

Word of the PILARS



A Tribe  Sourcebook



Dream Pod 9

A Tribe 8 Sourcebook

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"The strength of a house lies in its foundations. That is the first lesson. The Fatimas are the foundations of our Nation, and the Pillars the strength that binds Them in place. Without the bonds of law and the reach of the blade, we would be nothing but a collection of vandals and beasts..."

-Tomas Ever'on, Advocate of Tera Sheba

Joan the Warrior and Tera Sheba the Wise are arguably the most powerful of the Seven Fatimas and are the Fallen's most dogged enemies. Their tribes are also full and rich societies, who play important roles in the history and shape of Vimary. Word of the Pillars serves as both a sourcebook and player's guide for these two important tribes. Learn their secret histories, rites and rituals; meet their most important members; and understand just why they have adopted a hard line against the Fallen. Word of the Pillars is the first of the Wordbooks, which will detail all the tribes.

- Information on the daily life of the two tribes
- Full writeups on ritual Synthesis, myths and holy artifacts used and held in reverence by both tribes
- Expanded information on recurring NPCs and details on new and important characters both in and beyond Vimary
- A new Aspect used by a secret guild within the Tribe of Joan, as well as descriptions and statistics for the tribal totem spirits

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Children of Prophecy



Fourth Interlude

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Chapter one: Introduction

When a building has no base,
It collapses.

We aim to build a world.

Our base must be strong,

Or we too shall collapse.

The Pillars strengthen and hold.

We shall not waver.

— Words from the Grand Council



The Pillars: The Strength and The Will

From the writings of Tomas Ever'on, Advocate of Tera Sheba

The strength of a house lies in its foundations. That is the first lesson. The Fatimas are the foundations of our Nation, and the Pillars the strength that binds Them in place. Without the bonds of law and the reach of the blade, we would be nothing but a collection of vandals and beasts, like the Squats who infest the wilderness. I look around me and I see order, I see people with purpose and drive. I see the energy that we need to grow.

Warriors of the Wind

At times it seems that I have spent more time with the Joanites than with my own tribe. These last few years have taught me much, and yet, when it comes time to set pen to parchment, the words elude me. I have seen the smallest girl wield a sword twice her size with ease and grace, challenging all comers with eyes like new-forged steel. I have seen a mountain of a man struck dumb by the beauty of a perfect sunset. They have shown me a thousand facets, each reflecting a different shining world, and yet I have not begun to scratch their surface.

I have spent years in the Towers, and still their tribe is as much a mystery to me as it ever was. There is a deep and abiding grief that even they do not seem to comprehend. It permeates them all, colors their speech and motion, and someday, when the answers are found, I cannot imagine what this tribe will become.

Joan has given Her tribe majesty, honor, skill and grace. They are the arms of the Nation, and the blades in Her hands. They are our glory.

Testimonial

I wandered down to the Sunken City just three days ago. I took my seat in the gallery of the courthouse, and watched the Advocates, tall and confident, stride across the room expounding the law. I heard the Judge, calm and serene, ask the questions which decided a man's fate. I wept with the victim and cheered with the crowd when justice was done.

I sat in a small tavern, and drank my fill with the Lorekeepers, hearing their stories and telling my own. I warmed myself by the fire while their voices rang with tales of heroes and demons. I watched the sun rise on the Stiltwalkers' shores, and learned to clear my mind of thought while my hands chafed against the stiffened knots of the river-drenched nets.

I have seen the present, and now I look to the future. We are strong, and the Nation lies before us. We are the children of Tera Sheba, and the world is ours.

Word of the Pillars

The Word of the Pillars is the first of the Wordbooks for the Tribe 8 roleplaying game. It details the world of two of the most active tribes on Vimary: the tribes of Joan and Tera Sheba. This book expands upon material presented in the Tribe 8 Rulebook and Vimary, and gives Weavers essential material for incorporating the two tribes into cycles as both Player and Non-Player Characters.

The organization of the Wordbooks is slightly different from that of previous books. The first two chapters show the world of Tribe 8 through the eyes of the members of the two Tribes in question, and the last two give detailed information on how best to use this information within a cycle. Chapter Two: Broken Pillar begins a tale of treachery and battle, using the threads of the story to present the world of the Tribe of Joan in vivid detail. Chapter Three: Cornerstone brings the action back to Vimary proper, and offers a look into the workings of the Tribe of Tera Sheba and the courts and the laws of the Nation. Chapter Four: Warrior's Blessing gives tips and advice to Weavers considering using the Joanites, along with artifacts, rituals, NPCs and character templates. Chapter Five: Laws of the Land provides everything necessary to bring the Terashebans to life.

Chapter two: Broken Pillar

I call on the shield,
The dagger
and the sword.
Keep my mind sharp
My hand strong
And my strike true.
- Guylaine's Pledge



A time of danger

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

There have been many days when I wished I could return to my youth. They were days of hope and certainty, when my aspirations of becoming a Templar of Joan were fast becoming a reality. My clan name is Jacobi'on, and we held high standings amongst the Guilds of my people. There are few of us remaining now, for the times have become difficult, but I can still remember the joy I felt when I was chosen to accompany my fellow tribesmen on a quest. A quest that changed my life in ways I could not have dreamed.

We were gathered in crisis, shortly following the seasons after Lilith's reign. Her actions against the Z'bri had revived a tension that was on the verge of cracking the face of Vimary. The Garrisons of the Seven Fingers and the scattered towers throughout the Duskfall forest had fought several minor skirmishes, both with the Serfs and the ever present Squat bands. All had been a regular part of the vigilance we held against our enemies. Now, however, an event had occurred that demanded more direct action. A Tower of Joan, one of the Seven Fingers, had been sacked.

Circles pledge

I recall the excitement that lifted me as I approached the Tower of the Crescent Moon. It was located on the northeastern outskirts of the Hunting Paths, not far east from Griffentowne, along the Harvest River. I was called upon to serve my Fatima, the greatest task any Joanite could be commanded to perform.

There were several others who were also called to arms. They were all from honorable and respectable clans, and as individuals they had proven their worth several times over. I was the youngest and most naïve of them, so I was quietly respectful and I listened more than I spoke.

First, there was the eldest and most decorated of our circle, a White Guard of Joan, the eldest of the Templars who had been given a special place for their years of servitude to Joan and the Nation. His name was Geoffrey Morth'on, and although he was aging, his wisdom and resolute manner would provide us with firm foundation.

Second, there was an experienced Blade named Zola Heka'on. She had encountered the Z'bri several times in her life and had survived them all. Her scars were her rite of passage and her field experience was invaluable. I miss her the most, for her quiet, thoughtful manner reminded me of our Fatima.



Then there was Prenay Fera'on, a mysterious and alluring man who belonged to the Guild of the Winter Wolf. I didn't know much about him, but he seemed to come and go with an air that both intrigued me and left me with a sense of awe. He had such raw power and passion, which I had opportunity to witness first hand.

Last, there was Veena Kil'on, a rather large man and cousin to Awarnak Kil'on, Garrison Leader of the Tower of the Setting Sun. He had vast knowledge of our Tribe's history and traditions. He was full of tales and insights that kept us company in the cold nights together. He made us laugh with his off-hand approach to humor, and also kept us focused on the chores ahead. It was he who gathered us together and led us through the ritual that made us closer than any others I had ever served with. Together we became a Hunting Party of Joan.

The Hunting Party Chant of Inception:

"We ask you, Goddess, to bring our brethren together under your protection and guidance, that your conviction and strength should flow through us. We are in you, as you are in us. The sacrifice of all those who died, so that we may live, shall guide our hearts and give us purity in our actions. We pray to you, that Joan, in all of Her honor and nobility, shall be filled with the power of righteousness, and that our emulation of Her will see us to our goal, without falter or hesitation. Her courage will be our sword, and our devotion to Her our shield. Our companionship in this Circle of the Hunt will unite us in the difficulties ahead. Under Joan's banner, all those gathered here do undertake this quest for the good of all. To these words we pledge, in Joan's name."

-Veena Kil'on, Templar

Trinity

From the recollections of Nostra Guy'on, Joanite Grand Councilor:

The first Hunting Party took place with the coming of Joan. She came to us as a figure of divine power, Her aura striking out and instilling a deeply felt fervor that allowed us to rise against our oppressors. It was in the Camp of Keli'on that She manifested. My father was a part of the first circle that fought alongside Her. They helped us gather the strength to face the hard weeks ahead. I was very robust then, and, although still tender in my youth, capable and competent — a natural leader of my people. It was a beautiful thing, to see Joan wielding Her sword and striking down the Z'bri hordes. In Her presence we were indestructible, and the corrupting and pernicious Atmosphere that permeated the Camps for so many generations was replaced with a new sensation ... hope.

The battles raged all over the face of what we now call Vimary, but it was a far different place then. There was no Bazaar or Hunting paths, no arable land or fishing streams, no Towers of Joan or Council Ruins. There was nothing but devastation and havoc. We chanted songs that rent the stifling Z'bri taint and made the weaker serf vassals quiver and retreat in fear, while the bolder, fiercer beasts attempted to crush us with their rage. We hunted the Z'bri, just as they had once hunted us; sheep for the slaughter. It was our unity that kept them at bay, and when we finally joined our forces with the crazed and furious Joshuans, and the wise and dedicated Terashebans, we were unstoppable.

They were great times, for we freed humanity from the grip of its own fears. We call this era in Joanite history "La Chasse des Grand Fleaux," or "The Hunt for the Great Evil". The nights seemed endless and many of us died — my father included. We fought alongside the Fatimas, liberating each camp in turn and adding their strength to our own diminishing numbers. On the night of the Final Liberation, while our people waited for the guidance of Tera Sheba the Wise, we knew then that Joan and Tera Sheba created a balance that was necessary for the future of the Tribes. Together they stood bold and controlled in the face of a great enemy. Tibor, the Baron of the all the Camps, was defiant in his Ziggurat. Joan and Her Brother stormed the evil palace and brought an end to a time that we are thankful no longer exists. Joan and Tera Sheba made a pact with each other then, and They, together, as the Pillars of the Nation, ensured the freedom of our people and the foundation for the Nation.



Goddess revealed

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

Several prominent members of the Joanite Council were present as we carried out the ritual for the Hunting Party. The venerable Nostra Guy'on was attending, his role in the ritual a sign of the importance of the quest at hand. He took a symbolic dagger of Joan, and placed it at the center of our circle. It was a beautiful ceremonial artifact that had many inscribed runes and markings upon it. Despite its beauty, I recognized that it was stained with blood from long ago.

Valerie Ben'on then came into the ceremony and spoke of the virtues of Joan. She brought out in us our faith in our Fatima and our love for the Goddess. She was filled with emotion as she spoke and the effect it had on me was remarkable. The true weight of what was going to occur began to take hold. Valerie had a voice that raised itself in a perfect manner. It was crisp, yet had a soft quality to it, as though the nature of her prayer could have carried through battle.



The Prayer of Joan:

In Joan we trust our lives,
 For it is She who gave us this gift.
 Through Joan we have Courage,
 For it is She who instills it in us.
 In Joan we have faith,
 For in us She believes.
 By Joan do we have honor,
 For it is our greatest virtue.
 For Joan will we die,
 For it is our souls' purpose,
 In Joan shall we be redeemed,
 For through Her, do we find solace.
 Through Joan do we serve the Goddess,
 For it is through the Goddess that we all shall live.

I have said that prayer every day since the Ritual. It is as much a part of me as my own breath. The words stay with me in my dreams and waking hours; forever present in all of my actions and all of my thoughts. I am glad that the ritual was done before our quest, as I had a greater respect for the traditions of our Tribe after that. My faith in it was perhaps one of the only things that kept me alive.

Sorrows of suffering

From the journals of Tera Pal'on, Evan Nurse:

My heart stopped when I saw the carnage that lay before me. The Joanite Templars and Blades were our most sacred protectors and yet even they could not stop the force of the enemy that came for them.

Broken mirrors and shards of glass were strewn about the central grounds of the Tower of the Crescent Moon. It neighbored the Tower of the Setting Sun, the western-most of the Seven Fingers. I stepped over the bodies of the dead, careful to avoid their touch.

The Yagans nearby were already gathering the dead and setting fire to them in a ritual pyre. The Fleshers anointed several well-marked bodies, including the Garrison Leader from clan Ben'on, and performed protection rites in order to preserve the skin.

I noticed a Magdalite Diplomat lecturing an apprentice, explaining details of the attack, and some of the more mysterious, unseen clues that lingered in the air. The apprentice seemed more overwhelmed with the sights that assaulted her senses than with the wise words of her tutor. I struggled through the battered defenses and wiped my eyes as the smoke stung them and caused the tears that masked my sorrow.

No matter where I looked, I saw death. There were no signs of any survivors . . . not even one. Worse, there were no signs of whatever had caused this slaughter. I left the Tower through the southern gate and found a quiet spot at a stream nearby. The blacktop cast a shadow over me from behind and as I attempted to compose myself and wash away the sights that haunted me, I saw a ritual taking place in the not so far distance.

There were several Templars and Blades of Joan standing in a circle within an open glade. Surrounding them was a formation of spears in what appeared to be a star shaped pattern. From my vantage, I could make out some of their words and prayers as they carried on the wind. They were beautiful words and unlike the ones I was used to from the stalwart protectors. They enacted the ritual in an extremely formal and traditional way, each of them clothed in fine garments woven with color and armor that glistened with Dream. I knew then, that something was occurring that had not happened for a very long time. The Joanites were taking the fight to the Beasts.

I quietly sneaked back to the others, careful to not draw any attention to myself, and began the rites that would cleanse the Tower of the pain and suffering that came with such sadness.

Conflict

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

I saw that Prenay's rage was ready to explode. He clenched his fists in anger and the veins upon his forehead pulsed with a frenzied rhythm. Bartholomew Medi'on, a Terasheban Marshal of the Watch, stood strong against him, unflinching in the assault of words that would have struck any lesser man into submission. Yasmin Luther'on, a Watch Captain, continued to press by Veena's muscled frame, in an attempt to take command of the Tribals who were gathering information and attending to the scene — specifically, the Magdalite Diplomat, named Tanis Ibenkin, who stood in such a way that he favored neither side.

"This is not a Watch Marshal's concern, Yasmin," said Veena, completely ignoring Bartholomew Medi'on.

"You are impeding an investigation of the death of Tribal Warriors. I suggest you stand aside, or I will be forced to administer quick justice, most honorable Templar," retorted Bartholomew.

Geoffrey Morth'on placed a gentle hand on Prenay's shoulder to keep him from doing something regrettable.

"Investigation? Investigation! You are out of your mind. The results are set out plainly before you, Marshal. A Tower has been sacked . . . with no survivors. You want justice? Then I suggest YOU stand aside and let us do what is rightfully our duty. This is a Joanite concern and we won't have any Terashebans stepping in and claiming to be acting on behalf of justice." Veena glared at Yasmin, "Not ANY Shebans!"

We were all silent, for the connotations were clear. Zola Heka'on lowered her head and whispered some barely audible words that asked for Joan's forgiveness.

Tanis Ibenkin, the diplomat, stepped towards Veena and began to speak to him of the emotions and visions he received from the scene of the massacre. His decision on who had come out victorious in the exchange closed the argument, once and for all. I watched the Marshal, the Watch Captain and her entourage leave the scene, but I couldn't help but regret the division between us.



Laming of the prey

Prenay Fera'on turned his attention to the surrounding forest and paths. He searched the thick and tangled foliage that surrounded the Tower, passing under it and towards the other side in contemplative investigation. Having had some training in tracking, I noticed Prenay's unequaled adroitness in leaving the wake of his passing undisturbed. Upon completion, he came to the circle and spoke of what he had seen.

His skills as a member of the Guild of the Winter Wolf had aided him in the discovery of a trail left by the mysterious assailants. He slipped into a quick trance and whispered words that sounded feral and savage. He raised his hands high above his head, as though calling upon a spirit that hovered over him, and then struck his long nails into the clawed tracks in the earth with a snap that resounded with Dream essence. Blood boiled from the dirt and soaked his fingertips, running up his arms like external veins. I watched as he removed his hands from the ground and licked the blood, his tongue and teeth stained bright red.

"The prey is lamed now. We will travel faster than it will, but we must go immediately for the effects are not permanent. Gather our things. I will bring a fog that will allow us to travel unimpeded by the frigid air of spring. Let the Hunt begin."

Solace

The journey west took us past the Tower of the Setting Sun. It was one of our most magnificent and imposing fortresses, partially due to its location. The Duskfall forest lay within a tired man's walk from the Tower and many dangers came from within the forest's folds. The most predictable enemies were the Squats. They saw the small homesteads and Evan communes in these areas as easy prey. The Joanite presence usually dissuaded all but the most desperate of attackers. Often they came for food, but we always sent them back with a proper remedy to their shortages, by lowering their useless population. The more pressing threat was the Serfs. They often had some strategy or design to their attacks, and the nature of their commanders often gave them imposing, inhuman capabilities.

Of course, the Tower of the Setting Sun was run by Veena's elder cousin, Awarnak Kil'on. We left the trail and headed for the Tower to replenish our supplies. We were set to travel through the night, but a quick respite would give us a freshness that would be most advantageous. On our way to the Tower, as we passed under the brilliant banners that stood out against the dusky red sky, a small cadre of Joanite Cavalry rode from the main gate. We hailed them as friends and they paused for only a minute.

Family's pride

They were Ben'on clansmen of differing families, and they asked us for the news from the Tower of the Crescent Moon. Our tale was not one they took lightly; after all, a Ben'on Garrison Leader had been killed in the attack. They began to raise their voices in anger, and with their rapid pace and Ben'on accent, I lost much of what they said. The gist of it, as I understood, blamed the Z'bri for the attack and claimed that vengeance would be theirs alone, by Clan and Tribal right. Geoffrey spoke up then with an assertive voice and told them that we were on the quest to hunt down and destroy the cause of our joint woe. He weighted his oration by describing to them the ritual we performed and that both Nostra Guy'on and Valerie Ben'on, their clan's most respected and favored Templar, had blessed us with Joan's favor. This appeased them somewhat, but I noticed a certain restlessness within their ranks. I couldn't pin-point the reason behind it, but it troubled me.

They rode off soon enough, their torches and lanterns held high above their heads. No other Tribe dared venture into the night, especially so far from Bazaar and well-settled areas. I smiled at the ease with which we did so with justified defiance. It was as though we owned the night and had no fear. I was bolstered once again in my confidence.

Last respite

Within the Tower of the Setting Sun ran myriad halls and tunnels that led to battlements high above the ground. The blacktop itself disappeared into the canal nearby, lost under the lapping waves. There were barracks located at the base of the fortification, decorated with the colors of the clans and families that served at the Tower. The Kil'on clansmen held it as their main training grounds and it was unrivaled, the strongest and most disciplined of all the Seven Fingers. Two Blades escorted us through locked gates and dark, overhung walkways. We met with Awarnak Kil'on in the central war room.

Awarnak was well aware of the troubles that occurred at his neighboring defense. It seemed that the Dahlian Runners were quite adept at making certain that all pertinent information was swiftly delivered. There was a full compliment of three men posted at each of the corners of the Tower and a general state of readiness was apparent. When Veena told his cousin that Prenay had tracked the attackers an arrow's arc north of here, Awarnak looked even more determined than usual. He called for a doubling of the guard and ordered a lock-down of all the outer gates after our departure. We hadn't much time, so after gathering a fresh supply of water skins and rations, and serving a quick prayer at the Tower Chapel, we were on our way.

Forbidden friendships

From the conversations of Katrivar Merik, Glass-smith:

"What's that? A Hunting Party, you say? I see lots of traveling Circles in my journeys back and forth from Westholm and Bazaar. Can't say I remember a Hunting Party, though. Anyway, I was at the Tower of the Setting Sun in order to trade with some Dahlians who regularly plied the waterways between the Seven Fingers, bringing news and a few tricks, but, more importantly, goods from the Rust Wastes.

"Although we are all trained in the sword, not all of us Joanites are battle-starved warriors, after all. I myself belong to the Guild of the Glass-smiths, led by the gifted Nolan Uhan'on.

"I traded information with the Dahlians more often than anything else, although our weapon-shapers often made very intricate and fanciful pieces that always brought a good barter. Of course, they were most interested in the maps! Our Horizon Circle often surveyed the lands surrounding Vimary, for our vantage in Westholm stretched into largely unexplored territory. To a Dahlian, these maps were worth more than an entire caravan's props for a year!

"They often asked me how I managed to travel so far into the hostile wilds of the Outlands, but I was careful not to divulge too much information. The Dancers have a way of getting things out of you faster than a Magdalite Concubine, you know! No . . . for the safety of the people I now call my friends, I will bar myself from telling of their secret lives in the hills to the west. As far as the Tribes are concerned, they all died along with their Fatima, lost to the annals of history."



Nolan Uhan'on, Glass-smith

Nolan Uhan'on is the head of the Joanite Guild of the Glass-smiths. He is responsible for overseeing the magical and inspired stained glass depictions that adorn the Joanite Towers and Chapels. His work goes beyond depicting strictly Joanite legends, however, and he does a lot of pieces for the other tribes. He currently resides in Westholm, where he concentrates on creating glass works that reflect Lilith's recent reign and the effects it had on Joan. With this latest piece being controversial in nature, Westholm supplies him with a relatively trouble-free location.

Highlights: Gifted, Insightful, Hard Working

Eminences: Fury, Devotion

Aspect: Battle

Attributes: Cre +3, Kno +1, Fit -1, Inf +2, Psy +1

Skills: Craft (glass-smith) 4/+3; Craft (weapons) 1/+3; Melee 1/0; Combat Sense 1/0; Lore (Joan) 3/+1; Mythology 2/+1; Synthesis 3

Equipment: Glass forge imbued with the Aspect of Wonder. This special artifact allows an attuned glass-smith (attunement meaning someone who has performed a Devotion ritual with the forge) to instill Wonder in glasswork made in the forge. The glasswork will carry with it a magnificence that makes the onlooker feel as though they are actually witnessing the depicted event. Nolan Uhan'on is currently looking for an apprentice worthy of becoming attuned to the forge.

Tales of yore

From the Legends of Joan:

Shortly after the Liberation, our Fatima, Joan, who had fought so bravely, lay with broken body and mournful soul. Her beloved Brother had been taken from Her, stolen in the instant that was meant to be the most joyous. She fell to the ground, a terrible scream escaping Her divine lips, as the impact of what had occurred became clear. Her hands released the weapons that had brought Her to the bitter end, the weapons that had shed so much blood and brought hope for the people who followed Her; the people who would become our Tribe.

She wanted nothing more than to be one again with the Goddess, to leave behind all of the sacrifices that needed to be made in order to bring us to this day. But it was not yet the time for Her life to fade. Joan's broken and wounded body lay, twisted, upon the ground. The sky was raining blood from the countless souls that had died during the Liberation. The blood ran into the ground and mixed with that of Joan's, creating a holy blend of the divine and the mortal.

It was in the final moments, when Joan prayed for the embrace and love of the Goddess, that the mother of all things showed Herself in the form of the other Fatimas. First came Baba Yaga, Her presence a sign that Joan's actions had made Her worthy of passing across the Fold. She had done Her duty to Her people and to Herself, and if Her death were to come to pass, then Joan's spirit would be guided to its eternal resting-place.

Next came Magdalen, for in Her was the passion and love for life and form. She whispered to Joan of the importance of remaining in this world, for all had not yet been done.

Dahlia then moved gracefully around the dying Fatima's form, singing a beautiful song of the joys and happiness that were to be had, if only She would stay with Her Sisters and dance the dance of life.

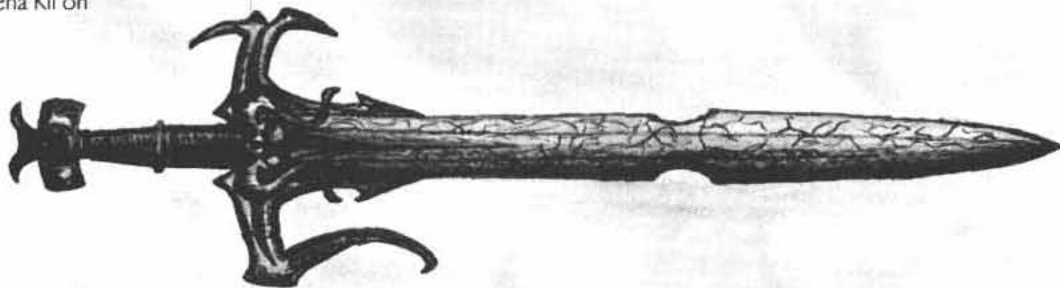
Eva showed Herself next, followed closely by Mary. They promised to heal and forgive Her, in order that She might lead Her people to their ultimate destiny. Mary caressed Joan's soul and took it upon Herself to know the horrors that ate away at the Holy Warrior.

Finally, came Tera Sheba. She showed Her fallen Sister that there was purpose even after victory — that the liberated masses needed a protector to shield them from the trials ahead.

The bond created by the love of the Sisters brought new hope into the brave Warrior Joan, and the gratitude they so willingly gave to Her, for the sacrifices She made, formed the gift that we hold so dear. Through Joan's blood, the love of the Fatimas and the healing that poured forth from Eva, Giver of Life, the ground burst into flowers of red and willows of the purest white. The pollen spread and the flowers' fragrances carried the seeds over the folds of the shattered earth, until all within sight was fertile and alive.

Joan rose from the ground, at the place now called the Watchtower, and looked upon the beauty that surrounded Her. She knew then that, despite the tragedies She had witnessed, sacrifice could lead to a brighter future. On that day, the Hunting Paths were born.

— Veena Kil'on



Secrets revealed

From the teachings of Prenay Fera'on, Guildsman of the Winter Wolf:

When Joan was young, a guiding spirit visited Her. It was powerful and bold, the very essence of all that was noble and pure, and it manifested in the form of a wolf. It was the Winter Wolf, the Totem Spirit that taught Joan the importance of duty and valor, along with the lessons of unity and courage. It showed Her that a Hunting Party was the first step towards defeating the hated Z'bri, and that through the alliance of body, mind and spirit could all things be accomplished.

Joan learned much from the Winter Wolf and they formed a companionship that still lasts to this day. She speaks with the Wolf Spirit, on occasion, but it is the members of the Guild of the Winter Wolf who are the true descendants of Her bond. We carry with us the ability to hunt with an unequalled passion and to live off of the land as easily as a true creature of the wild. We are capable of traveling great distances, without rest or repast. The forest is our home and the Spirit of the Winter Wolf guides us and protects us in our journey. The Aspect of *Winter's Cloak* keeps us from harm as the chill nights descend upon us. We are respectful to Joan, for it was She who understood the Winter Wolf and its ways. Those ways are ours now, and we still carry out the rituals that Joan learned so many generations ago.

The elite

Our markings bear a different significance than those of the Blades, the Templars or the Watch. They cover us completely, showing our deep connection with the River of Dream and the Spirit realms. We are all shamans as well as warriors and we have the ability, each and every one of us, to carry out the rites of our guild. As individuals, we each make up the pack that is the Guild, so none are held in higher graces than any other.

To become a part of the Guild of the Winter Wolf, one must be born within it. Although there are some other clans who have particularly worthy persons who have managed to join our ranks, we are almost exclusively from clan Fera'on. There are three families, but we do not distinguish ourselves as separate, so we all go by the title of Fera'on. Only during the mating rituals do we take note of lineage, for it goes against our Totem to marry within your respective family. Unlike the traditions of our Tribe of Joan and the teachings of Eva, we follow our lineage through the fathers.

That will be enough for you to know today. . . I see you grow tired from the day's journey. It becomes close to the midnight hour and I smell a strange scent upon the air. I gather we will not rest tonight.

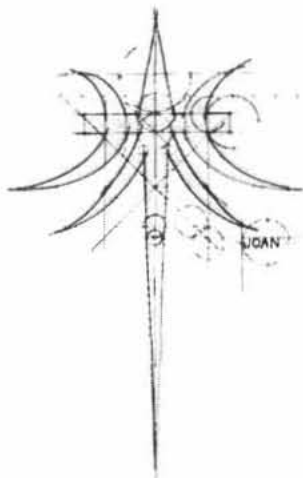
Dangers of Duskfall

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

True to Prenay's warning, we did not rest. A pack of vile creatures set upon us in an abrupt fashion. They resembled rats, but were large as badgers. They were fierce and quick and would have easily overcome us had we not taken to the campfire as a defense. We fought them off, using the burning branches from the flames, the heat searing their oily, black skin, which fell away in patches. They carried with them the scent of rotting flesh and, despite a few scrapes from sharp claws, we managed to keep from being bitten. All of us, that is, except for Geoffrey. The cold air stiffened his aging joints, causing his speed to slow.

When all was calm, we pulled away his mail skirt and layered some healing ointment onto the wound on his abdomen. Zola Heka'on told us that she had encountered these creatures before, calling them Skullers, and that they often carried with them diseases and infections. Unless we took Geoffrey to an Evan healer immediately, he would succumb to whatever illness the creatures had brought with them.

Division of Unity



Veena insisted that we go back to the Tower of the Setting Sun. There was an Evan Healer at each of the Seven Fingers, and Geoffrey could be treated quickly. Prenay disagreed, shaking his head and standing some distance from the rest of the circle. He claimed that we risked losing the trail and that one man's life was not reason enough to keep us from avenging and setting right the lives of all those who had perished at the Tower of the Crescent Moon. Geoffrey himself insisted that he was fine. After all, he was still mobile and wasn't going to let a little rodent bite take him away from the quest. Zola reiterated that, although the effects of the bite were minor now, they would become worse. It seemed we were at an impasse and everyone looked at me. I was going to have to cast the deciding vote. It was not a decision I took to lightly, for Geoffrey's life hung in the balance. I looked at each and every one of my companions, setting my eyes, finally, on the injured White Guard.

"This camp is infected and the creatures may come back. We'll pick up the trail again and carry on into the night. . .that is the best course of action." We gathered our supplies and headed into the darkness of the forest. I did not realize at the time how much I would come to regret those words.

A lesson of character

From the conversations of Simone Jacobi'on and Geoffrey Morth'on, Hunting Party companions:

Simone: How do you feel?

Geoffrey: Do not worry yourself, Simone. I am more than willing to accept whatever fate has in store for me.

Simone: I . . . I'm sorry that I made you continue. We should have turned back.

Geoffrey: Never regret your actions, Simone. Remember the Prayer of Joan and that our sacrifices are a part of our code. Besides, I've suffered wounds worse than this bite. The Evan Medallions Zola gave me are starting to help my breathing and the herbal ointment has stopped the burning, at least for a little while.

Simone: Good. That sets my mind at ease, although not completely. Not until you're safely under a nurse's care. Tell me, have you been this way before?

Geoffrey: Aye, I have. It has a different air about it than the Hunting Paths, don't you think? There was a time when most of Vimary carried this sickly pale luster. The days were as dark as the nights, and only the stars told us of the difference. The forest feels vindictive and hateful in these lost trails. The area is still heavily tainted, and I fear it will remain so — unless we take an active stand against the beasts.

Simone: So why don't we? Take an active stand, I mean. There is so much that needs to be set right, yet we focus our attentions on peripheral and frivolous affairs.

Geoffrey: You are referring to the Watch?

Simone: In part, yes. The argument between Yasmin and Veena still sits insistently in my head.

Geoffrey: There is a division within the Tribe of Joan. Our left hand is doing one thing, while the right hand seeks to carry on in a different manner. It is because our mind is ruled by the voice of Tera Sheba and our heart remains silent, mourning the indecision of things that cannot be undone. There must come an understanding between the Watch and the Templars, as well. Both are necessary and both will play important roles in the future of the Nation.

Simone: Hmm. . . perhaps we should slow down? Your breath escapes you.

Geoffrey: No, carry on. . . I'm fine. Now, what was I saying? Right. What we do now — this Hunting Party, the Seven Fingers, the Watch — is vital to the growth of our Tribe. We must explore and come to know the forests and rivers. We must set up Duskfall Towers in greater numbers, with stronger garrisons. We must carry our shield into the unexplored and dangerous wilds, to protect the paths that lie away from everyone's homes so that in Vimary, the Nation can grow. Although we may know what must be done, we are lost; confused in the face of a future that holds far too many mysteries and so few answers. We mustn't forget that, as Baba Yaga has taught us, the past holds the key to the future. Our mantle as the protectors of the Tribes is not an easy one, and nor should it be. It is an honor that we are given such a task, but we are undefined in how to carry it out.

Simone: Why? I have so much hope and so much conviction. I can see only good things for us Joanites, despite our difficulties. So why do we falter?

Geoffrey: I hesitate to say. . . but as an elder member of the Tribe, a Templar and a White Guard, I see a lot of promise within you; maybe because of your heritage, but more because of your inner strength. Take not what I am about to tell you lightly, for it requires that you have faith. Joan is ill.

Ill from the sores that fester within Her. Ever since the days of the Liberation, Her wounds have plagued Her, much like the way my own hinder me now. She lacks the vitality with which to stand for what She believes and so relies heavily upon Her Sister, Tera Sheba, for guidance and purpose. I pray for Her that She will be granted solace and rise once again to lead us, but it will take a crisis of great importance for this to occur. She must be blinded for Her to see; deafened for Her to hear. For now, all She hears are lies and half-truths. You will come to understand my words, Simone. They may strike you as impossible now, until the day that you witness them and know them for yourself, that which I have told you — the true import of it — will remain hidden.

Come, we lag behind the others. Take my hand. The trail becomes steep.

History repeated

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

The sounds of battle carried over the wind, causing us to run headlong into the trees towards a Joanite Duskfall Tower. We were heading south again, after three days of tracking, moving away from the H'l Kar and back towards Tribal lands. The trail took us through difficult terrain the night before and the forest grabbed at our armor and clothing as we forced our way through the brambles. Geoffrey's sickness had grown as the night wore on and, as the dawn broke, his face was pale and gray. He walked with a limp and his muscles were sore from the fever that clung to him. I struggled to help him keep up to the rest of the Hunting Party.

We entered the less dense undergrowth surrounding the Tower and were greeted by an assortment of bloodied bodies that littered the ground. They were all Tribals, some from a Dahlian caravan, some from the Tower's defense, while others, Evans and Magdalites, had no doubt been traveling to Westholm or Griffentowne. I turned my attention from the grisly sight and glanced toward the Tower proper, noticing a pitched battle being waged between an armed warrior and a beast that had long arms, an elongated neck and jaws of steel. Its wings batted at the air, striking up a force that blew loose debris from the battlement's tiers onto the ground below. My companions were already engaged with a wall of Serfs near the base of the Tower, the war cries of Joan's soldiers mixing with the guttural screams of the Z'bri slaves.

Devotion to duty

I saw a gap in the Serf ranks and fought my way through them, only suffering a few minor blows along the way. They fell to my sword swipes and just as I was about to reach the stairs to the Tower's upper level, a monstrosity lunged from the darkness. I gathered myself after a nimble evasion and, with a deafening cry, called upon the River of Dream to assist me. I felt the energy surge through me and I faced the creature with a boldness that countered its rage.

I fought it, tooth and nail, until it collapsed into a bloody mess, although I did not escape unscathed. I ignored my wounds by Joan's grace and ran forcibly up the stairs in order to aid the lone warrior.

I rounded the corner and saw him, the markings of a Hermit Blade stained across his forearms and neck. My earlier, pitiful use of Eminence was drowned in the amount of energy that freely shot across the Tower from his valiant form. The beast that challenged him, however, was even more imposing from this proximity. Its Koleris atmosphere crackled the air, forcing me to check my emotions and calm my mind. I lunged at the Horde Warrior, my blessed sword of Joan cutting a clean line to finally crash against its black, charred skin.

My attack managed to distract it enough, giving the Hermit Blade ample opportunity to strike a mighty blow that sunk deep into its flesh. Realizing it was in a poor position to defend itself, with the Hermit Blade on one side, and myself on the other, the Koleris sprang from the deck and took flight, reaching into the sky for its escape. It was at that point that Prenay took aim and let fly an arrow that pierced the Koleris's hide. The arrow fell from the sky with a sizeable portion of bone and sinewy tendons attached to it.

With their leadership gone, we dispatched the remaining Serfs who stood their ground. Those that escaped were lucky that we were spent and could not give chase.

A sad reminder

We took a note of our surroundings after the battle and saw that the Tower itself was still relatively unharmed. The base level had suffered some burns from the fire created by the serfs and a holding wall lay at odd angles, divided by the trees it had fallen into. All of those who were sheltered within the Tower were dead and we took their bodies and burned them in the Tower's main yard. I was angry that we had not arrived sooner, but learned that the Hermit Blade had shown up to the battle only shortly before us. I cursed myself soundly, believing that we could have been able to prevent another disaster. Of course, I was wrong in believing so: after all, an entire Garrison was overrun at the Seven Fingers Tower, and the Duskfall Tower was far smaller, with only a cadre of six Blades.

I stared meekly at the bodies as they burned. There are no divisions between the dead, my father once said. After what I had seen, I was starting to believe him.

In tradition we turn

The recollections of Templar Veena Kil'on during the Ritual of the Chase:

The piece of the Koleris Warrior in our grasp allowed us to continue the chase. An enemy can tell you many things about itself, without its knowledge or compliance. The Ritual of the Chase is a Hunting Party's strength, for it assists us in tracking our prey. The Ritual provided us with visions of the enemy's resting-place and of its intent. I gathered the others, after we cleaned up the Tower yard, for the sky grew dark and I feared a thunderstorm was drawing near.

The path began to show itself, but it still remained far from easy. The visions came to us while we chanted, the Hermit Blade, Karl Uhan'on, assisting us in our prayer. The River of Dream flowed through our minds, leaving trickles that we dove into and searched for meaning. At first, all was chaotic and said nothing but, soon, the images became clearer.

Vision of prophecy

Through the mist that clouded our minds, a sliver of light shone with a clear brilliance. It grew in size and proportion and soon showed itself to be a dagger of resplendent and angelic origin. It appeared to be the same dagger that Nostra Guy'on had utilized in the Ritual of the Hunting party, except larger, as though the dagger he used was forged from a piece of the one we saw now.

The dagger dripped with blood and flung itself against a shield of brilliant white. A mighty warrior with the markings of a Joshuan held the shield, yet he seemed vitreous and incorporeal. A massive army of Koleris Warriors rose around him and, in spite of his best efforts, the Joshuan Spirit fell under the assault.

The Koleris Horde took the shield and the dagger, and placed the artifacts upon a massive and imposing tower made from the skeletal remnants of a thousand slaughtered innocents. It emanated an evil that touched me in such a way that anger and vengeance welled up inside. How dare they make a monument from the artifacts that we held as holy and pure? It was sacrilege.

The Trophy Tower began to change as we continued the Ritual. We saw the landscape turn into a river of red, as blood ran freely from the wounds of thousands of people that hung from poles and gallows of bone. Massive forms walked among them and cleaved limbs from body and sanity from mind. The images rivaled those that I imagined from the Age of Camps, but I knew that these were from the present. Somewhere, the horrors we perceived still took place — somewhere far to the North. . . I seized upon the name spoken in my mind — Capal.

The scene shifted and a new revelation grasped a hold of us. We heard the prayer of Joan but instead of being spoken in the purity and piety I was used to, it was tainted and came to us in the vilest of languages. We heard it in the language of the Z'bri. The voice was in the accent of our Tribe, but I could not place the Clan or family.

Just as the ritual came to a close, I saw myself being dragged up the Trophy Tower and placed at its highest pinnacle, bloodied and dying. I screamed for help and then, as I awoke, collapsed into the arms of Zola Heka'on.

Heart's resolve

From the memoirs of Simone Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

The Ritual of the Chase ended with visions that were personal and unique. Was the Goddess warning us of what was to come or did the Seed plant fear and dissention within us? We allowed ourselves to recover afterwards, and took the time to gain needed resolve to face the dangers ahead. Veena, after recovering from his own harrowing experience, told us that our journey lay to the North within the lands known as the H'l Kar. It was a place that Joanites hadn't seen for quite a number of years, and we knew that in order to achieve our objective, a fast and swift intrusion was necessary.

After we collected our weapons and equipment, Prenay took the Z'bri bone and splashed it with blessed water. Steam rose from the contact of the two opposing components, but we were now able to leave the tainted substance behind. Karl Uhan'on told us he had other affairs to take care of and, hence, would not accompany us on our journey. He also informed us that an artifact of great importance had been stolen from the Tower — a Shield from the days of the Liberation. It was called the *Shield of Armathay*, he said, and it can only be wielded by a warrior of purity and truth. The way he described it, it sounded so much like the shield in the vision and I began to wonder, after consulting the others in the Hunting Party, why the Z'bri were stealing our artifacts.

We had no time for speculation, however, and set about continuing the quest under an umbrella of rain.

Shadows of doubt

The journey north took us far from the safety of the Joanite Towers and, as we continued, the remote countryside took on an ominous and perilous atmosphere.

The landscape turned bleak and dismal, the trees falling away to allow twisted and gnarled mutations of Nature to take hold. Stones and rocks showed faces trapped within them, screaming to be released while the water that ran in the streams bubbled with anger and confusion. Insects swarmed around us, attaching themselves to our exposed limbs, sucking the blood from our veins and vessels with an unquenchable thirst. We slapped at them and lit embers of wood so that the smoke would ward them off, but it was to no avail. A burning, sulfuric aroma wafted towards us and seared our eyes and mouths. We wrapped dampened cloths around our faces to lessen the irritation, but even that provided little relief.

The H'I Kar was weakening us with every step.

Geoffrey found the going very difficult over the following days, and he was racked with coughing fits that flung blood from his lungs and mouth. I aided him when I could, but the terrain was difficult for myself as well as the others, so he trailed behind, doing his best to stay with the group.

I notified the others that Geoffrey was falling further and further behind with each day, but they paid me no heed. I was frustrated by their indifference, and fell back from the others in group to rest with Geoffrey on a few occasions.

"What did the vision show you?" I asked.

He stared at me blankly and struggled to his feet. Between the fits of coughing, he managed to speak, "I need to make it to the Koleris Tower. I must be there. . ." He pitched forward, falling into my embrace. I used my Devotion towards him, and towards our cause, so that I could carry him the rest of the way. His body burned like fire and he was covered in sweat, even as he shivered uncontrollably in my arms. Tears ran from my eyes as I carried Geoffrey Morth'on to a place more evil than any I had seen before.

Souls purpose

From the final words of Geoffrey Morth'on, White Guard:

I was delirious and deep within the effects of the illness that sought to take over my body. My head lolled as the brave Simone Jacobi'on carried me to the inevitable battle ahead. When we saw the Trophy Tower piercing the sky in a valley littered with corpses, I began to weep. It was a foul and loathsome monolith that resonated with rage and hate. The forms of serfs, twisted and corrupted by the Z'bri around them, were running in chaotic patterns, striving to escape the fangs and claws of the Koleris Horde Warriors that toyed with them, often-times ripping life from body. I knew what needed to be done and gathered the group together in a ceremony of Battle. We united in a common purpose, driven to fight in our Fatima's name, regardless of outcome.

I invoked the Fury of Joan to give me strength and asked that my ancestors watch over me. Prenay Fera'on called upon the Winter Wolf, to guard our spirits, should we fall, and take our dying souls to Baba Yaga for final deliverance. Zola Heka'on called for a placing of faith in the swords that would bring death to the beasts and armor that would keep them from us. Veena Kil'on began chanting a Joanite war song that instilled Courage within us. Simone Jacobi'on said a prayer that would ensure that the Goddess saw us to our destinies. With our rituals complete and our task at hand, we unsheathed the mighty Swords of Joan from our sides and entered into a conflict that would bring us honor and glory.

Battle

The Serfs greeted us in the first wave, as we cleaved through them, our swords bringing down righteous Fury. The Z'bri bolstered the Serf forces with Gek' roh — chained Z'bri. Much blood was shed and we suffered grievous wounds in our melee. I felt a claw rip through the air and strike me with full force against the side of my head. Blood sprayed the air and I collapsed to the ground in a fit of pain. The contents of my stomach escaped my mouth and a hollow, sucking sound rang in my ears. As I rolled over, placing the sword tip straight upwards, the snapping jaws of the Gek' roh clamped down on its sharp edges, spilling its head's contents over me.

I clambered out from under its body and saw its Koleris Master standing imposingly before me — the same beast from the Duskfall Tower. Past the Iv'chet, I could see the base of the Trophy Tower. Only the formidable form of the foe before me kept me from retrieving the artifacts that had been stolen from the Joanite Towers.

I clasped my head in pain and whispered for Joan's spirit to guide me to victory. I glanced to my other companions and saw Simone running to my aid. I screamed a battle cry and swung my sword through the air as I rushed to meet my destiny.

Koleris' prize

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

No! I struggled to allow the River of Dream to flow through me so that I could Sacrifice my own body in order that Geoffrey could live. I watched him swing his sword at the Koleris Iv'chet's torso. Watched as it batted the strike aside and picked up my old friend and tore his body in two. The Koleris howled in satisfaction, which gave me just enough time to rush past it and begin my ascent up the Trophy Tower. It noticed me and threw Geoffrey's sundered corpse to the side. It then leapt after me and grabbed a hold of my leg. I slashed downwards at it and severed several fingers from its thorny hands. It fell back, allowing me to swiftly continue my climb to the top of the Trophy Tower. As I was about to reach the pinnacle, where I saw the Shield of Armathay and the almighty dagger from the vision, the Iv'chet's-winged frame landed before me. It sneered at me and I felt a Sundering that attempted to shatter my bones. I resisted with all of my might and screamed in pain from the assault.

I reached for the Shield of Armathay in a final attempt. The Koleris Iv'chet noticed the reason for my exertion and grabbed the shield from its undeserving location. It held it high over its head and screamed some foul words in its native Z'bri tongue. It then picked up the dagger.



Spirit's wrath

A flash of light exploded from the shield and a thunderclap rippled the sky. I toppled down the Trophy Tower, arriving violently at its base. I slowly sat up and saw Zola Heka'on locked in combat with a hulking Gek'roh. Its vicious maw snapped onto her arm and closed like a vice. Veena Kil'on yelled the words of Sacrifice as his own arm fell limply to his side, a brave act of selflessness that saved Zola's life. The chained Z'bri seemed confused that Zola's arm was still attached, which gave her all the time she needed to sever its head from its torso.

A Koleris Horde warrior, noticing Veena's useless limb, fell onto him, the valorous Templar disappearing in a shower of blood and bone. Prenay was fighting with a wolf's rage, the markings on his body rippling with dream, the presence of his Totem surrounding him with spirits that clawed and bit at the attacking demons. I turned my attention to the top of the Trophy Tower again, tears welling up inside, and saw a brilliant warrior who shone with a white light slashing and striking at the Iv'chet with Rage and Vengeance. The two figures shot into the air and crashed into the earth with the force of a pounding wave.

I stood up and fumbled for my sword, but it was nowhere to be found, lost somewhere in the mud around me. My eyes wavered, as dizziness passed through me, and then regained their focus as I stared into certain death. Three Koleris Warriors surrounded me, their faces dominated by huge, serrated teeth. I threw up my arms in defense, expecting to have my body torn asunder. The White Warrior surged through them, cutting them down and saving me from death's door. Fate had smiled upon me. The White Warrior shone before me, the faint markings of a Joshuan upon his body. I knew what needed to be done. . . I took the Shield of Armathay and the Dagger of Joan.

Ascension

I felt the Z'bri atmosphere around me wither and die, its putrid scent gone from my senses. I waded through the Chained, their claws striking harmlessly against the Shield, my Dagger, in return, cutting gashes of death upon them. Zola and Prenay supported me on either side, as we fought in what we believed to be our last stand.

For we are all one Tribe

Mek, Fallen Joanite Jacker, from the history of the Fallen Crusades:

The Joanites seemed to be all but defeated. We couldn't have arrived at a better time, for the Koleris Horde had no warning that more resistance would show itself. Mana and Gavin, the two others whom, along with me, led the Jackers, called out for the final assault. The battle was steeped in carnage and we lost many of our numbers in the push. There was a way to fight the Z'bri that would ensure our victory, and that was the destruction of the Horde Leader. The Koleris were mad with rage and would soon fall on each other without leadership, vying for the position of authority. It was our goal and I took Gavin and a handful of my most adept fighters in an attempt to close off the Koleris Iv'chet. We arrived before him with a few wounds and one less in number. There were four of us now, and we surrounded him, noticing the deep injuries upon his body.

Using Bravery and Vengeance, we rushed him. Gavin dove at the Iv'chet, slashing a tendon free from its leg, in turn opening himself to a strike that crushed his chest and left him gurgling in a slow asphyxiating death. His onslaught provided us with an opening that allowed us to close on the ferocious Z'bri noble. My comrades continued to fall around me as the Iv'chet produced countless jagged and spiked weapons from its own bone and flesh. As it razed us down to the final numbers, I suffered a deep slash that penetrated my thigh, falling to one knee. It was in that moment that a Joanite Blade, swathed in a white glow, flew high into the air and plunged a dagger deep into the beast's abdomen. A multitude of cracked lines spread across the Iv'chet's body and it collapsed in a flailing frenzy.

Deception revealed

It spat words into the air, cursing Joan and the Fatimas. It left an utterance that instilled fear in its final moments, saying, "You think you have defeated us? There still lies a viper in your midst. Within your dearest tower resides an evil that is greater than any you have seen here. . . for that evil is one of you."

The Z'bri's carcass lay still and silent, and in the confusion that came about from its death, my Fallen Crusaders, the three remaining Joanites and I all escaped from the cursed lands of the H'I Kar.

Home has no meaning

From the recollections of Zola Heka'on, Blade of Joan:

In our return to Vimary, after the battle at the Trophy Tower, two of the Fallen died of their wounds. Prenay performed Joanite death rites upon them, for they had died saving us. It was only proper that we honored their sacrifice. We also said a prayer for the lives of Geoffrey Morth'on and Veena Kil'on, who fought bravely so that we could continue our quest. We thanked the Fallen for coming to our aid and I spoke to Mek and Mana about the strength of the Jackers. They fought as well as any others I had served with and came to the aid of those who had cast them out. There was great honor in that.

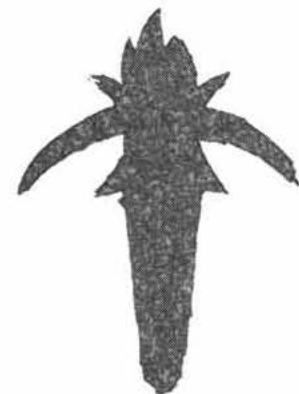
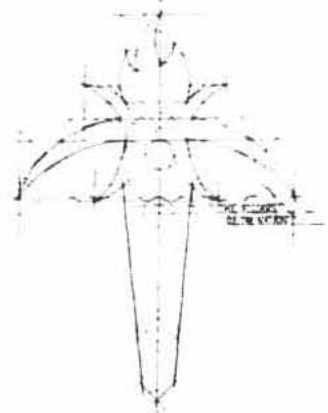
I spoke at length with Mek and found that he was still the strong and noble warrior I knew during the time we served together at the Seven Fingers. They were good times, and I remember he was always carrying out his duties with perfection. In fact, he and I trained together in the weapons forms that came to us in Dreams. When we fought each other in practice, all would come to see. Perhaps he wasn't a Tribal now, but his habits remained the same. Were we really so different?

I gathered Prenay and Simone together in a meeting to discuss the Z'bri's dying words.

If what the Beast said was true, then there was a traitor amongst the Joanites. Someone had told the Z'bri about the artifacts located at the Towers and of the tactics used by the Garrisons. Vimary's borders were in dire peril and we needed to uncover who had betrayed us. Of course, should the traitor be influential, word of our return would bring us under scrutiny, and it was possible that the traitor would do anything to stop us. We needed to enter Vimary unnoticed and the best way was to disguise ourselves as Fallen and enter Tribal lands with the Outcasts that accompanied us.

We were wounded from the previous day's journeys and paced ourselves as to not aggravate any injuries. Mana, once a Child of Lilith, told us that an Evan commune lay not far from Griffentowne and that healing and rest could be had there. We set our path in the direction of the commune and traveled as one, if only for a little while.

Prenay was intent on the return to Tribal lands, the knowledge of the traitor swimming across his mind, forcing the unfathomable reality of it to tangle him with frustration and anger. I walked slowly with the others and asked Simone how it was that she was chosen to become a part of the Hunting Party. As we made our way into more recognizable lands, she spoke to me with a calm resolve that was mature and quite dissimilar from her demeanor at the beginnings of the quest.



Arisen

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

I was posted at the Tower of Jacobi'on, one of the fourteen Towers of Joan upon the Great Hill, centrally located within the Hunting paths. My younger sister, Heather Miralkin, came to me while I patrolled the outer walls and told me that Nostra Guy'on was on his way to the Seven Fingers and required escort. I immediately went to the White Guard of the Tower and asked to be given the honor of attending to the Elder Councilor and his needs. Given the nature of my reputation of abiding by the Joanite traditions and laws, the White Guard thought it best I become more learned in the ways outside of the central towers. I went to gather my weapons, armor and traveling equipment immediately.

I was late for the departure, however, as it seemed that the entourage needed to travel with the greatest haste. I rode after them with earnest and caught them at the tower that housed the family Merakin, my own family's closest rivals. Unfortunately for me, one Tagos Merakin, a large, rather brutish man, thought it best to attach himself to the group and agitated to be allowed to join and take my part in the soon to be formed Hunting Party. I was disturbed at the possibility that I would be refused the opportunity to join what was certain to be a historical quest and so brashly announced a challenge to Tagos Merakin. I was favored to be the loser in the challenge, but I had no choice. I had not been given leave of my post by the White Guard only to return without part or place. I needed to prove that I was capable of undertaking a dangerous and meritorious duty.

Veena Kil'on was in charge of setting up the challenge. He set aside the training grounds of the tower and placed one of each weapon around the outer edge: a sword, a spear, a dagger, a shield, a staff and a mace. Tagos and I entered the circle each dressed in a robe of our family colors, mine green with red, his black on gold, and announced our clan and family names for all those present to know who we were. I stated the challenge as falling under my instigation and that Tagos had accepted the competition.

We then both invoked Joan's name and asked for Her favor, to ensure that She would choose the best warrior to rise victorious. We squared off against one another and locked arms. His forearms were massive and dwarfed mine, as his hands gripped my wrists. I knew the weapon I wanted to seize, but needed to keep in mind that keeping him from his choice was as important as me being able to reach my own.

Veena stood to the side of the circle and called out, in his booming and commanding voice, for the challenge to begin.

In an instant, I was flung to the edge of the circle by Tagos's heavy arms. I fell into the dirt and found myself on the opposite end of the weapon I was intent on — the sword. I rested my eyes on it as he pulled it from the ground and tossed it from one hand to the next. The closest weapon to me was the mace and I jumped for it before he could complete his yell. He screamed out with a voice that mocked me, even as it made him stronger. "To my challenger I demand the use of the dagger!" My hand fell on the handle of the mace as he began to laugh at my predicament. There I was, forced to use the dagger in melee against a larger warrior armed with a sword. I saw the hope of becoming a member of the Hunting Party dwindle, but not vanish entirely. Not yet. I devoted myself to carrying out the challenge regardless of circumstance or outcome and saw the spin of misfortune as being a test of my worthiness. I dropped the mace and walked to the dagger, placing it firmly in my left hand.

In retrospect, it resembled the dire situation we faced at the Trophy Tower, under-armed and overmatched.

Tagos waited for me to close on him, but I knew the disadvantage of pressing his longer reach, so I feinted a forward movement and allowed him to open his defense as he prepared to strike. The sword swung harmlessly over my head, albeit a little too close for my liking, and I slashed at his thigh with the blade. A deep wound opened up and I had balanced the odds. He was slower in all respects to me now and I forced him to turn on his bad leg for the remainder of the challenge.

I will spare him the dishonor of telling you of his ultimate failure, but, rest assured, Tagos Merakin carries no good will towards me. In fact, he has stated quite openly that, upon my return, he will have his own challenge waiting!

Understanding

From the recollections of Mana, Child of Lilith:

The Joanites we traveled with were deeply concerned with the nature of their quest. Rightfully so, for if the Joanites could not stand strong against the Z'bri and their seductive ways, then who could? While recovering from our wounds at the Evan commune, we discussed the possibility of spreading false news of the Hunting Party's demise in the H'I Kar. It would provide at least a few days cushion for them with which to infiltrate the Joanites and discover from whom and from where the plots against the Tribe were manifesting.

I helped the others tell them about the back streets of Bazaar and described roads and alleys that were infrequently used or patrolled by the Watch. We disguised them as Fallen, placing markings and false scars upon their bodies that resembled those from a banishment ceremony. At a casual glance, it would be impossible to tell that they were any different than the Fallen in Hom.

The Evans gave us food and water to take with us and we left the safety of their comfortable, yet rustic homes in the middle of the night. We followed the canals and waterways until we arrived at the Seven Fingers. There, we showed the Joanite Hunting Party a way through the defenses. They seemed amazed as we approached the Tower of the Setting Sun and entered hidden tunnels beneath it that led to the other side. There was no way for us to be noticed and upon our return to the upper ground, they glanced back at the Tower and shook their heads.

We calmed them by telling them that the Fallen were not intending to act against Joan, for it was She who showed the Outcasts mercy after Lilith's arrival. It was the Joanites who came to Her and acted for the better of all the people, not only those in the Fatima's graces. They understood our words, especially Simone Jacobi'on, which wasn't surprising, as she appeared to be the youngest.

Youth always lends an open mind.

We were reminded of that fact when we were heading through the north end of Bazaar. We, again, used the underground passages as much as possible. As we rested in a small, cramped tunnel that adjoined what I learned was called the Anger line, a group of Agnite Children ran headlong into our group of armed and ready warriors. They seemed startled at first, but upon noticing we were "Fallen" began accosting us with slurs and tempted us with dangerous games of which we had no clue as to the rules.

Prenay Fera'on, the wild looking Joanite, struck one of the children with an angry fist. The child went reeling headlong into a puddle of filthy water. As he was about to lash out at another child who attempted to shove him from behind, Simone stayed his hand with a light yet firm gesture.

"We must protect the children, my friend," Simone said. "They are our future and will carry us from our grief." She spoke with an other-worldliness, as though she had received a visitation from a spirit that brought peace and calm. We watched her as she tamed the angry Joanite, guiding him into leaving the children be.

The Agnites ran, giggling with nervousness, down the dark tunnels that lay beneath Bazaar.

Parting of the ways

We knew the Hunting Party had their pressing matters to attend to, so we took our leave of them. I thanked them for standing strong in the face of what seemed like an insurmountable adversity. They thanked us in turn for all of the aid we have given them, both in the H'I Kar and Bazaar. We left them at an emporium, a place they would be able to mix-in with the throngs of Tribals and Fallen alike. Zola Heka'on placed a gift in my hand before she departed — a medallion of Joan. I myself reached into the folds of my tunic to give something in return, but she stopped me from proceeding. She gave me a look as though where she was going, she would not need anything but the acceptance of one thing. . . the future.

Elucidation

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

It was midday when we traveled through the streets of Bazaar towards the Watchtower. The awkward movements and strange glances we received from the Tribals around us gave me a sense of what it was to be an Outcast. I hid my face out of necessity, but imagined what it felt like to hide it out of shame. We passed a group of youngsters who tossed fruit at us and yelled names that are best not mentioned. They were cutting words that stung us, even though they held no lasting meaning. A cadre of Watchers, a group that would under any other circumstances offer us assistance, provoked us and followed us for a fair number of streets, ensuring that we were of no harm to the merchants and entertainers in our passing.

I gained a true empathy for the Fallen at that time, for, not only had I seen them as individuals and people of emotion and honor, I saw how we were as we looked down upon them. We, in all of our tradition and morality, were ignorantly inflicting hateful prejudices on people who could not defend themselves for fear of ultimate punishment. I made a pledge to myself that day. It is one I still hold all these years later.

Tower of sin

The Watchtower. It looked to me as it did in the vision, covered in blood and smelling of treachery. Once I looked at it with proud eyes, but in light of what I had seen in the Ritual of the Chase, it now seemed cold and dark. The personal vision I had received was enigmatic and strange, but with the source of it standing plainly in front of me, it all became clear. Whoever had acted against the Tribe of Joan lay within. We removed our disguises and threw them in a heap outside of the outer gates. We then donned our armor and unsheathed our swords from the bolts of cloth in which we had hidden them. I clasped the Dagger of Joan and placed it close to my heart, feeling comfort in its cold steel. The Shield of Armathay hung comfortably from my back and with a gesture that signed the symbol of Joan, we entered the Watchtower.

The hall that hugged the tower itself was open to the air outside. I could see that there were Watchers training on horses and working in formations for battle and parade. Basyl Loren, the Cavalry Captain, shouted orders to the trainees who were doing their best at creating frustration in their captain. The cavalry grounds were flanked on one side by the armory and weapons forge, the resident burning embers and hot steel warming the spring air.



We turned to the inner rooms and halls of the tower, and lit torches from hanging brackets to shed light along our path. The dining hall was filled with Watchers and Blades, along with Evans who tended to the grounds and the kitchen itself. A Dahlian musician played a flute to soften the clanging of the pots and pans. The welcome aroma of stewed meats and fresh fruits were resisted, put off for a time when such indulgences could be more properly taken.

Prenay, Zola and I split up in order to cover more ground and explore the deeper recesses of the Watchtower. We performed a quick rite that would allow us to locate one another; all that needed to be done was to draw a little blood upon the discovery of our quarry.

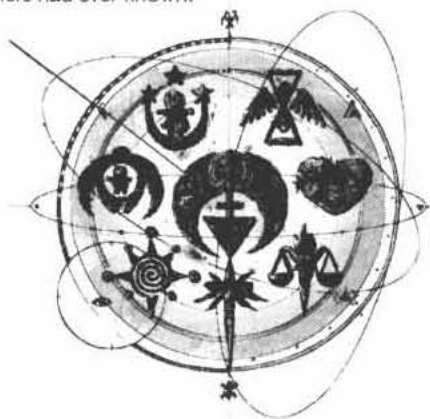
I wandered more passages, passing by private chambers, weapons training halls, chapels for individual prayer and larger rooms for group ceremonies and rituals. I avoided the contact of any people I came across, ducking into side rooms or adjacent hallways to assist evasion. It was during one such movement that I found myself bearing witness to the holiest of sights.

Joan's war room

Joan sat before an altar that held the body of Lilith. Candles, each the size of a man, surrounded Her and the Fallen Fatima's still form. The candlelight was cast off the walls, dancing in a rhythm that sang of lamentation. Sherra Uhan'on, a Templar favored by Joan, attended to the Fatima, standing quietly beside Her in case some order or service was needed. A massive wing, one that could have only belonged to Joshua, hung from the wall behind Joan, a series of stained glassworks framing it with images of the Liberation.

I doused my torch, not wanting to draw attention to myself, and stood hidden by a rack of weapons that appeared aged and worn. I touched one of them and felt the presence of a spirit around me. I became conscious of many spirits in the room and knew that Joshua's people were present, ever watching their dead Fatima's Sister.

Joan moved ever so slightly then, unnoticed by the vigilant Sherra, and shifted Her gaze from the peaceful Lilith straight towards me. I started to leave, but a voice asked me to remain. I locked eyes with Joan and felt Her enter me. It was a sensation that removed me from my body and sent my mind and spirit to a place where nothing existed, yet everything could be felt. Joan nodded Her head, as though giving me permission to leave Her audience and as I did so, I knew I had been blessed with something few others had ever known.



2. Word of Joan



Basyl Loren, Cavalry Captain

Basyl Loren is an equestrian of unrivaled competency. He trains all new riders at the Watchtower and is in charge of running the stables. He is a tough teacher, but is easily humored. This lightheartedness is one of the traits that makes him so good with animals. Basyl is fairly young for the amount of responsibility he has been given and does his best to hold and gain the respect of his peers and elders.

Highlights: Personable, Kind, Natural Teacher

Eminences: Fury, Devotion

Aspect: Sacrifice

Attributes: Agi +2, Cre +3, Bld +2, Per +1, Fit +1, Kno +1, Inf +1, Psy +3

Skills: Animal Handling 4/+3; Animal care 2/+1; Melee 2/+2; Combat Sense 2/+1; Lore(Joan) 1/+1; Riding 3/+3; Teaching 2/+3

Equipment: Stables at the Watchtower, riding equipment in abundance, Six horses — his favorite being a white Charger named Purity.

Long Spear AD+12; Long Sword AD+11; Armor Light Chain AR10



The corrupted

From the memoirs of Simone Miralkin Jacobi'on, Hermit Blade:

The forgotten tunnels under the Watchtower led me through a network of halls that twisted and turned, each one leading to a set of stairs that took me yet further into the underbelly of our sacred building. I felt a tingling upon my skin as I continued downwards and remembered the endless tunnels that crisscrossed the Seven Fingers and Bazaar. It seemed that the under passages did not discriminate their course and, even within the Watchtower itself, there were undefended entrances and exits. How many others knew of these weaknesses in our defense?

I soon came to a circular exit that was barred and locked with black steel. Several rats loitered at its base and I remembered the attack that ultimately destroyed Geoffrey's chances of ever returning to Vimary. I kicked the rodents to the side, checking the strength of the bars with a forceful tug. They opened upon hinges, swinging aside to let me crouch forward into the dark void ahead. The passage went for only a few paces before it opened up into a chamber lined with the skins and skeletal remains of humans. Armor adorned the walls beside each prize, creating a macabre trophy room that reeked of Z'bri! Here, in the Watchtower itself, the beasts remained. I wandered past the preserved skins, looking at the deeds accomplished by each one: a Joanite Watcher who had rescued a kidnapped child; a Dahlian caravan leader who presented the Liberation Play many years past; an Agnite child who became lost from her friends; a Magdalite with the markings of a Marian — there were too many to name them all.

I stopped at one of the trophies and pulled the Dagger of Joan from the armor at my bosom. Before me hung the skinned remains of my father. I began to cut him down from the hooks that held his skins on display. I began to fold the sacred history held in my father's flesh, when I heard a sound from a threshold nearby. I slashed the back of my arm, signaling the rest of the Hunting Party to find and join me in my location.

I swung the Shield of Armathay from my back and placed my father's skin gently on the ground, out of the way from any harm. I then proceeded to the threshold that was inscribed with runes of evil, shield and dagger in hand.

I peered into a den that had no identifiable shape. Bodies hung from hooks, their skin and muscles being pulled and strained from the torture. A few forms quivered, alive in a living hell. The center of the chamber was sunken, filled with a pool of thick, separated blood. Sharp spikes protruded from the walls and ceiling, while warts and boils bubbled from the living tissue that grew chaotically over the floor. At the far end stood a man wearing the ritual garb of a Joanite. He was saying the dark prayer I heard in the vision, speaking in the wicked Z'bri tongue with an experienced intensity.

I turned to see Prenay Fera'on and Zola Heka'on approach my position from behind.

"I can barely feel the evil," said Zola. "It is there, but muted."

"The runes upon the threshold keep it from escaping, I'm sure," whispered Prenay. "But, once we enter, we will succumb to its tainted embrace." He looked at me. "Simone, you have the Shield of Armathay. Only you can enter the chamber safe from the Z'bri Sundering effects and Atmosphere. If we risk coming in with you, we may fall on each other with hatred and murderous intent. Despite the runes that prevent the sensations from escaping, it still coats us like a humid air. We will invoke the Aspect of Battle and Sacrifice. Zola and I will take upon ourselves any wounds that may occur."

I nodded my head in acceptance to Prenay's advice and decision. My two companions touched my arms and head, completing a joint ritual that was intended to save our lives. I entered the chamber.

The face of evil

"It's over," I stated. "Turn so that I may look upon your face, traitor." I felt my fingers clench tightly around the hilt of the dagger, the palm of my hand beginning to grow slick with sweat.

He spun and stared at me, free of any surprise at my arrival. It was Jonah Ben'on, one of the Blades who had ridden from the Tower of the Setting Sun at the beginning of our quest, he who had acted so concerned at the dreadful news. He was the reason for my ill unease, although there was no way for me to have known it at the time.

"I was led to believe your Hunting Party had perished. Regardless, I can't say I'm disappointed with the falsity of it all. I can play a little bit longer this way. This victory will be held all the more sweet with your flesh as the prize — to adorn the wall beside your father's, perhaps."

"Why did you do it?" I said.

"What have we become? We are nothing but dogs, sent to do the Judges' bidding. We have no purpose, no ambition. My respected cousin, Valerie, she has all the glory of Joan. She is seen as the best, the purest, the most virtuous of our clan. What about me and my needs? Where did I slip into the cracks and end up with such mundane duties as escort and guard? Why have we forgotten the days when all Joanites were warriors, fighting the good fight and dying the noble death? I'll tell you why... because Tera Sheba, the Fates, the Dancers; they've all played us for fools. We are the laughing stock of Vimary. The 'long arm of the law' — bah! We are nothing now but herders for an island of complacent sheep."

I listened to Jonah's deranged perspective on our Tribe. I bided my time, taking in all of the power around me. I felt the spirit of a Z'bri Lord nearby but could not place its exact location. It was like it was a part of the room itself. I also sensed a movement above, but kept my eyes from straying. Best that whatever looked on from overhead believed I was unaware and capable of being surprised.

"Look at what you've done, Jonah. Two Towers of Joan have been destroyed, our kinsmen dead. Why did you join with the enemy you hated so much? Why?"

"The Koleris promised me glory. Plain and simple. By straining the borders of Vimary, we will be forced to go to arms, to play the role that was intended for us. We are warriors, Jacobi'on, and for warriors to exist, there must be war. Or have you forgotten!"

I rolled to the side as the Koleris Iv'chet fell from the ceiling. It cracked the ground with Sundering, the rippling of the floor beneath me sending me headlong into the bloody pool. I arose quickly, placing the Shield of Armathay in the path of the spiked tentacles that meant to pin me like a marionette.

I leaped into the air and rolled in mid flight, but was too slow as the Koleris slashed at my back and neck, opening a wound that would have paralyzed me in an instant. I slid into the wall and looked towards the threshold. I saw Prenay and Zola taking the wounds from my engagement. I held the Dagger of Joan above and to the side of my head, the Shield of Armathay covering my right side.

The Iv'chet screeched a piercing wail, drawing upon the cursed blessings of its Lord that hovered around him. I closed on the Koleris and struck a series of blows that angered it, but fell short of giving me any clear advantage. I skirted behind it, sliding on the floor and jumped for the lethal blow upon its spine, only to be denied the opportunity by Jonah Ben'on. He slashed at me with his sword and the force of it against the Shield slammed me into the floor. I screamed for Joan to give me courage.

I fought my two adversaries with Joan's favor. I felt Her with me as I did in the Chapel, but knew that the chamber we were in now was warded to prevent Her entrance. I could expect no direct help from my Fatima, but nonetheless, the knowledge of Her love filled me with hope and kindled my fury.

Prenay surged into the room, his sword whirling above his head, distracting Jonah with a flurry of strikes and parries, allowing me to concentrate on the Koleris beast. It pounded me with a force that could have crushed a mountain, the Shield of Armathay freeing itself from my grasp. Prenay flew backwards, racked with the pain that should have been my own. The Koleris Iv'chet, knowing that I was susceptible to Sundering now, attempted to work some of its vile magics upon me. I felt the energies gather and pour into my body, then syphoning off along the channel we had set only a little while before. Prenay exploded from the inside, his eyes bursting and his skin tearing into shreds that splattered the walls. I clambered frantically to retrieve the shield, seizing it before the Koleris could pounce on me from behind. I spun around, facing the beast and saw, from the corner of my eye, the dying form of Zola Heka'on enter the chamber in a fatal attempt to aid me. I allowed the Koleris to tear into me, its claws ripping into my sides with a searing embrace. Zola collapsed, dead from the final exchange between the Koleris and myself.

The Iv'chet lifted me from the ground, shaking my body like an Agnite's doll, trying to crush me for my insolence. My senses reeled, but Joan granted me clarity of purpose. I fought through the pain and focused a torrential blast from the River of Dream. It stunned the Koleris. I thrust forward with the Dagger of Joan, reaching deep inside the dark enfolds of the beast's torso and finally imbedding the blade into its spine. Joan used the flux in the Atmosphere to lash out against the Z'bri Lord's spirit and sent it careening into the Sea of the Lost.

I struggled to my feet, heady and fatigued from a thousand wounds. I spat the collection of blood in my mouth onto the floor and stepped towards the weakened Jonah Ben'on. With the source of his power gone, he feared my wrath. He clambered away from me, my scarred and bloody visage striking fear into his heart. I raised the Dagger of Joan in front of him, ready to take his life for all of the pain he had caused.

As I was in the apex of my righteous judgement, a hand took the Dagger of Joan from my grip. I spun around — slower than I wished — and looked into the venerable and wise eyes of Nostra Guy'on. He placed a gentle hand on my shoulder and said something to the effect of making a martyr out of a madman. This was no longer a Joanite concern. My duty had been done.

I wanted to scream — our duty should be to crush the beasts and their cohorts, not permit them to live and kill again! There should be no need for a trial, we all had seen what the traitor had done. And yet. . . and yet. I was to be reigned in like a senseless, mindless beast.

I nodded, slowly, and backed away, my pulse slowing, my mind reeling from the bloodlust and battle madness. I moved towards the door of that accursed chamber. I have yet to stop moving since.

The road ahead

I left the under tunnels of the Watchtower, placing the Shield of Armathay and Dagger of Joan in a sacred war-room. I gathered a Sword of Joan and a new set of armor along with a medallion to secure my faith. As I stood at the main gates of the Watchtower, I wrapped the cloak tightly around my body and started walking into the night. It was the first day of a hermitage that would see me through to my final destiny.

Yes, there were once days of hope and certainty.



Chapter three: Cornerstone

Repent, all the unworthy!
 She sees not,
 Yet She reads the secrets from your soul.
 She hears not,
 Yet She knows the lies that fall from your lips.
 She speaks not,
 Yet Her words are golden and pure.
 In the laws She writes your fate,
 And in Her book She seals your future.
 Repent, and be worthy once more.
 - The Psalm of Nidray



Tera Sheba's lament

I can never be wrong. Never again. Forgive me, my Brother. I have erred and the consequences have been terrible. You lie dead, your spirit returned to the great Goddess. Beloved Joan has withdrawn, shocked and stunned at your death and her inability to save you. Mary too is gone, overwhelmed by a wrong even She, the Forgiver, could not forgive. And I must bear the terrible burden of knowing I have caused your death. I struggle daily to ensure that it has not been in vain.

We were never close, you and I, because our duties lay so far apart. But we both understood our tasks and that bond will always remain between us. Do you understand the necessity of what I did? We needed leadership, else our war against the horrors would have been for naught. I expected Baba Yaga or Eva or even Magdalen to command. We all did. Instead, they turned to me. Can you believe me when I tell you it was a burden I did not welcome but was obliged to bear? When I tell you that not a day goes by without wishing it could be taken from me? But there is no-one I can tell this to, and no-one else who can bear it, so for the good of us all, I carry on.

Our task was to restore balance to our tortured world. To set our children free and help them find their destiny. Only I was strong enough to do what had to be done. So the Fates commanded and so I, their servant, obeyed.

How I wept that night. I had been content to lead my tribe and to perform my duty. Do you recall our councils of war? The planning, the discussions about the future, when the horrors would be gone and we could help our children to grow and become strong. But the Z'bri were already strong. Too strong. Our casualties kept mounting and no end was in sight. The harder we fought the more our casualties grew, and your children suffered more than any other tribe. Even our gifts to them could not staunch the flow of blood. I thought we might drown in it if the war did not end soon. If the price of victory was to be the destruction of our children and their future, it was not a price I was willing to pay. So we planned the final assault on Tibor's fortress. His defenses were mighty. I can still see you and Joan, fighting back to back, surrounded by your children as you cut a swathe through the monsters, driving all before your fury. Did I misunderstand the Fates? Was I wrong to order the attack? To allow you and Joan to range ahead of the rest of us? To allow you to confront the Baron, alone and unaided? Was I wrong?

Dear Goddess, I know I was. Mary could not forgive me, dear Brother. Please tell me that you can.



Day One

They sit above us all, watching and snooping and prying. They leash us with solemn words and simpering decrees. They are weakness in strength's clothing, and yet they are permitted to rule us all.

- Jonah Ben'on, Joanite Traitor

In the chambers of Judge Robbi Armandon

"Enter! Good morning, Seth. What do you have for me today?"

"Just our cases for the week. They look... interesting."

"Interesting? What have we got... theft... assault... treason. Treason?"

"The Ben'on matter."

"Yes, I heard about it. You've read the brief? What do you think?"

"It's political. Well, the trial is. The case is simple, open and shut, really. Ben'on decided we needed a war with the Z'bri and started killing Tribals to try and get one started. Ended up with his soul corrupted. He's already confessed. Bartholomew wanted the Watch to investigate, but Nostra overruled him and sent out a Hunting Party."

"Nostra Guy'on? What's his interest in this?"

"I'm not sure. Not yet. He stopped one of the Hunting party from killing Ben'on on the spot when they caught him. He must want an example made of the traitor. You know how subtle those old Joanites can be."

"Hmm. I don't like this. I want you to get to work on it right away. I want to know who's representing this Jonah Ben'on, who's prosecuting him, who was in the Hunting party — everything."

"Of course. Anything else?"

"Yes. I won't be in this afternoon. I've got to see if Anna has finished the chapters I asked her to write for my book. Get Mose to re-schedule my appointments. I'll be back tomorrow morning."

Double Jeopardy

From the journal of High Judge Cylix Seth'on:

Nostra has managed to wrangle a trial out of the Ben'on case. He's as canny as he is old, but I still may be able to turn things to my advantage. I hear that his Hunting Party was aided by a group of Fallen, helping them disguise themselves as Outcasts and sneaking across Vimary. I wonder, why didn't they trust their fellow Joanites? What did they need to hide?

I must seize this opportunity. If all goes will, even those self-righteous Templars will see that the Fallen are becoming too dangerous to ignore.

My enemies are watching me closely. But perhaps if I place an obvious stooge, someone clearly connected to me, on the prosecution team, they will not look elsewhere for my real agent.

By the Stone Shores

"Robbi! You made it! I thought you'd never come! Look at you!"

"Don't get too excited, Anna. I'm just here to hear Hamrark. Is he really going to talk to us?"

"He is. When I told him you were working on a chronicle of our Tribe, he agreed."

"How are your chapters coming along?"

"Oh, they're getting there. Don't worry, I'll get them done. I'm putting in some stuff that might be... sensitive."

"That's fine. I'll remove anything that's not appropriate."

"Good... Let's go — the Fisher King hates to be kept waiting."

The Birth of Tera Sheba

The recollection of Hamrark Slade'on:

Come in, my friends. I don't often receive visitors anymore; you must excuse the state of my home. Robbi, Anna tells me you want to write a record of our Tribe, our history and customs. I'll tell you what I can remember.

Tera Sheba first came to me in a dream. A dream of justice and balance and harmony. At first I thought it was my mind playing tricks, or the Z'bri toying with me. The agonies of our camp, the Theater of the Flesh, played on the minds of many. Why should I be any different? But after calling to me for weeks, I finally understood. I'll never forget the first time I set eyes upon Her. She was beautiful. Not the crude form She assumes to live among us, but Her true form. She is a creature of luminous beauty, incomprehensible to mortal senses. She gathered a number of us together in the River and told us what to do. She was coming, She said. We had to make things ready.

That morning, for the first time I could remember, I woke with hope in my heart, and tears in my eyes. I knew we were not alone, that our suffering would end and that we would be free to find our own destiny. But first, the Z'bri had to be brought to justice.

Baba Yaga visited us soon after. Some say She was the first, but Tera Sheba spoke to me and the others before the Crone visited our dreams. We prepared ourselves for weeks. Rumors began to float in about the other camps. Rumors that our salvation was at hand. In dreams we met and we plotted and schemed and we made ready to destroy our enemies.

We gathered the materials as we had been instructed, and hid them within the Z'bri's court rooms. Then, we allowed ourselves to be found out. The torture was excruciating, but we endured so that Tera Sheba could come and set us free. Our pain was a beacon, a call to Her across the River. There were a dozen conspirators. Only eight of us survived. We were taken to the Z'bri's largest, most elaborate courtroom. The prosecution began. We were accused of plotting against our masters, of wishing their destruction, of a hundred crimes we could not name. We stood in the dock, waiting silently. There was no room for doubt or fear, or we would be lost forever.

The Sergeant-at-Arms called out for anyone wishing to speak for the accused. The courtroom was silent. We waited, breathless with anticipation. Silently, She rose from the pile of junk we had assembled for Her. Silently, She swept Her gaze across the courtroom. At last, She spoke.

"I will speak for them. Their only crime is hope, which you have stolen from them. I accuse you of bearing false witness, of wrongful imprisonment, of theft and murder and rape. You have defiled my children and you will be judged.

"Your sentence is death."

WORD OF TERA SHEBA

3. Word of Tera Sheba



History: the Liberation

Things moved quickly then. Soon, the struggle for our freedom began in earnest. Those were days I will never forget! Freed at last from our slavery, our savagery knew no bounds. Joshua and Joan led the attacks, but Tera Sheba also stood tall in those heady days, ready to aid Her siblings and slay those who dared attack Her children. She herself wielded a great ax, felling the unjust and the unworthy alike.

It was not an easy victory. The Fatimas led the way, but we had to fight to reclaim our destiny. Some of us had been so savaged by the Z'bri that we could not regain our strength. Tera Sheba came to these wretches and touched them. Filled with a desire to somehow serve their savior, they served as assistants to the warriors, fixing weapons and armor, tending the wounded and recording our victories.

For weeks the battle raged, a battle for the soul of mankind. Live free, or be slaves forever? It was time for justice to be done. After a time, the Fatimas came together for a council of war. They knew the battles ahead would be terrible. They knew that the Z'bri were gathering their strength in order to strike at us. The other Fatimas begged Tera Sheba to take command, surely a sign of the Goddess' favor. Tera Sheba was humbled at first, but soon grew to be a mighty and fearless commander. The battle was rejoined with new vigor. I fought by Her side and together I felt we could have conquered the world. Everywhere we went the crowds cheered us as their saviors.

Then came the final council. Nobody knows what was said, but it was decided to press the attack, despite our heavy losses. If we waited too long, the Horrors would regather and we would be doomed. So we stormed the citadel!

It was a sight the likes of which will never be seen again. The fortress was a living entity; even the walls were trying to impede our movement. At first, the spearhead of the attack was Tera Sheba, Joan and Joshua. But we reached a courtyard of bone and transparent flesh and Tera Sheba said She would wait there, and use the room as a command post. Joshua was growing impatient with the delay. Joan looked to Tera Sheba. She seemed uncertain what to do.

"You have your orders," Tera Sheba told Her, "now carry them out."

With that, Joan and Joshua charged forth to find the Overlord in his chamber. We all know what happened there. It was our darkest day, and our brightest. Tibor and Joshua were killed. Slowly, the fighting wound down. It seemed that the deaths of their champions had taken the fight out of both sides. But we didn't care. We had won a great victory, though at a terrible price. Joshua lay dead, but we were free! Free of the camps, free of the Z'bri. All thanks to the Wise One.

History: the Nation of the Fall

The days after the fall of the Overlord were great days indeed. It seemed that our future lay open before us, ready to be made into whatever we decided. With the Fatimas to guide us, how could we fail to build something better than what had gone before? We had lost many of our brothers and sisters in the fight to end the tyranny of the Z'bri, so Tera Sheba forbade us to accompany our warrior brethren into battle. This left us with time to develop our laws. It was then that we began to realize what an enormous task lay ahead of us. We began to codify our judgements, teaching our tribemates to read and write so that our wisdom could be passed on to the generations yet to come.

It soon became apparent that our role in society was to be tightly constrained. The other tribes would not accept our authority, insisting that they had ways and laws of their own. We were called in to settle disputes between members of different families, clans and tribes, but that was all. Still, we had plenty of work to do. The merchants began gathering in the place now known as Bazaar.

3. Word of Tera Sheba

Where there are merchants there are criminals, and many children of both Tera Sheba and Joan were on hand to keep things under control. The solution was obvious. Joan designated a number of Her children to form the Watch, a group dedicated to policing Bazaar. Tera Sheba moved a dedicated cadre of Judges in, to serve the people's need for justice. So now the Watch apprehends criminals in Bazaar and our Judges decide their fates.

In those days the Keepers appeared. At first, we thought they were going to become useful members of our society. But soon Tera Sheba realized that despite their friendly face, their beliefs about the times before were a danger to us all. Mankind's spiritual desolation was what brought the Z'bri across the River of Dream, and here they were, trying to revive those old ways. I do not deny that such knowledge is seductive, but it leads to only one destination. With great sadness, Tera Sheba banished them from our lands. The Goddess soon pronounced Her own judgment on the Keepers, as a terrible blight befell their home.

The Grand Council was established at Tera Sheba's behest; it was only fair and right, She said, that the leaders of the Tribes should meet and discuss the matters of the day. They would then be allowed to make representations to the Fatimas so that They would be kept informed of the needs and desires of Their children. I believe that Tera Sheba wanted the mantle of leadership to be taken from Her, to be shared by all the Sisters in some form of a council. But as They had during the struggle to liberate mankind from the camps, Her Sisters once more insisted that only Tera Sheba had the wisdom to lead Their children.

History: the present

So now we reach the present times. Our tribe is beset with schemers. I believe this is the result of Tera Sheba's indecision. In the absence of strong leadership from our Fatima in matters of politics, the trained and ambitious minds of our most eminent thinkers turn to the questions Tera Sheba is not addressing. Some campaign for our authority to be extended over the other tribes, so that we would become the source of all the laws for all the tribes. Others turn their thoughts to the Fallen and how best to deal with them. Still others simply strive for power and authority as ends in themselves. This is a blight on our people, and as more extremists rise to positions of influence, so do their methods become more ruthless and unjust.

But I believe that Tera Sheba is merely biding Her time. She is allowing Her tribe to test itself. She is aware of all that goes on within it. Guided and aided by the spirit of the Great Owl, She allows Her children to plot and scheme. A time of great danger is coming and She will need to know who among Her children will serve Her faithfully and who will serve only themselves.

The corruption of the Watch is another problem. It is no secret that there are those who use their positions to take advantage of others. But when the time comes, it will be a simple matter for the Wise One and Her Sister Joan to root out the corrupt Joanites and Terashebans. I am sure They will not be gentle with them. I hope that time will be soon, for their corruption drives some of our brothers and sisters into the ranks of the Fallen.

The Fallen are the key to our fate, of that I am sure. I know that Tera Sheba feels responsible for them; She believes that the orders She gave to Joshua and Joan led directly to the Ravager's death and so the creation of His legacy — the Eighth Tribe. After the appearance of Lilith, I believe matters will come to a head. Perhaps the Outcasts will be allowed to return to their tribes, if they show penance and can demonstrate that they have been punished enough. The Wise One's compassion is limitless, but She must be stern as well. Not an easy task, and neither is it easy for Her children.

My tale is done now. I live here by the Stone Shores, surrounded by my memories as my sight grows dim and my end draws near. Soon enough I will be visited by Baba Yaga. But our conversations have invigorated me. Perhaps it is not too late for me to serve my Fatima one last time. I see many of my young brothers and sisters leaving the machinery of justice and coming here to find peace and purpose. Perhaps I can help them to find what they seek.

Go in peace. May Tera Sheba bless you both.



Day Two

And in the Court of the Flesh the voices cried out for justice and mercy, expecting no answer. Then, oh then, did the Wise One rise from their suffering to punish the offenders, in Her glorious righteousness.

- The Chronicles of the Camps



In the offices of Marshal Bartholomew Medion

"Yasmin, welcome, come in. Please, make yourself comfortable, can I get you anything?"

"No, thank you. I'm fine. What's this all about, Marshal?"

"Bart, please, my friends call me Bart."

"You're not my friend. What do you want?"

"Very well. You Joanites do like to get straight to the heart of things. You've no doubt heard of the prisoner? The Joanite traitor?"

"You mean Jonah Ben'on. Yes, of course I've heard."

And you've heard that the Templars took control of the investigation, despite my best efforts to defend our jurisdiction. But what if something were to happen which would demonstrate our effectiveness?"

"Don't play games, Marshal. What are you suggesting?"

"Why, nothing. But imagine what would happen if, say, the prisoner were to escape his guards on the way to the trial, only to be apprehended by the Watch?"

"How dare you say such a thing! By Joan, what you suggest is treason!"

"Treason? Demonstrating the plight of the Templars is hardly treason, my dear. They're becoming a danger to us all. Someone needs to show Joan how weak and corrupt Her favorites have become. I'm sure She would reward such a loyal and fearless servant."

"I... cannot believe what I'm hearing. Good day, Marshal."



On the streets of Bazaar

"Come on, Bennie, you can tell your old friend Seth what you heard. I'm an Advocate. Don't you trust Tera Sheba? Or do I need to suddenly remember those trinkets I saw you buying from those Keepers?"

"Oh, you remember hearing something. Storm-Cry and Cylix talking. Very good. You know, I'm not sure if they were Keepers I saw you trading with..."

"And they were discussing who should run the prosecution? Really? And who did they — Cylix's nephew, Willem?"

"Come to think of it, I'm not even sure if it was you I saw that day.

"So they want him to try dragging the Fallen in. Why am I not surprised?"

"Bennie, now that I think about it, I wasn't even in Bazaar last week."

In the chambers of Judge Robbi Armand'on

Tera Sheba, hear my prayer.

Seth has just briefed me on the defense and prosecution teams for the Ben'on case. High Judge Seth'on has assigned his nephew Willem, a junior Advocate, to run the prosecution. Willem's skills are untested, but I am uneasy with the High Judge Seth'on's interest.

The defense is being conducted by Annalise Dan'on. Her grandfather was Jak Uhan'on, of Joan's tribe. Seth has seen Shere Uhan'on and Valerie Ben'on visiting Annalise's office.

Forgive my suspicions, Wise One, but I cannot help them. There those who would use this trial to further their ambitions. Grant me the clarity and courage to focus on my duty. Help to serve you by deciding the case on its merits alone.

Tera Sheba, hear my prayer.

Life among the lawgivers

From the manuscript of Judge Robbi Armand'on:

The daily life of our Tribe shapes us all, hour after hour. Our tribe is one of great education and distinction. We pride ourselves on the fact that every child of Tera Sheba is taught to read and write. Even our fishermen — the Stiltwalkers — are scholars. We all take an interest in the doings of others. Each year we elect our Council. All are eligible to run; there are seven Councilors elected and there is normally an even mix of all our professions. The Council meets once a week and settles matters of policy such as trade regulations, disputes between neighbors which do not involve criminal matters and so on. Their decisions are binding on all members of the tribe.

In addition, the Judges, Advocates and Lorekeepers elect their own councils to further represent their interests. These lesser councils meet as often as they decide is necessary, and often bring petitions to the Tribal council regarding matters which concern them. Each of these professions also holds a number of functions and celebrations each year to reaffirm their dedication to their lifestyles. The Stiltwalkers are of course an exception to this; by their very nature they prefer an informal style of self-government in their territory by the Stone Shores. On occasion, however, even they will organize a representation to the council if they deem a matter worthy of such notice and effort. The last time they did so was during the Winter of Lilith, when they petitioned for both an increase in protection from the Fallen and an increase in the food they were allowed to keep for themselves. It is rumored that some were diverting part of their catch to the Fallen; I cannot speak on the truth of such accusations. However, after the Fallen attack on our lands, I doubt that the Stiltwalkers will be so generous again.

Terashebans are very active in promoting the welfare of their brothers and sisters in the other tribes. At any time there may be any number of informal committees and study groups working towards some goal. These may vary from groups of Lorekeepers organizing teaching expeditions to the people of the other tribes to young Judges and Advocates going on "missions" to the poor of Vimary, explaining the justice system to them and urging them to seek justice for any wrongs they may have suffered. I am always very proud of our children when they undertake such work, and I know it has the blessing of Tera Sheba Herself. Justice for all is Her desire, after all. It is important that we put a human face on our legal system; it is all too easy for an accused to be intimidated and cause herself unnecessary worry, either through ignorance of her rights or through an inability to compose herself when before a Judge. The truth always wins out in such situations, of course, but causing needless suffering is anathema to us, as it is to all decent people.

A tribe of many faces

Our tribe is the tribe of justice. We tend to the needs of others before our own; as much as the Joanites, we are bound by duty. All must serve in one way or another. Duty begins early for those of our tribe. After a few years on their mother's tit, all children begin schooling. They are taught to read and write and to appreciate our history and laws. Days may be spent watching Judges decide cases or assisting the Lorekeepers in their archives. Free time is carefully apportioned so that the children may mingle with those of the other tribes. It is good to know the hearts and minds of those you may one day be called upon to judge.

When a child has completed this basic education, it is time to choose a profession. All Terasheban are required to spend time as an Advocate or Lorekeeper. Their first years in these positions are a time of constant evaluation. Those who settle in remain and will rise as far in the Fatima's service as their talent and dedication will allow. Those who struggle with their studies, or prove otherwise unsuitable, are required to find other work. Some become Stiltwalkers, and perform honorable service to our tribe by the Stone Shores, fishing or learning the trades which support our Judges, becoming scribes, paper, rope or ink makers. Still others become travelers, searching the ruins of Vimary and beyond for knowledge of the past. Their activities remain hidden from most of the tribe, however; such knowledge could be dangerous in the wrong hands — or minds. Corruption is a constant danger for these brave souls, and they must undergo regular purification.

Still more find valuable roles serving others. Let it not be forgotten that we are a community like any other. We have our taverns, theaters and performers. There have been a number of great Terasheban actors; I believe our natural dignity gives them a gravity which fits them well for the great dramatic roles. We have many singers; they perform a function somewhere between a Lorekeeper and an entertainer. Their ballads and choruses enshrine our great stories and legends, such as the Fisher King's last battle, the appointment of the first Judge and Tera Sheba's Lament, a beautiful piece telling of our Fatima's grief at the death of Her Brother and the lesson of fearless bravery He taught Her. Still others ply our waters, transporting their Tribe-mates to and from their work and homes.

Yes, we are a varied tribe, but we are united in our love for the Wise One. More than any other Fatima, She led us from the camps and shaped our nation. Without Her laws and Her wisdom we would be living like animals, with nothing to protect us from our base nature. Our laws set us free, by allowing us the freedom and security to develop and exercise our higher faculties. We owe Her so much — obedience is the least we can give in return.



Day Three

The exams are what we all work towards, from the moment we become Advocates. Some say that they prefer the lifestyle of a researcher to that of a Judge, but you'll find that the majority of them have just never managed to pass. The exams are the benchmarks of talent and the key to our futures.

- Tomas Ever'on, Advocate of Tera Sheba

In the meditation chamber of Hamrark Slade'on

Wise One, hear my prayer.

I fear for my tribe, your people. We are beset on all sides by dangers and enemies, but I fear that we are beginning to turn on ourselves.

I have been speaking with a Judge, Robbi Armand'on. She is a good and loyal servant, yet she is troubled. When I fought by your side it seemed that all we needed was faith and purpose. She has both. Why does she struggle so? I know it is not my place to question your will, but she is like many others in your tribe. Are you preparing us for the times ahead? I wonder if defeating the Z'bri was not the easy part of gaining our freedom.

She is close to breaking, this Judge. You have your reasons for putting her to the test, I know. And it can be no accident that she has sought me out. The Owl came to me in a dream and told me it was time to remind our people of our past. She has been listening to my tale. When she asked my advice, I told her to put her faith in you, to trust that you would guide her and see justice done. Please do not fail her. Your people need a sign from you, a signal that your blessing is upon them. Your sister Joan has withdrawn; only you can give us the leadership we need. Let justice be done. Spare this Judge.

Wise One, hear my prayer.

Jonah and the Goaler

"Wake up, scum! Wake up! Time to face the Judge."

"Uhhh... what's the hurry?"

"Don't give me any trouble. If it was up to me, you'd be dead."

"Oh, spare me. I did those fools a favor. Look at you. A Joanite. A Goaler. What kind of work is that for a warrior? We should be fighting, destroying our enemies! These Terashebans are like parasites, sucking us dry and getting fat and complacent as they sit atop the heap they've made for themselves. We should be the leaders! We should be fighting, not guarding the condemned! Why didn't we finish the job? Huh? Why did we let Joshua die in vain? Because Tera Sheba didn't have the stomach for it. We need to reclaim our destiny. Or do you prefer living down here in the cold and damp and dark, taking orders from the Terashebans while the real enemy grows stronger? I have no regrets. Those I killed died as martyrs."

"They're still dead, traitor. And you killed them. I may not like it down here but it's our duty to protect the innocent, not to kill them. That's what our Tribe stands for. I've got to explain your legal rights to you. How the court works. So shut up and listen so I can get out of here. You're accused of treason. You know what that means, don't you? Exile. There'll be no quick execution for you. You'll die without the love of Joan and your soul will be lost. Think on that."

The Justice System

From the manuscript of Judge Robbi Armand'on:

Our system of justice begins its work when a criminal, or a suspected criminal, is apprehended by the Watch, or brought to a court house and accused. Our greatest court is the Court House in the Sunken City, the center of our legal system and the seat of our High Judges, but we have courthouses across Vimary. Tera Sheba's gaze follows us wherever we go, and there is no escape from Her laws. Some smaller settlements, such as Griffentowne and Westholm, have no Judges. Instead, Judges take turns making a circuit of Tribal lands, taking with them a small staff and a contingent of Watchers. This allows them to attend to their practices and still have the opportunity to travel our lands and to demonstrate to the people of Vimary that that Tera Sheba's justice protects us all, not just those of our Tribe, or those living in Bazaar. It also gives us the opportunity to learn about the other Tribes' laws.

Our court houses are blessed by Tera Sheba. Whenever a new one is built She comes and a special ceremony is performed to consecrate it to the cause of justice. At the end of the ceremony She dedicates a part of Herself to the courthouse's altar, so that She will always be present and so that justice will always be done. It also aids Judges should they need to use Tera Sheba's gift of Truthsaying, should the facts of a case not make the correct decision clear.

Each court house also has a number of cells. Sometimes the accused might have to wait a few days before her case can be heard. She stays in the cells or, if she has important duties or is a prominent member of a tribe and she has been accused of a minor crime, she will be allowed to return to work, but a Joanite will accompany her to make sure that nothing untoward happens to her before she is judged.

When the day of the trial comes, she is brought before a Judge. Witnesses may be called to speak for or against the accused, and they will be questioned by the prosecutor and the defender. Tera Sheba has decreed that both sides should speak. Only by hearing both sides of an argument can the truth be revealed. Usually, the accused and the accuser just make their cases to the Judge, with perhaps a few witnesses, and the Judge will decide on the spot. If the case is important, or if the people involved are eminent, someone might be brought in to speak for them. Perhaps a friend or relative who is clever or well-spoken, or even an Advocate. Some Advocates specialize in pleading cases, and their duty is to know the law and defend the rights of the innocent. They ensure that the Judge keeps in mind every law and case which might have a bearing on the matter at hand. These Advocates accept no payment for their services, of course. That would open the door for accusations that the case is being influenced by the wealthy or powerful. The Advocates have a special list of conditions which the accused must satisfy before they will agree. This way only the most important and worthy cases take up the extra time and effort involved.

Before a trial begins, a prayer is said to Tera Sheba, asking Her to watch over the proceedings and to bless the Judge with wisdom and impartiality. Then the prosecution speaks their case, followed by the defense. No interruptions or cross-examinations are allowed during these opening statements. In a simple case, the Judge will make a decision at this point. If, however, the case is more complex, witnesses are called by the prosecution, then questioned by the defense. The defense may then call witnesses, who speak and are then questioned by the prosecution.

The Judge may call a recess at any time, and during a long case may call for several, to properly consider all the evidence being presented. When all the evidence and arguments have been heard, the Judge will deliver a verdict. If the evidence is inconclusive, the Judge may call on Tera Sheba's blessing and use Truthsaying to reach a decision. Anyone may be examined, not just the accused. The power of Truthsaying is irresistible. No injustice can hide from Her gaze. If the accused has been found guilty, the verdict also includes the sentence or penalty to be suffered.

Once the sentence has been handed down, it is executed. The most usual punishment is service. Tera Sheba is merciful, and She reasons that the best way to make good a crime is to get the criminal to make restitution. So a thief will give back what she stole, and give a period of service, or maybe some goods, to the victim of her crime. In more serious cases, the punishment might include a whipping or a beating. The Joanites are always careful not to permanently injure those who suffer these punishments. The idea is to scourge the criminal, not to maim her.

3. Word of Tera Sheba

Truly awful crimes, especially those against the Fatimas or their agents, result in banishment. In these cases the criminal is sent back to her Fatima under the watch of the Judge (and some Joanites, of course). There is a banishment ceremony every new moon. A High Judge is always present to witness justice being done. Exiles are not allowed to take any belongings with them, nor are they allowed to say farewell to their friends and family. By being cast out, they forfeit any such comfort or consideration.

The death penalty is reserved for the worst of criminals — those who plot against the Fatimas. Their sentences are usually carried out immediately. They are banished first, so their souls will not be guided across the River of Dream by Baba Yaga. Thus, they are damned to wither away in the Sea of the Lost. Such is the fate of our worst criminals.

Society: Advocates

The first step along the road to becoming a Judge or a High Judge is to serve as an Advocate. Some enjoy their duties so much that they never seek promotion to the ranks of the Judges. Once a Terasheban has decided to join the ranks of the Advocates, her legal education begins in earnest. The law is a vast and detailed subject and it requires many years of study. Advocates are always kept busy. Each Judge is assigned several Advocates, and they act as personal assistants, researchers, confidants, cooks, messengers — whatever service their Judge requires, they perform it.

In addition to assisting her Judge, the Advocate must study hard to pass the exams which are set. There is usually one exam per season, which all Advocates must sit. The full course of exams takes five years to complete. If a subject is failed, the Advocate must wait another five years until the next round of exams. This ensures that the Advocates study hard. The pass rate is fair, but in truth some Advocates are not concerned with passing their exams and becoming Judges.

Occasionally the relationship between a Judge and an Advocate sours. These matters are usually resolved by the parties concerned, but in some rare cases the situation is intractable and a request may be made for the Advocate to be transferred to another Judge. It is a terrible stain on an Advocate's reputation to request a transfer; if the request comes from the Judge, then nothing short of intervention by the Wise One Herself will save the Advocate's career.

Only Advocates are allowed to argue cases, and some Judges have staffs composed almost entirely of Advocates who spend most of their time in such work. Skilled prosecutors and defenders are much sought-after, especially by wealthy or influential citizens who find themselves or their loved ones before a Judge.

It is the role of an Advocate in such a case to plead the case of the accused — or the accuser — and to make sure that no evidence is left unheard and no aspect of the law is forgotten. Her sacred duty is to defend or prosecute to the best of her ability. Winning or losing the case is unimportant; executing the law correctly, to see that justice is done, is her only objective.

Still other Advocates spend their time investigating the facts of cases, interviewing witnesses and gathering information to assist their Judge or the case they have been assigned to. These investigators usually have a wide variety of contacts and methods of information-gathering, so that the truth may be found, wherever it lies.

Of course, some Advocates never progress because they continue to fail their exams. These wretched souls sometimes retire to the Stone Shores in bitterness; others continue to try, certain that Tera Sheba will eventually see fit to allow them to move up. Poor souls. It is always hard to watch talent, hope and ambition turn to frustration, bitterness and despair.

Day Four

The courthalls of Vimary are the center of the Sheban stranglehold on the Tribes. The judges muse and scrawl verdicts in books while the world changes around them and they try desperately not to see it move. Stagnation is their watchword.

— Altara Ven, member of the Eighth Tribe

In court

"So you claim that the Tribe of Joan has lost its way, that although your deeds may seem wrong, they were a necessary act, to bring our weaknesses to the Fatimas' attention. That the victims of your brutal and unprovoked attacks died martyrs' deaths, is that correct? Your honor, I put it to you that this man is insane. I move that he be allowed to undergo ritual purification and be admitted to the ranks of the hermit blades..."

"Objection!"

"...to live out his days in the glorious combat he so clearly seeks."

"Objection! This suggestion is outrageous! The accused is a murderer who has consorted with Z'bri, stolen holy artifacts and defiled our lands! To allow him to live — even as a hermit blade — would be an insult to this court, an insult to the memory of his victims, and worst of all, an insult to the Fatimas!"

"And what would you have? Exile and execution? Is that justice? To allow him to escape from his crimes so easily?"

"Easy? His soul will be lost forever! Need I remind you that this is our most severe sentence, reserved for our most terrible crimes? He deserves such a horrible fate! This man went willingly into the arms of the horrors!"

"It is justice to allow the man no chance of redemption? Does not Tera Sheba teach that mercy is a partner of justice?"

In a corner booth in the Shack

"Kara the Hunter! Good to see you. What brings you to Vimary?"

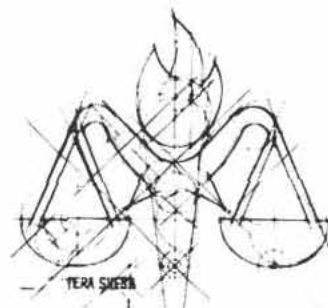
"Oh, business. What's going on, Seth? Isn't it risky to be seen with me?"

"Don't worry about that. Worry about the Ben'on trial. There's a lot going on behind the scenes, and Cylix is involved somehow."

"Well, that figures. You do know that a cell of Jackers gave them a hand, don't you?"

"Kara, nothing surprises me any more. Cylix isn't the only one taking an interest in this. It might be a good time to keep your eyes and ears open."

"Thanks for the warning. If I hear anything, I'll let you know."



In the offices of Marshal Bartholomew Medion

Well, Yasmin and her little band should be just about done by now. You handled her rather well, Bartholomew, if I do say so myself. Even got her to agree to those ridiculous disguises. I should have known that Cylix' idiot nephew wouldn't be able to take care of things. Makes me wonder where he gets his talent from — it obviously doesn't run in the family. Still, once the Watch has the prisoner safely in hand and he starts telling stories about being set free by a bunch of Fallen renegades, I'm sure Cylix will keep himself busy running after their shadows. By the time he's made an utter fool of himself, the Wise One will need someone steady and reliable to take over from him.

I wonder who She might choose?

Society: Judges

From the manuscript of Judge Robbi Armand'on:

We Judges are the best-known face of our Tribe. We do the daily, basic work of dispensing justice to those who have strayed from the law. It is not an easy task, but we perform it gladly. After all, we can do no less than the Wise One herself. Not all our Tribe are Judges, nor do all Advocates join our ranks. The selection process is long and hard. When you serve as an Advocate you are watched at all times by your mentor. Once you are deemed ready — and for some, that day never comes — you will be given a trial. You will not judge it officially, but you will hear the evidence and will be asked to write down a decision. If it is deemed worthy, you will be appointed a Judge.

It is a great privilege to join our ranks. We spend our days hearing cases and studying the law. Often we meet to discuss recent cases. Some of the fondest memories of my youth are from the after-hours drinking sessions I shared with my fellow Judges. But now my responsibilities are even greater and I have little time for such indulgences.

Every crime involving members of different Tribes is brought before us. There are those among our ranks who believe we should have authority over every matter of law; while it is a good idea, I wonder if we would have enough Judges, or enough time, to hear so many cases. Often a trial will run over several days, for few Judges can afford to devote their time to one case at the exclusion of all others. Usually, a Judge will hear long cases in the mornings and spend the afternoons dealing with summary matters. That way one also has sufficient time to deliberate over the more complex and important cases.

Sometimes, there will be an Advocate to plead the accused's case. This is good training, and it forces us Judges to keep up-to-date with our knowledge. We must always listen carefully to the cases before us, and we write our judgments down so that there will be a record of all our decisions. This gives future generations the benefit of our current wisdom, to which they will of course add their own.

Our other important duty is to help appoint new High Judges. When a High Judge steps down or dies in office, we gather to discuss who might be appointed in their place. We decide on a list of candidates and present the list to Tera Sheba herself. The other High Judges are not allowed to say anything about the selection.

Of course, one cannot be a Judge all one's life. When a Judge has come to the end of his career he will usually retire to the shores and join the Stiltwalkers. Some remain as Judges but serve as teachers and advisors. And some retire from public life altogether. It is a hard, demanding life.

There is no other life I would trade it for.

Society: High Judges

Our most revered tribe-mates are the seven High Judges. Selected by the Judges from the ranks of their most eminent legal minds, the High Judges serve the will of Tera Sheba in the most serious cases. An appointment to these exalted ranks is permanent, ending only with death or retirement. Retired High Judges usually move to the Stone Shores, where they serve as advisors and mentors to the Stiltwalkers.

The High Judges handle the most important cases. They hear appeals against the decisions of Judges and they decide which cases will be heard by Tera Sheba Herself. They assist Her in any way they can. Each High Judge has a staff of seven Judges. Each Judge has seven Advocates. Usually, half of the Advocates are researchers and the other half are investigators, explorers, all kinds of people, really. The High Judges say that unorthodox cases often require unorthodox methods.

As Tera Sheba's favorites, the High Judges spend much time with the Wise One. These counsels are secret, but it is speculated that they discuss far more than justice, important cases and the law. I suspect that they assist Her with the decisions She is called upon to make regarding the future of our Tribe and our Nation. In the aftermath of the brief reign of Lilith they have been spending much time in counsel; rumors abound but it is certain that Tera Sheba will take some decisive action to bring peace and order back to our troubled Nation. These are turbulent times and we are all waiting for our Fatima to take charge once more.

Perhaps the least-pleasant duty the High Judges are called upon to perform is sitting in judgment over members of their own tribe. These cases are rare, but there have been more of them in recent times. The accused goes before a High Judge and answers the case. These hearings are always held in a closed court and no-one but the accused and the judge goes in. The High Judge's staff gathers all the evidence, and their reputation for thoroughness is well-earned. I believe that knowing their case will be heard before the High Judges deters many a Terasheban of weak resolve from acting rashly.

Usually, sentence is given and things return to normal. If a Judge has been accused, the case is heard by three High Judges, and if found guilty, the usual sentence is to be sent to the Stone Shores to join the Stiltwalkers, but in serious cases, a Judge will be taken before Tera Sheba Herself for judgment. It is said that She looks directly into the accused's heart. If Her verdict is innocent, the matter is closed and it is never spoken of again. If the verdict is guilty, the Judge is cast out from the Tribe. Many banished Judges commit suicide before their sentence can be carried out. Their consciences might be able to withstand doing wrong to someone else, but not to Tera Sheba. Once Her love is gone, they have nothing else.

Society: Lorekeepers

For those who prefer a more scholarly approach to the law, a life among the Lorekeepers beckons. They are the custodians of Tera Sheba's laws. More than that, they are the custodians of much history and other knowledge as well. Lorekeepers maintain the archives and libraries; whenever an Advocate or Judge or High Judge needs to know an obscure fact, it is to the Lorekeepers that they go. Most chambers and all court houses have a Lorekeeper, whose job it is to keep the Judge and Advocates informed about the latest laws and cases. They also write codexes of commentary, explaining how the laws interact with each other. It is a vast topic, and no Judge or Advocate could keep their knowledge current; their court work takes up the majority of their time.

The archives at Court Hall have volumes containing the entire body of Tribal law. They are constantly being revised. The law evolves, as it encounters new situations. There is also a substantial collection of the other Tribes' laws as well. The Tribes themselves usually don't bother to write their laws down. This gives the Lorekeepers the opportunity to visit them and make permanent records. These expeditions, always accompanied by Joanites, are highly sought-after opportunities to travel and meet the people of the other Tribes, and teach them about our laws. In my days as a Lorekeeper I went on a number of such trips. I was always struck by how similar most of the Tribes' laws are. This similarity has added strength to the arguments of those who would like to see our Tribe administer all the law for all the Tribes. I can understand their reluctance to see our jurisdiction extended over their affairs, but if the laws are fair then they should apply equally to all.

3. Word of Tera Sheba

The Lorekeepers also have a sizable collection of material from the time before. These items are closely guarded and special permission is required to access them. The main purpose of their research is to discover precisely what brought the Z'bri across the River of Dream, but there is much other material of interest. There is an elite group of Lorekeepers who specialize in gathering this material. They are bold individuals, braving the depths of the Sunken City, the desolation of the Rust Wastes and the hazards of the Wilds to gather their treasures. Their expeditions are sanctioned by Tera Sheba Herself and while not secret, are not widely known. They undergo regular rites of purification, but occasionally one is filled with heretical thoughts and tries to join the Keepers, or the Fallen, or simply succumbs to despair and madness.

The other main task performed by the Lorekeepers is the creation and preservation of books. Using paper made by the Stiltwalkers, we have craftsmen who are experts in scribing, bookbinding and other techniques. It is painstaking and time-consuming work and their skills are formidable. They often spend time on the Stone Shores, relaxing and talking to the paper and ink makers.



Day Five

Many people see us as stiff and unyielding, stolidly going about our work with no thought of pain or pleasure. That couldn't be farther from the truth. We visit the Magdalites like anyone, and tuck in our children with tenderness and love. Simply because we are strict does not make us monsters.

-Tomas Ever'on, Advocate of Tera Sheba

In the office of Nostra Guyon

"Gone? Gone? What do you mean he's gone? How can he be gone? Who did this?"

"Master, calm down. We have troops searching for him. He won't get far."

"That's not the point. He couldn't have escaped by himself. He must have had help. Who would want him on the loose. Z'bri? No. Those damn Templars? I know they want to make a martyr of him, but I can't believe they'd actually go so far as to free him."

"The Watch are looking..."

"The Watch! Of course! Bartholomew tried to claim jurisdiction over the case, and he's just stupid enough to try something like this. Well played, but who would have done the deed? We need to find the culprits. And bring them to justice."

Kara the Hunter

...So when we heard Jonah was on the loose, we had a pretty fair idea what was going on. And a pretty fair idea where he'd be heading. So we just waited until he proved us right.

How did we know where he'd be going? Whoever let him go probably wanted him out of the way, and I can think of a few people who'd like to embarrass the Terashebans. They don't like being kept out of investigations. And there are a couple of Skyrealms you could reach pretty easily, once you've made it out of the Sunken City. Not too hard to figure out at all. See? Who says the Watch doesn't teach you anything?

And I've been inside a Skyrealm or two in my time. You should have seen the look on his face when he saw us. He thought he was home free. Pretty disappointing, all in all. Only took me a minute to knock him out; didn't even need a weapon.

But the best bit, the best bit, was taking him back. There they were, on the steps, arguing about whose responsibility it was, when we marched up, bold as brass. I don't think I've ever seen Cylix, Bartholomew and Shera ever look so dumbstruck. Yasmin didn't look at all happy — I hope she's not caught up in all this.

Anyhow, it put the wind up Cylix and his "Fallen conspiracy" line. Hee hee. What a day. Hey! Pass the grog... and the pipe. . . I've earned it.

In the Chambers of Marshal Bartholomew Medion

"Bartholomew! Everything's gone wrong!"

"Calm yourself, my dear. Here, have a drink. . . no? Suit yourself. Think about what happened today. A man accused of consorting with the Z'bri escapes from custody and is promptly recaptured by a bunch of outcasts. Cylix's boat is sunk, the Templars look like fools and the Watch has come out none the worse. I think things turned out rather well.

"You used me!"

"Did I? You seemed quite agreeable to our plan. No-one forced you to act."

"You will regret this, Medi'on."

"I regret nothing, my dear. You've learned a valuable lesson today. You ought to thank me for it."

"I thank you for nothing. You're scum, Medi'on. If you ever try anything like this again, you won't live long enough to gloat."

Society: Stiltwalkers

From the manuscript of Anna Armand'on:

Once, I was a Lorekeeper. Now I am a Stiltwalker. Life as one of Tera Sheba's children is often difficult. There is always pressure. Pressure to perform, pressure to be fair and just and to interpret the law properly. If we make mistakes, people suffer. And it's not just the Judges who are under pressure. If a Lorekeeper makes an error in some research, a Judge may be led into error. If an Advocate doesn't prepare her briefs correctly, a Judge may be led into error. And if a Judge is let down by her staff, a wrong judgment may be made. All Judges fear the day that one of their decisions will be successfully appealed. But this just puts more pressure on the High Judges, who sit in decision on the appeals. Their decisions not only settle a case, they can make or break a Judge's career.

And our Tribe has its own, special needs. We need boats to travel from place to place. We need paper and ink and ceremonial robes. We Stiltwalkers live by the Stone Shores and we are the ones who take care of all these needs. We need a place to go when our responsibilities become too heavy to bear. So we come down here, to the waters, and learn another way of life. Stiltwalking is dangerous work and requires intense concentration and no little skill; I have been here for years and am still learning. Others learn a craft. We are used to working with our minds; it is good to work with our muscles as well. In many ways, we are the heart and soul of the Tribe. Many a Judge has come to the Stone Shores with their enthusiasm failing, because of over-work or some other difficulty. We usually teach them to fish. We walk around on stilts, wading through the past, just as the Judges search through the laws for truth and justice. It takes patience to be a good fisherman, just as it takes patience to be a good Judge, or Lorekeeper or Advocate. It takes cunning too. Fish may not be very smart, but they know how to survive in their environment.

So we remain here on the Shores. Sometimes I think everyone ends up here sooner or later. There's no shame or stigma attached — sometimes it's necessary to find some solitude, to lose oneself in the exercise of a different set of skills. Some are down here every couple of weeks for a day or two, some come every year for a week. Others come for years and then go back, while some never leave. Hamrark Slade'on, the Fisher King, has lived here for many years. He usually stays in his tower but after helping my sister and I with this volume I believe he may come out more often and tell his tales. I believe he sees this as a way to serve his beloved Fatima. We all serve Her, regardless of where we are.

Holidays and festivals

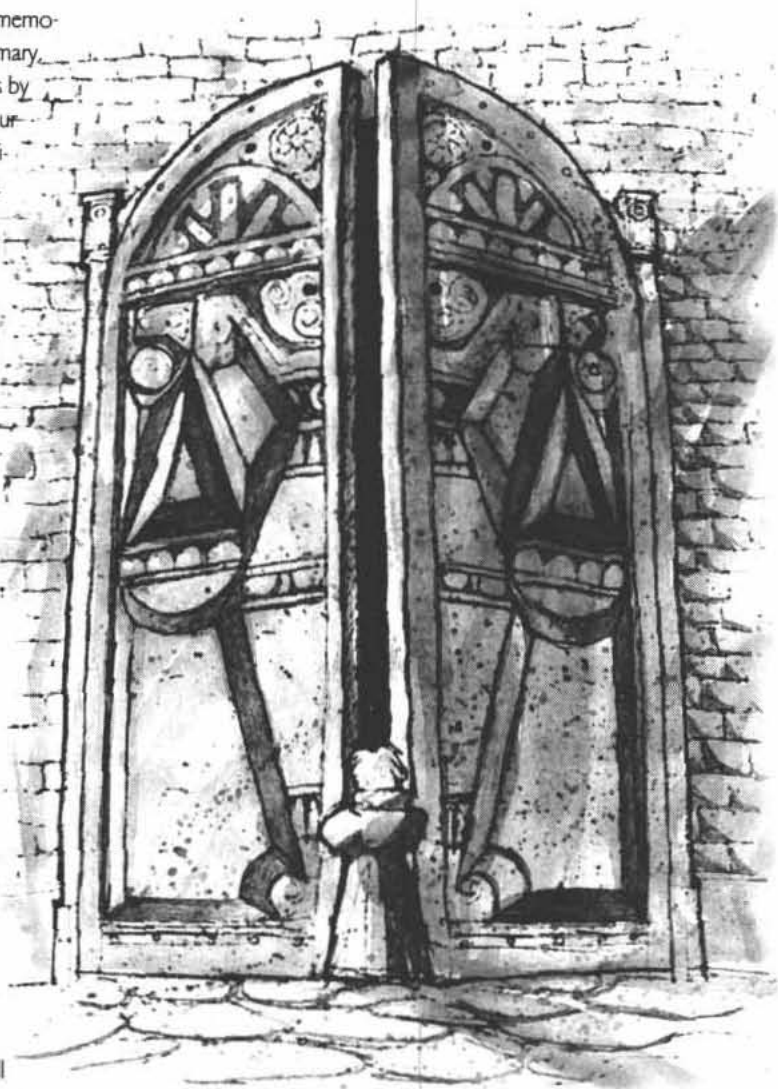
From the manuscript of Judge Robbi Armand'on:

All Terasheban enjoy a festival. Our professions are arduous and we all enjoy some time to relax and celebrate our way of life. At the end of every court day the taverns are full of Judges and Advocates enjoying a well-earned drink. But beyond these informal gatherings and celebrations, there are two festivals which we celebrate each year.

Tera Sheba's **Birthday** is our major festival. By tradition, Birthday is midwinter's day. It begins a full moon before the festival day. In memory of the camps, all Terasheban are forbidden meat and must live simply, on vegetables, fruit and fish. It is also a time of sexual abstinence. Families decorate their homes and relics or medallions are worn with pride. Each night there is a gathering by the Stone Shores; each night a different High Judge leads the singing and gives an inspirational address. Our struggles and triumphs of the past year are remembered; our hopes for the coming year are voiced. On the eighth day Tera Sheba Herself appears and blesses Her children. The ceremony ends at midnight and the families go home and eat a meal of bitter soup made from meat and vegetables. The next day, Birthday, is a day for visiting friends and exchanging gifts. The courts are closed and the entire tribe rejoices.

Foundation Day is our other major festival. It commemorates the founding of the first courthouse on Vimary. Every Judge joins a parade of boats which begins by the Stone Shores and winds its way through our lands. They are accompanied by singers and musicians; when the courthouse is reached, Tera Sheba is waiting inside. A Judge knocks three times on the heavy doors. A child, dressed as a survivor of the camps, demands to know who wishes to enter. The Judge replies that it is one who seeks to do right and serve the cause of justice. The child then opens the door and Tera Sheba Herself invites the Judges to enter and themselves be judged. They file in, walking past and touching Tera Sheba. Once the procession has been through the courtroom, Tera Sheba declares that Her touch has purified Her Judges and that they are fit vessels for Her wisdom. She then retires for a private feast with the High Judges, the council and forty-nine others, selected from the entire population of the tribe. The procession breaks up and a day of feasting and celebration is held which lasts long into the night.

A minor but increasingly popular ceremony takes place three moons after midwinter, down by the Stone Shores. The Stiltwalkers have a dawn ceremony to welcome spring and to pray that, as the sun's light warms their shores, so too may the light of justice touch the lives of all, bringing them peace and security. The rest of the day is a small but lively festival, with Dahlians and Magdalites a-plenty. Members of all tribes are welcome, and have been coming in increasing numbers in recent years.



Day Six

Deep within the hallways of the Sunken City, the Shebans spin their webs. Plots ride within plots, until even their great Fatima can no longer untangle the interwoven threads. Someday one of the cords will snap, and throw the whole mess back into their faces.

— Mek, Fallen Joanite, leader of the Jackers

In the chambers of Judge Robbi Armand'on

"Robbi? Judge Armand'on? Are you in?"

"Who is it?"

"Yasmin Luther'on. Of the Watch."

"Come in, Commander. I was going to have some wine. Would you care to join me?"

"Aaah... yes. Yes, thank you. I see you're still working on the case."

"It's proving to be more difficult than I thought. The accused has confessed his guilt and that should be all, but there is a larger game being played, I fear. But that can wait... what brings you to my office at this late hour?"

"The case, I'm afraid. The prisoner has been recaptured."

"He has! Excellent! Your Watchers have done their job well."

"I'm afraid not. It was an Outcast who brought him in. Ben'on was trying to escape into a Skyrealm. Returning to his masters, I suppose. She followed him in and subdued him. The Watch... I... I have failed in my duty."

"Yasmin! Don't be so hard on yourself. The burdens of leadership are no less heavy, no less worthy, than those of combat. Perhaps they lack simplicity, but they are just as vital."

"But there's more. Robbi, while he was loose, Jonah killed your Advocate, Seth. Ben'on confessed the killing. His body has just been found. He was following Ben'on, but the traitor spotted and killed him. I'm sorry. I have failed you."

"Seth. Oh... Seth. He never could keep himself out of trouble..."

"Robbi, I'm so sorry. I swear those responsible will be brought to justice. I won't fail again. Never again."

In the chambers of High Judge Cylix Seth'on

Intolerable! Utterly intolerable! How dare she! How dare that Fallen slut Kara march up to me, as bold as brass, with her lackeys watching, and hand over the prisoner as if I, a High Judge, had set him free!

Damn and blast her soul! And she was speaking the truth when she said that no Fallen were involved in the escape. I used Tera Sheba's blessings to be sure. But that means Ben'on had help from someone inside the Tribes. Who could it be? Nostra? Bartholomew? Verra? Someone else? I must get the Owls to find out, and to keep that information... discreet.

At least this will put the trial back on track. Ha! Freed by the Fallen, only to kill again. Another martyr has fallen to further our great cause.

In the chambers of Marshal Bartholomew Medion

Curse her! Curse her damn Clan! One simple task and she fails. One simple blow to strike and her aim is off. Now drastic measures are needed. Armand'on will break his mind and then we'll all be at risk. Damn them all! I cannot allow Ben'on to be interrogated.

Where's that duty roster... who can help me now... yes... yes... young Marcus. He'll do nicely. I'm sure he'd jump at the chance to serve his mighty Fatima. And if not, I'm sure his ailing father could do with a visit from a healer.

How tragic. The prisoner is overcome with remorse, no... fear for his masters coming to claim his soul, so he kills himself to escape their vengeance. I think that will do nicely.

The Fallen

The confession of Andre, captured Terasheban:

You think you know me? You think you know my tribe? You know nothing.

Let me tell you what you think you know about my tribe. You think we're ruthless, callous, backstabbing cowards who lord it over the Tribes, ordering the Joanites around like they're our own personal army.

Like I said, you know nothing. What you Fallen never try to do is to understand us, to try and see what it is that makes us tick. You're just being lazy and stupid. Far easier to stick us with a simple description and not bother to actually think for yourselves.

What keeps the Z'bri and the Squats and the Keepers and even you Fallen at bay? What protects Tribal society from the chaos around us? The Joanites? Hah! Order is what keeps the chaos at bay. And we Terashebans are the guardians of that order. We guard the laws which create the society you once lived in. The Joanites are simply the weapons we use to enforce those laws. We wield that weapon, we direct its cut and thrust. And we cut out the unfit, the criminal, the insane, all those unworthy of living amongst us. If it were left to the Joanites all the Templars and Blades would run off into the H'l Kar and get themselves killed, the Weaponshapers would talk all day about "the lesson of steel" and the Watch would apply the thumbscrews to every merchant in Bazaar.

Let me tell you something else. You say you're building something new here on Hom. You say your way is different. But your society, your rules and laws, your "rants" and your leaders — it's all just a poor copy of our ways, our laws. Don't fool yourselves. Everyone follows rules, everyone obeys laws. We just don't deceive ourselves like you do, always blaming someone else. But that's the way you all think. "I've broken the law, I've been caught and tried and found guilty and punished. It must be someone else's fault!" I'll tell you a secret. No criminal is ever guilty. No criminal has ever done anything wrong. There's always an excuse: "I had to steal; she didn't deserve to live; the noises in my head told me to do it; it's not fair the way things are." Grow up. Why can't any of you have the guts to face up to your crimes? How can a bunch of criminals and deviants and freaks and misfits claim to be the future of humanity?

The tribes are building something. What do you outcasts have? Filthy hovels, poverty and squalor and misery and insanity. This is the future? A bunch of criminals who, when they're not out stealing and murdering, sit around and whine endlessly about how unfair life is, how unjust their treatment has been, how great their destiny will be, one day. But that day never comes, does it? Why do you think that might be? Or was it just that Lilith let you down, or Joshua, or someone else?

The Fates

Of course, the other tribes aren't much better. They're all content to just sit back and let us do all the real work. Yes, we know we're not well-liked. How could it be otherwise? Most people only ever deal with us when they break the law, or think someone else has. But do we ever get thanked for what we do? Do we ever get any help? Apart from the Joanites, that is. Of course not. But when something goes wrong, who do they turn to? Who do they come to, begging for justice? Who keeps everything running? The Tribes have a council. It meets. The Fatimas meet. They make decisions. But it's always us who end up putting their decisions into practice. Always us.

The **Yagans** spend all their time skulking around skinning things and claiming to have just received some great insight into death. But they never actually do anything, apart from slaughtering a few animals and tanning some hides from time to time. I have to admit, the Pellis Artisans' skin libraries are a sight to behold — but I guess that means nothing to a bunch of outcasts, eh? Sometimes we get a Mordred to help us out. They can come up with the weirdest information. But that's about as useful as the Yagans get. And I can't stand the way they wander around like they've just got so much important stuff on their mind that they couldn't possibly be bothered with trivial stuff like obeying the law or keeping the peace.

The **Evans**, on the other hand, aren't nearly so bad. They're good, solid, dependable, law-abiding citizens, for the most part. Eva Herself is a little odd, but She agrees with Tera Sheba on most things so I suppose She's okay. And Her tribe makes a valuable contribution to society. Without them, we'd all starve, even you Outcasts. And their laws are pretty similar to our own. Serve your Fatima with heart and soul. Simple. But they're a bit too helpful to you Outcasts, if you ask me. Still, some of their more sensible leaders, like that Shaman Storm Cry, are finally beginning to see sense when it comes to your kind. There should be more like him.

The **Magdalites** are sometimes overlooked, but believe you me, they're not useless parasites like the Dahlians. Magdalites are vital to Tribal society. Their diplomats keep us informed about the Z'bri's doings and Her concubines perform many vital services for us. Yes, of course we use them. Didn't you? We're human too, you know, and every day we bear a burden you can't begin to imagine. It's not easy, sitting in judgment of others. Always in charge, always dealing with wretches and the dregs of society, never letting our emotions show. They help keep us sane, they remind us what it's like to feel passion, to surrender control to another. Yes, we know the value of the Magdalites. More than any other Tribe, the Magdalites help keep us human.

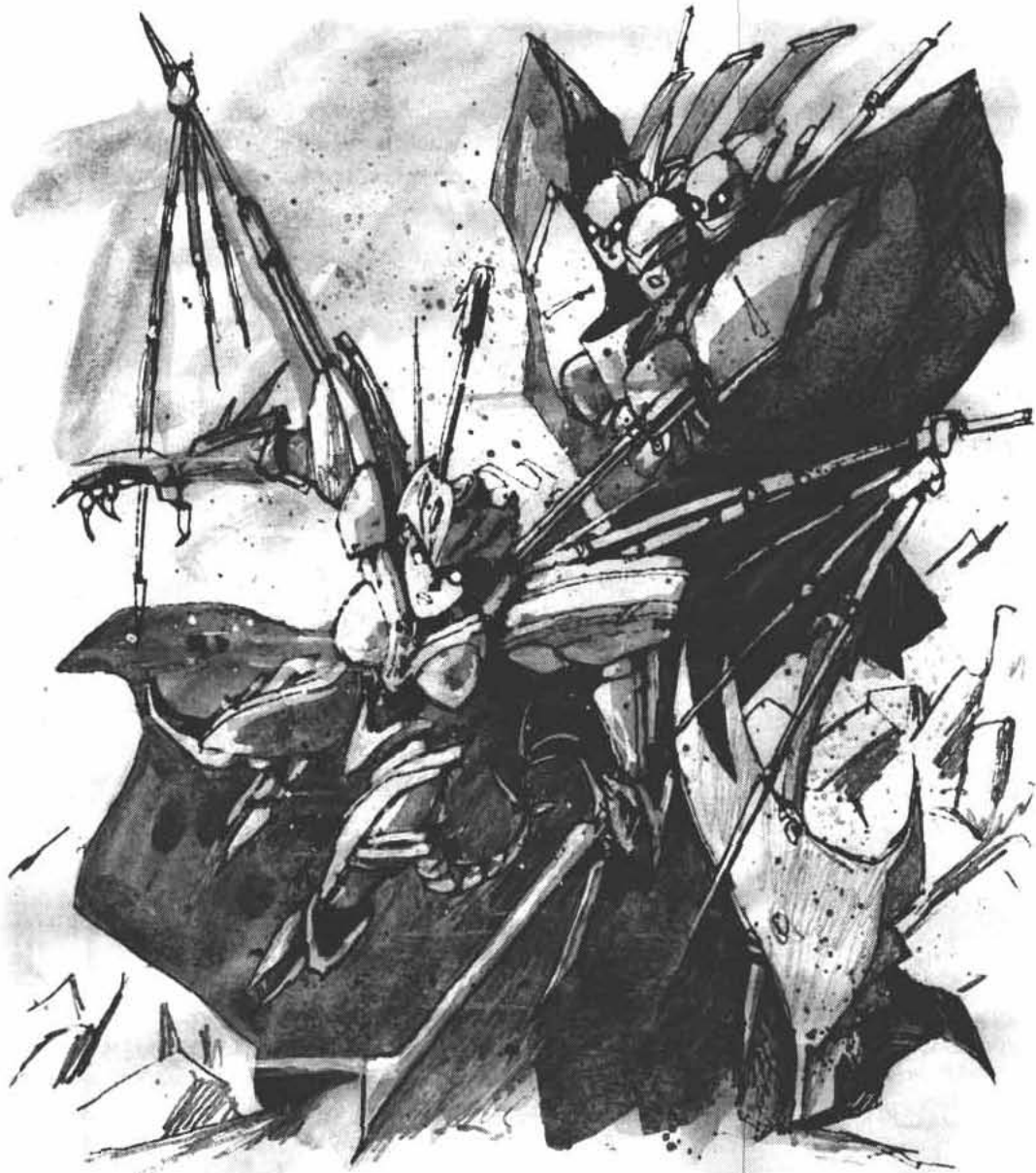
The Dancers and the Broken Pillar

We need the **Joanites** too. You see, we're not arrogant. We acknowledge our debts, we know who our friends are. Joan's children are our strong right arm, our shield and our sword. Were it not for them we'd still be out on the streets, delivering justice as best we could to those who needed us. But working together, the Joanites can focus on catching criminals and we can focus on perfecting the law and ensuring that every accused gets a fair hearing. They allow us to be truly impartial, for how could a Judge be truly neutral when hearing the case of a criminal he'd chased down himself? Never believe for a moment that we do not respect the children of Joan. They are our staunch allies and we love them dearly.

Dahlia's ridiculous brood is another matter entirely. The Joanites perform a useful function but I can see no use for the **Dahlians** besides causing trouble and getting up to mischief. They may think it's funny to play practical jokes on Judges, or to mock us in their performances. But every prank, every jest and jape undermines our authority. And our authority, which holds our society together and keeps chaos at bay, is too important to be so lightly mocked. Some say that their antics are meant as a reminder to us, to teach us humility and to be compassionate in our judgments. Bah! The law gives the criminals all the compassion they need or deserve. But our Judges do not need or deserve this mob of buffoons dogging their footsteps and undercutting them at every turn.

The **Agnites**? Agnes, the dear child. She is the one who shows us what innocence and humility are about, not Dahlia. Still, Her children are not so simple as many suppose. They remind us of the innocence of childhood – and also of its cruelty and ruthlessness. Children have an innate sense of fairness and I know many Judges spend time conversing with children, in order to have their perspectives refreshed. I sometimes wonder how much of Mary remains within Agnes. I know She claims to be a separate being, but I can't help wondering. It is said that before Her death, Mary and Tera Sheba had many conversations on how to win the war against the Z'bn and what the Fatimas' proper role should be once the monsters were defeated. They did not always agree but I believe Tera Sheba always listened carefully. Joshua lost His life then so did Mary. I wonder what crime She could not forgive.

The false Fatima nearly brought death upon us all. A Fatima for the Fallen? The Daughter of Joshua? Joshua stood beside His Sisters and fought for all of humanity. He would not stand now with a bunch of criminals who threaten to tear down everything His sacrifice made possible. Why, Lilith even attacked Tera Sheba Herself before Joan struck Her down. I'm sure that She will cast a long shadow over your fate.



Day Seven



Oscar, Lightbringer

Oscar believes that the Terasheban justice system is fatally corrupt. As an Advocate, he was exiled for accusing his Judge of corruption. He was convicted of treason with predictable results. Oscar believes that it is only mankind's laws, rules which he imposes upon himself, which can separate him from the beasts. He believes that laws imposed from above (in this case, from a Fatima) are inherently corrupt as they do not have the consent of the people, only their obedience.

Oscar knows that laws need enforcement and he is trying to convince a group of Fallen Joanites to form a kind of police force. He seems unable to realize that he is merely re-creating the system which betrayed him.

Highlights: cunning, watchful, ambitious

Eminences: Truth, Unity

Attributes: BLD +1, INF +2, KNO +2, WIL +2, STA 30, UO 4, AD 4

Skills: Human perception 2/+0, Investigation 2/+0, Law 2/+2, Lore (Fallen) 2/+2, Read/Write (Tribal) 2/+2, Synthesis (Truthsaying) 1

Equipment: Dagger, book of (Fallen) law

The Shebans — Tera Sheba Herself — were at least tolerable when their grip on the Joanites was still firm. Ever since Lilith, though, things have been getting strange. It makes me fear for the future.

— Altara Ven, member of the Eighth Tribe

In court

"This court is now in session. In the matter of Ben'on against the Seven Tribes, I am forced to rule in the absence of the accused. This court finds Jonah Markin Ben'on, late of the Tribe of Joan, guilty of murder, treason, conspiracy and consorting with the Z'bri. So let the records show.

"The court notes the extreme difficulty of the circumstances surrounding this trial. The court believes that certain factions attempted to use this trial to further their own agendas and pervert the course of justice. May the consequences of these actions weigh upon the souls of those involved.

"I announce my retirement from this court, effective immediately. I will retire to the Stone Shores and seek to re-dedicate myself to my Fatima's cause."

In a booth in the Shack

Seth, can you forgive me? I should have caught him sooner. I should have killed him when I had the chance. Now, because of my carelessness, you lie dead.

I never would have believed that the sickness in my old Tribe ran so deep. But now I cannot deny it. I was blind. I will be blind no longer. Seth, hear my oath. I, Kara the Hunter, swear that I will avenge your death. I will avenge the deaths of the innocent. I will show no mercy to my enemies. So do I swear. So shall it be.

Farewell, Seth. Know that you live in my heart. Know that I will avenge you.

In the meditation chamber of Hamrark Sladeon

Tera Sheba, hear my prayer.

I see now that you are truly testing our Tribe. I trust in your Wisdom, but I fear that we might not be strong enough to do what is needed.

Your Sister Joan has withdrawn from Her Tribe. Wise One, heal Her wounds. We are out of balance and it is only you who can restore it. Every week I see our most gifted children coming to the Shores. Do not withdraw your blessings from us now. We have come far, but we have so much further to go. Only with your vision and wisdom can we hope to prevail. Do not leave us. Guide us, I beseech you.

Tera Sheba, hear my prayer.

By the Stone Shores

"Robbi! What are you doing here?"

"I've left, Anna."

"You've... but how could you?"

"The trial. It was terrible. I need time to think, time to understand what's going on. Time to think of a way to fix things. What are you laughing at?"

"You! You haven't quit. You haven't changed one bit. You're still the same — still trying to do justice, to serve Tera Sheba."

"And what's wrong with that?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. But before you can heal our tribe, you have to heal yourself."

"And how do I do that?"

"One step at a time, little sister, one step at a time."

"And how do I start, oh wise one?"

"Tell me, how long has it been since you caught a fish?"



Tamsin Davi'on, Lightbringer

Tamsin's exile was the price of being on the losing end of a power play. Once a respected judge, she is now an Outcast. She hates the Fallen with a passion and has joined Oscar's scheme in order to punish them. She believes that once Oscar has done all the hard work of setting up a justice system for the Fallen, she will easily be able to depose him and take it over.

Her chances of achieving her goals are slim, however. Hal Nimva is well aware of her ambitions and has been quietly working to undermine her position.

Tamsin is aware that someone is working against her, but has been unable to find out who it is.

Highlights: ruthless, deceptive, manipulative

Eminences: Wisdom, Unity

Attributes: APP +1, BLD -1, CRE +1,
INF +2, KNO +2, PSY -1, WIL +2,
STA 25, UUD 2, AD 2

Skills: Grooming 2/+1, Human
Perception 3/-1, Interrogation 3/+1,
Investigation 3/+0, Law 3/+2,
Leadership 2/+2, Lore (Tribal) 2/+2,
Read/Write (Tribal) 3/+3, Ritual 2/
+2, Synthesis (Conviction) 2

Equipment: Staff, legal paraphernalia (robes, gavel etc.)

The Hand of Justice



Tish Dan'on, Lorekeeper

Tish is a carefree, idealistic young Lorekeeper who probably would have been happier as an Evan Nurse. She is known for her love of children, and travels around Vimary, meeting people and teaching them about the laws. In truth, she cares little for the law and her somewhat dizzy manner is nothing but a cover for an efficient spy. Tish works directly for High Judge Cylix, reporting to him only; not even the other members of the Crucible know of her allegiance. Her membership in the Bearers simply affords her additional opportunities to gather information on the other Tribes. She is not a fighter, however, and would not be willing to kill, even if Cylix gave her a direct order to do so.

Highlights: cunning, watchful, cautious

Eminences: Truth, Wisdom

Attributes: AGI +1, CRE +1, INF +2, KNO +1, PER +1, STA 25, ULD 3, AD 3

Skills: Etiquette 2/+2, Human Perception 2/+0, Investigation 3/+1, Law 1/+1, Lore (Tribal Law) 2/+2, Notice 1/+1, Read/Write (Tribal) 2/+1

Equipment: Knife, writing gear, medallion of Tera Sheba

The report of Davin, Order of the Black Owl:

The Hand of Justice is a cell of fallen Terasheban Lightbringers. They believe that our Tribe has strayed in its duty and now serves the personal ambitions of the High Judges and the other senior figures, not the cause of justice. Their goal is to reform Fallen society into a model based on us! Unbelievable arrogance! They are attempting to set up courts and a legal system on Hom, to govern the Fallen and to unify their society. Of course, they would set themselves up as the Judges, run the courts and administer the laws. This crude mockery of our sacred ways cannot be tolerated. I recommend immediate action against these fools, before they sully the name and reputation of our beloved Tera Sheba any further.

The Hand has received cautious approval from a number of influential Fallen, including Hal Ninva, who is keen for more formal arrangements to be made to govern the rabble with whom he lives. Altara Ven has expressed sympathy for their goals, if not their methods. The rest of the Fallen pay them little heed, many having run afoul of our Tribe once and being unwilling to trust even its fallen members. The members of the Hand are cunning, however, and have recently changed their approach, calling mass meetings to debate what laws the Fallen should have and how they should be enforced. This new development is as dangerous as it is foolish. If word of it should spread to Vimary, I fear the possible consequences.

The Lantern-bearers

The report of Davin, Order of the Black Owl:

The Lantern-bearers are an informal collection of young Advocates and Lorekeepers. Their activities are unofficial and typical of the uncontrolled, spontaneously-organized mischief that our more idealistic and irresponsible brethren get themselves mixed up in. They spend their free time traveling to the nurseries and schools of the other tribes, explaining our laws and making friends. If their activities were directed towards some useful end, like gathering evidence of criminal activities among the other tribes, there would be no need for me to report on them. But their goal seems to be to befriend the members of the other tribes, to teach them about their legal rights and inform them about our practices.

This will not do. Obedience should be commanded, not explained. The wrath of the law must be feared. But you know my sentiments on this matter.

The "Bearers" (as they fancy themselves) have no formal organization or leadership, which makes me suspicious. Their organization is more of a cell structure. Do they fear infiltration? What secrets are they hiding? I shall redouble my efforts to discover their true agenda.

They also have the blessing of a number of prominent Judges, all of whom would be classed as moderates at best, subversives at worst. They share the view that the more the other tribes know about the law, the better our society will be. I will soon begin investigating the views of some of these Judges. Perhaps they are the source of the "Bearers'" suspicious organization and spurious goals.

The Ravagers

The report of Davin, Order of the Black Owl:

Lastly, I come to the Ravagers, a cell of Fallen who have but one thing in common — a hatred of our Fatima and our Tribe. Their origins are as varied as their crimes, but they are united in passion. They lurk all around, on the edges of crowds, in the dark corners of taverns, waiting to thwart justice whenever possible. They organize escapes from our courthouses, free sacrifices from the Circle of the Chosen, rescue criminals from their punishment. I believe the outcasts who thwarted young Ariel's plans were members of this group.

I believe them to be a direct threat to our security and cannot emphasize strongly enough the danger they present. We must move against them immediately before it is too late. After all, it is surely only a matter of time until they decide to carry their struggle to our people directly. And while there are certainly those within our tribe who do little to secure its glory, these must be rooted out by the Wise One's loyal servants, not a band of traitors She has already exiled for their crimes.

I was able to interrogate one of their senior cell leaders, who claimed that almost one quarter of the outcast population were either active in the Ravagers' activities or had been active at some point in the past. He then claimed responsibility for a number of kidnappings and rescue attempts. Unfortunately we were disturbed by the rest of his cell and I was forced to flee.



Kate Thaim'on, Advocate

Kate is an ambitious young Advocate. She dreams of becoming a High Judge and is involved in many extra-curricular activities. These demonstrate her zeal and give her an opportunity to make contacts throughout the Tribal power structure. The Judge she serves, Lynn Nass'on, has impeccable credentials as a politically conservative member of the Tribe. She has been delighted to introduce Kate to as many of her fellow Judges as she deems proper, believing that Kate has a bright future ahead of her. However, Kate has yet to truly face the ruthlessness of her fellow Judges. Lynn has it in mind to teach her a few hard lessons about the realities of political power. How Kate reacts to these lessons will decide her fate.

Highlights: ambitious, naïve, dedicated

Eminences: Truth, Wisdom

Attributes: FIT +1, KNO +3, PSY +1, WIL +1, STA 25, ULD 3, AD 3

Skills: Dance 1/+0, Etiquette 1/+0, Law 2/+3, Leadership 1/+0, Lore (Terasheban) 2/+3, Lore (Tribal) 1/+3, Mythology 1/+3, Read/Write (Tribal) 3/+3, Teaching 1/+0

Equipment: Book of poems, fancy clothes



Gerald, Herite

There is no such faction or group as the Ravagers. Gerald is a (fallen Agnite) Herite who caught a Black Owl in the roof of his cell's house. He was overpowered by the spy and to buy time for his cell-mates to return home, he concocted a story about a secret organization of outcasts dedicated to rescuing the victims of Terasheban injustice and overthrowing the Tribe. His ploy worked, but better than he would have liked. His cell-mates did eventually return, but the spy escaped. Unfortunately, the spy was convinced of the existence of this dangerous conspiracy, and recent moves by the Wreathed underground (see *Tribe 8 Companion*, p. 17) have provided "evidence" to support his claims. Gerald and his cell are now trying to find the spy in order to stop the spread of this potentially damaging misinformation.

Highlights: worried, energetic, charming

Eminences: Capriciousness, Recognition

Attributes: AGI +1, APP +1, CRE +1, PER +1, PSY +2, WIL +1, STA 25, UD 3, AD 4

Skills: Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 1/+1, Dreaming 2/+2, Human Perception 2/+2, Melee 1/+1, Notice 1/+1, Ritual 2, Theatrics 1/+0

Equipment: Short sword, ritual implements, soft armor

Davin Sulla'on, Black Owl

Davin is a fanatic. His parents were exiled when he was just a child and he was given over into the care of his uncle and aunt, who treated him badly. His emotional traumas made him an outsider, and he never excelled in his studies. High Judge Cylix spotted him and groomed him for membership in the Order of the Black Owl. At last Davin had a family, people he could trust and who shared his beliefs. He is a good spy, observant and skilled. He is not a good judge of character, however, having few social skills. When Gerald spun his lie about "the Ravagers" Davin swallowed it hook, line and sinker, and has convinced High Judge Cylix Seth'on of their existence.

Highlights: fanatic, gullible, insensitive

Eminences: Truth, Wisdom

Attributes: AGI +1, FIT +2, KNO +1, PER +1

Skills: Archery 2/+1, Combat Sense 2/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Hand-to-Hand 2/+1, Interrogation 1/+0, Investigation 1/+1, Law 1/+1, Melee 2/+1, Read/Write (Tribal) 1/+1, Sneak 2/+1

Equipment: Hand crossbow, four poison bolts (potency 8 sedative, 4-round onset), dagger, leather armor

Notes: Night vision, Animal kinship (owls). See *Children of Lilith*, p. 84, for more information on the Black Owls.



Tera Sheba's lament

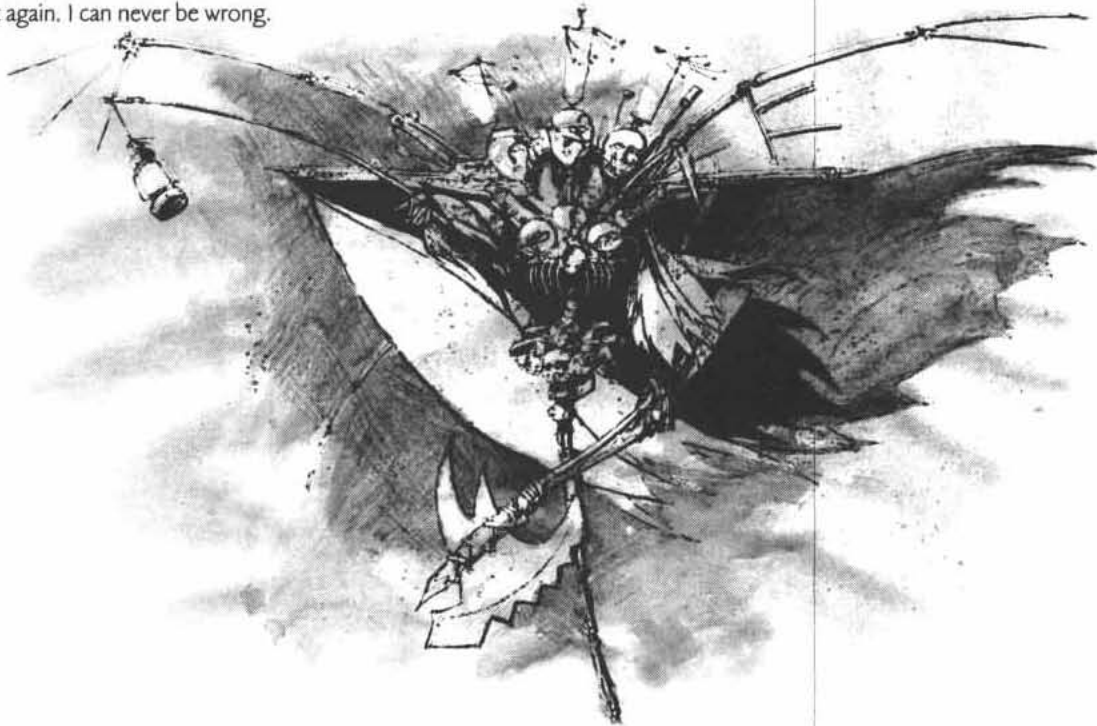
You were always stronger than Joan. The force of your fury knew no bounds, nor did the extent of your rage. Your Sister is, despite all else, a gentle soul whose impulse is to protect and preserve, whilst yours was to damage and destroy. In time, you would have destroyed us all. Baba Yaga foresaw this, but again it was left to me to find a solution. I thought the final battle would take care of everything. I thought it would end your rage. But it did not. Your rage lives on in our children.

Yes, our children. The Fallen. Your tribe. Our tribe. For as surely as you are their Father, I am their Mother. Do you know how it wounds me to cast them out, to banish them from my sight? Your rage lives on in them. It is the seed from which they grow, in the womb of the world I have made for them. Their exile is their moment of birth. All I want is to take them in, to hold them close and protect them against the horrors of the world, but I cannot. I made a terrible mistake once, and I cannot make another. Our victory was hollow. With neither fury to destroy the Z'bri, nor forgiveness to make peace with them, we have settled into an interminable stalemate.

In the days after your death, Joan wanted to lead the remainder of your children and Hers into battle, to continue fighting. In truth, I think She wanted to join you in death, to explain to you what had happened. She began to spend much time with Mary, but it was no good. The Forgiver could offer the Warrior no comfort. As She grew sicker and sicker Joan became more frantic. I remember the day well. Mary died in Joan's arms, did you know that? I think Joan has become mad with grief. She still obeys my orders and performs Her duties but She is a mere shadow of Her formerly glorious self.

My mistake killed you and killed Mary and may yet kill Joan. It has created the Fallen and it haunts me daily. But sometimes I wonder, dear Brother, whether you are still among us. There are among the outcasts powerful dreamers. Despite being stripped of our gifts they can still enter the River of Dream. Despite being stripped of our love they still strive and struggle and grow. I fear them, dear Brother. I fear your rage in them. The Lilith was only a toy, a foolish game played by Dahlia. I will deal with Her, but the problem remains. I have made a mess, brother, and I intend not only to clean it up but to never make another one. But there are so many mistakes, so much blood on my hands. How can I afford to be wrong again? I simply cannot. Can you understand that? Can you forgive me? Mary could not.

Not again. I can never be wrong.



Chapter four: Warrior's Blessing

Come with me, Sister.

Let the blood feed your blade

And the howls fill your ears.

We are together.

We are invincible.

- A Brother's Call



TRIBAL CYCLES

Tribal cycles differ from Fallen cycles in many ways. These differences will be brought to light in the following pages, helping the Weaver to portray the Pillars of the Nation in a realistic and detailed manner. There are many advantages to running a Tribal cycle, and focusing on a specific Tribe (in this case Joan or Tera Sheba) within a campaign can lend depth and substance to a group's play.

USING JOAN IN A TRIBE 8 CYCLE

Playing within the Tribe of Joan or Tera Sheba need not isolate and exclude the other existing factions of Tribe 8. In fact, the opposite is recommended and ideal in order to make Vimary come to life with a populated and dynamic culture. By delving into the intricate web-work of the clans, guilds and families of the Tribes, as they are presented in the **Word Books**, a wealth of information and roleplaying opportunities will present themselves.

There is also the option of utilizing the Tribal cycle as a parallel (or mirroring) campaign to a Fallen one. Weaving the central cycle in respect to the Tribal cycle, the two can create complementary storylines that enrich and unfold ideas that the Players would not have normally experienced. The Weaver can plant seeds in one that will affect the other further down the line. (For instance, a Joanite Watch Cadre uncovers a Fallen meeting ground, while in the Fallen cycle, the characters set up a trade with the Keepers in that very same meeting place.)

The Pillars also have the unique position of directly affecting both the future of the Nation and the lives of the Fallen in a more direct nature than the other Tribes. The Watch is always on the lookout for Fallen within Tribal lands while the Templars are torn between accepting their help or aiding the Watchers in controlling the Outcasts. This allows the exploration of legends and traditions that are specific to the Joanites. As a people, they are rich in tradition and culture, providing excellent potential for the Weaver to explore their rites and rituals.

The clans and families also have their own personalities and mannerisms, furthering the relationships between the characters. Creating a network of brothers, sisters, cousins, parents, elders and friends is something that stands out more prominently than the "cell based" Fallen lifestyle. Each and every person around a Tribal character affects her in some way. The strains of status, position, heritage and reputation are all ones that the Weavers and Players alike can enjoy.

Weavers also have the possibility (by running a Tribe specific cycle) of using the locations, personalities and factions in a more positive light. The Tribes believe in the structure and system set before them and adhere to the laws and traditions without hesitation or ill will. If they don't, well, all one need do is look towards the lonely island of Hom.

TRIBAL CHARACTERS

The main characters of any **Tribe 8** game are the ones created by the players. Therefore, in a Joanite cycle, what kind of characters can there be? Amongst the Joanites, it is important to decide what Guild the characters belong to. Are they part of the Watch or the Templars? What clan and family are they from? Where do they live and where did they grow up?

When designing a group of Joanites, it is wise to set them up as a unit or circle that works closely with one another. Depending on the exact parameters of the cycle, a number of choices are possible. The Weaver can have the group fall under the command of a mentor, possibly a White Guard. This lets the Weaver set out "missions" and quests suitable for the characters and style of play.

Having the group form because of an alliance (including another Tribe or the Fallen) or as the result of an enemy's actions (whether it be the Z'bri, Squats, or even an internal clan problem) is another viable option.

The group may also be formed due to a specific need within the Tribe or the Nation. Maybe a new Duskfall Tower requires a refit of defenses and the characters are sent to assist the stationed garrison. Having Joan call a Quest Circle (see **Tribe 8 Companion** pp. 22-35) to deal with a specific issue gives the group legitimacy and a certain level of autonomous power.

With the story requirements in mind, examples of Joanite groups that exist are: Hunting Parties, Garrison Cadres, Watch Cadres, Joanite instigated Harvest Circles, Trade Escorts, Scouting Parties, Council Guard, Outland Explorers, Cavalry Circles, and Training Circles.

THEMES

Joanite cycles are going to carry different priorities than Fallen ones and, therefore, follow themes that highlight the Tribe's guilds, people and culture. Common themes in a Joanite Cycle are:

Heroism: The Joanites are the shield of the Nation as well as its sword. They are called upon first when dangers threaten Vimary, hence the heroism of the people is well documented. Bringing out the virtues of the Joanites in the face of adversity will test their resolve and force them to rise to the occasion — or fall under its pressure. The theme of heroism can also extend to the more intricate elements of Vimary, as the Joanites stand strong against Tera Sheba and the Fates, finally doing what they know is right.

Tragedy: Incorporating tragedy into any cycle takes it to a higher level, but this is especially useful with the Joanites. They are a passionate and proud people, often seeing the world as failing when put up against their idealism. When this disillusionment occurs — love is lost, a faithful friend betrays them, duty stands in the way of personal happiness, or a sacrifice need be made — the tragic consequences are often times more than a Joanite warrior can handle.

4. Joanite Resources

It is seen in Joan Herself and it is only right that it carry down into those who follow Her.

Destiny: Destiny is a common theme in Tribe 8 and is evident within the Joanites, as well. They will need to make a stand at some point in the future and there are those who continue this struggle for the good of the Tribe. The Joanites know, more than any other Tribe, that Vimary is changing and, unless they fight for what they believe in, they will likely follow the paths of Mary and Joshua, and be betrayed and forgotten.

Family Loyalty: The clans and the families of Joan are distinct and each has their own outlook on life. The conflicts and relationships between immediate family members, as well as the more extended clan, can make the characters feel that they are a part of a larger order and gives a sense of place within the community. Does the character place much importance in their family or are they the black sheep, always looking in from the fringes but never taking part?

MOOD

Creating a sense of atmosphere specific to Joan is vital in portraying the Tribe properly. In order for the players to receive maximum enjoyment from a Tribal cycle, they must experience the moods that only Joanites can provide.

Piety and Spiritualism: Underestimating the pious and spiritual aspect of the Warriors can be a mistake for a Joanite cycle. They are driven with purpose and have a connection with their Fatima and the River of Dream that they respect and worship. Their lives are centered in prayers and discipline, the two things that most occupy their time when on or off duty. They believe in their Fatima and have faith in the traditions of the Tribe; it gives

Fantastical: The Joanites encounter all sorts of strange and wonderful things in their journeys. Incorporating high fantasy and exploration within a Joanite cycle takes the game to the level of fantastical. Magical swords and powerful warriors feature in this setting, making raids on Z'bri palaces and encounters with mythical beasts almost commonplace.

TRIBAL LANDS

There are several prominent locations that Joanite culture revolves around. These are presented for the Weaver to include in her cycles and get a better understanding of where Joanites spend their time.

The Seven Fingers: Lining the northern borders of Vimary, the Seven Fingers are the first defense against any Z'bri incursions and the starting point for forays into the H'l Kar. The Seven Fingers each have a specific name, from west to east: the Tower of the Setting Sun, the Tower of the Crescent Moon, the Tower of the Western Wind, the Tower of the Northern Star, the Tower of the Eastern Wind, The Tower of the Full Moon and the Tower of the Rising Sun. A Garrison Leader of a specific clan commands each Tower, and all those under her, regardless of clan, family or status, follow any orders given.

The Duskfall Towers: Scattered throughout the dark recesses of Duskfall, small cadres of six Blades and one Templar attend to the Duskfall Towers. It is a dangerous duty to be posted in Duskfall, for supplies and support come sporadically. The Joanites must therefore deal with a multitude of situations in relative isolation. The Duskfall cadres are responsible for keeping open the many paths of the forest as well as maintaining a constant watch on the squats, serfs and Z'bri that use the

War Rooms: The heart of any tower, the war room is where the Garrison Leader or Watch Commander keeps track of all of the happenings within the tower itself and the surrounding area that falls within its jurisdiction. Priorities are dealt with and any audiences are taken in this room. For the Duskfall Towers, the war rooms aren't much more than a central room, whereas within the Seven Fingers and the Watchtower, they are magnificent and decorated halls. Depending on the current state of events, they may seem to be uneventful and quiet, or at the opposite end of the spectrum, humming with the sounds of orders and war.

Forges: The place where armor, weapons and equipment are created by the Joanite master crafters: Weaponshapers and Glass-smiths. Not all towers have a forge, but those that do make certain that they are kept safe and protected. There is always at least one guard on duty, for the loss of the forges could be disastrous to all of Vimary.

FALLEN CYCLES

Joanites can take three distinct roles within a Fallen cycle, each with its own flavor and style.

JOANITES AS ALLIES

From the Fallen perspective, the Joanites are possibly the most feared next to the Shebans. After all, they are the acting arm of the law. However, this needn't be the case. The Joanites can play as unexpected allies, adding further character to the cycle. Many Joanites sympathize with the Fallen plight and may aid them in evading harsh punishments for crimes uncommitted. They may also provide information on the Nation's laws and policies that will affect the Fallen, warning them of dangers ahead. The resources available to the Joanites are also far greater than ones the outcasts can normally procure, so acquiring weapons, equipment, livestock and so on can all become a part of a Joanite/Fallen alliance, no matter how small.

JOANITES AS ENEMIES

Not all of the warriors are friendly and amicable towards the outcasts and, as enemies, they can be very dangerous indeed. With the strength and resources available to them, from trained cavalry to finely crafted weapons, the Joanites can spell certain death for any Fallen who happen to bring down their anger. The Joanites also have the right to carry out punishment, with Tera Sheba's bidding, making them seemingly capable of acting with impunity and complete authority. There are many Joanites who feel that the Fallen gain their connection to Dream through the Z'bri, and would like nothing more than to see swift and fatal action be implemented against them.

JOANITES AS NEUTRALS

The most obvious method to having the Joanites play a neutral role in a Fallen cycle is by using a little of what has been said in both the allies and enemies sections above. By having the outcasts be forced to deal with both the kind and the unforgiving traits within the Tribe, a sense of duality will come forth. There are also areas in which the Joanites may shift in favor for or in opposition to the Fallen. Having Fallen Jackers accompany caravans for safety and protection is something the Joanites allow (as long as the outcasts don't overstep their boundaries). They may also strike up more mercenary bargains, trading information, goods and supplies for the betterment (ideally) of all those involved.

The Fallen also have more freedom when it comes to time and responsibility. Joanites may use this to their advantage, having the Fallen carry out remote duties (such as information gathering, scouting, etc.) that the strict Joanite schedule doesn't allow for.

CHARACTERS

A Joanite character must be created carefully, always keeping in mind the unique traits of the tribe and its Fatima. It is too easy to slip into the "brutal warrior" stereotype, and miss out on the intricate layers of subtext.

JOANITE CONCEPTS AND CHARACTER CREATION

Joanites have several affiliations that they all have in common. These are: Fatima, Tribe, Guild, Clan and Family.

First and foremost, the Joanite mindset is completely loyal to Joan. She is their connection to the Goddess and represents who they are, on a fundamental level. Loyalty to the Tribe ties in closely, as the Joanites are proud (and slightly arrogant) of the position they hold as warriors of the Nation. They then see clan and family as being a large part of themselves as individuals and it helps them understand their role in respect to everyone else. Being someone's sister, mother or uncle makes life more than just a job and a position.

When designing a Joanite character, these things should remain at the forefront of their concept.

The Guilds available to a starting Joanite characters are:

The Templars: The finest warriors of the Tribe, the Templars continue to man the Seven Fingers and explore the wilds of Vimary. Without their leadership, the Z'bri would have lashed out against the Nation long ago. The Templars hope to see a return of the Crusades and an expansion of the borders of Vimary. More than anything else, they would like to see the Z'bri threat crushed once and for all. The Templars attend to Joan and take care of the traditions and rituals of the Tribe.

4. Joanite Resources

Blades of Joan: The warriors of Joan, the Blades are the fighters and defenders of Vimary. They are trained in weapons from an early age and many aspire to one day become Templars. Some Blades have transferred their duties to become Watchers. This is becoming more commonplace as Tera Sheba continues to impose Her rule over the Joanites, in turn, creating a rift within the Blades of Joan — something that is damaging the Tribe as a whole. Cavalry is a sub-guild of either the Blades or the Watch, depending on who you talk to.

Hermit Blades: Caught in some personal quest, Hermit Blades are Joanites that need to resolve some internal conflict. They wander the wilds of Vimary, seeking visions and signs that will lead them to their destiny and peace with themselves.

Weaponshapers: Arguably the most skillful crafters that Vimary has to offer, without these forgers of weapons, armor, metal tools and the glass made by the sub-guild of Glass-Smiths, the Nation would have been a far different place. They are the backbone to the warriors, their duties carrying into the construction and design of the Joanite Towers, ensuring that all aspects of defense and arms are administered to. (The Glass-Smiths are a sub-guild of the Weaponshapers.)

The White Guard: Eldest of the Joanite Templars, the White Guard are honored as having reached a respectable age and subsequently take on the status of guides and mentors. (The Old Guard is a sub-guild of the White Guard, although the former includes Watchers as well.)

The Watch: They work the closest with the Terasheban, carrying out the investigations and maintaining peace within Tribal territories. They are given expansive authority over much of Bazaar and hope to extend their influence over the entire Nation. (Cavalry are a sub-guild of either the Watch or the Blades.)

Winter Wolves: The followers and worshipers of the Winter Wolf Totem, they are a secretive and elite guild amongst the Joanites. They are knowledgeable in the ways of the Dream and understand the Spirit realm on an intrinsic level.

Teachers: Joanites who can no longer carry out their duties, due to age, injuries or any other reason are expected to pass on their knowledge to those still in training or expanding their repertoire. The Teachers are the ones that ensure that the wisdom and experience of the Tribe carries on into the future.

JOANITE FAMILIES

The prominent clans amongst the Joanites are listed below. A starting character can belong to any of these clans, but need not be restricted by the traits presented. Should the Weaver wish it, a series of perks and flaws can be assigned to add extra detail.

Jacobi'on: The Jacobi'on clan are renowned for producing excellent Blades, however, they seem rather cursed with meeting horrible fates upon attaining Templar status. They are noted as being extremely loyal, almost to a fault.

Kil'on: Driven and energetic, the Kil'ons are always looked upon favorably by the Tribe to "get the job done". They tend to be large and physically imposing as individuals, helping further their reputation of being courageous and bold.

Morth'on: Said to carry some of the oldest legends next to the Guy'on and Kil'on clans, the Morth'ons are intent on paving the future with the tales that hold respect for the past. Of all the clans, they work the closest with the Fates, especially Baba Yaga.

Ben'on: A rather political clan, they are always involved with the intricate dealings of the Tribe, whether it be involved with war or economy.

Uhan'on: Almost entirely made up of Templars and the Old Guard, they are respected by all. However, their position with Tera Sheba has become strained over the years and they are on the verge of being subjected to a major investigation.

Heka'on: This clan is having internal troubles as some members are shedding the old tradition of joining the guild of Blades and are taking on the role of Watchers instead. Internal division may soon tear them apart.

Fera'on: The clan of the Winter Wolf, they are secretive and removed from much of what happens in regards to the Nation. They are often the first called upon to lend martial aid and spiritual advice when trouble arises, and are held in high regards by any circle that their members may happen to join.

Luther'on: The clan with the highest number of Watchers, the Luther'ons are closely connected with the Tera Shebans and have become quite influential in their own right. They are furthering their jurisdictions lately to include the outer regions of Vimary, something the Uhan'ons are not taking to warmly.

Guy'on: The clan most given over to changing the manner in which the Joanites carry out their duty, the Guy'ons are the nominal "leaders" of the Joanites, led by the honorable Nostra Guy'on.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

Joanites, depending on the guild to which they belong, will have attributes that complement their required skills. When designing a character, weigh on the side of common sense (a Cavalryman without the Ride skill isn't much good).

Attributes: As a generalization, Joanites tend to have high Agility, decent Fitness and Perception, and good Willpower traits.

Skills: Joanites have skills in weapons (Melee, Archery), Survival, Riding, Lore (Joan), Craft (Weapons, Glass), and usually possess good Notice and Combat Sense scores.

Synthesis: Joanites have the Eminences of Fury and Devotion, while some gifted members also have the Aspects of Sacrifice and Battle. All members of the Guild of the Winter Wolf (and no-one else) have the Aspect of Winter's Cloak.

The Joanite character is made using the same allocated points (30 character points, 40 skill points) as noted in the **Tribe 8 Rulebook**.

Equipment is supplied according to station, for instance, Templars, Blades and Watchers will be properly armed with sword, shield, armor and the tools required for their upkeep. (i.e. A Weaponshaper will have a forge to work with and the required tools, and a Cavalryman will have a horse with stirrups and bridle.) Joanites also tend to carry a symbol of Joan or other icon that they use in prayer and worship.

Keep in mind that the abuse of Joanite resources and supplies can lead to reprimands, so only the required equipment is permitted upon character creation. As always, the Weaver has the final word.

THE RIVER OF DREAM

The Joanites' intense devotion to their Fatima grants them a very deep and intrinsic connection to the River of Dream, and their Synthesis levels and skills reflect this.

JOANITE RITUALS

The Joanites are very spiritual in nature, complementing their martial skills with sound minds. Joanites incorporate many rituals in their day to day existence, as well as large ceremonies for special occasions, including war and festivals. Their rituals tend to be ceremonial in nature, including a focus or artifact and a series of words or prayers that invoke Joan or the Goddess. The most decorated and highest standing member of those present normally leads the ritual.

Joanites have rituals for personal well being, the success of a quest, the ability to face adversity, the seeing of holy days (such as the Liberation or La Chasse des Grand Fleaux), the forging of weapons and a multitude of other reasons. Rituals exist in almost everything a Joanite breathes and lives. They are a major part of the Tribe and help define the Joanite culture.



ARTIFACTS

Joanite artifacts are some of the most awe-inspiring creations that any Tribal may have the chance to see. From their pristine swords to their stained glassworks, each and every artifact holds a respected position in Joanite legend and tradition. Artifacts are not limited to the greatest of armors or the purest of blades, but also extend into the small ritualistic tools and items that adorn the chapels and war rooms of Joan. More than being just a set of numbers, however, it is wise to make all artifacts important to the Joanite way of life, each one holding a special place of honor in family, clan and Tribe.

Some of the most noteworthy artifacts are:

The Shield of Armathay: Once held by a Joshuan during the Liberation, he gave it to a Joanite upon his death and stated that it was a final gift to his Fatima's beloved Sister. The Shield has the ability of allowing the wielder, who must be of pure heart and true mind (Weaver's judgement), to ignore the effects of Z'bri Atmosphere and receive a +4 to any resistance rolls versus Sundering. Should an unworthy individual try to use the Shield of Armathay, a Joshuan Spirit will appear and strike down the transgressor in a duel to the death.

The Dagger of Joan: The Dagger of Joan is a mysterious weapon that is not intended for a character to possess. However, it does have the ability of being a Major Fatimal Artifact, and gives a +3 to the wielder in any attempts at using Synthesis. It acts as a blessed Shortsword, but does an additional +4 damage against Z'bri (AD +10 normally, AD+14 vs. Z'bri, regardless of type).

Swords of Joan: Weapons blessed by Joan Herself. These finely crafted pieces give the sword a +1 ACC and +1 Parry modifiers. They do an additional damage +2 (a blessed Longsword would do AD +13).

Medallions of Joan: These are pieces of Joan that are given as rewards for exemplary duty and sacrifice. They offer status and have the game effect of being Minor Fatimal Artifacts.

TOTEMS

Joan has an intimate relationship with the Winter Wolf. It taught Her much about the world and She upholds this relationship. The Guild of the Winter Wolf directly worships the Tribal Totem, but anyone can benefit from its teachings. Joanites behaving in a manner that pleases the Winter Wolf can receive bonuses in play, while acting in ways that oppose its nature can bring about its enmity.

Positive actions of the Winter Wolf: Acting with passion, Upholding Loyal virtues, Acting on behalf of the Circle, Praying to the Winter Wolf, Sacrificing an animal to actual wolves, Living off the land for a week, Engaging in Winter Wolf rituals.

Negative actions of the Winter Wolf: Acting selfishly, Betrayal, Acting against clan Fera'on, Disregarding authority, Ignoring the River of Dream for more than a day, Succumbing to Z'bri Atmosphere, Using Joan's name in a blasphemous manner.



THE WINTER WOLF (TOTEM SPIRIT)

Highlights: Proud, Worldly, Supremely Powerful

ATTRIBUTES:

CRE	+4	INF	+6	KNO	+3	PER	+10	PSY	+8
WIL	+7	STR	+7	HEA	+15	STA	120	UD	34

SKILLS:

Combat Sense	4	+10	Dodge	3	+4	Hand to Hand	4	+4
Sneak	4	+4	Tactics	4	+3	Lore(Spirit)	4	+3
Mythology	4	+3	Notice	6	+10			

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bite (UD + 30), Wolf's Hunt (tracks prey successfully on an opposed PSY roll), Winter's Fog (allows travel in the material realm as though immaterial), Wolf's Howl (scares Prey from hiding on an opposed PSY vs. WIL roll).

NPCs

SIMONE MIRALKIN JACOBI'ON,
HERMIT BLADE

Simone was unable to come to terms with the sequence of events that followed the traumas of the Hunting Party. Her closest companions were killed while the traitor was allowed to live. She left the Watchtower knowing that one day Joan would rise from her sorrow and once again lead the warriors to brighter days. Simone spends her days wandering the Outlands and Vimary, searching for answers to a puzzle that still eludes her — what keeps Joan from confronting Tera Sheba and leading Her own Tribe.

Highlights: Thoughtful, Sad, Questing

Eminences: Fury, Devotion Aspect; Battle, Sacrifice

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	+2	APP	+1	BLD	0	CRE	+3	FIT	+2
INF	0	KNO	+2	PER	+1	PSY	+4	WIL	+3
STR	+1	HEA	3	STA	35	UD	6	AD	7

SKILLS:

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Athletics	2	+2	Melee	3	+2	Combat Sense	3	+1
Dodge	3	+2	Hand to Hand	2	+2	Disguise	1	+3
Lore (Joan)	2	+2	Tactics	1	+2	Mythology	1	+2
Survival	2	+3	Riding	1	+4	Navig. (Vimary)	1	2
Synthesis	3							

Equipment: Blessed Longsword of Joan (ACC+1, Parry 0; AD+13), Armor: Light Chain AR10, Travel gear, Prayer artifact of Joan.





TROY UHAN'ON, TEMPLAR

Troy was sent to command a Duskfall Tower on the northernmost tip, the no-man's land between the Duskfall Forest and the H'I Kar. That was eight years ago. He and his Blades have not had any contact with the Nation since that time, their position too important for them to abandon and the destination too hazardous to expect any relief.

The Joanites in Vimary know Troy and his cadre still exist (through Dream contact), but the lengthy removal from "normal life" has taken its toll on Troy. He and his cadre are rather eccentric these days and may be difficult to relate to, should someone encounter them.

Highlights: Crazed, Eccentric, Isolated

Eminences: Fury, Devotion Aspect; Battle

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	+3	APP	-1	BLD	-1	CRE	-1	FIT	+3
INF	-1	KNO	-1	PER	+2	PSY	-2	WIL	+3
STR	+1	HEA	+2	STA	30	UD	5	AD	6

SKILLS:

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Athletics	4	+3	Combat Sense	3	+2	Melee	3	+3
Dodge	3	+3	Hand to Hand	2	+3	Tactics	2	0
Lore(Duskfall)	3	+0	Synthesis	1				

Equipment: Troy is armed with a blessed artifact Katana (ACC+1, Parry +2, AD+15). Armor: Heavy Chain AR14. He has a cadre of six Blades under his command who obey him without fault.

ALNESH KIL'ON, WHITE GUARD

An extremely volatile man, Alnesh abhors the Old Guard's current attempts at further curbing the possibilities of a Crusade. He was the previous Garrison Leader of the Tower of the Setting Sun before his nephew, Awarnak, took over. He currently attends to the Tower Chapel and speaks of dangerous times ahead. He is at odds with Nostra Guy'on. Many younger Joanites hold Alnesh as a Tribal icon to live up to.

While many of the older Joanites respect his opinions, and even agree with him upon occasion, his abrasive manner and harsh speech have alienated most of the higher-ranking members of the tribe.

Highlights: Old, Angry, Respectable

Eminences: Fury, Devotion Aspect; Sacrifice

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	-1	APP	+2	BLD	+3	CRE	-1	FIT	-1
INF	+3	KNO	+3	PER	-1	PSY	+1	WIL	+1
STR	+1	HEA	0	STA	40	UD	9	AD	11

SKILLS:

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Melee	4	-1	Combat Sense	3	0	Dodge	3	-1
Hand to Hand	2	-1	Lore(Joan)	3	+3	Lore(7 Fingers)	2	+3
Mythology	3	3	Tactics	4	+0	Synthesis	2	

Equipment: A set of armor from the days of the Liberation (on display at the Tower of the Setting Sun's Chapel), Ceremonial Longsword AD+11, Several Medallions of Joan, Scars and markings of legendary battles.





CASSANDRA LUTHER'ON, TEACHER

Once an aspiring Watcher who was on the verge of becoming a Captain, Cassandra Luther'on was seriously injured during a chase of some outcasts who had robbed a merchant in Bazaar. The wet floorboards of an abandoned structure gave way under the melee and resulted in her partial paralysis from the waist down.

She now teaches Watchers and Blades in martial theory and human relations, hoping to help others to succeed where she can no longer.

Highlights: Witty, Attractive, Amiable

Eminences: Fury, Devotion

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	-2	APP	+3	BLD	-1	CRE	+1	FIT	-1
INF	+2	KNO	+2	PER	+1	PSY	-1	WIL	+2
STR	-1	HEA	0	STA	20	UD	1	AD	3

SKILLS:

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Melee	2	-2	Notice	3	+1	Teach	3	+1
Human Perce.	2	0	Lore(Weapons)	2	+2	Lore(Psychology)	1	+2
Dreaming	1	0	Rituals	2	+2	Synthesis	1	

Equipment: Wheelchair given as a gift from a Dahlian friend (imbued with Movement), Ritual Dagger for ceremonies, Scrolls and parchments of lessons and teachings.

KORBETT FERA'ON, WINTER WOLF

A brooding warrior who maintains a cool outer calm that transforms suddenly into unbridled rage at a moment's notice, Korbett is a shadowy fellow. He seldom socializes with the rest of his clan and keeps even further distance from those outside the Tribe of Joan.

He is tolerated in his solitary behavior because of his unfaltering loyalty to the Winter Wolf and his unequalled passion for a good fight. He prefers to spend most of his time roaming the Hunting Paths, declining to answer any questions about what he does when he's there.

Highlights: Mysterious, Aloof, Unpredictable

Eminences: Fury, Devotion Aspect: Winter's Cloak

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	+3	APP	-1	BLD	+2	CRE	+2	FIT	+2
INF	-2	KNO	-1	PER	+2	PSY	+1	WIL	+1
STR	+2	HEA	+1	STA	40	UD	9	AD	10

SKILLS:

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Athletics	2	+3	Archery	1	+3	Melee	3	+3
Notice	2	+2	Combat Sense	3	+2	Dodge	2	+3
Hand to Hand	2	+3	Lore*	1	0	Rituals	1	0
Synthesis	1		* (Winter Wolf)					

Equipment: A serrated Shortsword (ACC0, Parry+1, AD+8), Dagger (AD+3), Short Bow w/assorted arrows, Leather Armor: AR5.



Chapter five: Law of the land

Where there is no law, there is chaos.

Where chaos reigns, death follows.

There must be no more death.

The law is life.

The law is all.

- Words of Sheba



TRIBAL CYCLES

One of the most useful things to do when setting up a Tribal campaign which will feature the Wise One's tribe is to consider the things which make the tribe unique. That is, in what ways are Tera Sheba's tribe different from the other groups and factions in the world of **Tribe 8**?

To start with, Terasheban are not outcasts. They live under the grace and protection of their Fatima. The importance of this to the tribal mindset cannot be overestimated. All Terasheban are in service (the Herites would say slavery) to the Wise One; duty is all, and all are expected to serve.

Justice — or the idea of justice — is also central to the Terasheban mindset. While many of the activities carried out by a "typical" Fallen cell are, strictly speaking, criminal acts under tribal law (theft, assault, breaking and entering, treason, blasphemy etc.), Terasheban are steeped in that law and devote their lives to upholding it. This is not to say that a Terasheban character won't break the law, simply that the awareness of the nature of the act will be uppermost in his or her thoughts. Of course, some would say that the best criminals are the ones who know the law best...

Your chronicle should reflect this. Try to come up with ways to incorporate the central beliefs and ideals of the tribe into your game. A Terasheban cycle offers many unique opportunities for stories which are alien to, or simply not possible in, a Fallen chronicle.

THEMES

The overriding theme in **Tribe 8** is that of a world out of balance. Tera Sheba is a living embodiment of that very lack of balance. She is symbolized by the scales of justice, yet She is torn by internal conflicts which have destroyed Her own balance. It is surely within Her power to restore the balance of a damaged world, or to forever destroy it. Her tribe will surely be just as instrumental as the Fallen in determining the fate of mankind.

Keeping this overall theme of balance in mind, some more specific suggestions for themes, perhaps of individual stories within your cycle, include:

Justice vs. Law: Ideally, and publicly, Tera Sheba and Her laws embody the perfect justice of the Goddess. Yet only the most fanatical members of Her tribe would admit that this is the case. Even the Lorekeeper's mantra of "making the laws more perfect" reflects the fact that there is a gap between the ideal and the reality. It could be argued that the imperfections in the law are a result of its execution by a Tribe which is, after all, human and not divine. But it may equally be argued that many Terasheban, especially those directly involved in the legal system, spend many hours pondering the justice administered by Tera Sheba's laws and servants. The problem of the Fallen, and their often politically-motivated exile, is only the most obvious manifestation of this trend.

Fallen vs. Tribal: Few know that Tera Sheba considers Herself the "mother" of the Fallen, yet all acknowledge the Wise One's troubled relationship with them. Given that it is Tera Sheba's laws which exile the Fallen, this is hardly surprising. Many Terasheban would like to blame the Fallen for all the ills of Tribal society, but there are just as many who realize that the Fallen are a symptom of a disease, not the disease itself. Some of these are beginning to fear that the disease is being spread by their own Tribe.

Add to this the tragic inevitability of more and more Judges and High Judges being forced to exile their own friends and family members and you have a dangerous situation brewing among the leadership of the Nation. Faced with a choice between loyalty to one's Tribe and Fatima, and loyalty to one's family and loved ones, many Terasheban crack, and either go into exile themselves, join the ranks of the Stiltwalkers, or end their lives rather than make a choice they cannot possibly get right.

The Price of Power: Tera Sheba has been placed in a position of great power and She has paid a fearsome price. Many of Her children are in the same position. Leadership can be a heavy burden and the Wise One's children are often called on to make sacrifices — sometimes great sacrifices — in order to serve Her will. But are some sacrifices too great to make? Is the prize worth the price? The Stiltwalkers notwithstanding, there are many Terasheban who think it is not.

MOOD

Another important element of your game, regardless of other factors, is its mood. Do you want a game which is full of intrigue and suspense, or do you prefer action and danger? There are a number of things you can do to heighten the mood you want to create, but it is worth taking a moment to consider how theme and mood will interact in your cycle. For example, if your theme is the inner conflict between justice and law felt so keenly by many Terasheban, a mood of triumph and glory might not be appropriate.

Of course, it might be interesting to experiment with combining a seemingly-mismatched theme and mood; while they may seem to jar at first, it should encourage your players to look below the surface of your cycle. Some suggested moods are:

Suspense and Intrigue: Especially appropriate to courtroom dramas and investigative scenarios, the key to creating a suspenseful mood in your game is to carefully control the flow of information. Information should be fragmented, inconclusive, or contradictory, while other characters' motives may be difficult to fathom. Senior Tribal figures might lend a hand, leaving the players wondering about (or starting to investigate) their motives. Players should be drawn gradually into a web of intrigue; every connection uncovered should reveal three more, while progress seems always too slow. The trick is to give your players enough information to resolve a conflict without making the solution obvious.

5. Sheban Resources

Paranoia and Uncertainty: It is a difficult time for the Terasheban. The tribe, and its Fatima, is approaching a crossroads, and no-one knows what will happen when it is reached. Tera Sheba is preparing to clean up a mess She made three generations ago. Her tribe, though it may not know it, is similarly preparing for a massive change. The factions and cliques which are proliferating are a symptom of this; in such uncertain times, people are seeking the security of knowing that others share their particular values and beliefs.

Enemies lurk in the shadows, ready to trip up the unwary at every turn. Shocking revelations, factional politics and shifting allegiances all have a place in a campaign featuring this mood.

Hope and Faith: Some manage to find hope even in the midst of despair. A Terasheban campaign should not be unremittently dark. Although beleaguered, the Tribe has a proud history and many loyal members. Blind faith leads to tyranny and absolutism; hope and faith (in one's Fatima, one's Tribe and one's friends), on the other hand, may be the only tools with which to avert catastrophe.

It should not be forgotten that the Wise One's Tribe is indeed one of the Pillars of the Nation. Although the law is not perfect, it nevertheless regulates Tribal society and allows it to function. Help from unexpected quarters, the appearance of signs and omens (such as the Great Owl) and reminders of the good achieved by the Tribe should be used to keep up the spirits of your players (and their characters).

SETUP

Apart from such obvious inter-tribal setups as a Watch Patrol, with a Terasheban officer and a number of Joanite guards, there are a number of unique group setups available to a Terasheban cycle. Try to focus on the social situations, groups and activities which are particular to the Tribe. Some examples include:

Judge's chambers: A versatile setting which permits a variety of stories to be told, you may wish to make your circle the Advocates or Lorekeepers or even the whole staff of a chamber, from the Judge down to the most junior staff. This opens opportunities for courtroom dramas, political intrigues, investigative scenarios and even conspiracy or action adventures, as the details of a case are investigated and uncovered.

Lorekeeper explorers: These Lorekeepers are allowed considerable leeway. They may trade with Keepers, venture into the Rust Wastes and even travel off Vimary. Of course, they undergo regular ritual cleansing (see p. 77) and examination/questioning from their seniors. This is a perfect setup for an action, exploration or conspiracy game, as the team discovers facts the Tribe, or its Masters, would prefer to keep hidden.

Stiltwalkers: Stiltwalkers spend much time in contemplation and in pursuit of their various crafts, but many stories can be woven around them. Story possibilities include danger and discovery in the depths of the Sunken City, investigations into the Tribe's history and politics, even intrigue as the Tribe's power-brokers, misunderstanding the nature of the Stiltwalkers and their way of life, try to use them as pawns.

LOCATIONS

Given that the Terasheban are one of the most geographically homogenous Tribes, with the vast majority of them living together in the Sunken City (including the Stone Shores), it is important to bring their home to life. The Sunken City is not just a collection of courthouses and libraries. It is a complete, almost self-contained community, with all the facilities — schools, restaurants, theaters, parks and so on — such a community requires. Of course, the fact that everything has been built in, on or around the ruins of the time before only adds to its sometimes eerie ambiance. The following are a few sample locations:

Judge's chambers: Scattered throughout the Sunken City, and beginning to appear on Vimary proper, a Judge's chambers typically house a small community of Terasheban. In the Sunken City, the bottom floor usually has a large, constantly burning hearth, to dry the building and keep the books and papers free of moisture. The Judge will always have an office; depending on the size of the practice, the Advocates may have offices or a common area. Most chambers have a Lorekeeper on hand to take care of research and tend the chamber's library, which may range in size from a few select volumes to an entire floor of texts. Meeting rooms are also important, for discussing matters with witnesses and fellow professionals.

Courthouse: There are seven courts in the Sunken City, one in Bazaar and a number of "part-time" courts in other settlements across Vimary (Westholm, Griffintown etc.). All courthouses have a number of features in common. The first, of course, is the court itself. The Judge sits on a raised dais, while the prosecution and defense sit behind simple benches, facing the Judge. There are usually a few rows of seats in the rear of the room. In addition to the courtroom, the courthouse has holding cells, an office for the Judge, a small library, and rooms for visiting Advocates and their charges. The Foundation Stone is laid in the center of the courtroom floor; a Judge will stand on it and draw upon Tera Sheba's wisdom if required to use Truthsaying to decide a case. Most "part-time" courts are actually halls used for a number of purposes, and do not have a Foundation Stone.

Tavern: The Sunken City is home to a large number of taverns, including The Ax and Lantern (claiming to be Vimary's oldest permanent public house), the Black Gavel (catering to younger Terasheban) and the Nag's Head (featuring music every night). In addition to the large public rooms, Terasheban taverns invariably have a large number of private booths and many also have small auditoriums on upper floors, to host musical and theatrical performances.

The quality of the food served varies greatly, as does the ambiance, which runs the gamut from loud and raucous to quiet and dignified. One thing remains constant, however: the quality and variety of the drinks on offer is second to none on Vimary. Members of the other Tribes are usually (but not universally) welcome; visitors beware!

FALLEN CYCLES

Of course, Terasheban are also a rich resource to draw on for NPCs in areas beyond a Tribal campaign.

USING TERASHEBANS AS ALLIES

If you're intending to run a Fallen cycle, think about introducing some Terasheban as allies for your players. It's too easy to let the Terasheban become stereotyped representatives of a repressive legal/political system. It's far more interesting to demonstrate the diversity of occupations and beliefs the Tribe has to offer.

Of course, most Fallen are loathe to trust any Terasheban, given that many were exiled by the tribal justice system, so it can be tricky to introduce a sympathetic Terasheban into your game. The key is to think about the characters' (both your Players' and your own) motives. Alliances form between two parties when their goals coincide. What things would motivate a Terasheban to work alongside an Outcast?

The quest for justice is an obvious candidate. An unscrupulous Terasheban might be only too happy to work alongside some Outcasts if it would further their career. More sympathetically, a philosophically-inclined Terasheban might realize that for justice to be done, it might be necessary to step outside the law. Terasheban are unlikely to provide muscle to a group, but they have access to all kinds of information and many Advocates are as savvy and well-connected as the shadiest Dahlian. Evidence for a trial, protection of witnesses, even assistance with a Lorekeeper expedition may all provide points of contact between the Tribe and the Outcasts. And if your Players are up to it, a forbidden affair between a Terasheban and her Fallen lover has the potential to be a moving subplot.

USING TERASHEBANS AS ENEMIES

When using Terasheban as opponents for your players, reach beyond the archetypal vengeful Judge out to persecute the Fallen. While such characters have an important role to play in the **Tribe 8** story, a steady diet of them will rapidly become uninteresting. Remember that all Terasheban are educated, and many of them are in positions of influence and authority.

Think of the ways in which a Terasheban might clash with a Fallen. Terasheban strive to promote and protect order and stability; the Fallen are seen as a danger to both. A Terasheban, or a group of Terasheban, quietly and steadily campaigning against the Fallen, is a far greater danger than any single Judge. Consider the danger if a group of Terasheban began making it known that any shopkeepers in Bazaar who traded with the Fallen would be investigated for treason. Bribery, blackmail or even appeals to the grace of the Fatimas could be used to this end, and would hurt the Eighth Tribe far more than a simple assault.

The Stiltwalkers are another group who may have contact with the Fallen. Just because they've opted out of active involvement in the legal system doesn't mean they're friends of the Fallen. In fact, given the time many of them have for quiet contemplation, there are a number who bear the Eighth Tribe significant malice. In the aftermath of the Fallen raid into the Sunken City during Lilith's time a number of Stiltwalkers were injured and killed and their vigilance has increased.

USING TERASHEBANS AS NEUTRALS

Terasheban are often wrapped up in the affairs of their tribe to the exclusion of all else. After all, if their own house isn't in order, what hope is there for the other Tribes? In this variation, a Terasheban can make a memorable appearance in your game as a figure content to advance his or her own ends by whatever means is most expedient.

A Terasheban who is essentially uninterested in the Fallen until or unless they break the law makes a refreshing change of pace. It might also remind your players that the Terasheban are the guardians of their society's law and order first, unthinking enemies of the Fallen second. In this way you can show your players the difficult situation the tribe finds itself in and the conflicts it faces.

Courtroom dramas in particular may benefit from the presence of a strong, fearlessly independent Judge. Perhaps your players are the only witnesses to a crime they know must be defended. Do they trust the Terasheban? Can the Judge guarantee them a fair hearing? The Judge's dilemma is sharp, but has the potential to make allies or enemies of the players.

Advocates, Lorekeepers and Stiltwalkers also make good "neutral" contacts. Usually interested in information or artifacts, they will gladly deal with the Fallen if it will help a case, their research or their meditations. Of course, they will always want something in return for their aid. Terasheban's sense of fairness most certainly extends to their trades with other people.

CHARACTER CREATION

While not as outwardly entertaining or outrageous as the Dancers, the Terasheban offer a rare opportunity for a heavily political and subtly plotted campaign.

CONCEPT

This is the most important stage of character creation. Whether you're building NPCs for a Fallen cycle, or guiding your players as they create their PCs for a Terasheban cycle, the character's overall concept should be carefully considered before putting numbers down on paper. Some questions to consider include:

Justice or Law? The crucial question for all Terasheban. Try though many might to deny it, the two are not the same. Sooner or later all the Wise One's children must decide which is more important. If your character has, what was the decision? If the character has not, what will it be?

Judge, Advocate, Lorekeeper, Stiltwalker or "other"? What does the character do? The duties of a Judge or a High Judge are well-defined, but Advocates and Lorekeepers have a great variety of options open to them and could end up just about anywhere, doing just about anything. Stiltwalkers include everyone from fishermen to boatmen to craftsmen, storytellers and coastal guardians among their ranks.

Allegiance: Is the character a member of any group or faction? If so, why? If not, why not? Terasheban love gathering in small groups to get particular tasks done. This includes political conspiracies and professional networks as well as more community-oriented activities.

Motives/goals: Finally consider what, ultimately, the character wants to achieve. Reform the legal system? Destroy the Fallen? Master a craft? To be a respected citizen and devoted family, clan and tribe-member? Knowing what drives your characters will add depth to your portrayals of them.

PROMINENT CLANS

Terasheban are very aware of their social status and that of their neighbors, colleagues and companions. The following are some of the Tribe's more notable clans:

Thaim'on: Arch-conservatives, the Thaim'on Clan expects nothing less than brilliance from all its members. Some Clan members reject these expectations entirely and end up on the Shores or, occasionally, banished. These individuals are never spoken of again.

Dan'on: The Dan'ons are noted mostly for their diversity. The Clan has produced Judges of all political stripes, resourceful Advocates and some exceptional Stiltwalkers. More relaxed and diverse than the Thaim'ons, they pursue excellence as a matter of personal fulfillment, not clan power.

Medi'on: The Medi'ons are steadily gaining positions of influence. They jockey and maneuver for power; once they achieve it, their ability depends on the individual. The one constant is their desire to appoint other family members to positions around them, a desire which brings occasional controversy as other appointees complain.

Seth'on: Until the appointment of High Judge Cylix Seth'on, few had heard of this clan from the Western reaches of the Sunken City. Since his appointment, Cylix's power within his clan has grown enormously. Not all his clanmates are happy with Cylix's attitude or his politics, however.

Ever'on: This Clan is considered by most to be unexceptional, having produced moderates, conservatives, radicals, Judges, Lorekeepers and Stiltwalkers in equal numbers. The Ever'ons like it this way, the lack of pressure or preconception allowing each Clan member to pursue their own destiny in their own way.

SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

Now that you have a strong idea of your character's identity, it's time to start putting numbers down on paper. There are a number of sample characters and NPC templates in this and all other **Tribe 8** books. They make an excellent guide to the sorts of skills Terasheban are likely to have. The following suggestions are guidelines only:

Attributes: Most Terasheban are well-educated; good to excellent KNO scores are the norm. Judges and Advocates often have good scores in CRE, INF and PSY. Lorekeepers tend towards even higher KNO and good CRE and PER scores. Stiltwalkers' abilities vary, but they typically have good FIT and highly variable PSY scores.

Skills: All Terasheban are literate to some degree; an illiterate Terasheban is a rarity. Tribal Law is similarly common, as the children learn to read by studying the Laws. Other useful skills include Craft (various), Empathy, Human Perception, Intimidate, Lore: other tribes and Notice.

Synthesis: Synthesis is given as a mark of favor by Tera Sheba to those She deems worthy. As such, high synthesis scores are usually only seen in those characters who are of high social rank or who have performed exceptional service to the Tribe.

Perks/Flaws: Appropriate choices include the Perks Authority, Connections, Prestige, Subordinates and the Flaws Addiction, Code of Honor, Dedicated, Paranoid.

Equipment: All Judges are given their lantern-staff and a medallion of office. Terasheban are generally wealthy enough to afford whatever equipment they need, but they tend to use underlings to perform arduous duties.

THE RIVER OF DREAM

The Terasheban connection to the River of Dream is highly controlled by Tera Sheba Herself. Synthesis abilities and Aspects are given sparingly, as rewards for valued and loyal service.

RITUALS

The Wise One's Tribe has a great variety of rituals, performed at turning points in a tribe member's life, at important public events and other times as needed. Feel free to invent rituals to mark important events in your cycle. When performing them in-game, try to create a solemn mood. After all, Tera Sheba Herself is being invoked. Some of the most common or popular rituals are:

Ritual of Dedication: This is performed every morning, in every court, before any cases are heard. Its purpose is to focus the Terashebans' minds on the Wise One's justice and to make them fitting receptacles for it.

The court officials gather in the main courtroom and form a circle. The room is darkened and incense is lit while the most senior Judge leads the gathering in a simple chant, followed by a moment of quiet contemplation:

Tera Sheba, bless us this day

with clarity of mind

and purity of heart

and strength of will

that we might serve your laws.

Ritual of Purification: This ritual is administered by Lorekeepers to their explorer brethren, and is performed on all the members of an expedition upon its safe return to Tribal lands.

The explorer(s) stand in a line and drink a goblet of water which has been blessed. Then, as the following chant is intoned by an attendant, the Lorekeeper conducting the ritual sprinkles blessed water on the forehead and breast of each explorer:

Tera Sheba

bless your servant

for he has chanced his soul

that we might learn

the truths otherwise hidden.

ARTIFACTS

Tera Sheba's artifacts are generally created to assist Her children in the exercise of the law, however, most of the Tribe's treasured artifacts are historical, not enchanted in nature:

The Fisher King's Ax: Hammark Slade'on used this to slay his nemesis, Dev'ron (see the **Vimary Sourcebook**, p. 44). A plain, double-headed battle-ax, adorned with the scales of justice across the heads, it grants the user the Eminences Fury and Wisdom (level 4). It is currently held by Hammark, in his tower.

The Laws of Tera Sheba: The Tribe's most sacred treasure. This enormous volume contains all of Tera Sheba's laws and was penned by the Wise One herself. Every new moon, she takes the volume and inscribes any new or amended laws in it. It is kept, under guard, in the atrium of Court Hall.

Foundation Stones: Every court has one of these set in its foundations. Each stone has a small piece of the Fatima Herself embedded in it, conferring a +1 bonus on the use of Terasheban Aspects and Eminences by those within the building.

Judge's Lantern: Senior Judges may be given one of these lanterns. Made of dark wood chased with silver, their light may be varied from the glow of a single candle to that of a roaring bonfire (roll Synthesis, difficulty 3).

Medallions: Terasheban medallions may have a variety of effects, such as granting the holder Human Perception skill (level 3), one-off uses of Eminences or Aspects, bonuses to Empathy and Notice rolls, and so on.

TOTEM

The Great Owl is the totem spirit of the Terashebans. Proud and watchful, no deed escapes its gaze and its vengeance is swift.

Legend has it that the Great Owl bore Tera Sheba across the River of Dream, and has watched over both Fatima and Tribe ever since. It has coolly appraised the Wise One and has been ready a number of times to intervene in matters, were it not for the voice of the Goddess asking it not to interfere. It has come to understand that the Fatima must make, and learn from, her mistakes.

Still, the Owl is concerned for its people and has decided to become more actively involved with them. A nature spirit, the Owl has no real understanding of, and certainly no interest in, factions or politics.

A predator, it will not come peacefully to its children. For a Terasheban to receive assistance from the Owl, the need must be great and the Terasheban must call directly on the spirit. Word has begun to spread about the Owl's renewed interest in its children. Use your judgment as to whether the character has been acting in what the Owl would consider to be a "just" fashion. If the character has, then the Owl might appear and grant the character the use of any of its skills or abilities (see **Tribe 8**, p. 163). Alternatively, it might assist by (for example) distracting an opponent, causing a needed clue to appear or granting a sudden flash of insight.

PROMINENT TRIBE MEMBERS



ROBBI ARMAND'ON:

Robbi Armand'on is typical of many Judges. Trying to find some relaxation and inspiration, she is writing a chronicle of her Tribe, hoping to rediscover the idealism of her youth.

Robbi has a strong dislike for the self-serving politicking which seems to be taking over the tribe of her birth. Disillusioned by the dealmaking, she has begun to see the Sheban controls over the Nation in a whole new light.

She has recently retired to the Stone Shores, to write and meditate.

Highlights: Serious, workaholic, conflicted

Eminences: Truth, Wisdom

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	-1	APP	-1	BLD	-1	CRE	+1	FIT	-1
INF	+2	KNO	+2	PER	+1	PSY	-1	WIL	-1
STR	-1	HEA	-1	STA	20	UD	3	AD	3

SKILLS:

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Human Percep.	2	+1	Interrogation	2	+1	Law	3	+2
Lore*	2	+2	Mythology	1	+2	Read/Write**	2	+2
Ritual	2	+2	Synthesis***	2				
* (Terasheban History)			** (Tribal)			*** (Truthsaying)		

Equipment: Staff, legal paraphernalia, manuscript

GORDY LAL'ON. STILTWALKER:

Gordy used to be calm and carefree. The Fallen raid on the Sunken City changed that. When the Fallen were in trouble during the Winter of Lilith, Gordy was one of the Stilwalkers who petitioned for more food rations, and slipped his extras to the starving outcasts. The Herite attack (see *Children of Lilith*, pp. 48-53) took him completely by surprise.

When he was wounded and his sister killed, his attitude towards the outcasts change irrevocably. The Fallen were not hard-luck cases as he'd previously believed, but dangerous maniacs. Since then, Gordy has organized a large series of lookouts and defenses around the Sunken City and the Stilwalker territories. The next time the Fallen come, he'll be ready.

Highlights: Paranoid, vigilant, driven

Eminences: Truth, Wisdom

ATTRIBUTES:

AGI	+1	APP	-1	BLD	+1	CRE	-1	FIT	+1
INF	-1	KNO	-1	PER	-1	PSY	+1	WIL	+2
STR	+1	HEA	+1	STA	35	UD	6	AD	7

SKILLS:

Boating	1	+0	Combat Sense	1	+0	Dodge	1	+1
Dreaming	2	+2	Hand-to-Hand	1	+1	Melee	2	+1
Streetwise	2	+0	Swimming	2	+1	Throwing	2	+1

Equipment: Short spear, long sword, leather armor, boat, lantern



NPC TEMPLATES

STILTWALKER (FISHER):

Stiltwalkers have given up on the lifestyle embraced by the majority of their Tribe. They find that the intense concentration and physical skills required to fish the Stone Shores, or to learn some other craft, allows them to serve Tera Sheba in another way.

Highlights: Relaxed, healthy, hardworking

Attributes: AGI +1, FIT +1, KNO +1, PER +2, STA 25, UD 3, AD 3

Skills: Athletics 2/+1, Lore (Fishing) 2/+1, Mythology 1/+1, Sneak 2/+1, Swimming 2/+1

Equipment: Stilts, fishing gear (net or rod), knife, hat

STILTWALKER (GUIDE):

Some Stiltwalkers serve their tribe by navigating the waters of the Sunken City in numerous small boats, ferrying their Tribal brothers and sisters to and fro. In winter, when the waters freeze, they use sleds and sleighs. Friendly rivalries are common among their ranks.

Highlights: Chatty, impatient, competitive

Attributes: FIT +2, INF +1, KNO +1, PER +1, PSY +1, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3

Skills: Boating 2/+1, Gambling 1/+1, Haggling 1/+1, Lore (Sunken City) 3/+1, Navigation (Water) 2/+1, Read/Write (Tribal) 1/+1, Streetwise 2/+1, Swimming 2/+2

Equipment: Boat, lantern, staff

LOREKEEPER (EXPLORER):

Some Terasheban are just never satisfied with what the tribe's texts can teach them. These Lorekeepers specialize in uncovering the knowledge of the past. A hardy breed, they must venture into the field alone, for their expeditions are kept secret from the other Tribes.

Highlights: Inquisitive, loyal, confident

Attributes: AGI +1, FIT +2, KNO +2, PER +1, WIL +1, STR +1, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 4, AD 5

Skills: Boating 1/+1, Combat Sense 1/+1, Dodge 2/+1, Investigation 1/+1, Law 1/+2, Melee 1/+1, Mythology 2/+2, Navigation (choose one) 2/+2, Read/Write (Tribal) 2/+2, Read/Write (Fanzay or Gaelish) 2/+2, Riding 1/+0, Survival 3/+0, Swimming 1/+2, Synthesis (Tradition) 2

Equipment: Staff, short sword, light armor, survival gear, boat or horse

ADVOCATE (INVESTIGATOR):

Some Advocates prefer to argue cases, dig for dirt on witnesses or do the simple legwork required to get the facts for a case. Their methods range from surveillance to research and bribery to intimidation. All in the name of justice, of course.

Highlights: Resourceful, determined, cynical

Attributes: CRE +1, INF +2, KNO +1, PER +2, STA 25, UD 5, AD 3

Skills: Combat Sense 1/+2, Dodge 2/+0, Gambling 1/+2, Hand-to-Hand 2/+0, Human Perception 2/+0, Intimidation 2/+0, Investigation 2/+2, Law 1/+1, Notice 1/+2, Read/Write (Tribal) 2/+1, Sneak 1/+0, Streetwise 2/+2

Equipment: Knife, incriminating evidence

JUDGE:

Judges have perhaps the most thankless job on Vimary. Generally feared or hated by most of the other tribes, they toil hard to make life better for all. Most spend some time on the Shores, relaxing and getting some perspective before returning to the fray.

Highlights: Dedicated, hardworking, busy

Attributes: KNO +2, PER +1, WIL +1, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3

Skills: Human Perception 2/+0, Interrogation 2/+0, Law 3/+2, Lore (choose 1) 2/+2, Read/Write (Tribal) 2/+2, Ritual 2/+2, Synthesis (Truthsaying) 2

Equipment: Law books, robes, alcohol

HIGH JUDGE:

The seven High Judges are the most senior members of their profession. They have achieved their positions by virtue of talent, connections and political savvy. Once appointed, they serve for life or until they choose to retire. Most stay on as long as possible.

Highlights: Perceptive, knowledgeable, well-connected

Attributes: CRE +2, INF +1, KNO +3, PER +2, PSY +1, WIL +2, HEA +1, STA 30, UD 3, AD 3

Skills: Etiquette 3/+1, Human Perception 3/+1, Interrogation 3/+2, Law 4/+3, Lore (choose 2) 2/+3, Read/Write (Tribal) 3/+3, Read/Write (choose one) 2/+3, Ritual 2/+3, Theatrics 1/+1, Synthesis (Tradition and Truthsaying) 3

Equipment: Lantern of Tera Sheba, any other items required

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