TANARES
RPG FOR 5E
CAMPAIGN SOURCEBOOK

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To the Legends of the RPG Industry,

We cannot express how honored we are to have had your special participation in our project. Your immense contributions to the RPG industry have paved the way for so many of us to explore worlds of fantasy and adventure.

From groundbreaking creations to innovative systems, your influence can be seen in countless games and campaigns that have brought wonder and joy to so many. Your creations have inspired us all to do our best and to never stop imagining.

Thank you for everything you have done for the entire community of RPG enthusiasts around the world. You are true legends, and your impact will continue to be felt for generations to come.

With deepest gratitude and respect,
Dragori Team

Contents

Chapter 1 - Tanares Overview 6

Campaigns in Tanares ... 6
Core Themes of Tanares ... 6
The World of Tanares ... 8
The Malrokian Curse ... 9
Species of Tanares ... 10
Regions of Tanares ... 14
Religions of Tanares ... 27

Chapter 2 - Factions 38

Allied Forces ... 38
Arcanum ... 42
Cult of Shadow Wing ... 44
Forces of Darkall ... 46
Tanarean Empire ... 48

Chapter 3 - The Penumbral Plane 50

Surface ... 54
Eternal Cathedral ... 56
Caverns of Magma Giants ... 58
Crystal Fores ... 60
The Endless City ... 62
The Clockwork Nexus ... 64
Inverted Archives ... 66

Chapter 4 - Gods and Religions 68

Aibidh, God of Autumn and Air ... 69
Ba-Ka, Spirit God of Magic ... 70
Bás, Goddess of Winter and Death ... 71
Bauron, God of Punishment ... 72
Breith, God of Spring and Earth ... 73
C'thraxis, Lady of Sins ... 74
Dorsi, The Guardian God of Dwarves ... 75
Droggath, the Fleshspawner ... 76
Fruitful, the Fey Goddess ... 77
Fumetsu Tenshinkin (not a true god) ... 78
Glorious One, The God of Valor ... 79
Krynnethoth, the Mystical One ... 80
Lumina, Goddess of Wisdom ... 81
Òigridh, Goddess of Summer and Fire ... 82
Tamera & Bauron, God(ess) of Duality ... 83
Tamera, Goddess of Life ... 84
The Nature Spirits, the World Souls ... 85
Z'ulvath, the Shadow Wing ... 86

Chapter 5 - The World of Tanares 87

Central Empire ... 90
Republic of Freelands ... 104
Imperial Ben´net ... 120
Kingdom of Kolbjörn ... 128
Magocracy of Mage Tower ... 138
Seashores ... 146
Sindile Forest ... 152
Stravian Domains ... 160
Storm Islands ... 168
Taii'Maku City States ... 174
Theocracy of Kepesh ... 182
Tsvetan ... 190
Yama ... 198
Other Regions ... 206

Chapter 6 - Organizations 212

Bank of Hajal ... 212
Bloodbound ... 214
Celestianist Church ... 216
Collectors ... 218
DEATH ... 220
Dragon Council ... 222
Eternal Circle ... 224
Parliament of the Sea ... 226
Relic Hunters ... 228
Third Eye ... 230
Watchers ... 232
Other Organizations ... 234

Chapter 7 - History 236

Kingdoms of the Past ... 236
Tanarean Timeline ... 242
Tanarean History ... 246

Chapter 8 - Life In Tanares 252

The Economy and Special Minerals ... 252
Transportation ... 253
Pets ... 254
Drinks and Measuring Time ... 255
Holiday and Food ... 257
Cosmology and Tavern Games ... 259
Lunar Perigee and Lycanthropy ... 262

Chapter 9 - New Monsters 264

Akhu ... 264
Augur's Servants ... 268
Bellara's Servants ... 276
Collectors ... 284
Cult of Shadow Wing ... 286
Dragons ... 290
Drakes ... 306
Emoguns ... 308
Gloomfolk ... 324
Ironhands ... 326
Kemets ... 328
Kepesh ... 334
Kikoku ... 338
Penumbral Aberration ... 342
Stone Spirit ... 344
Spectral Ninja ... 345
Taii'Makian Constructs ... 346

Chapter 10 - Magic Items 350

Access extra content!

Tanares Expanded

To Our Esteemed Friends,

Just like you, we are deeply passionate about games. This passion, inspired by tabletop RPGs that provided us with thousands of hours of enjoyment from great designers and writers, led us to create Tanares. We aim to give back and share the same joy we received from those games we cherished back to the community.

Tanares was forged from creativity, dedication, and a shared dream: to breathe life into a world that began with "Arena: The Contest" and evolved with "Tanares Adventures," the dungeon crawler board games that were the first steps in transforming Tanares into the expansive world we present to you in the following pages.

This became possible thanks to your belief in our dreams, your unwavering support, and the opportunity you gave us to pour our souls into creating a world filled with new ideas and timeless classics.

Our affection for the world of Tanares grew during the production of the board games, but creating this RPG allowed us to delve much deeper. We meticulously crafted each detail and location, weaving its lore and sculpting its landscapes, which enchanted us. Every page and word is imbued with the essence of this unique world.

As creators, we ventured deep into the heart of Tanares, tracing the steps of heroes and villains, charting unexplored territories, and unraveling the intricate web of stories that bind this world. The echoes of "Arena: The Contest" and "Tanares Adventures Board Games" resonate throughout these pages, their legacy shaping the world you now hold in your hands. In our quest to expand this universe, we found ourselves not just as creators but also as explorers and chroniclers.

It leads us to ponder: Some important scientific sources state that the universe is infinite. Suppose there is $0.00001^{33212}\%$ chance of a dragon existing on a planet. In this infinite universe, if you roll the die a sufficient amount of time, you may eventually find one. This thought brings a smile to our faces–a playful notion, yet one that captures the spirit of this book and its deep lore, as real as all the grand settings that inspired us before.

This book, dear friends, is more than a collection of lore and rules; it is a bridge between our world and Tanares. It reflects the countless hours of dedication, the triumphs and challenges, and the unyielding commitment to excellence that has driven us from the beginning. As you delve into this book, we hope you feel the warmth of our team's spirit, the depth of our devotion to Tanares, and the unbreakable bond we share with you and our community. We have poured our hearts into these pages, crafting not just a game but a portal to Tanares for your enjoyment.

As you embark on your adventures in Tanares, remember that you are an integral part of a larger story. You are not just players; you are the heart and soul of this game. Together, we can create something extraordinary.

In closing, we extend our heartfelt thanks to you once more. Your support has been the wind in our sails, the magic that brought Tanares to life. May your journeys through its realms be as wondrous and fulfilling as our journey to bring this world to you.

With most profound appreciation and gratitude,
The Dragori Games Team

CHAPTER 1
TANARES OVERVIEW

Greetings, esteemed Game Masters, and welcome to the realm of Tanares, a vibrant world of high fantasy and exciting adventures. This overview provides a comprehensive summary, packed with essential information for understanding the world of Tanares and effectively guiding your players as a GM in this campaign setting. Throughout these pages, you will delve into details about the diverse species, explore unique regions, learn about great nations and their political structures, discover a variety of religions and deities, and study the most significant political alliances, known as Factions, in Tanares.

CAMPAIGNS IN TANARES

The world of Tanares is teeming with diverse cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and perilous threats. Venture through the frozen peaks of Ben'net, navigate the complex political webs of the Draconic Council, and face sinister forces lurking in the shadows of the Penumbral Plane.

As the architect of your players' journeys, you will guide their passage through a land where corruption, eldritch horror, heroism, and the Cold War are the potent forces molding the fates of mortals and deities alike. In this book, we will explore the unique aspects of Tanares, such as its pantheon, the interplay among powerful factions, and the diverse regions along with their extraordinary people and cultures, while offering guidance on incorporating these themes into your campaign.

We recommend reading the Player's Guide to Tanares for an overview of the knowledge your players should have about this world, as well as to acquaint yourself with the fundamentals of the diverse humanoid species that inhabit Tanares. Discover the unique classes and subclasses designed to enrich your campaign experience.

CORE THEMES OF TANARES

The Struggle Against Corruption

In Tanares, the Ungods' insidious presence seeps into the fabric of the Material Plane, corrupting morality and twisting reality. As the Game Master, you can immerse your players in the tormenting battle against these formidable foes. To emphasize the weight of corruption, you can instill a palpable sense of urgency and tension, reinforcing the responsibilities the characters bear. Populate your world with NPCs suffering from the influence of corruption, display the devastating consequences of the Ungods' machinations, and hint at the coming disaster if the heroes fail.

Examples:
1- Introduce a once honorable knight, now consumed and twisted by the vile touch of the Ungods. Charge the players with investigating the source of corruption, leading to a sinister cult hidden within the highest echelons of society.

2- Task your players with infiltrating a noble's mansion to uncover evidence of their malevolent dealings with the Cult of Shadow Wing. They must unravel a treacherous web of deception, extortion, and conspiracy, ultimately exposing the corruption and preventing the Republic's downfall.

Eldritch Horror

The Penumbral Plane, a perverse place intertwined with Tanares, teems with grotesque aberrations birthed from the Ungods' corruption. Engage your players by emphasizing the psychological terror and incomprehensible nature of their encounters. Describe the abominations with haunting detail, highlighting their morphing forms and the gut-wrenching terror they invoke. Encourage your players to confront the Penumbral Plane's horrors while remaining vigilant against the creeping insanity threatening their characters.

Examples:
1- The players uncover an abandoned village, its denizens grotesquely mutated into aberrant horrors by the Penumbral Plane's influence. They must discover the cause and close the rift, saving the village from this twisted dimension.

2- A series of horrible murders terrorizes a city, leaving residents desperate for resolution. Task the players with solving the enigma, which reveals an aberration from the Penumbral Plane orchestrating the massacre.

Heroism

In Tanares, the Heroic Age dawns with the return of the angels, and the rise of the Republic of Freelands. Inspire your players to forge their own destinies, weaving tales of valor, sacrifice, and resolve. Showcase the consequences of their actions and how their deeds ignite hope in the people they protect. Place them in moral dilemmas; test their convictions against seemingly impossible odds.

Examples:
1- The players learn of a village tormented by a horde of monsters. They must bolster the villagers' spirits, train them in self-defense, and ultimately confront the beasts in a climactic battle of courage and determination.

2- A relentless plague ravages the land as the players seek its cure. Along their journey, they encounter suffering people in need of aid. The players must choose between assisting the needy or focusing solely on their quest; this tests their commitment to heroism and their principles.

The Cold War

Tanares teeters on the brink of war as factions compete for dominance. Immerse your players in an atmosphere of unease and apprehension. Evoke the precarious balance between peace and conflict; craft scenarios that compel your players to navigate the complex web of alliances and hostilities. Highlight the pervasive paranoia and suspicion, reminding your players that the shadow of war looms ever nearer.

Examples:
1- The players find themselves ensnared in a delicate situation when they discover two factions they consider their allies to be close to war. They must employ diplomacy and negotiation to preserve the fragile peace and prevent a calamity.

2- The heroes uncover a scheme to assassinate a faction leader, an act that would throw the world into chaos. They must navigate the perilous world of intrigue and treachery to stop the plan and prevent the assassination.

Espionage

In Tanares, knowledge is the lifeblood of power, with spies manipulating the delicate balance of the Cold War from the shadows. Weave intricate narratives of espionage and subterfuge into your campaign, compelling your players to master deception and betrayal. Showcase the refined artifice of high society where spies and diplomats mingle, and create tension by unveiling NPCs' hidden motives and clandestine agendas. Encourage your players to improve their subterfuge skills while challenging them to unmask their adversaries' secrets.

Examples:
1- The players are enlisted by a covert organization to infiltrate a rival faction, gathering intelligence on their strategies and capabilities. They must complete tasks for the enemy faction to maintain their false identities, evading detection while trying to gather the necessary information.

2- At a grand masquerade, the players must identify and capture a notorious spy who has infiltrated the event. They must sift through whispers, engage in clandestine conversations, and watch other guests carefully to unveil the spy's true identity.

Political Strife

Tanares is embroiled in a cold war, with mighty factions, kingdoms, religions, and organizations competing for control and influence. Each group has its own agenda and methods for combating the ever-present threat of the Ungods and the eldritch abominations of the Penumbral Plane. As a GM, you can intertwine political strife into your campaign by displaying the different alliances, betrayals, and power plays of each political power.

To integrate political trouble into your Tanares campaign, examine the five factions' motivations and objectives. How do their goals intersect or clash with other groups? Understanding the driving forces behind each faction allows you to create a dynamic, evolving world in which the players must navigate a maze of danger and intrigue.

Examples:
1- The players are employed by a secret agent of the Republic to investigate corruption allegations within the parliament. Delving deeper, they uncover a sprawling conspiracy that endangers the Republic's foundation. This forces the players to determine their true loyalties and the risks they're willing to take for the greater good.

2- A powerful merchant guild seeks to expand its influence across Tanares but faces opposition from established nobility and religious organizations. The players are hired by the guild to carry out covert operations aimed at gaining leverage over the guild's rivals.

Crafting Stories

In Tanares, players' choices hold the spotlight as they move through a complex world full of challenges, from combating corruption and eldritch horrors to charting heroic paths through the factions' Cold War. As a GM, your role is to create a thrilling and dynamic story, deeply influenced by your players' decisions.

By smoothly incorporating themes such as political strife, espionage, and the delicate balance of opposing forces, you'll infuse your campaign with depth and realism. Provide your players with opportunities to engage in diplomacy, negotiation, and subterfuge alongside combat and exploration. Keep in mind that the essence of Tanares lies in the players' capacity to shape the world through their actions and choices.

Emphasize the fluidity of the narrative and be prepared to adapt the factions, villains, and history of Tanares to best fit your group and the stories you're collaboratively crafting. **No change you make to the material presented here is wrong;** you are the creator of your own Tanares. Maintain open communication with your players, allowing their decisions to significantly affect the balance of power in Tanares and establish a lasting, meaningful legacy for their characters within the world.

Tanares presents a rich mosaic of themes — including corruption, eldritch horror, heroism, Cold War, espionage, and political strife — which combine to deliver a truly immersive experience that will both challenge and inspire your players. As they journey through this realm, they'll confront moral dilemmas, unveil hidden agendas, and make choices that will reshape the course of history. The true power of Tanares resides in the shared adventures you and your players embark on, forging an exciting narrative to be remembered for years to come.

THE WORLD OF TANARES

In the wake of the Heroic Age, legendary Tanarean individuals stopped the Kemet Invasion, marking the dawn of a new era defined by the actions of those with great destinies. Yet, sinister forces, such as the Cult of Shadow Wing and the Ungods' spawns, keep weaving their webs of manipulation throughout Tanares.

As the Penumbral Plane is filled with nightmarish creatures born from Ungods' corruption, the heroes must navigate the intricate political landscape of the Material Plane while hindering the schemes of the Ungods and their servants, lest the world succumbs to its doom.

As the Kemet Invasion shattered the Tanarean Empire's dominance, five distinct factions rose, vying for power. Central to their struggle is the Vandanamalika, a magical portal crafted from rare minerals and arcane knowledge. During the rare lunar perigee, this portal can channel the planar energy, granting magical power on a divine scale.

Each faction desires to build a Vandanamalika for its own purposes. The Allied Forces seek to scour the planes for the fabled hero King Malrok, whose power is said to cleanse Ungods' corruption. The Emperor desires to summon a horde of devils bent to his will, intending to rule the world and vanquish the Ungods. The Arcanum aims to bypass the Tanarean Magic Field's limitations, unlocking magic far more potent than what currently exists,

empowering them to combat the Ungods. The Forces of Darkall conspire to cover Tanares in eternal winter and raise the undead, making people immune to the Ungods' corruption. Finally, the Ungods' servants plot to seize a Vandanamalika and summon an Avatar of their dark masters to conquer and desecrate Tanares.

Tanares is composed of distinct political and cultural realms, each with its own characteristics, from the honor-bound clans of Yama, with their mighty samurai and stealthy ninjas, to the hero-founded Republic of Freelands. The Dwarven Kingdom of Stonelair rules over Stravian, while the enigmatic spring elves live in the mystical Sindile. Kolbjörn's northern barbarians struggle against giants and political division, while the Tanarean Empire's heart lies within the prosperous Central Empire, full of oppression. Pirates govern the Seashores, forming the Parliament of the Sea. The icy mountains of Ben'net are home to the cirrus in the north, while the taii'maku City States boast their monumental mechanical moving cities in the south. Theocracy of Kepesh reveres Ba-Ka, the God of Magic and Spirit, led by the ancient lich Kalistessenâmun. Mage Tower, a magocracy of powerful wizards and sorcerers, where the study and use of magic are unrestricted. The Storm Islands are under the domain of Gullog and the kemets, while the Wasteland, a cursed territory, teems with restless undead.

Tanares offers an immersive, complex world full of high-stakes conflicts, diverse regions, political intrigue, and exciting adventures for your campaign.

THE MALROKIAN CURSE

"What is it that feeds the Ungods' powers? Could it be the amount of blood spilled in wars or the number of individuals whose lives were prematurely taken? Might it be the intentions or emotions carried by sentient beings in moments of sorrow?

Or is it simply the accumulation of souls touched by sin and decay? Some even propose that it is the fury of the Avatar Dragons. The truth is that no satisfactory answer has ever been found, and perhaps for this reason, many have tested the limits throughout the ages.

However, nothing compares to what we are experiencing now. The mounting tension created by those motivated by power or revenge threatens to ruin us all. I pray that we find unity before it's too late."

Excerpt from the essay written by Cardinal Erithad, the Wise, in the consistory of the Celestianinst Church.

The genesis of the Malrokian Curse is entwined with the eternal struggle between the Gods and the Ungods. As mortals indulge in wars, the surge of corrupted souls empowers the Ungods, who amass strength enough to unleash cataclysms of world-shattering proportions, including earthquakes, tempestuous storms, volcanic eruptions, and monstrous tsunamis, leaving once-thriving civilizations in ruins.

To stave off such annihilation, the Gods decreed that mortals must abandon war. Heeding this divine command, the land of Tanares devised alternative ways to settle disputes, such as through arena duels. Consequently, all factions and religions, from the Republic to the Empire and from the Celestianist Church to dwarven Dorsism, strive to prevent wars. This shared goal culminates in a cold war filled with political intrigue and power struggles.

Each faction seeks its own path to avoid wars and improve its strength to fight the Ungods' minions. For instance, the Empire bans large armed groups, except for the Ironhand soldiers, a legion of magically brainwashed zealots serving the Emperor unquestioningly. Through fear, strict laws, and a thriving economy, the Empire maintains control over its populace, suppressing revolts. Conversely, the Republic believes that only through freedom can individuals resist the Ungods' corrupting influence, thus preventing both internal strife and external conflict, condemning the Empire's despotic ways.

Since ancient times, the true origin of the Malrokian Curse has remained a mystery, leading to an abundance of rumors and speculation. Some people blamed the dragons, assuming that the source was the fury of Avatar Dragons incited by the smell of blood, while others attributed the curse to divine retribution for massive deaths, viewing it as the destruction of their creation. Unbeknownst to the populace, the dissemination of false information was orchestrated by the servants of the Ungods, who had infiltrated the Church and the upper echelons of power, twisting the truth to serve their nefarious purposes. They even influenced the conclusions of the legendary Torygg, the most powerful wizard the world had ever known.

The connection between dragons and the Malrokian Curse can be traced back to the Godly Age, when the Ungods corrupted the dragons. The Gods created dragons to be guardians of Tanares, but the Ungods inflicted a curse of madness upon them, making the smell of blood drive them temporarily insane. As cataclysms brought on by a Malrokian Curse provide ample blood to incite the madness of dragons, they are often seen enraged and attacking during such events, causing observers to link the facts incorrectly.

The reality is that the Malrokian Curse springs from a sudden surge in the Ungods' corruptive power caused when too many individuals die while filled with corruption, sin, and negative emotions. This rapid expansion of corruption frays the very fabric of Tanares, unleashing devastation.

Whenever someone with a tainted soul, laden with evil intent, sins, or dark emotions, dies, their soul can be twisted by the Ungods and spawn new penumbral creatures, especially emoguns, within the Penumbral Plane, increasing the armies of the Ungods' servants.

The Gods' prohibition of war is indeed a desperate attempt to prevent the Ungods from siphoning souls as they perish in hatred, fear, and a thirst for vengeance. These souls often transform into penumbral creatures that wreak havoc upon Tanares, posing a threat to the gods themselves.

With this knowledge, the Malrokian Curse can be incorporated into your campaign as an urgent call to arms. Players must work to prevent wars and battle the insidious Ungods, for unchecked schemes can unleash catastrophic destruction. In fact, the Malrokian Curse molds the world, its culture, and its politics.

As a Game Master, you can use the Malrokian Curse as a backdrop or a central plotline that drives your players' actions. Encourage them to investigate the truth behind the curse, unravel the machinations of the Ungods, and work to prevent wars that could trigger further cataclysms.

Additionally, the Malrokian Curse offers ample opportunities for moral dilemmas and challenges. Players may need to navigate a complex web of politics, espionage, and deception, as factions compete for power while attempting to maintain an uneasy peace.

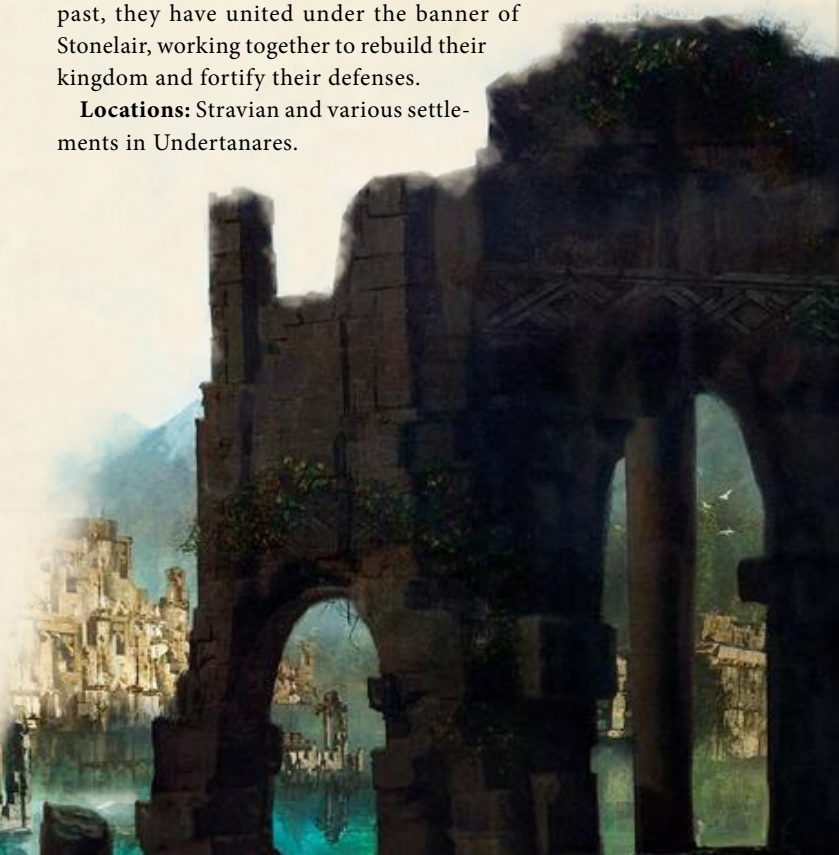
SPECIES OF TANARES

Tanares is filled with a plethora of intelligent species, ranging from the iconic species found in 5E to the Tanares-specific additions such as the taii'maku, soulborns, gloomfolks, cirrus, and even sub-species of elves. Each of these species possesses distinctive traits and rich backgrounds, imbuing the world of Tanares with a depth of lore. For a concise overview of their most notable features, please refer to the following summary:

Dwarf

The dwarves are a resilient, dedicated, and skilled people divided into three major clans: Lion, Goat, and Dragon. They inhabit the underground realm of Undertanares, where they guard against the forces of evil, specifically the Ungods. They worship Dorsi, the Guardian God, who instilled in them the virtues of courage, dedication, and wisdom. The dwarves aim to uphold these virtues and honor their ancestors, who transcended into Stone Spirits. Despite a tumultuous past, they have united under the banner of Stonelair, working together to rebuild their kingdom and fortify their defenses.

Locations: Stravian and various settlements in Undertanares.



Elf

The elves are a wise and ancient species known for their longevity, reverence for nature, and elemental magic. They fled their original extraplanar homeland due to an Ungod invasion and settled in Tanares, where they divided into four subspecies, each embodying a season and corresponding deity, the spring, summer, autumn, and winter elves. These elves, despite losing immortality, still live for millennia. They prioritize harmony with nature and are guided by the Cuibhle pantheon. The kemets, once winter elves, became tainted, aiming to turn Tanares into an eternal winter to counter the Ungods.

Locations: Spring: Sindile Forest; Autumn: Republic of Freelands; Winter: Republic of Freelands; Kemets: Storm Islands; Summer: All over Tanares.

Halfling

Halflings are whimsical yet powerful Feywild guardians, deeply connected to faeries and Fruitful, the Goddess of Joy, Abundance, and Hospitality. Living in idyllic farming communities, they maintain enchanted sacred orchards that protect against penumbral corruption. Local elders and guardian faeries guide their decision-making. Their alliance with archfey strengthens their power, and they're dedicated to spreading joy, weakening the Ungods' influence. The history of halflings highlights their resilience and commitment to combating dark forces, as well as their legendary hospitality and banquets.

Locations: Primarily in Stravian, with some small settlements all over Tanares.

Human

Humans are known for their ardent spirits, compassionate hearts, and intense emotions. They inhabit diverse regions, from the Republic to the Empire, Yama, and Kolbjörn. Their faith lies mainly with Tamera and Bauron, but they follow various deities, including the Ungods. They hold the power to shape their own destiny, balance good and evil, and forge alliances against the Ungods. Their history is marked by wars, unity, and the Malrokian Curse, and their future lies in their ability to learn from the past and resist temptation.

Locations: They are the majority in the Central Empire, Kolbjörn, the Republic of Freelands, Seashores, the Magocracy of Mage Tower, the Theocracy of Kepesh, and Yama; however, they are present in almost all regions of Tanares.

Dragonborn

Dragonborns were created by draconic magic over three millennia ago during the Ungod invasion. Of the initial forty, only six legendary heroes survived and due to their inability to reproduce, they were cloned. They have six colors: gold (compassionate and innocent), black (enigmatic and relentless), red (strong and passionate), green (cunning and charismatic), white (honorable and steadfast), and blue (analytical and intelligent). Dragonborns are highly respected for their draconic ties and mostly live in the Draconic Towers across the continent. They often serve as guardians or elite units against the Ungods' servants.

Locations: In few numbers all over Tanares, concentrated especially in the Draconic Towers.

Gnome

Gnomes embody intellectual prowess and sophistication, with origins dating back to the Godly Age, when Lumina created them to spread wisdom, art, and beauty. They dress in fashionable attire, and their appearance reflects their scholarly, refined nature. They emphasize elite education and cultural pursuits. Key aspects include their dedication to enlightenment, founding of the Academies of Light, mastery of fine arts, and exquisite culinary skills.

Locations: Cities spread across the regions of the Central Empire, Seashores, and the Republic of Freelands. Mustardseed, considered the "gnomes' capital," is on the Seashores.

Orc

Orcs are a resilient species native to the Tsvetan rocky lands. Comprising four clans—Spiked Bones, Stone Fangs, Hot Bloods, and Strong Fists—each with unique customs, they are deeply connected to shamanistic beliefs and ancient traditions. They worship their totem animals and the Red Mother, their spiritual leader. Despite misconceptions of savagery, orcs maintain complex relationships with other species, valuing strength, loyalty, and spirituality.

Locations: Tsvetan.

Tiefling

Tieflings are a tormented species, burdened by a dark ancestry of demonic lineage. They seek redemption through self-flagellation, simplicity, and combat against evil forces. They worshiped Caeldolor, the God of Redemption, Suffering, and Martyrdom; however, he sacrificed himself to protect the tieflings. Now worshiping Tamera and Bauron, they uphold a somber culture, battling demons that haunt their existence. Some tieflings, however, pursue twisted schemes for salvation. With a sinister appearance and dark lineage, they instill unease and suspicion among Tanares' inhabitants, who fear their potential corruption.

Locations: Hiding all over Tanares, especially in the Central Empire, the Republic of Freelands, Stravian, Yama, and Seashores.

Gloomfolk

The gloomfolk, originally winter elves, reside in the Undertanares, a subterranean realm beneath Tanares. After being captured and transformed by the Cult of Shadow Wing, they now possess elven upper bodies and scorpion-like lower halves. They live in tight-knit hive communities, valuing effort, individuality, and self-sufficiency. The gloomfolk worship no gods, but their rituals focus on community, freedom, and avenging their kin. With a society divided into various roles, they challenge societal norms and embrace alternative lifestyles. Their appearance, indomitable spirit, and pursuit of vengeance against those who enslaved them are their most important aspects.

Locations: Undertanares, with a few tribes living in the Penumbral Plane under protective pylons.

Taii'maku

The taii'maku are a highly intelligent and almost emotionless species in Tanares, characterized by their stoicism and unwavering logic. They have a striking appearance, with robust bodies, earth-toned skin, and luminous white eyes. They inhabit mobile cities, known as Illus, which are powered by arcane energies from bauronite ores. Instead of worshiping gods traditionally, they perceive deities as highly evolved entities. The taii'maku are best known for their expertise in engineering, mathematics, and magic, creating advanced constructs and technology. They value knowledge and education, striving to create a harmonious and equitable society.

Locations: Mostly in the taii'maku City States region, with a few moving to the Republic of Freelands region.

Soulborn

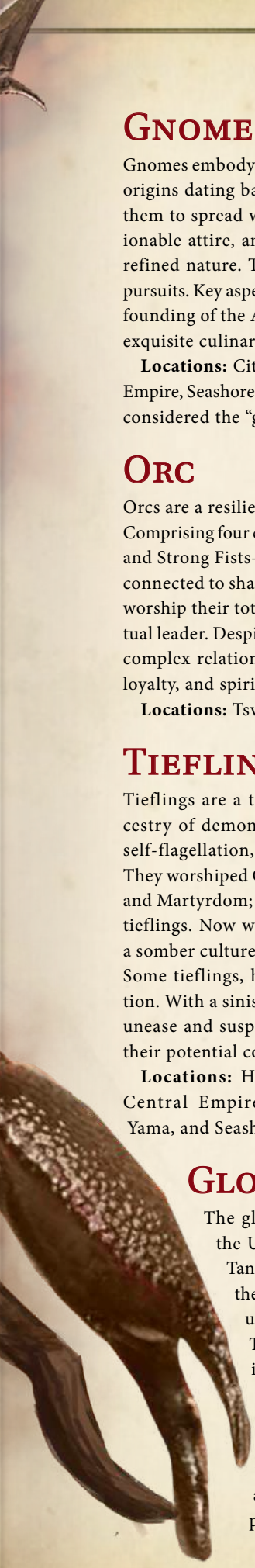
The soulborn species are reincarnated beings, originating from the kemets - winter elves who sought immortality. Their unique appearance, marked by gray skin and white curly hair, sets them apart from other species. Born into various species and cultures, they develop a multifaceted worldview and excel in diplomacy and trade. The soulborn respect all gods and rarely follow only one. To help regain memories, they are driven to recover relics from past lives. Their most important aspects include their accumulated knowledge across lives, adaptability, and their eternal cycle of rebirth, which provides them with diverse cultural experiences and perspectives.

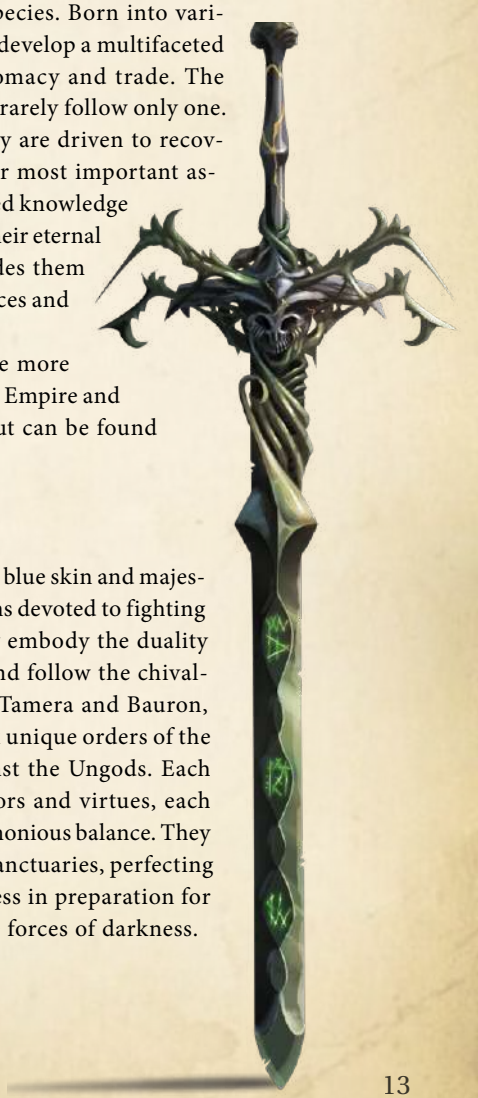
Locations: Especially in the more populated lands of the Central Empire and The Republic of Freelands, but can be found anywhere in Tanares.

Cirrus

The cirrus, angelic beings with blue skin and majestic wings, are celestial guardians devoted to fighting the malevolent Ungods. They embody the duality of arcane and divine forces and follow the chivalric code. The cirrus worship Tamera and Bauron, and divide themselves into six unique orders of the Zephyr Knights, united against the Ungods. Each order is distinguished by colors and virtues, each contributing to the cirrus' harmonious balance. They reside in secluded mountain sanctuaries, perfecting their arcane and divine prowess in preparation for the ongoing battle against the forces of darkness.

Locations: Ben'net and the Magocracy of Mage Tower.





REGIONS OF TANARES

Tanares is a world with unique regions characterized by their distinct geography, politics, and culture. Traverse the icy lands of Kolbjörn, home to the proud northmen, or mingle with Yama's honorable citizens devoted to the Sovereign Tenshikin; diversity flourishes throughout this realm.

Unravel the histories and traditions of Tanares' multifaceted nations, such as the mighty Tanarean Empire, embodying both grandeur and oppression, or the Republic of Freelands, a bastion of freedom and individual rights.

Embark on an adventure through Ben'net's frozen expanses or bask in the magnificence of the Sindile Forest, as you encounter an array of places, customs, and beliefs.

To uncover the most notable features of each region, please refer to the summary that follows:

Kolbjörn

Geography. Dominated by chilling tundras, towering mountains, imposing fjords, and dense, frostbitten forests, Kolbjörn's coastline stretches far and wide, encompassing numerous islands.

Population. Primarily inhabited by humans and giants, with humans concentrating in the south and giants in the north.

Politics and Economy. Governed by the Kingdom of Kolbjörn, it falls under the rule of the Tanarean Empire. Jarls command various regions, their loyalties torn between the Empire and the prospect of independence. Kolbjörn's economy thrives on saltwater fish, shipbuilding, furs, timber, and mystical herbs.

Culture and Society. Kolbjörners revere strength and honor. They use a runic alphabet, with each clan associated with a specific animal. While Celestianism is the official religion, the worship of Nature Spirits is still widespread. A faction of uncorrupted giants resists the Dark Titan's control, in contrast to another faction that serves them and attacks the Kolbjörners.

They often deal with Kemet Raiders, who want to gain a foothold on the continent and build temples and shrines to Bás, trying to bring perpetual Winter to Kolbjörn to advance from there to the entire Tanares.

Stravian

Geography. Distinguished by its cold northern mountains, boreal forests, hills, and temperate southern valleys, waterfalls, forests, and fields, Stravian is a large land of contrasts.

Population. Home to dwarves, halflings, and humans living harmoniously.

Politics and Economy. Governed by the Realm of Stonelair, Stravian is led by three dwarven kings, each representing the Lion, Goat, and Dragon clans. Dwarves excel in metalcraft, stonecraft, and mining, while halflings contribute with agriculture and spices. The cursed Duergar Clan seeks the unmaking of Stonelair.

Culture and Society. Stravian adheres to dwarven culture and law, emphasizing work and dedication. Beards and hair display intricate braids and ornaments, each with unique meanings.

Dwarves relentlessly strive to reclaim the legendary Dorsian Forge, battling the duergar and their alliance with the Cult of Shadow Wing.

As a crucial crossroads for the Empire, the Republic, and Kolbjörn, Stravian hosts important roads for merchants and caravans, and while Stonelair's cities and subterranean are protected, but the surface roads and settlements remain vulnerable to bandits and Imperial agents.

In the southern lands, the forests harbor halflings under the faeries' watchful gaze, producing most of the food consumed by the people of Stonelair.

Ben'net

Geography. Dominated by frozen mountain ranges, permafrost, ice highlands, and cold valleys, Ben'net also features sparse tundras scattered throughout its frigid landscape.

Population. Primarily inhabited by humans and the cirrus people.

Politics and Economy. Ruled by Governor Bonas Weyrdo, chosen by Emperor Baleroth, the southern portion of Ben'net falls under Imperial control. In the inaccessible north, the cirrus people govern the Crystal Mountains, led by the Council of the Zephyr Knights. The economy relies on textile production, distilled alcoholic beverages, and sheep and yak livestock.

Culture and Society. Nomadic herders populate the region, while fortified imperial-style cities thrive in the south. Residents take pride in their intricate fur and linen caps, showcasing their handicraft abilities, which are, alongside herding, the most respected skills in Ben'net. With a highland culture, the people lead simple lives based on handicrafts and livestock. Common people adhere to the Windspeaker religion, while middle and upper classes practice the Celestianism, with some retaining Evolutionist beliefs despite the Celestianist Reformation.

In the north, the cirrus embrace a culture of chivalry, with six orders of knights dedicated to combating the Ungods and their corruption, especially by the use of magic. Following the Windspeaker religion, they focus on meditation, mysticism, and martial training.

Magocracy of Mage Tower

Geography. The northern mountain ranges give way to a temperate waterway region, featuring navigable rivers, lakes, coniferous forests, grasslands, and wetlands with diverse flora like orchids and water lilies.

Population. Primarily inhabited by humans and cirrus, but all species can be found in small numbers, drawn by the lure of magical knowledge.

Politics and Economy. Governed by a council of wizards and sorcerers, leadership is determined by arcane prowess. The economy is driven by magic item crafting, freshwater fish, paper, and prestigious arcane universities.

Culture and Society. Social hierarchy is determined by one's highest-level arcane spellcasting ability, with non-spellcasters at the bottom. The colors of hats indicate magical specialization. Divine spellcasters hold unique, respected positions outside the standard hierarchy, but cannot reach the top hierarchy reserved for powerful arcane casters. People here are less religious; however, the worship of the God Ba-Ka, the deity of magic and spirit, is slowly growing. Competition among researchers is intense, sometimes leading to unethical practices or law-breaking. Arcane universities charge high tuition, with scholarships available for exceptional students. Known for its freedom of magical research, the Magocracy of Mage Tower is home to the finest arcane magic schools in Tanares.

Central Empire

Geography. The Central Empire boasts Tanares' finest lands, including forested regions, temperate woods, grasslands, and fertile river valleys.

Population. Primarily humans, with many gnomes, summer elves, and soulborns, but all other species are present in smaller numbers.

Politics and Economy. Ruled by Emperor Baleroth, the Empire operates under a highly structured bureaucracy and is enforced by the formidable Ironhand military. The economy thrives on international commerce, services, livestock, and agricultural products like wheat and barley.

Culture and Society. Citizens are expected to follow the Empire's norms and values or risk imprisonment and possible transformation into mindless Ironhand soldiers. Government surveillance breeds fear and distrust, yet wealth and comfort discourage rebellion. Pride in the Empire and a desire for stability and order are prevalent. Many believe the Empire needs to be strong and strict to face external and internal threats.

Arena combat is a popular form of entertainment, with successful gladiators able to achieve meteoric fame. While the Empire's populace follows Tamera and Bauron and accepts the Celestianist Reformation, resistance exists among the elite, nobles, and even the Emperor himself, who want to keep the old Evolutionist customs.

Republic of Freelands

Geography. The Republic features diverse landscapes, including wetlands and temperate forests to the north, the Cragplateaus mountain range at its center, and valleys, tropical forests, and highlands in the south.

Population. Humans, gnomes, and autumn, summer, and winter elves are the majority, but all species can be found throughout the Republic.

Politics and Economy. As Tanares' first democratic republic, citizens vote in a parliament and elect the First Minister, currently Tellatius. The Minister of Defense, Sedura, leads the military. The economy, still developing, is fueled by mining in the Cragplateaus, timber production, and mercenary services. The capital was built with Imperial funding, but the rest of the region remains either unexplored or underdeveloped.

Culture and Society. The hardworking, hopeful people of the Freelands cherish freedom and are fiercely patriotic. The first Adventurers Guild in Tanares provides opportunities for adventurers seeking work. Life is challenging as the people strive to defend their newfound freedom. The subterranean regions teem with monsters spawned by the servants of the Fleshspawner, one of the Ungods, and conflict with those creatures often happens, which in turn provides work for mercenaries and adventurers.

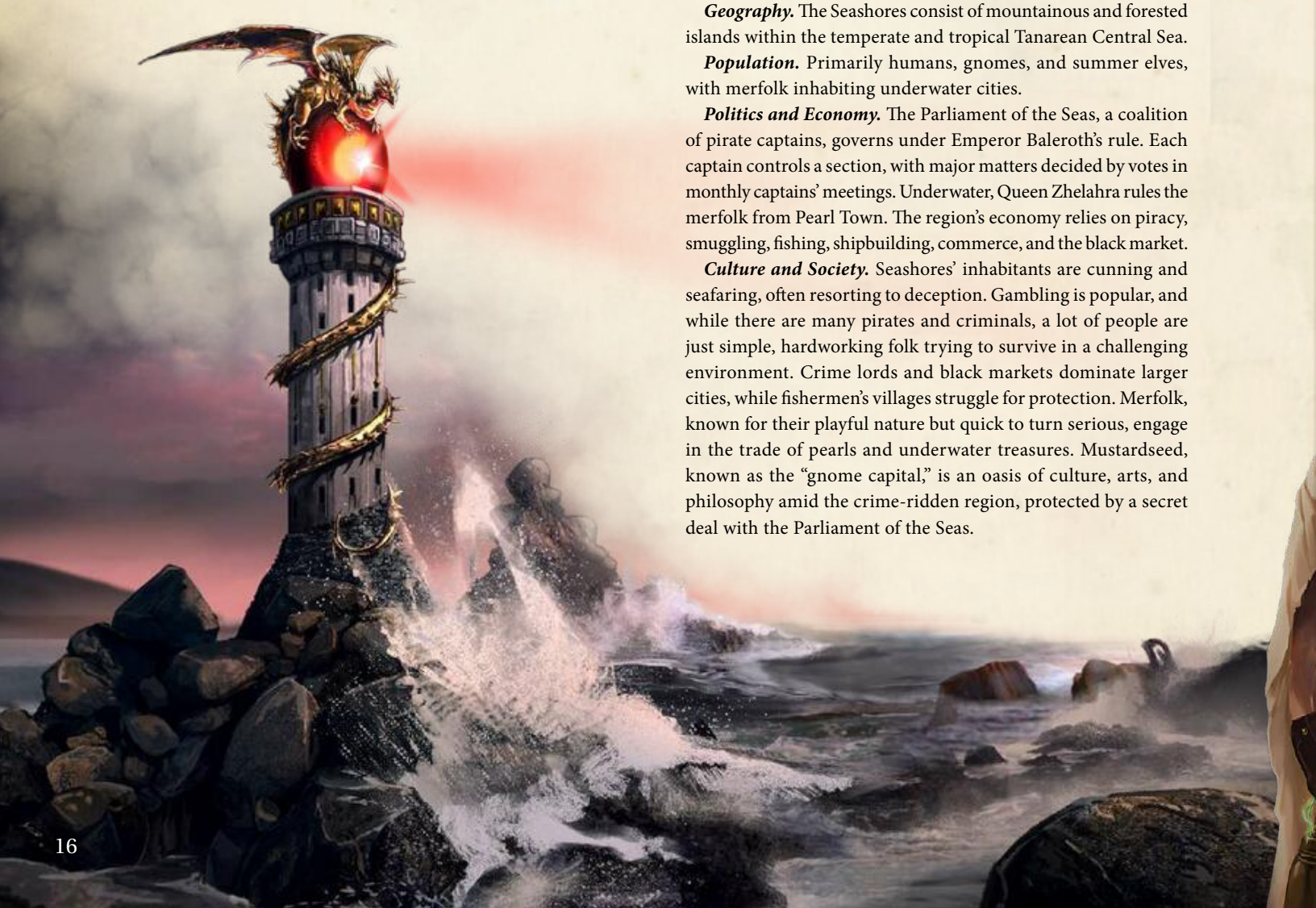
Seashores

Geography. The Seashores consist of mountainous and forested islands within the temperate and tropical Tanarean Central Sea.

Population. Primarily humans, gnomes, and summer elves, with merfolk inhabiting underwater cities.

Politics and Economy. The Parliament of the Seas, a coalition of pirate captains, governs under Emperor Baleroth's rule. Each captain controls a section, with major matters decided by votes in monthly captains' meetings. Underwater, Queen Zhelahra rules the merfolk from Pearl Town. The region's economy relies on piracy, smuggling, fishing, shipbuilding, commerce, and the black market.

Culture and Society. Seashores' inhabitants are cunning and seafaring, often resorting to deception. Gambling is popular, and while there are many pirates and criminals, a lot of people are just simple, hardworking folk trying to survive in a challenging environment. Crime lords and black markets dominate larger cities, while fishermen's villages struggle for protection. Merfolk, known for their playful nature but quick to turn serious, engage in the trade of pearls and underwater treasures. Mustardseed, known as the "gnome capital," is an oasis of culture, arts, and philosophy amid the crime-ridden region, protected by a secret deal with the Parliament of the Seas.



Taii'maku City States

Geography. A harsh landscape of deserts, rocklands, and volcanic hotspots, with a vast volcanic infertile region.

Population. Predominantly taii'makus, with some human barbarian tribes scattered throughout the region.

Politics and Economy. The nomadic taii'maku cities, called Illus, operate as independent city-states, each with its own laws. Their politics take a logical approach based on public debates and votings where reason and long-term gains are pivotal. They often keep discussing problems until they reach a unanimous vote. The taii'maku economy is based on bauronite, mechanical objects (compasses, clocks), architectural planning (especially great complex buildings), precision tools, and various glass products (lenses, spyglasses, spectacles).

Culture and Society. Taii'makus are a pacifist society focused on study, logic, and improving life through the fusion of magic and engineering. Emotionally detached, they seek rational solutions to problems.

Their Illus are marvels of engineering, filled with automated constructs performing a range of tasks from menial to transport and construction, including operating incredible flying vessels. This automation frees up time for the taii'makus to dedicate themselves to intellectual pursuits.

They are divided into three philosophical schools: the Ethereal Pragmatics, the Ethical Harmonists, and the Essential Existentialists. However, they are facing a moral issue: one group is melding magic and engineering into their bodies, aiming to evolve as a species.

Storm Islands

Geography. Once a tropical paradise, the Storm Islands are now encased in ice by the mystical powers of the Goddess Bás.

Population. Inhabited by kemets (winter elves who serve Gullog).

Politics and Economy. Gullog, a military leader with divine powers from Bás, rules the Storm Islands. The economy relies on self-sufficiency, resources sent from the Darkall continent, coastal raids, piracy, and mining of tameranium.

Culture and Society. Kemets are militaristic, fearless, and devoted to their objectives. Despite some loss of trust in Gullog after the Kemet Invasion failure, his status as Bás' chosen champion has restored much of their faith. Masters of necromancy, the kemets defend their islands with legions of undead, utilizing them in battle to preserve their strength. They seek to conquer Fisherman's Wharf, complete a Vandanamalika, and spread Bás' power throughout Tanares, freezing the land and transforming its inhabitants into undead to resist the corruption of the Ungods. The ice covering the islands, which are interconnected by kemet temples, can be manipulated to block enemy ships, thus creating a defensive barrier that renders invading the Storm Islands a daring feat.

Theocracy of Kepesh

Geography. Vast sand deserts, rugged rocklands, and a mountainous coastline.

Population. Predominantly humans.

Politics and Economy. Governed by a theocratic government worshiping Ba-Ka, with the Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun as the ruler. High priests manage various aspects of society, including bureaucratic aspects of the government. The economy relies on gold, bauronite and gem mining, camel and horse breeding, spice trading, and jewelry craft.

Culture and Society. Recently founded by the Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun, the realm unites Kepesh descendants and welcomes outcasts, the poor, and criminals seeking redemption from all across Tanares. Residents are practical, strong-willed, rustic, and most are uneducated, displaying strong emotions and zealous religious devotion. They follow Ba-Ka in hopes of an eternal afterlife in his ethereal city. Ba-Ka encourages worship in regular times, efficiency, fearlessness of death, and the widespread use and teaching of magic in all forms. He teaches that magic truly comes from the soul, stating that a spirit can think without a body, but a body cannot think without a spirit.

Ba-Ka bestows blessings upon chosen individuals, turning them into Akhu, the Favored Souls, who serve him in his sacred city or are sent to guide the Kepesh in Tanares and protect his temples.

Tsvetan

Geography. Primarily rocklands, savannahs, and volcanic Wastelands.

Population. Predominantly orcs, with some goblinoids and ogres.

Politics and Economy. Governed by four orc clans: Spike Bones, Stone Fangs, Hot Bloods, and Strong Fists. Each led by a warchief and an elder shaman. Warlord Katar, currently wielding the *Lava Axe*, had unified the clans as the new warlord; however, Vharzog plotted to challenge his position. He manipulated the death of the previous Red Mother and corrupted one of her disciples, using her now dark ungodly shamanism to try gaining control over the orcs. The economy depends on obsidian, sulfur, topaz, platinum ore, and pelts and leather from savage animals.

Culture and Society. Orcs value shamanistic traditions and the totem animals of their respective clans: Wolf, Naja, Vulture, and Scorpion. The Spiked Bones breed dire wolves and excel in mounted combat. The Stone Fangs are stealthy hunters with deep knowledge of terrain and herbs. The Hot Bloods are disciplined warriors respecting their elders, and the Strong Fists embody strength, simplicity, and resilience.

Katar is currently keeping the young disciple of the Red Mother safe in the fortress of Eferhild. This grand fortress, constructed during the Godly Age through the joint efforts of dwarven crafters and orc shamans, was blessed with the blood of the first Red Mother.

Realm of Yama

Geography. Composed of river valleys, wetlands, plains to the west, and mountains to the east.

Population. Primarily humans, with some spring, autumn and summer elves and half-elves.

Politics and Economy. The empire is governed by the Sovereign Tenshikin, a deity-like figure revered by the people of Yama. Clans and a court hierarchy system support him, who is secretly the Tameranium Avatar Dragon. The sovereign's rule is enforced through Yama's Edicts, which are powerful magical scrolls. The economy relies on rice, silk, tea, steel, herbal medicines, porcelain, and toys.

Culture and Society. Yama's people are honor-bound, strict, and serious, valuing actions over words. Trust is hard-earned but leads to lasting friendships. Citizens live in a feudal society, and clan loyalty is paramount. Samurai and ninjas serve their clans, while clerics must leave their clans to serve Tenshikin directly. Honor duels and martial arts are integral to their culture. Yama's Edicts, sacred scrolls inscribed with tameranium ink by Tenshikin, unleash potent magical effects, transcending normal magic spells when read under specific conditions. Anyone can read the scroll, it can be stolen or manipulated, and their creation consumes significant amounts of tameranium, but their effects suppress these drawbacks.

Sindile Forest

Geography. A tropical and dense forest, dominated by colossal trees that reach heights over 900 feet, casting perpetual shadows that shroud the forest floor.

Population. Predominantly spring elves.

Politics and Economy. Governed by the Elven Council of Guardians, presided over by a king and queen. The spring elves maintain a self-sufficient economy, though outsiders seek their rare herbs, enchanted wood, Sindile honey, and magical bows and arrows.

Culture and Society. Highly suspicious of outsiders, the spring elves primarily welcome fellow elves or trusted individuals. Their society is dedicated to protecting the 12 sacred trees (now only 10 remain), a gift from Breith, the God of Earth, spring, and forests. The Council of Guardians consists of accomplished rangers, druids, and elementalists, with a queen and king selected from the most talented married couple on the council. Ruling for a century, they may only be leaders again after another couple has ruled for an equal duration. This tradition ensures that individuals currently invested in protecting the forests are in power, encouraging temperance through shared decision-making. While serious and reserved around outsiders, spring elves enjoy humor among close companions, often making light of humans and orcs' disregard for forests.

Wasteland

Geography. A treacherous, mountainous region plagued by necrotic energy, scattered with a few toxic valleys and tainted highlands.

Population. Solely inhabited by undead beings.

Politics and Economy. Lacking any political or economic structure due to the absence of living inhabitants.

Culture and Society. The Wasteland, devoid of permanent living residents, was cursed by the Cult of Shadow Wing's attempt to use Zarumag's soul, a powerful Avatar Dragon, to bring the energies from the Penumbral Plane to Tanares. Although powerful heroes stopped the process, this land remains tainted by necromantic powers. As the site of the last Malrokian Curse, millions of corpses from the fallen Mystical Kingdom citizens are buried here, often reanimating as undead, ranging from simple skeletons and zombies to rare but powerful liches and vampires. The few intelligent undeads that arise harbor hatred for the living and seek vengeance against the world that destroyed their realm, gathering the mindless undead as armies for their cause. Adventurers venture into the Wasteland, searching for ancient treasures and magic items from the Mystical Kingdom or to uncover the remains and abandoned riches of previous explorers who failed to return from these cursed grounds.

Penumbral Plane

Divided into six different layers and the surface, the Penumbral Plane is a twisted dimension, born of the corruption brought by the Ungods. This realm teems with macabre denizens, including members of the Cult of Shadow Wing, emoguns, aberrations of all sorts, and penumbral dragons.

Surface

Geography. A dark, mist-shrouded reflection of Tanares, this nightmarish landscape echoes with eerie whispers. Cavern entrances lead to the first layer below.

Denizens. Penumbral dragons and various emoguns.

Leadership. Lypoec, the supreme penumbral dragon.

Eternal Cathedral (first layer)

Geography. A nearly endless, labyrinthine Gothic cathedral shrouded in shadows, with its crumbling altars and broken statues haunted by the flicker of mystical candles.

Denizens. Cultists of the Shadow Wing and emoguns of fear and pain.

Leadership. Gideoni, the fallen High Cardinal of the Evolutionist Church.

Caverns of the Magma Giants (second layer)

Geography. A maze of colossal stone tunnels, chambers filled with rivers and lakes of molten lava, as well as passages to the ruins of ancient cities and fortresses built by giants.

Denizens. Magical beasts, emoguns of anger and gluttony.

Leadership. Ardilog, the Everspawning Chimera, guardian beast of the Fleshspawner.

Crystal Forest (third layer)

Geography. Glittering crystalline flora fills a network of narrow tunnels and cavernous expanses, while webs stretch across every corner.

Denizens. Emoguns of grudge and pride, and arachnes.

Leadership. Bellara, the daughter of the Ungods.

Endless City (fourth layer)

Geography. A sprawling, ruined city of continental size in a Victorian-style, its narrow streets and alleys interwoven with areas of swampy, foul-smelling sewage.

Denizens. Hags, Purple Witches, emoguns of lust, disgust, and misery.

Leadership. Catharina, servant of Bellara and the C'thraxis.

Clockwork Nexus (fifth layer)

Geography. An endless array of bronze gears, mechanisms, and shifting walls forms a clockwork maze, passages opening and closing at fixed hours or by specific manipulations of levers and mechanisms.

Denizens. Kikoku and emoguns of sloth and sadness.

Leadership. The First Queen, ruler of all kikoku.

Inverted Archives (sixth layer)

Geography. A vast, inverted-gravity archive of books, scrolls, and enigmatic artifacts. Rooms connect via one-way teleporting metallic mirrors that conceal their destinations.

Denizens. Corrupted collectors, emoguns of greed and envy.

Leadership. The Dark Collector, a corrupted hoarder of unique objects.

Factions of Tanares

On the brink of war, Tanares is a world filled with tension, where factions, nations, and diverse species engage in a complex power struggle. A delicate equilibrium of alliances and enmities persistently shifting, underscored by an omnipresent sense of looming conflict and suspicion.

In the shadowy corners of Tanares, unseen spies and informants masterfully orchestrate a dance of political intrigue. Cultists of the Ungods insidiously disseminate half-truths and deceptions, fueling animosity amongst the mortal populace. Diplomats and informants, whose agendas shrouded in secrecy, create a growing tension within the grand theater of high society.

Four distinct factions, each with unique ambitions and strategies, compete for supremacy amidst the ominous threat of the Ungods and the monstrosities from the Penumbral Plane. The race to construct a Vandanamalika—a potent mystical portal—and activate it during a lunar perigee, incites further contention for resources.

Against this backdrop, a fifth faction, the Cult of Shadow Wing, with its four internal sects, serves the nefarious Penumbral Father. Despite being a common adversary, their insidious influence permeates every corner of Tanares, spreading discord and corruption.

In this world, players must adeptly navigate a labyrinth of political machinations, shifting alliances, and the pervasive menace of the Ungods' minions infiltrating society.

Allied Forces

Member Nations and Organizations: Republic of Freelands, Stravian dwarves, Celestianist Church, Realm of Yama, Sindile elves, Relic Hunters Guild, Kolbjörn revolutionaries.

Primary Objective: Reassemble the legendary Vandanamalika, a mystical portal that can be used to bring back the missing legendary hero, King Malrok, who is said to be able to defeat the Ungods and restore harmony to the world.

Alignment: Lawful Good.

Methods

Heroes and Adventurers. The Allied Forces use skilled heroes, adventurers, and mercenaries for stealthy, small-scale operations rather than relying on extensive armies.

Hearts and Minds. The coalition gains support by upholding righteous and moral values and leveraging the influence of the Celestianist Church to inspire the common folk.

Protectorate Diplomacy. By offering protection and political freedom from the oppressive Tanarean Empire, they strive to ensure a prosperous life for citizens and gain their loyalty.

Lore

The Council Chamber, located in the Republic of Freelands, serves as the symbol of unity for the Allied Forces. Founded by Sedura, Huradrin, and Zalir, the coalition expanded with the Celestianist Church under Taram's guidance. Members meet to discuss pressing issues, where diplomats and envoys from each member nation or organization have the same voting power. These representatives engage in debates, cooperating to further their collective ideals while defending their unique positions. Many representatives enlist adventurers on missions to acquire proofs or information that can help them support their cause during Council meetings.

Their primary goal is mutual protection and rebuilding the Vandanamalika at Fisherman's Wharf. To do this, they must secure three essential pylons located in Stravian, Ubel, and the Storm Islands. They also need to acquire rare minerals, tameranium and bauronite, and help the Stravian dwarves reclaim the Dorsian Forge. They also often search for alternative pylon construction sites that would enable them to activate the Vandanamalika as a secondary plan to hold the other three best locations.

Examples of the Faction's Endeavors

- Adventurers may be hired by the Church to infiltrate an enemy fortress, retrieve vital Vandanamalika pylon fragments, and showcase their abilities.
- To gain the loyalty of a community, adventurers could resolve a conflict with the Empire, defend the people against monsters, and demonstrate the value of their protection.
- To find the rare minerals tameranium and bauronite, adventurers might journey through the underground depths of Tanares, assisting the dwarves in a mining operation threatened by goblinoids and the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Arcanum

Member Nations and Organizations: Magocracy of Mage Tower (Reginheraht), Theocracy of Kepesh, cirrus people.

Primary Objective: Construct a Vandanamalika to break the limits imposed on magic by the gods Tamera and Bauron, allowing spellcasters to access the full power of unrestrained magic and battle the Ungods.

Alignment: Neutral.

Methods

Magical Espionage. The Arcanum relies on their mastery of arcane and divine magic to spy, surveil, and even infiltrate other factions, gather intelligence, and sabotage enemy operations. They often use magical disguises, divinations, and illusions for this purpose.

Trade of Magic Items. The faction uses its expertise in crafting magical items to strengthen its position, trading valuable artifacts and components to gain favors and resources. A few of these items are secretly provided to spy on their wearers or to malfunction on command.

Arcane and Divine Spellcasting Armies. Utilizing armies of spellcasters, the Arcanum takes a strategic approach to warfare, deploying magical forces for both offense and defense.

Lore

Forged in the tumultuous aftermath of the Kemet Invasion, the Arcanum faction unites the Magocracy of Mage Tower, the Theocracy of Kepesh, and the cirrus people in their shared pursuit of magical might and their battle against the sinister Ungods. Their ultimate goal is the creation of a Vandanamalika, a portal with God-like powers they want to use to shatter the Tanarean Magic Field and unleash raw magic's full potential.

Despite the coalition, political intrigue runs deep within the Arcanum faction. Each group maintains its distinct identity while cooperating towards their mutual objective. The Magocracy focuses on research, experimentation, and enchanting artifacts, while the Theocracy, led by the Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun, promotes their faith and universal access to magic. The cirrus people, bound by knightly orders, primarily combat the Ungods, valuing magic as a tool rather than an end in itself.

Arcanum Conclaves—secretive monthly gatherings—focus on decision making, strategic planning, arcane knowledge exchange, and resource negotiation. The ten-member council follows principles emphasizing respect based on magical prowess, the spread of basic magic knowledge, and autonomy preservation of its members.

Members of the Arcanum prioritize personal research, cunning plots, and resource acquisition over genuine collaboration. United against threats, they approach politics pragmatically, but personal power remains their driving force. An attack on one member does not imply an attack on all, but allies can request support, with assistance determined by Conclave vote, and emergency Conclaves can be called in dire situations.

Examples of the Faction's Endeavors

- Rumors of a hidden library containing ancient knowledge about the Tanarean Magic Field have surfaced. The Arcanum is looking for adventurers to go on a dangerous quest to locate the library, obtain the valuable knowledge, and navigate the ancient traps and guardians protecting the site.
- A powerful spellcaster, who once belonged to the Arcanum faction, has defected to work for the Forces of Darkall in exchange for resources for his mystical research. He holds dangerous secrets that could compromise the Arcanum's Vandanamalika project. Adventurers must capture or eliminate the traitor and destroy any disclosed information.
- The Cult of Shadow Wing has captured a prominent group of cirrus knights that are members of the Spellguards. The Arcanum is seeking brave adventurers or mercenaries willing to take part in a complex rescue mission plan to free the knights and prevent their secrets from falling into the tentacles of the Ungods.

Forces of Darkall

Member Nations and Organizations: The kemets (Storm Islands and Darkall), the Watchers (Penumbral Plane of Darkall).

Primary Objective: Harness the Vandanamalika to unleash Bás' full power upon Tanares, transforming the world into an eternal, icy wasteland and converting all living beings into undead, impervious to the Ungods' corruption.

Alignment: Neutral Evil.

Methods

Expendable Armies. The Forces of Darkall utilize the steadfast service of undead armies and Watcher soldiers in their quest to conquer Tanares. These emotionless beings, resistant to the corrupting influence of the Ungods, can be sacrificed without repercussion, as their demise neither empowers the Ungods nor risks the Malrokian Curse. Consequently, they are deemed expendable and easily replaceable components of the overarching campaign.

Territorial Expansion. The faction relentlessly pursues territorial growth by deploying their legions across Tanares and the Penumbral Plane. Contrasting with cautious rival factions, who restrain their armies for fear of war and the devastating Malrokian Curse, the Forces of Darkall audaciously advance and seize territories, employing unfeeling Watchers and undead that substantially mitigate the danger of unleashing the dreaded Malrokian Curse.

Unrelenting Tactics. The kemets and Watchers exemplify ruthless efficiency, devoid of empathy or moral qualms. As cold and resolute instruments of their master's will, they carry out their missions with unmatched determination and a total absence of compassion.

Lore

Rising from the ashes of Gullog's disastrous Kemet Invasion, the Forces of Darkall emerged as a cunning alliance. Freed from the constraints of prophecy, they sought a novel approach to achieving victory against the Ungods. Bás, the Goddess of Winter, interceded with her patronage, and in tandem with Golgöggoth, the enigmatic entity behind the kemet prophecies, they forged a pact creating the Forces of Darkall faction to vanquish the Ungods.

This faction was devised upon a chilling strategy: amass an army of undead and emotionless Watchers immune to the Ungods' corruption to conquer Tanares without triggering the Malrokian Curse, in order to acquire resources and secure the locations necessary to activate a Vandanamalika, thereby transforming Tanares into an eternal frozen realm of undeath, impenetrable to the Ungods' corruption, and ultimately securing a decisive victory.

The Forces of Darkall field formidable armies, distinguished by their absolute loyalty, mastery of unorthodox tactics, and tireless pursuit of their adversaries, and Gullog, now an immortal kemet leader, governs the Storm Islands and the majority of Darkall's habitable lands, while Golgöggoth maintains control over part of the Penumbral Plane's Surface.

Examples of the Faction's Endeavors

- Adventurers must infiltrate a Kemet stronghold to retrieve information about the Forces of Darkall's plans or rescue an individual that was captured to be turned into an undead soldier.
- The Forces of Darkall could attack an isolated small town, intending to capture its citizens and transform them into new Watchers for their army. Traveling adventurers could be called upon to defend the town and repel the invaders.
- Adventurers may be called to search for a secret temple of Bás that is slowly bringing cold weather to a region and destroying the farms, causing starvation among the townsfolk. They may uncover a complex scheme of the Kemets to take control of the region.

Tanarean Empire

Member Nations and Organizations: Central Empire, The Parliament of the Seas (Seashores), Kolbjörn Kingdom, Ben'net.

Primary Objective: Gain control over the entire Tanares continent and expand to the Darkall continent, governing the entire world. Secretly build and utilize a Vandanamalika to summon an almost endless army of devils under Emperor Baleroth's control to achieve this goal and combat the Ungods.

Alignment: Lawful Evil.

Methods

Ironhand Army. The Empire enforces its will through the Ironhand, a vast army of brainwashed soldiers who have lost their will through a magical ritual, becoming completely loyal servants of the Empire.

Surveillance State. Citizens are controlled through fear, propaganda, strict laws, and a network of informants. Whistleblowers are rewarded in gold, creating a society where everyone is afraid of being incriminated.

Law of the Arena. Disputes between citizens or regions are resolved through Arena battles, where the person or a proxy fights for who is to be considered in the right, valuing strength and power (including political or wealth) over righteousness.

Lore

Emperor Baleroth rules the Tanarean Empire from the Central Empire, overseeing a vast bureaucracy and maintaining order through the formidable Ironhand military.

The Empire consists of various regions, each with their unique laws and cultures. However, all must pay tributes to the Empire and follow the most important Imperial laws, such as those against armed groups gathering and the laws of the Arenas. The Emperor's word is above any law or decision, and an attack against any region of the Empire is considered an attack against the Emperor himself.

To maintain absolute control, the Empire forbids any military or armed group larger than half a dozen people from existing within its territories. Any gathering of armed individuals is heavily regulated, and even the nobility are limited in the number of armed guards they can employ. Additionally, all spellcasters are viewed as armed individuals, with arcane magic users, such as wizards and sorcerers, facing particularly heavy scrutiny due to past events in Tanares' history.

To prevent internal strife and keep its citizens satisfied, the Empire ensures a thriving economy, and access to basic necessities like food and water. It also provides entertainment throughout the popular Arena fights, which help to maintain a low crime rate.

The Empire values efficiency and power over morals and charity, ensuring a stable and secure life for its people while instilling fear and distrust. The Ironhand army is used as both a tool of enforcement and a symbol of fear, with criminals often being transformed into Ironhand soldiers as punishment.

Examples of the Faction's Endeavors

- A group may be offered a job by Empire officials to infiltrate a rival government, such as the Republic, in order to steal sensitive documents or sabotage a project that contradicts the Empire's objectives, such as the construction of the Vandanamalika by the enemy.
- Adventurers could be secretly commissioned by the Emperor himself to uncover evidence of corruption involving a noble or even a regional governor, plunging the group into a complex web of intrigue, deception, and crimes.
- To rescue a friend or ally who has been transformed into an Ironhand soldier, the party must discover the rumored method to reverse the transformation. This quest may involve locating a hidden chamber within the local Ironhand Barracks or obtaining a grimoire from an Imperial mage.

Cult of Shadow Wing

Member Nations and Organizations: Purple Witches, Hidden Cult, Spawners, Shadow Lords.

Primary Objective: Spread the corruption and influence of the Ungods across Tanares.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil.

Methods

Insidious Infiltration. The cultists blend into societies to subvert and corrupt them from within, using deception and manipulation to further their sinister goals.

Summoning Horrors. The Cult of Shadow Wing employs dark rituals to spawn and control monsters, especially aberrations from the Penumbral Plane, unleashing them upon the world.

The Four Paths to Madness. The insane cultists work to spread madness in mortals using curses, plagues, misery, and fear to break the will of the mortals, always bringing them closer to madness and their own doom.

Lore

The Cult of Shadow Wing reveres the sinister entity known as Z'ulvath, The Penumbral Father, or The Shadow Wing, and his three powerful progeny, all known as The Ungods. Within the Cult, individual sects devote themselves to each Ungod, working to extend their influence and engulf the world of Tanares in an abyss of darkness and madness. Though the Penumbral Father's offspring frequently engage in internal conflict as they vie for his favor, they stand united in their quest to serve Z'ulvath and bring ruination upon Tanares.

The Purple Witches, acolytes of C'thraxis, are guided by the deft hands of Bellara and Catharina. They artfully manipulate mortals into succumbing to their basest desires while insidiously meddling in the political affairs of the mortal realm. The Hidden Cult, commanded by the apostate High Cardinal Gideoni, excels at corrupting and recruiting common people to the cult while disseminating curses, pestilence, and despair in the name of Krynnethoth. The Spawners, worshipers of Droggath, serve under the orders of the Dark Titan, unleashing a relentless tide of abhorrent creatures and beasts to sow terror across Tanares. Lastly, the Shadow Lords, under the iron rule of Lypoec, serve the Penumbral Father directly and are formed by the mighty penumbral dragons and their thralls.

The machinations of the Cult of Shadow Wing are hallmarked by deception, brutality, and the spreading of madness and insanity. They endeavor to prevent their adversaries' attempts to construct a Vandanamalika, or to wrest one from their clutches, in order to call forth an avatar of an Ungod into the Material Plane. Furthermore, they incite mortals into waging war, as the intense anguish generated during these conflicts can empower the Ungods, unleashing a Malrokian Curse that wreaks havoc upon the mortals. As each of these events marks the lands of Tanares with destruction, the Ungods advance one step further in their ultimate objective: to corrupt Tanares whole.

Examples of the Faction's Endeavors

- A team of adventurers is contracted to investigate a series of enigmatic deaths in a remote community, ultimately discovering the presence of The Hidden Cult. This nefarious group is found to be performing dark rituals to disseminate a deadly plague.
- In a hidden lair nestled within the mountains, a group of the Spawners sect has been seizing travelers and utilizing their blood in a monstrous summoning ritual. Their aim is to unleash a horde of terrifying beasts upon a nearby city. Without intervention, the city's defenses will be overpowered, resulting in a massacre.
- A group of adventurers receives a mission to infiltrate a lavish ball hosted by prominent nobles. However, they soon discover that among the attendees are disguised members of the Purple Witches, who are manipulating events to advance the Ungods' agenda. The party must tread carefully, navigating a complex web of intrigue to unmask the Cult's presence without drawing unnecessary attention.

RELIGIONS OF TANARES

Tanares is home to deep and varied faiths, with an abundance of deities, each boasting a unique portfolio, dogma, history, and lore, shaping the beliefs and traditions of the people.

The vast divine spectrum in Tanares ranges from the benevolent Tamera, the Goddess of Life, to the enigmatic Ba-Ka, the God of Magic and Spirit. In the shadows lurk the sinister Ungods, led by the Penumbral Father Z'ulvath; these malevolent entities are bent on corrupting and devouring the world of Tanares. Many deities are intimately connected to specific species, such as Fruitful, the Fey Goddess, creator of halflings, or the members of the Cuibhle pantheon, the four Gods who created the elven people, each one tied to a season and an element of nature.

Aibidh, Lord of Autumn, King of Wind *(Neutral Good)*

Religion Name: Cuibhle

Portfolio: Air, Autumn, Elves, Magic, Nobility

Followers: Primarily autumn elves, with a minority of other species attracted to the pursuit of arcane knowledge, especially good-aligned nobles or wizards.

Dogmas and Lore

Noblesse Oblige. Followers are expected to use their talents and privileges for the advancement of others, as power means responsibility.

The Unseen Path. Devotees must know that, as the winds, there are many unseen forces shaping the world, such as magical, spiritual, or penumbral influences. One should always look to detect and eliminate hidden threats, uncover secret plots, and avoid see things only as they appear to be.

Penumbral Opposition. Aibidh's followers are sworn enemies of the Ungods and penumbral creatures, actively seeking to invade the Penumbral Plane and annihilate the corrupted aberrant beings.

Lore: Aibidh's followers are dedicated to improving their talents and using their excellency in service of the common people who lack their talents.

Sometimes their attitudes are seen as arrogant, as they use a pragmatic approach to protecting the world against corruption and evil. The Mystical Knights of the autumn elves must swear their lives to Aibidh, and the most accomplished of them are blessed with stormbirds by the God. These elemental creatures of the storm are loyal and powerful mounts that aid the knights in battle.

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Knowledge, Tempest

Ba-Ka, the God of Magic and Spirit *(Chaotic Neutral)*

Religion Name: Ba-Ka

Portfolio: Arcanists, Ethereal Plane, Magic, Spirits

Followers: Primarily the Kepesh people, along with wizards and sorcerers who believe in the supremacy of magic.

Dogmas and Lore

Fearlessness in Death. Followers must not fear death, as it is an opportunity for spiritual growth, a gateway to the eternal afterlife in Ba-Ka's ethereal city.

Expansion of Magic. Adherents are obligated to teach magic, explore and experiment with different forms, and break the limitations imposed on magic by other Gods.

Mystical Covenant. Followers must respect and follow the commands of more powerful spellcasters, who in return must reward obedience with mystical teachings. They must understand that the only true law is the law of power, and the only true power is magic, which can bend reality to the power of one's soul.

Lore: Ba-Ka teaches that magic truly comes from the soul, stating that a spirit can think without a body, but a body cannot think without a spirit. He seeks to create a massive army of powerful souls of casters in his divine city in the Ethereal Plane. He aims to defeat the Ungods by encouraging his mortal followers to build a Vandanamalika, intending to use it to break the limits imposed on magic by the Gods Tamera and Bauron when Tanares was created. This would allow spellcasters to unleash more powerful spells to fight against the Ungods and their spawns.

Ba-Ka preaches that ritual sacrifices are a sacred practice where the life force of an individual can be used for magic, and their souls can be turned into eternal spirits in his sacred city. These chosen individuals can be blessed by him and turned into an Akhu, a Favored Soul, who will serve Ba-Ka in his sacred city or be sent to guide the Kepesh in Tanares and protect the temples.

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Chaos, Death

Bás, Lady of Winter, Queen of Water *(Lawful Evil)*

Religion Name: Cuibhle

Portfolio: Death, Elves, Eternity, Water, Winter

Followers: Kemets, necromancers, ice elementalists

Dogmas and Lore

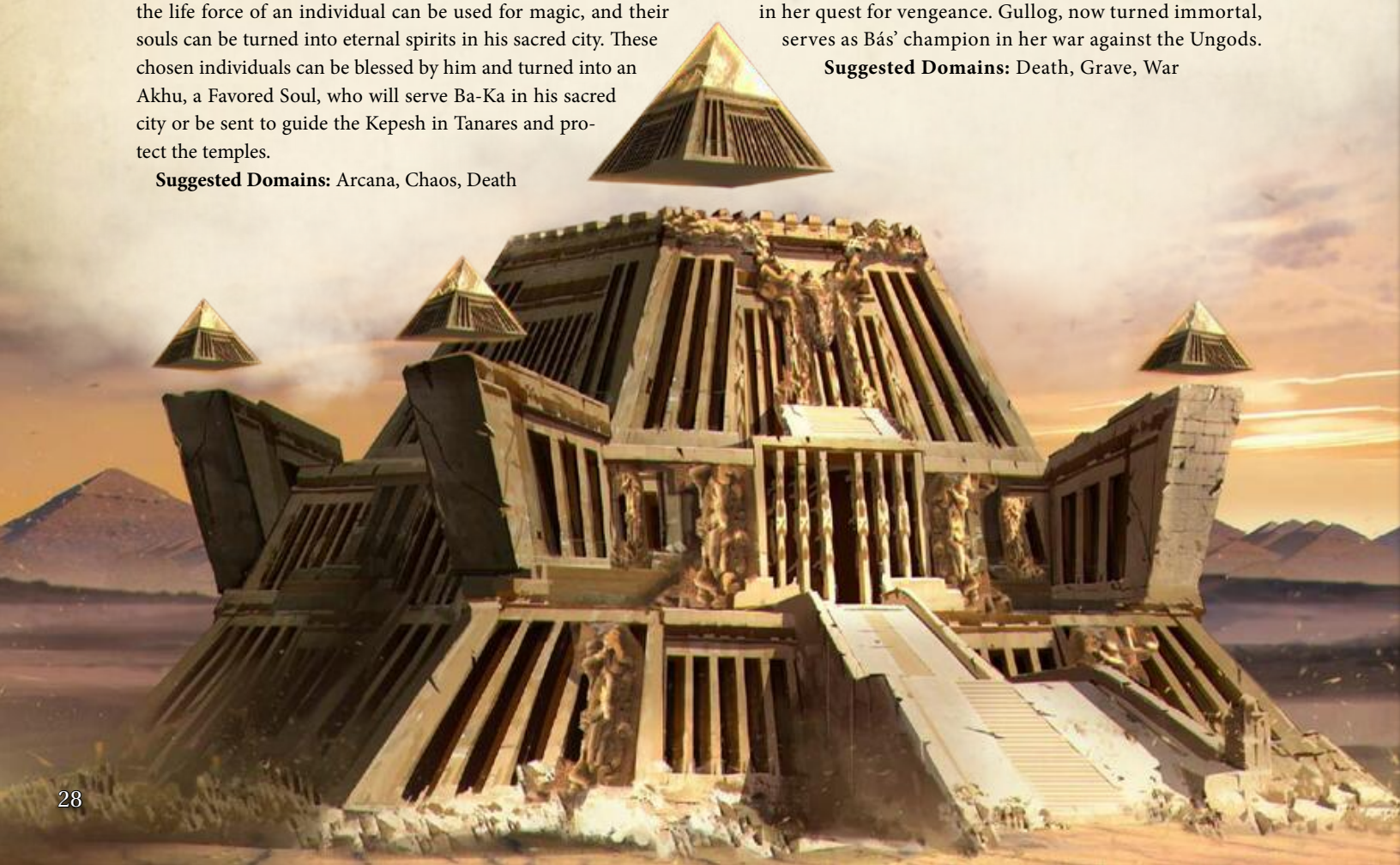
Endless Vengeance. Devotees of Bás must relentlessly seek retribution against the Ungods and their followers, who have brought ruin to their world. They must not rest until every trace of the Ungods' corruption has been eradicated.

Unforgiving Frost. Devotees should never show mercy or compassion to anyone, especially the followers of the Ungods. Weakness and mercy are sins in the eyes of Bás.

Hierarchy and Dominance. Bás' followers must adhere to a strict hierarchy within their order, with each member knowing their place and following the commands of their superiors without question. Followers must strive to control and subdue others, asserting their dominance over those they deem inferior. They must establish and maintain power structures that ensure Bás' influence spreads far and wide.

Lore: Bás was once a gentle Goddess providing healing and soothing. However, the corruption of her world by the Ungods drove her to hatred. Now vengeful and extremist, she uses her powers over ice and her undead armies to fight the Ungods' corruption. Her temples are able to slowly bring winter to a region, and the many temples on the Storm Islands turned a tropical place into a frozen land. The ice elementalists, once focused on water, now follow Bás in her quest for vengeance. Gullog, now turned immortal, serves as Bás' champion in her war against the Ungods.

Suggested Domains: Death, Grave, War



Bauron, the Moonlord and Hunter of Darkness *(Lawful Neutral)*

Religion Name: Celestianism (*former Evolutionism*)

Portfolio: Darkness, Hunting, Law, Moon, Punishment

Followers: The majority of people pay homage to Bauron. His most dedicated believers are often judges, warriors, hunters, and inquisitors.

Dogmas and Lore

Retribution. Followers must bring justice to villains and seek retribution against those who bring corruption, sins, or harm to Tanares.

Night's Vigil. During the night, the weak must seek protection, and the strong must hunt the creatures of darkness. It's the duty of the strong to remain vigilant and protect the innocents during the most vulnerable hours.

Relinquish Bonds. Clerics and paladins of Bauron must sever ties with their birth families and refrain from forming new ones. They must take a new name given by their order to prove their dedication and to protect their loved ones from being targeted by Bauron's enemies.

Lore: Bauron is a relentless force against evil and injustice, standing alongside his divine sibling, Tamera. Together, they created the world of Tanares and now battle the Ungods, who seek to corrupt their creation. Bauron's followers hunt down and seek to eliminate the Ungods and their minions, delivering righteous punishment to evildoers. They become tireless hunters under the cover of night, guided by the moon, the symbol of Bauron. Bauronian sect members treat each other as brothers and sisters, acting as a close-knit family united by their sacred duty, as they renounced their own families.

Suggested Domains: Grave, Order, Trickery.

Bauron's Vigil

During the night in the Material Plane, when any person (*even those not followers of Bauron)* defeats a penumbral creature or aberration, Bauron bestows a blessing upon that individual, influenced by the current phase of the moon. The person who delivered the final blow to the creature receives a number of temporary hit points, determined as follows:

- New Moon: 1d4
- Crescent (either Waxing or Waning): 1d6
- First/Third Quarter: 1d8
- Gibbous (either Waxing or Waning): 1d10
- Full Moon: 1d12

This lasts until the next night, but does not stack on multiple creatures defeated; you always keep the highest value.

Breith, Lord of Spring, King of Earth *(Lawful Good)*

Religion Name: Cuibhle

Portfolio: Earth, Elves, Forest, Spring, Vigilance

Followers: Primarily most of the spring elves, as well as druids, rangers, and some farmers, florists, and gardeners of other species.

Dogmas and Lore

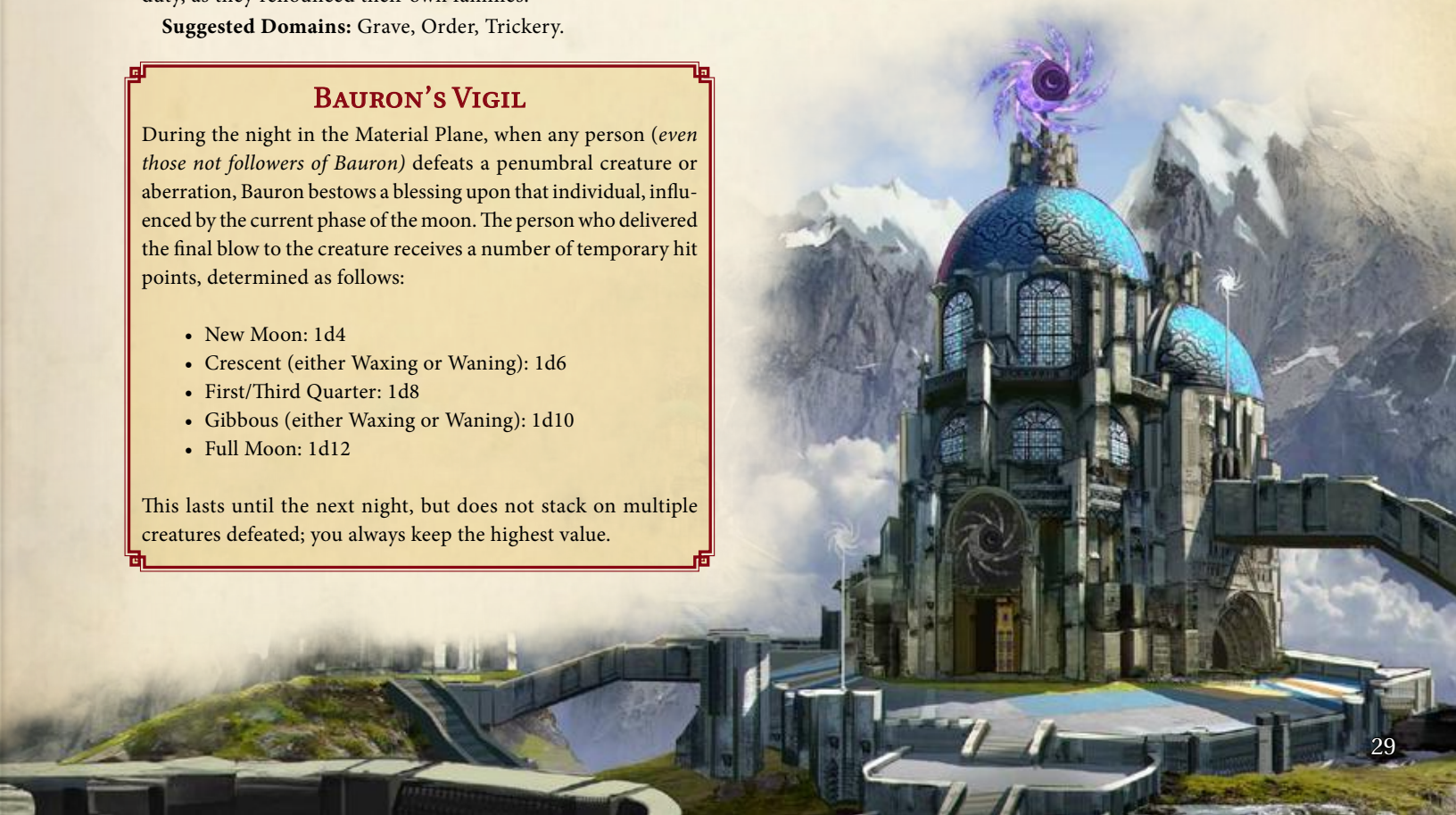
Celebration of Life. Followers must promote the birth of new life, celebrate the natural cycle, and admire the beauty of the forests. All young life, be it animals or people, must be protected and never harmed. For Breith, there are no evil children, only misguided ones.

Guardianship of the Forests. Devotees need to protect all forests, especially Sindile and its sacred Mother Trees. The Mother Trees should be protected at all costs and continuously cleansed from corruption with the sacred rites.

Eternal Vigilance. Adherents must remain watchful for signs of corruption and the minions of the Ungods, taking quick action to counter these threats.

Lore: Breith is a revered God among the spring elves of Tanares, who are entrusted with the critical task of caring for the 10 remaining Mother Trees in the Sindile Forest. These trees are essential for maintaining balance in the world, filtering out negative energy, and combating the corruptive influence of the Ungods. At each full moon, the earth elementalists and clerics of Breith perform the "Ritual of Renew," purifying the Mother Trees and restoring them from the damage caused by corruption.

Suggested Domains: Life, Nature, Protection



C'thraxis, Lady of Sins *(Neutral Evil)*

Religion Name: Cult of Shadow Wing

Portfolio: Deception, Fear, Manipulation, Pacts, Seduction

Followers: Evil cultists, individuals seeking power, and those wishing to deceive and exploit others.

Dogmas and Lore

Shadow's Embrace. Spread deception and distrust among allies, using lies and manipulation to turn them against each other for personal gain.

Temptation's Touch. Identify the vulnerable and exploit their weaknesses, using seduction and false promises to draw them into C'thraxis' service.

Corruption's Call. Encourage indulgence in base desires and immoral behaviors, transforming the purest souls into corrupted servants of the Ungods.

Lore: C'thraxis, an ancient and malevolent entity, was created by the Penumbral Father from the twisted essence of the void. She seeks to corrupt the world by spreading her insidious influence, in a silent and unseen way as the void from which she was born. All who serve her are required to revere and worship the Ungods, offering sacrifices and performing rituals to spread corruption throughout the world.

Under her guidance, the cultists, along with the Purple Witches, work to destabilize societies and draw souls into the darkness of the Penumbral Plane. C'thraxis' ultimate goal, as the other Ungods, is to turn the world into a nightmarish realm under the rule of the Penumbral Father.

Suggested Domains: Trickery

Dorsi, the Virtuous One, the Stonefather *(Lawful Good)*

Religion Name: Dorsism

Portfolio: Dwarves, Forge, Guardians, Underground, Virtues

Followers: Primarily dwarves, but also some smiths, miners, and guardians of other species.

Dogmas and Lore

Virtue of Wisdom. Wisdom is guardianship applied in the right direction, for it allows one to foresee threats, understand the world, and make sound decisions. Without wisdom, one cannot discern what is right to protect.

Virtue of Courage. Courage is the heart of guardianship, for it emboldens one to face their fears, stand against adversity, and defend those in need without hesitation. Without courage, one is unable to protect others.

Virtue of Dedication. Dedication is guardianship made into a duty, for it instills loyalty and perseverance. Without dedication, one is not prepared to protect.

Lore: Dorsi, the Stonefather, crafted the first dwarves from the stones of Undertanares. He imbued these creations with the virtues of guardianship, intending for them to serve as stalwart defenders of the subterranean regions.

The first dwarves faced the invasion of the Ungods. Those who were virtuous and fell in battle were transformed into Stone Spirits by Dorsi. In contrast, the dwarves who abandoned their brethren and fled were forsaken and ultimately became the corrupted Serpent Clan of the duergar.

To this day, the most virtuous dwarves can achieve the revered status of Stone Spirits upon death. Their clans pay homage by crafting stone statues in their likeness and embedding them with sacred moonstone cores. These statues serve as vessels for the spirits of the fallen dwarves, allowing them to be called to action by Dorsi when needed. They stand guard over their cities and sanctuaries, and over time, their presence slowly seals penumbral portals and rifts within a two-mile radius, ensuring the continued safety of the dwarven people.

When virtuous dwarves require assistance, whether in building, forging, or fighting, the Stone Spirits awaken at Dorsi's call.

Suggested Domains: Courage, Forge, Protection

Droggath, the Fleshspawner, the Dread *(Chaotic Evil)*

Religion Name: Cult of Shadow Wing

Portfolio: Monsters, Savagery, Slaughter, Summoning

Followers: Bloodthirsty murderers, evil giants, corrupted barbarian tribes, intelligent monsters, and the Spawners sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Dogmas and Lore

Obliterate the Weak. Adherents must prey upon the vulnerable, demonstrating the harsh reality of the world by eliminating those deemed unfit to survive in Droggath's nightmare realm.

Feast on the Fallen. Believers must consume the flesh of their defeated enemies, absorbing their strength and power to fuel their unbridled savagery.

Spread the Beasts. Followers must seek to spread, reproduce, or summon monstrous creatures, unleashing them upon the world to disseminate chaos and corruption in Droggath's name.

Lore: Droggath, the Fleshspawner, is a bestial force at the frontlines of the eternal war against the Gods. This malevolent entity takes delight in breeding, summoning, and luring monstrous creatures to wreak havoc upon the Material Plane, intent on dismantling any mortal resistance against the Ungods.

Though simple-minded, Droggath is brutally efficient, avoiding elaborate and complex schemes in favor of raw strength, bestial ferocity, and overwhelming numbers to crush all who dare stand against him. He demands the same approach from his followers.

The faithful servants of Droggath ascend the ranks of his dark hierarchy by slaying and consuming the flesh of formidable adversaries. This horrible act brings primal satisfaction to the Fleshspawner, who, in turn, bestows his unholy blessings upon the devoted.

Suggested Domains: Death, War

Fruitful, the Fey Goddess *(Chaotic Good)*

Religion Name: Fruitlism

Portfolio: Abundance, Faeries, Halflings, Hospitality, Joy

Followers: Primarily halflings, as well as farmers, bards, druids, tavern keepers, and innkeepers of other species.

Dogmas and Lore

Fey Hospitality. Followers are required to offer food and shelter to those in need, reflecting Fruitful's benevolence and the fey's code of hospitality. In return, they may request a favor comparable to the hospitality they have provided.

Life of Joy and Abundance. Adherents should lead simple lives filled with food, dance, and happiness, and promote this lifestyle to others as a means of combating corruption and malevolence.

Honoring Nature and Faeries. Devotees must respect and revere fey creatures as sacred emissaries of Fruitful and coexist harmoniously with the natural world.

Lore: In the Godly Age, Fruitful created the halflings from the realm's most fertile soil. As the Ungods invaded Tanares, Fruitful guided the halflings to forge an alliance with the archfey in her service to gain protection. The Feypact was established; halflings would host banquets to honor the archfey and receive defense in return. Fruitful's blessing on halfling lands can resist even the devastating effects of the Malrokian Curse, so long as her servants uphold their end of the Feypact. The Goddess of faeries is benevolent yet whimsical, being bound by fairy rules and etiquette, which requires a proper payment, as determined by fey rules, for each intervention.

Fruitful's followers exhibit unwavering optimism and inner fortitude, enabling them to face adversity with a smile and disseminate joy even in the unhappiest moments. Renowned for their green thumbs, they skillfully cultivate crops and gardens, providing sustenance and joy for the needy.

Suggested Domains: Nature, Protection, Trickery

Fumetsu Tenshikin, The Eternal One *(Lawful Good)*

Religion Name: Fumetsu Eido

Portfolio: Courtesy, Honor, Justice, Ki, Loyalty

Followers: Most of Yama's citizens, some samurai, monks, ninjas, judges, and justice-aligned nobles spread through Tanares.

Dogmas and Lore

The Principles of Dignity. Uphold the values of honor, courtesy, justice, and loyalty in all aspects of life. You must be an example to all who see your behavior, and your word must be your bond.

The Principles of Righteousness. Uphold justice, right the wrongs. Resolve conflicts through diplomacy and negotiation. Show compassion and understanding to those who seek redemption, and be careful, as no one is beyond corruption or unwise judgment.

The Principles of Ki. Practice rigorous self-discipline, controlling emotions and desires to achieve inner peace and harmony.

Lore: Fumetsu Tenshikin, the Tameranium Avatar Dragon, governs Yama under the guise of a deity. He instructs his followers to cultivate Ki and uphold honor, courtesy, justice, and loyalty. Yama's people adhere to this sacred path, working to maintain international peace by stopping the malevolent schemes of the Ungods.

Temples dedicated to Tenshikin serve as neutral grounds for discussions and negotiations between factions and nations. Yama's ninjas, under Tenshikin's guidance, vigilantly monitor the realm, gathering intelligence on corruption and the Ungods' influence.

Tenshikin's divine abilities originate from ancient angelic artifacts and the use of tameranium, a metal capable of channeling Ki energy, extracted from the land of Tanares. This highly Ki conductive material is utilized in crafting weapons and allowing Tenshikin to create Edict Scrolls that can be used to cause powerful effects. These scrolls, inscribed with his edicts, are revered by the people of Yama.

Suggested Domain: Courage, Knowledge, Life

Glorious One, The God of Valor *(Chaotic Good)*

Religion Name: The Path of Glory

Portfolio: Discipline, Endurance, Glory, Resolve, Travel

Followers: Adventurers, heroes, artisans, artists, warriors, bards, poets, and writers from all over Tanares.

Dogmas and Lore

Choose a Path. Choose a path in life and pursue it with unwavering dedication, adapting and growing as you progress.

Endure the Path. Embrace difficult paths, as they offer greater glory and opportunities for personal growth.

Achieve Glory. Commit to daily practice and discipline in order to achieve excellence and leave a lasting impact on the world by being the best you can be on your path.

Lore: The Glorious One believes that each individual must forge their own destiny and achieve greatness through dedication, discipline, and the pursuit of personal excellence. Followers are encouraged to explore and adapt to new circumstances while battling against the forces of evil and corruption. They should inspire others to strive for greatness in all life aspects. The defeat of the Ungods is considered the ultimate challenge and most glorious path. The God values the role of historians, bards, writers, and poets in preserving and sharing the tales of glorious individuals and encourages the celebration of their achievements rather than mourning their passing.

Suggested Domains: Courage, Light, War

Krynnethoth, the Mystical One *(Neutral Evil)*

Religion Name: Cult of Shadow Wing

Portfolio: Curses, Magic, Rifts, Rituals, Suffering

Followers: Cultists, mages, and those who seek power through suffering.

Dogmas and Lore

Embrace Forbidden Knowledge. Seek out and hoard secret lore, magical knowledge, and arcane secrets, using them to gain power.

Spread Suffering and Corruption. Inflict pain and suffering upon others, accelerating the corruption of mortals' souls. Establish new sects, recruit followers, and operate within mortal societies to corrupt individuals further, spreading misery, diseases, and all forms of suffering.

Revel in Madness. Accept and celebrate the physical and mental changes brought about by Krynnethoth's influence, viewing them as a mark of his favor. Devote yourself to spread his unholy touch.

Lore: Krynnethoth is the first and most powerful son of Z'ulvath, the Penumbral Father, and is known for his unparalleled intellect and eldritch arcane magic. As part of the Ungods, he seeks to bring about a reign of terror and madness to Tanares. His followers participate in arcane rituals and sacrifices to strengthen their connection to Krynnethoth and enhance their own magical abilities. They inflict pain and suffering upon others to fuel his power and accelerate the corruption of mortals' souls. His servants often revel in self-harm, exalting the pain as a connection with the Mystical One and using their own blood to infuse their sinister rituals. Krynnethoth's ultimate goal is to establish secret cults and networks of followers to advance his dark agenda and usher in the Ungods' reign of terror and chaos upon the world.

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Death

Lumina, the Goddess of Wisdom, the Illuminating One *(Neutral Good)*

Religion Name: Luminism

Portfolio: Art, Beauty, Culture, Gnomes, Knowledge

Followers: Most gnomes, and many scholars, artists, bards, educators, diplomats, and erudite nobles.

Dogmas and Lore

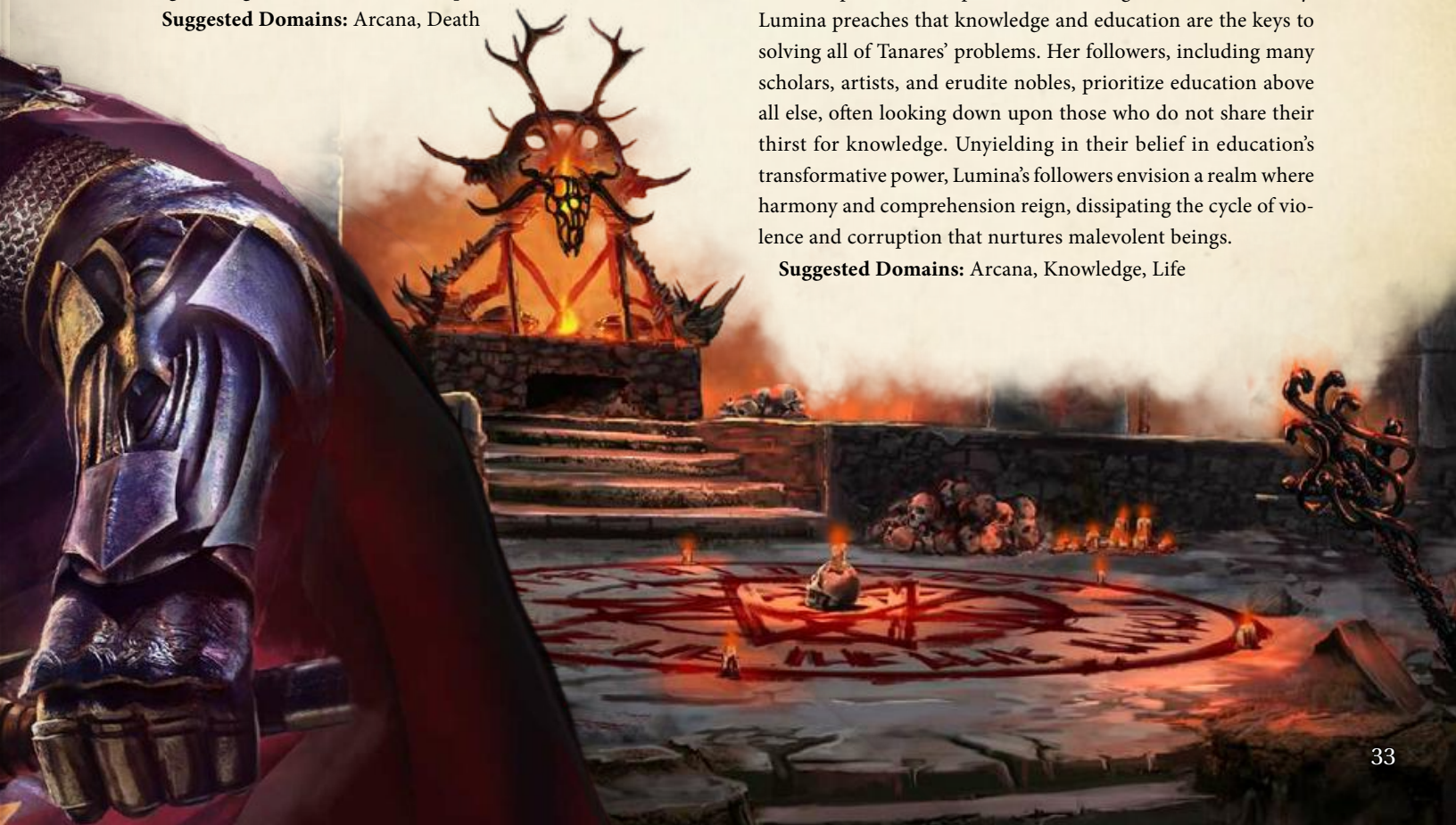
Pursuit of Knowledge. Lumina's followers must continually strive to study and learn, seeking to understand the world through research, exploration, and contemplation. They must share their knowledge with others and help uplift those who lack access to education.

Artistic Expression. Followers of Lumina are encouraged to appreciate art, as it reflects the beauty of the world and inspires greatness in others. Lumina teaches that true art comes from a place of understanding, combining knowledge, emotion, and technique to create works that inspire and challenge.

Fostering Knowledge. Lumina's followers must work to combat ignorance and superstition, spread rationality and knowledge, bringing erudition to all. They must bridge gaps between cultures, bringing development to Tanares.

Lore: In the Godly Age, Lumina, the divine patroness of scholars and artists, first created the gnomes and inspired the very essence of education in Tanares. Her temples serve not only as places of worship but also as centers of learning, with most schools and academies in Tanares often hosting altars in her honor. Lumina's influence radiates throughout Tanares, culminating in the three preeminent gnomish academies, esteemed institutions that welcome all species in their pursuit of knowledge and artistic mastery. Lumina preaches that knowledge and education are the keys to solving all of Tanares' problems. Her followers, including many scholars, artists, and erudite nobles, prioritize education above all else, often looking down upon those who do not share their thirst for knowledge. Unyielding in their belief in education's transformative power, Lumina's followers envision a realm where harmony and comprehension reign, dissipating the cycle of violence and corruption that nurtures malevolent beings.

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Knowledge, Life



Òigridh, Lady of Summer, Queen of Fire *(Chaotic Good)*

Religion Name: Cuibhle

Portfolio: Elves, Fire, Passions, Summer, Trade

Followers: Mostly summer elves, but also merchants, pleasure-seekers, bards, artists, and wanderers of other species.

Dogmas and Lore

Pursue New Experiences. Followers must seek new experiences and embrace the unknown, promoting practical learning and fostering personal connections with many people, as one's value can be determined by the number of people who consider one a trusted friend.

Embrace Positivity. Followers must cultivate and share positive emotions and seek pleasure, art, and hope even in the darkest times, helping others to enjoy the same.

Trade Fairly and Honestly. Whenever a situation arises where trade is beneficial to both parties, it should be done. Each transaction should create mutual happiness, benefiting both parties and contributing to unity and prosperity in the world. Bargaining and bartering are essential aspects of trade; however, exploitation or deceit are steps toward corruption.

Lore: Òigridh, the radiant sovereign of passions, trades, and hope, guides her followers to embrace positive emotions, pleasure, and the thrill of new experiences. These courageous disciples travel to many lands, driven by a commitment to uplifting others, while seeking transformative adventures and cultivating cherished friendships.

The valiant servants of Òigridh are renowned for their resourcefulness, empathy, and charisma. Leading unrestrained lives filled with vibrancy and indulgence, their path often takes them from opulent castles to impoverished slums, where their connections inevitably involve them with nefarious cultists and penumbral creatures they must combat.

Blessed by their ever-changing Goddess, many wield the power of fire for creative expression and protection. In homage to Òigridh, they embrace adaptability, resilience, and the beauty of life's impermanence. United in purpose, they forge bonds of hope and love, igniting the flames of passion within both their own hearts and the hearts of all whom they encounter.

Suggested Domains: Courage, Light, Trickery

Tamera & Bauron, Deities of Duality *(Chaotic Good)*

Religion Name: Windspeaker Faith

Portfolio: Life, Magic, Progress, Punishment, Strength

Followers: The majority of the cirrus are adherents of this religion, but it also welcomes other followers who embrace the dualistic nature of the world and strive for progress or magical mastery.

Dogmas and Lore

Embrace Duality. Followers must acknowledge and embrace the dual aspects of Tamera and Bauron, as well as the world of Tanares. Tamera represents love, forgiveness, divine magic, community, cooperation, and spirituality, while Bauron embodies justice, punishment, arcane magic, individuality, efficiency, and materiality. Devotees must strive to express these aspects in balance, without exclusively pursuing one or the other.

Seek Progress. Followers should pursue knowledge and mastery in all forms, especially magic, transcending limitations and discovering ways to strengthen Tanares to defeat the Ungods.

Punish Evil, Forgive Sinners. Adherents must strike the right balance between exacting retribution to the wicked and offering sinners a chance for redemption. A just sword must not delay, risking another's life; however, a blade that strikes too quickly risks corruption. One should never take a life lightly, but neither should they forsake the duty of taking one when necessary.

Lore: The Windspeaker Faith has its origins among the cirrus people, who believe that just as their own species possesses dual forms and souls, so too does Tamera-Bauron embody the divine duality of life and punishment. Followers of this faith are tasked with transcending the limitations of the Tanarean Magic Field to harness the true potential of magic. They wield this power to combat the forces of the Ungods in a millennia-long struggle against corruption.

The Windspeakers are the oldest religion of Tanares, and its relationship with the Evolutionists has been tumultuous. The Evolutionist Church persecuted and almost wiped out the cirrus civilization. However, with the rise of the Celestianist Reformation, the cirrus hunt has drastically reduced, and the Celestianists are beginning to open discussions about theological concepts about Tamera and Bauron with the Windspeakers.

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Life, Tempest

Tamera, the Goddess of Life *(Lawful Good)*

Religion Name: Celestianism (former Evolutionism)

Portfolio: Life, Light, Good, Protection, Sun

Followers: A majority of Tanares' inhabitants pay homage to Tamera. Her most devoted followers include commoners, healers, druids, and philanthropists.

Dogmas and Lore

Love and Empathy. Exhibit compassion, love, and understanding towards all living beings, extending redemption and forgiveness even to those who have strayed from the path of goodness.

Selflessness and Sacrifice. Prioritize the well-being of others, relinquishing personal desires when necessary for the greater good and the triumph of light over darkness.

The Sacred Flame. Honor the sun's life-giving warmth through daily rituals, treating fire kindled by Tamera's blessed ones as sacred. The blessed must light candles for all newborns and the deceased, exalting life's beginnings and ends.

Lore: Tamera, the embodiment of compassion, warmth, and nurturing care for all living beings, stands alongside her divine sibling, Bauron. Together, they crafted the world of Tanares and combat the Ungods, who seek to corrupt their creation. Tamera's followers dedicate themselves to healing, offering comfort, and protecting the weak and vulnerable.

The veneration of Tamera's Light, central to their rituals and beliefs, includes the belief that whenever a candle is lit by an ordained servant of Tamera, it creates a sacred altar, symbolizing eternal hope and connection to the Goddess. As long as the light lasts, all servants of Tamera are expected to pay reverence. This belief and the requirement for candles to be lit for any new birth or loss of life prompt Tamerian clerics, paladins, and redeemers to often carry dozens of candles with them.

Suggested Domains: Courage, Life, Light

Tamera's Light

During the day in the Material Plane, the sacred sunlight of Tanares bestows Tamera's protective power upon the world, scorching the corrupt penumbral creatures daring to trespass in her light as she protects Tanares' people.

Any penumbral creature that enters or begins its turn in Tanares' direct sunlight takes 10 points of radiant damage and loses any regeneration until the start of its next turn. This forces all penumbral creatures to roam the Material Plane only at night, hiding away during the day.

The Nature Spirits *(Neutral)*

Religion Name: Spiritualism

Portfolio: Animals, Harmony, Nature, Plants, Spirits

Followers: Druids, shamans, hermits, orcs, many of the Kolbjörn people, and some barbarian tribes.

Dogmas and Lore

Preservation of Nature. Preserve and protect nature to maintain harmony with the Spirits of the World. Destruction of natural lands and terrain may anger the spirits and bring their wrath. To gain the spirits grace, nurture and cultivate the natural world, encouraging growth and restoration in damaged areas.

Balance and Neutrality. Seek balance in all aspects of life and avoid extremes in actions, as evil leads to corruption, good to inefficacy, law to rigidity, and chaos to instability.

Seek Guidance. Embrace the wisdom of the spirits. Through communion, rituals, and offerings, honor the spirits of the land and learn from their ancient knowledge.

Lore: The Nature Spirits religion, an animist faith embraced by druids, shamans, and those attuned to the world's spirits, views natural landmarks, trees, and beings as inhabited by spirits embodying their existence. Instead of a singular deity, adherents of this faith venerate a collective of thousands of spirits.

Dating back to the Ancient Age, shamans and druids first connected with these ancient land spirits. Other faiths interpret these spirits as manifestations of Bauron or Tamera, but Spiritualism followers argue they are a collective of individual spirits, misperceived by others as merely two aspects. Nature Spirits followers channel unique natural powers, and their clerics perform miracles similar to those of Tamera or Bauron's devotees.

Believers in the Nature Spirits possess a nuanced view on morality and order. They see absolute good as manipulable and weak, often causing harm through dogmatism and inefficiency. In contrast, they regard absolute evil as abhorrent, corrupt, and a source of suffering and decay. They also recognize the drawbacks of law and chaos. They view absolute law as inflexible, resulting in inaction and impeding evolution, while considering absolute chaos as destructive and dispersive, promoting instability and lack of focus.

Suggested Domains: Death, Life, Nature

Z'ulvath, the Shadow Wing and Penumbral Father *(Lawful Evil)*

Religion Name: Cult of Shadow Wing

Portfolio: Corruption, Darkness, Madness, Penumbral Dragons, Psionics

Followers: Evil cultists, corrupted dragons, fallen madwalkers, corrupted nobles, and maddened spellcasters.

Dogmas and Lore

Embrace Insanity. To perceive the hidden truths of the multiverse and unlock one's true psychic potential, one's mind must surrender to madness. Through liberation from the constraints of sanity, the truth behind reality is revealed.

Absolute Obedience. No one is above Z'ulvath, and nothing is beyond him. Every being must display submission and obedience to the Penumbral Father. Questioning his will leads to annihilation, for there are no laws but his command.

Spread Corruption. Heed the dark whispers at the edge of your mind. Under Z'ulvath's will, corrupt the world, weaken the bonds of sanity, and enforce the might of the Penumbral Father.

Lore: From the eldritch shadows where reason and sanity dare not tread, Z'ulvath rules in his lair. A malevolent entity whose very existence is antithetical to gods and mortals alike, he reaches across the planes with his tendril-like wings of maddening influence, weaving a tapestry of insanity seeking to control and consume worlds.

His fervent servants in the Cult of Shadow Wing, who have forsaken reason to glimpse the obscured truths of the Penumbra, work to spread Z'ulvath's influence. Through their unwavering loyalty and obedience, they corrupt the world by turning mortals into insane spawns and servants of their dark father.

The faithful follow the Father's dark whispers, freeing themselves from the constraints of reason. As they abandon sanity, they unlock devastating psychic powers, becoming conduits for Z'ulvath's malevolent will. From reading thoughts to spreading discord through illusory manipulation, these conduits advance their Penumbral Father's agenda. Some among them can inflict madness upon their foes, exposing them to the soul-rending corruption of the Penumbral Father.

The Rite of the Broken Mind, a torturous initiation ritual, ensures that all who join the Cult of Shadow Wing are rendered utterly devoted to Z'ulvath or one of the other three Ungods. Bound by their eldritch, nightmarish revelations, the cultists inscribe their messages using indecipherable symbols, which are intelligible only to those who share their madness.

Hiding in the forgotten corners of Tanares, the Cult of Shadow Wing seeks to capture dragons, twisting them into monstrous penumbral dragons, the most powerful servants of Z'ulvath.

In the spectral fog of his penumbral realm, Z'ulvath, the eternal adversary of all gods, hungers for the day when he will corrupt Tanares as a whole. And from the depths of their fractured minds, his followers echo his malevolent desires, disseminating discord, fear, and madness, all to celebrate the rise of the Penumbral Father.

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Tempest, War

Tamera, Goddess of Life

Chapter 2
Factions

In the intricate game of power, there are no mere spectators. As Tanares stands on the verge of war, alliances and enmities are hastily forged, creating a semblance of hope in a dire situation. The Ungods are an imminent threat, coming ever closer to sealing Tanares' doom. Their plotting and subversive actions imbue the air with tension and mistrust, a force strong enough to turn potential allies into adversaries in an instant. In this chapter, we delve into the factions: coalitions of varied nations, political powers, and organizations, each with its unique characteristics, yet tied into alliances of common objectives.

At the factions' conflicts lies the race to construct and command the legendary Vandanamalika, an architectural wonder imbued with profound mystical power. During a lunar perigee, the Vandanamalika can conjure god-like phenomena, a power desired by each faction to serve their own purposes.

In Tanares' cold war, there are five main forces: Allied Forces, Tanarean Empire, Arcanum, the Forces of Darkall, and Cult of Shadow Wing. As a servant of the Ungods, the Cult is a shared adversary for the other four factions. However, each faction harbors its unique disputes and tactics to counteract this dangerous threat, creating a strong mixture of tension and conflict.

This chapter will detail each faction's profile, divided into the following sections.

FACTION'S PROFILE	
Member Nations and Organizations	The varied entities comprising that faction, ranging from powerful nations to influential organizations.
Objectives	A clear outline of the shared ambitions of the faction's members, fueling their tactics and strategies.
Alignment	The primary ethical and moral principles guiding the faction's decisions and actions.
Methods	An exploration of the key ways the faction uses to achieve its objectives.
Lore and History	A deep dive into the faction's backstory, customs, and worldview, offering insights into their past actions and future plans.
Secrets	A revelation of concealed truths and clandestine operations of the faction, providing potential plot hooks or unique interaction points for your campaign.

This chapter is a detailed guide to the factions, which can be used to create rich stories of political intrigue, imminent conflict, and the desperate race for the Vandanamalika. Prepare your players for an adventure where the threat of war is always present, and the fate of Tanares is uncertain.

Allied Forces

Built on heroism and goodwill, it unites nations and organizations aligned with moral righteousness and freedom principles, leveraging skilled heroes and adventurers to protect the common people from oppression and gain their loyalty.

Member Nations and Organizations. Republic of Freelands, Stravian dwarves, Celestianist Church, Realm of Yama, Sindile elves, Relic Hunters Guild, Kolbjörn revolutionaries.

Objectives

Rebuild the Vandanamalika. They aim to reassemble this mystical structure that was built on the Arena of Future in Fisherman's Wharf, the Republic capital. Yet, activating it involves securing three essential pylons located in the distant regions of Stravian, Ubel, and the Storm Islands. They plan to use the Vandanamalika to search the planes for the missing legendary hero, King Malrok, whose power can supposedly defeat the Ungods and cleanse their corruption. Some doubt Malrok's return, considering his survival a myth. However, many Celestianists believe that angels have revealed Malrok's imprisonment by the Ungods in the Penumbral Plane.

Acquire Rare Minerals. To rebuild the pylons, it is necessary to use large amounts of tameranium and bauronite. The pursuit of these minerals often involves daring subterranean missions, aiding the Stravian dwarves against threats like goblinoids and the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Rally the Common People. Through acts of heroism and diplomacy, they strive to demonstrate their protective value and gain the hearts of the people. Heroes and adventurers are often called to help protect innocents, dealing with monsters, cultists, and the oppressive force of the Tanarean Empire.

Alignment. Lawful Good.

Methods

Heroes and Adventurers. The Allied Forces, ignoring the obligatory military conscription, have embraced an idealistic approach to conflict, resting their hopes on the valor and commitment of heroes. They enlist the services of skilled adventurers and mercenaries, concentrating on small-scale strategic operations. This tactical choice enables them to lean into the varied expertise of these exceptional individuals, ranging from clandestine infiltrations and monster hunting, to diplomatic overtures and daring rescues. Adventurers form the lifeblood of the Allied Forces, particularly evident in the Republic of Freelands.

Hearts and Minds. Recognizing that their true goals require relying not solely on martial prowess but also on their capacity to inspire and uphold moral values, the Allied Forces, with the Celestianist Church at the forefront, engage actively within the community. They instill seeds of righteousness and hope in the hearts of the common people, calling their support for the cause. When dealing with external forces, their preference lies more with the polished dance floors of ballrooms and the regal decorum of diplomatic gatherings, rather than the bloody fields of war.

Protectorate Diplomacy. The Allied Forces are defined by their determined resolve to extend protection and political freedom against the oppressive Tanarean Empire and the imminent danger of the Ungods. Their diplomatic strategy transcends the mere formation of alliances—it ensures a prosperous existence for all citizens under their aegis. Their pursuit of loyalty is built not on the pillars of intimidation or coercion, but on demonstrating worth and commitment to the people's welfare. Embassies of Yama are spread across all countries of Tanares, even within the Tanarean Empire and the Arcanum territories. Yama's samurais maintain a vigilant watch, ensuring an atmosphere of free dialogue and guaranteeing the security of all parties. These embassies are tolerated by other factions as they help avoid igniting wars that might strengthen the Ungods.

Lore and History

The Allied Forces are deeply rooted in a history of heroism, resistance, and the pursuit of freedom. Birthed in the aftermath of the catastrophic Kemet Invasion, this faction's emergence marked a critical change in Tanares' political scene. War heroes, particularly Sedura, Huradrin, and Zalir, gained recognition, while the once powerful Tanarean Empire's dominance fell apart.

Sedura was a hero of the Kemet Invasion, crucial in starting a revolution along with the now Prime Minister Tellatius, the sparks of which ignited the birth of the Republic of Freelands. The aspiration was simple yet meaningful—free Tanares from oppression. As the dwarven denizens of Stonelair began rebuilding their subterranean realm, they found allies in the newly formed Republic. Together, they earned the trust of the typically reserved nation of Yama, who had witnessed their solid friendship during the Kemet Invasion. This marked the nascent union's first significant diplomatic victory.

However, the young Republic faced huge challenges on both fronts: the reorganized kemet forces threatening from the Storm Islands to the west and the recovering Empire in the east. In response, they tried to expand their alliance, inviting nations with shared ideals and a common foe.

The Magocracy of Mage Tower diverged in terms despite initial negotiations, forming their own alliance with the Kepesh and cirrus peoples. Yet, the Sindile elves and the Relic Hunters Guild answered the call, adding their strength and unique skills to the Allied Forces.

The Evolutionist Church initially resisted joining the faction, largely due to the opposition of High Cardinal Gideoni and their alliance with the Empire. However, divine revelation in the form of angelic visions exposed Gideoni's corruption and his ties to the Cult of Shadow Wing. This scandal triggered the Celestianist Reformation, resulting in the rewriting of the Sacred Scriptures. Led by the newly appointed High Cardinal Taram, a Kemet Invasion veteran and Sedura's comrade, the now Celestianist Church aligned itself with the Allied Forces, bolstering their cause with a surge of righteousness and divine sanction.

Currently, the Allied Forces extend their support to the Kolbjörn revolutionaries resisting the Empire. Although the revolutionaries haven't yet matched the Allied Forces' contributions, the faction remains hopeful. The Allied Forces seek to demonstrate their success in offering good lives and freedom to their citizens, intending to inspire other regions to rebel against oppressive forces and embrace their noble ideals.

Located in the Republic of Freelands, the Council Chamber serves as the symbol of unity for the Allied Forces and is where representatives of alliance members meet to discuss pressing issues, each having equal voting power. These representatives engage in debates, cooperating to further their collective ideals while defending their unique positions.

Secrets

The Veiled Vault. Located within a hidden cryptic labyrinth beneath the city of Fisherman's Wharf, the Republic of Freelands and the Relic Hunters Guild protect a secret of epic proportions: The Veiled Vault. This underground arsenal, filled with ancient, magically-infused weapons, stands ready to equip an army of heroes in the face of an enemy invasion. The Vault's location, known only to the Republic's Prime Minister and the Guild's top members, is protected by deadly traps and complex riddles that prevent unauthorized access. Its discovery could be a disaster for the Alliance, and some rumors of Imperial spies and greedy adventurers looking for its location are disturbing.

The Forbidden Codex of Celestia. Deep within the solemn libraries of the Celestianist Church hides a secret powerful enough to change the world's balance: The Forbidden Codex of Celestia. This compendium, said to have been delivered to High Cardinal Taram by the angels themselves, harbors unique spells and forbidden rituals. Knowledge of its existence is limited to the High Cardinal and a select circle of trusted scholars. Unbeknownst to most of them, both Emperor Baleroth and the Cult of Shadow Wing have discovered its existence and are secretly competing to get it. Taram, now aware of the leaked information, exhausts every resource to safeguard it, creating an atmosphere of suspense and intrigue within the Church's hallowed halls.

The Shadow of Dorsi. Operating deep within the Tanarean Empire, the Stravian dwarves protect their most dangerous asset: The Shadow of Dorsi. This elusive agent, rumored to possess the rare ability to change shape, is embedded within the Empire's Capital's highest echelons, feeding the dwarven kings of Stravian with crucial information. However, Emperor Baleroth has deployed large amounts of resources to expose this spy. If uncovered, it could mean disaster, potentially leading to the agent's execution and a crippling blow to the Allied Forces. Aware of the precarious situation, the faction stands ready to launch a bold rescue mission to extract the agent if his cover is compromised.

The Silent Rebellion. The Allied Forces have started a risky plan, engaging in secret diplomacy with influential figures within the Empire-controlled regions. Disappointed by recent Empire losses, these influencers, inspired by the Allied Forces' promise of freedom, are contemplating rebellion, seeing it as a chance to consolidate power. The risks are extremely high as, if found out, these discussions could start a full-scale war. The Republic, relying on trusted adventurers, protects these secret meetings, carries hidden messages, and engages with the potential rebels, hoping to gain new territories, reduce the Empire's control, and liberate more people.

The Ungodly Project. In the shadowy underbelly of the Realm of Yama, a dangerous experiment is in progress. Many captured Ungod spawns are going through arcane and alchemical trials, as part of a new research initiative to find weaknesses in these penumbral creatures' strange bodies. However, these experiments are very risky, as a single mistake could unleash a horde of powerful, mutated aberrations upon Yama. This covert project, known only to Yama's sovereign and his closest advisors, balances on the edge between catastrophe and an invaluable discovery in the battle against the Ungods.

Arcanum

A coalition of arcane scholars and priests that supports unrestricted magical research beyond religious or Imperial constraints. Their hierarchy, based on magical prowess, is led by a distinguished council. Pursuits include crafting magic items, conducting morally ambiguous experiments, and raising the Vandanamalika to obliterate magical boundaries and combat the Ungods' spawns.

Member Nations and Organizations. Magocracy of Mage Tower (Reginheraht), Theocracy of Kepesh, cirrus people.

Objectives

Construction of the Vandanamalika. The main goal of the Arcanum involves building a Vandanamalika, an imposing portal that will allow them to shatter the divine constraints on magic decreed by the deities Tamera and Bauron. This monumental task requires finding special resources, the building and protecting structures in far-off lands, and discovering the ancient scrolls of the Crystal Tower, which are crucial to success as they contain details of the Vandanamalika.

Rigorous Monitoring of Other Factions. Armed with their mastery over magic, the Arcanum takes part in secret actions and manipulation against rival groups to monitor their activities. Their agents, alongside hired mercenaries and adventurers, are regularly assigned to infiltrate other organizations, disrupt their plans, or steal important information, employing magical illusions, divinations, and disguises to bypass watchful eyes.

Magical Research and Trade. The faction's continuous pursuit of mystical erudition and might, while not inherently malevolent, occasionally involves ethically dubious methods, such as performing perilous experiments on living beings, or fabricating hazardous or unstable magic items. Agents, mercenaries, and adventurers may be conscripted to recover dangerous relics, acquire materials for the creation of new magic items, participate in controversial research, or aid in disseminating these items, all while dealing with potential moral dilemmas.

Alignment. Neutral.

Methods

Magical Espionage. The Arcanum's command over arcane and divine magic forms the backbone of their espionage operations. This covert methodology serves both defensive and offensive purposes, aimed at securing their advantage over rival factions. They often hire skilled infiltrators and provide them with scrolls or potions containing transmutation, illusion, and divination spells to ensure success in their tasks, such as gathering vital information or destabilizing enemy operations.

Trade of Magic Items. The Arcanum leverages its deep knowledge of magic in the creation and trade of magical items. This fortifies their influence and serves as a tool for indirect espionage. Artifacts and components of considerable value are exchanged for favors and resources, with some items clandestinely designed to spy on their users or malfunction on command. While other factions remain wary of the Arcanum's machinations, they depend on their expertise to gain access to superior and cost-effective magic items. These factions often employ spies and investigators to trace the origins of the magic items and inspect for potential curses, magical spying, or sabotage.

Spellcasting Legions. The Arcanum's military prowess is embodied not in traditional troops, but in their arcane and divine spellcasting legions. These formidable forces deploy a diverse array of magical capabilities for offense and defense, making their warfare highly strategic and unpredictable. Arcane battalions can unleash devastating assaults, while divine units provide support, healing, and protection. This facet of the Arcanum introduces a twist to conventional battle strategies employed in Tanares. Their approach invites strategic thinking, as the nature of magical battles is drastically different from regular ones.

Lore and History

The Arcanum coalition emerged from the turbulent aftermath of the Kemet Invasion. Forged from the shared necessity of three distinct societies—Magocracy of Mage Tower, Theocracy of Kepesh, and cirrus people—the Arcanum was unified by a collective hunger for magical might and a mutual objective to confront the malevolent Ungods. The faction's driving ambition is the construction of a Vandanamalika, a massive magical construct that, during a lunar perigee, wields godlike powers. They intend to use its capabilities to shatter the Tanarean Magic Field, unlocking the full, unfettered power of raw magic.

Each member of the Arcanum retains its distinctive identity despite their alliance. The Magocracy of Mage Tower, residing in the Crystal Tower in Reginheraht, delves into arcane research, enchanting artifacts, and daring experimentation. Meanwhile, the Theocracy of Kepesh, under the Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun, promotes the Ba-Ka faith and champions the unrestricted propagation of magic to all people. The cirrus people, guided by their knightly codes, primarily wage war against the Ungods, viewing magic as a tool rather than as an ultimate objective.

Arcanum Conclaves—secret gatherings held monthly—form the nexus of the faction's decision-making, strategic planning, magical knowledge dissemination, and resource negotiation. The ten-member council, consisting of three representatives from each group, plus Kalistessenâmun, representing the deity Ba-Ka, operates under principles emphasizing respect based on magical prowess, dissemination of fundamental magic knowledge, and preservation of member autonomy. Council members enjoy immunity to harmful spells of the 6th level and below, courtesy of Ba-Ka's divine favor.

The Arcanum's elite Spellguards, an assembly of warriors adept in both martial and magical arts, pose a formidable threat to rival factions. During Conclave assemblies, these Spellguards, under Ba-Ka's divine protection, secure the meeting and gain temporary immunity to harmful spells of 6th level and below.

Despite presenting a unified front against external threats, Arcanum members prioritize personal research, strategic schemes, and resource acquisition over true collaboration. Their political strategy is pragmatic, with personal power being the primary motivator. An attack on an individual member is not viewed as an attack on the entire faction. However, allies can petition for support, with the extent of the aid determined by a Conclave vote. Emergency Conclaves are convened in dire circumstances.

In the shadowy corridors of the Magocracy, whispers suggest that Vaeraunt, a formidable wizard, clandestinely controls the council and the Magocracy, even though he is not a councilor himself. Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun, fully aware of Vaeraunt's machinations, is engaged in a secret power struggle with the cunning mage. Vaeraunt's ultimate ambition is to harness the Vandanamalika to amplify his connection to the Tanarean Magic Field, aiming to usurp Ba-Ka's divine authority.

Secrets

The Eldritch Hand and the Soulbound Councilor. A shadowy faction known as the Eldritch Hand operates within the Arcanum, manipulated by the cunning wizard Vaeraunt. United by their thirst for power and the ambition to seize control of the Vandanamalika, they conspire to harness its immense power to grant Vaeraunt the omnipotence of a deity. In his web of deception, Vaeraunt employed advanced necromancy to bind the soul of a councilor, who now votes according to his directives, tipping the scales in his favor during Conclave meetings. Members of the Eldritch Hand orchestrate events from the shadows, involving unsuspecting individuals and adventurers in their ploys. This covert disruption of the Arcanum's goals requires a careful, secret investigation, a task that the council frequently delegates to trustworthy adventurers, aiming to preserve internal harmony.

The Shadow Weaver's Intrigue. Among the council members of the Arcanum hides a traitor, a corrupted servant of the Ungods known as the Shadow Weaver. This mage covertly sabotages the construction of the Vandanamalika, subtly undermining the Arcanum's cause. Unaware of the traitor's identity, council members are riddled with suspicion and paranoia. For some unknown reason, the council continues its activities even with this traitor and seeks adventurers willing to help unmask the person, a daunting task complicated by the traitor's protection under Ba-Ka's divine blessing granted to all councilors, as several attempts to detect the impostor failed.

The Cursed Artifact. In their quest for power, the Arcanum successfully crafted a potent artifact that amplifies magic, effective against aberrations, penumbral creatures, and ungodly powers. However, this artifact, created using the blood of penumbral beings, carries a malignant curse that corrupts its users. The council members are desperate to neutralize the curse without forfeiting the artifact's immense potential. They employ their own agents, researchers, and external adventurers to seek a solution—a quest that may lead to perilous journeys into the Penumbral Plane for unique components, or the pursuit of lost manuscripts of the ancient Archmage Torygg.

The Living Spell. Within the ancient depths of the Crystal Tower resides a living spell, a sentient entity composed entirely of pure magic. Its sudden manifestation and vast knowledge pose an enigma to the council. The living spell could be an invaluable asset or pose a catastrophic threat, depending on its inscrutable intentions. The council seeks adventurers to probe the living spell, to decipher its origins, and to assess if it can be controlled or harnessed for the Arcanum's advantage without courting a disaster. This journey into the labyrinthine ancient dungeon underneath the tower is full of dangers, including ancient golems, restless spirits of kemet wizards, and arcane traps.

Cult of Shadow Wing

The Cult of Shadow Wing, comprising the Purple Witches, Hidden Cult, Spawners, and Shadow Lords sects, seeks to spread madness in Tanares by manipulating societies, instigating war, and summoning horrors. Their goal: serving the Ungods' world-consuming ambition, while preventing their enemies' construction of a Vandanamalika.

Member Nations and Organizations. The Purple Witches, the Hidden Cult, Spawners, Shadow Lords.

Objectives

Proliferation of Ungods' Corruption and Influence. Through devious infiltration, the summoning of monstrosities, the invocation of curses, the spreading of suffering, and the dissemination of terror and insanity, the Cult aims to pervert societies, provoke wars, and ultimately pave the way for the Ungods to devour the world. Each sect within the Cult of Shadow Wing has a unique specialization in these dark arts. The Purple Witches excel in the infiltration of the elite, the Hidden Cult are experts in the propagation of disease, misery, and suffering, the Spawners are breeders of monstrous beings, and the Shadow Lords are unmatched in creating fear and madness.

Obstruction of Vandanamalika Construction. A main goal of the Cult is to impede the development of the Vandanamalika, a mystical portal that, during a lunar perigee alignment, is rumored to possess god-like power. The Cult is not blind to the efforts of rival factions who seek to harness this power as a weapon against the Ungods.

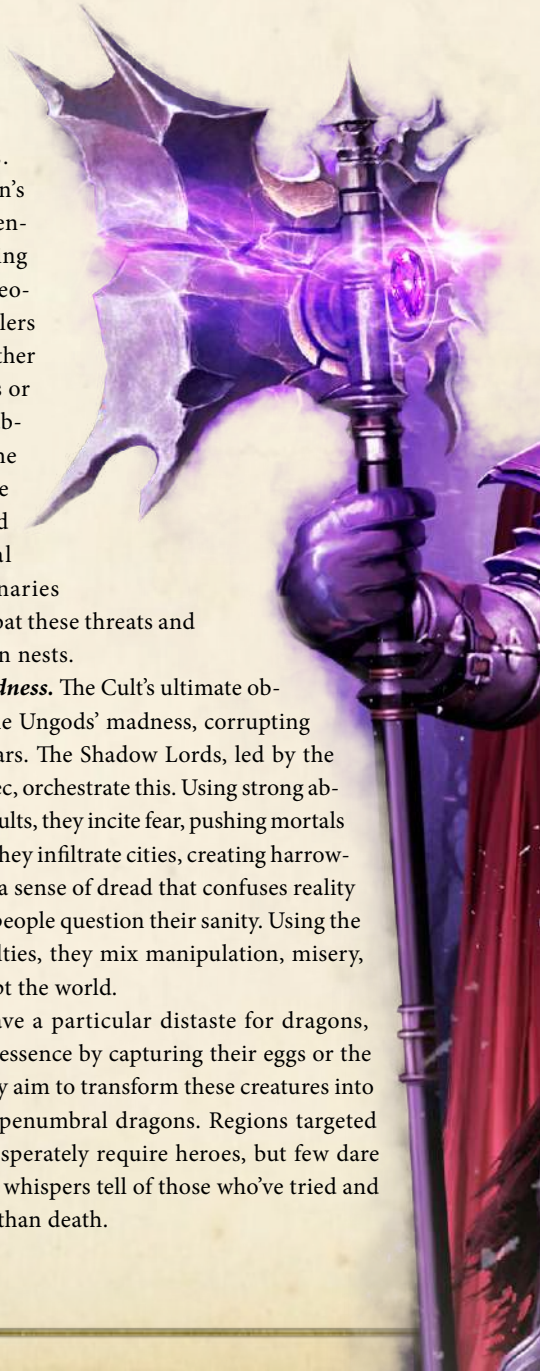
Seize Control of a Vandanamalika. If their efforts to stop its construction fail, they plan to take control of the Vandanamalika, exploiting it as a conduit to summon the avatar of an Ungod into the Material Plane, thereby amplifying their reign of terror. The Cult maintains a strategic presence within other factions, ensuring they follow the Vandanamalika construction activities, always at the ready to seize an opportunity to attack if the construction is near completion.

Alignment. Chaotic Evil.

Methods

Insidious Infiltration. The Cult of Shadow Wing, masters of deception, spread their dark influence within unsuspecting societies. This sinister infiltration is orchestrated by two distinct sects. The Purple Witches, dedicated to the manipulation of mortal politics, are led by Bellara and Catharina. Their tendrils reach into the heart of high society, manipulating leaders, fueling chaos, and creating a disruptive environment. They strategically infiltrated members within rival factions, with a keen eye on operations involving the construction of the Vandanamalika. Meanwhile, the Hidden Cult, under the command of High Cardinal Gideoni, corrupts and recruits the common folk. In the name of Krynnethoth, they spread suffering, using disease, magical corruption, and hunger to create unrest, leading the desperate to their cultist ranks. Their goal is to destabilize society, inciting civil wars and revolts to weaken the mortal realm.

Summoning Horrors. The Cult's power is accentuated by the Spawners' bloody rituals, meant to spawn and command monstrous creatures. Under the Dark Titan's orders, these conjurers engage in dark rituals, using the blood of innocent people, often captured travelers and adventurers. They either create monstrous beings or summon grotesque or aberrant creatures from the Penumbral Plane. These beasts wreak havoc and chaos, prompting rival factions to hire mercenaries and adventurers to combat these threats and uncover the cult's hidden nests.



The Four Paths to Madness. The Cult's ultimate objective is to propagate the Ungods' madness, corrupting societies and inciting wars. The Shadow Lords, led by the penumbral dragon Lypoec, orchestrate this. Using strong aberrations and mental assaults, they incite fear, pushing mortals to the path of madness. They infiltrate cities, creating harrowing scenes and fostering a sense of dread that confuses reality and nightmare, making people question their sanity. Using the other three sects' specialties, they mix manipulation, misery, chaos, and fear to corrupt the world.

The Shadow Lords have a particular distaste for dragons, seeking to corrupt their essence by capturing their eggs or the dragons themselves. They aim to transform these creatures into subservient, maddened penumbral dragons. Regions targeted by the Shadow Lords desperately require heroes, but few dare to face their madness, as whispers tell of those who've tried and suffered a fate far worse than death.

Lore and History

Emerging from the dark corners of the Penumbral Plane, the fearsome faction known as the Cult of Shadow Wing split into four unique sects: Purple Witches, the Hidden Cult, Spawners, and Shadow Lords. They are the devoted followers of the Ungods, their dark purpose to bring torment and madness upon Tanares, with the ultimate goal of expanding the Penumbral Plane through the consumption of entire worlds.

This group's beginnings go back to the Godly Age, where mortals, desperate for power in a time of war, pursued an entity to gift them with arcane wisdom. They discovered the entity Z'ulvath and forged a pact to create a portal for the Ungods in exchange for their immense, eldritch knowledge. When Z'ulvath and his offspring descended on Tanares, a war against creation began, leading to the birth of the Cult of Shadow Wing.

The Cult's malevolent influence is clear, with their path filled with deception, violence, and insanity. They constantly incite discord and war, hoping to unleash cataclysmic Malrokian Curses, bringing the Ungods closer to their ultimate victory.

All factions in Tanares unite against the Cult of Shadow Wing, but the Ungods' power is a formidable adversary. Even the Draconic Council occasionally falls prey to the cultists, who corrupt their members or eggs into penumbral dragons.

Secrets

The Marked Ones. The Shadow Lords protect an arcane rite that imbues individuals with a cryptic mark, a sigil representing Z'ulvath. This permanent mark serves dual purposes, acting as a sign of loyalty and as a conduit to the Penumbral Plane, unlocking access to whispers of eldritch lore and great powers. Intriguingly, it is not merely a mechanism of reward and control. Occasionally, the Cult secretly marks innocent people, eradicating their memories of the incident. The discovery of such a mark can start persecution, investigations, and even cause widespread panic, as friends and family turn against their own. Adventurers may find themselves with the double challenge of clearing the wrongly accused and finding a way to remove the mark before its corruption drives the bearer mad.

The Masquerade Dance. The Purple Witches, supreme tacticians in manipulation and societal subterfuge, employ an especially cunning plan. They organize grand masquerade balls in cities, enchanting unsuspecting persons with evil magic, shaping them unconsciously into tools for their plans. This trick has been affecting the upper class of society for over a decade. However, the Church has begun to grow suspicions about the true nature of these festivities. Adventurers might be commissioned by concerned nobles or the Church to infiltrate these masquerades, decipher the labyrinth of intrigue, and unmask the witches' machinations.

The Desolation Tears. The Hidden Cult, a faction notorious for disseminating despair and suffering, possesses knowledge of an arcane recipe to forge a devastatingly potent magical item: the Desolation Tear. This relic can drain vitality from an entire region, causing the flora to gradually decay and the terrain to grow sterile, propagating a blighted harvest that culminates in hunger and desperation. Adventurers may be summoned to locate this object, often concealed in subterranean cultist strongholds, and neutralize its lethal effects.

The Perverse Bestiary. The Spawners have built a hidden den deep in UnderTanares. They conduct vile experiments on aberrant creatures, merging them with mortal creatures to create monstrous hybrids. The Awakened, an assembly of monster hunters, have heard rumors of these grim activities and seek help to locate this secret hideout, rescue the captives, and stop the Spawners' horrific experiments before a disaster like the Astérion calamity happens again.

Forces of Darkall

Driven by discipline, militarism and strong resolve, they command legions of undead alongside emotionless Watchers—the aberrant soldiers. Their ambition is to expand their rule, cover Tanares in eternal frost, and crush the Ungods under their icy dominion.

Member Nations and Organizations. Kemets (Storm Islands and Darkall), the Watchers (Penumbral Plane of Darkall).

Objectives

Undead Scavenging. Tasked with the duty of exhuming the remains of former champions, the faction's agents delve into the dark world of necromancy. Guided by Bás' mystic prowess, Gullog is driven by a desire to infuse these legendary heroes with undeath to control them. The primary opposition comes from rival factions determined to protect the remains of their ancestors and stop the undead threat, yet the formidable strength of these reanimated warriors makes such efforts a tough challenge.

Augur Prophecies. With Golgöggoth, the Augur, leading them, the Watchers harness its great divination skills to manipulate the complex pattern of fate. Darkall's servants understand his puzzling orders, turning luck to their benefit. His instructions vary from carefully planned actions like weakening enemy bases, executing specific individuals, or stealing certain artifacts, to strange tasks like burning a lone tree or giving a poor person a knife. Yet, each order has a hidden purpose known only to the Augur.

Frigid Dominion. The Forces of Darkall envision Tanares transmuted into a perpetual, icy undead world, forcing the departure of the Ungods. While the construction of temples dedicated to Bás furthers her eternal winter, their ultimate ambition lies in seizing a Vandanamalika during a lunar perigee, thus unleashing Bás' unrestrained power upon Tanares, encrusting the world in complete ice. Their main plan involves capturing Fisherman's Wharf and reinforcing the Pylons in Stravian and Ubel to activate the arcane structure.

Alignment. Neutral Evil.

Methods

Expendable Armies. The Forces of Darkall follow a chillingly practical military strategy. Their ranks, filled with emotionless Watcher soldiers and undead warriors, are not affected by the corrupting influence of the Ungods. Fearless in the face of death, these legions can be sacrificed without concern for bolstering the Ungods' power and minimizing the risk of triggering the Malrokian Curse. The faction's members are relentless adversaries, ready to recover their losses by using their victims' corpses.

Territorial Expansion. Driven by an unstoppable thirst for power, The Forces of Darkall implement a strategy of territorial expansion. Disregarding the cautious restraint of rival factions, who fear inciting war and invoking the Malrokian Curse, the Forces of Darkall audaciously annex territories. Their armies move across the battlefield with cold resolve, often launching surprise attacks, taking cities, forts, or strategic places, and establishing control with their undead armies and fast Watcher troops.

Unrelenting Tactics. The Forces of Darkall show ruthless efficiency, free from moral concerns or empathy. The kemets and Watchers, serving as efficient tools of their master's will, pursue their objectives with determination. Their complete lack of compassion allows brutal tactics and strategies that dismiss any conventional rules of fighting or codes of honor. Encounters involving the Forces of Darkall quickly become very risky situations, as these enemies do everything to achieve their goals.

Lore and History

The Forces of Darkall, a ruthless faction, emerged from the ashes of the failed Kemet Invasion. After the battle ended, the defeated Kemets retreated to the Storm Islands, but Gullog had fallen in battle. However, the Goddess Bás intervened, offering Gullog a pact he readily embraced.

Now favored by Bás, Gullog returned as an immortal being, bestowed with the power to bring any dead creature back as undead, retaining its original power. In return, he became Bás' enforcer, tasked with defeating the Ungods. An unexpected alliance was established between Bás, the Winter Goddess, and Golgöggoth, the enigmatic entity behind kemet prophecies.

The Forces of Darkall embody the cold military spirit and firm determination. They are known for their harsh military tactics, disregarding morality and compassion to achieve their goal. The kemets and Watchers, loyal to their leaders, execute their tasks with ruthless efficiency. The lack of emotion or fatigue from the undead makes them formidable adversaries, while the Watchers' vast experience in crossing the Penumbral Plane makes them formidable foes that can materialize from any rift or portal to the Penumbra.

Gullog now rules the Storm Islands and most habitable lands of Darkall, coordinating the faction's ambitious plans from his stronghold. Meanwhile, Golgöggoth, wielding his prophetic powers, controls a portion of the Penumbral Plane's surface, manipulating fate to their advantage.

Adventurers may find themselves caught in the faction's schemes, either as unwitting pawns or deliberate foes. Often, other factions hire adventurers or mercenaries to infiltrate a kemet stronghold, rescue captives doomed to be turned to undead, or repel attacks on isolated settlements. Their journeys might also lead them to clandestine temples of Bás, where they might learn the cold truth about the faction's intentions.

While the Forces of Darkall present an intimidating presence in Tanares, willing to employ extreme methods to achieve victory, they demonstrate a firm dedication to their quest to stop the Ungods. They are willing to employ any means necessary, including diplomacy or alliances, if those prove to be the most logical options. They may be brutal and often unempathetic, but they are far from being inefficient or illogical.

Secrets

The End of Immortality. Whispers spread across Tanares about a mysterious object, or perhaps a ritual, potent enough to stop Gullog's immortality. This mystical secret attracts adventurers hoping for fame, glory, or rewards for defeating the Forces of Darkall. Unraveling the means to eliminate Gullog is an epic quest, riddled with dangers, mystical research, and a direct conflict against the Kemet forces.

A Soul Misplaced. Below Gullog's strong appearance, there's a sad truth: he is not the genuine Gullog. Instead, he embodies the soul of a man who was originally human but lost his mother in a tragic incident involving the Kemets. The Undead Knight that constantly follows Gullog is far more than meets the eye—it holds the original soul of Gullog's kemet body, Lahin, a kemet who was once a brave and noble warrior. Swapping these souls back would have potentially catastrophic consequences. However, Gullog is compelled by a hidden desire—a promise made by Bás to resurrect his mother if he succeeds.

Betrayal in the Ranks. Within the rigid hierarchy of the Forces of Darkall, a traitor lurks. This high-ranking member has covertly allied themselves with an unseen power, leaking critical information and instigating internal sabotage. This hidden threat from within could dramatically shift the balance of power, revealing an unexpected vulnerability within the Forces of Darkall.

Rival Divinity. The ancient elven pantheon, known as Cuibhle, shifting. These elven gods have foreseen the return of Bás and are now preparing to counter her icy dominion. The Dawn Blades, a trio of legendary elven champions, have heeded their gods' call and are poised to take action. Renowned for wielding exotic weapons, their mission is to change Bás' destructive path, end the reign of the Ungods, and restore the ancient balance maintained by the elven gods. Their quest involves seeking relics, some hidden in their frozen realm, and launching targeted strikes against Gullog's forces, guided by their prophetic visions.

Tanarean Empire

Under the dominion of Emperor Baleroth, the Tanarean Empire is the embodiment of oppressive control. This is promoted through rigorous legislation and a legion of magically brainwashed soldiers, known as the Ironhand. Aiming for global supremacy, the Empire wields fear and propaganda as potent tools, prioritizing order and efficiency over virtue or compassion.

Member Nations and Organizations. Central Empire, The Parliament of the Seas (Seashores), Kolbjörn Kingdom, Ben'net.

Objectives

Territorial Expansion. At the heart of the Empire's efforts is the quest for dominion over the entire continent of Tanares, with grand plans to extend its influence over Darkall and conquer the world. Emperor Baleroth firmly believes that true peace and unity, essential to combat the imminent threat of the Ungods, can only be achieved through his absolute rule.

Summoning Infernal Forces. The Empire is orchestrating the construction of a new Vandanamalika. Emperor Baleroth's secret intent is to use his archdevil's powers to summon a nearly endless army of devils. Despite possessing substantial reserves of bauronite, Baleroth faces a critical deficit of tameranium, a vital component in constructing the necessary pylons.

Absolute Control and Surveillance. Gaining Emperor Baleroth's trust is a feat achieved by few. His objective is absolute authority over his subjects, facilitated by his loyal Ironhand army and a vast network of informants. By cultivating an atmosphere of fear and encouraging citizens to report insubordination, the Emperor's goal is to maintain a divided and obedient society.

Alignment. Lawful Evil.

Methods

Ironhand Army. The cornerstone of the Tanarean Empire's control is the formidable Ironhand Army. Many regular citizens, often criminals or rebels, are transformed by arcane rituals into absolute servants of Emperor Baleroth. These soldiers, stripped of their free will, are chilling symbols of the Empire's power. This process of indoctrination, called psychosurgery, is a closely guarded secret held by the cabal of Imperial wizards. Only the Ironhand officers, exclusively of noble lineage, retain their free will, leading the troops in Baleroth's name. However, not even they have the full trust of the Emperor. As such, they can only control a select number of soldiers, and only Baleroth can command them all. Many of those who have lost loved ones to these rituals seek ways to reverse the process, but such method remains a mystery.

Surveillance State. The Empire's control extends beyond military prowess and reaches into the lives of its citizens through an extensive surveillance network. This environment of fear and betrayal is sustained by rigorous laws and a network of informants, generously rewarded for reporting any actions against the Empire's interests. Dissidents seek to stay under the radar and uncover imperial informants, while other factions aim to protect and extract hunted rebels, utilizing them to denounce the terrors of the Empire.

Law of the Arena. The Empire values strength, which is clearly shown by their unique conflict resolution method: the Arena. Whether it be disputes between citizens or regional conflicts, they are all resolved through combat in the Arena. This system prioritizes might and influence over justice. It is viewed as entertainment by the people, but it is also a battleground for Imperial political intrigue, often manipulated by secretive organizations, like the Third Eye, which amass large amounts of money.

Lore and History

The Tanarean Empire, the dominant political force in Tanares, emerged from the ashes of the fallen Mystical Kingdom. Baleroth, the aspiring Emperor, embarked on a tireless journey to create a new realm. After challenging conflicts and political machinations, the Tanarean Empire was born, expanding its dominion across almost the entire Tanares continent and remaining unchallenged for over two centuries.

However, the Empire faced its first significant challenge during the Kemet Invasion. In this brutal conflict, the invading kemet elves from distant Darkall were defeated by the Heroes of Wharfugee. While the victory preserved the Empire's territories, it ignited a series of rebellions that led to the loss of significant lands, including Outumn, Stravian, Ubel, Tsvetan, and Reginheraht. These territories established their independent political structures, such as the Republic of Freelands and the Magocracy of Mage Tower. Despite these setbacks, the Tanarean Empire remains Tanares' most expansive and powerful political entity.

Emperor Baleroth rules from the Central Empire, overseeing a vast bureaucratic system that maintains order through the Ironhand military. The Empire contains diverse regions, each with its own laws and cultures. Yet, all are bound by the

overarching Imperial laws and pay tributes to the Emperor. An attack on any region of the Empire is considered a direct assault on the Emperor. The Empire's rigid control even extends to the size and nature of armed groups within its territories, prohibiting groups larger than six members from wandering together. Special attention is given to magic users, who are always considered armed individuals.

The Empire prioritizes efficiency and power over morals and compassion, valuing stability and security above freedom. The Ironhand army enforces this vision, instilling order and fear in the populace. Criminals are often turned into Ironhand soldiers as a form of capital punishment. Despite its authoritarian rule, the Empire ensures that its citizens have access to basic needs and entertainment, most notably through the popular Arena fights.

Secrets

The Emperor's Infernal Secret. Emperor Baleroth holds a secret that, if exposed, could break the very base of his rule. According to legend, within the dark depths of the Caverns of Baleroth's Descent, he consumed the essence of an infernal lord, trapped by his own brother, Torygg. This monstrous act transformed him into an archdevil, a horrifying entity concealed beneath a human guise. His Imperial palace, strategically built atop these caverns, houses evidence of his diabolic transformation. The exposure of this hidden truth could cause a rebellion and potentially end Baleroth's rule, throwing the Empire into chaos.

The Ironhand's Hidden Rebellion. A group of heroic individuals, having resisted the psychosurgery, have managed to escape the Ironhand's control. These brave souls have established a hidden stronghold, known as the Sanctuary of Defiance, located within the wide tunnels beneath the Empire's capital. As a coordinated resistance, they seek to liberate their comrades and fellow citizens from their tyrannical oppressors and find a way to revert the mental alteration effects. If discovered by the Empire before their plans succeed, it could mean their end.

The Faceless Spies Among Us. The Empire's influence extends far beyond its observable boundaries, penetrating the territories of rival factions. The Faceless Agents, a secret network of hidden spies with minds resistant to magical control, act as the Empire's unseen eyes and blades. Trained in the enigmatic Shadow Citadel, hidden within the Bak Forest, these agents operate in utmost secrecy. Their exposure could blind and cripple the Empire's strategic surveillance of Tanares, potentially causing a dramatic shift in power dynamics.

The Exiled Prince's Insurrection. In hushed whispers, a story spreads of a prince born in exile. For unclear reasons, Baleroth reportedly ordered his Ironhand to kill a pregnant woman, one of his trusted advisor's daughters. Despite her tragic end, her twins, believed to be Baleroth's progeny, mysteriously disappeared. Today, the surviving prince, rumored to be hidden within the forgotten city of Seraph's Rest, gathers allies to overthrow Baleroth. The rise of this rightful heir could destabilize the Empire.

Chapter 3
The Penumbral Plane

The Penumbral Plane, an echo of the Material Plane, is a realm ruled by eldritch forces and unspeakable horrors. It is filled with aberrant monstrosities and lies under the watchful eyes of the Ungods. Within this world, reality is distorted, with landscapes embodying the fluctuating and disturbing essence of nightmarish dreams. Intruders move cautiously, feeling an ever-present sensation of being watched.

Access to this realm is granted through Penumbral Rifts, portals of terror. These can be the result of sorcery from cultists of the Ungods or planar breaches caused by natural accumulation of negative energies and sins in the Material Plane. All factions of Tanares deem sealing these rifts a top priority; it requires powerful and costly magic, but is necessary to ensure the safety of the mortal world.

The Penumbral Plane is home to monstrous aberrations like the emoguns, offspring of the Ungods. Created from the corruption of sinful, negatively-charged souls at death, each emogun embodies the essence of the sins and vices it carried in life. Alongside the Cult of Shadow Wing, they are the main residents of this plane.

Inhabiting the Penumbral Plane is a test of sanity and strength. It is an unforgiving land of constant dim light that is impenetrable by luminous magic. It offers no sleep or rest. Its influence preys on mortal minds, gradually tainting those who cannot resist, until they morph into penumbral aberrations.

The plane's landscape is a mixture of reality and nightmarish dreams, filled with ever-changing terrains and sudden transformations. Some places on its surface mirror unique locations of the Material Plane, where mortal sins and negativity accumulate and seep into the Penumbral Plane. Locations scarred by tragedy and evil resonate as horrific, nightmarish places. Adventurers may face spectral echoes of past atrocities or have their own fears materialized against them.

Daring to enter this realm requires preparation to face eldritch terrors. Lingering for too long on the Penumbral Plane is a risk for one's sanity due to the constant maddening whispers of the Ungods.

Planar Traits

Nightmarish Landscapes. Much like a dream twisted by subconscious fears, the Penumbral Plane eschews mundane geographical norms. Some regions retain consistency, while others constantly alter, reflecting the fears and anxieties of those brave enough to cross its boundaries. This ever-shifting landscape might induce abrupt terrain transitions or distort perceived direction, rendering the plane as unpredictable as it is dangerous. Here, every step is a gamble against the whims of the plane—a door that should lead into a simple cottage may, instead, take you to a vast swamp; a jump into a seemingly calm river could land you amidst the ruins of an old city.

- While in the Penumbral Plane, all ability checks made to track, locate, or orient yourself have disadvantage.

Perpetual Twilight. The Penumbral Plane exists in unsurpassing twilight—an unsettling dim light that resists every attempt at illumination. All sources of light, both mundane and magical, are reduced, allowing darkness to prevail. Most areas exist in a twilight, unaffected by visible light sources, while others are plunged into deep darkness that tolerates only minimal illumination. In this plane, the sanity of its denizens is proportional to the light amount.

All regions within the Penumbral Plane fluctuate between dim light and total darkness. Regardless of its origin, no light source can intensify an area's illumination beyond dim light.

Ascent into Insanity. Foreign beings to this plane find no respite within its borders, their minds continuously attacked by whispered terrors and insidious energies that defy rest and recuperation.

- ***Creatures not native to the Penumbral Plane cannot benefit from long rests while in it.*** The only exception is the insane cultists of the Ungods when protected by their faith or items.
- ***Across the entirety of the Penumbral Plane.*** If a creature would die from exhaustion, it instead turns into a **penumbral aberration**.
- ***Exclusively on the Penumbral Plane's surface (excluding the inferior layers).*** A creature must make a Wisdom saving throw for every eight hours spent here (DC 15, plus 1 for each previous saving throw of this type made since the last beneficial long rest). A failed save results in one level of exhaustion. All other ways of receiving exhaustion levels work normally, including rest deprivation.

These harsh conditions make the Penumbral Plane a tough challenge for mortals who rapidly succumb to both mental and physical fatigue. Ultimately, they may undergo a grotesque metamorphosis into aberrant beings.

Many mortals choose to explore the lower layers of the Penumbral Plane, where the plane's corruptive influence is somewhat reduced. While long rests are still not beneficial, the necessity to make saving throws every eight hours to resist exhaustion does not apply.

Spread across the Penumbral Plane, certain refuges like gloomfolk settlements, fortified Dragon Council towers, and secret faction hideouts employ tameranium and bauronite pylons to resist the plane's corruptive powers. Within these zones of stability, the terrain remains constant, long rest becomes attainable, and the Wisdom saving throws required on the surface become unnecessary. If these pylons are disrupted or destroyed, however, such as by assaults of the Cult of Shadow Wing, these mortal strongholds will inevitably succumb to the plane's hostile nature.

Effects on Magic

The Penumbral Plane imposes unsettling alterations upon spells concerning illumination and divination, both literal and metaphorical.

Spells invoking light are severely diminished within the Penumbral Plane, never illuminating more than the characteristic dim light of the plane. Spells reliant on light for their effect, such as *sunburst*, *blinding smite*, or *sunbeam*, are rendered powerless, inflicting neither damage nor their intended effects.

Divination spells, when cast in this plane of madness, yield distorted results. Instead of revealing truth and clarity, they echo the incomprehensible will of the Ungods, presenting maddening visions or nightmares.

Geography and Traveling

Venturing into the Penumbral Plane demands resilience of mind and spirit. It echoes the darkest nightmares of its travelers; each step taken might awaken new horrors. Unnatural tentacles erupt from the ground, whispers echo from unseen sources—rational understanding falls short within this realm of nightmares.

Explorers might encounter a vast spectral forest of ever-changing trees from which tormented screams emanate, or perhaps a seemingly infinite body of black, oily water that reflects lost hopes and their murmuring faces. One might even stumble into an area full of ground-bursting tentacles that trap travelers, transporting them vast distances across the plane in mere moments.

Locations on the surface of the Penumbral Plane often mirror those in the Material Plane, specifically those flooded with negative emotions, sins, and corruption. These places become teeming with associated emoguns. A few examples include:

- The Gibbering Market is a horrid reflection of a bustling city center riddled with greed and deceit. It is a monstrous marketplace in the Penumbral Plane where monstrous traders negotiate souls and sanity, filled with emoguns embodying greed.
- The Sanguinary Slums mirror a violent, crime-ridden, poverty-stricken district. Within the Penumbral Plane, these grim alleyways stink of blood-tasting mist and reverberate with the sounds of never-ending violence, populated by emoguns that embody fear and anger.
- The Shrieking Woods is a distorted echo of a forest tainted by executions and the hidden bodies of those murdered by criminals. The trees scream in agony within the Penumbral Plane, their leaves seemingly weeping blood, and the manifestations of undisclosed crimes rise from their graves in the form of emoguns like sadness and grudge.
- The Dreadful Court, a court deeply corrupted by pride, greed, and lust in the Empire's Capital, shows in the Penumbral Plane as a distorted version of the place. Its edifice is formed of ebon crystals where ghostly faces can be seen inside. The location is overseen by a huge blind aberration and infested with penumbral creatures of pride and lust, seeking souls to prey upon.

Below the surface, there are six inferior layers of the Penumbral Plane, accessed by going underground from the surface. Each one is a demiplane in itself, and represents one of the planes consumed by the Ungods in the distant past.

The six layers are the Eternal Cathedral, the Caverns of Magma Giants, the Crystal Forest, the Endless City, the Clockwork Nexus and the Inverted Archives. Each one has its own specific geography, inhabitants and unique traits that will be explained further in this chapter.

Entering and Leaving the Plane

Penumbral Rifts offer a gateway into this plane, and these passages can be opened by magic, often by servants of the Ungods, or form naturally at locations saturated with the accumulation of negative energy and emotions. Sites of mass death, betrayal, or great injustice can become focal points for such spontaneous rifts, as the accumulated sins and emotional trauma distort the fabric of reality itself. However, these passages are not one-way routes. As much as they serve as entry points, the rifts also provide exits from the Penumbral Plane, offering an escape from this realm of horror.

Although the rifts are not permanent, their duration can vary greatly, and they are a constant threat to the Material Plane while open. That is why closing these rifts is deemed a top priority, but they can only be sealed by potent holy magic or advanced sealing techniques.

Magic portals and planar traveling work as usual to enter or leave the Penumbral Plane, but if it is done from the Material Plane, it always leads to the location in the Penumbral Plane that is connected or related to that place on the Material Plane where the spell or portal was created. One cannot choose the location of arrival in the Penumbral Plane.

Certain magical artifacts might also aid or deter planar travel to the Penumbra. These objects, often deeply infused with the residual energies of the plane, can create temporary Rifts or stabilize existing ones. Equally, they might serve to disrupt a Rift, though this typically requires an artifact of significant power.

Inhabitants of the Penumbral Plane

The Penumbral Plane is a realm of madness and terror, a breeding ground for abominations and tormented souls, forever distorted by the corruption of the Ungods. It is a realm populated by the emoguns, the Cult of Shadow Wing, and a handful of desperate mortals striving to survive against impossible odds.

Emoguns

Emoguns, the cursed and maddened souls of mortal sinners, are the tragic majority within the Penumbral Plane. Once mortal, their essence is now cruelly reshaped into horrid beings by the Ungods' tormenting influence. An adventurer encountering these creatures can have a disturbing insight into a tortured soul and a potent reminder of the Ungods' power.

Bound by their originating sin or negative emotion, emoguns are compelled to feed on the essence of their corruption. This hunger defines their behaviors and territorial claims within the plane, often resulting in tumultuous interactions among differing emogun types. Their presence on the Material Plane serves as a corruptive force, drawing others of their kind and intensifying the localized negative energies.

Emoguns operate within a hierarchy defined by their strength and cleverness, with the more cunning among them manipulating other emoguns to further their dark ambitions. This twisted society exists in symbiosis with the Cult of Shadow Wing, as many emoguns ally with the cult, acknowledging their shared bond to the Ungods.

Cult of Shadow Wing

The Cult of Shadow Wing, fervent disciples of the Ungods, make their base in the Penumbral Plane. The cult embraces the chaotic power of negative energy and works to expand the reach of the Ungods across Tanares. Collaborating with emoguns, their influence permeates beyond the Penumbral Plane via the Penumbral Rifts, infiltrating the Material Plane. Cult members of sufficient rank are entrusted with eldritch cloaks, cursed with the Ungods' power, to protect them from the plane's corruption. They can rest in the Penumbral Plane and remain immune to transformation into Penumbral Aberrations, as long as they hold true faith in the Ungods.

They also construct temples and fortresses within the Penumbral Plane, to defend their domains against invaders from Tanares. Inscribed with dark sigils and unholy altars, these edifices also protect their occupants against the plane's corruption—as long as their faith in the Ungods remains unbroken.

Mortal Settlements

In this plane of horror, traces of mortal settlements remain, fortified by magical monoliths and sustained by pure determination. These settlements are rare beacons of hope in the Penumbral Plane. Mortal settlements are categorized into three types:

Outcast Havens. Consisting primarily of outcasts, criminals, fugitives, and the desperate, these enclaves maintain a precarious existence in the middle of the plane's horrors. These settlers form tenuous alliances and most dwell in the shelters abandoned by the gloomfolks or the Draconic Council. Their survival teeters on a knife's edge, threatened by the Cult of Shadow Wing and the Ungods.

Gloomfolk Dark Tribes. Certain gloomfolk tribes have made their home within the Penumbral Plane, hunting its monstrous inhabitants and the Ungods' servants. They embed tameranium and bauronite in their Hive Stones to create a mystical barrier against the plane's corrupting influence.

Draconic Council Outposts. The Draconic Council maintains fortified outposts within the Penumbral Plane. These strongholds, defended by draconic magic, protect against the corruption and allow for strategic incursions into the Ungods' territories. The Council's outposts vary between openly defiant towers under constant assault, and concealed structures protecting their secret plans against the Ungods' forces.

Survival in the Nightmare Realm

Surviving the Penumbral Plane requires strong resolve and courage. This terror-laden realm presents many threats that could easily shatter the sanity of even the most experienced adventurers. Its menacing landscapes and unwelcoming inhabitants stand in constant defiance of life.

The Penumbral Plane is shrouded in an unsurpassing twilight. No source of light, regardless of its intensity or origin, can pierce this prevailing dusk. Navigating under such conditions is a challenge due to unseen dangers, presenting a perpetual risk to explorers.

The Penumbral Plane presents not only physical challenges but also assaults the mind. Its ominous essence drains mental fortitude, inducing a fatigue that resists normal rest. Deprived of the chance for a true long rest, visitors must tap into their deepest reserves of determination to combat the madness or face the terrifying transformation into a **penumbral aberration.**

The ever-changing geography of the plane further complicates the search for refuge. Structures warp, relocate, or dissolve into the plane's unpredictable chaos. These constant changes in the landscape can leave adventurers vulnerable to the lurking monstrosities concealed within the gloom.

The task of finding food is a tough obstacle. Traditional food and water, if present at all, are rare commodities. Survival requires cleverness, relying on spells and artifacts to obtain nourishment. However, such efforts can attract penumbral creatures, who are drawn to the energy these activities release. The gloomfolk are the only mortal species capable of safely eating emoguns.

The emoguns and aberrations alike are relentless in their pursuit of emotional sustenance. These twisted echoes of mortal sin and negativity hunt the dim expanses, ever in search of emotional energy to devour. Encounters with these creatures rarely end peacefully, often turning into harsh conflict or mental torment that attacks the adventurer's deepest fears and sanity.

The Penumbral Plane Regions

Surface

Denizens: All emoguns are common on the Surface, and this layer is the lair of most penumbral dragons. This region is controlled by the Shadow Lords sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Leader: Lypoec, the Penumbral Avatar Dragon

The uppermost layer, known as The Surface, is a result of the ancient collision between Tanares and the Penumbral Plane. This cataclysmic encounter shaped the twisted landscapes and the sinister creatures that populate this dreadful place.

The Surface is an unsettling mirror image of Tanares, a distorted echo infused with the sinister influence of the Penumbral Plane. An icy chill pervades the atmosphere of the Surface, and a thick mist cloaks its corrupted expanses. This mist sometimes slightly follows travelers, while at other times, it forms a dense fog, completely obscuring the land. Here, in every corner, the chilling sensation of being watched persistently claws at the sanity of those who dare intrude.

The eastern portion of the Surface is dominated by the monstrous penumbral dragons, formidable beasts under the dominion of Lypoec. He leads the Shadow Lords sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing, alongside the countless emoguns that roam the territories of the Surface. Conversely, in the western portion, where the Darkall continent is mirrored, Golgöggoth reigns from his throne at the Penumbral Mountain. He commands his legions of transformed mortal soldiers, known as the Watchers, and fallen angels turned into aberrations, referred to as the Nightmares. These two sides are locked in a constant battle, each striving to expand their territory.

Despite its proximity to Tanares, which suggests a deceptive safety, the Surface is the most corrupted of all layers of the Penumbral Plane. Madness here is more potent, the horrors more intense, and the influence of the Ungods is stronger. The deeper layers, though filled with their unique dangers, offer some relief compared to the Surface.

Mind Echoes

The Surface harbors a unique phenomenon known as Mind Echoes. This bizarre manifestation compels those crossing this twilight realm to encounter specters of their haunting pasts. Traumatic memories rise and assume a physical form, replaying them with terrifying realness. Unprepared adventurers may succumb to their own despair or confront dangerous horrors of their deepest fears.

Some courageous individuals venture onto the Surface seeking to conquer their past and overcome their fears. It has even become a rite of passage among the gloomfolk aspiring to be their hives' heroes. Adventurers venturing onto the Surface sometimes encounter echoes of lost loved ones or forgotten relics from their past. While often risky, these encounters have been known to provide wisdom or reveal lost artifacts.

Objects manifested from Mind Echoes have a real form and can be brought back to the Material Plane, a mystery that many desire to exploit. However, despite ambitious attempts, no one has yet found a way to control or exploit the power of the Mind Echoes so far.

Lypoec, the Penumbral Avatar Dragon

Originally a majestic red dragon born from the divine powers of Tamera and Bauron, Lypoec (LE) was among the first and most powerful of its kind. However, the insidious invasion of the Ungods led him to fall under Z'ulvath's corruptive power. This transformed him into a terrifying penumbral dragon, filled with the essence of the Penumbral Plane.

He bows to no one except Z'ulvath, viewing himself as an avatar of the Penumbral Father and considering even the rest of the Ungods as merely his equals. From his concealed throne, he manipulates the Shadow Lords, fueling their ceaseless spread of corruption and despair. He tolerates neither disagreement nor advice, viewing himself as the embodiment of Z'ulvath's will. Whether this belief stems from his own distorted mind or is a fact remains a matter of speculation.

With audacious confidence, Lypoec regularly hosts large gatherings, like the bizarre king's festival, where he openly displays his power, sending invitations to both friends and foes. He transforms into a humanoid form for these occasions: a dark-skinned figure with eyes of pure void and flowing hair that moves like black tentacles. Dressed in impressive magical clothes filled with powerful artifacts, he radiates an overwhelming sense of grandness. His arrogance extends to such a degree that he banishes any who dare disagree with him promptly. In his warped mind, his actions are beyond criticism, and anyone daring to question his will deserves punishment. Although, fueled by his pride, he never harms his guests.

This puzzling behavior confuses even his most zealous followers, who dare not question or defy his commands. However, among the Avatar Dragons of the Draconic Council, long debates

have been held over the patterns in Lypoec's actions. They believe that beneath his apparent madness lies a calculating genius, and that a dark intent hides under his displays of grandiosity.

Dangers of the Surface

Penumbral Dragons. Once noble creatures, these dragons have now become grotesque shadows of their original selves, flying above the Penumbral Plane's surface. Corrupted by the Ungods, their forms have been twisted by eldritch energies into grotesque amalgamations of scales and tentacles. Each dragon embodies a unique and deep madness, making their actions as unpredictable as they are dangerous. Their insanity might drive them towards rage-fueled assaults, clever plans involving unsuspecting adventurers, or in rare cases, even negotiation. Despite their erratic behavior, the raw power they possess makes even the youngest among them a serious threat to those brave or reckless enough to venture into the Surface.

The Cult of Shadow Wing. The zealous cultists known as the Shadow Lords have established a complex network of dark temples and fortresses scattered across the Surface. Consumed by their desire for power and perversion, they capture adventurers to indoctrinate them into their twisted ranks or, worse, transform them into **penumbral aberrations**. When tied up and exposed to the plane's corruptive forces, these unlucky victims are changed, becoming unwilling soldiers in the endless conflict against Golgöggoth.

The Misleading Mists. The very landscape of the Surface poses a threat as deadly as any creature. The ever-present mists serve as a ceaseless source of disorientation and confusion, leading many off-course and into the jaws of unspeakable horrors. Navigation becomes a desperate gamble, a race against time exacerbated by both the disorienting fog and the relentless corruptive forces of the plane. Every moment spent lost in the mists is a step closer to mental and physical exhaustion and the transformation into a penumbral aberration.

Places of Interest

The Pool of Reflections. A shadowy expanse of placid waters shrouded in an eternally swirling mist, serves as both a mirror and a gateway into the soul. The lake, a liquid portal to the past, manifests the observer's deepest regrets as tangible specters, often triggering the Mind Echoes. While no physical object can escape its confines, those brave or desperate enough to submerge themselves can directly confront their past and potentially uncover hidden truths. But this opportunity comes with all the perils inherent to the Penumbral Plane, and many minds were broken facing their own pasts.

Mistweaver's Hollow. Hidden within the nebulous mists of the Penumbral Plane is a settlement frozen in time. This distorted echo of a mortal settlement offers a bittersweet refuge to the lost travelers of the plane, but poses its own unique perils. Its inhabitants, survivors forever altered by the plane, are bound to this ethereal town. They find comfort in the visitors who bring tales of the outside world, but those who stay two nights in this place become bound to it as new residents. However, there are rumors about an individual who was able to escape after years imprisoned there.

The Silent Market. A creepy spectral bazaar thriving amidst the ever-present mists of the Penumbral Plane. Here, one can trade memories for special goods and strange knowledge. However, the spectral merchants driving these transactions often extract a higher price than expected, leaving many travelers to lose important memories. Those who barter here need to be prepared to negotiate the value of their past and their sanity.

The Twisting Forest. This otherworldly woodland, draped in eternal shadows, offers its own set of peculiarities. Its main feature is the Weeping Tree, a colossal entity warped by the plane's influence. Its fallen leaves are rumored to possess unique transformative powers. Within the forest's heart lurks the being known as Shadowmoss, a once benign nature spirit corrupted into a unique penumbral creature. Despite its inherent danger, the spectral flora and fauna within this twisted grove can sustain life, the animals can be eaten and there's drinkable water, but only for those tough enough to face its risks.

The Shadow Nexus. The Cult of Shadow Wing's most formidable stronghold stands as a grotesque mockery of the holy cathedrals dedicated to Tamera and Bauron. Its architecture, an exact inversion of the holy edifices, features towers that plunge to the underground. The purpose of such architecture remains unknown; some speculate it serves to ridicule the divine order or perhaps fulfills an occult purpose yet undiscovered. This dark stronghold, full of strange signs and evil energy, serves as a symbol of the cult's servitude to Z'ulvath. In this crypt-like bastion, the cult performs its nefarious rituals, deepening its bond with the Penumbral Plane.

Eternal Cathedral
The First Layer

Denizens: This layer houses a multitude of emoguns, primarily those embodying fear and pain. Additionally, it is a stronghold of the Hidden Cult sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Leader: High Cardinal Gideoni, once the head of the Evolutionist Church, is now a servant of the Ungod Krynnethoth.

Long ago, the Eternal Cathedral was a symbol of hope, a sacred place for the Goetia tieflings and the dominion of Caeldolor, god of redemption, suffering, and martyrdom. Its unceasing fortress echoed their enduring penance, a monument to their firm faith. The divine Caeldolor was their protector against demonic attacks, supported by endless mercy.

Their defenses shattered when the Ungods cast their gaze upon the sanctuary, inciting a catastrophic invasion. Despite the valiant resistance of the Goetia tieflings and their god, they succumbed to the unyielding assault of the Ungods. Caeldolor performed his final, sacrificial act, protecting his followers, ensuring their escape to Tanares, before his realm was overtaken by the Penumbral Plane.

The cathedral, once a grand display of faith, now stands as a painful reminder of its former glory. Its winding corridors reverberate with spectral whispers, desolate altars mourn their lost purity, and once-hallowed halls house the profane shrines of the Cult of Shadow Wing, hidden collectors' villages, and the secret Draconic Council hideouts. Yet, among desolation, it guards forgotten secrets and undiscovered exotic treasures.

Sparse torches cast a mysterious purple light, illuminating a cathedral that extends as far as an entire empire. Walls bear the agony of tieflings, their struggle with demons depicted in once-revered murals, now serving as grotesque chronicles of enduring suffering. The scent of blood and torture devices paint a vivid picture of past massacre, the self-imposed penitence of Goetia tieflings and the cult's terrifying torture rituals.

The cathedral, a massive maze of corridors, prayer rooms, old libraries, and prisons, whispers with pain and pleas for mercy that echo within its unholy walls, creating the most extensive profane spectacle a Tanarean could ever witness.

Bloody Journey

At the Eternal Cathedral's heart lies an ever-shifting labyrinth. Once a bastion against demon invaders, it now confuses explorers with endless twists and turns, resisting conventional mapping.

In this maze, adventurers confront the Cathedral's blood-bound doors, gates, and secret passageways. Once a symbol of self-sacrifice, these features now demand a blood tribute to allow passage, reveal hidden relics, mysterious knowledge, or other unknown treasures within their vaults.

Brave souls willing to venture deeper must pay this sanguinary toll. Depending on the passage, a character may need to spend from 1 to 3 Hit Dice or take damage equivalent to twice the number in d10s. For example, a fighter may spend 3 Hit Dice or suffer 6d10 damage to unlock a vital route, while another unimportant passage might require just 1 Hit Die. Paying with a combination of hit dice and damage is possible.

Echoes of Pain

Haunting this layer are echoes of the tieflings' collective dread, their home plane's catastrophic consumption forever imprinted as horrifying phenomena. Sometimes, an area of the Cathedral becomes overtaken by these nightmares, often triggering one of the effects below (choose or roll a d6):

- ***Loss of Faith (1–2).*** This effect is derived from the tieflings' fear of losing the divine protection of Caeldolor. During this event, all torches and candle fires turn greenish, and all divine spellcasting and Channel Divinity are rendered useless within this area.
- ***Demonic Ambush (3–4).*** The echoes of the tieflings' eternal struggle against the demons that hunted for their souls sometimes manifest in the Cathedral. This causes a squad of demons to emerge from the images painted on the walls to attack any nearby mortals, often catching adventurers by surprise.
- ***Agonizing Pain (5–6).*** Sometimes, a region begins to reverberate the screams of pain and suffering from the tieflings of the past. All creatures that hear these tortured cries for help begin to feel their pain and must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of each turn or become stunned due to excruciating pain. At the end of each minute inside the area, the creature takes a cumulative 1d6 points of damage for each minute, as phantom wounds manifest (no saving throw can reduce this damage; it escalates from 1d6 for the first minute, 2d6 for the second, and so on).

Gideoni, the High Hand of Krynnethoth

The heart of the Eternal Cathedral is ruled by a figure once greatly revered: Gideoni. This former Evolutionist High Cardinal was known in the past for his dedication to Tamera and Bauron; now his name incites fear. His corruption, driven by an insatiable hunger for power and fear of mortality, was catalyzed by the assurances of the Ungod Krynnethoth.

Empowered by Krynnethoth, Gideoni subverted the natural order, extending his life beyond its mortal limitations. Secretly serving the Ungod, his influence spread far and wide. He manipulated the Church's course, deviating it from divine will, to serve his evil master's intentions.

Now exposed for his corruption, the charm and charisma that once guided the faithful of Tanares now control the cultists within the Cathedral's forsaken walls. Gideoni's ambition is to rise as the fifth Ungod, a vow Krynnethoth has promised to fulfill if Tanares falls under their control.

Gideoni's true terror lies not in death itself but in the erasure of his unique identity. His descent into darkness began with the realization that, upon death, his soul would be turned into an archangel, or face a more dire fate if transformed into an emogun. This fear led to his pact with Krynnethoth, who offered a solution in eternal life. For now, Gideoni has received only an extended life, a blessing he once publicly attributed to the grace of Tamera and Bauron.

His daughter, Ella Gideoni, leader of the Bauronian Sect of the Celestianist Church, remains a persistent obstacle. Gideoni yearns to persuade her to join his cause, to save her from the curse of mortality, but she is determined to bring her father to justice. Rooted deeply in familial ties and conflicting ideologies, their conflict is sure to lead to a major confrontation.

Dangers of the Eternal Cathedral

Hidden Cult. In the Eternal Cathedral, a sinister sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing has made its home. Known for their fervent devotion to Krynnethoth, they worship him through grotesque rituals involving torture, sacrificial blood rites, and the exploration of forbidden eldritch magic. Under Gideoni's direction, these cultists transform sections of the Cathedral into twisted shrines, pervading the area with a malevolent aura.

Confessional Chamber. Some places were used as a confessionary by the tieflings, as confessing their sins was the first step to redemption. However, the penumbral energy twisted the place. Now, any confession can bring a shared vision that manifests the sin in a tangible form, attracting penumbral creatures related to the essence of the sin. It is dangerous to use this place, as any body injury magically becomes real, but sometimes it is the only way to escape some special rooms, called Bravery of the Sinners.

Places of Interest

The Garden of Lament. This nightmarish area of vegetation, twisted by the Ungods' malevolent influence, was once a beautiful internal garden. Here, the petrified flora bleed a viscous red sap, and the angelic statuaries cry tears of ruby-red blood. Among these horrors, a rare species of celestial flowers, called Tears of Caeldolor, still blooms. These flowers are rumored to have curative properties, making them desired by healers and alchemists. It is said that combining the flower with the blood from the statues allows a person to trade their life to resurrect another. Yet the place is guarded by Sarrila, the Horned Hag, a corrupted Goetia tiefling druid that once cared for this very sacred garden; she became a servant of the Ungods in exchange for being the eternal keeper of the place. Her three children lie buried there, beneath the statues.

The Gallery of Shadows. This corridor is a symbol of the tieflings' bloody past. It houses great painted murals that react to the presence of living beings; their painted figures mirror the movements of passersby. The scariest of these murals is the Echoes of the Last Stand, depicting the fateful battle between Caeldolor and the Ungods. Touching this mural transports the adventurer momentarily into a replay of the battle. Those who enter this vision must fight for their sanity, as dying there completely destroys their minds. However, surviving adventurers may converse with the echoes of Caeldolor, obtaining valuable information, such as the locations of hidden passageways in the Cathedral and existing hidden artifacts.

The Wailing Prison. Hidden deep within the Cathedral, this area served as a jail and torture chamber used by the servants of the Ungods when they overtook the Cathedral. A sense of dread fills this macabre location, where horrifying devices of torment still stand. The walls echo with the anguished cries of trapped spirits, and tortured undead are found in great numbers, while emoguns of pain rejoice in their eternal suffering. Yet, sometimes an ethereal light shines in this awful scene: the spirit of Elandra, a once-powerful servant of Caeldolor. She crosses the corridors, her haunting lullabies offering a bit of comfort to the suffering souls. Despite her ethereal state, Elandra holds vast wisdom and divine knowledge, as well as a resolve to save the tortured souls, offering aid to those brave enough to seek her guidance.

The Sanctum of Eternity. At the Cathedral's heart is a hidden chamber containing a celestial artifact, the Celestial Tear. This relic, dormant and waiting, has the power to summon ancient celestial beings, making it a coveted tool to be used against the Ungods by many factions. Yet, the chamber is protected by exotic magic, a maze-like dungeon filled with deadly traps, and the souls of the tieflings who served Caeldolor bound to protect the artifact.

Caverns of Magma Giants
The Second Layer

Denizens: The Spawners, loyal disciples of Droggath, the Fleshspawner, hold dominion over this layer. The endless tunnels and scorching halls teem with emoguns of anger and gluttony, and due to the Spawners' summoning rituals, a plethora of magical beasts of all types struggle for survival here.

Leader: Abhorroth, the Dark Titan, prime leader of Droggath's forces, was initially designated as the layer's ruler. However, his bloodlust lured him to Tanares, leaving Ardilog, the Everspawning Chimera, as the guardian.

In the second layer of the Penumbral Plane lie the remnants of a once-mighty empire. This underground realm consists of colossal caverns connected by now-abandoned stone tunnels. Rivers of molten magma flow freely; their glow is the only light source in the perpetual darkness. Their fire cannot dispel the plane's shadowy essence, causing the lava flow to cast a dim, disquieting red light that projects long, horrifying shadows.

These vast tunnels once resonated with the clang of hammers and the roar of forges—the heartbeat of the magma giants' realm. Their magnificent empire, known for exceptional blacksmithing skill, used magma energy to craft stunning weapons and armor, trading these masterpieces with beings from many other planes.

However, their wealth drew the malicious Ungods, who launched a devastating attack. Despite the giants' strength, they fell. Their once-glorious empire is now smoldering ruins, consumed by the Penumbral Plane, becoming the second layer.

The petrified lifeless remains of the magma giants, conserved in cooled magma and stone, are spread across their former realm. These grim statues cast dreadful shadows, reminding visitors of their cataclysmic fall.

The ancient tunnels and majestic halls are now inhabited by the Cult of Shadow Wing, emoguns, and magical beasts. The Spawners, servants of Droggath, rule these caverns, summoning monsters and making blood sacrifices to the Fleshspawner.

Echoes of the Fallen Empire

To this day, the Caverns of Magma Giants echo the nightmares of their past inhabitants. These experiences manifest as unique events affecting this continent-sized layer. Occasionally, these nightmares overtake an area of the Caverns, causing one of the effects below (choose or roll a d6):

Forge Failure (1–2). Metal objects in the area appear aged and cracked while inside the area. All magical properties of these items cease, and non-magical items shatter after a single use. This nightmare brings into reality the giants' fear that their forging skills would not be enough against the invaders.

Freezing Storm (3–4). The temperature in a hall or corridor drops rapidly, and after 1d6 rounds, an ice storm engulfs the region, extinguishing all fires and chilling the molten magma to ice. Fire magic fails, and creatures take 4d6 cold damage whenever they end their turn inside the area. This pervasive cold embodies the magma giants' terror of being eternally frozen as lifeless stone statues.

Becoming Small (5–6). The sizes of all living creatures, except emoguns, diminish dramatically in the area. While inside the area their sizes are reduced by two categories (e.g.: a Medium creature becomes Tiny). Affected creatures have disadvantage on all Strength and Constitution checks, their damage is halved, and all damage they receive is doubled. This nightmare mirrors the giants' fear of facing enemies even larger than themselves, where their greatest strength would mean nothing to their foes.

Ardilog, the Everspawning Chimera

Ardilog, the mightiest beast of the Ungod Krynnethoth's horde, guards the second layer of the Penumbral Plane. Charged by Abhorroth, the Dark Titan, to protect the Caverns of Magma and stop anyone from claiming his throne, the chimera relentlessly pursues both mortals and emoguns in constant hunger for both flesh and dominance.

Ardilog is a formidable beast, powerful enough to bring down the dwarven empire of Arheimar when summoned to Tanares centuries ago. Drawn once by the carnage of the Kemet Invasion, it was defeated by Huradrin, the dwarf druid who is now one of the Kings of Stonelair. Ardilog respawned in its lair, a gift of immortality it received from its ungodly creator. Harboring deep hatred for the dwarf that killed it once, it constantly seeks an escape from the caverns for vengeance. However, the Dark Titan has recently bound it to the Caverns with mystical shackles it cannot break.

The cultists of the Spawners sect admire Ardilog greatly, frequently capturing mortals to feed the enormous chimera. Some believe that defeating Ardilog grants dominance over these cultists, as they respect the rule of strength and acknowledge the mighty as their rulers.

Dangers of the Caverns of Magma Giants

The Spawners. These violent and bloodthirsty cultists constantly seek fresh sacrifices and enemies to consume. Their cannibalistic devotion to Droggath and their eldritch summoning rituals are the hallmarks of this sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing. Their macabre guttural chants echo through the caverns as they summon monstrosities or perform gruesome sacrifices to Droggath. All who enter the Caverns of Magma Giants must remain vigilant.

Battle for Survival. Emoguns of anger and gluttony wander the tunnels, eager to unleash their fury and insatiable hunger on unprepared intruders. They feed on each other or the magical beasts summoned by the Spawners, all locked in an eternal battle for survival. Entering this layer means stepping into an underground battlefield where only the strong survive.

Ardilog's Hunt. The Everspawning Chimera's hunt is a perpetual danger. With the chimera ready to attack any creature it encounters, adventurers must walk cautiously to avoid becoming its next meal. It often flies through the great halls and large tunnels; experienced adventurers advise avoiding these open areas of the Caverns. While the chimera can navigate all the giant tunnels, it prefers to fly over vast expanses in its relentless search for food.

Magma Hazards. Lava flows and eruptions pose substantial risks, especially to those unfamiliar with such fiery landscapes. Even experienced adventurers may be overwhelmed by the unpredictable volcanic activity. In some areas, the heat is as intense as the hottest deserts (use extreme heat rules), while in others it is as overwhelming as a boiling cauldron, causing 2d10 fire damage each turn a creature ends in the area. The lava here is extremely hot, dealing from 10d10 (contact) up to 20d10 (total immersion) fire damage per turn.

Places of Interest

Agarok's Flame-Swept Throne. In the shadow of colossal stone giants and cooled magma, under the ever-present flicker of magma flows, sits the Throne of Agarok, the ill-fated king of the magma giants. Explorers' rumors suggest that Agarok's spirit lingers, forever bound to his molten throne room, longing for a successor strong enough to reclaim his legacy and free his trapped soul. Untold treasures may await those brave enough to occupy the haunted throne, providing an irresistible temptation for those who seek the power of the ancient giant king. The Relic Hunters have lost many members attempting to uncover the truth behind this throne room, and all they have found so far is a large gem that may have once been part of a crown.

The Hallowed Forges of Magmadar. Interconnected chambers throughout the stone labyrinth house the silent forges that once produced the legendary creations of the magma giants. Their ember-glow has long faded, but the latent energy that fills these ancient forges may be re-lit by those possessing the required skill and audacity. Uncovering their secrets could resurrect the giants' lost craft, rendering these dormant forges a potential haven for blacksmiths. Rumors say that the forges are linked to the streams of lava on the entire layer. The one who can control them can change the flux of the River of Eternal Flame, along with all other streams of lava, gaining complete control over navigation in this layer.

Chasm of the Wailing Shadows. This vast chasm echoes perpetually with tormented cries, serving as a scary platform for the Spawners' inhuman sacrificial rites. The cultists frequently throw sacrifices into this pit to appease Droggath's eternal hunger. Rumors suggest that the screams and wails are not echoes of the dead but instead the voices of living people, tormented as they are endlessly digested by Droggath, fueling his power with their eternal suffering and satiating his endless hunger. The Celestianist paladin orders consider this place a prime target for study and purification, believing that purging this location of its taint could save many individuals still suffering in its depths, many of whom could become powerful allies against the Ungods.

The Blood-Soaked Pits of Bloodmaw. Here, within these dreaded pits, the Spawners perform their horrific rites to summon creatures under the will of the Fleshspawner. These halls are filled with pools of blood and the smell of death and carnage, with parts of people and monsters hanging from chains throughout the area. A massive prison lies in its depths, where the cultists store their future offerings until the optimal time to be eaten by the beasts.

Ardilog's Bone-Strewn Den. The formidable lair of the Everspawning Chimera, Ardilog, is a twisting labyrinth of enormous tunnels and high-ceilinged chambers littered with remnants of the creature's past meals. The den has multiple entrances high in the walls, allowing the creature to enter and exit by flying through the openings, and to make a surprise attack. It is said that defeating Ardilog might grant one the leadership of this layer, as the rule of the strongest is considered sacred by the cultists of the Fleshspawner, but very few dare to hunt this plane's most formidable beast.

The Flowing River of Eternal Flame. These scorching veins of molten rock, once a fiery barrier serving the empire of the magma giants, now provide a perilous route through the labyrinthine realm, as the cultists navigate it using stone boats enchanted with eldritch magic. This major river connects to many other lava streams, allowing for swift travel across the vast expanse of caverns if one knows the correct magma flux to navigate. Some Relic Hunter members report the presence of salamanders, hell-hounds, fire hydras, and even the hell-fire phoenix near those rivers.

Crystal Forest
The Third Layer

Denizens: The arachnes and their Purple Acolyte servants, emoguns of grudge and pride, and giant spiders that serve as guards or pets for the arachnes.

Leader: Bellara, the Daughter of C'thraxis

Immersed in the heart of the Penumbral Plane resides its third layer, the Crystal Forest. A labyrinth emerges from luminescent flora and tangled spiderwebs, with soft purple light punctuating an otherworldly beauty that walks a fine line between fascination and fear. This mystical landscape echoes the tales of a past era rich in magic.

In a time long forgotten, the Crystal Forest was home to the crystal elves. These magical beings, sustained not by regular food but by the mysterious essence of magic, flourished under the purple glow of their crystalline domain. However, their peaceful existence broke apart with the invasion of the Ungods, whose curse slowly wiped out the elves, turning their magical haven into ruins.

Today, remnants of their ancient civilization rest within the haunting majestic appearance of the colossal crystal trees that form the forests filling this cavernous layer. These ancient scattered relics are remnants of the ancient wisdom and power of the crystal elves. However, these treasures are constantly targeted by Bellara and her arachnes, who tirelessly work to eliminate every trace of the elven legacy.

Now, the Crystal Forest resonates not with elven harmony, but with a creepy melody from its new denizens. Its once majestic caverns are now strongholds of the arachnes, temples for the acolytes of the Purple Witches, and domains of the pride and grudge emoguns. They are under the manipulative influence of the true puppet master of this layer, Bellara, the daughter of the Ungods, and weaver of the fate of all who enter the Crystal Forest.

Terrors of the Crystal Forest

Similar to other layers, the Crystal Forest echoes the nightmares of their past inhabitants. The terror and suffering of the crystal elves manifest as unique mystical effects in random areas of the underground forest (choose or roll a d6).

Mana Leak (1–2). Creatures attempting to cast spells in this environment find it increasingly difficult to channel mana. They are compelled to expend additional spell slots, the total level of which must be equal to the level of the spell they're casting; otherwise, the spell fails. For example, to cast a 3rd-level *fireball* spell, a wizard would need to use either another 3rd-level slot, or a combination of lower-level slots that add up to 3 (such as one 2nd-level slot and one 1st-level slot, or three 1st-level slots). This requirement reflects the deep-seated fear of the crystal elves: the possibility of their magical reserves being depleted, leaving them weak and vulnerable.

Shattering Disease (3–4). This terrifying manifestation causes all creatures in the area, except emoguns and arachnes, to appear crackled as if they were made of crystal or glass. All affected creatures are vulnerable to all forms of damage and will shatter and immediately die if they reach 0 hit points. This horrifying disease was the main reason for the downfall of the crystal elves; their nights were filled with nightmares as they saw their kin fracture and collapse to the disease brought by the Ungods.

Corrupted Forests (5–6). Afflicted areas witness a surreal transformation as crystal flora spring to life. Vile treants, shambling mounds, awakened shrubs, and awakened trees begin to move, all bearing malevolent intent toward anyone not in service to the Ungods (they don't attack arachnes, emoguns, and members of the Cult of Shadow Wing). This aberration marked the feared arrival of the Ungods in the crystal elves' realm, the beginning of the catastrophe that destroyed their world.

Bellara, The Daughter of C'thraxis

Bellara, the Arachne Queen, is a figure of power and cunning that rules over the third layer of the Penumbral Plane. She embodies danger and charm, extending her influence over both the Crystal Forest and the Material Plane, which she often reaches through permanent portals within her lair.

Born from the essence of C'thraxis—she is the most powerful servant of this Ungod—Bellara's charm conceals a relentless ambition: the destabilization of Tanares and the expansion of the Ungods' dominion. The arachnes and emoguns of this layer stand ready under her command, with their unique abilities strategically used in her wicked schemes.

Bellara's ultimate objective remains the materialization of the Ungods' avatar in Tanares, ensuring their victory over the Tanarean deities. In this singular pursuit, she exhibits unwavering devotion, willing to sacrifice herself in honor of the Ungods. Bellara's motives, however, are not solely of service and strategy; her actions are tainted by the intense, twisted affection she holds for her mother, C'thraxis. A mixture of adoration, yearning for approval, and desire for attention drives her.

With an objective rooted in the desire for C'thraxis' approval, Bellara meticulously plots against the other Ungods' followers to show herself as the most important servant. As a timeless entity, her tactics are slow and clever. Bellara's webs of machinations span centuries, each strand leading to long-term strategies, contingencies, and countermeasures, except when another servant of the Ungods receives more attention than she does. On these rare occasions, she may be consumed by jealousy, and secretly manipulate adventurers to disrupt their plans.

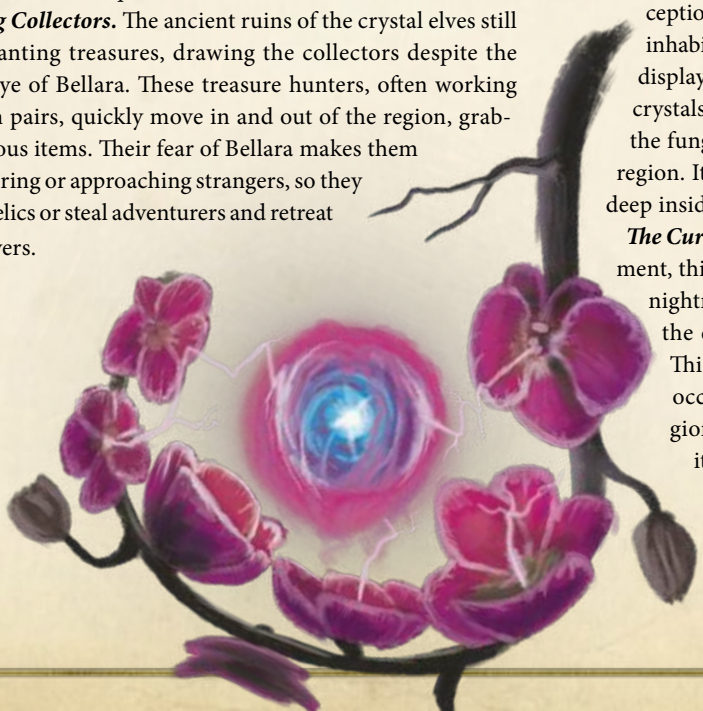
Dangers of the Crystal Forest

Bellara's Watchful Eye. The constant presence of the Arachne Queen Bellara, hangs heavily over the Crystal Forest. With the ability to see and hear by the senses of all spiders within a 100-mile radius of her, she continuously oversees her domains. This widespread network of arachnid spies amplifies Bellara's reach, ensuring that nothing escapes her watchful gaze. Adventurers venturing into her realms need to exercise caution, as the eyes of Bellara may always be upon them.

The Arachnes. Beneath the forest's beauty lie Bellara's progeny, the arachnes. Concealed within the caves and shrouded beneath the forest shadow, these creatures lie in wait, with their traps spread far and wide. Their devious webs stretch across the expanse, leaving few areas untouched by their influence. Adventurers must remain vigilant, avoiding the embrace of these hunters and their insidious lures, illusions, and manipulations.

Realms of Pride. Penumbral prides, the dominant emoguns of this layer, claim various regions within the Crystal Forest. These malevolent beings establish their rule by constructing imposing fortresses and forming courts of subservient underlings. While they might entertain negotiations, especially when appeased with respect, one must tread lightly for their pride is easily bruised, and their retribution, quick and merciless.

Thieving Collectors. The ancient ruins of the crystal elves still hold enchanting treasures, drawing the collectors despite the watchful eye of Bellara. These treasure hunters, often working alone or in pairs, quickly move in and out of the region, grabbing precious items. Their fear of Bellara makes them avoid lingering or approaching strangers, so they scavenge relics or steal adventurers and retreat to safer layers.



Places of Interest

The Shard Grove. It is a magical cluster of crystal trees that create a variety of reflections, protected by illusion magic. The illusory creatures look real to the invaders, but being defeated by them results in no physical harm. However, it causes unconsciousness, and if left unattended for 10 minutes, the creature is transported to a random location outside the grove. Hidden within the heart of the grove lies the ruins of an ancient palace, where rests an ancient scrying crystal. This artifact allows one to scry anywhere in the Crystal Forest and to teleport to any location being seen. The artifact is immobile, and there is no known way to destroy it. Somehow, the place repels all penumbral creatures, including Bellara.

Malrok's Silver Tower. A beacon of light within the shadows, the Silver Tower of Malrok resides in the depths of a secluded cavern. It is a relic of a millennia-old alliance among the Bauron and Tamera clergy and the Draconic Council. Raised around a crystal shard, imbued by King Malrok with his own blood, the tower has long served as a haven, protected by divine influence from Bellara's dark reach. A formidable force, including dragonblades, an ancient silver dragon, and paladins of Bauron and Tamera, guards this sanctuary beacon. Even Bellara avoids attacking the tower directly, recognizing the potency of Malrok's lingering protection, but she waits patiently, always plotting its downfall.

Bellara's Crystalline Throne. Located within a cavern of radiant crystals, Bellara's home is a huge cavern carved as a great temple for C'thraxis, adorned with a multitude of stony visages of the Lady of Sins. Bellara's throne, made of the finest crystals, holds the remains of the most powerful of the crystal elves. From the deepest reaches of the cave, it is possible to hear mournful feminine screams; rumors say that it comes from a traitorous Purple Witch, eternally chained and tortured at Bellara's hands. Another rumor says that she is keeping a crystal of immense power, which has been draining magic for centuries to attain its full charge. The true extent of its power and its intended purpose remain unknown, but C'thraxis tasked her to protect the crystal until the correct time arrives.

Cavern of Echoes. A vast, haunting cave covered with glowing crystal formations that create strange sounds, altering the perception of explorers. A variety of fungi and fungal creatures inhabit the place; tainted by the Penumbral Plane, they often display necrotic energies. While the echoing sounds on the crystals often disorient intruders, it serves as an advantage to the fungal beings, doubling their blind senses while in this region. It is said some crystal elves are still alive and hidden deep inside the cave.

The Cursed Forest. Shrouded in darkness and a fog of resentment, this chilling section of the forest manifests the deepest nightmares of the crystal elves. This region is always under the effects of one of the Terrors of the Crystal Forest. This area harbors numerous penumbral grudges, and occasionally some penumbral sadnesses walk this region in search of lost knowledge. Scholars conjecture it to be where the crystal elves made their last stand, a haunting battle graveyard that is believed to hold lost legendary weapons and mystical protection items once wielded by them.

Endless City
The Fourth Layer

Denizens: Purple Witches, hags of all kinds, emoguns of disgust and lust.

Leader: Catharina, the Purple Witch Queen

The fourth layer of the Penumbral Plane, known as the Endless City, unfolds as an urban expanse extending in continental proportions. Its once majestic structures appear decayed and corrupted, but despite its deterioration, this vast metropolis remains an awe-inspiring sight. A thin fog covers its cobblestone streets, punctuated by aged lamp posts and rusty iron gates.

Most structures in the city, built from stone or clay bricks with a Victorian style, remain strong against the passage of time. They generally range from three to four stories high, boasting pointed roofs and decorated facades. Numerous windows adorn the buildings, adding to the uniqueness of its architectural style. Built close to each other, these structures form great blocks of buildings, creating long, winding roads that disappear into the usual darkness of the Penumbral Plane.

This city was once populated by the now-extinct species called the Eternal Citizens. For these citizens, magic was not just a tool, but a fundamental aspect of their daily lives. This is evident in the remnants of their sophisticated magical transportation systems, enchanted everyday appliances, and relics of their high-magic society. Magical heaters for houses, cups that keep beverages chilled, and barrels in which food never spoils are just a few examples of their innovative wizardry.

The allure of these everyday-use magic items brings many adventurers to this layer, as they sell for high prices among the nobility. While most of these treasures serve practical purposes, others are unique weapons and valuable adventuring gear, relics of the few soldiers and guards of the Eternal Citizens.

The desolate realm of the Endless City is presided over by the Purple Witches, enigmatic figures draped in purple cloaks. These witches serve the Ungod C'thraxis, operating under the command of Bellara and Catharina. They share this forsaken landscape with various hags—some allied, others living alone or forming covens—as well as many emoguns, especially the penumbral misery in the sewers and the penumbral lusts that roam the streets in search of prey.

Nightmares of the Endless City

The Endless City is haunted not by specters or ghosts, but by the residual terror of its former inhabitants, the Eternal Citizens. Their profound fears sporadically seep into the reality of this layer, causing random regions within the city to distort and manifest their once-deeply held nightmares (choose or roll a d6).

Lost in the Alleys (1–2). The vast expanse of the Endless City once intimidated even its own residents. When the Ungods attacked, many found themselves hopelessly lost in the city's complex network of passageways while fleeing their pursuers. When this nightmare surfaces, non-natives of the Penumbral Plane suddenly find themselves transported to a random location within the city, where any magic intended to orient, teleport, or understand the geography automatically fails within this area. Disoriented and lost, they relive the desperate escape of the original inhabitants, with every turn potentially leading to a dead end, and each step risking an encounter with the city's penumbral entities.

The Plague (3–4). The most terrifying of the nightmares reflects the fear of the Eternal Citizens—the plague, a lethal contagion brought by the penumbral miseries during the initial invasion. This nightmare manifests as a swarm of rat-like apparitions lurking in the region, their menace amplified by their spectral nature. Upon entering this zone and every subsequent hour spent within, non-native creatures must succeed in a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or contract a random disease. This nightmarish scenario captures the terrible effect of the plague that once decimated the populace of the Endless City within weeks, transforming their busy streets into a deserted city.

The Big Sister (5–6). When the invasion started, one of the biggest fears harbored by the residents was the despair of losing sanity. Filled with exotic magic, certain areas within this realm can swallow adventurers in a vivid illusion so real that they can interact with objects and individuals within this mirage, including the ability to touch objects and take damage. The essence of the illusion might paint a bustling city inhabited by regular humanoids instead of the Eternal Citizens. These illusions often involve the adventurers in dangerous and embarrassing situations, and it can take days or months to escape them, usually by defeating or persuading the powerful city mayor. The Purple Witches enjoy to observe these illusory realms through a special crystal ball, engage in discussions over the victims' reactions, and, on some occasions, even develop a strange affection for them.

Catharina, The Ageless Witch

Leading the Endless City, Catharina is the greatest of the Purple Witches. Surviving through ages via soul transference, she has navigated the turbulent currents of history, being a shadowy presence in many events that shaped Tanares. This temporal vastness has allowed her to skilfully influence circumstances and creatures, making her a formidable foe.

Catharina is not a mere disciple of Bellara, she ascended to become an autonomous authority, leading the fourth layer by C'thraxis' will. Fascinated by beauty, she wants to destroy anyone seen as more beautiful than her, and if possible, steal its body for herself, a flaw that can be exploited.

Catharina embodies a form of sadistic patience. Exceptional at understanding personalities, she expertly finds weaknesses and exploits them to her advantage. Often, she goes undercover to Tanares, carefully plotting to gain more power and advance the Ungods' goals, drawn by promises of eternal youth and beauty. Secretly, she wants to turn Bellara into her servant.

Dangers of the Endless City

Penumbral Miseries Plague. The city teems with nefarious rodents, known as the penumbral miseries, which are carriers of numerous diseases, both mundane and magical. Explorers must be careful to avoid catching diseases by creating effective ways to distract the rats.

Witch's Curse. The layer is home to the Purple Witches and diverse hags who frequently employ curses and hexes to secure their dominions. Falling victim to their magic is not uncommon. Objects might bear curses, pathways might be hexed, and sites could be rigged with illusions and traps. Even if one manages to evade these, dealing with the witches and hags remains a threat in itself. Negotiations are possible, but most often lead to dire pacts or cunning deception through magically sealed contracts with treacherous clauses.

Emoguns of Lust. These beings, either solitary or in small clusters, incessantly hunt for prey to charm and exploit. They feast on mortal emotions of desire and lust, utilizing illusory and transmutational powers to mimic fellow explorers, adventurers, or distressed individuals. Their modus operandi is to gain trust, making their victims feel safe, and acting when their guard is down.

Places of Interest

The Ghost Market. Once a month, the remnants of the Endless City's grand marketplace stir with the spectral remnants of its past citizens. For a full 24 hours, countless ghostly figures engage in trade and bargaining within the squares that once constituted the vast Endless Market. This event is special because adventurers can actually talk and trade with the bluish ghostly figures, exchanging gold and gems for ghostly goods. The bought items, although ghostly, can be touched and used as normal — even the food can be eaten. But here's the catch: after 24 hours, anything given as payment vanishes with the ghosts, and the items bought may either vanish or become real. Depending upon the item's value and nature, the odds of it materializing range from 90% for mundane goods, 50% for magic items, and down to a mere 20% for unique relics or items imbued with rare or exotic knowledge. The risk is great, but many adventurers come to the fourth layer to take the opportunity and acquire unique magic items, rare components, or even unique relics.

The Rat-King Slums. In a particular sector of the city, the urban sprawl has always been decadent, characterized by dirty roads and small houses that are packed together and unkempt. This decrepit area is under the sway of a unique lycanthrope—the Rat-King—transformed not from a rat but a penumbral misery. Possessing extraordinary cunning, this creature can command any penumbral misery to its will, using it to collect information all over the layer. Despite its impressive knowledge of city affairs, the Rat-King is not an Ungod servant but a self-interested entity. Paranoid, it views everyone, including Catharina, Purple Witches, emoguns, and even the Ungods as threats. The Rat-King is always plotting, gathering power and wealth to keep safe and in control, always having plans and escape routes ready for any situation. He may even hire adventurers for special missions.

The Hag's Marsh. A marsh in the city, created by sewage, is said to be home to a very powerful coven of hags, so formidable that even Catharina hesitates to challenge them openly. Rumors suggest that witches from other planes have come to reside here for unknown purposes. Some speculate they have an arrangement with the Ungods, others theorize they are waiting to harvest Emperor Baleroth's soul due to a pact, and some hypothesize they are archfey changed by the Penumbral Plane's power. Their true agenda is known only to them. What is known is that they have lots of magical power and are willing to make deals. No emogun dares to venture into their marsh, which could be a safe place for adventurers. However, overstaying their welcome is said to risk transformation into a penumbral misery, reserved for those who incite the hags' wrath.

Cityhaven's Palace. This impressive palace, located in the heart of the Endless City, is the only building that keeps its former splendor. Catharina is credited for its immaculate preservation, ruling from this prominent seat of power. Comprising over a thousand chambers, numerous gardens, and various wings, it serves as the Purple Witches' primary stronghold. Bellara occasionally meets with Catharina here, using a direct passage from her upper layer lair directly to this palace grounds. Only the elite Purple Witches are granted residence here, maintaining this as the only spot of pure beauty in the Penumbral Plane.

The Ruined Stations. Throughout the Endless City, ancient stations used for train transportation persist. Remarkably, the trains, imbued with unknown magic, continue to operate, arriving at each station every two hours. However, the routes and schedules remain enigmatic, often leading to the disappearance of adventurers. Conversely, some know one or a few safe routes covering long distances using specific times and stations. It's known that the Purple Witches often use this means of transport, and several trains serve as lairs for powerful emoguns, notably a few of the penumbral prides and sadnesses that reside in this layer.

Clockwork Nexus
The Fifth Layer

Denizens: Kikokus, emoguns of sloth and sadness.
Leader: The First Queen, Supreme Hivemother of the kikokus

The fifth layer, commonly referred to as "The Clockwork Nexus," was once the home plane of the industrious and methodical clockwork gnomes.

This vast labyrinth of interconnected tunnels, caverns, and passages is marked by the artistry of the clockwork gnomes' master builders. They crafted gears, levers, and intricate bronze mechanisms that served as components of a grand clockwork realm. The geography here is defined by perpetually changing tunnels and moving stone pathways, all governed by the precise rhythm of bronze cogwheels that cover the walls and ceilings. The disappearance of the clockwork gnomes remains a mystery, with their magnificent creation being one of the few testaments to their past existence.

The downfall of the fifth layer resulted from a brutal invasion by the Ungods, a war that spanned over a millennium. The triumph of these aberrant deities was marked by Droggath spawning the first kikokus, dreadful insect-like monstrosities with the ability to corrupt and take control of machines. These creatures now infest the mechanisms and control the level under the rule of the First Queen, the eldest hive mother of the kikokus. Serving the Fleshspawner faithfully, she perpetuates the corruption, reinforcing their dominion over this layer.

Nightmares of the Clockwork Nexus

The layer is suffused with the lingering nightmares of its former inhabitants, the clockwork gnomes. Echoes of their horrors and fears sporadically breach the reality of this layer, causing random sections within the tunnels and halls to sometimes manifest one of these malevolent mystical effects (choose or roll a d6).

Erratic Malfunction (1–2). The horror of malfunctioning mechanisms and desynchronization haunts the creatures in the area, causing all creatures, except natives to the Penumbral Plane, to appear mechanical while inside the area of this manifestation. At the start of each turn, creatures must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the start of their next turn. Creatures already paralyzed gain advantage on this roll but also suffer 1d6 damage upon failure. In addition, spells that would repair a construct are changed, healing wounds instead; the affected target regains 1d8 hit points per spell level if no amount is specified (consider Cantrips as zero). This nightmare embodies the clockwork gnomes' existential dread of becoming flawed beings, plagued by constant paralyzing failures.

Precipitation of Decay (3–4). An atmosphere of relentless rusty decay permeates the area as the climate turns cold and damp. All metallic objects within this section begin to show signs of oxidation and deterioration. Metallic armors, including magical ones, are rendered useless, providing no Armor Class benefits (other effects apply). Metal weapons are significantly weakened, forcing their wielders to attack with disadvantage. Upon leaving the sphere of influence of this nightmare, the corrosive effect ends; any signs of decay vanish immediately, and even items previously broken have a 20% chance of being repaired (each item can be affected by a specific area a single time only for both destruction and repair).

Temporal Chaos (5–6). The perception of time within the area affected by this nightmare spirals into chaos, becoming unpredictable and distorted. Things appear to move slowly or quickly at random, and even gravity accelerates and decelerates unpredictably. Each creature within this sphere of influence has a 50% chance of being affected by the *slow* spell for 1 minute (10 rounds) and a 50% chance of being affected by the *haste* spell for the same duration. Upon entering the area, randomly assign to each creature if it is hastened or slowed, and after each minute within, the creature's condition is reevaluated randomly. This nightmare reflects the clockwork gnomes' fear of chaos and disorder that gripped them following the Ungods' invasion.

The First Queen, Supreme Hivemother of the Kikokus

The First Queen, a gargantuan kikoku queen, reigns supreme over the Clockwork Nexus. As the most ancient hive mother of the kikokus, she wields more power than any other, controlling even other queens in this layer through her formidable telepathic abilities. Driven by an insatiable desire to spread her species, she serves the Fleshspawner, an Ungod known for its brutal form of corruption. Her progeny seized control of the plethora of mechanisms that exist in this layer.

The First Queen's sole desires are to devour and propagate, disseminating more kikokus throughout the fifth layer and beyond, particularly to Tanares. Although she has no control over kikokus beyond the Clockwork Nexus, she is indifferent to the emergence of other free queens outside her dominion. Her primary goal is for her progeny to continue multiplying and consuming everything in their path, following the will of Droggath.

The First Queen has a penchant for consuming males from any species and often keeps some particularly fat females,

regardless of species, as pets. While she treasures her pets and treats them with care, she is quick to punish those who defy her, ending the lives of those who misbehave three times or lose their perceived fatness. Some say she is fooled by illusion spells about appearance, or doesn't care at all.

Dangers of the Clockwork Nexus

The Denizens. This layer is notable for hosting a significant population of emoguns, especially those of sloth and sadness. Emoguns of sloth often remain hidden, buried in the ground, waiting to attack and devour those that dare enter their territory. These creatures are constantly hunting for sustenance and stand ready to ambush explorers.

Meanwhile, emoguns of sadness are particularly abundant in this layer, more so than any other location within the plane. They maintain concealed chambers that serve dual purposes: arcane laboratories and safe havens. Within these secure quarters, they progress their investigations and protect their magical possessions. The logical operations and predictability of this layer appeal greatly to these creatures, as they meticulously study its movements to manipulate them for defensive purposes against interlopers.

Last but far from least, the kikokus infest this layer, presenting a formidable threat to explorers. The First Queen is the most menacing of all, constantly gathering information about intruders in her dominion using her psionic control over the kikokus. Her commands are clear: capture those who catch her interest. As such, those who venture into this realm must walk with caution.

Constructs. Corrupted constructs, remnants of the clockwork gnomes' ingenuity, roam aimlessly in this layer. These mechanical creatures, ranging in size from small to gargantuan, pose a significant threat to any perceived invaders under the kikokus' control. A variety of constructs, including metal golems and clockwork monstrosities, can be found meandering through the caverns.

Defensive Perimeters. The ancient defensive mechanisms crafted by the clockwork gnomes are still operational to this day. Incorrect manipulation of the ancient bronze machines can trigger catastrophic events such as floods, electrical shocks, and the release of burning vapors, among other dangers. Any attempt to navigate the mechanical complexities of this domain can result in disastrous consequences if not approached with caution. Numerous mechanisms also harbor kikokus, which can control them to entrap or kill explorers. Adventurers often require extensive knowledge or experience with this plane to navigate it safely, or they may get the help of taii'maku specialists, who can guide them through its complex mechanisms.

Places of Interest

Gearspring Heart. This vast underground chamber is where the clockwork gnomes once worked tirelessly on their creations. The hollow is filled with enormous gears, pistons, and springs, all constantly moving and shifting the layout of the chamber. Amidst the massive cogwheels and machinery, one can find the last messages of the clockwork gnomes. The area is now populated by many kikokus, who often infest the mechanisms here. Some of the golems here, once defeated and purged of the kikokus infesting them, can be reassembled by a skilled engineer. These golems may provide useful information and help with crafting or repairing mechanisms. It is said that schematics for unimaginable machines can be found at this location, including for massive weapons and mechanical vehicles.

The Forlorn Library. This ancient library holds a wealth of knowledge about the intricate design and maintenance of clockwork structures. It's said that a particularly powerful emogun of sadness has claimed this place as its lair. Its powers are said to be greater than an archmage's, and the other sadnesses often visit this region to ask for guidance and tutoring in exchange for sharing their own findings on arcane secrets. This reclusive creature, known only as Blacktear, is said to be studying the very nature of the Penumbral Plane, hoping to find a way to liberate its existence from the bonds of the Ungods. Adventurers who possess unique arcane secrets may attempt to negotiate with the creature, but they must exercise caution; Blacktear is as intelligent as it is wicked.

Queen's Gauntlet. This treacherous path leads directly to the First Queen's lair, lined with remnants of the gnomes' most ingenious and lethal defensive contraptions. Now under the control of the kikokus, these devices have been corrupted and are operated by the insect creatures. Intruders must navigate this path, its shifting mechanical traps, and the many kikokus guarding the place if they wish to reach the First Queen's chamber. At the end of this path, a vast chamber serves as the nesting place for hundreds of unhatched eggs and many kikoku servants, including the Five Daughters — kikoku queens who serve directly under the First Queen. The Daughter of Faith serves as a counselor and a powerful cleric of Droggath, the Daughter of Slaughter as the general and warlord of the kikokus, the Daughter of Magic as an advisor to the queen and a powerful master of arcane magic, the Daughter of Territory as the manager of information for the queen, and the Daughter of Happiness as the caretaker of the queen's pets and overseer of other mundane activities.

Echoes of Time. This hexagonal chamber is home to enormous bronze clock faces on its walls, each displaying a different time, frozen since their original world was consumed into the Penumbral Plane. However, once every one hundred days at midnight, all clocks chime in unison, causing a temporal anomaly. Creatures inside the chamber during this event might find themselves thrown back in time, compelled to face manifestations of the past. Most who were caught in this anomaly never returned. Those who claim they did tell wildly different tales; some say they found the clockwork gnomes in the past and returned with their help, while others claim they witnessed the initial invasion of Tanares. No one truly knows what secrets this chamber holds, and not even the servants of the Ungods seem keen on attempting to exploit it.

Inverted Archives
The Sixth Layer

Denizens: Corrupted collectors and emoguns of greed and envy.
Leader: Salevras, The Dark Collector

The Inverted Archives were once a peaceful place, full of treasures collected from many different planes. The initial residents of this place were known as the **collectors**. They were neutral beings who ventured across numerous worlds, accumulating unique artifacts and tomes of knowledge. However, their tranquil existence was disrupted when one of their own, Salevras, one of the most ancient and powerful of their kind, fell victim to overwhelming greed and envy for all books and mystical objects in existence.

His insatiable desire for a collection that contained items from the entire multiplane led him to delve into forbidden knowledge, where he learned of Z'ulvath, a sinister entity banished to the depths by powerful deities. Making a deal with Z'ulvath, he helped the entity escape from confinement and assisted it in preparing to invade the collectors' home world. In return, Z'ulvath promised that as it devoured each world of the multiplane, Salevras, now known as the Dark Collector, would receive a copy of each item and piece of knowledge from the destroyed worlds to keep in his collection.

Despite the collectors' magical skill and vast number of artifacts, they were taken by surprise by the invasion. The Dark Collector's betrayal of his own kind gave Z'ulvath all the secrets needed to ensure a quick and successful attack. However, despite their world being destroyed, the clever collectors survived, hiding within the dark corners of the Penumbral Plane. Using their magical abilities and items, they've managed to avoid the relentless pursuit of the Ungods, creating a new nomadic society that continues to this day.

Those who explore the Inverted Archives will find a labyrinth of libraries, archives, and rooms filled with relics. These spaces are mystically interconnected by large, polished metallic mirrors that serve as magic portals. A complex network of these mirrors permits movement from one room to another, although returning through the mirror from which one arrived often leads to a different destination. With no doorways connecting the rooms, crossing through this layer can only be accomplished via the mirrors. Very few areas are mapped, with the collectors being the only ones who truly know most of the routes.

Gravity within these rooms is inverted. This presents a disorienting situation where tables, bookshelves, and cabinets are anchored to what was once the floor, while visitors find themselves walking on what was formerly the ceiling. There are sporadic pockets of further distorted gravity where objects levitate or float until disturbed, or where every creature and object are continuously suspended in the air. However, these instances are rare.

Despite its somber and gloomy atmosphere, the Inverted Archives is full of books, manuscripts, and unique objects—traces of the ancient collectors' tireless quests. They stand as a treasure trove of the multiplane's vast knowledge and oddities. While countless adventurers have plundered the place over the eras, the immense quantity of books, scrolls, and magical objects gathered through eons of work by the collectors still offer an inexhaustible source for explorers.

Collector's Nightmares

The archives resonate with the harrowing nightmares of the collectors who perished during the long war against the Ungods' invasion. Their tormented minds and souls left indelible impressions on this plane, occasionally manifesting as peculiar mystical effects that temporarily transform random rooms (choose or roll a d6).

Loss of Memory (1–2). The Dark Collector exploited the Ungods' power to erase his kin's memories, converting them into corrupted collectors under his control. This collective fear of the collectors occasionally manifests in the area of the Archives. Within the affected area, non-native creatures of the Penumbral Plane cannot apply their proficiency bonus to any roll or to the DC of their spells and abilities, as their minds become foggy and their memories vague and bewildering.

Collection Disorder (3–4). Deep-rooted fears of losing cherished items and facing disorder in their collection have always plagued the collectors. When this nightmare materializes in an area, objects appear to move of their own volition. Any creature within the area affected by this nightmare finds that whenever they attempt to draw a weapon or retrieve a stowed item, they end up with a random object from their carried possessions instead. At the start of combat, any item in their hands gets strangely swapped with a random object they carry in the bag. This leads to complete disarray, as all possessions refuse to stay in their intended places in this area.

Mirror Entities (5–6). The most malevolent of all nightmares in the Penumbral Plane, mirror entities represent the terrifying idea of the collector succumbing to corruption and becoming a twisted version of themselves. When this nightmare materializes, the area fills with whispers that, if listened to, appear to include the listener's own voice. Looking into a mirror or any reflective surface during this phenomenon causes a sentient copy of the viewer to emerge. This mirror image is a flawless reflection, possessing the same items and capabilities as the original. Its sole purpose is to eradicate the original and take its place. Always chaotic and evil, the copy's desires or objectives are often opposed to the original creature's goals. For instance, a protector of their family will create a copy intent on their family's destruction, while an aspirant to the throne might spawn a mirror entity seeking to destroy the realm.

Salevras, the Dark Collector

Once fascinated by the mysteries of the planes, the Dark Collector has since been consumed by greed and obsession. His reflective, metallic skin has darkened, and his eyes have turned into void-like spheres, showing his total corruption and alliance with Z'ulvath. He floats, his feet never touching the ground, always surrounded by a dark aura. By pointing his finger at objects, he can manipulate his surroundings using telekinetic abilities, showing his high magical powers.

His relationship with Z'ulvath is not one of religious subservience, but rather a mutual pact serving both parties' ambitions. His sole desire is to possess every unique item and book from each plane destroyed by the Ungods. He aids Z'ulvath in consuming worlds, and in exchange, he is allowed to take the items he wants for his collection.

After being tainted by the pact with Z'ulvath, the Dark Collector's requisitions extended to also collect living and even sentient beings. Plants, animals, magical creatures, and intelligent creatures, including humanoids, from each devoured plane are trapped in an eternal magical stasis. Their preserved forms become another part of his huge collection. The Dark Collector frequently seeks unique items to expand his collection and opposes the destruction of any existence he has yet to collect. Despite his allegiance to Z'ulvath, he is open to negotiation if it aids in augmenting his collection.

Dangers of the Inverted Archives

Maze of Mirrors. Venturing into a perilous section via a mirror can be dangerous. Many mirrors do not provide a return route but instead link to another unknown location, which can easily cause a group to become lost in the labyrinth of rooms. Therefore, mapping the mirrors is a complex task, and very few routes are truly known. Furthermore, arriving in a dangerous location, such as the lair of a powerful emogun, the sanctuary of corrupted collectors, or even halls filled with mystical traps, can all prove lethal to unwary explorers.

The Dark Collector's Thirst. The Dark Collector's obsession with acquiring unique relics and books often puts adventurers in his crosshairs. His endless thirst for rare artifacts is a persistent threat to anyone infiltrating his domain. Many corrupted collectors, who are neutral evil in nature, serve him and often protect his treasures and seize unique objects from adventurers for their master.

Dangerous Denizens. The corrupted collectors who serve the Dark Collector, along with powerful penumbral greeds, inhabit many halls of this plane. Additionally, many packs of penumbral envies roam the area, drawn by the collectors' envy of one another and the adventurers' desire for the Dark Collector's huge collection of magical objects.

Magical Traps. Many collections within these halls are guarded by magical traps, ranging from summoning creatures of various types to curses or direct evocation magic aimed at those who dare to touch the items. Unique methods are often required to bypass each room's defense mechanisms. Determining whether a room is trapped is challenging, as some of the magical traps are concealed, undetectable even by magical means.

False Books. This layer holds an enormous quantity of books, covering nearly every subject across the planes. However, most of these books need a special ritual to reveal the truth, as, in their original shape, the information within often appears misleading or dangerous. For instance, a ritual may cast a harmful spell instead of healing; a map can lead to lethal places. The taii'maku genius U'Tibam developed some glasses capable of revealing if the book has this protection and the procedures necessary to be done. Some rare books are even resistant to this method but possess great magical mysteries and unique knowledge worth the risk.

Places of Interest

The Dark Collector's Collection Halls. This large complex is home to the Dark Collector's vast collection, which includes an assortment of books, relics, and magically preserved creatures. Many corrupted collectors maintain these halls, managing the colossal collection. Each hall is huge, covering hundreds of rooms, each dedicated to a specific type of content, meticulously organized and cataloged. The halls also house portals to various other planes from which the Dark Collector sends his servants to search for unique items. Occasionally, he recruits members of the Cult of Shadow Wing or even adventurers to retrieve specific objects or creatures from other planes that catch his interest, offering suitable rewards.

The Den of Bets. Operated by a powerful emogun of greed known as "The Four-Armed Dealer," this place allows creatures to gamble on games, gladiatorial fights, and various other stakes. Corrupted collectors frequent this place to try to win objects that might please the Dark Collector. Emoguns of different types also visit, seeking power or fortune. Cultists of the Cult of Shadow Wing and even some daring adventurers wager here. Although the environment is rife with corruption and deceit, the winners always receive their payouts. Some adventurers are even recruited to fight in exchange for favors or gold.

The Temple of the Decayed Gods. This dark temple was the first built in Z'ulvath's honor and has endured to this day. It contains statues of each god devoured by the Ungods, crafted by the cultists to represent the powers consumed by the Penumbral Father. Some believe that these images hold the lingering essence of the fallen deities and that communication with them is possible within this heavily guarded temple. Some disturbing rumors say that the statues of Tamera and Bauron are half completed.

Chapter 4
Gods and Religions

Tanares is a world rich in deities and religions. The gods and their direct manifestations in this world are shrouded in the mists of myths and legends, leaving a profound influence through the mighty power they bestow upon their devoted servants.

In this chapter, you'll delve into the faith beliefs of Tanares and be introduced to the pantheon of known deities. Each one has unique dogmas and distinct characteristics that set them apart.

Each god has its own community of priests, clerics, and paladins. An intriguing aspect of Tanares is that many of these gods belong to a larger religion. This signifies that all those who pledge their devotion to a specific god also participate in the same religious group or align themselves with the followers of the same pantheon. While they might lean more towards or be completely devoted to one particular god within the religion, they also recognize and respect the important roles of others, seeing them as integral parts of the same religious structure.

Detailing the information presented: Name of the Deity and its most common titles.	
Religion	The spiritual environment to which the deity belongs.
Alignment	The most common moral alignment of its followers.
Portfolio	The aspects of existence the deity presides over and the ideal essences of their divine manifestation.
Suggested Domains	The prevalent domains, a guiding beacon for clerics serving this deity.
Headquarters	The foremost worship sanctuary for the deity nowadays.
Leadership	The person or creature responsible for leading the religious congregation.
Typical Followers	A glance at the individuals who often kneel in devotion to this particular god.
Typical Vestments	The traditional clothes donned by priests and servants of the deity, each piece telling a tale of faith.
Sacred Temples	The prevalent architectural styles that define the temples of this deity, revealing the nuances of each divine abode.
Dogmas	The core teachings, morals, and duties that shape the lives of the followers and servants of the deity, forming the foundation of their faith.

Aibidh, Lord of Autumn, King of Wind

Religion: Cuibhle

Alignment: Neutral Good

Portfolio: Air, Autumn, Elves, Magic, Nobility

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Knowledge, Tempest

Headquarters: The Sanctum of Aurindunnum

Leadership: Sky-Lord Edronnas Silverlight

Predominantly autumn elves, some noble souls and respected wizards of good alignment, also follow this faith.

Typical Vestments: Fine silk garments in ethereal blues and snowy whites, crafted with the elegance of elven nobility and adorned with detailed embroidery reflecting the wind dance.

Sacred Temples: The towering structures made of glowing stone and crystalline glass are decorated with melodious wind chimes and flowing banners. They have vast flat peaks that are used for sacred rites. These awe-inspiring edifices seem to defy the heavens, representing their relentless pursuit of enlightenment and power.

The Faith of the Wind

Aibidh, the Lord of Autumn, is one of the four gods of the Cuibhle elven pantheon, symbolizing the transformation of autumn, the fascinating spirit of the wind, and the mystical heritage of the elves. To his followers, magic is an essential life force, invisible but omnipresent, integral to existence, and it needs to be harnessed for the protection of the weak.

The Faith of the Wind in Tanares began with the elves' arrival after the Ungods doomed their world and after the goddess Bás fell to hatred. While appealing mainly to autumn elves, the Wind faith of Cuibhle has attracted a select few from diverse species, fascinated by the arcane power, noble duty, and the pursuit of mystical knowledge. Through his teachings, Aibidh imbues his followers with a unique worldview, encouraging them to develop their talents and use their privilege to promote widespread well-being. To Aibidh, every gift—whether talent, status, wealth, or power—comes with an inherent responsibility. The followers must use these gifts to benefit all, extending their abilities to those less fortunate.

Aibidh is often depicted as a pallid male elf wearing silvery plate armor and a crown encrusted with obsidian orbs. He carries a silver staff in one hand and a silver longsword in the other. His eyes resemble storms, crackling with lightning. He is seen as the perfect image of nobility, always seeking solutions and protecting all beneath him, never leaving anyone behind.

Dogmas of Aibidh

Noblesse Oblige. Followers are compelled to use their talents and privileges to serve others. Magic should not be used for selfish desires but for communal good. A noble is duty-bound to use their wealth and influence for the betterment of the less fortunate. For Aibidh, every talent and every strength are responsibilities that need to be carefully managed to prevent falling into sin and corruption. Many tales circulate of Cuibhle nobility serving as magical advisors or secret protectors for threatened villages.

The Unseen Path. Aibidh's followers understand that the world goes beyond visible reality. Like the unseen wind, invisible forces of magic and spiritual energy shape their surroundings. They commit themselves to exposing hidden threats and uncovering secret plans. For Aibidh, nothing is exactly as it appears; one must always look beyond reality's illusions. When villagers disappear, for instance, darker forces are often suspected. There are rumors about the Wind Inquisitive, a secretive group within the Autumn faithful who quietly investigates malevolent influences.

Penumbral Opposition. Aibidh's devotees declare sworn enmity against the Ungods and denizens of the Penumbral Plane. They pledge to counteract these monstrous entities' expansion. It is common for the devout to embark on dangerous quests into the Penumbral Plane, facing the threat directly.

The Battle Against the Ungods

The rivalry between the Cuibhle and the Ungods is inherent to their faith, just as wind is integral to autumn. The Ungods are perceived as symbols of corruption and chaos—a storm to be calmed. Legends abound of epic confrontations between the Mystical Knights riding their Stormbirds and the abominations .

A common rite among the followers of Aibidh is the Gathering of the Storm, in which the faithful come together as a mighty army to invade the Penumbral Plane, slaying the penumbral creatures to harvest their mystical powers. The high wizards of the Mystical Knights employ obsidian orbs to extract the residual power from the vanquished monsters, storing them to empower the defensive illusions and magic that guard their elven cities.

The Mystical Knights

The Mystical Knights form a distinct part of this faith. All clerics and paladins of Aibidh, and many elven wizards, join this order. These individuals embody duty and nobility, upholding the dogmas of Aibidh. However, the dedication of Aibidh's servants and their Mystical Knights is occasionally seen as arrogance by others, who misinterpret their altruistic efforts.

Upon proving their loyal devotion, a Mystical Knight is blessed with a stormbird. These beings of elemental storm and wind serve as reliable allies and flying mounts. To behold a knight on their stormbird ascend to the skies is a magnificent sight.

Under the leadership of Sky-Lord Edronnas Silverlight, a paragon of deep wisdom and dedication, known to never stop working, even during his meditative rests, the faith further flourishes. He demands significant commitment from his knights and followers, setting high standards for all. But he holds himself to the highest expectations, seeking to exemplify, to an exaggerated degree, nobility, duty, and dedication to his people.

Ba-Ka, the God of Magic and Spirit

Religion: Ba-Ka

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Portfolio: Arcanists, Ethereal Plane, Magic, Spirits

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Chaos, Death

Headquarters: The Great Pyramid of Kalistessenâmun

Leadership: Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun

Typical Followers: The Kepesh people, arcanists who believe in the supremacy of magic.

Typical Vestments: Garments of soft satin in rich colors of gold, blue, and black, adorned with the cryptic Ba-Ka symbols. A circlet of shiny gold, decorated with images of scarabs, spirits, and arcane glyphs. They proudly carry trophies of defeated spellcasters in the form of skulls and bones. Commonly, gold bracelets inscribed with shapes of serpents, skulls, or mystical symbols, accentuate their attire.

Sacred Temples: Majestic sandstone pyramids, their apexes covered in radiant gold and sides decorated with detailed white carvings.

Ba-Ka Faith

Ba-Ka's doctrines permeate the everyday life of his faithful. They believe that magic, when used with the spirit, is a supreme power, a mystical bridge leading to Ba-Ka's sanctified city within the Ethereal Plane. Compelled by this conviction, they embark on an unending journey towards arcane prowess and spiritual elevation, aspiring to become the Akhu, the chosen spirits in Ba-Ka's divine court. They pledge their allegiance to the god of magic, vow bravery in facing death, and show respect for superior spellcasters.

The Great Pyramid of Kalistessenâmun, the heart of the faith, is the royal seat of the Pharaoh and the leader of Ba-Ka's disciples. From within these sacred walls, the formidable Lich Pharaoh directs the Kepesh and the entire religion of Ba-Ka. It is said that the pyramid's countless secret chambers house the extensive magical knowledge acquired by Kalistessenâmun, and earning access to its libraries, archives, and collections is a coveted goal for many of Ba-Ka's followers.

Ba-Ka manifests to his devotees as a slim figure wearing dark, ethereal robes; his face is a crow's skull. He's covered in golden arcane sigils connected by ghostly chains. In his hand, a shiny staff bearing a serpent at one end and an ethereal blue flame at the other.

Dogmas of Ba-Ka

Fearlessness in Death. Death is a mere doorway to another existence in Ba-Ka's divine city. Followers should not fear it but embrace it as an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Expansion of Magic. Acolytes of Ba-Ka should always delve deeper into learning, challenge conventional limitations, and discover new forms of magic. Wizards are esteemed as they embark on dangerous quests, braving uncharted realms in pursuit of hidden knowledge.

Mystical Covenant. The Kepesh society thrives on reciprocal respect and recognition of power. Disciples are bound to respect and follow superior spellcasters, who reciprocate by sharing their wisdom and magical knowledge. Hierarchy is determined by an individual's magical prowess and accomplishments to develop, protect, and spread magic. They must know that the only true law is the law of power, and the only true power is magic.

The Ungods and the Limits of Magic

Ba-Ka and his devotees view the Ungods as aberrations of the natural order that must be eradicated. They are resolute in their belief that their currently restricted magical potential, shackled by the gods Tamera and Bauron, limits their ultimate weapon against these blasphemies. As part of their plan, they are constructing the Vandanamalika—a potent mystical portal capable of unleashing unlimited magic to defeat the Ungods.

Ba-Ka also has another weapon against the Ungods: the Akhus. By converting mortal souls into his timeless ethereal servants, Ba-Ka disrupts the Ungods' method of corrupting souls to expand their aberrant army. This tactic starves the Ungods of additional forces while simultaneously bolstering Ba-Ka's army, but it also denies Tamera and Bauron the opportunity to elevate virtuous souls to become angels. While this causes conflict with the Celestianist Church, Ba-Ka justifies his actions as the most strategic maneuver.

The Akhu

The defining characteristic of Ba-Ka's followers is the Akhu, the ageless spirits living within the Ethereal Plane. Chosen individuals are blessed and transformed into these spiritual entities through a sacred ritual involving their life force. The Akhu serve Ba-Ka within his Eternal City or act as guides for the Kepesh and protectors of the temples.

They serve as emissaries, guardians of the faithful, or even slayers of the servants of opposing deities. They frequently accompany prominent priests of Ba-Ka, or answer directly to the Lich Pharaoh's will.

Bás, Lady of Winter, Queen of Water

Religion: Cuibhle

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Portfolio: Death, Elves, Eternity, Water, Winter

Suggested Domains: Death, Grave, War

Headquarters: The Ice Fortress

Leadership: Gullog, the Deathbringer

Typical Followers: Kemets, necromancers, ice elementalists

Typical Vestments: Dark cloaks in deep black, adorned with skulls and symbols of death, exuding an aura of icy terror. Their weapons are decorated with frost-like patterns.

Sacred Temples: Obsidian ziggurats with fronts displaying skeletal trophies of conquered enemies.

Their interiors are meticulously carved, depicting detailed images of elven history, confrontations against the Ungods, and the obliteration of the original elven plane.

The Iron Frost

Her faith embodies the unyielding resolve of winter's heart. Once a serene deity of water, peace, and rejuvenation, Bás became a remorseless manifestation of death, frost, and eternity by the Ungods' desecration of the ancient elven world. She is now the winter's fury, using her undead armies and icy prowess against the Ungods' corruption. Legions of kemets, necromancers, and ice elementalists offer a blind devotion to her.

Devotees portray her as a maternal elven figure with tears of frozen ice on her face. Her once fluid water robes have hardened into a chilling dress of icy spikes. In her grasp is an ice scythe with countless small black stars, each marking the end of a penumbral creature.

Dogmas of Bás

Endless Vengeance. The disciples of Bás are fueled by an insatiable desire for vengeance against the Ungods, seeking to eradicate all traces of ungodly defilement no matter the cost. For a disciple of Bás, any alliance with a penumbral entity is considered a severe sin.

Unforgiving Frost. Mercy and weakness have no place in the hearts of Bás' followers. Showing compassion or forgiveness is considered a betrayal of Bás' resolve and is renounced as a sign of weakness that must be avoided.

Hierarchy and Dominance. Bás enforces a strict hierarchy within her faithful, an order reflecting the rigid, immovable structures of frost. Every disciple recognizes their place and obeys their superiors. This authoritarian control is not just internal, as Bás' disciples are expected to dominate others, extending her frosty influence.

The Perpetual Winter

Bás perceives the Ungods as the font of all corruption, a plague to be cleansed by her icy wrath. She creates a terrifying strategy: turning Tanares into a realm of eternal winter and undeath, thus rendering it inhospitable to the Ungods. Her vision is of a world imprisoned in ice, where no life can endure, thereby depriving the Ungods of any essence to corrupt.

She has forged a pact with Golgöggoth, forming the Forces of Darkall, now collaborating to instill Tanares with an eternal frost, aiming to trap the Ungods in a desolate, icy world.

Because the other elven gods once thwarted her plan in their original world, Bás wants to ensure that nothing will stop her this time. She plans to first take control of a legendary Vandanamalika, so she can overcome the other gods, bring the Ungods to Tanares, and close all escape routes, guaranteeing they will be forever locked with her in this world.

The Cold Embrace

Bás' faith, notorious for its ruthless strategies and brutal tactics, is built on concepts of emotionless efficiency, strict hierarchy, and hatred toward the Ungods and all who stand in the way of their defeat. While the hierarchy is rigid, followers aim to prove their efficacy and expose the weaknesses of their superiors to ascend in the ranks, often leading to internal schemes and conflicts.

Gullog, the chosen of Bás', received great powers from her, including the ability to resurrect any creature, if in possession of its remains, preserving its original abilities and memories, but forcing the undead creature to serve him. To further strike fear into the hearts of Gullog's adversaries, the blessing of Bás ensures him endless resurrection upon death. However, rumors suggest that an elven artifact or ritual is capable of breaking Gullog's cycle of resurrection.

Gullog is known as one of the most skilled warriors in Tanares. He is ruthless, vengeful, and uncaring, treating his troops as sacrificial pawns in the determined pursuit of his objectives.

But he keeps a deep secret: Gullog, the supposed kemet leader and favored one of Bás, was originally a human, not a kemet. Decades ago, Golgöggoth swapped their souls, and now the true kemet soul resides within an undead knight that mindlessly serves Gullog. His determination derives from a promise Bás made to resurrect his mother, who died at the hands of the kemets, should he succeed in his mission. Currently, only Bás and Golgöggoth know this secret.

Bauron, the Moonlord and Hunter of Darkness

Religion: Celestianism

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Portfolio: Darkness, Hunting, Law, Moon, Punishment

Suggested Domains: Grave, Order, Trickery

Headquarters: Celestianist Cathedral of Skybell

Leadership: High Cardinal Taram and Ellen Gideoni

Typical Followers: Judges, warriors, hunters, inquisitors

Typical Vestments: Simple purple robes, often concealing the face, embroidered with Bauron's moon symbol. All weapons and shields carry the same sigil.

Sacred Temples: Fortified cathedrals built in locations that can serve as a refuge for the common people in times of danger. Often constructed of dark stone, with prominent depictions of Bauron's purple moon.

The Moon and Celestianism

Bauron, twinned in birth with Tamera, stands as the co-creator of Tanares. Their mutual reverence forms the unified faith known as Celestianism. High Cardinal Taram leads the overarching Celestianist Church, while Ella Gideoni, a formidable paladin, guides the Bauronian Sect.

Deceptive intrigues by the Cult of Shadow Wing once corrupted the narrative of the Evolutionist Church, portraying Bauron as an avatar of chaos. However, the Celestianist Reform—started by the returning archangel Ascaran—revealed the Ungods' manipulation, transforming the church into the Celestianist Church.

The knowledge about Bauron's essence as an upholder of order and an obstinate adversary to evil is now restored. Together with Tamera, Bauron protects Tanares, guarding against the Ungods' corrupting influence. While revered by most inhabitants of Tanares, Bauron finds his most zealous followers among the champions of justice and defenders of the weak, including judges, warriors, hunters, and inquisitors.

The Celestianist Church depicts Bauron as an imposing figure draped in violet and gilded plate armor, radiating divine power. Four wings sprout from his back, two a moonlit white and two black, symbolizing lunar illumination and the night sky. His divine halo crowns him, and a mighty greatsword rests in his hand.

Dogmas of Bauron

Retribution. Followers are tasked to bring justice upon sinners and act as persistent shields against the corruption, sins, and harm threatening Tanares. Guided by the moon's luminance, they tread the path of righteousness and retribution. To allow a crime or evil to succeed unpunished is sinning against Bauron.

Night's Vigil. As darkness descends upon Tanares, the weak seek refuge, and the strong act as hunters against the threats of the night. This sacred duty transcends obligation, manifesting as a privilege for Bauron's devotees. The followers are expected to maintain this vigilance during the night to protect those weaker than them. Because of this, Bauron's disciples often sleep during the morning.

Renounce Bonds. The clerics and paladins of Bauron are required to distance themselves from their birth families and abstain from forming new ones. They adopt new names given by their order as a sign of their dedication, but also to protect their kin from Bauron's enemies. All of Bauron's faithful, even the non-initiates, are required to treat the initiates as siblings but are prohibited from attempting to establish familial ties with them.

Bauron's Vigil

Bauron's disciples must wage an eternal war against the Ungods. Having once distorted the sacred scriptures to depict Bauron as an agent of chaos, the Ungods now face the wrath of the Moonlord, who is determined to hunt down and eradicate all their spawn. Bauron's blessing, conferred upon those who destroy penumbral creatures or aberrations under the night sky, empowers his followers and fuels their determination. **The person who delivered the final blow to the creature receives a number of temporary hit points, determined as follows:**

New Moon: 1d4
Crescent (either Waxing or Waning): 1d6
First/Third Quarter: 1d8
Gibbous (either Waxing or Waning): 1d10
Full Moon: 1d12

This lasts until the next night, but the points do not stack for multiple creatures defeated; you always keep the highest value.

Orders of the Moon

The Bauronian Sect of the Celestianist Church comprises many orders, each contributing to the grand vision of Bauron's disciples.

The Awakened are lone wolves who hunt down penumbral creatures in the night. Resolute against abominations born of corruption or foul sorcery, they employ unconventional methods and might come off as cold, but their loyalty to Bauron's cause never wavers.

The Heralds uphold justice, influencing the legal mechanisms of the Empire and the Republic. Their impact extends to the Empire's arena battles, where many fates are sealed, and to the Republic's judiciary, where they sit among the respected judges.

The Inquisition, a disciplined and military faction, relentlessly tracks witches, cultists, and all those tainted by the Ungods. Operating with the precision of an army, they journey across Tanares, finding the corrupted and punishing the sinners.

The Spiritual Guides preside over sacred rites, funerary customs, and the destruction of the undead. They delve into understanding spirits, necromancy, and defenses against the dark arts and the corruption of the Ungods. They conduct their tasks discreetly, protecting burial grounds and possessing knowledge of mysticism and spirituality.

Breith, Lord of Spring, King of Earth

Religion: Cuibhle

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Earth, Elves, Forest, Spring, Vigilance

Suggested Domains: Life, Nature, Protection

Headquarter: The Glade of the First Mother Tree

Leadership: High Hierophant Bennalas Sindile

Typical Followers: Spring elves, druids, rangers, and some farmers, florists, and gardeners of other species.

Typical Vestments: Green hooded robes tied by a rope at the waist, often decorated with leaves, carrying wooden sacred symbols and wearing ritualistic bows on their backs.

Sacred Temples: Sacred clearings in forests, occasionally forest caverns turned into temples for storing sacred objects.

The Faith of the Earth

In Tanares, deep in the green embrace of the Sindile Forest, the spring elves express their devotion to Breith, King of Earth and Lord of Spring. He is a prominent figure in the Cuibhle pantheon, shaping the lives of his Children of Spring. These devoted followers pledge themselves to the sacred Mother Trees, ten ancient trees blessed by Breith. Every full moon, the elves rejuvenate these sacred plant guardians with the Ritual of Renewal, a rite against the corruption of the Ungods.

Dogmas of Breith

Celebration of Life. Life is a sacred gift, a demonstration of Breith's power. Every birth, humanoid or animal, is an emblem of the divine. Followers must nurture and protect all life, especially the young ones, as no child is born with the corruption of the Ungods.

Defense of the Forests. Breith's disciples must defend their sacred woods. The Sindile Forest and its Mother Trees, in particular, demand supreme reverence. Any transgression against these sacred wards must find strong resistance. The Mother Trees must be maintained at all costs and continually cleansed of corruption through the sacred rites.

Eternal Vigilance. Vigilance against the spread of corruption is an important responsibility. The faithful must be alert to the whispers of the Ungods and prepared to strike quickly when they discover any corruption.

Protecting the Mother Trees

The Children of Spring view the Ungods as direct threats to the Mother Trees and, consequently, the entire world. This relationship traces back to the first Ungod invasion, during which they faced the loss of a Mother Tree for the first time. Today, only 10 of the original 12 Mother Trees exist.

Other species, having shorter lifespans compared to the spring elves and showing disregard for the forests, led the elves to close Sindile's borders for over a millennium. While things are changing after the Kemet Invasion, the servants of Breith are still distrustful of anyone in their sacred forests, perceiving invaders as potentially corrupted or manipulated by the Ungods.

The destruction of the Mother Trees is seen by the Ungods as a great step to their ascension, and they use all methods possible to weaken the servants of Breith and the spring elves. They are now exploiting the slow opening of Sindile's borders, sending agents infiltrated into groups of people who are being accepted there.

The Paths of the Forest

Woven into the Faith of the Earth are five distinct paths. These paths mirror the connection between life and the divine.

The Path of the Bow comprises rangers and archers. Their duty lies in protecting the forest, a defense against intruders.

The Path of the Sword summons warriors and paladins to action, the martial might of the spring elves guarding against the forces of corruption.

The Path of the Trees is where druidic harmony interlaces with worship, the guardians of the Mother Trees enduring against the forces of devastation.

The Path of the Elements resonates with earth elementalists, keepers of ancient knowledge, and the land's essence.

The Path of the Altar sees clerics and priests conducting sacred rituals, divine helpers, and serving as spiritual advisors. Members of this path are always found assisting groups from different paths.

Among these paths, there is a unique hierarchy. Initiates evolve from Seedlings to Sprouts, to Blossoms, and finally, Elderwoods. Hierophants oversee each path, with the High Hierophant at the top of the spiritual hierarchy.

High Hierophant Bennalas Sindile leads the faith. This venerable figure is believed to be the first elf to be born in the lands of Tanares; his mother arrived pregnant from the elves' original world. Bennalas' mother was the most powerful druid in Tanarean history, and she gave her life defending the Mother Trees during the invasion by the Ungods.

Bennalas leans toward disdain for non-elven humanoid species because he witnessed the greed and impulsive nature of humans. Though his views incite controversy, his commitment to his people and the protection of the Mother Trees remains strong. Bennalas is devoid of worldly desires, dedicating himself to preserving the Sindile Forest and the service of Breith, serving as an example for his followers.

C'thraxis, Lady of Sins

Religion: Cult of Shadow Wing

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Portfolio: Deception, Fear, Manipulation, Pacts, Seduction

Suggested Domains: Trickery

Headquarters: The Crystal Forest and the Endless City—respectively, the third and fourth layers of the Penumbral Plane

Leadership: Bellara, the Daughter of C'thraxis, and Catharina, the Purple Witch Queen

Typical Followers: Corrupt nobles, evil cultists, swindlers, seducers, power seekers, and deceivers.

Typical Vestments: Dark purple robes or dresses, designed to be revealing and seductive, adorned with symbols representing the Ungods.

Sacred Temples: Hidden sanctuaries in abandoned buildings, mansion basements, or meeting points of nobility, all concealed by illusions.

The Cult of Sins

The Cult of Shadow Wing reveres C'thraxis, the Lady of Sins, alongside her siblings and her father, Z'ulvath. Born in the shadowy void, C'thraxis is a manifestation of deception, fear, and seduction. Her followers, spread across Tanares, exploit others' weaknesses, turning the once virtuous into servants of darkness. Her servants infiltrate high society, playing on the mortal heart's weaknesses and spreading their web of corruption. Lust, greed, and envy — all fall under the domain of C'thraxis. She is the most cunning, deceitful, and charismatic of the Ungods, able to weave lies and truths in such a way that can seduce even the most righteous of mortals.

In dreams and nightmares, C'thraxis reveals herself to her devoted followers. Her form displays compelling beauty concealed beneath a dark and enigmatic mask, emanating an irresistible aura. Contrasting her black and white dress, her deep red lips draw attention. Below her slender waist are many ink-black, sinuous tentacles adorned with elongated, razor-sharp spikes. Demonstrating her power and dominance, her tentacles always firmly clutch the skulls of her defeated enemies, while her opening arms invite devotees to embrace her.

Dogmas of C'thraxis

Shadow's Embrace. Followers shall perpetuate lies and deceit, planting discord among allies, instilling distrust, and breaking friendships. As they dismantle trust, they benefit from the resulting chaos. Territories on the brink of civil war or organizations nearing collapse are often the result of C'thraxis' servants' insidious schemes.

Temptation's Touch. The weak and susceptible are targets of the cunning. Those who follow the Lady of Sins shall manipulate the vulnerable, luring them with half-truths and empty promises. An orphaned street child may be offered a loving family; a failing noble might be seduced with the prospect of power and wealth—all fall into C'thraxis' service.

Corruption's Call. The path to power often involves indulging in sinful behaviors. Followers shall drive others to indulge in their desires. A modest merchant might become a greedy hoarder, or a once-honorable knight could become a cold-blooded killer under C'thraxis' influence.

The Path of the Sinful

Operating in secrecy, C'thraxis and her followers methodically orchestrate the world's downfall, conducting the ascension of the Ungods. Often, figures once respected in society, driven by desperation or greed, find themselves ensnared by the Cult. Their dark purpose manifests in the effort to destabilize societal structures, drawing innocent souls into sin. They seek to transform Tanares into a horrific realm under the rule of the Penumbral Father, proving that C'thraxis is the greatest of his offspring.

The Cultists of Sins

What sets apart the cultists of C'thraxis is their ability to infiltrate society, especially its higher ranks. Its followers, while bearing the dark mark of the Ungods, often disguise themselves as high-society figures such as nobles, rich merchants, influential priests, cunning advisors, or great wizards.

The followers of C'thraxis are divided into three major groups. The Purple Witches, under the control of Catharina, the Purple Witch Queen, the arachnes, spawn of Bellara, the Daughter of C'thraxis, and the Purple Acolytes, the male devotees, who execute the impulses of the Purple Witches. These servants are all masters of manipulation, influencing the powerful to serve their dark agendas.

The Purple Witches are mortal females who, after making a pact with Bellara in exchange for power, are placed under Catharina's control, a Purple Witch elevated to the status of an equal to Bellara for her great deeds in the name of C'thraxis. Catharina and her witches control the fourth layer of the Penumbral Plane, the Endless City.

The arachnes, half-spider and half-woman, inhabit the third layer of the Penumbral Plane, the Crystal Forest, where Bellara established her lair. They are powerful creatures, carrying the blood of Bellara and the corruption of C'thraxis in their veins. They often take control of parts of Undertanares, and the most powerful among them may disguise as a mortal and infiltrate society to follow the will of C'thraxis.

A cultist might hide in plain sight as a charming noble or a daring bard, weaving an illusion of charisma while pursuing their true agenda. What appears as a simple investigation might lead to a web of deception and corruption reaching the highest ranks of power.

Dorsi, The Virtuous One, The Stonefather

Religion: Dorsism

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Dwarves, Forge, Guardians, Underground, Virtues

Suggested Domains: Courage, Forge, Protection

Headquarters: The Great Temple of Stonelair

Leadership: Huradrin, the Wise

Typical Followers: Primarily dwarves, but also smiths, miners, guardians, and bodyguards of other species.

Typical Vestments: Thick gray and brown robes, bearing the symbol of their clan alongside the Symbol of Dorsi. They often wear a heavy stone amulet on their chest.

Sacred Temples: Great stone structures adorned with symbols of virtues and historical battles.

The Guardians of Undertanares

From the heart of Undertanares, the Dorsism faith venerates the Stonefather, a deity deeply intertwined with the creation of the dwarven people and their culture. Dorsi created the first dwarves from the stones of Undertanares, imbuing them with the core virtues: wisdom, courage, and dedication. He tasked them to defend the subterranean world and its hidden wonders from the Ungods.

Dorsi is depicted as a stone dwarf, similar to the Stone Spirits, with eyes of shining moonstone. His metal armor features a dragon shape on the right shoulder, a goat on the left, and a lion on the helmet. He wields a two-handed hammer that appears suitable for both war and forge. His symbol, a chimera, represents the challenges of the three virtues.

Dogmas of Dorsi

Virtue of Wisdom. Rooted in understanding and thinking ahead, wisdom is seen as the guiding light for protection. Without wisdom, one does not know what is right to protect. A wise individual anticipates potential threats, understands the world around him, and makes sound decisions. Tales speak of ancient dwarven elders who prevented catastrophes with their sagacity.

Virtue of Courage. The very essence of protection, courage empowers followers to face fears, confront adversity, and stand for those in need. Without courage, one cannot protect others. Stories tell of dwarven warriors who stood firm against overwhelming odds, their courage echoing through the centuries.

Virtue of Dedication. Dedication shapes protection into a tireless duty. It encourages loyalty and perseverance, representing the resolve to protect without hesitation. Without dedication, one is not prepared to defend. A true believer in dedication would move mountains and make an effort to guard what they hold dear for centuries, if necessary.

The Stone Spirits and the Ungods

The Stonefather and his followers stand resolute against the Ungods. Armed with the virtues, the first dwarves clashed with the Ungods' invasion. Those who fell in battle, virtuous and resolute, were honored by Dorsi and transformed into revered Stone Spirits. Conversely, dwarves who abandoned their kin, succumbing to fear and neglecting their duty, were excluded, ultimately degenerating into the corrupt Serpent Clan of the duergar.

Dwarven priests honor great individuals by building stone statues of them and imbuing them with a core of moonstone enchanted with Dorsi's blessings. This ritual allows the ancestral dwarf spirits to lie dormant in the stone, rather than proceed to the afterlife, enabling some of them to awaken and protect their people during times of need, becoming the Stone Spirits.

The Quest for Virtues

The Dorsism faith centers on the sacred quest for personal growth. Each devotee embarks on a journey through four great challenges associated with Dorsi's three virtues and the fight against corruption, known as the Serpent's Tail. These trials, sometimes lifelong, guide the dwarves through tests of wisdom, courage, and dedication as they combat the corrupting influence of the Ungods.

When a priest of Dorsi deems a follower to have performed a deed that proves they possess one of the virtues, the local elders gather for a grand ritual. They review the follower's deeds; if they decide that the virtue was achieved, they craft a symbol with their name and the corresponding chimera's head. This symbol is often carried with great pride by the dwarf.

Acts of dishonor may lead a council of elders to remove the symbol and, in severe cases, even exile the individual, considering them corrupted by the serpent's path. Conversely, a dwarf who acquires all three sigils is invited to join the ancestral dwarven stone spirits after death. Dwarves possessing all three virtues are rare, even among the councils. Currently, only the three kings of Stonelair, Rurik, Huradrin, and Ukhumlim carry this honor. Their achievements during the Kemet Invasion provoked Dorsi to call upon the Stone Spirits to aid the dwarves after the long centuries of what was called the Stone Silence, after the fall of Arheimar to corruption.

Huradrin serves as the High Priest of Dorsi. While he holds great power as a druid, he received Dorsi's blessing during the Great Dwarven Summoning that reawakened the Stone Spirits, granting him divine spells that complement his already powerful druidic ones.

Droggath, The Fleshspawner, The Dread

Religion: Cult of Shadow Wing

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Portfolio: Monsters, Savagery, Slaughter, Summoning

Suggested Domains: Death, War

Headquarters: Ardilogs' Lair in the Cavern of Magma, the second layer of the Penumbral Plane

Leadership: Abhorroth, the Dark Titan

Typical Followers: Bloodthirsty murderers, evil giants, corrupted barbarian tribes, intelligent monsters, and the Spawners sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Typical Vestments: Dark and ragged dark purple clothes stained with the blood of slain foes.

Typical Temples: Dark caverns filled with bloody altars and monstrous images.

The Bloodthirsty Cultists

The Cult of Shadow Wing worships the Ungods, including the monstrous Droggath, a manifestation of savagery and unrestrained brutality. This terrifying deity is revered by the worst elements of society, including sadistic murderers, vile giants, marauding barbarians, and those fascinated with summoning monstrous horrors. The cult encourages the idea of survival of the fittest, pushing their followers to demonstrate their strength and brutality, leaving a trail of violence and destruction in their path.

Servants of Droggath create no image of their bloody god, believing the blood of their victims to be the symbol of their deity. The few cultists who have glimpsed his image speak of a gargantuan form, beyond reason, covered in hide of iron-like scales and huge spikes from his back. From his grotesque maw extend teeth that are longer and more menacing than any nightmare could conceive, promising an agonizing death to those swallowed by them. Bizarre tentacles protrude from his head and tail, indicating the chaos to come. And finally, his eyes reflect voids of unending hunger.

Dogmas of Droggath

Cull the Weak. The followers of Droggath are commanded to ruthlessly target the weak and vulnerable, as they serve only as prey to the strong, and their eradication helps to clear the way for a world ruled by the mightiest. As an example, a tribe of corrupted barbarians might attack a peaceful village, spilling the blood of its inhabitants solely to honor Droggath; no other reason is required.

Feast on the Fallen. Cannibalistic rituals mark the aftermath of every battle. Followers of Droggath must consume the flesh of their defeated foes, believing they absorb their strength and resilience. In the Droggath temples, cultists hold blood-soaked feasts where they devour the life essence of their fallen enemies.

Spread the Beasts. The faithful actively propagate monstrous creatures by any means possible. Through dark summoning rituals, they bring terrifying magical beasts and creatures from the Penumbral Plane, unleashing them upon Tanares. Other servants may reproduce monsters or destroy their habitats to make them move to civilized lands. A summoner should infiltrate a city and release creatures at the heart of civilization.

The Path of Blood

The Spawners seek to corrupt Tanares with savagery and terror. In honor of Droggath, they unleash monstrosities that spread chaos and death, gradually wearing down the resistance of the mortal world against the Ungods' ascension. Each act of brutality, each monster birthed, and each life claimed fuels the growth of their power.

A once tranquil forest might transform into a den of abominations and magical beasts due to unchecked summoning rituals. A once reclusive group of trolls might bring destruction to a village, being lured by a sadistic cultist.

The servants of Droggath use all methods to incite a bloodbath, whether by killing their targets themselves, raising armies of goblinoids or other monstrous humanoids under their control, or spawning creatures by magic. They always look for the path that causes the most pain, suffering, and destruction, believing that only the strong deserve survival.

The Hierarchy of Savagery

Followers of Droggath embrace raw savagery and are true believers in the survival of the fittest. Cultists gain status through strength and brutality, not manipulation or cunning. The rites involving the consumption of enemies offer a particularly horrid spectacle, echoing the primal monstrosity that Droggath embodies.

A cultist will rise in the ranks by the power of the enemies they defeated and ate. Cultists are forbidden to attack each other, as they need to focus their strength on the enemies of Droggath. However, they will eat their fallen comrades if they have the chance, believing that by doing so, they gain their strength and rise to the ranks of those they consumed. However, such promotions may lead to the downfall of those who receive them, as higher-ranked cultists are expected to face more powerful enemies. The servants of Droggath revere this bloody cycle, believing that it creates strong servants while eliminating the weak ones.

Fruitful, the Fey Goddess

Religion: Fruitlism

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Portfolio: Abundance, Faeries, Halflings, Hospitality, Joy

Suggested Domains: Nature, Protection, Trickery

Headquarters: The Great Orchard at the heart of halfling territories

Leadership: Patriarch Freddus, the Humored

Typical Followers: Mainly halflings, along with farmers, bards, druids, tavern keepers, and innkeepers of other species.

Typical Vestments: White and green robes, colored with seasonal flowers and fruits. Holy symbols, personally carved in wood, are worn as necklaces. Followers often carry finely crafted walking staffs, carved with shapes of their favored fruits.

Sacred Temples: Beautiful, open orchards, rich with flowers and fruit-bearing trees, decorated with stone and wooden statues.

Joy and Abundance

The faith in Fruitful, the fey goddess, forms the backbone of halfling society. Their myths tell of their first ancestors, shaped by Fruitful from the most fertile soil of Tanares. Halflings embody the blessings of abundance, hospitality, and joy bestowed by Fruitful. While this faith is deeply integrated into everyday halfling life, it is also respected by farmers, bards, druids, tavern keepers, and innkeepers of other species who revere this goddess of faeries, farming, and hospitality.

Fruitful is portrayed as a beautiful halfling maiden, her gem-like eyes reflecting the green fields full of life. Her vestments, woven with nature's bounty, show flowers and fruits that appear at the right times of the year. Her brown hair is adorned with a crown featuring small fruits and berries. Translucent wings fan out from her back, shimmering iridescently in the sunlight and fluttering rhythmically. Around her, pixie followers play in constant joy, with their laughter harmonizing with Fruitful's melodious voice.

Dogmas of Fruitful

Fey Hospitality. The tradition of hospitality, reflective of both fey etiquette and Fruitful's benevolence, is deeply rooted in her followers. Providing food and shelter to those in need is seen not merely as a moral obligation but a sacred duty. In return, they may request a favor equivalent to the hospitality provided. This reciprocal relationship has resulted in a unique exchange system, creating complex networks of favors and aid.

Life of Joy and Abundance. Followers are encouraged to lead lives filled with laughter, dance, and plenty. This philosophy serves as an antidote to the darkness and despair propagated by the Ungods. This doctrine, deeply rooted in halfling culture, has inspired joyful music, lively dances, and delicious feasts celebrated across Tanares. Rites and sacred days for Fruitful are always marked by dance, music, food, and celebration.

Honoring Nature and Faeries. Fey creatures, considered sacred emissaries of Fruitful, are revered and respected. Followers desire to coexist harmoniously with nature, cultivating vibrant orchards and gardens, establishing sanctuaries for fey creatures, and utilizing natural resources sustainably. This respect extends to fey etiquette, with fair trades and carefully keeping promises.

The Fairies and the Ungods

The Ungods, disruptors of the natural world's sacred balance, are considered the primary adversaries in the sacred teachings of Fruitful's followers. As protectors of the wild, the faeries serve as mystical guardians of the goddess, offering relentless resistance against the corruption of the Ungods. The invasion of Tanares by the Ungods, in ages long past, led to the formation of the Feypact, an alliance between the halflings and the archfey, the most powerful entities living within the mystical realm of the Feywild. As the nefarious power of the Ungods grows, preserving this sacred pact becomes ever more essential. Consequently, halflings and their allies become increasingly drawn into tumultuous confrontations against the evil forces seeking to devastate the world.

Devotees of Fruitful dedicate their lives to spreading hope and joy throughout the lands, offering abundant food, melodic music, and rejoicing dances to all corners. They firmly believe that by suppressing negative emotions and promoting an environment of goodwill, they can reduce the influence of the Ungods, and prevent the people of Tanares from falling into sin and malice.

Fruitful's blessings, bestowed by her archfey servants, provide her halfling children with the only known protection in Tanares against the devastating effects of the Malrokian Curse. However, this divine shield remains strong only if her disciples fulfill their obligations under the Feypact. Protected halfling villages are the only safe havens in the world during the cataclysms of a Malrokian Curse.

While Fruitful is a beacon of infinite benevolence, her nature also embodies capricious whimsy. She adheres strictly to the etiquette of the fey, demanding fair compensation for each divine intervention she orchestrates.

The Feypact and Halfling Resilience

A distinctive aspect of this faith is the Feypact and its manifestations. Each halfling town hosts weekly banquets honoring an archfey; in return, they provide protection based on the liveliness of the festivities. This arrangement enhances the halflings' talent for transforming simple gatherings into grand events, attracting fey of all kinds to their celebrations. The annual competition to find the best cook, hunter, dancer, and performer, with the winners receiving a unique fairy blessing, is a beloved tradition. Some whisper these blessings have led to unusual abilities, good fortune, and even magical weapons.

The resilience and optimism of Fruitful's followers, even when confronted by the Ungods, make them beacons of hope in these troubled times.

Fumetsu Tenshikin, The Eternal One

Religion: Fumetsu Eido

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Courtesy, Honor, Justice, Ki, Loyalty

Suggested Domains: Courage, Knowledge, Life

Headquarters: Yama's Imperial Palace

Leadership: Fumetsu Tenshikin

Typical Followers: Citizens of Yama, samurais, monks, ninjas, judges, and justice-aligned nobles.

Typical Vestments: White kimonos with details in yellow or red, often depicting a dragon or the clan symbol of the priest.

Sacred Temples: Wooden Yama-style structures decorated with paper sigils and ritualistic ropes. In the inner hall, an altar holds a finely crafted dragon statue made of tameranium and storage for the blessed relic of the temple.

The Way of Honor and Righteousness

Fumetsu Eido, the Eternal Path, is the way of Fumetsu Tenshikin, the Eternal One. Under the disguise of a god-sovereign resides the tameranium Avatar Dragon, whose draconic duty as a guardian of Tanares shaped his decision to act as a deity and guide mortals towards ascension. His ability to grant divine magic to his priests derives from ancient angelic artifacts and the use of tameranium. Its Ki channeling properties allow him to send energy through the Ley Lines, extracted from the life force of Tanares' lands.

Tenshikin's teachings of cultivating Ki and upholding honor, courtesy, justice, and loyalty shape the core principles of Fumetsu Eido. The people of Yama adhere to these teachings, and the number of priests and their position in the Fumetsu Eido hierarchy is one of the greatest political disputes among Yama's clans. Their importance is related to the number of priests and the number of their annual donations of tameranium ore. In Yama, Fumetsu Eido is at the heart of society and its culture. In other lands, the temples serve as Yama embassies and neutral grounds for negotiations.

As Tenshikin is believed to be a physically present god, his depictions are more realistic and accurate. The Sovereign of Yama is an old man, with a long, straight, white beard, dressed in the most noble of Yama clothes with golden colors. He is always depicted holding great mystical power or providing a powerful edict to a servant.

Principles of Fumetsu Eido

Principles of Dignity. Upholding the values of honor, courtesy, justice, and loyalty is the keystone of Fumetsu Eido. Followers must embody these values; their word binds them, and their actions must always serve as an example to the entire society. For instance, priests and samurais must navigate the court intrigues with their honor intact.

Principles of Righteousness. In a complex dance of diplomacy and negotiation, followers of Fumetsu Eido seek to uphold justice and right the wrongs. They must approach those seeking redemption with compassion and understanding, always watching themselves as no one is beyond falling to corruption or to unwise judgment. Tenshikin's monks, in their pursuit of righteousness, often find themselves mediating conflicts between disputing clans.

Principles of Ki. Fumetsu Eido promotes rigorous self-discipline, guiding followers to master their emotions and desires. This inner peace and harmony, achieved through practicing Ki, forms the armor against the chaotic world outside. Such a path often lures monks, samurais, and ninjas in search of mastering the subtle balance between the self and the world.

The Way of Peace and Harmony

The Eternal Path positions itself as a bulwark against the corrupting influence of the Ungods. Through establishing a powerful religion with strong ethics and a focus on discipline and self-control, Tenshikin aspires to exemplify virtue and honor, thereby protecting mortals from sins and wars.

The primary goal of the Fumetsu Eido is to promote peace, prevent conflicts, and bring harmony. While it may come at the cost of freedom and require great dedication to a strict path, Tenshikin believes this to be the only way to shield society from the Ungods, increase the number of souls ascending as angels, and reduce the number that fall as emoguns in the Penumbral Plane.

Religion and Politics

Complex layers of spirituality and politics shape the uniqueness of Fumetsu Eido. Tenshikin, a reclusive sovereign, communicates primarily through written commands and edicts, only speaking personally with the highest-ranked priests.

When his powers are needed, he uses tameranium, a Ki-conductive metal, to infuse an Edict Scroll with immense mystical power, allowing a divine gift to be bestowed upon its reader. Such edicts are given to his priests to be carried to specific places of use, but they are sometimes stolen by those who want to avoid their effects or to use them for personal gains.

While the Fumetsu Eido is at the heart of Yama society, it also has substantial weight in other lands. Its temples, operating as neutral grounds, promote peace and diplomacy across Tanares. However, these places also house Yama's most dedicated spies, vigilant eyes and ears to alert Tenshikin to signs of Ungodly corruption. The clash between peace and espionage within these sacred grounds provides a dynamic and complex layer to the faith.

The Glorious One

Religion: The Path of Glory

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Portfolio: Discipline, Endurance, Glory, Resolve, Travel

Suggested Domains: Courage, Light, War

Headquarters: The Temple of Glory, located in the city of Anatar

Leadership: Highlord Mellius Pathbringer

Typical Followers: Adventurers, warriors, artisans, artists, bards, poets, and writers.

Typical Vestments: Armor concealed beneath a traveling robe, commonly decorated with the sigil of The Glorious One. Worshipers typically carry a walking staff, a travel bag, and at least one well-maintained weapon.

Sacred Temples: Constructed from stone and decorated with white marble, these structures are designed to be visually impressive and reflect the divine light of the God of Valor. Usually located in elevated positions, their interiors are adorned with images of heroism.

The Path of Glory

The Path of Glory is a tribute to the god of valor, The Glorious One, who inspires individuals to shape their destiny and pursue greatness through discipline and personal excellence. This deity encourages followers to confront challenges directly, adapt to change, and oppose forces of corruption and evil, inspiring others to aim for greatness in the process. It is always important to vividly recount one's deeds to everyone, serving as a radiant example.

Although no single region exclusively venerates The Glorious One, this religion is expanding rapidly in Tanares. Adventurers, artists, and artisans are particularly attracted to the practicality and openness of the Path of Glory, often forsaking the dogmatic Celestianist Church for this more pragmatic faith.

Followers of the God of Valor depict him as a radiant golden figure in ornate full-plate armor, with beams of divine light emanating from every joint and slit. His helmet, decorated with a bright red plume, reveals only a radiant light within. He holds a massive shield and a shining golden spear, always aimed forward.

Dogmas of the Path of Glory

Choose a Path. Followers must choose a life path and pursue it with persistent dedication. One shall always seek to adapt and grow in their chosen path. Whether a blacksmith aspiring to craft legendary weapons or an adventurer seeking the unknown, both can walk the Path of Glory as long as they commit to excellence.

Endure the Path. Followers are encouraged to embrace the arduous paths necessary for their quest for excellence. The greatest challenges often offer the greatest potential for growth and glory. A bard, seeking to write the most enchanting epics, might journey through dangerous lands for the rarest of tales.

Achieve Glory. Followers must commit to daily discipline and practice to reach excellence. They are urged to leave a lasting impact on the world by being the best they can be on their path. Artists aiming to create masterpieces or warriors aspiring for legendary skills, all echo the Path's values.

Stand Against the Ungods

The most glorious path lies in defeating the Ungods and their corruption. All followers must endure the temptations of sins and immorality, guiding others to avoid falling from their paths.

While a warrior or a paladin might directly confront the penumbral creatures, a woodworker must aspire to bring excellence to his craft, generating prosperity for society and protecting it from corruption. When pursued with righteousness and dedication, all paths can lead to a better world and the suppression of the Ungods' forces. Historians, bards, writers, and poets—those responsible for preserving and sharing the tales of glorious individuals—find this struggle a rich source of inspiration, showing examples to be followed in the ongoing battle against corruption.

The Most Glorious Ones

The faith of the Glorious One has a loose hierarchy based on feats of glory rather than a rigid structure. They are elevated by their own merits in a ritualistic revelation of their deeds. Highlord Mellius Pathbringer, known as the Bane of Fallen Dragons, leads the faith. This resolute paladin lord started from humble origins from an illegitimate noble birth and was raised excluded in the city of Anatar, in Outumn. He walked a path of adversity in his youth, finding his way through unmatched dedication and faith.

He was a humble adventurer forced into the Ironhand ranks during the Kemet Invasion. He grew stronger during the war and was one of the champions who held the line, allowing Gullog to be killed and the Kemet to be defeated, even though Bás later resurrected him. Among his many feats, he protected Prime Minister Tellatius against an ancient penumbral dragon and defended the newborn Republic during the Night of Spiderslaughter.

Wandering the expanses of Tanares, he spreads his faith, builds temples, recruits clerics, and defeats villains in each city he visits. However, his compassion shines brightest for the poor people, as he once faced starvation and discrimination. His powerful reputation and commanding voice echo in defense of the common folk and in disdain for the oppressive Ironhand. He may be ostentatious and occasionally exaggerate his tales, but his face never shows fear or exhaustion. Highlord Mellius is a beacon of divine strength, glory, and heroism that inspires all in the Path of Glory.

Krynnethoth, the Mystical One

Religion: Cult of Shadow Wing

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Portfolio: Curses, Disease, Magic, Rifts, Rituals, Suffering

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Death

Headquarters: Eternal Cathedral, the first layer of the Penumbral Plane

Leadership: Gideoni, the Fallen High Cardinal

Typical Followers: Cultists, mages, and those who seek power through suffering.

Typical Vestments: Cloaks of dark purple, entirely shrouding the wearer; talismans marked with cryptic glyphs, bands of various shapes inscribed with enigmatic symbols, frequently paired with staff or dagger etched with runes.

Sacred Temples: Hidden sanctums, typically concealed within the catacombs of ancient citadels or towers—bearing a similarity to Gothic cathedrals or sepulchral dungeons—eternally covered in spectral shadows, decorated with ancient statues and purple candlelight.

The Cultists of Plagues and Curses

Krynnethoth, known as the Mystical One, is the first and most powerful son of Z'ulvath, the Penumbral Father. He is known for his exceptional intellect and dark arcane magic. His followers, the Hidden Cult sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing, delve into forbidden magic and the infliction of suffering. They dedicate themselves to opening new rifts in Tanares to the Penumbral Plane—they even resort to self-harm, exalting the pain as a connection with the Mystical One, and using their own blood to infuse their sinister rituals. Guided by the fallen High Cardinal Gideoni, this cult seeks to bring misery and pain to the world, leading it to the dominion of the Ungods.

A statue of this Ungod, frequently used as the focal point in their unholy rituals, depicts a menacing figure with three serpentine heads. Its blue, scaly skin emanates an unsettling radiance, and it has three bright red eyes that stand out. The creature has two sets of long, muscular arms with black claws at the end. It holds a dark staff adorned with arcane symbols with two arms, a levitating sphere with another arm, and a poisonous dagger with the fourth arm.

Dogmas of the Mystical One

Embrace Forbidden Knowledge. The acolytes of Krynnethoth are encouraged to seek arcane knowledge and power, using these newly acquired abilities to bring suffering to others. For instance, in large libraries, unseen cultists might discreetly steal ancient parchments containing prohibited spells or plant corruptive magic scrolls in the grasp of mage novices.

Spread Suffering and Corruption. Krynnethoth's disciples disseminate illness, despair, and insanity, accelerating the disintegration of societal structures. They infiltrate these societies, offering salvation or deceptive aid to desperate people. Within a village affected by the plague, a healer could be a cultist in disguise, offering temporary healing while secretly planting an even more insidious affliction.

Revel in Aberrations. Members of the Hidden Cult embrace the physical and mental changes induced by their superiors' influence, seeing these distortions as signs of divine favor. The mutilations and deformations caused by disease, the monstrous alterations from corrupt magic, and all forms of decadence are revered as sacred by them.

Spreading Misery

Krynnethoth's followers orchestrate a silent spread of chaos across Tanares, accelerating the ascension of the Ungods. They infiltrate societies, causing distrust, chaos, and panic through their sinister curses and the suffering they inflict by spreading diseases and corruption while hiding their existence in the crowds.

In a once peaceful city, an inexplicable witch hunt might start as citizens succumb to a lethal plague of unknown origins. As they turn on their own in a desperate search for the malefactor, the true instigators—a small sect hidden among them—spread discord, redirecting the populace's wrath towards each other.

The Hidden Cult

What sets the servants of the Mystical One apart from the rest of the Cult of Shadow Wing is their integration into the common populace. Krynnethoth's disciples blend into society, hiding in plain sight as scholars, healers, merchants, or peasants. They insidiously corrupt society from within, spreading affliction and suffering before offering their dark salvation to the desperate, recruiting new members. The Hidden Cult has more mortal followers than any other sect within the Cult of Shadow Wing, effectively outnumbering the combined members of the other three Ungods' sects.

Their methods are so insidious that the High Cardinal of the Evolutionist Church, for decades, was none other than Gideoni, the Chosen of Krynnethoth. Although the Celestianist reformation—sparked by the resurgence of Archangel Ascaran—unmasked Gideoni's true intention, members of the Hidden Cult remain undercover within the Celestianist Church, biding their time, awaiting orders from Fallen High Cardinal Gideoni. From his formidable stronghold in the first layer of the Penumbral Plane, Gideoni masterfully controls the Hidden Cult.

Although their influence is subtle, their impact is considerable. The looming threat of their presence casts a perpetual pall over Tanares. In hidden places in the city, these followers secretly meet and perform unholy rites. They sacrifice innocent souls to honor Krynnethoth, conjuring dark magic to spread disease, curses, and suffering among the populace. They persistently lure new disciples, preparing for the fateful day when Krynnethoth will issue his unholy command to dominate Tanares.

Lumina, The Goddess of Wisdom, The Illuminating One

Religion: Luminism

Alignment: Neutral Good

Portfolio: Art, Beauty, Culture, Gnomes, Knowledge

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Knowledge, Life

Headquarters: Academies of Light, Mustardseed

Leadership: Doctor Ventusius J. C. Bookling and his three assistants—Doctor Jurilius, Doctor Jennizi, Doctor Cappernica

Typical Followers: Mostly gnomes and many scholars, artists, bards, educators, diplomats, and erudite nobles.

Typical Vestments: Elegant and exotic clothes of bright colors with ties, scarves, or neckbands. The holy symbol is often discreetly shown on a ring or necklace.

Sacred Temples: Always libraries, schools, academies, or other places of learning, with architectures inspired by gnomish artistic tendencies.

The Light of Knowledge

Lumina, the god of the gnomes, embodies wisdom, encouraging intellectual pursuits, artistic expression, and cultural refinement. The light of Lumina permeates all parts of Tanares, opening minds and sparking creativity. Lumina's followers believe in the transformative power of education, envisioning a realm where knowledge eradicates ignorance, leading to peace and understanding.

Gnome artists have various representations of Lumina, each based on the individual perspective. But a common feature is the eyes of pure radiance that pierce the veil of ignorance and represent learning. Her form looks like a beautiful gnome depicted in a sublime and majestic manner, often with mathematically perfect proportions.

Scrolls or books are often depicted levitating around her, symbolizing her infinite knowledge.

Dogmas of the Illuminating One

Pursuit of Knowledge. Lumina's followers embark on a lifetime journey to acquire knowledge, seeking to decipher the world's mysteries through rigorous study, exploration, and contemplation. They must share their knowledge with others and help uplift those who lack access to education. For instance, an alchemist might pursue the creation of a universal panacea and spread this knowledge to his students.

Artistic Expression. Followers should appreciate art. Lumina sees art as more than just beauty but a sophisticated language combining knowledge, emotion, and technique to reflect the world's beauty and inspire greatness in others. For instance, a sculptor capturing a hero's valor in marble exemplifies this principle.

Promoting Knowledge. Followers seek to combat ignorance and superstition, spreading rationality, bridging cultural gaps, and granting access to knowledge. This pursuit often involves challenging retrograde traditions, with many potential confrontations and societal upheavals.

Fight Against Obscurantism

For Lumina and her followers, the Ungods represent the darkness of ignorance that threatens Tanares' light, distorting the truth and causing conflict and disharmony. Lumina's disciples, who possess wisdom and knowledge, battle this existential threat by dispelling the darkness through enlightenment.

The servants of Lumina strive to shine the light of rationality over Tanares, believing that education will bring prosperity and dispel corruption.

For them, through study, education, and rationality, society will improve and offer a better life. They believe that education will discourage people from committing sins, crime, and corruption, preventing them from falling into the grasp of the Ungods.

They don't see fighting on the battlefield as their main goal, believing that the pen is more powerful. While they help in combat if necessary, they believe their fight occurs in schools, seminaries, and academies.

Temples and Schools

Lumina's influence extends beyond the realm of academic studies and formal arts. She has left a significant mark on the cultural landscape of Tanares, particularly through her chosen people, the gnomes. Renowned for their intellect and artistry, gnomes excel in various fields, from arcane studies to culinary artistry.

Every temple dedicated to Lumina serves as a school, library, or academy. The crowning jewel of Lumina's influence is the Academies of Light. These prestigious institutions are dedicated to intellectual and artistic pursuits. The schools are open to the general public, even non-faithful, as the servants of Lumina believe in bringing knowledge to all people. These institutions are considered the pinnacle of learning in Tanares, making them highly sought after by many students.

In Lumina's faith, leadership is determined by scholarly achievements and the quality of published theses, rather than typical hierarchical structures. These are evaluated by panels of researchers. The religious hierarchy consists of students, graduates, masters, great masters, and doctors. A member can elevate their ranking by presenting new studies to a group of superiorly ranked individuals who may approve the ranking rise.

Their leader is Doctor Ventusius J. C. Bookling, a prestigious gnome scholar and priest, who dedicated his life to studying math, physics, and their relation to divine magic and spellcasting. While he is the leader of the Lumina faith, a title acquired by open votes from the Board of Enlightened Individuals of the Scientific Community of Servants of Lumina (B.E.I.S.C.S.L.), he is so engrossed in his research that most of the actual internal work of the faith is done by his three assistants, Doctor Jurilius (administrative matters), Doctor Jennizi (religious matters), Doctor Cappernica (research and education matters). Doctor Ventusius is a man of a good heart, but he is often so lost in his own thoughts that he fails to observe his surroundings, sometimes giving the mistaken impression that he's arrogant or uncaring.

Òigridh, Lady of Summer, Queen of Fire

Religion: Cuibhle

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Portfolio: Elves, Fire, Passions, Summer, Trade

Suggested Domains: Courage, Light, Trickery

Headquarters: The Great Bazaar of Hag'Salar

Leadership: Azira, the Wandering Mother

Typical Vestments: Emerald and gold silk clothes decorated with flame and flower shapes. Golden bracelets, ornate rings, and a cloak are also present.

Sacred Temples: Open-air temples featuring an ever-burning central fire found in significant travel hubs. They offer accommodation for wandering devotees.

The Passion Seekers

Òigridh, the Lady of Summer and Fire, personifies radiant passion, wise trading, and fiery hope. She guides her followers to amplify positivity, meet new people, and maintain a resilient spirit in the darkest times. The ever-changing paths of these adventurous devotees lead them to various corners of Tanares, where they cultivate valuable connections, engage in fair trade, and battle the forces of darkness with their uplifting light of joy and positivity.

Depicted as a beautiful elven maiden, Òigridh's skin shines like the morning sun. Her hair glows with pure, incandescent fire. She wears light silk garments decorated with abundant jewelry, including large necklaces, bracelets, and rings; each piece reflects the light of her fiery hair. Her clothes, adorned with coins from numerous realms, symbolize the extensive travels of her followers.

Dogmas of Òigridh

Pursue New Experiences. Òigridh's followers ardently seek new experiences and embrace the unknown. Their travels teach them much and allow them to form relationships with different individuals. They believe that the true value of a person lies in the number of trusted friends they have, so priests of Òigridh often embark on quests to assist their many friends and gain new allies.

Embrace Positivity. The disciples of Òigridh are committed to cultivating and spreading positive emotions, finding joy even in the harshest circumstances, and helping others to do the same. A bard singing hopeful tunes amidst despair exemplifies this principle.

Trade Fairly and Honestly. For Òigridh's followers, trade is more than an economic activity—it's a path to unity and prosperity. They aim for mutual satisfaction in each transaction, planting seeds of harmony and goodwill. In contrast, exploitation and deception are steps toward corruption. Bargaining and bartering are considered essential aspects of trade, while exploitation or dishonesty are sinful.

The Flame that Chases Away the Darkness

The followers of Òigridh stand as luminous beacons against the corrupting agents of the Ungods. They perceive these entities as representing negative emotions and the antithesis of their pursuit of positivity, hope, and passion. Their travels often result in confrontations with the Ungods' servants, creating tales shared around the bonfire during the Festival of Flames, inspiring others to uphold the light. Though most of Òigridh's servants are summer elves, the goddess extends her favor to all mortals alike.

Her followers must not succumb to prejudice or disregard those different from themselves. The devotees must spread the passion for the beauty of life to all, viewing this as the best way to combat corruption.

While she recognizes passion as a great asset, she also acknowledges its potential to lead to greed, lust, and envy—all sins that bring one closer to the Ungods. Therefore, the Lady of Summer promotes the necessity not to become bound to a single passion. She advises against stagnation, as attaching to the same place, goal, or lifestyle for too long invites negative emotions. Continual movement is seen as a means to renew the heart, letting passions guide your steps.

The Path of Summer

Òigridh's followers lead lives filled with passion and wanderlust, embodying the spirit of an endless summer. Their vibrant, celebratory lifestyle often brings them close to various cultures, allowing them to amass many experiences, stories, and friendships.

The Great Bazaar of Hag'Salar is the most famous location of worship for the Goddess of Summer. However, no follower of Òigridh remains in the Great Bazaar for long. There is no permanent shop; instead, it consists of many tents where followers sell their products and prepare for their next journey.

Azira, the Wandering Mother, the most revered priest of Òigridh, is considered the leader of the faith, despite its lack of hierarchical structure. Dressed in silk robes of vivid red and white, she emanates divine warmth. Her arms, adorned with trinkets and jewels, each tell a tale of ancient journeys.

Over a millennium, Azira has had many descendants in countless cities and among various species, including dwarves, halflings, orcs, and humans; most of them are torchbearers of her philosophy of exploration and warmth. Still, rumors say one of them is capable of countering the powers of Bás, or even ending the eternal ice in their home world if properly trained. As expected, kemets are already looking for them.

As a master storyteller, Azira's narratives flow with vivid landscapes and heart-stirring journeys. Her tales ignite the audience's imagination, subtly embedding Òigridh's teachings, and ensuring her wisdom resonates deeply with those who listen. In every interaction, she remains friendly while honoring each person's unique journey.

Tamera & Bauron, God(dess) of Duality

Religion: Windspeaker Faith

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Portfolio: Life, Magic, Progress, Punishment, Strength

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Life, Tempest

Headquarters: Temple of the Four Winds, in Ben'net

Leadership: High Priest Xylonis Zephyron

Typical Followers: Cirrus and other followers who embrace the dualism of the world and desire for magical mastery.

Typical Vestments: Clothes in the colors appropriate to the Order the follower is part of, carrying the symbols of the Windspeakers and symbols of Tamera and Bauron.

Sacred Temples: Great temples, often built on mountaintops, blending a monastery and a fortress, with great walls and expansive inner yards, with many open spaces for their griffons.

The Windspeaker Faith

The Windspeakers, custodians of Tanares' oldest religion, perceive their divine figure unconventionally. This deity, a single entity composed of Tamera and Bauron, represents a divine duality mirroring the dual-soul nature of the cirrus. The Windspeakers argue that other species have misconstrued ancient wisdom, unable to comprehend a god reflecting this dualistic concept.

In cirrus belief, their god manifests as Tamera during the day and Bauron at night. Despite these identities boasting distinct personalities and unique existential essences, mirroring the cirrus' dual existence, they are actually one entity.

Tamera symbolizes life, progress, spirituality, and divine magic, while Bauron embodies punishment, strength, materiality, and arcane magic. Their harmonious dichotomy created Tanares and the mystical forces that infuse its existence.

The Windspeakers depict Tamera and Bauron as a dual entity like themselves. By day, it's a woman with iridescent light-blue skin, white wings, and sun-like eyes. She is dressed in a simple white toga and surrounded by a golden aura. At night, this entity transforms into a strong man with dark blue skin, black wings, and night-like eyes, emanating a mystic aura and wielding a rune-inscribed sword symbolizing retribution for sins.

Dogmas of the Windspeakers

Embrace Duality. Life thrives in a delicate dance of contrasts. The warmth of Tamera harmonizes with Bauron's severity, paralleling the balance between divine and arcane magic. Like the Zephyr Knights and their seven orders, followers embody this dual nature, harmonizing community and individuality, mercy and justice, spirituality and materialism.

Seek Progress. Learning and skill are essential to resist the Ungods. Magic, gifted by Tamera and Bauron, surpasses the limitations of mortals. Research and progress in magic empower Tanares for the upcoming final battle against corruption.

Punish Evil, Forgive Sinners. Adherents should walk the tightrope between justice and mercy. While the hand of justice should not fail, a hastily drawn sword risks corruption. Taking a life is not easy, but duty demands it when necessary. The Crimson Judgment dispenses justice bravely, even at personal cost. Conversely, the Order of the Ivory Redemption exemplifies mercy, offering sinners opportunities for redemption.

The Ungodly Doomsday

Serving as a barrier against the Ungods for countless millennia, the Windspeakers have aimed to surpass the limitations of the Tanarean Magic Field, seeking to harness the true power of magic to defeat the Ungods. They uphold the belief that magic, initially taught to the cirrus by the angels, was a divine gift to combat evil.

The Windspeakers foresee a continuous struggle against the Ungods, culminating in their final assault on Tanares with all their forces from the Penumbral Plane, the ultimate test of good against evil. To prepare for this upcoming doomsday, the Windspeakers seek to advance mystical knowledge among mortals while weakening the Ungods' forces.

The courageous Order of the Ebony Shield leads this monumental battle, tirelessly training to confront this imminent war. Simultaneously, the Emerald Guardians commit to protecting the divine creation, even when pitted against such formidable foes.

The Significance of the Windspeakers

The Windspeaker religion is uniquely dualistic. The Zephyr Knights are divided into seven orders. Each Order adds its own virtue to the faith and has two colors representing their power source and unique way of thinking.

Crimson Judgment. Ruthless enforcers who use harsh measures to uphold laws against the Ungods' chaos. Masters of blood magic, they ensure justice at any cost.

Azure Seekers. Scholars and arcanists who employ divination magic to unlock secrets. They cross Tanares alone in pursuit of truth and preparation against the Ungods.

Ebony Shield. Tactical wizards and brave defenders who use defensive magic to fortify the cirrus against the Ungods. They guard strategic points, demonstrating great resilience in battle.

Ivory Redemption. Healers and guides who protect the vulnerable and minimize battle losses. They operate free hospitals and manifest compassion.

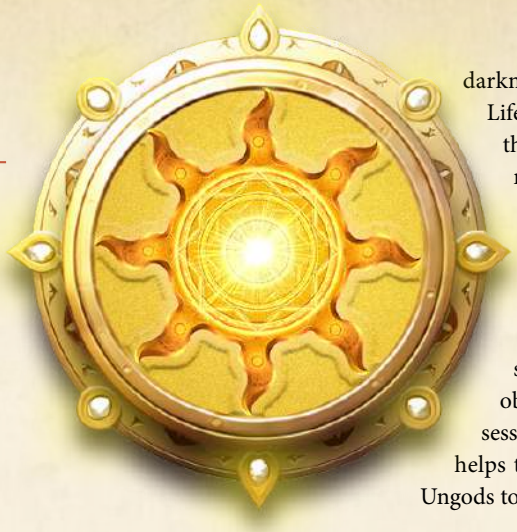
Golden Light. Bringing hope and inspiration, they venture to eradicate evil, uplift people, and mentor heroes, spreading goodness.

Celestial Balance. Masters of both arcane and divine magic, they preserve balance among the Zephyr Knights, approaching all matters neutrally and presiding over cirrus judgments.

Emerald Guardians. Strong in faith, they protect the people and resist the Ungods' corruption.

Above all the Orders is High Priest Xylonis Zephyron, who maintains harmony among them.

Tamera, Goddess of Life



Religion: Celestianism

Alignment: Lawful Good

Portfolio: Good, Life, Light, Protection, Sun

Suggested Domains: Courage, Life, Light

Headquarters: Celestianist Cathedral of Skybell

Leadership: High Cardinal Taram and Jocasta, the Pure

Typical Followers: Adventurers, commoners, healers, druids.

Typical Vestments: Simple white and gold robes decorated with Tamera's sun symbol. Most also carry a golden holy symbol prominently displayed.

Sacred Temples: White-colored cathedrals adorned with gold, silver, and marble. Structures include high towers, grand stained-glass windows, and interior murals depicting Tanares' history from a Tamerian religious perspective.

The Sun and Celestianism

Tamera, twin to Bauron, stands as the co-creator of Tanares. Their mutual reverence forms the singular faith known as Celestianism, followed by more than half of the Tanarean people. High Cardinal Taram leads the overarching Celestianist Church, while Jocasta, the Pure, guides the Tamerian Sect.

As a figure of compassion and care, Tamera's followers—primarily healers, adventurers, and common folk—uphold the principles of love, selflessness, and the sanctity of life. Together with Bauron, Tamera protects and nurtures life, aiming to purify the corrupting influence of the Ungods.

With daily rituals celebrating the sun's life-giving warmth, all members of the Tamerian Sect are required to light candles for prayers and to honor newborns and the deceased. As these candles are considered altars of Tamera, all Celestianist faithful pay reverence, whenever they see a candle lit by a disciple of Tamera, often decorated with Tamera's symbol.

In Celestianist Church depictions, Tamera is often portrayed as a beautiful woman dressed in a white tunic, adorned with gold bracelets, belts, and brooches with sun symbols. Her blue eyes gleam with divinity, and she holds a flaming angelic figure—a symbol of the divine and holy aspect of life.

Dogmas of Tamera

Love and Empathy. Followers must regard all life as sacred, deserving of compassion and understanding. Those who sin should be granted forgiveness and an opportunity for redemption. The Sons of Tamera, for example, provide healing without discrimination to both the hero and the fallen.

Selflessness and Sacrifice. The well-being of others takes precedence, reflecting Tamera's nurturing spirit. Personal desires should be set aside for the greater good and the triumph of light over darkness. This is exemplified by the Seeds of Life, who assist farming communities, using their magic to cultivate the land, asking for nothing in return.

The Sacred Flame. Candles ignited by Tamera's disciples serve as a sacred altar, representing eternal hope and divine connection. A cleric lighting a candle at birth or death signifies Tamera's presence and sanctifies these key life events. This is an obligation for all of Tamera's servants possessing holy powers. It is believed that this light helps to guide the soul, making it difficult for Ungods to take.

Tamera's Light

While manifesting pure love and care, she provides the most powerful protection against the Ungods, showing the might of exalted emotions. The sunlight of Tanares, Tamera's protective power, burns penumbral creatures daring to roam in her light. It keeps the day safe from all incursions of penumbral creatures, an effect known as Tamera's Light.

Any penumbral creature that enters or starts its turn in Tanares' direct sunlight takes 10 points of radiant damage and loses any regenerative capabilities until the beginning of its next turn. This compels all penumbral creatures to roam the Material Plane exclusively at night, seeking refuge during the day.

Orders of the Sun

The Tamerian Sect of the Celestianist Church contains four different orders, each contributing uniquely to Tamera's radiant influence in the world.

The Seeds of Life are situated primarily in rural areas, cultivating natural life and supporting farmers both physically and spiritually. They renounce wealth and material possessions, focusing instead on wisdom obtained from nature and communities. Their knowledge of food production and farming is invaluable.

The Sons of Tamera are exceptional healers who never deny aid to the sick or wounded. Although they often ask for donations, their healing never depends on payment, displaying Tamera's compassion. Despite this, they are among the wealthiest of Tamera's orders due to generous contributions from the nobility.

The Scribes are the Church's intellectual heart, concentrating on theology and philosophy. They delve into the mysteries of the Ungods, offering insights into combating their influence. Due to their importance, they are prime targets for the servants of the Ungods.

The Enlightened carry Tamera's light to the darkest places, eradicating evil wherever they find it. Their holy powers are a beacon against darkness, attracting those in need. They often are adventurers, as this role allows them opportunities to shine Tamera's light onto the world.

Through these orders, the Celestianist Church upholds Tamera's principles. They bring her light to the world's darkest corners, provide compassion and hope, and stand firmly against the Ungods' corruption.

The Nature Spirits

Religion: Spiritualism

Alignment: Neutral

Portfolio: Animals, Harmony, Nature, Plants, Spirits

Suggested Domains: Death, Life, Nature

Headquarters: None (Decentralized)

Leadership: No Central Leadership, varies by community

Typical Followers: Druids, shamans, hermits, orcs, Kolbjörn people, and some barbarian tribes.

Typical Vestments: Based on local culture, often incorporating elements from nature.

Sacred Temples: Natural landmarks or spiritually significant locations.

The Spiritualism Faith

The faith of Spiritualism represents the worship of Nature Spirits, a combination of ancient animistic beliefs shared by those deeply connected to the natural world, such as druids, shamans, hermits, and many tribal cultures. Unlike traditional religions, which focus on a single deity or pantheon, Spiritualism venerates the spirits inhabiting all living beings and the land, symbolizing the harmony and unity of life. Deeply implanted in the culture of many societies, this faith varies in its rituals, traditions, and interpretations. However, all resonate with the spiritual essence of the natural world.

There is no single representation of the Nature Spirits. A Kolbjörner Spiritual Guide may describe a spirit as a ghostly bear, while an orc shaman might portray the spirits as ancient orc ancestors guiding their actions. Many of the faithful believe that through their dreams and sacred rituals, they can communicate with the local spirits or the spirits of their ancestors. They take such visions very seriously.

Spiritualism Dogmas

Preservation of Nature. Followers are committed to maintaining the delicate balance of nature and its preservation. The Spirits' wrath is feared, and often invoked by the faithful when natural lands face destruction or harm. Actions to help and restore damaged ecosystems are not just seen as dutiful but also as spiritually enriching, attracting the Spirits' blessing.

Balance and Neutrality. Followers seek equilibrium in life, avoiding extremes in their actions. They view the path of absolute good as potentially leading to fanaticism, while absolute evil can breed corruption. Equally, they perceive unyielding law as rigid and oppressive to progress, while unchecked chaos creates instability.

Seek Guidance. Embracing the Spirits' wisdom is central to the faith. Followers commune with these spiritual entities, making offerings, performing rituals, and learning from their ancient knowledge.

The Ungods and Spiritualism

The Spiritualism faith views the Ungods as the greatest threat to the natural order. Their corrupting influence disrupts the delicate balance maintained by the Nature Spirits. An insidious strategy of the Ungods involves corrupting Spiritualism's leaders, turning them to darker paths such as Dark Shamanism and Dark Witchcraft. Such corrupted individuals use their power to advance their desires, maintaining a facade of being true followers, but their actions often lead to conflict and division, proving harmful to the faith and its communities.

These corrupted followers are a great danger to societies spiritually connected with the Nature Spirits, as they can use their sinister curses, spread diseases, and push individuals towards corruption. Their existence is the reason why the Kolbjörners are superstitious and maintain a respectful fear of all divine magic wielders, and also the reason why the orc clans are in constant conflict, never able to reunite and become a powerful force like in their ancient past.

Spiritualism Communities and Traditions

The diversity within the Spiritualism faith makes it a rich variety of regional beliefs and customs. Here are some unique practices:

Tsvetan Orcs. Their shamanistic practices are embedded in their culture, embracing the relationship with their totem animals and environment. The totem animal protects the entire tribe, and its physical receptacle is considered the most sacred item of a tribe. Led by the eldest female shaman, these spiritual guides influence all aspects of orc life, except for war and hunting. Chosen by the Spirits, the Red Mother serves as a spiritual guide for all orc tribes. Adorned with war paints crafted by their shamans, the orc warriors embody resilience and strength on the battlefield, especially when the Red Mother leads them.

Kolbjörners. Their ancestral rituals, centered around the use of complex runes and the connection with animals, form a significant part of their identity. During a revered ceremony, an individual adopts an animal's spiritual essence by wearing its skin, gaining a personal spiritual guide until death. Their clerics, known as Spiritual Guides, and their druids, often referred to as Nature Walkers or Shapeshifters, wield significant influence. The fear of curses and spiritual retribution makes the common populace tread carefully around these spiritual practitioners.

Druid Circles. Most druidic circles across Tanares connect with the Nature Spirits. They learn from the wisdom of the ancient druids and harness power from nature's spiritual essence. Their magic always involves seeking the assistance of the relevant spirits. These druids respect their surroundings, always seeking permission from the local Spirits before entering new places, and dedicating themselves to protecting ancient natural sites.

This diverse collection of Nature Faith groups shows how every living being is connected to the spirit world.

Z'ulvath, the Shadow Wing and Penumbral Father

Religion: Cult of Shadow Wing

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Portfolio: Corruption, Darkness, Madness, Penumbral Dragons, Psionics

Suggested Domains: Arcana, Tempest, War

Headquarters: The Obsidian Citadel, the Fortress of Lypoec in the Penumbral Plane

Leadership: Lypoec, the Penumbral Avatar Dragon

Typical Followers: Deranged cultists, corrupted dragons, individuals with fractured minds, tainted nobility, wizards succumbed to insanity.

Typical Vestments: Deep purple robes, marked with faint eldritch magic, bearing the cryptic sigils of the Penumbral Father.

Sacred Temples: Majestic and terrifying, carved from dark stones. Often hidden in desolate, forgotten landscapes, their interiors never receive sunlight, being lit only by purple flames of candles and torches. Inside their halls, obsidian altars are inscribed with indecipherable symbols.

The Shadow Lords

The Cult of Shadow Wing worships all Ungods, but Z'ulvath, the Penumbral Father, reigns supreme as the ruler of the Penumbral Plane. An ancient eldritch entity born from the mysterious depths of the void, he seeks to thrust all existence into madness and consume everything. He created the other Ungods and shaped the Penumbral Plane.

The entire Cult of Shadow Wing pays the utmost respect to Z'ulvath. However, only the sect of the Shadow Lords is directly under him, while the other sects serve his three offspring. The Shadow Lords are composed of the most powerful cultists. Chosen by Z'ulvath, they are formed primarily by mighty spellcasters and sinister penumbral dragons. To become a Shadow Lord, individuals must completely sacrifice their sanity, but this loss grants them vast psychic powers and the ability to see beyond reason.

Z'ulvath's true form is unknown even to his most devoted servants. However, occasional nightmarish glimpses suggest a massive draconic entity shrouded in darkness. His silhouette is distinguished by three gigantic pairs of wings and countless shadowy tendrils. His four eyes burn with purple flames, his breath emits a toxic mist, and his horns and claws secrete a viscous, venomous ichor.

Dogmas of Z'ulvath

Embrace Insanity. Z'ulvath's disciples must submit to madness, a corruptive journey that unshackles their minds from mundane confines. The psychic power received from Z'ulvath must be employed to dominate or break into madness anyone who opposes the Penumbral Father. It is common to discover powerful nobles under the mental influence of these cultists; their minds twisted to serve their dark master.

Absolute Obedience. Z'ulvath's commands are absolute. His disciples pledge unwavering loyalty, as disobedience leads to death. They are free to pursue personal ambitions, provided they do not oppose their master's schemes. To gain power and prove their worth to the Penumbral Father, the cultists often seize control of criminal organizations, subjugate corrupt nobles, and coerce greedy merchant guilds, bending influential individuals to Z'ulvath.

Spread Corruption. Servants of Z'ulvath must listen to the whispers at the corners of their minds. These murmurs, resonating at the edge of their consciousness, are considered by the cultists as Z'ulvath's commands, guiding them to specific mortals that must be killed and subjugated. Driven by the voices in their minds, after these targets are identified, their lives are ruined, their hopes shattered, and their free will subdued, all in the name of the Penumbral Father.

The Path of Madness

The Shadow Lords wield immense power but are the fewest in numbers within the Cult of Shadow Wing. On the Material Plane, they often operate alone or in small groups. They aim to dominate influential mortals, corrupt dragons and instigate widespread disaster to win Z'ulvath's favor.

They disseminate cryptic symbols in cities and villages that gradually deteriorate the sanity of the populace. By disseminating unholy magical tomes and scrolls, they lure those susceptible to corruption. It is not unusual for entire villages to fall into madness, with their minds corrupted by insanity. The most horrific of their deeds is capturing dragons or their eggs for rituals that can permanently transform these creatures into penumbral dragons.

The Shadow Call

The Shadow Lords attract potential members by exploiting their diverse motivations, ranging from the desire for arcane knowledge to the allure of treasures. They promise power and eternal life in the Penumbral Plane, causing many to fall to these temptations out of greed, hatred, or despair.

Unlike other sects of the Cult of Shadow Wing that use manipulation, the Shadow Lords favor dominating others with overwhelming power. Their control tactics range from using magic, torture, coercion, and blackmail to more direct means, such as assassinating loved ones or exercising mind control, to break their victims' resistance. They relish displaying their power and subjugating their victims; most are as power-hungry as they are insane.

The Shadow Lords' greatest power is the Penumbral Infusion, a potent eldritch ritual that can transform dragons or their eggs into penumbral dragons. This complex, time-consuming magic requires multiple cultists and the use of chains inscribed with symbols of madness and decay. Besides dragons, this ritual can transform humanoids into penumbral aberrations, creatures of pure madness and deep darkness. The Shadow Lords often employ these aberrations as instruments of destruction.

Chapter 5
The World of Tanares

Tanares, a land of epic proportions, was once largely unified under the Tanaren Empire's control but now has fragmented into diverse nations. This chapter, expanding on the general overview provided in the first chapter, provides an in-depth view of each region. It details their government, society, economy, history, history, unique locations, and important characters. Additionally, this section focuses on vital information for creating characters and NPCs from Tanares.

From the democratic frontiers of the Republic of Freeland to the arcane depths of the Magocracy of Mage Tower, Tanares offers endless possibilities for adventure and intrigue. Tanares also harbors its darker corners. The Mystical Wasteland and the depths of Undertanares offer great challenges to those brave enough to unearth their secrets. Each region unfolds with its tales, ready for your players to discover and become legends.

Region	Geography	Core Concept	Main Threats
Central Empire	Lush river valleys, grasslands, and forests - the prime land of Tanares.	An opulent, tightly controlled empire under Emperor Baleroth, known for economic wealth and stringent societal order.	Corrupted officials, imperial oppression, penumbral creatures, potential rebellion.
Imperial Ben'net	High icy mountain ranges, glaciers, and tundras.	Culturally rich location, home to imperial traditionalists, Cirrus knights, and nomadic groups.	Religious strife, imperial manipulation, the rise of criminal organizations.
Kolbjörn	Tundras, mountains, forests, and cold coastlines along the Storm Sea.	A clan-based northern realm affiliated with the Empire, valuing warrior honor and led by Jarls with special lycanthropy.	Clan conflicts, struggles for independence, Kemet raiders, escalating tensions with giants.
Magocracy of Mage Tower	Riverlands, icy mountains, mystical landscapes, and volcanic areas.	A center of mystical knowledge, arcane research, and magic schools.	Secret unethical experiments, mage rivalries, magic-devouring fungus dominating creatures.
Sindile Forest	Enchanting forest with colossal trees and diverse vegetation.	Elven sanctuary, guarded since ancient times, protecting sacred Mother Trees.	Radical isolationist druids, orc incursions, distrust towards converted Kemets.
Republic of Freelands	Diverse landscapes, including moors, forests, mountains, and unexplored frontiers.	A democratic state known for high citizen freedom and as a cradle of adventurers, depending on them to face monsters.	Cultists, a wild frontier with dungeons and monsters, political intrigue.
Stravian Domains	Cold mountainous ranges, tempered forests, valleys.	Dwarven kingdom focusing on mining and rebuilding ancestral tunnels, with surface areas inhabited by humans and halflings.	Underground monsters, duergars, perilous ancient ruins, banditry on the roads.
Tsvetan	Dry, rocky landscape with sparse vegetation.	Orc clan society based on traditional spiritual shamanism, currently divided due to corruption.	Corrupted shamans, clan rivalry, resource scarcity.
Storm Islands	Archipelago covered in ice, featuring cold mountains, forests, and swamps.	Kemet stronghold dedicated to goddess Bás, ruled by cold meritocracy and powerful necromancy.	Armies of undead, a significant naval force, powerful Kemet Lords, Bás Midnight Sun, Gullog, the immortal leader.
Taii'Maku City States	Arid deserts, rocklands, magical mechanic moving cities.	Nomadic cities powered by Bauronite Mystical Reactions, showcasing an advanced blend of magic and engineering.	Philosophical conflicts, insectoid monsters, covert espionage, intellectual extremists.
Theocracy of Kepesh	Vast deserts with rocky and mountainous areas.	A theocracy serving Ba-Ka, god of spirits and magic, ruled by a Lich-Pharaoh, cohabiting with different barbarian tribes.	Kemet incursions, barbarian tribes, internal extremism.
Seashores	Tropical archipelagos, an inner seas maritime region.	Governed by Pirate-Lords, affiliated with the Empire, known for piracy, commerce, smuggling, and seafaring.	Piracy and criminals, marine monsters, cultists seeking a dead Ungod.
Yama	Mountains, hills, beautiful meadows, and plains, often covered in mystical mists.	Governed by an ancient sovereign acting as a god, a land of honor and ancestral clans of ninjas and samurais.	Conflicts of ideals, divine artifacts, Yaman Demons such as Onis and Tengus, and underworld mafia.
Continent of Darkall	Harsh terrain with cold mountains, forests, and extensive wastelands.	Kemet lands in eternal conflict with demons, where the Kepesh once lived and their ancient ruins still exist.	Demonic invasions, undead lands, lost spirits, internal Kemet social struggles.
Mystical, The Wasteland	Blighted and cursed geography.	Realm of undead, lost magic, and ruins of a great destroyed civilization, where great treasures are still to be found.	Monsters, Shadow Wing cultists, undead legions, mystical traps.
Undertanares	Expansive underground realm covering most of the continent.	Dangerous location, home to all subterranean species, often filled with conflicts, and where survival is challenging.	Duergars, conflicts between goblinoid tribes, strongholds of the Cult of Shadow Wing, geological hazards.

Lone Man's Island
Shredded Coast
The Ice Coast
Shivering Pines
Stormbird Islands
Twin Heads Forest
Great Valley
Cracked Hoof Tundra Fields
Stravian
Shadowy Forest
Kolbjörn
Gazini Island
Stravian Range
Maelend Range
Dale of the Lost
High Forest
Hammer Passing
Storm Valley
Dorsi's Forest
Maed Range
Blake Island
Souliers Coast
Dead Islands Archipelago
Ruins of Kölm
Outlaw Forest
Willow Lake
Dragonsting Forest
Left Island
Republic of Freelands
Boscage Archipelago
Grassroot Island
Lunar Valley
Central Sea
Coral Sea realm
Storm Islands
Anabiel Strait
Crystalline Sea
Shortfall
Fire Islands Archipelago
Coastsiders
The Rubicunds
Taii'maku City States
Rock Islands
Uhrelian Fire Pits
Theocracy of Kepesh
Bay Satar
The Great Molting
Baidon's Ridge
N
W
E
S

BEN'NET
MAGOCRACY OF MAGE TOWER
CENTRAL EMPIRE
SEASHORES
YAMA
MYSTICAL
TSVETAN
SINDILE FOREST
Crystal Mountains
Dark Glacier
Cold Valley's Grave
Rainbow Dale
Orgoth Valley
Threshold Forests
Western Bak
Eastern Bak
Lake Plavo
Imperial Capital
Midorinohara
Yaranhito
Ahimoth Woodland
Bones Valley
Turtledragon Island
Thaisan Fields
Ruins of Arcana
Wasteland Forest
Hook Jungle
Yama Bibnkatsu
Wasteland Savannas
Sindile Forest (Outskirts)
Sindile Forest (Depths)
Cindergrove
Efreidos Cauldron
Tsvetan Twinspikes
Sulfur Path
Ember Mountains
Ship Graveyard
Southern Basin
The Whirlpool
Harpoon Channel
Rainy Pass
Kingfisher Island
Alkira Mountain
Summer Island
Mistvale
Plateau of Eternal Ice
Mountain Pass
Winterbreeze
Swanhorn
Lake Plavo
0
100
200
300
400
500

Central Empire

Government: The center of power of the Tanarean Empire, the most powerful Empire under absolute control of Emperor Baleroth, the Faceless Emperor.
Faction: The Central Empire is the heart of the Tanarean Empire and from where the Emperor rules all other regions under the Tanarean Empire's control.
Population: Around 2,300,000. Humans 84%, gnomes 5%, summer elves 3%, tieflings 2% dwarves 2%, soulborns 2%, others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Very Low
Crime and Violence	Low
Economic Prosperity	Very High
Government Corruption	High
Magic Access	Low
Monster Presence	Low
Political Stability	High

Geography

In the heart of Tanares, the Central Empire is a blend of lush river valleys, expansive grasslands, and wooded areas such as the enormous Bak Forest. It stretches from its bustling ports in the southern borders by the Central Sea to the frosty northern peaks of Reginheraht in the north. The Bak Forest, a verdant sanctuary, surrounds the blue gem of Lake Plavo at the Empire's core. This realm features varied biomes—from the Bak Swamp wetlands to the quiet O'Myre salt marsh and from the craggy northern highlands to the rolling western plains and towering mountains—housing a wide range of life within what many consider the continent's finest land.

Politics

The Central Empire is tightly ruled by Emperor Baleroth, who controls a vast network of bureaucrats and commands the Ironhand army. His rule is strict, with an emphasis on surveillance and rigid legislation, instilling fear and obedience.

Despite its oppression, the Empire's rule is viewed as a shield against chaos, supporting a thriving economy and protecting against the Malrokian Curse. Baleroth's grand vision is to control the Tanarean continent and beyond, creating a unified world under his rule and forging a unique Empire. Ending all possibility of wars, he wants the world to stand united against the threat of the Ungods.

Below him, a noble caste of governors, lords, and advisors exists, but their influence is limited, and any dissent is quickly silenced. Essentially, the Empire is a structure of rigid hierarchy, with its elite controlled through wealth, safety, and authority, cementing Baleroth's unchallenged reign.

Economy

The Central Empire thrives on international trade, services, and agriculture. Fertile lands yield wheat, barley, and various meats, contributing to the significant Empire's wealth. However, this prosperity is unevenly distributed, benefiting the ruling elite and bureaucrats. Despite high taxes, the Empire's economic strength allows for ample military funding and a higher standard of living. Famine is rare, even among impoverished households. Jobs are plentiful, with surplus labor directed at grand construction projects, road building, and city maintenance to prevent unemployment. Those unwilling to work face disdain and prejudice, are viewed as parasites, and can be accused of crimes, ending in imprisonment, execution, or involuntary conversion into Ironhand soldiers.

Culture and Society

The Tanarean Empire combines fear and stability. Citizens comply to avoid imprisonment or becoming Ironhand soldiers, yet economic security and relative peace deter rebellion. The Empire frames its strict rule as a necessary defense against threats, fostering pride among its subjects.

Arena combat is central to Imperial culture, offering entertainment and a venue for settling disputes. Official clerics or nobles enforce Imperial Law, while arenas resolve civil conflicts, personal accusations, disputes between cities or regions, and unproven crimes. The system favors the wealthy, who can hire champions, while successful arena teams gain power, prestige, and high-paying commissions from nobles and merchants to defend them in the arenas.

The primary deities are Tamera and Bauron. Previously aligned with the Evolutionists, who justified Emperor Baleroth's rule by attributing the Malrokian Curse to divine wrath, the Empire has since distanced itself due to the Celestianist Reform. While Baleroth tolerates the reform because of his subjects' faith, the elite quietly long for the return of the Evolutionist doctrine. Meanwhile, the common folk generally appreciate the more compassionate Celestianist views. However, some, particularly those who used

the old Bauron doctrine to justify morally dubious practices, remain resistant to the changes.

History

After the fall of the Mystical Kingdom and the devastating Malrokian Curse, Tanares was on the brink of anarchy. Baleroth, the last survivor of Mystical Kingdom, took control and formed alliances, used blackmail, and subjugated nobles to gather all the small states and fiefdoms that appeared after the cataclysm, unifying the region that is now the Central Empire. Backed by the Evolutionist Church, Baleroth gained widespread support, as both the populace and nobility believed the Empire to be their shield against another cataclysm.

With the Church's blessing, Baleroth established Arena duels to resolve political disputes, avoiding war. To enforce his rule, Baleroth delved into ancient magical texts, summoning dark forces and learning rituals capable of transforming individuals into mindless soldiers, thus creating the Ironhand army. A new law restricted other armed forces, cementing Ironhand's monopoly.

To prevent the recurrence of the Mystical Kingdom's fate, Baleroth sponsored the Evolutionist Inquisition and charged Imperial wizards with restricting and controlling access to arcane magic. However, the Cult of Shadow Wing, which was working to expand the cursed Wasteland, and the subversive Third Eye guild, which profited by manipulating the arenas, posed challenges. Baleroth deployed adventurers and mercenaries to maintain control while secretly constructing the Arena of Future, hiding a Vandanamalika beneath. But before its completion, the Kemet s invaded, plunging Tanares into war and causing Baleroth to disappear amid the conflict.

Tanares won the war but at a high cost, with the Empire losing much power. Different regions began to seize the opportunity to claim independence. The Republic of Freelands championed political freedom and opposed the Ironhand. The Magocracy of Mage Tower became a haven for persecuted spellcasters. Orcs rebelled against their prolonged mistreatment, while the powerful Lich Kalistessenâmun took a part of the south deserts to restore his ancient Kepesh realm.

The Imperial Age was over, and the heroes of the Kemet Invasion dispersed power across the continent. However, Baleroth was far from defeated; he now seeks to reclaim the Empire's might, intending to dismantle his rivals through political and economic leverage. He remains cautious, confident that he can rebuild another Vandanamalika and restore his reign over Tanares.

Ironhand Army

A tool of Baleroth's dominance that incites both fear and awe with its might. The bulk of these enforcers are brainwashed foot soldiers made from criminals and dissidents condemned to lose their free will through the psychosurgery rite. They become emotionless, iron-clad troops.

The army has two main divisions: the brainwashed soldiers and the officers with free will. Officers typically hail from noble families or an ascending middle class. They are divided into sergeants, lieutenants, and majors. These officers oversee the five major branches of the army: warfare, intelligence, medical, naval, and diplomatic. The Ironhand Captain, who ranks only below Emperor Baleroth, oversees all the majors. Although Baleroth's authority is unchallenged, the Captain's role has become suspect among the nobility due to the betrayal of the two previous Captains, Dillsgar and Sedura. The current Captain, Brook, faces noble's scrutiny, but performs his duties diligently.

The compulsory conscription policy often stokes fear among families with missing relatives. They dread finding their loved ones among the ranks of the mindless Ironhand soldiers. The Republic vehemently condemns this practice, deeming it abhorrent. Even within the Empire, several hidden minor groups rally against this policy, attempting not only to prevent the transformation of more people but also to discover ways to liberate those already ensnared by mind control.

Tyranny and Control

In the Central Empire, government surveillance is constant and intrusive. The Empire keeps an extensive information network that reports dissidents, rebels, and all violations of Emperor Baleroth's laws. Attempts to spread subversive information are rapidly quashed. Anti-imperial books are burned, and would-be revolutionaries risk mysterious disappearances—either to be mystically brainwashed into becoming Ironhand soldiers or just eliminated.

Substantial rewards offered by the government lure citizens into denouncing rebels and criminals, as well as into betraying neighbors, friends, and even family; this fosters division and distrust, keeping society obedient to the Empire. The consequence is that people are too afraid to criticize Baleroth, fearing betrayal from their closest confidants, whom the reward may tempt.

Despite this, some dissidents persist, taking great care to evade the authorities. The rebels often get help from heroic adventuring groups and even from the Celestianist Church, who, in secret, offer sanctuary and aid to those unfairly persecuted by the Empire.

The Arenas

The Arenas are central to the Empire, offering entertainment to the masses, distracting them from the government's tyranny, and operating as part of the judiciary system.

While heinous crimes such as murder and treason are judged by nobles or clerics appointed as Imperial Judges by Baleroth, conflicts without clear culprits, civil disputes, and even disagreements between nobles, cities, or regions are resolved via arena combat. Whether it involves a noble vying for control over a newly discovered mine's territory or a merchant alleging theft with no solid proof, these matters are settled through battle in the arenas.

Even Imperial Decrees can be challenged in the Arena of Fate, though few dare to do it. This lends a facade of fairness to Baleroth's rule, which he upholds on the rare occasions where challengers succeed. For example, Yama's autonomy was upheld when its champions defeated Baleroth's team in the Arena of Fate years before the Kemet Invasion.

In the Empire, the arena battles are regarded as sacred, featuring rituals honoring gods Tamera and Bauron before and after the matches. The outcomes are considered divine will, making even Baleroth respect them. However, their political significance places them at the heart of the Empire's intrigue, schemes, and manipulation. Nobles cunningly leverage the arena to legitimize their ambitions, while criminal organizations like the Third Eye rig outcomes, assassinate heroes, and profit immensely from manipulated fights. As much as the arenas are conflict resolution systems, they are equally the epicenter of numerous conflicts arising within the Empire.

Threats and Conflicts

Shrewd Politics

The Empire is full of scheming nobles and organizations that are primarily focused on social climbing and acquiring wealth. Most in power are ruthless or corrupt, as gentler souls rarely survive the web of high-stakes intrigue that dominates the upper echelons of Imperial power. Common tactics include assassination, kidnapping, blackmail, forced marriages, and framing enemies with crimes. Those in authority often employ mercenaries and adventurers to investigate or undermine rivals while hiding their own misdeeds.

Imperial Oppression

The Empire is ever-vigilant, eager to suppress any rebellion, dissent, or illicit activity. Aspiring heroes are viewed with skepticism, with vigilantism considered a criminal act. The sole accepted authority and force within the Empire is the Ironhand. While adventurers are invited to battle monsters, compete in the arenas, or hunt penumbral creatures and other servants of the Ungods, interference in citizen or government affairs can swiftly convert these heroes into pursued outlaws.

Penumbral Creatures

The Central Empire is the most stable regions in Tanares. Its borders have remained relatively free from the dangers of monsters, bandits, or foreign invasions—save for the threats from the Penumbral Plane. Yet, beneath the surface, the oppressed populace and corruption-riddled nobility create fertile ground for the Ungods' influence. This dark energy and accumulation of sins ensure that many souls, upon death, transform into emoguns—a phenomenon more prevalent here than anywhere else in Tanares. Drawn by the Empire's negative emotions, emoguns constantly seek passage to the Material Plane to feast on such negativity. While encounters with these beings are all too common, not all emoguns are alike. The more cunning among them remain hidden, orchestrating schemes to amplify misery. In contrast, their less rational counterparts wreak havoc until halted by the Ironhand army, the forces of Celestianism, or a band of brave adventurers.

Secrets

The Infernal Servants

Baleroth, in secret, commands a legion of special devils who serve the Empire. These creatures, known as Imperial devils, are completely loyal to the Emperor as they are bound by the power he usurped from an archdevil. Baleroth has a total of three hundred of these beings under his command and can summon replacements for any who fall. The Imperial devils possess the ability to transform into human forms, allowing them to serve the Empire discreetly. However, if the public found out about Baleroth's control over these devils, it would cause a significant scandal, especially with the Church. While Evolutionism saw devils as servants of Bauron in the past, the Celestianist Reform has changed the Church's views, which now consider these entities as evil and unrelated to Bauron.

Ironhand Flaw

Creating Ironhand soldiers involves a psychosurgery ritual that has two hidden flaws. Firstly, it severs a part of the soldier's soul, storing it in a crystal kept in secret bases. If the crystal is destroyed, the soldier dies. However, a skilled wizard who knows the proper ritual can use the crystal to restore the soldier's mind. Nevertheless, very few individuals in Tanares are aware of this ritual, and only three know how to perform it: Thidexius, the head of the Imperial Wizards, Avelum of the Republic, and Vaeraunt from the Magocracy.

Secondly, the ritual was created based on the study of Golgöggoth's emotionless Watchers. Golgöggoth gave Gullog an artifact that allows one to take control of all individuals mind-controlled by this ritual, including the Ironhand soldiers. This artifact, the *Fang of Augur*, was lost at the end of the Kemet Invasion. The Empire, the Republic, and Gullog are all searching for this item, which could be a significant weakness for the Empire.

Shadow Wing Bargains

Emperor Baleroth harbors a dark secret tied to his prior dealings with the Cult of Shadow Wing. Even after discovering Dillsgar's affiliation with the Cult, Baleroth retained him as the Ironhand Captain. His reasoning was strategic: let the Cult instill fear among the populace to solidify his own authority. While Baleroth never genuinely aligned with the Ungods, he felt he could exploit the Cult under certain conditions. Such covert dealings could cast doubt upon Baleroth's dedication to combating the Cult and protecting Tanares. However, Baleroth considers such tactics pragmatic. By sowing discord among the Cult's fractured sects, he aimed to outmaneuver them, viewing this as a calculated risk, vital for triumphing over the Ungods. To him, blind righteousness is a path to defeat, not victory.

Places of Interest

Skybell City

This blessed city hosts the holiest Celestianist Cathedral, a pilgrimage site steeped in legend. It's said that angels gathered here to fight the Ungods ages ago. The Cathedral conceals ancient

artifacts, scriptures, and the tombs of holy figures. Rumors suggest it even holds angelic relics. Though under Imperial jurisdiction, the Cathedral grounds follow Celestianist law and are protected by its paladins, a legacy of an ancient pact with Emperor Baleroth.

The city's central market thrives due to pilgrims across Tanares offering many goods. However, non-Celestianist followers are not welcome; no other temples exist, and while the practice of other religions is not illegal, it is clear that such worship is seen as an affront to the local populace.

The Cult of Shadow Wing aims to corrupt Skybell. They almost succeeded before the Celestianist Reform and now regroup in hidden corners. Their agenda includes corrupting clergy, undermining people's faith, and fostering counter-reform to revert the Church to its original Evolutionist dogma. By creating false hints of corruption against the Church leaders, they seek to manipulate public opinion. Though the Church has countered its efforts, Skybell remains the focal point of the Cult's activities.

Hajal City

A global financial center, it hosts the Bank of Hajal's main office. The city's cold climate and seasonal gardens complement its elegant, multicultural design, reflecting its Soulborn founders' culture.

Residents adhere to strict social hierarchies and etiquette, and even the least affluent earn above-average wages, but attire varies by class. The wealthy don formal outfits and fine jewelry, traveling in lavish carriages. The middle class wears long coats and leather boots for style and warmth. Lower-class citizens use work-specific attire, usually marked by employer-specific pins or buttons. Employment is a badge of honor, symbolized by well-kept clothing, while the jobless wear rugged outfits.

Though Imperial Law and the Ironhands are present, the Bank essentially rules Hajal because of an old deal with Emperor Baleroth.

Attracting visitors from across Tanares, Hajal is a hub for those seeking wealth or investment. However, predatory contracts, idea theft, and even blackmail are rampant here. Rumors of debt-induced servitude hint at the city's darker aspects.

The many wealthy individuals in the city make it ripe for adventurers looking for powerful patrons. Bank investors are always looking for competent individuals to protect their investments in distant lands or to enforce contracts on those unwilling to keep their part.

Recently, the Third Eye has been infiltrating the city, slowly building up power to place agents in the higher positions of the Bank. While the Council of Investors of the Bank has received notice of strange movements in the city, they are imprecise. The Councilors are offering high payments to lure great investigators, adventurers, and spies to uncover what is happening in their city.

The Great Forest of Bak

Divided into Western and Eastern regions, it is the continent's second-largest forest, safeguarded by an Imperial Decree. This protection was secured by Thalia in the Arena of Fate, defending the druids' rights, which Baleroth used to showcase his supposed desire to enforce the Arena's judgments, even against the Empire.

Bak is no ordinary forest; it boasts healing ponds that cause plants to grow into exceptional beauty while ancient spells guard its core. This verdant sanctuary is home to the most extraordinary druidic circle of Tanares, devout followers of the Nature Spirits. Their deep connection with Bak offers them unique gifts: resurrection powers

The Pilgrimage to Skybell

Once a year, an individual can make a pilgrimage to Skybell; the arrival method is irrelevant, but it only produces effects once a year.

When arriving at the Cathedral, the pilgrim can dedicate their first prayer to one of the eight statues of the main hall; they depict four different images of Tamera and Bauron, each one related to one of the Celestianist Orders.

The pilgrim must pay eight percent of all it gained in the previous year, and if they do so, they will receive a sacred blessing, depending on the statue they choose to make their prayer.

Orders of Tamera

The Seeds of Life:

- ***Blessing of Nature.*** The pilgrim gains a +1d4 bonus to Animal Handling and Nature checks, as well as checks associated with farming and agriculture for one year.

The Sons of Tamera:

- ***Blessing of Health.*** For one year, the pilgrim is resilient in the face of death, requiring four failed death saving throws, instead of the usual three, to meet their end.

The Scribes:

- ***Blessing of Inspiration.*** Once within the year, the pilgrim can invoke a moment of divine clarity, granting them advantage on a single attack roll, saving throw, or skill check. This blessing expires after one use.

The Enlightened:

- ***Blessing of Light.*** After every long rest, the pilgrim gains temporary hit points equal to their character level for one year.

Orders of Bauron

The Awakened:

- ***Blessing of the Night Watch.*** For one year, during the night, the pilgrim receives a +1 bonus to attack rolls against aberrations or beings from the Penumbral Plane.

The Heralds:

- ***Blessing of Truth.*** For one year, when speaking with pure sincerity and devoid of ulterior motives, the pilgrim gains a +1d4 bonus to Persuasion checks.

The Inquisition:

- ***Blessing of Suspicion.*** The pilgrim is granted a +1d4 bonus to Insight checks for one year, but only when trying to discern if someone is lying.

The Spiritual Guides:

- ***Blessing of the Spirit Warden.*** For one year, the pilgrim is shielded from forces beyond the grave, gaining advantage on saving throws against necromancy spells and all effects imposed by undead beings.

Farmers often ask for the Blessing of Nature, while city-dwelling commoners and bureaucrats tend to ask for the Blessing of Truth or the Blessing of Suspicion. Artists and artisans often desire the Blessing of Inspiration, while the adventurers and mercenaries go for the Blessing of the Night Watch, Blessing of Light, or Blessing of Health.

and agelessness within the forest's bounds. Some druids, Tanares' oldest humans, have lived over a thousand years.

However, dark times have descended upon Bak. A sinister plague, supposedly the doing of the Cult of Shadow Wing, corrupts its flora and fauna into aberrations. While Imperial Wizards believe a corrupted artifact might be the source, their motives are questioned by the druids who deny them entry to the forest's heart. Rumors are that the wizards harbor hidden agendas, seeking to uncover the druid's secrets to learn how and negate their magical protections.

Further complicating matters, a group of afflicted elves from Eastern Bak aim to penetrate deeper into the forest. The druids, wary of their sacred ponds being infected by the plague, stand in their path, while these elves blame the druids' prolonged lifespans for nature's imbalance and the consequent plague.

In the past, the druids have kept adventurers at bay. But with the forest now under siege, they beckon outsiders to help against plague-created aberrations and help to unearth a cure.

The Sacred Ponds

A creature that takes a short rest within the life-infused waters of these ponds gains special benefits.

- When expending hit dice to regain hit points, it regains twice the number of hit points. Additionally, the restorative waters cleanse the creature of any natural diseases.
- The waters also imbue the creature with vital energy, granting temporary resilience. The next time the creature would gain a level of exhaustion within the following 24 hours, that level is ignored, ending this effect.

Taking the water outside of Bak causes it to lose its properties.

Ancient Heargs

Deep in the heart of the Bak Forest western region lies an ancient stone circle, the Ancient Heargs, revered as the druids' holiest site. This sacred enclave is the nexus of ancient magic that defends the forest. The site is a breathtaking clearing with twelve stone effigies engraved with druidic symbols, lush grass, and radiant flowers, channeling the forest's energy. Outsiders are not allowed near the Heargs, save for a few who gained the trust of its guardians.

The spirits that appear here are not mere apparitions but the will of nature's diverse facets. Some personify nature's benevolence, while others reflect its brutality, but all seek to defend Tanares against the Ungods. Rumors say that the magic in the Heargs has roots in the Godly Age, when magic and knowledge, now lost to mortals, flourished. This ancient origin has drawn the interest of many organizations eager to unearth its secrets.

Close to the Heargs resides the lair of a couple of ancient green dragons that protect an isolated Draconic Tower in Bak Forest. These dragons are not merely allies of the druids; they are among the earliest to tap into nature's magic in Tanares, having waged war against the Ungods since their invasion. They imparted the ways to many mortals, and to this day, they partake in rituals and the defense of the forest, yet a shadow has recently befallen them; their youngest progeny has vanished. The dragons, deeply troubled by this loss, believe it has been taken away to the Penumbral Plane by cultists of Z'ulvath. The druids seek adventurers to go into the Penumbral Plane for a rescue mission, fearing the young dragon may be used against its kin.

Phantom Fortress

Located just miles from the Capital, the stronghold doubles as an Ironhand fortress and maximum-security prison. Its fifty-foot walls, patrolled by guards, house high-risk prisoners and reinforce the Capital's defenses.

The stronghold sports a cruciform layout surrounded by a circular wall, dividing it into four courtyards, with a wide tower at its center. The Ironhand army occupies three wings and the tower's upper levels, while the prison takes one wing and the tower's lower and underground floors.

Once an ancient wizard's lab, the tower's underground now serves as an "open jail." Prisoners roam chambers circling a dark abyss, seemingly free, yet trapped. Amenities like a sunlit garden, an Imperial propaganda-filled library, and a temple to Tamera and Bauron serve to indoctrinate them. But the ghosts haunting their sleep are the prison's worst feature, slowly eroding mental resistance to turn prisoners into complacency.

Named after these ghosts, rumored to have been slain wizards in Baleroth's quest for mystical knowledge, the stronghold also houses special isolation cells warded by antimagic fields to deal with dangerous prisoners. Magic wards and alarms secure the entire facility.

On the military front, hundreds of soldiers stand ready to quell any military threat or escape attempts. A ritual chamber exists at the top of the tower, used for converting individuals into Ironhand soldiers by psychosurgery using tameranium and bauronite to strip them of free will.

Many criminals, rebels, and captured spies are sent to this fortress, which also makes it a target for prison break attempts. The allied forces have a deep interest in releasing a few of the prisoners that are here. At the same time, the Empire uses this place to extract information or keep individuals who can be held for ransom, possessing value for other political forces. Some scholars believe that the ghosts here are bound by powerful magic from Baleroth himself, and they hold unique knowledge about the psychosurgery that creates Ironhands. Rumors say freeing these souls could allow one to gain their vast arcane knowledge or mystical powers.

Cursed Ground

In the forest's heart, trees covered in eerie luminescent fungi of purple and green hues show the advancement of a pervasive curse. These fungi, releasing hallucinogenic spores, are rumored to grant visions of potential futures. Amidst the eucalyptus trees and vibrant green moss, there are no animals, as here dwells fungal entities and plant beings such as myconids, violent fungus, otyughs, and treants, with many treants bearing fungal growths adorning their trunks and leaves.

The fungus demonstrates collective intelligence, enabling it to sense and communicate across the forest. Though its purpose is mysterious, whispers suggest it may be a cursed human transformed into this state. The infected treants are under the fungus' control, while myconids and other fungal creatures remain free, with the myconids even venerating the fungus as a deity despite receiving no divine magic in return.

The fungus beckons people to the forest's center, offering wisdom in exchange for accepting a curse. After a cursed individual dies, their body will dissolve in fungus, and their soul, memories, and

skills will be assimilated into the fungus' collective intelligence, augmenting their extensive knowledge.

Three factions are currently at odds within the forest. The Prophets of Fungal Ascendancy view the fungus as a god and believe in assisting it to reach a higher state of collective consciousness to restore its powers. They lure individuals into making pacts with the fungus, subsequently sacrificing them to nourish their deity. In contrast, the Flames of Purity, comprised of Bauronian clerics and paladins, aim to cleanse the forest by setting it ablaze, disregarding warnings from other Celestianists about the potential for a Malrokian Curse. They argue that immediate action to thwart the fungus's influence is necessary to avert making a cataclysm inevitable later. Meanwhile, other fungal beings strive to deter the Prophets from ensnaring more humanoids, fearing retribution, and simultaneously plead with the Flames of Purity to spare their homes. Amidst this chaos, the fungal entity continues to grow, maintaining a neutral stance, neither encouraging nor hindering sacrifices, its goals being a mystery.

Odraz Monastery

Located at the southern foot of the Rainbow Dale mountains, on the extreme western edge of the Central Empire, Tamera's devotees have maintained the Odraz monastery for centuries. Its alabaster walls are adorned with carvings of angels, saints, monks, and paladins. Those who attain the status of saints and heroes of the church may have statues carved here honoring them.

Hundreds of monks and priests keep the monastery's daily routine of prayer, study, and meditation, but what makes Odraz famous is its unique martial art—created centuries ago by Odraz's traveling preachers who returned from distant lands, bringing back insights about Yama's unique blend of meditation and physical training for self-improvement and fusing it with the Odraz paladins' training. By combining physical exercises, combat training, weapon drills, meditation, and prayer, they have developed a unique style that blends faith, inner strength, weapon mastery, and hand-to-hand combat.

Odraz primarily admits young recruits chosen through the meditative divination of Odraz masters. Other individuals wishing to learn from them must offer substantial donations and agree to perform services for Odraz, usually helping small communities and facing evil creatures as a test of their worth. Individuals may be accepted for training at Odraz if they approach the tasks with sincerity, dedication, and a genuine desire to assist those in need.

Rumors suggest that the monastery houses a sacred torch, crafted by a saint and blessed by Tamera. This artifact would be the only one capable of completely illuminating areas within the Penumbral Plane. While the true origin or power of the artifact remains a mystery, the monks do their utmost to protect their secret vault from intruders.

Odraz Monastery Training

(Optional Rule)

If you want to incorporate the distinctive style of Odraz Monastery into your campaign, you have the option to enable Paladin, Cleric, or Monk characters who have received training at the monastery to choose from an alternate set of class features. However, by choosing this alternate set of features, they will have to give up some of their original class core features in exchange for the features of the Odraz style.

Odraz Monk Training

Prerequisite: Monk Class

Lose:

At 1st level, Unarmored Defense.
At 2nd level, Step of the Wind (see Ki).
At 4th level, Slow Fall.

Gain:

Armor Proficiency. At 1st level, you gain proficiency with light and medium armor.
Armored Monk. Starting at 1st level, Monk abilities and subclass abilities that are restricted while wearing light or medium armor no longer impose such restrictions.
Paladin Weapon Training. At 1st level, you gain training with all martial weapons. All melee weapons are also considered monk weapons for you.
Radiant Flurry. At 4th level, when you use Flurry of Blows, you can spend an additional ki point to add 1d6 radiant damage to each of your Flurry of Blows attacks.

Odraz Cleric Training

Prerequisite: Cleric Class

Lose:

At 1st level you learn one less cantrip, and you can prepare one fewer spell after each long rest (to a minimum of one spell). This does not change your spell slots, only the number of spells you can prepare.

Gain:

Martial Artist. At 1st level, you can roll a d4 in place of the normal damage of your unarmed strike.
Martial Prowess. Starting at 1st level, you gain proficiency with all martial weapons.
Holy Smite. Beginning at 2nd level, you gain the paladin's Divine Smite feature, dealing 1d6 radiant damage per spell slot level instead of 1d8.
Swift Strikes. Starting at 5th level, when you take the Attack action on your turn with an unarmed strike or a melee weapon, you can make one unarmed strike as a bonus action.

Odraz Paladin Training

Prerequisite: Paladin Class

Lose:

At 1st level, Fighting Style

Gain:

Clerical Aptitude. On the 1st level, you gain access to two cleric Cantrips of your choice. You can use your Charisma modifier for its spellcasting ability.
Martial Artist. At 1st level, you can roll a d4 in place of the normal damage of your unarmed strike.
Divine Hands. Beginning on the 2nd level, after finishing a long rest, you can choose to forgo all hit points in your Lay on Hands pool to gain one additional paladin spell slot of your highest known level for that day.
Swift Strikes. Starting at 5th level, when you take the Attack action on your turn with an unarmed strike or a melee weapon, you can make one unarmed strike as a bonus action.

Note: When losing a class feature or ability, you also lose access to any feature or ability from your subclass that requires the feature you lost. For example, if your subclass made your Step of the Wind also cause you to ignore difficult terrain, you would lose this feature as you no longer have access to Step of the Wind as an Odraz Monk.

Tourmaline Bay
Natural Pool
Docks District
Palacedomain
Artisan
Sloghood
Uptown
Boomburbs
Duke Wicab's War School
Central Complex of Capital Portals
Grove of Hope
Beautiful Prune Tavern
Bar Beat Pawn Shop
The Moonlit Herbarium
The Iron Haulier Smithy
Old Lirk's Soul House
The Redeemers Assembly
Eucheset Moon Inn
Knights of the Lanarian Order
Baleroth Library of the Capital
Herbarium Emporium and Flower Stop
The Leather and Fur Association
The Gilded Chisel Sculptors
Herbalists Guild
Artificial Canvas Art Gallery
Tsvetdown
Lanarian Bridge
South Creek
Water Gate
Baleroth Gate
Knight's Ave
Oath Ave
Herolate Ave
Imperial Thermal Springs
Inlet's Bazaar Block
Fremzorkas Manor
Imperial Palace
Governor's Square
Pamela's Melody Inn
Ferrel's Verdant
Ironhands Headquarters
The Boom Market
Kidney's Area
The Weeping Area
Peaceless Area
Yolfhol Forest

Oldtown
Arenarea
Martpart
Downtown
Dweomer
Square
Scholarnest
Neckoffoods
Arena of Fate
Robicund River
Stone Fortress
West Mines
Cemetery of Sacred Remembrance
Moon Tower
Hippodrome
Halfling Barrows
Municipal Market
Municipal Palace
Illid Die Arena
Elven Plaza
Little Yama
Customs House
Braves Arena
Old Gray Tavern
Farmer's Market
Public Discussion Hall
Burlesque Theater of Horrors
Dusk of Justice Bleeding House
Golden Chalice Casino
Oak & Stone Hotel
Hogwarts Wine Inn
Stonebreaker Forge
Sinkland Net Fishing
Oldmyre Shallelle House
Arabian Bridge
Old Bridge
Shield Ave
Strawlan Av
Reservoir St
Saint Malrok St
Knight's Ave
Herofate Ave
Arena Gate
Warriors Gate
Imperial Department of Trade
Imperial Museum
Imperial Wizards Headquarters
Orphanage of the Sacred Seed
Drunken Sail Tavern and Inn
The Imperial University of Light
Mystic Isle Tavern
Stones and Metals Guild
Cheese and Hammers Guild
Diamond Dust Jewelers
Tongg Addins-Zaira's Magic Tower
Oakdale Manor
Elder Elm House
The Northwood

The Capital City, Tanarean Empire's Capital

Population: Approximately 680,000.

Leadership: Under the stern rule of Emperor Baleroth, the city experiences political stability and stringent control, with the Ironhand Army maintaining order. The day-to-day bureaucracy is taken care of by the Lord Mayor Frenzuck.

Military Strength: The formidable Ironhand Army has around 34,000 soldiers in the city, the most impressive army of Tanares.

The Imperial Capital, situated in the heart of Tanares, serves as Emperor Baleroth's seat of power and is the largest city on the continent.

Most of the population is human. Society is divided by class and wealth, with various factions, guilds, and organizations competing for influence. The political stability is maintained under Emperor Baleroth's rule, and the Ironhand Army enforces his orders. Entry into the city is strictly controlled, and cleanliness is meticulously maintained in all inner-wall districts. However, government corruption and invasive surveillance of citizens' personal lives are common in the Capital.

The unexplained disappearances of children, particularly in the outer-wall districts, have recently unsettled the populace. Theories range from simple kidnappings to dark experiments, but the authorities have failed to provide any solutions.

Districts of the Capital

1- Sloghood. The most prosperous outer-wall district, Sloghood, is one of the last bastions of the old Evolutionist faith, clashing with the Celestianist Reform. Loyal to the Empire, many of its residents work for the nobles' leniency from the Ironhand officers. The district's narrow lanes feature well-kept homes displaying the colors of the noble houses they serve, along with Tamera and Bauron symbols. Residents disdain Bloomburg dwellers as dangerous refugees, blaming their lawlessness on their foreign roots.

Criminals often target Sloghood for its fewer patrols and perceived loyalty to nobility. Many low-ranking Ironhand officers hail from Sloghood and retaliate, focusing on Bloomburg. This conflict frequently draws adventurers into a cycle of vengeance or justice, with both sides offering payment for aid.

2- Uptown. Situated in the southwest, Uptown is a vibrant hub for lesser nobles, artists, and wealthy merchants. Its social events are luxurious and immersed in political maneuvering. Though seen as a gateway to elite districts like Downtown or Palacedomain, Uptown's allure often exceeds its residents' status.

Its cobblestone paths wind through distinct mansions and galleries, all illuminated by lanterns. Enclaves like Tsvetown mix Orcish and Imperial designs, while Baleroth Library attracts scholars.

Uptown is secretly ruled by the Third Eye, a criminal organization deeply embedded in local society. Identifying their agents is difficult—they could be anyone, prompting constant surveillance by the Empire. Yet, the guild's elusive leadership and structure make them a formidable opponent.

Both the Third Eye and local nobles employ adventurers for various tasks, especially during social events and balls where they can aid in investigating, advancing schemes, or enhancing security, as assassinations and intrigue are not uncommon in them.

3- Artisansquare. Known for top-tier craftsmanship but reserving magic items for the nobility, this district is a nexus of artisan rivalry and innovation, crucial to the city's economy and responsible for many products for exportation. The region is characterized by its many guilds, gathering artisans of similar trade, each guild competing against the others for influence and economic prosperity. The streets feature exceptional shops with ornate architecture while the air is filled with the scent and sound of artisans at work. Amidst the bustling commerce, sculptures, and gardens offer spaces of peace. The Vault, a major branch of the Bank of Hajal, marks Artisansquare as a central financial area of the Empire. Guilds frequently hire adventurers to counter or probe rival plots, as authorities are often part of the problem.

4- Scholarnest. In this district, status means scholarly merit rather than wealth or title. Though mostly middle-class, it offers scholarships and free housing to exceptional, less privileged students, making it the most socially diverse area. Lined with white marble buildings and statues of notable figures like Archmage Torygg and Emperor Baleroth, the district buzzes with intellectual fervor. Home to theaters and the Imperial University of Light, Scholarnest is both a bastion of Imperial dogma and a cradle of radical thought, drawing covert agents from various factions. Ideas born here often shape the continent, making control of its discourse a priority for key players, including Emperor Baleroth.

Scholars frequently disappear, many presumably detained for subversive ideas. The Ironhand and the Imperial Department of Truth often reward individuals aiding in suppressing misinformation, lies, and socially destabilizing ideologies, employing hidden agents and even mercenaries to uncover disruptive individuals.

5- Dweomer. Established to gather the arcane elite all under the watchful gaze of the Imperial Wizards Department, at its heart is the Torygg's Magic Tower, the Empire's sole arcane academy. Joining this academy requires exceptional talent and loyalty, verified by stringent background checks.

Graced with grand mansions, lush gardens, and hovering crystals serving as arcane wards, floating lanterns illuminate its streets, which are adorned by stone golems disguised as statues. These golems answer only to Imperial Wizards, ensuring district security.

Two forces control Dweomer: the Imperial Wizards, enforcers against illegal magic, and Archduke Omathyr, a check against excesses from the government.

The Archduke is a virtuous and kind man. Loyal to the Emperor, he acts as his advisor, keeping him from losing his true purpose of protecting Tanares against the Ungods. He secretly employs adventurers to investigate corruption in the bureaucracy and the military, as well as to protect the innocent from unfair persecution.

6- Martpart. As the Capital's market district, it boasts diverse products and crowds of patrons. Lantern-lit stalls and culturally blended architecture adorn cobblestone streets, while a hidden underworld hosts secret trades and schemes. Despite Ironhand Army scrutiny, illicit activities persist in its darker alleys.

At its core lies the Illu Die Arena, a magically lit battleground featuring taii'maku engineering that captivates crowds most nights. Beyond the market and arena, the district offers nightlife for all budgets, earning its reputation as the Capital's sleepless quarter.

Adventurers and mercenaries flock here to gain fame in the arena or find work—whether guarding merchants or engaging in shadier pursuits. Jobs like recovering stolen goods or smuggling are commonplace.

7- Arenarea. Famed for the Arena of Fate, where combat and politics shape the empire, the district caters to elite nobles and officials with upscale shops and homes. Its architecture features grand mansions with marble columns, large front gardens, and intricate stone fountains. To satisfy the wealthy, it houses the Golden Chalice Casino, the Hippodrome, and the Dusk of Justice betting house, as well as the Inlet's Bazaar, at the district's edge, which sells luxury goods.

This district is a nexus for political intrigue, with decisions sealed in the Arena either by the battles or whispered conversations.

The Blood Bound mafia, a noble faction, covertly runs the district's underworld. They often hire unscrupulous adventurers to aid in their schemes. In contrast, upright ones can find occupation by fighting in the Arena of Fate, assisting commoners wronged by the nobles of the mafia, protecting influential figures, or investigating political schemes threatening the populace.

8- Oldtown. The historical heart of the Capital, it was here that the village that grew to be the Capital existed. Its narrow streets display Orsal's architectural heritage and long-established businesses. Factories and shops, some older than the city's expansion, fill the district, supporting key industries like the lumber mill, the slaughterhouse, and the forges.

The roads weave through time-worn buildings, contrasting with the Empire's modern influences. Oldtown's residents are mostly elderly and often wary of newcomers. Economic disparities are evident: while old businesses thrive, newcomers struggle. Most work for a few influential families, earning just enough to get by. Crossing these families risks ruin, which has stoked some fires of rebellion.

Known as the Capital's "cemetery" for its rigid traditionalism, it is where the city's cemetery lies, protected by the Moon Tower, a temple to Bauron, which advocates the existence of afterlife justice. The Gravekeeper's Guild manages the cemetery and all bureaucratic matters related to death.

9- Neckoffoods. The agricultural heart that supplies the Capital's markets, people here are simple and hard-working, making most view this district as politically unimportant and merely a land of cultivation. In reality, respected and wise elders, as well as powerful retired heroes whom even Emperor Baleroth respects, live here as simple farmers.

Because of the Braves Arena, it is common for aspiring adventurers to begin their career here, dreaming of ascending to grander arenas. It is there where the retired veterans often scout for talent, hoping to pass on their legacy. They offer budding adventurers quests to deal with unfinished businesses, old enemies, or unconquered hidden dungeons for valuable rewards—training, wisdom, and magic items from their adventuring times.

What very few know is that beneath the peaceful surface of the Neckoffoods hides a cell of rebels against Baleroth, as righteous retired heroes gather the people in old barns to plot against the Empire.

10- Bloomburgs. In stark contrast to the Capital's opulence, this district is stricken with poverty and defiant. Here, the marginalized refugees resist Imperial rule, showing their unyielding spirit, unbroken under oppression.

Most people here either do physical labor or end up in crime, with many relying on the black market, with stolen items, smuggled goods, and elicits being sold in its labyrinthine alleys.

Various sub-districts house diverse groups of refugees; the Ubelians maintain their southern barbaric traditions, the Kjörners cling to their northern Kolbjörn customs, and "The Worst" Area offers refuge for the worst criminals seeking to evade the Ironhand.

The distaste for the Empire is omnipresent, making this district a sanctuary for subversives and rebels, with magic being taught in secret and masked vigilantes patrolling the streets, as no one trusts the Ironhands. Called "Slum Saviors," they dispense their form of justice, each with their own agenda.

Adventurers may either turn vigilantes or criminals in this district, sometimes forced to navigate its underworld to acquire restricted magical goods or remedies for unique curses and mystical ailments, as many magical products are illegal in the Empire.

11- Downtown. The Downtown District is the Imperial Capital's administrative and spiritual core, known for the Sacred Celestianist Cathedral of the Eight and the Municipal Palace, where Lord Mayor Frenzuck and city officials manage civic matters.

Though crowds visit the cathedral and Pious Sara Sonata Hospital, the district remains exclusive to noble dwellers, as land ownership is restricted to nobility by imperial decree.

Its architecture features mansions with noble and religious symbols. At the same time, the streets have many statues of the gods and sanctified heroes, such as King Malrok and the archangel Ascaran.

Apart from nobility, only clerics, acolytes, and priests may reside here, restricted to living on the temple grounds. Given the cathedral's role as a Celestianist training center, clerical figures are common on the streets.

Though short on entertainment and ordinary commerce—usually vetoed by the nobles—the district offers high-end shops. Some even hold Imperial permits to sell magic items exclusively to noble customers.

12- Palacedomain. This district embodies the Empire's three pillars: military strength, religious zeal, and arcane mastery. Baleroth's court gathers the elite of the nobles, where hidden rivalries and political maneuvering unfold under the guise of piety or righteousness.

Architectural splendor marks this district with pristine cobblestone pathways and gold-adorned mansions. At dusk, magical lanterns brighten enchanted gardens, all overlooked by the radiant Imperial Palace.

Land ownership requires court approval. Commoners can use only designated roads to the Palace or Tamera's temple and Orphanage. Nobles exclusively roam the inner lanes and parks under the protection of the Ironhand patrols, many leisurely walking with magical beasts on leashes to showcase their wealth and status, a practice that showcases the Empire's culture of power and oppression.

Adventurers here usually serve the court or influential noble houses. Though various jobs exist, they swiftly find themselves entangled in the court's intricate politics orchestrated by Emperor Baleroth.

Emperor Baleroth

Emperor Baleroth, considered the only survivor of Arcana in the Malrokian Curse, is reputed to have single-handedly defeated hordes of penumbral creatures to survive the cataclysm. However, as no one else escaped, it is his accounts that now shape the history of the event. In the aftermath, Baleroth seized control of Tanares, capitalizing on the power vacuum and the populace's need for security, all in a bid to avert another disaster like the Malrokian Curse. He started by annexing small, newly-formed kingdoms, forming his Ironhand army, and forging alliances with the Evolutionist Church and influential nobles, ultimately declaring himself Emperor of Tanares.

His remarkable prowess as both a warrior and an archmage silenced any opposition, cementing his claim as an Arcana survivor. Yet, a hidden truth lurks behind his rise to power. As a prince of Arcana and twin to Archmage Torygg, Baleroth gained immense strength by usurping the mystical powers of his siblings, committing fratricide. Ironically, these very acts of fratricide destabilized Arcana, leading to its downfall, while simultaneously endowing him with the resilience to withstand the Malrokian Curse.

Upon realizing the Cult of Shadow Wing had manipulated him, and witnessing the cataclysm's true horrors, Baleroth vowed to prevent such a calamity from reoccurring and to exact vengeance on the Ungods. This resolve led him to pursue the unification of Tanares under his rule.

Tormented by his past and haunted by the specters of his siblings, he conceals his mystical scars and anguished visage behind a mask. His rule is marked by authoritarian control, under the conviction that only he possesses the capacity to protect the world from the Ungods. Ambitiously, he aims to summon an army of fiends using the Vandanamalika, intending to transform them into eternal overseers to enforce worldwide compliance. His formidable power and strategic acumen enable him to employ daring risks and cunning tactics, even manipulating the Cult of Shadow Wing to assert his dominance.

Yet, the sudden reappearance of his presumed-dead sister, Queen Tyreen, has thrown Baleroth into unease. He suspects her of being an impostor or a vengeful undead and is reluctant to order her execution. He worries that his subordinates, especially the High Imperial Wizard Thidexius, might act independently to eliminate her. Consequently, Baleroth treads carefully, seeking the assistance of external investigators to unravel the mystery of this enigmatic return.

Asineus & Diamus, The Twin Tigers

Orphaned twins Asineus and Diamus (LE) were discovered on High Imperial Mage Thidexius' experimental grounds by Emperor Baleroth. Intrigued by their resilience to magical and alchemical experiments, Baleroth trained and molded these siblings into the Empire's most formidable gladiatorial champions, the Twin Tigers. They are often found fighting in the Arena of Fate under Baleroth's orders or serving as his silent bodyguards.

Shaped into supreme warriors and utterly subservient, their deep loyalty is directed exclusively towards Baleroth, responding only to his commands or threats against him, and showing indifference to everything else. Baleroth enhanced their resilience and strength to supernatural levels, using necromantic magic to bind their souls and life forces together. This bond allows for telepathic communication and shared vitality, enabling them to coordinate attacks and demonstrate legendary resilience.

Rumors suggest that the twins' true minds are magically imprisoned, conscious, but unable to control their own bodies. While some idealistic rebels of the Empire and heroes of the Republic are attempting to free them, only Baleroth knows their true desires.

Conversely, both the Third Eye and more pragmatic rebel factions have marked the Twin Tigers for elimination. These groups are actively advancing their plans and seeking mercenaries to assist in ensuring Emperor Baleroth loses these crucial assets.

Myr, The Death Merchants' Leader

Myr (NE) was once a street orphan in Hajal who rose to notoriety as a thief, famed for her stunning acrobatics. Her life took a turn when, after attempting to steal from a Death Merchant—an elite assassin—she was captured. Instead of being killed, her potential was recognized, and she was recruited into their ranks.

Myr quickly excelled, using her agility and newfound deadly skills to fix arena matches for the wealthy by eliminating their rivals' champions. However, her path shifted dramatically when a job to assassinate Dillsgar, a former Ironhand Captain, proved to be a trap. Captured, Myr watched as her team, unable to withstand torture, divulged Death Merchant's secrets. Consequently, she and her guild were coerced into swearing loyalty to Emperor Baleroth.

As the leader of the Death Merchants but secretly bound to Baleroth, Myr upholds her code of ethics, particularly avoiding harm to children. She is haunted by her past and dedicates herself to investigating child abductions she suspects are connected to Imperial wizards. Additionally, she supports orphanages and seeks apprentices to continue the Death Merchant legacy. Her primary goal is to uncover evidence against High Imperial Wizard Thidexius to justify his removal. To this end, she discreetly employs mercenaries and adventurers, careful not to expose her subordinates to Thidexius and risk revealing her plans.

Thidexius High Imperial Wizard

Thidexius (LE), now among the Empire's most influential wizards and political figures, showed an early talent for magic but a complete lack of empathy or emotion. His cold and heartless demeanor bred fear and isolation.

Magic became Thidexius' sole focus, and he excelled rapidly. He frequently challenged other wizards in duels, indifferent to fear, pride, or shame, driven only by his quest for the elusive thrill of excitement. This quest led him to boldly challenge Emperor Baleroth. In this private duel, Baleroth's revelation of his Archdevil form overwhelmed Thidexius with fear, igniting a profound and unwavering admiration for Baleroth's diabolic power.

Recognizing Thidexius' potential, Baleroth offered to mentor him in return for absolute loyalty and service. Under Baleroth's tutelage, Thidexius refined his magical prowess and political acumen, eventually becoming the High Imperial Wizard with authority over all magical affairs. Despite suspicions of corruption, few understand his fanatical devotion to Baleroth and his readiness to undertake the empire's darker tasks, regardless of the damage to his own reputation.

Thidexius is seeking adventurers and mercenaries to assist the Imperial Wizards in their campaign against the Empire's four major adversaries in the Capital: the Third Eye, the Rebels, the Eldritch Hand, and the Cult of Shadow Wing. Each group presents unique challenges to Thidexius' goal of eradication.

Captain Brook, The Ironhand Leader

Captain Brook (LE), leader of the Ironhand army and second in military command only to Emperor Baleroth, is a figure of unwavering honor. His commitment to the Empire, driven by a belief in the necessity of strict control and ruthlessness, is rooted in his determination to avert another Malrokian Curse.

Brook's firm adherence to his principles has made him an outlier among the nobility. The betrayals by former Captains Dillsgar and Sedura have put him under constant analysis, while his resistance to corruption has further alienated him from the aristocracy.

Clad in his signature Ironhand armor and a dark red mantle, Brook is often perceived as brooding or depressive. However, his somber demeanor reflects the weight of the difficult, often sacrificial decisions he makes in the Empire's interest.

His dedication, seen as a burden willingly accepted for the greater good of the Empire, garners respect from those loyal to the imperial cause. They view his rigid measures as necessary for the well-being of the Empire, not acts of personal ambition.

In his current secret mission, Brook is working to identify and eliminate traitorous nobles. He discreetly manipulates adventurers, unknowingly involving them in his schemes to find and eliminate dissent within the Empire. For Brook, the eradication of these internal threats is crucial, and he is prepared to go to extreme lengths, including the elimination of entire families associated with the traitors, to safeguard the Empire's stability.

Cardinal Erithad, the Wise

Cardinal Erithad (LG), a prominent theologian and philosopher of the Celestianist Church, hails from a wealthy noble lineage. Opting for a scholarly life rather than indulgence, his thirst for knowledge and disillusionment with noble politics led him to study under an erudite cleric at the imperial library. This mentorship inspired him to join the Church and enter the Scribes, a Tamerian sect committed to wisdom.

Erithad's education, encompassing etiquette and a variety of ancient languages, provided him not only to unravel complex historical texts but also to skillfully navigate the intricacies of Imperial politics to the Church's advantage. Transforming from a naive noble to a paragon of integrity, Cardinal Erithad is celebrated for his gentle nature and consistently calm demeanor. Although he unites a conservative approach to societal change, he holds a hopeful view of the Celestianist Reformation.

Fully aware of Emperor Baleroth's schemes and the threat posed by the Cult of Shadow Wing, Erithad skillfully balances these challenges. He prioritizes the welfare of the people over personal moral convictions, advocating for pragmatic and effective actions over naive or extremist ideologies

Currently, he is actively engaging adventurers to investigate the Empire's corruption, challenge the Cult, and spread the Celestianist doctrine. Aware of the precarious state of peace, Erithad is committed to strengthening it, even if it means forming strategic, albeit cautious, alliances with influential figures like Emperor Baleroth.

Galender, the Weapon Master

Galender, the Weapon Master (N), is one of the Arena of Fate's most esteemed combatants. His expertise as a gladiator and instructor is sought after for his extraordinary physical prowess and his mystical telekinetic mastery of weapons. In battle, he is a whirlwind of steel, skillfully combining hand-held weapon attacks with telekinetically maneuvered blades.

Renowned for both his combat skills and his legendary pride and vanity, Galender holds in disdain those who rely on power they cannot wield themselves, such as certain nobles and bureaucrats. Despite his arrogance, he respects the courage of adventurers and heroes, often mentoring them to enhance their abilities for the thrill of future challenges to augment his own victories.

As an avid weapon collector, Galender is always on the hunt for unique magical weapons and martial techniques. Driven by an ambition to carve his name into Tanares' history as the unrivaled gladiator, he is on a quest for the Four Seasons Regalia. These legendary elven blades, lost to time and endowed with the power to summon elemental forces through divine magic, hold immense appeal to him, despite their sacred status in elven culture—a concern he dismisses.

Ignoring the potential sacrilege, Galender generously rewards anyone who can assist him in acquiring these blades or other rare martial artifacts and secrets. His offer includes substantial gold and the chance to participate in his extraordinary quest to ascend as a living legend, including learning some of his secret techniques.

Republic of Freelands

Government: The Republic of Freelands holds a democratic system with a parliament led by a Prime Minister.
Faction: The Allied Forces
Population: Around 1,700,000. Humans 70%, autumn elves 11%, winter elves 8%, summer elves 4%, gnomes 4%, dwarves 1%, others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Very High
Crime and Violence	Low
Economic Prosperity	Low
Government Corruption	Normal
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	High
Political Stability	Low

Geography

Nestled between the Central Sea to the east and the expansive Storm Sea to the west, the Republic of Freelands boasts remarkable geographical diversity. Its northern territories consist of moors and wetlands, which give way to temperate forests bordering icy mountain ranges. The imposing Cragplateaus Mountain Range divides the Republic, serving as a natural barrier between the Central and Storm Seas. To the south, the landscape unfolds into lush tropical forests, scenic highlands, and yet more mountainous expanses, which herald the onset of arid desert lands. This varied topography renders Freelands an enthralling domain for exploration, ripe for settlement and the founding of new villages.

Politics

The Republic of Freelands thrives on democracy. First Minister Tellatius, a revolutionary hero, leads both as an elected parliamentarian and as the head of government. Assisted by Defense Minister Sedura and Magic Minister Rigilia Choween, they anchor Freelands' democratic foundation. In Freelands, while nobles lack official authority and power, the wealthy nobility still controls many lands and often clashes with parliament. Mila, a noble and elected parliamentarian, questions the sustainability of the Republic's freedom-centric policies. She highlights the complex nature of deals and political movements in the parliament as a deterrent to taking the necessary actions to sustain the country.

As a leader of the Allied Forces, Freelands stands as the exemplar of the ideological battle against tyranny, opposing the Empire and counting the Cult of Shadow Wing among their greatest enemies. However, Freelands' democracy also harbors many internal alliances and rivalries. Conspiracy rumors and power struggles between influential individuals plague its government. Yet, unlike despotic regimes, every citizen, from peasant to noble, influences Freelands' fate, and its people are willing to fight for that.

Economy

The Freelands' economy thrives on the mineral-rich Cragplateaus Mountains and the timber-abundant southern forests. Its capital, Fisherman's Wharf, boasts gilded palaces, remnants of ancient Imperial affluence. Beyond its grandeur, the realm remains a frontier. New towns emerge near resource sites, offering a rugged yet optimistic life. The economy rests on iron, copper, tin, timber, monster parts, and mercenaries. Luxury items are rare and often imported. However, the vestiges of an Imperial era persist, with nobles holding vast areas of land, exacerbating wealth disparities. Yet the people's indomitable spirit endures. Many in the Freelands make their livelihood as mercenaries and adventurers, frequently defending against monsters in the wilder regions. The Republic's trade, though abundant in essentials, lacks sophisticated products, reminding its citizens of their nascent economy and the lengthy journey ahead as a nation.

Culture and Society

The Freelands are a melting pot of cultures, united by a shared spirit of democracy and progress. Freelanders, as they are known, fiercely guard their freedom, a legacy of their fight for independence. They are recognized for their courage and adventurous spirit. Many heed the call to serve as mercenaries, gaining renown as pioneers of uncharted territories or as hunters of the monstrous creatures that roam the untamed expanses of their land.

Religion mirrors the diversity of the Freelands. Celestianism, which venerates the deities Tamera and Bauron, embodies the Freelander ideals of harmony and resilience. Numerous adventurers and mercenaries follow the Path of Glory, while elves uphold their devotion to the Cuibhle pantheon. Gnomes and scholars, meanwhile, pay homage to Lumina, the goddess of wisdom. A modest minority, primarily remote farmers, honor the Nature Spirits.

Their greatest annual celebration, the Festival of Freedom, commemorates their victory over the Kemet Invasion by celebrating unity, resilience, and heroism with banquets marked by games and fireside tales of heroic deeds.

Freelanders value genuine interactions, viewing formal etiquette as a sign of deceit. Their customs, from distinctive handshakes to toasts for the departed, mirror their deeply held values. Speaking ill of those who perished in honorable battle, even if the words are truthful, and falsely claiming acts of heroism, termed "Theft of Valor," are significant cultural taboos.

History

In ancient times, the region was divided between the Realm of Kemet's Kolm and the Zepardit Gnomish Kingdom. However, the Malrokian Curses transformed it into desolate ruins, burying countless treasures and artifacts. The region then became a complex web of contested territories until annexed by the expanding Tanarean Empire.

Though once deemed an insignificant territory, everything changed thirty years ago when the Empire heavily invested in Fisherman's Wharf. This transformed a simple coastal village into a bustling city. The Emperor's covert goal was to construct a Vandanamalika, disguised as a gladiatorial arena. Yet, before its completion, Kemet forces, guided by the prophecies of Golgöggoth and led by Gullog, invaded, capturing the city and the nearly finished Vandanamalika.

Numerous Tanarean heroes gathered, forming the Resistance and establishing the city of Wharfugee. Hidden in the mountains and protected by ancient druidic magic, they launched a counter-attack, reclaiming Fisherman's Wharf after a legendary battle.

However, the Kemet Invasion weakened the Empire, and the heroes' newfound prestige paved the way for a rebellion. Sedura won the people's hearts, and Tellatius instilled the ideals. Together, they instigated the uprising that led to the birth of the Republic of Freelands, Tanares' first democracy. Avelum, disenchanted with the Reginheraht wizards' pursuit of arcane power over improving people's lives, sided with the Republic. He established his magic tower and academy in Wharfugee, now known as Heroes Rise.

In the west, Baraelmer, a repented Kemet general, founded a winter elves city within the Republic. Denouncing Gullog's prophecies as false and Bás as a tainted goddess, he vowed support to the Freelands against the Kemets on the Storm Islands. In the north, King Sundaryll married the elven heroine Anariel, and together, they started restoring the autumn elves' Kingdom within the Republic. With powerful heroes and now two elven realms under their flag, Freelands was elevated from a mere insurgent state opposing the Empire to a shining beacon of hope for the continent, culminating in the formation of the Allied Forces. Today, the Freelands entice adventurers with vast uncharted territories and boundless prospects for valorous quests.

Frontrunners of the Frontier

The Republic of Freelands is a realm of peril. Monsters, spawned by the minions of the Ungods, stalk its wilderness, while ancient ruins conceal magics from bygone empires as well as ghosts, the undeads, and magical creatures birthed by the Malrokian Curse that devastated those ancient realms.

Though the Freelands remain the least charted territory on the continent, having been neglected by the Empire, common folk venture forth in search of new lands to call home. Many brave the risks to become settlers, while adventurers are lured by the challenge and possible riches hidden in these lands, hoping to earn their place as heroes by confronting the lurking perils.

Recognizing the demand for such valiant souls, the Republic founded the Adventurer's Guild to formalize their training and apply their prowess in defending the territory and reclaiming relics. As the Ungods plot the fall of Tanares, these adventurers keep risking their lives, standing firm against the ever-present menace of cultists and creatures that endanger their newfound home.

The Adventurer's Guild

In a realm plagued by monsters, cultists, and aberrations, the Adventurer's Guild is a beacon of hope for the people. Citizens of the Freelands may enter, offer payment, and patiently await a team to accept their task. The guild handles adventurer registrations, displays quests, and has instituted a ranking system from iron to diamond. It ensures transparency, safety, and fair compensation, preventing inexperienced adventurers from taking on tasks beyond their abilities to uphold high success rates. Yet, as the guild flourishes, its burgeoning influence draws both admiration and suspicion. While every new hall shows its success, with some even built beyond the Freelands, they also bring new challenges. Entities like the Empire, eager to halt their progress and maintain a firmer grip on military forces and mercenaries, conspire to hinder the guild's operations and tarnish its reputation.

The ranking:

Iron Tier. The greenhorns of adventuring, tasked with duties of a menial nature, from mundane errands to minor guard duties. These individuals form the first stepping stone to a greater calling.
Typical Character level: 1 to 2 (CR ⅛ to ¼ NPCs)

Copper Tier. These are the bulwarks against the common threats against the simple people. Copper-ranked heroes are seen as proficient in dealing with lesser monsters, such as harpies and specters, or organized threats like goblin and gnoll raiders.
Typical Character level: 3 to 4 (CR ½ to 1 NPCs)

Bronze Tier. The professional face of adventuring, these individuals bear the weight of combating significant monstrous threats, such as the petrifying basilisks and the dangerous manticores. Their reputation is one of reliability and strength.
Typical Character level: 5 to 6 (CR 2 to 4 NPCs)

Silver Tier. Local champions, those of the Silver rank, are already considered true heroes. They are the ones who battle against foes likes trolls, extraplanar elementals, and even wyverns. Their names are echoed in the towns and cities they protect.
Typical Character level: 7 to 10 (CR 5 to 7 NPCs)

Gold Tier. The epitome of mortal prowess, these individuals are tasked to face the worst terrors that plague Tanares. Capable of challenging fearsome demons, powerful emoguns, ancient vampires, and even capable of dealing with the occasional maddened adult dragon. They serve as an inspiration to the populace and their names are known even outside of Freelands.
Typical Character level: 11 to 16 (CR 8 to 13 NPCs)

Diamond Tier. The paragons of heroism and living legends, their deeds have carved their names into the annals of Tanares. The Diamond rank is more than a measure of ability; it is the embodiment of legendary heroism that transcends conventional scales. Avelum, Sedura, Garion, and Sir Erick are some of the individuals that embody the diamond rank, their power considered immeasurable. These individuals are called only to deal with situations of world shattering consequences.
Typical Character level: 17+ (CR 14+ NPCs)

The Democracy's Dance

The Republic of Freelands envisioned a society where every voice mattered. However, this noble goal birthed covert politics and conspiracies. Hidden agendas aim to corrupt the electoral process, leading to ballot tampering, public slander, and even assassination attempts. Adventurers are constantly hired to uncover illegal plots, protect individuals, or do dirty work for political groups. Despite these challenges, the Republic stands vigilant, defending its democratic values against rising acts of deception.

Threats and Conflicts

Cultists and Witches

Hiding both in cities and in wildlands, the Cult of Shadow Wing thrives by spreading discord in the Ungods' name. Purple Witches exploit political turmoil in urban centers, while cultists of Droggath use rituals to summon or control monstrous hordes that terrorize the hinterlands. Their objective: to sow fear and disrupt society. Adventurers frequently counter these threats, either by exposing the Cult's machinations or by battling the creatures that endanger the villages. The Republic is tainted by corruption and the eldritch magic of the Ungods' minions. Whether within the walls of parliament, hidden shrines in urban areas, or ancient ruins amidst forests and mountains, the Cult is there plotting, and only the adventurers stand as a shield against the Ungods' tendrils.

The Power Games

In the Republic's heart lies a political landscape rife with treachery and power struggles. Parliamentarians and nobles vie for influence, some driven by noble desires, while others by selfishness, resorting to any means to ascend in power. Adventurers often become entangled in these schemes; discrediting rivals, investigating corruption, infiltrating political meetings, stopping assassination attempts, or even murdering rivals of their patrons are all "common jobs."

However, sometimes, adventurers themselves are the greatest threat. Some exploit the people's fears of monstrous invasions, demanding high fees for protection and removing other adventurers from the area to monopolize their region. Others, in their quest for fame, directly eliminate rival adventurers. These acts are direct betrayals of the culture of heroism and the founding ideas of Freelands, but they force true heroes to tread carefully, balancing their values and their own lives against the Republic's complex political landscape.

The Wild Frontier

The Freelands' untamed wilderness is full of mythical and monstrous creatures, each constituting a dire threat to the region's expanding settlements. Griffon cries reverberate through the frost-clad mountains, bizarre aberrations, like the sinister emoguns, stalk in the night's darkness, and trolls roam the forests in search of their next victims. Adventurers must grapple with the harsh reality of protecting these growing communities, their heroism serving as the sole thing between the creeping dangers of the untamed wilds and the common people trying to give a better life for their families.

Secrets

A Play of Appearances

Lady Mila, a powerful parliamentarian and leader of the noble's faction, often seen as upright and virtuous, has secretly aligned herself with a young sorcerer named Kaya, believing her to be part of a council of sorcerers. In truth, Kaya is a Purple Witch who disguises herself as a young girl. This alliance has allowed Kaya entry to exclusive events and restricted governmental areas, where Kaya is subtly manipulating influential individuals using her innocent demeanor. Yet Mila's schemes run deeper; she intends to betray Kaya to the Blood Bound, a dreaded noble mafia, under the impression she's betraying a circle of sorcerers, aiming to solidify her allegiance to the Blood Bound. This intricate web of treachery is a hidden threat inside the heart of the parliament.

The Church's Dark Past

In the wilds of the south, not all monsters are the creation of cultists or remnants of the Malrokian Curse effects. Some are the result of dark experiments conducted by the Astérion Church. Once a scholarly sect, the Astérion Church was believed to have disappeared following the Celestianist Reform. Their sinister goal was to forge human-monster hybrids to subjugate the continent under their control using the banner of the Evolutionist Church. Yet, their tainted legacy lingers. Grotesque humanoid beasts wander the southern Freelands, hinting that the Astérion might still be at work.

The Celestianist Church condemns the Astérion's actions as heretical, and High Cardinal Taram asserts that the Astérion was completely eliminated. However, Sir Erick and Morlogh, a man turned minotaur who survived the Astérion's experiments, argue otherwise. They claim that the creatures being found in the south bear a striking resemblance to those crafted using Astérion techniques. Some believe they are only remnants that escaped, others that Astérion clerics are still acting in hiding. If the Astérion is found still operating, it could gravely undermine public faith in the Celestianist Cardinals.

The Horror Below

Beneath the vast expanses of the Republic, a secret of dire proportions slumbers. A terror from the Godly Age resides within Undertanares, deep below the earth. This ancient entity, trapped in a perpetual nightmare, births aberrations into existence, spawned from the creature's eldritch mind. These offspring then emerge from the depths through passages open to Undertanares, especially near the Cragplateaus Mountains.

Tellatius, Sedura, and Avelum are all aware of this dark presence, but the secret is kept within the highest echelons of the Republic, and no solution to counter this menace has been found thus far. The information is concealed to prevent mass panic, but the creature's awakening could herald a catastrophe. Therefore, great efforts are being made to better understand it.

Places of Interest

Aurindunnum

Soaring in the skies, the capital city of the autumn elves floats above the Republic's northern expanse. A blend of city and fortress, its autumnal glow, waterfalls, and spires are shaped by both tangible materials and unique illusion magic turned solid by intricate rituals. This magic allows the city to float amidst clouds, showcasing unique structures like levitating staircases and the orbiting spheres of light that brighten its nights, as well as granting all its residents illusory wings that allow flight.

To shield Aurindunnum, robust abjuration wards stand, and countless air elementals are bound for its defense. Once in ruins, King Sundaryll regained hope when he fell in love with Anariel during the Kemet Invasion. Seeing the Republic as a chance for rebirth, and with the assistance of Archmage Avelum and High Cardinal Taram, the city was revitalized.

However, challenges persist. The Cult of Shadow Wing often makes it a target of their assaults, and the Empire sees the airborne fortress as a threat, especially because of its alignment with the Republic. Yet, the gravest threat is internal, as Prince Quizzarian, Sundaryll's younger brother, both brilliant and mad, is always working on plans to take the throne from his brother.

Quizzarian plans go from harmless pranks to dangerous gambits to undermine Sundaryll. Whether it's entrapping the King in a maze, magically enhancing monsters, breaking Sundaryll's scepter and hiding the parts, or unleashing a plague with one unique cure, Quizzarian's actions are always wrapped in riddles and intricate traps. His goal? To prove his intellectual superiority.

Further complicating matters, Sundaryll must lead monthly ventures into the Penumbral Plane to gather energy from aberrations and emoguns. This energy sustains Aurindunnum's defenses and keeps it airborne. Joined by Anariel and the mystical knights, riding Stormbirds of the god Aibidh, they are often seeking mercenaries and adventurers to help with specific threats or tasks during these missions.

The City of Aeyefall

Aeyefall, once Outumn's capital, still shows traces of its oppressive past. Now, the city blends grand stone structures with newer, elegant wooden buildings, their bright roofs symbolizing the people's spirit. Though its past splendor has faded, Aeyefall thrives with its timber and woodcraft, thanks to the nearby Shortfall Forest.

Atop the city's tallest cliff sits an eerie citadel. Formerly the home of Outumn's Imperial Governor, it's now a haunting reminder of dark times. Years ago, Imperial Wizards experimented on prisoners within its depths, in search to advance the methods of creating brainwashed Ironhand soldiers. These cruel trials left tormented spirits, who now roam its halls.

These spirits are able to take control of dead bodies and rise as undead, making the citadel's dungeons dangerous. While there have been attempts to exorcize them, the spirits keep returning. Protective sigils, supervised by the Celestianist Church, now seal the citadel. Yet, the Republic wizards are arguing that these ghosts may hold the last remains of knowledge about the Imperial Wizards research, which could potentially free thousands of Ironhand soldiers from the Empire's mind control. This sparks tension between the wizards wanting research and the Church and the city watch who want to keep the citadel sealed.

The Church seeks ways to purify the citadel, but what binds the spirits remains a mystery. Some think an artifact hidden in the citadel might be the cause; others feel the souls' desire vengeance. A lasting solution eludes the clerics.

Secretly, a powerful vampire, **Lord Krox** (NE vampire, with access to all spells of an archmage), resides in the Citadel. A formidable archmage in life, he is able to bypass the Church's barriers, and has made the citadel his fortress. The old governor's home is now his opulent den where he brings his victims. His intentions remain unclear, but he seems to feed only on individuals whom he sees as a disruption to Aeyefall, while his goal involves restoring the city to its former prestige for unclear reasons.

Unique Characteristics of the Citadel's Dungeons

Undying Spirits. When an undead in the citadel falls, the spirit possessing it is freed. In 1d10 minutes, it possesses the nearest remains, retaining its memories and intent. The dungeon harbors about forty spirits, making any long stay here a living nightmare.

Corpse Preservation. An ancient enchantment placed by the citadel's former wizard inhabitants prevents corpses in the dungeon from decaying.

Corpse Abundance. The dungeon is littered with remains of humanoid soldiers, experiments executed by the wizards when they abandoned the citadel, and fallen adventurers who died trying to challenge the dungeons' depths.

Random Undead Encounters

To determine an undead encounter or a new possession by a spirit, roll 1d6 and reference the table below.

Roll (1d6)	Undead	CR
1-2	Zombie	1/4
3	Skeleton	1/4
4	Wight	3
5	Ghast	2
6	Revenant	5

Shortfall Forest

The Shortfall Forest, known as the 'Jewel of the South' within the Republic, boasts majestic trees and verdant undergrowth. Deep within lies the abandoned lair of Huradrin, a dwarven druid who is now one of the kings of Stonelair. This hut is formed by an opening in the roots of a massive ancient tree. Its walls are etched with glowing druidic runes, leading to the underground realm of Undertanares.

Lately, the tranquil forest has been overtaken by unrest. Once-peaceful creatures are now showing aggression. Owlbears, typically reclusive, are attacking travelers on the roads. Ettercaps, previously bound to the forest's east by druid magic, now wander to assault anyone venturing into the forest. The treants have gone into hiding, and many dryads are exhibiting symptoms of a disease with black marks, which, in its later stages, may turn them into wicked forest hags. The dryads are seeking Stoneoak, the eldest treant, a great archdruid, and Huradrin's mentor, believing it may have answers. Rumors suggest Stoneoak may be found close to Huradrin's lair, searching for an ancient secret in the Undertanares.

Lumberjacks and rangers have started vanishing, alarming the people of Aeyefall, who depend on the forest. Desperate, they seek aid from the Adventurer's Guild. Yet, the Eternal Circle's druids and rangers blame Aeyefall's inhabitants for the forest's plight, deterring them with beasts and magic. Tensions are rising as the Circle is also clashing with the Spawners, a sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing. These cultists are erecting shrines to Droggath in hidden caverns in the forest. Their leader, "The Blighter," a fat undead hill giant with a taste for eating the hearts of his victims, is roaming the forest. Whether they are the cause of the forest's recent disturbances or are just seizing the opportunity to advance the sinister agenda of their dark master is uncertain.

City of Heroes Rise

Situated in a valley surrounded by hills, Heroes Rise was established by the Resistance during the Kemet Invasion and originally named Wharfugee. Its strategic location, combined with ancient druidic magic, made it an ideal site for constructing a hidden village. Over weeks of work, the Resistance fortified the city, creating what now is a symbol of the courage and resilience that gave birth to the Republic.

Now, Heroes Rise stands as the cherished historical jewel of the Republic, capturing the spark that defied both the Kemets and the Empire. The city draws young adventurers, housing a major branch of the Adventurer's Guild. Many believe starting their adventurer's career here brings good fortune, luring countless aspiring heroes.

Notable residents include Avelum, Tanares' mightiest archmage; Zalir, the Relic Hunters' founder; Sara, the seer who owns Tanares most prestigious tavern; and Sir Erick, the noble paladin and current Lord Mayor of Heroes Rise. Together with other legends of the Kemet Invasion, they turn Heroes Rise into the city of living legends.

Heroes Rise's streets pulse with optimism. Crime and poverty are rare, and the community's bond, forged during wartime, remains strong. However, the Cult of Shadow Wing seeks to destroy the city, recognizing its significance in the hearts and minds of people across Tanares. The Cult wants to make the city an example of what happens to the enemies of their dark lords.

High Cardinal Taram and the Celestianist Church also consider the city crucial due to a secret prophecy about a child or group of children destined to shape the world of Tanares. Uncertain if the Ungods' followers are aware of the prophecy, they keep it closely guarded. Both Razun and Taram stay vigilant to safeguard all children of the city, ensuring that the city orphanage provides exceptional care to every child.

The Winterhold City

Winterhold, a city of the winter elves, lies by the delta of the Humming Gulf. Each manor showcases the Kemet style of architecture, complete with Gothic spires and towers that overshadow ornate courtyards. Their stone facades are adorned with shadowed alcoves and intricate ironwork, making these elegant yet harrowing manors serve as fortresses for various clans.

On the streets, a blend of elves and undead can be seen, with the undead performing most of the menial work in the city. At night, undead servants carrying lanterns cast ghostly glows, creating eerie shadows on the columns and turrets of surrounding buildings. The only sounds are the dragging of bony feet and the fluttering wings of crows, mixed with the waves crashing along the coast.

Currently, the city is in turmoil due to mysterious murders. Dead bodies are found at night, marked with disturbing Kemet symbols. Rumors are circulating about a possible Kemet spy, winter elf clan disputes using the Kemet name as a pretext, or even a scheme of the Cult of Shadow Wing. Compounding the unease, some undead have begun showing signs of defiance, alarming the city's nobility. The noble houses are seeking aid to investigate these issues, but so far, they remain unresolved.

Another problem is a political struggle against the conservatives in the Republic's parliament. A decade ago, it became common for winter elves to pay for the right to animate a person's body as a mindless undead after death, a practice necessary to maintain their number of servants. They assert that the soul of the deceased is free to journey into the afterlife; however, many in the Republic are apprehensive about this practice, raising concerns about potential assassinations, exploitation of the impoverished, and violations of sacred burial rites. The winter elves argue that a body is merely an object, and that individuals have the right to sell their bodies post-mortem. With the looming threat of Kemet naval forces, lawmakers on both sides are desperate to find common ground, understanding that this issue must not fracture their unity.

Outunmoor

Cloaked in perpetual twilight, the Outunmoor Swamp stretches across the northern Freelands, its expanse veiled in spectral fog. This marsh is home to a unique ecosystem, attracting scholars and healers with its rare herbs—both valuable and perilous to gather. Yet its true allure lies in the hidden Lakilato Ruins, where the ancient Ruins of Kölm stand as the remains of a once mighty Kemet kingdom that was abandoned ages ago.

Many adventurers have sought to explore the ruins; some return bearing powerful magic items, while others vanish without a trace. Recent rumors suggest that an ancient curse has reawakened near Lakilato, leading to the mysterious disappearance of numerous explorers. This curse is believed to transform intruders into swamp monstrosities.

However, the swamp is indeed fraught with danger. Numerous lizardfolk tribes inhabit the regions far from the Lakilato Ruins, and within the ruins themselves, Penumbral Rifts are concealed in sunken structures, allowing aberrations to emerge from the Penumbral Plane. On moonless nights, the ancient Kemet magic that lingers in the ruins stirs, reanimating the deceased as undead for a single night.

One specific locus of power, known only to Avelum and Rigilia in the Republic, as well as Grace Sung in the Magocracy, is the Stone Circles in the northern part of Lakilato. Here, ancient magic enables portals to other planes of existence to open, provided the runed stones are correctly aligned during specific celestial events. Occasionally, extraplanar beings breach into Tanares through this nexus; some cross willingly, while others are transported without understanding their new whereabouts.

Yellow Creek

Crossing the northern woodlands of the Republic is the Yellow Creek, renowned for its unique yellow-hued waters. Though curiously tinted, its waters are drinkable, immune to corruption, and impervious to diseases, curses, and poisons. This anomaly attracts alchemists, who attempt to harness its essence for potion-making.

Local tales attribute the creek's color to a great wizard, hunted by the Empire and slain by her lover, who had been transformed into a mindless Ironhand soldier. Her demise near the creek infused its waters with her golden life essence. Her ghostly image is rumored to dance atop the water during full moons.

Some of the tales continue by claiming that she was not only a wizard but a demigod from another plane, arriving in Tanares to pursue aboleths that fled her hunt. She fell in love with a human, but tragically, her love story was manipulated by the aboleths, leading to her death and the creek's divine tint.

Yet, beyond legend, it is true that the creek stands as a barrier against a hidden aboleth colony in the forest's southern region. These malevolent beings shun the creek's waters, making the creek a natural shield for neighboring settlements, thus being the source of the myths about it.

At the colony's leadership is Abyllisoth, an ancient aboleth from the wizard's plane, his arrival predating even the Ungods. Distinct from typical Aboleths who side with the Ungods, Abyllisoth loathes both sides of the divine conflict, aiming to obliterate all deities in Tanares.

Unlike his cruel kin, Abyllisoth is calculating and subtle, favoring strategic manipulation and keeping his existence hidden. His colony does not attack land residents if not with a clear purpose. His endgame is to amass mystical power in the form of artifacts and knowledge, positioning himself for the inevitable final clash between gods and Ungods that he plans to manipulate, ensuring both sides are destroyed. As part of his strategy, he employs marsh goblins and kua-toas, gathering all sorts of magic items to ready himself for the day Tanares falls to his kind.

The Creek's Water

Restorative Power. A creature submerged in the waters for one minute receives the effects from the *lesser restoration* spell.

Aberration Ward. Aberrations that enter the water or start their turn in it suffer 4d6 radiant damage.

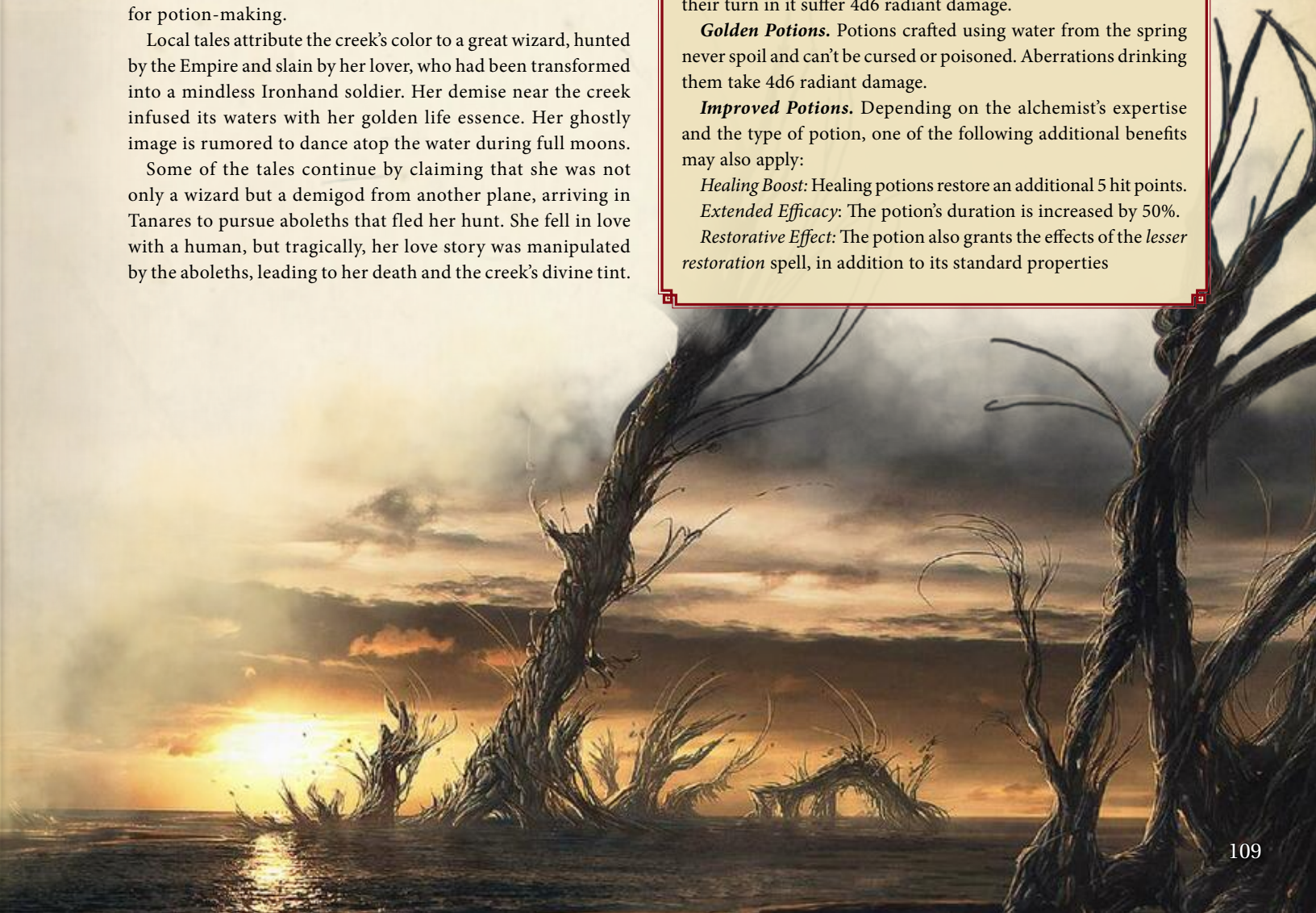
Golden Potions. Potions crafted using water from the spring never spoil and can't be cursed or poisoned. Aberrations drinking them take 4d6 radiant damage.

Improved Potions. Depending on the alchemist's expertise and the type of potion, one of the following additional benefits may also apply:

Healing Boost: Healing potions restore an additional 5 hit points.

Extended Efficacy: The potion's duration is increased by 50%.

Restorative Effect: The potion also grants the effects of the *lesser restoration* spell, in addition to its standard properties



The Port City of Goldraft

Goldraft City, once a great port city of the Empire, now struggles amidst the Republic's economic hurdles. While bronze domes and spires stretch toward the heavens, echoing past glories, the city has clearly lost its luster. During the day, one can see the enduring stalls of the merchants and the many ships docking, as people strive to make a living. Myriad sails and flags wave, each symbolizing their captain's ambition. At the city's heart, an ancient lighthouse emits a haunting green light, which local whispers say guides more than mere ships. Yet it is at dawn that the bustling port truly comes alive, with adventurers weaving through streets filled with diverse inns and boisterous taverns bustling with captains, merchants, buccaneers, adventurers, and locals. Their nightly festivities paint a facade of joy, immersed in ale, dice games, and loud music.

Yet danger looms. A deadly plague, marked by black spots and hallucinations, spreads from the docks, sparing no one; even mighty pirate captains fall victim to it. Rumors trace its origin to a cursed island or perhaps the chants of dark cultists. Locals accuse sailors of introducing the disease, while sailors deem the city cursed. Many captains are now beginning to avoid the port of Goldraft, risking the city's primary trade. As tensions rise, famine may soon join the plague as another impending peril.

Amidst this situation, a local legend speaks of a place where a sick man can potentially find a cure: the Shadow Harbor's Market. Stories tell of a ghostly market where souls are traded, overseen by malevolent faeries. This elusive place appears only on full moons as an inconspicuous door within one of the city's alleys, always in a different location. Rumor says that an ancient pact binds this market to Goldraft.

Still, Goldraft's allure remains. Adventurers flock here to brave treacherous waters, pursue pirates, uncover hidden treasures, and safeguard merchant ships. Despite its challenges, Goldraft City continues to attract those eager to forge their own sagas.

The Goldraft Plague

Type: Magical Disease

Transmission: Contracted through touch with an infected creature or through contact with tainted water or goods, commonly found at the docks.

Save: DC 17 Constitution

Symptoms: The infected develop dark spots on their skin, suffer from continuous fever and chills, experience hallucinations, and are overcome by crippling fatigue.

Effects:

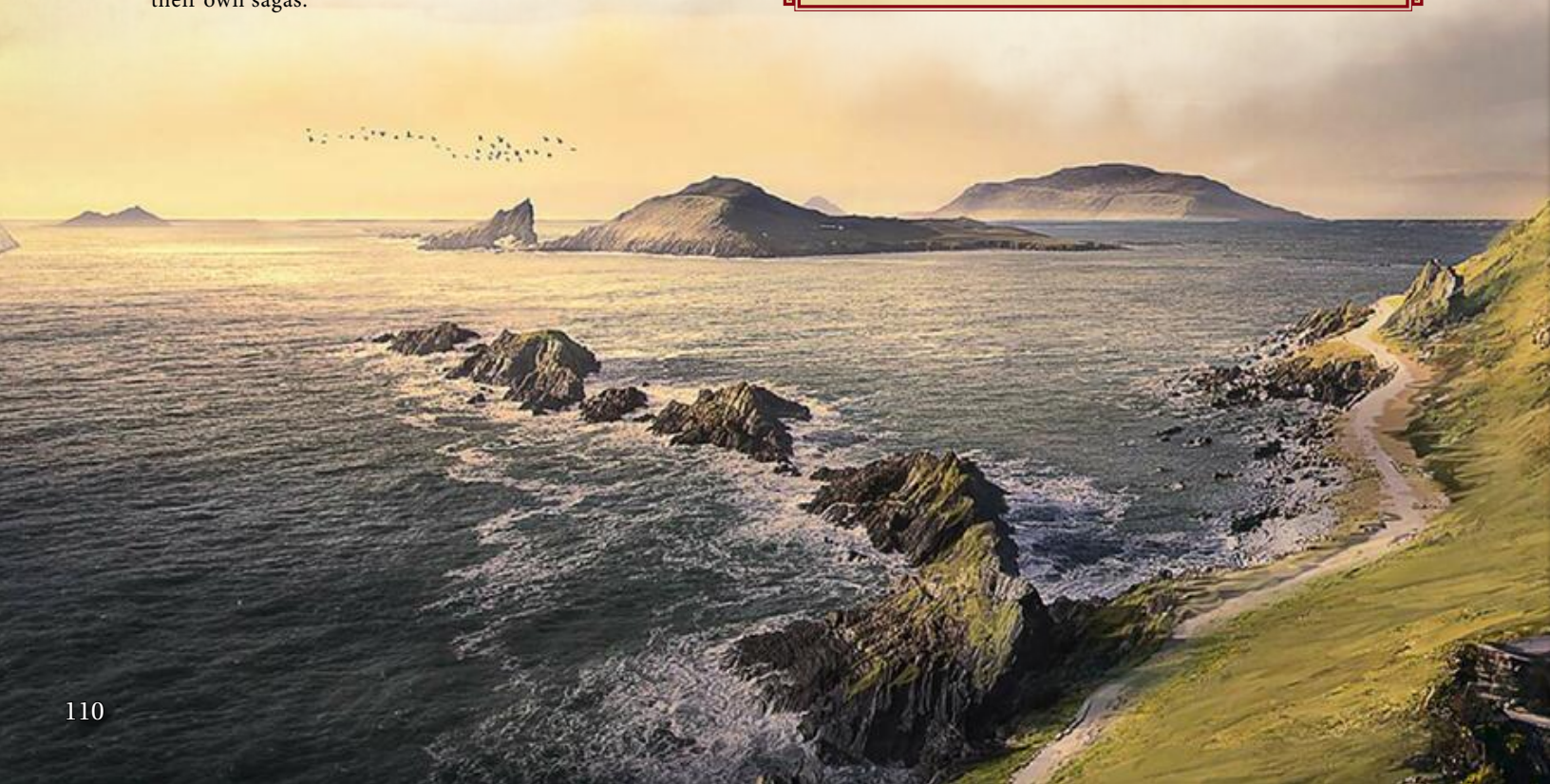
Feverish Visions. After finishing a long rest, the infected creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature feels compelled to complete a mysterious task—such as inscribing a rune on a specific wall or creating peculiar amulets to place at designated locations. Until the task is completed, the creature has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. This effect resets after completing another long rest.

Progressive Weakness. At dawn, the infected creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature's hit point maximum is reduced by 1d6. The creature dies if this reduces its hit point maximum to 0. This reduction remains until the disease is cured.

Cure. Casting *lesser restoration* on the infected creature doesn't cure the disease, but it does grant relief from the nightmares and further loss of hit points for 24 hours. A true lasting cure remains unfound.

Prevention. Isolating infected individuals and purifying tainted water sources can limit the spread of the disease.

Complications. The tasks compelled by the hallucinations serve the interests of a mysterious entity, potentially advancing a malevolent ritual. The true purpose is unknown but might involve Krynnethoth aiming to open a large penumbral rift to engulf the city or demons from Darkall seeking a foothold in Tanares.



Fisherman's Wharf, Republic's Capital

Population: Approximately 570,000.

Leadership: Governed by the current elected Lord Mayor Jessa. It hosts the Parliament, and the Republic Ministers, including Prime Minister Tellatius

Military Strength: The Republic has around 4,100 soldiers in the city.

From a once-humble fishing village, Fisherman's Wharf rose to a bustling metropolis with the Empire's investments before it became part of the Republic. Emperor Baleroth intended to create a Vandanamalika here, hidden underneath the Arena of Future's construction, aiming to use the unique positioning of the city to activate it during the Lunar Perigee. However, the Kemet Invasion disrupted these plans.

The city's architecture, with towering stone edifices amid simpler wooden buildings, showcases its rapid growth under the Empire. Now, the red banners of the Empire were exchanged for the calming blues of the Republic, while statues and symbols of the Empire were replaced with monuments honoring the heroes of the Kemet Invasion.

Fisherman's Wharf, hosting the Republic's parliament and the Freelands' busiest port, hums with ceaseless activity. Yet, Kemet invaders from the Storm Islands frequently challenge its prosperity. Though the city lacks formalized noble districts, its center draws the wealthy for its proximity to the parliament, raising real estate prices. The middle class favors the coast, while the less affluent find a home near the city walls, where property remains affordable, except near the gates, where shops, inns, and taverns fight over space.

In the Main Hall of the Adventurer's Guild, one can find many quests and employment opportunities, while in the Relic Hunters Headquarters, explorers can expect generous rewards for bringing ancient relics and texts.

But beneath this tranquil exterior, political games play out. The city teems with high-society events and covert meetings, all centered around power plays. Currently, a faction of nobles is working to incite civil unrest and inflate crime rates, all to destabilize society, aiming to increase their influence in the upcoming elections. Believing the Republic lacks a robust authority figure, they seek to secure many parliamentary seats under the pretense of creating more strict laws against crime and then appoint a new prime minister, all to gain power and tilt the Republic toward a more aristocratic rule.

Fisherman's Wharf

1- The Parliament
2- Arena of Future
3- Republic Military Fortress
4- Prime Minister's Palace
5- Celestianist Cathedral of Sun and Moon
6- Fisherman's Wharf Port
7- Seabreeze District
8- The Six Quarters
9- Wallside District
10- Uptown
11- Hope Square
12- The Cerulean Plaza

Locations in Fisherman's Wharf

1- The Parliament. The Republic's heart is its political core, symbolized by a grand white marble edifice representing peace and hope. It hosts public debates, but some chambers are exclusive for confidential parliamentarian discussions. Recently, bills regulating certain aspects of magic use and altering taxes on specific goods have heightened Parliament tensions, leading some to secretly hire mercenaries to intimidate rivals.

2- The Arena of Future. While no longer part of the judicial system, it remains a popular spectacle. Adventurers display their prowess in safe, magical, non-lethal bouts, seeking renown. Monthly tournaments in the Arena promise rich rewards, and victories here can elevate one's status in the Adventurer's Guild, unlocking more lucrative quests. Yet beneath its surface lies an inactive Vandanamalika, coveted by the Kemets and other powers. To activate it, specific pylons must be erected in the Storm Islands, Stravian, and Tsvetan.

3- Republic Military Fortress. Built atop a natural plateau, this fortress houses both magical cannons in its towering spires and the headquarters for the Freelands' military forces. Sedura, the present Minister of Defense, devises strategies here that influence the entire army. Due to its key importance in defending the city from naval attacks, security here is reinforced. Nevertheless, the Kemets plot to disable the cannons, aiming to unleash their vast naval fleet to bombard defensive structures.

4- Prime Minister's Palace. The palace is the home for the head of government and hosts meetings with diplomats and private talks with parliament members. It also serves as the administrative heart of many ministries and offices for the Republic's state bodies. The Prime Minister traditionally holds a monthly gala here, attended by parliamentarians, wealthy merchants, diplomats, select nobles, and the families of those guests. These events are central to the Republic's political maneuvers but are also exploited by groups like the Third Eye for negotiation, information gathering, intimidation, or even poisoning targets.

5- Celestianist Cathedral of Sun and Moon. High Cardinal Taram oversees the Republic's primary Celestianist temple, having shifted the Church's administrative heart from the sacred Skybell to Fisherman's Wharf. Though Skybell's cathedral remains grand and the city is considered sacred, Taram's choice represents a shift from using Church's wealth as a display of power to now aid the populace. This temple is now the epicenter for Church deliberations, where Cardinals gather for them. With the ever-present danger of Ungods' servants infiltrating society and the Church, Taram and the cardinals remain watchful. He discreetly enlists hero groups proven loyal to Tamera and Bauron to investigate dubious figures in the city.

6- Fisherman's Wharf Port. The Republic's largest and most militarized port is vital for its citizens, providing an abundance of fish and seafood like squid, octopus, and oysters. Most trade ships engage with Kolbjörn, as the Republic's main trade flows through the Central Seas' Goldraft port. Fishing boat captains frequently post tasks in the Adventurer's Guild, needing aid against threats like Kemet vessels, Sahuagin clans, the occasional kraken, or pirates responsible for vanishing ships.

7- Seabreeze District. This middle-class enclave houses merchants, artisans, fishing ship owners, military officers, and bureaucrats. It's a serene district where children play in the streets and neighbors know each other by name. Businesses are restricted to those meeting basic daily needs, such as bakeries and small food vendors.

8- The Six Quarters. Surrounding the Parliament, this district boasts the city's priciest estates. These grand homes belong to parliamentarians, nobles, and affluent merchants. No commercial endeavors are allowed. The sole non-residential structure is the esteemed Relic Hunters Guild headquarters, housing Tanares' most renowned open museum. Given the guild's collection of ancient treasures and vast knowledge from Tanares' ruins, it is heavily defended, with many magical traps and mystical sentinels protecting its vaults. While heists have been attempted, the guild has consistently secured its relics.

9- Wallside District. Inhabited by winter elves, this district is eyed with mistrust by the city's denizens, doubting the residents' true loyalties. Though most are innocent winter elves, some Kemet spies blend in, masquerading as regular townsfolk. A concealed temple to Bás lies in a house basement where these Kemets convene to venerate their god. They covertly plan to bring frost to the farms, leading to food scarcity and city weakening. With discretion, they place secret shrines of Bás across the farmlands, awaiting the impending winter to activate their sabotage plan.

10- Uptown. Nestled among hilly terrain with uneven and sometimes steep streets, the area boasts diverse shops, homes, and artistically designed estates. The city's open market thrives in the southeast on cobblestone grounds. Overlooking the market, atop a hill, stands the Adventurer's Guild headquarters, a central hub for adventurers. Its mission board is perpetually filled, offering quests ranging from monster hunts to herb collections, merchant escorts through perilous areas, and even journeys to distant lands. Each task offers rewards proportional to its risks and duration, with values set by the quest givers. However, underpriced quests may remain unclaimed

11- Hope Square. Home to laborers and farming families, the district boasts modest dwellings, many crafted from resilient timber salvaged from the buildings destroyed during the Kemet Invasion. Those who lost their homes in the war resettled in Fisherman's Wharf, naming this district. On its edge stands the Fisherman's Wharf Academy of Magic, a symbol against the Empire's stranglehold on the study of magic.

While this district embodies hope, it also harbors a darker aspect. As this is one of the city's most impoverished areas, crime is rife. Nights are treacherous, with muggings rampant and the murder toll exceeding the city's combined. The government's bid to strengthen patrols falters against the needed manpower and costs. Skirmishes between guards and criminals intensify, as these rogues band together, their menace growing.

12- The Cerulean Plaza. The commercial heart of Fisherman's Wharf, this bustling market is brimming with local and imported wares. Adorned with inns, taverns, and the grand "Cerulean Cross Hotel," the plaza boasts a uniform white and blue facade, enforced on the owners by fines. Celebrated as one of Tanares' most beautiful marketplaces, its elegant shops, filled with exotic goods, attract many wealthy patrons, as well as bandits. With crime on the rise, shopkeepers, weary of the overburdened authorities, now turn to adventurers, offering rewards for reclaiming stolen items.

Prime Minister Tellatius

Tellatius (CG), once a Whispers of Revolution leader, stood against imperial tyranny and became a key founder of the Republic after the Kemet Invasion. He is a descendant of the legendary King Malrok and carries his ancient blood. It gave him a latent power revealed through enigmatic dreams and unexpected power surges. This power is so intense that it can challenge the Ungods if Tellatius learns how to control it. The Watchers, knowing the nature of this power, are planning to capture him for use in battle.

His blood pulses with ideals of liberty and compassion. Now, as the Prime Minister of the Republic, Tellatius' belief in equality and liberty shapes the nation's ideals. Renowned for his soothing voice, insightful writings, extensive vocabulary, linguistic prowess, and dedication to social justice, his work consumes all his time. The only leisure moment he can afford is his cherished afternoon tea ritual, laden with moments of smoking, introspection, and discussions with close friends.

Yet, his role has many challenges. Facing opposition from parliament regarding his forward-thinking policies, Tellatius enlists the aid of adventurers to maneuver through political obstacles, unveil corruption, and secure vital intelligence. Simultaneously, he struggles to solve conflicts with some remnants of the Whispers of Revolution, that argue that he has not sufficiently championed the people's cause. This radical group stirs social unrest and sows chaos.

Sir Erick

Sir Erick (LG), the most revered paladin of Tamera, was the first to challenge the deep corruption within the Evolutionist Church, especially the Astérion faction. He departed the Church in protest, returning only after the Celestianist Reform led by his friend, High Cardinal Taram, with whom he became close during the Kemet Invasion. Sir Erick was one of the great heroes of the Resistance and remains a paladin to this day, holding unprecedented holy power as a champion of Tamera, receiving her orders in dreams.

After the war, Tamera commanded him to take care of Wharfugee, and he became the Lord Mayor of the city, now renamed Heroes Rise. He leads with kindness and determination, training the next generation of paladins. He always emphasizes camaraderie over formalities, disliking honorifics and etiquette, encouraging open dialogue, and preferring to greet those he meets with a firm embrace, displaying his view that no one is above others.

Yet, shadows of doubt are cast over his leadership. Anonymous threats demand his resignation, and the sudden vanishing of a young paladin deepens his unease, leading him to suspect a link between the events. Adding to his worries, reports of monster hybrids on the Republic's southern borders have reached him. These beings, echoing past Astérion experiments, have heightened Sir Erick's vigilance.

Avelum, the Master Wizard

Avelum (LG), the most powerful wizard in the world, once dedicated his days to the arcane arts within the ancient walls of Reginheraht Magic Tower, ultimately rising to lead the venerated institution. Despite his position, Avelum remained a gentle soul, always enjoying smoking, tea, and conversations. He values the wisdom of others and, as a mentor, guides with a firm but just hand, ensuring both ethical and magical excellence in his pupils.

Avelum became a hero in the Arena of Fate, where he limited his magic and fought in the arena to sharpen his skills. However, it was during the Kemet Invasion that Avelum became a legend. Approached by Orthus, who revealed himself as Avelum's future self from a timeline where the Ungods destroyed Tanares, he started a deep magic study to prevent this future.

After the war, the shadows of corruption began to dance in Reginheraht, and Avelum noticed hints of Vaeraunt's dark influence. Disturbed by the Council turning on him, he journeyed back to Heroes Rise, establishing an academy and aiding in the birth of the Republic. His current quest delves into the mysteries of the Vandanamalika, with the hope that it will unveil the new Supernal School of magic to decipher the essence of divine powers, even those wielded by the Ungods. As he sends adventurers to reclaim ancient artifacts, even from distant planes, Avelum remains vigilant in stopping Vaeraunt's dark plots.

Rigilia Choween, Minister of Magic

In her youth at Crystal Tower, Rigilia Choween (LG) was entranced by Avelum's wisdom. Gifted with an eidetic memory, she vividly retained every moment of their first encounter, dedicating herself to studying under him. Obsessively organized and possessing an exceptional memory, Rigilia rose swiftly within the Mage Tower. Her beauty drew envy and prejudice from her peers. Avelum, seeing her mistreatment, took her under his wing, acknowledging her dedication to magic and her sense of dignity.

Throughout the Kemet Invasion and the founding of his Magic Tower, Rigilia loyally served Avelum. Recognizing her dedication, he recommended her to the parliament as Minister of Magic. Though inexperienced in politics, she embraced and thrived in her new position. Now, Rigilia navigates the task of ethically regulating magic in the Republic. She is concerned about wizards returning from studying in the Magocracy with a ruthless and cold approach to magic. The rise of unethical magical research requires her attention, as some wizards seem to be stepping into sinister practices.

She directs the reactivation of the Republic's hidden Vandanamalika. The hunt for rare materials and ancient knowledge often requires expeditions into ancient ruins and hostile Kemet territories, requiring brave heroes.

Queen Anariel, the Swordmage

Anariel (NG), queen consort to King Sundaryll and one of the heroes of the Kemet Invasion, has lived for over two thousand years. She has witnessed empires rise and fall, her existence predating the first Malrokian Curse. However, her heart bears a deep wound: her son was transformed into an undead by the Kemets, breaking an old pact she had with them. This betrayal fuels her drive to destroy Gullog and free her child's tortured soul.

She treats everyone, including fellow elves, as if they are children, considering them naive and inexperienced in the world's ways. She also nurtures protective, motherly care for all, viewing everyone as very young kids through her eyes. Because of this, she tends to be complacent and understanding of people's shortcomings, yet she also teaches them condescendingly.

United in grief with Sundaryll, as both have suffered significant losses, Anariel sparked a newfound purpose in the disheartened king to revitalize the autumn elves. A skilled swordmage, Anariel's calm exterior conceals her formidable combat prowess. Her gaze often displays a distant weariness but retains a compassionate warmth. Yet, in battle, her eyes blaze with resolve, reflecting her readiness to wield diplomacy or destruction as needed. Anariel frequently enlists adventurers to spy on Gullog, offering rewards for returning her undead son, hoping to restore him while Bás still anchors his soul. She also aids Sundaryll, sourcing remedies for his depression and mental instability, often tasking adventurers with finding the necessary ingredients.

King Sundaryll

King Sundaryll (LN), sovereign of the autumn elves, bears scars from an era of ruin. His rule has endured tragedies, from the Malrokian Curse that destroyed his realm to conflicts with the Kemets. Such sorrows once drove him to madness, making him a deranged king presiding over the illusion-shrouded remnants of his kingdom.

Redemption came during the Kemet Invasion when heroes challenged him and convinced Sundaryll to join forces against the Kemets. He got closer to Anariel, who brought solace to him; as a fellow individual who had lived through ages, she convinced him to rebuild the elven realm.

Determined, Sundaryll strove to revive his people's glory and face the threat of the Ungods. However, his brother Quizzarian, gripped by the same madness that plagued Sundaryll, remains an imminent danger. Sundaryll rallies forces, including adventurers, to counter Quizzarian's plots in an attempt to save his brother from dooming himself.

Sundaryll's stern exterior hides a sharp mind, mastery of illusion magic, and a love for puzzles and games once shared with his brother. He often sees the spirit of Jezzisel and Allandir, two of his closest friends and counselors who died during the Malrokian Curse, talking and taking counsel with them. Whether these are figments of his madness or real spectral advisors is up to speculation, but these conversations influence his decisions.

Prince Quizzarian

Prince Quizzarian (CE), King Sundaryll's brother, boasts a formidable intellect twisted by bitterness and solitude. Once, he revered his elder brother. Yet, when their realm fell and Sundaryll succumbed to despair, Quizzarian's unwavering faith in his brother fractured, driving him to madness.

He sought refuge in the depths of Undertanares, where isolation gnawed at his sanity. Only upon the resurgence of the autumn elves' domain did he emerge, burning with a newfound conviction: he should have been king.

Haunted by past passivity, Quizzarian reflects on times he held back, letting his admiration for Sundaryll take precedence in the dispute for the throne. He's now convinced that, under his rule, their realm's fate would have differed—or at least, it would have spared his brother the weight of failure that would be his alone to bear.

His plots against Sundaryll aren't born of malice. They serve as proclamations of his perceived superiority and a convoluted attempt to free Sundaryll from guilt in the event of their realm's decline. This warped sense of fraternal duty drives him to devise intricate stratagems, complex puzzles, and masterplans driven by insanity, armed with magical scrolls, clones, and illusions, all to outwit Sundaryll and seize the throne.

Baraelmer, the Battlemaster

Baraelmer (LN), a winter elf with a rigid demeanor, stands as a bastion amid his divided kin. Once a trusted general of Gullog, he is renowned for his unmatched martial skills and is considered the most formidable warrior alive, possessing almost supernatural strength and speed, capable of fighting dozens of warriors alone without breaking a sweat.

His dedication to the Kemet military stemmed from his commitment to the Kemet people. However, Gullog's treatment of soldiers as expendable gradually eroded Baraelmer's trust. Over time, he began to suspect Gullog's true intentions and initiated an internal rebellion.

By the end of the war, disillusioned with Gullog, Baraelmer betrayed him, aiming to save as many of his people as possible. He chose to revive their ancient traditions, renouncing the name 'Kemets' in favor of becoming 'winter elves.' The war's toll deepened his sense of responsibility, leading him to ally with Sedura in search of a peaceful resolution.

While revered as a hero by the winter elves, the Kemets consider Baraelmer a traitor, placing him at the top of their elimination list. His primary concern, however, is the welfare of his people. Having founded the city of Winter Hold, he negotiated an alliance with the Republic. Baraelmer now strives to offer more Kemets the chance to abandon Gullog.

High Cardinal Taram

High Cardinal Taram Hemsfield (LG), the greatest cleric of Tanares, once viewed the Empire as a means to protect Tanares, advocating for and participating in arena battles. Known for his integrity, Taram radiates kindness and prefers hard truths to sweet lies. He delights in teaching children, a practice he continues even as the head of the Church.

During the Kemet Invasion, Taram was part of the secret Council of Four. His wartime heroism and staunch defense of Sedura earned him immense respect. He was granted two secret divine spells by the Gods, the most potent known divine spells.

After the war, recognizing the Church's growing corruption, Taram was enlightened by a visit from Archangel Ascaran. He learned of the Church's deceit, Gideoni's betrayal, the tampering of Sacred Scriptures, and the origins of the Malrokian Curse. This revelation compelled him to initiate the Celestianist Reformation, steering the Church back towards its divine origins. Subsequently, Taram was appointed High Cardinal, responsible for leading the Church's spiritual path.

Despite the success of the Reformation, hidden corruption remains a challenge. Taram actively recruits adventurers to pursue Gideoni, now a fugitive in the Penumbral Plane, liberate the unjustly imprisoned by the Empire, all while maintaining peace.

Cardinal Jocasta, the Pure

Cardinal Jocasta (NG), an exemplar of benevolence, was tragically orphaned at a young age. She was raised in a temple, haunted by the memory of her parents' murder by a mob falsely accusing them of hoarding wealth. These tragic events, she later learned, were orchestrated by the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Under the guidance of the temple head, Erithad, Jocasta sought refuge in her faith, becoming a devout follower of the gods. Her dedication to Tamera and her involvement in charity work led to her rapid rise within the Church, a climb she was unaware was manipulated by High Cardinal Gideoni to exploit her saint-like image.

Her journey to self-discovery began following an encounter with Archangel Ascaran, who revealed Gideoni's deceptions. She realized that Gideoni was behind her parents' death and that the ominous dreams plaguing her were part of his manipulative curse. Now aware of the truth, Jocasta advises High Cardinal Taram, playing a crucial role in the Church's leadership.

Leading the Sons of Tamera, Jocasta is devoted to aiding the impoverished and the sick, seeking justice for her parents, and battling against Gideoni's schemes. Her saintly reputation is a beacon of hope in a world shadowed by the Ungods' corruption.

Despite her non-combative nature, Jocasta's divine magic ranks among Tanares' most potent, earning her the title 'Hand of Tamera.' As a committed pacifist, she plays a vital role in diplomatic efforts between the Church and the Empire and is deeply involved in the spiritual welfare of the Tanareans, inspiring heroes to counteract the Cult's evil influence.

Cardinal Ellen Gideoni

Ellen Gideoni (LG), daughter of the deposed High Cardinal Gideoni, grew up overshadowed by her brother, constantly seeking her father's approval. Through rigorous swordsmanship training and dedicated study of scriptures, she developed into a reserved yet formidable paladin, masking her inherent shyness with a seemingly cold demeanor. However, those who know her well recognize the warmth and kindness beneath her stern exterior.

The mysterious death of her brother cast a shadow of doubt over her father's integrity. As she ascended to the head of the Inquisition, Ellen's determined efforts to eradicate corruption were consistently undermined by her father's secretive actions. It wasn't until Ascaran's celestial revelations that the extent of her father's betrayal became clear.

Now, Ellen is driven by a relentless pursuit of justice, which sometimes borders on excess. She is consumed by the need to locate her brother's body, fearing her father might resort to necromancy. To this end, she offers a significant reward for any information leading to its whereabouts.

Amidst her quest for justice, whispers and rumors link Ellen to the Cult of Shadow Wing, prompting adventurers to delve into both her activities and the operations of the Inquisition. Ellen vehemently refutes these allegations, viewing them as a plot by the Cult to undermine her mission and spread turmoil within the Church's ranks.

Sedura, Minister of Defense

Sedura (LG), famed as a beacon of heroism in Tanares, is not only a masterful blue dragonblade but also renowned for her martial and strategic prowess during the Kemet Invasion. She currently serves as the Minister of Defense for the Republic, a role she earned for her leadership of the Resistance, previously as the Captain in the Imperial Ironhand army. Her successful leadership, alongside Tellatius, was instrumental in establishing the Republic as a bastion against the Empire's oppression.

Before her captaincy, Sedura was a legendary adventurer, defeating the Avatar Dragons Thyra and Zarumag. While her victory over Zarumag is a celebrated achievement, her role in Thyra's downfall, misled by the members of D.E.A.T.H., remains a source of deep regret. This event, coupled with the Draconic Council's stern disapproval, fuels her quest for redemption.

Revered for her heroism, Sedura often engages incognito with the citizens, empathizing with their struggles and inspiring future adventurers. Her support for their quests and challenges reflects her belief in the enduring spirit of heroism.

Despite Emperor Baleroth's attempts to undermine her credibility and destabilize the Republic, Sedura stands resolute. Her unwavering commitment to her people and role symbolizes hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

Imperial Ben'net

Government: Province dominated by the Tanarean Empire, ruled by a governor appointed by Emperor Baleroth.
Faction: Tanarean Empire
Population: Around 445,000. Humans 55%, cirrus 34%, winter elves 5%, dwarves 4%, others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Low (south), High (north)
Crime and Violence	Normal
Economic Prosperity	Low
Government Corruption	Normal
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	Normal
Political Stability	Normal

Geography

Despite encompassing one of the largest territories in Tanares, Ben'net boasts one of the lowest population densities due to its frigid and barren lands. Enveloped by icy mountain ranges stretching across the horizon, with the Crystal Mountains reigning as the mightiest among them, the region is defined by its frozen and rugged landscape, particularly in the north, where glaciers accumulate. Its coastal region in the far north is practically dominated by glaciers, constantly calving ice sheets and giving rise to true ice islands. To the south are the tundras, valleys, and ice forests, which allow for traffic and exploration and serve as a focal point for the population's activities.

Politics

Ben'net attempted to gain independence after the Kemet Invasion; however, the southern areas refused the Cirrus Council of Zephyr's assistance due to religious differences. The Council backed down, knowing that action without community support could ignite a war.

An agreement was made between Governor Bonas Weyrdo and the Council of Zephyr, intermediated by Vaklav from the Celestianists. As a result, the southern region is governed by Imperial forces, and the northern mountainous territory, which held low desirability for the Empire, is controlled by the six orders of the Cirrus Knights.

The Empire allowed the cirrus to retain their ancestral lands and now permits open practice of the Windspeaker Religion, which was banned in the past. The Empire is now allowing it to comply with the Celestianist Reform, which considers cirrus' persecution profane, and to secretly weaken the Celestianist by enabling another faith spread in hopes of in the future reinstalling Evolutionism.

The Empire still seeks to indirectly weaken the cirrus, especially by manipulating their six leaders against each other, giving special attention to Saezz Skyborn, the most radical among them.

The southern region is governed by Imperial Law and enforced by the Ironhands. Governor Bonnas has absolute power backed by the Emperor and can act as he pleases without any opposition.

On the Crystal Mountains and beyond, the cirrus control the territories, with regions governed by each of their orders. The Council of Zephyr makes all central decisions, with one councilor appointed from each Order. The decisions taken by the Council are considered sacred mandates that cannot be changed until the next meeting.

Economy

Most of the population lives as herders, raising animals adapted to the cold, mainly sheep and yaks, with milk, cheese, meat, hide, and wool being their most important production. Their farmers rely on tubers and are known for producing the best and strongest distilled beverages of Tanares. Their textile production is well known, and along with alcoholics, they are their most important export. Their relative geographical isolation and harsh, cold, and treacherous roads make them unattractive for large commercial caravans to pass through. Peddlers or small local caravans carry most products, while large mercantile groups travel only as far as Bregaense.

The cirrus communities are self-sufficient, only trading with local small human farmer communities, sustaining themselves on tubers and fish.

Culture and Society

In Ben'net, society is primarily divided into three different groups.

Cirrus. Their people made their homes in the northern mountains, seeking isolation, following their old customs and traditions, and devoting themselves to the Windspeaker faith. Divided in Orders, they train in magic and physical combat and raise flying mounts while seeking ways to combat the Ungods. Some cirrus have never left their mountain homes, as they were once hunted as heretics by the Empire and the Evolutionists. Although they are now accepted, many are still hesitant to travel far from their mountains.

Imperials. The southern regions boast the highest density of urbanized cities, showcasing the Empire's investments in infrastructure.

Visitors can witness grand stone fortresses, cobblestone streets, and watermills. These cities also feature impressively decorated Celestianist Temples, which adhere to more strict religious views, believing in the necessity of penance to atone for sins. They encourage atonement from their followers for transgressions, including donations to the Church, fasting, vigils, or even physical acts of self-discipline. The locals are law-abiding and resilient, facing challenges with quiet determination and viewing complaints as a sign of weakness.

Farmers and Herders. Most are nomadic herders living on the outskirts, while a few villages and towns exist and serve as meeting points. They are responsible for the bulk of food production, regularly trading with the southern cities and receiving oil, seasonings, salt, metal tools, ceramics, and other manufactured products. The villages hold the traditional techniques to produce the high-priced beverages exported around Tanares, while the mass-produced ones in southern cities are considered lower quality. These people are divided between the Celestianist faith and the Windspeaker religion. In the villages, the official religion is Celestianism. Still, the traveling communities have secretly practiced the freedom-abiding Windspeaker religion for generations, and now that it's no longer persecuted, they openly embraced their faith. Most groups are amicable to the cirrus and view the Imperial Forces suspiciously, considering the taxes abusive. Yet, they are unwilling to risk their peaceful lives for revolution.

History

Before the Malrokian Age, the lands that would come to be known as Ben'net were wild and largely uncharted, with more hospitable realms drawing the attention of civilizations and only a few nomadic tribes living in these icy lands.

At the end of the Malrokian Age, Ben'net gained importance for the first time. Following the great cataclysm that shattered the continent, the cirrus people found themselves the scapegoats of the Evolutionist Church, which accused them of heresy for discrediting the Evolutionist Sacred Scriptures. Zafara counseled the Council of Zephyr against escalating the conflict, leading her people to exile themselves in the Crystal Mountains. A procession of pilgrims, adherents to the Windspeaker's creed, followed their journey and settled at the base of the frozen peaks, fostering peaceful relations with the local nomads and integrating into their society.

However, the Evolutionists' hunting persisted, culminating in a brutal campaign against any who practiced the Windspeaker faith. The Cirrus Order of the Crimson Judgment, seeking to protect their people, erected the Ice Fortress. This fortress withstood numerous assaults by the Evolutionist Church over the years, its remote location being a natural defense against all but the winged mounts.

The rising of the Empire brought a new wave of attacks, as Baleroth's deal with the Evolutionist Church included him aiding the Church against the cirrus. The Empire invested in colonizing the southern part of Ben'net, erecting cities, and building fortresses. They made an organized effort to bring Evolutionism, hunting anyone displaying Windspeaker faith while marching the Ironhands to eliminate cirrus patrols. This practice, along with the expansion of the Sacred Inquisition, saw significant losses for the cirrus.

The tide began to turn after the Kemet Invasion. The exposition of the inner corruption inside the Evolutionist Church gave rise and swift spread to the Celestianist reform. One of its many changes was that all persecution against the cirrus or the Windspeaker faith was now considered profane. For the first time in centuries, the cirrus could descend from their mountain sanctuaries without fear.

Embracing their newfound liberty, the cirrus intensified their efforts against the Ungods, finding allies in the Theocracy of Kepesh and the Magocracy of the Mage Tower. Together, they forged the Arcanum Pact, uniting in their quest to harness the power of magic.

Despite this renaissance of freedom and the surge of independence movements across Tanares, Ben'net remains under Imperial dominion. The Southerner Ben'neters, deeply ingrained with Imperial traditions and beneficiaries of its economic investments, show little interest in insurrection, favoring stability over revolution. The nomadic and agricultural communities, content with their simple lives, eschew the complexities of politics for the tranquility of their existence, making this land distant from a revolution that would greatly benefit the cirrus.

Ben'net thus enjoys a tenuous equilibrium, a land where diverse groups coexist, yet external forces, particularly the Cult of Shadow Wing, lie in wait, eager to unsettle this delicate balance and ignite conflict between the cirrus and the Imperial South.

Cirrus Recruitment

Throughout history, the cirrus species have always been vehemently opposed to the Ungods. This reputation has earned them the label of "ends justify the means." In pursuit of defeating the enemies of the gods, they do not hesitate to employ any form of magic. However, their harsher actions often become a target of the Empire's propaganda, which questions the cirrus' ethics, especially when it suits Baleroth's agenda.

The cirrus have openly declared their objectives and are now accepting volunteers from other species to join them in their arduous training. Aerial mounts transport these individuals to the Plateaus of the Eternal Ice region, where they undergo rigorous training and tests of faith. Those who show genuine desire to serve the gods are taken to their temples to partake in the sacred rituals, take an oath, and become part of one of the Orders. This grants them access to the cirrus cities, making them part of the community as true brothers and sisters.

Celestianist Zeal

In Ben'net, the Celestianist sect upholds a stringent adherence to the Sacred Scriptures, a conviction sharpened by historical strife with the Windspeakers and the region's severe conditions. This fervor is a union of local traditionalism and the religious zeal promoted by the Church and the Empire to ward off the cirrus' faith. Despite their orthodox stance, the once Evolutionists have, unexpectedly to many, wholeheartedly adopted the new Celestianist scriptures, their fervor reinforced by the accounts of archangel Ascaran being seen on the Cathedral of Begraense during his journey to bring the new Scriptures to Tanares.

The devout of the Ben'net Church adhere to strict practices: they perform penance for transgressions, dress modestly to minimize skin exposure, abstain from alcohol and mind-altering substances, and men grow beards. Their ethos emphasizes hard work and moral integrity as defenses against sin and the taint of the Ungods.

The Church's zeal has sparked a campaign to outlaw Highlandtuber Distillate, a strong beverage derived from a distasteful root which, when distilled, combats hypothermia. Its harsh, sour flavor and highly intoxicating effects are off-putting to the uninitiated but valued in the frigid north of Ben'net for its warming properties. In excess, it is said to cause increased aggressiveness, but some appreciate the great physical comfort it provides in the harsh cold of Ben'net.

The prohibition has been met with mixed reactions, yet the majority support it, believing it will diminish crime and maintain moral rectitude. However, the Bloodbound Mafia and the Third Eye saw this as an opportunity for profit, so they have been increasing their presence in Ben'net by creating channels for smuggling the prohibited beverage, which many appreciated. The Bloodbound is pushing for the Church to increase restrictions to all alcoholic drinks, seeing excellent profit potential. The Third Eye is instead trying to lure authorities and adventurers to destroy sources of highlandtuber while keeping a secret farm for themselves, wanting to monopolize and sell it for fortunes.

Highlandtuber Distillate

When you drink a small dose of Highlandtuber Distillate, you gain advantage on all Constitution saving throws against the effects of cold weather for 1 hour. If you consume additional doses before taking a long rest, the duration of the effect stacks.

However, the distillate is potent. If you drink more than one dose before a long rest, you must immediately make a DC 8 Constitution saving throw. The saving throw DC increases by 1 for each dose consumed beyond the first (DC 9 for the second dose, DC 10 for the third, and so on). On a failed saving throw, you become poisoned for 24 hours.

If you are already poisoned by Highlandtuber Distillate, failing another saving throw from consuming another dose will give you one level of exhaustion.

Threats and Conflicts

Imperial Oppression

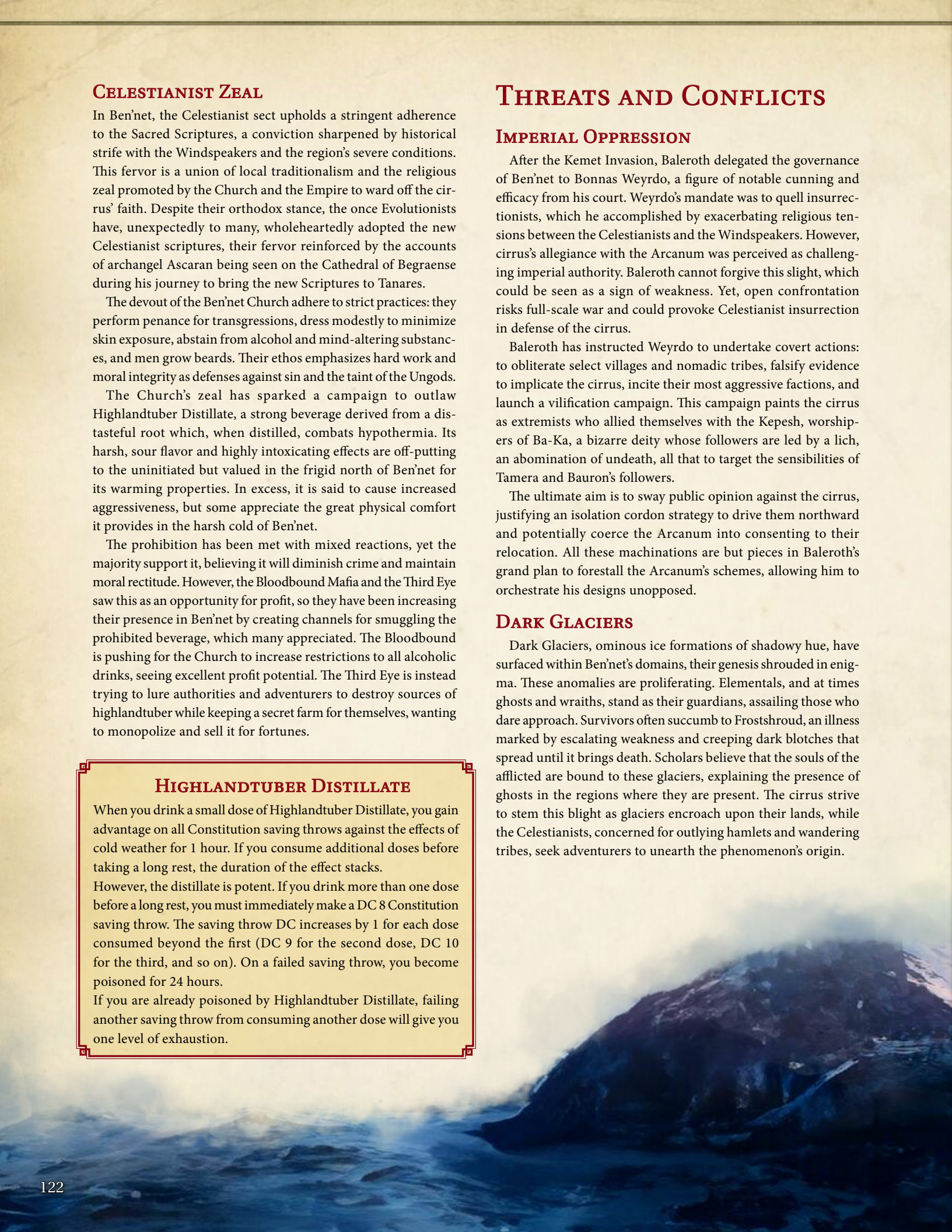
After the Kemet Invasion, Baleroth delegated the governance of Ben'net to Bonnas Weyrdo, a figure of notable cunning and efficacy from his court. Weyrdo's mandate was to quell insurrectionists, which he accomplished by exacerbating religious tensions between the Celestianists and the Windspeakers. However, cirrus's allegiance with the Arcanum was perceived as challenging imperial authority. Baleroth cannot forgive this slight, which could be seen as a sign of weakness. Yet, open confrontation risks full-scale war and could provoke Celestianist insurrection in defense of the cirrus.

Baleroth has instructed Weyrdo to undertake covert actions: to obliterate select villages and nomadic tribes, falsify evidence to implicate the cirrus, incite their most aggressive factions, and launch a vilification campaign. This campaign paints the cirrus as extremists who allied themselves with the Kepesh, worshipers of Ba-Ka, a bizarre deity whose followers are led by a lich, an abomination of undeath, all that to target the sensibilities of Tamera and Bauron's followers.

The ultimate aim is to sway public opinion against the cirrus, justifying an isolation cordon strategy to drive them northward and potentially coerce the Arcanum into consenting to their relocation. All these machinations are but pieces in Baleroth's grand plan to forestall the Arcanum's schemes, allowing him to orchestrate his designs unopposed.

Dark Glaciers

Dark Glaciers, ominous ice formations of shadowy hue, have surfaced within Ben'net's domains, their genesis shrouded in enigma. These anomalies are proliferating. Elementals, and at times ghosts and wraiths, stand as their guardians, assailing those who dare approach. Survivors often succumb to Frostshroud, an illness marked by escalating weakness and creeping dark blotches that spread until it brings death. Scholars believe that the souls of the afflicted are bound to these glaciers, explaining the presence of ghosts in the regions where they are present. The cirrus strive to stem this blight as glaciers encroach upon their lands, while the Celestianists, concerned for outlying hamlets and wandering tribes, seek adventurers to unearth the phenomenon's origin.



Secrets

The Northpact

Nomadic tribes share a secret pact with Azilhada, a hag of ancient power who has dwelled in these lands since the Godly Age. Accompanied by white wolves, her aid to the tribes — from curing maladies to calming blizzards — comes at a dire price: all children born in the winter months are hers by ancient right. Nomads, driven by deep-seated desires, may also seek her favor, which she grants, always asking for a dire cost. The nomads believe that the children she claims are transformed into white wolves, making the killing of such beasts among the nomads a grave sin, for it may mean the slaying of their own blood.

Ice Gambit

Governor Bonas Weyrdo, in covert collaboration with a sect of Imperial Wizards, has initiated the extraction of Frostshroud-tainted crystals. They aim to forge these crystals into weapons of war against their adversaries. The wizards are working to refine the crystals into a powder, allowing the spreading of the deadly illness caused by it unseen behind enemy lines. To achieve this, they are performing secret experiments on the unwilling — criminals, captured cirrus, and nomads taken unawares.

The Harsh Winter Methods

Within the Zephir's Cirrus Council, a faction of extremists delves into a specific branch of ancient magics, seeking dominion over the weather itself. They seek to harness an ancient artifact they found in the ruins of Maland, and cast a powerful ritual to unleash perpetual snowstorms upon the south of Ben'net. Their ultimate scheme is to bury the Imperial cities under the ice and create an impenetrable barrier to halt future Imperial incursions into Ben'net.

Places of Interest

Begraense

The fortified capital of Ben'net stands at the foot of towering glaciers, its icy walls protecting its northern flank, while the Frostflow River's cold, turbulent waters cover its eastern side. The city rises on several concentric plateaus, each encircled by walls that limit access to unauthorized persons. Here, the Ironhand's vigilance is strict, yielding an impeccable organization and negligible crime. The densest population resides in the lower tiers, marked by inns and stables. Ascending zones, one can find merchant shops, temples, and garrisons, culminating in the central Nobles' Ward, where one can find Governor Bonas Weyrdo's palace.

Beneath the city lie concealed passages and subterranean chambers, facilitating the swift deployment of Ironhand troops and housing prisons and hidden halls. This network allows soldiers to appear abruptly when trouble arises, with entry points scattered throughout the city.

Begraense allows cirrus and envoys from other factions, like the Allied Forces and the Arcanum, to enter but keeps them under close surveillance.

Despite the stringent regulations of the city, an underground black market thrives, trading in Highlandtuber Distillate, magic items, and other prohibited goods. It is controlled by a figure known as "The Veiled Baron," who allegedly has ties to the Imperial echelons and the Bloodbound Mafia. This hub offers rare goods and information, and its existence under Governor Bonas' jurisdiction is rumored to have resulted from a deal with the Baron. Adventurers and mercenaries can often find work here, from commoners seeking aid they cannot find with the Ironhand, such as to find disappeared family members, to members of the Third Eye seeking individuals to perform dangerous tasks, to hidden rebels trying to incite the populace against the Empire by seeking help to expose the misdeeds of Governor Bonnas. Many more factions are seeking capable hands than those willing to venture into this harsh, cold north, so plenty of tasks are available.

Crystal Mountain Herbs

Frostcap Shimmerleaf

Description: This herb has radiant blue leaves perpetually encased in frost, a chill that defies the warmth of any surrounding climate.
Effect. Eating raw Frostcap Shimmerleaf grants resistance to cold damage for 1 hour.
Harvesting. A DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check is required.
Alchemical Uses.
Icerunner Elixir: Incorporating this elixir into a potion bestows upon the drinker the ability to traverse icy terrain with ease, negating any slippery conditions for 24 hours.
Frostguard Salve: When applied as a salve, it shields the skin against the ravages of extreme cold, granting immunity to natural icy environmental effects for 8 hours.
Special Use: The innate cold-preserving properties of the Frostcap Shimmerleaf make it an essential stabilizer for other concoctions. Potions that normally deteriorate rapidly can retain their efficacy for years when imbued with this leaf. This preservation quality allows for the mass production of certain remedies, proving invaluable in medical treatments across the realms.

Skyward Blossom

Description. This blossom bears petals that glisten with the ephemeral light of dawn, believed to be imbued with the celestial realms.
Effect. When utilized as a material component in spellcasting, the Skyward Blossom triples the duration of any spell that grants the power of flight.
Harvesting. A DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check is required.
Alchemical Uses:
Ethereal Tincture: When this tincture is imbibed, the drinker can experience the effects of the *etherealness* spell for a duration of up to 10 minutes.
Celestial Infusion: Consuming this infusion grants the drinker an advantage on Charisma checks for 1 hour as their skin emits a soft, heavenly luminescence.
Special Use: Skyward Blossom can be used to create a highly potent variant of holy water that can ward off undead. Undead attempting to enter or pass through ground wet with this holy water must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be unable to cross.

Glaciermint

Description. Glaciermint is a resilient herb that prospers amidst the frigid landscape, emitting a mist of palpable chill.
Effect. When consumed, Glaciermint grants the user the ability to unleash a 15-foot cone of frosty breath, causing 7d6 cold damage to all creatures within the area. Affected creatures may make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw for half damage. This ability must be used within one hour of Glaciermint's consumption and can be used only once.
Harvesting. A DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check is required.
Alchemical Uses:
Frostbite Vial: This throwable alchemical weapon shatters upon impact, dealing 7d6 cold damage to all creatures within a 5-foot radius from where it fell.
Chillbane Draught: When this potent draught is consumed, it grants the imbiber the fortitude to endure submersion in icy waters without suffering cold damage for up to 1 hour.
Special Use: Glaciermint is especially prized as a trade item among those seeking to curry favor with white dragons, who find the herb to be a particularly delectable treat and greatly value them for its rarity
Special Use: Glaciermint is especially prized as a trade item among those seeking to curry favor with white dragons, who find the herb to be a particularly delectable treat and greatly value them for its rarity.

Crystal Mountains

The cirrus communities perch high up on the Crystal Mountains, breathtaking in their austere beauty. Their architecture, a marvel of design with towering structures, balances gracefully on the mountain peaks, embodying the freedom the cirrus cherish. Access to these cities is a feat, typically requiring magical or aerial means due to the treacherous mountain terrain. Since not all cirrus possess wings to fly, many of them rely on winged creatures as mounts, which can be seen constantly patrolling the skies. The seven largest communities are governed each by one of the seven Zephyr Knights Orders.

Historically, the Evolutionist Church and the Tanarean Empire have sought to catalog these settlements, but the persistent mists cloak their boundaries, obscuring where one community ends and another begins. For centuries, alchemists and wizards have attempted to explore these mountains to collect unique herbs unavailable anywhere else in Tanares. However, the harsh terrain and the cirrus' distrust often make it challenging to obtain these rare components. This often leads adventurers and mercenaries to climb the mountains for flowers or leaves that can earn them significant rewards.

Due to their inaccessibility and strong defenses, the Tanarean Empire has never threatened these communities. Still, the same cannot be said of Thundraxa. This penumbral dragon has established its lair in the vicinity of Dark Glacier and has been corrupting white dragons in the region to unleash their fury against the communities of the Crystal Mountains. The elder cirrus defends the hypothesis that these attacks are merely a ruse to camouflage an ongoing plan that the creature is executing.

Mistvale

The region of Mistvale is shrouded in dense mists and frost that have long characterized its name. Of late, these conditions have worsened; the fog's chill intensifies to lethal levels within its radius, claiming the lives of the unwary. These victims rise as frozen undead, preying upon travelers from Ben'net's eastern reaches and fueling speculation about the source of this curse. The Tanarean Empire, preoccupied with the cirrus communities and wary of aiding Baleroth's schemes, neglects Mistvale. Only with the use of magic can one safely navigate its frigid haze.

In truth, the Darkall Forces, led by Gullog and the priests of Bás, are the culprits. They've erected a sanctuary for Bás, the Goddess of Winter and Death. Their goals are twofold: to extend Bás' dominion, forge an undead legion, and access the cirrus cities in the mountains where their many ancient artifacts and magic knowledge are stored, which could greatly benefit the Kemets. They are sending incursions of undead to the nearby Plateaus of Eternal Ice, where cirrus warriors and the Arcanum congregate for training, who are now facing the peril of the undead emerging from Mistvale.

Mists of Mistvale

The Mists manifest without warning. The air cools rapidly, and visibility drops as a creeping frost covers the ground. The onset is often heralded by a sudden drop in temperature and the distant echo of forlorn whispers.

Detection: Players can detect the incoming Mists with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. This check can be made with advantage if the party can detect weather changes or is familiar with the region's lore. Noticing it allows escape by running away from the expanding frost.

Effects:

Cold Exposure. Upon entering the Mists, creatures must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or take 2d6 cold damage and suffer one level of exhaustion from the creeping frost.

Reduced Visibility. The dense fog reduces visibility to 15 feet. Creatures within the Mists have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Undead Hordes. Every hour a creature spends in the Mists, there is a 20% chance to find a group of undead. The GM rolls a d10, and on a roll of 1 or 2, the creature will encounter a group of undeads emerging from the fog to attack.

Navigation Challenge. The disorienting nature of the Mists imposes disadvantage on any Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate.

Long-Term Exposure. Creatures that perish in the Mists rise as frozen undead after 24 hours. These undead are bound to the Mists and cannot leave its radius.

Countermeasures:

Casting *protection from energy (cold)* or similar magic can prevent the exhaustion from cold exposure.

Carrying a beacon of warmth, such as a *flame tongue* weapon or *everburning torch*, can reduce the cold's effect, granting advantage on the Constitution saving throw against cold exposure

Oz Stormwind

Oz Stormwind (LG), known as the Skyhunter, is a ranger-paladin leading the Emerald Guardians. He is an extraordinary warrior and an exceptional hunter, adept at swiftly locating and descending upon the corrupted with astonishing dives, striking fear in them, showing no worldly desires to divert his righteous focus.

He sees himself as a role model to his people, going to great pains to act and be what they need him to be, often shouldering more than he can. He is often at odds with extremist or pragmatic Cirrus, as Oz is adamant about righteousness over consequences, believing soul purity is more important than anything. Sometimes, the extremists use the negative mundane consequences of his thinking to point out Oz's idealism and unpractical expectations.

His ultimate aspiration is to join Archangel Ascaran in the battle against the Ungods. However, Oz believes he must achieve more remarkable feats to earn his place among the angels. To this end, he seeks to destroy the demon Vanarus, suspecting a connection between him and Emperor Baleroth. He aims to expose the Tanarean Empire and pave the way for Ben'net to achieve freedom. Oz often recruits adventurers to gather information on Vanarus' whereabouts, offering generous rewards. He also fosters heroism, aiding promising, good-aligned adventurers.

No one knows Oz's other soul, which has never been seen manifested. Some believe he has achieved a legendary fusion of both aspects, while others speculate that he never sleeps. There are rumors of the two souls despising each other, with whispers that his counterpart may even serve the Ungods.

Saezz Skyborn

Saezz Skyborn (LE) leads the Crimson Judgment, inspiring respect and fear with his booming, commanding voice. His cruelty has stirred controversy among the Orders, yet his efficiency remains undisputed. He bears the burden of his family's death to the Evolutionist Inquisition. This tragedy fuels his opposition to any talks with the Church, constantly reminding everyone of his people's long-suffering under the Inquisition. While others ally with the reformed Celestianists, Saezz stands apart, suspecting corruption and considering other Cirrus Orders too lenient. His rigorous recruitment methods, bordering on torture, are born from his belief that true character is revealed under duress. Nevertheless, he fiercely protects his followers, being careful with Hizzas' fanatism, as it can be inspiring but dangerous.

Hizzas Skyborn (LE) is the other soul, alternating with Saezz each time they sleep. He is an obsessive Zafara devotee, seeing her as the god's chosen. Hizzas has amassed Zafara's ancient manuscripts and seeks to force his interpretation and doctrine on all. Hizzas talks with whispery, honeyed words, manipulating others into adopting his zeal.

He believes he has found a prophecy in Zafara's manuscripts and does anything necessary to make it true, believing it foretells the angels' return to Tanares. He sees Saezz as a pivotal hero in this but thinks he must embrace Zafarism.

Disturbed by reports of Zafara's recent disappearance, he is sending knights and hiring adventurers to investigate the three prime suspects: the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Governor Bonas Weyrdo

Bonas Weyrdo (NE), once the esteemed Grand Governor of the Imperial Capital, now governs Ben'net. His appointment ensured stability, preventing the spark of rebellion. Despite his discontent with the assignment to such a desolate outpost, his duty compelled obedience, and his governance has been markedly effective.

A master of political intrigue, Bonas remains an enigma to his rivals, maintaining a veneer of cordiality even towards those he despises. A staunch believer of Evolutionism, he views Celestianism as High Cardinal Taram's gambit for power under the guise of benevolence. Through seasoned political insights, Bonas has seen principles and morality as often aligned with personal comfort rather than genuine altruism. He perceives acts of charity and justice as mere strategies for personal advantage. Though he acknowledges Taram's goodness, Bonas questions who stands to benefit from his reforms if not Taram himself. For Bonas, the natural order of self-interest can explain all, and even the purest intentions are stepping stones for people's search for personal gain, even if just one desire for higher moral ground.

Bonas is secretly one of the Lords of the Bloodbound Mafia, leveraging his role as governor to further their cause. His rivalry with the Third Eye is fierce; he employs all means necessary to dismantle them as they threaten his underworld dominion.

The ban on Highlandtuber Distillate is but a cog in his machinations to amass wealth. Dissatisfied with his northern post, he schemes to transform Begraense into a bastion of wealth and comfort. Coveting the amenities of the mystical technology of taii'makus Illus and the ambient control achieved by the magic of the Magocracy, he now seeks mercenaries, spies, and assassins to procure this mystical knowledge, hoping to reshape Begraense climate and create amenities to make it into a haven free from the snow he so detests.

Cardinal Vaklav, the Judge

Vaklav (LN) is the Bauronian Cardinal of the Celestianist Order 'Heralds' and wields supreme authority as the highest Moonlord Judge. Clad in full plate armor, he forever conceals his face behind an ornate helm—his identity surrendered to embody the Renounced Bounds of the Bauronian Dogmas.

Blessed with Bauron's unique gift, Vaklav requires neither sleep, sustenance, nor breath. Though once suspected of being undead, he pierced himself to show his red, warm blood. As the Moonlord's chosen, he stands vigilant against night's perils, hunting all forms of corruption and chaos.

Vaklav has the power to judge anyone, including the governor, and even Baleroth treads lightly to avoid conflict with the Church. With the Judge's attention primarily on the Cult of Shadow Wing—a mutual foe—the Emperor cunningly engages Vaklav with leads on their activities, maintaining an alliance. As a Judge, Vaklav mediates between factions, striving for harmony. Although his influence rivals secular leaders, he remains impervious to political intrigue, his path dictated by his divine mandate.

Presently, Vaklav navigates a myriad of tribulations. The ban on Highlandtuber inadvertently bolsters criminal organizations; the city's underbelly is swelling with schemers, and the Cult of Shadow Wing is taking the opportunity to infiltrate the city. Disappearances plague the outskirts of Ben'net, with evidence pointing towards cirrus, albeit on dubious grounds. Penumbral dragons have been sighted in the mountains, while taii'maku and the Magocracy report thefts of their artifacts, now smuggled into Ben'net, prompting demands for their return. To Vaklav, these events indicate a brewing storm, likely the schemes of the Ungods. In response, he gathers a cadre of paladins, cavaliers, and trustworthy oathbound adventurers to dispel the gathering shadow. He suspects that a threat looms, graver than any faced alone.

Kingdom of Kolbjörn

Government: The entire territory is ruled by a king, who delegates to his Jarls the responsibility of governing each region, all under the banner of the Tanarean Empire.
Faction: The king rules under the Tanarean Empire, but there are revolutionary groups sympathetic to The Allied Forces.
Population: Around 720,000. Humans 71%, dwarves 10%, giants 10%, winter elves 6%, others 3%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Normal
Crime and Violence	Normal
Economic Prosperity	Low
Government Corruption	Normal
Magic Access	Low
Monster Presence	High
Political Stability	Low

Geography

Located in the northwestern region of Tanares, the lands of Kolbjörn are bathed by the frigid waters of the Storm Sea. This region is characterized by tundras, frosty mountains, cold prairies, and pine forests, as well as a vast coastline that features numerous islands and archipelagos. Temperatures here vary drastically between summer and winter, resulting in green pastures during the warmer months and snowy plains in winter. The Maëd Range, with towering peaks encased in permafrost, divides the more civilized south from the wild north. Deep lakes and fjords are found along its hills, tundras, and forests, and although Kolbjörn is not commercially significant to the Empire, it hides natural sanctuaries of profound beauty.

Politics

Kolbjörn is ruled by a King in a feudal system, where he receives tributes from the Jarls who directly control their lands. The major clans are each tied to an animal, and in their lineage runs lycanthropes' blood. One cannot ascend as a Jarl without awakening this sacred feature, proving one descends from the First King. This power has made them strong and united them for a long time.

However, since the Empire took control hundreds of years ago, Baleroth began to be the one to appoint Kings from Jarl families instead of allowing the King's heirs to assume the throne.

The current King, Trygve, the werebear, fought in the Kemet Invasion, protecting Kolbjörn from being overtaken, which earned him the respect of Baleroth and the Jarls. But despite past deeds, he is now facing a challenging situation as many of the Jarls are seeking independence from the Empire, aligning with the Allied Forces; others want Kolbjörn utterly free, wanting to submit to no alliances, with some even plotting to take Trygve's crown.

Although all Jarls have pledged loyalty to Trygve, the King knows many are ready to betray him. However, the King is also facing another problem: the conflict against the giants in the north is becoming increasingly tense, and many people have lost their lands already, causing pressure to rise for Trygve to take action.

Economy

Kolbjörn, though not a land of wealth, has endured through darker times. With the Eternal Storm's end, deep ocean fishing became a possibility, but with the Kemet naval forces in the ocean, the demand for Kolbjörn's sturdy shipbuilding grew. Their vessels, coveted by the Republic and the Kepesh, have bolstered their exports, along with their furs, leathers, and herbs—goods that command high interest across the continent. While not flourishing, Kolbjörn's economy stands stronger than in days past.

Renowned as formidable mercenaries, the warriors of Kolbjörn are a prized choice for those seeking skilled fighters, especially the lycanthropes who have awakened the First King's blood.

Yet, in the shadow of the Central Empire, Stravian, Taii'makus, and the Magocracy—masters of agriculture, mining, engineering, and magic, respectively—Kolbjörn grapples with carving out its niche. Jarls strive to diversify, watching the potential of their superior timber for export. But the difficulty of transporting such heavy cargo profitably remains an unsolved problem.

Culture and Society

For generations, the Kolbjörners have protected their lands and traditions, upholding honor, courage, and strength. While these made them skilled warriors, their aversion to scheming made them vulnerable to less dignified foes. Most would rather die in battle than lose their honor, making them fearsome warriors and mercenaries. However, this was a trait the Empire exploited to dominate them politically.

Embracing adversity as an opportunity to grow, they honor their ancestors, believing to be guided by them from the afterlife. Celestianism is uncommon, as Kolbjörners keep their traditional religion with the elders passing down ancient customs through oral recitations, as written records are considered not to impart true wisdom.

Worshiping a unique view of the Nature Spirits' faith, their religion personifies nature; for example, they revere the snow as a maiden spirit, Agrada, thunder as a warrior spirit, Asathor, and the ocean as an giant spirit, Goriund. A wise shaman knows the names of countless such spirits.

Key rites include a coming-of-age ceremony where one bonds with the spirit of an animal by donning its skin, rituals for hunting, and prayers to the spirits offered before grand feasts, which are held to celebrate special significant events, bountiful hunts, or battle victories.

If one thing unites all Kolbjörners, it is their loyalty to their clans and their belief that hunting, fishing, and fighting are not just means of survival but the most noble duties.

History

Kolbjörn, a land forgotten by Tanarean history, is home to tales recounted in oral tradition and ancient poems. Initially settled by giants, dwarves, and winter elves, it only became densely populated when the humans arrived. As the dwarves kept to the underground and the elves left to follow their prophecies, the humans faced the giants alone.

Ygfall Kolbjörn, called the Spirit's Chosen, is renowned for repelling the giants' attacks, averting a Malrokian Curse, and mediating an oath of peace, crafting a pact demarcating human lands to the south and giants' to the mountains and beyond. His triumph crowned him the first Northern King, and his many descendants are considered founders of the noble Jarl clans, with each recording its genealogical origin to prove they carry Ygfall's blood.

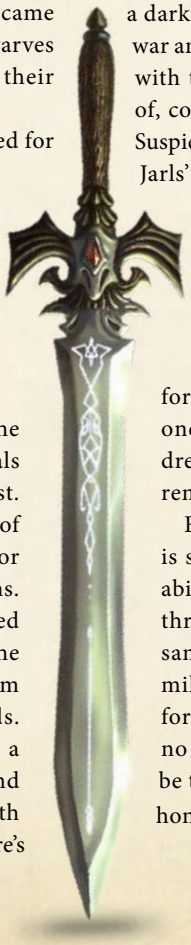
According to local myth, Ygfall was bestowed by the spirits with the power to take on the essence of animals for battle and could transform hybrid forms of any beast. He would have passed down one animal form to each of his descendants, which is why today, the Jarls of major clans are lycanthropes and can take hybrid animal forms.

The traditions and laws established by Ygfall endured over millennia, allowing the Kolbjörners to withstand the destruction of the Malrokian Curses, the monsters from Undertanares, and the cold winter of the northlands. However, when Emperor Baleroth arrived, they faced a new threat. By enticing Jarls with power and wealth and enlisting Kolbjörn mercenaries for southern wars, Baleroth spread his influence. King Agrarom recognized the Empire's strategy too late and stepped from the throne in a deal where the Baleroth would only assign noble Jarls from Kolbjörn as Kings. This condition guaranteed that the blood of Ygfall would still live on the throne. Thus, a tradition was born where whenever a King died, the Emperor chose one of the Jarls familiy members to be an Imperial Governor and a King for the Kolbjörners.

Amidst these political machinations, the Kolbjörn land became a target during the Kemet Invasion due to its strategic location. The invaders, however, failed to defeat the combined force of Trygve, the Kolbjörn warriors, and the heroes of Wharfugee who arrived to help. But the king died in the battle, making a new ruler needed.

Trygve, celebrated by the Kolbjörn warriors and commoners for leading the defense against the Kemets, was chosen by Baleroth as King, preventing potential revolt for freedom as other realms were already doing so. Despite Trygve's popularity, the Republic of Freelands' message stirred an independence movement among the Jarls. Facing economic challenges, Trygve's situation worsened as the giants began to attack beyond the mountains, breaking the ancient pact.

The giants, embroiled in a civil war of their own, saw many of their clans corrupted by the power offered by Abhorroth, a dark titan and champion of Droggath sent to secretly stir a war and bring about a Malrokian Curse. Trygve is negotiating with the uncorrupted giants, which many Jarls disapprove of, considering the giants' breach of the oath dishonorable. Suspicions regarding his deal with Baleroth further complicate Jarls' trust in Trygve as claims that he is not a true descendant of Ygfall appear. Some Jarls believe that Trygve's rule is what invalidated the ancestral oath with the giants and are advocating for his removal in favor of a legitimate heir to enforce the ancient pact anew.



The Honor. For Kolbjörners, honor is not just a concept or creed. It is a way of life. Making an oath means forging a bond with destiny; breaking it means bleeding one's soul and desecrating one's ancestors. Kolbjörners dream to live a life that would be sung by the bards and remembered in the tundras centuries after their deaths.

For them, honor is not individual but a clan's legacy. It is so important that no matter one's status, one needs to abide by rules of honor. A King or a Jarls lead not by the throne but by example, sharing meals and standing on the same ground as their people. This camaraderie and humility are the cornerstones of what makes honor unique for the Kolbjörners. They learn to uphold their integrity no matter who they interact with, for even enemies must be treated with dignity. Even if they are dealing with "dishonorable dogs."

To maintain honor in Kolbjörn, one must:

- Uphold oaths and never break sworn promises.
- Never allow another to talk ill of your ancestors or your clan.
- Preserve your reputation and ensure others believe in your honor.
- Strive for an honorable death; only do what leads to a dignified end.
- Never do something that goes against your ancestor's words.
- Demonstrate resilience and adaptability, embracing challenges.
- Display bravery and courage to protect the clan and the traditions.
- Be loyal to clan and family, even above Kings and Jarls.
- Never force someone to speak or act against his family or clan.
- Treat nature as a family; don't exploit it; only take what you need.
- Seek forgiveness through actions, never words.
- Repay debts with deeds of equivalent worth, not with coins.
- Extend hospitality generously, reflecting the honor of your family

Drakkar Riders

The Kolbjörners were renowned navigators and shipmakers known for sailing in the Storm's Ocean. Despite their skills being overlooked in the past, the end of the Eternal Storm and the rise of the Kemet fleet changed everything.

Their ships, called Drakkars, are medium-sized vessels designed to withstand strong currents and frontal collisions with rocks or enemy ships and to be highly maneuverable, sailing both in rivers and the open sea. The traditional techniques used to construct them rely on carefully selecting the wood, which involves a shaman leading the ship crafters into the forest to find the right tree. When one is found, a ritual is performed to impart it with courage, and then it is cut down. However, the best trees are found in the Twin Heads Forest, where trolls, monsters, and giants roam freely, making the journey unsafe. To mitigate the danger, the shamans often request the help of warriors, adventurers, or mercenaries to secure the trip.

These ships are now vital to Tanares in the war against Gullog and the Kemets, so the Allied Forces are eager for the Kolbjörn to ally with them and break ties with the Empire.

Floating Islands

For ages, the floating islands of Kolbjörn have defied explanation. Some scholars point to the deities Tamera and Bauron; however, local belief credits Sigrida for their creation. They believe she, the supreme spirit of winds, who guides the souls skyward in death, made it to shelter her chosen people, the Valkyries.

Each island is an ecosystem replete with winged fauna, including birds, pegasus, and griffons, all under the watch of the Valkyries. These female warriors, empowered by Sigrida, defend Tanares from the Ungods, wielding divine might similar to paladins, forging enchanted weapons, and excelling in combat. They never meddle in mortal business, only taking charge to face extraplanar threats such as the Ungods or the Kemets, who they know are in league with Golgöggoth.

The Valkyries' society is insular and enigmatic, known to admit few outsiders. Unknown to all, their covert charge is cultivating great heroes for Tanares, guiding them on legendary quests, or leading them to places where they can gather powerful weapons. It is their secret mission to nurture more heroic individuals and weave them into the legends of Tanares, which they record in detail through long epic poems. Their stories even claim that they have once aided King Malrok, and they keep a complete version of his poem hidden in their vaults.

Threats and Conflicts

The Jars Revolution

The Kolbjörn people are divided in their opinions regarding King Trygve's allegiance to the Empire. While some appreciate his efforts to keep peace and prosperity, others believe it is the right time to honor their ancestors and regain their freedom from the Tanarean Empire.

The Jars of the major clans are divided; four support Trygve and the Empire, the "loyalists." Three want to join the Allied Forces, the "revolutionaries," and three seek total independence, the "traditionalists." Disliking political maneuvering, the Jarls have resorted to skirmishes, and battles have broken out between those loyal to each side. Although Trygve has prevented civil war, tensions remain high.

The traditionalists are attempting to assassinate Imperial agents in Kolbjörn, aiming to overthrow Trygve and seize the crown. The revolutionaries want Trygve to abdicate in favor of his eldest son to re-establish the ancient tradition of crown inheritance. The loyalists are divided between those who swore to uphold Trygve's reign and those in league with the Empire, gaining favors from it.

The Kemet Raiders

The Kemets frequently launch attacks on merchant ships, fishing boats, and drakkars of Kolbjörn. Their aim is to force the Tanareans out of the seas and gain easy access to the entire coast. These attacks are carried out with the goal of destruction, looting of riches, burning of fields, and leaving behind undead, all to weaken the Tanareans by eliminating their resources and weakening their morale. Additionally, some attacks are also attempts to establish new temples of Bás, which bring the harshest of the colds into the land, further expanding the Kemet domains, changing the climate, and causing the fields to wither and the people to starve.

The Kolbjörners are constantly engaged in fighting the Kemets, and no ship leaves the dock without being ready for combat, as they never know when they will be attacked. Due to the inconspicuous nature of these temples, scouts, shamans, and warbands continuously patrol the lands, especially the coasts, in an attempt to find Kemets trying to infiltrate the continent to build temples to their deity.

The Giants

Giants have always been numerous in Kolbjörn. Consisting of various species, they inhabit the mountains and further north, often fighting between themselves or repelling intruders. Despite disliking humans and dwarves, they are more isolationists than warmongers, fearing the Malrokian Curse. While the rare outcast and the wild trolls pose a sporadic threat, the giants have historically remained away from the affairs of smaller folk.

Now, the Dark Titan Abhorroth is gathering an army of giants, readying to descend from the mountains for war. These giants, once rare sights, now venture forth, hunting humans in the forests.

To counter this threat, Yviah, the Queen of the Frost Giants, has been waging battle against Abhorroth, dividing the giants into a civil war. Although King Trygve and Queen Yviah are trying an alliance, their subjects are reticent. The Kolbjörners don't trust the giants, and the giants prefer to keep their communities and problems away from strangers.

Blessing of the Spirit's Chosen

The revered Blessing of the Spirits is an ancestral gift, tracing its origins to the legendary Ygfall Kolbjörn. This boon is selectively bestowed upon his descendants, typically awakening during pivotal moments or rites of passage.

While not the standard form of lycanthropy, Tanarean Scholars associate it with a variation that carries no curse and has no negative effect on the bearer.

Eligibility

The individual must be a direct descendant of Ygfall Kolbjörn, often hailing from one of the ten eminent clans, to be considered for the blessing. It can be added for both player characters and non-player characters.

GM Note: Given its power, NPCs with this blessing should be treated as having a Challenge Rating (CR) one higher.
For PCs, it's advised that the GM consider the party balance carefully before applying these rules. It may create exciting roleplay potential but also cause an impact on party balance and encounter difficulty.

Awakening the Blessing

The blessing may emerge naturally or through a venerable ritual conducted by a shaman versed in Kolbjörn's traditions, often requiring the accomplishment of a sacred quest or the recognition of a remarkable feat. Still, it's impossible to know if the spirits will decide to bless the individual, and only those of Yggfall lineage have a chance to succeed.

Feature

Recipients of the blessing forge a permanent bond with an ancestral spirit, inheriting unique abilities when transformed in its hybrid form.

Hybrid Form

Once per long rest, a blessed individual may, as an action, assume a hybrid humanoid-spirit form for 1 hour, gaining benefits as follows:

Ability Score Increase. The individual receives bonuses to ability scores according to their Spirit Animal, up to a maximum of 24.

Natural Weapons. They gain a natural attack pertinent to their Spirit Animal, using either Strength or Dexterity for attack rolls.

Natural Armor. Their Armor Class (AC) is set as outlined in the Hybrid Form Table when unarmored.

Spiritual Resilience. They gain resistance to nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Limitations

Exhaustion. Reverting to their normal form inflicts one level of exhaustion.

Recognition. The distinctive hybrid form, often associated with Kolbjörn's nobility, may inspire awe or fear, potentially attracting unwanted attention. This blessing is esteemed as a marker of legitimacy within the Kolbjörn clans, shaping the bearer's identity and societal interactions.

Spirit Animal	Ability Score Increase	Natural Attack	AC	Traits
Polar Bear	+4 STR +2 CON	Claw: 1d6 slashing; Bite: 1d8 piercing	13 + DEX modifier	**Powerful Build:** You are regarded as one size larger for carrying capacity and the ability to push, drag, or lift.
Snow Leopard	+2 STR +4 DEX	Claw: 1d6 slashing; Bite: 1d6 piercing	13 + DEX modifier	**Ice Traverse:** Moves through ice or snow-covered difficult terrain without penalty.
Arctic Wolf	+2 STR +2 DEX +2 CON	Bite: 1d6 piercing	12 + DEX modifier	**Pack Tactics:** Gains advantage on attack rolls against a target if an ally is within 5 feet of it.
Musk Ox	+2 STR +4 CON	Horns: 2d4 piercing	13 + DEX modifier	**Charge:** After moving 20 feet straight toward a target, the subsequent melee attack deals an extra 1d6 damage.
Artic Owl	+2 DEX +4 WIS	Claw: 1d4 slashing	13 + DEX modifier	**Wings:** Gain flight speed equal to base walking speed. **Owl's Insight:** Advantage on Wisdom checks.
Walrus	+6 CON	Tusks: 1d8 piercing	14 + DEX modifier	**Thick Blubber:** Resistance to cold damage. **Swim:** Gain a swimming speed equal to base walking speed.
Arctic Fox	+2 DEX +4 CHA	Bite: 1d6 piercing	13 + DEX modifier	**Keen Smell:** Advantage on smell-based Wisdom (Perception) checks. **Elusive:** Advantage on saves against grappling.
Reindeer	+2 DEX +2 WIS +2 CHA	Horns: 1d6 bludgeoning	12 + DEX modifier	**Agile:** +5 feet to base walking speed. You can take the Disengage action as a bonus action.
Raven	+2 DEX +4 INT	Claw: 1d4 slashing	13 + DEX modifier	**Wings:** Gain flight speed equal to base walking speed. **Mimicry:** Capable of mimicking simple sounds.
Icelandic Horse	+2 STR +2 CON +2 WIS	Slam: 1d6 bludgeoning	13 + DEX modifier	**Fleet:** +10 feet to base walking speed.

Secrets

The Serpent's Shadow

Rumors in Kolbjörn talk of a secret group known as The Serpent's Shadow, consisting of nobles without the lycanthropic gift. Opposing the ruling lycanthropes tied to the spirits' blessing, they plot to end this reign and its sacred connection using dark magic.

These nobles, most of whom once favored prodigies, fell from grace for failing to manifest lycanthropy as adults. They contest the status quo, arguing that worth should stem from one's actions and dedication, not fate or spirits' whims.

Amidst distractions from giants, the Empire, and rebels, The Serpent's Shadow aims to redefine sovereignty in Kolbjörn. Intent on dismantling the revered link between lycanthropy and leadership, they envision a future where the rule is solely by human effort and merits, free from ancient spiritual bonds.

The Salvation Army

A few years ago, the Celestianist Church formed a Salvation Army to help remote communities. Their mission is going to remote regions to aid those in need in isolated communities. They stay out of politics, but Kolbjörn's conservative Jarls suspect them of rebel ties. Some Celestianists' actions, helping Jarls that are aligned with the Allied Forces, have raised Trygve's suspicions. Lacking solid evidence to act against them, he's sent mercenaries and adventurers to investigate the clerics and find a way to remove them from Kolbjörn.

To make matters worse, some priests have disappeared, and High Cardinal Taram has taken notice of the situation. He has demanded an answer from King Trygve and sent Church inquisitors to find out more. Trygve is trying to balance the case to avoid a political scandal or conflict with the Church, but he cannot concede too much to the Celestianists without displeasing the Jarls.

Lost Runes

At Kolbjörn's heart, a secret looms, capable of crumbling the trust and loyalty upholding its society and the people's faith in the Jarls. Legend speaks of ten sacred runes Ygfall gave his descendants; four are now missing—two lost to time and two during the Kemet Invasion. The King and Jarls of the clans who lost the runes are concealing this truth. They covertly conduct the yearly rituals with the Elder shaman's knowledge that four of the runes are false, fearing the chaos that knowledge of the lost ones might unleash. Discovery would provoke a power struggle among the Jarls, undermine their legitimacy, and shake the honor and traditions integral to Kolbjörn's fabric, creating additional obstacles to its efforts against the Empire and giants.

Places of Interest

Kolbjörn Capital

Nestled in a river valley and serving as the capital, the city is known for its stone bridges that connect neighborhoods around the Ygfall Fortress, the King's home. It is renowned for boasting the major clans' common houses, the large shipyards, the forges of famous blacksmiths, and the halls of expert leatherworkers. However, only those with a father and a grandfather born in Kolbjörn can live inside the walls; others must live in the external district or a unique separated stone walled section built for the servants of the Empire.

Because of torrential rains and floods, the city constructions are elevated, with tunnels and chambers below to drain water. Unfortunately, these often attract criminals who want to move around undetected. However, during rain, the tunnels can suddenly fill with water, resulting in yearly drowings.

Recently, a secret cult began to gather criminals and the discontented in the tunnels. Led by "The Rat Jarl," a rat lycanthrope passing himself as a blessed one from a lost lineage, they are building a secret lair. Using magic and cunning masonry, he protects these lairs from flooding, creating a criminal haven while turning the most loyal servants into wererats to "spread his blessing." The Rat Jarl is a Third Eye member in ascension, using this ploy to gather information and gain wealth. Unknown to his lackeys, he lives covertly in the Imperial District as an Imperial Tax collector.

The King and the Empire are aware of the rise of crime and bandits fleeing to the sewers. However, they have already lost good men who drowned while investigating. The King has placed a bounty on these criminals and especially on their unknown leader.

Irongauntlet

Irongauntlet, an ancient dwarven citadel, sits atop the Maëd Range. Abandoned by the dwarves ages ago, it is now a fortified human city. The citadel's design made it an invulnerable refuge for Kolbjörn's people, with a bustling village at its gate. The economy is based on miners and blacksmiths, depending on its trade to survive. The city also serves as a shelter, as during winter or wars, people from many villages in Kolbjörn are guided to hide in Irongauntlet underground citadel.

People live in a village on the surface, as the dwarven citadel is a maze of tunnels and hidden paths where miners venture to gather ore. Yet, recently, the roar of unknown creatures has been echoing there, and small earthquakes are causing destruction and fatalities. Some shamans interpret these as mountain spirits' anger, believing a misdeed of one or a group of miners.

The inhabitants are divided. The Stonecircle group attributes the tremors to lurking monsters. They advocate for sealing off the mines and reinforcing structures to prevent collapses. On the other hand, the Mountain Warriors argue that the solution lies in facing these creatures head-on. They fear that closing the passages will lead the monsters to increase, amplifying the earthquakes and destroying the city.

Meanwhile, the Spirit Whispers see the tremors as messages from the spirits. They claim that closing or venturing into the mountains will worsen the situation and believe in doing sacred rituals, sacrifices, and finding who angered the spirits to punish them.

As iron reserves dwindle, miners and blacksmiths face a looming famine. They are torn between the shamans and warriors while dreading the Stonecircle solution. Amidst the turmoil, groups recruit adventurers for support, with the Mountain Warriors seeking heroes to venture into the undergrounds. While the truth is unknown, the Kolbjörners may soon know why the dwarves abandoned Irongauntlet.

Northharbor

This bustling port city thrives on trade with the Freelands and Kepesh Theocracy. Ruled by a savvy Jarl from the Walrus Clan, known as a tough seafarer, the city's harbors are its soul, full of colorful masts of Drakkars and the resonant noise of commerce.

The people of Northarbor, hardened by the freezing waters in which they swim from youth, are renowned as the most enduring warriors. Though they are the most pacifist and diplomatic clans, they possess great tenacity and can become terrifyingly violent when provoked, traits they believe mirror the walrus displayed on their flags.

Yet beneath the surface of this vibrant trade center, tensions arise between the revolutionaries and the imperial loyalists as whispers of treason and dishonor spread. While alliances forged in commerce with the Republic have strengthened some bonds, others believe staying with the Empire is necessary to avoid war.

Amidst these internal struggles, they must stand against the sea threat as the Kemets' fleet has seized significant portions of the Dead Island Archipelago, bringing a creeping mystical winter from their temples of Bás, along with their hordes of undead. The Walrus Clan and the city of Northarbor stand defiant, safeguarding their home and fighting to stop the Kemets from advancing into the continent.

Falun Mountain

Falun, the Valkyries' sacred city, floats atop the towering peaks of the Maëd Range as a sanctuary closed off to outsiders, and those few invited in find a wondrous sight. The stone structures are carved with sacred symbols in gold while the streets are taken by valkyries sharpening their weapons, writing and singing epic poems, or riding their pegasus in patrols. At the center is the temple dedicated to the spirits, encircled by many communal halls. Here, the valkyries prepare themselves for the ultimate battle against the Ungods while searching for valorous heroes for them to guide.

The Valkyries believe that their holy power comes from the poems and legends kept stored in the temple vaults, which hold the essence of the praised heroes. A claim they prove with unaging bodies and holy powers. Their creed stands that on the day of the final battle against the Ungods, the spirit of these legendary individuals will infuse their bodies and allow them to show their true strength.

During battles, it is common to see Valkyries soaring in the skies, protecting heroes, or searching for new champions. They often nurture those with great potential, but only those they deem honorable. Those who betray them or lose their honor while being guided are hunted down for being potential servants of the Ungods.

While the Valkyries travel the continent searching for individuals to guide, they rarely involve themselves in mortal affairs, preferring to drive people to solve their own problems. However, their honorable and benevolent nature may cause one to intercede, especially if extraplanar forces are involved.

Currently, the Valkyries are seeking champions to stop the spread of Bás Temples in the west islands and to venture into the Mystical region to recover lost artifacts in the ruins.

Great Valley

In the shadow of the towering Godspire Mountains lies the ancient lands of the giants. This majestic valley, partitioned among the giant kin, has thrived by upholding ancient pacts of peace with the humans to the south and between the giant kinds themselves. The Pact gave rise to the One Council, an assembly where leaders of each giant kind meet to deliberate the affairs of the valley and ensure the sacred vows of their ancestors endured.

At each solstice, or when an emergency meeting is required, the One Council is held in the Earth and Sky Temple, a magnificent colossal tower of stone and crystal at the center of the valley protected by powerful magical wards.

Yet, the once harmonious coexistence has frayed at the edges, simmering toward conflict. A titan named Abhorroth, consumed by the corruption of the Ungods, has cast a shadow over the region. He has sown discord, swaying the younger and the power-hungry among the giants and casting aspersions to suggest the humans, the Kolbjörners, have forsaken the old Pact. Though the most sensible of the elder giants remain impervious to his machinations, those who have allied with him have formed what is now known as the Giant Empire. This burgeoning coalition, open to all giantkind, seeks to usurp the valley and ignite a war against Kolbjörn. In their eyes, the battle is for the birth of a Giant Empire; for Abhorroth, it is a means to an end—a massacre intended to invoke a Malrokian Curse to empower his master, Droggath.

The Giant Kins

Stone Giants. Led by the Stoneseer, they guide their kin by connecting with the earth and divinating the future. They are stoic and unbending in their ways, carving their homes in the mountains where they build rune-carved obelisks that protect their cities.

Their divinations have been predicting a great evil involving the corruption of a mighty ancient dragon. They are currently trying to interpret their visions and find a way to stop them from coming past.

Hill Giants. Led by the Tribal Matrons, these wise female elders carry the wisdom of their ancestors while communing with nature to find the paths and bring the land's bounty. Living in nomadic tribes, they are great hunters and gatherers deeply tied to the valley's nature.

Due to the temples of Bás in the west, the climate in the valley has been changing; the warm currents that should reach the valley are now arriving at incorrect times. Many Tribal Matrons are worried and seeking the One Council for some action before nature is disrupted and their people fall hungry.

Cloud Giants. Led by their Council of the Wise, they live in floating spires on the top of the tallest mountains, delving into magic and philosophy; they are reclusive and only leave their dwellings to the One Council meetings.

The cloud giants are secretly researching magic to combat the Ungods and even venturing into the Penumbral Plane. But some of them were imprisoned during journeys or corrupted inside the dreadful plane. Not willing to risk more of their wise, they are looking for help from smaller folk experienced with the Penumbral Plane.

Storm Giants. Led by the King of Storms, they stay in the mountains to the south and east that border with the human territories, keeping guards so no intrusions enter their valley and being the overseers that keep other giants from breaking the Pact.

The storm giants are acutely aware of the doings of Abhorroth and are in a veiled confrontation against his gathering forces. The King is unwilling to start a war, but a few fights have occurred. Yet, unknown to him, many of his subjects are secretly aligning with the Dark Titan and are ready for betrayal.

Frost Giants. Led by Queen of Ice, currently Yviah, they take home into icy fortresses in the north; keeping their militaristic traditions, they dedicate themselves to strenuous training in combat and are tasked with vanquishing any threat that may appear against the giant kin.

Yviah, at the forefront of the fight against Abhorroth, was once an ally of the heroes during the Kemet Invasion. She is currently sending requests for assistance to the Allied Forces. While she can't propose a direct alliance between the giants and them, as that would break the Pact, she uses her connection to ask for help in exchange for gold and magic weapons. Yet she knows that any help would require entering the Giant lands unnoticed, as the giants will not allow any trespassing, and she can't formally invite them in, especially at this time of inner turmoil.

Yviah, the Frost Giant Queen

Queen Yviah (NG) is a renowned frost giant who embodies the virtues of her ancestors as both a queen and a warrior, known for her strong will and kind heart. When the Kemet Invasion began, Yviah was traveling the continent in search of a lost relic. Despite the danger, she chose to join forces with the heroes fighting against the Kemets, realizing that her lands would later be at risk if they failed. Along the way, she made unlikely allies and became more open-minded about the "small folk," particularly heroes and adventurers.

Now, back home, she faces the threat of Abhorroth endangering her people. Although the frost giants have the fewest Abhorroth sympathizers, she knows that more than her army is needed to maintain the valley's balance of power. She has urged the One Council to accept outside help. Still, so far, tradition has prevailed over practicality, as elders fear dishonoring the ancestors and upsetting the balance of the valley if they allow outsiders.

Despite her loyalty to the council, Queen Yviah secretly seeks aid from the Alliance Forces. She offers treasures in exchange for help from heroes and adventurers that can discreetly enter the valley and help solve the situation. She knows her decision can have dire consequences, so she treads carefully.

To make matters worse, an orb of great power over ice that Yviah recovered during her travels has disappeared. She is unsure whether Abhorroth has taken it for a nefarious plan or if the Kemets, known for frequently raiding her northern borders, have stolen it for their Goddess Bás.

Abhorroth, the Dark Titan

Abhorroth (CE), once a benevolent titan, is now the most powerful servant of the Ungod Droggath. Arriving from another place with his people, Prince Abhorroth began to have visions of his people's extinction. He searched for how to avoid this fate, but whatever he did, the future changed, yet in every vision, his peers perished. As he got more desperate in his search for a solution, he found the Ungods, who offered him the power to protect his kin in exchange for servitude, a sacrifice he accepted, becoming astonishingly powerful, even for a titan.

However, upon his return, his peers noticed his corruption and decided to exile him. He tried to warn them of their fate and pleaded, but they refused to listen to a corrupted being. When he refused to leave, they pulled weapons, and Abhorroth, enraged, as he had sacrificed everything for them, took his blade and ended up decimating his people.

He then fell into despair, and, consumed by it, he embraced Droggath's will, deciding to help his master consume all existences and all gods who played with his fate, believing the worlds shall share his suffering.

The valkyries see the defeat of Abhorroth as a legendary achievement, and they are helping train heroes to confront him. On the other side, a few surviving titans in hiding believe Droggath fooled Abhorroth and want to make him see the truth, believing the once benevolent prince still exists inside him.

King Trygve, the Werebear

Trygve (LN), the King of Kolbjörn, is a descendant of the Bear Clan, known for their strength and valor, which he displayed during the Kemet Invasion, defeating numerous foes and protecting many villages. After the conflict, Emperor Baleroth gave him kingship to quell potential insurrections.

Known as 'The Bear King,' he is famous for his honor and fair judgment. Although the commoners admire him, many Jarls see his deal with the Empire as cowardly, believing he missed the opportunity to free Kolbjörn. To defend his crown, Trygve centralized power and reduced Jarl's influence; however, this sowed more distrust from nobles. Whispers of treason lurk beneath many nobles' expressions of loyalty. To gain allies, the King reintroduced "The Great Hunt" ancestral tradition, where the ones to kill the most powerful creatures were rewarded with gold and military rank, allowing lesser clans to ascend.

Trygve is currently conflicted; he admires the revolutionaries, recognizing in them his own fierce defense of Kolbjörn, but he fears the consequences of a revolution. He often personally meets with captured insurgents, strangely neither executing nor torturing them, with some even being released. This fueled rumors that Trygve might use these rebels for a greater strategy, either to negotiate with the Empire or to spread the flames of independence. As Trygve lies awake through the night, his mind wrestles with the legacy of Ygfall and the meaning of sovereignty.

Lana the Valkyrie

Lana, the Valkyrie (NG), and Sky High, her loyal pegasus, were part of the Resistance that saved Tanares from the Kemet Invasion. Her goal was to nurture mortal adventurers and chronicle the feats of the Heroes of Wharfugee in an epic poem, to be secured in the Valkyries' vault.

It is even unknown where she or other Valkyries came from; the Kolbjörners believe that a pegasus takes orphaned girls who disappear, transforming them into Valkyries. Others believe that Valkyries are born from the myths they so fervently record and chant, while some shamans believe that they are avatars of the world's spirits.

During the war, Lana became close friends with Avelum, Taram, Sir Erick, and other heroes. She believes they can do more for Tanares and constantly urges them to face new challenges. They, on the other hand, prefer to occupy her with training other adventurers who can, in the future, take their places as Tanares' guardians.

Unknown to Lana, Emperor Baleroth is secretly interested in her and the other Valkyries. He desires to capture one of them for his experiments, believing he may develop mystical enhancements for his army.

Magocracy of Mage Tower

Government: Magocratic regime headed by a council containing one representative from each specialty.

Faction: The Arcanum

Population: Around 867,000. Humans 72%, cirrus 19%, winter elves 6%, others 3%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	High
Crime and Violence	Low
Economic Prosperity	Normal
Government Corruption	High
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	Normal
Political Stability	Normal

Geography

While a significant portion of its territory is dominated by the icy mountains of the northern region of Tanares, the south boasts many rivers and lakes that flow into the Central Sea, with marshes and swamps filled with dense vegetation adapted to the waterlogged soil. Among these, the most notable is the Summer Island to the east, which boasts a mighty active volcano, surrounded by a temperate forest. In this region, much of the natural flora defies typical climatic expectations due to magical interventions by powerful mages.

Politics

Although once part of the Empire, Mage Tower's philosophy now is to grant individual freedoms with minimal interference in the daily lives of its inhabitants. All are free to contribute economically and to share their magical knowledge and expertise.

Mage Tower, known as Reginheraht during the Empire era, has always been distinguished by its extensive practice of magic, which was harshly condemned and suppressed in the past. The current Council of Mages, headquartered at the Crystal Tower and led by the ideologically opposing figures Hoccugius and Grace Sung, largely emphasizes matters of high magic, paying little to no attention to mundane inhabitants.

Inhabitants are urged to delve into various magical endeavors, from trading arcane items to offering specialized services, taking advantage of the high demand from foreigners who visit these lands. Despite their freedoms, citizens fear committing crimes, as the Arcane Enforcers usually punish severely after judgment.

Economy

The most important economic activity is to provide magic services and, in particular, produce magic items. Its main income sources include magical accessories, potions, scrolls, arcane appraisal, and teaching services. Trade with other nations is frequent due to the high demand for their services and goods. Many mage groups constantly compete for supremacy, often resorting to various forms of sabotage.

Arcane universities attract students from distant lands, many of whom are prepared to pay fortunes for admission to such respected institutions. They prioritize heavy fees over ideological or political matters.

Culture and Society

In the past, the region endured significant freedom restrictions by the Emperor. Now, societal norms have turned to the opposite extreme, granting wizards almost unchecked freedom. This led to unchecked use of magic, many clandestine laboratories of research, and a culture where individuals often exhibit their power and are divided into social classes according to their magic power.

There exists fierce competition among individuals for recognition as both intelligent and powerful. Additionally, many unofficial groups compete among themselves, often divided by school specialization and social class. They proudly display their ranks, with hats of various colors and shapes denoting their capabilities. Those without hats are considered to belong to the lower classes and are treated as such. Though the society leans more scientific than religious, some cults of Ba-Ka have begun to emerge in various places.

History

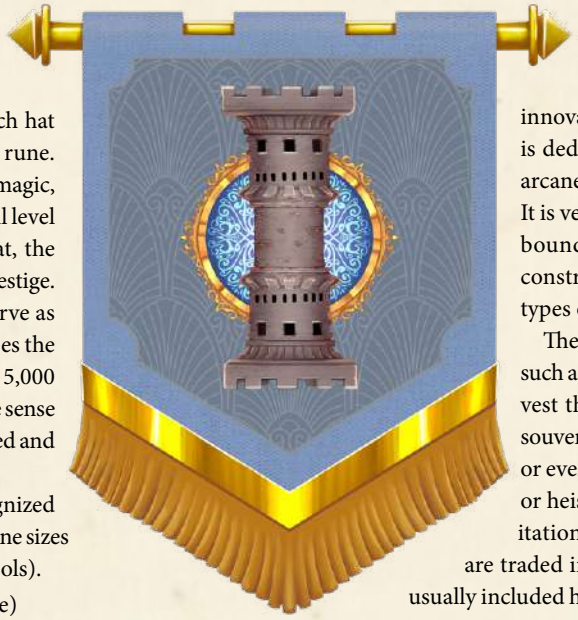
The region's past has always been marked by a strong presence of magic and the largest, purest spring of Tanares, Chowillawu Acchoda, was discovered and named by the Kemet s during the Ancient Age.

While free and isolated, the Kemet s constructed the Crystal Tower with the intention of harnessing its power to open a super portal to Darkall.

In time, a group of wizards breached the Crystal Tower, unlocking its secrets and gaining immense power. They founded the Mystic Kingdom and extensively utilized the location for spell research. Even after their fall, the legacy of Torygg, the greatest mage of all time, remains.

For centuries, the Empire limited access to spells, warning about the dangers posed by uncontrolled magic. Many wizards and sorcerers were imprisoned or even killed by the Evolutionist Church. Having finally broken free from the Empire's grasp, the region was renamed from Reginheraht to Mage Tower, symbolizing a new dawn of opportunity and freedom for all arcane practitioners. Moreover, region like Summer Island, Chowillawu Acchoda, and the Crystal Tower continues to guard numerous secrets.

Arcane Hats



A prominent display of social class in this society is through hats, which most individuals wear impeccably. Each hat is a magic item, adorned with a colored rune. This rune's color indicates the school of magic, while its shape signifies the highest spell level the wearer can cast. The bigger the hat, the greater the mage's power and societal prestige.

All other parts of the clothes also serve as a way to display wealth. The typical robes the wizards use vary in price, from 1 gp to 5,000 gp. This divides society and increases the sense of competition, as people are often judged and treated based on their hats.

There are eight schools of magic recognized and two in analysis. For now, there are nine sizes (spell levels) and ten colors (spell schools).

- **Abjuration:** Royal Blue (shield rune)
- **Conjuration:** Emerald Green (star rune)
- **Divination:** Gold (eye rune)
- **Enchantment:** Lilac (brain rune)
- **Evocation:** Fiery Red (burst rune)
- **Illusion:** Silvery Gray (mask rune)
- **Necromancy:** Black (skull rune)
- **Transmutation:** Earthy Brown (vortex rune)

There are also two more hats from the not recognized schools, provoking different reactions; some approve as it represents the future, and others disapprove, considering them rebels.

- **Aethermancy:** (Manipulation of the Ethereal and Void) - purple (spiral rune)
- **Biomancy:** (Expansion of Life Force) - yellow (tree rune)

Unethical Researchers

Creating or updating spells is another form to gain recognition and prestige in this society. This has incited a competitive race among researchers. In their quest for distinction, many wizards often disregard the Arcane Ethics Committee and undertake risky experiments. There is heavy traffic of items, some forbidden, resources, plants, and even people to be used on the tests, usually in clandestine laboratories.

When a new spell is discovered, it is initially named after the wizard who developed it throughout all of Mage Tower territory. For instance, spells often bear their creator's name, like *'Torigg's wish'* or *'Avelum's meteor swarm'*. Some spells don't have names because the records don't show their creator, like *hideous laugher*.

In some situations, experiments get out of control, requiring assistance to avoid widespread calamity.

Magic Items

One of the most important economic activities is to create and sell magic items. To maintain quality control, the Council established the Arcane Certification, marked by a specific rune from the Mage Tower. However, since certification costs gold, more than half of the items lack this mark, and their functionality can be inconsistent.

Different groups typically specialize in crafting particular types of items, constantly competing over quality, innovation, and price points. Some research is dedicated to items, as they can gain their arcane patents and control their production. It is very common to use elemental creatures bound in bauronite as fuel or part of the construction, so they always demand these types of creatures.

They also engage in other types of trade, such as acquiring depleted magic items to harvest their raw materials or crafting magical souvenirs with harmless effects. Some groups, or even spies, obtain these items for sabotage or heists, replacing real items with these imitations. The most rare and powerful items are traded in Magical Auction Houses, as bidders usually included high-ranked mages and wealthy nobles.

Threats and Conflicts

Arcane Council

The Arcane Council is composed of eight wizards, one from each magic school. They are responsible for research, knowledge, defense, commerce, diplomacy, security, organization, and management. This Council is an arena of intrigue and deception. Many wizards fervently defend the interests of their respective schools, resorting to deceit or forming alliances for votes. Although the Council professes impartiality and fairness, Vaeraunt, a powerful and charismatic wizard outside its official ranks, significantly influences its decisions. Mysteriously, Hoccugius behaves subserviently to him.

Many counselors harbor unethical and greedy tendencies, hiding their true intentions behind politically correct rhetoric. However, some, like Grace Sung, genuinely support the populace's welfare, practicing magic responsibly and advocating for their protection. Unofficially, Grace and Hoccugius lead two political currents.

School	Counselor
Abjuration	Grace Sung
Conjuration	Hoccugius
Divination	Alina
Enchantment	Khys
Evocation	Juliet
Illusion	Zund
Necromancy	Uster
Transmutation	Fernando, the Erurite

Arcane Enforcers

This special police force specializes in tracking and capturing mages and sorcerers. They employ a range of efficient methods: divining orbs for scrying and long-range communication, ward shields bolstering resistance against magic, masks enchanted to encourage honesty during interrogations, and rune-cuffs designed to suppress a prisoner's spellcasting. It is composed of three types of forces:

- ***Wardens.*** Skilled in basic combat and magic,
- ***Detectives.*** Wizards specialized in spells of enchanting or divination,
- ***Spellshields.*** Specialists in abjuration and paralysis spells.

Some special units include planar divisions, memory extractors, and disenchanters. When they capture a criminal, the most common punishments are:

- ***Conscious Petrification.*** The criminal stays as a stone statue on a central square. Even while petrified, the individual remains aware of the surroundings.
- ***Sensory Deprivation.*** Temporarily remove one or more senses from a criminal, like sight or hearing.
- ***De-aging.*** This rare spell is reserved for very serious actions, as it is expensive to cast it. The criminal returns to be a true baby, forgetting all his life and behaving accordingly.

Magic Devourers

Five years ago, an experiment went awry, and its repercussions are still causing problems across the region. Trying to imbue a fungus creature with spell absorption qualities, a terrible mutation happened; the creature was out of control, and the researcher went missing. It feeds on spells and multiplies using the harvested arcane energy. Also, its spores can infect creatures with lower intelligence, create a symbiosis, and control them, forcing the creatures to consume magic items or expose themselves to magic to be absorbed by the fungus. The creature must hold onto the magic item uninterrupted for four hours. Then, the magic item becomes a mundane one, except for unique artifacts or other powerful items at GM's discretion.

Upon absorbing a spell, the fungus releases a distinctive fragrance based on the school of the absorbed magic, lasting for 4 hours.

Some believe a main fungus controls all others, like a queen for insects. Others believe that the researcher is controlling them for nefarious purposes.

The fungus usually camouflages in the environment except when it absorbs spells. In combat, use the stat block of the dominated creature, and add the following ability:

Magic Absorption. When a creature within 60 feet of the fungus (or its controlled creature) casts a spell, the fungus can use a reaction to make the spell fail and apply no effect. Then, the creature regains 10 hit points per spell level.

Secrets

Spying Items

In times of Cold War, espionage becomes highly relevant. Initially, a group of wizard researchers created items to monitor their competitors and be able to sabotage their research. However, now these items are applied to spy on other Factions and nations.

Even when viewed through detection magic, it appears as a mundane item. However, depending on the item, it can hear or see the surroundings of its owner, appearing as images on a crystal ball or reflecting pools, or the creator can hear through echoing shells or even a silent flute, with their words becoming play tunes.

Another dangerous feature of some items is the triggering of command words, causing the item to malfunction, change its properties, or even hurt its owner. Some prototypes that enable mind reading are still in development.

A known method to detect these espionage devices is to take them to Arcane Inspectors. They can run all tests in one business day and make sure the item is clean, but the cost is high, around 500 gp.

Aemomium

In the secretive spell school known as Aethermancy, they've discovered how to enchant tameranium to enhance spell effects. When a spell is cast upon tameranium, it's consumed and transforms into a glowing blue mineral. For the next 12 hours, a spellcaster can expend the aemomium to amplify their spell's potency. Depending on the quality of the aemomium, treat the spell as if cast using a higher spell slot than actually expended. The price varies according to the improvements.

- 1 level: 500 gp
- 2 levels: 2,000 gp
- 3 levels: 8,000 gp
- 4 levels: 32,000 gp

If the aemomium is not used in the next 12 hours, it spontaneously explodes without effect. Currently, only a few wizards are initiated into this school, and its teachings remain concealed until the Arcane Council endorses its safety and legitimacy.

The Eldritch Hand

In the shadows of Reginheraht territory, a cabal of unscrupulous mages saw an opportunity. As the traffic of items and resources is something common but dangerous, they specialized in navigating these risks on behalf of researchers.

By wielding strong influence over some counselors, either through blackmail or by offering premium services to enhance their research, they gain privileged information about the Arcane Enforcers' patrols and any findings reported to the Council.

Their charismatic demeanor presents their services as golden opportunities, attracting numerous researchers. They also recruit many adventurers to capture creatures and retrieve items and resources, presenting themselves as benevolent patrons concerned for the common good.

The true leader of this group, Vaeraunt, is less concerned with gold or the organization and more focused on gaining significant influence in Mage Tower. He seeks to aid wizards in opening

the grand portal, Vandanamalika. However, rather than pushing spell boundaries to vanquish the Ungods, he desires to seize that immense power for himself. Vaeraunt believes he is the one chosen to destroy the Ungods and rule Tanares, and he must carry his calling.

Places of Interest

Arcane University

Next to the Dawn of Light city, there is an immense campus of the largest arcane university in Tanares. With eight large towers, one for each school of magic, and many other structures, including a small floating island, it is the best place to learn spells. It is full of large halls with decorations based on arcane spells and corridors connecting various locations. Legends even speak of a vast dungeon underground. Families pay large amounts of gold for their children's admission; still, there is a long waiting list.

It is both a place of study and competition; from early on, students are motivated to elevate the prestige of their respective towers above the others. The time required to earn an arcane certificate is ten years, with four years of basic subjects, four years for advanced subjects, and another two years for specialization. Many tests occur along the way, and only a third of the initial students complete the course.

This place is mainly enhanced by magic and contains many interesting features:

Arcane Mirrors. Students have in their rooms a special mirror capable of communicating with other students and their tutors.

Living paintings. Some paintings move, showing a sequence of actions for learning or entertainment purposes.

Chrono Chamber. Inside this room, the time passes ten times slower than the outside. It is used when students need to study before the tests.

On the floating islands, there are some locations related to each school tower:

- **Abjuration**: The Barrier Wards
- **Conjuration**: The Summoning Circle
- **Divination**: The Oracle's Pool
- **Enchantment**: Hall of Whispers
- **Evocation**: The Arcane Arenas
- **Illusion**: The Mirage Labyrinth
- **Necromancy**: The Ancestral Tombs
- **Transmutation**: The Alchemical Gardens

Crystal Tower

The Crystal Tower, one of the most mysterious places in Tanares, has stood tall since the Ancient Age. It is a massive tower with one hundred floors and a large tameranium crystal on its top. Constructed by the Kemets, the tower is a remarkable blend of engineering and magic, possessing unique characteristics that have never been replicated.

It is a place for extensive research and study, where the Arcane Council members work, and they govern from the Mage Tower.

Before Avelum departed for the Republic, he warned that some secrets within the tower were too dangerous to be utilized. He cast powerful spells to seal parts of the tower and its underground chambers. Many wizards are now working to dispel these protections and access its mysteries.

The tower possesses many defense mechanisms and traps, and records indicate that its underground contains a dungeon full of extraplanar creatures summoned by the ancient wizards to protect the place.

Summer Island

The mysterious and magnificent tropical island, nestled amidst the frozen mountains of Reginheraht, remains an enigma yet to be understood. Created by Kelorth, the White Avatar Dragon, this island serves as both a resting place and a unique training ground for dragonblades. Its elemental magic-infused landscape climate greatly contrasts the surrounding region. The island's warm climate, inviting beaches, and friendly fauna attract visitors from across Tanares, especially nobles, drawn to its hot waters.

At the heart of the island, near the volcano's base, lies a portal to an extraplanar dungeon called "The Elemental Grounds." With its deserts, lava wastelands, and towering freezing mountains, this mysterious realm is home to gargantuan animals, aggressive elementals, and aberrant hybrid creatures. However, explorers must be cautious, as the portal's arrival location within this treacherous land shifts unpredictably each day. The shining tower, built at its center as a beacon for dragonblades, offers the only hope of return. Despite the danger, the portal lures many curious and brave. It leads to numerous rescue missions for those lost within its depths, despite the constant vigilance at its entrance to avoid such accidents. Curiously, creatures from this extraplanar dungeon cannot pass through the portal into Tanares; they dissolve upon attempting it.

Dragonblades frequently venture into this portal searching for combat experience, often in groups. Kelorth intended this place to be a test and training for his army, preparing them for battle against the Ungods. It's a rite of passage for Kelorth's servants and even young dragons from his tower to brave this place at least once. The ultimate reward for reaching the central shining tower is an audience with Kelorth himself, a coveted opportunity for adventurers seeking the counsel of this powerful being or to plead their case directly to the Draconic Council leaders.

Plane's Elemental Nature. Each location in the Elemental Grounds is saturated with an element—Fire, Water, Earth, or Air. Creatures spawned in each area deal an additional 1d6 damage of that elemental type (fire, cold, acid for earth, or lighting for air) with their attacks and are immune to damage from it.

Asylum Eberek

In a remote place of Alkira Mountain, there is a powerful magical construction that receives visits from people across all Tanares. It is made of marble and gems, many of which have a pulsating shine. This asylum has a unique feature. When an individual is admitted to this place, others gradually forget about this person, taking up to an entire month for them to be fully forgotten. This means that anyone might have a family member there whom they have forgotten about.

It is a very convenient place, as people can abandon members of their families without carrying the guilt of this action. In around one month, the creature starts to live in an illusion of life through a dream, varying in the time they experience.

Freeing someone at this stage is almost impossible. Recently, the wizard Alina from the Council developed a powerful spell allowing a group to project into the Astral Plane, enter the individual's dreams, and retrieve their consciousness by convincing them to wake up from the dream's illusion. Some reports suggest these dreams can be extremely dangerous, as fears and hidden secrets may manifest to the group in various forms. If a person dies in the dream, their soul must be recovered first from there before any resurrection attempt can be made.

Magic Duel Arena

This arena was built for wizards to demonstrate their might in a safe environment. It is a vast, oval-shaped arena protected with a dozen magic barriers. Initially, it was used for wizards to duel but was later adapted to host group fights for sport and training. After some time, new styles of combat appeared, such as:

- A group must defeat a magic simulacrum of one or more creatures, simulating powerful monsters.
- A group gains 7 wands of wizard spells (three from 1st level, two from 2nd level, and one from 3rd and 4th levels). Each has four charges and is given before the combat starts. Non-wizards can use these wands, but they must use two charges for each use of the spell. No attacks or spells except those from these wands can be used during these trials.

Mesoriver

The region's most developed and notable city has earned the title of capital for being the magical city of Tanares. The city is composed of many towers, floating islands, and even castles levitating, with many trying to display their wealth and power. With many tameranium pylons and elemental creatures spread throughout the city, many magic items are powered by the auras of minerals. It is possible to find many curious features:

- Houses with living architecture capable of shape changing;
- Transportation options include disks, flying boats, transportation circles, and flying carriages for romantic purposes;
- Magical utilities: while within the city, many devices and wands can create day-to-day effects, like everburn fire to illuminate places;
- Extensive use of illusions for entertainment purposes, like showing magical beasts, dragons combats, and many others;
- Perfect weather control to create pleasant temperatures or, in some specific areas, be either cold or hot.

However, despite its magnificence, this city harbors many dangers. Some spells may cause explosions, elementals can get loose and attack people, summonings can go out of control, and the teleportation circle may malfunction and send people to unsafe areas.

Recently, two major concerns have frightened people in the city. A powerful mastermind invoked from the Elemental Plane is trying to release the elementals, and some wizards have been disappearing from the higher towers without a trace. The Arcane Enforcers are investigating but recruiting adventurers to assist them.

Vaeraunt

Arandaros Vaeraunt (CE) is a young-looking, slender and agile man of average height. His hair is raven-black and usually shoulder length, his facial features are beautiful, almost feminine, his mouth is thin-lipped and usually clamped shut and crooked in a hint of a sardonic smile, and his eyes are cold and very dark green. He can usually be seen wearing a dark-hued overrobe with a high, stand-up collar and flaring sleeves. He prefers to avoid any unnecessary ornaments, favoring instead the use of sturdy, well-made, high-topped boots.

Tentacled hand

A legacy of being caught in the midst of casting an elaborate and experimental spell when the Mystical Kingdom was ravaged in the cataclysm that ended it and brought about the Wasteland, the fingers of Vaeraunt's right hand were transformed into (and remain, no matter what he does) scaly gray tentacles. He's become deft in their use, and can extend them all to a foot in length, though he usually keeps them retracted (to a little longer than the middle finger of a large man's hand). He conceals this transformation by wearing a special metal gauntlet, modified so its metal fingertips are missing, and replaced by "caps" that are actually talon-like fingertip-rings—so when Vaeraunt's tentacles thrust forth, each is capped by a sharp metal claw that he can use to rake flesh.

He secretly tips these with various venoms and poisons that cause temporary blindness or paralysis to foes, or react with their blood like acid, to dissolve flesh and do additional damage (you never know just what effects a particular talon will have, as Vaeraunt's experiments are ongoing).

Regeneration

Once a young, bold, prone-to-experimentation wizard in the Mystical Kingdom, Vaeraunt was so ravaged and changed by the raging chaos that surged through the Tanarean Field around him then that he's aged only little since, and has been unsleeping all that time (he never sleeps, goes unconscious, or feels tired; his mind cannot even be reached by the magics of others). This is because his body is now involuntarily and constantly regenerating by drawing on the Field.

This ability repairs not just physical damage, but restores entire lost limbs and organs; he can "come back" from as little as a fingernail. This calling on the Field is a unique personal ability, not the result of a spell or magic item—but Vaeraunt can use it only to replenish his energies and heal harm, not to augment himself with greater size, strength, or abilities.

He can sense ripples, gatherings of power, and other disturbances in the Field, and so instantly know the distance and direction of great outpourings of magic (on the Material Plane; he can sense nothing at all occurring on the Penumbral Plane).

Moreover, Vaeraunt's body can absorb draconic energies that are unleashed at directly at it—so, for example, a dragonblade weapon attack striking him that would normally harm with extra burning strike fire damage instead harms him for only the weapon's physical damage—and he gains the additional damage it would have done as a benefit, in the form of temporary hit points that

last for an hour, unless expended earlier (all attacks on him go against these temporary hit points first).

Motivations

Vaeraunt seeks a way to use the energies of the Field to give himself greater powers, by automatically casting spells "for him" that he already knows how to use, to fly, teleport short line-of-sight distances, and drift down great distances, rather than suffering fatal falls. In other words, rather than preparing and casting spells to do these things, he'll just think of doing them, and his Field energies will make it happen.

Moreover, Vaeraunt sees mastering these powers as just a beginning. Yet he hasn't yet found the means to do these things, so is trying to coerce, manipulate, or hire others—adventurers—to gather old writings, spells, and other lore for him. He doesn't mind paying handsomely, and promising spell scrolls and even spellbooks as additional payment, because he intends that his secrets are kept, by always hiring a second and more powerful band of adventurers to shadow the first group—and eliminate them, somewhere private, when he sends word to do so.

Anyone who learns too much about Vaeraunt (his whereabouts, usual defenses, breadth of schemes, and secret intent in particular) becomes, in his mind, a foe to be eliminated—particularly if they're clergy or part of a large organization such as the Ironhand. This includes adventurers. Increasingly, Vaeraunt has taken to framing adventurers and government forces sent after him, or to investigate him, so they themselves seem to be villains best eliminated, to others.

His Current Plan

Vaeraunt is always hiring adventurers to explore Wasteland ruins and bring back spells, spellbooks, and magic-related writings and items to him; he customarily pays them for their expeditions and buys what they find for him for handsome prices (he doesn't mind overpaying, as he expects whichever "shadow band" he's set on them to kill them and recover his funds—and he uses his shadow bands to tell him when hireling adventurers are holding out on him (hiding magic from him, for themselves).

Vaeraunt will likely cross paths with PCs by hiring them, through an intermediary, for a Wasteland "go and find me magic" expedition, giving them directions a previous—and recently eliminated—band of hirelings learned for him.

Vaeraunt is wary of the many forces trying to take control of Tanares by building a Vandanamalika, but he'd rather that he himself be the central tyrant, making decisions for everyone. So he wants to become ruler of all, but not necessarily known as such by everyone, for he sees taking a throne and a grand title as painting a target on himself.

Rather, he'd prefer to work covertly—using adventurers as his unwitting agents, so they do his bidding in specific tasks without ever knowing who they're really working for, and why they've been tasked with doing particular things.

He is willing to patiently manipulate the Magocracy, controlling Hoccugius and secretly influencing many council members. He plays a long game of political and mystical chess against Kalistessenâmun, carefully timing his moves to allow the Magocracy to build its Vandanamalika at the perfect moment. His goal is to take control of it and use its powers over the Field and the divine potency of this mystical construction to elevate his power to unprecedented heights.

Vaeraunt is a lost magic researcher, but operating partly from memory, not just what he learns from the relics of the past. He's recently learned that some more powerful wizards of the Mystical Kingdom, in his time (the mages Mureltalar and Horond) were researching how to transform themselves into dragons, and he wants that achievement for himself, too.

More than anything else, Vaeraunt wants to know. All the secrets must be his!

Grace Sung, Counselor Abjurer

Grace Sung (LG) is the mage Avelum chose to occupy his seat when he departed from the Tower. Under the weight of responsibility passed down to her by her hero and friend, Grace approaches her role with utmost seriousness, standing as one of the respected members of the Arcane Council. She oversees the management of the Crystal Tower and the entire region, always trying to help people and solve the region's problems.

She also ensures that the sealed places within the Crystal Tower remain that way, as it is far too dangerous to let the Council gain uncontrolled powers. She is very frustrated by the lack of consideration of most of the Council with the people and is searching for the Arcane Codex of the Mystical Kingdom to reinforce her arguments toward laws and ethics, as their queen cared a lot about this matter. Although she attempts to dispatch the Arcane Enforcers to regions where she's been informed of unethical research, her efforts are frequently undermined.

She is also investigating the University due to numerous anonymous complaints about dangerous experiments. It's alleged that a student group is testing forbidden spells, but their mentor refuses to intervene.

As the only person who really cares about her people above herself, she secretly hires adventurers for specific missions, helping the residents of Mage Tower in the way she can.

Dernas, Magic Researcher

Dernas (LE), an obstinate magic researcher, aims to elevate the Mage Tower above all nations, deceiving others with her angelic face. She is secretly developing weapons to deal with larger groups, aiming to gain an advantage in negotiations with other nations through intimidation. In her workshop, she is nearing the completion of the Paralysing Globe, a massive machine used to amplify the effects of *hold person* spells. If effective, it could paralyze large groups of combatants, eliminate their key warriors, and force the others to surrender. She is also developing other devices, such as one that casts massive illusions and another capable of controlling dozens of individuals or creatures.

She is a direct individual who always seeks to gain the upper hand in negotiations. She enjoys playing chess with pieces transmuted into the shapes of renowned military figures or famous heroes. Dernas often invites people for a match during negotiations, sometimes using the outcome to a better or worse deal.

She frequently requires exotic items for her inventions and seeks assistance in acquiring or stealing these items, but she never reveals her true intentions to others. Although she attempts to maintain a benevolent tone, she often fails, quickly trying to correct herself.

Zanac, the Fire Sorcerer

Zanac (N), a fire sorcerer from the Stravian village of Eb'boria, hails from a place where people inherit sorcery from efreeti bloodline. Zanac didn't manifest powers in his youth, leading to scorn from his peers. When they finally emerged, they were immense and uncontrollable, wreaking havoc upon his village.

He was exiled and forced to fight in the Arenas to win Baleroth's favor for his people. Overwhelmed by his power, his mind was clouded by efreeti's disposition to cruelty and destruction. So, he began to take delight in immolating his foes.

During the Kemet Invasion, Zanac joined the resistance as he could freely enjoy incinerating Kemets without repercussion. Yet, meeting Avelum and Isendden changed his life. They aided him in mastering his power as the true heir of a Lord of the Plane of Fire, breaking free from the efreet's influence over him. Enlightened, Zanac seeks to guide others with extraordinary abilities, to control their powers, and not be overwhelmed by them. To protect other sorcerers, he aided in establishing the Magocracy, allowing more to escape imperial persecution. Zanac still grapples with bouts of magical overload and destructive impulses due to his tremendous power, particularly after exerting his magic to the limit under intense stress. However, he has learned to temper his emotions, maintaining serene yet stern control.

Recently, Zanac uncovered the schemes of the secretive Eldritch Hand, an organization that is now abducting sorcerers to exploit their blood's power. He is enlisting adventurers to aid in locating and infiltrating their bases, rescuing imprisoned sorcerers, and dismantling their operations.

Hoccugius, Counselor Conjurer

Hoccugius (NE) may be the least powerful mage to occupy a seat on the council, but his political influence and vast personal collection of artifacts have made him an important figure in the creation of the Arcanum and for the independence of Reginheraht. A proud and envious man, he always coveted the power and prominence of Avelum but had to settle for being in his shadow.

Obsessed with magic items and artifacts, Hoccugius is able to rival the other mages in power thanks to these resources, which artificially enhance his abilities. He oversees many arcane labs where experiments with spells to summon giant creatures are conducted, but none have succeeded yet. Despite his notoriety, he is an important pawn controlled by Vaeraunt, the true hidden master manipulating the Crystal Tower and the Arcane Council.

On many occasions, he uses his credibility to send adventurers to rival laboratories and harm their operations, as he prefers not to involve the Arcane Enforcers. He also favors non-caster associates, as he instinctively envies other wizards. Another key goal is to weaken the Kepesh and the cirrus people, aiming to gain complete control of the super portal Vandanamalika once it opens. He discreetly informs other factions through intermediaries about minor operations, ensuring they are never significant enough to raise suspicions. His main goal is to eliminate Avelum, and he sends numerous mercenaries and spies to sabotage any project of which Avelum is a part.

Seashores

Government: Officially it is still an Imperial province, but it is governed by the Pirate Lords of the Parliament of the Seas, in agreement with Emperor Baleroth.
Faction: It is part of the Tanarean Empire. But that doesn't stop its pirates from sailing according to the tides that are most favorable to them, as long as no one knows.
Population: Around 617,000. Humans 74%, gnomes 12%, elves 7%, merfolk 5% and others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	High
Crime and Violence	Very High
Economic Prosperity	Low
Government Corruption	Very High
Magic Access	Normal
Monster Presence	High
Political Stability	Low

Geography

A region covered mainly by the majestic Central Sea, reaching the coastal edges of various other territories. It consists of several islands and rocky archipelagos scattered throughout its expanse, some vast enough to have tropical forests. Additionally, on the larger rocky formations, it is possible to find mountains with a cold climate at their peaks, contrasting with the rest of the terrain. Its crystal-clear waters feed numerous rivers, some of which flow through underground channels. Filled with waterfalls, caves, peninsulas, and bays, it's a haven for those who know where to sail, full of uncharted islands.

Politics

While being an integral part of the Tanarean Empire, Seashores is now governed and administered by a council of five Pirate Lords, members of the Parliament of the Sea. Each lord holds a portion of the Seashores territory, rotating annually during their meetings. Although the population is granted total freedom, the only requirement they impose is the monthly payment of heavy tributes—failure to pay results in punishment, usually involving plunder and looting.

Despite the presence of Ironhand in the region, headquartered on Turtledragon Island, it is often merely symbolic, mainly to monitor pirate movements and, most importantly, ships from other factions that may cross those waters.

Two independent cities exist, though they're still subject to tributes. These are the gnomes of Mustardseed Island, whose society is dedicated to art and etiquette, and the Merfolk of Pearl Town, an underwater city with a unique culture.

Economy

While not officially recognized, piracy and the black market are the primary economic activities. This attracts many shady investors seeking this kind of freedom. As a result, a wide range of products can be found here, including stolen ones, but prices often vary according to the customer.

Criminal organizations, such as the Third Eye and the Bloodbound, thrive in these waters, taking advantage of various opportunities. Since security is almost non-existent, those who can afford it usually pay for protection, as mercenaries, executioners, spies, and assassins are plentiful here.

Nevertheless, a strong fishing industry prospers here, along with the trade of pearls and other valuable marine goods. Additionally, the region is home to Tanares' most famous shipyards, responsible for crafting the most valuable vessels.

Culture and Society

Life in this region is hard for regular citizens, who don't have many options other than to adapt and survive under the rule of pirates. Despite having their own strongholds, each Pirate Lord migrates between the territories they administer. Each one adheres to a unique style and code of conduct; some are more peaceful and permissive, while others lean towards violence. Therefore, the annual change in management is a very tense event and forces the population to adapt quickly to these shifts if they want to keep their lives and businesses. Since all Pirate Lords seek to increase their private treasures and maintain their target gold to sacrifice for their curse, this measure has been the most appropriate so far.

Despite all this, the people are accustomed to drinking, celebrating, and having fun in their few leisure hours. Games in taverns and even brawling are common and expected. Religion isn't widely spread here, primarily found in larger cities where nearly all cults, including various Shadow Wing cultists, can be encountered.

Many still argue that the region is in better hands with the pirates than with the Emperor, as dangerous freedom is better than safe oppression. Its prevailing law, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' instills a certain sense of justice.

History

The region now known as Seashores has undergone numerous changes throughout the ages, including the origin of the Central Sea itself. Before the Malrokian era, this territory was home to forests, vast mountains, and even great civilizations. However, when the cataclysm caused by the Malrokian Curse struck Tanares, along with earthquakes and hurricanes, an immense wave from the west engulfed much of the continent. The influx of water was vast enough to create the Central Sea, connecting in places to the Storm Ocean.

During the Fallen Age, the region slowly began to be colonized, and the construction of local shipyards flourished, along with piracy. Spreading rapidly, pirates and outlaws found a suitable place for their activities, far from the great kingdoms of the time. After the fall of Arcana and the beginning of the Imperial Era, the Emperor's forces attempted to impose their rule in the region, but it was a complex task. He preferred to make an agreement with Krystus Sylverblade, the local ruler. Thus, the region remained partially controlled, maintaining many of the illegal activities that had occurred before.

During this period, while exploring an underwater cave, a group of pirates discovered the remains of the deceased Ungod, Kralmorgoth. They managed to seize some of its powers by taking an eye off it but were cursed to sacrifice a large amount of gold in the depths of the sea, or they would become creatures of that being, paving the way for his resurrection.

With the new powers, these pirates quickly took control of the region, establishing the Parliament of the Seas. After overthrowing Krystus, they upheld the agreement with the Empire.

Pirate Lords' Pact

During an expedition searching for a supposed lost relic underwater, five pirate captains found the immense body of a dead monster in the caves of an uncharted island near Pearl Town. No other treasure was found, but the eyes of the monster emitted some strange glow and seemed valuable. Each captain took one and returned to the sea.

In a few days, a strange mark appeared on the chest of each captain. After searching for a while, they found an arcanist powerful enough to analyze the eyes. His reading was terrifying, "Each of your ships shall have immense power, your body will be immortal, and you shall rule this land. However, I demand 100,000 gold pieces for this cave every year to be consumed in my name, Kralmorgoth. Failing to do so ten times will transform you all into mindless aberrations hungry for gold."

After learning that this curse is real, they now share power in the Seashores, always struggling to acquire enough gold. They are very different and have intense disputes but tread carefully in diplomacy; if one of them doesn't contribute their share, the others must cover the amount.

Silverblade Justice

Sylithia is the daughter of the famous pirate who governed the Seashores. Her father died when the Parliament of the Seas started to rule, and she swore to destroy or imprison all pirate lords and free the people from their abusive tributes.

To achieve this goal, she is ruthless and obstinate. Her loyal crew practices all kinds of crimes, including assassination, sabotage, robbery, and ship raids to pillage. The reason is that some sacrifices are regrettable but necessary to destroy the Parliament.

She blindly believes she is the savior of the seas, and her ideals of freedom and justice inspire many to join her. She never overcame the trauma of her father's death and always keeps five prisoners aboard, often merchants with ties to the Sea Lords, and every night, she talks to them like they are the lords themselves, full of threats and accusations.

Sylithia usually recruits adventurers to kill important people, get difficult items, or even assault ships. She often speaks half-truths and is an expert in finding the correct argument to convince people.

Uncharted Islands

The last estimate from some sages suggests that only half of the islands have been discovered in the sea. One reason is the unusual mist cloaking parts of the sea, and powerful concealment enchantments protect some of them.

The reasons and casters behind these spells remain unknown, but legends of powerful relics from the past encourage many expeditions to find these islands despite all the dangerous monsters that may reside there. Many adventurers are hired to join the expeditions to protect the ship or help in exploration.

Threats and Conflicts

Cult of Shadow Wing

As remnants of the Ungod Kralmorgoth lie in an underwater cave, traces of his power still linger in the area, attracting all sects of the Shadow Wing in search of it. It is even common to see the sects fighting each other in the region, as its return would be a significant achievement for them.

They employ many tactics to find it, such as capturing people for rituals of location through sacrifice, raiding libraries to get maps and information, hiring adventurers on expeditions, and many others. Rumors say that its champion, a mighty dormant Kraken, will awaken upon its return and cause unimaginable destruction.

Aware of this search, the Sea Lords launch frequent offensives against these groups.

Marine Monsters

In addition to the intense piracy in the region, there is another great fear: fearsome aquatic creatures throughout the Central Sea. From mutated beasts like fish, sharks, and aboleths to titanic

sea monsters like krakens, leviathans, and hydras, sea dangers always concern captains.

Some attribute these beasts to experiments by Arcana's ancient wizards, while others believe they're summoned by the Spawners. Regardless of the cause, various cities and captains offer significant bounties for these creatures for adventurers brave enough to face these beasts.

Mysterious Shipcrafters

Known as the finest shipbuilders in Tanares, their expertise peaked after the Kemet Invasion, where they gained many naval secrets. With navigation's increasing importance, every faction highly desires their skills.

Crafting their most exceptional ships, however, requires rare components: breithwood from the Sindile, bauronite and tameranium from dwarven mines, enchanted crystals from Mage Tower, and the finest steel from Imperial mines. Adventurers and mercenaries are frequently contracted to find these materials, protect shipments, or investigate missing cargoes.

One obstacle for those seeking the best ships is the elusive nature of the master ship crafters, who typically work exclusively for a select few with connections to the Parliament. Negotiating with Parliamentary figures or locating these elusive masters to win their favor proves challenging.

Secrets

Undersea prison

One of the most hidden secrets of the Seashores is the cruel prison underwater, which is used to punish severe crimes or intimidate enemies, as it is one of the safest prisons in Tanares.

These prisons, accessible only during summer when the tide is at its lowest, contain chambers with air bubbles lasting only eight months. During one month, the prisoners must take potions to breathe underwater. Any bad behavior makes the sahuagin guards withhold the necessary potion from the individual

Access is challenging due to the many sahuagin and their shark guards. Unique passwords are required for entry, and many unusual traps are placed in some locations. There are rumors about an ancient elf locked there for centuries because he knows something important related to Arcana, but the reason for keeping him there is unknown.

Blink Island

There is a particular island that seems like a paradise. Beautiful seas and green vegetation attract any sailor who approaches. However, it can disappear at any moment and instantly reappear in a different location.

One rescued survivor, Captain Thylos, reported that he spent one year on the island, surviving with much difficulty using the natural resources there and evading a fearsome hag who killed his entire crew. To the captain's surprise, he learned that the rescue date was the same as the day his boat had arrived there, though the island had shifted to another location.

He claims to have heard the hag's voice throughout the island, singing about possessing the souls of all who perish there. She also mentioned the First General of the Malrok Kingdom, whose trapped soul she deemed her most valuable. She captured Thylos but claimed his soul was tainted and could contaminate others.

Some investigations did not reveal anything useful, but they concluded that the Island never disappears while under observation.

Mad Captain Treasure

Legends say an old captain could not have sons. He was among the most intelligent and wealthy in all of Seashores, but the idea of not having an heir slowly drove him insane.

He buried portions of his treasure throughout the Seashores, in the most unlikely places, and created maps that were very hard to decode for each one. In his mind, he wanted to leave his treasures to those as intelligent as him. However, he also buried many traps to punish people lacking cunning. In his eyes, this was a form of natural selection to refine the Seashores' populace.

His maps are always found in chests adorned with blue pearls. People prefer not to be involved when they find such chests, but some brave adventurers have embarked on this journey.

Places of Interest

Bluhaven, the Capital

At first glance, the capital of Seashores disappoints. Most of it is very disorganized, with many piers and docks full of poor taverns but full of people. As the Parliament is absent, the city serves as the primary gathering point for pirates and all sorts of outlaws who conduct their activities here completely unchecked. Taverns here are notorious for brawls, arguments, illicit dealings, and meeting spots for hiring equally dirty services.

Except for those under the Parliament's protection, whom no pirate dares to disturb, the city remains a dangerous place for many. Many shipyards are located here, usually heavily secured, and many places for trading sea goods and weapons, stolen items, and even ships.

The regent, William the Whale, titled for his size, allows most types of crime as long he gets some profit. When someone commits a grave crime, he applies a particularly disturbing sentence. In the center square, people can throw stones and lances at the criminal, but when the person is almost dying, a cleric heals the wounds, and the punishment continues.

Here is a place where many adventurers are hired, some to protect people, some to eliminate inconvenient persons, and some to steal important items.

Mustardseed

The most majestic and sophisticated city in Tanares, Mustardseed is a place of art and knowledge. Divided into thematic districts based on the other nations of Tanares, it is filled with places showcasing art and architecture to symbolize many aspects of the theme. Some are comical, illustrating the caricatural features of other nations, especially notable people. Many animated instruments create melodic streets, which are also thematic.

The residences seem to defy physics, are sophisticated and adorned with beautiful paintings and magic items that enhance the beauty of household utensils. Their society values the individual for their education, manners, and etiquette. As a result, many unnecessary formalities arise when speaking to a gnome. The city's crown jewel is the 'Academy of Light,' dedicated to deep studies in art, knowledge, and music.

Despite its appearance of safety, the city harbors dangers. The city houses stone guards that can cast a secret spell to trap a person in a painting, an evil and cunning opera singer with the power to enrage non-gnomes, violent etiquette enforcers patrolling the streets, and many eccentric individuals seeking outlets for their frustrations.

As lovers of sound, constant music fills the air, conveying messages when necessary. Much like the music, their artworks contain subliminal messages that often go entirely unnoticed. They boast the largest and most highly regarded music schools, The Academies of Light, which can also be found in every corner of Tanares.

Closely tied to their past, in their constant quest to revive their culture and tradition, they are always organizing expeditions into the depths of the Central Sea in search of their relics and artifacts. However, there are numerous challenges, ranging from dealing with lizardfolk who have taken over some of the submerged caves to navigating the labyrinth formed by the rocks and structures that were once part of their kingdom. Occasionally, they receive assistance from the Merfolks, but most of the time, they rely on contracted groups.

Pearl Town

It is a beautiful underwater city built by the merfolks, filled with magic that allows people to breathe underwater. Accessible through a small island, it is heavily guarded by merfolks and water elementals. The city is a center for trade for the merfolks, who usually ask for favors instead of gold for their valuable goods. Underwater, the city can release many unusual defense mechanisms, like water currents, jellyfish swarms, black ink curtains, and others.

It is ruled by the merfolk queen Zhelahra, the greatest sorcery among them, usually changing her appearance to a blue elf when dealing with humans. She is kind and benevolent, using her melody to calm rough waters and help the lost sailors find their way. Like a siren's song, her voice is revered as the most beautiful, and it is hard to resist falling in love with her chant.

She has three major concerns: the cursed sunken city, spawning undead merfolks and other aquatic creatures; the corrupted coral reef near the abyssal regions, which emits a dark light that maddens the merfolk; and the increased number of pirate slavers, who sell the merfolks as pets for wealthy nobles from distant lands. She is always willing to reward fairly and share her vast information about the sea mysteries.

The Whirlpool

This immense and constantly powerful tidal wave has existed since the first formation of the Central Sea itself. Occupying part of the southern region of Seashores, it compels vessels to take alternative routes through treacherous, rock-laden passages. It is also the Parliament's chosen site for executing prisoners: they are made to walk the plank and jump into the whirlpool, surviving only as long as they can swim before exhaustion claims them.

Some sages believe this whirlpool connects with a water-related plane and others with Undertanares, justifying the rivers and lakes there. Having claimed many ships in the past, exploring it could lead to discoveries beyond imagination, if the adventurer is prepared to breathe in water and resist its pressure.

Uncle Joe's Tavern

If one were to pinpoint the center of black market trade, it would be Uncle Joe's tavern. There, it is possible to find a variety of unique items, typically offered by members of factions such as the Third Eye, Bloodbound, and The Dragon Syndicate.

Located on a small island of the Fire Archipelago, it is a meeting place not just for pirates, but also for many members of various organizations. It is forbidden to fight inside the island, especially in the tavern and its luxurious inn.

Uncle Joe, a retired and good-humored pirate, enjoys brokering deals over a hearty banquet. He deals in magic items and vessels, buying, selling, or even renting them, meticulously recording all transactions and basic customer information.

The island is heavily guarded by creatures such as ogres, giants, and kobolds, as well as beings summoned by his artifacts, like rakshasas and other strange entities.

Underwater dungeon

Legends tell about a vast, labyrinthine dungeon in the north Central Sea. It is filled with luminescent flora and fauna and some breathable chambers. This is where remnants from battles against the Ungods rest, so very unique relics can be found there, especially the penumbral stone, a gem with powers that supposedly match the moonstone.

The stories narrate a hero who had to open the doors by redirecting the water current there when activating a water device, passing through coral labyrinths, facing sea monstrosities, including giant piranhas, and traps where touching the wrong combination of stones causes the water to boil. In the tale, he discovers an ancient library and a mysterious box. The end of the story was lost in time, but people say this hero became a guardian of the place.

Captain Dorro

Dorro (CG) is considered by many the luckiest and most handsome person in the Seashores. Since an early age, this half-elf lived on the streets of Fishtail City, using his eloquence and street smarts to survive. In a legendary feat, he battled a captain of a small ship. He nearly lost, but some rough water unbalanced the captain, granting him the victory.

He always tried to free people from Imperial oppression and ended up in many different places, always sabotaging imperial ships or other pirate captains to free people.

During an operation on the ship named Deepspawn, he was present when they discovered the body of the Ungod Kralmorgoth and were subsequently cursed. His ship is now known as Hypnotic Unicorn, capable of protecting itself with illusions to help him with his operations. Even as a sea lord, he secretly continues to help the poor, employing adventurers for these missions. Also, rumors say he could break the curse if he finds the six pearls of light lost in both the Central Sea and Storm Ocean.

Captain Liana

Liana (LG), the most famous and skilled pirate of Tanares, proved her great prowess by sailing against the Kemet s and defeating many sea beasts. She is extremely severe but fair and wants the region to prosper. In charge of negotiating with Emperor Baleroth for the Seashores' interests, she always tries to diminish the Empire's oversight over the place to favor the Parliament.

The body of the Ungod Kralmorgoth cursed her, and now she holds a position as a Sea Lord, trying to bring order to this chaotic place. She is responsible for judging criminals, halting pirate raids, and combating maritime threats, from kuo-toas to krakens, making the Seashores a safer place.

She knows that keeping order in this region is challenging, so she has many informants, especially tavern keepers, to be her eyes. She is always looking for talented people to assist with various tasks, such as rescuing those abducted by pirates, taking down evil captains, uncovering clandestine operations, and thwarting numerous other crimes.

Her ultimate goal is to defeat a unique beast, a hydra named Hanirac. This monster had killed her father, and so she seeks to take revenge. This hydra can regenerate even if completely destroyed, and only a particular ritual can end his life once and for all. A seer told her she would require advanced spells from the Crystal Tower, an ancient sword forged in the Magmadar of the Penumbral Plane, and the blood of several sea beasts.

Captain Black Soul

Black Soul (CE) is a legendary gnome pirate, famous for his cruelty to enemies and efficiency in ruling through fear. He studied the refined arts of the gnomes but learned how to subvert the bardic music to harm people. Exiled from the city, he joined an unscrupulous captain, whom he served for a year before killing and seizing his position.

He was on the Deepspawn when they found the body of the Ungod Kralmorgoth and received the curse. His ship gained the power to create a thick fog to disorient other ships and allow an easy assault. During the Kemet Invasion, he secretly struck a deal with them that he keeps to the present, and their necromancer powers now make him the captain of a ghost ship, full of undead as crew. They usually assault villages on remote islands to get the gold, secretly using the knowledge of the Sea Lord's documents to aid him. He is also amassing an army of undead in the deep waters for unknown purposes.

He uses his position to cover all his activities and even his curse immortality to constantly engage himself in the raids, enjoying killing the enemies with his corrupted magic. If recognized by survivors, he usually pursues the victims using bribed pirates, undead, covert Kemet agents, or even corrupt law officers. For some strange reason, probably related to the curse, the other Pirate Lords don't suspect his crimes.

Captain Maryne

Captain Maryne (LE), known as the Iron Maiden of the Seas, deceives many with her innocent appearance, which hides a cunning, ruthless intellect. She maneuvers the political landscape of the Seashores, forging alliances and indebting many to her, thereby ensuring their future utility. Secretly, she is Emperor Baleroth's closest ally in Parliament, with both parties respecting and using each other in their quests for power. Cursed by Kralmorgoth, Maryne is diligent in amassing wealth. However, unknown to all but Captain Brakan, the curse has affected her more deeply. Occasionally, she awakens in a location different from where she fell asleep, with no memory of her last days. She and Brakan suspect that Kralmorgoth is using her for an unknown purpose, yet a cure eludes her. Complicating matters, cursed artifacts have begun surfacing in the Seashores, corrupting their bearers with whispers from the depths. Maryne has noted a disturbing correlation between their emergence and her mysterious "episodes."

Maryne's ambition is to dominate the Seashores, bending the Parliament to her will. However, she acknowledges the obstacle that Captain Brakan poses. She recruits promising pirates, mercenaries, and adventurers to achieve her ends, manipulating them to her stratagems. She tests these recruits' mettle by assigning tasks such as retrieving lost artifacts, exploring submerged ruins, confronting rogue pirates, and unmasking traitors. Those who prove themselves may be entrusted with more dangerous missions with greater rewards.

Sindile Forest

Government: Governed by a high council of Spring elves, whose last word is a couple, a King and a Queen, who hold office temporarily.
Faction: Allied Forces.
Population: Around 432,000. Elves 91%, halflings 3%, humans 2%, cirrus 1%, others 3%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	High
Crime and Violence	Very Low
Economic Prosperity	Normal
Government Corruption	Low
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	High
Political Stability	High

Geography

Surrounded by the imposing and impenetrable mountain range to the southeast, this magnificent and dense forest has remained nearly untouched since the dawn of time. Its territory is almost entirely covered by vegetation, with many colossal trees. Among them, a few rivers, streams, and lakes hide a few clearings or places where sunlight penetrates with some intensity.

Politics

For millennia, the spring elves of Sindile have adhered to the same government model. Led by a wise council of Guardians, they guide the decisions of a ruling couple, King Nandorel Brightblossom and his gentle Queen, Larannis Verdeluna. Together, they pronounce their orders and make decisions after considering advice from the elders and occasionally involving High Hierophant Bennalas when he is not attending to his sacred duties towards the Mother Trees.

The King rarely interferes in the daily lives of the people. With a strong influence from the religion of Breith, the Lord of Spring, many social functions are combined with spiritual ones, organized into paths with their own hierarchical structure. People enjoy complete freedom, able to move wherever they wish, engage in relationships freely, and establish their residences where they see fit. The only great discussion in the Council is the limitation of relations with foreigners. Some defend the purity of the sanctuary; others prefer cooperation with other races to protect against the Ungods.

Economy

Despite being self-sufficient in their economy, the spring elves demonstrate a degree of generosity towards foreigners by offering some of their most important goods for trading. These include their rare herbs, the delicious Sindile honey, and magic bows and arrows. The two most desired items are the breithwood, a highly resilient lightweight wood, and Estelindea, an elixir of elven youth capable of slowing down aging.

Although they generally do not require specific types of goods from other regions, they still trade to explore new flavors, aromas, and clothes, as they tend to be curious. The most deficient resource in Sindile is metal, which, despite not being widely used, is still necessary for crafting their weapons and armor. Rare minerals such as tameranium, moonstone, and bauronite are always in demand, particularly as magical components.

Culture and Society

Deeply connected to the forest and nature, their culture and traditions are almost entirely centered around this fact. Their clothing and accessories resemble leaves, roots, and even tree bark. As the forest is dangerous, their communities are built among the tall treetops connected with passways, so they have many items to help them adapt to this, like grappling arrows, protections for falling, vines for transporting goods between levels, and many others. They tend to be isolated, as few villages are at the ground level.

Their diet is predominantly vegetarian, with most animals being nurtured as companions. Their music evokes the beautiful melodies of birds with harps, but it is also used to signal danger, and their crafts of wood are particularly strong and light.

They deeply revere life and celebrate birth. When an infant is born, they receive a seed bathed in a drop of their own blood, to be carried throughout their life and buried with them upon death, with the hope that a tree representing their spiritual ascension to Breith will flourish. Their largest cemetery, Cindergrove, is filled with trees sprouted from these seeds.

Although they are closed off to the outside world and their culture, they occasionally explore other lands because of curiosity or trade, returning to share their discoveries in a lively and dramatic manner. Despite being wary and distrustful, once a foreigner earns their trust, their friendship can endure beyond a lifetime, extending to their descendants.

History

The history of Sindile intertwines with the very history of elves, as it was the first location for the spring elves to establish their kingdom when arriving in Tanares. The elves left their home plane because their god of winter condemned the world to eternal winter and death in an attempt to stop the Ungods from invading it.

In their search for a suitable place to live, they found a vast valley protected by mountain ranges, as if forming a natural wall. There, the high hierophant Elya Sindile, the most powerful druid among them, carried twelve sacred seeds, received from the god Breith himself, and planted them throughout the valley. From those seeds, immense trees miraculously and rapidly sprouted, reaching incredible heights to the point where their shade extended for miles.

Around them, countless other trees emerged, quickly covering the entire territory with dense vegetation. When the Ungods invaded Tanares, Sindile realized that those twelve giant trees could draw in and clean the corruption emanated by the arrival of the Ungods and their creatures, preventing the spread of this evil. These trees were called the Mother Trees. The druid observed that when the leaves turned dark, their elven Ritual of Renewal purified the trees so they could continue to fulfill their vital role.

Recognizing the threat posed by the Mother Trees, the Ungods launched an assault on the forest, resulting in the permanent destruction of two of the twelve trees and the death of Sindile. On her deathbed, she miraculously gave birth to Bennalas, the first spring elf born in Tanares, and entrusted him with continuing her task.

The forest was named Sindile in her honor, creating an entire culture based on protecting the Mother Trees and isolationism. In the following ages, these elves remained closed off, unaware of most events, including the terrible catastrophe caused by the Malrokian Curse that destroyed almost half of Tanares. But thanks to their dedication to preserving the Mother Trees, corruption did not prosper.

Recently, in the wake of the Tanarean victory over the invading Kemet forces, the spring elves reduced their isolation, recognizing their importance and allying themselves with the Allied Forces. The responsibility that fell upon them was to judge all Kemet prisoners loyal to Gullog and keep the guilty ones locked.

Mother Trees

The region's most remarkable feature is its ten Mother Trees. These colossal sacred trees are vital in capturing and filtering the corruption emanated by the penumbral agents. Planted by the spring elves of Sindile in ancient times, they believe the trees have prevented many cataclysms, including possible replications of the Malrokian Curse and penumbral incursions.

To preserve its power, the periodic practice of the Ritual of Renewal, performed by elven druids, is required whenever a tree exhibits signs of darkening and withering. In addition to their chants, the druids use various herbs and tameranium during the ritual. The trees are highly guarded, even inside the dangerous depths of Sindile Forest. To reach the trees, the druids created the Trail of Blossoms, full of natural traps and difficult terrains, to prevent invaders from harming them. It is important, as one of the main goals of the Shadow Wing is to destroy them.

Estelindea

One significant elixir produced by the elves is Estelindea, known as the elixir of youth. This fragrant green potion, derived from the sap of the Mother Trees, serves as a youth elixir and is highly coveted. It is a highly coveted product, with a vial that can be purchased directly from the hands of these elves for 100 gp. Still, its value can be much higher when traded through intermediaries.

It slows the aging process of non-elf individuals by 20 to 30 years, with a single vial lasting a year. This is why many Tanareans, particularly the wealthier ones, can maintain their youthful appearance longer, as they have been utilizing this resource since reaching maturity.

As expected, the Third Eye makes some false elixirs to profit from this desired item. But the real danger is a process created by the Shadow Wing to use the elixir to empower their emoguns. For one reason or another, the route of this item for the cities has many robbery attempts.

Giant Insects

The sun cannot penetrate the depths of the forest except for rare small areas, so it is challenging to explore it, even for elves and druids. The place is filled with giant insects, like ants, beetles, praying mantises, and even worse beasts lurking there.

For some reason, they never attacked the Mother Trees nor ventured outside the forest, but after a giant wasp arrived, the insects became more aggressive and started to attack new areas.

There are many speculations about their origin. The Guardians believe it is a curse left by the Ungods and must find its source within the forest. Bennalas believes a mad ancient druid is creating them to protect the trees. Some elves reported two Penumbral Rifts where the blood of a colossal penumbral creature flows through them, creating a river of gray blood. No one could close these rifts, but no creature had come through it yet. Some elves secretly use adventurers to investigate the matter and solve the problem.

Threats and Conflicts

Radicalism Rising

A group of radical druids, known as the Eternal Circle, fervently opposes opening the boundaries to foreigners. They never make a direct attack against the elves, but they sabotage attempts of other races from reaching the elven cities. By creating some dangers in the forest with their druidic powers, they discourage people from venturing into Sindile and, on some occasions, even create diplomatic conflicts.

In their mind, this is the only way to protect the mother trees and avoid the corruption of the elves, as members of the Shadow Wing can always come disguised. With this rhetoric, they are gaining more followers each day, planning soon to attack close civilizations more actively instead of only defending themselves to expand the forest.

Open Wounds

The orcs of Tsvetan and the elves of Sindile had many conflicts in the past. For the elves, one of the heaviest consequences was the partial destruction of the Cindergrove, the cemetery where each elven seed was planted, desecrating their ancestors.

After centuries of peace, a new orc dark shaman and many orc barbarians started to make incursions into Sindile, looking for some lost artifact that could be corrupted to serve her needs. These orcs don't formally declare war but secretly kill many druids and elves they encounter.

Many elves believe that the orcs are a species highly susceptible to the corruption of the Ungods, and some are already planning attacks on the Orc tribes in Tsvetan.

Servants of Bás

After the Tanarean victory over the Kemet invaders, the prisoners of war were brought to be judged by the spring elves, away from curious or political eyes. Some Kemet s were declared innocent and are living among the spring elves, though under watchful eyes.

However, some druids have raised alarms about the presence of freezing energies from Bás, indicating that some of them are actively working for Gullog, the Kemet leader, in the region.

Some of the more radical spring elves have initiated hostilities against all the Kemet s who live there, now called winter elves. The council believes this should be fabricated by the Kemet spies invading the forest to manipulate public opinion and punish their traitors in their own sanctuary.

Secrets

Resource Drain

The hierophant druid Bennalas is responsible for conducting the Ritual of Renewal. He always recruits trustworthy adventurers to find tameranium for him; however, only one survivor from the last group returned with alarming news. He said a duergar told him something related to the roots of the Mother Trees going deep into Undertanares, and a mysterious noble is paying them to discover the location.

Now, Bennalas not only needs people to get more tameranium for him but also needs adventurers to investigate this serious matter and avoid causing panic in the elven communities.

Lost Artifacts

Despite the dangers, there are reasons for many to explore inside its darkness. Many magic items from the era of the Malrokian Kingdom remain untouched in the forest, including the legendary bow given to the elves as a gift, bathed by the Ancient Blood of King Malrok.

Also, as many adventurers perished inside the woods, all their items can be found somewhere. Some druids say the hives of the giant insects hide multiple powerful magic items.

The last important item recovered from the forest was by Niary, a bow that was used during the Ungods' invasion. Some elven sages believe this bow is highly effective against penumbral creatures. She prefers her own bow and has declared that she will gift the ancient one to someone she deems worthy.

Gateway Tree

For decades, the spring elves have been working on a secretive plan as a last resort, in case the Ungods or Bás prevail. One of the giant trees is particularly useful to hold energy. They carefully applied the same process to create the portal used to arrive in Tanares.

The druids and elementalists who constructed it affirmed it would offer the elves a new world to live in. However, it has been years since they entered and never returned. Despite many efforts, the destination of this portal remains a mystery, and no one who enters it returns. Recently, a ranger swears that he saw a cloaked man arriving from the portal and disappearing in the woods. Now, they intensified the studies about this portal with help from other nations and are searching for the man who arrived through it.

Places of Interest

Sweetsprings

Untouched and majestic is the common definition of the capital of the spring elves in Sindile by foreign visitors. Divided into levels, its floors are like rings surrounding the colossal tree trunks, interconnected by bridges or elevators. Its construction is so complex that it blends with the very branches and leaves of the trees to the point that a distracted traveler on the ground may not even realize the presence of the city. They use equipment crafted from breithwood to transport themselves and goods through the levels, some methods very curious.

Only the Council, priests and elementalists are allowed to access the upper levels, where the sunlight reaches the city more intensively. The Council of Guardians meets with the king and queen in a fancy hall called Breith's cocoon, which is sacred to them. Foreigners are typically confined to the city's lower levels, under strong vigilance.

There have been heated debates since Sedura was invited into the structure, as many believe she would destroy the purity of the place. To make things worse, one of the trees died soon after, fueling debates about desecration. Some guardians believe that was an action by the Eternal Circle, but could not confirm.

The king often speaks slowly and explains things to foreigners as though he's speaking to children, so any meeting with him requires extra patience and diplomacy.

Hunter's Nest

Miles away from Sweetsprings lies the fortified and warlike elven construction known as Hunter's Nest. Here, the majority of their warriors gather with their vast arsenal, most created from breithwood, including a collection of magical bows and arrows. Unlike their capital, this city stands on the ground level. The constructions are practical and military-oriented but still contain beautiful elven architecture. Rigorous training and strategic planning sessions frequently occur here, preparing the elves to defend Sindile Forest and even explore its depths.

Niary, the renowned elven heroine, leads the training and is very rigorous, because she hates incompetence. At the slightest sign of flaws, she complains and applies some punishment to encourage her warriors to be perfect. It is severe training but very effective. Each spring, she promotes the archery contest on neutral ground, inviting foreigners to the event. The last champions were two humans, whom Niary accepted as her students.

Recently, the last group of elite soldiers was sent into the forest. However, only a few returned alive, and they were suffering from a form of memory loss, rendering them unable to report the facts. She sent the word to Sedura to find competent and trustworthy adventurers to investigate the matter, as she must continue protecting the cities.

Cindergrove

Spring elves are gifted a seed when young to carry for their whole lives. When it dies, the seed is planted here to become one of the trees of Cindergrove. The trees sprouted in this manner carry the essence of the elf, allowing its memories to endure and offering guidance to others. This grove is beautiful, with colorful flowers and butterflies contrasting with the grey-bark trees that give the place its name. A significant part of it was destroyed by orc raiders long ago, leaving part of the location barren as some ancient stone obelisks carved with druidic magic were damaged as the orcs pilled their emerald cores. To this day, the elves search for these stones, as each obelisk recovered means another section of Cindergrove that will be able to grow again.

The elves value this location not only for its natural importance but also because of the memories it stores. Touching one of the trees can allow one to talk with the essence of an ancient elf, who can even impart memories to the living. Some of them have unfinished business and may ask for help; others have long goals and still try to convince others to take their mantle. Their rewards are intriguing; they impart knowledge into the person's mind for a time, often between one day and a few weeks. However, rumors say that some powerful deceased elves can grant much more durable, or even permanent, powers. Many elves have even been trained by these essences as their masters, touching the trees every day to commune with them and receive wisdom for their daily practices, emerging as powerful heroes after long seclusion.

Elven Essence Boon. The elven essence can grant specific memories, proficiency with a tool, language, skills, or even one or more class features from that elf's past (of GM choice). Still, the memory or knowledge disappears entirely after a set amount of time.

It is said that the elves visit Cindergrove when they know of an invasion to gain extraordinary abilities to defend their forest, which is one of the secrets of why they were never overtaken.

Sindile Road

After much controversy surrounding the construction of a road after the Kemet Invasion, the king finally ordered its creation. Connecting Yama, Mystical, and Tsvetan, the road was built with the aid of Earth Elementals, ensuring no tree will cover it. This road only skirts the periphery of Sindile and does not penetrate its depths.

Some magical mosses and fungi provide some illumination by night, and earth elementals act as silent guides, helping travelers navigate the pathway. This road also magically erases any footprints, making it impossible to track.

The Eternal Circle periodically makes some sabotages, creating dangers on the road or guiding people to strange places, even to the depths of the forest. They officially deny such actions, the more formidable the group crossing the road, the more probable they are to draw their attention.

A few elven small villages can be found across the road, and even with restrictions, they can trade or offer guidance.

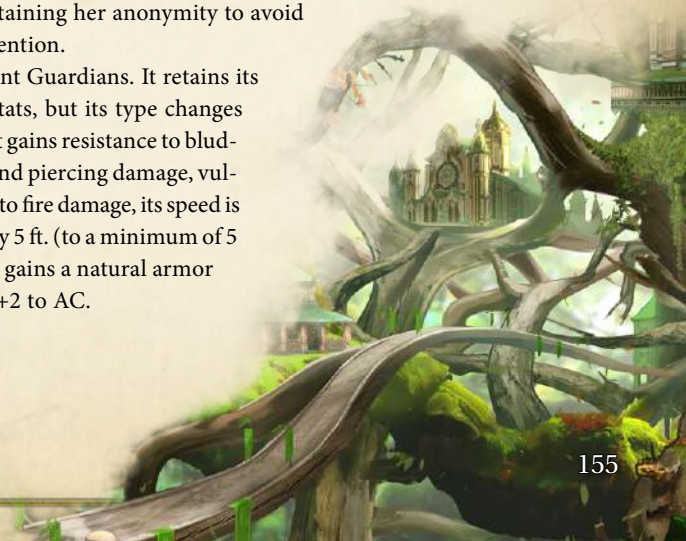
Verdant Colossus

In Tanares, the largest tree is not one of the colossal Mother Trees but an even larger sequoia. This tree, now a living fortress, was cultivated by Vollanas Deepleaf, one of the druid hierophants who led the crossing from their home plane to Tanares. He endeavored to bring many relics from his world to their new home, but after arriving, humans stole some of his sacred items. The loss of his world and the ancient artifacts he had sworn to protect caused Vollanas to lose his sanity, and he became obsessed with securing the relics from his world.

He transformed the giant tree in the forest into his fortress to protect the remaining relics, creating a dungeon with multiple levels extending underground within its roots and branches. It is said to hold ancient elven relics and the possessions of many who dared to explore its depths and never returned. The dungeon has labyrinths of wooden passages and enchanted leaf walls. Those who perish within are transformed into plant-like guardians, eternally defending the tree.

Rumors suggest a portal within it leads to the elven homeworld, now a frozen, lifeless expanse. Hierophant Bennalas forbade entry into the tree, but the few who defied him died or were forced to flee. In a scandalously kept secret, the king's only son ventured into the tree to prove his courage but never returned. The queen, acting discreetly, has since offered rewards to adventurers who search for him, always choosing foreigners and maintaining her anonymity to avoid public attention.

The Plant Guardians. It retains its original stats, but its type changes to Plant. It gains resistance to bludgeoning and piercing damage, vulnerability to fire damage, its speed is reduced by 5 ft. (to a minimum of 5 ft.), and it gains a natural armor bonus of +2 to AC.



Verdant Expanse of Yrthak

In the depths of Sindile Forest lies a portal to Yrthak, a plane of existence unfathomable to ordinary travelers. Those who cross the portal find themselves in a dense, sweltering jungle where the air is heavy with humidity and filled with the constant noise of exotic birds. This world, largely uncharted by the Tanareans, is viewed by scholars and explorers alike as a blend of danger and wonder.

The jungle of Yrthak is home to a myriad of lizard creatures, ranging from aquatic plesiosaurs to herds of triceratops and from the terrifying tyrannosaurs that hunt the wilderness to the Primedraconids - enormous, bestial draconic creatures that fly over the forest, hunting purely by instinct, always hungry.

Amidst this savage splendor, ancient temples lie hidden in the forest. Harboring the secrets of the gods they honor and magical artifacts of untold power, these stone structures were erected by a unique species of lizardfolk inhabiting Yrthak. While some temples are old and abandoned, filled with traps, and protected by sorcery, others are actively used for sacred rites.

The lizardfolk in the region the Tanareans explored so far can be divided into three groups.

The Servants of Azskah. Calm and tradition-bound, these lizardfolk are the self-appointed guardians of Yrthak. They worship Azskah, a colossal winged serpent revered as the creator of their world. Their society, structured and adhering to strict traditional laws, fervently opposes any external intrusion, especially from the Tanareans, fearing they will bring the corruption of the Ungods. In their eyes, every outsider is a potential harbinger of desecration. Despite their desire to seal off their realm, the secrets to close the portal elude them.

Distinguished by their use of feathers as indumentary, with colors signifying their societal roles, they are led by High Priests who answer to the Azskahnian King, a leader empowered by their serpent deity. Azskah, a god of healing, protection, and vengeance, instills in his followers the importance of life, mutual protection, and retribution for those who harm them. This often leads them to make incursions against the Spawns of Ukka for hunting Azskahnians.

The temples of Azskah are rumored to contain untold riches, magical items that can rejuvenate individuals, and even scales said to be from Azskah himself, capable of reviving the dead.

The Spawns of Ukka. Warriors of raw, untamed ferocity, these lizardfolk live by the hunt. In the dense undergrowth, they pursue their prey with a zeal bordering on fanaticism. Devotees of Ukka, the Scaled Sorceress, they believe her to be the first of their species, the mother of all, and the giver of all magic. They sacrifice non-believing lizardfolk to return their spirits to "Greatmother Ukka," allowing them to be reborn from their eggs as purified believers. Sacrificial rituals are also made using powerful hunted creatures or Tanarean explorers, demonstrating Ukka's power. They hunt Azskahnians and Jungle Walkers, believing those who stray from Ukka are misguided. They particularly detest Azskah and its priests, seeing their deity as a devilish snake attempting to steal Ukka's offspring, just as snakes sneak on their eggs.

While the Ukkanians may hunt explorers in Yrthak, they sometimes strike deals with adventurers, trading information and the locations of Azskah's secret temples in exchange for help eliminating more of the serpent deity's servants.

The Jungle Walkers. These nomadic druids embody the spirit of Yrthak's wilderness. Harmonizing with nature, they roam the jungle as a nomadic society, collecting and hunting as necessary while blending with the fantastic nature around them. Unlike their kin, they welcome outsiders, viewing the looming threat of the Ungods as a universal peril that will endanger their world if not addressed. They see the Servants of Azskah as overly rigid and the Spawns of Ukka as corrupted, deviating from the natural balance they cherish. Open to trade with explorers and adventurers, they generally respect Azskahnians and are often in search of aid to rescue captured Walkers destined for sacrifice to Ukka.

Adventurers venturing into Yrthak are drawn into a world where the allure of ancient mysteries and a constant struggle for dominance create a perpetual survival challenge. The jungle, teeming with dangerous creatures, cursed temples, and hunting lizardfolk, offers dangers and opportunities for those brave enough to explore this uncharted world.

Giant Beetle

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge: 3 (700 XP)

Carapace. Whenever the giant beetle takes bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, reduce it by 1d8 (minumum 0).

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Mirror Lake

In the heart of Sindile, within the Mountain Gate temples region, lies the location where the elves first arrived in Tanares. Mirror Lake, blessed by Breith, the Lord of Spring, showcases a stunningly reflective surface that once served as the portal to the elven dying world. It is a sacred place from where elven druids draw water to cleanse the Mother Trees during their purification rituals.

Guarded by the heroic nymph Thalia, this lake holds immense sanctity for the Spring Elves and is one of Sindile's most awe-inspiring locations. The Mirror Lake reflects the expansive gardens, meticulously tended by Thalia, other nymphs, and select arch-druids, displaying a vibrant array of enchanted roses of many different colors.

Each rose, believed to possess curative properties for various ailments, curses, and penumbral corruption, draws many to the druids for healing. However, Breith stipulates that seekers of the lake's water or flowers be swiftly aided but then bound by an oath to undertake a task decreed by the god, tailored to the individual's capabilities, invariably aimed at combating world corruption.

The lake's significance makes it a target for the Cult of Shadow Wing, who seek to corrupt it. Thus, elves, druids, and nymphs remain on high alert, often enlisting adventurers and heroes to thwart the Cult's schemes. Such tasks may involve venturing beyond the forest to counteract the Cult's insidious activities in Undertanares or their efforts in the penumbral plane to open a rift in Sindile and unleash an army against the lake. Devotees of Breith and believers in the World Spirits frequent this site, drawn by its unparalleled natural energy.

Natural Energy. Within this place, all druid and ranger spells have their duration doubled and gain +2 to their spell DCs and attack rolls, as one can gather much greater natural power here than anywhere else in Tanares. Elves, halflings, and other species inherently tied to nature's energy who make a long here gain 2 temporary hit points per level, lasting until they rest long.

Rose Powers. The roses of Mirror Lake, when distilled into potions, yield powerful remedies. Each potion specifically targets and eradicates afflictions of a certain type, dealing with any of such effects that a *wish* spell could end. Moreover, consumers gain an advantage on saving throws and resistance to damage related to these afflictions for one week.

The following table delineates the ailments each rose color can address:

Color	Description
Purple	Curses
Red	Poisons
White	Penumbral corruption (also confers advantage against planar effects of the Penumbral Plane)
Blue	Magical contamination (e.g., exposure to raw magical energies, mana contamination)
Grey	Necromantic effects
Yellow	Diseases (including magical
Orange	Mind effects and mental manipulation

Giant Wasp Queen

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural)
Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)
Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6
Skills Athletics +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities paralyzed, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages -
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Swarm of Wasps. The wasp queen is accompanied by **swarms of insects (wasps)**, which use the creature's abdomen as their home. The wasp queen has 2 (1d4) swarms inside it, releasing them, in an adjacent free space, as soon as it engages in combat.

Paralyzing Poison. The wasps that inhabit the interior of the wasp queen acquire a paralyzing poison. A creature that suffers a successful attack from a swarm of the wasp queen's wasps must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is poisoned for one minute. A creature poisoned in this way is also paralyzed. It can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending both effects on itself on a success.

Actions

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The poisoned target is paralyzed, and it can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns.

Niary

Niary (CG), revered amongst the spring elves, stands as a renowned hero for her part in defeating Thyra and Zarumag. As the leader of the Wood Hunters, she bears the heavy responsibility of protecting the forest from all threats. Though meticulous, serious, and bluntly sincere, she hates incompetence and often complains a lot about failures from others with her typical phrase, "*To do it right, I must do it myself.*"

She tirelessly trains elven archers, perplexed at their struggle to match her prowess. Overwhelmed by mounting challenges, she desperately needs competent assistance. Her foes include giant insects, becoming much more aggressive with the arrival of a wasp queen, undead from the Wasteland attacking the forest, Kemet infiltrators, and even orcs from Tsvetan guided by dark shamans.

Suspicious of strangers, especially humans, for their emotional instability, she's nonetheless open to working with competent adventurers. Prove worthy, and she might involve you in her quest deep in the forest to retrieve the Earth Bow, a divine relic of the spring elves, or to uncover the mystery behind the creation of the forest's giant insects.

Halthidon

Halthidon (CN), a half-autumn elf, was trained from youth by a group of elves intent on assassinating the maddened King Sundaryll. They aimed to eliminate the "cursed lineage" and set a new king to rule the lost and unguided autumn elves.

Halthidon's birth resulted from a cold calculation: the elves created an army of disposable half-elves by offering wealth to human women. They wanted to avoid shedding "pure elven blood" but believed non-elves were too weak, as all human mercenaries failed.

Halthidon was brought up austerely, living in communal dwellings with other half-elves and undergoing rigorous training. Most of his "brothers and sisters" perished, with few deemed successful. Ellistia, his only equal in skill, chose freedom; demonstrating the efficacy of their training, she slaughtered most of the organization's leaders, set fire to the dwellings, and escaped.

Feeling adrift, Halthidon wandered the forests, searching for purpose. He plotted to kill Sundaryll, but his first attempts failed. His quest was interrupted by the Kemet Invasion. Halthidon aligned himself with the Resistance, aiding the heroes. Post-invasion, seeking a new purpose, he set out to find Ellistia. His search led to Sindile, but he could not find her.

Despite his efforts to overcome it, Halthidon still carries a deep-seated urge to kill, remainings of his brutal childhood training. He pledged allegiance to Sindile, becoming their master spy. Now, he protects the elves and searches for Ellistia, who he believes that allied with sinister forces.

Cildroly

Cildroly (NE), once a Kemet Lord under Gullog and a notorious archer responsible for numerous Tanarean deaths, somehow survived when he was defeated by the Resistance and was imprisoned in Sindile following the Kemet's defeat.

After years of silence, he claimed that Gullog had abandoned him. He seemingly began to change his allegiance, having expected better from his former leader. He provided valuable intel on Kemet tactics and occasionally helped the elf hunters kill giant insects and the undead. Recently, the information he gave saved the queen's life, earning his freedom despite some protests. He vanished shortly afterward and has never been found.

He is cynical, cruel, and exceedingly arrogant, but his next move is unknown. Niary suspects that it was part of a plan and he will return to Gullog, while others believe he will take revenge for being abandoned.

In secret, Sedura is sending adventurers to find him and watch his moves, as it could reveal important secrets of the Kemet. Niary prefers a direct approach: eliminate him for past sins.

Becca

Becca (NG), blessed with a legacy as Bennalas' daughter and Sindile's granddaughter, knows she is destined to protect the Mother Tree. Idealistic, she dreams about a society where people can prosper and have a good time, filling their hearts with positive emotions.

Currently, she seeks to address the issue with the Eternal Circle.

Having infiltrated the organization, Becca familiarized herself with their motives and methods. She agrees about the need to protect nature and the danger of exposing the trees to foreigners, but not with their methods.

Employing her unique abilities, she creates peace clearings that influence invaders to abandon their hunt. She uses her animal shape to enter the communities unnoticed and educate people about harmony. She also saved them numerous times from attacks by the Eternal Circle.

She always attempts to prevent people from harming the forest or unfairly suffering at the hands of the Eternal Circle. If her method fails, she enlists adventurers to solve the problem. However, her benevolent deeds didn't go unnoticed; a fanatical druid saw some of her actions and intends to expose her to the leader.

Stravian Domains

Government: Governed by the three Dwarf Kings of the underground Kingdom of Stonelair, keeping all surface communities under their rule.
Faction: The dwarves of Stonelair have forged an alliance with the Allied Forces, although there may be individuals sympathetic to the Tanarean Empire or other factions, particularly among the surface dwellers.
Population: Around 960,000. Dwarves 51%, humans 22%, halflings 18%, gloomfolks 4%, cirrus 3%, others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	High
Crime and Violence	Low underground and High on the surface.
Economic Prosperity	Normal
Government Corruption	Normal
Magic Access	Normal
Monster Presence	Normal
Political Stability	High

Geography

The Stravian mountain range divides the territory, distinguishing the two sides. To the north, the land is cold and poorly populated. To the south, green forests, valleys, and hills make it fertile and highly populated. Here, most of the region's rivers and waterfalls converge, creating breathtaking views. The destruction caused by the Malrokian Curse ages ago created caves, hidden valleys, and connections to the Undertanares.

Politics

Merely decades ago, this was a secondary Imperial province, but after the Kemet Invasion, the dwarves migrated en masse to this location to reestablish their old kingdom. The majestic city of Stonelair was built with a colossal entrance to Undertanares.

Unlike their predecessors, the dwarves of Stonelair embrace the spirit of knowledge-sharing, granting prosperity and dignity to all who reside here. Governed by the triumvirate of clan kings—Rurik, Huradrin, and Ukhumlin—decisions are determined through a democratic process, avoiding regressive measures.

While many species were invited to these lands, it was predominantly the halflings who migrated in large numbers, especially settling in Mirare Town and its surrounding farms. As esteemed members of the Allied Forces faction, they provide a substantial portion of their mineral resources.

Economy

The mining industry drives the local economy. Within the large mines of Stonelair and Undertanares, the dwarves reward this labor generously, attracting workers from far and wide. It is common to behold vast shipments of Stravian ores departing for every corner of Tanares. Also, the halflings, blessed by their god Fruitful, also boast substantial food production on their farms, exporting to many regions of Tanares.

Despite their mineral and food abundance, there is a shortage of livestock and leather, primarily importing from Kolbjörn and the Republic of Freelands.

The dwarves of Stonelair also provide an efficient underground transportation method: the Stone Disks. These floating stone platforms swiftly traverse the land, capable of transporting large volumes of cargo.

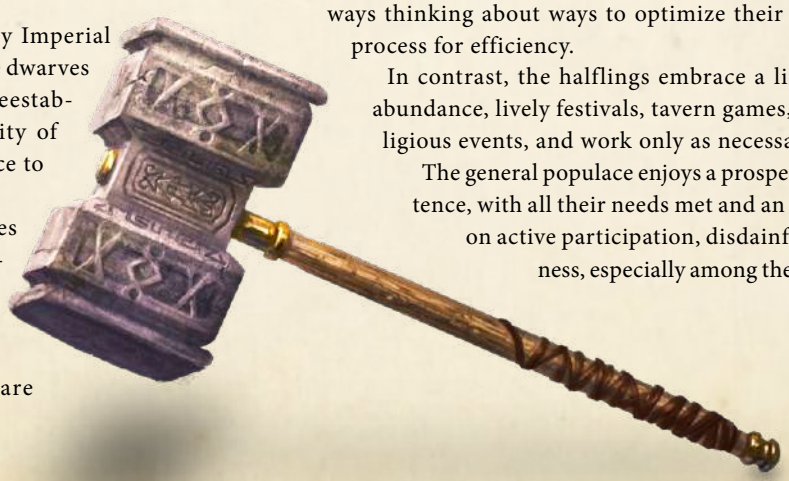
Culture and Society

As the dwarves control the land, their culture is the most prevalent, including the worship of the god Dorsi. However, as people from all Tanares come to work in the mines, many traditions combine, creating something unique and rich in the region.

The kingdom embraced dwarven principles of honor such as integrity, reputation, and meritocracy, extending their warm regard even to non-dwarves who proved their worth through skill and perseverance. People view it as a place of work, always thinking about ways to optimize their time and process for efficiency.

In contrast, the halflings embrace a lifestyle of abundance, lively festivals, tavern games, open religious events, and work only as necessary.

The general populace enjoys a prosperous existence, with all their needs met and an emphasis on active participation, disdainful of laziness, especially among the dwarves.



History

Long ago, the region was the seat of the Malrokian Kingdom's capital, boasting impressive structures. However, after the kingdom fell due to the Malrokian Curse, numerous secrets of this land were buried deep within it and have remained hidden for hundreds of years.

After centuries of Imperial domination, which viewed it as a secondary land, and following the Kemet Invasion, the dwarves reunited to rebuild their ancient kingdom of Arheimar. The most important leader of each dwarven clan guided their people to Stravian, selecting a site near an important entrance to Undertanares to establish their new kingdom's capital. They named it Stonelair, a change signifying cooperation between the clans.

Soon, many other dwarves arrived in the region, founding many other cities. The halflings accepted the invitation, creating some villages and farms, and later came to dominate Mirare Town.

However, despite their quick ascension, these dwarves still face numerous challenges and require the assistance of other species to work in the mines and for their own protection, as the abundant mineral resources attracted many greedy individuals, including forces from the Shadow Wing.

Stone Spirits

The bond that dwarves share with stones allows their priests to create the Stone Spirits, large stone statues shaped like dwarves. They also have a moonstone positioned where their heart would be, which channels the divine energy of Dorsi.

Whenever a worthy dwarven hero dies, the dwarf's soul can control the statue and assist the dwarves in defending their sacred places or offer guidance in times of need. Most of the time, they are inactive, but whenever the dwarves are in danger, their eyes emit a green glow, and the statues come to life.

They are formidable in combat, creating an effective wall that is hard to trespass. The brighter the eyes, the more energy the soul channels, and the more powerful the statue. If the dwarf hero fell in combat, the statue gains resistance to the type of damage that killed the hero.

Even out of combat, the statue can communicate with Dorsi high priests or even gift a group with a memory stone. When these specific persons touch the rock, some vivid images from moments when the hero was alive flood their minds.

Stone Disks

One of the remarkable inventions created by the dwarves of Stonelair is their Stone Disks. Imbued with magical runes, these immense structures can quickly cross the tunnels under the realms. When activated with specific words, these disks carry passengers to various destinations and serve as efficient cargo transport, offering a viable and secure alternative to surface roads.

The tunnels connect the important points of Stravian, bringing prosperity and development to many regions in Stravian. As a result, city construction becomes faster and more efficient since necessary materials and skilled labor can quickly reach the site. Additionally, the residents of a city can work in the mines of Stonelair, even if they are miles away, and return to their homes within short periods of time.

Among the significant dangers are other Factions attempting to copy this wonder by stealing a disk, as well as sabotage from the duergar. They wish to destroy the dwarves for their exile and have some spies infiltrated to discover how it operates to turn the disks deadly or redirect them to designated ambush sites.

Sacred Orchard of Mirare

The new halfling city was gifted a sacred orchard by the will of the fey lords. Priestess Alluna and a unique archfey with twelve wings take care of the place, protecting it from any danger.

It's vibrantly colorful, with exceptionally green plants that bear nearly every kind of fruit. At night, the leaves shine unnaturally with the moonlight. There are also small statues of halflings, priests, and champions.

The fey lords usually make requests of the halflings for most tasks, but when in dire need, they call for champions to help, even from other species. Depending on the importance of the mission, they offer two kinds of fruits as rewards. One is the fey rainbow fruit, which heals wounds and cures disease (upon consuming, the creature regains 3d8 hit points and receives the effects of the *remove disease* spell). The other, for truly heroic deeds, is the Celestia Fruit, which should be consumed only once in a lifetime. It improves the body and spirit in a way beyond imagination (upon consuming, the creature gains one level. If consumed a second time, the creature dies and is reborn as a fey.)

Threats and Conflicts

Danger in the Mines

Most dwarven mines are located in Undertanares, a colossal dungeon of continental proportions. Though abundant in minerals, the dwarves primarily seek tameranium and bauronite, both more valuable than platinum.

However, these mines are extremely dangerous; the dwarves often hire adventurers for escort and protection during their work. Threats such as cave collapses, hallucinogenic gases, and assaults of many kinds of creatures are expected. Some dwarves have reported uncommon dangers, such as ancient traps, sudden lava flows, and even mimic infestations.

Duergar

When the Dorsism religion became predominant among the dwarves, some were cast out due to their failure to uphold the three virtues of Dorsi. Since a part of the Chimera represented each clan, the duergar were designated as the serpent clan, as they were considered treacherous and ultimately evil. A powerful high priest even changed their appearance to clearly identify the renegades.

Over time, these dwarves organized their clan and launched guerrilla attacks, though initially, they posed no threat. When Arheirmar fell, the two mightiest duergar brothers, Drogolin and Skrabolin, led their clan and conquered the Dorsian Forge, the most powerful forge in the Material Plane. They found many weapons and explored the Undertanares to expand.

Now, as the dwarves also explore this territory, numerous conflicts erupt over mines and the ruins of ancient cities.

They have not learned how to use the forge yet, but their sages are seeking this knowledge. Skrabolin was killed in an epic fight against Rurik, and now his brother wants revenge at any cost.

Dangerous roads

Because the region welcomes anyone willing to work, this open-border policy has also attracted many malicious individuals. The dwarves and halflings prefer to protect their villages and cities, but the roads are treacherous territories full of robbery, assault, and assassination.

Travelers often hire mercenaries or adventurers when crossing the Stravian Roads, as they expect to encounter bandits, magic beasts, and even emoguns at night. Some hidden dangers, like Malrokian monoliths imbued with distorted and dangerous spells, mystical fogs that cause hallucinations, and terrain hazards, may also harm the trip. For those fortunate enough to avoid these threats, some charlatans may try to sell false items or ineffective potions.

Secrets

Undertanares Findings

The dwarves are sending many groups to explore Undertanares in search of mines for several minerals and metals. However, some unusual and even dangerous discoveries have prompted the dwarves to close certain mines and employ items and spells to make the workers forget about these locations. Some of the findings include:

Fungus of Forgetting. Upon consumption, a creature must make a Wisdom 15 saving throw. On a failure, it forgets all events within the last 48 hours for red ones or a month for blue ones.

Black Crystals. These strange crystals absorb light, changing the illumination to dim light within 10 feet of it. When touching the crystal for at least 1 minute, the creature must make a Wisdom 17 saving throw. On a failure, it becomes frightened.

Draining Red Iron. This metal has an affinity for life force. When touching this metal, the creature must succeed on a Constitution 16 saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion. When this happens, the metal loses its red color and becomes a regular iron.

Some even more serious crystals and metals were found, like stones that trap souls and gold that petrifies its owner after some time carrying it, but the dwarves keep some secret about their exact effects and locations. Many other factions are searching for the vault where the dwarves store these findings, as some may be much more powerful.

Imperial Agents

Stravian is situated between two Imperial territories, Kolbjörn and the Central Empire. They know of a secret route; however, it's more distant and difficult to cross, reserved only for transporting essential individuals or items.

Many spies, Ironhand soldiers, and other Imperial agents can be found in this territory. Their ultimate goal is to destabilize the dwarven government and have the region annexed back into the Empire.

So they make many assaults on the roads, sabotages in the cities, and espionage to learn sensitive information and use it against the dwarves.

Tribin Vendetta

The halfling villages and farms are protected not only by feys but by halfling warriors mounted on their dire boars. The leader of these brave soldiers is named Tribin, who became renowned for saving his community during the Kemet Invasion. The feys chose him to be the champion, tasked to protect the halflings.

During the Kemet Invasion, the Lich Kalistessenâmun stole his sister's soul and imprisoned it within a gem. Now, some Kepesh agents have been blackmailing him, and he is torn between duty and the essence of his sister. He has been negotiating with sinister archfeys, including one of their representatives, the fallen dryad Celya, making unknown deals likely related to this matter.

He prefers to hire adventurers and mercenaries for other species to help him in protection tasks. But his main intention is to find a group that seems strong enough to infiltrate the main base of the Kepesh and retrieve his sister's soul. He knows it is very complex and requires careful planning, as the gem could be lost or, even worse, destroyed by a small mistake.

Places of Interest

Mirare

Located along the shores of the Central Sea, the city is the largest and most renowned halfling community in Tanares. With the blessing of Fruitful, this place is considered the granary of Tanares, with abundant food production.

The city is full of small houses for the halflings, but there is a separate district for foreigners with regularly sized houses. There is an unusual number of taverns and central squares. Even the beach has structures to be a place of entertainment.

Its mayor, Aldo Cotton-Hair, constantly promotes festivities and games in the name of the feys. During some of them, it's common for the wealthiest halflings to bring some giant fruits produced by feys' magic to share. The larger and more imposing the fruit brought, the more prestige and status the halfling gains. Some common games:

Fruit-eating. Competitors must eat the most fruits in five minutes. Each must make *Constitution* 15 saving throws to avoid

getting full or sick. The number of successful saves in a row determines the winner, but each test increases the difficulty by 2.

Fruit Dish Race. A race with a twist. Competitors must balance a dish of fruits. If any of them drops, it must restart the racing. *Dexterity* (Acrobatics) 15 checks to maintain balance. Failed checks result in dropping fruits. For those who succeeded, a Strength check and compare the results to determine the winner.

Story Narration. The competitor who tells the most captivating story wins. First, it must make an DC 15 Intelligence check to think of good elements. Then, make a *Charisma* (Performance) check, having advantage in case of a successful Intelligence check. The winner is the competitor who gets the biggest number in the last test.

Eclipse Village

This village serves as a refuge for many bandits, salters, and mercenaries hiding from authorities. The village is centered around Main Street, featuring wooden and stone structures such as saloons, inns, general stores, blacksmiths, stables, and dueling grounds. The rest of the village has modest wooden homes and ranches.

It is a no man's land with no security or government; the only authority is the bandit master, Kibral, considered the quickest crossbowman in the Stravian West.

They typically ride horses that are magically empowered to run faster and longer. These bandits attack caravans and travelers using crossbows and explosive arcane barrels. In the village, bards play at the saloons using unique instruments recovered from ruins. Many disagreements are resolved with a crossbow duel, some ending in death.

Kibral is a formidable combatant and can use his crossbow much faster than most, shooting four bolts in the time it usually takes to shoot one. He cares more for glory and the role of a boss, or sheriff as he calls himself, than the gold and items stolen. Kibral is considered the most wanted criminal in Stravian, so many adventurers are hired to arrest or kill him. None succeeded until now.

Moolooite Mines

This ghost mine is one of the places the dwarves avoid the most. All of its workers died tragically and were cursed to remain within the mines indefinitely. In the Ethereal Plane, they have established a village inside and continue to mine ores that are unique to that plane. They also have a forge there and create ethereal weapons and armor.

On the Material Plane, these ethereal items cannot be obtained. However, it has caught the interest of certain necromancers who frequently traverse that plane and some priests from the Kepesh, who aim to use the ethereal ores for their spells and to construct the Eternal City for their deity Ba-Ka.

Though it is sealed and difficult to access, some adventurers are still hired to explore it, as the dwarves believe this mine has many valuable metals.

Dorsian Forge

Hidden in Undertanares, the Dorsian Forge is the best achievement of the ancient dwarves. It is the mightiest forge on the Material Plane, designed to craft weapons formidable enough to counter the Ungods' invasion. It consists of multiple smaller forges, with each one handling different aspects of item creation, such as magma and ice forges, and can be combined into one colossal single forge using an activation mechanism.

It can forge any magic item or unique artifact as long as the blacksmith possesses detailed instructions and components for its creation. It also can combine tameranium and bauronite to create moonstone, the rarest and most powerful mineral. It even has the capability to transform base materials, such as iron, into precious metals like adamantine or mithral.

Weapons forged here gain a unique ability, which may vary based on the forging process. The most common is the accurate burst, granting advantage for one attack roll once per hour, or memory metal, containing memories of their last wielder.

The duergar control the forge, but they have not yet been able to activate the combined forge. Even utilizing its basic capabilities, they can craft formidable weapons. Additionally, Drogolin discovered a metallic statue shaped like a dwarf. His priests have found the means to create the Iron Spirits using the soul of Skrabolin. If the duergars learn how to mass-produce these statues, their army will be much more powerful. As expected, the dwarves pay large sums of gold for anyone capable of reclaiming this forge.

Malland Hing Halls

Close to the city of Stonelair stands a monolith alongside an entrance to a vast dungeon. It takes at least a day's journey on foot to traverse it. These are the Malland King Halls. Unfortunately, it is protected by a magic barrier that is impossible to break, even using the most powerful known spells.

After a long study, the dwarf sages believe they need someone with the descendency of Malrok to cross the barrier; they are now searching for a courageous individual with the Ancient Blood. They offer rewards for any information leading to such an individual.

The scholars suggest this place is both a prison and a treasure hall. Malrok kept powerful extraplanar beings and other dangerous entities locked away, beings he could not destroy. However, it contains artifacts from his Age that Malrok considered powerful enough to keep hidden.

Stonelair City

Stonelair City is located between the Malland Range's foothills and the Crystal Torrent cascades. Towering stone walls protect the inhabitants, and within the city lie advanced structures, such as stone elevators and suspended tombs, which are not seen anywhere else. Smoke rises from countless forges, and the rhythmic clang of hammers echoes, capturing the city's enduring spirit. The city has a grand entrance to Undertanares, where there is a constant flow of people and mining carts.

The city is governed by the three Dwarven Kings—Rurik, Huradrin, and Ukhumlin—who extend opportunities for all to prosper, opening their rich mines for collective exploration. Known for its masonry, forging, trade, and jewel crafting, the city thrives on hard work, with its inhabitants taking only brief moments of rest.

The city has another part inside the Undertanares with many distinguished features.

Within Stonelair's grand armies, a long-time dwarven tradition reemerged. Each unit includes an experient cleric of the Domain of Protection, enhancing the already legendary resilience of the dwarven legions. These clerics aligned with the frontline warriors, their shields locked together as one. Amidst battle's chaos, they manifest Dorsi's glory, embracing the dwarven ideal that being a guardian for one's people is the noblest of callings.

In temples, on adventuring groups, within sacred halls, and at besieged fortifications, the clerics of the Domain of Protection serve as vigilant sentinels. They stand ready to shield their allies, wielding magic that forges barriers and confers protective blessings, safeguarding their friends against all forms of malice and harm.

The cleric class receives new subclasses in this section.

Protection Domain

In realms where perils are a constant threat, numerous deities seek to offer refuge to their faithful. In Tanares, the first to grant the Domain of Protection was Dorsi, the dwarven god of guardianship. The dwarves refer to these individuals as Sacred Guardians, epitomizing the ideal dwarf: a mighty shield for their community and clan, unflinching in the face of evil.

This domain is predominantly associated with clerics of Dorsi, yet it is not exclusive to them. Any deity that embodies the defense of the vulnerable and the values of endurance and guardianship may have clerics on this hallowed path. Followers of Fruitful, who safeguard their farmlands, orchards, and villages south of Stravian, often embrace this path, as do some devotees of Breith, pledged to protect the Sindile forest.

The tenets of the Domain of Protection vary by deity but typically involve shielding the weak, safeguarding sacred sites, or defending communities from invaders. With their unwavering faith, these divine protectors become unbreakable walls on the battlefield, their shields shining with holy light and their magic resolute even against mortal peril.

GM Note: While the Domain of Protection is referenced in this book as part of Dorsi, Breith, and Fruitful faiths, in other settings, this domain can be used as clerics of any deity that promotes protection.

Domain Spells

Protection Domain Spells

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	*sanctuary, shield*
3rd	*warding bond, protection from poison*
5th	*protection from energy, wind wall*
7th	*death ward, fire shield*
9th	*wall of force, wall of stone*

Bonus Proficiencies

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain proficiency in heavy armor and the Perception skill.

Aegis of Faith

Starting at 1st level, while you are wielding a shield, you add your Wisdom modifier as a bonus to all concentration checks.

Additionally, whenever you cast a cleric spell of 1st level or higher, divine energy fortifies your shield, increasing your Armor Class (AC) by 1 until the end of your next turn. This bonus increases to +2 at 10th level.

Channel Divinity: Bastion of Protection

Beginning at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to protect yourself and your allies. As an action, you present your holy symbol, and a divine aura emanates from you. Until the end of your next turn, all attacks against you and any allies within 15 feet of you are made with disadvantage.

Protective Blessing

At 6th level, when you cast a cleric spell of 1st level or higher targeting yourself or an ally, the target gains a protective blessing. Until the end of your next turn, this blessing provides two benefits:

- The first attack roll made against the target has disadvantage.
- The target gains advantage on the next saving throw it makes.

Divine Strike

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 radiant damage to the target. At 14th level, this extra damage increases to 2d8.

Sanctum of Divinity

Beginning at 17th level, you can use a bonus action to manifest a translucent image of a divine fortress at a point you choose within 30 feet of you. This sanctuary grants half cover to you and your allies within a 30-foot radius and causes hostile creatures to have disadvantage on saving throws against your cleric spells and abilities. While you are inside this area, you automatically succeed on all concentration checks to maintain your spells.

This effect lasts for 1 minute. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.

King Rurik

Rurik (LG), the dwarven king of the Lion clan, prefers the title of clan leader over king. His past is filled with suffering; his brother Thurgrom betrayed him, exiling both his sons. He has faced many battles in the Arenas to claim Imperial help and during the Kemet Invasion. His most remarkable deed was to defeat Bellara, forcing her to retreat. After the dwarves returned to Stonelair, he dedicated the Lion clan to exploring and combating the threats in the Undertanares, including monsters and the duergar clan.

Some say he is the stronger dwarf alive and a brilliant leader, but as the demands are increasing fast, he is overwhelmed and now is more focused on trusting adventurers to help him than on solving the problems himself since he is committed to defending Stonelair, especially after Bellara's vow of revenge.

He is studying ways to regain the Dorsian Forge from the duergar without a bloodbath, finding a secret laboratory of Spawners that are creating hybrid monsters to attack the dwarves, and searching for the legendary Dorsian Armor, made of Moonstone and blessed by their god. While his two sons handle the clan's daily affairs, rumors suggest that his youngest is subtly trying to incite the Lion clan to be the dominant one.

Rurik is very fair and hates fancy speeches, preferring a sincerity.

Aldo Cotton-Hair

Aldo Cotton-Hair (NE) is a friendly halfling responsible for the Mirare Town administration. Secretly, he is a leader of the Third Eye and is involved in a range of activities: from recruitment and espionage to blackmail, trading in black markets, and more. His cunning ensures that no one suspects his role as a mastermind, even in his halfling community, using a speech that seems always happy and naive.

Respecting the codes of the fey, Aldo never harms halflings or their plantations, ensuring his uncontested status as mayor. But he manipulates the destination of the food, trades favors, and even infiltrates people in the Stonelair, bringing many gems and weapons to his black market. He is also an expert in extracting information from victims, usually interrogating individuals without arousing suspicion.

Controlling the "Tanares Granary," he subtly uses the food supply as leverage, often saying: 'Your nation is four meals away from total chaos.'

He typically recruits for the Third Eye by assigning adventurers a seemingly noble mission, only to later disgrace them when the outcomes are revealed as a mere crime. He has informants everywhere and doesn't hesitate to eliminate people he considers dangerous or annoying by sending his thugs. He is also dedicating resources to eliminate a dangerous woman Elarine, who knows a lot about his organization.

King Ukhumlim Stronghope

Ukhumlim (LG), the Dwarf King of the Goat Clan, wise and kind, is responsible for the real administration of Stonelair and all clans. While he works to maintain the traditions and autonomy of each clan, he also invites other species to join their city, encouraging unity and alliance. One of the reasons he was open to new races was that he was trapped in the elemental plane and was saved by a mysterious sky captain Mavras, who remains his friend to this day.

He has an excellent relationship with Rurik and Huradrin, but both have more pressing concerns than the mundane tasks of administration. He excels as a politician and diplomat, a trait uncommon among dwarves. However, due to his extremely slow and repetitive speech, people have to be patient to engage him in a long conversation.

However, given the challenges he faces, he finds himself in dire need of assistance. On the surface, many bandits, greedy merchants, and even rival factions threaten the peace and prosperity of Stonelair. In Undertanares, the Order Bringers are a group of revolted dwarves who claim it's wrong to involve other species. They are violent, bold, and commit crimes, placing the blame on other species. Other logistical challenges, such as transporting rare minerals, exploration of new areas, and problems with the duergar require assistance for many warriors and adventurers.

King Huradrin

Huradrin (NG), the Dwarf King of the Dragon Clan, is renowned as a hero from the Kemet Invasion. He felt guilt for decades, believing his strange penumbral powers, which invoked a chimera, were the cause of his kingdom's downfall. But when he discovered it was a scheme from evil entities, he has now gained the confidence to guide his people.

The Stone Spirits elected Huradrin as a dwarven champion and have direct contact with him, guiding and empowering him in these dangerous times. Recently, they have been asking Huradrin to use his penumbral powers more frequently and to recruit adventurers for operations there. Some are to bring rare metal from the Clockwork Level in the Penumbral Plane, gems from the Crystal Forest, free imprisoned Stone Spirits, and he even uses his powers to track the cultists' hideouts there. But his most important desire is to end Ardilog, the chimera that destroyed his kingdom, once and for all. But this requires forging an ember sword in the Magmadar Forges, imbuing it with draconic magic, and learning some soul imprisonment from the Ba-Ka priests. When speaking, he often lists potential pitfalls to test an adventurer's resolve.

Some say his father became a vengeful Stone Spirit for his assassination and may be corrupted by the path of the Serpent. Huradrin dismisses it officially, but he secretly seeks the truth.

Storm Islands

Government: Ruled by Gullog, the Deathbringer, in league with Bás, the elven deity of winter and death.

Faction: The Forces of Darkall.

Population: Around 386,000. Kemets 96%, other elves 2%, humans 1% and others 1%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Very Low
Crime and Violence	Very Low
Economic Prosperity	High
Government Corruption	Low
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	Normal
Political Stability	High

Geography

Composed of a vast archipelago of rocky and mountainous islands, this land boasts its own unique ecosystem in the central areas. Swamps, marshes, and dark forests thrive amidst the rugged and fragmented terrain. This region also has an unusual number of natural caves and caverns.

The coastline and distant islands are covered in ice and snow of magical origin, with waters that can magically freeze to obstruct vessels. Additionally, sudden snowstorms can swiftly shroud the landscape, obscuring it from view.

Politics

Gullog and his Kemet Lords rule with absolute authority. The society is based on meritocracy, where those who demonstrate their worth and loyalty are rewarded with elevated positions and prestige, which can be swiftly lost at the slightest sign of incompetence or insubordination. Thus, the citizens aim to suppress their desires to attain higher positions through remarkable achievements. Below Gullog, the five Kemet Lords have their own chain of command and areas of expertise, enjoying autonomy to implement his methods and laws as long as they align with Gullog's will and the dogmas of Bás.

Diplomatic encounters with other regions or factions are rare, as they are viewed as threats, but temporary alliances may happen occasionally.

Economy

Due to their geographical and political isolation, they have become virtually self-sufficient, receiving limited resources from Darkall, a continent to the West. They cultivate various types of tubers and cereals and use advanced fishing techniques. The islands are rich in minerals, including the rare tameranium, which is utilized as a magical component.

They also engage in piracy, with their massive fleet raiding ships that pass through their region, seizing their resources and crew members as prisoners or casualties.

The population generally lives with little luxury, as the dogmas of Bás prohibit indulgence in greed or materialistic avarice.

Culture and Society

Kemet society suppresses emotions and desires, compelling inhabitants to direct their efforts toward Gullog and Bás. Priests of Bás encourage them to detach gradually from all attachments, symbolizing a frozen, incorruptible heart resistant to the Ungods' domination. The Kemet Lords recruit most of the people for the army, training them for the upcoming invasion of the continent.

Their society has a unique feature. They incorporate the undead into their daily lives, utilizing these creatures for various tasks, according to the physical possibilities and intelligence of the undead. Skeletons perform repetitive tasks, zombies carry heavy loads, and many other labor-intensive jobs are undertaken by the undead. Many families even keep undead creatures as pets, such as skeletal dogs.

Their homes typically consist of communal mansions, where entire families share the same space, and each member plays their part in maintaining the structure, using undead assistance. They typically illuminate the places with a special blue cold fire.

The only recognized religion is Bás, and devotion is mandatory for all members of society. The rare presence of other species among them is tolerated only after an unconditional conversion to Bás.

History

This territory was once a unique civilization known as Cantala, a matriarchal society based on studies of stars and their powers. They mastered advanced techniques of navigation, cartography, and star spells, producing effects unfamiliar to contemporary civilizations. They constructed numerous mazes to improve their guidance by stars. Now, ruins of this civilization, part underground and part underwater, can be found.

The Kemets, winter elves from Darkall, were manipulated by Golgöggoth into eradicating the Empire. This was done to suppress the negative emotions that empower the Ungods.

These Kemet s first conquered the Storm Islands, establishing a crucial strategic position from where they launched their invasion into the rest of Tanares. They dominated the city of Fisherman's Wharf with hopes of opening the super portal, Vandanamalika, to destroy the Empire. A fierce war lasted for six weeks, but after a huge effort, the resistance defeated the Kemet. After Gullog's death, part of the Kemets retreated to the Storm Islands and established their civilization, isolated from the rest of Tanares. The rest surrendered and were given a chance to live in the Republic of Freelands.

After a year of despair, Gullog returned with a new mission. To open a Vandanamalika, allowing the goddess Bás to cover Tanares with ice and undeath, saving it from the Ungods. With much of their society aligned with the army and indoctrinated by their religion, they stand ready to invade merciless Tanares.

Deep Freeze

Following the teachings of Bás, the Kemet s realized that the only way to purge the threat of corruption represented by the Ungods was through the complete freezing of Tanares.

The ice produced by the goddess's vile magic possesses unique properties that facilitate the creation of the undead. Using the pylon shrines spread throughout the Storm Islands and at some points on the continent, the surrounding temperature drops, and tainted ice covers the ground. The radius varies from 1 to 10 miles. Here are the unique qualities found in the special ice:

Message Crystals. Some ice crystals can hold messages that only Kemet can understand.

Prism of Detection. Certain special ices change color: they turn red if a living creature approaches and yellow if a soul or spectral creature is nearby.

Ice Flora. The plants change into an exotic version of the area taken by the ice magic. It is still alive but combined with ice, usually with a particular poison applied by contact or injury.

Frostbite Venom (Contact). The victim feels an intense chill, and ice forms under the skin. A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a CD 14 Constitution or take 2d6 poison damage and become poisoned for 6 hours. The poisoned creature has disadvantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws.

Undead Army

The Kemets extensively use the undead as soldiers and expendable troops. One of the reasons is to avoid the Malrokian Curse, as the deaths of the undead don't trigger the catastrophes.

When a creature is reanimated in an area affected by Deep Freeze (typically near the Frost Pylons), its body becomes resistant to cold damage, remains better preserved, and doesn't emit the usual odor of the undead.

The Kemets are also researching to create new types of undead, to improve their use in the army and in their day-to-day lives. Their last challenge is to learn how to create undead versions of the penumbral creatures. If they learn the process, they will become much more powerful. For now, three new undead creatures stand out, even though they are still uncommon.

Aquatic Centaurs. The Kemet s were able to create a versatile undead, capable of covering great distances fast by running and fighting perfectly underwater.

Mirror Specters. Specters that can teleport through mirrors and attack unexpectedly. It is said they can also pull the creature inside the mirror to an unknown plane.

Permafrost Banshees. They move silently through the snow, and their cries can cause snow to fall, induce blindness, and cause hypothermia.

Kemet Lords

Following tradition, five Kemet Lords command the army, all under Gullog. Some were lost during the Kemet Invasion, replaced by others eager to prove their worth to Gullog. The current five Kemet Lords are:

Solnertha. The master of necromancy, she is capable of creating immense necrotic energy and combining it with frost. She is researching new forms of undead.

Teraphas. She is a master tactical specialist for infiltrations and surprise attacks. She is not very competent but always tries to hide this from Gullog.

Xorius. Commander of the archers, he is an average shooter but has an excellent knowledge of the position and ways to use the environment to his troops' benefit.

Zhaeral. The high priestess of Bás, she is capable of casting 'frost healing', an energy that can heal creatures related to frost, including Kemet s and their undead.

Zisenuh. This fierce berserker is the leader of the infantry. He can also regenerate his wounds quickly and prefers to be present in missions, to be part of the fight.

Apart from Baraelmer, who leads the winter elves in the Republic of Freelands, the other two former Kemet Lords are:

Cildroly. The best archer in all Kemet history. He is cruel and hot-blooded, imprisoned by the spring elves and abandoned by Gullog. Recently, he was freed, and his next action is unknown. He may take revenge on Gullog or join him again.

Yrizard. Master spy, she was capable of teleporting through shadows. She was devoted to Gullog and died at the hands of the Resistance. Gullog is looking to find her body to revive her and boost the Kemet Army.

Threats and Conflicts

Baraelmer's influence

Baraelmer is viewed by Gullog and many of his Kemets as the greatest betrayer and deserter. A position as a Kemet Lord has even been offered to anyone who can eliminate Baraelmer.

However, his actions inspire many Kemet to gain courage and flee, looking for a place in the Republic of Freelands. Even within Storm Island, a small group of Kemets known as 'The Last Fire' has begun rallying disillusioned members to resist. However, they desperately need assistance from adventurers, occasionally sending a message to the continent for help. If someone discovers them, they will surely be executed as traitors, usually frozen in ice tombs for eternity, with their faces displayed to all Kemet s as a warning against treachery.

Frost Pylons

The primary Pylon on Storm Island is immensely powerful, covering most of the region. However, the Kemet s are using tameranium to build secondary frost pylons in some places through the continent, usually remote ones, to avoid immediate retaliation.

It typically takes about a year for a pylon to become fully operational, built using labor from the undead and a handful of Kemets. When activated, it creates a surrounding zone of Deep Freeze that grants advantages for the Kemet and the undead, including the Midnight Blue Sun. Additionally, the Kemet s can teleport from one Pylon to another, greatly enhancing their mobility across the continent. Many Factions and groups hire adventurers to destroy the pylons, but it is not an easy task.

Undead Ships

The Kemet s have the most impressive fleet in the Ocean, composed not only of kemet and undead crew but by the ships themselves being an immense undead monsters.

They patrol the seas, attacking any vessel they encounter. If the Kemet crew is lost, the undead ship sacrifices itself after about an hour. It sometimes throws the crew that dominated it into the ocean. Experimental constructs from U'Tibam can conceal ships from their detection, but these are rare and unreliable items.

Undead Ship

Speed 2 mph, Crew 60, Passengers 60, Cargo 150 tons, AC 15, 400 hit points, Damage Threshold 15.

It has blindsight 60 ft. and can make a Slam attack against other vessels or creatures inside the Undead Ship.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 34 (5d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Secrets

Gullog's Humanity

The greatest secret of the kemets lies in Gullog's origin. He was a human who lived in Darkall when Baraelmer's forces attacked a village that refused to pay their tributes. He fought bravely, but the village fell. Baraelmer ordered his forces to avoid killing the people, opting instead to kill only ten percent as tradition demanded. But a general, ignoring the order, killed random citizens to satisfy his anger. Gullog saw his mother die in front of him and fled to the mountains, where he promised to kill every single kemet.

He could not imagine that this territory belonged to Golgöggoth, who had a plan to strip all people of their emotions and defeat the Ungods. His soul was swapped with a kemet hero called Lahin, and Golgöggoth gave him an amulet that sent visions to control Gullog indirectly. Using the visions when he returned to the surface, he could almost predict the future. It didn't take long for him to be considered the savior of Darkall.

Gullog completely despises the Kemet, sending them to certain death with no remorse to achieve any victory. He failed during the Kemet Invasion but was revived by Bás, the God of Winter and Death. She granted him the power of immortality: whenever he dies, on exactly three days, he is revived at the Main Pylon on the Storm Islands during the Midnight Sun. Gullog became her champion, and she promised to revive his mother once he achieved the goal of opening the Vandanamalika.

There are many studies about how Gullog could be destroyed once and for all. The first theory says that if the Pylons were completely destroyed, the Midnight sun would not manifest, and Gullog would be dead forever. Another theory states that a descendant of Azira could wield the power of the summer elf god to neutralize the winter's connection and prevent the resurrection. But this person was not found yet, and many factions are looking for this descendant, including the Kemets.

Midnight Sun

Visible only in the regions affected by the Deep Freeze (Storm Islands and places that surround the Pylons), this sun appears for one hour every 24 hours, starting from midnight. It is a blue, icy sun that emits cold instead of warmth and affects only the regions with Deep Freeze; it cannot be seen and has no effect in other places. Some sages believe the reason is some planar phenomena, as regions with deep freeze are closer to another plane. All creatures, except the kemets, suffer these effects:

Extreme Cold. Apply the same rules, but at an accelerated rate. The Constitution save must be checked every 10 minutes.

Undead Strength. Whenever an undead rolls a damage dice, add 2 to the result of all dice rolled. Apply this bonus to cold-related damage as well.

Undead Revival. If an undead creature is created during the Midnight Sun, it gains resistance to cold damage in addition to its usual traits. If Gullog is revived, it also retains all abilities from when it was alive, but his memories are blurry.

Blue Fire. All fire from natural sources turns blue and no longer emits warmth. Reduce the result by 2 for damage each die rolled when a fire-related spell deals damage.

Kalistessenâmun's Shackles

The Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun, leader of Kepesh, was forced to serve Gullog for years because of an ancient Kemet spell. During the Kemet Invasion, his wife, Khloe, saved him by breaking the spell. However, the ancient relics that the Kemets used to bind the Pharaoh for the first time still exist. Gullog has one of them, but two others are necessary to make another attempt to subdue the Lich, and they have disappeared.

Now, both Gullog and Lich are searching for these relics, as the fate of Kepesh hinges on who finds it first.

Places of Interest

Night Mansions

Unlike other regions, the Kemets of Storm Islands have a singular urban concentration known as Night Mansions. In a valley surrounded by walls of ice, mists, and frost, a vast assemblage of palaces and grand mansions lies. Every architectural detail meticulously emphasizes death, adorned with skulls, bones, and numerous sharp and macabre ornaments.

The skeletons and zombies handle the hard work, allowing the citizens to devote themselves to Bás and train in combat, ice elementalism, and necromancy. Entire families, including extended relatives, commonly inhabit these mansions, attended to by undead servants.

During the Midnight Sun, many events take place throughout the city. Magical musical instruments play, undead battle in the Arena of the Undead, and numerous other festivities occur.

A law of the city dictates that no one may attack another within its boundaries. Offenders face severe punishment, typically lashing by ice whips. The cumulative slashes deal a total of 5d6 damage, and the wounded creature cannot regain hit points until finishing a long rest. When foreigners visit the city, some kemets provoke them solely to relish the spectacle of their punishment.

Cantala Ruins

Many caves in Storm Island are passages to an ancient dungeon. It is the Lost City of Cantala, filled with mazes, secret chambers, and even an underground forest sustained by a strange spell that keeps the trees alive.

Historically, the inhabitants were renowned for their knowledge of astronomy and their unique star spells. The kemets have already found some papers containing a few of their spells, but they are still studying how to use these instructions.

At every entrance to the dungeon stands an indestructible statue of a woman holding a star and the name Amarila at its base. Recently, all these statues began to shed tears for unknown reasons.

It is not easy to reach this place since it's located within the heart of the Storm Islands, but many adventurers dream of the powerful relics that can be found there.

Boneheart

This dreadnought is the largest known vessel in all Tanares. It terrorized Tanares during the Kemet Invasion but returned to Storm Island after the defeat of the kemets. Many ice elementalists and necromancers infused the warship with many spells, changing it dramatically.

Its hull is covered with nearly indestructible permafrost, and its glacial cannon can damage and freeze other vessels, reducing their speed. The vessel is powered by souls, producing haunting war drum sounds that instill fear in opposing crew members, while also emitting light as a powerful lantern.

It has many other powers not revealed yet, but some sailors reported a trail of ice that can damage ships that try to pass it.

The Captain is the skeletal undead remains of a once highly-experienced captain, improving its speed and maneuverability. Its crew includes hundreds of kemets and undead creatures, some very exotic. This ship is also affected by the Midnight Sun.

Sedura has schematics of this vessel and is planning to recruit an experienced adventurers to invade this ship and destroy it.

Shrine of Bás

Each shrine dedicated to this god is imbued with elements of death and ice, both inside and out. The exterior has some statues of kemets carrying torches of cold blue flame. An enormous pylon made of tameranium floats above the shrine, emanating intense cold energy that creates the Deep Freeze zone.

Many structures on the interior are made of pure ice, such as the altar, chalice, and even statues. Some frozen tombs with the bodies of traitors are displayed there. Typically, the shrine is attended by at least three priests of Bás, alongside some experienced warriors, and undead to secure the place.

If invaded, the shrine's defenders can manipulate the cold and unleash the traitors, reanimated as frosty undead.

The Pylon becomes exposed and can be destroyed (100 hit points, AC 15, damage threshold 15) if the central altar is ruined.

Thyra Cave

Kemet necromancers are developing an advanced technique to reanimate undead dragons. They take the bodies of these creatures to the Dark Lab to experiment and create powerful undead from their remains.

They are now trying to locate Thyra's hideout on a secret island within Storm Island territory. If they can reanimate an avatar dragon, the devastation it might bring could be catastrophic. Some agents of the Draconic Council are recruiting adventurers to find this location before the kemet does, to remove her body, in case she is really dead. Adventurers might not only discover her body but also her unimaginable treasures and dragon eggs.

Solnertha has an even more ambitious dream. She learned that the body of a dead Ungod lies in the central sea. If it could be reanimated, maybe the Kemet could annihilate all enemies using this monster.

Dark Lab

Numerous kemet warriors, necromancers, and undead guard this subterranean facility, located near Night Mansions. This is where they conduct experiments to develop new types of undead.

It has many chambers and testing fields, with cages and prisons where they confine both the created undead and subjects for experimentation. The central chamber is the reanimation atrium, where the main tests are performed. There are also pits, with giant caldrons filled with bubbling green liquid. Many incubators, bone depots, and processors for failed experiments can be found everywhere.

Kemets commonly capture creatures from various species for their experiments. After the transformation, the Kemets usually teleport the experiments to specific locations to be tested or lock them in prison. These creatures maintain their intelligence and memories for one week, after which they fall completely under kemet control. Reversion is possible in the Dark Lab, on a specific incubator. Except for specific experiments, here is the undead they become:.

Roll	Common	Elite
1	Zombie	Death Knight
2	Ghoul	Death Knight
3	Wight	Mummy Lord
4	Mummy	Mummy Lord
5	Revenant	Vampire
6	Vampire Spawn	Vampire

Solnertha, the master of necromancy

Solnertha (NE), the oldest kemet alive, studies necromancy and elven magic intensely. A devout Kemet Lord deeply rooted in tradition, her necromantic spells considerably augment the army's strength.

She is in charge of the Dark Lab, a place where the Kemets develop new and powerful forms of undead. Solnertha is searching for ancient scrolls and relics that can be used to learn how to create new and useful types of undead.

She disagrees with the god Bás' plan to freeze all Tanares, but she must follow her leader as a duty. She uses the tactics of the old way: To deploy numerous undead across various dungeons and remote locations, to make people feel unsafe, and to transfer the military efforts to protect the people. This way, the military forces will not be available for offensive actions.

Another obstinate pursuit of hers is to find bodies of powerful or monstrous creatures and bring them to the Dark Lab, so numerous experiments can be performed to create giant undead. Her most recent discovery concerns the dead body of an Ungod in Tanares, which she has made a priority to locate. Her grimoire, the Ancient Book of Necromancy, is a very desired object by many Factions and contains many forgotten spells.

Zhaeral, the High Priestess of Bás

Zhaeral (LE) was chosen from the kemet commoners for her devotion to Bás and her knowledge of the doctrines and religion. She improved her powers extensively, earning the respected title of a Kemet Lord, killing at least three other priests to achieve this position. Many devotees believe she can incorporate champions of Bás from the past to offer guidance and reveal secrets about the elves.

She knows the main goal of Bás is to dominate the Vandanamalika, but she is trying to prove her valor by secondarily conquering Tanares. By establishing shrines and pylons across the continent, she aims to turn the lands into ice, thereby accelerating Bás's will.

She even disobeys Gullog's orders, which dictate only the construction of necessary shrines, by ordering many additional ones to be built. Each shrine takes a year to become fully operational, but if they can finish all of them, the kemet influence in the continent will grow much stronger. However, some residents detected something unusual was happening in some areas and warned the authorities. At any time, the Republic, Empire, and Arcanum may take action to destroy all the known shrines, usually hiring mercenaries or adventurers to take care of them.

The most intriguing report came from a kemet who had infiltrated and shared this with his group. *"I directly asked her if she realized most of these shrines would be destroyed by the enemies. She calmly answered: Yes, I know, and this is part of the plan. Let them be occupied destroying the shrines to put the second part of the plan in motion."*

Teraphas, the tactical specialist

Teraphas (LE), introverted and calculating, was chosen by Gullog to replace the position of Yrizard to oversee the Kemet's spycraft efforts on other Factions. Lacking experience in this role, he frequently makes mistakes, consistently shifting blame to his subordinates and fellow Kemet Lords.

He excels at crafting excuses and disguising his inadequacies, with only a few individuals realizing he is not truly up to the task. Teraphas believes he is far more competent than he is, refusing to accept suggestions for improvement.

But what Teraphas lacks as a spymaster, he compensates for as an assassin, able to enter any place and kill even great warriors by employing magic, poison, and stealth to significant effect.

He was a great demon-killing back in Darkall, and his great success in that role feeds his tremendous ego despite his recent failures, which he refuses to recognize even to himself.

Baraelmer has noticed this weakness in the Kemet command. Knowing Teraphas, with whom he fought a long time ago, he is ready to exploit his ego. Baraelmer aims to feed Teraphas' spies misleading information, expecting him to boast about his findings without proper care, thus feeding the Kemets with false intelligence. But everything must be done secretly, and if Gullog realizes this, they will start to question the integrity of their spies' findings.

Apart from espionage, Teraphas was tasked with delivering at least a dozen people for testing in the Dark Lab each week, which he successfully accomplished. Though dangerous, the Republic is considering using this to infiltrate elite adventurers into Storm Islands.

Zisenuh, the leader of the infantry

Zisenuh (CE), arguably the mightiest and strongest of the kemets, is famed for his deadly combat fury, which drives him to fight with increasing intensity as he nears his own death. Chosen by Gullog to lead the front lines, Zisenuh seeks formidable opponents worthy of testing his strength, but such encounters are rare. Furthermore, he possesses impressive regenerative abilities, enabling him to fight for prolonged periods and heal any injuries sustained.

He has little patience for assault plans or strategic maneuvers; he prefers to lead by example, being the first in the frontline to attack. During sieges, he often launches solo attacks to test a fortress's defenses and will even deliberately trigger traps to demonstrate his resilience.

When defeating an enemy army, he prefers not to kill the most valorous heroes, capturing them and offering a chance for freedom to fight against him alone. Kemet troops typically watch these duels, and as Zisenuh defeats his opponents, the army's morale gets a significant boost.

He carries with him a frozen flower that once belonged to Yrizard, the most beautiful kemet he had encountered. Even irrationally, he makes more effort to protect the flower than expected. Now, he is determined to discover who took Yrizard's life and exact revenge upon them.

Taii'Maku City States

Government: With no unified government, each Illu is its independent city-state ruled by a council of the greatest minds. Each year, the Illus sends representatives to a gathering of knowledge exchange to discuss shared goals.
Faction: The taii'makus are not officially part of any faction and were politically isolated until a decade ago. They have ties with the Allied Forces but are not members.
Population: Around 698,000. Taii'maku 86%, humans 8%, dwarves 3% and others 3%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	High
Crime and Violence	Very Low
Economic Prosperity	High
Government Corruption	Very Low
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	High
Political Stability	High

Geography

The taii'makus cities govern the Ubelian regions, stretching from Seashores in its north to the Bauron's Ridge in the south. The Ubelian Fire Pits are rocky lands with scorching lava and magma rivers covering the ground. Moving southward, the Ubelian Cauldron becomes a darkened volcanic rock formation. Further south, the landscape is an arid sand desert that ends in mountains to the east and gradually transitions to scrubland to the west. The Desert of Poppy Fields is a sight of its south, as during the annual rainy season, a mass blooming of blossoms occurs, creating a unique scene that attracts many to find rare mystical flowers.

Politics

The taii'maku lives intertwine with their cities, the Illus, powered by magic and moving across the land. Each Illu has a council comprising the greatest mathematicians, engineers, and wizards, who discuss matters until reaching a unanimous decision. They don't seek personal power, as one's prestige is useless in discussions; only what is said matters, not who speaks. This level of objectivity is never found in other species, keeping taii'maku's conversations profound and complex.

When a discussion is inconclusive, they test or solve hypotheses in contests. For example, their guards compete in sports or mock battles in arenas, determining suitability for specific tasks. Winning or losing brings no joy or resentment; they focus on objectiveness, testing reality analysis.

Recently, a few taii'maku heroes from the Kemet Invasion, M'Bollo, A'Laffia, and U'Tibam convinced the Illus to reopen to other species, pointing to the consequences of closing to the outside world. Most councils agreed and now are discussing how much knowledge to share. They are reticent to join any alliance despite having a proximity with the Allied Forces and good mutual exchanges with the Arcanum.

Economy

The city-states share their need for bauronite as their primary resource, as it powers their mystical reactors, providing energy to golems, flying vessels, and incredible inventions. They also mine and purchase various metals, as their crafts use significant amounts.

Renowned as excellent engineers, mathematicians, and crafters, they are the sole exporters of compasses, clocks, precision tools, and mechanical objects. Their glass production is also notable, with lenses, spyglasses, spectacles, and stained glasses exported continent-wide.

As highly skilled architects, they can undertake grand projects efficiently and with the best results. Several countries require expertise in identifying construction and production inefficiencies, so Taii'makus offers these services.

They never disclose their mystical engineering, which requires their Bauronite Mystical Reactors. While taii'makus know how to operate their artifacts, and many can craft inventions using the Reactor's energy, only a few know the secrets behind the Reactors, a knowledge they want away from the wrong hands.

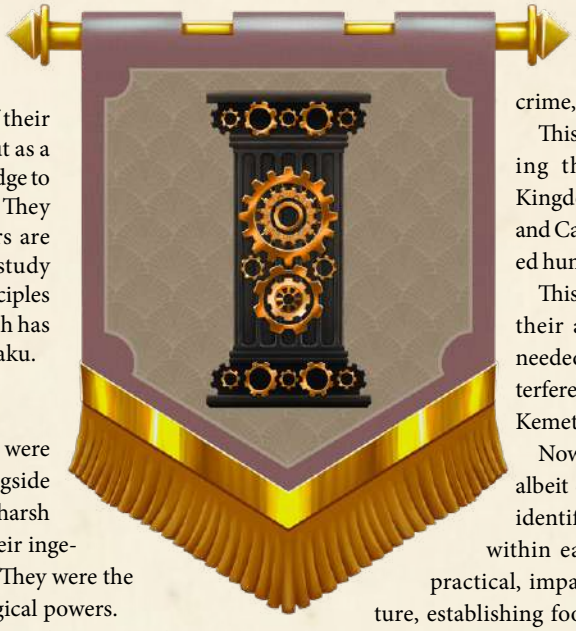
Culture and Society

Taii'maku society is a paragon of logic, mathematics, and advancement, viewing existence as a vast, complex mechanism. This shapes their lives, from views on magic to personal relationships, with ego and emotions being unimportant. Focused on education, they favor teaching and objectively correcting mistakes over empathetic understanding. Polite and tranquil, they foster amicable relations with other species despite occasional misinterpretations due to taii'maku's low emotional nature.

Their nomadic civilization uses their moving cities, powered by powerful Bauronite Mystic Reactors, to relocate. They approach magic with the same logical rigor applied to other subjects; arcane knowledge is seen as a branch of physics subjected to mathematical principles.

Their inventions are powered by their huge central bauronite Mystical Reactors, allowing mystical climate regulators, arcane aqueducts, and other fantastic improvements to living conditions. Their golems labor force relieves them of manual toil, freeing them to focus on intellectual pursuits. Transportation and communication are similarly advanced. Levitating trains transport masses while flying vessels carry small groups. Buildings are equipped with runic communication devices, allowing easy one-to-one conversations with any other.

Taii'makus clerics lack faith and instead focus on scholarship, their temples being libraries. While they possess divine spellcasters, their abilities stem from learning the wisdom of their deity, whom they view not as divine but as a great extraplanar being with the knowledge to be understood rather than worshiped. They believe that sacred rituals and prayers are mere superstitions and that diligent study and adherence to the extraplanar's principles allow for receiving power. This approach has proven effective, at least for the taii'maku.



History

During the Godly Age, the taii'makus were one of the first Tanarean species, alongside humans and orcs. They thrived in the harsh southern lands of Tanares thanks to their ingenuity, strong bodies, and sharp minds. They were the first to find bauronite and learn its magical powers.

Loving learning and exploring, they were always nomadic. Over time, they even invented magical devices to travel across deserts easily. Their most outstanding achievement was creating the first Bauronite Mystical Reactor, which allowed for moving cities, the Illus, a technology still closely guarded.

In the early days, they faced barbarian tribe attacks for resources, but their moving cities and golems allowed safe traveling. Learning from different places and helping other species to develop made them enemies of the Ungods, who found it hard to corrupt taii'makus, who are logical and do not often fall for sinful or egoistic actions.

During the Malrokian Age, they supported King Malrok, agreeing with his ideas on peace and community. After Malrok died, followers of the Ungods manipulated the next generations, who began to misuse taii'maku knowledge for military purposes, contributing to the first Malrokian Curse cataclysm.

Most Illus survived, as they could move to flee, but the taii'makus saw the result of sharing the knowledge, deciding to isolate themselves. At the same time, they had a new enemy, the kikokus. These large insect-like creatures came from the Penumbral Plane and could take over machines and golems, posing a significant threat.

Over the centuries, the taii'makus faced many challenges: attacks from the kikokus, oppression by an empire, and threats from the Cult of Shadow Wing. They passed centuries keeping to themselves to avoid their knowledge being used for war. Still, the Kemet Invasion demonstrated the risks of isolation, as Tanares was almost conquered before the taii'makus could react. They are discussing the extent of their opening to trade and negotiation with other species while considering past mistakes to prevent similar incidents.

Peace and Prosperity for All

Aware of the Ungods and the Malrokian Curse's menace, taii'makus have repeatedly warned other species that war is a result, not the origin. They always knew the cause was sins, corruption, and malice and have long established a correlation between evil deeds and the spawning of emoguns in the Penumbral Plane.

They deduced peace and societal advancement could protect against this darkness. Their strategy is to ensure no individual suffers, promoting a society where everyone can work, study, and rest, preventing misery, greed, hatred, and crime, the sources of conflict and war.

This strategy almost succeeded in thwarting the Ungods during the Malrokian Kingdom. Still, the machinations of Bellara and Catharina, who infiltrated and manipulated humanity, destroyed the paradisiac realm.

This failure led the taii'makus to question their actions, pondering whether species needed to evolve independently, without interference. This theory was changed when the Kemets nearly took Tanares.

Now, resolute in the necessity to intervene, albeit carefully, the taii'maku are seeking to identify and fix social and structural issues within each Tanarean society. They propose practical, impactful solutions—erecting infrastructure, establishing food reserves, providing efficient tools, and guiding individuals toward their innate talents. All that to deny the grounds used by the Cult of Shadow Wing to corrupt mortals and feed the Ungods.

Illus and Bauronite Mystical Reactors

Within the heart of each Illu, among its metallic spires, lies the Bauronite Mystical Reactor - the pinnacle of arcane engineering. This core consumes bauronite, a purple crystalline ore primarily found in the southern Tanares' deserts or within the Undertanares, converting its raw, unstable magical energy into usable power, extracting thousands of times more energy per pound of bauronite than other methods.

Its operation is an intricate chain reaction caused by complex geometric magic circles and powerful elemental forces. These elements enable complete and stable bauronite fission into pure energy. Concentric runic circles spiral towards the reactor's center, where the bauronite's power is harnessed. A network of conduits then distributes this energy throughout the Illu by metallic pipes encrusted with brilliant gems, allowing pure ether to flow within, feeding the connected mystical inventions. This power moves the Illu, recharges the golems, levitates trains, and recharges specific magical artifacts, such as flying vessels, arcane ovens, mystical climate regulators, and communication items.

Bauronite Mystical Reactor knowledge is closely guarded, not for selfishness but to prevent catastrophic misuse or disastrous meltdowns. Legends speak of an Illu, far beyond the southern mountains, that was destroyed, causing an explosive reactor meltdown, with the land becoming afflicted with mystical corruption, mutated living beings, and dangerous mystical diseases. Some scholars believe the Mystical Kingdom's cursed land was caused

not only by the Malrokian Curse but by the meltdown of an Illu destroyed along with Arcana.

Taii'makus Golems

Golems are essential to taii'maku society. These mechanical creatures, magically created with bauronite cores, can be built for all tasks, from cooking to cleaning, from woodcutting to blacksmithing, and from standard guards to colossal defenders. Their existence makes most hesitant to threaten the taii'makus.

Requiring the energy of a Bauronite Mystical Reactors to recharge their core, they are restricted to the Illus, and only taii'makus use them. Golems without maintenance and recharge become dangerous, prone to instability and erratic operation.

Because the kikokus can infect and control mechanisms, the taii'makus are careful to deploy dangerous golems against them, as they can be hazardous if infected. Rumors suggest that the kikoku queens are commanding all such infected golems to a specific region of caverns in the desert, where they are building an army to make a move against the Illus.

Bauronite Ore

Bauronite is a purple crystal radiating mystical energy, renowned for its potent magical properties and volatility. Though incredibly valuable, it is dangerous to handle, and a significant impact cause it to explode. It is primarily used to craft magic items and serve as an energy for magical artillery.

Instability. If bauronite ore is hit with significant force, such as a weapon attack or being thrown, it explodes in a 20-foot radius blast, dealing 1d8 force damage per pound of bauronite (up to 10d8), consuming the ore. A successful Dexterity saving throw against a DC 15 reduces this damage by half.

Value. Bauronite is extremely valuable, worth between 600 and 800 gp per pound.

Magic Item Crafting. Each pound of bauronite is worth 500 gp of material component when crafting magic items. It's notable for helping create almost any magic item as a universal component. A skilled crafter can extract Pure mystical energy from it to produce any item they know how to craft.

Mining Methods. Because of its instability, mining bauronite is a challenging task. Three methods are the most commonly used:

- **Alchemical Mining:** Special mystical acids are used to dissolve surrounding rock, leaving bauronite intact. This process requires careful handling to prevent detonation, and the special acids required are expensive to produce.
- **Antimagical Mining:** While inside an antimagic field, bauronite's explosive properties are neutralized, allowing safe mining. This method requires spellcasters capable of casting and maintaining the Antimagic Field, which is hard to have.
- **Mystical Resonance Sifting:** The most ancient and less expensive method, but much more dangerous. Producing vibrations explicitly tuned to the bauronite node against the cavern walls, the bauronite can be stabilized, making mining possible. But the mining tools must strike in tandem with them, and any mistake can trigger an explosion, culminating in a cave-in

Transporting. Moving bauronite must be done carefully, and commerce is done with the ores placed inside large barrels with cushioning to avoid impacts, making trading much more cumbersome than other ores.

Threats and Conflicts

Kikokus

These insectoid hordes are the most direct enemies of the taii'makus. Like a plague, they threaten their creations and impede their Illus movement. Their queens arrive from the fifth layer of the Penumbral Plane and can spawn hordes of creatures quickly if well-fed. This forces the taii'makus to send their best guards and wizards on expeditions, leaving their golems and other mechanical creations behind. All past attempts to reason with the kikoku queens have failed, as they either refuse to communicate or deceive and backstab, forcing the taii'maku to take up arms instead of going for their typical pacifist solutions.

Illus offers excellent rewards to lure adventurers from foreign lands to help deal with the kikoku nests, help defend taii'maku mining operations, or protect human villages threatened by them. They aim to save lives and prevent the insectoid hordes from reproducing further.

The Extremists Within

The Aetheric Synthesis Guild (ASG) is led by T'ssir, a taii'maku visionary and genius who believes the taii'maku intellects must shape Tanares to combat the Ungods. ASG is seen as a beacon of development and altruism, spearheading the taii'maku efforts to benefit other societies.

ASG's headquarters are towering glass and stone obelisks, monuments to their advanced engineering. However, their secret underbellies are said to hide T'ssir's true vision: laboratories experimenting with integrating living creatures with golemic enhancements, fusing arcane, mechanic, and biological.

Vastly geopolitically influential due to wealth from manipulating bauronite prices and their facilities in each nation, they became Tanares' most successful infrastructure builders. Despite accusations of shady practices by competitors, ASG's actions are calculated, leaving behind no trail of misdeeds and keeping a pristine reputation.

Their goal is improving the lives of what their leaders secretly see as lesser-minded species. For T'ssir, taii'makus only can guide Tanares against the Ungods. Still, he sees their pacifism as complacent, with only a significant catastrophe able to force the taii'makus to action.

He is using ASG to influence nations, covertly pushing regions towards turmoil, and later offering aid, all in a complex strategy to gain power and create a perfect cataclysm to force taii'makus to reconsider their values and work pragmatically to defeat the Ungods.

To the world, ASG is a paragon of philanthropy, providing taii'maku knowledge to those in need. Yet, within, T'ssir ethos prevails — the ends justify the means. Each project, while beneficial, serves T'ssir's vision of doing the necessary to defeat the Ungods.

The Long Reach of the Eldritch Hand

The Eldritch Hand are secretive spellcasters hailing from the Magocracy. Seekers of rare magical knowledge they have long been interested in the taii'makus, especially the Bauronite Mystical Reactors. Hand servants, often disguised as travelers, merchants,

or adventurers, infiltrate the Illus to steal knowledge. Though they have yet to succeed in getting great secrets, they had some success with secondary ones.

Vaeraunt, currently focused on major plans within the Magocracy, has assigned a few powerful wizards to oversee operations in taii'maku lands, who frequently employ mercenaries and less scrupulous adventurers to assist their endeavors.

The taii'makus must continuously strengthen their security measures to avoid their secrets leaking, and trusted adventurers are sometimes asked to help retrieve stolen items and scrolls or to fortify their defenses during vulnerable situations.

Secrets

She is a Good Giant Golem

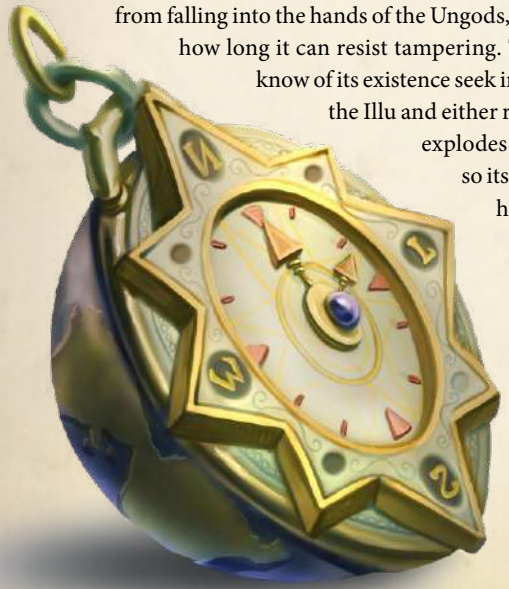
During the Kemet Invasion, the taii'maku initially avoided direct involvement. However, it became inevitable when a titanic undead creature attacked Illu Maro'Si. To protect it, U'Tibam, one of the most notable Taii'maku geniuses, unveiled his most incredible creation - Sha'Numi, a colossal Golem who fought the undead, emerging victorious and saving the Illu.

After the war, U'Tibam hid Sha'Numi to make repairs, but while he was on a journey to the Republic, someone found his hidden lab and managed to steal her three bauronite cores. Without them, Sha'Numi is inoperant. These cores are highly sophisticated and unique, and U'Tibam needs to retrieve them as reconstructing could take years. Sha'Numi was relocated to the southern mountains; however, the taii'makus fear their enemies will try to destroy her while inoperant. They are seeking protection for the legendary construct that saved Maro'Si.

Penumbral Illu

A unique Illu, a secret recent creation, was designed to explore the dangerous Penumbral Plane, rescue innocents, and fight against sources of corruption. However, all communication with this Illu was recently lost, and no one knows why. Some believe the Illu was captured and held in the Penumbral Plane, while others believe it has fallen to corruption and will now be used by the Cult of Shadow Wing to attack Tanares.

The Illu had safety measures to prevent its Mystical Reactor from falling into the hands of the Ungods, but they are still unsure how long it can resist tampering. The few taii'makus that know of its existence seek individuals to help locate the Illu and either rescue it or ensure that it explodes in the Penumbral Plane so its core doesn't fall into the hands of the Ungods.



Taii'Maku Philosophical Schools

Though taii'makus typically present a unified front in their beliefs, they engage in intricate scientific and philosophical debates. However, their current polarization is unprecedented. The Kemet Invasion, the factions' cold war, the increase in the Cult of Shadow Wing actions, and the contentious ideas of T'ssir have deepened the division in three lines of thinking.

Ethereal Pragmatics. Led by T'ssir, they uphold that saving reality from the Ungods justifies any means necessary. Rooted in logic and mathematical precision, they see righteousness as measured by the positive effects produced across the fabric of reality. They advocate forceful societal progression, as the well-being of countless future individuals outweighs the discomfort of the present few.

- The sacrifice of a few is morally justified to save many.
- Utilize mathematics to calculate outcomes, guiding actions against the Ungods.
- Advocate for accelerated innovation, deploying magic and engineering to combat the Ungods.

Quests: Aethereals often seek adventurers and mercenaries for covert operations to dismantle rival groups or individuals who stand in the way of progress. These tasks may involve espionage, sabotage, or even assassination, all rationalized by the greater good.

- T'ssir's followers are seeking adventurers to help plant an arcane explosive device in a village of desert barbarians contaminated with a lethal plague spread by the Cult of Shadow Wing. The epidemic risks spreading, bringing suffering, and the demise of thousands in the Theocracy deserts.

Ethical Harmonists. The taii'maku oldest philosophical tradition regards morality as an intrinsic part of the cosmic calculus that governs existence. They contend that morality is not found in the results of actions but in the universal constants of right and wrong. To them, one shall seek harmony in truth and balance in oneself. They see the intentions and laws as defining aspects of righteousness, not the actions' consequences. They see T'ssir's theory of improving the species with magic and engineering as dangerously against harmony and cosmic balance.

- Reject strategies that compromise morality, even against existential threats.
- Emphasize the importance of intentions and moral duty over a supposed greater good.
- Argue that magic and engineering must be practiced ethically and never infringe on individual rights or cosmic laws.

Quests: The Harmonists often seek help from adventurings to curb the misuse of magic, research abuses, and stop those who endanger peace. These journeys can involve investigating researchers or intercepting morally dubious expeditions. Their greatest adversaries are often corrupt wizards inside the Magocracy, evil Kepesh spellcasters, or members of the Eldritch Hand, who are often willing to dirty their hands for power.

- A Harmonis got information about a wizards' cabal within the Magocracy conducting experiments enslaving intelligent extraplanar creatures to power arcane constructs. They seek help to gather evidence, dismantle the constructs, and liberate the extraplanars while ensuring no innocence is harmed.

Essential Existentialists. An emergent philosophical school that interprets the Ungods' menace as self-feeding. They defend that the fixation on external threats diverts individuals from finding personal significance, leading to suffering and sins, thus empowering the Ungods. Embracing freedom and responsibility inherent in their logical nature, they advocate for each individual to forge meaning in their lives through intentional, responsible action instead of focusing on fears imposed by society. They see it as impossible to win against the Ungods, who feed on fear and existential suffering while holding fear and anxiety about them.

- View the fear of the Ungods as the cause for much of the suffering that feeds them.
- Encourage individuals to act in ways that are true to their essence, even in the face of existential threats.
- Believe that progress in magic and engineering should not be dictated solely by utility or morality but by personal significance.

Quests: They often seek adventurers to help liberate people under oppressive control, especially those exploiting the fear of the Ungods to justify their ruling. Their greatest adversary is the Empire, which they are vehemently against. They are often aiding the Empire's rebels and trying to dismantle structures that limit personal freedoms under the guise of protection.

- An Essential Existentialist was imprisoned in the Central Empire for preaching against the Emperor's oppressive use of Ungods' threats to justify his reign. The Existentialists are hiring adventurers to help orchestrate a daring prison break, allowing the philosopher to escape and continue spreading his message.

Places of Interest

Ubellian Fire Pits

One of Tanares' most treacherous lands, it is a scorching realm of fiery pits and lava rivers and home to several red dragons, including the mighty Avatar Dragon Azymor. The region hosts a noteworthy Dragon Tower, defended by many young dragonborns and dragonblades, as its harsh and isolated environment creates an ideal setting for training recruits.

Taii'makus have a good relationship with the tower, and Azymor does not interfere with their traveling. However, other foreigners are not as well received unless they have good standards with the Draconic Council.

The Shadow Lords, a sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing, have constantly attacked dragons living here, capturing living individuals and eggs to corrupt them into maddened penumbral dragons. A few penumbral dragons and their servants have taken over some caverns on the western side of the Fire Pits, becoming a threat in the region. Unknown to anyone, the one behind this strategy is Lypoec, who is trying to lure Azymor into an open battle so he can try to take down the Red Avatar Dragon. The Draconic Tower is seeking support from adventurers but is wary of accepting anyone, as the cult is always trying to infiltrate their ranks.

Awo Irin Illu

This city is known for innovation and has striking silver spires that shine in the sun. Its architecture combines geometric precision with functional elegance. The council here focuses on actionable plans rather than theories. Its people are practical, inclined toward engineering rather than philosophy, and favor combat training over sports and goods-producing and guard-duty golems rather than those that provide daily life amenities.

Awo Irin is the most active city in reaching out to other species. They send emissaries carrying the city's inventions rather than waiting for others to seek them. They actively pursue to shape the world according to their vision of the greater good.

Most people in Awo Irin adhere to a philosophy of ethereal pragmatism, preferring to see results over intangible morals. T'ssir, who was born here, is part of the council and is currently discussing his view on blending individuals with magic and machines. Many still need to be convinced about the risks and advantages of this approach. The first tower of the Aetheric Synthesis Guild is located here, and it is from there that T'ssir exerts his influence over Tanares.

Recently, several researchers and council members have died in what appear to be natural deaths, but the timing of these deaths is strange. Some believe these are coincidences, while others accuse the Cult of Shadow Wing, the Third Eye, or the Eldritch Hand. A few even point fingers at T'ssir, causing a great commotion, as such accusations are uncommon among taii'makus.

G'bagede Illu

G'bagede is a city known as the City of Golems. It is famous for the high numbers of golems patrolling the streets, which are produced to safeguard the city and care for all its citizens' daily needs. Most taii'makus here spend their days in contemplation and ethical debates, most adhering to ethical harmonism, while the golems care for their every need. The only people who work in G'bagede are teachers who educate the young and the golem researchers who develop more advanced and unique creations, aiming to have a specific golem to fill each function society needs.

The Illu's high external walls and hexagonal stone structures proudly demonstrate its culture of resilience and righteousness. Furthermore, due to their golem production, it is one of the most dedicated mining Illus, always searching for metals, especially bauronite and rare ores, with numerous golems devoted to this task.

G'bagede is home to the Righteous Sun Celestianist Temple of Tamera, which preaches Tamera as a cosmic being who exemplifies virtuous conduct. It is also known to produce most of the taii'maku clerics and paladins. M'Bollo, the Wharfugee Hero, is the current bishop of this temple and a member of the council that runs the Illu.

However, shipments of rare ores from Stravian have recently been targeted by pirates in the Central Seas, disrupting the flow of mithral and tameranium necessary for researching golem

improvements. The city seeks help from those who can venture into the Seashores and find more. M'Bollo believes there is more behind the situation than just pirates.

Ilaorun Illu

Renowned for its beautiful open gardens, the city features buildings with unique architecture, reflecting its designer's perspective and forming a patchwork of styles. Its streets, lined with statues, complement the walls with beautiful paintings and frescoes. These artworks are not expressions of emotions but rather profound rational critiques and complex expressions of ideas made into art objects.

The city council is composed of inventors, artists, and philosophers. While always open to new ideas, they are critical of any attempts to curb freedoms, create norms, or stifle innovation. However, they view personal responsibility as critical, with individuals needing to solve any damage caused by their actions.

The ethos of Ilaorun Illu is to explore talents and articulate one's unique viewpoints, spurring groundbreaking inventions, even at the cost of efficiency. For them, creativity and new connections of ideas are more valuable than material production. Most of its citizens are adepts of essential existentialism and often gather in public places to discuss their latest works and perspectives. They delve into magic and engineering to satisfy their preferences, display unique ideas, solve their personal problems, and not think about social use. The city's workshops are filled with incredible inventions, and while some argue many are niche or inefficient, Ilaorun has also produced highly significant innovations.

Ilaorun Illu is also a sanctuary for refugees fleeing tyranny, particularly scholars and artists. Here, they can contribute their thinking to the taii'maku discussions and are treated as equals. Often, revolutionaries and fugitive scholars seek the help of adventurers or mercenaries to scout them to Ilaorun and help them get accepted into it by the taii'makus.

Currently, the council is divided in their discussion about T'ssir's ideas. Some argue for freedom of research, as he is testing his theories on himself and taking responsibility. In contrast, others say his experiments turn one away from their essence and risk creating a fear of obsolescence in all those who do not accept it, and will ultimately force everyone to accept being transformed. Some counselors are secretly funding adventuring groups to investigate T'ssir and his guild to ensure they divulge all the risks.

Shield, the Steel Golem

In the secret lab of the Aetheric Synthesis Guild, wizards aimed to create conscious, free-willed golems, advancing their knowledge to merge their own brains with mechanical parts. Hundreds of golems were made and destroyed. One, Unit P-731, initially a failure prepared for dismantlement, was indeed a triumph. His bauronite core, recycled from numerous preceding golems, had accrued a complex amalgamation of memories, including those of others who attempted to escape and failed.

With the accumulated knowledge, P-731 managed to escape, renaming himself as Shield. He now aims to free all constructs, and resents all organic beings for their treatment of "his kin," believing his existence is superior, he wants constructs to rule Tanares. He aims to gather an army of free golems and either build a Mystical Bauronite Reactor or capture one from the Taii'Makus.

Shield, implanted with knowledge of mystical engineering from ASG's experiments, became a talented inventor and strategist, justifying his often ruthless methods as necessary to liberate constructs.

Unlike others, Shield empathizes with constructs, treating them as conscious. He can seemingly grant taii'maku constructs free will, sparking discussions about whether Shield is merely creating an illusion of intelligence through complex instructions or genuinely bestowing a degree of free will upon constructs. His method requires direct contact with the construct's bauronite core, and it to be willing, bound, or deactivated for the procedure that takes a few minutes.

Many Illus perceived him as a threat, prompting them to commission adventurers to investigate, negotiate, or halt his plans. He mobilizes golems in Bauron's Ridge, attacking Illus and ambushing Taii'Makus.

Rumors abound regarding the fate of golems who attained a semblance of autonomy under Shield's influence. While some were said to have returned to benevolent masters, others reportedly sought vengeance against former oppressors, and a few were believed to have embraced their newfound freedom, embarking on personal quests. The veracity of these tales, remarkably how these autonomous golems managed to sustain and recharge their bauronite cores, remained a mystery.

A'Laafia, The one In Equilibrium

A'Laafia (LG), known as the Sage of G'bagede, is a serene wizard who, in her youth, was chosen for a student exchange and stayed a few years in Reginheraht Magical Tower. Her experience with humans was eye-opening, as they vastly differed from her taii'maku peers. She learned much about the flaws and weaknesses of character in others and herself.

Returning to G'bagede, A'Laafia immersed herself in studies for self-improvement and, later, in golemcraft. Her eyes to find flaws allowed her to improve their golem's precision, stabilize their cores to reduce recharge time, and make them less expensive to craft. Today, she is a leading expert in golem mass production.

Two decades ago, she was among the few taii'makus who directly aided in stopping the Kemet Invasion, furthering her perspectives on other species' thinking. After returning, she became an important exponent of ethical harmony principles, known for compiling the knowledge of generations of genius philosophers to refute existentialists and pragmatics. She enjoys having long discussions filled with thought experiments as she is more of a theorist than an empirical researcher.

Although A'Laafia became famous, she strives for collective good over personal glory. During council deliberations, she advocates for sharing knowledge with the wisdom of restraint, considering the energy of the mystical reactors not just power but a responsibility.

Her long experience with humans made her acutely aware of misdeed signs. She is suspicious of T'ssir and is trying to build a web of informants, spies, and righteous adventurers to help curb actions from the Cult of Shadow Wing and Eldritch Hand while investigating the activities of the pragmatics and the ASG.

Ahr'Arthra, The Desert Broodmother

She is the oldest kikoku queen (CE) of Tanares, having arrived from the Penumbral Plane during the first kikoku invasion. Still, unlike the other Queens, she is wiser and keeps herself hidden, constantly gathering more knowledge about Tanares.

The Broodmother has built an extensive hideout in the south mountains, keeping a large collection of unique constructs that she can dominate and use to perform various tasks. She always demands her offspring to bring in more varied constructs for her collection, which she treats with great care. One of her most prized ones is a unique model that was enchanted to appear indistinguishable from a living elven woman. The Broodmother often uses this construct to walk incognito in the city of mortals and advance her plans.

The kikoku power of psionically overtaking a construct is so strong that even constructs with depleted bauronite cores can work normally under their control. This makes the ever-increasing army of the Broodmother a terrible danger to the taii'makus. Its patient nature and cunning make her a much more dangerous enemy than any other kikoku. Many have tried to find or eliminate her, but she remains elusive. On the other hand, she sometimes uses her mortal disguise to manipulate adventurers, barbarian tribes, and other organizations to strike at the taii'makus who seek to find her, making her one of the greatest adversaries of the City States.

U'Tibam, the Inventor

U'Tibam (CG) is known as the greatest mind of Tanares for his outstanding inventions, such as Sha'Numi, the colossal golem who fought during the Kemet Invasion. Despite his advanced age, U'Tibam keeps an explorer's spirit and is always learning. He has a unique sense of humor, uncommon to taii'makus, which developed after years spent with other species. However, his exaggerated jokes sometimes fall flat, prompting him to make fun of himself.

U'Tibam has a knack for always having the perfect gadget for the situation and is constantly working on multiple projects. Although he travels often, his primary laboratory is in Ilaorun Illu, where he is a counselor. While many young taii'makus dream of becoming his apprentices, he is reluctant to take any, afraid they could become a target for his enemies, such as the Cult of Shadow Wing and the Kemets.

With a deep friendship with some Allied Force members who fought alongside him during the Kemet Invasion, he is always willing to lend a hand to adventurers with good intentions, especially if recommended by his old allies.

Currently, he is trying to build a colossal ship golem to face the Kemet's fleet and protect the coast. The golem could save countless lives of sailors and villagers of coastal cities, often attacked by Gullog undead. He is working with M'Bollo to make it pump jets of holy water, but the project still has flaws. U'Tibam needs more information on the Kemet undead and ships to improve his designs. He seeks adventurers to infiltrate the Kemet fleet with his instruments and acquire necessary data.

T'ssir, the Visionary

T'ssir (NE) is the only Tanarean mind rivaling U'Tibam. His cunning and few moral restraints made him the most influential taii'maku of Tanares. A survivor of a Cult of Shadow Wing's attack, T'ssir dedicated his life to studying the Ungods. After decades of research, he found that Tanares' only chance was true pragmatism, stripped of all distractions and focused solely on their defeat. He began experimenting with biological enhancements, combining magic and machinery to improve his body and mind. As a result, he acquired the ability to calculate outcomes with the precision akin to divination magic, which he utilizes to create intricate plans and manipulate geopolitics, commerce, and people.

He believes the taii'makus must harness their intellect and merge with magic and machinery, evolving as a species to defeat the Ungods.

In his quest, T'ssir has orchestrated roused one of the continent's most influential international guilds—the ASG. Under the guise of philanthropy, he maneuvers this entity to further his ultimate goal: force the taii'makus to leave complacency and take action.

T'ssir is genuinely committed to the greater good of Tanares, believing it must be achieved at any cost. He is willing, for example, to knowingly send agents to a deadly trap if this furthers his plans.

He often constructs elaborate schemes with multiple layers designed to outmaneuver adversaries. T'ssir aims to shift the taii'maku from their peaceful doctrines to a proactive stance against the Ungods. His utilitarian ethos and decisive leadership had made many taii'makus unaware of his vision's darker aspects.

He constantly searches for valuable individuals to manipulate and potential allies to exploit. He often uses naive, righteous adventurers, leveraging ASG's philanthropic facade to direct them against his enemies or advance
his complex schemes.

Theocracy of Kepesh

Government: Governed by the religion dedicated to Ba-ka, whose main representative is the Pharaoh Lich Kalistessenâmun.
Faction: Allied with the arcanists of the Arcanum, they believe that only through magic will they reach fulfillment and salvation.
Population: Around 695,000. Humans 81%, cirrus 6%, taii'maku 6%, elves 5% and others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Normal
Crime and Violence	Normal
Economic Prosperity	Low
Government Corruption	Low
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	High
Political Stability	Very High

Geography

Most of its territory is covered by deserts, mountains, and rocky regions, characterized by a hot and arid climate for most of the year, even with the embrace of the two seas. In its northernmost part, the weather is more temperate, where it borders the Republic of Freelands and a portion of its northeastern coastline meets the Seashores. To the east, territorial disputes arise with the taii'maku City States, while to the west, they stretch to the rocky coast of the Storm Sea. To the south, its reach extends to the desolated lands and towering peaks of Bauron's Deture, serving as an extreme natural barrier.

Politics

Guided by their Pharaoh, Lich Kalistessenâmun, a new group of Ba-Ka followers united to restore their god's glory by reviving the ancient Kepesh culture and re-establishing its caste system.

The hierarchy is rigid, yet those who show magical aptitude and a commitment to scholarly pursuits can ascend as wizards or clerics, which elevates their entire family's status. There is no prejudice against a spellcaster born in other Castes, with only the level of magic they can achieve defining their ranking.

The Kepesh actively convert outsiders to increase Ba-Ka's followers and disseminate magical knowledge, even among non-believers, believing it amplifies their deity's strength and reach among mortals.

To fulfill their vision, the Pharaoh established the Arcanum Faction, a spellcaster coalition, to protect against the Empire's oppression and the Republic's shortsighted righteousness. Their grand objective is to shatter the boundaries of magic through the divine might of a Vandanamalika.

Economy

Despite the vast expanses of land, the territories of the Kepesh mainly consist of deserts and scrublands. They have had to work diligently to transform these areas into lands that could sustain their population, relying on irrigation and magic to supply water. However, their ancestral knowledge of desert spices has allowed them to flourish in producing and exporting these valuable seasonings. In contrast, they import succulent fruits and legumes that grow better in milder climates.

Although food production is inefficient in their lands, bauronite, gold, iron, and some gemstones are plentiful in their soil. Mining has thus become one of the primary means of generating wealth. Their artisans, using ancient Kepesh jewel-crafting techniques, create exquisite pieces with gold and gemstones. These pieces are often utilized by their wizards, priests, and warriors or sold at high prices throughout Tanares.

The Kepesh have also mastered the art of breeding horses and camels. The breeds raised here are renowned across Tanares for their stamina on long journeys. Additionally, fishing is practiced along the coast. However, the presence of Kemets poses significant risks, and the catch is primarily consumed locally.

Culture and Society

The Kepesh, once thought extinct, has resurged as the Lich Pharaoh Kalistessenâmun rebuilds his society from his memories, recovered documents, and the wisdom of other surviving Kepesh undead. He gathered new faithful and taught the Kepesh language and its lost customs, culture, and techniques. They are reconstructing their mythical past and seeking knowledge about it while building grand temples and huge pyramids embellished with gold and colossal statues to show their society's recovery and Ba-Ka's power.

Kalistessenâmun welcomed all seeking conversion, barbarians, the impoverished, criminals, and refugees. Beginning as the continent was healing from the Kemet Invasion, the Lich found an excellent opportunity to amass followers. Numerous foreigners took the chance to start anew within a faith that proffered salvation as an eternal soul.

The Kepesh holds unique notions of death and the afterlife. They preach that upon death, if one has fulfilled obligations to Ba-Ka, their spirit would become an Akhu, a spirit in the Sacred city inside the Ethereal Plane, with its memories and identity eternized. Failure in serving Ba-Ka instead leads the soul to the cycle of reincarnation, presided over by Tamera and Bauron, making the soul lose all memories and become a new individual, killing who you were.

They practice elaborate funeral rites that praise the deceased deeds for Ba-Ka, attempting to convince the deity to allow him to become an Akhu. Mummification is also a common practice, as they believe the spirit may return to the body if Ba-Ka needs it.

Owing to their belief that other gods are the cause of souls losing memories, they largely renounce other religions. Their aversion is so intense that foreigners manifesting alternate beliefs within their dominions risk being lynched by the citizenry or targeted by extremists. While most clerics and sensible members of the Kepesh society will respect different religions and try to convert them, accepting refusal, they will not tolerate anyone speaking ill of Ba-Ka in their lands, which is a crime punished by death.

History

The story of the Kepesh civilization is a tragic one. Their long conflict with the Kemets in the past led to their extinction, as the Kemets seized their knowledge, leaving only a handful of undead and hidden, slumbering individuals as survivors. Among them was the powerful Lich Kalistessenâmun, whom the Kemet necromancers imprisoned and later used as a weapon against Tanares during their invasion. However, the Heroes of Wharfugee liberated him, creating an unlikely alliance to repel the Kemets.

Although the Kemets were defeated, Kalistessenâmun yearned for vengeance. He aimed to resurrect his rule and become Pharaoh of the Kepesh again, amassing power to hunt the Kemets as they had his people. He found a promising opportunity in Ubel, a region of little historical significance. The Ironhand's military presence was the only notable power there, which focused on preventing barbarian raids, while the taii'maku illus searched for bauronite while fending barbarian assaults.

Kalistessenâmun viewed the dunes of Ubel as the ideal location to rebuild his kingdom, reminiscent of his ancient homeland. As the revolutionary sentiments surged against the Empire, the Lich masterminded monstrous attacks on eastern Ubel towns. He then emerged as their savior, securing the people's trust. Supporting the revolution against the Empire, he established a new faith, offering spiritual salvation and the prospect of eternal existence, thereby converting many.

The skeptical taii'makus withdrew westward, cautioning the Lich against pursuit. Meanwhile, Kalistessenâmun proclaimed the establishment of a Theocracy with himself as Pharaoh. His past alliance with the Heroes of Wharfugee against Gullog led to a cautious acknowledgment of his territory by the Republic. The Magocracy, fascinated by the focus on magic, supported the fledgling state.

With close allies like Khloet, his mortal-era wife, and Paru-Haka, his devoted priest, both true Kepeshians who were reawakened during the Kemet Invasion, the Lich began to gather followers and establish his realm. He enticed the impoverished to his city with promises of a new life opportunity. News of this utopia spread, attracting many lower-class Tanareans to the southern deserts to embrace the Kepesh culture. These new adherents, imbued with a sense of purpose, became zealous and wholly devoted to their Pharaoh and new deity.

Hesit-Ka, the Soul Salvation

The ancient conflict between the Gods and the Ungods has long shaped the destiny of Tanares. Since the Godly Age, the corruption wrought by the Ungods has threatened the souls of the people, as any individual burdened with heavy sins or negative emotions is doomed to fall to the Penumbral Plane after death, where their soul will become a corrupted Emogun serving the Ungods. In contrast, the gods wage a relentless battle to destroy the Emoguns and free the souls into the Soul Flux cycle to prevent the spread of corruption.

Yet, ages ago, amidst this eternal conflict, some individuals received hope when Ba-Ka offered salvation from the cycle of souls to those who followed his teachings. These individuals formed a new religion as the first Kepeshes. Those who devoted their lives to him were transformed by Ba-Ka into Akhus, his Favored Souls, to reside in his sacred city within the Ethereal Plane.

These Akhus, liberated from the cycle of reincarnation of the Soul Flux, became eternal spirits untouched by corruption,

retaining all the knowledge and power accrued in their lifetimes. While this doctrine nearly vanished with the Kemets' pursuit of the Kepesh people, it has now been rekindled by the new Theocracy, offering an opportunity to those who seek to preserve their hard-earned power and knowledge against the ravages of time. Spellcasters, in particular, find this prospect most compelling, drawn by the promise of an eternal existence where their pursuit of power and knowledge can continue unabated.

Ba-Akhu, The Ethereal Connection

A remarkable trait practiced by the Kepesh people is their constant connection to spirits and the ethereal spirit world. While the Akhu manifest freely in the Material Plane, Ba-Ka's followers have learned to perform various types of magical rituals, bridging the physical and spiritual worlds. This not only grants them the ability to communicate with disembodied spirits but also enables the incarnated to cross physical barriers and experience situations in the City of Eternity. There, they make contact with the mightiest Akhus, receiving information, knowledge, missions, and even certain granted powers. Hence, the Kepesh are known never to be alone, as spirits can always accompany them, whether to watch their steps or protect them from superior adversaries. In ancient tales passed down among the Kepesh, it is said that in the past entire cities were transported to the ethereal realm to shield them from the Malrokian Curse. Something truly awe-inspiring, even for the most powerful spellcasters.

Renkhet-Netjer, the Immortalization

The most esteemed figures among the Kepesh adorn themselves with bands that are far more than simple ornaments. These enchanted bands are integral to a powerful ritual, bestowing upon the wearer a vital mission from which they must not perish until it is fulfilled. Thus, the magical bands protect the individual from the ravages of time, and if Ba-Ka wills it, they can even crumble to dust to resurrect the wearer. Remarkably, these bands also enable the wearer to enter a state of torpor, hindering the need for water, food, or air, making them appear lifeless. Consequently, they can be entombed for decades to be revived under specific conditions, typically outlined on their sarcophagus or through symbols in their possession.

Threats and Conflicts

Savage Master and the Barbarian Tribes

The savagery of the barbaric tribes in the region has always been a constant threat, menacing any trace of development in the area. Even during the Imperial era, they were rarely subdued. While many of them have embraced Kepesh culture and converted to Ba-Ka, there are still tribes that persist in their ancient ways, preserving their traditions. They have been fighting each other since ancient times, many believing in the myth of the Savage Master, a chosen one, a warrior like no other, destined to unite the tribes by force and take the entire south as an unstoppable horde. Recently, a colossal barbarian, arriving from the Great Nothing desert, has conquered a few tribes; some believe he might be the one, while others say that he is just one more that will soon fall in his quest to unify all the tribes.

Kemets and the Ancient Rivalry

The Kemets and the Kepesh people are sworn enemies. The Kemets are responsible for destroying the ancestral kingdom of the Kepesh people, usurping their culture, and cursing Kalistessenâmun. The Lich Pharaoh holds a deep grudge against the Kemets, and his true goal is their destruction, even above the well-being of his realm or the will of Ba-Ka. The Kemets often attack the Kepeshes on the west coast, while the Lich gathers forces, ships, and magic to prepare an assault on the Storm Islands. The Kemets are aware of the Kepesh threat and often make incursions to weaken their efforts before they become powerful enough to pose a threat.

Shemushemetep, the Radicals

Despite the Kepesh having an alliance with the Arcanum and maintaining diplomatic relations with other factions, they are closely monitored, even by their allies, due to fear of a nation governed by a Lich. Kalistessenâmun is striving to overcome this obstacle, but the existence of the Shemushemetep complicates his diplomacy. These extremists believe that faithfuls of other deities must perish, as they serve the gods who enslave souls. Covertly commanded by the Lady Vampire Se-Nâmum, they consider themselves the concealed blade of their faith, enacting what they believe to be the will of Ba-Ka, while the

Pharaoh is obliged to present a facade of diplomacy. Although Kalistessenâmun publicly condemns their actions as criminal, the Shemushemetep see it as their sacred obligation to eradicate the followers of other gods. They operate both within Kepesh territory, exterminating those they judge disloyal to Ba-Ka, and abroad, where they target prominent clerics, religious figures, and hallowed temples, particularly those of Tamera and Bauron.

Secrets

The Lost Mummies

Kalistessenâmun is aware of the fact that he has very powerful enemies. Therefore, he needs equally powerful allies who will remain loyal to him. Many such allies can be found among those who were buried in the past of Kepesh civilization and can still be awakened. Kepesh culture involves mummification of their important members so that they can fulfill significant missions in the future. This ensures their survival without attracting attention. Many of them underwent the Renkhet-Netjer ritual and being sealed in ancient sarcophagi waiting to be awakened to once more serve their Pharaoh. However, after the Malrokian Curse, many of these stone coffins were lost, and others became corrupted due to the influence of the Ungods or as punishment from Ba-Ka. These became decadent and malevolent undead, the Mummies. Many such individuals are still scattered throughout Tanares, some corrupted, and others waiting to be awakened. Kalistessenâmun frequently sends covert groups to find ruins that might contain ancient hidden Kepeshes or to recover sarcophagi that are in the hands of other factions.

The Kemet Bane

The hatred of Kalistessenâmun towards the Kemets is unrelenting. Despite his diplomatic efforts, providing military and mystical support against Kemet incursions against other factions, the Lich Pharaoh sees all winter elves as more Kemets and is acting to eliminate them even in foreign territory.

Kalistessenâmun knows that the Republic has given refuge to Baraelmer and his followers and that other realms have integrated the winter elves into their society, yet he refuses to abandon his hate. He sends Akhus, assassins, and mercenaries to kill winter elves, devising ways to eliminate them from Tanares, including plagues and curses.

While most attacks on winter elves are attributed to Kemets, who despise their kin who betrayed them to side with Tanares, many of the attacks are secretly orchestrated by Kalistessenâmun. He operates with careful planning, aware that conclusive evidence against him could damage his diplomatic efforts and provide a reason for other factions to turn against him, in addition to being a Lich. Yet, he has no intention of stopping until the last Kemet and winter elf dies.

The Unwilling Servants

While most individuals who become Akhu are honorable servants of Ba-Ka, the Kepesh priests harbor a dark secret. Some of their most potent sacrificial rituals and the blades of the most formidable Akhus can force their victims to transform into an Akhu servant of Ba-Ka, binding their souls into eternal servitude. Captured clerics and paladins from other faiths are the prime targets, as their divine powers can be converted into powerful Akhus to serve the deity of spirits and magic.

The priests categorically deny all allegations of forced transformation, maintaining that all who perish in their sacrifices are willing participants eager to join Ba-Ka in eternal existence. Nevertheless, they conceal the grim reality that not all the transformed are volunteers.

Should the Celestianist Church ever obtain irrefutable evidence of this practice, it could trigger the start of a new inquisition or even a holy war.

Places of Interest

Pakaitos, the new Capital

The Kepesh capital is a splendid city erected upon golden sands, encircled by towering sandstone walls glistening under the desert sun. The city's layout features broad, orderly streets leading to an expansive plaza, with the central pyramids and temples dedicated to Ba-Ka, containing extensive libraries, mystical laboratories, and sacred vaults. The city's design, encompassing the walls, streets, and temples, forms a vast magical circle that channels Ba-Ka's divine grace, bestowing potent mystical defenses. The outer walls resist most magic, the water remains perpetually pure, and spellcasters recover their magical energies much quicker. Despite the blistering heat and sporadic sandstorms, the mystical barrier wards off the sand and also maintains Pakaitos' relative comfort, hot for those non-accustomed but colder than the desert around.

Beneath the city lie chambers where extraplanar elementals of diverse kinds are bound by magic. Wizards and clerics harness these elementals to forge magic items and conduct grandiose rituals.

The urban structure reflects its rigid societal hierarchy, with concentric circles divided by walls, each representing a different caste. The bustling outer rings teem with markets offering exotic spices, magic items, and the unique handicrafts of Kepesh's artisans, including elaborate jewelry and distinctively fashioned ceramics.

Nonetheless, Pakaitos faces a threat from the Cult of the Shadow Wing. The resurgence of Ba-Ka worship worries the Ungods, prompting them to dispatch servants to undermine the Kepesh capital. As the city welcomes numerous refugees annually, the Cult has infiltrated occult cells within. The Hidden Cult operates among the Servants Caste, the Purple Witches blend in with the Wizards Caste, the Shadow Lords tempt several Ba-Ka's clerics with greater power, and the Spawners of Droggath use the barbarian tribes against Kepesh's farmlands and traders.

The Pharaoh personally confronts these foes or delegates his most loyal servants to combat them, but the Cult's assaults are unyielding. Lacking sufficient capable adherents to counter all threats, the Lich offers substantial rewards in gold or magic items to adventurers and mercenaries from distant lands willing to help suppress the Cult.

Pakaitos Mystical Enhancement

The complex construction of the city is a vast and intricate magical circle in itself, created to channel the mystical energies of magic and bring the blessings of Ba-Ka to the citizens. This provides the following effects.

Mystical Recovery (Every spellcaster in the city)

Spellcasters who complete a short rest within the city regain one expended spell slot of the highest level they can cast.

Mystical Stability (Every spellcaster in the city)

Spellcasters who need to prepare spells, upon completing a long rest within the city, find they can hold more power than usual. They can prepare two additional spells of any spell level they have slots for.

These extra spells remain prepared until the next long rest.

Blessing of Ba-Ka (Only worshipers of Ba-Ka)

All individuals who worship Ba-Ka receives protection against magic inside the city gaining advantage in all saving throws against magic.

This affects not only clerics and paladins but all individuals who truly worship Ba-Ka, an effect that disappears if they lose their faith or betray the god.

Bright Coast

The coastline along the Storm Sea is rocky and rugged, with countless ships being claimed by its turbulent waters, sinking along their treasures. While drawing adventurers and treasure hunters, colonization here is scarce, limited to a few fishing villages. Legends about the spirits of the drowned and sea monsters give this region a cursed reputation.

Kalistessenâmun's forces know the coast is vulnerable, leaving an opening for the Kemets. Still, with a scarcity of warships and a coastline fraught with danger, the Kepesh often relies on hiring corsairs, Kolbjörn mercenaries, or adventurers for defense and patrol, an expensive necessity.

The Kepesh rarely navigate the Storm Sea, as their vessels cannot match the heavily armored Kemet ships transporting undead hordes. The Kemets use their naval superiority to infiltrate the expansive coast, sending their undead and warbands to wreak havoc in the Theocracy territory with incursions that challenge the Pharaoh's sovereignty and incite Kalistessenâmun's wrath.

Beneath certain coastal areas, extensive coral forests are guarded by merfolk. These bastions of marine life are the stages of conflict as the merfolks clash with the Samudara barbarians and defend against the Kemets, who seek to turn merfolk warriors into undead minions.

The Samudara barbarians, adorned in fish leather and coral, are nocturnal raiders aboard their rudimentary boats, adding to the region's woes. Known for their excellent swimming skills and the ability to hold their breath for long periods, they live as nomadic navigators plundering coastal villages, merfolk cities and any ship that crosses their path. They often attack Kepesh coastal villages and the Kemet ships. But what is behind them is what is truly scary. Deep within the Storm Sea's caverns dwells a powerful Kraken and its offspring. The Samudara appease this leviathan with offerings and serve its unknowable will. The Kraken's animosity is particularly inflamed by the Kemets, driving it to purge both them and the Kepesh from the waters it claims.

The Great Nothing

The southern deserts are extremely dangerous, with enormous sandworms hunting in the dunes, giant scorpions foraging for food, and lamias claiming ancient ruins as their lairs. The mountains to the south harbor fierce barbarian tribes who traverse the desert for annual raids; they brave the sands, which serve as a natural defense against any incursions on their villages, to pillage the towns to the north and other barbarian tribes of the near regions.

Many legends permeate the desert, but the most renowned speaks of an oasis whose waters can transmute metal into gold, heal any curse or ailment, and even resurrect the deceased. Countless adventurers seek this miraculous site annually, yet the oasis eludes discovery, its precise location and true capabilities eluding explorers.

In reality, the oasis does exist but proves elusive, as a mystical sandstorm envelops it every three dawns, transporting it to a new location in the desert. The vigilant guardianship of numerous sphinxes further complicates access. These guardians consider it their sacred duty to protect the waters, permitting only those they judge as worthy. They challenge aspirants with questions to gauge their righteousness, tasks to measure their courage and integrity, and riddles to test their wisdom. Those failing the tests are turned away, and any who dare to approach the waters without consent are met with lethal consequences.

Some scholars believe the oasis was created by drops of blood from the gods; others think it is a tear of Tamera or that it holds an artifact left by the angels. The truth is only known to the sphinxes, but they never disclosed it while seemingly waiting for something or someone and allowing very few to use its water's power.

Hag'Salar

Amidst the dunes and stone remnants lies the ruins of the Summer Elves Kingdom of Hag'Salar, once a splendid realm remembered for its cultural diversity and trading. Though the civilization has crumbled, its spirit endures, as the ruins are a meeting point for cultural exchange.

The Alchemist Oasis, located within Hag'Salar, has become a sacred site for all barbarian communities of the south. Combat is strictly forbidden here, fostering peace and becoming a hub of commerce among the tribes. Every year during the summer solstice, a ten-day bazaar takes place in Hag'Salar. Tribes, merchants, and caravans from different lands assemble here, setting up their tents and stalls and transforming the desert into a vast marketplace. Most Summer elves visit this bazaar at least once every five years to reconnect with each other and exchange goods, knowledge, and stories from their voyages across the continent.

During these events, tribes forge alliances and buy products from across Tanares. The absence of external laws grants a unique freedom, permitting the trade of goods otherwise restricted in different regions.

Recently, the Kepesh have also turned their attention to this celebration. They propagate the faith of Ba-Ka and recruit from among the barbarians and the marginalized, integrating them into Kepesh society. Yet, the Kepesh approach cautiously, knowing well the potential threat of the barbarians to their expansionist aims.

Another allure of this land is the treasures of the ancient Summer elves, which can be found in its lost ruins. The Kepesh often organize expeditions into the subterranean depths, bestowing lesser artifacts and gold to the barbarians to ensure cooperation. Some adventurers and explorers often travel here in search of treasures. Still, they must contend with the Kepesh, who want to keep the prizes for their Pharaoh, and the barbarians, who dislike intruders in their territories.

Brightlight Desert

The Kingdom of Shahar was a mighty realm during the Ancient and Malrokian Ages. However, the Malrokian Curse has destroyed it. The scattered ruins, broken stone towers, and bronze dome fragments serve as remnants of its former glory. Sometimes the shifting sands uncover some of its ancient ruins with riches that attract explorers.

Now, it's a barren land with dangerous nagas, cunning rakshasas, and tribes of salamanders who share the land with the few survivors of Shahar.

The human survivors split into three tribes, the Sirocchi, Zaphyrus, and Verdane. Each tribe blames the others for their land not recovering. Adorned in long robes and armed with curved blades, they became barbarian tribes, and their cultures diverged over centuries of strife. However, they still share some customs, such as honoring the dead through martial displays, and young warriors undergoing ritual combats and tests of endurance.

The Sirocchi. Dwellers on high cliffs near the Ubelian Fire Pits, build fortress homes carved on cliff walls and live by stringent laws. Their warriors, sword and shield experts, braid steel chains in their hair and use white robes bearing family emblems. In grand halls, they debate law and community under their King's gaze. They worship Tamera, but not as part of the Celestianist Church, as they deem Bauron evil. They yearn for a united Shahar and believe Tamera's blessing will return with restored order.

The Zaphyrus. These nomads wander the sands, expressing their love for freedom through their foldable silk tents and martial dances. They follow the Glorious One, believing he is the true sun's god, and view Tamera's faith as oppressive. Generous and cunning, they avoid violence, seeing Shahar's fall as a lesson against greed for power. They resist restoring the kingdom, linking such ambitions to Tanares' calamities. They advocate peace and individual freedom to appease the gods. They believe that the Verdani and Sirocchi must lay down their weapons for them all to be blessed again.

The Verdani. They live in tune with the harsh desert, mastering falconry, and building homes from sandstone and plant fibers with roofs designed to collect dew. Their culture prizes the natural order, where strength reigns. They attack those they see as weak or civilized, believing that eliminating these elements will rejuvenate the desert. Their brutal view of the Nature's Spirit faith celebrates the survival of the fittest. They are the most dangerous and brutal of the tribes, attacking travelers, merchants, and other tribes at any opportunity to prove their strength and "curb the weak". They believe that once they kill all the Sirocchi, who dare to keep laws and a king, and all the Zaphyrus, who are cowards unwilling to let go of their traditions to embrace nature, the desert will again flourish with natural power.

To make their conflict worse, water disputes are fueling animosity, with Sirocchi canals redirecting essential resources, prompting clashes. Allied to that a mysterious sickness at the oases is causing the tribes to blame one another, each trying to find a cure hidden within desert secrets and the Shahar's ruins.

The Suns' Scroll, prophesying Shahar's resurgence, was found by the Sirocchi, it talks about a foreigner that will uncover ancient secrets. Their king is searching for this chosen one, giving special attention to warriors and adventurers from other lands.

Kalistessenâmun, the Lich Pharaoh

Kalistessenâmun (NE), the great ruler of the Kepesh people, has traversed ages of existence, amassing powers, and knowledge but also enduring enormous suffering. Established as the Pharaoh of his people back in Darkall, his homeland, he was deposed by the usurping Kemet s, who, by corrupting his magical ritual, turned him into a Lich, cursing and enslaving him. Humiliated and subjugated, he witnessed the downfall of his people and their lands, able to do little, serving only as a pawn of those who conquered him. However, when he managed to secure his freedom through the hands of Sedura, Khloet, and the Heroes of Wharfugee, he swore to extinguish the life of all Kemets.

With his freedom restored, he gathered the few remaining Kepeshes he could find, both the undead and those in magical hibernation, and began a new realm. He offered a new home to all who had lost hope after the war in an attempt to rebuild the people he had lost and, in part, to use them in his grand plan to eliminate all Kemets. And as one of the most powerful spellcasters in Tanares, he may very well succeed.

He is a wise ruler, dedicated to improving his realm and the life of his people, desiring the Kepesh name to be a synonym for grandeur again. Often calm, he becomes enraged if threatened or commanded, as strings hold him so long that he never accepts orders. Even Ba-Ka does not control him and is seen only as an ally by Kalistessenâmun.

Paru-Haka, the High Priest of Ba-Ka

Paru-Haka (NE), is the one who oversees all priests, ensuring that the Theocracy runs according to the wishes of the Pharaoh. He is more of an overseer than one to run the details of government or sacred affairs. Instead, he is always looking for betrayers, corruption, and infiltrated members of the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Known as the Priest Slayer, he once roamed Tanares. He was the last Kepesh to receive a Renkhet-Netjer blessed bandage from Ba-Ka before their last temple fell to the Kemets back in Darkall. The blessing made him immune to the effects of aging and gave him a prophetical task: prepare for the return of the Pharaoh. He endured millennia, gathering scattered Kepeshians while hunting down and executing priests of other deities to secretly turn them into Akhus, all to prepare for the return of the Pharaoh.

He reunited with Kalistessenâmun during the Kemet Invasion, and since then, he has followed his orders, becoming one of the key figures in the resurgence of the Theocracy of Kepesh. His greatest pleasure is capturing Kemets priests of Bás to use in his sacrificial rituals.

He often oversees the adventurers that enter the Kepesh lands and is responsible for offering rewards for tasks that need to be undertaken by mercenary groups in their lands. He is currently worried about the reports from the coast, where the fishing villages have suffered attacks from both Kemets and barbarians.

Se-Nâmum, the Vampire High Priest

Se-Nâmum (CE) is an ancestral vampire and one of the High Priests of Ba-Ka. She leads the most important ceremonies and uses her powerful charisma to unite the masses under the will of the Pharaoh. Her passionate discourses and mesmerizing gaze are decisive for the Kepesh mass conversion strategy.

She was once a young priestess who secretly loved Kalistessenâmun. Yet, when the Kemets took the Pharaoh, she sought power to help fight, resorting to the vilest of the necromantic rituals on herself, becoming one of the first vampires of Tanares.

Despite her sacrifice, she could not win against the Kemets and was forced to flee. Receiving a revelation from Ba-Ka that the Pharaoh would one day walk free again, she endured millennia gathering resources and making vampire spawns. The origin of many vampires that roam Tanares today can be traced back to her. Following this mission, she formed a radical cult of Ba-Ka, surrounded by wretched and cursed individuals.

When Kalistessenâmun finally returned, Se-Nâmum's joy was short-lived, as Queen Khloet was alive and by her husband's side. Yet time made her wise, and she is lying patiently, waiting for Khloet to slip and for her to become the new Queen.

She secretly leads the Shemushemetep, believing that all other deities must fall for Ba-Ka to rise as the only true god, a doctrine she has been preaching for centuries before the return of the Pharaoh.

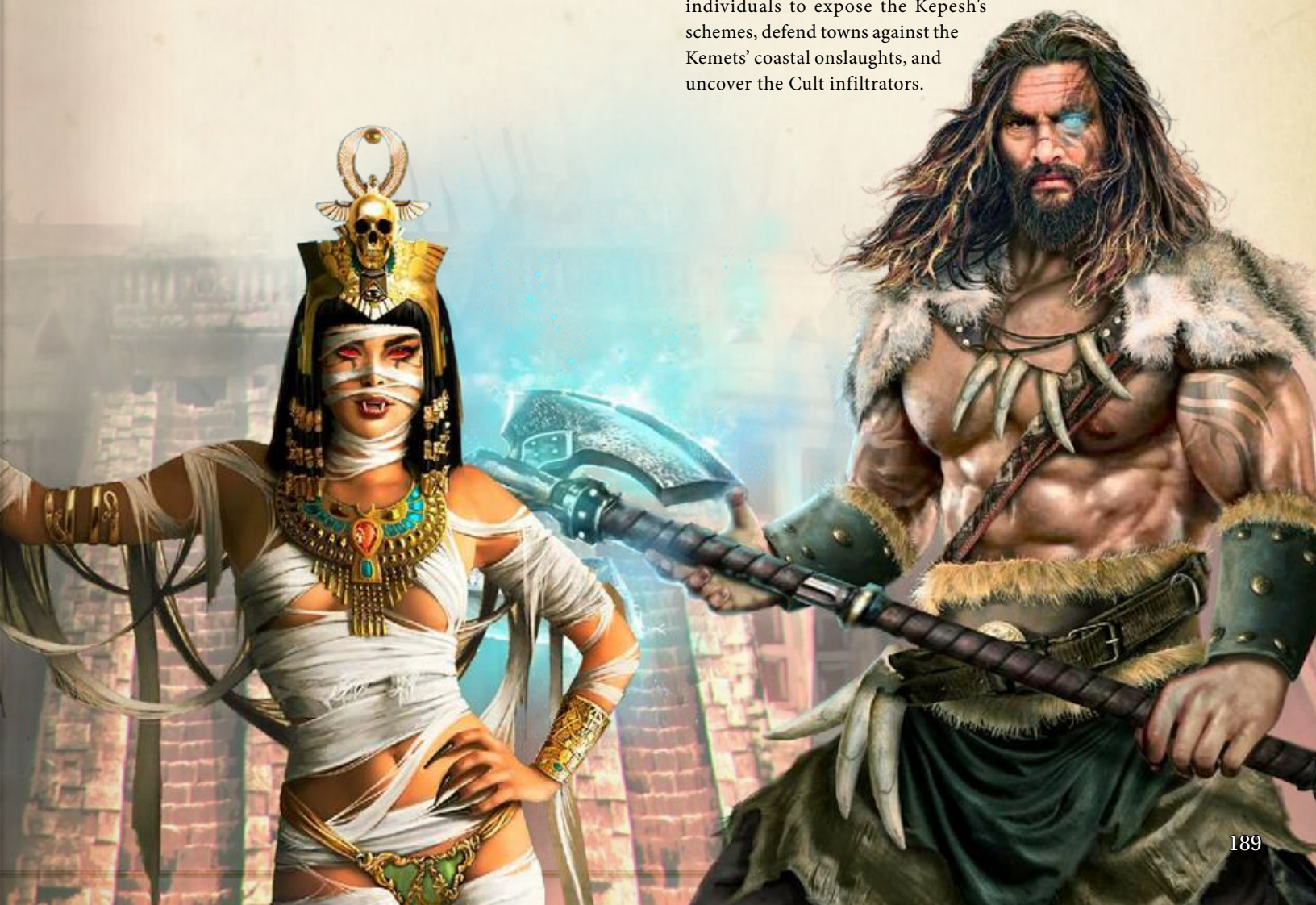
Velord, the Barbarian Warchief

Velord (CG) is the warchief of a barbarian tribe from beyond the Great Nothing Desert. Every year, they descend to raid, a dangerous tradition that claimed his father's life, instilling in Velord the desire for strength to protect his kin.

During his first raid, a sandstorm scattered his tribe during a sandworm attack. Lost Velord arrived at an oasis surrounded by sphinxes. After surviving their challenges, they let him drink from their sacred pond and gave him a task: to venture into a dungeon, defeat a demonic scorpion, and, with its treasure, unite the southern tribes.

Velord killed the scorpion, costing his left eye but granting him an ancestral axe. Returning to his village with formidable strength and the "Eye of Insight," replacing his lost one, he began to gather the tribes. He leads benevolently, seeking unity through prosperity rather than conquest. He aims to gather the smaller tribes and lead them to the Brightlight desert, and by uniting the ancient tribes, he dreams of creating a prosperous and peaceful southland.

The Kepesh have been his worst adversaries, plotting assassination attempts, spreading lies, and trying to convert the tribes, as they fear a barbarian horde could incite war. To make matters worse, the Cult of Shadow Wing crept into Velord's ranks to sow discord, and the lands under his rule are facing a mysterious blight that the Kepesh attribute to divine retribution. Velord is still optimistic, searching for capable individuals to expose the Kepesh's schemes, defend towns against the Kemets' coastal onslaughts, and uncover the Cult infiltrators.



Tsvetan

Government: Fragmented into two groups of clans, each claiming to have their legitimate War Lord and Red Mother.
Faction: No alliance.
Population: Around 468,000. Orcs 88%, humans 5%, goblinoids 4%, others 3%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Normal
Crime and Violence	Very High
Economic Prosperity	Very Low
Government Corruption	Normal
Magic Access	Low
Monster Presence	Normal
Political Stability	Very Low

Geography

Composed mostly of dry and rocky lands, mixed with sparse dry vegetation, the area is surrounded by big mountains to the south and active volcanoes in the northeast. To the north, there's an extensive, irregular coastline fragmented into numerous islands, connecting the region to the Central Sea. Bordered by the big Sindile Forest to the east and the deserts of Ubel to the west, this land is intensely hot and dry.

Politics

Tsvetan has been ruled by orcs since the Godly Age. They recognized this region as a suitable place to strengthen their bodies and spirits, following ancient shamanic customs.

Embracing the belief in nature spirits, the figure of the Red Mother was born to guide the orcs on their spiritual path. She created the four great clans, gifting each with their respective protective animal totemic spirits.

Each clan elected a leader, known as the Warchief. One among them is chosen to be the Warlord. While the Red Mother leads in religion and customs, the Warlord handles conflicts.

However, a significant impasse has arisen: The last Red Mother was killed, leaving behind two apprentices, Grizza and Xateri. Each one considers herself the rightful successor. Two military leaders, Katar and Vharzog, each aligned with one apprentice and declared themselves Warlords.

Economy

Geographically and climatically inhospitable, Tsvetan is a land for truly resilient individuals, as many essential natural resources are scarce here. Its residents depend primarily on extracting obsidian stone to make sharp tools and ornaments. They use sulfur for consumption and medicinal purposes, and platinum for crafting jewelry and decorations.

A vast array of animal hides is utilized for clothing and covering communal huts and dwellings, featuring various bones as structural elements for these rustic places. They lack metal and wood, which drives them to seek these resources in other lands, often leading to conflicts when trade is impossible.

Culture and Society

Deeply rooted in their culture and traditions, orcs have neither evolved nor adapted over the ages. Superstitious by nature, they attribute spirits to everything, especially animals, which have become the patrons of their clans, shaping them with their characteristics. Whether it's an erupting volcano, raging hurricane, or ground-shaking earthquake, orcs believe these are manifestations of the will of superior spirits.

In this way, the Red Mother and her spiritual shamans serve as the religious, moral, and social guides among the orcish clans. It is their duty to decide the future of their people and enforce their laws and customs.

Strong and vigorous, orcs embrace brutality in their daily lives, often misinterpreted by individuals of other species as aggression.

Orcs enjoy testing their strength and strategy in clan competitions like Urug-Tuk, a fierce match between two teams of four, where the team loses when pushed into the designated arena's center. However, they eagerly embrace battle in times of conflict, adorning their bodies with mystical body paint.

History

Having settled in the southern region, the orcs cultivated spiritual traditions that led them to ally against the Ungods. They clashed with the Ungods' forces and exposed one, eventually leading to its demise at the hands of dragons. In retaliation, the Ungods unleashed a mighty corrupted dragon to destroy the orcish community, but the orcs emerged victorious. The remains of this dragon were taken to the Dorsian Forge, where the dwarves crafted the Lava Axe as a token of gratitude for the orcs' valor.

Later, the downfall of the Malrokian Kingdom resulted in various cataclysms, misery, and resource scarcity throughout Tanares, and Tsvetan suffered a lot. The tribes' fights for the Lava Axe created a division, weakened them, and the Empire conquered them with

relative ease. For over a century, the Empire ruled this land with an iron grip, appointing Vharzog as their Warlord.

However, Katar, a notable orc hero of the Arenas, managed to reclaim the Lava Axe during the Kemet Invasion. Afraid of losing power, Vharzog responded quickly, assassinating the Red Mother and seducing Xateri, one of her disciples, into joining him and drawing forbidden powers of the Ungods to get stronger.

Katar rescued the second disciple, Grizza, from an ambush, holding the belief that she was the rightful successor to the Red Mother. Now, Tsvetan is divided between these two groups, engaged in a veiled military and shamanic war.

War Paints

The most notable feature of orcs is their war paints. Crafted by the shamans, these mystical paints contain potent spiritual energies that protect against the Ungods' corruption and intensify their strength and resilience. The shamans use minerals, including tameranium, plants, and the blood of magical beasts.

This tradition is in danger because only the Red Mother knew the method to produce the component guarding against corruption, typically shared with the shamans during meditative sessions around a bonfire.

Xateri, the false Red Mother, creates war paints filled with energy derived from the Penumbral Plane. Though powerful, they cause collateral damage to those subjected to them. On the other hand, Grizza must complete her training by deepening her connection with the spirits to learn how to produce protection against corrupt energies before it is too late.

To benefit from the effects of War Paint, a creature must be in proximity to the tribe's main totem, and a shaman of the tribe must administer the paint during a ritual that takes 1 hour. These effects last until the creature completes a long rest. The benefits received depend on which shaman applies the war paint:

- **Hot Bloods:** +2 to Strength, +2 to Constitution
- **Spiked Bones:** +2 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity
- **Stone Fangs:** +4 to Dexterity
- **Strong Fists:** +4 to Strength
- **Grizza, the Red Mother:** +4 to Strength, +2 to Dexterity, +2 to Constitution
- **Xateri, the Black Mother:** +4 to Strength, +4 to Dexterity, +4 to Constitution, cannot regain hit points.

Orcish Clans

The first Red Mother divided the orc people into four major clans. Each one gained a totem of a spirit animal, forming a connection with the spirits. Over time, each clan developed its own identity and strengths. These four clans are:

- ***Hot Bloods (Vulture Totem).*** The most formidable warriors among the orcs, they value strength, courage, and the control of fury. They collect trophies from their fallen adversaries and hold great value in weapons and metal objects. They are good at forging metal weapons and bone constructs.
- ***Spiked Bones (Wolf Totem).*** Raiders who have formed a deep connection with dire wolves. Thanks to this bond, they excel as excellent scouts and quick raiders. They are adept at breeding animals both for mount or for food.
- ***Stone Fangs (Naja Totem).*** Being the most skilled ambushers, hunters, and trackers, their nomadic culture gives them profound knowledge of Tsvetan terrains. They deeply understand herbs and poisons, earning them great respect. With these qualities, they serve as spies and informants.
- ***Strong Fists (Scorpion Totem).*** The largest and strongest among the orcs, but the least intelligent. They use primitive weapons and instinct in battle, using their strength and resilience in combat. Their communities thrive in agriculture in arid lands.

Shamanic Wars

The nation is divided, with two clans supporting each side, but there is no immediate interest in open war for the catastrophic consequences.

However, there is a fierce war happening on another level. Grizza's followers, the primal shamans, and the dark shamans of Xateri are already attacking each other through shamanic energies in the dreams and Astral Plane. Many spirit animals are attacking each other, corrupted energy colliding with primal energy in a confrontation, each trying to prevail. Whenever a shaman is defeated, the connection with the spirit is cut, and the powers are lost.

Although these conflicts might seem subtle to most, they can be decisive in determining which side prevails, as the shamans' power can heavily influence the war.

Rumors about assistance from the Shadow Wing have motivated Grizza's shamans to seek help from powerful adventurers brave enough to enter the Astral Plane through a shamanic spell and face all spiritual dangers there.

Threats and Conflicts

Fallen Warlord

Months before the Kemet Invasion, the so-called Wasteland heroes killed one of the most powerful Warlords, Kor'dal. He was the son of the Red Mother, who became violent and greedy. He ignored his mother's teachings and made plans to expand Tsvetan, willing to sacrifice countless orcs to achieve his goal.

His body was buried in a grave near Eferhild Citadel; however, it disappeared on the same day his mother was killed. Various theories circulate regarding this, but one thing is known for sure. Whoever can control him or get his allegiance will have a decisive power in the Shamanic War.

Both sides are searching for his body, using orc scouts and recruiting adventurers to find it across the harsh lands of Tsvetan. At first, many dismissed it as unimportant and mere superstition, but several mysterious and unusually violent deaths raised concerns.

Resource Scarcity

With the Kemet Invasion followed by the Imperial retreat, while Tsvetan stands independent, numerous nobles abandoned the region. At first, people celebrated, as the rich ones related to the Empire were gone forever. However, after some time without their investments, Tsvetan experienced a deep decline in economic and social development.

With a brutal conflict potentially on the horizon, each side is already seeking resources. Orcs from Vharzog typically invade other nations, especially Sindile and Ubel, aiming to pillage as much as possible before fleeing potential retaliation. Katar is attempting a diplomatic approach to secure supplies, particularly with the Republic.

Sedura, already aware of the situation, is secretly dispatching adventurers to prevent pillage from the orcs, based on the intel of spies.

Eferhild Eruption

Some shamans, alarmed, informed the Red Mother that the lava in Eferhild was more agitated than usual and could erupt at any time. The last time this happened was centuries ago, when a demonic creature and his army arrived in Tanares and devastated part of the land. Mother Grizza suspects that Xateri might be using dark magic, possibly to destroy Eferhild using the lava or to summon these demonic creatures.

Deeming it unwise to send her orcs to investigate the matter closely, as it could trigger a war, she discreetly communicated with trustworthy soldiers to find mercenaries or adventurers willing to take this task. The spirits pledged their assistance in identifying worthy individuals and will contact them via dreams.

Secrets

Wild Spirits

Vharzog assassinated the former Red Mother on the sacred grounds of Twinspikes and trapped her soul in an eagle totem. However, her guiding spirits became enraged. The animals in the area have become unusually aggressive, attacking people. Additionally, some magical beasts are drawn to the place, causing destruction. Even some spells get distorted when cast on the site.

Mother Grizza believes it is a sign that the Red Mother Spirit is imprisoned and will cease only when she is released. Deeming it too dangerous to keep, Vharzog sold it as a common item to a caravan heading to Ubel

First Red Mother Soul

The Primal Urn, which contains the souls of the First Red Mother, many of her shamans, and their animal spirit protectors, is hidden somewhere in the Astral Plane.

If this item can be found and her soul is freed, this could affect the outcome of the Shamanic War, as she would likely help to keep the Orcish traditions and help to defeat the corrupted shamanic power.

However, some say that back in the old times, they had differences, and her soul may be disappointed by the changes and could potentially retaliate. Or even unleash their wrath at the person who finds it. For now, the item has never been found, but some shamans are searching for it, even using mercenaries to send them to the Astral Plane to search.

Vharzog Alliances

Vharzog, the former Tsvetan governor appointed by the Emperor, is the most intelligent orc alive but is not particularly strong. Despite never being officially recognized as a Warchief by the orc shamans, he obtained that title through blackmail and threats, causing many orcs never to acknowledge him as their leader.

Following the Imperial withdrawal, Vharzog felt threatened by opposing orcs. This prompted him to accelerate his plans, leading to the execution of the Red Mother and the manipulation of one of her disciples. He has connections with the Shadow Wing to improve the dark shamanism and the Empire, to help him return the territory to the Emperor and reinstate the previous regime.

He plans to kill both Katar and Grizza to reunite the Orc clans. Then, eliminate Xateri and use the orcs to betray the Shadow Wing, making it easier for the Empire to return.

The Empire is secretly helping Vharzog. Also, the Shadow Wing, especially the Spawners, are aiding him as well.

Places of Interest

Feargus, the Capital

A city founded during the Fallen Age has seen better days. After the Imperial retreat, the city's economy was greatly shaken. Many tents cover the open areas of the city, providing precarious shelter for its residents. Additionally, some structures made of wood and bone are suspended by ropes from elevated places, housing families.

Security and various services are offered by groups of mercenaries and specialists from the clans, usually favoring those who can pay more. The city Arena is constantly being used to settle disputes between families and groups, usually ending up with some deaths.

In contrast, Vharzog's palace stands out as the sole magnific and opulent structure in the city, full of music and food. Xateri and her shamans reside in the palace, which is heavily fortified to prevent acts of rebellion. Vharzog enjoys this situation, as he can now stimulate the orcs' brutal instinct through poverty. With no more nobles left to label as 'the villains,' he pins the blame on Katar, effectively creating an army through his manipulation.

Eferhild Citadel

Once known as the Cauldron of Moritar, the place was a fortress of the Mystical Kingdom, full of arcane protections that remain until today. The place is near a lava river, favoring metal weapons and armor creation. Katar and Mother Grizza reside there, harnessing the site's potent magic to enhance all shamanic abilities.

Influenced by the shamanic tradition, each resident has a totem in their home and meditates to contact their guardian animal spirit. Katar tries to improve the lives of the people; despite not being wealthy, food and water are distributed, and people are asked to work properly to ensure the services and basic needs of everyone.

One particular shaman named Martuk claims that he can use spirits of magical beasts for his protection, and they are much more potent but demand some special actions to bound, often involving either the killing of individuals or causing significant destruction. Secretly, he is gathering more followers every day.

This city also has an immense dungeon full of lava and protection from the wizards of the past. Some orcs have attempted to explore it, but none have successfully navigated its depths. Mother Grizza believes something important is hidden there, but she and Katar cannot afford to be absent for days exploring the site.

Obsidian Fortress

Obsidian Fortress is an imposing construction, built entirely from the cooled and shaped volcanic glass. Its reflective walls glow with fiery colors from the nearby molten flow. Nearby, numerous small ember islands float in the river, resisting its current as if the fortress magically attracts them.

The fortress served as a place to imbue weapons and magic items with animal spirits, but this practice was forbidden by the last Red Mother and the place was abandoned. However, now that she is dead, some Mage Tower members have much interest in capturing the spirits in the Astral Plane, and then binding them in the Fortress, as powerful items could be produced from it.

The place is dangerous, as the heat, steam vents, and lava explosions are common. Furthermore, legends speak of an undead shaman guardian patrolling the fortress

The Greatwolf Race Course

This annual event is celebrated by the Spiked Bones clan, where their best riders compete to test their agility, speed, and endurance. Other clans, or even individuals of any species, are also welcome to take on the challenge.

Mounted on a Dire Wolf, it starts on the Cave of Sacrifice and ends on the Stormgrounds, covering almost all Tsvetan. It is more than a race; many perils are on the way, such as natural hazards, attacks from wild beasts, sabotage from rival competitors and clans, among other challenges

The prize is a special paint from the First Red Mother's creations, heavily guarded by the clan. It can fully protect for a single day from any penumbral effects and give resistance to all damage taken by penumbral creatures.

Poison Grounds

The Stone Fangs clan are experts in poisons and herbalism. They extract the substance from giant scorpions, giant snakes, and basilisks. Some refined poisons are extracted from the tails of imprisoned young purple worms and from green dragons.

Agents of the clan are consistently hiring adventurers to hunt these creatures and bring them alive, paying some considerable amount of gold, even though the funds often come from pillaging. On other occasions, a beast might escape, causing destruction in the area.

Bone Fields

The Strong Fist clan traditionally cultivates food where they bury their fallen warriors, adorning the site with the bones of giant beasts. They believe the food will absorb the essence of the fallen warriors and strengthen people.

At the end of each day, shamans perform a blessing ritual, asking for the spirits to help the plants grow. However, the scent of their dead warrior attracts undead creatures at night, occasionally resulting in attacks against the shamans. As tradition demands, orcs are forbidden from battling within these sacred grounds, so the shamans are in search of external help to solve the problem.

The druid class receives a new subclass in this section.

The Circle of Spirits (Shamans)

Druids of the Circle of Spirits commune deeply with the world's spiritual essence, embracing not only the living essence of the present living creatures but also the echoes of the past and all living beings that ever existed before. These druids see nature's power as not only coming from what is currently alive but from all past life that lived, from ancient spirits of the land to their ancestors who can impart them with wisdom from ages past.

They channel these energies into potent totems and mystical war paintings by tapping into this reservoir of past wisdom. Such druids often serve as mediators between the physical and spiritual realms, wielding the insights and powers of the spirits that compose each aspect of nature, as well as their long-gone ancestors to guide and protect their allies.

Usually, they receive the title 'Shaman' and become spiritual guides for members of their tribes. However, some receive a spirits calling and become adventurers.

Circle of Spirits in Tanares

Tsvetan orcs have a strong tradition of shamanism. They follow the Red Mother and her code of peace and meditation to commune with the ancient spirits. However, if in need, these druids can be formidable opponents, as their totems can augment the power of their group.

While the most potent effects of the paintings require the tribe's totem, these druids can also use them to extend the duration of ritual spells. Usually, they choose a color that represents the animal spirit to which the druid has more affinity. In Tsvetan, tribe members recognize these painting colors and treat the druids according to the spirit they represent.

- Vulture: Yellow
- Wolf: Blue
- Naja: Green
- Scorpion: Black

The only shaman able to use the sacred red tint is the Red Mother and her apprentices. Their effects are much stronger, but the red painting has no effect if not performed with the correct ritual.

Spiritual Totem

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your bonus action to place a spectral totem on the ground in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of you, protecting your allies and cursing your foes. This totem lasts for 1 minute. Allies within 10 feet of the totem gain a +1 bonus to AC, while enemies suffer a -1 penalty to AC. The totem does not physically occupy its space but is the size of a Small creature.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of once), regaining all expended uses after a long rest. You can only have one totem placed at a time. Using this ability again immediately ends any other active totem. The AC effect of totems from different druids don't stack.

Ancestral Marks

At 2nd level, you learn to create magical paintings using natural pigments. When you cast a spell with a duration of 1 minute or more that targets one or more allies, you can perform a 10-minute ritual to extend the spell's duration to 1 hour. You must paint each targeted ally during the ritual.

This ability can be used a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, regaining all expended uses after a long rest. You cannot be a target of the spell when using this ability.

Spirit Talker

At 6th level, you gain the ability to communicate with any elemental, fey, ghost, or spiritual creature that knows at least one language.

In addition, once every long rest when you sleep, you can talk with the spirits and receive the effects of the divination spell (without requiring any components), but the nature spirits answer your questions.

Totemic Mastery

Upon reaching 10th level, your Spiritual Totem ability is enhanced. When you place a totem, you and allies within 10 feet of the totem gain temporary hit points equal to twice your druid level, and you can apply one of these extra effects:

Elemental Protection. You and your allies have resistance to one chosen damage type (fire, lightning, cold, or thunder) while within 10 feet of the totem. The element is chosen when placing the totem.

Elemental Fury. Enemies ending their turn within 10 feet of the totem must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC, taking 3d6 damage of a chosen type (fire, lightning, cold, or thunder) on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. The element is chosen when placing the totem.

The Large Totem. The totem size becomes Large, and its effect radius is increased to 20 feet (including the temporary hit points). When you place the totem, enemies within 10 feet of it must succeed on a saving throw against your spell save DC to avoid being pushed back 10 feet and knocked prone.

Spirit Walker

At 14th level, when you use Wild Shape, you can choose to transform into a spectral version of the chosen animal. In this form, you gain resistance to all non-magical damage and can move through objects and creatures as if they were difficult terrain.

Additionally, you can also cast astral projection targeting only yourself, without requiring a spell slot or material components. You regain the use of this feature after a long rest.

While in the Astral Plane, you can sense the rough direction of spirits, deities, and beings tied to nature in the region you accessed. The GM can decide what existences are in the area, if any. They are not immediately friendly to you; some can be dangerous, but most will hear you before taking any action.

Katar

Katar (CG) is a strong and vigorous orc, full of tattoos and scars. He was a champion of the Arena during the Imperial Age. He returned to Tsvetan during the Kemet Invasion, recovering the Lava Axe and protecting the people against the kemet assault.

When the Red Mother was killed, Katar saved Mother Grizza from a group of assassins. He faced more than ten of their champions alone and entered a barbaric rage state, destroying completely all his enemies. Frightened of losing control again, Katar prefers to avoid open war and show the evil in Vharzog to other tribes.

He possesses the Lava Axe, an artifact that should unify the tribes. Although it's mainly symbolic, somehow in his hand, this axe evokes the power of magma spirits, making Katar even more deadly.

Despite his attempts at peace, some commanders under him believe he is weak and should have already started to attack the others, especially Shaarog, his most skilled follower.

Using his bonds with Sedura and other heroes of the Republic, he usually asks for some support, both in resources and adventurers, to stop the threat of the Dark Shamans and civil war. He usually speaks in a rude manner, comparing the newer, softer orcs and humans to the older, more brutish ones. But he has a good heart and wants peace and the best for all his nation and Tanares.

Bruld

Bruld (CE) is a sinister and mad goblin. In Tsvetan, goblins are often overlooked and typically used as laborers or mercenaries. However, he learned techniques of shamanism and studied in Ubel the secrets of spirits, slowly developing a fearsome power.

He learned a unique magic that can store the souls of his victims on dolls for playing. In his crazy mind, he needs to complete his collection to be able to create joyful stories, adding new characters to it as new souls are attached to different dolls.

His stories need heroes, villains, and innocent people. He searches the land for people he considers fitting for the role and applies his dark powers, using many hired goblins to help him, including his most skilled mercenary, Wranga of the Spinning Axe.

His hideout is isolated in the desert and guarded by mercenaries. He rarely speaks directly to anyone and often insanely confuses the stories he's playing with reality. He has traps in his place to prevent his dolls from escaping, even if they are inanimate objects.

Many families seek authorities and adventurers to find their missing loved ones. The most notable soul he got is an elf, the old Wood Hunter's leader, now replaced by Niary. Bruld uses him as a hero for many of his stories. He's still in search of a 'king' character and is contemplating how to obtain such a soul.

Grizza, the Red Mother

Grizza (NG) was a dedicated disciple of the Red Mother, always trying to deepen her connections with the spirits to help the people. Calm and peaceful, she appears to be in constant communication with the spirits, as if guided by them, and usually talks to them in the middle of conversation with other people.

Since Katar saved her, she understood the danger of the madness of Xateri and wishes to bring her 'sister' to the right path again. She is now studying all secrets to strengthen and neutralize the dark shamanistic power. The Red Mother always mentioned an artifact lost in Tanares, the book of Maenthi, that would enable her to increase her shamanic powers substantially. She is looking for trustable adventurers to search for this legendary item, as she cannot leave Tsvetan.

Despite wanting peace, she is preparing potent war paints to apply to her orcs in case of war and even studying to develop new ones. Her sacred duty to keep the Ungods' influence from the orcs continues, and she even assists individuals from rival clans, as she believes they are just misguided.

She is also investigating the Red Mother assassination and where her spirit is hidden. If she could find it, she believes her mentor's soul would help her to cleanse Tsvetan from the dark.

Xateri, the Black Mother

Xateri (NE) was an enthusiastic and loyal disciple of the Red Mother. Grizza and she studied together for a long time, always trying to deepen their connection to the spirits to be a suitable successor.

Naive and always trusting the people, she was invited by Vharzog to live in his palace while not performing her duties. For years, Vharzog persuaded her to use alternative powers to save Tsvetan from the Ungods, saying that the Red Mother would never allow it just because she considered Xateri a child.

When Shadow Wing agents cursed her parents with a severe illness, Vharzog promised to help her and brought a cursed totem. She didn't even suspect that this was a scheme by him. After days of dilemma, Xateri finally agreed to use it. From that day on, always with a different 'noble' reason, she started using forbidden dark shamanism, slowly corrupting her.

Xateri believes she is the chosen one to save Tsvetan and bring harmony to the spirits, even if the people are too ignorant to understand the sacrifices she must make. In her mind, the Red Mother and Grizza are shaming the spirits and leading the people towards death, so both should be eliminated for the greater good. While they had already eliminated the Red Mother, Katar managed to save Grizza.

Yama

Government: Ruled by the eldest tameranium dragon, Fumetsu Tenshikin, the Emperor sanctified as a deity dwelling amidst his devoted adherents, beneath whom stand the clergy and the clans forged by the most distinguished lineages.
Faction: They have a strong alignment with the Allied Forces, maintaining some relations with Arcanum.
Population: Around 793,000. Humans 83%, elves 8%, cirrus 4%, soulborn 3% and others 2%.

Regional Statistics	
Citizen Freedom	Normal
Crime and Violence	Low
Economic Prosperity	Very High
Government Corruption	Low
Magic Access	High
Monster Presence	Low
Political Stability	Very High

Geography

Created by a beautiful combination of large mountains and ranges, the impressive Higashiyama extends along its eastern side. Yama has beautiful meadows, rolling hills, and plains like the Midorinohara and Yabanhito, where forests are adorned with bright Tabebuia flowers. Because of the constant rain, much of the land is misty, especially near the Central Sea and big lakes, leading to wet areas, marshes, and swamps. To the south, where the thick Sindile forest covers mountains, stands the famous Yamabunkatsu.

Politics

Yama stands as an ancient realm, an enduring presence through the ages, its governing system remaining nearly unaltered since its birth. Its foundation lies in the revered figure of Fumetsu Tenshikin, a distinguished leader. It is structured into various clans and castes, each with its own specific purpose and role in society, limiting the extent of power and influence and discouraging any attempt to disrupt the established social order.

Sovereign Fumetsu Tenshikin is at the top of the hierarchy. He is the Tameranium Avatar Dragon disguised as an old sage. Below him stand those of his draconic lineage. Then come the priests, who write the emperor's rules through the sacred Edicts, scrolls of divine command. These decrees are then executed by the nobility, embodied by the Samurai, diplomats, and the entire bureaucratic elite. Beneath them come the common populace.

Economy

Yama has many natural resources, which makes the realm almost self-sufficient. Having opened their borders, they began to trade their primary goods, including rice from their fields, silk from silkworm farms, high-quality steel, and many herbs used mainly for tea.

Despite their vast tameranium deposits, they pursue this mineral in other territories. This fact raised concern among certain groups, who argue that they maintain their resources secure as they consume those of others.

Culture and Society

Their culture is closely connected to their religion, where Tenshikin stands at its center. Through the cultivation of Ki, they seek balance and harmony, protecting themselves from the corruption of the Ungods. This instills cordiality, serenity, and determination in the citizens.

In this society, divided into clans and castes, ascension is permitted only by Tenshikin's grace. Thus, social competition is sparse, concentrated at the upper echelons, where each family seeks to incorporate its members into the clergy and Samurai.

Through generous offerings, the clans present tameranium as a tribute to honor Tenshikin. Each year, the clan with the highest offerings can nominate members to become priests or to be trained as Samurai, responsible for commanding their forces. As a result, these groups inevitably collide, whether directly or indirectly.

Honor and word are taken seriously, for breaking these oaths means embracing corruption and deviating from the path of harmony, casting these individuals and their families into shame.

History

During the Fallen Age, hundreds of years after the downfall of the Malrokian Kingdom, Avatar Dragons ignited a conflict due to divergent visions of the future. Among these conflicts, one significant disagreement stood out between the Tameranium and Bauronite Avatar Dragons. The tameranium believed that if humans were guided by rigorous morals and ethics, they could resist the temptations of the Ungods and aid in their defeat. Conversely, the Bauronite asserted that humans are merely expendable, as there is no way to fix their corrupted nature; the correct action is to make them stronger and throw them to face penumbral creatures.

Tenshikin, the Tameranium Avatar Dragon, found ancient relics from angels in the eastern territory and took them for himself to

help him guide the humans. Some dragons of the Council opposed it, but before the matter escalated, Isendden banished Tenshikin from the Council and allowed him to settle in the east, leading to the foundation of Yama.

Tenshikin would guide them as a leader, and Yokensha would test their convictions and tempt them to deviate from the path. Their contest was not merely to combat the Ungods, but to prove to each other their wisdom regarding humanity.

Tenshikin began his rule over the land and, within a few years, discovered an ancient collection of angelic artifacts. These artifacts allowed him to channel the magical energy of his potent Ki through the Ley Lines and grant divine magic to priests.

A towering, impenetrable wall protected his domain from the rest of Tanares, guarding their ancient traditions. Following his ethical and moral values, the society flourished, gradually dividing into castes and clans, with the Fumetsu Eido faith as its principal pillar.

After the Kemet Invasion, Tenshikin decided to open Yama to the rest of Tanares, as he sensed a terrible danger from the Ungods. Joining the Allied Forces, he established temples that served as embassies in various locations. These sites have an important function. They are neutral grounds for negotiations between Factions and nations, with a single purpose: to weaken the Ungods.

Yama's Edicts

The most remarkable display of Tenshikin's might resides within his sacred scrolls, known as Edicts. He infuses the document with tameranium and Ki, granting it magical abilities.

Usually, his priests read them and give them to any group they consider to be better qualified to fulfill Tenshikin's will. Occasionally, some Edicts may be directed to a specific person or group.

They grant an exotic and devastating power that can only be used during a very specific situation described in the Edict. For example, in a samurai's last mission report, the order was to invade a fortress, and the Edict said, "When the enemy army arrives, say the word 'Banzai' while looking to the ground." When he did, a fire and ice storm fell on the enemies simultaneously.

Yokensha's servants intercept some Edicts, and its power is altered, usually empowering the enemies and making it harder, but not impossible, to achieve the objective. She is eager to see the humans failing to achieve Tenshikin's expectations.

Blood and Honor

Tenshikin divided Yama into three clans, all guided by moral codes and honor. Each clan was divided into castes (workers, priests, and warriors) and developed different styles for their warrior caste.

Chiyori Samurai (Dragon's Paw). Noble samurai who dedicate their lives to justice and peacekeeping, eager to obey their leader's orders. Each receives a tameranium katana, which they keep for life and magically improve as their spirit and techniques strengthen. Losing the blade is considered dishonored, and the samurai is banished from the clan.

Kageryoushi Ninjas (Dragon's Tail). Furtive ninjas who can infiltrate any place, preventing conflicts before they even start. They receive a tameranium Ninjatō (a smaller version of the katana). For each enemy killed quickly (in at most two strikes), the weapon strengthens in the ninja's hand. Any steal or surprise attack for personal gain is dishonored, and the ninja is banished from the clan.

Goukuden Monks (Dragon's Neck). Focused and wise monks who can channel an immense amount of Ki energy to protect people and disable their enemies, preventing unnecessary deaths. They carry a tameranium necklace of prayer beads, and whenever they save a person, a bead's rune is activated. The legend says that a monk who can activate the 108 beads will be recognized as a champion by Tenshikin and gain divine powers.

Temples of Peace

Yama constructed many Eido Temples across Tanares to have embassies in other nations and offer them as a neutral ground for discussions and avoiding conflicts. The temple is a magnificent oriental architectural masterpiece with golden roofs, jade-tiled floors, and walls adorned with beautiful statues of tameranium dragons.

Every month, they invite representatives of factions or anyone in imminent conflict to discuss peaceful solutions.

The place is guarded by Golden Samurai, the elite force of the Chiyori clan. When entering it, they must remove all items, and a potent dispel magic is cast on all guests to avoid any mind control or scrying.

The main room is under the effect of calm emotions, and any spell cast is transformed into a gentle breeze. There are also magical ofuda (special types of scrolls) that display spoken words in the room in the Common language.

It is very safe, but some ninja spies brought alarming news. Shadow Wings agents of the Shadow Lords Sects have learned to taint the temple if they can remove the tameranium stone on its roof. In response, Yama has dispatched reinforcements and is recruiting adventurers to protect the temples.

Threats and Conflicts

Yin-Yang

Both Tenshikin and Yokensha are involved in a philosophical war, each attempting to prove that their way is correct. They never attack each other directly, but instead, they take actions using the humans to prove their superiority.

Tenshikin rarely intervenes with Yokensha's criminal group, allowing humans to deal with it. Yokensha prefers to make their chosen fail on missions, not killing them. She often prefers to create tests related to endurance, resistance to temptation, strength, or intelligence, aiming to cause human failure and thus humiliate

Tenshikin. These tests always have methods to be beaten, so Yokensha can clearly show how inefficient they are.

Both of them meet once per month to discuss who is right and more efficient in combating the Ungods. Some priests have visions of both in their dragon form discussing the fate of humanity, but they believe the dreams are symbolic prophecies.

Every year, there is a Festival of Yama, with contests that combine debates, martial arts, combat, and math. Both choose five champions and secretly compete.

The Dragon Clan

Yokensha lives in the Underworld, always disguised as an elegant sorcerer. Initially, she created a free organization to counteract the rigid structures of the clans imposed by Tenshikin. Ironically, her organization spontaneously formed a hierarchy and is now even more stringent than the clans, driven by fear.

Below Yokensha, two leaders run the operation. The first is another bauronite dragon that runs, always disguised as a fat human called Hamura. The other is Ronin Kojik, who lost his family tragically, and Yokensha promised to revive them for his loyalty.

They traffic magic items and bauronite, run gambling activities, and protect the villagers receiving gold or food in return. All members have a dragon tattoo on their bodies, and for each great achievement, they gain more tattoos, raising in ranks. Even though they are powerful, they have a code of honor, never breaking their word.

They also run underground fight arenas, where they profit from bets and can recruit worthy fighters to join the organization. In combat, they prefer to use a cursed katana, but with their special tattoo, the curse effects benefit them.

The most popular gambling game is Dragon Gateway.

- Pay 100 gp. Additionally, pay 40 gp to be able to reroll ONE SINGLE time any dice other than d20 or 60 gp to be able to rerroll any dice.
- Roll a d4, d6 d8, d10, d12, and d20
- The sum must be 38 or higher. If you win, gain 200 gp.

This is the most common rule, but values may vary proportionally.

Ancient demons

When Tenshikin claimed the territory, some ancient beings were forced to hide. They lived in the woods and dark places, plotting to destroy Tenshikin and return to their old power in this land. Their main goal is to get the Artifacts of Gods and use their power to destroy all dragons and enslave humans.

There are three of them that are most common, each with their unique tactics to create chaos in Yama.

Oni. They are ogre-like creatures with sharp claws, wild hair, two long horns, and wielding a metal club. They take a direct approach, attacking travelers and villages to inspire fear in the people. Some of them are warlords and use fear and illusions to gain an advantage in combat.

Tengu. Bird-like humanoids with human features, long noses, and wings. They are masters of martial arts, and many focus on espionage and kill enemies with surprise attacks.

Kitsune. Unnatural foxes with nine tails, superior intelligence, and the ability to shape-shift into human forms. Using their cunning and deception, they attempt to get closer to the relics. In combat, they can use fire spells to burn their enemies.

Many adventurers are hired to kill these creatures or protect caravans, as sometimes the warrior cast is not enough to deal with them.

Secrets

Hidden dragons in full view

In Yama, dragons are uncomfortable in their true forms, often assuming human or elf disguises to blend with society. The reason for this is not certain, but some studies suggest that one artifact of Tenshikin created this effect. In all of Yama territory, except for Tenshikin's palace, dragons in their true form have disadvantage on all attacks, and any saving throw they impose has advantage.

Recognizing tameranium and bauronite dragons in human shape is not easy, but there are some clues for attentive observers. Tameranium dragons always maintain a consistent human appearance, while bauronite dragons can adopt various forms. Still, they always exhibit a dragon tattoo in the same body position, no matter what shape they assume.

This is another reason why the presence of other dragons in Yama has diminished, although some other dragons still visit the region. The Council believes Tenshikin activated this artifact to discourage any attempt to attack his territory, even if officially he said to the Council that it was a measure for protection against the penumbral dragons.

Artifacts of the Gods

Tenshikin found six relics from Tamera's angels and adapted their immense power to use for his purposes. Each has a distinctive power and can only be activated by consuming tameranium. Thus, Tenshikin constantly demands this mineral from the clans.

The most important is the Divine Scale, which is used to channel divine energies that permeate the world and convert to Ki. Using this, Tenshikin could concede divine power to his priests and imbue the region with stronger Ki energy. Mainly, the monks learn how to use this energy, but all members of the warrior caste have contact with it at some point.

Two of the artifacts have not been activated yet. He seeks to learn how to use them, but no clue is found. Tenshikin is dedicating resources to this search because he believes one of them will be decisive in the fight against the Ungods.

Sugenjas

The sugenjas are the priests of the Fumetsu Eido religion, responsible for conducting ceremonies, blessing the population, translating Tenshikin's Edicts, and guiding the society. You can add the following actions to divine spellcasting Yama NPCs:

Acolytes, Priests, and more powerful clerics:

- **Healing Cranes (2/day).** Two paper cranes fly 20 feet and dissolve into healing energy on contact, each restoring 1d8 hit points. Both can target one creature or different ones.

Priests and more powerful clerics:

- **Tiger Guardian (1/day).** A paper tiger (**tiger**) comes to life as a guardian and fights for the caster for 1 minute or until destroyed.

Powerful clerics only:

Phoenix Resurgence (1/day): A paper phoenix becomes fire energy that fills a willing creature. If the creature dies within 1 minute, it revives with 25 (5d10) hit points. Enemies in a 10-foot burst must succeed a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 25 (5d10) fire damage.

Note: Ananab, the Republic writer, can provide detailed information about this exotic **class** *if READERS express interest.*

Places of Interest

Tengoku Palace and Kinshi, the forbidden city

From the golden gates of Yamanoma, a path leads to the Tengoku Palace, where the relics of the gods are hidden, along with an array of other mystical items and tameranium.

The road is paved with golden tiles, adorned with arches bearing red lanterns, each marked with the emblem of Fumetsu Eido. Many guardians are on the way, some human monks and priests, others unnatural as Shisa (Lion-dog statues that come to life when intruders approach), and tameranium dragons.

There is another protection on the artifacts. When close to any of them, a hundred other copies appear, and the legends say the guidance for the correct one comes from the pure heart. If the wrong one is taken, a Spirit Guardian possesses one of the samurai statues and attacks the robbers. There are only three objects that can reveal the correct artifact: the Jade Dragon Statuettes.

Jade Dragon Statuette

This detailedly carved statuette, made from deep green jade, depicts a serpentine dragon with eyes of polished obsidian. It fits comfortably in the palm of a hand and feels cool to the touch.

The Jade Dragon Statuette is a magic item imbued with the power to detect magic. When held and activated with a prayer of Fumetsu Eido, the eyes of the dragon glow softly, pulsating in the presence of magical items or spells. It can detect magic within a 30-foot radius for 10 minutes. Then, it needs to recharge its energy at dawn to be used again.

If used near an angelic artifact (including those of Tenshikin), it can reveal the artifact's exact location when the protection is activated, and a hundred copies appear.

Floating Markets

In many cities and villages, traditional shops on boats resemble small red houses anchored in the middle of rivers. Many of these boats sell exotic teas made by rare herbs that can uplift the spirit (its cost range from 50 gp to 200 gp). To activate their powers, on a ceremony, all participants say the word Kampai and drink simultaneously. Then, a ceremonial master casts a specific spell, reciting the name of Tenshikin, and the effects last for 4 hours. The herbs can be obtained in Yama Bunkatsu forest.

The warrior caste commonly consumes:

Tea of Cherry Blossom. The spirit becomes lighter. The creature's speed increases by 10 feet, and it can walk in water and difficult terrain with no penalties.

Tea of Lotus. The spirit becomes resolved. Your attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 17, 18, 19, or 20.

Tea of Plum Blossom. The spirit becomes protected. The creature has advantage on saving throws against spells and gains the Deflect Arrow ability (see monk's class and consider a character level instead of monk level).

Yama Bunkatsu Forest

It a place full of dangers, especially the four Oni Guardians, typically forcing any reason for attacking.

Blue Oni. Guardian of the trees and other plants.

Red Oni. Guardian of animals and wildlife.

Wet Oni. Guardian of streams and waterfalls

Mountain Oni. Guardian of treasures and gems

Many adventurers are hired to get their herbs and explore treasures of the forest, as some sugenjas believe another angelic artifact is hidden within Yama Bunkatsu.

Tiger Monastery

Located atop a cold, hard-to-access mountain, the Tiger Monastery lies hidden within a dense bamboo forest. Although the rigorous cold surrounds the structure, the Ki energy maintains a pleasant temperature within. This structure is built from deep orange and black stones, with some large training grounds and places for meditation. Their main focus is honor, peace, and Ki studies.

Legends tell about the Ancient Tiger ofuda, a special technique, capable of improving the Ki channeling beyond common limitations. Also, at night, monks report hearing the Whispering Bamboo, which is said to speak knowledge from ancient times to those who perform tasks to the spirits guarding it.

Many families of the Goukuden clan dream of their children being admitted to the Monastery. Annually, the Festival of Tiger Masks displays many combats and admits new students from the most capable ones.

Kagemori Village

Located at Yama's southernmost point, Kagemori village has become a haunted place after the unearthing of a cursed Katana. Some believe it is a weapon used during the Ungods' invasion; others assume this weapon came from the demons.

During the day, it is a peaceful but empty village with many arts in porcelain and tapestries. A beautiful lake and cherry blossom trees stand out. At night, all this art becomes distorted, and evil spirits roam the place, seeking to consume souls. Among them are yūrei (vengeful spirits), kappa (water spirits that lure travelers to drown), and kodama (ancient tree spirits bringing misfortune to travelers). A cave leads to a vast labyrinthine dungeon where the katana is believed to be kept, and even nature becomes treacherous (as an example, the cherry blossoms fall continuously, putting the adventurers into a deep slumber).

One common type of creature in the place is the jiangshi, usually with white and green skin and a paper talisman on its head.

Yamanoma

The capital of Yama stands majestic, fit for epic tales; its architecture is built into the slopes of Hihashiyama, as if ascending a stairway to heaven. Its districts, constructed on rising plateaus, mirror

the social hierarchy of its inhabitants, with Tenshikin's palace at the pinnacle. The city has grown and expanded recently because of economic progress, though foreign visitors are still limited.

Resounding gongs mark the rhythm of activities, signaling both regular routines and special events. The high priests receive their Edicts and undertake actions to fulfill Tenshikin's will. Although the city is generally safe, many hidden dangers lurk in the shadows, such as kitsunes, spectral ninjas, corrupted monks, and more.

One interesting place in the city is the Silver Dragon Pagoda. Tenshikin allows criminals seeking redemption to undergo the test of the Silver Dragon. It is a construction that takes individuals to another plane in an immense tower of eleven floors, as large as a city. The test consists of reaching the pagoda rooftop and finding the portal to return to the Material Plane.

Each floor presents a unique test, from combating unusual creatures and guardians to learning and demonstrating specific skills, and resisting temptations to act dishonorably. The challenges become progressively difficult to test the prisoner's convictions, eventually leading them to challenge the Silver Dragon itself. Many die trying to reach the goal, but according to the few survivors, the hardest challenge is the seventh floor, the Lantern Library, capable of driving people insane. The secret of this tower is that people can be released from it through a demonstration of honor or altruism, not by defeating the challenges.

Kitsune

Medium fey (shapechanger), any chaotic

Armor Class: 13
Hit Points: 44 (8d8 + 8)
Speed: 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills: Deception +5, Insight +4, Perception +4, Stealth +5
Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages: Common, Sylvan
Challenge: 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. The kitsune can use its action to polymorph into a human form, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The kitsune has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Innate Spellcasting. The kitsune's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). The kitsune can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- At will: *minor illusion*
- 3/day each: *charm person, disguise self, illusionary script, invisibility, major image*

Actions

Multiattack. The kitsune makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Kitsune

Kitsune are mystical fox spirits known for their cunning and magical abilities. They appear as beautiful humanoids with fox-like features, such as pointed ears and bushy tails. A kitsune's number of tails, which can range from one to nine, indicates its age, wisdom, and magical prowess. With each century of their life, they gain a new tail, and their power increases correspondingly.

Kitsune are inherently magical, capable of shape-shifting and illusion. They often transform into human forms, sometimes living among humans and adopting their customs. In their true form, they display an array of fox-like characteristics.

A kitsune is a formidable opponent in combat due to its agility, cunning, and magical abilities. They are adept at casting illusions to confuse and mislead foes, and they can use their shape-shifting ability to gain the upper hand in various situations. Older kitsune, with multiple tails, have access to more powerful spells and can summon elemental forces. They are also skilled in using their charisma to manipulate and charm individuals, often avoiding conflict through diplomacy and deception.

Creatures Adaptation

To increase the "Yama feeling," you can adapt some oriental creatures to 5e rules, following this guide:

Increased Power. Add 1 to the Challenge Rate for all creatures.

Non-Combat Encounters. Remember that not all encounters with these creatures need to be combative. Some, like the Kodama or Baku, might offer quests, information, or assistance

Empowered versions. You can use other stronger creatures as base. For example, instead of a zombie, the Jiangshi can be a vampire. The special ability can be adapted to:

Essence Drain (3/Day). Jiangshi can use its action to perform an Essence Drain attack. *Melee Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. *Hit:* The target takes 3d6 necrotic damage, and the Jiangshi gains temporary hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt. Additionally, the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest.

Adventure Hooks. Here is a list of small adventure hooks to incorporate the creatures into Yama.

- A secret relic was stolen from the Tiger Monastery by a Tengu, and the monks seek help in retrieving them.
- A Gashadokuro haunts an old battlefield next to the corrupted Mystical Territory
- A Yūrei haunts an old mansion, and the party is hired to investigate its tragic past and find a way to lay it to rest.

Creature	Typical Place	Description	Creature Equivalent	Unique Ability
Baku (CG)	Neshin, the village of dreamers	Dream-eating creatures resembling tapirs.	Giant Spider	**Dream Walk.** Can enter the dreams of a sleeping creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be affected by the *dream* spell.
Dokkaebi (CN)	Forests in Yamanoma region	Goblins known for their trickery and love of challenges.	Goblin	**Illusion Creation (4/Day).** As an action, the Dokkaebi can cast *minor illusion* (spell save DC 12). **Fire Conjuration (3/Day).** As an action, the dokkaebi can cast *burning hands* (spell save DC 13). from the club bangmangi it wields.
Gashadokuro (NE)	Five Rocks	Giant skeletons formed from the bones of the starved or fallen in battle.	Skeleton	**Deathly Rattle (1/day).** As an action, it emits a rattle. Each creature within 60 feet must suceed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turn to end the effect.
Jiangshi (NE)	Kagemori Village	Oriental vampires or zombies.	Zombie	**Life Drain.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The Jiangshi regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.
Kappa (N)	Any river or lakes	Mischievous water demons resembling humanoid turtles.	Water Elemental	**Water Manipulation (1/Day).** The Kappa can cast *control water* (spell save DC 13). Only affects a 20-foot cube of water. **Water Whirlpool 1/Day).** The Kappa can use an action to create a whirlpool in a body of water within 60 feet. The whirlpool is 15 feet in diameter and lasts for 1 minute. Any creature other than the Kappa that starts its turn in the whirlpool must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or take 2d8 bludgeoning damage and be pulled 10 feet toward the center of the whirlpool.
Kodama (N)	Midorinohara Forest	Spirits associated with trees, known for protecting the forest.	Dryad	**Forest Camouflage**: While in a forest, the kodama can take the Hide action as a bonus action and has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. **Nature's Wrath (1/Day).** The Kodama can make the forest to attack. Vines and roots within a 20-foot radius of the Kodama lash out at creatures the Kodama chooses. Each target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage and be restrained until the end of the Kodama's next turn.
Mogwai (CE)	Umay	Demons known for causing harm.	Imp	**Shapechange (2/Day).** As an action, the Mogwai can polymorph into a pixie, sprite or homunculus, gaining the abilities and statistics of the new creature. This transformation lasts for 1 hour
Noppera (N)	Hazarmaveth, the abandoned town	Faceless ghosts, known for startling people with their featureless visage.	Doppelganger	**Faceless (3/Day).** As an action, can cause its face to appear blank. Creatures within 30 feet that see it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of the Noppera's next turn.
Oni (LE)	Yama Bankatsu	Demonic ogres, fierce and horned.	Ogre Mage	**Regeneration**: At the start of its turn, the Oni regains 15 hit points if it has at least 1 hit point.
Tengu (CN)	Higashiyama mountains	Bird-like humanoids, skilled in martial arts.	Kenku	**Razor Feathers.** Once per turn, when the Tengu makes a melee attack, it can release a volley of razor-sharp feathers in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
Yūrei (N)	Any city or village	Ghostly figure, often seeking vengeance or tied to a tragic fate.	Specter	**Soul Drain.** As an action, the Yūrei can target one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3d6 necrotic damage, and the Yūrei regains hit points equal to the total damage dealt.

Rokaru, the Samurai

Rokaru (LG), the most renowned samurai, fought in the Imperial Arenas and achieved many victories, showing the power of the people from Yama. Tenshikin himself declared him the protector of Yama, and he constantly travels across Yama, bringing hope and protection to remote villages. He is very strong in combat, combining discipline and advanced sword fighting to create a unique and devastating combat style.

In a recent investigation, he learned that the city feared the Dragon Clan, an organization that charges people for protection. Deepening his investigation, he discovered some shocking facts. Their leader is a female bauronite dragon who has contact with Tenshikin. Also, while Tenshikin publicly condemns the organization, he has not taken any effective measures to disband the Dragon Clan.

Rokaru is now delving into the reasons behind this, but he treads carefully, aware that he could be declared a traitor and face banishment or execution. Occasionally, he leverages his contacts to discreetly enlist foreign adventurers for gathering information.

Hamura, one of the second in command of the Dragon Clan, ordered to eliminate Rokaru, but none of their assassins were successful yet.

Yokensha, the Bauronite Dragoness

Yokensha (CE), the alluring and seductive bauronite dragoness, reigns over the underworld of Yama. She considers humans as a lesser species that can be expendable troops in a war against the Ungods.

Her main objective is to show Tenshikin how pathetic his idea is to guide humans to evolve into something greater. She believes all honor and justice the people of Yama display is just a way to please their own ego, and all their codes are forgotten when fear or problems appear.

She is the leader of the Dragon Clan but delegates the day-to-day command to Hamura and Ronin Kojik, preferring to observe and entice the humans to fall rather than force it upon them herself.

Aware that evil actions corrupt the human soul and empower the Ungods, she crafted a curse within a tattoo. This curse can transform a deceased individual into a Specter Ninja, preventing the soul from becoming an emogun. Now, she attracts special members banished by their clans and desperate people who seek her out.

She typically speaks some proverb suggesting humans are inferior and expendable. "Even the mightiest river is a slave to the moon." and *"Just as the monkey mimics man, humans can only echo true power."* are examples of them. Strangely, despite all this disdain, many fall in love with her, trying to prove themselves.

She has a strange relationship with Tenshikin; she loves but hates him.

Tsuyoko, the Ninja

Tsuyoko (CN) is one of the most skilled ninjas of the Kageryoshi clan who got involved with Yokensha to achieve one hard mission. Ultimately, her true intention was to gain recognition as the best ninja in the clan, rather than aiding others. Guided by Yokensha, she killed an entire family, supposedly corrupted by the penumbral powers. It was a hard decision, and she hesitated, but in the end, she concluded it would be necessary to save the village.

Upon returning to her clan, she confronted a harsh reality: the family she had killed were merely traders who had refused to pay for the Dragon Clan's protection. She was banished from the Kageryoshi clan, and burdened by the shame of her actions, her father took his own life to spare his other daughter the dishonor.

When Tsuyoko learned that her soul was tainted and she would become a Spectral Ninja when she dies, she dedicated herself to redemption and to finding a way to revert this process.

After successfully completing a critical mission for a high priest, a new ofuda was given to her. *"Save Bushi village from its ominous fate, and your soul will be elevated again."*

Despite her extensive espionage and research during her initial investigation, everything in the village seemed normal. However, recently, something weird started to happen. The citizen's shadows vanished, even in intense light. Now, she needs to piece all the facts together to save the village and herself from a terrible destiny, but she needs help to find out the truth.

Ohris, the Monk

Ohris (NG), a champion from Tanares who stood against the Kemet Invasion, distinguished himself with his strength and mental balance — qualities only master monks from the Tiger Monastery possess. He frequently has visions in his dreams of six strange artifacts merging into one magic sword, and a battle against four indescribable aberrations, which he believes to be the Ungods. This item seems to be very effective against them, and just before the final blow, Ohris awakens.

Before returning to his lands, he had followed some Third Eye bandits to bring these evil persons to justice. In the end, he defeated the group and saved a woman imprisoned by them.

The woman was revealed to be Elarine, a once powerful telepath seeking to live in peace, away from the organization. They went to live in the distant mountains of Yama, where they fell in love.

After sharing information about the artifacts with the high priests, Ohris finds himself unwelcome in the cities, with little support from the clergy. Using her telepathic powers, Elarine tried to help him go deeper into the dreams to uncover truths; however, upon seeing a vision of the Penumbral Father, she fell into a deep coma.

Now, Ohris needs to save Elarine using unique herbs and uncover the truth about his dream, questioning whether it is genuine or manipulated by evil. Meanwhile, he continues to use his powers in the service of honor and good. As he needs to care for Elarine, he must rely on adventurers to help him.

Other Regions

The Undertanares

Below the continent of Tanares stretches a chain of ancient halls, tunnels, and caverns, the Undertanares. This underground region is as large as the continent above, with a network of caverns and chasms cloaked in perpetual darkness. In some regions, bioluminescent fungi cast an ethereal glow onto stalactites and stalagmites, while in others, rivers of magma snake through caverns and halls. Some areas are covered in the reflections of vast crystalline formations, while a few host underground lakes and rivers teeming with eyeless fish and other strange creatures.

In Undertanares, the remnants of the past glory of dwarven civilization merge with the skeletal remains of adventurers who dared venture into its depths. While dangerous, it is also home to many creatures, from monsters and aberrations to dwarven cities, gloomfolk hives, and numerous tribes of goblinoids and ogres. In the dark and corrupted corners of these caverns, the Cult of Shadow Wing establishes their dark temples, occult strongholds, and concealed hideouts. From there, they train cultists, spawn monsters, and worship the Ungods, always hatching plans to destroy Tanares.

The Inhabitants

Goblinoid Tribes. Four tribes of goblinoids, each with its own culture and traditions, populate the Undertanares.

Bloodgod Clan. This tribe includes goblins, hobgoblins, and a few bugbears, notorious for their savage raids on dwarven settlements. Despite a longstanding feud with the dwarves, they even more despise the Shadow Wing cultists for corrupting the underground. They fiercely protect their territories, allowing no uninvited trespassers, but are open to temporary alliances against the Cult. The Bloodgod Clan practices sacrificial rituals to appease their mysterious bloody deity, G'huunzuk the Crimson Maw. They occasionally resort to the capture and sacrifice of dwarves to appease or seek blessings from their deity.

Skullcrusher Clan. A tribe of ogres and bugbears, they value strength and perceive raiding as sacred, asserting that the victors of battles possess plundering rights. Known for brute strength and staunch independence, they form no alliances within Undertanares. Their raids target dwarven settlements, cultist lairs, and other tribal groups alike, always eager to pillage resources. The Skullcrusher Clan boasts a unique tradition of crafting trophies from the skulls of defeated foes, believing they carry their enemies' souls, empowering the holder. For them, defeating another in battle or saving another's life confers the right to take their trophies.

Stonehide Clan. A tribe of goblins and hobgoblins, they are known for their diligence as warriors and miners. They are honor-bound, seeing survival as requiring cooperation, regarding the underground as their sacred home, and respecting the nature and spirits of Undertanares. The Stonehide Clan maintains an age-old alliance with the dwarves, recognizing them as guardians against Penumbral Rifts. The Stonehide Clan's inability to seal rifts was why the alliance was first formed. They collaborate closely with dwarves in protecting the Undertanares against the ungods and often send warriors to safeguard dwarven construction projects. Despite some dwarves' skepticism of these goblinoid allies, the Stonehide Clan persistently upholds its honor, exiling any member who violates their traditions, which, to their dissatisfaction, often joins rival tribes.

Shadoweye Clan. Predominantly composed of goblins, ogres, and a few hobgoblins, often led by ogre mages, they are infamous for annihilating entire settlements with their ferocious, horde-like invasions. The Shadoweye Clan is deeply tied to the Cult of Shadow Wing, frequently conspiring with them in exchange for wealth, territorial gains, and mystical power. Once led by prideful ogre mages, they fell into corruption and madness while searching for power. After accepting offerings from the Cult, the clan became increasingly aggressive and prone to berserker rages. They have a long and profound blood feud with the Skullcrusher Clan and relentlessly pursue them, a rivalry that predates their deal with the Cult.

Gloomfolk. These beings, half-scorpion and half-dark elf have made the Undertanares their home since escaping enslavement in the Penumbral Plane. Their hives are like tribal communities with a strong communal bond and tenacious collective spirit. Built around a hivestone where they store the memories of their ancestors, the gloomfolk are fierce hunters who hate all Ungods' servants. Their relations with other Undertanares inhabitants are based on pragmatism and survival, except for servants of the Ungods, whom they strive to annihilate. The gloomfolk hunt penumbral creatures summoned to the Undertanares, feeding on them for sustenance. They consider these creatures a delicacy vital for their children's healthy growth. Their relationship with the goblinoid tribes varies from hive to hive, but generally, they ignore them unless provoked. However, the pillaging practices of many goblin tribes may often bring them into conflict.

Dwarves. Once the dominant force within the Undertanares, their reign faltered due to internal conflicts. Recently, they have embarked on a mission to restore their former realm, now unified under the name Stonelair. Driven by their desire to regain their past glory, the Lion, Goat, and Dragon clans tirelessly strive to protect Undertanares from the threat of the Penumbral Plane. In this fight against corruption, the dwarves rely on the aid of Stone Spirits - ancestral dwarven spirits blessed by their god, Dorsi, that inhabit animated stone statues. They are not only able to fight but also to slowly close Penumbral Rifts. The dwarves build temples dedicated to Dorsi and place Stone Spirit statues at sites where penumbral rifts have previously opened. Over time, they gradually seal the dangerous breaches.

The dwarves are sworn adversaries of the penumbral creatures, the corrupted duergars, and all Ungods' servants. They often find themselves in conflict with various goblinoid tribes, though not all. At the pinnacle of their power, the dwarven empire sprawled across the Undertanares, spanning the entire continent. They now labor to rebuild and restore their former might.

Duergars. These corrupted dwarves of the Serpent Clan succumbed to vices and sins, lost the blessing of Dorsi, and joined the ranks of the Ungods. Duergars are vicious, selfish, and prideful, yet they are also diligent smiths and skillful warriors. Their clan inhabits some of the deepest areas of the Undertanares, constantly

scheming to bring the downfall of other dwarves' clans. Having conquered the legendary Dorsian Forge, the most powerful mystical forge in Tanares, capable of even crafting artifacts, they now utilize part of its power to build weapons to assault the Stonelair dwarves.

Cultists of Shadow Wing. They maintain numerous hideouts, strongholds, and temples within Undertanares as they prefer to establish their lairs in inaccessible locations, safe from their adversaries, yet retaining the capability to strike or access anywhere in the continent. Often, these places serve to train recruits or bring captured victims for torture. They open Penumbral Rifts to get Emoguns into Undertanares, either to serve them or to be released onto the surface. Their lairs are usually concealed with illusions, situated in hard-to-reach and unknown locations, or heavily fortified, as many forces constantly seek to destroy them.

Dangers of Undertanares

Penumbral Rifts and Penumbral Creatures. The Cult of Shadow Wing continuously strives to open planar breaches into the Penumbral Plane, attracting aberrations into Undertanares. This poses a grave threat to inhabitants and explorers. Various types of emoguns now inhabit the underground, ranging from lone travelers to groups led by cultists. Also, powerful emoguns like penumbral pride, sadness, or fear can establish domains.

Geological Hazards. The environment poses many dangers as treacherous as the creatures within. The caverns are often unstable, with regular cave-ins, which can trap or seriously injure the unwary. Pockets of poisonous or explosive gasses, accumulated from millennia of geological activity, can be unexpectedly found, risking explosions for those who rely on fire for illumination or combat. Underground rivers and lakes are unpredictable, with strong undercurrents capable of sweeping away even the strongest swimmers. The vast caverns and tunnels are also easy to get lost in, particularly for those without experience treading in this region. Deep chasms and pits hidden in the darkness have claimed many lives, and many explorers have lost themselves and starved in the winding, labyrinthine depths, making the region a great danger to the unprepared.

Tribal Disputes. Ancient clashes among the goblinoid tribes often escalate into bloody confrontations. Unwary travelers can quickly become entangled in these perilous conflicts. To survive in Undertanares, one must be cautious about where they tread and who controls each region of the underground world. This includes avoiding the areas claimed by the highly territorial Bloodgod Clan, steering clear of mugging Skullcrusher patrols, and evading the murderous Shadoweye, who may be willing to kill for pure sadistic glee.

Cult of Shadow Wing. The Cult maintains a significant presence in Undertanares and often directly or indirectly influences the events within the underground realms. The two sects most commonly found here are the Spawners, specializing in breeding monsters through magic and alchemy, and the Purple Witches, particularly the arachnes, who establish vast nests within sections of the Undertanares caverns, protected by giant spiders. These territories are often under the surveillance of Bellara herself, who frequently visits the Material Plane to advance her sinister agenda.

Continent of Darkall

The uncharted and inhospitable continent of Darkall, distantly removed from the familiar soils of Tanares, has remained inaccessible for millennia. The Eternal Storm, raging across the oceans, has been a barrier between the two continents, rendering any crossing impossible, including by magic. It ceased two decades ago.

The varied geography of Darkall spans snow-capped mountain ranges, rolling green hills, and dense, dark forests punctuated by barren wastelands — grim testaments to unending demonic wars. Despite its horrors, Darkall has a strange allure, beckoning the brave or foolhardy enough to explore. Its history, marked with countless battles and lost treasures, enthralls many an adventurer, as lost knowledge and relics hidden within the Kepesh ruins prove irresistible to wizards and relic hunters.

Once part of a vast continent with Tanares, this land was the initial home of the Kepesh people. The cataclysmic power of the First Malrokian Curse sundered the great continent in two, giving birth to Darkall and Tanares. For many years, the Kepesh lived in isolation as all crossing was thwarted by the Eternal Storm, a mystical barrier Thyra and the Draconic Council created. The situation changed when the Kemets constructed the first Vandanamalika. Although not at full power, it was sufficient to bypass the storm via teleportation, leading most of the Kemet people to migrate to Darkall, seeking to fulfill their prophecies.

Upon arrival, following the ancient prophecies, the Kemets began a long extermination war against the Kepesh, devastating them. This war left the land forever scarred as the Kepesh, in their final act, opened portals to the Plane of Abyss, allowing hordes of demons to invade the continent as a last act of vengeance against the Kemet s.

The enduring conflict that ensued with the demons caused the Kemet to be in constant battle, waging their existence. This led them to become even more zealous about their ancient prophecy, hoping to escape the demons in a promised fertile land that would be their paradise. This prophecy foretold of a future-seeing leader who would guide them across the ocean to return and conquer Tanares, finding their homelands, glory, and ultimate destiny. They believe Gullog is the one described.

Regions of Darkall

The North. This region, nestled among rugged highlands and expansive woodlands, serves as the Kemets' heartland—a vibrant tapestry of bustling Kemet city-states. Amid their ostentatious prosperity, lingering pyramidal ruins offer a stark contrast, representing remnants of the Kepesh's past. The upper echelons of Kemet society reside in this region, leading comfortable lives with undead servants attending to their every need.

After the Kemet Invasion, many people left for Tanares to live under Baraelmer.

The Kemet has many people working in the war industry, as they fight on two fronts: against the demons of the south and in Tanares to fulfill Lady Bás' desires. They focus on necromancy, siege weapons, and warships. Some strategists believe that if they could make the Kemet cities in Darkall fall, it would deny Gullog of his line of resources, and force him to retreat.

Central Darkall. This war-torn region presents a disturbing blend of fortified strongholds, walled cities, and skeletal Wasteland where the Kemets' undead legions maintain unceasing vigil. The air, heavy with an oppressive aura of necromancy, carries the spectral breath of restless spirits. These undead forces form the first line of defense against the demonic invasions plaguing these lands in a constant war. The Kemets in this region are usually glory-seeking warriors or lower-caste individuals who couldn't secure a place in the affluent North.

The combination of unholy and demonic energy impacts the lands and weather, making shifting terrains, rains of blood, pools of acids, and many other environmental dangers. One unique region, the Elemental Maelstrom, features elements with altered properties, like fire, freezing creatures, lightning making the creatures poisoned, and many other phenomena. Whenever damage applies to a creature, change its type randomly, except if it is piercing, slashing, or bludgeoning.

Despite the difficult conditions, these lands need inhabitants to produce sustenance and other resources for the many Kemet soldiers and necromancers who keep the demons from going further north. As a result, many are forced to live in these lands, where countless lives are lost each year due to the ongoing conflict.

Also, some adventurers search the area, looking for relics of fallen Kemets.

Demonic Lands. To the south lie the Demonic Lands. Here, two ancient portals, remnants of the Kepesh's vengeful curse, serve as conduits to the Plane of Abyss. From them, demons surge forth, their eyes aflame with a thirst for conquest. Demon Lords control these hordes from mighty strongholds surrounding the portals, devising intricate strategies against the Kemets. As demons face permanent death on Tanares if slain after crossing these portals, they are reluctant to merely throw their forces into battle, resulting in a slow, methodical war.

The territory has nine fortresses, one for each major layer of the Abyss. Each fortress houses a demon lord and a portal to its specific layer, sustained by a powerful abyssal artifact, such as the Whip of the Tainted. Even during the War against the Kemet, the demon lords attack each other, occasionally even employing mercenaries to weaken other demon lords and the Kemet.

The deserts of the Demonic Lands are filled with ancient treasures from distant past eras and artifacts from slain Kemet warriors.

Legends tell of 'The Cave of the Damned,' an immense dungeon where prisoners Kemet are taken to be tortured, as their pain and suffering empower the demons. Some speculate that Ascaran's sister is imprisoned there, her agony providing even greater power to the stronger demons.

Adventures in Darkall

- The goals of the Demon Lords remain a mystery, as do the politics of the Kemet elite in the Northern cities.
- The common folk of Central Darkall, perpetually in need of heroes, might be fostering rebellious factions against the ruling class.
- The spirits of the dead still roam the war-ravaged fields; many souls search for eternal rest but are bound by magic or unsolved matters.
- Kepesh lore and ancient artifacts might be found in their most

Penumbral Mountain
The North
Northreach
Ymthid Village
Grimnath Village
City of Prophecy
Kepesh Tombs
Eaststorm
Port of Bones
Bonecradle
Skeleton's Retreat
City of Ancients
Port of the Moon
Central Darkall
Westfortress
Cursed Valley
Cindergate
Sunkenbone Sea
Unapproachable Ruins
Seahold
Ba-Ka Ruins
Fortress of Abyss
Hellmouth
Dark Island
Corrupted Groves
Abyssal Meet
Demon's Soul Bazaar
Hellkeep
Demonic Lands
Unholy Desert
Pharao's Demise
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secluded ruins in the Demonic Lands. These are often guarded by demons, curses, and magical protections securing great unclaimed treasures.

- Darkall holds many secrets, which Emperor Baleroth and many others from Tanares are keen to uncover. Different factions and organizations' plans for this region remain shrouded in secrecy.

Mystical, The Wasteland

Mystical, a vast desolation stretches across the territory between Yama, Sindile, Tsvetan, the Central Empire, and the Seashores. Once a symbol of magical knowledge and prosperity, the region of the Mystical Kingdom bore witness to the devastation of the Malrokian Curse. The cataclysm turned these lands into the infamous Wasteland, tainted by the Ungodly energy, manifesting as a toxic lilac mist that subjected living beings to hallucinations, stupefaction, and horrific mutations.

Though the Heroes of the Wasteland have cleared much of this lethal mist by defeating the Cult of Shadow Wing, which harnessed the soul of the Avatar Dragon Zarumag to channel the Penumbral Plane's power into Tanares, the curse left an enduring stain, casting a permanent purple hue over the terrain. The once-fertile heart of Mystical bears a necrotic energy, inhibiting life and rendering healing magic ineffective. This barrenness is exacerbated by the reappearance of the Mystical Kingdom's deceased inhabitants, clawing from their graves as undead.

Undead Denizens

While most of the undead that arise are mindless beings, aimlessly attacking living beings, some corpses become powerful sentient undead with unknown sinister objectives. Several elite figures from the ancient kingdom have returned as malevolent vampires, banshees, and even powerful liches. These great undead can even control their mindless counterparts,amassing vast legions for mysterious plots. Some of them operate alone, while others collaborate towards a common goal. The factions of Tanares are still grappling to understand their cause.

Any deceased body left in this region is susceptible to reanimation after an unpredictable duration, ranging from hours to decades. While details are scarce, the truth is that powerful individuals transform into formidable undead beings, while ordinary folks often become skeletons or zombies. Even ancient skeletal remains can resurrect in this cursed land, a fact that has led the Cult of Shadow Wing to seek the remains of long-gone champions, aiming to bring them to Mystical so they can become powerful beings to wreak havoc on Tanares, yet the Cult hold control over them. Even the most skilled Kemet necromancers have tried without success.

Mystical's Landscape

Central Mystical. Where the Kingdom once stood tall, now spectral ruins shape the vista. Among these remnants, arcane dungeons, grand towers, and enigmatic halls hide fearsome guardian golems, undead hordes, and a multitude of magical traps that guard treasures and legendary knowledge. The grand city of Arcana, once Mystical's capital, lies at its center. Here, its undead seem to serve a mysterious undead ruler seated on the former throne of the Mystical Kingdom.

Borders. Although less devastated by the curse, these outer regions still display signs of corruption. While fewer undead spawns here, it is still threatened by undead legions emanating from the Wasteland's center, often marching to neighboring regions like Sindile, Tsvetan, and Yama, their motives largely a mystery.

Queen Tyreen

Among the numerous stories surrounding the Wasteland, murmurs abound of the resurgence of Queen Tyreen, elder sister of Emperor Baleroth and the last monarch of Mystical Kingdom. Some say she survived, preserved by protective magic that only released her after the dominance of the Penumbral Plane was reduced. They say she is now enlisting adventurers to recover ancient orbs, Mystical Kingdom's royal insignias, asserting they can cleanse her homeland's curse.

However, reports of her vary greatly. Some view her as a mere legend, others suspect she is a pretender sorcerer, and a few think she was reanimated as a lich and is using illusions to mask her form while seeking vengeance. Nonetheless, a small group remains hopeful, trusting she genuinely has the power to rejuvenate the Mystical Kingdom.

Special Rule - The Wasteland

In the **Central Wasteland**, living creatures cannot regain hit points through any means, including healing magic, spells, abilities, or items.

One can still gain temporary hit points, but resting does not recover HP, and one cannot spend Hit Dice to recover hit points during rests.

In the **Wasteland Borders**, diseases can be cured as normal, and healing and hit points recovery is not completely negated but still reduced by half (rounded down).

Adventures in Mystical

- Many adventurers, lured by tales of immense wealth and arcane knowledge, brave this cursed domain in their search of magic items.
- Neighboring cities and realms often hire adventurers to hunt and eliminate undead lords amassing forces at their borders.
- Some individuals may seek Queen Tyreen to aid her or to uncover the true story behind her, journeying into Mystical, especially into the ruined capital, Arcana.
- Many Cult of Shadow Wing sects frequently establish bases in this accursed territory. Their Ungod patrons shield them from the land's energies. Consequently, the Draconic Council and the Celestianist Church regularly commission mercenaries and adventurers to investigate and dismantle such strongholds.

Chapter 6
Organizations

Bank of Hajal

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Core Concept: The Bank of Hajal is a renowned banking institution known for protecting valuable assets within its highly secure planar vaults and for employing powerful, mystically bound Djinn guards.

Headquarters: The Great Bank of Hajal in the Imperial domains
Leadership: Tiwilade, the Appraiser
Typical Members: Soulborns, financial specialists, wise low-born nobles, charismatic negotiators, appraisers, former mercenaries, and security guards
Typical Vestments: Tailored coats with detailed embroidery, rich velvet waistcoats, fine silk cravats, and tailored wool or silk trousers.
Typical Locations: Grand halls adorned with marble columns, mahogany counters, glowing runes, djinn attendants, and massive magical doors that lead to rows of shining planar safes.

The Greatest Bank of Tanares

Founded by the soulborns, the Bank of Hajal grew from a system designed to protect possessions across their reincarnations into a prestigious institution that safeguards valuable assets, lends money, and invests in guilds and businesses across Tanares. Their planar vaults, accessible from any city with a unique specific key, attract clients from diverse realms. Despite the recent breaches by extraplanar forces during the Kemet Invasion, the bank's reputation for "maximum security and easy access" remains largely unscathed. Under the diligent supervision of Tiwilade, the Bank of Hajal aims to safeguard its assets, establish a presence in every city, and ultimately control the economic flux across the entirety of Tanares.

Methods

Secure Vaults and Magical Security Systems. The operation's backbone lies in its vaults and security systems. Each vault exists in the Astral Plane and is fortified with magical barriers, guardian creatures, and wards to prevent breaches. Despite these extensive security measures, the bank was breached during the Kemet Invasion. The nature of the stolen goods remains undisclosed, inciting speculation and numerous investigations. The bank continues to track the lost items and often recruits adventurers to recover a located item. The bank desires to recover all lost items to uphold its reputation and assure clients that they will never lose their possessions.

Financial Services and Wealth Evaluation. The bank accommodates the financial needs of its clients through services ranging from currency exchange to loans. They employ proficient appraisers with a keen eye for valuing diverse assets. However, the bank can resort to harsh measures when debts are not repaid, regardless of whether the debtor is a country, a business, or an individual. Measures can range from hiring mercenaries to apply pressure or even employing assassins to make an example out of those who refuse to pay their debts. Occasionally, adventurers may be enlisted to aid individuals persecuted by the bank, especially if they have been robbed or cheated and are not responsible for the payment failure.

Magical Identification and Confidentiality. The Bank employs magical and documental verification to ensure client identity and transaction security, requiring the individual vault key for every transaction. Divinatory spells are utilized to authenticate ownership and transaction details, guaranteeing client privacy. However, unscrupulous employees may occasionally leak confidential information for personal gain, particularly to criminal organizations or spying nations. These breaches often start external investigations, and the bank is always willing to pay well for those who can identify the offenders and recover the leaked information, even if it requires silencing some individuals in the process.

International Relationships

The Bank of Hajal is the primary financial institution in Tanares and maintains deep ties with the Empire. It has recently financed various structural investments in the Republic, dwarven operations in Stravian, and the construction of several Kepesh cities. Consequently, it holds significant sway in international politics, as many nations have debts with the bank. This influence is often used to pressure nations into enforcing strict laws against unpaid debts and let the bank act with more force than typically permitted by law.

The Ungods pose a considerable threat to the bank's investments. Thus, the Bank funds many organizations devoted to studying or combating the Ungods and their servants, as the destruction they bring often causes substantial losses to the bank.

While the Bank of Hajal does not directly combat the Ungods, they offer special credit lines to adventurers who demonstrate commitment against the forces of the Cult of Shadow Wing or against penumbral creatures. They are also willing to finance or loan for expeditions to the Penumbral Plane and support all efforts to research or combat the penumbral creatures and their masters.

Extraplanar Workers

One of the Bank of Hajal's main features is its unusual security force: Djinn guards and workers summoned into this realm through high-level magic. These djinns are bound to the mortal realm by tameranium bracelets inscribed with unique blue-glowing runes.

These djinns are not enslaved; rather, they have signed a service contract. As part of this agreement, they receive substantial quantities of tameranium and bauronite, rare minerals found only in the Plane of Tanares. They commit their service for a century—a span that may seem significant to mortals but is momentary to a djinn.

The tameranium bracelets are instrumental in maintaining the summoned djinns' existence in this realm. These powerful beings would not agree to work under conditions that could risk their lives. Given their method of arrival into the mortal

plane—via summoning rather than portal traversal—they do not risk death. If they fall in battle, they merely return to their home plane, similar to any summoned entity. However, if their bracelets are destroyed, the djinn are instantly returned home, prematurely ending their contracts, and causing substantial financial loss to the bank.

The djinns' disregard for their own safety makes them formidable in combat. However, due to their high summoning cost, the bank employs them in battle only when needed, often preferring to hire mercenaries and adventurers. Nevertheless, the presence of djinn security effectively deters potential attacks on the bank's branches. Smaller branches typically employ 1d4 djinns, whereas medium branches usually have at least 1d6+5. The bank's major branches, such as the headquarters in Hajal, maintain a force of up to 1d10+10 djinns. Occasionally, a bank manager makes mistakes, and it is used by djinn to break free from its contract. In this case, the creature may cause problems in the Material Plane, requiring experienced adventurers to stop it.

Lines of Credits and Services

Usually, the person in any bank agency is received by female dwarves, using standard phrases like "What can I do for you today?". Then, during the wait, some illusions create images of rich people and their jingle:

"Time flies by, days rush past,
Yet the Vault of Hajal stands everlast."

They offer many services: Life insurance, weapon insurance, loans, and investments.

Bank Services

Life Insurance (150 gp/year): *If you die, the bank pays 500 gp for material components of the resurrection spell or twice that amount to your family if you cannot be resurrected.*

Sword Insurance (pay half its cost): *If your weapon is lost or damaged, you can get its full price. However, only if the investigation proves that it was not done in a malicious way. Often, there is a 20 to 40% chance that the bank will find some flaw to contest your claim.*

Loan: *You can get from 500 to 10000 GP (usually about 500 gp per level, but it may change depending on fame and estimates of survival and collaterals). Each month, it charges 5% of fees.*

Vault: *You can use a vault for an entire year. The fee depends on the size:*

- **Small vault (2 feet cubic):** *10 gp / year*
- **Medium vault (5 feet cubic):** *120 gp / year*
- **Large vault (10 feet cubic):** *850 gp / year*
- **Huge vault (15 feet cubic):** *2500 gp / year*
- **Gargantuan vault (20 feet cubic):** *5500 gp / year*

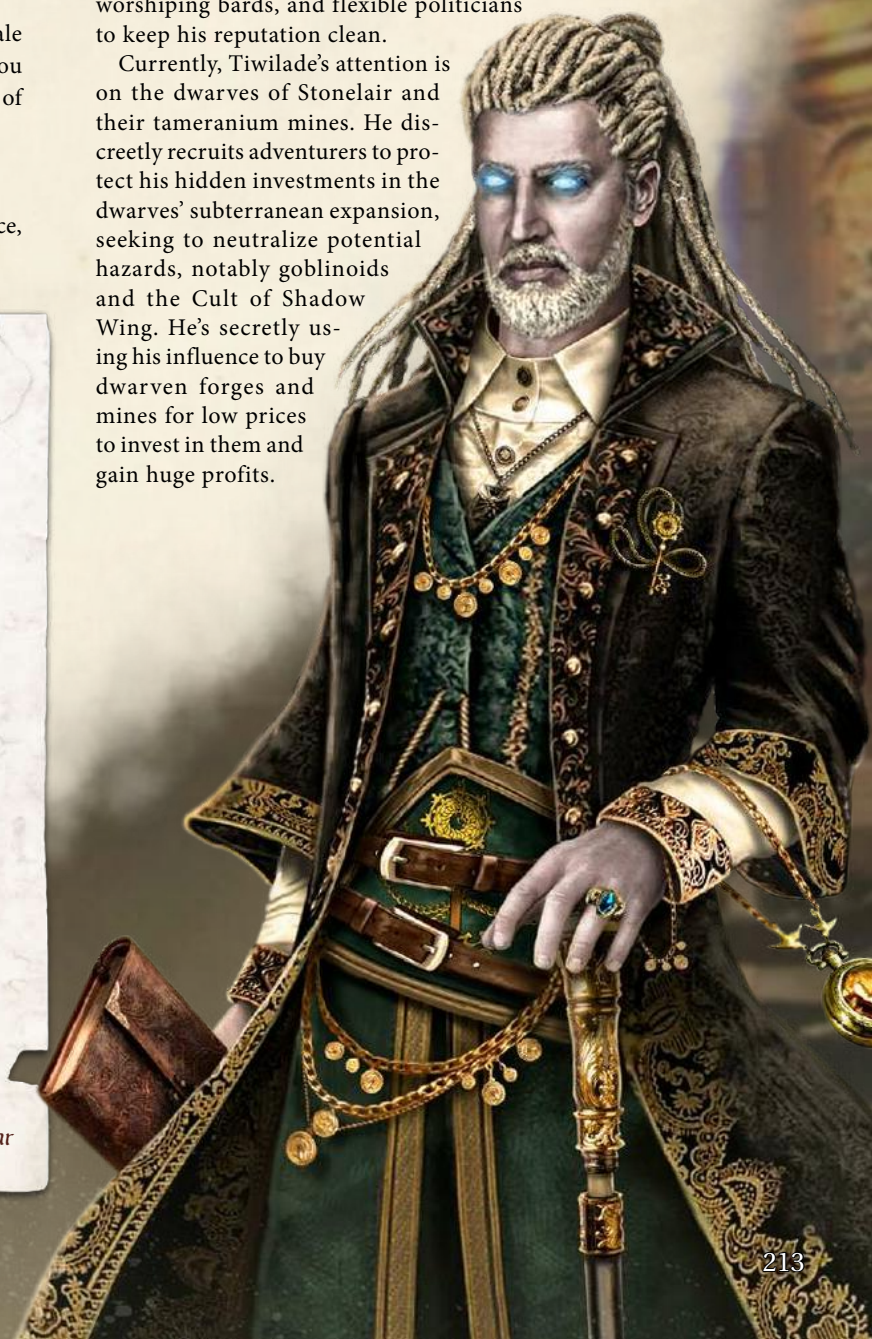
Tiwilade, Hajal Financial Tycoon

Tiwilade (NE), among the most renowned soulborns, traces his line of reincarnations back to his reincarnation as a dwarf known for his appraising skills and for amassing gems and the coveted tameranium ore. In subsequent lives, his reputation grew, eventually marking him as Tanares' leading financial baron. One of the founders of the Bank of Hajal, he wanted to protect his assets for future incarnations, having endured substantial losses in earlier lives.

Full of sophistication and etiquette, he is an intelligent businessman perpetually on the hunt for profitable ventures. His commitment to protecting his assets is over to his own life; he perceives death merely as a brief interlude before continuing his projects. An accomplished negotiator, Tiwilade artfully convinces others of their advantageous position, while maximizing his own gains. His concealed prosthetic eye is a magical tool that allows him to discern magical attributes and accurately appraise an item's value.

Tiwilade's concern for people is strictly transactional. Skillfully avoiding direct ties to questionable activities, he maintains a robust shield of documentation, astute lawyers, worshiping bards, and flexible politicians to keep his reputation clean.

Currently, Tiwilade's attention is on the dwarves of Stonelair and their tameranium mines. He discreetly recruits adventurers to protect his hidden investments in the dwarves' subterranean expansion, seeking to neutralize potential hazards, notably goblinoids and the Cult of Shadow Wing. He's secretly using his influence to buy dwarven forges and mines for low prices to invest in them and gain huge profits.



Bloodbound

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Core Concept: A network of powerful nobility and merchants exerting secret influence through mafia-style cooperation. Their loyalty is bound by an artifact that enables their leaders to share vitality, resulting in extraordinary resilience.

Headquarters: Bauron's Paradise Casino, in Goldraft city.

Leadership: Gustigh Redfield

Typical Members: Corrupt nobles, influential merchants, ruthless goons, and individuals driven by avarice.

Typical Vestments: Impeccably tailored suits or noble attire; the higher one is in the hierarchy, the more luxurious the jewelry they display to signify their power and wealth.

Typical Bases: Opulent mansions for leaders, while common goons and servants operate out of inconspicuous sheds in remote areas.

Mafia and Blood

The Bloodbound is a clandestine organization of nobles and wealthy merchants, seeking to maintain control over their territories in the wake of the Kemet Invasion. To preserve their wealth and power amid the significant changes in Tanares' political landscape, they established an organization intended to exploit the situation to their advantage. They guaranteed the loyalty of their ten leaders using an ancient artifact discovered by Gustigh during the war, which allows those who imprint their blood on it to share vitality. This made their blood oath not only political but also physical - their life forces are connected, and injuries are shared equally. This binding ritual encourages a sense of unity and obligation among leading members, compelling them to protect one another at all costs. Their primary objective is to expand their network, recruiting more influential figures to ensure a firm grip on power.

Methods

Extortion and Coercion. They intimidate businesses and influential individuals to accumulate wealth and power. For example, they might threaten a prominent merchant into surrendering control over a crucial trading route, or they may operate a protection racket. These situations often lead to pleas for help from adventurers, as local authorities are often perceived as unreliable.

Political Influence and Corruption. They infiltrate positions of authority, manipulating laws and policies to serve their interests. A city guard might secretly work for them, sabotaging efforts to uncover the Bloodbound's criminal activities. Higher-ranking officials often ask for external assistance to investigate these matters, as local forces are usually too terrified or trapped by the mafia's power to act effectively.

Information Trading. They gather, trade, and exploit valuable information for influence. This knowledge is used to blackmail powerful individuals, such as high-ranking city officials, enabling the Bloodbound to gain control of territories while remaining hidden. Adventurers may need to count on the Bloodbound's information, leading them to overlook their principles and work for them or pay them. Alternatively, they must find a way to extract the necessary information. In some cases, blackmailed individuals may seek the help of trustworthy adventurers to escape the mafia's grasp.

The Bloodbound and Ungods

The Bloodbound maintains a calculated distance from the Ungods. Although they realize the immense power of these deities, they also understand the risks of becoming pawns in their evil games. Instead, they manipulate various factions and organizations, taking advantage of the chaos caused by the Ungods.

The tense political climate following the end of the Imperial Age makes their diplomatic and political skills highly desired. They exploit these tensions, using weak bureaucrats and authorities to advance their goals. They maintain a careful balance, ensuring that their actions remain hidden and their true intentions obscured.

All factions view the Bloodbound as a threat, as they steadily extend their influence across territories. However, none is willing to exert the necessary effort to oppose them directly.

An Immortal Mafia

The shared vitality among the Bloodbound's leaders gives them an aura of near-immortality. Their resilience is amplified, they do not age, and they are immune to poison and curses, making them formidable adversaries. Their constant awareness of each other's physical harm encourages a unity rarely seen among criminal organizations. The threat of the artifact's destruction upon a member's death hangs over them, forcing their protection of each other at all costs.

From noble courts to shady casinos, from protection rackets to human trafficking, and from assassinations to bribes, their influence permeates all levels of society. Their underworld's intricate structure, their strict code of silence, and their emphasis on familial loyalty, all contribute a unique layer to the Bloodbound's appeal. Whether it involves infiltrating their ranks, uncovering their activities, protecting key witnesses, or rescuing loved ones from their clutches, dealing with the Bloodbound is always dangerous because they have a group of muscles ready to deal with enemies or fix problems. Sometimes, from a dark chariot, henchmen with crossbows firing through a small window can eliminate targets. Others, thugs, can directly attack the unwanted persons.

Don Gustigh, the Bloodbound Boss

Don Gustigh Redfield (NE) is one of the most influential nobles of the Imperial Capital and secretly the boss of the Bloodbound Mafia. He conducts business in all Tanares, particularly within the Empire and Republic, and owns the premier casino in the Capital.

His crimes range from smuggling illicit goods to extorting shop owners for protection, but his efficacious crime control has earned Emperor Baleroth's approval, even though not declared.

To Gustigh, power and wealth come second only to the love he harbors for his daughter Cheryl, and his lover, Bromeliad. Every decision is made with the intent to provide safety for Cheryl and lavish Bromeliad with riches. Even as he manipulates and controls others for gain, Gustigh demonstrates loyalty to those he holds close.

Gustigh's latest grand scheme involves exploiting a penumbral rift and an artifact stolen from the Cult of Shadow Wing. The mystical tool allows the user to lure penumbral miseries, rat-like creatures from the Penumbra, which he is using to infest the houses, causing panic and driving property prices down, allowing him to purchase, demolish, and rebuild for profit. Locals are desperate to eradicate the infestation, searching for adventurers, while Gustigh is looking for more capable mercenaries to venture into the Penumbral Plane to escort his wizard henchman to find and lure more penumbral miseries to the city.

The Bloodbound Chalice

[Unique Artifact]

The ten leaders of the Bloodbound experience the following effects from being bound to the chalice:

- Immunity to poison and curses, as well as the poisoned condition.
- Immunity to aging, be it natural or magical.
- All damage sustained by one of them is divided evenly among all ten *(rounded up - and healing is not shared)*.

They always know the direction and distance to another of the ten, who it is, and whether it is under physical harm. If one of them reaches 0 HP, all others fall unconscious with 1 HP, and the artifact is permanently destroyed.

To bind with the artifact, one must shed blood upon it and swear eternal loyalty to the others. The Bloodbound Chalice can bind up to 20 people, but the organization prefers to limit the number of connections to minimize the risk of one member's death resulting in the chalice's destruction.

Celestianist Church

Alignment: Lawful Good

Core Concept: The preeminent religious institution in Tanares, devoted to the deities Tamera and Bauron.

Headquarters: Celestianist Cathedral of Skybell

Leadership: High Cardinal Taram, Cardinal Jocasta the Pure (Tamera Sect), and Ellen Gideoni (Bauron Sect)

Typical Members: Predominantly humans from the Empire and the Republic, including healers, druids, priests, philanthropists, judges, warriors, hunters of evil creatures, and inquisitors. Together, they form the Church's main support.

Typical Vestments: For the Tamerian Sect, immaculate white and gold robes adorned with Tamera's sun symbol; for the Bauronian Sect, simple and practical purple robes displaying Bauron's moon symbol.

Typical Bases: Grand, white-hued cathedrals for Tamera's followers, fortified, dark-hued cathedrals for Bauron's followers.

Introduction and Goals

The Celestianist Church's faith centers on worshiping Tamera, the Goddess of Life, and Bauron, the Moonlord. The Church aims to cultivate a balance between light and darkness, protection and punishment, day and night, while protecting Tanares from the corrupting influence of the Ungods. High Cardinal Taram leads the entire Church, Cardinal Jocasta the Pure oversees the Tamerian Sect, and Ellen Gideoni directs the Bauronian Sect.

Previously known as the Evolutionist Church, the institution followed the Evolutionist doctrine for over a millennium before a significant reform took place nearly two decades ago. The Reformation was sparked by the archangel Ascaran's return from the divine battlefield against the Ungods. He exposed internal corruption and manipulation of sacred scriptures by members secretly affiliated with the Cult of Shadow Wing.

This Reformation purged many corrupt individuals from the Church, including the influential High Cardinal Gideoni, who was replaced by High Cardinal Taram. While Taram revised the scriptures based on Ascaran's revelations and many corrupt individuals were apprehended, Gideoni escaped. Hidden members of the Shadow Wing cult remain within the Church.

Taram, Ellen, and Jocasta are dedicated to restoring the power that the Church lost during the Reformation and seeking to eliminate any remaining corrupt members. Ellen's situation is especially complicated, being the daughter of former High Cardinal Gideoni, leading many to question her true intentions.

Despite some loss of power, the Church remains one of Tanares' most powerful and wealthy institutions, holding ancient knowledge, impressive mystical artifacts, substantial influence over the population, and a mighty army of clerics and paladins.

Methods

Worship of Duality. The core of the Celestianist Church practice is the dual worship of Tamera and Bauron. The clergy, composed of priests from both sects, embodies the balance between mercy and justice, representing the unity and harmony between these two deities. Trained in the arts of healing, combat, theology, and diplomacy, they prove invaluable both within temples and in battles against the Ungods.

Preaching and Politics. With Celestianism widely accepted in Tanares, the Church uses its influence to promote teachings and spearhead initiatives, expanding its number of sacred temples and cathedrals. However, the Church's significant political force, knowledge, and wealth occasionally result in accusations of corruption and attempts to control the populace.

Guardians of Knowledge. Serving as guardians of ancient lore and texts, the Celestianist Church is essential in preserving information about the world's creation, the nature of the Ungods, and strategies to counter their corruption. Part of their responsibility involves maintaining records of births, deaths, and personal information such as wealth status, personality traits, illnesses, and criminal activities to monitor potential corruption. While some view this intrusion into private lives with concern, the Church argues that it's essential for protection against the Ungods. However, whispers circulate that some corrupt Church members exploit this information for personal advantage, leading to several internal investigations in recent years.

Enemies and Allies of the Church

The Celestianist Church firmly opposes the Ungods, considering their influence a corruption to be eradicated. They are part of the Allied Forces, aiming to bring back King Malrok to aid in the battle against the Ungods. While historically they were allied with the Empire, the Church's relationship has cooled since the Reformation, culminating in their joining of the Allied Forces. Although the Emperor views the Church as a political adversary, his opposition is restrained by the populace's ongoing devotion to Tamera and Bauron. The Emperor seeks to restrict the Celestianist Reform, and return the Church to its Evolutionist roots, which previously supported his government.

Orders of Tamera

The Seeds of Life. As humble servants of Tamera, they draw wisdom from nature and the ties of community, cultivating life in its multiple forms. Providing both spiritual and physical aid to the farmers, their fundamental understanding of agriculture becomes a vital part of the heart of the communities. They protect the community against plagues on the crops, discords among the community, and even hidden cultists.

The Sons of Tamera. Beacons of benevolence, the Sons of Tamera breathe life back into the wounded and sick. Their healing arts are provided indiscriminately, aiding both the needy and the rich. However, their services are not without cost, especially for the wealthy, whose generous donations support the order. They also record information about all persons they heal. Their

noble appearance and wealth attract envy, intrigue, and even impostors intent on exploiting their reputation and knowledge.

The Scribes. As the theological intellects of the Tamera sect, they delve deep into divine mysteries, seeking comprehension of the Ungods and ways to combat their servants effectively. Their scholarly pursuits walk a fine line between wisdom and heresy, constantly threatened by the Cult of Shadow Wing. They count on adventurers for protection and to find important relics, offering helpful knowledge in return.

The Enlightened. Bearing Tamera's torch, they venture into the world's shadow-streaked corners. Their divine prowess illuminates the path for those lost in the darkness, serving as a beacon for the desperate and needy. Often, they integrate into adventuring groups, extending their reach, but their righteous crusade could incite conflict with hidden forces, wary of their influence.

Orders of Bauron

The Awakened. The Awakened are shadow warriors, solitary hunters who sneak under the obsidian cloak of night. As adept strategists and combatants, they challenge penumbral creatures and aberrations with determination and effectiveness. They make frequent assaults on the Penumbral Plane and are always open to hiring additional help for important missions.

The Heralds. The Heralds, the representatives of Bauron's justice, influence the courts and arenas of the Republic and Empire. They preside over legal matters, serving as arbiters both in the bloody sands of the arena and within the quiet halls of the judiciary. However, their significant influence and authority may render them susceptible to political manipulation, assassination attempts, or moral dilemmas challenging their core principles.

The Inquisition. As the bearers of holy retribution, the Inquisition hunts down those whose hearts and minds have been corrupted by the Ungods. Striking with the discipline of a battle-hardened army, they purge Tanares of its corrupt souls, guiding the evil towards divine justice. However, their relentless pursuit of purgation can often blur the line between the guilty and the innocent or discover a threat from within their own ranks.

The Spiritual Guides. Mysterious and silent as the graves they tend, they stand against the Ungods' spectral influence. Absorbed in studies of spirits and necromancy, they offer protections against the shadows that dance at the periphery of life and death. During their solemn duties, there may arise a arise a vengeful ghost, a disturbance within the spirit realm, or an unhallowed resurrection that requires intervention, usually from strong adventurers.

Corruption in the Church

The Celestianist Church faces a significant hurdle in its effort against internal corruption. The Cult of Shadow Wing utilizes a powerful and macabre ritual to conceal its infiltrators from magical detection within the Church. Members of the Purple Witches or the Hidden Cult, trained for infiltration, are subject to a ritual that traps the soul and memories of a real priest, who is sacrificed. This fusion of identities allows the cultists to pass all magical tests undetected. The captive soul serves as a perfect disguise, hiding the cultist's true nature, as divination spells will only identify the bound soul of the sacrificed priest, devoid of deception, evil, or corruption.

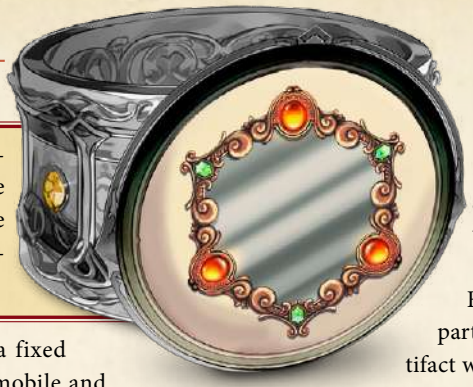
Leading the counter-effort against this insidious strategy are Cardinal Jocasta and Ellen Gideoni, supported secretly by High Cardinal Taram. Together, they head the Light Inquisitors, a secret group dedicated to unmasking and removing these evil infiltrators. They employ a unique method, relying not on magic but on human intuition and investigation. Often, they must seek external assistance, enlisting the services of adventurers.

Anomalies in behavior, questionable relationships, or unanticipated ascensions within the Church's hierarchy become their clues to potential corruption. However, their actions must be delicate, as too overt a pursuit could cause discord within the Church, leading to accusations of paranoia or even tyranny.

Meanwhile, the Cult of Shadow Wing perpetually seeks ways to augment its infiltration and sabotage the Church's attempts at purification. It manipulates the Church's bureaucratic machinery, instills doubt among members, and lays false trails to confuse the Inquisitors. It sets the stage for a quiet war, where each piece of information may be a weapon, every ally could be a traitor, and every decision may determine survival.

Finally, if a cultist dies, the captive soul is released, and a black mark appears on the deceased's body, serving as the only tangible sign of this scheme.

Collectors



Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Core Concept: Small psychic artificers who scavenge relics from the Penumbral Plane while avoiding the servants of the Ungods and the sinister emoguns that live there.

Headquarters: They don't have a fixed headquarters, preferring to stay mobile and not remain in the same location for too long.

Leadership: Each nomadic group is led by its own Elders, who are wielders of powerful artifacts and possess extensive magical knowledge. They guide the younger members.

Typical Members: Known as collectors, they are all small, agile beings with reflective metallic skin.

Typical Vestments: Their clothes are concealing, simple but ample, and suitable for carrying artifacts and various objects.

Typical Bases: They have small, fortified hideouts in the Penumbral Plane with multiple secret exits. These bases are always used temporarily.

Collector Communities

The collectors, survivors of a world consumed by the Ungods, are elusive and curious beings. Agile and resilient, they constantly gather relics, artifacts, and knowledge from various realms and planes. To get their revenge on the Ungods, they protect one another, continuously augment their collections, and obstinately recover anything that's been stolen from them. They conceal themselves within the shadows of the Penumbral Plane, keeping their communities hidden within the numerous layers of the Penumbra, especially the colossal, reverse-gravity library known as the Inverted Archives.

As a species of artificers, their psychic abilities enable them to infuse mundane objects with magical qualities. The creation and preservation of these magical artifacts form a significant part of their culture and way of life. These traditions often include passing on an elder's knowledge to the younger generation, ensuring that the process of creating artifacts continues through generations.

While the collectors lack formal laws, they adhere to an unwritten code of conduct known as the Collector's Codex. This includes the preservation of all artifacts, not causing harm to fellow collectors, and prioritizing the group's survival over individual accomplishment. Breaching this codex is a grave offense, and transgressors face severe punishment by confiscating all their items. This creates a dilemma as they have all the impulse to get more items, ignoring others, but they have to care for the rest of the group.

Methods

Stealthy Acquisition. In the collectors' perception, the more items one possesses, the more powerful one is, both individually and within their society. The collectors, being small and stealthy, are master scavengers. Usually wandering alone, they use their telepathic abilities and magic-enhanced invisibility to subtly acquire relics and objects of mystical value. For instance, a collector may follow an adventuring party, waiting for an opportune moment to steal an artifact without being detected.

Intricate Bargaining. The collectors, known to be skillful negotiators, often trade for interesting objects. Despite their cautious nature, they frequently offer adventurers valuable information or magic items in exchange for a specific artifact. It is impossible to know which items they are looking for, so they may negotiate to trade a magic item they've found for a mundane item that interests them.

Pursuit of Vengeance. While they are keen on acquiring more items for personal purposes, they have a greater plan to get revenge on the Ungods for destroying their home plane. They hold occasional meetings to analyze if their newly acquired items can be used to destroy the emoguns, Cult of Shadow Wing, and their greatest fear: the Dark Collector and its followers. They usually search for help in this matter, including brief visits on the Material Plane requesting adventurers to help.

Survivors of a Consumed World

The minions of the Ungods and the Dark Collectors hunt them to obtain their items. It forces them to become unwilling refugees within the Penumbral Plane, always on the run.

In order to ensure the survival and preservation of their collections, the collectors' bases are labyrinthine and fortified. A group of collectors might move an entire village to a new site in the Penumbral Plane upon sensing an upcoming danger. They quickly raise defenses and use their secret passages to escape, leaving behind traps to prevent potential intruders.

Their interactions with Tanares, adventurers, and other extraplanar entities are driven by a necessity for survival and a never-ending pursuit of knowledge. As they cannot survive for too long in the Material Plane, their visits are quick, usually seeking assistance or stealing items from adventurers or cultists. They are very distrustful and cautious when approaching a new creature.

The collectors' dependency on psychic energy limits their visits to the Material Plane. However, a few of these beings have adapted using artifacts that generate a psychic energy field, allowing their survival in foreign planes. Their ingenuity and adaptability make them fascinating allies or opponents for adventurers. Their chatty and curious nature often leads to intriguing interactions and exchanges of information despite their initial caution and distrust.

Psychic Nomads

In order to support their nomadic lifestyle, the Collectors have established an elaborate network of safe havens throughout the Penumbral Plane. These refuges, marked by hidden psychic sigils only recognizable to a collector, are stocked with provisions, emergency artifacts, and basic defensive magic. While each hideout is temporary, the network remains, providing crucial support to their unpredictable existence.

While most collectors have some mythical power, the true guides of the collectors are their Elders, who hold a variety of unique mystical artifacts and extensive magical knowledge. Their leadership is based on the size of their collection, its rarity, and how long the collector has managed to keep it safe. Even within their own groups, respect and trust must be earned. Attempting to enforce a dominant hierarchy often divides the group and forms new communities.

Additionally, their ability to telepathically communicate and sense the presence of other creatures gives them an advantage in strategizing silently and perceiving threats, the key to their survival in the Penumbra. Their psionic powers are what protect them from the pervasive madness of the Penumbral Plane, to which they are immune.

The Dark Collectors

Some collectors fell under the influence of the Dark Collector, who was responsible for releasing the Penumbral Father into their plane and helping him corrupt the entire Archives Plane. Many collectors, having been driven insane, are now willing slaves of the Dark Collector, hunting their peers to steal their items and drain their psionic powers.

To eliminate opposing collectors and occasionally explorers from the Material Plane, they often create traps using weapons modified with psychic energy, a phenomenon unfamiliar to many. There are reports of weapons either exploding or turning to glass upon their first hit. The most curious report involved a Relic Hunter who obtained a sword; instead of harming his foes, the sword healed and empowered them, defying all logic. When activated, the modification lasts for around 1 hour, except when the item is destroyed, ending it.

In combat, they manifest psionic abilities unfamiliar to residents of the Material Plane.

Ananab's Guide to Psionic Powers

Hi, my readers from the Republic. As many of you asked, I searched for the so-called Psionic Powers. They are not arcane, divine, primal, or any other common power source.

One wizard from the Mage Tower categorized this power into six disciplines. Clairsentience, Metacreativity, Psychokinesis, Psychometabolism, Psychoportation, and Telepathy.

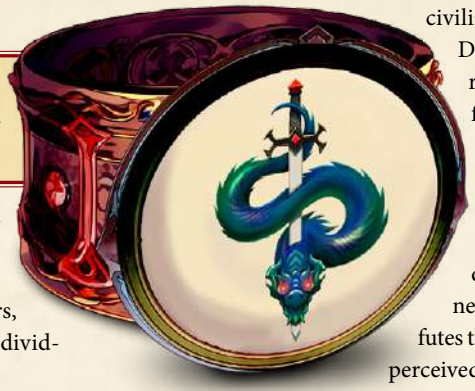
Our trusted source, Rigilia Choween, who's shared many adventures with the renowned Avelum, informed us that some creatures from other planes use these powers, but it is very rare to find one willing to speak.

Now, here's a thought: If your thirst for knowledge is as insatiable as I think it is, drop me a hint! With enough buzz, I might just unwrap all the juicy details in a must-have guide. If you are interested, let me know. It will be a pleasure to detail it for you.

D.E.A.T.H. (Draconic Evolutionist Assembly of Tanarian Helpers)

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Core Concept: A fervent organization committed to exterminating all dragons in hopes of ending the Malrokian Curse.



Headquarters: Dragonends Fortress in the city of Umay
Leadership: Renkyr, the Dragon Avenger
Typical Members: Scholars, dragon hunters, arcanists, mercenaries, adventurers, and individuals bearing hatred towards dragons.
Typical Vestments: Members are typically seen in tunics adorned with draconic shapes, equipped with weapons and armor crafted from dragon scales and bones.
Typical Bases: Bases are discreetly located in both cities and wilderness, often camouflaged as mundane homesteads or noble mansions.

The Misguided Saviors

D.E.A.T.H. was established centuries ago by a consortium of nobles, scholars, and arcanists deeply influenced by Archmage Torygg's studies on dragons and the Malrokian Curse. Currently led zealously by Renkyr, the Dragon Avenger, they seek to eradicate the draconic species, holding them responsible for the Malrokian Curse. Their ultimate goal is the extinction of all dragons, particularly the Dragon Avatars, and their allies. These passionate hunters collect dragon-forged potent weapons and armor to combat their enemy creatures. Driven by fear of an upcoming divine catastrophe, they resort to extreme measures.

Members of D.E.A.T.H. follow the principles of the old Evolutionism. However, they perceive the gods Tamera and Bauron as oppressors that must be subjugated through the evolution of mortals, beginning with destroying the Malrokian Curse's source. They argue that annihilating dragons would prevent the gods from inflicting the destructive Malrokian Curses, ending this plague that has devastated Tanares.

Firm in their beliefs, they recognize dragons as the source of the Malrokian Curses and dismiss the Celestianist Reform as mere deception. They justify their extreme actions through the original scriptures' explicit teachings, genuinely believing that they are heroes saving the world. Still, most people are either ignorant or too blinded by Celestianism to understand.

Furthermore, they argue that the Ungods are not enemies of Tamera and Bauron, but rather outcomes of the divine curse. They view the Ungods as dark servants of Tamera and Bauron, established to instill fear and maintain control over mortals.

Methods

Propaganda and Recruitment. The order primarily manipulates the masses. By portraying dragons as threats to civilization and by fabricating stories of attacks, D.E.A.T.H. influences public perception to rally support and gain willing recruits. They fund politicians and priests who speak against the dragons, while they can even eliminate people who support the Draconic Council. For example, they might initiate rumors about a benevolent dragon causing local disruptions, describing it as a menace that needs eliminating. The Draconic Council refutes these rumors whenever possible, but dragons' perceived threat makes many commoners suspicious. Adventurers can gain favor from the Draconic Council by leveraging their reputation to counteract D.E.A.T.H.'s claims.

Dealing with Dragon Allies. D.E.A.T.H. members warn people who aid dragons or the Draconic Council, usually with a sincere threat note with a detailed explanation about the malevolence of dragons. However, if the person fails to cut the relationship with the dragons, they employ assassins or their own soldiers to eliminate this person. They believe it is too dangerous to let the dragons' minions live. Many adventurers are targeted by these actions.

Utilizing Dragon Remains. They use their deep knowledge of dragon behavior and habitats to strike when their targets are most vulnerable. They seize these opportunities to ambush and eliminate dragons, frequently hiring mercenaries or adventurers to assist them. Then, the remains – scales, bones, and blood – are employed to craft armor, weapons, and potions specifically designed to counter dragons. Dragons often face D.E.A.T.H. members equipped with shields resistant to their breaths and blades coated in the precise element that can penetrate their scales. The Draconic Council considers these items desecrations and pays adventurers to recover and destroy them.

Dragon Hunters Hatred

The primary adversaries of D.E.A.T.H. are dragons and the Draconic Council. Although they view Ungods as evil, they are not considered primary opponents. However, penumbral dragons are a different story; they regard these creatures as the vilest dragons that must be eliminated at all costs. They are even prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, forming a temporary alliance with the Draconic Council if it aids in dealing with these corrupt, powerful dragons that serve the Ungods.

They distrust the Celestianist Church and maintain strained relations with all realms and organizations, frequently forming temporary alliances out of convenience. Most realms consider them criminals, but authorities often overlook them, finding them useful against dragons acting against local interests. D.E.A.T.H. members rarely harm ordinary individuals, though records indicate incidents where they stole dragon-related items.

Misplaced Righteousness

Members of D.E.A.T.H. deeply believe in Torygg's research, asserting that the Ungods are a scheme and the Malrokian Curse is a strategy the gods employ to subjugate mortals. This belief, paired with their tireless dedication, culminates in an obsession bordering on fanaticism, fearlessly confronting dragons. The organization houses an extensive collection of draconic artifacts, including comprehensive studies and manuscripts. Although some members may be simple mercenaries, most are willing to sacrifice their lives for their cause, believing they are protecting Tanares' future.

However, there are numerous redemption stories within D.E.A.T.H. members. Several great heroes were once affiliated with D.E.A.T.H., later rectifying their misguided beliefs and actions and significantly contributing to Tanares' protection. Sedura, a former member, exemplifies this, evolving from a misled dragon killer to one of Tanares' famous heroes. Zalir, once a D.E.A.T.H. scholar, left to create the Relic Hunters Guild and support Tanares against the Kemet Invasion. This suggests that not all members of D.E.A.T.H. are consumed by fanaticism, and future heroes may arise from this misguided organization.

The Dragon Anatomy

Dragon Wings and Flight: *Dragon wings are built for flying. They have strong bones and big muscles that help them push against the air. The bones inside are not empty; they can sustain the massive structure due to draconic magic energy, producing unnatural strength to allow flight even with the huge size of a dragon. The big wings help it catch much air, so the dragon can lift its heavy body and fly.*

Fire-breathing Mechanism: *Inside a dragon's throat, there's a special part that can produce a breath. When the dragon starts its breath, this gland releases certain chemicals, which, combined with a specific draconic magic present within them, create a different breath based on the dragon's color and type. Their magic is also present in the mouth, so they don't get hurt by their own breath.*

Dragon Scales: *Dragon scales are like strong armor. Each scale is made of thick layers that can protect the dragon. These scales cover one another, making it hard for anything to hurt them. Their unique composition also provides flexibility, ensuring dragons can move with agility. The scales can shine and look beautiful, but they are also solid.*

Draconic Council

Alignment: Neutral

Core Concept: This faction unites powerful dragons and their allies in opposition to the Ungods and the menace of the Malrokian Curse.

Headquarters: The Gathering of the Dragons, located south of Tanares.

Leadership: The Avatars - Auros (dragonborn), Azymor (red dragon), Isendden (gold dragon), Kelorth (white dragon), Talessa (humanoid Dragon Queen), and Zaldrus (black dragon).

Typical Members: Dragons, dragonblades, dragonborns, servants of Dragons, and individuals committed to eradicating the Ungods' servants.

Typical Vestments: The Council's attire is adorned with draconic style and shapes, featuring a prominent insignia that displays the symbol of the Council.

Typical Bases: Each base consists of enormous Draconic Towers built from sculpted stone and guarded by magic, each level providing ample space for even the oldest dragons to land or take flight. Each Avatar also maintains a secret lair.

The Council

The Draconic Council was established in response to the rise of the Ungods and the consequential Malrokian Curse. Representing the unified front of dragon kind, it comprises five distinct groups led by the Avatars. Their common goal is to stop the manifestation of the Malrokian Curse and resist the Ungods' influence. Each group - Claws of Retribution, Heralds of the Skies, Lord Guardians, Mystic Breath, and Shadow Masters - operates independently, joining forces only when necessary.

To bolster their efforts, the Council trains dragonblades and maintains a staff of servants ready to confront enemies. Despite internal disagreements and diverse methods, their united front is a fortress against chaos and destruction.

The Draconic Council's hierarchy is merit-based, rewarding those who contribute significantly to their fight against the Ungods. This ranking system encourages members to aspire for glory, showing their achievements in the battle against the Ungods. The Council also motivates individuals outside their ranks by offering rewards for eliminating penumbral creatures. It encourages the adventurers and mercenaries to specialize in hunting penumbral beings for these rewards.

Methods

Diplomacy and Subterfuge. The Council frequently mediates mortal disputes to prevent escalating conflicts that could trigger the Malrokian Curse. Dragonblades often act as mediators, negotiating pacts and ceasefires. At the same time, infiltrating dragons or mortal servants manipulate the situation from the shadows, employing magic, cunning, or even assassination to prevent conflict. The Council commonly enlists adventurers and mercenaries in their secret operations to prevent potential wars between realms.

Preemptive Strikes. The Council understands that inaction allows the Cult of Shadow Wing to advance its schemes. As such, they prefer to strike first against perceived threats. For example, the Claws of Retribution hunt down and eradicate those suspected of serving the Ungods. They reward evidence of a penumbral creature or Shadow Wing cultist's death and welcome anyone willing to assist in their hunt. Conversely, individuals accused of corruption by the Ungods can seek the Council's protection, fearing for their lives. While some may genuinely be innocent, others might attempt to deceive and exploit the Council's aid.

Education and Influence. While some factions of the Council are more aggressive, others recognize the importance of guiding mortals. The Heralds of the Skies favor this approach. They seek to eliminate the wars by guiding mortals towards peaceful paths. Local heroes or community leaders are often secretly mentored by a Herald, unrevealed to others. The Council may provide guidance and even magic equipment to promising heroes who demonstrate potential in combating the Ungods' servants.

Dragons and Ungods

The Draconic Council views the Ungods as their most formidable adversary. Fear of the Ungods' curse unifies the diverse Council, creating a common enemy, especially the penumbral dragons. The Council's relationships with other factions largely depend on their stance towards the Ungods. Factions that resist the Ungods, such as the Republic, the Celestianist Church, and even the Tanarean Empire, find natural allies in the Council. However, organizations seen as potential war triggers, like the kemets, Tsvetan orcs, and the people of Kolbjörn, are approached with caution and sometimes open hostility. Neutral parties may find themselves courted by the Council, which perceives potential allies against the Ungods.

The Council in Tanares

The Draconic Council is notable for accepting mortals, particularly dragonblades, into its ranks. These individuals are granted significant respect within the Council, advancing through its hierarchy based on merit and service. This promotes harmony between dragons and mortals, leading to various perspectives and skills within the organization.

Additionally, the Council has established a widespread network of alliances and influence across Tanares, from remote villages to large cities. The Draconic Towers, often positioned near important settlements, serve as constant reminders of the Council's presence and vigilance. In more undercover circles, members of the Shadow Masters infiltrate societies and shape events from within.

Ordinary folk regard the dragons with apprehension and fear, perceiving their power as oppressive and their actions as destructive. However, when circumstances become desperate and no other help is available, they often seek refuge in a Draconic Tower, hopeful for the dragons' protection. The numerous factions and realms maintain unique relationships with the Council, respecting their

power and wisdom but exercising caution in their dealings. They are aware that many Council members hold little concern for mortals and would willingly sacrifice them to achieve their objectives.

The Council's Factions

Shadow Masters (Neutral/Evil). Led by the black dragon Zaldrus, the Shadow Masters believe in the power of deception and manipulation, considering control over mortal societies crucial to preventing wars. Using their ability to shapeshift into humanoid forms, members infiltrate various power circles, subtly exerting influence from behind the scenes. They employ disguise, deception, and even assassination as necessary tools to maintain peace. Their bases of operation are typically located within major cities and power centers, hidden in plain sight.

Claws of Retribution (Chaotic/Good). The Dragon Queen Talessa leads the Claws of Retribution. They are a group that regards extraplanar influences as the primary triggers for wars. They dedicate their existence to the pursuit and elimination of entities that might upset the balance of power in Tanares. Members of this group are more united and communal than others, establishing themselves together on islands from where they can easily reach the mainland to execute their missions. They are known to mobilize in large groups to deliver swift and decisive retribution to those who incite discord.

Lord Guardians (Lawful/Evil). The red dragon Azymor leads the Lord Guardians, who believe in draconic supremacy over the "lesser" species. They maintain strict control over the regions they dominate, vigilantly suppressing any hint of conflict that might incite a war. The Lord Guardians are territorial, with their lairs located in mountain areas, allowing them to keep a watch over their vast territories.

Heralds of the Skies (Lawful/Good). Isendden, the gold dragon, and Auros, the dragonborn hero, lead the Heralds of the Skies. This group believes in the potential of other intelligent species and seeks to guide and educate them toward peaceful coexistence. They often are mentors and guides for potential heroes and influential figures. If necessary, they intervene directly to maintain peace. Their lairs are usually located near major cities, allowing them to provide positive influence and guidance where needed.

Mystic Breath (Neutral). Led by Kelorth, the white dragon, the group known as Mystic Breath believes that magic is the primary catalyst leading to the Malrokian Curse. They aim to monopolize magical knowledge, sabotaging and restricting the magical understanding of other species. They approach their work with extreme caution, preferring to avoid direct contact with other species while focusing on preparing magical contingencies to prevent wars. Their lairs are located in remote places like the frozen peaks of the northern mountains.

The Rankings of the Council

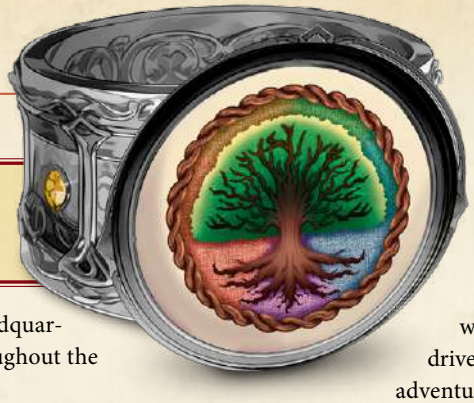
The Council's hierarchy is based on merit, with seven ranks representing their powers and responsibilities. An individual may ascend a Draconic Tower only as high as their rank permits.

Rankings	Description
Dragon Avatar	*Supreme Commanders of the Council (able to vote in council meetings)*
Draconic Archon	*Guardians of the Draconic Towers and Regional Commanders*
Dragon Lord	*Field Generals in charge of large-scale military operations*
Dragon Commander	*Leaders of a battalion (Young dragons start here)*
Dragon Captain	*Commanders of a company within a battalion*
Dragon Lieutenant	*Platoon leaders responsible for a group of Soldiers*
Dragon Soldier	*Entry-level rank for mortal members*

Eternal Circle

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Core Concept: A radical naturalist group opposing civilization and the corruption of the Ungods.



Headquarters: They maintain no central headquarters; their numerous bases are scattered throughout the wilderness of Tanares.

Leadership: The Harvester (Ardnold Bak)

Typical Members: Druids, rangers, nature guardians, and extreme naturalists.

Typical Vestments: Simple leather mantles, leaves mantles or aged furs, and masks, charms, and weapons fashioned from bones.

Typical Bases: Groves, caverns, or naturally occurring shelters decorated with druidic symbols. Groves, caverns, or naturally occurring shelters adorned with druidic symbols. Their surroundings feature warnings made from the bones of vanquished foes to deter intruders.

The Circle's Creed

The Eternal Circle represents nature's loyal protectors in the lands of Tanares. This group aims to guard the forests from the spreading damage of civilization and the malign influence of the Ungods. Its members, diverse in background but united in purpose, fervently believe in the uninterrupted continuation of the natural cycle of life, regardless of the sacrifices required.

Following a unique interpretation of Spiritualism, the organization welcomes druids, rangers, and anyone willing to abandon the comforts of civilization to embrace life in the natural wilderness. They warn of a doomed future if their mission fails, attracting new members with a sense of purpose and belonging.

The Harvester is the powerful druid who leads this faction. He is driven by his terrifying visions and nightmares of a dystopian future where nature falls victim to the Ungods' power, becoming twisted and fearful. Ready to use extreme methods, including murder and torture, they believe in their cause and hope to save the world.

While primarily defending the wilderness, they often extend aid to the needy and generally promote goodwill toward others, viewing all life as part of nature. However, when they perceive a threat to nature, they stand ready to eliminate the offender to preserve it. At their core, the members of the Eternal Circle believe they are acting in Tanares' best interests, even if it means adopting brutal tactics.

Methods

Ecological Sabotage. To stop settlement expansion, the Circle employs unconventional intimidation tactics. These actions include poisoning food stores, disrupting water supplies, modifying the terrain to create dangers or make it harder to advance, manipulating weather, and more. Their sabotage often drives the desperate populace to seek help from adventurers to uncover the cause of their distress and find solutions or purification methods for their provisions.

Nature's Retribution. The Circle utilizes nature itself as a formidable weapon against invaders. Suppose mining, hunting, or logging operations begin near their sacred lands. In that case, the Circle typically summons local wildlife elemental powers, animates plant creatures, and unleashes swarms of venomous insects, forcing the trespassers to abandon their territory. In response, local authorities often mobilize troops, mercenaries, or adventurers to confront the Circle members. In such situations, neutral druids and rangers may find themselves caught in the middle, attempting to negotiate peace between the parties.

Extermination of Penumbral Creatures. The Circle acts swiftly against aberrations from the Penumbral Plane, which disrupt Tanares' ecological balance. When these creatures appear near their territories, their elimination becomes the Circle's primary goal. The Circle may enlist adventurers to help confront these creatures or determine their origins, particularly if they suspect their source is within civilized lands. The emergence of penumbral creatures from cities may cause the Circle to believe such a place is corrupt and doomed, potentially triggering a full-scale attack if the locals don't address the aberration before the Circle acts to eliminate the root of the evil.

Relationships

The Ungods, perceived as the ultimate adversaries of nature, face strong opposition of the Eternal Circle. The Circle claims that all civilizations are tainted to some degree by the influence of these entities. They view other nations and organizations as misguided, trapped in the Ungods' sinister illusions. However, they regard the elves of Sindile, other druidic circles, and individuals who respect nature favorably, considering them potential allies.

While they desire the fall of civilizations and a return to wilderness life, they see the Ungods as a greater threat than any kingdom or organization. They are prepared to form temporary alliances with realms, governments, and organizations to cooperate against the Ungods and their minions. These uncomfortable alliances often result in successful strikes against the Cult of Shadow Wing's forces.

Charm of Life's Circle

A unique trait of the Eternal Circle is their ability to create a *Charm of Life's Circle,* a detailed wooden pendant shaped like a ring, able to ward off death a single time. Granted to honorable druid members and adventurers who perform significant services for them, this charm enables the wearer to recover from near-death situations, purging poisons and diseases in a surge of life energy.

Additionally, the Circle knows the art of fashioning weapons and armor from the bones of magical beasts, producing lightweight equipment that retains the properties of their steel equivalents. Adventurers who assist the Circle by defeating challenging magical beasts may be rewarded with these exceptional items.

The Harvester

Ardnold Bak (NE), also known as The Harvester, is the infamous leader of the Eternal Circle, a group responsible for ecological radicalism, blaming social progress for past catastrophes. His terrifying appearance hides an excellent strategist and powerful druid.

He began having daily nightmares about a corrupted nature that ultimately allowed the Ungods to dominate the plane; the food was poisoned, causing madness, and the animals became monsters that attacked people. Now, he wants to protect nature at any cost to avoid this future.

He employs numerous questionable tactics, but many prove to be highly effective. He takes advantage of the Wild Shape ability of his druids to change their form into animals and spy on cities. By studying threats and responding accordingly, he employs the most effective tactics for intimidation. He has recently used his terrain and weather control to destroy some buildings, roads, and bridges.

In the event of a forest invasion, he strategically weakens enemies before launching attacks. So, he usually uses roots to entangle invaders, heavy rain, quicksand, and many other natural dangers to weaken their enemies before launching a direct attack. Then, with exhausted enemies, the combat is much easier, as he seeks to preserve all of nature, his druids included. If a direct approach is necessary to protect the forest or his community, he usually hires adventurers.

Even though some druids disagree with his methods, he often invokes the need for sacrifice for the greater good. His approaches have effectively kept the forest safe. More followers join this cause daily, and are even spreading to forests beyond Sindile.

Charm of Life's Circle

Wondrous item, rare

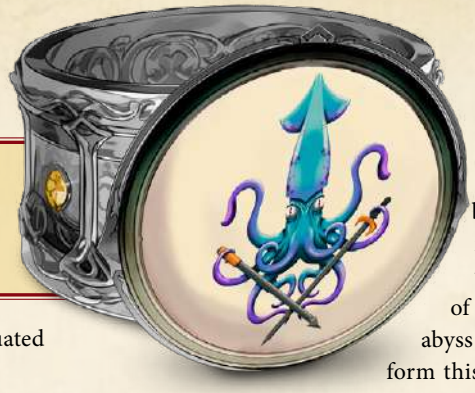
This small charm, a magic ring of wood adorned with nature's sigils, is worn as a necklace on a thin rope. It emanates a subtle aura of natural energy and can be used once to summon a miraculous healing power that rescues its user from the edge of death.

If a creature wearing this charm fails a death saving throw, the charm disintegrates, its energy consumed in a final, potent burst of life force. The creature regains 4d8 hit points, and any diseases or poisons affecting it are instantly purged, removing the poisoned condition. After this miraculous recovery, the charm is destroyed.

Parliament of the Sea

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Core Concept: This formidable group of immortal Pirate Lords, bound by a curse, is forever in pursuit of treasures to prevent their transformation into aberrations.



Headquarters: The Fortress of Skull Island, situated near Sandport in the Seashores.

Leadership: The ruling body consists of Captains Bretrar Brakaan, Dorro, Liana, Black Soul, and Maryne.

Typical Members: Pirates, corsairs, privateers, and seafarers of all types.

Typical Vestments: Members typically wear sea-stained clothing, often adorned with unique symbols, styles, and colors based on their respective crews, to inspire unity among themselves.

Typical Bases: Each Pirate Lord possesses an island stronghold, but their magically enhanced ships primarily serve as their operational bases.

Parliament of Pirates

Decades ago, a consortium of five notorious pirate captains explored a secret abyssal sea cavern. They discovered mystical powers and everlasting youth but also acquired a horrible curse. To resist transformation into aberrations, they must amass a considerable amount of gold each year and sacrifice it to the sea abyss at a concealed location. Failing to perform this annual ritual ten times will result in their complete consumption by the curse. Despite their perpetual youth, the inevitability of a tenth failure is a possibility these pirates face, much to the perverse delight of the Ungods.

The Pirate Lords wield political control over the Seashores as governors of this part of the Tanarean Empire, exploiting and taxing coastal towns to ensure they reach their annual gold quota. Each captain governs a pirate state in the region, asserting control over various islands. Every three months, they assemble at the Parliament's headquarters on Skull Island to discuss governance, laws, and disputes.

Methods

Piracy and Plundering. With sanction from the Empire, the Parliament gains most of its wealth from piracy and extortion. Their reputation for brutality and their ships' unique powers intimidate merchant vessels and coastal towns, assuring easy surrender. For safe passage, merchants, adventurers, and travelers are forced to arm themselves heavily and carry enough gold to offer as bribes. Hiring adventurers for protection in these dangerous waters is common.

Black Markets and Smuggling. The Parliament operates a significant network of smuggling routes and black markets, providing a consistent source of income and a means to dispose of stolen goods. Usually, they also protect illegal transactions within their jurisdiction, securing a share of the profits. This often serves as the starting point for investigations when items are stolen to be sold. Despite the obvious risks, many interesting items can be found through these pirate smuggling operations.

Tributes and Taxes. The Parliament imposes heavy taxes on coastal towns, island settlements, and vessels passing through their territories. Non-compliance leads to severe repercussions, sometimes escalating to attacks from the ships and their arcane cannons.

Cursed Relationships

The Pirate Lords' curse is a dark secret known only to a few, including Emperor Baleroth and some Cult of Shadow Wing members. The curse is connected to the dead body of Kralmorgoth, the fifth of the Ungods, and the only one to fall during their invasion of Tanares. Even after death, its powers seep into the abyssal regions of Seashores. It was through the discovery of its remains that the Pirate Lords became cursed. The reality of the curse is that if they are fully transformed into aberrations, they may become vessels for the rebirth of Kralmorgoth, something that the Cult of Shadow Wing greatly desires. Because of this, the Parliament faces regular disruptions from the Ungods and their minions, who seek to plant chaos and seize their wealth to revive this Ungod.

Despite their secret battles with the Cult and the Ungods, the Parliament maintains strained relations with all Tanares nations, excluding the Empire to which they belong. Their control over the Seashores has significantly disrupted the flow of goods, especially from the Republic and Yama. Yet, the Parliament's naval supremacy has so far prevented any retaliation from other forces.

The Republic and Yama work to disrupt piracy, create corridors of safe trade, and establish alternative routes, but the Parliament always seems ready to counteract their efforts. Adventurers are hired to guarantee the safety of these corridors, but many die in the process or, mysteriously, end up joining the pirates.

The Maritime Nightmares

Each magical ship of the Parliament is uniquely infused with magic from one of Kralmorgoth's eyes, obtained during their old expedition to the abyssal cavern. Each ship contains unique abilities that the captains exploit to their advantage. The magical bond between a ship and its captain ensures that only the five Pirate Lords can harness these powers. For example, Brakaan's ship can shift between planes.

The Pirate Lords may occasionally undertake mercenary jobs or negotiate with other kingdoms for rapid wealth accumulation, particularly after less profitable years. If a lord fails to meet their annual quota, the others often have to compensate to avoid a failed sacrifice. These debts often lead to disgrace and can be exploited by other lords. However, they maintain a minimal unity, aware that the loss of any one of them would increase the burden on the remaining lords without reducing the annual quota.

Each captain has its own style and prioritizes different matters. For example, Maryne is devoted to exploring remote islands and Black Soul enjoys attacking regular vessels, capturing both loot and souls for his Ghost Ship. Legend has it that they cannot be truly slain as long as their ship remains intact, reviving on the ship's deck shortly after their demise.

Brakaan

Bellara's Grace is a powerful mercenary warship that can sail between the planes touched by the Penumbral Sea. It has a planar compass in its binnacle that accurately leads to its destination, even if that destination is on the land. The mummified head of a demon graces its stern and gives the ship the ability to emit a pulse of fear once per 24 hours. The ship operates primarily as a pirate but can be hired to deliver particular important persons, haul rare cargo, or operate as a privateer under a letter of the mark. Attacking *Bellara's Grace* is usually a bad idea, as it has been known to blockade ports, which has dealt them badly.

Bretrar Brakaan captains Bellara's Grace. This gloomfolk bears a flaming sword wrested from one of the great azer dukes on the Elemental Plane of Fire. Brakaan is the fifth known captain of this ship, and it is unknown if he inherited the title or defeated the previous captain for the position. Brakaan engages in piracy to maintain a safe haven for his family deep within the plane.

Bellara's Grace and its captain are linked in such a way that one may not die or be destroyed as long as the other survives. Both ship and captain will be teleported deeper into the Penumbral Plane if reduced to 0 hit points or hull points, and one will seek the other out if separated. Only if both are destroyed in the same round will they be permanently defeated.

Ships of the Parliament of the Seas

Hypnotic Unicorn (Captain Dorro)
It can create extremely powerful illusions. They are used to make the ship invisible for stealth, to create mirages of a formidable armada for intimidation, or even images of an island and rocks for disorientation.

Ghost Crown (Captain Black Soul)
This is considered a fearful ghost ship. It can create a large, dense mist that makes the other vessel helpless. Members of the opposing ship's crew mysteriously vanish without a trace. If some creature is killed inside the Ghost Crown, it becomes an undead to serve Black Soul.

Immortal Hydra (Captain Liana)
This ship is speedy and impressively resilient, crafted to excel in naval confrontations and battles against fearsome sea monsters. It also boosts the morale of any person inside it, making the crew more confident and willing to embrace risks.

Flying Dragon (Captain Maryne)
This ship can magically create maps and discover unexplored regions. It is the faster ship of the pirates and can even fly for some minutes each day, reaching difficult areas. The vessel bestows a peculiar mental influence upon its crew, infusing them with a desire to find gold for their captain.

Bellara's Grace (Captain Brakaan)
This is the most powerful ship of the Parliament. It is imposing and resistant. It can ship between planes and appear at any specified location known by the Captain, even on solid land. Also, it has the power to create fear in the enemies.

Relic Hunters

Alignment: Neutral Good

Core Concept: A guild of adventurers dedicated to unearthing, studying, and preserving relics from the past.

Headquarters: The Great Museum of Fisherman's Wharf

Leadership: Wynna, the Relic Hunter

Typical Members: Scholars, good-aligned rogues, knowledge-inclined rangers, expert guides, adventurous wizards

Typical Vestments: Practical explorer's clothing with many tools and frequently adorned with a hat, whip, sword, or crossbow.

Typical Bases: Guild halls with expansive underground complexes, housing libraries, artifact restoration workshops, and places for training.

Exploring Scholars

The Relic Hunters form a group of brave explorers and scholars united by a common objective: to decipher the enigmas of the past. Their mission is to reclaim the lost fragments of history and piece together the puzzle of extinct civilizations. Guided by their motto, "Lessons from yesterday, vision for tomorrow," these committed hunters aim to keep relics from falling into the wrong hands. Their past involvement during the Kemet Invasion demonstrates their dedication to protecting Tanares and preserving its cultural heritage.

The Relic Hunters frequently trade and share their findings with academic institutions, enhancing collective knowledge. They also fiercely protect their discoveries, employing an extensive security system to guard their relics. Despite their adventurous nature, the organization values education and encourages aspiring members.

Methods

Research and Documentation. They are dedicated to extensively examining historical texts, ancient manuscripts, and legendary tales to find potential sites of relics or interpret ancient prophecies. Their quests often involve searching for ancient scrolls within dangerous ruins. They always welcome adventurers who can assist in acquiring such items and are willing to purchase some relics found by them.

Expedition Planning and Execution. They always gather necessary information before adventuring, such as potential threats and the historical context of a relic or ruin before their expeditions. It is usual to hire specialists to aid their preparations and assist their adventurers. When an ally is in danger, the Relic Hunters are always ready to repay favors by making their maximum effort to help the ally. When necessary, they ask trusted friends or adventurers for assistance.

Artifact Recovery and Preservation. The Relic Hunters Guild takes the preservation of ancient objects very seriously. They handle the extraction and subsequent preservation of these relics with care. They restore and guard these items in their vaults, museums, and libraries. However, these items often attract the attention of sinister forces, such as the servants of the Ungods, the Forces of Darkall, some members of the Arcanum, or even adventurers who seek magical power at all costs. Although the Guild does its best to protect the relics, they may be raided or stolen, requiring aid to defend or recover the lost items before they can be used dangerously.

Relic Hunters' Relations

Part of the Allied Forces, the Relic Hunters value faction loyalty and enjoy acceptance across Tanares' diverse realms. The only exception is the kemets from the Storm Islands, who despise them. The Relic Hunters' dedication to the Republic makes the Empire and Arcanum alert, but the Hunters' expertise often leads to strategic alliances, allowing exploration of territory-specific ruins.

The Ungods and their followers, the Cult of Shadow Wing, are their primary adversaries. Given the cult's pursuit of ancient wisdom and powerful artifacts that could threaten Tanares, the Relic Hunters preemptively attempt to secure such relics.

Despite their enthusiasm to aid adventurers, the Relic Hunters require friendship as payment. They cultivate relationships with various adventuring parties, anticipating future assistance from this connection. Those failing to honor these debts risk losing access to the guild, a severe penalty given the Hunters' exceptional guides, maps, and exceptional knowledge of Tanares' regions.

The Adventurer's Luck

The unique edge of the Relic Hunters lies in their unnatural talent for being in the right place at the right time, providing them with an advantage over their rivals. This peculiar ability, often dismissed as it is not reliable, has led to rumors and bard songs about their "adventurer's luck". The truth is often, they seem to find themselves precisely where they need to be, with events mysteriously developing around them.

This intriguing phenomenon results from a pact that Wynna, their leader, made with a genie imprisoned in an ancient relic she discovered. Upon freeing this powerful entity, she requested a boon for her guild, not for herself. The genie bestowed a necklace, a legendary artifact from another realm. When worn, this relic bestows good fortune upon the wearer and their followers.

Although the relic is not omnipotent, it gently but persistently influences destiny, guiding the Relic Hunters toward prosperity. This power, unknown to all, including Wynna herself, has bestowed untold benefits upon the Guild. However, according to the pact, the genie will make one significant demand of her in the future.

The Lost Jungle Plane

Wynna and two followers discovered an ancient portal that led them to a heavy jungle plane in Sindile. After exploring and studying, they concluded that it is another plane populated with lizardfolk and dinosaur-like creatures. Currently, they possess only two solid pieces of information: first, the creatures are tribal and guard their relics with numerous traps and unique protections to protect them from other tribes. The other is that they specialize in crafting magic weapons from bone, which possess unique and potent powers.

For now, Wynna has not alerted others. Should the Ungods learn of this plane, the consequences could be severe. But she is looking for trustworthy adventurers to help her explore this new plane and all its relics.

Wynna, Relic Hunter Leader

In the gnomish corridors of Mustardseed's Ancient Lumina Academy, Wynna Jannis (CG), daughter of a human scholar, uncovered her destiny. Immersed in a youthful world of ancient texts and arcane maps, her thirst for knowledge sparked an audacious spirit of exploration, pushing her to search for artifacts. After several significant discoveries, she was invited to join the Relic Hunter Guild.

Trained by the illustrious adventurer Alfredo, Wynna honed her skills. When the guild's founder, Zalir Draconis, chose a worthy heir, Wynna's proven expertise earned her the Guild Master's Mantle—a leadership she had never aspired to.

Despite her playful behavior, many seek Wynna's expertise. Though bound by administrative obligations, her true passion lies in adventuring. She constantly seeks adventurers to assist the guild in finding documents and artifacts, grading them on a scale from 0 to 10 based on five criteria. Those scoring 7 or higher often receive an invitation to join the guild.

Her primary objective is to find suspected traitors in the guild, believed to be selling information to other factions or even stealing artifacts. Also, she needs to discretely explore the new plane she discovered, as plenty of new knowledge awaits. She requires the help of powerful adventurers for both objectives.

Wynna maintains a secret collection of relics and souvenirs, sparking speculation about compulsion for hoarding or an illicit trade network.

Wynna's criteria for evaluating an adventurers.

Combat Prowess: *How effectively the adventurers handle themselves in battle, including their tactics, teamwork, and individual skills.*

Ingenuity & Problem Solving: *The adventurers' ability to think outside the box, solve riddles, bypass traps, and handle unexpected challenges.*

Diplomacy & Charisma: *How well the adventurers navigate social situations, negotiate with others, and charm or persuade NPCs.*

Morality & Ethics: *The adventurers' decisions in morally gray areas and whether they act with honor, kindness, cruelty, or indifference.*

Resource Management: *How efficiently the adventurers use their spells, items, and other resources during their quests.*

Third Eye

Organization Name: Third Eye
Alignment: Neutral Evil

Core Concept: A complex and far-reaching criminal organization engaged in activities such as extortion, smuggling, assassination, and information brokering.

Headquarters: The Hidden Eye, a huge underground hideout in the city of Ahimoth

Leadership: The Three Eyes - Tuani, Aldo, and Oraelus.

Typical Members: Burglars, corrupt officials, information brokers, mercenaries, smugglers, spies, thieves, and skilled assassins.

Typical Vestments: The members prefer inconspicuous clothing, blending in with the general population. High-ranking members might wear a discreet, eye-shaped pendant.

Typical Bases: Underground hideouts, secret dens in crowded cities, and discreet operations within seemingly legitimate businesses.

The Eyes in the Shadows

The Third Eye is a vast and complex organized crime network known for its widespread influence in Tanares. The organization primarily engages in various illicit activities such as robbery, extortion, murder, smuggling, kidnapping, and information brokering.

Notorious for the tattoo that grants them resistance or immunity to magic detection, charm, and mind reading, the Third Eye members must endure rigorous training and tests before being accepted into the organization. Varic, the current recruiter master, is particularly severe in mind-reading resistance and stealth tests, often leading many aspirants to death. During many Eye meetings, agents are required to display their tattoos, which are checked against each other for authenticity.

The Third Eye corrupts influential individuals, gaining wealth and power without ever toppling established regimes. Their primary goal is to exploit societal weaknesses for personal gain, using the power of information and fear to keep their members loyal and their operations secret. Three influential individuals lead the Third Eye.

Aldo Cotton-Hair, a charismatic and smooth-talking halfling, is known for his exceptional ability to extract information from the unlikeliest of sources. Using his charming demeanor as a mask, Aldo subtly influences and manipulates those around him for the organization's benefit.

Tuani, the second leader, bears a noblewoman's title. Her difficult past has molded her into a ruthless master of deception and manipulation.

Oraelus, the third leader, an unlikely noble elevated to his position through suspicious accidents within his family, oversees the Third Eye's operations in the Empire. Cunning and ruthless, he excels in political manipulation and assassination.

Methods

Infiltration and Manipulation. The Third Eye is well-known for its ability to infiltrate all levels of society. They exploit moral and organizational weaknesses, utilizing their vast network of contacts and informants to their advantage. In many cities, high-ranking officials might be under their control, subtly influencing city policies for their benefit, and even blaming their enemies for crimes.

Intimidation and Blackmail. Extortion is one of the more common tactics employed by the Third Eye. They use sensitive information from their extensive network of spies and informants to control influential individuals. For instance, a governor might receive an anonymous letter revealing a dark secret and demanding a particular action to keep the information hidden.

Magic Tattoo. After enduring hard training, the member receives a magic tattoo in the shape of an eye. The tattoo naturally grants resistance to charm, magic detection, and mind reading. However, after the training, it grants immunity, increasing the rogues' efficiency. But there is a catch: as long as a member bears the tattoo, the three leaders can instantly kill them using a secret command, ensuring loyalty and efficiency through fear. In the event of death, the tattoo reverts to its original form: an eye.

Underworld and International Connections

Despite their nefarious operations, the Third Eye maintains a complex web of relationships with various factions and countries, as many end up needing their intelligence network.

The Empire detests their existence but tolerates them to an extent. While the Republic never directly engages with them, many parliamentarians find themselves indebted to the Third Eye. The Third Eye is officially considered a criminal organization and is hunted in all realms, but many do not truly exert effort in this pursuit. They are almost non-existent in Yama, where Yokensha controls the criminal world.

The Third Eye even deals with the kemets and the Forces of Darkall. For them, there is no one they are unwilling to work with, except the Cult of Shadow Wing and the Ungods. The Third Eye knows that for them to turn a profit, the world must continue to exist, and they comprehend the true goals of the Cult of Shadow Wing. While some members of the Third Eye end up dealing with Cultists, whether knowingly or not, the leaders often go to great lengths to work against the Ungods, even offering help to other factions, realms, and organizations against the servants of the Ungods—at a price, of course.

A Game of Information and Secrets

The Third Eye organization emphasizes information as a form of power, utilizing it as a significant resource in their operations. They operate under a unique, decentralized command structure that ensures the safety of its leaders. The lower-ranking members of the organization rarely know the true identities of their superiors, a security measure that keeps the Third Eye difficult to dismantle.

Their operations are highly adaptable, altering tactics based on the environment and circumstances. They maintain an extensive network of spies and informants, giving them the advantage of always being a step ahead of their adversaries. With rigorous training, they become experts at stealthily infiltrating places and acquiring the necessary information.

The Third Eye also utilizes unique infiltration methods, such as recruiting members into various guilds of adventurers. These unsuspecting individuals are lured into the organization's service through seemingly straightforward missions, often not realizing who they truly work for until they are deeply entangled in illicit activities.

Tattoo of the Eye

Wondrous item (tattoo), rare (requires attunement)

This tattoo grants advantage on saving throws against spells and effects that charm, use divination, or read minds or memories. If the bearer has undergone the Third Eye's extreme training, they become immune to these effects instead.

While the tattoo's shape is an eye, it allows its bearer to change it as a bonus action. However, it reverts to its original form upon the owner's death. When two of these tattoos come into close proximity, both bearers can sense the authenticity of the other's tattoo, feeling a faint tingling and cold sensation.

Curse of the Eye. This tattoo carries a powerful curse. If the curse is removed, the tattoo itself disappears. The three leaders of the Eye can, at will, use a secret command to slay any creature bearing this tattoo, ensuring loyalty and obedience through fear. This powerful curse can only be removed by a *wish* or similar effect.

Watchers

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Core Concept: A military organization loyal to Golgöggoth, seeking to suppress the Ungods by extracting emotions from mortals, preventing them from succumbing to sin.

Headquarters: The Penumbral Mountain Stronghold, located in the west of the Penumbral Plane Surface

Leadership: Golgöggoth, the Augur

Typical Members: Nightmares (transformed angels) and Watchers (unemotional, transformed mortals)

Typical Vestments: Sinister heavy armor completely concealing the wearer and adorned with symbols of the Augur (Watchers)

Typical Bases: Fortified strongholds spread across the Penumbral Plane, supplemented by a few concealed outposts in the Material Plane

The Emotionless Army

The Watchers, a legion led by the enigmatic Golgöggoth, the Augur, are empty of emotion. They promote the belief that emotions lead to sin, which in turn transforms souls into penumbral creatures, strengthening the Ungods — their greatest adversaries.

Golgöggoth, formerly the Archangel Golgael, once led the angelic armies of Tamera and Bauron. His divine mandate involved entering the Penumbral Plane to eradicate the corrupted servants of the Ungods. When his forces encountered a perverse secret at the Penumbral Mountain, the location where human wizards first connected Tanares to the Penumbral Plane, they were corrupted. The initial zeal to fulfill their divine mission changed to an obsession: eliminate all penumbral creatures to weaken the Ungods.

Using knowledge from his journey into the Penumbral Plane, Golgöggoth created a magical ritual to transform mortals into emotionless agents, who would serve his dark purposes. This marked the birth of the Watchers organization, which includes changed humans, known as Watchers, and distorted angels, the Nightmares. They patrol the Penumbral Plane under the Augur's command, seeking out Cult of Shadow Wing members, eradicating penumbral creatures, and capturing mortals for transformation. Their main objective is to increase their numbers, particularly by transforming humans with Ancient Blood, empowering their forces against the Ungods. Guided by Golgöggoth's strong premonitory and divinatory abilities, the Watchers faithfully execute his orders, aiming to eliminate the Ungods' servants and prevent Malrokian Curses on the Material Plane.

Methods

Hunting and Raiding. The Watchers maintain their territory within the Penumbral Plane by patrolling and hunting penumbral creatures. They frequently orchestrate raids to invade and eliminate Cult of Shadow Wing bases or emogun nests. Their ability to teleport, materializing from mists, allows them to strike anywhere within the Material or Penumbral Plane. It is common for them to replenish their ranks by invading Material Plane villages and transforming the residents into Watchers.

Prophetic Manipulation. Golgöggoth uses his great divination abilities to guide the Watchers and manipulate susceptible mortals by implanting dreams and tricking them into believing them to be prophetic. Unwitting individuals, often of humble origins, may rise to local power or acquire wealth by following their "prophetic" dreams. After they fully believe in them, the dreams start to induce actions promoting the Watchers' purpose.

The Enemies of the Ungods. Of all the organizations opposed to the Ungods, none are more dedicated to their destruction than the Watchers and Golgöggoth. He is willing to take any measure for their defeat, including aligning with the Winter Goddess Bás to transform Tanares into a freezing undead land, empty of emotions. The Watchers may strike deals, assist adventurers, or exploit them if it contributes to the destruction of the Ungods' servants, even though their ultimate goal is to strip all mortals of emotions and transform them into Watchers or undead.

Golgöggoth Relations

The Watchers' primary focus is combating the Ungods and their followers, the Cult of Shadow Wing. Their historical ties with the kemets and the recent pact between Golgöggoth and Bás make the kemets their close allies, constituting the Forces of Darkall faction.

Golgöggoth is open to forming temporary alliances with any faction or organization that aids his fight against the Ungods. He is firm in his word, fulfilling the exact terms agreed upon, but feels no obligation to support previous allies once the agreement is fulfilled. While many might interpret this as betrayal, the Watchers view it as logical and in keeping with their dedication to honesty; they consider deception sinful and an act supporting the Ungods. Golgöggoth never lets emotions influence him, always assuming a cold, logical approach.

Their practices of raiding the Material Plane to transform commoners into Watchers and hunting for exceptional humans to acquire individuals of Ancient Blood make them formidable. They are ruthless, showing no mercy to soldiers, civilians, and children alike. Although some organizations may form temporary alliances with the Watchers to address the threat of the Ungods, from the perspective of the mortals, establishing these alliances often proves to be tense and difficult. For the Augur, however, it is simply a matter of efficiency and achieving his current goal.

Cold Logical Strategy

The Watchers, operating under the Augur's meticulous oversight, are known for their cold, emotionless efficiency and sharp precision. With Golgöggoth's premonitory abilities guiding them, they employ mysterious but well-planned strategies. Sometimes, their actions may seem pointless, but they often connect in specific ways to realize a future predicted by Golgöggoth. Their systematic approach often gives the appearance of irrational destruction but always reveals a logic aimed at combating the penumbral monsters. For example, a hundred innocents may die by the Watchers' hands to make sure a cultist is eliminated.

The Watchers also possess a unique ability to traverse planes via mist travel, adding to their unpredictability. Operating from their stronghold within the Penumbral Mountain on the Darkall side of the Penumbral Plane, they hold a great secret that many factions would like to know more about.

In a tempest of revelation, Ascaran reproduced the twisted words of Golgael—a fallen archangel now known as Golgoggoth.

"Oh, Ascaran, do not be so utterly naive. My efforts for Tamera and Bauron far surpass what you could even imagine. Are you aware of the stakes at hand? If the Ungods claim dominion over Tanares, it's the doom for everyone—Tamera, Bauron, you, me, dragons, humans, all of us.

It is our sacred charge to guard what the gods have made. Yet here we stand, at the precipice of an unprecedented calamity. My initial scheme—oh, such a pristine vision it was: to strip away human emotions. No feelings, no negative emotions, no Penumbral Plane, yet life would continue. Lament with me, my comrade; that plan failed, and Kemet has fallen, victims of the Ungods' manipulated champions: the Resistance. They dared to stop us merely to keep their useless free will.

But behold! Tamera and Bauron are not lost; I have a plan most ingenious, birthed from the ancient lore of elven deities. Bâs, the Elven Goddess of Winter, shall entomb Tanares in frost, cleansing the land of all negative emotions. Devoid of their sustenance, the Ungods will have their strength seeping away like shadows at dawn. My exceptional intellect is our salvation.

We must not fear this temporary disruption. A millennium hence, humanity and all the myriad beings that crawl upon Tanares will be nothing but echoes. No one will recall their suffering of the present. But Tamera and Bauron will be safe."

High Cardinal Taram

Other Organizations

The Ebon Claws

A group of worshipers of a powerful extraplanar dragon resides hidden in Tanares, working to prepare the world for the arrival of their master Etoraax.

Etoraax is an especially ancient dragon, native to Ebon, a distant and highly chaotic plane of existence. Its origin, history, and how it came to rule an entire plane are all uncertain, and Etoraax itself violently discourages any inquiry into its past. Still, despite the mysteries surrounding it, Etoraax's influence reaches across the planes. Operating through minions and unwitting accomplices, Etoraax gains power and spreads chaos in worlds under its influence, reducing once orderly and peaceful regions into places of madness and disorder, then drawing sustenance from its resulting cataclysms.

The fragile state of the world of Tanares, especially the events following the destruction of the avatar dragon Thyra, who was the secret defender against extraplanar intrusions, seems like a perfect opportunity for Etoraax to meddle, and possibly gain power amid the ongoing crisis. To this end, the ancient dragon has sent a number of allies to Tanares to sow chaos and conflict. Etoraax's servitors include humanoid worshipers from several different worlds, including humans, elves, orcs, and hobgoblins — the last of these is especially favored due to their loyalty and lawful nature.

In the early stages of Etoraax's schemes, it remains out of the picture, letting its plans unfold while receiving updates from and delivering commands to its minions. Only when a world is gripped by a significant amount of chaos and disruption does Etoraax make an appearance, moving into a lair near the center of the disturbance, and acting directly against its enemies.

On Tanares, Etoraax's minions carry out their master's desires by creating powerful teams to destabilize the Arena system, by encouraging anti-imperial dissent and rebellion to provoke violent reprisals by the Ironhand, and by subtly encouraging conflict between factions such as the Allied Forces and particularly fanatical members of D.E.A.T.H., encouraging them to engage in increasingly extreme acts in pursuit of their goals.

Etoraax's ultimate plan is to destroy one or more of the avatar dragons, and possibly step in to become the ruler, promising to save the world. Once this goal is accomplished, Etoraax will treat Tanares just as it has treated its other conquests, drawing upon the death and disaster caused by his rule, then moving on to new worlds, leaving Tanares as a wretched and near-lifeless husk.

Etoraax Manifestation

Gargantuan dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class: 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points: 550 (28d20 + 224)
Speed: 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	14 (+2)	26 (+8)	22 (+6)	24 (+7)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws: Dex +10, Con +16, Wis +15, Cha +16
Skills: Deception +16, Insight +15, Perception +22, Stealth +10
Senses: blindsight 120 ft., darkvision 240 ft. passive Perception 32
Languages: Common, Draconic
Challenge: 29 (135,000 XP)

Planar Instability: Etoraax remains partially anchored to its demiplane and not entirely present. Attacks against Etoraax must be made at disadvantage.

Legendary Resistance (5/Day): If Etoraax fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack: Etoraax can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (2d10 + 14) piercing damage.

Claw: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (2d8 + 14) slashing damage.

Tail: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 25 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (2d8 + 14) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5-6): Etoraax uses one of the following breath weapons:

Dimensional Shift: Etoraax's weapon affects all creatures in a 120-foot cone. Each affected creature is briefly shifted to a different plane, taking environmental damage while there. Each target must make a DC 25 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, targets take 29 (5d8 + 14) damage of a type determined by Etoraax. Those who fail vanish into the alternate location until the beginning of Etoraax's next turn and may not take actions during this time.

As time flows differently in different realities, targets are only absent for one round, but spend 3d10 rounds at their destination, taking environmental damage while they are there. Shifted targets take 12 (2d8 + 3) damage for each round that they spend on the alternate plane. This damage can be of a type determined by Etoraax.

Confusion. Etoraax subjects targets to visions and mental impressions of its chaotic home plane. All creatures in a 120-foot cone must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or be affected as by a *confusion* spell. Affected targets can make saving throws at the end of each of their turns as per the spell description.

Frightful Presence: Each creature of Etoraax's choice that is within 120 feet of Etoraax and aware of it must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, Etoraax is immune to Etoraax's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Wish (4 uses). Etoraax can manifest part of his true power, casting a *wish* spell, but only to replicate other spells. Etoraax can use this ability four times, regaining its uses after a short rest.

Legendary Actions

Etoraax can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Etoraax regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect: Etoraax makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack: Etoraax makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions): Etoraax beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of Etoraax must succeed on a DC 26 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (2d6 + 14) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. Etoraax can then fly up to half its flying speed.

The Tivarc, or The Chroniclers

Tivarc Plendaryn, an early Imperial bureaucrat, was originally the sole designate to conceive of and organize the bureaucracy around the Arenas and the Teams, which are now common across the Empire. The group took on his name as their honorific after his death, and members or anyone taught by them always refer to the group's adherents as the Tivarc. Most others outside the group refer to them as the Chroniclers.

This group has broad-reaching influence equal to the largest trade guilds. However, its business and motivation lie not in maximizing profits but in educating the people, finding the exceptional among them, and guiding adventurers inside and outside the Arenas.

The Chroniclers, through their displays of art and bardic recitations, remind all Tanareans of the glories of all those who entered the Arenas in search of their dreams and how their heroism allowed the continuation of life despite all dangers.

They assist smaller or youthful adventurer groups, helping them grow in ability and knowledge. This aid includes providing training, jobs, or assignments.

They also record the annals of significant Team actions, good or ill, within and outside the Arenas, as much information as they can ascertain and confirm if not directly witness. (A unique guild tachygraphy—a rare language all its own—maintains privacy and reduces the size of the documents, although any records shared publicly are always translated back into local legible script.)

Origins. The group began in the Imperial Capital as a needed assembly of disparate bureaucrats and administrators charged with organizing the earliest Arenas and Teams after the rise of the Empire. They were responsible for noting a Team's members, organization, and founding principles; they also recorded and wove Teams' group emblems, and recorded what gifts were bestowed upon Teams as their heroism grew (from early treasures to the standard gifted lands of today).

To avoid the appearance of undue influence after years of aspersions, the Chroniclers became independent from direct control by any outsiders. The Tivarc Elders—Cahral "the Shining," a redeemer from Ayefall; Syamarran "Sevengnarl," an accomplished Kolachin wizard despite three missing fingers; and Hao Maltra, priestess of Tamera in Imperial Capital—undertook binding oaths religious and arcane witnessed by the noble houses, the Emperor, and the seven of the wealthiest merchants. In exchange for their guild's autonomy over land distributions and Arena influence, the Tivarc vowed to educate anyone who could pay or work in exchange for education. Thus, while their primary concern is the Arena Teams and recording their deeds for posterity, they have also become a primary means of educating people in at least minimal literacy in local languages and providing trade skills of a non-physical nature.

Base of Operations. Whenever an Arena is built anywhere across the Empire, a Tivarc Tritor is built within a half-day's walk from its location. Each Tivarc Tritor must have three towers (one of which has an unblocked line of sight to the Arena) along with any subsidiary buildings and a curtain wall surrounding the complex. Each Tritor always has at least the following features:

- Dedicated cisterns (if not an isolated well or artesian spring) for water sources;
- Living quarters for the staff, students, any religious penitents, and servants of the same;
- One tower dedicated as a school and dormitory for attendees;
- Multiple chambers for creating and storing essential supplies of parchment, vellum, book-binding materials, and flags (dye, ink, & paint creation and storage, fabric weaving, etc.);
- Stables for steeds and barns for animals readied for food or materials (sheep and lamb for wool or vellum, chickens for eggs, etc.);
- At least two temple chambers, one designed generically for use by anyone for their personal prayers or services, the other a chapel to The Glorious One, whose acolytes often tend to any wounded within the Arenas;
- A Heroic Hall, a public-accessible library/museum from which folk might read or hear the legends of heroes past and present and their most epic battles, whether presented in tomes or tapestries or sculptures or even curated artifacts and former weapons once used by heroes of renown;
- Vaults and libraries for housing the unexpurgated details of any Teams invested or made famous locally (and these vaults are limited to a very select few);
- A hidden portal within each Tritor providing two-way access to one other Tivarc Tritor (though rumors say more).

Chroniclers use this network to keep their members apprised of local Team activities, land investitures, and any major actions or dangers on the move by any and all powers.

Members. Most Tivarc members are historians, linguists, learned scribes, cartographers, illustrators, or craft folk who brew inks and dyes or weave cloth. Chroniclers found between Arenas or Tritors are often simple scribes accompanying an adventurer group to record their actions for posterity. Tritors in the largest cities may have affiliated retired adventurers—a trio to quintet, most often wizards, sorcerers, redeemers, clerics, or bards now working as Chroniclers.

Campaign Use. The Tivarc can be found anywhere across Tanares, some traveling with Teams as scribes, others providing education and knowledge for local people.

Many folktales or legends can be seen, read, or heard among the Heroic Halls at all Tritors, so they're an easy inspirational launching point for many new heroes and Teams.

Being a student at a Tritor provides aspiration beyond physical labor, as learning math and literacy offer broader opportunities, irrespective of one's family or locale.

Some Chroniclers wield darker skills of subterfuge and manipulation to keep their lore from those who steal such for their own gain. While they rarely kill to protect the records, the Tivarc directive of "recording heroic annals for posterity and the public good" is held with nigh-religious fervor. Tritors can employ adventurer groups to retrieve anything stolen from them, if they do not have any veteran Team of their own. Should they capture spies and learn their employers' names, they often keep the powerful at bay by covertly hinting at what they know and offering to help keep their secrets out of the public eye.

In general, the Tivarc is well received in most realms, sharing the common goals of maintaining order and level of civilization.

Chapter 7
History

In this chapter, you will delve into the rich lore behind Tanares' past. While the full breadth of Tanarean history is a complex weave of events and epochs, here you will find a distilled account of the most pivotal moments that have shaped this world. You will journey through the rise and fall of its greatest civilizations, walk alongside a legendary band of heroes, and navigate the timeline of Tanares, providing you a succinct summary of key events. Each age of Tanares' history - the Godly Age, Ancient Age, Malrokian Age, Fallen Age, Imperial Age, and Heroes Age - is explored, offering a glimpse into the epochs that have defined this realm.

Kingdoms of the Past

Similar to other campaign settings, Tanares is home to dozens of ancient, ruined kingdoms, each eagerly awaiting brave adventurers to uncover its secrets. However, unlike other worlds, Tanares is afflicted by the Malrokian Curse, a devastating force unleashed during bloody conflicts that causes cataclysms, obliterating not just kingdoms but also entire landscapes and ecosystems. As a result, countless kingdoms have risen and fallen throughout its history, with many disappearing instantly, burying centuries of development.

Here, you will find information on the most notable kingdoms of the past, complete with brief histories of Tanares and adventure ideas, to enrich your campaigns. Feel free to add your own elements to these locations, tailoring them to fit the unique characteristics of your campaign. These kingdoms can also serve as inspiration for creating backgrounds for PCs or even NPCs.

The Forbidden Kingdom

From -1814 to -1707

Location: Northern part of the Darkall continent.

On the edge of Darkall, the Penumbral Mountain towers above everything else, remaining shrouded in mystery. The Forbidden Kingdom, a name now spoken only in whispers, once stood here—home to a doomed realm of wizardry that, in desperation, consorted with the Ungods for survival. Celestianist doctrine refers to this place as the cradle of Penumbra corruption and the site where the first Ungod portal ruptured the planes, transforming its thirteen elder wizards, driven by fear and pride, into aberrations.

During the Godly Age, mortals were trapped within a sprawling conflict, and a once-rising mystical realm was on the brink of falling. The twelve wizards, in their hubris, decided to save their kingdom by colluding with extraplanar forces. They made immense sacrifices to beckon Z'ulvath, the Penumbral Father, to Tanares, bartering their world for promised power and knowledge. Transformed into aberrations, they heralded the arrival of the Ungods' minions, sparking the first divine clash—the Battle of the Gods—that continues to shape Tanares' fate. When the Ungods attacked, Golgael, one of the greatest archangels, led an onslaught on the emoguns' bastion, perceiving it as the wellspring of corruption. During the assault, he discovered a mysterious entity or artifact powerful enough to warp his essence into the twisted being now known as Golgöggoth, the Augur.

Ever vigilant, Golgöggoth claimed the mountain as his fortress, guarding the secrets of the ancient kingdom and the enigmatic discovery. Yet, beneath the foreboding surface, many ancient relics lie in wait, presenting an irresistible challenge for those with the audacity to defy the Augur's watchful gaze.

Elven Kingdom of Hag´Salar

From -2048 to 0

Location: In the west part of what now is the Theocracy of the Kepesh region.

Nestled in the southern slopes of Tanares, the Elven Kingdom of Hag'Salar was a paradise for the summer elves. This kingdom, next to the western sea, drew traders from all corners of Tanares to its rocky and sandy shores. They came for the unique spices, masterful craftsmanship, and the warm hospitality of the locals.

The cityscape of Hag'Salar exemplified the elves' harmony with nature. Stone structures, hewn from the surrounding rock formations, were adorned with exquisite sculptures. Vast tents and fabrics draped over the city, lending it an air of sophisticated charm. This welcoming atmosphere and the summer elves' openness to cultural exchange made Hag'Salar a melting pot of cultures.

The summer elves were fascinated by jewels and gemstones. Many of these precious stones, imbued with magic, embellished the inhabitants and the city's architecture. Serving as protective talismans, these jewels were their primary defense, capable of incapacitating intruders with a mere utterance. This made them highly sought after on the black market.

However, the cataclysm that shattered the Malrokian Kingdom also laid waste to Hag'Salar. Earthquakes and titanic waves reduced the once vibrant kingdom to ruins. "Despite the destruction, whispers of a hidden gem mine, untouched by the cataclysm, still motivate searches in the area.

In honor of its past, the grand market of Hag'Salar still exists, maintaining the spirit of the summer elves who once lived there. Each year, merchants from across the regions gather for a significant fair held on a surviving rock formation from the original kingdom. The summer elves highly value their ancestral jewels and offer generous rewards for their recovery. The Relic Hunters Guild often employs adventurers to retrieve these lost treasures, while legends tell of a gem-obsessed dragon lurking in the depths of the ancient Gem Mines, guarding secrets and untold riches.

Cantala Kingdom

From -1661 to 0

Location: Deep in the Storm Ocean, near the Boscage Archipelago.

The Cantala Kingdom was once an exemplar of Tanares' finest cultures. It was a haven of peace and wisdom, situated in the Boscage Archipelago off Tanares' west coast. Led by wise women, this pacifist matriarchal society was a sanctuary for knowledge, philosophy, and the study of stars. The Cantalans, renowned for their grace and intellect, were in stark contrast to the conflict-prone cultures of other realms. Their grand Cantalan Library and numerous public existential debates still motivate many researchers.

Their defense lay in labyrinthine stone walls, shrouded in lush vegetation and imbued with magic that conjured illusions and confusion. Within these walls, elegant homes nestled amidst floral landscapes, adorned with flowing fabrics. Their mastery of plant magic birthed sentient topiaries, protective barriers capable of ensnaring invaders with potent poison. They also crafted the Blossoming Blades, weapons adorned with enchanted flower petals capable of unleashing paralyzing blossoms.

Their tranquility was disrupted when a group known as the cirrus Windspeakers, led by Zafara, sought to introduce them to the gods. Queen Amarylis declined the initial offer but agreed to Zafara's request to take her son, Malrok, who struggled to fit into Cantalan society. Years later, Malrok returned as Tanares' greatest champion, eventually merging Cantala with his own kingdom. Cantala's wisdom shaped the Malrokian Kingdom's laws and moral conduct, but ultimately shared its fate, swallowed by the sea, its ruins now guarded by merfolks.

Cantala's legacy endures. Mysterious events have caused a portion of Cantala's ruins to resurface, revealing a hidden chamber untouched by time. Rumors now abound of a secret entrance to the Cantalan Library, supposedly guarded by an ancient sentient topiary, a being of such age and power that it has gained wisdom surpassing that of mere mortals. Inside, one may find ancient knowledge of star magic and even the last exemplar of the famous Blossoming Blade.

The Dwarven Kingdom of Arheimar

From -1661 to 0

Location: In Undertanares, covering the entire region below the Central Sea and its boarders.

In the Ancient Age's dawn, the Dwarven Kingdom of Arheimar thrived deep within Undertanares, displaying the unity of the Lion, Goat, and Dragon clans. Guided by Dorsi, the Dwarf God of virtues, they carved the Sacred Passage, a deep tunnel leading to a common point where they built Arheimar, a mighty fortress against the Ungods' incursions.

With the Stone Spirits' aid and Dorsi's blessing, they constructed the legendary Dorsian Forge, capable of crafting artifacts and fusing tameranium and bauronite into the moonstone, essential for crafting more Stone Spirit Statues.

Arheimar flourished, with its dominions expanding throughout Undertanares. However, the Malrokian Curse led to the collapse of many dwarven tunnels. This chaos brought ambition and greed into the clans, seeping corruption into them and leading to Dorsi's withdrawal of his blessing.

At the dwarves' weakest moment, the Ungods sent Ardilog, the Everspawning Chimera, to destroy the dwarven realm. Seizing the opportunity, the duergar—a corrupted dwarf clan—claimed many ancient Arheirmar ruins, including the sacred Dorsian Forge. A handful of dwarves remained, fighting for their territory, while others spread to the surface, interacting with other species. Although Stonelair has now begun to reconquer Undertanares, many of Arheirmar's artifacts remain lost in the tunnels.

To this day, many dwarves strive to gain glory and Dorsi's favor by seeking the means to slay Ardilog once and for all. Legends whisper of an ancient dwarven waraxe, blessed by Dorsi, capable of destroying this chimera. Another tale speaks of the Stone Cradle, a core of moonstone hidden in Arheirmar's secret halls, believed to be the birthplace of the first dwarves. It is rumored that these statues, embodying the spirits of the first dwarves, guard this place, waiting for those of necessary virtue to awaken them for the battle against the Ungods.

Zhepardit -The Gnomish Kingdom

From -1661 to 0

Location: Deep in the Central Sea, around the town of Mustardseed.

In the Ancient Age, the Gnomish Kingdom of Zhepardit thrived atop the central plateaus, now submerged beneath the Central Sea. Renowned for their artistic creations, they were the first to develop magic through sound; they were the forefathers of all bardic schools, with magic that wove enchanting melodies that could sway hearts, conjure illusions, and even create tangible effects. Their insatiable curiosity led them to explore Tanares, spreading their music, philosophy, and the bardic tradition.

Invited by King Malrok, the gnomes brought their culture and arts to his kingdom. Yet, the cataclysm that shattered Malrok's realm also claimed Zhepardit, swallowed by colossal waves. Today, the Gnomish city of Mustardseed stands as a remnant of this once-great kingdom.

Beneath the Central Sea's depths, the sunken ruins of Zhepardit lie hidden, now claimed by the sahuagin. They share these ruins with other aquatic creatures and fungal monstrosities, adding to the dangers of these labyrinthine ruins.

Some say that adventurers have recovered part of the gnomish artifacts, including colossal war drums. These mighty instruments, imbued with bardic power, are capable of inspiring a legion of soldiers, boosting their power.

Legends also speak of the 8th musical note, a powerful mystical enhancer accessible only through great magic. Some say Jade, a hero of the Kemet Invasion, holds part of this secret, while others point to the ruins of Zhepardit. Many gnomes are pursuing these rumors and the ancient relics of their ancestors, sponsoring adventurers to recover these artifacts in hopes of rebuilding their past glory.

Cauldron of Moritar

From -1661 to 0

Location: Region of Eferhild's Cauldron in Tsvetan.

In the Ancient Age, the orcs sought peaceful refuge in Tsvetan's hot, mountainous region. Guided by their shamans, they built a kingdom amidst rivers of lava and intense heat, the Cauldron of Moritar. A corrupted penumbral dragon dispatched by the Ungods threatened their unity and prosperity. However, under the leadership of a legendary Warlord and the First Red Mother, the most powerful shaman in Tanares' history, they defeated the beast.

From the dragon's blood, the Red Mother, guided by the spirits, forged the Lava Axe with the assistance of the dwarfs of Arheimar. This mighty weapon, a symbol of orc power, was gifted to their Warlord to be used against the Ungods. Under the leadership of the great lineage of Warlords and Red Mothers, the orcs were able to expand their kingdom.

Still, the Malrokian Curse eventually brought untold destruction to Moritar. Famine and disputes over scarce resources led to strife between the clans, and each began to fight for the Lava Axe, a once symbol of orc unity, which furthered the division among the orcs and left them vulnerable. Their realm fell into the chaos of internal war and was later conquered by the Mystical Kingdom.

Centuries later, scattered orc groups gradually recaptured Eferhild after the fall of the Mystical Kingdom. The Lava Axe's holder, Katar, has settled in this ancient orc fortress. Eferhild remains a mystery, with many tunnels and passages having been magically sealed by the ancient magic of the First Red Mother. The exploration of the ancient ruins below the great Eferhild fortress is of great importance to all orcs and a thorn in the Ungods' side, as it may hold great secrets laid by the ancient orcs in their war against the penumbral creatures.

Legends whisper of the First Red Mother's spirit still lingering within Eferhild's ruins. Those who can commune with her may gain valuable guidance, leading to hidden treasures or ancient rituals. The long-lost rituals and artifacts that once allowed the orcs to summon fiery allies may still lie within Moritar's chambers. Unlocking these secrets could shift the region's power balance, emboldening the orcs in their struggle. Both Katar and Vharzog are said to be racing to uncover these secrets.

Malrokian Kingdom

From -661 to 0

Location: In much of the central and western Tanares region, with its capital, Malland in Stravian.

In the Ancient Age, the Malrokian Kingdom was the most formidable realm in Tanares, covering over half of the continent. Under King Malrok's wise rule, the Kingdom was a beacon of justice and freedom, a bulwark against the Ungods. Malrok, Tanares' greatest champion, is known for his victory over Bellara, one of the Ungods' most potent creations. Alongside Zafara and the cirrus Windspeakers, he spread the teachings of the gods Tamera and Bauron, fostering a society of benevolence and respect for all.

Malrok's closest friends were his companions from his youth's adventure group. This group inspired countless tales, instigating the idea of heroes and adventuring parties facing perilous missions. Many different stories tell about the disappearance of Malrok and his group. It is said that the king left the government to his son and gathered his close allies to venture on an extraplanar journey to find a solution against the Ungods.

The Malrokian Kingdom had great prosperity, and most realms joined them of their free accord, as it brought protection and wealth while respecting each region's culture. However, not even the Malrokian Kingdom survived the insidious corruption of the Ungods. Some speculate that the Ungods infiltrated the Evolutionist Church and the Kingdom's nobility, sowing discord and exploiting Malrok's disappearance. The ensuing catastrophe, known as the Malrokian Curse, devastated the Kingdom and much of Tanares, marking a grim victory for the Ungods.

Today, the ruins of the capital, Malland, stand as a stark reminder of the past. Yet, whispers of Malrok's lost heir carrying the legendary Ancient Blood stir intrigue; some suspect Prime Minister Tellatius. An ancient prophecy foretells Malrok's return in Tanares' darkest hour, a notion the Republic of Freelands seeks to realize using the Vandanamalika's god-like powers.

The ruins of Malland and Malrok's Palace, preserved through time, hold secrets of Bellara's imprisonment. Protected by a potent spell, the palace's inner chambers remain unexplored. Rumors suggest that ancient soldiers and servants of King Malrok lie in magical stasis within the palace, awaiting their King's return. The dwarves of Stonelair, now controlling the region, sponsor adventurers to delve into these ruins, hoping to unearth answers and forgotten secrets.

Damasyan Lands

From 0 to 275

Location: Along the foothills of the Alkira Mountains.

In the wake of the first Malrokian Curse, a band of humans found sanctuary in the rugged Alkira Mountains. Over time, they evolved into a formidable barbarian horde; their society was reshaped under the rule of the enigmatic sorceress Koran Damasyan. Scholars murmur that she was a Purple Witch, her ageless beauty and powerful magic being the evidence.

Koran's reign was a spectacle of might and marauding, her followers mastering the art of taming monstrous beasts using enchanted chains made by Koran and her disciples. Their society morphed into a matriarchy, with magically gifted girls handpicked as Koran's apprentices. Their ambitions drove them eastward, towards Chowillawu Acchoda, where they were thwarted by the Kemets and the Crystal Tower. The ensuing clash witnessed the intervention of extraplanar warriors, speculated to be Augur's Watchers, who decimated the horde, including Koran, marking the end of the Damasyan.

Today, remnants of the Damasyan civilization persist in the Alkira Mountains, their legacy etched in rock drawings that reveal the secrets of beast taming. Descendants of their tamed creatures still patrol the area, safeguarding the territory and its concealed secrets. Some barbarian groups who have great affinity with beasts are believed to be Damasyan descendants.

In a recent revelation, the Cult of Shadow Wing discovered that Koran had a surviving daughter, and her lineage continues to this day in a young orphan named Helene, under the guardianship of Bishop Razun in the Heroes Rise orphanage. What makes her existence of great importance is a prophecy by Golgöggoth that foretells a Damasyan Horde resurgence led by the last of Koran's bloodline. This ignited a race between Augur's forces and the Cult to locate Helene. The first group seeks to kill her, while the second aims to protect her, ensuring that the horde will once again do their bidding.

Concurrently, the Purple Witches seek to resurrect Koran herself, believing that her resurrection would be the proper way to accomplish the prophecy of the last Damasyan. They've deciphered an ancient ritual within the rock drawings and believe they know her final resting place.

Agythur Jungle Kingdom

From 45 to 1101

Location: In much of the territory occupied by Hook Jungle in Mystical.

During the Fallen Age, before the Kingdom of Arcana ascension, the enigmatic civilization of Agythur flourished. Their culture preached simplicity and profound faith in an ancient aquatic deity, whom current scholars believe to have been the remaining spirit of the deceased fifth Ungod.

In the dense Hook Jungle, they built pyramid-like structures near rivers and waterfalls. These structures contained intricate submerged passages and treasure chambers filled with traps and secret paths. They used golden statues for their sacrificial rituals, believing they could hold the spirits of the departed.

The Agythurians, isolated and territorial, had been drawn into conflict with the Mystical Kingdom, incited by visions from their deity. The invasion led to their downfall, as the Malrokian Curse caused by the war devastated Agythur, pushing them to extinction. Their lands became part of the Wasteland, and their survivors dispersed.

Centuries later, as the Wasteland receded, it revealed the ancient ruins. The tales suggest that the territory is still guarded by their sacred warriors, who are now corrupted. Pirates and outlaws whisper golden idols hidden within the ruins, believed to confer wishes when offered to the fallen god.

Some adventurers speak of encountering aberrant humanoids within the ruins, twisted remnants of the Agythurians, transformed not by the Malrokian Curse but by their god's unholy blessing. Those who claim to have encountered these abominations often return deranged, causing many to dismiss these tales.

Additionally, within the ruins of Agythur, those who sleep are plagued with ominous dreams and nightmares. These prophetic dreams guide individuals through the ruins, revealing hidden passages and traps, promising riches and power. The dreams intensify, blurring the lines between reality and nightmare and slowly eroding the person's sanity until they find themselves at the very lair of the aberrations that inhabit the place.

Kingdom of Orsal

69 to 1103

Location: On the western and northern shores of the Central Sea, covering the Republic of Freelands, Stravian, and Imperial Capital regions.

After the fall of the Malrokian Kingdom, humanity thrived along the shores of the Central Seas, giving rise to the city-states of Eyefall, Deverell, Goldraft, and Skybell. Each city, a fortress, was united under the Evolutionist Church's guidance, forming the Kingdom of Orsal.

Orsal's power structure was a delicate balance, with each city's noble elite competing for the temporary position of Regent. This competition bred a web of intrigue, betrayal, and secret pacts, all aimed at securing the ascension of their respective representatives. Amidst this, the Evolutionists established their headquarters in Skybell, consolidating their ecclesiastical power.

However, Orsal's prosperity masked a rotting core of internal corruption. The nobles reveled in decadence, and the ordinary

people languished, which sparked sporadic rebellions. As resources dwindled, the nobles sought wealth by invading foreign lands, eventually leading to the Arcana Kingdom's catastrophic siege. Orsal allied with other forces to invade Arcana, and the resulting war caused the second Malrokian Curse cataclysm.

In the post-catastrophe period, the population was in panic, prompting the Evolutionist Church to seek a solution urgently. They found Baleroth, the lone survivor of Arcana, who was in the midst of his bid to unify Tanares under an Empire that would forbid wars. The Evolutionists saw in him a possibility to expand their influence and control the whole of Tanares to avoid a new cataclysm. Faced with this new reality, many Orsal nobles were forced to pledge allegiance or face extermination. Some nobles found a place in Baleroth's Empire, becoming Imperial Governors, Ironhand officers, or court nobles, but others were not so lucky.

In desperation, some nobles turned to dark magic to retain their influence, either becoming warlocks or falling under the sway of the Ungods. These new Ungod servants formed the Dark Coven, a shadowy faction within the Empire that is rumored to exist to this day. Meanwhile, legends whisper of noble families surviving by accepting a sinister deal and being transformed into powerful vampires, creating the Crimson Houses. These vampire lords spread to all Empire lands, primarily the Capital and Kolbjörn. The Crimson House leaders are believed to meet secretly still, plotting to regain their power and territory through influence, deceit, and unholy powers. Their existence remains a constant struggle for the Celestianist Church.

Arcana, the Mystical Kingdom

931 to 1101

Location: In the highlands of the Mystical region, centered on its capital, Arcana.

After the Malrokian Kingdom's fall, a group of arcane scholars foresaw the brewing conflicts in Tanares. Determined to prevent another cataclysmic event like the Malrokian Curse, they established a secret magical community atop the highest plateau in southeastern Tanares, which would later become the Mystical Kingdom. The rapid ascension of this kingdom remains a mystery, and many scholars speculate that a lost branch of magic was used to raise a country so quickly.

The Mystical Kingdom served as a sanctuary for persecuted arcane spellcasters, with its borders closed to outsiders, especially the Evolutionist Church. This isolation and swift accumulation of power bred suspicion and envy, culminating in a coalition of kingdoms laying siege to Arcana, the kingdom's capital. The ruling council, led by the elder sister, Queen Tyreen, and composed of mage siblings Baleroth, Torygg, Sintaya, and Sara Sonata, was expected to hold the city. However, Baleroth's treacherous assassination of his siblings to usurp their power weakened Arcana's defenses.

The ensuing war triggered the Second Malrokian Curse, decimating the Mystical Kingdom. The Cult of Shadow Wing, responsible for instigating the war, is also rumored to have unleashed the toxic fumes that turned it into the Wasteland, a cursed region, by enslaving the soul of the Avatar Dragon Zarumag and creating a connection to the Penumbral Plane.

Decades later, heroes led by Sedura confronted the cultists and freed Zarumag's soul, thereby extinguishing the Wasteland and revealing the ruins of the Mystical Kingdom. However, a residual magical effect began to slowly reanimate the ancient corpses of the kingdom's people, creating hordes of undead that periodically invade nearby territories. Among these undead are powerful, intelligent entities, including ghosts, mummies, vampires, and liches, capable of leading the undead hordes in terrifying assaults.

Recently, Queen Tyreen resurfaced, claiming resurrection through ancient magic. She seeks the Arcana Council's five mystical gems, which she believes can lay her people's souls to rest. Some skeptics argue that she is an undead imposter, intending to use the gems to control the undead hordes. Others suggest that these rumors are Baleroth's doing, as he desires his sister's demise. The gems are rumored to be lost within the Mystical region

The Sentinels

The legendary team of adventurers known as the Sentinels—sometimes as "They Who Watch and Wait" and "The Sentinels on the Unseen Mountain"—was one of the first formed after the rise of the Empire, their career beginning in the year of 1115. They won many victories in the Arena and gained a reputation for supporting only even-handed and just causes, as well as showing mercy and generosity to those in need. The team of five corresponded to the four cardinal directions and to the center, the place of their leader.

Hawkstar *(male half-elf ranger, Mark of the Commander):* Deeply tanned, with black hair and a close-trimmed black beard, Hawkstar's golden falcon badge on a black field was famous and instantly recognizable, along with the company of his companion, the hawk Goldclaw. The ranger's golden-fletched arrows always struck true, and he was known for his sure and capable leadership of the Sentinels Team. Quiet and thoughtful to the point of brooding, Hawkstar listened and watched, as befits the man known as the Sentinel of the Summit.

Numa the Shaper *(female human wizard, Mark of the Controller):* If any were to choose the most powerful of the Sentinels, it would be the regal Numa the Shaper, mistress of transformation, transmutation, and illusion, known as the Sentinel of the North, or Sentinel of the Winds. The dark-skinned Numa was distinctive for her cloudy mane of pure-white hair and her dark eyes that flashed with barely restrained arcane power. The brilliant wizard was Hawkstar's second and closest advisor and a skilled tactician, known for wielding her powers to control the battlefield of the Arena, particularly her *wand of polymorph*.

Sister Jade *(female half-orc monk, Mark of the Brute):* Raised and taught by the monks of the Jade Thunder Temple, the woman known as Sister Jade was a green-skinned giantess, well over six feet tall, and powerfully muscled. Yet she spent a lifetime mastering the fury within her, such that her considerable strength was paired with grace, wisdom, and precision. She needed no weapon save for her own body, and was as formidable an opponent in matters of debate, serving as the Sentinels' agent to bargain and negotiate. Those who underestimated the Sentinel of the East, Sentinel of the Green Earth, were certain to regret it.

Kholdark Pyre *(male tiefling sorcerer, Mark of the Shooter):* Although some say his companion Sea-Shadow was the more sinister Sentinel, Kholdark Pyre, Sentinel of Fire and the South, was well-known as the Team's most forceful weapon. The tiefling sorcerer wielded fire as his plaything, from a candle-flame in a cupped hand to a roar like a dragon's breath sweeping the Arena. His skin was as black as night, as were his curling horns, his hair burnished red-gold, and his eyes glowed like burning coals when he invoked his power.

Sea-Shadow *(nonbinary sea elf druid/rogue, Mark of the Tactician):* The most mysterious of the Sentinels was Sea-Shadow, the Sentinel of the West, Sentinel of the Waves. The deep blue-skinned sea-elf was only one of their many forms, and Sea-Shadow frequently took on the shape of different animals, especially those close to or dwelling in the sea. Most often, Sea-Shadow's shapes were marked by their almost completely black fur, feathers, or hide, coupled with sea-green eyes. The shapeshifter was a master of stealth and disguise, as well as a fearsome fighter in any number of forms. Sea-Shadow was particularly known to wear and use a *cloak of the manta ray*.

The Unseen Citadel

After many victories, both in the Arena and in the lairs of various foes, the Sentinels set out in search of their most challenging quest: the Unseen Mountain, a legendary peak that could neither be perceived nor found by mortal senses, and perhaps did not even exist in the material world. It is said that they found it, and there upon its peak delved into an ancient fortress. What became of the Sentinels thereafter is a matter of speculation and legend: Some say they lost their lives there on the Unseen Mountain, for they never returned to the Arena or public life. Others say the Sentinels cleared the citadel of its monstrous inhabitants and claimed it for their own, having discovered secrets so profound they could not return.

Those who believe the latter think the Sentinels may dwell in their Unseen Citadel still, keeping watch over the world and waiting, their lives extended by powerful magic, or simply by existing in a place outside of time as most beings understand it. Exactly what they are watching and waiting for differs depending on the teller of the tale. For some, the Sentinels discovered a gateway or portal in the depths of the Unseen Mountain, and swore a pact to guard it and keep it sealed. Others say their unique view from the Unseen peak gave them insight into the future, or they encountered prophecies warning them of what is to come. Some adventurers think of the Sentinels like folk-heroes or even patron saints, and there are countless tales of their reappearances in places all over the world: showing up suddenly to aid those in need and vanishing just as quickly as they came, without any explanation.

Campaign Use

The Sentinels' legend often serves as an inspiring tale for budding Heroes, with some even recounting mysterious encounters with these legendary figures in their past. The allure of the Sentinels and their Unseen Citadel could propel Heroes on a quest to locate the hidden mountain. What they find there is up to fate. Are the Sentinels alive, biding their time for the right Heroes to find them? They might mentor the Heroes, preparing them as successors or prophesied champions destined to shape the world in ways the Sentinels couldn't. Alternatively, the Unseen Citadel may reveal a darker truth, with the Sentinels imprisoned or corrupted by an unknown entity. Can the Heroes overcome these formidable adventurers, possibly the most powerful the world has ever seen?

Tanarean Timeline

Godly Age: The creation of the world and the eldritch Ungods invasion

- **-4631:** Bauron and Tamera forge Tanares, a world designed for multitudinous species to evolve.
- **-3631:** These gods forge the Angels, divine beings to aid in world-shaping.
- **-2652:** Angels craft the cirrus, mortals possessing dual souls, meant to learn and disseminate divine wisdom.
  - The Cycle of Souls emerges with the appearance of the first mortal species (the cirrus). Faithful souls ascend as Angels, the rest reborn via the Soul Flux.
- **-2531:** Bauron and Tamera sculpt dragons from the elements, defenders against extraplanar threats.
- **-2424:** Cirrus unlock the secrets of arcane and divine spellcasting through the Tanarean Magic Field.
- **-2351:** The Divine Siblings shape the orcs, taii'maku, and Humans. Other gods and creatures from various planes arrive to populate Tanares.
- **-2335:** The Windspeakers, cirrus preachers, are formed to guide mortals in divine ways and magic.

The Ungods Invasion

- **-2173:** Mortals build their first kingdoms amidst prosperity.
- **-2048:** Elves, refugees from a devoured world, arrive in Tanares, dividing into four seasonal factions.
- **-1814:** Envy drives mortals to conflict over resources and mystical knowledge.
- **-1813:** Conflict escalates to war, despite cirrus' warnings.
- **-1711:** A group of desperate human wizards resort to a forbidden pact with Z'ulvath to win a war.
- **-1710:** The pact with the eldritch Ungods, gave power to the wizards but transformed them into aberrations.
- **-1709:** The Ungods invade Tanares, bringing their Penumbral Plane, devouring and corrupting the world.
  - Mortal souls bearing sins spawn as penumbral creatures.
  - Dragons awaken to combat the Ungods.
  - Tamera, Bauron, and other gods rally their divine armies and mortal heroes against the Ungods.
- **-1708:** Dragons imbue mortals with Draconic Powers; the first dragonborn are created to lead mortal armies.
- **-1707:** Angels attack the Penumbral Plane; Golgael, their leader, becomes corrupted into Golgöggoth.
  - The gods kill one Ungod and force the battle into the divine realm, sparing mortals further carnage.
  - Ungods curse the dragons, causing insanity upon the smell of blood;
  - Before departing, the gods warn mortals: war empowers the Ungods; they leave mortals and dragons behind.
  - Golgöggoth refuses to leave, staying to battle Ungodly influence;
  - Gods began empowering mortals as redeemers.
- **-1706:** Three powerful servants of the Ungods remain, each tasked with corrupting Tanares in their own way.
  - Surviving tieflings from the Penumbral Plane arrive in Tanares, met with suspicion from the mortals.

Ancient Age: Emergence of Kingdoms and the Kemets' Transformation

- **-1705:** Dragons form a council to contend with their curse; the dragonblades and Dragon Towers are established.
- **-1684:** Dragons create a unique cloning magic, ensuring the survival of the dragonborn species.
- **-1680:** Golgöggoth manipulates the winter elves with prophecies, using them to further his plan of eradicating emotions.
- **-1661:** Mortal realms including Arheirmar, Kepesh, Cantala, and others are established, each with unique cultures.
  - Kepesh forms a sacred connection with a spiritual mystical deity, preaching eternal souls.
- **-1584:** Mortals first venture into the Penumbral Plane, a perilous quest to combat its dark influence.
- **-1581:** Prophecy-driven winter elves began to study the

Penumbral Plane, using its properties to open portals across Tanares.

- **-1578:** Bellara's minions capture, enslave, and transform some winter elves into scorpion-like gloomfolk during their penumbral explorations.
- **-1575:** Free winter elves, renamed as Kemets, expand to the far east and west, igniting conflict with the Kepesh and constructing the Reginheraht Magical Tower.
- **-1368:** The first madwalkers emerge on Tanares, survivors who mastered control over Penumbral corruption, mentoring others in their unique methods.
- **-1351:** Despite widespread persecution, madwalkers focus on retribution against penumbral beings rather than societal acceptance.
- **-1108:** Shamans and druids form bonds with world spirits, preaching the faith of Nature Spirits across the lands.
- **-680:** Zafara, eldest cirrus, guides hero Malrok and a party of adventurers to hunt Bellara, planning to imprison her in an ancient coffer, a symbol of unity among Tanares' races.

Malrokian Age: The Ascension and Fall of the Legendary Malrokian Kingdom

- **-661:** Hero Malrok's victory over Bellara. Ascends to the throne, establishing the Kingdom of Malrok.
- **-657:** Bellara's prison relocated beneath the Malrokian Palace.
- **-624:** Mortals document cirrus wisdom, giving rise to the Evolutionist Church.
  - Shadow Wing cultists subtly infiltrate the newly formed Church.
  - Custodian scribes' interpretations of cirrus teachings are distorted by Ungodly influence.
- **-612:** Interpretational differences of scriptures cause strife within the Church. Shadow Wing cultists fan the flames.
- **-510:** Gloomfolk rebel against Bellara's minions, escaping to Undertanares and forming their own civilization.
- **-411:** King Malrok and his most trusted allies embark on a journey across planes to find a way to eliminate the Ungods. He is never seen again.
- **-408:** Purple Witches, Bellara's disciples, infiltrate the Malrokian Kingdom to free their leader.
- **-290:** The Church, manipulated by Shadow Wing cultists and Purple Witches, begins persecuting dissenters. Advisor Zafara ousted.
- **-46:** Shadow Wing cultists infiltrate Kepesh society, stirring up conflict with the Malrokian Kingdom.
- **-21:** Purple Witch Catharina possesses Queen Ella Malrok, instigating war with the Kepesh.
- **-1:** Kepesh unite with minor barbarian realms, preparing to face the Malrokian Kingdom.
- **0:** The war births suffering and penumbral creatures in the Penumbral Plane, fueling the Ungods and causing the Malrokian Curse.
  - The Curse splits the continent, bringing down civilization in Tanares.
  - Kepesh leaders seek Ba-Ka's divine intervention, saving some of their cities.
  - Bellara is freed from her prison, fulfilling her followers' plans.
  - The Malrokian Curse wipes out major kingdoms: Hag'Salar, Cantala, Kepesh, Arheirmar, Zhepardit, Moritar, Kölm and Latarian.
- **3:** Golgöggoth and the Watchers plot to remove emotions from mortals to weaken the Ungods.
- **4:** The Draconic Council conducts a ritual to cast an eternal storm, separating Kepesh and Golgöggoth on Darkall from the Tanares survivors.
  - The Draconic Council emerges as a significant force in Tanares, warding off war and penumbral corruption.
  - Construction of Draconic Towers across Tanares begins.
- **5:** Tanares enters a dark age, with only Sindile and the taii'maku city-states standing.
- **23:** Zafara retreats with the remaining cirrus to the Ben'net mountains after the Malrokian Kingdom's fall.
  - The Fallen Age: Post-apocalyptic era following the Malrokian Curse.
- **69:** The Kingdom of Orsal emerges, first to restore order post-Malrokian Curse.
- **76:** The Church blames disunity and mortals' wars for the Malrokian Curse, pointing to the old divine decree.
- **80:** Some regions resist kingdom affiliation, choosing city-state status.
- **162:** The Evolutionist Church rises and initiates a religious inquisition.
  - The Cult of Shadow Wing further infiltrates the church, exploiting the inquisition.
- **275:** Kemets construct the Crystal Tower, opening a Vandanamalika portal (not on lunar perigee).
  - Purple Witches' plan for Vandanamalika control thwarted by Augur's Watchers.
- **276:** Kemets move to Darkall; portal destroyed; a century-long conflict begins with the Kepesh.
- **303:** Eternal Circle forms to radically safeguard nature post-Malrokian devastation.
- **306:** Church establishes Skybell HQ; angels' last known assembly point.
- **332:** Kemets interrupt Kepesh ritual; devastating fallout births soulborns.

- **397:** Kemets conquer Kepesh; necromantic knowledge seized.
- **589:** Smaller kingdoms start to surface across the continent.
- **591:** Soulborns establish the Bank of Hajal; financing the kingdom's growth.
- **692:** Tenshikin, the Tameranium Avatar Dragon, forms Yama to hunt angelic artifacts.
- **741:** Tenshikin acquires angelic artifacts after a long conflict with Yokensha.
- **743:** Tenshikin uses artifacts to govern Yama, feeds on tameranium.
- **869:** Draconic Council denied Yama's artifact access; Yama-Bunkatsu Mountain damaged in the conflict.
  - Isendden halts conflict, expels Tenshikin from council.
- **931:** Tanares wizards and cirrus unite to combat Malrokian Curse. They found the Mystical Kingdom.
- **1099:** Baleroth seizes power in Mystical Kingdom; frees and absorbs an archdevil.
- **1100:** Shadow Wing cult triggers Malrokian Curse via barbarian assault on Mystical Kingdom.
- **1101:** Mystical Kingdom falls, creating the Wastelands. Shadow Wing captures Zarumag.
- **1102:** Arheimar clan downfall; Chimera wreaks havoc; dwarven clans disperse.

Imperial Age: Era of oppression and stability under Emperor Baleroth's reign

- **1103:** Emperor Baleroth initiates plans for a unified Empire, using power stolen from his siblings and the archdevil.
- **1105:** With cunning diplomacy and assassinations, the Empire is officially established.
  - Powerful nobles coerced into Empire governance, enabling swift expansion.
- **1107:** Alliance formed with the Evolutionist Church, enforcing peace and religion.
- **1109:** D.E.A.T.H. organization forms, aiming to end the Malrokian Curse by exterminating dragons.
- **1110:** Secrets stolen from Golgöggoth help Baleroth create a mind-controlled Ironhand army.
- **1111:** The Arena duels system is established to prevent large-scale wars.
- **1113:** Gideoni, secretly serving Ungods, becomes the Evolutionist High Cardinal.
- **1147:** Arcane magic knowledge suppressed, Inquisition gains more power.
- **1202:** Wastelands double in size due to unknown magical influence.
- **1255:** Avelum and allies rise in Imperial hierarchy, gaining access and unlocking the Crystal Tower's secrets.
- **1260:** Elarine establishes the Third Eye, the most influential thieves guild in Tanares.
- **1261:** Pirates pact with an Ungod specter, gaining great power at a high cost.
- **1266:** Dillsgar, a Shadow Wing cultist, becomes the leader of the Ironhands.
- **1273:** Construction of the Arena of Future begins, hiding a secret Super Portal plan.
- **1275:** - Sedura confronts Gazini, learning about the relation between blood and dragons.
  - The dragonblade Sedura kills Thyra, ending the Eternal Storm.
  - Zalir founded the Relic Hunters Guild, aiming to avoid catastrophic historical misinterpretations.
- **1276:** Kemet Squadron begins the invasion of Tanares, starting with the Storm Islands.
- **1277:** Kemets take Fisherman's Wharf by surprise, Emperor Baleroth goes missing.
  - The Council of Four forms to stop the invasion and the new Malrokian Curse.
  - The Kemets force a Lich to spread powerful curses, turning mortals into undead.
  - Heroes free the Lich from Kemets' control, who becomes an unexpected ally.
  - Baraelmer, betraying Kemets, reveals Gullog's final plan to the heroes.
- - Heroes defeat the Kemets, forcing Gullog to flee and preventing Tanares' downfall.

Heroes Age: A new but turbulent era of hope for Tanares

- **1278:** Heroes hunt and kill Gullog, Kemet leader, but Bás revives him in exchange for loyalty.
- - To combat the Ungods, Golgöggoth, and Bás form a pact to transform Tanares into a realm of ice and undeath.
- - Sindile elves judge war's Kemet captives, releasing innocent to restore the winter elves.
- **1279:** Angels expose Evolutionist Church's corruption, establishing truth-based Celestianism.
  - Under Bás, Gullog and Kemets initiate the Endless Winter plan from their Storm Island base.
- **1280:** The three dwarf kings summon all dwarves to Stonelair, a new kingdom safeguarded by Stone Spirits.
- **1281:** Post-war separatism sweeps the Empire; weakened, it focuses on restoring core strength.
- **1282:** Kolbjörn, Outumn, Reginheraht, Tsvetan, and Ubel

secede, forming four new nations.

- Tsvetan becomes orc territory; Ubel region splits between taii'maku and Kepesh.

- **1283:** Despite reluctance, the Emperor allows secessions to focus on a plan to summon a vast horde of devils to conquer the world.
  - Internal conflict hampers Kolbjörn's split about independence; giants threaten northern territory.
  - Sedura, Tellatius, and others establish the freedom-focused Republic of Freelands.
  - Mages form Reginheraht's Magocracy of Mage Tower, led secretly by Vaeraunt.
  - Pirate lords form the Empire-aligned Parliament of the Seas, and began governing the Seashores region.
  - Pharaoh Lich Kalistessenâmun forms the Theocracy of Kepesh, reviving ancient traditions.
- **1284:** Displaced Empire old Governors found the Bloodbound mafia in the Capital.
- **1285:** Night of Spiderslaughter: Madwalkers and Aweakened hunters thwart Purple Witches' infiltration of the Republic parliament.
- **1286-1298:** Tanares, fractured by diverse factions, navigates a tense Cold War, haunted by the looming Malrokian Curse.
  - The Allied Forces emerge, seeking King Malrok's return against the Ungods, rallying multiple nations and guilds under its banner.
  - The Tanarean Empire, advocating control for peace, plans to unite Tanares under a devil-army summoned by Emperor Baleroth.
  - The Forces of Darkall return, determined to thwart the Ungods by turning Tanares into an icy wasteland of undead.
  - The Arcanum, persecuted wizards and sorcerers, aim to dismantle the Tanarean Magic Field, unshackling full magic power.
  - Autumn elves rebuild their kingdom, their rulership challenged by Sundaryll's genius, mad younger brother.
  - The Kepesh convert marginalized groups, stirring unease in the Celestianist Church due to differing beliefs and sacrificial practices.
  - Orc hero Katar and Red Mother's unity effort collapses with her being betrayed and killed, leading to a split among orc tribes.
  - The Republic negotiates with Kolbjörn and for unity against the Empire, while battling Gullog in the west.
  - The Seashores focus on economy and naval safety, secretly amassing wealth to prevent the revival of the fifth Ungod.
  - The Empire reorganizes, secretly crafting a new Vandanamalika, Emperor Baleroth playing a long game of power.
  - The Third Eye instigates conflict between the Empire and Republic, offering their services to both factions.
  - The Eternal Circle contends with the Republic's overreach into Outumn, causing recent outbreaks of aggression.
  - The Bank of Hajal promotes international trade, aiming for monetary monopoly and political leverage, safeguarding gold coin flow.
  - The Bloodbound scheme to dominate criminal organizations, leveraging dirt and secrets against nobles and government officials.
  - Celestianist Church rebuilds raided temples and combats the Kepesh conversion wave, with limited success.
  - The Magocracy of Mage Tower seeks to rebuild Crystal Tower Vandanamalika, needing rare materials for the project.
  - Taii'maku City States negotiate to retain free city-state rights within Freeland territories, while relocating from kikoku hordes.
  - Winter elves work to restore their image, recovering lost knowledge of Water Elementalism and building a new life.
  - The Relic Hunters Guild seeks adventurers for the Penumbral Plane, racing against the Magocracy for lost relics.
  - The Awakeneds increase recruitment, protecting cities from cultists and penumbral creatures.
  - The Draconic Council, feeling Thyra's loss, fortifies Penumbral Plane bases, increasing bounties on penumbral creatures and showing themselves more publicly.
  - The halflings rebuild lands ravaged by the undead plague, seeking revenge against the Kemets and Kepesh.
  - The cirrus prepare for the Ungods' final attack, gathering resources for the prophesied day of reckoning.
  - Gloomfolks face increasing penumbral rifts in Undertanares, seeking surface adventurers for assistance.
  - The Gnomes aim for a cultural upheaval through knowledge, establishing universities across Tanares.
  - Soulborns gather in Hajal, advocating for business and peace in the Cold War.
  - Yama hunts Bellara and other Ungod cultists, risking trust due to their secretive operations.
  - Golgöggoth sends watchers to test adventurers, guided by a vision predicting the final Ungod invasion.
  - Queen Tyreen, Baleroth's sister, emerges from supposed death, seeking help against Arcana's undead menace and to retrieve the mystical orbs from the ruins. Rumors say she is, in truth, an undead in disguise.

Tanarean History

The Godly Age

Tanares was breathed into existence by the divine hands of Tamera and Bauron, intertwining life, light, order, and darkness into the world's fabric. United in their dream of a haven in harmony, they birthed their celestial children, the angels, to guide and shape creation. Echoing their creators' wisdom, the angels gave life to the cirrus, keepers of divine knowledge, to nurture the world's generations yet to come, guiding them in the path of the gods.

Dragons were created from the heart of mountains and the primal force of elements and were assigned the mantle of world guardians, warding off threats from beyond the Plane.

Sheltered under the guiding wings of angels and fortified by the vigilant dragons, Tanares bloomed. The ancient tales tell that the gods created the orcs from the heart of volcanic fury, from its cooled obsidian, the taii'makus, and its rising ashes, the Humans.

Extraplanar deities- Dorsi, Fruitful, Lumina - arrived, leaving their mark on Tanares, birthing their creations - the dwarves, halflings, and gnomes. Through a labyrinth of ancient portals, centaurs, gnolls, and goblins found their place under Tanares' skies, enriching the realm. In this blossoming diversity, the Windspeaker religion was established by the cirrus, teaching the new species about divine will and the ways of harnessing arcane and divine magic, the gift of the gods.

The elves were the latest arrivals to Tanares, escaping from a plane plagued by perpetual winter. Their goddess had descended into a furious rage against eldritch entities that sought to devour their world. The elves settled throughout Tanares, forming four distinct groups: Summer, Spring, Autumn, and Winter elves. Each group established its own magnificent and unique realm, experiencing great prosperity.

Yet, tranquility proved ephemeral. Prosperity's bloom bore the thorns of envy and greed, sparking the kindling of conflict. Mortals hungered for the celestial power of angels and dragons, fueling strife. On the precipice of ruin, a desperate human kingdom ruled by wizards dared the forbidden, searching the mystical realms beyond the planes for a power to turn the tide of a relentless siege. Their desperation led them to entities shrouded in pure horror - the Ungods.

The 13 elder wizards, seduced by Z'ulvath's sinister promises, accepted his dark pact. Under Z'ulvath's instruction, they constructed a portal, a gateway for the arrival of the Ungods into Tanares. Transformed into monstrous aberrations, these wizards spearheaded the Ungods' grotesque invasion, their corruption spreading like a plague.

With their celestial legions, Tamera and Bauron waged a war against the Ungods. Dragons and mortal champions held the line, suffering terrible losses. Z'ulvath and his followers started corrupting dragons into dreadful penumbral dragons, tipping the scales of the war in favor of the Ungods. Yet, even in this grim hour, a beacon of hope ignited - an army of dragonborn, forged by dragons through potent artifacts and magic, took up the forefront of the mortal troops. Six of them became legendary heroes, surviving the onslaught to continue inspiring Tanares in its enduring fight against the Ungods, serving as potential mentors for the next generation of heroes.

Angels, led by the mighty Golgael, stormed the Penumbral Plane, seeking to dismantle the power base of the Ungods. In the Penumbra, as Gogael fought, his essence was tainted by the Plane's insidious corruption. On reaching the core of the Forbidden Kingdom, the original gateway that welcomed the Ungods, Golgael discovered a cosmic secret and was transformed into the monstrous Golgöggoth. The secret he uncovered remains known only to him. Still, from that moment, he has become the grim sentinel of the Forbidden Kingdom, his mind consumed by a singular, relentless desire - the annihilation of the Ungods.

As Golgael closed the eldritch portal, the gods seized the moment, pushing the battle into the divine realm, protecting Tanares from further destruction. Yet, the dragons were left scarred, suffering a curse from the Ungods that sent them to madness at the mere scent of blood.

With the mortal realm now beyond their reach and the angels summoned to divine realms, Tamera and Bauron chose to empower select mortals with the divine gift of Redemption. These redeemers were bestowed with the strength to resist the Ungods' corruption and given prophetic dreams to shepherd their fellow mortals.

Before their departure, the gods left a warning etched in the hearts of all mortals. They spoke of the dangerous might of the Ungods, creatures thriving on strife, sins, and negative emotions. Tamera and Bauron addressed the mortals for the last time, issuing a divine decree that prohibited wars, as such acts would invite natural disasters and empower the Ungods.

The gods then left for the divine realms, calling all angels to join them. Golgöggoth, once Golgael but now twisted by corruption, chose to stay behind, driven by his mad desire to eradicate the spawn of the Ungods in the Penumbral Plane.

In their insidious design, the Ungods left behind potent servants, each bearing a fragment of their dark ambition—Bellara, the Arachne, aimed to corrupt leaders through her Purple Witches. Lypoec, the penumbral dragon, was tasked with eradicating the dragons loyal to the gods. Abhorroth, the Dark Titan, spawned terrifying monstrosities in the name of Dread, while the enigmatic Mystical One sowed the seeds of countless cults rather than leaving a single powerful minion.

The curtains of this era are drawn by the absence of the deities and the Ungods from the Material Plane, marking the dawn of a new age for Tanares.

The Ancient Age

The Ancient Age was a time of great civilization and cultural flourishing. From the emergence of kingdoms to the thriving of manifold cultures, the pillars of the world as we know it were laid. The relics of this era - ancient ruins and potent artifacts - still exist as silent testimonies to an era long gone.

In the aftermath of the Ungods' ascent to the celestial realms, Tanares was bereft of direct divine protection, leaving the dragons as its sole guardians. In the year -1705, haunted by the curse of the Ungods - the scent of blood turning their kind to madness - the dragons assembled the Draconic Council. Acknowledging the lingering malignancy of the Ungods' servants, they mobilized their mortal followers into armies of dragonblades. They erected

the Dragon Towers, sanctuaries that provided refuge and fortification for their kin.

After realizing that dragonborn, a species created during battles against the Ungods, could not reproduce naturally, dragons spent years developing cloning magic to create more of the six legendary dragonborns. These new soldiers were fiercely loyal to the Council, carrying great potential to become heroes in the future.

Meanwhile, the corrupted Golgöggoth spun his dark web of deceit among the Winter elves, exploiting their fervor to combat the Ungods' corruption. He whispered prophecies of a world stripped of emotions, thus invulnerable to corruption and out of reach of the Ungods' malevolent grasp.

As new mortal realms emerged in -1661, each etched its unique ideologies, powers, and cultures into the canvas of Tanares. Among these developing civilizations, the Kepesh people formed a sacred pact with an Ethereal Plane deity that preached the eternity of souls and the omnipresence of magic. The deity's followers aspired to transcend the mortal form upon death, becoming ethereal spirits inhabiting his divine city, safe from the Ungods' corruptive touch.

Certain audacious mortals dared to tread the twisted paths of the Penumbral Plane, confronting its potent corruption. The survivors of these perilous expeditions emerged as the first madwalkers. These individuals endured the corruption and bent it to their will, becoming feared and persecuted outcasts hellbent on retribution against penumbral creatures.

Influenced by Golgöggoth's prophecies, the Winter elves harnessed the plane's energies to create portals that spanned vast distances across Tanares. However, their ventures cost them dearly as some elves fell into the clutches of Bellara, becoming her tormented servants. The unfortunate ones who survived the ordeal were transformed, their forms grotesquely twisted into the first gloomfolk.

Following the prophecy, the winter elves adopted a new name: Kemet. They spread their influence to the eastern and western fringes of Tanares, sparking conflicts and establishing the formidable Reginheraht Crystal Tower.

During this era, seeds of a new faith took root as groups began to revere nature. The inaugural shamans and druids established connections with the spirits of the world, giving birth to the faith of the Nature Spirits religion.

Zafara, the eldest and wisest of the cirrus, guided the Cantalan hero, Malrok, and his band of adventurers on a legendary quest. Their mission: to hunt and imprison Bellara, a powerful servant of the Ungods. Their valiant efforts resulted in Bellara's entrapment and the establishment of the legendary Malrokian Kingdom.

Malrokian Age

The Malrokian Age, resplendent in its triumphs and harrowing in its tragedies, unfurls as a legend of ascendance and decline. This era bore witness to the rise of a mighty kingdom under the reign of a hero, Malrok, following his legendary defeat of Bellara in -661. His victory brought an era of peace and prosperity that has never been seen again to the present day.

With Bellara vanquished, Malrok moved her prison to the underground dungeons below his palace. He then began to gather all species under his banner and create a realm of greater equality and prosperity for all.

As the kingdom thrived, priests began preserving the wisdom of the cirrus in sacred texts, culminating in the establishment of the Evolutionist Church in -624. Unbeknownst to most, however, the Cultists of the Shadow Wing were already weaving their influence within this nascent institution, subtly skewing the interpretations being woven in the sacred scriptures.

Over the ensuing decades, the Cultists clandestinely sowed discord within the Church, igniting internal strife that eroded the unity of its followers. Their goal was to plunge the Malrokian Kingdom into chaos and liberate Bellara, whose absence weakened the forces of the Penumbra. This vacuum of power even led to the loss of control over the enslaved gloomfolk, as the enigmatic Patriarch, who, in -510, rallied his kin in a rebellion against Bellara's servants within the Penumbral Plane, ultimately escaped to establish an independent gloomfolk civilization in Undertanares.

In the meantime, King Malrok, in his quest for a permanent solution to the Ungods and the Penumbral Plane, left for an extraplanar venture in -411, accompanied by his most trusted allies. Their journey led to their mysterious disappearance—an enigma that persists to this day, beckoning brave adventurers to unravel its truths.

Within the confines of the Malrokian Kingdom, Bellara's minions, the Purple Witches, began their subtle infiltration, intent on freeing their leader. Their machinations, along with those of the Hidden Cult concealed within the Evolutionist Church, triggered a religious purge, transforming the kingdom's spiritual landscape into one of inquisitions, persecution, and distrust.

As the final century of the Malrokian Age dawned, external threats loomed large over the kingdom, spurred by Ungod servants. With the Cult of Shadow Wing fanning the flames of conflict with the Kepesh, and, in -21, with the Purple Witch Catharina assuming control over Queen Ella Malrok's body, the last of the long line of Malrokian rulers, the kingdom teetered on the brink of war. The ensuing violence, steeped in sin and negativity, catalyzed the birth of penumbral creatures, bolstered the Ungods, and precipitated the first Malrokian Curse cataclysm in history, marking the year 0 of the Tanarean calendar. The Curse rendered Tanares asunder, separating the world into two continents and decimating the Malrokian Kingdom, plunging the world into chaos. Bellara escaped her prison beneath Malrok's Palace, returning to the Penumbral Plane. In these dire straits, the Kepesh leaders implored their deity, Ba-Ka, for deliverance, and some of their cities were saved in the Ethereal Plane. At the same time, the ensuing bloodshed sent the dragons spiraling into madness, wreaking further havoc.

In the aftermath of the world-shaking Cataclysm, the Draconic Council arose amidst the smoldering ruins, their ancient eyes filled with sorrowful hatred at the devastation. As timeless guardians of Tanares, they felt an urgent need to intervene. Their response was ambitious and monumental: the erection of an increased number of Draconic Towers to be established across the realm as vanguards against unchecked aggression. Their purpose was to leash the ambitions of war-prone mortals and stand as bulwarks against the insidious creep of penumbral corruption, the tendrils of which sought to strangle the world's remaining hope.

As a further safeguard, Thyra, the Blue Avatar Dragon esteemed for her wisdom, proposed casting an arcane rite of unparalleled potency. The spell, if successful, would give birth to a mystical tempest—an eternal storm that would cleave the now shattered continent, forever inhibiting passage and enforcing peace between the divided realms of mortals, separating the two sides of the war, the remaining Kepesh from the last Malrokians. Hence, the Eternal Storm was forged by the combined might of each Avatar Dragon's power in a ritual conducted by Thyra, known as the Storm's Heart Ritual. The responsibility of overseeing this raging torrent fell to Thyra, who took to her duty with resolve, making her lair on Storm Island. She would stand vigil over the tempest as its guardian.

The remaining cirrus, led by Zafara, found refuge in the Ben'net mountains, retreating from increased hostility due to their Windspeaker religion and teachings of arcane magic, which contradicted the manipulated Evolutionist scriptures, being wrongfully implicated in the disaster. Thus, the Malrokian Age drew to its tumultuous close, plunging Tanares into a period of darkness.

Fallen Age

In the wake of the Malrokian Curse, the seeds of a new era began to sprout amidst the ruins of the Malrokian Kingdom. This era bore witness to fragmentation and chaos as people clawed for survival, striving to rebuild from the ashes of their shattered world. The Kingdom of Orsal, rising in 69, marked the first re-emergence of order from chaos, signaling civilization's rebirth. Their resilience ignited a flame of hope, inspiring other fledgling realms to rise and stoking rivalry fires as they scrambled for scarce resources.

Yet even as hope flickered on the horizon, shadows of old threats began to coalesce. The Evolutionist Church, amassing unprecedented power, sought to cast the world in the mold of its religious order. The rousing power of the Evolutionist Inquisition in this era saw their presence spread like a relentless storm, ruthlessly hunting the cirrus and the Purple Witches, branding them as heretics. Their reach extended to wizards, sorcerers, and followers of other faiths, all of whom became prey in the eyes of the zealous Inquisition.

Further to the east, the kemets, guided by the ominous prophecies of Golgöggoth, completed the construction of the Crystal Tower by 275. With the activation of an incomplete Vandanamalika (and not during a perigee), they successfully breached the Eternal Storm, the dragons' mighty barrier, setting foot on the Darkall continent. Their arrival signaled the beginning of a centuries-long conflict against the Kepesh people, seeking to steal their necromantic knowledge as foretold by the Kemet's Prophecy. This passage was soon closed as a great conflict brought down the Crystal Tower, involving the action of the powerful White Avatar Dragon Kelorth.

In the wake of nature's devastation by the Malrokian Curse, the shamans and druids founded the Eternal Circle in 303. Emerging as radical protectors of the world's healing wounds, they pursued their newfound stewardship with extreme zeal. This furthered the religious conflicts in Tanares, prompting the Evolutionist Church to speed their grasping of power.

In 306, the Evolutionist Church fortified its divine dominance by erecting Skybell Cathedral, a symbol of their godly might. From here, the Church began to shape the world's faith.

In 332, on the Darkall continent, in a desperate attempt to turn the tides of their war against the kemets, the Kepesh attempted a grand ritual. The intent was to imbue their Pharaoh with immortality, turning him into an avatar of Ba-Ka. This audacious attempt spiraled into disaster as the kemets stormed the ritual site. The resultant magical cataclysm extinguished all lives present. Ba-Ka protected the souls of his faithful, but the kemets who perished found their spirits forever bound to the Tanarean Magic Field, birthing the soulborns - cursed souls doomed to eternal reincarnation. As these soulborns accumulated wealth across multiple lives, they erected the Bank of Hajal. The fortunes of this financial bastion, erected by influential reincarnated souls, backed the emergence of new kingdoms in the turbulent tide of the Fallen Age.

Notably, the kingdom of Yama emerged in 692, founded by the Tameranium Avatar Dragon Tenshikin. This realm's initial objective was to recover ancient angelic relics. Upon defeating his rival Yokensha and securing the relics, Tenshikin achieved god-like status in Yama as these relics conferred upon him the power to grant magic to clerics of his choice. This move sparked discontent among the other dragons of the Draconic Council, leading to a violent conflict that ravaged Yama Bunkatsu, as they demanded the relics be given to the Council, not hoarded by Tenshikin. Isendden, the Gold Avatar Dragon, intervened and expelled Tenshikin from the Council in 869. Tenshikin, being a long-time friend of Isendden, understood the gesture and accepted it, ending the conflict.

The recovery of the world took a grim turn in 931, as wizards and the cirrus formed an unlikely alliance to evade the escalating

persecution of the Evolutionist Church. They laid the foundation for the Mystical Kingdom, dedicated to finding a mystical means of nullifying the Malrokian Curse and circumventing the grim fate of Tanares. But their noble quest fell prey to the Cult of Shadow Wing's machinations and to the treacherous acts of Prince Baleroth. As the Cult of Shadow Wing sowed discord, pitting the Evolutionist Church against the Mystical Kingdom, the Purple Witches infiltrated other realms, stirring the embers of conflict and instigating war against the Mystical Kingdom.

Chaos inside the realm already reigned as Baleroth, blinded by power, assassinated his siblings, including the beloved Queen Tyreen, stealing their magic. Driven by his belief that their combined power was the key to combating the Ungods, he caused the realm to be teetering on the brink of a civil war. In these internal conditions, the tribulations of war proved too much. The invaders caused bloodshed, killing soldiers and civilians alike. It also triggered the power of the Malrokian Curse for the second time in history, which led to a new catastrophic event. This event marked the fall of the Mystical Kingdom in 1101 and the birth of the monster-ridden Wasteland - a reminder of the hardships of that era.

The Dwarven Kingdom of Arheirmar fell prey to the ruthless times in the subsequent year. Strife within the clans and the aftershocks of the second Malrokian Curse left them vulnerable. Seizing the opportunity, Droggath sent his prized Ardilog, the Everspawning Chimera, to wreak havoc on the weakened dwarven realm. The Stone Spirits that once protected them stood silent, as the dwarves had lost the favor of Dorsi due to their descent into greed and envy. Their downfall resonated across the lands, further emphasizing the dangers of the Malrokian Curse, even those not involved in the war.

With the collapse of the Mystical Kingdom and the aftermath of the second, albeit lesser, Malrokian Curse cataclysm still in fresh memory, fear coursed through all other realms, including the great Evolutionist Church. Seizing the moment, Baleroth, one of the scarce survivors of the Mystical Kingdom, began to manipulate the strings of power to become a new great ruler, convinced that only he could prevent another cataclysm.

Imperial Age

A combination of precise structure and calculated oppression gave rise to an era known as the Imperial Age. Under the iron rule of Baleroth, the Faceless Emperor, this era emerged in 1103. Baleroth capitalized on fear and manipulation to secure the backing of the Kingdom of Orsal's nobility and the support of various smaller realms, thereby establishing a new Empire.

Wielding the mystical powers he ruthlessly wrested from his siblings and the secret power he had forcefully taken from an archfiend bound by his brother Torygg, Baleroth seized the opportunity to unify Tanares under his single rule. Masterfully employing a mix of cunning diplomacy and ruthless subterfuge, he did not merely annex the territories of the Kingdom of Orsal by 1105 but also co-opted its nobility. By leveraging their prestige, he gave his Empire a veil of legitimacy. This age bore witness to a complex web of alliances, with the Evolutionist Church being the pillar of the Empire's legitimacy.

The Church recognized an opportunity for unity against the imminent threat of another war within the Empire, so they supported Baleroth in his quest for a united domain free from the devastation of conflict. Unbeknownst to them, the Empire's hierarchy had already been heavily infiltrated by the Cult of Shadow Wing, which plotted to expand the Wasteland and corner the Empire.

Furthermore, the Evolutionists were unknowingly manipulated by servants of the Ungods, hidden within their ranks, to support the Empire, as it would further the secret plans of the Ungods.

To further prevent another disaster akin to the Malrokian Curse, Baleroth established the Arena duels system in 1111. Framed as a means to resolve political or territorial disputes, the Arenas received a newfound legitimacy as the Evolutionist Church claimed it had divine authority.

Simultaneously, in 1109, an organization known as D.E.A.T.H. emerged from the ranks of mercenaries and scholars. Their members, deceived by false information propagated by the Ungods' servants, believed that eradicating dragons could avert the Malrokian Curse.

Even more ominously, in 1110, Baleroth stole mystical knowledge from Golgöggoth, learning a ritual of great and sinister power. This allowed him to create an army of Ironhand soldiers, brainwashing criminals and political enemies into servants without free will.

At the pinnacle of Baleroth's reign, arcane magic faced relentless control. The Emperor, alongside his Evolutionist allies, feared its potential for disaster. Thus, in 1147, they sought to curb arcane knowledge, sparking a resurgence of the Evolutionist Inquisition and the creation of the Imperial wizards' sect, both orchestrated to regulate magic within Tanares.

However, the Empire had its challenges. By 1202, the Wasteland had already doubled in size, casting a daunting shadow over Baleroth's rule. While at first it was used for Baleroth as propaganda of the terrors of the Malrokian Curse and the need of the Empire, by this year it started to become a problem.

In 1260, Elarine founded the Third Eye, swiftly transforming it into Tanares' most formidable thieves' guild by manipulating Arena matches, blackmailing nobles, and even assassinating influential individuals.

In 1261, a group of Seashores pirates discovered the carcass of the lone Ungod slain by Tamera and Bauron. Seduced by power, they were cursed by the dead being and now needed to sacrifice vast sums of gold each year to avoid being consumed by the entity. This led to a drastic surge in piracy within the Empire, further complicating Baleroth's rule.

However, Baleroth remained undeterred. In 1273, he initiated the construction of the Arena of Future in Fisherman's Wharf, concealing a secret Vandanamalika in its depths.

Events took a sharp turn in 1275. Under D.E.A.T.H.'s manipulation, Sedura and Zalir led a team of heroes to hunt and kill Thyra, inadvertently ending the Eternal Storm that separated the continents. This fact would later allow the Kemet Invasion. Later, regretting his actions, Zalir resigned from D.E.A.T.H. and founded the Relic Hunters Guild, vowing never to act without sufficient knowledge again.

The Empire suffered its major setback a year later, in 1276, with the sudden Kemet Invasion prophesied by Golgöggoth.

Their surprise attack on Fisherman's Wharf came alongside the sudden disappearance of the Emperor and ushered in the direst period in recent Tanares' history. This invasion pushed Tanares to the brink of another Malrokian Curse, threatening complete ruin.

In this dire scenario, hope arose from the Council of Four. Comprising some of Tanares' bravest and wisest heroes - Taram, Avelum, Orthus, and Isendden, the Gold Avatar Dragon leading them - they rallied against the forces threatening their world.

Despite their disadvantage, many heroes rallied to their cause, constructing the city of Wharfugee as they prepared to stand against the Kemet forces. They became known as the Wharfugee Heroes.

Unlikely alliances formed as the Kemet-controlled Lich Kalistessenâmun, freed by the heroes, sought revenge beside the Council of Four. A betrayal also arose within the Kemets as Baraelmer, second-in-command to Gullog, revealed his leader's final plan to the heroes.

The Imperial Age drew to a close in 1277, with the heroes' victory over the kemets, forcing Gullog's retreat and averting another Malrokian Curse. The Empire was significantly weakened, and Tanares forever changed. To some scholars, the scars left behind by this age bore a silent warning against unchecked power and the fragility of unity under a tyrant's banner.

Heroes Age

The epoch following the cataclysmic Kemet Invasion brought forth the Heroes Age, imbued with a vibrant air of hope, yet filled with uncertainty and promise in equal measure. This era is marked by a unique tension, as Tanares fractured into rival factions, giving rise to a theater of intrigue and calling forth a new breed of heroes.

This era begins ominously, as in 1278, the resurrection of Gullog, the once-defeated Kemet leader, sparked fear of another wave of Kemet invasions. Brought back to life by Bás, a malevolent ancient deity with a chilling vision of a world blanketed in death and ice, Gullog returned to his purpose under this new, sinister alliance. Golgöggoth, whose dark prophecy had been derailed by the intervention of the heroes, joined forces with Bás in another plan to stop the Ungods at all costs. Under their chilling dominion, the Storm Islands morphed into a formidable icy stronghold and a temple dedicated to Bás.

In the tumultuous wake of war in 1279, angels led by Ascaran descended onto Tanares once more. These celestial beings shed light on Tamera and Bauron's true intentions and the Evolutionist Church's machinations, sparking a pivotal change in the faith's trajectory. High Cardinal Taram rose to prominence, initiating the Celestianist Reformation, an overhaul that purged the Church of its corrupt elements and realigned it with divine intent and historical truths. Yet, with numerous infiltrated cultists remaining undetected, an ongoing internal purge characterizes this newly holy Celestianist Church.

Following their valorous acts during the Kemet Invasion, the dwarf kings Huradrin, Ukhumlim, and Rurik regained Dorsi's favor. They issued the Great Dwarven Call, inviting their kin to settle in Stonelair, a realm blessed by Stone Spirits and fortified by Dorsi's virtues.

By 1281, the weakened Empire watched as regions stirred with a newfound thirst for independence. By 1282, the culmination of these restless ambitions saw the birth of four distinctive nations: the Kolbjörn Kingdom, the Republic of Freelands, the Magocracy of Mage Tower, and the Theocracy of Kepesh. Each realm's unique aspirations and challenges created a diverse political landscape in a world eager to reclaim its identity.

The Tanarean Empire, though initially resistant, accepted their independence to avoid a war. As regions carved their autonomy, the Emperor focused on constructing a Vandanamalika in the Empire's heartland, intending to harness an army of devils under his command.

The years following the Kemet Invasion witnessed an influx of heroes and factions. Every faction and hero strived to mold the world in line with their visions, creating a dynamic political arena filled with intrigue and conflicts.

For example, the Kingdom of Kolbjörn wrestled with giants in the north and internal conflicts in its core. Meanwhile, the Republic of Freelands emerged as a beacon of peace and freedom, although monstrous incursions and an unstable economy continually threatened its prosperity. The Magocracy of Mage Tower stood as a haven for mages, free from the influence of the Empire or the Celestianist Church. However, it teetered on the brink of internal strife as various arcanists sought to assert their theories and methodologies.

Regions like Ubel were divided between the ancient city-states of Taii'maku and the Kepesh Theocracy. In contrast, the Seashores managed a careful dance of self-governance under the Parliament of the Seas, maintaining allegiance to the Empire. The Bloodbound, a covert collective of former powerful governors, was birthed in the Empire's Capital, their intentions shrouded in mystery, save for their relentless pursuit of power and wealth.

The year 1285 served as a stark reminder of the concealed threats within the realm. When the Purple Witches attempted an infiltration of the budding Republic, a group of madwalkers and the hunters of the Celestianist organization known as the Awakened thwarted their schemes. This event, now referred to as the Night of Spiderslaughter, cast a long shadow over the Republic as it unveiled the hidden infestation of the Purple Witches amongst the influential echelons of society.

As the year 1298 dawns, the world of Tanares finds itself in a complex web of political tensions, power struggles, and mythic prophecies, all threaded together by the arcane allure of the Vandanamalika. This age's cold war climate hosts various factions, each immersed in their distinct challenges and motivated by their unique agendas.

First among these is the Allied Forces, a bastion of justice and righteousness. United by the shared goal of improving the lives of ordinary folk and bringing prosperity to all, they want to build the Vandanamalika to locate King Malrok, a hero lost in time. This faction consists of a wide array of allies: the Republic of Freelands, the stalwart Stravian dwarves, the reformed Celestianist Church, the realm of Yama, the Sindile elves, the Relic Hunters Guild, and the revolutionary force in Kolbjörn.

Meanwhile, the Tanarean Empire, under the iron grip of Emperor Baleroth, dreams of unifying the entire world of Tanares. The Empire envisages a society immune to the turmoil of war,

an aspiration tied to the Emperor's secret intent to marshal an army of devils summoned by the Vandanamalika, uniting Tanares against the ominous specter of the Ungods.

The chilling presence of the Forces of Darkall, remnants of the Kemet Invasion, infuses the world with a stark cold. The goddess of winter and death, Bás, blesses and guides the Kemets while the Watcher armies march under the gaze of Golgöggoth. They have a grim vision for Tanares—a realm encased in eternal frost and inhabited only by the undead, untouchable by the corruption of the Ungods.

On the fringes of society, arcane spellcasters have found their voice in the Arcanum. Following the Kemet Invasion, these mages—comprising those from the north's Reginheraht and the southern adherents of ancient Ba-Ka faith under Lich Kalistessenâmun—rose in unison to harness magic's power against the Ungods. They want to use the vandanamalika to free themselves from the constraints of the Tanarean Magic Field, unleashing true, unhinged magic.

In the shadow of these major players, other factions and groups contend with their issues. Whether it's the crown crisis among the Autumn elves, between King Sundaryll and his genius yet mad brother, the rapid spread of Kepesh's faith unnerving the Celestianist Church, the discord among orc tribes following the Red Mother's assassination, or the diplomatic challenges faced by the Republic, each situation is ripe with possibilities for conflicts and alliances.

The oppression and unseen designs of the Empire, the information trading and strategic maneuvers of the Third Eye, the resistance to civilization expansion of the Eternal Circle, the economic aspirations of the Bank of Hajal—any of these can destabilize Tanares' power balance. From the rumors permeating the criminal underworld to the Celestianist Church's battles against inner corruption, and from the magical aspirations of the Magocracy to the Winter elves' struggle for acceptance, Tanares is a world teetering on the brink, waiting for the spark to ignite an era-defining conflict.

Among the prophecies and legends, the tale of Golgöggoth's fixation on adventurers destined to stop him yet defeat the Ungods and Queen Tyreen's quest to reclaim her kingdom from the undead while whispers of her true identity circulate lend themselves to epic quests and intrigues defining the Heroes Age.

This is an era characterized by fragile alliances and concealed desires. Regardless of their status or power, each faction tirelessly works toward shaping Tanares' future, driven by the desperation to counter the Ungods. The world is ripe with veiled schemes and simmering conflicts, each awaiting the spark to explode into an epic confrontation.

Groups like the Third Eye fan the flames of conflict, exploiting the distrust between the Empire and the Republic while offering their services to both sides. Elsewhere, the Eternal Circle stands against the Republic's unchecked expansion into Outumn, causing various incidents hinting at larger conflicts on the horizon.

The Bank of Hajal, intending to monopolize Tanares' economic flow with their international coin, promotes the idea of international trade. This move calls for recruiting mercenaries to protect the coins and goods routes, offering opportunities for adventurers seeking work.

In the shadows, the Bloodbound strive for dominance over other criminal syndicates, fostering a dangerous environment ripe with secrets and treachery, which presents abundant opportunities for mercenaries and investigators. The Celestianist Church, meanwhile, works to recover stolen sacred texts and relics while countering the rising tide of Kepesh conversions, setting the stage for numerous adventurers who want to work missions related to retrieval, protection, and diplomacy.

The Arcanum, particularly the Magocracy, is poised to reactivate the Vandanamalika in the Crystal Tower, offering jobs for those that can bring them tameranium, bauronite, and moonstone—powerful magical resources needed by them

As the world hinges on the brink of monumental change and an age ripe for the rise of heroes, only they will decide the world's fate and how the next steps of history will be written.

Chapter 8
Life In Tanares

Economy

Coins

In Tanares, coins are not just a means of transaction. Many cultural elements are associated with them.

Copper. The least valued coin, common in poor villages. It is a common belief that Tamera may reward heroic acts by changing copper coins to gold as a miracle.

Silver. This coin appears most in larger villages and poor areas of cities. Also, there is a superstition that everyone should carry two silver pieces, each in a different pocket, to gain the luck of Tamera and Bauron.

Electron. This coin is rare in the Empire, but Yama uses it as standard in the transactions instead of gold. When visiting Yama, for a small fee, it is possible to exchange coins. Usually, 2 ep values 1 gp, but the exchange rate may vary in exceptional cases.

Gold. The most common coin for adventurers is commonly found in all Tanares except Yama. The coin has the Imperial Tiger carved.

Platinum. Uncommon coin, used for rich people to carry less weight and make important transactions. When visiting the Endless City (4th layer of the Penumbra) and returning to Tanares, this coin has a 50% chance of changing in any copper or gold.

Commerce in Tanares

There are small differences across the regions, but typically is accepted for payment of items and goods:

- Coins
- Gemstones
- Credit Letter of Bank of Hajal (100 gp or 500 gp)

Special Methods

Living Contracts. In Tanares, wealthy individual use a unique, mystically crafted contracts that, when signed with blood, punish those who break their clauses. The pages held by the opposing party transform into one invisible stalker per offending individual. Each stalker can shapeshift, as an action, into a perfect clone of a specific offending creature, gaining all its statistics except for its equipment. Each stalker's sole purpose is to exact justice against its counterpart, after which it vanishes. Only signatures given of one's own free will activate this contract. A living contract is a rare (consumable), wondrous item (600 gp).

Enchanted Soil of Sindile. In the Forest's outskirts, a small place is dedicated to the summer elves. Some priests of Òigridh usually have tasks for mercenaries or adventurers, and they have a unique way to reward. The group plants an amount of gold pieces, and depending on the efficiency of the quest, part of it becomes copper or platinum, usually 25% of the amount. If someone steals coins from this sacred ground, it becomes sand.

The Deal Wine. An exotic and expensive is produced in Stravian in cooperation with the dwarves and Fruitiful's special grapples. When this wine is poured on a coin or gemstone, it becomes green if the piece is false. By tradition, when a transaction uses this wine, if a false item is detected by this method, the infractors must drink the green wine. It bestows a curse that makes the person see all coins as gold and all gems as emeralds, no matter which one they are, for 1d6 weeks.

Special Minerals

Tameranium

Appearance. This rare mineral is yellow and shines brightly when exposed to direct sunlight. It emits a small warmth.

Extraction. Mines in Stravian and Undertanares. Some depots in Mystical Kingdom, Storm Island, and far north Ben'net

Applications. Arcane experiments, construction of portals, protections against penumbral creatures, divine spell affinity items

Value. 2,500 gp for small pieces, 20,000 gp for medium pieces, and 180,000 gp for large pieces.

Bauronite

Appearance. This uncommon mineral is purple and feels cold in the hand as it absorbs heat. When activated, it emits a pulsating light and is unstable, risking exploding.

Extraction. Mines in Stravian and Undertanares. There are depots in all of Tanares; the largest is in the south desert in the taii'maku's territory.

Applications. Arcane experiments, activation of portals, capture and binding extraplanar creatures, absorb spells, modify magic items, activate taii'maku golems.

Value. 800 gp for small pieces, 6,000 gp for medium pieces, and 17,000 gp for large pieces.

Moonstone

Appearance. This legendary mineral is green, and its surfaces change the patterns, resembling some liquid inside, but it is completely solid. Medium pieces create a 15-foot radius aura, revealing the true form of all invisible or shape-changed creatures or objects inside the aura. It is very rare.

Extraction. Undertanares. The legendary Dorsian Forge can produce this mineral by fusing bauronite and tameranium.

Applications. Its effects are not fully discovered or controlled. Experiments have shown a capacity to amplify spells. Theories about reality and time distortion, resurrection, and mind effects were not proven.

Value. 9.000 gp for small pieces, 85,000 gp for medium pieces, and 870,000 gp for large pieces.

Transportation

Transport	Common Place	Rarity	Cost	Speed	Miles Per Hour (Normal/Fast)	Carrying Capacity
Camel	Kepesh and Taii'Maku	Common	50 gp	50 ft.	5/6.5	480 lb.
Carriage (Simple, 2 horses)	All	Common	100 gp (excluding horses)	As horses	As horses	1,000 lb.
Carriage (Advanced, 4 horses)	All	Uncommon	300 gp (excluding horses)	As horses	As horses	2,000 lb.
Carriage (Magical, no horses)	Mage Tower	Very Rare	1,000+ gp	60 ft.	6/8	1,200 lb.
Chariot	All	Common	100 gp (excluding horses)	As horses	As horses	1,000 lb.
Dire Boar	Stravian (halflings)	Rare	500 gp	50 ft.	5/6.5	600 lb.
Dire Wolf	Tsvetan	Rare	200 gp	50 ft.	5/6.5	400 lb.
Elephant	Stravian	Uncommon	200 gp	40 ft.	4/5.5	1,320 lb.
Giant Beetle	Sindile	Uncommon	150 gp	30 ft.	3/4	800 lb.
Giant Lizard	Swamps, Underdark	Uncommon	200 gp	30 ft.	3/4	450 lb.
Golems (as mounts)	Taii'Maku City States	Very Rare	Not typically sold	30 ft.	3/4	800+ lb.
Horse, Raiding	All	Common	75 gp	60 ft.	6/8	480 lb.
Horse, Clockwork	Clockwork nexus / Taii'maku	Rare	500 gp	60 ft.	6/8	400 lb.
Horse, Kolbjornian	Kolbjorn	Rare	1000 gp	80 ft.	8/10.5	600 lb.
Kirin	Yama	Legendary	Not typically sold	100 ft.	11/14	600 lb.
Magic Train	Taii'Maku City States	Legendary	Not typically sold	100 ft.	0/13	10,000+ lb.
Plant Animals (e.g., Vine Beasts)	Sindile	Rare	Not typically sold	25 ft.	2.5/3.5	300 lb.
Undead Animals	Storm Island and winter elves	Rare	Varies	40 ft.	4/5	500 lb.
Unicorn	Sindile, Ben'net	Very Rare	Not typically sold	60 ft.	6/8	500 lb.
Warhorse	All	Uncommon	400 gp	60 ft.	6/8	540 lb.

Secret Roads. Rumors say that some camouflaged roads from the Mystical Kingdom are yet to be discovered. With a specific item or a command word, the path opens for a limited time, and it is possible to use it as a road for transporting people or goods. As Emperor Baleroth was one of the five Lords of the Mystical Kingdom, some say that he knows and uses secret paths.

Mimics as Carriage. A recent product developed by the Mage Tower has caused some uproar: the sale of mimics, bound by magic and controlled by anyone holding a specific magic ring. Initially employed as sentinels, these mimics have recently begun to be used in carriage forms. They don't wear down, can still be pulled by horses, and offer the added advantage of concealed defense against bandits through their element of surprise.

On the other hand, they are used for malicious purposes. Some are used to secretly attack people who are fooled into using these carriages for travel. The command to attack passengers is usually issued at a remote location on the road. Another use is for smuggling illegal items; in case of inspection, the ring bearers can order the mimics to consume these items before authorities find them.

The mimic and the ring can be purchased for arounf 4,500 gp.

Dwarven transport disk

The Portal Network

In the distant past, the Mystical Kingdom constructed a network of portals for quick access to many of its domains. Many of these portals still exist today, and the Emperor has built additional ones, particularly in the Capital. During the Kemet Invasion, the old Wharfugee, which later became known as Heroes Rising, served as a hub for the Resistance. Significant resources were invested there to construct more portals.

To build a portal, at least three large tameranium stones are required. Additionally, a bauronite is necessary for the portal's operation. Each use of a portal consumes a portion of a bauronite, which explains the high cost of using the portal network.

Many portals remain undiscovered, prompting numerous expeditions in search of them.

The Underground Network of the Dwarves

The ancient dwarves of the old Arheirmar Kingdom created an impressive form of transportation, used primarily to move ores and goods from the mines. The underground floating stone disks.

It is not completely clear how it works, but it uses runes to power the disk; it is fast and can carry up to fifty people at a time. There are many locations to set the course of the disks; the most used still is the one that connects Stonelair with Mirare Town.

This transportation allows the mine workers to live in cities in all of Stravian and beyond to access Stonelair quickly.

Penumbral Rifts

While not a conventional transport method, it is exploited in specific situations. The rifts connect the Material Plane with the Penumbral Plane, where the laws of physics are twisted.

The Penumbra is full of dangers, but some adventurers or clandestine organizations traced faster routes by traveling in the Penumbra. For example, the Third Eye has access to two Rifts that reduce to 6 hours the travel time from Yama to Freelands by walking in a Penumbral field. Powerful merchants have attempted to use the Penumbra for transporting caravans of goods. However, the large volume of goods and people often attracts penumbral creatures, making it a highly risky journey.

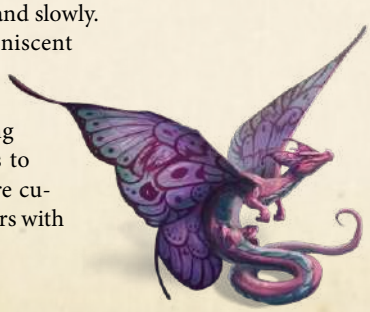
Pets

Tanares features classic pets, mostly dogs and cats, but also has some peculiar pets. They can become integral to daily life, providing companionship and aiding in everyday tasks.

Purplerfly

Hatching from translucent eggs, Purplerflies live up to 60 years. Small, about the size of domestic cats, they have delicate wings, enabling them to fly gracefully and slowly.

Their melodic singing, reminiscent of harps caressed by the wind, attracts bards and poets. Many nobles use Purplerflies during meetings, as their music tends to relax people. These creatures are curious, eager to please their owners with songs and aerial displays.



Squabbit

The Squabbit, a notably cute pet, has a lifespan of about ten years. Its body changes color: orange normally, reddish when running, and yellowish while sleeping. Squabbits collect food and small items in pouches on their abdomen and legs, ideal for storing and hiding objects. They are empathetic, often trying to bring joy to their owners in times of anger or sadness. Squabbits are also adept at finding food, providing advantage to Wisdom (Survival) checks for locating food. However, they have a 30% chance of dying in the wild as they are a favorite prey of many predators.

WoolBlinker

Originating from the ancient elves' plane, WoolBlinkers are common in the homes of elven and halfling nobility. With a 20-year lifespan, they can emit light from their tails and teleport short distances (about 10 feet) to places they can see. WoolBlinkers are particularly useful in the Penumbra, emitting light in the darkness, and are often used in military patrols. They are playful and protective, teleporting near their owners and emitting light when threatened. Penumbral creatures may be discomforted by this brightness but are not harmed.

Canisroot

Originally created by the Circle of Bloom druids as companions, Canisroots have become popular pets due to their loyalty and appealing behavior. They don't need to eat and occasionally provide wood for torches or small constructions. Canisroots can sense minor ground tremors and have limited regeneration abilities, making them effective at enemy detection and offering some physical protection against minor attacks. They have a lifespan of 8 years but are often targeted by those seeking their wood.

Labatuty

Despite their intimidating appearance, Labatuties, similar in size to large dogs and with a lifespan of 45 years, are favored by merchants as protectors. Attracted to gold and gemstones, they actively protect these valuables from theft. Their large fangs are useful for digging and hiding gold.

Labatuties are temperamental and carnivorous but rarely attack without provocation. However, they become aggressive if someone attempts to steal their owner's coins or gemstones. Their origins are speculated to be from the fourth layer of the Penumbra, the Endless City, where they fled to escape harsh conditions.

Penumbrabbit

Penumbrabbits, from the Penumbral Plane, exemplify how its corrupting forces can transform animals. Their behavior alternates between gentle and aggressive, the latter particularly at night. Used symbolically to demonstrate control over the Penumbra, they burn in direct sunlight. Penumbrabbits have a natural affinity for penumbral energy and can detect rifts or penumbral creatures near them.

Rabbits, cats, and squirrels are among the most common creatures transformed into penumbral pets. However, this transformation can also affect other animals, with some experiments successfully conducted on horses and eagles.

Drinks in Tanares

The regular drinks offered in taverns are beer, mead, and wine, with various qualities. Some special drinks are very appreciated by Tanarean people and may be found in most parts of the world.

Tamera Juice

The most refreshing drink in Tanares is crafted from golden peach nectar, slices of citrus fruits blessed by Fruitful, water infused with golden blossoms, and a touch of edible gold dust. One dose of this drink can satisfy thirst for an entire day, lasting until it finishes a long rest. Unfortunately, it must be stored with ice, so it is not practical to take it on adventures.

Hangedelf Pale Ale

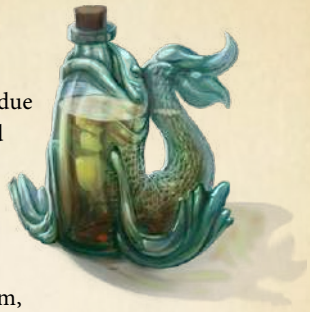
Crafted with traditional barley malt, pine hop, dew from the Elven forests, and a hint of blueberry essence, this beer possesses a clear color. Its exotic taste is said to resemble that of an elven tear, but it makes the person forget their deepest worries or recent traumas for around 2 hours. During this time, the creature has advantage to resist any attempt of intimidation.

Noble's Double Wine

This exotic wine graces the tables of nobility, a meticulously crafted elixir designed to ignite the flames of romance and friendship. It is a harmonious blend of deep red and white wines, infused with the essence of golden orchids and a delicate touch of rose petals.

As the Tanarean saying goes, 'Alcohol is a social smoother,' and this wine is a prime example. All Charisma checks have advantage for those who consumed the wine for 2 hours.

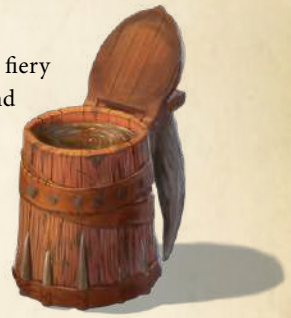
Central Sea Rum



This flavorful and viscous rum is remarkable due to its exceptional taste and aroma. Crafted from the finest distilled honey of the Central Sea, purified saltwater, roasted malt, and an infusion of rare seaweed, this rum is largely consumed by pirates and nobles.

For 2 hours after drinking a dose of this rum, the creature can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to 3 + its Constitution modifier (minimum of 30 seconds). It also has advantage on Constitution saving throws to avoid suffocation.

Ubellian Fire Mead



This viscous and spicy mead, crafted from the fiery honey of desert bees, Ubellian pepper extract, and blood orange, is known as Ubellian Fire Mead. Upon consumption, a creature starts to sweat as if emerging from a sauna, followed by a gentle sensation across the skin and emits a distinctive yet pleasing odor. For the next 2 hours, the aroma serves as a potent repellent for insects and small creatures such as tiny snakes, toads, and lizards.

Malrokian Liquor

Born from the ancient roots of the Stravian mountains, oak seeds, imperial spring water, and a pinch of bauronite dust, this elixir is transcendent. For 1 hour after its consumption, the creature can read three times faster and clearly remember everything it sees or hears. It is expensive, but many wizards drink it before studying arcane spells.

Measuring Time

Days of Week (always gods' names)

Order	Name
1	Aibidh Day
2	Breith Day
3	Celestial Bauron Day
4	Dorsi Day
5	Exalted Tamera Day
6	Fruitful Day
7	Glorious One Day

Months - there are 12 months, based on the year's seasons. Each one has 30 days.

Summer	Early Summer	Middle Summer	Late Summer
Autumn	Early Autumn	Middle Autumn	Late Autumn
Winter	Early Winter	Middle Winter	Late Winter
Spring	Early Spring	Middle Spring	Late Spring

Present Year: 1298

To track the time and have the hours of day, the people of Tanares use different methods, simple or advanced.

Sundial. Many sundials are magically enhanced to function in various environments and weather conditions.

Hourglasses. Filled with magical sand from Tsvetan that changes color as time passes, these hourglasses, especially the larger ones, are used in public spaces.

Church Candles. These candles are infused with divine magic, burning precisely for one hour before automatically lighting the next candle.

Special Methods

Taii'maku Church Clocks. High Cardinal Taram acquired from the taii'maku special clocks and placed them in many Celestianist Cathedrals. These clocks function using bauronite; every hour, the bell rings, prompting the priests to offer a short prayer to Tamera during the day and Bauron at night.

Arcane Timepieces. The Mage Tower has an interesting method to measure time. They have created a special amulet that emits an aura changing colors every 4 hours, resembling the rainbow but with only six colors:

Color	Hour
Yellow	6 AM to 10 AM
Orange	10 AM to 2 PM
Red	2 PM to 6 PM
Purple	6 PM to 10 PM
Blue	10 PM to 2 AM
Green	2 AM to 6 AM

Penumbral Pulse. Periodic vibrations emanate from the depths of Ben'net every six hours. Many believe these originate from an underground rift with an immense purple crystal stone. The tremor is more intense near the area, but can be subtly felt across the continent. The tremor can be felt more intensely near the area, but across the continent, it is very subtly. However, some special red crystals, the Stone Singers, can amplify the vibration and emit a different sound for each of the four pulses. Some erudites connect the four pulses with the four Ungods.

It is a reliable time-tracking method, but some creatures or magic items can emulate the tremor, creating confusion.

Magic Water Clocks. These portable marvels of craftsmanship are filled with a special liquid that changes colors as it flows through twenty-four distinct chambers, each signifying an equal segment of the day's cycle. These clocks are not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing, often serving secondary functions.

- **Weather Forecasting:** Additionally, the clock's colors indicate upcoming weather changes, such as storms, hurricanes, or sunny conditions, with 70% accuracy, proving helpful to farmers and sailors.
- **Magic Detection**: In the presence of magical entities, active spells, or magic items, these clocks glow in various colors and intensities.
- **Rhythmic Sparkles:** Very useful for professions that require timing, such as crafting potions and forging weapons and armor.

Method	Rarity	Size	Cost Range (gp)
Sundial (Magically Enhanced)	Uncommon	Varies	100 - 500
Hourglass (Small)	Common	Small	25 - 100
Hourglass (Large)	Uncommon	Large	200 - 800
Church Candles (Divinely Infused)	Uncommon	Standard	50 - 200
Taii'maku Church Clocks	Rare	Large	2,000 - 5,000
Arcane Timepieces	Rare	Small	1,000 - 3,000
Singing Stones (Penumbral Pulse)	Uncommon	Small	300 - 900
Magic Water Clock (Standard)	Uncommon	Medium	200 - 800
Magic Water Clock (Weather Forecasting)	Uncommon	Medium	400 - 1,200
Magic Water Clock (Magic Detection)	Rare	Medium	1,000 - 5,000
Magic Water Clock (Rhythmic Sparkles for Crafting)	Rare/Very Rare	Medium	1,000 - 4,000

When in possession of a clock specifically tuned for one potion or weapon, the user has advantage on crafting tests, with each clock being unique to its designated potion, weapon, or armor.

Estelindea

After the Kemet Invasion, the Sindile Elves opened their borders to commerce and revealed their greatest product: **Estelindea**, an elixir extracted from the sap of Mother Trees. This elixir halts aging for 20-30 years and is priced at 100 gold pieces per flask, making it a luxury only accessible to the affluent. It deepens social divides in Tanares, as it extends the reigns of rulers, nobles, adventurers, and scholars, thereby influencing politics and reshaping society.

This development has led to a shadow market teeming with counterfeit potions and theft, intensifying competition between the Third Eye, which produces counterfeits, and the Bloodbound, who manipulate market prices. Bandits frequently attack shipments, compelling merchants transporting Estalindea from Sindile to hire mercenaries and adventurers for caravan protection. Furthermore, the Cult of Shadow Wing, seeking Estelindea to temporarily enhance their emoguns, makes some attacks particularly dangerous. To maintain the elixir's effects, individuals must consume Estelindea every 7-10 days, using a small fraction of a vial that lasts one year, extending the user's life by two to three decades while preserving their current age's appearance and health.

Holiday

Tamera Day

Once per year, on the summer solstice, people celebrate the goddess Tamera and her role in protecting Tanares from the Ungods. By tradition, everyone lights a candle and prays to Tamera as long as the flame burns. Following this, a beautiful festival ensues, featuring music, dance, performances, and clerics who provide food and healing in the streets. Typically, people volunteer to help others without expecting payment in return. By nightfall, large bonfires are lit, symbolizing the everlasting sun. During this day, holy energy is more effective. Add 2 to all dice results when using a healing spell. If you have significantly helped someone, add 3 instead.

Bauron Day

Once per year, on the winter solstice, people celebrate the protector god Bauron. As night falls, communities gather in squares where members of the Church sacrifice a captured penumbral creature. The ceremony, lasting about 30 minutes, is accompanied by prayer and the making of vows. The moon festival then begins, filled with drinks, dance, music, and even combat. On this day, people are encouraged to consume only meat provided by the Church, often sourced from large beasts hunted by adventurers in the preceding days. For 24 hours, all attacks against penumbral creatures in the Material Plane receive a +2 bonus to hit and damage. As long as the person consume only meat during the entire 24 hours, the bonus increases to +3.

Malrok Day

Annually, on the first day of the year, people engage in intense celebration, offering prayers and food to the gods and others and making a pact of non-violence. Tradition holds that the gods curse anyone who breaks this vow, with each drop of blood spilled leading to seven days of suffering after death. Roads are safer on this day, and even those of other faiths are hesitant to challenge the tradition. The day is often marked by hope and positive energy, granting advantage on all Charisma checks.

Arena Day

Hosted annually by the Empire, this day is filled with combat in all Arenas of Tanares, featuring traditional battles and other activities like "Capture the Orb," where powerful spells prevent heroes from dying within the Arena. The goal is to capture the enemy's orb and bring it to your base. Free bread is distributed to the populace, and entry to the Arenas is complimentary.

Many adventurers are recruited to fight, earning substantial rewards for victories. It is also a day for betting and celebrations, with local leaders engaging with the populace.

Magic Water Clock

Uncommon Meals

These special meals often feature exotic ingredients and unique flavors that cater to the tastes of various inhabitants. These expensive meals are often imbued with special properties.

Roast Griffon

An Orcish specialty, is prepared by expertly roasting the succulent meat of the fearsome griffon over an open flame, infusing it with the rich flavors of the Orcish wilderness. It grants a +1 bonus to Strength checks for 2 hours.

Yama cuisine

Features an array of mystical dishes, such as the Celestial Sushi Roll, crafted with the tender flesh of celestial sea creatures and wrapped in enchanted seaweed. It sharpens the senses of those who consume it, granting a +1 bonus to Wisdom checks for 2 hours.

The fruits blessed by Fruitful's

Clerics are brighter, much more delicious, and increase fertility and attraction. They grant a +1 bonus to Charisma checks for 2 hours.

The Dwarven Delight

A robust dish, features a thick stew made from rare underground mushrooms, tender cave moss, and the meat of the understone basilisk. This nourishing meal bolsters resilience, granting a +1 bonus to Constitution checks for 2 hours.

Elven cuisine

Is known for its elegance and grace, with dishes like the Moonbeam Salad, a delicate blend of moon-touched leaves and starflowers. Those who savor this dish find their minds sharpened, granting a +1 bonus to Intelligence checks for 2 hours.

Common Food

1. ***Hearty Bread.*** A staple food made from wheat or other grains, often served alongside meals or used to make simple sandwiches with various fillings.
2. ***Vegetable Stew.*** A nourishing and filling dish made from a mix of seasonal vegetables, legumes, and herbs, usually cooked in a large pot over an open fire.
3. ***Porridge.*** A warm, thick breakfast dish made from boiled grains like oats or barley, often sweetened with honey or fruit and served with a dollop of butter or cream.
4. ***Roasted Meats.*** Simple, slow-cooked cuts of meat, such as chicken, pork, or beef, are seasoned with salt and herbs. They are roasted over an open fire or in a communal oven.
5. ***Cheese and Dairy.*** A variety of cheeses made from cow, goat, or sheep's milk, as well as other dairy products like yogurt and butter, often used as a source of protein and fat in everyday meals.
6. ***Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.*** Seasonal produce, harvested from local farms and gardens, is consumed either raw or cooked into simple dishes such as salads, soups, or pies

SOURCE
POSITIVE RADIANCE
FLUX
EARTH
TAMEREAN PLANE
PLANAR MAELSTROM
TANARIAN MAGIC FIELD
AIR
TANARES
WATER
PENUMBRAL PLANE
BAURONIAN PLANE
FIRE
ASTRAL AND ETHEREAL OCEAN
NEGATIVE NECROTIC
EXILE

Cosmology

Cosmological Exposition by Archmage Avelum

The study of cosmology is a knowledge domain with many theories and too few proof. I shall explain the latest advancements and the most widely accepted hypotheses. Let us begin by examining the established facts.

To date, no living person has witnessed a deity in Tanares, and we have reason to believe they never shall. According to High Cardinal Taram, the gods Bauron and Tamera placed a protective ward that reduces the direct influence of the Ungods in the Material World. The reason was to guard the plane from the overwhelming power of gods.

Another fact I can mention is that magic in Tanares is limited. I can explain it as a filter that limits almost half of the full potential of our magical capabilities. But the gods were wise again: consider the destruction if magic were as unchecked as fire in the hands of a child. Imagine the devastation of a meteor swarm spell with its potency multiplied by twelve, for example.

Additional considerations for our reflection: the fate of souls post-mortem. Most people who die traverse the Soul Flux, returning to the Source, where they await reincarnation or resurrection. A few may become penumbral beings or angels, though they represent a minority. Another fact is that we can summon extraplanar creatures, indicating the existence of many other planes.

Incorporating all this, I surmise that the Penumbral Plane envelops Tanares, with both immersed in the Astral and Ethereal planes, strengthening their bond. I can also mention the four elemental planes, relatively next to Tanares. There are also two sealed planes that I named the Tameriean and Bauronian planes. And, of course, the positive and negative planes are undeniable, as their energies are perceptible.

The most intriguing one is the Exile, full of lost souls of powerful creatures, including dragons, demons, and angels. It serves as a connection to numerous other planes, still a mystery to us. My estimates suggest the existence of at least a hundred additional planes beyond it, though Exile hinders any direct contact with them.

My journeys across various planes, alongside the eccentric Captain Mavras of the flying vessel, are lessons for another time.

Tavern Games

Drinking Contest (Simple)

Setup. Each participant buys a round of drinks. The contest continues until only one person remains conscious and not sick.

Rules. Every round, participants drink a strong alcoholic beverage. They must make a Constitution saving throw.

In the first round, they must succeed on DC 10 Constitution check. Failure eliminates the person from the game. “For each new round, add 2 to the DC for all participants until only one passes the saving throw, or all fail, resulting in a draw.

Arm Wrestling (Complex)

Two characters face off across a table, each placing an elbow on it and gripping the other’s hand. Participants and spectators often place bets.

Rules. Each participant makes an opposed Strength (Athletics) check. The winner of the check pushes the opponent’s arm closer to the table.

The contest is best two out of three rounds. Before the roll, participants may choose to apply a -2 modifier to their roll to attempt a special action.

Cheat. Make a Sleight of Hand check opposed by the opponent’s Perception check. Successful cheating grants advantage on the Strength check.

Verbal Banter. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) imposes disadvantage on the opponent’s next Strength check.

Special. In taverns within the Mage Tower territory, wizards conduct this contest using mage hand spells. In this case, replace the Strength check with an Intelligence check.

Special Games

If you wish to surprise your players, you can use real games in a tavern. These two examples can be interesting for people who want something different.

Ale Stack

Participants take turns adding a d6 to a stack. The player who causes the tower to fall is eliminated, and the others start a new tower until only one participant remains.

Advanced: To make subsequent rounds more interesting, consider changing the dice type. For example, use a d8 in the second round, a d10 in the third, and so on, until the dice used are d20s.

Dart Throw

Place a D20 in the center of the table to represent the target. Participants then take turns rolling a d6 towards the D20. The player whose die lands closest to the D20 wins the round.

Advanced: Introduce a twist: if a player rolls a 6 on their d6, they cannot be eliminated in that round, regardless of the distance from the D20.

Note: One popular game in Tanares is the Arena Battles game, which you can find in the Dice Kit & Mini Game Box.

Jade, the Bard

Jade, a human bard, is actually searching for the complete 8th note. She has this knowledge because it was the 8th note that created her. A native of the Penumbral Plane, she was born of the energies of Mischief, Nostalgia, and Loneliness. Her player of the 8th creator was Nin-Bairden, a female warlock-sorcerer dwarf who accidentally played the 8th note on an organ when attempting to sever her pact to her demon. While the pact was never quite terminated, the demon's power was transferred to the Penumbra, and through the 8th note, Jade appeared. Nin-Bairden, feeling free of her pact, assumed Jade was residual collateral, and so hid Jade away in an underground cell. Nin-Bairden experienced many months free from her warlock powers in peace, but soon began to lose herself, her magic, and her mind. Jade missed and loved Nin-Bairden, from the moment she was created, and Nin-Bairden experienced deep guilt over Jade 's imprisonment. Nin-Bairden died after her final act of releasing Jade, and Jade now spends her life honoring and thanking Nin-Bairden, hoping her energies will be beneficial to the dwarf, in whatever plane she finds herself.

Jade, full of longing, sought out to find an instrument that contradicts her own nostalgia and sadness. Discovering the two most joyful instruments, she built her own combination: a ukulanjo, and named it Nin-Bairden. It has eight strings, two per note, and Jade carved friezes that represent her journey from the Penumbral Plane to the Material Plane. If asked, though, she says the carvings represent the path that music takes from her instrument into her audience's mind. Those who know how connected the Penumbra is to bardic magic know that there isn't much difference between the two stories.

Jade wants to return home to the Penumbral Plane where she can break apart into different energies and move on to become something else. She knows that the 8th note is fundamental in this process, but she doesn't trust that she herself could survive it, and also is not sure if she could use the 8th note on herself. Jade can teach someone to play the 8th note, but she is waiting for a student worthy of her instruction who can either survive the 8th note or is disposable. Although her 'birth' occurred through an organ, she also knows that the 8th note can be achieved with any instrument because contrary to millennia-old legends, the bard or player is the actual vessel.

Music

The Penumbral Plane is influenced by subconscious attention from creatures in the Material Plane. Dreams, emotions, subconscious thoughts—they all craft the Penumbral reality.

The most powerful conductors of subconscious attention are the creatures that can manipulate and shift conscious attention—storytellers and bards.

Some might say that bards receive their magic from attention, but another viable theory is that they receive their magic from the Penumbral Plane. The transaction moves in this way: A bard, through music, plants a seed into their audience's subconscious.

That seed grows and moves, giving power and tangible substance to the Penumbral Plane. Because the bard is the planter of the seed, they have a deep attachment to their Penumbral manifestation.

A bard may now draw from that connected manifestation source, and when they do, their experience in the Material Plane is 'casting magic'; similar to a sorcerer's magic, but arguably even more intentional and self-imbued.

A creature in the Material Plane may think on this the next time they hum a tune that was played by the fireside the night before or when they speak or walk in their sleep. Someone is getting more powerful, and it is not the sleepwalker.

Legend of the Hiden 8th Note

An 8th note is said to exist beyond the 'natural' seven notes in classic music. The 8th note is both all of the natural notes and none of them. If one believes in this note, they perceive that it is a powerful note of creation. In the Material Plane, it does present as 'something from nothing.' But in reality, the note does not conjure; rather it combines many energies in the Penumbral Plane into one physical being. The 8th note removes the concept of time from the process of manifestation, crafting a being (or many beings) immediately in the Penumbral Plane.

The note also thins the barrier between planes. In most cases, the being, made aware of its 'creator,' passes through the barrier in pursuit of the Player of the 8th. Its motives at this point may seem random; but in fact, they depend on the Player, the being itself, and all number of intentions and preparations taken to create the being (or lack thereof). The being may seek the Player in humble servitude or sexual love or destructive resentment. When it crosses over to the Material Plane, the being's form shifts from one of a monster to a form that is much more palatable and attractive (perhaps an adorable fox or even an enchanting human).

This note is extremely dangerous and impossibly difficult to play correctly. There are no records of how to achieve The 8th Note nor with what instrument because any artists who have succeeded in playing it have succumbed to death or insanity. There is a rumor of a creature in Tanares who has found The Hidden 8th Note and knows how to play it. Although they have never themselves played it, they have the capacity to teach a worthy student. As yet, no such student has presented themselves.

Jade and Nin-Bairden, her Ukulanjo

Song/Poem

Drink of my singing
Give of your soul
You'll hear the ringing
Wherever you go
Memorize these notes
Hear them in dreams
Play them for others
But not for keeps
Plucked from the ether
Guided by song
Our world is deeper
We don't belong
Time moving forward
But to what end?
Music enduring
Life is pretend
As it engulfs us
Reality
Shimmers to dullness
And so we sleep

Lunar Perigee and Lycanthropy

Common Tanareans warn that the lunar perigee drives lycanthropes mad, and they're not wrong. The whole truth proves somewhat more complex.

Lycanthropes know they can expect a few boons when the moon looms large overhead. Accordingly, most lycanthropes try to make the most of the temporary benefit, usually by planning something audacious or simply by taking more risks. No lycanthrope sits out the night of lunar perigee, doing nothing at all. Still, the night of perigee brings some challenges. The moon is ever-changing and contrary, and even the lycanthropes are never sure exactly what benefits any particular perigee might bring. At best, a lycanthrope has a vague idea of what sorts of activities might achieve the most success on the night of perigee. For the approaching perigee, these possibilities might apply.

Night Boons

Boons apply from the moment that twilight begins on the night of the lunar perigee and remain until expended or until the first moment of sunrise, whichever occurs first. Pick from one to three:

Lunar Hardiness. The lycanthrope gains two temporary hit points for each hit die it has.

As the perigee approaches, the lycanthrope feels a sense of invulnerability or improved health.

Lunar Virtuosity. Once per hour, the lycanthrope gains advantage when performing an action during its turn.

As the perigee approaches, the lycanthrope feels a sense of competence or improved confidence.

Lunar Resilience. Once per hour, the lycanthrope gains advantage when making a saving throw or check made as a reaction or to avoid an adverse happening.

As the perigee approaches, the lycanthrope feels a sense of invulnerability or a general sense of impunity.

Lunar Fitness. The lycanthrope gains two points of Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity (choose any one).

As the perigee approaches, the lycanthrope feels particularly energetic, hale, and hardy.

Lunar Defiance. The lycanthrope gains resistance to one type of energy or immunity to one of the following conditions: charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, or stunned. As the perigee approaches, the lycanthrope feels a sense of freedom or impunity.

Moonlight Boons

A lycanthrope can trigger these as a legendary action at the end of another creature's turn. The lycanthrope can trigger the boon only when it is bathed in moonlight. Once triggered, the boon runs for the duration noted in the boon's description, no matter what the light conditions. Pick one:

Lunar Alacrity. The lycanthrope gains the benefits of a *haste* spell cast by a 12th-level wizard; the lycanthrope's speed is doubled, it gains a +2 bonus to AC, it has advantage on Dexterity saving throws, and it gains an additional action on each of its turns. Each use of the boon lasts as long as the lycanthrope concentrates, to a maximum of one minute. Unlike the *haste* spell, however, the lycanthrope does not suffer a period of lethargy when the effect ends.

Lunar Frenzy. The lycanthrope makes one attack with a claw or bite. If this attack hits an opponent of the same size category as the lycanthrope, that opponent is lifted from its feet, violently shaken, and tossed into any space adjacent to the lycanthrope. The

lycanthrope chooses the space. The tossed opponent lands prone and takes 1d6 points of damage; with a successful Dexterity save, the tossed opponent does not fall prone and suffers no damage.

If the Lunar Frenzy attack hits an opponent of a smaller size category than the lycanthrope, that opponent is tossed 1d4 Î5 feet in a straight line. The lycanthrope chooses the direction. The tossed opponent lands prone and takes 1d6 points of damage per five feet tossed; with a successful Dexterity save, the tossed opponent does not fall prone and suffers half damage. If the tossed opponent hits a solid object before traveling the indicated distance, the creature stops and falls into an unoccupied space adjacent to the object and as close as possible to the lycanthrope that tossed the creature. The creature takes the same amount of damage as it would have if it had traveled the full distance. A successful Dexterity save halves the damage, but does not prevent the opponent from falling prone.

Lunar Howl. The lycanthrope unleashes a bloodcurdling howl. Living creatures, but not shape changers, within 60 feet of the howling lycanthrope must make Wisdom saves or become frightened for 1d6+1 rounds. A successful save negates the howl's effects and renders the creature immune to the lycanthrope's howl for the remainder of the night.

Lunar Shadow Walk. The lycanthrope instantly moves into any space within 300 feet, where moonlight casts a shadow. This power otherwise functions as the dimension door spell cast by a 12th level character.

Plot Hooks

Things can get pretty wild in Tanarea as the moon looms ever larger in the night sky, and various groups maneuver to take full advantage of the Perigee's full effects.

- Wererats in one more city begin infiltrating businesses and institutions in preparation for an all-out assault on the night of Perigee. The wererats might simply want to rob their targets, or they might be planning to move in and take over. Player characters might be hired to root out the wererats before the Perigee to stand guard on the night of Perigee, or both.
- A love-struck young aristocrat approaches the Player Characters for assistance in planning to elope with his or her true love. The aristocrat needs the characters to provide some enhanced spells to help accomplish the plan. The aristocrat might be genuinely in love, or perhaps the aristocrat merely poses as a lover and seeks to kidnap the subject.
- Spies, saboteurs, and conspirators of all kinds plan various operations on the night of Perigee, hoping to take advantage of the enhancements to Transmutation and Abjuration spells. Various individuals might approach player characters as the Perigee approaches, either to guard against such activities or to assist with them, or to provide enhanced spells to assist them.
- A weretiger and a few werewolf companions plan a large hunt to take place on the night of Perigee. They plan to sally forth after sunset, running down any prey unfortunate to draw their attention. The lycanthropes spend the weeks leading up to Perigee recruiting other hunters and marking potential prey. The player characters might get wind of the plan somehow (perhaps hired to break up the hunt) or become marked as prey.

Chapter 9
New Monsters

Akhu

Emerging from the Ethereal Plane, the akhu are ghostly beings serving their ruler, the deity Ba-Ka. They are known for their spectral ability to expand their numbers by harvesting the life force of mortals and turning them into other akhu, ethereal spirits in service to their god. Ba-Ka pays little attention to physical forms, seeing the soul and mind as vessels for the true essence since this is where the heart of magic resides. Possessing the ability to cross between the Ethereal and Material Planes, the akhu can subtly infiltrate territories and even eliminate significant figures or foes from opposing factions.

Ba-Ka's Ethereal Vanguard

Kepesh followers revere the akhu, considering them sacred entities. Tasked with diverse duties such as delivering divine messages, neutralizing threats, and aiding Ba-Ka's servants, the akhu also serve as spectral guardians or secret leaders during Kepesh's missions. However, they have a sinister reputation among outsiders, as many fear dying at the hands of the akhu and being forced to serve Ba-Ka forever. Disturbing stories of misguided priests of Ba-Ka forcibly turning unwilling souls into akhu through dark sacrificial rituals are common.

Ba-Ka's Celestial Plans

Ba-Ka's celestial plan aims to liberate souls from the eternal wheel of rebirth, protecting them from the Ungods' corruption. The creation of an akhu is seen as a spiritual refuge, binding a soul in eternal service to Ba-Ka. This god preaches that the cycle of reincarnation removes mortal memories and prevents souls from accumulating deep wisdom and arcane might. He views this as a trick by rival deities to keep mortals obedient and limit their magical growth, fearing the power mortals might wield if they had forever to study magic.

The City of Eternity

Within the Ethereal Plane, the akhu inhabit the majestic City of Eternity. Upon arriving in the city for the first time after their transformation, each spirit receives a role, a duty, and a hierarchical rank reflecting their level of devotion to Ba-Ka in the Material Plane. Devout mortals secure higher ranks in the afterlife, and once assigned, the rank persists eternally within the city. In this grand metropolis, higher-ranked akhu serve as governing priests and scholarly wizards in colossal pyramids, while those of a mid-rank take on the roles of scribes, merchants, and military commanders. The duties of construction, guarding, and serving as frontline soldiers are reserved for the lowest caste.

The Unevolved and the Sanctified Spirits

Named "unevolved" by the Celestianist Church but revered as "sanctified spirits," or akhu by the Kepesh, these spirits successfully escape the cycle of rebirth. The spirit of a humanoid creature slain by an akhu may be forced to join their ranks. However, rumors suggest it is possible to release the soul to resume the cycle and potentially be resurrected. Accomplishing this requires the destruction of the specific akhu and its originating akhu or priest, breaking ties with Ba-Ka. If an akhu falls while its creator lives, it retreats to the sacred city, entering a dormant state for 1d10 days.

Chosen of Ba-Ka

The chosen of Ba-Ka are honored followers of the deity. Dressed in majestic robes, these four-armed, faceless ghosts bear pale, glowing magic symbols on their bodies and blades. As priests or high wizards of Ba-Ka's City of Eternity, they view magic as a divine gift, supporting its universal access. Their loyalty to Ba-Ka's will is absolute. However, they may be tolerant and even extend clemency to spellcasters while treating any non-spellcaster as inferior. Possessing deep abilities in divine and arcane spellcasting, and skillful mastery of their Soul Blades, in battle, they will primarily aim to disrupt enemy spellcasters with a combination of melee attacks and magic, considering them always the most dangerous foes.

Chosen of Ba-Ka

Medium Undead, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +12, Wis +12
Skills Arcana +18, Perception +12, Religion +18
Damage Vulnerabilities radiant
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 22
Languages Common
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Ba-ka's Servitude. If the chosen of Ba-Ka kills a humanoid, the target's spirit rises as an akhu zealot in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space, at the end of the round. It serves the chosen of Ba-Ka.

Eternal Doom. All enemies within 90 feet of the chosen of Ba-Ka have disadvantage on saving throws against curses (i.e.: all effects that can be ended by the *remove curse* spell). If a creature fails to resist a curse while inside this aura, this curse can be removed only by a *wish* spell or similar.

Ethereal Sight. The chosen of Ba-Ka can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The chosen of Ba-Ka can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Spellblade Multiattack. The Chosen of Ba-Ka makes two Soul Blade attacks and casts a spell from its spellcasting list below.

Soul Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Spellcasting. The chosen casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *bless, inflict wounds, detect magic, blindness/deafness, bestow curse, speak with dead*

3/day each: *create undead, symbol, mass cure wounds, geas*

1/day each: *antimagic field, arcane sword, prismatic wall (particularly powerful chosen may also be able to cast wish and mass heal)*

Etherealness. The chosen enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Legendary Action

Ba-ka's Cursed Symbol (3/Day). The chosen of Ba-Ka can use the *bestow curse* spell as a legendary action. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn.

Akhu Knight

Medium Undead, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (spectral armor)
Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Skills Arcana + 6, Insight +6, Persuasion +7, Religion +6
Damage Vulnerabilities radiant
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Ba-Ka's Mantle. The akhu knight and all allies within 30 feet of it has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects

Ba-ka's Servitude. If the akhu knight kills a humanoid, the target's spirit rises as an akhu zealot in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space, at the end of the round. It serves the akhu knight.

Ethereal Sight. The knight can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The akhu knight can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object

Actions

Cursed Multiattack. The akhu knight makes two Great Soul Blade attacks and one Cursed Touch attack.

Great Soul Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage and 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Cursed Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) necrotic damage. The creature touched must also make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or it will be cursed, unable to receive any form of healing or regain hit points in any way. A *remove curse* spell or similar effect removes this condition

Mass Etherealness. The akhu knight enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa, bringing with it any number of willing allies within 30 feet of it.

Akhu Knights

Akhu knights, Ba-Ka's respected champions, lead fervent groups and mortal servants, comprising most military leaders and prosperous merchants in the City of Eternity. They wear purple robes and golden arcane sigils adorn their necklaces and rings. They have no face, only a dark silhouette. Wielding two sharp ebon blades, they seamlessly incorporate their cursed touch in battle. Their touch carries a strong curse, preventing all healing until removed, making them fearsome foes. They can transport large numbers of allies into the Ethereal Plane and back, making them effective as merchants and troop leaders. Their battle strategy involves observation from the Ethereal Plane and quick assaults in the Material Plane, bringing their full group for surprise attacks.

Zealots of Ba-Ka

Zealots, the most numerous akhu, form the core of their spectral army. Dressed in simple black or gray robes, a dark silhouette replaces their non-existent faces. They carry a single ebon blade wrapped in necrotic energy. As the foundation of the City of Eternity, they act as guards, builders, soldiers, and are responsible for most of the menial work that keeps Ba-Ka's ethereal metropolis functioning. Their preferred battle tactic is to form a large group and launch surprise ethereal assaults, focusing on single weak foes, one at a time. In situations where they are leading Kepesh bands, they change their tactics to prioritize self-preservation, preferring their life-draining touch over cursed blades, and viewing their mortal allies as expendable.

Zealot of Ba-Ka

Medium Undead, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 88 (16d8 +16)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Arcane +3, Religion +3
Damage Vulnerabilities radiant
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The zealot of Ba-Ka can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Ethereal Sight. The zealot of Ba-Ka can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Ba-Ka's Servitude. If the zealot of Ba-Ka kills a humanoid, the target's spirit rises as a zealot of Ba-Ka in the nearest unoccupied space to its corpse at the end of the round. It serves the zealot. Unlike other akhus, a zealot of Ba-Ka can only create another zealot once per day, and zealots created by zealot of Ba-Ka require one day to gain this ability.

Actions

Soul Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Draining Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) necrotic damage, and the zealot regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.

Etherealness. The zealot of Ba-Ka enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Reactions

Vengeful Spirit. When the zealot of Ba-Ka is reduced to 0 hit points, it can take a reaction to teleport up to 60 feet to a space adjacent to the creature that killed it and make one final Soul Blade attack against that creature.

Augur Servants

Loyal Disciples of the Augur

Golgöggoth, often referred to as the Augur, is one of the main leaders of the Forces of Darkall. He wields control over a mysterious army composed mainly of two groups: the Nightmares and the Watchers. The Nightmares were once angels like Golgöggoth, with their forms twisted by the corrupted energies of the Penumbra. The Watchers are mortals reshaped by the Augur's power, serving as frontline troops in the war against the Ungods.

Nightmares

The Nightmares were once angels but now share little similarity with their original forms. These monstrosities have bodies similar to deformed spheres, a singular central eye, and numerous tentacles, and serve their leader with full loyalty. Initially, they were creations of Tamera and Bauron. These celestial beings joined the resistance against the Ungods' invasion of Tanares millennia ago. However, during their extended battle within the Penumbral Plane and an assault on the Penumbral Mountain—the portal used by the Ungods to enter Tanares—their essence was corrupted, morphing their bodies and minds into their present forms.

Angels No More. Angels, created by deities to act as the world's guardians, fell victim to the Ungods, who corrupted Tanares with their legion of aberrations. Golgael, a mighty archangel, led a divine army of angelic guardians against the invaders, delving into the very core of the Penumbra. Despite being surrounded by corruption, Golgael's troops stood firm. But during their invasion of the Penumbral Mountain, they discovered something far more sinister that altered their existence entirely.

The nature of this encounter remains a mystery studied by many scholars. However, it undeniably deformed the angels' bodies and minds, transforming their divine zeal for combating the Ungods into a twisted obsession that forever changed their methods and actions. Now, they employ ruthless tactics, ready to stop the corruption of Tanares at all costs.

Ungods Stalkers. The Nightmares constantly patrol the Penumbral Plane and occasionally venture into the Material Plane to hunt down members of the Cult of Shadow Wing and the emoguns. These relentless hunters can trace negative energy and ill intent, using them to locate their targets. When they encounter minions of the Ungods, they strike mercilessly, viewing the death of potential innocents as expected when preventing the survival of the Ungods' servants. They remain cautious of any mortal who wanders the Penumbral Plane, considering them enemies. This often results in situations where adventurers or explorers in the Penumbral Plane confront these creatures.

Divination and Intellectual Might. These beings possess great intellect and strategies. They meticulously plan their onslaughts and patiently await the perfect moment to strike. Like Golgöggoth, they have abilities to predict imminent threats and prepare accordingly, providing them with an advantageous position. They may negotiate and even form temporary alliances if they find it to be the most efficient way to advance their fight against the Ungods. However, they view mortals with deep suspicion, seeing them as easily manipulated and deceptive. Due to their superior strategic skills, they are often placed in commanding positions of the Watcher troops serving Golgöggoth. Trusting in their divinatory powers, these creatures may seek out mortals to form temporary alliances or intervene in the mortal realm to fulfill a specific prophecy that benefits their fight against the Ungods. Most peaceful negotiations between mortals and these creatures hide secret prophecies they manipulate behind the scenes.

Eternal Nightmare. Although their power has diminished compared to their divine status, the Nightmares retained their celestial immortality. Upon death, they return to Golgöggoth's side, their bodies regenerating over a period of 1d12 days within the Penumbral Mountain. Rumors suggest that only within this mountain can a Nightmare truly be vanquished, and dying there causes them to regain their angelic form.

Because of their immortality, the Nightmares are often willing to take great risks to achieve their goals and are not afraid to be on the front lines of combat.

The Chain of Command. The Nightmares follow a structured hierarchy: warriors, lords, and archnightmares. Although lesser in power, the Nightmare warriors are more numerous and often lead the Watchers in battle, scout the Penumbral Plane, and command

smaller contingents. The lords, strategic leaders of Golgöggoth's forces, guard fortified bases and lead Golgöggoth's armies across the vast expanse of the Penumbral Plane. Many items and scrolls with precious information may be found there.

Finally, the archnightmares, Golgöggoth's trusted confidants and advisors, ensure their master's influence extends beyond the Penumbral Mountain. Even though Golgöggoth remains guarding the mountain, his archnightmares enact his will across the Penumbral and Material Planes, advancing his grand plan.

As most of Augur's schemes are fully known only by the archnightmares, many powerful factions pay high prices for capturing these monsters alive.

Nightmare Warrior

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 66 (7d12 + 21)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +7
Skills Perception +8
Damage Resistance psychic
Condition immunities prone
Senses darkvision 90 ft., truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 60 ft.
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Future Omen (1/Day). Due to its ability to see the future, the nightmare warrior can better the odds of fate. As a free action, the creature can re-roll a single saving throw, skill check, or attack roll made by any creature, either an ally or an enemy.

Sixth sense. The nightmare warrior uses double its proficiency bonus for Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Precognition. The nightmare warrior can see into the future and react to it, never being surprised.

Actions

Multiattack. The nightmare warrior makes two Frightening force blast attacks

Frightening Force Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) force damage and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. The nightmare warrior casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *clairvoyance, command, comprehend languages*

3/day each: *levitate, suggestion*

1/day each: *counterspell*

Reactions

Future guard (3/Day). Due to its foresight, the nightmare warrior can better dodge attacks. As a reaction, the nightmare warrior can add 2 to its AC against an attack that would hit it.

Nightmare Lord

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 157 (15d12 + 60)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +9
Skills Perception +12
Damage Resistance psychic
Condition immunities prone
Senses darkvision 90 ft., truesight 45 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Future Omen (2/Day) Due to its ability to see the future, the nightmare lord can better the odds of fate. As a free action, the creature can re-roll a single saving throw, skill check, or attack roll made by any creature, either an ally or an enemy.

Sixth sense. The nightmare lord's proficiency bonus is doubled for Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Precognition. The nightmare lord can see into the future and react to it, never being surprised.

Prediction Gaze (2/Day). When a nightmare lord locks eyes with a creature, as a free action, it can see the creature's immediate future. The creature must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature will have disadvantage on all attacks, ability checks, and saving throws it makes against the Nightmare lord for 1 minute.

Actions

Multiattack. The nightmare lord makes three Frightening Force Blast attacks.

Frightening Force Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) force damage and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Maelstrom of madness (Recharge 5–6). The nightmare lord creates a 30-foot radius area of unstable psychic energy up to 90 feet away. Other creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw, or take 44 (8d10) psychic damage and have disadvantage on all attack rolls for 1 minute.

Spellcasting. The Nightmare lord casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *command*, *comprehend languages*, *levitate*

3/day each: *arcane eye*, *counterspell*, *locate creature*, *suggestion*

1/day each: *animate objects*, *telekinesis*

Reactions

Future guard (3/Day). Due to its foresight, the nightmare lord can better dodge attacks. As a reaction, the nightmare lord can add 3 to its AC against an attack that would hit it.

Archnightmare

Gargantuan aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 330 (20d20 + 120)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (2)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)	26 (+8)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +12, Wis +14
Skills Insight +20, Perception +20
Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, psychic
Condition Immunites charmed, frightened, prone
Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 90 ft., passive Perception 30
Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

Future Omen (3/Day). Due to its ability to see the future, the archnightmare can better the odds of fate. As a free action, the creature can reroll a single saving throw, skill check, or attack roll made by any creature, either an ally or an enemy.

Sense Magic. The archnightmare can sense magic within 120 feet, at will. This trait works like the detect magic spell, but is not magical itself.

Sixth sense. The archnightmare's proficiency bonus is doubled for Wisdom (Insight) and Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Precognition. The archnightmare can see into the future and react to it, never being surprised.

Prediction Gaze (3/Day). When a archnightmare locks eyes with a creature, as a free action, it can see the creature's immediate future. The creature must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature will have disadvantage on all attacks, ability checks, and saving throws it makes against the archnightmare for 1 minute.

Actions

Multiattack. The archnightmare makes four Frightening Force Blast attacks.

Frightening Force Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 8) force damage and the target must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Maelstrom of Madness (Recharge 5–6). The archnightmare creates a 30-foot radius area of unstable psychic energy up to 90 feet away. Other creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw, or take 66 (12d10) psychic damage and have disadvantage on all attack rolls for 1 minute.

Spellcasting. The archnightmare casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 22, +14 to hit with spell attacks):

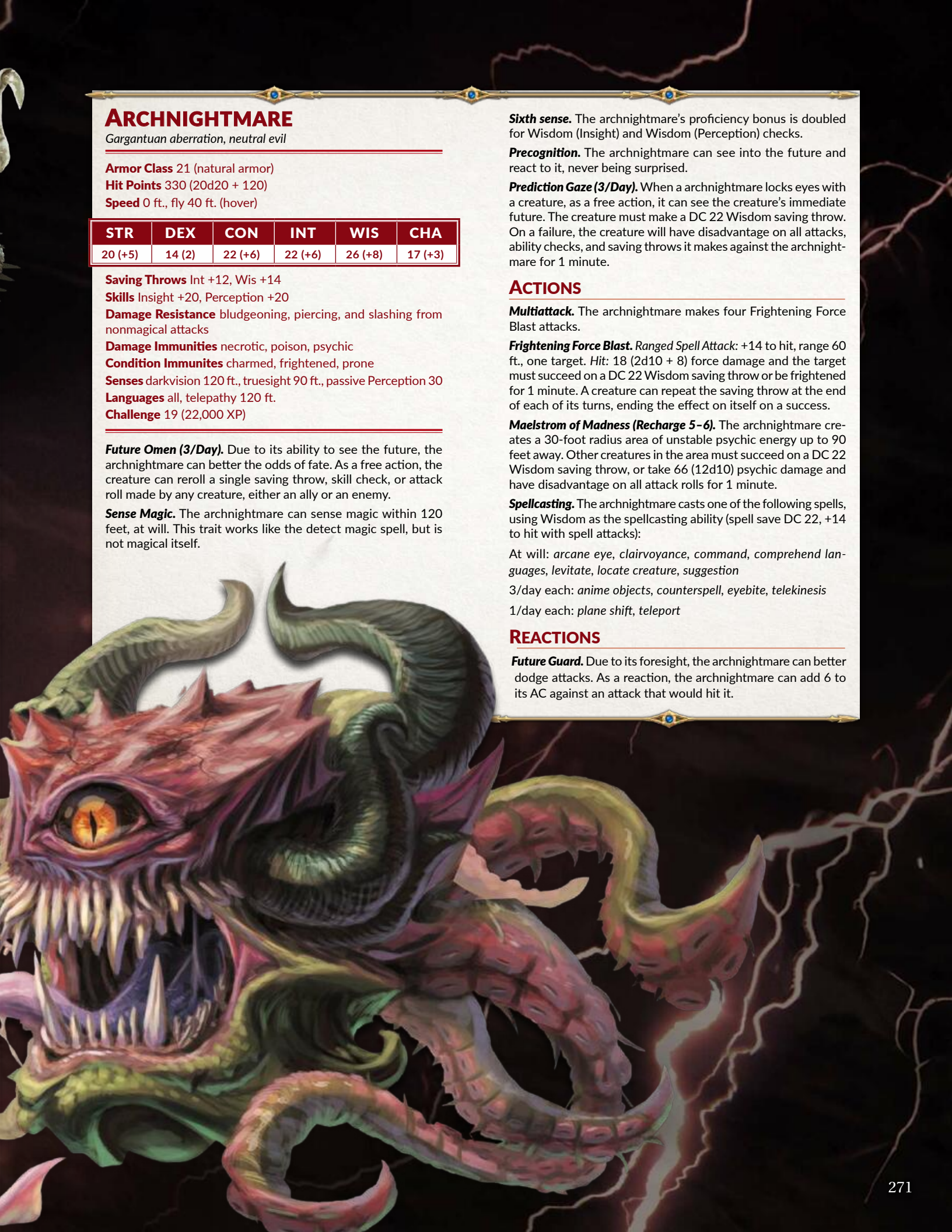
At will: *arcane eye*, *clairvoyance*, *command*, *comprehend languages*, *levitate*, *locate creature*, *suggestion*

3/day each: *anime objects*, *counterspell*, *eyebite*, *telekinesis*

1/day each: *plane shift*, *teleport*

Reactions

Future Guard. Due to its foresight, the archnightmare can better dodge attacks. As a reaction, the archnightmare can add 6 to its AC against an attack that would hit it.



Watchers, Army of Golgöggoth

Reshaped into warriors by the Augur for the war against the Ungods and their servants, the Watchers are a formidable legion. The origin of their powers is unknown, though it is widely believed that the Augur infused the first Watchers with his blood and unique magic originating from the Penumbral Mountain.

Composing the majority of Golgöggoth's military, the Watchers fulfill their duties under the Nightmares' watchful eyes. Fearless and determined, they strictly comply with orders in a systematic manner. Scholars compare them to the brainwashed soldiers of the Empire's Ironhand, suggesting that these soldiers are a result of a less potent version of the initial ritual used to shape the Watchers.

Under their heavy armor, the Watchers reveal an aberrant purple, twisted version of their prior selves, covered in small writhing tentacles. When present in the Material Plane, they typically wear full armor or adopt robes to disguise themselves as mortals.

Emotionless Army

Equipped with purely logical and rational minds, the Watchers are devoted to carrying out Golgöggoth's strategies. They exhibit no emotions but possess free will. Despite being bound to serve the Augur, they show strategic thinking, and can even manipulate mortals through deceit—all while being entirely empty of feelings. They can mimic emotions to trick others but lack empathy. This makes them a formidable adversary in battle with fearlessness and cold efficiency.

Misty Travelers

Also referred to as "Misty Travelers," the Watchers' armies often appear cloaked in mists. When ten or more Watchers assemble, they can perform a 10-minute-long ritual that summons a cloud of mist around them. This mist then materializes at any location within the Penumbral or Material Plane previously visited by one of the Watchers, where it gradually intensifies. Following this, the Watchers, alongside any Nightmares and other creatures of their choice, can teleport to that location. This capacity to cross both planes makes them threatening, as they can suddenly appear in large numbers and launch their assaults.

Small settlements and towns, suspected by the Nightmares of harboring Cult of Shadow Wing members, frequently fall prey to the Watchers' attacks. They exterminate all residents to prevent the cultists from escaping, attempting to transform as many as possible into new Watchers. Travelers who encounter such situations often face a choice: to challenge the Watchers or to flee quickly, leaving the common people to their fate.

Metamorphosis through Blood

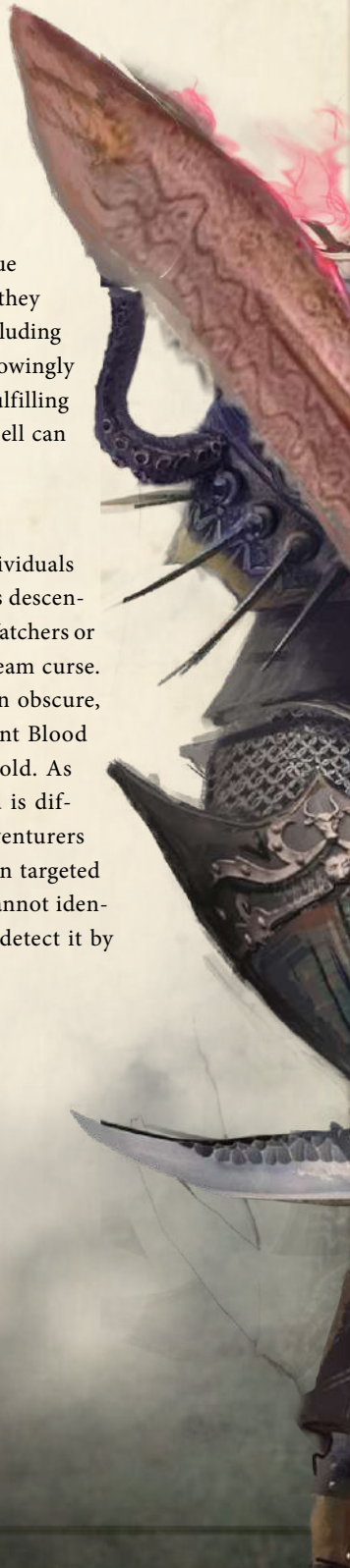
If an unconscious, dying humanoid is infused with a Watcher's blood, it stabilizes and transforms into a Watcher within a minute. The newly transformed creature retains its memories but loses all emotional connections, which makes these memories a blend of lived experiences and distant dreams. There are theories about methods to revert a Watcher to its original form. The most accepted one is to use Nightmare's blood alongside an object emotionally charged by the victim.

Curse of Dreams

Golgöggoth's psychic powers infuse the blades of the Watchers. Any creature injured by a Watcher's weapon receives an undetectable curse, subjecting them to distressing dreams manipulated by the Augur, which may subtly influence people's actions. Initially, those afflicted dismiss these as mere dreams, but as some visions become true due to the Augur's cunning manipulation, they begin to consider them prophetic. Many, including adventurers and ordinary people, are unknowingly manipulated by these dreams, potentially fulfilling the Augur's intentions. A remove curse spell can lift this effect, but no magic can detect it.

Ancient Blood Hunt

The Augur takes particular interest in individuals with Ancient Blood, bearing King Malrok's descendants. His goal is to transform them into Watchers or manipulate their destinies through the dream curse. The reasons behind this preference remain obscure, but every Watcher converted from Ancient Blood is assigned to guard the Augur's stronghold. As identifying someone with Ancient Blood is difficult, powerful humans, particularly adventurers displaying extraordinary abilities, are often targeted for transformation. While the Watchers cannot identify it, the Nightmares leading them can detect it by tasting the blood.



The Scouting Eyes

Wearing lighter armor, the scouting eyes function as Golgöggoth's stealthy agents. They infiltrate mortal settlements to expose hidden Ungods' followers. The scouting eyes are versatile and adept, handling various tasks as specialists in the Watchers' ranks. They serve as scouts and skirmishers specializing in hit-and-run tactics. They might approach adventurers to inform them of the Cult of Shadow Wing's activities, sometimes offering rewards for their assistance.

Scouting Eye

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leathe armor)
Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +4, Perception +5, Persuasion +4, Stealth +8
Damage Resistance psychic
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Isolation Prey. If the target of scouting eye's attack has no allies within 5 feet, the scouting eye has advantage on its attack roll.

Opportunist (1/turn). If the scouting eye hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, it can make an extra attack using a different weapon.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The scouting eye deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the scouting eye that isn't incapacitated and the scouting eye doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Sudden Dash (Recharge 5–6). The scouting eye gains an extra Dash action. Its movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks during this turn, and until the start of its next turn, all attacks against it are made with disadvantage.

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Penumbral Guardians

These constitute the majority of the Watchers' army. Equipped with a sword and shield, they are sturdy, resilient, and adept at coordinating their movements to form powerful warrior units. They usually fight in groups, relying on their heavy armor and shields for protection.

Penumbral Guardian

Medium Aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 20 (plate armor, shield)
Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str+4, Con+5
Skills Athletics +4, Intimidation +2, Perception +3
Damage Resistance psychic
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Impenetrable Wall. The penumbral guardian receives a +1 AC bonus for each other watcher (scouting eye, penumbral guardian, and watcher overlord) adjacent to it (max +4 AC).

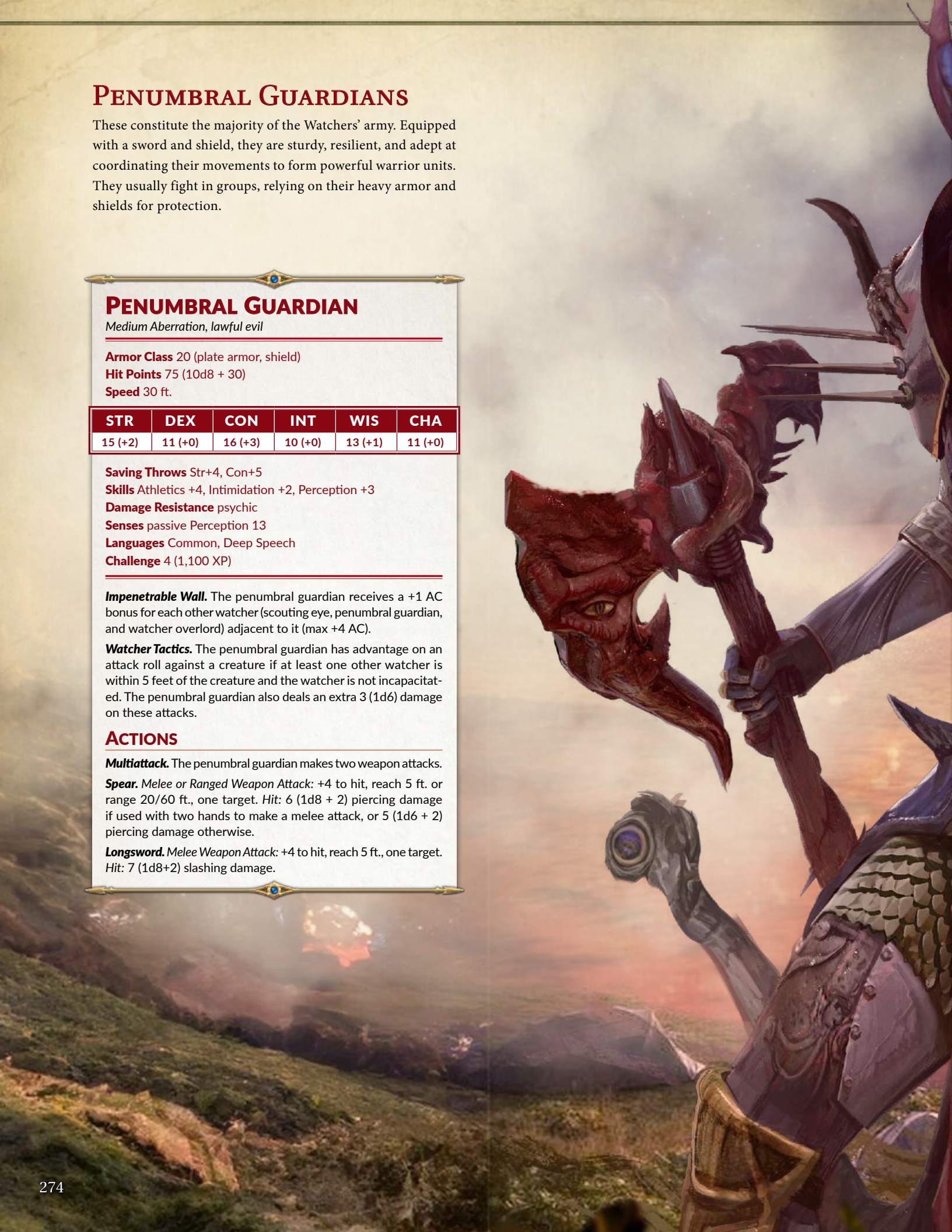
Watcher Tactics. The penumbral guardian has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one other watcher is within 5 feet of the creature and the watcher is not incapacitated. The penumbral guardian also deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage on these attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The penumbral guardian makes two weapon attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, or 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage otherwise.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+2) slashing damage.



The Watcher Overlords

These formidable beings command the Watchers' troops. Wielding ebon greatswords etched with runes emitting psychic energy, a faint mist always follows their steps. While all Watchers obey the Nightmares' commands, the overlords excel as battlefield commanders. Their combat abilities are impressive, but their real strength lies in maneuvering their allies into advantageous positions. Their potent psychic war cry fortifies nearby Watchers, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of a Watcher's unit.

Watcher Overlord

Medium Aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (plate armor)
Hit Points 231 (22d8 + 132)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (+0)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +11, Con +12
Skills Athletics +11, Intimidation +8, History +9, Perception +9
Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened
Senses Passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Misty Step. As a bonus action, the watcher overlord can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space that it can see.

Penumbral Lord's March. When the overlord uses its move action, all willing allies within 10 feet of it can use their reactions to move up to their speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Psychic Weapons. The watcher overlord's weapon attacks are magical. When the overlord hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 4d8 psychic damage (included in the attack).

Watcher's War Cry. As a bonus action, the watcher overlord can shout, causing all watchers (scouting eyes, penumbral guardians, and other watcher overlords) within 30 feet of it to gain 20 temporary hit points.

Watcher's Command. When the watcher overlord hits a creature with a weapon attack, it can use its bonus action to command all willing allies within 5 feet of that creature to make a melee attack against it with advantage.

Actions

Multiattack. The watcher overlord makes four melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

Bellara's Servants

Hidden in darkness, the devoted servants of Bellara orchestrate a web of deception. Dedicated to the corruption of mortal souls and the expansion of the Ungods' legion, Bellara's disciples exploit the Material and Penumbral Planes, imbuing their essence with malevolence.

Both the arachnes and the Purple Witches—Bellara's two distinct classes of acolytes—work to please her. The arachnes, as her direct progeny, reflect Bellara's image by embodying a macabre appeal of a woman-spider fusion. They lurk in the Penumbral Plane and the abysses of Undertanares, weaving their plots. Conversely, the Purple Witches are mortals who swear loyalty to Bellara, forsaking their souls to pursue power or realize their unique wishes. Fortified by Bellara's sorcery, they merge into society to manipulate mortals.

Bellara's Hierarchical Structure

From her unhallowed sanctuary in the third layer of the Penumbral Plane, Bellara oversees her servants. The elder matriarchs, Bellara's powerful spell-wielding progeny, lead the arachne commanders, who in turn control the various ambushers.

The Purple Witches operate within a parallel structure. Overseeing the fourth layer of the Penumbral Plane, Catharina leads the Purple Witches; she serves Bellara but maintains some independence. Subordinate to Catharina are the Purple Witch mistresses—experienced witches who guide the sorcerers and initiates, usually forming triads. Upon the death of a Purple Witch mistress, an apprentice typically ascends to her role. This unique structure often sparks internal strife as the Purple Witches, driven by their lust for power, conspire against each other, occasionally exploiting the naiveness of susceptible adventurers, secretly guiding them to defeat their rivals by posing as good people in need of help.

Bellara's Blessings

The outstanding servants of Bellara receive an uncanny mystical gift from her, granting two unique powers: Essence Absorption and the Purple Curse.

Essence Absorption allows servants to steal bodies and appearances. Siphoning the essence of their victims, they morph into a simulacrum of the stolen form. The arachnes and Purple Witches employ this ability to infiltrate the high echelons of mortal society. They target influential roles to consolidate power, modify hierarchies, and amass resources. Apprehension regarding such malevolent entities has gripped numerous factions, which enlist skilled adventurers to expose the servants of Bellara and stop their plots.

The Purple Curse is another insidious weapon held by Bellara's blessed ones. Unbeknownst to the victims, the curse sets a series of misfortunes in motion. High-ranking officials and nobility often find themselves victims of this hex. Their cursed destinies often cause despair and instigate investigations that only the most cunning one can trace back to Bellara's servants.

Optional Rule: Bellara's Blessings

The GM may choose to grant one or both of the powers below to any arachne or Purple Witch:

Essence Absorption. A servant of Bellara can attempt to absorb the essence of a different female creature to steal her shape. The target must be unconscious at 0 hit points, and the servant must be adjacent to it and spend its Action, Move Action, and Bonus Action, and be unable to use Reactions until the start of its next turn. If the servant sustains any damage or is moved, the essence absorption fails, and nothing happens.

Upon a successful attempt, the target creature dies, and its body gradually fades to shades of gray. The servant flawlessly takes on the form of the creature. While disguised as another creature, the servant adopts the physical attributes of the target, such as Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, speed, racial traits, senses, and any other traits the GM considers appropriate. The servant maintains its own Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, proficiency bonus, saving throw, and skill proficiencies.

The Purple Curse. Mighty servants of Bellara can deploy potent witchcraft to hex their prey. As a bonus action, a Bellara's servant curses a creature she can see within 60 feet. The curse, requiring no verbal, somatic, or material components, is imperceptible, save for a focused stare when the servant applies it. The targeted creature must make a Wisdom saving throw against the servant's spell save DC. If it fails, it becomes cursed. If successful, the creature is immune to the same servant's curse for the next week.

A cursed creature experiences three unfortunate events at any time in the following week; examples include unexpected rainfall without protection, furniture breakage, or pest-infested food. They are often harmless but annoying, but sometimes, they can evolve into an indirect disaster for the target.

Optionally, the GM may decide to roll a d20 at any time to determine the outcome of these adverse events:

18+ - No Unluck: Nothing unfavorable happens. In fact, luck may even favor the cursed individual (this still consumes one of the three events). A character who rolls 18+ three times during the same curse becomes permanently immune to the Purple Curse.

7 to 17 - Minor Inconvenience: An inconvenient but unharmful misfortune occurs as previously described.

2 to 6 - Major Inconvenience: The target endures severe bad luck. An unfavorable event happens, and all its attack rolls and ability checks have disadvantage for the next hour.

1 - Disaster: The target suffers a calamity. An old foe may reappear at the worst moment, or an ally may be captured. While this usually doesn't result in immediate death or permanent loss, it creates a situation that requires the character's intervention to avoid losing something important.

The curse persists until the three unfortunate events occur and can only be applied to the same creature once per week. This curse is undetectable by any known means. While some argue its nonexistence, Bellara's servants depend on this power to bring their victims' downfall. They continuously curse their foes for years, allowing a chain of unfortunate events to destroy them gradually.

Purple Witches

Purple Witch initiates. They are usually young women recently inducted into Bellara's ranks. Their magic, still developing, is limited. Initiates maintain a discreet profile, adopting common clothes and blending into the crowd to evade persecution from the Church Inquisition.

Purple Witch sorceresses. They are on the next tier, standing as experienced servants. They are competent sorceresses with deep knowledge of the ways of serving Bellara. As their proficiency in infiltrating mortal societies rises, their fear of persecution weakens. With their elegant clothes and seductive behavior, these witches blend in with the ranks of mortal nobility, subtly advancing Bellara's schemes.

Purple Witch Initiate

Medium humanoid (any species), any evil alignment

Armor Class 14 (17 with mage armor)
Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +4, Cha +6
Skills Deception +6, Insight +4, Persuasion +6, Stealth +6
Damage resistances poison, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Deep Speech, plus any one language
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Ambusher Conjurer. When the initiate casts a spell that targets a surprised creature, the witch has advantage on attack rolls for the spell, and the target has disadvantage on any saving throws against the spell.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the initiate can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Energy Arc. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) lightning damage. If the initiate targets the same creature with Energy Arc on its next turn the attack automatically hits.

Spellcasting. The initiate casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *mage armor*, chill touch, mage hand, poison spray*

1/day each: *charm person, blindness/deafness, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement, suggestion, tongues*

**The purple witch initiate casts this spell on itself before combat*

Purple Witches Sorcerer

Medium humanoid (any species), any evil alignment

Armor Class 14 (17 with mage armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +7, Cha +8
Skills Deception +8, Insight +7, Persuasion +8, Stealth +7
Damage resistances poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Deep Speech, plus any tree languages
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Ambusher Conjurer. When the sorcerer casts a spell that targets a surprised creature, the witch has advantage on attack rolls for the spell, and the target has disadvantage on any saving throws against the spell.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the purple witch can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Energy Arc. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d12 + 5) lightning damage. If the sorcerer targets the same creature with Energy Arc on its next turn the attack automatically hits.

Essence Transfer (1/Day). The sorcerer can exchange life energy between two creatures within 60 feet. Both creatures must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the two creatures' current hit points are swapped. Any hit points exceeding a creature's maximum hit points are lost. If at least one creature succeeds on the saving throw, the ability has no effect.

Spellcasting. The sorcerer casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic*, *chill touch*, *levitate*, *mage hand*, *mage armor**, *poison spray*

3/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *charm person*, *invisibility*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *suggestion*, *tongues*

1/day each: *arcane eye*, *banishment*, *bestow curse*, *blight*, *nondetection*, *remove curse*

**The Purple Witch sorceress casts this spell on itself before combat.*

Purple Witch Mistress

Medium humanoid (any species), any evil alignment

Armor Class 15 (18 with mage armor)
Hit Points 85 (10d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Wis +9, Cha +11
Skills Deception +16, Insight +14, Persuasion +16, Stealth +15
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Deep Speech, plus any six languages
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Ambusher Conjurer. When the mistress casts a spell that targets a surprised creature, the witch has advantage on attack rolls for the spell, and the target has disadvantage on any saving throws against the spell.

Magic Resistance. The mistress has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the mistress can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage.

Energy Arc. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +11 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 58 (8d12 + 6) lightning damage and if on the next turn the mistress decides to attack the same target, as long as he has not moved more than 60 feet at any time, the hit is automatic.

Life Stealing (1/Day): The mistress can exchange life energy between two creatures within 60 feet. Both creatures must make a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw. If both fail, the two creatures' current hit points are swapped. Any hit points exceeding a creature's maximum hit points are lost. If at least one creature succeeds on the saving throw, the ability has no effect.

Spellcasting. The mistress casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic*, *chill touch*, *levitate*, *mage hand*, *mage armor**, *poison spray*

3/day each: *arcane eye*, *banishment*, *bestow curse*, *blight*, *blindness/deafness*, *charm person*, *invisibility*, *nondetection*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *remove curse*, *suggestion*, *tongues*

1/day each: *feeblemind*, *mass suggestion*, *plane shift*

1/week: *wish*

**The Purple Witch mistress casts this spell on itself before comba*

Purple Witch mistresses. They are at the peak of the hierarchy of the Purple Witches. Respected for their considerable magical talent and a long list of achievements in Bellara's name, they operate from behind the scenes, disguising themselves in bodies seized from their victims. Exhibiting remarkable manipulative skills, they construct complex webs of intrigue, lead groups of manipulated mortals, and instruct lesser witches while keeping their identities concealed.

Arachne

Arachne ambushers. They constitute the backbone of Bellara's military force. These numerous armies lurk in Undertanares and the third layer of the Penumbral Plane. They are cunning and deceptive but tend towards cowardice, striking only when the odds favor them. They rely on their cunning, web-crafting skills, and stealth, instead of direct confrontation. Ambushers are ready to negotiate, plead for mercy, or make false promises, seizing every opportunity to backstab their prey.

Arachne commanders. They are the nobility of the arachnes. Considered a superior caste to the ambushers, they have magical might flowing in their veins. Commanders greatly value riches and are often covered in jewelry of gold and gems. Their cunning and deception are bound by a unique code of honor, never breaking a word explicitly given, making them feel superior to the ambushers. Creating sophisticated lairs and enjoying the pleasures of eternal life, they tempt mortals into sin. Cruel by nature, they are embodiments of narcissistic manipulation, taking pleasure in the suffering of others while maintaining a facade of dignity and nobility. In combat, they prefer to lead ambushers while using their spells, webs, and poison jets to weaken their foes. Because of their pride, they often fight to the death.

Arachne elder matriarchs. As direct descendants of Bellara, they have vast power and command worship and servitude from lesser arachnes. Extremely arrogant, they view themselves as sacred entities, expecting adoration and submission from anyone except Bellara. From their luxurious temples dedicated to the Ungods, they act as chosen ones and high priestesses, creating complex webs of deception that span centuries. Matriarchs favor magical ornaments and enchanted clothing, considering any nonmagic item as insignificant. They avoid entering battle, but if forced, they will rely on magic, giving priority to dominate or charm their enemies. If in danger, they won't hesitate to use *teleport* or *plane shift* to flee. Considering themselves too important, they perceive fleeing as merely a display of their great powers and an opportunity to plan their revenge.

Arachne Ambusher

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 59 (7d12 + 14)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7 Cha +4
Skills Stealth +9
Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Prowlers. The ambusher's proficiency bonus is doubled for Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Spider Climb. The ambusher can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Spinning. The ambusher can spin webs to cover an area of 20 square feet for every 10 minutes of work. A creature that touches the web must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become restrained until it breaks free. The web lasts until destroyed, and it has the same AC, hit points and other stats as the one created by the ambusher's Web attack.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the ambusher knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The ambusher ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The ambusher makes three Poisonous Claw attacks.

Poisonous Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 10; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Arachne Commander

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 127 (15d12 + 30)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	21 (+5)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +8 Cha +7
Skills Stealth +11, Perception +5
Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities Poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Prowlers. The commander's proficiency bonus is doubled for Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Spider Climb. The commander can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Spinning. The arachne can spin webs to cover an area of 20 square feet for every 10 minutes of work. A creature that touches the web must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or become restrained until it breaks free. The web lasts until destroyed, and it has the same AC, hit points and other stats as the one created by the commander's Web attack.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the commander knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The commander ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The commander makes three Poisonous Claw attacks.

Poisonous Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage. A creature hit must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute.

Poison Jet. The commander sprays magic poison gas in a 40-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) poison damage and being poisoned on a failed save, or half as much damage and not getting poisoned on a successful one. A poisoned target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. The commander casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *charm person, mage hand, poison spray*

3/day each: *fear, invisibility, see invisibility, sleep*

1/day each: *dimensional door, dominate person, greater invisibility*

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 13 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 10; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Arachne Elder Matriarch

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 231 (22d12 + 88)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +12 Cha +12
Skills Stealth +18, Perception +16
Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 26
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Prowlers. The elder matriarch's proficiency bonus is doubled for Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Spider Climb. The elder matriarch can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Spinning. The elder matriarch can spin webs to cover an area of 20 square feet for every 10 minutes of work. A creature that touches the web must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or become restrained until it breaks free. The web lasts until destroyed, and it has the same AC, hit points and other stats as the one created by the arachne's Web attack.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the elder matriarch knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The elder matriarch ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The elder matriarch makes four Poisonous Claw attacks.

Poisonous Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 6) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage. A creature hit must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute.

Poison Spray. The elder matriarch sprays poison gas in a 40-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 63 (14d8) poison damage and being poisoned on a failed save, or half as much damage and not getting poisoned on a successful one. A poisoned target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. The elder matriarch casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *charm person*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *mage hand*, *poison spray*, *sleep*

3/day each: *dimensional door*, *dominate person*, *greater invisibility*, *hold monster*, *see invisibility*

1/day each: *dominate monster*, *gate*, *plane shift*, *teleport*

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 18 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 10; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Legendary Actions

The elder matriarch can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The elder matriarch regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The elder matriarch makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Move. The elder matriarch moves up to her speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Web (Costs 2 Actions). The elder matriarch makes one Web attack.

Collectors

Hidden within the shadowy corners of the Penumbral Plane, the collectors are an enigmatic and cunning species; they possess unique psychic powers. These beings of reflective metallic skin are miraculous survivors from a world devoured by the Ungods, having escaped the madness that the Penumbra incites. With a size of approximately three feet and a slim form, their speed is surprising. Their minds are extraordinary, imbuing them with telepathy and protecting their sanity against the maddening powers of the Ungods. The collectors are also magical artificers, always bearing numerous strange objects, the utility of which is known only to them.

Small and Chatty

Coming from the Eternal Archives, a plane consumed by the Penumbra, the collectors have improved the art of stealth to endure in this realm of fear. Their small stature and ability to become invisible allow them to hide in nearly any place, fleeing at the slightest sign of trouble. Their curiosity often leads them to follow and observe beings foreign to the Penumbra, always vigilant for signs of menace. Once they confirm the creatures hold no allegiance to the Ungods, the collectors become excited, introducing themselves with a flurry of telepathic questions, often impatient for responses.

Curiosity Beyond

Lacking knowledge about anything beyond the Penumbra, the collectors are irresistibly drawn to the exotic treasures of the "world beyond." They enjoy trading information or items for novelties and newfound wisdom. They frequently ask adventurers for specific artifacts or materials to repair their antiquated possessions, often offering magical items in return. Their meticulously curated collection of exotic objects is a source of great pride, and they happily gratify strangers with extensive monologues about their precious items. Should one of their items be stolen, the collectors can become unusually aggressive, employing the assistance of other collectors or even adventurers they encounter within the Penumbral Plane.

Perpetual Wanderers

The collectors survive through nomadic tendencies, constantly shifting locations within the Penumbra. Therefore, they are frequently discovered on pilgrimages to unexplored territories, exhibiting their adeptness in navigating the plane. Despite their intense desire to know the "world beyond," the collectors rarely venture outside the Penumbral Plane due to their dependency on psychic energy. The Penumbral Plane offers them sustenance, albeit in lesser quantities than their home plane, while the Material Plane is a sterile wasteland to them, which causes illness after a few hours of exposure. Some unique collectors have managed to exist in the Material Plane, relying on magical artifacts emitting psychic energy. However, these exceptions are sparse and usually remain hidden. Those who do find a way to live in the Material Plane, amidst their quest for knowledge and unique items in Tanares, may seek the assistance of adventurers, particularly during desperate times, such as the loss of a precious artifact or the malfunction of a life-sustaining item.

Collector

Small humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 39 (6d6 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Int +6
Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Investigation +8, Perception +7, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages understand all languages but can only speak telepathically; telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the collector can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Master Artisan. The collector is considered proficient with any tool it holds. It adds double its proficiency bonus to checks it makes with the tool and uses Intelligence in place of any other ability score for these checks.

Mind Protection. The collector is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells. They are also immune to the negative effects of the Penumbral Plane.

Actions

Multiattack. The collector makes two Dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, plus 2 (1d4) psychic damage.

Nimble Hands. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* Take one item the target is carrying that is not being held. If taken an item from a bag or sack it can't see, it gets one random item from it.

Spellcasting. The collector casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic*, *identify*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *see invisible*, *shocking grasp*

1/day each: *dispel magic*, *nondetection*, *pass without trace*

Ancient Collector

Small humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 105 (14d6 + 56)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	23 (+6)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +10, Wis +8, Cha +6
Skills Arcana +14, History +14, Investigation +14, Perception +12, Sleight of Hand +12, Stealth +12
Damage Resistance necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages understands any language but only communicates telepathically, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the ancient collector can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Magic Resistance. The ancient collector has advantage on all saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Master Artisan. The ancient collector is considered proficient with any tool it holds. It adds double its proficiency bonus to checks it makes with the tool and uses Intelligence in place of any other ability score for these checks.

Mind Protection. The ancient collector is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells. They are also immune to the negative effects of the Penumbral Plane.

Actions

Multiattack. The ancient collector makes two Dagger attacks, and one Nimble Hands attack.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage, plus 5 (2d4) psychic damage.

Nimble Hands. *Melee Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* Take one item the target is carrying that is not being held. If taken an item from a bag or sack it can't see, it gets one random item from it.

Spellcasting. The ancient collector casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *identify*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *see invisible*, *shocking grasp*

3/day each: *dimensional door*, *fabricate*, *lightning bolt*, *mirror image*, *nondetection*, *pass without trace*

1/day each: *disintegrate*, *scrying*, *teleport*, *teleportation circle*

Reactions

Deflect spell. The ancient collector can deflect a single-target spell cast at it. The collector makes an Intelligence check against a DC equal to 10 + the cast spell's level. On a success, it can choose a new target for the spell that is within half the spell's original range, with a minimum range of touch (if the spell's original range is 5 feet, it becomes touch). To do so, the ancient collector must be able to see the spell being cast and have at least one free hand.

Cult of Shadow Wing

An aura of fear surrounds the Cult of Shadow Wing, a group committed to the adoration of the four Ungods. The tendrils of their corrupting faith extend across Tanares, with their dark promises of dominion and eternal life in the Penumbral Plane seizing hearts and twisting minds. The followers of the Ungods drink in the power of the Penumbral Plane, using complex strategies to expand the reach of the Ungods' power and advance their sinister plans.

The cult's ideology can consume people you would least expect. Formerly respected figures—including good fathers, renowned merchants, or simple barmaids—sometimes join the cult due to personal problems or strong desires. Adventurers should exercise caution when choosing which tasks to accept to avoid unknowingly working for evil.

C'thraxis' Servants - The Purple Acolytes

Devotees of the Lady of Sins, C'thraxis, cleave into two congregations. The Purple Witches, exclusively female, draw their arcane strength from a pact with Bellara. The male-dominated Purple Acolytes exist primarily to serve the caprices of their Witches. Despite their humble standing within the cult, these servants master the arts of deceit, control, and seduction. Their influence permeates the upper echelons of society, inciting discord and chaos. Often guided by a Purple Witch, they will willingly surrender their lives to serve and protect their mistresses.

While in their secret hideouts, the Purple Acolytes wear their usual sinister robes. However, in society, they often appear to be attractive individuals, impeccably dressed, concealing their true nature behind various demeanors. They frequently employ charm to deceive high-society individuals, disguising themselves as nobles, bards, or wealthy merchants. Concerned parents or close family members often hire adventurers to investigate these individuals, frequently perceived as potential gold diggers or charlatans.

Droggath's Servants - The Spawners

Heralds of ferocity and ruin, the followers of the Fleshspawner, Droggath, revere unrestrained brutality, crushing those they consider inferior. Engaging in a dance of death, they consume the flesh of their foes, invoking monstrous entities to wreak havoc. Their macabre rituals create hybrid creatures, which they release upon Tanares to spread terror and disorder. Their brutal feasting on the flesh of destroyed adversaries propels their ascent within the cult's ranks.

Due to their horrible acts, it is often easy to identify the presence of servants of Droggath in a region, as they leave behind the bodies' remains. Their presence often encourages authorities to summon heroes, adventurers, and military units to confront them, as they can never be certain whether they are dealing with a few individual cultists or a horde of monsters.

Krynnethoth's Servants - The Hidden Cult

Adherents of the Mystical One, Krynnethoth, pursue power through suffering, using unholy magic to corrupt souls and spread agony. Keepers of concealed knowledge, they wield their spell mastery for personal gain, drawing perverse pleasure from the pain they inflict. Their clandestine cabals spread across cities, openly recruiting anyone who thirsts for their sinister cause. Their ambition is to cover Tanares with plague, misery, and despair.

The most sinister method they employ is corrupting clerics of local deities and using their privileged position to spread hidden diseases and plagues while healing the injured to cover their tracks. The very hand that should save people now brings disgrace.

Z'ulvath's Servants - The Shadow Lords

Acolytes of the Penumbral Father, Z'ulvath, embrace the madness, transforming into conduits for the malevolent deity's will. Allying with fallen madwalkers and formidable penumbral dragons, they form an exclusive sect within the cult, selecting only those with power. They instill despair in the hearts of mortals, extracting perverse pleasure from the destruction of hope and resistance.

The Shadow Lords are often after corrupting dragons and stealing dragons' eggs. It is not uncommon for the Draconic Council to call for all adventurers and mercenaries in a region, promising great rewards for a recovered dragons' egg.

Shadow Wing Initiates

These novices, dressed in tattered hooded robes of deepest purple, perform the menial duties of the Cult. While their tasks seem mundane, they conceal deeper, insidious purposes, including identifying recruitment opportunities or spying on potential threats. Covered in scars and pulsating arcane symbols, they always carry a poison-laced blade at hand.

Sometimes, initiates may regret their decision to join the Cult and actively seek out adventurers who can aid them in leaving safely, potentially exposing hidden cells and secrets in the process.

Shadow Wing Initiate

Medium humanoid (any species), any evil alignment

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)
Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +3, Stealth +4
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Unholy Frenzy. As a bonus action, the shadow wing initiate can take 1d4 psychic damage to gain advantage on all its attack rolls until the start of its next turn.

Shadow Affinity. The shadow wing initiate has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks in dim light or darkness.

Actions

Shadow Kriss. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

Bolt of Insanity (3/Day). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) psychic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be affected by the confusion spell until the end of its next turn.

Spellcasting. The shadow wing initiate casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1/day each: *cause fear*, *inflict wounds*

Masters of Pain

Disturbing figures within the cult hierarchy, the masters of pain are specialists in suffering. They implement punitive and control measures within the cult, using their proficiency in inflicting pain. Their intimate understanding of suffering makes them a fearsome force, often feared even within their own ranks. Concealing their faces with black cloth masks and dressed in dark leather armor, they resemble true executioners.

Master of Pain

Medium humanoid (any race), any evil alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 85 (10d8 + 40)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +6
Skills History +5, Insight +6, Persuasion +3, Religion +5
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Blood Sacrifice. Whenever the master of pain casts a spell, it can take 7 (2d6) hit points of damage to increase the spell's save DC by 2.

Distorted Mind. The master of pain is immune to spells that read its emotions, thoughts, or provide any form of divination.

Pain Enhancer. When the master of pain has 40 or fewer hit points, its spell save DC is increased by 2.

Pain Magic. When the master of pain casts the *inflict wounds* spell, it can be cast as if using a 3rd level spell slot.

Shadow Veil. As a bonus action, if the master of pain is in an area of dim light or darkness, it can become invisible until it attacks or casts a spell, or until the end of its next turn.

Actions

Sinister Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage, and the master of pain can immediately cast any spell of its list below against the target with advantage on any attack roll.

Executioner's Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage. If this attack reduces a creature to 0 hit points, that creature automatically fails one death saving throw. If the creature is already at 0 hit points, it fails two death saving throws due to this attack, instead of one.

Spellcasting. The master of pain casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *guidance, resistance, thaumaturgy*

3/day each: *bane, command, inflict wounds*

1/day each: *bestow curse, blindness/deafness, hold person*

Shadow Mages

These wielders of unholy magic prove instrumental to the Cult of Shadow Wing's machinations. Their spells incite chaos or control obedience, crucial to the Cult's power hierarchy and external dealings. Enrobed in purple with concealed faces, they summon creatures from the Penumbral Plane, curse enemies, or imbue items for rituals.

Shadow Mage

Medium humanoid (any species), any evil alignment

Armor Class 12* (17 with *shield* spell)
Hit Points 51 (8d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +4
Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Insight +4, Religion +7, Stealth +4
Damage Resistance psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Shadowcaster. The shadow mage's spells deal necrotic damage instead of their normal types. For instance, the shadow mage's *fireball* spell deals 8d6 necrotic damage instead of fire.

Penumbral Mastery. Cultists of the Ungods and emoguns can see normally through the darkness spell cast by the shadow mage, and they also gain advantage on all attack rolls while within the spell's area. Furthermore, the shadow mage can cast its *darkness* spell as a bonus action once per day.

Shadow Affinity. The shadow mage has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks in dim light or darkness.

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Spellcasting. The shadow mage casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *mage hand, minor illusion, ray of frost*

3/day each: *darkness, disguise self, magic missiles, shield*

1/day each: *fireball, major image, ray of enfeeblement*

Prophets of Shadows

The prophets, spiritual guides of the Cult, wield significant authority, communicating with the Ungods, and seeking advice for their cult's schemes. Adorned in ostentatious purple capes and vests, these profane leaders perform rituals, mastermind strategies, and manipulate both Cult members and outsiders.

Cloak of Penumbral

Cloak, rare

Some Shadow Wing cultists receive this item to operate in the Penumbral Plane

This item grants immunity to environment effects of the Penumbral Plane.

Cursed item. If used by non cultists, it causes the creature to suffer twisted visions and hear indistinguishable sounds, having disadvantage in attack rolls and ability checks, including saves.

Prophet of Shadows

Medium humanoid (any race), any evil alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 105 (14d8 + 42)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +8, Cha +6
Skills History +6, Insight +8, Persuasion +6, Religion +6
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Distorted Mind. The prophet of shadows is immune to spells that read its emotions, thoughts, or provide any form of divination.

Shadow Affinity. The prophet of shadows has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks in dim light or darkness.

Shadow Veil. As a bonus action, if the prophet of shadows is in an area of dim light or darkness, it can become invisible until it attacks or casts a spell, or until the end of its next turn.

Actions

Ebon Kriss. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become cursed as per the bestow curse spell, with the effect chosen by the prophet of shadows.

Shadow Flames. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or ignite in shadowy flames, taking 1d6 necrotic damage at the end of each of its turns, then making a new saving throw to end the effect.

Spellcasting. The prophet of shadows casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *guidance*, *minor illusion*, *thaumaturgy*

3/day each: *bane*, *bestow curse*, *blindness/deafness*, *command*, *dispel magic*, *hold person*

1/day each: *banishment*, *conjure emogun**, *contagion*

****new spell, see the Player's Guide to Tanares.***

Bauronite Dragons

These dragons, born of chaos, recognize Yokensha as their Avatar Dragon and leader. Bauronite dragons are devoted to freedom, valuing power, cunning, and efficiency. They oppose order, viewing laws as fragile constructs, particularly when compared to personal desires, holding little respect for them. Despite this fact, these dragons exploit their deep understanding of rules to their advantage, seeking out loopholes. They often live among humans, exploiting them to amass wealth by any means, including illegal ones.

In appearance, these dragons possess long, serpentine bodies, with dark scales covering their backs and white scales on their fronts. A fur runs from head to tail. The magic within these dragons is as volatile as the bauronite mineral contained within their scales, making any injury they sustain potentially dangerous to any other creature.

Upon hatching, these dragons display lighter back scales in shades of purple that darken with age. They can transform into **humanoid creatures** of various ages and species at will and carry their dragon image tattooed in a consistent position on their skin across all forms. Many dragons encourage their followers and employees to acquire similar dragon tattoos to disguise themselves better.

Yama and Organized Crime. Bauronite dragons, enemies of order, manipulate organized crime in Yama. They serve as influential mentors to The Dragon Syndicate, an organization offering various illegal services and marketing all kinds of products. These dragons protect their subordinates, who all see each other as an extended family. The Syndicate deals with extortion, blackmail, paid protection, and all illegal products in Yama. Several of these dragons extend their influence beyond Yama, serving as contacts for the organization in major cities across other territories.

A Lair in Society's Underworld. As cities expand, producing multitudes of outcasts and vast populations living in vulnerable and impoverished conditions, bauronite dragons claim these areas as their lairs. They educate the inhabitants, emphasizing survival over adherence to laws and encouraging them to prosper as best they can.

Power and Freedom. Bauronite dragons passionately champion freedom and hate prisons and any form of deprivation of liberty. They believe that everyone should be free to be who they choose, provided they take responsibility for their actions. They guide the strongest and most talented individuals, ensuring that they maintain their freedom and use their powers when necessary.

Conflict with Tameranium Dragons. Tameranium and bauronite dragons hold opposing ideologies. While tameranium dragons prefer orderly societies, bauronite dragons thrive in chaos. They often become influential leaders in the underworld, attracting many with promises of profitable ventures and easy money, but often interlaced with illegality. Despite this, they demonstrate that people can be happier and stronger amidst disorder.

A Bauronite Dragon's Lair

Bauronite dragons typically set up their lairs in basements or sewers beneath secret hideouts for illegal businesses that the authorities ignore or overlook. The passages leading to their lairs, protected with traps and puzzles, are known only to their most loyal servants. Their places are filled with crates and barrels of spices, artwork, and other valuable items. The lairs also feature comfortable hiding places where the dragons can rest in both their human and draconic forms.

Lair Actions

On an initiative count of 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- A 20-foot square area within 120 feet becomes covered in sewage water. The area becomes difficult terrain; creatures within it and those within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned due to the water's strong smell. A creature that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the poisonous effects of the water for 24 hours. A creature poisoned in this way that is at least 30 feet away from the water can use its action to take a deep breath, ridding itself of the poisoned condition.
- Poisoned blades shoot out from the ground beneath a creature the dragon sees within 120 feet. The creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d6 slashing damage plus 2d6 poison damage, and becoming poisoned for 1 minute on a failed save. A poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the condition on a success
- 1d8 bandits loyal to the dragon rush to its aid. On the turn they enter combat, they can use a bonus action to move up to their speed.

Regional Effects

The region around a legendary bauronite dragon's lair is warped by the dragon's magic, creating one or more of the following effects:

- Sounds are muffled at night within a six-mile radius of the dragon's lair.
- Flames take on a reddish glow at night, radiating reddish light within a six-mile radius of the lair.
- In the cities they inhabit, law enforcement weakens, and residents become more self-assured.

If the dragon dies, the red glow and muffled sounds disappear. After the next 1d6 days, the authorities regain their normal function, and the overconfidence of some inhabitants begins to fade.

Bauronite Dragon Wyrmling

Medium dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +5, Wis +2, Cha +4
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2
Damage Immunities force, poison
Condition immunities poisoned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Draconic
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aura of Bauronite. Bauronite dragons are unstable, similar to a bauronite. When they are below half (23) their hit points, all creatures within 20 feet of them take 5 (1d10) points of force damage if they start their turn or enter the area. The damage increases to 11 (2d10) if they have a quarter (11) or fewer hit points. A successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw reduces damage taken by half.

Death Burst. When the bauronite dragon dies, it explodes in a burst of unstable magic, spreading blood, flesh, and guts. Each creature within 5 feet of it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Force Breath (Recharge 5–6). The Bauronite Dragon Wyrmling exhales pure magic energy in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice). In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form. When a bauronite dragon assumes a humanoid form, its original form is engraved on its skin in the form of a tattoo and will always appear in the same place, no matter which humanoid form it assumes.

Young Bauronite Dragon

Large dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 184 (16d10 + 96)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	11 (+0)	21 (+5)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +5, Cha +8
Skills Perception +9, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities force, poison
Condition immunities poisoned
Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Aura of Bauronite. Bauronite dragons are unstable, similar to a bauronite. When they are below half (92) their hit points, all creatures within 20 feet of them take 11 (2d10) points of force damage if they start their turn or enter the area. The damage increases to 16 (3d10) if they have ¼ (65) or fewer hit points. A successful DC 17 Constitution saving throw reduces damage taken by half.

Death Burst. When the bauronite dragon dies, it explodes in a burst of unstable magic, spreading blood, flesh, and guts. Each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Force Breath (Recharge 5–6). The young bauronite dragon exhales pure magic energy in a 60-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice). In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form. When a bauronite dragon assumes a humanoid form, its original form is engraved on its skin in the form of a tattoo and will always appear in the same place, no matter which humanoid form it assumes.

Adult Bauronite Dragon

huge dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 243 (18d12 + 126)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	11 (+0)	25 (+7)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +12, Wis +6, Cha +10
Skills Perception +11, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities force, poison
Condition immunities poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Aura of Bauronite. Bauronite dragons are unstable, similar to the bauronite mineral. When the dragon's hit points are below half (121), any creature that starts their turn or enters the area within 20 feet of the dragon takes 16 (3d10) force damage. The damage increases to 22 (4d10) if the dragon has a quarter (60) or fewer hit points. A successful DC 20 Constitution saving throw reduces the damage taken by half.

Death Burst. When the bauronite dragon dies, it explodes in a burst of unstable magic, spreading blood, flesh, and guts. Each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must, at the dragon's choice, succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or take 11 (2d10) force damage and become frightened for 1 minute. A creature takes half as much damage and is not frightened on a successful save. A frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Force Breath (Recharge 5–6). The adult bauronite dragon exhales pure magic energy in a 90-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice). In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form. When a bauronite dragon assumes a humanoid form, its original form is engraved on its skin in the form of a tattoo and will always appear in the same place, no matter which form it assumes.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed

Ancient Bauronite Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 526 (27d20 + 243)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (+0)	29 (+9)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +16, Wis +9, Cha +13
Skills Perception +16, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities force, poison
Condition immunities poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 26
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

Aura of Bauronite. Bauronite dragons are unstable, similar to the bauronite mineral. When the dragon's hit points are below half (121), any creature that starts their turn or enters the area within 20 feet of the dragon takes 16 (3d10) force damage. The damage increases to 22 (4d10) if the dragon has a quarter (60) or fewer hit points. A successful DC 20 Constitution saving throw reduces the damage taken by half.

Death Burst. When the bauronite dragon dies, it explodes in a burst of unstable magic, spreading blood, flesh, and guts. Each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d10 + 10) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6 + 10) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +17 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d8 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must, at the dragon's choice, succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or take 16 (3d10) force damage and become frightened for 1 minute. A creature takes half as much damage and is not frightened on a successful save. A frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Force Breath (Recharge 5–6). The Ancient Bauronite Dragon exhales pure magic energy in a 120-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw, taking 77 (14d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice). In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form. When a bauronite dragon assumes a humanoid form, its original form is engraved on its skin in the form of a tattoo and will always appear in the same place, no matter which form it assumes.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 ft. of the dragon must succeed on a DC 25S Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d6 +10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

Penumbral Dragons

The penumbral dragons are feared entities in Tanares, symbolizing the corruption of the mightiest beings by Z'ulvath's power. The first penumbral dragons appeared during the Godly Age, corrupted by the Ungods and their servants during the Ungods' Invasion. Lypoec, a once mighty leader of the dragons and now considered an Avatar Dragon by the cultists, leads the penumbral dragons and the Shadow Lords, a sect of the Cult of Shadow Wing. He was tasked with destroying the Draconic Council and demonstrating the might of the Ungods to mortals, driving them into despair and insanity.

Penumbral dragons don't reproduce through egg-laying; instead, they originate from the corruption of other dragons' bodies or eggs, which are then transformed to serve Shadow Wing. There is no single method of creating a penumbral dragon; cultists employ a variety of rituals, artifacts, plagues, and spells to corrupt dragons. Signs of such corruption, such as the shedding of scales, growth of tentacles, and loss of vision, are often noticeable in the middle stages of transformation. Fully corrupted penumbral dragons become eyeless aberrations with multiple tentacles protruding from their heads. Despite their lack of eyes, their extraordinary perception makes them difficult to surprise, and their draconic senses allow them to perceive their surroundings better than most eyed creatures.

Shadow Wing Lords. Dragons of this breed typically serve as leaders within the Shadow Wing, a cultist faction committed to spreading darkness across the Material Plane and transforming it into a realm of shadow. Fanatical members of the cult revere the penumbral dragons.

Unique Insanity. Due to the mutation and corruption of their bodies, penumbral dragons are extraordinarily intelligent, but their minds are frequently disturbed, causing each dragon to exhibit a unique mental trait such as megalomania, narcissism, paranoia, or other characteristics chosen by the GM. No penumbral dragon is sane; while some may seem normal initially, they all bear madness, accompanied by complex thought processes.

A Horde of Insane Cultists. The corruption process often reduces a penumbral dragon's interest in material treasures, although some might demonstrate extreme greed as a unique trait. Instead, they prefer to amass fanatical followers in their lairs, valuing them above all else. In fact, killing a penumbral dragon's fanatic is considered a grave offense, equivalent to stealing a magic item from a red dragon.

Typical Penumbral Dragon's Lair

Penumbral dragons establish their lairs in caves found on flying islands in the Penumbral Plane, often usurping them from previous inhabitants and supplementing them with their followers. Grotesque chants of worship and insane screams echo throughout the dragon's lair, which is always tinged with a faint concentration of dark purple toxic gasses. While a penumbral dragon prefers to gradually drive its prey mad, it fights fiercely if provoked.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The dragon roars, causing tiny penumbral creatures to attack a target within 120 feet. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 slashing damage and becomes grappled, as the penumbral creatures latch onto it. A grappled creature is restrained, has disadvantage on its attack rolls, and takes 1d6 slashing damage at the start of each of its turns. A grappled creature can use its action to shake off the penumbral creatures. These creatures can also be attacked; they have AC 13 and 10 hit points, but any damage inflicted on them is also dealt to the grappled creature.
- Toxic penumbral gasses seep from cracks in the floors, walls, and ceilings, forming a cloud that fills a 30-foot cube until the end of the round. Any creature that enters the cloud area or starts its turn there must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be subject to the effects of the confusion spell until the end of its next turn. Creatures immune to psychic damage are immune to the cloud's effects.
- 1d8 cultists loyal to the dragon rush to its aid. They are immune to psychic damage and enter the battle with an initiative of 0.

Regional Effects

The region housing a legendary penumbral dragon's lair is warped by the dragon's magic, resulting in one or more of the following effects:

- Large landmasses within a six-mile radius begin to float, forming a sprawling archipelago of floating islands.
- A greater number of penumbral creatures start to inhabit a region up to six miles around the lair, tripling the likelihood of random encounters.
- Mists composed of dim, toxic gasses blanket a six-mile radius around the lair. Creatures in the area who breathe the fumes for an hour or more have disadvantage on any saving throw that might drive them insane. Exposure for 24 hours or more can drive a creature insane, at the GM's discretion.

If the dragon dies, the fog dissipates within 24 hours, and island parts collapse anytime over the next 1d10 days. Those that remain afloat will permanently become flying islands.

Penumbral Dragon Wyrmling

Medium dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 76 (9d8 + 36)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +6, Wis +2, Cha +4
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Draconic
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) psychic damage.

Psychic Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales psychic energy in a 20-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw, taking 19 (3d12) psychic damage and becoming confused for 1 minute on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature confused in this way suffers the effects of the confusion spell and can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the dragon's breath remains immune to the confusion effects of this ability for the next 24 hours.

Young Penumbral Dragon

Large dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 184 (16d10 + 96)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +10, Wis +5, Cha +8
Skills Perception +9, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses blindsight 90 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Mind Blank. The penumbral dragon is immune to effects that would sense its emotions, read its thoughts, or involve divination spells. A creature attempting to read the dragon's mind or using a divination spell targeting it takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) psychic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Psychic Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales psychic energy in a 60-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, taking 52 (8d12) psychic damage and becoming confused for 1 minute on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature confused in this way suffers the effects of the confusion spell and can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the dragon's breath remains immune to the confusion effects of this ability for the next 24 hours.

Adult Penumbral Dragon

huge dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 261 (18d12 + 144)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	12 (+1)	26 (+8)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +14, Wis +8, Cha +11
Skills Perception +14, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Mind Blank. The dragon is immune to effects that would sense its emotions, read its thoughts, or involve divination spells. A creature attempting to read the dragon's mind or using a divination spell targeting it takes 27 (6d8) psychic damage.

Psychic Curse. The dragon's Frightful Presence can imbue a creature with the Psychic Curse. Once per day, the dragon can invade the dreams of a cursed creature as though using the *dream* spell, aiming to drive the creature towards insanity. The Psychic Curse can be removed by the remove curse spell or similar magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) psychic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with the effect ending on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful, or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours. After successfully ending this effect, a creature must immediately make another Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted by the Psychic Curse.

Psychic Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales psychic energy in a 90-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw, taking 65 (10d12) psychic damage and becoming confused for 1 minute on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature confused in this way suffers the effects of the confusion spell and can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the dragon's breath remains immune to the confusion effects of this ability for the next 24 hours.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 ft. of the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

Ancient Penumbral Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 553 (27d20 + 270)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	12 (+1)	30 (+10)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +17, Wis +10, Cha +13
Skills Perception +17, Stealth +8
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses blindsight 180 ft., passive Perception 27
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 24 (62,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Mind Blank. The dragon is immune to effects that would sense its emotions, read its thoughts, or involve divination spells. A creature attempting to read the dragon's mind or using a divination spell targeting it takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

Psychic Curse. The dragon's Frightful Presence can imbue a creature with a Psychic Curse. Once per day, the dragon can invade the dreams of a cursed creature as though using the *dream* spell, aiming to drive the creature towards insanity. The Psychic Curse can be removed by the remove curse spell or similar magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d10 + 10) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) psychic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6 + 10) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d8 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours. A creature that succeeds on this saving throw or the effect ends for it must make another Wisdom saving throw immediately. If it fails, it is affected by the Psychic Curse.

Psychic Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales psychic energy in a 90-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw, taking 65 (10d12) psychic damage and becomes confused for 1 minute on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A confused creature behaves as if under the effects of the *confusion* spell and can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the confusion effect on itself on a success. A creature that succeeds on a saving throw to avoid or end this ability's confusion effect becomes immune to being confused by it for the next 24 hours.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 25 Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

Expanded Penumbral Dragon - Variant Lair

Not all penumbral dragons' lairs are the same, as their unique madness seeps into the land they govern. The following is an example of such a variant.

Shifting Lair

The few souls who enter this lairs tell tales of disturbing works of art, a bizarre crown, and an ever-shifting landscape. The location of the lair on the Penumbral Plane can shift. None can predict when the lair will disappear or where it will reform. It might stay in the same location for several millennia, only to blink around the Penumbral Plane for a few minutes before settling in another place for eons.

A typical shifting penumbral dragon lair is 1 square mile. It is enclosed in a shimmering dome of force 1 mile high, like a wall of force but much larger. There are 20 doors at random locations in the dome of force, and 4 of these are at ground level. The doors randomly shift locations whenever the penumbral dragon shifts the location of its lair. No matter how often it does this, 4 of the doors are at ground level. The penumbral dragon's hoard shifts to a random location within the lair whenever it shifts the location of the lair.

The dome enclosing the penumbral dragon's lair has no floor of its own. Whatever grass, trees, rocks, and other natural features are present when the penumbral dragon shifts its lair to that location remain.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the penumbral dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- The penumbral dragon causes its lair to shift to another location of its choice on the Penumbral Plane. When the lair shifts, creatures and objects within it shift as well. They are not entitled to a saving throw to prevent this effect. The shift is extremely disorienting to creatures that are not native to the Penumbral Plane. They must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- The penumbral dragon performs a horrible, undulating dance. This shifts the layout and features of its lair until initiative count 20 on the next round, as if it had cast *mirage arcane*.
- The penumbral dragon unleashes a keening psychic scream at one creature within 150 feet. The creature must make a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw, or suffer the effects of *feeblemind* until initiative count 20 on the next round.

Regional Effects

The interior of the dome containing the penumbral dragon's lair is warped by the creature's presence, which creates the following effects:

- A creature that attempts to leave the penumbral dragon's lair through one of the doors must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma saving throw or find themselves unable to leave. They can only attempt this saving throw once on each of their turns.
- A creature that touches any part of the penumbral dragon's hoard must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be affected by the *antipathy* spell that applies to the entirety of the hoard.
- The first creature that can cast 8th-level or higher spells that fails its saving throw against the penumbral dragon's Psychic Breath immediately learns the *form of the penumbral dragon* spell. It is added to all their spell lists, to their known spells if they cast spontaneously, and to their spell book if they use one to prepare spells. In addition, the *crown of penumbra* appears on the head of the creature that learns the spell.

If the penumbral dragon dies, the dome of force enclosing its lair blinks out of existence. All creatures that were inside the dome, as well as the penumbral dragon's hoard, stay where they are.

The Penumbral Dragon's Hoard

Like the hoards of other dragons, the penumbral dragons with shifting lairs tend to hoard large quantities of coin, art objects, and gemstones, mostly collected from adventurers who tried to slay the dragon and failed. Art objects brought into the treasure warp, becoming disturbing and nightmarish versions of themselves. A portrait depicting creatures might change so that all those depicted appear to be melting. A sculpture depicting a griffin might shift to depict a grotesque chimera.

Similarly, magic items brought into the hoard twist and mutate into related items with disturbing or unpredictable properties. The change almost always results in an item of the same rarity. A +2 mace might transform into a mace of terror. A *wand of lightning bolts might become a wand of wonder.*

The Crown of Penumbra

Very rare (requires attunement)

You gain resistance to psychic damage and advantage on saving throws against the frightened and charmed conditions. Finally, when you cast a spell that affects a target's mind in any way, such as various enchantment spells or those that deal psychic damage or cause certain conditions, all creatures affected by it have disadvantage on any saving throws against the spell.

Curse. Wearing it causes you to immediately attune to the crown and gain access to the form of the penumbral dragon spell that you can use once, recovering its use with a long rest. If you have already filled all your attunement slots, you must immediately choose one of your attuned items. Your attunement to that item ends. As long as you remain cursed, you cannot take off the crown and are unwilling to allow another creature to break the curse, though they can attempt to do so without your permission.

Tameranium Dragons

These orderly dragons adhere to the will of Tenshikin, who they regard as their Avatar Dragon. They serve as brave protectors of law and society, valuing hierarchy and wisdom. Their long, serpent-like bodies boast scales that vary in shades from yellow to orange on their backs, while their bellies are brilliant white. The symmetry of their scale pattern is so remarkable that many regard it as a divine artwork.

Unlike other change-shaping dragons, tameranium dragons are born with a unique humanoid form. They can freely shift between their draconic and humanoid forms, often choosing to live in humanoid form among others to guide them toward the path of order. They cannot adopt any other humanoid shape using this ability, and the age of their humanoid form roughly equates to their draconic age. Hence, wyrmlings appear as young children, while ancients resemble venerable elders. Possessing strong personalities and an aura of respect, they make charismatic leaders, particularly in their humanoid form, where they can better relate to common folk.

Newly-hatched tameranium dragons are not immediately introduced into humanoid societies. Instead, their experienced ancestors train them in philosophy, ethics, hierarchy, order, and other principles they uphold. Tameranium dragons are strict parents but eternally connected to their offspring and entire genealogy. Should a wyrmling be killed, it may incite the wrath of an ancient who is its great-great-grandfather.

The Sovereign of Yama. Yama has always maintained its independence from the Tanarean Empire under the leadership of Tenshikin, the great protector of law and divine rules. Tenshikin, the first tameranium dragon created by the gods, sees Isendden, the Gold Avatar Dragon, as his brother. Through the ages, Tenshikin has fathered many sons and daughters, most of whom still reside in Yama, disguised as elders, masters, generals, priests, or trusted court members.

Adult tameranium dragons can be found throughout society as important judges, government officials, clan leaders, and owners of respected martial arts dojos. While Yama is populated with mortal humanoids who occasionally rise to positions of power due to Yama's meritocracy, the dragons' natural power, intelligence, and vast lifespan allow them to hold many significant positions secretly. Though some individuals are aware of this secret, common folk view it as mere legend, interpreting Tenshikin's association with the dragon symbol as a divine and religious concept rather than factual truth.

Wisdom and Patience. Like all dragons, tameranium dragons are susceptible to the blood curse imposed by the Ungods, causing them to lose their sanity at the scent of blood. They also deeply fear the Malrokian Curses and believe the best way to prevent these issues is by educating humanoid societies about absolute law, wisdom, and patience, asserting these as essential for preventing wars and maintaining orderly social coexistence. They firmly believe in a rigid hierarchical system governed by laws and overseen by the wise Tenshikin.

Penumbral Dragon Magic

There is one spell that is inextricably linked to the crown—*form of the penumbral dragon.*

Form of the Penumbral Dragon
8th-level transmutation
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M*
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

This spell functions as the *shapechange* spell, except you can only transform into a penumbral dragon or back to your original form.

** (You must be wearing the crown of penumbra to cast this spell. While wearing the crown this spell is also considered part of your spell list and a spell known for all spellcasting classes you have.)*

Honor and Loyalty. Tameranium dragons place a high value on order, honor, and loyalty. If a deal is struck with them, they will fulfill their part to the death, expecting the same commitment from their counterpart. Any creature that breaches an agreement or acts dishonorably will incur the wrath of a powerful, wise, and patient enemy who bides their time to punish the betrayal.

Eternal Search for Tameranium. Tameranium dragons consider tameranium ore a culinary delicacy and continuously seek ways to acquire it, either by sponsoring mining expeditions or buying it from merchants. This pursuit is critical to them because Tenshikin demands monthly offerings of tameranium. Few know the secret behind this requirement. He needs it to sustain his ability to bestow divine powers upon his priests, effectively playing the role of a deity for them.

Indeed, Tenshikin is not a god but a mighty dragon who possesses ancient angelic artifacts from the Godly Age, which he uses to convert tameranium energy and transmit power through Tanares' ley lines. These energy veins, created by Tamera and Bauron and referred to as Ki by Tenshikin, allow him to supply his priests with power as efficiently as a true god.

A Tameranium Dragon's Lair

Tameranium dragons make their lairs in magnificent castles, fortresses, and noble mansions, valuing isometric aesthetics and architectural symmetry. They negotiate fiercely to obtain rightful ownership of their homes. They have secret fortified rooms or subterranean chambers within their lairs where they keep their treasures, including historically significant and high-quality items, particularly those belonging to past heroes. They also employ a staff of loyal humanoid servants willing to lay down their lives to protect their master's abode.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The dragon activates a teleport trap that affects a creature it can see within 120 feet. The creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, or it is teleported to a point of the dragon's choosing at a height of 30 feet.
- A stone block drops from the ceiling onto a creature the dragon can see within 100 feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage, be knocked prone, and become restrained by the stone. A restrained creature, or an adjacent ally, can use its entire turn to move the stone, thereby freeing the creature from the restrained condition.
- 1d6 soldiers loyal to the dragon rush to its aid. On the turn they enter, they can move up to their speed as a bonus action.

Regional Effects

The region housing a legendary tameranium dragon's lair is warped by the dragon's magic, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- The city where it resides enjoys prosperity, its economy flourishes, and its inhabitants become more law-abiding. Citizens strive to keep their promises, even at the cost of their lives.
- Blades of swords and melee weapons within and around the city rarely become dull.
- Metal items always appear new, shiny, and clean, even after being used or exposed to dirt.

Tameranium Dragon Wyrmling

Medium dragon, lawful neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d8 +18)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +5, Wis +3, Cha +6
Skills Perception +5, Stealth +2
Damage Immunities radiant
Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Draconic
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

The Law of Time. The dragon does not roll for initiative. Instead, it can act any time before any turn of a creature that is in the initiative order. In a round, as long as the dragon doesn't take a turn, it has advantage on its saving throws, and attacks rolled against it are made at disadvantage.

Actions

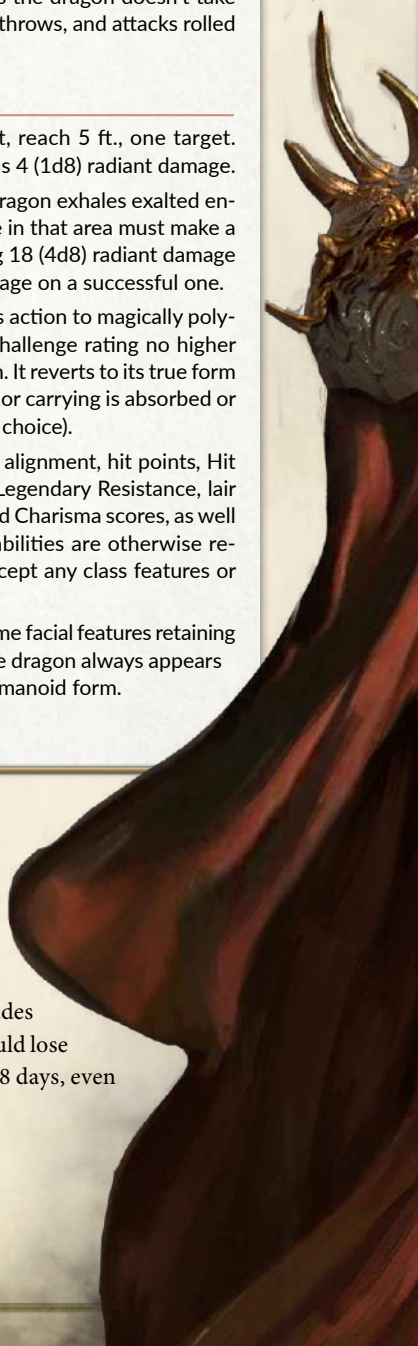
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) radiant damage.

Radiant Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales exalted energy in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon can use its action to magically polymorph into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice).

In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

The humanoid form always has the same facial features retaining scars and markings in both forms. The dragon always appears a relative age when it assumes its humanoid form.



If the dragon dies, metal items lose their shine, and those that have not been properly cleaned appear as though they have endured 1d4 years of natural exposure. Furthermore, blades that have not been sharpened and should lose their edge will become dull within 1d8 days, even if unused.

Young Tameranium Dragon

Large dragon, lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 168 (16d10 + 80)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +6, Cha +8
Skills Perception +10, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities radiant
Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

The Law of Time. The dragon does not roll for initiative. Instead, it can act any time before any turn of a creature that is in the initiative order. In a round, as long as the dragon doesn't take a turn, it has advantage on its saving throws, and attacks rolled against it are made at disadvantage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Radiant Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales exalted energy in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that line must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice).

In the new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

The humanoid form always has the same facial features retaining scars and markings in both forms. The dragon always appears at a relative age when it assumes its humanoid form.

Adult Tameranium Dragon

huge dragon, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 246 (17d12 + 119)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	10 (+0)	24 (+7)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +12, Wis +8, Cha +10
Skills Perception +13, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities radiant
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 16 (15.000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

The Law of Time. The dragon does not roll for initiative. Instead, it can act any time before any turn of a creature that is in the initiative order. In a round, as long as the tameranium dragon doesn't take a turn, it has advantage on its saving throws, and attacks rolled against it are made at disadvantage.

Rejuvenating Presence. The dragon and any creature of its choice within 120 feet of it regain 10 hit points at the start of their turns while the dragon still has at least 1 hit point.

A creature that remains under this effect for two minutes regains severed body parts (fingers, legs, tails, and so on). If the creature has the severed part and holds it to the stump, the presence instantaneously causes the part to knit to the stump.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can make three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 18 (4d8) radiant damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Radiant Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales Exalted energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that line must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 58 (13d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon can use its action to magically polymorph into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice).

In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

The humanoid form always has the same facial features retaining scars and markings in both forms. The dragon always appears a relative age when it assumes its humanoid form.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 ft of the dragon must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

Ancient Tameranium Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 487 (25d20 + 225)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	10 (+0)	28 (+9)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +16, Wis +11, Cha +13
Skills Perception +18, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities radiant
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 28
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

The Law of Time. The dragon does not roll for initiative. Instead, it can act any time before any turn of a creature that is in the initiative order. In a round, as long as the tameranium dragon doesn't take a turn, it has advantage on its saving throws, and attacks rolled against it are made at disadvantage.

Rejuvenating Presence. The Tameranium Dragon and any creature of its choice within 120 feet of it regain 10 hit points at the start of their turns while the dragon still has at least 1 hit point.

A creature that remains under this effect for two minutes regains severed body members (fingers, legs, tails, and so on). If the creature has the severed part and holds it to the stump, the presence instantaneously causes the limb to knit to the stump.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon can make three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d10+10) piercing damage plus 18 (4d8) radiant damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6 + 10) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d8 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6). The ancient tameranium dragon exhales exalted energy in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice).

In the new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

The humanoid form always has the same facial features retaining scars and markings in both forms. The dragon always appears at a relative age when it assumes its humanoid form.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 ft. of the dragon must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

Drakes

Drakes are distant kin of the mighty dragons, possessing a rudimentary, savage intelligence typical of common beasts and animals. Although their appearances share similarities with chromatic dragons, each drake species boasts unique characteristics. While most drakes are wild and dangerous, some are harnessed as formidable aerial mounts, capable of covering vast distances at speeds exceeding those of any ground-bound horse, and serving as powerful allies in battle.

Family Link. Immediately after birth, a drake forms a strong bond with the first group of creatures it encounters. Perceiving these creatures as their family, drakes develop a mystical link that allows them to share their unique magical powers. This connection makes groups of drakes exceptionally dangerous, as they are stronger together than when solitary.

Wild Drakes. In the wild, drakes form bonds with their own kind, typically creating packs of 3 to 10 members. These wild drakes are exceedingly territorial, fiercely attacking anyone threatening their hunting grounds, including other drake packs. When a stronger pack claims its territory or when a pack grows too large and must divide, the displaced drakes often advance upon civilized lands, posing threats to animals and, occasionally, humans. This behavior requires specialized drake hunters, adventurers, or mercenaries because there are always areas needing drake elimination.

Solitude Rage. Drakes form deep connections with those involved in their birth bond. If they lose their pack, these creatures tend toward solitude and aggression, attacking indiscriminately in a state of madness. Though some believe it is possible to form new bonds with these solitary drakes, many consider it safer to eliminate these dangerous beasts.

Desert Drake. Inhabiting vast caverns, these nocturnal hunters and scavengers are renowned for their necrotic breath, which turns their half-consumed, rotting prey into disease vectors. When a desert drake nears a settlement, adventurers and mercenaries are often recruited to locate and eliminate the creature to prevent the spread of disease.

Jungle Drake. The jungle drakes are formidable creatures boasting a powerful breath attack that surpasses those of other drakes, but with only a single use per day. Notorious for their rapid reproduction, these territorial drakes organize themselves into smaller groups and fiercely defend their territories. Interestingly, jungle drakes are herbivores that consume various plants and fruits. However, their vast numbers can advance on farms, instigating food shortages.

Ridge Drake. Residing in icy mountains, ridge drakes are creatures adapted to cold climates. They store food beneath the frozen ground, creating caches for future consumption. Despite their lethargy during hibernation, awakened ridge drakes rally their entire pack, forming a formidable defensive force. Adventurers who dare disturb their lair may face the wrath of an entire colony eager to defend their food and territory.

Desert Drake

Large dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3,
Damage Resistances necrotic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages –
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Assault. If the desert drake moves at least 15 feet before it hits with a Bite attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 4 (1d8) additional piercing damage.

Wild Accuracy. For each other desert drake within 30 feet, this drake receives +1 on attack rolls (max +5).

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Necrotic Breath (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The desert drake exhales necrotic energy in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must take a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Jungle Drake

Large dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +2
Damage Resistances acid
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages –
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Spiked Body. A creature that touches the jungle drake or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) piercing damage.
Wild Strength. For each other jungle drake within 30 feet, this drake receives +1 to damage rolls of its attacks (max +5).

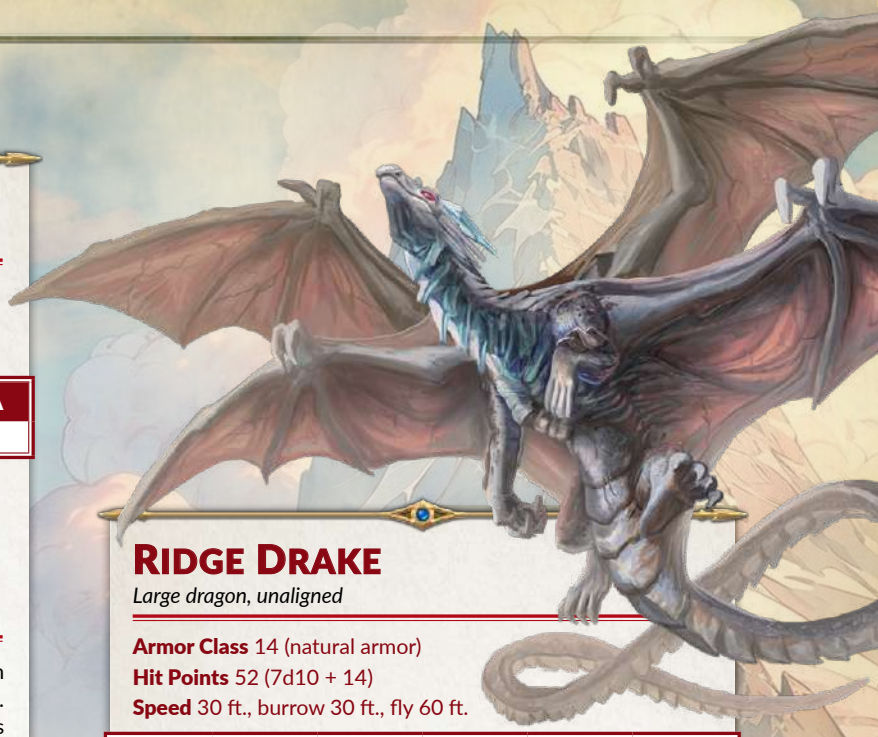
Actions

Multiattack. The jungle drake makes three melee attacks, one with its Bite and two with Claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage

Acid Breath (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The jungle drake exhales acid in a 45-foot line. Each creature in that line must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



Ridge Drake

Large dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 52 (7d10 + 14)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +4,
Damage Resistances cold
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages –
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Wild Reflexes. For each other ridge drake within 30 feet., this drake receives +1 to its AC (max +5).

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d10 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Cold Breath (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The ridge drake exhales an icy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (5d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Drake Knights

Numerous drakes are specially trained to serve as mounts. To establish a bond, a drake must imprint on its rider at birth. It takes approximately four years for a drake to mature enough to serve as a mount. When serving as a mount, a drake and its rider share AC and saving throws, each using the higher value between the two. This shared trait, part of their mystical bond, functions only for the specific knight-drake pair; their hit points are also combined. This makes drakes exceptional as war mounts. While being ridden, a drake is limited to move actions unless the rider forgoes their own action to allow the drake to take an action. When a rider dismounts, any damage dealt can be distributed as the rider sees fit between themselves and their mount.

Emoguns

The emoguns are among the most common entities residing in the Penumbral Plane. Their existence springs from the souls of mortals who have succumbed to corruption, trapped by the grasp of sin, madness, or negative emotions. These distorted beings form the vast legions of the Ungods, with both the Cult of Shadow Wing and the Ungods themselves desiring to expand their already formidable ranks.

While their presence is most evident in the Penumbral Plane, they also permeate the Material Plane. Through portals, cultist summonings, or rifts tearing the veil between planes, they lurk unseen, spreading corruption in Tanares.

Each emogun is intrinsically connected to a particular sin or negative emotion. The nature of these creatures is dictated by the unique sin that corrupted their souls before transformation. Clerics and preachers from various religions educate the common folk, teaching ethics, morals, virtues, and positive emotions to prevent the creation of more emoguns.

From Mortal Souls to Penumbral Spawns

The fate of mortal souls hangs in the dispute between the gods and the Ungods. Tamera and Bauron seek to uplift these souls, enabling them to ascend and become celestial beings of light—known as angels—who join their ethereal ranks in the struggle against the Ungods. In contrast, the Ungods feed upon the depravity and sin of these souls, transmuting them into their grotesque minions, the emoguns.

Upon the death of an emogun or angel, the soul retreats into the Soul Flux to be reborn again as a mortal or revived. The Celestianists dedicate themselves to eradicating the emoguns, which weakens the Ungods and frees corrupted souls.

Although both emoguns and angels retain memories of their past, angels enjoy the full knowledge of their previous existence. In contrast, emoguns have twisted, fragmented, and distorted memories of their mortal lives.

The Church has categorized sins alongside emoguns since the Ancient Age. In Tanares, the 13 sins are viewed by the common folk as pathways to corruption: anger, disgust, envy, fear, gluttony, greed, grudge, lust, misery, pain, pride, sadness, and sloth. These form the thirteen emogun categories.

Bound by Sins and Negative Emotions

Emoguns sustain their existence by feeding upon the very sins and emotions that gave birth to them. These emotions, even when generated in the Material Plane, seep into the Penumbral Plane. As the Penumbral and Material planes are closely aligned, each location in the Material Plane correlates with one in the Penumbral Plane, including where emotions seep. Over time, these concentrations of emotion can accumulate, drawing numerous emoguns to a single location.

This concentration of penumbral creatures triggers a feedback loop on the Material Plane. The presence of emoguns amplifies the same emotions that drew them, exacerbating the sins and emotions in the Material Plane, attracting even more of these creatures.

Penumbral Hunters, Predators of Emotions

As inhabitants of the Penumbra, emoguns roam ceaselessly, driven by an insatiable hunger for the emotions that feed them. They eagerly prey on explorers and other beings who trespass into their realm, deriving exquisite pleasure from the intense emotions they evoke. For this reason, adventurers and explorers must walk cautiously in the Penumbral Plane, and large armies are rarely employed because the collective emotions and sins of a large group can attract emoguns from vast distances. Smaller groups are more commonly used, with the belief that fair, honorable, and just individuals are less likely to attract emoguns.

Emogun Hierarchy

Lacking a structured society, emoguns often congregate in large clusters. A hierarchical order emerges, established by emoguns of superior intelligence and power, who use weaker emoguns as pawns. Though separate from the Cult of Shadow Wing hierarchy, these cunning emoguns readily collaborate with them, aware that they ultimately serve the Ungods and may one day receive their unholy command to invade Tanares en masse to consume the world.

Death of an Emogun

When an emogun dies outside the Penumbral Plane, its form dissipates into a brief cloud of purple smoke, leaving only a pool of ichor. Its soul retreats to the Soul Flux, where it can resurrect. If revived, it returns with memories of mortal life and some fragments of memories from its emogun form, often bearing profound mental scars from its time as such. Family members commonly implore adventurers to find their loved ones, seeking either to end their misery or to resurrect them. Sometimes, factions may seek specific emoguns to extract the information they possessed in life or to uncover crucial details about the Penumbral Plane or the Cult of Shadow Wing.

Tamera's Light:
In the Material Plane, the sacred sunlight of Tamera protects Tanares by scorching the corrupt penumbral creatures daring to trespass in her light.

Any penumbral creature that enters or starts its turn in the direct daylight of Tanares takes 10 points of radiant damage and loses any regenerative capabilities until the beginning of its next turn. This compels all penumbral creatures to roam the material world exclusively at night, seeking refuge during the day.

Bauron's Vigil:
During the night in the Material Plane, when any person defeats a penumbral creature or aberration, Bauron bestows a blessing upon that individual, influenced by the current phase of the moon. The person who delivered the final blow to the creature receives a number of temporary hit points, determined as follows:

New Moon: 1d4
Crescent (either Waxing or Waning): 1d6
First/Third Quarter: 1d8
Gibbous (either Waxing or Waning): 1d10
Full Moon: 1d12

This effect lasts until the next night and does not stack upon defeating multiple creatures; you always keep the highest value.

See more about the deities Tamera and Bauron in Chapter 4.

Penumbral Anger

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor, see Battle Fury)
Hit Points 210 (20d8 + 120)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	22 (+6)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +10
Skills Athletics +10
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Battle Fury. When anger reaches half of its hit points or below (105 or less), it takes a -2 penalty to AC but makes two additional bone spike attacks with its Multiattack.

Raging Shout (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the anger can release a guttural shout, itself, and all willing allies within 60 feet of the anger enter a rage receiving a -2 penalty to attack rolls but gaining a +4 bonus to damage rolls, for 1 minute.

Siege Monster. The anger deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The anger makes four bone spike attacks or two Bone Spike attacks and one Raging Slam (see Battle Fury).

Bone Spike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Raging Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the target must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be pushed 30 feet away and knocked prone. If the target's path is blocked by a solid object or creature before reaching 30 feet, the target takes an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 5 feet it couldn't be dislocated. If another creature is hit by the pushed target, that creature must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take the same additional damage. On a successful save, it takes half damage.

In Search for Conflict

Appreciating the conflict, the penumbral anger seeks out battle to unleash its fury and provoke wrath in its opponents. This monstrous entity does not enjoy killing as much as it revels in inciting anger in others, often leaving opponents alive for them to harbor a thirst for revenge. The anger's approach to combat is calculated and ruthless. It begins the battle with a deafening shout of rage, aiming to incite chaos and anger within enemy ranks. When wounded, the anger enters a frenzied state, striking quickly and lethally with its bone spikes.

Angers are notorious for wreaking havoc in the Material Plane. Their destructive actions are often directed at the entities or situations that would provoke the most anger and resentment, thereby feeding their own power. They are known to take satisfaction in the anger and desire for revenge they instill in their victims; they kill loved ones, humiliate the prideful, and taunt the weak, leading many individuals to seek the aid of adventurers or mercenaries in hopes of taking vengeance.

Angers also hold bizarre arenas in the Penumbral Plane, attracting adventurers with the promise of safety and rewards for participating in their brutal games. The promise of riches and the thrill of battle often lure many despite the knowledge that most participants do not survive these encounters. The fact that these entities uphold their promises of security and rewards adds to their allure, perpetuating a dangerous cycle of violence.

The Species of Emoguns

Penumbral Anger

The penumbral anger is an embodiment of raw, violent emotion. This aberration is fierce, with a solid body and four arms ending in enormous bone spikes. The creature's head is encased in a large, hardened white bone structure, making it an intimidating sight. The anger's chest is often red, contrasting with the gray, spiky expanse of its back. This creature is a battle-thirsty brute, but behind their uncontrolled rage lies a warrior's mind that often leads other lesser creatures, be them other emoguns in the Penumbra or barbarian and orcish tribes in the Material Plane.

Penumbral Disgust

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 37 (5d8 + 15)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)

Damage Resistances psychic
Damage Immunities acid
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Acid Skin. A creature that touches the disgust or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 3 (1d6) acid damage. Each hit on the disgust with a nonmagical weapon made of metal or wood induces corrosion. After dealing damage, the weapon suffers a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. The weapon is destroyed if the penalty reaches -5. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal or wood that hits the disgust is destroyed after dealing damage.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the disgust must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a success, the creature becomes immune to the disgust's stench for the next 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. The disgust makes three Gastric Spit attacks.

Gastric Spit. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) acid damage.

Disgusting Vomit (Recharge 5–6). The disgust expels acid in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. After this initial effect, all creatures within 20 feet of the disgust (whether they were in the cone or not) must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of their next turn due to the nauseating sight. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the disgust's Disgusting Vomit for 24 hours.

Penumbral Disgust

A penumbral disgust is an unsightly creature that resides primarily in the swamps of the Penumbral Plane, especially in its fourth layer, the Endless City. These monstrous beings collect garbage, turning their lairs into mucky dumps. Amidst this filth, one might discover valuable treasures, making these creatures objects of interest to greedy adventurers. Disgusts often form small communities and are very territorial, defending their lairs and their pile of filth with their lives. The only different creatures they tolerate on their lairs are penumbral miseries, which they enjoy raising as pets.

The creature is horrid, with a misshapen torso bearing an oozing opening from which a tentacle emerges, holding a worm-like head filled with sharp teeth. Small, deformed wings jut from its back, serving no purpose for flight. Various tentacles are randomly distributed across its body, which is covered in foul-smelling acid secretions.

Defilers of Beauty

In battle, penumbral disgusts maintain a distance, spitting acidic bile derived from their potent gastric fluids to dissolve foes. They exhibit a peculiar preference for attacking beautiful enemies, taking perverse pleasure in degrading their appearance with their corrosive secretions. Should foes draw too close, these creatures reposition themselves to engulf as many as possible in their repugnant vomit.

Beyond combat, the disgusts' hatred of beauty influences their behavior. They accumulate decaying matter and mar beautiful or well-crafted items by burying them in filth or destroying them. When these creatures cross into the Material Plane, they hunt beautiful individuals to kill or disfigure. Their lairs, typically hidden in sewers or swamps, are carefully concealed.

At times, while scavenging, they discover valuable objects like magic items or scholarly books. These items are added to their hoard, providing adventurers with requests to recover a lost object from the lair of these creatures. Despite their grotesque appearance, the disgusts are surprisingly intelligent and capable of forming alliances and devising plans to spread disease and decay to mortal's cities. Their sinister actions serve to increase the negative emotions of disgust and repulsion they feed upon.

Penumbral Envy

Penumbral envy is an aberration of peculiar appearance. With dark green, almost brown scales covering its entire body, this creature is a bizarre amalgamation of a toad and a reptile. Underneath its chin, it boasts multiple fine red tentacles, while its dorsal side has small spikes running down its spine. However, its most notable feature is the large eye at the end of its tail, which constantly watches its surroundings for prey. This unique adaptation grants the creature extraordinary perception and a unique ability to mimic spells cast by others.

Envious and Cowardly

Penumbral envy creatures demonstrate a unique combination of cowardice and envy. Preferring to move in large packs, they avoid direct combat unless they significantly outnumber their opponent. However, these creatures deeply desire to bring down those who seem more powerful than them, especially spellcasters. They ignore weaker creatures and are strangely unharmful to children, small animals, or weak individuals, but they may become obsessed with killing powerful ones. In combat, they focus their attacks on the most powerful or impressive-looking foe, and if a spell is cast in their surroundings, they attempt to replicate it.

When these creatures venture into the Material Plane, they tend to cause harm to those who appear successful or powerful. On the other hand, they sometimes ally themselves with weaker individuals who harbor resentment towards powerful masters or nobles. In such cases, while not particularly intelligent, they can still serve as companions, encouraging the envy of these persons and aiding in their revolt against the powerful. This has led to numerous situations where local authorities or adventurers have had to intervene to eliminate these creatures.

In their native Penumbral Plane, the envy creatures typically inhabit swampy regions or the plane's deepest layer, known as the Archives. Here, they amass collections of junk, ancient books, and magic items, often disputing over the most attractive pieces among themselves. To navigate these areas, adventurers must adopt the disguise of the humble and weak to avoid attracting the envies' attention, adding a unique challenge to these journeys.

Penumbral Envy

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 37 (5d8 + 15)
Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Wis +6
Skills Perception +8
Damage Resistances psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages –
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Amphibious. The envy can breathe both air and water.

Magic Envy (Recharge 4–6). If a 1st or 2nd level spell is cast within 100 feet of the envy, it can immediately use its reaction to cast the same spell without requiring any components, against a valid target of envy's choice.

Pack Tactics. The envy has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the envy's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The envy makes two attacks, either two Bites or two Eye of Envy attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Eye of Envy. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) psychic damage, and until the start of the envy's next turn, whenever the target regains hit points, the envy regains the same amount.

Penumbral Fear

Hailing from the shadowy corners of the Penumbra, the fear represents the epitome of psychological warfare in its most insidious form. This sinister creature possesses a slender, white, fungoid body from which emerge long, writhing, purple tentacles. Acting as its limbs and head, these appendages are crowned by a wriggling bulb that houses a single glowing, purple eye. The fear assumes an intimidating presence, notorious among emoguns as the most powerful and devious, renowned for their exceptional illusionist abilities. Commanding the creatures in the Eternal Cathedral, their influence spans all layers of the Penumbral Plane, where they act as puppet masters, leading other emoguns to execute their wicked plots. Considering themselves the true progeny of Shadow Wing, they align closely with the Ungods, aiming to spread fear among mortals.

In the shadows of their hidden lairs, cloaked by complex illusions and nightmares, fears plan elaborate schemes, exploiting their devout cultists and various penumbral beings. Unlike typical tyrants, they disdain territorial conquests, preferring to manipulate events from behind the curtain. They are lone creatures, often plotting against each other in a secret race to win the favor of the Ungods.

Masterminds of Despair

Fears leverage their shapeshifting abilities to subtly merge with mortals on the Material Plane, skillfully planting seeds of distrust and despair. While they derive pleasure from inciting mass panic, they have a peculiar affection for gradually deteriorating the courage of resilient individuals. This perverse pleasure often compels them to confront certain victims personally, seeking the desperation in their eyes. This behavior deviates from their typical strategy of maintaining distance, potentially introducing a flaw in their schemes.

While they are formidable combatants, they prefer to evade direct confrontations, instead leveraging their illusionary powers to confuse enemies and turn them against each other. They primarily target the most psychologically vulnerable individuals, feeding on their fears and gaining resilience from their aura of terror. They maintain distance from frightened melee combatants, enjoying their inability to approach.

Known for their cunning and scheming nature, fears often infiltrate the highest echelons of politics, leveraging their illusionary abilities to manipulate influential figures from the inside. They strategically use their targets' fears to drive them in their desired direction, requiring the intervention of heroes to expose and eliminate the infiltrated creature. Their influence on the Material Plane has not gone unnoticed, with the Draconic Council and the Celestianist Church on high alert, offering substantial rewards for adventurers capable of defeating these penumbral masterminds.

Penumbral Fear

Medium aberration (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)
Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Wis +10, Cha +13
Skills Intimidation +19, Perception +10
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, prone
Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20
Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Guided by Fear. The fear has advantage on attack rolls against creatures that are frightened.

Shapechanger. The fear can use its action to polymorph into a Small, Medium, or Large humanoid, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Terror Aura. At the start of each of its turns, the fear gains 1d6 temporary hit points for each frightened creature within 30 feet of it.

Actions

Multiattack. The Fear makes three attacks: three with its Fear Stab or three with its Psychic Blast.

Fear Stab. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) psychic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Psychic Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +13 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) psychic damage.

Terror Wave (Recharge 5–6). The fear emits psychic energy in a 40-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. On a failed save, the creature also becomes frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. On any successful saving throw, the creature becomes immune to the fear's Terror Wave for the next 24 hours.

Planar Shift. The fear magically shifts from the Material Plane to the Penumbral Plane, or vice versa.

Spellcasting. The fear casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *darkness*, *detect magic*, *fear*, *major image*

3/day each: *dream*, *phantasmal killer*

1/day each: *mirage arcane*

Legendary Actions

The fear can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. It can take only one legendary action at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The fear regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Worst Fear (Costs 2 Actions). The fear delves into the deepest fears of one frightened creature within 60 feet of it and uses its Shapechanger ability to assume a form that embodies those fears. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become restrained, its legs shaking uncontrollably, until the fear changes its form again or leaves the target's line of sight.

Fear Stab. The fear makes a Fear Stab attack.

Psychic Blast. The fear makes a Psychic Blast attack.

Penumbral Gluttony

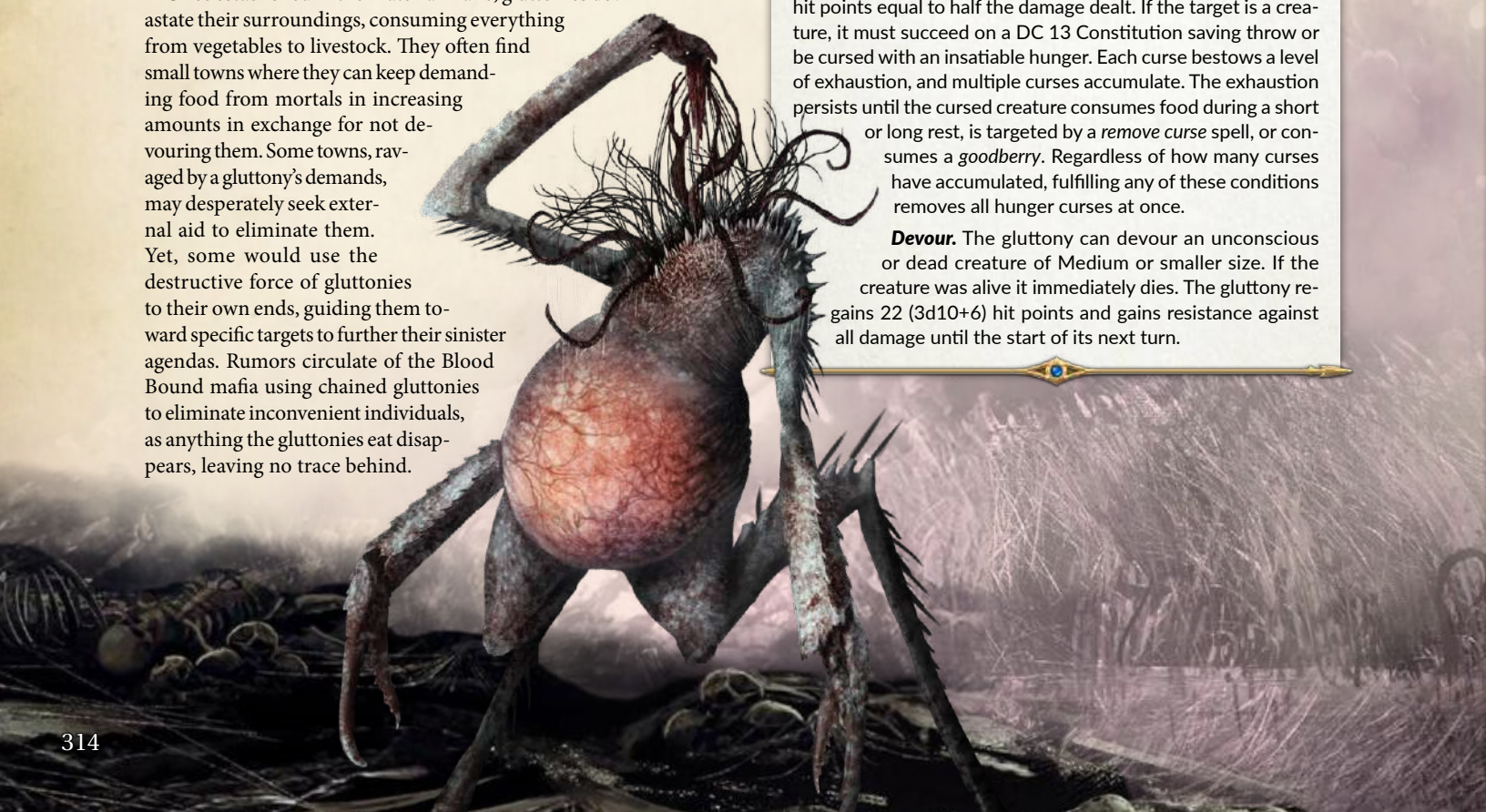
The penumbral gluttonies are grotesque and chilling, roaming constantly in search of their next meal. Their grayish bodies lack any discernible head or face, but a gnashing maw is situated where a neck would typically be found, surrounded by countless thin, writhing red tentacles. With three arm-like appendages, each ending in pincers, their bloated bellies contrast sharply against their slim insectoid legs. These creatures are simple-minded but cunning, driven by an insatiable hunger that keeps them constantly on the move. They possess the unique ability to shape-change into the form of their last meal, enabling them to disguise themselves among the harmless, even blending in with herds of animals, or to walk unnoticed in the Material Plane as mortals.

In the Penumbral Plane, they have been found in servitude to the more powerful penumbral angers or left to roam the Caverns of Magma Giants. Interestingly, these creatures often travel alone, preferring solitary hunting over the risk of competition for food. It's not unheard of for gluttonies to press weaker creatures into service, only to devour them during periods of food scarcity. Often, they roam disguised as a lesser creature they last devoured, ready to surprise and consume their next meal. But the abundance of food of the Material Plane entices them the most, making these creatures the most likely emoguns to strike bargains with anyone who can help them cross over.

Devouring Threats

In combat, gluttonies are formidable, with resilient bodies and bites that inflict a dreadful curse of insatiable hunger. When met with sufficient force, gluttonies are prone to fleeing as they have no honor or pride, preferring to find their next meal elsewhere. This characteristic and their relentless appetite have led to their infamy across the Material Plane.

Once established in the Material Plane, gluttonies devastate their surroundings, consuming everything from vegetables to livestock. They often find small towns where they can keep demanding food from mortals in increasing amounts in exchange for not devouring them. Some towns, ravaged by a gluttony's demands, may desperately seek external aid to eliminate them. Yet, some would use the destructive force of gluttonies to their own ends, guiding them toward specific targets to further their sinister agendas. Rumors circulate of the Blood Bound mafia using chained gluttonies to eliminate inconvenient individuals, as anything the gluttonies eat disappears, leaving no trace behind.



Penumbral Gluttony

Large aberration (shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 103 (9d10 + 54)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	23 (+6)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +9
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, necrotic
Damage Immunity psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Deep Speech
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Blood Frenzy. The gluttony has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Shapechanger. The gluttony can use its action to polymorph into the last thing that it fed upon of Huge size or smaller, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size and speed, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

False Appearance. When the gluttony assumes the form of a creature it has devoured, it becomes indistinguishable from a normal specimen of that creature's species. Only a spell such as *true seeing* or similar spell of 6th level or higher can reveal the gluttony's true form.

Unwieldy. A creature must use 15 feet of speed to try to move the gluttony 5 feet.

Actions

Ravenous Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d8 + 3) piercing damage. The gluttony regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with an insatiable hunger. Each curse bestows a level of exhaustion, and multiple curses accumulate. The exhaustion persists until the cursed creature consumes food during a short or long rest, is targeted by a *remove curse* spell, or consumes a *goodberry*. Regardless of how many curses have accumulated, fulfilling any of these conditions removes all hunger curses at once.

Devour. The gluttony can devour an unconscious or dead creature of Medium or smaller size. If the creature was alive it immediately dies. The gluttony regains 22 (3d10+6) hit points and gains resistance against all damage until the start of its next turn.

Penumbral Grudge

Penumbral grudges embody pure resentment, distinct from the volatile fury of anger and the pervasive sadism of pain; they exist as beings of bitterness. Their sole purpose is to satisfy their insatiable desire to bring about the downfall of those responsible for their miserable existence. They are never fully satisfied and are unable to set any goal outside of their vengeance. This sentiment is intensified if any physical injury is inflicted upon them, initiating an obsessive quest for the individuals; thus, they often chase groups of adventurers for months.

These creatures exhibit a sinister appearance characterized by a huge maw filled with numerous large teeth, and a substantial torso with muscular, elongated arms terminating in clawed paws designed for powerful dashes. Although their hind legs are relatively smaller, they can run quickly to pursue their target of resentment.

Soldiers of the Cult

Penumbral grudges are a favored choice as frontline soldiers by the Cult of Shadow Wing, a position they often end up accepting for the opportunity to seek payback against mortals in general or against specific individuals they believe have wronged them.

Possessing simple minds, they forsake elaborate schemes in favor of straightforward, violent approaches to achieve their ends. According to the cult, their most notable traits are the desire to harm mortals over self-preservation, impressive combat abilities, including a potent bite and rapid chase reflexes, and low intelligence, making them easy to manipulate. However, the cultists are careful, avoiding crossing certain boundaries to prevent the grudges' resentment from shifting towards them.

They often reside in the third layer of the Penumbral Plane, but when summoned to the Material Plane, a grudge often brings chaos due to its lack of restraint. However, the absence of rage in their composition allows cultists to securely confine them in hidden sanctuaries or temples without significant trouble, serving as excellent guardians for the secret abodes of the Ungods.

Penumbral Grudge

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Damage Immunities psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages understands Deep Speech but can't speak
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the grudge can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Rancor. When a creature takes damage from the grudge and fails a Wisdom saving throw, it begins to view the grudge as its most hated enemy. All of the creature's attacks against creatures other than the grudge have disadvantage. This effect ends if the grudge is killed, the creature is affected by a *calm emotions* spell, or the creature takes a long rest. A creature that successfully saves or the effect ends for is immune to the Rancor effect for the next 24 hours. If a creature is affected by multiple Rancor effects, only the most recent one applies.

Grudge Mark. The grudge marks the last creature that dealt damage to it. The marked creature is under the effect of a *locate creature* spell without distance limitation as long as it is on the same plane as the grudge. Spells and effects like *polymorph* or shapeshifting abilities do not hide the creature from the grudge.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If the grudge takes 10 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Loathsome Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or take an additional 7 (2d6) psychic damage and be affected by Rancor.

Begrudgingly Run (Recharge 5–6). The grudge can move in a straight line up to four times its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

EXAMPLE OF ADVENTURE SEEDS WITH A PENUMBRAL CREATURE - THE GREED

THE WANDERER

The heroes are in the service of a minor noble during one of their quests. When they return, they find the noble's court in ruins and his servants and champions gathered in two different parts of the keep. As they question each side, they find one group, led by the castellan, and the other led by the lord. The castellan is mad with greed—he wants the noble's crown.

The noble is saddened but resolute. The castellan is like a second father to him. The lord cannot imagine why he would betray his life's work and the people he has served faithfully for so long.

It's the castellan's very strength of character that has gathered so many of the court to his side. Some seem to share his desire for the noble's crown or the incredible wealth they're sure it is hidden somewhere.

Now the court seems irrevocably split and bloodshed is certain.

To stop this tragedy, the heroes must find and slay the greed emogun that has poisoned the castellan and the noble.

If accomplished, the lord forgives his castellan with the vile creatures' destruction, but the champion is heartbroken that such a base instinct could infect his heart. He begs to be relieved and wanders off into the world to perform penance. If the party treated him kindly throughout the affair, he becomes a wandering rogue who might come to their rescue in some dire circumstance. If this occurs and he perishes in the act, they gain some powerful artifact of his (an appropriate magic item of the GM's choice). If he lives, he grants the characters the artifact, considers his penance paid, and returns to serve his lord.

The Trap

A local farmer spies a terribly wounded dragon slink into its cave. While still beyond their meager abilities, word is sent to the party of the opportunity. For a tenth of the treasure, the villager will take the heroes there so they can dispatch the beast and claim its horde.

Everything is as the villager says, but watching over the dragon via its scrying mask is a greed emogun. While the party deals with the dragon (which has only 25% of its normal hit points), the sinister penumbral creature slides into the material world and bombards them with its Covetous Globes. Once it gets at least one hit, it vanishes back into the Penumbra to watch the unfortunate victims and enjoy its malicious handiwork.

The Request

A paladin princess has been cursed by a greed emogun. The obsession with gold, magic, and treasure has driven her to great bloodlust. She and her loyal entourage and retainers rampage through a craggy mountain range inhabited by gnolls, ogres, and other humanoids.

The princess' parents, powerful nobles whose influence is helpful or even critical for the party's goals, want their daughter back. They've learned of the curse and how to break it, but can't reach the princess. They ask the characters to follow her bloody trail into the mountains and help her break the curse.

The princess, a powerful and reckless individual surrounded by equally fierce retainers and bodyguards, has no interest in breaking the curse. She claims she's ridding the land of fearsome monsters.

Quietly, her companions know something is wrong with the champion, but must be convinced to talk, perhaps through some act of valor when counterattacked by the local humanoids. If they can gain the retainers' trust, they can eventually convince the princess to destroy the blessed longsword she was granted on attaining knighthood.

Penumbral Greed

Greed lurks at the heart of most adventurers to one degree or another. One cannot gaze upon a dragon's treasure without feeling deep desire stirring the soul. This foul emogun preys on that lust, feeding it until they are obsessed with the acquisition of that which others once held.

The greeds hide in the Penumbra, looking into the Material Plane to find parties they wish to plague with their curses. Sometimes, they serve greater masters and use their powers to aid or stop them. Other times, they watch over great treasures, using the bait to afflict great heroes with their vile magic.

Manifesting as six-armed, light purple humanoids, they are marked with arcane tattoos. Their faces, obscured by bird-skull masks, enhance their horror, while the skulls that decorate their mantles tell stories of their past conquests. Their clawed hands hold luminous orbs, with the power to bestow a terrible curse upon their prey.

Greeds are driven by an insatiable desire for wealth and magic items, their lairs packed with loot stolen from adventurers, nobles, and kings. They work with the Cult of Shadow Wing and the Ungods only when promised substantial rewards, and they command lower-ranking emoguns such as penumbral envies, pains, and gluttonies, manipulating these entities for their personal gain. However, their greed also causes them to turn on each other, often offering aid to adventurers against their rivals to claim their treasures.

Combating Greed

Despite their manipulative nature, these emoguns are formidable in combat. Their Covetous Globes inflict more than just injuries; their true power lies in their curse. The Curse of Greed causes those who fail to satiate their new-found avarice gradually weaken, their life force seeping away day by day. The curse can only be lifted by sacrificing something precious to the victim, ensuring that even after their departure, the emoguns extract a heavy price.

Their planar-shifting abilities make them evasive and deadly foes, instilling fear and greed into the hearts of even the bravest adventurers. Their bird-skull masks, inscribed with magical runes, serve as their means to watch the Material Plane, allowing them to plan and strike when least expected.

Penumbral Greed

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	21 (+5)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +10 Wis +8
Skills History +10, Insight +8, Stealth +9
Damage Immunities psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Deep Speech, plus any three languages
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Covetous Globes. The greed watches over the material world from the Penumbral Plane via its magical Mask of Scrying. When it spies an appropriate target, usually some crusading do-gooder or powerful noble, it shifts to the Material Plane and attacks with its Covetous Globes. The globes deal enough damage to seem like a real threat, but this is a ruse. Their real power lies in the transmission of the Curse of Greed.

Curse of Greed. Every day at dusk, in which a victim of this terrible curse fails to accumulate at least 500 gp in gold, goods, or treasures, its maximum hit points are reduced by 3 (1d6) points. The curse cannot be lifted by a simple *remove curse* spell, but it does grant the recipient the knowledge of how to shed the curse. To remove a Curse of Greed, the victim must permanently sacrifice at least 10,000 gold pieces in valuable items, such as useful magic items, family heirlooms of great sentimental value or other treasures.

Mask of Scrying. The greed wears an enchanted, birdlike mask of bone covered in magical runes over its grotesque face. The mask allows it to peer into the Material Plane at will, as if using the scrying spell, even if it is not currently on that plane. The mask crumbles to dust if removed from the emogun's person or if it dies.

Actions

Multiattack. The greed makes two attacks with its claws and two with its covetous globes.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Covetous Globes. *Ranged Spell Attack*: +10 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) necrotic damage. Each creature struck by a globe must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or suffer the Curse of Greed.

Planar Shift. The greed magically shifts from the Material Plane to the Penumbral Plane, or vice versa.

Penumbral Lust

Penumbral lusts are entities born from the darkest desires of mortals. They embody the antithesis of love and affection, representing allure and domination at their purest. These creatures derive pleasure from manipulating the emotions of mortals, gradually siphoning away their morals.

Capable of assuming any humanoid form, they instinctively morph into attractive figures to lure in their prey, leveraging their beauty, charm, and mystical influence to simulate a dedicated subordinate, subtly dominating mortals.

In their true form, lusts are slender aberrations adorned with tentacle-like arms and a mass of tendrils that resemble long hair, extending from their heads. A particular tentacle stands out, growing much longer than the creature's own height. They often maintain a humanoid form to disguise their sinister appearance, especially outside the Penumbral Plane.

Known for their social adeptness and shapeshifting prowess, they frequent the Material Plane more than their emogun counterparts, seamlessly blending into various societies. While Purple Witches prefer to command the mortals to obey them, lusts prefer to instigate desires in their victims aligned to their goals as they feed on these twisted feelings.

Fascination and Allure

In the fourth layer of the Penumbral Plane, known as the Endless City, these beings establish their lairs and incessantly seek passages to the Material Plane to expand their influence and find mortal victims. Using compelling presence and charm magic, they manipulate individuals with weak wills. They reserve the *dominate person* or *geas* spell for rare targets.

Penumbral lusts surround themselves with luxury, often indulging in lavish parties with wine and expensive foods, all paid for by the admirers. Unlike other emoguns, they do not immediately wreak havoc upon arriving in a city. Instead, they gradually permeate the upper echelons of society with corruption, promoting moral decay to destroy familial and societal bonds.

Though they generally avoid direct confrontations, they attempt to charm as many adversaries as possible if forced into battle. Only then will they unleash their Mind Overload ability, shattering the psyches of individual victims. These creatures favor crowded locales where they can easily escape by changing their form, prioritizing self-preservation over confrontation.

Penumbral Lust

Large aberration (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 152 (16d10 + 64)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Cha +10
Skills Deception +10, Insight +6, Persuasion +10, Stealth +9
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Charm Opportunist. The lust's attacks that hit a charmed creature are automatically considered critical.

Shapechanger. The lust can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size and the availability of its Tentacle attack, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Actions

Multiattack. Lust makes three melee attacks.

Creepy Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and lust can't use its tentacles on another target.

Mind Overload. Lust targets one charmed creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw, taking 44 (8d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This attack doesn't end the charmed condition on the creature.

Spellcasting. The lust casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks).

At will: *charm person*, *command*, *hold person*

3/day each: *charm monster*, *dominate beast*, *hypnotic pattern*

1/day each: *dominate person*, *geas*

Fascinating Presence. Each creature of lust's choice that is within 120 feet of lust and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed for 1 minute, or until lust or its allies take any harmful action against it. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Penumbral Misery

Penumbral miseries resemble common rats and are the weakest entities within the penumbral hierarchy. Upon launching their first attack, a disturbing array of tentacles hidden within their mouths is revealed. These tentacles secure a firm hold on their victims, allowing the miseries to deliver a potent bite, infecting the recipient with the Mind Plague. This debilitating disease induces nightmares, delusions, and hallucinations that intensify with each passing day. As its victims gradually descend into misery and madness, the miseries thrive and feed on this despair.

These vile creatures are born of deprivation and nourished by misery. They lurk in the shadows of the Penumbral Plane, launching surprise attacks on weakened adventurers. In the Material Plane, they infest cellars and sewers, stealthily spreading the Mind Plague among victims, later retreating to feed off the ensuing despair. Their elusive nature often provokes local authorities to instigate mass exterminations of all rat species, though such efforts are rarely successful.

Plague Bringers

In combat, penumbral miseries favor strategic infection over direct confrontation unless they significantly outnumber their opponents. In such instances, they use their tentacles to latch onto their prey and bite them relentlessly. Given their diminutive size, these creatures often evade detection until it is too late. Their presence is typically signaled by instances of madness among local populations, prompting the need for adventurers to intervene.

The miseries are especially abundant in the Endless City, the fourth layer of the Penumbral Plane, but their shadowy presence extends everywhere. Penumbral disgusts, a more potent breed of emogun, even keep these lesser creatures as pets. The miseries enjoy this protection and may become attached to certain disgusts, defending them ferociously.

Penumbral Misery

Tiny aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 15 (6d4)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Dex +3
Perception +2, Stealth +3
Damage Resistance psychic
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Inoffensive Appearance. If the misery is out of combat, it looks like a normal rat. When a misery attacks a creature that does not know its true form, its attacks have advantage.

Keen Smell. The misery has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Mind Plague. A creature afflicted with the misery Mind Plague has delusions and hallucinations that cloud its senses. The creature has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks, on Wisdom saving throws, and cannot maintain concentration. The Mind Plague is a magical disease and can only be removed by a *lesser restoration* spell, or similar or more powerful effects.

Nimble Escape. The misery can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage and the target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be afflicted with the Mind Plague. Creatures immune to psychic damage or diseases are immune to the Mind Plague.

Latching Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* The misery becomes attached to the target. At the end of each of the target's turns, the misery can make a Bite attack against it with advantage.

Any creature that attacks an attached misery must choose to roll with disadvantage or in case the attack misses, it must roll the same attack against the creature to which the misery is attached.

The misery can detach itself using a bonus action. A creature, including the target, can use its action to make a Strength saving throw against DC 11 to detach the misery.

Penumbral Pain

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +7
Damage Immunities psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Deep Speech
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Thorns. The pain is covered in thorns. A creature that touches the pain or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet takes 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

Suffering. Damage caused by the pain ignores temporary hit points and resistances. If pain reduces a creature to 0 hit points while it has temporary hit points it falls unconscious and is dying as normal.

Actions

Multiattack. The pain makes three attacks with its Painful Claws.

Painful Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on its next attack roll or ability check due to intense pain.

Excruciating Pain. The pain targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target creature takes 13 (3d6+3) psychic damage, falls prone, and drops any held equipment.

Thorn Rain (Recharge 5–6). The pain launches a volley of thorns in a 20-foot radius around it. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) piercing damage and becoming impaled with thorns on a failed save, or half as much damage and no impalement on a successful one. A creature impaled with thorns takes an extra 7 (2d6) psychic damage each time it takes damage until it completes a long rest or is targeted by a *lesser restoration* spell or greater. A creature can only be affected by one thorn impalement at a time.

Penumbral Pain

The penumbral pains, embodiments of torment, possess a grotesque form with their quadruped bodies punctuated by spindly, angular legs. Their heads feature fearsome maws wreathed in an unholy halo of writhing, red tentacles. Their white and gray hide contrasts starkly against their luminous, blood-red eyes, while a haunting, bloodshot eye crowns their tail, completing this macabre spectacle.

Pains are the sadistic stalkers of the Penumbral Plane, relentless in their pursuit to inflict agonizing torment on mortal beings. This insatiable need to create pain is their primal pleasure and primary sustenance, fueling their strength and aggression.

Pains are among the dreaded residents of the Eternal Cathedral and the broader Penumbral Plane. They are commonly found as foot soldiers, serving the stronger and more cunning emoguns. This subservience, however, is a deal of convenience rather than loyalty. Stronger emoguns maintain brutal control over pains, and in turn, this involuntary servitude presents pains with abundant opportunities to satiate their hunger for mortal suffering.

Instruments of Suffering

In battle, pains are unexpectedly tactical. They prefer to attack the weak, targeting less-armored adversaries while using their thorn rain to spread spines and inflict maximum pain on multiple foes. In coordinated assaults, pains have been witnessed employing ingenious strategies; one pain might engage in direct combat while others spread out, keeping their distance, using their tail eyes to induce paralyzing waves of pain in their foes.

Beyond the battlefield, the macabre capabilities of pains have attracted the attention of various nefarious organizations. The followers of Krynnethoth and Droggath use them as sentinels and enforcers within their hidden enclaves in the Material Plane. However, pains remain loyal only as long as these factions satiate their thirst for torment and offer protection from stronger adversaries.

Even more disturbing are the whispers about the use of pains' body parts in crafting potent poisons, dark magic items, and torture tools. The Empire and the Third Eye have been implicated in such rumors, leading the Allied Forces to launch an extensive investigation. Similarly, the Magocracy and the Republic are allegedly researching methods to neutralize their power to prevent their use in war.

Penumbral Pride

Penumbral prides are one of the most powerful inhabitants of the Penumbra Plane. They are often considered dukes, controlling vast territories, especially within the third layer, the Crystal Forests. They are large bipedal creatures, equipped with a broad torso, sturdy arms ending in enormous claws, short legs, and a small head. Spines protrude from their backs, from behind which numerous black tendrils emerge, twisting into patterns reflecting their mood. Despite their brutish appearance, prides conduct themselves nobly, speaking with unexpected eloquence and calmness but in a voice reminiscent of the true monsters they are. Their behavior, however, is merely a facade to maintain their prideful self-image as the lords of the Penumbral Plane.

Penumbral Pride

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	25 (+7)

Saving Throws Wis +8, Cha +12
Skills Athletics +12, Insight +8, Intimidation +12, Persuasion +12
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Prideful Grappler. The pride has advantage on attack rolls against creatures it is grappling.

Armor of Pride. Whenever an enemy attack misses the pride it gains a cumulative +1 to AC until the start of its next turn (up to +10).

Actions

Multiattack. The pride makes three claw attacks or three force blast attacks. If the pride hits at least one attack with its Claws, it can make a Grab attack with any remaining attack against the same target hit.

Force Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) force damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) slashing damage.

Grab. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 20).

Spellcasting. Pride casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *misty step*

3/day each: *counterspell*, *fly*, *haste*, *slow*

2/day each: *blight*, *dominate person*, *geas*

1/day: *true seeing*

Summon Envoys (1/Day). The pride can summon 1d4 envy or 1d4 pain. The summoned creatures are loyal to the pride.

Highly manipulative, prides are adept at reading situations and people, persuading or intimidating others to heed their command. They form a 'court' with allied lesser penumbral creatures, where they plan territorial expansion within and beyond the Penumbra. Sadnesses act as their court and advisors, lusts form their harems, while angers lead their armies, which are composed of numerous gluttonies and pains. Some powerful prides can create a Symbol of Power, an object that embodies their essence of pride and serves as the focal point of their strength. This symbol often takes the form of a throne, altar, or other significant emblem. As long as this symbol remains intact, the pride cannot be permanently destroyed. If it is killed, it will resurge after 1d6 days near its symbol.

Conquerors and Oppressors

Prides leverage their superior strength and many servants in battle as an advantage. When threatened, they respond with resolute force, declaring true wars and engaging in brutal fights to protect their realm. But, encounters with prides can also result in diplomatic negotiations if they are approached with sufficient respect and deference.

When they travel to the Material Plane, they seek to oppress beings, enjoying the act of subjugation. Prides' tendency to oppress others often results in adventurers being hired to eliminate these creatures, freeing a city from its influence. The sudden rise in power and influence of certain nobles, or the easy conquest of neighboring territories, often signal the meddling of a penumbral pride. Prides are also drawn to symbols of pride and power within the mortal realms, taking ancient crowns, banners, swords, or other important symbolic objects in mortal realms so they can feed on the deposited emotions of pride in them, which again often cause nations to chase after the creature to recover their stolen items.

Penumbral Sloth

The penumbral sloths are truly grotesque quadrupeds. Their front legs, bulky and overly powerful, starkly contrast with their smaller rear counterparts. Their brownish skin is covered in white, bone-like spikes, while their underbelly dons a lighter beige color. With a maw constantly leaking saliva, their small heads appear almost fused into their torsos, lacking any visible eyes. This apparent lack of sight is a ruse, as they have eyes inside their mouths. They also have an innate tremorsense, which they can use to detect the approach of others while burrowed underground. They prefer a life of minimal exertion, always opting for the path of least resistance and movement. That said, their laziness should not be mistaken for weakness. Their powerful jaws and clawed appendages are extremely dangerous, and these creatures are known to be territorial and willing to fight if confronted.

Penumbral sloths have a herding instinct and will form groups, often gathering in large herds when possible. Such congregations offer increased protection and create a formidable force of lumbering beasts. Surprising many, the sloths are herbivorous creatures and often feed on the odd flora of the Penumbral Plane, moving from layer to layer, even venturing into the Material Plane, in search of nourishment. The devastation they bring upon farmlands and forests is a major concern for the local populace, with many falling victim to the sloths by approaching the site where they are burrowed, only to be ambushed by these massive creatures.

Unexpected Warbeasts

During combat, sloths prioritize the conservation of energy. They attack the closest targets, using their Aura of Laziness to hinder enemies' mobility and potentially induce slumber. If critically wounded, they burrow underground to recover before re-emerging to reclaim their territory. However, their slow, deliberate movements can be deceiving. When threatened, they can surge into action with a surprising burst of speed, closing distances swiftly to catch their adversaries off guard.

Their importance to the Cult of Shadow Wing cannot be underestimated. The cult members manipulate these creatures into becoming war beasts, exploited for their strength and size. Similarly, penumbral prides and angers have been seen using these creatures for their resistance and enemy-debilitating aura. Their presence on the Material Plane is usually met with alarm, especially among various druidic circles who see these creatures as a threat to nature's balance.

Penumbral Sloth

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 136 (13d12 + 52)
Speed 20 ft., burrow 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +5
Skills Perception +5, Stealth +9 (only when buried)
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft. passive Perception 15
Languages –
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Aura of Laziness. Creatures that start their turn within 15 feet of the sloth have their movement speed halved for that turn. If the creature ends its turn inside the aura, it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or fall asleep, becoming unconscious until the end of its next turn, until the sleeper takes damage, or someone uses an action to shake or slap the sleeper awake.

Regeneration. The sloth regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Surge of Action (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the sloth can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Actions

Multiattack. The sloth makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, it takes 11 (2d10) poison damage, can't take reactions until the end of its next turn, and has its speed halved until the end of the sloth's next turn. On a success, the target takes half as much damage and doesn't suffer the other effects.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Penumbral Sadness

Penumbral sadnesses are the prime arcane intellects of the Penumbral Plane. Appearing as hunched, old men shrouded in mantles, their faces are obscured by dozens of luminescent yellow eyes. Five slender arms protrude from their bodies—two pairs positioned at the front and a solitary arm projecting from their back. These thin arms often clutch staffs crafted from the bones of eliminated spellcasters, which amplify their magical prowess. These beings are the embodiment of melancholy; their constant state of sorrow and depression leaves them incapable of feeling accomplishment. Their life is but a tiresome quest for knowledge, a futile attempt to distract themselves from their miserable existence. Their primary domain is the fifth layer of the Penumbral Plane, the Clockwork Nexus, though they also frequent other layers in their relentless pursuit of mystical knowledge.

Desolation of Magic

Although averse to combat, penumbral sadnesses are formidable foes when threatened. Their mastery of magic gives them heightened resilience against magical attacks, and they have a unique ability to drain magic, being able to dispel enemy magic quickly. They use *disintegrate* spells against enemy spellcasters and create *walls of force* to distance themselves from melee attackers. Additionally, they employ *misty step* to evade enemies and can use the *globe of invulnerability* spell to stave off attackers further.

Out of their obsession with hoarding mystical knowledge, a darker penchant emerges—a sadistic pursuit in sabotaging the quest for knowledge of others, both mortal spellcasters and other sadnesses. This often leads to destroyed ancient scrolls, disrupted magical experiments, and stolen magical components or artifacts, all causing great trouble to wizards, sorcerers, and other magical practitioners. The sadnesses' greatest dedication is to hoard all mystical knowledge to themselves and deny others from learning more about the arcane. They are also known to inflict curses and misfortune on beings to feed on the resulting sorrow, leading to a rise in inexplicable tragedies that might warrant the attention of a group of investigators. Their appearance in a region might suggest a larger plot in motion, involving dark deals, arcane secrets, and the pursuit of knowledge that invariably ends in tragedy.

Penumbral Sadness

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 142 (19d8 + 57)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	23 (+6)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +11, Wis +7
Skills Arcana +11, History +11
Damage Resistances damage from spells; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks (from *stoneskin*)
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Deep Speech, plus six other languages; telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Dispel Master. The sadness can cast *dispel magic* as a bonus action and it is always considered as if it was cast using a 7th level spell slot.

Magic Resistance. The sadness has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Melancholy Magic. When a creature fails a saving throw against a spell cast by the sadness, it has disadvantage on all saving throws until it finishes a short or long rest.

Sad But True. When the sadness dies, it explodes in a burst of psychic energy. Each creature within 15 feet of it must make a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Actions

Multiattack. The sadness makes two Creepy Slam attacks.

Creepy Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Planar Shift. The sadness magically shifts from the Material Plane to the Penumbral Plane, or vice versa.

Spellcasting. The sadness casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic, detect thoughts, dispel magic, fireball, mirror image, misty step, shocking grasp, stone skin**

3/day each: *cloud kill, disintegrate, globe of invulnerability, scrying, wall of force*

1/day each: *mind blank**, *teleport, time stop*

**The sadness casts these spells on itself before combat.*

Gloomfolk

Born of the chilling fusion of elven beauty and the ferocity of the scorpion, the gloomfolk are an impressive sight. Their humanoid torsos bear the delicate, ethereal traits of their winter elf ancestors, while their lower bodies, crafted from a dark, chitinous exoskeleton, manifest as terrifying scorpion-like appendages, complete with venomous stingers. Honing their survival instincts in the dangerous depths of Undertanares, the gloomfolk have developed a distinctive aesthetic. It is rebelliously loud and expressive, exemplified by bold clothes, tattoos, and an inclination for tribal music. Their communities, known as hives, are interdependent and highly adaptive, with members often changing roles based on desire and necessity while maintaining a formidable loyalty to the hive itself.

Hunters in the Darkness

The drastic transformation bestowed upon the gloomfolk by the Cult of Shadow Wing has its advantages. Their dark metamorphosis granted them exceptional hunting capabilities, allowing them to survive and prosper in the sinister gloom of the Penumbral Plane. Their sturdy exoskeletons offer them protection, while their venomous stingers serve as potent weapons, effective even against creatures typically resistant to toxins. Their survival strategy is a combination of cunning and brute force. They employ traps and ambushes, making full use of their knowledge of the Penumbral Plane and the Undertanares to stay one step ahead of their adversaries.

The Hive and the Rituals

The gloomfolk's social organization is fascinating. Members of their hives wear elaborate tribal tattoos representing their individual skills and providing a glimpse into their personalities and experiences. These tattoos are ever-evolving, like the gloomfolk, displaying their personal growth and triumphs. The heart of each hive—the Hive Stone—is a sacred relic infused with the blood of all hive members. Its connection with the past is powerful, granting the gloomfolk's respected elders access to the collective memories of their departed kin. It embodies their unity and shared history, symbolizing the very essence of gloomfolk society.

A hive's survival hinges upon the supply of the flesh of penumbral creatures, which is critical for nourishing the younger members of their society. While they build their homes in the Undertanares, their hunting groups must often venture into the Penumbral Plane to kill penumbral creatures to feed their young. Thus, if a hive's hunting party were to go missing, it would be a disaster, and adventurers would be hired to look for them or bring food to the hive.

The hives are considered a sacred bond to the gloomfolks, but they accept outsiders who prove themselves true brothers to them. These individuals may find themselves offered the honor of having their blood mingled with the Hive Stone, binding them to the hive across generations and beyond mortal lifetimes.

Gloomfolk Hero

Medium humanoid (gloomfolk), any chaotic alignment

Armor Class 16 (scale mail)
Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)
Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +5, Wis +5
Skills Athletics +6, Intimidation +3, Perception +5, Stealth +5, Survival +5
Damage Resistances poison
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Deep Speech, Gloomfolkean
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brave. The gloomfolk hero has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Perseverance. The gloomfolk hero has advantage on saving throws against effects of the Penumbral Plane environment.

Hive Loyalty. When the gloomfolk hero sees another gloomfolk take damage within 30 feet of itself, it can take a reaction to move up to its speed toward the attacker, ignoring opportunity attacks, and make one weapon attack against that creature.

Envenom Weapon. As a bonus action, the gloomfolk hero can apply poison to a weapon. Until the start of its next turn, each time a creature is hit by the weapon, it must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save. Each time a creature is subjected to another saving throw against the gloomfolk hero's poison before taking a short or long rest, the DC for the poison increases by 2.

Actions

Multiattack. The gloomfolk hero makes two attacks with its Greataxe or one with its Greataxe and one with its Sting.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage. If the weapon is envenomed, the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking an additional 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking an additional 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save.

Shadowmeld (Recharge 5–6). The gloomfolk hero can meld into the shadows, disappearing from sight. At the start of its next turn, it can emerge from any point of shadow within 60 feet of its original location. If it emerges adjacent to a creature, it can use a bonus action to make a surprise attack with advantage using its Greataxe or Sting. If the attack hits, it deals an extra 1d6 damage of the same type dealt by the weapon.

Gloomfolk Hive Hunter

Medium humanoid (gloomfolk), any chaotic alignment

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Wis +3
Skills Athletics +4, Stealth +3, Survival +3
Damage resistances poison
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Deep Speech, Gloomfolkean
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

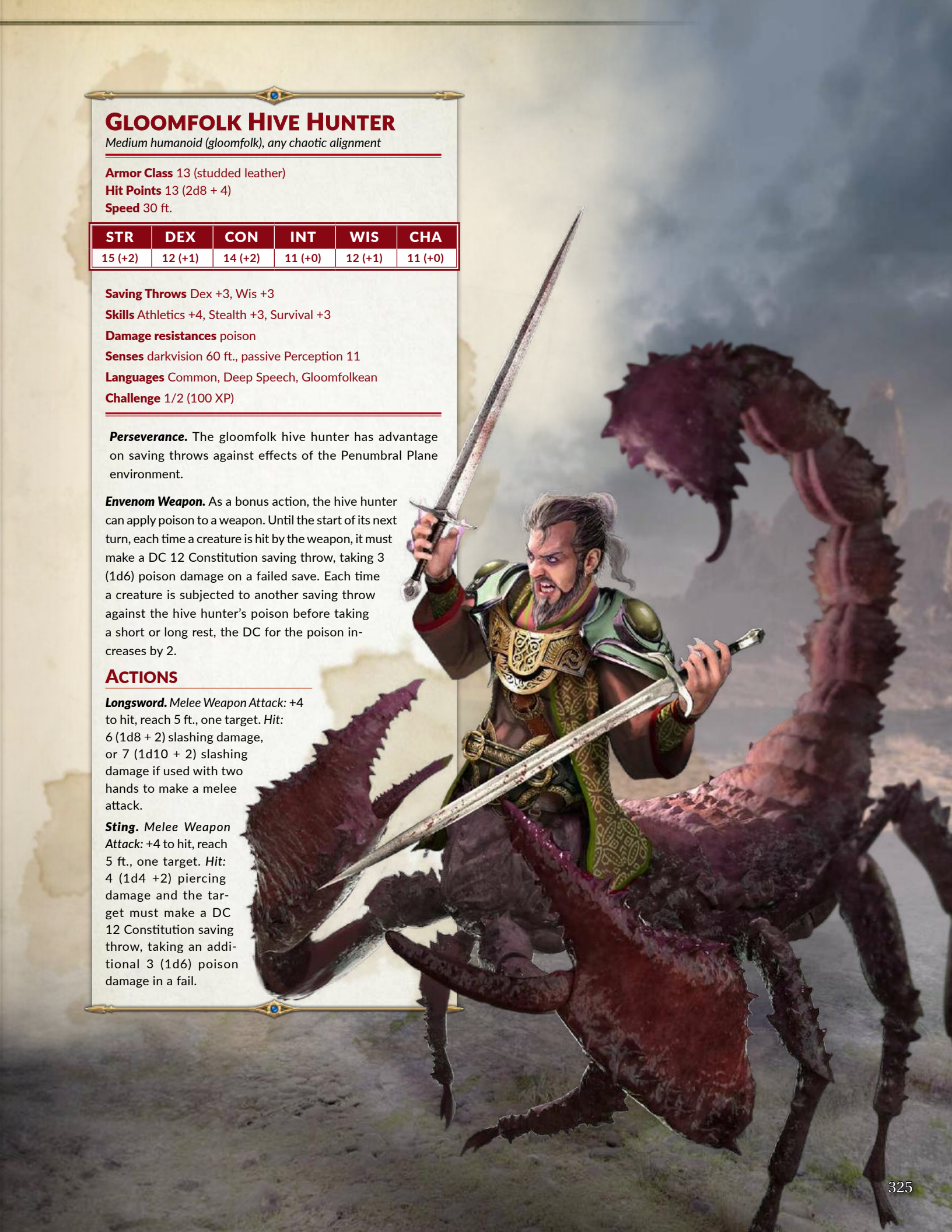
Perseverance. The gloomfolk hive hunter has advantage on saving throws against effects of the Penumbral Plane environment.

Envenom Weapon. As a bonus action, the hive hunter can apply poison to a weapon. Until the start of its next turn, each time a creature is hit by the weapon, it must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save. Each time a creature is subjected to another saving throw against the hive hunter's poison before taking a short or long rest, the DC for the poison increases by 2.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 +2) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking an additional 3 (1d6) poison damage in a fail.



Ironhand

The Ironhand, an iconic military force of Emperor Baleroth, serves as an unbeatable wall against internal and external threats. Though their presence has diminished following the resolution of the Kemet Invasion, their decreased visibility does not signify their decline. Despite their reduced territorial boundaries, the Ironhands remain a fearsome force. A horrifying combination of magic and ruthless pragmatism, they are former bandits, troublemakers, or anyone seen as a potential threat, subjected to a magical ritual called psychosurgery that strips away their memories and emotions. Now, they stand as soulless guardians, with their dreadful reputation instilling fear in both enemies and citizens alike. Their once-familiar faces are hidden behind the distinctive heavy armor of the Ironhand; they carry standardized weapons and bear the open palm symbol, while their helmets are always adorned with red plumes.

Relentless Enforcers

Due to their altered state, Ironhands follow orders to the letter, exhibiting complete obedience without question. Their behavior is devoid of emotion, reacting solely to the commands of their superiors. They are, however, capable of logic to some extent, ensuring they carry out orders in a manner that protects their superiors and themselves unless explicitly told otherwise. Unless receiving an order from a superior, communicating with an Ironhand is futile. Their tactics are brutal and direct, often opting for strength and numbers to overwhelm their enemies. Unrelenting and terrifyingly effective, they serve as relentless enforcers, exemplifying the iron will of the empire.

Ruthless Hierarchy

The Ironhand's hierarchy is well-defined, with higher ranks consisting of free-willed officials and nobles who were not subjected to psychosurgery. These individuals, including the Ironhand Captain, wield immense power, often using their loyal and mindless troops for personal gains. This does not come without risks, as whispers of corrupt officials fuel the fear and mistrust within the Empire. Adding to these tales of corruption are whispers about secret locations where the Ironhand soldiers' souls are kept, perhaps hinting at a way to reverse the process. This fuels the hopes of those families whose loved ones have been transformed into these soulless soldiers, resulting in hiring adventurers to help them.

Ironhand Soldier

Medium humanoid (any species), lawful neutral

Armor Class 19 (splint, shield)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.
Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Animal Handling +2, Athletics +5, Perception +2
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Mindless Soldier. The soldier can't be targeted by any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, nor can it be targeted by divination spells.

Aegis of the Empire. At the start of the soldier's turn, if it has 1 hit point or more, it gains 4 (1d8) temporary hit points.

Iron March. As a bonus action, the soldier can move up to half its speed towards an enemy without provoking opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The soldier makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 +3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Ironhand Brute

Medium humanoid (any species), lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint)
Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	18 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +5
Skills Animal Handling +2, Athletics +7, Perception +2
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Mindless Soldier. The brute can't be targeted by any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, nor can it be targeted by divination spells.

Aegis of the Empire. At the start of the brute's turn, if it has 1 hit point or more, it gains 4 (1d8) temporary hit points.

Iron March. As a bonus action, the brute can move up to half its speed towards an enemy without provoking opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The brute makes two Imperial Maul attacks.

Imperial Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Ironhand Arbalist

Medium humanoid (any species), lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +3, Con +4
Skills Animal Handling +3, Athletics +3, Perception +3
Damage Immunity psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Mindless Soldier. The arbalist can't be targeted by any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, nor can it be targeted by divination spells.

Aegis of the Empire. At the start of the arbalist's turn, if it has 1 hit point or more, it gains 4 (1d8) temporary hit points.

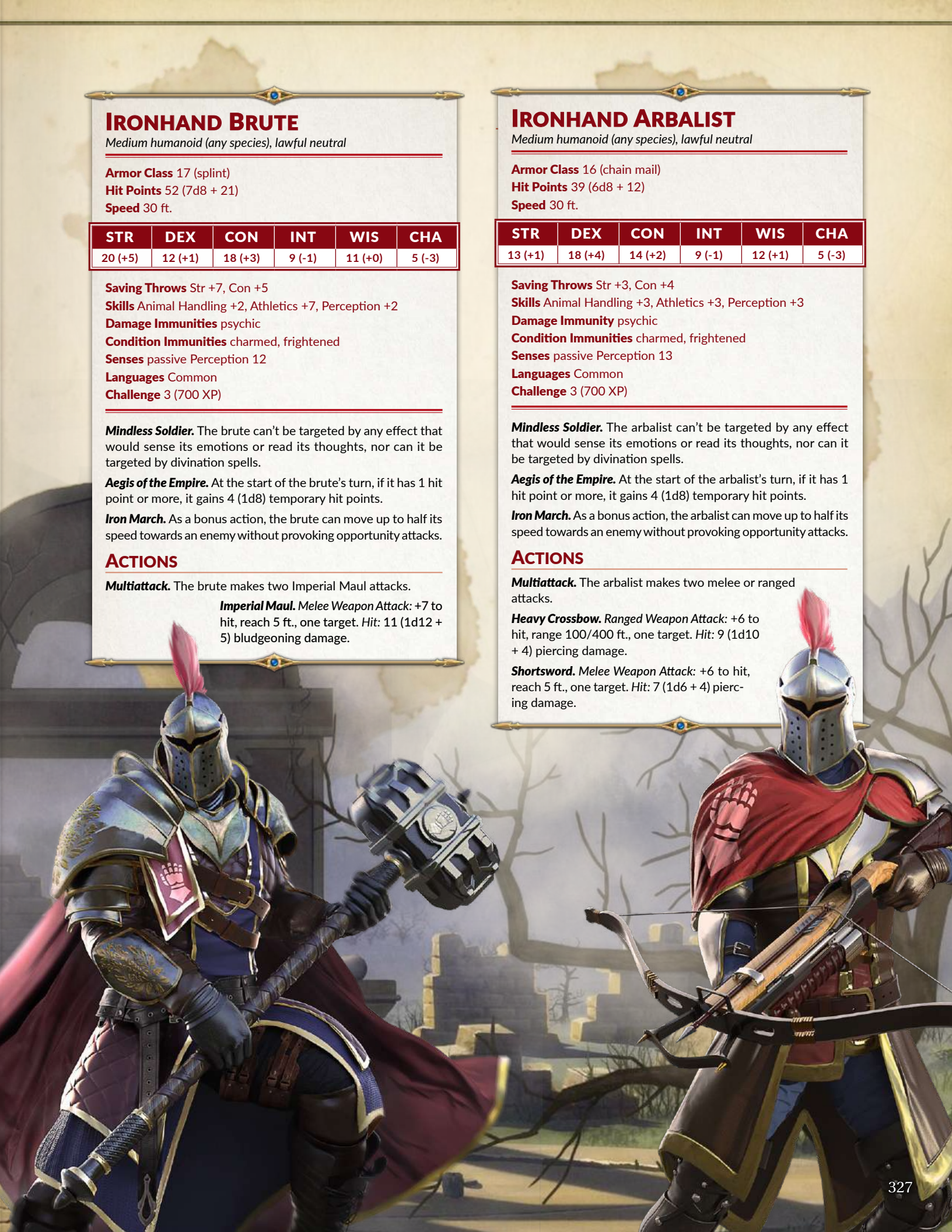
Iron March. As a bonus action, the arbalist can move up to half its speed towards an enemy without provoking opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The arbalist makes two melee or ranged attacks.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.



Kemets

Kemets, a unique subculture of the winter elves, are easily distinguished by their skin tones, which range from grayish-purple to deep ebony, and silvery-white hair. Despite their slender build, they possess an imposing strength, often catching their adversaries off guard. Their cold, calculating eyes, which mirror their patient and wise culture, are a stark reminder of their acceptance of mortality. Named after an ancient prophecy, Kemets were once known as winter elves. However, their desperate pursuit of preventing the world's end at the hands of the Ungods led them to adopt a militaristic lifestyle and fully incorporate necromancy into their societal structure and tasks.

Divisions and Alliances

A climactic event, the Kemet Invasion, resulted in the fracture of the winter elves, with a faction known as the Kemets desiring to transform the world into an eternal winter and convert all living creatures into undead. Despite their similar roots and shared necromantic practices, the kemets and winter elves possess disparate objectives. The former, resigned to the world's upcoming demise, have embraced Bás, the goddess of winter and death, and seek to establish an ice realm of undeath, impervious to the Ungods' corruption. The latter, under the leadership of Baraelmer, aim to restore the benevolence of Bás, and have formed alliances to counter the kemets at sea, and to share knowledge of undead control and elimination.

Battle Tactics and Social Structure

Kemets demonstrate their mastery of necromancy both in their societal organization and their approach to combat. They employ the undead in all aspects of their civilization, from menial tasks to warfare, creating an efficient shield against the Ungods' influence. These undead warriors, immune to fear or loss, serve as ideal troops, reducing the potential for a cataclysmic event caused by the Malrokian Curse. Kemets organize themselves into family clans, displaying their prestige and influence through the size of their mansions and the number of undead servants. As the winter elves aid the Allied Forces in coastal defense, the kemets persist in their quest for world domination, leveraging their powerful necromancy and the terrifying might of their undead army.

If your campaign includes followers of Gullog and devotees of Bás, the Winter Goddess, among the kemets, consider adding the following ability to reflect the divine favor she bestows:

Blessing of the Eternal Winter (1/Day). A kemet devoted to the Winter Goddess may use its bonus action to resurrect an allied kemet that has died within the last minute. The resurrected kemet returns with half its maximum hit points and has the same statistics as in life but is considered an undead creature. This form grants immunity to cold damage, poison damage, and the poisoned condition. The resurrected kemet serves its master for 1 minute before dissolving into a frosty dust. This blessing requires the deceased kemet's body to be largely intact. Once a kemet has been resurrected by this spell, that individual cannot be resurrected by it again.

Kemet Warrior

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +2
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Common, Elvish, Kemet
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The warrior has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the warrior to sleep.

Death Smite (2/Day). When hitting an attack the warrior can choose to deal an extra 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Death Touched (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action the warrior can regain 3d10 + 3 hit points.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

Spellcasting. The warrior casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *chill touch*

1/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *speak with dead*

Reactions

Touch of Bás. When the warrior is hit by a melee attack within 5 feet, it can take a reaction to force the attacker to make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 4 (1d8) cold damage and has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the warrior's next turn.

Kemet Archer

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)
Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+0)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5, Survival +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Elvish, Kemet
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The archer has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the archer to sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The archer makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Rapidshot. The kemet archer makes three longbow attacks. Each attack must be against a different target.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage. The target hit and each creature within 5 feet of it takes 1d4 necrotic damage.

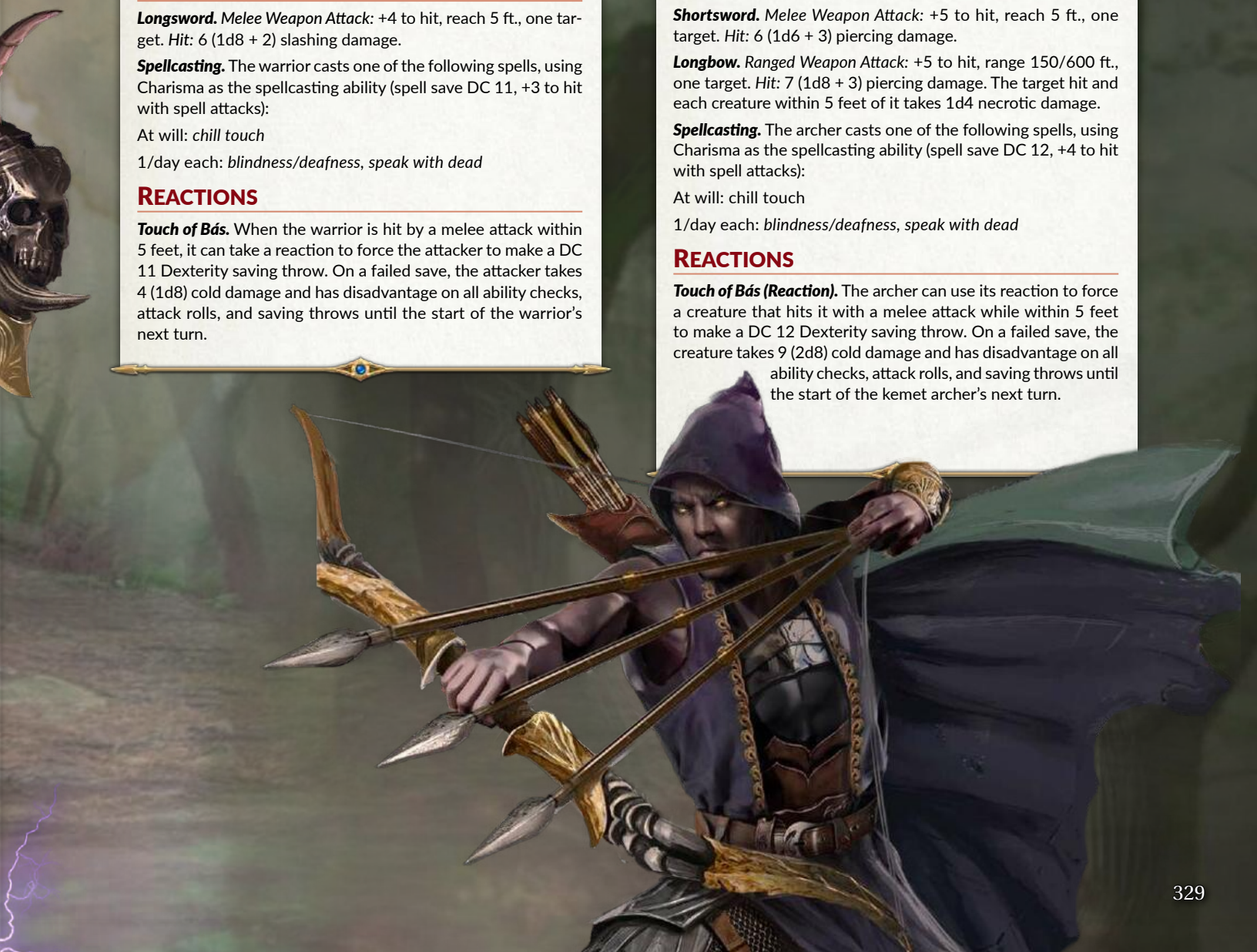
Spellcasting. The archer casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: chill touch

1/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *speak with dead*

Reactions

Touch of Bás (Reaction). The archer can use its reaction to force a creature that hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet to make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 9 (2d8) cold damage and has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the kemet archer's next turn.



Kemet Assassin

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)
Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +7
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Elvish, Kemet
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If the assassin is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the assassin instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Fey Ancestry. The assassin has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the assassin to sleep.

Nimble Escape. The assassin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The assassin deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The assassin makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spellcasting. The assassin casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *chill touch*

1/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *speak with dead*

Reactions

Touch of Bás. When the assassin is hit by a melee attack within 5 feet, it can take a reaction to force the attacker to make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 13 (3d8) cold damage and has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the necromancer's next turn.

Kemet Berserker

Medium humanoid (elf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (unarmored defense)
Hit Points 102 (12d8 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +4, Survival +4
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Elvish, Kemet
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the berserker hits with it (included in the attack).

Fey Ancestry. The berserker has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the Kemet Assassin to sleep.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the berserker can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but all attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Unarmored Defense. The berserker adds its Constitution modifier to its AC when not wearing armor.

Actions

Multiattack. The berserker makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12 + 4) slashing damage.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Spellcasting. The berserker casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *chill touch*

1/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *speak with dead*

Reactions

Touch of Bás. When the berserker is hit by a melee attack within 5 feet, it can take a reaction to force the attacker to make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 13 (3d8) cold damage and has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the berserker's next turn.

Kemet Ice Elementalist

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +7
Skills History +5, Insight +7, Perception +7, Religion +5, Stealth +6
Damage Immunities cold
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Elvish, Kemet
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The ice elementalist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Winter's Blessing. All allies of the ice elementalist within 20 feet gain resistance to cold damage, ignore difficult terrain created by ice or snow, and if undead, their melee attacks deal an extra 1d6 cold damage.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, plus 14 (4d6) cold damage.

Elemental Surge. The ice elementalist exhales an icy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Spellcasting. The ice elementalist casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *blindness/deafness*, *chill touch*, *speak with dead*

1/day each: *animate dead*, *create undead*

Elementalist spells (see the Player's Guide to Tanares):

At will: *mirage mirror*, *water essence*, *wind essence*

1/day each: *force of wind*, *spiritual travel*, *wall of spirit*

Note: The ice elementalist never applies the Elemental Flux effects, and ignores any elemental requirement to cast the spells above.

Reactions

Touch of Bás. When the ice elementalist is hit by a melee attack within 5 feet, it can take a reaction to force the attacker to make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 18 (4d8) cold damage and has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the ice elementalist's next turn.

Life Shift. As a reaction, when the ice elementalist takes damage, it can choose to swap its current hit points with an ally within 60 feet, provided the ally isn't a construct or undead. The ice elementalist assumes the current hit point of the ally, and the ally takes on the ice elementalist's current hit points after it takes the damage from the triggering attack. They are still limited by each of their own maximum hit points. This can prevent the ice elementalist from falling unconscious from reaching 0 hit points.

Kemet Necromancer

Medium humanoid (elf), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (17 with mage armor)
Hit Points 91 (15d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Int +9
Skills Arcana +9, History +9, Perception +6, Religion +9
Damage Immunities cold
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Elvish, Kemet
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Bone Shield (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the necromancer can conjure a shield of floating bones that reduces by 10 the damage from each of the next two attacks it receives. Once the shield has blocked two attacks, it shatters, causing bone splinters to deal 18 (4d8) piercing damage to all creatures within 10 feet of the necromancer. Each creature can make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking half as much damage on a successful save.

Fey Ancestry. The necromancer has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the necromancer to sleep.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Spellcasting. The necromancer casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *blindness/deafness, chill touch, detect magic, mage armor*,magic missile, speak with dead*

3/day each: *blight, cone of cold, ice storm, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement*

1/day each: *blindness/deafness, control weather, create undead, finger of death*

Reactions

Touch of Bás. When the necromancer is hit by a melee attack within 5 feet, it can take a reaction to force the attacker to make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 18 (4d8) cold damage and has disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the necromancer's next turn.

Kepesh

With the arid deserts of Ubel surrounding them, the Kepesh people are a robust yet spiritual nation, mirroring their environment's harsh and mysterious beauty. They carry the strength of the sun in their features: bronze skin hardened by the severe desert wind, eyes reflecting the brilliant colorings of the shifting sands, and muscular structures conditioned by a life of hard labor. Their clothes, made of lightweight fabrics, are practical, designed to protect them from the harsh sun and biting wind. Yet, the Kepesh bear the influence of their deity Ba-Ka in the glyphs and symbols in their garments, as well as in the arcane tattoos adorning their bodies - a sign of their magical prowess and a visual tribute to the Eternal City of their god in the Ethereal Plane.

Conduct and Spiritual Beliefs

The Kepesh community is steeped in tradition and mystical wisdom, with their day-to-day life deeply intertwined with their faith. Their social hierarchy is clearly established, with the Lich Pharaoh at the top, followed by high priests, wizards, and commoners, each playing a critical role in society. The high priests act as spiritual leaders and interpreters of Ba-Ka's will, guiding the people through rituals, prayers, and acts of service. Meanwhile, wizards use their skills to study the Ethereal Plane, mentor promising spellcasters, and contribute to their society's mystical and physical defense. On the other hand, the commoners, though lesser in magical expertise, are no less important. Their hard work and determined faith contribute to the sustenance of the Kepesh community. They also fight for the honor of becoming an Akhu—an eternal spirit in Ba-Ka's divine city.

The Sands of Battle

On the battlefield, the Kepesh are an awe-inspiring sight to behold. Their warriors blend physical prowess with spiritual powers, able to step into the Ethereal Plane to surprise their enemies while branding their weapons with great skill. Harnessing the souls of the fallen, the Kepesh high priests command them as spectral entities that can not only fight as powerful creatures but also scout and provide crucial information about enemy positions. The wizards form the core of their attack force, casting powerful spells to wreak havoc on enemy lines. The Lich Pharaoh leads from the shadows, an immortal figure of fear and reverence.

There have been whispers of entire invading armies disappearing in the deserts of Theocracy, only for them to reappear as spectral entities under Kepesh command. Some warning of an imminent threat from the Celestianists, who perceive the ascension of the Akhu as a blasphemous act. Others speculate about the Lich Pharaoh's alliance with Ba-Ka, suspecting a deeper, darker pact at play.

Ba-Ka Faithful Servant

The Ba-Ka faithful servants are commoners who have turned to a zealous and fanatical faith. Their bronze skin carries many arcane marks, while their clothes are inscribed with cryptic glyphs of servitude to their deity. The zealous gleam in their eyes reflects a fervor that is as blinding as the desert sun. Unlike the average Kepesh commoner, their devotion has transformed them into fanatics, willing to offer their lives to Ba-Ka. What sets them apart is their ability to cast simple spells, a sign of their faith being rewarded. Their days are spent in pursuit of magical knowledge, secrets, and artifacts, sometimes leading them to find ancient relics that may be far more powerful or dangerous than they can handle. Often, these servants form cults or become followers of powerful priests, serving them in hopes of one day becoming blessed Akhus.

Ba-Ka Faithful Servant

Medium humanoid (any species), lawful neutral

Armor Class 12 (padded armor)
Hit Points 9 (2d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Arcana +3, History +3, Religion +3
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undying Zeal. When the faithful servant dies, roll a d6. On a 5 or 6, a shadow appears at the start of the next round, representing the servant's unwavering devotion to Ba-Ka.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Minor Arcana (Recharge 5–6). The faithful servant casts either the *magic missile* spell (as a 1st-level spell) or the *cure wounds* spell (as a 1st-level spell), using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks).

Kepesh Elite Warrior

Hailing from the Kepesh's disciplined military echelons, the elite warriors are an impressive blend of physical might and ethereal mastery. Their muscular forms and hardened skin show their harsh training. Cloaked in their ceremonial armor, these warriors appear as ghostly apparitions against the stark desert ground. They possess the ability to step into the Ethereal Plane, an advantage proven instrumental on the battlefield. Despite their connection to magic, their focus remains primarily on the military hierarchy and their duties. However, stories of elite warriors straying from their paths to explore strange anomalies in the Ethereal Plane have been whispered in hushed tones.

Kepesh Elite Warrior

Medium humanoid (any species), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (ring mail, shield)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +4, Con +4
Skills Athletics +4, History +2, Intimidation +2
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Brute. When the elite warrior hits with a melee weapon attack, the attack deals one extra die of its damage (included in the attack).

Incorporeal Step (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the elite warrior can become incorporeal until the start of its next turn. While in this form, the warrior has resistance to non-magical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and can move through other creatures and objects as though they were difficult terrain, but it can't attack or cast spells. If it ends its turn inside an object, it takes 5 (1d10) force damage. The elite warrior has advantage on the first attack roll it makes after it reverts to its corporeal state.

Actions

Multiattack. The elite warrior makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 13 (2d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

High Priest of Ba-Ka

The high priests of Ba-Ka, spiritual beacons of the Kepesh community, are embodiments of religious devotion. Adorned in ceremonial robes studded with golden symbols of Ba-Ka, these high-ranking priests often decorate their clothes with bones and skulls, a grim reminder of their power over life and death. They strongly resent other faiths and have become masters at disrupting the magic of enemy clerics and paladins. Their determined faith in Ba-Ka drives them to constantly strive for more souls to be reborn as Akhus. However, among the Kepesh, there are whispers of certain high priest sects threatening to destabilize their sacred mystical hierarchy.

High Priest of Ba-Ka

Medium humanoid (any species), neutral

Armor Class 15 (scale mail)
Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +7, Cha +5
Skills Arcana +4, History +4, Perception +7, Survival +7
Damage Resistances necrotic
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses passive Perception 17
Languages Common
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Ba-ka's Servitude. If the high priest kills a humanoid, the target's spirit rises as an Akhu servant in its corpse's space or in the nearest unoccupied space. The Akhu servant is under the high priest's control. The high priest usually has between 0 and 5 Akhu servants (1d6 - 1) already serving him.

Heretic's Admonition. When another creature within 120 feet of the High priest casts casts a cleric or paladin spell, that creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the spell has no effect, and the high priest can choose one expended spell from its spellcasting list to recover.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Spellcasting. The high priest casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *bless, guidance, inflict wounds, resistance, shield of faith, spare the dying*

3/day each: *augury, blindness/deafness, cure wounds, dispel magic, spirit guardians*

1/day each: *divination, guardian of faith, insect plague, mass cure wounds*

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

Sand Wizard

The sand wizards, magical prodigies of the Kepesh, are a striking figure among their kin. Draped in mantles adorned with arcane runes and carrying staffs with Kepesh symbols, they exemplify the Kepesh's deep connection to magic. They are important to the long desert caravans, guiding them through the treacherous dunes and protecting them from the desert's wrath. While they are dedicated to Ba-Ka, their hunger for magical power often surpasses their religious commitment. Unlike their counterparts in other lands, these wizards do not hoard their knowledge. Taking numerous apprentices under their wings, they spark a cycle of knowledge exchange as vast as the desert itself. Their insatiable curiosity sometimes leads them to forbidden terrains, from which often many do not return.

Sand Wizard

Medium humanoid (any species), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 11 (14 with mage armor)
Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	17 (-3)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +5
Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Perception +5, Survival +5
Damage Resistances fire
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Scorching Magic. The save DC for the sand wizard's spells increases by 1 during the morning and evening, by 3 during the three peak hours of sunlight, and decreases by 1 during the night.

Sun Blessing. The sand wizard and all allies within 30 feet are unaffected by natural difficult terrain of deserts and adverse environmental effects caused by desert heat.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Spellcasting. The sand wizard casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *detect magic*, *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage armor*, *prestidigitation*

3/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *fear*, *fireball*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*, *shield*

1/day each: *blight*, *cloudkill*, *divination*

Kikoku

The kikokus are imposing insectoid creatures that stand on average at about the height of a fully grown man. Their large chitinous bodies are covered in a carapace that shimmers in various colors, each hue signaling a unique ability possessed by the creature. These colors range from blue, gray, red, yellow, brown, to green. While their coloration doesn't influence the hierarchy within their communities, these hues significantly impact their capabilities. Despite their visually impressive appearance, their true threat lies in their ability to infiltrate and control the machines and constructs they encounter. This gift has made them formidable foes for the taii'maku, whose strength and defense are primarily based on innovative machinery.

Combat Behavior and Tactics

Kikokus are equally formidable in combat. Their main weapon is a rapid-hardening ooze that they utilize to incapacitate their enemies, leaving them preserved for later consumption. However, their power doesn't stop at immobilizing foes; their hive structure and telepathic link give them a distinct advantage in battle. A kikoku queen, through her psychic powers, can coordinate the others in complex maneuvers and strategies, making them an organized and deadly threat. This hive-mind mentality, combined with abilities based on their colors, can make them a significant challenge even for well-prepared adventurers.

Ecology and Interactions

The kikokus primarily establish their colonies in the southern regions of Tanares, specifically in areas governed by the Theocracy of Kepesh and taii'makus, and they dominate the Clockwork Nexus of the Penumbral Plane. These creatures display absolute loyalty to their hive and queen, ensuring survival through cooperation and coordination. They work tirelessly to sustain their queen and young, both of whom require significant amounts of food for growth and maturation. This insatiable appetite often puts them at odds with nearby communities, especially during breeding season. Their loyalty is so unyielding that when a queen dies, her subjects fulfill her final orders until they perish or find another hive to serve. The longevity and persistence of the kikokus and their capacity to multiply and infest different planes have allowed them to become a continuous and substantial threat.

The kikokus' presence in the Material Plane has raised concerns about a potential invasion led by the First Queen and the Ungods. A kikoku queen, especially one that serves the Ungods, is a great threat to the world. Her keen intellect, bolstered by a strong telepathic link with her subjects, allows her to send minions to the Material Plane with specific orders. These actions serve the interests of the Ungods, aiming to disrupt the material world's order and wreak havoc among its inhabitants.

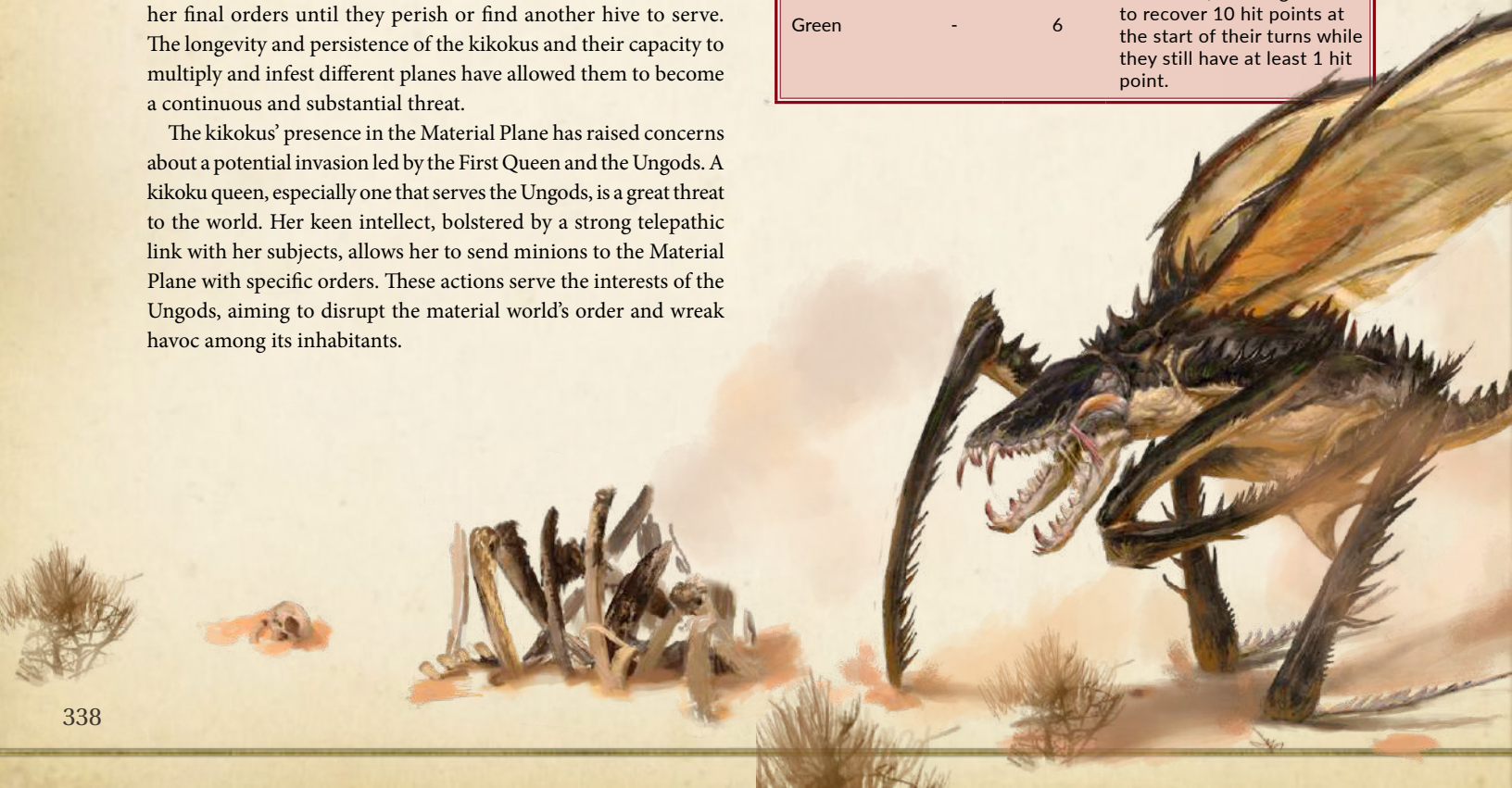
Color and Psychic Auras

Kikokus become stronger when near others. In the kikoku colonies, color distinction holds significant meaning and is related to the unique psychic abilities inherent in these creatures. The carapace of a queen always has the same hue, while the worker and soldier kikokus exhibit a diverse palette, each color corresponding to a specific ability that its aura provides to all other kikokus nearby.

Workers typically exhibit carapace hues of blue, gray, red, and yellow. Soldiers, on the other hand, can display a broader spectrum of colors, including brown and green, in addition to the colors observed in workers.

Note: The effects are not cumulative, multiple kikokus of the same color do not stack their aura. The queen has no aura, but she gains the effects of other kikokus auras.

Carapace Color	Worker (1d4)	Soldier (1d6)	Effect
Blue	1	1	The kikoku's speed is doubled
Gray	2	2	The kikokus harden their carapace, gaining a +2 bonus to AC
Red	3	3	The kikokus become more aggressive, dealing an additional 1d6 damage with their attacks
Yellow	4	4	The kikokus' senses heighten in battle, resulting in a +2 bonus on attack rolls
Brown	-	5	The kikokus' defensive instincts are amplified, providing them with an advantage in saving throws against spells, attacks, or abilities
Green	-	6	The kikokus' metabolism accelerate, allowing them to recover 10 hit points at the start of their turns while they still have at least 1 hit point.



Kikoku Soldier

Large monstrosity, lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 76 (8d10 + 32)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Con +7
Skills Perception +4
Damage Resistances acid, poison
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages telepathy 90 ft. (only with kikokus)
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the soldier can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Beast of Burden. The soldier is considered to be one size larger for the purpose of determining its carrying capacity.

Color Carapce Aura. The soldier has a carapace color that emanates a specific psychic aura effect. Roll a 1d6 to determine the carapace color and corresponding effect using the Carapace Color table. The aura has a range of 60 feet and affects the soldier and all kikokus within range. Multiple auras of the same color do not stack.

Pack Tactics. The soldier has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the soldier's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The soldier makes one Bite attack and one Claw attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Machine Infestation. The soldier can psionically meld its form with any machine or construct it touches. While melded, the soldier takes on the statistics and abilities of the machine/construct, but cannot use its own abilities, including its Color Carapace Aura. A construct can make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to resist this effect. On a successful save, the construct becomes immune to this soldier's Machine Infestation for 24 hours. The soldier can sustain this meld for up to a month before needing to feed, or it will die.

Kikoku Worker

Medium Monstrosity, lawful neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Damage Resistances acid, poison
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages telepathy 30 ft. (only with kikokus)
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Beast of Burden. The worker is considered to be one size larger for the purpose of determining its carrying capacity.

Color Carapce Aura. The worker has a colored carapace that emanates a specific psychic aura effect. Roll a 1d4 to determine the carapace color and corresponding effect using the Carapace Color table. The aura has a range of 60 feet and affects the worker and all kikokus within range. Multiple auras of the same color do not stack.

Pack Tactics. The worker has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the worker's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Machine Infestation. The worker can psionically meld its form with any machine or construct it touches. While melded, the worker takes on the statistics and abilities of the machine/construct, but cannot use its own abilities. A construct can make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw to resist this effect. On a successful save, the construct becomes immune to this worker's Machine Infestation for 24 hours. The worker can sustain this meld for up to a month before needing to feed, or it will die.

Sticky Dough (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by the sticky dough. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 13 Strength check, bursting the sticky dough on a success. The dough solidifies after 1 minute, causing any creature still restrained by it to fall unconscious. A creature trapped in the solidified goo is in a state of suspended animation until freed from the dough and can survive for up to 3 months if fully covered. The solidified dough can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; 10 hit points; vulnerability to acid damage; immunity to poison and psychic damage).

Kikoku Queen

Huge monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 143 (13d12 + 65)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +10, Wis +6
Skills Perception +10
Damage Resistances acid, poison
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 20
Languages telepathy 90 ft. (1 mile with kikokus)
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Hatch (1/Day). As a bonus action, the queen can cause 1d4 eggs to hatch, spawning kikoku workers on a roll of 1-4, or kikoku soldiers on a roll of 5 or 6. These accelerated-born kikokus die after 24 hours.

Magic Resistance. The queen has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Synchrony. The queen mentally coordinates her allies within 60 feet of her, granting them advantage on the attack roll on their turns.

Actions

Multiattack. The queen makes three attacks: one with her bite and two with her claws. Alternatively, she can use Mind Whip twice.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Mind Whip. Ranged Spell Attack: +10 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d8 + 6) psychic damage.

Mental Scream (Recharge 5–6). The queen emits a potent psychic scream in a 120-ft radius. Any creature within the area, other than the queen's brood, must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of her next turn.

Machine Infestation. The kikoku queen can psionically meld its form with any machine or construct it touches. While melded, the kikoku queen takes on the statistics and abilities of the machine/construct, but cannot use its own abilities. A construct can make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw to resist this effect. On a successful save, the construct becomes immune to this queen's Machine Infestation for 24 hours. The queen can sustain this meld for up to a month before needing to feed, or it will die.

Spellcasting. The queen casts one of the following spells, requiring no spell components and using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 18, +6 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *command, detect thoughts, levitate, suggestion*

3/day each: *arcane eye, dispel magic, protection from energy, dominate beast*

1/day each: *dominate monster, telekinesis*

Lindwurm

The lindwurms, creatures of myth and legend, are otherworldly entities whose origins trace back to the distant Stormlands of Trudvang. The curiosity of planeswalking wizards, intrigued by the arcane potential of these beings, led them to bring the hearts of lindwurms into the realm of Tanares. Their story intertwines with the fall of the Mystical Kingdom as its capital, Arcana, crumbled under the destructive onslaught of the Malrokian Curse. Their arcane vaults were destroyed, inadvertently releasing the lindwurm hearts into the realm. In the marshlands and the shadowed depths of caverns near Mystical, these hearts gave birth to the formidable lindwurms. Their bodies are colossal, serpentine entities, each scale a bulwark against both adversaries and the elements, with lengths that can extend up to sixty feet. Their scales either gleam with the spectral purity of fresh-fallen snow or brood in the inky blackness that mimics the void of the abyss.

Behavior and Diet

Within their subterranean lairs, lindwurms inspire veneration and fear, mirroring their stature in their original home, Trudvang. Their cunning is evident in their gastronomic preferences; their diets primarily consist of goblins and forest trolls, inhabitants of the Undertanares regions linked to their cavernous habitats. Some desperate goblinoid tribes have been known to form precarious alliances, offering substantial tributes of food to these beasts in return for protection. The lindwurms usually accept these offerings and the worship accompanying them, but their relentless hunger escalates over time, creating a dangerous situation for the tribes. Many of them end up hiring adventurers to deal with the beasts.

Combat and Cultural Influence

Engaging a lindwurm in combat is challenging, as their physical might is rivaled only by their strategic cunning. The heart of a lindwurm, rumored to imbue its consumer with restorative powers, has proven an irresistible lure for those seeking glory or rejuvenation. However, the legend that a vanquished lindwurm's heart may spawn a new beast adds a layer of cruel irony to such quests. The story of the lindwurms has influenced the traditions of many barbarian tribes. Leaders, echoing tales from the Stormlands, often hunt these beasts to claim their skins as symbols of their might and authority. While no tribal law mandates a leader to slay a lindwurm, many aspirants drawn to power embrace this daunting challenge; few would contest the leadership of those capable of triumphing over such a fearsome beast. The lindwurms continue to shape the traditions and power dynamics within the tribal communities.

Lindwurm

Huge Dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 149 (13d12 + 65)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +9, Wis +5, Cha +7
Damage Immunities cold
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Regenerating Heart. If the lindwurm is slain, its heart begins to regrow a new lindwurm over a period of 1d10 weeks.

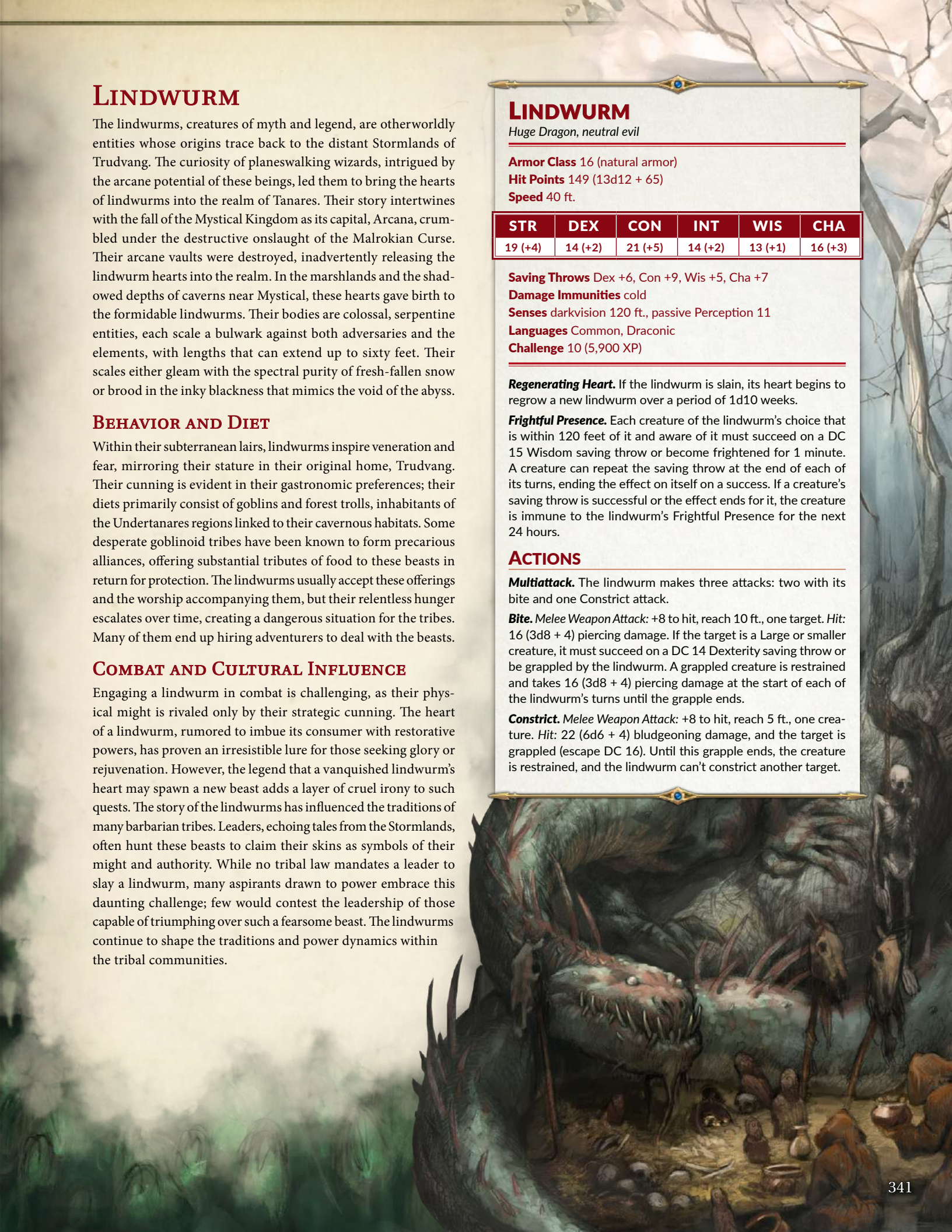
Frightful Presence. Each creature of the lindwurm's choice that is within 120 feet of it and aware of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the lindwurm's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. The lindwurm makes three attacks: two with its bite and one Constrict attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be grappled by the lindwurm. A grappled creature is restrained and takes 16 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage at the start of each of the lindwurm's turns until the grapple ends.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 22 (6d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the lindwurm can't constrict another target.



Penumbral Aberration

The penumbral aberration, a horrifying amalgam of humanoid and cephalopod, is a testament to the corrupting power of the Ungods. These entities have skin resembling that of a slime-coated squid, while their heads sport tentacles instead of mouths, and their bodies, distorted and abhorrent, possess wings and are cloaked in green or gray hues. These creatures stand apart from the emoguns, emerging from living beings that their form transfigures into an aberration. Most of them were victims of the corruption that the Penumbral Plane places on those that wander its depths; without rest, their minds and bodies decay until they are twisted into penumbral aberrations. In some cases, rituals conducted by the Cult of Shadow Wing produce the same effect.

These creatures, although bathed in madness, possess great intelligence. Their minds, capable of studying through the veils of reality, are unpredictable. They roam the Penumbral Plane, driven by agendas that span centuries and defy mortal comprehension. They still suffer from Tamera's Light and Bauron's Vigil.

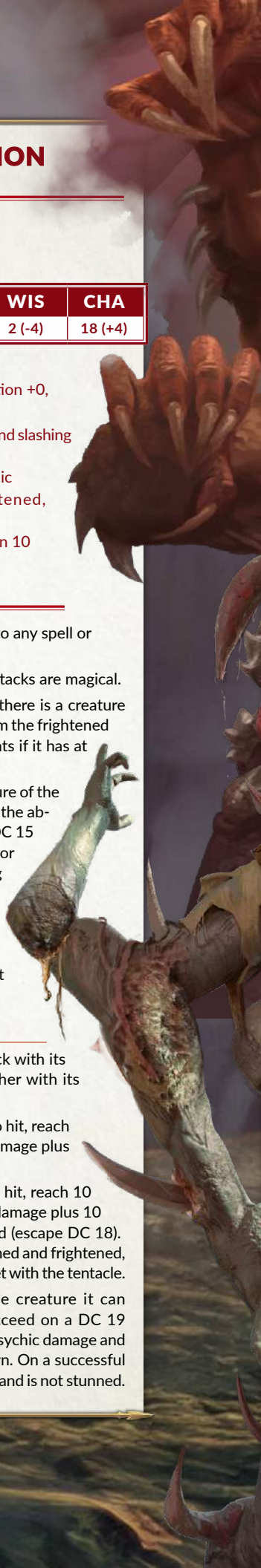
Sinister Motives and Mysterious Agenda

Upon finding rifts to the Material Plane, these creatures embark on quests that sow destruction, incite madness, and breed chaos. Intriguingly, instead of killing their victims, they often drag them into the Penumbra. Here, individuals might slowly succumb to the plane's corrupting powers and insanity, eventually transforming into another aberration.

Some rumors speculate about ways to restore a deeply corrupted individual to their sane form, but no true and consolidated method has been found. Many believe that confronting the fears and the unique madness that overcame that individual is a key part of the process.

Terrifying Combat

In combat, these entities display brute strength, backed by resilience and formidable intellect. The penumbral aberration relies heavily on its terrifying presence, instilling fear in its opponents. It feeds on the fear of its victims, regenerating its own wounds when immersed in their despair. With a versatile arsenal of powers, the penumbral aberration combines mental assault with powerful physical strikes. A target caught in its tentacles suffers from severe psychic damage and great despair while physically restrained.



Penumbral Aberration

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 168 (16d8 + 96)
Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	24 (+7)	2 (-4)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +10
Skills Arcana +11, Intimidation +12, Perception +0, Stealth +4
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Immutable Form. The aberration is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Weapons. The aberration's weapon attacks are magical.

Terror Absorption. At the start of its turn, if there is a creature within 30 feet of the aberration suffering from the frightened condition, the aberration regains 20 hit points if it has at least 1 hit point.

Frightful Presence (Bonus Action). Each creature of the aberration's choice that is within 120 feet of the aberration and aware of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the aberration's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. The aberration makes one attack with its Corrupted Claws and one other attack, either with its Creepy Tentacle or the Mind Shatter attack.

Corrupted Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Creepy Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) psychic damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained and frightened, and the aberration can't grapple another target with the tentacle.

Mind Shatter. The aberration chooses one creature it can see within 60 feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 19 Intelligence saving throw or take 35 (10d6) psychic damage and become stunned until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not stunned.

Stone Spirits

The bond that dwarves share with stones allows their priests to create the stone spirits, large stone statues shaped like dwarves. They also have a moonstone positioned where their heart would be, which channels the divine energy of Dorsi.

Whenever a worthy dwarven hero dies, the dwarf's soul can control the statue and assist the dwarves in defending their sacred places or offer guidance in times of need. Most of the time, they are inactive, but whenever the dwarves are in danger, their eyes emit a green glow, and the statues come to life.

They are formidable in combat, creating an effective wall that is hard to trespass. The brighter the eyes, the more energy the soul channels, and the more powerful the statue. If the dwarf hero fell in combat, the statue gains resistance to the type of damage that killed the hero.

Even out of combat, the statue can communicate with Dorsi high priests or even gift a group with a memory stone. When these specific persons touch the rock, some vivid images from moments when the hero was alive flood their minds.

Stone Spirit

Large construct, lawful good

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 195 (17d10 + 102)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +11, Wis +10
Skills Athletics +11, History +8, Perception +10
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20
Languages Common, Dwarvish
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Dwarven Legacy. The stone spirit has proficiency with all artisan's tools related to metal and stone work. The stone spirit can craft magical items, up to and including those of legendary rarity, given sufficient time and necessary components. The specifics of this crafting process, including time required and components needed, are determined by the GM.

Immutable Form. The stone spirit is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The stone spirit has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Stalwart Sentinel. The stone spirit cannot be surprised and does not require sleep, food or drink, and never becomes fatigued.

Actions

Multiattack. The stone spirit makes two Warhammer attacks and one Shield Bash attack.

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be pushed back 10 feet and knocked prone.

Legendary Action

The stone spirit can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The stone spirit regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Hammer Slam. The stone spirit makes one Warhammer attack.

Defense Surge (Costs 2 Actions). The stone spirit reinforces its defenses. Until the end of its next turn, the stone spirit has resistance to all damage.

Earthquake (Costs 3 Actions). The stone spirit slams its hammer into the ground, causing a localized earthquake. Each other creature within 15 feet of the stone spirit must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The area becomes difficult terrain until cleared.

Reactions

Shield Wall. When a creature the stone spirit can see targets it or an ally within 5 feet of it with an attack, the stone spirit can use its reaction to cause the attack to have disadvantage.

Spectral Ninjas

Created by Yokensha to serve the Dragon Clan, the spectral ninjas are a widely recognized disruptive force in Yama and across the Tanarean continent. Their mission is twofold: to destroy the Cult of Shadow Wing and advance their own clan's purposes. Uniquely, they are solid entities formed of humanoid-shaped shadows, but unlike other shadow beings, they are not ethereal and cannot normally pass through small openings. However, they can contort their forms to escape restraints when enveloped in darkness.

Bound Souls. The Spectral Ninjas arise from the magic of mystical tattoos, initially created by Yokensha, and applied upon the servants of the Dragon Clan by the bauronite dragons. When a clan member dies, this magic is a protective measure, keeping their soul from descending into the Penumbral Plane, where it could become an emogun. This protection is crucial for these servants, given their morally questionable actions in their fight against the Ungods, often corrupting them with sins. This enchantment anchors their souls to the Material Plane, and on the next full moon following the servant's death, that soul emerges from its resting place, taking form as a corporeal undead entity made of shadows.

Dragon Clan Loyalty. Although these entities are embodiments of chaos, akin to the Bauronite Dragons that inspire their clan, they are magically bound to be loyal to their organization, incapable of any form of betrayal. This ensures their operational freedom, as the Dragon Clan knows that the spectral ninjas are most effective when granted the autonomy to devise their own strategies, excelling in improvisation.

Spectral Ninja

Medium undead, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)
Hit Points 45 (7d8 + 14)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +5
Skills Acrobatics +10, Deception +4, Intimidation +7, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +10
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages any three languages
Challenge 6 (5,000 XP)

Ambusher. The spectral ninja has advantage on attack rolls against any surprised creature.

Cunning Action. The spectral ninja can take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Evasion. If the spectral ninja is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the spectral ninja instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Innate Spellcasting. The spectral ninja's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *mage hand*

1/day each: *darkness*, *disguise self*, *misty step*

Shadow Movement. While in dim light, the spectral ninja ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can't reduce its speed or cause it to be restrained. It can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The spectral ninja deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spectral ninja that isn't incapacitated, and the spectral ninja doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Shadow Poison. A creature hit by the spectral ninja attack must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target also becomes unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

Actions

Multiattack. The spectral ninja makes two melee attacks.

Wakizashi (shortsword). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, and apply Shadow Poison.

Reaction

Kawarime. The spectral ninja adds 3 to its AC against one attack that would hit it. To do so, the spectral ninja must see the attacker. If the attack misses, the spectral ninja can teleport to 20 feet away and take a hide action, leaving a simple object behind in its place, usually a dummy. The object disappears after one minute.

Taii'makian Constructs

The taii'makian constructs are highly advanced mechanical and magical constructs created by the taii'maku for a wide range of purposes. These constructs are designed to be emotionless but intelligent, possessing great power and durability thanks to their virtually unlimited energy source: bauronite ore. Many highly desire and covet this remarkable ore, but only the taii'maku possess the knowledge to harness its properties to create constructs.

The development of taii'makian constructs and the discovery of the bauronite have profoundly impacted the technological advancement and cultural evolution of the taii'maku. The ability to create and control these constructs has allowed the taii'maku to accomplish incredible feats, such as constructing elevated structures, excavating deep mines, and even defending themselves against powerful enemies. Moreover, the knowledge of bauronite became an integral part of their culture, imbuing them with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Complex Construction. The process of constructing taii'makian constructs is highly complex, requiring not only skilled craftsmen but also detailed manuals that outline the necessary steps and materials. Similar to the construction of golems, the creation of a taii'makian construct requires precision and attention to detail. The rarest material used in their construction is bauronite, an unstable stone packed with immense energy, which is used to form the central core of these constructs. Taii'makian constructs are highly prized for their incredible power and durability.

Followers of a Single Master. Taii'makian constructs are always bound to a single master, designated at the time of their creation. The master places the bauronite in the center of its chest and attunes it to the construct. Once attuned, the taii'makian construct follows its master's commands without question, using its power and durability to complete any assigned task, even if it means destroying itself. If the master of the construct wants to pass the control to someone else, they must first de-attune the construct. The new master must then attune to the construct before it will obey their commands. Regardless of the type of construct, it is always loyal to its current master and will never act against them. These constructs are considered an integral part of the taii'maku culture.

Unstable Core. Due to its bauronite core, the energy of the Taii'makian construct is almost infinite. However, regular maintenance is necessary to prevent the core from destabilizing. The maintenance requires only a skilled taii'maku engineer with the proper tools and 8 hours of work, though they charge twice the standard price for a day's work of a specialist. It needs to be done at least once per month.

If the core does become unstable, the construct loses its attunement with its master and may begin to act erratically, depending on its type. Some of them become very dangerous.

Because bauronite is a rare and valuable material, defeating a taii'maku construct rewards twice the normal value in treasure found by creatures of the same challenge rating unless the core is destroyed, at GM discretion.

Construct Nature. A taii'makian construct doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Noisy. The constant movement of its gears prevents a taii'makian construct from being silent. They automatically fail all Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Makian Guard

The makian guard is a medium construct with four arms, created to protect important and wealthy figures in taii'maku society. They are also tasked with guarding valuable items and important locations within the Illus. When their bauronite core becomes unstable, they begin attacking creatures randomly, as if protecting places, defining randomly what they need to protect.

Makian Guard

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +6
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with adamantine weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages understands Taii'makian and the languages of its creator, but can't speak
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Death Burst. When the makian guard dies, it explodes in a burst of steel shards. Each creature within 15 feet of it must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Immutable Form. The makian guard is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Weapons. The makian guard's weapon attacks are magical.

Opportunist. The makian guard has a number of reactions equal to 4 minus the number of creatures it is grappling. It can only use these reactions to make opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The makian guard makes up to four melee attacks. It makes one fewer attack for each creature it is grappling.

Grab Hand. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained. The makian guard has four arms, each of which can grapple one target.

Makian Thopter

The makian thopter is a flying construct created to transport goods and creatures through the air. They are very strong and capable of carrying much weight with relative ease. Over time, improvements and adaptations have been implemented, and their function has also extended to serve as a scout for taii'maku cities during their travels and as a hunter of fugitives and prisoners. When its bauronite core becomes unstable, it begins to hunt creatures randomly, capturing and releasing them at random places. Sometimes, they may even release individuals at high altitudes, often leading to a tragic death. Another common failure is for it to start searching for carriage loads and supplies from establishments or farms, and carrying them away to hoard on a single random point.

Makian Thopter

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)
Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +9, Dex +6
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with adamantine weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands Taii'makian and the languages of its creator, but can't speak
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Death Burst. When the makian thopter dies, it explodes in a burst of steel shards. Each creature within 15 feet of it must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Immutable Form. The makian thopter is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Weapons. The thopter's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The thopter makes two melee or ranged attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Shock Weapon. *Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. Hit:* 20 (4d8 + 2) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned. The stunned target can make a new saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Capture/Charge. The makian thopter can capture a creature that it has stunned and is within 5 feet. The captured creature becomes unconscious until it is removed from the makian thopter, which can only occur when the makian thopter's hit points are reduced to 0 or if it releases the creature as an action. The makian thopter can only capture one creature of Medium size or smaller at a time. Alternatively, the makian thopter can store items within it, occupying a total volume of 125 cubic feet and/or a weight of 850 pounds. If it is carrying items, it cannot capture a creature unless it ejects the items, which it can do as an action.

Makian Shaker

The makian shaker is a Huge construct created to clear the path for taii'maku cities' travels by destroying or moving obstacles that could hinder their journey. Over time, other uses were given to the makian shaker, and it began to defend cities from large-scale attacks, ensuring that they could escape while holding off attacking troops using its abilities, thus ensuring the survival of many taii'maku soldiers. This required refining the makian shaker to withstand attacks for as long as possible, to regenerate, and even to rebuild itself after being defeated, allowing it to track the city and return. When its bauronite core becomes unstable, it begins to destroy any obstructions it finds, often attacking villages or cities randomly, as if opening the path for a taii'maku city to pass.

Makian Shaker

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 260 (20d12 + 120)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +7
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with adamantine weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages understands Common and Taii'makian and the languages of its creator, but can't speak
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Death Burst. When the makian shaker dies, it explodes in a burst of steel shards. Each creature within 15 feet of it must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Immutable Form. The makian shaker is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Regeneration. The makian shaker regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Automatic Reconstruction. If the makian shaker drops to 0 hit points, it regains all of its hit points in 24 hours unless its remains are thoroughly destroyed, as by a *disintegrate* spell or equivalent.

Electric Retaliation. When the makian shaker takes damage from an attack, it releases a shockwave of electrical energy. Each creature within 15 feet of it must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Magic Weapons. The makian shaker's weapon attacks are magical.

Siege Monster. The makian shaker deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The makian shaker makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d6+10) bludgeoning damage.

Core Pull (Recharge 5–6). The makian shaker opens its bauronite core compartment, creating a gravitational pull. Each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 20 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 55 (10d10) force damage and is pulled 30 feet towards the makian shaker, or half as much damage and not being pulled on a successful one.

Earth Shake. The makian shaker stomps the ground, causing a localized earthquake. All creatures within 90 feet of it must make a DC 24 Strength saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage and being knocked prone on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one without falling prone. The makian shaker cannot use this ability if it is prone.

Makian Tool

Initially constructed by solitary taii'maku researchers or artisans in need of assistance with their tasks, makian tools proved so satisfactory that they became popular not only among all taii'maku but also artisans of other species. These tools were developed to combine the characteristics of an assistant with the actual working tool. When their bauronite core becomes unstable, they keep trying to do their work endlessly, often creating chaos.

Makian Tool

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Taii'makian
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Built to work. The makian tool has proficiency in one skill of its creator's choice.

Immutable Form. The makian tool is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Tool Machine. Each makian tool can serve as one specific type of toolkit (determined by the GM). The makian tool has proficiency with it and can use the Help action to assist with checks related to that toolkit, as long as the creature it's helping is within 5 feet of it. It can use its Help action while being used by another creature as a toolkit.

Actions

Tool Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Chapter 10
Magic Items

Tanares is home to many unique magic items, born either out of the necessities imposed by the perpetual state of Cold War under the Malrokian Curse, or from the distinct needs of its unique species, such as the taii'maku, cirrus, and gloomfolk. This chapter showcases some of these extraordinary items unique to Tanares, each adaptable for use in your own campaign settings as a GM.

Amber Blade

Weapon (any sword), common

This enchanted elven blade, crafted from amber, functions as a metal weapon of its type and can also be used as a spellcasting focus.

Arcane Force Armor

Armor (any), very rare (requires attunement)

The wearer can use a bonus action to expend one of the armor's three charges, activating a protective energy that grants a +3 bonus to AC and resistance to force damage for 1 minute. The armor regains all expended charges every dawn.

Augur Mask

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this mask, you can make Wisdom (Perception) checks as a bonus action. Additionally, you can spend one of the mask's 3 charges to gain truesight out to the range of your normal vision for the next minute. The mask regains all expended charges every dawn.

Bauronite Staff

Staff, very rare (requires attunement)

This staff can absorb magic from spells cast within 120 feet of it, gaining a number of charges equal to the spell's level. It can store up to 10 charges. As a bonus action, the wielder can expend any number of the stored charges to deal 1d6 force damage per charge spent on a creature within 120 feet.

Black Feather

Wondrous item, common

This item can appear as a fountain pen, a small magic wand, or even a feather quill. Upon uttering a command word, the *black feather* floats next to its user, aligning with the nearest piece of parchment.

While active, it transcribes everything spoken by the user until deactivated using the same command word.

Capture Canvas

Wondrous item, uncommon

This device resembles a miniature white canvas small enough to fit in the palm of an open hand. Upon uttering a command word, it "captures" the entire scene in front of it, replicating the image on its surface as if viewed from the user's perspective.

The image remains stored until a new command word is issued to capture a new scene. The user can also utter the command word to erase the current image from the *capture canvas*.

Curupira's Boots

Wondrous item, uncommon

These boots, which appear as simple, worn leather footwear, harbor a concealed trick. When worn, they cause all footprints left by the wearer to appear as if they are going in the opposite direction, misleading anyone who might be tracking the wearer's path. All checks to track the wearer have disadvantage.

Dark Manual

Wondrous item, rare

This tome, often handed down through countless generations by noble families or esteemed wizard lineages, contains detailed information on the occult. When consulting this book, you have advantage on Intelligence (Arcana and Religion) checks related to the Penumbral Plane.

Detection Powder

Wondrous item, uncommon

Typically sold in sealed bags, this dark powder is often used at crime scenes. When released into the air, it quickly disperses in a 15-foot radius area, illuminating certain clues in it for the next 15 minutes. This includes:

Footprints

Indications of objects that have been removed from the location within the last 24 hours

Bloodstains up to 30 days old (even if previously cleaned)

Each bag contains up to three uses of the powder, which recharge every dawn. Consult your GM regarding what else the *detection powder* might reveal.

Dragon Bone Whip

Weapon (whip), rare

This magic weapon grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. When you attack with it, its range extends by an additional 10 feet, and it inflicts an extra 1d6 slashing damage upon hitting a creature. Furthermore, on a successful hit, you can use the whip to grapple a creature up to one size larger than yourself. The creature must succeed on a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to escape the grapple. While grappled, the creature is restrained, and you can't use the whip to attack.

Dragon Breath Staff

Staff, legendary (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This staff functions as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls. When you are wielding it, you also gain a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls.

The staff has 20 charges. As an action, you can expend 1 or more of its charges to unleash a breath attack similar to a dragon's. Each creature in a 60-foot-long, 5-foot-wide line must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 1d6 damage for each charge expended on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. You can expend up to 10 charges on a single breath attack. The damage type depends on the type of dragon the staff is associated with. The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the staff turns into ashes.

Dragon Plate Armor

Armor (plate), legendary (requires attunement)

This armor, crafted from the rare tameranium and inlaid with dragon scale fragments, grants a +3 bonus to AC and offers resistance to the damage type associated with the dragon from which the scales originated. As an action, once per day, you can emit a terrifying dragon aura. Every creature within 30 feet must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the frightened condition imposed by a dragon or similar source for the next 24 hours.

Dragon Scale Shield

Armor (shield), legendary (requires attunement)

This shield, crafted from dragon scales, grants a +2 bonus to AC in addition to the shield's normal AC bonus. Furthermore, you are immune to the damage and effects of any dragon's breath weapon or similar ability.

Emanation Mask

Wondrous item, uncommon

While wearing this mask, you can discern the distance and direction of energies emanating from portals up to a mile away, though the destination remains hidden.

Encoding Ring

Ring, uncommon

This silver ring, adorned with a purple rune, possesses an interesting feature. When the wearer utters a command word followed by a self-chosen password and touches the ring to a piece of text, the text becomes illegible until a *ring of decoding* is used on it and the original password is spoken.

A character can attempt to read the encoded text with a DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If they fail, the check cannot be retried.

Interception Crystal

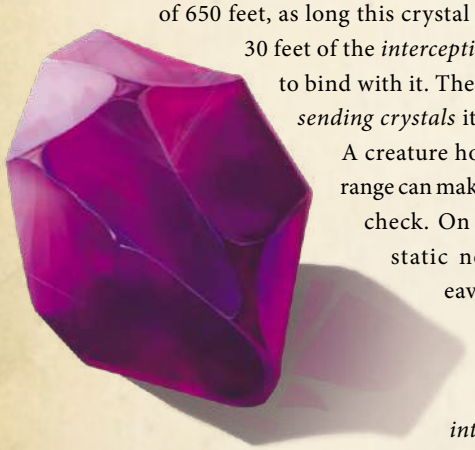
Wondrous item, rare

Upon speaking a command word, this elongated bauronite-crafted crystal emits a purplish glow and can intercept messages sent via *sending crystals*.

The bearer of the *interception crystal* can hear all conversations conducted through any *sending crystal* within a range of 650 feet, as long this crystal was placed at any time within 30 feet of the *interception crystal* for at least 1 minute to bind with it. There is no limit to the number of *sending crystals* it can bind.

A creature holding a *sending crystal* within range can make a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they detect a faint static noise and realize someone is eavesdropping via an *interception crystal*, though they don't discern the crystal's location.

Rumors of legendary *master interception crystals* that do not require the bound are feared by spies.



Master Key

Wondrous item, very rare

A desired item among infiltrators, this key is crafted from tameranium. It appears simple but is capable of unlocking any lock, including magical ones.

Each time the master key is used to unlock a lock, the GM rolls a d8. On a 1, the key breaks after use. If the key is used to unlock a magically sealed lock, such as by an *arcane lock* spell or similar effect, it breaks on a roll of 1, 2, or 3. The *master key* can only unlock locks with a keyhole and cannot bypass magical seals that are not based on an actual lock.

Personal Document

Wondrous item, common

This rectangular item has a lid on its upper side, typically bearing the coat of arms of a country or city. Opening the lid reveals an identity portrait and basic information about the individual. It is magically protected against water and normal wearing, and its authenticity can be checked by anyone in possession of another similar item.

This item is typically used by individuals associated with the governments of the Republic, Empire, and Magocracy, or by individuals wishing to legally travel between these countries.

At the bottom of the document, there's space for magical symbols. These symbols, placed by authorities, signify special permissions, restrictions, or convictions the individual holds. Their authenticity can be verified by spellcasters at borders.

Forging one of them is particularly difficult, requiring a DC 20 Dexterity (forgery kit) check.

Portal Distortion Jewel

Wondrous item, rare

The *portal distortion jewel* is a small disc featuring a bauronite crystal at its center. When placed in a teleportation portal (usually on a portion of its arch or runic circle), it manipulates the teleportation energy, causing anyone who steps through it to be transported to a random location. The destination is always another portal.

The *portal distortion jewel* continues to operate until it is removed from the portal it is distorting. Any creature that crosses the distorted portal will be transported to the same random location. If the *portal distortion jewel* is removed, the portal immediately reverts to its original function.

The destination can be determined by a d20 roll on the following table:	
1-6	Random portal, including in the Penumbral Plane or other planes.
7-14	Portal of a distant destination, but still in the same plane.
15-19	Portal of a nearby destination in the same plane.
20	Original intended destination.

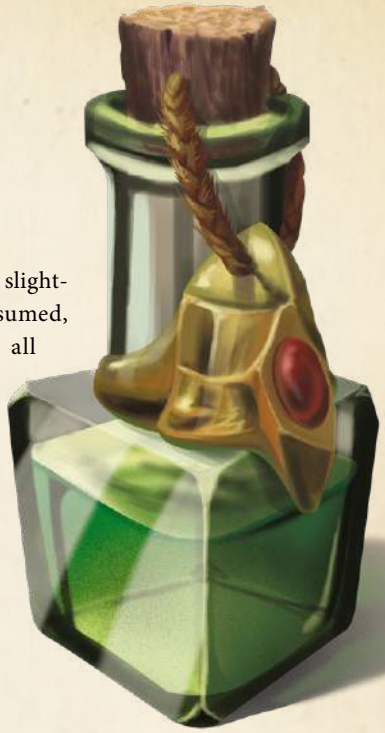
Potion of Penumbral Resistance

Potion, rare

Upon drinking this potion, the creature has advantage on all saving throws against the environmental effects of the Penumbral Plane for a duration of 12 hours.

Potion of Perfect Memory

Potion, common



This greenish potion has a slightly sweet scent. When consumed, you can accurately recall all the details you perceive for 1 hour. These memories persist for about 3 days, and effects that erase memory do not affect you during this time.

Ring of Spy Mind

Ring, rare

Crafted from dark steel, this thin and smooth ring grants you immunity to spells and effects that read your thoughts or detect your alignment, as well as immunity to the charmed condition, while you wear it. This ring does not give off a magical aura when subjected to *detect magic* or similar effects. Its magical nature can only be discerned by testing its effects.

Scroll of Copying

Wondrous item, uncommon

This seemingly ordinary scroll is marked with a special seal. When the seal is pressed against another scroll, the contents of that scroll are copied onto the *scroll of copying*. The copied contents vanish from the scroll after 24 hours. A *scroll of copying* cannot duplicate the content on another *scroll of copying*, and it does not copy effects of magical symbols or magic scrolls, only their textual content.

Sending Crystals

Wondrous item, varies (requires attunement)

These tameranium-crafted crystals are used for transmitting spoken messages. Each crystal bears a unique, non-transferable name etched in draconic runes.

The crystal's bearer can speak a command word followed by the name of the destination crystal to send a message. If the target crystal is within range, the receiver crystal glows, and its bearer can speak a command word to accept the magic connection. For one minute, the crystals can transmit and receive spoken messages that are audible at both ends.

Once a crystal creates three magic connections to others, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Sending crystals come in three primary forms:	
Minor Crystal (Uncommon)	A button-sized crystal capable of sending messages up to 300 feet away.
Major Crystal (Rare)	Portal of a distant destination, but still in the same plane.
King's Crystal (Legendary)	A 2-foot diameter, 80-pound crystal that can send messages up to 100 miles away.

Space Suitcase

Wondrous item, uncommon

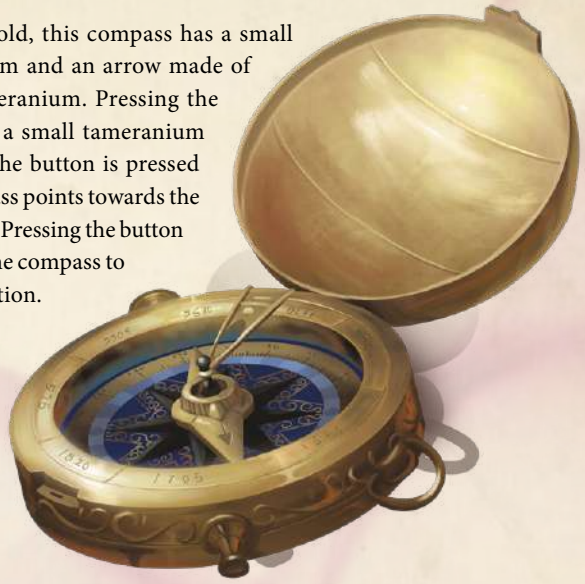
This seemingly mundane suitcase is expertly crafted, with its design varying based on its maker. It contains an extra-dimensional space capable of holding up to 125 pounds. The owner can speak a command word to render the suitcase's properties undetectable. If the command word is not spoken, opening the suitcase reveals only the non-magical storage capacity typical of a normal suitcase. If damaged or destroyed, the contents of the extra-dimensional space spill out into the nearest unoccupied space.

Placing a *bag of holding*, *portable hole*, or similar item inside the extra-dimensional space of the *space suitcase* immediately destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it to a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.

Tameranium Compass

Wondrous item, uncommon

Crafted from gold, this compass has a small button on its rim and an arrow made of crystalline tameranium. Pressing the button releases a small tameranium crystal. When the button is pressed once, the compass points towards the released crystal. Pressing the button again restores the compass to its normal function.



Thermal Armor

Armor (any), uncommon

Tailored by the taii'makus for desert pilgrimages, this armor combines leather and specialized fabrics to mitigate extreme temperatures. The wearer suffers no penalties in environments ranging from -100° to 200° Fahrenheit.

Index

A
A´Laafia 180
Abhorroth, the Dark Titan 136
Ahr'Arthra 180
Aibidh 27, 69
Akhu 70, 262
Aldo Cotton-Hair 166
Allied Forces 22, 39-41
Allied Forces 39-46
Ancient Age 246-247
Arcanum 23, 42-43
Arcanum 23, 42-43
Ardilog 58
Augur Servants 266
B
Ba-Ka 28,70
Bank of Hajal 210-211
Baraelmer, the Battlemaster 117
Bás 28, 71
Bauron 29, 72
Bauronite 250
Bauronite Dragon 290-294
Becca 159
Bellara 60
Bellara´s Servants 274
Ben'net 15, 120-127
Bloodbound 214-215
Bonas Weyrdo 127
Breith 29, 73
Bruld 196
C
C'Thraxis 30, 74
Captain Black Soul 151
Captain Brook 102
Captain Dorro 150
Captain Liana 150
Captain Maryne 151
Cardinal Erithad 103
Catharina 63
Caverns of the Magma Giants 20, 58-59
Celestianist Church 214-215
Central Empire 16, 90-103
Cildroly 159
Circle of Spirits 194
Clockwork 20, 64-65
Collectors 216, monster 284
Collectors 284-285
Cosmology 257
Crystal Forest 20, 60-61
Cult of Shadow Wing 26, 44-45
D
D.E.A.T.H. 218-219
Darkall, continent 206-208
Dernas 144
Dorsi 30, 75
Draconic Council 220-221
Drakes 306
Droggath 31, 76
E
Emoguns, monster 306
Emperor Baleroth 100
Empire see Tanarean Empire
Endless City 20, 62-63
Eternal Cathedral 20, 56-57
Eternal Circle 224-225
F
Fallen Age 248
First Queen 64
Forces of Darkall 24, 46-47
Fruitful 31, 77
Fumetsu Tenshikin 32, 78
G
Gideoni 57
Gloomfolk, monster 324-325
Glorious One 32, 79
Godly Age 242
Grace Sung, Counselor Abjurer 144
Grizza, the Red Mother 197
H
Halthidon 158
Heroes Age 244
Hoccugius, Counselor Conjurer 145
I
Imperial Age 244
Inverted Archives 20, 66-67
Ironhands, monster 326-327
K
Kalistessenâmun 188
Katar 196
Kemets, monster 328-333
Kepesh, monster 334-337
Kikoku, monster 338-340
King Huradrin 167
King Rurik 166
King Sundaryll 116
King Trygve, the Werebear 137
King Ukhumlim Stronghope 167
Kingdoms of the Past 236-241
Kolbjörn 14, 126-137
Krynnethoth 33, 80
L
Lana the Valkyrie 137
Lumina 33, 81
Lunar Perigee 262-263
Lypoec 54
M
Magic Items 350-353
Magocracy of Mage Tower 15, 138-145
Malrokian Age 243
Malrokian Curse 9
Monster 284
Moonstone 252
Myr 101
Mystical see Wastelands
N
Nature Spirits 35, 85
New Monsters 262
Niary 158
O
Ohris, the Monk 205
Òigridh 34, 82
Other Organizations 234-235
Oz Stormwind 126
P
Parliament of the Sea 226-227
Paru-Haka 188
Penumbral Aberration 340
Penumbral Anger 309
Penumbral Disgust 310
Penumbral Dragon 295-299
Penumbral Envy 311
Penumbral Fear 312-313
Penumbral Gluttony 314
Penumbral Greed 316-317
Penumbral Grudge 315
Penumbral Lust 318
Penumbral Misery 319
Penumbral Pain 320
Penumbral Plane 20, 50-67
Penumbral Pride 321
Penumbral Sadness 323
Penumbral Sloth 322
Pets 254-255
Prime Minister Tellatius 114
Prince Quizzarian 117
Protection Domain 164
Q
Queen Anariel 116
R
Realm of Yama 19, 198-205
Reginheraht see Magocracy of Mage Tower
Regions of Tanares 14-21
Relic Hunters 228-229
Republic of Freelands 16, 104-119
Rokaru, the Samurai 204
S
Saezz Skyborn 126
Salevras 67
Seashores 16, 144-149
Sedura 119
Se-Nâmum 189
Sindile Forest 19, 152-159
Sir Erick 114
Solnertha 172
Species 10-13
Spectral Ninja, monster 345
Stone Spirit, monster 344
Storm Islands 17, 168-173
Stravian 14, 160-167
T
T´ssir 181
Taii´Makian Constructs, monster 346-349
Taii'maku City States 17, 174-181
Tamera & Bauron 34, 83
Tamera 35, 84
Tameranium 252
Tameranium Dragon 301-305
Tanarean Empire 25, 48-49
Tanarean History 246-251
Teraphas 173
The Surface 20,54-55
Theocracy of Kepesh 18, 182-189
Thidexius 102
Third Eye 230-231
Transportation 253-254
Tsuyoko, the Ninja 205
Tsvetan 18, 190-197
U
U´Tibam 181
Undertanares 206-207
V
Vaeraunt 142-143
Vaklav 127
Velord 189
W
Wasteland 19, 210-211
Watchers 232-233
X
Xateri, the Black Mother 197
Y
Yama see Real of Yama
Yokensha 204
Yviah, the Frost Giant Queen 136
Z
Z'ulvath 36, 86
Zanac, the Fire Sorcerer 145
Zhaeral 172
Zisenuh 173

TANARES RPG 5E

CLASS & LEVEL | BACKGROUND | PLAYER NAME

SPECIES | ALIGNMENT | EXPERIENCE POINTS

PROFICIENCY BONUS

INSPIRATION

INITIATIVE

SPEED

PASSIVE WIS

PERCEPTION

STRENGTH

DEXTERITY

CONSTITUTION

INTELLIGENCE

WISDOM

CHARISMA

SKILLS

SAVING THROWS

- Acrobatics (Dex)
- Animal Handling (Wis)
- Arcana (Int)
- Athletics (Str)
- Deception (Cha)
- History (Int)
- Insight (Wis)
- Intimidation (Cha)
- Investigation (Int)
- Medicine (Wis)
- Nature (Int)
- Perception (Wis)
- Performance (Cha)
- Persuasion (Cha)
- Religion (Int)
- Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- Stealth (Dex)
- Survival (Wis)

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

SPECIAL CLASS SKILLS

PERSONALITY TRAITS

IDEALS

BONDS

FLAWS

HIT DICE

HIT POINT MAXIMUM:

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

SUCCESSES

FAILURES

DEATH SAVES

OTHER PROFICIENCIES

HEROIC MARK

ATTACKS AND SPELLCASTING

Weapon / Spell	Hand	Type	Range
Bonus	Damage		
Special			

Weapon / Spell	Hand	Type	Range
Bonus	Damage		
Special			

Weapon / Spell	Hand	Type	Range
Bonus	Damage		
Special			

Weapon / Spell	Hand	Type	Range
Bonus	Damage		
Special			

TANARES RPG 5E

AGE | HEIGHT | WEIGHT

EYES | SKIN | HAIR

Equipment

Languages

Team Name

Backpack

Allies & Organizations

Character Backstory

TANARES RPG 5E

Features and Traits

Powers

TANARES RPG 5E

Spellcasting Class

Spellcasting Ability

Spell Save DC

Spell Attack Bonus

0

Spell Level | Slots Total | Slots Expended

1

Prepared

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

TANARES RPG 5E

Team Sheet

Team Name

Career Points

Team Members

Facility/Staff Provided FAME

Fame

Level

Prestige

Staff Provided PRESTIGE

Beneficiary

Style

Specialization

Coat of Arms

Features

Dream

Hidden Agenda

Feats

Relations

Legendary Rewards

Name

Team Headquarters

Location

Main Hall
Facility

Butler
Staff

Facility

Staff

Facility

Staff

Facility

Staff

Facility

Staff

Facility

Staff

Facility

Staff

Facility

Staff

TANARES

Lone Man's Island
Shredded Coast
The Ice Coast
Crystal Mountains
Stormbird Islands
Shivering Pines
Goldwater Fen
Twin Heads Forest
Great Valley
Cracked Hoof Tundra Fields
Giant Head Valley
Oath Mountain
Ice Fortress
Dark Glacier
Cold Valley's Crater
Ben'net
Mistvale
Plateaus of Eternal Ice
Kolbjörn
Stravian
Shadowy Forest
Stravian Range
Malland Range
High Forest
Dale of the Lost
Hammer Passing
Storm Valley
Gazini Island
Blood Castle
Northarbor
Lightning Temple
Roundtop Hill
Tigers Peak
Proudbeard Citadel
Varsiwater
Dorsi's Forest
Orgoth Valley
Threshold Forests
Rainbow Dale
Stonelair
Old Malland
Maska Prastyr
Frozen Tomb
Magocracy of Mage Tower
Ukaima Pani Lake
Mountain Pass
Chowiiawu Acchoda
Summer Island
Alkira Mountain
Nabhendu Monastery
Winter Elves' Ruins
Asylum Eberek
Calmwaters
Mesriver
Old Dwarf Road
Vault Village
Fox Crossing
Deepfreeze Cave
Northeros
Western Bak
Central Empire
Eastern Bak
Lake Plavo
Bak Swamp
Arcane University
Porcupine Rest
Dawn of Light
Magic Duel Arena
Crystal Tower
Green Hallow
The Womb
Dragon Nest
Wintershiel
Higashi Wyvern Mountains
Midorinohara
Yabanhito
Tiger Monastery
Yamanoma
Kiridji, Forbidden City
Yama Bunkatsu
Tongaku Palace
Kagenori
Nihonokabé
Yama
Mystical
Watcher's Lake
Watchkeepers' Town
Ruins of Arcana
Dragon Gallery
Thaisan Fields
Rainy Pass
Ruined Overlord
Ahimoth Woodland
Ahimoth
Five Locks
Hazarmaveth
Sakuras Bridge
Kyoki
Nemio
Yashin
Hayaiken
Knotty Oak
Umay
Turtledragon Island
Assembly Rite
Turlepoint Peninsula
Kingfisher Island
Unknown God Shrine
Ruddfirehelm
Seashores
Bones Valley
Narrowedge
Goldrock
Galleys Town
Whitecrown
Jellyfish Bay
Tallree Point
Left Island
Devil's Nostril
Dragonsting Forest
Heroes' Rise
Gambit
Craggy Plateaus Mountains
Republic of Freelands
Boscage Archipelago
Fishermans Wharf
Winter Hold City
Grassroot Island
Forgotten Colossus
Lunar Valley
Avelfall
Lumbershack
Goldcraft
Pearl Town
Mustardseed
Bluhaven
Whalon Thrune
Central Sea
Coral Sea realm
Fire Islands Archipelago
Uncle Joe's Tavern
Blackland
Fort Bridge
Shortfall
Anariel Strait
Crystalline Sea
Humming Gulf
Jagged Bay
Pennspine
Coastsummits
The Rubicunds
Malrokian Opening
Astérion
Ghaecde Hlu
Ember Mountains
Ship Graveyard
Southern Basin
Fethrall
Sandpari
Taii'maku City States
Countrysummits
Infinite Sand Banks
Brightlight Desert
Ubellian Fire Pits
Ubellian Cauldron
Sulfur Path
Rock Islands
Bright Coast
Nowhere Bridge
Ipade
Pakaitos Capital
Sandstorm Fort
Theocracy of Kepesh
Hag Salar
Alchemist's Oasis
Desdemona
The Great Nothing
Bauron's Denture
Desert Poppy Fields
Ina Ina Illu
Awo Irin Illu
Taii'maku Memorial
Okuta Akoko Illu
Stacked Stones
Haorun Illu
Bauron's Ridge
Cave of Sacrifice
City of Rorth
Tsvetan
Tsvetan Twinspikes
Flatbloods
Stormground
Eferhild's Cauldron
Eferhild Citadel
Obsidian Fortress
Spikebones
Stonefangs
Ventana Village
Wasteland Savannas
Harpoon Chasm
Wasteland Forest
The Hook
Hook Jungle
Ruins of Thanhelm
Ruins of Aghyur
Eastend Pass
Sindile Forest (Outskirts)
Hunter's Nest
Mother Trees
Sweetsprings
Cindergrove
Sindile Forest (Depths)
Verdant Colossus
Mountain Gate
Sindile Forest
Mirror Lake
Wasteland Savannas
Ember Mountains
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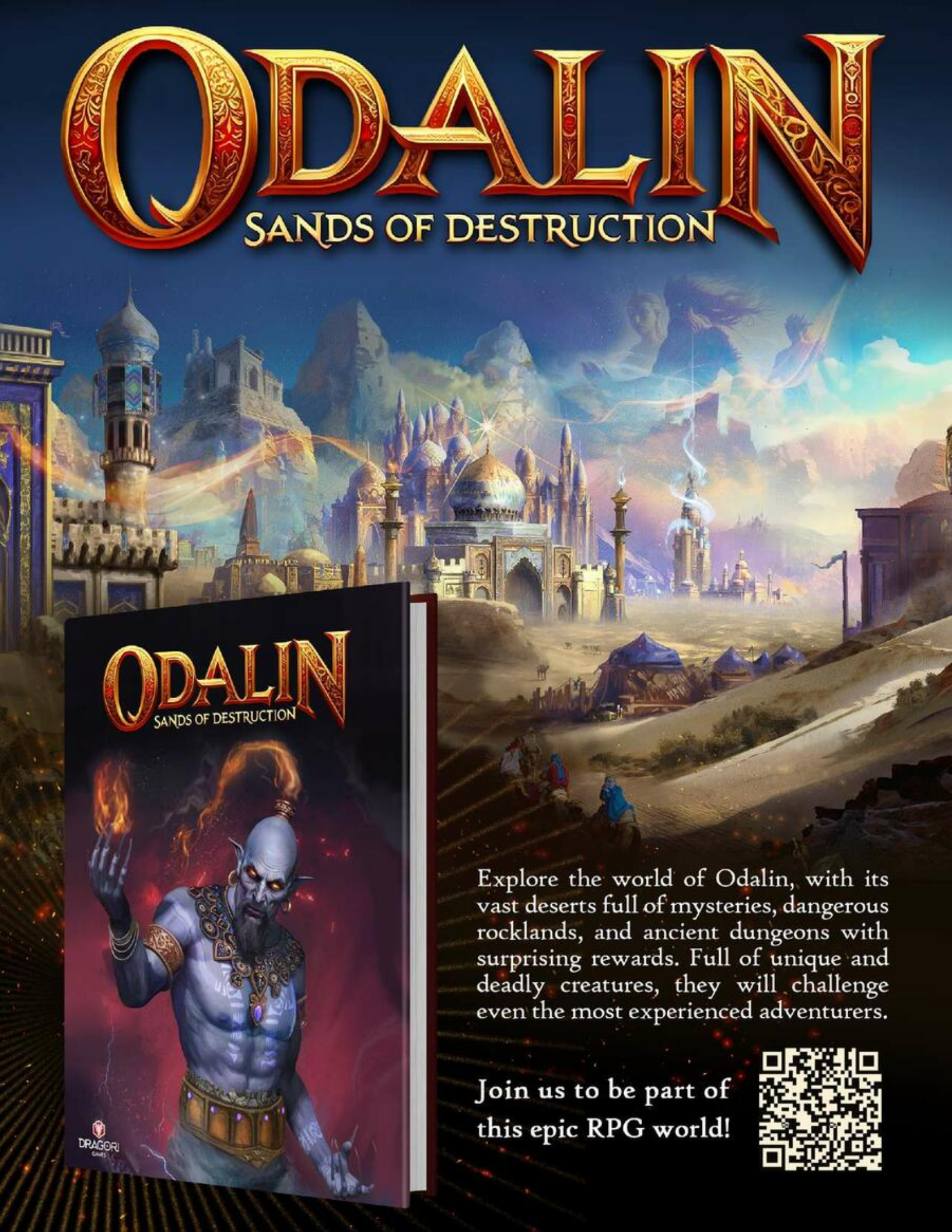
Rock Islands

Oldtown
Arenarea
Palacedomain
Downtown
Marketart
Artisansquare
Dwefomer
Schoolarnest
Uptown
Sloghood
Boomburbs
Neckoffoods

ODALIN

SANDS OF DESTRUCTION



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