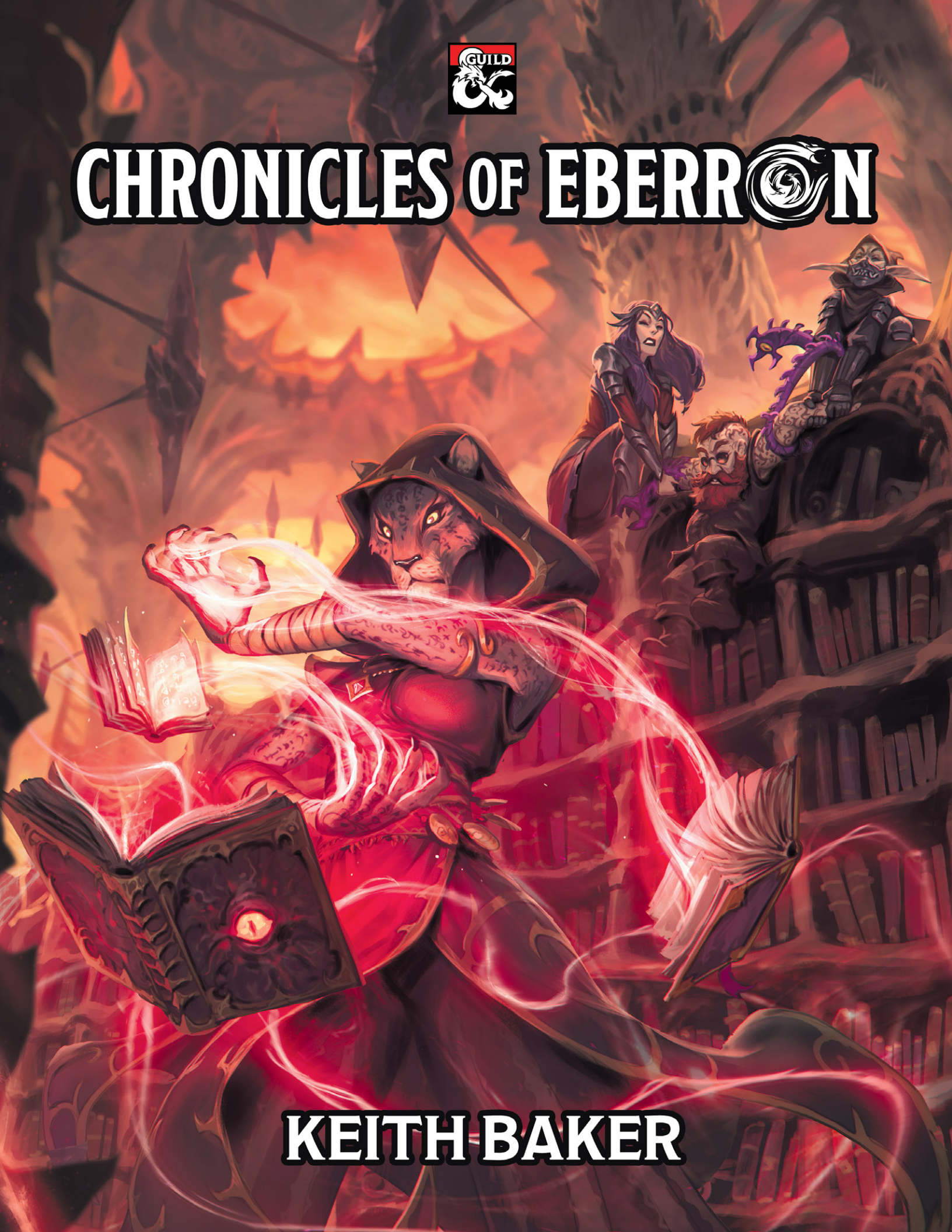
GUILD
CHRONICLES OF EBERRON
KEITH BAKER

CHRONICLES OF EBERRON

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Spells marked with XGE are available in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.
Spells marked with TCE are available in *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*.

Keith Baker Presents is an imprint of the game design studio Twogether Studios, LLC.

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On the Cover

The adventurers known as the Badgers have ventured into the demon city of Ashtakala in pursuit of the Codex Ourelonastrix. While Dela d'Cannith and Rev guard their escape path, the remaining Badgers must steal the tome under the very nose of Hektula, the First Scribe. This scene is brought to life by Thomas Bourdon.

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BAD MOON ART STUDIO (TITLE PAGE ART)

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Preface

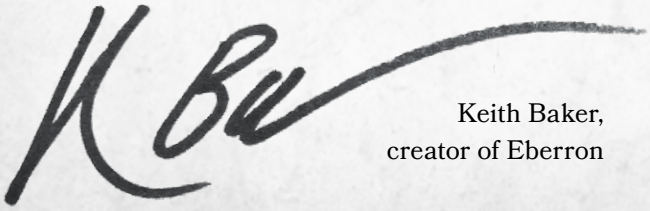
As I write these words, it's been almost twenty years since I first began exploring the world of Eberron in my mind. Over these two decades, a part of me has always been thinking about Eberron, considering all the questions the official books never had time and space to answer. What's the history of Dor Maleer? Just how smart are Karrnathi undead? Why so barren, Barren Sea?

In the days before the Dungeon Masters Guild, there was no opportunity to create new Eberron content. I couldn't legally release new lore or mechanics—but I *could* answer questions. I started doing just that on my website, Keith-Baker.com, and over the years, I've written hundreds of articles. But that quantity is a blessing and a curse; some topics are more generally useful than others, but they're needles in a very large haystack. Beyond those questions and answers, I couldn't give players and Dungeon Masters new tools to work with until the Dungeon Masters Guild opened up Eberron for new creations.

These pages you hold in your hands—or, potentially, these pixels you see on your screen—contain the answers to some of my favorite questions. This book blends practical advice ("How do I start a new campaign? How do I handle travel?") and deep lore detailing topics like the Twister of Roots and the gnomes of Lorghalan. In compiling this book, I've revised some of my articles and expanded others; even if you've read everything I've written, you'll find things here you've never seen before. And thanks to the excellent work of Imogen Gingell, we've added further depth and concrete mechanics to many ideas I previously only explored as stories. Because of her collaboration on this book, you can fight the daelkyr Avassh or wield the forbidden magic of the Shadow.

What lies ahead evolved from questions I've answered and how I've run things in my own personal campaign. Remember that what you're hearing in these pages is my personal voice. As fans have come to call it over the years, this book is "kanon"; in addition to being far less formal than canonical material, details in this book may contradict canon sources. One of the core principles of Eberron is that canon should serve as an inspiration, not a restriction on the stories you want to tell—and that applies to me as much as it does to you! What you have here is an account of what I'm doing "in my Eberron." I hope it will inspire you, but never let anything I say stop you from telling a story *you* want to tell in your Eberron.

And now, let's dive into the *Chronicles of Eberron*!



Keith Baker,
creator of Eberron

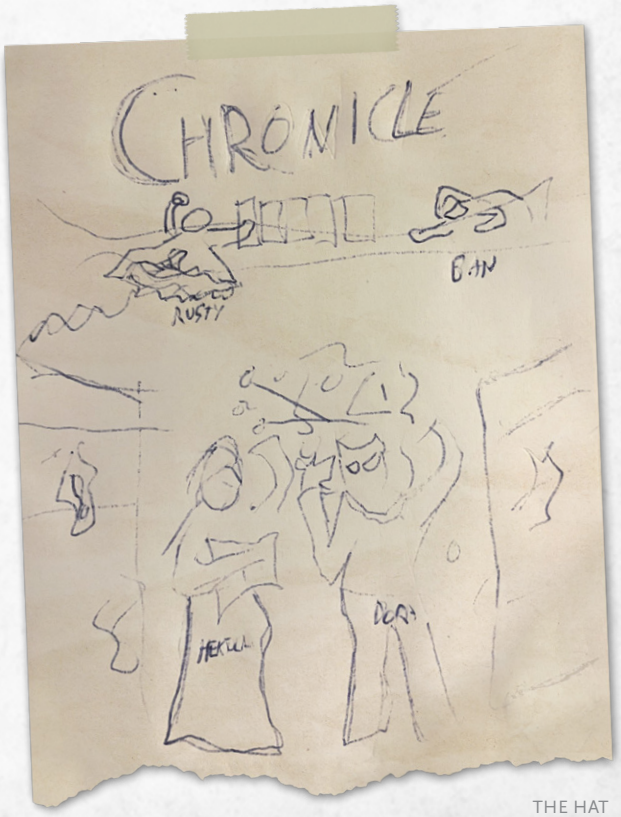
Introduction

Chronicles of Eberron delves more deeply into the Eberron campaign setting, presenting ideas that could inspire your next character or campaign.

It serves as a companion to *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* and *Exploring Eberron* (available on the Dungeon Masters Guild). This book is divided into two parts, each with a series of short chapters (well, most of them ...) designed for quick reading and easy reference.

Part 1: The Library contains material that's widely useful to all readers. These chapters explore things that are either common knowledge or that any character could reasonably know about. For example, a Dungeon Master might craft adventures using the chapters about the gnomes of Lorghalan and Pylas Pyrial ... or a player might use the same information to create a gnome character from one of these locations. Similarly, a DM could read about the traditions of Galifar's nobility before introducing their duke NPC—meanwhile, the player of a noble character might review the same information before meeting that duke.

Part 2: The Vault is primarily designed for Dungeon Masters and adventure creators. In these pages, you'll find deadly monsters and dangerous places that are unlikely to fit into a player character's background. Anyone can read these chapters, of course ... but beware the spoilers that lie ahead! Even though some players may know the secrets of Ashtakala or the Twister of Roots, it's unlikely their characters do.



THE HAT

THOMAS BOURDON

Part 1: The Library

Chapter 1: Common Knowledge

Eberron sourcebooks provide us a source of absolute knowledge. As players and DMs, we know about the Lords of Dust and the Dreaming Dark. We know about the giants of Xen'drik and that they fought the quori. Our adventurers may also know these things if they succeed on appropriate ability checks; if a character wants to recall details of the conflict between the Dhakaani and the daelkyr, they might make an Intelligence (History) check. But what do people know *without* making any ability checks? What things are just common knowledge? If an adventurer mentions the Lords of Dust in a tavern, do other patrons know what they're talking about?

This chapter discusses much of the common knowledge of a citizen of the Five Nations. For other cultures, DMs will have to combine this chapter's foundation with common sense to account for the variances in common knowledge: Stormreachers know more about drow than Aundairians do. Shadow Marchers have heard of the Gatekeepers, while most Karrns haven't. People living in a region probably have common knowledge about the things that impact their lives there—the people of the Mror Holds don't know much about the daelkyr in general, but they *do* know about Dyrrn the Corruptor, because they've been fighting him for decades and he signed his name with Dyrrn's Promise in 943 YK.

Could You Pass the Test?

Every year during the feast of Aureon's Crown, Morgrave University professor Jolan Hass Holan runs "Crowns for the Crown"—a challenge where any denizen of Sharn can test their knowledge and earn a few coppers. Is Malleon's Gate named after a pirate or a king? What was the name of the city whose foundations lie beneath Sharn? Fun as this is, it's not just a game; for the professor, it's a long-term project to measure how general knowledge has spread across the people of Sharn—and to identify flaws in the educational system. In this year's challenge, only one in ten contestants knew which Tavick was the namesake of Tavick's Landing; more concerning was a continuing decline in familiarity with the customs and geography of the nations beyond Breland. "The war built walls between us," Hass Holan says. "If we truly hope to reunite Galifar, we need to ensure we remember our common history and culture."

Religion

Gods don't walk the world in Eberron, and the existence of the divine is a matter of faith. But even if you don't believe in anything you can't touch, you'll still know some basic details about the faiths of Eberron. (These faiths are discussed further in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, *Exploring Eberron*, and this book's chapter on "The Dark Six.")

The Creation Myth

Everyone knows the basic creation myth: Khyber, Eberron, and Siberys created the planes. Khyber killed Siberys and scattered his pieces in the sky, creating the Ring of Siberys. Eberron enfolded Khyber and became the world. Some people believe this is literally true while others consider it metaphor, but everyone understands that magic comes from Siberys, natural creatures come from Eberron, and fiends and other evil things come from Khyber.

The Sovereign Host

The Sovereign Host is deeply ingrained into daily life in the Five Nations. Even people who don't believe in the Sovereigns know the names and basic attributes of the Nine and Six, and you don't have to be a Vassal to take part in the festivities of Aureon's Crown or Bounty's Blessing. Likewise, everyone knows that in the dawn of time, demons ruled the world, the Sovereigns fought them, and the demons were bound by the Silver Flame. Because of this, some Vassals actually believe the Sovereigns created the Silver Flame—it's just the light of Dol Arrah, and templars are fools for not seeing this.

The Dark Six are widely known by their titles—the Mockery, the Keeper—but their original names—Dol Azur, Kol Turrant—are usually only known by those with ties to a relevant cult or proficiency in Religion.

The Silver Flame

For hundreds of years, the Church of the Silver Flame has been a significant force within the Five Nations. Even citizens who don't worship the Silver Flame recognize it as a force that binds demons, and its templars are known as soldiers devoted to protecting the innocent from supernatural evil.

Prior to the Last War, local law enforcement commonly worked with templars to combat supernatural threats. However, the Last War undermined trust in the templars (though most people understand that templars are devoted to their faith rather than to Thrane); today, the level of cooperation between templars and local authorities varies from place to place. Most people—including those devoted to the Silver Flame—don't know the actual origins of the Silver Flame; they recognize couatls as divine servants of the Silver Flame, but not as its creators. The faithful believe the Silver Flame is a celestial force strengthened by noble souls, while many Vassals assert the Sovereigns created the Flame.

The doctrine of the Church of the Silver Flame doesn't deny the existence of the Sovereigns, and it's entirely possible—although uncommon—to follow both religions simultaneously. Similarly, most Silver Flame templars are happy to work with paladins of the Host. At the end of the day, the Church of the Silver Flame doesn't care if the

JÚLIO AZEVEDO

Sovereigns exist**.** Flamic creed maintains that if they do exist, they are vast powers that maintain their individual domains in the world: Arawai makes sure there's rain for the crops, while Onatar watches over foundries. That's all great, but *someone* has to deal with the ghouls in the graveyard. So the church doesn't teach anything about the Sovereigns, and it doesn't encourage its followers to believe in the Sovereigns or incorporate them into its services—but it doesn't specifically deny the Sovereigns exist or forbid followers from holding both beliefs.

Along the same lines, the Church of the Silver Flame doesn't have a unique creation myth; to them, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter where the world itself came from. Beyond all else, the faith is practical: supernatural evil exists, it threatens the world, and good people should work together to fight it. Compared to our own world, the Church of the Silver Flame is more like the Jedi or the Men in Black than any of our religions. The Silver Flame is a real, concrete source of celestial energy that can empower champions to fight evil. Noble souls strengthen the Flame after death, so be virtuous—and if you want to believe in higher beings beyond that, feel free. What's important is to protect the innocent from supernatural evil, and faith in the Flame will help you to do that.

Secondary Religions

Aside from the Silver Flame and the Sovereign Host, most of Khorvaire's religions are regional. The Blood of Vol is the best known of the secondary religions because of the role it played in Karrnath during the Last War, but outside that nation, most people think it's some sort of Karrnathi death cult. Everyone knows druids exist, and the Wardens of the Wood are relatively well known because of their central role in the Eldeen Reaches, but other druidic sects are largely unknown outside the areas they operate in. The Path of Light is generally only known about by people who have direct contact with kalashtar communities. Finally, people have a general sense that some elves worship their ancestors, but they don't know the specific details.

Mystical Forces

Magic is part of everyday life in the Five Nations. But how deep does this knowledge run? What do people know about the enigmatic fey or the Draconic Prophecy?

The Draconic Prophecy

Though most people have heard of the "Draconic Prophecy," they know almost nothing about it aside from the fact that it's ... a prophecy. When common people do talk about the Prophecy, they're usually thinking of the *Caldyn Fragments*, a collection of pieces of the Prophecy assembled by Korranberg scholar Ohnal Caldyn (described in *City of Stormreach*). Most people have no idea that the Prophecy is an evolving matrix of conditional elements, nor that it's the key to releasing the overlords (a topic discussed further in chapter 15, "The First War").

Dragons

Everyone knows that dragons exist and that they are terrifying and powerful creatures. Stories of dragons guarding hoards of treasure are plentiful, and if you're from Thrane, you know of the Bane of Thrane, the dragon who slew Prince Thrane. A few stories tell of heroes making bargains with dragons, or of dragons possessing secret knowledge. Everyone knows that Argonnessen is a land of dragons, but they know almost nothing about it beyond "here there be dragons" and the fact that people who go there don't come back. Some people know that dragons occasionally attack Aerenal, and the giants of Xen'drik were destroyed in some sort of war with dragons.

So everyone knows dragons exist, they are extremely powerful, and they can be deadly threats or enigmatic advisors—but most people don't expect to ever see a dragon. The idea of dragons secretly manipulating humanity is a conspiracy theory on par with our world's idea that many world leaders are secretly reptilian aliens; there are certainly people who believe it, but sensible people don't take it seriously. (For more information on this entirely preposterous theory that has absolutely no basis in reality, check out chapter 15.)

Dragonmarks and Aberrant Dragonmarks

Dragonmarks have been part of civilization for over a thousand years. The dragonmarked houses provide the major services that are part of everyday life, and everyone in the Five Nations knows the names of the houses and the common twelve marks. However, a character without proficiency in History is unlikely to have heard of the Mark of Death.

Common knowledge is that aberrant dragonmarks are dangerous to both their bearer and the people around them. Such marks are often seen as the "touch of Khyber." Without proficiency in History, a character won't know much about the War of the Mark, aside from the fact that the aberrants were dangerous and destroyed the original city of Sharn.

Fey and Archfey

Everyone knows that dryads, sprites, and other fey exist, and that they're especially common near manifest zones tied to Thelanis. Not only do people know fairy tales about fey and archfey, they know these stories have some basis in reality. So when people tell stories about the Lady in Shadow and the Forest Queen, they believe that somewhere in the planes, you might actually be able to meet the Forest Queen and other archfey—though they don't personally expect to ever meet one. Specific knowledge about the fey is more prevalent in regions close to Thelanian manifest zones or where people have a tradition of bargaining with the fey; notably, Aundairians know more about fey than most other people of the Five Nations.

Most people can't easily differentiate between an archfey and some other type of powerful immortal. As a result, cultists of the Dragon Below bargaining with Sul Khatesh might mistakenly think they're dealing with an archfey, or cultists of Avassh might believe they're blessed by the Forest Queen. A cult might know they worship a being they call "the Still Lord" or "the Queen of Shadows," but they don't automatically know whether that power is a fiend, a fey, or a celestial. Making such distinctions is an academic pursuit that would require a successful ability check.

Planes, Moons, and Manifest Zones

Everyone knows the names of the planes and their basic attributes: "Shavarath, the Eternal Battleground, is filled with celestials and fiends fighting." Similarly, they know the names of the moons and that each has a mystic tie to a corresponding plane; many people also hold superstitions regarding the impact of each moon on daily life, especially for those born under that moon. Think of this like knowledge of the solar system in our world; most people can name the planets, and they know Mars is the Red Planet, but only someone who has studied them can tell you the names of each of Jupiter's moons.

Even common folk understand the planes have concrete effects on the world through their manifest zones and coterminous/remote phases. Someone may not be able to tell you the precise effects of a Shavarath manifest zone unless they actually live by one, but they know Shavarath is the Eternal Battleground, and they could guess what such a manifest zone might do. (You can learn more about the planes, manifest zones, and moons in chapter 5 of *Exploring Eberron*.)

Supernatural Evil

Fiends, undead, aberrations, and lycanthropes abound in the world—and everyone knows it. They're aware ghouls may haunt graveyards, the creepy stranger in town could be a vampire or werewolf, and dangerous things could crawl out of Khyber at any time. This is why even people who don't follow the Silver Flame treat its templars with respect; people understand that evil exists, the Silver Flame opposes it, and the templars are a volunteer militia who are ready to fight it.

Demons, Lords of Dust, and Overlords

Everyone knows the overlords were archfiends who dominated the world at the beginning of time, are now bound, and would like to break free and destroy the world. You don't have to worship the Sovereigns or the Flame to believe this; an actual overlord broke out and ravaged Thrane mere centuries ago. Most people have heard stories of a few overlords and may know their titles—the Shadow in the Flame is best known—but a character would need an ability check to know more.

While everyone knows about the overlords, most have never heard of the Lords of Dust. Most citizens of the Five Nations are familiar with stories of troublesome shapeshifting demons and understand they're a potential threat, but the idea of a massive fiendish conspiracy manipulating human civilization for thousands of years is as unbelievable as the idea of dragons doing the same thing. Now, if you have credible proof that an individual person in town is actually a fiend or possessed by one, people take the threat seriously, understanding that such threats can be real. But few people actually believe in any massive conspiracy secretly controlling the course of history, because if there were, why haven't they done anything more dramatic with it? (You can learn more about the overlords and this preposterous conspiracy theory in chapters 13–15).

Most common folk don't differentiate between devil, demon, and fiend, instead treating these as synonyms. Rakshasas are widely known as "shapeshifting demons," even though an arcane scholar might pedantically explicate, "Well, actually, 'demon' refers specifically to an incarnate entity of chaos and evil, and the rakshasa is a unique class of fiend most commonly found on the Material Plane." Similarly, nobody is particularly bothered that the Demon Wastes aren't called the Fiend Wastes, even if that name would be more accurate.

The Dreaming Dark and the Kalashtar

Even children know that when you dream, you go to Dal Quor, and "demons give you bad dreams"—but very few people believe the far-fetched idea that those fiends are manipulating the world. People have had bad dreams *forever*, so if bad-dream demons were going to take over the world, why haven't they already done it? As with the Lords of Dust, people listen to credible threats that a specific person could be possessed, but few believe stories of a massive dream conspiracy bent on world domination.

Looking to Sarlona and the Inspired, everyone knows the Riedrans have a strict culture ruled by beings who are said to channel celestial powers. However, in the Five Nations, few people have met even a common Riedran, let alone one of the Inspired. Those who have met kalashtar (usually in a major city) know the kalashtar have been oppressed and driven from Sarlona, but most assume the conflict comes from political and religious differences, not a war between dream-spirits. It's relatively common knowledge that people from Sarlona study some form of mind-magic, but most people don't know the precise details of how psionics are different from arcane or divine magic. (You can read about Sarlona and psionics in chapter 21.)

Khyber and Daelkyr

Tied to the creation myth and to the acceptance that evil exists, people know that bad things come from Khyber. They don't need to know about demiplanes to understand that if you find a deep hole, there might be something bad at the bottom of it. Most people don't differentiate between aberrations, fiends, and monstrosities; they just know the Dragon Below is the source of bad things. This is why the cults of the Dragon Below are all lumped together, even though a cult of Dyrrn the Corruptor has nothing in common with a cult of Sul Khatesh. As far as the common folk are concerned, these cults all worship big evil things, and big evil things come from Khyber—thus, they must be a cult of the Dragon Below.

Anyone who's proficient in Arcana or History has a general understanding of the difference between the daelkyr and the overlords without needing to make an ability check. But other people aren't usually familiar with the term "daelkyr" and are likely to conflate any stories about them with the overlords. They're powerful evil things bound in Khyber that want to break free and destroy the world; what more do you need to know? (The daelkyr and cults of the Dragon Below are discussed in *Exploring Eberron*.)

General Information

The Draconic Prophecy, fiends, the Silver Flame—these are dramatic forces in the world. But what about more mundane things? What do the people of the Five Nations actually know about drow, the dar, or even the Aurum?

Aerenal, the Undying Court, and the Tairnadal

Aerenal is an isolationist culture with little interest in sharing its traditions with others. However, the elves do trade with the Five Nations and there's been enough immigration over the course of history to provide a general knowledge of their culture. Most people know Aerenal is ruled by the Undying Court, a group of ancient undead elves. However, they don't fully understand the difference between deathless and other undead.

Most Five Nations citizens have never heard of the Tairnadal, and they assume any Tairnadal elf is from Valenar. They know Valenar elves are deadly warriors who are always looking for fights and who worship their ancestors, but they don't know any specifics about patron ancestors or the Keepers of the Past. (You can learn more about the Tairnadal in chapter 5.)

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The Aurum

While it's a stretch to say that everyone's heard of the Aurum, it's about as well known as, say, Mensa in our world. The Aurum is generally seen as an exclusive fraternal order of extremely wealthy people. Because it is exclusive and many of its members are minor local celebrities, there are certainly lots of conspiracies theories about what it's really up to ... but despite claims that the Aurum wants to overthrow the Twelve or that it engineered the Last War, at the end of the day, people think of it as that fancy members-only club on Main Street that always donates generously to the Race of Eight Winds celebrations.

Uncommon Ancestries

People in Khorvaire know lizardfolk and dragonborn come from Q'barra, but most don't realize these are two different ancestries. Most people know drow are from Xen'drik. Tieflings are generally understood to be planetouched; on the other hand, aasimar and genasi (as discussed in *Exploring Eberron*) are generally so rare that they won't be recognized by the general populace. With these and other uncommon folk, Eberron's people are generally accepting of creatures from ancestries they've never encountered. After all, this is a world where people deal with humans, orcs, shifters, goblins, warforged, elves, kalashtar, ogres, medusas, and more every day; so if someone has never seen a goliath before, they're far more likely to say "Well, that's new" than to panic at the sight of alien giant-folk. Unusual characters are generally targets of curiosity rather than fear.

The History of Xen'drik

People know Xen'drik was once home to a civilization of giants, who most believe were destroyed in a war with the dragons. Many people know the elves were originally from Xen'drik and fled this destruction. However, without History proficiency, most people don't know the name of any of the giant cultures—nor know there was more than one—and they definitely don't know anything about giants fighting quori. The idea that arrogant giants destroyed the thirteenth moon is a common folktale, but the legend has many variants and few people consider it truth.

Goblins and the Empire of Dhakaan

Everyone in the Five Nations knows that a goblin empire inhabited Khorvaire before humanity, but it fell long ago. Most people don't know the name of this empire or exactly what led to its downfall. People generally recognize Dhakaani ruins as goblin creations, and they know many of Khorvaire's largest cities are built on goblin foundations. A few fringe groups assert those ancient structures are clearly too sophisticated to be goblin work and must've been built by some forgotten human civilization, but most people consider these stories as the ridiculous conspiracy theories they are—on par with the idea that shapeshifted dragons are secretly manipulating the world.

Most people of the Five Nations—and even some denizens of Darguun—don't know the difference between the Kech Dhakaan and the more modern goblin civilizations, like the Marguul and the Ghaal'dar. When someone from the Five Nations meets dar of the Kech Dhakaan, they may recognize that these dar are evoking unusual elements from Dhakaani history. However, it's not commonly known that the Kech Dhakaan have maintained an unbroken link to the past—nor do Khorvairians have any idea how powerful the goblinoids of Dhakaan are.

Shifters and Lycanthropes

In the Five Nations, most people believe lycanthropes are cursed humanoids who become animals or hybrids, then prey on innocents, potentially spreading their curse (but are luckily vulnerable to silver). People know most lycanthropes were wiped out in the Silver Crusade (or Lycanthropic Purge), and for the most part, they believe this was a justified action against a serious threat.

Shifters are often called "weretouched," and most people believe shifters are distantly connected with lycanthropes. Some even mistakenly believe shifters become aggressive when many moons are full. However, few believe that shifters can spread lycanthropy or that they're sympathetic to lycanthropes. Those negative stereotypes exist, especially in rural Aundair or places where people have never encountered shifters, but they're uncommon.

Spies

When people in the Five Nations talk about spies, they're usually thinking of the Dark Lanterns or the Royal Eyes of Aundair. These familiar spy agencies are known to operate covertly in other nations, similar to what people in our world knew of the CIA and KGB during the height of the Cold War.

Most people in the Five Nations have heard of the Trust and understand that it's some sort of secret police force that maintains order in Zilargo. But they don't know much beyond that, and people aren't concerned about Zil spies.

House Phiarlan and House Thuranni, renowned for their entertainers, aren't generally viewed as spies. The assertion that Phiarlan runs a spy network is like the idea that Elvis worked for the CIA; not impossible, but also not a particularly credible theory.

Chapter 2: Arms, Armor, and Aesthetics

Eberron is a world of elemental-powered lightning rails and airships, of mass-produced warforged, of magnificent towers that scrape Sharn's sky. But it's also a world where your character might be a knight in plate armor hitting things with a sword or shooting them with crossbow bolts. So what does that *look* and *feel* like? Does the world seem medieval, or is the aesthetic closer to World War I?

Magical, Not Medieval

When creating Eberron, the design team made a conscious decision to keep the experience of the world grounded in D&D. This meant people would still wear plate armor. They'd ride horses instead of motorcycles. They'd fight using swords and bows rather than firearms. But while Eberron's design process didn't make classic armor and weaponry obsolete, the setting isn't particularly medieval in tone. Fifth edition highlights the spread of wandslingers, lightly armored soldiers who fight using damage-dealing cantrips; they are one of many examples of how the world of Eberron is moving beyond medieval trappings. In one of my favorite quotes from *Wayfinder's Guide to Eberron*, an Aundairian exclaims, "Sovereigns above, Wyllis. We're days away from the Eleventh Century and you're still shooting people with pointed sticks?" So in 998 YK, Eberron is nearing the point where a soldier could just as plausibly be a leather-clad, wand-wielding warlock as they could be a fighter in plate with sword and shield—but for now, armies still clash with sword and spear.

With that said, Eberron's central concept is that of a world whose progress is driven by magic, not science. Eberron has trains, yes—but they don't use steam or gears, they're a series of stagecoaches that ride a line of lightning. Eberron is not our world, and while the tools its people use may have names we consider medieval, that doesn't mean they are medieval in form or function.

Heavy armor became obsolete in our world because crossbows and gunpowder weapons could easily penetrate it, and because the protective value of the armor no longer offset its limitations on movement. But in fifth edition, this isn't the case: regardless of whether your attacker is using a sword, heavy crossbow, or firearm, plate armor provides more protection than leather armor, and it's remarkably flexible (though noisy), imposing no penalties on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks and the like. You can choose to attribute these qualities to the limitations of a streamlined rules system—but I prefer to embrace the idea that this isn't medieval armor. Though made of heavy plates and requiring Strength to use it effectively, plate armor needn't be medieval in material or appearance.

The same concept applies to other "medieval" things. Orien couriers use special *horseshoes of speed*, channeling the power of their dragonmark to give a mount greater speed and durability. So yes, people are riding horses instead of motorcycles, but that Orien courier can tear past you with blue light flashing from their horse's hooves! On rare occasions, you might even see a courier with *horseshoes of a zephyr* riding a horse across the surface of a river. Eberron is a magical world; rather than thinking "they don't have cars, the world is primitive," highlight what they've developed instead. Describe a squad of Vadalis hippogriffs passing overhead or a street performer weaving wonders out of illusion; it's not *medieval*, it's *magical*.

Armor and Fashion

Magic is a part of life—and very much a part of fashion. *Glamerweave* (presented in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*) is commonly used to imbue clothing with illusion magic. A sorcerer may wear a cloak lined with a starry sky, or the armor of a former soldier could be etched with glowing sigils representing the service medals bestowed on them. The Glamerweave Designs table provides inspiration for illusion magic you might see in the fashions of the Five Nations.

Glamerweave Designs

d10	Glamerweave
1	A starry night sky with the moons and Ring of Siberys.
2	Cloth that appears to be metal—depending on style, it might be polished or rusty.
3	Patterns of dancing flame rising up from the fabric.
4	A roiling thunderstorm with periodic flashes of lightning.
5	Cloth that appears to be formed of a swarm of butterflies or other insects.
6	Whirling patterns of clouds or mist.
7	A national flag, rippling as if in a breeze.
8	A dragon circling the clothing, occasionally releasing gouts of flame.
9	A labyrinth through which a monster chases an adventurer.
10	The skyline of Sharn with tiny moving skycoaches.

Similarly, *shiftweave* (also in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*) allows a person to shift their attire between multiple outfits; for example, you might change between a traveling outfit and a shimmering gown with a snap of your fingers. And *Exploring Eberron* discusses cosmetic transmutation—the idea that you can go to a cosmetic illusionist and add magical details to your appearance. Particularly in Aundair, you can expect to see people with glowing eyes, metallic hair, or other cosmetic details that are obviously the product of magic.

Magical enhancement doesn't just apply to civilian attire. After all, Khorvaire is just two years out from decades of war, when all genders served in the armies of the Five Nations. Wartime trends often prioritized practical clothing allowing freedom of movement; the closer you were to the front lines, the more you needed to be ready for anything. Though some nobles might embrace fashions that restrict movement to make a statement—"my gown shows I'm not going to fight, or if I do, it'll be with magic, not muscle"—these would be exceptions.

Even after the war, armor (especially light armor) remains a part of everyday life and fashion. Leather and studded leather can be designed to be stylish and comfortable, and many former soldiers wear a modified form of their service armor. Think of it a bit like gunslingers in westerns: carrying a pistol suggests you can handle yourself, but it's not going to immediately raise an alarm. So while heavy armor definitely makes a statement, people won't blink at someone casually wearing light armor.

When Is a Breastplate Not a Breastplate?

The names of armors in D&D are arbitrary. A more complex system might explore the advantages and disadvantages of chainmail versus rigid armor, but fifth edition keeps it simple. Mechanically, different types of armor are differentiated by the presence (or absence) of metal, weight, AC, disadvantage on Stealth ... and the fact that someone who examines you can recognize those things. Everything else is story.

In other words, there's no reason you can't say the Doldarun dwarves produce exceptionally strong, light "chainmail" whose statistics coincidentally match breastplate statistics—allowing a character with medium armor proficiency to wear armor with heavy armor aesthetics. Your "breastplate" armor doesn't have to be an actual breastplate, as long as someone looking at it can recognize its qualities. The same applies to any armor, whether studded leather or heavy plate—describe it with whatever aesthetics you wish, as long as it uses the same statistics and can be recognized by anyone who might need to know how well you'd be protected in combat.

All of this comes back to the idea that just because people in Eberron use tools we think of as medieval, it doesn't mean they *are* medieval. You can adjust the appearance of everything from crossbows to plate armor, making their designs feel more modern or culturally specific. Don't limit yourself with an armor's official name, as long as you logically maintain its statistics and ease of recognition.

Armor of the Five Nations

Until the start of the Last War, the soldiers of the Five Nations all served in the united army of Galifar. Over the century of war, styles evolved as each nation strove both to distinguish its soldiers and improve their tools of war. This was especially true with elite forces, which show off the strengths of the nation; Karrnath fielded the finest heavy infantry of the Five Nations, while Aundairians relied more on arcane firepower and lighter armor.

However, throughout the war, the uniform of common soldiers of the Five Nations remained quite similar. Here's an overview of the common armor of today:

Light armor typically involves a leather greatcoat or thick leather tunic. This is supplemented with heavy leather gauntlets and boots, or for better defense, metal shin guards and vambraces.

Medium armor uses the same base—a long leather coat or vest—enhanced with a strong metal helmet and a breastplate. The breastplate of the common soldier is cheap and heavy, and actually uses the statistics of scale mail (including imposing disadvantage on Stealth checks), while officers and elite forces wear a finer, lighter design that uses breastplate statistics.

Heavy armor is considerably more distinctive between nations. For example, the Brelish equivalent of splint mail combines a breastplate with a layer of chainmail, while Karrnathi splint mail is light plate.

This reflects the armor of the common soldier of the Five Nations, but elite units, mercenaries, local militias, and other forces use different styles and materials. If you're playing a ranger with the soldier background and want to wear hide armor, you could say that it was a distinct style of the Brelish "leatherback scouts." Beyond this, every nation has its own distinct approach to fashion, both in its armor and civilian clothing. Here are a few style points to keep in mind.

BAD MOON ART STUDIO

Aundair

Magic is part of daily life in the Five Nations, and this is never truer than in Aundair. Aundairians often use glamerweave or transmutation to add flair to both clothing and armor, and an Aundairian knight could have twinkling stars or brooding storm clouds imbued into their armor. With that said, Aundairians favor grace, mobility, and skill over heavy armor and brute strength. The Aundairian wandslinger—lightly armored, fashionably dressed, wielding wand and rapier—is celebrated over the heavily armored knight.

Breland

The Brelish are pragmatic people with no great desire to stand out on the battlefield. Thanks to their superior industrial capacity, they were able to field more soldiers in medium armor than their rivals; and due to mass production, Brelish soldiers have nearly identical equipment. Brelish soldiers add personal touches, to be sure, but these are more related to comfort and functionality than to Aundairian flair.

Cyre

Cyre has long been known for "the Cyran Appreciation." The Cyrans say they see the best in the nations around them and combine those elements to make something new; others say that they Cyrans only appropriate instead of innovating. Regardless, Cyran armor and clothing combine Brelish practicality with some of the flair of Aundair. Cyran heavy armor mirrors Karrnathi light plate designs, though without the gothic styling. Cloaks and capes are an important part of Cyran fashion, and Cyran soldiers are sometimes called "Greencloaks" due to their distinctive uniform cloaks.

Karrnath

Unlike the flamboyance of Aundair, Karrnath's fashions emphasize strength. The nation is both gothic and martial in its overall style, and its armor and helmets are designed to intimidate. The Karrns have always been the finest armorers of the Five Nations, and armor—especially heavy armor—is more common here than in other nations, both on and off the battlefield. Their armor is frequently stylized; aside from their infamous bone knights, you can expect gothic styling or details tied to a family crest. The flag of Karrnath is black and red, and both these colors are common in their fashions.

Thrane

Thrane is the most practical and least pretentious of the Five Nations. Templars may wear heavy armor, but the common peasant militias rely on light armor and bows. Light armor is common in everyday life, but unostentatious; cosmetic transmutation and *glamerweave* are rare. Thrane militias don't have a standardized uniform, but followers of the Silver Flame usually display a symbol of their faith, often through pendants, brooches, or painted designs.

Other Nations

Elsewhere in Khorvaire, armor and fashions are sometimes influenced by trends in the Five Nations, but each culture's armor strongly reflects its own traditions. The **Mror Holds** have a strong tradition of chainmail, and Doldarun double-chain uses the statistics of plate armor. Each of the **Lhazaar Principalities** has its own distinctive style; however, as befits a people who spend much of their time on the sea, they tend to wear light armor that won't impede a swimmer. It's common for the people of **Darguun** to wear armor in everyday life; each clan has its own style, but medium armor is common, especially different forms of scale mail; like Karrnath, Darguul arms and armor are often designed to intimidate. The people of the **Eldeen Reaches** use natural materials taken from supernatural creatures, making them stronger than one would expect; as such, the Eldeen equivalent of plate armor could be made from the hide and bones of a demon-spawned bear. Meanwhile, the people of **Zilargo** prefer not to wear armor in everyday life—after all, thanks to the Trust, they have no fear of violence—though light armor can be incorporated into casual fashion.

Mundane Weapons, Magical World

Moving from armor to arms, many of the same questions and considerations apply. Given the overall sophistication of Eberron, it can seem strange that people use medieval weapons like crossbows. Though wandslingers are formidable and growing in number, becoming one requires specialized training, so you can't just hand a peasant a wand. In a world of airships and warforged, why haven't people created more effective personal weapons?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the simplest answer to this question is that Eberron's weapons aren't medieval—just because D&D calls a weapon a crossbow doesn't mean it's the same as medieval crossbows from our world. Keep in mind that while the following sections focus on crossbows, similar concepts could be applied when envisioning any ranged or melee weapon.

When Is a Crossbow Not a Crossbow?

When we consider ranged weapons that would fit well in Eberron, we're looking for an affordable weapon anyone can use without training. Though it should be better than a medieval crossbow, it doesn't need to match a modern firearm; in general, Eberron's advances are closer to the late nineteenth century than to the twentieth century.

In truth, the light crossbow in the *Player's Handbook* is already more efficient than a medieval crossbow; the crank method for reloading a medieval crossbow allowed for around two shots per minute, and even the 1861 Springfield rifle—a common weapon in the American Civil War—could only fire 2–4 shots per minute. By contrast, a light crossbow in D&D can fire ten bolts per

minute with enough damage to drop a commoner with one shot. So while it's no match for modern automatic weapons, the light crossbow is far from medieval.

If you don't like the crossbow aesthetic, you could introduce gunpowder to the Five Nations—it can certainly be both accessible and deadly—and this option is discussed later in this chapter. But let's first consider ways to describe crossbows (or any weapon) in a way that fits Eberron and its emphasis on magic instead of technology.

Keep It Medieval

One way to highlight the efficiency of the modern crossbow is to occasionally have adventurers encounter weaponry that's more medieval in design. The soldiers of Galifar I used medieval-style crossbows, with more limited range and a slow crank to reload; the superior crossbows used today are the result of centuries of engineering. Similarly, the Dhakaani and the Five Nations use highly effective modern crossbows, but when out in some Lhazaar backwater or fighting the Carrion Tribes, adventurers might encounter inferior weapons. You could represent this simply through how you describe a weapon's aesthetics; or if you want to represent it mechanically, perhaps reloading such a crossbow requires a bonus action, and you can't move and reload on the same turn. An even more limited design could reflect a slow crank mechanism by requiring an action to reload rather than a bonus action, reinforcing that this weapon is inferior to what the adventurers are used to.

Mundane Weapon, Supernatural Materials

Some modern crossbows maintain the same general design as a classic crossbow—they're just better than any medieval weapon. They use superior materials and techniques that don't exist in our world, including products of manifest zones and alchemy; for example, densewood quarrels might be more aerodynamic and small enough to store in an integrated quiver. Similarly, the weapons themselves may not be magical, but the artisans building them may be guided by the *magecraft* cantrip (from *Exploring Eberron*) and use transmutation techniques to enhance their work. The fact that the light crossbow can be loaded in 6 seconds, with no strength requirement or limitation on movement, reflects exceptional engineering. Light crossbows like the Brelish SAC-12 and the Dhakaani Aram'kron (see "Crossbows of the Five Nations") are broadly similar in appearance to a classic crossbow, aside from innovations like integrated clips or bayonets.

Arcane Science

The crossbow isn't a magic weapon, but it can still operate using magical principles. In Eberron, magic is a science, and this manifests in many ways beyond arcane spells. Magic can generate kinetic force—what if those principles were used to add force to a physical bolt instead of generating a bolt of pure force?

Consider the line of crossbows produced by House Cannith (see "Crossbows of the Five Nations"). Cannith's crossbow barrel interior and quarrels are both engraved with arcane sigils. When the quarrel moves against the barrel, the symbols create an arcane interaction—a formula that adds kinetic energy to the bolt. With this in mind, the only force the bow itself has to provide is the initial push of the bolt down the barrel, a spark that triggers the arcane interaction. It's much easier to reload a Cannith crossbow than a medieval one because Cannith's bow itself is actually weaker; the weapon's power needn't depend on the tension of the bow.

This also means Cannith's crossbow doesn't look like a crossbow as we're used to it. It's closer to a rifle—the longer the barrel, the longer the arcane interaction. Thus the Spark hand crossbow has a shorter range, while the Thunderbolt heavy crossbow is the largest and longest weapon. In these crossbows, the "bow" is a relatively small component of the weapon. In many ways, these weapons resemble firearms, but their force isn't coming from a chemical reaction, but an arcane one.

When using such a crossbow or other ranged weapon, there's nothing stopping you from describing it propelling its ammunition through the air via an arcane reaction. Just remember this doesn't change a crossbow's game mechanics; it's not a magic weapon, so it doesn't bypass damage resistance or register on the *detect magic spell*. (If you take the existence of a minor enchantment to its logical conclusion, an *antimagic field* spell would theoretically suppress the magical reaction and render the weapon useless in that area—but this 8th-level spell is far beyond the everyday magical effects the people of Khorvaire expect to encounter, so this isn't something crossbow manufacturers are worried about.)

Crossbows of the Five Nations

The crossbow is a mainstay across the Five Nations. Thranish soldiers typically used bows, and by the end of the war, Aundairians were deploying wandslingers on a wider scale, but the crossbow remained the common infantry weapon. The light crossbow was most popular, due to its simplicity and ease of use, while the heavy crossbow was used by elite troops. Countless models of crossbows are found across Khorvaire, but the following models stand out. By default, these all use normal crossbow statistics in combat, but if you'd like to reflect further innovation, consider applying some of the improvements from the "Crossbow Advancements" section.

The SAC-12

Breland has long been noted for its industrial base. The soldiers of Galifar may have trained at Rekkenmark, but Starilaskur Arms produced their weapons. At the start of the Last War, the Starilaskur SAC-12 was the standard light crossbow used by the armies of the Five Nations; while each nation now produces their own weapons, they're still modeled on the classic "Sack." The SAC-15—or the "Big Sack"—is the standard heavy crossbow. Over the last decade, Karrnath has sought to improve on the SAC with the Korth-Atur Tactical Crossbow—KATC, or "Cat-C"—but many Karrns still prefer the standard SAC.

Cannith Crossbows

During the Last War, House Cannith pioneered the line of crossbows mentioned in "Arcane Science"—weapons with engraved sigils that use an arcane interaction to add force to the bolt. The standard weapons in this line are the Spark (hand crossbow), the Lightning (light crossbow), and the Thunderbolt (heavy crossbow). During the Last War, Aundair and Cyre both made extensive use of these weapons, while Karrnath and Breland held to the more mundane design of the SAC-12.

Cannith Crossbows: Lightning, Spark, and Thunderbolt

The Passage Pistol

Aundair has a long history of dueling. While members of wizard circles use magic in duels, the Passage Pistol was developed as an alternative for other duelists. While this hand crossbow has spread across the Five Nations, it's still commonly associated with Passage and dueling.

The Aram'kron

The standard crossbow of the Heirs of Dhakaan is a compact design employing superior alloys and sophisticated engineering. Its power is comparable to the SAC-15 in a smaller and more streamlined package. The standard Aram'kron is a heavy crossbow with a retractable bayonet. Light crossbows are rarely seen among the Heirs of Dhakaan, though the Khesh'dar employ the Sar'ka, a hand crossbow designed with Reload 4.

Crossbow Advancements

Once we embrace the idea of the crossbow as a modern weapon that's actively evolving, there are many ways one could improve on it. Consider the following ideas that DMs can introduce to their games.

Bayonets

During the Last War, the crossbow was the common infantry weapon in many of the Five Nations. While bayonets aren't as effective as a stand-alone melee weapon, they provide crossbow-wielders with an attack they can use in close quarters without dropping their crossbow.

The Bayonets table presents two new weapons, which are available from most weapons vendors in the Five Nations. The light bayonet is a simple weapon that can be attached to a light crossbow, while the heavy bayonet is a martial weapon that can be attached to a heavy crossbow. Each bayonet uses the following special rule:

Using Bayonets. You have disadvantage on attacks made with a bayonet that isn't attached to a crossbow. It takes an action to attach or remove a bayonet from a weapon.

Bayonets

Weapon Name	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Bayonet, light	2 gp	1d6 piercing	1 lb.	Two-handed, special
Bayonet, heavy	3 gp	1d8 piercing	1 lb.	Two-handed, special

Reloading

Standard crossbows in fifth edition already have an impressive rate of fire; you could easily justify this by describing them as having an integrated clip. However, if you want to reflect further innovations, you could introduce a crossbow model with the reload property (originally from the "Firearms" section of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*) instead of the loading property:

Reload. A limited number of shots can be made with a weapon that has the reload property. You must then reload it with ammunition using your choice of an action or a bonus action.

Perhaps Starilaskur Arms has developed a hand crossbow with Reload 6 for the King's Dark Lanterns, or maybe Cannith East has developed a version of the Thunderbolt heavy crossbow with Reload 15 that's currently being tested by Karrnath's elite forces. While these weapons won't significantly shift the balance of encounters, they can slightly increase a character's damage output; keep that in mind when deciding how easy it is for adventurers to acquire such weapons.

Silencers

Illusion magic can create or dampen sound, so it's easy to imagine a magical device attached to a crossbow, eliminating the sound produced by firing or loading the weapon. This *crossbow silencer* would prevent people from hearing the shot from a distance, and in combat, make it difficult for foes to locate a hidden archer.

Crossbow Silencer

Wondrous Item, Common

This small magical band can be clamped to or removed from the stirrup of any crossbow as an action. While the *silencer* is attached to a weapon, Wisdom (Perception) checks to hear the weapon firing are made at disadvantage.

In addition, if you are hidden when you make an attack roll using the *silencer's* attached weapon, you can activate the *silencer* (no action required) to remain hidden, and your attack doesn't give away your location. Once this property is used, it can't be used again for 10 minutes.

ROBERT MOODY (LIGHTNING AND SPARK) | RINEHART APPIAH (THUNDERBOLT)

Spellbolts

Developed by House Cannith near the end of the Last War, a *spellbolt* functions as a sort of magical grenade. Each *spellbolt's* arcane payload is triggered by the kinetic formula of a Cannith crossbow, allowing an archer to shoot a target and affect them with a spell. Effectively, a *spellbolt* is like a scroll or potion—a consumable magic item holding a single charge of a spell—with the advantage of delivering that effect at a longer range. These bolts are a recent innovation, and House Cannith has thus far only created *spellbolts* using spells of up to 3rd level from the wizard spell list. Though *spellbolts* aren't widespread in the Five Nations, they have the same cost and rarity as a scroll of the same spell.

Spellbolt

Ammunition, Common (Cantrip–1st Level) or Uncommon (2nd–3rd Level)

A *spellbolt* is a crossbow bolt imbued with a single spell of 3rd level or lower from the wizard spell list, which is activated by corresponding arcane sigils engraved into most modern Cannith-issued crossbows. The imbued spell must require a ranged or melee spell attack when the spell is cast, and have a range other than self.

As an action, you can load the *spellbolt* into a Cannith-made crossbow and cast the spell imbued in the bolt, using the crossbow in place of the spell's components. When you do, the range of the spell is equal to the crossbow's range instead of the spell's usual range. In place of each spell attack, make a ranged weapon attack using the crossbow against a target within range; on a hit, apply the spell effects in place of weapon damage. If the spell requires a saving throw in addition to the spell attack, its save DC is 13. Once the imbued spell is cast, the *spellbolt* is destroyed and turns to dust.

But What About Gunpowder?

Sure, crossbow innovations are interesting, but what about actual firearms? After all, if something exists in D&D, there's a place for it in Eberron—and the *Dungeon Master's Guide* includes rules for firearms!

In developing Eberron, the design team made an intentional choice not to include gunpowder-based firearms in the world. We wanted to explore magic as a form of science, with people finding arcane solutions to the problems our world solves with mundane science. So rather than adding gunpowder on top of the Five Nation's arcane innovations, we chose to create a world where people use magic to fight from afar, whether via wandslingers or Cannith's kinetic formula. But at the end of the day, that's largely a semantic and stylistic choice. As a DM, if you want to use the firearms in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, here are a few easy ways to do it.

Magical Firearms

There's no reason that firearms have to use gunpowder. You could use firearm statistics but describe how they're driven by Cannith's arcane formula—perhaps the SAC-12 is a light crossbow, but the Cannith Thunderbolt is a musket. Or you could introduce Zil elemental firearms that use a bound earth elemental to project the stone bullets, or an Aereni firearm powered by a harnessed poltergeist. The rules are a set of concrete statistics for a weapon, but nothing requires these weapons use gunpowder (and notably, futuristic firearms already don't).

Cultures with Gunpowder

If you want firearms with actual gunpowder but don't want their existence to impact the development of the Five Nations, you could give that science to an isolated culture that followed a different path. My personal choice would be the Kech Hashraac—a Dhakaani clan specializing in artillery. Such tools could either be unique to the Kech Hashraac or used by all of the Heirs of Dhakaan. This can highlight how the Dhakaani are an advanced culture that followed a different path than the Five Nations, and the difference in weaponry could make for interesting conflicts between the Dhakaani and the Five Nations. Meanwhile, if a player character wanted to use guns, they could have a connection to the Kech Hashraac or another isolated and technologically advanced culture—one unusual choice would be to give firearms to Riedra!

Unique Invention

If an artificer wants to use firearms, perhaps they personally developed these unique weapons unknown to the wider world. This artificer might use gunpowder, or they could've developed an even more unconventional principle the world doesn't yet accept—"My nightmare gun is powered by dreams and shoots bullets of pure fear!" Again, the firearm mechanics in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are simply a foundation; you decide how those rules *feel* in the world of Eberron. Whatever the design, these weapons are peculiar prototypes that require constant maintenance; the character's ability to keep them working is a reflection of their remarkable skill.

Firearms and Balance

I personally prefer to stick with enhanced crossbows, maintaining the game's balance while still presenting the party's crossbows as advanced weapons. If you do introduce firearms into a D&D game, here are some balance considerations.

The Renaissance firearms are reasonably balanced against weapons from the *Player's Handbook*; for example, the musket deals more damage than the heavy crossbow but with a significantly shorter range. However, the Modern and Futuristic weapons significantly outshine standard weapons. The Modern hunting rifle inflicts twice the damage of a heavy crossbow, and a single shot from the Futuristic antimatter rifle deals as much damage as a 3rd-level *inflict wounds* spell.

With that in mind, if I added firearms to my campaign, only the Renaissance weapons would be widespread. I'd treat Modern weapons like uncommon magic items (though notably, their damage doesn't bypass damage resistance like a magic weapon would), and give these weapons to the more technologically advanced cultures in Eberron. Perhaps Aerenal's elite Cairdal Blades have firearms driven by ectoplasm, or the tiefling lords of the Venomous Demesne use firearms harnessing the flames of Fernia. Meanwhile, the incredibly powerful Futuristic weapons would be unheard of, and as hard to come by as a very rare magic item.

Chapter 3: Nobility of Galifar

When you're making a character and you take the noble background, what does that actually mean? What titles are used within the Five Nations? Is a noble title purely hereditary, or can it be purchased? Do nobles have duties, or is the position largely symbolic? This chapter answers these questions and more, exploring the practical impact of noble birth and the role of the nobility in the Five Nations (and in other nations that inherited the traditions of Galifar).

A Changing World

As mentioned in the previous chapter, from the very beginning of the Eberron setting, one of the goals was to make sure the experience of adventuring in this new world still felt like D&D. Knights in plate armor still fight using swords and crossbows, and many nations are ruled by monarchs. At the same time, we wanted to highlight the steady rise of industrial power and the shifting balance of power between the dragonmarked houses and the established aristocracy. So while D&D is stereotypically medieval, our goal was to present a vision of a world that's actively evolving and straining against the past. Breland is already shifting well away from the medieval version of monarchy—and depending on how your story unfolds, other nations might be close behind.

When making history, you always want to know why it matters. We wanted adventurers to be caught in the middle of these changes, to have to deal with the Swords of Liberty and overreaching houses, to have to decide whether to challenge tradition or defend it. So while the many medieval trappings of the Five Nations may seem incongruous, that's the intent— Eberron is a world actively caught between the traditional medievalism associated with D&D and the pull of social and industrial evolution. Galifar's semi-feudal status quo certainly hasn't remained unchallenged for the last thousand years; though prior books don't discuss much of what happened in that millennium, it had its share of uprisings, social experiments, and other remarkable events. As *Exploring Eberron* mentions in the "Untold History" section of chapter 1, the world's history is full of vast periods that were intentionally left unwritten, letting the DM decide what story to tell.

For example, if it suits your story, it's entirely possible there was a thirty-year period in which Aundair broke away and existed as the Republic of Thaliost before being pulled back into Galifar; this early rebellion might've laid the foundation for the more successful secession of the Eldeen Reaches in the tenth century. As of 998 YK, there are still traces of medieval flavor in the culture of Galifar, but you can change these or explore untold moments of history if it makes your campaign more interesting.

Position of Privilege

What does it mean to be a noble? In most of the nations of Khorvaire, nobles actively govern a region, whether large or small. They collect taxes, maintain lands, and manage tenants. Nobles may not personally administer justice, but within their domains, they're still responsible for maintaining the courts, sustaining the forces of the law, and ensuring justice is done. In the wake of the Last War, nobles continue working to repair the damage to their domains, to reintegrate soldiers into civilian life, to deal with the impact of casualties, and to address the needs of refugees seeking shelter in their lands. But with great power comes great responsibility ... and as such, few landed nobles have time to go on adventures.

It's not impossible to create a player character who is both an adventurer and ruler of their lands; perhaps you have a younger sibling or remarkable steward who's doing all the work in your absence. But it's more likely that as a "noble" adventurer, you're just a scion of a powerful family, an heir who doesn't yet hold a significant title. Your blood grants you prestige, but you neither carry the responsibilities of your rank nor have access to the full resources of your domain.

In fifth edition, this status can be reflected by the benefits of the noble background. As a noble, you don't have an army at your beck and call, nor a treasury filled with coffers of coin—after all, you're not the one who does the work of collecting those taxes. What you do have is a handful of proficiencies, your family's signet ring, a set of fine clothes, 25 gp in your pocket ... and a feature called Position of Privilege:

"Thanks to your noble birth, people are inclined to think the best of you. You are welcome in high society, and people assume you have the right to be wherever you are. The common folk make every effort to accommodate you and avoid your displeasure, and other people of high birth treat you as a member of the same social sphere. You can secure an audience with a local noble if you need to."

This underscores that while the precise duties and powers of nobles vary by nation, the defining practical benefit is *respect*. As a player character with this background, you're treated as a peer by aristocrats (even outside your home nation) and generally accommodated by "common" folk—though the latter may be due to self-preservation rather than admiration. You're not above the law. You can't get away with murder. But people are inclined to think the best of you, expecting you'll uphold the honor and dignity of your rank.

Within the Five Nations, your rank is recognized even when you hold no actual authority in a region—or when you're in another nation entirely. This is tied to the romantic notion that Galifar may someday be

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restored; all nobles treat those of other nations with respect, because someday they may all be one kingdom again. Even in Darguun and the Mror Holds, pragmatism ensures your connections will have an impact; though this might simply mean enemies are more inclined to ransom you than kill you.

Noble Background Variants

While the Position of Privilege feature represents benefits that might come from your position, not all nobles receive such recognition. If you're a noble from Cyre, you no longer have your estate or your fortune. You might still have your Position of Privilege if your family was so beloved or connected that the respect lingers, but most Cyran nobles aren't treated this way. In situations like this, you might choose the Retainers feature instead (from the "Variant Feature: Retainers" sidebar in the *Player's Handbook*). Perhaps your estates were lost to the Mourning, but you still have three loyal servants who are sworn to follow you to the bitter end. Or if your influence and retainers are all lost, but people with ties to your family's legacy still look kindly on you, you might choose the background of a displaced noble, presented in this chapter's "Variant Noble: Displaced" sidebar.

Variant Noble: Displaced

The Mourning and the Treaty of Thronehold have remade the borders of the Five Nations and beyond. Your home estates have been annexed, gifted to another family, or enveloped by the dead-gray mists. Unfortunately, you can no longer enjoy the direct benefits of your titles, but your family's legacy lives on.

Feature: Remembered Loyalty

Many people still remember the old days. When you arrive in a new settlement, talk to your DM about creating an NPC you know from your old life. If you make contact, they treat you favorably and offer you food and shelter. This NPC might be a member of your household or a commoner who used to live under your aegis, or you can roll on the table below to choose.

d8	NPC
1	Household guard
2	Farmer or brewer
3	Court magewright
4	Chamberlain or treasurer
5	Valet or butler
6	Chaplain or priest
7	Groom or horsemaster
8	Smith or armorer

However, you don't have to stick with the noble background just because you're playing a noble. You can customize any background, mixing and matching other background features and benefits. For example, if you were an earl of Cyre who turned to crime after losing your fortune, you might choose the criminal background—or simply substitute its Criminal Connections feature in place of Position of Privilege. From a story perspective, you were once a noble with land and a title to match, but you don't receive any practical benefits from your lineage. Similarly, if you're a Cyran noble who has fought to help other Cyran refugees, you might instead be a folk hero who can find shelter in any refugee community.

So whether you were a Lhazaar prince driven from your throne by a treacherous sibling, or the former Lord of Stubborn (the Brelish settlement in Droaam now known as Stonejaw), you can take whichever feature you wish, including the variant features in this chapter.

When Is a Noble Not a Noble?

Just as you can be a noble without the noble background, you can also take the noble background or its Position of Privilege feature even if your character isn't part of the nobility. This is an especially good option for wealthy or influential members of dragonmarked houses. As a dragonmarked "noble," you're either close to house leadership or part of an especially wealthy or powerful branch of the family—and people know it. You're treated as an equal by nobles, you can request an audience with local authorities, and common folk are generally impressed by you.

Gaining Privilege ...

Just as adventurers can become soldiers or criminals during a campaign, it's possible for them to be raised to the nobility. The traditions associated with this are described in later sections, but what's the practical impact of this elevation? Does a new noble gain the benefits of Position of Privilege? What are their duties and responsibilities?

An adventurer could gain a noble title as a reward for service, or in some nations, a soldier could win their title through battle. This might be a substantive title—one that grants land and subjects, which can be passed down to heirs—or simply a courtesy that doesn't carry lands or duties. Being granted a knighthood may not confer the benefits of Position of Privilege, but it also probably won't prevent you from further adventuring. On the other hand, becoming a Lhazaar prince might grant that privilege, but it also complicates your adventuring life significantly! You'll either need to manage your principality or employ people to do it for you (the Valenar method) and hope they do a good job.

When you grant player characters substantive titles as part of a campaign you're DMing, you may wish to make the management and defense of their domain an integral part of the campaign moving forward. On the other hand, if Boranel grants someone the title of Shield of the East, it's a symbolic courtesy that carries significant weight with Brelish nobles (as it reflects the favor of the king), but it bestows no actual responsibilities and doesn't have the impact of Position of Privilege in other nations.

The "Variant Noble: Newly Risen" sidebar presents a background variant you might select if your character's meteoric rise draws attention from people who hope to benefit from your newfound influence. Alternatively, a DM might consider granting the Rising Star feature to a character who rises to the nobility during a campaign.

Variant Noble: Newly Risen

Your family has risen to the aristocracy very recently. Service to the crown, a heroic deed, or an extraordinarily generous donation may have contributed to your success. Though older and more entrenched noble families meet their obligations toward you, they may still look on you with disdain. Meanwhile, there is no shortage of other folks looking to ride your coat-tails to a new and better life.

Feature: Rising Star

Your name is known among monied individuals in your home country. You generally enjoy the utmost respect of non-aristocratic upper and middle classes. You can expect reasonable accommodations and inside information from such people in return for a simple non-monetary favor, such as passing their name or details of their business along to another noble.

... And Losing Privilege

Just as a lowborn character can gain a noble title, a high-born one can lose it. The simplest path to being stripped of a title is to be convicted of treason. However, in the Five Nations, nobles have duties, and a family who fails in those might be stripped of their title and property by their monarch. In the Lhazaar Principalities, a character could lose their title because someone else takes it by force. And countless Cyran nobles lost their holdings in the Mourning, then the Treaty of Thronehold effectively stripped them of their privileges. The following table provides inspiration for ways an adventurer's family might've lost their title; while the table assumes an ancestor lost the title, it's also possible the adventurer themself lost it.

How Did You Lose Your Title?

d6	Reason for Loss
1	Your ancestor attempted to kill the sovereign and failed. Do you know what drove them to attempt this crime?
2	Your ancestor was framed by rivals who now hold your rightful title and lands. What crime were they framed for?
3	Your domain was lost to an enemy during the Last War. Who holds it now?
4	Your ancestor worked with an enemy during the Last War and was convicted of treason. What were they trying to accomplish?
5	Your domain was abandoned after being seized by a supernatural force. Is it haunted by deadly undead or held by aberrations from Khyber? Was your ancestor responsible for this situation?
6	Your ancestor refused to uphold the laws of the land. Were they decadent, corrupt, or negligent? Or were they taking a principled stand?

Should a player character be stripped of their title during a campaign, it's up to the player and DM to decide how this affects their Position of Privilege. If the character is widely known and beloved, it's possible the benefit lingers based solely on that goodwill. As a DM, if I removed the benefits of Position of Privilege, I'd grant a new feature to replace it, based on the circumstances of its loss. Was the noble convicted of treason because they opposed a tyrant? They might lose their Position of Privilege but gain the Rustic Hospitality feature of a folk hero ... or perhaps the infamy of their deeds earns them the Bad Reputation of a pirate. The "Variant Noble: Disgraced" sidebar presents a background variant a DM could grant during a campaign, or that a player could choose for a new character who recently fell from grace.

Variant Noble: Disgraced

Though you're a member of the aristocracy, your family has lost favor with its peers. The source of your disgrace might be a debt or defeat shared between all members of your house, or a particular family member might've been accused or convicted of heinous crimes.

Feature: Scandalous

Your family name and your alleged failures are known far and wide. Nobles and loyal commoners may put up a polite front as propriety demands, but they are inclined to think the worst of you. Meanwhile, there are plenty who seek to capitalize on your position. You can always seek a secret meeting with a noble who is not the current head of their house, or with a local criminal leader.

Traditions of Galifar

The culture of the Five Nations blends the united traditions of Galifar with the preserved traditions of each nation. The Last War was fought not for independence from Galifar, but in an attempt to reunite it and determine who would rule the united kingdom. With a few notable exceptions (Thrane's theocracy, the Code of Kaius), the Five Nations intentionally preserved the traditions of Galifar, always hoping that within a few years, their ruler would be the sovereign of the reunited Galifar.

While Galifar was a united kingdom, it wasn't a monolithic culture. Throughout its history, the people of Galifar maintained pride in their individual cultures, thinking of themselves as distinct nationalities even while considering themselves citizens of Galifar. A millennium ago, King Galifar Wynarn I—then king of Karrnath—began his campaign to unite the Five Nations by conquering the neighboring kingdom of Metrol. There, Galifar displaced existing nobles and instituted new systems, drastically transforming (and renaming) it as he made Cyre the heart of his new kingdom of Galifar. The other three nations were ultimately brought into Galifar by diplomacy, not by absolute conquest—though Galifar's clear military superiority was the iron fist that drove these negotiations. Galifar I instituted changes at the highest levels of society, appointing his children as the rulers of each nation; but rather than displacing the existing nobility, he generally married his children into the current ruling families.

Galifar built on the existing feudal structures of the Five Nations, but restructured them so it was clear all power ultimately flowed from the sovereign. Over time, he streamlined systems and added new universal concepts, such as expanding education and instituting the Galifar Code of Justice. Meanwhile, he nationalized and advanced the role of institutions such as the Arcane Congress, the King's Citadel, and Rekkenmark. He instituted a standardized currency—the crown-sovereign-galifar-dragon values still used today—and established the Karrnathi dialect as the Common tongue. So all the nations of Galifar were united by a vital set of shared customs and laws, but they also maintained their own unique traditions and quirks, highlighted in the "Nations and Nobles Today" section.

Sovereigns and Sovereigns

The faith of the Sovereign Host played a crucial role in the foundation of the united kingdom. Galifar I believed he was guided by Aureon and fulfilling a destiny laid out by that Sovereign; given the king's remarkable successes, it's entirely possible he was a paladin of the Host, possibly even a subtle aasimar. The belief that the Wynarn bloodline is blessed by Aureon is a vital cornerstone of the Galifar monarchy. This bedrock principle has stood against uprisings, would-be usurpers, and consorts seeking to claim the crown. In the present day, this belief doesn't come up often and modern monarchs vary in their piety, but it still underlies the traditions of Galifar. The Galifar Code of Justice invokes Aureon, and other aspects of law similarly assume a casual faith in the Sovereigns.

While the faith of the Sovereign Host permeates the Five Nations, it has never been an institution wielding monolithic power like the Church of the Silver Flame does in Thrane. But just as nobles are required to maintain courts, collect taxes, and levy troops within their domains, they're required to sustain the Vassal faith. Depending on the size of a community, this could involve maintaining a grand temple, a small temple with a single priest, or just a small shrine. Most nobles of Galifar viewed this not as a hardship, but an opportunity to display piety; they might lavish resources on their favored temples, raise monuments or shrines to a particular Sovereign, or compete to lure the most accomplished scholars to their seminaries. Within the Sovereign faith, anyone seen as guided by the Nine can fill the role of priest, so some renowned nobles have even acted as priests of the Sovereign Host.

Throughout the untold history of Galifar, some zealous nobles sought to stamp out divergent sects—hunting down and publicly executing followers of the Dark Six (real or imagined) or persecuting "heretics." However, despite his deep faith, Galifar never sought to force his beliefs on others. His kingdom's principles presumed simple faith in the Sovereigns and nobles were required to support the faith—but they and their people weren't required to actually practice it. Following his legacy, the Five Nations are largely tolerant to this day (and many of its monarchs aren't particularly devout), but the principle of Aureon's Blessing remains at the heart of the myth of Galifar.

Role of the Nobility

When Galifar was founded, each of the Five Nations practiced forms of medieval feudalism. Nobles governed lands tended by tenant farmers in exchange for collecting taxes and providing military service to the leader of the nation. In many nations, the nobility was also responsible for the administration of justice. Galifar was built on this framework. All power and authority flowed from the sovereign, through the princes and princesses who governed the land, down to local nobles and administrators. Throughout the united kingdom of Galifar, the nobility remained its foundation. They were still responsible for maintaining their territory, including collecting taxes and raising levies for military and national service.

Under the Galifar Code of Justice, nobles didn't administer justice personally, but it was their duty to maintain the system, which included appointing justices and managing the local courts. As the kingdom expanded and life became increasingly more complicated, this produced a class of dedicated civil servants and landowners—initially ennobled viscounts and crown reeves, but ultimately expanding into gentry and merchant classes. But at the start of the Last War, most lands were still associated with a noble's domain, and the local lord still appointed justices, mayors, and other officials. A crown reeve was responsible to their count, the count to their duke, the duke to their prince, and the prince to their king.

As noted earlier, some titles are courtesy titles, carrying respect and prestige, but nothing more; an important administrator might be granted a courtesy title to reflect their service, but no land would be tied to that title. These are a great option for a DM to award to player characters, allowing them to enjoy the status of being a count or shield of the realm without having to give up adventuring and begin maintaining roads and collecting taxes. Meanwhile, substantive titles are associated with land and the duties of maintaining it.

Military Service

Under Galifar's traditions, each duchy was obliged to contribute a certain number of soldiers to the army of Galifar. As soldiers were paid a fair wage, this quota could often be met with volunteers. If not, the duke was responsible for making up the shortfall through whatever methods necessary. While conscription was practiced in the kingdom's early days (a task often delegated to the counts of a duchy), in time, it became common practice for nobles in peaceful regions to pay for Karrnathi troops to enlist in their name. As Karrnath had a tradition of mandatory military service, this worked out well for all sides.

With the outbreak of the Last War, sovereigns continued to rely on nobles to levy troops. Thrane and Karrnath had little trouble meeting quotas, but other nations fell back on conscription when necessary. In the present day, most nations are reducing their active military forces, so nobles are primarily responsible for maintaining the local watch in their domains. They're also entitled to maintain a limited household guard of their own (with the size varying by nation).

Noble Ranks and Titles

Galifar I instituted a series of noble titles, which remain the common ranks of nobility to this day. The list below describes this hierarchy in descending order; beyond mere status, the order also reflects the practical reality of land ownership and chain of command.

King/Queen. In current usage, the monarch of any of the Five Nations. Under the united kingdom of Galifar, only the monarch of Galifar held this title; they reigned from Thronehold, the island in Scion's Sound.

Prince/Princess. In current usage, a child of the king or queen. Under the united kingdom of Galifar, the nations didn't have individual monarchs, so the prince or princess governing each nation used a title including their nation, like "Princess of Breland."

Archduke/Archduchess. A duke or duchess married to a prince or princess. (See "Princes and Archdukes.")

Grand Duke/Duchess. A duke or duchess governing a palatinate. (See "Grand Dukes.")

Duke/Duchess. The ruler of a duchy (each nation was subdivided into several duchies). Reports to the ruler of their nation. Originally synonymous with "Warlord," though some nations now appoint warlords to office.

Shield. Ruler of a county considered a dangerous border. Formally addressed as "Shield of [County]," but commonly addressed as "Count" or "Countess." Though technically peers with other counts, they're afforded extra respect.

Count/Countess. Ruler of a county (a region within a duchy).

Viscount/Viscountess. A nonhereditary appointed title, typically granted by a count or duke for performing important administrative duties within their domain.

Crown Reeve. Administers territory within a county (sometimes as a hereditary title, other times tied to service). Commonly addressed as "Lord" or "Lady." This is the lowest rank of nobility, roughly equivalent to the use of "Baron" in medieval history.

Anyone holding one of the above titles is allowed to use the ir' prefix with their surname. The children of these nobles use this prefix as well—this applies even if their parent holds a courtesy title, though that title is usually tied to the holder and can't be transferred to heirs.

The eldest child of a duke can use the title of count, and their second heir has the title of viscount; all other children of nobles are known as lords or ladies. These titles are mere courtesies since heirs have no actual authority. A noble's spouse generally doesn't take on their title; they're instead known as the noble's consort, and commonly addressed as lord or lady. (See "Gaining a Title: Elevation, Inheritance, and Marriage" for details.)

Princes and Archdukes

The succession traditions of Galifar are a tangled web, and it's a miracle the united kingdom endured as long

as it did. The basic order of succession went like this (for conciseness, the below titles use the male form, but nobles of any gender could hold them):

Monarch of Galifar. When the monarch of Galifar died, their eldest child took the throne of Thronehold. If none of the monarch's heirs had come of age, their eldest sibling (or that sibling's heir) governed the kingdom as regent until an heir came of age.

Rulers of the Nations. When the five eldest children of the current Wynarn ruler of Galifar came of age, they each assumed rulership of one of the Five Nations. This position was traditionally sealed by them marrying into one of that nation's duchies; in so doing, they were formally acknowledged as prince of that nation.

Former Rulers. Princes were always tied to duchies. When the monarchy changed and the heirs of the new monarch were appointed as princes, the previous princes remained in their nations as dukes. If there wasn't a new prince—because the monarch hadn't produced five heirs—the previous prince and their heirs would continue to hold the title.

Archdukes. When a prince married the leader of a duchy, their new spouse became the archduke of that nation, potentially taking this title from its previous holder in another duchy. Should death create a vacancy with no Wynarn heir of age to rule as prince, the archduke would rule that nation until an heir came of age.

These traditions resulted in regular shifts in the balance of power between duchies, as the rise of a new monarch ultimately displaced the current prince or princess (and often the current archduke or archduchess as well). Though the Last War was sparked by resistance to the order of succession, that certainly wasn't the first time a nation or duchy resisted this change. Today, archdukes no longer shift with the rulers of each nation. Rather, archdukes hold that title by merit of ruling whatever duchy a prince or princess was ruling from when the Last War began—so Fairhaven, Korth, Wroat, and Sigilstar are now permanently ruled by archdukes.

Grand Dukes

Grand dukes are rulers of palatinates, often referred to as grand duchies. These regions hold a degree of independence from the surrounding nation, and they have the right to enforce local laws and practice customs that might be at odds with those of the surrounding nation. The first palatinate was the Grand Duchy of Atur in Karrnath, but the most significant palatinates are in Zilargo. When the armies of Galifar passed the Howling Peaks, they were met by Zil diplomats. These envoys negotiated the incorporation of the region into the overall mantle of Breland, but as three grand duchies—with the net result that the Zil became part of Galifar while still maintaining nearly complete autonomy. The three grand duchies of Zilargo were Zolanberg, Trolanport, and Korranberg; however, during the Last War, Zilargo declared independence from Breland. It's up to the DM to decide whether there are any other grand duchies in Khorvaire.

Gaining a Title: Elevation, Inheritance, and Marriage

Under the traditions of Galifar, a hereditary title passes to the oldest child of that noble. If there is no living heir, the title passes to the noble's siblings or the siblings' heirs; failing that, the noble who oversees the deceased's domain has the power to reassign it, though that appointment must be ratified by the sovereign. Several noble lines were lost in the Last War (or convicted of treason and stripped of rank), so there are dukes with counties to dispense and counts in need of qualified crown reeves.

In most of the Five Nations, marriage doesn't convey title (other than the prewar practice of elevating the ruler of a duchy to archduke or archduchess when they married a prince or princess). This stems from the principle that only a Wynarn can rule; when the Wynarn monarch dies, their consort has no claim to the throne. Often, a noble consort is granted a courtesy title, as seen with Queen Etrigani of Karrnath; but if Kaius III were to die, the crown of Karrnath would immediately pass to his eldest heir, not to Etrigani. This principle generally holds throughout the ranks. Someone who marries into a noble family is a consort. They may be granted a courtesy title (see "Honors and Offices"), but they're not the equal of their noble spouse—and if they're a player character, it's up to

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the DM to decide whether their status is sufficient to justify a Position of Privilege. This largely depends on public perception: do the nobles and common folk respect the consort?

While many nobles limit themselves to a single consort, this isn't enforced by law. A monarch could have multiple consorts, and any child with an official consort (whether by marriage or simple royal decree) is considered an heir. For hundreds of years, it was accepted tradition for a reigning sovereign to have a consort from each of the Five Nations, in part to spread out the burden of producing five heirs. In the wake of the Last War, some nobles have continued this tradition. For example, Kaius III of Karrnath maintains a harem; only Etrigani carries the formal title of queen, but it's possible Kaius has named other partners as consorts. By contrast, Queen Aurala of Aundair has a single consort, but hasn't granted him the title of king.

In most nations of Khorvaire, only the sovereign can create a new title. However, many domains have a set of existing courtesy titles (see "Honors and Offices") that can be dispensed at the discretion of the local noble. For example, the Count of Threeshadows may have the authority to appoint a Viscount Threeshadows and two knights—but these titles aren't passed on to heirs.

In most nations, it's illegal for anyone to sell a title, whether it's their own or a domain within their jurisdiction; Breland is a notable exception to this rule.

Honors and Offices

In addition to the noble titles above, the Five Nations use many other titles that are honors or offices. Similar to the courtesy titles of nobility, these titles signify status but aren't hereditary and don't bestow land.

For example, knighthood (discussed further below) is an honor, not a title of nobility. Traditionally, a duke or higher noble can appoint a knight to reward them for their service to the nation. While there were Karrnathi nobles among the original Order of the Emerald Claw, many knights of the order came from the gentry. On the other hand, among the Karrnathi chivalric orders, the Order of the Inviolate Way only accepts members who are also of noble blood.

Offices include titles like "Minister of Magic" or "Warlord." For example, in Aundair, Darro ir'Lain is the Duke of Passage and Second Warlord of the Realm. His title of duke is hereditary, but his second title is an office he currently holds, not something he carries for life. If he fell out of favor with Queen Aurala, there would soon be a new Second Warlord.

Knights and Knighthood

By the traditions of Galifar, knights are associated with orders. A knight isn't just a knight; they're a Knight of the Order of the Emerald Claw, or a Knight of the Order of the Inviolate Way. Knightly orders serve three functions. First, a knighthood is an honor reflecting the favor of a sovereign, duke, or lesser noble granted the privilege of appointing knights. Additionally, knightly orders are fraternal orders, and members are expected to support one another in both war and peace. Finally, knightly orders are also elite military units.

Though knights usually serve as elite warriors, that's not always the case; this is similar to how most nobles have substantive titles (with formal responsibilities), whereas others are titled as a courtesy. The Duchess of Karrlakton might appoint one woman as a Knight of the Order of the Blackened Sky because she's an exceptional combat alchemist whose skills will serve Karrnath well on the battlefield. Meanwhile, the duchess might appoint another man to the same order for entirely different reasons: he's an influential citizen of Karrlakton, and she wants both to honor his service and connect him to other members of the order, even though she understands he's not a soldier and will never serve the order on the battlefield.

Sometimes a knighthood comes with an annuity, making it a concrete reward that can help support a non-noble knight. But beyond that, the knighthood's function as a supportive fraternal order comes into play. In the example given above, the combat alchemist may not be a noble nor have significant wealth. Meanwhile, the second knight *is* wealthy and could serve as a patron to the alchemist. The orders are designed to bring the finest citizens together, people who might normally be split by class lines. Knighthood allows nobles to elevate and forge connections with gifted commoners without actually raising them to the nobility. (*Forge of War* presents the most detailed description of knightly orders in canon material, describing six Karrnathi orders on page 54.)

Dragonmarks and the Nobility

The Korth Edicts prevent members of dragonmarked houses from owning land or holding titles. A noble can marry a dragonmarked heir, but one of them must completely sever all legal ties to their family. For example, a Deneith heir who chooses to marry into a noble family must cut all ties to their house, including their family name; if their noble lover instead chooses to marry into House Deneith, the noble must renounce their title and rights. Of course, this doesn't prevent such a union from having important diplomatic implications, as the original *Eberron Campaign Setting* observes:

"Some tension exists between the houses and the crown since the marriage of Queen Aurala to Sasik of House Vadalis. Traditionally, the dragonmarked houses and the royal families have avoided mixing to maintain a division between rulership and commerce. Even though Sasik, as the royal consort, has severed his claims to the House Vadalis fortune, he nevertheless maintains ties that make the other houses nervous about what advantages Vadalis might be gaining in its dealings with Aundair."

It's also the case that not all nations care about the Korth Edicts. For example, the elves of Valenar are effectively appointing Lyrandar heirs to the duties of

viscounts, though they aren't using that title; these Lyrandar administrators don't sever ties to their houses. To date, this has gone unchallenged, in part because it's not entirely clear who would challenge it and in what forum.

Further complicating matters, though dragonmarked heirs have to abandon house ties to marry into noble families, they bring their blood with them—and consequently, there have been nobles who carried dragonmarks. That said, dragonmarks appear most frequently in the dragonmarked houses due to intentional mingling of strong dragonmarked bloodlines. If someone from those bloodlines marries an outsider, a dragonmark is far less likely. As a result, foundling marks are quite rare, and someone who unexpectedly develops a mark may not even realize that they had a connection to a house in their history. So while dragonmarked nobles are possible, they're by no means common.

Citizenship

Citizens of the Five Nations are protected by the Code of Galifar. But how does one become a citizen? Keeping in mind that Galifar is based on feudal principles, most nations still require would-be citizens to attend an audience with a local noble. There, the applicant swears fealty to the nation, its ruler, and that local noble; in turn, the noble formally accepts them as a subject. In doing so, the noble accepts responsibility for that individual, and the individual promises to obey that noble, pay taxes, answer any call for conscription, and respect the laws of the land.

Nobles don't have to accept an offer of fealty, and most won't unless the potential subject intends to reside within their domain. For example, a Brelish noble might refuse to accept the fealty of an ogre from Droaam—perhaps because they don't believe the ogre will uphold the laws, or because they don't believe the ogre intends to remain within their domain. And without an accepted oath of fealty, you have none of the privileges of a citizen. Long before the people of the Barrens established Droaam, Galifar I declared the land to be part of Breland's domain—but the region's monstrous inhabitants had never sworn fealty to any Brelish lord. As a result, they weren't considered citizens, and from Galifar's perspective, they were outlaws squatting in Brelish land.

In the modern age, much of the citizenship process is streamlined and standardized by bureaucracy, especially when granting citizenship to children of existing citizens. In some regions, there are annual ceremonies where each youth swears an oath to the local lord before being recognized as an adult. In a populous region like Sharn, the parents file paperwork when the child is born, and when the child becomes an adult, they file their own statement. But the underlying principle remains the same: *someone* needs to make a decision on behalf of the local lord as to whether to accept the offer of fealty, based on the applicant's residence, reputation, family, and other factors.

Nations and Nobles Today

So far, we've explored the standard traditions of Galifar that most nations share. However, even while Galifar was united, the nations had their own unique customs, and these changes have only accelerated over the last century.

Aundair

Aundair has held closely to the old traditions of Galifar, and its people have a romantic view of the nobility. These tendencies may be due in part to the influence of Thelanis, but whatever the reason, Aundairians have always embraced the notions of noblesse oblige and chivalry. The common folk value self-reliance and ambition, but alongside that, most have believed throughout history that the Aundairian nobility is noble in all senses of the word, that their leaders will do what's best for the country and for their people.

Their idealism doesn't extend to foreign nobles, however; Aundairians have long believed that their people—both nobles and commoners—possess a dignity and decency beyond their neighbors. Over the last two centuries, a rift has also formed between the farmers of Aundair's west and the grand cities of its east. This division led first to the west's embrace of the Pure Flame sect and eventually culminated in the secession of the Eldeen Reaches. Nonetheless, most remaining Aundairians are proud of their rulers and feel a bond to their local lords.

Noble Ranks

Aundair uses the standard noble ranks of Galifar. Accomplished arcane spellcasters often add a title describing their primary school of magic, along with an indication of the highest-level spell they can cast; so a noble might be introduced as "Alara ir'Lain, Countess of Askelios, Diviner of the Fourth Circle." (Bear in mind that NPC spellcasters may not have the full capabilities of a PC class; while Countess Alara is capable of casting at least one 4th-level divination spell, that doesn't mean she has all the versatility of a 9th-level wizard; she might even be limited to casting her spells as rituals, like a magewright.)

Playing an Aundairian Noble

Aundairians have high expectations of their nobles. Aundair is a land that values wit, knowledge, and arcane talent, and a noble is expected to possess all of these. Nobles may not be accomplished spellcasters, but if you can't at least cast a cantrip, your peers will

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chuckle and your parents will push you to study harder. Similarly, Aundairian nobles have high standards of honor and duty, and crass or selfish behavior reflects poorly on your family.

The noble background is a logical choice for any noble character, but if you're a second child or further down the line, both soldier and sage are good Aundairian choices; many Aundairian officers were drawn from noble families. You could also be one of the "Lost Lords," nobles whose domains were lost in the secession of the Eldeen Reaches. While a few Lost Lords still have enough influence to justify a Position of Privilege, this is a sound basis for taking the Retainers feature instead; if your retainers are members of long-lived ancestries, they might even have served your family long before the Eldeen rebellion.

Aundair has a significant population of elves and Khoravar, and these are folded into its noble families; there are also a few noble families comprised of gnomes. A significant number of noble estates are close to manifest zones tied to Thelanis, and many of the oldest families claim to have ancient agreements with fey; such agreements could range from a formal pact with an archfey to a simple understanding with a dryad who dwells in the local wood. It's also the case that Sul Khatesh is bound beneath Aundair, and some families have secret ties to the Queen of Shadows. In creating an Aundairian noble, consider whether your family has any ancient compacts in their history—if so, is this a point of public pride or a secret?

Breland

The kingdom of Wroat was founded by reavers and bandits, and its rulers held their power through a blend of charisma, cunning, and force. This collection of city-states, loosely aligned under Wroat, was once the greatest power in the region—but it was clear from the start of Galifar's invasion that Wroat would ultimately fall to Galifar's disciplined forces. Those leaders who wisely chose to ally with their invaders became the nobles of the newly forged Breland.

While Breland accepted the feudal structure of Galifar, its people never fully embraced the nobility. It's always been said that a Brelish farmer sees themselves as the equal of any king. Brelish commoners accepted that the nobles had the *power*, but they never bought into romantic ideals of divine bloodlines. Breland was an active frontier, and its people were more concerned with practical protection than with who was doing the protecting. When Galifar was formed, the lands west of the Dagger were still home to ogres and gnolls, while goblins and gnomes held the lands to the east. Zilargo's grand duchies were quickly incorporated into the united kingdom, but it took centuries for Breland to achieve its current borders. The shield lords of the west were far more practical than the grand lords of Aundair; the common folk relied on the nobles to direct military action and to bring the resources of the crown to bear, while the lords relied on the people to be more self-directed than in other nations. Brelish communities chose their own reeves and lesser officials, and even simple matters of justice were resolved by the people instead of going to the courts.

So throughout the history of Breland, nobles had to earn (and maintain) the respect of their subjects instead of merely relying on tradition to keep them in their place. When Brelish respect their leaders, the people are known for their pride and loyalty—but Breland has also seen more minor uprisings than the other Five Nations.

Parliamentary Rule

The Brelish Parliament was established before the Last War as a representative body that advised the Prince of Breland, and at the outbreak of the Last War, Princess Wroann ir'Wynarn promised to make Breland a place where "people would be judged by word and deed instead of social class." In 895 YK, Wroann granted greater powers to the Brelish Parliament, and it wields the same authority to this day; the parliament makes the laws, and the crown enforces them (as well as overseeing foreign affairs and national security). King Boranel is an exceptionally popular ruler, but a strong movement believes that the Brelish monarchy should end with Boranel's reign—or at least be relegated to a purely symbolic position.

Noble Ranks

Breland uses the traditional ranks of Galifar, but an unusually high number of its counties are ruled by shields, especially west of the Dagger. Even though most of these counties have been secure for centuries, the shield lords still take pride in their titles and the deeds of their ancestors. Most cities and large communities have a council that manages local affairs, and in many counties, viscounts are actually appointed by this council, rather than by the noble lord; a canon example of this is the Lord Mayor of Sharn, a viscount appointed by the city council.

Breland is the only one of the Five Nations that allows nobles to sell their titles and domains—notably, this is how Antus ir'Soldorak of the Aurum obtained his "ir." Any such transaction must be approved by the sovereign, and the crown takes a cut of the proceedings. The new noble is required to fulfill the duties of their position, and should they fail, the title can be stripped away.

Playing a Brelish Noble

Brelish nobles need to be popular with their people to rule effectively. If you're a noble with a Position of Privilege, what's the foundation of your popularity?

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Are you charismatic, or have you or your family performed great deeds to earn the love of your people? Is there a song local bards sing about you? Can your family trace its roots back to the foundation of Galifar, or did they buy their title? Are you from a core county that's always been part of the realm, or are you a shield lord whose ancestors took your lands from the so-called monsters of the west? Is your domain secure now, or are your lands on the border with Droaam—and if the latter, why are you adventuring instead of standing with your people?

If you don't want a traditional noble background, it's possible your lands were west of the Graywall mountains but were lost in the rise of Droaam; perhaps Graywall itself was your family's domain! Or if you're a minor Brelish noble popular with the people, you might take the folk hero background; your support of the common folk is so well known that you're celebrated even in other nations. Alternatively, if you're from a small county with relatively little influence, it might be interesting to take the criminal background—is it because your noble family has deep dealings with the criminal community? Or are your family criminals who bought a minor title?

Noble Families of Sharn

Twenty-five noble families are represented in Sharn; together with thirty-five other powerful (but common) families, they make up the Sixty, the "social nobility" of Sharn. However, these nobles don't rule Sharn itself. Though Sharn lies within the Duchy of the Hilt, the city is governed by the Lord Mayor, a viscount appointed by the elected city council; beyond the mayor's rule, the city's other actual leaders are city councilors and Watch captains.

Some of Sharn's aristocratic families are landed nobles who maintain estates in the city but govern lands elsewhere in Breland; even if the actual lord is rarely in residence, their heirs might be in Sharn to enjoy the season. Others merely hold courtesy titles. Notably, the ir'Tain family—generally seen as the crown jewel of the social scene—draws their influence from vast wealth. While ir'Tains have served as Lord Mayor, the family doesn't actually govern lands. So there are many nobles in Sharn, but their domains—if any—lie outside the city.

Cyre

The conquest of Metrol was Galifar I's first step in establishing his united kingdom. The realm was his bitterest enemy and the one most completely transformed in defeat. The nobles of central Cyre, each hand-picked by Galifar, were devoted to the ideals of the united kingdom. They believed they embodied those ideals, confident that "what our dreams imagine, our hands create." Some folk argue that these dreamers were decadent and soft; in truth, they were devoted to arts, sciences, and philosophy—though their contemplative pursuits avoided challenging the concept of the monarchy itself. To central Cyrans, the crown was the bedrock foundation of Galifar, and all their dreams were built on that foundation.

Of course, things were quite different for the nobles of southern and eastern Cyre. To realize his dreams for central Cyre, Galifar divided the best lands of old Metrol among his new, hand-picked nobles, while resettling the original nobles in the lands to the south and east. The lands to the south were inhabited by goblins, and the distant region across the Blade Desert by farmers who traced their roots back to the Khunan region of Sarlona. Neither of these forces were organized into nations nor had the power to resist Galifar; he claimed both regions by conquest, then granted their lands to Metrol's displaced nobles. While he forbade outright slavery, he was willing to overlook the excesses of feudal serfdom. As a result, Central Cyre may have embodied the ideals of Galifar, but eastern Cyre was its antithesis. Due to its isolation, the region was simply ignored by the rest of the united kingdom, its nobles allowed to rule their petty fiefdoms as they wished.

Following the outbreak of the Last War, the Cyrans continued to hold to the traditions of Galifar; after all, they were the rightful heirs of the true kingdom and were fighting to defend it. Eastern and southern Cyre were lost in the uprisings that formed Valenar and Darguun, then central Cyre fell in the Mourning. Today, most surviving Cyran nobles have little but their pride. The Treaty of Thronehold established Cyre as a fallen nation, giving its nobles no voice in shaping the treaty. While Boranel has granted Prince Oargev the land now known as New Cyre, the only power Cyran nobles now wield is what others choose to give them.

Noble Ranks

Cyre used the standard ranks of Galifar. Counties in southern Cyre were often ruled by shields, as the land was taken from the goblins; the centuries that followed were filled with ongoing conflicts over that land.

Playing a Cyran Noble

The earlier "Position of Privilege" section discusses several background options for Cyran nobles, including a new background feature for displaced nobles. Beyond background, consider the following when developing the story of a Cyran noble.

Was your family's domain within central Cyre (now the Mournland)? Or are you from southern Cyre (now Darguun) or eastern Cyre (now Valenar)? Valenar and Darguun were lost almost four decades ago, and if you're human, you may have never known these lands. But unlike the lands lost to the Mournland, your family's land still exists; do you yearn to reclaim it from the elves or goblins?

While it's usually most practical for adventurers to be heirs as opposed to actively holding a title—explaining why you're not bound by the duties of your rank and why you don't have access to its resources—it's simple to adventure as a titled noble if you're playing a Cyran!

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It could be you were the Duchess of Eston and part of Dannel's councils—and now, you're a refugee with only three loyal retainers left to show for it. As discussed earlier, your Cyran title probably means little to the rest of Khorvaire; once you may have been Duchess of Eston, but now you're just a woman with a well-worn sword and the skills to use it.

Karrnath

The Karrns are a hard people who have always valued martial discipline and strict order. Karrn the Conqueror's deeds eventually secured human dominance over Khorvaire—albeit a thousand years after his death—and Galifar I himself was from Karrnath. While Cyrans believe they're the rightful heirs of Galifar because of the traditions of succession, Karrns know it was their people who *created* Galifar, and their language that became the common tongue. If Kaius III can't reclaim the throne of the united kingdom, perhaps another capable Karrnathi warlord will be the next Galifar and start the cycle anew.

In Karrnath, the Galifar Code of Justice has been supplanted by the harsh Code of Kaius, a form of martial law. Enacted at the start of the Last War, the code met little resistance and remains in place today, in part because it reflects the overall character of the Karrns and their culture, which stood long before Galifar I crafted a more enticing foundation for his united kingdom. While there are certainly exceptions, most Karrns are proud of their strict laws and view the other nations as soft and corrupt. All Karrns serve a term in the military, further cementing their respect for order and the chain of command. One might ask what Karrnath needed with such a sizable army, especially during the most peaceful years of Galifar; in truth, the Karrnathi army fills many noncombat roles within the nation. Local law enforcement is largely provided by soldiers, with a small corps of career officers who maintain continuity of service. Soldiers also perform public works. A term in the army is a term of service to the nation—you must be prepared to go in harm's way for the good of your people, but the precise form of your service is up to your sovereign and the warlord.

Grand Duchy of Atur

Karrnath is notable for its Grand Duchy of Atur. This region's independence was negotiated long ago, recognizing its work containing the dangerous influence of the powerful Mabaran manifest zone at the heart of the region. During the Last War, Kaius I affirmed this independence in exchange for the support of Atur's elite necromancers. This allowed Atur to remain a public stronghold of the Blood of Vol even after Regent Moranna and Kaius III turned against the faith. Atur is still home to the finest necromancers in the nation, and most of Karrnath's undead troops are stored in its vaults. Some warlords despise the Blood of Vol or fear that the undead it maintains could be turned against Karrnath. But these nobles know that seizing Atur would prove disastrous without the knowledge to contain the power of the manifest zone, and so the City of Night remains inviolate.

Noble Ranks

Karrnath uses the standard ranks of Galifar. It's common for dukes to use the title of warlord, but the titles are interchangeable. Counts along the new southeastern borders of the nation take pride in the title of shield. Nobles are expected to levy a specific number of troops for the service of the crown, but they may maintain additional forces as they see fit within their realms; likewise, when troops are levied, it's understood that they're merely on loan to the crown, and those troops retain their loyalty to their duke.

Playing a Karrnathi Noble

As a Karrnathi noble, consider whether you want the noble or soldier background. Like other Karrns, all nobles serve in the military, often as officers (if they actually possess the skills to lead). The Position of Privilege feature reflects greater diplomatic influence, whereas the Military Rank feature reflects respect earned on the battlefield, deeds recognized even by enemy soldiers. Which is a better fit for your noble Karrn?

You'll also want to decide where you stand on the Blood of Vol and the use of undead. The faith has always had deep roots in Karrnath. It spread when it was embraced by the crown earlier in the war, then withered when Regent Moranna turned against it two decades ago. Are you from a proud Seeker family, perhaps tied to the Grand Duchy of Atur? If so, how has the nation's rejection of the faith affected your family? Did your family once embrace the faith only to abandon it—and if so, are you still a believer in spite of your faithless forbearers? Or are you a true Vassal devoted to Dol Dorn and the Sovereigns, confident that proud Karrnath can dominate the battlefield without using undead?

Another question is where you stand on Kaius III and his efforts to strengthen peace. Do you believe the current peace is best for all? Do you trust your king is doing what's best for the nation, even if you hope it's merely a stratagem in a longer game? Or do you believe Kaius is squandering Karrnathi might and hope a new warlord will lead your nation to greatness? Do you think you could be that warlord, given time?

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Thrane

Even before becoming Thrane under Galifar I, the city-state of Daskara was devoted to worship of the Sovereign Host, reflecting the influence of ancient Pyrine (and to a lesser extent, Irian). Just as Karrnath has powerful manifest zones tied to Mabar, Daskara has a few noteworthy zones tied to Irian, which inspire hope and encourage faith; notably, one of these zones is in the region where Flamekeep now stands. Like Galifar I's belief in the Wynarn family's right to rule, the people of Daskara believed their own rulers were blessed by the Sovereigns and governed with divine right. This faith was shaken by their defeats at the hands of Galifar's forces, but he was able to convince most that his united kingdom was part of the divine plan, that their blessed lords were *meant* to kneel to the Wynarn monarch. Galifar further strengthened this by establishing Daskara as the seat of the Grand Temple of the Host, the greatest temple in the lands. However, divine will was called into question when the dragon Sarmondelaryx ravaged the newly christened Thrane, killing its prince and burning the Grand Temple.

These challenges strained the faith of the Thranes, but it took the overlord Bel Shalor to shatter it. Neither a prince nor the Sovereigns saved the nation from his terror, but a warrior of lowly birth, strengthened by courage and the power of the Silver Flame. In the years and centuries that followed, the people of Thrane largely abandoned the Sovereign Host and embraced the Silver Flame. Bel Shalor's forces had destroyed the Grand Temple of the Host, and the people chose to replace it with the citadel of Flamekeep. This moved the seat of the Vassal faith out of Thrane and to the Cathedral of the Sovereign Host in Metrol.

These changes left the nobles of Thrane in an odd position. They had long touted their supposed divine blessing, but now their people were shifting away from the faith that supported it. Many nobles responded to this by embracing the Silver Flame, sharing the faith of the people, and acknowledging the power that saved their nation. Others sought to balance both traditions; after all, even if the Grand Temple was never rebuilt, the faith of the Silver Flame didn't actually *deny* the possibility the Sovereigns might exist and might have blessed the noble lines. And a few nobles clung bitterly to the old ways, refusing to acknowledge the new faith and struggling to limit the power of its church within their domains.

Theocratic Rule

Following the death of King Thalin in 914 YK, Thrane officially became a theocracy led by the Keeper of the Silver Flame and the Council of Cardinals. The lands once held through the crown were now considered the property of the church, and the church claimed authority over most civil and military matters previously administered by nobles. The roles of viscounts and blood regents were dissolved and taken over by church functionaries. Higher nobles were allowed to retain a single manor and estate, but no more.

Many nobles chose to work with the church, helping with the transition and earning a place within the theocracy through faith and service. Others were willing to remain in a decorative ceremonial role—a position Queen Diani ir'Wynarn finds herself in today. In theory, she is the Blood Regent and serves as advisor to the Keeper and the Cardinals. In practice, she is largely ignored. While she smiles at the services she attends, Diani believes that Aureon and Dol Arrah have plans for her, and there are loyalists—known as Throneholders—who dream of restoring Thrane's monarchy to its rightful place.

Noble Ranks

The Thrane nobility uses standard ranks, but there are no viscounts or crown reeves. Only an eldest heir receives a courtesy title. Thrane nobles can't create titles or take any action that would've once required the approval of the sovereign. Most have no authority beyond their estates unless they also serve in the church.

Playing a Thrane Noble

If you want to play an influential character in Thrane, whether of noble blood or otherwise, the acolyte and soldier backgrounds are an excellent choice. An acolyte is the equivalent of a civil servant, and its Shelter of the Faithful feature gives you the same sort of influence among the faithful and within the church that Position of Privilege gives with nobles. As a soldier, the Military Rank feature reflects your role with the templars or general army of Thrane; either way, your deeds were significant enough that you're respected even by the soldiers of other nations. What did you do to earn this respect? What was your most noteworthy battle?

Should you wish to play a disenfranchised noble, the Retainer feature (or the Displaced background from earlier in this chapter) is probably a better fit than Position of Privilege. Beyond your retainers, your family still has an estate you can return to, but they have little influence or resources to spare. As a noble of Thrane, are you devoted to the Silver Flame, supporting the nation's new direction? Or are you a bitter Throneholder determined to restore the old order? For a more dramatic twist, you might believe you were chosen by one or more of the Sovereigns for some divine purpose; is this purpose the restoration of the nobility, or do the Sovereigns have a plan for you that doesn't place you at odds with the church?

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Succession, Inheritance, and Resurrection

How does the Code of Galifar handle succession and inheritance when a noble dies ... and then comes back? *Sharn: City of Towers* establishes that the Code of Galifar doesn't consider undead to be citizens, and undead nobles can't hold property. However, in a world with the *revivify* spell, it's extreme to say that if someone is dead for less than a minute, they lose all their privileges. With this in mind, the common practice in the Five Nations is to observe a two-week grace period while the soul of the dead person is passing through Dolurrh. During these two weeks, they aren't legally dead. A dead noble's heir may immediately take up office to ensure the system keeps running, but a noble raised from the dead during that time retains all their rights and privileges.

On the other hand, after a person has been dead for two weeks, they're legally dead, and the laws regarding inheritance and succession come into effect. A noble returned to life after this period is considered to be a new person with no claim to their old titles or property. So if Queen Wroaan ir'Wynarn were brought back to life, she wouldn't displace King Boranel, though in recognition of her deeds, she might be granted quarters at the castle and a courtesy title like "Queen-Posthumous."

Other Nations

While most other nations of Khorvaire have their own unique traditions of nobility, a few have inherited elements from Galifar, and these are briefly addressed below.

If you want to play a character who wields great power within one of these nations, keep in mind that the noble background's Position of Privilege feature reflects a broad recognition of your authority—an authority you likely don't have outside your region. So if you wield great power within a Lhazaar principality but don't have any influence beyond it, the sailor or pirate background might fit better than the noble one. Your background feature usually reflects the aspect of your background that you want to most regularly come into play; but if you just want to have an interesting story hook about your noble heritage, even if it might never come up in the campaign, that simply requires the approval of your DM.

The Eldeen Reaches

The Eldeen Reaches seceded from Aundair in 958 YK, and its people swore their fealty to the Great Druid Oalian. The Eldeen Charter affirmed that the land now belonged to the Eldeen people and that the titles and claims of the nobility of Aundair were no longer recognized. Many nobles weren't in residence at the time (which was part of the reason for the secession). Others fled to Aundair, becoming the Lost Lords. But a few chose to stay with the people and to start a new life, working to be good community leaders even without the titles and privileges of their former lives.

Because of the time frame, a human adventurer likely wouldn't have held power in the Eldeen Reaches before the uprising. But as an elf or Khoravar, you could easily have been a noble in what is now the Reaches. Are you a Lost Lord hoping to reclaim your birthright? Or have you embraced your new nation and worked to strengthen it?

Q'barra: New Galifar

In the early years of the Last War, Ven ir'Kesslan of Cyre founded the first human settlement in the land of Q'barra. Ven, who was once duke of the Dollen region of Cyre, named his colony New Galifar and declared his intention to recreate the noble model of Galifar in this untamed land. The former duke thus became the first king of New Galifar, despite not being tied to the Wynarn bloodline. The few counts who had supported his cause were named dukes, and wealthy donors who had funded the expedition became counts.

Today, New Galifar remains small, though actively expanding. Newthrone is the royal seat, and the only two actual duchies are Whitecliff and Adderport. Nobles who rule small villages hold the generous title of count, though such domains would barely justify a crown reeve in the Five Nations. Most Q'barran nobles are "claim lords"—they've been granted titles and parcels of land by the King of Q'barra, but they haven't actually claimed or cultivated those lands. Adderport and Newthrone together have a kingdom's worth of dukes and counts, but most only rule over a handful of retainers and a small city estate.

A Q'barran title currently means little in the wider world, and it's unlikely that a Q'barran noble would have a Position of Privilege unless through another office, such as being an appointed ambassador. With your DM's approval, your character could be a claim lord, regardless of your actual background; as such, you have a title and some influence when you're actually in Newthrone, but no real significance elsewhere. While this wouldn't give the benefits of a Position of Privilege, your king could direct you to perform services in the name of New Galifar.

Valenar

As far as the outside world can tell, the Valenar warclans known as the Host of Valenar seized the lands of eastern Cyre, drove out the Cyran nobility, and replaced them as feudal overlords. High King Vadallia granted the fiefs to his war leaders, so there is a Count of Moonshadow and a Duke of Pylas Maradal. However, this was largely a show for the rest of the world; the Valenar have never cared about holding land or titles, as the ancestors they emulate didn't rule petty fiefdoms. The Valenar nobles are rarely found in their supposed domains, and Khoravar immigrants (including many from House Lyrandar) administer justice and civil services in the name of Valenar.

There's little logical basis for using the noble background for a character from Valenar. Being the Count of Moonshadow won't get you the benefits of a Position of Privilege in the wider world. If you want to be a person of influence among the Tairnadal, the soldier background carries far more weight than a noble title. If you want to be a former Cyran lord yearning to reclaim your lands, you could take the Displaced background from this chapter or the Retainers feature (bearing in mind that Valenar was seized forty-two years ago), or you could choose another background and simply work with your DM to establish that your family has claim to a title in Valenar.

Zilargo

As described earlier in this article, when the forces of Galifar advanced to conquer the lands beyond the Howling Peaks, they were met by gnome negotiators. After lengthy discussions and a wide array of Zil offers and enticements (many of which were later discovered to favor the gnomes more than they originally appeared), Galifar recognized the region of Zilargo as the Grand Duchies of Korranberg, Trolanport, and Zolanberg. The region was governed by triumvirate with a representative from each duchy. While ostensibly part of Breland, their status as grand duchies allowed them to largely remain autonomous. However, "grand duke" is a symbolic role that the Zil largely ignore, except during special interactions with nobles of Galifar. The actual positions of authority within Zilargo are elected offices, though these elections are often decided by vast webs of intrigue. In practicality, the Triumvirate, the Councils of Nine, and the Trust actually maintain the nation.

In the wake of the Treaty of Thronehold, the grand dukes are even more toothless than they were before. To this day, heirs of the three noble families in Zilargo—the ir'Korrans, the ir'Trolans, and the ir'Zolans—happily compete for the title of grand duke with elaborate duels and games; once a winner is chosen, they hold extravagant coronations ... then they repeat the process again a year later. While these families are among the most powerful families in Zilargo, the title of grand duke is considered little more than a toy.

Notable Nobles

In developing Eberron, we chose not to create a heavy burden of history, freeing each DM to add details that are important for the story they want to tell. The precise details of the thousand-year history of Galifar don't matter in most campaigns! If you do find yourself wanting to create historical events, the Untold History table in chapter 1 of *Exploring Eberron* can help.

For further inspiration, this section presents stories of six members of the royal family: kings, queens, and princes whose deeds are still celebrated or cursed in the present day. However, their stories intentionally exclude dates; Cyre and Galifar the Dark are already loosely set in canon, but the other characters are designed to be dropped into the untold history of Galifar wherever you need them to be. The story suggests that the Sun Queen inspired Tira Miron—but was Queen Hala the daughter of Galifar the Dark, or was she still alive when Tira first took up her sword? These characters serve as examples of what the rulers of Galifar could be: scholars, paladins, tieflings, traitors. Each one suggests ways their stories could matter—how adventurers might encounter their relics or tales in the present day.

Cyre of the Five Faces

Casual students of history may be confused by the contradictory accounts of the namesake of Cyre. In some accounts, Cyre ir'Wynarn was Galifar's oldest daughter, mere minutes ahead of her twin sister Aundair. In others, Cyre is described as Galifar's youngest son, who ruled as king after his father stepped down. Both accounts are true; as Princess Cyre, her vision of unity shaped her father's kingdom, and as King Cyre, he ascended to his throne.

Galifar's twins, Aundair and Cyre, were the most mystically gifted of the Wynarns. Aundair specialized in evocation and conjuration; she negotiated with celestials and fiends, and brought down her enemies with storm and fire. Cyre was devoted to divination, illusion, and transmutation; their interest was always in understanding the true nature of a thing and exploring the ways it could be expressed. Where Aundair was bold and often reckless, Cyre was thoughtful and empathetic. The Cyran national motto is "What our dreams imagine, our hands create"—and this was Cyre ir'Wynarn's motto long before it was the nation's. They sought to understand the people of the Five Nations, and it was Cyre's vision of all five working together—of harnessing the best in all of them—that drove both the development of the nation and the foundation of the united kingdom of Galifar.

Cyre's mastery of transmutation was unprecedented in the Five Nations. Their greatest creation was *Cyre's Mantle*, which used principles of transmutation and divination both to alter the form of the wearer and imbue them with new knowledge. Cyre didn't use the mantle as a disguise, but to create unique personas reflecting different aspects of their identity. Their subjects grew used to the "Five Faces of Cyre," and Cyre considered each face to be as much their true nature as the one they were born with. Few who knew Cyre were surprised they chose to rule as King Cyre; this face's confident, decisive persona embodied his strongest leadership qualities. After his coronation, King Cyre used the mantle less often; he wanted the people to have a clear and consistent image of him as king, and only used other personas in private or with close advisors.

Those who are familiar with changeling cultures may recognize elements of traveler philosophy in Cyre's use of personas. While the truth is buried beneath centuries, some tales relate Cyre's great respect for the Children of Jes as he helped them establish havens across the united kingdom. In some of these tales, Cyre didn't actually create *Cyre's Mantle*, but received it as a gift from the Traveler. Whatever the truth, both *Cyre's Mantle* and some of his advisors disappeared after the king's natural death; various legends tell of the mantle being used at various points in history, but its current location remains a mystery.

Prince Dyran ir'Wynarn: Clever Dyran

Dyran ir'Wynarn was a Khoravar born of the Duchess of the Duskwood and the King of Galifar. As a child, he spent much time on his mother's estates; Cyrans whispered that he was visiting his grandmother, an archfey whose domain lay on the other side of the Duskwood. Whatever the truth, there is no question that Dyran was remarkable. When he was appointed as governing Prince of Aundair, he was an Enchanter of the Third Circle; many believe that his true power was greater still, but he chose to conceal it. Dyran was a brilliant orator, blending natural charisma and supernatural gifts. He strengthened the Arcane College considerably during his reign, but his life's work was tracking down and identifying Thelanian manifest zones, evaluating obscure tales and walking forgotten paths. Aundairian bards know countless tales of Clever Dyran—how he won the crown of the Count of the Barren Marches, danced with Lady Perilous in the Palace of the Moon, and stole arcane secrets from the Mother of Invention. Some say he surely could've stolen the throne of Galifar from his human brother Dolan, except Clever Dyran had no desire to rule. He disappeared when he was 111 years old; the tales say he surely went to claim a seat in the Palace of the Moon, and he might still be there today.

While the details aren't known to history, Prince Dyran certainly negotiated with many of the archfey of Thelanis, both on his own behalf and for the good of his nation. If found, Dyran's journals could provide insight both into Thelanian manifest zone locations and secrets of the archfey; perhaps he made bargains that could still be invoked today. His vaults surely included treasures of Thelanis, and an unusual trinket could turn out to be a fey heirloom of Clever Dyran.

King Galifar ir'Wynarn II: Galifar the Dark

Young Galifar II was born in Vult, on the darkest night of Long Shadows. The common story says that both his mother and the attending Jorasco chirurgeon were found dead in the birthing room, the silent child still cradled in his mother's arms. The servants whispered that the child was cursed, that plants withered in his shadow. But it seemed Galifar could sense those who carried death in their heart; when a would-be assassin sought to kill King Cyre, the boy called out the killer's name and the assassin fell dead at Cyre's feet. While others still feared the prince, Cyre embraced him and the two were inseparable until Cyre's death.

This is a popular legend, but as with so many elements of history, the concrete facts are shrouded in mystery. Many scholars believe Galifar was a tiefling with ties to Mabar; others credit his powers to a concealed aberrant dragonmark. It's said that when Galifar the Dark looked at someone, he knew exactly when and how they would die. But while these eerie gifts and his cold demeanor earned Galifar his sobriquet, he was a good ruler who strengthened the bonds between the Five Nations. He reinforced the Galifar Code of Justice and overhauled the calendar, establishing the Year of the Kingdom system still used today.

Aberrant dragonmarks were rarer in Galifar II's time than in the present day. If Galifar the Dark's "gift" was an aberrant dragonmark, it was a strong one. He may have done research into these marks during his reign; it's possible he sheltered other aberrants or developed focus items for aberrant marks. If aberrant-marked adventurers in the present day could find conclusive evidence of Galifar's mark—or a cache of journals or tools—it could have interesting repercussions for House Tarkanan and the Twelve.

Queen Hala ir'Wynarn: the Sun Queen

As fourth child of the king, Hala ir'Wynarn never expected to be Queen of Galifar. She devoted herself to Dol Arrah, studying the arts of war and vowing to live a virtuous life; when she came of age, she was appointed Princess of Thrane. Soon after, cruel fate slew Hala's older siblings and placed her on the throne of Galifar. She began her reign by purging corrupt elements within the royal court and the army of Galifar. She quickly turned her attention to the ongoing conflicts in southern Cyre and western Breland, and insisted on personally leading campaigns against ogres and worgs. The young Sun Queen was particularly celebrated by the common folk of Breland and advanced the borders of that nation.

When Hala was twenty-four years old, stories say her younger brother convinced her to pursue a grander threat than a mere ogre or troll. At that time, Sora Maenya had been credited with destroying several small villages on the edge of Aundair. Hala led an elite force of trackers and hunters into the Towering Wood to finally end this threat ... but she never returned. As Hala had produced no heirs, her brother claimed the throne when she was finally declared to be dead. Today, Hala ir'Wynarn remains a legendary champion and an inspiration for paladins, and Tira Miron was likely following the example of the Sun Queen.

Only Sora Maenya knows Hala's final fate; it's possible the hag still has Hala's arms and armor, or they might be hidden somewhere in the Towering Wood. A gruesome possibility is that Maenya has bound Hala's soul and has the queen's skull among her trophies; adventurers could be charged to recover the relic and finally allow Hala to rest.

Queen Marala ir'Wynarn: the Hand of Aureon

Serving first as Princess of Aundair then ascending to be Queen of Galifar, Marala ir'Wynarn devoted herself to strengthening the Arcane Congress, but also to improving schools and universities across the united

kingdom. Many of Galifar's traditions of education are the direct result of Marala's efforts, leading the people to call her the Hand of Aureon.

In addition to her public works, Queen Marala took great pride in her personal library, collecting tomes from across Eberron. Her library included rare texts and *spellshards* from Aerenal and Ohr Kaluun, and even a massive codex written by a Cul'sir wizard of ancient Xen'drik. Tales say her library was hidden in an invisible tower, which modern scholars believe was probably a variant of the *magnificent mansion* spell. She died under mysterious circumstances, and her trove of texts wasn't accounted for in her will; it's quite possible her invisible tower is still out in the ether, waiting to be found.

King Sarath ir'Wynarn: the Serpent King

Sarath, Prince of Breland, was last in line to ascend the throne of Galifar ... and yet, one by one, his four older siblings fell to misfortune. In *The Serpent and the Crown*, playwright Miala Shol claims Sarath orchestrated all of these deaths, even working with a shapeshifting fiend to clear his path to the throne. Sarath's culpability in the earlier deaths is conjecture, but when his final sibling—Laeran, a Khoravar—took the throne, Sarath stepped into the spotlight. Sarath asserted that no half-elf could claim the mantle of Galifar, and though Laeran was well-loved in Thrane and Aundair, Sarath succeeded in poisoning the minds of many. While Laeran's Khoravar blood was an early pretext, Sarath amplified other fault lines that had formed in the kingdom over the centuries, using the anger and frustration of the people to strengthen his position. These schemes ultimately brought down Laeran and set Sarath on the throne—but in the end, Sarath reaped what he had sown. The fires of hatred that Sarath had lit continued to burn. Uprisings sparked across Breland, and his reign was finally brought to an end by a swift civil war led by the archdukes of Thrane and Aundair.

Sarath is just one example of the many Wynarns who placed personal power and ambition above the public good. His short reign is surely invoked by the Swords of Liberty and others to demonstrate the monarchy does more harm than good, and the poisonous lies he spread are still told by those who hate the Khoravar.

A critical question is whether he was working with the Lords of Dust, as Miala Shol suggested in her play. Bel Shalor revels in the suffering of innocents, and Eldrantulku would delight in a brother murdering his siblings and sowing strife across his kingdom. It's quite possible that Sarath claiming the throne was a crucial point in the Draconic Prophecy, and securing the power of the Serpent King was a victory for one of the overlords—but did Sarath's fall undo that triumph, or was this just one piece of a plot that'll finally come to fruition in the present day?

Using the Nobility

As with any element of lore, a key question remains: why does any of this matter? Why should player characters care about the laws of inheritance or the difference between a grand duke and an archduke? Here are a few examples of how the traditions of nobility might affect a character's story.

Assault on Atur. An adventurer who follows the Blood of Vol could have ties to the Grand Duchy of Atur. The grand duke fears that the warlords are preparing to formally conquer the duchy and assimilate it into Karrnath. Can the adventurers prevent this conflict from occurring?

Climbing the Ladder. The adventurer is involved in a romance or business affair that can't proceed unless the character acquires a title (even if it's just a courtesy title). What can they do to gain status?

Common Ties. If a commoner character is from the Five Nations, they grew up in the domain of a noble. Who was their lord? What's the adventurer's relationship with them? Were they a fair ruler the party might try to help or seek as a patron? Or does the adventurer want to expose the noble's cruelties or crimes?

Iron Hand. For service to the crown, an adventurer is granted a title and domain ... but this land was seized during the war, and the adventurer is expected to quell the ensuing unrest. How will they handle this? Can they justify and enforce their sovereign's claim to the region?

Juggling Act. When a noble character comes into their inheritance, they're suddenly responsible for maintaining their domain. How will they balance this with their adventuring life? Will they find a steward to administer the lands in their name? And if so, can the steward be trusted? Will they abdicate the title to a younger sibling?

Lost Title. Perhaps an adventurer's family used to hold a title or land within a nation, but lost it due to treason, war, or treachery. Does the character want to reclaim their title? If so, what would it take?

Villains and the Law

Many questions can arise when a DM is designing an adventure around an aristocratic antagonist. How much freedom do individual nobles have, and how much does the nobility vary between regions and nations? If a noble behaves badly, why do adventurers need to respond instead of their feudal lord? (And even when a noble isn't behaving badly, but there's a problem in their domain, why aren't they dealing with it instead of the adventurers?)

The answers to these questions can vary dramatically based on the story you want to tell. Eberron is designed for stories across a spectrum from pulp adventure to noir intrigue, and every adventure falls somewhere in between the two.

Pulp and Noir Villains

Pulp adventure thrives on over-the-top nefarious villainy. This is why Eberron includes villains like the Order of the Emerald Claw; when adventurers encounter the Emerald Claw, they don't have to stop and think about it, because they know fighting the Emerald Claw is the right thing to do. So if the local noble is a pulp villain, they should be clearly terrible. They *should* be starving their people, hanging dissenters, or holding Human Sacrifice Night on Tuesdays (but only if you know your players are comfortable with these themes! See chapter 10 for advice on covering this during session zero).

By contrast, noir intrigue thrives on shades of gray, uncertainty, and questions that have no simple answers. If your noble is a noir villain, they might still be hanging villagers—but it's because they lost their children to an Aundairian attack in the Last War, they're convinced there are Aundairian spies in the village ... and they might be right. If the noir lord has Human Sacrifice Night, it's because the town is on a manifest zone to Thelanis and if they don't sacrifice one person, five more innocent people will die. The noir lord may be terrible, but are you so sure that if you remove them, the next lord won't be worse?

Plausible Villains

Regardless of where your adventures fall on the pulp versus noir spectrum, adventures are most entertaining if they feel plausible. At the same time, you don't want to get mired in being "faithful" to lore—it's there to inspire you, not prevent you from telling a good story. As DM, if your story needs a noble to act in a manner that seems un-Galifaran, here are a few ideas for how to justify it.

The Grand Duchy. Palatinates are largely independent, and grand dukes can ignore traditions and override the laws of the land. There's not very many of them, but if you need a noble who's acting openly against the Code of Galifar, you can make them a grand duke. If a grand duke wants to have Human Sacrifice Tuesdays, there's no one to say no.

Welcome to Karrnath. Thanks to the Code of Kaius, Karrnath has harsh laws that place near-absolute power in the hands of each local warlord. If you want to tell a story about a tyrannical aristocrat, consider setting it in Karrnath.

The Backwater. If your town has a *speaking stone* station and a lightning rail stop, people should be able to report the nefarious activities of a cruel noble—and if things get bad enough, residents can just get on the train and move. On the other hand, a small town might not have these things. Perhaps your town isn't on the lightning rail, and the stone station closed three years ago—or the stonespeaker is in the pocket of Bad Lord Boggle and they only send messages that support him. If the adventurers can bring the matter to the attention of the duchess, she might do something about it ... but first they'll have to survive three nights in Boggleton, and get the proof they need to convince the duchess.

The Broken Ladder: Adventurers and the Law

Continuing with that last example, let's say your campaign revolves around the villainy of Bad Lord Boggle. The players decide to call on the duchess and demand she do something about the situation. It's possible this is exactly what they should do—if the system works. Perhaps if these brave adventurers can reach her with proof of what's going on, the duchess will arrive with an army, bring down Boggle, and reward the adventurers for their actions. That's the pulp scenario; the problem is now solved, justice is restored, and we can ride off into the sunset knowing the people of Boggleton are saved.

On the other hand, one of the basic principles of noir is that the system is unreliable—either corrupt, incompetent, or simply lacking power. In a story like that, the duchess could be Boggle's mother, or perhaps she's taking a cut from Boggle's heavy taxes. When the adventurers come calling, she may refuse to hear their complaint ... or worse yet, accuse them of treason—slandering a peer of the realm!—and threaten to arrest them. Even if the duchess is a virtuous noble, she might not listen to a random group of adventurers. She may not know if the adventurers have a reliable reputation—they could be just a bunch of armed vigilantes and professional tomb robbers. Are they all from the local nation, or might some of them be enemy spies? Do they have one of those untrustworthy warforged? (It's a well known local fact that the duchess hates warforged because of that incident at Orcbone at the end of the war.)

In situations where a noble *should* be dealing with a problem but you want the adventurers to have to deal with it on their own, the Why Can't the Duke Help table provides excuses (which work just as well for counts and kings!).

Why Can't the Duke Help?

d10	Reason
1	The duke is too far away, and time is of the essence!
2	The duke is in the capital city for the season, and the steward can't handle this.
3	The duke is part of the plot or being bribed by the villain to look the other way.
4	The duke is related to the villain by blood or marriage and won't act against them.
5	The duke is being blackmailed by the villain.
6	The duke is under some form of curse or enchantment. Is this the work of the villain, or is it completely unrelated?
7	The duke doesn't care about the problem. They might be petty, ineffective, or simply don't understand the threat posed by the villain.
8	The duke has recently died. Their heir is too young to hold office and the steward-regent can't deal with this.
9	The duke's being manipulated by an advisor who's in league with the villain.
10	The duke was the real villain all along!

Killing Noble Villains

Imagine the adventurers come to town and discover the crown reeve is a cultist and up to no good. Rather than taking this to the count, they decide to terminate the reeve with extreme prejudice. What happens next?

As always, this ultimately depends what type of story you're telling as DM and what *you* want to happen next. Everyone is entitled to justice under the Galifar Code, and that definitely includes the crown reeve; unless the adventurers are appointed justiciars, a bunch of random vigilantes killing a noble could end very badly. However, here are a few ways to handle it.

Justice with Murder. If the reeve's crimes are extreme, the evidence is entirely clear, and the public is on the side of the adventurers, it's entirely reasonable for the locals to cover the adventurers' tracks. Similarly, the law might not care about hunting them down because it's clear they did a good thing.

Justice without Murder. The reeve has committed crimes. There's tons of evidence. But legally, he should be brought to justice, not killed—and the adventurers would be aware of the potential consequences, even if their players momentarily forget. So as a character lands the killing blow (or even afterward), you can check in with the players: "if you kill this noble, you'll all be on the run from Sentinel Marshals until you're hauled in front of Brelish justice ... would you like to shift the campaign in that direction, or would you rather knock them unconscious?" Keep in mind that in fifth edition rules, a melee attack can be used to knock a foe unconscious instead of killing them. And even beyond that, a downed foe isn't necessarily dead; as DM, you can give any NPC death saving throws, allowing the adventurers time to stabilize them.

No Justice, No Murder. If you're going full noir, it's entirely possible the adventurers *can't* bring the reeve to justice ... but if they kill the reeve, they'll still be hunted down as murderers. Or perhaps the noble's death would cause the Mabaran manifest zone adjacent to town to expand and kill everyone. Or perhaps the noble has *blast disks* (from *Exploring Eberron*) on a dead man's trigger. And if the adventurers don't kill them, there's no evidence and no justice will be done. This can create an interesting story, but there should still be a satisfying conclusion for the adventurers—even if they can't get the answer they want, can they get an answer they can live with? Is there an outcome that gives the players pride in having done the best they possibly could? And keep in mind that adventurers have free will, so if you set up a scenario like this, it's possible the adventurers will kill the noble anyway. This isn't your story, it's everyone's story; so if the players say "we don't care about the blast disks, we're killing the damn reeve," are you actually prepared to go through with it? Or was it a bluff?

Forget it, Jake. It's Callestan. Depending where the adventurers are, it's possible the law simply doesn't apply there. This isn't to say that actions won't have consequences, but the corrupt count and the local watch might not give a damn whether you kill the crown reeve ... though the Boromar Clan, who he was working for, might.

Basically, this is a stylistic question that you should work out with your players in advance. This knowledge might allow the adventurers to make wise decisions—or enable their players to enjoy making bad ones! Is this a world in which the player characters can get away with murder, or will killing a noble in cold blood end with the adventurers facing justice? The goal of all of this is for people to have fun, and while I'd like to believe that people can have fun without murder, the DM and the players need to be on the same page about the kind of game they're playing.

CAMILLE KUO

Chapter 4: Adding Ancestries to Eberron

There are well over fifty official playable ancestries in fifth edition, and that's not counting variants and lineages, let alone third-party publications and homebrew. Eberron has defined roles for familiar folk—elves, gnomes, orcs, goblins, dwarves, even gnolls. But how do harengons fit into Eberron? What about kenku or goliaths? "Where does this ancestry fit into Eberron?" is the most common question I'm asked, both by DMs who want to incorporate a new creature into a story and players who want to use new options.

Reasons to Play

There's room for almost anything in Eberron, but what's going to make the most interesting story? If a player wants to play an owlin, you could say there's an undiscovered nation of owlin in the Eldeen Reaches—or the character could be an archmage's owl familiar magically transformed into an owlin. Do you want to add a nation of these creatures, or do you just need an explanation for a unique player character? When helping a player fit their character idea into Eberron, my priority is that the elements of the world and their story should both feel significant. While there's a place for everything in Eberron, I don't want to force something that doesn't add a compelling thread to the story I'm telling. So my first goal is to identify what story my player wants to tell, and how it fits with mine. Let's look at the three most common answers to "why do you want to play this ancestry?"

Mechanical Benefits

Often, the question comes down to "I want my character to use those mechanics." Why play a tabaxi instead of a shifter? Sometimes, it's not related to the ancestry's story at all; the tabaxi simply has the Feline Agility trait, and it's a perfect fit for the player's new ranger idea. And there's nothing wrong with that! But you don't need to add an entirely new culture into the setting—giving them territory and considering their role in both history and the current political balance—in order for a ranger to use Feline Agility. Here are a few ways to handle it.

Reskin Them

You can reskin any statistics and describe them as one of Eberron's existing ancestries. If the player wants the traits of a tabaxi but doesn't mind being part of shifter culture, you can call the character a shifter. In your story, they're an unusual swiftstride shifter; they can even describe their character as "shifting" when they use their Feline Agility, though it doesn't grant other mechanical advantages or disadvantages of shifting. The player gets the abilities they want, but in your story, they're part of an ancestry that already has an established place in the world.

Make Them Unique

If the player doesn't want their character to be part of an existing culture or community, they could be unique: they're the only tabaxi in Eberron. Perhaps they were mutated by the Mourning, or they might've been created by a daelkyr, Mordain the Fleshweaver, or a House Vadalis experiment. Their abilities could result from the curse of an archfey or exposure to a manifest zone's energies. Similarly, an owlin could've once been the owl familiar of an archmage teaching at Arcanix; when this wizard died, their last act was to give their faithful familiar independence and a humanoid form. In these examples, the player gets the abilities they want without the DM adding a new culture to the setting. This approach gives the opportunity to explore the character's relationship with their creator: Why did Mordain the Fleshweaver create a tabaxi? Was the character once his feline familiar? Did the character escape from Mordain, or were they released into the wild, and do they know why?

Small Batch

The downside to making a character with a unique ancestry is that they don't have an opportunity to interact with other members of their ancestry. If a player wants their character to have connections to other creatures like them, but they don't want their culture to play a major role in the world, you can take the small batch approach. Perhaps an entire village was caught in the Mourning and all its inhabitants transformed into tabaxi. Maybe House Vadalis magebred a unit of goliath supersoldiers during the war; the character escaped, but most of their kin are still held in a secret Vadalis facility. Or it's possible there are only a dozen kenku—they were servants of the archfey known as the Forgotten Prince, and as punishment for a crime, he stole each kenku's voice and exiled them all to Eberron.

A small batch ancestry is fun because it automatically gives you a story hook to work into the game. If you're one of only twelve kenku, you know them all—are you working together, or are you rivals? Are you seeking revenge against the kenku who betrayed you and your allies to the prince, or are *you* the traitor responsible for their exile? Similarly, if you're a goliath supersoldier, what do you do when another goliath asks for help freeing your kin from a Vadalis facility?

Being part of a small batch means that you don't have a nation or culture to fall back on, but every member of your ancestry is significant. If tortles have a principality in Lhazaar, you're just one of many tortles. But if you and your three siblings are *actual turtles* transformed into tortles by the Mourning, then you're the only four tortles in the world, which makes you quite remarkable!

Cats at the Circus?

The Carnival of Shadows is in town! Attendees at the opening show marveled at the acrobatic displays of these performers with feline grace and feline features! From a distance, the acrobats might be mistaken for shifters, but from the front rows, it was clear these remarkable athletes are more fully feline than our usual fuzzy friends. We managed to speak to the manager, Halaer d'Thuranni, who informed us these performers are truly miraculous—their troupe of elf acrobats was in Cyre on the Day of Mourning, but instead of being slain, they were transformed by the mists. We hope these acrobats have nine lives, because they've certainly used up their first one!

Played Them Before

It's common for a player to say, "I like playing this character in another setting and I want to play them in Eberron." They always play tabaxi, and they just want to play that character again. In this situation, the player usually has a very concrete idea of what tabaxi are like and doesn't want the DM to change their culture to better fit the setting. They want to play this character the same way they've always played it. They don't want to play a Qaltiar drow, they want to play a drow ranger from the Forgotten Realms.

Personally, my answer is usually to say, "Okay, your character has come to Eberron from another world." The far traveler background works well for this, representing that nobody has ever seen anything like you. This doesn't mean you have to make travel between settings commonplace within your campaign. This character could be a bizarre fluke brought to Eberron by the Mourning, the Draconic Prophecy, or a planar convergence that won't happen again for thousands of years. Or they could be like the gith—a fragment of a previous version of reality that somehow survived into this one. Either way, the player gets to play this character exactly the way they want to, and the DM doesn't have to bend the setting into strange shapes trying to fit this character into it.

In this situation, make sure the player understands their character is alone in this world: their drow ranger from Faerûn can talk about the cultures in their very forgotten realms, but nobody will have any context for what they're talking about, and the drow they meet in Eberron will be Umbragen and Qaltiar. Usually this isn't a problem, and the player is more focused on the experience of the character rather than their culture. On the other hand, if that's not the case ...

S. TAPPIN

Meaningful Place

Sometimes it's not just about a specific player wanting to play a single character of a particular ancestry. Either a player or DM might say, "I love this ancestry's story and want it to have a meaningful place in the world." So what are some ways to handle this without rewriting the entire setting?

Replace Something

Have you ever used the Znir gnolls of Droaam? Do you plan to? If not, you could say that tabaxi, not gnolls, are the founders of the Znir Pact. Or if you don't like goblins, you could say the Empire of Dhakaan was a goliath empire and the Heirs of Dhakaan are goliath clans. This allows you to make use of existing lore and relationships with a slight change of focus. The world doesn't become a cluttered kitchen sink, because you've taken something out before adding something in.

Previously Unnoticed

When adding the dragonborn in fourth edition, we took the "they've always been there, you just never noticed" approach. In third edition, the setting already established the presence of reptilian humanoids in Q'barra and the tension between them and the colonists. So we just said, "we previously mentioned lizardfolk, but there are dragonborn in Q'barra as well; humans just didn't understand the difference between them." Then we added further history, describing how the dragonborn had an empire that once covered the Talenta Plains and fought the Dhakaani, but had to retreat to their strongholds in Q'barra to fight the Poison Dusk. This allows players to play dragonborn with a homeland to return to, but we didn't have to redraw the maps or change recent history. The dragonborn have always been here, but they are an isolated culture with little contact with the Five Nations.

The map holds many isolated places that work for this approach. It's entirely possible tribes of tabaxi live alongside shifters in the depths of the Towering Woods, just as lizardfolk and dragonborn coexist in Q'barra; it's up to the DM to decide whether they have a unique culture that humanity simply hasn't encountered, or if they are integrated into the druidic sects. The Lhazaar Principalities can work for this as well—if no one's ever

met the Cloudreavers in your campaign, you can declare that they're goliaths (and always have been). They're rare enough that people don't know them in the Five Nations, and they didn't have a huge impact on the Last War, but they have an island, they have ships, and they're known across the Principalities. And Xen'drik is a vast blank slate intentionally designed for this purpose, where you could easily add a loxodon nation in Eberron that no one's encountered. (Speaking of loxodons, I've also seen DMs place them in the Tashana Tundra or the Frostfell as mammoth-folk, which I think is a great way to use them and adds flavor to regions that are largely unknown.)

New in Town

We took the "new in town" approach when adding the eladrin in fourth edition. We established that the eladrin lived in feyspires that moved back and forth between Thelanis and Eberron. These feyspires usually only remained in Eberron for short periods, but following the Mourning, they were trapped in Eberron and stripped of their defensive magics. As a result, eladrin haven't played a more significant role in history because they haven't been on the Material Plane until now. You can do the same with any ancestry, saying they were previously secluded and hidden from the rest of the world but have been thrust into contact.

Being new in town allows your ancestry to have a deep culture—and potentially possess magic or other advancements that should make an impact on Khorvaire—while explaining why your people haven't affected Eberron's history to this point. While others may not have encountered your ancestry before, you're a significant part of the story now. For example ...

Khyber's demiplanes are strange and wondrous miniature worlds. An unusual ancestry could've evolved in a demiplane without interaction with Eberron—until the Mourning fractured the demiplane and caused your city to be transported somewhere on Eberron. What was the impact on the world when your city appeared in the world four years ago? If it's in a remote place—the Shadow Marches, the Eldeen Reaches—it might not be a problem. But if the city appeared in the Five Nations, how is that nation reacting? Has this new city-state been recognized by the locals? Do your people want to go home, or are you settling in for the long haul?

Remote regions of Eberron could be threatened by an existential threat. Perhaps your people are from the Frostfell, Xen'drik, or Khyber, but you fled to the Five Nations. Perhaps an unleashed overlord claimed your homeland or a daelkyr drove you up from Khyber. Are your people content to be refugees, or is your character determined to rally allies to reclaim your homeland?

The planes of Eberron could have countless marvelous denizens. Your people may be from Fernia or Kythri, but a planar convergence or conflict within the plane forced you to flee—much like the eladrin and their feyspires. Have your people been transformed by this experience? If you want fire genasi to be refugees from Fernia, it could be that while in Fernia, your people were immortal spirits of flame, but the mystical effect that stranded you on Eberron also stripped you of your immortality and much of your power. You might have been an efreet prince in Fernia—but now you're just a low-level fire genasi on Eberron.

Telling Their Story

The basic principles I've suggested above can be applied to creatures from any ancestry. They could be created by Mordain or the daelkyr, magebred by House Vadalis, twisted by the Mourning, or discovered in Xen'drik or a Khyber demiplane. Or to take a simpler approach, any anthropomorphic creature could simply be an unusual type of shifter. I've never personally used tabaxi, harengon, or many other non-Eberron ancestries in my campaign. But what would I suggest if a player *did* want to play one of these ancestries in my game? Here are some stories you could add to your world.

Aarakocra: The Dragonhawk Battalion

The dragonhawk is the symbol of Aundair. In the final decade of the Last War, Queen Aurala and her consort Sasik d'Vadalis established Project Dragonhawk, a cooperative venture between the Arcane Congress and House Vadalis. This program blended cutting-edge transmutation magic with Vadalis magebreeding, permanently transforming a group of volunteers into aarakocra—avian humanoids with the features of dragonhawks. While Project Dragonhawk was ultimately successful, its expensive and difficult program couldn't be replicated on a large scale. Nonetheless, the dragonhawks were lauded as symbols of Aundair and of its arcane might. Instead of serving in a single unit, most were spread among existing forces, serving both as flying scouts and celebrated mascots.

As a member of the Dragonhawk Battalion, you're recognized and likely admired throughout Aundair. If you choose the soldier background, you served with distinction and your rank is still respected among fellow soldiers. If you're a folk hero, you may have had trouble adhering to military discipline, but the people consider you a hero of Aundair. Or perhaps you went into the entertainment business after the war, performing feats of aerial acrobatics. Are you still recognized as a living symbol of Aundair? Or did you let your nation down? Perhaps you became a criminal, or were otherwise a grave disappointment; in this case, you might replace any background feature with the pirate's Bad Reputation.

Centaurs: Horse, Tribex, and Fey

Fifth edition presents two very different sorts of centaurs: their NPC stat block says they're Large Monstrosities, but their playable statistics present them as Medium Fey. In my campaign, these are unrelated creatures with completely different histories and cultures.

Monstrous Centaurs

Khorvaire has two distinct ancestries of monstrous centaurs. While these use the centaur NPC stat block, you could certainly build a character from one of these cultures using the playable centaur statistics:

Kaan'dar—"Horse People"—are equine centaurs who were nearly exterminated by the Dhakaani Empire during the Age of Monsters. The surviving Kaan'dar became nomads in the Barrens, allying with the peaceful Gaa'ran orcs but often clashing with other chibs. In modern-day Droaam, the Kaan'dar have forged an alliance with the Daughters of Sora Kell, and Maenya's Fist includes an elite force of centaur cavalry. The Kaan'dar have recently begun working with House Tharashk, serving as mercenaries with the Dragonne's Roar.

Trascalando—"People with the Thundering Hooves" in the Talenta tongue—are a blend of humanoid and tribex rather than humanoid and horse. They sport bone headplates and short horns, though these aren't strong enough for an effective gore attack. The Trascalando are nomads who usually travel with herds of tribex. Though they prefer their isolation and usually have little interest in the world beyond the Talenta Plains, most Trascalando bands are friendly toward the Talenta halflings and have a long tradition of trade and storytelling. The Valenar incursions have disrupted this long peace, and the Trascalando are deeply suspicious of elves.

These two peoples are the native centaurs of Khorvaire, but the other continents may well hold more—either of these ancestries or new ones. Both the Kaan'dar and the Trascalando are unique ancestries with a distinctive appearance—they are half-*humanoid*, not half-*human*. Humans would consider their features to be somewhat animalian, especially the horned Trascalando.

Fey Centaurs

Khorvaire's fey centaurs trace their roots to powerful Thelanian manifest zones. In particular, a few tribes of centaurs in the southern Eldeen Reaches have ancient ties to the Twilight Demesne. Fey centaurs are neither limited to being half-horse nor half-human, and different tribes can vary drastically. For example, in the Eldeen Reaches, one tribe of centaurs is half-human, half-horse—but another is half-deer, half-elf. If you look long enough, you might even find a tribe that's half-gnome, half-wolf! These cosmetic details don't affect their statistics, and aren't limited by genetics; while each tribe tends toward a common form, variations aren't unheard of, so the child of an elf-stag centaur could be a gnome-wolf.

These centaurs of the Towering Wood are relatively rare, far fewer in number than the shifters who inhabit the same forest, but they play a similar role. Over the last century, some have chosen to work with the Wardens of the Wood, and centaur cavalry supported the Eldeen secession. However, others prefer to remain in the deep woods and the Twilight Demesne, ignoring the violence and brutality of the world beyond the woods.

Whichever path you take, as a centaur character, your ancestry is unusual but not unheard of. Why have you left your herd behind and chosen to walk on the hard roads of the two-footed? You could be associated with one of the druidic sects, carrying out a mission for the Wardens of the Wood or dealing with threats to Eldeen independence. Or you could just be driven by curiosity; as a centaur bard, you could be chasing a song you can't quite hear, but you know it's out there somewhere.

Changelings: Fey or Humanoid?

Though *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* presents changelings as Humanoid, the more recent *Monsters of the Multiverse* describes them as Fey instead—and expands their shapechanging to encompass both Small and Medium forms. Does this mean Eberron's changelings are fey, and if so, do they come from Thelanis?

Regardless of changeling origins, I'm happy to accept that they can take smaller forms. While it's a shift from previous rules, it grants changelings greater flexibility—and it means gnomes and halflings are no longer safe from changeling intrigue.

Native Changelings

In my campaign, the changeling's new fey origin doesn't impact their previously established history, including their mythic ties to the Traveler and their historic ties to Ohr Kaluun. However, changeling history has always included the story of their bargain with the Traveler. As they are an ancestry defined by a story, they could be native fey—and their chaotic and magical nature causes spells to affect them differently from humanoid creatures. But they are natives of Khorvaire, they have no ties to archfey, and denizens of Thelanis don't see them as cousins; they're just immune to *charm person* and vulnerable to *magic circle* because of their innately magical nature.

Changelings of Thelanis

On the other hand, it's possible another unrelated type of changelings *do* come from Thelanis. These could be mortals of other ancestries who were taken to Thelanis as children and altered by this supernatural childhood. Or perhaps they're members of the supporting cast of Thelanis—spirits who shift to fit the needs of a story—who have somehow been cast out of Thelanis to find a story of their own. Such a player character would be extremely rare and have no ties to Eberron's native changelings; with this in mind, I'd give them a different natural form inspired by their backstory.

Dhampirs: Sworn to the Keeper

A dhampir is a living creature with vampiric traits and a consuming hunger, reflecting their connection to the plane of Mabar. Much like tieflings, a dhampir can be born when a child is conceived in a Mabaran manifest zone; there's at least one dhampir noble family in Karrnath, though they couldn't reproduce if they moved away from that zone. Some legends claim dhampirs can be created when an unborn child survives their parent

being slain by a vampire. Others say dhampirs can be created by forging a pact with the Keeper or the overlord Katashka—creatures killed by the dhampir's Vampiric Bite empower their patron, and if the dhampir doesn't supply a steady stream of victims, their own life is forfeit.

Whether you're a dhampir warlock, sorcerer, or another class, you could flavor your class abilities as coming from such a bargain. You needn't have ongoing interactions with the force that created you—but their power is part of you, and you learn to manipulate it in ever more effective ways. An interesting twist would be if your character unintentionally forged such a pact; perhaps you were delirious from plague and had a vision, only later learning what you truly committed to. Can you feed your appetite (and your patron) with the blood of evildoers, or will innocents suffer so you can survive?

Fairies and Satyrs: Wanderers and Envoys

Satyrs and fairies are found throughout Thelanis and its manifest zones. As lesser fey, most are swept up in endless celebration, paying no heed to the passage of time or the mortal world. As a player character, what has drawn you away from these revels and compelled you to become part of mortal machinations?

Perhaps you're the personal envoy of an archfey, tasked with a mission in the wider world; even if you choose a different character class, you can still describe your relationship as that of an Archfey warlock with an ongoing connection to your patron.

On the other hand, it could be that something gave you a story of your own, changing who you are. Perhaps a dying mortal pressed a locket into your hand and begged you to take it to their beloved, and you're still searching for them. Perhaps you're writing a song, and you just can't find the inspiration—but you know it's out there somewhere in the world, and you can't rest until you've found it. As you pursue your quest, how does your character evolve from a lesser fey and add depth to their story? In the mortal world, you're likely to encounter many moments of sheer wonder—what mortal customs are strangest or most marvelous to you?

Firbolgs: Children of the Forest Queen

A great forest once stretched from the Blackcaps to Scion's Sound. First the Dhakaani goblins and then humanity hacked away at the vast forest—but even then, there were regions most mortals feared to tread, places soaked in primal power and guarded by the archfey known as the Forest Queen. Today, these shunned woods survive as the Harrowcrowns, the Greenhaunt, and the Imistil, all feared by the people of the Five Nations. However, firbolgs have long called these forests home—and called themselves the children of the Forest Queen.

Though firbolgs aren't fey, primal power is in their blood; they hear the whispers of root and leaf, and they delight in the darkness of the deep woods. The firbolgs of the Greenhaunt and the Imistil are largely friendly to travelers and serve much the same role as the Wardens of the Wood in the Eldeen Reaches—protecting their forest from outsiders while protecting outsiders from the dangers of their forest. The firbolgs of the Harrowcrowns are a harder lot; they blame civilization for the destruction of their Queen's Wood—the vast forest lost to time—and use their powers of stealth to prey on outsiders who dare to enter the deep woods.

Firbolgs have always been few in number, and even the friendly guardians of the Imistil have little interest in the world beyond their woods. If you're playing a firbolg, you're one of the first of your kind to venture into the wider world. Are you driven purely by curiosity, or did something else cause you to leave your comforting, whispering woods for the lands of steel and fire? Perhaps you found the pack of someone who died during the Last War, and you're determined to deliver the letters that they were carrying. Maybe you've had a vision of a threat to your home forest, and you know the answer lies beyond your woods. Or perhaps you've been given a quest by the Forest Queen herself!

Firbolgs follow a primal tradition that shares some similarities with the Greensingers and the Wardens of the Wood, but their practices developed independently. Along with their druids and rangers, firbolgs also have bards and warlocks who draw on the magic of the Forest Queen. The warriors of the Harrowcrowns are fiercer than their cousins in Imistil, and their ranks include more barbarians and fighters.

Genasi: Touched by the Wild

Some manifest zones tied to Lamannia surge with elemental energy. These zones can be quite dangerous, with exceptionally strong winds and quickly sparked wildfires. But sometimes determined settlers dwell there, drawn by fertile soil and fresh water. When a child is conceived in such a region—especially if Lamannia is coterminous—there's a tiny chance they'll be infused with elemental energy. "Genasi" is the academic term for such people, coined by the Arcane Congress after Galifar the Dark ordered research into the phenomenon. However, most folk call them 'touched—Flametouched, Stormtouched, Stonetouched. The gifts of the genasi aren't reliably hereditary, and even in primal lands, it's rare to find a community with more than a handful of 'touched.

Few people have ever seen a genasi, as most choose to stay in their hometowns where they are known and celebrated. But most people have heard of folktales like *The Boy Who Was Born in the River* and *The Girl with Hair Aflame*. It's these stories—plus the research of Arcanix—that separate genasi from tieflings in the common understanding. People consider tieflings dangerous, tied to malefic powers ... while genasi are considered natural, so there's little worry that a fire genasi might burn down the barn. Genasi draw attention wherever they go and people surely remember them, but people aren't usually hostile toward the 'touched.

While genasi can be naturally born, they can also be artificially produced. Zilargo is constantly experimenting

with elemental binding, and the Arcane Congress and the Twelve are also intrigued by this field of study. If you're a wizard, artificer, or sage, you might've personally conducted the research that transformed you into a genasi, or you could've been a test subject, voluntary or otherwise. Is the program that created you still active, or was it shut down—or possibly sabotaged by agents of the Trust?

Goblins: Fey Ancestry?

Much like changeling statistics were updated in *Monsters of the Multiverse*, goblins, bugbears, and hobgoblins gained new fey-related traits (though their creature type remains Humanoid). In my campaign, these traits don't impact on how I present the goblins or their history—my dar have no connections to Thelanis or the fey.

However, trait names aside, I like the new goblinoid statistics; I'd just explain them differently. The Fey Ancestry trait gives advantage against being charmed, and in the case of Eberron's goblins, this can easily reflect their disciplined minds. Similarly, the hobgoblin's Fey Gift trait significantly expands the benefits of the Help action; this can represent how goblins work exceptionally well in groups, due in part to instinctive discipline combined with the lingering impact of the Uul Dhakaan.

Goliaths: the Syrkarn Eneko

Goliaths—better known as eneko, or Children of the Sand—are found in the Syrkarn deserts and steppes of Sarlona. Many outsiders say the eneko descended from the ogres of Borunan and the humans of the steppes. However, the eneko say their roots run deeper, claiming they carry the blood of giants who roamed the desert long before the rise of any human civilization. Chapter 21 of this book presents information on Sarlona, and you can learn about the eneko in *Secrets of Sarlona*.

While the Syrkarn eneko are well known in Sarlona, they don't sail and have almost no contact with the people of Khorvaire. As a player character, what has drawn you from your home? If you're a warrior, you might be searching for ever-greater challenges; if you're a storyteller, you could be researching the truth of a mysterious merchant's tale. Or perhaps you seek revenge after a loved one was killed by outsiders who sought an ancient artifact—you've followed them to Khorvaire, but you fear they're mere agents of a greater power, so you hone your skills and gather allies while pursuing the truth.

If you'd rather not play an eneko, you could also use the goliath statistics to play a young ogre from Droaam. As the runt of the litter, you were always the butt of jokes among your people—but now you've traveled east, where you can be the biggest and the strongest.

Desert Born

To reflect the eneko's adaptation to the desert climate, you can replace the goliath's Mountain Born trait with the following.

Desert Born. You have resistance to fire damage. You also naturally acclimate to hot climates and aren't adversely affected by extreme heat.

Grungs: Marsh and Myre

Legend says the daelkyr Kyrzin created grungs by fusing orcs and frogs. The Gatekeepers say the grungs were servants of Kyrzin and deadly foes, while grungs say the Gatekeepers sought to wipe out their ancestors without cause. There has been a deep antipathy between the two ever since. Today, grungs live throughout the Shadow Marches in communities known as pods. Grung mystics use hallucinogens to commune with a totemic force they call the Myre; the Gatekeepers maintain this is Kyrzin, but grungs believe the Myre is the collective spirit of the swamp.

While grung pods usually shun outsiders, the Aashta line of House Tharashk has forged an alliance with the sizable Mrrga Pod. In addition to Aashta's collaboration with grung apothecaries—who excel at the creation of poisons, antidotes, and hallucinogens—the Dragonne's Roar brokered the services of a few units of grung amphibious commandos during the last days of the war. As a grung adventurer, did you work with Tharashk and serve in the war, or did you find your own way out into the world?

Harengons: Holondon Holt

The sprawling burrow-hall known as Holondon Holt lies a short distance from the Blackwater Lake, along the ill-defined border between the Shadow Marches and what's now known as Droaam. Harengons have fought off the raids of the Gaa'aram orcs for many generations, and they have a long and bitter feud with the Great Pack of the Watching Woods. Though these struggles have kept the Holondon harengons from expanding to new communities, Holondon Holt has held against all attacks and continues to thrive. The reputation of Holondon harengons drew the attention of House Tharashk, and in the last decade of the Last War, a squad of Holondon scouts known as the Sar'taashi—Swift Razors—were a celebrated part of the Dragonne's Roar. However, these bold deeds also drew the attention of the Daughters of Sora Kell, who have recently offered the Holt the chance to join with Droaam under the oni warlord Drul Kantar. The Holondon harengons have no great love for Drul Kantar, but they fear that refusing the offer could mark them as enemies of Droaam, and they've been perseverating and drawing out the discussions for as long as possible.

The origins of the Holondon harengons are shrouded in mystery. According to their own tales, Holondon Holt has been their home for "as long as long can be." However, contemporary accounts from the people of the Watching Woods and the Shadow Marches suggest that the Holt appeared approximately two centuries ago—recently enough for reliable records, but long enough that there are no living harengons to tell the tale. Harengons haven't been encountered anywhere else on Khorvaire ... so where did they come from? One possibility is that they fell directly out of Thelanis, much like the feyspires; perhaps Holondon Holt is an archetypal children's story that one day became real. On the other hand,

Holondon Holt isn't far from Blackroot, the infamous hall of Mordain the Fleshweaver—could Mordain have transformed a warren of mundane rabbits into harengons? And if so, does he have any further plans for his creations? The harengons themselves have never felt any need to find the answer; Holondon Holt is their home, always was, and always will be. Perhaps you'll stumble on the truth in your travels!

As a Holondon harengon, you may have encountered the wider world as part of the Sar'taashi or through other service with House Tharashk. Are you still serving as a mercenary? Are you hoping to find allies or resources that could help Holondon Holt? Or have you left your burrow behind to search for your own adventures?

Kenku: Forgotten Exiles

Once upon a time, the archfey known as the Forgotten Prince found a clutch of raven eggs. Their mother had been slain and the eggs forgotten, so the Prince took them back to the Castle of Lost Things, where he raised the ravens as if they were his own children. As the ravens grew, they wandered the halls and explored all that was lost. When they came of age, the Prince asked them each to prove their unique talents. The first raven sang a beautiful song. The second told an intriguing story. The third cast a remarkable spell, and the fourth dueled cleverly with a blade. Yet with each impressive feat, the Prince grew ever more angry. For while the ravens presented these achievements as their own, the Forgotten Prince recognized them. Each was the creation of a mortal of Khorvaire, each abandoned and taken to the vaults of the Castle of Lost Things. Despite the ravens' skills, the Prince could not abide both the plagiarism and the lies, and he cast his children out into the world. "Go, and do not return until you have a true marvel of your own devising."

This tale is told of the kenku. Like many tales of Thelanis, the story defies time; this version is shared in Aundair, but a different version of the tale was told by the Dhakaani dirge singers, and yet another form can be found in the scrolls of the Cul'sir giants. This story plays out time and time again, and each time it takes root, a new clutch of kenku is cast into the world to seek redemption.

As a kenku character, you and your brethren likely inspired the most recent version of that tale. You've since been thrown into the Five Nations to atone for your lie and to seek an accomplishment to call your own. When exactly were you cast out? That's up to you, as Thelanis has a casual relationship with time. What's important is that you have been shamed, and you can only undo that shame by mastering the path you previously mimicked and creating a truly unique technique.

There are only a handful of kenku in Khorvaire, and each follows a different path. If you're a wizard, you must create a marvelous spell; if you're a rogue, you're likely bound to a more shadowy pursuit. You know your fellow kenku, but you each have your own task, and it's up to you and the DM whether you're friends or rivals. The kenku warlock could be an interesting outlier, as your patron might be the Forgotten Prince himself, and your task is to monitor your brethren. On the other hand, your challenge might be to *become* the perfect warlock—whoever your patron is initially, you're expected to find a new and better patron as part of your journey of discovery. But in short, your goal is to improve your skills, which you can best do through adventure—and at some point, to create a unique technique within your chosen field to earn a place of honor in Thelanis.

Warforged: Full Constructs?

Rules are always evolving. During the early years of fifth edition, designers were reluctant to give player characters any type aside from Humanoid. Thus warforged were Humanoids, not Constructs; similarly, even though eladrin stat blocks were Fey, their playable statistics were Humanoids. Recent books have loosened this restriction; with this in mind, I add the below traits to warforged characters in my campaign.

Living Construct

To reflect the warforged's dual nature, you can add the following traits to your warforged character.

Creature Type. You are a Construct.

Living Construct. The livewood and alchemical fluids in your body allow you to benefit from several spells that preserve life but normally don't affect Constructs: cure wounds, healing word, mass cure wounds, mass healing word, and spare the dying.

GAOZ

Chapter 5: The Tairnadal Elves

The lives of the Tairnadal elves are shaped by those of their patron ancestors. When an elf comes of age, the Keepers of the Past read the signs to determine which of the patron ancestors has laid claim to the child. From that point forward it is the sacred duty of the child to become the living avatar of the fallen champion, mastering his or her skills and living by her code. The people of the Five Nations know little about the Tairnadal, and their general assumptions often don't make sense. Ask ten people in Sharn, and you'll hear that the Valenar are bloodthirsty brutes who love to pillage the weak; that they seek glory in battle and won't fight a weaker foe; that they are bound by a strict code of honor; that they have no honor; that every Valenar is bound to a horse; and so on. In fact, no one rule applies to every Tairnadal, for every ancestor demands a different role of his or her descendants. A child chosen by Maelian Steelweaver will spend his or her days forging swords instead of wielding them. One chosen by Silence will spend life in the shadows. War is the common thread that unites the Tairnadal, because the wars against giants, dragons, and goblins were what produced these legendary heroes. As such, the Tairnadal seek conflicts that will let them face the same odds and fight in the same style as their ancestors. Nowadays a child of Vadallia can't fight giants, because the Cul'sir Dominion has fallen, but they must search for a foe that is equally challenging and then defeat it in the same way Vadallia would, thus creating new legends in Vadallia's name.

—*Dragon* 407, "Eye on Eberron: Vadallia and Cardaen"

The island of Aerenal is home to two distinct elven cultures, both of which cling tightly to tradition and the past. The Aereni, ruled by the Undying Court, remain isolated on Aerenal. On the northern steppes of the same island, the nomadic Tairnadal roam—but during the Last War, one of their armies laid claim to the nation of Valenar in Khorvaire, and a sizable Tairnadal contingent remains there today. Driven to emulate their legendary ancestors, Tairnadal elves from either continent can be compelling adventurers. This chapter discusses the patron ancestors that define Tairnadal faith and explores other aspects of Tairnadal society.

Tairnadal Faith

Tens of thousands of years ago, the Tairnadal came to Aerenal as soldiers—fresh from fighting against the giants of Xen'drik and their minions—and never stood down. Warriors who'd served with fallen champions were determined to honor their heroes by following in their footsteps. Those who were most devoted to this path swore they felt a connection to their idols and believed the spirits of their champions were guiding them. Over the centuries that followed, Tairnadal religious traditions and the Keepers of the Past evolved, but the patron ancestors were with the elves from the start.

Today, the Tairnadal remain driven and defined by their devotion to their patron ancestors. They believe they preserve these ancestors by emulating their lives, and in doing so, the living Tairnadal receive spiritual guidance. So their faith thrives not only because the Tairnadal want to fulfill their duty to their ancestors, but because they gain practical benefits from that devotion: each elf benefits from the guidance of their patron ancestor, and society benefits from these effective citizens and communal ancestral wisdom.

When an elf comes of age, the Keepers of the Past determine which ancestor has chosen them. From then on, that elf has a sacred twofold duty: first, to preserve an ancestor through devotion, living as that ancestor did; and second, to allow that champion to walk the world again, acting through the living "revenant" and guiding them. According to Tairnadal doctrine, you can only receive this guidance after an ancestor personally chooses you—and if you refuse that bond, you deny your entire community the chance to benefit from that ancestor's supernatural guidance. The Tairnadal believe you'll never be as useful on your own as you could be if you embraced the path of your patron ancestor, and refusing to follow that path is deadly arrogance and selfishness.

Patron Ancestors

The first patron ancestors fought their giant oppressors during the Age of Giants, battling to liberate their fellow elves then helping them flee when Xen'drik was doomed. However, the Tairnadal didn't exist yet; these first patron ancestors came from various cultures of the time, long before the Tairnadal culture evolved on the island of Aerenal. The patron Vadallia was a warrior queen, said to have been born in the saddle; many martial traditions of the modern Tairnadal were drawn from her people. In contrast, the patron Cardaen was enslaved and raised in the Cul'sir Dominion; he learned magic in captivity and turned this power against his masters. The first patron ancestors include warriors, slaves, gladiators, and even a feral druid raised by animals in the wild. Some were legendary horsemen and others never rode. As described in this chapter's opening quote, some of these first heroes

had codes of honor and chivalry, while others were infamously cruel—and modern Tairnadal believe their duty is to emulate how their ancestor would act in any situation, whether it forces them to be chivalrous or cruel.

The first patrons were the champions of ancient Xen'drik, but over the tens of thousands of years since the giants fell, new heroes have arisen. Some Tairnadal patrons fought the Dhakaani goblins when the elves first explored Khorvaire, and others fought dragons who attacked Aerenal. With over twenty thousand years of history to work with, Tairnadal could have fought daelkyr, exposed the schemes of the Lords of Dust, battled sahuagin or krakens, or defeated a plague of undead from Aerenal's Mabaran manifest zones.

Creating a Patron

In developing a patron ancestor—whether as a player or DM—consider that they are a celebrated, legendary figure. Why do the elves want to ensure this patron is never forgotten? Patrons don't have to be directly related to the modern elves they choose, though after many thousands of years, most Tairnadal elves are related to many of the patron ancestors. Unlike the kalashtar, you don't expect your family members to be chosen by the same patron; instead, it's believed an ancestor chooses you based on your skills and potential. Young Tairnadal essentially spend their youth auditioning for the ancestors; you might've honed your skills at stealth in hopes you'll be chosen by Falaen, or focused on magic expecting to be selected by Cardaen. But ultimately, the patron chooses the elf, and their choice can't be questioned. As a child with an aptitude for archery, you might expect to be chosen by a legendary archer, only to end up being picked by a brave swordsman—perhaps for your bravery or another aspect of your character you didn't see as an asset. As you create a patron ancestor for your character, consider how their story will affect your own.

Legend. The Tairnadal patrons are legends. They become patrons because the elves believe their deeds must not be forgotten and others should follow their example. What did your patron do to earn this devotion? Why are they celebrated and admired? What was their greatest achievement? Did they have a legendary weapon, tool, or treasure they were known for (and if so, are you working to find it)? What was their signature move, spell, or other distinctive thing you can emulate?

Personality. As a Tairnadal, you're expected to pattern your personality after your ancestor—including both their strengths and challenges. However, an elf wouldn't be preserved as a patron ancestor unless their virtues significantly outweighed their flaws. If one of the champions of Xen'drik was known for their cruelty, their positive aspects would have to vastly outweigh it so the Tairnadal are willing to not only overlook this cruelty, but to reenact it to preserve the ancestor's spirit.

Despite being beloved and preserved in memory, what were your ancestor's notable flaws? What about their personality traits, ideals, and bonds? Keep in mind how those might impact your own: has cultivating their traits come easily to you, or are you constantly trying to overcome your own inclinations? For example, if your flaw is your overconfidence, you might be naturally so—or you might *try* to be overconfident, because that's something your ancestor was known for.

Class Features. Patrons are supposed to share their skills with their revenants. Do you see your ancestor as the source of any of your class features—either those you have now or those you'll eventually gain? For example, if you're a ranger, your Favored Enemy and Fighting Style features likely reflect your ancestor's influence, and when you cast *hunter's mark,* you might feel your ancestor guide your aim. As a rogue or bard, your expertise is likely tied to the skills your ancestor was celebrated for. If you're a sorcerer or druid, your patron likely was as well, and they probably specialized in similar spells. If you're a warlock, you might serve the same patron as your ancestor; if you're a Hexblade, your otherworldly patron might be the weapon your ancestor carried.

Relationship with Your Ancestor. Consider what you felt about your patron ancestor when you came of age and were chosen by them. Were you proud to follow in their footsteps? Had you hoped you'd be chosen by them, or did you always imagine you'd be chosen by a different patron? And beyond that, consider what your relationship is like today. Do you value their guidance and believe you'll create new legends together? Do you feel their presence guiding you, perhaps even having visions while trancing? A strong sense of guidance is especially appropriate for Tairnadal paladins, clerics, or warlocks, but regardless of your class, you might believe the ancestor has a concrete purpose for you.

As always, work with your DM on how your ancestor's influence shapes your goals. How will your patron fit into the campaign? Are you trying to find their legendary weapon? Are you driven to defend the innocent or hunt down a particular type of creature? As a Tairnadal, you have a story you're trying to relive; ideally, it fits into the campaign your DM has in mind, not clashes with it.

Rivals. There are many more elves than patrons, so most patron ancestors have multiple elves following in their footsteps. How well represented is your patron among the Tairnadal? Are you one of a few, or are there dozens or even hundreds of elves following in their footsteps? What makes you stand out from the others? Do you have a particular rival who's determined to be a better revenant than you?

Living Revenants

Any Tairnadal elf who's bound to a patron ancestor can be referred to as a revenant, based on the idea that the ancestor lives on through them. Once an elf undergoes the rite to determine which ancestor chooses them, it's their duty as a revenant to emulate this ancestor, perfecting their skills and following in their footsteps.

Elite revenants who've honed this connection and can use it to produce supernatural effects are given the special title of revenant blades; you could create a revenant blade character using the paladin Oath of Veneration presented later in this chapter, or you can describe any class's features as supernaturally empowered by your ancestor.

Trappings of a Revenant

Every devout Tairnadal wears an amulet known as a zaelshin—"spirit bond"—that bears the sigil of their ancestor. Some Tairnadal carry a version called the zaelshin tu; this special heirloom contains a relic tied to their patron, such as a sliver of bone, a scrap of cloth, or a tiny piece of a broken blade.

When performing heroic deeds, a revenant covers their lower face with a veil known as a zaelta, or "spirit mask." In so doing, the revenant signals to their enemies (and others who see them) that the honor of their achievement goes to the ancestor rather than the living elf. However, most Tairnadal still dream of one day—through their ancestor's guidance—having their own story become legend. Such living legends still wear the zaelshin of their patron, but they may abandon the zaelta in recognition that their own legend is celebrated as well. Usually, this is done only with the guidance of a Keeper of the Past; it would be extremely arrogant for a Tairnadal to unilaterally decide they're now the equal of an ancestor.

Voice of the Ancestors

How exactly does a patron ancestor communicate with a living elf, whether with a Keeper of the Past or a revenant blade? It's not a straightforward conversation; Shaeras Vadallia couldn't chat with the spirit of Vadallia about whether to conquer Valenar. However, a patron's voice can manifest in several ways:

Instincts. Revenants believe their ancestors are guiding them, and intuition and instinct are considered the hand of the ancestor nudging them in a particular direction. As with many aspects of religion, this is about faith—but the high skill level of the typical Tairnadal warrior suggests that this is more than mere superstition. When a Tairnadal lets instinct guide them, it usually works out well.

Trances. Tairnadal elves often interact with their patron ancestors in their trance meditations. They might have visions of training with the ancestor, or they could experience a moment from the ancestor's memories. Usually this is a passive experience, not unlike a dream; the revenant remembers it when the trance ends, but they can't stop the training montage to ask Falaen her opinion about current events. However, the context of such a vision could itself be a message; if a revenant keeps having trance-visions about Taeri's final battle, this might hint at the resting place of his legendary double scimitar.

Spells. As suggested earlier, Tairnadal spells and class abilities often reflect ancestral guidance. A Tairnadal wizard may feel as though Cardaen is guiding her as she casts her *fireball* or studies her spellbook. A paladin could believe the ancestor is guiding their hand when they smite or reaching through to inspire their allies when they cast *bless*. Spells like *augury* and *divination* reflect a more direct interaction with the spirit, though these are likely still conveyed through instinct or vision rather than a mundane conversation.

So as a Tairnadal adventurer, you don't usually talk directly to your ancestor. Instead, you regularly ask yourself, "what would Vadallia do in this situation?" And when you do, you truly believe she guides you through instinct. And as a DM, you could signal something important to a Tairnadal character via their instincts: "you have a really bad feeling about that Deneith soldier" or "you feel a strong desire to test this minotaur's strength." You might even describe a specific vision the character has, but these moments are rare and remarkable.

MARK TURNER

Tairnadal Burial

Tairnadal culture is nomadic. They're effectively always engaged in battle and on the move, and they don't particularly value physical monuments. Likewise, they don't place much importance on corpses—they're far more concerned with that person's spirit, and they believe that spirit can live on through devoted followers. For revenant blades of Cardaen, Cardaen's spirit is with them at all times; it doesn't matter where his bones are.

Because of this belief, Tairnadal burial practices are more practical than religious in nature. The common practice is to burn the dead, then to collect ashes, teeth, and slivers of bone that survive the fire. You don't want to leave something behind that an enemy could desecrate—but beyond that, these remnants can be carried by other members of the fallen elf's warband and possibly passed on to the Keepers of the Past. A mere sliver is enough to serve as a beacon to their spirit, and these relics are often embedded in the zaelshin tu amulets discussed in "Trappings of a Revenant."

Keepers of the Past

The elves of ancient Xen'drik didn't emulate their ancestors as the Tairnadal do today. The people were devoted to their legendary champions and swore to preserve their memories, but it wasn't until later that some elves gradually came to believe that the ancestors were still with them, that it was possible to hear the voices of the ancestors and call on them for guidance. These elves were the first Keepers of the Past—the clerics and priests of the Tairnadal—and over time, they evolved rituals for recognizing the bonds between living elves and their patrons, developing the path of the revenant.

Unlike revenants who emulate a single patron ancestor, the Keepers of the Past can hear all the ancestors and potentially channel any of their gifts. Keepers don't work to preserve one ancestor; they strive to protect all ancestors and ensure all Tairnadal benefit from their gifts. Despite their central role in Tairnadal society, however, the Keepers of the Past are guides, not rulers. As such, the Tairnadal culture isn't truly a theocracy; though its foundations rest on a shared faith, the Tairnadal are formally led by lords known as shan (discussed in the "Tairnadal Hierarchy" section).

In addition to their religious duties, Keepers of the Past often serve as entertainers; one of their duties is to share the stories of all the ancestors and ensure they're remembered.

Creating a Keeper of the Past

Eberron: Rising from the Last War suggests Nature and War as cleric domains for the Keepers of the Past, and these are sound choices for Keepers who choose to ride with a warband. But for those who live among the zaelantar (see "War and Peace") and guide the young, there are other options. The Knowledge domain reflects a Keeper who can draw on the memories of the ancestors, with Knowledge of the Ages reflecting channeling an ancestor's skill. Alternatively, the Life domain fits the priest who sees all Tairnadal as their children and strives to protect them all. When playing a Keeper of the Past, consider attributing different spell effects and class features to specific ancestors; you may call on Vadallia to inspire your allies with *bless*, while you ask Cardaen to smite them with a *guiding bolt*. Neither of these ancestors have power on their own, but they can act through you. A Keeper of the Past could also be a bard, likely of the College of Spirits; again, the primary role of the Keeper is to inspire others and to share the stories of the ancestors.

When you play a Keeper of the Past as a player character, it's reasonable to ask why you've left your people. Your duty is to guide and inspire the Tairnadal and to preserve the memory of the ancestors; how are you doing that by walking among strangers? Especially if you're a young Keeper, it's possible you've been given a sacred quest. Perhaps you've been sent to recover an artifact of one of the ancestors, or to learn the final fate of a champion who disappeared in the Age of Monsters. Or perhaps you've been given a quest by the ancestors themselves, a vision you don't yet fully understand. Given the long lifespan of the elves, it's not unreasonable for you to plan on spending a few decades on your quest before returning to your people.

Ultimately, as a Keeper of the Past, your purpose in your adventuring party includes helping your friends achieve their full potential. You seek to preserve your ancestors, but that's in part because that ancestral guidance helps Tairnadal become heroes themselves. Even if you're traveling with non-elves, you may still feel driven to help them become the best versions of themselves.

Tairnadal Without Ancestors

The Keepers of the Past aren't selected by any one ancestor; as described earlier in this section, a central part of their role is their ability to hear many ancestors. But are there other Tairnadal who don't have a patron ancestor?

Most elves receive an ancestor at around 60, after they undergo a few decades as zaelantar. If you're a Tairnadal elf of this age (who doesn't have the gift of the Keepers) but you haven't been chosen by an ancestor, you essentially haven't "graduated" yet—so work another decade as zaelantar and try again. Your fellow Tairnadal would assume that if you're not picked, it's because you haven't yet displayed enough value to be chosen; though you're a disappointment, that doesn't mean you deserve to be shunned. You simply need to go back to work and *do better*.

Though highly unusual, it's possible that a particular elf might not be picked because *all* the ancestors wanted them and couldn't reach an agreement. Perhaps the Tairnadal have a tale of the elf who was thought to be shunned by the ancestors, but who was in fact the most exceptional of all—or perhaps they'll tell that tale about your player character! But in the overwhelming majority of situations, an unpicked elf would simply continue on as zaelantar until an ancestor eventually chose them.

Ancestors of Legend

When deciding on your character's patron ancestor, there are dozens throughout elven history who might choose your character as a revenant. The "Creating a Patron" section gives ideas for how to create your own patron if you'd like them to fit a particular mold—a legendary archer, a perfect paladin—or you can draw inspiration from one of the patrons presented below.

Vadallia: Queen of Swords

As described in *Dragon* 407, "Vadallia was one of the finest warlords of the Age of Giants. She was a gifted equestrian and a deadly warrior, but her greatest talents were her grasp of strategy and her ability to inspire others. She united rival clans and convinced stubborn heroes to join together beneath her banner. She was driven by her passion and her love of the elven people, yet her love was tempered by a lack of compassion for any other creature except her horse."

Personality. The Tairnadal expect Vadallia revenants to be leaders, inspiring their comrades and devising clever strategies to defeat their enemies. While Vadallias are

expected to be utterly devoted to their warband and their people, they are known for ruthless expediency with enemies. This can be seen in the actions of High King Shaeras Vadallia, who betrayed Cyre's trust and seized what's now Valenar ... but in so doing, brilliantly secured the land for the elves. If you play a Vadallia revenant, do you agree with Shaeras's decision and believe Vadallia herself would've done the same thing? Or do you believe the High King's actions show him to be an imperfect avatar of the Queen of Swords?

Character Options. Vadallia revenants are typically martial characters. A Battle Master fighter might highlight her strategic brilliance, while an Oath of Veneration paladin (presented later in this chapter) showcases her skill with horses and in inspiring allies.

Artifacts. It's said that one of Vadallia's eyes was a diamond through which she could see glimpses of the future. Her double scimitar is also a legendary weapon, and would be a remarkable artifact for a revenant to discover. Currently Shaeras Vadallia is seen as the predominant avatar of the Queen of Swords, but someone who acquires one of these might be able to challenge the High King.

Cardaen

Dragon 407 paints Cardaen as "an arcane prodigy, raised by giants and taught to love magic above all else. In his early life, he was completely absorbed with study. He had no interest in how the rituals he crafted were used; he simply sought to push the laws of magic to their limits. After Vadallia's death, he realized that magic was pointless if it didn't have purpose. He dedicated his life to vengeance, hunting down and punishing those who brought suffering to his people."

Personality. Cardaen is widely considered to be one of the greatest elf wizards of history, commanding respect from the Aereni and Tairnadal alike. Some Cardaens are cold and dispassionate, while others see beauty in magic, but all are known for their intellectual pursuits. Some Tairnadal say that to be a true revenant of his, an elf must begin with an innocent love of magic and be hardened by a terrible loss. Following his legacy, Cardaen revenants may choose two very different paths—that of zaeltairn or zaelantar, war or peace, as discussed in the "Tairnadal Society" section. Those who choose to be warriors tend to embrace Cardaen's vengeful nature in defense of their people. But others choose the settled life and focus on arcane research in the few cities of the Tairnadal. While "peaceful" by comparison, such revenants are typically cold-blooded in their use of magic.

Character Options. Many of Cardaen's revenants are wizards and sages, as Cardaen's greatest strength was his towering intellect; a Cardaen might focus on developing spells and arcane weapons to support the warbands. While it would be unusual, an Artillerist artificer could certainly draw inspiration from him. Other Cardaen revenants who wield magic on the battlefield could be Bladesingers, War wizards, or even Hexblade warlocks.

Artifacts. Cardaen died in Xen'drik before the exodus, and his spellbook has never been found; it's possible it contains spells he never shared with others. His staff was a powerful magical weapon, and it is also lost to time. Over the centuries, explorers and scholars have occasionally found spell scrolls written by this great wizard, and one might surface in Xen'drik or elsewhere.

Falaen: the Silence

Falaen was the deadliest assassin of the Age of Giants, known as "the Silence" both for her skills at stilling tongues and for her taciturn persona. Much about her is a mystery, as suits a figure who lived in the shadows. Falaen grew up among the drow and was trained to kill her own kind; most stories say the drow took her after they killed her family, but some maintain she was at least part drow herself. What's certain is that she turned against the drow and their giant masters, and that during the Silence's war in the shadows, she brought down countless drow and struck deep inside enemy lines.

Personality. By all accounts, Falaen was ruthless but never cruel; she viewed her work as necessary but took no joy in killing, and her revenants usually share that perspective. She was endlessly patient, and similarly, her revenants sometimes wait weeks or months until seizing the perfect moment to bring down their prey. Unlike many Tairnadal, Falaen revenants usually avoid horses, as she had no love for the creatures.

Character Options. Falaen revenants tend to be Assassin rogues or Gloom Stalker rangers, but some follow other paths. While a Tairnadal warband might have a single Falaen revenant who serves as a Scout rogue, there are also several "Silent Bands" comprised entirely of her revenants, specializing in long-term covert operations.

Artifacts. Falaen specialized in two light blades, and either her weapons, her mask, or her legendary cloak of shadows would be prized artifacts for a revenant to recover.

Taeri

Where Vadallia was known for her strategy, Taeri is celebrated for his sheer prowess on the battlefield. Some scholars liken him to an elf analogue of Dol Dorn, emphasizing the virtues of courage and skill. Taeri was a master of melee combat in all its forms, but he is particularly celebrated as the greatest wielder of the double scimitar who's ever lived; most modern scimitar forms are still drawn from his teachings. Though renowned for his skill with melee weapons, Taeri is said to have never touched a bow.

While Taeri is exceptional, there are certainly other patrons who follow his mold—ancestors renowned for their courage and skill with a particular weapon, whose revenants are always seeking greater challenges to prove themselves. Quite a few of Taeri's revenants have become patrons themselves: Daealyth was a Taeri revenant who accomplished great deeds in her battles with the Dhakaani goblins, while Haetar Taeri fought dragons and is one of the primary patrons of the Draleus Tairn.

Personality. Many modern Tairnadal stereotypes are rooted in Taeri's legacy: he's known for always seeking a greater challenge and refusing to take advantage of a weaker foe. On more than one occasion, he let an opponent live when they threw down their weapons and refused to fight him. While celebrated for his skill, Taeri is notably *not* known for his cunning; stories tell of him being outwitted by clever drow, or being the lone survivor of an ambush that Vadallia would have surely anticipated.

Character Options. Taeri's revenants could be fighters, rangers, paladins, or even monks; several legends tell of a disarmed Taeri defeating his enemies with his bare hands. However, he's celebrated first and foremost for his skill with the double scimitar (as presented in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*), and most of his revenants are skilled with that or similar martial weapons.

Artifacts. Anyone who could recover Taeri's legendary double scimitar would secure a place in song and story. His chainmail was shattered and scattered, but many Taeri revenants carry a link of his armor.

Vaela the Wolf

There are many legendary druids and rangers among the Tairnadal. One of these, Maezan the Thunderhand, raised the briar walls of Taer Valaestas during the Age of Monsters. Maezan was himself a revenant of the druid Shal; meanwhile, Shal was inspired by Vaela the Wolf, whose legends date back to the earliest days of that age.

When Vaela was only a child, their village was destroyed by giants and their people were taken as prisoners. Vaela alone escaped into the jungle. They should've died, but they forged a bond to the beasts of the wild; it's said that when they encountered a pack of wolves, Vaela instinctively became a wolf, and grew up among them. As Vaela the Wolf grew older, they shifted from form to form, living with every beast in the jungle and learning their secrets. Eventually, Vaela came upon another band of giant raiders who were hunting elves. Vaela slaughtered the giants and joined the elves, assuming an elven form just as they'd assumed so many beast forms in the past. Along the way, Vaela remembered their past and realized they were elven, though it took them a long time to decide what that meant and who Vaela the Elf would be. Vaela taught many elves the secrets of the wild; some became rangers, while others followed more closely in Vaela's footsteps and became the first of the Gyrderi druids.

Personality. Though druid revenants of later generations—including those of Shul and Maezan—have shifted away from their feral roots, Vaela is pure and primal. Their revenants prefer to live surrounded by untamed nature, and for them, concepts like gender, family, and national identity are often fluid, though they still deeply value their Tairnadal heritage and strive to preserve Vaela's spirit. One Silaes Tairn warband, formed entirely of Vaela revenants, functions much like a pack of wolves. However, it's not uncommon for Vaela revenants to leave their warband for a time to learn

the ways of another culture, or even to live alongside a particular beast and learn its ways.

Character Options. Their revenants tend to be Circle of the Moon druids, more comfortable in beast form than on two legs; however, some become Beast Master rangers, Totem Warrior barbarians, or other classes closely tied to primal nature.

Artifacts. Vaela trusted their teeth and hide over weapons and armor. Vaela's teeth are infused with their power and, if they still exist, would be highly sought after by their revenants.

Patron Ancestors and Resurrection

Why don't the Tairnadal resurrect their beloved ancestors? Simply put, they don't because they *can't*. Even if you have a sliver of their bone, the *resurrection* spell and similar magic require a spirit to be "free and willing"—and the ancestors' spirits faded from Dolurrh long ago.

No one knows what lies beyond Dolurrh. Vassals believe that noble souls join the Sovereigns in some higher realm, while the Church of the Silver Flame teaches that virtuous spirits are preserved in the Silver Flame. Meanwhile, the Blood of Vol maintains that nothing lies beyond Dolurrh, and death is oblivion. The Tairnadal share a similar belief that once a spirit fades from Dolurrh, it's gone forever—but they believe the spirit can be preserved by the memories and actions of the living. So while you can't resurrect a patron ancestor or find one of them lingering in Dolurrh, the ancestors continue to exist spiritually because of the actions and devotion of those who remember them.

CHETO SEE

Paladin: Oath of Veneration

At 3rd level, a paladin gains the Sacred Oath feature, which offers the choice of a subclass. This section presents a new oath option, which can be played by a Tairnadal character or by anyone who channels a revered ancestor.

Paladins who are called to follow in the footsteps of a great hero take the Oath of Veneration. The Tairnadal are the most common culture in Eberron to keep these ideals, taking up arms in hopes of emulating the patron ancestor assigned to them by the Keepers of the Past. However, this path isn't limited to the elves. A goblinoid warrior might choose to emulate ancient Dhakaani heroes, or a human of the Five Nations might consider themself the inheritor of Karrn the Conqueror's will.

Tenets of Veneration

The tenets of the Oath of Veneration challenge a paladin to uphold the legend of a treasured ancestor.

Respect the Past. The deeds and legends of our ancient ancestors are our greatest treasure.

Emulate Your Patron. Keep your patron ancestor's stories alive by reliving their victories.

Fight for Your Future. Resist the tyranny your ancestors devoted their lives to defeating.

Oath Spells

3rd-Level Oath of Veneration Feature

When you take this oath, choose the following class that best represents your venerated ancestor: artificer, bard, cleric, druid, ranger, sorcerer, warlock, wizard. When you gain this feature, choose one 1st-level spell from your ancestor's class spell list. That spell is an oath spell for you. When you reach certain levels in this class—5th level, 9th level, 13th level, and 17th level—you gain another oath spell of your choice from your ancestor's class spell list. When you gain a paladin level, you can choose one of these spells and replace it with another spell from your ancestor's class spell list. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how oath spells work.

Additionally, you add the *enhance ability*, *find steed*, and *find greater steed* spells to your oath spells.

Channel Divinity

3rd-Level Oath of Veneration Feature

You gain the following two Channel Divinity options. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how Channel Divinity works.

Ancestral Recall. As a bonus action, you can use your Channel Divinity to call to mind a great deed of your ancestor. Choose one skill and choose one tool or language that your ancestor was skilled in during their life. For the next 10 minutes, you are proficient in any chosen skill or tool, and your proficiency bonus is doubled for each ability check you make using a chosen proficiency. If you choose a language, you can speak, read, and write that language for the duration.

Ancestral Companion. You call on the spirit of one of your ancestor's most treasured allies, manifesting the spirit as a loyal mount or imbuing an ally with its favor. You cast either *enhance ability* or *find steed* as an action without expending a spell slot. When you reach 15th level in this class, you add *find greater steed* to the list of spells you can cast in this manner.

Aura of the Paragon

7th-Level Oath of Veneration Feature

You emanate an aura that evokes the storied history of your patron ancestor, filling you and your companions with hope and drive. When you use your Divine Smite, friendly creatures within 10 feet of you can use their reaction to gain your ancestor's favor until the end of their next turn. Creatures with your ancestor's favor deal an extra 1d4 radiant damage the next time they hit with an attack.

When you reach 18th level in this class, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

Exemplar Companion

15th-Level Oath of Veneration Feature

While a creature is affected by your *enhance ability* spell, or while you control a creature that you summoned, animated, or created with magic, that creature becomes an exemplar companion. Your Aura of the Paragon extends to the area around each exemplar companion as if you were in that creature's space.

Additionally, when an exemplar companion gains your ancestor's favor, the extra damage it deals increases by 1d4 for each spell level higher than 1st that you expended with your Divine Smite.

Perfect Avatar

20th-Level Oath of Veneration Feature

As a bonus action, you reach your spiritual apotheosis and embody your patron ancestor's spirit completely. You and your Exemplar Companion creatures gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- You have advantage on all ability checks.
- When you take the Attack action on your turn, you can do one of the following as part of that action: take the Dash, Help, or Use an Object action, or attempt to shove a creature, grapple a creature, or escape a grapple.
- When you regain hit points, treat any dice rolled to determine the hit points you regain as having rolled their maximum value for you.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest, unless you expend a 5th-level spell slot to use it again.

Tairnadal Society

The people of the Five Nations are used to dealing with the Tairnadal as individuals, whether as lone mercenaries or members of a warband. Yet even while they are spread across the world, the Tairnadal are still part of a single nation. Here are some key elements of Tairnadal society that shape their lives on Aerenal and beyond it.

War and Peace

Tairnadal culture is based on people emulating the lives of their patron ancestors. But these ancestors became legends by fighting a guerrilla war, and to follow their example, the Tairnadal elves have been engaging in complex wargames for tens of thousands of years. While Tairnadal combatants spare enemies when possible—you don't finish off a fallen foe—there is no point to a battle that doesn't truly test the skills of the combatants, so battles are fought with deadly spells and steel. Building on this foundation, Tairnadal civilization has developed into two basic aspects: peace and war, zaelantar and zaeltairn.

Zaelantar

The zaelantar—"peaceful souls"—maintain the civilian infrastructure, raising and training both young elves and beasts of war and burden. They craft weapons and tools, and they maintain the settled communities of the steppes. The bulk of the zaelantar are young elves—Tairnadal elves receive a patron ancestor when they come of age, which usually doesn't happen until an elf is at least sixty. Before that, Tairnadal spend decades of their lives training in basic skills, studying Tairnadal history, and maintaining their community, including caring for younger elves. Through this process, each elf is effectively auditioning to the patron ancestors. The young elf who excels at hunting expects to be chosen by a legendary archer or stalker, while the elf who becomes a community leader hopes to be chosen by one of the great leaders of the past.

While waiting for a patron to choose them, these elves spend at least four decades of what humans would consider adult life working in a zaelantar community, performing necessary tasks until they're set on a different path. Other zaelantar include former zaeltairn who are unable to fight due to age or infirmity, but who can teach the young. The Keepers of the Past are largely zaelantar, serving to train and guide. And finally, the zaelantar include adults chosen by patron ancestors whose legendary skills are tied to the civic sphere: fabled smiths, legendary teachers, the Siyal Marrain (druids who tend the beasts), and so on.

Zaeltairn

Meanwhile, the zaeltairn—"warrior souls"—serve in an army and fight the Tairnadal's endless war, emulating their ancestors in the field. Zaeltairn are split into armies, each of which is further divided into clans and bands. These assignments and duties aren't temporary; once assigned to an army, Tairnadal serve until they die or until they retire (or are forced to retire) to train the young. A Tairnadal army effectively functions as a nomadic city-state; most patron ancestors were guerrilla soldiers and mobility was vital, thus most Tairnadal armies are nomadic, following migratory paths across the steppes. A few armies remain settled, however, based on the specialties of the ancestors represented by the army. Notably, each of the great jungles of the region—around Shae Thoridor and Var-Shalas—is home to an army, whose members specialize in jungle warfare and commando operations.

Tairnadal Cities

Among the Tairnadal, the zaeltairn are nomadic while the zaelantar live in village communities. Three great Tairnadal cities stand in the northern region of Aerenal:

Var-Shalas is the largest city of the Tairnadal, surrounded by walls of bronzewood thorns (similar to Taer Valaestas in Valenar). In addition to being the stronghold of the Keepers of the Past, the Shanutar conducts council business here (see "Shanutar: Council of Lords").

Shae Thoridor is the greatest city of the zaelantar. It is smaller than Var-Shalas, though similar in construction, but is nonetheless an important seat of the Keepers of the Past and an industrial center for the goods required by the armies.

Taer Senadal is a stone fortress—but an unusual one. Rather than being built to defend the region from attack, this fortress is designed to *be attacked*. Taer Senadal is defended by youths in the late stages of their training, and it lives up to its name, loosely translated as "fortress of whetstone." Here, armies take turns attacking the fortress, allowing the youths to hone their skills as they defend it, while the army practices assaulting fortifications.

The Tairnadal elves known as the Valaes Tairn have also laid claim to Valenar in Khorvaire. There, they occupy the cities of Taer Valaestas and Pylas Maradal, though their warbands remain largely nomadic. You can learn more about Valenar in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.

Tairnadal Hierarchy

The Aereni are ruled by the Undying Court and the Sibling Kings, while Valenar has a "High King." But what of the Tairnadal of Aerenal? No single monarch or high priest leads the Tairnadal, and as mentioned earlier, the culture isn't strictly a theocracy, despite being founded on faith. Instead, the basic leadership role within the Tairnadal is the shan, loosely translated as "lord." Each rank of shan can be held by any Tairnadal, with no restrictions on gender or blood.

Civilian Hierarchy

Among the zaelantar, the title tar-shan—"peace lord"—is used for either a village leader or someone who oversees a district of one of the great cities. In the cities, the tar-shans of each district confer on matters affecting the full city, rather than appointing a single city leader. On a smaller scale, a band of youths is guided by one of their peers known as an an-shan—"young lord."

Military Hierarchy

While the structure of Tairnadal society is relentlessly martial, they don't have a complex hierarchy of ranks. Most Tairnadal armies follow a similar structure to the model described for Valenar in the original *Eberron Campaign Setting*.

Armies and Var-Shans. Among the zaeltairn, the highest recognized rank is the var-shan—"great lord"—who leads an entire army. The people of the Five Nations often characterize Shaeras Vadallia as a "High King," but this is largely a translation error. Shaeras is actually a var-shan, making him the Great Lord of the Army of Valenar. As the only var-shan in Khorvaire, Shaeras is the highest-ranking Tairnadal on the continent, but each Tairnadal army has a var-shan of its own. (See "Valaes Tairn, Silaes Tairn, and Draleus Tairn" for a bit more information about the different armies of the Tairnadal.)

Warclans & Shans. The Army of Valenar has forty-five warclans in Khorvaire, each of which has several hundred elves. The clan leaders are known simply as shans. At any given time, twenty of these clans are under the direct command of var-shan Shaeras Vadallia, while the rest are active in the field. The same is true for the armies in Aerenal: each army has a core of clans that remain close and under the direct command of the var-shan, while others follow general directions but operate independently.

Warbands & Lu-Shans. Within each clan, some bands remain under the direct command of the shan, while others may be dispersed on independent operations like scouting or harrying enemies. Each band is led by a lu-shan—"band lord."

Warbands (discussed further in the "Families and Warbands" section) are essentially families whose members serve together indefinitely. When there is a split-second military decision to be made, the lu-shan commands and their word can't be questioned. But if there are other issues, the band debates them around the campfire and consensus generally rules; the lu-shan has the final say, but it's rare for a lu-shan to veto the decisions of the band without clear military reason. And on the rare occasions they do veto, the band respects the decision not for the title alone, but because they respect the lu-shan as a person—and as a revenant of a particular ancestor.

Ancestral Authority. Those appointed to leadership roles are elves channeling the spirits of legendary leaders. Within a clan, of course the Vadallia revenant is the lu-shan, because she's channeling Vadallia! Taeri is a peerless swordsman, but he's not a leader; who would even think of appointing a Taeri as shan? Beyond the authority of an individual leader, the word of another respected revenant carries a great deal of weight in matters related to that ancestor's expertise. For example, a Vadallia lu-shan is generally a good war leader, but when planning an ambush, they may defer to the Falaen revenant, trusting their expertise in matters of stealth and cunning.

This overall structure flows upstream. If a clan's shan issues a command, it must be obeyed—but unless it's an urgent matter, the shan first seeks the consensus of their lu-shans. Or if it isn't a question of war, they seek the guidance of Keepers of the Past or even the local tar-shan.

Beyond this, each army dispatches two clans to Var-Shalas and one to Shae Thoridor. These clans protect the cities, but the shans also represent their army in the Shanutar.

Shanutar: Council of Lords

Var-Shalas is home to the Shanutar—the Council of Lords—which brings together both zaelantar and zaeltairn leaders. This isn't a ruling body, but a place for the lords of the armies and villages to share news and resolve grievances. The Keepers of the Past mediate the Shanutar; each village's tar-shan has a place on the council, and each army is represented by the two shans whose clans are stationed at Var-Shalas.

Consensus in Leadership

So ultimately, who leads the Tairnadal? When decisions must be made in a moment, the present ranking leader's word is absolute, regardless of whether they're the var-shan, shan, or lu-shan. In other matters, the Tairnadal seek consensus—whether a lu-shan consulting with their band, a shan seeking consensus from the lu-shans, or the var-shan consulting the shans. Beyond this, people respect the ancestors that are channeled; they look to those guided by ancient leaders to channel that wisdom.

Internal Differences

Tairnadal culture has little room for internal dissent. It's effectively a highly disciplined army that's further united by deep devotion to a shared religion, compounded by the overall elven dedication to tradition. This is reflected by the fact that the civilization has stood, virtually unchanged, for over twenty thousand years. On the one hand, this reflects unity and stability; on the other hand, it also reflects the general stagnation of Aerenal.

The Tairnadal are effectively an army, broken into a clearly defined system of warclans and warbands. The endless training exercises conducted between these units provides an outlet for competition within the culture, as does the rivalry between revenants striving to be the best avatars of their patron ancestors. There's potential for tension between revenants based on the morals of their ancestors—the chivalrous defender of the weak and the ruthless assassin—but these stories are well known and shans are careful to assign such

revenants to different bands. So there is friendly competition within the confines of the culture, but people who truly don't fit in are expelled from the society, typically fostered to the Aereni (see the "Aereni and Tairnadal" sidebar).

Valaes Tairn, Silaes Tairn, and Draleus Tairn

The Tairnadal do have some philosophical divisions, and canon identifies three significant Tairnadal subcultures (though there could be more if it suits your story):

The Valaes Tairn seek glory in battle; this subculture is the one most Five Nations people think of when you say "Tairnadal." They comprise the majority of the Tairnadal; they're represented by at least three armies within Aerenal, and the large army occupying Valenar is also Valaes Tairn.

The Silaes Tairn believe that true glory can only be found in Xen'drik; their single army has twenty-one warclans, most of which remain in Aerenal, but at any given time there are four Silaes warclans active in Xen'drik. The giants of Xen'drik are no longer the mighty enemies their ancestors fought, but Silaes warriors pit their skills against the deadliest threats Xen'drik has to offer, and search for artifacts and relics of their patron ancestors.

The Draleus Tairn are the smallest army, with only five warclans, but they are widely believed to be the deadliest warriors of all. Aerenal has suffered many draconic attacks over the centuries, and the Draleus Tairn are always preparing—and yearning—for the next battle. Some say that the Draleus Tairn hunt rogue and feral dragons across Eberron, and there are even stories of Draleus champions venturing into the vast plains of Argonnessen.

These long-established sects have coexisted for millennia and share many traditions. However, there is one major point of conflict, especially within the Valaes Tairn: "do you support the Valenar initiative?" While warclans from every Valaes Tairn army joined Shaeras's expedition, many other warclans chose to remain in Aerenal and disapprove of his actions. As a Tairnadal elf, do you serve in the Army of Valenar? If not, do you oppose Shaeras Vadallia, and why?

Aereni and Tairnadal

While the Aereni and the Tairnadal have quite different beliefs and traditions, the two cultures have always been allies. Their ancestors fought the same enemies, and both respect the shared blood that flows through their veins. The Tairnadal and the Aereni stand together when their island comes under attack, and Tairnadal may serve as mercenary marines on Aereni vessels. Because of this, it's also possible for elves to move between the two cultures. Children who can't adapt to the harsh life of the Tairnadal are fostered among the Aereni, and some Aereni feel the call of a patron ancestor drawing them to the Tairnadal.

Valenar Atrocities?

Some canon sources lay significant atrocities at the feet of the Valenar elves. In particular, *Forge of War* describes Valenar warriors massacring countless Cyran civilians fleeing the Mourning. How does this incident fit with any of the other ideas presented in this chapter? The short answer is that it doesn't, because canon is inconsistent. Many different authors have worked on Eberron over the years, and inconsistencies occasionally arise when authors were unaware of details established in prior canon or intentionally changed them. A core principle of Eberron is that canon should inspire you, not hold you back; use what makes sense to you and ignore what you don't.

In the case of the Valenar, the ancestors they seek to emulate were rebels who rose up against tyrants and cruelty. Tairnadal revenants don't want to conquer or oppress; they want to *fight* conquerors and oppressors. Even now, the Tairnadal don't directly rule Valenar, instead leaving administration to the Khoravar. In my Eberron, the Valenar don't actually want a kingdom; what they want is to provoke a powerful nation into attacking them because that's what can most closely replicate the conflict with the giants—guerrillas fighting against overwhelming odds. I believe they've claimed Valenar solely because they want Karrnath or Darguun to try to take it from them.

Could the Valenar have slaughtered a massive number of civilians? Small-scale atrocities happen in Eberron, just as in wars throughout our history, because people—elf or human—can do terrible things. So this massacre is possible if it helps drive your story, but I'd want to know why. Did they mistakenly see the refugees as a threat, perhaps thinking they caused Mourning? Were the refugees truly helpless civilians, or had they already been corrupted by the Mourning into a horde of mutated ghouls? Or could the Valenar have been struck by a form of the infamous Du'rashka Tul curse of Xen'drik, driving them into a murderous frenzy? So while it's possible the slaughter was set in motion by revenants whose ancestors were known for cruelty, even Vadallia was ruthless only in protecting her people—so why were these refugees a threat?

Families and Warbands

Given the relentlessly martial nature of Tairnadal society, it's reasonable to wonder how families work within the Tairnadal. Do parents carry their children with them in a warband? Are familial relations important? The answers to these questions are "no" and "not very."

Family Ties

Who your parents are is far less important than who your patron ancestor is. Tairnadal don't maintain property, so you're not passing your holdings down to a child. And the Tairnadal don't use family names: each Tairnadal elf uses a given name followed by the

name of their patron ancestor. So Shaeras Vadallia may have been the son of Jael Cardaen and Sol Taeri, but ultimately, that doesn't matter. A child is given to the zaelantar to be raised, and they become an adult when chosen by a patron ancestor.

With that said, the Keepers of the Past keep records, and most Tairnadal know who their parents are; given their long elven lives, it's even possible that a freshly trained warrior could be assigned to a warband that contains a relative. So as a Tairnadal, you might serve with a relative and feel a strong attachment, but on a societal level, your personal lineage isn't as significant as your spiritual lineage.

Warbands

The people you're closest to are the other members of your warband, who you may serve alongside for many decades or even centuries. Warbands (composed of eight to twelve warriors) are trained to be self-sufficient, and given the nomadic nature of Tairnadal life, the other members of a warband are the only reliable social contact a Tairnadal has through much of their existence. Members of a warband are essentially fighting an endless war, so they have to be able to work together and to trust one another. The band works together to settle any feuds and disagreements internally.

Though warbands can be made up of elves with the same spiritual lineage, this practice is very rare. Keep in mind that ancestors are essentially military specialties: Vadallia is a leader, Cardaen provides arcane support, and Taeri specializes in melee. You'll rarely find a warband that has more than one Vadallia, because what's the point of having two leaders? Most warbands have a versatile blend of patron ancestors that serve the needs of the unit. A warband with a highly specialized function—a band of archers or a commando unit specializing in urban infiltration—may have multiple elves that follow the same ancestor because that overlap of skills is desirable for that purpose.

The shans are very careful in who they assign to which warband, in part because some patron ancestors have stories that are fundamentally at odds; you don't want to put someone whose patron is known for chivalry and honor in the same warband with a patron known for ruthless cruelty. This contributes to the conflicting impressions of the Valenar within the Five Nations: some say they adhere to a strict code of honor, while others say they are brutal and cruel. Both stories are true; they're just describing warbands driven by different patron ancestors.

Where's Your Warband?

The warband is the basic social unit of the Tairnadal. If you're playing an adult Tairnadal elf, your warband is your family. So why are you traveling around with a group of adventurers instead of serving with your warband? As an adventurer, you can use the Where's Your Warband table to inspire reasons for why you've left your warband behind.

Where's Your Warband?

d8	Warband Fate
1	Your warband is in Aerenal. You left because of a vision from your patron ancestor, and you plan to return once you've fulfilled this mission.
2	Your warband was sent on a suicide mission. You're believed to have died on that mission, and you need to lay low until you can expose the powerful shan who sent your band to their deaths.
3	You believe you're to blame for the death of your warband, and you can't return until you've redeemed yourself.
4	Your warband was betrayed by one of your fellow soldiers. The traitor escaped, and you can't return until you have tracked this villain down.
5	Your warband was targeted by a specific organization—the Order of the Emerald Claw? the Royal Eyes of Aundair?—and you've sworn that you won't return until you've avenged them. Are you hunting the specific individuals involved in the ambush, or are you planning to destroy the entire organization?
6	Your warband is active in Valenar. After you disagreed with Shaeras Vadallia's actions, you were dishonorably discharged and banished from Valenar. Did you conflict because he betrayed Cyre, or was it something more personal?
7	Your warband is active in Valenar, but you've been given a covert assignment by the var-shan. Elves play long games; it may be that you're expected to take decades to accomplish this mission. Are you tasked with acquiring an artifact, killing a particular enemy, or subtly driving a powerful force to attack Valenar?
8	Your warband is active in Valenar, but you've gone AWOL. Is your desertion driven by a personal disagreement? By your patron ancestor? Or did you stumble upon a conspiracy within the army itself, which you couldn't reveal to your warband without placing them in danger? If so, you hope to one day return, but you'll need powerful allies to help you defeat this hidden enemy.

Half-Elves and the Tairnadal

Though uncommon, some half-elves live among the Tairnadal; the Tairnadal attitude toward these Khoravar is that they're children who can never grow up, due to no fault of their own. The Tairnadal believe that no Khoravar can channel a patron ancestor—and thus far, they've never been proven wrong. Khoravar are seen as having a connection to their people, and they're happy to have Khoravar serve as zaelantar, performing civilian tasks in the peaceful cities. But these half-elves can never be chosen by an ancestor, and thus they can never be zaeltairn. Even the most gifted of Khoravar warriors is considered a child in training. Of course, if any Khoravar could prove this wrong and channel an ancestor, it would be a player character!

Tairnadal Animals

The Valenar are known for their amazing horses with seemingly supernatural attributes—potentially including sapience. Despite House Vadalis's best efforts, they've never been able to breed these horses in captivity. In *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, we expanded on this concept in the "Valenar Animals" section (though it'd be more accurate to call them "Tairnadal animals," as they exist on Aerenal and predate the nation of Valenar by tens of thousands of years).

Channeling Ancestors

The reason Vadalis hasn't been able to replicate the abilities of Valenar animals is that their attributes aren't purely genetic. The Siyal Marrain do breed exceptional horses as a baseline, but Tairnadal horses go above and beyond this. You may well find an elite cavalry warband in which all the horses are Tairnadal animals, but it's not the case that *every* Valenar soldier's horse is such an animal. A true Tairnadal animal is channeling the spirit of a legendary ancestor, much as a Tairnadal elf is. In some cases, the animal itself has a legendary ancestor; the Gyrderi elves were trapped in beast form during the wars against the giants but continued to fight alongside their kin. In other cases, the animal can channel the spirit due to their revenant's bond to an ancestor. The legends of Vadallia include her remarkable horse, while Falaen has a scouting hawk and Vaela often travels with a faithful wolf.

When a Vadallia revenant forms a strong attachment to a horse, it can become a Tairnadal animal channeling her spirit ... but should the horse be separated from the revenant for more than a few days, the spirit usually chooses to leave it. House Vadalis hasn't given up on replicating Valenar animals. But their attempts are likely to remain unsuccessful, as the spirit only manifests when an animal is bound to a Tairnadal companion; when that same animal is bred in captivity away from the Tairnadal people, the spirit won't manifest and offspring are born as mundane beasts, not fey.

Bonds Beyond Death

As a Tairnadal, once you've established a bond to your Tairnadal animal, this connection transcends death. If your companion is killed, you can restore its spirit by finishing a long rest in the company of a friendly nonmagical beast of the appropriate species—but once you've formed a connection to a Tairnadal animal, you can't just trade it in for a different kind of animal. For example, if you've established that your story is recreating Vadallia's bond to her horse, you can't swap your horse out for a Tairnadal hawk over a long rest.

Not every revenant has a Tairnadal animal, as it's a reflection of a revenant's special connection to their ancestor. As a new player character, you're unlikely to start with a Tairnadal animal companion, but as you gain experience, your DM may decide your existing animal companion becomes a Tairnadal animal—because you've strengthened your bond to Vadallia, your horse becomes sapient. From a mechanical perspective, this is much like receiving a supernatural gift or boon, as described in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Tairnadal Animals and Non-Elves

Eberron: Rising from the Last War suggests that a Valenar animal could bond to a non-elf adventurer. This would be exceptionally remarkable and meaningful—so why did it happen? Do you have a distant blood tie to the ancestor? Do you have a spiritual connection to them? Could you be an elf reincarnated in human form? Or has the spirit simply judged you to be a worthy companion?

FRED HOOPER

Chapter 6: Gnomes of Lorghalan

The Lhazaar island of Lorghalan lay uninhabited for countless centuries, until a group of Zil gnomes chose it as their new sanctuary. They not only braved its elemental dangers, but found a way to live in harmony with them. Today, the Lorghalan Principality has a small but fierce fleet, and the Lorghali have mastered a new magical tradition of stonesinging. This chapter tells their story.

Zil Dissidents

Two years after the founding of Zilargo, gnomes across the nation awoke to find mysterious pamphlets explaining the existence of the Trust and the role it would play in the nation moving forward. It concluded with these words: "To those who follow the proper path, we shall be as invisible as any ghost. Trust that we have your best interests at heart. Trust that we will act only when we must. Trust that we will always look after the needs of our great family, and that we need your aid as much as you need ours." Today, the Trust is universally accepted as part of Zilargo, and it's estimated that at least a third of the population works for the Trust in some capacity.

Despite what the Triumvirate would have you think, not all early Zil embraced the Trust with open arms. Some demanded accountability, insisting this Trust be drawn into the light. Others called it a coup, urging their families to end the experiment of Zilargo and return to their prior independence. But few spoke out against the Trust for long—deadly accidents and unlikely misfortune quickly stilled any voices that challenged this new order. It seemed it was too late for those who opposed the Trust to remove it from their new nation ... And so, most dissidents chose to remove themselves instead, leaving their nation behind.

Immigrants to the Five Nations

Many of the dissident Zil immigrated into the Five Nations, usually abandoning their old ways and fully embracing their new nations. Those gnomes who remained in Zilargo can be easily identified by name, as Zil gnomes use three names: a personal name, family name, and house name. Gnomes with distant blood connections to a Zil family don't use these names, as they aren't part of a Zil house and have no direct ties to Zilargo. So if you meet a gnome sage in Aundair named Talia Lorridan Lyrris, you know she considers herself Zil (she's "Talia of the Lorridan family in House Lyrris"); on the other hand, if she simply goes by Talia Lorridan, she's likely Aundairian.

Explorers to New Frontiers

Other dissidents had grander aspirations and took to the sea. The gnomes had long been accomplished sailors, and while they were uninterested in colonizing new territory, they'd explored the coasts and noted interesting and unclaimed lands. Now these sailors dreamed of creating their own new havens whose glories might one day outshine the land they left behind.

Sadly, most of these rebel colonies came to bad ends. Tolanen was established in the Shadow Marches; some years after its founding, a trading vessel docked to find the town completely depopulated. While the travelers blamed pillaging orcs, accounts later confirmed there were no signs of conflict, and the only looting was committed by the merchants themselves. New Zolanberg was constructed on the coast of Xen'drik, near the modern settlement of Zantashk, and it prospered and grew for decades ... and then, within the span of a week, its people tore the town and each other to pieces—a notable example of the curse that's come to be called the Du'rashka Tul. There were a handful of other settlements, but only one still thrives to this day: the principality of Lorghalan.

Island of Lorghalan

Glancing at a map of the Lhazaar Principalities, you might wonder why Lorghalan was uninhabited when the gnomes claimed it. This tropical island seems far more inviting than the icy mountains of Orthoss and Farlnen ... but names tell a story. To the island's west, the Tempest Strait is lashed by storms as powerful as any found in the Thunder Sea. To the southwest, Dreadwood Isle lies close to Mabar and Dolurrh, and strange ghosts and hungry shadows lurk in the depths of its Dreadwood. Lorghalan's northern coastline is lined with hidden reefs and unusual stone outcroppings, and even the most careful of captains can find their ship unexpectedly dashed against the rocks—thanks to the many water elementals that dwell along the coast.

The safest landing is at Hammer Bay to the south, but to get there, ships must pass the island that shares its name ... and the Hammer isn't a natural island, but a massive earth elemental. It never ventures far from its mapped position, but it has no love of ships; any vessel that draws too close may be shattered by a hurled stone or a mighty fist. Though it's possible airships might reach the island safely, they've only been in operation for about a decade—and airships rely on docking towers that the gnomes, quite happy with their fleet, have proven uninterested in constructing.

Exploring Lorghalan

Gnome explorers had chronicled the island's threats long ago, so the gnomes who sailed east knew what they were heading into. The Lorghalan expedition included several sages specializing in elementals and Lamannia, in hopes they could convince the Hammer to let them land safely. And so they did, establishing the town of Cornerstone on the shore of Hammer Bay.

Exploring the island, the gnomes found it was poised on the edge of Lamannia. The land was bountiful, fresh water was plentiful, and much of the island was *alive*. Apart from the wild zones of Sarlona, Lorghalan has the most intense concentration of elementals found anywhere on Eberron. Stones roll of their own accord. The earth intermittently rumbles. What seems to be a peaceful pond might unexpectedly move to a new location. Most elementals on Lorghalan are spirits of earth and water, but some are storms that follow paths of their own choosing or pits of endless fire. These elementals are creatures of Lamannia, pure and inhuman; there are no dao or marids here. The deep jungle is home to megafauna beasts, and off the coast of Lorghalan, sailors occasionally spot rocs hunting whales.

Claiming Lorghalan

In light of these discoveries, it's not surprising that the island was never colonized before; what city could survive the ravages of an avalanche of earth elementals? But the colonists came prepared. The expedition's leaders had long studied elementals, convinced they could reason with these alien creatures—and using these techniques, the gnomes succeeded in securing the region around Cornerstone. Over generations, they developed and honed these techniques, learning how to live in harmony with elementals, and even convincing the spirits and beasts of the land to work with them.

Lorghalan isn't a blissful island paradise, and daily life comes with its challenges, but to the gnomes, it has truly become home. Cornerstone is the only large city on the island; on the rest of the island, the Lorghalan gnomes keep to their family estates along the coast or on the jungle's edge. The deep jungles of Lorghalan are left to the primal forces. The gnomes know what they can harvest without upsetting the balance, and they are careful not to push these limits.

Fleet of Lorghalan

After a few minor clashes with Lhazaar fleets, the gnomes of Lorghalan were recognized as one of the Lhazaar Principalities. Today, the small Lorghalan fleet is known and respected within the Principalities, but the Lorghali remain largely unknown beyond it.

Their fleet primarily focuses on merchant trade within the Principalities, allowing other traders to carry their goods to distant lands. Many unusual plants grow in the jungles of Lorghalan, and from these the gnomes produce medicines, drugs, and potent spirits. Lorghalan wood is exceptionally strong, rivaling the densewood and bronzewood of Aerenal; while the Lorghali don't export lumber, they sell fine wooden goods. Their fleet has relatively few ships, but other Lhazaar tread lightly around Lorghalan vessels; not only are the hulls of their ships exceptionally strong, but most vessels are accompanied by one or more water elementals. These friendly spirits help propel the vessel, allowing Lorghalan ships to match the capabilities of Lyrandar elemental galleons.

Lorghalan Cannonballs

In battle, Lorghalan ships are known for launching small earth elementals at opposing ships. At a glance, these Lorghalan cannonballs appear to be simple boulders ... until they start rolling toward you. Though limbless, these living missiles can wreak havoc after impacting an enemy ship. In the wild, these elementals spend much of their time embedded in soil, as they can easily pass through earth and stone.

Lorghalan Cannonball

Small Elemental, Neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d6 + 12)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (–1)	16 (+3)	5 (–3)	10 (+0)	5 (–3)

Damage Vulnerabilities thunder
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Terran
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Earth Glide. The cannonball can burrow through nonmagical unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the cannonball doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

False Appearance. While the cannonball remains motionless, it's indistinguishable from a stone boulder.

Siege Monster. The cannonball deals double damage to objects and structures.

Fire! If the cannonball moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a slam attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Ready, Aim ... When an outside force (like another creature or a siege weapon) moves the cannonball at least 20 feet in a straight line, the cannonball makes a Slam attack against a creature, object, or structure within its reach.

People of Lorghalan

Gnomes comprise the vast majority of the island's population, though a few other folk have immigrated there over the years. Lorghalan gnomes share some traits with their Zil cousins: they love clever oratory and prefer to solve their problems with words instead of swords. But where the gnomes of Zilargo dive deep into intrigue, Lorghalan bases its society on freedom and honesty. The founders of Cornerstone swore there would be no secrets on their island: all knowledge would be shared and all problems drawn into the light, not eliminated in the shadows.

Lorghalan Names

The island's settlers dissolved their ties to previous Zil houses, and today, Lorghalan gnomes consider themselves to all be one house; a gnome of the island might introduce themself as Tara Tan Lorghalan.

Lorghalan Society

Though the Lorghali dissolved their ties to Zilargo, local family units remain important to them. Each family maintains an estate—a farming village based around a central communal building. Every estate specializes in different crops and skills, and Cornerstone is where they all come together. The island economy is largely driven by barter and the exchanging of favors, though families do maintain funds for dealing with the world beyond Lorghalan. All families have lodging in Cornerstone, and each family has three representatives on the Cornerstone Council, which governs the island and mediates disputes.

Like other principalities, Lorghalan has its own prince, but they hold significantly less power among their people than do other Lhazaar princes. The gnomes recognize the Prince of Lorghalan as the cleverest on the island, and as such, someone whose voice should always be heard and opinion considered. But the prince has no power beyond that, and any Lorghali can claim the title by defeating the current prince in a series of duels of wit and strategy. Sometimes decades go by with no challenges; other times, challenges are a weekly or daily occurrence. The young Prince Shasi Stormlyn recently claimed the title, and she's been urging a dramatic course of action, but the DM must decide just what this is: does Shasi want to work more closely with Rygar to establish a powerful, united Lhazaar? Does she want to see a new High Prince rise to power? Or does she want the Lorghali to shun political change?

Stonesingers

The Lorghali produce excellent mediators, apothecaries, and farmers, but what makes them truly remarkable is their tradition of stonesinging—a form of primal magic—and their relationship with the elementals of the region. Lamannian elementals are alien creatures whose thought processes and perception of reality are quite different from the humanoids of Eberron. Rather than binding elementals, as is common throughout Khorvaire, Lorghalan stonesingers influence elementals and natural forces by communing directly with each spirit and convincing it to help. A simple stonesinging effect, such as one produced by *druidcraft*, is hardly more complicated than singing a few words in Primordial. More significant requests require deeper communion with the spirits,

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including both concentration and an expenditure of will in addition to the song—*urging* the spirit to comply and impressing the request onto it. (As such, stonesinging follows the same rules as other forms of spellcasting.)

A stonesinger's most frequent and important work is with elementals. On a Lorghalan ship, a stonesinger literally sings to the elemental associated with the ship, encouraging it to move the vessel swiftly. If a ship's stonesingers are killed, the elemental still recognizes the vessel as friendly, but it can't be compelled to perform any particular action and may simply wander off. On the island, stonesingers negotiate with elementals to establish which territories the gnomes can build within, as well as convincing earth elementals to plow their fields and water elementals to irrigate the crops. Especially remarkable stonesingers can manipulate elemental and natural forces in more subtle ways—charming beasts, encouraging plants to grow, even conjuring fire or calling lightning from a clear sky. Others learn the melodies that define their own bodies, learning how to heal injuries or even change their shape.

Almost every Lorghali knows at least a few simple songs, but those who can work greater magics—usually those with the powers of bards or druids (see "Variant Rules")—are greatly respected. While stonesinging is a unique tradition that plays a central role in Lorghalan culture, the gnomes have nothing against other forms of magic; in particular, Lorghalan alchemists perform many wonders using the unusual plants of their island. The original immigrant families included a handful of dissidents from House Sivis, and while the Lorghali have made no particular effort to cultivate the Mark of Scribing, a few gnomes in each generation still manifest the mark; such gnomes often become the most gifted wizards of the island.

Lorghalan Religion

The gnomes of Lorghalan live in a land that's literally alive with spirits, so it's little surprise their traditions are practical and center on animism. The Lorghali refer to the world beyond the island as the "deadlands"; they find it depressing to wander in realms where the wind and waves aren't singing back to them. The gnomes interact with exceptionally powerful entities, including elementals like the Hammer and legendary megafauna beasts. So the Lorghali don't believe in distant, abstract deities; instead, they focus on concrete, local spirits.

They respect nature, but more concretely so than a druid who reveres Eberron as a whole; after all, the Lorghali have a personal relationship with the well that provides their water and the boulder that rolls by every day. They likely have festivals in which the greater spirits are invoked, but none of their practices focus on "faith"—theirs is a practical, concrete relationship, and spellcasters tend toward primal magic instead of divine. They have a very relaxed attitude toward death and the afterlife, focused instead on living their best life; when it's over, it's over, and whatever happens next will happen. Their traditions are essentially the opposite of Aerenal and the faiths that are obsessed with avoiding Dolurrh; at the end of the day, the Lorghali don't care what happens after death, as long as they live a good life.

Lorghalan and the World

The gnomes of Lorghalan generally have little interest in dealing with the outside world, and they consider it to be a dangerous place driven by greed and dishonesty. However, some gnomes are drawn beyond the island either by sheer curiosity, the challenge of matching wits with a dangerous world, or the need to obtain resources or techniques unavailable on Lorghalan. Most Lorghali strive to remain true to the principles of their culture even in hostile lands, solving problems through open discussion rather than treachery and subterfuge. But they aren't fools; a Lorghalan gnome won't spill every secret to a stranger, and if they don't want to lie, they don't have to say anything at all. But they usually prefer Persuasion over Deception, believing that reason can convince an enemy of the proper path. Intimidation is also an acceptable tool, but this is largely a matter of tone—not making idle threats, but ensuring an enemy understands just how dangerous the wrong decision could be.

Because of the dangers posed by the Hammer, the primary way to reach Cornerstone is on a Lorghalan ship. The Lorghali are largely gracious hosts and curious gnomes are often eager to talk to outsiders, but the gnomes are aware that outsiders don't share their traditions of honesty, so they watch strangers with both eyes. Over the last century, an increasing number of Zil have reached out to Lorghalan. The islanders are especially suspicious of their cousins and do not trust the Trust, but they've cautiously engaged in cultural exchange; notably, Lorghalan stonesinging techniques fascinate some Zil, leading to the rise of the Power of Purity movement in Zilargo.

Lorghalan Adventures

As with anything in Eberron, why does Lorghalan matter? What does the island and its culture add to your game that you can't find anywhere else? Here are a few ideas of what might bring adventurers to this isolated island or cause a stonesinger to cross their path.

Elemental Rights. The Lorghali have forged an alliance with the Power of Purity and the Ashbound druids, launching a concerted effort to disrupt Zilargo's elemental binding industry and sabotage elemental vessels. Is this just a matter of principle, or do they know a terrible secret that could lead to a far worse catastrophe?

It's a Jungle Out There. The deep jungles of Lorghalan hold many wonders: megafauna beasts, massive elementals, plants charged with the energies of Lamannia. Adventurers are sent to Lorghalan to obtain something—perhaps a Cannith alchemist needs a legendary berry, or an Aurum showman wants them to capture a megafauna beast. Can they get past the Hammer? Will the Lorghali interfere with their quest?

Lamannian Gateway. When adventurers stumble through a manifest zone to Lamannia, they reemerge in Lorghalan. What do they find as they seek a way home?

Mysterious Marauder. The Lorghali dislike deception and rarely engage in piracy—but a Lorghalan warship has begun terrorizing the region around the Dreadwood, supported by a host of elementals. Who is this pirate and what are their motives?

Princemakers. While Lorghalan's fleet is small, its ships are fast and powerful. Lorghali don't usually concern themselves with the politics of the Lhazaar Principalities, but in the wake of the Treaty of Thronehold, what role might they play in securing the position of the High Prince?

Lorghalan Characters

When creating a Lorghalan adventurer, consider what calls you away from home. Most islanders are quite content in their elemental paradise—what's driven you into the deadlands of Khorvaire? The Leaving Lorghalan table provides inspiration.

Leaving Lorghalan

d8	Reason
1	**Curiosity.** After growing up on an isolated island, you want to see *everything*. You're delighted by new experiences.
2	**Accident.** You never intended to leave Lorghalan, but an accident involving a Lamannian manifest zone stranded you far from home.
3	**Following the Wind.** You're guided by whispers of elemental spirits. You're not entirely sure what they're trying to tell you, but you need to do *something* far from home.
4	**Servant of the Council.** You're an envoy of the Council of Cornerstone. Are you gathering information about Khorvaire? Seeking allies? Searching for trade opportunities?
5	**Fame.** You deserve to be known and celebrated for your achievements—and one day, you're sure you will be.
6	**The Zil Connection.** You're pursuing a quest tied to your ancient Zil roots. Are you working with the Power of Purity? Trying to reconnect with your Zil family? Investigating a Trust scheme targeting Lorghalan?
7	**Following the Song.** You're working on a song and you need to travel to find your inspiration. Once it's done, you'll return home, but that could take years.
8	**Exile.** You were exiled to the deadlands after committing an unforgivable crime. What did you do? Are you seeking redemption or revenge?

Sea-related backgrounds are excellent choices for any Lorghalan character. Lorghalan pirates are rare, but sailors, fishers, and shipwrights are all common on the isle. If you're an entertainer, you might become the first stonesinger to perform on the stages of the Five Nations. Or as a hermit, you could discover something about Lamannia or elementals—perhaps a terrible secret about the elemental binding industry!

While stonesingers are the most distinct aspect of Lorghalan culture, a Lorghalan gnome could pursue any class. An Alchemist artificer likely makes potions using strange herbs and elemental ores brought from the island. The Lorghali aren't especially religious and don't see an abstract divine hand at work in nature, but a Lorghali paladin could present their Oath of the Ancients as being tied to Lamannia.

Variant Rules

You can play a gnome from Lorghalan using standard rules—but if both DM and player agree, you might enjoy using the following variants instead.

Stonesinger Druids

The stonesingers of Lorghalan aren't druids in the traditional sense. Rather than channeling the power of Eberron, stonesingers channel Lamannia's energies—and they wield this power through song and force of personality rather than faith. Few have the ability to change shape, and they generally don't speak Druidic. You could create a stonesinger druid with one of the following variants:

Druidic Bard: Use the rules for the bard class, but substitute the druid spell list instead of the bard spell list. When picking spells, keep in mind that stonesingers have no particular knack for illusion or enthralling humanoids; they use their songs to charm the elements themselves. The College of Eloquence and the College of Lore are both sound choices for stonesingers.

Primordial Druid: Use the rules for the druid class with the following changes: Stonesingers can learn the Primordial language instead of Druidic, and when choosing class skills, add Performance to the list of options. Shapeshifting stonesingers are rare, but stories tell of those who can sing new shapes and assume elemental forms, so the Circle of the Moon is a reasonable choice.

Variant Gnome: Lorghalan

You can use any gnome statistics when playing a Lorghali character; forest gnomes are common, along with a rare few with the Mark of Scribing. However, Lorghalan gnomes are known more for their charisma than their intellect, and for working with nature as opposed to weaving illusions.

The "Customizing Your Origin" rules from *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* allow you to easily increase your gnome character's Charisma instead of Intelligence. Additionally, if you're using forest gnome statistics, your DM might allow you to replace the Natural Illusionist trait with the following trait:

Song of the Elements. You know the *druidcraft* cantrip. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for it. In addition, you can speak, read, and write Primordial.

Chapter 7: Gnomes of Pylas Pyrial

The Glamerwind River connects the Zil city of Oskilor to the Thunder Sea. Only a few small villages lie along the Glamerwind's banks, but if you choose the right time to sail down it, you may hear ethereal music coming from the Shimmerwood. At night, you might see swarms of glimmering lights dancing among the trees—flights of pixies creating dazzling displays of illusion. And if you abandon your boat to follow, you may stumble upon a vast clearing, and in it, a massive spire of glowing white stone entwined with threads of gleaming gold. This is Pylas Pyrial, the Gate of Joy—a citadel of the Faerie Court, a wonder from Thelanis momentarily in the mortal world.

Gate of Joy

The feyspire of Pylas Pyrial usually rests in the Moonlit Vale of Thelanis, but at certain times, it's drawn into Eberron. Usually this occurs when the moon Rhaan is full, but this alone isn't the determining factor; according to Shan Pyrial, ruler of the spire, "tides of joy" draw her spire to the Material Plane. Even when the feyspire is present on Eberron, it can't always be found; enraptured travelers have wandered in the Shimmerwood for days, trying to follow the music yet never finding it. This is typical of most feyspires—they can be found only by chance, remain hidden from the nations that surround them, and are known only from stories; you can learn more about these citadels in the fourth edition *Eberron Campaign Guide*.

Family Secret

Pylas Pyrial has been known to the gnomes since long before Zilargo was founded, and unusually, the majority of this feyspire's inhabitants are gnomes. Many Korranberg scholars believe that the gnomes of Eberron most likely descended from gnomes who left Pylas Pyrial long ago. This theory explains the natural talents for illusion and wild speech that many gnomes develop, as both of these are common among the gnomes of Pylas Pyrial. But why did these ancient gnomes leave Pylas Pyrial in sufficient numbers to create a beachhead for a new ancestry on Eberron? And why does Shan Pyrial refuse to discuss this exodus? (The "Pyrial Adventures" section suggests possible answers to these mysteries.)

While Pylas Pyrial is known to the Zil, they haven't spread the news of its existence widely. It's generally seen as a family secret among the Zil, told as a story they know is real—but given how sporadically the feyspire appears, one can't ever be sure of finding it. The region of the Shimmerwood surrounding the tower is a powerful Thelanian manifest zone, and people who've tried to clear the forest or build too close to the spire have always suffered disasters. Furthermore, those who come to the spire driven by greed can't pass through its gates. A few villages along the Glamerwind maintain ties with the spire, their people rejoicing when it returns ... and agents of the Trust live in these villages to monitor the tower and make sure the fey don't pose a threat to the nation. But by and large, Pylas Pyrial is allowed to be a wonder. While the feyspire is labeled on maps in *our* Eberron books, the Zil don't mark it on the standard maps they produce; after all, most of the time, it's not there!

Gnomes of Joy

When the Prince of Summer was betrayed by his lover, his heart froze and he became the Prince of Frost. So bitter was he that he tore the sun from the sky, swearing there should be no light in the vale while there was no light in his heart. None of the lords of the court challenged him—some remained silent out of fear, but most found they preferred to live in moonlight. And so the Moon Court found its name. But a gnome who loved to dance under the sun sought a respite from the somber shadows. She went to the prince's palace of frozen tears, but found the doors frozen shut. The clever gnome sang a happy song, and as the notes rose to the sky, she caught them, carrying her to the highest tower. When the prince's servants barred her path, the gnome danced with them and melted their frozen hearts. She found the prince on his glittering throne and begged him to return the sun. In response, the prince challenged the gnome to dance for him, to maintain her high spirits while he spoke of every tragedy of the past and of those yet to come. The prince was certain her heart would freeze as his had, but the gnome held fast to her hope and her light. At last the prince relented, telling her: "You shall be the Prince of Joy, keeper of the Summer Sun. But you must keep the sun within your own tower until all the lords of the Moon Court ask for its return. And you must keep joy bright in your heart, for if it ever fades, the sun will fade with it."

Forest gnomes are generally quick and curious, with a talent for illusions, the ability to speak with small beasts, and a love for life—and so are the gnomes of Pylas Pyrial that they're said to be descended from. In dealing with a Pyrial gnome, imagine they've stepped right out of a folktale—because in a very real sense, they have. These gnomes live in a world defined by storybook logic, one where a good heart and noble intent allow the

reckless hero to overcome those who would do them harm. Some Pyrial gnomes are idealistic, naive, and easily deceived; however, others are far more clever than their enemies expect, affecting trust to convince an enemy to lower their guard. However, even such cunning gnomes are never cruel or driven by selfish goals—for joy is the defining principle of Pylas Pyrial. The spire and its people celebrate life, embracing the brightest moments and pushing through the dark.

Happiest Place in the World?

If this sounds extremely optimistic for the noir-touched world of Eberron, it's because it is. Pylas Pyrial isn't a mortal city, but an *idea*, a story about the happiest place in the world. It's a place where sunlight never fades, always filled with music and laughter. Everyone looks out for each other, concerned as much for the happiness of a neighbor as their own. The gardens always produce a surplus. The golden light of the feyspire's Summer Sun banishes disease. Most of its people have never experienced hardship or bitter loss. Some are artisans, creating the wonders that are part of everyday life in the spire. Some are entertainers, tasked to sing and dance, raising the spirits of those around them. Some lovingly tend the gardens or the kitchens, for in Pylas Pyrial, every day ends with a grand feast and celebration. Regardless of their position, the people of Pylas Pyrial love what they do and love bringing happiness to those around them. If it's hard to imagine how this works, the answer is to not look at it too closely—because again, on a certain level, *it's not real.*

Shan Pyrial: Prince of Joy

Shan Pyrial is the ruler of the Gate of Joy. She appears as a Medium-sized gnome, but in truth, she is the spire itself. She is an immortal archfey, and Pylas Pyrial is her story. As described earlier, her story begins with the gnome who danced for the Prince of Winter and earned the stewardship of the Summer Sun. The spire isn't always a part of her story, but she always keeps a comforting light and offers hope to those fighting despair. Sometimes she's in a cheerful cottage with a warm hearth; sometimes she tends a campfire in the dark woods. Wherever Pyrial appears, she offers hope and a warm cup of tal or cocoa.

In her role as lord of the spire, Shan Pyrial tends the Summer Sun and usually watches the people from the top of the spire. However, she descends if she senses anyone is truly in

need of inspiration. Pyrial warmly listens to adventurers' tales, and while she rarely offers magical assistance, she always offers good advice and common sense. Even in the most trying times, Shan Pyrial can find a path to the light.

As Prince of Joy, Shan Pyrial isn't only immune to fear, she can also banish fear from any creature that can see or hear her. A powerful *sanctuary* aura around her makes it nearly impossible to target her with any harmful effects, and she relies on spells like *calm emotions* and *charm monster* to defuse any combat around her.

Visiting the Spire

Pylas Pyrial typically only appears in Zilargo for a few days each year. Its people welcome guests, but visitors carrying greed, cruelty, or evil intent in their hearts can't pass through the Gate of Joy. This is a trait of the gates themselves, not something its guards can control; generally, the gnomes at the gates talk with those who can't enter, trying to learn what burdens them and help them to find a path to joy. Once within the spire, strangers are celebrated. The people of Pylas Pyrial are always curious to learn more about the Sunlit World (their name for Eberron, in contrast to the Moonlit Vale where the spire spends most of its days). Visitors are encouraged to tell stories or display whatever talents they might possess, and entertainers find an enthusiastic audience. Each day ends with a glorious *heroes' feast*.

The spire itself is a vast hollow cylinder, surprisingly reminiscent of a great tower of Sharn; people live on ledges around the edges, crossed with many platforms and bridges. At a glance, the top of the spire seems to hold the sun itself, but closer examination reveals a golden cage containing a marvelous crystal globe about the size of a wagon wheel. The Pyrials call this the Summer Sun, saying the prince plucked it from the sky in Thelanis.

Throughout the spire, flights of pixies and sprites fill the air. Music is ever-present, yet it can dramatically change from platform to platform. The temperature is perfect, and delightful scents waft in the air ... but both scents and temperature vary to please each person experiencing them. On some platforms, people play games; on others, they dance, dine, or contemplate things of beauty.

Wonders of Pylas Pyrial

During Pylas Pyrial's time in Zilargo, its people trade with local villagers, and it's possible to obtain wonders here; common magic items truly are commonplace, and more powerful items can be obtained. But the Pyrial gnomes have no need of gold and no interest in profit. Seeking things that bring joy, they may be willing to trade a magic item for a fantastic joke or an heirloom that has brought delight to many despite having little monetary value. The gnomes may also trade things in exchange for promises—a promise to spread joy or to help those dwelling in darkness. But visitors should bear in mind that Pylas Pyrial is on the edge of Thelanis, and promises made here carry great weight. While the spire can be a source of wonderful magic items, the creations of Pylas Pyrial can't easily be replicated in the Sunlit World of Eberron; Zil artificers have long tried to reverse engineer these gifts, but the magic woven into them is tied to Thelanis and defies all logical arcane science.

The Trinkets from Pylas Pyrial table inspires wondrous items the adventurers might trade for (or be gifted) in the feyspire; it's also likely that a character from Pylas Pyrial would carry a trinket like these as a memento of home.

Trinkets from Pylas Pyrial

d10	Trinket
1	A pouch of luminescent marbles of various sizes, colored to resemble the moons.
2	A wooden spoon that adds a delightful flavor when placed in porridge—and only porridge.
3	A copper locket containing a painting of a cheerful dog; when held, you hear faint, happy barking in the distance.
4	A battered deck of playing cards depicting archfey on the face cards.
5	A brass key bearing the image of the sun; when held, you remember a happy moment from a sunny day.
6	A perfectly preserved butterfly with wings that slowly and constantly change pattern and color.
7	A small copper rattle that makes a slightly different sound each time you shake it.
8	A well-worn stuffed toy chimera with heads that each make a different sound when squeezed.
9	A brass spinning top in the shape of a dancing pixie.
10	A piece of purple chalk that's restored to its original size at each dawn; if broken, only the largest piece retains this power.

Departing the Spire

Many visitors from the Sunlit World wish to remain forever, but few can. Most find themselves left behind when the spire departs, suddenly standing in the Shimmerwood. Those visitors who do remain within find it easy to be lost in the endless celebration, losing track of time and goals alike. However, those who keep their wits about them can venture out of the feyspire into the Moonlit Vale. In this way, Pylas Pyrial can provide both a passage to Thelanis and a safe haven for adventurers who wish to explore the plane or negotiate with the Moon Court ... but the feyspire needn't be safe at all. If you explore the plots in the "Pyrial Adventures" section, it could instead be a tragic location as its optimistic denizens are forced to deal with harsh reality.

Pyrial Adventures

At a glance, Pylas Pyrial is a magical wonderland, a literal embodiment of joy. Its gates keep out those who come with evil intent, such as greed or cruelty. This has nothing to do with the alignment written on

your character sheet; the Gate of Joy rejects visitors based on their *intent*. For example, an "evil" character could enter if they truly mean no harm to the spire and have no desire to profit from their visit, while a "good" character is barred from entry if they plan to resell the feyspire's magic items for profit. You can't come into the spire if you intend to cause harm, spread sorrow, or to take advantage of the spire or its people; it's about purity of purpose, not just alignment.

Though would-be visitors can't cross the feyspire's threshold with evil intent, it's still possible to challenge the joy of Pylas Pyrial. Consider these ideas if you'd like to introduce some trouble in paradise:

Hidden Serpents. Powerful magic prevents those with evil intent from entering Pylas Pyrial, but that magic isn't impervious. Some evil force could have taken root inside the citadel, possibly in the form of rival fey: the Prince of Frost may still yearn to see Shan Pyrial thrown into despair, and his agents could try to trick adventurers into being their tools. Perhaps a rogue dragon has plans for the tower. Perhaps the Trust has managed to get a foothold, not realizing their malign intentions could poison the spire itself. Or perhaps someone seeks to steal the feyspire's Summer Sun; if someone removed this artifact, the spire could be doomed without its power source.

Secret History. Did the first gnomes come to Eberron through Pylas Pyrial? A Korranberg scholar intends to get to the bottom of this mystery, and they hire the adventurers to help with the investigation. But why is Shan Pyrial determined to hide the truth? Why would the gnomes of the past choose to leave the Gate of Joy? Were they driven from the feyspire by a bitter feud? Could it be that they were pawns in a terrible bargain, perhaps a deal with the overlord Tul Oreshka—that in order for the feyspire to endure in joy, some of its people had to be sacrificed to live out their lives in the misery of the mortal world? Or is the reverse true—that the first gnomes of Pylas Pyrial were kidnapped from the Material Plane? Some questions may be best left unanswered ...

Stranded on Eberron. The *Eberron Campaign Guide* suggests that a number of feyspires have been trapped on Eberron since the Mourning. The cataclysm also stripped the towers of the defenses that kept them hidden—possibly destroying the enchantments that kept those of evil intent from entering the spire. In the past, the people of Pylas Pyrial knew that visitors had good intent and would only remain for a few days, but now the spire is trapped, possibly forever. And the longer it remains, the more its fairytale magic may also begin to fade. What will its people do if their gardens begin to fade and they don't have enough food for their endless feasts? Can hope sustain the Gate of Joy even without magic? Will they join the Triumvirate—and if so, will they accept the Trust or defy it?

Wounded in War. During the Last War, Aundair launched a sneak attack against Zilargo, targeting a facility in the Shimmerwood that was producing alchemical weapons for Breland. This force—including ground troops, siege staffs, and a team of bombardiers on skystaffs—successfully made it up the Glamerwind, but mistook Pylas Pyrial for the target. The spire withstood the fierce siege, but it sustained damage before it disappeared, and several residents of the spire who'd been wandering in the woods were left behind in Zilargo. Shan Pyrial was injured in this attack and her wound won't heal. Some fear the vision of war has marred her joy—should that fade entirely, the tower will crumble, and perhaps the sun itself will be extinguished. Has the spire remained in the Moonlit Vale since this attack? Or if it has returned to Eberron, do its inhabitants refuse to open the gates?

Pylas Pyrial and the Trust

Most Zil assume the Trust has infiltrated Pylas Pyrial, though doing so wouldn't be a simple matter; agents have to get past the gate without evil intent. It's possible agents who just want to protect Zilargo have entered the spire to observe it—after all, protecting Zilargo is the Trust's mission—but agents who hoped to steal the power of the spire or profit from it would be barred from entry. Complicating the Trust's clandestine efforts, they can't be sure their agents would remain with the spire when it returns to Thelanis; they could easily be left behind in the Shimmerwood. And those agents who *are* taken with the spire risk being swept up in the spire's infectious joy; many would-be spies have likely forgotten their original missions entirely.

Regardless of whether the Trust has agents inside Pylas Pyrial, they certainly monitor the feyspire from the outside and have agents in surrounding Glamerwind villages. So a player character who obtains a remarkable Pyrial magic item or has other unusual dealings with the spire could be intercepted by Trust agents after leaving Pylas Pyrial.

Pyrial Characters

While gnomes make up a significant portion of the feyspire's population, characters don't have to be gnomes to have a connection to Pylas Pyrial. The spire is also home to eladrin and a wide range of fey. Beyond that, a bard or warlock could be drawn to the spire and go with it to Thelanis, learning their skills from fey mentors or patrons. Regardless of heritage or class, keep the following ideas in mind when creating characters associated with Pylas Pyrial.

Pyrial Names

Unlike the gnomes of Zilargo, who have naming conventions involving house and family, Pylas Pyrial names follow no discernible system. The feyspire has a very small population, and its residents are more likely to have names like "Big Halan" (because there are only two Halans and he's the big one) or "Jala the

Butcher's Daughter." This compounds the chicken and egg mystery of whether Zil gnomes were originally immigrants from (or to) the feyspire, as they can't use names to trace their family lines.

Hopeful Characters

Pyrial gnomes are defined by their optimism and fey worldview. While they understand that evil and greedy people exist—most stories have a villain, after all—they cling to hope and believe the world is a place of wonder and joy. Even when outwitting or battling a foe, a Pyrial gnome is never cruel. They're deeply disturbed by selfish and vicious behavior from those they consider friends, though they may try to draw such friends to a brighter path rather than simply abandoning them.

This all stems from Pyrial gnomes being accustomed to a world that meets their expectations—but the longer they dwell in the Sunlit World, the more they must come to terms with life's cruelty and suffering. The question is whether hope and optimism will prove stronger than despair, or whether the gnome will be broken by the misery of the mortal world. A Pyrial gnome who's been overcome by despair could serve as an interesting villain, as they seek to steal the hopes of others.

Storybook Characters

Pyrial gnomes carry a touch of Thelanis with them. They're used to operating under storybook logic ... and mysteriously, that logic often continues to work even beyond their spire. This is especially relevant with Pyrial artificers, who likely use the approach *Exploring Eberron* describes as "Magical Thinking." Such an Alchemist might use cook's utensils as a spellcasting focus, producing baked goods with magical effects (have you ever seen someone killed by a *catapult* pie?). An Artillerist might use painter's tools to paint *firebolts* that become real. An artificer who lives on the streets might even use tinker's tools to create things out of garbage—things that logically shouldn't work, yet somehow do.

While artificers are an obvious example of this, Pyrial gnomes can follow many other paths. The gnomes of Pylas Pyrial are gifted illusionists; though they generally use magic to entertain others, not harm them, a Pyrial illusionist will happily use their magic to trick those who would harm others. A rogue can describe their class abilities as being tied to remarkable luck—perhaps they stood in the perfect place, or an enemy stumbling, or other unusual coincidences that tell the story of the lucky gnome. Alternatively, a Pyrial gnome could easily be an Archfey warlock—especially if they're following the path of the Agent of Joy. Regardless of which class you pick, the Pyrial gnome provides an opportunity to play a character who's literally out of this world—someone who stepped out of a fairy tale and expects the world to act like one.

Reason for Adventuring

In creating a character from Pylas Pyrial, you'll want to decide why you've left the Gate of Joy to walk the decidedly unjoyful world. Consider these possibilities ...

Agent of Joy. Shan Pyrial has charged you with a mission vital to the safety of the spire. If your game follows the "Wounded in War" plotline, you could be searching for a way to cure the wounded shan. If you're "Stranded on Eberron," you might be trying to return your home to Thelanis ... perhaps by unraveling the mystery of the Mourning itself. Alternatively, you could be trying to recover a treasure stolen from the spire by some clever mortal. How urgent is your quest—is it the driving force of the campaign, or do you have time to explore the world and pursue other quests while you keep your eyes open?

Curiosity. You're that storybook hero whose curiosity draws them into endless danger. You've always been fascinated by the Sunlit World and chose to leave the spire of your own free will. You may have a particular mystery you want to see or solve—Have tea with a dragon! Find a stolen fey artifact! Meet every monarch in the world!—or you may have no agenda at all, merely trusting the road to lead you where you need to go.

War Orphan. Following the "Wounded in War" plotline, you could've been stranded on Eberron during the siege of Pylas Pyrial. You might've fled from Aundairian forces, or even been captured and taken back to Aundair as a prisoner. Or perhaps you were just a child when you were stranded; though you grew up as an urchin, you faintly remember the Gate of Joy, and you still can weave its storybook logic into your spells or class features. You may hope to return to Pylas Pyrial, but you've realized something's keeping the spire from returning to Thelanis. Can you maintain your optimism even in the face of unrelenting adversity?

Pyrial Gnomes: Humanoid or Fey?

What type of creatures are the gnomes of Pylas Pyrial? Well, the answer depends on where they are! Mortal denizens of Thelanis become more mortal when they leave it—so it stands to reason that Pyrial gnomes would be Fey while they're in the feyspire, but when they leave to walk the Sunlit World, they use the standard traits of Humanoid gnomes.

As far as their languages go: in my campaign, Pyrial gnomes speak Sylvan and Common, and Sylvan is closely related to Elvish. Sylvan speakers and Elvish speakers can understand one another, but depth and detail may be lost.

Chapter 8: The Dark Six

Across the Five Nations, people lift their voices to sing the praises of the nine Sovereigns and to curse the Dark Six. Vassal priests say the Sovereigns are always with us, always ready to offer their guidance. Onatar steadies the hand of the smith, Dol Dorn offers courage to the soldier, Aureon gives insight to the sage. According to the priests, all that is good flows from the Sovereigns. But all is not good in the world ... and the Vassal priests place the blame for all evil at the feet of the Dark Six. Just as the Sovereigns are always ready to guide us, the Dark Six are always with us, forever playing on our darkest impulses. The Keeper fuels our greed, whispering to us of the things that could and should be ours. The Mockery urges us to be cruel, telling us that the only path to victory is to abandon honor and mercy. The Fury overwhelms us with anger and passion. Where the Sovereigns lift us up, the Shadow seeks to pull us down into the darkness.

These are the stories told by Vassal priests in the temples of Five Nations. But it's not the only way to see the Dark Six. This chapter explores the Dark Six from various perspectives, expanding on the information presented in chapter 3 of *Exploring Eberron*. Faithful adherents of the Dark Six can be fascinating enemies, allies, or even player characters; keep in mind that people who honor one of these deities aren't necessarily evil or cruel. At the end of this chapter, you'll find new character options linked to the Dark Six. This includes three new subclasses: the College of the Fury bard, the Aspiration domain cleric, and the Dark Petitioner rogue. This section also includes a feat and five Metamagic options reflecting forbidden magic of the Shadow, along with six new spells—one for each of the Six.

The Cazhaak Faith

The Sovereigns and Six can be found in countless cultures throughout history, and every interpretation has its own unique elements. It's never been a monolithic faith, even within the Five Nations; a Boromar enforcer in Sharn might whisper a prayer to Bally-Nur when starting a hunt, instead of praying to the more common Balinor. However, most Vassals of the Five Nations follow the Pyrinean Creed—a form of the faith that arose in the old Sarlonan nation of Pyrine, and that was carried to Khorvaire when humans settled the land.

Due to the influence of the Pyrinean Creed, the people of the Five Nations largely condemn the Dark Six as forces of evil. Those who respect or revere the Six do so in secret, whether alone or in cults like the Three Faces. However, beyond the Five Nations, there are places where the Dark Six are openly celebrated. These traditions often cast the Six as embodying primal forces of the world—frightening, perhaps, but the storm is as much a part of the world as the gentle rain.

Droaam is one such place where the Six are revered openly. This young nation's tapestry has been woven together from wildly diverse cultures, many of which have their own unique and ancient traditions. The Last Dirge harpies worship the Fury, asserting that she was born from Eberron's cry in birthing the world. Meanwhile, the minotaurs worship the Horned King (a title usually associated with the fiendish overlord Tol Kharash), but interpretations vary; depending on the clan, the minotaurs are effectively worshiping the Mockery, Dol Dorn, or Dol Arrah. However, following the recent unification of Droaam, the traditions of Cazhaak Draal have effectively become the state religion. People still hold to their own traditions, but the Voices of the Shadow—typically medusas or oni—are recognized as spiritual authorities.

LAURA HIRSBRUNNER

In the Cazhaak faith, all members of the Dark Six are worshiped by their common titles (the Shadow, the Fury, the Keeper, the Mockery, the Devourer, the Traveler) ... though usually in Goblin. While the Cazhaak Six are seen in a more positive light than the Pyrinean Six, they still embody the same core ideas; it's simply that the values of Droaamite civilization are very different from those of the Five Nations, so the Six are seen as positive forces for civilization. In Droaam, there's no distinction between vengeance and justice, and victory in battle is more important than honor. It's a meritocracy where having the talent to take power is more important than following a system of laws. Meanwhile, the Sovereigns are seen as the cruel and petty gods of the people of the East. The general Cazhaak assertion is that the Sovereigns want to keep their subjects small and weak, but the Shadow rebelled and broke free from Aureon, giving gifts to its creations. So while a Vassal farmer might make a sacrifice to the Devourer to ward off a storm, followers of the Cazhaak faith never call on the nine Sovereigns.

There are many different ways to invoke the Dark Six, but the Cazhaak faith has the widest reach and provides a strong general foundation. Its perspective is presented throughout this chapter.

Cazhaak Priests

Most Cazhaak priests are devoted to a single deity and lead or provide services tied to that god—for example, in Graywall, a priestess of the Keeper performs funerary services. However, a Voice of the Shadow (discussed in "The Shadow") reveres all members of the Six and invokes them when appropriate.

The Cazhaak faith is the dominant faith of Droaam, but other traditions—the Horned King, the First Song, and others—are allowed to flourish. Graywall's Street of Shadows includes a host of shrines and idols to various obscure sects. The Daughters haven't sought to stamp out these traditions, but they also won't condone any actions that threaten the good of a city or of the nation. Regardless of an individual Droaamite's beliefs, those who don't adhere to the Cazhaak faith are usually familiar with its ideas; a harpy who sings to the First Song still treats a Voice of the Shadow with respect.

Even beyond Droaam, Pyrinean and Cazhaak priests know of each other's rival faiths; they don't typically seek to directly silence or harm their counterparts, but each asserts that the other's interpretation is flawed. The Voice of the Shadow pities the fool who worships Aureon—"how good can your god be, when he didn't even give you eyes that can see in the dark?" Meanwhile, the Sovereign priest dismisses the Shadow-worshiper as a servant of the Tempter, both deceiver and deceived. So it's possible for a Cazhaak cleric to visit Sharn, or even to be in the same party of adventurers as a Vassal paladin ... but while they may not come to blows, each likely thinks the other is a fool.

MATTHEW JOHNSON

The Devourer

In the dawn of time, the Sovereigns of the natural world chose to share their gifts with mortals, teaching us to harness the natural world. Arawai instructed the first farmers, woodworkers, and herbalists, while Balinor demonstrated how to hunt game and work with horse and hound. Together, Arawai and Balinor sought to lift us up, but another sought to tear us down. The Devourer despised the first people and their civilization, seeing them only as prey. This struggle continues to this day. Arawai showed us how to harness the wind for sail and mill, while the Devourer sends winds that snap masts and shatters buildings. Kol Korran taught us to build ships, while the Devourer delights in sinking them. Onatar showed us how to harness fire, while the Devourer smiles when the uncontrolled flame engulfs a city. The Sovereigns guide us when we work with nature—but we must always be careful and cautious, for the Devourer is ever ready to bring the power of the wilds down upon us.

—Phthaso Mogan, High Priest of Sharn

You humans see the wilds as a thing that must be tamed. You fight it, caging it in your fields and binding it with leash and chain. We embrace the storm, running with the wind and dancing through the fire. We know flame paves the way for new growth, and culling the weak strengthens the pack. You fear the Devourer; we **are** *the Devourer.*

—Khaar'kala of the Great Pack

Exploring Eberron describes the Devourer as "the tsunami that overwhelms the tallest ship, the wildfire that consumes the grandest castle, the earthquake that levels the most glorious city. He is the vast and

primordial power of nature, a force that will break any chain and wear down the strongest wall. The Devourer is the glorious cruelty that drives the predator, the cry of the hawk and the howl of the wolf. He is all that is wild, savage, and unknowable. He is the deepest ocean, a force that can be crossed but never controlled."

Arawai and Balinor embody mortal dominion over the natural world; Arawai grants power over flora, while Balinor grants power over fauna. But the Devourer reminds us that the wild can never be truly bound. We must never grow too arrogant or complacent; we must never forget to respect the power of nature. Because if we do, the Devourer will be there with wind, with flame, with tooth and claw.

Nature's Wrath

As shown in this section's opening quote from Phthaso Mogan, the Pyrinean Creed asserts that the Sovereigns showed their earliest Vassals how to control the natural world. Arawai guides those who harvest, while Balinor guides those who hunt, both reflecting our power to impose our will on nature. Through this lens, the Devourer reflects that we can't ever fully control nature and its disasters and tragedies. It's the Devourer who sinks ships and levels villages with wildfires and hurricanes. It's the Devourer who guides the wolves who prey on our sheep.

Under the Pyrinean Creed, there is no benevolent aspect to the Devourer. The Devourer, Arawai, and Balinor are differentiated by the outcome, not by the tool that produces that outcome. It's common for Vassals to associate Arawai with gentle rains and the Devourer with scouring storms—but if overabundant gentle rains cause devastating floods, they're a tool of the Devourer, and if a region relies on monsoons to irrigate land, Vassals see those nurturing storms as gifts of Arawai. A shepherd curses predatory wolves as teeth of the Devourer, but they might well guard their flock using a magebred wolf domesticated by House Vadalis; whether a wolf is associated with Balinor or the Devourer depends on the outcome of interacting with it.

Though this view attributes nothing benevolent to the Devourer, he's still part of everyday Vassal life and faith. The farmer who thanks Arawai for her guidance equally fears the Devourer's wrath, and Vassals who regularly deal with dangerous natural forces often make placatory offerings to the Devourer. A common Vassal saying is that "the Devourer will have his due." If you benefit from the natural world, the Devourer eventually comes to even the scales—but if you make an offer willingly, he may accept it and pass you by. Vassals typically burn a fraction of the yield after a harvest; skeptics simply burn the dross, while the devout base the burn on their own prosperity and what they have to lose. Vassal sailors trust Kol Korran to guide them, but many also cultivate a relationship with the Devourer and make an offering when their vessel reaches deep water. This offering could be anything from a single crown to a lock of hair, a poem, or something more precious; it depends on the perceived danger of the voyage and where they feel they stand with the Lord of the Depths. Again, there is no thought of benevolence here. Many sailors essentially view it as playing poker with a deadly opponent—how well do you know your enemy and what can you get away with on this voyage? Though this superstition is common, some captains won't abide it on their ships; they may assert it's a foolish waste of resources, or simply believe that making offerings to the Devourer is more likely to draw his attention than placate him.

Vassal Champions of the Devourer

Beyond the Three Faces and placatory offerings, there's little worship of the Devourer within the Five Nations; he's a force to be feared and placated, not idolized. As a result, champions of the Devourer are rare, remarkable, and often dangerous.

The Storm Herald. On rare occasions, wandering priests of the Devourer travel through agricultural regions. When such a Storm Herald comes to a community, they call together the Vassals and have them organize a communal feast. At this feast, the Herald calls on people to discuss their profit and loss, the blessings they've received from the Sovereigns, and what is owed to the Devourer. Sacrifices are made both through the feast itself and through additional burnt offerings at the feast. In so doing, the community hopes the Storm Herald helps them buy a period of prosperity, carrying disaster away when the herald leaves. Storm Heralds are extremely rare, mainly known through stories. Some of these tales depict them as good people who are truly trying to help innocents avoid disaster, while others tell of extortionists running supernatural protection rackets—"unless I'm satisfied, there *will* be a disaster."

The Lightning Rod. Typically only encountered in stories or plays, the lightning rod is a figure blessed or cursed by the Devourer. Wherever they go, they draw disaster, and are constantly plagued by predators, bad weather, spontaneous fires, and other minor phenomena. The longer they stay in one place, the worse these manifestations get. In stories, some lightning rods manage to weaponize this effect, becoming Storm sorcerers or Ancients paladins—but even these champions need to keep moving, lest the disasters that dog their heels destroy the people they care about.

The Zealot. Zealots of the Devourer are extremists who wield supernatural power and who despise civilization and industry. A typical zealot becomes infuriated by a particular manifestation of civilization—a new Tharashk mine, a Vadalis ranch, a lightning rail line driving across their field, or even just local farmers cutting down a tranquil grove—and their intense devotion to their target's destruction unlocks divine power. Devourer zealots generally have more in common with cults of the Dragon Below than with druidic sects; if they band together with fellow zealots or accumulate followers, such a sect typically lacks organization or deep tradition. Should a zealot achieve their goal, they might snap out of that obsession and return to normal

life ... or they might latch onto a new and even greater obsession—having destroyed the Orien ranch near their village, they're now determined to destroy the house enclave in the nearby city, continually escalating until they finally fall in battle. While zealots can be tied to the Three Faces of the Wild, they're characterized by their ever-growing obsession with destroying their target and the degree of supernatural power they wield; a Three Faces sect might try to negotiate with an environmental offender or to otherwise find a peaceful solution, while a zealot sees themself as the vengeful hand of the wild.

Nature and Tempest

Champions of the Devourer can take many forms. One zealot might have the gift of wild shape and run with a pack of wolves—drawing on the Moon druid for inspiration—while another might be more like a Storm sorcerer, wielding *shocking grasp* and *lightning bolt*s. But what's the difference between a druid, cleric, or paladin of the Devourer, versus one devoted to Arawai (or Balinor)?

Remember that the Devourer isn't the Sovereign of Storms; he's the Sovereign of the destructive power of nature, while Arawai is nature harnessed in the service of civilization. As such, their followers could wield very similar divine magic, but with a different *feeling* and to a different end. For example, a servant of Arawai could smite an enemy with lightning or unleash a tidal wave, but for them, this is no different from the ability to plant a seed or to harness an ox to a plow; they've been granted dominion over nature as a tool to serve the greater good. Such a character is typically calm—even serene—when using their powers, and they strive to minimize collateral damage. On the other hand, the champion of the Devourer teaches us that nature cannot be controlled. They revel in the wild and primal nature of the powers that flow through them and make no effort to avoid collateral damage; after all, they were granted these powers to make people fear the power of nature.

So even if two clerics are casting the exact same spell, it should feel different depending on whether it's tied to Arawai or to the Devourer. Arawai's *lightning bolt* is focused and precise, while the Devourer's is wild and intimidating, as if the caster is barely in control of the bolt. Keep in mind that the spells wielded by player characters don't have to reflect the absolute limits of mystical power. It's possible that an NPC Storm Herald can curse a community with a promise of a devastating hurricane—and follow through on the threat. Similarly, the death of a champion of the Devourer might trigger a devastating flash flood. Neither of these effects have the precision or speed of *control weather* or *tidal wave* ... but that very unpredictability is what makes them interesting. If a DM and player agree, it's possible that even a player character who's tied to the Devourer could be a lightning rod, drawing disasters wherever they go unless they ensure that the people around them make sufficient sacrifices.

Primal Power

In Droaam, nature has a single face, and it's both beautiful and cruel. Ghaal'gantii—the Devourer—speaks through the storms that lash the land, through the fangs of the worg, through the stone beneath the hands of the medusa. This isn't a tradition of shepherds; it's the faith of the wolves. There's no need to split the roles of hunter and predator, and no interest in a deity to bless the harvest; outside of the Gaa'ran orcs, widespread agriculture is all but unknown. The Devourer embodies a view of a world that's red in tooth and claw. He is the hunger that drives us to survive, but he places deadly obstacles in our way; those who overcome the challenges of the Devourer grow strong and prosper, while the weak are swept away to make room for the strong.

For most who follow the Cazhaak faith, the Devourer is a force to be endured rather than celebrated. He'll test you with a hurricane or a wildfire, lash you with thorns, and his hand is in the deadly currents of the rapids. You can certainly offer a prayer or a sacrifice, but what he wants is your strength. Survival isn't something he gives in exchange for a paltry offering; he has already given you tooth and claw, and he wants you to use them. Because of this, many peoples of Droaam acknowledge the Devourer, but they rarely invoke him or make offerings as the Vassals do.

The worgs and the lycanthropes of the Great Pack—the purest predators of the region—are a notable exception to this. They call on the Devourer to sharpen their senses and their fangs, not as a petition, but an offer: "join me in my hunt, that you may share my joy in victory." The Cazhaak Devourer has no need of weaklings who require his aid to survive; but a worthy hunter can draw his eye and his favor, and their only sacrifice need be the kill itself. These devotees are often equally devoted to the Fury; the Devourer is a source of physical strength, while the Fury is the source of instinct; both are important to the hunting worg.

Beyond the predators, the Devourer also draws prayers from those who work with natural resources. Large-scale agriculture may be uncommon, but medusa stoneworkers and kobold apothecaries thank the Devourer for nature's bounty. Even here, though, the tone is different from the thanks offered by the Vassal priests of Arawai. The Cazhaak faithful know that the Devourer gives nothing; he only offers you the chance to take it. Essentially, the Devourer puts the "hunt" in "hunter-gatherer." Whether you're an apothecary looking for bloodroot or a sculptor seeking the perfect place to strike the stone, you face a challenge; the Devourer will sharpen your eyes and give you the hunger to succeed, but you must still fight for your victory. The people of Droaam don't sail, but if they did, they would scoff at the placatory offerings of Vassal sailors. If the Devourer chooses to challenge you with a storm, he will; you honor him and earn his favor by facing that challenge without fear and surviving it. What the Devourer wants from you is strength and skill, not trinkets tossed in the water.

Cazhaak Champions of the Devourer

Just as Vassal priests can perform services of all of the Sovereigns, a Cazhaak priestess of the Shadow can offer thanks to the Devourer. However, it's rare to find a singularly devoted priest of the Devourer in a temple in Droaam—he has little interest in cities and buildings, and his most devoted priests are the worgs running with their pack and the harpies singing high on storm-wreathed peaks. Here are a few examples of devoted Cazhaak champions of the Devourer.

The Huntmaster. Within the Great Pack—an alliance of worgs, lycanthropes, and other predators—Huntmasters serve as equal parts bard and priest, inspiring their comrades with wolfsong and guiding them on the hunter's path.

The Stormsinger. While Huntmasters focus on the hunt, the Stormsinger embraces the furious power of hurricane and storm. Most Stormsingers are harpies, devoted equally to the Fury and to the Devourer. They dance through the winds, delighting in the deadly play of lightning. Stormsingers are ecstatic mystics who praise the Six through song and flight, but they can also call down lightning on enemies in battle, or even draw away a storm, luring it with their songs.

The Stoneshaper. Medusa architects known as Stoneshapers invoke the Shadow and the Devourer. They thank the Shadow for weaving stone into their blood and showing them the secrets of working it, while they thank the Devourer for the raw gift of stone itself. Stoneshapers are specialized adepts capable of producing effects like *stone shape, mold earth,* and *meld into stone*.

The Wolfchild. Goblins and kobolds have long been oppressed in the Barrens of Droaam, dismissed as small and weak by the ogres, trolls, and their kin. But there have always been those whose fury and determination to bring down their enemies—no matter their size—has drawn the favor of the Devourer and unlocked the predator within them. Known as the Gaa'taarka, these small champions develop the gift of wild shape. While they are most often associated with wolf form, they aren't limited to it; for example, some Gaa'taarka prefer to scout as hawks or fight as bears. The Gaa'taarka are broadly similar to Moon druids (and you could use that subclass to play a Wolfchild character), but most don't possess the full spellcasting abilities of a druid. Those that can cast spells typically possess magic tied to working with beasts—*beast sense, speak with animals,* and similar spells. In the past, Wolfchildren have often served as champions defending their kin from would-be oppressors. In the present, several Gaa'taarka have joined the Great Pack, while others serve with Maenya's Fist. Technically, any devoted creature could become a Gaa'taarka, but their gift is still primarily associated with goblins and kobolds, hence their being described as "children."

Many Faces of the Devourer

More than any other Sovereign, the interpretation of the Devourer varies dramatically from culture to culture, driven by the relationship of culture and ancestry to the natural world. The Pyrinean interpretation of the Devourer reflects a fundamental fear of the untamed wild, while the sahuagin Sha'argon is the paragon of a culture of carnivores who believe the strong should consume the weak. The Church of the Wyrm Ascendant depicts the Devourer as a dragon turtle while Arawai and Boldrei are traditional dragons; this reflects the fact that the Sovereigns walk among humanoids and guide them, while the Devourer lurks in bitter isolation in the deepest water, sinking ships and lashing the land with hurricanes. Ultimately, a culture's perspective on the Devourer depends on whether they fear nature's wrath or seek to embrace primal power. Here are a few examples:

Rowa of the Jungle Leaves is revered in Xen'drik by the giants of Rushemé, and her worship incorporates aspects of both Arawai, the Fury, and the Devourer. According to *City of Stormreach,* Rowa is "the goddess of life and nature. Rowa is much beloved, but she is given to fits of passion that can drive her into a rage. As a result, storms, wildfires, and other natural disasters are attributed to 'Rowa's wrath.'"

Shargon the Devourer is acknowledged by the Three Faces of the Wild as the primal force of untamed nature, as discussed in the following section. This Three Faces cult believes that Shargon commands balance between the wild forces of the world and the order civilization brings—and that Shargon must be given his due, or he will take it.

Sha'argon is honored by the sahuagin of the Eternal Dominion. They say he began as a mortal hunter who stalked, killed, and devoured the sahuagin interpretations of Arawai and Balinor, thus claiming dominion over nature. This vision of the Devourer is even more ruthless than his Cazhaak counterpart. The sahuagin razh'ash teach that Sha'argon "sets the laws of the world, and they are cruel. Life is an endless struggle. The weak will perish in the storm or be consumed by the mighty. Those with cunning and courage can conquer the world itself, and the victor has the right to devour their vanquished foe."

There's no limit to the number of sects that might be out there, each with its own unique interpretation of the Devourer. This diversity of tradition sparks countless perspectives on the relationship between the Devourer, Arawai, and the Fury. A Pyrinean myth suggests the Fury is the child of Arawai and the Devourer—a metaphor reflecting the anguish born when a terrible storm destroys a long-awaited harvest. On the other hand, the Rushemé faith conflates the three into a single deity, while a Droaamite myth asserts that the Fury was born of Eberron's cry of pain when she brought life into being. Priests create myths about the Sovereigns as a way to teach lessons, and those myths vary based on the culture that creates them and the lessons they're passing on.

Three Faces of the Wild

The Three Faces of the Wild is a mystery cult within the Five Nations. Much like its counterparts in other Three Faces cults, it honors members of both Sovereigns and Six: in this case, Arawai, Boldrei, and Shargon (the Devourer). While they acknowledge Shargon as the primal force of untamed nature, he's not considered malevolent: Shargon commands us to respect nature and to maintain the balance between nature and civilization ... and should we forget, or disrupt the balance due to greed or ignorance, he will lash out and remind us of nature's might. A destructive hurricane may be punishment for foolishness, but it can also just be a reminder of the power of nature, one we would do well to respect.

Followers of the Three Faces of the Wild embrace agriculture and animal husbandry, but also assert that the wilds must be respected and preserved. Adherents generally seek balance between civilization and nature, not unlike the Wardens of the Wood. They practice free-range grazing and low-impact farming, opposing any techniques or industrial advances that they see as causing lasting harm to the world. As a result, there have been clashes between these sects and House Vadalis or House Cannith enclaves, as well as opposition to mundane damming and logging operations. While outright violence is rare, this is still a potential source of ecological conflict in the heart of the Five Nations, far from the Eldeen Reaches and the Ashbound.

Three Faces Cults: Secret Societies?

Alongside the Pyrinean Creed's traditional views on the Sovereign Host, several mystery cults exist throughout Khorvaire that honor the Sovereigns and Six alike. These secretive Three Faces sects each honor a member of the Six alongside two Sovereigns. Initiates believe that those three all reflect different faces of the same concept—such as Coin, Love, War, or Wild—and thus all three should be honored. These cults offer not only faith, but also fraternity, serving as secret societies even to members who are disinterested in the religious aspects. But are these "secret" societies truly secret? For example, Karrn himself is said to have been a member of the Three Faces of War, so why can't Karrnathi soldiers openly declare themselves to be following in his footsteps?

The reason for secrecy isn't about fear of dangerous persecution. The Three Faces honor a member of the Dark Six, yes, but in balance with two members of the Host; they are often more devout than most common Vassals. There have been a few points in history when the Three Faces have been persecuted as heretics, but in the present day, the templars and the paladins of Dol Arrah know the Three Faces aren't a threat.

As a member of the sect, you don't announce it because only those who have been initiated into its mysteries understand it, and only they *deserve* to know about it. Initiates understand the context of why they accept their chosen member of the Six as worthy of veneration—but they know that those who don't understand the mysteries will not. So, the first rule of the Three Faces is that *you don't talk about the Three Faces.*

House Lyrandar: The Kraken's Brood

According to House Lyrandar doctrine, the Mark of Storms is a blessing granted by Arawai and Kol Korran, a gift to help the Khoravar prosper. However, a sect within the house holds more sinister beliefs. These cultists claim that their mark is a gift of the Devourer, and that it's intended to be used as a weapon. These Lyrandar believe the Khoravar are meant to assert their dominion over Khorvaire with hurricanes and lightning.

The sect calls themselves the Kraekovar—the Kraken's Brood—and claim that their greatest visionaries have become krakens who dwell in the deepest waters and guide their followers through visions. Kraekovar heirs learn to use their dragonmarks in unusual and destructive ways with a specialization in lightning. While the Kraekovar believe their power ultimately flows from the Devourer, they don't share any common cause with the Three Faces of the Wild or with zealots. They are loyal to their own elders—whom they believe to be immortal krakens—and to their vision of a nation ruled by Khoravar storm kings.

Other Lyrandar heirs assert that the abilities of the Kraekovar represent a fundamental corruption of the dragonmark, as the mark isn't meant to be used as a weapon, and they believe this corruption drives the Kraekovar to sociopathic behavior.

Using the Devourer

One of the simplest ways to bring the Devourer into your campaign is to talk about the weather. It's an important part of everyday life, but often ignored in adventures—and the sourcebooks don't go into much detail about what weather to expect in different parts of Khorvaire, so to some degree, you're on your own here. But if you regularly mention the gloomy rains of Sharn, you lay the groundwork for the slowly building threat of a hurricane that somehow resists the power of the Raincaller's Guild. Is a group of Devourer zealots responsible for this threat? Is it the work of the Kraken's Brood (in which case the Raincaller's Guild may have been sabotaged from within)? Can the adventurers find a Storm Herald, and if they do, what'll the herald want in return? A storm at sea, a wildfire threatening an adventurer's home village ... when these moments come, will the adventurers embrace superstition and make an offering to the Devourer, or will they spit in the eye of the storm?

Followers of the Devourer provide an easy source of villains. Zealots can always turn up to shatter cities or strike at the dragonmarked houses. The Kraken's Brood uses primal force in their pursuit of power. A Droaamite worg may honor the Devourer by hunting the most dangerous prey—and they've set their sights on one of the player characters. On the other hand, champions of the Devourer don't have to be enemies. A medusa Stoneshaper could prove an invaluable ally when adventurers are trying to get into a collapsed

mine. The Three Faces of the Wild could draw attention to industrial activities that truly threaten a local community. A Droaamite Huntmaster could adopt the adventurers as their temporary pack and guide the party through a dangerous region. Adherents of the Devourer can also just be mysterious—if the adventurers have business in a small community, a Storm Herald could arrive and call for the Devourer's Feast. They say this innocent action will help to protect the village from disaster. Will the adventurers help organize the feast, or will they oppose the herald—and if so, will disaster indeed strike?

Player Characters

Those who honor the Devourer can serve not only as allies, but as compelling player characters. The earlier sections contain many themes that can inspire a character tied to the Devourer. Here are a few more ideas:

Druid. An urban druid might be devoted to the Three Faces of the Wild; or if you're a goblin or kobold, you might play one of the Gaa'taarka as a Moon druid. Have you been sent out on a mission from the Daughters of Sora Kell, or are you just following your instincts?

Sorcerer. A Storm sorcerer could be a lightning rod, both cursed and blessed by the Devourer; you have power over lightning and wind, but if you stay in one place for too long, disaster follows. Can you find a way to lift this curse ... and if you do, will you lose your gifts as well?

Warlock. As a Lyrandar Fathomless warlock, you might've been raised in the Kraekovar cult; have you turned against the Kraken's Brood, or are you trying to oppose its corruption from within the system?

The Fury

When I found my lover murdered, I gave myself to the Fury. I don't remember the rest of the night. But I regret nothing, and I thank the Dark Lady that justice was done.

—Lady Cyra ir'Tain, at her trial

You know what you want to do. You know what you need to do. But you bury your heart with your fears and your logic and your laws. You are afraid to be what you truly are, to take the path that comes without thinking. Follow it now. Think no more. Feel and act.

—Sarvus'kor, kobold priestess

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Exploring Eberron describes the Fury as "a silent whisper that can drive you to doubt or despair. She is reckless rage and all-consuming passion. Instinct is the voice of the Fury, guiding us when rational thought fails. And she is the Sovereign of revenge, promising vengeance to those willing to surrender to her. Her father the Devourer embodies the devastating power of the storm outside us; the Fury is the storm that rages within us, the wild emotions we fight to control."

As with all the Dark Six, Vassals who worship the Sovereign Host acknowledge the Fury. To them, she's the source of any unbalanced emotion; someone consumed by despair is carrying the Fury on his shoulders, while someone who lets anger drive her to rash action has given the reins to the Fury. Though love is commonly considered a positive emotion, in the hands of the Fury, it is wild and dangerous. Just as there are Three Faces of War, there are Three Faces of Love: Boldrei is the love that binds, Arawai is the love that brings life, and Szorawai—the Fury—is the love that burns.

So people of the Five Nations typically guard against the Fury; she must be contained and controlled lest she leave your life in ruins. But she is a part of the world, and there are those who choose to embrace her. While there are priests of the Fury—especially along the path of the Revelers—most people find the Fury on their own. You don't need a priest to speak to the Fury, for she's part of you, already speaking through your rage and your sorrow. You simply need to listen.

Sovereign of Revenge

The Fury is there whenever you suffer pain or anguish. Aureon's laws provide a path for order in society, and Dol Arrah guides the justiciar. But perhaps you feel the forces of the law are corrupt and won't ever punish your enemy. Perhaps the wrong that's been done to you isn't legally a crime, but you still want someone to pay for the pain they've caused. Or perhaps you don't want justice—you want bitter and bloody revenge, to make your enemy suffer the pain they've inflicted on you a thousand times over.

In some cultures—certainly in parts of Droaam and Darguun—revenge and justice are seen as one and the same; it's understood that anyone who is harmed has the right to revenge, and the Fury promises that vengeance. Within the Five Nations, people don't generally revere the Fury, as they support clear laws and frown on vigilante justice ... but even such Vassals certainly acknowledge her presence and her power. She's typically seen as something you should fight against: bite back your anger, overcome your despair, and trust in the law to see that justice is done. So you're unlikely to find a priest of the Fury on the streets of the Five Nations, and even a paladin who acts as a vengeful hand (described below) may not announce that, knowing that acting in the name of the Fury doesn't let them get away with murder. But people don't need a priest of the Fury to hear her voice.

Crimson Candles

In the Five Nations, the crimson candle is urban legend as much as it is myth: if you've been wronged, you can engrave the name of the person you seek vengeance on into a red candle, blend a drop of your blood with the wax, and leave the lit candle in your window. This serves as a symbol that the Fury burns within you, demanding vengeance on the person you named. In some stories, this candle simply calls for the Fury to take vengeance for you, acting through environmental forces; if your target falls from a horse the next day, that's the Fury answering your prayers. Other tales claim a hidden order of assassins roam Khorvaire to fulfill the promise of the crimson candle.

In either case, when invoking the Fury, you understand that you have no control over what form the vengeance will take or how many people will be hurt in the process. After all, you don't seek justice, but vengeance—and while that comes with a price, you may not be the one who pays it. The Fury doesn't eliminate pain and suffering; she spreads it and magnifies it. Because of this, the crimson candle isn't used lightly; placing the candle in your window is a public declaration that you want revenge and you don't care about the cost or who knows it. And in so doing, the person named on the candle faces an ultimatum: will they try to make amends and convince their victim to extinguish the candle before the Fury takes notice of the plea?

Putting a crimson candle in your window is usually seen as a cry for help or an act of protest, not heresy that needs to be punished. If adventurers enter a village and find dozens of red candles burning in the windows, any character from the Five Nations would recognize it as a sign that something is terribly wrong.

Vengeful Hands

The crimson candle is an intentional invocation of the Fury, a request for someone (or something) else to enact vengeance. But stories also tell of "vengeful hands"—people being terribly wronged and surrendering entirely to the Fury, abandoning moral principles and personal responsibility until vengeance is obtained. According to these tales, a vengeful hand becomes a vessel for the Fury's power and is capable of superhuman feats. It's up to the DM to decide whether there's any truth to these tales, but if so, such an occurrence would be incredibly uncommon. Anyone can claim the voice of the Fury drove them to rash action, but a vengeful hand is truly gripped by an unquenchable focus on revenge, to the exclusion of rational thought. Regardless of whether others believe such a state is divine, many sympathize with a vengeful hand and understand they wouldn't commit such horrific crimes under other circumstances—but this doesn't excuse the crimes they commit in pursuit of revenge.

When creating such a character, consider what fuels their need for vengeance and what might fulfill it. For example, if you're driven by a desire for vengeance against Erandis Vol, you might have no idea where Vol is nor possess the personal power to bring her down—in which case, you could devote yourself to fighting the entire Emerald Claw until the path to Vol is made clear. Or if a criminal killed your parents, you could devote yourself to wreaking vengeance on all criminals. If you're driven by the Fury, you don't care about the cost of revenge, and you're not seeking "fair" punishment; your quest is raining down pain and suffering on those who wronged you. Will you ever reach the end of that dark path? Or is your need for vengeance an all-consuming flame?

Vassal Offerings to the Fury

Boldrei is the patron of mediators and therapists, those who help maintain peace within a community and help people overcome negative emotions. However, not all turn to Boldrei in the midst of overwhelming emotion. Much like some Vassals make a sacrifice to the Devourer in the face of an oncoming storm, begging the Devourer to turn his rage to someone else, some do the same for the Fury. They don't expect the storm of emotions to suddenly stop; rather, they hope to burden someone else instead.

Simple altars to the Fury can be found hidden in Vassal communities. The principle is simple: if you're dealing with an emotion you can't handle, you can make a sacrifice—and if it's accepted, your pain will be given to someone else. This practice is largely reviled because it's a zero-sum game; *someone* will suffer your sorrow or despair. But if you're willing to pass your pain to a stranger, it's a possibility. Such an altar can also be used to beg the Fury to ignite a spark of passion in an object of affection; but as always, the love of the Fury is wild and uncontrollable, and such a prayer often leaves ashes in its wake.

Sovereign of Revels

Structured societies typically fear the Fury, seeing her influence as disruptive. However, some consider the overwhelming fervor she brings to be a virtue; this belief is more common in Droaam than in the Five Nations. This path asserts that *fighting* the Fury is what brings pain. Aureon's laws are chains. Break them. Let your instincts guide you, experience your emotions fully, and you'll know a freedom others can't imagine. Adherents are encouraged to act without thinking, to trust impulse and instinct. Whether you feel sorrow or anger, embrace it and follow where it leads.

Such public followers of the Fury often engage in fevered celebrations. Outsiders generally call these frenzies, describing them as a dangerous and immoral blend of celebration, orgy, and riot. But those who participate call these events revels, and themselves Revelers. One aspect of a revel is the experience of unbridled joy—for *all* extreme emotions are the touch of the Fury. But a Reveler's primary purpose is to shatter Aureon's chains, to experience a moment unfettered by the expectations of others ... and in that moment, to find your true self.

Many Faces of the Fury

There are many different interpretations of the Fury. Under the Pyrinean Creed, she's often said to be the child of the Devourer, though this is generally understood to be a metaphor. When a farmer's field is destroyed by a hurricane, the "child" of that action is rage or despair; hence, the Devourer is the father of the Fury. Meanwhile, another Pyrinean myth says that when the Devourer was bound by his enemies, his rage was so great that the Fury took on a life of her own, tearing free of him and snapping his bonds in the process.

Looking beyond the Five Nations, Cazhaak traditions don't credit any other Sovereign for creating the Fury; she was present when the first heart began to beat, and she was heard in the first child's cry. This is echoed in the traditions of the harpies of the Byeshk Mountains; all their flights agree that the harpy sings with the Fury's voice, but much like the Barrens minotaurs and the Horned King, each flight has its own interpretation. The Stormsingers say the Devourer and the Fury are one and the same, and her song shapes the storm at the same time it guides the heart. The Wind Howlers say the Fury was born from Eberron's cry of pain when she gave birth to the world. Most flights call her the Song or the First Song; meanwhile, the Wind Howlers call her the Howl.

Three Faces of Love

The Three Faces of Love is a mystery cult devoted to Arawai, Boldrei, and Szorawai (the Fury). Like the other Three Faces cults, this secret society recruits members seen as being touched by one of these Sovereigns. Initiates are usually people who work with people, those who see the value of community and believe they can guide its path and inspire love; mediators, bartenders, midwives, companions, and poets are all found in this cult. On one level, the cult is simply a place for these people to come together and enjoy the company of like-minded individuals; the Three Faces of Love hold remarkable salons and revels. On the other hand, cultists often share problems they've seen—whether a quarrel of a single couple or tension that threatens an entire community—and seek subtle ways to solve the problem. On a more casual level, the Three Faces of Love are also excellent matchmakers who take joy in forging strong relationships. This can happen when someone asks for help or advice, but sometimes members take it on themselves to bring people together when they recognize a perfect match.

The Three Faces of Love weave the tapestry of a community. Arawai is the *Love That Brings Life*, celebrated by midwives and mothers as well as herbalists and healers. Boldrei is the *Love That Binds*, the underlying bond that holds any family or community together; mediators, innkeepers, and others who find joy in uniting others. Szorawai is the *Love That Burns*, passion that is as inspiring and powerful as it is painful; she is often the patron of poets, artists, and others who work with fantasy and desire.

Using the Fury

One of the first ways to work the Fury into a campaign is to talk about feelings. Sometimes we don't stop to think about how mechanical moments—landing a critical hit or being the victim of one, receiving Bardic Inspiration or being saved by an ally's reaction—actually feel for the character. Do you feel a moment of rage when you suffer a grievous injury? Is there a moment of doubt or despair? Or are you cold and austere, refusing to let any emotion distract your perfect focus? This doesn't have to come up in every situation; no one wants to discuss their feelings about every roll. But it can be fun to think about whether a character embraces their emotions or suppresses them, whether that could change over the course of a campaign—and whether there's any chance of them losing control.

As the Sovereign of Vengeance, the Fury can be integrated into adventures in many ways. A villain could be driven by revenge, giving themself to the Fury and refusing to consider the consequences of their actions until they've achieved their goal. This can be more interesting if the adventurers (or their players) know the villain's rage is justified; they can sympathize with the desire for revenge while still needing to prevent collateral damage or uphold the law. As an interesting twist on this, an ally of the adventurers could become a vengeful hand—complete with divine powers—after suffering a terrible tragedy that the player characters failed to prevent. How will the adventurers stop their friend, knowing the vengeful hand doesn't care about the damage they do in pursuit of revenge?

The red candles can also set a story in motion. When the adventurers arrive in a small village and see a dozen red candles in different windows, it's clear that there's trouble in this town—what will they do about it? Are all these candles tied to a tyrant who's hurting their people, or do the candles reflect a complex web of interwoven feuds, where helping any one of the victims will be seen as taking sides?

A Reveler can be an interesting ally for a party; impulsive and often reckless, brutally honest and willing to say whatever they think. If a group of adventurers tends to overthink things or to be too cautious, a little time with a Droaamite worg guide or a night at a revel can force them to face their feelings.

Player Characters

Characters linked to the Fury can come from any class or background—after all, the burning sense of revenge and revelry are universal emotions. Here are a few ways you could reflect a connection to the Fury in your player character.

Reveler. The "Character Options" section at the end of this chapter presents a new option for bards, the College of the Fury. This subclass is an excellent way to reflect a Reveler character's supernatural connection to the Fury—and in many ways, a bard makes a better Reveler priest than a cleric does. Regardless of your subclass, you likely have the ability to inspire primal

emotions as a Reveler, and you encourage people to fully experience and feel their feelings. I like to think of a Fury-tied bard's spells as gifts of devotion as opposed to lore (though this doesn't have a mechanical effect). It's possible you only embrace the Fury fully when in the throes of performance, but you could also play a priest who tries to help people understand their feelings at all times ... or you could even play a priest who fights to bring down any system that seeks to compel or control peoples' thoughts and emotions. This is different, however, from the priest of the Traveler who inspires chaos and change on a societal level; the Fury is more driven by the storm within each heart.

If you'd like to play a traditional cleric of the Fury, none of the official domains reflect the flavor of a Reveler well; however, you can (perhaps counterintuitively) use the Order domain by simply reversing its flavor! As written, the Order priest compels because people respect their inherent authority; for the Fury, all the compelling abilities would be about generating raw emotion. A *command* might feel so right in the moment that the victim obeys; meanwhile, *hold person* can reflect a paralyzing doubt and despair that the victim must shake off before they can act normally.

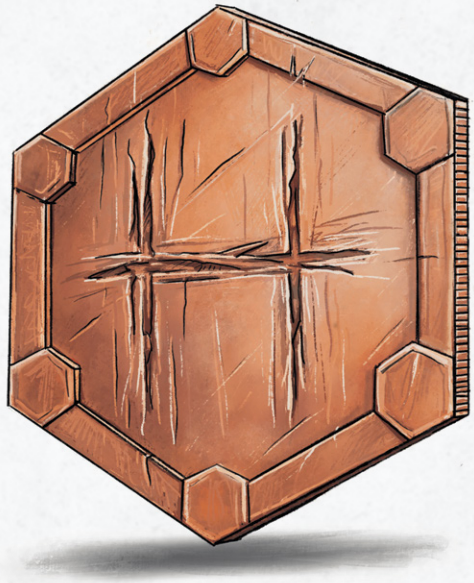
Vengeful Hand. If you'd rather play a revenge-focused character, such as a vengeful hand, the College of Whispers bard is skilled at manipulating emotions and fears, both weapons in the arsenal of the Fury. Vengeance needn't always be bloody; as a bard devoted to the Fury, you could be a character assassin, carrying out missions of vengeance like any other vengeful hand but focusing on *destroying* the lives of your victims, as opposed to simply ending them.

For paladins of the Fury, the Oath of Vengeance is an obvious choice—a warrior infused with divine power to be used in pursuit of revenge. This path of vengeance works just as well for a Zealot barbarian, or potentially a cleric with the War or Death domain. This could fit the idea of the vengeful hand: you were peaceful until you swore your oath of vengeance, and you've been filled with the power you need to see it through. On the other hand, you could've been granted your powers to help others take vengeance; you are the one who answers the call of the crimson candle. In either case, keep in mind the difference between this and the path of Dol Arrah: the hands of the Fury don't pursue justice, but vengeance, regardless of how much new pain and suffering is generated in the course of revenge.

Any warlock could've made their vow to the Fury, gaining power to be used in a quest for revenge—which could be personal or on behalf of others seeking vengeance. Though the gods can't be proven to exist, a warlock of the Fury needn't directly interact with their patron; they simply swore an oath and know what they must do. Or the warlock could have visions they believe are coming directly from the Fury ... but is there a way to prove these aren't just delusions? It's also possible the warlock's patron is a fiend who considers itself to be a voice of the Fury—perhaps a spirit of Mabar who enjoys the pain and death that accompanies these quests.

Other Ideas. As a Berserker barbarian, you might've been raised as a warrior in a community where the Fury is respected, having always embraced and cultivated your rage—an outlander or soldier from Droaam, for example. Alternatively, you might be a reserved and harmless-looking scholar of the Five Nations ... until you rage, channeling adrenaline and unleashing your fury.

Finally, you could play an interesting Moon druid as a member of the Great Pack of Droaam. This group of worgs, lycanthropes, and other predators views the Fury as a personal guide and patron—to them, instinct is more important than reason, and one should always let instinct guide action. Your powers could flow from this idea; rather than being tied to a traditional druidic sect, you're a primal predator whose form and actions are shaped by the Fury.



The Keeper

Never flaunt good fortune. Avoid arrogance and pride. Those who crow too loudly may catch the jealous eye of the Keeper.

—Asta Ollen of the Restful Watch

What is it you desire? Fine clothes? A grand mansion? Caskets of coins and jewels? Good for you. If these things were bad, they wouldn't exist; and if they're good, what's wrong with wanting them? Why shouldn't a warrior want the strongest armor or the sharpest blade? Why shouldn't a wizard want the biggest library or the finest arcane workshop? The Keeper teaches that you should have all the things you desire—you just have to be willing to pay for them, whether with gold, sweat, or blood. So let's talk about what you desire ... and what you're willing to pay for it.

—Copper Tom, Talon of the Keeper

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Among the Dark Six, the Keeper is the deity most commonly acknowledged by Vassals. Every funeral acknowledges his presence, and it's common to think of him as the Sovereign of Death—but this is a mistake. In the myths of the Sovereign Host, the Sovereigns *fight* death, and they're not fighting the Keeper. He's not the Sovereign of Death, he's first and foremost the Sovereign of Greed; however, one of the things he desires most are souls, and he does use death and all the myriad ways of causing it as a way to get the souls that he desires. Wasting sickness, food poisoning, sheer bad luck—the hand of the Keeper can cause death in countless ways, but all are merely a symptom of the Keeper's greed ... and all can potentially be staved off if you placate him with other treasures.

Exploring Eberron describes the Keeper as "the patron of those who put personal gain above all else. He guides those who use guile to gain gold, regardless of the cost to others. A rogue who invokes Olladra sees themself as the hero of the story; one who calls on the Keeper has no compunctions about being the villain. Beyond guiding those who place profit before all else, the Keeper is also known for his willingness to make deals—though his bargains are always slanted in his favor. Priests known as Talons make these deals on behalf of the Keeper, though the terms are often abstract and driven purely by faith. An entertainer could bargain with a Talon, exchanging ten years of their life for fame; even if the entertainer subsequently becomes famous, there's no way to know if this is the result of the bargain, nor to anticipate when the entertainer might suddenly die."

So under the Pyrinean Creed, the Keeper plays two very different roles. He's the Stealer of Souls, who must be placated at every funeral. But he's also the Lord of the Hoard, the patron of avarice who's ever ready to make a deal.

Stealer of Souls

As Asta Ollen says, "those who crow too loudly may catch the jealous eye of the Keeper," so Pyrinean teachings encourage humility and thrift. Flaunting wealth or talent draws the attention of the Keeper, and once his eye is upon you, misfortune is sure to follow. If you're lucky, he might just steal your flaunted wealth—or worse, he may desire *you*, and even the mightiest hero can be laid low by disease or ill fortune. Once the Keeper pulls you down into darkness, he snatches your soul before it can reach Dolurrh and adds you to his endless hoard, where he can toy with and torment you until the end of time.

On first reading, this might not sound entirely bad. Isn't Dolurrh a place where the soul fades and memories are lost? Aren't souls taken by the Keeper being spared from oblivion? The answer is both yes and no. It's an observable fact that souls fade in Dolurrh—but the question is *why*. Vassals maintain that as memories fade, this reflects that soul's transition to a higher level of reality; the soul isn't lost, but joins the Sovereigns. If the Keeper steals you, he steals your chance at paradise ... or even if you don't believe that souls join the Sovereigns, you're still choosing between oblivion or eternal torment at the hands of the Keeper. So most people very reasonably prefer to avoid his grasp.

While all Pyrinean Vassals acknowledge the threat posed by the Keeper, very few worship him in this aspect; most just want to avoid him. But a few servants of the Keeper can be found in Khorvaire, including Keeper's Fangs and priests of the Restful Watch.

The Restful Watch

Priests of the Restful Watch specialize in embalming, overseeing funerals, and maintaining cemeteries. They can be found in every major city in the Five Nations, and some smaller towns have a devotee of the Watch tending the boneyard. However, they maintain a low profile, so unless you're planning a funeral or robbing a grave, there's little reason to interact with them.

The doctrine of the Restful Watch is based on the idea that most spirits pass through Dolurrh and into the realm of the Sovereigns, but once someone has entered the realm of the Sovereigns, they can never return. As a result, if Aureon knows that a dead hero will be needed in the future, he has the Keeper snatch the soul before it reaches Dolurrh, intending to restore that hero when the time is right. Thus, initiates of the Restful Watch present themselves first and foremost as servants of Aureon, but they understand the Keeper and help people avoid his grasp. When preparing a funeral, an initiate of the Watch helps the bereaved choose appropriate grave goods or a sacrifice to distract the Keeper and ensure that the soul reaches Dolurrh. For a simple person with few achievements, a single coin might suffice; but the more remarkable the deceased, the greater interest the Keeper will have, requiring a more significant sacrifice to distract him.

Keeper's Fangs

While the Restful Watch operates openly across the Five Nations, others with ties to the Keeper prefer to stay in the shadows. These people feel a closer connection to the Keeper—they hear his voice, receive visions, or simply *know* what he wants most of all. Known as Keeper's Fangs, these assassins hunt down and slay anyone marked by the Keeper. They may also be charged to find treasures the Keeper wants to add to his hoard (though it's up to the DM to decide whether the Keeper expects a Fang to immediately sacrifice such an acquired treasure, or if the Fang can make use of the relic for a time before the Keeper claims it).

In the ancient Sarlonan nation of Pyrine, Keeper's Fangs sold death in exchange for gold. Assassination isn't sanctioned in the Five Nations, but one order of Keeper's Fangs still follows these old traditions and offers their services for coin. These Fangs are few enough in number that House Thuranni generally doesn't see them as a threat to business.

Today, most Keeper's Fangs aren't assassins, and they have an entirely personal relationship with the Keeper. They see what he wants in visions, and act in

the hope of a reward from the Keeper himself. This is a logical path for a Hexblade warlock, whose shadow-infused weapons are a gift from the Keeper. However, it's just as plausible for a Death cleric, Oathbreaker paladin, or Assassin rogue.

The *Keeper's fang* is also a name for a weapon enchantment that prevents resurrection, as described in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* and *Exploring Eberron*. Some Keeper's Fangs use these weapons in their work, while others possess a supernatural gift that mimics this ability; either way, when they kill someone marked by the Keeper, the soul never reaches Dolurrh.

Blessing of the Fang

According to the myths of the Dark Six, the Keeper covets the souls of the living, and his servants sometimes possess the ability to steal away a creature's soul. These myths are most commonly associated with the *Keeper's fang* dagger, and Dark Petitioner rogues (presented at the end of this chapter) gain a similar ability at 17th level. However, powerful fiends in service of the Keeper's ideals—or even the enigmatic god himself—might bestow loyal followers or fated individuals with the following blessing. Such supernatural gifts are discussed in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Blessing of the Fang. When you touch a creature that has been reduced to 0 hit points or killed within the last minute, you can choose to kill it (if it isn't already dead) and remove its soul. A creature whose soul has been removed in this way can be restored to life only by a *wish* spell.

The Keeper and the Afterlife

Does the Keeper truly snatch souls on their way to Dolurrh? As with anything tied to the divine, there's no absolute proof. But from the preponderance of myths to the concrete fact of soul-trapping *Keeper's fang* weapons, it's certainly possible souls might be lost in this way. Stories tell of heroes finding the Lair of the Keeper in the Demon Wastes and negotiating with a skeletal dragon to recover souls lost to *Keeper's fangs*. Perhaps these stories are literally true. Or perhaps the "Lair of the Keeper" is a portal to a demiplane ruled by Mazyralyx, the first and most powerful dracolich ... and this mighty creature created the *Keeper's fangs*. Ultimately it's up to the DM to decide—is there anything to a Talon's bargains beyond superstition and coincidence? Can souls be taken by the Keeper, and if so, how can they be recovered?

In Eberron, death presents another opportunity to bargain with the Keeper. Should a player character die early in their career, the Keeper (or a powerful dracolich or other creature posing as him) could offer resurrection—but at what cost? Alternatively, if player characters have the ability to raise the dead, the Keeper can add an unexpected obstacle. If the Keeper claims a soul, the *raise dead* spell won't work unless the Keeper chooses to release the soul ... and to convince him, the cleric must make a difficult bargain.

Necromancy and the Dark Six

Necromancy has a sinister reputation in the Five Nations. Among Vassals, arcane necromancy is associated with the Shadow, while divine necromancy (such as a cleric with the Death domain) is usually tied to the Keeper. Outside the Sovereigns and Six, divine necromancy is usually associated with the Blood of Vol, and during the Last War, only Karrnath employed necromancy.

Common folk shun necromancy for many reasons—after all, undead are a real, dangerous force in the world. Ghouls, shadows, and wraiths are all concrete threats, and undead thus trigger instinctive fear in most people. Compounding this, many people believe that the spirits of the dead ultimately reach some form of peace beyond Dolurrh—whether with the Sovereigns or the Silver Flame—so any sort of magic that interacts with the dead may disturb that rest. Vassals also tend to inter their dead and find the manipulation of corpses to be disrespectful and revolting.

The practice of necromancy isn't illegal in the Five Nations, just unsavory. As with all magic, the crime is determined by how you *use* your spells. A cleric of the Blood of Vol can't be arrested for having a skeleton companion—but desecrating corpses is illegal, so guards could demand to see evidence of your claim to the corpse! The common reaction to other spells depends on the manifestation of the spell. Rationally, a *ray of enfeeblement* is no more or less evil than a *scorching ray* ... but if it manifests as a bolt of screeching shadows that seems to weaken its victim by sapping their soul, people will say it's the work of the Shadow or the Keeper. The *scorching ray* may actually be deadlier than the *ray of enfeeblement*, but at least it's good, honest fire.

Atur in Karrnath is the primary center for necromantic research in the Five Nations, but Arcanix has its own school of necromancy—albeit its smallest and least funded. This school primarily focuses on "passive" necromancy, such as the *speak with dead* spell, rather than on offensive magic.

Grave Robbing in Khorvaire

Since Vassals bury treasures with their dead to distract the Keeper, why isn't grave robbing widespread? For Vassals, superstition is the primary deterrent. People bury goods with a loved one's corpse so the Keeper claims the treasures instead of the soul—and if you rob that grave, you're stealing from the Keeper directly. Even though the Keeper doesn't physically snatch buried items from graves, Vassals believe he lays claim to them as part of his scattered worldwide hoard. If you steal from that hoard, he may choose to take back his treasure with interest.

As a result, tales abound of grave robbers cursed by the Keeper. Sometimes the thief contracts a wasting disease or suffers deadly bad luck (perhaps when the character rolls a 1 on an attack roll, they target themself with the attack; when they roll a 1 on a saving throw, they suffer twice the usual damage or harmful effects; and when they roll a 1 on an ability check, their failure has dangerous consequences). Other times they're targeted by random violence, often muggings or other acts driven by greed. And if a magic item is stolen, the touch of the Keeper may twist the enchantments—so if you find the tomb of Breggor Firstking and steal his legendary

sword from the Keeper's hoard there, it may become a cursed *sword of vengeance*.

These are ways the Keeper's curse *could* manifest ... but that doesn't mean it *will*. Vassals know that not everyone who steals from a grave dies horribly, but why would you take that chance? Beyond that risk, commoner graves rarely hold valuable treasures; they might have a few copper coins, but most of these grave goods are selected for their value to the deceased. A small portrait of a child might have been terribly important to the person who died, but a thief will be lucky to pawn the frame for a few galifars—is it worth the risk?

In the case of a wealthy merchant or prince, sometimes the risk is worth it. Such figures have more significant treasures in their tomb, but Vassal cemeteries are often guarded by members of the Restful Watch. Graves that contain significant wealth may also implement other protections; this could be as simple as an *alarm* summoning the Restful Watch or an *arcane lock* placed on the coffin, or it could be more dramatic or dangerous. A *magic mouth* could address anyone who enters a crypt, sounding an alarm if they're not recognized. A *glyph of warding* could *summon shadowspawn*. In the case of a truly celebrated hero or noble, a crypt could hold a veritable maze of traps and wards—an adventure in the making! "You need to get into the crypt of the first Queen of Metrol to recover the sword that was buried with her. But can you get past the many traps, and is the blade's power still intact?"

The Keeper, the Blood of Vol, and Katashka the Gatekeeper

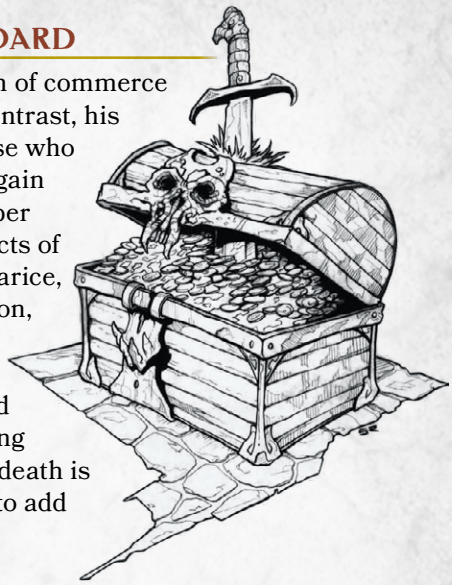
On the surface, the Keeper, the Blood of Vol, and the overlord Katashka are all associated with death and necromancy. The uninformed often assume their cults would be allies, but in practice, these three are very different from one another.

The Blood of Vol centers around the belief that people should fight against death, not embrace it. Seekers use necromancy in part to avoid oblivion, but also because there's poetic justice in animating the dead to protect the living—"even though their lives were lost, they rise again to protect their people." Seekers despise followers of Katashka and the Keeper. They believe that all Sovereigns are cruel beings who torment mortals with disease and suffering; the Keeper just does it openly.

Katashka the Gatekeeper thrives on mortal fears of death and the undead. Katashkan necromancers revel in their dominion over the dead and in the terror their spells can cause. Of these three cults, the followers of Katashka are the ones most likely to engage in unnecessary cruelty and to create horrific new forms of undead; their ability to terrify others is a source of joy.

Keeper cultists have no love for Katashka or the Blood of Vol. Priests of the Keeper typically use necromancy spells to weaken or kill enemies directly, or to speak with the dead. They *can* create undead—it's seen as the Keeper temporarily releasing a spirit from its hoard—but few actually enjoy the company of undead. After all, the Keeper's signature move is stealing souls, not animating corpses. And the Keeper cultists who honor him as the Lord of the Hoard may not use necromancy at all, as their interests lie in the realm of wealth, not death.

Lord of the Hoard



Kol Korran is the patron of commerce and honest trade—by contrast, his brother is patron to those who put their own personal gain above all else. The Keeper reflects the darker aspects of commerce, inspiring avarice, conspicuous consumption, and insatiable greed. Though these can lead to murder or theft, greed and hoarding are defining aspects of the Keeper—death is simply the tool he uses to add souls to his hoard.

Greed and Guile

Several of the Sovereigns and Six have a relationship to greed and guile. The Mockery guides those who use deception to spill blood, but if your deception is in the pursuit of gold, you'll instead call on the Keeper. Similarly, criminals and rogues who consider themselves altruistic or heroic are likely to look to Olladra for good fortune, but if you're willing to acknowledge your own greed, you pray to the Keeper instead. After all, the Keeper helps the liar and the cheat.

This sort of worship is typically a personal thing. Many members of the Boromar Clan offer prayers to the Keeper, but the clan doesn't maintain a shrine to him. A swindler who is especially skilled at separating people from their riches may be said to be blessed by the Keeper, just as a skilled blacksmith may be thought to be favored by Onatar; such a scoundrel likely doesn't have the trappings of a priest, but others may still ask for (and pay for) their blessing. On the other hand, a priest of the Keeper could run their own guild of thieves, typically seeing their congregation as a tool to further their own greed. The Trickery domain is excellent for a cleric following this aspect of the Keeper, but this path is just as appropriate for any rogue, criminal, or charlatan.

Talons: Bargaining with the Keeper

The Keeper is always searching for new treasures to add to his hoard, and these can include souls or memories as well as material goods. A bargain with the Keeper can get you wealth, magic items, the powers of a warlock, or more. While the gifts of the Traveler often have unexpected consequences, the goods of the Keeper are generally exactly what they appear to be ... but the Keeper never makes a deal unless the price is in his favor. Whatever you get from the Keeper, you'll have to give up something of even greater value.

How do bargains with the Keeper work? The Six don't walk the world, so you have to find a Talon—an intermediary who can make a bargain on behalf of

SCOTT ROLLER

the Keeper. Anyone who believes they have a strong connection to the Keeper could serve in this priestlike capacity—whether a Keeper's Fang, a priest of the Restful Watch, a Pennyroyal, or even a random grifter convinced their talents are a gift from the Lord of the Hoard. Despite all of these options, mortal Talons are exceptionally rare, and those with established track records are even rarer. A Talon is defined by their string of successes; to attract business, people have to believe they can speak for the Keeper. But the Keeper acts in his own time and in his own way.

As a result, working with a Talon is entirely a matter of faith. The petitioner comes with a request, and the Talon establishes the exact terms. Payment is often abstract: the most common fee is the assurance that the Keeper will claim the petitioner's soul after death, often with an added limitation on maximum lifespan ("Should you live to be forty years of age, the Keeper will end your life and claim his rightful prize"). But payment could also be something unique that the petitioner possesses, whether physical or metaphysical. The only constant is that the Kefeper never makes a bargain unless the price is in his favor; the cost is always dear.

If a Talon's bargain has a material cost, they take the goods on behalf of the Keeper, but they don't fulfill the bargain themself, and there's no guarantee as to *when* the Keeper will uphold his end of it. So an aspiring merchant could make a deal to acquire wealth and success in exchange for the only picture of her mother and a shortened forty-year lifespan; the Talon takes the picture and the merchant goes on her way. Within the year, the merchant has a run of good fortune, or finds a wealthy investor, or stumbles on buried treasure that allows her to set up her business. Is this the result of the bargain, or just coincidence? Will she die when she's forty, or is that also just superstition? Through the eyes of a skeptic, a Talon's bargain is highly suspect; but few people are skeptical enough to try to cheat a Talon, as being wrong would prove far too costly.

Metaphysically, many believe the Keeper is able to bestow the more abstract gifts on people through imbuing them with an element of one of the souls in his hoard. For example, the Keeper might grant musical talent by imbuing the seeker with the soul of a renowned bard. In some ways, this is similar to channeling a Tairnadal patron ancestor—but Pyrinean priests suggest that it's a horrible experience for the subject soul, which is said to be bound helplessly to the beneficiary, forced to watch as the bargainer uses their knowledge but unable to act or influence the world in any way. Again, there's a reason people aren't encouraged to make these deals! Since the Keeper depends on souls in his hoard to empower many of his bargains, there are limitations to his gifts. He can give material wealth, specific treasures, skills, or knowledge—but he can't offer knowledge no mortal has discovered, nor skill no mortal could possess. This is a critical difference between the Keeper and the Shadow. In exchange for your soul, the Keeper can give you the skills of someone who's died. The Shadow, however, can offer secrets no mortal has ever known—likely at the high cost of using that knowledge to hurt others.

Immortal Talons

The Sovereigns and Six don't manifest physically, but immortals and other powerful creatures can act on their behalf. Consider the following entities that could offer dangerous deals in your campaign, whether on behalf of the Keeper or otherwise:

Golden is the Dominion of Greed in Syrania. She spends most of her time in the Immeasurable Market, but occasionally comes to Eberron to negotiate an interesting deal—whether of her own volition or in service to the Lord of the Hoard, who she believes grants her divine guidance.

Hazaresha Salazan is an amnizu devil in Daanvi who loves to negotiate complex contracts. Like Golden, he considers himself faithful to the Keeper and often serves as a Talon.

Shining Olazaryx is a gilded dracolich from Argonnessen. He believes that upon his final death, he'll become the Keeper, and seeks to emulate his actions in the meantime.

The Merchant of Misthaven is an archfey from Thelanis whose story revolves around making dangerous bargains; she's not devoted to the Keeper in any way, but she's another possible source of similar deals.

Mazyralyx is the first dracolich, created during the Age of Demons. He serves as the prakhutu of the overlord Katashka the Gatekeeper. Mazyralyx doesn't engage in general bargaining but has collected many souls over the millennia, using tools like the *Keeper's fangs*; if adventurers need to bargain for a particular lost soul, they could seek out Mazyralyx in the Lair of the Keeper in the Demon Wastes.

All five of these beings are very powerful, very real beings who could negotiate bargains with concrete and immediate benefits, as opposed to the take-it-on-faith deals of most mortal Talons. They could also serve as a patron for a warlock who'd like to have a more active relationship with their patron—though again, the Merchant of Misthaven isn't actually tied to the Keeper.

Many Faces of the Keeper

Most of the Dark Six are viewed in a very different light in the Five Nations versus in the Cazhaak Creed or other monstrous cultures. This is less true of the Keeper, though varying sects of the Keeper still appear throughout the world. Within the Five Nations, the Three Faces of Coin honor the Keeper in his aspect as Lord of the Hoard. Meanwhile, the Cazhaak faith shares the common Pyrinean idea that the Keeper hoards both the souls of the dead and material goods.

Three Faces of Coin

The Three Faces of Coin is a mystery cult devoted to Onatar, Kol Korran, and Kol Turrant (the Keeper). Like all Three Faces cults, it's a secretive and exclusive organization; initiates are recruited because they're considered to be blessed by one of the Three Faces. Members are often successful merchants or captains of industry, and the cult includes members of the Aurum and the dragonmarked houses. However, the Three Faces of Coin has no grand agenda. At its simplest level, the cult is a fraternity for those who understand the mysteries of coin, and it provides valuable opportunities for networking and bargaining.

The Three Faces of Coin govern the "battlefield" of commerce and industry, the struggle to get the things that we want. Onatar guides those who create the goods people desire, Kol Korran inspires those who trade in the light, and Kol Turrant guides those who work in the shadows. All members of the cult are driven by the same principles: You should always be able to get the things you desire, but good work always deserves a fair price. All people should have a path to profit, provided they are willing to work for it. An honest blacksmith should always be able to profit from their hard labor, and someone who wishes to purchase the smith's goods should have a way to do so ... even if that requires unscrupulous collaboration.

The blessed of Kol Turrant—known as Pennyroyals—walk a crooked line. The archetypal Pennyroyal is a smuggler or a fence—someone who dodges the laws to get people the things they desire. However, Pennyroyals also include grifters, pickpockets, and thieves. This seems perfectly reasonable to most Coins (the casual term for initiates of the sect), since you should always be able to get the things that you desire—even if you're skirting the whole reason fair prices matter. Of course, the thief always believes they should be paid a fair price for their own services! After all, fellow Coins deserve fair payment most of all, even if a few unlucky bystanders get scammed in the process.

As a follower of the Three Faces of Coin, it's up to you to decide which of the three paths you'll walk. You can choose to only follow the path of Kol Korran and to engage in honest commerce, but you also recognize your comrade's right to step into the shadows when they can't get what they desire in the light. Coins don't inherently oppose trade laws; they simply believe there should always be a way around these laws for those prepared to work for it. The honest merchant may never deal with a Pennyroyal, but they know that they *could*.

The dark side of the Three Faces of Coin is reflected by their embracing Kol Turrant. The Coins understand that in the right time and place, greed can be good—and it's better to understand and use it than to run from it. After all, everyone wants things, and everyone who creates wants people to want those things they create. The Coins say that there's nothing wrong with that desire, and there's nothing wrong with bending the rules to get what you want, as long as you're willing to pay a fair price. As such, the Three Faces of Coin is one of the only sects openly willing to sell the spells of its divine spellcasters. Spells are commodities; if you want one, you should pay for it. This doesn't mean a Coin cleric *has* to charge their companions for casting helpful spells; but you recognize your magic has value, and you *could* charge for it, so if you're choosing to give this as a gift to a friend, they'd better appreciate it!

Keeper's Hands

Dedicated priests of the Keeper—known as Keeper's Hands—can be found in Droaam, Darguun, and even in Zilargo or the Lhazaar Principalities. Though more common in regions that practice the Cazhaak faith, Keeper's Hands can be found across multiple cultures and traditions. These priests generally take the place of the Restful Watch, though they lack the benevolent aspect of Aureon. They still perform funerals and tend cemeteries, but they have no qualms about presenting themselves as servants of the Keeper as opposed to being tied to some greater good. Like the Restful Watch, they set a price for a soul's safe passage; however, this definitely includes personal profit for the priest. In communities served by a Keeper's Hand, it's generally accepted that one can gain the Keeper's favor by sending him choice souls, either by simple dedication ("Keeper take your soul!") or fuller ritual ... so if you don't pay the Keeper's Hand to ensure a loved one's passage to Dolurrh, they instead profit by selling the soul to the Keeper themself.

Keeper's Hands often pursue necromancy, likely as adepts, Death clerics, Undead warlocks, or Oathbreaker paladins. They see necromancy as an earned gift from the Keeper and consider it the necromancer's right to compel the dead to service—a vastly different perspective than priests of the Restful Watch who seek to lay the dead to rest.

A Keeper's Hand doesn't see any of this as evil—it's just the way the universe works. Life and death are business transactions, and a Keeper's Hand is a merchant who expects to profit from them. They might even travel with a mercenary band of violent adventurers; after all, this is an excellent way to frequently encounter death, and they're happy to dedicate those deaths to the Keeper in hope for favor.

While the above practices center on the death aspect of the Keeper, Keeper's Hands may also serve as Talons, and they are often shrewd negotiators. Especially near city centers and other populous regions, a Keeper's Hand may be involved with smuggling or managing other criminal enterprises in addition to their religious duties. Such a Keeper's Hand can make an excellent greed-driven mercenary adventurer, open to all potentially profitable endeavors. There's no reason you can't be willing to share these profits with your friends, as long as you get what you want.

Using the Keeper

You can integrate the Keeper into a campaign by introducing a Talon who offers a player character an unusual bargain in their time of need (or desire). This bargain might simply affect the story, but it's also possible the deal brings with it some mechanical benefits; it's up to the DM to decide what terms the Keeper will offer and what the practical effects will be. For example, if a character asks to give up their musical talent in exchange for a silver tongue, the DM might allow them to swap a proficiency in Performance for Deception ... but again, it's up to the DM to decide whether such a thing is possible and how to implement it.

A Talon could also approach adventurers with a specific offer. Perhaps the party has acquired the *Book of Vile Darkness* but they don't want to read it—and coincidentally, a Talon approaches them. The Keeper knows they have the book and he wants it; are the characters interested in acquiring a different artifact in exchange for it? The Talon doesn't necessarily possess the promised artifact themself; the characters will simply have to take it on faith that, should they give the book to the Talon, the other artifact will come to them in time.

Alternatively, next time the party needs to acquire—or dispose of—a particularly unique item or tidbit of information, you could introduce them to a Pennyroyal or other initiate of the Three Faces of Coin.

Player Characters

When creating a character dedicated to the Keeper, do you honor his aspect as Stealer of Souls or Lord of the Hoard? The rogue subclass—the Dark Petitioner—presented at the end of this chapter reflects a character who honors one or more members of the Dark Six, likely including the Keeper as the Stealer of Souls. Here are some other stories to inspire characters with ties to the Keeper.

Restful Watch. Clerics of the Restful Watch typically take the Grave domain, reflecting their balance between the light of Aureon and the darkness of the Keeper. Similarly, Watch paladins typically embrace the Oath of Devotion or Redemption. Consider the following ideas:

- The Watch occasionally identifies living individuals who they believe have been marked by Aureon for preservation—and they've identified one of your fellow adventurers as such. As an adventuring member of the Watch, you've been assigned to chronicle this person's life and perform the proper rituals when they die. Whether or not the person appreciates or wants your companionship is irrelevant. "Don't mind me, I'm just going to follow you around until your heroic death. Trust me, you're going to accomplish some big things!"
- Especially gifted priests of the Restful Watch serve as exorcists and mediums, and you consider it your holy purpose to seek out the undead and lay their troubled spirits to rest.
- Something was stolen from a tomb you were tasked to guard, and a plague is now sweeping the land. You're certain that the plague is the wrath of the Keeper—if you return the stolen goods to the tomb, will it end?

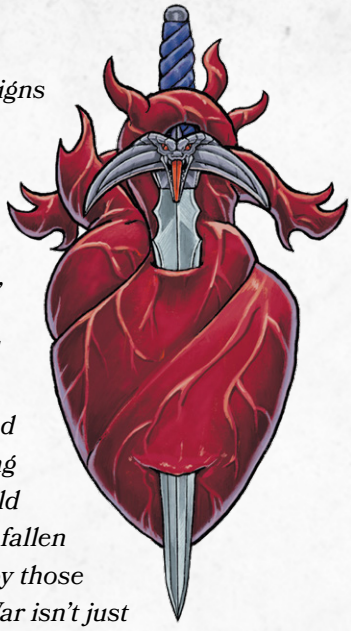
Revenant. The Keeper's propensity for both soul-snatching and bargains presents an interesting story hook: You could be a revenant who died before the current campaign began, then made a deal with the Keeper to bring you back to the world of the living. Playing such a revenant is a fun way to explore history; you could play a character with an aberrant dragonmark who fought alongside Halas Tarkanan, or a Dhakaani warrior who died fighting the daelkyr. Be sure to collaborate with your DM, as they need to approve of your past and consider how it ties into the future of the campaign. There are many questions to answer here:

- When did you die and how long have you been dead? Were you aware of the passage of time, or does it feel as if no time has passed?
- Did you make a deal with the Keeper (or someone claiming to represent him)? Or have you been returned because you have a destiny to fulfill in the present day (which ties to the beliefs of the Restful Watch)?
- Is your current body a duplicate of your original body, or has your spirit been implanted into a new form? Are you partially undead—perhaps using the Reborn lineage from *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*—or have you been restored to full life?
- If you were powerful in your original life, why are your powers limited to those of a low-level character now? Is it going to take time to recover your full memories? Are you still adjusting to your new body? Was this part of the bargain—you traded your skills for a second chance at life?

Mercenary. While a player character could worship the Keeper as lord of greed, there's little heroic about it. Kol Korran governs the positive aspects of trade, and Olladra guides the playful trickster and bard. Meanwhile, the Keeper is patron to those concerned solely with their own personal gain, regardless of the cost to others. However, it's possible for a mercenary character to begin their career as a cold-hearted devotee of the Keeper—fighting solely for gold—then perhaps discover along the way that there are things more important than simple greed.

Keeper's Bargain. Making a deal with a Talon is an interesting way to establish a character's backstory. Did you bargain for your remarkable talents, and if so, what was the cost? Perhaps the terms of the agreement only give you one year to live—can you find a way to break the bargain before time runs out?

The Mockery



The principles of the Sovereigns are the cornerstone of our civilization. Boldrei brings us together. Aureon's laws let us coexist in peace. When peace is not an option, Dol Dorn gives us strength to defend ourselves, and Dol Arrah teaches us to use that strength compassionately and wisely. Why should the strong protect the weak? Why should warriors spare civilians and fallen foes? Because if we all live by those principles, we all prosper. War isn't just about victory—it's about being able to live with the aftermath.

—Phthaso Mogan, Sovereign priest of Sharn

"Why should the strong protect the weak?" This question is posed by those who wish for you to believe that they are strong and you are weak, that you'd be helpless without them. These are the words of people who only know one way to play the game of war, and they're desperate for you to play by the same rules. Our lord shows the truth: the strong protect the weak because they don't want the "weak" to realize how strong they can be. Imagine a hundred hounds pursuing two wolves, challenging the wolves to face them in honorable combat. One of the wolves is brave: they turn and fight beneath the bright sun, but the hounds tear them into a hundred pieces. The other wolf is wise, and they know a simple truth: "I cannot beat them at once, but in the shadows, my teeth are as sharp as any of theirs." Every night, the wolf comes with the shadows and kills one of the hounds. The hounds may curse the wolf's cowardly, dishonorable actions ... but in a hundred days, that wolf stands triumphant. Which wolf are you? Will you fight in the sunlight and die with honor? Or will you follow the path that leads to victory, even if it leads you through shadows?

—"Redblade" Rrac, of the
Deathsgate Adventurers' Guild

In the first age of the world, three siblings challenged the Lord of Death. They rallied their forces and swore to meet Death on the battlefield at dawn. When Death came with his army of corpses, the eldest brother was nowhere to be seen; he lacked the courage to face this dreadful foe. The mortal soldiers quaked, seeing their fallen comrades now serving in the army of the dead. But the young brother filled the soldiers with courage and inspired them with his strength, scattering the forces of the dead. And the sister called on the light of the sun, blinding Death until her soldiers could safely retreat. Though the battle was lost, the champions were able to save most of their soldiers. They learned that their missing elder brother had used the distraction to steal a great treasure from the Citadel of the Dead, caring more for his personal enrichment than for the lives of his siblings, their soldiers, or his own oath.

This is the story of Dol Azur—the Mockery. It takes many forms across many cultures, and the details are always different. In the Pyrinean version of the story, Aureon orders that the Mockery be stripped of both his name and his skin, his truth laid bare for the world to see. By contrast, the Cazhaak myth tells that the elder brother fools his siblings by shedding his skin and using it as a decoy; going forward, he often strips the skin off his enemies and wears it to fool their friends. The reason for the Mockery's betrayal similarly varies. In the common Pyrinean story, the Mockery betrays his siblings due to cowardice and envy, using the opportunity to enrich himself instead; if he'd bravely stood with his siblings, Death could have been defeated. But the annals of the Three Faces of War instead say that Dol Azur believed the battle to be a fool's errand from the beginning, as it's impossible to defeat Death; rather than fighting an unwinnable battle just because he'd sworn an oath to do so, Dol Azur used the distraction to steal a mighty weapon from the enemy's citadel. So while his action was unquestionably a dishonorable betrayal, he also accomplished a tactically significant objective, rather than fighting an "honorable" fight that couldn't be won.

Such shifting interpretations are common with the Sovereigns and Six, reflecting the values of the cultures and individuals who worship or revile them. Within Khorvaire, there are three common approaches to the Mockery. The common Vassals blame him for the excesses of war and for cruel betrayal. Some emulate him, seeking to earn his favor through acts of cruelty. And others see him not as the Lord of Betrayal, but as the Sovereign of Victory—a deity who can always show you the way to overcome your enemies, even if it is a dark path.

Sovereign of Bloodshed and Betrayal

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Pyrinean Creed asserts that the Dark Six embody our darkest mortal impulses. While Boldrei tells us that we're stronger as a community and Aureon teaches that laws can benefit us all, the Mockery scoffs at courage and honor, urging that our own survival and victory are the only things that matter, no matter the cost. The Mockery says we should place our own needs above anything else, and other people are solely tools to be used (or abused). Vassals believe that the Mockery—sometimes called the Sovereign of Bloodshed and Betrayal—embodies two spheres.

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Bloodshed

On one level, the Mockery is a war god, as he encompasses the darkest elements of conflict and combat. Bloodlust, unnecessary cruelty, and dishonorable strategies are all tied to the Mockery. But he isn't confined to the battlefield. The assassin who kills without warning and the bully who beats smaller children are also guided by the Mockery. Whenever blood is shed in cowardly or cruel ways, the Mockery smiles. The Fury inspires rage, the Keeper drives greed, but when the actual blade is drawn, the Mockery guides the hand of the murderer.

Betrayal

The Mockery also delights in betrayal. He takes the greatest pleasure when the betrayal runs deep—a sibling betraying a sibling, a lover turning on their paramour. But on the simplest level, this aspect of the Mockery centers on deception with the intent to cause pain. While the Traveler also delights in deception, it does so as Sovereign of Chaos and Change. By contrast, the Mockery uses deception in the pursuit of *pain*. So a changeling grifter may see the Traveler as their patron, whereas an assassin who uses *disguise self* to get close to their victim is guided by the Mockery.

Fear

Another aspect of the Mockery that's not always recognized is the use of fear. Dol Dorn inspires courage in the soldier's heart; the Mockery shows them how to inflict terror on their enemies. This ties to the idea that the Mockery delights in causing pain—psychological as well as physical. To the Mockery, no weapon is too vile to use in battle, so fear and other forms of psychological warfare are certainly valid.

Cruelty

Among Vassals, the Mockery is primarily seen as an explanation for cruelty in the world. Virtuous Vassals never offer prayers to the Mockery; they pity the brutal people who are swayed by his whispers and drawn down cruel and criminal paths. People who actively revere this aspect of the Mockery willfully embrace a dark path, acknowledging their actions as selfish and cruel. A King's Dark Lantern who kills for the good of his nation and people will ask Olladra for luck, even though he's deceiving others and spilling blood. The assassin who invokes the Mockery *knows* that she's spilling blood solely for her personal gain, and she takes pride and delight in her power to inflict pain.

The Cazhaak monks of the Flayed Hand are an example of this: they acknowledge the Mockery as the Sovereign of Bloodshed and Betrayal, but worship him still, and believe that they commune with the divine by inflicting pain. And for this reason, the Flayed Hand is a secretive order and the monks hide their devotional scars; those who knowingly employ the Flayed Hand are comfortable with cruelty.

Lord of Victory

The Pyrinean Creed casts the Mockery as a force of pure evil—the cruel betrayer who delights in the suffering of innocents. But there are many ways to look at the world, and the Cazhaak faith calls him the Lord of Victory. The Pyrinean interpretation chooses Dol Arrah over the Mockery, saying that war can and should be fought honorably. The Cazhaak interpretation says there is no honor in the brutality and bloodshed of war: "once you see that someone always suffers in war, you'll realize it's better to hold the blade than to be the one who bleeds."

Cunning

The Cazhaak Creed values cunning over brute strength, for survival is the ultimate proof of righteousness. If the goblin defeats the ogre, it doesn't matter if they used poison or treachery; they should be celebrated for finding a path to victory. In this harsh, ruthless vision of the world, you should always be ready for betrayal, and always be watching for weakness in others. Though one might think that this philosophy would undermine any form of community, the Cazhaak Creed does create communities—just in a very different way from Boldrei's love and Aureon's laws. A Cazhaak community is a wolf pack, and its leaders must command respect with their cunning and power. You follow your leader because you believe you'll prosper under their rule. So if a leader isn't betrayed, it's not because of their people's honor or duty; it's either because the people think it's in their own self-interest to serve the leader, or because the people believe they couldn't get away with a betrayal.

Find a Path to Victory

In a society driven by Cazhaak principles, no agreement can be based purely on trust. Words alone mean nothing; they have to be backed up by fear, by the knowledge that betrayal carries a terrible cost. Look to Droaam as a whole; while Katra inspires with her voice, Maenya's fist is always ready. This is a cruel way to view the world, but it makes sense to those who follow it. The ideals of Dol Arrah are childish because war isn't a game with rules.

With that said, the Pyrinean scholar might argue that Aureon's laws and Dol Arrah's ideals matter because international relations rely on trust and on law. The Cazhaak faith can support communities, but it has never been tested on a wide scale. Droaam is a new nation, and in the centuries prior, the Barrens were ruled by small communities and city-states. The armies of Droaam rely on guerrilla warfare and small-unit tactics, where the cunning of a squad leader can turn the tide of battle. It remains to be seen if their ruthless principles can support global relationships.

Some who follow the Cazhaak path draw on the more extreme elements of the Lord of Bloodshed and Betrayal: for example, the Skinners of Graywall prey on

despised foreigners and wear the tanned hides of their victims as grisly trophies. But for most who follow the Cazhaak path, the point is more that the world is cruel, and you must be strong and cunning to survive it; do whatever you must to bring down your foes.

Many Faces of the Mockery

As with all the Dark Six, different representations of the Mockery appear throughout the world's cultures and faith traditions ... and even on other planes. On Shavarath, some demons and devils even claim the Mockery is a commander of theirs, a bitter disagreement that stokes the eternal war between both factions. Most traditions, however, aren't that extreme, and have much in common with the Cazhaak view.

Three Faces of War

The Three Faces of War is a mystery cult devoted to Dol Arrah, Dol Dorn, and Dol Azur (the Mockery). It's the most widespread and well known of the Three Faces cults; it was deeply rooted in the united army of Galifar, and cult chapters can now be found in all of the armies of the Five Nations. Allegiance to the Three Faces doesn't supersede national loyalty, but shared knowledge of the mysteries of war provides a foundation for friendship between soldiers of different nations and ranks; in the eyes of the Three Faces, all are equals. If a player character with the soldier background chooses to be an initiate of the Three Faces of War, this can help explain how they benefit from their Military Rank feature with soldiers of other nations; even if they fought one another in the Last War, they respect each other as initiates into the mysteries.

Followers of the Three Faces of War believe that honor and courage are always to be valued, but there are times when cunning is the only path to victory. They acknowledge that the world would be a better place if we could all live in Dol Arrah's light—but also that the world is cruel, and there are times when victory must come before honor. They also recognize the power of psychological warfare and that sometimes demoralizing a foe is the best way to avoid bloodshed. Overall, the cult respects Dol Azur as a less intense version of the Lord of Victory. They downplay his role as *betrayer* and focus more on *cunning* and *finding a path to victory*.

Members of the Three Faces often feel they have a particular affinity for one of the Sovereigns; those who feel guided by Dol Azur may still seek to use their powers for good, but acknowledge they have a knack for sowing terror or ruthless action when it becomes necessary. Within the sect, steel is used to represent Dol Dorn, gold to represent Dol Arrah, and leather to represent Dol Azur; if a soldier wears a leather ring, it might be a sign they feel they're guided by the Mockery. On the flip side, even a soldier who accepts that Dol Azur is part of war doesn't have to embrace his path themself; a soldier could decide that they are guided by Dol Arrah and wear gold to show it.

While the cult isn't generally malevolent, it can be used however suits your story. For example, an influential Azur-touched initiate of the Three Faces of War could use the organization to rally other Azur-touched for some sinister purpose.

Darguun and the Mockery

The Ghaal'dar hobgoblins and the Marguul bugbears of Darguun both revere the Mockery. Much like the diversity among the minotaurs of Droaam in their worship of the Horned King, each goblinoid tribe and clan has its own interpretation and unique traditions, but they fall on a spectrum between the Sovereign of Betrayal and Bloodshed and the Lord of Victory. Since taking power, Lhesh Haruuc has been working to promote the worship of Dol Dorn and Dol Arrah, blending this with the existing worship of the Mockery—but this effort is about optics more than faith. Haruuc recognizes that most people of the Five Nations see worship of the Mockery as evil, so shifting the conversation to say that Darguuls worship all of the Sovereigns of War makes things a little more palatable for outsiders.

However, Haruuc's efforts aren't entirely insincere; he believes there are lessons to be learned from each of the Sovereigns, and he feels a particular affinity for Dol Dorn. At the moment, the Three Faces of War cult hasn't engaged in any concerted effort to initiate Darguuls, but it's possible that some goblinoid mercenaries were initiated by comrades during the war.

What's the Orb of Dol Azur?

The *Orb of Dol Azur* was first mentioned in an article I wrote in 2004. Ever since, it's been my go-to mysterious artifact, an easy name to drop into any piece of fiction where adventurers are looking for something dangerous and powerful. But I've never actually used it in a campaign or said what it does. *Dragons of Eberron* establishes that the draconic champions fought the overlord known as Katashka the Gatekeeper during the Age of Demons; it's entirely possible that this battle inspired the myth of the Dols fighting Death, and that the *Orb of Dol Azur* is actually what the Mockery stole from Katashka the Gatekeeper.

So, what does it do? An easy option is to use the *Orb of Dol Azur* to bring in the powers of iconic artifacts from the greater multiverse, just in a different shape. Katashka is the overlord of death and the undead; the orb he once possessed could wield the powers of the *Wand of Orcus*. Another possibility is that the orb is one of Katashka's eyes! By default it's the size of a dragon's eye—quite large—but the proper ritual could cause it to shift to a size appropriate to the bearer, possessing the same powers as the *Eye of Vecna*.

An entirely different option is to say that the orb is tied to *Keeper's fangs*—a magical weapon introduced in the original *Eberron Campaign Setting* and brought into fifth edition in *Exploring Eberron*. A *Keeper's fang* steals the soul of any creature that's killed with it—but what people don't know is that the soul is then trapped in the *Orb of Dol Azur*. By this point, the orb holds the spirits of countless mortals and lesser fiends that have been trapped over the course of history.

Using the Mockery

So how can you use the Mockery in a campaign? Well, in a world filled with shades of gray, followers of the Sovereign of Bloodshed and Betrayal are a good source of absolute villains. When you're running a pulp campaign and you want someone who feels capital-E Evil, a Flayed Hand monk fits the bill. Someone who is guided by the Pyrinean Creed but nonetheless embraces the Mockery is someone who delights in cruelty and believes they gain strength by inflicting suffering on others.

However, not everyone who honors the Mockery delights in suffering. A group of vigilantes could believe that the terror tactics of the Mockery are the only way to combat rising crime, or a once-faithful Vassal might turn to the Mockery and the Fury to take vengeance for a crime Aureon's laws failed to stop. Those who venerate him as the Lord of Victory might band together into a wolf pack, a group that'll do whatever it takes to survive and overcome a foe.

The Mockery can provide an interesting contrast between a soldier of Droaam and a soldier from the Five Nations. Those who follow the Cazhaak path genuinely see the idea of honor in war as a childish concept. This doesn't make them evil—just because the world is cruel doesn't mean they have to be unnecessarily cruel, but they'll do whatever is required to survive and only show mercy if they see some clear benefit down the road. On the other hand, rather than highlighting differences, introducing the Three Faces of War can forge a bond between soldiers of all nations. If one or more of the player characters is a veteran of the Last War, an influential member of the Three Faces could be a useful patron or ally.

Player Characters

Though honoring the Mockery is an unlikely path for a Vassal player character, it's certainly possible to play the cynical hero who wields fear as a weapon, such as Batman or the Shadow (the pulp hero, not the deity!). This is a dark path to follow, as the fearmonger knows they are inflicting suffering on their enemies; but to them enemies don't deserve to be treated with honor, so it's acceptable to engage in a brutal war on evil, fighting fire with fire. Most likely, a vigilante who embraces the Mockery in this way believes that the law is ineffective—that Aureon's laws and Dol Arrah's honor have failed, and that only cruelty and fear can overcome the threats the character is facing or avenge the wrong that's been done to them. The Dark Petitioner rogue presented at the end of this chapter is one excellent option, but any class could reflect such a vigilante character. On a darker note, a particularly ruthless warlock might believe their power flows from the Mockery—and their Mask of Many Faces invocation might require a strip of skin from the person they wish to impersonate, whether living or dead. The same could apply to a Whispers bard's Mantle of Whispers feature, or to any character who wields fear as a weapon and regularly uses the *disguise self* spell.

Even when playing a more traditional Vassal, keep in mind that Vassals see the hand of the Sovereigns and Six in all walks of life. When anger or despair gets the better of you, that's the Fury taking hold of you for a moment. If you take a cheap shot in a wrestling match—when the crowd goes "Oooh, that's a dirty trick!"—then you're listening to the Mockery. Dol Dorn gives you the strength and skill you need to win in a fair fight, while the Mockery can show you how to win even when the fight isn't fair. But throwing one sucker punch doesn't suddenly make you a cultist of the Mockery. Think of it like someone in our world saying "the devil made me do it." The Dark Six are always with us, trying to pull us down sinister paths. Good Vassals should strive to heed Aureon's law and spread Dol Arrah's light, but everyone has moments of weakness.

If you're a player character who follows the Cazhaak Creed, you expect betrayal and cruelty from others, and you believe you need to display your strength or cunning to ward off challenges. To you, displays of kindness and altruism are suspect, and you don't expect people to keep their word if it becomes an inconvenience to them. After all, people are driven by self-interest—so the key to a lasting bargain isn't a word of honor; it's making sure that neither party dares to break the agreement.

The Shadow

The Shadow was the first of the Dark Six. As Aureon drew words of power in the blood of Siberys, his shadow traced sigils in the blood of Khyber. As Aureon gained power, the darkness in his heart gained strength and sapience. The Shadow's whispers led the Mockery down his dark path and stoked the anger of the Devourer. The Shadow's gifts gave the harpy a voice that lures innocents to their doom, and gave the medusa her deadly gaze. For the Shadow is the maker of monsters—and it can make monsters of any of us, tempting us down evil paths. Aureon and Dol Arrah show us the path to the greater good, while the Shadow urges us to give in to our own darkness. It's up to you to walk in the light and to take the higher road.

—Halas Molan, High Priest of Wroat

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Eat your vegetables. Look both ways before crossing the street. Don't learn that spell, it's dangerous! Aureon, the king, the judge, the teacher ... the world is filled with people telling you what to do, people who want to impose their laws on your life. They say the Shadow urges you to do evil, but who decides what's evil? The Shadow wants you to achieve your full potential, to live your best life—not to be limited by lesser people and their laws. And if that makes you a "monster" in their eyes, so be it.

—Thalanna of Sharn

Exploring Eberron describes that "the war between the Shadow and Aureon rages in all of us. Aureon's voice tells us that we're stronger together, that it's worth it to suffer for the sake of the common good. The Shadow whispers that there is no common good—all that matters is what you need and what you can do. Why should you make sacrifices for others instead of doing what's best for yourself? Why should you give when you can take?"

In the Pyrinean tradition of the Five Nations, the Shadow is broadly responsible for evil within the world. The Sovereigns banished and bound the overlords of the first age, but the Shadow is part of Aureon and couldn't be destroyed; metaphorically, this reflects that the potential for evil is in everyone. But as with all the Dark Six, the Shadow has different aspects: the Sovereign of Ambition, the Tempter, the Keeper of Secrets, and the Maker of Monsters.

Ambition and Temptation

The Shadow is the source of ambition, the voice that urges you to achieve greater things. A little ambition can be a good thing, but the Shadow is never satisfied. It embodies the hunger to succeed regardless of the cost to yourself or others. Those who revere the Shadow emphasize this as a positive trait: the Shadow will show you the path to power, how to be the best that you can be. But how far will you go? Would you murder your boss if it's the only way to advance? What if you can simply ruin their reputation with a lie? Would you employ dark magic even if you know each spell you cast takes a year off an innocent person's life? This is how ambition becomes a pathway to temptation.

But what's the purpose of temptation? Why does the Shadow want to lead you astray, and why should its followers care about you? According to the Pyrinean Creed, Dolurrh isn't the end of existence. Most Vassals believe that Dolurrh is a place where the soul transitions to a higher level of existence: the realm of the Sovereigns. Some believe that this is a true afterlife based on the concept of each Sovereign: that Arawai and Balinor govern a realm of perfect nature, while Aureon presides over a grand assembly of courts and libraries. Others believe that Vassals become part of the Sovereign they most resemble—that the soul of the sage becomes one with Aureon. But one led astray by the Shadow becomes part of the Shadow. This might mean dissolution of the soul or eternity trapped in a formless void; either way, it's not going to be fun. Of course, as with all things related to the Sovereigns, there's no absolute proof of this ... and a devotee of the Shadow will tell you followers of Aureon just use that story to control you. Are you going to let fear keep you from achieving your ambitions?

Shadowtongues

Those who follow this aspect of the Shadow often call themselves mentors, but others refer to them as tempters or Shadowtongues. A tempter specializes in helping others find a path to power, while always driving them toward the darkest path. While this has some overlap with a Talon of the Keeper, there are significant differences between the two. A Talon negotiates a deal with explicit terms and benefits: "your inn will prosper, and in exchange, you'll die at the age of forty and the Keeper will take your soul." By contrast, a tempter doesn't make a specific promise or ask you for anything in return—they simply offer advice, helping you figure out how to solve your problem or achieve your goal yourself. But in the process, they urge you to follow darker and darker paths, driving you to become a monster.

Some tempters believe their powers are gifts from the Shadow, and the Shadow whispers to them, telling them who to corrupt. Other tempters trust that the Shadow rewards them for their work, but they don't have direct interaction with the Shadow or an immortal emissary.

Keeper of Secrets

Aureon is the Sovereign of Knowledge, using science (arcane and otherwise) to build a better world. As the dark side of Aureon, the Shadow is also the Sovereign of Knowledge ... specifically, of the knowledge you *shouldn't* know. The Shadow knows the evil that lurks in the hearts of mortals. It knows who killed your parents. It knows what your lover really thinks about you. And it knows secrets of magic that Aureon won't share—techniques that can provide power, but at a cost. This desire is one of the main things that can draw a Vassal to invoke the Shadow: the desire to gain knowledge they know they shouldn't seek.

In dealing with a priest of the Shadow—NPC or player character—consider that they may have gifts that aren't measured in spell slots or class abilities. A priest of the Shadow may regularly receive revelations about the people around them or the world. But unlike an *augury* or *commune* spell, the priest doesn't ask for this knowledge and has no control over it. Sometimes this knowledge is useful, but just as often, it reveals things you don't actually want to know—knowledge that will hurt people if you share it. People with such a connection to the Shadow often end up as fixers in the criminal underworld; are you willing to pay the price they demand for their knowledge?

Forbidden Gifts

As DM, you might use a revelation from the Shadow—perhaps in a dream or vision—to introduce forbidden gifts into the campaign. The "Character Options" section at the end of this chapter contains a feat that grants forbidden

Metamagic options; though a player might choose these as part of their character's standard class progression, you could also grant these benefits as a supernatural gift (discussed in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Alternatively, the Shadow might bestow one or more additional spells on a character (perhaps from the "Spells of the Six" section of this chapter). It could even grant a spellcaster the ability to increase the power of any spell they know—as if it were cast using a higher-level spell slot—once per long rest ... but every time they're used, these powers could come at a cost. The "Optional Rule: Forbidden Magic Costs" sidebar presents ideas about how such forbidden gifts might impact your game in dark and horrifying ways—if you and your players all agree that's a story you'd like to explore together.

Optional Rule: Forbidden Magic Costs

As suggested in a similar sidebar in *Exploring Eberron*, a DM could introduce magical gifts of the Shadow into a game. The Shadow knows secrets that are dark, powerful, and carry a horrible cost—secrets that good people shouldn't know or use. While the game's rules aren't designed with forbidden spells that shouldn't be cast, you can add forbidden magic into your game, and along with it, a terrible cost.

The character options presented at the end of this chapter aren't designed with many penalties; however, a player who chooses them (or receives them as a supernatural gift) might be interested in embracing additional downsides and exploring the story of "forbidden magic at a cost." Regardless of what effects you establish, they should illustrate a clear and concrete reason why this magic is forbidden—someone or something pays a price every time it's used. Consider the following ideas:

- When you cast the spell, roll 1d4. You permanently lose that many hit points.
- When you cast the spell, roll 1d6. The DM chooses you or one of your allies, either dealing the result rolled as necrotic damage or applying it as a penalty to that creature's next saving throw.
- When you cast the spell, an innocent creature dies. You have no control over who suffers and might never learn who died.
- When you cast the spell, plants wither and all living creatures within 15 feet of you take 1 necrotic damage.
- When you cast the spell, roll 1d4. On a 1, a hostile **shadow** (or another shadow-like Undead with either the Amorphous or Incorporeal Movement trait) manifests and attacks you and your friends.
- When you cast the spell, choose an ally within sight. The player can reveal to you a horrifying secret about their character that's worse than any previous secret they've revealed; if they can't or if they choose not to, the spell fails. (Note that the player makes this choice, not their character; it's up to the DM if the character even realizes the Shadow has shared their secret.)

These ideas are all reasonable for player characters; meanwhile, an NPC who wields secrets of the Shadow could have even more dramatic effects or costs to their spells. All of this demonstrates that when people say "this is power that nobody should wield," it's not just Aureon being a jerk—these powers truly are dangerous.

Maker of Monsters

Through temptation, the Shadow can transform anyone into a monster—but the Shadow is also infamous for unleashing monsters into the world. Though the definition of "monster" varies by culture, the Shadow's influence is seen when malevolent magic twists nature; thus, "monster" usually includes most aberrations and monstrosities, along with giants and humanoids that are seen as evil by the culture in question. Mythologically, the idea is that the Shadow took evil humanoids and transformed them into harpies, medusas, hags, and the like. A host of myths detail these monstrous origin stories. However, these aren't only myths, they're in many cases provably false; certain creatures are known to be the creations of specific overlords or daelkyr. But it isn't always possible to prove a creature's ancestral origins; many scholars assert that the daelkyr Orlaask created medusas, while the medusas themselves attribute their powers to the Shadow.

It's crucial to recognize that this view of "monster" reflects the casual prejudices of the Pyrinean Creed—it is a dismissive label driven by fear. In Eberron, medusas, harpies, trolls, and other such "monstrous" creatures are no more or less evil than any human. In fact, the Cazhaak faith asserts that it's humanity who suffers in lacking the wondrous supernatural gifts of the so-called monsters. Even within the Five Nations, the work of House Tharashk and the Dragonne's Roar have brought more people into everyday contact with beings they were taught to see as monsters, and more continue to realize that this is a false and close-minded label.

Many Faces of the Shadow

The above sections focus on the common perspective on the Shadow within the Five Nations. However, the Cazhaak tradition views the Shadow in a different light than does the Pyrinean Creed, most notably by dropping the aspect of the tempter. In Droaam, priests of the Shadow—known as Voices of the Shadow—assert that knowledge is power, that people should pursue their ambition and that there should be no limits on knowledge. But they scoff at the idea that the Shadow tempts people to do evil; that's the product of a civilization that's bound and blinded by its laws and moral codes, that fears ambition and instinct.

The various peoples of the Barrens have long had diverse interpretations of the Nine and Six, as discussed in "The Cazhaak Faith" at the beginning of this chapter. When Droaam was unified, the Cazhaak faith essentially became the state religion. People are free to revere whichever gods they wish, but Voices of the Shadow fill the role of spiritual leaders. These priests are typically medusas or oni; while the position isn't restricted to them, the Cazhaak medusas are the most devout of the peoples of Droaam, while many oni believe that their powerful innate abilities prove they are favored by the Shadow. The Shadow is the foremost of the Six, and in addition to its traditional spheres of magic and knowledge, the Shadow

is generally considered to be a guide and guardian to monstrous creatures. As such, a medusa cleric of the Shadow might have the Life domain, because she sees the Shadow as being the bringer of life to her people.

A Voice of the Shadow reveres all members of the Six and invokes all of them when it is appropriate—though they also seek to mitigate some of the more extreme behaviors of the lesser faiths. So a medusa priestess might approach a Last Dirge harpy who's just come to Graywall and say "I recognize your devotion to the Song. Here in Graywall, we know her as the Fury; let me teach you ways to honor her that won't get you killed."

Three Faces of Knowledge

The Three Faces of Knowledge is a cult devoted to Aureon, Onatar, and the Shadow (who the sect knows by no other name). This sect is the smallest and most secretive of the Three Faces cults. Their principles are simple: Aureon is the Teacher, who holds laws, history, articles of faith, and all the shared information that shapes a society. Onatar is the Builder, who puts knowledge to concrete purpose. And the Shadow hides those things that must be concealed, the secrets that could tear down civilization. Members of the Three Faces of Knowledge believe all things should be known—but there are secrets that should only be held by those who can use these insights wisely.

As with all the Three Faces cults, most initiates believe they are blessed by a particular Sovereign. Those tied to Aureon are often teachers, historians, or scribes; they seek to record and disseminate knowledge. Initiates of Onatar apply arcane knowledge to everyday life as magewrights, artificers, and wizards. Initiates of the Shadow are the rarest—and rarely seen. These devotees seek out secrets but also conceal them; they can often be found as archivists or librarians, positions where they can carefully bury or hide knowledge they feel must be kept secret. With that said, initiates won't risk vital knowledge being lost forever; secrets may be hidden, but they won't be destroyed.

The adventurers might encounter the Three Faces of Knowledge when the sect approaches one of them as a potential initiate—likely a character with the sage background or one who pioneers new arcane techniques. On the other hand, the adventurers might need information the Three Faces have decided must be hidden; can they expose the conspiracy in the Morgrave stacks?

Marhu Nasaar: Emperor of Night

Worship of the Shadow has deep roots in Darguun, but the Darguul interpretation of the Shadow is different from both the Cazhaak and Pyrinean traditions. In Darguun, the Shadow is seen as a patron of all those who prosper in darkness—of those creatures and cultures who have no fear of the night or lightless tunnels. The Darguul formally call the Shadow the Marhu Nasaar, Emperor of Night.

This faith broadly aligns with the Cazhaak view of the Shadow as the patron of so-called monsters, but most Darguuls don't bother with the extended pantheon. Aside from them honoring the Mockery as the Lord of Cunning and Victory, they see the Shadow as a deity who can be invoked in any time and space—though it's well known that the blessings of the Shadow hold little weight when the sun is high and the skies are clear.

The Shadow and the Overlords

The Shadow has specific overlap with two of the best-known overlords of the first age of the world. Sul Khatesh is also known as the Keeper of Secrets and said to be a source of both arcane knowledge and things best kept hidden. Meanwhile, Bel Shalor is known as the Shadow in the Flame and specializes in temptation.

Some scholars assert that the myths of the Shadow are actually based on interactions between draconic champions and overlords—so the story of Aureon learning magic may actually be based on a bargain between the dragon Ourelonastrix and Sul Khatesh. It's up to the DM to decide whether there's any truth to these tales, but regardless, Sul Khatesh and Bel Shalor are concrete, very real entities that can serve in the role of the Shadow … and warlocks or cults that believe they're dealing with the Shadow could easily be working with one of these archfiends.

Using the Shadow

So how can you use the Shadow in a campaign? What would a villain devoted to the Shadow actually *want*?

In many cases, a servant of the Shadow may be an instigator as opposed to the primary villain. A tempter drives others to do evil and helps facilitate their plans. A priest of the Keeper of Secrets may serve as a general fixer in the criminal underworld, but can also set trouble in motion by revealing a secret. Combined with their knowledge of dark magic, such a character could be an interesting frenemy for a group of player characters. Consider Thalanna, a human priestess at Sharn's shrine of the Shadow. She's known as a reliable source of information about the underworld, always willing to share her knowledge … for a price. But she may also approach the adventurers and simply tell them things. Did they know that Ilya Boromar is going to assassinate Saidan Boromar tonight? Did they know that their recently murdered friend was killed by Thora Tarkanan? Thalanna has nothing personal to gain by sharing this information, but she enjoys setting wheels in motion. And Thalanna can offer to teach a wizard character a few things they won't learn in Arcanix—these secrets are powerful, but is the character willing to pay the price?

Shadow sects can also fill the classic role of the warlock coven or the infernal bargain … people being granted mystical power in exchange for performing malevolent actions. Often this is about ambition—getting the power you need to fulfill your darkest desires—but it can also be driven by fear. The leader of a warlock coven may play on fears of the Mourning, refugees, or even monsters. Join them and they'll teach you the magic you need to protect yourself! As mentioned in the "The Shadow and the Overlords" sidebar, such a cult

could have connections to the Lords of Dust, either Sul Khatesh or Bel Shalor.

Another Shadow-driven villain is the wizard who is determined to unlock ultimate arcane power, regardless of cost. Such a character could even have a noble goal; for example, a wizard who believes they must unlock the power of the Mourning so they can prevent it from spreading or being harnessed by one of the Five Nations. Regardless of motives, this character becomes consumed by their ambition and doesn't care who they hurt in pursuit of their goal. Perhaps they need to open a manifest zone to Mabar in the middle of Sharn to complete a ritual or learn a secret—despite knowing this will break Sharn's connection to Syrania and bring down the towers. It doesn't matter, because the knowledge they acquire will help them save the entire world!

To be clear: these examples are extremes. There are some who offer prayers to the Shadow who aren't warlocks or wizards, who don't seek to tempt others or destroy the world. The ultimate principle of the Shadow is that nothing is forbidden, so you shouldn't let laws or the dictates of society hinder your ambition. Do you believe you'd do a better job than your boss, but it's going to take decades to get there if you follow the system? The Shadow tells you the system is the problem.

Additionally, the Shadow embraces those others call "monsters"—you needn't be evil to be drawn to it, simply seeking a place to call your own. While the Mockery and the Keeper can be patrons for criminals driven by greed or violence, the Shadow is a patron for anyone who feels they stand apart from Boldrei and Aureon—perhaps they haven't found a place in their community, or feel that the laws only exist to hold them back. In this, there's some overlap with the Traveler; the Traveler encourages people to challenge systems and to drive change, while the Shadow is more about pursuing personal ambition.

Long Shadows

Sharn: City of Towers mentions several "holidays" in Eberron, including Long Shadows, which spans three nights from Vult 26th–28th. It's said that during this time, the power of the Shadow is at its peak; malevolent magics are stronger and "monsters" are free to act (this can include those born monsters and those who have become monsters). It's up to the DM to decide what truth there is to this superstition. Perhaps saving throws against any sort of "dark magic" have disadvantage during this time. Maybe those who act with evil intent receive supernatural benefits like advantage on some rolls. Perhaps there are mystic rituals that can only be performed on these nights. In any case, on these three nights, good folk tend to stay inside and huddle around the fire while the forces of evil rise up and take action.

Player Characters

The Shadow can be tied to many interesting character concepts: the scholar pursuing knowledge at any cost, the character shaped by a past bargain who now seeks redemption, or the bard who sees the Shadow as the source of knowledge and freedom, doing good but on their own terms. The "Forbidden Feat" and "Forbidden Metamagic" sections at the end of this chapter present new options for a spellcaster who has received secret knowledge from the Shadow. Here are some other ideas to consider.

Driven by Ambition. A rogue might be a casual supporter of the Shadow, asserting that laws are for other people; alternatively, you could create a more devoted rogue using the Dark Petitioner subclass at the end of this chapter. A Conquest paladin might be willing to use the power of the Shadow to seize their ambition; this would-be tyrant believes the Shadow is giving them the power they need to achieve their ambitions ... will they have a change of heart along the way? Keep in mind that what separates a paladin of the Shadow from a paladin of the Mockery is the focus on *power* rather than *war*. Where a Mockery paladin lives for conflict, the Shadow paladin is only concerned with the end result.

Monster Maker. The Shadow is known for creating monsters—so wizards and warlocks who are seeking to create monsters themselves might gravitate toward it. The warlock Pact of the Chain can be reflavored to suggest that the character created their familiar.

Secret Seeker. Knowledge clerics and Whispers bards are both sound paths for a character who pursues the arcane secrets of the Shadow. The College of Lore is also a reasonable option; your Cutting Words ability can reflect your whispered knowledge of their weakness or another secret that causes them to stumble.

The Shadow is particularly known for teaching dark techniques that are shunned by good people. At a simple level, this makes the Shadow an excellent patron for warlocks who are sacrificing to gain mystical power—and who expect to use that power for malevolent purposes. Because this is about deadly power, the actual "patron" is flexible; Fiend or Hexblade both work, and as noted above, an Archfey warlock could reflect powers of coercion and deception as opposed to an actual tie to the fey. Like all gods of Eberron, the Shadow won't actually manifest to a warlock—but the warlock may *believe* they have a direct channel to the Shadow; they could have a sinister spirit acting as an emissary of the Shadow, or they might actually be working for the overlord Sul Khatesh.

Tempter. Tempters are typically villains, and they facilitate the evil actions of others. But it's a possible path for a player character, albeit a dark one. A tempter emphasizes choice and freedom; they may excel at solving problems and help other characters achieve noble goals, but as a follower of the Shadow, they believe that nothing is forbidden. Such a character could even be searching for light in the darkness—tempting in the hopes of finding someone who resists corruption.

A skilled tempter character needs to know secret paths to power and to have the charm to convince others to follow them. As such a tempter, you could be a cleric of the Aspiration domain, presented at the end of this chapter; the Knowledge or Trickery domain are also reasonable options. As a warlock, you could use the Archfey patron to reflect a talent for beguiling

others and slipping into the shadows. A bard of the Shadow would likely be of the College of Whispers.

Alternately, a player character could be haunted by a previous encounter with a tempter who helped them achieve whatever position or power they hold today. Is this character permanently tainted by the actions they took to achieve their ambition? Or can they find redemption?

Unexpected Gifts. The Shadow sorcerer is a logical servant of the Shadow; but it's possible this power was given to you involuntarily. Perhaps your parents were Shadow cultists, and you're the result of a terrible ritual—but are you doomed to be consumed by evil, or can you use your power in the service of the light? Beyond this, any wizard can be presented as having received unexpected inspiration from the Shadow. You'd never have mastered necromancy on your own, but you woke from a dream and realized you understood it.

MATTHEW JOHNSON

The Traveler

Boldrei unites us as a community, and Aureon's laws bring order to our lives. Dol Arrah shows us the path of honor, and Dol Dorn gives us courage. But the Traveler seeks to destroy all of this. They wander the world, hiding behind a hundred different faces. They offer gifts, tempting you to take risks and to stray from the path. They have one goal: chaos. Try something new! Listen to this secret! Take this risky opportunity! All of these are the gifts of the Traveler, and all lead to despair. Trust in tradition. Trust the neighbor you know, not the stranger on the road. Beware the gifts of the Traveler.

—Halas Molan, High Priest of Wroat

"Don't speak to strangers." "Don't try anything new." The priests tell you to treasure the life you have now, and to avoid anything that might place it at risk. Well, the sheep in the field live predictable lives of absolute security ... until the shepherd grows hungry! Yes, the Traveler will shatter the life you have known, and in that chaos, you'll find your path and learn who you truly are. Only by leaving your comfortable home can you see all the wonders the world has to offer. If you care only about peace and stability, you might as well crawl into your grave right now. But if you want to experience everything life has to offer—moments of despair, yes, but also the greatest joys you can imagine—embrace the gifts of the Traveler.

—Chance of Sharn

Five bones lashed together—one of the oldest and simplest symbols of the Dark Six, found in countless shrines in Droaam. But why *five* bones, not six? Because the Traveler can't be bound to one place or one form; they're the space on the wall, acknowledged by their absence.

Our lives are balanced between order and chaos, and the Traveler, Sovereign of Change, always tries to push us over the edge. In the myths of the Nine and Six, the Traveler is never encountered as "the Traveler" themself. Instead, they're the smith who gives Dol Dorn a sword, only to have it shatter in the first battle; the thief who steals Aureon's tome the moment he needs it most; the soldier who exposes Dol Azur's treachery. The Traveler wears a different name and face in every tale, but we know they're the Traveler because of the impact of their actions. Sometimes the gifts of the Traveler raise you up, and sometimes they ruin you. The only constants are chaos and change—shattering the foundation of your life and forcing you to find a new path forward.

In the common traditions of the Sovereign Host, the Traveler is presented as a malicious entity who revels in misfortune, chaos, and confusion. Good fortune is the blessing of Olladra, but when something fails at the worst possible moment, it's the hand of the Traveler. In these stories, the Traveler seeks to undermine all security, to tear down every foundation. Any stranger could be the Traveler, seeking to bring you to ruin. By contrast, those who follow the Traveler say that the change the Traveler brings is a positive thing—that chaos spurs innovation and revelation, that it's important to challenge traditions and abandon those that have served their purpose. Like most of the Dark Six, the Traveler focuses on the good of the individual over the stability of institutions: they help you find *your* path, rather than being bound by tradition. When you meet a stranger on the road, are you afraid of this possible threat or excited to meet someone new?

In addition to discussing the common Vassal view of the Traveler, this section examines two other relevant sects. The Cazhaak tradition, the common faith of

Droaam, respects the chaos of the Traveler as a force that challenges tradition and forces people and civilizations to evolve. Meanwhile, the most devoted followers of the Traveler are the Children of Jes, nomadic changelings who view the Traveler as a personal guide and source of inspiration. You can learn more about these changelings in chapter 2 of *Exploring Eberron*.

Chaos and Change

The Traveler touches the domains of many other Sovereigns. Like Aureon and the Shadow, the Traveler is a source of knowledge. Along with Olladra and the Mockery, the Traveler is a patron of those who rely on deception and cunning. Like Onatar, they can provide inspiration to the artisan. Both those who fear the Traveler and those who revere them agree on one thing: whatever gifts the Traveler gives, they always lead to chaos. If the Traveler gives you knowledge, it's because the revelation will force you to reevaluate everything you know. If they help you deceive, it's because your actions will introduce chaos and crisis into your life or the lives of others. While Onatar teaches a swordsmith to make a better sword, the Traveler might show her how to make a bomb, changing the face of warfare. The Traveler isn't here to help you to satisfy your greed or to achieve your ambitions—instead, they set you on paths you never thought to try. They may grant you good fortune, but when you call on the Traveler, you invite the unexpected into your life.

The Traveler isn't *evil* in the same way as the Devourer or the Shadow. But most Vassals view the Traveler as an entirely malicious force—while those who honor the Traveler emphasize the potentially positive aspects of chaos. Take one common myth as an example: A smith gives Dol Dorn a magic sword, promising that it can defeat any foe. Dol Dorn rashly challenges a band of demons, but as he fights, the blade shatters. Refusing to retreat, Dol Dorn fights on and brings down his enemies with his fists and feet ... creating the martial art practiced by the Vassal monks of the Order of the Broken Blade. The typical Vassal interprets the role of the Traveler as entirely negative: the sword shattered, and only the strength and courage of Dol Dorn allowed him to triumph. By contrast, the Children say that Dol Dorn was forced to create something entirely new *because* the blade shattered—the Traveler's goal wasn't to kill Dol Dorn, but rather to challenge him and force this moment of innovation. The Cazhaak tradition maintains that the chaos of the Traveler is a flame that tests and tempers traditions and beliefs, whether these define a society or an individual; the Traveler doesn't seek absolute anarchy, but they want you to constantly challenge your beliefs and abandon traditions that have outlived their usefulness. Under this interpretation, the Traveler is ultimately a positive force, though they force you to live in interesting times. However, most Vassals dismiss this and see the Traveler solely as a bringer of misfortune and mischief.

Walking Your Own Path

In the Pyrinean myths, the Traveler seeks to lure you off the path of safety and security. But in the traditions of the Children, the Traveler is the guide who walks by your side when you choose the unknown road—because it's only by walking your own path that you can find yourself. "Walk your own path" and "find yourself" are important principles for those who honor the Traveler. Walking your own path can be embraced both literally and metaphorically. On the one hand, it's a faith that encourages a nomadic lifestyle, embracing the chaos of the road and seeking out new places and experiences. Beyond that, it's a simple directive not to let others control your life; trust your instincts and don't fear the unknown.

Finding yourself can likewise be embraced on multiple levels. Identify your strengths and your passions, but beyond that, figure out who you want to be and become that person. While this is an easier directive for a changeling, Eberron's world of magic can make it a literal truth for anyone. *Disguise self* and *alter self* allow you to temporarily assume identities, but special versions of transmutation spells and rituals can allow you to permanently change any aspect of appearance or gender. Followers of the Traveler are urged not to feel bound by anyone's expectations—only you know who you are.

So while Vassals fear the Traveler as a malevolent force that seeks to pull you into chaos, the Children and those that follow the Cazhaak faith see the Traveler as the one who stands by you when you choose to leap into the unknown or challenge tradition. Those who follow the Traveler generally embrace one of three paths.

Tricksters

The trickster sows chaos for the joy of it, believing that as long as they're causing trouble for someone, they're protected by the Traveler. Some tricksters are impulsive and wild, causing disruptions wherever they go but rarely causing any huge disasters. Others are careful and calculating, forgoing petty disruptions in favor of actions that'll shake cities or institutions. With that said, most tricksters have no long-term agenda beyond chaos itself; their purpose is to light the fire, and how far it spreads or what it consumes is in the hands of fate. Tricksters are primarily found among Vassals; as the faith has a purely negative view of the Traveler, those who follow their path embrace that destructive view.

Mentors

The mentor creates chaos because they believe it'll have a positive outcome. In comparison to tricksters, mentors are rarely impulsive, preferring to create chaos with a goal in mind, whether that's testing an institution, a law, or a particular individual. The mentor is the smith who gives Dol Dorn a flawed sword because they know he relies too heavily on his sword and needs to learn he doesn't need it. Of course, the mentor decides what lesson you need to learn, and there's no promise you'll survive the ensuing strife. Mentors can also focus on guiding those who are in moments of crisis; just as they

believe the Traveler is by their side in chaotic times, they take that role for others, trying to lead toward a positive outcome. Such a mentor believes that traditions need to be challenged and people need to be tested, but ultimately they want people to learn a positive lesson, not to be lost to the chaos.

Wanderers

The wanderer follows their own path, pursuing a life of constant change and new experiences. They don't seek to cause chaos in the lives of others, either maliciously or with good intent. Rather, they embrace chaos in their own life, seeking to live unfettered by expectations and avoid settling into any negative patterns.

Many Faces of the Traveler

Many followers of the Traveler follow the path of the wanderer, living nomadic lives and walking their own paths with little concern for the greater world around them. However, just as the Traveler inspires chaos, the faith of those who follow the Traveler can take a vast array of forms. Here are some examples.

The Cabinet of Faces

One alliance devoted to the Traveler follows the path of the mentor, actively sowing chaos in large and small ways. Most members of this Cabinet of Faces are changelings, so their exact numbers are impossible to track and it's up to you as a DM to decide just how widespread they are and how deep their resources go. There could be members of the Cabinet in every city, with agents hidden in positions of power. Or there could be merely a dozen members of the Cabinet, each of whom assumes a hundred different roles.

Members of the Cabinet of Faces play the role of the Traveler in the myths, acting in ways that set chaos in motion. This could be a gift, a theft, or a revelation. Consider the following possibilities.

- The party is ambushed, and before their would-be assassin escapes, the characters recognize their clothing or other trappings as tied to a local organization. In fighting that organization, the party shakes up a corrupt and ingrained system ... but they never encounter the person who originally attacked them.
- A scholar arrives with proof that one of the characters has an unexpected claim to a noble title ... but what chaos will ensue if they pursue it?
- The party is accosted by a group of guards, who report that a member of the party was clearly seen committing a crime earlier—will the characters sort out the situation, or panic and dig in deeper?

In all these examples, a single individual is setting a chaotic series of events in motion. The assassin, the scholar, and the criminal don't have a personal investment in the outcome; they're simply placing the player characters in a challenging situation or using the party to challenge a powerful institution or tradition.

The key with the Cabinet of Faces is that their actions always create a crisis. This could be a personal crisis—"do I pursue my ancestral claim?"—or it could be a set of events that could bring down a dragonmarked house, a high priest, or a nation. It's possible that these actions can objectively be seen as noble, as they often target corrupt institutions. But the Cabinet of Faces also challenges virtuous institutions or traditions, both to make sure they're still serving their purpose and to force them to evolve. Their goal isn't "good"—it's chaos, with the hope that that chaos will have a positive outcome.

Cannith Cults

Onatar is generally seen as the patron of House Cannith. While he does inspire artisans and help them find better ways to do their work, he does so slowly and carefully. Onatar can be seen as following the Prime Directive: the Sovereign of the Forge won't share any ideas until the world is ready for them. But there are others in House Cannith who believe there should be no limits—divine or otherwise—on arcane advancement. Artificers and artisans who invoke the Traveler pursue ideas that could change the world. After the Mourning rocked the Five Nations, a common theory emerged that the disaster was caused by a Cannith cult of the Traveler—that they were creating a weapon that would completely change the face of modern warfare, and they lost control of it. There's no question that the Mourning has forced change on the world—but it also shows the potential danger of meddling with forces we don't understand. Others say that Aaren d'Cannith was a devotee of the Traveler, and that the Sovereign of Change showed him the path to warforged sentience ... a discovery that forces everyone to reconsider the nature of life and the rights of their creations.

The party could encounter a single visionary Cannith with big dreams and creations they can't control, or an entire coalition within the house that's actively researching something that could fundamentally change civilization as we know it. Whether that's reliable resurrection or cheap teleportation, part of their motivation would be to explore the chaos such a discovery would cause, and the ways in which it would transform the world.

Cannith cults are an excellent example of artificers who revere the Traveler, as it's easy for them to hide within the infrastructure of the house, but any artificer can seek inspiration from the Traveler. The risk is that House Cannith always seeks to contain any advances that could threaten its monopolies. Working within the house, you can try to hide your true work within legitimate paths. As an independent, you don't have the shield provided by family connections or knowledge of the house. But an independent artificer who creates a revolutionary ritual could certainly threaten the established dominance of the house ... and bringing down established powers is one of the goals of the Traveler.

Independent Operators

Anyone who causes chaos or crisis can be perceived as a hand of the Traveler, but some people do the work of the Traveler in less dramatic ways. The Tyrants of

Sharn aren't as far-reaching in their actions as the Cabinet of Faces, but they also take subtle actions to challenge the institutions of the city—whether that's exacerbating the conflict between Daask and the Boromar Clan, or subtly interfering in the espionage and diplomacy that occurs throughout the city. Meanwhile, a priest of the Traveler named Chance runs a gambling hall in Sharn, encouraging people to take risks and facilitating unusual wagers.

Using the Traveler

The Traveler is the only Sovereign who's often depicted as wandering the world. However, this is a flawed interpretation of what's actually going on. The Traveler is the stranger on the road, the spark that creates the flame. The Traveler takes a different form in every story, but we know they're the Traveler because of the consequences of their actions. While you could posit this as the work of a single divine entity, it can simply be the actions of many different people. The Children believe that the Traveler acts through you; when you do the work of a mentor, in that moment you *are* the Traveler. Likewise, many powerful beings—from archfey to the legendary Sora Kell—have taken on the mantle of the Traveler or had their actions attributed to the Traveler.

Player characters might meet an individual who claims to be the Traveler—but are they truly a god? Are they an archfey or celestial that's taken on the mantle? Are they simply a changeling priest? They might be from one of the sects discussed in "Many Faces of the Traveler," or an independent operator. Either way, when introducing a devotee of the Traveler, consider whether they're a wanderer, mentor, or trickster ... do they wander the world for their own benefit without seeking to bring chaos to others? Do they believe their actions could have a positive outcome? Or are they lighting a fire because they want to watch things burn?

Player Characters

In following the Traveler, you embrace instability and chaos as positive tools. Unless you're a trickster, you don't want to cause trouble without reason. But you believe in taking chances, embracing uncertainty, and pushing others to do the same.

The critical question is how you're going to interact with the other members of your party. The carefree trickster who sows chaos with no concern for consequence might be fun for *you*, but why would the other adventurers associate with you (unless they share your beliefs)? And how will the players themselves feel about your character's actions toward theirs? As such, the mentor or the wanderer are usually better paths for player characters.

Wanderer. As a wanderer, you're primarily a free spirit. You likely encourage the party to keep moving forward, to question authority, and to avoid being tied down, but you're primarily focused on your own journey as opposed to trying to bring chaos to others. A ranger could easily follow the path of the wanderer, as could a changeling monk who seeks to perfect their own form.

Mentor. As a mentor, you may focus on bringing down corrupt systems and institutions: challenging the dragonmarked houses, exposing corruption in local guilds or temples, and trying to help innocents find a positive path through chaotic times. You could also receive cryptic divine guidance, being directed toward people to help or institutions to challenge. You may not know the entire story, but you know that it's your task to bring down the Daggerwatch Garrison in Sharn ... are you up to the task?

Trickster. Bards, rogues, and charlatans make excellent tricksters. A sorcerer specializing in illusion or enchantment could also attribute their gifts to the Traveler. An Archfey warlock could believe the Traveler is their patron ... but are they actually serving the Sovereign, or an archfey who's taken on the mantle?

Priest. If your character not only honors the Traveler but actively serves in a priestly role, you could play a cleric of the Trickery or Knowledge domain, depending on your vision of your character. Are you more about active deception, or do you work by exposing secrets? Another option is to play an artificer or Forge cleric who focuses on creating things that will change the world (see the "Cannith Cults" section above for more information on this). There's no paladin oath that's particularly suited to the Traveler, but you could follow any oath as long as you're pursuing the Traveler's goals. If you're a wanderer, you could take the Oath of the Ancients; if you're focused on tearing down corrupt systems, you might take the Oath of Vengeance; and if you're primarily driven to help guide others through times of chaos and crisis, you could follow the Oath of Devotion. However, you needn't be a divine spellcaster to believe you have a divine purpose, or even to play the role of priest.

Unlike priests of other faiths, who often use a particular holy symbol to mark their service, the Traveler doesn't have a consistent holy symbol; it's hard to be a subtle agent of chaos when you're wearing a uniform or carrying an object that advertises that fact. Instead, the holy symbols of the Traveler are things that have personal significance and importance to the individual priest—each priest carries an object with a *story*. These can be handed down; one common symbol used by the Children is a traveling cloak, patched and repaired over generations. If a holy symbol is lost, the servant of the Traveler can invest a new object as their holy symbol by finishing a long rest—but that new object must also have a story and significance to the priest. (If you're using something that's not a traditional holy symbol, or even playing a different class that doesn't use one at all, you can describe any spellcasting focus or component as if it were an item of divine significance; just be sure to follow the rules for how that item should be used in spellcasting, such as touching it while you cast a spell.)

Character Options

This section presents new subclasses for bards, clerics, and rogues devoted to the Dark Six.

Bard: College of the Fury

Bards who follow the College of the Fury know that intense revelry, unbound by taboo and pretenses of decency, is among the most powerful expressions of the Music of Creation. These bards are overtly passionate, sometimes hedonistic, and eager to call others into their dance. Harpies of the Cazhaak Creed are the most common practitioners of this college, reveling in Szorawai's name.

Despicable Tongue

3rd-Level College of the Fury Feature

You gain proficiency in the Intimidation skill. If you are already proficient in Intimidation, you gain proficiency in another skill of your choice.

Additionally, you have advantage on all Charisma checks directed at creatures that are hostile toward you.

Fury's Revelry

3rd-Level College of the Fury Feature

You have learned to empower your bardic magic to inspire frenzied dance. Once on your turn when you hit a creature with a bard spell attack or when a creature fails a saving throw against one of your bard spells, you can force that creature to dance. That target must immediately move 5 feet, plus an additional 5 feet for each level of the triggering spell (cantrips are level 0), in a direction of your choice. The movement need not be in a straight line. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks. If a target is compelled to move into an obviously dangerous hazard, such as a fire or pit, it can make a Wisdom saving throw against your bard spell save DC. On a successful save, its movement ends before it enters the hazardous space, and you can move it no further that turn.

Voice of Betrayal

6th-Level College of the Fury Feature

You can inflict your enemies with paranoia, causing them to strike their allies. As a bonus action, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to force a hostile creature you can see within 30 feet of you that can hear you to make a Wisdom saving throw. A creature automatically succeeds on this save if it is immune to being frightened. On a failed save, the target must immediately use its reaction (if available) to make one melee weapon attack against a creature of your choice within its reach. On a hit, the attack deals extra damage equal to the number rolled on the Bardic Inspiration die.

Revelry of the Crowds

14th-Level College of the Fury Feature

Whenever you use your Fury's Revelry feature, you can empower your song into a magnificent and malign crescendo. Rather than affecting just one target of the triggering spell, you can instead affect each hostile creature that you hit with that attack or that failed its saving throw against that spell.

You can use this ability a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Cleric: Aspiration Domain

Clerics of the Aspiration domain consider themselves mentors—though others are more likely to call them tempters. They offer forbidden knowledge and challenge people to live up to their full potential, eschewing the confines of what others might consider right, proper, or safe. The most common clerics to earn these gifts of the faith are followers of the Shadow under the Cazhaak Creed.

Domain Spells

1st-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

You gain domain spells at the cleric levels listed in the Aspiration Domain Spells table. See the Divine Domain class feature for how domain spells work.

Aspiration Domain Spells

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	*detect magic*, *illusory script*
3rd	*augury*, *detect thoughts*
5th	*clairvoyance*, *Shadow's echo**
7th	*divination*, *shadow of Moil* XGE
9th	*circle of power*, *scrying*

* Appears in the "Spells of the Six" section of this chapter

Dark Revelations

1st-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

Your divine studies have revealed a wealth of knowledge to you. You gain proficiency in one skill or tool of your choice, and your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make using that skill or tool. Whenever you finish a long rest, you can change the proficiency granted by this feature to another skill or tool.

Eyes Unveiled

1st-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

Your sight is unhindered, and you can see in the deepest shadows. You have darkvision out to a range of 120 feet. In that radius, you can see in dim light as if it were bright light and in darkness as if it were dim light. In addition, you have advantage on saving throws against illusion spells and on ability checks to determine whether something is an illusion.

Channel Divinity: Awaken Ambition

2nd-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

You can use your Channel Divinity to invoke the secrets of the Shadow, allowing you and your charges to turn forbidden potential into strength. You and each willing creature of your choice that you can see within 15 feet of you take necrotic damage equal to 1d10 plus your Wisdom modifier, and gain twice that many temporary hit points. This damage can't be reduced in any way.

Shadow's Gifts

6th-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

When you use your Channel Divinity feature, you can impart some of the Shadow's most successful lessons and awaken new gifts in those affected. Choose one of the following magical gifts, bestowing that benefit on yourself and each target of your Channel Divinity:

Eyes of the Medusa. For 1 minute, you can use your bonus action to fix your gaze on one creature within 30 feet of you that you can see and that can see your eyes. The target must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to the cleric spell save DC of the cleric that granted you this benefit. On a failed save, the target's speed is reduced to 0 feet until the end of its next turn.

Heart of the Troll. At the start of your next turn, you regain hit points equal to 1d10 plus the Wisdom modifier of the cleric that granted you this benefit. If you take fire or acid damage before the start of your next turn, you don't regain hit points from this benefit.

Mastery of the Hag. For 1 minute, you have advantage on saving throws against spells.

Voice of the Harpy. You gain advantage on all Charisma checks for 1 minute.

Potent Spellcasting

8th-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

You add your Wisdom modifier to the damage you deal with any cleric cantrip.

Shadow's Apotheosis

17th-Level Aspiration Domain Feature

The range of your Channel Divinity: Awaken Ambition feature increases from 15 feet to 30 feet. In addition, creatures affected by your Shadow's Gifts feature gain all four benefits, instead of just one.

Rogue: Dark Petitioner

As a rogue, you know that the path to peace and prosperity is rarely as virtuous as the Vassals of the Sovereign Host claim. Victory must be won by pragmatism, sacrifice, and the blood of those who aren't afraid to get their hands dirty—like you. With these tenets, you ask the Dark Six for the gift of their power.

Though some Dark Petitioners worship the Six as great leaders to venerate and emulate, many among the Five Nations don't hold their patrons in such high esteem. For these petitioners, their rites and rituals instead serve to appease the dark powers, and to turn the Six's attention to their enemies. Do you enjoy the power of Dol Azur's blessing on a poisoned blade? Or do you only hope that your offerings to the Mockery will cause your opponent to stumble first?

Spellcasting

3rd-Level Dark Petitioner Feature

You gain the ability to cast spells. See chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook* for the general rules of spellcasting and chapter 11 for the cleric spell list.

Cantrips. You learn the *guidance* cantrip and two cantrips of your choice from the following list: *dancing lights*, *friends*, *message*, *resistance*, *spare the dying*, *thaumaturgy*, *true strike*, and *Traveler's enigma* (in the "Spells of the Six" section of this chapter). At 10th level, you learn another cantrip of your choice from this list.

Spell Slots. The Dark Petitioner Spellcasting table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your cleric spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

For example, if you know the 1st-level spell *cure wounds* and have a 1st-level and a 2nd-level spell slot available, you can cast *cure wounds* using either slot.

Spells Known of 1st-Level and Higher. You know three 1st-level cleric spells of your choice. The Spells Known column of the Dark Petitioner Spellcasting table shows when you learn more cleric spells of 1st level or higher. Each of these spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots. For instance, when you reach 7th level in this class, you can learn one new spell of 1st or 2nd level.

Whenever you gain a level in this class, you can replace one of the cleric spells you know with another spell of your choice from the cleric spell list. The new spell must be of a level for which you have spell slots.

Spellcasting Ability. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for your cleric spells, since your spells come from your appeasement or veneration of the Dark Six. You use your Wisdom whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Wisdom modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a cleric spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

Dark Petitioner Spellcasting

Rogue Level	Cantrips Known	Spells Known	—Spell Slots per Spell Level—			
			1st	2nd	3rd	4th
3rd	3	3	2	—	—	—
4th	3	4	3	—	—	—
5th	3	4	3	—	—	—
6th	3	4	3	—	—	—
7th	3	5	4	2	—	—
8th	3	6	4	2	—	—
9th	3	6	4	2	—	—
10th	4	7	4	3	—	—
11th	4	8	4	3	—	—
12th	4	8	4	3	—	—
13th	4	9	4	3	2	—
14th	4	10	4	3	2	—
15th	4	10	4	3	2	—
16th	4	11	4	3	3	—
17th	4	11	4	3	3	—
18th	4	11	4	3	3	—
19th	4	12	4	3	3	1
20th	4	13	4	3	3	1

Pragmatic Petition

3rd-Level Dark Petitioner Feature

You ask the Six for their guidance and protection when you take advantage of an opening, no matter how dishonorable another Vassal might consider it. When you hit a creature with an attack on your turn, you can use the bonus action granted by your Cunning Action to cast one of your Dark Petitioner cantrips, regardless of its normal casting time.

Azur's Advantage

9th-Level Dark Petitioner Feature

If you roll a 1 or 2 on one or more of your Sneak Attack dice when dealing damage to a creature that is blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, grappled, incapacitated, poisoned, prone or restrained, you can reroll those dice and must use the new roll.

Shadow's Veil

13th-Level Dark Petitioner Feature

Through careful positioning, cunning and a divine gift or two, you've learned to slip out of a weakened creature's sight. When you hit a creature with an attack, you can choose to become invisible to that creature for 1 minute or until you dismiss this effect (no action required). This invisibility ends early if you deal damage to a creature or force a creature to make a saving throw.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest, unless you expend a spell slot to use this feature again.

Keeper's End

17th-Level Dark Petitioner Feature

When you reduce a creature to 0 hit points, you can steal that creature's soul and keep it joined with your own. While a creature's soul is joined to yours, that creature can be restored to life only by a *wish* spell.

Additionally, when you have to make a death saving throw, you can instead choose to release a soul you have stolen. When you do so, you regain 1 hit point, and that soul is no longer joined to yours.

Forbidden Feat

The following feat reflects a connection to the Shadow that grants knowledge of forbidden magics. With the DM's permission, this feat can be used with the optional feat rule in the *Player's Handbook*.

Shadow's Metamagic

Prerequisite: Spellcasting or Pact Magic Feature

You've learned the forbidden secrets of the Shadow, allowing you to alter how your spells function:

- You learn two Metamagic options of your choice from the Forbidden Metamagic list. You can use only one Metamagic option on a spell when you cast it, unless the option says otherwise. Whenever you reach a level that grants the Ability Score Improvement feature, you can replace one of these Metamagic options with another one from the Forbidden Metamagic list.
- You gain 2 sorcery points to spend on Metamagic (these points are added to any sorcery points you have from another source but can be used only on Metamagic). You regain all spent sorcery points when you finish a long rest.

Forbidden Metamagic

A character with the Shadow's Metamagic feat (see previous section) gains access to the following Metamagic options. With the DM's permission, other characters with the Metamagic feature might also be able to choose these Metamagic options.

Doomed Twin

When you cast a spell that targets only one creature, doesn't have a range of self, and doesn't inflict the charmed condition, you can spend 2 sorcery points to target a second creature in range with the same spell. When you do, the DM chooses a third creature within range (other than yourself) to target with the same spell. If the spell provides a choice of effects, the DM picks the effects on the third target for the duration of your spell.

If the creatures you twinned the spell between are your allies, the DM typically chooses an enemy to benefit from the spell. If the creatures you twinned the spell between are your enemies, the DM typically

chooses an ally to harm with the spell. You can only use Doomed Twin if the DM agrees there is a third target meeting that criteria within range for them to affect, or if you and the DM both agree for them to choose a third target outside the normal range of that spell.

To be eligible, a spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level. For example, *magic missile* and *scorching ray* aren't eligible, but *ray of frost* and *chromatic orb* are.

Defiled Gift

When you cast a spell that restores hit points to a creature, you can spend 1 sorcery point to roll a number of d6 equal to your proficiency bonus. One target of the spell regains that many additional hit points, and you or one willing creature within your reach takes necrotic damage equal to half the number of additional hit points restored. This damage can't be reduced in any way.

Shadow's Toll

You can spend up to 5 sorcery points to push yourself to cast a spell of a level equal to the number of sorcery points spent. To do so, you must normally have spell slots of that level but have expended all slots of that level. When you do so, you cast that spell with its normal casting time without expending a spell slot. Immediately afterward, a number of **shadows** equal to the number of sorcery points you spent appear in unoccupied spaces next to you and take their turns immediately after you. They are hostile to you and your companions, and attack you on their turns if able. Each shadow remains for 1 minute or until reduced to 0 hit points.

Blood Debt

When you cast a spell of 1st level or higher, you can spend any number of sorcery points to gain twice that many sorcery points. When you do so, you gain a number of levels of exhaustion equal to the number of sorcery points you spent. You must use these newly gained sorcery points before the end of your turn or they are lost as if you'd spent them.

You can use Blood Debt even if you have already used a different Metamagic option during the casting of the spell.

Reverse Speech

When you cast a spell with verbal components, you can speak them backward and spend 1 sorcery point to reveal hidden meanings in your utterances. For the duration of the spell, each target that knows at least one language and can hear you understands what you say. In addition, if the spell would cause a target to be charmed, you can instead choose for that creature to be frightened instead, and vice versa, though all other effects of the spell apply as if the original condition were in effect. If the spell targets multiple creatures, you can choose whether to charm or frighten each creature separately.

Spells of the Six

This section contains new spells that reflect a connection to one of the Dark Six. The DM may add these spells to a campaign, making them available to player characters and NPCs alike. The Spells of the Six table lists the new spells, ordering them by level. The table also notes each spell's school of magic, whether it requires concentration, whether it bears the ritual tag, and which classes have access to it.

Devourer's Teeth

4th-Level Conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (30-foot cube)
Components: V, S, M (a shark's tooth)
Duration: 1 minute
Classes: Cleric, druid, sorcerer

A great wave of salt water bursts from the ground beneath your feet. Each creature in a 30-foot cube originating from you must make a Strength saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 4d10 bludgeoning damage and is pushed 15 feet away from you. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't pushed.

Along with the wave, you conjure the spirit of a great shark. Choose one creature that failed its saving throw as the shark spirit's prey. That target takes an extra 2d10 piercing damage and is restrained by the shark spirit's jaws. A target restrained in this way can use its action to make a Strength check against your spell save DC. On a success, it frees itself and the shark spirit disappears.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage of the wave and the damage of the spirit shark's jaws each increase by 1d10 for each slot level above 4th.

Spells of the Six

Level	Spell	School	Conc.	Ritual	Class
0	Traveler's Enigma	Transmutation	No	No	Artificer, Bard, Cleric
1st	Fury's Chorus	Enchantment	Yes	No	Bard, Cleric, Warlock
2nd	Keeper's Vault	Necromancy	Yes	No	Artificer, Bard, Cleric, Warlock
2nd	Mockery's Snare	Abjuration	Yes	No	Artificer, Cleric, Ranger, Warlock
3rd	Shadow's Echo	Illusion	No	No	Bard, Cleric, Warlock
4th	Devourer's Teeth	Conjuration	No	No	Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer

Fury's Chorus

1st-Level Enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute
Classes: Bard, cleric, warlock

You call a group of people to a heightened emotional state, driving them to anger and mistrust. Each Humanoid in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point you choose within range must make a Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature must use its reaction (if available) to make an opportunity attack whenever another creature (including an ally) moves out of its reach. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. The *calm emotions* spell suppresses the effects of this spell.

Keeper's Vault

2nd-Level Necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, M (an unlit lantern worth at least 10 gp)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute
Classes: Artificer, bard, cleric, warlock

You draw out a fragment of a living soul and bind it within the lantern used as a material component for this spell. Choose a creature you can see within 60 feet of you that isn't an Undead or Construct. For the duration, the lantern is ignited by the target's soul and sheds dim light in a 30-foot radius. At the start of each of the target's turns until the spell ends, the target must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 2d6 necrotic damage. On a successful save, the target takes no damage, but its soul remains bound. If the target's saving throw succeeds by 5 or more, its soul becomes unbound and the spell ends.

Until the spell ends, as a bonus action, you can choose one creature you can see within 30 feet of you that isn't an Undead or Construct. That creature regains hit points equal to the total damage dealt by this spell, up to a maximum of 20 hit points, and the spell ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 and the maximum hit points regained increases by 10 for each slot level above 2nd.

Mockery's Snare

2nd-Level Abjuration

Casting Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Touch
Components: S, M (a piano wire)
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute
Classes: Artificer, cleric, ranger, warlock

You imbue yourself or one willing creature you touch with the duplicitous power of Dol Azur, laying a trap to ensnare a foe in spectral bindings. The next time the imbued creature is hit with an attack before the spell ends, the attacking creature must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the attacking creature takes 3d8 necrotic damage and is restrained until the spell ends. On a successful save, it takes half as much damage, is not restrained, and the spell ends. While restrained by this spell, the restrained creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the spell on a success.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 2nd.

Shadow's Echo

3rd-Level Illusion

Casting Time: 1 reaction, which you take after you see a creature within 60 feet of you finish casting a spell with a casting time of 1 action and a duration of Instantaneous
Range: 60 feet
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous
Classes: Bard, cleric, warlock

You mirror a creature with its shadowy reflection. If the creature cast a spell that is at least 2 levels lower than the level of this spell, you also cast that spell as part of your reaction, without expending an additional spell slot for that spell.

The spell you cast uses your own spellcasting ability, and if the spell deals damage, it deals psychic damage instead of its usual damage types.

As part of your reaction when you cast this spell, you learn what level the target spell is. If the level of the spell slot you expended is too low to copy that spell, you regain the spell slot you expended. When this happens, you can choose to either expend a higher-level spell slot to copy the spell, or choose to abort this spell. In either case, your reaction is spent. For example, if the other creature casts a 5th-level spell, you can regain your 3rd-level spell slot and instead expend a 7th-level spell slot to copy that spell.

Traveler's Enigma

Transmutation Cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: S, M (a folded cloth)
Duration: 1 minute
Classes: Artificer, bard, cleric

A nonmagical object you touch is transformed into a random trinket (either from the Trinkets table in the *Player's Handbook* or a similar trinket of the DM's choice). The object you touch must weigh less than 10 pounds and be no more than 5 inches along any dimension. The transformation lasts for 1 minute, until you dismiss the transformation as a bonus action, or until another creature touches the trinket.

Part 2: The Vault

Chapter 9: Session Zero

Once upon a time, the typical D&D campaign started something like this: "Five strangers meet in a tavern. They have nothing in common. They have no families, no friends, no real idea of what they want in life. But they've got a special set of skills, and there's a person willing to pay them a fistful of gold to beat up some baddies. Let's roll."

And if all you're looking for is a chance to roll some dice and fight some monsters, there's nothing wrong with that approach! But you might want your campaign to involve more preparation than this. Before a game even begins, many players and DMs prefer to create characters with interesting ties to the world of Eberron, developing hooks for others to build on. Whether you do so as a formal meeting or simply a series of group chats, "session zero" allows your group to establish ground rules and agree on a foundational story before diving into a campaign.

Starting a Campaign

Let's say you're starting a new Eberron campaign—but half the players have never heard of Eberron. Where should they start? How do they know if they're even interested in playing your game? If they have a little time, you can encourage them to read the introduction of *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*. Or you can just summarize the key details: "It's a world of magic with airships and dragonmarked dynasties; the Last War has ended, sort of; it draws on both pulp and noir for inspiration; and familiar things may not be what you expect them to be."

Defining the Campaign

When I'm starting a new campaign, I start by pitching the concept to my players: "I'm thinking about a campaign in which you're all reporters for the Korranberg Chronicle, tasked with investigating the biggest stories in Khorvaire." After all, the most important thing is to make sure the players want to play in that campaign! The second is to give them some basic direction on creating characters.

Group Patrons

Chapter 1 of *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* provides a simple framework to tie characters together via group patrons. The simplest of these patrons is the classic adventurers' guild, in which the idea is that you are professional adventurers; this patron establishes that your campaign is likely to involve dungeon crawls and exploring long-lost ruins. The tone of the campaign can be set by the specific guild you choose; for example, the Clifftop Guild has a positive reputation and generally doesn't employ evil characters, while the Deathsgate Guild thrives on dirty tricks.

Other patron options include working for the Boromar Clan (a crime syndicate), becoming private investigators in Sharn (an inquisitive agency), or serving as agents of the Argentum (a religious order). Creating an adventuring party for a specific patron gives players a clear focus: "For our group of reporters, we want someone who's good at social interaction, a good researcher, and some muscle to keep us safe and throw around a little intimidation when we need it."

Location

Even when you don't have a shared patron, the setting you choose can inform characters. In my Q'barra campaign, I established that the characters lived in a small mining town and encouraged the players to draw on classic Western archetypes. I noted that the town needed a sheriff, a preacher, and someone with an interest in local business—the players could claim these roles for their characters if they wanted, otherwise I'd fill them with NPCs.

By contrast, when running a game set in Callestan, I told players that the tone was similar to *Gangs of New York*; they were living in one of the worst districts in Sharn, and the question they needed to answer was "why?" Were they urchins who grew up in the neighborhood? Did they have ties to local criminals? Were they excoriates or deserters hiding from powerful enemies, or were they virtuous vigilantes trying to make a difference?

Creating Eberron Characters

Once you've clearly established the underlying story, you can help the players come up with ideas for their characters. If your game was a movie, how would each character fit in it? For example, if they're a professional adventurer, why? How did they get into that line of work? Where do they expect to be in ten years? Are they just in it for the thrill? Are they searching for inspiration for their arcane experiments? Is this job the equivalent of waiting tables, but their real ambition is to be an actor? This section contains some basic questions to consider for any Eberron character.

What did you do during the Last War?

For most of the last century, the continent of Galifar has been embroiled in a bitter civil war. If you're human, you've never known a world without war. If you're a warforged, you were literally built to fight in it. The Last War came to an end two years ago, after the utter destruction of one of the warring nations.

Think about how the war affected your character and their skills—for example, a rogue might've been a smuggler who avoided the war, or they might've used their skills to infiltrate enemy territory. Here are some questions to consider:

How were you involved in the war? Eberron is a magical world; during the Last War, wizards, artificers, and all classes had roles on the battlefield. Were you a soldier? Or were you a criminal, a conscientious objector, a fugitive, or just a civilian whose connections or talents kept you off the front lines?

If you fought, how did your service end? Are you still in good standing with the military, or did you leave that life behind? Are you proud of your service or would you rather not talk about it? Was a particular event a defining moment for you—a battle where you did something especially heroic or where you were one of the only survivors?

How did the war affect you? Did you lose a loved one? Was your hometown destroyed—or your entire nation, in the case of Cyre? Did the things you saw during the war cause you to lose your faith, or did they actually strengthen it?

A character who served in the Last War doesn't have to take the soldier background, though the Military Rank feature is a good fit if your character is still respected by or tied to the military. An outlander could've been a scout; a sailor might've served in the navy; an entertainer could've been the musician for their troops; and an acolyte could've been a chaplain. Meanwhile, a criminal could've been dishonorably discharged, or a folk hero might be celebrated for heroic deeds they performed during the war ... even if their heroism went against orders.

What is your religion?

Eberron has many vastly different faith traditions across the world. If the player isn't familiar with the setting, it helps to focus on the main options:

The Sovereign Host's pantheon of deities don't manifest in the world, but their followers believe the Sovereigns are with them always, offering guidance. This is the most popular religion in the Five Nations, and it's a casual faith that asks little of its followers.

The Silver Flame is a tangible spiritual force that holds demons at bay. Followers of the Flame seek to protect innocents from supernatural evil and to encourage compassionate behavior. It's sort of like a cross between the Jedi and the Men in Black; the faithful don't believe in an anthropomorphic deity, but they can draw on the power of the Flame to fight evil.

The Blood of Vol is a grim but practical faith that believes there's no afterlife, the gods are cruel, and all we have is each other. Followers of this faith believe that all mortals have a spark of divinity within their blood, and Seeker clerics and paladins draw divine power from their own souls.

Primal faiths include druids and other cultures that are devoted to the natural world and animistic spirits.

Faithless people can be found throughout Eberron. After all, gods don't physically manifest in the world, so many people either don't believe the gods exist, or just don't care whether they do. As a faithless character, did you lose your faith because of something terrible that happened, or have you just never been a believer?

I might suggest other faiths—like those of the Path of Light, the Tairnadal, and the Dark Six—if they seem especially appropriate based on the player's concept. Likewise, if they're intrigued by the concept of a primal character, I suggest a specific option (Gatekeeper, Warden of the Wood, Talenta halfling) once I learn more about their character.

Where are you from?

If my players don't know the setting, I usually suggest a couple options for their origins once I know what kind of character they're interested in. This can be less intimidating than trying to explain all the nations in sufficient detail for the player to make an informed decision—so instead, I say "tell me about your idea" and see if it lends itself to a particular nation ... especially when informed by their role in the war and their religion. A Silver Flame cleric who served in the war? That sure sounds like Thrane. A faithless or primal outlander ranger who didn't serve in the war? Talenta or Eldeen, depending on your ancestry.

If an entire group of players are new to the setting, I often suggest their characters are all survivors from Cyre—perhaps they served together during the Last War, or they could've been thrown together by the Mourning. This approach not only makes it simple for players to know little about their homeland (after all, they won't be casually strolling its streets or navigating its politics), but being from Cyre gives the party a shared loss and an easy explanation for why they're adventurers. They have no home to return to, and all they have is each other—now do they want to help other Cyrans, or are they just looking out for themselves?

What do you want?

This question isn't particularly tied to Eberron, but it's a good question to ask. Why are you adventuring? Are you just in it for the gold—and if so, what do you want the gold for? In the introduction of *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, "Why Do You Need 200 Gold Pieces?" suggests one way to inspire character flaws, debts, and motivations.

If you're not in it for the gold, are you fighting for a cause, and if so, what? Do you want to recover a lost heirloom? Are you seeking vengeance? In all these cases, my job as DM is to find a way to work that desire into the thread of the campaign. If you want vengeance against the man who killed your father, guess what—now he's part of the Emerald Claw, the main villains of this arc! And he's carrying the heirloom sword another character is determined to recover!

What's your background?

Backgrounds provide skills and proficiencies, but they also add depth to a story. It's important to keep in mind that background is *background*; it's typically what the character used to do, so why did they leave that life behind? Why isn't the acolyte tending a shrine? How did the criminal turn their life around, and why? What guild is the guild artisan part of, and is it tied to a dragonmarked house? What's the entertainer's most popular song, and did they sell the rights to House Phiarlan?

If I'm working with players who don't know much about Eberron, I ask them to come up with a basic story, then I offer suggestions tied to the region where the

campaign is taking place. In the case of an acolyte, I suggest a particular temple or monastery they could've served at; if they're a former criminal, I offer a suggestion for their criminal contact.

Ongoing Questions and Flashbacks

Beyond the above, you can ask many more questions—for example, the "Everyone Has Regrets" section in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* explores your character's greatest regret. But these basics usually create enough of a foundation that I can help the player flesh out the story with additional Eberron details. And that's a key point: they might not know the world, but I do. I understand the story the player appears to be looking for. So I can offer suggestions that translate that story into the setting. I don't need to ask them if they have ties to a dragon-marked house if they don't know what that is. But if they describe a story that sounds like *Romeo and Juliet*, I can say, "Eberron has these powerful houses that forbid marriage—what if you're tied to one of those?" Between the war, faith, desire, and background, I usually have good hooks to work with as I build out the story.

Players don't need to establish every detail about a character at the start of a campaign. They can build on these foundations over time—even improvising details in the middle of a session. If you've established that your fighter fought for Breland during the war, when a Brelish veteran shows up during an adventure, the DM can say, "You saved his life during the Last War—how did that happen?" Or perhaps when you run into a Boromar enforcer, the DM can say, "He was in your unit during the war, but you didn't get along—what happened?" When an entertainer takes advantage of their By Popular Demand feature, I might say, "You played at this tavern a year ago and something dramatic happened—what was it?"

Similarly, details about family can be established over time. Consider the typical movie or novel: we get enough details about our protagonists to draw us into the story, but we usually don't get a detailed dossier. In the case of a certain war in the stars, revelations about family end up being part of the story itself!

Session Zero

By this point, your players probably know the basic idea behind the campaign and have ideas for characters who could be a part of it. Session zero is about bringing players together before you actually start rolling dice, so everyone can discuss the story you're going to create together. It's a final opportunity to make sure everyone knows what they're getting into and to see what excites people about this story—and just as important, to make sure everyone knows the places they *don't* want the story to go. During session zero, you all have a chance to establish ground rules for characters and conduct alike.

The underlying principle of session zero is that a role-playing game is a *collaborative* story—so everyone should collaborate on bringing those pieces together, DM and players alike. Establishing this mutual understanding can encompass anything from agreeing that the rogue won't steal from the party to setting boundaries on romance in the story. When holding a session zero, I start with the following basics ...

Safety Tools

Before delving into the story, it's important to establish what content players—and DM—don't want to see at the table. This can be anything from "plotlines involving child endangerment" to "any romance involving my character."

A common approach is to discuss "lines and veils." Are there elements a player doesn't mind being part of the storyline, as long as they remain *veiled*—kept in soft focus or occurring off camera? And are there *lines* a player simply doesn't want the story to touch on at all, even in passing? While this discussion gives the DM useful knowledge in directing the story, it's also an important time for players to establish boundaries with one another. It's entirely reasonable to say "I don't want to play in a party with evil characters" or "I'm not comfortable with in-character flirting." This could be a simple discussion or use a detailed checklist.

Even once a campaign is started, it's important for everyone to feel empowered to express discomfort or set boundaries as new topics come up. Sometimes, you don't realize you have any lines until you're in the middle of a scene and you suddenly don't want to go any further down that particular path. In situations like this, many groups use the "X card"; this physical or digital card can be raised to silently signal (without any need for explanation) that the current scene should stop.

Chapter 4 of *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* provides advice on setting boundaries and expectations before a game begins. Additionally, the free *TTRPG Safety Toolkit* (by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk) and *Consent in Gaming* (by Sean K. Reynolds and Shanna Germain) contain a wealth of resources on safety tools and how to collaboratively explore challenging content.

Rules and House Rules

If you haven't already talked about your house rules before session zero, this is the time to do so! In addition to any modified rules you might use, are there other things players should know about your DMing philosophy and approach to the game? Here are a few examples.

Death

How does the group want to handle the deaths of player characters? Do you take a straight let-the-dice-fall-where-they-may approach where if an ogre gets a critical hit, characters might die even in the first session? Or do you generally assume that dropping to zero hit points renders you unconscious, but as long as *someone* survives, the group will be okay? Somewhere in the middle? Perhaps your resurrection rules are flexible (your cleric doesn't need the diamonds for *revivify* as long as they have the equivalent gold). Or maybe a character who drops to zero hit points lives, but with a lasting scar or injury—but this should be mutually agreed on by the player and DM.

Descriptive Rolls

How does the DM plan to handle things like Charisma-based skills? Can a player just say "I intimidate them. I roll a 20. I'm so scary!"? Or does the DM expect the player to add more detail to the scene—"what are you doing that's so terrifying?" This can be handled on a player-by-player basis; one player might enjoy detailed roleplaying, while another player may have taken expertise in Persuasion precisely because they aren't comfortable roleplaying such interactions and want to be able to roll through them. Either approach is okay; just like you don't expect the ranger's player to shoot a real longbow every time their character makes an attack, persuasive characters don't have to require persuasive players.

Inspiration and Other Rewards

Does the DM plan to use any sorts of rewards for clever play, such as awarding inspiration when a player leans into their character's flaws? Are there any special benefits available at character creation?

For example, some DMs grant characters a bonus feat at 1st level or allow them to choose a feat from a specific list. If your campaign is tied to House Tarkanan, all the characters might start with a free Aberrant Dragonmark. If the campaign is set in Sarlona, you could offer the players a choice of the psionic feats from chapter 21 of this book, reflecting that all the characters have some degree of psychic power, regardless of their class. In an espionage-centered campaign, you could offer specialized feats like Actor, Athlete, Keen Mind, Linguist, Observant, Skilled, and Tavern Brawler—with the restriction that everyone needs a unique feat to reflect their specialty on the team. (Keep in mind that granting a bonus feat slightly affects encounter balance, but as long as everyone receives the same benefit, feats can help make the characters feel larger than life and emphasize a particular story.)

DMing Style

As part of session zero, DMs should share what to expect about their approach to DMing; similarly, players should feel free to give feedback on what approaches are most comfortable for them. In my campaigns, I always emphasize two basic things about my approach.

First, I'm a story-driven DM: the rules are a framework, but I may choose to ignore or override a rule in a particular scene. I'm happy for players to bring rules to my attention if it seems like I may have overlooked something, because often that may be all that it is—but if I acknowledge it and say that I'm intentionally ignoring it, I don't want to argue about it.

Second, part of my DMing style is to ask players to add details to a scene: "There's a mob of zombies—they're rotting villagers! Describe one of the zombies that draws your attention." I like doing this because it helps to give players a concrete investment in the scene, and players come up with things that I never would. But I always want to make sure my players are comfortable with this style of play; I tell them they can always say "Pass" if they don't have an answer or just aren't comfortable with the question. While the goal is to let everyone share in building the story, the more important goal is for everyone to enjoy the experience—and not everyone likes being put on the spot.

Review the Story

Before we reach session zero, I've already made sure the players approve of the campaign's basic concept, but I lay it out in more detail during this session. We may have agreed in advance that the adventurers are starting in a mining town and that the party's warforged fighter is the sheriff, but now I want to tell the players about the basic situation in Q'barra and the events that are shaping the story. At this point, I usually ask the players to add some personal elements to the setting: "There's only one tavern in town, the Cat and Biscuit—tell me one detail about it." Or you could say, "tell me about someone you know in town." This could be a relative, a friend, or a rival; the point is that it gives both the character and the player a connection to the location, and now I've got a few NPCs I can work with.

Character Introductions

Now that players know the basic building blocks of the story, you have an opportunity to work together, establish connections between the party members, and talk about their hopes for the campaign and their character's development throughout it. It's a good idea to start by having each player introduce their character, describe what most defines their character, and share one thing that's important to them.

Character Connections

After everyone's familiar with each other's characters, it's time to connect them with each other. Who served together during the war? What was the worst thing they endured together? Who lost the most money gambling, and does one of them still owe the other? Perhaps the elf and the dwarf are siblings—"how did you never know you were adopted?" Maybe the charlatan was the entertainer's promoter for a time, or the urchin always used to hum one of the entertainer's songs in hard times but never imagined they'd meet. It's likely that players have been thinking of their characters in isolation; this is a chance to find things that bring them together, giving them a shared story instead of one about five strangers.

Aspirations

In creating characters, I encourage players to think about each character's aspirations. But what about the *player's* aspirations? What interests them most—social interaction? Challenging combat? Solving mysteries? Political intrigue? Do they want to own land or gain titles, or to just focus on carefree adventuring? Ideally, a group will be largely united in what they want to see, but it's still possible for the DM to work around different player preferences; the fighter may never have to worry about politics, but the bard can still be drawn into intrigues.

Aside from these broad choices, this is a chance for players to describe things they'd like to see happen at some point during the campaign. This could be anything from "I want to find a *holy avenger*" or "I want us to fight a dragon" to "I want to overthrow Kaius III and become the new monarch of Karrnath." As a DM, it's important to be clear that these things might not happen for a long time (or ever), but knowing the players would enjoy seeing it helps me shape the story. I'm not going to give them a *holy avenger* at first level, but perhaps the adventurers hear stories about a legendary blade early on. If they're fighting the Emerald Claw, Lady Illmarrow's chief lieutenant could be a death knight who lost the blade after breaking their oath—and the only way the party can ultimately defeat this enemy is by finding that forgotten blade and breaking the curse laid on it. So they'll get to that *holy avenger*, but by the time they get there, it'll be part of the story.

If a player wants to overthrow Kaius but that just doesn't fit with the campaign, I might still be able to work aspects of that into encounters. The adventurers may have an opportunity to help a Karrnathi warlord, earning their respect. Or they might win the friendship of a group of mercenaries who could prove invaluable in a campaign against Kaius. I can help the player move their character toward that lifelong goal, even if it never happens "on camera" before our campaign ends.

After Session Zero

The topics discussed above are merely a list to get you started; you may come up with many more based on your campaign. Regardless, by the end of session zero, you'll likely have touched on these key questions:

- What story are we embarking on? Where does it begin?
- Who are our characters? What brings them together?
- What things do people want to see? What lines do we agree to not cross? When there's a problem at the table, what strategies can we use to identify and deal with it?
- Are there any rules or house rules players should know?

Keep in mind that this doesn't have to be a one-time discussion—and in fact, it's great to encourage players to revisit these topics any time they'd like to see things head in a different direction (or enthusiastically continue in the same one). Dealing with all these questions in advance can help to avoid frustration down the road and build a sound foundation for your campaign. Similarly, keeping these channels of communication open during the campaign helps ensure you keep collaborating to tell a story everyone is proud of.

STORN COOK

Chapter 10: It's All About the Journey

Is your adventure about the journey or the destination? That's a trick question—the answer is probably "yes." But how do you approach all the traveling that happens between major events in your campaign? Imagine that your intrepid band of heroes are beginning a long trek to reach their destination. The Deep Dark Forest is an infamous haven for bandits and ruffians, shunned by the wise ... and it's the only path to the forgotten tomb that holds the *Orb of Dol Azur*. If the adventurers were 1st-level characters, this could be a perilous and exciting journey ... but they're 9th level now, and far too powerful for any typical band of brigands to pose a significant threat to them. As their DM, you know that playing out a battle against bandits would waste time without any real tension, and compared to the challenges waiting for them in the tomb, fighting bandits is a bland adventure. What do you do?

Filling the Space Between

In the situation described above, you could simply take the red-line approach, cutting from point A to point B with just a few sentences of description. It's simple to explain just how creepy the forest is and that the bandits are smart enough to avoid the party. But at the same time, the forest *is* really creepy, and the presence of the bandits is an established part of the setting; you want the players to feel like they've taken a significant journey. Consider the following options for how to involve players (and their characters) in the adventure.

Enjoy the Ride

It's possible for the journey to *be* the adventure. On the surface, *The Hobbit* is a story about a group of adventurers delving into a dragon's lair ... but the bulk of the story is about their journey to the dungeon. Similarly, your Tomb of Dol Azur may be the ultimate goal, but you might take a few sessions to actually reach it. Rather than wasting time on random encounters, focus on making each step interesting and meaningful.

Unexpectedly Challenging Challenges

A typical group of bandits shouldn't pose a threat to experienced adventurers. But what if the bandits of the Deep Dark Forest aren't typical? What if they come back to life whenever they're killed—and the only way to stop them is to find and destroy the artifact that's empowering them? Or perhaps the adventurers are capable of overpowering the brigands, but it's actually a moral dilemma. What if the so-called bandits are actually Robin Hood-style heroes robbing from the rich to raise money for some vital cause, like buying medicine to end a local plague? The adventurers are incredibly rich by local standards; are they willing to help in any way?

Ancient Artifacts

If you're in a truly out-of-the-way location, adventurers could find a relic or remnant of an ancient civilization—something built by Dhakaani goblins, by dragons in the Age of Giants, or even by couatl or fiends in the Age of Demons. This discovery could be purely an interesting curiosity—an indestructible, immovable statue of a couatl hovering over a mysterious inscription—that could become important later in the campaign. Or it could be something that's already powerful and dangerous ... maybe even the reason this land is shunned.

Trouble at the Bar

The adventurers find an inn or a campsite occupied by friendly travelers, and they're welcomed to take a long rest. But trouble arises. Perhaps there's a murder. Perhaps one patron accuses another of being a renegade war criminal—and those crimes impacted one of the player characters. Perhaps a merchant is selling something that seems too good to be true; can you trust the gifts of the traveler?

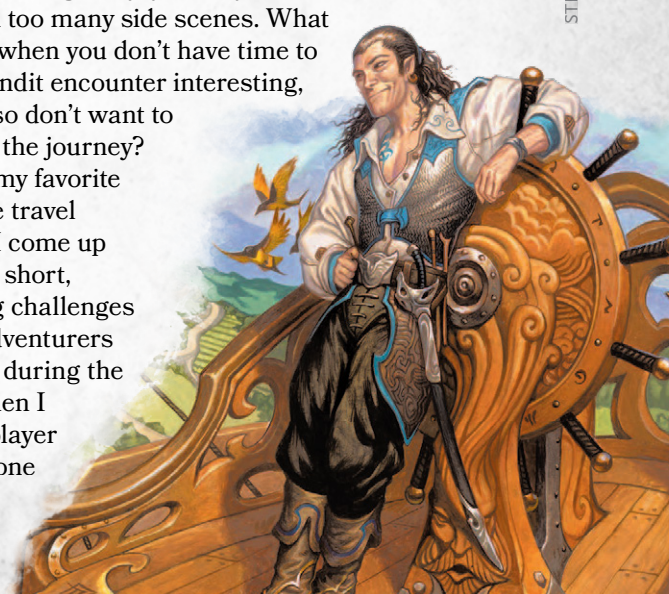
Manifest Zones

Virtually anywhere in Eberron, adding a manifest zone brings an unexpected twist to an otherwise mundane region. Nobody ever goes into the heart of the Deep Dark Forest ... which is why they don't realize the tomb is in a manifest zone to Shavarath! To reach it, the adventurers must somehow cross a battle line of warring angels and devils to reach it. Or perhaps the tomb is in a manifest zone to Dolurrh, and the adventurers must face ghosts from their past or overcome debilitating ennui to move forward. The Unexpected Manifest Zones table provides ideas to inspire you.

Travel By Montage

The ideas suggested in the previous section can be fun ways to make a journey memorable. However, playing through such scenes takes time, and if the core adventure has a strong story, you may not want to water it down with too many side scenes. What do you do when you don't have time to make a bandit encounter interesting, but you also don't want to gloss over the journey?

One of my favorite tools is the travel montage. I come up with a few short, interesting challenges that the adventurers could face during the journey, then I ask each player to handle one



STEVE PRESCOTT

of these situations. So if the party includes a rogue, a wizard, a fighter, and a cleric, I might say:

Rogue: "Tell me how you help the group avoid a bandit attack on the first day."
Wizard: "You're beset by constant storms. By the second day, your clothes are drenched and the bridge across the local river has been washed away. How does your magic help the party get across the river?"
Fighter: "This forest is older than human civilization. You're sure you hear the howls of ghosts on the wind, and see things moving in the shadows. You're known for your bravery ... what's the one thing that actually scares you on the journey?"
Cleric: "Tell me about the dream you have on the last night of your journey."

This gives each character a moment in the spotlight and encourages the players to think about what makes the journey interesting for them. Sure, any of the characters could figure out how to cross a river, but this time, the wizard figured it out ... tell me how. Depending on what the players come up with, you could incorporate their answers into the campaign. Perhaps the cleric's dream turns out to be prophetic, or the thing that frightened the fighter unexpectedly returns. Perhaps the rogue was friendly with the bandit leader in their first guild—in which case, that leader could turn up again later in a more interesting role.

Alternatively, the players might just make jokes out of these scenarios: the one thing that actually scares the fighter is watching the rogue eat or hearing the cleric snore. And there's nothing wrong with this! The whole point is to let the players tell the story they want; if they want to laugh, this is a great opportunity for that. Either way, the goal is for the players to imagine the journey and think about how it impacts their characters.

If you want to add more suspense, you can require an ability check to overcome each obstacle, based on the solution they come up with. If the rogue negotiates with the bandits, they might need a Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. If the wizard uses magic to cross the river, you could ask for an Intelligence (Arcana) check to see how effective it is. You could ask the cleric to make a Wisdom (Religion) check to gain Inspiration from their dream. When doing this, be sure to consider what consequences you'll apply in the case of a bad roll. If time is of the essence, it could be that the only consequence is that the party is delayed. Otherwise, characters might gain a level of exhaustion or lose a couple hit dice—they make it through the challenge but the journey is grueling. You could also offer the players a choice: do you want to gain a level of exhaustion or use two healing potions? You each lose something in the disastrous river crossing—what is it, and how do you respond?

Regardless of the approach you use or the challenges you set, the goal of the montage is to make an interesting story—to help the players imagine the journey their characters have been through. As long as the players enjoy the experience, you've succeeded!

Unexpected Manifest Zones

d12	Manifest Zone
1	**Daanvi.** A Daanvi devil informs the group that there is a toll for passing through the zone—and they've already incurred that toll by entering it. Each adventurer must surrender one object that has personal value to them. Defeating the devil is a way to avoid this toll, but it could result in future Daanvian prosecution.
2	**Dolurrh.** The adventurers hear the ghosts of people who died here with unfinished business—from Dhakaani goblins and pre-Galifar humans to recent deaths, such as a spy who died in the Last War with a crucial undelivered message. Will the adventurers try to resolve any of these lingering debts?
3	**Fernia.** This section of wilderness is on fire. Vegetation burns forever without being consumed, but the flames still produce deadly heat and fire elementals rove restlessly. Do any of Fernia's sapient denizens emerge from the fire, and what do they ask of the adventurers?
4	**Irian.** A lone deathless hermit dwells in this place, sustained by the positive energy of the region. How old is this hermit, and what secrets do they possess?
5	**Kythri.** The adventurers encounter a slaad outpost; if you have *Exploring Eberron*, roll on the Slaad Cultures table in chapter 5. Do the slaadi insist the adventurers enjoy their hospitality, or do they take offense at outsiders intruding on their domain?
6	**Lamannia.** A gargantuan beast blocks the adventurers' path. How will the party evade or placate this enormous megafauna?
7	**Mabar.** The adventurers find a campsite or farmstead occupied only by animated skeletons. Is there a valuable treasure or secret to be recovered here ... or a more dangerous undead creature hidden among the weak skeletons?
8	**Risia.** The region is bitterly, unnaturally cold, and adventurers must struggle against the effects of the deadly temperature. Do they find any creatures suspended in the eternal stasis of Risian ice?
9	**Shavarath.** A force of angels is locked in battle with a troop of devils, and the adventurers must safely pass through this disputed territory. Do they run the risk of being conscripted into service?
10	**Syrania.** The adventurers find a door to the Immeasurable Market, but the door is a one-way journey. Once they cross through, how will they purchase passage back home?
11	**Thelanis.** One or more dryads seek to engage the adventurers in conversation. If the adventurers are rude or threaten the dryads, does a fey treant show up to demand an apology?
12	**Xoriat.** The adventurers are trapped in a closed circle of space, where moving forward only brings them back to where they began. Can they come up with a novel way to escape this spatial anomaly?

Chapter 11: The Barren Sea

The Barren Sea is so called because it is poor for fishing and devoid of apparent life. Hideous monsters are said to inhabit its depths—but sailors make that claim about all ten seas. In fact, sailors have more to fear from storms, icebergs in the north, and unpredictable winds than they do from any living thing in the Barren Sea. In addition to the mundane risks of storm and calm, the Barren Sea is known for scattered areas of dead calm—areas of perfectly still water, sometimes suffused with negative energy that attracts undead.

—Player's Guide to Eberron

The Barren Sea is home to dark and sinister fiends that dwell in horrid cities far below the waves ... and tremendous storms send ships to splinter against the rocky shore [of the Demon Wastes].

—Eberron Campaign Guide

The Thunder Sea is home to powerful civilizations, and those who cross it must deal with sahuagin or sea elves. The Lhazaar Sea is more chaotic, home to pirates, drake hunters, elemental islands, and all manner of monstrosities. But the Barren Sea tells a different story. As its name suggests, it seems to be almost lifeless. The Barren Sea isn't a resource to be harvested; it's a deadly obstacle to be crossed, an aquatic desert. It's for this reason that you don't see a nation like Rhiavhaar or the Lhazaar Principalities thriving on the coasts around the Barren Sea. There's no fishing, nothing to draw people into the water; as a result, the people of Ohr Kaluun, Nulakesh, and the lands now known as Droaam largely ignore the Barren Sea. Today, the Riedran province of Corvagura is an important port that supports shipping to and from Riedra's interests in western Khorvaire and Xen'drik, and many of Riedra's merchant sailors are Corvaguran; but even they send no fishing boats to the Barren Sea.

Unyielding Waters

Why is the Barren Sea so barren? Scholars of the Five Nations generally agree this is due to the sea's hypersalinity, though they're unsure what causes that phenomenon. The waters of the Barren Sea have almost ten times the salt content of the other seas of Eberron. Few plants or animals can survive in these waters. A side effect of this is that the waters of the Barren Sea are surprisingly buoyant; anyone swimming in the Barren Sea has advantage on checks made to stay afloat.

But while the salt content explains why the sea is devoid of life, a larger question remains: why is the water so salty? Hypersalinity is usually caused by mineral deposits and closed bodies of water, but that's not a factor here—the sea isn't a bounded body of water and there are no known mineral deposits that could cause it. Near Sarlona, the barren waters begin beyond the island chain of Ohr Kaluun. Off the coast of Khorvaire, the barren water starts just west of Zarash Bay; currents should carry the deadly waters into the bay itself, but oddly, the hypersalinity remains within certain static boundaries. When the waters of the Barren Sea flow beyond its invisible bounds, the salinity almost immediately fades. Some sages theorize that the Barren Sea's effect is somehow created and sustained by a supernatural force—for while hypersalinity is typically a natural phenomenon, these waters defy all attempts to explain them.

The mystery is further compounded by the fact that the majority of the Barren Sea is shielded from divination (including the psionic clairsentience techniques employed by Riedrans). Much to the bewilderment of scholars and sailors alike, a massive *nondetection* effect blankets the barren waters and anything on them—and its effects begin and end almost precisely where the hypersalinity does. Sages can't explore the Barren Sea with *scrying*, Tharashk prospectors can't sense what lies beneath the waves—even the *commune* spell can't unlock the secrets of the Barren Sea. Mystical navigation tools become unreliable in barren waters, and navigators must be prepared to use mundane techniques.

Dangers of the Barren Sea

What goes on in the Barren Sea? You won't encounter dragon turtles or merfolk there, but that doesn't mean that it's boring and uniform. The Encounters on the Barren Sea table suggests a few things adventurers might find when venturing on its waters, and the sections that follow provide more details on the hazards of this unusual ocean.

Deadly Storms

The *Player's Guide to Eberron* calls out the risk of storms and unpredictable winds, but it presents these as mundane risks—so while storms are always a danger on the Barren Sea, they aren't as dramatic as the Lamannia-fueled storms of the Thunder Sea. The exception is to the north, where the *Eberron Campaign Guides* notes that tremendous storms can dash a ship against the Demon Wastes; along this cursed coast, the weather is enhanced and twisted by the malevolent powers bound in the Wastes.

Encounters on the Barren Sea

d10	Encounter
1	An abandoned ship or an entire graveyard of ships, haunted by shadows or other undead.
2	A Riedran frigate searching for a fugitive changeling or kalashtar. Stand down and prepare to be boarded!
3	A small Adaran vessel carrying kalashtar on their way to Khorvaire.
4	A Riedran merchant vessel carrying a cargo of sentira, crysteel, and other psionic goods.
5	A Lhazaar pirate ship seeking soft merchant targets.
6	A Lyrandar elemental galleon bound for Dar Jin, possibly carrying valuable cargo or engaging in a diplomatic mission.
7	An iceberg formed of Risian ice with something visibly trapped within it.
8	A dinghy from a wrecked ship, carrying a lone survivor—comatose, but alive.
9	A dramatic storm with shadows moving among the clouds, threatening to strike with the lightning.
10	A nightmarish creature (use the **kraken** stat block) seeks to pull the adventurers' ship down into the depths.

Dead Calm

The southern Barren Sea holds several large manifest zones tied to Mabar. Normally, Mabaran manifest zones can be recognized by their impact on flora and fauna, but in the Barren Sea, there's no native life to measure this by. However, these Mabaran zones do create areas of unnatural calm, where winds die and currents are diverted. Some of these areas share Mabar's property of Eternal Shadows, as described in *Exploring Eberron*; here, all bright light is reduced to dim light, and ships must make their way through this unyielding gloom.

Regions of dead calm are often inhabited by undead. Zombies, skeletons, and other undead rise as animated corpses—some appear to be unlucky travelers, while others are strange creatures from deep below the poisoned waters. However, shadows are the most common form of undead. Superstition holds that within the dead calm, the shadows of sailors can come to life and kill their owners, persisting even after killing the mortal who cast that shadow. Countless tales feature merchants stumbling on ghost ships inhabited solely by shadows. The annals of the Wayfinder Foundation tell of Lord Boroman ir'Dayne discovering a massive graveyard of ships in the Barren Sea, including vessels that seemed to be the ships of giants and Dhakaani galleys. According to the story, Boroman's own ship was overrun by shadows, forcing him to abandon his vessel and flee. His dinghy was overturned and his friends consumed by "shadow sharks," but according to the tale, Boroman managed to swim for days and made landfall in the Demon Wastes (a story in its own right). Though he tried, ir'Dayne was never able to find the graveyard again.

Still Water

While Mabaran manifest zones exist throughout the Barren Sea, they are outnumbered to the north by manifest zones tied to Risia. These zones are unnaturally cold, home to unexpected icebergs and creeping ice that can potentially trap slower vessels. Such zones have Risia's Lethal Cold property, as described in *Exploring Eberron*, and creatures unprepared for the bitter cold quickly succumb to exhaustion. A few of the largest manifest zones have the Preservation property; any creature or object completely encased in this Risian ice is kept in stasis, ignoring the passage of time. Travelers or entire ships might be found trapped in such an iceberg: fiends or dragons from the first age of the world, Sarlonan refugees fleeing the Sundering, or more recent sailors from Khorvaire. The shroud against divination makes it difficult to track such prisoners from afar ... but there are wonders waiting to be found.

Known Threats and Dangerous Paths

Over the centuries, sailors have charted safe paths through the Barren Sea, identifying deadly manifest zones and plotting routes that avoid them. There are three primary routes used by Riedran ships and Lyrandar vessels, and with a reliable map and a good navigator, you can follow such a path and avoid the planar threats. However, many independent captains—smugglers, spies, Adaran vessels avoiding Riedran patrols—pride themselves on knowing shorter paths. Such routes can save you time and avoid contact with other vessels ... but a false map can lead into still water or a shadowy end. Even if your shortcut is good, these infrequently traveled paths carry a greater chance of running across an intermittent manifest zone that was dormant when the cartographer passed through. When you leave the known paths, you may encounter deadly threats—but you also might find ghost ships laden with treasure or ancient wonders preserved in Risian ice.

Merchants and Soldiers

A regular stream of legitimate traffic flows across the Barren Sea. In the south, merchants and cargo ships travel between Dar Jin, Dar Qat, Stormreach, and Sharn. A northern route connects Dar Jin and Dar Kel to Aundair and points east. The majority of these ships are Riedran, mixed with a few Lyrandar vessels and others. Diplomats and scholars can also be found making their way across the sea.

Riedran frigates patrol trade routes, ever watchful for pirates and smugglers. While Riedran soldiers aren't inherently hostile to the people of Khorvaire, they may stop and board any vessel they suspect of smuggling or of supporting enemies of Riedra—notably, kalashtar.

Smugglers, Spies, and Pirates

The Barren Sea's steady stream of merchant vessels provides inviting targets for pirates. Riedran frigates

are ever vigilant, but the sea's shrouding effect makes it possible for pirates to evade pursuit by plunging into uncharted waters. Of course, this means braving the dangers of a dead calm or still waters, but some are willing to take that risk. Given the dangers, the Barren Sea isn't exactly teeming with pirates, but those who manage to thrive in these dangerous waters are often quite capable.

The shrouding effect also makes the Barren Sea a haven for smugglers—including the Dream Merchants of Riedran, Adarans making their way to or from Khorvaire, and others—along with spies, whether they're spying on Riedra, Droaam, or elsewhere. Meanwhile, conspiracy theorists claim that many dragonmarked houses maintain secret facilities on platforms in the Barren Sea, places where they can defy the Korth Edicts.

Sahuagin

The hypersalinity of the Barren Sea is just as deadly to the sahuagin as it is to other creatures, and the Eternal Dominion of the Thunder Sea doesn't extend into these western waters. However, a few sahuagin clans live scattered across the very edges of the Barren Sea. Each of these small enclaves has its own unique culture; some are peaceful, others vicious and cruel. The Sa'arlaath—the All-Consuming—are the most dangerous of these sahuagin; dwelling on the coast of the Demon Wastes, this enclave's people have been twisted by fiendish powers. The Sa'arlaath raid vessels that pass over their terrain, but most sahuagin of the Thunder Sea remain in isolation in the deep, ignoring both the people of the surface and those who dwell in the deepest depths of the Barren Sea—the kuo-toa.

Kuo-toa: Dreamers in the Deep

The upper waters of the Barren Sea are deadly, but descend far enough and the salinity of the water drops. It is here that adventurers can discover the "sinister fiends that dwell in horrid cities far below the waves" mentioned in the *Eberron Campaign Guide*. Those creatures that dwell on the ocean floor aren't literal fiends, but their realm is a terrifying array of nightmares—and their gods are sinister indeed. This is the domain of the kuo-toa.

While the upper waters of the Barren Sea are close to Mabar and Risia, the depths of the ocean once held powerful manifest zones tied to Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams. All mortals of Eberron possess a connection to Dal Quor, glimpsing the realm of dreams when they sleep. But among the manifest zones of these depths, unique creatures evolved with a far deeper connection—existing in both realms simultaneously, they perceived both the dreamscape and the Material Plane at all times. They called themselves the Quor-Toa, the People of Dreams. Beyond their power to perceive Dal Quor, the Quor-Toa could draw the essence of Dal Quor into reality and shape it within the manifest zones below the Barren Sea, sculpting tools, structures, and servants from the stuff of dreams. Their deep empire was a place of impossible wonders, of spectacles dragons and giants could only dream of. Yet because they could only work these wonders in manifest zones to Dal Quor, the Quor-Toa never sought to spread into other lands or seas.

Though uninterested in expansion, they defended their territory—and as a result, few giant explorers ever reached Sarlona, though some Cul'sir records describe the glories glimpsed below the waves of the "Golden Sea" and the godlike beings that defended it. In the end, the giants destroyed the Quor-Toa without even meaning to. Forty thousand years ago, the giants severed the ties between Eberron and Dal Quor, as a way to end their conflict with the quori ... and in the process, they destroyed the Quor-Toa. As the manifest zones tied to Dal Quor were stripped of power, the dream-towers of the Quor-Toa melted away, the fishfolk suffered devastating psychic trauma, and their civilization collapsed into chaos. Though later generations adjusted to this shattered connection, their people were never the same. Their knowledge had been stored in libraries of dreams, vaults that were shattered and lost, and their psychic gifts were twisted. They no longer called themselves the Quor-Toa, the People of Dreams—they had become kuo-toa, the fallen people.

Following Two Paths

The kuo-toa have never regained the power of their ancestors, and the energies of Dal Quor no longer flow naturally into Eberron. But the kuo-toa still possess a stronger connection to Dal Quor than any other mortal creature. Most mortal creatures find the kuo-toa's behavior mystifying, and many believe they're prone to mass hallucinations, but the truth is far more complicated. While most mortals only glimpse Dal Quor when they sleep, the kuo-toa perceive both realms simultaneously; they are *always* dreaming, experiencing the dream overlaid with the Material Plane's reality. This has a few effects.

Waking Dream. Kuo-toa can always be targeted by the *dream* spell, even while awake.

Dual Reality. Kuo-toa experience two realities at once—the physical world and Dal Quor. Thus, when a kuo-toa is dealing with an adventurer, they are also dealing with whatever dream occupies the same space as the adventurer in their vision. They could be holding a fish and describe it as a sword, because in Dal Quor, they *are* holding a sword. To the kuo-toa, both realities are equally real—it's a sword *and* a fish. Similarly, the kuo-toa could be fighting a monster in Dal Quor while also talking to an adventurer on the Material Plane; so even

though the adventurer just sees them waving a fish around, they're actually fighting a nightmare with a mighty sword.

Dream Sense. Kuo-toa perceive invisible and ethereal entities through their echoes in the dream, which grants them their Otherworldly Perception trait.

Dreams in Which I'm Dying. If a kuo-toa is slain in Dal Quor, they simply lose their perception of Dal Quor until they complete a short rest. There's no other negative consequence; it's essentially no different from a human waking up after being killed in a dream.

Language of Dreams. The kuo-toa of Eberron speak Quori instead of Undercommon. They have no ties to creatures of Khyber, and they learned Quori long ago from their dreams.

While kuo-toa lack both the resources and the knowledge of their ancestors, they still possess supernatural powers tied to their dual existence. Kuo-toa seers have a sharpened form of their Otherworldly Perception, seeing dream visions that reveal secrets about the waking world. Such a seer might manifest *true seeing*—seeing a shapeshifter's true form as a dream aura around it—or other divination effects. Meanwhile, kuo-toa shapers can cast illusion or conjuration spells by pulling dreams into reality, often without fully understanding that this is what they're doing. An individual shaper's abilities are just a shadow of the power they wield as a community, as discussed below. The **kuo-toa dreamseer** and **kuo-toa godshaper** stat blocks at the end of this chapter present examples of creatures with such powers.

Beyond their innate powers, there's a second aspect that's crucial to understanding the kuo-toa's dual experience of Dal Quor and Eberron. Because Dal Quor is currently shaped by il-Lashtavar—the Darkness that Dreams—a kuo-toa's dreamscape is often one of nightmares, and this in turn shapes the way they interact with the world. Adventurers might meet a kuo-toa who has learned to resist this; perhaps one of the dreamseers has even touched il-Yannah and can channel positive dreams. However, as long as the kuo-toa remain linked to the Darkness that Dreams, their dreamscape will continue to attract nightmares.

Gods & Monsters

A single kuo-toa might have the power to draw a wisp of dream into reality to create the effects of a *minor illusion*. But as kuo-toa join together, their collective unconscious amplifies their dreams—and nightmares—and they can bring these things into reality. Kuo-toa cities are ruled by gods they have dreamed into being, but they didn't *choose* these gods; these deities are built from their fears. Every kuo-toa deity is unique, and they shape their cities to match their nature. These gods are the true "sinister fiends that dwell in horrid cities beneath the waves," and they make harsh demands on their people. Beyond gods, the kuo-toa can dream otherworldly creations and horrors into existence—they may dream creatures with the abilities of krakens or aboleths (though not their exact shapes or motivations), or entirely new abominations. Such monsters might serve the local deity, or they could simply rise to the surface to prey on unwary travelers. So you never know what you'll find in the Barren Sea ... because the kuo-toa in the deep could dream up a unique nightmare that has never been seen before and will never be seen again.

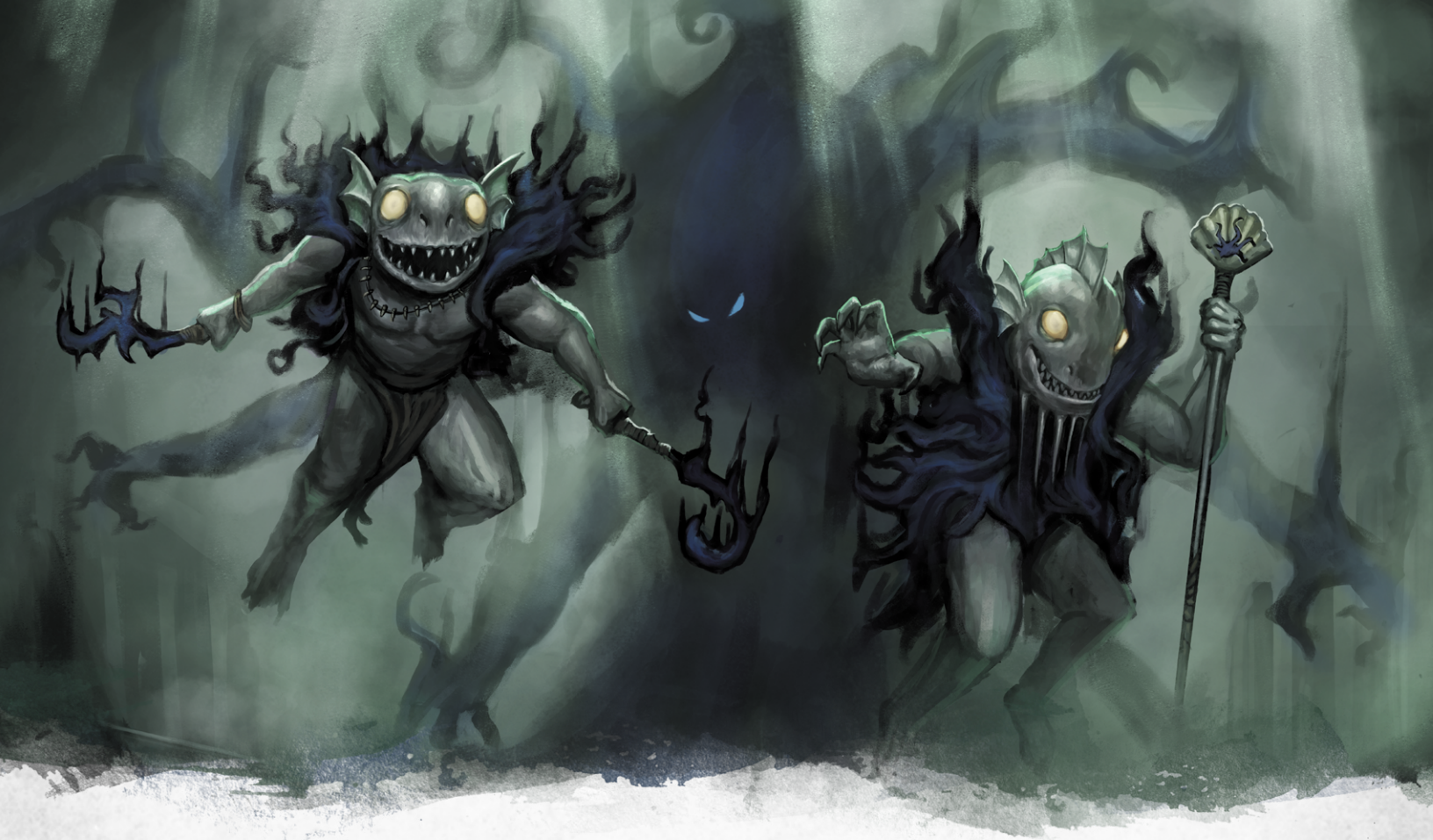
The power of these kuo-toa gods depends on the community they're tied to, since it's the kuo-toa themselves that dream them into existence. A small outpost might have a "god" with the power of a mere pit fiend. For the major cities, the DM could repurpose the statistics of existing archfiends; this would be a fine place to have a version of Demogorgon or Zariel, though I'd definitely give them some distinct kuo-toa flavoring. However, their power is definitely geographically limited; while Blibdolpoop/Demogorgon might be extremely powerful in their domain, they couldn't go attack Sharn. It's a little like the Undying Court, except the kuo-toa gods feed on the nightmares of their people instead of on their love.

Kuo-toa and Quori

It might seem like the Dreaming Dark would love the kuo-toa and would exert power over them; in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Consider that in the Age of Giants, the Quor-Toa were in a realm close to Dal Quor, and yet the quori came to Xen'drik instead. Why not travel through this open gateway? Because the quori of the past feared the Quor-Toa, just as those of the present fear the kuo-toa. When the kuo-toa shape dreams, pulling the essence of Dal Quor into reality and bending it to their will, this includes molding the quori themselves—for the kuo-toa gods began as quori! Understanding this, it becomes clearer why the kuo-toa gods are so cruel and why kuo-toa society is gripped by nightmares; they're built on the foundation of il-Lashtavar. However, the quori are themselves helpless prisoners; the kuo-toa gods are formed from their essence, but the quori themselves are forced to play the roles that are set for them. This isn't something the kuo-toa do consciously, and they can't choose *not* to do it. But the quori are aware of the powers the kuo-toa wield, and they stay far away from the ocean depths.

The Barren Truth

The beginning of this article raised a question: why is the Barren Sea so barren? What causes the focused hypersalinity, and what blocks divination? Scholars on land have advanced many theories. Some say it's clearly the work of the dragons of Argonnessen, an epic curse like those unleashed against Xen'drik. Others assert it's obviously the handiwork of the daelkyr. Or maybe there's an unbound overlord in the



water and this is its domain. All of these ideas are plausible; any of them *could* be true.

But in my interpretation in this chapter, the Barren Sea itself is a nightmare of the kuo-toa. Collectively, they see the world as a barren place of death, and this shared nightmare actively poisons the waters above them. They've dreamed cruel and oppressive gods into existence from quori seeds, and these nightmare gods conceal their domain from prying mortals. Though the kuo-toa no longer suffer the acute distress of the cataclysm where their ancestors were torn from Dal Quor, their world can't be changed by a few friendly conversations. On the other hand, if Dal Quor itself were to change—if il-Lashtavar were to give way to il-Yannah and an Age of Light—perhaps the Great Light could heal the kuo-toa and life could return to the Barren Sea. And there could even be a band of kuo-toa champions who have learned to consciously wield their dreams and are fighting to drive this change; these could be valuable allies for any adventurers following the Path of Light.

So, back to the original question: what goes on in the Barren Sea? Pirates! Smugglers! Getting boarded by Riedran soldiers who want to inspect your cargo! Ghost ships filled with shadows! Finding an ancient couatl frozen in an iceberg! A secret Cannith research platform! A nightmare from the depths! Or, perhaps, a visit to a city deep beneath the waves, where a nightmare deity rules over people poised between two worlds ...

What's Common Knowledge?

The people of the surface world know almost nothing about the kuo-toa people. Surfacers know merely what's suggested in the quote at the beginning of this chapter—that there are "fiends in horrid cities" at the bottom of the Barren Sea. Thus far, the nightmare deities of the kuo-toa have kept their dreaming subjects in the depths—and the major trade routes used by Riedra and Khorvaire don't pass over kuo-toa cities, leaving them undisturbed and unknown. So how will adventurers discover what lies below? Adventurers venturing through uncharted waters could be shipwrecked by a nightmare and drawn into the depths. A dragonmarked research platform could attract the attention of a kuo-toa god, causing it to focus its wrath on the world above. A kalashtar could be urged below by visions from il-Yannah; could the kuo-toa play a vital role in the turning of the age?

Kuo-toa Stat Blocks

In addition to the kuo-toa stat blocks in the *Monster Manual*, this section presents two new stat blocks that demonstrate the powers wielded by kuo-toa seers and shapers. The Dreamer's Ego trait shared by these kuo-toa reflects their ability to manifest spectral armor from their dreams; this is typically formed from misty shadow, with full details flickering into existence and fading away. The Dreamstrike attack of the dreamseer uses weapons similarly forged from dreamstuff. The greatest power is that of the godshaper, who can

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conjure a powerful entity and enhance its power over time. While the godshaper is mechanically presented as controlling the god-entity, the idea is that this guidance is limited; the god will fight the enemies of the kuo-toa, but kuo-toa gods are typically cruel and can't be commanded. The godshaper is the god's subject, not its master.

Kuo-toa Dreamseer

Medium Humanoid (Kuo-toa), Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	9 (–1)	15 (+2)

Skills Insight +3, Perception +3
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Quori
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Amphibious. The dreamseer can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The dreamseer can sense the presence of each creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The dreamseer has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the dreamseer has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The dreamseer makes three attacks: two with its Dreamstrike and one with its Bite.

Dreamstrike. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) psychic damage, and the target's psyche suffers a debilitating blow. Until the end of the target's next turn, it can't expend spell slots or make more than one attack on its turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Sleep with the Fishes. When the dreamseer takes psychic damage from a creature it can see, it instinctively forms a bridge across Dal Quor between it and its foe. The creature that caused it to take damage must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, both that creature and the dreamseer fall unconscious for 1 minute. If either of them take damage or if someone uses an action to shake or slap one of the unconscious creatures awake, both creatures wake up.

Kuo-toa Godshaper

Medium Humanoid (Kuo-toa), Any Alignment

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 137 (25d8 + 25)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +4, Cha +7
Skills Arcana +3, Insight +7, Perception +7
Damage Resistances psychic
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Quori
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Amphibious. The godshaper can breathe air and water.

Otherworldly Perception. The godshaper can sense the presence of each creature within 30 feet of it that is invisible or on the Ethereal Plane. It can pinpoint such a creature that is moving.

Slippery. The godshaper has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the godshaper has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Dreams of Victory. The godshaper sees the fierce attacks of a kuo-toa deity in the dreamscape. The godshaper chooses one deity it can see that was created by its Shape Deity or a friendly godshaper's Shape Deity, moving that deity up to 30 feet to a space it can see. After this move, each creature of the godshaper's choice within 20 feet of the deity must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Dreams of Strength. The godshaper sees the ever-growing power of a kuo-toa deity in the dreamscape. The godshaper chooses one deity it can see that was created by its Shape Deity or a friendly godshaper's Shape Deity. That deity gains the following cumulative benefits:

- Its size increases by one category (such as from Medium to Large).
- Its AC increases by 1.
- It regains 10 hit points and its maximum hit points increase by 10.
- When a godshaper uses Dreams of Victory with that deity, the damage dealt increases by 7 (2d6).

Additionally, the godshaper can choose another godshaper it can see, allowing that godshaper to immediately use its reaction to use its Dreams of Victory.

Bonus Actions

Reveal Dreamscape. Until the end of the godshaper's next turn, each creature within 30 feet of it has truesight out to 60 feet.

Shape Deity (1/Day). The godshaper imagines a deity and shapes it from ectoplasm. The deity appears in an unoccupied space the kuo-toa can see within 30 feet of it. The deity's size is Medium, and it has AC 15, 50 hit points, and resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. The deity remains for 1 minute, until it is reduced to 0 hit points, or until no friendly godshaper can see it. The godshaper can't use this ability if it can see another friendly godshaper's deity.

Chapter 12: The Astral Plane

Eberron is balanced between thirteen planes, each of which represents an iconic concept. All mortal creatures are influenced by these planes. We dream in Dal Quor and cast shadows in Mabar. We feel the martial call of Shavarath balanced by the tranquility of Syrania. Where these planes extend directly into the Material Plane, they create manifest zones and wild zones, shaping Eberron in their image. Counting those that are lost, there were thirteen planes, thirteen moons, thirteen dragonmarks.

What, then, is the role of the Astral Plane? What concept does it represent? Does it, too, shape the world? Why isn't it associated with a moon or with manifest zones?

Space Between Spaces

While the Astral Plane is called a "plane," it has little in common with the thirteen planes of the orrery. It wasn't created to embody a concept, because *it wasn't created*. The Astral Plane is the ultimate foundation of reality, the realm that existed before creation. If you interpret the creation myth literally, the Astral Plane was the canvas upon which the Progenitors painted existence as we know it. As such, it's not part of creation; it's the space that lies between and beyond it. It doesn't have a purpose; it simply *is*.

With that said, the fact that the Astral Plane is the space between spaces gives it value. With a few exceptions—such as the Immeasurable Market of Syrania—the planes of Eberron exist as independent and isolated systems. There's no direct path from Risia to Fernia, or from Mabar to Lamannia. All of the planes (other than Dal Quor) touch the Material Plane, but manifest zones that serve as gateways aren't easy to find. Barring manifest gateways, travel between the planes involves passing through the Astral Plane. *Plane shift* and *gate* spells expedite this process, connecting through the Astral in a blink of an eye; without such magic, travelers must enter and depart the Astral Plane through the color pools scattered throughout it. These gateways to other planes are described further in the "Travel on the Astral Plane" section.

So why visit the Astral Plane? The first reason is to go somewhere else; the Astral is just the road that takes you there. The second reason is to get away; disconnected as it is from reality and the ravages of time, the Astral can serve as the ultimate sanctuary. The third reason is because you need to interact with the travelers or exiles who dwell there—or because you wish to explore the forgotten debris of previous ages, abandoned and forgotten on the Astral Plane.

Universal Properties

The Astral Plane is an endless silvery void. Wisps of silver and gray drift between motes of light; at first glance, these seem like stars, but they're the countless pools of color where the other planes bleed into the Astral. There is no inherent gravity or orientation here; you move by *thinking* about moving, and if you have no desire to move, you remain simply suspended in the void. Some travelers embrace the idea of flying, while others choose to walk across the void even though there's no ground beneath their feet. The following properties apply to the entire plane.

Ancient and Enigmatic. *Commune, augury, divination, legend lore* and similar spells are unreliable on the Astral Plane. Many of the ruins and relics found in the silver sea are from previous incarnations of Eberron or even predate creation itself, and spells of the current age can't unlock their mysteries.

Beyond Time and Space. Time passes at the same pace on the Astral Plane as it does on the Material Plane, but creatures that spend extensive time on the Astral Plane often lose the ability to sense the passage of time. A hermit who's been isolated on the Astral Plane for thousands of years might believe it's been a single year. The passage of time has no effect on a mortal creature's body; creatures on the Astral Plane don't age or grow, and they are immune to hunger and thirst.

Speed of Thought. While on the Astral Plane, a creature typically has a flying speed (in feet) equal to 3 × its Intelligence score. However, this speed applies primarily while creatures are in combat; see the "Travel on the Astral Plane" section for more details on traveling the plane.

Suspended in the Void. Movement on the Astral Plane only happens by intention, and a creature that isn't actively moving or being moved merely floats, suspended in the void. Thrown objects and ranged attacks travel the maximum distance they would travel on the Material Plane—driven by the intent of the person who launched them—and then come to a stop, floating in the air.

Denizens of the Astral Plane

There's no native life on the Astral Plane. The creatures encountered here are either immigrants, travelers passing through, or things that have been created and set here—most by beings or civilizations long forgotten.

Travelers

While the *plane shift* spell allows travelers to instantly traverse the Astral Plane, there are always travelers who make their way across it step by step. These travelers only rarely include denizens of the outer planes; the planes are independent systems that are designed to function in isolation. So if you encounter a being from the planes traveling through the Astral, you can be sure there's a story behind it. Perhaps an efreeti pasha wishes to serve shaved Risian ice at their next gala,

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and they dispatched a servant to fetch some. Perhaps a condemned archfey is being escorted from Thelanis to the Inescapable Prison of Daanvi, or an angelic Virtue of Knowledge is going to consult the Infinite Archive. Any of these things could happen, but they're remarkable events; it's not like there's a constant stream of immortals passing through the Astral Plane.

Mortal travelers from the Material Plane are likewise rare, but not unknown. The mages of the Five Nations know of the Astral Plane, though they haven't yet developed a sustainable form of astral travel. Three civilizations currently make use of astral travel: the dragons of Argonnessen, the elves of Aerenal, and the Venomous Demesne.

Dragons of Argonnessen

Long ago, a cabal of dragons sought to build within the Astral Plane; this experiment came to an end with the loss of Sharokarthel (described in the "Astral Locations" section). Today, Argonnessen sees the Astral Plane purely as a conduit for travel. Since powerful wyrms make use of *plane shift,* most dragons encountered on the Astral Plane are only in their middle years—accomplished enough to have needs that can only be met in other planes, but not yet capable of casting *plane shift*. Loredrakes (dragon scholars) may wish to consult the Infinite Archives of Daanvi or to speak with a particular immortal. Masters of the hoard (collectors and merchants) may be seeking unique commodities, while flames of the forge (artisans and artificers) may be looking for resources that can only be acquired beyond reality.

Elves of Aerenal

The ascendant councilors of the Undying Court spend a great deal of time on the Astral Plane, working on the grand experiment of Pylas Var-Tolai (described in the "Astral Locations" section). Beyond this celestial realm, the Aereni follow in the footsteps of the dragons. The greatest Aereni sages may consult with virtues in Syrania or browse the Infinite Archive, and Aereni artisans may seek materials that can only be found in the planes. While the dragons you find traveling on the Astral are usually young, elf travelers are most likely among the most accomplished of their (living) kind; astral travel is an established practice, but only the most capable elves risk its many dangers.

The Venomous Demesne

Hidden in western Droaam, the Venomous Demesne is less than two thousand years old—a pale shadow in comparison to Argonnessen or Aerenal. But the humans and tieflings of the Demesne are brilliant mages who are pushing the bounds of arcane science. Over the last century, they've begun to dig deeper into the mysteries of the Astral Plane, using it both as a corridor through which to reach the planes and as a resource in its own right. Some mages of the Demesne seek to bargain with the githyanki, while others hope to find forgotten treasures in the ruins of Sharokarthel. So the Demesne doesn't yet have a large-scale presence on the Astral Plane, but adventurers could encounter Demesne mages either as fellow travelers or rival explorers competing for plunder and secret knowledge.

Immigrants and Exiles

While the Astral Plane has no truly native life, some creatures—both mortal and immortal—choose to live within this silver sea. Some have been stranded by mystical accidents. Others are prisoners exiled to the Astral Plane, cursed so they can't leave it; they are trapped in the timeless void, doomed never to return to the world that has forgotten them. The plane holds hermits who have chosen this solitary existence, philosophers who appreciate having an eternity to contemplate the higher mysteries, inventors working on forbidden research, and fugitives waiting for their enemies to die of old age. With no need for food or drink, some dwell in complete isolation; explorers could find a Cul'sir giant who has been meditating for the last five thousand years.

Other creatures come to the Astral Plane in groups and maintain some form of society in the silver sea. The most significant of these are the githyanki, who escaped the destruction of a previous incarnation of Eberron (described in chapter 5 of *Exploring Eberron*) and now dwell in fortress-ships the size of small towns. However, there are a handful of smaller communities scattered across the infinite void. Like the gith, some come from lost realities. Others are remnants of fallen civilizations or followers of traditions that have been wiped out on the Material Plane. Adventurers exploring the deep Astral could discover an outpost built by the dwarves of Sol Udar, or a Dhakaani garrison that knows nothing of the chaat'oor. These outposts allow your adventure to explore the idea of isolation, as these denizens don't need anything from the outside world. They have no reason to seek out others and trade with them. Thus they can exist as flies in amber—a Dhakaani force even more isolated than the Kech Dhakaan, goblins who don't even realize their empire has fallen. Adventurers could find an astral workshop where giants of the Sulat League have been perfecting a doomsday weapon they can use to take vengeance on the dragons, or they might find the labyrinth-tower of an infamous prince of Ohr Kaluun, cast into the Astral Plane to escape the Sundering.

Githyanki

Most immigrants and exiles of the Astral Plane exist in isolation and timeless stagnation, content to be forgotten in the trackless expanse of the void. The githyanki are the most notable exception to this rule. Tu'narath is a bustling city, fueled by the plunder githyanki raiders bring in from other planes. The ships themselves are communities, from small vessels that house a dozen raiders to fortress-ships that hold hundreds.

However, between dwelling on the Astral and pillaging immortal planes, the githyanki themselves have lost track of time. This has led to a faction in Tu'narath advocating for an invasion of the Material Plane—asserting that a foothold on the Material both would allow their population to grow and would give them an anchor in time. The naysayers argue that they don't belong in the current creation—that they've been able to thrive on the Astral because it's beyond reality, but that if the githyanki stake a claim on the Material, it could trigger unknown metaphysical defenses. Their argument continues unresolved; as a DM, if you decide to explore such an invasion, you'll have to decide whether there will be unforeseen consequences to a githyanki incursion.

The githyanki are warlike and proud. Their ultimate goal is to build their power until they can destroy Xoriat itself, regardless of the consequences this could have on reality. They have a deep competitive streak—perhaps born from a need to prove themselves superior to the world that has replaced theirs. Whether merchant or warrior, githyanki view all interactions through the lens of conflict. Every situation has a winner and a loser, and the githyanki must always be the victors. This doesn't mean mindless aggression; the githyanki recognize the need to outwit their enemies, to employ careful strategies and preserve their limited resources. But they are always seeking a path to victory, and they have no compunction about taking anything they desire from the people around them. In the eyes of the githyanki, only their people are real. All the trappings of this age are just flawed reflections of their reality. This is one reason the githyanki raid other planes while leaving the other denizens of the Astral Plane alone. Even if the other exiles are from other realities, the githyanki recognize them as kindred in suffering—and beyond that, they prefer not to start battles on their home ground. So the gith are constantly raiding through the color pools, but they avoid the ruins and outposts of other immigrants on the Astral Sea.

The githyanki maintain only limited contact with the Aereni of Pylas Var-Tolai. They feel no love for these creatures of the usurping reality, but see more value in trading with them than in starting a conflict in the void. However, if the githyanki were to launch an attack against Eberron, it's likely they would either negotiate a treaty with Aerenal before they begin, or find a way to destabilize the Undying Court and launch their conquest with a devastating first strike against the elves.

The Forgotten

Most denizens of the Astral Plane have a history that can be unraveled and explored. Some come from earlier incarnations of reality, like the githyanki. Others come from fallen nations—remnants of Xen'drik, Sol Udar, the Empire of Dhakaan. The ruins of Sharokarthel are almost a hundred thousand years old. But some beings on the Astral Plane predate even the Age of Demons—monstrosities constructed and abandoned by civilizations entirely unknown, ones that could even predate the Progenitors and the cosmology of Eberron itself. The terrifying astral dreadnoughts are one example of these forgotten entities. These gargantuan beings glide through the Astral Sea, destroying all they encounter. Some believe the dreadnoughts were created by the Progenitors to fight any beings—especially would-be gods—that might come from beyond Eberron's

cosmology and seek a foothold in Eberron. Others believe the dreadnoughts predate the Progenitors, incredible remnants of a world truly beyond mortal understanding. The dreadnoughts are just one example of those things that may linger in the depths of the Astral, forgotten powers waiting to be unleashed.

Astral Locations

Unlike Eberron's thirteen planes, the Astral Plane isn't divided into layers. It is a singular, seemingly infinite void in which color pools are scattered like stars. Measured using the concepts of the Material Plane, Tu'narath and Sharokarthel could be tens of thousands—or even hundreds of thousands—of miles apart. This is why it's possible to find an astral hermitage where a giant philosopher has remained undisturbed for thousands of years ... because unless you know what you're looking for, the Astral Plane is so vast as to make any particular location a single grain of sand on a vast beach.

Travel on the Astral Plane

It might seem like these vast distances would prevent any sort of meaningful travel on the Astral Plane. If Tu'narath and Sharokarthel are a hundred thousand miles apart, how is an adventurer to move between them? The catch is that movement on the Astral Plane isn't measured in miles or even in space; it's purely a concept. The Speed of Thought property at the beginning of this chapter determines a character's speed in combat, where people must focus on the narrow moment. Outside of combat, movement across the Astral Plane is based on knowing where you wish to go and willing yourself to get there.

Color Pools

Color pools allow travelers to exit the Astral Plane; each pool is tied to a particular location within another plane. Identifying the astral point and opening the gate requires magical tools that the people of the Five Nations have yet to master. The three civilizations mentioned earlier—Argonnessen, Aerenal, and the Venomous Demesne—have ways to navigate color pools, either with a specialized ritual or using an astral key (described in the "Astral Artifacts" section) that can open color pools from either side. Some of these keys are linked to a particular pool, while others may be able to open any pool-point the adventurers can find.

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* notes that it takes about 1d4 × 10 hours to find a color pool tied to a particular plane, with the risk of psychic wind increasing travel time. Think of this as searching the skies for a green star and then willing yourself in its direction. On the Astral Plane, each color pool appears as a two-dimensional pool of rippling color—one that matches the moon tied to its plane, as described in chapter 5 of *Exploring Eberron*. However, these pool-points are generally imperceptible on the other side of the pool. The Astral Color Pools table lists the color of each plane's astral pools.

That's all assuming you just want to find a random pool—but each astral color pool is tied to a different location within a plane. Finding a specific pool (or finding a location like Sharokarthel) is a different story.

Astral Color Pools

d20	Plane	Pool Color
1–3	Material Plane	Green
4	Daanvi	Yellow-gold
5	Dal Quor	Impossibly black, but portals are inaccessible
6–7	Dolurrh	Orange-red
8	Fernia	Silver
9	Irian	Bright gray
10	Kythri	Pearly white
11–12	Lamannia	Pale orange
13	Mabar	Smoky gray and shadowy
14	Risia	Lavender
15	Shavarath	Steel-gray with dark spots
16–17	Syrania	Blue-gray
18–19	Thelanis	Pale blue
20	Xoriat	Dull white with a black chasm

Silver Cords and Spirit Forms

There are multiple ways to enter the Astral Plane. It's possible to enter it physically by using spells like *plane shift* and *gate*, or by opening a pool portal (using an item like an *astral key*, described in the "Astral Artifacts" section). Physical travel puts the traveler at risk of lasting harm and death, as their body is physically present on the Astral Plane. On the other hand, *astral projection* separates the caster's spirit from their body and allows them to enter the Astral Plane as a spirit form, tethered to their body by a silver cord. The advantage of this form of travel is that you can't be permanently harmed; if you're reduced to 0 hit points in astral form, you simply return to your physical body. The ascendant councilors of the Undying Court typically travel the Astral Plane in this spirit form, allowing them to venture into unknown regions without fear.

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Finding Locations

If you've been to a location before, it usually takes you around 1d4 × 10 hours to reach it. If you haven't, but you're proficient in Arcana and have a description of a location (an Aereni map, a description from a Cul'sir tomb), it generally takes 1d8 × 10 hours to reach your destination. If you have no intended destination, you can try to navigate based on the constellations formed by the scattered color pools; you'll eventually find *something*, whether it's just a pool or some more interesting outpost or ruin. A character familiar with astral travel can make an Intelligence (Arcana) check to speed travel; a good result could reduce travel time and help the travelers avoid the psychic wind.

The elves of Aerenal are the most notable astral cartographers in Eberron. The ascendant councilors of the Undying Court have spent countless hours exploring the Astral Sea as incorporeal spirits, recording the paths of its constellations and noting interesting ruins and hermitages. If adventurers wish to find adventure on the Astral Plane, they could just dive into the sea and start swimming ... but a torn page from an Aereni atlas could be what they need to get started.

Psychic Wind

The Astral Plane's psychic wind operates just as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. It's a supernatural phenomenon that reflects storms in the natural world; multiple storm systems slowly move across the plane, waxing and waning in strength. Most major settlements are out of the paths of the psychic wind. When hermitages or other structures are in areas that can be struck by psychic wind, the buildings are usually shielded against its effects—so if the wind is growing worse, see if you can find a safe shelter! The *Dungeon Master's Guide* notes that "a psychic wind is made up of lost memories, forgotten ideas, minor musings, and subconscious fears," and a DM could decide that particular instances of the psychic wind are tied to especially catastrophic events. Perhaps one storm system is tied to the destruction of the reality of the githyanki, while another emerged following the devastation of the Mourning, carrying the memories of all who died in the disaster.

Pylas Var-Tolai

The ascendant councilors of the Undying Court spend a great deal of time on the Astral Plane—leaving their bodies behind and exploring through astral projection. In part, they are charting the near-infinite expanse; the Aereni have maps of many ruins and hermitages, though they leave many of the hermits undisturbed. But astral cartography is a side project; their true interest is something far grander. The Astral Plane is a place of beginnings. If the myths are true, it's here that the Progenitors laid the cornerstone of creation. The Undying Court seeks to follow in their footsteps—to *create a new reality*. They are still far from this goal, but using their gestalt power, they've managed to create a region within the void—an island they call Pylas Var-Tolai.

CAROLINA CESARIO

The core of Pylas Var-Tolai is a vast, fortified monastery. This includes a scriptorium where monks draw maps of the Astral Sea, a vast library holding accounts of all the ruins they have explored, and a vault holding both wonders found on the Astral and artifacts deemed too dangerous to be kept on the Material Plane. At the monastery's center lies a council chamber where the ascendant councilors commune with one another and exert their power. While the most important inhabitants of Var-Tolai are the astral forms of the ascendant councilors, there is a population of mortal elves—scholars, priests, and soldiers—who are physically present. The **Var-Tolai priest** stat block in this section provides statistics for some of the elves who live and labor here on the Astral Plane.

Pylas Var-Tolai is primarily a research outpost, but it also serves as a waystation for Aereni who have business in the planes; as such, it does have a small capacity for guests, and it usually houses a handful of travelers along with the permanent staff. However, the monastery is driven by research, not commerce. If adventurers come to the gates of Pylas Var-Tolai, the priests will be more interested in their stories than their gold.

The most important aspect of Pylas Var-Tolai is the great gate. This allows passage to the workshop of the Undying Court ... and into the reality they are creating. This realm is very much a work in progress, fluid and unsustainable. But they are continuing to work at it. When adventurers visit, the realm on the other side of the gate could be a tiny island or a vast continent. It could

be a perfect replica of Aerenal, or it could be a wondrous realm that defies the laws of physics. Visiting adventurers could be asked to explore the nascent realm—to test the creation of the councilors and identify its flaws.

Var-Tolai Priest

Medium Humanoid (Elf), Typically Lawful Neutral

Armor Class 18 (breastplate, shield)
Hit Points 154 (28d8 + 28)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +8
Skills Arcana +6, Religion +6, Perception +8
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, Elvish
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Fey Ancestry. The priest has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The priest makes two Scimitar or Light of the Undying attacks, and it uses Reshape Reality.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Light of the Undying. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 100 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) radiant damage.

Reshape Reality. The priest choses a point it can see within 100 feet of it, reshaping reality in a 20-foot-wide cube originating from that point. Each creature within that area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 16 (3d10) force damage, and the priest chooses an unoccupied space it can see within the area to teleport that creature to. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not teleported. Additionally, the priest can choose one of the following effects, which last until the priest uses Reshape Reality again:

- The ground in the area turns into fractal shards, becoming difficult terrain. When a creature moves into or within the affected area, it takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage for every 5 feet it travels on the ground.
- Gravity within the area pulls in a direction of the priest's choosing.
- Each creature and object within the area is either enlarged or reduced, as if affected by the *enlarge/reduce* spell. The priest chooses the same effect for the whole area.

Spellcasting. The priest casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *guidance*, *light*, *silent image*
2/day each: *banishment*, *dimension door*, *dispel magic*, *major image*
1/day each: *creation* (as an action), *demiplane*, *hallucinatory terrain*

Bonus Actions

Astral Step. The priest teleports up to 15 feet to an unoccupied space it can see, then each enemy within 5 feet of the priest takes 4 radiant damage, and each ally within 5 feet of the priest regains 4 hit points.

Ruins and Hermitages

The Astral Plane may in fact be infinite, and there's no telling what could be waiting in that void. There's at least one active city, Tu'narath (described later in this chapter); however, many other points of interest lie scattered in the void, most of them ruins. Some are the remnants of actual cities once built on the Astral Plane, like Sharokarthel. Others are simply pieces of unknown civilizations or lands. These could be from the distant past of this Eberron. They could be remnants of a lost Eberron, such as the Eberron of the gith. Or they could even be relics of previous creations, realities older than the Progenitors themselves. The Astral Ruins table provides a few examples.

Astral Ruins

d12	Ruin
1	A dragon's skull, ten miles long from snout to horn-tip; its shape doesn't precisely match any known type of dragon.
2	A single tower, seemingly broken off a larger castle.
3	A massive ship designed for ocean travel—a distinctly different design than githyanki astral vessels.
4	A mountain peak formed from smoky crystal.
5	A mass of silver clouds, soft but solid enough to stand on; they drift and shift, but never disperse or drift apart.
6	The empty shell of an immense dragon turtle; within it, abandoned tents stand in irregular rows like a marketplace without its people.
7	A grove of enormous trees with roots and branches intertwined.
8	A manor house, preserved with *mending* magic and tended by *unseen servants*.
9	A colossal inert construct, headless with three arms and three legs; tiny crablike constructs crawl along its body.
10	A cozy, rustic farmhouse with smoke rising from the chimney.
11	Rows of brass urns floating around a central monolith.
12	Half of a vast library, perfectly cut down the center; books and scrolls drift through the void around it.

Odd structures can be found on many planes; what differentiates the ruins of the Astral Plane from the bizarre landscapes of Xoriat is the fact that astral ruins generally feel like they had a *purpose*—they may be encountered out of context, but once upon a time, that ship was in water and that skull was part of an immense dragon. Meanwhile, what makes them different from the wonders of Thelanis is that while astral ruins may have a purpose, they rarely have a *story*—at least, not one that can be easily discerned. The skull was once part of a dragon, but there are no further clues as to who that dragon was or how it died; if it was once part of a story, that story is long over.

Ruins are generally abandoned. When immigrants or exiles lay claim to a ruin, it becomes a hermitage. Given that creatures on the Astral Plane are immune to starvation and thirst, people can live in places

that could never support life in the natural world. A massive dragon skull could be inhabited by a clan of winged kobolds or a trio of Seekers of the Divinity Within. Again, unlike Xoriat, the denizens of such a realm came from somewhere; if there's kobolds in the skull, they're probably either from Eberron, a previous reality, or a forgotten creation.

Sharokarthel

In the wake of the Age of Demons, the victorious dragons spread across the world. Their ascendancy empowered the first rise of the Daughter of Khyber, followed by a devastating war of dragons that destroyed the nations they'd created. Ten thousand years later, a loredrake presented a new idea: the Daughter of Khyber drew power when the dragons expanded across Eberron, but the Daughter herself was bound to Khyber—what, then, if the dragons spread not across the Material Plane, but across the outer planes? This impulse led to the creation of several outposts on the Astral Plane, culminating in the great city of Sharokarthel. This is a city built by dragons, for dragons—a city formed from magic and the immaterial, unbound by gravity or weather. Here, the dragons of Sharokarthel built arcane workshops and planar orreries, and amassed hoards drawn from across the planes. But ultimately the theory was proven wrong. The Daughter of Khyber couldn't touch the dragons in Sharokarthel—but as their glory grew, she could corrupt those dragons still on Eberron, and these corrupted servants could carry the fight to the astral city. This led to the second great collapse. The Daughter was defeated once again, but the dragons were forced to abandon Sharokarthel. They didn't destroy the glorious city, but they laid powerful wards and curses on it, ensuring that no casual traveler could claim their abandoned glory.

There are several draconic ruins on the Astral Plane, but Sharokarthel is the grandest of them all. It surely holds untold wonders and treasures, but it's protected by powerful curses and traps. Still, there are surely accounts of those defenses somewhere. Perhaps a human sage might stumble on a book detailing a secret path into Sharokarthel ... or perhaps a young dragon might recruit a group of adventurers to accompany them to the abandoned city, hoping to reclaim some treasure of their ancient ancestors.

Subspace

Many effects—*magnificent mansions, bags of holding, portable holes*—make use of extradimensional spaces. Typically, these are presented as tiny demiplanes, isolated and unconnected; others, such as *secret chest*, mention the Ethereal Plane. However, it's possible these extradimensional spaces are in fact on the Astral Plane. A traveler might encounter a *bag of holding* as a floating bubble of force that contains objects; meanwhile, a *magnificent mansion* might be found suspended in the void. If this is the case, someone might be able to find and penetrate those spaces from the outside.

Of course, the chances of finding a *bag of holding* on the Astral Plane would be like finding a bottle dropped into an infinite ocean. But a DM could decide that items created with the same technique occupy the same region of the Astral Plane; that there is a constellation of Cannith *bags of holding*, a neighborhood of Ghallanda *magnificent mansions*, or an island formed by the Kundarak Vault network. If this is the case and someone does find a way to access any of these things from the outside, it could cause chaos and force the houses to deploy additional security. But in the meantime, it could certainly make for an epic astral heist!

Tu'narath

In their early days on the Astral Plane, the githyanki discovered an immense six-fingered hand floating in the void—one charged with arcane power, not unlike Eberron dragonshards. The origins of this severed hand remain a mystery, but the githyanki recognized it as a useful resource and a suitable foundation for the anchorage of Tu'narath. Most githyanki prefer to dwell in their ships, but Tu'narath is the port where the city-ships come together, where the githyanki unload their planar plunder and tell tales of their glorious battles. And should they plan a conquest, it's here that they will mass their forces.

The githyanki have no love of outsiders; if you want a friendly place to conduct commerce, go to the Immeasurable Market of Syrania. However, the Sixth Finger of Tu'narath is essentially a foreign quarter where travelers can find shelter and sample some of the wonders the gith have claimed from across reality. It's a very rough neighborhood, where you'll find exiles, astral prisoners, and worse—but if you're looking for an astral guide or some exotic planar plunder, you could make a landing at Tu'narath.

Planar Manifestations

Here are some ways the Astral Plane can affect the Material Plane.

Planar Connections

The Astral Plane doesn't produce manifest zones on the Material Plane, and it never becomes coterminous or remote. However, it does touch all of the planes at various points; these connections are visible on the Astral Plane as color pools (as described in the "Travel on the Astral Plane" section), but the other side of the pool is generally imperceptible. The color pools aren't usually navigable without special magic, but a Chamber agent could use special rituals or an *astral key* (described below) to open an astral gateway,

allowing adventurers to escape disaster or to quickly pass between distant points on the Material Plane.

Beyond color pools, the primary ways to enter the Astral Plane are to use *plane shift*, *gate*, *astral projection*, or similar spells. For travelers who lack such magic, however, a DM could always decide there are circumstances under which unwary travelers can fall into the Astral Plane. For example, perhaps if circumstances are just right at a point in the Thunder Sea, a maelstrom can draw ships entirely out of reality and into a graveyard of ships on the Astral Sea.

Astral Artifacts

The Astral Plane produces nothing on its own, and unlike other planes, it has no unifying theme. But the Astral Plane is filled with the ruins and remnants of countless civilizations and worlds. Githyanki plunder can provide treasures drawn from across the planes. Ruins and hermitages hide relics from the past; adventurers could recover the treasures of titans from a Cul'sir outpost, Dhakaani weapons from a floating piece of an Imperial garrison, or draconic wonders from the ruins of Sharokarthel. Beyond that, astral explorers might discover tools or resources that truly have no place in this creation. These could be anything, whether a new form of dragonshard, a material that simply doesn't exist on Eberron, or an iron flask holding an entity who comes from a previous iteration of Eberron or another creation entirely.

Astral Keys

One uniquely astral tool is the *astral key*, an object that allows the bearer to open an astral color pool from either side. These keys vary in power and design; one could be tied to a single specific astral pool, while another could have the power to open any pool-point the bearer can find. The people of the Five Nations don't currently possess *astral keys*; if the adventurers acquire such an item, it could be a relic of one of the civilizations that has mastered astral travel, or it could be a unique prototype or breakthrough. Despite the name, an *astral key* could be any shape; it could be a dagger that slices through the veil of reality or a brush that can paint a doorway in thin air.

Astral Stories

For most creatures, the Astral Plane is simply the space that lies between the planes. It's a path to be traveled, not a destination. But there are many ways it can drive a story on its own. The adventurers might have to pursue a fugitive who's slipped through a pool-point and into a ruin. They could be tasked to explore a region of the Astral Sea, to bargain with a githyanki smuggler, or to help an eccentric scholar who's determined to reach Sharokarthel. They could acquire an *iron flask* holding some unknown spirit from a previous world—what will it take to open it, and would it be better left alone? Here are a few other ideas:

An Ancestor's Call. An Aereni adventurer is ordered to bring their adventuring companions to Shae Mordai, and from there, the Aereni send them to Pylas Var-Tolai. An ascendant councilor—the adventurer's distant ancestor—is conducting experiments in creation, and wants their descendant to test the lands beyond the portal. Is this just coincidence, or does the ascendant councilor know something about their descendant as yet undiscovered by the living?

Storming the Castle. An enemy of the adventurers has built a fortress on the Astral Plane. Using a spell similar to *magnificent mansion*, they can retreat to their fortress from any location; this allows them to have their evil lair wherever the adventure is taking place. The adventurers could be on a desert island or in a small rustic village, but they'll still have to pursue the necromancer Demise into her Tower of Death when things go wrong.

The Undiscovered Country. A Morgrave scholar has discovered three *astral keys*. One opens a pool-point in Sharn, and they want a group of adventurers to help them explore the other side. The pool-point leads to a Cul'sir outpost on the Astral Plane. Is it abandoned, or are their ancient giants still lingering in this place? Was it just good fortune that the scholar found the keys, or does someone want the adventurers to stumble into the forgotten outpost?

Spelljammer and the Astral Plane

In the Spelljammer setting, the Astral Sea is the space between Wildspace systems that connects all realities. However, this chapter's depiction of the Astral Plane is still tightly connected to Eberron. It's inhabited by elves and by gith from a previous Eberron, but as described, you won't accidentally stumble into Realmspace as you explore the Astral. *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* says that while Eberron is part of the multiverse, "it is fundamentally apart from the Great Wheel, sealed off from the other planes [and] ... sheltered from the influences and machinations of gods and powers elsewhere in the Great Wheel." This article assumes that this is true even of Eberron's Astral Plane. There is a mystical barrier within the Astral, a metaphysical wall that blocks passage to the Astral Sea.

If your campaign is entirely contained within Eberron, you can decide this barrier is unbreakable. On the other hand, if you want to allow travel to and from the rest of the multiverse, this barrier could be breaking down. Adventurers can pass through these cracks to reach other Wildspace systems, or they can encounter travelers from strange new worlds.

Chapter 13: The Overlords Revealed

In the first days of the world, the children of Khyber rose from the darkness to reign over Eberron. The greatest among them were the overlords, who held dominion over a world of fear, war, and death until the children of Eberron and Siberys rose up against them. Armies of dragons fought against the fiends of Khyber. And though the overlords couldn't be destroyed, the couatl sacrificed their lives to build a prison of celestial light: a silver flame that bound the overlords in Khyber once more. These bonds have held for countless generations, but the overlords still yearn to break free and reclaim the world above.

—Eberron: Rising from the Last War

The overlords are one of the greatest threats in the Eberron campaign setting. They ruled the world in its first age, and they yearn to break their bonds and drag reality back to that Age of Demons. The Lords of Dust work to free the overlords, while the dragons of the Chamber oppose their efforts—and this long, cold war is one of the driving forces in the setting.

Demons and Immortal Evil

Though the term "demon" formally refers to a chaotic evil fiend, the people of Eberron commonly use it as a term for any evil immortal. So when we say Eberron's first age was the Age of Demons, this doesn't mean it was ruled solely by creatures whose stat blocks say "demon"; the term potentially encompasses any archfiend, devil, or other form of supernatural evil.

Immortal Archfiends

The overlords are immortal archfiends with immense power. At full strength, an unbound overlord exerts influence over a broad region, but this dominion is finite; it might cover a country, but not an entire continent. In the Age of Demons, there were approximately thirty overlords, and between them, they dominated the world. Despite their incredible power, however, the overlords aren't deities—and they can't grant divine magic, though a devout follower might be able to draw power directly from Khyber as a result of their faith.

Though the overlords can't be permanently destroyed, during the Age of Demons, the couatl sacrificed themselves and fused their celestial energy together to create the Silver Flame. This divine force proved capable of binding the overlords and most of their minions—but some lesser fiends slipped through. These beings, known as the Lords of Dust work to release their masters; their efforts are opposed by the dragons of the Chamber.

Each overlord is bound in a physical vessel, but the power of the Silver Flame keeps them bound (see "Bonds of the Overlords"). They can only be released if a particular piece of the ever-evolving Draconic Prophecy comes to pass. As a result, the Lords of Dust (and their opponents, the Chamber) study the Draconic Prophecy, seeking to manipulate it to achieve their goals.

Even while bound, the overlords still influence the regions around their prisons. Most overlords are effectively asleep, and this influence is essentially an effect of their "dreams." A few—such as Bel Shalor, the Shadow in the Flame—are more aware and actively scheming.

Hearts of Khyber

The overlords are commonly referred to as the children of Khyber. The truth is slightly more complex; they are actually the *architecture* of Khyber. Beyond the physical tunnels and caverns that extend into the depths, Khyber is a matrix of demiplanes. Most scholars believe these demiplanes are the dreams of Khyber the Progenitor, each reflecting a horrifying vision of a possible reality—realms defined by fear, bloodshed, and worse. While most are isolated, some are able to leak out into the Material Plane; these planes, known as heart demiplanes, are each tied to an overlord.

Heart demiplanes are the source of native fiends in Eberron, and these realms are defined by the nature of their overlords; chapter 5 of *Exploring Eberron* presents more information about heart demiplanes. At the moment, the Silver Flame still binds the overlords, separating the consciousness of each overlord from its heart demiplane—but if one were to be released, its power would flow out into reality, slowly reshaping the surrounding region to mirror its heart plane. The overlord's physical form that mortals can fight is an avatar of that force, but it's just a projection; if an overlord's projection is destroyed, its power flows back into its heart, regenerates, and returns. So physically defeating an overlord is only a temporary setback for it, and the physical entity you encounter is merely a projection.

Overlords and Gods

One common question is what differentiates overlords from the Dark Six (or other deities). There are a few major differences. First and foremost, the overlords absolutely exist—you can find the resting place of an overlord or go to its heart demiplane. If they've loosened their bonds, an overlord can manifest an avatar and you can actually fight it. So while you'll never shake hands with Aureon or dine with the Devourer, one day you might punch Rak Tulkhesh in the nose or have tal with Sul Khatesh.

Second, as powerful as the overlords are, they have a limited sphere of influence. While bound, they can only influence small regions around their prison or where

their heart demiplane touches the world. Even when released, their power usually has a finite radius—Bel Shalor threw Thrane into chaos, but his power wasn't felt in Sharn or even in Korth. Other overlords have different limitations: the Daughter of Khyber can reach across the world, but she can only influence dragons.

A final important difference is that the overlords aren't a logically arranged pantheon with complementary domains—and they aren't gods, but monsters. There's an overlord of cold, but we've never mentioned one associated with fire. Others have overlapping ideas; Sul Khatesh and Tul Oreshka hold secrets, Masvirik deals with reptiles while the Daughter of Khyber corrupts dragons. Bel Shalor and Eldrantulku are both corruptors, but they influence entirely different regions in the world. Rak Tulkhesh is infamously an overlord of war in the Five Nations, but there could be an entirely different overlord associated with bloodshed or war in Sarlona. Overlords are epically powerful, but they are also finite. They don't explain the existence of evil, they embody specific aspects of it.

Overlord Statistics

In each edition of the game, Eberron has provided statistics for some of the overlords, but these vary wildly in power. Under third edition rules, overlords rivaled lesser deities; they possessed the equivalent of 7 divine ranks and 30–50 character levels. In that edition, Sul Khatesh could cast *counterspell* as a free action, had spontaneous access to all wizard and sorcerer spells, and could destroy antimagic fields; she had innate *true seeing* as well as the ability to cast *legend lore* on anything she could see. By contrast, *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* now presents Sul Khatesh as a CR 28 threat with a fairly limited set of spells. How do these two interpretations relate to one another?

The answer is that the third edition statistics reflect the full power that an entirely unbound overlord could wield (comparable to that of a lesser deity). Meanwhile, the CR 28 interpretations of Sul Khatesh and Rak Tulkhesh reflect a weaker avatar, most likely manifested by an overlord who's still partially bound. At the end of the day, overlords are essentially plot devices. They are the most powerful entities that exist on Eberron, and at their full power, they were able to face entire armies of dragons. They aren't supposed to be "balanced"; for player characters to face them directly and have a chance of winning the fight, this would require other remarkable factors. In such a victory, perhaps the overlord is limited somehow (such as with the *planar binding* spell), or the player characters might be vessels of the Prophecy, or special preparations might influence the outcome (for example, Tira Miron might have bathed Kloijner in the waters of Irian or the heartsblood of Durastoran the Wymbreaker). Overlords wield apocalyptic levels of power, and any stat block should be seen as inspiration for what an overlord might be capable of, not an absolute limit.

Bonds of the Overlords

Overlords can't be permanently destroyed. When an avatar is defeated, its essence flows back into its heart plane and reforms. The champions of the first age bound that essence—preventing it from returning to its heart plane. Essentially, they severed each overlord's brain from its heart; the heart demiplanes still exist, but the consciousness of the overlords are bound elsewhere and they can't manifest their avatars or exert their full power. While the essence of each overlord is bound to a physical vessel, the power of the Silver Flame actually keeps each overlord bound. A vessel can be damaged—Rak Tulkhesh is bound to a Khyber shard that's been shattered—but this won't actually release that overlord.

Unbinding an Overlord

Releasing an overlord is no trivial matter. The prisons of the overlords are as indestructible as the fiends themselves. The only way for an overlord to be released is for a certain path of the Prophecy to come to pass. For this reason, the actions of the Lords of Dust are enigmatic. They cannot simply release their masters—they must bring history to a particular crossroads, a point at which the planes and moons are aligned and the darkness can rise again. It is up to you to decide just what is required for a particular overlord to be released. It could be something as grim as the downfall of a nation, or something as positive as the birth of a child.

—Eberron Campaign Guide

Chapter 15, "The First War," goes into more depth about the nature of how the overlords are bound and how such a bond might be broken. In short, releasing an overlord is controlled by several factors. The Draconic Prophecy is almost always tied to the actions of specific mortals. So despite all the power of the dragons and the Lords of Dust, they can't resolve a situation with brute force; they need to guide the actions of mortal pawns. Additionally, the Prophecy is always evolving. There is always a path for the release of an overlord—and as soon as the Chamber severs one branch, a new one begins to take shape. There will never be a time when humanity doesn't have to worry about the overlords; you can buy time by foiling the plans of the Lords of Dust, as a new branch may take centuries to be uncovered and cultivated, but there is always a path to release Sul Khatesh and there always will be. And while the Lords of Dust and the Chamber are always working to cultivate these branches or to trim them, there's always the chance that the events required to release an overlord will play out entirely on their own. Not all overlords have agents within the Lords of Dust, and the Chamber isn't omniscient; it's always possible that the necessary events will simply *happen*, even if there's no cult or fiend driving them.

Degrees of Influence

As long as the overlords are bound by the Silver Flame, they can't physically manifest in the world. But each overlord embodies a particular aspect of evil, which grows in strength as their servants scheme to release their ancient masters. The overlords gain strength when mortals embrace the dark paths laid down for them. And as they grow stronger, they gain more influence.

—Eberron: Rising from the Last War

If the bonds of an overlord can only be broken by a Prophetic path, what does it mean for an overlord to "grow stronger?" How do they threaten the world? If an overlord is released from its prison, it begins to transform a region of the world into a mirror of its heart demiplane. This may start slowly, but the end results can be dramatic. The Cold Sun will steal the light from the sky, while the Heart of Winter will blanket her domain in ice. Every overlord has a handful of fiends that already walk the world ... but if an overlord is unbound, greater forces will emerge from its demiplane. Beyond this, the overlord itself will be able to manifest a physical avatar, as shown in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.

An overlord is only able to affect the world directly if their bonds are broken. But even while bound, they still have the ability to influence mortals—Tiamat corrupts dragons, the Wild Heart corrupts nature, and Rak Tulkhesh drives people to spill blood. And the more mortals who succumb to their influence, the greater this power becomes. Sul Khatesh can't walk the world and unleash an arcane armageddon, but she can still whisper secrets to warlocks and create cults, while Rak Tulkhesh can shatter peace and drive war.

It's possible for an overlord to be partially released, increasing its ability to influence its surroundings but not possessing its full power or the ability to move from its prison. This state generally occurs when the bonds of an overlord are almost broken; there might be a single condition that stands between the overlord and full release, whether that's a planar or lunar conjunction, a ritual sacrifice, or something else its followers must accomplish. While the Wild Heart was in this state, it was able to amplify the power of the curse of lycanthropy and assert control over all 'thropes, and it may have been able to manifest an avatar in the heart of the forest; but the Towering Woods themselves weren't physically transformed, and the avatar of the Wild Heart wasn't roaming freely and striking down its enemies.

Ultimately, the amount of power an overlord wields is determined by the needs of your story. A bound overlord has a very limited ability to influence mortals. An unbound overlord can affect both mortals and the world itself, and it can manifest an avatar wielding tremendous power. A partially released overlord falls somewhere in between, with whatever limitations you need to impose to make your story satisfying. Even when cults and fiends aren't actively seeking to release their overlord, they often try to increase its influence—usually by playing out its core concept (war, undead, betrayal, sinister magic) in a region.

While bound, the overlords are effectively dreaming—or trancing, if you prefer, as they aren't tied to Dal Quor and can't be targeted by the *dream* spell. In this state, they aren't entirely conscious, nor are they fully comatose. Rak Tulkhesh revels in hatred and bloodshed, but it's his speaker Mordakhesh who schemes across the centuries and who actively sows strife. Sul Khatesh does whisper to her warlocks and share dangerous secrets, but even this is essentially reflexive; it's how her influence manifests, and not every warlock she deals with is part of a world-breaking scheme. The Lords of Dust understand the world and scheme to free their overlords; the overlords themselves are delighted when their influence grows, but are only partially aware of what's going on in the world. This is what makes their speakers—*prakhutu*—so important; Mordakhesh can commune with Rak Tulkhesh and divine what the Rage of War desires. (Hint: it's war.)

The Lords of Dust

The *Eberron Campaign Setting* describes the Lords of Dust as a coalition "of rakshasas and other fiends [who] have been playing games with the common races for thousands of years. They hide in the shadows of Khorvaire, plotting to free their ancient masters from the depths of Khyber, scheming to use them to gain greater power, or spreading pain and suffering."

Immortal Servants

Given that the overlords are so firmly bound, why *do* the Lords of Dust serve the overlords? Why doesn't Mordakhesh pursue his own interests? There are a few aspects to this. The first is that these fiends are immortals with fundamentally inhuman minds, created as the physical embodiments of ideas. Mordakhesh never *chose* to serve Rak Tulkhesh; it's a fundamental aspect of what he is. Furthermore, all native fiends are tied to heart demiplanes; when Mordakhesh dies, he returns to the Bitter Shield, the heart of Rak Tulkhesh. In essence, while he has his own unique personality, Mordakhesh is part of Rak Tulkhesh. Immortals can change—angels can fall, quori can become kalashtar—and it's certainly possible to encounter a fiend that's somehow shifted its allegiance or even become something other than a fiend. But this would be extremely unusual. Most fiends don't choose to serve their overlord; it's a fundamental part of who and what they are.

Wary Allies

Though the Lords of Dust often scheme together to release their various overlords, this is an arrangement born of convenience, not sentiment. The servants of some overlords avoid involvement with the Lords of Dust entirely, while others only work with this coalition when it serves their purposes. Meanwhile, the

overlords they serve are certainly not allies, nor do the Lords of Dust support all overlords. The overlords often fought one another during the Age of Demons, and a few—such as Ran Iishiv, Sakinnirot, Dral Khatuur—have even been described as being shunned by the Lords of Dust.

Keep in mind that the overlords embody terrible things, and all they desire is to express their nature. Rak Tulkhesh *is* furious bloodshed and has no other way to relate to the world; if you live next to Rak Tulkhesh, you know he's going to constantly attack you. Likewise, Eldrantulku is the embodiment of betrayal; the Lords of Dust who deal with him know that sooner or later, any arrangement ends in an unpleasant surprise, but because they know this, they can prepare and work around it.

So while the overlords themselves don't work together, the Lords of Dust are merely the lesser fiends that serve them. Though Rak Tulkhesh is unreasoning war, his speaker Mordakhesh is careful and calculating, willing to scheme with the servants of other overlords. But the Lords of Dust always place the interests of their own overlord above all else ... and many members of the Lords of Dust have long-standing feuds or rivalries with other fiends.

Who Are the Overlords?

There is no complete list of overlords, and even their exact number is uncertain; one canon source says "around thirty" while another says "a few dozen." Similarly, many details are left vague even for the overlords that have been named. Does Sakinnirot have a prakhutu, and if so, do they consult with the Bleak Council of Ashtakala? Where is Tul Oreshka's prison? This vagueness is largely intentional, because the overlords are essentially plot devices. Sakinnirot has a prakhutu if you want it to! We know the location of Sul Khatesh's prison, but Tul Oreshka's is intentionally undefined so it can be wherever you want it to be. Are there thirty overlords or thirty-six? Well, how many do you need?

This section lists the overlords who've been mentioned in canon or kanon, but these are just a starting point. You can learn more about some overlords using the references provided, but many don't have much information available; in some cases, this chapter actually provides more information on them than what exists in canon. Don't let that hold you back! Use this as inspiration and build on it to meet the needs of your campaign.

Ashtakala: the Demon City

Located in the Demon Wastes, Ashtakala is described in many sources as the last citadel of the Lords of Dust and the meeting place of their Bleak Council. In my Eberron, Ashtakala is itself an overlord, the immortal embodiment of the citadel of evil. (You can learn more about Ashtakala in chapter 14 of this book.)

Ashurak: the Slow Death

While never named in previous sourcebooks, the Slow Death is the patron of the Plaguebearers, one of the Carrion Tribes of the Demon Wastes. Ashurak revels in the horror of disease. The plagues they spread are agonizing and disfiguring, but never kill quickly; lingering suffering is Ashurak's hallmark. While their prison is in the Demon Wastes, their influence can be carried by the diseases they create, and Plaguebearers have occasionally started cults in the Five Nations.

While one might expect these cultists to find allies among the Children of Winter, the truth is quite the opposite; the maladies of Ashurak are deeply unnatural, and the druids battle these cults whenever they find them. Ashurak isn't one of the most powerful or infamous overlords, but they do have representatives among the Lords of Dust; their speaker is Shalashar, a native oinoloth. (The Plaguebearers were introduced in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, though that book contains no information about Ashurak.)

Bel Shalor: the Shadow in the Flame

Bound in Flamekeep, Bel Shalor is the most infamous overlord in Khorvaire, largely due to his well-documented devastation of Thrane and subsequent defeat at the hands of Tira Miron. Bel Shalor embodies our fear of one another and the capacity for even the most virtuous person to do evil. He thrives on paranoia and smiles when a good person harms an innocent or ignores their conscience.

Bel Shalor's speaker is the ak'chazar rakshasa Durastoran the Wyrmbreaker, and his minions are a powerful force within the Lords of Dust. Though his influence was originally tied to Thrane, the conditions of his binding now allow him to influence anyone who draws on the power of the Silver Flame; it's entirely possible he *wanted* to be bound and always planned to become the Shadow in the Flame. (You can learn more about Bel Shalor in the *Eberron Campaign Guide* and *Exploring Eberron*.)

The Daughter of Khyber

The Daughter of Khyber embodies the fear of dragons and the evil they can do—this includes both humanoids who fear the dragons, and the fears of the dragons themselves. She is bound in the Pit of Five Sorrows in Argonnessen, but much like Bel Shalor and the followers of the Silver Flame, the Daughter of Khyber can touch the heart of any dragon, wherever they may be. Her influence can be subtle, hidden within pride or even a desire to help lesser creatures—but once she sinks her hooks into a dragon's soul, she can twist even noble desires toward evil ends. The Daughter of Khyber's machinations have brought the world to the edge of disaster at least once since the Age of Demons, devastating ancient civilizations on Khorvaire that have now been forgotten; it's because of this that the dragons of Argonnessen

place severe restrictions on how dragons exercise power in the wider world.

Known to some as Tiamat, the Daughter of Khyber has no involvement with the Lords of Dust, and if she has a speaker, their identity is unknown. (You can learn more about the Daughter of Khyber in *Dragons of Eberron*, the *Eberron Campaign Guide*, and *Exploring Eberron*.)

Dral Khatuur: the Heart of Winter

Bound in the Frostfell, Dral Khatuur embodies all of the terrors of winter—endless night, the killing frost, the ice-encrusted face of a frozen friend. Her minions are frozen corpses, fiends sculpted from ice, and the howling, hungry wind. She despises all other creatures, including the other overlords; she has no ties to the Lords of Dust, and waits in the Frostfell for anyone foolish enough to venture into her domain.

Eldrantulku: the Oathbreaker

As described in *Dragon* 337, "Eldrantulku is a spirit of discord who turns allies into enemies and lovers into mortal foes. A master deceiver, his title comes from his ability to convince others to break their oaths. He is not a force of war—he corrupts the innocent, using ambition, jealousy, and paranoia as his tools." Eldrantulku is active within the Lords of Dust. Notable minions include Thelestes, an exiled Mabaran succubus and deadly assassin; and the devious rakshasa Kashtarhak, his prakhutu. The location of Eldrantulku's prison is unknown.

Katashka: the Gatekeeper

Katashka thrives on mortal fears of death and the undead. He is thought to have brought the first undead into the world, and certainly created the first liches and dracoliches. Katashka's servants are part of the Lords of Dust, and his prakhutu is the dracolich Mazyralyx (thought by some to be the origin of many myths of the Keeper).

The location of Katashka's prison is a mystery—the Lair of the Keeper in the Demon Wastes is one possibility, but it's just as likely that the lair instead contains a connection to his heart demiplane. Katashka's cults are more widespread than many other overlords, which suggests his prison could have been shattered and scattered like that of Rak Tulkhesh. As Katashka is known to create liches, one possibility is that pieces of his shattered prison are used as phylacteries by his lich champions, who spread his influence wherever they go. Katashka largely works with undead as opposed to fiends; his champions include the ancient wizard Kyuss and his spawn. (You can learn more about Katashka in *Dragon* 337, the *Eberron Campaign Guide*, and *Exploring Eberron*.)

The Lurker in Shadow

In the first age of the world, the Thunder Sea was the domain of a powerful overlord embodying the fear of the unknown and unknowable, of the unimaginable terrors lurking in the depths and in the darkness. Its true name is one more secret. Its servants call it Surash Ka, which is Abyssal for "the Deep Lord" or "the Ruler Below"; the sahuagin and other denizens of the Thunder Sea avoid even that name, calling it the Lurker in Shadow or just the Lurker. It's an exceptionally powerful overlord; while unbound, it dominated the Thunder Sea, and even now, its influence can be felt across the region.

The Lurker in Shadow has no interaction with the Lords of Dust. Its servants include aboleths, shadow demons, and shark-aspected rakshasa, but stories say these are the least of the horrors it has spawned. While the Lurker has some overlap with Sul Khatesh and Tul Oreshka, Sul Khatesh is focused on arcane knowledge and personal secrets, while Tul Oreshka deals with secrets that can break people; the Lurker in Shadow deals with the *things* you can't imagine, the forces that lie just beyond sight and that are waiting to pull you down. (You can learn more about the Lurker and the Thunder Sea in *Exploring Eberron*.)

Masvirik: the Cold Sun

Masvirik consumes the light, embodying our fears of all that slithers through the dark and cold. On the one hand, he embodies the warm-blooded fears of reptiles and venomous vermin. On the other, he embodies the reptilian fears of cold and death. His minions include corrupted lizardfolk, dragonborn, and kobolds, along with undead reptilian creatures and fiends who thrive on cold instead of heat.

Masvirik is imprisoned beneath Haka'torvhak, and his influence is felt across Q'barra. His speaker, the dragon Rhashaak, is bound in Haka'torvhak; the reptilian rakshasa Asshalara represents Rhashaak on the Bleak Council of Ashtakala. (You can learn more about Masvirik in *Dungeon* 185.)

Rak Tulkhesh: the Rage of War

Rak Tulkhesh embodies the fear of war and bloodshed, whether as a victim of violence or losing oneself to bloodlust and rage. The cults of Rak Tulkhesh include brutal raiders who embrace lives of endless violence, but also those who spread hate and strife—anything that stirs up harsh conflict where there might otherwise be peace.

The prison of Rak Tulkhesh has been shattered, and his influence is spread across Khorvaire; however, he has a strong presence in the Demon Wastes and his Carrion Tribes are always thirsty for bloodshed. His speaker, Mordakhesh the Shadowsword, is a respected member of the Lords of Dust and a brilliant military strategist. (You can learn more about Rak Tulkhesh in *Dragon* 416, *Exploring Eberron*, and *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.)

Ran Iishiv: the Unmaker

Bound beneath Adar, Ran Iishiv is a force of chaos and destruction. Some believe that Ran Iishiv reflects Khyber's primal hatred of creation itself, the burning desire to tear down the Material Plane and start anew. Whatever the truth, Ran Iishiv was exceptionally powerful and feared even by other overlords; it's believed that the wild zones to Kythri in Adar are the result of Ran Iishiv literally tearing through reality. Even while bound, the Unmaker's fury is a powerful force. Ran Iishiv may be the source of the storms that batter Adar, and some accounts claim its rage created the volcano of Korrandar.

Ran Iishiv has no allies among the Lords of Dust; it's possible fiends tied to other overlords would help prevent its release. Ran's primary servants are the Endseekers, cultists who have heard the Unmaker's dreaming whispers and seek to return reality to primordial chaos. (You can learn more about Ran Iishiv in *Secrets of Sarlona*.)

Sakinnirot: the Scar That Abides

Those loyal to Sakinnirot say it was the first child of the Dragon Below. In many ways, it embodies pure hatred—not the savage bloodlust of Rak Tulkhesh, but hatred that smolders and burns. It thrives on bloody feuds that only deepen the need for revenge, on physical and spiritual wounds left to fester. It's possible Sakinnirot is nothing less than the patient fury of Khyber itself, the determination for vengeance on the world that holds it prisoner.

Whatever the truth, Sakinnirot is one of the most powerful overlords; during the Age of Demons, the Scar laid claim to all of Xen'drik and reveled in battling other overlords. It was bound even more tightly than most overlords, and few of its fiendish servants escaped into the world; both because of this and its feuds with other overlords, the Scar That Abides isn't represented within the Lords of Dust. However, the rakshasa Lorishto—an ak'chazar of Eldrantulku—has been seeking to weaken the binding of Sakinnirot, hoping to become the prakhutu of the Scar That Abides. (You can learn more about Sakinnirot in *City of Stormreach*.)

The Spinner of Shadows

Though the Spinner of Shadows is commonly associated with spiders, this simply reflects her wider role as an overlord of hidden schemes, of the careful vendetta and the joy of toying with a powerless foe. She has significant overlap with Sakinnirot, but the Spinner is less driven by burning hatred and more by hungry ambition; she is the schemer willing to climb a web formed of innocent corpses to achieve her desires.

Though the Spinner isn't one of the most powerful overlords, one of her strengths is her talent for remaining hidden—reflected by the fact that she had her domain in Xen'drik despite Sakinnirot's claim on the continent. Because of this obsession with secrecy, it's unlikely that the Spinner is involved with the Lords of Dust; her agents scheme alone, hiding even from their fiendish cousins. (You can fight the Spinner yourself—digitally, at least—by playing the *Dungeons & Dragons Online* MMO.)

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Sul Khatesh: the Keeper of Secrets

Eberron: Rising from the Last War describes Sul Khatesh as "the Keeper of Secrets and the Queen of Shadows. She embodies the fears and superstitions surrounding magic, from malevolent warlocks to mad wizards, from deadly curses to magical power that draws those who wield it deeper into darkness." She may be bound beneath Arcanix, but she has found ways to spread her influence further. Her prakhutu—the First Scribe, Hektula—has written books of magic that can grant tremendous power but that also serve as a focus for her influence; these could mirror the effects of the *Book of Vile Darkness* or the *Demonomicon*.

Sul Khatesh spreads cults and covens, and where her cultists come together to perform malefic rituals, Sul Khatesh can touch the world. While she often whispers to her warlocks and to other susceptible minds, Sul Khatesh is essentially dreaming; her whispers rarely work out well for those who listen to them, but they aren't all tied toward one grand plan. The agents of Sul Khatesh are a strong force in the Lords of Dust. Hektula maintains the Library of Ashtakala and often mediates disputes between the other speakers. (You can learn more about Sul Khatesh and Hektula in *Dragon* 337, *Exploring Eberron*, and *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.)

Tol Kharash: the Horned King

A dark power lies bound beneath the fortress known as Turakbar's Fist, and it has long spread its influence across the barren region now known as Droaam. Znir hwyri hunt those who fall too far down its path, but the minotaur clans see this power as their patron. Tol Kharash can easily be mistaken for Rak Tulkhesh, as both delight in bloodshed and war. However, Tol Kharash is a force of tyranny rather than rage. It drives the strong to oppress the weak ... and the crueler they are, the better.

The Horned King is the common name of the overlord and the aspect worshiped by Rhesh Turakbar and his clan, the Blood Horns; they raid and pillage in his name. However, each of the major minotaur clans has their own unique interpretation of the Horned King. The Red Hooves are devoted to He Who Walks Behind, and they prefer sly ambushes over the howling assaults of the Blood Horns. The Blade Breaker clan worships One Horn, who rewards displays of strength and courage. While the Blade Breakers are just as aggressive as the Blood Horns, they're less brutal; it's possible that while *they* think One Horn is an aspect of the Horned King, they're in truth drawing on a different power entirely—perhaps the essence of Dol Dorn.

Tol Kharash has relatively few fiendish minions. His greatest servants are possessed mortals as opposed to manifested fiends; he has no representatives in Ashtakala and doesn't work with the Lords of Dust. (Tol Kharash appears in the upcoming *Frontiers of Eberron: Threshold*.)

Tul Oreshka: the Truth in the Darkness

Tul Oreshka embodies our fear of secrets and the things we don't know, of unbearable truths and feelings we'd kill to keep private. These may be deeply personal—"your mother wishes you'd died instead of your brother"—or shocking cosmic revelations. She's far more primal than Sul Khatesh; the words she deals with may not conjure fire or fiends, but they still have the power to shatter lives. People who pass by her prison may learn terrible things through ghostly whispers or vivid nightmares. Though her cults take many forms, they're almost always driven by a compelling, infectious idea. While she doesn't deal in traditional mystical knowledge as does Sul Khatesh, Tul Oreshka can reveal secrets that defy our previous understanding of magic or that alter the way we see reality. For example, a cult of Tul Oreshka might reveal that humans are actually fiends—and humanity itself is collectively an overlord.

While her agents are unpredictable, Tul Oreshka does participate in the Bleak Council of the Lords of Dust; her current speaker is a pit fiend named Korliac of the Gray Flame, though Tul Oreshka's speakers rarely hold the position for long. The location of Tul Oreshka's prison has never been established.

Val Gultesh: the Shaper of Nightmares

Many overlords embody something that is feared; Val Gultesh feeds on fear itself. It thrives on paranoia and on lives torn apart by unfounded fears, and crafts nightmares that help spread terrifying and disruptive ideas. While it can shape nightmares, it does so from Eberron—effectively using a powerful form of the *dream* spell that can potentially affect hundreds of people at once—as opposed to entering Dal Quor. The quori of the present age haven't encountered an unbound Val Gultesh, but it's quite possible the overlord would pose a threat to them, especially to quori manifesting in Eberron as Inspired or kalashtar. Val Gultesh is imprisoned somewhere in Zilargo, and it's possible that should its power grow, that it could corrupt the Trust to serve its purposes; however, the Trust could be aware of this threat and may have ruthlessly eliminated cults of Val Gultesh in the past.

The Shaper of Nightmares works with the Lords of Dust, but the nature of its speaker and the power of its faction have yet to be established. (Val Gultesh is introduced in the *Fear Reveals Truth* adventure path, which begins with *Curtain Call*.)

The Wild Heart

The Wild Heart embodies mortal fears of the natural world. To some degree, this embodies the sheer unknown that the wild represents, but it especially draws on the fear of predators—the unknown dangers lurking in the depths of the darkest wood. The Wild Heart is known both for its connection to gnolls and as one of the primary sources of lycanthropy; in my Eberron, it was the cause of the Lycanthropic Purge.

As a force fundamentally opposed to civilization, the Wild Heart uses no name and takes no part in the schemes of the Lords of Dust. Its speaker is a shapeshifting fiend known as Drulkalatar Atesh, but its fiendish minions are more likely to possess or be fused with beasts than to act in fiendish form. (The Wild Heart is featured in the novel *The Queen of Stone*.)

Yad-Raghesh: the Fallen Rajah

The fiend known as Yad-Raghesh is a mystery; some loredrake scholars question whether he was actually an overlord, or whether he was an exceptionally powerful champion of Sakinnirot or Ran Iishiv. What is known is that during the wars of the Age of Demons, Yad-Raghesh fought in the form of a colossal two-headed rakshasa; he was defeated with surprising ease, but it was later discovered he had somehow imbued his essence into the region in which he was slain, permanently corrupting it. The corpse of Yad-Raghesh remains in this vale, which seethes with hatred and fiends.

There is no evidence that the consciousness of Yad-Raghesh remains as an active force, and he plays no role in the Lords of Dust, but he has effectively transformed this Vale of the Fallen Rajah into a heart demiplane in the midst of Argonnessen. (You can learn more about Yad-Raghesh in *Dragons of Eberron*.)

Unnamed and Unknown

Other overlords have been hinted at in canon sources but never described in detail. *Secrets of Sarlona* suggests that there are overlords imprisoned in the Krertok Peninsula and in Sustrai Mor, while the *Player's Guide to Eberron* suggests that an overlord with power over the weather is bound on Tempest Isle. Some previous

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lists included Shudra the Fleshrender, a "mighty rakshasa" mentioned in *Forge of War*; however, Shudra isn't an overlord, but a rakshasa champion on par with Mordakhesh and Hektula. Shudra is associated with the overlord Dhavibashta, who appears in James Wyatt's novel *In the Claws Of the Tiger*. As mentioned at the start, this isn't intended to be a complete list of overlords, and I would never want to create such a list; there should always be room in the world to create an overlord who perfectly suits the needs of your story.

The Overlords and the Planes

The overlords are spirits of Khyber and the Material Plane. However, since the Material Plane ties together all of the iconic concepts that define the outer planes, some of the overlords reflect ideas that are also represented in the planes. Rak Tulkhesh and Shavarath are both associated with war. Tul Oreshka and the Lurker in Shadows both deal with the unknowable and unnatural in ways that evoke Xoriat. Val Gultesh shapes nightmares—but this overlord isn't a creature of Dal Quor, nor is Rak Tulkhesh from Shavarath.

When the overlords deal with mortals who fight and dream, they influence those things in and from the Material Plane, and they have no connection to or alliances with the denizens of the planes. In general, the power of an overlord trumps the power of any extraplanar entity while that entity is on the Material Plane; so an unbound Val Gultesh might be able to control quori possessing human hosts. For this reason, extraplanar entities generally try to avoid conflict with overlords and the Lords of Dust.

Using the Overlords

Eberron is balanced on a precipice. Should the overlords rise en masse, they'd destroy reality as we know it and drag the world back into the primal chaos of the Age of Demons. The release of even a single overlord would be a devastating event that could destroy a nation—but it wouldn't instantly herald the end of the world. We've seen examples of this before. In the Year of Blood and Fire, Bel Shalor devastated Thrane until he was rebound by the sacrifice of Tira Miron. In this chapter, I suggest that the Lycanthropic Purge was the work of the Wild Heart; as the Towering Woods were more remote than Thrane, the impact of the Wild's Heart partial release and the sacrifices made to rebind it are less well known. It could even be that the Mourning was the result of releasing an overlord. Consider the following ways the overlords might influence your campaign.

Legacy of the Overlords

Overlords are sources of evil, and their existence and legacy can be used to explain why evil things exist in the world: The Daughter of Khyber corrupts dragons. The Wild Heart is one of the sources of lycanthropy. Katashka creates many forms of undead.

Artifacts

The overlords also have the power to create artifacts; a sword bearing a shard of Rak Tulkhesh might grant great power while also spreading strife and hatred. An adventure or a campaign arc could involve creations of the overlords—a rogue dragon, a pack of werewolves, a clan of clever ghouls, a cursed artifact—without actually having anything to do with the overlord or its goals. The *Book of Vile Darkness* may have been written by Hektula and be a vector for the influence of Sul Khatesh; but if Sul Khatesh's plans are on hold for the next century, the book may only be dangerous by virtue of its innate power.

Cults and Influence

Even while bound, the overlords influence mortals. *Exploring Eberron* delves into the many forms these cults take—from ancient secret societies that actively work to release an overlord, to deluded sects who have no idea of the power they're tied to. The whispers of Bel Shalor are a threat to every follower of the Silver Flame. Followers of Rak Tulkhesh strive to cause strife, and the ghouls of Katashka feast on flesh beneath cities across Khorvaire. So adventurers can clash with a cult of the Whispering Flame or a cabal of Katashka's ghouls, even if the overlord has no greater role in the campaign.

Long-Term Plans

Prophetic paths that lead to the release of an overlord have many steps; they can take generations or even centuries to finally bear fruit. So it's possible for adventurers to be caught up in a scheme set up by one of the Lords of Dust, even though there's no threat of an overlord actually being released during their lifetimes. It may even be that a fiend wants to *help* an adventurer acquire a powerful magic item—because the character needs to have that item to fulfill their role in the Prophecy. The Lords of Dust also have their own feuds and rivalries; a stranger could give the adventurers a tip about a rakshasa scheming to take over a local guild, only to eventually realize that it was another fiend who tipped them off.

Boons of the Overlords

The overlords, their speakers, and their lesser minions might seek mortal pawns to help fulfill the requirements of a Prophecy foretelling their master's release. Often, these mortals rise to prominence as willing leaders of the cults of the Dragon Below. However, an overlord's power might also be granted to the unwilling or ignorant. In bestowing these accursed gifts, the overlord may be hoping to tempt someone with its dark power or to simply make them a living weapon.

The DM can either give the following supernatural gifts to player characters, or they might add these as traits to an enemy stat block (such as the **cultist**, **cult fanatic**, or **warlock of the fiend**). These dark gifts typically last for 28 days, but DMs should change this duration as appropriate for the overlord's schemes. For the gifts that grant spells, the creature's spellcasting ability is its choice of Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma.

Dark Gift of the Citadel. Ashtakala drives you to build for yourself a grand throne. You can cast *tiny hut* up to three times, after which this dark gift vanishes. You can

also cast *magnificent mansion* once, after which this dark gift vanishes.

Dark Gift of the Slow Death. Ashurak opens your heart and mind to the glory of the plague. You automatically fail all saving throws against disease, but you are immune to all effects of diseases except for any effect that would infect another creature. In addition, you can also cast the *contagion* spell up to three times, after which this dark gift vanishes.

Dark Gift of the Silvered Shadow. With Bel Shalor's gift, your mind opens to the darkness at the edge of all mortal minds. When you see a creature cast a spell or use a magical effect that would restore hit points to one or more other creatures, you can use your reaction to instead cause that effect to deal necrotic damage to each target equal to the number of hit points that would have been restored. Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

Dark Gift of Khyber's Daughter. Tiamat kindles the rage of dragonfire within your heart. Once on your turn when you make a weapon attack, you can replace that attack with an exhalation of magical energy in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that area must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC = 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus). On a failed save, the creature takes 1d10 acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison damage (your choice). On a successful save, it takes half as much damage. This damage increases by 1d10 when you reach 5th level (2d10), 11th level (3d10), and 17th level (4d10). You can use this breath weapon a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Dark Gift of Winter. Dral Khatuur teaches you to embrace the killing cold. Whenever you would take cold damage, you instead gain that many temporary hit points.

Dark Gift of the Oathbreaker. Eldrantulku grants you an understanding of the power of lies. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check using Deception. In addition, you can cast the *dominate person* spell, after which this dark gift vanishes.

Dark Gift of the Gatekeeper. Katashka grants you a reprieve from your fears of mortality. If you die, you return to life 24 hours after death; if your body was destroyed, it first reforms (without your equipment) at a spot determined by the DM within 1 mile of the place of your death. After you return to life, this dark gift vanishes.

Dark Gift of the Lurker. The Lurker's gift opens your eyes to what moves in the depths. While underwater, you have a swimming speed of 30 feet, you have darkvision out to 120 feet, and you can see through magical darkness. While underwater, you can't close your eyes, but suffer no other penalty.

Dark Gift of the Cold Sun. Masvirik's gifts seed primordial fears of all things that slither in the dark. As an action, you can choose to emit an aura that impresses these fears on other creatures for 1 minute. Each creature of your choice, other than a reptilian or draconic creature, that starts its turn within 30 feet of you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of reptilian and draconic creatures. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to your aura for the next 24 hours. Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

Dark Gift of War. Rak Tulkhesh's gifts open your eyes to the richness of slaughter. You have advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points. Additionally, when you reduce a creature to 0 hit points, you gain advantage on your next saving throw.

Dark Gift of the Unmaker. Ran Iishiv makes you a nexus of instability, poised to tear a wound in the fabric of reality. You can cast the *storm of vengeance* spell once. When the spell ends, your body is torn into several pieces, you die, and this dark gift vanishes. This death can't be prevented by any means.

Dark Gift of the Scar. Sakinnirot empowers you with its slow and patient hate. Each creature that deals damage to you becomes your resented adversary for as long as you have this dark gift. You have advantage on all attack rolls and opposed ability checks against your resented adversaries. Additionally, when you make an attack roll or opposed ability check against one of your resented adversaries, you can choose to change the die result to a natural 20, after which this dark gift vanishes.

Dark Gift of Secrets. Sul Khatesh reveals to you a passage of lore from her forbidden tomes. You have advantage on ability checks to recall or decipher lore about spells, rituals, magical effects, and magical creatures. In addition, you can use an action to recite cursed words from the passages Sul Khatesh has revealed. When you do, you take 1d12 psychic damage, and each creature you can see within 15 feet of you takes 3d6 psychic damage.

Dark Gift of the Truth. Tul Oreshka pulls back the curtain of your mind to reveal the dark truths of the soul. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check using Insight. Additionally, you can cast the *detect thoughts* spell up to three times, after which this dark gift vanishes.

Dark Gift of the Wilds. The Wild Heart connects you to your predatory nature and you embrace a more bestial appearance. You grow claws that you can use to make unarmed strikes. When you hit with these claws, the strike deals 1d6 + your Strength modifier slashing damage, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike. In addition, you can use an action to gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered for 1 hour, after which this dark gift vanishes.

Player Characters

Player characters can be tied to overlords. A warlock with the Pact of the Tome could be tied to Sul Khatesh and the intrigues of her Court of Shadows. A Great

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Old One warlock might be receiving visions from Tul Oreshka, not knowing why they've been chosen by the Truth in the Darkness or what she wants with them. A barbarian could have a sliver of Rak Tulkhesh's prison shard bound to their flesh; the shard is what powers their rage, but by mastering that rage, they help hold the overlord at bay. This could be vitally important if the campaign involves the potential release of the Rage of War ... or it could be that there's no risk of Rak Tulkhesh escaping this century, but the character may clash with cultists who want to claim the shard.

An Overlord Unleashed

The threat of an overlord's release could be a driving arc for a campaign, building to a climactic clash in which the adventurers race against a doomsday countdown to prevent an overlord from escaping its binding. If the party succeeds, the overlord won't be released, though they'll certainly have to deal with cultists and Lords of Dust. They might face a weak avatar in the conclusion of that final battle, but it's a battle that can be won.

But there's another option—to say that your campaign isn't about stopping the release of an overlord, but rather dealing with the aftermath of an overlord who *has* been released. Let's look at a historical example ...

The Year of Blood and Fire: Tira's Campaign

When Bel Shalor broke his bonds in Thrane, he plunged the region into chaos—a period known as the Year of Blood and Fire. In my vision of things, Tira Miron didn't simply ride up and smite him; a long road led her from the first time she touched the Flame to her final sacrifice. And while she may have made that sacrifice alone, she had companions on the journey. Canonically we've mentioned the avenger Samyr Kes, but in my opinion, Tira had a full party of stalwart allies. In short, she was one of the player characters of her age. I see her campaign as going something like this.

Shadows Fall. According to the *Eberron Campaign Guide*, "if the Shadow in the Flame is freed, his influence will begin to extend out over the land around him, first covering a few miles, and ultimately spreading out across an entire nation. People who fall under his sway become selfish and cruel, turning on one another instead of standing against him." This is the world in which the campaign begins—a Thrane in which people are drawn to darkness, where good people are tempted to commit atrocities. Tira begins as a paladin of Dol Arrah. She *knows* something is wrong, but she doesn't know what it is ... and Bel Shalor has only just broken his bonds, so his power is weak. In Tira's initial adventures, she

fights the symptoms; she and her companions clash with newly formed cults, with good people drawn to evil, and perhaps even with a few shadowy fiends—agents of Bel Shalor who helped with his release.

Vision in the Darkness. As the campaign proceeds and Bel Shalor's power grows, the Year of Blood and Fire truly begins. Murder and arson spread across the realm. Cities burn. Innocents suffer. Fiends emerge into the chaos, gathering cults and preying on the innocent. And it is in this time—perhaps as Tira chooses her paladin oath—that she has a vision of a couatl and is first touched by the power of the Flame.

Face to Face. Along with her companions, Tira fights the horror spreading across the land. She learns to harness the power of the Silver Flame and uses it to protect the innocent. She establishes a haven in an Irian manifest zone, and develops techniques that can help her followers recognize and resist the insidious corrupting influence. Her and her allies discover the source of the darkness—and reaching it, they discover that Bel Shalor has broken his bonds but isn't yet fully free. He can manifest a weak avatar but can't leave the spot in which he's been bound. Nonetheless, this avatar is far too powerful for Tira and her companions to defeat, and they are lucky to survive and flee. But now they know their enemy.

Search for Answers. While they can't defeat Bel Shalor, Tira and her allies are celebrated champions protecting a community of people. They continue to deal with Bel Shalor's servants and those who've been corrupted by his influence, while also doing all they can to learn how he can be defeated. In addition to the couatl, they receive assistance from a (secret) agent of the Chamber. They travel to Daanvi, seeking knowledge in the Infinite Archive, and to other planes as well. They take steps laid out in the Prophecy, though many of these challenges are enigmatic and set them directly at odds with agents of the Lords of Dust.

Pursuing the Prophecy. Guided by the Flame and the Prophecy, Tira obtains the greatsword Kloijner. A brutal cult is spreading across Thrane, but Tira presses to the heart of it and exposes Durastoran the Wyrmbreaker, the speaker of Bel Shalor. The rakshasa kills her Chamber ally, but Tira takes him down with Kloijner. This battle is part of a Prophetic path Tira has uncovered. She knows it'll keep Durastoran from reforming for decades—but it also fully releases Bel Shalor, who now strides across Thrane as a vast force of shadow.

Final Stand. Tira knew the consequences of defeating Durastoran. In the Irian zone that has become her haven, she and her companions gather all those innocents freed from Bel Shalor's power. She holds Durastoran's heart, and beyond that, she knows that the unbound Bel Shalor can't stand to have a stronghold of light at the heart of his darkness. All of this has been foreshadowed by the Prophecy; though her Chamber ally has fallen, Tira knows that Bel Shalor will come to her, and she knows what she must do. She rallies her allies, sharing the light of the Flame. Bel Shalor comes with an army of fiends and victims, and Tira's faithful make their stand in the last bastion of light. Though the battle seems hopeless, Tira's allies help her reach Bel Shalor himself—and in this moment, Tira and her couatl guide make their final sacrifice. They bind Bel Shalor with the light of Tira's soul and the power of the Flame, which surges forth as the silver column that can still be seen in Flamekeep to this day.

Setting the Stage

This is merely my vision of the campaign that Tira might've gone through. It's a simple, high-level sketch: for example, in my mind, Tira traveled to Irian and Daanvi as part of her adventures, but I don't know exactly what she did there.

In a campaign like this, Tira doesn't even have a chance to prevent Bel Shalor from being released. He's already been partially released when the campaign begins—but if I was running the campaign, the players wouldn't yet know it. In our session zero, I'd emphasize that *something* is wrong with the world, that the player characters will be both warriors and investigators, champions of the light trying to identify an infectious evil that's spreading across the land.

As the campaign itself unfolds, the adventurers not only uncover the true threat of Bel Shalor and the Wyrmbreaker, they also must develop their own personal connections to the Silver Flame. The first tier of the campaign would be almost entirely spent dealing with cultists and corrupted innocents, trying to determine what power is behind the encroaching evil; they might initially think they can stop Bel Shalor from being released, only to reach that stronghold of evil and discover he's already out. In tier 2, they are dealing with the increasingly apocalyptic consequences of his release, fighting fiends as well as cultists and the corrupted; and things only get more dramatic from there.

A More Subtle Approach

This is an apocalyptic scenario; we know from the start that it's called "the Year of Blood and Fire," so of course there'll be burning cities and mass chaos. However, that flavor would depend on the overlord involved and the story you want to tell. The release of the Rage of War would involve brutal bloodshed, while the release of Sul Khatesh or the Oathbreaker could have very subtle effects. Every story will be different.

For example, in a campaign based around Sul Khatesh, the Court of Shadows' influence slowly spreads. As the campaign continues, the court's dark vision of the world starts to become real, with towers of shadow appearing across the nation. Common people start gaining arcane powers and resolving petty disputes with curses. Sly rakshasas offer tempting pacts. Minister Adal might even forge an order of witchfinders and seize control of Aundair, little realizing that he too is just a pawn of Sul Khatesh, helping to spread delightful fear. It builds to a point where civilization could collapse into outright arcane terror ... but this fall can take time.

Chapter 14: Ashtakala

The one city of any real significance in the Demon Wastes is Ashtakala, the last citadel of the Lords of Dust. Surrounded by a permanent storm of sand and volcanic glass and shielded from all forms of divinatory magic, Ashtakala rarely reveals itself to human eyes. Explorers who manage to penetrate the eternal storm find a bizarre yet beautiful metropolis, a citadel built from basalt and brass. Compared to the shattered ruins spread throughout the rest of the Wastes, Ashtakala seems impossibly alive, filled with thousands of demons and other fiends.

While Ashtakala appears as it did a million years or more ago, it is a city of ghosts and shadows—all an illusion. In addition to the illusory inhabitants and the spirits of ancient things that still wander the decaying streets masked by powerful illusions of the city's zenith, a handful of zakyas and rakshasas and a host of minor fiends serve the great Lords of Dust who congregate here. The Lords of Dust occasionally meet in this shadow of their ancient city, and rakshasas return to Ashtakala to scheme and to study in the vaults and libraries, reading scrolls and tomes that will crumble to dust if ever removed from the city. The power that preserves the image of Ashtakala transforms anyone who enters the city; visitors find their clothing and equipment altered to match the archaic fashions of the city, as if by a disguise self spell. The city of fiends is a dangerous place for mortals to visit—only the luckiest of intruders caught by the rakshasa lords get to die quickly.

—Eberron Campaign Setting

If you delve long enough into the mysteries of the Age of Demons and the tales of fiends lingering in the shadows today, you'll eventually find some mention of Ashtakala, the City of Demons. Hidden deep in the Demon Wastes, Ashtakala is shrouded in mystery, the subject of countless contradictory tales. In some tales, it's a crumbling ruin; in others, it's a mighty citadel of evil and the seat of the Lords of Dust. As a DM, you might well ask why the dragons of Argonnessen haven't destroyed Ashtakala. If a player character may know stories about it, surely the Chamber does as well—so how could it still exist? Let's dig deeper into this mystery.

City of Demons

Ashtakala, the last surviving city of the Lords of Dust, endured on even after the overlords were bound. It is immune to divination and surrounded by a deadly storm, while the entire region around it is an unnatural wasteland that's never been tamed. Ashtakala was supposedly ruined long ago, but its magic is so powerful that it creates an alternate reality within its storm—there, it still appears to be at its zenith, and people who enter its influence are themselves altered to fit this haunted narrative.

As the city is used as a meeting place by *all* of the Lords of Dust, this implies it's not tied to any single overlord. Though Hektula—the speaker of Sul Khatesh—maintains the Library of Ashtakala, this city isn't the heart of Sul Khatesh. It's neutral ground where all the Lords of Dust can find sanctuary. And while Ashtakala has stood for a hundred thousand years since the Age of Demons, it has never expanded. It is immortal but largely unchanging, like the fiends themselves.

Ashtakala and Argonnessen

The dragons of Argonnessen have no obvious presence in the Demon Wastes. The defenses of the Demon Wastes, including both the Ghaash'kala and the Labyrinth itself, are tied to the Silver Flame. Unlike Q'barra, there are no dragonborn or dragon guardians. This is no accident—the dragons shun the Demon Wastes because they have no choice.

Should a sage ever gain access to the records of the Chamber, they would learn that the Light of Siberys *did* attack the Demon Wastes tens of thousands of years ago. The dragons laid waste to it, destroying a humanoid civilization predating the Carrion Tribes (who arrived in the Wastes less than two thousand years ago). But this attack was a disaster. Aside from the host of fiends, many powerful magical defenses were unleashed against the attackers. Ashtakala was the worst of all. Just as it shields the city from divination magic, the storm surrounding Ashtakala repelled magical and elemental attacks ... and as dragons drew close to it, their souls were ripped from their bodies and they turned on their allies. When they were wounded, dust spilled out instead of blood. The attacking force was almost entirely wiped out—and the dust-stuffed dragons claimed by Ashtakala proved to be an ongoing threat and asset to the Lords of Dust for thousands of years.

Though the dragons' attack wiped out the humanoids of the Wastes, the slain fiends simply reformed. The dragons have shunned the region ever since; while they know Ashtakala is an asset for the Lords of Dust, they don't have the power to destroy it. So the city continues to serve as a useful sanctuary for the Lords of Dust—but it has done so for a hundred thousand years, so it's not like it poses a dire, imminent threat to the safety of Argonnessen.

Demon City

How could a fortress of rakshasas be strong enough to resist the power that leveled Xen'drik? Consider again what we know of Ashtakala. It's surrounded by a corrupted region the size of a nation. The corruption can't be undone, and the region is filled with free-roaming fiends. It alters reality within its confines. And while it has endured for a hundred thousand years, it remains fundamentally unchanged—maintaining the shadow of its glory, but never expanding.

Corrupting a nation? Surrounded by fiends? Possessed of mystical power to resist the might of Argonnessen? That sounds a lot like what Bel Shalor did to Thrane when he was partially released—and therein lies the answer. Ashtakala isn't just a city ... Ashtakala is an overlord. It's an immortal embodiment of eternal evil, irrevocably corrupting the region around it while being attended by a host of lesser fiends. Ashtakala is trapped in place by the wards of the Labyrinth and by the power of the Silver Flame, but of all the overlords, Ashtakala alone was never fully bound.

Dark Citadel

Though Ashtakala is an overlord, it has also always been a city. All fiends embody malevolent ideas: Ashtakala is the Dark Citadel, the fortress of ultimate evil. It can't move and it doesn't have an anthropomorphic form—after all, it's a demon *city*. But like any overlord, it's immortal and it alters reality within its sphere of influence. Ashtakala is the *source* of the never-ending storm that surrounds it. There aren't powerful enchantments laid on the city to transform those who enter—the power of the city itself transforms them. The host of illusory fiends are the servants of the city. And Ashtakala is the source of the unnatural corruption of the Demon Wastes, the blight that cannot be lifted—for that blighted landscape is part of its defining concept as the Citadel of Evil.

What does it mean to be a demon city? First, Ashtakala was never constructed. This overlord is the concept of a city given form—specifically, a city of fiends. The currency of Ashtakala is souls, for the city can rip the souls from mortals and forge them into coinage (and potentially other things). *Explorer's Handbook* describes a lesser form of this in the city's Drain Works, but in that case, a parasitic rakshasa is making use of Ashtakala's capabilities rather than the city doing this. Ashtakala itself can rip the soul out of a dragon in an instant; the Drain Works is a slower process that rakshasas can use on creatures the city considers to be insignificant.

This brings us to an important reminder: overlords don't think the way mortals do. They are vast, alien, and unique. Ashtakala allows the Lords of Dust to dwell within it, but it doesn't cater to their whims or help them with their schemes. I've mentioned before that the weakness of the overlords is that they didn't work together, and that remains the case here. Ashtakala doesn't care that the other overlords are imprisoned, and it doesn't care about the needs of the Lords of Dust. Ashtakala simply *is*. It expresses

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itself by creating and maintaining the Demon Wastes, by doing the thing that gives its existence meaning. The city's illusory servitors are extensions of the city, serving no purpose other than to maintain it. They're much like the manifestations of the planes; just as Daanvi has subjects and Shavarath has conscripts, Ashtakala's servitors have no lasting identity, no purpose beyond playing out the story of Ashtakala. They can't be recruited to serve the schemes of Rak Tulkhesh or Sul Khatesh because they literally don't exist independently of Ashtakala.

Immortal Citadel

Ashtakala doesn't recognize lesser mortals as a threat. This immortal city fought dragons, titans, and celestials, and if such creatures approached it again, Ashtakala would strike them with its full force. But humans? Orcs? Elves? Ashtakala doesn't register them as having any significance. If a dragon approached the city, the city would rip the dragon's soul out and replace it with dust; but if a mere human managed to make it through the storm, the city would cloak them in illusion so they fit in the city—just as it cloaks its fiendish denizens—because Ashtakala can't conceive of them as a threat. Now, the fiends that dwell *within* Ashtakala may capture that human, torture them, or take them to the Drain Works, but the city doesn't care.

This comes back to the point that, like all overlords, Ashtakala is immortal. If it were burned to the ground, it would return within days. This is what's meant by the city being an "illusion." While you're within it, it's real—but if you steal an ancient tome from the Library of Ashtakala, it'll crumble to dust when you leave the city ... and it'll be back in the library the next day, intact. However, this property doesn't apply to things that are brought into the city (or things forged from outside materials, like stolen souls); if Hektula steals a tome from Arcanix and brings it to Ashtakala, that book can later be stolen from the city or destroyed permanently. But the library's most ancient scrolls dating back to the Age of Demons aren't truly real; they're memories in the mind of the Demon City.

Due to all of this, Ashtakala is a perfect haven for the Lords of Dust. It's shielded from hostile magic, and their greatest enemies can't even approach it. They don't need to maintain it—no one repairs the masonry, or fixes the sewers, or touches up the paint—because the entire city is a concept that maintains itself. It provides them with invaluable resources like the library and Drain Works. But again, while it appears to be a thriving metropolis filled with tens of thousands of fiends, less than a thousand of those are truly independent and *real*; like the scrolls, the vast majority of denizens are just ideas in the mind of the Demon City.

Deadly Citadel

Ashtakala's manifested denizens can't leave the city, and they have no desires beyond playing out their role in the story ... but they still exist within the city, and that means they can hurt you. And though Ashtakala itself doesn't target mortals when they enter the city, this mostly just means it won't instantly rip your soul out, not that it'll welcome or protect you. Even the illusion it cloaks visitors in is a passive effect, not something it consciously chooses—because if it chose something to do to you, it would be decidedly unpleasant.

Ashtakala is an incarnate nightmare. Imagine the most horrifying hell-city you can; that's what it is. The music of Ashtakala is the screams of tortured mortals kept in hideous painful stasis. Its furnaces are filled with bones—not because Ashtakala needs to burn people to keep the fires going, but because that's what its story is about. And if mortals remain within Ashtakala too long, they're slowly transformed into fiends themselves. So even though it won't instantly smite you with the force that lays a titan low, it's surely one of the most dangerous locations in Eberron. It literally doesn't notice mortals—but its servants and denizens definitely will. As the *Eberron Campaign Setting* says, "the city of fiends is a dangerous place for mortals to visit—only the luckiest of intruders caught by the rakshasa lords get to die quickly."

Using Ashtakala

So Ashtakala is an overlord, and dragons can't come near it without being corrupted. But what does this mean for you and your campaign?

Stories of Ashtakala

As discussed previously, the mind of an overlord doesn't work like that of a human. Ashtakala isn't working with the Lords of Dust; it simply allows them to dwell within it because that suits its nature as the Citadel of Evil. But by default, Ashtakala doesn't have goals beyond the Demon Wastes. It expresses its nature by creating and maintaining the Demon Wastes, and by destroying any dragons or similar threats that come too close, but it doesn't actually participate in the schemes of the Lords of Dust or help them free other overlords.

Though the city isn't actively pursuing a worldwide agenda, it's still an overlord, and you could involve it in a campaign in many ways. Consider the following ideas.

Chamber Agents

The Chamber knows that most humanoids are beneath the city's notice. So if the Chamber has any interests tied to Ashtakala—if they want to spy on the plans of the Lords of Dust or steal information from the Library of Ashtakala—they need to work with capable humanoid agents ... like the player characters.

Along similar lines, Argonnessen and Aerenal have intermittently warred for countless centuries. It's possible the dragons have been attacking them because they want to practice fighting something with the power of an overlord, all in preparation for a new assault on Ashtakala. How could this assault involve the player characters? Might the Chamber ask powerful characters

to help with the assault, perhaps sabotaging Ashtakala from within during the attack? When the adventurers learn about the planned attack, do they also learn it could inflict devastating collateral damage on Aundair and the Eldeen Reaches?

Dust-Stuffed Dragon

Explorer's Handbook includes the Drain Works, a facility that allows fiends to suck out a creature's soul and replace it with dust. As mentioned earlier, my thought is that this is something Ashtakala can do on its own, and the Drain Works is simply a way the Lords of Dust have found to harness this power for their own purposes. A dust-stuffed dragon working with the Lords of Dust could be an interesting alternative to a rogue dragon. And if the adventurers have an ally within the dragons of the Chamber, a tragic twist would be for that dragon to be captured by the Lords of Dust and taken to Ashtakala, returning as a dust-stuffed villain.

Growing Consciousness

One interesting plot point would be to introduce warlocks or active fiends who *do* represent the interests of Ashtakala—to say that after a hundred thousand years of largely ignoring the world, Ashtakala now has its own desires. What would these desires be? How would its agents interact with fiends serving other overlords? The "Interlopers in Ashtakala" section presents lair actions that Ashtakala might grant a creature as its speaker.

Lost Civilization

Long before the Carrion Tribes, the Demon Wastes were once home to another mortal civilization, which was destroyed when the dragons attacked. Adventurers exploring the Demon Wastes could find relics of this previously unknown civilization. Similarly, this civilization could be used to explain the origin of new creatures you want to add to the setting (as discussed in chapter 4).

Sister Cities

Ashtakala is a city that corrupts the land around it—a region as large as a nation, making it into a warped wasteland. Sound familiar? The Mourning itself could've resulted from a similar demon city being released into Cyre. If so, has that city taken the place of an existing city like Metrol? Or is it still waiting to be found?

Soul-Forger

Ashtakala can rip souls from mortals and forge them into solid form. This effect prevents that soul's resurrection, much like a *Keeper's fang*; it's even possible that these dark weapons are tied to Ashtakala. Adventurers might acquire Ashtakalan magic items forged from souls—perhaps even artifacts made from the souls of ancient dragons, giants, or couatl. Could such an item be destroyed, and if so, could its fallen champion be resurrected? Alternately, what could a modern artificer do with a handful of coins forged from dragon-soul?

Denizens of Ashtakala

Ashtakala seems to be full of life. But in this alien city, life is always cruel. Guards are always dragging innocent people off to be tortured or imprisoned, and there's almost always an execution to watch. Meanwhile, the city also holds merchants, musicians, pickpockets, beggars, and more, all going about little stories that'll ultimately never come to anything significant. Most of these denizens are essentially temporary; should the adventurers kill the arrogant noble, he'll be back tomorrow and probably won't recognize them. And the tentacled beggar who wants to play dice *always* wants to play dice; she'll never win big and get off the streets.

The Denizens of Ashtakala table can inspire basic details for random NPCs in the Demon City. Some of Ashtakala's inhabitants are recognizable fiends, but many are closer to tieflings; they're humanoid in form, but with disturbing fiendish elements. So adventurers might meet an ancient dwarf in the plaza—but when he smiles, they see he's got the mouth of a serpent, with curved fangs and a forked tongue.

Meanwhile, the Encounters in Ashtakala table provides story hooks for the adventurers to engage with. The denizens of Ashtakala typically won't recognize adventurers as intruders, but a suspicious guard may still ask them questions, while an oily merchant may promise to reveal a secret vault deep within the city. As always, these tables are purely sources of inspiration, and adventurers may encounter things far stranger or more dangerous than these.

Denizens of Ashtakala

d8	Appearance	Ancestry	Quirk
1	An emaciated ...	Orc or Gnoll	... with cracked skin oozing purple blood.
2	A hulking, bestial ...	Human or Dwarf	... with multiple tentacles instead of arms.
3	A beautiful ...	Elf or Khoravar	... with a half-dozen rows of mismatched teeth.
4	An elderly ...	Dragonborn	... with eyes or mouths in unexpected places.
5	A sobbing ...	Goblin or Bugbear	... with unnaturally long limbs hanging backward.
6	A young ...	Halfling or Gnome	... with smooth skin where their eyes or other features should be.
7	A terrified ...	Ogre or Troll	... who constantly, slowly changes shape.
8	A malevolent ...	Fiend	... whose rubbery body lacks any bones.

Encounters in Ashtakala

d10	Encounter	Twist
1	A legless beggar ...	... invites you to a game of chance.
2	A musician playing a bone flute ...	... recognizes you and will soon reveal your presence.
3	An arrogant noble ...	... offers you a stolen soul.
4	A suspicious guard...	... recognizes you but offers to help.
5	An oily merchant ...	... tries to draw you into intrigue.
6	An obvious criminal ...	... has a story to share.
7	An off-duty torturer ...	... wants to know all about you.
8	A masked fortune teller ...	... offers to take you to a secret location.
9	An abandoned child ...	... thinks you're someone else.
10	An escaped prisoner ...	... lies on the ground, recently murdered.

Interlopers in Ashtakala

The Demon City very rarely turns its attention on mortal interlopers. However, particularly powerful creatures (such as dragons of Argonnessen or Prophecy-bound individuals) may draw the Dark Citadel's gaze. In these cases, Ashtakala may manifest its power through a fiendish servant as its speaker. A high-ranking rakshasa such as the prakhutu of the Bleak Council, or even mortal warlocks who have proven themselves to the Lords of Dust, may have access to the following lair actions within the bounds of Ashtakala.

These lair actions are designed for tier 4 play; in encounters for that tier, granting a creature these lair actions typically increases its challenge rating by 1.

Ashtakala Lair Actions

While in the bounds of the Demon City, a creature chosen by Ashtakala as its speaker can take lair actions. The save DC for these actions is equal to 8 + the speaker's proficiency bonus + the speaker's Charisma modifier. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the speaker can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; it can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

Demonglass Eruption. Spikes of serrated black glass erupt from the ground in a 50-foot-radius area centered on a point the Speaker can see. That area becomes difficult terrain for 1 minute. For the duration, when a creature moves into or within that area, it takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage and 5 (2d4) necrotic damage for every 5 feet it travels. If a flying creature starts its turn no more than 60 feet above that area, it is drawn by the Demon City's fell presence, and must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or fall prone and be unable to leave that area until the start of its next turn.

Soul Tearing. Ashtakala rends the soul from one creature the Speaker can see, gifting it to the Speaker. If the target has fewer than 40 hit points, it dies. Otherwise, it takes 22 (4d10) necrotic damage, which can't be reduced by any means. If the target dies in this way, its soul becomes trapped as if affected by the *soul cage* spell (from *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*), and its cage is a conjured sliver of demonglass that appears in the Speaker's hand. This effect lasts until the demonglass sliver, which has AC 12 and 40 hit points, is destroyed. A creature whose soul is trapped in this way can be restored to life only by a *wish* spell.

Create Dust-Stuffed. The Speaker chooses the corpse of a creature whose soul is trapped by the Soul Tearing lair action. That creature's body becomes reanimated by the dust of Ashtakala and it regains half its maximum hit points. Until the dust-stuffed creature drops to 0 hit points, it is friendly to Ashtakala and the Speaker, follows all their commands, and is a Fiend instead of its usual creature type, but it otherwise uses the statistics it had in life.

Storm of Ash. A maelstrom of volcanic ash swirls in a 50-foot-radius sphere centered on a point the Speaker can see. The storm spreads around corners. It lasts for 1 minute or until the next time the Speaker uses a lair action. A creature that starts its turn within the storm must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 18 (4d8) magical piercing damage and is blinded until the start of its next turn. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and is not blinded.

CAMILLE KUO

Chapter 15: The First War

A hidden alliance of rakshasas and other fiends, the Lords of Dust have manipulated the world since the dawn of time. The rakshasas wove themselves into the tapestry of human civilization in its earliest days. When the explorer Lhazaar gathered her expedition for Khorvaire, there was a rakshasa advisor at her side. Looking at the power of the Council of Ashtakala, people might wonder why the Lords of Dust haven't conquered the world. A rakshasa's first answer to this would be, "Haven't we?"

—"Eternal Evil," *Dragon* 337

The aftermath of the Last War has produced many threats. The Swords of Liberty, the Order of the Emerald Claw, and the Lord of Blades are revolutionaries or extremists. The Aurum and the dragonmarked houses are driven by greed and ambition, capitalizing on the chaos caused by the Last War. People frightened or broken by the horrors of war may embrace dark powers, creating cults of the Dragon Below.

Though these may be the first threats adventurers encounter, as the characters delve deeper and grow in power, they'll likely face older and stronger threats. Now you're not just fighting the cults of the Dragon Below, you're dealing with Dyrrn the Corruptor or one of the other daelkyr who destroyed the Empire of Dhakaan. You began by battling soldiers of the Order of the Emerald Claw, but now you're dealing with Lady Illmarrow, who has spent two thousand years plotting her revenge. Perhaps you initially fought a street gang being manipulated by their dreams; now you're dealing with the Dreaming Dark, who spent the last thousand years consolidating their power over Sarlona and are now reaching out for Khorvaire. You may have clashed with a rakshasa or dealt with a dragon; was it operating alone, or did you have a glimpse of a greater plan?

If you pull on that thread, you may come into direct conflict with the greatest powers of Eberron: the Lords of Dust and the dragons of Argonnessen. These forces have been fighting one another since the dawn of time ... so while humanity may think it has fought the Last War, Eberron's *First* War has never ended. The dragons (and the couatl) bound the ancient overlords who once dominated Eberron, but the Lords of Dust—the immortal servants of the overlords—endlessly toil to release their dread masters and to return Eberron to an age of primal chaos. Meanwhile, the dragons of Argonnessen will stop at nothing to prevent this from happening. Both discovered long ago that little can be accomplished with direct physical conflict; victory depends on using the Draconic Prophecy to shape the future, which requires them to manipulate the younger mortal ancestries. As this chapter's opening epigraph relates, despite their vast power, neither fiends nor dragons have any interest in *conquering* humanity; the nations of Khorvaire are unwitting pawns in a vast and ancient game. The lesser forces you fought in your first adventures may themselves have been manipulated by one side or the other in the First War, and you may have received assistance from a dragon or fiend—something that was surely helpful at the time, but that drove you down a particular Prophetic path.

So when a campaign begins, the adventurers almost certainly have no concept of their involvement in the First War (if they have any idea it exists at all); they begin their stories dealing with mortal, modern threats. As they progress, they face older and stronger powers, and they may see the hand of the Chamber and the Lords of Dust. As they come into their full strength, adventurers may finally see the full scope of the First War ... and they may have the power and influence to stop being pawns and to become active players in this great game. The First War can't be *won*, but powerful adventurers can choose the path for the future, rather than being manipulated by ancient forces.

Friend or Foe?

The Lords of Dust want to collapse the world into a fiendish apocalypse, which is clearly bad for everyone. Argonnessen opposes that, which makes it easy to see the dragons as the heroes—champions opposing demons! But it's important to understand that the dragons aren't friends to lesser mortals. Think of how most humans interact with mice: We usually ignore them completely. A few of us think they're cute and keep a few specific mice as pets. But when mice become pests, we exterminate them without a second thought. And when we need something—to test our cosmetics, to study cancer or psychology—we use them for our experiments, often torturing or killing them without remorse. So it is with Argonnessen and humanity. Yes, their battling the Lords of Dust protects us from the demons, but that's incidental. They aren't doing it for us, and if they have to wipe out a humanoid nation—or entire civilization—to protect Argonnessen, they will. It's very possible that the Chamber caused the Mourning and killed hundreds of thousands of innocent Cyrans, simply because it served their goals in the First War. The dragons aren't our saviors; they are still monsters who can inflict devastating damage in pursuit of their goals. Why haven't they interfered with the Dreaming Dark, or the Last War, or injustice against warforged? Because they don't care about any of these things.

A *single* dragon might take an interest and help lesser creatures—whether a rogue pursuing its own

ELDON COWGUR

agenda, or an agent of the Chamber manipulating mortals—potentially becoming a friend or ally of the adventurers. This is what Vvaraak did when she established the Gatekeepers (but she was an outcast because of these sympathies). Dragons are mortal creatures and unique individuals; they're usually pursuing the best interests of their civilization, but they could always choose a new path or simply develop an attachment to their particular mortal tools.

Adventurers are much less likely to develop a friendship with one of the Lords of Dust; as immortals, these fiends are literal embodiments of evil and won't stray far from their core purpose. But even with the dragons, if one helps you when you're fighting the Lords of Dust, that's likely because your actions serve its purposes ... and if your usefulness comes to an end, it'll abandon you. As a whole, the dragons aren't fighting to protect humanoids; they're fighting to protect Argonnessen, and any benefit to humanoids is incidental. To most dragons, humanoids are necessary tools at best, annoying pests at worst. They will sacrifice individuals, cities, or even nations without remorse if it supports their agenda ... and as the non-giant civilizations of Xen'drik can attest, collateral damage is a serious risk when Argonnessen unleashes its full power.

Battleground of Prophecy

The Lords of Dust and the Chamber are battling to drive the direction of the Prophecy. But what does that mean? In short, the Prophecy is a vast matrix of if-then statements. The future isn't set in stone, but anchor events can lock in specific consequences. *If* the Beggar King (and is this an elevated urchin? or could it be Prince Oargev?) kills Queen Aurala in the light of five moons with the Blade of Sorrows, *then* the Eldeen Reaches and Aundair will join together as the Kingdom of the Pines. *If* the Greatpine's Daughter is slain by the Tyrant Kraken at the Battle of the Bloody Field, *then* the Wild Heart shall rise again. Exactly how that happens isn't set, but seemingly random chance will keep pushing in that direction until it happens. Anchors don't set the entire future, but they ensure specific parts of it.

Slow and Steady

The First War is fought on multiple fronts. We talk about the Lords of Dust as a singular entity, but it's an alliance of servants of many overlords, each pursuing their own goals. Looking to the example of the Beggar King, the servants of the Wild Heart have identified a Prophetic thread that leads to their goal—a series of anchoring

events, likely spread out over a vast span of time. The Beggar King killing Aurala is just one point on that thread. Let's say the Beggar King is Prince Oargev. The servants of the Wild Heart had to make sure the Mourning happened, because it was the Mourning that destroyed Cyre and created the Beggar King. Earlier in the thread, they had to ensure the creation of the Blade of Sorrows, which involved manipulating a Dhakaani daashor ... all so that ten thousand years later, the Beggar King could use that blade to kill Aurala, and ultimately lead to the release of the Wild Heart. Keep that glacial pace in mind.

There are at least thirty overlords, and different factions of the Lords of Dust are working to unleash all of them. But each overlord is bound to different Prophetic threads, and most of those can't be resolved in the near future. The Lords of Dust may be working on a plan to release the Truth in the Darkness, and one of its anchoring events may play out in a campaign, but she still can't be released for at least another two centuries; a victory in the present just gets them closer to the goal. So in creating a campaign, it's up to the DM to decide which overlords could be released in this current time; the others can still be background threats, but they won't be released during the adventurers' lifetimes.

Ever-Shifting Tapestry

It seems like this complex web of causality would be easy to disrupt. If the Wild Heart needed the Mourning to occur, why didn't the Chamber stop it? At any given moment, many thousands of threads of the Prophecy are in motion. While the Wild Heart needed the Mourning to occur to aid in its release, the Chamber may have also needed the Mourning to lock in five other threads they wanted to happen. The Chamber might also want to create the Beggar King, but they want him to marry the Queen of Words, because that will ensure the Daughter of Khyber remains bound. It's also entirely possible that the Chamber doesn't yet know about the thread concerning the Beggar King and Aurala; the signs that reveal threads are spread across the world and are constantly evolving, and a major part of the work of the Chamber is digging for new threads and monitoring changes.

Changes? Yes. A crucial point is that the Prophecy is a living thing. It's entirely possible that after all the work the Wild Heart did—ensuring the creation of the Blade of Sorrows, making sure the Mourning came to pass—that someone will simply kill the Beggar King in a manner that prevents resurrection. Hurrah! Now he can't kill Aurala and the Wild Heart will never be released, right? Wrong. If that happens, the Prophecy will weave a new possible path that results in the release of the Wild Heart. The Lords of Dust will search for this thread and start setting it in motion. This is what the First War looks like; the Wild Heart has surely been *almost* released a dozen times (and may have been released, at least partially so, during the Silver Crusade), but it's always ultimately been blocked and rebound, kicking the can another few centuries down the road as new threads are woven.

Keep in mind that the Prophecy requires specific individuals to act, though the identity of those individuals may be cryptic: the Beggar King, the Greatpine's Daughter, the Tyrant Kraken. It would be easy for the Cult of the Wild Heart to kill Queen Aurala; after all, they have an army of demons. But just killing Aurala won't serve any purpose. They need the Beggar King to do it—at a specific time and with a specific weapon. They likely needed a specific daashor to forge the Blade of Sorrows. For all their vast might, both dragons and demons are dependent on the individuals through whom the Prophecy flows.

The First War and You

So why does this matter? What is the narrative purpose of the First War, and why did we make it part of the setting? First of all, it establishes the most powerful beings in the setting, factions that should be terrifying even to the mightiest player characters. But having done that, it also provides a concrete reason why these forces don't dominate the world and make all lesser beings and conflicts irrelevant. It's that basic question — "why don't the Lords of Dust conquer the world?"—to which the answer is that conquering it today won't get them what they want. They could conquer Breland easily enough, but they don't want to rule a kingdom of mortal mice; they want to revel in the immortal glory of the overlords, and that means following the thread.

The First War establishes that there are powerful beings that can challenge any adventurer, but it gives them something to do and a reason to keep a low profile. It also gives them a clear reason to work through mortal agents, meaning they can be patrons for the heroes and villains alike—pushing the stories you want to have happen from the shadows. They can be mysterious benefactors and shadowy masterminds, working at any level of a story.

A rakshasa patron could be assisting a bandit chief in eastern Aundair, someone who seems entirely unimportant, and who *is* entirely unimportant in the big picture—except that his rise to power and subsequent defeat at the hands of the adventurers is part of a Prophetic thread. So the adventurers defeat the bandit chief; they get a cool magic sword, which seems way too cool for this ruffian to have. The adventurers also learn from the defeated bandits that the chief received the sword from a mysterious sage, who also gave him guidance ... and that sage is nowhere to be found. But perhaps, as the adventurers continue the journey, that sage will turn up again, helping another group of their enemies. Are the adventurers interfering with the plans of the Lords of Dust? Or are the adventurers themselves actually part of the plan—are their victories part of the thread the rakshasa needs to release its overlord? You could have a campaign that's ostensibly about fighting the Emerald Claw and Lady Illmarrow, and only discover after she has been defeated that the "final fall of the Queen of the Dead" was a crucial key to the release of Katashka the Gatekeeper, and that the Lords of Dust have been helping the adventurers in minor ways all along.

Using the First War

The Prophecy can be a reason for the characters to receive unexpected aid: a kindly stranger has a skill they need; a local merchant has exactly the right scroll in stock; a watch patrol shows up at the perfect moment (and they're actually good at their job!). However, when characters receive such aid, there's always the question of whether it's truly a good thing—if one of the Lords of Dust is helping you, it probably means your actions will help them in the future!

Campaign Focus

As DM, it's up to you how much to involve the First War and the Prophecy in your game. Your campaign could focus on a single thread of the Prophecy—a specific faction within the Lords of Dust or a particular overlord—or it could focus on the Prophecy as a whole, with the adventurers dealing with servants of different overlords and ultimately engaging with the broad scope of the First War itself. The following sections suggest ways you could use the Draconic Prophecy and the First War in a campaign.

Who Needs Prophecy?

You actually don't have to use the Lords of Dust, the dragons of Argonnessen, or the Draconic Prophecy in your campaign at all. All canon is just a starting point for your stories; if you want, you can drop these elements from your Eberron entirely, without even changing any canon material. You can simply decide that nothing significant will happen with these forces over the next year, decade, or even century. So just as you can choose to run a campaign in which you completely ignore the Dreaming Dark and Sarlona, you can easily ignore the Chamber and Argonnessen. This doesn't stop you from using dragons or native fiends in a story; they're simply rogues or loners and not involved in world-shaping schemes.

Weaving Threads

You could decide that the Lords of Dust and the Chamber are both advancing threads, but there's no threat of an overlord being released, and they aren't setting anything major in motion like the Mourning. One of these forces could have a particular interest in a player character. Or they might support one of the campaign's major factions just long enough to ensure a critical triggering event occurs: they want a particular player character to destroy a specific lieutenant of the Lord of Blades in a particular battle, but after that battle occurs, they abandon the Lord of Blades; he's served his purpose. Essentially, a dragon or rakshasa may serve as a mysterious patron or sinister foe for any adventure or two ... but this needn't build to an epic conflict with an overlord or a showdown with Argonnessen. The First War touches your campaign's story, but it's not what the campaign is about and the adventurers don't need to ever know the true scope of the war.

Operation: Overlord

An entire campaign could be built around a single overlord; the fifth edition *Tyranny of Dragons* storyline is an example of this form, with a plotline that slowly drives toward a final conflict with an archfiend. This can begin with clashes against lesser cultists or forces that don't even know they're serving the Lords of Dust. The adventurers might battle the Aurum in one adventure and the Emerald Claw in the next, slowly picking up the clues that reveal the true danger—"Why is everyone collecting pieces of a shattered Khyber shard? Who's this mysterious sage who's advising all these groups?" By the middle of the campaign, the adventurers are fighting more powerful forces: fiends, possessed mortals, perhaps even corrupted dragons.

By the time they understand the nature of the threat (perhaps with the assistance of a Chamber advisor or a couatl), the overlord may already have been partially released, just as Bel Shalor was partially released for a year in Thrane. The overlord won't be able to channel its full power or leave the region of its prison—but it can manifest an avatar (as reflected in the stat blocks for Rak Tulkhesh and Sul Khatesh in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*), it can unleash more of its fiendish servants into the world, and it can exert its influence over a wider area. This may seem like an obvious time to rally an army, but numbers may not matter. If you raise an army and send it against the avatar of Rak Tulkhesh, the Rage of War will cause the soldiers to turn on one another; all you'll accomplish is to send your allies into slaughter. Even the Chamber can't destroy an overlord, and the only way to restore its bonds is to do so in a manner laid out in the Prophecy.

So the adventurers must build their strength and learn the key to victory—and then assemble the pieces they need for success. Consider Tira Miron and the Shadow in the Flame (as discussed in the "An Overlord Unleashed" section of chapter 13). When Tira heard the call of the Flame urging her to fight Bel Shalor, the archfiend was already partially released; along the way, she had to protect innocents both from fiends roaming Thrane and mortals corrupted by the overlord. And in the end, she had to defeat Bel Shalor in a very specific manner and with a great sacrifice. The adventurers can't just charge into the final battle, because it's not just about whether they can defeat the overlord's avatar—it's whether they can defeat it in the particular way that will actually restore its binding.

Players in the Great Game

The previous example focuses on a single overlord, leading to an ultimate battle with a semi-released archfiend. A different campaign could focus on a wider interaction with the First War, where the adventurers find themselves dealing with lesser schemes of multiple factions of the Lords of Dust. These aren't schemes that could directly release an overlord, but anchoring events or plots that gather resources or information for the fiends. So the adventurers defeat a bandit chief

("How'd he get that cool magic sword?"). They clash with an Aurum warlock ("Why has Sul Khatesh given him this power?"). The truth is that the adventurers are being used as tools by the Chamber.

The party might know of the Chamber's involvement from the start; while dragons aren't immortal, they could essentially serve as the Immortal Being group patron from *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*. Or it might be many months before they realize the helpful ally who keeps setting them on the right path is a Chamber dragon. At first this might seem great. They're fighting fiends who are doing evil things! How can this be bad? But then the adventurers might learn the Chamber has done terrible things in pursuit of its goals—for example, the Chamber (in this version of Eberron) may have caused the Mourning. They realize the Chamber is using them, and neither side in the First War cares about human lives. What will the adventurers do? What *can* they do? On the one hand, you have an army of immortal fiends; on the other, you have an entire continent of dragons. It doesn't matter how powerful the adventurers become, they can't defeat these threats by rolling initiative and killing them one at a time.

If the adventurers have Prophetic significance, they may be able to use that as leverage; the dragons need them to fulfill a particular anchor event, but the party wants the Conclave to make promises before they'll play the game. If you want a truly apocalyptic solution, perhaps the adventurers can find a way to destroy the Prophecy (or at least cause it to become unreadable); this could involve an unlikely alliance with the daelkyr or greater powers of Xoriat. This would be a pretty extreme step, but even having it as a threat would give the adventurers real leverage over both sides.

Exposing the War

So, your adventurers have discovered one of the schemes of the Lords of Dust. They could handle the problem themselves, but the bard suggests they make things public. "Let's tell the Korranberg Chronicle! Let's tell the king! Let's warn the Twelve!" How hard would it be to expose the conflict and unveil the actions of dragons and demons ... or the schemes of the Dreaming Dark, for that matter?

A major question here is whether the adventurers want to expose a specific plan, or if they want to expose the vast scope of these conspiracies. Exposing a specific plan—"An unnatural force is controlling the House Kundarak enclave in Sharn!"—is going to be far easier than convincing people that "the Lords of Dust have been manipulating all of us for thousands of years and we must rally together to hunt them down once and for all!" In the case of a single corrupted enclave, you don't have to convince people of the vast conspiracy—and ultimately, it doesn't matter who's behind it, since you're simply convincing people that there is a concrete threat that they can and should eliminate. That's quite different from "we need to stop a fiendish conspiracy that caused the Last War by manipulating our dreams."

As with so many things in Eberron, this comes down to how difficult *you* want it to be. If you and your players want to explore a story where they expose the Lords of Dust once and for all, then for Aureon's sake, tell that story! It's your campaign, and you decide just how many agents the Chamber has hidden in Khorvaire and who can be trusted. But if you want it to be difficult, here are some elements that could complicate any plans to expose these forces.

Limited Knowledge

When you're looking into the grand scheme of things, one question is how much you really understand about these threats. Do you actually know what the Chamber is trying to accomplish? Do you know how many Chamber agents are operating in Khorvaire? Do you have absolute, unimpeachable evidence? Again, this is where it's easier to convince people that "someone is manipulating the Boromar Clan in Sharn," while "someone has manipulated human civilization since Lhazaar came to Khorvaire" is a hard sell.

Who Can You Trust?

The Lords of Dust and the Chamber have been planting agents across the Five Nations since civilization began. In addition to hidden rakshasa and shapechanged dragons, humanoid families have served these masters for countless generations, while others have sold their loyalty without even knowing who they're working for. These hidden agents could be watch captains, chronicle reporters, royal advisors. Do we know with certainty that Queen Aurala herself isn't a quori mind seed? Often the sole job of these agents is to observe—collecting information and watching for people who try to reveal inconvenient truths—then either discrediting or eliminating them. So part of the difficulty of exposing these plans is whether you can truly trust anyone ... or whether the moment you start spreading these rumors, agents of the Citadel will target you as a "threat to national security" while a royal advisor presents Boranel with trumped-up proof of your instability and unreliability.

Crying Wolf

These powers have had agents within society for ages—which means they've had centuries to spread false rumors and get people to believe that these ideas are ridiculous. It's not that people have never heard of the Lords of Dust, it's that they've heard so many ridiculous stories ("King Jarot was possessed by a demon! The entire Wynarn family are actual demons!") that nobody is going to take *your* story seriously. It would be like trying to convince people in our world that world leaders are really reptoid aliens in disguise. While people know that dragons and demons exist, they're sure all those stories of "vast demonic conspiracies" are rubbish. Besides which, if something like that did exist, surely the Church of the Silver Flame would deal with it!

As a result, it's easier to convince a local leader of a local threat using concrete proof, but it's incredibly difficult to convince an entire nation there's a global threat

(where again, you'll immediately get loyalist pundits and chroniclers muddying the waters and presenting countering evidence). Beyond that, why should anyone trust you? Are you just a group of vagabonds and murder hobos? Or do you have an established reputation, with powerful nobles in your debt who trust your word even when your story is ridiculous?

What Will It Achieve?

One of the core themes of Eberron is that player characters are remarkable, and that they can achieve things normal people can't. For the sake of argument, imagine that you discover the dragons of Argonnessen are going to destroy Khorvaire in a week. Rallying the nations won't be too much help, because this isn't a problem that can be solved by a humanoid army—all the armies of the Five Nations combined would be slaughtered within minutes if they faced the full force of Argonnessen. King Boranel has no particular influence when negotiating with the dragons; they don't care about his crown or his nation. This doesn't mean that humanity is doomed; it means that the adventurers will have to do something seemingly impossible—perhaps sneak into Argonnessen and find a way to make the Conclave listen to them. How? Maybe they can somehow channel the spirit of Ourelonastrix. Maybe they can threaten to release the Daughter of Khyber if the dragons don't back down. Maybe they can find proof the Conclave has misinterpreted the Draconic Prophecy. So while all the horses and all the king's men may be useless in this struggle, a few bold adventurers may be able to do the impossible.

You Could ... But Should You?

Another possibility is that you discover a plot, you gather all the proof you need to expose it ... then you discover a compelling reason why you *shouldn't*. Imagine you discover the Chamber is planning to trigger a second Mourning that will destroy Valenar; you've obtained all the information you need to expose this to the world, to prove with absolute clarity that Argonnessen is behind it. Except then you discover that this second Mourning is the *only* thing that can prevent the release of Rak Tulkhesh, who'll collapse all the nations of Khorvaire into a brutal conflict that makes the Last War look like a playdate. Further, you discover that it was Mordakhesh the Shadowsword who helped you obtain your evidence in the first place, and he clearly wants you to expose the plot. So, do you?

If you do nothing, you're allowing a hundred thousand people to die when you could stop it. If you act anyway, you may be dooming millions when Rak Tulkhesh rises. Do you take that chance, confident you can find another way to stop the Rage of War? Or do you allow Valenar to be destroyed? One of Eberron's central themes is that stories don't always end well; while this shouldn't be the norm, I love to occasionally present my adventurers with situations where there is no good answer, where it's a question of deciding what is the lesser of two evils.

Another aspect of "You could, but should you?" is whether your actions will make you or your loved ones—or even your entire nation—a target for retribution. These powers are generally so far above you that they don't feel a need to take vengeance; yes, you stopped the second Mourning they had planned, but you're human and in fifty years you'll be dead, and that's the blink of an eye to a dragon. But going back to the mouse analogy, when humanoids become pests, they'll be wiped out ... and as Xen'drik shows, they have no concerns with inflicting massive collateral damage. Again, most of the time, even what appears to be a serious setback doesn't require retribution; the Lords of Dust and Argonnessen have been feuding for a hundred thousand years, and if they have to wait another three centuries, so be it. But if the adventurers discover that revealing the cause of the Mourning might cause Argonnessen to kill everyone who has that knowledge—including Breland itself, just to make sure—are they going to take that chance?

Ultimately, this is the same principle you see in stories like *Men in Black*—why don't they just tell the world about aliens? Often, this is because it would cause panic and wouldn't actually accomplish anything useful. The player characters can solve problems that entire nations can't. However, it's again up to how difficult you want it to be. If you *want* the final challenge to require the adventurers to unite the Five Nations, perhaps they can find a way to expose the servants of the Lords of Dust, or even present such a compelling case that these agents will change sides. Perhaps they can bring the Twelve and the Church of the Silver Flame together to create a device that can reveal rakshasa across Khorvaire. It's not supposed to be easy, but this is always about the story *you* want to tell.

Survival of the Smallest

If the dragons and the Lords of Dust are so powerful, if they've got unlimited resources and agents across Khorvaire, why don't they just kill the adventurers as soon as they cause problems? If Mordakhesh wants the *Orb of Dol Azur* and the adventurers destroy it, why doesn't Mordakhesh immediately call in some favors and have the adventurers murdered in their sleep?

Well, if a mouse chews through your power line, do you bother to have that mouse assassinated? Or do you get the power line fixed and move on with your life? The Lords of Dust and the Chamber are so far above humanity that they don't really pay too much attention to specific mortals. If an anchor event fails, what matters is finding the new thread that'll take its place; why bother killing the mortals responsible, when they'll all have died of old age by the time the next thread comes together? The First War has been going on for tens of thousands of years, and both sides have suffered literally countless setbacks. Delaying plans by two centuries is an immense amount of time for humans, but largely just an annoyance for the Lords of Dust; there's no need to swat the mayfly who messed things up.

That general principle covers most situations, but perhaps the adventurers have an ongoing, antagonistic relationship with a particular rakshasa. They've foiled its plans time after time. Surely *this* fiend will want

revenge—so what does it do? One approach plays on the fact that immortals have all the time in the world. Death is easy; this enemy wants to make the player characters suffer. It might wait until they have children, so it can kill their children or make them serve its overlords. It might wait until they have risen to great heights so it can make everything come tumbling down. It doesn't want death, it wants *pain*, and it has all the time in the world to take it (but when it does come for revenge, I certainly hope the adventurers will find a way to foil those plans!).

A second approach is to say "Good question ... why *isn't* it taking revenge?" The obvious answer is that the rakshasa can't kill or punish them because it needs them. If the player characters have a role in the Prophecy that serves the ends of one of the Lords of Dust, that fiend may have forbidden others from breaking its toys. What it needs could be far in the future; perhaps it needs two of the adventurers to have a child together, because that child will end up freeing an overlord. So even though the adventurers continue to interfere with its plans, it's possible the rakshasa not only won't destroy them, but it'll protect them from other fiends.

Dragonmarked Characters and the Prophecy

Dragonmarks inherently have Prophetic significance, but that doesn't mean individual dragonmarked heirs automatically have important roles to play. There are many ways to interpret the shifting threads of the Prophecy; just as some people read the future in tea leaves or the movements of birds, there are scholars who can gain information from gatherings or actions of dragonmarked characters. Think of dragonmarked characters as tarot cards: the individual card isn't important, but it has symbolic meaning, and someone who understands the mysteries can gain information by interacting with it.

Most examples of the Prophecy in this chapter are extremely specific events with massive impacts on the future. But there are also thousands of minor threads that are constantly in motion. "*If* someone with the Mark of Storms burns their tongue on hot tal at midday, *then* a conductor stone on the eastern rail will fail in the evening." These are micro-anchors with minor, short term effects, and in such an example, anyone with the Mark of Storms will do.

So dragonmarked characters have an innate minor tie to the Prophecy, but that's not as significant as being the Beggar King. In addition to this lesser significance, though, dragonmarked characters can also have major roles to play; as noted earlier, the Tyrant Kraken is likely a Lyrandar heir who seizes control of the house by betraying a loved one.

Bound to the Prophecy

The previous section considers ways the Prophecy could affect a campaign—but it's possible that the player characters themselves have specific roles to play in one or more threads of the Prophecy. In the example in the "Battleground of Prophecy" section, one of the player characters may be destined to *become* the Beggar King or the Tyrant Kraken; factions within the Chamber or the Lords of Dust could have a vested interest in that character's future. The Prophetic Roles table provides ideas ...

Prophetic Roles

d8	You Must ...	While ...
1	Slay a [fiend / monster / ruler] ...	... wielding a particular artifact.
2	Restore a [monument / temple / nation] ...	... in a distant and dangerous location.
3	Perform a [dangerous / forgotten] ritual ...	... during a rare planar or lunar convergence.
4	Resolve a schism within a [family / faith] ...	... assisted by your mortal enemy.
5	Destroy an [artifact / organization/nation] ...	... losing your most treasured possession.
6	Create an [artifact / child / artwork] ...	... betraying someone you love.
7	Assume leadership of a [family / faction / nation] ...	... by accident.
8	Found a [movement / religion / nation] ...	... at the cost of your own life.

For example, you might decide to involve one or more of the following threads in your campaign:

- You must have a child with your mortal enemy.
- You must destroy the *Orb of Dol Azur* while Fernia, Shavarath, and Mabar are coterminous.
- You must restore Cyre while wearing the crown of Galifar I.
- You must take control of House Lyrandar by betraying someone you love.

Keep in mind that the Prophecy is a series of if-then statements that lead to certain consequences. It's not saying you *will* or *must* have a child with your mortal enemy (though everyone loves a good enemies-to-lovers story). Rather, *if* you have a child with your mortal enemy, *then* that child will reunite Galifar ... Similarly, *if* you take control of House Lyrandar by betraying someone you love, *then* Eldrantulku will be released from its bonds. So a Prophetic Role could be something you want to happen, or it could be something you really *don't* want to happen—even if it's good in the short term, it could have disastrous long-term consequences. But the servants of Eldrantulku want you to take control of House Lyrandar through an act of betrayal, and they'll do their best to direct you down that path.

A Prophetic Role is something that must be approved by the DM, as it plays into the unfolding story of a campaign. Personally, I wouldn't make a character a lynchpin of the Prophecy without at least discussing their involvement with the player first (even if they won't know any details of the Prophecy they're tied to). I'd also be open to a player presenting me with a thread they'd like to have tied to their character; perhaps they want their artificer to be destined to create a significant artifact in a distant land. Again, this doesn't mean that this *will* happen, but if it does happen, there will be a significant consequence for the future—and there are powerful forces who want it to happen, and others who want to ensure it *doesn't* happen.

Chapter 16: Ghost Stories of Eberron

Content Warning

Some of the undead and other creatures mentioned in this chapter have troubling origin stories or act in horrific ways. This chapter references many challenging topics such as cannibalism, consuming humanoid blood and body parts, memory loss, murder of children, possession and mind control, sadism, torture, and war crimes—plus, of course, lots of reanimated corpses. Before introducing these creatures into your game, it's a good idea to use safety tools (discussed in chapter 9) to ensure everyone is comfortable exploring these stories.

It was Zarantyr of 972 when she came to our gate. She was a refugee. She told us that her husband and children had been killed by trolls. I'll never forget her: Tall and thin, hair as black as a crow's wing and just as ragged, surrounding her like a shroud woven from the night itself. I could see that her skin was flawless beneath the dirt, and her eyes were as dark as her hair. But it was her spirit that impressed me the most—the determination that had carried her out this far from Sharn and Wroat, the courage that kept her going after her family was destroyed. She said she was hungry, and asked if she could stay the night beneath our roof before continuing east. The commander agreed. But I didn't stay for the evening meal. Cainan and I were sent on a scouting mission, to search for our lady's village and to track the aggressive trolls."

"And what did you find?" Thorn said.

Beren studied the cold fire dancing along his enchanted torch. "There was no trail to follow. It was Zarantyr, and it had snowed the day before, but there were no tracks save ours ... and the snow was stained with blood. Yet there were no signs of struggle. No smashed doors, no burned buildings. Just the bones of twelve settlers, picked perfectly clean and stacked neatly by the town well. Every bone ... except for the skulls. Those were nowhere to be found ... We returned as quickly as we could, but it was past midnight by the time we arrived. I'd called on Dol Arrah, begged the Sovereigns to let that woman be a ghost, a restless spirit who'd simply wanted her remains to be found. But I knew what we were going to find. We'd left thirty people in that fort, veteran soldiers among them. All that awaited us on our return was bones, picked clean and stacked on the table in the great hall. The skulls were gone. She'd told us the truth: She was hungry."

—*The Queen of Stone* novel

What stories do the people of the Five Nations tell during the nights of Long Shadows? Who are their equivalents of Dracula and Strahd, infamous undead whose tales are told across Khorvaire? In looking to the bogeymen of Eberron, an immediate answer is the Daughters of Sora Kell (though they aren't undead). The above epigraph describes one of the Daughters, Sora Maenya. Another section of that novel relays a shorter tale about her: "Maenya eats the flesh and drinks the blood, but she saves the soul, binding it forever to the bones of her victim. She sleeps on a bed made from the skulls of children, and their ghostly cries ring through the cavern, now and through the end of time ..."

Sora Katra is less of a brute, but also the subject of terrifying stories. Typically her tales involve the deadly consequences of making foolish bargains or trying to outwit her, and it's often said that she weaves curses on her loom. Meanwhile, Sora Teraza is a legendary oracle; it's well known that she can see the moment of your death when she looks at you—"See it, or set it in stone."

So while the legends of the Daughters of Sora Kell aren't *ghost* stories, these hags are certainly the subject of scary stories and campfire tales. There are countless other fey, monstrosities, and similar creatures whose stories are shared in hushed voices; but chief among them are the undead of Eberron. The rest of this chapter explores the role of undead in the world and names a few of the infamous children of the night.

The Reality of Undead

Tales about undead are viewed differently in Eberron than they do in our world. After all, the existence of Eberron's undead isn't urban legend, but indisputable fact. Karrnath fielded legions of the dead during the Last War. Ghouls are a public menace. It's public record that entire villages have been destroyed by wights. This is an important aspect of the Church of the Silver Flame; while it's a religion, it's also very much a volunteer militia prepared to protect innocents against the undead and other unnatural threats. Because of the efforts of the templars of the Silver Flame and the paladins of Dol Arrah, most people can reasonably hope they'll never personally be menaced by undead. And most people haven't actually seen a vampire, let alone a lich—but they still know that these things are *real*. So if someone says a place is haunted, people take it seriously.

Planar Influence

Manifest zones and coterminous periods related to Dolurrh or Mabar are easily the most common sources of undead in Eberron, and thus many ghost stories are tied to these manifest zones and planes. There are definitely other options—independent necromancers, the overlord Katashka—but if you're looking for an infamously haunted

castle, well, perhaps it was unintentionally on a manifest zone tied to Dolurrh. On the other hand, if you have a graveyard like *Pet Sematary* where "the ground is sour" and those buried there return as malevolent undead, that's a Mabaran manifest zone, for sure.

Mabaran Zones

Mabaran manifest zones are infamous and almost universally shunned, for nearly all are harmful to the flora and fauna of the region. In some zones, life withers and dies. In others, it's twisted in strange ways; plants may seek the blood of living creatures, or grow unnaturally pale and cold. Rot and decay are often accelerated, and disease can thrive ... While Mabaran manifest zones rarely serve as gateways to the plane, they are powerful sources of negative energy and produce undead. Skeletons, zombies, and ghouls can all spontaneously rise in Mabaran manifest zones, and more powerful undead can be created under the proper circumstances.

—Exploring Eberron

Mabar is the embodiment of entropy and despair. It seeks to consume light, life, and hope. As such, the undead produced by Mabar are driven to prey on the living. A Dolurrhi zombie might not be hostile, instead just trying to complete some lingering task from its life. But a zombie spontaneously created by Mabar is inherently hostile toward living creatures (barring the influence of a necromancer); it can sense your spark of life and mindlessly seeks to extinguish it. It's important to note that undead raised by necromancers outside Mabaran zones don't automatically have this killer urge, and Seeker communities in Karrnath safely use zombies and skeletons for manual labor; but those that are spontaneously raised by the power of Mabar are driven by its malevolent hunger.

Dolurrhi Zones

Manifest zones tied to Dolurrh ... are still close to the Realm of the Dead and exceptionally haunted, though not blighted, as Mabaran zones typically are. Shadows move in disturbing ways, and travelers may hear whispers they can't quite make out. The restless spirits of Dolurrh yearn to return to the Material Plane, and it's easier for them to do so in manifest zones. They might manifest as ghosts, or animate the corpses of people buried in the zone, causing them to rise as revenants or zombies.

—Exploring Eberron

Dolurrhi zones and undead don't share the blighted aspect of Mabaran zones, and Dolurrhi undead aren't driven to harm the living. Instead, Dolurrhi undead are restless, pulled toward Dolurrh and yet somehow kept from it. Sometimes this is due to the classic trope of unfinished business; they can't rest until they have revenge, or until their lover knows the truth, or until their treasure is found. Sometimes a powerful emotion keeps them tied to the world. Regardless, Dolurrhi undead aren't necessarily hostile or evil, but they also are often incomplete. They don't possess the full memories or sentience they had in life; instead, they cling to one sliver of their life, and that utterly defines them.

Additionally, most Dolurrhi undead don't realize they're undead; their limited sentience often prevents them from processing or retaining new information. So when you encounter the classic story of a ghost lingering in its house, wanting the truth about its murder to be revealed, that's a Dolurrhi ghost. It doesn't want to hurt anyone (except perhaps the murderer), it's incapable of making grand schemes, and it has no opinion about, say, the destruction of the Brelish monarchy. It's defined by the single story that's holding it from Dolurrh, and as soon as that story is resolved, it can finally rest.

Notably, the Aereni believe that Mabaran undead inherently pose a threat to the living, but they don't believe the same is true of Dolurrhi undead. Despite the relatively benign nature of the latter, people still wouldn't ever aspire to become one! A vampire or lich has its full consciousness and memories from its life, but a Dolurrhi ghost is just a fragment, trapped between worlds; it's not a satisfying alternative to life.

Mabaran Undead and Sunlight Sensitivity

Why are some undead sensitive to sunlight while others aren't? Sunlight is a dilute form of positive energy, so exposure to sunlight can disrupt the negative energy that sustains Mabaran undead. This effect is especially strong in certain undead, especially wraiths and specters (who are essentially pure negative energy) and vampires. Others, like skeletons and zombies, have a weaker connection to Mabar; this is also reflected by the fact that their touch doesn't drain life energy. Such creatures may not *like* being exposed to sunlight, but it has no mechanical effect on them.

Other Sources of Undead

Mabaran and Dolurrhi manifest zones and coterminous periods both have the potential to spontaneously create undead, but they're far from the only way that undead can come to exist. Aside from modern necromancers, there have been many powerful civilizations that have made use of necromancy, such as the Qabalrin elves of Xen'drik, the lords of Ohr Kaluun, and the Kech Nasaar of Dhakaan. The overlord Katashka the Gatekeeper thrives on mortal fears of the undead and has created many terrors to haunt the night. In all of these cases, adventurers could deal with undead created by one of these forces that have simply survived the long passage of time. However, artifacts, relics, and lingering curses are just as dangerous. It may be that no one's seen a Qabalrin vampire for forty thousand years ... until a foolish Morgrave scholar unearths the *Sanguineous Tome* and reads the rituals within!

JACK HOLLIDAY

Types of Undead

There are countless forms of undead in Dungeons & Dragons. Here's an overview of some of the most common varieties and how they fit into Eberron.

Skeletons and Zombies

Mindless skeletons and zombies are the workhorses of any necromancer. They can be spontaneously animated in Mabaran manifest zones; such undead are malevolent, though after a century of war with Karrnath, most people are familiar with the concept of skeletons and zombies that are bound to a mortal's will. However, if you're a necromancer planning to walk around with undead companions, you'll still have to deal with a few challenges. Even though people know skeletons and zombies aren't necessarily dangerous, few commoners like being around them. Outside of Karrnath, many businesses refuse to allow such undead on their premises—and regardless of the necromancer's nationality, most people associate skeletons and zombies with Karrnath. Thus, if a town suffered at the hands of Karrnath during the Last War, its townsfolk are likely to transfer that aggression to any necromancer who passes through town.

Corpse Ownership

While necromancy itself isn't illegal under the Code of Galifar, grave robbing is! An officer of the law could demand that a necromancer present proof of their ownership of the corpses in their entourage—though most officers rarely do so. In Karrnath, necromancers authorized by the Ministry of the Dead are issued warrants that authorize them to "compel the corpse of any Karrnathi citizen into service," so their ownership is easy to establish as legitimate. Likewise, priests of the Blood of Vol have long raised the corpses of followers of the faith, so their claims generally go undisputed. However, if you kill someone then raise them as a zombie, the Sharn Watch might not be able to prove you killed that person, but they can certainly prosecute you as a corpse robber! This usually results in a fine and the confiscation (and destruction) of the zombie.

Zombies in Pop Culture

A typical zombie story is driven by the Dolurrhi zombie—it has a limited intellect, doesn't realize it's dead, and strives to complete one last task or to reach a loved one. However, one popular zombie tale currently in circulation has a different spin. *The Late Count* is a comic opera by the bard Kessler; this tale revolves around a Karrnathi count whose servants resurrect him as a zombie, then attempt to use the undead noble as a puppet while they have the run of the estate. Thanks to this opera's popularity, zombies currently have some comic appeal in Sharn and Wroat; if a necromancer is accompanied by a single zombie dressed in fancy clothes, they can play it off as a hilarious jest.

Ghouls and Ghasts

The halflings of the Talenta Plains tell the stories of the Hungry Hunter, Orlasca. The greatest hunter of his age, Orlasca swore to eat every creature he killed. When he was forced to kill another halfling, his oath compelled him to consume his enemy ... and he developed an insatiable appetite for halfling flesh. After he slew his whole tribe, Orlasca was finally slain. But so great was his hunger that his spirit lingered, slipping into the forms of weaker creatures, trying to work its way up to halfling form. One of the basic Talenta taboos is to never consume the flesh of a creature that eats its own kind—because that allows the spirit of Orlasca to pass into you and transform you into a ghoul.

Ghouls are the most commonly encountered undead threat in the Five Nations. Though especially common in Mabaran manifest zones, they can spontaneously spawn when Mabar is coterminous, when powerful necrotic forces are unleashed, or seemingly, anywhere that many people died at once; massive battlefields often spawn ghouls prowling among the corpses. While technically sentient, Mabaran ghouls have no memory of their former lives and are driven by their hunger. The Restful Watch and the templars of the Silver Flame both patrol cemeteries and sewers watching for ghouls, and most cities in the Five Nations have a bounty on them (the value based on level of threat).

After skeletons and zombies, ghouls are the easiest undead to create; it's largely a matter of binding a corpse to Mabar. However, such ghouls are more aggressive than zombies or skeletons, and unless they are actively

being controlled, they seek to sate their endless hunger. Karrnath experimented with ghoul forces during the Last War; the resources required to control them were too great, but on a few occasions, they used *bags of holding* to drop packs of ghouls behind enemy lines, sowing terror among their enemies.

Ghoul Strains

While Mabaran ghouls are savage, there are other strains as well. Ghouls in the Talenta Plains inhabit the forms of beasts, and the Talenta say that all of these creatures are guided by the spirit of Orlasca. These ghouls can exhibit surprising cunning and pack tactics, tracking targets with ease and working together to isolate weaker characters such as spellcasters. Additionally, an entire pack of ghouls sometimes speaks with one voice (in Halfling, not Common). The "Orlasca Ghoul Template" sidebar presents statistics to turn any beast into a ghoul.

Another strain of ghoul can be found among the cults of Katashka the Gatekeeper. These cultists believe that the practice of ritual cannibalism will protect them from disease, aging, and death. And it does—but over time, the rituals transform the cultists into ghouls. These ghouls retain their full memories and intellect, but are increasingly driven by their unnatural appetites. Some of Katashka's ghouls can maintain their original mortal appearance as long as they are well fed, but if their food supply dwindles, their undead nature becomes increasingly apparent. Such ghouls can potentially form mutually beneficial partnerships with vampires; the vampire feeds on the blood of the living, and the ghouls consume the flesh that remains.

Orlasca Ghoul Template

You can transform any Beast stat block into an Orlasca ghoul by making the following changes:

Type. The Orlasca ghoul's type changes from Beast to Undead.
Damage Immunities. The Orlasca ghoul gains immunity to poison damage, in addition to any prior immunities.
Condition Immunities. The Orlasca ghoul can't be charmed or poisoned, in addition to any prior immunities, and it doesn't suffer from exhaustion.
Senses. The Orlasca ghoul gains darkvision out to 60 feet, in addition to any prior senses.
Curse of Orlasca. Once per turn, when the Orlasca ghoul hits an enemy other than an elf or undead with a melee attack, the target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
Unusual Nature. The Orlasca ghoul doesn't require air, drink, or sleep. It loses any trait, such as Amphibious, that assumes a living physiology.
Hungry Chorus (Optional): The Orlasca ghoul speaks Halfling. When it speaks, each friendly Orlasca ghoul within 120 feet of it joins it in speaking the same words in a chorus.
Cunning Tracker (Optional): The Orlasca ghoul gains proficiency in Survival and has advantage on checks made to track or perceive creatures it has dealt damage to in the last 24 hours.

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Ghasts

For the most part, ghasts are old ghouls. The longer a ghoul survives, the deeper the power that animates it sinks into its flesh. Mabaran and Orlasca ghasts have greater intellect than ghouls and can make more cunning plans. Katashka ghasts retain their mental ability scores from their former life, and also have the ability to control their foul odor. Leaders of ghoul cults are typically ghasts.

Wights

The people of the Lhazaar Principalities tell tales of the Ship of Bones and the haunted vessels of the Bloodsails. But the sailors of Stormreach speak of the Crimson Shadow—the name of both a vessel and its captain, a Khoravar pirate and her swift sloop. Rather than taking a vessel in open conflict, the Crimson Shadow would approach her target under cover of darkness. In some tales, the Shadow had a crew of swift and silent killers, but most say she would board an enemy vessel on her own and kill its entire crew—taking its most precious cargo aboard her sloop, and abandoning the vessel to drift lifeless. After several years of piracy, the Crimson Shadow was revealed to be Jola Wylkes, daughter of the harbormaster of Stormreach. Her lineage couldn't save her, and she was hanged for her crimes ... But two months later, another ship was found adrift, its crew butchered. The common tale is that the Keeper recognized talent when he saw it, and he returned the Crimson Shadow to the seas, free to sail for as long as she continues to send him new souls and the treasures he desires.

A wight is a mortal that made a bargain with a dark power after death. Wights were invariably effective killers in their mortal life; while many were soldiers or bandits, a wight could have been a serial killer, a pirate, an assassin—anyone whose achievements draw the attention of a dark power and is willing to bargain with it. Over the course of the Last War, warrior wights rose in every nation. One of the deadliest wights of the last century is Azael Vadallia, a Valenar wight who's said to be searching for warriors worthy to join his undead warband.

The typical bargain of a wight is simple: you continue to exist as long as you continue to kill. Different wights operate under different restrictions, and their powers may vary as a result. The **wight** stat block in the *Monster Manual* reflects a typical warrior or bandit. However, wights retain much of their memories and skills from life; for example, the **deathlock wight** in *Monsters of the Multiverse* could reflect someone who was a spellcaster. Both of those stat blocks have a challenge rating of 3, but extraordinary wights can be considerably more dangerous. The normal wight stat block can only raise twelve of its victims as zombies, but historically, Malleon the Reaver is said to have led an army of thousands when he rose as a wight. And Azael Vadallia has only raised a few of his victims, but those he does raise become wights themselves and serve as loyal members of his warband.

Wights and the Bone King

In common folklore, wights are thought to make their bargains with the Keeper. However, most wights actually forge their pacts with the Bone King of Mabar, one of the Dark Powers of the Endless Night. Some wights remain continuously active, but most go through periods of torpor that can last for years or decades; during this time, the wight's body appears to be a corpse, and its spirit resides in the Kingdom of Bones in Mabar. This often leads to wights being dismissed as mere myth, because a wight can disappear for a generation before returning to kill again. When the wight is finally destroyed, its spirit remains in the Kingdom of Bones; an exceptionally strong-willed wight may eventually return as a wraith.

It's possible that there could be a templar wight who is determined to pay its tithe to its patron with the blood of evildoers—but a wight is suffused with the essence of Mabar and bound to its Dark Power, and this tends to erode any compassion or empathy the victim once had.

Trapped Souls

One question is what fate befalls those killed by a wight. If the victim is merely allowed to die, its soul travels to Dolurrh. But if the victim's corpse is raised by the wight, the victim's soul may be claimed by the wight's patron—bound in miserable service in the Kingdom of Bones, or perhaps trapped in the Lair of the Keeper. If a DM chooses this approach, then the only way to raise such a victim from the dead is to free its spirit from this bondage.

Wraiths and Specters

A wraith is a spirit that has become deeply entwined with Mabar and that's unable to ever truly find oblivion in Dolurrh. Wraiths are often the end result of other forms of undead; wights, mummies, or vampires whose physical forms degrade or are destroyed may linger as wraiths.

A wraith's behavior and abilities often depend on its original form. Wraiths formed from mummies continue to be bound by the oaths that hold them on Eberron. Wraiths formed from wights likewise continue to be bound by their pacts with their patron. Such wraiths are generally tied to the Bone King or the Queen of All Tears, and like wights, they can be pulled into Mabar for extended periods of time; eventually, most are permanently drawn into the Endless Night. This is the classic source of the wraith who only manifests when its tomb is disturbed; at other times, it dwells in Mabar.

Creating Wraiths

The Bloodsail elves of Farlnen have devised rituals that can transform a mortal creature into a wraith. Such wraiths aren't bound by the oaths and pacts of wights or mummies, but this means they sustain their existence with pure will; essentially, the wraith only endures as long as they can remember who they are. Over time, many lose cohesion and fade, becoming specters. Lady Illmarrow knows the techniques to create wraiths, and has created quite a few to serve her in the Emerald Claw. Many of these lack the will to maintain their existence for decades, but they serve her purposes for now. The most infamous wraith of the Bloodsails is the Grim Lord Varonaen, one of the founders of the principality; though his physical form was destroyed in a clash with the Aereni Deathguard, he persists as a wraith through sheer will. (You can learn more about Varonaen and the Grim Lords in chapter 17.)

Specters

Specters are a lesser form of wraith. The *Monster Manual* describes a specter as "the angry, unfettered spirit of a humanoid that has been prevented from passing to the afterlife. Specters no longer possess connections to who or what they were, yet are condemned to walk the world forever." These undead possess traces of memory from their mortal life, but unlike a wraith, they don't possess full consciousness or memory, and they lack the skills of their mortal life. They can remember just enough to be tormented by what they've lost, drawing them to consume the life energy of mortals and destroy what they cannot have.

Another form of specter is the never-living; these are pure extensions of Mabar, negative energy shaped into humanoid form. Though never-living specters use the same statistics as those who were once mortal, they have no human memories and seek only to feed. Never-living wraiths can be generated by powerful necromancers, and can be found serving Katashka cults or lingering in the domain of the Keeper.

Ghosts, Banshees, and Dawn Specters

In Khorvaire, ghost stories are as plentiful as they are in our world; they tell similar tales of souls trapped between Eberron and Dolurrh, driven to complete their unfinished business or held fast by emotions or memories they can't let go.

Ghosts

While ghosts have at least some of their memories from life, most aren't fully aware of their condition or the passage of time, and they generally can't retain new information. They are a remnant of someone who has died, but existence as a ghost isn't something most people would aspire to; it's a half-life. Even where there are unusual ghosts with greater consciousness and awareness, most are bound to something—a location, an object, a bloodline—and they can't roam freely. Ghosts are usually tied to Dolurrh; but even those that aren't have no connection to Mabar, nor any innate desire to harm the living. They can still be dangerous, especially if they are driven by anger or were hateful in life, but a ghost is driven by the bond that keeps them away from Dolurrh, not by hunger to harm the living.

Dolurrhi Banshees

The typical banshee is a form of ghost tied to Dolurrh, but bound to Eberron by an intense tragedy. The pain of this tragedy drives the banshee to lash out at the living, and this focused pain empowers the banshee's wail; it's not that the banshee drains the life from its victims, but rather, it inflicts such intense emotional trauma that most creatures die of heart attacks or are rendered catatonic. Like most ghosts, banshees are generally trapped in their tragedy and largely unaware of the passage of time, unable to fully process new things.

Dolurrhi banshees can be formed from humanoids of any ancestry or gender; one of the classic Dhakaani ghost stories is of the dirge singer who will not die. In creating a Dolurrhi banshee, replace its Elvish language with "the languages it knew in life."

Mabaran Banshees

Though most banshees are tied to Dolurrh, the Dark Power known as the Queen of All Tears has created a strain of Mabaran banshees specifically drawn from elf women who have suffered great tragedies. These **handmaidens of sorrow** (stat block presented below) have more in common with wraiths than with ghosts. They are typically fully conscious and aware of their surroundings, and they split their time between haunting the place of their sorrow and the Court of Tears in Mabar.

Handmaiden of Sorrow

Medium Undead, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +6
Skills Insight +4, Perception +4
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Elvish
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Detect Life. The handmaiden can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't Undead or Constructs. She knows the general direction they're in but not their exact locations.

Incorporeal Movement. The handmaiden can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Mabaran Courtier. The handmaiden has advantage on saving throws against effects that turn Undead.

Unusual Nature. The handmaiden doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Corrupting Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (4d6 + 2) necrotic damage.

Shared Despair. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the handmaiden that can see her must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 minute. While charmed, a creature takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage the first time the handmaiden takes damage on a turn. A charmed target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, made with disadvantage if the handmaiden is within its line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the handmaiden's Shared Despair for the next 24 hours.

Wail (1/Day). The handmaiden releases a mournful wail, provided that she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on Constructs and Undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a successful save, a creature takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage.

Dawn Specters

Commonly found in Aereni, a dawn specter is a variety of ghost that's actually a deathless, rather than being tied to Dolurrh or Mabar. Each dawn specter must be bound to something—either a location or a *spirit idol* (discussed in *Exploring Eberron*)—but its ability to manifest is tied to the devotion it receives from the people of a community. So you might find the dawn specter of a bard entertaining patrons in an Aereni tavern; the joy of the patrons is what allows it to maintain its form and interact with the world.

Dawn specters can possess mortals just like ghosts; however, most dawn specters can't go more than 10 miles from the object or location they are bound to, even while possessing a mortal. Some Aereni willingly allow dawn specters to possess them, allowing the dead elf to interact directly with its descendants; however, a willing host's mind usually can't maintain this possession for more than a few hours or days, depending on their force of will, after which the specter is forced out.

Dawn Specter Statistics

A dawn specter uses a **ghost** stat block with these changes:

- Replace its immunity to necrotic damage with immunity to radiant damage.
- Replace its Withering Touch attack with a Radiant Touch attack that deals radiant damage.
- Replace its Horrifying Visage action with a Glorious Visage action that charms victims rather than frightening them, and that doesn't age its targets.

Vampires

Surely you've heard of Haldon d'Cannith, the Vampire Prince of Starilaskur? When he took over the post of Cannith viceroy, he began running his factories at all hours to meet the demands of the war. Rumor has it that he chained his workers to their stations; those who challenged him were publicly tortured, and as they bled, he drank their blood. The common folk begged the duke for aid, but he was Haldon's thrall and turned a deaf ear to their cries. Later, Haldon began using prisoners of war in his factories, and that was when he truly began working his people to death ... who cared what became of their corpses and their delicious blood? Here we are sixty years later, and Haldon is still viceroy. He can't use prison labor any more, but I hear he's taking on Cyran refugees ...

While most people have never seen a vampire, everyone knows about them—and as a result, it's common for people to see vampires where none exist. Is someone especially cruel or bloodthirsty? Have they lived longer than seems plausible? *Sounds like a vampire to me!* Haldon d'Cannith might well be a vampire who uses his workers to slake his thirst. On the other hand, he could simply be a ruthless industrialist, and all those stories of his imposing a blood tax on his workers are just sensational rumors. If he truly has held his post for sixty years, he could be taking experimental alchemical treatments to extend his life ... or it's possible that the current Haldon d'Cannith is the *son* of the man who inspired the tales, and the rumormongers just ignore that aspect of the story. So even though people say Haldon is a vampire, only the DM knows if he actually is.

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Vampires don't occur naturally—or more specifically, they aren't generated spontaneously by Mabaran manifest zones. Creating a vampire is an act of epic necromancy that infuses a humanoid creature with the power of Mabar. But once you have one vampire, it's easy to make more ... so why aren't vampires more common? The primary reason is that it's not easy being a vampire. A vampire is bound to Mabar, and Mabar is hungry. This fuels a vampire's thirst for both the blood and life energy of the living, and over time, it becomes increasingly difficult for a vampire not to see all living creatures as prey. A weak-willed vampire quickly devolves into a feral predator; such creatures use the statistics of vampire spawn, but their Intelligence is more a measure of cunning than of rational thought. It takes strong will to maintain your personality as a vampire, and stronger still to maintain any empathy or compassion for other creatures. This is why vampires are seen as monsters, for many do become ghoulish killers that need to be hunted down by templars of the Silver Flame, the knights of Dol Arrah, or the Aereni Deathguard. This is an additional reason most vampires don't make legions of spawn; all it takes is one spawn going feral and drawing templars to town to lead to a deep purge. Undead have no rights under the Code of Galifar, and destroying a vampire isn't considered murder; you'd just better be sure the mayor *is* a vampire before you kill him.

Vampire Strains

The first known vampires were created by the Qabalrin elves in the Age of Giants, and the line of Vol resurrected these techniques to create several vampire bloodlines on Aerenal. When the Undying Court eradicated the line of Vol, its allies were allowed to flee; some settled on the island of Farlnen and founded the Bloodsail Principality, while others spread west, helping to establish the Blood of Vol in what's now Karrnath. These elves brought vampires with them, and most vampires in Khorvaire can ultimately trace their bloodlines back to Aerenal. With that said, there were vampires in the line of Vol for tens of thousands of years, and some came to Khorvaire long before the Mark of Death appeared in Aerenal. One of the oldest vampires on Khorvaire, Iraala, is the hobgoblin dirge singer of the Kech Nasaar; she became a vampire through dealings with the line of Vol before the empire fell. So it's possible that a vampire in western Khorvaire could trace their lineage to the Nasaar bloodline—but ultimately, that too leads back to Aerenal.

While the Qabalrin are the common source of vampires, there are a couple other paths to creating them. The Bone King of Mabar can transform a mortal into a vampire. Such vampires can't spawn other vampires; most instead transform victims into ghouls. When they are destroyed, their spirits are drawn to the domain of the Bone King, where they exist as wraiths.

Additionally, there are a few examples of devotees of the Keeper becoming vampires. Such vampires can't create spawn at all. Their hunger is a manifestation of the greed of the Keeper, and the souls of creatures they slay may be bound, similar to the effect of a *Keeper's fang*.

Other forms of vampire might exist—such as the penanggalan—but these are tied to rituals developed by different cultures, and simply aren't as widespread as the other techniques. In adding such variant vampires, consider their source. Are they tied to an overlord, like Katashka the Gatekeeper? Were they created by one of the princes of Ohr Kaluun?

Vampire Weaknesses

At the DM's discretion, each strain of vampire—Qabalrin, Bone King, Keeper—could have different weaknesses. For example, it's possible the vampires of the Bone King aren't harmed by running water, but are vulnerable to fire. Meanwhile, Qabalrin vampires might not require permission to enter a dwelling, but they can't return once they leave it. The Vampire Weaknesses table provides ideas for unexpected weaknesses; some of these direct you to replace a trait in its stat block, while others can be added or substituted at your discretion.

All vampires of the same strain should have the same weaknesses, but it's up to the DM to decide what those are—and adventurers would likely need to use Arcana or Religion to accurately identify a vampire and its weaknesses.

Mummies

Most people are familiar with the concept of undead guardians bound to protect tombs or temples, but the people of Karrnath have the most practical experience with mummies. The Crimson Monastery of Atur has been staffed with mummies since before the founding of Galifar, and mummies are the most common form of sentient undead associated with the Blood of Vol.

Oathbound

Mummies are produced by rituals that include embalming and mummification (among many other factors); this leads to their commonly used name. But that's just a cosmetic detail, and not what most necromancers consider to be their defining principle. Most necromancers call these undead "oathbound." Anyone can become oathbound; the process requires a conduit to Mabar, an expert necromancer, a series of rituals including the embalming process, and rare and expensive components. But there's one more essential aspect of creating a mummy: its oaths. These conditions and parameters are integral to creating oathbound. And once created, the mummy *must* obey these oaths, as they're used to bind its essence to its body and prevent it from being dragged to Dolurrh.

This is how you end up with a mummy bound to protect a specific tomb. Even if it's intelligent, the mummy can't choose to leave the tomb and forget about it; that role of "tomb guardian" is what defines it and preserves it. Most mummies are bound by restrictive oaths; for example, many Bloodsail mummies are bound to their ships. The looser these oaths, the

Vampire Weaknesses

d12	Vampire Weakness
1	***Cleansing Flame.*** The vampire is vulnerable to fire. While it can see an open flame that's Small or larger, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks. [replaces Harmed by Running Water]
2	***Compulsive Counting.*** If a creature casts seeds in front of the vampire, the vampire must make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw at the start of each of its turns. Each time it fails this save, it must use its action to count the seeds. On a successful save, it resists the urge, the effect ends, and it loses this weakness for 1 day.
3	***Deathless Binding.*** If a ring of targath is fixed around the vampire's finger, hands, or neck, the vampire becomes paralyzed until the ring is removed. [replaces Stake to the Heart]
4	***Drawn to Decay.*** If the vampire sees one or more creatures take necrotic damage, on the vampire's next turn, it is drawn to the creature it saw take the most necrotic damage. The vampire either must use its movement to end its turn as close as possible to that creature, avoiding obvious hazards, or it must take 20 radiant damage.
5	***Keeper's Greed.*** The vampire must accept any gift offered to it.
6	***Lunar Herding.*** The vampire has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws on any night with more than one full moon. [replaces Harmed by Running Water]
7	***Never Look Back.*** Once the vampire leaves a building, it can't reenter the building for 13 days. [replaces Forbiddance]
8	***Odds and Evens.*** The vampire is vulnerable to piercing damage on each even-numbered day of the month, and immune to piercing damage on each odd-numbered day of the month.
9	***One for the Keeper.*** If the vampire hears a creature speak a list of five connected things, it must either name a sixth connected thing, or have disadvantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws until dawn and gain a level of exhaustion.
10	***Perfect Etiquette.*** When asked a question, the vampire must truthfully answer if its name was spoken as part of that same sentence. This answer can be brief or cryptic. [replaces Forbiddance]
11	***Slithering Shadow.*** The vampire can't assume bat or mist form, but it can become a poisonous snake or a swarm of poisonous snakes. When Misty Escape is activated, the vampire immediately transforms into its swarm form. [modifies Shapechanger and Misty Escape]
12	***Unfaceable.*** If the vampire can see an image of itself at the start of its turn, the vampire becomes frightened of the image for as long as it can see it.

more power and components are required for the ritual. Malevanor, the high priest of Atur, has far fewer restrictions than most oathbound; but he was created by the finest Seeker necromancer of the time, at great cost. Of liches, vampires, and oathbound, the oathbound are the most common form of undead within the Blood of Vol. Their mummies are often bound to temples or villages, but many of the oathbound are never seen. There are hundreds of mummies in Atur, but most dwell in the vaults and temples of the City of Night, tirelessly performing their duties.

Creating Oathbound

The mummy in the *Monster Manual* only reflects one type of oathbound, the classic tomb guardian. Such a creature was typically made into a mummy as a sort of curse, forced by its oaths to battle intruders; it's a physical powerhouse, but it hasn't tried to retain its mortal consciousness, and it certainly wouldn't make a great research assistant.

However, there is great diversity among oathbound; despite all being sustained by the same basic rituals and power, they typically retain their mental ability scores, their proficiencies, and some of their abilities. For example, Malevanor is the high priest of Atur and can perform divine magic. Meanwhile, the **oathbound Seeker** stat block presented here represents a devoted martyr of the Blood of Vol, bound by its oaths to protect and teach a particular community of Seekers.

In creating an oathbound, consider what oaths bind it. What are the restrictions on its actions and choices? Who was it in life, and what key skills has it retained in its undeath? Has it retained its sense of mercy and empathy, or has this been worn away?

Keep in mind that an oathbound can't intentionally violate its oaths. If it's somehow forced to do so, it must do everything in its power to rectify the situation immediately. If it can't, this will weaken the bonds that sustain its existence; within a period of hours or days, the mummy eventually disintegrates. However, there could always be exceptions if it suits the story! A mummy with the strength of will to break its oath might become something else—finding a new way to sustain itself—potentially transforming into something like a death knight or a wight, depending on the power of the spirit and its personal story.

Touch of Mabar

Oathbound aren't driven by the hunger of the vampire, and they don't need to consume to survive. However, they're still sustained by and suffused with the power of Mabar. This is why the touch of the mummy causes flesh to rot and why its gaze causes dread; it's a vessel for Mabar, which embodies the death of all that lives and the end of all hope. While oathbound aren't affected as dramatically as vampires are, the influence of Mabar still erodes their compassion and empathy; consequently, most mummies have an evil alignment.

As is always the case in Eberron, oathbound can have an evil alignment and still be driven to do good—but because of that lack of empathy, they may do good deeds in an evil way. A mummy forgets pain,

Oathbound Seeker

Medium Undead, Typically Lawful Evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +5
Skills History +3, Religion +3
Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Seeker's Aegis. If the oathbound isn't incapacitated at the start of its turn, it regains 1d4 hit points for each friendly creature it can see within 20 feet of it that isn't an Undead or Construct and that doesn't have all its hit points. When the oathbound Seeker regains at least 1 hit point in this way, it has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects until the start of its next turn.

Unusual Nature. The oathbound doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The oathbound makes one Rotting Fist or Mabaran Touch attack, and it can use its Seeker's Word.

Rotting Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic.

Mabaran Touch. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. A ghostly, skeletal hand clings to the target, and the target can't regain hit points until the start of the oathbound's next turn.

Seeker's Word. The oathbound utters a prayer exalting divine sacrifice. Each creature within 20 feet of the oathbound that can hear it is compelled to choose one of the following effects; Constructs and Undead are immune to these effects:

- The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become frightened until the end of the oathbound's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration.
- The target takes necrotic damage equal to half its maximum hit points, which can't be reduced in any way.

A creature that either chooses to take damage or succeeds on its saving throw is immune to the Seeker's Word of all oathbound for the next 24 hours.

Spellcasting. The oathbound Seeker casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):

At will: *guidance*, *mold earth* XGE
1/day each: *bless*, *hold person*, *shield of faith* (as an action), *silence*

and so it doesn't care about causing pain to others; as a result, mummies tend to be crueler than the deathless of Aerenal, who are sustained by positive energy. You can have a good or neutral mummy, but there's a reason they are rare. And even for these, the Aereni point to the mummy's Rotting Touch to support their assertion that the oathbound *do* consume the life force of the world—that even though mummies don't actively feed on others as vampires do, they are still slowly destroying the world merely by existing.

Liches

Lady Illmarrow is older than bones. Some say she came to Khorvaire with the elves, but the way I've heard it, she was a queen of the Forgotten People, the humans who ruled this land before there ever were goblins or orcs. She's forgotten more about magic than the wizards of Arcanix have ever learned. People say she weaves a grand tapestry made from souls—that when she's quiet, it's because she's got all she needs to keep her busy, but when she runs out of thread, it's time to harvest more. It was Lady Illmarrow who set the Talons of Ice ravaging the north during the reign of Marala ir'Wynarn, and she's made

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the boneclaw wyverns that nest in the Icewood. What's that? Why hasn't some bold hero faced this villain? Oh, many have—and many are frozen into the walls of her palace. Haryn Stormblade surely did slay Lady Illmarrow, and brought her crown to his king. But you can't kill a thing that's already dead. It was Illmarrow who created the shadow plague that killed the king, and it was her shadow that reclaimed her crown. Illmarrow can't die, and if she's stirring again, all we can hope is to wait it out.

Common folk generally know little about liches beyond the basic concept of "ancient undead wizard who can't die." Liches are among the rarest of all undead, rivaled only by death knights. With very few exceptions, a necromancer can't make you into a lich: *you* have to perform the ritual yourself, a process requiring both tremendous will and a deep understanding of necromancy and arcane science. All liches are powerful spellcasters because you have to already be a powerful spellcaster to become a lich. Even more so than a vampire, becoming a lich requires an unflinching iron will: not merely mystical knowledge, but an absolute will not to die, defying the pull of Dolurrh with your sheer conviction. The oldest member of the Crimson Covenant, Duran, began as a lich (though he has become a demilich over time). But he can't just make other Seekers into liches; he can teach the rituals, but the aspirant has to be able to perform them.

Though liches must be self-made, there are a few unusual situations that break this rule. The first and best known is the case of Minara Vol and Lady Illmarrow—a situation involving one of the greatest necromancers of the last twenty thousand years. Another exceptional example is that of the Vyrael Sisters—three elves of Farlnen who bound themselves together in a single body, surviving in a form of shared lichdom; you can learn more about these extraordinary sisters in chapter 17.

Seeker Liches, Vampires, and Mummies

Within the Emerald Claw and the broader Blood of Vol, liches are rare and remarkable, due to the extraordinary difficulty of becoming one. Vampires aren't very common, but they are often found as active agents in the field because they have freedom of movement and need to find new prey. Oathbound are the most common sentient undead, and if adventurers encounter an undead priest of the Blood of Vol, it's most likely a mummy; however, it may be bound to its temple or its village (and it may be a lesser oathbound, weaker than the fifth edition mummy stat block).

Gath: A Divine Lich

The default lich in the *Monster Manual* is presented as an arcane spellcaster, but there is certainly a divine path to lichdom. The people of the north know about Lady Illmarrow, but the Brelish tell stories of Gath. In life, Hogar Gath was the high priest of the Sovereign Host, infamous for his love of luxuries. After his death, it was revealed that Gath had also been leading a cult of the Keeper in lower Sharn ... and that he was *still* leading it. Champions of the Silver Flame rallied and destroyed the undead priest. But even after his defeat, thieves who sought to pillage his "mausoleum"—effectively a mansion he'd built in Sharn's City of the Dead—rarely returned. Typically this was attributed to the deadly wards and traps, the finest and most expensive House Kundarak could provide. But stories began to circulate that Gath himself had risen again and still dwelled in the mausoleum ... and so he had.

This pattern continued for centuries. Once, he was revealed to be behind a new criminal organization that was challenging the Boromar Clan. Another time, he was exposed as the force behind a smuggling ring being run out of the Pavilion of the Host itself. Sometimes he's destroyed, sometimes he flees; whatever happens, he always returns eventually.

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The typical lich must be a master of arcane science, and most are consumed by their obsession with eldritch knowledge. Divine liches are rarer and more unique. Gath didn't become a lich by accident. He prepared for it, which is one reason his mausoleum was so richly appointed and heavily secured. And those preparations required him to perform sacrifices that were both horrific and expensive. His love of luxuries is just a surface manifestation of his absolute and relentless greed, which is ultimately what makes him such an effective servant of the Keeper. Where the arcane lich is sustained by will, in many ways Gath is sustained by sheer greed—by the desire to expand his hoard, to have the finest things. In many ways, he's more akin to the stereotypical fantasy dragon than is any dragon of Argonnessen. Gath doesn't care about conquest and has no inherent desire to kill others: but he'll do *anything* to satisfy his greed, and he'll never be satisfied with what he has.

Gath also continues to serve as a Talon of the Keeper, training new priests and serving as an intermediary for those who would bargain with the Sovereign of Death and Decay. Adventurers could be surprised to find that the mysterious patron who funded their expedition now wants them to deliver the treasure they recovered to the City of the Dead. He's absolutely evil, but his schemes are always driven by greed and might not actually pose a threat to the world at large ... and as a bonus, he pays his agents very well.

Gath's Statistics

Gath uses the **lich** stat block, but replaces his spell list with the following spells (or other spells from the cleric spell list):

Cantrips (at will): *guidance*, *thaumaturgy*, *toll the dead* XGE
1st level (4 slots): *bane*, *command*, *detect magic*, *inflict wounds*
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *locate object*, *mirror image*, *silence*
3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *dispel magic*, *spirit guardians*
4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*, *secret chest*
5th level (3 slots): *dominate person*, *scrying*
6th level (1 slot): *harm*, *soul cage* XGE
7th level (1 slot): *fire storm*, *sequester*
8th level (1 slot): *antimagic field*, *earthquake*
9th level (1 slot): *true resurrection*

Death Knights

The Nightwood didn't always stretch as far north as it does today. Back before Galifar, it was the domain of a family long devoted to the Blood of Vol. The rulers, they were champions of the Blood of Vol, and those around 'em didn't think much of that. But the lord and lady, they're unmatched on the battlefield. There comes a time they're fighting a plague of warlocks, foul cultists sworn to the Queen of Shadows. The lady, she cuts her way through them, but the last one speaks with the voice of the Queen and curses her: if she says even one word, her children will die. Now, this victory over the warlocks is a glorious thing, and the lord insists that they have a grand celebration. Warlords come from all about, and in the midst of the feast, the lady sees an assassin drawing a knife by her husband. She's got time to shout a warning, but she puts her children before her lover and holds her tongue, has to watch him die. It's a massacre; the lord and lady are killed, the castle razed, the land itself shunned and soon overrun by the Nightwood.

Not an uncommon story in old Karrnath. Except for the fact that over the next year, each of the scheming warlords was slain—and no one ever saw or heard them die, even those just on the other side of a door. There's them that say that it was the lady, risen to take vengeance, and that she still rules over her ruined castle in the Nightwood. But the curse is still on her, so if she speaks, her children—or their descendants now—will die. So you'd best not harm any Seeker child that you meet; if you do, the Silent Knight will come for you. Nothing will stand in her way, and no one will hear you die.

The rarest of all undead, a death knight blends aspects of ghost and wraith. A death knight is forged when someone of deep devotion and martial skill—typically a paladin—suffers intense tragedy leading to their death. When this happens, the divine power they once channeled can be replaced by the pure power of Mabar. Such a tragedy usually involves the character breaking their own oaths, blending loss with shame. A death knight can't rest, in part because they won't allow themselves to forget their shame. Some find brief solace in taking vengeance on mortal enemies, but largely a death knight spends its time meditating on its pain.

Infamous Death Knights

The Silent Knight, one known death knight, is a member of the Crimson Covenant of the Blood of Vol. She still acts to protect her descendants, but she's also believed to have killed some of them—those who have (in her eyes) brought shame to their house, perhaps by abandoning the Seeker faith, by becoming a warlock, or by forming a romantic attachment to one of the bloodlines that betrayed her. She doesn't speak and can extend an aura of magical silence at will; even in the midst of this aura, she can ignore the verbal component of spells.

Another infamous death knight is Prince Moren of the Lhazaar Principalities. Once a bold swashbuckler and beloved prince, he betrayed his beloved ... and his treachery resulted in the destruction of his principality. Murdered by his own crew, he now sails the Lhazaar Sea in a ship of bones, hunting treacherous captains and forcing them to serve his vessel.

Haeldar Krakensbane is a Tairnadal warrior whose hunger for glory cost him all that he loved. He too lingers as a death knight; as described in chapter 17, he serves as one of the Grim Lords of Farlnen.

Chapter 17: The Grim Lords

The ship is a shadow in the night, its darkwood hull all but invisible against the water. It is the sail that draws the eye. The black silk is adorned with a hundred crimson sigils, each burning with pale light. The sea is calm, but a groaning wind fills the sails. If you make your living on the Lhazaar Sea, you know what that vessel is. If you're lucky, it's a merchant vessel carrying the strange spices and other goods of Farlnen. If not, you'd be wise to make your peace with the Sovereigns. The Bloodsails are known to take prisoners, but they rarely take them alive.

—"Eye on Eberron: The Bloodsail Principality," *Dragon* 410

Thousands of years ago, the Undying Court and the dragons of Argonnessen joined forces to eradicate the line of Vol. All elves who carried the blood of Vol were slain. But many elves without blood ties to the line had supported Vol, and the victors offered these defeated elves a choice: swear allegiance to the Undying Court or be exiled from Aerenal. A large force of these exiles traveled north and laid claim to the island of Farlnen, founding the Bloodsail Principality.

A bleak and sunless land, Farlnen is charged with the energies of Mabar, allowing its people to perform remarkable feats of necromancy. Over centuries, they've created a society where the living earn an undead afterlife through their deeds in life. Despite their historical ties to the line of Vol, the Bloodsails have never embraced the faith of the Blood of Vol. They're a pragmatic people who are willing to accept the certainty of undeath over the uncertain hope of the Divinity Within. However, they respect the

Seekers and worked with Karrnath during the Last War; and ever since Kaius III turned against the Blood of Vol, Karrnathi vessels have become the primary targets for Bloodsail raiders. There are divine spellcasters among the Bloodsails, but their powers are a form of focused channeling that draws power directly from Mabar, rather than being driven by faith in a higher power.

Prince Shaen Tasil is the *living* ruler of Farlnen, but the greatest power on the island is the Grim, a council of mighty undead. Some of the Grim work for the benefit of the Principality, while others focus on their own esoteric interests and arcane research.

Members of the Grim

The members of the Grim are powerful undead. Canon lore includes one infamous member: Lady Illmarrow, the self-proclaimed Queen of the Dead. Few of the Grim leave Farlnen; most make extensive use of the power of Mabar that permeates the island, and they rely on retinues of skeletal and spectral servants. More than this, Farlnen is a safe haven. Many would-be heroes—the Aereni Deathguard, templars of the Silver Flame, paladins of Dol Arrah—would be thrilled to destroy a Grim Lord. While few possess the power to accomplish such a thing, most Grim lords prefer to remain in their estates, protected both by powerful wards and by their peers. As a result, only a few of the Grim are known beyond Farlnen—and even those are obscured by legends and rumors.

Most members of the Grim are vampires, with oathbound mummies as the next most common form; there are only one or two liches aside from Illmarrow and the Lords Vyrael. The following sections discuss some of the most unusual members of the Grim, lords whose tales are known in Lhazaar and beyond.

Lord Varonaen: The Bloody Gardener

Before the elves came, Farlnen was just bare rock and sand. The sun doesn't shine there, and no living thing could prosper in that cursed place. But a land with no sun sounds mighty nice if you're a vampire, like Lord Varonaen! So he steers the elves to Farlnen, and when he gets there, he breaks his ship to splinters and he scatters the splinters across the stony ground. He kills his own sailors and waters the wood with their blood, and they sprout up as darkwood trees and bloodstained roses. All the night-gardens of Farlnen, it was Varonaen who planted their seeds. And if the Bloodsails kill you on the sea? They'll keep your bones to work an oar, but they won't let your flesh go to waste; cargoes of carrion make their way to Farlnen to feed the bloody gardens.

Lord Sylian Varonaen is the oldest member of the Grim. The Varonaen were allies of Vol long before the Mark of Death appeared, and Sylian Varonaen was one of the first vampires created on Aerenal. Where Vol studied ways to imbue humanoid creatures with the energies of Mabar, Sylian Varonaen explored its effects on plants. Varonaen was fascinated by those strains of flora that managed to adapt to Aerenal's Mabaran zones, and he improved on these with his own hybrids; in fact, it was he who refined the strain of darkwood that Aerenal exports to this day.

So it was no accident that Varonaen and his exiles came to Farlnen. The elves knew they needed a powerful Mabaran zone to continue their research, and Varonaen came prepared. The story quoted above is apocryphal, but it holds seeds of truth. Varonaen brought his hybrids with him across the Lhazaar Sea and established the first night gardens. He planted darkwood groves, and in the centuries that followed, he developed entirely new strains of vegetation that could thrive in the unique conditions of Farlnen. The stories exaggerate when they say darkwood is watered with blood, but some of Varonaen's creations do thrive when fertilized with the flesh of the dead. Some of his experiments are just plants, but others could be considered both Plants *and* Undead; Varonaen has created assassin vines that drain the lifeforce of creatures they constrict, and a shrieker that howls with the cry of a banshee.

Personality

Lord Varonaen played a vital role in founding Farlnen. The people rely on his hybrid plants as a source of both food and lumber, and the exotic spices and wines produced from his creations are unique exports sold by Bloodsail merchants. Despite his part in ensuring the survival of his people, Varonaen has never asserted his power over his peers; his plants are his sole obsession, and he has spent the centuries working on his gardens. He has the manner of a mild, friendly scholar—but he feels no compunctions about creating plant life that feeds on the living, nor about sacrificing strangers in this work.

Using Lord Varonaen

There was a time when Lord Varonaen traveled in search of exotic blooms, but on such a journey, he was destroyed by the Deathguard of Aerenal. His vampire form was reduced to ashes, but Varonaen had bound his spirit to his garden, much like a lich's phylactery. He was reborn in Farlnen as a wraith (albeit a unique one with spellcasting abilities; the stat block for **Lord Varonaen** is provided below). While he often remains in this incorporeal form while doing his work, he has crafted a body from darkwood and can animate this vessel when he wishes to interact with the physical world.

Varonaen hasn't left Farlnen since his death, and it may be that he can't travel far from this soul garden. However, adventurers could encounter his creations in Farlnen or beyond, or they might need an exotic elixir that can only be produced from his undead plants. He could even have an interest in consulting with an adventurer renowned as a master alchemist or a remarkable druid.

Lord Varonaen

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 110 (13d8 + 52)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +6, Cha +6
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Elvish, Common
Challenge 10 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Animate Darkwood. Once on his turn (no action required), Lord Varonaen can either transform into his wraith form, or he can touch a darkwood tree or a Medium or larger nonmagical object made of darkwood and transform into his darkwood form.

When he transforms into darkwood form, he animates the darkwood he touched into a rudimentary body. While in that form, his statistics change as follows:

- He loses his Incorporeal Movement trait, flying speed, and immunity to being grappled and restrained.
- His AC increases to 18, his speed becomes 30 feet, his Strength becomes 16 (+3), and he has advantage on Strength and Constitution saving throws.

When he transforms into wraith form, he relinquishes control of the darkwood and appears in an unoccupied space next to the tree or object.

Incorporeal Movement (Wraith Form Only). Lord Varonaen can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. He takes 5 (1d10) force damage if he ends his turn inside an object.

Magic Resistance. Lord Varonaen has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Tree Stride. Once on his turn, Lord Varonaen can use 10 feet of his movement to step magically into one darkwood tree within his reach and emerge from a second darkwood tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger.

Unusual Nature. Lord Varonaen doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. Lord Varonaen makes four Slam attacks, or uses Life Drain and casts a spell.

Slam (Darkwood Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (3d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Life Drain (Wraith Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 40 (8d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Darkwood Dryad. Lord Varonaen targets a Humanoid corpse within 10 feet of him that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and that died violently. He binds the target's spirit to a darkwood tree he can see. The spirit becomes a **dryad**, except that it is Undead rather than Fey, and its Fey Charm action causes a creature to be frightened rather than charmed. The darkwood dryad is under Lord Varonaen's control. Lord Varonaen can have no more than twelve dryads under his control at one time.

Spellcasting. Lord Varonaen casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

1/day each: *aura of vitality*, *dispel magic*, *entangle*, *plant growth*, *grasping vine* (as an action)

Haeldar Krakensbane

You think you've looked death in the eye? Wait until you've stared into the empty sockets in the skull of a dragon turtle, after it's capsized your ship and it's coming right for you. I'm telling you now, you get too close to the Sunless Isle and pirates are the least of your worries. I know you've heard these stories before, but have you ever wondered where the Bloodsails got these bones so they could animate 'em? I can tell you in two words: Haeldar Krakensbane.

That elf was a legend in life, a dragonslayer who fought alongside the rebel elves just for a chance to fight dragons. So he gets himself exiled for his troubles, and sails north with the rest of 'em. His ship runs afoul of a bloody great kraken, which demands tribute from the fleet. The elves, they're rightly terrified, and they all agree to pay its price. But Haeldar, he's not having it. It's his ancestor, see? Never would bend to a beast. So he seizes control of his ship, and no surprise, kraken sinks it and kills everyone aboard—including Haeldar's children! You'd think that would be the end of it, but weeks later, as them elves are camped out on the sunless shore, they see a monster on the horizon. It's the kraken; after it swallowed Haeldar, he refused to die, dug his way up through its heart and out its eye. Now here he is, riding the damn dead thing home.

That beast still patrols the waters of Farlnen today. And Haeldar ... well, he spends much of his time mourning his lost children, but when the mood is upon him, he goes back to sea. He won't force his own on the hunt, not again—so he boards a stranger's vessel, assumes command, and takes it on another monster hunt. If he comes to your ship, hope you're one of the lucky ones, that he takes down his prey with your vessel still intact. Haeldar Krakensbane never misses his mark ... but the ships he sails rarely make it home again.

In life, Haeldar Arrael was a Tairnadal of the Draleus Tairn. He fought alongside the line of Vol not because he believed in their cause, but because it gave him the opportunity to fight dragons. Over the course of the conflict, he fell in love with an elf of the Vyrael line, and following the defeat of the line of Vol, he sailed north in the company of his wife and kin. As the story says, when a mighty leviathan threatened his ship, Haeldar put his dreams of glory ahead of the safety of his family. He lost everything, including his own life—but his hunger for victory was so great that he returned as a death knight in the very belly of the kraken, slaying his enemy and animating its corpse.

Personality

Haeldar's eternal quest for glory is the only thing that distracts him from all-consuming guilt and shame. He's always searching for a greater, grander challenge, something to overshadow his pain. He's the source of many of the great beasts bound in undeath as guardians of Farlnen. Haeldar slays these creatures—serpents, dragon turtles, and his eponymous kraken—personally, and his unique gift animates those he slays; however, he turns control of these sentinels over to living necromancers upon his return to the island. And as the tale says, when he's in the mood for a hunt, Haeldar sets out on board a Bloodsail vessel—but he then boards and seizes control of some other ship, ensuring he doesn't place more elves at risk in his relentless pursuit of challenges at sea.

Using Haeldar Krakensbane

Adventurers on the water could encounter a vessel that's been seized by Haeldar and is in the midst of a hunt—or they could be aboard a vessel when Haeldar commandeers it, and have to decide whether to fight the death knight or to assist him and hope to survive his hunt.

The Ship of Eldaraen

When I was just a boy in the rigging, my captain spots a ship dead in the water near Farlnen. Beautiful elven vessel it is, not a soul aboard. We board the vessel, no sign of the crew, but it's loaded with treasures. The sailors, they take what they can carry; but me, I'm just a boy, and I've heard all too much about Farlnen to see such a thing as luck. After looting what he can, my captain scuttles the ship and we watch it sink as he sails away. Late that night, the lass in the nest calls a ship on the horizon. It's that same vessel, good as new, following us. The captain, he panics, starts prepping Zil fire he'd been saving to burn the cursed ship down. He launches six canisters, and the riggings of the elf ship are all aflame. But then, as sure as I see you now, I see a shadow amid the barrels we had left ... and that's all I see before the explosion. I'm the only one who survived, and whatever loot my captain claimed, it should be spread

Haeldar Krakensbane

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather, shield)
Hit Points 199 (21d8 + 105)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +8, Cha +10
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Elvish, Common
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +6

Freedom of Movement. Haeldar ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can't reduce his speed or cause him to be restrained. He can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

Magic Resistance. Haeldar has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Marshal Undead. Haeldar and friendly Undead creatures within 60 feet of him have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn Undead, provided he isn't incapacitated.

Unusual Nature. Haeldar doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. Haeldar makes three Trident attacks.

Trident. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage, plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

Kraken's Call (1/Day). Haeldar conjures an enthralled Gargantuan kraken in an unoccupied space he can see within 120 feet of him. Each creature within 20 feet of the kraken must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 28 (8d6) lightning damage and 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage, and it is grappled and restrained (escape DC 18). On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't grappled or restrained. The kraken disappears at the end of Haeldar's next turn, releasing all grappled creatures when it does.

Bonus Actions

Leviathan's Bane (3/Day). Haeldar imbues his weapon with his thirst for the hunt. The next time Haeldar hits a creature with a melee weapon attack within the next minute, his weapon tears at a creature's soul, and the attack deals an extra 14 (4d6) psychic damage to the target. Creatures that are swimming or immersed in water have vulnerability to the extra psychic damage from this attack. On a hit, the target must also succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks, and it can't take reactions until the end of its next turn.

Reactions

Parry. Haeldar adds 6 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, Haeldar must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

across the bottom of the ocean. But I tell you this, and I'm telling you true: I remember my captain holding that same golden skull you have in your hand now ... and that ship behind us, it's the same one we sank so long ago.

Many see the days before Galifar as the golden age of piracy. Riedran merchant ships made inviting targets. There was no united Galifar and the dragonmarked houses had only a sliver of the power they wield today. In those days, Bloodsail captain Vyra Eldaraen was the terror of the northern seas, and she plundered the oceans for two centuries before her luck finally ran out. With all the plunder she'd amassed, Eldaraen had certainly earned her right to undeath; she was restored as an oathbound and chose to be bound to her ship. Though other members of the Grim warned against it, she sought to continue her career ... and soon enough, the Deathguard and a brave captain—Bright Lorrister, a distant ancestor of the modern Prince of the Heavenly Fleet—destroyed Eldaraen and sank her ship. But a century later, Lhazaar ships reported another clear sighting of Eldaraen's vessel, good as new. It seemed that somehow, Eldaraen had become something more than a mere oathbound; she was truly bound to the ship itself, and just as a lich's body reforms after it is destroyed, the Ship of Eldaraen will always return ... even if no original part of the ship remains.

Using the Ship of Eldaraen

Stories of the Ship of Eldaraen vary, but it seemingly goes through stages. In some tales, the ship is actively crewed by wights and shadows, with Eldaraen herself manifesting as a wraith among them. In others (like the tale shared above), the ship appears to be empty ... and in some stories, Eldaraen manifests aboard it in a form similar to a demilich. A few facts remain consistent across all tales:

- The ship can't be targeted or perceived by any divination magic. Creatures can't teleport into or out of the ship or use planar travel to enter or leave it ... unless they're traveling to Mabar.
- The ship essentially acts as a mobile manifest zone tied to Mabar. While within 500 feet of the ship, the radius of each light source is halved; saving throws against necromancy spells are made with disadvantage; and Undead have advantage on saving throws against being turned or frightened.
- The ship carries the plunder of centuries, but treasures taken from it often bring ill luck. Sometimes the items themselves are actively cursed. Other treasures cause the victim to be tracked by the ship itself (as in the story above) or specters from its crew, or haunted by nightmares until the loot is flung back into the water. The details vary, but the treasures of Eldaraen always return to her eventually.

The Ship of Eldaraen is included in this article because it's a powerful undead entity tied to the Bloodsail Principality. However, Eldaraen isn't believed to be an active member of the Grim; her ship follows its own path, and it doesn't appear to coordinate with the living ... but it's possible there's more to this than meets the eye. It could be that Eldaraen is in contact with other Lords of the Grim, whether communicating through *sending* spells or even interacting with them in the court of the Bone King of Mabar. Even if this isn't the case, it's possible that should the Bloodsails have need of her, a living Bloodsail elf could track down the ship and recruit Eldaraen to help her people.

The Vyrael Sisters

The Bloodsail elves pursue undeath as a path to eternal life. Some are content to endure the red thirst of the vampire or undertake the vows of the oathbound. Others yearn for the power of the lich—but that power isn't a gift that can be given. It can only be claimed by a being who possesses both tremendous will and arcane knowledge, as discussed in chapter 16. Few individuals possess these traits ... but on Farlnen, there's one example of a *family* claiming power no single member could achieve alone.

Shared Unlife

The Vyrael were one of the largest and most powerful families among the exiled elves that set out for Farlnen. In the early days of the island, three sisters of the Vyrael line rose to prominence, working with Lord Varonaen to establish the night gardens and to lay the foundations of Farlnen. Centuries later, they knew their time was running out. Torae believed she'd mastered the ritual that granted lichdom, but she was certain her two sisters couldn't survive the process ... and she couldn't bear to leave them behind. Working together, they became something entirely new—the first skull lord of Farlnen, three spirits bound together in a single form.

The Sisters are essentially an unusual form of lich, and it's quite possible that they have a phylactery and will return if they are destroyed; however, returning in this way would require the willpower of all three sisters, and if one sister lost her desire to cling to existence, they would all pass on.

The Three Sisters

The Vyrael Sisters serve as one of the more active members of the Grim. However, they have a long-standing feud with Haeldar Krakensbane, whom they blame for the death of their aunt. While they've never engaged in any direct violence against Haeldar, it's possible they'd provide surreptitious aid to adventurers clashing with the Krakensbane.

Each sister has her own interests, and they take turns serving as the primary force of their shared body. Though one of the Sisters always holds dominance, the other two are an active presence at all times. They can all speak and offer opinions, but the active spirit determines the capabilities of the **skull lord** (*Monsters of the Multiverse*); this active spirit can be changed when they finish a long rest.

Torae Vyrael is the most accomplished wizard of the Sisters. She loves to spend her days studying obscure lore or mentoring accomplished Bloodsail necromancers. If an elf player character has Vyrael

blood (knowingly or not) and arcane talent, Torae could reach out to them through the *sending* or *dream* spell and offer to serve as a mentor; she'd make an excellent Undead patron for a warlock. While Torae is in control of the skull lord, feel free to change or expand that stat block's standard spells to reflect her breadth of knowledge; she can also cast a single spell of 6th–8th level, and she has expertise in Arcana.

Solae Vyrael is the most politically active of the Sisters. She advises Prince Shaen Tasil and enjoys hosting salons and galas with Bloodsail captains and other interesting individuals. While foreigners are rarely welcome on the Sunless Isle, particularly intriguing adventurers who visit might receive an invitation to such a salon. If so, they'd best prove entertaining; boring guests rarely survive the evening. Of course, spurning an invitation from Solae is even more dangerous than attending. While she's the dominant spirit, the skull lord has expertise in Insight and Persuasion.

Vyla Vyrael is a scholar and philosopher. Though she studies religions, Vyla herself draws her divine power through Mabar, shaped by her will. Nonetheless, she's fascinated by the concept of religion, and hopes to some day concretely prove the existence of the Sovereigns—though she largely subscribes to the view that if the Sovereigns exist, they are cruel. Should a group of adventurers be seeking the mysteries of the divine, it's possible Vyla may have answers they seek. She also collects divine artifacts, and adventurers could clash with agents she's dispatched to recover a new relic for her collection. When she's in control of the skull lord, she has expertise in History and Religion, and she can replace the stat block's standard spells with any from the cleric spell list.

Aerenal and the Bloodsails

Why doesn't Aerenal destroy the Bloodsails? After all, Mabar consumes light and life. Many scholars believe that anything that draws the energies of Mabar into Eberron is inherently destructive—and in particular, undead animated by the power of Mabar ambiently consume the life force of Eberron itself. In many ways, this is analogous to the threat of global warming in our world. It's a threat that plays out over a very long time with incremental impacts (such as grass withering around a garrison of skeletal warriors). Given this, there are people who are concerned about it, others who are convinced it's nonsense, and meanwhile, the vast majority of people simply don't care because it doesn't affect their daily life.

Deathguard Priorities

The Aereni care deeply about Mabar's threat to Eberron, and they've created the Deathguard to eliminate undead and police the practice of Mabaran necromancy. But Aerenal is an insular nation that takes almost no action in the world beyond its borders. As described in the original *Eberron Campaign Setting*, the Deathguard was "created to battle the corrupted spirits of the realm ..." which is to say, they mainly operate in Aerenal itself.

If you compare Mabaran necromancy to global warming, Aerenal has enacted extremely strict regulations within Aerenal itself ... but they aren't sending soldiers to Detroit to blow up automobile factories, let alone smashing individual gas-guzzling cars in New Jersey. In the armies of Karrnath, the skeletons alone likely outnumber the *entire* population of Farlnen. Yet the Deathguard hasn't somehow brought down Karrnath or destroyed Fort Bones. What they have done is send agents—notably, a highly influential agent with direct access to the king, who has convinced Kaius III to break ties with the Blood of Vol and to limit military necromancy. That's a more typical path for the Deathguard to pursue in the wider world than direct military action.

Farlnen's Mabaran Zone

It's also important to note that Farlnen is in a strong Mabaran manifest zone. Mabaran manifest zones are a part of the world and always have been, offset by the presence of Irian manifest zones. Mabaran necromancy has less impact on the environment when it's practiced in such a manifest zone, because you're already halfway in Mabar. So making skeletons on Farlnen adds less to your "carbon footprint" than making them in Sharn. Many other major centers for necromancy—such as Atur—are also in Mabaran zones. The Aereni don't like any use of Mabaran necromancy, but they're not very concerned about Atur, Odakyr, or Farlnen; in fact, it's possible that necromancers channeling the energies of such a zone may actually *reduce* its overall environmental impact.

Small Potatoes

This helps to explain why the Aereni aren't pursuing the Bloodsails. Destroying individual undead is small potatoes for Aerenal; they aren't trying to hunt down every individual vampire in the world any more than environmental activists in our world blow up individual gas-powered cars. Occasionally, they *do* target what they see as high-value targets—they took down Lord Varonaen a few centuries ago, and they killed Eldaraen (though they worked with a local hero to pull that off). But overall, the Aereni don't mind the Bloodsails existing as long as they remain largely confined to Farlnen.

The Aereni would be far more concerned if the Bloodsails spread the practice of Mabaran necromancy throughout the Principalities—and that's one reason the Bloodsails haven't spread their knowledge or culture beyond the island ... but even if that occurred, as seen in Karrnath, Aerenal would be more likely to send a diplomat than an assassin to deal with the problem.

In short, Deathguard strikes can happen, but they're extremely rare outside of Aerenal—and when they do occur, it's likely the Deathguard will work with some sort of local hero, like Bright Lorrister in Lhazaar. So if the adventurers run afoul of the Grim Lords, it's unlikely the Deathguard will solve their problem for them; the Aereni would be much more likely to try to work *with* capable adventurers and deal with the problem together.

Chapter 18: Karrnathi Undead

The Karrnathi undead are tremendously efficient soldiers. A normal zombie requires some sort of necromancer to sustain and command it, but the sentient Karrnathi undead can integrate with any unit. Fear, hunger, and exhaustion are alien to them. They can see in perfect darkness—an advantage over the warforged, and one that Karrnath often exploited in conflicts with Cyre. One of the few limitations of the undead derives from their utter lack of mercy or compassion. Left on its own, a Karrnathi skeleton will slaughter all opposing forces—soldiers, civilians, even children. A commander must exercise close control if he wants his undead to leave anyone alive.

The Odakyr Rites—the ritual used to create the Karrnathi undead—isn't a cheap form of Raise Dead. The original victim is gone. A Karrnathi skeleton doesn't have the specific memories of the warrior who donated his bones. The military specialty of the undead reflects that of the fallen soldier, so only the bones of a bowman can produce a skeletal archer. However, the precise techniques of the skeleton aren't those of the living soldiers. Rekkenmark doesn't teach the bone dance or the twin scimitar style common to the skeletal swordsmen. So where, then, do these styles come from?

Gyrnar Shult believed that the Karrnathi undead were animated by the martial spirit of Karrnath itself. This is why they can be produced only from the corpses of elite Karrnathi soldiers: an enemy corpse lacks the connection to Karrnath, while a fallen farmer has no bond to war. However, the [current commander of the Corpse Collectors] fears that the undead aren't animated by the soul of Karrnath, but rather by an aspect of Mabar itself—that the combat styles of the undead might be those of the dark angels of Mabar. Over the years, he has felt a certain malevolence in his skeletal creations that he can't explain, not to mention their love of slaughter. He has also considered the possibility that they are touched by the spirits of the Qabalrin ancestors of Erandis Vol. The [commander] hasn't found any proof for these theories, but they haunt his dreams.

Karrnathi undead never show emotion and never speak without cause. A Karrnathi skeleton is content to stand motionless and silent for days if there is no reason to move. A soldier's name is typically a combination of name and number ... and the records of the original identity of the body are hidden in the tomes of the Corpse Collectors.

The distinctive armor of the Karrnathi skeletons is forged for them and fitted to their fleshless bones. Fort Bones operates a small forge for this purpose, though most of this armor is created at the Night Forge of Atur.

—"Eye on Eberron: Fort Bones," *Dungeon* 195

Canon and Kanon

The nation of Karrnath became infamous for its use of undead during the Last War. Initially, the bulk of the undead forces were common mindless skeletons and zombies. But as the war progressed, the science of necromancy continued to evolve. The greatest breakthrough came when the high priest Malevanor and master necromancer Gyrnar Shult developed the Odakyr Rites—techniques that could imbue the skeleton or corpse of an elite Karrnathi warrior with malign intelligence and increased resilience. The Karrnathi undead possess deadly skill and considerable cunning; once given direction, a unit of Karrnathi undead can operate autonomously, adapting to deal with unexpected threats or strategic setbacks.

After the Treaty of Thronehold, most Karrnathi undead were retired, sealed away in vast vaults beneath Atur, or stationed at Fort Bones and Fort Zombie. But a few remain in service, and people have questions about them. What is the intelligence level of Karrnathi undead? Do they have any memories of their past lives? Do they have thoughts and opinions? Would a Karrnathi undead be a viable player character? Do the families of Karrnathi undead get visiting hours to pay their respects to their dead relatives?

As always, the real answer here is "whatever makes a good story." But let's start with the canon presentation and move on from there.

Canon: Unchanging Undead

A Karrnathi skeleton is as intelligent as a typical human and it can speak Common, but it doesn't have a human personality or think like a human does. According to the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, Karrnathi undead are "imbued with malign intelligence," and their alignment is always lawful evil. This is noteworthy because in Eberron, sapient creatures rarely have an "always" alignment; and indeed, the elite living soldiers of Karrnath can be any alignment. So this already tells us that the consciousness of the undead isn't the consciousness of the deceased donor of the corpse. A dictated alignment is typically tied to a creature that embodies an idea, such as a celestial or fiend, or to a creature whose behavior is dictated by a supernatural force, like a lycanthrope.

In addition to their intelligence, Karrnathi undead possess remarkable skills—but the *Eberron Campaign Setting* gave them no way to advance, unlike most stat blocks of that edition. One of the defining features of the warforged is that they can learn new things: a warforged built to be a fighter can become a wizard. By contrast, Karrnathi undead have tactical intelligence, but they can't *evolve*.

Thoughts and Opinions

With all this in mind, let's look back at those questions. Do Karrnathi undead have thoughts and opinions? Well, how would you know? A Karrnathi skeleton obeys the orders of its commander without question. It fights without fear and holds a position even at the cost of its own existence. Karrnathi undead never speak unless spoken to, or unless necessary in pursuit of their duties; if they have thoughts, they don't share them. If questioned, their opinions *appear* to be an absolute commitment to the Karrnathi cause, and the opinions of one are shared by all of them; so they *do* express opinions, but they all have the same opinions.

Going back to the warforged comparison: a warforged might compose a poem, and they're the only one to ever create that poem from their own mind. Meanwhile, a Karrnathi skeleton might *know* a poem—even though no one ever taught it to them—but if it does, then *all* Karrnathi skeletons know that poem. And what about that underlying cruelty? Is a Karrnathi commander truly confident that their obedient undead will always remain so, or do they have to worry that *maybe* the dead are just going along with them? Maybe there's a darker force behind those eyeless sockets, waiting for the right moment to turn its blades on you.

Memories

By canon, Karrnathi undead have no memories of their past lives. While they can only be created from the corpses of elite Karrnathi soldiers, their skills and techniques don't match those of the donor. They are always lawful evil, regardless of the alignment of the donor. In my opinion, the Karrnathi undead don't even know the names of the people who donated their bones. But, with that said, see the next section for other ideas.

Undead Player Characters

With all this in mind: Would a Karrnathi undead be a viable player character? By canon, definitely not. They can't learn new skills or advance. Their true opinions and thoughts are intentionally mysterious. Ultimately,

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the Karrnathi undead are *supposed* to creep you out. They aren't just warforged who happen to be made out of bone. There's a sense of malign intelligence in them ... a touch of *Pet Sematary*, with that lingering fear that you should have let them stay dead.

Kanon: Uncanny Undead

The previous section discusses the canon details on Karrnathi undead, along with a few ideas you can extrapolate from those details. But beyond that, I have a couple "kanon" perspectives on Karrnathi undead.

Necromantic Progress

First, the science of necromancy has continued to evolve—just because things were done a certain way during the Last War doesn't mean that's the only way they're done in 998 YK. So as a DM, you can introduce sentient skeletons or zombies that aren't produced using the Odakyr Rites. Such skeletons could possess more distinct personalities, be capable of learning new skills, and possess memories of their former lives. You could play around with a form of undeath that can preserve mortal soul and memory in a rotting shell. And despite what I said in the previous section about canon Karrnathi undead, this could even work for a player character if that's the story you want to tell.

Disquieting Uncertainty

Even if necromantic advances have created a more advanced form of Karrnathi undead, I personally believe the Karrnathi undead *should* feel creepy ... and I like to play up the idea that even the Seekers don't know exactly what they are dealing with. Mabar is the plane of entropy and loss, the darkness that eventually consumes all light—and Mabar's energies are animating the Karrnathi undead. You can tell yourself that a skeleton is animated by a pure spirit of Karrnathi patriotism. You can insist that there's nothing of your wife left in those bones ... but then one night, as her skeleton patrols the line, you might hear her voice singing a song only the two of you knew. You might wonder if you'd find her again, if you also died on the battlefield—and you might wonder if some piece of her is trapped in those bones, held captive by the cruel spirit and never truly able to rest.

So as with anything in Eberron, do what feels right for the story. But I'm personally always looking for a way to make the undead disturbing. Even if there's a zombie with the perfect memories and personality of your friend, I'm going to point out that there are maggots in their flesh and the occasional falling tooth ... and again, are you sure it's the soul of your friend in there?

Frequently Asked Questions

Beyond the above, here are answers to a few questions I'm frequently asked about Karrnathi undead.

Are undead used for menial labor in Karrnath?

There are a few factors at play when it comes to the use of undead for menial labor. The followers of the Blood of Vol—who prefer the term Seekers—are the ones who practice necromancy and embrace the undead. The Blood of Vol has had a presence in Karrnath for over a thousand years, but it has never been the faith of the majority. During the Last War, Kaius I embraced the Blood of Vol and it gained greater influence; during this time, the undead were incorporated into the Karrnathi army. In more recent years, Kaius III and the Regent Moranna turned against the Blood of Vol. The chivalric orders of the Seekers were disbanded, and Kaius has used the Seekers as a scapegoat—blaming the famines and plagues that crippled Karrnath on the Seekers.

So today, the faith still has a significant presence in Karrnath, but it's neither the majority faith nor in a position of power—and as a result, undead labor has fallen into significant disfavor. Karrnathi traditionalists despise the use of undead, which they see as a stain on Karrnath's proud martial tradition; this is another reason Kaius sealed the bone legions in the vaults below Atur. He doesn't want to throw this weapon away, but he gained political points among the established Karrnathi warlords by reducing the role of undead.

The Seekers, on the other hand, have always used undead for menial tasks. They have no emotional attachment to corpses; a Seeker wants their body to be put to good use after they are gone. So within a Seeker community, you could definitely find zombies working the fields today. But these are traditional mindless zombies, who have to be provided with clear direction. The sentient Karrnathi zombies are a different type of creature—a more recent development, and ill-suited to noncombat tasks. The Odakyr undead are weapons: sentient, yes, but imbued with malign purpose.

Do the families of Karrnathi undead get visiting hours to pay their respects to their dead relatives?

No. First of all, Seekers aren't sentimental about corpses. The bones of a dead relative are no different from a set of clothes or piece of jewelry the deceased wore in life. The basic principle of the Blood of Vol is that what matters is the divine spark (what others might call the soul), and Seekers believe this spark is obliterated in Dolurrh. A Seeker pays respects to the dead by recalling their deeds and following their example. The bones the deceased leave behind are a resource to be used, not a thing to be treasured. In addition, while the identity of the donor is noted when the Odakyr Rites are performed, this information isn't publicly available and the undead warrior doesn't know the name of the donor.

What's the origin of the Odakyr Rites?

The Odakyr Rites are discussed in *Dungeon* 195. The Blood of Vol has always had a strong presence in the agricultural region of Odakyr, which also contains a

powerful manifest zone tied to Mabar. When Kaius I embraced the Last War, Fort Bones was established in Odakyr as a center for necromantic research. Gyrnar Shult and Malevanor (then living) developed the Odakyr Rites after years of research and work. It's noteworthy that these can only be performed in a place with a strong manifest zone to Mabar; in Karrnath, this means Fort Bones or Atur.

As for exactly how the breakthrough was made, it's not defined in canon; for me, the answer would depend on how I planned to use the Karrnathi undead in the story. Did Shult and Malevanor discover some sort of artifact tied to Mabar at the heart of the manifest zone? Did they tap into the power of Katashka the Gatekeeper, or acquire some sort of ancient Qabalrin tome from Erandis Vol? Or did they just legitimately develop a new necromantic technique that no one had mastered before, which is entirely possible? Despite their cruelty, are the Karrnathi undead truly what Shult believed—are they empowered by the patriotic spirits of the fallen, or do they hold a darker secret?

Were Karrnathi undead created for any other branches of the Karrnathi military?

Even more so than warforged, Karrnathi undead aren't robots. They aren't precisely programmed; the *Dungeon* 195 article notes that you can't use the Odakyr Rites to create an undead farmer. The basic principle of the Odakyr Rites is one of sympathy: if you perform these rites on the corpse of an expert archer, you'll get an archer, and if you perform them on an elite melee fighter, you'll get a melee fighter. Beyond that, you can only create soldiers, not farmers or poets. This reinforces the fact that there's something *disturbing* about the Karrnathi undead; you can only use the rites to create killers. But even there, it's not a perfect proficiency match: oddly, the Karrnathi skeletons favor a two-weapon style that isn't a standard technique for Karrnathi infantry. And again, they're incapable of learning entirely new skills.

So if you boarded a Karrnathi galleon with a skeleton crew manning the oars, they wouldn't be skilled sailors, and they'd likely be mundane reanimated skeletons, not sentient Karrnathi undead. However, that same galleon could be carrying a squad of undead marines (who also have the advantage of not needing to breathe).

While undead could make for interesting airship paratroopers, remember that airships are a recent development (they've only been in active use for eight years), and they require Lyrandar pilots. Most air battles mentioned in canon involve aerial cavalry: Thrane wyverns, Aundairian dragonhawks. However, you could certainly equip undead troops with *feather tokens* and drop them into enemy territory; they have darkvision, don't need food or sleep, can operate tirelessly, and are happy to engage in suicide missions.

How would the Karrnathi undead react if they were deployed against each other during a civil war?

No one knows whether Karrnathi undead would wage war against each other. This is one reason the traditionalist warlords hate the use of undead—they don't know where the undead's loyalty truly lies. The undead troops never betrayed Karrnath during the Last War ... but what would happen if Karrns fought Karrns? Would they follow their local commanders? Would they be loyal to the crown? Would they be loyal to who they believe deserves the crown, and if so, does that prove the legitimacy of the candidate they support? Or could it be that once you tell them to spill Karrnathi blood, they might turn on *all* Karrns?

Beyond this, Lady Illmarrow arranged the alliance between the Blood of Vol and the Karrnathi crown. It's entirely possible that Illmarrow has a backdoor—that she could seize control of all Karrnathi undead. Of course, if that's the case, why hasn't she used that power already? It could be that she's waiting for a specific moment. Or it could be that there's something she needs to seize control of the undead—an artifact or eldritch machine—and the adventurers could be the only hope of keeping it from her!

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Chapter 19: Mordain the Fleshweaver

Children in Breland, Aundair, and the Eldeen Reaches are raised on stories of Mordain the Fleshweaver and the monsters he creates. Parents warn that Mordain steals disobedient children and carries them off to his living fortress, leaving perfect simulacra in their place so even their friends won't miss them.

History of Mordain

Mordain was born into House Phiarlan and became one of the most gifted wizards of the Twelve; it's said that the standard House Jorasco *potion of healing* is Mordain's recipe. But his obsession with creating and improving life drew him down dark paths, and he began adapting the techniques of the daelkyr and delving into the secrets of Sul Khatesh. According to one story, he sought to mage-breed a new dragonmarked house, but instead produced a line of aberrations that consumed his own family before they were destroyed.

Whatever the truth of these stories, Mordain was excoriated from House Phiarlan in 797 YK. According to the records of Salyon Syrralan d'Sivis, the Twelve tried to execute Mordain and failed. Salyon's account states that Mordain was bathed in acid, burned at the stake, drowned, and even dismembered, but after each attempt, "he rose again, his vigor unchecked and flesh rebound." The Twelve then petrified him and sent to Dreadhold ... but despite being petrified, he mysteriously escaped before reaching the island prison. Salyon speculated that "no lesser mage could set his will over the flesh of Mordain."

The first confirmed sighting of Blackroot—Mordain's tower—occurred in 873 YK, during the Silver Crusade. A troop of Aundairian templars pursued a few werewolves far to the south of modern Aundair (a region now considered part of Droaam). Weeks later, another patrol encountered a lone survivor from this force, delirious and nearly incoherent. The templar spoke of a tower "with blackened, leathery walls, twisted as the limb of a dragon reaching up to grasp the sun." The soldier couldn't account for his companions, but his own condition was testimony to the horrors he'd seen—his upper torso had been fused to the lower body of what was posthumously confirmed to be a werewolf. His mental state quickly deteriorated and he soon died of self-inflicted wounds.

Today, Mordain is the most powerful wizard living in Khorvaire, and the region surrounding his tower is warded against divination and teleportation. Though paladins of Dol Arrah have attempted to destroy the foul wizard and his works, emissaries of every nation sought Mordain's aid at some point in the Last War; knights and envoys both met with failure, and only a lucky few survived to share their stories. Mordain remains a sinister enigma, a dark legend on the edge of Droaam. Some believe he has an arrangement with the Daughters of Sora Kell, but many believe that even the hags fear Mordain.

Using the Fleshweaver

As the mightiest mortal wizard in Khorvaire, Mordain can be as powerful as you want him to be. His specialty is creating and transforming living creatures, but he can easily have other talents. Notably, you could substitute "Mordain" for "Mordenkainen" in spell names in Eberron; this gives us *Mordain's private sanctum* and *Mordain's magnificent mansion*, suggesting that he has a talent for manipulating extradimensional space. Mordain might have a few extradimensional back doors scattered around the continent, allowing him to drop his experiments wherever best suits your story.

With that said, Mordain isn't simply using the sorts of magic that player characters like wizards and artificers might use. His techniques are adapted from the daelkyr and the overlords, and they involve channeling the energies of Kythri and Xoriat; the **Mordain the Fleshweaver** stat block presented later in this chapter gives an example of the powers he might wield in combat. While Mordain can affect the subjects of his experiments wherever he chooses, most of his magic can only be performed in Blackroot, which is essentially a vast eldritch machine. It's quite possible that through his centuries of work, he has essentially *become* Blackroot—that his physical body is just a shell he creates to interact with people, but that the true Mordain is merged with his tower. This is one way you could limit his impact and add a reason for him to work with adventurers. And while his tower is in a dangerous region, his location is public knowledge, so adventurers know where he can be found.

Mordain or Daelkyr?

How does Mordain's role in a campaign differ from that of the daelkyr? Why use him instead of, say, Dyrrn the Corruptor? There are a few simple answers. The first is that Mordain operates on a smaller scale. He doesn't have cults or armies of minions spread across the continent. Additionally, the daelkyr are mysterious but unquestionably destructive; they'll destroy civilizations if left unchecked. Mordain, on the other hand, has no desire to destroy civilizations; his experiments are on a smaller scale, and collateral damage is generally incidental, not intentional. A final critical factor is that Mordain is an eccentric sociopath, but he's not as completely alien as the daelkyr are. You can have a real conversation with Mordain—you can talk to him about what he's doing with his latest experiment, and he'd be happy to pay you for those remorhaz entrails you discovered on your last adventure. He's infamous and he's deadly, but he's more grounded than the daelkyr, and his schemes are generally more focused.

Introducing Mordain

Mordain pairs unmatched arcane power with an utter disregard for the suffering of others. At the same time, he has no interest in wealth or influence—he's not trying to conquer Khorvaire, and while he's indifferent to the suffering his creations can cause, he's not *trying* to harm others. As DM, you could decide Mordain wants revenge on the dragonmarked houses for driving him away; but by default, he considers the houses to be as pointless and irrelevant as the Five Nations. All that he cares about is his work—creating and perfecting life. With this in mind, there are several ways Mordain can enter a campaign.

Mordain the Villain

Though Eberron is swimming in major conspiracies, Mordain has no grand plans for Khorvaire, which makes him an excellent source of one-shot problems that have to be dealt with but that have no long-term consequences. While he rarely leaves his tower (assuming he even can), he uses *scrying* and teleportation magic to inflict his experiments on targets across Khorvaire. Consider the following options:

Contagion. Mordain might engineer a magical plague and inflict it on an isolated village to see what happens. Can the adventurers find a cure? Perhaps he's experimenting with a new form of lycanthropy: how does it differ from the traditional form?

Predator. Mordain could introduce a dangerous monster into a region as an isolated threat, likely just to see how things play out. If you want to drop a tavern-sized gelatinous cube in the heart of Aundair, blame Mordain.

Infestation. Mordain could also introduce a significant population of monsters to a region—possibly by transforming an entire village into a nest of kruthiks or a band of yeti. Can any victims be restored? If not, can the adventurers find a way to stabilize the situation?

Enigmatic Arrival. Mordain's creations don't have to be monsters. He could transform the inhabitants of a village into tortles, or create a murder of kenku. This can be a simple way to introduce a small population of unusual creatures into a location (possibly creating an origin story for a player character, as mentioned in the next section); no one knows *why* Mordain put a tribe of tabaxi into the King's Forest, but he did.

Ongoing Experiments. Adventurers could stumble upon other bizarre experiments. Dolurrh's Dawn (originally presented in *Dragon* 365) is an isolated village in Droaam where Mordain has recreated legendary characters from history. It's unclear why he's done this, but it's an interesting location for adventurers to find.

Hidden Hand. Mordain could be supplying or supporting a faction the adventurers are fighting. He could be providing symbionts or other magic items, or giving them access to monstrous forces (you kill the leader of the organization, but a week later he's back as a flesh golem!). The main question here is why? How is the group interesting or useful to Mordain?

It's Personal. Mordain might even take a personal interest in the adventurers. Will he turn their friends into monsters, or grant strange powers to their enemies? Is he testing the adventurers, or is there something about them that poses a threat to his experiments? Does he know something about one of the adventurers that they have yet to discover?

Secret Origin

Mordain can serve as an interesting backstory element for an unusual player character. Perhaps a player wants to create a character using an ancestry with no established place in Eberron, such as a loxodon or a Simic hybrid. Simple answer: they were created by Mordain.

The same approach can explain class features: perhaps a sorcerer's arcane powers stem from being magebred by Mordain. A player could use the statistics for a half-orc barbarian, except describe their character as an artificial lifeform created by Mordain, and their "rage" reflects a hulking-out battle mode. A monk could attribute their Unarmored Defense and enhanced abilities to Mordain-crafted mutations. Or a character could have ties to the village of Dolurrh's Dawn; they could be a clone of a famous historical figure, perhaps Karrn the Conqueror or Tira Miron reborn ... or even a clone of a young Mordain the Fleshweaver!

With any of these ideas, there are a few critical questions. Was the character created in an isolated incident, or are they part of a larger experiment (like Dolurrh's Dawn)? Did Mordain release them into the wild, or did they escape captivity? Do they *know* the purpose for which they were created—and are they defying it, or could their adventuring career be part of Mordain's plan?

Mordain the Ally

Mordain has much to offer, from magic items to mysterious boons. He could easily serve as a patron for a warlock or a mysterious mentor for a wizard ... or even an entire group (following the model of the immortal group patron from *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, even if he may not be immortal).

Working with Mordain should never be an entirely comfortable experience. There should always be the sense that he's incredibly dangerous and could do something terrifying at any moment. But again, Mordain is motivated solely by his experiments; as long as those current experiments aren't harming innocents, there's no reason he can't be a useful ally. Here are a few possibilities of what he might he want from adventurers:

Damage Control. Mordain wants the adventurers to clean up his messes. Use the same story seeds from the "Mordain the Villain" section, but in this case, Mordain dispatches the party to minimize collateral damage. He still feels a need to drop an enormous gelatinous cube into Aundair, but once he's learned what he needed, he's happy to have the adventurers deal with it.

Lesser of Two Evils. A Cult of the Dragon Below, the Lords of Dust, the Dreaming Dark, or a similar force might interfere with one of Mordain's experiments. He sends the adventurers to resolve the problem.

Organ Donors. Adventurers encounter lots of rare creatures. Mordain wants them to harvest organs of monsters they defeat, and pays them (in gold or in other ways) for unusual finds.

Searching for Symbionts. Mordain is always interested in relics of the daelkyr, and he could send adventurers into dangerous dungeons in pursuit of symbionts or other daelkyr creations.

Silver Tongues. Mordain could ask the adventurers to mediate a local problem with some of his neighbors in Droaam ... likely as a last resort before resolving the problem himself in a horrifying and deadly fashion.

Facing Mordain

In general, Mordain's role is as creator of monsters and other threats. He's not really intended to serve as a monster himself, as he's a grand instigator who has no desire to be pulled into demeaning physical conflicts. Nonetheless, a story could involve fighting Mordain, and statistics are provided for him here ... but *defeating* Mordain and *killing* him are two very different tasks.

One of Mordain's defining features is that he's impossible to kill. The Twelve took him prisoner, but even with all of the resources at their disposal, they couldn't kill him. Think of it this way: through his work, Mordain has essentially become a living artifact, and is as indestructible as any other artifact—including being immune to the effects of a *sphere of annihilation*! So if the adventurers have to kill Mordain, what can they do that the Twelve couldn't have tried back in the day? Could adventurers gain the power to kill him by dealing with Katashka the Gatekeeper or the Bone King of Mabar? Is there some secret tied to his past that would reveal a weakness—could he be killed by a member of his own bloodline, or by one of his own creations? Like an artifact, there's surely *some* way to destroy Mordain, but learning this technique and executing it would be an epic challenge.

Around Blackroot

Over many generations, Mordain has transformed the woods surrounding Blackroot. The people of Droaam call it the Forest of Flesh, and that's not just a colorful title. Long ago, Mordain created skinweavers—spider-like aberrations that weave webs from the muscles and entrails of their victims. The forest is filled with a bizarre array of flora and fauna, ranging from eerie natural things from other environments (like phosphorescent vegetation usually only found underground) to Mordain's entirely unnatural creations. Adventurers could encounter a troll with the wings and Luring Song of a harpy, or a manticore with the massive head of a medusa—and its deadly abilities. Like the skinweavers, some of these creations have carved out a broad niche within the region, but for the most part, the Forest of Flesh is filled with bizarre and unique encounters.

Mordain's Lair

The tower of Blackroot is Mordain's stronghold and his greatest tool. Blackroot is a disturbing blend of wood, stone, and leathery flesh; rather than build it, Mordain *grew* it. This gruesome structure is unnaturally durable. Its walls are as strong as steel, and it swiftly regenerates damage. It's impossible to teleport through the walls of Blackroot, and divination magic can't penetrate its walls.

Seen from afar, Blackroot is an imposing structure, but it's even larger on the inside; there are several extradimensional spaces within the tower, similar to magnificent mansions. Explorers may pass through a door to what should be a small room and instead find themselves in an immense storeroom or a vast menagerie filled with creatures Mordain has created and abandoned.

It's possible that Mordain has evolved beyond his humanoid form and that he essentially is Blackroot. If this is the case, he has some degree of awareness spread across the tower—though just as most humans don't know exactly what's going on within their bodies at all times, it would take something significant to draw his attention.

Lair Actions

While within Blackroot Tower, Mordain can take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Mordain can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

Curated Copy. Mordain magically creates a body double of another creature he can see, placing the double in any unoccupied space within his lair; he can't have more than one double per creature at a time. A double has the same statistics as that creature does at the moment Mordain creates it, except the double has 1 hit point and can't take actions or reactions on its own. Whenever a creature attacks, casts a spell, makes an opportunity attack, or otherwise acts, it can choose for that action to originate from its space or its double's space, as if the creature were in that space. A creature can move its double up to the double's speed on its turn, regardless of whether that creature also moves on its turn. Once on a creature's turn, if it isn't incapacitated, it can magically teleport into its double's space, swapping places with it. Additionally, Mordain can magically hijack a double's movement by moving a creature's double up to its speed immediately after that creature's turn, and/or by using his reaction any time during a creature's turn to magically teleport that creature into its double's space, swapping their places.

Limitless Self. Mordain magically creates a body double of himself in any unoccupied space within his lair; he can have up to three doubles of himself at a time. These doubles follow the same rules as his other Curated Copy doubles, except he can choose to split his actions between them, and he can't hijack his own double's movement.

Mordain the Fleshweaver

Medium Aberration, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (*mage armor*)
Hit Points 136 (13d8 + 78)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	23 (+6)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +12, Int +12, Wis +8
Skills Arcana +18, Medicine +8, Nature +12, Perception +8
Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities disease
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, Deep Speech, Elvish, Goblin
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +6

Abiding Flesh. Mordain automatically succeeds on death saving throws, and he can't be killed by taking damage.

Fey Ancestry. Mordain has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Fleshweaver's Immortality. Mordain can't be reduced to 0 hit points while he has at least one use of Legendary Resistance remaining.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Mordain fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Master Transmuter. Mordain can magically transmute one nonmagical object, which must be no larger than a 5-foot cube, into another nonmagical object of similar size and mass and of equal or lesser value. He must spend 10 minutes handling the object to transform it.

Mastery of Self. While Mordain is paralyzed, petrified, stunned or unconscious, his speed is reduced to 0 feet, but he is not incapacitated and he can move within his space (for example, he can attack while unconscious, but he can't move to a different space). If Mordain takes cold or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function until the end of his next turn.

Veil of Nondetection. Mordain can't be targeted by any divination magic or perceived through magical scrying sensors.

Actions

Multiattack. Mordain makes one Stinging Tentacle attack and one Unraveling Ray attack.

Stinging Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) slashing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage.

Unraveling Ray. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) necrotic damage and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or become cursed. A cursed creature takes 10 necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Magnificent Experiment (3/Day). Mordain chooses two creatures he can see within 60 feet of him, subjecting them to a horrific magical transmutation experiment. Each target must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one. If at least one of these targets fails its save, both targets are subjected to the effects of Mordain's experiment (even if the other target succeeded on its save); these effects can be reversed only with a *remove curse* spell or similar magic. Mordain chooses one of the following experiments when he uses this action:

Horrific Merger. One target is teleported into the same space as the other, and the creatures merge. The creatures act independently but share a space. Whenever one creature moves, the other is dragged with it. Both creatures have resistance to all damage, and each time one of the creatures takes damage, the other creature takes the same amount of damage.

Exchange of Self. Each target is polymorphed into a form identical to the other target's original appearance. The targets exchange their Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores, their Hit Dice, their hit points, and their maximum hit points.

Sympathetic Discorporation. The targets alternately blink in and out of existence. Mordain chooses one of the targets, which immediately vanishes from its current plane of existence and appears in the Ethereal Plane, as if affected by the *blink* spell. At the end of each target's turn, it must roll a d20. On a roll of 11 or higher, it trades planes with the other target; the target that was on the Ethereal Plane vanishes and appears on the plane the other target was on, and the target that was on another plane vanishes and appears on the Ethereal Plane. When the targets trade planes, each returns to an unoccupied space of its choice that it can see within 10 feet of the space it vanished from. If no unoccupied space is available within that range, it appears in a random unoccupied space nearest to the space it vanished from. These effects are suppressed if both targets are on the Ethereal Plane.

Spellcasting. Mordain casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 20):

At will: *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*
2/day each: *animate objects*, *flesh to stone*, *mage armor*, *polymorph*, *prismatic spray*
1/day each: *true polymorph*, *true seeing*

Legendary Actions

Mordain 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. Mordain regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Rapid Strike. Mordain makes a Stinging Tentacle or Unraveling Ray attack.

Reform Flesh (Costs 2 Actions). Mordain regains 16 (3d10) hit points and gains advantage on Strength, Dexterity and Constitution saving throws until the end of his next turn. Mordain can't use this legendary action while incapacitated.

Fluid Form (Costs 2 Actions). Mordain magically takes the form of another creature until the end of his next turn. The new form can be of any creature with a challenge rating equal to or lower than Mordain's. Mordain retains his own statistics, except that he adopts the size and speeds of his chosen form. In addition, he can choose one action available to that creature. He uses that action immediately as part of this legendary action, and can use it again as an action on his turn for as long as he retains this chosen form.

STYLIANI PAPADAKI

The Hand of Mordain?

The *Hand of Vecna* and *Eye of Vecna* are classic artifacts—the severed hand and eye of a legendary archmage, indestructible and imbued with immense power. Vecna doesn't exist in canon Eberron, but Mordain is a legendary archmage who's known both for being indestructible and for loving anything to do with body horror ... so why not link these artifacts to Mordain? There are a few ways to do this:

- When the Twelve tried to destroy him before, they couldn't kill him, but they did sever a hand and pluck out an eye. These were kept in the vaults of the Twelve ... until they were stolen and released into the world. Does Mordain want them back?
- Mordain removed his own hand and eye and sent them out into the world ... for science!
- When the campaign begins, Mordain has been slain by an epic hero (or a treacherous lieutenant). The Eye and the Hand are all that remain of him. But was Mordain truly slain, or was this all part of his plan?

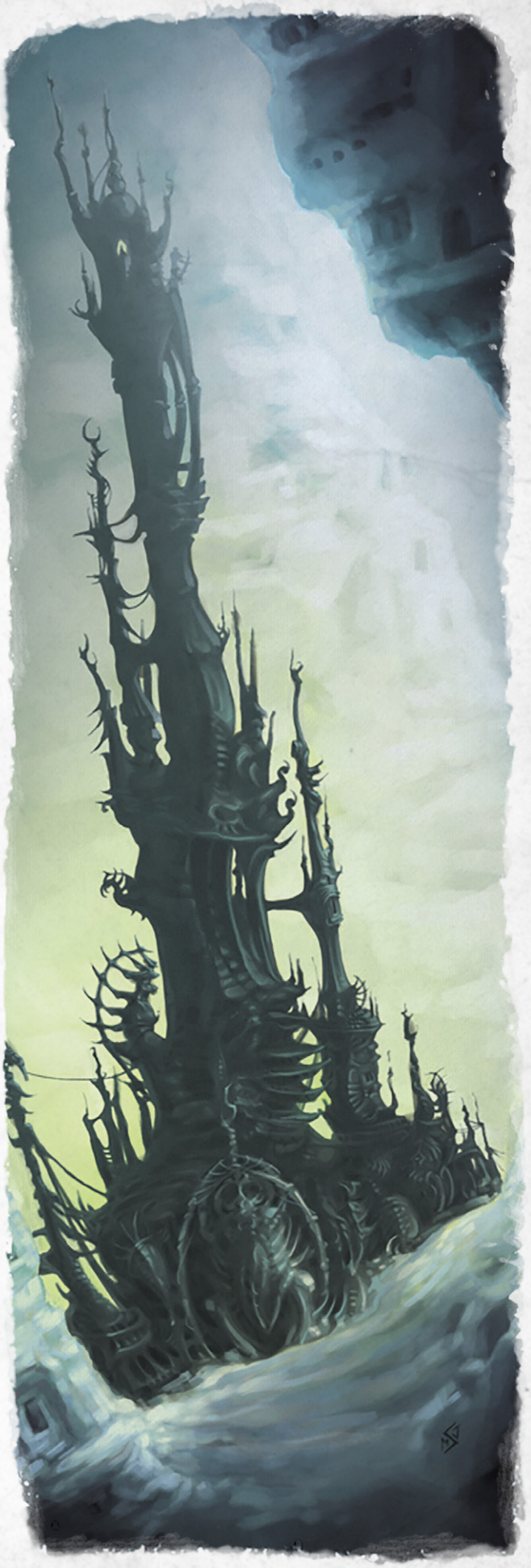
Why So Powerful?

One of the core principles of Eberron is "wide magic, not high magic," and spells beyond 5th level are all but unknown in the Five Nations. So how does Mordain wield this level of power? And perhaps more importantly, why hasn't he had a greater impact on life in the Five Nations? Why don't people just copy what he's doing?

Ultimately, Mordain is a pulp villain. He's not supposed to logically fit into the structure of the world; if he were sane and reasonable and willing to lend his skills to House Vadalis, Khorvaire would be a better place. Instead, he's channeling powers normal artificers and wizards can't understand, and he's using them for dangerous and selfish reasons.

Beyond that, these powers can't be easily duplicated and have come with a terrible cost. Through his experiments, he has become an aberration, and he may be bound to Blackroot and unable to leave it. So even if people in Arcanix could copy what he's doing, they might not want to; anyone who could master his techniques would likely lose their humanity in the process.

Some might wonder why the dragons of Argonnessen haven't dealt with Mordain. Aren't they concerned by such a powerful wizard? In short, no. Argonnessen typically doesn't care about humanoids unless they threaten Argonnessen or the Prophecy, and it seems that Mordain hasn't done either. He attempted (and failed) to make a new dragonmark; if he'd succeeded, they might've taken an interest, just as they took action after the line of Vol successfully created an apex dragonmark. But even in the example of Vol, the trouble only began after the elves and their allies succeeded in creating the mark. The dragons aren't peeking over the shoulder of every wizard, and they don't immediately murder high-level adventurers. Mordain's techniques are impressive, but compared to the epic magics the dragons used to destroy Xen'drik, they're not *that* impressive. He's a big deal in Khorvaire, but he hasn't done anything that makes him a serious threat to Argonnessen.



MIKE SCHLEY

Chapter 20: Avassh, the Twister of Roots

You call her the Twister of Roots, for you cannot see the beauty in her works. Open your mind and your body to the Bloody Cornucopia. Let her plant her seeds in your thoughts and your fertile flesh, and she can show you wonders beyond imagination.

Avassh is the terraformer of the daelkyr. Poisonous blooms unfold at its touch, and fungus spreads in its wake. Dhakaani accounts of the wars against the daelkyr speak of blighted fields where rotting crops rise up to consume the farmers, and jungles where the screaming trees drink goblin blood through barbed roots. The Dhakaani on the western frontier had to burn their dead to ensure the corpses didn't rise again, overflowing with fungal blooms. Those Dhakaani facing Avassh were ordered to be extraordinarily vigilant. Terrifying as Dyrrn's mind flayers may be, when an illithid is slain, the threat is over. Avassh's minions often scatter spores when they are destroyed; unless preventive measures are taken, a single shambling mound could give birth to a new legion. The Gatekeeper druids helped the Dhakaani to contain Avassh's influence, but there weren't enough druids to protect the vast empire; in many regions, fields and forests had to be razed to utterly expunge this alien threat.

Today, Avassh is bound in Khyber, and mercifully, its influence is severely restricted. Avassh is most active in the Towering Wood of the Eldeen Reaches; the Wardens of the Wood watch for its general influence, while the Children of Winter contain its threats in the Gloaming. However, Avassh could have a foothold in some of the other vast untamed jungles of Khorvaire—or adventurers could discover an alien oasis beneath the surface. Beyond this, there are seeds that were scattered across Khorvaire thousands of years ago, still waiting for the right moment (or cult rituals) to bear deadly fruit. Some sages believe the Barrens of western Khorvaire—the area now known as Droaam—was brutally defoliated to counter the influence of Avassh, and if so, there may be many forgotten seeds there waiting to be recovered and cultivated.

Twister of Roots

Avassh doesn't embody mortal fears of nature; rather, it transforms nature to create alien terrors. This transformation appears to be the primary motivation of the daelkyr, and many of Avassh's creations are deadly threats. Blights kill creatures of flesh and corrupt natural vegetation. The compelling scent of Avassh's blooms may be poisonous, or they could carry a more insidious threat—psychic spores that take root as powerful psychoses.

Useful Plants

Avassh's creations are unlike anything that exists in our world; but while certainly unnatural, some of these alien resources can be harnessed to serve the greater good. Avassh doesn't care if its plants help you or harm you. Avassh is reshaping the world in its image, and whether you thrive in this new environment is incidental.

Brightwort is a fairly minor and benevolent example of Avassh's work. This faintly luminescent plant is immensely useful in creating *potions of healing* and *potions of vitality*. Most casual botanists assume it's connected to Irian, like Araam's Crown, another potent medicinal herb. But unlike Araam's Crown, brightwort doesn't grow in Irian manifest zones, and there's nothing natural about the way this herb promotes flesh to knit and blood to clot.

Warpwood is a more remarkable creation. If a warpwood seed is pressed into the stump of a humanoid's severed limb, it takes root; over the course of a year, the seed grows into a fully functional wooden prosthetic, perfectly mirroring the functionality of the original limb. Warpwood trees are only found in the Towering Wood, and no one's managed to get them to grow in other soil. Some people in the Wood distrust warpwood, claiming that a warpwood limb might one day turn against the creature that bears it; but to date, there's never been any confirmed case of this happening.

Disturbing Plants

Other creations of the Twister of Roots range from dangerous to bizarre. The classic mandrake—a plant with a human-shaped root that screams when it's dug up—could definitely be in Avassh's garden. Carnivorous plants, flowers that smell like your most painful memories, angry trees with razor leaves—these are just a few of Avassh's creations (and the Twister of Roots also creates many plant monsters, described in the "Forces of Avassh" section below). Consider these possibilities:

Mourning Roses. These flowers cry in the darkness, a haunting sob designed to lure victims. The thorns on its vines are charged with powerful venom. Those who search for the source of the cries usually fall prey to the venom, and their corpses fertilize the roses. The plant only cries when it's in bloom, and the cries are actually a psychic effect rather than audible sound; the voice *feels* familiar, even though it's impossible to identify.

Bone Orchards. Colorless orchards sprout from humanoid bones. At a glance, they appear to be dead trees, with closely interlaced, leafless boughs—but their bark has the texture of bone. The trees feed on the last vestiges of spirit that linger in the bones that spawned them. You can effectively cast the *speak with dead* spell on any bone tree, as if you'd

dug up the corpse at its roots; strangely, this effect works regardless of whether the tree's corpse has a mouth. Even without the spell, the whispers of the dead can often be heard in a bone orchard. These trees are typically found on ancient Dhakaani battlefields or mass graves, but new orchards can be found in areas with active Avassh cults or in places close to the daelkyr's prison.

Tree of Knowledge. Each of these trees is unique—deciduous in appearance, but often strange in color and texture. One tree of knowledge might appear to be made of glass, while another could bleed if its bark is cut. As its name suggests, a tree of knowledge imparts information: each person who consumes its fruit learns something they know to be absolutely true. Each tree holds a particular piece of knowledge, and sometimes this information is entirely useful; a tree of knowledge could grant understanding of the Goblin language or proficiency with woodcarver's tools. But a tree could also grant absolute understanding of secrets that mortals weren't meant to know—secrets that might drive someone to start a cult devoted to the Twister of Roots, for example. This is often how Avassh cults spread, and NPCs may be powerless to resist such infection. A player character who eats such fruit must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC dependent on the story you want to tell) or become friendly to and charmed by all Avassh cultists; that character can repeat the saving throw each time an Avassh cultist harms them, as well as when they finish a long rest.

Cults and Creatures of Avassh

Avassh's cults typically begin with a seed. Sometimes this is a relic of the Dhakaani conflict that suddenly sprouts—perhaps watered by a particular emotion or simply by contact with humanoids. In other cases, a cultist might be compelled to perform rituals that *create* the seed without truly knowing what they are doing. The form of the cult depends on what seed they have sprouted. Cults that know Avassh as the Bloody Cornucopia (described below) are similar to Dyrrn's Transcendent Flesh cults, yearning for an unnatural transformation. Cults that know Avassh as the Twister of Roots may cultivate deadly gardens. This could be all they do—cultivate a garden of mourning roses without sinister plans—or they could be tending a blood mother (described in "Forces of Avassh"), caring for it until it can unleash a blight.

Bloody Cornucopia

While Avassh creates new forms of plant life, it also explores the line between animal and vegetable, often creating strange hybrids of the two. This process can be reflected by its symbionts (see the "Gifts of Avassh" section), but it often involves an actual transformation rather than the use of a temporary symbiont. Most cultists welcome such transformations, seeing it as ascension to a higher state. Here are a few examples of cult transformations.

Wooden Soldiers

These cultists appear normal, but beneath their skin, their muscles become flexible roots and their organs transform into wood. Wooden soldiers could use the statistics of a **warforged soldier** (*Eberron: Rising from the Last War*) or a **sword wraith warrior** (*Monsters of the Multiverse*); they don't have visible external armor, though they use the stat block's normal AC, and their creature type is both Plant and Aberration.

Rootbound

The cultists become bound to a wooden object—typically a living tree, but it's also possible to be bound to the wooden structure of a building. These cultists can't venture more than a few miles from the object they are bound to. They use the statistics of **dryads** with the following changes:

- Their creature type is both Plant and Aberration.
- They speak Deep Speech and the languages they knew in life.
- They can't cast *druidcraft* or *shillelagh*, but they know the *primal savagery* and *acid splash* cantrips (spitting acid from their mouth).
- Their Fey Charm action doesn't affect Beasts, and they can charm one Humanoid and up to three Plants or Aberrations at a time.

Dolgaunts

While Avassh has servitors with the abilities of dolgaunts, they are quite different from those created by Dyrrn the Corruptor. Avassh's dolgaunts begin with a seed being implanted in the spine of a cultist. As the seed grows, roots spread throughout the cultist's body; two of these pierce the skin, becoming the long tentacles of the dolgaunt. The cultist's eyes turn into dead wood and are eventually pushed out of their sockets by roots. By this point, the original cultist is dead and what's left is a dolgaunt servant. Avassh's **dolgaunts** are both Plant and Aberration.

Myconids

There have been a few cases of cults voluntarily infecting themselves with a consuming fungus, transforming into **myconids**. These cults are often peaceful, interested only in their own fungal communion; however, they may decide to aggressively share this bliss with others. Avassh myconids are discussed further in the next section.

Forces of Avassh

In addition to the transformed cultists described in the previous section, the Twister of Roots has many other

creations that the adventurers could encounter. These forces could be found working with cults, or they could be encountered on their own in regions influenced by Avassh.

Blights and Blood Mothers

Blights are a bioweapon originally unleashed against Dhakaan. Blights kill humanoids and transform the vegetation of their region, spreading poisonous brambles, slimy vines, and other disturbing vegetation.

The Dhakaani called the trees that spawn these blights *khaar'niianu*, "blood mothers." The sphere of influence of a blood mother is based on its size and age. Most ancient blood mothers were destroyed by the Dhakaani. Occasionally a new tree sprouts—a relic of the Dhakaani conflict that never germinated, or the result of cult rituals—but such young trees have a limited range. A new blood mother might destroy Sharn, but it couldn't engulf Breland.

Gas Spores

Avassh created the first gas spores. Some scholars believe that this is a key to understanding the relationship between daelkyr—that the gas spores are in some way a reflection of the relationship between Avassh and Belashyrra—but there is continuing debate as to whether this reflects cooperation or if it's a form of mockery or humor.

Myconids

The only known account of a civilization of myconids comes from Boroman ir'Dayne, who described a subterranean expedition that discovered an ancient Dhakaani vault inhabited by these creatures. Boroman describes the myconids as existing in a state of "ecstatic union" and says they were awaiting the coming of "the Harvester," who had sown them long ago and would one day harvest them to serve a greater purpose. Boroman theorized that these myconids (a term coined by ir'Dayne and not used by the creatures themselves) were the remnants of a Dhakaani kech that had been targeted by Avassh—possibly centuries after the downfall of the empire on the surface. While this is the only account of an entire civilization of myconids, individuals can be encountered in Avassh's cults—as described above—or as unique creatures spawned by the Mourning or created by Mordain.

Shambling Mounds

The shambling mounds of Avassh form around the bones of dead sapient creatures. Most are just rough shapes, but occasionally a shambler more closely resembles its original form; there's at least one case of an Avassh cult leader being restored as a shambling mound and retaining their memories of mortal life. As with treants and other creatures, these are Avassh's shambling mounds; shamblers can also be created by primal forces, but those versions aren't associated with bones.

Shriekers

Little is known about shriekers. Most sages believe they're non-sentient fungi that only react to the presence of light and motion. However, Boroman ir'Dayne reports hearing a "haunting choir of shriekers" that seemed to be singing to each other across great distances; he was unable to make any sense of the song or induce individual shriekers to replicate it or communicate in any way. There have also been a few examples of "shrieking cults"—a seeming variation of Kyrzin's gibbering cults—who use the bodies of their dead to fertilize shriekers. Such cultists claim to be able to hear the voices of their loved ones in the shrieks. It's possible that Avassh is linked to shriekers and can speak through any shrieker—if it ever has any reason to speak to adventurers. If this is true, Boroman's mysterious choir could be the equivalent of Avassh humming to itself ...

Treants

During the Xoriat incursion, Dhakaani fortresses in what's now Aundair were assaulted by living siege engines they called the *Gaa'avassh,* the Children of Avassh. Since then, these creatures have been encountered in the depths of the Gloaming and other jungles and forests touched by Avassh. Most gaa'avassh have the broad appearance of classic treants blended with willow trees; however, their bark has a slick texture, they have nothing resembling a human face or head, and the dangling "willow branches" are actually a mass of prehensile tendrils. Avassh's **treants** replace the stat block's normal Slam attack with the following:

Tendril Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 18). The treant can grapple up to six creatures at a time.

The only language that all Avassh treants know is Deep Speech; ancient gaa'avash also know Goblin, and they may have learned other languages from the creatures around them. They are reclusive creatures that largely dwell in the deepest woods, and they consider animals of all types to be an infestation, seeing no difference between humans and squirrels.

While the above describes the traits of the common gaa'avassh, there are certainly more unusual examples. One Dhakaani account speaks of a massive gaa'avassh that also served as the blood mother of a blight infestation, and an old Aundairian folktale seems to describe a gaa'avassh that falls in love with a parasitical dryad.

Other Creatures

Assassin vines, violet fungus, and similar creatures can all be attributed to Avassh, and cults of the Twister of Roots may cultivate such creatures and even have the ability to control them psychically. Plants with similar statistics can have other origins as well, but any dangerous and unnatural plant *could* be the work of Avassh.

Using the Twister of Roots

Avassh isn't hard to work into a story. If adventurers wander into a deep, untamed region—the Towering Wood, the King's Forest—they could discover that Avassh has influence in the area. Alternatively, they could have to deal with a cult or a war-seed that has sprouted in a town or city and needs to be dealt with. Here are a few other ideas.

Ancient Ruin. The adventurers stumble on an ancient Dhakaani ruin that was destroyed long ago in conflict with Avassh. It could be occupied solely by aggressive plants, or it could have myconids or wooden soldiers based on the original inhabitants. *Five Nations* describes that Yarkuun Draal, a ruined Dhakaani fortress in Breland, is held by "the daelkyr Bhodex'av'gr"; but I'd personally say that Bhodex'av'gr isn't a daelkyr, but rather an ancient, evolved cultist of Avassh. This powerful lieutenant may not be a daelkyr, but it is something very powerful and inhuman.

Lost Garden. The adventurers find the ruins of a cult stronghold wiped out sometime during the golden age of Galifar. Texts in the ruin speak of the gifts of the Garden of Knowledge ... and when the adventurers find it, at least one tree of knowledge remains intact. Will anyone taste its fruit?

Uncanny Resemblance. After clashing with wooden soldiers, one of the characters—likely an artificer—notices a disturbing similarity between the root-like musculature of the fallen soldiers and the body of a warforged. Is House Cannith drawing on Avassh's power to create the warforged, and if so, do they know it? Could Avassh suddenly claim and control the warforged?

Plant. Adventurers discover evidence that Oalian, the Great Druid of the Eldeen Reaches, is a creation of Avassh. Can they determine whether Oalian is a figurative plant—a mole patiently waiting to enact an ancient scheme—or whether the Great Druid is truly as noble as he seems?

Facing Avassh

Like all of the daelkyr, Avassh's appearance is subjective. The mortal mind can't entirely comprehend Avassh, and two viewers will see different details when facing the daelkyr. The general impression, however, is of a feminine humanoid wearing barklike armor. Long, prehensile roots emerge from its flesh and suspend it above the ground; while Avassh has a flight speed, this actually reflects this unnatural suspension. What at first appears to be long hair is a mane of writhing vines, which can lash out and crush its enemies.

More than any other daelkyr, Avassh has a loose relationship with its physical form. Vegetation in the region around Avassh shivers and shudders. Avassh spreads seeds, and at any point it may dissolve its current body and emerge reborn from one of its seed pods. Wherever it goes, plants secrete strange pollens and scents; the world smells wrong, and leaves rustle in an unfelt wind.

Avassh's Lair

Avassh is bound in a prison demiplane in Khyber. The demiplane takes the form of a giant rotting tree, with fungus blooming and vines twisting along the slick surface of the rotting wood. Avassh dwells deep within the heart of this Dying Tree, surrounded by corpse gardens and blight creatures. While Avassh focuses on its work, the roots of the Dying Tree burrow out through Khyber, seeking new soil. Where the roots find purchase, they can forge a temporary connection between the two points, triggering the regional effects described below.

If it suits your story, and the proper rituals are enacted and the energies converge, Avassh can physically manifest at the terminus of a root. Avassh can take lair actions anywhere within the Dying Tree's root structure. Avassh can't travel more than 1,000 feet away from the root; if its body is transported more than 1,000 feet from the root, it immediately decomposes, and Avassh uses its Rebirth legendary action to reappear at the root terminus.

Lair Actions. While in its lair, Avassh can take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Avassh can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; it can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

Infectious Growth. Avassh releases a plume of infectious blight spores. Each creature it can see within its lair must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or become infected with a blight spore.

Arboreal Temptation. Avassh grows a magical tree in an unoccupied space it can see within its lair. Each creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of that tree must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature must use its movement on its turn to end its turn as close as possible to that tree. Each creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the tree (on that turn or subsequent turns) must pluck a leaf or fruit from its boughs, and a creature that does so can't regain hit points until the end of its next turn.

Awaken Minion. Avassh conjures either one **treant** or two **shambling mounds** in unoccupied spaces it can see within its lair. The creatures disappear when they are reduced to 0 hit points or when Avassh uses this lair action again.

Regional Effects. A region touched by the roots of the Dying Tree can be warped in one or more of these ways; if Avassh dies or the roots are destroyed, the effects fade away after 1d10 days:

Aberrant Blooms. Natural plants within 1 mile of the root terminus may develop unusual traits—while they retain their normal appearance, they could become poisonous or psychedelic, or start drawing on a source of sustenance other than sunlight.

Alien Flora. Unnatural plants can appear within 1 mile of the root terminus, as such as those described in this chapter.

Unnatural Growth. Plant growth and decay is unnaturally accelerated within 5 miles of the root terminus.

CAROLINA CESARIO

Avassh

Medium Aberration, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 287 (25d8 + 175)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	21 (+5)	25 (+7)	24 (+7)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Int +14, Wis +13, Cha +13
Skills Arcana +14, Nature +14, Perception +13, Survival +13
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, exhaustion, frightened, petrified, poisoned, prone
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 22 (41,000 XP), or 23 (50,000 XP) in lair
Proficiency Bonus +7

Alien Mind. If a creature deals psychic damage to Avassh or tries to read its thoughts, that creature must succeed on a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. The stunned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Blight Spores. When Avassh uses its Ligneous Claw or Infectious Growth, it has a chance of infecting creatures with a blight disease carried by its corrupted spores. A diseased creature suffers the following cumulative effects for each blight spore infecting it:

- Its hit point maximum is reduced by 10.
- When it makes a saving throw against any of Avassh's effects, it must roll a d4 and subtract the number rolled from the saving throw.

Blight spore disease can be cured by the *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic; when cured, all blight spores currently infecting the creature are destroyed. If blight spores reduce a creature's hit point maximum to 0, it dies, then rises at the start of its next turn as a **dolgaunt** under Avassh's control; this dolgaunt is both a Plant and an Aberration. This transformation can be undone only by a *wish* spell.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Avassh fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Avassh has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Regeneration. Avassh regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn. If Avassh takes radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of Avassh's next turn. Avassh dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Ruinous Seed. At the start of its turn, Avassh grows a Medium seed pod in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet of it. A seed pod has AC 12 and 50 hit points. Creatures within 5 feet of the seed pod when it grows take 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Actions

Multiattack. Avassh makes two Ligneous Claw attacks and two Thrashing Vines attacks.

Ligneous Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6 + 7) slashing damage, and the target is infected with a blight spore.

Thrashing Vines. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) slashing damage, and the target is restrained until the end of its next turn.

Mourning Bloom. Avassh grows a bloom of haunting roses from a point it can see within 120 feet of it, and the roses cry out with the voices of the blood that fertilizes their soil. Each creature in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage and becomes frightened of Avassh. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and is not frightened. A frightened creature must repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, taking 22 (4d10) psychic damage on a failed save, and ending the effect on itself on a successful one.

Rootbinding. Avassh attempts to remake one creature it can see within 30 feet of it into a twisted tree. The target must make a DC 22 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the target narrowly escapes being remade, and instead takes 55 (10d10) necrotic damage. On a failed save, the target's body is twisted into the form of a Large tree, becoming paralyzed and rootbound.

A rootbound creature must make a DC 22 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On a failed save, it is paralyzed until the start of its next turn. On a successful save, it is no longer paralyzed, but has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks, and its speed is reduced to 10 feet. The creature continues making this saving throw at the start of each of its turns until it either succeeds twice or fails twice (not including the initial failure that made that creature rootbound). If the creature succeeds twice, the effect ends and the creature takes 55 (10d10) necrotic damage. If the creature fails twice, the effect ends, the creature dies, and it is turned into an inanimate tree; this transformation can be undone only by a *wish* spell.

Bonus Actions

Teleport. Avassh teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Legendary Actions

Avassh 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. Avassh regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Vine Whip. Avassh makes a Thrashing Vine attack.
Burst Seed Pod. Avassh chooses one seed pod it can see that was created by its Ruinous Seed. That seed pod is destroyed and explodes in a 20-foot-radius cloud of noxious fumes. Creatures within the fumes must make a DC 22 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Creatures are affected even if they hold their breath or don't need to breathe.
Rebirth (Costs 3 Actions). Avassh discards its current body and reemerges from one of its seed pods, destroying the seed pod in the process. Avassh ends all diseases and conditions afflicting it, and if it has fewer than half its maximum hit points, it reemerges with half its maximum hit points (143). Avassh can use this legendary action while incapacitated.

Gifts of Avassh

The Trinkets of Avassh table provides inspiration for trinkets that a character tied to Avassh might carry—or that the adventurers might find along the way.

Trinkets of Avassh

d8	Trinket
1	A sachet of dried flowers; their colors never fade and their scent triggers an intense surge of sorrow.
2	A pressed rose that sings softly at night.
3	A plain wooden bracelet; when blood is spilled on it, strange symbols appear on its surface, then fade after ten minutes.
4	A small wooden disk; one side of it shows the silhouette of a tree with tentacle-like roots, while the other side is blank and has a sharp thorn in the center.
5	A replica of a bird's skull, perfectly formed out of an unfamiliar wood.
6	A dried mushroom with gleaming silver patterns; something interesting might happen if you eat it, but there's only one way to find out ...
7	A mundane dagger carved from unnaturally hard wood, with thorns on the hilt and pommel.
8	A sachet of dried herbs, which can be brewed to create a bitter beverage that prompts especially vivid dreams; it may be that you're dreaming in Xoriat instead of Dal Quor.

Potions

The most common gifts of Avassh are potions—elixirs brewed using the alien properties of Avassh's creations. Cult herbalists are typically driven by unnatural intuition and don't really understand the alchemy they are working. So while Avassh's potions are potent, they may well have side effects ranging from minor hallucinations while the potion is in effect (perhaps you hear strange music whenever you come close to a living plant) to actual physical transformations. These effects could be very minor on a single dose—so an adventurer can use the *potion of giant strength* they obtained from a cultist and only have green skin for a few hours—but repeated doses of the same potion likely come with more serious side effects ... which explains why adventurers won't want to embrace an Avassh cult as a friendly pharmacy.

Symbionts

Symbionts of Avassh are made of wood or other vegetable matter. As suggested in *Exploring Eberron*, any existing magic item could be flavored as a daelkyr symbiont. So a symbiont *cloak of protection* from Avassh might be made of interlocked leaves; it feeds off the blood of its host, which visibly pulses through the veins of the leaves. Avassh cultists may use *hungry weapons* made of wood and studded with thorns, or a *tongueworm* that's a thorn-tipped vine. Non-symbiont tools of Avassh could include enchanted prosthetics or a *dagger of venom* made of an Avassh variant of livewood.

Character Ideas

Avassh cultists aren't all destructive; some wish to pursue their own vegetative communion or evolution and have no interest in letting you in on the action. On the other hand, a character could be a former cultist who's broken free from Avassh's influence but retained the powers they gained in the process. Consider the following ideas ...

Elixir of Knowledge. As a diviner, you could draw your talent for divination from an elixir made from a tree of knowledge. Do you have ongoing access to the tree, or are you worried what'll happen when you run out?

Herbalist of Avassh. As an Alchemist artificer, you could be drawing your magic from the strange herbs of Avassh. Are you a cultist who cultivates your own sacred garden, or are you a scholar who recovered plants grown by an Avassh cult, now experimenting to see what you can do with them?

Wildshape Plants. With your DM's permission, you could play a Circle of the Moon druid who wild shapes into plant forms instead of animal forms; this could include actual Plant stat blocks, as well as Beast stat blocks that you describe as if they're plants. You gained your gifts through communion with Avassh; do you still believe that the Bloody Cornucopia is benevolent, or do you now oppose the cults of the Twister of Roots?

Wooden Soldier. With your DM's permission, you could play a wooden soldier of Avassh using the statistics of a warforged. You can't integrate armor into your body like a normal warforged, but you can wear it like humans do; with or without armor, however, your Integrated Protection trait still gives you +1 AC. Do you enjoy your wooden condition, or are you searching for a way to return to your original form?

DARIA USTIUGOVA

Chapter 21: Riedra

Sarlona was once home to over a dozen distinct kingdoms, but wars devastated the continent. From this chaos, a band of saviors rose up to forge a new world. Guided by celestial spirits and endowed with vast psionic powers, these champions became known as the Inspired. Today, the Inspired have united the broken nations into a single realm: the Empire of Riedra. Outsiders aren't welcome in Riedra, and little is known of the nation. Merchants tell stories of massive monoliths that control the dreams of the people, and of secret police who use psionics to root out dissidents.

—Eberron: Rising from the Last War

The fifth edition *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* focuses on the continent of Khorvaire, and Sarlona in its entirety only gets a few pages of description. This is due in part to Sarlona's strong ties to psionics, which play a smaller role in fifth edition than in previous editions. This chapter delves deeper into Riedra, examining how to use it in fifth edition and describing the cities and provinces of Riedra.

Riedra's Purpose

From the beginning of Eberron's design process, Riedra was always supposed to be mysterious and extraordinary—a unique culture shaped by alien powers from the Region of Dreams. It's a land where people craft tools and towers out of solidified emotions and where the rulers weave dreams for their subjects.

Riedra isn't intended to reflect any nation or culture on Earth. It's home to psychic warriors and soulknives, not to samurai and ninja. Nor is it supposed to evoke the Soviet Union—in Eberron, the cold war is being fought between the Five Nations, not between Khorvaire and Riedra. So, in looking for inspiration, don't look to our world or our history. Instead, look to your imagination; this realm should feel as if it's shaped from dreams and nightmares.

This section discusses a few of the ideas Riedra was designed to bring to the world (and to your campaign).

Psionic Society

The core idea of Khorvaire and the Five Nations is "civilizations where arcane magic has been incorporated as part of society." On the other side of that coin, Riedra's core idea is "a civilization where psionics are the foundation of society." With the rest of Eberron, we wanted to look at the logical consequences of magic existing; with Riedra, we wanted to do the same for psionics.

At the same time, the design team knew that many DMs didn't like psionics in classical fantasy, so it felt appropriate to make Riedra isolated and mysterious. That way, DMs who wanted to delve into psionics could either take their adventurers to Sarlona, or simply introduce more Riedran and Adaran characters. So at its core, our goal was this: "Psionics are a well-established part of D&D that feel out of place when placed directly alongside arcane magic. Let's create a place where psionics *belong*—where they're a key tool of civilization."

So if you do want a deep psionic campaign, Sarlona gives a place to run it. Characters with psionic classes or abilities can be from Sarlona or have learned from a Sarlonan teacher. It provides an opportunity to introduce psionic villains, and it's a source for psionic artifacts.

Fifth edition doesn't have the same extensive psionic rules that third edition did when Eberron was developed. However, recent fifth edition sourcebooks have expanded psionic player options, and I offer more suggestions later in this chapter. If you want to use the psi knight fighter or the soulknife rogue, Sarlona is a perfect home for them.

Humanity's Birthplace

Sarlona and Riedra also serve an important purpose as the birthplace of humanity. We decided from the start that humans weren't native to Khorvaire; while they're the dominant ancestry on Khorvaire, they are colonizers there. So on a fundamental level, humans are on the wrong side of history. But while humanity came from Sarlona, it's no longer the land they left behind—and in Riedra, we have a new nation built on the bones of those ancient realms, with many forgotten secrets waiting to be found.

Since Sarlona holds the hidden bones of the nations that gave birth to humanity, it may also hold many secrets lost in the Sundering. What did Khalesh know about the Silver Flame that the people of Thrane have yet to discover? Did the Pyrineans have ways to invoke the Sovereigns—new divine spells—that never made it to Khorvaire? What wonders and terrors are hidden in the war mazes of Ohr Kaluun?

Alien Reality

The people of Sarlona are just like people anywhere, but their continent has been shaped by vast otherworldly powers. Sarlona lies closer to the planes than any other continent. In addition to its massive manifest zones, it has wild zones—regions where another plane essentially projects into the Material—along with bewildering reality storms.

Beyond the tangible effects of these interplanar phenomena, Riedra is controlled by spirits from another plane—alien entities with nightmarish minds and inhuman goals. The country uses a supernatural science that's all but unknown in Khorvaire, and its culture is built on a foundation of nations that tapped the planes in strange ways. After a thousand years of Galifar, Khorvaire is known to the rest of the world; Riedra is home to thriving civilizations, yet it remains carefully isolated and unknown.

Utopia?

Riedra is a dystopia where tyrants control even the dreams of their subjects ... or is it a utopia without crime, hunger, or doubt? Out of character, *we* know it's an oppressive dictatorship, and yet it's not the enemy of Khorvaire and many nations want its aid. This is another part of its role in Eberron's story: what do you do when your country allies with an oppressive nation? (And in the case of Riedran player characters, what do you do when your country *is* the oppressive nation?)

One of Eberron's fundamental principles is that things aren't supposed to be simple. *We* know the quori have stolen the freedom of the people of Riedra, but the greatest trick of the Dreaming Dark was convincing the people to forge their own chains; the Riedrans don't want your freedom. So we look at Riedra and feel that their leaders *should* be the enemy; the Inspired rule an oppressive dystopia, a vast and alien-ruled empire. But by default, they *aren't* the enemy. How do you deal with a country that's the base of the Dreaming Dark, when the common people of Riedra don't even know the Dreaming Dark exists?

Riedra's dystopian tyranny is more inspired by *1984* or *The Giver* than by any nation in our world's history. If you want to play out an underdogs-against-the-empire campaign, Riedra is better suited to that than any nation in Khorvaire ... whether on the Adaran front, as a band of Doriak commandos, or a group of unchained dreamers hiding in the heart of the empire. Yet Riedra is also a place to explore the question, "what would we give up for security?" Riedra has no crime, no hunger, no doubt. Are we so sure Khorvaire is better, with its greedy houses, warring Wynarns, and vindictive Boromar Clan?

The Unity of Riedra

The benevolent foundation of Riedra's government is known as the Unity, and most of the nation's citizens serve one of its seven branches. The local leaders of each branch of the Unity work together under the authority of the Inspired lord of each bastion city. The organization and leadership of the Unity is separated from the Thousand Eyes and Harmonious Shield (responsible for surveillance and the military, respectively).

Bountiful Horn. Food supply, logistics and agriculture fall under the Bountiful Horn's responsibility. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Horn's farmers, no Riedran citizen goes hungry.

Industrious Forge. True to its name, the Industrious Forge manages the industry of Riedra. Extraction and distribution of raw materials also fall under their purview. Their hard work ensures every citizen is well equipped.

Sturdy Wall. The builders and architects of the Sturdy Wall manage construction and infrastructure across the Unity. Every Riedran under the Wall's leadership is proud of their role in building the wondrous hanbalani altas monoliths.

Healing Hand. Healthcare falls under the responsibility of the Healing Hand, and no loyal citizen is left without. The Unity's skilled healers largely employ nonmagical methods, but powerful psionic healing can be found in the bastion cities.

Sheltering Hearth. The Sheltering Hearth sees to the proper management and maintenance of Riedran communities; as such, they often serve as a liaison between the other branches. Sanitation, waste disposal, and even disaster relief fall under the Hearth's broad influence.

Guiding Path. Proper education and spiritual direction are the Unity's gift to all the people of Riedra. The Path carefully chooses the trade and pairing of every citizen to ensure they can contribute best to their nation.

Iron Gate. Overseeing all foreign affairs, including trade and diplomacy, the Iron Gate ensures that Riedra's border and its people are safe, secure, and untroubled by disruptive outside influences.

Symbols of the Unity of Riedra:
the Bountiful Horn, the Industrious Forge, the Sturdy Wall,
the Healing Hand, the Sheltering Hearth, the Guiding Path, the Iron Gate

MARCO "MA4PS" BERNARDINI

What Fits Your Story?

As expressed earlier, if you have no interest in psionics, you can safely ignore Riedra completely. But if you'd like to introduce it into your campaign, this isn't an all-or-nothing commitment! You can use as much of it as suits your story:

- You can use Riedra in the background, perhaps as a source for psychic characters and tools; it might be the home of a single recurring villain or player character.
- You can emphasize Riedra's role as an enigmatic ally—highlighting its presence in Q'barra or introducing the Inspired ambassador at the Tain Gala. This presents Riedra as a force that is technically *helping* and that the Five Nations want good relationships with, while also invoking its alien nature and dystopian aspects. If the Inspired ambassador offers aid, do the adventurers take it?
- You can select the Dreaming Dark as a major foe in your Khorvaire-based campaign, making Riedra far more important. Player characters will have to navigate international politics as Riedran villains are shielded by diplomatic immunity and embassies.
- You could lead the adventurers to Riedra itself. Perhaps in their fight against the Dreaming Dark, they must work with the Adarans, or perhaps the party needs to find a relic lost in a ruined temple in Khalesh or hidden in a war maze in Ohr Kaluun.
- You could even set your entire campaign in Riedra (or elsewhere in Sarlona), focusing on the struggle of Sarlonan player characters against an all-powerful alien dictatorship that holds the common people in its thrall.

A Riedran Invasion?

Riedra is a massive, tyrannical empire. The Dreaming Dark yearns to control all mortal lives. On the surface, this seems like it's a setup for a vast invasion. And if that's a story you really want to tell in your campaign, your player characters will soon rue the name of Lord Zoratesh, the kalaraq quori who commands Riedra's armies. However, in canon Eberron, invasion isn't a likely scenario.

Saviors, Not Conquerors

Both the Devourer of Dreams (leader of the Dreaming Dark) and Lady Sharadhuna (leader of the Thousand Eyes) believe that open war with Khorvaire would be disastrous. It would provide a common enemy to unite the people of Khorvaire, destabilize Riedra, and risk the ire of the dragons, the Lords of Dust, and other conspiracies currently watching from the shadows ... The Unity of Riedra succeeds because the people believe that the Inspired are saviors, not conquerors.

—*Secrets of Sarlona* (paraphrased)

Lady Sharadhuna believes that the quori don't *need* Khorvaire—that dominating Sarlona is sufficient for their needs. Meanwhile, the Devourer of Dreams does plan to conquer Khorvaire, but not through brute force; he wants the Five Nations to embrace the quori as saviors, just as the Riedrans did. Keep in mind that the quori created Riedra through manipulation; they tricked the old kingdoms of Sarlona into fighting each other, eroded faith in the old religions, played on prejudices and fears ... and then they *created* the Inspired as champions who rose up from among the common people, uniting the people to fix the disasters the quori had carefully engineered. So the people of Riedra believe that the Inspired are *heroes*—legends who guided them through a terrible age of darkness and into a golden age.

The Devourer of Dreams plans to use the same script in Khorvaire ... and he's most likely already doing it. Over the last century, the long-stable kingdom of Galifar collapsed into chaos and civil war. This war was driven by the paranoia of the last king and by the ambitions of the heirs—*exactly* the sorts of emotional states that could be engineered or enhanced by quori manipulation. We've never said conclusively that the Dreaming Dark *did* cause the Last War, because ultimately we want each DM to make that decision themselves. But it certainly fits their style. They don't conquer with invading armies; they conquer by tricking people into tearing their own nations apart. (As a tangent here: if the quori *did* ignite the Last War, they surely *didn't* cause the Mourning. After all, the Mourning brought a sudden and immutable end to the war, leaving the nations afraid to continue their battles until the mystery is solved. So if the Dreaming Dark did cause the war, the Mourning is surely a deep source of frustration for them ... and they're likely trying to solve this mystery themselves!)

Building Their Own Cage

If you want to explore the quori conquest of Khorvaire, there's a crucial second piece of the puzzle. The quori don't need the people of Khorvaire to adopt Riedran customs. The Dreaming Dark wants to create a stable civilization where it controls the dreams of the public, using a system similar to the *hanbalani* monoliths in Riedra. But they don't actually need people to worship the Inspired or to follow the Path of Inspiration! They simply created the Inspired because it fit the situation they'd created—this gave them saviors who rose from *within* to solve the problem. If the quori are using a similar script in Khorvaire, they'll create something local and new—a force the people of Khorvaire will accept as their saviors. Consider a few possibilities ...

The Sovereign Swords. As presented in *Dragon* 412, the Sovereign Swords are an order of selfless heroes guided by the Sovereigns and strengthened by their angels. Or are they? The Swords truly are devout champions who seek to aid those in need. But *are* their powers and visions coming from the Sovereigns? Or are their "angels" actually quori, and their visions carefully scripted by the Dreaming

Dark? The original Inspired were heroes who rose up within the common people, guided and strengthened by celestial powers. The Sovereign Swords could be unwitting tools of the quori, following the same script ... but how can adventurers be sure?

The Dragonmarked Houses. One of the basic themes of Eberron is the balance of power between the old monarchies and the dragonmarked houses. Perhaps the quori are working within one or more houses to drive this—pushing for a future in which the common people accept that the old nations are irrelevant and that the houses are the future—creating a functional dictatorship run not by godlike Inspired, but simply by gold. In such a future, the monolithic dreams could be presented as a *service*: House Cannith and House Sivis working together to provide you with *OneDream*™, the latest in somnambulant entertainment! A House Sivis think tank known as Tasker's Dream is working on the potential of telepathy; could it be a quori front? Remember that the Dreaming Dark doesn't need Khorvaire to resemble Riedra; it just needs the situation to be stable, and it needs people to accept their quori-designed monolithic dreams.

The Once and Future King. The Dreaming Dark could have helped to tear down Galifar in order to rebuild it in a design of the quori's choosing. The Dreaming Dark could choose one of the existing candidates for the throne, working to present them as the true, destined savior who will restore Galifar. Queen Aurala is a possibility since she is known to want to restore Galifar, but an especially interesting option would be Prince Oargev of Cyre—this would allow the Dreaming Dark to create a narrative of how the prince who lost everything is the one destined to save us all. This option is a way to have a *little* bit of a Riedran invasion, since Riedra could lend troops to support Oargev's claim. But again, the goal of the Dreaming Dark would be to convince the common people to support Oargev; they don't want to *conquer*, they want the people to build their own cage. So using dreams and agents, they'd work to convince people that Oargev is blessed, that the Sovereigns are behind him, that he's the one who can sweep away the corruption and terrors of the war and restore a golden age, where even dreams are always happy.

Regardless of which approach you choose, it generally boils down to this: Riedra is a looming, powerful force, but it doesn't want outright war with Khorvaire. Instead, the Dreaming Dark seeks to rebuild from within. It's just a question of who their figureheads and cat's-paws will be.

Psionics in Fifth Edition

Riedra's society is built on a foundation of everyday psionics ... but there's no dedicated psionics system in fifth edition. So how do you run a campaign there? How can you make a Dreaming Dark assassin feel different from a mundane rogue? How do you make psionics feel truly alien?

Psionic Characters and NPCs

Fifth edition has some options for psionic characters, though they're limited in scope. *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* presents several character options that are described as being psionic in nature: the Psi Warrior fighter, Soulknife rogue, and Aberrant Mind sorcerer, along with the Telepathic and Telekinetic feats that any character can acquire. And the Great Old One warlock has always had psychic flavor to its powers, which include telepathy, a thought shield, and the ability to mentally dominate a thrall.

Additionally, this chapter contains a few more options for psionic player characters; namely, the "Psionic Talent Feats" and the "Sentira Lenses" sections. But you don't have to limit yourself to psionic options—it all comes down to how you describe whatever options you choose.

Mechanics versus Flavor

If you separate class mechanics from the default flavor associated with them, you have the tools to create a wide assortment of characters. A barbarian doesn't have to be angry, and a bard doesn't have to be an entertainer. Consider the following ideas, which could inspire either agents of the Dreaming Dark or heroic player characters.

Tactile Telekinetic. This is a human child, perhaps an urchin living in a bad part of Sharn, ignored by the world. Despite their childlike appearance, they display surprising strength because they are channeling telekinetic ability through their body. When forced into battle, they're surrounded by a translucent field of energy—a force field that reduces damage from physical attack and increases the damage of their melee attacks. As long as they are aware of threats, they can try to use their gift to shield them from threats that require a Dexterity save. Now, that's the *story*—but mechanically, this character is a halfling urchin barbarian. The halfling statistics are used to represent "young human"; they're small and quick. Mechanically, the character has a high strength score, but they don't *look* like it; nothing says that a strong character has to have big muscles! Their telekinetic shield is provided by the barbarian's Unarmored Defense, and it's temporarily supercharged when the character enters a rage (which has nothing to do with anger for them). The barbarian's Danger Sense is flavored as being able to deflect threats with their telekinetic shield. The Fast Movement feature? Kinetic enhancement. And so on. The point is that mechanically, Rage provides you with a temporary boost to melee damage, resistance to physical attacks, and advantage on Strength checks. It's up to you what that looks like—whether it's primal fury that allows you to only take half damage from physical attacks, or whether you're generating a telekinetic shield.

Thoughtstealer. This clever agent blends exceptional training with coercive telepathic power. They carry no weapons, preferring to strike their enemies with disorienting psychic blasts. They can use their telepathic gifts to guide the actions of their allies or to disable their enemies. And above all, they excel at beguiling their foes. This is a bard of the College of Lore, who fights with

vicious mockery and describes Bardic Inspiration and Cutting Words as telepathic guidance or interference. *Friends, charm person,* and *suggestion* round out their powers of mental coercion; they could add *sleep* as the power to shut down enemy minds, and *detect thoughts* is another obvious choice. Bardic Inspiration and *vicious mockery* are usually limited by the fact that the victim has to be able to hear the target, but in *my* campaign, if the bard is a kalashtar, I'd allow this to combine with their Mind Link trait; so the caster doesn't have to speak aloud if the target is within range of their Mind Link.

Mindbreaker. Perhaps I want a more aggressive psion. Though they carry no weapons and wear no armor, this Inspired commando can shield themself with a kinetic shield, blast enemies with telekinetic force, and unleash devastating blasts of psychic power. When an enemy strikes them, empathic feedback causes the attacker to share their pain. This is a Fiend pact warlock, flavoring *eldritch blast* as telekinetic force bolts and *mage armor* as a kinetic shield. To add some flavor I've changed some damage types; the "empathic feedback" is *armor of Agathys*, but it deals psychic damage instead of cold damage. Similarly, I'm changing the damage type on all their fire spells—*burning hands, scorching ray, fireball*—to psychic damage and saying that they can only damage living creatures ... so the Mindbreaker can unleash a psychic blast that devastates a crowd (psychic *fireball*) but doesn't burn down the building. (Even if a DM isn't willing to change a spell's damage type, however, you can still describe a spell as dealing psychic pain to its target, even if they mechanically take cold damage.)

Other Ideas. You can apply the above principles to any character, NPC or player character. *Mage armor*, *wall of force*, or *Bigby's hand?* Telekinesis. *Detect thoughts* or *enthrall*? Telepathy. Even *disguise self* could be described as planting a telepathic image in the minds of viewers; to add flavor, a DM could say this spell won't affect someone protected by a *ring of mind shielding* or creatures immune to being charmed. A fighter could describe Second Wind as psychometabolic healing, and Action Surge as momentarily altering their perception of time. A monk can easily present their ki-related abilities as psionic disciplines, and for this reason, we've always presented monks as being more common in Sarlona.

Sometimes it makes sense to change a damage type or a detail of an effect; perhaps a kalashtar quori-hunting paladin deals psionic damage instead of radiant damage with their smite, and Divine Sense and Divine Smite are effective against aberrations instead of undead. On some levels, this is a question of balance; radiant damage is a powerful tool against undead, and if my campaign was going to be all about fighting the Emerald Claw, I wouldn't make that change to a player character. But if DM and player agree, there's nothing wrong with a "paladin" who smites with the power of their mind and lays on hands using a psychometabolic discipline. The *effect* is extra-damage-on-melee-attack and heal-on-touch; the mechanics still work even if the ability doesn't come from a divine power.

Magical and Psionic Interactions

When using the above approach, "psionic" spells are still mechanically treated as magic; for example, psionic effects can be detected with a *detect magic* spell, suppressed by the *antimagic field* spell, and so on. The essential principle is that all forms of supernatural power—divine, arcane, primal, psionic—are different ways of manipulating energy, but that the results are similar enough to overlap.

On the other hand, a DM could change those rules. Perhaps psionic spells can't be countered with *counterspell* or negated with an *antimagic field*. In that case, I'd say the flipside is true too: a kalashtar bard casting *counterspell* could only use it on other "psionic" spells. This approach can emphasize the alien nature of psionics—the diviner can't even sense them!—but can raise balance issues or simply cause confusion in your game.

Your approach will depend on what you want from psionics in your game. If you *want* them to be entirely unique, with nothing in common with other forms of magic, you'll probably want to use a psionics system from a third-party publisher. But if you're looking for unique *flavor*, you can add that directly using official fifth edition rules. So personally, I don't have any problem using the Dreaming Dark in the current system; I just make a few changes to the creatures and characters I use as a base.

Inspired Player Characters?

If one of your players has their heart set on playing an Inspired character, one obvious answer is to have them be a rogue Chosen who's wearing a charm that protects them from being possessed by their quori spirit ... but perhaps they *want* to play an actively possessed Inspired. This isn't as impossible as it sounds. There are factions within the Dreaming Dark; Lady Sharadhuna of the Thousand Eyes believes that the Inspired don't need to conquer Khorvaire and that the Devourer of Dreams is chasing personal ambition, not working for the good of all quori. A player character could easily be a Chosen vessel of Sharadhuna or one of her top lieutenants, sent to Khorvaire to monitor and potentially interfere with the Devourer's schemes. They'd be entirely loyal to Riedra and to their quori spirit, but that doesn't mean they are evil or intend any harm to the people of Khorvaire.

Personally, I'd design this character as a kalashtar warlock—either using the Fiend patron and the Mindbreaker model I suggest above, or the Great Old One patron and more of a telepath/manipulation spell set. The point of the Inspired is that the powerful spirits have multiple Chosen hosts, intentionally spread around. So the character's patron might be Sharadhuna, but she very rarely possesses the character except to give them direction; she's got far more important things to take care of in Riedra. As with any warlock patron, they teach the character to use their supernatural abilities and guide them. Meanwhile, the DM would reserve the right to have the character be fully possessed (temporarily gaining a boost in power) if it serves the needs of the story, but the character can't trigger this—or resist it.

Psionic Feats

As a remarkable player character from Sarlona, you might have developed innate psionic gifts. The Telepathic and Telekinetic feats from *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* provide a couple options for psionic player characters. Additionally, this section presents new feats that are available to characters with psionic talents.

Psionic Egoist

Your innate psionic talents improve your mastery of your own body, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Whenever you gain temporary hit points, you gain a number of additional temporary hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.
- You learn the *enhance ability* spell, which you can cast without a spell slot or components. Once you cast the spell in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest. You can also cast this spell using spell slots you have of the appropriate level. This spell's spellcasting ability is the ability increased by this feat.

Psionic Nomad

You learn to fold and manipulate space with your mind, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- As a bonus action, you cause yourself to float slightly, skating 1 inch off the ground. Until the end of your next turn, movement in difficult terrain doesn't cost extra.
- You learn the *misty step* spell, which you can cast without a spell slot or components. Once you cast the spell in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest. You can also cast this spell using spell slots you have of the appropriate level. This spell's spellcasting ability is the ability increased by this feat.

Psionic Seer

You awaken your mind to see beyond space and time, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Your psionic senses grant you a vague impression of a space you can't see. By touching a solid barrier that's no more than 1 foot thick and concentrating for 1 minute (as if concentrating on a spell), you learn whether at least one living creature is within 30 feet of you on the other side of the barrier, and you learn the approximate size and rough shape of the space, to a maximum of 30 feet on each side. If any side is greater than 30 feet, you don't learn that side's measurement, and instead simply learn if it is an enclosed space (such as a room or cavern) or an open space (such as a courtyard or alley). Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.
- You learn the *augury* spell, which you can cast without a spell slot or components. Once you cast the spell in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest. You can also cast this spell as a ritual, or by using spell slots you have of the appropriate level. This spell's spellcasting ability is the ability increased by this feat.

Psionic Shaper

You've learned to wield your psionic power to shape intangible ideas into physical objects, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- As an action, you conjure a nonmagical weapon, tool, or similar object in your hand. The item must be worth no more than 25 gp, weigh no more than 10 pounds, be no more than 5 feet along its largest dimension, and be of a form and material you have seen and are familiar with. The item disappears after 10 minutes or when you conjure another item with this ability. If a creature uses its action to examine the object, the creature can recognize it's a conjured simulacrum with a successful Intelligence (Investigation) check against your spell save DC; this save's spellcasting ability is the ability increased by this feat.
- You learn the *bestial spirit* [TCE] spell, which you can cast without a spell slot or components. Once you cast the spell in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest. Whenever you cast this spell, the summoned spirit is a Construct instead of a Beast. You can also cast this spell using spell slots you have of the appropriate level. This spell's spellcasting ability is the ability increased by this feat.

Everyday Psionics in Riedra

If we're primarily using reflavored spell effects to represent psionics, that raises a question: how is the psionic society of Riedra any different from the wide magic society of the Five Nations? And wasn't that the whole point of Riedra—to be built on a different foundation?

High Psionic, Not Wide Magic

Unlike Khorvaire, the economy and society of Riedra isn't based on the widespread presence of low-level casters. Sarlona doesn't rely on the psionic equivalent of magewrights. Psionic training and power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of extremely powerful people—the Inspired.

When talking about the Five Nations, we say it's "wide magic" instead of "high magic"; this is because Khorvaire's story is about a vast number of people employing low-level magic, while high-level spellcasters are very rare. Riedra is the opposite. It's "high psionic"—a nation where a privileged corps of extremely powerful immortals have used their powers to create the infrastructure. Under third edition rules, there are 20th-level psions among the Inspired; by comparison, Merrix d'Cannith is a mere 12th-level character.

Because of this, depicting Riedra in your game requires less wondering about "what effects are

used on a daily basis? What psionic powers might a local merchant use?" and more "what massive wondrous systems have been put in place by the metaconcert of the Inspired?" In the Five Nations, most dragonmarked tools require a dragonmarked heir to operate them. By contrast, Riedra's infrastructure systems are powered by the psychic energy gathered by the monoliths; the Inspired don't need the common people to do anything. So rather than widespread low-level casters, Riedra relies on the small corps of extremely powerful individuals creating self-sustaining systems.

Psionic Infrastructure

Since Riedra's infrastructure isn't dependent on widespread low-level magic (or psionics), the infrastructure systems described in *Secrets of Sarlona* can be used as described. Even if we don't have a perfect psionics system underlying them, most of their effects are *story* effects as opposed to magewrights actively casting spells. Let's take a quick look at the psionic infrastructure in place in Riedra.

Hanbalani Altas

Riedra's most iconic visual element is the massive ovoid monoliths spread across the landscape. These *hanbalani altas* draw on the thoughts and emotions of the surrounding populace and convert them into psychic energy, which is used to power most of the effects described below. The monoliths also serve as planar anchors, slowly helping to bring Dal Quor back into alignment with the Material Plane. Where most services in Khorvaire are provided through individual dragonmarked enclaves and different dragonmarked focuses, the *hanbalani* represent a chokepoint for the Inspired; disabling a *hanbalan* is a way to essentially "cut power" to an entire region. This ties back to the basic point that the Inspired have great power in their *systems*, but that power isn't spread throughout the populace.

Nondetection

Each *hanbalan* is the center of a massive *nondetection* effect that prevents outsiders from scrying on Riedra. Once people are within the field, scrying and divination work normally, and people within the field can scry on those beyond it. But this field prevents diviners in Khorvaire from spying on the Inspired.

Dreamshaping

The quori believe that by stabilizing the dreams of mortals, they can stabilize Dal Quor itself, preventing the prophesied turning of the age that will end il-Lashtavar and reshape all quori. One of the most important functions of the monoliths is to broadcast the dream programming that's shared by all the people of Riedra. *Secrets of Sarlona* describes that "the typical Riedran dream is soothing and vague, blending images to project the wonder of Riedra, the joys of being part of a greater whole, and the celestial benevolence of the Inspired. Every so often, these soothing visions are interspersed with flashes of the dark horrors that lurk outside the borders of Riedra." These dreams can be fine-tuned, targeting a region or village with a specific village, but the goal is to have a single dream whenever possible.

The Voice of Riedra

Just as the *hanbalani* broadcast dreams, they allow the Inspired to broadcast telepathic messages over a wide area. Through the network, a message can be broadcast across the entire Unity. However, messages are usually tailored to a specific region or even a particular village. The Voice provides news, instructions, and encouragement throughout the day. It allows the Inspired to mobilize a region against a problem—for example, sharing a description of a dangerous group of rogue adventurers. It also provides the sense that the Inspired are always watching, even though the Voice is just an outward projection.

Teleportation

Swift transit is an important area in which Riedra has a significant advantage over Khorvaire. Riedra's network of massive teleportation circles connect points in space; these operate very differently than the teleportation circle network House Orien is developing in Khorvaire. Riedran psionic circles connect two specific gates. The circle in the fortress of Kintam Lar connects to the city of Durat Tal *and that's all*; it can't be adjusted to teleport to Dar Jin. While that's inherently more limited than the typical *teleportation circle*, it has an enormous advantage because it's always on. As long as the portal can draw power from the *hanbalani*, it remains active, allowing the Inspired to move entire armies across the continent, or to transport vast quantities of food and supplies.

Durat Tal is the central hub for this network—so in moving that army, it marches through the gate at Kintam Lar, arrives in Durat Tal, then enters another gate to, say, reinforce Kintam Keera in Borunan. The kintam fortresses and bastion cities are thus connected by reliable teleportation networks, and caravans deliver goods or troops from these hubs to surrounding villages. By contrast, House Orien is developing a system that works using the *teleportation circle* spell. This allows one Orien circle to connect to any other Orien circle ... but an heir must have the ability to cast the spell to open the circle, and it only remains open for *six seconds*. So currently the Orien system is a novelty—a way for wealthy clients to move swiftly, but not a system that can be used to move armies or replace the lightning rail as a means of transporting goods.

It's important to note that all Riedran gates are heavily guarded and this service isn't available to the general public; Riedrans aren't supposed to travel. But this ability to swiftly move forces across the length of Riedra is one of the most powerful tools of the Inspired.

Light and Heat

In Khorvaire, light is provided by individually enchanted *everbright lanterns*. In Riedra, the energy of the *hanbalani* flows into specially treated crysteel (a substance

with properties of both crystal and metal) and causes it to glow. In villages, light comes from mounted crystal globes, while in larger communities, the buildings themselves shed light; seen from afar, a bastion city is a stunning vision of glowing domes and spires. This same system can provide climate control, heating buildings in the chill north or cooling them in the tropical regions of the south. As such, fire is rarely seen in a Riedran community; light and heat are gifts of the Inspired.

Casual Telepathy

When presenting the alien flavor of Riedra's everyday psionics, highlight the casual, institutional use of telepathy. Street signs don't bother with names (and many Riedrans are illiterate); instead, a subtle telepathic signal means that you always *know* where you are in a Riedran city, if you stop to think about it. Riedran monuments project feelings or images; in studying a statue of a hero, you may *feel* a swell of pride at their achievements, and when you visit a memorial, you may *remember* the tragedy that it commemorates as if you were there. All of this is perfectly normal to a Riedran, but it can feel intrusive or unsettling to people from Khorvaire.

Other Systems

The above are systems that are immediately obvious, even to outsiders. Other systems are more subtle; the Thousand Eyes has a network of remote viewing (psionic scrying) that dwarfs the capabilities of even House Phiarlan or the Trust. The Inspired also have an interesting advantage in terms of communication—any quori can leave the vessel they're possessing and return to Dal Quor at any time. There are Inspired whose sole role is to deliver messages; they have host Chosen in every major city and fortress, and can move between them to get news where it needs to go within seconds.

So in comparing Riedra to the Five Nations, the Inspired have capabilities that far outstrip the nobles of Khorvaire. They have a system of swift communication, a vast network of observation, and the ability to transport forces across the continent in a brief time. But the common people don't have access to any of these services, and daily life is more limited than life in the Five Nations. There's no casual equivalent to the widespread magewrights and wandslingers of Khorvaire. While there are humans trained in psionics or magic, they're devoted to very specific roles—notably the Edgewalkers, who protect the people from supernatural threats. The people benefit from crystal illumination, the guiding Voice, the unifying dreams. But they are dependent on the Inspired for these services ... and if a *hanbalan* is deactivated, these services are lost.

Riedran Tools

While Riedrans make use of wood, metal, leather, and other materials commonly found in Khorvaire, they also use a few materials that are less common. Crystal is a useful medium for psionic energies; as noted in the "Psionics Infrastructure" section, crystal spheres provide illumination in most Riedran villages. Crysteel is a substance that has the appearance of crystal, but the durability and flexibility of metal; it is an excellent channel for psionic power and is used both to make buildings, tools, and weapons. Sentira, a substance with the appearance of polished shell, is actually a form of ectoplasm, created from pure, solidified emotions. Sentira is a critical part of Riedran tools, as it is an excellent channel for psionic effects tied to its associated emotion; the "Psionic Weapons" section presents new psionic weapons that use this remarkable substance.

Creating Psionic Tools

Riedra is the logical source for psionic tools. But even if you aren't using a comprehensive psionics system, you can take a similar approach to what I've done with character abilities above. This allows you to create things that *feel* like psionic tools but that use the rules for traditional magic items ... perhaps with a twist or two. Any magical effect that can be easily identified as telepathy, telekinesis, or teleportation can be described as psionic tools; the Psionic Tools table provides inspiration for such items. For example, it makes sense for a Dreaming Dark spy to have a *cape of the mountebank*, a *ring of mind shielding*, and perhaps a *sword of life stealing* that deals psychic damage instead of necrotic damage.

Psionic Tools

d6	Psionic Tool
1	A crysteel *flame tongue* sword that inflicts psychic damage instead of fire damage; it channels the rage of the bearer and directs it at the target.
2	A crystal that serves as a *wand of fireballs*; it deals psychic damage instead of fire damage and deals no damage to targets that aren't living creatures.
3	A shard of crystal that serves as the psionic equivalent of a *spell scroll*, holding a single charge of a psionic effect.
4	A psionic tattoo that can be transferred to a willing creature by touch, and triggered as a bonus action; it duplicates the effects of a potion, and vanishes when its power is used.
5	A crystal *figurine of wondrous power*. When activated, the statue doesn't grow or animate; instead, it projects an ectoplasmic construct of the associated creature around the crystal core.
6	A pair of crystal bracelets that generate telekinetic force, granting the effects of *wings of flying* without becoming actual wings.

To add more flavor to your "psionic magic items," keep in mind that many psionic items can only be attuned or activated by people with some degree of psionic talent. Depending on how your game implements psionics, this could be a negligible issue; on the other hand, agents of the Dreaming Dark might wield powerful tools that can't be immediately used by non-psionic adventurers (even if they can surely find people in House Cannith or Sivis who'll be happy to pay for them!).

Riedran Aesthetics

Most Riedran structures are built from stone, sentira, and crysteel, adding to the land's alien aesthetic. Structures are often shaped through metacreative techniques, rather than using mundane tools and physical labor. Spheres are more common than sharp angles, and sentira tools have the look of horn or shell—more grown than built.

Psionic Weapons

By taking advantage of the unique properties of psiactive materials such as sentira and crysteel, Riedran artificers are able to produce unique forms of weaponry unknown to the people of Khorvaire. This section presents a few new items made of the shell-like material known as sentira; you can learn more about how sentira is produced in the "Factories" section later in this chapter.

Sentira Lenses

A common psionic armament found among the ranks of Riedra's Harmonious Shield is the sentira lens, a hand-held ranged weapon that can focus a wielder's psionic potential to fire a harmful bolt of telepathic energy.

Unlike a wand or other arcane implement, a sentira lens requires very little training to use effectively; even a person with no other psionic ability can activate this weapon. The Harmonious Shield considers this an important benefit, allowing their loyal soldiers to access psionic power while eliminating the usual dangers of cultivating innate psychic power in an individual. Since their development in Riedra, sentira lenses have gradually found their way into the hands of Adaran kalashtar, who are busily trying to replicate the metacreative powers necessary to recreate them.

The Sentira Lenses table presents three variants of this ranged weapon, along with its cost, damage, weight, and special properties. The psiactive weapon property is described below. Additionally, the "Sentira Shards" section presents psionic shards that can augment the powers of any sentira lens weapon.

Sentira Lenses

Weapon	Type	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Sentira lens, light	Simple Ranged	50 gp	1d6 psychic	5 lb.	Psiactive (range 30/120), two-handed
Sentira lens, hand	Martial Ranged	150 gp	1d4 psychic	3 lb.	Psiactive (range 30/120), light
Sentira lens, heavy	Martial Ranged	100 gp	1d8 psychic	18 lb.	Psiactive (range 30/120), heavy, two-handed

Weapon Property: Psiactive

A psiactive ranged weapon draws its power from your innate psionic potential, whether or not you're trained to use it. When attacking with a psiactive weapon, you use your choice of your Intelligence or Charisma modifier for the attack and damage rolls.

Sentira Weapons: Heavy, Light, and Hand

You can fire psiactive weapons a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus. After that, your psionic potential is temporarily expended and you can't fire another psiactive weapon until you regain your psionic focus by using an action or a bonus action (your choice). Your psionic focus is shared between all psiactive weapons; whenever you make an attack with any psiactive weapon, you expend one of your uses.

As psiactive weapons channel your own latent energy, they aren't considered magic weapons and they can't be sensed with the *detect magic* spell or similar magic. However, they don't function in an *antimagic field*.

Sentira Shards

A sentira lens typically delivers a blast of telepathic power that simply causes headaches before death. However, with more care during creation, Riedran psionic artificers have created *sentira shards* with much more focused emotional resonance. When fitted to a sentira lens, these shards can imbue a shot from a sentira lens with the emotion embedded in the ectoplasm during its creation.

Though sentira lenses aren't considered magical, the *sentira shards* presented below follow the same rules as magic items. When one of these is affixed to a sentira lens, the entire weapon counts as magical for the purpose of imbuing it with an artificer infusion.

Sentira Shard: Anxiety

Wondrous Item, Common

For this shard's properties to work, it must be attached to a sentira lens weapon. You can attach it or remove it from a sentira lens with 10 minutes of work. A sentira lens can only have one *sentira shard* attached at a time.

Follow the Path
Matthew Johnson

When you hit a creature with an attack using this shard's sentira lens, you can instill vague and undirected dread in the target. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be anxious until the end of its next turn. While anxious, the target can't move more than 5 feet on its turn, and it can't attack any individual creature more than once. Once used, this shard can't be used again until the next dawn.

Sentira Shard: Disgust

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

For this shard's properties to work, it must be attached to a sentira lens weapon. You can attach it or remove it from a sentira lens with 10 minutes of work. A sentira lens can only have one *sentira shard* attached at a time.

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this shard's sentira lens. Additionally, this shard has 3 charges, and it regains all expended charges daily at dawn. When you hit a creature with an attack using this shard's sentira lens, you can expend 1 charge to flood the target's mind with revulsion. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become vulnerable to poison damage and have disadvantage on saving throws against the poisoned condition for 1 minute.

Sentira Shard: Fear

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

For this shard's properties to work, it must be attached to a sentira lens weapon. You can attach it or remove it from a sentira lens with 10 minutes of work. A sentira lens can only have one *sentira shard* attached at a time.

You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this shard's sentira lens. Additionally, this shard has 3 charges, and it regains all expended charges daily at dawn. When you hit a creature with an attack using this shard's sentira lens, you can expend 1 charge to focus fear on the target. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of you until the end of its next turn.

Sentira Shard: Misery

Wondrous Item, Rare

For this shard's properties to work, it must be attached to a sentira lens weapon. You can attach it or remove it from a sentira lens with 10 minutes of work. A sentira lens can only have one *sentira shard* attached at a time.

You have a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this shard's sentira lens. Additionally, this shard has 3 charges, and it regains all expended charges daily at dawn. When you hit a creature with an attack using this shard's sentira lens, you can expend 1 charge to drench the target in misery. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks and saving throws until the end of its next turn.

Sentira Shard: Tranquility

Wondrous Item, Common

For this shard's properties to work, it must be attached to a sentira lens weapon. You can attach it or remove it from a sentira lens with 10 minutes of work. A sentira lens can only have one *sentira shard* attached at a time.

When you hit a creature with an attack using this shard's sentira lens, you can overcome the target with blissful calm. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Charisma saving throw or its emotions are suppressed as if affected by the *calm emotions* spell for 1 minute. Once used, this shard can't be used again until the next dawn.

Dreamspace

Planar gateways that once linked Eberron and Dal Quor, the Region of Dreams, were sundered during the cataclysmic wars that destroyed Xen'drik and shattered the giant civilization. Since then, Dal Quor has been forever distant, and no stable manifest zones to Dal Quor exist anywhere on Eberron.

However, Dal Quor and Eberron remained inextricably linked by the state of dreaming—the process by which mortal minds travel to the Region of Dreams, and the subtle gateway through which the quori first began their conquest of Sarlona some fifteen centuries past.

Discovered short years ago and still known only to a few, the dreamspace is an effect that appears related to this spiritual connection between planes, but one that as yet has no explanation. It appears as a kind of ripple of arcane and psionic energy—a border of sorts between the mortal world and the world of dreams ... Regardless of its origin, different factions among both the kalashtar and Inspired distrust—some even say fear—the dreamspace. In particular, a good number of Inspired are said to be disturbed by the existence of a power connected to Dal Quor that they neither control nor understand.

—Secrets of Sarlona

Secrets of Sarlona introduced the concept of the dreamspace, along with a set of dreamtouched feats that allowed third edition characters to attune themselves to the dreamspace. These included the Dream of Contact (which allowed long-distance telepathic communication, not unlike the *sending* spell) and Dream of Insight (which allows the dreamer to make a Intelligence-based ability check with a substantial bonus—essentially, drawing knowledge from the collective unconscious). Techniques like these serve as crucial tools for the Unchained, a resistance movement within Riedra whose members engage in unsanctioned "free dreaming."

Possible Explanations

There's no other canon information on the dreamspace—we just know it was "discovered a few short years ago" and both the Inspired and kalashtar distrust it. So what *is* the dreamspace? A few possibilities come to mind ...

Natural Connectivity. The dreamspace might just be part of the natural infrastructure of the planes. Think of it as the phone lines that connect mortal dreamers to Dal Quor. There's nothing sinister about it; it's just a (super)natural part of the world.

Artifact. The dreamspace could be an artifact created by the quori of a previous age when they interacted with Eberron. Rather than tying this to the giant-quori conflict in Xen'drik, I'd tie this to an even older age of Dal Quor—long before il-Lashtavar—that's potentially associated with long-forgotten civilizations in either Khorvaire or Sarlona ... civilizations destroyed by the rising of the Daughter of Khyber or another overlord. This would allow characters to discover ancient rituals or artifacts designed to manipulate the dreamspace. It leaves the question open as to whether the quori of that past age were benevolent, or if the dreamspace itself was designed as some sort of weapon or tool of oppression.

New Phenomenon. People might've only recently discovered the dreamspace because it's only recently come into existence. It could be the side effect of unforeseen damage the Inspired are inflicting on the psychosphere of Eberron through their use of the *hanbalani* monoliths. At the moment it's a useful tool, but as the damage becomes more extensive, it could connect unwilling minds, cause dreaming spirits to be lost in the dreamspace instead of reaching Dal Quor, or far worse.

Hoax. The dreamspace might be a hoax. Created by the Dreaming Dark, it's a lure that's being used to draw out rebels like the Unchained. Attuning the dreamspace and developing dreamtouched techniques actually makes the user more vulnerable to quori possession.

These are all interesting possibilities. But like the Mourning, I wouldn't want to present a single kanon or canon answer, because a central point of the dreamspace is that the people using it don't know what it is. It's a new tool that's being latched onto by a desperate resistance—is it a blessing, or could it be a trap? Is it secretly a tool of the Dreaming Dark, or is it the horrifying result of dabbling in powers beyond even their control? Each of the four options above would form the foundation of very different stories. Using the first option, it could be a simple, reliable tool that has no other significant impact on the story. Using the second option could unveil a quori scheme from a previous age that dwarfs the ambitions of the Dreaming Dark. And the third option could end with the Dreaming Dark and the player characters working together to disassemble the *hanbalani* system before it tears reality apart.

So, the dreamspace was always intended to be an idea that each DM could use in different ways; I hope one of these ideas inspires you!

Cities of Riedra

Riedran communities typically consist of small villages that serve a specific function (typically agriculture or mining), which are spread out around a central massive city, known as a bastion. The bastion serves as a military garrison and houses the Inspired who govern the region. Crucially, every bastion has a teleportation circle, typically connected to Durat Tal. So if you're on official business for the Inspired and need to travel quickly, you travel to the nearest bastion, use the circles to reach the bastion closest to your destination, and then go from there.

In describing the city of Dar Jin, *Secrets of Sarlona* says that the people "go about their business silently, speaking only when it is absolutely necessary." With this in mind, it's reasonable to ask what life is like in the cities of Riedra. Is it like being in a city of zombies? Why does Riedra even have cities?

About Bastions

Bastions serve as military strongholds, transportation hubs, and centers of industry. Most villages gather raw materials, while the bastions contain the factories that produce goods.

Factories

Riedra has factories, though the nation lacks the wide magic of Khorvaire, so its factories are more primitive than their Cannith counterparts in Khorvaire. In Riedra, factory work is done by hand, without the aid of constructs or arcane tools. But you don't have a lot of individual blacksmiths running their own businesses; instead, the bastion has a massive foundry, with a hundred smiths all working together. Assembly lines are common, with each individual focused on a single task. And while you don't see the *magecraft* or arcane tools of Cannith, there are psionic tools at play. Riedran factories employ background telepathic projection. In some cases, this is simply a tool that helps the workers clear their minds and focus on a task. In others, the projection actually guides the hands of the worker, operating as a constant form of *magecraft*.

Riedra's most unusual factories are the sentira production facilities. Sentira is a form of solidified ectoplasm formed from intense emotion. Where tools of crysteel and steel can be created by mundane workers, sentira can only be worked by shaper psions, using a powerful psionic form of the *fabricate* spell. The role of the common worker in a sentira factory isn't to produce the finished goods, but rather to *feel*; the Inspired need concentrated emotion to create raw sentira. Different emotions create different forms of sentira, and factories that focus on hatred or sorrow are usually also prisons; the Inspired have no desire to force loyal citizens to feel miserable, but this is a perfect use for dissidents. So if a group of adventurers is looking for a force of possible allies, they should find a sentira factory with an unpleasant aura.

Administration

In addition to being centers of industry, military fortresses, and transport hubs, the bastion cities are administrative centers. Chosen and Inspired monitor events in the bastion, tracking production, transport of supplies, dissident activities, and other critical information. While paper is used to some degree, information is primarily stored in crystal form, using a system similar to *spellshards*. Administrative centers have large crystal repositories that are managed by psychic figments tied to Dal Quor by the Inspired. These simple personalities (not unlike third edition's psicrystals or the spirits associated with the Archivist artificer from Unearthed Arcana) assist and manage data access, as well as performing other minor administrative functions. Each center has a figment capable of moving between Dal Quor and Riedra, and all records are also stored in a central repository in Dal Quor; if an Inspired in Dar Jin needs to know about troop requisitions in Dar Ulatesh, the figment clerk can quickly retrieve that information from Dal Quor.

Can Sentira be Faked?

The Adaran kalashtar also work with sentira, so you can find sentira items in Adar. However, they don't have the facilities or resources to produce it in the same quantities as the Inspired. Notably, pela—the horned headdresses kalashtar are often shown wearing—are usually sculpted from sentira, but you won't find entire buildings made of sentira in Adar.

One interesting question is whether the emotions used to generate sentira can be artificially induced. Can you create love with a charm effect, or generate fear with psychic power? The simple answer is yes, but it's more *interesting* if you decide that the answer is no—that the emotion has to be sustained and natural. This makes a factory that deals in fear more horrifying, because they can't simply cast a psionic *fear* spell; they have to truly make people terrified for an extended period of time. And this would also lean toward certain emotions being much harder to produce in a factory setting. It could be that love sentira is rarely made in Riedra—but it can be found in Adar (where it's often crafted by hand), whereas Adarans are rarely found using fear or hate sentira.

Life in a Riedran City

Dar Jin is larger than any city in Khorvaire. It is composed of five spherical wards, each a metropolis in its own right. Four of the wards are almost identical. The streets are paved with smooth black cobblestones, interspersed with squares of clear crysteel. When darkness falls, the crysteel blocks glow with a soft light. Workhouses, dormitories, and storehouses are made of blocks of black and white stone; crysteel panels serve as skylights during the day and glowing lanterns at night. Most buildings are curved or whorled; hard angles are few and far between. The city is beautiful in its way, but is extremely repetitive; every dormitory looks exactly the same.

—*Secrets of Sarlona*

Psionic Navigation

In Riedran cities, casual psionic projection is used to identify streets and buildings. At a glance, it seems like it could be impossible to find your way. But when you stop to think about it, you realize that you *know* where you are. It's an alien memory nestled in your subconscious, but one you're aware of; this casual projection makes it easy to find your way around. Likewise, the dormitories look exactly the same, but you *know* which one is Jhora Hall and which is Ula Hall.

Comfortable Silence

Secrets of Sarlona describes that Riedrans go about their business silently, speaking only when necessary. This doesn't mean they act like zombies! Riedrans are taught to be focused on their tasks. They know exactly what they need to do, and they're determined to do the best job they can; they don't have time for small talk. But this doesn't mean they're emotionless robots. Riedrans may smile or nod to each other in passing. If someone drops what they are carrying, the people around them likely stop to help pick it up. They may not *say* anything while at work, because nothing needs to be said; it's understood that "we're all working together, we're here to help you." So while many things about Riedra are oppressive, the silence isn't one of them; it occurs because most of the time, nothing needs to be said. Most Riedrans are comfortable with their lives, and they feel they share a common cause with the people around them. They aren't shuffling, emotionless zombies; most are content, determined to work as hard as they can and to earn their advancement on the Path of Inspiration.

Purpose and Predictability

For a Riedran citizen, daily life is very predictable. You work with the same people in the same building following the same general schedule. You all dream the same dreams; you all receive the same messages from the Voice. Again, this doesn't make Riedrans zombies, it just means that they have safe, reliable patterns. This is a primary reason that adventurers make most Riedrans uncomfortable: they are disrupting that pattern. Riedrans know what to expect from one another. They have no idea what to expect from a warforged, an elf, and a dragonmarked human—all the worse if these three appear to be armed and prepared for violence!

So what is life like in a bastion city? There are many people but little conversation. People aren't standing around, shopping, or killing time. They act with a sense of careful *purpose*, quietly devoted to their work. They know where they're going, they know what they have to do, and they're always moving toward that goal.

Riedran cities aren't designed for tourists or consumers. There are no shops or restaurants; Riedrans eat in their dormitories or garrisons. There are no theaters, no gambling. Now, they *do* have gardens of reflection and memorials that share memories of tragic

events or grand triumphs. There are statues of the Inspired that radiate awe, plazas where priests of the Path of Inspiration inspire the crowds, spaces where soldiers drill or people engage in group exercise. But there aren't luxuries, nothing that's designed for pure leisure; everything serves a purpose.

Foreigners in the Jhodra

If adventurers from Khorvaire manage to visit Riedra, they'll find that people keep their distance. Civilians largely ignore outsiders, avoiding eye contact; adventurers are seen as a curiosity at best and as threats at worst. Meanwhile, soldiers watch outsiders closely, clearly concerned that they may be up to something dangerous. If forced to interact, most Riedrans are polite to adventurers but seek to end the conversation as quickly as possible; of course, they have somewhere else they need to be.

It's no surprise that in Dar Jin and Dar Ulatesh—the only two major ports where foreigners are welcome—they have foreign quarters that cater to the needs of outsiders. The Jhodra is the foreign quarter of Dar Jin, Riedra's greatest port. It has dragonmarked enclaves and embassies of several nations of Khorvaire. There are theaters, shops, and taverns, most of which are actually run by the dragonmarked houses, not Riedrans. So the good news is that after your long journey across the sea to the empire of the mysterious Inspired, you can still get a bowl of tribex stew at the Gold Dragon Inn (Disclaimer: the tribex stew served at the Jhodra Gold Dragon Inn is not actual tribex, but rather a pomow-plant-based meat substitute being tested by House Ghallanda).

Most Riedrans are forbidden from entering the Jhodra. Those who work in the foreign quarter are trained and prepared to deal with foreigners, and thus don't display the discomfort seen elsewhere. There are many guides, always watching for travelers who seem lost or confused, always ready to provide assistance; there are even some who are only guides, as opposed to also being agents of the Thousand Eyes!

So in imagining a scene in the Jhodra, keep that cosmopolitan population in mind. Walking through the Jhodra, you'll have that odd sensation of *knowing* where you are—of remembering the name of the street even though you've never read it. Most Riedrans are going about their business: sailors headed for the docks, envoys headed to an embassy, all moving quietly and with purpose. Dragonmarked heirs share jokes with embassy staffers. An expat grabs you—"Did you just get off the Sharn boat? You don't have any of Mazo's shaat'aar, do you?"—and perhaps they have a story to share, or a risky opportunity for a few capable people. You see a statue of the Inspired, and you can't help but be impressed ... but is that your actual feeling, or just a projection of the statue? And perhaps—though it's unlikely—one of those silent, hardworking Riedran gives you a *look* or makes an odd gesture. What are they trying to convey? Do they want to find a way to speak to you alone? Is something going on? Or is it an agent of the Thousand Eyes, testing you to see if you're searching for dissidents?

Crime is almost unheard of in Riedran communities—in part because most people have little to steal. There are criminals in the Jhodra, but they're mostly from Khorvaire and focus their attentions on fellow travelers. However, the Jhodra is well defended, both by soldiers of the Harmonious Shield and the imposing oni of the Horned Guard. The Jhodra also has an unusual number of Inspired, who help monitor the area and support the soldiers if needed. For example, in other cities, the priest in a garden of reflection is usually an unoccupied Chosen or even a mundane human—but in the Jhodra, such a priest is likely a hashalaq Inspired with significant powers of coercion and empathy.

Secrets of Sarlona discusses Dar Jin and the Jhodra in more detail, including the mercantile center, the Tower of Eyes, and the Song of Skin—a meditative talhouse catering to changelings.

Entering Riedra Proper

There are several clandestine ways to enter Riedra: you might travel through Khyber, pass through another plane, or work with the Dream Merchants or other smugglers. But if you want to leave the Jhodra to explore another part of Dar Jin or to travel across Riedra—and if you truly have a good reason to do so—all you have to do is ask. *Secrets of Sarlona* describes the following:

"In order to explore Riedra, a traveler must acquire a transit visa from the Iron Gate, the foreign relations office, in Dar Jin or Dar Ulatesh. This scroll provides a description of the travelers, states the nature of their business, and delineates any restrictions on travel. A bearer might be limited to traveling in specific provinces or spheres, and the visa usually has a set expiration date. The document is notarized with a sentira seal, a psionic sigil that carries the thought-signature of the Inspired ... The Iron Gate does not charge for transit visas, but it rarely grants them. Riedra isn't for tourists. Travelers must provide a valid reason for entry and show that they have no criminal tendencies or intent, as well as enough knowledge to avoid accidentally breaking Riedran laws. A successful [DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check] is sufficient to get an entry request considered, but even then the reason must stand on its own. Finally, [a psionic mind probe is often used] to ensure that the travelers have no hidden motives. If the request is especially intriguing or risky, the Iron Gate might allow travel but send a member of the Thousand Eyes along as a chaperone and observer. Unless the party is deemed a serious risk, this observer is a Chosen; the controlling spirit only takes possession of the vessel every few hours to check on the situation."

Marco "MA4PS" Bernardini

THE TASHANA TUNDRA
WHITE SEA
THE SPUR
THE FROSTBLADE MOUNTAINS
THE FINAL PASSAGE
THE FROSTWALL MOUNTAINS
KELNELUUN
THE FOREST OF LURKING SHADOWS
THE WORM WOOD
NUPAKAR
THE IMPERIAL CRYPT
KORALANDALUUN
RHIALUUN
THE CAULDRON
THE BROKEN BLADE MOUNTAINS
DRAGON BONES
GLUE DOM
SEA OF RAGE
SYRKARN
ANDNEMUN DESERT
ADAR
SHANJEED JUNGLE
BARREN SEA
DOR MALEER
NULAKESH
OHR KALUUN
PYRINE
KHALESH
BORUNAN
RHIAVHAAR
CORVAGURA
WAR MAZE
DURATH TAL
KINTAM KABEER
TAM ETH
KINTAM NALEER
KINTAM ARLUUN
KINTAM MALIN
DAR TERASH
DUL ZERATH
DAR RETH
DAR MUN
DUL NATATH
DAR VULEER
TAM KAT
DAR DARATH
KINTAM TELUUN
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DAR ULATESH
KINTAM MURATH
KINTAM PANEER
TAM OLASH
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DAR ILASH
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A DETAILED MAP OF THE
UNITY OF RIEDRA
COMPILED BY THE HOUSE SIVIS
USING THE MOST ACCURATE
KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE
MAPS 2022

Provinces of Riedra

The Unity of Riedra is one nation, a single political entity. But it's made up of eight provinces, and all of them were once unique nations shaped by environmental factors, religions, arcane discoveries, and most of all, by planar influences. While the provinces are now unified—and while the Inspired work to discourage any strong sense of provincial nationalism in modern Riedra—understanding these fallen nations is crucial to understanding the landscape of Riedra, the history of the Five Nations, and the secrets or wonders that adventurers might travel to Riedra to uncover. Riedra may be one nation, but you'll have very different adventures in Borunan versus Ohr Kaluun.

Fallen Kingdoms

Secrets of Sarlona implies that the old kingdoms were fairly advanced—that they had wizards, sorcerers, divine champions. If so, why did these techniques not travel to Khorvaire? And in general, why don't the Five Nations show their Sarlonan roots more strongly? Most followers of the Sovereign Host in the Five Nations know that their faith is "the Pyrinean Creed," but very few actually know that this means it originated in the Sarlonan nation of Pyrine. Why have these nations been forgotten? A couple factors contribute to this loss.

Renegade Colonizers

The Sarlonan "settlers" of Khorvaire weren't the paragons and pride of their nations. We've called out that Lhazaar was a pirate, and it's no accident that her lieutenant was known as Malleon the Reaver. Many who followed Lhazaar were outlaws, renegades, or rebels of one brand or another. Later waves of colonization were largely driven by refugees. In both cases, these migrations weren't organized efforts to preserve the culture and achievements of the old kingdoms.

Planar Influences

Equally important is the fact that the Sarlonan settlers *couldn't* transport many of their greatest achievements (which is part of why there weren't more active programs driving Sarlonan colonization of other lands). The one thing Sarlona has in greater amounts than any other continent is planar influence—manifest zones, wild zones, reality storms, and more. Simply put, Sarlona is closer to the planes than Khorvaire, and this creates both threats and opportunities.

Depending on their traits, manifest zones and wild zones can be extremely dangerous—but as seen in Sharn, Shae Mordai, and Dreadhold, they can also enable wonders that can't be replicated in the mundane world. Manifest zones can be a source of unusual flora, fauna, or other resources. The drug known as absentia is created using a root that grows in certain Xoriat manifest zones, while the pomow plant—mainstay of the Riedran diet—was developed in Lamannian zones. Beyond this, the more powerful zones leak planar energies into the surrounding region. This can be tapped to produce magical effects ... and can also subtly shape the personality of mortals. Creatures that live in the vicinity of a Shavarath wild zone are more likely to be aggressive—and to have an instinctive knack for developing martial skills.

Lost Magic

The wizards of Khunan and the sorcerers of Corvagura were channeling Sarlona's planar magic ... and when Khunan wizards fled to what's now Valenar, they found that *their magic didn't work there*. So the reason the Five Nations don't seem to be that much more advanced than the fallen kingdoms of Sarlona is because they had to *rebuild* their arcane science ... in the process, creating forms of magic that are more reliable and versatile.

Nonetheless, it's possible that adventurers sifting through the ruins of the old kingdoms may find rituals, relics, or spells that are a match for (or even superior to) modern techniques ... though it might take the skill of an exceptional arcanist—or a player character—to adapt these techniques to the modern style!

Sarlonan vs. Khorvairian Magic

Most Khorvairian scholars refer to the old Sarlonan style of magic—drawing on planar energies—as "Externalist" magic (or "wielding external forces"). By comparison, the most common form of arcane science employed by the Five Nations is called "Siberyan" magic, as it manipulates energies exuded by the Ring of Siberys.

There are a few practitioners of Externalist magic in Khorvaire. The technique can still be effective if the caster is familiar with the manifest zones and planar influences within a region. Some of these old traditions still linger among the human wizards of Valenar, for example. But it's an unusual style rarely seen in the Five Nations.

The Provinces Today

Though the following sections discuss the modern-day provinces of Riedra, they largely focus on aspects *not* covered in *Secrets of Sarlona:* namely, the impact of the planes and interesting aspects of the old cultures. But always remember that the Inspired have worked to suppress the old traditions. In particular, the Edgewalkers are an elite order tasked to protect innocents from extraplanar threats, and one of their major duties is patrolling the borders of wild zones. Many zones do contain deadly threats; but in other cases, the Inspired simply don't want the locals to find ways to use the zones as their ancestors did, or for them to be influenced by the zone.

These sections include information on the most common and powerful planar influences in a region, along with the common wild zones. But manifest zones to *all* planes (save Dal Quor) can be found anywhere in Riedra; for example, in the novel *The Gates of Night*, the protagonists travel between Xen'drik and Sarlona using manifest zones tied to Thelanis. So feel free to add manifest zones anywhere it suits your story!

Borunan

In Borunan, you might ...

- Be drawn into the schemes of oni and ogres plotting rebellion.
- Find an ancient forge where oni crafted weapons for ogre champions.
- Be forced into an extension of Shavarath, where celestials and fiends fight an endless war.
- Use a passage from Khyber to enter Riedra.

In the days of the old kingdoms, the ogres of Borunan were peerless warriors. Their champions possessed inhuman strength, martial discipline, unshakable courage, and weapons forged in Fernian flame. Time and again, they repelled the legions of Nulakesh and the crusaders of Khalesh, and yet Borunan never sought to conquer any of its neighbors. Some might wonder why this was. Borunan is a harsh land; did the ogres never consider claiming the more fertile fields of Nulakesh? What kept their population so low that they never needed to expand?

Planar Influences

Today, it's commonly believed that the people of Borunan considered their neighbors to be "unworthy foes"—the usual assumption is that the ogres were cruel brutes who constantly fought one another. In fact, the ogres were waging a truly divine war, fighting alongside angels in an endless struggle against devils. The center of Borunan contains a wild zone to Shavarath where a fragment of the Eternal Battleground extends directly into the Material Plane. So the ancient ogres devoted their might not to conquest, but to defending this keep—known to the ogres as Gul Dol, the Gate of War—against the forces of tyranny.

Borunan contains several wild zones tied to Fernia and Shavarath, along with multiple passages into Khyber. The forerunners of the ogres emerged from a demiplane within Khyber; tectonic activity destroyed this passage, leaving them stranded in this barren region of rocky desert and hills. Of the Shavaran wild zones, only Gul Dol is a direct passage to the Eternal Battleground. But the ogres built their fortresses in the other Shavaran zones, and over generations, the influence of Shavarath helped shape them into fierce warriors.

The ogres of ancient Borunan cared nothing for the Sovereigns or the Silver Flame—they were entirely devoted to the battle for Gul Dol. The angels of the Legion of Freedom battle the devils of the Legion of Tyranny for control of this massive fortress, which is broken into multiple rings and wings. The angels believe that the balance of this war reflects the balance between tyranny and freedom across the multiverse. Of course, this is only one of countless fronts in the eternal war between these forces, but the ogres embraced this idea and believed that in fighting alongside the angels, they were fighting for freedom for all people.

Birthplace of the Oni

The origin of the oni is a secret long forgotten, but one possibility is this: just like the rakshasa and the overlords, the immortals of Shavarath can't be permanently bound. But during their service in Gul Dol, the champions of Borunan found a way to bind defeated fiends to their own bodies—sort of an involuntary version of the process that created the kalashtar, trapping a fiend within a bloodline of ogres. Thus the supernatural powers of the oni may be tied to the essence of devils bound to the bloodlines. This could be why many oni are drawn toward evil; but the oni of Borunan resisted those sinister instincts, using the power of their defeated foes to fight alongside celestials.

In addition to being fierce warriors, the oni of Borunan forged their weapons in the Cauldron, a wild zone tied to Fernia. Their weapons weren't as well-crafted as the arms and armor of the Dhakaani, but the oni spell-smiths were able to channel the energies of Shavarath and Fernia to imbue their creations with powerful magic. While most of these weapons were destroyed long ago, legendary items or even artifacts could remain in Gul Dol, the Cauldron, or other ancient ruins; it's up to the DM to decide whether these enormous items, designed to be wielded by ogres and oni, magically adjust to the size of smaller folk.

The Fall of Borunan

Despite the might of its champions, Borunan was easily laid low by the Dreaming Dark. The humans of the surrounding regions had long feared the ogres, and it was easy for the quori to fan these flames. Within Borunan itself, the quori sowed doubts and created feuds, shattering centuries of unity. "Are the oni secretly in league with devils? Was the battle for Gul Dol a pointless sacrifice?" Civil strife decimated Borunan and left it vulnerable to outside attack.

Borunan Today

In the present day, the ogres of Borunan are kept from the wild zones that served as the strongholds of their ancestors. They're also largely kept from any form of war; they use their strength for manual labor as opposed to battle. The oni are raised to believe in a twisted form of their actual history, taught that their gifts are the result of being living prisons for fiends. Thus, it's the duty of the oni to redeem the fiend within them through their own devoted service to the Inspired. Largely, this indoctrination has proven successful, and the Horned Guard—an elite corps of oni soldiers—is one of the most powerful weapons in the Riedran arsenal.

However, over the last two decades, a group of Borunan rebels has been forming a resistance movement, the Horned Shadow, that seeks to protect the ogre-kin (ogres, oni, eneko). This is still a young movement, struggling to build power while avoiding the gaze of the Thousand Eyes. It's up to the DM to decide

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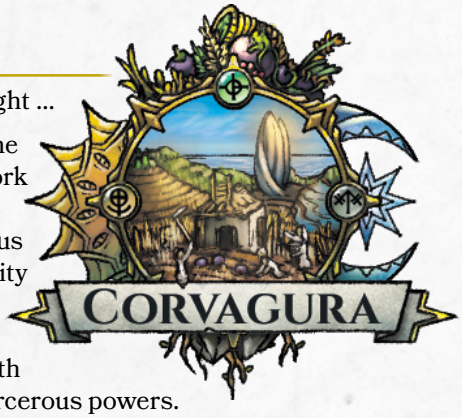
whether the Horned Shadow is entirely heroic—a throwback to the champions of ancient Borunan, who devoted their lives to defending freedom from tyranny—or if the oni leaders are driven by fiendish impulses and have malevolent goals.

Keep in Mind

Borunan has many passages to Khyber. These could provide ways for adventurers to cross from Khorvaire into Riedra, intentionally or by accident. This could also be a vector that could bring the minions of a daelkyr into Riedra. The Edgewalkers monitor these passages, and have sealed those that can be sealed. The public is kept away from the wild zones that hold the ancient ruins of Borunan, and believe them to be the domain of foul *altavars* (the Riedran term for fiends). The two most powerful zones are the Cauldron (a Fernian zone in the Broken Blade Mountains and the seat of old Borunan's oni spell-smiths) and Gul Dol. Today, the majority of the Gate of War is in the hands of the Legion of Tyranny, but the angels still hold an isolated keep. Their forces include several Borunan sword wraiths—the spectral vestiges of the ogre-kin champions that fought and died alongside them.

The ogres of Borunan are generally more intelligent than their cousins in Droaam, with an average Intelligence of 9. It's likely that the ancestors of Droaam's ogres and oni were transported across the world by a planar anomaly; this might explain their reduced Intelligence and the lack of any Borunan traditions. Another possibility is that the ogres of Khorvaire are a separate branch of that people—that they came from the same demiplane but emerged in Khorvaire instead of Sarlona, and were untouched by the influence of Shavarath.

Corvagura



In Corvagura, you might ...

- Seek to sabotage the teleportation network of Durat Tal.
- Explore a mysterious magebreeding facility in a Lamannian wild zone.
- Try to rescue a youth who manifested sorcerous powers.
- Explore the tomb of a forgotten sorcerer-king.

Corvagura is a tropical region marked by deep jungles and lush fields. It has long been the most densely populated region of Sarlona, and it was one of the most powerful and influential of the old kingdoms.

Planar Influences

Corvagura includes manifest zones and wild zones tied to Lamannia, Mabar, and Thelanis. Notably, the influence of Lamannia lends unnatural fertility to the region and its inhabitants. The influences of the other planes were made manifest in two powerful lines of human sorcerers. Anyone born within the planes' sphere of influence could potentially develop sorcerous powers; the nation of Corvagura was born when leaders rallied these sorcerers into two noble houses, then used their powers to conquer the city-states in the region.

The House of the Sun drew its power from Thelanis. Its members had powers like those of Wild Magic sorcerers. Their magic tended toward glamour and glory, twisting the thoughts and emotions of others or striking down foes with bolts of flame. Though biologically human, members of the House of the Sun often had fey features and could be mistaken for Khoravar. The sorcerers of the House of the Sun were taught to be proud and glorious, demanding adoration from their subjects.

The House of the Moon drew its power from Mabar. Its members had powers like those of Shadow sorcerers, and their magic drew on darkness and inspired fear. They never animated the dead, but they could command shadows and summon specters. The sorcerers of the House of the Moon were taught to be calm and cruel, instilling terror in any who might challenge them.

While these houses were presented as families, one's position within them was based entirely on sorcerous power. Anyone who manifested such powers would be adopted into the appropriate house, while any heir who failed to show sorcerous talent by their eighteenth birthday was cast out. The majority of the sorcerers of Corvagura were convinced that their powers elevated them above the common people, and they were infamous for their casual cruelty and tyrannical rule. But they did protect the common people from many deadly threats, including the colossal beasts that emerged from Lamannian wild zones, as well as the restless dead and capricious fey unleashed by the other wild zones.

The Fall of Corvagura

The quori attacked Corvagura on three fronts. They encouraged the cruelty and narcissism of the worst of the sorcerers, pushing their subjects past the limit of what they would endure. They created a deep, paranoid rift between the houses, leading to destructive vendettas. And they encouraged the spirit of revolution among the people—culminating in the appearance of early Inspired, commoners wielding supernatural powers capable of defeating the sorcerers.

Corvagura Today

Today, Corvagura is the heart of Riedra, both in terms of population and administration. It's home to both the capital city of Durat Tal and the primary eastern port, Dar Jin, along with other important

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bastion cities. The influence of wild zones tied to Mabar and Thelanis are largely contained by the Edgewalkers; the Shanjueed Jungle has been called out as the largest Mabaran manifest zone in Eberron, dwarfing even the Gloaming of the Eldeen Reaches. Lamannian wild zones and manifest zones have been tapped to contribute to the agricultural programs of Riedra; this includes the creation of unusual hybrids, such as the pomow plant.

As the Inspired keep people out of the wild zones and work to contain their influence, planetouched sorcerers are rarely born in Corvagura. People know what to watch for, and they *know* such sorcerers are vessels for evil *altavars*, responsible for chaos and bloodshed in the days before the Unity. Any sorcerers identified by the Thousand Eyes are either killed or forced into service with the Edgewalkers. However, as with other provinces, there may well be a few who have managed to conceal their powers or who fled into wild zones and survive there—rebels who could assist player characters. On the other hand, some such sorcerers have internalized the teachings that these powers are the gifts of fiends, and believe that the path to greater power lies in performing vile acts; such criminals are exceedingly dangerous. It's worth noting that while the lines of sorcerer-princes of ancient Corvagura were human, there's nothing stopping a Corvaguran changeling, shifter, or other ancestry from developing such powers.

Keep in Mind

Corvagura is the heart of Riedra. Dar Jin is a center for trade and diplomacy. Durat Tal is the administrative center of the Unity, and also the hub for the network of *teleportation circles* that allow the Inspired to swiftly move troops and supplies across the length of their realm. Because of this, Corvagura has the largest number of *hanbalani* monoliths and the greatest effort made to ensure the loyalty of its people; while there could be a few rogue sorcerers, Corvagura is a difficult place to find support for any sort of rebellion.

The manifest and wild zones tied to Mabar and Thelanis provide all sorts of potential for adventures. These zones may contain ruins associated with the Houses of the Sun and Moon, along with the forgotten treasures of the sorcerer-kings. Mabar zones may yet be haunted by the specters of ancient tyrants or by newly animated undead. The Edgewalkers are dedicated to keeping fey and undead contained, and the Thousand Eyes ensure that no one tells the stories of the fey. But this can still be another way to enter Riedra; Thelanian zones often allow passage to the Faerie Court under the right circumstances, and adventurers exploring the Twilight Demesne in Khorvaire could accidentally end up facing Edgewalkers on the edge of a forest in Corvagura.

Dor Maleer

In Dor Maleer, you might ...

- Use a passage to Dolurrh to rescue a lost soul.
- Release an ancient champion who's been bound in ice for thousands of years.
- Battle rocs or other colossal beasts.
- Help a band of duergar commandos strike a blow against the Inspired.

Dor Maleer is a region of harsh plains, cold deserts, and mountains. Its barren land is only slightly more hospitable than the Tashana Tundra that lies to the north. In the days before the Sundering, the northern mountains were the domain of the Doriak dwarves, while the plains were claimed by the Hual Maleer, a loose federation of human and shifter clans.

Planar Influences

Dor Maleer contains multiple wild zones and manifest zones tied to Lamannia, showcasing the versatility of that plane. Most people think of Lamannia as the Twilight Forest, as a plane that enhances the fertility of plants and animals ... and this is one common element of Lamannian zones. But Lamannia embodies the power of nature, and that includes deadly storms, frigid tundras, raging volcanoes, and more.

The plains of Dor Maleer are broken up by regions of environmental extremes at odds with the surroundings. As the plains lack the resources to support large settlements, the Hual Maleer always lived in small communities, splitting and forming new clans when the population began to outstrip local resources. Wild zones could cause endless hurricanes, with free-roaming air elementals howling with the winds. There are vast pools of lava in the Maleeri plains, and fire elementals occasionally emerge to scorch the soil. There are also a few wild zones where the environment is more welcoming—a stretch of dense forest, an impossibly verdant valley. Maleeri hunters forage and hunt in these regions, but attempting to settle them is unwise. These zones represent the indomitable force of the wild, and they resist the intrusion of civilization. Disease, accelerated decay, and hostile wildlife all plague any would-be settlers. And hostile wildlife in these zones is quite literally a big deal—these regions produce megafauna, massive beasts similar to rocs in size and power, though they can take many forms. These powerful beasts can't reproduce outside their zones, and thus they haven't spread. But there are tales of ancient hunters feeding a village for a month with the corpse of a mighty bear dragged from the deep forest. These wild zones can't be tamed, but there are a few manifest zones with less extreme effects, and these were the sites of Dor Maleer's largest communities.

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The mountains of Dor Maleer contain wild zones tied to Risia and Dolurrh. In the Risia zones, chasms are filled with ice, and temperatures are far more severe than nature should allow. But the ice of Risia preserves, and time ceases to flow for creatures or objects encased in ice in such a zone. It's possible explorers could find ancient champions from the Sundering or the days of the old kingdoms—or even a frozen dragon from the Age of Demons! Meanwhile, the influence of Dolurrh is unpredictable. The region's most dramatic landmark is the Final Passage. When the moon Aryth is full, those who venture into this cavern can enter the Catacombs of Dolurrh. This offers a way to recover a soul that can't be resurrected through normal means. But the Catacombs have guardians, and the Queen of the Dead doesn't surrender her subjects easily.

Doriak Dwarves

The Frostblade (Paqaa) Mountains were once the home of the Doriak dwarves, a dwarf culture that produces mountain, hill, and gray dwarves. The Doriak duergar are thought to be a mutation resulting from generations dwelling in the radius of the Dolurrh wild zones, and they have an unusually strong bond to Dolurrh. This often results in a dampened emotional affect; though they aren't paralyzed by the infamous ennui of Dolurrh, the Doriak are somber by nature.

Doriak duergar hear the whispers of spirits, both the voices of their own ancestors and of others who have died in the places they pass through. These voices usually form an incomprehensible chorus. However, some Doriak duergar hone their skills and become mediums (as per the magewright specialty in *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*). All duergar can learn to channel this babel, harnessing this choir of excess thought as pure psionic power; it's by channeling this power that a duergar can hide from the perceptions of others or temporarily expand their mass. Doriak champions learn to wield this power to produce devastating effects. In the days before the Sundering, the Doriak pioneered the development of psionic tools and channeling devices; the *hanbalani* monoliths that ensure Inspired dominance over Riedra are based on Doriak techniques.

The Fall of Dor Maleer

Dor Maleer was never a strongly united nation. The first step for the Dreaming Dark was to drive a wedge between the Hual Maleer, causing tensions between clans and between human and shifter. Inspired champions arose within the clans, uniting them and spreading the word of the Path of Unity. The psychic Doriak proved resistant to the manipulations of the Dreaming Dark, but the quori amplified fear and conflict between them and the people of the lowlands. As the Unity of Riedra emerged, the first true Inspired offered peace to the Doriak, and paid them handsomely for their aid in creating the *hanbalani* and other elements of Riedran infrastructure. But once the dwarves had served their purpose, Riedra turned on them, launching a brutal preemptive strike. The Doriak survivors were driven from their mountain home and into the Tashana Tundra.

Dor Maleer Today

This harsh frontier region can't support the civic infrastructure that is common throughout the rest of Riedra. As such, there is only a single bastion city: Dar Vuleer, a port on Lake Kelneluun. This city is in a Lamannia manifest zone that allows limited agriculture and exceptional fishing. The fortress of Kintarn Malin coordinates the defense of the northeastern border and also serves as a training center for the shifters of the Taskaan Legion. Beyond this, Maleeri villages are smaller and more loosely structured than their southern counterparts. There are relatively few *hanbalani* monoliths in the province, and many villages don't have the shared dreams or receive messages from the Voice. As such, while most Maleeri still support the *idea* of the Unity, they aren't as deeply indoctrinated as the people of other provinces. Rebels from other provinces who don't want to flee Riedra entirely might take shelter in Dor Maleer, where the Thousand Eyes aren't watching so closely.

Because of the sparse population of Dor Maleer, the wild zones of the province don't receive the same level of attention from the Edgewalkers as those in southern population centers. Local hunters work together to deal with rampaging megafauna, and elementals rarely stray far enough from their zones to endanger the inhabitants. The Final Passage doesn't unleash threats into the world, and mortals who enter it almost never return; so while there are a few Edgewalker outposts monitoring the region, these zones are largely accessible to adventurers.

The Doriak were driven from the region and their towns and fortresses were destroyed; their ruins can be found in the mountains, though most have been picked over by Doriak rebels in the intervening centuries. As described in *Secrets of Sarlona*, the Doriak are currently expanding their resistance movement, even sabotaging monoliths.

Keep in Mind

The mountains are home to manifest zones and wild zones tied to Dolurrh. Unlike Mabar, Dolurrh rarely produces hostile undead. However, the mountains are certainly haunted, carrying echoes of the ancient dead. Shadows might replay powerful or emotional moments, or adventurers could stumble across battles being refought. Like the information gleaned from a *speak with dead* spell, these are typically just traces of memory—but they can certainly be eerie.

Khalesh

In Khalesh, you might ...

- Recover a long-lost artifact from a couatl tomb.
- Discover a hidden enclave of shulassakar.
- Channel the power of Irian to perform a crucial ritual.
- Find a portal to one of the floating towers of Irian.

Khalesh is a land of temperate plains and desert—green grassland fading into sunbaked plains and mesas. While it's more hospitable than neighboring Borunan, at a glance it's rather barren—endless and empty. And yet, if you wander these plains, you may find yourself enveloped by a sense of well-being, a deep-rooted optimism, and the knowledge that all will be well ... with an underlying conviction that you'll fight to keep it that way.

Planar Influences

Khalesh is suffused with the energies of Irian and Shavarath. It is Irian that fills the land's people with optimism and draws them toward the light. The influence of Shavarath is slower and more subtle, but over many thousands of years, it produced a culture determined not only to embrace the light, but to battle the darkness. There are some patches where Syrania reaches through, where the dominant mood is one of peace. But for the most part, it's a realm that breeds hope and the willingness to fight for it ... two things that are very dangerous for the Inspired.

Due to these influences (and that of the couatl discussed below), the people of Khalesh were constantly clashing with their neighbors. They fought supernatural threats, sometimes battling aberrations from Khyber, destroying undead, or smashing extraplanar threats. But they were unduly proud of their virtue, and the pervasive influence of Shavarath drove them to *fight*—to look for flaws in the people around them. They fought the tyrants of Nulakesh, clashed with the reavers of Rhiavhaar and the bandits of Sunyagir, and battled the beasts of Borunan. In periods when they were at peace with Nulakesh, they would join forces to attack Ohr Kaluun ... which, to be fair, certainly deserved it.

So Khaleshite civilization was built around constant conflict, blended with a sense of moral superiority and an endless quest toward the light. Khalesh was a virtuous society, but all too quick to draw a sword when a compassionate word could better serve.

It's up to the DM to decide just how wild the wild zones of Khalesh are. Unlike the ogres of Borunan, the Khaleshites weren't fighting a war in Shavarath. But it's possible their capital city was in a wild zone tied to an actual projection of Irian, and Khaleshite emissaries regularly visited the Amaranthine City. Khalesh is also known to have at least one wild zone tied to Syrania. This could simply be a region where aggressive thought is impossible, or a place of floating rubble and remnants of great towers—a warning of what could become of Sharn. But as a wild zone, it could be something far stranger, or even a portal into Syrania itself. Perhaps one of the floating towers of Syrania is in Khalesh—the tower of a Dominion of Knowledge who has been recording the conflict between the overlords and the couatl since time began.

The Couatl of Khalesh

Planar influences aren't the only supernatural force at play in Khalesh. Glance across a Khalesh plain and you may see what looks to be a giant bone projecting from the earth—a fallen column of something like polished ivory. The locals call these "dragon bones," saying they're the bones of Eberron herself. But search further and you may find patches of wall, foundations, or even small buildings formed from this dragonbone. It's virtually indestructible and seemingly immune to the passage of time. In truth, this isn't made from the bones of the earth; it's a building substance used by the ancient couatl, the most numerous of the native celestials of Eberron. Khalesh is one of the places that the couatl came into the world in the Age of Demons, one of the anchors where these immortals would reform if they were destroyed. In a sense, it's the celestial counterpart to the Demon Wastes of Khorvaire; a place suffused with lingering celestial power.

The humans of Khalesh built their cities on couatl foundations, and Khaleshite champions had visions of the celestial serpents and their great sacrifice to protect the innocent. The couatl graced the banner of Khalesh, and its people took up their ancient battle against fiends. The Khaleshites drew on the power of the Silver Flame and embraced the call to fight supernatural evil. Irian inspired them with hope and the belief that they could build a better world. And Shavarath drove them to fight for that world—to push beyond the purely compassionate aspects of the Silver Flame and to use the sword to battle mortal evil as well as fiends.

The Khaleshite crusaders wielded the power of the Silver Flame, but they didn't call it by that name. They fall under what the Library of Korranberg has defined as a "serpent cult"; their focus was purely on the celestial couatl and their battle against the fiends. Precedent suggests that the Khaleshites must have had their own equivalent of the Voice of the Flame, but few details of the ancient champions remain.

The Fall of Khalesh

Khalesh was always deeply unpopular with its neighbors, so it wasn't hard for the quori to harness that resentment. But they also had another card to play. Quori agents revealed that the noble families of Khalesh had long concealed a bizarre secret: that over untold generations of devotion to the serpent cult, Khaleshite champions had gradually become something inhuman. The Khaleshite leadership was riddled with shulassakar, a feathered form of yuan-ti tied to the couatl. While the shulassakar were devoted servants of the light, the quori were able to

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twist this through dreams and agents, convincing the common people that the shulassakar were monstrous alien invaders—that *they* were the fiends, and that the corrupted bloodlines of Khalesh had to be completely exterminated. And exterminated they were, to a large degree. The Inspired largely depopulated the region and leveled its cities—fortified citadels built in manifest zones tied to Irian and Shavarath. All couatl relics that could be found were destroyed, and records of the virtuous victories of the Khaleshites were wiped from history.

Khalesh Today

The current inhabitants of Khalesh are descended from people resettled from the forgotten nations of the Syrkarn region. The modern people of Khalesh shun the ancient ruins and know that the ancient people were corrupted by the vile spirits in the region, and they are especially observant in their devotion to the Path of Inspiration. A few of the Kintam fortresses are built in manifest zones tied to Shavarath, but people are forbidden to enter the powerful wild zones, and these areas are patrolled by the Edgewalkers; all know that the sense of hope one feels around these areas is the lure of fiends trying to set hooks in your soul.

Khalesh has the potential to be especially interesting for any adventurers tied to the Silver Flame. The Khaleshite faith was closer to that of the Pure Flame than to the modern Church of the Silver Flame; the Shavaran influence drove them toward unnecessary violence. But this land still holds relics that respond to the touch of anyone who channels the power of the Flame. There is surely a *holy avenger* waiting in a tomb, and couatl artifacts might help a party that needs to bind demons or resist the power of the Lords of Dust. This is also an opportunity to introduce new spells, feats, or archetypes; perhaps a connection to a couatl or wisdom shared in an ancient scroll teaches a champion of the Silver Flame a new way to wield its power.

There's also the question of whether any of the shulassakar were able to survive the Inspired purge. An unusual possibility is that in their last days, the Khaleshites developed their own form of deathless, similar to the councilors of the Undying Court. If so, there could be ascendant shulassakar, Khaleshite champions who survived the Sundering but who can't leave the wild zone that now sustains them.

Keep in Mind

The energies that permeate Khalesh inspire and provide hope, but also urge war. The ruins of the couatl are largely *very* ruined, having endured the full force of both the overlords and the Inspired ... though it's always possible there are some hidden subterranean sanctums that were never found. The people of Khalesh had their own Voice of the Silver Flame; could that spirit reach out to a modern follower of the faith, and if so, is it a purely positive power or does the influence of Shavarath make it a dangerous threat? The current people of Khalesh are devoted to the Inspired and hard to sway, but could the touch of Irian lend hope to insurgents?

Nulakesh

In Nulakesh, you might ...

- Try to convince an Edgewalker commander of the threat posed by the Dreaming Dark.
- Steal planar research from the arcane workshops of Dar Mun.
- Destroy a Riedran resurrection facility.
- Venture into the Iron Ward of Daanvi, a realm of tyrannical devils.

Long before anyone had dreamed of the Unity of Riedra, the Empire of Nulakesh was the most powerful force in Sarlona. Beginning as a single city-state, its legions conquered and assimilated the people of the surrounding region, incorporating them into its war machine. At its height, the Empire of Nulakesh dominated much of what's now Pyrine and Dor Maleer. The empire waxed and waned many times; its current borders reflect the lands it held when the Inspired rebellion finally wiped out the Imperial line at the end of the Sundering.

Planar Influences

Nulakesh is strongly influenced by Daanvi and Shavarath. While the Khaleshites were urged by Irian and the Silver Flame to fight for the light, the Nulakeshi were driven by war and order. This drove deep martial instincts and an innate aptitude for martial discipline ... a legacy that still lingers in Karrnath today. But the Nulakeshi genius for war was all too often wielded by tyrants, as the influence of the Iron Ward shaped the Imperial line.

Nulakesh has many manifest zones tied to Shavarath. These were the foundations of most of the ancient city-states, and still are today; Nulakesh provides the bulk of the soldiers of the Harmonious Shield, and even Nulakeshi peasants engage in regular martial drills. However, the region also has wild zones, and these have been a danger throughout its history. One of the Shavaran wild zones is connected to the layer known as the Warring Cities, but unlike the experience of the ogres of Borunan, there's no role for mortals to play in this layer. Other zones don't serve as actual portals to Shavarath, but they recreate its deadly environs. All too often, these Shavaran wild zones have been the source of bloodshed or tragedy, with razor storms or sword wraiths flowing beyond the borders of the zone to threaten the lands beyond.

The region's Daanvian zones are less dramatic, but they are largely tied to the oppressive layers of Daanvi. The ancient capital of the empire, the city of Nulakar, was built in a zone tied to Daanvi's Iron Ward. While there was no direct portal between the planes, accounts suggest that more than one devil passed from Daanvi

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into Nulakar, and that there was a time when the Nulakeshi emperors had fiendish advisors.

There are only a few wild zones tied to Dolurrh in Nulakesh, but they are noteworthy. The Imperial Crypt, the royal necropolis, had curious powers of resurrection. When any form of magic that returns life to the dead is used here, it only requires half the usual costly material components. In some cases, the dead interred here have spontaneously returned to life ... though perhaps not with the same souls they began with. The other noteworthy wild zone tied to Dolurrh is a stretch of fields known as the Gray; this region is suffused with the ennui of Dolurrh, and those who remain in it for long soon succumb to a deadly apathy.

The Fall of Nulakesh

Nulakesh was at a low point when the Sundering began. The Dreaming Dark began by firing up the people's imperial spirit, giving the emperor and warlords dreams of regaining their past glories. The Sundering lasted for generations, and the resurgent Nulakesh was just the beginning of their plans. It became a tool they used to cripple surrounding nations—the force that fiercely battled the foul serpent-people of Khalesh and brought righteous fury to Ohr Kaluun. Along the way, the quori encouraged the emperors to indulge in ever-greater acts of cruel tyranny, and to work with their Daanvian devils (who were acting independently, with no idea of the role they were playing in the quori's greater schemes). Even the stoic Nulakeshi had a breaking point ... but as they grew close to it, the first Inspired rose up, promising to overthrow the tyrants—whom they revealed to be working with devils!—and to lead the people on the true path of righteousness, cleansing all the foulness from Sarlona. Once the Inspired of Nulakesh convinced their forces to unite with the Inspired-led armies of Corvagura, the fate of the continent was sealed.

Nulakesh Today

Nulakesh has always been an important part of Riedra's strong foundation. It is the base of the Edgewalkers and the primary source of the Harmonious Shield. Its people are happy to have a cause to fight for, and to the degree that Daanvi is allowed to influence them, they are more inherently comfortable with tyranny in pursuit of order. However, the city of Nulakar is a shunned ruin, and the Edgewalkers patrol all of the dangerous wild zones. The Inspired remain ever alert: they don't mind Daanvi instilling an appreciation for order in their subjects, but they won't allow other immortals to influence their people.

The Edgewalkers are based in the massive fortress-city of Dar Mun, which is poised between four wild zones (including old Nulakar, the Imperial Crypt, and two Shavaran zones). In addition to being the primary garrison and training facility for the Edgewalkers, it holds the finest arcane library and workshops in Riedra. The Edgewalkers are allowed to study arcane magic, as they must be prepared to fight any sort of threat. The Inspired also conduct much of their planar research in Dar Mun, and there are surely many secrets to be discovered here and powerful eldritch machines.

The ruins of the Imperial Crypt lie close to Dar Mun, and they are heavily guarded by Edgewalkers. The Inspired have limited access to resurrection and largely don't need it, because they simply employ new hosts; but it could be that the Inspired are working on new techniques, trying to transform this zone into a resurrection factory.

Keep in Mind

The people of this region are both fiercely loyal to the Inspired and the most martially inclined of all Riedrans. The widespread manifest zones tied to Shavarath encourage aggression and can enhance it in many ways, as detailed in *Exploring Eberron*. This region also has the highest concentration of Edgewalkers, in part because it has some of the most dangerous wild zones.

Ohr Kaluun

In Ohr Kaluun, you might ...

- Work with the Dream Merchants to enter Riedra unseen.
- Be hunted by a ruthless family of skulk assassins.
- Search for a powerful artifact hidden in a constantly shifting maze.
- Fight a cabal of wizards preparing to unleash chaos on all of Sarlona.

The island kingdom of Ohr Kaluun may be the most infamous nation in the history of Khorvaire. Its lords were ruthless in their pursuit of supernatural power, committing countless atrocities in their quest for mystical might.

It's thought that the first changelings were created in Ohr Kaluun, and spread to Khorvaire in a wave of refugees. Likewise, refugees from Ohr Kaluun are believed to be the ancestors of the humans found in the Carrion Tribes of the Demon Wastes.

Planar Influence

The influences of Xoriat, Mabar, and Kythri permeate the islands of Ohr Kaluun, even beyond their manifest zones and wild zones; the islands also hold lesser manifest zones tied to other planes. These powerful forces shaped the psyche of the Kaluunite people. Mabar wiped away empathy, driving people to be cruel and predatory. Kythri drove constant change, a quest for innovation and endless emerging factions. And Xoriat inspired the Kaluunites to pursue strange and terrible visions, to attempt things no mundane mind would consider.

The people of Ohr Kaluun possessed advanced forms of both divine and arcane magic. Thanks to the influence of Kythri, they made countless breakthroughs in arcane science, but rarely maintained or preserved these techniques; thus Kaluunite wizards

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wielded astonishing powers but rarely passed their knowledge on to future generations. The most widespread and consistent advancements in Ohr Kaluun were made by their warlocks and priests; the lords of Ohr Kaluun were more than willing to make dangerous bargains in exchange for the power that they craved.

Shadow Lords

Throughout most of its history, Ohr Kaluun was ruled by an alliance of Shadow Lords. In theory, these were hereditary bloodlines, but in practice, the title was held by whoever could claim power and hold on to it, and feuds and uprisings were common. Ohr Kaluun is well known for its war mazes, vast labyrinths that served as both fortresses and cities. Each Shadow Lord dwelled at the heart of a great maze, pursuing their own paths to power and scheming against their rivals. Each lord generally followed a different path to power, and a maze would be devoted to a particular sinister patron, whether that was a member of the Dark Six, an overlord, or an archfiend from one of the planes. While there were a few Kaluunite lords known to have actually been loved by their people, the influences of Mabar and Xoriat drove the Kaluunites to horrific excess and cruelty. If you're ever looking for an image of a classically evil cult, for people willfully embracing the service of fiends or performing vile sacrifices, there are surely tales of Ohr Kaluun that serve that need.

War Mazes

Every war maze was built within a manifest zone, and the influence of each zone colored the practices and achievements of its inhabitants. Evidence suggests that both the skulks and the changelings were created in Ohr Kaluun, using magebreeding techniques that surely drew on the power of Kythri. The influence of Xoriat led them to pursue paths of magic no rational mind would conceive of. Thus, while Ohr Kaluun was known for its warlocks, the Kaluunites dealt with many different patrons; one maze might use the Fiend patron to reflect bargains with native fiends, another would use the Great Old One to reflect dealing with Xoriat, while another might use the Hexblade to reflect bargains with the Dark Powers of Mabar. The priests of Ohr Kaluun revered the Dark Six, but different mazes had their own unique pairings, names, and interpretations of the Six.

A critical aspect of this chaotic history is that almost any mystical approach could be found in a Kaluunite war maze. We've never mentioned Ohr Kaluun as working with the daelkyr or symbionts—but there certainly could have been a Shadow Lord who bargained with Belashyrra. Necromancy wasn't a widespread practice in Ohr Kaluun, but adventurers could be drawn into a war maze whose lord dealt with the Bone King of Mabar, and whose mummy still rules over the deadly tomb.

The Fall of Ohr Kaluun

The people of Sarlona always feared and hated Ohr Kaluun, and Pyrine, Nulakesh, and Khalesh had clashed with the island in the past. Fear of Ohr Kaluun was a common thread the quori used in stirring up conflict across Sarlona; on the island itself, it was easy to amplify the existing paranoia and feuds of the Shadow Lords until it reached a breaking point. The Shadow Lords had weakened one another long before they were destroyed by the combined forces of Nulakesh and Corvagura, united by their Inspired champions.

Ohr Kaluun Today

As with Khalesh, the Inspired were ruthless in their cleansing of Ohr Kaluun. The vast majority of its people were simply slain. The war mazes were nearly impossible to destroy, but were blocked off and shunned.

Riedra maintains a presence on Ohr Kel, the largest island of the train. Dar Kel is the sole bastion city in Ohr Kaluun; while it serves as a port, it's primarily there to monitor the area, seeking to stop or at least reduce the activities of smugglers and the Heirs of Ohr Kaluun (dissidents who seek to recover dangerous power from the ancient ruins). The Inspired are legitimately afraid of Ohr Kaluun; they know that they *don't* know what deadly forces remain bound in the sealed mazes.

Ohr Kaluun is sparsely populated; aside from Dar Kel, its legitimate inhabitants are mainly dedicated to fishing, and they avoid the inland ruins. However, as an area shunned by the Inspired, it's a haven for smugglers (including the faction known as the Dream Merchants) and renegades.

There is only one place where the traditions of Ohr Kaluun survive today: the Venomous Demesne of Droaam. The ruling families of the Demesne are tieflings, the result of magebreeding and pacts made by their ancestors. They possess the strongest warlock tradition in Eberron and have built on the achievements of the past; however, long removed from the corrupting influences of Mabar and Xoriat, they are neither as cruel nor as inventive as their ancestors.

Keep in Mind

The powers wielded by Ohr Kaluun are supposed to be legitimately dangerous and frightening. It's not simply that they were powerful warlocks and wizards, it's that their techniques were things rational people would avoid. In some cases, Kaluunite powers may have had a price in blood or suffering. But it's also possible that they used spells or techniques that had unusual and dangerous side effects, much like those discussed in chapter 8, "The Dark Six."

A secondary point is that anything is possible in Ohr Kaluun. The Venomous Demesne only preserved the traditions of a single maze, and the Shadow Lords didn't share techniques. There's no telling what secrets are buried in these ancient labyrinths ... but whatever they are, they'll be dangerous and disturbing.

Pyrine

In Pyrine, you might ...

- Explore one of the earliest human shrines of the Sovereign Host.
- Be granted a divine vision or entrusted with a sacred artifact.
- Debate religion with a priest of the Path of Inspiration.
- Discover a hidden library vault filled with ancient knowledge.

Pyrine is a land of warm plains and forests, welcoming both in its aspect and its aura. Something about Pyrine inspires calm reflection. When standing in a Pyrinean meadow, it's easy to feel a sense of joy and contentment—to know that somehow, all is right in the world.

Planar Influences

Pyrine has strong ties to Irian, Daanvi, and Syrania. The effects are strongest when people are close to a wild zone, but even beyond the zones, a general sense of peace and well-being pervades the region. The people of Pyrine are naturally inclined to follow the rules and avoid conflict; even where there are problems, surely they can be worked out.

The Pyrinean Faith

Pyrine was never a conquering kingdom. It was a nation of scholars and sages, and it shared its knowledge freely with its neighbors; Pyrinean tutors and advisors could be found in courts across Sarlona. But there was one pillar that was even more important than knowledge: the Sovereign Host. The form of the Sovereign Host embraced by most Vassals of Khorvaire is known as the Pyrinean Creed; this is because it was established and codified in Pyrine. According to myth, a Pyrinean shepherd stumbled into the First Library, where Aureon taught them the nature of the Host and the basis of Aureon's laws. True or not, the Pyrineans were people of deep conviction and faith. They had deep and detailed visions of the Host, cataloged in countless scrolls; as a result, they also wielded remarkable divine power, matched only by the crusaders of Khalesh. But they never used their powers for war; instead, Pyrinean priests traveled across Sarlona, spreading the word of the Sovereigns and using their gifts to help those in need.

Largely, Pyrine was left in peace by its neighbors. The Vassal faith became common across Sarlona, and many people did see Pyrine as a blessed land with a special connection to the Sovereigns. One notable exception was Nulakesh; while many Nulakeshi adopted the faith, several emperors used their faith as a basis for invasion—"the blessed land must be protected by the Empire, for the good of all!" There were also periods where Pyrine was targeted by Rhiavhaarian raiders, and one point when a Rhiavhaarian warlord established a new kingdom in Pyrine. However, in time—often due to pressure from other nations, and apocryphally, due to pressure from the Sovereigns—Pyrine was always restored.

The Fall of Pyrine

Faith was the strong foundation of Pyrine, but the Dreaming Dark was able to use this as a weapon. Dream manipulation allowed the quori to spread false visions, creating schisms and driving zealots to pursue heresy. Nulakesh was again encouraged to extend its power into Pyrine, and even some of the Shadow Lords of Ohr Kaluun were urged to attack. Across Sarlona, quori worked to undermine faith in the Sovereigns; after all, if the gods were just, why would they allow the myriad terrors of the Sundering? Ultimately, people came to see the Pyrineans as servants of the *altavars*, peddling a faith that bound innocent dupes to the service of fiends. The temples were torn down and the Sovereigns forgotten.

Pyrine Today

Today, the Sovereign faith has been wiped from Pyrine. The people remain thoughtful and philosophical, but that deep-rooted faith has been shifted to the Path of Inspiration. The region maintains the general aura that encourages its people to follow the rules and avoid conflict, but now that has been harnessed in the service of the Inspired. The Harmonious Shield has a reduced presence here, as any sort of violence is rare. The people of Pyrine generally remain both kind and inquisitive, and while their faith is deep, it isn't blind. Of all the people of Riedra, they are the most likely to be welcoming to foreign travelers and interested in engaging them in conversation. However, most Pyrineans deeply believe in the Path of Inspiration and are prepared to rationally present its virtues. Of all the provinces in the Unity, Pyrine has the highest degree of literacy; the Guiding Path maintains schools in Pyrine, and those trained here serve as scribes across the nation.

The wild zones of Pyrine are largely benevolent in nature. Under the proper circumstances, some can serve as portals to the Refuge of Irian and the Immeasurable Market of Syrania. However, these zones are carefully secured by the Edgewalkers, and the people of Pyrine believe that they are dangerous regions filled with fiends. However, the Dream Merchants—and occasionally even the Inspired themselves—make use of the market portal.

While most shrines to the Sovereigns have been destroyed, there are a few that weren't so easily wiped away. There's a great arch carved of dragonbone, and a few shrines remain hidden in caves or wild zones. Most notably, the common belief was that the capital city of Pyrine was built around the First Library; that city was leveled in the Sundering, replaced by Dul El. However, it's possible that the actual First Library wasn't a building on the Material Plane, but rather,

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a tower in Syrania. If this is the case, there may be other portals to the First Library in Pyrine. Did Aureon truly teach the first Vassal? Or was "Aureon" a Dominion of Knowledge or a plane-traveling dragon?

Keep in Mind

The most interesting question about Pyrine is *why* the Sovereign faith was so strong there. Was it promoted by angels from Irian and Syrania? Or is there some deeper tie between the region and the faith? A Vassal cleric or paladin could be drawn to Pyrine to reclaim an ancient artifact, or adventurers in Sarlona for other reasons might experience divine visions while passing through Pyrine.

Rhiavhaar

In Rhiavhaar, you might ...

- Help Unchained dissidents escape the Thousand Eyes.
- Find an ancient artifact tied to the legendary Lhazaar.
- Search for an ancient treasure trove hidden in the height of Rhiavhaar's power.
- Deal with an archfey whose defining story has been long forgotten.

The people of Rhiavhaar have always been the finest shipwrights and sailors of Sarlona; but they weren't simply merchants or fisherfolk. Long before their descendants settled the Lhazaar Principalities—named after the notorious Rhiavhaarian explorer—they were known for their piracy. In general, Rhiavhaarians were seen as wild, capricious, and dangerous; "Rhiavhaarian luck" was a common curse suggesting that fortune favors a scoundrel.

Planar Influences

Rhiavhaar has wild zones tied to Lamannia, Thelanis, and Shavarath, and the influence of all three planes can be seen in its history. The Rhiavhaarian knack for sailing is due in part to the unusual lumber harvested from their Lamannia wild zones; Rhiavhaarian ships have always been faster and more durable than their counterparts in other nations. Beyond this, Rhiavhaarian sailors have long known tricks for finding favor with wind and water. Some of these were tied to Lamannia and a limited form of primal magic. Others were tied to bargains with the fey, whether the friendship of a minor mischievous sprite or a pact made with an archfey. But adding to the touch of these planes, the influence of Shavarath has long driven the Rhiavhaarian people to piracy and reaving, and anyone who lived on the Sarlonan coast dreaded the sight of their sails.

Alliances with the fey were a crucial part of Rhiavhaar's culture. The fey-favored families rose to power, and feuds between archfey often played out in Rhiavhaar. While many of the champions of Rhiavhaar could be considered to be Archfey warlocks, this tradition wasn't as developed or understood as it was in Ohr Kaluun; Rhiavhaarian warlocks generally stumbled into their pacts, and only a few wielded significant arcane power. The Rhiavhaarians valued their connections to their fey "cousins," but they placed much of their faith in strength and steel. As a result, many of the benefits Rhiavhaarians received from the fey were closely tied to location—and as such, were largely lost when Rhiavhaarians crossed the seas to Khorvaire.

The Fall of Rhiavhaar

While it was never as despised as Ohr Kaluun, Rhiavhaar was also never loved by the people of Sarlona. Internally, the Dreaming Dark exacerbated the feuds between clans. Externally, they fanned the flames of those who desired vengeance for generations of Rhiavhaarian reaving, and further convinced people that the Rhiavhaarian "cousins" were fiends, not fey.

Rhiavhaar Today

Rhiavhaar serves as the western hub for sea traffic, and Dar Ulatesh is the legitimate port of entry for visitors and merchants. While the region is firmly under Inspired control, the people of Rhiavhaar aren't as devoted as their counterparts in Nulakesh or Corvagura. There is, perhaps, still a touch of fey wildness in the Rhiavhaarian people. The Edgewalkers patrol the wild zones, but they can't cover all the manifest zones tied to Thelanis. Meanwhile, the various tools of the Inspired—the Voice, the dreams, the remote viewing of the Thousand Eyes—can be unreliable in these areas. Cells of the Broken Throne or the Unchained often meet in fey woods or circles of stones, trusting the ancient powers to shield them. Because of this dissident streak and the region's role as the western gate, Rhiavhaar has a high concentration of soldiers and many active agents of the Thousand Eyes. The Edgewalkers and the Thousand Eyes are always watching for fey influence, and it's a dangerous place to be an Archfey warlock.

The Inspired continue to harvest lumber from a few of the Lamannian wild zones, though these zones can produce many dangers. Many of the region's wild zones are on the coast and extend into the water. Sailors who don't know the region can run afoul of endless storms, megafauna sharks, fey curses, and other threats.

Keep in Mind

The Inspired and the Edgewalkers have been largely successful in containing the influence of the archfey associated with the Rhiavhaarian wild zones. However, this is a point of frustration for these fey, many of whom yearn to see their stories told once more—and want revenge against the Inspired who have humiliated them. This could drive an adventure, perhaps by entering Riedra through Thelanis, or just provide a source of unexpected assistance.

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Chapter 22: High-Level Adventures

One of the core concepts of Eberron is that *player characters are remarkable*. From the original *Eberron Campaign Setting* onward, we've emphasized that most NPCs are relatively low level—even those who wield significant political power. In third edition, it was common for these characters to use NPC classes (warrior, magewright, adept) rather than player classes such as fighter or wizard. And continuing in fifth edition, we've emphasized that spells of up to 3rd level are common in the Five Nations, but those of 4th or 5th level are remarkable, and higher-level effects are legendary.

However, this often leads to the mistaken assumption that Eberron is a "low-level setting"—that there are no real challenges for characters of 10th level and above. That was never the intent. Yes, the people of the Five Nations are typically low-level magewrights and commoners, and city guards in Sharn are low-level warriors. But when we designed the setting, we didn't expect your high-level characters to be fighting city guards in Sharn! A comparison here would be *The Hobbit*. When Smaug comes to Laketown, the Master of Laketown isn't a mighty champion who can fight him. All the soldiers of Laketown are helpless against the dragon. Their only chance lies with a hero who can beat the odds and do the impossible. And in Eberron, that's you. The Lord Mayor of Sharn isn't supposed to be able to beat you in a fight; he's the Master of Laketown, and his power isn't about being good at fighting. If you're a high-level character, sure, maybe you can defeat all the guards in Daggerwatch Garrison—but you're not supposed to be fighting them! You're supposed to be the one who *defends* the city when the tarrasque shows up and no one else can stop it.

A World Without Gods?

Eberron is also sometimes mistakenly described as a "low-level setting" because gods don't walk the world. While it's true you can't meet the gods in the flesh, Eberron does have overlords, the archfiends who dominated the world at the dawn of time. In their original presentation in the third edition rules, overlords have "divine rank" (a term used to compare relative power of various entities); they aren't gods, but they have the same *power* as gods in other settings.

Looking to the overlords' fifth edition statistics, *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* indicates that the avatar of a partially released overlord might have a CR of 28 (with the side bonus of being immortal, which means that unless you do it properly, defeating them will only incapacitate them for about a day). Meanwhile, a fully unbound overlord can reshape reality over the space of an entire nation; one plausible theory for the cause of the Mourning is that it's the side effect of an overlord's release, and that the Mourning is just an aura that surrounds them ... so if they decided to start moving, they would leave a trail of utter devastation.

So Eberron has *evil* entities that rival the power of gods of other settings ... But should the overlords be released, there are no *good* forces of equal power that can face them. Given this, one might ask why the people of Eberron believe in gods at all. Simply put, the people of Eberron don't expect the Sovereigns or the Silver Flame to manifest in the world; they expect these deities to guide and empower the mortals who face evil. The Sovereigns defeated the overlords in the dawn of time and then ascended to maintain reality. The Silver Flame is the prison that binds the overlords. These are vital tasks worthy of respect and worship. And again, should an overlord be released, people don't expect Dol Arrah to appear to fight it. They expect a mortal champion to face it, guided and empowered by Sovereigns and Flame—which is exactly what Tira Miron did when she battled Bel Shalor. If these malevolent entities with godlike power rise again, it's up to *you* to be the Tira Miron of this age.

A World in Need of Heroes

Eberron is always one bad day away from an apocalypse. There are *dozens* of overlords straining against their bonds, plus thousands of lesser fiends in the world; most fiends are trapped in places like the Demon Wastes, but those allied with the Lords of Dust could be walking the streets of Sharn right now, waiting for the moment to strike. The daelkyr and their minions crawl beneath our feet, while the quori study our dreams. Perhaps tomorrow there'll be a new wave of lycanthropy. Perhaps the Lord of Blades will lead a force of restored warforged colossi against Korth. Perhaps the ancient vampires of the Qabalrin will arise from their forgotten tombs. These things don't happen every day, which is why the civilization of the Five Nations still exists. But they *could* happen any day, and that's why the world needs heroes. Most of the time, Laketown is perfectly stable and safe ... but when the dragon shows up, the common people need a champion. As a player character, you're supposed to be remarkable, because there *are* powerful malevolent forces and you may be the only one who can deal with them.

Mighty and Malevolent

Here's a quick roundup of some of the most dangerous forces in Eberron.

Fiends

Fiends appear countless times in Eberron's lineup of powerful villains. In fact, once upon a time, Eberron was entirely dominated by them. Eventually, the overlords were bound, along with their most powerful followers ... but some of their lesser minions escaped the Flame like

tiny fish slipping through a net, while others managed to escape over time as bonds weakened. As discussed in chapters 13–15, most fiends (including overlords and rakshasas) have no interest in ruling over mortals. They're immortal beings of transcendent power, and ruling mortals is like babysitting deeply annoying children ... also, doing so risks starting a fight with the neighbors in Argonnessen. So fiends don't try to *rule* humanoids, but they are out there. They can appear any time it actually serves the goals of the Lords of Dust. And they can appear at other times—perhaps summoned by a foolish wizard, or just a random fiend following their own agenda.

Native fiends are the pure embodiment of evil and of mortal fears. They are most common in the Demon Wastes and similar places, but can be found anywhere in the world—and the more powerful that adventurers become, the more chance they have of drawing the attention of these beings or stumbling into their plans. While we've always said that rakshasas are the most numerous native fiends, *any* fiend—devil, demon, or otherwise—could be spawned by Khyber. Native demons and native devils differ due to their embodiments of malevolent concepts; all fiends embody pure evil, but demons reflect chaotic ideas while devils are more orderly. But any fiend tied to Rak Tulkhesh will be an embodiment of war and bloodshed, whereas any fiend tied to Sul Khatesh will embody secrets and the malevolent power of magic.

These native fiends don't have the same vast hierarchy as the immortals of the planes—after all, they are the Lords of *Dust*. Their kingdoms fell a hundred thousand years ago, and they are the handful who escaped its destruction; they want to restore the Age of Demons so they can go back to the way reality is supposed to be. But you can still play out immortal vendettas between servants of different overlords.

Now, fiends can be a powerful force, but you might say, "I can't just have a nalfeshnee randomly walking around Sharn." And it's true that we don't see fiends often in the world. But never forget that the rules are a foundation for us to build a story on; fiends don't have to be bound by the exact rules listed in their stat block. Here are a few suggestions for slipping fiends, sight unseen, into your stories.

Possessed Mortals

It could be that there are more fiends in the world than anyone knows—because they're possessing mortal hosts. If you want to take this approach, the first step is to decide what forms possession can take. Again, there's no need to be limited to rules for possession that exist in the current rules. Consider the following ideas ...

Observer. The fiend can't control the host and doesn't grant any powers to them, but it perceives everything the host does and can push ideas into their subconscious if the host fails a Charisma saving throw against that thought. Putting an observer in your game allows a fiend to gather information, but you can also use it to explain weird shifts in behavior.

Vessel. The host is fully controlled by the fiend, much like the Inspired of Riedra. It's up to you if this grants the puppeted host any special abilities; the fiend may be able to use a few of its own powers, such as innate spellcasting, while in the host body.

Transformation. The host is fully controlled by the fiend. The host body has no special powers, but at a suitably dramatic moment, the fiend can transform the host into a replica of its fiendish form for a short time—likely 1 minute. So when the adventurers challenge the corrupt judge, he can become a full nalfeshnee ... until he's defeated, at which point his body reverts to the battered form of a dead mortal.

In using any of these options, a key question is who can be possessed. If the host has to agree to possession, then things are relatively straightforward. If allies of the adventurers can be possessed (or with a player's consent, perhaps even their player character), then heroes will have to find ways to protect their allies and to exorcise involuntary hosts instead of just smiting them. *Protection from evil and good* is an adventurer's best friend!

Disguised Immortals

According to Eberron canon, there are definitely disguised dragons and rakshasas around, using ancient magic to hide from mortal eyes. This same principle can be added to any fiend. Again, stat blocks provide a foundation, but nothing is stopping you from saying that one particular erinyes can assume a perfect mortal disguise. For example, instead of just saying "all fiends are shapeshifters," perhaps amulets can be created through blood sacrifice that let the fiend assume the form of the mortal sacrificed. The erinyes can't just assume the form of *any* mortal; they can assume the form of one particular mortal, and only while they wear the amulet ... and that amulet also shields them from most divinations, showing them to be that mortal.

Artificial Fiends

Perhaps House Vadalis and Jorasco, working together, create a horrific monster with the power of a goristro—a beast they can't control that breaks free and starts a terrible rampage. Perhaps Cannith creates a steel marilith. These could be vessels for actual fiends, driven by an immortal consciousness—or they could be entirely artificial creatures that have the *statistics* of fiends, but don't have their minds or motivations.

Aberrations

Existing aberrations have their own roles in the world. A cult devoted to Belashyrra could be led by a beholder, while aboleths scheme in the depths of the Thunder Sea. But the general concept of aberrations is that they are *things that should not be*. And aberrations can appear anywhere. Yes, the daelkyr have armies of existing aberrations, and you could look at a sourcebook for ideas on specific creatures and locations for your adventure about the daelkyr ... But the daelkyr can also create new aberrations (as can Mordain the Fleshweaver, while others might be created spontaneously by the energies of Xoriat).

"New" Aberrations

The point of aberrations is that they're, well, aberrant. They're unexpected and unexplainable, so make them however you want and drop them wherever it suits your story. Do you want your adventurers to fight an aboleth in the sewers of Fairhaven, but you can't think of an explanation for how it got there? It could've been created by the daelkyr Kyrzin, fused from the ooze of the sewers and given foul life. I'd simply describe it in a different way from a standard aboleth—it's translucent, formed from the same mucus that surrounds it, just fused into a solid form.

Similarly, the slaadi may be natives of Kythri, but there's nothing stopping Dyrrn the Corruptor from creating a creature that uses the red slaad stat block, but that pursues the daelkyr's agenda and doesn't look anything like a red slaad. Again, stat blocks are a foundation. There's no reason a creature with the stat block of a red slaad has to be either red or a slaad! It could be a slimy green humanoid covered with tiny tentacles, and it infects its victims by embedding one of those tentacles within them. This has the added bonus of confounding players who have memorized the *Monster Manual* and are baffled by this "Green Corruptor"—even though *you* know you just converted a red slaad.

This same principle holds true for stat blocks that *aren't* aberrations. A daelkyr could create a creature that uses the goristro stat block; just change its creature type from Fiend to Aberration. After all, nothing's stopping the daelkyr from creating anything. Dyrrn could even create aberrant unicorns—it's not a horn projecting out, it's their spine protruding out through their brain ...

Undead

There are any number of high-CR undead creatures that can pose challenges to high-level adventurers. At a quick glance, you have vampires, mummy lords, liches, dracoliches, demiliches, death knights, and so on... In chapter 16, "Ghost Stories of Eberron," I discuss how such creatures might appear. These forces could be tied to the Lady Illmarrow and the Order of the Emerald Claw, but they can just as easily be entirely unique. An ancient Qabalrin vampire may have come to Sharn and started creating a network of vampire minions (and for a high-level games, those "minions" could be CR 13+ vampires, with the Qabalrin elder being a far more powerful creature that I'd create for the campaign). A death knight could've been formed by its own tragic backstory. A dracolich bound to Katashka could be expanding its reach.

Undead can be especially handy in a campaign because common people can become undead. So the adventurers could've spent their low levels fighting a group of criminals, and then as they reach tier 3, they discover the guildmaster they killed has returned as a vampire—and both she and her minions are now far more powerful than they were in life.

Mortal Ingenuity

Eberron's common people aren't that tough. But that leaves room for *uncommon* people—people like the player characters. The Lord of Blades. Mordain the Fleshweaver. They were low-level characters once, and like the player characters, they have potential beyond that of the common folk. We say there aren't many powerful *benevolent* NPCs, because that's your job as player characters. But there can easily be NPCs with however much power the story requires; the point is simply to emphasize that they *are* remarkable. If you want Merrix d'Cannith to have the abilities of a 20th-level artificer in your story, give him the abilities of a 20th-level artificer; just make sure to call out how astonishing that is, and perhaps add details to emphasize that point. Maybe he's actually transforming himself into a construct (in the style of the old renegade mastermaker). Maybe he has embedded an ancient *docent* into his forehead. He can be ridiculously powerful, but he isn't typical—it should be clear he's just as remarkable as the player characters are.

Even when you aren't dealing with individual "uncommon" NPCs, you can encounter "common" ones—magewrights, adepts—who *create* things that pose threats to high-level PCs. NPCs don't use the same rules as PCs, so they may be using rituals that require multiple casters, that take years to complete, and so on—but they eventually accomplish things no single wizard can do. Artificers can create constructs with tremendous power: just look at the warforged titans and colossi! As I suggested earlier, maybe Vadalis could create living weapons with the power of fiends ... only to find that they can't actually *control* them. Mortals may have even created the Mourning!

So you could say an artificer has created a suit of armor that gives its wearer incredible power ... just consider giving the adventurers a compelling reason to avoid putting it on after the villain is defeated ("because it taps into your spine and kills you within three days").

Planar Danger

When you're searching for high-level threats, you can always leave the world behind and travel to the planes. *Exploring Eberron* provides details about the thirteen planes, and all of them have options for high-level play. Engage in dangerous wagers with an efreeti in Fernia. Fight alongside the Legion of Freedom in Shavarath. Try to free your city after it's been claimed by Mabar, before it's fully consumed by the Endless Night. Go to Daanvi to try to break someone out of the Inescapable Prison. Research the location of Illmarrow's phylactery by reading Minara's diary in the Library of Dolurrh. The denizens of the planes usually have little interest in Eberron, but *you* might be interested in accomplishing something in the realms beyond.

And So On ...

The above sections are just a starting point. I haven't discussed the dragons, the Dreaming Dark, the Heirs of Dhakaan, or artifacts—all of which could drive

higher-level adventures and serve as dangerous foes. The critical point is that even though most of Eberron's population is low level, Eberron certainly doesn't lack high-level threats; and the people need you to face these because city guards can't solve the problem on their own. And as previously stated, the rules are a foundation that you can change to fit your story; you can give *disguise self* to any fiend, or even use the statistics of a marilith but make it an Aberration.

With Great Power

As characters grow in power, do they outgrow the things that make the setting unique? Once they're fighting fiends and liches, once they can do things that are beyond everyday magic, doesn't that just make Eberron like any other setting? Once they're fighting overlords, how is it any different from fighting gods? Maybe your characters began as plucky orphans in Callestan dealing with Daask and the Boromar Clan; you enjoy low-level play, and you don't want to clash with dragons and vampires. There are a few ways to approach this.

Never Grow Up

If you want a campaign where the city guard is *always* a threat, simply don't advance your characters to higher levels. Decide what the maximum level for the campaign will be, then use milestone advancement. It's good to allow characters to advance in *some* way so there's a sense of progression and players don't get bored, but there are many ways to handle that. Here are some ideas:

Feats. You could grant characters relatively minor mechanical boosts by giving extra feats instead of class levels. This gives them new options and capabilities, but doesn't increase their hit points or give them access to spells beyond the reach of everyday magic.

Favors. Instead of granting magic items, let the party earn favors from powerful people; when they eventually *are* arrested by the city guard, that favor the captain owes them might be more useful than a *+1 sword*!

Responsibilities. Give characters new territory, new titles, and new responsibilities—these add to the sense of story progression even if they rarely gain a level.

For example, I played in a campaign where the adventurers were professional ratcatchers. We started at 3rd level ... and we stayed 3rd level for the entire campaign. Instead of leveling up, we made connections and we earned improvements for our business (Sewer maps! A superior toxin kit!). We were never going to go from being ratslayers to being dragonslayers, and we knew it.

Level Up the Opposition

Maybe you want to level up, *and* you want to keep fighting the Boromar Clan, *and* you don't want them to become irrelevant because of your newly magnified power. No worries: have them evolve with you. This doesn't mean all Boromar standard enforcers have to be 7th-level rogues. But Boromar might have a team of exceptional enforcers—their *own* party of adventurers, if you will (they might even hire them from the Deathsgate Adventurers' Guild!).

Or perhaps Boromar has a transformative event that creates worthy high-level foes. They become lycanthropes. Saidan becomes a vampire and transforms his lieutenants. They make a bargain with an overlord and are possessed by fiends. So they continue to be a threat, but they are a very *different* threat; as you have become more powerful, they have too, in a way that feels natural within the story. Meanwhile, all of you are more powerful than the common folk around you. You are exceptional, but your enemies are exceptional as well.

Great Responsibility

When planning an epic campaign, my typical approach is to shift the story's focus as the adventurers gain power, recognition, and connections across the world. Consider this campaign arc based around a Seeker paladin player character; their starting character note was "I want to overthrow Kaius III, even though that's probably a terrible idea in the long run."

Prologue (Levels 1~4)

The adventurers are on an airship to Stormreach. They have to foil a skyjacking, but despite their success, the ship passes through a manifest zone into Lamannia and crashes. The adventurers must work together, both to help the other survivors and to find a way to escape Lamannia. This brings the characters together, as only they have the skills required to succeed.

Adventurers (Levels 5~10)

Having made it to Stormreach, each character has a few hooks to explore—but they need allies, and they don't know anyone in town. Some of the challenges they face are local intrigues (drawing them into the schemes of the Storm Lords and the Kraken), and others are action (one character wants to find the crown of the last emperor of Dhakaan). Along the way, they grow more powerful—both in their abilities and personal connections. The key piece is that the Karrn player character needs to win the loyalty of the Blades of Karrn, who'll serve as their core force in their campaign against Kaius.

Rebels (Levels 11~16)

The scene shifts to Karrnath. To achieve the paladin's goal— not just of killing Kaius but of claiming the crown—the action must shift to a much higher level. The adventurers are powerful enough to easily kill dozens of Karrnathi soldiers, but that won't win them the loyalty of the common people. They instead need to negotiate with warlords, inspire commoners, use the allies they made in Stormreach, make dangerous bargains with dragonmarked houses, and unwisely accept help from Lady Illmarrow. Furthermore, they need to identify and eliminate Kaius's hidden weapons. When they do fight, they aren't fighting common soldiers, but Kaius's greatest champions—bone knights, Rekkenmark paragons, and strange things created during the Last War.

Finally, they face Kaius, but only at the end of a long road of diplomacy and investigation.

Rulers (Levels 17–20)

To the adventurers' dismay, it turns out Kaius was somehow preventing Illmarrow from exerting control over the Karrnathi undead. With his downfall, Illmarrow turns Karrnath's legions of undead against the living. She cares nothing for who rules Karrnath—she just wants massive casualties to fuel her rituals. Karrnathi undead might not be a threat to high-level player characters, but the adventurers can't personally destroy tens of thousands of them; time is in short supply, and the death count grows with every hour. The adventurers need to direct the forces they've amassed and allies they've made as effectively as possible to slow down the undead apocalypse while they find the real answer.

They face Illmarrow's champions at the sites that are crucial to her ritual—champions including mummy lords, death knights, and liches. They must find Illmarrow's phylactery—which is so well hidden even *she* doesn't know where it is—and destroy it. Then they must face Illmarrow herself and defeat her. But even in defeat, it's possible her ritual might work. The party must finally go to Dolurrh itself, either to destroy Illmarrow once and for all ... or perhaps to guide her onto a positive path as the new Queen of the Dead. And even after all that, the adventurers must restore order to Karrnath. There, they must not only deal with the aftermath of the undead attack, but with the very real threat that that one or more of the Five Nations will take advantage of Karrnath's weakness, especially if the players haven't won the support of the other Wynarn monarchs before killing their kinsman.

Adventure Progression

In this sample campaign, the player characters started by doing traditional adventures, dealing with local gangs and intrigues. As the adventurers grew more powerful and the local ruffians became irrelevant, they shifted both to leading groups of weaker allies and to fighting champions of equal power. And in the end, they were dealing with threats that could destroy nations and bargaining with extraplanar forces.

I followed the same basic progression with my Q'barra campaigns. In the beginning, the characters were fighting bandits and exploring tombs. By the end, they clashed with the half-fiend dragon Rhashaak, and ultimately, the overlord Masvirik. Their actions determined the fate of the Cold Sun Federation and New Galifar. It's not simply that the characters gained greater *power*—it's that they also gained greater *responsibility*, directing allies and making decisions that could affect thousands of people instead of just fighting a tougher monster.

Again, you don't have to advance to this epic scale! You could spend the whole campaign in Sharn, dealing with the Boromar clan becoming infested by demons. Or you could be ratcatchers who never go beyond 3rd level. The setting has a home for any of these stories—but if you want to, you can entwine your characters with the fate of Khorvaire. Will they broker a lasting peace or ignite the next war? They might solve the mystery of the Mourning ... or perhaps make it worse!

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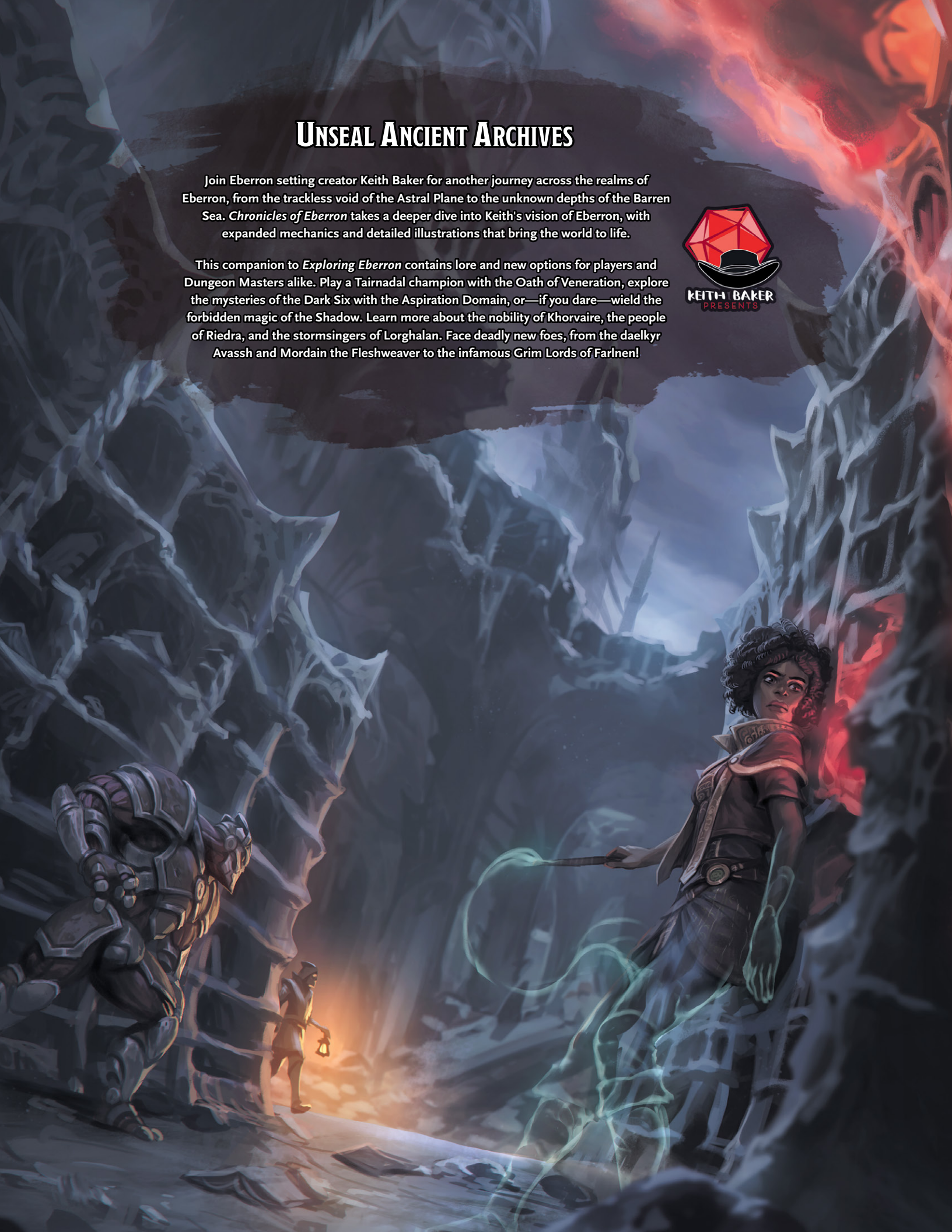

Unseal Ancient Archives

Join Eberron setting creator Keith Baker for another journey across the realms of Eberron, from the trackless void of the Astral Plane to the unknown depths of the Barren Sea. *Chronicles of Eberron* takes a deeper dive into Keith's vision of Eberron, with expanded mechanics and detailed illustrations that bring the world to life.

This companion to *Exploring Eberron* contains lore and new options for players and Dungeon Masters alike. Play a Tairnadal champion with the Oath of Veneration, explore the mysteries of the Dark Six with the Aspiration Domain, or—if you dare—wield the forbidden magic of the Shadow. Learn more about the nobility of Khorvaire, the people of Riedra, and the stormsingers of Lorghalan. Face deadly new foes, from the daelkyr Avassh and Mordain the Fleshweaver to the infamous Grim Lords of Farlnen!

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