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Beyond the Skies



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To my mother and greatest supporter, Monique Heard-Devanne

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Gods of the Great Caldera

Foreword

A long time in the making, *Beyond the Skies* offers a breath-taking array of insights into the World of Calidar. Indeed, it is twice the size of the first book, *In Stranger Skies.* In its own way, this new volume fleshes out the universe even more, offering the points of view, hopes, and fears of the gods and their mortal followers. The faiths, mythologies, and brotherhoods detailed in these pages go a long way toward conferring character and motivation not only to each of the Great Caldera's realms, but also to individual heroes and the villains who oppose them. Countless adventure ideas lie within for referees to develop, and for players to give their heroes' personalities even greater depth. Following the complex webs of intrigue between the gods is certain to lead adventurers toward new horizons and mysteries.

Bruce Heard
May 2016

An Overview: Calidar's *Known World,* the Great Caldera, features ten realms inhabited by people who are culturally and racially diverse. Among them, only the fellfolk are natives of this land. All the others came from three nearby moons—Alorea for the elves, Kragdûr for the dwarves, and Munaan for the humans. Gnomes, an elder race, originated on the first two moons, while populations from alternate realities reached Calidar's universe through a magical vortex. With such diverse backgrounds, it is a foregone conclusion that they all have their own imaginary cults, some of which are inspired from Earth's historical beliefs. Each creed accommodates a few to myriad divinities, resulting in throngs just as colorful and lively as the mortals who honor them. To better illustrate a fantasy setting such as Calidar, which commonly digs into its inhabitants' mysticism, this book became necessary before proceeding further with geographic gazetteers like CAL1 *In Stranger Skies.* Many of the stories and motivations of the people described therein depend upon their relations with their spiritual patrons. *Beyond the Skies* enables a systematic treatment of the subject, which will likely impact every following Calidar accessory.

Fundamentals

The Cycle of Magic: One of Calidar's peculiarities is that its world soul, a vast pool of magic imbuing the land and the spirits of all life on its surface, enables masses of sapient beings to unwittingly create their own gods. If enough people come to believe in an otherworldly guardian and can imagine its appearance, ethos, and personality, the world soul will, over time, fashion this divine entity from its magical energy. Once imaginary deities become tangible, part of their own power springs from the masses of faithful who honor them, a fact the gods understand all too well. Though they have wills of their own, they reflect their followers' mindsets in such a way that it is often a challenge to perceive where one ends and the other begins. Who influences whom is never quite clear. As their faculties ebb and flow with the fates of their mortal followers, the gods redistribute a great deal of their magic to those among their flocks who are trusted to use it well. This enables priors of the cults to cast spells in the name of their divine lieges. Through prayers and meditation, members of the clergy commune with their spiritual lords (or, far more likely, with their immortal servants), and gain the wisdom needed to do their bidding. As they earn experience and bolster their piety throughout their careers, devout followers, zealots, and enlightened priors obtain more powerful spells or other abilities, which are described at length in this book.



What are Gods? Deities of Calidar aren't quite what some readers may think gods should be like. They are immortal, to be sure, well-endowed magically, and very hard to destroy, but neither flawless nor omnipotent. Since they were created by people who aren't without fault, these gods cannot be divinely perfect. However well informed through their networks of spirit servants or, for some, demons and other horrid minions at their beck and call, they do not know all things. They still rely on communion with mortals for insights. Gods can peer at any single point in Calidar's universe all the way from their magical domains in the Ambrosian dimension, but they can't see or hear all things in all places all at once, however keen their heavenly faculties. Denizens of the spiritual world also use magic to veil their followers' schemes from their rivals' vigilance. Epic heroes often work as their divine lieges' scouts, spies, and informants; ultimately they are tasked with quests to handle godly business among mortals.

Deities are only willing to pass along limited information to their mortal followers in the spirit of promoting their cults at the expense of rival faiths. It might seem logical to assume they would keep key priors and heroes informed in such a way that they could best serve their divine lieges. This isn't necessarily desirable in a game's context. Surely the gods have known of the moons and their people eons before mortals ever learned to travel the Great Vault. Yet, they didn't reveal anything. Why? Because divinities are possessive of their knowledge. They don't like giving anything away (be it insight or power) unless someone truly deserves it. Even then, fear that imparted knowledge may fall into the wrong hands keeps the gods from talking much at all. Besides, one does not chit chat with "the help."

Mortals are the lowliest of servants. If they fail, others more worthy will take their places. It is the natural order of things. For this reason, even high priors of a cult aren't aware of the dealings between gods. They receive wisdom unveiling hints of what their spiritual lords expect of them. The clergy makes up missing details and the more colorful bits, rationalizing everything through artful metaphor for the sake of inspiring or impressing others. Mythology finds its place here. In Calidar's universe, it's never entirely clear how much of the legends about gods are actually true, because their stories are based on those imagined by their mortal makers and by astute prophets. Faith does the rest.

An unspoken rule has prevailed among deities which forbids them from interceding personally. It is called the Ambrosian Covenant. Should anyone transgress its premise, peers of other pantheons are bound to intervene. All understand that part of their power comes from mortals, and thus they are protected from unrestrained jealousy, pride, and temper. Gods are entitled to bestow magic, reward work, and commune with the faithful—or to deny any or all of such. Whatever they give, the gods can always take back; at worst, they can inflict punishment upon those who betray them. In their view, it isn't acceptable to interfere directly with the followers of their peers. It is an important consideration because deities are living, thinking, and feeling reflections of the people who imagined them, and of current beliefs among mortals. As such, they can prove as petty, unpredictable, and vengeful as their own makers. Though smarter and infinitely more discerning as a result of their immortality, they remain subject to their followers' cultural paradigms.

One might argue that demigods aren't included in the Ambrosian Covenant because they stand at the threshold between the mortal and the spiritual worlds. As yet they neither possess the full powers of an established deity, nor do they act independently from their lieges. This does, however, allude to a pecking order among the divine. Deities often gather in pantheons reflecting their common cultural ancestry. Each features a ruler enshrined by *greater* and *minor* peers. All three sorts of deities may sponsor demigods, who must thereafter accept their lieges' authority. Demigods manifest themselves among mortals at great risk to themselves and cannot funnel the full magical power of their lieges. Even so, militant demigods still stand as a fantastic challenge to superlative epic heroes. Their presence outside Ambrosia will always attract the scrutiny of other gods, possibly leading to a dangerous escalation.

In effect, there are four categories of deities: ruler, greater, minor, and demigod. These refer to the relative number of mortal followers *within their given pantheon*. The idea is that rulers have the most mortal followers, greater gods not quite as many, minor gods fewer yet, and demigods the fewest. Peers of the gods refer to all deities above the status of demigod. Elder gods are the oldest ones among a pantheon, regardless of their ratings (their dates of ascension are provided in their individual descriptions). They are often involved in building the pantheon's magical domain. The intent of these qualifiers is to help define how gods of the same pantheon view and relate to each other. The concept is fairly flexible: for example, both Istra and Teos-Soltan are ranked as *greater* gods, yet Teos-Soltan clearly commands many more faithful than Istra. Meryath's leading goddess inspires only a fraction of the islands' population, since she shares this regional stronghold with the other ten gods of her pantheon. This probably accounts for a third of a million believers in Istra. Teos-Soltan, on the other end of the divine spectrum, embodies the faith of nearly the entire populations of Ellyrion and Narwan, which certainly includes several million souls. Both deities also compete to spread their cults to other realms. Thankfully, part of a deity's magic comes from the world soul, with additional potency stemming from the number of mortal followers—in other words, divine might isn't entirely proportional to the number of faithful.

Regardless of their ratings, deities in Calidar's universe wield great personal power. This book, however, focuses primarily on the duties and benefits of divine faith from a mortal point of view rather than game statistics for the gods. Such ratings would have little impact on the players' heroes and what they might gain from their spiritual patrons. In this respect, the mystical world acts as a power broker and a source of motivation for heroes and their foes. How much magic the various deity ranks can actually wield remains at the discretion of referees. They're not intended to be able to create entire universes in the blink of an eye. Calidar's gods are more akin to super beings with a vast amount of magical means. Whether divinities pick fights with each other and the outcomes of such are more relevant to story-telling than any sort of number-crunching. Since this fantasy setting is intended as a non-rules-specific accessory, mechanics for handling gods should be the ones from the game system chosen to run Calidar adventures, as long as the guidelines given in the previous paragraphs are respected.

Common Abilities of Divine Peers: Aside from what was described earlier, ascended gods do have a set of common abilities in addition to spellcasting at will, supernatural physical capacities, and whatever unique innate powers referees can imagine for them. Since they are more likely to interact directly with mortals, demigods are described in more detail later in this book, along with divine servants and demons (see *Godly Trappings*, page 211). Suggested common abilities for divine peers are as follows:

- **Insight:** Unless listed otherwise, gods can easily detect the philosophy of a mortal creature, and whether it is lying, misleading, speaking in half-truths, or hiding something.
- **Communion:** Gods understand, speak, read, and write any mortal language. They also possess the power to share emotions empathically, telepathically, and through communion with followers and divine peers, as well as read the thoughts of common mortals. Unwilling epic heroes/villains and demons receive a defense check at a substantial penalty (see *Game Mechanics*, page 10) to shield their thoughts.
- **Divine Might:** Common mortals are generally stricken with awe or fear at the sight of a god. When receiving a direct command from any god, common mortals must obey. This ability can send heroes on a quest. Unwilling epic heroes/villains and demons receive a defense check at a substantial penalty to resist this effect. When given an order, demigods must obey their divine lieges (they need not obey any other gods, however).
- **Travel:** Gods typically rely on instant transportation between and within planes of existence. At will, they can teleport themselves, related divine servants, or any non-divine creature singly or in a group. Unwilling epic heroes/villains, demons, another god's divine servants, and unrelated demigods receive a defense check with a substantial penalty. This ability does not always work in all parts of the Ambrosian and certain other planes.
- **Summoning:** All pantheon peers can summon any being that has embraced their faith or their ascendancy, such as pious followers, zealots, priors, epic heroes/villains, divine servants, demons and monstrous beings. Those summoned are teleported singly or in a group up to twenty individuals at a time. When armies are summoned, each commanding divine servant must help transport their war bands as directed.

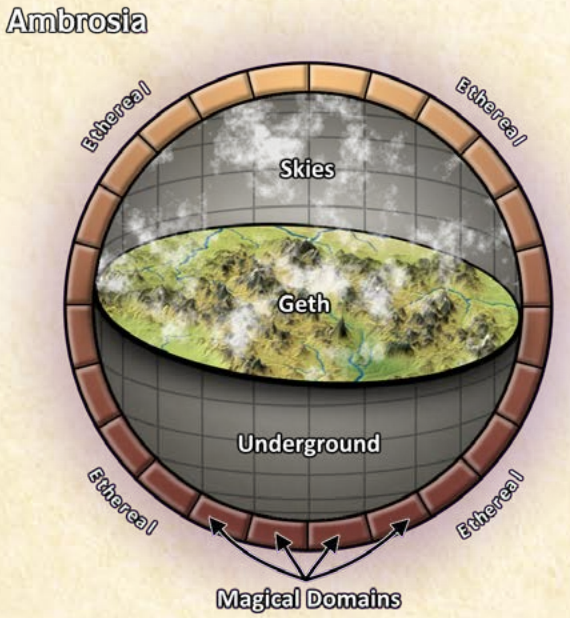
- **Godly Impunity:** Common mortals have no means of affecting gods other than the beliefs from vast numbers of pious followers. Gods are immune to all magical and physical forms of attack wielded by mortals, epic heroes/villains, all but the most powerful undead, and magical creatures, but not to godly artifacts. Certain demons and divine servants can harm gods under special circumstances (see *Death Among Gods*, page 210).
- **Veil:** Deities of Calidar have the peculiar and powerful ability to hide what they do not wish others to see. A *godly veil* can target a non-divine being, an object, a place, or a past event. It prevents any sort of magical detection or divination by any existing being from succeeding on its target creature. Any other goal is also veiled from sight and erased from memory, if not rendered entirely immaterial. Gods working together can affect a race's history, hide a city, banish a land, or mask the gates to their divine domains.
- **Divine Domains:** When working together, elder peers can manipulate the Ambrosian dimension to create a pocket plane, and use it as their pantheon's exclusive realm (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 62). Entrances are generally veiled, as explained earlier. These domains do not allow unwanted teleportation or spying from the outside.
- **Create Avatars:** To intervene in the affairs of mortals, divine peers may create avatars, temporary constructs built in their image or given some other appearance. They are costly in magic and painful to lose if destroyed. The powers of avatars are comparable to demigods—temporals for minor gods, and paragons for the greater deities (see *Demigods*, page 218).

Ambrosia and Other Planes

Ambrosia: It is the universe to which gods generally ascend. It may also be defined as a "celestial plane." In total, it can be visualized as a sphere, with an infinite number of possible godly domains nested on its inner surface. At the center lies the wondrous land of Geth (pronounced *"yeth"*), with a sky-like space above and an underground below. The land's orientation is indefinable as it swivels and warps *ad infinitum* to connect with each of the gods' magical realms.

Geth looks like a vast wilderness shrouded with silvery mists. It features regular periods of twilight and darkness, as well as ethereal storms, though there are no moons, stars, or suns to be seen. It is a universe that only beings of divine or quasi-divine status can enter. Lesser creatures can come when invited by the gods or accompanied by their servants. It is customary for newly ascended gods to explore Geth's mysteries; in doing so, they hone their divine skills and earn a fine mythology. Deities residing in Ambrosia dwell in veiled hideouts on Geth or in magical domains. Most gods belong to pantheons of peers who pool their resources when building such domains, actually individual pocket planes surrounding Geth. This explains the need for deities or their servants (called *psychopomps*) to lead worthy spirits of the dead to their rightful places. Divine domains were originally described in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 62.

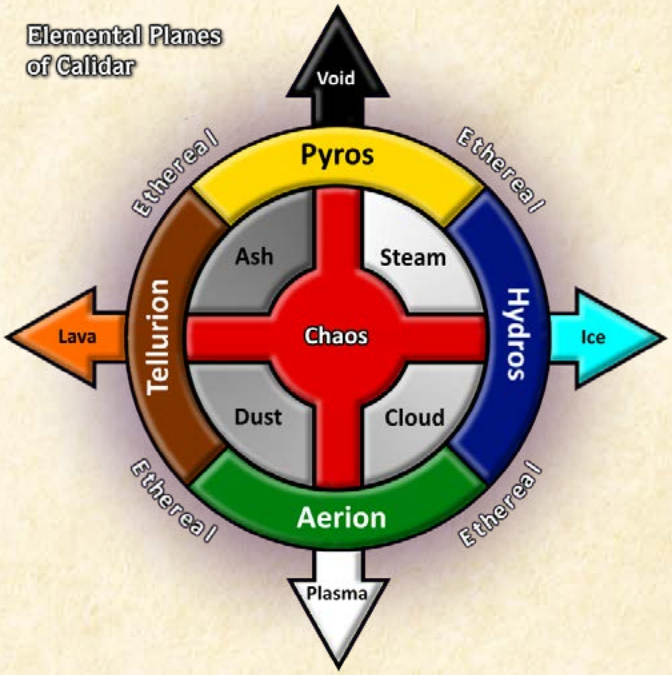
Ambrosia is a frightening dimension where even gods can be destroyed. Although the deities of monsters or those of alien worlds aren't described in this book, they do exist and they are just as fearsome to Calidaran gods as the perils their followers face in the mortal world. Throngs of worthy servants may accompany traveling deities. If gods are ever destroyed, their priors can no longer commune with them or cast spells (see *Death Among Gods*, page 210). The unfortunate news spreads quickly among mortals, causing widespread despair and disorder. By way of missionaries and prophets, other gods soon seek to sway the cults' forsaken priors and their followers.

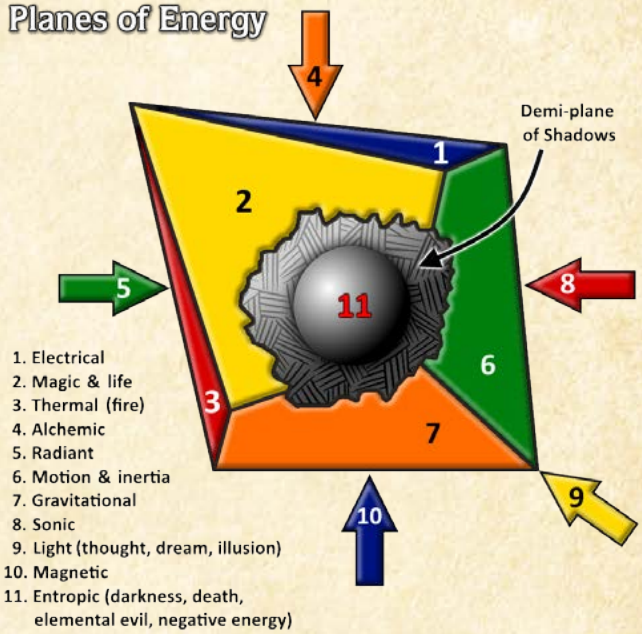


The Netherworld: Also known as the Astral Plane, it is the place where the spirits of the dead linger before they meet their final fates (see *Calidar's World Soul*, page 207). Though they look totally unlike, the netherworld and the realm of the living (also known as the prime universe, which includes Soltan's ephemeris) occupy the same space. Both are infinite. Certain outer planes may feature their own netherworlds, as appropriate to their natures—the various realms of the dead interconnect through a web of wormholes. Elemental planes and Ambrosia do not feature a netherworld. Elemental beings revert to their basic nature if deprived of life. Though the undead can create gods in their own image, gods cannot become undead. Vaguely similar to the netherworld in its appearance, the ethereal is nearly as dangerous as Ambrosia itself since many entities cross through it during their journeys. Fantastic predators dwell there, some large enough to swallow a straying skyship whole.

The Ethereal: This plane acts as a buffer between the prime universe, the inner planes, the outer planes, the netherworld, and the Ambrosian dimension. It is a good place to feature outer-planar visitors, gods, their servants on missions, the undead, demons, and all sorts of bizarre creatures that do not fit the prime universe.

The Elemental Planes: Calidaran cosmology recognizes four primordial planes—Pyros (Energy), Hydros (Fluid), Aerion (Essence), and Tellurion (Matter). With the ethereal, these are also known as the Inner Planes. Each of these planes possesses regions where elements take different properties and appearances. For example, Tellurion includes regions dominated by rock, or sand, or metals, or crystals, or possibly even wood, etc. Despite what labels imply, there are such things as liquid crystal and liquid metals (unrelated to heat), or solid water, solid air, as well as liquid or solid fire, etc. Pyros likely splits into a number of sub-planes featuring various forms of energy (see next section), and so on with each of the elements. These aspects of primordial planes enable referees to create thematic





realms for heroes to visit. The magic bringing them there allows survival in deadly environments. Monsters may be natives of these planes. Other beings dwelling in the prime universe can also enjoy affinities with specific elements, like a fire-breathing dragon for example.

Elemental planes also connect with demi-planes, which are parallel regions (dust, ash, steam, clouds, lava, ice, plasma, and void). Elemental void is the absence of all other elements. Some creatures may hail from demi-planes (except elemental void presumably), such as dust devils, steam sprites, lava weevils, etc. Native monsters of the prime universe can also bear affinities to demi-planes, such as cloud and frost giants. The prime universe is where all primordial elements combine and are bound by laws of physics. A plane of elemental chaos also exists, where laws of physics, probabilities, and logic never apply. In this plane, the elements remain in flux, whereas they are stable in the prime universe. Elemental order suffuses the other primordial planes to varying degrees.

Elemental Planes of Energy: It may be incorrectly assumed that Pyros only refers to elemental fire: it actually encompasses all forms of energy. Ten of these can be visualized as a diamond-shaped decahedron (numbered 1 to 10 on the diagram). All ten elemental energies together relate to positive energy in general. At the decahedron's center lies an eleventh plane, which is entropy. It relates to demons, the undead, and negative energy. The demi-plane of shadows surrounds entropy; it relates to fear and nightmares. Therefore, to reach entropy a visitor from the prime universe must cross three intervening layers (the ethereal, one of the ten elemental energies, and the demi-plane of shadows).

All these aspects of energy work as described earlier—they can form solids, liquids, and immaterial components enabling game referees to build imaginary sites for the heroes to visit (such as walls of fire, forests of shadows, rivers of elemental evil, etc.) A crucial energy embodies elemental magic. It connects directly with Calidar's world soul, thus to "life" itself. Spellcasters learn to manipulate magic either directly (as wizards) or through faith in their spiritual patrons (as priors), which gives them an affinity with this plane. Illusionists, however, relate instead to elemental light, which also governs sentient thought, fantasies, dreams, and illusions. Time is not represented as an elemental component because it suffuses all inner and outer planes to varying degrees.

Outer Planes: The "outer" label reflects the prime universe's point of view. Therefore, the netherworld and Ambrosia could be considered outer planes. Other planes exist, which can be as varied and imaginative as referees need them to be. Strange creatures, their realms, and entire universes can fit in outer planes. Their realities and laws of physics remain entirely separate. At a referee's personal discretion, these worlds can be inspired from fantasy literature. The Vortex described in Calidar *In Stranger Skies* (see CAL1's *Gate Keeper,* page 63), enables a game referee to bring denizens of outer planes into Calidar's prime universe, including such exotic beings as gummy ghouls and marshmallow dragons, if ever these become desirable.

All inner and outer planes essentially occupy the same physical space. Previous diagrams only help visualize what the planes are and how they relate to each other. The analogy of radio waves and broadcast stations being akin to separate planes of existence is apt. There can be hundreds of different radio signals existing in the same physical space. All one needs to do is to "tune in" to reach a given station. In a fantasy setting, one still needs to go through at least the ethereal to reach another plane, and possibly multiple others to get to a final destination—such as the Plane of Entropy, for example. To a certain degree, the entire multiverse co-exists but on different "wave lengths."

About Evil Gods

Why are there evil gods? Using the idea that people aren't intrinsically malicious, in theory wicked gods should not exist at all. Yet, vengeful entities have always been a part of fantasy literature. They are the dark shadow behind the "bad guys," the sinister and frightening power summoning the strange, the cruel, and the monstrous to inflict chaos and destruction upon good people. Within reason, Calidar is no different in this respect.

Some deities became evil as a result of followers believing them willfully responsible for natural catastrophes and other historical events, such as wars or epidemics. Others sprang from primal fears, delusions, and the darker side of people's minds. Calidar's world soul does not realize the difference: it brings forth whatever dwells in the dreams of many, good or bad. In both cases, superstitious people spin legends and mythologies around deities, possibly casting them in villainous roles. Since gods are reflections of those who honor them, their followers' mindsets can influence spiritual patrons to become wicked or, over time, bring them back to a more optimistic side.

Why would pantheon rulers allow evil gods in their midst? The answer is simple. As described in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* leading deities earn power from lesser gods. In other words, they collect rent. As long as they do not jeopardize their pantheons or defy their rulers, evil gods pay dues like everyone else. Within a pantheon, most gods tend to personify specific aspects of faith. Those are described in this book as *spheres of interest*. Malicious or vengeful gods therefore can hold actual "jobs" within their divine community.

One might then also wonder why people would ever adopt evil faiths. At first, some are tempted to make offerings to vengeful gods out of fear to appease them and obtain their protection against a specific peril. Others may see a cult as a way to get back at a hated foe. Too, they may adopt a questionable faith, completely failing to see where it might lead. While a sect slowly descends into darkness, factors such as pride, denial, self-righteousness, greed, ignorance, hatred, fear, peer pressure, and sheer blind faith may prevent them from turning away. Misinterpreting ancient scriptures can serve to justify acts of evil, at least in the minds of perpetrators. This illustrates a vicious circle, where those who spin dark tales influence their gods toward a wicked ethos, and in turn, become evil themselves. It takes the expression "I think, therefore I am," to an entirely different order of magnitude.

How do evil gods actually survive without a solid clergy and masses of followers deliberately worshiping them? Most neutral or benevolent deities earn power from a number of devoted faithful gathering in temples, under the spiritual leadership of an organized clergy. The greater their piety, the more power their divine liege enjoys. That's the "simple" way. Some evil gods rely instead on a parasitic strategy. They personify primal sources of fear and elemental evils such as greed, malice, hatred, envy, or lust. These entities have few direct followers. Rather, they skim residual power from a vast number of unwitting people devoted to other gods. Primal fear and elemental evil are widespread enough among normal populations that these kinds of deities can actually become quite powerful, especially during times of strife.

Why then would evil gods even want to be part of a pantheon? Belonging to one is a way to legitimize their existence and their purpose in the eyes of mortals. Pantheons also offer protection, a useful consideration when dealing in the high-risk business of evil. For the so-called parasitic divinities, a pantheon is critical because it defines whose population they can skim power from. No god is great enough to be able to derive magic from all beings in the universe. Cooperating with their pantheon peers definitely benefits parasitic entities because it can enlarge the overall number of faithful whose residual power they can leech.

Deities of Calidar are as sly and opportunistic as hungry felines. Whether benign or fiendish, they see beliefs among mortals as sources of power. Though they focus on grander spheres of interest, established deities can also task demigods to exploit lesser aspects, weaving themed networks to maximize their gains. For example: a god of war might consider sponsoring entities to personify consequences of conflict, such as famine, pestilence, chaos, ruin, hatred, pain, and so forth. For the sake of divine competition (and survival of the fittest), gods and those who brought forth their existence can prove very creative. When the subject of their ethos is concerned, one ought to bear in mind that there can be many shades of benevolence and malevolence. Not all gods are fundamentally extreme in their own philosophies, and in fact many are simply labeled as "pragmatic," neither fish nor fowl. They bear feelings and react more to some things than to others. As stated earlier, Calidaran gods are very much like their makers and, over time, both can change, trends with which epic heroes may be involved. As a final note, the author neither condones nor promotes evil cults, fictional or otherwise. They are described here for illustrative purposes only and to rationalize the logic behind those generally referred to as "the bad guys."

Game Mechanics

In a campaign world designed without a set of rules from a specific role-playing game, there lies a challenge in describing creatures, spells, and game effects so everyone can understand and easily express them in their chosen system. Much of this is abstracted in this book, leaving referees at liberty to interpret the author's intent in ways that best suit their purposes. However, mechanics need to be suggested more explicitly at times. The following pages list terms and concepts describing game effects and abilities. In most cases, scores allocated to character or monster statistics are expressed here as percentages of customary ranges used in the players' chosen game system. For example, a range of scores running from 1-20 is easy to translate from percentiles; on the other hand, the corresponding percent scores aren't quite so intuitive for a range of 1-36. Table 1 translates percentile ratings to match commonly-found numerical ranges. All results are rounded to the closest number.

Die Rolls: A variety of dice commonly used in hobby gaming are referred to in this book. For example: a d6 is a common six-sided die; a 3d20 refers to three 20-sided polyhedral dice, a d% is a (percentile) roll of two d10s, one expressing single digits and the other showing tens. Other dice include d4, d8, and d12.

Career Paths: These refer to the heroes' prevailing occupations, such as being wizards, priors, rogues, or warriors of various types. The assumption is that heroes progress along these career paths, gaining specialized proficiencies and becoming more powerful as they advance. Use the closest analogy in the chosen game system.

Life Force: "LF" refers to the extent of a hero's career advancement or to the relative vitality of a monster. This rating impacts directly the odds of heroes and monsters performing successful attacks. It should be assumed in this book that attack abilities and the amount of inflicted damage are consistent with a creature's Life Force and its intended challenge level. A numeral is added to express how far along their career paths heroes have progressed, or how tough monsters are. This number is a percentage of the maximum range used to measure a character's career or a monster's vitality.

For example: a warrior whose career is measured in increments ranging from 1 to 40, an "LF3" means 3% of 40, or close to "1" (that is: [40/100] x 3 = 1). Under the same conditions, an "LF1" monster could be a small pest, while a mighty dragon might be better described as "LF58." A "+" or "–" modifier following the LF rating indicates single life points that should be added or subtracted from the total during a game. An "LF3–1" creature would be puny.

A lot of games do not have an actual limit to a player character's possible career achievements. Referees should decide carefully what their campaigns'

Table 1. Range Conversion Chart

%	10 to –10	1–12	1–18	1–20	1–21	1–30	1–36	1-40	%
0	10								**0**
3						1	1	1	**3**
5	9			1	1			2	**5**
6			1				2		**6**
7						2			**7**
8		1					3	3	**8**
10	8			2	2	3		4	**10**
11			2				4		**11**
13						4		5	**13**
14					3		5		**14**
15	7			3				6	**15**
17		2	3			5	6		**17**
18								7	**18**
19					4		7		**19**
20	6			4		6		8	**20**
22			4				8		**22**
23						7		9	**23**
24					5				**24**
25	5	3		5			9	10	**25**
27						8			**27**
28			5				10	11	**28**
29					6				**29**
30	4			6		9		12	**30**
31							11		**31**
33		4	6		7	10	12	13	**33**
35	3			7				14	**35**
36							13		**36**
37						11			**37**
38					8			15	**38**
39			7				14		**39**
40	2			8		12		16	**40**
42		5					15		**42**
43					9	13		17	**43**
44			8				16		**44**
45	1			9				18	**45**
47						14	17		**47**
48					10			19	**48**
50	0	6	9	10		15	18	20	**50**

Table 1. Range Conversion Chart (continued)

%	10 to –10	1–12	1–18	1–20	1–21	1–30	1–36	1-40	%
52					11				**52**
53						16	19	21	**53**
55	-1			11				22	**55**
56			10				20		**56**
57					12	17			**57**
58		7					21	23	**58**
60	-2			12		18		24	**60**
61			11				22		**61**
62					13				**62**
63						19		25	**63**
64							23		**64**
65	-3			13				26	**65**
67		8	12		14	20	24		**67**
68								27	**68**
69							25		**69**
70	-4			14		21		28	**70**
71					15				**71**
72			13				26		**72**
73						22		29	**73**
75	-5	9		15			27	30	**75**
76					16				**76**
77						23			**77**
78			14				28	31	**78**
80	-6			16		24		32	**80**
81					17		29		**81**
83		10	15			25	30	33	**83**
85	-7			17				34	**85**
86					18		31		**86**
87						26			**87**
88								35	**88**
89			16				32		**89**
90	-8			18	19	27		36	**90**
92		11					33		**92**
93						28		37	**93**
94			17				34		**94**
95	-9			19	20			38	**95**
97						29	35		**97**
98								39	**98**
100	-10	12	18	20	21	30	36	40	**100**

"practical" career ranges should be as the basis for a game-balanced conversion. This neither prevents heroes from growing past the 100% mark, nor does it limit monsters. Life Force ratings exceeding 150% or 200% of the practical basis are entirely conceivable.

Though it is assumed in this book that the Life Force range for heroes and monsters is the same, it may not necessarily be correct in the players' chosen game system. It is entirely possible to use two different practical ranges, one for player characters and the other for monsters

(and for that matter, to substitute the concept of Life Force to one more representative of challenge level). Referees should adjust these numbers until they "feel right" in their games.

Life Points: **"LP"** are a byproduct of Life Force, which determines the ability of a creature or of an object to sustain damage, based on the referee's chosen game system. *Death's Door* refers to a creature's lowest amount of life points before being irreversibly destroyed. A creature at *Death's Door* is assumed to be either disabled or unconscious.

Spell Potency: **"SP"** refers to a spell's complexity. Most fantasy role-playing games rank spells according to a spellcaster's career advancement. SP is expressed in 10% increments (10%, 20%, 30%, etc.) of all spell ranks available in the chosen game system, rounded up. Adjust as desired.

Armor Rating: **"AR"** expresses how difficult it is to strike a creature. This can be the result of natural defenses, magic, armor, agility, or a combination thereof. Analogy is the rule of thumb for classical monsters or specific armor worn by heroes. If needed (for entirely new monsters), a numeral can be added, expressing how potent one's armor rating is, as a percentage of the chosen system's practical range, rounded to the closest unit, where "AR0" is unarmored and "AR100" is the best protection. For example: in a game system whose unmodified armor ratings range from 10 to –10, an "AR5" yields a 1, *worth a 9 in the chosen system* ([20/100] x 5 = 1; 10 –1 = 9). An "AR80" yields 16, worth –6 in the chosen system ([20/100] x 80 = 16; 10 –16 = –6). The lowest AR value ought to be the one for a basically unarmored target in the chosen game system. The highest AR value should be the toughest rating listed for armor or monsters, although nothing prevents a referee from using ratings in excess of 100 if needed.

Type of Attacks: This lists what forms of attacks and how many of them a character or a monster generally performs during combat (abbreviated as "**TA**"), such as 1 sword, 1 spell, 1 bite, 2 claws, etc.

Damage Rating: Analogy is often used in this book to describe the sort of damage a weapon inflicts (**"DR"**). For example, the type of weapon is mentioned specifically. Inflicted damage remains in accord with the chosen game's weapon statistics. Damage from natural attacks (bites, claws, talons, tail, etc.) should be consistent with the level of challenge a monster's Life Force infers. Referees are encouraged to adjust these ratings as needed.

Damage can otherwise be expressed as follows: **V**ery **L**ow (as a dagger), **Lo**w (like a short sword), **M**edium (as a mace), or **Hi**gh (like a two-handed sword), and **V**ery **H**igh (for an even larger weapon). This damage rating can be multiplied as needed when writing a number before it, such as 2Hi meaning *double* high damage. A "+" rating can also be added at the end, increasing rolled damage by a flat value (each "+" is equal to the weapon's minimum damage, times the number of plusses). So a "DR: 3Hi+2" damage rating could be seen as a fairly serious attack. "Attack score", "roll to hit", "combat damage", etc., are well known terms to all fantasy role-players worth their salt.

A *critical hit* is an attack whose unmodified roll scored the best number on the die (this may or may not translate well to the chosen game system, but the term is referred to in this book; a secondary roll may be required to confirm a critical hit—referees will rule as appropriate). Likewise, a *critical miss* is an attack whose unmodified roll scored the worst number on the die.

Weapon and Spell Ranges: Referees should use the ranges for weapons and magic commonly found in their chosen game systems. If any need listing within the context of this book, distances for ranged attacks are otherwise expressed in feet (one single value for spells; three for missile weapons, such as short/medium/long). Referees are encouraged to adjust these values to reflect indoor or outdoor ranges, as appropriate. Though most spells have a finite range, missile weapons released in the Great Vault do not, other than the gravitational pull of nearby worlds. On the other hand, the ability to hit a faraway target outside a weapon's rated long range demands a Critical Hit (see previous paragraph), provided the target is still visible.

Ability Scores: These ratings help define heroes and non-player characters. In general, they refer to one's physical strength (Str), body agility (Agt), manual dexterity (Dex), stamina (Sta), intellect (Int), wisdom (Wis), personality (Per), etc. Body agility (Agt) may affect Armor Rating. Dexterity (Dex) is related to hand-eye coordination, therefore to the ability to cast projectiles and/or to perform close-up work such as picking locks. A numeral is added, ranging from 1-100, zero being lowest. This rating can be used as a percentage of the chosen game's normal range for Ability Scores (of mortal creatures). For example, an Agt score of 50 would be dead average. Certain game feats may require a die roll under an ability score as a way to determine success or failure (an Ability Check). A *critical failure* is a check whose unmodified roll scored the worst number on the die, as appropriate to the chosen game system.

Skills: Heroes and non-player characters may have specific knowledge. A die roll may be needed to determine whether a skill is used properly while under adverse conditions. These are called Skill Checks.

Defense Checks: Certain types of attacks allow a victim a chance to avoid or reduce their effects. This usually involves rolling a die against a specific score, depending on the chosen game system. Monsters' defense checks (**"DC"**) are generally those of warrior heroes (W) with equal Life Force, but some may defend as mages (M), Priors (P), or Rogues (R), as appropriate to the chosen game system.

Morale Checks: Some game systems may call for an ability check or a roll under a set Morale Rating (**"MR"**) to determine whether a foe decides to flee. If needed, MR is expressed as a percentage of the chosen game's total allowable rating.

Bonuses and Penalties: Bonuses and penalties are listed as +/– modifiers. They are intended to alter equipment ratings or game checks to reflect the ease or difficulty of a situation. The impact of modifiers varies with the range of related values. On a 1-20 scale, a +1 modifier refers to one increment (+5% of the range). On a greater scale, a +1 modifier may instead result in a 10 point increment (such as a +10% modifier on a percentile score). On a small scale, 1-10 or less (such as armor and damage rating), the smallest increment available should be more appropriate. Referees should use their best judgment, keeping in mind game balance, flexibility, and the context for which these modifiers are intended. Use values that are customary for the chosen game systems. This conversion process applies to all tables listed in this book.

Time and Movement: Time is counted in blocks of 10 seconds or 10 minutes (abbreviated 10 sec and 10 min). Durations measured in seconds are intended for combat encounters—therefore, seconds listed in this book may convert into different durations within the chosen game system, as appropriate to the context. Movement (**"MV"**) is expressed in feet, first by increments of 10 minutes (a slow dungeoneering pace) and then by increments of 10 seconds (usually when fighting), such as 90' (30') respectively. It is assumed that heroes and monsters have at least one action each during encounters, which is another way time may be measured in this book. Using the metric system, 10 feet equal approximately 3 meters, 10 yards equal approximately 10 meters.

Philosophy: **"PH"** refers to an individual's general ethos and personality. Traits are organized in three broad categories corresponding to the Heart ♥, the Mind 💀, and the Spirit 🗲. Each features two opposing trends (with a middle-ground third if neither of the first two are appropriate). Up to ten personality traits describe each trend (some or all of them may apply). For example, Heart features either *benevolent (+)* or *malevolent (–)* trends, and a *dispassionate* (*) one if neither of the previous two applies. The general idea is that the prevailing three trends are the ones with the most traits best describing personality. As an option, one could simply list the number of appropriate traits (or itemize them in parentheses) as a way to express how intense trends are. Using the elven deity Delathien as an illustration, his philosophy can be summarized as ♥ *dispassionate* (*), 💀 *instinctive (–7)*, 🗲 *lively (+6)*, or just ♥ * 💀 *–7* 🗲 *+6*. Trends and traits are described below.

♥ Heart

Benevolent: Friendly, altruistic, humble, merciful, considerate, generous, truthful, trusting, tolerant, magnanimous

(Dispassionate)

Malevolent: Wicked, selfish, insensitive, vengeful, deceitful, unscrupulous, mistrustful, jealous, manipulative, spiteful

💀 Mind

Rational: Analytical, calculating, patient, straightforward, cautious, stubborn, methodical, conventional, principled, obedient

(Practical)

Instinctive: Impulsive, hasty, emotional, unpredictable, bold, creative, curious, adventurous, cunning, unruly

🗲 Spirit

Lively: Mirthful or sarcastic, cheeky, flamboyant, passionate, outspoken, hedonistic, shameless, feisty, indomitable, eccentric

(Even-Tempered)

Stern: Ascetic, aloof, brooding, formal, dreamy, haughty, enigmatic, reserved, self-conscious, dour

If any of the opposing trends are selected, they prevail regardless of circumstances. For example, if *benevolent* or *malevolent*, a god always acts accordingly. However, if a deity is *dispassionate, practical,* or *even-tempered,* this could mean two things, one or both of which may be true:

1. Individual personality traits in either of the opposing trends are weak or marginally relevant (therefore the god is neither fish nor fowl).
2. The deity leans toward one or the other opposing trend at different times, depending on circumstances, such as when besotted, jubilant, angered, fearful, saddened, under pressure, etc.

Other traits can be substituted for those suggested above, as long as not more than ten traits per trend are selected (for example: austere, arrogant, boorish, vain, crafty, forgetful, greedy, romantic/sentimental, etc.)

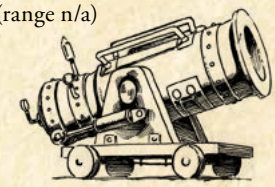
Siege Weaponry and Ship Damage: Within the context of Calidar, game mechanics would not be complete without a word about skyships. Values from the chosen game system can be used directly. Another simple approach is available here to help give some perspective for different types of skyships.

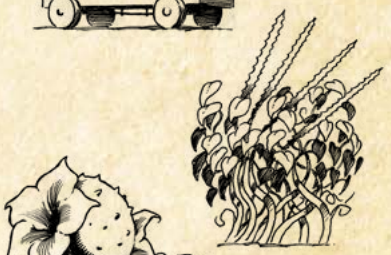
Structural Rating (SR): This number indicates how much damage a skyship can withstand before its enchantments fail catastrophically. At about 70% SR loss, a skyship becomes hard to maneuver and, if not in the Great Vault, starts losing altitude. A ship the size of the *Star Phoenix* has 120 SR, meaning approximately 1 SR per foot of length (rounded up to the next ten). Subtract 20% for a clipper-style vessel (such as Alorean skyships). Add 20% for a skyship designed primarily for war rather than speed (such as Draconic vessels). Double this rating for a dwarven ironclad.

Armor Rating (AR): Lightweight or fragile vessels, such as rafts, river boats, canoes, or longships have with an AR10 or less. A typical wooden, multi-decked skyship, such as the *Star Phoenix,* possesses an AR25. A dwarven ironclad could reach AR40. Magic can easily modify these ratings. If either the attacking vessel or its target is moving, up the target AR +15. If both are moving, add instead +30 AR to the target. If winds are gusting, increase the target's AR another +5 to +20. Referees are welcome to tweak these ratings for best results.

Damage and Range Ratings: Damage from individual weapons or siege machines (catapults, ballistae, trebuchets, etc.) applies directly to a skyship's SR. Unless noted otherwise, siege weapons require a minimum range to operate. Ranges are listed here in yards (meters). As an optional reference, common siege weapons of Calidar are listed below.

- **Scorpion:** M+4 damage (300/600/900, line-of-sight trajectory at short range, otherwise parabolic; no minimum range; half-damage at medium and greater ranges)
- **Ballista:** Hi+6 (200/400/600—as scorpion)
- **Light Catapult:** M+8 (200/250/400—Min. 100)
- **Heavy Catapult:** Hi+10 (250/400/600—Min. 125)
- **Trebuchet:** VH+12 (250/500/800—Min. 150)
- **Battering or Ship Ram:** M+8 (range n/a)
- **Kragdûr Culverin:** Hi+10 (200/250/400—as scorpion)
- **Kragdûr Firemouth:** VH+12 (250/400/600—Min. 60)
- **Alorean Thornbush:** M+4 (200/250/400—as scorpion; ensnare within razor-sharp thorns 15' radius until burned or hacked away)
- **Alorean Podkin:** M+8 (250/400/600—Min. 100; M+4 continual acid or rust damage within 20' radius for the next 1-2 minutes or until doused or splattered surface is destroyed).







Final Comment: Though a generic campaign setting requires a bit of up-front work to adapt it to an existing role-playing game, there is a silver lining—two of them, in fact. First, the setting remains more usable with different systems, and we all know that publishers regularly replace their core mechanics or go out of business, don't we? The plethora of game systems currently in the hobby is nothing short of bewildering, and ultimately divisive. Second, by simply altering the ranges used to convert game statistics, judicious referees can tailor their games up or down to better fit their players' expectations. Say for example that a monsters' Life Force typically runs on a scale of 1 to 36. An "LF6" monster is therefore worth an equivalent value of "2" in your game system. Now, increase this range from 36 to 50, and that monster now shows instead a relative value of "3." By the same token, everything else in the game, including non-player characters, becomes tougher as well, all in a consistent manner except heroes, who now face a greater challenge. A party of adventurers seems a bit weak in your campaign? No problem either, since the opposite measure also holds true.

Overview of the Pantheons

Before going further, it behooves readers to refresh their memories now (if they haven't already) by reading the introduction to gods and pantheons given in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies* (pages 61-62), as well as the Great Caldera's historical timeline (pages 75-81).

Residents of colonial ancestry honor the traditional gods from the moons despite their wars of independence. The majority of the original lunar cults was preserved during the following several centuries, while entirely new spiritual entities emerged. Other gods who had gone dormant, especially on Munaan, were revived, exacerbating tensions between former colonies and the Nicarean Potentates. This resulted in a colorful mosaic of sects existing side by side in the Great Caldera, with beliefs and traditions intermixing in many places.

Though prevailing cultures have their own individual pantheons, some of their gods are commonly worshiped elsewhere as well. These are listed both under their local denominations and under the so-called "Calderan faiths". This latter pantheon overlaps with many others. For example, the dwarves of Araldûr honor their own traditional gods and some of those forming the Calderan faiths. Osriel, being the most diverse of cultures in the Great Caldera, only features Calderan faiths—no other specific pantheon prevails there. On the other hand, Ellyrion and Narwan, being fiercely monolatrous cultures, honor exclusively Teos-Soltan (see CAL1, page 62) as their states' legal faiths. In Ellyrion, small temples dedicated to other cults are permitted for visitors only. High-placed members of the sun god's clergy have a presence in Ellyrion's governance, while members of other sects do not. The imperial province of Antiatis is in fact a theocracy. In Narwan, practicing faiths other than Arun Al Malik Al Soltan are forbidden outright; visitors must keep other beliefs to themselves. Both realms openly hunt heretics.



Aside from Teos-Soltan, all gods listed in this book belong to native pantheons, each with a presiding ruler. Members naturally recognized the benefits of being part of an association of peers with common origins. They see this as the "natural order of things," which led them in centuries past to formalize the existence of pantheons as matter-of-fact hierarchies, with a leader at the top. No one, mortal or otherwise, questioned this *fait-accompli.*

With this in mind, the Calderan faiths presented both an opportunity and a challenge. Over time its divine members saw them as an association of peers honored across the Great Caldera, a sort of spiritual common market. Their innate sense of rivalry led them to formalize this fellowship as a roundabout way to legitimize their cults outside the borders of their traditional realms, and thereby to try to keep out those who weren't members. For example: the elven deity Delathien could theoretically be honored in Araldûr without trouble from the dwarven pantheon because he is a member of the Calderan faiths (in addition to the elven pantheon). Other elven gods, who aren't members, may not be so blessed. The opposite is also true since several dwarven gods are also affiliated with this exclusive "club."

Matters became more complex when members realized that they needed someone to resolve disputes among them. By the same token, the idea was born that non-members would take the association more seriously if it had a strong leader. The gods could not agree on a ruler, let alone the extent of that leader's authority. In desperation, members finally elected Teos-Soltan, who wanted no part of it. In their view, it made him the best candidate. He, however, saw the Calderan pantheon as a way to promote his cult at the expense of everyone else's. Teos-Soltan eventually relented and agreed to become the *Honorary Conciliator*, but in exchange for not collecting power from them, this pantheon's members agreed not to inspire their priors to proselytize in his divine backyard of Ellyrion and Narwan. (Non-members made no such promise.) That he dislikes each and every one of the members, whom he sees as upstarts and *Johnnies-come-lately*, makes him perhaps the most impartial judge, certainly no less so than any other participant. It was a difficult decision to make—a number of affiliates loathe the sun god because of persecutions perpetrated in his name against their followers.

Objective: The following pages concentrate on deities of the Great Caldera, the world soul, death, the netherworld, divine alliances, and mortal sects. It is by no means a complete listing. Other gods may exist, those from cultures not yet unveiled or already forgotten, as well as the spiritual patrons of monsters and denizens of other worlds. Deities honored on the three moons are mostly similar to the Great Caldera's although, since the colonial wars, a few new ones make the object of cults exclusive to Calidar itself. Pantheons of Lao-Kwei, Draconia, and the Fringe (other than the Wayfarer faiths) require separate treatments. Because of their connection with Calidar, the gods of Ghüle demand a few more words in this book's appendix.

Godly Chapters: These sections follow roughly the same structure. Each pantheon's introduction addresses who honors its gods and where, divine politics, scriptures, tools of the faith, and traditions, followed by relations between cult and realm, taxes, and the influence on people and leadership. **Common Attributes** define abilities that apply to all followers of a pantheon. **Genesis** fleshes out the history of a pantheon's rise. **Divine Domain** offers insights on a pantheon's magical realm. Descriptions of individual gods follow, with their ruler listed first. Boxed material provides information at a glance. A mythological tale continues, which referees can adopt as fact or fanciful tales. Each god's textual description typically starts with their origins, interests, and worshipers. Next come goals, personality, and activities. Allies, rivals, and relations with other divinities follow. The last paragraph addresses physical appearances, temples, and offerings. Capping each god's description, information about preferred divine favors, totem animals, and cult weapons concerns zealots and priors of the faith.

Maps of the Cults: Each chapter describing a pantheon features a geographical map outlining areas where particular beliefs prevail, along with percentages showing a few more that are common there. Under the label "Other" fit additional local creeds, cross-border cults including those of the Calderan faiths, native shamanism (if any), and faithless heathens.

Pantheon Diagrams: Most chapters describing pantheons also feature diagrams showing how deities relate to each other. The diagrams' background shading summarizes the stance of the gods toward their pantheon ruler. At the center are the closest allies. In the middle ground stand those who remain more neutral. The outer circle is intended for rivals and those who bear a personal dislike for their ruler. The boxes enclosing the gods' names indicate whether they are greater or minor deities, or demigods. Individual links between them also show how they relate to each other (by race, family ties, friendships, demigod obedience, etc.)


Republic of Belledor
Kingdom of Nordheim
Confederacy of Alfdain
Magiocracy of Caldwen
Araldûr
Ellyrian Empire
Republic of Osriel
Semocracy of Phrydias
Emirates of Narwan
Kingdom of Meryath
Realms of the Great Caldera

Table 2. Pantheons of the Great Caldera

Interests	Calderan	Alfdaín (E)	Araldûr (D)	Belledor (F/G)
Blacksmiths, craftsmen	Brokk[10]	Maëlrond (Sòldor)	Klangrîm Thunderforge	
Chaos, mischief	Thraldûr Silvertongue		Thraldûr Silvertongue	
Death, underworld	**Ashgaddon**	**Ellorien** (Sòldor)	Balir-the-Whispering	***Yarima-of-the-Hand*** (F)
Deserts, volcanoes	Oloroth			
Earth, fertility	*Freyja*		③ ***Khrâlia*** *The All-Mother-Mountain*	
Earth, mountains	***Khrâlia***			Emeryl Starglitter (G)
Fall, elders	*Lara Umberlock*			*Lara Umberlock* (F)
Fate, bards, seers	*Kahula*	*Bëlianda*[1] (Sherandol)	*Khestrid Goldskald*	Belgomeer Fablesong (G)
Forests, hunters	**Delathien**	① **Delathien** (Sherandol/Elëan)		
Healers, alchemists	Arnmîr Tinkerbones[4]	*Eilonna*[1] (Sherandol)	Arnmîr Tinkerbones[4]	Armidal Copperpot[5] (G)
Justice, revenge	Arthalas		Djurohr Hammerlaw	
Light, science	Dagleeth		*Ghedrun Evercraft*	
Love, beauty	*Ululani-Two-Pearls*	*Adamar* (Sherandol)		
Luck, wit	***Thaleera-the-Wanderer***			⑤ ***Thaleera-the-Wanderer*** (G)
Magic	**Naghilas**	② ***Faëriad*** (Tolarin)		**Derrow Flickerhand** (G)
Messengers, scribes	Dandomyr			
Mirth, trickery	Balladoo-of-the-Hoo			Balladoo-of-the-Hoo (G)
Night, mysteries	Astafeth	Mythriel[2] (Tolarin)		
Order, oaths	Kustrîm Stonebrand		Kustrîm Stonebrand	
Peace, protectors	Galadir Blackmattock		Kjorûn Gatekeeper[3]	Galadir Blackmattock (G)
Romance, adventurers	***Istra***	*Melrenwë* (Meruín)		
Seas, fishermen	Durandil	Durandil (Meruín)		
Shadows, secrets	*Ashebai*	*Ashebai* (Tolarin)	*Brâlkha Shadowfist*	
Sky, air, winds	Sphiel	Sphiel (Elëan)		
Spring, youth	*Floria Tanglemane*			*Floria Tanglemane* (F)
Summer, abundance	*Gilla Amberbraid*			*Gilla Amberbraid* (F)
Sun, fire	**Teos/Soltan**		*Arkhâna Emberfury*[4]	
Thunder, lightning	Thor	*Arëatha* (Elëan)		
Time, wisdom	⑩ **Odin**			Aevan Timebringer[6] (F)
War, conquerors	Koanui		④ ***Krîma Ironblaze***	
Water, fertility	*Myriël*			⑥ ***Celendine*** (F)
Winter, sleep	*Malva Darkbrow*			*Malva Darkbrow* (F)

Ranking: Pantheon Ruler • **Greater God** • Minor God ☙ Gender: Male God • *Female God*

Godly Listing

Now that fundamentals have been covered, pages 14-15 provide a list of pantheons and their members, organized by spheres of interest and regional strongholds. Colors and typeface indicate several details, such as:

- Underlined Names: These are pantheon rulers.
- **Boldfaced Names:** These refer to *greater* gods. Non-boldfaced names connote *minor* gods.
- *Italicized Names:* These are female deities.
- Names Printed in Blue: They represent gods with a benevolent or forgiving philosophy.
- Names Printed in Red: These indicate deities with a malevolent or vengeful ethos.
- Names Printed in Black: They correspond to deities with a more pragmatic stance.
- Names Preceded by a Number: They identify divine lieges who sponsored demigods. For example: ⑩ is Odin's liege number.
- Names Followed by a Number: These names are also offset to the right. They refer to demigods, with their numbers matching their divine lieges'. For example: Brokk[10] is a demigod who answers to ⑩ Odin.

Demi-human races include elves (E), half-elves (½E), dwarves (D), gnomes (G), and fellfolk (F). These races are indicated with a simple letter, usually appearing after a realm's name (their cults' regional strongholds). All other faiths are of human ancestry (from Munaan). The following chapters are organized alphabetically, starting with Alfdaín (the elves), Araldûr (the dwarves), and so forth, with the gods of Phrydias coming last. Additional guidelines about the Calderan faiths are listed under "Osriel." Calidar does not feature half-orcs (½O) or any beings of monstrous ancestry as playable characters (though this may change in future books). Up to this point,

Table 2. Pantheons of the Great Caldera (continued)				
Interests	**Caldwen**	**Meryath**	**Nordheim**	**Phrydias (½E)**
Blacksmiths, craftsmen	Barthazu *(Prince of Wands)*		Brokk[10] (D)	
Chaos, mischief			**Loki**	
Death, underworld	**Ashgaddon** *(Wormsoul)*	Hakulu-Boneshadow	*Hel*	*Anwë*
Deserts, volcanoes				
Earth, fertility			*Freyja* (E)	
Earth, mountains				Oloroth
Fall, elders				
Fate, bards, seers		*Kahula*[8] *(Mountain Mist)*	Bragi	
Forests, hunters				Arthalas
Healers, alchemists	*Nekathal (The Unborn)*			Nabulos
Justice, revenge		Makapono-Truesight[8]	Forseti	
Light, science	⑦ Dagleeth *(The Librarian)*			
Love, beauty		*Ululani-Two-Pearls*	Baldur	
Luck, wit				
Magic	**Naghilas** *(The Gray Flame)*	Akuamakue *(Spellweaver)*		
Messengers, scribes	Shai-Mamnon[7]-Scrollmaker			Dandomyr
Mirth, trickery				
Night, mysteries	Astafeth *(Night-Howler)*			
Order, oaths				
Peace, protectors		Nuaka-Coral-Blade[9]	Heimdal	
Romance, adventurers		⑧ ***Istra*** (aka. *Ise-Taora*)		
Seas, fishermen	Samaz *(The Deep One)*	⑨ *Kaimana (Stingray Queen)*	Njord	*Selenwë*
Shadows, secrets	Zarghadin *(The Mad)*			
Sky, air, winds	Avraoth *(Lord of Flies)*	Kanemanu *(Feathered One)*	*Frigga*	**Thaëldar**
Spring, youth				
Summer, abundance				
Sun, fire	*Urthaala-the-Unquenched*	**Teos-Fireking**	Freyr (E)	
Thunder, lightning			Thor	Saëroth
Time, wisdom			⑩ **Odin**	Milánn
War, conquerors		Koanui *(The Horned One)*	Tyr	Baëlyon
Water, fertility		*Alana-Lifebringer*		*Myriël*
Winter, sleep			*Skadi*	

Personality: Benevolent • Neutral • Malevolent ❧ Numbers denote: ① Divine Liege • Demigod Underling[1]

their gods are those from Ghüle, which will be treated in a more general fashion in the Appendix.

Details on each god's spheres of interest will be expanded in the following chapters. Some of these deities may have more purviews than those summarized in Table 2. The sphere of interest governing wealth and business is absent from this table. Many of the gods are directly involved in this capacity. For more regarding this topic, see *Gods of Osriel, page 162*.

In a universe featuring the concept of *Eternal Glory*, the assumption should be that *many more* gods, at least demigods, should exist in addition to those suggested here. The following chapters provide examples for referees to describe new deities and incorporate them into their campaigns. Keep in mind balance issues: rulers exert authority within their pantheons in part because they enjoy the most backers. These pantheons' internal dynamics also reflect disagreements, grudges, and rivalries among rulers and their divine peers.

People of Calidar often honor one primary deity, although they can make occasional offerings to other gods of the same pantheon for good luck, protection, or gratitude. Priors and zealots, on the other hand, only worship one spiritual patron. This practice and the subject of different levels of piety will be visited later in this book. The description of abilities gods confer their followers and their priors which are listed herein supersede those given in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*. Any special abilities for a deity's followers and priors are compiled separately from the pantheons' descriptions in the *Rewards & Obligations* chapter; see *Pious Followers* (page 188) and *Fanatical Zealots* (page 193). Converting characters or monsters to a faith is possible. Game mechanics are suggested in this book (see *Creed of Ellyrion, page 107*) if none are available in the chosen game system.

Gods of Alfdaín

Briarwoods	Interests
① **Delathien** (Sherandol/Elëan)	Forests, hunters
Adamar (Sherandol)	Love, beauty
Arëatha (Elëan)	Thunder, lightning
Ashebai (Tolarin)	Shadows, secrets
Bëlianda[1] (Sherandol)	Fate, bards, seers
Durandil (Meruín)	Seas, fishermen
Eilonna[1] (Sherandol)	Healers, alchemists
Ellorien (Sòldor)	Death, underworld
② ***Faëriad*** (Tolarin)	Magic
Maëlrond (Sòldor)	Blacksmiths, craftsmen
Melrenwë (Meruín)	Romance, adventurers
Mythriel[2] (Tolarin)	Night, mysteries
Sphiel (Elëan)	Sky, air, winds

Alfdaín is the regional stronghold for elven cults in the Great Caldera. Aside from the Calderan faiths, elves throughout the old colonies most often honor the Alorean pantheon. Those born or raised outside Alfdaín have a choice between these deities, those of the Calderan faiths, or those prevailing in their land of residence. Within the Alorean pantheon, elves generally prefer gods whose ancestries they share (Sherandol, Meruín, Sòldor, Tolarin, and Elëan). The pantheon's five elder gods correspond to these ancestral tribes, and they are known as the *Ascended Five* (respectively, Delathien, Durandil, Ellorien, Faëriad, and Sphiel).

Traditional elven gods reside in the Briarwoods, their magical realm in the Ambrosian dimension. While they generally favor good relations between elves of Alorea and Alfdaín, they keep a respectful distance from the gods of Kragdûr and Belledor. They also distrust Teos-Soltan, Munaan's sun god. Relations remain neutral with the gods of Caldwen, Meryath, and Phrydias, and are best with those of Nordheim.

Ancient scriptures include the *Lothenial,* a collection of tales describing the lives of the gods and the rise of ones who later ascended to the Briarwoods. These texts are divided into five *Revelations*, one for each of the tribes. The scriptures come in the form of a large scroll rolled on two ornate rods. Major temples own copies of at least one of the five *Revelations*, which are used during services or to study elven theology. Smaller shrines often rely on abridged editions. Prayers, psalms, and common rituals for each of the gods are detailed in the *Adanorials.* Lightweight versions are commonly available for travelers. Though the earliest part of elven and gnomish history has been magically veiled (see *Genesis,* later in this chapter), the *Lothenial* lists the days on which the gods ascended. Those are dates presumed by the clergy, since historical records dating back to these times are either incomplete or missing altogether. They became holidays for Alorean and Calderan elves.

Elven cults do not have a direct part in the administration of Alorea or Alfdaín. They rely on alms from the faithful, and the exploitation of local lands or businesses owned by the temples. They neither collect nor pay taxes, but it is common for local lords of the same faith to provide monetary support if such is needed. Each cult features a patriarch or a matriarch governing spiritual matters. A schism has split the Alorean cults from those in Alfdaín since the wars of independence. Their hierarchies remain separate.

Common Attributes

Adult followers of elven gods have a basic knowledge of plants common to their native environment. In most cases, a skill check reveals whether flora is toxic or sentient (based on the hero's intellect score). Penalties come into play when dealing with foreign or alien vegetation. All priors gain a +1 bonus to personality checks when interacting with sentient flora. Druidical priors gain instead a +2 bonus to the above checks, and always know what other plant will act as an antidote if they are familiar with the toxic flora's natural environment. Priors faithful to elven gods generally prefer wooden weapons. Elven ironwood is reputed for being as strong as the best steel.

Elves of Alfdaín faithful to this pantheon possess a natural empathic ability with plants. Their basic chance of success is 5% on a d% roll, plus their Life Force rating (Alorean elves, when on Alorea, enjoy a 30% basic chance of success). This faculty allows them to send through the roots of plants a simple message (ten words or less) to a specific person, regardless of distance or location. The recipient must touch a plant and succeed an empathy roll to sense and understand the message. Sending a message requires an unbroken chain of plant roots within 3ft or less from each other. The ability can be used multiple times as long as attempts succeed. If one attempt fails, the ability is lost until the next day at dawn. Wherever common attributes suggested here duplicate or conflict with racial abilities established in the referee's chosen game system, use the latter.

Genesis

2100 BCE There lies a dark place in time upon which no mortal is able to gaze. It was the Age of Alorean Gnomes, when the small folk prevailed on their moon, and their magic was powerful. Elves lived among them, primitive nomads and hunter-gatherer clans. With an arrogance only equaled by their curiosity, the gnomes came to see them as servants who would undertake work on their behalf, yet be pleasing to their eyes. At first, gnomes subjugated the elves, bound them to cater to their every wish, and all was fine for the longest of times.

800 BCE Reflecting their hubris as centuries went by, the lords of the land assembled armies of elves clad in iron and armed with swords and magic. A time of great sorrow followed, when conceit and greed led the masters against one another. The elves fought and died. They suffered and despaired. The masters did not care. They only demanded more. Those who could fled the armies and the horror of breeding camps built by the gnomes. They hid below ground, in places deep enough even their masters could not find them. There, in the dark and silent solitude of their rocky abyss, they yearned for the time they would return and again feel upon their faces the warm embrace of the sun.

600 BCE A prophet spoke of such a day. He, Naghenor, had foreseen the future. He had gazed into the eyes of a savior who would require unwavering faith. Thus was born in the minds of his kinsmen the idea that a divine protector would rise upon their return to the light, a spirit greater than they, and one whom the gnomes could never tame or enslave. The masters already honored many such idols, but power had corrupted their souls and, with them, their faiths grew darker as well.

The day came when the *Children of the Deep,* skin pale as alabaster and hair white as snow, followed Naghenor and emerged from their underworld to challenge the masters. Mystics among them scattered, spreading the word of their prophet. Clashes followed, but the gnomes' servants lost heart.

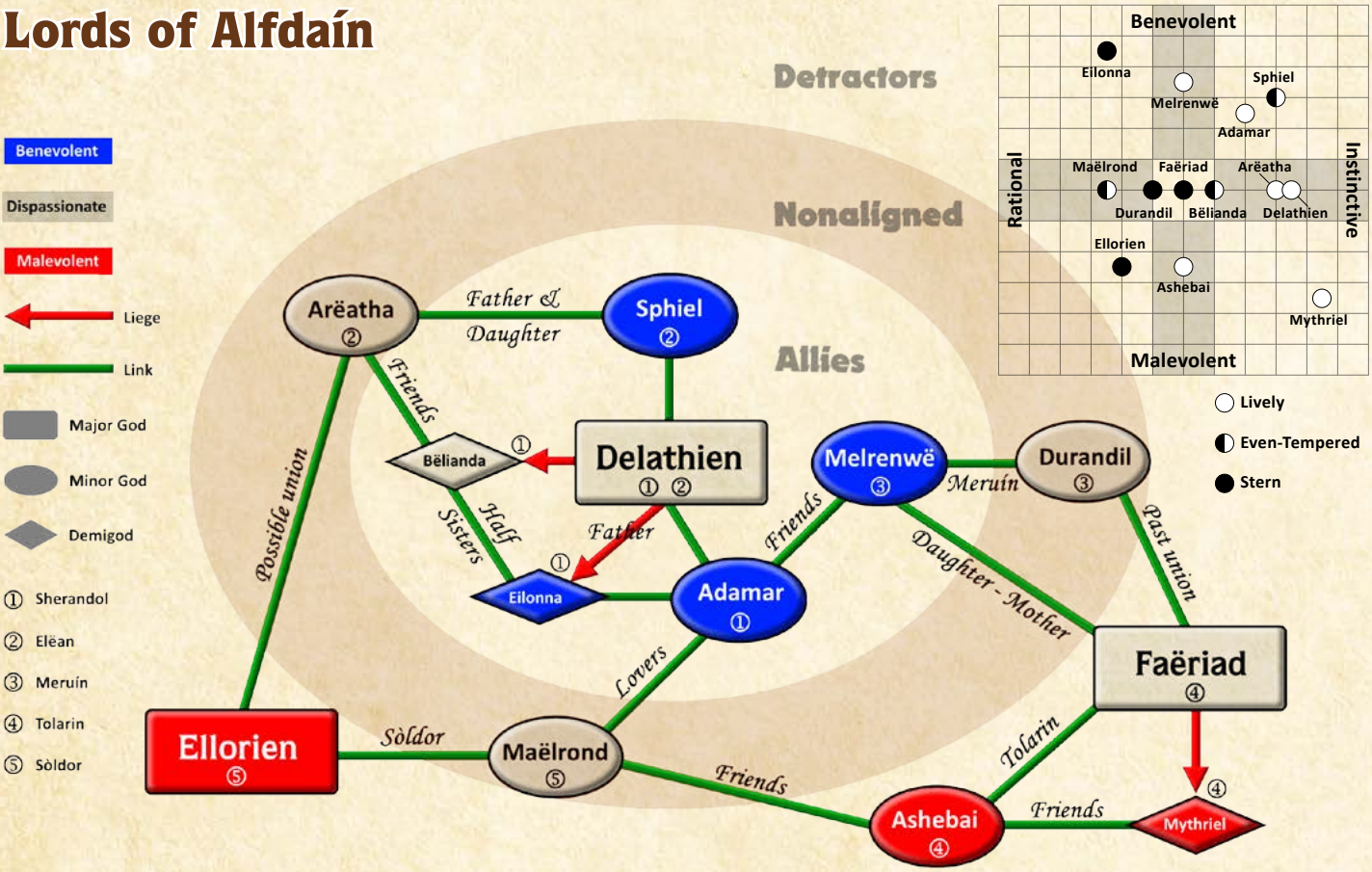


Beguiled by the idea of a spiritual patron, they became one with those who called themselves the Sòldor, the Elder Tribe. Deprived of their armies, the once-masters became the slaves. Their civilization collapsed, and much of the ancient knowledge of magic and metals was lost in the fiery storms of revenge. A dark age followed.

During the past millennium of their bondage, elves of the surface—the *Children of the Light*—had been magically altered by their masters. They looked strikingly unlike the Sòldor. The Meruín had an affinity with water to harvest the bounty of the seas. Those of Elëan breeding were gifted with wings to conquer the skies and the mountains. Others were conceived as their masters' helpers, fewest but more highly skilled in the magical arts and able to weave the fabric of shadows. Dark and brooding, they were called the Tolarin. By far the most common were the Sherandol, bred to work the vast stretches of woods and fields covering Alorea.

As regards the words of the Elder Tribe's prophet, the *Children of the Light* remained circumspect. Indeed, the concept was

Lords of Alfdaín



overpowering, but since they could now think and debate freely, the elves argued that such a protector ought to look like themselves. The dispute nearly unraveled Naghenor's prophecy. The Sòldor were incensed and felt cheated. They expected a god upon returning to the surface. Instead, they entered a competition for one. The Sherandol and the Elëan together won the initial round. Due to their larger population, they were able to bring forth the first manifestation of their faith, Delathien. From the thunder and spray of the ocean soon grew Durandil, embodying the ideals of the Meruín. With more time, as their own ranks thrived under the warmth of the sun, the Sòldor were vindicated with the genesis of Ellorien. Much later came Faëriad's personification of the Tolarin. Distrustful of each other and empowered by their rival deities, the tribes scattered, taking with them their gnomish captives.

300 BCE With the Alorean dark ages ending, somber gods of the former masters survived, shaken and none too pleased with the elven upstarts. The gnomes came to believe their protectors had forsaken them. Distraught and in the throes of divine introspection, their gods fell into obscurity, and in so doing inspired the gnomes to wonder where they had gone wrong. While this drawn-out languishing went on, the gods of the elves worried about the gnomes recovering their confidence. Their first step was to choose a leader. Delathien proved the strongest and, despite Ellorien's bitter protest, became the ruler of their fledgling pantheon.

Delathien sought a magical domain fitting his ideals, and thus created the Briarwoods, a suitable home for his peers to inhabit. From this point on, the tribes rejoined and began working together.

250 BCE In Delathien's view and in those of his peers, it was necessary to remove the notion that gnomes had been this world's first masters. Following the wisdom imparted to them, elven priors endeavored to eradicate all remaining traces of the gnomish ancient past, including books, monuments, tombs, temples, ruins, and so on, which to their eyes had become blasphemous. Laws were enacted prohibiting gnomes from learning to read and from practicing any cult whatsoever. Efforts then followed to erase all memory and records of this *Great Cleansing*, leaving behind misleading legends and deliberate untruths about demons. From this day on, no mortal knew the true origins of the elves and how gnomes become children of a lesser kind.

This important event had the strange effect of veiling the distant past, casting the Age of Alorean Gnomes into the deepest of shadows into which no mortal could gaze. A ritual demanding the contribution of all elven gods, the *Spell of Erasing*, sealed the matter. For reasons of her own, the one goddess of the gnomes still awake, Thaleera, chose not to react, though she knew all too well what was happening. Indeed, her followers forgot who they once had been. Their other gods had already fallen into obscurity. To this day, Thaleera still looks away from this ancient darkness.

100 BCE The gnomes gradually regained their freedom, but in elven minds, they were a reviled and mistrusted people.

Though they'd forgotten their past, gnomes still believed their clans to be older than those of the elves. An oral tradition replaced their lost scriptures and helped preserve this belief. The gnomes began honoring new gods, different and more benevolent than those of their ancient cults. In more recent times, with the ascendancy of the Tòrr-Gàrraidh on Alorea, the elves gave in to their inner fears, and the gnomes again became their captives.

Briarwoods

The divine domain of the elves is a pocket plane in the Ambrosian dimension. Much of it is filled with giant brambles as tall as mountains. Deep within them stands Delathien's court, the sanctum of Sherandol spirit, a palace made of intertwining roots and thorns. A part of this plane features a great ocean, where the brambles gradually disappear beneath the waves. This is Durandil's *Meruín Hallows*. Sphiel rules *Everbright*, the Elëan kingdom on top of clouds far above Delathien's court. Opposite the ocean, on the plane's gloomy far side, lies Faëriad's Tolarin realm, *Thistledark*, where the Briarwoods are made of living, shifting shadows. Last but not least, Ellorien's deathly dominion occupies a lower level of the plane. It includes the *Soul Thorns,* a place of sorrow and horror where those who betrayed their divine patrons are banished until they atone. Worthy spirits of the Sòldor summoned to the Briarwoods are Ellorien's servants. They dwell around the *Soul Thorns,* in a vast ring-like temple called *Argentyl,* with floors of alabaster and silver pillars rising farther than the eye can see. The gods who later ascended to the Briarwoods reside in this realm, which embodies their ancestry.

Lords of the Briarwoods

Delathien rules the Alorean pantheon. Oldest of these gods, he draws much of his spiritual might from two tribes, the Sherandol and the Elëan. He promotes unity among elves, both Alorean and Calderan, a strategy that his peers see as a self-serving way of attracting more followers to everyone else's detriment. His closest allies are Sphiel, Adamar, and Melrenwë, in addition to two demigods bound to him, Bëlianda and Eilonna. More aloof remain the Tolarin and Sòldor gods—chief among them Ellorien and Faëriad, as well as her immediate allies, Ashebai and Mythriel. Aside from innate philosophical disagreements, the opposition to Delathien partly originates from a feeling that the two latter tribes and their gods were ill served when Alfdaín was established on Calidar. Tolarin and Sòldor faiths in the Great Caldera remain minorities there: these tribes and their philosophies are much stronger on Alorea. Ellorien concentrates on reinforcing his power on the ancestral moon and considers Calidar merely a side show.



Delathien

Epithets: *Ruler of the Briarwoods, the Great Huntsman, the Once Blind*
Ranking: Ruling god of the Sherandol and Elëan; eldest peer
Interests: Forest, hunting, good fortune, all elves
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (although magnanimous, can be vengeful when angered), *Instinctive*–7 (impulsive, hasty, creative, curious, adventurous, cunning, unruly), *Lively*–6 (cheeky, flamboyant, passionate, outspoken, feisty, indomitable)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Adamar (fellow Sherandol), Sphiel (fellow Elëan), Bëlianda (daughter), Eilonna (daughter)
Hated Foes: *Iron horns of Gheeth*, bull-like creatures including minotaurs, their spirits, their divine patrons
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Mythuín and throughout central Alfdaín; also strong in Meryador and Seághal), Osriel (Hauteville area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Loreath 13, 561 BCE
Pronunciation: DEL-lah-thien

Mythology: From the sheer strength of their imagination and beliefs as they called for their spiritual protector, the Sherandol roused a primal consciousness from the depth of Calidar's world soul. Over decades of unrelenting prayers and entreaties, Delathien took on the shape and character his callers believed he should have. When at last he was whole, he opened his eyes and gazed back at those who'd foreseen his coming. They became his first priors: they knew he had risen.

The first of the elven gods was to become a great hunter. It wasn't long before Delathien started exploring his surroundings. He traveled the world of mortals in disguise, honing his skills. For a time, he felled great beasts in the woods and in the skies before seeking ever greater challenges. His path led him to the outer planes. There, he encountered the terrible *iron horns of Gheeth,* a race of giant bull-like beings made of living metal and able to breathe clouds of petrifaction. He was challenged at once when he penetrated their domain. Though he slew his attacker, many more followed. They grew powerful wings and chased Delathien from their plane back to that of the mortals in a furious flight. As he dodged and rolled through their midst, dashing across the Great Vault from one world to the next, he aimed countless arrows into their mirror-like hides, his quiver never empty. One by one, he felled the giant beasts, their fiery blood drenching the soil of his path.

Over the millennium that followed, the lands of mortals bore the progeny of the fierce iron horns, growing from the seeds of their spattered blood. Smaller and devoid of their ancestors' wings, they remained a deadly hazard for the elves and the denizens of other worlds. Delathien grew wiser and preoccupied with those of his kind who'd risen from oblivion as he had before them. For nearly a thousand years he ruled blind, following an incident when Sphiel ascended. And then came the day his faithful took on the challenge to rid their realms of the spawn of iron horns. To prove their worth, they too became great hunters among their own people, for such was the way of Delathien.

Description: Delathien was originally described in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies* (see page 64 for the original entry). The *Great Huntsman* was born of common beliefs shared by the Sherandol and the Elëan. Oldest among elven gods, he rules the Briarwoods, and has become the chief protector of elves in general and of the Sherandol in particular. Though they see Sphiel as their patron deity, the Elëan also consider Delathien their god of good fortune. He favors hunters, rangers, mountaineers, and meditating hermits. He also inspires all those who fashion fine things out of wood, such as cabinet-makers, woodcarvers, and bowyers, as well as protectors of the forest.

His main goal is the unity of all elves, regardless of their ancestral tribes and whether they hail from Alorea or the Great Caldera. He inspired his greatest priors to be his prophets, traveling all realms where elves are found, preaching his word. Many of them are "half-breeds," born from parents of different elven ancestries, a measure that rubbed Ellorien and Faëriad the wrong way considering the majority of elves who left Alorea were from the Sherandol tribe. Tolarin and Sòldor are the most resistant to Delathien's idea, seeing it as self-serving. They consider their Sòldor and Tolarin tribes superior to the others and, therefore, half-breeds are inferior elves. Delathien promotes the expansion and the protection of woods and all those dwelling within. His attitude toward the treatment of nature on Alorea remains ambiguous, since the forests there have been altered and bound to serve the elves—he neither supports it nor speaks against it. This and the migration of many Sherandol to Alfdaín before the wars of independence have damaged Delathien's standing among Aloreans.



His closest allies are Adamar and Sphiel, as well as two demigoddesses he sponsored, Bëlianda and Eilonna. His mortal followers in Alfdaín have been imagining a love affair between their spiritual patron and Melrenwë, a Meruín deity. The idea is the eventual birth of a divinity bearing three ancestries. As a result, Delathien feels a growing attraction for the goddess, but she has so far remained somewhat of a cold fish. He and Sphiel enjoy adventuring into the outer planes, seeking out monstrous beings—this habit grew from legends spun by their mortal flock. Several conflicts have ensued with alien deities, prompting the two elven gods to lead their armies of servants from the Briarwoods into battle. Durandil and Melrenwë sometimes join in. Ellorien and Faëriad question these fights and usually remain aloof. Ever more brutal clashes with the denizens of Gheeth have become a regular concern. Whether they actually happened or not, these otherworldly conflicts eventually find a way into the *Lothenial* scriptures, vastly reinterpreted by the priors to fill the faithful with awe and attract new followers.

The *Great Huntsman*'s fair complexion and silvery wings allude to his Elëan ancestry. The Sherandol, however, often represent him with a darker skin tone and fiery hair, especially in Alfdaín. Delathien's greatest temple stands near the siege of matriarchal power in the capital city, Mythuín. One of the favored rites of passage requires those aspiring to reach the clergy's upper echelons to seek out an *iron horn* or an ancient auroch and slay it. These creatures can be found in caves, dungeons, abandoned ruins, and the wilderness of Alorea and the Great Caldera.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Personal Device*—bow +2 to hit and damage (see Table 10, score of 12). As an option, the magical bonus is otherwise added to an existing magical bow. The personal device and any granted bonus vanish when the *Divine Favor* ends. If archery is unsuitable, replace the favor with an arrow or other projectile able to slay a foe (a monster type or a career path chosen at the time the favor is granted). The foe must succeed a defense check or die.

Preferred animal/monster: Elven hunting dogs. These animals are smarter than common canines and can blend in with their surroundings (90% chance of remaining unseen.) They do not bark unless they wish to alert their masters of prey or an unseen enemy.

Preferred weapon/spell: Bows (or any spell creating magical projectiles).

Temple of Delathien—Map Key

Ground Level
1. Public Entrance
2. Ceremonial Entrances
3. Great hall of Delathien
4. Dais, statue, and altar
5. Hall of the Sherandol
   5a. Stairs down to 5b
6. Sacristy
   6a. Stairs up to 6b
7. Hall of the Elëan
   7a. Stairs down to 7b
8. Hall of the Tolarin
   8a. Stairs up to 8b
9. Hall of Sòldor
   9a. Stairs down to 9b
10. Hall of the Meruín
    10a. Stairs up to 10b

Lower Level
- 5b. Stairs up to 5a
- 7b. Stairs up to 7a
- 9b. Stairs up to 9a

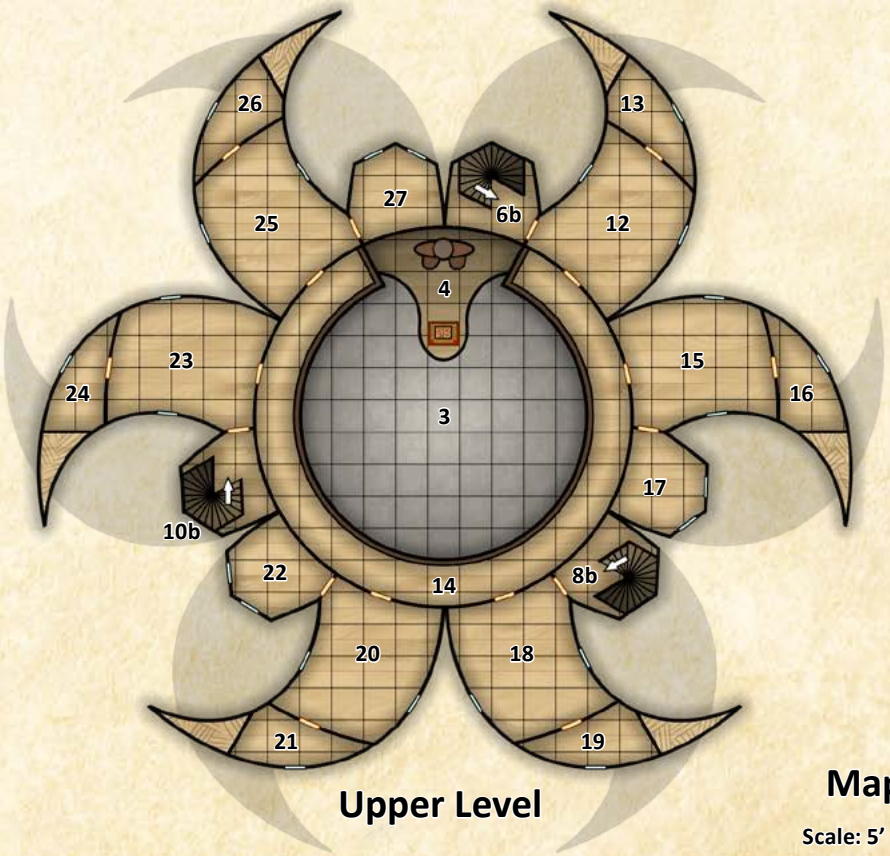
11. Crypt of the *Great Huntsman's* Holy Arrow

Upper Level
- 6b. Stairs down to 6a
- 8b. Stairs down to 8a
- 10b Stairs down to 10a

12. Repository of the *Adanorials*
13. Scriptorium
14. Gallery above Area 3
15. Chapel of Eilonna
16. Office
17. Meditation Chamber
18. Hall of the Great Vault
19. Storage
20. Chapel of Athraniel
21. Office
22. Meditation Room
23. Repository of the *Lothenial*
24. Scriptorium
25. Chapel of Lorialar
26. Office
27. Meditation Chamber

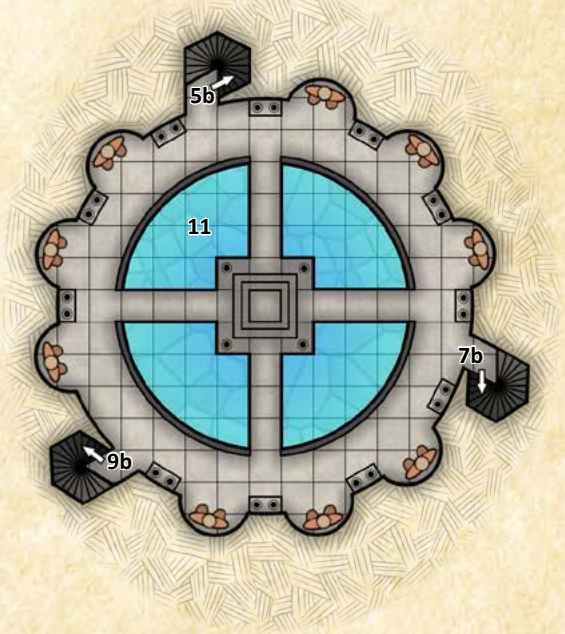
Temple of Delathien





Upper Level

Lower Level



Map Key

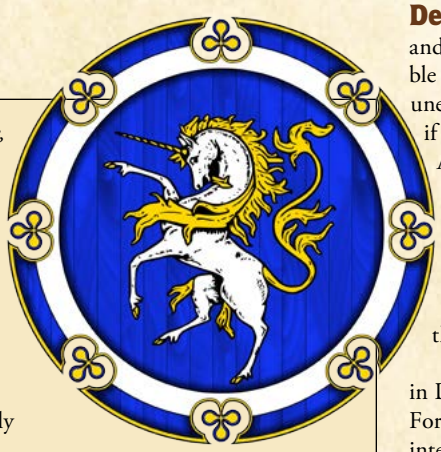
Scale: 5’ per square

Door | Window

Column | Altar | Up ⇦ Down | Stairs Up | Statue

Athraniel: Delathien's loyal hunting companion is the spirit of a great elven hound that the Huntsman adopted from the netherworld. His ability to elevate the hound's spirit to the status and abilities of an eternal (see Table 19. *Divine Servants*) took form from beliefs already widespread among his followers that such a being already existed. Delathien rescued the great hound's spirit from a pack of undead attempting to feast on his energy. Athraniel's baying strikes with fear all mortals within half a mile, save for epic heroes. It inflicts one bite attack at double damage (rather than an eternal's standard two-fist attacks) plus continual damage as long as it doesn't release its bite.

Adamar



Epithets: *Heavenly Matchmaker, the Eternal Embroiderer*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the Sherandol
Interests: Love, beauty, earth, fertility
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (friendly, truthful, trusting, romantic, tolerant—though a tad manipulative and occasionally vengeful), ☗ *Instinctive*–4 (somewhat impulsive, creative, curious, adventurous), ↟ *Lively*–6 (mirthful, flamboyant, passionate, outspoken, hedonistic, shameless)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Delathien (fellow Sherandol), Melrenwë (friend), Maëlrond (lover)
Hated Foes: Evil monsters with goat-like features, such as certain demons and chimeras
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Lathias and southern Alfdaín)
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 2, 253 BCE
Pronunciation: AD-amar

Mythology: Elven ideals of beauty and eternal love struck up a heavenly music in the depths of the world soul. From it emerged Adamar. Forever smitten by visions of their lovely new goddess, the exalted souls who'd awakened her from eternal oblivion became peaceful. More than one joined her at once in the world beyond from a mere glimpse of her gorgeous eyes. It is said that gnarled trees and ominous darkness in the most feral woods of Alorea shed their wickedness, bowed before her, and strewed flowers along her path. Veiled by naught but pale forest mist, she wandered the thickest tangles. All who glimpsed her beauty thought of no other companion in their lives.

Such was the case of Dagragol, a demon prince, half man and half goat, who sought the elven goddess as his bride. "My heart will be yours, Dark One, only if yours will forever shed its blackness. Swear to this covenant, and I will take my place at your side," said Adamar. Hopelessly smitten, Dagragol kneeled. "I do forever, Fairest of All," he said, "for I can no longer suffer the fire consuming my soul." The demon accepted the arcane vow that bound them together.

In truth, he neither could nor wanted to change. He then found himself unable to touch his naked prize, no matter how hard he tried. He resorted to blackmail, threatening her mortal followers. Adamar refused to repudiate the covenant. In a rage, Dagragol destroyed all things of beauty that he could find, and poisoned the woods she'd graced with her presence. Though the divine maiden relented, she could not truly dispel the divine enchantment. In a frenzy of lust, the demon lord seized his coveted trophy and at last pressed his lips against hers.

The nature of the unwise pact was such that it sheared all the evils that once flowed through Dagragol's black heart. His essence as a demon prince was no more, and his flesh turned to ashes enshrined in an artifact long since lost to elvenkind.

Description: Adamar is most popular as the goddess of beauty, courtship, and love in the minds of the Sherandol elves. She favors stories of impossible love and romantic self-sacrifices, occasionally setting up mortals with unexpected relationships. Like a rose and its thorns, she can prove vengeful if jilted, scorned, or betrayed. It is best to avoid angering her. Love with Adamar always comes with a price in the form of a challenge to prove oneself worthy of her attentions. Once she gives her love, she does so with passion, and expects no less in return. Adamar is the protector of poets and sculptors, suave heroes, creatures of great beauty such as unicorns, and those who've sworn eternal faithfulness to a lover beyond their reach. Professional courtesans (they do exist among elves despite their rather prim manners) often seek her protection.

Adamar skims part of her power indirectly, from the love of mortals in Delathien's pantheon, regardless of whether they honor her personally. For this reason she promotes courtship and public displays of amorous interest, such as flowers and romantic gifts from the most humble to the most extravagant (at least from the elves' subtle point of view). Marriage ceremonies are often performed in her temple to obtain her blessing. It is wise to seek formal separation if matrimonial life takes a turn for the worse; in Adamar's view, betrayal of vows pronounced before her altar, while still married, may result in divine punishment for the worst of the transgressors, and even more so if the betrayed party is a member of her clergy. The goddess is also thought to enjoy embroidery. She is said to own a magical needle which, in her hands, embroiders great mortal love stories.

Behind her typical elven stateliness and reserve lies a slightly impudent, cunning, and flirtatious goddess. Though an ally of Delathien, she entertains an intimate relation with Maëlrond, who is no friend of the *Huntsman*. As she once did with the demon prince, she hopes to turn her lover from Ellorien's influence. The issue is uncertain but her passion remains true. Melrenwë became her good friend and confidante. Though openly respectful, the two elven minxes privately poke fun at Ellorien's dour demeanor. They are trying to set him up with Arëatha, partially to mellow him as well as bring him closer to Delathien. Adamar shows little interest in either of Delathien's demigoddesses, though they share Sherandol ancestry.

The patron of beauty and love bears unmistakable Sherandol features: copper-hued skin, bright green eyes, and dark red hair with golden accents. Modesty among elves demands her representations wear long flowing robes. Though it has been written in the *Lothenial* she has carried the progeny of Delathien and Mythriel, newborn deities have yet to manifest themselves. Because of this, she is sometimes depicted in her shrines as being with child. A great temple was built in her honor at Lathias, Lathraël, the center of her cult on Calidar. As a rite of passage for the upper ranks of her clergy, a goat-headed monster is preferred as a live offering to Adamar. The creature must be slain at her temple, and its heart burned on her altar.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Loyal Companion*—unicorns for female followers, or pegasi for male followers (see Table 10, score of 8.)
Preferred animal/monster: Peacocks or unicorns.

Preferred weapon/spell: An ornate chain ending with one or two hooks, usually worn around the waist (or charm-based spells).

Needle of Thelerien: This artifact is an embroidery needle made of gold. In the hands of a deity, it stitches fabulous works depicting the achievements of mortals, from Adamar's point of view. The needle controls the minds of mortals who touch it (a defense check is allowed with wisdom scores of 94 or more). In their hands, it creates a tale of instant death for whomever is seen through the needle's eye and the one holding the artifact. The victims' spirits become threads within the embroidery, and cannot be raised from the dead. The final needlework is cursed and will cause a murderous madness to mortals gazing upon it, unless they succeed defense checks. Embroidery depicting love stories, however, act as blessings to the ones who carry them, and enable those represented within to find their soulmates, wherever they may be. The needle can only be destroyed by a natural lightning during a great ethereal storm in the netherworld. If the artifact is destroyed, all possessed works are disintegrated and their captive spirits released.

Arëatha



Epithets: *Cloud Mother, Divine Storm, Winged Maiden*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the Elëan
Interests: Clouds, thunder, lightning, rain, fertility
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (generous if pleased, but vengeful if betrayed), 💀 *Instinctive*–5 (impulsive, impatient, emotional, adventurous, most unruly), 🗲 *Lively*–6 (sassy, flamboyant, stubborn, blunt, defiant, indomitable)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Sphiel (father), Alana-Lifebringer (mother, Meryath), Bëlianda (friend), Ellorien (possible mate), Kanemanu (grandfather, Meryath)
Hated Foes: Ghüleans and their descendants, their demonic spirits, and alien divine patrons
Centers of Faith: Alfdaín exclusively (Tëodyl, from the Fëoros Range to northern Andolien along the Belledoran range, and near Manarao in Meryath)
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 23, 1237 CE as a peer; Aereath 17, 1144 CE as a demigoddess
Pronunciation: ar-REEAH-thah

Mythology: At the heart of the wars of independence, when chaos reigned in the Calderan realms, a demigoddess was born. She was the child of Sphiel, *Warlord of the Winds*, and Alana-Lifebringer, the *Lady of the Lagoon*. Arëatha became a child of war when the fates of Calidar and its three moons became locked in an impasse of conflict. *Children of the Beast* appeared in the Great Vault, their monstrous worms spreading through Soltan's ephemeris to disgorge legions of horror. Young and unwise, Arëatha seized the *Sword of Elëan* from her father's court and took it upon herself to join mortal heroes of Meryath on their way to defy death. Clad in armor of storm, lightning and thunder in one hand, elder sword in the other, she slew a great many of the invaders. Despite visceral fear of their bloodthirsty gods, the Ghülean legions fell into disarray and despair at the sight of the winged maiden boldly standing atop a towering mound of their dead kin.

A champion of Ghüle stepped forth, unholy prince of another world's demons, hyena-like mass of rotting muscle and bones, with the tail of a scorpion and black tentacles writhing atop its shoulders. Caring naught for its own, the beast callously charged, crushing warrior and war machine alike, flinging all aside like wisps of straw. It reveled under the celestial fire Arëatha rained upon it, growing fiercer and more colossal with each bolt. Its massive jaws snapped shut upon the godling, its jagged fangs nearly severing her in half. But the winged maiden still held the *Sword of Elëan,* and deep into the beast's head she sank her blade. A great fire ran through the dark creature's bowels, like cracks in shattering crystal, until the Ghülean champion became engulfed in a blaze of divine wrath. As her foe crumbled into a pile of ashes and Calderan winds blew them away, Arëatha lay on the ground, her life as a demigoddess forfeit.

Description: So great was her display during the Ghülean invasion that many among the Talikai honored her sacrifice. They built a colossal pyre and, as the demigoddess's remains were consumed, thousands kneeled around it. She would live on in their memories. Tales of her war feat became even more popular in faraway Fëoros. Since the time of her death in 1237 CE, she sprang to life once more as a minor goddess, thanks to her followers. From the elder sword she rose fully as a blood kin of the Elëan. With her father's affinity for the air and her mother's for water, she became the *Cloud Mother,* the bringer of rain, and thus a patroness of fertility. Her actions also make her a warrior goddess, one as unpredictable as the winds and as powerful as the sea.

Arëatha is a short-fused glory-seeker with a hint of narcissism. She tends to enjoy a good fight for its own sake. A cause, good if possible or somewhat justifiable at worst, is all she requires. Ever the overachiever, heavy-handedness is her norm in war and love. As for fecundity, in Arëatha's view it belongs with the victor's spoils and good times after war. In her peers' opinions and to her mother's chagrin, Alfdaín's *enfant terrible* stands as a mighty ally in war and a troublesome friend in peace. Though she keeps alert for the return of Ghüle, Arëatha chafes under her father's warning that gods are not to intervene in the affairs of mortals. She almost wishes she were a demigoddess still, for it would allow her a better chance of eluding the scrutiny of other gods and do as she pleases.

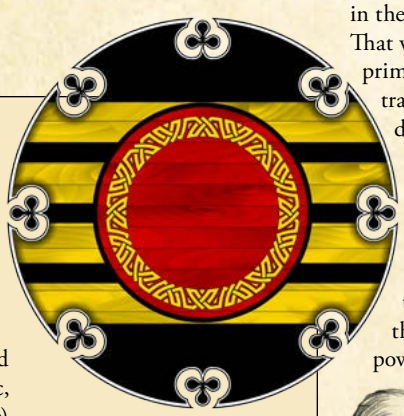
Sphiel and Alana-Lifebringer are her two greatest supporters. Adamar and Melrenwë see the youngest god of the elves as a loose cannon, and they have been working to set her up with Ellorien. They hope she will temper the ill feelings the *Watcher of Sòldor* bears toward Delathien, or perhaps that an unruly spouse might distract him from his old rivalry. Likewise, becoming a spouse might also bring a measure of wisdom to Arëatha. As for the winged maiden, she has every intention of bending Ellorien to her every wish, or else. Bëlianda shares aquatic origins with her, and the two have become off-and-on friends. Arëatha also enjoys the company of Kanemanu, her Talikai grandfather, whose extravagant ways make her laugh. The two enjoy exploring the infinite skies of Ambrosia.

The elder sword had a lot to do with her final nature when her demigoddess persona passed away. Her skin white as alabaster, hair and wings bright and golden, and with eyes like sapphires, she embodies the look of the Elëan despite her mother's Talikai ancestry. In her shrines in Meryath, she is nonetheless represented with a skin of bronze and golden eyes. As a reminder of Elëan dominance in Fëoros, her grand temple sits in Tëodyl, conspicuously facing Ellorien's out in the hills. The priors

of both cults face each other, unsure of which stance to adopt—friend or foe. Her shrine is a tall white tower ending with a golden spindle at the top. Favored offerings include beasts or agents of Ghüle brought live to a consecrated temple. From there, they are flown to the clouds, where the *Ritual of Sending* will turn them into the stuff of storms, producing great rolls of thunder and savage lightning strikes.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Breath,* electrical (see Table 10, score of 20).
Preferred animal/monster: Roosters, cockatrices.
Preferred weapon/spell: Javelin (bolts of lightning and electrical attacks).

Ashebai



Epithets: *Whisperer in the Shadows, Lady of Shadows*
Ranking: Minor Tolarin goddess
Interests: Shadows and secrets
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–5 (selfish, vengeful, unscrupulous, manipulative, spiteful), ☻ *Practical* (though patient and calculating, she can be cunning and quite unruly), ↗ *Lively*–5 (sarcastic, vain, shameless, arrogant, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Faëriad (fellow Tolarin), Mythriel (fellow Tolarin), Maëlrond (friend), Loki (friend, Nordheim), and Anwë (friend, Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Servants and followers of Teos-Soltan as well as those of Brâlkha Shadowfist (see *Gods of Araldûr)* and Freyr (see *Gods of Nordheim)*
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Nythuín and far northern Fëoros), Osriel (Bickersford area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 10, 106 BCE
Pronunciation: ASH-eh-bye

Mythology: At first, there were shadows, the strange and unexpected shapes dwelling at the edge of night and day. Deep in the towering woods of Alorea, where the sun struggles to extend its realm, where the wind softly rustles through the fronds, dimness stirs and torments all but the Tolarin. The dark ones sense the shadows when they come alive. Others fear the tricks played on their minds. At the fringe of their consciousness rose Ashebai, faceless and mysterious, a presence neither here nor there, a watcher in the gloom, a keeper of somber secrets. Those she deceives rightfully worry about what truly lies just beyond sight, for the world soul weaves what lurks in their minds. The Tolarin know this. And the Tolarin gave Ashebai her eyes' fleeting glare, the soul of twilight deep, her long stretching shadow in the glory of dusk, and the sigh of the coming night.

Long ago, well before elvenkind reached Munaan, the *Whisperer in the Shadows* tangled with no less than Soltan. It had been her habit to lurk just out of sight of mortals and gods alike, enjoying nothing more than eavesdropping on all things that shouldn't be shared. She once observed a towering firestorm shoot from the sun's surface and reach for the Great Vault. Curious, she approached. She watched Soltan rage and mutter. Bitter were his words about ungrateful and insolent Norsemen: he vowed his priors would see to their oblivion. She lingered for a time until her presence was noticed. At once, a blinding radiance flooded the Great Vault, casting long shadows behind worlds and moons in the ephemeris—an event duly recorded by ancient astronomers thirteen centuries ago. Fleeing before deathly billows hurtling toward her, Ashebai darted round a distant world and into the stark dimness behind it. When the storm was over, she returned to the Briarwoods, but not before whispering into a keen ear some of what she'd gathered. There was no mistaking in his mind who had unveiled the portent of dark times to come. And he made good use of it. His name was Loki.

Description: Ashebai was born from the elves' primal fear of the unknown, skimming her power from their subconscious dread of what lurks in the shadows. The Tolarin recognized her existence and personified her. That was the element needed for her to ascend to divine status. She favors primarily the Tolarin, but also all people who rely on shadows to ply their trades, such as thieves and spies, but also guardians and dwellers of places dimly lit. She both keeps at bay and rules creatures of the shadows. Many who live deep in the wilderness on Alorea and Alfdaín pray for her protection from what prowls out of sight. Ashebai also is the keeper of secrets, and she is often called upon to veil what needs to be hidden. Among elves, she protects treasures and knowledge from prying eyes. Misdirection is one of her tools, and for this she became the patroness of elven illusionists. She also acts as a discrete messenger, the one who whispers in the shadows. Aside from fear, Ashebai skims power from elves who lie and deceive, no matter what their true faiths are.



The *Whisperer in the Shadows* spends a good deal of her time eavesdropping on the secrets and sweet little lies of those who failed to pray for her protection. An offering would have been appreciated for her goodwill, but in the absence of such prudent thoughtfulness, Ashebai feels wholly justified to let slip a murmur or two into the right ears. The rustle of her breath as she unveils a clue comes just as one's mind starts slipping into restful sleep. The experience has jolted many, who are never quite sure whether they heard a woman's sly whisper or merely dreamed it. Her priors sell blessings to ward off such indiscretions. A good price can be had for a baker's half dozen. The earnings serve to pay for candles, incense, and garlands of fresh flowers to enliven her dark idols and altars.

Ashebai's closest allies are Faëriad and Mythriel. Loki remains grateful for her warning. He then influenced his peers to lead their followers away from Munaan. It was she who cast a veil of shadows to conceal their departure. Another friend is Anwë, the half-elven protector of shape-changers. Though for different reasons, she is as dark as the *Lady of Shadows* and, like her, relishes those who hunt under the moons' silvery glow. Ashebai, on the other hand, dislikes all about Melrenwë, in particular her glorious gleam. She sneers at the hallowed legend of the sea hag, which she hopes to disprove one day. Since Adamar is Melrenwë's friend, she detests her as well. Ashebai has long been a friend of Maëlrond, and resents his love for Adamar—she'd rather have him to herself. She seeks a way to drive a wedge between the two. But above all, she despises Soltan's sheer power. She never forgave him because she once had to flee for her life from his wrath. Like him, pride is her weakness. For this, she inspires those who secretly honor her to watch his priors and betray their true aims whenever possible—of which Soltan remains fully aware and increasingly bitter.

The *Lady of Shadows* features the blackest of skin and long, flowing hair whose midnight blue waves reach down to her calves. She is openly honored among Tolarin on Alorea. In Alfdaín, much of her faith is veiled, with shrines hidden below ground or in remote areas of the woods. Her faith prevails in northern Fëoros. Her greatest temple stands in Nythuín, unhidden. It also serves as a school for illusionists who specialize in the manipulation of shadows. Favored offerings include holy symbols of Teos or Soltan, stolen from devout followers of the sun god or from his temples. During a ritual, those are defaced on Ashebai's altars, and turned into a metal as dark as night, which can be fashioned into *shadowblades*.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Hallowed Veil* (see Table 10, score of 15).
Preferred animal/monster: Gray cats, denizens of the shadows.
Preferred weapon/spell: *Shadowblade* (or illusion spells used to summon denizens of the shadows).

Tolarin Benefits: All shadow elves can clearly see through shadows as if in broad daylight. However, they suffer a –1 penalty to hit and to their defense checks when fighting in broad daylight. Ashebai's followers can hide in shadows like rogues with half their career achievements. Rogues practicing her faith gain a bonus to this ability, and can safely shift 10' sideways, forward, or back while hidden in shadows, including past obstacles such as portcullises, pits, and traps, as long as shadows extend that far. In exchange for these benefits, their career advancement sustains a –10% penalty, and elven empathy with plants is lost. "Shadows" are generally described as a very dimly lit area fraught with ominous shapes shifting in and out of sight. Shadowy conditions are those prevailing near dusk or dawn, under the moonlight, in a heavily forested area on a dark day, or in a traditional dungeon setting.



Denizens of the Shadows: These include all varieties of shadow monsters such as those with the word "shadow" in their names, beings created with phantasmal or illusion spells, and creatures from the demi-plane of shadows.

Shadowblades: The dark gray metal is made from melted remains of holy symbols taken from hated foes. If Ashebai is pleased with the offering and enough metal is available to make a weapon, a *shadowblade* can be forged. When scoring a critical hit with this weapon, an area 60' radius is cast in shadows (–1 penalty to hit, to defense checks, and to initiative rolls to all non-Tolarin). The effect is permanent until dispelled or until the blade is taken out of the affected radius (ignore in broad daylight or complete darkness).

Bëlianda

Epithets: *The Eternal Singer, Shark Slayer*
Ranking: Demigoddess, Paragon of the Sherandol
Interests: Fate, bards, seers, druids
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though humble and truthful, she can be merciless when defied), ☻ *Instinctive*–2 (creative and adventurous), ᔓ *Even-Tempered* (though leaning toward dreamy and reserved.)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Delathien (father and divine liege), Eilonna (half-sister), Arëatha (friend), and Milánn (friend, Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Weresharks and all evil shape-changers, servants and followers of Krath'nar the Ravager
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Glyfuín and northeastern Andolien)
Day of Ascendance: Chelonea 29, 59 BCE
Pronunciation: b-LEEAN-da

Mythology: A profound love once brought together Delathien and a siren deity, a great sea queen in her mortal years. Lorialar hailed from a water realm on Calidar. She'd spurned the interest of a warlike entity named Squarn the Devourer, who'd sent his servants to abduct the one he coveted. Having made short work of the shark god's spawn, Delathien earned Lorialar's gratitude and fell deeply in love after she sang for him. From their union came Bëlianda.

But the idyll wasn't to be. In a fit of jealous rage, Squarn inspired his mortal followers to wage war upon Lorialar's faithful while Delathien was busy with an invasion from Gheeth. In a mindless frenzy of blood, the shark god's followers slaughtered the sirens and only retreated when an army of merfolk intervened. But it was too late. With only a handful of sirens left, Lorialar fell into a deep sleep. Not even Delathien could bring her back, and long would he mourn her passing.

Lorialar wasn't the only victim. Squarn captured young Bëlianda and took her to his domain, Glaubrine. After dispatching the iron horn threat, Delathien vowed to avenge his love's fate and recover his daughter. Durandil and Melrenwë joined him as the *Huntsman* departed.

"And now, you will sing for me, Daughter of Lorialar," said Squarn. "Do as your mother never did. Please me fully, and you shall live to bear my hallowed spawn. Stop, and I'll feed you to my servants, one divine morsel at a time." Grimly, Bëlianda bowed. "As you are master here and now, I shall endeavor to satisfy you as you command. May the sorrow in my heart bring you what you so rightfully have earned." With a most rapturous melody, she entangled the barren minds of her captor and his most loyal servants like sweet water on parched desert sand. When her song ended, Squarn and his guards were halfway through a blissful trance. So profound had her performance resonated that for a fateful moment it also ensnared the passing of time itself.

Bëlianda then seized the shark god's mighty serrated sword, and gutted every one of them like fish. Chaos ensued in Glaubrine as the gates to the magical realm collapsed. Delathien and his allies marched in and slew all of Squarn's remaining servants, spirits, and demons who'd failed to escape to the netherworld. Among mortals, the merfolk chose this time to invade the sharkmen's temporal realm. Rare were those who survived their god's demise, a hapless few fleeing into the darkness of the watery abyss.

Description: Delathien's daughter inherited from her mother her divine voice and singing ability, and from her father bravery and fortitude. She captured the imagination of many elves, and naturally both Sherandol and Meruín see her as their muse of music and the patroness of bards. It is true she often entertains the gods of the Briarwoods at both Delathien's and Durandil's courts.

Her abilities go far beyond mere artful performance. Bëlianda possesses an innate affinity with fate and time. With her singing, she can manipulate the flow of minutes, slowing time around her for those her music enraptures. Her inspiration also enables her to consult the *Ætherian Scrolls*, a repository of spiritual knowledge at the heart of the world soul. From this, she can see the true natures of mortals and the line of their people back to the *Spell of Erasing*. Bëlianda then sings their eternal praises and keeps their memories alive.

The few sharkmen who survived gathered in the deep, well beyond the reach of the merfolk. The ruins of their old underwater empire became cursed. Some who wandered there took some things that should have been left alone. This is how weresharks came to exist on Calidar. They prowl the surface world, spreading their evil when the moons are right, as a revenge for their fallen god. They pray upon merfolk and elves. Bëlianda knows this, and inspires her priors to stay on the lookout for Squarn's followers. Meanwhile, Lorialar's remains lie in a crystal coffin, under her care at the Briarwoods.

The goddess of fate and bards is a good friend and confidante of Eilonna, her half-sister, Delathien's youngest daughter. The two often travel the world of mortals in disguise. Bëlianda watches heroes on their quests, so she may later sing their praises or the tales of their deaths. She also enjoys a friendship with Milánn, the Phrydians' half-elven god of eternal knowledge. He often shares his wisdom of mortal pest control, aquatic or otherwise, and she offers insights from the *Ætherian Scrolls*. On the other hand, Adamar dislikes Bëlianda, mostly because of her enthralling charms when she sings, which she sees as an encroachment upon her domain. Ashebai has uttered more than a few sharp words about Bëlianda's long-term quest to eradicate weresharks.

Besides her mother's melodious voice, the demigoddess also kept dark green hair. From her father's Sherandol persona, she retained the elven form with coppery skin and bright green eyes. Her most notable temple stands at Glyfuín, in northeastern Andolien. Favored offerings include the blood of evil shape-changers, especially weresharks, but others such as wererats will do.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Godly Shield* (see Table 10, score of 2).
Preferred animal/monster: Sea and river otters, giant otters, merfolk.
Preferred weapon/spell: Harpoon (time-altering spells or magic that can speed up or slow opponents).

Durandil

Epithets: *Lord of the Sea, Bearer of Tanasar, Wisdom of the Deep*
Ranking: Minor god of the Meruín; elder peer
Interests: Sea, fishermen, navigators, storms, Meruín warriors
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (tolerant and generous, he can be vengeful if defied), 💀 *Rational*–2 (leaning toward analytical and cautious), 🗡 *Stern*–5 (aloof, brooding, formal, dreamy, self-conscious)
Godly Cabals: *The Fellowship of Watchers* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 219)
Allies: Melrenwë (daughter), Eilonna (secret healer)
Hated Foes: Evil sea monsters, their minions, their spirits, their divine patrons
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Mythuín and eastern Andolien), Osriel (Sterlingham area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 18, 498 BCE
Pronunciation: DURN-dil

Mythology: Great drums rumbled in the deep. Prayers swelled into a pious crescendo, summoning waves to crash upon rock and sand. Dark billows filled the sky, masking moons and stars. Divine fire raced in the midst of all, and thunder bellowed. A shard of light struck the sea at its heart, throwing skyward a tower of spray. Thus was born Durandil. He extended a hand, and all grew still.

All of Meruín blood bowed before him. Great herds of creatures that dwell in the sea came to pay homage. At last, great beasts of watery flesh soared into the air to honor the new lord, before scattering to herald his coming. Satisfied, Durandil ascended to the stars. "Welcome to Ambrosia, my noble peer," said Delathien. "Here do I offer you as a token of friendship the iron heart of a Gheethien champion, once a mighty warrior among his kind. May it bring you good fortune." Durandil bowed and lifted a hand with a gift of his own. "So mote this kraken's eye prove worthy of your welcome, and bestow you with foresight when all grows dark." Delathien considered the wondrous artifact. "Most worthy it is, Lord of the Meruín," he said. "Let us dwell together, for I sense more of our kind are soon to ascend."

Those who'd awakened Durandil's consciousness from the world soul's primal womb pacified in his name the inner seas of Alorea, and brought elven law to the deep. Under his auspices, the great people of the sea fashioned majestic cities beneath its surface, many where light



plays with wave and spray, a few in the silent dark of the abyss where magic is strongest. A time came when the new world beckoned. Many a Meruín departed, in search of new waters and greater opportunities, only to unveil a challenge unyielding to their advance.

There, Durandil sensed a presence lurking in the ethereal between the realm of mortals and the netherworld. More than twice his size, a great amorphous beast lay there, its tentacles drifting in and out of the prime universe as it fed. Mouths opened and closed, drooling, spitting, oozing, foaming, smacking, sucking. Amid puffs of poisonous and flesh-burning miasma, glistening tongues slithered from sphincters and ruptured buboes, reaching out and tasting the surrounding ether. Misshapen, soulless eyes emerged to gaze at the divine visitor, blinked, rolled, swelled and burst into purulent excretions, or sank back into the writhing, throbbing, gurgling mass beneath. Some snapped free of their looping and twisting tendril-like tethers, levitating into the spectral distance. Others traversed to the physical abyss, splitting into smaller globules before fading from sight. When hailed, the beast did not respond. Sensing an unfathomable depth of evil and corruption before him, Durandil drove *Tanasar*, his mighty trident, into the beast. An inky, viscous blood gushed out. Some dripped onto his hand and burrowed through his divine skin. In horror, the god of the seas staggered away and summoned a great storm. Ethereal fire roared down upon the beast, sizzling its flesh, ripping it apart, and casting about its unholy innards.

Panting and trembling from the effort, Durandil sensed a faint darkness taking root within his soul, one he could not shed. Diffuse and weak at first, monstrous bellows rose from the watery abyss, a place in the world of mortals that would not reveal itself to his godly vision. Mournful at their beginning, the hideous prayers grew ominous and imperious. The beast's remains came back to life, slowly assembling into several smaller creatures, their eyes gazing with evil lust at Durandil.

Description: Durandil embodies the ideals of the Meruín and of those dwelling near the sea or beneath its surface. He is most powerful when in contact with water, capable of summoning nearly any water elemental and controlling most marine creatures. He favors warriors, fishermen, sea traders, and shipbuilders. Seeking his blessing, many sea ports feature dedicated monuments to the sea god. To warn navigators of nearby reefs, elves often build great lighthouse-like statues of Durandil fitted with mirrors in his eyes, pointing toward the nearest port.

Since his encounter with the creature of the ethereal abyss, the sea god was never able to fully understand the mysterious darkness he now bears within. He can feel it, spying on him and growing ever so slowly. The *Lothenial* does not refer to what fell on his hand, the darkness welling in his blood, or his fleeing the beast. After obtaining from Eilonna an oath of eternal silence, he unveiled the story of his encounter. The *Divine Healer* readily agreed to quest for a cure. Since then, Durandil has favored the building of marine fortresses and inspired his priors to expand Alfdaín beneath the Bay of Eyes. Its depths remain to be cleared of aquatic monsters and pacified, but his priors have been debating the timing of such a crusade. Durandil suspects that what lies there keeps the beast he encountered alive. It must be destroyed, but he does not know at what cost.

Now a recluse, Durandil has few friends. His brooding, sullen demeanor keeps many at bay. His closest ally is his daughter, Melrenwë. Though not hostile to Delathien, he dislikes the *Huntsman*'s strategy aiming to unite the elves at everyone else's cost. He also worries about the rivalry between Delathien and Ellorien as a potential source of conflict among elves, intervening to ensure neither prevails. Durandil and Faëriad once formed a couple, but his union with the Tolarin goddess ended soon after he encountered the beast. Not quite the same thereafter, he shunned her as a way to keep her from suspecting his predicament or somehow becoming affected by it. She has remained bitter. Meanwhile, their mortal followers accuse each other of their patron's infidelities. As for Sphiel, the winged deity seems far too odd for Durandil's personal taste.

His silver and soft scaly skin, celadon-hued eyes, and mother-of-pearl hair speak plainly of his origins. He owns a great shrine in Mythuín, not far from Delathien's, as a reminder that his followers also dwell there. Favored temple offerings include the heart of a beast from the abyss. It must be kept beating in a crystal vessel filled with an enchanted fluid until the time it is purified on Durandil's altar in his consecrated temple, and dispatched with a *Ritual of Sending*.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Exalted Affinity* with water elementals (see Table 10, score of 17).
Preferred animal/monster: Whales and water elementals.
Preferred weapon/spell: Trident (all spells related to water or water elementals).

Tanasar: Artifact and personal device of Durandil (see CAL1, page 86), this trident permanently turns into a water elemental any mortal creature coming into contact with it (no defense check). The trident, when struck against the ground, opens a gate into elemental water on the plane of Hydros. The gate remains open until the weapon is removed. *Tanasar* also has the ability to help its owner command aquatic creatures in battle, including Meruín elves, adding a +1 bonus to their attack rolls and morale checks. The trident always returns to its owner's hand after being thrown. When not in use, it can turn into an ornately carved coral rod.

Eilonna



Epithets: *Apothecary of the Gods, Divine Healer, Tooth Fairy*
Ranking: Demigoddess, Paragon of the Sherandol
Interests: Healers and alchemists
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–9 (friendly, altruistic, humble, merciful, considerate, generous, truthful, trusting, and tolerant), ✺ *Rational*–5 (analytical, patient, methodical, principled, and obedient), ✓ *Stern*–3 (ascetic, dreamy, self-conscious); somewhat of a know-it-all; her bedside manner could be improved
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Delathien (father and divine liege), Bëlianda (half-sister), Dagleeth (friend, Caldwen), and Durandil (secret patient)
Hated Foes: Servants and followers of Nabulos, Ghülean shamans
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Meryador and central Andolien)
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 8, 482 CE
Pronunciation: eh-LON-na

Mythology: There was a time when a great plague from the moon of the dwarves spread throughout Soltan's ephemeris. A great many elves suffered and perished. When the plague in Alorea was at its worst, some elves came to help. Among them was Eilonna, a Sherandol prioress serving Delathien. She is remembered as the one who built care-giving temples, organized caravans of healers traveling the moon to help save those who could be treated, and promoted urban sanitation. During this time of sorrow, the first Ghülean invasion struck, adding the devastation of war to the dwarven pestilence. While chaos prevailed, it was Eilonna who came to help the poor and the destitute, organizing food supplies so that not all of Alorea would sink into utter barbarity. So great was her contribution that she ascended to demigodhood under the auspices of her divine patron, Delathien, who thereafter adopted her as his own daughter.

With greater powers came greater endeavors. She searched far and wide under the Great Vault for scions of Ghüle's invaders, whom she rightfully considered sources of corruption and disease. From visions they received, those who honored her scoured the land to eliminate evil shamans and rid elven soil of their curse. As centuries went by, she encountered Nabulos, a divine bearer of diseases among the ancient Bongorese of Munaan. His pride in his work shocked and appalled her. She took it upon herself to address his senseless plagues, undo his work behind his back, and promote among his mortal followers the sanitization of their mosquito infested swamps.

"Look here, O Great Spirit of the Wilds. With all due respect, your breath is foul and your wake a perilous miasma for innocent mortals," she dared say. "Surely, you can do better than spew pestilence upon all, be they innocent friend or foe." The swarthy god raised an eyebrow. "It is whom I ascended to be. I can no more change these ways than you could slay a moribund patient." Eilonna feigned not to hear his answer. "Let me help you attain divine purity for the sake of all." Full of disdain, he shot back, "You are exceeding your welcome, healer. Learn your place." The demigoddess shrugged. "Come now, it would be the right thing to do, and you know it deep down. I can sense it." Nabulos pointed a wrathful finger at the young elven deity. "Well then, sense this. . ."

The patroness of elven health and purity soon discovered she'd become the bearer of a divine infection. In her search for a cure, she met Dagleeth of Munaan. Quite puzzled he became with the strange case of Eilonna, whose divine energy was being slowly nibbled away by rebellious demon worms. It wouldn't be much longer before she would be mortal again, and thus perish. Digging deep into his repository of obscure science and maggoty demonology, Dagleeth shed light upon the illness and, together, they concocted a cure. This formed a capital offense in the opinion of old Nabulos, who vowed to exact revenge against the two.

Description: Ever the virtuous maiden during her mortal years, Eilonna shunned all pleasures in life and devoted herself to the cult of her spiritual liege and to the glory of knowledge. She studied elven anatomy, herbal and magical medicine, dentistry, surgery, alchemy, the techniques of apothecaries, and all practical applications to healthy everyday life. She is the deity that parents refer to when telling their children to wash their hands, brush their teeth, and mask their mouths before coughing. She's also thought of as a tooth fairy, aside from standing as the giver of good health and the patroness of recovery. Eilonna favors all those whose mission in life is to heal and learn about health. She has also become the center point for lively arguments among immature bookworms and other sophomoric know-it-alls fascinated with the tales of her accomplishments in the *Lothenial* and their applications in elven society.

Among her greatest feats, Eilonna restored the gift of sight to the *Great Huntsman.* She now travels the worlds in disguise, often in company of her half-sister, Bëlianda. She seeks new remedies for ancient diseases, collects plants, and on occasion leads her followers to bring help to wounded heroes. She remains on the lookout for traces of Ghüle's descendants, hidden here and there in caves beneath Alorea or the Great Caldera. She indirectly brought up Durandil's disease with her friend, Dagleeth of Caldwen, without ever identifying her patient. They both share a love for knowledge. Though Dagleeth has grown fond of her, she fails to notice his attentions, distracted by her never-ending quests. Her sibling, picking up on the nature of their relationship, often offers an inspirational song, but Eilonna dismisses this as a pointless exercise. Dagleeth, equally challenged in the art of romance, opens his third eye even wider, unsure of how to proceed. Annoyed, Bëlianda shrugs. Melrenwë smiles politely. Arëatha shakes her head and strides away. Adamar rolls her eyes. Ashebai snickers, hardly repressing urges for snarky jabs. Meanwhile, Delathien remains utterly clueless of the entire matter. Farther away, Nabulos, now a half-elven deity of Bongorese origins, still detests her.

Eilonna retained her Sherandol appearance, and keeps her hair tied in a bun. As can be expected, her grand temple in Meryador includes healing halls and an insane asylum. Though magic may be used to cure mental diseases, some cannot be healed, especially when caused by arcane means. Desiccated remains of creatures notorious for causing diseases, mixed with a powerful incense, are favored offerings at her altar (mummies and lycanthropes also rate high on the list). The clergy is very grateful for donations of books or scrolls revealing heretofore unknown knowledge, especially medical.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Devout's Immunity* to diseases and poison (see Table 10, score of 3).
Preferred animal/monster: Owls, giant owls, and owl-headed monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: Staff carved to depict a coiling serpent on a rod (once a day, a wizard can alter uncast magic to generate a healing spell of comparable potency.)

Ellorien



Epithets: *Watcher of Sòldor, The Rightful King, Keeper of the Soul Thorns*
Ranking: Greater god of the Sòldor; elder peer
Interests: Death, the underworld, Sòldor hegemony
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–5 (wicked, insensitive, vengeful, mistrustful, jealous), ☗ *Rational*–4 (patient, stubborn, conventional, principled), ↟ *Stern*–4 (austere, brooding, formal, self-conscious)
Godly Cabals: *The Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Maëlrond (fellow Sòldor), Faëriad (Tolarin), Ashebai (Tolarin), Arëatha (potential mate)
Hated Foes: Servants and followers of *The Famished One*
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Tëodyl, northern Andolien and Fëoros)
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 27, 466 BCE
Pronunciation: eh-LOR-rien

Mythology: As the clash of war and its lingering sorrow prevailed under the light of the sun, peace and silence reigned in the deepest of sanctums. Curled up on the faintly glowing moss of his hermit's cave, Naghenor dreamed he stood on Mount Faëryn, Soltan's golden fire resplendent in his eyes. At the foot of the towering rock, shrouded in the shadows of a fey mist, lay nothing but devastation and the bloodied corpses of his kin. He beseeched the great sun to bring life back to the torn land. His voice echoed in the sky, but only silence followed. Crying and pulling at his hair, he implored at length. But the sun set in a crimson blaze, and war continued. At last, when night fell, moonless and gloomy, the prophet saw eyes in the dark, like two stars lost in the Great Vault. They twinkled when he blinked. They dimmed when he frowned. One vanished when he covered part of his face. Naghenor pondered his dream after awaking. Meditation revealed what needed to be done. After a life of devotion, the prophet kneeled one last time. His mortal flame forever dimmed when Ellorien ascended.

"Hail to thee, Great Lord of Sòldor," greeted Delathien. "Come and stand at my side. I bid you take your rightful place among honored peers." Ellorien stood his ground and crossed his arms, defiant. "I shall do no such thing, Lord of the Sherandol, for you have taken what is rightfully mine. I will return when all elves have chosen their champion. We shall see then who stands as the better god."

As he waited for his Tolarin peer to ascend, Ellorien left to wander the Ambrosian plane on his own. He fell into a trap set by a lanky, emaciated demoness with hairless gray skin, filthy claws, glistening black lips, and a long, pointy tongue darting back and forth. Her voice was raspy and hissing. "How unwise for a god to stray hither unaccompanied. You may live, for all I crave is a single bite of divine flesh willingly offered. Concede, and you will walk freely, if not whole. Refuse, and I shall destroy you." However hard he tried, Ellorien failed to break through the ethereal limbs holding him and thwarting his magic. He also loathed calling out to Delathien for help. Bitter and sullen, he nodded, gritting his teeth from the pain to come as his wrath welled within.

With ghoulish delectation, the demoness sank her snaggled fangs into godly skin, muscle, and sinew, and ripped away a mouthful of Ellorien's hallowed thigh. At once the ethereal bonds gave. Overcoming the paralyzing venom in his gaping wound, the *Watcher of Sòldor* seized the beast. Cold and clammy, it reeked of undeath. A mighty struggle followed until the aching god prevailed and tore off her lower jaw. Mad with pain, the beast howled and fled into the ethereal. Cries of horror and rage rose on Alorea, from the throats of ghouls and other dark beings yearning for revenge, as Ellorien's priors vowed to bring eternal war to the undead.

Description: Ellorien is the protector of the Sòldor elves and their grand promoter as the "noble race," the clan who wrested their people beyond the tyranny of gnomes. In the wake of the *Spell of Erasing,* the issue isn't discussed among gods, let alone mortals, but the feeling remains strong. It lies behind the ascent of the Tòrr-Gàrraidh on Alorea. Following his scrape with a god of ghouls, the *Watcher of Sòldor* has devoted himself to the study of all things undead. As a result of this, he became the protector of elven spirits, the traditional Alorean psychopomp, and accepted Delathien's offer to



rule the *Soul Thorns* in the Briarwoods. His fascination with death and the underworld led elves other than the Sòldor to see Ellorien with dread, and as a portent of ill omens.

Latent fear of death among long-lived elves is strong. Ellorien skims great power from these worries, and he does little to assuage them as they contribute to his status as a greater god. The bulk of his followers reside on Alorea, though he works toward expanding his cult in Alfdaín. One of his greatest achievements is a grand enchantment he cast upon the elves, gifting them with immunity to the poison of ghouls. He then called upon his followers to seek out these beasts and destroy them where they stand. Meanwhile, he constructed great gargoyles to guard the *Soul Thorns*.

Ellorien is Delathien's chief rival. He never truly accepted the *Great Huntsman*'s hegemony and he distrusts his peer's endeavor to bring all elves closer together. He ascended to the Briarwoods to compete for its control, though he does not seek open hostility with its ruler. Maëlrond, Faëriad, and Ashebai all favor the *Watcher of Sòldor*. Though he still bears a horrid scar from his encounter with the ghoul demoness, Ellorien keeps his distance from Eilonna. He feels his eternal pain gives him strength and determination to overcome adversity. It is also a matter of Sòldor pride. His mortal followers have adopted a scar to honor their dark god and show their own achievements. The *Adanorials* describe the *Code of the Scar* in detail, and their spiritual symbology. Ellorien has an interest in Arëatha as a possible mate as he wishes to procreate a loyal scion of his blood. He sees both as opportunities to increase his influence in the pantheon. Perhaps mistakenly, he believes that he will exert some measure of authority over her and their child.

Pale as bone and with wisps of translucent hair beneath his iron crown, haughty Ellorien rests eyes of deepest black upon those who dare to look back. His most notable temple in Alfdaín sits on the heights outside Tëodyl, in northern Fëoros. It had been a place dedicated to Teos, but the sun god's worshipers were put to flight after a solar eclipse. The once-golden shrine was recast in a darker metal as a salute to Naghenor's dream. Ellorien's favored offering includes ghouls and other undead brought before his altar in a consecrated temple. There, a high prior disintegrates their flesh during an involved death ritual. It is believed that their corrupted souls are forever imprisoned within the gargoyles guarding the *Soul Thorns,* denying their unholy god the opportunity to reclaim them as its servants.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Battle Blessing* vs. ghouls (see Table 10, score of 7).
Preferred animal/monster: Gargoyles, small animal constructs.
Preferred weapon/spell: Great mace (protection against undead).
Other Benefits: Followers of Ellorien can read each other's facial scars like books, getting an understanding of achievements and honors, like medals and stripes on a warrior's chest. Some are more prestigious than others and are considered symbols of social status.

Naghenor: The *Great Prophet* is thought of being both a part of Ellorien and a separate entity. Naghenor is the god's pre-ascendancy form. His body lies in a great mausoleum among the silver pillars of *Argentyl*. Two rib bones were left for mortal followers to find. They are considered holy relics. One remains on Alorea, the other lies in the temple in Tëodyl. Ellorien occasionally animates Naghenor's remains to act as the spiritual manifestation of the *Great Prophet.* It is an avenging *Incarnate* (see *Godly Trappings*, page 213) forming the third element of what is called the *Trinity of Sòldor*. It travels the mortal world under guise, seeking to put to rest Sòldor elves who fell prey to the undead, or to free those enslaved by another race. Without revealing its true nature, the Incarnate may join a band of adventurers for a time, if it suits its plans. If found out, it may seek to kill that party. Naghenor's Incarnate limps from a large and unhealable wound on its thigh.

Faëriad



Epithets: *The Feyweaver, The Dark One, Defender of Aroth*
Ranking: Greater goddess of the Tolarin; elder peer
Interests: Magic
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (however truthful and magnanimous with elves, she tends to be jealous and vain), 💀 *Practical* (though patient and calculating, she also is cunning and unruly), 🗡 *Stern*–3 (brooding, haughty, enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Mythriel (sponsored demigod), Ashebai (fellow Tolarin), Ellorien (Sòldor), Maëlrond (Sòldor)
Hated Foes: Followers of Arthalas (see *Gods of Phrydias)* and Derrow Flickerhand (see *Gods of Belledor)*
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Niergrún, southern Lathraël)
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 15, 388 BCE
Pronunciation: FAY-ree-ad, as in "myriad"

Mythology: It is said that ripples travel the world soul each time magic is called upon. Those who use it always sense its presence. They perceive faint, unintelligible whispers in the back of their minds. Wise ones believe it is the voice of the world soul, the echo of magic in the ether, and the song of life. The Tolarin believe this in their hearts. With each spell, each enchantment small or great, a fraction of the universe flows for a subtle instant through a wizard's mind. For this reason, one's very first spell remains an unforgettable experience, one that speaks to an apprentice's deepest feelings. Magic is a living thing, with a personality and a purpose that will influence a mage's choice of careers. Do not disbelieve those who claim magic has a face, for it does, although veiled in shadows. This too the Tolarin know. Through meditation by the most exalted minds, the dimness receded, and Faëriad revealed herself. Thus did the last of the elder peers ascend.

Ellorien was first to greet her, and the two took their places among their equals. At Delathien's behest, *The Five* worked together and built the Briarwoods. When they were done, Faëriad prepared to leave the safety of the divine domain to study the universe. Ellorien and Durandil, who had both been smitten by the *Dark One,* offered to accompany her. They knew all too well the dangers lurking in Ambrosia, perils even gods would be wise to avoid. But Faëriad refused. She needed to work alone and prove herself in the eyes of her faithful.

As she pondered hidden links between the mortal world and the Ambrosian universe, a colossal being appeared before her, a mighty lion with a man's head and great wings. "Answer my riddle, godling, and you shall live," he thundered. Her pride and curiosity piqued, young Faëriad accepted. The challenge came as follows:

"Here today, gone the next,

"Ever I devour, my feast is hexed,

"For those asleep in my hand,

"A king's ransom I demand."

The goddess of magic pondered the question. The regal beast lowered its head, ready to swallow its coveted treat. But Faëriad knew the answer: "It is he who brings the newcomers," she said. "The Gate Keeper of the Great Vault."

In a huff, the great beast soared into the swirling mists of the Ambrosian immensity. A sigh of relief behind her surprised Faëriad. Durandil was there, hidden behind the leaves of a weeping willow. "I do beg your forgiveness," he said. "I feared for your safety and followed you, for I could not bear the thought of harm befalling you. On my knees I now offer my undying love." Faëriad came to him, seized the sea god's face in her slender hands, and kissed him.

Description: The Feyweaver is the quintessential goddess of elven spellcasting. She personifies magic in the minds of the Tolarin, and became widely accepted as the spiritual patron of wizards. Faëriad skims a great deal of power when mages cast magic or when they enchant items of wonder. It is the source of her status as a greater goddess, which balances out the relative few numbers of the Tolarin. She protects her mortal kin and those who honor her, as well as creatures of the twilight (see *Ashebai*, page 24, for the definitions of twilight and denizens of the shadows).

Faëriad studies the link between the world soul, magic, and life. She knows how to alter the natures of spirits inhabiting mortal beings, and thusly enhance their physical forms. It is written in the *Lothenial* that she summoned from the ground the colossal trees of Alorea, whose trunks are vast enough to house Sherandol cities, as well as the great coral mounds of the Meruín, gifts honored among the two tribes. She also stands at the origin of the Alorean elves' ability to commune with plants. As a weaver of magic, Faëriad favors web spinners. She recently adopted the Scions of Aroth, whose patron deity Aranith died during an ambush set by Arthalas, a jackal-headed god of hunters (see *Gods of Phrydias*, page 174). Sentient spiderfolk now honor the *Feyweaver*, whom they call Chelicea, as one of their own.

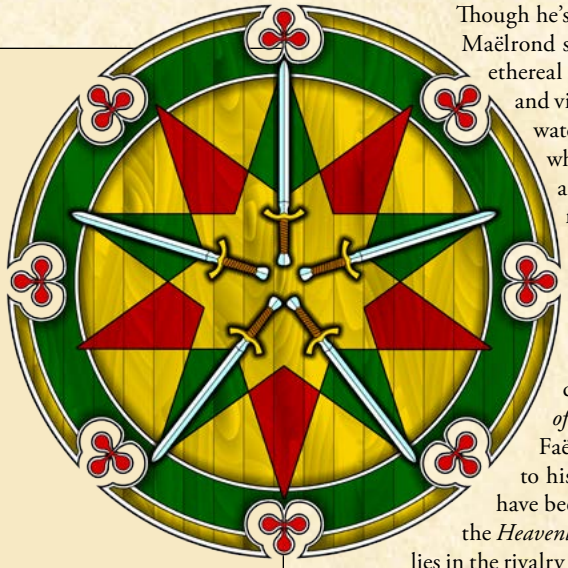
Faëriad is Mythriel's divine liege and an ally of Ashebai. She resents Durandil recently pulling away from her. Over time, her spurned love turned into bitterness and suspicion. The separation brought her closer to another brooding god, Ellorien, though she remains wary of making herself vulnerable once more to such whims. She sides with Ellorien in her distrust of Delathien's prophets, and resents Sherandol and Elëan domination of Alfdaín. Like many of her peers, the *Feyweaver's* weakness lies in her pride and jealousy, and she will seek vengeance against those who betray her trust. She despises Arthalas, whose followers have now become her sworn enemies, as well as those of Derrow Flickerhand, who seek to undo the *Spell of Erasing*.

To the uninitiated, Faëriad resembles Ashebai and many regal females of the Tolarin. Stars of the Great Vault flicker in her mane of midnight-blue waves when she moves. Her eyes feature no pupil and shine as if made entirely of gold. Her best known temple in Alfdaín lies at Niergrún, in southern Lathraël. It is a learning center for wizards and their apprentices. Favored offerings include scrolls bearing unidentified spells. If it is truly worthy, its knowledge may be imparted to the one who sacrifices it. As Chelicea, the goddess favors the hearts of those who hunt Scions of Aroth.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Path of the Beast*—a "spider's touch" causing paralysis (see Table 10, score of 11).
Preferred animal/monster: Spiders of all types.
Preferred weapon/spell: Staff (spider summoning).
Other Benefits: Faëriad's faithful receive a +1 bonus to personality checks with sentient spiders.



Maëlrond



Epithets: *Maëlrond of the Five Swords, Craftsman of the Elves*
Ranking: Minor god of the Sòldor
Interests: Blacksmiths and craftsmen
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though humble and merciful, he will sacrifice all for the sake of his craft), 💀 *Rational*–5 (cautious, methodical, conventional, principled, obedient), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (though austere and aloof, he also is driven and somewhat eccentric)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Ellorien (fellow Sòldor and previous liege), Adamar (lover), Faëriad (friend), Ashebai (friend)
Hated Foes: Blue dragons and those who associate with them
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Færlinga, northern Lathraël)
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 4, 307 BCE as a peer; Drachean 17, 384 BCE as a demigod
Pronunciation: MEL-rond

Mythology: As the first five ascended, five shards of godly magic formed deep within the bowels of Alorea, in a circle of great fiery pillars shooting from the bottom of a crystalline pool to the darkness of a majestic vault. Well after the Sòldor emerged from their stony abyss, one of their own came to this place. He was an epic hero from many battles against ancient dragons of Alorea, and his name was Maëlrond. He'd put all but one beast to flight. To deal with the last one, he sought the power of the gods. Ellorien whispered to the mighty warrior in his sleep a few words of wisdom that led him to the hallowed cavern.

There and for the next forty years, Maëlrond forged five wondrous blades from the shards that lay at the bottom of the pool. When he doused them one last time in the cold blessed waters, the fifth stayed afloat, its hilt above the surface, beckoning Maëlrond's grasp. It was the *Sword of the Sòldor,* and he kept it for himself with his master's blessing.

He returned to the surface and sought the last of his foes, an ancient blue well beyond the age of any mortal dragon. Chalybion coveted the whole of Alorea, a dominion outside ancient Draconia whence he could challenge his peers. In the forty years of Maëlrond's absence, the old blue had replaced his fallen minions, and more were to come. The demigod resumed his grim work. A century later, he faced his sworn enemy. Despite many wounds, the warrior prevailed and, with the *Sword of the Sòldor,* brought death at last to his divine foe. His own followed swiftly, for such was the nature of his mighty blade. This was the day Maëlrond ascended to the Briarwoods and forever stood among his peers.

Description: The *Lothenial* describes Maëlrond as the maker of mythical weapons and armor for the gods and their heroes. In truth, he is as much a warrior as a master crafter able to create wondrous artifacts and jewelry. Although he uses metals and gems, much of his craft relies on the finest of ironwood and other mysterious fibers from the Briarwoods. He is the spiritual patron of blacksmiths, armorers, swordsmiths, and jewelers.

He also favors warriors of Sòldor ancestry as well as those who hunt dragons, especially blue ones.

Though he's long departed the cavern of his ancient quest, Maëlrond still travels the Ambrosian dimension and the ethereal for stray blue dragons. He now uses their blood and vital force as components in his creations. He also watches for their return to Alorea. It is believed that when Chalybion passed, he uttered a prophecy heralding the destruction of all elves. This Maëlrond never forgot. His gaze now lingers on Draconia, yet he cannot see within. The schemes of that distant world's living gods remain veiled and ominous. There is no telling whether the old blue bid another take his place.

The *Craftsman's* greatest ally is Ellorien, his divine liege. Maëlrond remains loyal to the *Watcher of Sòldor.* He also entertains a fair relation with Faëriad, who, on occasion, lends her divine touch to his magical creations. The *Craftsman's* attentions have been diverted of late. His heart lies with Adamar, the *Heavenly Matchmaker.* He knows that what attracts her lies in the rivalry between Sherandol and Sòldor. She seeks nearly impossible loves, and he worries it will lead to a conflict of interest that could weaken his loyalty to Ellorien. He suspects others covet the enthralling goddess. Jealousy led him to craft a set of exquisite rings for Adamar and himself, sealing their mutual love with an unbreakable vow. These rings will lead one or the other to betray their elder peer if a divine conflict were to erupt. It isn't clear who would.

Pale as a Sòldor, his long white hair tied behind his head, Maëlrond bears the burns of a blacksmith on his face, arms, and hands. Hardened by his trade and his time as a warrior, the *Craftsman* is a muscular god. His greatest temple on Alfdaín stands at the city of Færlinga, in northern Lathraël. Five pillars of fire shoot up from surrounding towers, defeating the darkness of the night and the mists of the forest. Under his auspices, the city became a center for the arts as well as a place for merchants of war from distant horizons to sell their wares. A great fair takes place in Færlinga late in summer, where weapons of great workmanship and exquisite jewelry are sold. Favored offerings at his temple include magical items or the parts of a fallen blue dragon, such as bones, fangs, claws, scales, blood, eyes, and so on. A live one that could be sacrificed on the altar would be the greatest possible offering.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Innate Magic*—provides a temporary +2 magical bonus to a weapon or armor, or two additional spell slots at the referee's discretion. The favor lasts one encounter for every 10% of the beneficiary's Life Force rating, rounded up. Cumulated magical bonuses cannot exceed +5 or as advised in the chosen game system (see Table 10, score of 9).
Preferred animal/monster: Sentient clockwork creatures.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword (fire-based attacks).

The Five Elder Swords: One blade was forged for each of the elven tribes. The location of the cavern where they were created was lost to mortals long ago. The *Ascended Five,* counting Sphiel in this case as the leading Elëan god, know where their swords are. Some could be in the Briarwoods, on Alorea, in Alfdaín, or beyond Calidar's Ephemeris. One may reveal itself to a worthy epic hero of the appropriate tribe during a mighty quest. Its full power is unleashed only once, when the final object of a quest is at hand. If they prevail, wielders of the blades ascend to demigodhood, the elder sword vanishing thereafter. They can also disappear as a result of disgraceful behavior or a final failure. Regardless of their chosen career paths, those who

possess them can always wield them as warriors. For a time, elder swords act as personal devices enabling their owners to challenge denizens of the Ambrosian dimension. They also provide a 60% chance to repel mortal spells, or 30% against divine magic. The *Lothenial* reveals that five heroes armed with elder swords and fighting side by side could defeat and destroy even the greatest of gods.

Melrenwë

Epithets: *Swordmaiden of Meruín, The Twice-Born*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the Meruín
Interests: Romance, adventurers, bravery
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–7 (friendly, merciful, considerate, truthful, trusting, sentimental, magnanimous), ● *Practical* (principled and obedient, yet bold), ↯ *Lively*–4 (passionate, tenacious, feisty, indomitable, yet modest)
Godly Cabals: *The Hallowed Seven* (see page 220)
Allies: Durandil (father), Faëriad (mother), Adamar (friend), Delathien (honored ruler), Makapono-Truesight (friend, Meryath)
Hated Foes: Sea hags and evil fish people, their spirits, their divine patrons
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Seághal and southeastern Alfdaín)
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 21, 212 BCE as a peer; Seithean 22, 361 BCE as a demigoddess
Pronunciation: mel-REN-way



Mythology: There was a time when fascination and passion brought together the king of the seas and the queen of magic. From their union was born Melrenwë, a noble warrior soul equally at ease above and beneath the deeps. Her nature determined that she would favor her father's talents, earning her mother's disdainful coldness. A knightly demigoddess, she was tasked with the duties of herald to her father. As such, the *Swordmaiden of Meruín* was once dispatched to negotiate a truce with a goddess of evil fish people. Twisted and wicked, Ixthya offered a most curious bargain when Melrenwë came to her palace.

Ixthya ran a black tongue over her translucent fangs, weedy hair like bedraggled kelp doing little to disguise warty skin of bilious shades. She gauged the elven herald, her expression between suspicion and anticipation. "One must first earn trust to agree to a truce," lisped the divine hag. "How can I believe your words and the promises of the Briarwoods without peering deep into your heart?" Standing a few steps down from Ixthya's throne, Melrenwë crossed her arms. "I do not deceive, for it isn't in my nature. My reputation speaks for itself." The hag cackled. "Well then, how can you ever trust me? I lie. I cheat. I steal. I torture and slay for the pleasure of my people, and despoil the sanctums of their foes. Nay, proud elven maiden. There can be no truce lest we both see what lies yet unrevealed." Melrenwë wondered what the hag had in mind. "What then do you propose?"

"Share hearts with me, if you dare," said Ixthya. "For a time, you can bear mine while I bear yours so we may both see the truth. Only then will I agree to a truce." Ominous as it sounded, the idea rang strangely true to Melrenwë. She agreed to the swap, and the spell was uttered. It was then the *Swordmaiden of Meruín* realized what the hag had done, for she was in truth a heartless beast. Ixthya cackled again. "Slay me, and you will die. Carve out the poison seeping through your fine bosom if you can. Only I can forestall your demise. Tell your father you now serve me as the price for his truce."

A fey darkness spread within Melrenwë, endeavoring to bind her to the hag's will. But Ixthya had not foreseen what happened next. Rather than resign to such an ignominious fate, the *Hallowed Lady of Meruín* drove her sword into her own chest and collapsed. Durandil sensed the somber ripples across the world soul, portents of his daughter's demise. Having fallen in his service, she was at once granted ascension as a peer. Melrenwë's remains burst into flames, both those at the hag's feet and in her chest, fully engulfing Ixthya. Out of the towering blaze stepped the ascended goddess while it consumed the writhing,

howling hag. When naught was left of the wretch but her ashes, the wicked fish people fled their realm and were never heard of again.

Description: Though seen primarily as a Meruín deity, Melrenwë also is of Tolarin blood. Certain shadow elves honor her as their warrior goddess. The greater part of her following includes the sea elves of Alfdaín. She represents courage, martial prowess, individuality, and faith in oneself. Melrenwë favors knights, adventurers, and explorers, especially if they seek to excel in both swordsmanship and magic. The *Lady of Meruín* honors those who show style and daring in their deeds. She also is the patron of romance born from great feats of bravery and self-sacrifice.

The *Lothenial* tells of her many combat feats at the sides of Durandil and Delathien when trouble's afoot. She has been involved with her father's efforts to inspire his followers, and therefore hers, to cleanse the Bay of Eyes of monstrous denizens. Of mixed heritage herself, Melrenwë appreciates the *Huntsman*'s efforts to bring the tribes closer together. Her ancient exploits inspire her followers to be on the lookout for evil fish people. Some have found clues that they, or others like them, might dwell on the Great Caldera's outer coast, beneath Deepmorrow Bay. Sunken ruins dotting shallow reaches show recent alterations. Bands of adventurers have undertaken to search hidden hollows beneath the ruins in her name, and some haven't returned. That Melrenwë finds herself unable to see what lies there alludes to an ominous presence.

A good friend of Adamar, the *Lady of Meruín* shares with her a common interest in romance. Unlike the goddess of love, Melrenwë skims part of her power from the bravery and wit of adventurers and the romance between them. Her friendship leads her to indulge in secret shenanigans instigated by Adamar, until the truth emerges and her father gives her a discreet yet eloquent gaze of disapproval. Though she retains greater affinity for her father, Melrenwë also works to assuage her parents' brooding dispositions, wishing they would warm up to each other. Much more recently, Melrenwë has come to appreciate the demigod Makapono-Truesight, and his quest to free the spirit of his fallen liege, an epic hero of Meruín ancestry. The two entertain a secret but passionate affair sparked by the visit of a Talikai sage in Seághal circa 1418 CE. His research on the origins of Meríon the Great captured the imagination of her Meruín followers, leading them to imagine the two deities meeting.

Tall, regal, with hair of pale iridescent green and eyes of bright blue, the swordmaiden is often depicted with scale armor, a coral sword, and a nacre-incrusted shield. As a Tolarin deity, she is sometimes believed to have black skin and hair. When in battle, she rides a giant merlion. A great temple stands in her honor at Seághal in southern Andolien. A causeway leads to a partially submerged dome just outside the city port. The temple's sanctum lies beneath the surface. As a rite of passage, her priors are expected to travel the world in search of wisdom and experience. Many join adventurers, explorers, and merchants for this purpose before returning to their temples.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Life* (see Table 10, score of 13).
Preferred animal/monster: Sea lions (animal and monster) and merlions.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword (or water-related spells).

Elemental Merlion: Elemental planes feature creatures such as fyrlions, sandlions, aerlions, and merlions. They are roughly similar in form, if not in their natures. All such creatures feature the front end of a lion and the tail end of a coiling snake or fish. The ones discussed here are merlions, water elementals. Some are small enough for a human-sized rider. Others are only sized for deities. Merlions have been traditional mounts for epic heroes and mythical figures of Meruín culture. Magical creatures, they can only be harmed by magic or enchanted weapons. They can be summoned and controlled by mages, just like other elementals. A hero whose Life Force is twice that of a merlion can coax the creature to act as his mount, which requires a personality check. If the roll succeeds, the elemental remains until dismissed. During this time, it acts as a mount and fights for its rider (though, if badly wounded, it will vanish). Meruín elves who've once ridden a merlion can, once a day, summon another. These creatures do not venture on land more than 90' from shore. There are three sizes of mounts: young, mature, and giant.

Young: AR 38, LF 23, AT 2 watery claws + 1 watery bite, DR claws 1Lo + bite 1M, MV 180' (60') or 60' (20') on land, Int. average, PH ♥ * 💀 * 🗲 *, Size: a large draft horse.

Mature: AR 47, LF 34, AT as above, DR claws 2Lo + bite 2M, MV 210' (70') or 90' (30') on land, Int. average, PH ♥ * 💀 * 🗲 *, Size: an elephant.

Giant: AR 63, LF 56, AT as above + tail whip, DR claws 3Lo + bite 3M + tail 2M, MV 240' (80') or 120' (40') on land, Int. average, PH ♥ * 💀 * 🗲 *, Size: a large whale.

Mythriel

Epithets: *Prince of Thieves, Lord of the Night, Feyraven, Nightwalker*
Ranking: Demigod, Paragon of the Tolarin
Interests: Night, mysteries, thieves, assassins
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–9 (wicked, selfish, insensitive, vengeful, deceitful, unscrupulous, mistrustful, manipulative, spiteful), 💀 *Instinctive*–7 (impulsive, unpredictable, creative, curious, adventurous, cunning, unruly), 🗲 *Lively*–8 (sarcastic, boorish, arrogant, hedonistic, shameless, feisty, indomitable, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Faëriad (divine liege), Ashebai (fellow Tolarin and friend), and Ellorien (Sòldor)
Hated Foes: Paladins, dwarven knights, servants and followers of Djurohr Hammerlaw (see *Gods of Araldûr)*
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Laërath, southern Fëoros)
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 12, 1 CE
Pronunciation: MYTH-real

Mythology: Dark is the night in Ambrosia. Darker yet is the heart of Mythriel. There was a time when wizards and priors of all elven tribes competed for the secret of *seitha* and to unlock travel across the Great Vault. Ruthless and devious they were. Few hesitated to use the services of those who would rid them of a hated rival, whether blood kin or stranger. They were known as seekers. Mythriel stood among the most skillful, working for bounties to fetch his quarry, dead or alive. Justiciars used seekers to

bring criminals before the law. So did wizards, coveting the best for their darkest designs.

So skillful did Mythriel grow that no single tower's magic could keep him at bay. As the finest of Tolarin seekers, he manipulated shadows to penetrate the deepest sanctums, extorting as a payment a small piece of a wizard's spirit. As he slew those for whom he was sent, he also collected a sliver of their essence thanks to an artifact he'd stolen in his earlier years. Among mortals who told his tales, he was the greatest of thieves. Among a few who knew better, he was the most sinister of slayers.

All was fine until the impious heathen ventured into the ethereal in search of a fugitive mage. He encountered instead an old crone as keen as he was dark. She pointed a gnarled finger at him. "You will return that which you have stolen from the gods, Mythriel *Feyraven,* or you will die," she said. He laughed. *"You* will kill me, old one? You'll have to catch me first. The shadows are mine, and through the shadows I take my leave." But for once, he failed to vanish into the night. Instead, dark hands seized him, grasping ever more tightly as he vainly fought to escape. The crone cackled. "I *am* the shadows. Relinquish that which you took, and twice more I shall give. Serve me and no one else, and yours will be the glory of worthier foes. Defy me and face eternal oblivion. What say you, Mythriel *Nightwalker?"*

Description: *Lothenial* scriptures describe his encounter with Faëriad's avatar, which led the *Prince of Thieves* to give up his artifact and submit to the Tolarin goddess. Thus did he ascend as a demigod to the Briarwoods. Bounty hunter and remorseless slayer, he became the guardian of Faëriad's court and the keeper of her treasures. In addition to handling her dirty work, he earned a following of his own among the darker fringes of elven population. He skims power from mortals who steal or kill for the sake of killing, such as murderers, executioners, and psychopaths. Oddly, fearful elves pray to Mythriel to appease his greed and to keep thieves and assassins away. He became the protector of bounty hunters, mercenaries, spies, professional slayers, and those who work in the night.

Though he serves the *Feyweaver*, he still covets fine trophies and artifacts. While on errands for his divine liege, free-spirited Mythriel moonlights, keeping for himself whatever lies in his path that is worth keeping. Though he once served justiciars, the truth is that he despises them. He sees justice as a child engendered by laws enforced by the strong upon the weak. Whether they are benevolent or malevolent, he abhors self-righteous servants of laws unless they do his bidding. More than any others, he feels contempt for dwarves and their dour, arrogant demeanors, especially those who vow to follow a code of honor. Mythriel has had a fair share of scrapes with Kragdûras deities, instigating events designed to pour oil on the fire of conflict between elves and dwarves. Mythriel also delights in stealing wondrous items of divine workmanship from gods of Kragdûr, and then rubbing their faces in the fact. As a god of mysteries, he often spins fantastic rumors around a death or a theft, planting bizarre clues for the sake of challenging truth-seekers.

The *Prince of Thieves* struck a friendship with Ashebai. The two relish a rivalry with Adamar and Melrenwë, working to thwart or undo their plots. From Ashebai, he obtained *Shadowborn*, a sword that drains the spirits of the living when wounded at twilight. The blade is potent enough to be able to siphon a shard of divine Life Force from minor gods. Like his Tolarin friend, Mythriel adopted the cause of the Sòldor, and thus favors Ellorien and Maëlrond over Delathien and his allies. As a demigod of the night and a bringer of death, he enjoys a particular affinity with the *Keeper of the Soul Thorns*, and he occasionally does Ellorien's bidding. Faëriad does not necessarily approve and, occasionally, Ashebai veils her friend's misconduct. In this respect, Mythriel could spark a dispute between the three gods.

Though dark like a Tolarin, the demigod bears short white hair cut in a pattern of symbols. His eyes are entirely black. The faithful can find his main shrine beneath the streets of Laërath in western Lathraël. Though his cult is generally hidden, it has grown strongest in what is seen as Adamar's backyard. Frictions between the two cults have led to street fights in Laërath. Mythriel's supporters wear masks when involved in a riot. A powerful thieves' guild also exists in this city. Favored offerings are personal devices stolen from hated foes, or at the very least someone's treasured object of magic. The *Ritual of Sending* disintegrates the offering and provides Mythriel with its magical essence.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Death* (see Table 10, score of 5).
Preferred animal/monster: Magpies, ravens, and harpies.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword (or spells of darkness and deception).

Circlet of Talbyon: An assassin-necromancer from a sect of slayers in ancient Gandaria, Talbyon sacrificed many spirits to Ashgaddon in exchange for the ability to enchant this circlet. The artifact enabled its owner to receive a random *Divine Favor* after the ritual killing of a foe with a greater career achievement than his own. As a price for its power, the circlet demanded victims at an ever-increasing frequency. If none were felled, the owner suffered grievous pain and, eventually, death. The circlet had a wicked mind of its own, easily able to dominate lesser beings than Talbyon. The assassin-necromancer, though an epic villain, eventually died when he found himself trapped in the ethereal and unable to satisfy his artifact. Mythriel found it later and claimed it for himself, until Faëriad became annoyed. She felt *Divine Favors* ought to remain the purview of gods and no one else. Faëriad confiscated the circlet when Mythriel became a demigod in her service. Nicarean inquisitors and minions from the ancient Gandarian sect of slayers, among whom once stood Darbyses the Black (executed in 1236 CE by the Inquisition), still search for the artifact.

Sphiel

Epithets: *Warlord of Winds, Eternal Light*
Ranking: Minor god of the Elëan; elder peer
Interests: Sky, air, wind, sunlight
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–6 (friendly, merciful, truthful, trusting, tolerant, magnanimous), 💀 *Instinctive*–6 (impulsive, emotional, creative, curious, adventurous, cunning—though obedient to his ruler), 🗡 *Even-Tempered* (somewhat vain and narcissistic)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Delathien (ruler and fellow Elëan), Arëatha (daughter), Alana-Lifebringer (wife, Meryath), Thaëldar (friend, Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Creatures of the night (the undead in particular), and their divine patrons
Centers of Faith: Alorea, Alfdaín (Aërin , western Fëoros and western Lathraël), and Osriel (São Salvação area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 1, 414 BCE
Pronunciation: SPHEE-ehl

Mythology: Out of the cool and crisp gold of the early morning rises the *Great Light*. With it come the winds of fate and the hopes of a new day, and it is known as Sphiel. There was a time when the Elëan debated which was mightiest, the sun or the light. While the sun was resplendent during the day, it vanished at sunset and could never penetrate the deepest of caverns. Yet light could shine during the night in all places.

Thus did the Elëan come to honor light rather than fire. When those who foretold his coming first communed with the new god, they announced his ascendancy over the darkness of past times, and all the Elëan took to the air. They departed the old tribal lowlands and traveled to the heights of mountains, where they built fabled cities to honor the *Great Light.*

When Sphiel ascended to the stars, he met Delathien and Durandil. He saluted his eldest kin and the *Lord of the Sea,* offering to share with them a very fine mead. The three gods drank to their hearts' content, helping themselves from a wondrous decanter which they could never empty. Senses clouded by their elixir-induced euphoria, they decided to go on a hunt in the Ambrosian. The rumbling of an ethereal storm sounded, presaging a difficult hunt, but the three gods challenged each other to continue. Soon they found a chasm: from it rose a fey darkness. Delathien loosed an arrow. The projectile flew through the unholy dimness, and split a tree well behind it. Durandil cast *Tanasar,* but the mighty trident returned to the sea god's hand after rousing mere ripples in the dark. Giant claws surged as the storm worsened, and grasped the youngest of the gods. Sphiel vanished into a gaping maw that clapped shut with a roll of thunder. Undaunted, the young god shone like a thousand suns. Light blazed through the darkness, tearing it apart and shooting in all directions. The shining was so bright that Delathien was blinded and Durandil's skin blistered. In reaction, the sea god summoned a downpour so heavy it snuffed out Sphiel's glory.

Durandil never forgave Sphiel for the burns on his soft skin, though they healed on their own. And the god of light never absolved his peer for dousing his magnificence. Since then, the two have remained aloof. As for their elder, he remained blind until the coming of Eilonna, who restored his sight. He did not mind the challenge of a divine infirmity. The *Huntsman* went on to prove himself even more skillful as the one many still call the *Once Blind*. During that time, Sphiel also took it upon himself to stand as his ruler's most stalwart defender.



Description: Sphiel is the spiritual patron of all that dwells above the ground. Elëan elves are naturally attracted to wide open spaces and bright light. They delight in flying and reveling beneath the sun. They are at their best when soaring above the clouds, so long as they don't climb too high, where the air is too thin to breathe. Sphiel embodies those feelings. His cult teaches hard lessons on embracing life high in the sky. Followers of Sphiel dislike constricted places, such as dungeons, as well as the subaquatic environment. His followers distrust all other elves except the Sherandol with whom they have been traditionally allied.

Sphiel and his daughter, Arëatha, bring life to the forests and mountains of Alfdaín. Her clouds carry nurturing rains while her father's bluster pushes them forth. At times a warrior god, he also promotes elven artistry, especially architecture and sculpture. He protects air elementalists as well as those who live from, travel through, or dwell in the sky. He honors rightful warriors and those who aspire to reach for the heavens. A number of benevolent winged creatures which aren't humanoid or of elven ancestry have adopted Sphiel as their protector. Gregarious, Sphiel courted Alana-Lifebringer, a Talikai goddess of fertility. From their association came their daughter, brash and unpredictable Arëatha. All three are welcome guests in the Talikai and elven divine domains.

Delathien is Sphiel's primary ally. They share the same Elëan ancestry. Though the *Huntsman* never blamed him for his accidental blindness, Sphiel always felt responsible. As a result, he still believes he should protect him, which annoys Delathien's detractors. Over the past several centuries, the *Warlord of Winds* has become obsessed with Mythriel's and Ashebai's machinations. He detests them and bears marginally more sympathy for Faëriad. He also remains quite dubious about his daughter's connection with Ellorien and Kanemanu. In his view, a god of death and of the underworld is much less than a suitable match, and believes Ellorien goes along with the association solely to irritate him. He also finds the *Feathered One* perfectly ridiculous and without substance whatsoever. He would much rather she aimed her sentiments at Thaëldar, the mighty Eagle God of Phrydias, who shows no interest in the rambunctious elven goddess.

With wings and hair of purest light, Sphiel stands as the elves' equivalent to Soltan. The *Warlord of Winds* fights with a fabulous mace that disintegrates all but the most powerful beings, and he rides a massive air elemental appearing as a giant flying serpent. His great temple soars above the city of Aërin, the *Jewel of Fëoros*. Favored offerings include undead creatures intended for disintegration with a *Ritual of Sending* at one of his consecrated temples.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Protection* vs. undead (see Table 10, score of 6).
Preferred animal/monster: Eagles and air elementals.
Preferred weapon/spell: Mace (or spells related to light and detection).

Net of Living Light: This magical weapon is entrusted to paladins or priors when tasked with fighting the undead. If successfully cast, the net continually inflicts low damage (1Lo; see *Game Mechanics*, page 10) until the undead reaches *Death's Door*. It is equally potent against creatures with a physical body, like ghouls and zombies, and immaterial ones, like specters and ghosts. Odds of breaking through are 1% per entangled Life Force. For example, an LF20 undead has a 20% chance of destroying the net per attempt to break free. Each attempt results in additional (2M) damage to the undead. If more than one creature is entangled, only one can attempt to destroy the net each turn, but damage applies equally to all within, as the net draws ever tighter. Nets of living light come in two sizes. A small skein can hold one human-sized being, or three small ones. A great skein can hold one ogre-sized or up to three human-sized creatures; it requires at least two people to wield it. Trapped undead cannot cast spells, but they retain their innate magical abilities, such as a life-draining or paralyzing touch, or a banshee's deadly scream.

Clerical Devices

Though this section lies at the end of the chapter on elven gods, tools of clerical trade described here are available in some form or another to zealots of all creeds. Some are magical; most are simple tools provided for color. Using these devices appropriately and consistently adds to those role-playing details that help keep priors in good standing with their deities.

Altar, portable: Typically made of leather or canvas stretched on light wooden or bamboo supports, it is painted or embossed with the prior's symbol. It can be folded flat so as to form a rigid frame onto which an adventuring backpack can be strapped. An altar gives a prior a measure of credibility during ceremonies (+1 bonus to persuasion and ceremony skill checks). Cost: 10-100 silver coins. Weight: 2-3 pounds. Encumbrance: moderate.

Bell, silver: A small, ornate bell or miniature portable gong is used symbolically to help gain the attention of a deity's servants. It may be used during ceremonies, at the end of a prayer, or after casting a spell. A referee might allow a small chance that a spell performs better than a die roll indicates. Cost: 20-50 silver coins. Weight: ½ pound. Encumbrance: minimal.

Candle, ceremonial: Candles of various sizes, shapes, and colors are often used in ceremonies, while meditating, or during prayers. They symbolize divine light or clarity of mind. If blessed at the prior's temple, burning candles can be particularly beneficial when seeking answers to nagging questions (+1 bonus to a Wisdom check). Cost with candle holder: 5-50 silver coins (3-12 uses, depending on price). Weight: ½ pound or more. Encumbrance: minimal.

Chalice: The chalice may be an important feature for some creeds, especially if a beverage needs to be consumed or shared with the faithful. Carved from wood for the most humble zealot or made from gold studded with ornamental stones, a hallowed chalice can become the receptacle of one's true faith (+1 bonus to a Stamina check when drinking from the chalice). Cost: 1-1,000 silver coins. Weight: up to 4 pounds. Encumbrance: minimal to moderate.

Holy symbol: It is the very first item a prior should acquire, usually provided by the temple. It is required to be presented unequivocally when casting spells on behalf of the prior's divine patron or when attempting to repel undead and demons. Adventuring priors often embed or engrave their holy symbols in their favored weapons. Cost: 50-500 silver coins. Weight: 1-5 pounds. Encumbrance: minimal to moderate.

Holy water: This includes a flask of blessed liquid used during ceremonies, a symbol representing the physical manifestation of the spirit. In some creeds, a strong beverage may replace water. Depending on the chosen game system, holy water may provide combat benefits against certain monsters. Cost: 3-6 silver coins per dose (double that for breakable flasks intended as projectiles). Weight: ½ pound. Encumbrance: minimal.

Holy water sprinkler: Most favored weapons (staff, pole arm, sword, an arrow—as appropriate to the creed), or holy symbols, can be fitted with a small holy water dispenser. Typically, a successful strike releases a dose of enclosed fluid. The weapon's size determines the maximum number of doses the dispenser can contain (one on an arrow or crossbow quarrel, up to three on a pole arm). Because of the modifications, attacks with such weapons receive a –1 penalty to hit. Cost: 50-150 silver coins to fit the dispenser, plus the cost of holy water. Weight ¼ to ½ pound. Encumbrance: n/a.

Holy hand grenade: This magical orb contains residue of concentrated faith. One such device may be granted to a zealot by his/her temple, if a quest warrants it. When thrown at a hated foe of the creed (with much reverence to the divine patron), it produces a blast of spiritual power inflicting damage upon all foes within an area of effect. Cost: indeed priceless. Weight: 2-3 pounds. Encumbrance: moderate.

Mushrooms, hallucinogenic: Certain faiths may rely on mind-altering substances to achieve a more exalted state of divine communion. Effects are unpredictable and up to the referee. One common usage, as an example, results in a –1 penalty to hit during combat, but a +1 bonus to saving throws while under the influence. A dose lasts an hour. Cost: 30-60 silver coins for a small medicine pouch with 3 doses. Weight and encumbrance: negligible.

Relic, totemic: Business is fierce among temples for body parts belonging to holy persons or totemic creatures. These generally take the form of bone fragments, teeth, hair locks, mummified bits, or splinters of objects that might have been owned or touched by saintly figures. Many fakes exist. Targets of spells cast by zealots possessing such hallowed marvels incur a –1 penalty to their defense checks. Cost: only acquired through adventuring. Weight and encumbrance: determined by the size and shape of the relic's tabernacle.

Rosary: This necklace-like device features beads that are manually shifted while repeating prayers or mantras. When actively using a rosary, a hero reacts and moves at half speed, fights one handed, and cannot cast spells. However, the hero may reroll once a failed die roll during every combat action. Cost: 1-5 silver coins. Weight and encumbrance: negligible.

Signet of the Order: Is it a magical ring or any other intricately carved object used to mark a surface with the seal of the zealot's temple. The seal requires wax (on a parchment) or can be burned into wood, leather, or flesh. When producing the seal, a few words can be whispered, which will remain encoded within the mark. The seal can be recognized as genuine when touched by another signet of the same creed, and its hidden message revealed in this manner only. Signets are only granted to experienced and trusted zealots. Cost: reward only (worth 300 silver coins). Weight and encumbrance: negligible.

Succor Kit: Includes bandages, a flask of pure alcohol (or other strong spirit), tourniquet, splints, clamps, a surgeon's knife and pliers, thread and needle, healing oils, medicinal herbs, ointments, a bezoar stone, a vial of smelling salts, a small mirror, three silver coins (blessed, to be used for the deceased). Appropriate usage can revive or at least prevent a patient from perishing soon after falling unconscious. Cost: 150 silver coins (75 to replenish after each adventure). Weight: 3 pounds including leather carrier and buckled straps. Encumbrance: moderate.

Thurible, ceremonial: Available in many shapes, this object houses smoldering incense. One style includes a small metal sphere dotted with vents, and attached to a chain. In temples, thuribles can be quite large and swing from a ceiling. A fuming thurible bestows a zealot with a bonus to an exorcism (one attempt daily after an hour of meditation), or with a bonus to defense checks against mind-altering effects. Cost: 10-20 silver coins (plus incense; 5 silver coins per hour). Weight: ½ pound. Encumbrance: minimal.

Thurible, war: Similar in use to the ceremonial device, this thurible is part of a large melee weapon. Aside from helping resist mind-altering effects, a war thurible in the hands of zealot enables the weapon to hit creatures only vulnerable to magic, although it does not provide a combat bonus. Non-player characters and monsters able to wield one also receive a small bonus to their Morale Ratings. Cost to install: 100-500 silver coins depending on the weapon, plus the cost of incense (5 silver coins per combat encounter). Weight: ½ pound. Encumbrance: n/a.

Gods of Araldûr

Holmring	Interests
③ ***Khrâlia*** *The All-Mother-Mountain*	Earth, fertility, mountain
Arkhâna Emberfury[4]	Fire
Arnmîr Tinkerbones[4]	Healers, alchemists
Balir-the-Whispering	Death, underworld
Brâlkha Shadowfist	Shadows, secrets
Djurohr Hammerlaw	Justice, revenge, written words
Ghedrun Evercraft	Light, science
Khestrid Goldskald	Bards and oral tradition
Kjorûn Gatekeeper[3]	Peace, protectors
Klangrîm Thunderforge	Blacksmiths, craftsmen
④ ***Krîma Ironblaze***	War, conquerors
Kustrîm Stonebrand	Order, oaths
Thraldûr Silvertongue	Chaos, mischief, fate, and wealth

Though dwarves dwell in most realms of the Great Caldera, they prevail in Araldûr, Kragdûr's former mining colony. Subjects of the mountain kingdom naturally prefer their ancestors' spiritual patrons, putting their faiths in deities directly affiliated with the old clans. Entire families usually honor the same gods. Residents of outer realms, however, aren't too particular in this respect, adopting local cults or adapting dwarven beliefs to better fit the prevailing culture. Unlike elven races, dwarven clans *(Dârgilath, Bhalrûd, Hâradhir,* and the *Khôr-Halad)* are physically similar (complexion and hair color do not reflect clan ancestry; there are no such things as winged or aquatic dwarves native to Kragdûr), though their personalities and cultures do differ.

Gods of the dwarves reside in Holmring, their divine domain in the Ambrosian. They are fully aware of all the other pantheons connected with the realms of the Great Caldera. They still hope that the dwarves of Araldûr and Kragdûr will solve their differences someday. Given the bad feelings between the two realms, most do their best to serve the interests of their followers on both sides. Dwarves of Holmring generally shun gods of Alorea, Belledor, and Soltan, the Munaani sun god. The elven god Mythriel is universally reviled among dwarves both mortal and divine. They remain on best terms with Asgard. Toward all the others, the dwarves adopt a more circumspect attitude.

Mortal followers of Holmring possess ancient scriptures, the *Krone Skrinâd*. These holy writings are only engraved in stone out of respect to the gods. They line the walls, floors, and ceilings of temples, and are found on the vaults of massive ceremonial halls in subterranean cities, telling the stories of the gods. A record of prayers, psalms, and rituals is more conveniently kept on paper-thin gold foil rolled inside ornate metallic tubes fitting within a prior's vambrace, part of his or her sacred vestments. Small thumb wheels allow the foil to be scrolled beneath a magnifying crystal set in a three-inch-long rectangular dial. Called *Klime Skrinâd*, the bracers are small enough to hide beneath a sleeve. The side underneath the forearm typically features a slot in which a sacred symbol can be inserted, either an ornamental stone representing a particular spiritual patron, or a ceremonial knife whose pommel bears a consecrated signet. Divine symbols of Araldûr otherwise come in the form of metallic gorgets, either crescent shaped and with a chain (worn over armor), or an actual armor component fitting around the neck and upper chest (worn over clothing). Religious gorgets are often artfully gilded, engraved, embossed, or enameled, reflecting the status of their owners. Only priors and knights who've sworn loyalty and service to a god ever wear these gorgets.

Cults of Araldûr often influence the way the realm is administrated. Members of the clergy work as unpaid advisers to local nobility and the monarchy. This religious counsel reflects the prevailing faith of the land (see map of Araldûr). Khrâlia is therefore the leading faith at the court of King Rothbrîm II in Hamarfold. The various cults jealously defend their influences on the land, on its people, and on those who rule. Temples collect a tithe from the farm or city folk living where their counsel is official. Besides tithes, temples also own businesses and farmland generating services, goods, or gold. Each province or dominion regularly undergoes a census to determine which faith prevails locally. It is called the *Tarâd th'oth Kroldûl* (Century of the Moon), corresponding to 100 Kragdûras years (2,800 Calidaran days, or seven years and 280 days based on Calidar's common thirty-day calendar), a very confusing schedule for foreigners observing the process. The next such event is set for Nubeian 13, 1514. It is a period ripe with intrigue as supporters of the various cults may attempt to interfere with Araldûr's census efforts, or alter the results by fair means or foul. Oath-bound agents of the monarchy are responsible for overseeing this work and minimizing abuse.

Common Attributes

Adult followers of traditional dwarven gods possess basic knowledge of rocks and precious stones. A successful ability check (Wis) reveals a flaw in a stone structure, alluding to the presence of a secret passage or a trap that involves moving walls, floors, or ceilings. They can also tell how deep beneath the surface they stand. If not studying their surroundings, followers receive a penalty to these abilities (checked secretly by the game master). Other penalties are appropriate when sand or mud are involved. Priors gain a +1 bonus to this ability, as well as basic gem-appraisal skills (Int). Priors also favor weapons made of steel from a native dwarven forge. Non-dwarven followers gain these abilities only if raised among dwarves practicing these cults. Wherever common attributes suggested here duplicate or conflict with racial abilities established in the referee's chosen game system, use the latter.

Genesis

2000 BCE At the dawn of their kind, Kragdûras dwarves lived as troglodytes, stone age savages existing on the bounty of the underworld before emerging under Soltan's light. Their warlike clans competed for hunting lands and river access. Fights were as common between them as they were bloody and short. In their minds, the world beyond was populated by scores of faceless demons that ruled the elements of nature. Their shamans feared a Great Spirit common to all dwarven clans, whom they believed gave them life and snatched it back.

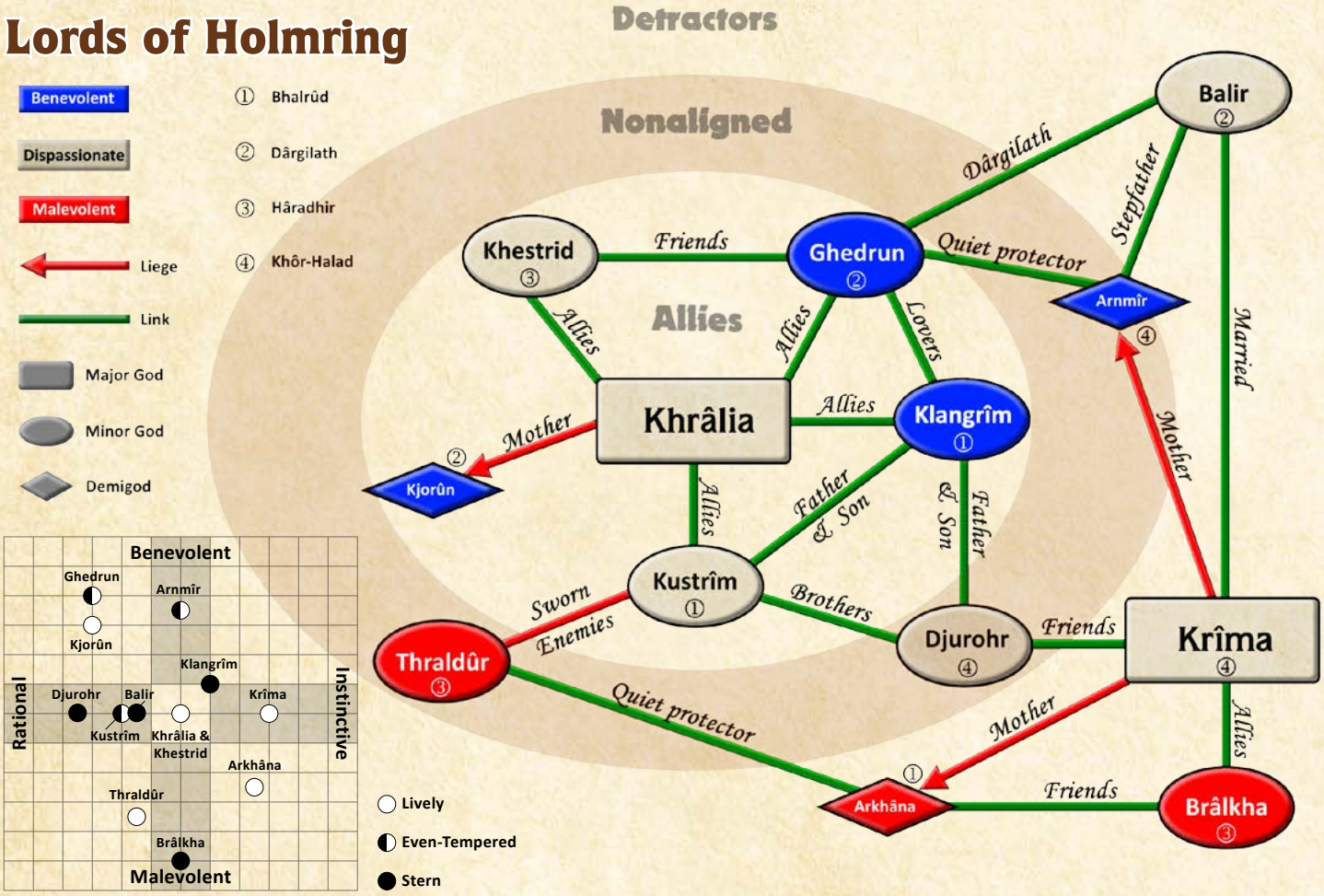
By then, Kragdûras gnomes had already mastered writing and knew the secret of bronze. Simple magic was already available to their scholars. Several organized realms already thrived on the mountainous moon. These were self-sufficient autarkies whose inhabitants had long ago shunned the outside world to honor gods in their own image. Known as autarchs, sages formed councils to rule the realms. To the dwarves, these lands were taboo, magical places protected with great walls and subterranean gates behind which reigned mystery.



1050 BCE For a long time, the gnomes enjoyed their private existence apart from the dwarves. But as the realms expanded, it became harder to acquire necessities, and resources lying beyond their borders grew more attractive. Unscrupulous merchants exchanged more than just beads and shiny baubles for goods. Despite strict laws concerning trade with the dwarves, gnomes resorted to bartering bronze objects and tools that could be made into weapons in exchange for what they no longer could obtain within the realms. They believed it a small matter since the gnomish autarkies had acquired the secret of iron centuries earlier.

850 BCE With their shiny, sharp bronze weapons, nearby clans took advantage of their stone-age

Lords of Holmring



neighbors and left a trail of blood as they began expanding, pillaging resources they could trade to the gnomes. Sensing the growing danger, autarchs cracked down on illegal commerce, but the damage was done. The clans outside the walls had become much more powerful and arrogant after they'd either massacred their neighbors or enslaved them. They began looking at the old realms differently. The dwarves demanded more precious metal, but the autarchs refused. The clans became bitter and jealous of the gnomes. While fear of the smaller folk's magic forbade dwarves from attacking the old realms, they began questioning how the metal was made.

750 BCE Increasingly wary, autarchs began thinking they should spread their faiths to the clans as a means to bring peace among them. Clans who'd benefitted from the earlier bronze trade became suspicious and refused, killing or driving gnomish missionaries away. Others, more distant from the old realms, accepted, but only in exchange for iron weapons. A few were conceded. The true strength of these clans grew from their ability to commune with their new spiritual patrons in ways they couldn't under the shamans' guidance. Their traditional ways were soon lost, the ancestral shamanism relegated to obscurity. All was quiet until these dwarves began thinking they could use the magic of their priors to gain revenge against the clans who'd persecuted them with bronze weapons.

700 BCE And revenge they took. A series of bloodbaths followed as the divinely-exalted dwarves all but exterminated their former rivals. When done, they turned on clans farther away, inflicting more mayhem upon their moon and within its bowels. In the face of such reckless violence, the gnomes retreated behind their walls and cut off all trade with the dwarves, imploring their gods to undo their latest unwise deed. The gods did not respond. With the dwarves now standing as their followers, gnomish deities weighed the pros and cons of the sudden influx of power. As a result of the growing dwarven influence, these gods also became more vengeful and belligerent. Rather than forsake their new followers, they directed their warlike ardor away from the old realms and toward other dwarves. Worse yet was the fact that the dwarves had finally forced the secret of iron from stray gnomes captured outside the walls of their mighty realms.

650 BCE The old shamans still possessed one last card to play. In the face of the new cults' power, an idea emerged that the Great Spirit should be mightier than the gods of the gnomes. The concept was recast in the image of the All-Mother-Mountain. Ancestral shamans finally abandoned the last of their traditions and became Khrâlia's priors. She was truly of dwarven heart and spirit, which captured the imagination of the clans. Her faith spread like wildfire among distressed dwarves. The violence fanned by the gnomish gods was followed by even more wars in the name of Khrâlia. With her blessing, discarded beliefs in ancient spirits

of nature were revived. This brought about the ascension of other dwarven gods to help her forestall the gnomish foe. Krîma Ironblaze rose as the queen of battlefields. Klangrîm Thunderforge, maker of weapons, came next. Balir-the-Whispering emerged to judge the dead and punish the unworthy. Thraldûr Silvertongue followed, the last of the elder gods, who instilled chaos and mischief among the ranks of Khrâlia's foes.

600 BCE In the course of the conflict, followers of Klangrîm Thunderforge mastered the secret of steel. With this, and as the dwarven gods worked together, mortals who'd adopted gnomish cults faced unavoidable doom. Hoping to be spared, many abandoned their former faiths and switched sides. Others were mercilessly butchered. A faction of unyielding and particularly malevolent dwarves resisted the new cults. Exasperated, the elder gods agreed to banish them to a poisoned world far away beyond the confines of Soltan's ephemeris. When the fighting ended, all that remained standing were the walls of the old gnomish realms protecting fabled cities within, and hundreds of thousands of bloodthirsty dwarves staring at them. A lull followed during which Khrâlia built Holmring, a great magical domain in the Ambrosian dimension, intended rival of the home of the gnomes' gods.

500 BCE Dwarven brutality resumed soon, this time against gnomish finesse and magic. It worked for a time. As the dwarves perfected their martial skills, the old realms collapsed one after the next until none were left. The gnomes of Kragdûr became an enslaved race in service to their overseers. A grim peace followed while the dwarves bickered over rebuilding the old realms. Some believed they should be forever razed. Others coveted the knowledge of the gnomes, wanting to use it to build their own great realms. Others considered gnomes with deep-rooted suspicion and jealousy, even though they had been subjected. The gnomes could do what dwarves could not: wield magic other than that bestowed by the gods. Because of this, the dwarves never relinquished their dominion over the smaller folk.

300 BCE The dwarves' combative nature eventually prevailed again. Squabbling over status and who rightfully owned what degenerated into new fights, just like during their stone age. Lines were drawn around faiths as new gods made appearances and challenged their elders. Followers became further divided among factions devoted to rival high priors and opportunistic warlords. The fires of dwarven conflict roared anew. More than a few minor gods came and went, swept into obscurity as their mortal followers' fortunes of war declined. Of thousands of primitive clans from the stone age, four remained that had destroyed or conquered all others.

150 BCE Bull-headed and short-tempered, the gods dug in their heels, each supporting their lot of mortals and their petty kingdoms—all but one. Khrâlia's struggled to bring some sanity to the mortals of Kragdûr. It is said that her own blood flowed in the veins of the One King, a mighty warrior who defeated all the others in her name, and at last united the whole dwarven moon. His name was Oth-Baradrîm, *The Magnificent,* and he impressed upon the minds of his subjects that Khrâlia was the greatest goddess of all. Peace lasted until the Dark Ages of 372 CE. It wasn't to return until 768 CE, when a new monarch, Khos I *Rohr thal'Rohru,* seized power and reinstated the old order.

Holmring

The domain of the dwarven gods in the Ambrosian is a giant mountain surrounded by an unending glacier. Perpetual night prevails outside, while periods of calm weather and snow storms succeed each other unpredictably. Populated with white furry beasts armed with claws and fangs of steel, gargantuan stone golems, and giant ice serpents rising from the depths of its glaciers, this deadly wilderness stirs when strangers find a way into Holmring.

A number of colossal gates lead inside, one for each of the five elder gods. They appear on the outside of the mountain or in the Ambrosian, wherever gods or guests wish to enter or exit. The great halls of Holmring are so large that moons, suns, and stars can be seen traveling their vaults. At times, haunting drafts bring silver mists or showers of scintillating specks that vanish on the floor. Holmring's younger deities reside at the courts of the elder gods, in private halls they shape as they see fit, where they keep their own servants.

Khrâlia's court, *Tokhrast Bryn,* lies at the center of the mountain, shining with constellations of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and fiery topazes. Divine servants come and go, some carrying about the crystalline bounty of the mountain, others enjoying great feasts and dances around a forever fire. Three other courts exist, surrounding the All-Mother-Mountain's sanctum. They are the magical realms of Krîma Ironblaze, Klangrîm Thunderforge, and Thraldûr Silvertongue.

One was carved from red and black stones, with surfaces polished or carved to honor Krîma's deeds of war. Her faithful reenact great victories, those of their mortal past and others of divine servants in Ambrosia and elsewhere. It is known as the *Hamardûl,* the Halls of Glory.

The next harbors gates and walls of steel and pillars of fire, with streams of lava flowing into *Tokhrast Klangan,* Klangrîm's Forever Forge. Tirelessly, the *Hammer of Kragdûr* toils on fabulous artifacts, his servants around him stoking the fires, working the bellows, and striking metal evermore.

Thraldûr's domain, *Tokhrast Jartol*, features mighty vaults of gold and silver adorned with the finest of lace-like works of art. Those spirits at his side compete in eternal games, stalking each other, attempting to foil enchanted guards and wards, and stealing wondrous treasures that their liege hides for them in his realm.

A fifth dominion lies in everlasting twilight, deep below. It is *Snyadrin,* Balir's eternal catacombs, where the spirits of the unworthy are imprisoned. Its hapless residents are made to starve and dig new galleries while old ones soon close behind them. At *Snyadrin's* center stands Balir's court, one with magnificent streets, mausoleums of breathtaking splendor, and majestic monuments of translucent alabaster honoring the memories of the worthy.

Lords of Holmring

There are two broad camps among these gods, one aligned with Khrâlia, the other with Krîma Ironblaze, her direct rival in the Holmring pantheon. Krîma secretly plots for a war between Araldûr and Kragdûr as a way to force their reunification, something that Khrâlia has long been suspecting. Due to the overpopulation on Kragdûr, Khrâlia's faith has ceased growing there and is on a par with Krîma's. On the other hand, her influence in peaceful Araldûr and elsewhere in the Great Caldera spreads steadily, which keeps her ahead. More than ever, the Kragdûras contemplate war as the way to address their problems, which favors Krîma. The war goddess sees a reunification between the old empire and its former colony as a way to supplant her rival.

Khrâlia

Epithets: *All-Mother-Mountain, Mountain Queen, Ruler of Holmring*
Ranking: Ruling goddess of the dwarves; eldest peer
Interests: Earth, mountains, fertility, dwarves of all clans
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (–), 💀 *Practical* (–), 🗲 *Lively*–5 (mirthful, passionate, outspoken, feisty, shameless)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Klangrîm Thunderforge, Khestrid Goldskald, Kustrîm Stonebrand, Ghedrun Evercraft, and the demigod Kjorûn Gatekeeper (her son)
Hated Foes: Evil dragons, their scions, and their followers
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (central and western Araldûr), Nordheim, and among the Wayfarers of the Fringe; generally strong among dwarves outside Araldûr and in Osriel (Puerto Valiente area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 5, 650 BCE
Pronunciation: KRA-liah



Mythology: There was a time when the faint voices of shamans echoed through the fey dimness of the world soul. At first, there was a mere ripple at the surface of the great lake of magic. As more voices rose, the call became more insistent. In the past, rituals of the clans had appealed for a hunt's good fortune, or for healing stricken folk. Never had a call been so imperious and so uniform, as all the shamans requested the same thing. "Arise, Great Spirit. Stand before Your humble servants so they may gaze upon Your eyes and hear Your voice. Mighty Queen of All Mountains, stand and claim Your realm!"

The calls, repeated a thousand times by a thousand shamans for a thousand days, reached deep beneath the surface of the great lake of magic. Tendrils of hallowed hope stretched into the arcane abyss, stirring eddies of power never before awakened. A tendril recoiled when a seed was sensed. It glowed, and it grew, and it rose until it broke the surface like a hazy morning sun. The shamans' clamor hailed the new dawn. The halo of primal magic split and formed two eyes. Veins of throbbing gold spread from them and outlined the shape of a head and a body hovering above the arcane lake. Divine flesh filled the gaps, adding bone and traits of life. The new consciousness took notice of the shamans and their summons. "Hear me now, my loyal servants. Go forth through the mountains of Kragdûr, its valleys, and its caves. Bring word of my coming to those who despair. Stop only when your bodies grow bereft of vigor. Fear not your deaths, for you will stand forever at the side of Khrâlia."

The shamans cast off their ancient trappings and took on the roles of priors, harbingers of a new cult. A thousand of them traveled the moon and its depths, and after them so did their scions, and their scions' scions. As she ascended to the firmament, Khrâlia shed part of her magic and bestowed it upon her servants. Soon, a multitude of voices reached her, fearful yet filled with hope. As time passed, her oldest servants joined their goddess and helped listen to the prayers of the faithful fighting in her name. They also fetched the spirits of the valiant ones fallen in battle to stand in defense of the All-Mother.

With numbers of her celestial cohorts swelling, Khrâlia led her faithful to a hidden chasm in the Ambrosian. "Here will be the first gate to the Hallowed Domain, and Holmring shall be its name. And there shall be four more of my peers, each with a regal gate befitting their status. Children of Stone and Mountain, send news of my words to the faithful. Let them herald the birth of new gods."

Description: As the first native dwarven deity, Khrâlia isn't predominantly from any dwarven clan. Before Baradrîm the Magnificent, the gods had

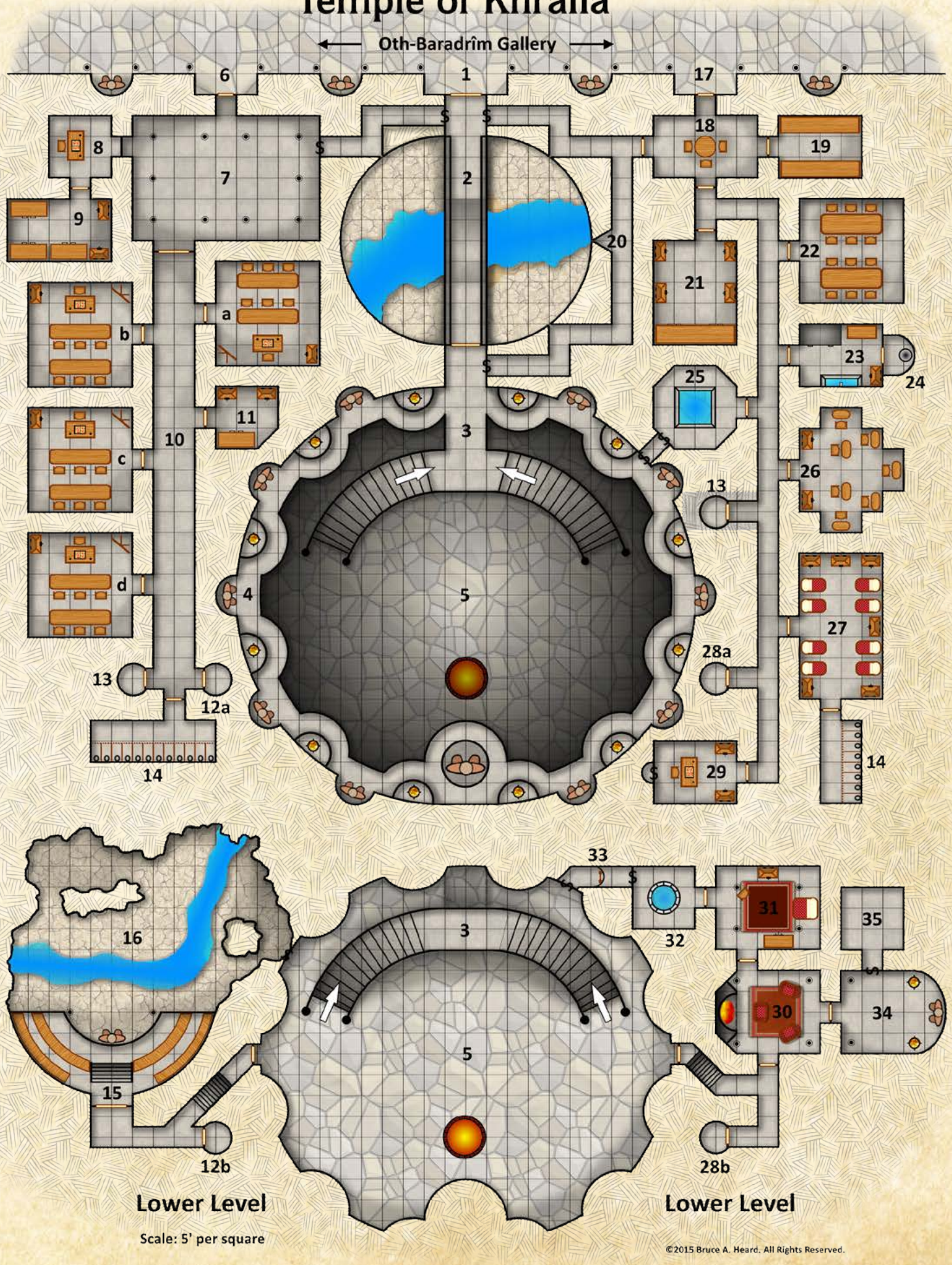
Temple of Khrâlia—Map Key

Temple Section
1. Temple's public entrance
2. Chasm, river, and bridge
3. Sanctum access
4. Gallery of circumambulation
5. Lower sanctum

College Section
6. College entrance
7. Entry hall
8. Registrar's office
9. Archives
10. Main hallway
10a-10d. Classrooms
11. Storage
12a. East elevator, street level
12b. East elevator, lower level
13. Broom closet
14. Latrines
15. Amphitheater
16. Earth elementals observation area

Priors' Section
17. Service entrance
18. Guardroom
19. Cloakroom
20. Hidden crossbowmen gallery, with arrow slits
21. Storage
22. Acolytes' refectory
23. Kitchen
24. Refuse pit
25. Acolytes' washroom
26. Scriptorium
27. Acolytes' Dormitory
28a. West elevator: street level
27b. West elevator: lower level
29. High prioress's office
30. High prioress's lounge
31. High prioress's bedchamber
32. High prioress's washroom
33. Hidden access with ladder
34. Private chapel
35. Temple's treasury

Temple of Khrâlia



Scale: 5' per square

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become self-centered, backing certain tribes at the expense of others. Khrâlia added a drop of her blood to Baradrîm's before his birth, which helped him become an epic hero. He survived as a servant of the All-Mother, and is now a powerful hierarch at her court in *Tokhrast Bryn*. Baradrîm fostered the change in dwarves' minds that their gods need not be exclusive to any clan. By the time he founded the Kragdûras Empire and sat upon the *Jor Bjulbar*, the Throne of Steel, only four main tribes survived, the ones known today in Araldûr. Khrâlia became the most-commonly honored deity among dwarves, regardless of gender or profession. She represents the safety of the mountain and the earthen womb from which dwarves believe they first sprang. Khrâlia favors matriarchs with extensive families, those who build great cities beneath the earth, and explorers reaching for ever-greater depths.

Though her faithful only admit this in private, she also represents health, the celebrated dwarven stamina, and sexual prowess. Despite her origins, Khrâlia isn't a warlike goddess. She is far more interested in increasing her followers' population and, in so doing, leading dwarvenfolk to spread across the Great Vault to Calidar and beyond. In her view, fecundity will achieve peacefully what wars cannot. Her avatar and a retinue of divine servants often travel Soltan's ephemeris in search of suitable places for dwarven settlements, especially areas offering rich mineral deposits. Draconia's resources caught her attention, which led her to tangle with some of their more powerful denizens, including Sayble herself (for more on Sayble, see CAL1 pg. 65). In the wake of a brutal disagreement sending both sides to tend to their wounds, the All-Mother now cautions her faithful about the evils of Draconia.

Her closest allies are Klangrîm Thunderforge, Khestrid Goldskald, and Djurohr Hammerlaw. She remains somewhat uncomfortable with Ghedrun Evercraft's mechanical origins, though they are allies. She has a son, the demigod Kjorûn Gatekeeper, who serves her faithfully. In her many journeys, Khrâlia encountered Kjosgor Stonecrown, a quasi-divine ruler of earth elementals. He challenged her when she strayed into his kingdom. Khrâlia defeated him soundly, and the ruler offered one of his heroes to serve her. True to her philosophy, she accepted, but only if the hero was of his spirit and hers. Thus was born Kjorûn. But all isn't so peaceful in Holmring. Krîma Ironblaze remains jealous of Khrâlia's rule. She embodies the quarrelsome nature of dwarves and naturally seeks to resolve all through war. To her, Khrâlia's accommodating ways represent weakness.

Stocky and muscular, the All-Mother seems made of dark gray stone, with sapphires for eyes and a mane of frost. Dressed in clothing of alabaster and obsidian, she adorns the icy braids growing from her head and cheeks with small blue topazes. The greatest shrine in Araldûr is hers. Standing in the lower levels of the capital city Hamarfold, it also houses a college of mineralogy and lore of elemental matter. Favored temple offerings include the bones or the teeth of those who served the rulers of Draconia, especially if they matched or exceeded the faithful's own Life Forces before they were felled. A *Ritual of Sending* transports offerings to Holmring.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Personal Device* in the form of a war hammer (see Table 10, score of 12).
Preferred animal/monster: Earth elementals and related beings.
Preferred weapon/spell: War hammer (or spells related to earth elementals).

Drûmkahk: Otherwise known as *Earth Slayer,* this giant war hammer is Khrâlia's personal device. It appears in her hands when she summons it. Its steel shaft and head are made of a metal similar to Araldium, adorned with decorative carvings and dwarven runes. It is said to provoke earthquakes when it strikes the ground. A mere mortal cannot lift such a weapon, let alone wield it. Living beings struck by Drûmkahk must succeed a defense check or be turned to stone. Any mortal-built structure collapses within a 50' radius from the point of impact. Earth elementals reduced to less than half their Life Force as a result of being struck by this weapon are subdued and brought under the owner's control. The weapon's damage, not including any bonuses from the divine owner wielding it, is rated as a 10Hi. A critical hit scored against another divine being will stun the victim as well as all mortal priors communing with the victim at the time.

Arkhâna Emberfury



Epithets: *Firestorm, Cloudbane, Forge Soul*
Ranking: Demigoddess, Paragon of the Bhalrûd
Interests: Fire, fire giants, strife and quarrels
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–5 (wicked, selfish, insensitive, vengeful, spiteful), 💀 *Instinctive*–5 (impulsive, emotional, unpredictable, cunning, unruly), 🗲 *Lively*–8 (sarcastic, boorish, arrogant, passionate, outspoken, shameless, feisty, indomitable), all with a fiery temper
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Krîma Ironblaze (mother), Brâlkha Shadowfist (friend), and Thraldûr Silvertongue (secret protector)
Hated Foes: Cloud giants and their divine patrons
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (northern Araldûr)
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 4, 114 BCE
Pronunciation: ar-KAH-na

Mythology: Unforgiving is the goddess of war. In her eternal search for challenges in the Ambrosian, Krîma Ironblaze defied a god of fire giants, the formidable Arkhroth Bloodboil. After felling his companions, she subdued her mighty foe by brute force and martial means, until he could only submit to her. "Krîma *Thayn of Hûrkhana,* you have bested me and my companions. I hail your might. Now respect my dignity: slay me at once or set me free, for I shall never serve you." The goddess of war placed a foot on his chest and her axe under his fiery chin. "If you'll not serve me, then the spawn of your flesh will." She callously reached deep into his blazing chest, pulled out a throbbing ember, seed of his divine spirit, and pushed it against her own chest until it sank out of sight. "Thus shall you live on, Arkhroth *Fallen-King,* and forever remain in my service." After these words, she raised her blade again and beheaded the giant.

From this brutal union rose Arkhâna, forcefully-taken spawn of Arkhroth and blood scion of Krîma. The tale was engraved in the *Krone Skrinâd*, and the demigoddess ascended as the patroness of fire. For a time, she dwelled among mortals to hone her skills and prove her worth. In other most celebrated feats, she earned the faith of King Khos I when he ordered ancient forges to be relit. After centuries of chaos following Kragdûr's dark ages, horrid monsters had taken over the hallowed caves, and Arkhâna led her champions to defeat them. Her fury alone was enough to bring the ancient forges back to life. She thereby earned the faith of many a Bhalrûd dwarf, despite her impulsive temperament and fits of rage that have caused countless champions to die at her side.

Description: As ill-tempered, contentious, and arrogant as her father, Arkhâna is quick to anger, sparking a firestorm of rage that can be as intense

as it is short-lived. The demigoddess is fascinated with all that relates to fire and, for that matter, fire giants. Despite her mother's words of caution, Arkhâna sought out her Ambrosian forebears and attempted to impose her dominion upon them, rooting her perceived authority in her spiritual origins. Most giants rejected her pretention, first among them the heir to Arkhroth Bloodboil, his son Hjarni Flametongue. A few detractors of the new king, however, see the demigoddess as a pawn in their schemes. Arkhâna favors warriors who fight in her name, and all those who work with fire or dwell in fiery places. Among her most loyal supporters are the Bhalrûd.

In her bid to sway the fire giants, the demigoddess challenged their rivals, the cloud giants of Ambrosia. She sees them as scions of the water element. The fact that her half-brother, whom she loathes, is the offspring of a fallen cloud giant also gives her the smoldering pleasure of vexing him. Arkhâna often takes her favored spirit servants with her when she seeks battle. She earns her mother's pride as a worthy warrior in her own right. She thirsts for blood that could never douse the flames consuming her inner self. When in Holmring, she hatches endless plots with her friend Brâlkha Shadowfist. Their favored victims are Ghedrun Evercraft, Khestrid Goldskald, and Kjorûn Gatekeeper. Though they share common traits, Klangrîm Thunderforge and Arkhâna remain suspicious of one another. That he is an elder peer and the chief deity among the Bhalrûd does much to keep her out of his path.

Thraldûr appreciates the trouble Arkhâna causes wherever she goes, providing a constant source of chaos and entertainment. Though he does not always condone her actions, he sometimes acts from behind the curtains to keep her from trouble that might prove beyond the means of even a demigoddess. However conceited she has proven, her prowess as a warrior and her callous behavior with giants make her mother proud. Krîma's only regret is that Arkhâna became favored of the Bhalrûd rather than the valorous Khôr-Halad. Her step-father, Balir-the-Whispering, remains far more circumspect when it comes to the rowdy demigoddess. He sees her as a key pawn in Krîma's desire to supplant her rival, Khrâlia. If Arkhâna dies while in service to her mother, she would have a good chance of rebirth as a peer of Holmring, thus altering the balance of power. It may also dampen her fiery disposition with a dose of needful divine wisdom and humility. Balir therefore secretly plots her downfall at the hands of her sworn enemies, the cloud giants.

Arkhâna owns dark brown skin, with eyes like embers and a wild mane of fiery-red hair much like that of a regal lion. She wears black plate armor and wields a flaming axe. Her largest shrine stands at Falsdam on Araldûr's northern coast. It features a great tower with a blazing brazier on top. Zealots and priors are taught to perform the *Bloodboil Ritual*, triggering a frantic rage lasting for one battle. When enraged, her followers fight with a +3 bonus to their attacks and the damage they inflict. Immune to mind-affecting magic, they temporarily gain half again as many life points as they started with. Subsequent battle damage is taken from these life points first. While enraged, followers may not retreat or cease to fight for any reason. When the effect ends, these followers have a 30% chance of dying, minus 5% for each *Divine Favor* they may have earned in the past (minimum odds of dying remain at 5%). If they perish, they depart to serve Arkhâna in Holmring. If they survive, they must rest for 6 hours before regaining the ability to fight. The *Bloodboil Ritual* can only be invoked once per adventure. Favored temple offerings are cloud giants, in particular their heads or their hearts.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Exalted Affinity* with all fire-related monsters or fire-breathing creatures (see Table 10, score of 17).
Preferred animal/monster: Fire-breathing creatures.
Preferred weapon/spell: Axe (or fire-based spells).

Arnmîr Tinkerbones

Epithets: *Cloud Kin, Protector of Battlefields, Undead Slayer*
Ranking: Demigod, Paragon of the Khôr-Halad
Interests: Healers and alchemists
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–7 (friendly, altruistic, humble, merciful, considerate, truthful, magnanimous), 💀 *Practical* (though principled and obedient, he also is curious and adventurous), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (–)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Krîma Ironblaze (mother), Balir-the-Whispering (stepfather), Ghedrun Evercraft (secret protector).
Hated Foes: Undead creatures and their demonic patrons
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (eastern Araldûr), and in Osriel (Gabrial Island, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 16, 123 CE
Pronunciation: ARN-meer

Mythology: Arngoth-the-White—such was the name of Krîma's victim, a god of cloud giants whom she'd slain like many before him. From Arngoth's union with the goddess of war forcibly imposed rose the youngest of Holmring's demigods. Searching his soul and his past, he departed soon after his ascension on a quest to find his father's remains. Over time, he snatched the skull and scattered bones from the gnarled hands of fiends who would deny him, and returned them to his peers in the Ambrosian clouds. "August lords of mountain and sky, here do I bring the remains of my father, and lay them at your feet so that he may receive a rightful burial. Here do I come in peace to humbly ask that I may honor him and pay my respects to his kin. I, Arnmîr, son of she who felled your master, am of your blood and seek no quarrel."

Suspicious and bitter at first, many of the giants finally relented, acceding to his wisdom. The demigod's gesture was enough for them to set aside on this occasion their hatred of dwarvenfolk and accept Arnmîr's offering. He worked with them to erect a great mausoleum in the clouds, following advice from his stepfather, Balir-the-Whispering, who spoke softly in his ear of tomb-building and proper rituals. When the task was done, the cloud giants praised the demigod's hard work, and Arnmîr departed, his conscience clear and his heart appeased.

During his journey among the world of the mortals, more than once did he encounter towns and villages whose people bemoaned the presence of a haunted battlefield in a mountain pass or in a mighty cavern housing crucial crossroads of nearby dominions. Forbidden cities and forsaken fortresses long bequeathed to bitter shadows abound in Kragdûr's deep. Arnmîr found his calling in ancient, angst-imbued, and accursed places. There, he defied unholy pawns of undead lords and retrieved myriads of bones left far too long without burial. The most horrid of beasts often guarded these places of sorrow, acting on behalf of dark powers that thrived on hate harvested from friends and foes who could not

depart. Arnmîr vowed to dispel the evils of old wars, and gather the bones of the dead, so their spirits could find restful peace at last. And always, the demigod's stepfather guided him to do his bidding.

Yet, the son of Krîma never forgot the living. In the wake of a battle, the most perceptive of dwarves might catch a glimpse of him in the dimness of twilight, tending those who could still be saved and blessing others soon to pass. Priors devoted to his quest endeavored to cleanse the land from the scars of conflict. Many among the Khôr-Halad honored this treatment of their wounded and their dead. If not undying faith, they offered respect and gratitude. More than one champion, sickened by the senseless waste of wars not won, donned the blue robe and crook of Arnmîr's followers.



Description: Youngest among the denizens of Holmring, Arnmîr is the son of Krîma Ironblaze and Arngoth-the-White, a god of cloud giants. Whether this story is true remains irrelevant as it is widely accepted by his mortal followers and dwarven theologians. Arnmîr's challenge lies in being a stalwart servant of his irascible mother, yet gifted with a benevolent nature. He must therefore act in ways that he sometimes finds abhorrent. Betraying his divine liege would lead to his banishment from Holmring and his demise. The demigod is most popular among the Khôr-Halad, and is generally regarded with goodwill by other clans. He favors not only healers, alchemists, apothecaries, and embalmers, but also the kind-hearted who devote themselves to helping others. Many of his champions are experienced undead hunters who prowl haunted sites, usually where great battles took place or within cursed mines, of which there are a great many such locations above and within Kragdûr. His priors dispense hallowed rites to the dead in the absence of Balir's servants, heal the wounded, and distribute blessings to those most deserving of Krîma's attention.

An erudite in osseous lore, Arnmîr owns the ability to recover scattered bones torn apart in battle, identify them, and bring them together for proper burial. Arnmîr is also believed to protect the spirits of the fallen during their journey to the netherworld or to Holmring, on his stepfather's behalf. When not in Holmring, the demigod hunts those who defy death itself, the undead dwelling in the Ambrosian, in the netherworld, or in the mortal world. Arnmîr has proven a worthy and determined warrior, one unafraid of horrors the most powerful undead can exact upon mortals and gods alike.

His mother is torn between what she sees as sentimental weaknesses in her son, and his celebrated status among her own Khôr-Halad. She dislikes Arnmîr's visits to the cloud giants when he seeks to honor his late father. On the other hand, she accepts that it is his right to do so, and thus ignores the matter. Her greatest challenge lies in keeping her son and her daughter, Arkhâna Emberfury, from fighting each other, which they have uncountable times. A proxy war between giants of the Ambrosian has also been brewing as a result of the rivalry between the two demigods. Balir-the-Whispering, god of death and husband of Krîma Ironblaze, suspects Arnmîr is bound to turn against his mother sooner or later. Though he does not show it, he treats his stepson as if he were his own divine flesh. If ever the demigod were to defy his mother, Balir would offer his liegedom to prevent Arnmîr's demise. Likewise, if the demigod perished in the service of his mother, and she failed to raise him as a peer, Balir would do so. In both cases, his marriage would end, but a precious servant such as Arnmîr should not be wasted. The young demigod also benefits from Ghedrun Evercraft's secret protection. She was charmed by his kind heart and helps him if she can.

Arnmîr Tinkerbones has fair skin and long brown hair caught at the nape of his neck. He wears dark blue leather with a matching cloak and broad-brimmed hat that masks much of his face. He fights with a silver mattock able to disintegrate on contact any undead creature or demon short of lordly status. The same weapon can otherwise be used to revive the recently dead and heal their mortal bodies. Those brought back to life in this manner are likely to adopt his faith (most NPCs will; players otherwise decide if their characters should). His main shrine stands in Klosfel on Araldûr's eastern coast. It houses an institute of dwarven alchemy focused on apothecary techniques and the preparation of healing compounds. Favored temple offerings include bones or ectoplasm from defeated undead, the more powerful the creatures, the better.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Life* (see Table 10, score of 13).
Preferred animal/monster: White cats and cat-like creatures with white pelage, scales, or feathers.
Preferred weapon/spell: Mattock, preferably silver plated (or healing spells).

Balir-the-Whispering

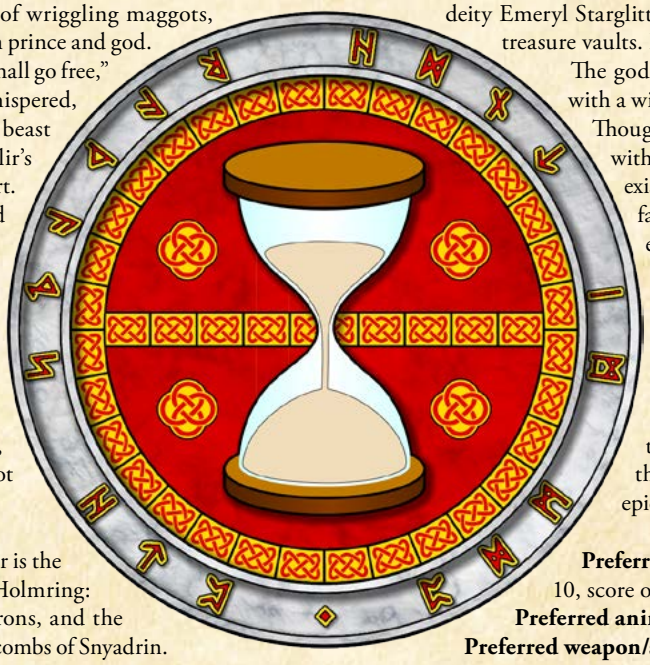
Epithets: *Keeper of the Vaults, Soul Master, Ogre Bane*
Ranking: Minor god of the Dârgilath; elder peer
Interests: God of death, the underworld, ancestors, and peaceful rest
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful, he can be vengeful and somewhat manipulative), 💀 *Rational*–3 (calculating, patient, principled), ↟ *Stern*–3 (brooding, formal, haughty)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Krîma Ironblaze (wife), Arnmîr Tinkerbones and Arkhâna Emberfury (stepson and stepdaughter)
Hated Foes: Ogres and followers of Thraldûr Silvertongue and Emeryl Starglitter (see *Gods of Belledor)*
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (southeastern Araldûr), and among the Wayfarers of the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 8, 615 BCE
Pronunciation: BAHL-eer

Mythology: A fearsome spirit existed in ancient times before the rise of the dwarven gods. It inhabited sacred burial grounds, haunting places of death and desolation. Those who transgressed the clans' taboos heard whispers of their ancestors beckoning them before the cold hand of death

clutched their hearts and led them to their final fates. The shamans knew this ancient spirit well and, at Khrâlia's behest, besought it to rise from the stony depths of the moon and take on a sentient form. It became known as Balir-the-Whispering.

When he ascended and met Khrâlia, he extended pale skinbound fingers to her. "Take my hand and gaze upon my soul," he whispered. The All-Mother seized his hand and peered into his eyes. There, she watched myriad spirits rise, fight, and relinquish their existence, all in mere instants as the dwarves of Kragdûr battled each other. Khrâlia released the god of death and considered his words before answering. "Balir *Soul-Master,* unveil mortals worthy of divine honor, and lead them safely to those they must serve. Take the unworthy to a place of your making so they may be punished. Release all others so they may find their own paths." Balir bowed to his elder and endeavored to follow his divine mission.

As he led worthy spirits away from the world of the living, a demon of ogres stepped in his way. Towering, misshapen, with a gaping maw filled with twisted fangs and its belly a mass of wriggling maggots, Aroogh stood somewhere between demon prince and god. "Relinquish your charge, dwarf, and you shall go free," it demanded. "Take me instead," Balir whispered, "so the meek may pass unharmed." The beast approached and plunged its claws in Balir's chest, intent on ripping out his beating heart. Instead, the demon's hand remained trapped while its own flesh turned as gray as ash and flaked away. While the ogrish beast fought in vain to break free, Balir wrapped bony hands around his foe's neck. "One does not defeat death so easily, demon," he rasped. As the beast collapsed into a pile of dust blowing away in the ethereal winds, the god of the underworld added, "Balir fetches the worthy, and he does not forsake them to the spawn of demons."



Description: Taciturn and aloof, Balir is the one who escorts the spirits of the dead to Holmring: the worthy will serve their spiritual patrons, and the unworthy will suffer in the unending catacombs of Snyadrin. Deprived of their former glory and wealth, pariahs of dwarven-folk are made to endlessly relive the worst of their crimes. Balir decides upon releasing to the netherworld spirits that have atoned for their evils. Though he protects the dead and favors heroes fallen on battlefields, Balir also personifies the fear of death among all dwarves, and indirectly skims a great amount of power as a result. He is one of the traditional gods of the Dârgilath (builders, engineers, architects, masons, stone carvers, etc.) because he is seen as the maker and guardian of tombs, mausoleums, and great vaults. He also safeguards treasures from thieves.

When not ruling over Snyadrin, Balir spends much of his time escorting the spirits of the dead to Holmring. Occasionally, his divine servants or his stepson may replace him. Ever since his encounter with Aroogh, Balir inherited the enmity of ogrish demons and of all those associated with them. The god of the dead instructs his mortal followers to search for these creatures in the prime universe, and to launch raids against them as a way to cull their numbers. Ogres live below ground in the Great Caldera, in the Fringe, and on Lao-Kwei. They are descendants of Ghüleans who once intruded upon Soltan's ephemeris well before times recorded in mortal history. Balir himself and the closest of his divine servants occasionally seek ogre demons dwelling in the outer planes or in the Ambrosian dimension.

Balir's primary ally is Krîma Ironblaze, his wife. Their relation is a most curious one, forged in the causality between war and death. It isn't in Balir's nature to give life to offspring, therefore he neither opposes nor condones Krîma's short-lived bonding with defeated foes. Instead, he adopts her progeny, Arnmîr Tinkerbones and Arkhâna Emberfury, magnanimously and without question. He often acts as the two youngsters' teacher, their warlike mother usually turning her back upon these duties. Balir is intrigued with Ghedrun Evercraft because she ascended as an enchanted machine rather than a living being or spirit. Like him, she also is a divinity favored of the Dârgilath. In his view, it is unfortunate but hardly avoidable that she chose to remain an ally of Klangrîm Thunderforge, her maker, and therefore a supporter of Khrâlia. Balir also bears a forgiving attitude toward the All-Mother's son, Kjorûn Gatekeeper, because he is also honored by the Dârgilath. The same cannot be said of Thraldûr Silvertongue and the gnomish deity Emeryl Starglitter, because they favor the plundering of treasure vaults. For this, Balir hates both.

The god of death looks like a desiccated dwarf, with a wispy mane of white hair and a long beard. Though his eyes are entirely black, those gazing within can see thousands of souls coming into existence, going through life, and meeting their fates in a mere instant. Any mortal less than epic status looking into his eyes or hearing his whispering voice dies on the spot (no defense check). Balir wears a dark gray robe and hood. He carries an enchanted hourglass named *Tokhdrîm*. A great temple stands in the Grimalsfel necropolis, at the *Hûrkadam*, the royal mausoleum beneath the mountain. Favored offerings include the heads of mortal ogres, or the hearts of epic status creatures associated with ogres.

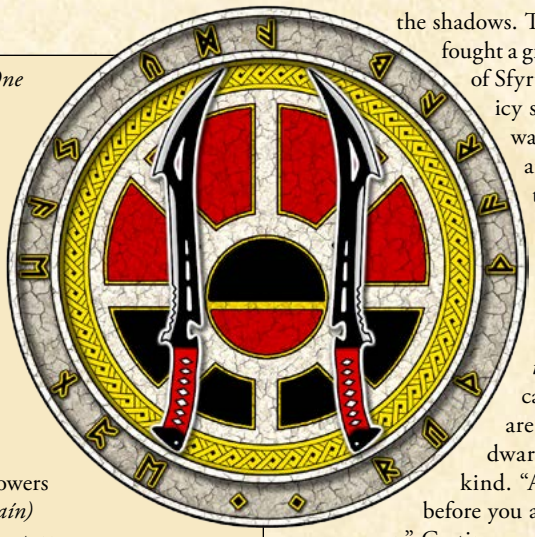
Preferred Divine Favor: *Transcendence* (see Table 10, score of 14).
Preferred animal/monster: Ravens.
Preferred weapon/spell: Crossbow (or necromantic spells).

Tokhdrîm: Balir always carries with him this enchanted hourglass. It is powerful enough to affect the world of the living, slowing time within a thousand leagues, or stopping it entirely within a hundred. Divine beings are immune from the effects of this artifact. It does not contain sand, but rather a depiction of spirits trapped in Snyadrin, flowing like minute granules through the hourglass's waist. With it, Balir can determine who among those imprisoned have sufficiently atoned for their evil deeds and should be released to the netherworld.

Spawn of Aroogh: Now serving Aroogh's successor, Qaraad Slimefang (see *Ghastly Appendix*, page 243), these mummy-like undead ogres have vowed revenge against Balir's faithful—AR 35, LF 17+2, MV 90' (30'), AT 1 bite or halberd, DR VH+3 or by weapon +3, DC as prior LF 17, MR 92, PH ♥–7 –7 –5, Size L; Str 100, Agt 44, Dex 44, Sta n/a, Int 50, Wis 72, Per n/a. *Special Abilities:* as prior LF 17; bite or touch cause rotting disease (no DC); requires Defensive Check vs. fear at first sight; harmed only by magical weapons, spells, and fire; immune to mind-altering magic.

Brâlkha Shadowfist

Epithets: *Mistress of the Nolnâgh, Swarthy One*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the Hâradhir
Interests: Shadows and secrets
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–10 (wicked, selfish, insensitive, vengeful, deceitful, unscrupulous, mistrustful, jealous, manipulative, spiteful), 🧠 *Practical* (though calculating and patient, she can also be emotional and cunning), 🗡 *Stern*–4 (ascetic, brooding, haughty, enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Krîma Ironblaze (ally) and Arkhâna Emberfury (friend)
Hated Foes: Frost giants, Tolarin elves, followers and servants of Ashebai (see *Gods of Alfdaín)*
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (southwestern Araldûr)—none among the Wayfarers
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 13, 218 BCE as a peer; Deirdea 19, 295 BCE as a demigoddess
Pronunciation: BRAHL-kah



Mythology: In the darkest of times and in the darkest of lands dwelled a slayer whose skin was as black as her heart. She sold her services to clans who paid her the most, hunted their foes, and often assured victory on the battlefield. Celebrated by some as an epic hero, she was feared by most as an archvillain. At the height of her notorious career, she ascended as a demigoddess and stood before Krîma Ironblaze.

"*Mistress of the Nolnâgh,* I value your skills with shadows," said the goddess of war, "and I praise your talent for finding your way where few others can. I will stand as your Divine Liege, *Swarthy One,* but know that treachery against me will not be forgiven, and should you be tempted, stand ready to be cast out and to face my wrath." Brâlkha bowed to the elder goddess. "Ever so faithfully shall I serve you, Krîma *Thayn of Hûrkhana,* though the manner in which I fulfill your wishes remains my choice. If in so doing I incur your heavenly ire, thus must it be."

Fate decided, however, that the demigoddess should fall in the service of her liege. She'd dwelled for a time in the Ambrosian, spying on frost giants prowling near Holmring's gates. Suspecting an unwanted presence as he prepared to assault the dwarven domain to avenge his sibling's death at the hands of Krîma, Sfyrtur, kin of Gralthur Icecrown, ordered his minions to search the shadows. The demigoddess was forced out and though she fought a great battle, the *Swarthy One* perished at the hands of Sfyrtur. He devoured her, leaving just her head on an icy shaft not far from Krîma's gate. The goddess of war later exacted a pitiless revenge upon her enemy, after which she enabled the *Mistress of the Nolnâgh* to ascend as a peer of Holmring.

Long after her ascent, no longer bound to a divine liege, Brâlkha's shadowy path in the Ambrosian led her to tangle with Ashebai of the Tolarin elves. "Brâlkha *Dirt-Monger,* dim are your past and your intentions," said the *Whisperer in the Shadows.* "You reek of dwarf and other things I cannot fathom. Away from my realm! The shadows are mine and they do not welcome usurpers." The dwarven goddess drew her blade and responded in kind. "Ashebai *Later-Born,* I owned the shadows well before you ascended. Take them from me if you dare, elven cur." Casting waves upon waves of shadowy monsters in colossal clashes, ambushing each other from the dimness of the Ambrosian twilight, spinning in and out of pools of darkness, neither could defeat the other for they were kin of the same element. Exhausted, the two withdrew at last, vowing revenge.

Description: Brâlkha is the bogeyman of dwarven deities. Few honor her openly. Those who pay tribute to her do so to ward her off, to obtain protection from their foes, or to wish ill upon enemies. The *Mistress of the Nolnâgh* (meaning the "night on the sides") skims much of her power from the consciousness of superstitious dwarves, doting upon their fears and evil aspirations. Adopted as their patron deity by assassins, spies, and those who desire to eliminate the weak and the sick, she is generally associated with the Hâradhir clan.



The fact is that neither mortals nor gods know her true origins. She was born from a stray shadow dwarf female who died shortly after labor. A Harâdhir family adopted the baby when they found her. Brâlkha's original people were the descendants of wicked dwarves whom the gods of Holmring had banished from Kragdûr (600 BCE). Unbeknownst to the gods, the appearance of the "cursed ones" changed over time. They became the Nol-Oshgûr, or Night Dwellers, who now live beneath the surface of Khodrûl, a poisoned world well outside the confines of Soltan's ephemeris. Long ago they sacrificed the remaining goodness in their hearts and earned their dark skin in exchange for the skill to manipulate shadows and magic. Wormholes connected to *shadow gates* enabled them to secretly visit other worlds in search of coveted resources. Some of them, such as Brâlkha's mortal mother, occasionally became trapped when their passageways shifted or collapsed. As a result, several clans now survive deep beneath the surface of Calidar and in the Fringe. Wayfarers have had

several scrapes with the swarthy ones during their history. They call them the *Skuggdvergar*. Shadow dwarven gods remain hidden and burn with eternal hatred for Holmring.

Brâlkha is unaware of her origins and of the shadow dwarves' existence. Despite her best efforts or anyone else's, her past remains hidden in a fell mist. She is in fact the offspring of Nâzhvar Twiborn, a Nol-Oshgûr god who impregnated the wayward mother, and then summoned her spirit to serve him. He awaits a time of his choosing to reveal to Brâlkha who she really is, expecting to sway her to his side. Until such time, Brâlkha remains Krîma's faithful ally and favored spy. She also befriended Arkhâna Emberfury, with whom she always schemes to annoy and embarrass Khrâlia's allies for the purpose of turning mortal followers away from them. Brâlkha remains aloof to the other gods, though she bears some sympathy for Thraldûr because they share similar philosophies and a Harâdhir connection.

Brâlkha features the jet-black skin of the shadow dwarves, with dark gray hair and pearly white eyes. Slimmer than typical Kragdûras deities, she wears dark red leather coveralls and fights with a short curved serrated sword. A hidden shrine built in her honor guards the entrance to a depleted mine near Dol-Barad. Favored temple offerings include mortal Tolarin or their spirits. Privileged followers of her cult (select adventurers and priors) may be entrusted with a device known as a *Gheolan Ring*. It is used to incarcerate captured spirits so they may be brought back to her shrine and sacrificed to the *Mistress of the Nolnâgh*.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Death* (see Table 10, score of 5).
Preferred animal/monster: Owls, giant owls, and owl-headed monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: Serrated sword (or mind-affecting spells).

Djurohr Hammerlaw

Epithets: *Judge of Holmring, Keeper of the Laws, Rune Master*
Ranking: Minor god of the Khôr-Halad
Interests: God of justice and revenge
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful, he tends to be insensitive, mistrustful, and vengeful by nature), 💀 *Rational*–7 (analytical, deliberate, cautious, stubborn, methodical, conventional, principled), 🗡 *Stern*–5 (austere, brooding, formal, haughty, dour); his philosophy is largely based on the cult of written law
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Krîma Ironblaze (leading deity of the Khôr-Halad), Ghedrun Evercraft (stepmother)
Hated Foes: The Nāgá people and servants of the *Holy Nigiste;* servants and followers of Mythriel (see *Gods of Alfdaín)*
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (southwestern Araldûr), and among the Wayfarers of the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 1, 399 BCE as a peer; Chelonea 23, 465 BCE as a demigod
Pronunciation: DEEW-ror

Mythology: Soon after the ascension of Kustrîm Stonebrand, mortals felt the need to write down ancient laws and traditions of Kragdûr. Not all dwarves were keen on taking solemn oaths that could lead to their deaths. They yearned for another way to address their many disputes. The desire that the Oath Master should have a brother who kept the laws was strong, and thus did priors of the All-Mother summon a new champion from the world soul. With the love and affection of his spiritual father and mother, Djurohr Hammerlaw took his rightful place among the denizens of Holmring, and Khrâlia tasked him with creating the *Barprovâd thal'Kragdûr,* the Great Legal Code of Kragdûr.

But all was not fine with this endeavor. Rivalry developed between the brothers. It wasn't long before the two accused each other of undermining their respective efforts. Fate caused their mother, Belbryn Sunblade, to perish during this time. Decades of grieving caused their jealousy to fester. Kustrîm's self-righteousness and his strong relation with Khrâlia only succeeded in alienating Djurohr. Revered among the Khôr-Halad, the younger god turned toward their leading patron, Krîma Ironblaze. The goddess of war swore that she would seek revenge for his mother's death, and he was grateful for her pledge despite his father's stern words of caution.

Along a deserted hall of Holmring came Brâlkha Shadowfist, swarthy minion of the war goddess. "Welcome, Djurohr Hammerlaw, friend of Krîma. I praise your work in Holmring. Long has *Tokhrast Bryn* lacked a voice of reason." Uncomfortable with the salutation's bold implication, the *Keeper of Laws* responded gingerly. "I greet you, *Mistress of the Nolnâgh.* What brings you to me?" Brâlkha laughed as she faded in and out of the hall's dimness. "I know what you seek in the *Hamardûl*. We all heard of your dispute with the *Oath Master*. You owe him naught but scorn and retribution for his arrogance." Shifting the weight of the heavy codex of laws tucked under his arm, Djurohr worried about the aim of the discussion. "My brother does what he feels is right. So do I." The *Lady of Shadows* reappeared next to him, and whispered in his ear. "There is a way to put him back in his place, Djurohr Son-of-Klangrîm. Change the law so that you may earn what is rightfully yours. Not even the All-Mother will question your judgement, for you *are* the law. Make the rulings you need and rid Holmring of those who challenge your divine might. It will be our secret."

The Dark One had used all the magical skills at her disposal to enthrall, misdirect, and influence her august peer. Djurohr's astute mind methodically churned through her words, weighing them against his articles of law. One by one, her dweomers failed before his statutes, decrees, regulations, and precedents. It dawned upon him what she expected. "It is my finding that the Law is the Law, and I do not change it to suit my needs or yours. I further caution you not to meddle in my affairs. *Mistress of the Nolnâgh*, I judge you guilty of promulgating seditious behavior. Hence justice is rendered." He suddenly brandished his massive tome of laws and slammed it hard upon Brâlkha's head as she reappeared from the surrounding dimness. In an explosion of thunder, she vanished from the hall. Since this encounter, Djurohr retained his most popular name: Hammerlaw.

Description: Holmring's Great Judge is the god of dwarven law as well as the defender of truth and rightful justice. He favors judges, bailiffs, and all those who are honor-bound to follow strict and detailed codes of conduct. Some are equivalents of human paladins, while others adopt a grittier take on the means to achieve their ends. Though more than half of his mortal followers are of Khôr-Halad origins, Djurohr remains popular with the Hâradhir, who appreciate his priors' talent at

putting in writing elaborate contracts that are the envy of merchants in Osriel and Phrydias. The Bhalrûd and Dârgilath generally prefer simpler and more radical oaths under the purview of Kustrîm's priors.

Djurohr spends much of his time overseeing a vast bureaucracy of spirit servants who monitor the myriad issues adjudicated by mortal priors. Priestly magistrates often pray for guidance, submitting their most perplexing cases to the "higher court." Servants sometimes enlighten clerical wisdom, but mainly they watch to make sure priors do not betray their spiritual patron's precepts. Djurohr is never involved directly, save for uses of the law affecting a vast number of mortals, or if some judgement is needed among gods or heroes of epic status. When absent from Holmring, Djurohr hunts outer-planar creatures seeking to prejudice that magical domain. This has led to a blood feud with spiritual patrons of the Nāgá, half-serpent people. As it were, Araldûras miners fell upon an important vein of Araldium which intersected a sacred tomb of the Nāgá. When their priors discovered the dwarven intrusion, they launched a holy war to regain control of the ancient mausoleum. Though the dwarves of the Bhalrûd clan retreated, those of the Khôr-Halad did not. They made a stand and were massacred. In turn, priors of Djurohr called for a war of reprisal. Concerned with the escalation, Djurohr sent a trusted hierarch as an emissary to the chief spiritual patron of the Nāgá. His mission was to negotiate an end to the conflict and an agreement on the extraction of Araldium. Instead, the *Holy Nigiste* devoured the hierarch's spirit. The god of laws never forgave her and now seeks revenge more than ever.

Djurohr's main supporter is the goddess of war. She uses her influence with him only as a ploy to drive a wedge between him and his brother, his father, and ultimately Khrâlia. Nonetheless, the Keeper of Laws remains generally neutral regarding his loyalty to the pantheon's ruler. Despite her stepson's rebellious stance, Ghedrun Evercraft still endeavors to steer him closer to his father and older brother whenever she can. Meanwhile, Klangrîm refuses to speak to his wayward son. Djurohr dislikes Kustrîm's arrogance, Khestrid Goldskald, who commonly circumvents his laws, and Thraldûr Silvertongue, who shamelessly defies them.

The Keeper of Laws sports tightly curled, platinum-colored hair and a trimmed beard. He wears a scarlet robe, tippet, and hood, with a white fur mantle, gold chain, black scarf and girdle, and buckled shoes. He or an honored servant always carries the original version of the *Barprovâd thal'Kragdûr,* and he may summon a tall mace, which he uses as a scepter of authority. The *Kustradam*, the illustrious academy of magistrates and university of dwarven law, lies in his main temple in the lower levels of Kragfold's citadel. A wing of the temple houses headquarters for the *Comrades of the Hammer* (see *Godly Trappings*, page 224). Favored offerings include fangs from the priors of the Nāgá, be they mortal or spiritual servants of the *Holy Nigiste*.

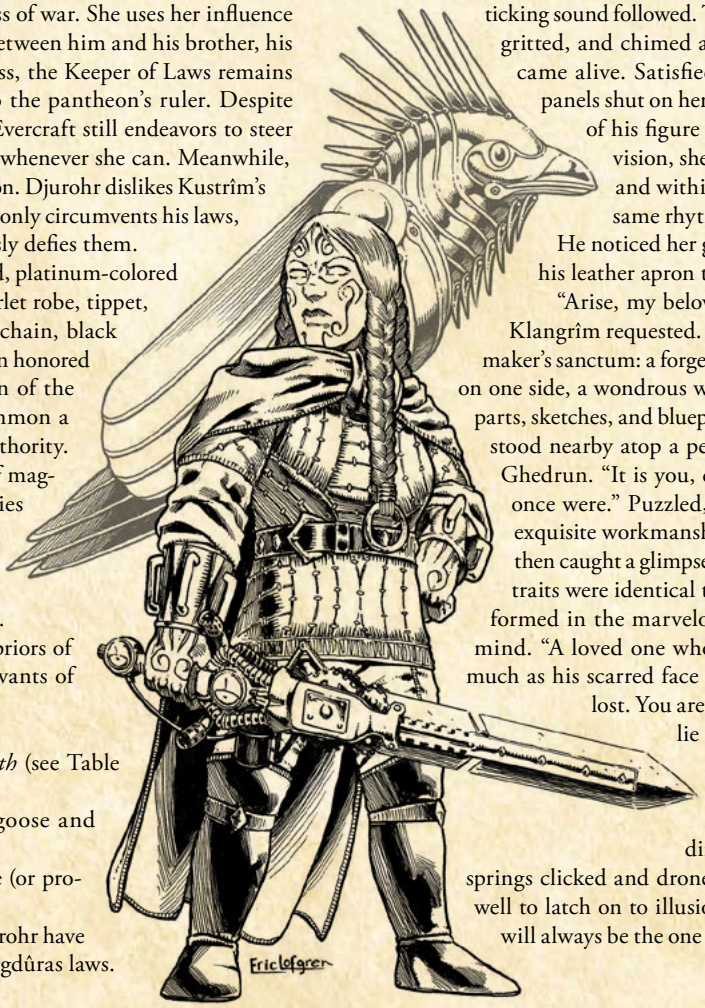
Preferred Divine Favor: *Peers of the Faith* (see Table 10, score of 18).
Preferred animal/monster: The mongoose and devourers of snakes.
Preferred weapon/spell: Footman's mace (or protection spells).
Other Benefits: Pious followers of Djurohr have basic knowledge of traditional Kragdûras laws.

Ghedrun Evercraft

Epithets: *Clockwork goddess, Steel Soul, Belbrynkin*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the Dârgilath
Interests: Knowledge, science
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–8 (friendly, altruistic, humble, merciful, considerate, truthful, trusting, tolerant), 💀 *Rational*–6 (analytical, patient, cautious, methodical, principled, obedient—though she can be curious and adventurous), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (tends to be a bit formal, dreamy, and enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: *The Hallowed Seven* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 220)
Allies: Klangrîm Thunderforge (her maker and lover), Khestrid Goldskald (friend and advocate), Khrâlia (honored ruler of Holmring)
Hated Foes: Doppelgangers, their spirits, their divine patrons; all who are not what they claim to be
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (southern Araldûr)
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 22, 313 BCE
Pronunciation: g-DROON

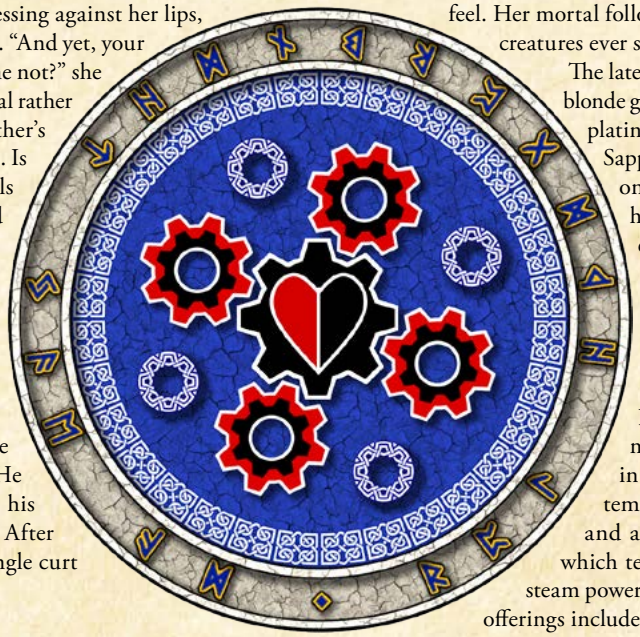
Mythology: When Ghedrun's eyes opened, she saw first the concerned face of her maker as he hunched over her to examine his work. He then reached into her chest, flicked a wheel into motion, and a ticking sound followed. The machinery within her whirred, gritted, and chimed as her arms, legs, and facial parts came alive. Satisfied, the Great Blacksmith flipped panels shut on her body, and stood back. As the rest of his figure shifted within Ghedrun's field of vision, she saw a gaping wound in his chest, and within it, half a heart beating with the same rhythm as her own internal workings. He noticed her gaze and pulled up the top part of his leather apron to mask the wound.

"Arise, my beloved. Take your place at my side," Klangrîm requested. Ghedrun sat up and observed her maker's sanctum: a forge, bellows, anvil, and great hammer on one side, a wondrous workshop on the other, with spare parts, sketches, and blueprints. The golden bust of a woman stood nearby atop a pedestal. "Who is this?" wondered Ghedrun. "It is you, dearest, or the image of who you once were." Puzzled, she examined her hand and the exquisite workmanship of the mechanism within. She then caught a glimpse of her face in a nearby mirror. Her traits were identical to those of the artwork. Thoughts formed in the marvelous clockworks of her enchanted mind. "A loved one who was lost?" Klangrîm smiled as much as his scarred face allowed. "Lost? No my dear, not lost. You are in all ways like the memories that lie in my heart, and now those live within you." Ghedrun searched her mind and found what her maker had given her. "Yet I am different," she answered. Gears and springs clicked and droned inside her head. "It doesn't do well to latch on to illusions for too long, yet a part of me will always be the one you seek, Craftsmaster. I accept it



and will return your love, but you must set free what you created, for only in this way will our love grow whole."

Ghedrun took her leave to discover on her own the world into which her maker had brought her. After departing the Hallowed Halls of *Tokhrast Klangan,* her steps led her to the All-Mother's court. Khrâlia interrupted her audience with Khestrid and Kustrîm. She frowned. "You aren't Belbryn Sunblade and yet you are, in your mind if not in her flesh. Who are you?" Kustrîm responded before Ghedrun could. "She is a contraption of my father's making, a mere travesty of my mother. My brother and I cautioned him about this. She has no business here. Begone, scarecrow!" A pain flashed in Ghedrun's mechanical chest. "Though you weren't born of my womb, Kustrîm Son-of-Klangrîm, and I shall never replace your mother, a part of me will always be her in spirit." Khestrid Goldskald stepped forward before Kustrîm could say another word, examining the divine clockwork with amusement. "How fascinating. Is she machine or goddess? There is no law about this. Do you deny her right to dwell in Holmring, Kustrîm Stonebrand?" The young god faced the All-Mother. "By all that is sacred in *Tokhrast Bryn,* I do." Her index finger pressing against her lips, Khestrid repressed a smile. She continued. "And yet, your father created you and your brother, did he not?" she observed slyly. "Though this work is of metal rather than godly flesh, I sense half of your father's faithful already welcome her in *their* hearts. Is there no such place in yours? Soon, mortals will serve her, as those who once honored your father now serve you and your brother. Shouldn't this be the true basis for one's divine right to dwell in Holmring? What say you, Khrâlia *Mountain Queen?"* The All-Mother considered Ghedrun's advocate before nodding slowly. "Agreed. Your words are fair and wise, Khestrid Goldskald. Do you concur, Kustrîm *Oath-Master?"* The young god bared his teeth in frustration. He opened his mouth to answer, swallowed his words, and let out a grunt of annoyance. After a stern look at Ghedrun, he gave her a single curt nod, turned, and left.



Description: Ghedrun is an automaton that ascended to divine status. Her maker, Klangrîm Thunderforge, gave her half his heart, which contained the magical power to make Ghedrun come alive. It imbued her mind with his memories of Belbryn Sunblade, his late wife. She appears in many ways like her predecessor, in body and personality, yet she is fully aware of her nature. It remains unclear whether Klangrîm first thought of replacing his beloved spouse with an automaton or his mortal faithful did, but the end result is the same. Since she ascended, his followers readily accepted Ghedrun's existence and amended the *Krone Skrinâd* accordingly. The idea of a mechanical goddess captured the minds of countless dwarven engineers and clock workers of the Dârgilath, who soon established her cult. This sealed her status as a rightful goddess of Holmring.

The divine automaton earned her epithet, Evercraft, after she endeavored to learn about her inner workings, as well as the magic and the science behind them. She enjoys knowledge of all things. She now builds her servants from machine parts inhabited by the spirits of her followers, from small sentient artifacts to earthshaking steel beasts. Ghedrun is believed to have inspired her faithful toward discovering steam power. The reality isn't so obvious, as her followers may have invented steam power on their own and then assumed Ghedrun gave them the ability to do so. Neither gods nor mortals really know. The many discoveries and works of wonder attributed to her led more than one gnome to adopt benevolent Ghedrun as one of their own, something that dwarven theologians refuse to accept.

Among her allies she counts her maker, Klangrîm Thunderforge, her advocate, Khestrid Goldskald, and her pantheon ruler, Khrâlia herself. Though in effect, she has become stepmother to Klangrîm's two sons, Kustrîm and Djurohr, the two younger gods merely tolerate her. They dislike the idea that an automaton was built in the image of their mother. Though not an ally, Balir-the-Whispering is baffled by Klangrîm's work, as she is neither alive nor dead, or is perhaps half of both. Intrigued, he grew to respect her as a fellow Dârgilath deity. She also appreciates Arnmîr Tinkerbones's efforts to inspire his followers to better understand dwarven medicine. In her journeys in the Ambrosian, she confronted the godly spirits of doppelgangers, and immediately disliked their philosophy. That one later impersonated her as a way to infiltrate Holmring in her absence, thereby causing mischief with her stepsons, ignited a rage that only a mother could feel. Her mortal followers have been waging a war against the creatures ever since.

The late Belbryn Sunblade was a fair-skinned and blonde goddess. Ghedrun's metallic skin is made of platinum, and strands of gold form her braids. Sapphires serve as her eyes. Upon closer look, one can perceive very fine engravings on her face and hands, which are part of the enchantment that initially brought her to life. Clicks and whirrs of her internal workings can be heard when she moves. She wears a jerkin, breeches, and boots made of bronze interlaced with copper and brass, and wields a sword not unlike Belbryn's fabled weapon, thanks to her maker, who forged the original. She lives in Klangrîm Thunderforge's domain. Her temple at Hûlmar houses a great workshop and an academy of mechanical engineering which teaches all necessary techniques regarding steam power and Fetzgrim propulsion. Favored temple offerings include the hearts and souls of doppelgangers.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Loyal companion;* the granted creature is a mechanical device with a mind of its own (see Table 10, score of 8).
Preferred animal/monster: Cuckoo birds and automatons.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword (or spells related to electricity).

Ghedrun's Glaive: It is a strange device that her maker fashioned for her. After he'd finished creating her, the Lord of Forges granted her a mighty sword whose hilt and pommel houses a wondrous mechanism. When activated, it hisses, growls, and releases jets of steam, causing the blade to vibrate and heat up. The glaive is rumored to be able to cut through any stone or metal known to mortals. It can also burn through the thickest of red dragon scales. When at its hottest, the blade is said to shine as bright as a sunray and strongly enough to repel the undead and denizens of the shadows. It was Klangrîm's way of recreating the mighty weapon that his beloved Belbryn Sunblade once wielded. Some sages believe that it is imbued with the power to return Ghedrun to Holmring, wherever she might be, should she suffer damage enough to cause her internal workings to falter.

Khestrid Goldskald



Epithets: *Advocate of the Gods, Lore Mistress of the Courts*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the Hâradhir
Interests: Fate, bards, seers, the spoken word, ancient lore
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though merciful and considerate, she also is manipulative and unscrupulous), ♦ *Practical* (though analytical and calculating, she also is quite creative and cunning), ↗ *Lively*–7 (mirthful, flamboyant, passionate, outspoken, shameless, feisty, and somewhat eccentric); she enjoys standing in the limelight
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Khrâlia (honored ruler of Holmring), Klangrîm Thunderforge, and Ghedrun Evercraft (friend).
Hated Foes: Harpies, their spirits, their divine patrons, including Espralyra
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (central Araldûr)
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 11, 476 BCE
Pronunciation: KES-trid

Mythology: As they march to battle, mourn their dead, honor their gods, or celebrate victories, weddings, and new births, the dwarves sing. Be it for the glory of ancient heroes or a tankard overflowing with frothy ale, they laugh and chant wholeheartedly, banging their fists on tables or striking the floor with hobnailed boots. From the bottoms of their cavernous chests and through their powerful throats, dwarven voices soar to the heavens, rivaling thunder itself. It is said that from the songs of dwarves ascended their divine bard.

"Khestrid Goldskald," greeted the All-Mother. "You are a most welcome peer of Holmring. Join me at *Tokhrast Bryn,* and may you bring peace and joy to the hearts of all." The young goddess saluted her elder before responding. "In *Tokhrast Bryn* I shall reside, and to all the courts of Holmring I shall impart the wonder of music, of art, and of the spoken word. If Fate will have it, upon sorrow, anger, worry, and malice I shall cast light and perspective, and preserve the Lore of the Heavens."

Though she'd demonstrated her talents on many an occasion, one episode of Khestrid's work shined when Djurohr Hammerlaw called for a divine trial before Khrâlia and her elder kin. Khestrid was invited as *Lore Mistress of the Courts* to keep records of the trial. Djurohr opened the session with these words: "Thraldûr *Hand-of-Chaos,* you've been seen consorting with a deadly foe of Holmring, namely the *Unholy Nigiste* of the fiendish Nāgá people, and are thus accused of treachery against your peers. What say you in your defense?"

The accused bared his teeth and sneered at the Keeper of Laws. "I only did what you failed to accomplish, Djurohr *Rune-Master.* At least, I did not send an underling to do the work of a god." The *Great Judge* hissed at that answer. "Aye, I met with the *Nigiste,"* Thraldûr continued. "We spoke of peace. And we bonded too." As Khrâlia repressed a smile, Djurohr sternly pointed a finger at the accused. "So, you admit your treachery, knowing full well that a state of holy war exists between Holmring and the *Nigiste's* Realm?" Angry mutters and expressions of horror rippled through Djurohr's Hall of Hearings. "'Tis not I who is at war," Thraldûr sneered. "This conflict was born of the Khôr-Halad's arrogance and your own foolishness, Your Divine Honor!" Djurohr struck the shaft of his mace against the floor, producing sparks and a peal of thunder. "Holmring is ruled by its laws, and so are its divine peers. When one is at war, all the others must help. It is the law. To defy it is to cast away tradition, to forfeit honor, and to beckon chaos."

Khestrid cleared her throat and raised a hand. "If I may, Your Honor?" The dour magistrate gave a puzzled nod, and she proceeded. "Point of order: with all due reverence, laws do not rule Holmring—Mighty All-Mother Khrâlia does. With respect to chaos, a little might not be so bad, would it? In fact, isn't it true that constructive chaos fosters creativity and innovation? Could there ever be any improvement without change?" Djurohr glared at the goddess. "You are here to record this trial's proceedings, *Lore Mistress.* The matters presented here are to be resolved by your elders." At these words, Khestrid casually approached the bench. "Truly? I don't recall seeing any laws preventing anyone from speaking at the Hall of Hearings. And if I do not speak, how can you hear?" Djurohr struck the floor once more with his mace's shaft, but before he could speak, Khrâlia lifted a hand. "Let us hear her, Rune Master." The godly magistrate frowned with annoyance as Khestrid resumed her speech.

"Thank you, All-Mother. I shall be brief." She turned to Djurohr. "If it happened that the accused bonding with the *Nigiste* engendered progeny, might it not lead to peace? Therefore, does this truly constitute a case of treachery?" Djurohr pointed at Thraldûr. "One would need to know his true motivation." Khestrid grinned at the divine magistrate and then faced the accused. "Indeed. Thraldûr Silvertongue, are you willing to make a *Vow of Verity?"* His answer was somewhere between a grunt and a snort. "Excellent!" said Khestrid. She then called loudly, *"Oath Master!* Your presence is required!" Kustrîm appeared in an instant. "Apologies for the impromptu summons. We need a vow, there," said Khestrid, casually designating Thraldûr. Ignoring his brother, the god observed the accused, sighed, and approached him. "Do you, Thraldûr *Chaos-Born,* solemnly swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?" Mumbles ending in a hiss emerged. "Speak up now! The binding must be clear and intelligible to the court. Do you swear?" The accused cringed and growled, "I do." Ghostly chains snaked along his arms and around his neck. Khestrid gave a thankful nod to the *Oath Master,* who turned and joined his elder peers.

"Thraldûr Silvertongue, describe to the court the nature of your bonding," she requested. "Speak up." The accused winced as the ethereal chains seemed to inflict pain, but kept quiet. Khestrid nodded with a knowing smile. "There was no bonding, correct? Why were you there?" He gazed back at her and bared his teeth defiantly. Burn marks appeared on his skin beneath the chains before he finally answered. "I made the *Nigiste* believe I wanted to offer an alliance against the Khôr-Halad so she would see me. Instead, I stole her crown and a few other things." Khestrid strutted to the center of the room. "There you have it, Elders of the Court," she announced. "No treachery was committed, only a simple theft against a foe of Holmring. I have said all that need be heard." Glancing at Thraldûr, she added, "And I do expect payment for services rendered."

Khrâlia stood and looked at Djurohr, who gave her a nod. "It is the judgement of this court that Thraldûr *Chaos-Born* is not guilty of treachery against Holmring," she concluded. "It is also the judgement of this court that his ill-gotten gains shall be remitted at once to the All-Mother, who shall decide their future usage. I declare this matter settled."

Description: Born from the emotional singing of dwarves, Khestrid rose as the goddess of skalds, and as the spiritual patron of Kragdûras art and oral tradition. Djurohr, as Holmring's Rune Master, favors the written word relating more to contracts and law than to art. Thraldûr, as his epithet implies, embodies Fate more than Khestrid does (despite what the main chart indicates). She also is the keeper of Holmring's ancient lore and an advocate of the gods. Therefore, she became popular among the Hâradhir, who pray for her protection when they become embroiled in contractual disputes. Khestrid favors hunters of ancient lore, sages, teachers, bards, poets, orators, inspiring leaders, and of course, trial lawyers. Warriors of the Khôr-Halad greatly welcome her songsters for their compelling sagas and entertaining talents.

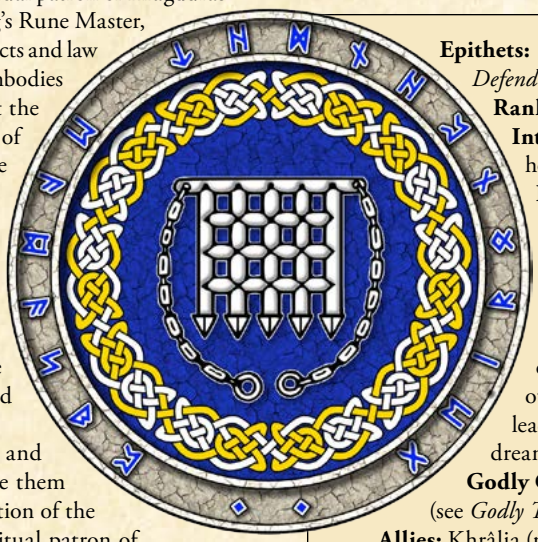
Khestrid and her servants inspire bards and collect their most famous works to preserve them as part of dwarven lore. Early in her exploration of the Ambrosian, she ran across Espralyra, a spiritual patron of harpies that had captured one of her servants and was preparing to devour his heart. So appalled was Khestrid of the creature's horrid voice and its ghoulish desire for godly flesh that she sang a famous verse from Thranor's *Hamargrim,* a classical Kragdûras opera about the fall of an epic hero to Balir's underworld. Though its dissonant harmony remains particularly pleasing to dwarven ears, her divine rendition exceeded Espralyra's ability to endure. Horrorstruck and feeling like she might explode, the goddess of harpies vowed to seek revenge and fled, leaving her prey. Since this mythical encounter, the cult of Khestrid now calls for the eradication of harpies.

Khestrid Goldskald enjoys personal allies such as Khrâlia, Ghedrun Evercraft, and Klangrîm Thunderforge. Djurohr dislikes her because she often finds ways around his laws when she takes someone's defense. Gods often rely on her wits as an advocate and talented orator when they get into trouble. As a result, she possesses unusual insights regarding the denizens of Holmring, and few of them are willing to defy her. Though her services are appreciated, they always come with a high price, as Thraldûr discovered with dismay more than once.

The goddess is often represented with dark green hair braided with diamonds. She wears a robe matching her hair, and often sings using a hurdy-gurdy. It is said the wondrous instrument has a mind of its own and can force mortals who hear its tunes to dance until they drop dead from exhaustion. Khestrid's main shrine in Dol-Haddir features a dwarven opera house, called the *Bar-Khurâdam*. Many of the musical instruments are steam powered and, with the performers' thunderous voices, produce a unique auditory experience, which foreigners often describe as artful pandemonium. Favored temple offerings call for live harpies or the hearts of their spiritual denizens.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Innate Magic* (see Table 10, score of 9). Effects generally include removing or causing fear, inspiring courage resulting in a +1 bonus to strength, stamina, or morale, or enabling a greater ability to march longer distances in a day.
Preferred animal/monster: The lark and other songbirds in general.
Preferred weapon/spell: Crossbow (or spells related to speaking or chanting, such as communication with plants, animals, or monsters, and understanding foreign tongues).

Kjorûn Gatekeeper



Epithets: *Watcher of Holmring, Defender of the Land*
Ranking: Demigod, Paragon of the Dârgilath
Interests: Peace, defenders of their homelands, fortress builders
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–6 (friendly, merciful, considerate, truthful, tolerant, magnanimous—qualities tempered by a tendency to mistrust), 💀 *Rational*–6 (analytical, patient, stubborn, methodical, principled, obedient—creative and cunning at times), 🗲 *Lively*–4 (passionate, outspoken, feisty, indomitable—a born leader loyal to the hilt, he tends to be dreamy and self-conscious occasionally)
Godly Cabals: *The Fellowship of Watchers* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 219)
Allies: Khrâlia (mother), Kustrîm Stonebrand (oath witness), and Ghedrun Evercraft (fellow Dârgilath)
Hated Foes: Traitors and invaders of the cult's homeland
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (northeastern Araldûr), and among the Wayfarers of the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Chelonea 25, 7 CE
Pronunciation: keoh-ROON

Mythology: From the union of the All-Mother-Mountain with Kjosgor Stonecrown, an earth elemental ruler, rose their son, Kjorûn. He remained for a time on his father's plane, learning the ways of the stone realm. Few among the elementals accepted him. In their stolid and rockbound points of view, he was a half breed, weak and soft because of his flesh and blood. Fights continually pitted factions of elementals against denizens of fire, air, and water. Tired of their bellicose natures and pointless wars, Kjorûn departed to live at his mother's court.

"And who is this pebble of a godling asking for entrance in Holmring?" railed Krîma Ironblaze. "He is of my blood," answered Khrâlia. "And I welcome his presence under the vault of *Tokhrast Bryn."* But the war goddess did not flinch at the response. "He may be so, yet tradition demands he prove himself worthy." The term "tradition" tickling his eardrum, Djurohr Hammerlaw joined the discussion. "The *Thayn of Hûrkhana* is right, Khrâlia *Mountain Queen.* It is the law." Thus did the door to the Great Mountain shut against Kjorûn, and the demigod departed to the mortal world.

With divine blood flowing in his heart and in his veins, the son of Khrâlia easily proved his worth among the dwarves of Kragdûr. He unveiled to his mother's priors the strange nature of seitha when they came upon a visiting Alorean skyship. In hindsight, he never forgave himself for his indiscretion, as it led to a vicious rivalry between the lunar empires. To forget his misdeed, Kjorûn joined brave warriors who settled the world of Calidar. But his peace wasn't to last: conflict between dwarves and elves found the far-flung shores where he dwelled. Although Khrâlia's son defeated nearly single-handedly unrelenting waves of raging natives, terrifying spirits of nature, and vicious Alorean raids, the colony was abandoned and the fight continued across the Great Vault. Deploring the wasteful war, Kjorûn advocated peace, but few listened. He then endeavored to protect the ones who could not defend themselves. The son of Khrâlia became a builder of mighty fortresses above and below the ground, and

many mortals told the tales of his bravery when raiders came swooping in searching for their share of treasure, death, and sorrow. It was then the door to Holmring opened to Kjorûn at last.

Description: A rare deity of the dwarven pantheon, Kjorûn does not condone war, yet he is a brave and capable warrior. Though a demigod of humble status in Holmring, many revere him in Araldûr and on Kragdûr for different reasons. On the moon, he unveiled the secret of seitha and proved himself a hero of the early colonial times. On Calidar, he is considered more as a pacifist, having the wisdom of knowing that being ready for war is oftentimes the best way to avert it. As such, he garnered respect from Alfdaíners and their spiritual patrons. He protects those who guard citadels, great walls, and towers from invaders. Above all, he honors those who die in this sacred duty. Kjorûn earned the trust of the Dârgilath, and consistently gains followers among engineers, architects, masons, and stone carvers. The *Gatekeeper* is the consummate builder of strong fortresses, and many mortals pray for his protection when fearing an invasion.

The All-Mother knows her rival seeks war between Araldûr and Kragdûr. Knowing Kjorûn's character, Khrâlia tasked him with keeping an eye on the conspiracies of Krîma and her daughter. During his decades among mortals, he learned to make himself unseen to better observe his foes. To help him in his endeavor, Klangrîm also crafted a wondrous mirror called the *Ob-Thal' jor*. It enables the Gate Keeper to see if someone or something unwelcome slipped into Holmring. The mirror alerted him to the presence of a device in Thraldûr's possession. When he observed the object, it produced an illusion that the *Ob-Thal' jor* was able to dispel, and revealed a great evil. Soon afterward, the mirror was no longer able to sense the foreign device, and Kjorûn concluded it was beyond the All-Mother's realm. But what he'd seen caused him great concern. He left Holmring in search of an answer. His path led him to seek the wisdom of mighty Odin. Alarmed by what Kjorûn described, Odin introduced the Gatekeeper to *the Fellowship of Watchers*, a secret association of deities with similar experiences. Since then, the Gatekeeper closely observes Thraldûr in addition to Krîma and her daughter.

Kjorûn's primary ally is his mother. Klangrîm looks upon the demigod with kindness, as he sees in him a worthy candidate for godhood. Ghedrun Evercraft and Balir-the-Whispering are fellow Dârgilath deities who will stand by his side during trouble. Kustrîm Stonebrand witnessed Kjorûn's oath when the demigod swore to protect Holmring.

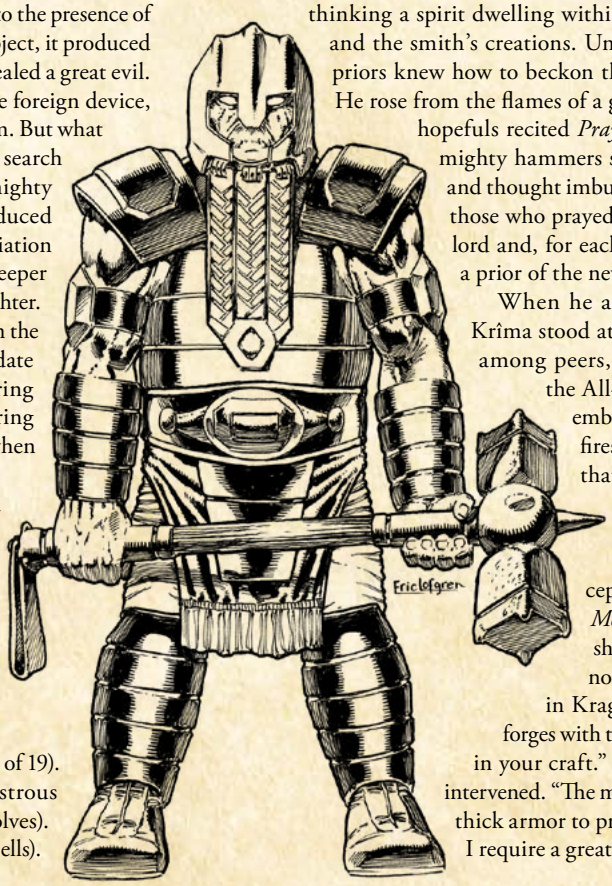
The Gatekeeper looks like a young adult dwarf, with bronze-colored hair and beard, and brass-hued skin. He wears golden plate armor and wields a golden axe. When fighting on an open battlefield, Kjorûn rides a very large wolf named *Drûmrast*. His main shrine overlooks Lake Ghurlag, in Fehrkrag. Favored temple offerings include traitors brought before the altar to meet their fate at the sharp end of a ceremonial axe.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Heavenly Abode* (see Table 10, score of 19).
Preferred animal: Wolves, giant wolves (but not monstrous wolves used as mounts by goblins of Ghüle, or werewolves).
Preferred weapon/spell: Battle axe (or protection spells).

Klangrîm Thunderforge

Epithets: *Great Blacksmith, Lord of the Forges, Hammer of Kragdûr*
Ranking: Minor god of the Bhalrûd; elder peer
Interests: Blacksmiths, craftsmen, forges, steel, hard work
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–2 (altruistic, truthful), 💀 *Instinctive*–2 (sentimental, creative), ↯ *Stern*–5 (austere, aloof, brooding, dreamy, self-conscious); generally driven to the point of obsession when on a quest
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Khrâlia (honored ruler of Holmring), Ghedrun Evercraft (lover), and Djurohr Hammerlaw (elder son)
Hated Foes: Defilers of forges, destroyers of fine works of craftsmanship, and minions of Ghüle
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (southeastern Araldûr), and among the Wayfarers of the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 17, BCE 629
Pronunciation: CLAN-grim

Mythology: Ever have dwarves of yore watched fire glaring under a bellows' breath or a hammer smiting red hot iron amid a shower of sparks, thinking a spirit dwelling within bestowed life to the forge and the smith's creations. Under Khrâlia's guidance, her priors knew how to beckon the Great Blacksmith to life. He rose from the flames of a great forge while a thousand hopefuls recited *Prayers of Calling* at the beat of mighty hammers striking giant anvils. As life and thought imbued his divine flesh, a tenth of those who prayed became one with their new lord and, for each departed, another became a prior of the new god.



When he ascended, he met Khrâlia. Krîma stood at her side. "You are welcome among peers, Klangrîm *Hammer-Soul,*" the All-Mother greeted. "You shall embody the clan forges, the great fires of dwarven industry, and all that is made of iron and steel." Taciturn, his arms crossed on his cavernous chest, the *Great Blacksmith* bowed imperceptibly. "As you wish, Khrâlia *Mountain-Queen.* Speak and you shall receive." The All-Mother nodded. "Seek the blackstones in Kragdûr's womb. Feed the great forges with them, and instruct the faithful in your craft." Krîma stepped forward and intervened. "The mortals need fine weapons and thick armor to prevail against their foes. And I require a great axe." Once more, Klangrîm

bowed. "It shall be done." With a sparkle in her eye, Khrâlia gazed for an instant at the goddess of war, and added, "Well then, if she gets the axe, I'll have the hammer, a large one."

As time went by, many other gods joined the ranks of Khrâlia. Among them was Belbryn Sunblade, a fair goddess who became Klangrîm's bride. For her, he forged a mighty sword made of pure sunlight. Together, they engendered two sons, Djurohr and Kustrîm. All was fine until Krîma revealed the presence of a fissure in a remote corner of Holmring, with a fell passage leading to another universe. Worried about a possible intrusion into the divine domain, she invited her rival to assist her exploration. Klangrîm joined the war goddess so he might seal the dangerous breach if needed. Along came his sons, his beloved spouse, and Balir. Klangrîm sensed a sinister presence and cautioned his companions not to be so hasty pushing forward. But Krîma laughed. "So soon do you worry that your mighty axe will fail me?"

As he'd feared, her endeavor led to an ambush. Nightmarish beasts fell upon them, and the gods barely escaped, all but one. To save her sons, Belbryn attracted their pursuers and made a stand atop a tall rock before an endlessly swelling tide of horror. While her sword seared through monstrous heaps falling upon Belbryn, Krîma and her companions stopped the rest of the hordes at the fissure. They held long enough for Klangrîm to collapse the passage and forever seal it shut, all the while calling for his beloved to flee. She was neither heard of again, nor did the Great Blacksmith ever forgive Krîma Ironblaze.

Description: As his name suggests, he is the grim, scarred, and disfigured patron of miners, blacksmiths, and guardian of forges. He embodies the ideals of the ancient Bhalrûd clan and stands as their chief deity. He is also the god of thunder under the ground, the echo of anvils and great hammers at work, the rush of cataracts in lofty caves, and the rumble of volcanoes deep below. Ever since the death of Belbryn Sunblade, Klangrîm has grown more aloof and glum, burying himself ever deeper in his godly tasks.

The bitter grief for his loss progressively drove many away from him, including his two sons as they matured into full-fledged gods. During his endless solitude, Klangrîm built a wondrous automaton in the image of his late spouse. In his eyes, it was but a pale copy of the fair goddess. In desperation, he sacrificed a part of himself to imbue her with divine life. He severed half of his own heart and placed it within the automaton's internal workings. She became Ghedrun Evercraft, and he pledged the other half of his heart as a token of eternal love.

Aside from having earned Ghedrun's affection, Klangrîm is a stalwart ally of Khrâlia. His relation is best with the elder of his two sons, who also pledged his loyalty to the All-Mother. Djurohr Hammerlaw, the younger one, allowed himself to fall within Krîma's influence, after she promised him reprisal for his mother's death. That she also inspires some among her legions of Khôr-Halad to honor the god of law and revenge also helps explain where his heart lies. In short, Krîma bought off the young god with a gift of power from her faithful, something his older brother and his father revile.

Klangrîm's skin is very dark brown. Heavily muscled from his craft, he also bears many scars, cuts and burns that have over the centuries disfigured him. His beard is tightly woven and encased in steel. He lost his hair long ago, and wears instead a close-fitting and ornately carved helm that masks much of his mutilated face. He fights with *Molroth,* a war hammer that, when it strikes mortal creatures or objects fashioned by them, causes them to ignite with magical fire. In battle, the Lord of the Forges rides a giant salamander of epic status. Araldûr's Royal Forges located beneath Domkark are part of his great shrine. It includes an academy of metalworking, where young Araldûras of the Bhalrûd clan learn their trade. Favored offerings include objects of great craftsmanship, mechanical or magical devices, which are sacrificed to the Great Blacksmith through a *Ritual of Sending*. Centuries of such gifts are forever displayed in the Hallowed Halls of *Tokhrast Klangan.*

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Might* (see Table 10, score of 1).
Preferred animal/monster: Fire salamanders; mythical imps dwelling by magical forges (minor smoke, fire, steam, or lava spirits).
Preferred weapon/spell: War hammer (or spells related to heating, bending, or producing metal).

Krîma Ironblaze

Epithets: *Blood of Kragdûr, Thayn of Hûrkhana, Axe Mistress, Heart of Hamardûl*
Ranking: Greater goddess of the Khôr-Halad; elder peer
Interests: War, conquest, glory, Kragdûras hegemony
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (leans toward malevolent—though selfish, insensitive, and vengeful, she is friendly, extravagantly generous, and magnanimous to those loyal to her), ☗ *Instinctive*–6 (highly impulsive, hasty, unpredictable, bold, cunning, unruly), ✓ *Lively*–9 (sarcastic, boorish, flamboyant, passionate, outspoken, shameless, feisty, arrogant, and indomitable)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Arnmîr Tinkerbones (son), Arkhâna Emberfury (daughter), Balir-the-Whispering (husband), Brâlkha Shadowfist (ally), Djurohr Hammerlaw (friend)
Hated Foes: Frost giants and followers of Galadir Blackmattock (see *Gods of Belledor*)
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (northwestern Araldûr), and among the Wayfarers of the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 26, 637 BCE
Pronunciation: KREE-ma

Mythology: Krîma Ironblaze rose from the blood of dwarves on battlefields. The minds of those who wished for victory gave her a body and a face. Those who summoned her in the name of Khrâlia gave her a divine spirit. Warriors were prompt to adopt her as their spiritual patron, one who never gives up in the face of adversity. When Krîma ascended, Khrâlia was there to welcome her. "Together, let us claim the hearts and souls of all dwarves so that they may take their place among the great races of this universe," declared the All-Mother. The warrior goddess's quarrelsome nature made it difficult for her to bow to her elder. "Your trade is hearts and souls. Mine is war and glory. Do as you wish, Khrâlia *Mountain Queen,* but I shall lead those who choose to follow me along my own path. We shall see who finishes better."

Despite great victories and ghastly massacres perpetrated in her name, Krîma fell short of her elder's accomplishments. The All-Mother tallied more followers among mortals who sang her praise. In a huff, the war goddess set off into the Ambrosian to vent her frustration. There she encountered a towering god of frost giants with a cohort of his kin behind him. Though Krîma stood well over 20' tall, a giant herself by mortal standards, her challenger stretched ten times as high. A crisp and crackling-cold haze formed a halo around his rime-covered body. "Step aside, little one. Make way for Graltur Icecrown," he thundered. Krîma, hands on her hips, shot back, "You aren't tall enough for that, *King of Glaciers."* The giant laughed, picked her up, and brought her to his enormous mouth. In a foul mood, Krîma bit off a chunk of the giant's hand that held her. He

laughed again. "It takes more than a nibble to defeat the Mighty Graltur," and he swallowed the goddess whole. Her hands free, Krîma summoned her axe, *Hûrkhana.* As she descended through the monstrous gullet of roiling frost, she sliced all around until the giant's throat and spine were thoroughly severed and his head rolled off. In a frenzy of rage, the Axe Mistress slew the rest of Graltur's people, save for a few who fled into the Ambrosian twilight.

When Ironblaze's rage was quenched at last, the All-Mother appeared. "The rest of their people will bear eternal hatred for us all," she observed. Krîma shrugged. "You'd rather make love to them, perhaps?" Khrâlia smiled back at the retort. "I might." The war goddess bared her teeth in an angry jeer, raised her axe, and callously chopped off the giant's mid-section before kicking it toward the All-Mother. "Help yourself then," Krîma responded with a sinister grin. Khrâlia dubiously eyed the frosty remains for an instant. "Perhaps you should keep it as a reminder that war does not solve everything." Defiant, Ironblaze strutted away in search of the escaped giants. As a parting shot, she spat over her shoulder, "That remains to be proven."



Description: Krîma is most popular among the Khôr-Halad and warriors in general. Her cult is important since the dwarves of Calidar's universe, in particular those of Kragdûr, are a warrior race. Dwarves of Araldûr have grown more accustomed to other people living among them or nearby and, though they are quick to take offense, they don't necessarily view war as the unavoidable solution to all their problems. This explains why Khrâlia enjoys a greater following in Araldûr and in the Great Caldera. The situation is nearly reversed on Kragdûr, which could jeopardize Khrâlia's authority in Holmring.

The Axe Mistress seeks dwarven hegemony in Soltan's ephemeris. Her priors are instructed to train their followers in military tradition. In their eyes, true nobility is earned on the battlefield. Until one can claim a foe's blood, one does not enjoy the right to speak, at least not within the circles of the war goddess's followers. When not scheming to undo Khrâlia's efforts, Krîma wanders the Ambrosian, seeking challenges either to vent her frustration or to stay in shape. She entertains a private war against the frost giants there and in the outer planes. Her mortal followers emulate this behavior, challenging giants wherever they can find them in the prime universe. As it turns out, some can be found deep below ground or in mountain caves in the Great Caldera. Krîma had a rough encounter with Galadir Blackmattock, and since then she has felt a particular loathing for him and his followers.

As a way to mock Khrâlia, the war goddess engenders progeny with those she defeats, underscoring the primal nature of female dwarves. Such is the case of her son and daughter, Arnmîr Tinkerbones and Arkhâna Emberfury, both offspring of godly giants whom Krîma later slew. They are in fact live trophies. Though this does not trouble Arkhâna in the least, it does present a challenge for Arnmîr, who is torn between loyalty to his liege and parent, and misgivings about her callousness. It is written in the *Krone Skrinâd* that the irascible warrior goddess has fought and defeated many a mythical giant. Mortal priors thus suspect that others of her blood exist who may have shunned Holmring. Thankfully, Krîma's priors are quick to caution her mortal followers that their divine patron's reproductive feats cannot be emulated, however hard they may try. Nonetheless, some among female Khôr-Halad remain partial to symbolic mating before the ritual finality of death to the vanquished. The Axe Mistress also benefits from the support of Balir-the-Whispering, whom she married, and Brâlkha Shadowfist. Djurohr Hammerlaw also stands among her allies chiefly because many among the Khôr-Halad honor him.

Tough and battle-hardened, Krîma sports a thick mane of black hair and dark brown skin. She is said to bear a great many scars transferred to her body when her most honored heroes died in her name. Her eyes are entirely red; when gazed into, one can see endless legions of those who perished at war whose spirits rose to serve the Axe Mistress in Holmring. Her great shrine beneath Gor-Burudh features myriad sculptures of fallen heroes and immense mosaics telling their stories, as well as a majestic triumphal arch within its midsection. Favored temple offerings are frost giants subdued into complete obedience. Their spirits are sent to serve Krîma as eternal slaves in Holmring, or to roam Balir's catacombs.



Preferred Divine Favor: *Battle Blessing* (see Table 10, score of 7).
Preferred animal/monster: Giant boars; war elephants and rhinoceroses.
Preferred weapon/spell: Battle axe (or spells related to fear).

Hûrkhana: Literally "Death Mistress," it is Krîma's personal device, a trusty battle axe she can summon at any time. Klangrîm Thunderforge worked its steel, and it is said that the blood of Balir himself was used to temper its blade. Hûrkhana is able to cleave any non-magical stonework or metal forged by mortals. It will instantly kill any mortal hapless enough to be hit (no defense check). If reduced to half their Life Force, giants of epic status, mythical rulers, or spiritual servants of that race are subdued and brought under Krîma's domination. The weapon's damage, not including any bonuses from the divine owner wielding it, is rated as an 8Hi. Wounds inflicted to a divine being as a result of a critical hit can never be healed, save by Balir-the-Whispering himself.

League of Giants: This loose association of otherwise rival giants includes Fjalgar the Hazy, Hjarni Flametongue, and Snjórbræði Gralturssson (*Ghastly Appendix*). Sharing a hatred for Krîma and her daughter, their followers will target those of the two goddesses whenever possible. Arnmîr Tinkerbones and Galadir Blackmattock neither oppose nor support this league's objectives.

Kustrîm Stonebrand

Epithets: *Oath Master, Champion of Order, Seal of the Covenant*
Ranking: Minor god of the Bhalrûd
Interests: Oaths, order, loyalty, honor, integrity, morality, traditions
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful and trusting, he is by nature vengeful with oath breakers), 💀 *Rational*–4 (patient, stubborn, principled, highly obedient), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (though passionate and outspoken, he also tends to be dour at other times); his philosophy is largely based on the cult of honor
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Khrâlia (honored ruler of Holmring), Klangrîm Thunderforge (father), and Ghedrun Evercraft (step-mother)
Hated Foes: Followers of cults devoted to chaos or deception
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (eastern Araldûr), among the Wayfarers of the Fringe, and Osriel (Kraszˇnik area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Loreath 20, 544 BCE as a peer; Loreath 27, 635 BCE as a demigod
Pronunciation: KOOS-treem

Mythology: As their love deepened, Belbryn Sunblade and Klangrîm Thunderforge solemnly swore eternal faithfulness to each other, a celestial event duly recorded in the *Krone Skrinâd*. When these vows were taken, a new god ascended, sealing the divine covenant. Thus was born Kustrîm Stonebrand and, soon afterward, arose his younger brother, Djurohr. It was written that if the godly love were ever betrayed, the hallowed seal would be broken, and both sons would perish. But fate had it that the mother met an untimely end, and the seal remained unharmed. In memory of his fallen parent and with the blessing of Khrâlia, Kustrîm became master of oaths and champion of order. His younger sibling became the keeper of laws.



Heavy were the hearts of the father and his sons after the death of Belbryn Sunblade. While Djurohr immersed himself in his duties, Kustrîm returned many times to the place where he'd last seen his mother. The *Great Blacksmith* had erected an arcane barrier to forbid anyone breaking through. More than once did the *Master of Oaths* attempt to find a way past, but his father's work proved well beyond his means to alter. One day, on his way out, Kustrîm noticed something everyone had missed: a silver button. A face engraved on it jeered and stuck out its tongue at him when he looked more closely. He recognized Thraldûr's traits. Suspicious, he came back frequently, lurking among the rocks until the god of mischief showed up, searching for something.

Kustrîm stepped from his hiding place and hailed the other god. "Looking for this, perhaps?" He showed the button missing from Thraldûr's vest. "What business did you have in this place of evil?" Kustrîm sternly inquired. Thraldûr shrugged. "I merely stumbled on this chasm and managed to get the bauble caught on a stone. Thank you for finding it. I'll have it back now." Kustrîm returned the button to his pocket. "I think not, and will have you swear to tell the truth, for the matter is grave." The older dwarf bared his teeth in defiance. "I take no orders from young pups, *Oath Meddler,* and neither do I willingly swear to anything." Kustrîm pointed an accusing finger. "Thraldûr Silvertongue, I hold you for a liar and fiend. I shall uncover the truth behind your visit here and, mark my words, if you had a hand in my mother's downfall, costly will be your amends."

Description: Older brother of Djurohr Hammerlaw and the patron of solemn oaths, he follows a harsh and incorruptible way. Among mortals, a binding prayer spoken when taking a hallowed vow typically results in death should its terms be brazenly broken. Though they often serve other deities, many warriors bound to a code of honor pledge to uphold their precepts before Kustrîm. Among gods, breaking a sealed promise results in excruciating pains until proper atonement is made. His power is such that even Thraldûr, prince of lies, could not thwart it. Refusing to swear before the Master of Oaths is almost always seen as an admission of guilt or suggests questionable intentions. On the other hand, this god protects all those who take lifelong vows and are willing to die if they fail to fulfill their quests. Predominantly a Bhalrûd deity, Kustrîm remains popular among all clans, though less so for the Hâradhir, who prefer written and excruciatingly-detailed contracts, such as those put together by priors of Djurohr.

Aside from being the final arbiter of oaths spoken by myriads of mortals under the purview of his priors (and magistrates acting on behalf of Djurohr), Kustrîm has not set aside the grief from his mother's passing. One of his weaknesses is that he trusts no one, and has kept to himself Thraldûr's mysterious connection with the sealed passage leading to Ghüle's universe (see Klangrîm's description). He's focused his attention upon the god of chaos, whom he naturally despises. Kustrîm has nonetheless approached Balir, a notorious detractor of Thraldûr, and dropped a clue that perhaps he was connected with the incident. But the *Oath Master* learned nothing new.

Despite his headstrong and solitary stance, Kustrîm does have allies, though he likes none of them but Khrâlia (he pledged his loyalty to the All-Mother rather than his own father). Regardless, Klangrîm and Ghedrun will always show goodwill toward the *Champion of Order.* He opposed his father's decision to create the clockwork goddess, and though he later agreed to tolerate her, he still resents her existence. Kustrîm also begrudges Khestrid Goldskald, who advocated Ghedrun's divine right to dwell in Holmring, as well as Krîma, whose brash arrogance he believes is responsible for his mother's downfall. Because of this, he's grown aloof to his younger brother, Djurohr, for consorting with the goddess of war. Above all, he despises Thraldûr.

The *Champion of Order* has a golden mane and thick beard of the same color. He wears gilded chain mail and carries a black spear with wicked barbs, which his father made for him. It is said to strike mortals dead who callously break solemn vows taken before his priors. Kustrîm lives in *Tokhrast Bryn,* Khrâlia's court in Holmring. An important shrine stands at the heart of the *Aralîm*, the realm's war academy in Arohgan. Favored temple offerings include convicted traitors who never took a solemn vow before his priors yet betrayed the trust of others. If brought in alive, they will be executed at the temple. Creatures of chaos also rate high on the wanted list.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Wound* (see Table 10, score of 4).
Preferred animal/monster: War dogs, magical or spirit dogs (but not wolves or werewolves).
Preferred weapon/spell: Spear (or detection spells).

Thraldûr Silvertongue



Epithets: *Hand-of-Fate, Chaos-Monger, Bearer of Change*
Ranking: Minor god of the Hâradhir; elder peer
Interests: Chaos, mischief, lies, wealth, merchants, and thieves
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–7 (wicked, selfish, deceitful, unscrupulous, mistrustful, jealous, manipulative), ♦ *Rational*–3 (calculating, patient, crafty, principled—though quite unruly), ↗ *Lively*–5 (sarcastic, greedy, hedonistic, shameless, feisty under pressure)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: None
Hated Foes: Followers and servants of Kustrîm Stonebrand
Centers of Faith: Kragdûr, Araldûr (northern Araldûr), among the Wayfarers of the Fringe, and Osriel (Lorical area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 30, 603 BCE
Pronunciation: THRAL-dure, as in "poor"

Mythology: Last of the five elder gods, Thraldûr ascended not from the summons of Khrâlia's mortal priors, for his divine seed had already grown strong in the minds of many. The rise of the first four celestials provoked Thraldûr's coming. His ideals blossomed among those who could not find solace in their communion with the earlier gods. Others feared his darker aspects such as lying and the theft of treasures, and they prayed to him so he'd stay away. When he reached Ambrosia, Khrâlia was there, awaiting his arrival.

"Thraldûr *Chaos-Monger,* I know that for which you stand. You are the Hand of Fate, the Bearer of Change, who counteracts stifling tradition. I value what you bring, but know this, Thraldûr Silvertongue: betray me and you shall pay for it dearly." As the nascent god bowed before the All-Mother, he answered with an ambiguous grin, halfway between smile and sneer. "Ever shall I do your bidding, Khrâlia *Mountain Queen,* but do not begrudge me my nature, for all things come with a price." After the requisite baring of teeth and defiant growling on both sides, Thraldûr lowered his gaze and submitted to the All-Mother's lordship.

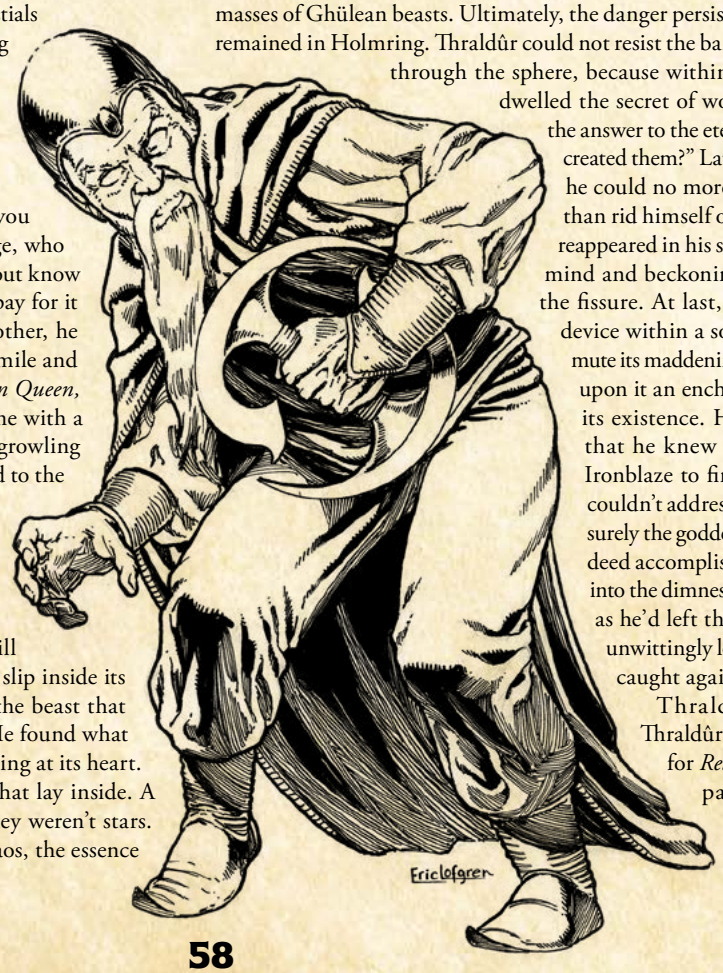
Little more than a century came to pass until he stumbled on a lair hidden in the Ambrosian. There, he sensed something beckoning him. A hideous beast dwelled at the entrance, shapeless, mindless, and soulless. Regardless of what he tried, Thraldûr could not kill it. Instead, he later tricked it to come out so he could slip inside its lair. For a time he was trapped within, hiding from the beast that could defy a god. But his greed overcame his dread. He found what he was seeking: a crystal sphere with an odd glow pulsing at its heart. At the limit of revulsion and terror, he focused on what lay inside. A blur dispelled, unveiling a great swirl of stars. But they weren't stars.

He knew that he was gazing upon Primordial Chaos, the essence of his own soul. He wrapped the artifact in his cloak and was able to escape to Holmring.

There, he studied the crystal, desiring above all to learn more about what it showed him. He allowed his mind to stray deeper within the visions. There he sensed a fey power that could open a passage to what he sought. He responded, calling it upon himself. A fissure broke open somewhere within Holmring, and Thraldûr went searching for it. He found it soon enough and ventured inside. On the other end stood a twisted and misbegotten world, alien enough to make even the *Bearer-of-Change* queasy. He saw no pool of Primordial Chaos. Sensing he'd been tricked, Thraldûr backed away and veiled the passage's outer end. His subterfuge would work for a time. Others more skillful than he could seal it shut later. He'd see to that, in his own roundabout manner.

Description: Thraldûr dwells upon fundamental hopes and fears of the dwarves. Though he embodies chaos and mischief, his sphere of interests also includes greed and the quest for power. He skims much of his personal magical energy from the followers of other gods, especially merchants, diplomats, and many among the Hâradhir. Thieves, escape-artists, tomb-robbers, and all who lust for wealth honor him. Those who fear thieves and trickery pray to Thraldûr, hoping to keep him and his mortal followers away.

When he caught a glimpse of Primordial Chaos, Thraldûr was bound to investigate. Gods of Ghüle intended the elaborate lure to open a passage directly into Holmring. That the *Great Blacksmith* sealed it shut reflects his divine skill, though this was only possible with Belbryn Sunblade waylaying masses of Ghülean beasts. Ultimately, the danger persisted while the sphere remained in Holmring. Thraldûr could not resist the bait of the illusion sent through the sphere, because within Primordial Chaos dwelled the secret of world souls, and thus the answer to the eternal question "Who created them?" Later did he realize that he could no more destroy the sphere than rid himself of it. The relic always reappeared in his sanctum, probing his mind and beckoning him to return to the fissure. At last, he sequestered the device within a solid block of lead to mute its maddening call, and bestowed upon it an enchantment to conceal its existence. He then cast a spell that he knew would lead Krîma Ironblaze to find the fissure. If he couldn't address the danger within, surely the goddess of war would. His deed accomplished, he settled back into the dimness of anonymity. Alas, as he'd left the passage, Thraldûr unwittingly lost a button that had caught against a rock.



Thraldûr has no allies. Thraldûr wants no allies, save for *Reapers of the Pale* (see page 222). Though he agreed to serve the All-Mother, in truth he prefers a

neutral stance, being more likely to set Khrâlia up against her rival, Krîma. In this, he seeks to divide and conquer. He does receive sympathy from two other deities associated with the Hâradhir clan, Khestrid Goldskald and Brâlkha Shadowfist. Thraldûr otherwise appreciates Arkhâna Emberfury's natural mischievousness to which he relates, and occasionally acts as her secret protector when she gets into trouble. On the other hand, his connection with thieves earned him Balir's displeasure. Thraldûr despises Kustrîm Stonebrand, the Champion of Order—in fact, he fears him most among all gods because he cannot escape such a vow and, if he were to reveal the extent of his trickery, he would be banished from Holmring, leaving him defenseless before the horrors who would ensnare him with the crystal device. If cornered, he would therefore side with Khrâlia and seek forgiveness, at least for now.

Thraldûr is a twisted-looking dwarf, with silver-gray hair and beard. He wears white breeches and a vest now missing a button. His outfit is complete with a red shirt and stockings, a pair of red shoes with argent buckles, and a crimson cloak. As he is thought by many an evil deity, Thraldûr's shrines are generally hidden. The most important one poses as a mint facility in Makhfold, the city of bankers. Preferred temple offerings include gems, precious metals, gifts of lands or mining businesses, or jewelry (especially if stolen or obtained through trickery).

Preferred Divine Favor: *Hallowed Veil* (see Table 10, score of 15).
Preferred animal/monster: Squirrels and snakes.
Preferred weapon/spell: Chakram (or charm spells). The chakram is roughly equivalent in damage and range to a hatchet; if the attack score is at least half what was needed to hit, the weapon ricochets back to its owner (walls and other deflecting obstacles are needed for the chakram to ricochet).
Other Benefits: Pious followers of Thraldûr have an aversion for oaths and do not willingly swear to anything other than serving their spiritual patron.

Personal Devices

Personal devices were first introduced in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 86. Though this section lies at the end of the chapter on dwarven gods, the items described here can be granted in some form or another to pious followers of any creed. Actual combat or armor bonuses are up to the referee.

Brunk's Brandistock: At first glance a simple staff, this pole arm reveals three sharp, serrated prongs during combat (otherwise hidden inside its shaft). With a critical hit, the prongs skewer an opponent and his/her spirit form. With a failed defensive check, the opponent suffers unhealable damage and falls unconscious, or is killed outright if the check failed catastrophically. The weapon enables its owner to detect within 90' defilers of his/her temple and transgressors of its laws.

Death Seeker: Once per day, this mighty bow enables its owner to release one arrow at a foe, including one ducking past a door, rounding a corner, teleporting away, turning incorporeal, etc. Taken during the next combat action, the shot unerringly finds its mark regardless of any obstacles or the quarry's true form and whereabouts. The foe must succeed a defensive check or become paralyzed for up to 8 hours. The bow can locate specific objects or people once daily.

Ghostwing: Once per day, this gray cloak enables its owner and all carried non-living equipment to become incorporeal for 10 minutes. In this form, the owner is invisible and able to cast magic, though still vulnerable to magical weapons and spells. Weapons and magical items cannot be used while incorporeal. A failed defensive check against an anti-magic spell will return both owner and cloak to their physical forms. The cloak is sentient and smart enough to act as a messenger.

Granthar's Mace: When striking a hated foe of its maker (or a servant of such), this weapon summons a whirlwind of flame, water, ice, or sand (as appropriate to the creed). Aside from suffering a fair amount of magical damage, the foe is flung upward 30'-40' and sideways in a random direction. The effect takes place once per day. This mace can otherwise bestow moderate healing or enable its owner to recall one spell already cast.

Hauberk of Meliston: This ultra-light chain mail traps spells cast directly at its owner. If a defense check against the spell attack succeeds, the armor enables its owner to instantly "blink" away to a visible spot within 30'. It is sentient (Int 72, Wis 61, Cha 83) and often sings its maker's glory when its owner marches to battle. Its personality directly reflects its maker's. It can detect magic and warn its owner if any is cast without his/her knowledge.

Korban's Revenge: Recorded in arcane lore as a berserker's axe, this weapon grants the ability to strike back each and every time a melee attack succeeds against its owner. Counterattacks are not under the owner's control and must be performed. Critical hits bear a minimal chance of severing a random body part, but these odds increase with each successful strike. Though immune to mind-altering effects, the owner remains unable to retreat from combat once the axe has tasted blood.

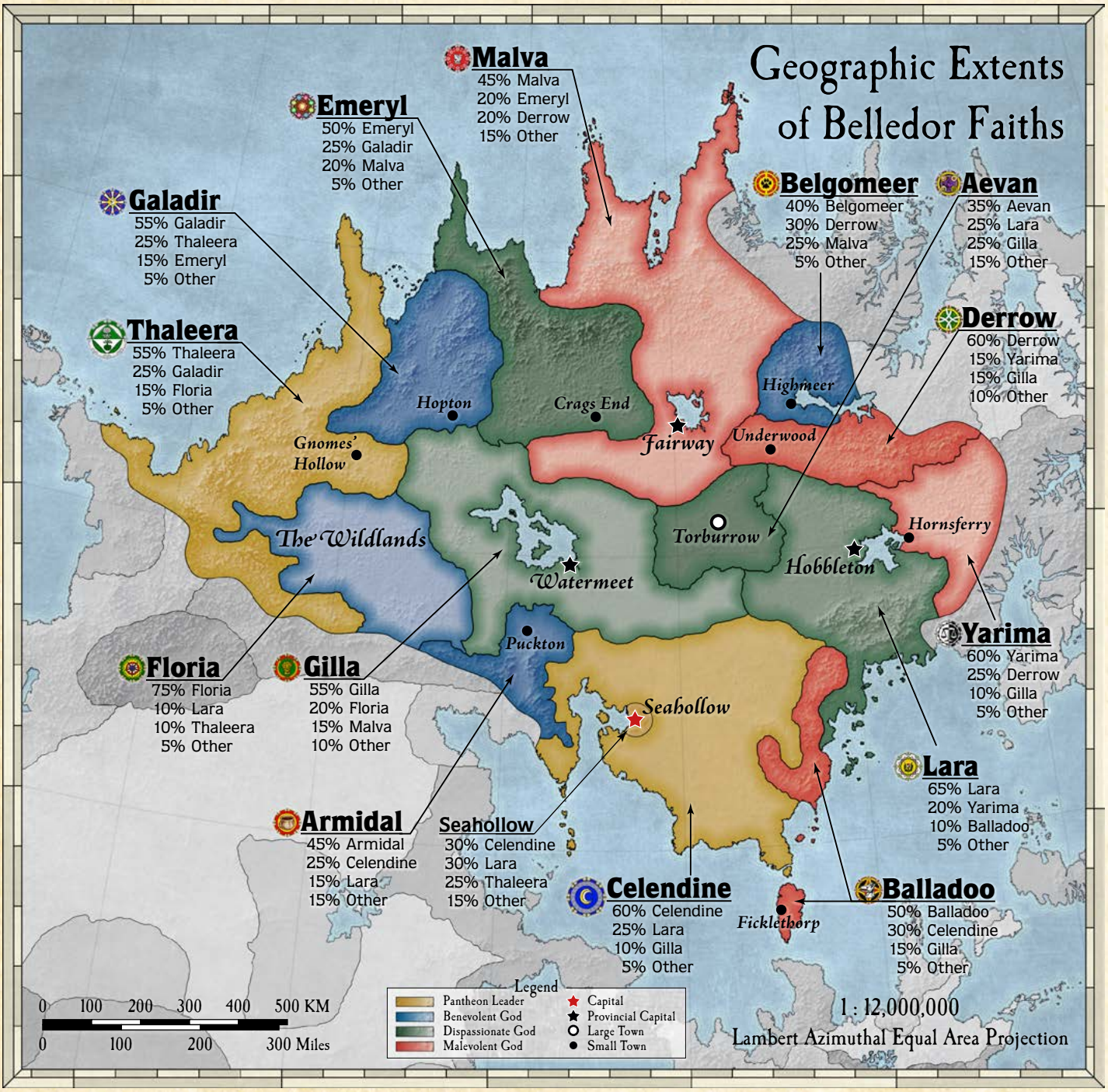
Nightswift: Once per day, this short blade enables its owner to attack a visible foe up to 120' away when in a shadowy environment (at night or in a poorly-lit dungeon for example). As the owner makes a stabbing gesture with the blade, a shadow forms behind the foe, unerringly performs the attack, and vanishes. A shadow attack either bears poison or inflicts paralyzing damage (both negated with defense checks). *Nightswift* enables its owner to detect invisible creatures.

Singhal's Sling: In its owner's hand, this apparently unremarkable sling transforms its projectiles to produce various magical effects. Small stones turn into a foot-wide sticky, resilient web (connected or not to the owner with a strand), while metal pellets produce small explosive fire beetles that can fly around obstacles. Though damage is Low, projectiles return to their previous form at the end of a combat encounter. The owner is able to perform "called shots" at no penalty.

Twine of Galabar: This small piece of twine can turn on command into an unbreakable 60' long lariat. In this form, it is similar to a wizard's companion and can manipulate objects (50% to all ability ratings). If the owner's attack succeeds, the rope entangles and solidly binds a foe. It can be commanded to stretch upward, tether itself to an object, unfasten itself, or return to its original twine form. It is also immune to fire and edged weapons.

Wand of Selenee: Once per day, this wizard's wand enables its owner to steal unused magic from a spellcasting foe. A die is rolled to determine the potency (SP) of what is stolen; an actual spell is then picked randomly. Fully conscious of the stolen magic's nature, the owner may trigger it at a later time, or convert it into a healing effect of comparable potency. If the owner suffers lethal harm, the wand absorbs all the damage and disintegrates.

Gods of Belledor



Belledor is peculiar in that two pantheons share the realm. Calidar's native fellfolk initially claimed this northern land. Over time, however, gnomes immigrated chiefly from Alfdaín and Araldûr, taking over the hills and mountains of Belledor's outskirts, while the fellfolk thrived in the fertile valleys and plains. Two main faiths are therefore described in this chapter, the *Masters of Berylea* (gnomes) and the *Masters of Morever Meadows* (fellfolk). Though followers of the two cults coexist without trouble, their pantheons remain generally separate. As gnomes and fellfolk became better acquainted with each other's histories and traditions, the lines between their faiths blurred, progressively reflecting location more than racial origins. The percentages listed on Belledor's geographical map refer to the proportion of inhabitants honoring certain deities. These numbers are relevant only to the dominating race. For example, Heartlands' statistics involve fellfolk inhabitants; gnomes who may also live there typically honor Berylean deities prevailing nearby (such as Armidal, Galadir, and Emeryl). The opposite also holds true with fellfolk residents in predominantly gnomish areas.

Masters of Berylea

Gnomes	Interests
⑤ *Thaleera* *(the-Wanderer)*	Luck, wit
Armidal Copperpot[5]	Healers
Balladoo-of-the-Hoo	Mirth, trickery
Belgomeer Fablesong	Fate, bards, seers
Derrow Flickerhand	Magic
Emeryl Starglitter	Earth, mountains
Galadir Blackmattock	Peace, protectors

(Pronounced: berry-LEE-ah) Gnomes typically favor gnomish gods, but if born outside Belledor, they may adopt beliefs common to their native lands or the Calderan faiths. They are, however, very unlikely to honor dwarven or elven deities. Gnomish philosophies are usually found in any area with hills or mountains, including Alfdaín and Araldûr, where they are tolerated (but not encouraged). As with all others, foreign philosophies are outlawed for residents of Narwan and Ellyrion. Likewise, gnomish faiths are against the law on all three of Calidar's moons, and punishable by death by Alorea's Tòrr-Gàrraidh and Munaan's Inquisition.

There are two types of gnomes in Belledor: those whose forebears hailed from Alorea, and those who originated on Kragdûr. Though they look similar, they originally spoke either elvish or dwarvish, since they are a race native to both moons. Their traditions, cultures, mannerisms, accents, and expressions differ as a result of their ancestral backgrounds. Calidar's gnomes speak the languages prevailing in the realms where they grew up. Belledoran is a colonial-era language derived from ancient fellfolk, Ellyrian, elvish, and dwarvish. The moons' two ancient gnomish languages have been forgotten for more than a thousand years by all but mages who speak them when casting spells. Therefore, gnomish spellcasters can tell their kin's origins from how their spells sound. As regards their gods, some ascended from Alorea, others from Kragdûr. Only one, the current pantheon's ruler, knows her origins as a deity who was once honored on both moons.

All but one of the truly ancient gods vanished during the wars that opposed gnomes against elves and dwarves, sinking into obscurity for lack of mortal followers and rising later as entirely different entities with new histories. (The previous two chapters describe these conflicts.) The only one who survived this onslaught, Thaleera-the-Wanderer, became Berylea's ruler. Her identity and character were reshaped as her followers' mindsets shifted during and after their catastrophic fall from grace. Her current peers ascended or re-emerged during the gnomes' ensuing long captivity. The persecution of their followers led these deities to dislike and distrust the elven and dwarven pantheons. On the other hand, the more constructive attitudes of Calidar's Alfdaíners and the Araldûras toward other races in general has helped alleviate some of the gnomes' enduring bitterness. Certainly, Calderan gnomes are far better off than their lunar kin. *Masters of Berylea* strive to protect their mortal followers and covet a time when gnomes of Alorea and Kragdûr will become free. Smarting from her past experience, Thaleera promotes goodwill with neighbors, peace, and prosperity as long-term strategies to restore the gnomes to their former grandeur—though a much more benevolent one. Among other pantheons, she favors first and foremost the *Masters of Morever Meadows,* who stand for another oppressed people. Nordheim's Asgard comes next, followed by Meryath's Halls of Ardorín and the Heavenly Valley (the half-elven people of Phrydias never clashed with the gnomes, many of whom live in the island's mystical mountains). Gods of Caldwen seem altogether strange and ominous to Thaleera and her peers, yet so much less insufferable than those of the Briarwoods or Holmring.

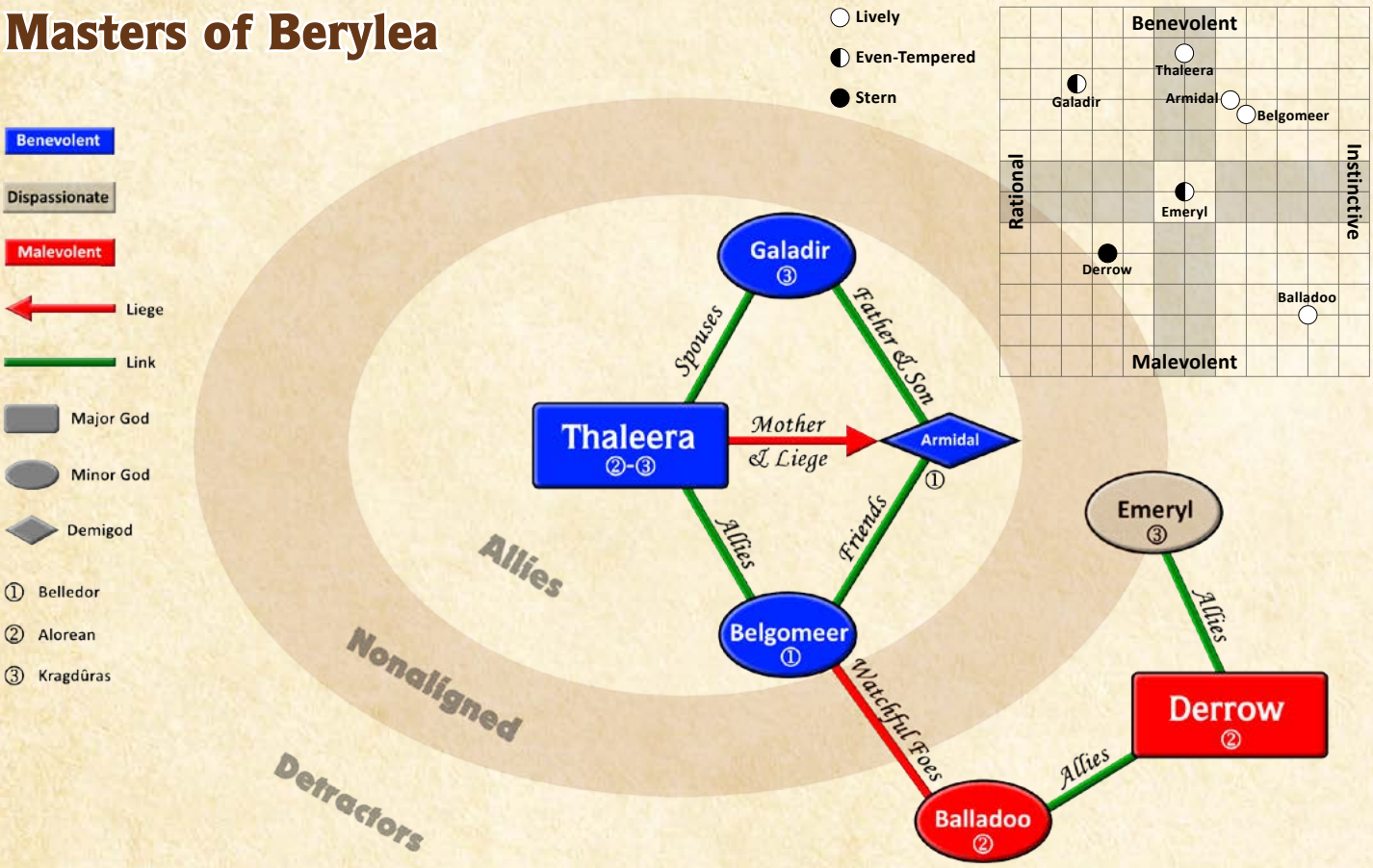
Given that the gnomes' cults have been forbidden on both Alorea and Kragdûr, their tradition remains fundamentally oral. They do not possess "holy scriptures" per se. Divine tales and rituals are freely taught in Belledor or secretly where forbidden. Out of respect and devotion to the divine, the true faithful take the time and effort to commit to memory what ought to be passed on to future generations. The history of gnomish gods, such as it has become today, is part of the *Anisama,* a series of songs originating with *The Imprisonment.* On Thaleera's behalf, neither the faithful nor the divine willingly speak of the times preceding their long captivity. It is also a tacit understanding among elven and dwarven deities to suppress memory of that era. Thaleera and her peers await the time when the *Truth* will be revealed, but not before the gnomes regain their rightful place among the races, an eventuality that puts the denizens of the Briarwoods and Holmring ill at ease. Common services and ceremonies are set down in the *Thousand Rites of the Nobolnian.* All could be written down, but it would be seen as offending the gods. Some well-meaning human sages sometimes wish to compile lore of the gnomes' traditions and their mysteriously shrouded past, but local priors try to discourage them. Clerical symbols are worn beneath one's clothing; it is considered impolite and condescending not to do so, if not downright provocative in certain realms. A prior's discreet gestures and veiled metaphors related to the *Anisama* or the *Nobolnian Rites* are enough for believers to plainly recognize a speaker of the faith. Jewelry and flashy attire remain uncommon among the priesthood.

Secular and spiritual leaderships are separate among Belledoran gnomes. Neither has authority over the other. Hereditary aristocracy finds its origins in those who took charge of their companions during *The Imprisonment*, guiding undercover resistance against their oppressors. These networks are very much still in place on the two moons. During the colonial era, however, covert leaders known as masterminds, cloak captains, and dagger sergeants became hereditary earls administering villages and surrounding lands in Belledor. Priors are concerned with defending the faith. Though the various cults own revenue-generating property, priors also rely on donations from the faithful, which aren't hard to obtain. They collect no formal tithe from the people or from the leadership. Priors often act as advisors to the earls, for which they are well paid. Though secular powers select which prior or cult in which they wish to enroll, the head of the prevailing faith in the region may approve or deny a new earl, provided there are other immediate heirs to the title (sons, daughters, siblings, or eligible regents). A prevailing cult's influence is such that few aspiring earls would challenge such a ruling.

Common Attributes

Pious followers of Berylean cults possess an inherent affinity with wizardly magic. Those who have chosen a career path other than that of mage can always cast one neophyte spell per day, chosen at the time of their faith's confirmation ceremony. Gnomish mages decide each day whether to activate this spell in addition to others they can normally cast, or to cancel it in exchange for trading another spell for one from the next highest proficiency. Pious followers also have the skill to appraise the value of gems (Int). Gnomes of other cults do not gain these abilities. Wherever

Masters of Berylea



common attributes suggested here duplicate or conflict with racial abilities established in the referee's chosen game system, use the latter.

Genesis

Millions of years from what sapient-kind calls the Common Era, Calidar's world soul made gnomes appear on both Alorea and Kragdûr. It was the dawn of the Age of Gnomes. Clever and small, they lived on hills, hiding among rocks, and dwelling in caves well protected from fearsome predators. The broken terrain made it child's play to set traps, capture prey, and feed many. A time came when the hills alone could no longer support these growing tribes. On Alorea, adventurers and outcasts departed to the giant forests in the valleys. Under the influence of the world soul, these gnomes changed and became elves, leaner, taller, and more agile, able to take advantage of their new domain. On Kragdûr, outcasts sought depths beneath the moon's colossal mountains. The world soul led them to become dwarves, stout and rough to better cope with their cold, stony abyss.

25,000 BCE Life for the departed of both moons remained harsh and precarious during the long time it took for their natures to change. Meanwhile, the Elder Tribes thriving in the hills earned a better understanding of the magical forces at work around them. They knew many spirits of nature, communed with the world soul, and trusted shamans to protect them. Their sorcerers' tribal magic and all fey things fascinated them.

8100 BCE Gnomes wondered about the link between the one great source of life and the many magical spirits around them, who they were, and what they wanted. Later on, gnomes questioned their own origins. Since they believed they sprang from the depths of the world soul, they concluded that they were akin to nature's spirits, or rather, that spirits ought to exist in the image of gnomes. A new cult soon came to light on Alorea, based on an omen predicting one greater spirit rising above all others. Since these tribes were matriarchal, the shamans saw this commanding spirit as a female gnome embodying the world soul. They hailed the coming of a divine entity and called her Thala, mistress of magic and queen of all gnomes. A mere century later, this new deity inspired kinfolk on Kragdûr to honor her as well, under the alias Eeria. Thus did the gnomes of both moons unwittingly come to adopt a common faith associated with different divine names. During the thousands of years following, new gods ascended on both moons. Meeker ones sank into obscurity as their followers adopted other beliefs. Bolder ones survived and extended their cults to the other moon, but always under the aegis of Thala and Eeria. Since this happened, the fortunes of gnomes on both moons became inextricably intertwined, but not necessarily for the best.

4500 BCE By this time, the gnomes of both moons had acquired primitive writing, built city states, erected many fine temples, enjoyed relatively comfortable and enlightened lives, and were mastering primitive forms of magic-use that did not require praying to the gods. Meanwhile, Alorean gnomes observed their elven cousins. They seemed quite lazy, taking all the time in the world to make any sort of decision,

and relying on the goodness of the forest for their safety and wellbeing. The elves had no writing ability other than artful paintings on tree trunks, built no cities the gnomes would recognize as such, and ever so quaintly persisted in honoring faceless spirits of nature. Neither had these poor fellows mastered bronze making, favoring instead traditional polished stone or wooden utensils. The same scenario took place on Kragdûr, where dwarves were seen as downright brutish and uncouth when they began spreading on the planet's surface. This didn't sit well with the smaller, hyper-active, goal-oriented gnomes. Since elves and dwarves evidently did not remotely look like the elder gods, they were declared children of lesser races and ruthlessly kept out of gnomish society and off their lands.

2400 BCE Clever as always, Alorean gnomes were first to master several forms of advanced magic-use. They'd grown wealthy, arrogant, and jaded. The elder realms ruled the moon and still shunned the elves. But with limitless might came corruption. Depravity followed and beckoned decadence. Gnomes easily subjugated the nature-loving elves and bound them to become their slaves. During the next two thousand years, decaying morality by the masses of Alorean gnomes slowly led them to adopt more ominous views about the gods and the powers they granted. Neither did anyone question the ethics of unbound magic-use, when the end always justified the means. At first, the gods punished the most pernicious of the faithful, but over time, divine ethos began reflecting the followers' unrelenting wickedness. The gods slowly changed. So did the nature of their communion with Kragdûr's priors, initiating the other moon's descent into darkness. Meanwhile, Alorean gnomes wielded unspeakable magic, breeding elves to suit their whims. Their kin on Kragdûr became greedy and manipulative. Mired in political intrigue and internal rivalry, the elder realms on both moons bickered continually about status and tribute.

580 BCE At the lowest ebb of gnomish civilization, wars flared on Alorea like boils on diseased flesh. Mayhem soon followed on Kragdûr. Out of the chaos rose two new deities, one from the elves and the other from the dwarves. Yearning for what had been denied them for so long, the lesser races crushed the elder realms. Within less than a century, the moons witnessed the Age of Gnomes' twilight. All but one of the original deities fell into obscurity during the long era of *The Imprisonment*, while their followers atoned for their failure and questioned their faiths. As the numbers of mournful gnomes dwindled under captivity, as their lore faded into darkness, and as their skills were dulled in the dimness of dungeons and the gloom of slavery, some still clung to ancient beliefs—Thala here, and Eeria there. Facing spiritual extinction, the elder goddess recalled her Kragdûras alias to herself, consolidating her followers under one cult. She became known as Thaleera and, as a consequence of her rebirth, her priors on both moons learned of their kin hidden on Calidar's opposite side. They spoke to each other through prayers.

250 BCE Under the yoke of their overseers, the gnomes clung to their new faith, one that preached hope for a better future. A far cry from the self-serving religion the twin goddesses had once represented, it called instead for gnomes to help each other and cope with their hardships, like iron beaten on the anvil of fate. Thaleera became the patron of wit and good fortune needed to survive the harsher, grittier new world. To forestall despair and racial oblivion, she also advocated matrimony and fertility, something that was regarded with derision at the height of gnomish civilization—few at that time wanted the burden of progeny whom they suspected might later turn against them. A falling birth rate and an aging population abusing magic to extend their lives became the root cause for the elder realms' ultimate inability to keep elves and dwarves at bay.

It was during this time that Alorean elves performed the *Great Cleansing*, scouring all tangible evidence of gnomish culture from the land, and replacing it with their own. So did the dwarves. To finish the work, the elven gods then invoked the *Spell of Erasing*, removing all memory of their ancient history from the minds of elves and gnomes, save for the distrust of the elder race. The gods of the dwarves allowed the spell to affect their mortal followers as well, seeing this as a useful development. So did Thaleera. Isolated and outnumbered, she wasn't about to defy both the Briarwoods and Holmring. In her opinion, veiling the gnomes' darker past wasn't necessarily a bad thing while she endeavored to recast their faith under a brighter light. And she had another plan. However powerful the elven spell, it did not alter the minds of gods conscious at the time. Thaleera remained the protector of ancient lore, and she would not reveal its secrets until such time as her divine peers could withstand the gods of elves and dwarves. Only when the gnomes earned respect from the other mortal races would she reveal to her priors the darker days of old so that the elder folk would never again fall from grace.

150 BCE However veiled their natural character, gnomes nonetheless retained their fascination for all things magic. It earned them elven suspicion. Dwarves, who could only pray for the magic of gods, realized their captives could cast magic on their own—this was a concern. They coveted the elder folk's ability to perform enchantments, which reinforced their need to keep the gnomes under strict control. These gnomish talents revived a god of yore. With memories limited to the Alorean faithful who summoned him, Derrow Flickerhand rose as the new patron of magic, a bitter and shadowy figure who failed to understand Thaleera's game. He knew she hid something from him when he questioned her about the fey darkness shrouding the gnomes' past. She refused to speak of it.

50 BCE Other gods followed, rising from their mysterious slumbers or coming to life from new cults. Next to ascend was Galadir Blackmattock, a champion of peace born of Kragdûras hopes, as inspiring as Derrow was dour and somber. Thaleera, the single elder god, watched over both carefully, cautioning them from tangling with denizens of Holmring and the Briarwoods. Perceiving the clear and present peril, all remained in the Ambrosian shadows until they could build their own magical home called the Mounds of Berylea. Another realm already existed, however. Much older, it exuded the evils of Thaleera's erstwhile and forsaken pantheons. She'd removed from the abandoned abode the dormant forms of those for whom mortal faith had failed. One by one, she scattered her peers' remains in the Ambrosian, burying them deep where, she hoped, few if any could find them. Thaleera veiled their graves and the old domain's gates from both mortal and divine sight, and vowed never to reveal their existence to the new gods. What was once known as the *Obsidian Heart* remains locked and wisely cloaked from memory, forever concealing whatever odious beasts lurk within.

The Mounds of Berylea

The domain of the gnomes' later gods includes a vast territory of rolling hills overgrown with flora of living beryl. Though three deities participated in the building of this magical realm, only one is seen as an elder god: Thaleera. In truth, co-creator Derrow predates the *Spell of Erasing.* By rights, he should stand as an elder god. That he cannot remember his

true origins rules against him. Nonetheless, like Thaleera, he and Galadir hold courts of their own, their palaces dug from beneath great hills. They are named, respectively, *Eeremond, Derrowyn,* and *Galador*. All other gods of Berylea reside with one or the other. The sacred mounds do not possess an underworld. By a curious twist of fate, Thaleera negotiated with Celendine, the ruler of fellfolk gods, to harbor the spirits of forsaken gnomes in her domain, care of Yarima-of-the-Hand.

The gnomes do not have a god of death. Thaleera does not want a god of death. The one who'd once existed was wicked enough that the Mistress of Good Fortune does not wish to tempt fate and ever see such an entity rise again. When they lose a loved one, gnomes pray to any of the Berylean gods, save perhaps Armidal and Balladoo. Prayers for the dead generally beseech gods to safeguard the spirits of the departed as they journey back to the Great Pool of Magic whence they may rise again. It is widely accepted that the most deserving in the eyes of their spiritual patrons will stay at the mounds to serve the gods. The least deserving are forever forsaken in the far reaches of the netherworld. A part of the *Obsidian Heart* had once been built as a place of utter sorrow. Some of the wickedest spirits still dwell there, left to their own devices since the Age of Gnomes ended.

Gods of the Gnomes

Since Thaleera was reborn as a benevolent deity, she has endeavored to inspire the gnomes on the two moons to survive and endure. Her goal is to reach a time when dwarves and elves will accept gnomes as peers rather than a lesser people. She does much to garner sympathy from the gods of fellfolk and humans, with whom her kind had little interaction before the colonial wars. She therefore preaches kindness, good humor, and unsinkable persistence during adversity. By virtue of the fact she is the present pantheon's "first" deity, she has been accepted as its ruler and its sole elder deity. On the down side, Derrow neither agrees with her philosophy nor does he trust her. So far, Balladoo-of-the-Hoo and Emeryl Starglitter have aligned with him. Thaleera's husband Galadir Blackmattock, their son Armidal Copperpot, and Belgomeer Fablesong stand with her. Despite their disagreement on the proper relationship with elves and dwarves, the gods of the gnomes will come together should their followers be threatened. Of them, Thaleera is the most worried about reprisals against gnomes of Kragdûr and Alorea.



Thaleera-the-Wanderer

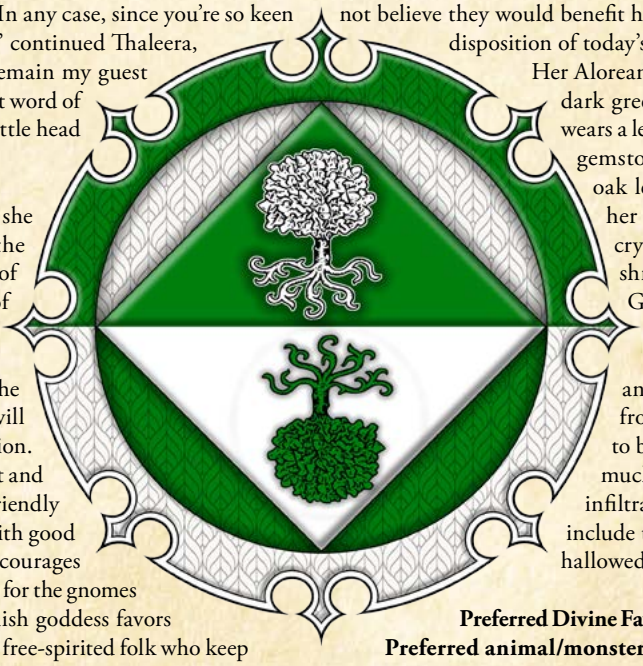
Epithets: *Eternal Light of the Gnomes, Elder-Born*
Ranking: Ruling goddess of the gnomes; elder peer
Interests: Wit, good fortune, matrimony, fertility, hearth
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–9 (friendly, altruistic, humble, merciful, considerate, generous, truthful, trusting, magnanimous), ☻ *Practical* (though patient and stubborn as regards her goals, she is otherwise curious and adventurous), ↯ *Lively*–5 (mirthful, witty, passionate, sentimental, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Galadir Blackmattock (husband), Armidal Copperpot (son), and Belgomeer Fablesong (ally)
Hated Foes: Kobolds and their gods
Centers of Faith: Openly in Belledor's northwest, parts of Phrydias, and Osriel (Oosterdam and Novezia areas, see page 166); covertly on Kragdûr and Alorea, as well as in Araldûr and Alfdaín
Day of Ascendance: Pre-rebirth, circa 7800 BCE; Thala and Eeria's rebirth as Thaleera, Calidere 22, 575 BCE; Date remembered and celebrated, Loreath 11, 250 BCE (immediately after the *Spell of Erasing*)
Pronunciation: thal-LEER-rah

Mythology: In the beginning reigned the darkness of terror and barbarism. From its midst rose Thaleera, *Eternal Light of the Gnomes*, called forth from the sorrow of her people in the face of their *Imprisonment*. In her infinite wisdom, her believers found hope and courage to live on despite their plight. Her message dawned within the minds of her faithful, leading them from the dimness of the past to seek a brighter future. Powerful were the gods of the overseers. But wit and good fortune always kept Thaleera a step ahead of those who sought to blot her from existence. Gods who were her enemies searched for her, rancorous and relentless. Their priors knew from tortured mortals that she'd defied the overseers as she encouraged her gnomefolk. Unafraid, she embraced at once the forbidden universe of other gods, and with utter impunity trod past their realm's mighty gates. As if she knew this magical land like the back of her hand, Thaleera eluded her pursuers, leaving them to a welter of divine frustration and mounting wrath. Unseen, unheard, unharmed, she found a secure and well-hidden site of her own, constructed by mysterious others departed long ago. Heavenly cunning allowed her entrance despite undying watchmen and powerful charms veiling the site. These protections would hide Thaleera as well and, as if driven by a common purpose, warn her of approaching peril.

In her loneliness, she searched for errant spirits of her fallen followers. Cautiously, she ventured from her lair to guide those who'd become lost in the world of the dead. She led most to rejoin the Great Pool of Magic. A hallowed few returned with her, furtive and cautious, to serve her. Among them were those talented enough in the art of gnomish magic to trick the uncanny vigilance of elves and dwarves. These incarnates would, for a time, covertly teach the skills her faithful needed to defy their overseers. Many succeeded; however, all fell in the course of their work. The most exalted perished after unspeakable horrors inflicted by their captors, leaving a legacy of martyrdom. The struggle against oppression persisted. The gnomes learned the ways of the cloak and the dagger, while priors on two moons quietly communed with their sole mistress.

It was on one such journey to seek lost spirits that Thaleera encountered a strange being she recognized as a demigod of kobolds. Annoyed that she had spotted him in the mist, he straightened, defiant and mighty. "I know who you are, Thaleera Runaway Queen," he said in a snarly, hissing drawl.

"I see you vanish over there, where I can't follow. It must be where you hide. I know those who would pay dearly to learn of this." Undaunted, Thaleera crossed her arms and considered the intruder's threat. "Understand this, godling of misbegotten blood, there are some with whom you should not trifle. I have slain darker things than the likes of you." The divine kobold snorted in derision. "Stay your ground, gnome. My peers know all about you, and they'll reveal your secret if I don't return. Give me some of those tasty followers of yours, and I shall keep quiet . . . for now." Thaleera shook her head. "Nay, I ken your sort, kobold wretch. You have no peer, and you are far too greedy and quarrelsome to share secrets with anyone else. It is your misfortune that I saw you, and your undoing for not fleeing when you could." On these words, her servants and enchanted watchmen who'd been prowling behind him piled upon the godling and strung him up in ways that even divine magic could not undo. "In any case, since you're so keen to see this place which you cannot enter," continued Thaleera, "I shall now take you inside. You shall remain my guest for a very long time. And if it happens that word of my whereabouts gets around, your ugly little head will be first to roll."



Description: Thaleera veils the fact she ascended thousands of years prior to the gnomes' *Imprisonment*. She is the keeper of the gnomes' ancient lore. In the wake of her long descent into evil as Alorea's Thala and Kragdûr's Eeria, and her subsequent rebirth as a single benevolent goddess, she works hard to promote what she believes will lead her followers to improve their condition. Though she is honored as the patron of wit and good fortune, she also preaches fair and friendly behavior, as well as unsinkable tenacity with good humor in the face of adversity. She also encourages fruitful matrimony and hard work as a way for the gnomes to regain their past grandeur. This gnomish goddess favors happy-go-lucky, adventuresome, creative, free-spirited folk who keep their wits about them no matter what. She protects those at their best when their world is at its worst.

Thaleera prophesies the elves and dwarves of the moons will see the error of their ways and come to live in peace and harmony with their elder kin. With time, she is convinced the gnomes will show the righteous path, and wisdom will come to all. Until then, she encourages her Calderan followers to master the lands in Belledor which were generously given them, and spread from there to neighboring realms. She inspires her faithful on the moons to resist oppression. Hidden among them are her priors, covert leaders of gnomish resistance. They seek to sway Alorean elves and Kragdûras dwarves to their cause of defeating the oppressive regimes there and to view the elder folk as allies rather than captives. Thaleera also wages a war with the kobolds. When she and her peers abandoned her old hidden lair and moved into Berylea, her "guest" Kabakuluk of the Kobolds was unceremoniously kicked out. News that he'd been her hostage reached his priors, which provoked flames of hatred, secretly fanned by unkind gods such as Ashebai and Brâlkha Shadowfist (Thaleera's sinister stalkers after her rebirth). As a side note, the hidden lair in Ambrosia, which she'd built well before the gnomish civilization's demise, remains available should misfortune befall the *Masters of Berylea*.

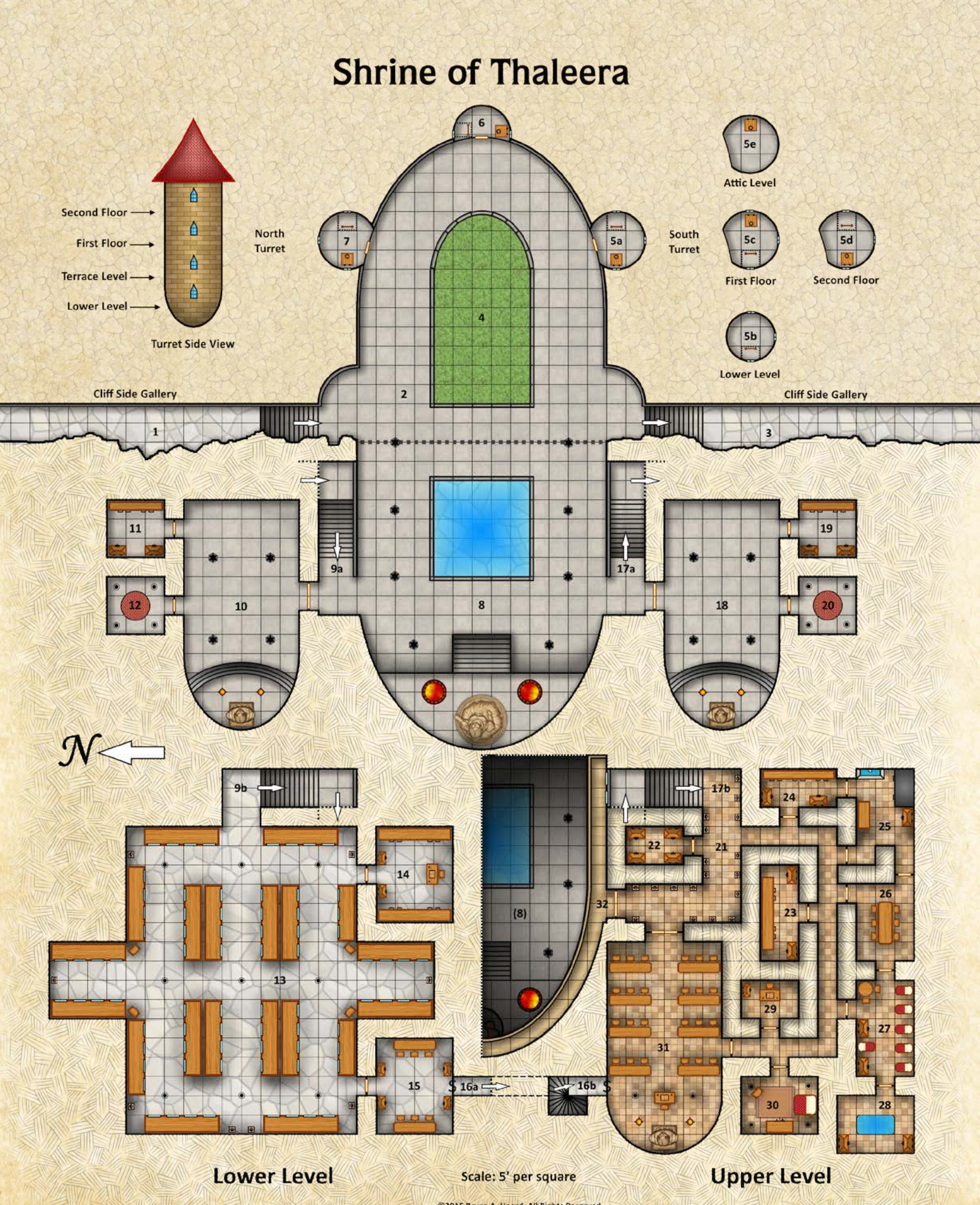
Not long after mortals began honoring Galadir Blackmattock, he and Thaleera declared their mutual love. He swore ever to remain her loyal champion, and to this day they endeavor to change the fate of gnomes. From their union came a son, Armidal Copperpot, a kind and devoted demigod. A third supporter joined the elder goddess's inner circle, Belgomeer Fablesong—once a demigod, he recently ascended as a grateful and trustworthy peer. Celendine of the Fellfolk is Thaleera's good friend, and the two often meet to share strategies benefitting their followers. Still bitter about Thaleera's refusal to shed light on the gnomes' ancient past, Derrow Flickerhand is now her detractor. He objects to her strategy because he doesn't share her faith in elven and dwarven good sense prevailing in the end. Thaleera still hopes to sway him to the brighter side sooner or later. Those loyal to him are Emeryl Starglitter and the psychopathic Balladoo-of-the-Hoo. There are other gods lying dormant in Ambrosia who could be revived. Thaleera does not speak of them, for they were profoundly evil in nature. She does not believe they would benefit her pantheon, even with the more positive disposition of today's gnomes.

Her Alorean followers depict Thaleera as a deity with dark green skin and eyes nearly translucent. She wears a leather jerkin and pants studded with small gemstones and imprinted with the outlines of oak leaves. Those of Kragdûras origins prefer her with tan skin and patterns suggesting crystal formations on her clothes. Her main shrine is in an excavation in the cliff near Gnomes' Hollow in the Wildlands. It houses a museum of cartography, and is also a front for covert information about Kragdûr and Alorea. Amazingly, fragments of maps from Lao-Kwei and Draconia are rumored to be there. The two lunar empires suspect as much, and their spies have been attempting to infiltrate the premises. Favored temple offerings include the remains of past martyrs returned to a hallowed altar and blessed.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Hallowed Veil* (see Table 10, score of 15).
Preferred animal/monster: Doves and white birds in general.
Preferred weapon/spell: Short sword (or spells related to invisibility, silence, and stealth).
Other Benefits: At each stage of their career advancement, priors on Kragdûr or Alorea can commune with a peer on the opposite moon. This communion can take place once per month with a roll of 1-2 on a d6, and allow a ten minute exchange of thoughts.

Staff of Thaleera: The worthiest of gnomes honoring Thaleera may at times be granted the use of a personal device (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 86) shaped to resemble Thaleera's own staff. The object is made of white wood carved with interlaced oak leaves or studded with small ornamental stones. At the top sits the carving of a dove. When wielded, foes within 120' radius of the owner must roll a defensive check. Those who fail must stop fighting (or cannot initiate attacks) and leave. If successful, the enchantment lasts an hour and uses one of the staff's original 12 charges. When all charges are spent, the staff vanishes. Attempting to attack those affected, whether successfully or not, negates the effect. Those who roll a critical failure on their defensive checks become friendly with the owner's party (until attacked or endowed with a magic-canceling spell). The staff also has the ability to cure or revive small animals at will (squirrels, birds, rabbits, etc.)

Shrine of Thaleera



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Armidal Copperpot



Epithets: *Boarslayer, Heartfyre of Belledor*
Ranking: Demigod, Temporal of Belledoran gnomes
Interests: Healers, alchemists, charity, compassion, romance
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–6 (friendly, altruistic, merciful, truthful, trusting, magnanimous), 💀 *Instinctive*–3 (unpredictable, bold, and adventurous), 🗲 *Lively*–4 (mirthful, romantic, feisty, and rather shameless)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Thaleera-the-Wanderer (mother and honored ruler of Berylea), Galadir Blackmattock (father), and Belgomeer Fablesong (friend)
Hated Foes: Wereboars, their spiritual patrons, and all things pig-like and evil
Centers of Faith: Openly in Belledor's southwest; covertly in Araldûr and Alfdaín
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 14, 1201 CE
Pronunciation: ARM-mee-dahl

Mythology: He had the wit of his mother. He had the mien of his father. But none could tell from whom he acquired a spirit larger than life—nay, larger than eternity. Though he was no peer of Berylea, there was nothing *demi-* about his nascent godhood. Feisty yet debonair, owning audacity edging on insolence, oft did he trouble the serene peace under the Mounds of Berylea, upstaging anyone who'd give him an inch, stepping forth to speak his mind and the minds of others too if they'd let him, and seizing every opportunity to enjoy immortality to its fullest. Exasperated by the boy-god's antics, *the Dour, the Brooding,* and *the Wicked* complained to his parents. In the face of mounting remonstrations and petty jealousy, his mother and father had no choice but to send him off to the world of mortals to glean divine wisdom, earn much needed humility, and prove his worth. Unabashed and with his usual enthusiasm, Armidal donned his copper-hued helm, swung a red cloak over his shoulder, grasped his sword, and with a flourish departed.

In the mean streets of Seahollow, not a wee speck of mud or horse filth ever besmirched his boots. The gleam of his smile dispelled shadows in somber alleys. His voice ravished hearts, and with his brawn he won the admiration of all. No one knew his true name, and that suited Armidal fine. He once returned from a journey in Alfdaín during which he'd plundered much booty from Alorean traffickers unwisely dwelling near the border. Gold changed hands in more taverns than one could count. After a day of revelry, his companions of fortune out for the count under the table, Armidal left for a bit of fresh air. Along came Leelora Cobblewell, an alluring wench, whom he knew was married to the head of the millers' guild. As a fine young gnome, he had a talent for love. A glint from her eye and a furtive smile was all that was needed, and the two promptly vanished into the miller's house.

Per chance, Master Cobblewell was out. Shoes and boots were flung on the stairs, pants were caught on the bannister, her dress dangled from a chandelier's branch, and the matrimonial bed was put to the test forthwith. Goose down drifted in air, woodwork groaned. The rapturous union came to a halt when the front door slammed shut. "My husband!" gasped Leelora. "Quick, get out!" Without hesitation, the saucy wench shoved her accomplice through the nearest window before rushing to collect the evidence they so imprudently left behind. Naked and hanging from the sill, Armidal pondered his options. Staying would endanger the few things not yet savaged, sweet Leelora's honor and marriage. Thus, Armidal skillfully maneuvered across the brickwork. As he passed another window, eager hands pulled him inside. It was Grunella, the neighborhood's matron. He'd forgotten about her, a large and buxom brunette ecstatic at such a fine gift dangling at her casement. Her bold and rough manner wasn't altogether unpleasant, and Armidal took the challenge. "O divine love!" she screamed. "Yes?" inquired the demigod. Her bedding derelict and his blood on fire, Armidal prevailed, and the matron passed out.

As he sneaked out of the chamber, heavy stomping rose from the lower floor. "He's up there!" roared a fellow with a cavernous voice. "I heard screaming! Death to the pervert!" Desirous to avoid harming the locals, the demigod rushed through an attic and onto the roof. As Armidal retreated to a gable, a dozen militiamen struggled through the trapdoor and began their approach, bristling with weapons. "Aye, if you insist," sighed the demigod. An instant later, his helm appeared on his head and his sword in his hand. He'd casually parried a few jabs when a rope dropped past his shoulder. A quick glance up revealed a flying carpet and, leaning over its edge, Belgomeer. "Well, if you want your own show, I can arrange that, you know!" the Ringmaster said with a smirk. After sending several of his pursuers' weapons spinning through the air all at once, the naked demigod saluted the militiamen, grasped the rope, and soared into the sky. Gazing back at those below as they angrily shook their fists at him, he muttered to himself, "Wisdom. Terribly overrated."

Description: During his time among mortals, Armidal learned many a lesson but never gave up his adventurous ways: he loves a good brawl and fine company. Throughout the Great Caldera, his conquests are legion and stem from all walks of life. In addition to his amorous pursuits, the demigod joined countless battles as a mercenary. He excels with sword, hammer, axe, mace, flail, pike, halberd, bill and hook. He throws stone, dagger and javelin without peer, while bow and crossbow hold no more secrets than even a dwarf's thunderous blunderbuss. He mastered

Shrine of Thaleera—Map Key

Cliff Side Areas
1. Outside gallery (toward Gnomes' Hollow)
2. Esplanade
3. Outside gallery (toward mountain pass)
4. Front yard
5a-5d. South turret
6. East turret
7. North turret

Sanctum Level
8. Sanctum
9a. Stairs down to Area 13
10. Galadir chapel
11. Storage
12. Meditation chamber
17a. Stairs up to Area 21
18. Armidal chapel
19. Storage
20. Meditation chamber

Lower Level
13. Cartography museum
14. Curator's office
15. Cartography workshop
16a. Secret passage up to Area 16b

Upper Level
16b. Secret passage down to Area 16a
17b. Stairs down to Area 8
21. Halls of heroes
22. Storage
23. Archives
24. Pantry
25. Kitchen
26. Refectory
27. Dormitory
28. Water chamber
29. High prior's office
30. High prior's quarters
31. Seminary hall
32. Wooden gallery

horseback warfare, beast-tracking and -felling, sky-riding, bear-wrestling, siege weaponry, and digging and sapping in addition. Armidal became most famous for his copper-hued helmet, which he uses as a crucible to mix medicinal compounds or to cook meals. Grimmer realities of military life taught him to care for his fallen companions, and his reputation as a healer shines almost as brightly as his fame as a warrior. Behind the mighty captain and champion stands a truly charitable and compassionate soul.

Though the doors to the Mounds of Berylea are now open to him, he enjoys spending his time among mortals in disguise. A justiciar, he seeks to put bullies in their places, though he always gives them a chance to redeem themselves (aside from first aid after legendary drubbings). His path as an adventurer led him into the ethereal, where he crossed paths with one Grushgrom, a most despicable demon lord who'd risen from a cult of evil wereboars spreading in Belledor. After suitably slicing and dicing the pesky devil of a swine, Armidal endeavored to defeat the disease before catastrophe befell the gentle realm. Surviving wereboars quickly fled and scattered to neighboring lands. Since then, all things porcine and evil have displeased the fabled demigod.

At the heart of Thaleera's inner circle, Sir Copperpot remains faithful to father and mother, though the former frowns at his son's persistent antics. *The Dour, the Brooding,* and *the Wicked* abhor him even more, now that he stands as a rightful resident of the magical mounds. Emeryl Starglitter chooses to ignore the young pup. Derrow Flickerhand stays on the lookout for opportunities to drive a wedge between son and mother. Balladoo-of-the-Hoo instead foments trouble among mortals, quietly seeking dark champions who might at last slay, maim, or disfigure the hated *Heartfyre of Belledor* (like Grushgrom, whom he'd bribed for the task). Belgomeer has been Armidal's accomplice in many adventures, though he has already ascended as a peer of Berylea. Thaleera's son doesn't mind. He isn't a jealous fellow and, in truth, he'd rather stay a demigod, for the alternative would mean shunning the mortal world. Armidal has made a fortuitous conquest in Kahula-Mountain-Mist, a fine young Talikai demigoddess who will unleash for him a divine hula at every opportunity, but for his eyes only. His mother approves. His father is dubious. Belgomeer will give him a ride.



Armidal sports a golden tan, a musketeer's mustache, and a goatee. With eyes and hair of dark brown, and a nose like a war galley's ram, he prefers a warrior's garb set off with a red cloak, and his fabled copper-hued helm. A rapier appropriate to his size remains his favored weapon. When home, he resides at his mother's court in Berylea. His main shrine can be found in Puckton, which also features an apothecary and school of gnomish alchemy. Favored temple offerings include the skins and tusks of evil boar-like creatures, mortal or quasi-divine.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Devout's Immunity* to lycanthropy (see Table 10, score of 3).
Preferred animal/monster: Bears and werebears, which are seen as symbols of healing.
Preferred weapon/spell: Rapier (or charm-related spells).
Other Benefits: Zealots and priors gain a +1 bonus to friendly Personality checks with the opposite gender.

Balladoo-of-the-Hoo

Epithets: *The Wicked, Mad Howler of Alorea, Scream in the Dark*
Ranking: Minor god of Alorean gnomes
Interests: Morbid humor, trickery, mischief, pain, fear, nightmares
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–8 (wicked, selfish, insensitive, highly vengeful, deceitful, unscrupulous, manipulative, spiteful), *Instinctive*–8 (highly impulsive, hasty, unpredictable, bold, creative, curious, cunning, unruly), *Lively*–5 (sarcastic, crafty, utterly shameless, psychotic, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Derrow Flickerhand, Emeryl Starglitter, Astafeth (Caldwen), and Anwë (Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Hunters, centaurs, followers of Delathien (see *Gods of Alfdaín)*
Centers of Faith: (Always covert on Calidar or the moons) in Belledor's south, Alfdaín, Alorea, and Osriel (Lorical area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 29, 378 CE
Pronunciation: BAL-lah-doo

Mythology: At the heart of sorrow, when hope was lost for those whose world had become a prison, fear prevailed. Fear twisted one's bowels. Fear weakened heart and spirit. Fear lingered in the mind, growing, living, and taking a face of its own. Gnomes prayed for it; they embraced it to escape its chilling grasp. And then they wished it upon others. For this, they summoned it, and to summon it, they gave it a name. Thus was born Balladoo the trickster, Balladoo the laughing, Balladoo the howling. No one could tell whence he came and what he was, or who, Balladoo-of-the-Hoo.

Thaleera confronted him as he ascended. He sat by an empty grave, now gaping amid thick shrouding mists, muttering strange words. "Stand from the shadows, Earl of Fear. I do not cast you back whence you came, for others would seek to call you anew. Know that if you stray and harm those I protect, I shall inflict upon you pains unspeakably worse than the nightmares of your twisted mind. Release your foul breath at the foes of my kin, Godling of the Night, and take your place under the Mounds of Berylea, where you will submit to my rule." Balladoo gawped at the goddess with a lurid and perverse leer. He snickered maniacally as he bowed and danced around Thaleera. "Of course, Your Divine Majesty! I obey! I obey!" The snicker grew into a chilling laugh as he leapt and ran wildly in the Ambrosian mist. "I live to serve you, and only you, for I'm Balladoo-of-the-Hoo." He vanished into the twilight, wailing insanely. His voice echoed in the shrouded distance. "The Hoo! The Hoo!"

In his demented quest to serve his mistress, he changed his appearance to that of a traveling centaur. He came upon a Tolarin village and enthralled its people with mirthful songs and sweet little gifts. By nightfall, he stole a baby and fled the village. Late in the night, as the villagers searched the woods, Balladoo devoured his prey and taunted the villagers, dodging their hunt as



he howled gleefully, "The Hoo! The Hoo!" Furious, the Tolarin descended upon neighboring centaurs. While the elves walked into an ambush, Balladoo swept through the four-legged folk's village, leaving no one alive among the young and the defenseless. Priors of Alorea sensed an evil god's presence and beseeched Delathien for help. In the face of danger, *the Wicked* retreated to Berylea's safety and, from then on, tasked his pawns with sowing fear and sorrow in his place, setting up tribes of elves and their allies upon one another.

Description: Latent fears of the gnomes revived Balladoo from his grave. An evil god of ancient times, he can only remember as much as those who summoned him, and thus does not know his origins. He saw the grave from which he rose, but in his demented mind, doesn't care. He lives only in the present; the past and the future mean nothing to him. Thaleera veiled his empty grave once more, and now keeps him in Berylea, where he can be watched more closely. Her priors promote hope among mortal followers, endeavoring to dispel their fears and keep this evil god as weak as they can. Thaleera does not strike him down because she knows that as long as fear dwells in the heart of gnomes, no one worse than Balladoo could take his place. Nonetheless, if summoned to do so, he will serve Thaleera in his own wicked ways. He skims much of his powers from the worries and superstitions of gnomes and elves alike. He thrives on night's dark terror, chaos, pain, and sorrow. He favors the worst of people and those who can change their appearance to commit the vilest of deeds. His pawns include conspirators, grifters, those with nefarious secrets, and especially the cursed, the psychopaths, and evil beings afflicted with lycanthropy.

Balladoo personifies creatures that transform in the night and steal babies to eat them—by day jovial and playful, fiendish and monstrous after sunset. His priors trick people to gain their trust, and then betray them. Hated by the Tolarin and Sòldor, Balladoo's followers target in particular the upper class, which on Alorea includes overseers. His cult is more prevalent on Alorea wherever fear runs high. In Belledor, it is a minor faith struggling to survive. His early crimes eventually earned him the hatred of centaurs, who aren't rare in Belledor. They've declared a holy war against him and his followers.

Since there is no love lost between Balladoo and Thaleera, he naturally stands closest to Derrow Flickerhand. As rational as the other is driven by instinct, the brooding god of gnomish magic sees his ally as a liability and handles him with caution. The dourest of Thaleera's detractors, Emeryl Starglitter, dislikes the *Mad Howler*, but sees him as a means to oppose Thaleera. Balladoo associates with very few gods, but servants of Galadir Blackmattock have seen him consort with Astafeth and Anwë. Suspicion lingers in Berylea and elsewhere that they may be plotting to create a secret cabal. Who might rule it remains a mystery.

Balladoo's natural form is a male gnome with very pale skin marbled with black veins. His appearance often varies from jovial and friendly during the day to sinister and unsettling at night, his gaze glaring with the brazen intensity of madness. His main shrine in Belledor is hidden outside Ficklethorp, a smugglers' haven on Poppelos Island. Called the Hoo, his dark and twisted court stands within Derrow's domain in Berylea, alluding to the question "Who?" and to his skin-crawling wails in the night. Favored temple offerings include foes of Balladoo who have willingly given themselves up in exchange for the safety of loved ones.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Path of the Beast*—the beneficiary has the ability to switch forms such as a lycanthrope or a doppelganger, twice a day (see Table 10, score of 11).

Preferred animal/monster: Mockingbirds, doppelgangers, evil lycanthropes (preferably swine, wolves, rats, or bats).

Preferred weapon/spell: Short sword (or fear- and confusion-related spells).

Belgomeer Fablesong

Epithets: *The Ringmaster, Lord of Cripples, God of Orphans, Braveheart*
Ranking: Minor god of Belledoran gnomes
Interests: Fate, bards, entertainment, charity
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (friendly, altruistic, considerate, truthful, tolerant), 💀 *Instinctive*–4 (unpredictable, creative, curious, adventurous), 🗲 *Lively*–6 (mirthful, cheeky, flamboyant, feisty, indomitable, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: *The Fellowship of Watchers* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 219)
Allies: Thaleera-the-Wanderer (honored ruler of Berylea and past liege), Galadir Blackmattock (ally), and Armidal Copperpot (friend)
Hated Foes: All who hail from Ghüle
Centers of Faith: Openly in eastern Belledor; covertly in Araldûr and Alfdaín
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 08, 1238 CE as a peer; Vortas 11, 1187 CE as a demigod
Pronunciation: BEL-go-meer (as in "mere")

Mythology: He'd grown up as a mortal: an orphan, and a pauper. It was a time when the colonies had descended into the madness of insurrection all around mystical Belledor. Elves, dwarves, and humans of the Great Caldera rejected their outer-world masters, and blood ran in the streets of cities and villages. Relative peace existed in the remote and half-wild lands of the fellfolk. Destitute, Belgomeer lived with feral cats at the outskirts of Highmeer, feeding on roots and fruit from the forest, or at worst hunting rats and squirrels for survival. An odd fellow, he was picked up by a traveling circus. His strange affinity with animals led him to thrive as the show's beast master when he grew older. At death's door,

the owner, a kind old man, bequeathed him the circus, and the show went on. During his life, tiny Belgomeer applied his erstwhile mentor's charity, welcoming the poor and the discarded, the malformed and the unsettling. A fabulous ringmaster, his show became a famous treat for all in Belledor.

Over the years, the circus had begun touring neighboring realms. On the way to Alfdaín, Belgomeer's caravan became mired in the Thornholt. A wizardly recluse, half-mad from decades of sylvan seclusion, was so enthralled with his guests' spectacle that he enchanted the wagons and carts so they could fly out of spring's mud and reach their destination across the Belledor Ridge. He joined the traveling show, taught Belgomeer what he knew, and later died of old age, well satisfied with his work. Tales spread throughout the Caldera of the ringmaster challenging and befriending beasts, or keeping at bay fearsome denizens of the skies. As time went on, Belgomeer added new parts to the circus. The flying caravan turned into a ramshackle and chaotic assemblage of shacks, platforms, rickety walkways, nets, tents, masts and ropes securing all the parts. As part of his success, Belgomeer always allowed seats for the poor who couldn't afford a ticket, especially children. So great was his fame that he became an epic hero in his own right, one of the first recorded in Belledor.

Belgomeer's work did much to show fellfolk what good gnomes could do, and as a result his show people became popular wherever they performed. "Yer one of 'em *gh'nowms?"* would ask astonished farmers to any wayward gnome. "Ye mean, like that funny flyin' feller? Well, smokin' draguns! Come in and share our 'umble dinner!" That there rarely was anything humble about a fellfolk meal made Belledorans very popular to expatriate gnomes as well. This caught Thaleera's attention. She later offered Belgomeer the opportunity to ascend as a demigod. He accepted, and his show grew even more wondrous. There was a time when the circus was even allowed to perform under the Mounds of Berylea.

Later in his career, Belgomeer founded an orphanage in Seahollow, and the circus often came to the region for this reason. The town became its winter quarters. The *Amazing Flying Circus* gave its last show in 1238 when Ghüleans came, attracted by the size of what had become the capital city. The circus took off one last time as the invaders approached. Belgomeer challenged the lead beast to delay a fleet of gröns while troops could ready themselves in the city. There, gnomes and fellfolk stood together facing the coming scourge. His tamed monsters poised to defend their home, circus people at the ready with magical tricks, together with Belgomeer they fought a mighty battle in the sky. Many an orc and other horrors perished in the clash. In the end, a demon lord emerged from the bowels of a grön, and though Belgomeer felled it, the fiend took the ringmaster with him. In the face of sheer numbers and frantic recklessness, the wondrous circus was destroyed. Its sacrifice enabled the troops below to be ready for the coming onslaught. Though many died in the ensuing invasion, many more would have fallen had it not been for Belgomeer's incredible fight.

Description: A mausoleum was built for Belgomeer in Seahollow, yet much of the demigod's remains were scattered across Belledor and elsewhere. Not one prior was able to raise the hero from the dead because his spirit had already been taken to Berylea, where Belgomeer ascended as a peer. *The Ringmaster* is the consummate showman. Seen as a skald or as one who paves the way for Fate, he favors entertainers, adventurers, eccentric characters of all ilks, do-gooders, vagabonds, freaks, and misfits.

Belgomeer's godly "day job" consists of inspiring adventurers, especially those in the entertainment business, as well as individuals to whom Fate bequeathed a most humble status in life. His divine servants handle much of this work. He seeks out the most disfavored and deformed victims of misfortune and, upon the most worthy, sometimes bestows a strange magical ability to lessen their pain. Though a kind soul, he otherwise gets bored with life under the mounds, and often takes off with his trusted friend Armidal, usually in the form of an avatar, for some fun among mortals. He occasionally uses these frivolous outings as a cover for an opportunity to meet with *the Fellowship of Watchers,* a secret cabal concerned about Ghülean invasions.

His most trusted ally and divine liege is Thaleera, whom he serves faithfully and without question. Though a very good friend of her son Armidal, he also watches that adventuresome hero to make sure he doesn't create more trouble than he can handle. That Armidal was born a demigod doesn't trouble Belgomeer, but he feels the young fellow has had it far too easy for his own good, and hopes to help him find the wisdom and perspective that he still needs to embrace his mother's lofty goals. Belgomeer is somewhat unconcerned with Derrow and Emeryl, but he does keep a wary eye on Balladoo and his treacherous schemes against Armidal. Though a respected member of the *Watchers,* he remains aloof from Kjorûn and Durandil. He has forged instead a good rapport with Makapono of the Talikai. Elsewhere, Belgomeer harbors feelings for Lara Umberlock, the fellfolk patron of autumn and mistress of the hills. The two have been seeing each other quietly but regularly.

With a pale skin, an upward-curving goatee, and spiky black hair, Belgomeer cultivates a strange look. When not in disguise, he often wears a harlequin-like costume, red boots, and white gloves. He resides in a hall of Thaleera's domain in Berylea. His main shrine stands near his birthplace in Highmeer, along with a theater and a school for bards, storytellers, comedians, and beast-masters. Favored temple offerings are objects that once belonged to him or the original circus. Though a *Ritual of Sending* will transport offerings to his magical court in Berylea, many of them are returned sooner or later to the present-day flying circus (see *Godly Trappings*, page 226).

Preferred Divine Favor: *Feyskins*—the beneficiary has the ability to turn into a tabby cat or a tiger twice a day (see Table 10, score of 16).
Preferred animal/monster: Tabby cats, tigers, and feline constructs.
Preferred weapon/spell: Cudgel and net (or spells to summon animals or monsters).

Derrow Flickerhand

Epithets: *The Brooding, Blind-Born*
Ranking: Greater god of Alorean gnomes
Interests: Gnomish magic, gnomish supremacy
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–4 (selfish, insensitive, vengeful, mistrustful), 💀 *Rational*–5 (analytical, calculating, cautious, stubborn, principled), 🗲 *Stern*–4 (ascetic, brooding, haughty, enigmatic); driven in his quest to unlock the secrets of the gnomes' ancient past
Godly Cabals: *The Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Emeryl Starglitter and Balladoo-of-the-Hoo, Malva Darkbrow (ally, peer of the Morever Meadows)
Hated Foes: Followers of Faëriad (see *Gods of Alfdaín)*
Centers of Faith: Belledor's east and, covertly, in Alfdaín and on Alorea
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 02, 147 BCE
Pronunciation: DAIR-ro (as in "low" or "toe")

Mythology: Harsh were the laws of the moons. The elves sought to deprive the gnomes of their birthright to use magic. Aloreans opposed teachings that encouraged their captives to weave the arcane. The dwarves permitted education in the arts and the casting of spells, but strictly at their bidding and under close scrutiny. Both punished transgressors and their loved ones severely, and hostages were taken to suppress defiance. To a gnome, magic was innate, like air, food, and water. Starving for both home and birthright were most cruel burdens to bear. In their despair, long did the gnomes ache for a champion of magic, and over time he rose from a fey darkness. His name was Derrow Flickerhand.

Blinded by a magical veil, he drifted in the Ambrosian until he encountered Thaleera. She dismissed the strange dweomer blocking his divine sight, and led him to her hidden lair. "What strange magic was it that blinded me so?" he inquired. "What callous curse was it that I couldn't dispel?" Thaleera considered her suspicious guest. "'Twas I who cast it to conceal kinfolk born in Ambrosia, for the foes of the gnomes are wicked and powerful." Derrow closed his eyes for an instant, searching the hearts of the mortals who'd summoned him. "I sense a long and bitter struggle enshrouded in obscurity into which I cannot gaze. Something lies there that some wish to keep to themselves, and I will have you shed light upon it, Thaleera *Elder-Born*." The goddess handed her guest a stout brew to help strengthen his spirit. "Alas, I am no more able than you to unravel this mystery," she answered. "Ever shall I endeavor to cast away this curse. Until then, you may stand at my side while others ascend as you did." The beverage helped clear Derrow's mind. He pondered Thaleera's words, somber and doubtful. "Magic is my domain, and I will find out what lies obscured," he ventured. Thaleera smiled. "I'm certain you will, friend. All in good time."



In his quest for knowledge, Derrow later came upon his elven counterpart in a dim forest of Ambrosia. Cold and haughty, she stared at her visitor. "I ken what dwells in your heart, Spellweaver, and I care naught for the likes of you." Undaunted, he returned her glare. "And I for yours. Seethe as you may, those of my faith are here to stay. I come here not to taunt, Faëriad Elven-Witch, but to strike a bargain. I can reveal what you wish to learn about the Elder-Born, in exchange for which I seek to gaze through the darkness of the ancient past." The goddess frowned and showed her growing displeasure. "I know naught of which you speak." Derrow wrinkled his nose and responded in a hiss, "There do I smell the stench of elven magic. I am no fool. Speak the truth now." In a huff, Faëriad turned and faded into the mist. In the distance, her voice lingered. "Some things are not for you to know."

Description: Born from the yearning of gnomes bereft of liberty to cast magic, Derrow did not see the grave from which he ascended due to a spell of concealment Thaleera had placed upon it centuries earlier. Communing with his priors led him to sense a blind spot about their ancient past. He suspects Thaleera hasn't been forthcoming with certain facts, and from other attempts to obtain an answer, has become certain of a divine conspiracy to hide the truth. He bides his time inspiring his priors to help develop gnomish magic covertly among Alorean captives, and openly on Calidar. He firmly believes in gnomish superiority, and he chafes at the injustice of other races dictating their will to his people. That gnomes may pay dearly for his ideals is no concern of his.

Derrow favors gnomes, mages, illusionists, priors skilled in wizardry, those with professions related to the arts such as astrologers and alchemists, and magical creatures. When not at work under the Mounds of Berylea, the god of gnomish magic scours the Ambrosian dimension for clues about his past. A master enchanter, he spies on others in hopes of unveiling a hint, tracking elven gods when they leave the Briarwoods. Derrow knows the elves are involved with the veil. He may risk an avatar to explore the netherworld in search of a spirit old enough to know what he seeks. All so far have been the victims of the elves' *Spell of Erasing*. Priors or hired adventurers do the same in the world of mortals, seeking ancient ruins on Alorea or elsewhere. Derrow hopes to learn the whereabouts of some artifact powerful enough to thwart the curse. Such might yield useful clues. Over time, Faëriad has become his *bête noire*. Not only did she refuse his bargain, she's been watching him as well, interfering with his search whenever possible, sending her Tolarin faithful to oppose all quests to locate gnomish artifacts. The two cults are locked in a quiet but ruthless fight. As for the dwarves, Derrow feels nothing but an abyss of contempt

for them. Nonetheless, he deems acceptable in the course of their work for mortal followers to consort with elven and dwarven adventurers, to learn from them what can be learned. In truth, Derrow has remained a creature of the past, unaware of the elder race's tragic fall from grace and unwilling to embrace its change of heart.

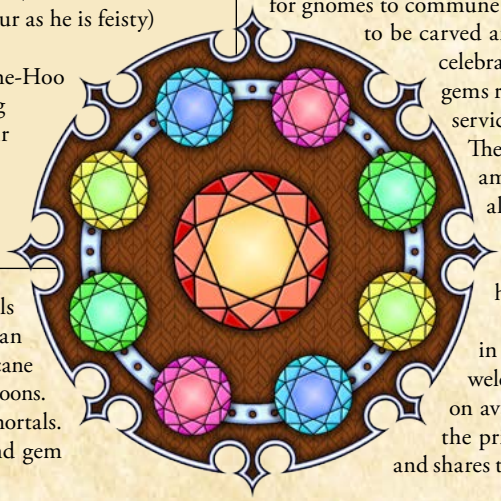
Derrow's allies are few: Emeryl Starglitter and the psychotic Balladoo-of-the-Hoo. Both *the Brooding* and *the Dour* object to Thaleera's unsolicited and single-sided magnanimity toward the gnomes' oppressors. They disapprove of Thaleera's faith that goodwill will sway "the enemy." Her desire to make the best of a bad situation, in their view, is but a weak remedy to what ails gnomefolk. As for *the Wicked*, Derrow covets insights on his origins, which so far he has failed to unveil. Balladoo eludes questions, possibly to exert a measure of influence over Derrow. The god of gnomish magic dismisses Thaleera's inner circle as a dim-witted pack of dogsbodies. Beyond the confines of Berylea, he has shown interest in Malva of the Morever Meadows, which he keeps quiet to avoid prying eyes.

Derrow has a golden complexion, with bright red hair he keeps tied on the nape of his neck. Black flames in his eyes connote as much the power of his magic as it does the intensity of his dark desires. He is often depicted wearing a gray hooded robe. An important shrine stands in Underwood, in the Northern Marches. It houses a great library of gnomish works of the arcane. Favored temple offerings are clues about ancient ruins and artifacts. Actually bringing evidence of such, or a divine relic of gnomish origins, warrants special attention if not a *Divine Favor*.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Righteous Spell,* preferably related to the earth element—one offensive, one defensive, and one detection spell closest to the top range of what the beneficiary should be able to cast (see Table 10, score of 10).
Preferred animal/monster: Bats and wyverns.
Preferred weapon/spell: Wooden staff (or detection spells).

Emeryl Starglitter

Epithets: *The Dour, Gem-Maker, Stonesoul*
Ranking: Minor god of Kragdûras gnomes
Interests: Earth, mountains, gemstones, guardian of gnomish mines.
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though vengeful toward those who cross him and dwarves in particular, as well as mistrustful, he is kind and generous with his followers), ☗ *Practical* (he is as stubborn as he is bold), ↟ *Even-Tempered* (he is as dour as he is feisty)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Derrow Flickerhand and Balladoo-of-the-Hoo
Hated Foes: Followers of Balir-the-Whispering (see *Gods of Araldûr)*, djinn, elementals of air
Centers of Faith: Belledor's north and, covertly, in Araldûr and on Kragdûr
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 22, 196 CE
Pronunciation: EM-mur-reel



Mythology: A spirit lord of rocks and crystals dwelled deep in the heart of Calidar. Or rather, an infinity of them did, not only by the world soul's arcane shores from which they sprang, but also within the moons. They emerged to seek revenge against covetous mortals.

Nowhere but on Kragdûr, where stone and gem were most prized, were these strange and wondrous denizens best known. The *Age of Gnomes* came and went, and with it the *Spell of Erasing* came to pass. Elven magic did not suppress what the gnomes of Kragdûr desired most. Forced to labor in the mines under their dwarven masters, the gnomes suffered pain worse than death when the fruit of their hard work was taken from them for the greed of faceless kings. From their sorrow ascended one of the spirit lords, and his faithful called him Emeryl Starglitter.

Unaware at first of his exalted nature, the new god basked well beneath the deepest of Kragdûr's mines. As he stretched and moved, he left in his wake veins of diamonds. His mood shifted as he sensed the feelings of his believers, depositing instead rubies, emeralds, or golden topazes for them to find. But the dwarves soon picked up on the discoveries, and they were prompt to seize all of value. Angered, Emeryl emerged and recovered what had been stolen from the faithful, inflicting ruin and panic among the rapacious overseers. Nothing was safe as he plundered the hoards in vaults and mausoleums alike. Before he returned to his stony abyss, the recovered gems appeared in the hovels of gnomish slaves. Upon investigation, dwarven priors appealed to their patrons. Khrâlia, Krîma, and Balir-the-Whispering responded. Their avatars quietly descended upon the mines, and the hunt was afoot for the mysterious and wayward god.

It might have been a perilous time for Emeryl had it not been for Derrow's intervention. "I salute you, friend of gnomes, for we are of the same kin," he said. "I hail your actions, but beware. Powerful foes who seek your demise are soon to arrive. They are masters of those you dispossessed. Come with me, *Gem-Maker*, so I may lead you to safety." Somewhat mistrustful, Emeryl gauged his impromptu visitor. "What is this place of which you speak?" Derrow touched the rock and betrayed a frown of worry. "You will find solace under the Mounds of Berylea. Search the hearts of your faithful, for they know of this place. To a queen you'll have to bow, but appreciate her you will not. 'Tis a small matter. I shall stand at your side and assist with your bearings as a peer of the realm. Come now, for time grows short." None too soon, the two departed the mortal world.

Description: Emeryl ascended while he dwelled within Kragdûr as a spirit lord, an extension of Calidar's world soul. His memories are those of the mortal believers who summoned him into sentient godhood. He has no prior connection with deities of ancient gnomish past. Emeryl's interest lies beneath the ground. He or his avatar fashion crystals and gems, but among them lie some that are most precious to gnomes. Rarest of the rare, their purity is such that they can hold gnomish magic indefinitely, so as to be released at a later time. Better yet, the largest ones serve as windows for gnomes to commune with the divine. Like only gnomes can, gems are to be carved and polished into things of beauty, admired, and celebrated by the faithful. In the eyes of greedy dwarves, gems represent wealth alone, to be traded for goods and services, or to be sealed within the darkness of a vault. Therein lies a source of great conflict. Emeryl is popular among miners, gem cutters, earth elementalists, but also with Robin-Hood-style thieves, spellcasting rogues, and (oddly enough) gnomish bankers, moneylenders, and bookkeepers, who pray for his protection.

Like Derrow, Emeryl despises the dwarves, but in a much more personal fashion. Ever since he was welcomed under the Mounds of Berylea, he has relied on avatars, incarnates, and priors to do his bidding in the prime universe. There, he steals from the dwarves and shares the wealth with the poorest of his faithful or those

deserving of his generosity. This has earned him the particular enmity of Balir-the-Whispering, who is a protector of dwarven vaults and mausoleums. The two cults have been fighting covert struggles on Kragdûr and in the Great Caldera. Emeryl also dislikes creatures of the skies and all that is related to the element of air. Though there are no present conflicts, his feeling stems from his previous nature as a spirit lord of rock and crystal.

Emeryl only has one true ally—Derrow Flickerhand. He sees Balladoo-of-the-Hoo as insufferable and untrustworthy, and only works with him because Derrow seems to wish it. Though Thaleera has been laboring hard to sway Emeryl to her cause, he dislikes her idea of consorting with dwarves in any way. The god of gems is more interested in helping mortal gnomes ascend and in promoting epic heroes for the final clash with Holmring that he believes to be inevitable. He remains respectful of and reasonably cooperative with Galadir Blackmattock, Armidal Copperpot, and Belgomeer Fablesong, whom he sees as worthy warriors, useful in a possible war against the dwarves. Outside of the mounds, Emeryl has pursued a romantic affair with Queen Aknaak, a monarch on the plane of Tellurion. With her he also enjoys battles between factions of earth elementals, which has earned him the displeasure of the arad among Narwan's djinnifolk.

Emeryl's skin and clothing seem to be made of scintillating milky quartz. His eyes are blue sapphires and his hair golden topazes. As an avatar, he is a blond and blue eyed fellow, with a beard curling upward from the sides of his cheeks. He resides in a private hall of Derrow's court in Berylea. An important shrine devoted to his cult stands at Crag's End, by the Hauntgrim. It also houses a workshop reputed for its gem cutters. Favored temple offerings are rare gems brimming with gnomish magic.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Breath*—salt or quartz petrifaction (see Table 10, score of 20).
Preferred animal/monster: Armadilloes or crystal constructs.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sling (or spells related to earth—turning stone, turn mud into rock or rock into mud, stonewalls, etc.).

Galadir Blackmattock

Epithets: *Champion of Berylea, Merciful Lord*
Ranking: Minor god of Kragdûras gnomes
Interests: Peace, protectors, prowess, justice, and honor
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–7 (friendly, charitable, humble, merciful, truthful, trusting, magnanimous), ☻ *Rational*–7 (sensible, perceptive, patient, orderly, conventional, principled, obedient), ↟ *Even-Tempered* (though passionate, romantic, and steadfast, he also is tactful, self-conscious, and somewhat austere)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Thaleera-the-Wanderer (spouse and honored ruler of Berylea), Armidal Copperpot (son), and Belgomeer Fablesong (a brave heart)
Hated Foes: Followers of Krîma Ironblaze (see *Gods of Araldûr)*
Centers of Faith: Openly in Belledor's north and Osriel (Altarocca area, see page 166); covertly in Araldûr and on Kragdûr
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 17, 49 BCE
Pronunciation: GAL-lah-deer

Mythology: However witty and goodhearted the *Elder-Born*, the bravest of gnomes came to think that a gallant protector ought to stand at her side. Despite their belief that goodwill would prevail upon those who wished them ill, they also wisely felt that strength should be apparent behind her, for peace might not always triumph without respect and the deterrent of war. It was a fine line to walk without falling into the habit of dwarves, who solve all by feat of arms. Prowess with humility. Justice with compassion. Honor with goodness. Thus did the faith in a defender closely associated with Thaleera come to light, and Galadir Blackmattock, champion of the gentler gnomefolk, ascended to the Ambrosian. The *Elder-Born* had long foreseen his coming, and she stood where he awoke. There could have been no other outcome than love at first sight, for this was the wish that lay in the hearts of their believers, a power greater than the gods themselves.

Lest darker foes hunting Thaleera saw them, she led her new companion along an obscure byway to her hidden lair. Haughty and mistrustful, Derrow Flickerhand did not approve the new guest. Galadir appreciated his somber peer even less, but loyalty to his beloved was such that he showed no disfavor, and the matter was ignored. In spite of the awkwardness, festivities soon followed, when the gods' spirit servants celebrated the union of Thaleera and Galadir. Derrow attended in deference to the *Elder-Born*, wished the two well in his own gloomy way, and retreated to his quarters.

"Oddly somber is this god of mages," Galadir commented. "I sense he bears some resentment toward you." Thaleera watched the passage through which Derrow had left before responding. "He has cause to mistrust me," she said in a low voice. Galadir poured an elixir in both their chalices. "How so, my beloved?" The divine bride gazed into the golden ichor swirling in her cup. "He seeks to unveil the darkness of ancient past, and I denied him this secret." Galadir frowned. "I saw it too. Neither can I pierce its veil. What of it?" Pensive, the *Elder-Born* sighed. "There are things that should be left alone, at least for now. I hope you will trust my judgement, love, for I sincerely believe it is for the best. And that is the reason I shan't talk of it further." Galadir pondered her answer before giving her a kind smile. "Trust you I do, my sweet, and ever shall I endeavor to uphold your wishes. Your secret will be safe, and to this I make my solemn vow."

Description: Galadir Blackmattock is the quintessential champion of the gnomes, a chivalrous and romantic warrior bound to defend peace. By the beliefs of his followers, he is also compelled to protect Thaleera, his beloved wife and mother of his son Armidal Copperpot. Next in his order of values, he would never betray his word and honor. He has the heart and strength to confront those who'd defy him or Thaleera. Though a stout warrior, he is inclined to show good faith and make friends rather than bash foes first and ask questions later. Galadir has no connection with another deity of the gnomes' ancient past, and doesn't care to find out what lies beyond the veil. He favors warriors with a code of honor, and all those who have sworn to safeguard the weak and dispense justice.

Aside from watching over Thaleera, Galadir also keeps an eye on his rambunctious son. This and the need to watch Berylea's foes require him to leave the mounds and travel the Ambrosian, or to create an avatar to address issues in the prime universe. Until Thaleera's magical domain was established, he patrolled the area in search of those who meant to harm her. Sensing a dangerous foe, Brâlkha Shadowfist gave the gnomish champion a wide berth and mentioned the fact to Krîma Ironblaze. Looking for a challenge, the goddess of war deliberately stood where her ally had once sighted Galadir. Shorter than her, the gnome approached,

unafraid. Following a few harsh words, a fight soon began that wasn't to the powerful dwarven deity's advantage. Galadir's swiftness and skill proved a match to Krîma's savage boldness and strength. After a fine maneuver, he hailed Krîma while she regained her footing. "*Thayn of Hûrkhana,* your axe is mighty but you fight for the sake of hate. Here do I uphold the greater cause, and though yours cannot prevail against love, I choose to spare you. Do not return to these parts, *Heart of Hamardûl,* or I shall tell your faithful of this day." Since then, the two deities have remained silent about what had happened, and unkind to one another.

Galadir's allies unquestionably are his spouse, his son, and Belgomeer Fablesong, whom he considers a valiant soul and a hero of gnomefolk. He recognized Belgomeer's endeavor to protect his son, and quietly appreciates it. Armidal's carefree and scandalous manner troubles him. He wishes his son would be wiser and more regal. He and Thaleera endeavor to sway Emeryl Starglitter to their cause, and perhaps one day Derrow Flickerhand too. As for Balladoo-of-the-Hoo, Galadir only feels pity for that troubled and wayward mind. For this reason, his followers erected a hospital where the unsound can be helped, wishing that, one day, enough of the patients could be healed of their afflictions so even the *Mad Howler* would come to his senses. Galadir's challenge is that he and his servants have so many things to worry about: foes of Berylea including none other than Krîma and her allies, the elves, Derrow's driven goal to pierce the darkness of the ancient past, his son's antics and inherently perilous life as a demigod, and Balladoo's sickly schemes.

Galadir owns a slightly blueish complexion reminiscent of certain stones of Kragdûr. Bald, he sports a tightly-cropped black beard and enjoys handsome traits and a proud nasal appendage so like his son's. The *Champion of Berylea* is usually represented wearing gold plate armor and carrying his trusty weapon, a large mattock of black shimmering steel. He owns his own court in Berylea. His main place of worship and the hospital for the deranged lie in Hopton, by the Morn Glens. The cults of Galadir and Thaleera often share the same shrines. Favored temple offerings are as many and varied as Galadir's foes. Swaying the wicked to his faith through kindness and mercy remains the most honored of feats.



Preferred Divine Favor: *Godly Shield* (see Table 10, score of 2).
Preferred animal/monster: Leonine creatures, especially if armored.
Preferred weapon/spell: Mattock (or defensive spells).

Masters of the Morever Meadows

Fellfolk	Interests
⑥ ***Celendine***	Water, fertility, life
Aevan Timebringer[6]	Time, wisdom
Floria Tanglemane	Spring, youth
Gilla Amberbraid	Summer, abundance
Lara Umberlock	Fall, elders
Malva Darkbrow	Winter, sleep
Yarima-of-the-Hand	Death, underworld

Original Belledorans are a melting pot of tribal fellfolk whose ancestors fled their homelands as the Great Caldera's colonization took place. Progressively, these refugees came to make their final stand in the last bastion of fellfolk animism in this region. But Belledor was never colonized. Instead, it faced mounting external pressure from those who coveted its lands. The cults of the Morever Meadows served as a catalyst for the region's independence as a distinct realm. Aside from migrating gnomes soon after its foundation, the republic regrouped under a new belief system garnered from a myriad of different people with diverse languages, customs, and native mysticisms.

There are no separate cultures among fellfolk because their tribal origins have become largely intertwined and unidentifiable *by mundane means*. In appearance, fellfolk may bear different complexions, hair color, and facial traits, depending on their geographic ancestry. Different races of fellfolk exist on Calidar, such as the seafolk, but these do not reside on Belledor's mainland, and their faiths other than shamanism aren't covered in this book. (*Seafolk* also is the name of the southernmost Belledoran province, unrelated to the aquatic race.) Early Belledorans did not possess a written tradition, therefore much of their history and lineage was lost. Although nothing rules out fellfolk from honoring foreign gods, Belledorans typically adopt deities of the Morever Meadows because they seem to bear a strong connection with nature, perhaps more so than those of other pantheons. Die-hard animist beliefs directly connect the spiritual world with physical land and nature—in their view, people and their gods are sentient extensions of the world soul, like spirits of nature, rather than discrete, independent entities. This is partially true since Belledor's present pantheon governs areas such as life, death, time, and the four seasons. The cults of Morever Meadows aren't illegal outside Belledor, except for citizens of Ellyrion and Narwan, but they are generally overlooked everywhere else. Fellfolk faiths of Belledor are almost totally unknown on the moons, except by sages and well-informed Munaani inquisitors (only the cult of Teos is tolerated on Munaan).

Gods of the Calderan fellfolk dwell in a magical Ambrosian domain called Morever Meadows. Largely responsible for triggering the passage from ancestral shamanism to organized faiths in anthropomorphic gods, Celendine became the pantheon's ruler. Fellfolk deities are most favorable to their Berylean allies. If not outrightly suspicious, they otherwise remain careful in their relations with gods of the other races, whom they see as having inspired the Great Caldera's conquest over native fellfolk inhabitants. On the other hand, Belledoran deities ascended as a result

of colonization, something they do not wish to admit. Consequently, fellfolk priors are prompt to blame humans, dwarves, and elves for stealing tribal lands, but never will they allude to their cults' existence having anything to do with these events. In their view, Belledoran gods rose from the depths of the spiritual world independently from outside influence. Denizens of Morever Meadows stand as some of the youngest in Calidar's universe since they originate in the establishment of the fellfolk republic. For all intents and purposes, theirs are state-sponsored cults.

Though they started out with an oral tradition, Belledorans later recorded the stories of their gods' ascension. Being relatively recent spiritual events, these were fairly easy to put in a written form, first as petroglyphs and temple carvings, and later on parchment and in books. These scriptures are known as the *Vodonic Verses,* named after their original author, a hermit known as Vodon of Endsmeet. They come in two parts. The first, called *The Rising*, tells the story of Celendine's ascension, the emergence of other deities, and the creation of Morever Meadows. The second part, *The Unveiling*, speaks of ancestral beliefs in spirits of nature and how they led to *The Rising*. It is enormous and unfinished because it compiles legends as well as innumerable and often unconnected tribal faiths. Councils led by high priors of the Belledoran cults sometimes add new parts or modify others as they see fit. Though useful in understanding tribal shamanism, *The Unveiling* remains colored by an ideological agenda deliberately seeking to marry state-sponsored cults with old beliefs as a ploy to overshadow the latter. Nonetheless, shamanism still hides and survives in Belledor. Unwilling to abandon their old ways, rebellious shamans abhor *The Unveiling,* as it depicts them as wayward heathens or demons. Aside from the *Vodonic Verses,* common rituals and prayers find their place in the *Abbrevian*. Older versions have traditionally been hand-written and lavishly decorated; the *Abbrevian* now relies on the printing press and, generally, small type so the book can be easily carried or replaced.

Priors typically wear vestments bearing the prevailing colors of their spiritual patrons. They can be recognized by a strip of cloth looping behind the neck and hanging down the front to the knees, or by a sash worn across the chest and held at the hip, with the cults' symbols embroidered at the edges. The more modest stoles are made of linen or wool. Affluent priors use silk. All members of the clergy must shave their heads, including nuns. Felt or fur hats of various shapes are therefore needed and expected to be worn when priors leave a building. A wooden staff bearing a deity's symbol is also common.

The map of Belledor shown at the beginning of this chapter displays the geographic urban center. Although other faiths are tolerated, the only ones with relevance under provincial law are the local cult (first), other cults of the pantheon (second), and Berylean cults (third). Other religions have no legal status in Belledor. Speakers of the Faith collect a tithe from local residents regardless of their actual faiths, and operate businesses (mostly agrarian) as secondary sources of income. Speakers of the Faith and local nobility provide charity to the needy during times of hardship. Though Belledor is a republic, it isn't a secular power. Its *Steward* is elected by five provincial representatives selected by common people, members of the aristocracy, and the clergy. Stewards of Belledor serve until they step down or pass away. Aside from watching over the education of youngsters in the proper tenets of local faiths, another much less advertised activity of the clergy consists of the purging of ancient shamanistic beliefs still deeply rooted among Belledorans. Though branded as heretics and outlawed, shamans still practice covertly, preventing old traditions and superstitions from vanishing entirely.

Timeline of Alfdaín Fellfolk

813 CE: Elven settlers fortify the area of Mythuín and repel massive attacks from local fellfolk tribes.
817: Alorean military forces destroy local native villages and execute shamans.
819: Elven settlers begin a westward expansion.
851: Fellfolk launch a massive counterattack, massacre settlers, and burn down a number of fortified settlements (Battles of Lathias and Færlinga 852 and 855).
856: Alorean skyfleet is dispatched to reinforce colonial defenses.
859: Most fellfolk tribes east of the Lathrian Rim are forced to submit to Alorean forces.
862: Alorea claims the whole region between the Polemikon and Belledor Ridges.
863: The *Alorean Colonial Territories of the Caldera* are formally established, with a Tòrr-Gàrraidh governor to administrate them; clan elders act as regional prefects.
868: Elves defeat the last pockets of fellfolk resistance in the Lathrian Rim and the Elëaras Range, and settle the western shores.
874: Fellfolk natives are largely used as cheap labor. The governor enacts a law barring fellfolk from owning land or holding public office.
877: Alorean forces put down an urban fellfolk revolt.

Common Attributes

Pious followers of the Morever Meadows deities benefit from special abilities listed with each god's description. Mortals of fellfolk ancestry, however, experience faith in a different manner than those of other races. This is seen in the duality of Belledoran beliefs. The most pious followers of Belledoran gods have no connection with spirits of nature, but they enjoy strong communion with their gods. The others and the so-called "heathens" have little or no connection with established gods, but possess a greater affinity with mystical forces of nature. This last group includes denizens of the Dread Lands. Remaining in a gray area, countless Belledoran fellfolk struggle to stay in touch with both sides despite pressure from shamans and priors to favor one over the other.

Shamans have the power to summon, control, and dismiss spirits of nature. Though this feat is limited, it remains a critical advantage for those dwelling in the Dread Lands. Shamans of Belledor aren't as potent because Dread Lands no longer extend their dominion to the Great Caldera. Nonetheless, local shamans can still summon weaker spirits, though less frequently than their brethren of surrounding continents. Shamans are described in more detail (see *Calidar's World Soul*, page 207). Unrepentant heathens and the casual faithful, as described under *Rewards & Obligations* (page 185), can sense the presence of nature's spirits within a 90' radius, identify them, use empathy to communicate with them on a very simple level, and are generally unharmed by them. If the world soul is non-sentient (or rather, *it is,* but on a geological timeframe), spirits of nature remain semi-sentient and react mostly to their environment, whereas mortals, servants of deities, and the gods themselves are clearly conscious and mostly driven by their emotions or their intellects. Pious followers of Belledor's fellfolk gods can merely sense the presence of nature's spirits, but within a 60' radius and only upon concentration. Zealots and priors have no ability whatsoever as regards interacting with nature's spirits, but they receive a +1 bonus to their armor rating and defense checks when fighting these entities.

Main Migrations Timeline

777 CE: Frostholmers force native tribes to retreat south across the Ice Spine.
847: Fellfolk east of the Erebos Mountains begin migrating northward and join those north of the Polemikon Ridge. Others sail to Karibdis Island and the shores of Eerien.
848: Fellfolk south of the Osirim Range begin migrating northward or sailing to the Dread Lands of Ras-Meliyah and toward Hags' Landing in Laëril.
857: Island tribes of Phrydias begin crossing the Sea of Osriel, and follow the coastline northward to Crimson Deep's shores.
858: Forest natives begin migrating from the Alorean Territories through the Belledor Ridge.
861: Fellfolk natives start leaving dwarven territories, spreading eastward past the islands of Devansy and Tirsia.
863: Clashes oppose fellfolk of the Thornholt and western migrants.
868: A handful of fellfolk islanders of Meryath sail southward toward Mareas Island.
871: Tribes of the Thornholt, Morn Glens, and Hogs Wallow agree to absorb western migrants, and heed their warnings about colonial brutality.
876: Alarmed, rival northern shamans cooperate and work to revive the Dread Lands to keep invaders out.
881: An elven force is lost in the Thornholt. Skyships are destroyed as they attempt to evacuate ground troops. All traces of the force vanish under the thick forest's canopy.
884: Tribes of mixed origins migrate *en masse* past the Caldwen Shield, following widespread massacres and epidemics farther south.
887: Mining prospectors from Araldûr and their escort are wiped out near the Rock Bend Mountains. Not one survivor remains.
892: Terrifying magic is used to suppress fellfolk resistance in the Arcanial Valley and in the Arm of the Magus. Entire tribes vanish between Scroll Woods and Caldwa's Wand. Very few reach the shores of Laëril.
896: In the north, roused spirits ambush raiders from the Bergmark. Less than a dozen survivors flee across the Stone End Mountains. Their tales of horror reach other lands. For a century, not one realm dares send troops into northern fellfolk tribal lands.
898: The *Way of Tears* event takes place as remnants of eastern migrating tribes funnel past Østfjord and Mørkling Sound. Migrants later clash with local tribes dwelling south of the Ice Spine.
994: While migrants trickle in, shamans of the north become increasingly wary of the skyfolk. A great shaman, Toltin the Mossy, unleashes spirit lords against neighboring realms. They fall apart soon after entering foreign lands.
1017: Frostholm slavers ravage tribal lands south of the Ice Spine.
1025: Farmlands of Frostholm become increasingly unable to support local population. Norse warriors begin their conquest of neighboring territories south of the Ice Spine.
1032: Final native migration takes place from Nordheim to Belledor. Horrified by the migrants' legendary tales of woe, tribes by the Tuckwoods and Rock Bend Mountains find ways to accommodate the refugees.
1041: A heavily-armed dwarven force makes landfall on Belledor's Raiders' Coast, looking for good mining sites. Their *darkpowder* cannons obliterate great spirits roused to fight them. Shamans fear their powers are waning.
1048: Constant skirmishes with natives and angry spirits driving up the cost of business, the dwarves abandon their Belledor mines. They poison, booby-trap, flood, or collapse the main shafts, and leave in good order.
1056: "Colonial" fellfolk bring to the northern tribes new ideas about spiritualism, different traditions, and technical skills which the past eight or ten generations acquired as laborers and servants in surrounding realms.
1062: Foreign merchants begin trade with natives along the southwestern shores of Belledor. Some establish trading posts.
1075: Foreign missionaries and adventurers show up among the tribes, possibly scouting the hinterlands for future colonization.
1083: In the face of possible invasions while the shamans' power is fading, tribal elders hold a *Great Palaver.* Native tribes forge a blood-alliance.
1094: Under the influence of colonial fellfolk, the Republic of Belledor is founded. The idea of independent realms makes its way from Belledor to neighboring colonies of Alorea, Kragdûr, and Munaan.

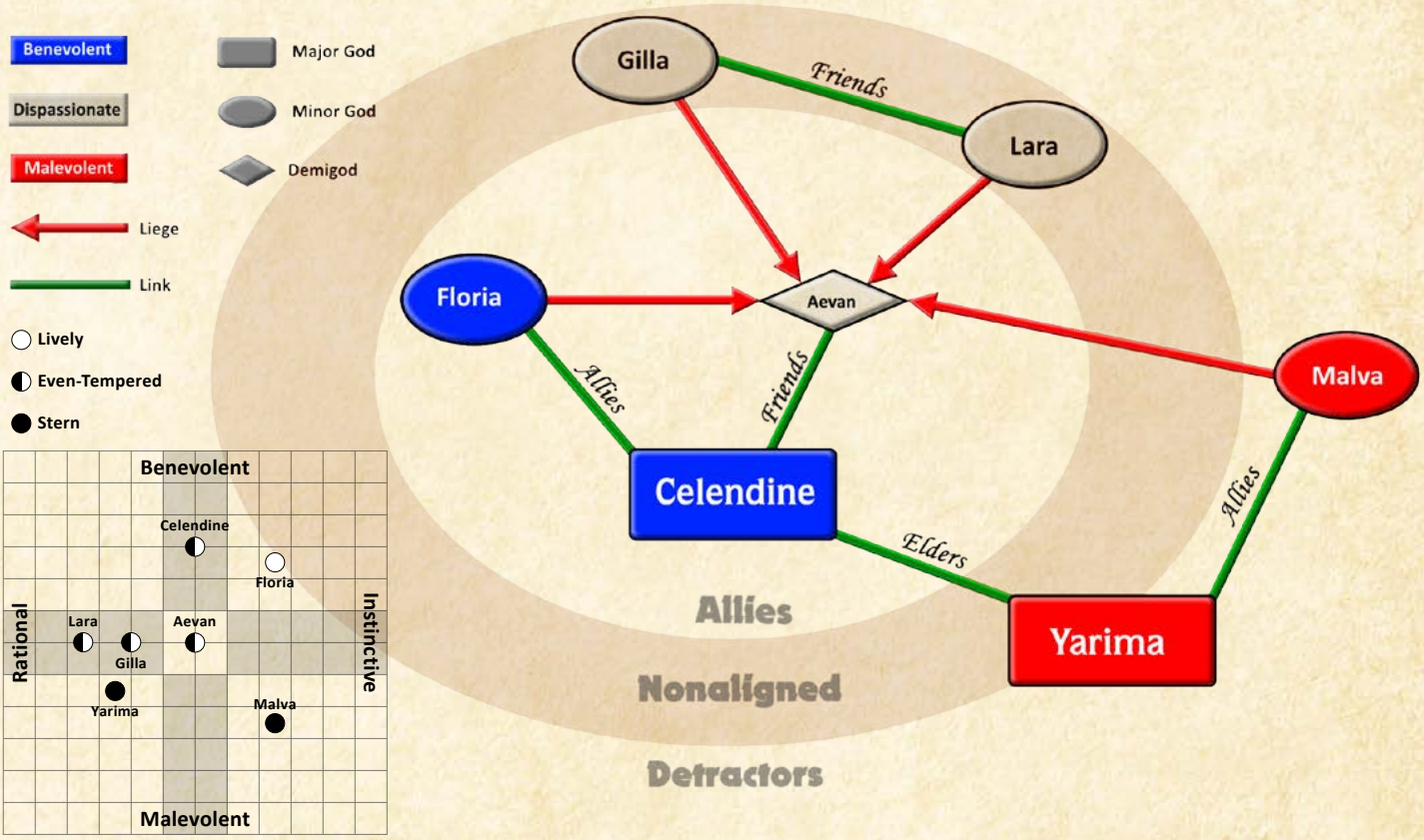
Genesis

715 CE Before the Age of Colonialism, the Dominion of Shamans prevailed on Calidar. Though the tribes were rivals and often hostile to each other, absolute were their beliefs in the spirits of nature. They lived and died in the Dread Lands, secure from the perils lurking beyond the Great Vault. A time came when the world soul was weakened. A gap in the fabric of the Dread Lands grew for a time in the Great Caldera, leaving its wilderness exposed to outside forces. It wasn't the first instance such a breach had formed, but most had been ignored long enough to heal and allow the Dread Lands to reclaim lost ground. This time would be different: denizens of the three moons possessed ships able to cross the Great Vault. Long had they coveted the vast lands of Calidar and their hidden riches. Soon, they discovered Dread Lands no longer haunted the Great Caldera, and thus began two centuries of sorrow for its tribes.

796 CE The *Terrible Sky Comings* began in the Calderan far south. Many a warrior died fighting the skyfolk. Many more died of new diseases. Some were captured and made to serve new masters. Those who could fled north. First were the fellfolk of the Calderan west, vagrants, outlaws, and beggars in their own lands taken from them by man and elf. Not long afterward followed an even more somber ordeal for the fellfolk of the Calderan east, as they sought refuge in the north from the growing tentacles of onslaught. One by one, vast regions fell to the skyfolk, pushing those who would not submit ever farther northward.

876 CE For a time in the far north, *children of the fells* held back the invading legions. Working together at last, they summoned the Dread Lands and kept their foe at bay. But it wasn't to last. The damage was done. The ancient power of the shamans faded in the Great Caldera as the rule of man, elf, and dwarf prevailed around the last bastion of tribal faith. It had been nearly two centuries, and offspring of those who'd been made long ago to serve the skyfolk came to the north, bringing with them new ideas about faith. Some perished at the hands of offended shamans. Others succeeded in spreading the idea that a greater spirit in the image of fellfolk existed. It would speak to them in ways that the spirit of nature could not. It would help on its own accord, not because it was summoned or because nature was harmed, but because it wished to. They said that man honored such a spirit. They revealed that dwarves had many of them, and so did the elves. Those spirits made their followers powerful so that they could travel the Great Vault and defeat the shamans. They also said that

Masters of Morever Meadows



another race from the moons, like them a smaller folk imprisoned and persecuted by dwarves and elves, enjoyed such spirits despite their captors' wishes. And they were good. And they were mighty. And above all, they could defy their hated foes and prevail.

1056 CE The idea captured the minds of many fellfolk, progeny of those who'd fled and native northerners alike. Late-comers also said it was true. They too knew of the gnomes. If they were foes of the skyfolk and they knew the way of wizards, then they could be trusted and honored as allies of the fellfolk. Word got around that gnomes would be welcome and safe in the north. And thus did those able to escape their captors find solace among the tribes. The shamans feared what had come to pass, when escaped gnomes and scions of servants brought with them new skills in the ways of the skyfolk. They knew this knowledge would profoundly change the nature of the northern tribal lands.

1083 CE A *Great Palaver* took place among shamans and village elders. The tribes formed a blood alliance, at a site that would later become known as Watermeet. Under the guidance of former fellfolk servants and gnomes, a city was built by the sea shore. It was used at first as a way to contain foreign merchants within a place that could be watched. There, concessions were allotted, late-comers were given a place to live, an army like those of the skyfolk was trained, and a port was dug for great ships to come and go. It was called Seahollow.

1094 CE A few short years later, the Republic of Belledor was founded. A Steward was elected to speak on behalf of the citizens to realms of the skyfolk, not as a defeated people but as one free and united. It was, in fact, the sole and only sovereign state in the Great Caldera at the time, one second to none and recognized by all others. Thus did the last of nations become first. This fact wasn't lost on the minds of settlers, who strived for happiness under the harsh rule of outer-world autocracies. The Age of Colonialism truly ended a century later (by 1200 CE) when Belledor's first skyship took flight. It began a long journey around the Great Caldera to herald the birth of a new nation, bearing a message unspoken and yet so screamingly clear, which no longer could go unheeded.

1127 CE This wasn't the end of the story. Rather, it merely was the end of a new beginning. As hopes of a great spirit spread throughout the land, wary shamans began hunting the bearers of unwanted tidings. Though somber scenes took place in the night, new ideas proved too hard to quiet. Tribal shamans attempted to suppress the new beliefs, but a sentient and personified goddess emerged from river spirits, and a great shrine was soon erected in Seahollow. It was consecrated in the hallowed name of Celendine, the one great goddess of fellfolk.

1158 CE Other gods did not react kindly to the new arrival in Ambrosia. In truth, the more evil ones went looking for her, intent on a culling to prevent others of her sort from following in her footsteps. As it were, to repay the fellfolk for the kindness they'd shown their followers, the Masters of Berylea offered

Celendine the safety of their domain until such time she could construct her own. Yarima-of-the-Hand ascended next, and joined the one who would be her ruler. She was grim and ominous, perhaps a bit much for her hosts, and the gods of gnomes decided it was time for their honored guests to depart. When a worthy place in Ambrosia was found, Celendine, Yarima, and the gnomish gods endeavored together to build the Morever Meadows. Satisfied with the feat of magic, the gnomes wished their new friends well and returned to their realm.

1201 CE During the next century, the colonies of the Great Caldera descended into the chaos of insurrection to gain their own independence from the moons' overseers. Four more deities emerged, one for each season—Floria, Lara, Gilla, and Malva. Celendine stood as birth, the beginning of all life. Yarima was death and the end of all things that should come to pass. They were the elder gods of Morever Meadows. One last divine spirit was needed, one to oversee the passage of time, from birth to death and between them, through life's four seasons. He would endeavor to assist each of the four youngest spirits, and they became his liege one after the next. His name was Aevan and he ascended in 1368, well after peace had returned to the Great Caldera. Though least powerful and the servant of lesser goddesses, he would grow to become their master. This was understood by the two elders and, when Aevan was ready, Celendine would of her free will relinquish her rule in his favor. Such was recorded in the Vodonic Verses.

Never again shall we bow before adversity.

Here do we stand at last, proud and free.

Koban Bannoral, First Steward of the House
Seahollow, third day of Calidere 1094.

The Morever Meadows

Celendine, Yarima-of-the-Hand, and the gods of the gnomes (all but Balladoo-of-the-Hoo, who'd wandered away for some unknown and disturbing reason), built the fellfolk pantheon's magical domain. The Morever Meadows are a vast expanse of rolling hills and fields with never-ending rivers and a great lake at its center. Four high mountain ridges extend outward, like spokes of a wheel. Periods of day and night occur regularly, though no sun can be seen in the domain's sky. Beneath the lake shines Celendine's palace, as if its vault were made of a crystal dome letting in the pale blue-green light filtering through the lake's nearly translucent waters. Gilt decorations on tall and slender wooden columns glow at night, bathing her court in a soft halo of peace when darkness prevails outside. All those who visit Celendine might be tempted to remove their divine footwear and don woolen pads to avoid besmirching the floor's exquisite parquet (a small pile of them does indeed lie by each entrance).

Though the goddesses of the four seasons reside in private halls at Celendine's or Yarima's courts, outside lands surrounding Morever Meadows' great lake are split into four regions, one illustrating each season. Pleasant antechambers reminiscent of the quaint comforts of Belledor's fellfolk dwellings are available for divine guests, usually peers of Berylea or some other visitor. Aevan uses them as he moves to serve the next of his timely lieges. Yarima's court exists beneath, a place more austere made of stone magically shaped. Deeper yet lies the Ring of Bones, a shape-shifting place of jagged rocks, where the forsaken spirits of gnomes and fellfolk are made to suffer and expiate their offenses. Thaleera bestows upon Yarima a fraction of her magic to pay for this service, which the fellfolk patroness of death dutifully provides. Galadir Blackmattock regularly accompanies sorrowful spirits of gnomes to the gates of Morever Meadows, where Yarima takes charge of them.

Gods of the Fellfolk

As the first to ascend, Celendine now rules the fellfolk pantheon. Her purpose is to inspire other races to show more respect and kindness to her kin. The goddesses of the four seasons are generally thought of as siblings; they do not always agree with each other. The two elders, Celendine and Yarima, personify divergent cultures, but this is seen as being part of the necessary divine balance. The pantheon's ruler and her peers promote the development of Belledor as a progressive nation, one fully able to accomplish all that other realms can. They oppose all forms of ancient shamanism and superstition. In the long term, they seek to sway to their views fellfolk throughout the Great Caldera who haven't yet embraced the new cults of the north. The process isn't always peaceful, as shamans and missionary priors are likely to resort to violence at some point. Fellfolk who've adopted foreign faiths common to lands of their births aren't immune to Belledor's aggressive proselytizing efforts. On the other hand, gods of this pantheon do make efforts to help inspire improvements in the way their followers are treated outside Belledor, as regards their rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, divine fellfolk and gnomes visit each other, discuss business, and routinely enjoy great feasts.

Celendine

Epithets: *Lady of the River, the First of Twelve*
Ranking: Ruling goddess of the fellfolk; elder peer
Interests: Water, fertility, birth, life, enlightenment, wealth
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–6 (friendly, altruistic, humble, considerate, generous, truthful), 💀 *Practical* (though patient and principled, she can also prove emotional and sentimental), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (though passionate and outspoken about shamanism, she is otherwise dreamy and enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: *The Hallowed Seven* (see *Godly Trappings* page 220)
Allies: Floria Tanglemane, Thaleera-the-Wanderer, Alana-Lifebringer (Meryath), Myriël (Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Followers of the Mud Skin shamans
Centers of Faith: Southern Belledor (Seafolk area)
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 10, 1127 CE
Pronunciation: KEL-len-dine (as in "fine")

Mythology: There was a time when the good people of the forest came to the river and honored its peaceful spirit. They were grateful for her fresh waters and fish she released to fishermen's nets. Sometimes she'd claim a villager whom she took to the bottom, and that was fine—it was repayment for her bounty. Distant kin of the fellfolk came, fleeing from strangers who'd stolen their faraway homes. They spoke of gods who gave dreams and magic. The shaman told them to hold their tongues and leave. But the idea remained. A waif wandered by the river banks, her head full of the strangers' stories. She sat by the reeds, day-dreaming. One day, she saw another face than hers reflected in the water. Startled, she fled to the village and recounted her adventure. Some returned with her and saw the



face she'd described. The shaman argued that spirits had no faces, that it was all a mind trick to fool them. But the idea spread, and others came looking for the face in the river. The waif grew up and, threatened by the shaman, left her home. She traveled the land to tell her story and show what she could see. She was thought a prophet, yet many a shaman chased her away. Her name was Celendine.

One day, she slipped and fell into a secluded pool near the river. The villagers could see her dreaming below the surface, but could not reach her. When the light was right, the reflection of the spirit's face replaced Celendine's. This vision lasted twelve days during which shamans came to dispel the magic. All failed, and when the twelfth tried, a silver lady emerged, bearing the face seen in the water. She deposited twelve large pearls on a rock before fading back into the pool and vanishing. Smitten by their experience, the shamans became believers and the first priors of the new faith.

Soon after her ascension, She Who Became Celendine sensed dangers lurking all around in the Ambrosian. Shadowy denizens were on her trail, hunting for her. She eluded them several times, fading into silvery streams and lakes of the divine universe. As she emerged one last time, Thaleera was waiting for her, sitting on a boulder above a hidden pool. "Peace to you, *Lady of the River*. Beauty and marvels abound in this place, but they hide a great many perils for one who just ascended. There are some who do not welcome your coming. May I extend the solace of my peers' abode? Your kin have given those of my faith a kindness I wish to return." Celendine accepted the gracious offer and was soon afterward introduced to the Masters of Berylea at Thaleera's court.

During a celebration attended by all, from the most boisterous to the dourest, the Elder Born passed along a cup of bubbly golden elixir to her guest and observed her intently as she emptied it. A vision of possible futures played out in Celendine's mind. She faced her hostess, who grinned at her. Understanding the origins and nature of her drink's visions, Celendine gave the Elder Born a thankful nod. At the opposite table, while Balladoo danced dizzyingly before everyone and a giddy Armidal threw Ambrosian grapes at the mad fellow, Derrow Flickerhand watched quietly, a quizzical eyebrow raised, his blazing dark eyes drifting with suspicion from the guest, to the cup, to Thaleera, and back to the guest.

Description: The first of the Belledoran deities, she originally was honored by the tribes as one of many river spirits. The pool where she first emerged lay just south of Hogs Wallow, close to where two rivers join. A shrine stands nearby, and the area is considered sacred. Belledoran beliefs brought about her existence as a personified goddess of water and fertility. Over time, Celendine took on the cause of faithful Belledorans and the enlightenment of their culture. Her faith strengthened the Republic of Belledor. After her shrine was built, her followers gathered nearby, helping Seahollow grow as the nation's capital. Once she was firmly established, Celendine facilitated the ascension of other deities. She is the spiritual patron of matriarchs, healers, merchants, fishermen, boatmen, and all those who seek change and cultural openness. Many see her as the beginning of all things and those yet to come, hope, wealth, and the future. Druids and conventional priors serve her equally.

The elixir alluded to in her mythology was in fact Thaleera's invitation to join *the Hallowed Six*—which promptly became *the Hallowed Seven* when members accepted her. Celendine had a particular interest in the cabal's goals, especially as regards expanding their faiths to neighboring continents. In the Dread Lands lies the immense domain of tribal shamans, whom she wants to subdue and bring to her faith. In so doing, it may be possible for Belledoran civilization to gain a foothold in Eerien and Laëril. If she succeeds, her power would exceed that of Soltan himself. Shamans of the Dread Lands present a danger for her cult, should their ancient ways prevail again in Belledor. Because of this, she encourages a cleansing among the people of Belledor. Those refusing to submit are banished to the Dread Lands. Her magnanimity toward her foes troubles her because she worries that they may return and continue their struggle in Belledor or elsewhere in the Great Caldera. Indeed, some already have.

Celendine's closest ally is Floria, who assists her in bringing new life to the world. The ruler does not have detractors in her pantheon, although Yarima and her ally Malva Darkbrow remain at philosophical odds with her, as they toil to bring the end of things. It is divine nature at work. Gilla, Lara, and Aevan are more aloof than Floria, but loyal to the pantheon as a whole. Celendine's most valued friend and confidante is Thaleera. Among *the Hallowed Seven,* she also appreciates the company of Alana-Lifebringer and Myriël, who are her soulmates

Shrine of Celendine





Level 2



Level 5



Upper Levels

Scale: 5' per square





Level 4

Level 3

Stairs Down Up
Pillar
Cart
Armoire
Boat
Door
Window
Table & chair
Chest
Statue
Brazier
Trapdoor
Glass case

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there. The work of the *Lady of the River*'s foes is most visible in the actions of the Mud Skins. It is a secret network of shamans extending from Belledor to the shores of Eerien and Laëril. They are sworn to strike down cults of the Morever Meadows, starting with Celendine's. A merciless fight takes place in Belledor's underworld, and many tribes nearest the Great Caldera fiercely oppose encroachment by her faithful or any other outsiders on their tribal lands.

Celendine appears as a silvery fellfolk. Her body ranges from translucent to slightly blueish, her hair and eyes closer to watery celadon. She wears flowing ethereal robes. Her greatest shrine stands in Seahollow. It arches over the city's river and includes a bridge connecting the north and south banks. Popular faith contends it holds one of the twelve mythical pearls of her mythology. One each is said to remain in Belledor, at the shrines of the four seasons' goddesses. Yarima and Aevan are thought to keep theirs at Morever Meadows. Legends speak of the other five, stolen by shamans. Some believe they still lie hidden in Belledor. Others claim they were taken to the Dread Lands. Celendine can sense these artifacts have not been destroyed, yet she cannot locate them, as powerful spirits of nature must have been summoned to hide them. The most favored temple offerings include the eggs of water-born elemental beings delivered unharmed to the shrine. Clues about the missing pearls are also highly desirable.

Shrine of Celendine—Map Key

Outdoors
1. Street level
2. River docks
3. Summer Bridge
4. Spring Gate
5. Summer Gate
6. Autumn Gate
7. Winter Gate

Indoors—Shrine Level
8. Shrine sanctum
9a. Stairs down to Area 10
9c. Stairs up to Area 12

Lower Levels
9b. Stairs up to Area 8
10. Service entrance
11. Private dock

Upper Levels
9d. Stairs down to Area 8
12. Wooden gallery
13a. Stairs up to Area 14 (on top of 9c/9d)
13b. Stairs down to Area 12
14. Upper hallway (beneath arched roof)
15. Guard room
16a. Stairs up to Area 19
16b. Stairs down to Area 15
17. Scriptorium
18. Archives
19. Library
20a. Stairs up to Area 22 (on top of 16a/16b)
20b. Stairs down to Area 19
21. Office
22. Attic

Preferred Divine Favor: *Innate Magic*—when immersed in clean, flowing water, the beneficiary can heal combat damage once per day (to self or other). Roll 1d6 to determine the extent of healing: 1. One quarter of the damage rounded up; 2-3. Half; 4-5. Three quarters; 6. All (see Table 10, score of 9).
Preferred animal/monster: Kingfishers and water sprites (sentient entities).
Preferred weapon/spell: Spear or javelin (or water-related spells).

Twelve Pearls of Belledor: These are separate elements of a single artifact. Each pearl contains a fraction of energy from the world soul. The faith of mortal followers will in theory lead them to find the lost pearls and return them. When they are brought together, a spirit lord ascends as a demigod of Morever Meadows serving the deity whose followers recovered the most pearls. The pearls then vanish and are scattered across Calidar's universe for the process to start anew. Some of the pearls thought to be kept at Belledoran shrines may actually be fakes enchanted by mortals, as a tool for the priors to attract and enthrall the gullible faithful. Priors aware of the ploy will willingly reveal the truth only to those who accept to be bound by silence and honor, and leave on a quest to find the true relic. Whosoever carries a pearl gains a +1 bonus to wisdom. The bonus becomes permanent when the artifact is safely delivered as sworn. No mortal has ever managed to return more than one such relic.

Aevan Timebringer

Epithets: *Lord of the Four Winds, Demigod of All and Great God of Nothing (for now)*
Ranking: Demigod, Temporal of the fellfolk
Interests: Time and wisdom
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate*, ☗ *Practical*, ↯ *Even-Tempered*. Much of his personality reflects the goddess he serves, from Spring's youthful and carefree ways to Winter's grim and merciless demeanor
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Celendine (honored ruler of Morever Meadows), Yarima-of-the-Hand (protector), one of the peers of Morever Meadows, depending on the season
Hated Foes: Time-corrupting starfolk
Centers of Faith: East-Central Belledor (Torburrow area)
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 3, 1368 CE
Pronunciation: AY-van



Mythology: It was only a question of time before he ascended. Though he came late to the Meadows, the eternal flow of sand through the divine hourglass worked in his favor always. He rose from a curious sort of nature's spirit, one hard to seize and forever on the move, neither here nor there, yet everywhere at once. When gnomes introduced the mechanical clock to Belledor, they often referred to its face. The fellfolk took the idea one step further, and thus was born Aevan Timebringer. Welcomed by all at the Meadows, he began his work at once, enhancing the dominance of the goddess whose season had come, for he served each equally and none could hold him back as time passed.

As he endeavored to help Floria reclaim her forest from Malva's grip, Aevan broke a river's resilient ice lasting curiously late in the season. He then roused the waters to take away Winter's shattered remains. "Sweet Aevan," said the *Fair Spring Maiden,* "I thank you for your hard work. I must have forgotten this spot. Silly me." She kissed the demigod with much affection and cast upon him flowers, butterflies, and chirping songbirds before capering off into the nearby woods. Amused, he headed for the hills to continue surveying the season's progress. He came back the next day and found the ice had returned. Annoyed, he smashed it once more, and Floria showed up. "Sweet Aevan," she said in an all too familiar manner, "I thank you for your hard work. I must have forgotten this spot. Silly me." She embraced Aevan with identical eagerness, bestowing upon him the very same proofs of her seasonal fondness.

Puzzled, the *déjà-kissed* demigod suspected foul play, sensing something had been twisted that should not have been. He summoned a great phoenix and from its back followed the scent of time wantonly altered. His flight took him to a red world some good distance across Soltan's ephemeris. A curious vessel of steel had landed in a windswept desert, colored lights flickering all about in the night. The demigod dismounted and knocked at what looked like a door. A curious stranger emerged, fully enclosed in armor supple as leather and shiny as silver, his bulbous gray head trapped inside a crystal sphere.

"Denizen of the Great Vault," said Aevan, "you meddle with forbidden matters. You are to cease and leave this place at once." The odd being responded in an alien language. Its meaning became clear when he pulled up a tube-like object and, from it, discharged magic that tore at Aevan's very fabric. Annoyed, the demigod crushed the stranger's bubble helm and cast aside his writhing body. A larger tube pointed from the vessel and reduced to ashes the proud phoenix awaiting nearby. Now divinely wrathful, Aevan ripped the weapon from its mount, entered the vessel, and bludgeoned its occupants with the offending device. When Aevan came back out, covered in green blood, his mighty mount was reborn. The demigod then dug a great hole in the rock, pushed into it the vessel's smashed remains, and directed the phoenix to melt the rock over them. Satisfied, he checked the stars. "My noble companion," Aevan said, "'tis time to return whence we came. One should know better than tamper with the celestial clock."

Description: Last to have ascended to the fellfolk pantheon, Aevan grew from a concept among Belledorans representing the passing of time. This demigod is unique in Calidar's divine cosmogony in that he serves not one liege but four. It was by design, which required the agreement of the entire pantheon. The intent was for one season to prevail over the other three, and to help the living journey from birth to death and back to the world soul for the cycle to begin anew. Aevan's connection with the world soul is the strongest in the Meadows. The two elders of the pantheon believe this gift will enable the Timebringer to rise as their peer without first perishing in the service of a liege. For now, the demigod favors clockmakers, messengers, sages, scribes, and those who seek balance in all things such as druids and warrior-monks.

The Lord of Four Winds, as a demigod, remains unusual. His appearance shifts to suit his current liege, and so does his personality. On his own, he is otherwise as indefinable as time itself. Aevan remains acutely mindful of the passing of time. This led him to skirmish with occasional starfolk bent on manipulating fundamental laws of physics. His fight is one fraught with many dangers, as some of their weapons can harm the divine. Certain races dwelling well past the far reaches of the Fringe seek lost technology of the Kahuulkin, including certain time-bending devices. They are rival races and their dealings with Calidar's divine world remain unpredictable. So far, they have failed to infiltrate either the netherworld or the Ambrosian dimension.

Aevan's closest allies are Celendine and Yarima, who initially conceived of his nature and purpose, so that neither life nor death could have ascendancy over the other. For this, he would have to rise as a greater god, but none of them know how or when it will happen. The goddesses of the four seasons both adore and despise him, depending on whom he serves at the time. All see him as a younger brother, save for Gilla Amberbraid, who seeks to make him her lover and spouse—a hopeless endeavor if ever there was one.

Of his own, the demigod has no physical appearance. He takes on the form that is most endearing to the goddess he serves. Mortals tend to represent him variously as a newborn, a young shepherd, a mature woodsman, or a wizened old sage—when not all four in the same statue. His changing nature fails however to repress a powerful and determined entity that will do what it must to ensure Time's integrity. The Great Clocktower at Torburrow protects a famous shrine dedicated to Aevan (see *Godly Trappings*, page 227). Favored temple offerings are those of the liege he currently serves.

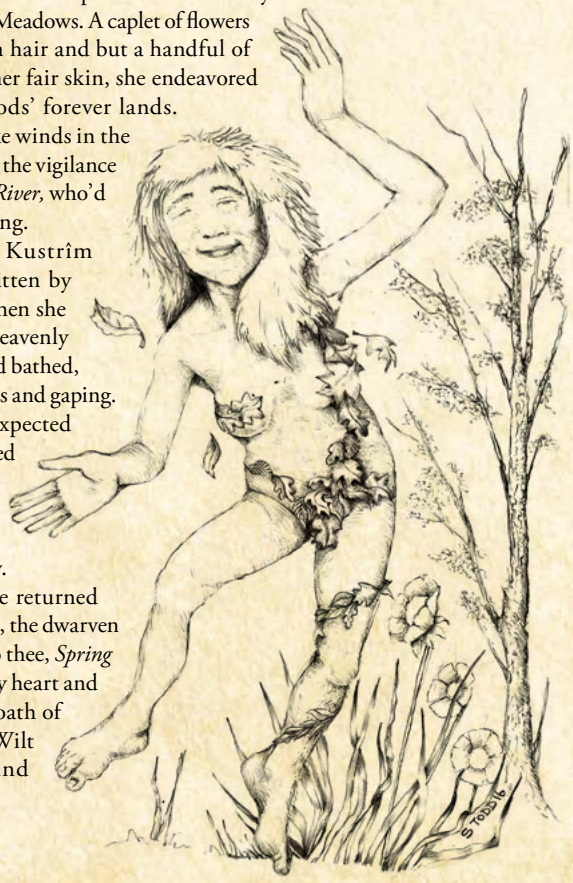
Preferred Divine Favor: Those of the liege he currently serves.
Preferred animal/monster: Storks and time-shifting monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: Open fist, or weapons and spells of his current liege.
Other Benefits: Aevan's faithful enjoy followers' and priors' abilities related to the goddess Aevan serves at the time (they switch sets each season).

Floria Tanglemane



Epithets: *Morning Dew, the Fair Spring Maiden*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the fellfolk
Interests: Spring, youth, love, beauty, forests, woodland beings, fairies
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (friendly, merciful, truthful, trusting, tolerant), 💀 *Instinctive*–5 (spontaneous, emotional, creative, curious, highly demonstrative), 🗲 *Lively*–8 (lighthearted, bubbly, cloyingly-sweet, free-spirited, romantic, hedonistic, shameless, eccentric, if somewhat absentminded and forgetful—Morever Meadows' *flower-child*)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Celendine (friend and honored ruler of Morever Meadows)
Hated Foes: Pawns and masters of the Tòrr-Gàrraidh
Centers of Faith: Western Belledor (The Wildlands area), Osriel (Villavecchia area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 17, 1191 CE
Pronunciation: FLOR-ree-ah

Mythology: In the wake of the elder gods' ascent, Floria arose from the thoughts of those mindful of the woods and all things spring-like. Though a good many fellfolk imagined a goddess born from a forest spirit, the beliefs of fairy folk helped hasten her entry into the Morever Meadows. A caplet of flowers in her wild flaxen hair and but a handful of fronds covering her fair skin, she endeavored to explore the gods' forever lands. Unpredictable like winds in the spring, she eluded the vigilance of the *Lady of the River,* who'd awaited her coming.



Along came Kustrîm Stonebrand. Smitten by Floria's beauty when she emerged from a heavenly pool wherein she'd bathed, he stood speechless and gaping. Elated by the unexpected attention, she smiled at her visitor as leaves and vines grew anew to veil her modesty. When some sense returned to his divine mind, the dwarven deity kneeled. "To thee, *Spring Maiden,* I offer my heart and the unbreakable oath of eternal fidelity. Wilt thou be mine and

stand by my side to shine light and joy as a great lady of Holmring?" Floria giggled and danced mirthfully round the puzzled dwarf. "Sweet *Master of Oaths,* so soon do you seek to sweep me away and lock me up within the great walls of your love? Shouldn't you rather enjoy the freedom of the wilds?" Like a bear pawing at a mayfly, Kustrîm reached for the whimsical maiden, but failed to capture her. Frustration mounting, he got back to his feet. "Won't you stay put for an instant, woman? I proffer all that a peer of Holmring commands. If you require more, state your price. You have my word I shall endeavor to honor it." Though the matter seemed altogether straightforward to the *Master of Oaths,* Floria responded with another giggle. "Lovely *Lord of Stout Halls,* I am no more for sale than the morning dew. I come and go with the wind. Won't you cast off this steel which imprisons your chest? Rip away these dull trappings and join me in the woods. I shall show you freedom and joy, and give you much love and affection." Increasingly circumspect, Kustrîm glanced dubiously at his armor. "This glorious manifestation of my father's craftsmanship? I shall do no such thing, *Fairest of Maidens.* This price which you demand is far too high. Come to your senses now!"

Another woman's voice rose nearby, somewhat stern. "Do you really mean to see trees, shrubs, and flowery garlands adorning your hallowed halls, *Oath Master?* Rabbits, squirrels, and deer cavorting through your bedchamber? Bees and butterflies caught in your beard? Songbirds besmirching the finest riches of dwarven godhood? And your beloved spouse running wild across the courts of your elders?" Celendine sat on a mossy stump by the pool's silvery waterfall, chin resting casually on her hand, elbow propped on her knee. "Those of your faith have taken enough from the children of the fells. Know that the *Fair Maiden of Spring* isn't to be had. That is not in her nature. Your admiration is appreciated, but now we take our leave."

Description: Third to ascend to sentient godhood, Floria embodies youth, joy, and bright colors. Originally a tree spirit, she tends to favor woodlands and all who dwell within. Though generally benevolent, she also stands for denizens of the woods with a darker ethos. She may punish truly evil and destructive behavior but eventually forgives and forgets. She is most powerful during Belledor's spring, when Aevan Timebringer serves her. She favors the young, the star-crossed lovers, bards, poets, charming rogues, romantic heroes, mirthful rebels, fairy folk, and all with beauty, love, daring, and shameless exuberance. Many druids honor her cult.

As with the other four goddesses of seasons, if Floria's faith extended to Calidar's southern hemisphere or to other worlds, she would enjoy multiple yearly renaissances. Aevan Timebringer would then create as many local manifestations in order to serve each goddess, as he is presently bound to do, despite overlapping resurgences. Floria ideally appreciates the elves' affinity with forests, but the way of the Tòrr-Gàrraidh remains a monumental crime in her view. Sweet, charming Floria can thus turn wicked for the sake of those she protects. She stands as their staunchest opponent.

Floria is thankful for the life Celendine brings. Her elder also is her best ally and protector. Regal and haughty, Gilla Amberbraid politely tolerates her. On the other hand, the Wild One refuses to acknowledge Lara Umberlock's reserve, and she makes it a point to cast lovely clouds of flowers and flocks of butterflies upon the Lady of the Fall whenever she can, hoping to sway her to spring's joyful youthfulness. Many of Floria's fleeting lovers have experienced such spontaneous and colorful outpourings of affection. She does not understand or appreciate the mindsets of Malva Darkbrow and Yarima, and stays away from them.

The Spring Maiden sports a fair complexion with a mass of tangled golden hair crowned with a ring of nodding flowers. She wears only a few leaves and vines for the sake of divine decency. She resides in a wing of Celendine's great halls. Floria owns no great temple; her faith is taught in the many natural shrines of the Wildlands in the west and in the woods nearest the towns and farms where she is most powerful. Favored cult offerings include new breeds of flora, fauna, and monsterhood, species able to adapt to life in Belledor and be beneficial to local nature. Offerings must be made to a high druid of her cult.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Life* (see Table 10, score of 13).
Preferred animal/monster: Hummingbirds and tree dwellers.
Preferred weapon/spell: Wooden staff or a thorny cudgel (or plant-related spells).

Gilla Amberbraid

Epithets: *Sun Queen, Lady of the Wheat, Mistress of Riches, Harrier of the Plains*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the fellfolk
Interests: Summer, abundance, wealth, farmland, fellfolk pride
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful and generous, she can be intolerant and merciless), 💀 *Rational*–4 (driven, tenacious, methodical, principled), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (though flamboyant and indomitable, she also is stately, haughty, and somewhat humorless)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Lara Umberlock (friend), Milánn (friend, Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Followers of The Great Scratch.
Centers of Faith: Central Belledor (Heartlands and Mornglens areas), Osriel (Middeldoorn area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 7, 1228 CE
Pronunciation: GHEEL-lah

Mythology: Since the beginning of time when the children of the fells learned to tend fields, myriad spirits dwelled within furrow, stalk, leaf, and kernel. One of many, a golden spirit ascended from the great plains of Belledor, and her name was Gilla Amberbraid. As she trod the world of mortals, the fields in her wake yielded magnificent crops of golden wheat and giant corn at a time when a blight ravaged the north. She was hailed as the goddess of abundance, and forever honored in the Heartlands.

The *Lady of the Wheat* sought out the source of the blight. As she healed the land, she saw rats fleeing before her. Their trail led to the great silos of Watermeet, at the port whence barges once ferried Belledor's riches to faraway shores. Not one worker was to be found, and the river barges lay silent and motionless. She sensed evil at the largest of warehouses. When she flung its doors aside, a crevasse opened in the ground, disgorging endless swells of rats. Bearing an unholy halo of ill-tidings, they screeched and closed round Gilla the Magnificent. Unafraid, the goddess cast upon the fiends a pillar of sunlight that seared through flesh and bone until all were reduced to graying ashes.

"Come forth, *Lord of Fiends,"* she said. "I know you hide in the darkness of this chasm. Show yourself." A cackle rose from the dimness and, with it, a being not completely unlike the demon-rats. Skinbound



and covered with patches of mangy fur, eyes and fangs purulent green, it stood defiantly before the *Lady of the Wheat*. "State your name, wretch, before I strike you down." Her voice was as imperious as her mien. The fiend snarled as it pointed a gnarled and clawed finger at its foe. "You should know me better, former spirit of dirt and muck. Long have your sort toiled against my kind. I am hailed by many names in many places. Some know me as Malnibble or Skrathnag. Others remember me as Rottigryn, Snagribble, Skrittlefang, or Raat-Skataal. Though most fear me as *The Great Scratch,* those of my kin honor me as Skirrr-ng-skirrr, not that you could pronounce it properly."

The red-headed goddess summoned a great footman's flail, and began spinning its spiked head at the end of the chain. "Whatever you wish to be called, your business here is at an end. Flee and do not return, or prepare to meet your doom." The fiend snickered, circling the goddess just outside her flail's reach. "It isn't the way I fight, *Queen of Furrows.* Catch me if you can." Gilla spun her weapon ever faster. "Suit yourself, *Rodent Master.* I need not chase you to smite you." The chain suddenly stretched, allowing the spiked head to fly forth and strike her foe, ripping skin and fur from its face. Half its skull exposed, an oozing eye dangling on its side, the fiend wailed and hissed. "Think you have vanquished me, do you? It takes more to defeat *The Great Scratch.* Like a bad itch, I always return where you least expect." Thus vanished the demon-pest, and ended the blight of Belledor.

Description: Fourth to ascend to the Morever Meadows, Gilla rose from the spirits of the land to embody abundance, wealth, strength, glory, and summer festivals. She is the patron of farmers, bakers, butchers, and those who reap the bounty of the land. Gilla also favors merchants, bankers, shopkeepers, as well as architects and builders of all that commands awe, for she is proud and determined to lead the fellfolk to their rightful place among the great realms of Calidar. Warriors and heroic leaders honor her regal demeanor, and see her as one of their own.

Though Gilla supports Celendine's effort to change the old cult of shamans, she also pursues goals of her own. She opposes minions of harmful entropy corrupting nature, such as willful discord, diseases, crimes, curses, and the soiling of the land. She watches over the plains of Belledor for portents of chaos. Her priors hunt them down in the world of mortals, while she and her servants do the same in the ethereal or in Ambrosia. Above all, she wages an endless war against the lord of demon-rats, whose depredations flare sporadically in various realms on and outside Calidar. Her mortal avatar confronted him more than once, and always does he escape to spoil another day.

Though not a detractor of Celendine, she stays aloof from her liege until summoned. Proud and imperious, Gilla does not like being ruled, and the head of the pantheon has been careful not to bruise her feelings. Neither does the *Lady of the Wheat* endorse Yarima or summer's rival, Malva Darkbrow. Both of them favor dimness and the end of things, which displeases Gilla. She does not object to Floria's effusive personality, but tends to treat her as a child, patiently waiting for her antics to subside so she can clean up and move on. Gilla enjoys Aevan's presence when he comes to serve her. She endeavors to conquer his heart, but the Timebringer always moves on, and the Mistress of Riches grows less resplendent for it. Nonetheless, she values her friendship with Lara Umberlock, with whom she shares a similar personality, and Milánn, who hates wererats.

Taller and slimmer than her peers, dazzling with hair red like flame topped with a golden crown, she is the Regal Lady of the Sun. Equally at ease in both, she wears with pride the stately vestments of monarchs as well as the steel trappings of war. She resides in a wing of Celendine's halls. Gilla is a far cry from how most strangers imagine a fellfolk queen. Mightiest in the meadows, her gleaming shrine towers above Watermeet. Its great vaults hold vast quantities of grain and other produce from farms of the Heartlands saved for times of need. The magic of her priors keeps out pests and thieves alike. Favored temple offerings include the severed heads of demon-rats, and the hearts of those who lead them.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Wound* (see Table 10, score of 4).
Preferred animal/monster: Harriers and birds of prey in general.
Preferred weapon/spell: Two-handed footman's flail (or spells related to light).

Lara Umberlock

Epithets: *Sovereign Mistress of Autumn, Great Lady of Harvests*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the fellfolk
Interests: Fall, elders, tradition, fellfolk lore, wisdom, honor
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though humble and truthful, she can be mistrusting and unforgiving), 💀 *Rational*–7 (down-to-earth, forbearing, cagey, stubborn, straightforward, honor-bound, obedient), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (behind her façade of formality, reserve, and a somewhat straitlaced mien lies a sensual spirit and a *gourmand*)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Gilla Amberbraid (friend), Belgomeer Fablesong (peer of Berylea)
Hated Foes: Thor and his followers (see *Gods of Nordheim)*
Centers of Faith: Southeastern Belledor (Easthome and Raiders' Coast areas), Osriel (Oosterdam area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 21, 1269 CE
Pronunciation: LAR-rah

Mythology: When fall comes to Belledor, great storms spill over the Stone End, bringing cold showers to herald the approaching winter. Carrying on ghostly shoulders somber clouds of the Bergmark are legions of sky spirits roused from their summer slumber. Lara was one of them. Given a visage

and personality, she ascended to godhood as a protector of the fellfolk in the hills. "Arise! *Sovereign Mistress of Autumn*," greeted Gilla Amberbraid. "The warmth of my heart yields a great bounty awaiting your harvest and protection, for such is not in my nature to perform. Come, my righteous kin, my soul-sister, so that I may lead your steps to the domain of my peers."

Soon did Lara go about her work after Celendine welcomed her at the Morever Meadows. She knew that after the rains of autumn, bitter spirits of snow and ice would swoop down and breathe upon the land blinding-white blankets of frost till all would go dormant. Her followers would only survive on what they saved in their barns or what little there was to hunt or trap. Lara's wisdom and careful ways inspired the faithful to prepare themselves. A ruthless people dwelled beyond the mountains, born of another race in a harsh realm bereft of good farmland. They came with the rains of autumn, coveting the wealth of Belledor before winter shut the passes. These were followers of a brutal god favoring courage and brazen ways, intent on taking all from those who could not hold their keep.

Responding to her faithful's prayers, Lara sought out the Mighty Thor in the Ambrosian. After he'd smitten three scores of demonic wretches into oblivion and refreshed himself by a waterfall, Lara cast a spell on his great hammer lying nearby, veiling it from its owner's sight. When he turned from the water, he noticed both the missing artifact and Lara's presence. "How dare you steal the hammer of the Mighty Thor!" he thundered. Undaunted, the fellfolk goddess crossed her arms, defiant. "I have stolen nothing, unlike those of your faith. Do not trifle with me, Thor Odinsson. You may stand unvanquished, but I can bring misery to those who help themselves so callously." His anger mounting, the Norse god stared down at Lara. "You would be wise not to anger the people of the fjords, young godling. Theirs are the ways of warriors. Your faithful keep what they can defend. It is honorable. The others do not command such compassion." Undeterred, Lara returned Thor's gaze. "Then you aren't worthy of keeping your own hammer." Thunder rolled in the Ambrosian. "We shall see, impudent shortling!" Though he could not see it, the god of Nordheim summoned Mjölnir. Despite the spell veiling it, the hammer flew into his hand, and he brought it down with full force. Lara dodged the mighty blow and, as she retreated into the Ambrosian mist, parted ways with a few more words. "Your people will go hungry when winter bites. That which they plunder will rot before long. This much I swear to you, Thor Odinsson."

Description: Fifth to ascend to sentient godhood, Lara is the *Sovereign Mistress of Autumn*. She has an affinity for cloud-bearing winds, and the desire to store away the riches of the land. She favors the quaint and quiet comforts of Belledoran homes, with well-stocked pantries and cellars. Her most devout followers enjoy the warmth of a fireplace, a good book, a hearty liquor, and the sweet aroma of fine smokeweed. Most powerful in the hills, she is the patroness of elders, such as mayors, landlords, sages, and all with responsibilities, knowledge, and wisdom.

When not inspiring her followers to gather fall crops such as nuts, when not encouraging the construction of stout dwellings and deep stores able to forestall hunger during the winter, Lara watches over the handling of livestock, the autumn woods, fine spirits, and all that will enable a simple but good living. She watches for the coming of raiders across the Stone End Mountains, and warns her priors of the peril. Upon her foe, she inflicts cold and miserable rain, withering winds, muddy paths, and the certainty that their ill-gotten riches will spoil. This much she promised Thor, with whom she maintains a chill and unkind relation.

Her primary ally is Gilla Amberbraid, whose philosophy is closest to hers. She hardly can stand Floria's giddy effusions of love and affection, much less her silly clouds of flowers. Despite being closer to them by nature, Lara remains wary of Malva and Yarima for what they embody. She neither sides with Yarima nor Celendine in their everlasting debate on future and past. Her concerns are preparations for the coming winter so that her followers may live for another year. Lara is thankful nonetheless for Celendine's goodwill, and remains loyal to her call. Despite the best of her intentions, she has run across company whom she ought not to have appreciated, but divine love sometimes finds its own ways, especially with facetious Floria helping in the background. His name is Belgomeer Fablesong. His good heart and witty charm touched Lara despite her natural reserve, beckoning to the fore her repressed sensuality.

Lara resides in a wing of Celendine's great hall. As her name suggests, her curly mane is of a dark brown. She wears fall-like colors and patterns adorning garb that does little to conceal her voluptuous curves. If fight she must, she favors spiky chestnuts or Ambrosian stones flung with a staff sling. Lara's greatest shrine stands in Hobbleton, Easthome, which also includes a popular brewery. Preferred temple offerings are the weapons of raiders, especially if magical.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Protection* against servants and followers of Thor, as well as raiders in general (see Table 10, score of 6).
Preferred animal/monster: Wild turkeys as well as flightless, bird-like monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: Staff sling (or spells related to wind and weather).

Malva Darkbrow

Epithets: *Dark Queen of Ice, Keen Lady of the Frost, Mistress of Winter*
Ranking: Minor goddess of the fellfolk
Interests: Winter, sleep
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–5 (vain, selfish, vengeful, mistrustful, jealous), ☠ *Instinctive*–5 (unpredictable, audacious, defiant, cunning, tricky), ✔ *Stern*–5 (haughty, cynical, captious, sneaky, ill-tempered)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Yarima-of-the-Hand (elder goddess and ally), Loki (Nordheim), Derrow Flickerhand (peer of Berylea)
Hated Foes: Followers and servants of Skadi (see *Gods of Nordheim)*
Centers of Faith: Northeastern Belledor (Northern Marches and Belledor Rim areas), Osriel (Mistenbroek area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 14, 1315 CE
Pronunciation: MAL-vah

Mythology: From the spirits of snow and ice rose Malva, *Keen Lady of the Frost*. Of those who summoned her to sentient godhood, some feared her and begged for her mercy, others revered her

as they coveted all that their southern kin enjoyed. From her sister of the spring, Malva earned the intense blue eyes. From summer, she bore a kingly demeanor. From autumn, she kept unbound sensuality. From her own realm she inherited long straight hair dark as ebony and skin fair as alabaster. Yet her mien is bitter and jealous, ruling the north, where few faithful dwell, and where little grows from her harsh lands.

Her three sisters met her in the Ambrosian, when the *Mistress of Winter* ascended. "Hail to you, Malva Darkbrow," greeted Gilla Amberbraid. "Long have we awaited your rising, for we were incomplete without you. I bid you take your place among your kin and peers in the Morever Meadows." Brooding, the *Lady of Frost* played with hazy ice crystals slipping between her fingers before she looked up and gazed at her siblings. "And yet, you have taken the best of lands for yourselves, you who speak as my peers." Gilla frowned as she considered her younger sister's response. "True. I have taken the Heartlands' plains, for it is whence I rose." Lara Umberlock chimed in. "And I have the hills in the east, where the riches can be saved for all in need. I shall help if such you require." Floria Tanglemane leaned past her sister of the autumn. "The forest in the west I protect. You have plenty yourself. Tall, proud woods they are, strong in winter and summer alike." Gilla stepped forward. "Our *First Elder* took the south whence she rules upon brook, pond, and river, while the *Dark One* contented herself with far less, for she commands the underworld." Haughty and somber, Malva crossed her arms. "How convenient that I should have what's left, a hard and barren land that none of you claimed." Floria approached, saddened and puzzled. "But we love you all the same. You are part of us all, and we of you." Small clouds of flowers and butterflies punctuated her words, showering her bitter kin. They turned to frost and ice, and shattered on the ground. Annoyed, Lara dispelled the frozen flowers. "We come to you with an open hand. Gracefully accept it, and join us of your free will. Amends shall be made." In response, Malva summoned an icy haze that crackled and froze the ground around them. "As you wish, my sisters. I accept your empty-handed offer, but I do not bear the burden of your petty charity. Know that when winter comes, I shall reap the greater share of your lands, for this is my nature. The wolf will call in the night, and a hunt will take place before the sun rises anew."



Description: The sixth to take her place among fellfolk gods, Malva arose as the *Dark Queen of Ice*, envious of her siblings' good fortunes for she rules naught but the mournful winter. Malva is the bearer of ill tidings and dark portents. She favors dwellers of the Northern Marches, the downtrodden, the jealous, the spiteful, the malicious, and all those whom good life has scorned. Her concerns are the magnificence of the ice, the wind howling in her hair, and the culling of the weak and unprepared.

Despite her ominous ways, Malva protects those who trust in her. She guides her faithful toward shelters and helps hunters find their quarry. While she awaits her time, she covets and schemes. Along her tortuous path, she became acquainted with Derrow Flickerhand. She enjoys his keen and inquisitive mind, and he her dark and brooding charms. For a time, Nordheim followers of Skadi, huntsmen for the most part, encroached upon the Northern Marches, and the two became rivals. As it were, Loki had a hand in the affair, and Malva saw it. When she confronted him, the god of chaos offered a mirthful solution. Rather than meddling with Skadi's believers, he shifted his mischievous attention to those of Thor, tricking them instead to raid Easthome and perhaps as far as the Heartlands. The raiders bypassed towns and villages devoted to Derrow and, as long as his followers stayed out of the way, concentrated on the lowlands beyond. Malva tempted southern fellfolk to seek her protection while her well-inspired priors ostensibly harried the Bergmark scourge. A friendship grew from the scheme, bringing Loki closer to founding a dark cabal with Malva, Derrow, and a few others of their ilk, such as Ashebai of the Briarwoods and Anwë of the Heavenly Valley.

Malva also enjoys one ally in the Morever Meadows—Yarima-of-the-Hand. By nature, the *Dark Queen of Ice* has an affinity with the end of things. For this reason, she resides in private halls of Yarima's domain. She dislikes her sisters, Gilla in particular, whom she sees as hypocritical and self-serving. Malva resents Celendine for failing to enable Winter's ascent as the first of the four seasons. She suspects it was by design rather than fortuitous circumstance. Though she will serve the *Lady of the River,* Malva may twist matters if she sees some interest in the affair. She seeks to attract followers at the expense of her peers. Aevan Timebringer is the only member of the pantheon she trusts without question.

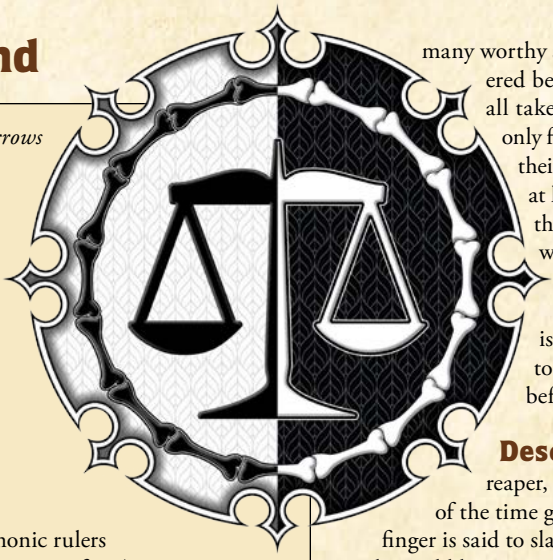
Her skin like pure alabaster, and hair like a raven's plumage, she wears a sparkling garb of ice and frost. Though a great shrine honors her at Fairway, her power shines greatest in the high mountains and on frozen shores. Preferred temple offerings include fine items of ivory and clear crystals, especially if enchanted.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Transcendence* with boreal, arctic, and high-altitude conditions (see Table 10, score of 14).

Preferred animal/monster: Snowy owls and boreal monsters including white dragons unconnected with Draconia.

Preferred weapon/spell: Ivory-tipped harpoon (or ice-related spells).

Yarima-of-the-Hand



Epithets: *Queen of Pain, Mistress of Sorrows*
Ranking: Greater goddess of the fellfolk; elder peer
Interests: Death, the underworld, redemption
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–3 (mistrustful, manipulative, heartless), 💀 *Rational*–5 (analytical, patient, impartial, conventional, principled), 🗲 *Stern*–6 (gloomy, austere, aloof, inflexible, eerie, foreboding)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Malva Darkbrow (friend)
Hated Foes: The undead and their demonic rulers
Centers of Faith: Eastern Belledor (past Hornsferry)
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 25, 1158 CE
Pronunciation: yah-REEM-mah

Mythology: Few are the mortals who do not fear death. Fewer yet are those who do not give it a name and a purpose. Such spirits had roamed the tribal lands since the fellfolk came to believe in the forces of nature. The new ways of Belledor led one to ascend as a personified goddess and join Celendine. As the eldest marked the beginning of life's adventure, so Yarima-of-the-Hand would end its story. So far apart stood the two, yet they enjoyed philosophical debates about future and past, and which mattered most. With the help of Berylea's peers, Yarima and Celendine built the Morever Meadows, then the dark-haired deity seized its underworld.

The goddess of death then endeavored to tend to the dead. With countless throngs of spirits in her wake, she traveled the netherworld to gather yet more of those who'd fallen since the birth of their Belledoran faiths. When done, she ordered most to stay until such time the world soul would reclaim them. The remainder would then follow her, the bright ones to dwell a rightful existence as servants of the Meadows, and the dark ones to endure hellish torments in the Ring of Bones. As she prepared to depart, monstrous hordes descended upon her and her massed spirits. Horrors neither dead nor alive fought for one of their own who'd risen long ago as a demon lord. Many of his ilk, wicked lords of darkness, had joined him to partake in the feast of souls so conveniently gathered.

As Yarima reaped with her scythe wide swaths of specters and ghosts, many more took away hapless scores in her charge. Though her foes could not defeat the goddess of death, their vast numbers kept swelling beyond sight, summoned by their lord's servants to keep her at bay. But in the horrid tumult of screeches and wails, another battle could be heard behind the demon's tattered banners. A hero in golden armor smote the ethereal ground with his mattock, rousing ripples of magic that tore through the masses of undead. The demon lord lost his footing, and his legions wavered. At last Yarima reached him, and at the waist severed his wicked flesh. After a final clamor, vast numbers of the undead collapsed, releasing their accursed energies to the netherworld, while a small remainder escaped with their ill-gotten prizes.

"Hail to thee, *Champion of Berylea*," Yarima said. "Your action has saved many from the darkest of destinies, and for this I am grateful. What brings you to these parts?" Galadir glanced at a grim-looking cohort of ghostly gnomes. "I came to fetch those on their way to the Mounds. I have lost many worthy servants this day." Yarima observed the spirits gathered behind him. "I do not see your dark ones. Were they all taken?" Galadir raised an eyebrow and smiled. "Nay, I only fetched the worthy ones. Time will guide the others to their rightful fates." The goddess of death gazed strangely at him, perplexed. "They are likely to join the ranks of those we just fought. If they are strong with magic, they will be trouble for all. Perhaps I could tend to yours as I tend to ours. 'Tis but a small matter." Galadir leaned on his mattock's handle as he pondered the issue. "Most unusual, this is. I shall refer your offer to the *Elder-Born*. Let us depart this place of sorrow before those who fled return with assistance."

Description: This gloomy deity is Belledor's grim reaper, the one who collects those who have reached the end of the time given them in the world of the living. A touch of her finger is said to slay the strongest of mortals. She rules the Belledoran underworld known as the *Ring of Bones*, a place of incarceration for those who defy Death and her peers. As the goddess of death, her eyes gaze toward the past so she may pass judgement. She governs respect for traditions, ancient lore, introspection, sorrow, and repentance. Yarima favors executioners, avengers, and those whose hand brings about the fate of others, such as assassins and the grimmest of adventurers. She also protects graves consecrated by her priors.

Following her battle with the demon lord Korvath and his Sea of Undead, foreboding Yarima became friends with Galadir Blackmattock. She enjoys his forthright manner, while he desires to sway her to a kinder ethos. He fears that her unmerciful ways may unduly burden the spirits of gnomes left in her charge. He questions torment for its own sake. She does not. Her unkind nature was born of her dark purpose. Under the terms of a divine treaty with Yarima, solemnly witnessed by Thaleera and Celendine, Galadir Blackmattock remits to her safekeeping the spirits of gnomish pariahs until they atone for their deeds. This *rent-a-hell* arrangement is still hotly debated among gnomish and fellfolk priors; it raised more than a few divine eyebrows among the other pantheons.

Yarima's closest ally is Malva Darkbrow, whom she sees as the one who corrals into her arms those soon to be reaped. The *Mistress of Sorrows* respects Celendine, as without life there would be no death. Yarima is at odds with Celendine's yearning for constant change and denial of their spiritual origins, for she knows sooner or later all shall return to the world soul. The other peers of the pantheon are but facetious children who bicker among themselves over trifles soon to pass. With her elder, she believes that one day Aevan will rise as the greater god and rule the Meadows. It is only right, for he is the essence of time, without which there would be no cycle of life. She both protects and fears Aevan, for time can never end.

Yarima owns the palest complexion of all her peers. She bears long white hair, and pupilless eyes like abalone. Dressed in a long white robe fitted with a hood shadowing her face, she carries a great scythe. Though not without beauty, she remains as stern as death ought to be. Her shrine at Hornsferry is popular during Remembrance Day. It houses great catacombs. Favored temple offerings include the souls and remains of those who escaped her judgement.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Death*—destroyed undead cannot rise anew (see Table 10, score of 5).
Preferred animal/monster: Ravens and monsters with black feathers.
Preferred weapon/spell: Great scythe (or necromantic spells).

Gods of Caldwen

Sadarya	Interests
Naghilas (*The Gray Flame*)	Magic
Ashgaddon (*Wormsoul*)	Death, underworld, desert, volcanoes
Astafeth (*Night-Wailer*)	Night, mysteries
Avraoth (*Lord of Flies*)	Sky, air, winds
Barthazu (*Prince of Wands*)	Blacksmiths, craftsmen
⑦ Dagleeth (*The Librarian*)	Light, science
Nekathal (*The Unborn*)	Healers
Samaz (*The Deep One*)	Seas, fishermen
Shai-Mamnon[7] (*Hallowed Scroll*)	Messengers, scribes
Urthaala-the-Unquenched	Sun, fire
Zarghadin (*The Mad*)	Shadows, secrets

Gods of the humans largely hail from Munaan. Caldwen's faiths relate to old Gandarian beliefs, which the Nicarean potentates suppressed when their forces conquered this region of their moon. Though reduced to secret and forbidden cults there, they are now the most common beliefs in the Great Caldera's magiocracy. Five of Caldwen's contemporary gods are part of the Calderan faiths, including two of their greater deities. Most wizards of that region honor gods of Caldwen, but other cults are largely accepted. If honoring Teos is tolerated, it remains unpopular due to Nicarea's bloody repression during the colony's secession conflict. Though the magiocracy is no longer at war with Nicarea, Munaani temple emissaries and their inquisitors are invited to stay out of the country for their own safety. Miyuki Island, off the eastern coast, almost exclusively features Kumoshiman faiths, which aren't covered in this book.

Though the magiocracy is a secular power, its people still bear strong feelings about their spiritual beliefs. Munaan's forbidden *Maghia* sect alleged that magic was a separate entity from the sun (Teos), the fiery god being a reflection of a greater power, which infuriated the Nicarean potentates preaching exactly the opposite. When Nicarea conquered Gandaria, native priors were branded demon-worshipers and burned at the stake whenever possible. Inflicting widespread persecution, the potentates nearly succeeded in wiping out the ancient cults. Their deities became dormant, or nearly so. The *Maghia* managed to revive them during the civil war on Calidar, spreading the old philosophies as a way to fight Nicarea.

The truth is that the old deities were, for the most part, demonic in nature. They were both masters and pawns of dark wizards. Since their rebirth, these gods have changed, conforming to ideals of contemporary Caldweners. Though revived gods still feature sinister aspects they have trouble shaking off, they aren't as evil and destructive as their former selves. The magiocracy's mundane population, unable to cast wizardly magic, honors these gods to earn their protection and to ward off the return of the inquisitors. Priors prevailing today in Caldwen keep their cults somewhat acceptable to neighboring states and commoners in general, their baleful image sometimes having more to do with posturing than true demonic intent. This created a rift with the *Maghia,* whose members seek to preserve the gods' original character. Its members resent this shift in philosophies, which they see as monumental ingratitude for helping Caldwen gain its independence. The *Maghia* remains to this day a secret sect active in the Great Caldera and Munaan. In the view of Caldweners, bodily possession by deities or their servants, though terrifying, is a sign of divine blessing. As a result of this, acts committed under godly will are not punishable under Caldwen's civil and penal codes, provided possession is proven in a court of law. The magiocracy, however, does not tolerate demons and undead creatures unrelated to the accepted faiths.

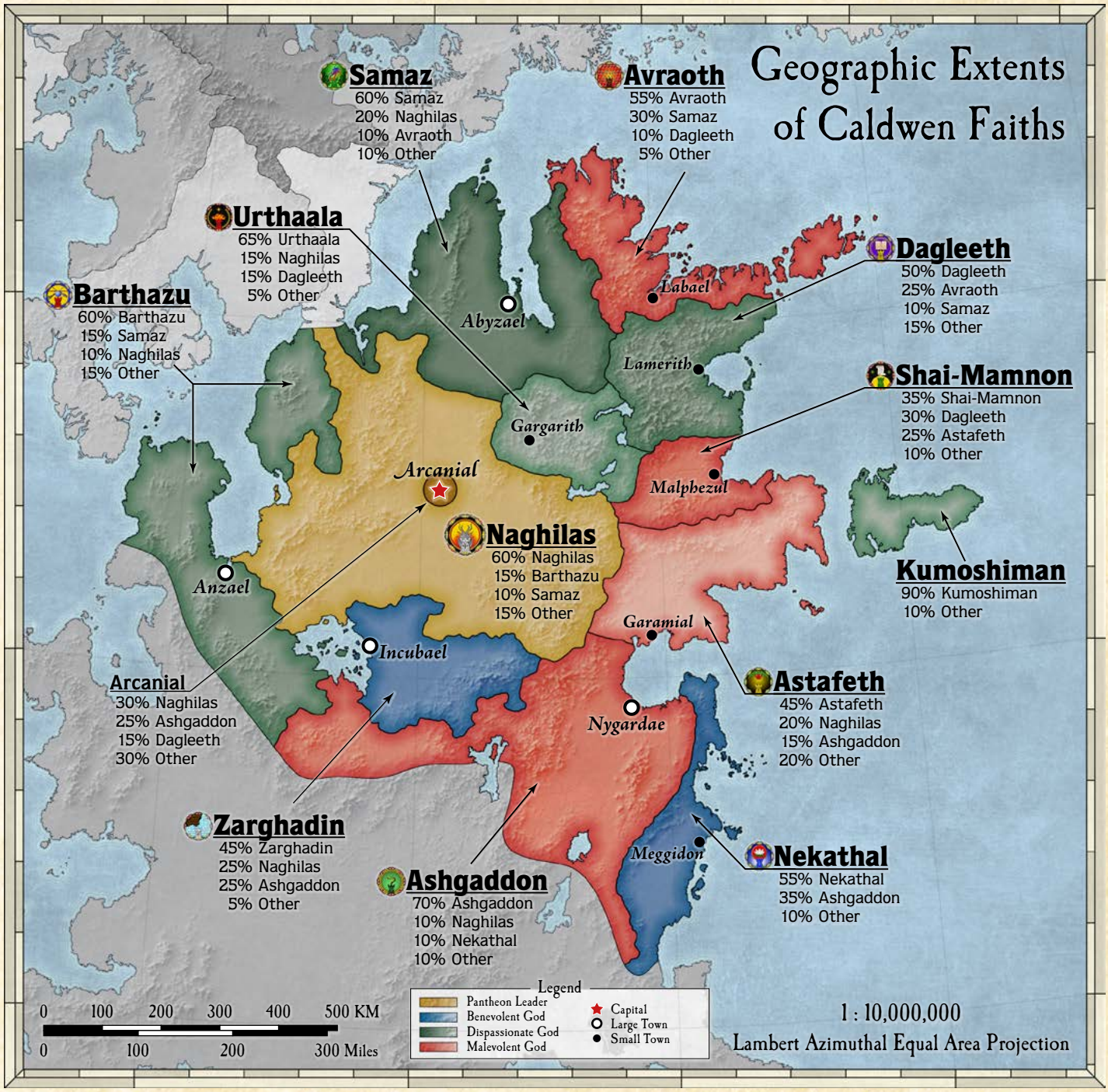
The Lords of Sadarya do not mind their Phrydian and Talikai peers, for their struggle against Nicarea is the same. Most other pantheons regard the "former" demon-gods with suspicion and concern, and stay away from them. At the opposite end of the spectrum stands Teos-Soltan, Naghilas's arch-enemy.

Sacred texts are recorded in the *Kheravim,* a series of scrolls telling the legends of the gods, detailing ceremonies and listing the prayers. Typically, scrolls are rolled onto two rods and stored in a highly decorated case. Many a wizard has enchanted sets of scrolls so that they can be made to display a specific item of the *Kheravim* on command. Traveling mages and priors often carry such objects. An official reference document is kept at Dagleeth's main shrine, in Lamerith, which all enchanted scrolls use as their source. It may be amended during a yearly council of the pantheon's high priors. During ceremonies, members of the clergy wear long robes with *capirotes,* tall pointy hoods covering their faces. A simple hood shading one's traits is more common when traveling: it is seen as improper for them to show their faces. It is believed that priors speak with one voice, thus making individuality irrelevant. Many such hoods are enchanted to veil the face in darkness without impairing eyesight, leading commoners to call members of their clergy "the Dark Ones." Priors can recognize each other despite these magical veils, and from details embroidered on their robes. Colors and symbols on their vestments' chest or back indicate a specific cult. Most priors of Caldwen's faiths are also skilled in wizardry and, consequently, do not wear metal armor. They are, however, able to use ceremonial armament appropriate to their beliefs.

Cults of Caldwen only enjoy official representation in the magiocracy's *Upper Chamber of the Magi,* but their influence across the country cannot be ignored since so many high-placed mages honor them. A *Committee for Spiritual Affairs* includes three priors whose faiths are germane to the matters at hand, and three wizards from each of the upper and lower chambers with other beliefs. Their role is to settle complaints of a clerical nature. The High Chancellor has the option of vetoing their decision and submitting a case for general vote by the chambers. Wizards, and wizards only, contribute a form of tithe willingly purveyed and reflecting their career achievements. The extent of donations does not necessarily equate a mage's devotion; some at best qualify as *casual faithful* less concerned with spiritual affairs than social status. The clergy openly protects and promotes its most generous benefactors. Caldwen's high society looks down on sorcerers who do not support at least one of the old Gandarian faiths. The nefarious *Maghians,* however, are zealots. They loathe mages of spurious piety, and those among the clergy who praise their generosity. Anonymous donations by the mundane public are accepted at the shrines. The clergy typically controls education, which requires payment from students or their parents.

Common Attributes

Pious followers of Caldwen's cults all benefit from some degree of protection from demons unrelated to the peers of Sadarya. Such creatures are considered renegades, dangerous rogues that, when encountered, must be either destroyed or made to submit to the appropriate divine patron. Failure to take any sort of action against known rogue demons may be noticed and punished, as appropriate to the follower's own capabilities. Many of the faithful in Caldwen are sorcerers, who may have occasional need to summon demons, and if so, this must always be done on behalf of the sorcerer's deity.



When fighting a rogue demon, a pious follower's protection negates one of the fiend's abilities (chosen randomly; no defense checks). Disability is temporary, lasting for the duration of the encounter plus 1d4 hours. A rogue demon's disability in general is only relevant to the pious follower whose random roll called for it. Separate rolls are required for each encounter and each follower (reroll duplicate results during the same encounter). Each encounter requires a separate roll. No more than eight disabilities can be inflicted upon a rogue demon, regardless of the number of pious followers involved (make random rolls starting with the most powerful followers; the remaining ones do not receive this special attribute). If a random roll calls for an ability the rogue demon does not possess, select the next one on the list.

Priors of Caldwen's cults (including those of the *Maghia),* may try to force a rogue demon to reveal its true name. If it does, the rogue demon submits to the prior's divine patron. Rogue demons are only affected by priors with a Life Force rating higher than their own. Odds of success are a cumulative 1% per successful attack the prior scores upon the fiend (any single spell counts as one attack, regardless of total damage inflicted). These odds are permanent for the entire life of the prior and the

demon, until one dies or the other submits, regardless of how many years this might take. Cumulated odds are personal to the prior (they cannot be traded, given away, sold to, or combined with others of the same cult). A prior may only attempt to force a fiend to reveal its true name when scoring a successful attack (one immediate attempt per successful attack).

Table 3. Rogue Demon Temporary Disability

1d20	Blocked Ability (as appropriate)
1	Partial immunity to all magic
2-3	Immunity to weaker spells
4-5	Immunity to one attack type (fire, electricity, acid, poison, etc.)
6	Immunity or partial resistance to specific metals
7-8	Immunity to non-magical or weakly-enchanted weapons
9	Striking the follower in any way (hand, claw, bite, sting, barbs, or with a weapon)
10	Approaching the follower less than 15'
11-12	Casting spell-like magic directly at the follower
13	Lying to the follower or using any sort of mind-affecting power
14-15	Using one special attack (spit, howl, breath weapon, poison, paralysis, disease, draining Life Force, etc.)
16	Summoning other demons
17	Controlling undead
18	Teleporting away or using any sort of travel magic to escape
19	Shape-changing
20	Creating illusions of any type

Genesis

4200 BCE Black was the heart of ancient Gandaria. At the dawn of mankind, a sickness in Calidar's world soul afflicted Munaan's rocky deserts, well outside the reaches of what would become Taneth and Nicarea. Though magic was still there to be had, it was corrupt, attracting nefarious intruders. Soon they enslaved the bickering tribes of nomadic shepherds who'd claimed that sorry stretch of desolate land. Petty fiends and demon lords ruled thereon, and the humans who served them learned the dark arts of the fiends while they fought each other.

3000 BCE When Taneth had established its first kingdom, the tribes of Gandaria fell to one of their own, a demon prince most powerful in magic. His name was Naghilas. He reigned over human and lesser demon alike, but the weakness in the world soul was nearing its end. To maintain his strength, Naghilas needed to feast upon living flesh now more than ever. The tribes and their goats could not sustain the pace of these offerings. To please their blood-thirsty monarch, tribal mages began raiding villages at the outskirts of Taneth, taking their young deep into the desert where Naghilas ruled. Thus began a long history of warfare between Taneth and Gandaria.

1500 BCE Taneth was first to reach its Iron Age, and Gandaria was nearly destroyed. Naghilas and his people fled into the jagged hills of the hinterland. For a time, the wizards sought to prey upon the burgeoning realms of far-away Inti-Suyu and Bongor. It was costly and time-consuming. Worse, a new power was rising some distance from Taneth. Its people called themselves Nicareans, warriors devoted to the cult of Teos. One after the next, Gandaria's outer provinces began to fall either to Tanethian pharaohs or to Nicarean warlords. As Naghilas grew weaker, the Gandarians fewer, and neighboring perils ever greater, the demon-king sought another strategy. He went on a devouring frenzy, consuming the power within demon-governors at his service. Gandarian mages went along with their dark monarch's feeding orgy, tricking and betraying their past masters so that they would fall to Naghilas. In the wake of this callous bloodletting, Naghilas shed his own persona as a demon and became a malevolent god. The last of his demons begged for protection, and so did the Gandarian sorcerers.

1000 BCE Despite the efforts of neighboring realms, the desolate rocky shards of Inner Gandaria could not be conquered. Wizards held their ground in the name of their new god. Relying on water lying deep beneath the surface, they erected a fortified city, with a great temple to Naghilas, and crypts wherein new demon servants could be honored. They became uncanny generals and mighty champions who, along with human mages and a population now able to grow without the burden of feeding their master, could stand up to the best of Nicarean phalanxes or to the war chariots of Taneth.

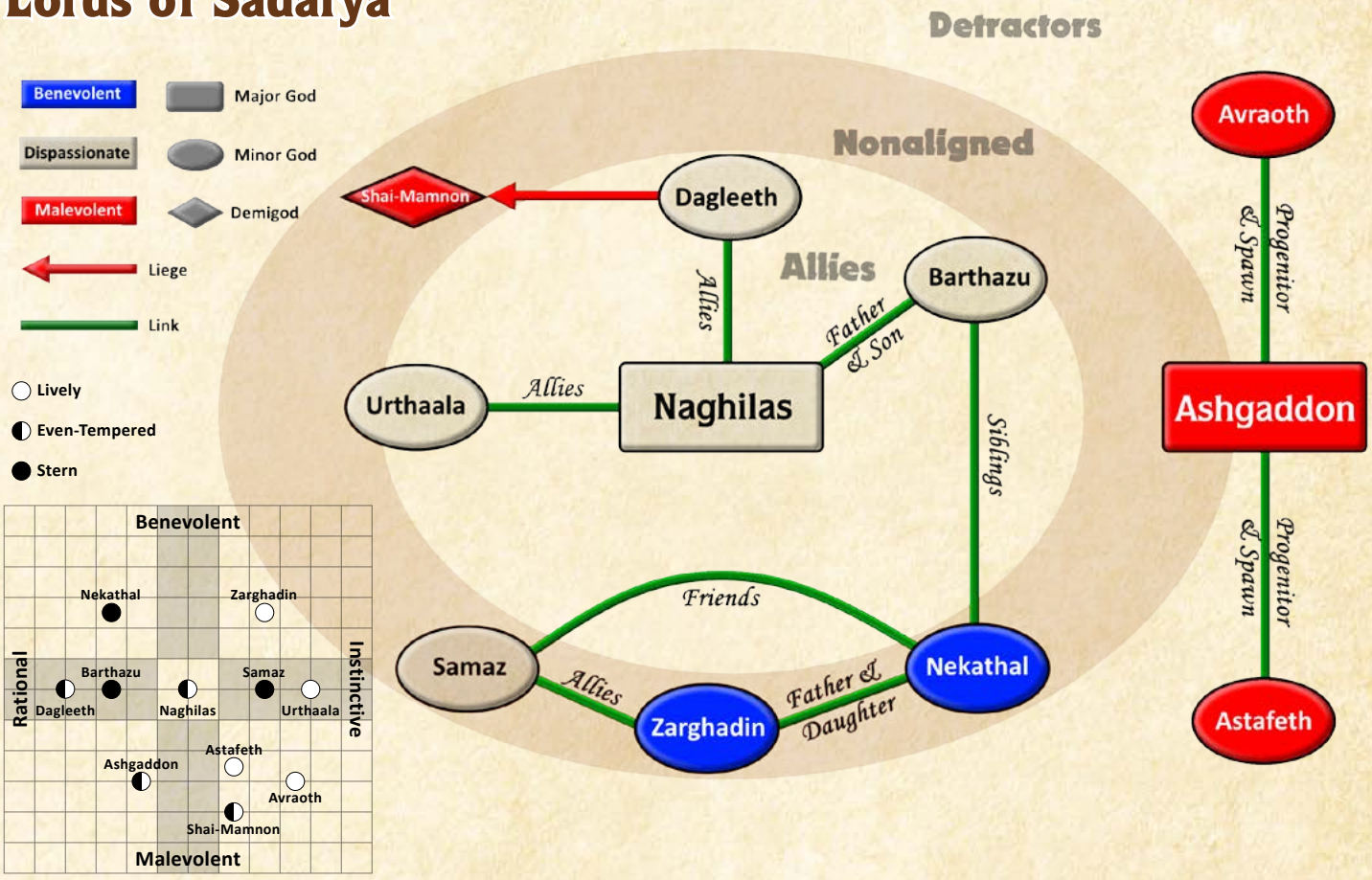
493 BCE As the Gandarian civilization flourished and great towers gleaming with brass domes graced its capital city at Karsa, one of the serving generals ascended from the ranks of demons. He submitted to Naghilas at once. His name was Ashgaddon. Many more would follow in the next few centuries. A lull in the wars for control of Outer Gandaria's deserts took place, as rivalry flared between Taneth and Nicarea over matters of commerce and faith. The armies of Nicarea had gained the secret of steel, alas a rare commodity in Taneth.

196 BCE For a time, Taneth struggled against the people of the phalanxes, but as Nicarea's power grew, Taneth's waned, and the pharaohs adopted a defensive stance. Satisfied, rulers of Nicarea turned their gazes toward other horizons. Meanwhile, Naghilas and his minions completed their magical domain in Ambrosia, dubbing it the Towers of Sadarya. It was Gandaria's golden age.

1 CE The Time of the Great Vault Travels came to Munaan. Colonies were founded on Calidar, sparking a great rivalry between elves, dwarves, and humans. Nicarea's attention focused on Calidar and the acquisition of seitha. Meanwhile, under Naghilas's influence, Gandarian wizards built their own spacefaring vessels and forged an alliance with Kragdûras dwarves against Nicarea. They exchanged wizardly services for weapons and dwarven mercenaries.

310 CE The great warlord Tallas the Radiant seized power, and in the name of Teos, led a life-long expedition to subdue all under the light of the sun. Gandaria's neighbors failed to stop Nicarea's fanatical warriors. While some of the old powers became client realms of the fast expanding empire, others vanished altogether from Munaan. The stoutest of Tallas's armies and legions of warriors from subject kingdoms gathered and, at last, turned upon Gandaria's lands and skies. Nicareans saw Karsa as a festering pool of evil and treachery. During decades of the relentless invasion, the last few desert demons, demigods in their own right, fell before the Bearers of the Light. Tallas died in the final battle, but his armies prevailed nonetheless. Retribution was swift and brutal. Karsa was razed, its crypts purified and sealed, the last few demon-servants slain before

Lords of Sadarya



Teos's altar, dwarven mercenaries shorn of their beards and beheaded, the mages imprisoned, throngs of people enslaved, and their old language forbidden. Repression spread inexorably throughout Nicarea's sprawling empire, seeking the removal of ancient faiths.

372 CE At the zenith of Nicarean power, dark things came. In the wake of Gandaria's devastation, a plague struck, and a Ghülean invasion followed. Chaos reigned on Munaan, during which Naghilas and his peers attempted to reassert their power over the desert. Demons old and new were summoned to Munaan. But the plan backfired. When Nicarea emerged from its dark ages three centuries later, it reasserted power over its provinces, and the Bearers of the Light became demon hunters and inquisitors of the temple. Their work was thorough, and the Lords of Sadarya became dormant or nearly so as their cults faded from Munaan until the tenth century. All that remained was a sect of half-mad zealots, who formed the dreaded *Maghia,* scheming magi and assassins hiding in the forgotten crypts of Karsa's ruins.

885 CE Settlers founded the Nicarean colony of Nav-Gandar on Calidar. Among them stood minions of the *Maghia,* who endeavored to revive the old cults away from the prying eyes of the empire. Their quiet work lay at the source of the scandal that led to the ignominious razing of the library at Arcanial, and Kosyas III's assassination a century and a half later. The event convinced his successor to inflict the Inquisition upon all Nicarean colonies on Calidar, a festering conflict culminating with the thirteenth century insurrection. Naghilas was reawakened well before then, early in the tenth century.

1212 CE Nav-Gandar wrenched its independence from Nicarea's grip. Descendants of the colonists cast aside what casual beliefs they'd held in the state-imposed cult of Teos, and embraced wholeheartedly the *Maghia's* old faiths as a symbol of defiance. Yet, the *Maghian* conspiracy did not go as planned. Popular philosophies of that age diverged profoundly from those of ancient Gandarians and fundamentally influenced Sadarya's spirit. Though the gods dwelled with nostalgia on their former demonic natures, they accepted the New Convictions, as gaining followers quickly was critical to emerge from centuries of divine slumber. Over time, a new clergy emerged, sweeping once more into obscurity the *Maghia's* inflexible and sinister beliefs.

The Towers of Sadarya

The divine domain of Caldwen's pantheon is a vast desert of burning sands and jagged mountains not unlike Munaan's Gandaria, save for immense volcanoes spewing raw mana into the skies and down their flanks. A red sun reigns above, flooding the domains with its unflinching, ever-present amber glow. Searing hot wind storms blast at random intervals through the desolated valleys, gritting away at exposed flesh if ever a mortal creature were caught there. More odious things hungering for blood lurk in the shadows.

Sadarya is a bleak place. Its faraway outskirts are bleaker yet. Ashen and poisonous, *Karkerath* is where the spirits of those who were punished by the gods are banished. This part of the domain remains under Ashgaddon's keep. Demons are its guardians, tormentors, and executioners. After a time, some of the banished are redeemed and released to the netherworld. Others are devoured and their essence forever consumed. A few remain eternally or, at the whim of vengeful gods, are made to serve cruel interests in the world of mortals.

The pantheon's ruler, Naghilas, dwells at *Khoraz-the-Pale,* the tallest tower at the center of this pocket plane, surrounded in the distance by those of his lesser peers. With flying buttresses, slender columns, pointed arches, vaulted ceilings, grimacing faces carved in the rock, cavernous halls, and grand windows letting in Sadarya's eerie light, it stands as a kingly abode. Yet, the interior of this stunning pearl-gray edifice defies what mortals comprehend as normal laws of physics, with impossibly twisted stairwells, shifting corridors, and enchanted gates that would render an architect mad. It is said that only gods and demons tread here without getting lost. Naghilas raised *Khoraz-the-Pale* on a volcano whose mana pulses through the walls. It is a living thing responding to minds strong enough to impose their wills upon it.

Four elders built Sadarya: Naghilas, Ashgaddon, Zarghadin, and Dagleeth. Other towers were added when later peers ascended. Guests of this domain reside with one or the other established gods.

Lords of Sadarya

Three main forces are at work in Sadarya. The first two concern the stance to take with Teos, and whether to guide mortal priors of Caldwen on a path to war. To say the least, Caldwen's gods do not look kindly upon Teos. Three of Sadarya's lords simmer with hate and a burning desire for revenge. They are Ashgaddon and his two allies, Astafeth and Avraoth (the three As). Their desire is to foment unrest on Munaan, inspire their priors to strike when the empire is weak, and bring the old cults back to the Gandarians. Though their priors would object, these gods favor the teachings of the *Maghia*. Naghilas and his two backers, Dagleeth and Barthazu, oppose an all-out conflict, which would tear apart the Great Caldera itself and jeopardize Munaan for the benefit of powers existing elsewhere in Soltan's ephemeris. Naghilas's views have prevailed so far. He also seeks to protect the rivalry between Munaan, Kragdûr, and Alorea, to divert the empire's focus from Calidar. Samaz, a deity native to the Great Caldera, leads the last faction, with Nekathal and Zarghadin at his side, two deities who never were demons though born of Gandarian faith. Samaz and his allies oppose the *Maghia,* and are more concerned about Ghüle than Nicarea. They suspect the shadowy alien deities do not covet mortal slaves alone but the gods of Calidar themselves. Some news has come that a goddess of Kragdûr already fell to denizens of Ghüle, and that her peers barely escaped. Is Ghüle an odious world beckoning Calidar's gods to intervene? Or is it the herald of a power hungering for universal Armageddon? Samaz fears what may come.

Naghilas

Epithets: *The Gray Flame, Devourer of Magic, Demon-King, Keeper of Khoraz*
Ranking: Pantheon ruler, greater god of Munaan, and elder peer of Sadarya
Interests: Magic
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful and tolerant, he also is selfish and manipulative), 💀 *Practical* (though patient and calculating, he can also prove bold and cunning), 🗡 *Even-Tempered* (though hedonistic and shameless, he also is haughty and enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Dagleeth and Urthaala-the-Unquenched (allies), Barthazu (spawn), Akuamakue (Meryath), Freyja (Nordheim)
Hated Foes: Teos-Soltan, his servants, and his followers
Centers of Faith: Central Caldwen, Gandaria (covertly), and Osriel (Hauteville area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 30, 1289 BCE
Pronunciation: NAG-ghee-las

Mythology: As he stood over a mound of nefarious carcasses, black blood dripping from his mouth and down his chest, Naghilas became engulfed in blue flames consuming what had once been his body. A ring of wizards kneeled around him, chanting the spells of a dark and ancient ritual that only fiends should know. When the blaze yielded to an unholy dimness, all that remained of the demon-king were a few scorched bones and a fragment of its skull glowing in the shadows. A wave of power flew outward from the mages, a message to all surviving demons that one of theirs had ascended and that he would rule them.

As Naghilas searched the divine wilderness for a suitable site to stake as his own, a pillar of flames erupted before him. Diffuse and echoing as if it traveled through eons and vast distances, a voice rose from the golden

Shrine of Naghilas—Map Key

Street Level
1. Estate gardens
2a-2d. Entry alleys
3. Main sanctum (overlooks Area 11 in center)
3a-3d. Stairs up to Area 4
4. Gray Flame stone platform (as high as upper level 1)
5. NW landing
5a. Stairs up to Area 22
6. NE landing
6a. Stairs down to Area 9
7. SE landing
7a. Stairs up to Area 26
8. SW landing
8a. Stairs down to Area 16

Lower Level
6b. Stairs up to Area 6
8b. Stairs up to Area 8
9. NE lower landing
10. East corridor
11. Lower sanctum (open to Area 3 above)
12. Meditation chamber of the water element
13. Guardroom
14. South corridor
15. Meditation chamber of the air element
16. SW landing
17. West corridor
18. Meditation chamber of the fire element
19. Guardroom
20. North corridor
21. Meditation chamber of the earth element

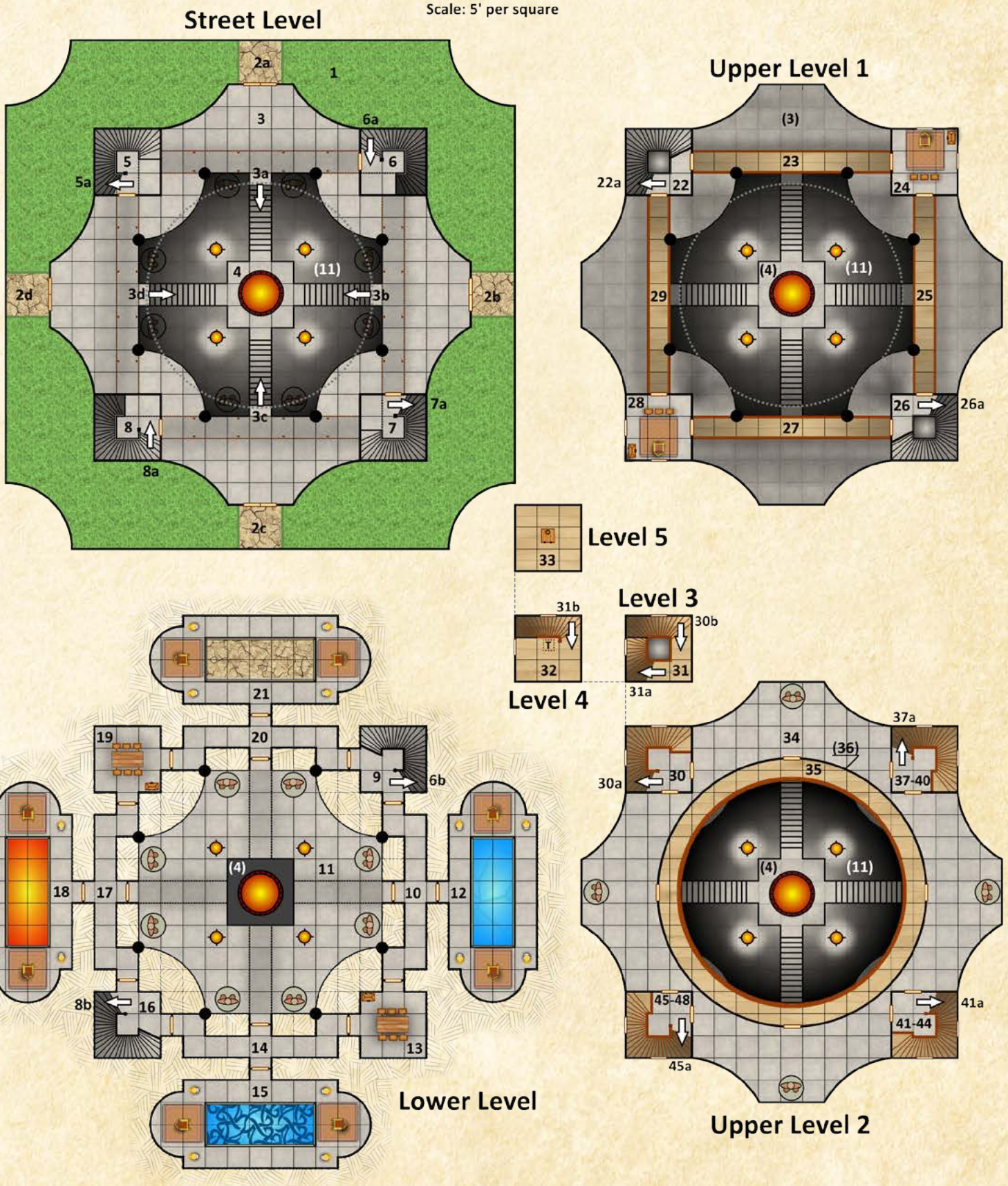
Upper Level 1
22. NW landing
22a. Stairs up to Area 30 (above stairs 5a-5b)
23. North bridge*
24. First chamber of audiences
25. East bridge*
26. SE landing
26a. Stairs up to Area 41 (above stairs 7a-7b)
27. South bridge*
28. Second chamber of audiences
29. West bridge*
(*) Arching above Area 3

Upper Level 2
30. NW tower
30a. Stairs up to Area 31 (above stairs 22a-22b)
34. Outside terrace
35. Dome catwalk (above Areas 3 & 11)
36. Dome outer wall
37-40. NE tower
37a. Stairs to Areas 38-40
41-44. SE tower
41a. Stairs to Areas 42-44
45-48. SW tower
45a. Stairs to Areas 46-48

Upper Levels 3-5
30b. Stairs down to Area 30
31. Mid-level landing
31a. Stairs up to Areas 32
32. Night watch quarters
(T) Trapdoor in ceiling
33. Attic

Shrine of Naghilas

Scale: 5' per square



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blaze. "Naghilas Demon-King, you are unwelcome. In your wake lie naught but stench and rot. Begone, portent of ill-wishes and pestilence. Ambrosia shall not suffer your malfeasance." The godly fiend stepped on a rocky spur to stare boldly at the fiery whirlwind. "I salute you, Mighty Soltan. I am honored that you deigned to appear on my path. Know that I do not yield to anyone, least of all to a foe of my kind. Here do I stand my ground and defy your magnificence." The flames approached Naghilas, towering before him. "No longer do you dwell in the world of mortals. You, who now choose so unwisely to tread upon the land of the gods, prepare to meet your fate." A ball of fire roared from the blaze, engulfing the demon-king and the tall outcropping on which he stood. Arms extended, Naghilas embraced the magic cast upon him. He drank it like a sweet elixir until its last flicker faded in a puff of smoke. "To you, Great Lord, I give thanks. I am known by many names. One is the *Devourer of Magic*. Some other's or yours, 'tis but a small matter, for it shall be consumed all the same, and I shall grow stronger for it."

At once, Soltan took on a physical form nearly thrice as tall as the demon-prince's. He swung his mighty mace, missing Naghilas by a hair, and disintegrated the rocky spur. The divine fiend leaped out of the way and summoned hordes of his kin, as minuscule as they were wicked in the face of the looming sun god. Screeching, wailing, howling, they crawled up his legs and arms, flew round his head and his mace, clawing and biting as Soltan grasped and tore them asunder. More kept coming, and Naghilas laughed. "More await whence these came, ever more furious and vengeful as you smite their brothers." While Naghilas retreated into the Ambrosian mists, Soltan transformed back into his blinding whorls, consuming the lesser fiends like puny insects. As his foes popped and flashed amid divine flames, his voice resonated throughout the Ambrosian vastness. "This day you run and hide, Naghilas spawn-of-fiends, but mark my words, one millennium hence will my followers crush yours, and you will lie bereft of life."



Description: Once a demon of ancient Gandaria that outcompeted his rivals, Naghilas originally ascended as an evil god. His cult nearly vanished on Munaan, but a new faith dawned in the early twelfth century CE. It prevailed in Caldwen in 1215 during the wars of independence, when followers of Teos were expelled. By then Naghilas's cult wasn't a wicked one, although it inspired fear in foreigners due to its roots and appearance. The most ancient scrolls of the *Kheravim* described Naghilas as the Devourer of Magic, one who swallowed all magic cast upon him. Polymath of the gods, he became known as the *Gray Flame*, the one who mastered all schools of magic. He now favors all wizards, alchemists, and magic-using beasts regardless of their natures.

Much of his time consists of watching Teos-Soltan, and inspiring his followers to beware of the sun god. Teos is far too conceited to dignify Naghilas's existence with outright war or an attack upon his magical domain. Demons who've submitted to his rule are often used to cause mischief with the Teosian clergy in particular, usually trying to frame popular priors for crimes they haven't committed in order to discredit them and their cult. Aside from defying his ancestral enemy, Naghilas does not seek outright conflict between Caldwen and Ellyrion or Nicarea.

His primary ally is Dagleeth, who works closely with his ruler. Barthazu is a spawn of Naghilas, one born of his flesh. Most enigmatic, Urthaala stands at his side as well, but keeps to herself. The *Gray Flame* seeks to establish a secret network with Akuamakue and Freyja to keep each other informed of Teos's actions. While Freyja remains cautious on the matter, Faëriad and Derrow Flickerhand refused outright because each was approached with the same offer. Zarghadin and his allies are neither hostile nor disloyal, but they remain distant. Far more troublesome, Ashgaddon and his clique openly criticize Naghilas's rule.

Not long after his ascension, the demon-king adopted the appearance of a gray flame, which is said to result from the blending of all magic. He owns the Ebon Rod that Barthazu made for him. This artifact creates a double of any mortal creature touched with it (including all abilities and memories) except that it is made of ebony and serves the rod's owner. Naghilas is revered in Arcanial, where his grand shrine stands. It underwrites the nearby *Faculty of Magic* and the *Primary School of Potion-Brewing*. Favored temple offerings include magical items and artifacts taken from temples of Teos in Nicarea or Ellyrion. Leaving clues but no proof that wizards of Caldwen stole them is seen as a loss of face for Teos's clergy.

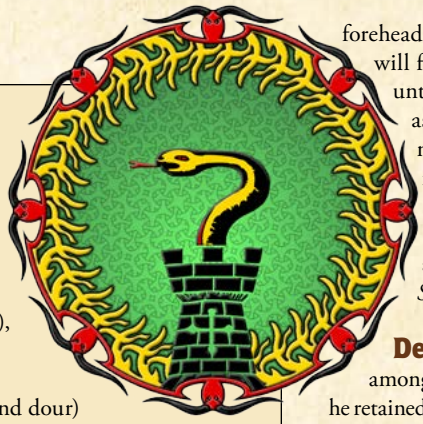
Preferred Divine Favor: *Righteous Spell*—select one each of an electricity-based attack spell, a defensive spell, and a detection spell closest to the top range of what the beneficiary should be able to cast (see Table 10, score of 10).

Preferred animal/monster: Tarsiers/homunculi or imp-like creatures.

Preferred weapon/spell: Barbed chain whip (or mind-affecting spells).

Other Benefits: With a 1-2 roll on a d6, pious followers can sense the presence of a rogue demon within 30' radius. Zealots and priors can tell if someone is possessed by gods or demons of any kind, and with a 1-2 on a d6, identify the possessing entity.

Ashgaddon



Epithets: *Wormsoul, Lord of Shades, Scourge of Karkerath, Keeper of Souls*
Ranking: Greater god of Munaan and elder peer of Sadarya
Interests: Death, putrefaction, atonement, the underworld
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–5 (selfish, insensitive, vengeful, deceitful, spiteful), *Rational*–3 (patient, stubborn, principled), *Even-Tempered* (though boorish and vain, he is also brooding and dour)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Gallows* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 221)
Allies: Astafeth and Avraoth (lesser peers)
Hated Foes: Teos-Soltan, his servants, and his followers
Centers of Faith: Southern Caldwen, Gandaria (covertly), and Osriel (Devansy Island, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 9, 493 BCE
Pronunciation: ASH-gad-don

Mythology: Fear of death. For a time it was omnipresent in Gandaria, but terror of fates worse than death reigned even greater. Common folk loathed the Lord-Demon Ashgaddon, master of necromancers and of those who could no longer live or die. The terrible cost of what he harbored afflicted the people of Gandaria like a spreading disease. Though his rotting legions stood up to foreign armies wishing to encroach upon Gandarian lands, terror spread among the rest of the realm, as the living slowly joined Ashgaddon's ghoulish ranks. The faithful appealed to Naghilas for his divine help, and he heard their supplications. His avatar descended upon Gandaria and confronted the Lord-Demon in his palace.

"Bow to me, *Wormsoul,* I command you," said Naghilas. His necromancers formed a circle around their master, unsure of what would happen next. The demon lord hissed and relented, lowering his head, then kneeling. His minions did the same. "Time has come for you to make a choice," said Naghilas. "Remove your servants from the streets of Karsa and from the other towns of Gandaria. Build a place to sequester the undead from the living." The demon lord snarled, his voice like sandpaper. "They fight for Gandaria," he responded. "And for this they demand a price that only the living can pay." As the *Gray Flame* grew taller and more menacing, the necromancers lowered their foreheads to the floor. "There is another way," said Naghilas. "The living will fend for themselves. For now, consume those who will not die until the last one, for if you are Master of Death, then you should ascend as such and claim your place at my side. Arise. Let your necromancers become your servant spirits. Among the living and from this day hence, what new undead come to be summoned shall be few and restrained, for such is now the law of this land. The others shall dwell at your side for whatever purpose befits a god. When the time comes, you shall become the *Keeper of Souls* on my behalf."



Description: Ashgaddon embodies the fear of death and entropy among ancient Gandarians, the severing of corpse from magic. Though he retained his earlier appearance in the cult's post-civil war revival, *Wormsoul* took on the role of a scholar of all things necromantic. He is a student of death and undeath as classical disciplines of wizardry. As Naghilas—a former demon king—tolerates fiends in his service, Ashgaddon condones the undying within his. Any such beings must be summoned in his name or for purposes in compliance with the laws of the land. In parts of Caldwen, the undead are treated as regulated commodities. His priors and necromancers of the cult understand that the undead are a liability to the living and that they must be strictly controlled or destroyed at once. Ashgaddon protects tombs and those who cater to the dead, such as embalmers, tomb builders, grave diggers, stone carvers, and guardians of sepulchers.

As his description implies, the *Lord of Shades* favors students of necromancy. An important aspect of his interest concerns the world soul as a source of life, the link between magic and corpse, and the effect of large-scale undeath on the world soul. Ashgaddon's concern is the weakening of Calidar's planetary magic as a result of depredations from uncontrolled undead. If potential victims are plentiful and unprotected, undeath can spread enough to damage the world soul, which jeopardizes his own existence as a god—something that did not concern him while he was just a demon, however powerful. Therefore, Ashgaddon's mission, aside from ruling Karkerath, is to hunt down all beings whose powers rely upon legions of rogue undead. Aside from the faithful services of Caldwen necromancers, much of Ashgaddon's power is skimmed from the fears and superstition of other wizards and commoners.

Wormsoul's allies are Astafeth and Avraoth, whom he spawned while he was a demon lord. Though now peers of Sadarya, they remain loyal to their progenitor. Ashgaddon endeavors to inspire his cult's revival on Munaan. He dislikes Nekathal, who seeks to preserve lives where he would rather end them. He favors a strategy leading to unrest in Nicarea, at which point he believes human colonies of the Great Caldera ought to intervene and put an end to the hated empire and its cult of Teos. He doesn't mind the many Gandarians who would perish in the conflict, seeing them as guilty of having abandoned the true faith. He anticipates welcoming a great many of these heretics in Karkerath. His opinion on the matter diverges with the remainder of the pantheon's, causing tension in Sadarya. He expects to overthrow the *Gray Flame* if his plan succeeds.

Though often represented with near-human appearance, Ashgaddon often changes to a shape made entirely from demon-maggots, his true face appearing only furtively among the squirming mass. He wears a dark robe with a large hood, and sometimes rides a skeletal pegasus. Ashgaddon dwells at the tower named *Naavut-Karkerath* in

Sadarya. The Mausoleum of Keth in Nygardae, in which are entombed some of the greatest figures of Caldwen's history including Caldwa the Wise, also houses Ashgaddon's great sanctuary. Favored temple offerings include the remains of Teos-Soltan followers. If recently departed, their spirits can be found in the netherworld and forcefully taken to Karkerath, where their essence is consumed and forever destroyed.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Path of the Beast*—succeeding a bare-hand strike temporarily drains one increment of strength from a foe. A successful defense check blocks this power. Drained strength increases the beneficiary's own strength rating, up to a mortal's customary maximum. If the foe does not have a rated ability score, then one Life Force is temporarily lost instead. Losses are regained when the sun rises next (at least six hours later), at which time gains are negated. If totally drained of strength or Life Force, the foe dies and its spirit rises later as an incorporeal undead in Ashgaddon's service (see Table 10, score of 11).
Preferred animal/monster: Maggots/worm-like monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: Barbed spear (or necromantic spells).

Astafeth

Epithets: *Night-Wailer, Lord of Huutat*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Night, mysteries, vice, envy, lust
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–5 (wicked, vengeful, deceitful, mistrustful, jealous), ☗ *Practical* (Astafeth's mind changes from cold and calculating to emotional depending on circumstances), ↜ *Lively*–6 (sarcastic, cynical, shameless, self-indulgent, narcissistic, ingratiating)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Gallows* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 221)
Allies: Ashgaddon (progenitor), Avraoth (blood kin), Balladoo-of-the-Hoo (Belledor), Anwë (Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Auri avengers
Centers of Faith: Eastern Caldwen, Gandaria (covertly), and Osriel (Marrebourg area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 15, 191 BCE as a peer; Kragean 4, 239 BCE as a demigod
Pronunciation: AST-tah-feth

Mythology: Ruling over sly and defiant demons never was an easy endeavor, even for the *Scourge of Karkerath.* Longing for obedience without question or insolent trickery, Ashgaddon inspired his priors to feel his pain. They sensed his need and the idea of a true minion emerged in the *Kheravim.* The god of the dead was content. He reaped the energy of many a captive spirit he knew would never be freed from his keep. Oozing with their life force, he slit open his right arm and filled with his black blood a chasm in the Ambrosian. He remained at the site while his flesh healed. When this was done, the ground bulged where his blood had soaked. With a flick of the wrist, he unearthed his spawn, a dark and ominous infant. Dreams of what he'd done came to his mortal priors, and they amended the *Kheravim* at once. Ashgaddon enabled enough of his priors and followers to adopt a new faith so that his spawn could ascend. Thus was born Astafeth, progeny of the demon-god, and demigod in its own right.

"Leave to the streets of Karsa," said Ashgaddon. "Learn needful skills and see that the ranks of your followers swell so that you may rise as a peer." Young Astafeth, craving the feel of life and innocence, departed at once. Over a few short years, he matured and earned a growing notoriety. By day he dwelled in the seedy districts of Karsa and among the depraved. At night, he stole virtuous maidens and impregnated them. From his progeny, he raised many a wizard who honored him. When his infamy could no longer be ignored, Ashgaddon recalled him to Ambrosia. He invoked a vision of an Auri avenger with his companions holding camp in the ethereal plane. *Wormsoul* pointed a maggoty finger at the golden warrior's image, and gazed back at his spawn. "Fetch."

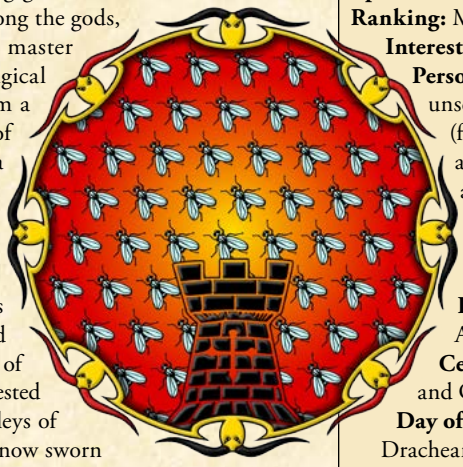
With bestial dedication to his divine liege, Astafeth vanished from Ambrosia and tracked down his quarry. Somewhat unrefined and inexperienced, he boldly challenged the Auri lord, a demigod by rights and a notorious slayer of demons. Both powerful in wizardly magic and mighty in battle, Astafeth's foe prevailed, though his valiant companions fell during the dogged fight. The Auri plunged his sword into the *Night Wailer's* chest and severed the eternal bond between his divine lifeform and the world soul. Thus died Astafeth *the Young,* in the commanded service of his liege. Satisfied, Ashgaddon granted his progeny the right to ascend as a peer, and with him returned to Sadarya.



Description: Prior to his revival during the civil war, Astafeth represented all that was evil and corrupt, including vice, envy, and lust, as well as fear of darkness. So vile and widespread were his ravages in ancient Gandaria that he accumulated enough followers to ascend as a peer after perishing in the service of his erstwhile liege. Caldwen's version of Astafeth still struggles with his conflict as a former demon wishing to expand as a god. Though he no longer roams the streets, his mind teeters between selfish pleasures and earning a greater number of followers. His faithful today include mostly

mages from the school of invocation, as well as purveyors of vice. He otherwise skims much of his power from unsatisfied wishes, unhealthy desires, and unspoken jealousy among the masses.

His current work consists in helping guard Karkerath, especially when Ashgaddon is away. Among the gods, he is seen as an opsimath who seeks to master the art of invocation, pentacles, and magical circles. This has done much to gain him a greater following among certain types of wizards. Despite his present status as a peer, Astafeth holds a bitter grudge against the Auri (pronounced OR-rye) and the one who once slew him. These creatures are related to the plane of Pyros. Their benevolent and rational philosophy has led them to form a knightly brotherhood whose mission is to root out the deepest of evils. With his companions, the one who bested Astafeth had been preying upon back alleys of Karsa from the ethereal plane. They are now sworn enemies of Astafeth's priors and followers.



Though he is now a peer of Sadarya, the god of the night remains loyal to his progenitor, Ashgaddon. He is otherwise as unruly and unpredictable as a former-demon ought to be. Avraoth is his blood-kin, born of Ashgaddon as well, and the two often cooperate. Astafeth mistrusts and despises Zarghadin and Nekathal, neither of whom ever were fiends. On the other hand, he enjoys Anwë's fiery personality, and sees her as a soul mate. He covets her attentions. Balladoo-of-the-Hoo amuses him and may yet prove a useful ally.

The *Night-Wailer* retained his original beastly form, horned, barbed, and with a body reminiscent of bulldog's with two massively muscled front paws and shoulders. In Caldwen, he is often given an anthropomorphic image, though somewhat of a cross with his demonic bulldog form. His tower in Sadarya is called *Huutat-Fangstones.* A shrine and school of symbology stands in Garamial, on the Hexlords Coast. Though sacrificing live people isn't permitted in Caldwen, the execution of convicts is acceptable (with or without involving altars and rituals) as long as death comes swiftly. Favored offerings are the ashes of his foes or those of Ashgaddon.



Preferred Divine Favor: *Peers of the Faith*—as an option, rather than knights or priors, Astafeth may grant up to three demons with Life Forces lower than the beneficiary's (see Table 10, score of 18).
Preferred animal/monster: Bulldogs/hound-headed monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: Staff (or summoning spells).

Avraoth

Epithets: *Lord of Flies, Lord of Lies, Master of Fezzit*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Sky, air, winds, flies, and lies
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–6 (vengeful, deceitful, mistrustful, unscrupulous, manipulative, spiteful), 💀 *Instinctive*–7 (free-spirited, impulsive, hasty, unpredictable, bold, adventurous, unruly), 🗲 *Lively*–2 (profoundly eccentric, a pathological liar who delights in misleading others)
Godly Cabals: *The Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Ashgaddon (progenitor), Astafeth (blood kin), Arthalas (Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Spiderfolk and Scions of Aroth (see *Faëriad*, page 30)
Centers of Faith: Northern Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 23, 340 CE as a peer; Drachean 17, 134 BCE as a demigod
Pronunciation: ah-VRAH-oth

Mythology: An unusual story in the world of demons was told about Talari and Avraoth. As it were, the spawn of Ashgaddon fell for the charms of a demoness of great beauty. Soon, he offered her as a token of his love a precious jewel, the pride of his hoard. Not long afterward as the two sought to gain notoriety, they descended upon a fledgling Munaani colony on Calidar. Some say it lay on the Venom Coast, in a valley where the Dread Lands had grown weak. It had been home to spiderfolk, whom the Gandarian wizards had some trouble with. In exchange for a kingly ransom, the two fiends endeavored to cleanse the valley of its eight-legged inhabitants. Soon hairy husks piled up. As Avraoth and Talari went in search of survivors in the forest, they received word of a queen gathering the last of her brood. On the spur of the moment, the fiends decided to mount a two-pronged attack to trap the queen once and for all, and separated.

Along the way, Avraoth ran into a spirited ambush and, though he dispatched his aggressors, the demigod reached the queen's location later than expected. A great many of the spiderfolk lay there, ripped to shreds. Among the survivors stood their queen, partly human and with three pairs of arms. Armored warriors crawled out of a chasm obstructed with webs, some in full arachnid form, and others half-human hybrids like their queen. "Come forth, Avraoth!" she hailed. "Your war upon my kin has come to an end." Talari was nowhere to be seen. Suspecting a trick, Avraoth stood his ground and summoned to his side a number of lesser fiends who'd served him before. "It ends if I wish it," he then responded, trying to gaze into the chasm. Spiderfolk in the defensive line stepped aside to make room for their queen. "It ends because it must," she said as she approached. "I am Aranith, Queen of Chelisaria, and I do not fear you. Your beloved companion is now in my keep. If you wish her to survive, you will leave these lands at once, you and your human patrons." She then showed the jewel he'd given Talari. Avraoth sensed the queen reeked of the Ambrosian. Wondering whether he might best her and what other forces he suspected awaited beneath the chasm, he was torn between harm that might come to Talari and a bestial desire for retribution. He decided not to chance it, for now. "You can hide her, and hide

her well, queen of wretches, but there is no place that can escape me. In the end, will you pay."

Avraoth ushered away the fiends who'd answered his call. Together, they descended upon the Munaani settlers, and for tricking them into defying a demigoddess, devoured wizards and all before scattering into the ethereal.

Description: Born of Ashgaddon's blood, he was a demigod of the skies and the winds. In the decades that followed Talari's disappearance, Avraoth searched Ambrosia for places where Aranith might be hiding. He roamed the ethereal far and wide. He summoned countless billions of flies to search for his companion throughout the universe and the outer planes, using his magic to veil the place whence they'd come and their true quest. Some explored the Venom Coast. The Dread Lands had reclaimed the valley, but his flies could come and go. Though many were caught on the chasm's webs, a few brave ones buzzed along, but the spiderfolk were long gone. So his tiny servants multiplied on carrion, excrement, and all that is vile, flying wherever flies could, watching and listening to all that could be seen or heard. Thus did Avraoth become the god of flies. He is honored by air-wizards and adepts of the school of conjuration.

When Nicarea launched its forces against Karsa, Ashgaddon ordered his spawn to stand and fight among the mortals. He released horrid plagues of flies upon his foes, and marched upon the Nicarean phalanxes. Though he and the Gandarian wizards accompanying him slew a great many of the invaders, mighty heroes and servants of Teos intervened, prevailing in the end. Avraoth fell, and his progenitor promptly accepted his ascension to Sadarya. Even after his post-civil-war revival, the new god hasn't given up finding his erstwhile companion. His search for Talari goes on to this day. It has become his nature to watch through the eyes of his servants, continually spying on everyone who may be spied upon. The vast flow of information streaming through his divine mind has affected his thinking, especially the amount of falsehoods to which he is now privy. He's become more alien and stranger than his peers of Sadarya. In the face of so much secrecy and deceit, the *Lord of Flies* became the *Lord of Lies*.

Ashgaddon and Astafeth appreciate the information Avraoth can gather about their foes. They protect each other. Avraoth shows, however, little interest in his other peers. He knows what secrets their priors and heroes conceal. He generally ignores them, focusing on his original search. He has learned that Aranith attained the status of a goddess, but was later slain by the hunter god of the Heavenly Valley, Arthalas, in some century past. Talari's fate remains unknown. The Heavenly Valley hasn't granted him entry or an audience with the god of hunters. He also knows that the spiderfolk of Aroth now honor Faëriad in the place of their fallen goddess.

Avraoth is often represented as a near-human deity with large insect-like eyes. He resides at *Fezzit-of-the-Flies*. A shrine stands in his honor at Labael. It includes laboratories and libraries devoted to entomology and the use of insects in magic. Favored offerings are clues about Talari or the location of Aranith's demise. The eyes of felled spiderfolk are also prized in a spiteful kind of way.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Feyskins*—the beneficiary can turn into a fly (as an exception to the *Divine Favor's* description—see Table 10, score of 16) or, at a substantial penalty to personal charms, grow multifaceted eyes on his/her face or head allowing vision in all directions. Such character cannot be surprised and receives a +1 bonus to reaction or initiative (as appropriate to the chosen game).

Preferred animal/monster: Flies/blood-sucking flying insects and avians.

Preferred weapon/spell: Darts (or insect-summoning spells).

Other Benefits: Zealots and priors exert a 15' radius protection repelling flying insects.

Barthazu

Epithets: *Prince of Wands, Shatter-Soul, Lord of Gaughena*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Blacksmiths, craftsmen, and enchanters
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though humble and truthful, he also is mistrustful and jealous), 💀 *Rational*–5 (analytical, cautious, stubborn, principled, and obedient), 🗲 *Stern*–3 (brooding, enigmatic, reserved)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Naghilas (honored ruler of Sadarya and progenitor), Nekathal (half-sister)
Hated Foes: Witnesses of the vault, and all who serve them
Centers of Faith: Southwestern Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Chelonea 4, 299 CE, as a peer; Seithean 13, 261 CE as a demigod
Pronunciation: BAR-thah-zu (as in "zoo")

Mythology: Gandarian enchanter from his human mother, four-eyed and leathery skinned from his demonic father, Barthazu inherited the skills of both and an attraction for all things of beauty imbued with magic. A demigod at birth, he prowled the streets of Karsa, in search of spirits to bind to his will, and of the dark secrets of forgotten artifacts. He'd stolen more than a few when Naghilas summoned him to Sadarya. "Seek not the flesh of mortals or the labor of others," the *Gray Flame* said, "for most are unworthy. Take my tower's highest hall and make it your place of work. *Khoraz-the-Pale* will provide all that you need. There will you enchant a wand worthy of me, and be hailed as a prince."



Barthazu obeyed. At first a fine library emerged from the walls, and within the myriad ancient tomes, the demigod found what he sought. His quest led him to hunt a strange being, spherical, scaly, levitating, with a glaring eye in its midsection, and as large as a mortal's warhorse. The ancient pages described it as a Witness of the Vault, a

creature imbued with great magic. "Hail to you, Witness," greeted Barthazu. "I wish to offer a bargain." The creature floated past a clump of trees, keeping its distance. "I seek no bargains," it answered, its voice resonating in the demigod's mind. "I seize what I want, and I want what you bear." The Witness blinked, and a burning ray obliterated a nearby oak's trunk, narrowly missing its mark. Barthazu marshaled his own magic, vanished, and reappeared behind the creature, ready to strike. A leathery scale flipped open in its backside, revealing a smaller ocular globe, then another, until a dozen eyes rolled wildly and blinked, shooting all manners of magic in all directions. Nearby trees caught fire, others frosted over, turned to stone, or became utterly twisted. Some hit Barthazu and though he survived, the pain was excruciating. The Witness spun round and blinked its large eye. The ray caught Barthazu in the chest, charring his skin. His wound still smoking, the demigod wailed and collapsed, feigning death. After a moment of silence, the Witness levitated closer. From a sphincter heretofore concealed beneath its ever-staring eye, a tentacle emerged, dark veins throbbing under its pallid skin. After exploring the corpse, the oozing, glistening limb revealed lamprey-like jaws, which struck Barthazu's wound, burrowing into his flesh. He felt his own essence being sucked away. The demigod seized the offending appendage and ripped it out. A scream resonated in his mind as small eyes flew out of their sockets before they and the mother creature scattered into the woods.

With a wince of pain, Barthazu extracted the wicked jaws from his chest, seized an iron flagon at his waist, and squeezed into it blood still left in the tentacle's bulging veins. "A mere thirdendeal ought to do. So said the *Compendium of Baraddi,"* he rasped, before tossing away the limb and returning to Sadarya. It was the first of many components needed for his task.

Description: Barthazu is the son of Naghilas and S'saithal, a young sorceress. S'saithal lived on another eighty eight years before giving birth to her daughter, Nekathal. Born a demigod, Barthazu was part human enchanter and part demon. At his father's request, he devoted his existence to the crafting of legendary artifacts. The very first one he created, after many adventures to secure required components, led to his own death and subsequent rebirth as a peer of Sadarya. He is now revered by enchanters, wand-makers, woodworkers, merchants of precious woods, and all those who create objects of wonder. He occasionally possesses worthy followers to do his bidding, such as gathering components for his enchantments that are found only in the world of mortals.

Barthazu's peculiarity is that he permanently sacrifices part of his own vitality when he crafts an artifact. When he enchanted his father's Ebon Rod, his entire Life Force flowed within, ending his existence as a demigod. A part of his consciousness forever dwells in each of his creations, including the Ebon Rod, giving them a sentient mind and innate abilities beyond those their owners are empowered to trigger. Those he crafted before his civil-war revival are wicked objects that are dangerous to all but their rightful owners. What they do not know is that Barthazu is still linked to these items; he can see and hear through them as they are part of his divine spirit. His specialty remains wand-making, which earned him the sobriquet "Prince of Wands."

The god of enchanters has remained loyal to Naghilas. He also remains close to his half-sister, however strange she appears. As regards the remainder of his peers, Barthazu stays businesslike. He may craft an object on request, but the cost in magic that he demands for such work is never cheap, something only Sadarya's elders consider an option. The exception to this is Nekathal, for whom he would produce a work of wonder if reasons were worthy of his own sacrifice. Barthazu has many enemies, usually those from whom he gathers precious components for his enchantments. Witnesses of the vault make the top of his list, as they brim with magic. Barthazu's followers often tangle with these wicked creatures, or those they enslaved to their will. Some have ascended as demigods of monstrous deities, and now prowl the Ambrosian.

Clad in dark blue clothing, and with four eyes upon a face seemingly carved from ebony, Barthazu bears the great silver horns of a markhor. His tower is known as *Gaughena-of-the-Iron-Orb*. A great shrine is dedicated to him in Anzael, in southwestern Caldwen, which also is a famous school and workshop for the making of wands, rods, and staves. Favored temple offerings are parts of rare monsters powerful in magic.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Personal Device*—a rod, a staff, or a wand (see Table 10, score of 12).
Preferred animal/monster: Woodpeckers or mandrakes.
Preferred weapon/spell: Any pole arm or staff (or enchantment spells).

Dagleeth

Epithets: *The Librarian, Curator of Neshnee*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan; elder peer of Sadarya
Interests: Light, science, ancient lore, obscure and mostly useless knowledge
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though humble and forgiving, he can also be greedy and mistrustful), 💀 *Rational*–8 (analytical, straightforward, deliberate, methodical, conventional, principled, obedient, obsessive-compulsive with counting, arranging, and hoarding personal effects), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (feisty and irascible in the face of malicious disorder, he can otherwise prove overly formal, stuffy, and self-conscious)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Naghilas (honored ruler of Sadarya), Shai-Mamnon (demigod subject), Eilonna (friend, Alfdaín)
Hated Foes: Nicarean inquisitors and book-burners
Centers of Faith: Northeastern Caldwen, Gandaria (covertly), and Osriel (Sterlingham area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Loreath 7, 266 BCE
Pronunciation: dag-LEETH



Mythology: The mood was festive at *Neshnee-of-the-Red-Gate,* for it was the anniversary of Dagleeth's ascension to Sadarya. The *Gray Flame,* the *Prince of Wands,* the *Scrollmaker,* and the *Unquenched* sat at his side, partaking of an elixir he'd discovered during one of his many journeys in search of ancient lore. From her looks, Urthaala seemed to have had a little too much already. While throngs of spirit servants tended to the needs of their divine hosts, a score more entered, carrying an artfully prepared efreet soufflé above which fire imps merrily flew around, two for every century. "Thank you, thank you dear friends," declared the *Librarian*. "You shouldn't have. Space for the imps is becoming scarcer every time." Naghilas laughed. "Growing self-conscious are we? Come now, there's plenty more space for them. Trust me." Barthazu stood and raised his chalice. "Hear, hear!

Please, don't be shy. The soufflé is getting cold and the imps are melting." The guests chuckled and awaited until Dagleeth blew out his fire imps and made a mental wish. As the spirit servants passed around godly apportioned slices, Dagleeth's third eye opened wide. "I do beg your forgiveness, my friends," he said suddenly. "Urgent business I'm afraid. Back in a moment."

Vanishing from the Hall of Ceremonies, the *Librarian* reappeared in a remote corner of his immense library, where someone awaited. "Eilonna?" The visitor turned and pulled down her hood, revealing her smile and a lacquered box under her arm. "You shouldn't have, sweet lady," said Dagleeth, his third eye rolling with embarrassment. "I wasn't about to forget your celebration. I hope you don't mind my intrusion," she said. The *Librarian* hugged the goddess. "Of course not, dearest friend. Will you join my guests?" Eilonna placed her gift on a nearby table. "No, thank you. You know I'm uncomfortable at gatherings." Dagleeth waved in a fatalistic manner. "What was I thinking? You, sweet Eilonna, will always be welcome at Neshnee, whether you enter through its Red Gate or its back door." After a pause, he added, "I missed you." The elven goddess gazed at him in a slightly gauche manner. Dagleeth hesitated when silence prevailed, until a confused imp came flying by. "Shoo! Shoo, I say. Silly thing. My apologies," said the *Librarian* with a mix of regret and relief. "What news of the Briarwoods?" he asked. Eilonna sighed softly. "Oh, nothing really. You know me, divine bumps and bruises to mend. Gods will be gods." Dagleeth smiled as the two sat. "Is your patient getting better, the one with the darkness within?" Eilonna looked in the distance, pensive. "He worries. Something wicked in the sea troubles him greatly. I slowed his ailment, but I fear healing it will require more than I can..." Dagleeth's third eye rolled wildly and gazed through bookshelves and walls. "Quiet, my sweet. I'll be right back."



The *Librarian* vanished to a nearby aisle. "Can I help you?" he enquired. Urthaala-the-Unquenched lifted her gaze from an ancient tome she held open before her. "Truly fascinating, what you keep here. I'm afraid I've allowed myself to wander about in your absence. Your guests are waiting." Annoyed, Dagleeth took the book from the goddess's hands. "You are welcome at Neshnee, Fiery One, but please ask before perusing my library. I shall be back momentarily." Slightly miffed, Urthaala wrinkled her nose at the *Librarian* and faded away. Around the corner came Eilonna, worried. "Do you think she heard us?" Dagleeth frowned as he returned the book to its rightful place on the shelf. "Perhaps. I do wonder what she came looking for down here. I'll be watching that one," he added. Eilonna gazed at his third eye glaring in the Hall of Ceremonies' direction. "Good idea."

Description: The *Librarian* is the keeper of magical books, literary artifacts, possessed tomes, cursed grimoires, book-like beings, and secret knowledge removed from the world of the mortals for their safety. It is said that he may have been one of the earliest writers of the *Kheravim* and that he once existed as a scroll spirit. He favors abjurers, scribes, sages, and keepers of books. In his view destroying books, however nefarious, is a sin.

Dagleeth or one of his spirit servants occasionally possesses people who might lead him in his eternal search for forbidden lore. Control lasts until the host is knocked unconscious or killed, in which case the possessing spirit moves to the next closest victim. While overcome, the host searches for what the god seeks. Possession ends when the object is brought to one of Dagleeth's temples. Though he favors his own followers, he will at times dwell in the minds of others who may know something for which he searches. His sworn foes are those who seek to suppress knowledge and burn books. Among them are Nicarean inquisitors, whom he never forgave for burning Arcanial's library in 1018 CE. The *Librarian* sometimes returns ancient tomes to Munaan as a scheme to help revive forgotten faiths there.

Naghilas is both his ally and ruler in Sadarya. As a master of written spells, the *Librarian* feels compelled to assist the *Gray Flame*. His relations with Barthazu and Urthaala are reasonably good, although since he started watching the latter, he wonders what she's up to. His best friend and confidante is Eilonna, who wishes to keep her connection with him unnoticed. He has no particular interest in other peers of Sadarya. For a fee, he may search his library on request, but he will not willingly reveal the contents of his rarest books. Shai-Mamnon *Scrollmaker* is a demigod in his service.

The large eye in the middle of Dagleeth's forehead, in addition to two normal ones, makes him instantly recognizable. The third eye enables him to consult the *Ætherian Scrolls*, a rare talent among the gods. He commands a great shrine in Lamerith, facing Mantra Bay. It also is a magnificent library, a school of arcane grammar and calligraphy, and a shop where properly-tested "certified pre-owned spells" may be purchased. Librarians of Dagleeth are wizardly priors whose mission it is to look for dangerous tomes and lock them away in a vault at the great temple. Forgotten lore and forbidden writings constitute the most prized temple offerings.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Heavenly Abode*—a microplane within which an entire library can be stored; godly magic can render its contents invisible and incorporeal on command (see Table 10, score of 19).

Preferred animal/monster: Bookworms (if kept away from books and fed clean vellum) and ink-secreting monsters (such as giant octopi and krakens, whose ink is reputed for being the finest and most magical in nature).

Preferred weapon/spell: Stiletto pen, paper cutter, or any device fitted with quills (or abjuration spells).

The Book of Books: Dagleeth owns a wondrous tome listing all the contents of his library, their locations, whether they lie in the correct place, whether parts are missing or damaged, who might have borrowed certain titles, and whether they are overdue. A command word is needed to open the tome. A topic may be spoken at the open book, after which it turns to the correct page, showing the closest match. One only needs to say "next" for pages to flip to the next best match. Touching a title summons the tome from Dagleeth's library, trading places with the *Book of Books*. Shutting the former switches the two volumes around. Shutting the *Book of Books* shrinks it so it can be kept in a pouch.

Nekathal



Epithets: *The Unborn, the Foretold*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan
Interests: Healers, alchemists, divination
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (altruistic, humble, truthful, tolerant, magnanimous), 💀 *Rational*–5 (patient, cautious, conventional, principled, obedient), 🗲 *Stern*–3 (austere, dreamy, reserved)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Zarghadin (progenitor), Barthazu (half-brother), Samaz (trusted peer)
Hated Foes: Assassins and all who willingly support slayers' guilds
Centers of Faith: Southeastern Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Chelonea 19, 374 CE as a peer; Munaea 2, 349 CE as a demigoddess
Pronunciation: NEK-kah-thaal

Mythology: From the depth of S'saithal's womb, Nekathal sensed all that her mother could. Her mother wasn't young by any means, at least in mortal terms. A powerful sorceress, she'd borne another god eighty-eight years earlier from another union. For this, S'saithal was notorious. Dagleeth had prophesized the rising of another peer of her blood, leading some in Sadarya to covet her flesh. She'd entertained courting from both Zarghadin and Ashgaddon. When the time was right and celestial bodies sat as they should in the Great Vault, S'saithal enchanted a pentacle and began a ritual. In the end, she'd chosen Zarghadin as the better party. Some say Ashgaddon, the older of the two peers, was offended. It is thought that perhaps he should have come first. But that wasn't to be. The sorceress perished before the ritual was complete, lying at the center of the circle, where none could reach her. Suspicion remained that Ashgaddon had claimed her life altogether and imprisoned her spirit in Karkerath.

Whatever the truth, it didn't prevent her daughter's coming. The ritual's interruption left Nekathal half-formed and unborn. Foreseeing untimely death, the mother had enspelled her progeny to inherit knowledge and magic bestowed upon her by Zarghadin, and earlier by Naghilas himself. As she faded from the mortal world, the spirit of S'saithal whispered to her daughter, fully awaking her. "I must leave you now, my daughter. Stay close to your father. He will protect you." Nekathal sensed the dying flesh surrounding her. Frightening silence prevailed as the beat of the mother's heart and her soothing breath came to an end.

Gathering her nascent magical strength, the *Unborn* transported herself from her mother's womb. She appeared a few feet above S'saithal's remains, floating in mid-air. The soft glow of candles outside the protective circle revealed another presence. Four-eyed, skin like ebony, a knee to the stone floor, he wore armor brimming with magic and a mighty halberd. "Come, my sister," he said, "for this place no longer is safe." Nekathal recognized the demigod as the spawn of Naghilas. "How did you know of my coming?" she inquired. Barthazu stood and glanced warily over his shoulder. "Our mother told me of this time. I am oath-bound to lead you safely to *Nazruu-of-the-Mirrors*. Creatures have been summoned that do not answer to Sadarya. They've been tasked with hunting you, and allowed entry into Ambrosia." Nekathal waved her hand, dousing the candles, and approached the circle's edge. "Who has a quarrel with me?" The *Prince of Wands* summoned a wondrous cloak she knew could conceal her from divine sight. "It isn't known who your enemies are, for a fey darkness masks their tracks. Cast this veil upon yourself, and let us depart at once. They are coming."



Description: Also known as *The Unborn*, she bears her epithet from an entry in the *Kheravim* that told the story of her birth. Nekathal never could grow much beyond her fetal shape. Despite her condition, she became a great healer and a seer. As a demigoddess, she took pity of the Gandarians' fate and sacrificed her immortality to heal a great many of those suffering from the Great Plague of 367 CE. Thus did she ascend to Sadarya as a peer. In the minds of the healed and of following generations, she became a patron of healing and mercy, one who wasn't honored out of fear but for her compassion. Among her followers are the ill and the cursed or those who were saved, as well as diviners, healers, alchemists, sages, and apothecaries devoted to helping the sick, the weak, and the malformed.

It is said that those she saves from certain death are bound to preserve the lives of three others, however good or wicked they may be. If they fail to act when their deed is due, a slow demise awaits them in the form of rotting diseases no mortal spell will cure. Though her divine might enables her to change her form at will, Nekathal never fights in battle, at least in a physical sense. She always relies on magic, generally the non-lethal kind. She has confronted several times creatures bound to eliminate her before ascending as a peer. These were notorious villains skilled in the ways of slayers. They came from different places in the world of mortals, humans and others mighty enough to rise as demigods, or certainly to challenge a nascent demigoddess. Perhaps such had been promised in exchange for

completing their quest. They all bore divine magic masking their patron's name. The few whom Nekathal's followers captured died at once before they could be questioned in any way. As a result of this somber time of her eternal existence, the *Unborn* became the sworn enemy of slayers and their wicked brotherhoods.

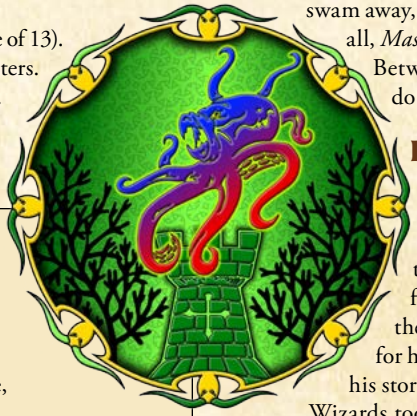
Her allies are Zarghadin and Samaz, an honorable peer. Having fulfilled his oath to bring Nekathal to her father's tower in Sadarya, Barthazu still shows goodwill toward his half-sister, though he sides with Naghilas. He crafted the cloak he saved her with, and, through it, watches her and any who may bring harm upon her. She pities Ashgaddon and his divine minions, and hopes someday to sway them to more benevolent dispositions. There was a legendary encounter when she faced the god of death. To him she said, "August Elder, though I have feared the many who sought to end my eternity, I forgave them and their masters, for I bear no ill will as an ascended peer of Sadarya." Ashgaddon never responded, nor did he give the slightest clue he was ever involved. The search for her mother's spirit goes on, as Dagleeth concluded the world soul had not claimed her yet. The missing spirit has nonetheless never responded to her daughter's call.

Half-formed and somewhat ghastly in appearance, Nekathal is often represented as a newborn in her mother's arms. She resides at her father's tower. A great hospital and school of divination stands at her main shrine in Meggidon, in southeastern Caldwen. The most favored temple offerings are humble gifts from those her followers preserved from death or worse fates.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Life* (see Table 10, score of 13).
Preferred animal/monster: White mice/albino monsters.
Preferred weapon/spell: None (or divination spells).

Samaz

Epithets: *The Deep One, Master of Melpheer*
Ranking: Minor Calderan god
Interests: Seas, storms, fishermen, water elementalism, beasts of the depth
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though tolerant, he is selfish and deceitful), 💀 *Instinctive*–5 (impulsive, unpredictable, cunning, adventurous, unruly), 🗡 *Stern*–3 (aloof, brooding, unfathomably enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: *The Fellowship of Watchers* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 219)
Allies: Zarghadin (elder peer), Nekathal (trusted peer)
Hated Foes: Sea dragons (or Ghülean ethereal seekers)
Centers of Faith: Northwestern Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 12, 1271 CE
Pronunciation: sah-MAHZ



Mythology: Pallid and glistening, his head like an octopus, Samaz emerged from concentric ripples on a wall of *Melpheer-the-Glaucous* as if he'd stepped out of the sea. A guest stood in a chamber devoid of the murky eddies filling his tower. Not everyone in Sadarya was comfortable with his usual domain, least of all the goddess of fire. "Uncommon are your visits, Urthaala," he observed. "I had not foreseen it. Please sit." He designated a sponge-padded, barnacle-studded seat by a nearby table. A delicate lace of coral and mother-of-pearl at its edges gleamed under the ceiling's shifting pale blue aura. Aquatic-like spirit servants drifted in, bringing a flagon and two chalices, before sinking back through the walls. "Neither has your honored presence often graced hallows of mine at *Quazith-of-the-Cauldron*," she answered.

The host casually waved a hand, and the flagon poured its contents into the chalices before resting on the table once more. "What news then do you bear?" Samaz asked. His guest picked up a mollusk straying on the table, and sizzled it between her fingers before popping it into her mouth. "I wanted to praise your stance as regards Nicarean mortals and their patron. It takes a certain courage to cross the *Scourge of Karkerath,* for he is known to carry grudges." The host parted his facial tentacles and lifted the chalice to his mouth, all the while carefully observing Urthaala. Out of courtesy, she had extinguished her usual lava-like appearance and adopted midnight-blue skin. "One is entitled a voice at *Khoraz-the-Pale*. So warrants Naghilas," he answered. Urthaala nodded. "He has indeed. Nonetheless, I salute you for it." She took a sip of the beverage, producing a bit of steam that made her wrinkle her nose. "It helped that Zarghadin sent word of similar views on this matter, and the word of an elder has its value," she added. Samaz lowered his chalice, his tentacles writhing slightly. Before he could answer, the goddess continued. "I'm surprised he didn't come himself. This worries me. Has something gone awry at *Nazruu-of-the-Mirrors*?" Annoyed at her attempt to squeeze details from him, Samaz eluded the probing about his elder peer. "I can assure you, all is as well there as ought to be. Was there something else?" An enormous shadow loomed ominously within the mysterious green depths of the chamber's walls. As it swam away, Urthaala smiled and leaned back in her chair. "Not at all, *Master of Melpheer*. If I may be of service, do let me know. Between you, me, and these watery walls, one can always do with a few more friends."

Description: *The Deep One* is a native Calderan deity. Original Gandarians were mostly a desert people. Once established in Caldwen, the newcomers learned to cope with a colder clime and two coastlines. When time was right, a new deity rose from the seas' shadowy fathoms. Considered at first a sea demon, he became the patron of seafarers and coastal townsfolk, who prayed for his protection. Many are those who fear the strength of his storms and the unknown lurking deep below the surface. Wizards took an interest in Samaz, as he embodied the College of Alteration and the element of water.

It is rumored that those possessed with his spirit become creatures of the deep and vanish from their native cities. With them, the *Deep One* created an aquatic race dwelling in the murky darkness at the heart of Wizards Gulf. They sometimes raid nearby shores of the Østfjord and abduct isolated residents of other faiths. The truth is that Samaz is a creature of Ghüle, albeit a renegade who fled its alien masters and was able to tap the beliefs of mortals to attain godhood. He hides from unspeakable horrors still hunting for him on the outer planes. He knows what may follow in their wake, but will not speak of it for fear of revealing who he is to peers or followers, and that word might also reach his foe. He suspects the Great Lords of Ghüle may first come through the abyssal dark. The sole purpose of his aquatic race is to fight, not against the likes of orcs and trolls, but against their Ghülean masters. They stand dormant at the bottom of the sea or in marine caverns, clad for war and packed in tight rows veiled by his magic, awaiting the call of their master. Meanwhile, he worries about recent events at *Nazruu-of-the-Mirrors*.

Samaz supports neither Ashgaddon nor Naghilas, though he will not defy the ruler of Sadarya and risk a confrontation. He knows that great wars in Soltan's ephemeris will attract Ghüle's attention like a wounded

fish in shark-infested waters. He favors ignoring Nicarea entirely and making a greater effort to learn more about Ghüle. Urthaala's inquisitive and meddlesome stance is something he wonders about. He suspects her unusual kindness to him hides something, but hasn't found what. He protects Nekathal and Zarghadin, who agree with his fears—what little of them he has shared. Only recently, he consented to take over Zarghadin's informal leadership, at Nekathal's bidding. Samaz joined the secret *Fellowship of Watchers*, but he is seen there as standoffish and cold. Of all the peers of Sadarya, Samaz is the most withdrawn and quiet.

Samaz took on an anthropomorphic appearance, though his head looks like a large octopus. He is sometimes represented wearing silvery scales and sporting a fish tail in lieu of legs. His tower on Sadarya is known as *Melpheer-the-Glaucous.* His great shrine erected at Abyzael harbors a fantastic aquarium whose sides are protected with magical force fields. It sponsors a school of water elementalism as well as an academy of alteration magic. Though his sworn enemies are ethereal seekers, Ghüle's version of bounty hunters, Samaz avoids advertising the fact to escape undue attention. Instead, he fancies deprecating the gods of Draconia as a diversion. Sea dragon trophies and any news on Ghüle therefore are equally favored as temple offerings.



Preferred Divine Favor: *Hallowed Veil* (see Table 10, score of 15).
Preferred animal/monster: Octopi/giant cephalopods or krakens.
Preferred weapon/spell: Harpoon (or alteration spells).

Shai-Mamnon



Epithets: *Scrollmaker, Heart of the Kheravim*
Ranking: Demigod, Calderan Temporal
Interests: Scribes, scrolls, deserts, sand creatures
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–7 (wicked, selfish, arrogant, vengeful, greedy, manipulative, spiteful), 💀 *Instinctive*–3 (unpredictable as desert winds, cunning, unruly), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (vain and cynical, he can also be brooding and festering with bitterness)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Dagleeth (divine liege), Ashgaddon (elder peer)
Hated Foes: Demon hunters such as those of the *Daimonikon League* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 230)
Centers of Faith: Eastern Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 27, 1348 CE
Pronunciation: SHY-mam-non

Mythology: "Be quiet, Corvan, or the night prior will hear us. We're almost there." Bildoo-the-Swift lay flat on a stairwell leading up to a stone platform. The smell of incense suffused the shrine's atmosphere as a large gilded thurible slowly swung from a nearby chain with a low-pitched woosh. It gleamed under a ray of moonlight filtering through the glass-covered openings in the dome above. The thief nudged his companion's shoulder with the tip of his boot. "Do you have the bag?" he whispered. His companion nodded back at him. A new cloud happened by, casting the remainder of the shrine deeper into darkness. Hunched low, the two climbed the long stairway while a bell rang softly in the distance.

At the top, barely visible in the dimness, a marble plinth occupied the center of the platform. Above it, hung the object of the thieves' intrusion, a long vertical strip of vellum nearly as tall and wide as a person, and two ornate silver rods holding it at both ends. The artifact floated in mid-air and exuded a feeble glow. "Don't you look at it, Corvan," Bildoo said in his breath. "It'll make you mad."

The thief stepped onto the plinth while a faint murmur rose from the magical scroll. "Bildoo... Gaze upon me. Behold the true faith." The thief wiped sweat from his brow and fought to ignore the eerie call. Heart thumping, hands trembling as he stood precariously at the edge of the plinth, he motioned Corvan to toss him the enchanted sack. Nothing came. When he glanced down, his companion rested on his knees, wide eyed, gaping as drool escaped the corner of his mouth while he stared up at the scroll.

"Corvan, no!" he whispered with force. "Snap out of it, you fool." The younger thief's senses returned when Bildoo kicked him in the head. He looked down at the bundle of brown fabric in his hands, then up at his accomplice on the plinth, and pointed a finger at him. "Infidel!" he hollered, his voice echoing throughout the temple. Bildoo jumped off the plinth, seeking escape. But he never landed. His feet dangling in mid-air, he spun slowly around despite his best efforts, until the scroll loomed large before him. "Read me," spoke the haunting voice from the artifact. "Honor me and be one with the faithful!"

Kicking and squirming, the rogue attempted to break free of the magic holding him. In his struggle, his eyes at last were drawn to the ancient verses. For an instant, his gaze drifted along until a feeling deep down tugged at his mind. Wracked with repulsion mixed with unbearable attraction, he rebelled. And then, when his reason failed, he landed softly on the platform, bereft of coherent thought.

A prior appeared at the top of the stairs and examined Bildoo. "Aye, that one's done for." He turned to a group of concerned acolytes awaiting at the bottom. "Put him with the others. Take this one too," he added, pointing at Corvan. "They're now of our flock. Hallowed be Shai-Mamnon!"

Description: Shai-Mamnon originally was a wondrous scroll endowed with empathy so that it could display whatever appropriate verses of the *Kheravim* a reader might seek. More enchantments were added, giving the object an incredible notoriety by the turn of the eleventh century. In 1018 CE, the library of Arcanial was burned to the ground, but followers of the *Maghia* managed to hide the scroll from inquisitors who'd come to destroy it. It stayed in their hands until the cult of Dagleeth re-emerged. Soon afterward, the *Librarian* removed the item from circulation and sequestered it in his tower. There, he further imbued it with the essence of a sand demon to give it sentient thought and be able to defend itself. He then returned the scroll to Caldwen. The demon's name was Shai-Mamnon.

Although the artifact promoted all of the pantheon's ancient faiths, awed visitors who came to its shrine began to honor it on its own. Thus was born the cult of Shai-Mamnon, which led the artifact and its resident spirit to ascend as a demigod serving Dagleeth. Visitors need to succeed a wisdom check with a substantial penalty to resist the urge to read the ancient verses. This power affects anyone able to peruse the scroll, regardless of where they are (including those using mirrors or crystal balls). If they fail, the scroll may convert outright non-Caldweners to one of Sadarya's faiths. In this instance, "non-Caldweners" refers to followers of other pantheons and unrepentant heathens. Those succeeding a defense check, and thus rejecting the scroll's dogmata, most often lose their minds. They are later committed to a hospital under the care of Nekathal's priors. Conversion and madness in this case are considered divine magic and cannot be dispelled without a god's direct involvement. The outcome of conversion is listed below:

Though he bears all the magical powers of a demigod, Shai-Mamnon remains at his temple in Malphezul. If summoned by his liege, the spirit of the scroll can generate an alter-ego of the former demon, and act as required. Nekathal and Zarghadin have cautioned Dagleeth about Shai-Mamnon's wicked nature. He seeks to rise as a peer to sever Dagleeth's liegedom and free himself of the scroll. He then hopes to join Ashgaddon's side. If the artifact were ever destroyed, and Dagleeth failed to elevate the demigod to peer status, Ashgaddon or his two minions certainly would. Meanwhile, his clergy and the *Maghians* remain the artifact's quiet protectors in the world of mortals.

The scroll itself shows the part of the *Kheravim* a reader wants to access, or ought to if a stranger. The shrine at Malphezul sponsors the nearby College of Magical Scroll-Making. Favored offerings are simply folks brought before the artifact to gaze at its magnificence and read a few lines. Hated foes of Shai-Mamnon are many. Typically, they are those of the other gods of Caldwen. Each follower is given one (roll at –1 on Table 4. *Shai-Mamnon's Communion* ignoring scores of 4 or less to determine a hated foe).

Table 4. Shai-Mamnon's Communion

d20	Effect
4(–)	Converted to Shai-Mamnon's faith
5-8	Converted to Dagleeth's faith
9-11	Converted to Naghilas's faith
12	Converted to Ashgaddon's faith
13	Converted to Astafeth's faith
14	Converted to Avraoth's faith
15	Converted to Barthazu's faith
16	Converted to Nekathal's faith
17	Converted to Samaz's faith
18	Converted to Urthaala's faith
19	Converted to Zarghadin's faith
20	Convert is possessed by the spiritual patron; roll again with a –1 penalty.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Transcendence*—the beneficiary is attuned to desert life. Need for water is reduced to a minimum, sand storms are harmless and do not block short-range sight, and the beneficiary is never surprised in this element (see Table 10, score of 14).
Preferred animal/monster: Horned lizards/dust devils, sand spirits.
Preferred weapon/spell: Steel claws (or abjuration spells).
Other Benefits: Once per day, a prior can summon a whirlwind-like, non-spellcasting, dust, ash, or sand devil with half the prior's combat abilities and Life Force. The creature can fly (or become undetectable if in a desert). It maintains a telepathic link with the prior and will serve him/her until sunset or destroyed. This ability replaces one listed for messengers and scribes (see Table 12. *Fanatical Zealots' Abilities*).

Urthaala-the-Unquenched

Epithets: *Lady of Fire, Ember Dark, Queen of Quazith*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan
Interests: Fire, fire elementals
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (neither benevolent nor malevolent, though she owns a talent for manipulating others), 💀 *Instinctive*–8 (impulsive, hot-tempered, unpredictable, audacious, adventurous, sly, cunning, quarrelsome), 🗡 *Lively*–7 (cynical, flamboyant, obsessive, opinionated, brazen, fiery, unrelenting)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Naghilas (honored ruler of Sadarya and elder peer), Dagleeth and Barthazu (peers).
Hated Foes: Followers of Avraoth (see *Gods of Caldwen)*
Centers of Faith: North-Central Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 6, 152 CE
Pronunciation: oor-THAA-lah



Mythology: The pink, purple, and gold billows of the majestic Oortan Cloud filled the Great Vault behind Samaz, bathing the divine amphitheater in a soft and soothing glow. "...and I say this without a doubt, rightful peers of Ambrosia, the danger comes not from a moon of Calidar, not from the red world or the distant Fringe," he stated. His facial tentacles wriggled as he studied the motley assembly of somewhat bored deities. "Truer danger lies in the darkness of Draconia. There are those dwelling there who seek nothing but ill will toward the lords of Ambrosia. And those living gods will not address us here..." As Caldwen's lord of the seas continued his impassioned speech, Urthaala leaned back and quietly observed the fellow seated next to her. Crimson red, a horned carapace covering his back to the top of his head, Koanui cracked his craggy knuckles in annoyance at the speech.

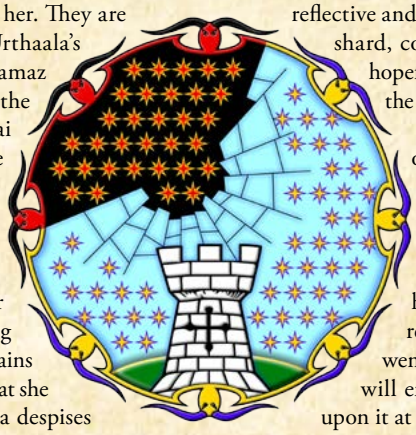
"He's a lot more interesting in person, you know," she said, shifting closer to the Talikai god of war. "I visited his tower once. Very impressive. A bit damp for me, but you might like it." Koanui raised a leathery eyebrow as he gauged his neighbor. He then shrugged dismissively. "Well I disagree with him," he said. "Hand me one of their living gods any time. Dangerous, he says? I can wring their scaly necks and snap them like twigs." Urthaala lowered her face to mask a smile. "Honestly, I can fry a few myself with a sneeze. It's all in the number of followers. We just have more than they do."

The fire goddess slyly observed Koanui's reaction to her statement. "I'd say we bask in the true danger," he responded, sullen. The goddess knew to whom he referred. "That old fogey didn't even bother to show," she observed. "What nerve." Koanui snorted and cracked his knuckles more loudly. "He's got more followers in that big, fat empire of his than he knows what to do with. I'd just as soon carve a slice of that for myself." Urthaala wrinkled her nose at Koanui's crabby sideways retort. "You and me, both, friend. But in truth, I don't think it's really worth it. I believe in fact there are greater dangers out there than what lies nearby. I sense our honored speaker knows more than he wants to admit. Deep down, he hides something. You might have better luck with him than I. You at least hail from his element. Me, I just make steam and fry his barnacles." While Koanui pondered the goddess's ominous words, a fly happened by, carelessly buzzing hither and yon. Urthaala snatched it in mid-air between her thumb and index, and examined it with suspicion, before igniting the hapless insect with a divine spark. "Pesky little devil. I wonder how it got here."

Description: Urthaala was awakened when a sect of fire elementalists known as the Red Hand sought a deity in which they could believe. Their old writings alluded to a great spirit of fire that dwelled in toxic fumes and lava fields beneath the Gandarian desert. It helped catalyze their beliefs and enable Urthaala to ascend. The cult spread rapidly among war wizards, blacksmiths, and all who dabble with fire when the Red Hand clinched a string of Munaani military victories against rival forces from Alorea and Kragdûr during the early days of Calidaran colonialism. Though fire elementalists revere this deity, by recent centuries, the original sect has faded and their ancient scrolls have been lost. In her followers' minds, she remains today the unquenchable, all-consuming fire that purifies the world.

No one among mortals and gods knows that she is in fact a divine alias of Soltan (see CAL1 page 62). The sun god secretly created this persona to infiltrate and spy on the affairs of Sadarya. She poses as a supporter of Naghilas, and acts accordingly solely to avoid suspicion, which may occasionally damage the affairs of Nicarean priors and their inquisitors. They are collateral casualties of Urthaala's need to play her role to the hilt. She knows about Ashgaddon and his clique's desire to bring harm to Nicarea, Ellyrion, and Narwan.

Lately, she has begun investigating a blind spot in Sadarya, in the divine person of Samaz and his allies. She senses something else and worries about it, because none of these three deities will confide in her. They are as suspicious of the fiery goddess as she is of them. Urthaala's current tactic is to convince other deities to approach Samaz so that they may unveil more about what happens at the towers of Melpheer and Nazruu. Koanui of the Talikai is an example of such an attempt. She hopes to squeeze knowledge from them, while diverting foes of Nicarea away from Soltan's interests.



Her relation with Naghilas is affable if not subservient, but her nature is unpredictable and quarrelsome if openly challenged. Dagleeth loathes her. He sees her as an incorrigible snoop. The idea of a fire deity inviting herself into his library disturbs him greatly. Barthazu remains businesslike. Ashgaddon knows from Avraoth's flies that she schemes to connect other gods with Samaz. Urthaala despises Avraoth, with whom she often quarrels, on account of his flies infesting her shrines. She also quietly supports the *Maghians,* whom she sees as a way to weaken Caldwen's burgeoning magiocracy. To better "blend in" with the style of old Gandarian cults, the fire goddess occasionally "possesses" one or two depraved nobles for good measure, leading them to immolate themselves in her name.

Urthaala adopted the appearance of a fire demoness, sporting dark blue skin marbled with glowing lava, bat wings, and cute little horns to please the old-fashioned sensibilities of Sadarya's peers, and keeps a fiery whip for the naughtier ones. Her tower is *Quazith-of-the-Cauldron.* She sponsors a fine school and a shrine in Gargarith, just north of Arcanial. Her priors are jokingly referred to as fly-slayers. In truth, favored temple offerings include any artifacts stolen from Avraoth's misbegotten clergy.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Devout's Immunity to Fire* (see Table 10, score of 3).
Preferred animal/monster: Fireflies/efreet and other fire spirits.
Preferred weapon/spell: Flaming whip (or fire-related spells).

Zarghadin

Epithets: *The Mad, Lord of the Mirrors, Keeper of Nazruu*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan; elder peer of Sadarya
Interests: Shadows, secrets, mirrors, illusions
Personality: When not beset with a bout of insanity ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (affable, altruistic, merciful, truthful, magnanimous), ☗ *Instinctive*–5 (inventive, inquisitive, adventurous, cunning, crafty), ↯ *Lively*–5 (mirthful, outspoken, romantic, sentimental, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Nekathal (daughter) and Samaz (trusted peer)
Hated Foes: Followers of the *Maghia*
Centers of Faith: South-Central Caldwen and Gandaria (covertly)
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 13, 375 BCE
Pronunciation: zar-gad-DEEN

Mythology: Zarghadin stood in the void at the heart of darkness. His cobalt blue robe and silver hair floated around him, and his feet, shod in pointed, upturned slippers, dangled in the emptiness beneath. Myriad mirror shards swirled slowly round the chamber's infinity, for no one could ever measure the true grandeur of *Nazruu-of-the-Mirrors*. Flashing in some invisible light, the jagged pieces spun, flipping back and forth between their reflective and black sides like twinkling stars. Within each rotating shard, countless eyes gazed at Zarghadin, praying followers, hopeful mages, confused strangers, or unknown denizens of the multiverse, each vanishing in a blink as others appeared.

Gandaria's legendary illusionist sensed a great many of the gazes, dismissing most as accidental encounters, acknowledging a few, and responding to the rarest, those eyes behind which lay sharper minds, exalted faiths, and curious knowledge that Zarghadin hadn't yet tapped. To a fewer yet he granted a small token of his divine skill and sent their shards spinning ever more, revealing other eyes and other minds. The silent dance went on for a time no mortal could fathom, until a darker will emerged from a mirror's twinkle. Zarghadin focused upon it at once. The reflective segment froze in place, deflecting others around it. Within it dwelled a burning spirit, imperious, hateful, seeking to come through. The divine magician shook uncontrollably until the mirror shattered. Needle-like splinters shot across the void, colliding with nearby shards and inflicting chaos throughout the Chamber of

Stars. Zarghadin howled like a beast in pain, and the gravitating fragments suddenly collapsed in a din of broken glass.

A cold stone floor, smooth and dark like obsidian, appeared beneath him as he rested on his knees. Drenched in sweat and panting, Zarghadin stared into the mounds of broken mirrors surrounding him. He rocked back and forth, muttering mindlessly until another presence manifested itself at his side. "Father," said Nekathal, "look into my eyes. Cast away those somber troubles." She seized his head, and turned it so that he faced her. "Repeat after me. Magic alone is the anchor of my mind. Spells are born of the world soul. Through them magic comes alive and imbues the divine. Magic alone is the anchor of my mind..." Recited with growing conviction, the mantra calmed the wounded god. He sighed and closed his eyes, casting a veil upon the insidious gaze still burning in his thoughts. "Sleep, my father," said Nekathal. "I shall watch over you as you rest. You are safe in your tower."



Description: Zarghadin was once a spirit of dreams, one who captured the imaginations of Gandarians believing in his existence. His mythical feats first appeared in the storyteller Jherak's fanciful writings, *Tales of the Desert Knights,* which became the triggering event leading this spirit to rise as a peer of Sadarya centuries later. As for Jherak, he was thought a prophet, albeit posthumously, now a trusted hierarch in Zarghadin's service. This deity's fabulous deeds embody the school of illusion. The *Kheravim* surmises that much of Sadarya is a grand artifice of his making. He has indeed cast great enchantments to veil the gates of Sadarya in the Ambrosian and mislead intruders.

His most fervent followers have said that sometimes he appears to them and reveals magical insights as they gaze into broken shards of a mirror. Zarghadin peruses the minds of those who look back at him through reflections as a means to unravel the deepest secrets of the universe, gathering the fragments of their knowledge like the pieces of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. On one of these occasions, as he gazed upon a vision of the masters of Ghüle, he became subject to fits of madness. The alien gods are now aware of him too and uttered in their monstrous language that they would come for him. Nekathal, who dwells in his tower, calms his fits of raving insanity, during which shadow creatures of his nightmares materialize through the mirror shards to possess and devour his followers. Though wizards and illusionists fear these instances, the lure of his knowledge is strong enough to keep them faithful. Zarghadin is a dogged foe of the *Maghia* and does not acknowledge their contribution to Caldwen's civil war and the revival of Sadarya. His priors are inspired to look for its members, undo their work, and if possible, bring them to repent and adopt more benevolent views on life.

Clearly, his daughter is his most trusted ally. He once stood as the leading spirit of his faction, which also includes Samaz, but ever since his mental troubles developed, he became a recluse. Though his state of mind over time has become common knowledge in Sadarya, he is reluctant to let his peers see him during a seizure. Nekathal declined to step forward, leading Samaz to accept the leadership of their small faction. Zarghadin respects and obeys Naghilas, but he would rather his ruler and Ashgaddon ignored Nicarea and Teos altogether, and focus instead on what great dangers lurk in the multiverse. The divine illusionist shuns Ashgaddon and his minions. He'd fought demons while a mortal, and mistrusts those among them who ascended and remained influenced by their old values.

The *Lord of Mirrors* appears as an old man with silver hair and a blue robe studded with tiny stars. He enchanted a wondrous collapsible hand-held fan fitted with mirror-like surfaces, which he uses to mesmerize foes or dazzle friends. His tower in Sadarya is *Nazruu-of-the-Mirrors*. His most holy edifice stands in Incubael, next to the *House of Chimeras*, his school of illusions and shadow magic. Favored temple offerings include literature and other artifacts taken from the *Maghia*.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Might* (see Table 10, score of 1).

Preferred animal/monster: Chameleons/benevolent rakshasas.

Preferred weapon/spell: Razor-sharp metallic fan (or illusion spells). The fan can be used to misdirect an attacker, granting the owner a +1 armor rating bonus. It inflicts low damage.

Other Benefits: Pious followers can gaze through a mirror shard and see through another that they left elsewhere. The two fragments must be part of the same original mirror. Only two such pieces can be used each day, at any range. The effect lasts until sunrise, at which time the two shards and the original mirror (if any parts remain) shatter and become useless. Zealots and priors can speak through their mirror or cast a spell or a projectile (such as an arrow) through it. If they do either of the latter two, the connected mirror elements shatter immediately afterward, and the owner passes out for 3d6 minutes (no defense check applies). These two abilities replace one in each of Tables 11 and 12 listed under "Shadows & Secrets" (see *Special Abilities*, page 188).

Ethereal Stalkers: Winged and fish-headed, these humanoid servants of Ghülean progenitors spawn from beneath the Bay of Eyes. They explore surrounding lands or seek anyone the progenitors know to be foes of their Dark Masters. Silent, invisible, and skillful trackers, they watch priors and zealots, sometimes slaying them to follow their spirits into the netherworld. There they await an opportunity to learn more about their gods' servants and the location of their lieges' magical domains.

Lesser Spawn: AR 35, LF 22, MV 90' (30') *walking/swimming* or 180' (60') *flying*, AT 1 bite or harpoon, DR 4Lo or by weapon, DC rogue LF 22, MR 100, PH ♥*–6* 💀 *–6* 🗡 ***, Size M; Str 89, Agt 94, Dex 50, Sta 106, Int 67, Wis 46, Per n/a. *Special Abilities:* invisibility at will, empathy, skills equivalent to an LF 22 rogue, can enter the ethereal and netherworld planes.

Elder Spawn: AR 50, LF 33, MV 90' (30') *walking/swimming* or 180' (60') *flying*, AT 1 bite or trident, DR 3M or by weapon +2, DC prior LF 33, MR 100, PH ♥*–7* 💀 *–7* 🗡 *–3*, Size M; Str 89, Agt 94, Dex 50, Sta 106, Int 72, Wis 111, Per n/a. *Special Abilities:* as lesser spawn plus spellcasting as prior LF 17 and paralyzing touch (DC negates effect).

Creed of Ellyrion

The most ancient of Tanethians were first on Munaan to honor a personified deity ascended from Calidar's world soul. Prior to his divine rise, he'd been known as faceless sun spirits, tribal totems whose names could variously be interpreted as Sol (the sun) or Tan (the light). The Tanethians, "people of the Land of Light," called him Arun-Te (the warring lion lord). He was the chief deity of a now extinct pantheon—at least as far as it related to Calidar's ephemeris, for it was written that a number of his peers fled to faraway reaches of mankind's universe. Elsewhere on Munaan, the name Soltan surfaced from various other creeds. The most common today is, however, Teos (the lord), the Nicarean Empire's state deity and patron god of Ellyrion, the empire's former colony in the Great Caldera. Under these various names, he stands mostly as a god of humans.

Despite his distant past, Teos does not condone the idea that gods should form pantheons. He believes they should be unique and able to stand on their own, like him. He sees pantheons as cliques of upstarts unable to survive without the help of peers. It proves these deities unworthy of divine status. Worse, pantheon rulers are in his view weaklings propped up by power they extort from those too cowardly to walk away. Likewise, he despises deities stooping to "skim" power from their peers' mortal followers. They are the lowest of the low, a blight upon the divine world. Teos's growing concern is that pantheons and their sordid practices encourage an uncontrollable multiplication of countless petty gods and demigods. They are vermin claiming a share of worshipers that should rightfully come to him—the one true god. Yet, as a whole, he fears them.

A fundamental difference exists between faiths in Ellyrion and in the remainder of the Nicarean Empire. Ellyrians welcome the honoring of Teos's divine servants in his temples. Scions (see *Scions of the Cult*, page 215) also are very common throughout Calidar. Branded as heretical, these practices are forbidden on Munaan; they lay at the source of Ellyrion's war of independence in 1201 CE. Teos's theological background was compiled in the *Metathon,* a gold-plated book detailing the god's existence and dealings with prophets. Both great temples of Nicarea and Temenopolis claim to hold the only correct version. Prayers and rituals fit in smaller books, a collection of works known as the *Agiorkos*, from old scriptures harking back to the late Tanethian period to more recent revelations, which various councils have adopted as official temple doctrine during past centuries. Priors of the cult typically wear a headband displaying a sun symbol on their foreheads, brass for the lower ranks or platinum for upper ranks. All hold a staff shod with metal at the top, to illustrate their deity's great mace. A robe or a tabard worn over armor is appropriate, flaxen for acolytes or golden brocaded silk for prelates. Traveling priors will join adventuring parties usually for the purpose of demonstrating the ascendancy of their beliefs over all others, and of smiting forces of the night. An autonomous branch of the cult exists on Munaan, the inquisitors, responsible for rooting out heretics and blasphemers. Its agents often operate under cover in realms of the Great Caldera, where they are unwelcome at best.

The clergy is involved in most aspects of Ellyrian society. All sorts of taxes and duties are collected from the faithful and from the empire. The laws of the state include those of the temple, in addition to amendments deemed necessary by the empire (Ellyrian or Nicarean as appropriate). Magistrates, school teachers, and family preceptors are typically assigned by the clergy. All army and navy units accommodate chaplains to provide spiritual guidance and clerical magic. Under a war vicar's command, armed forces of the temple often stand among imperial legions. Known as *Maces of Teos,* their ranks include elite war priors and Ellyrian knights (called *kataphraktoi* if mounted). Fighting monks are often used as army scouts, strike units behind enemy lines, and undercover spies beyond the empire's borders. Though subject to the authority of an imperial army commander when engaged in combat, clerical forces remain otherwise autonomous. The creed of Teos is a state-sponsored faith. Foreign practices and related clerical services are only tolerated for visiting foreigners. Resident foreigners are expected to keep their faiths private (if other than Teos). Proselytizing for the benefit of a foreign creed is not permitted on Ellyrian soil. Speaking against Teos, his clergy, or the empire is considered sedition and blasphemy.

Common Attributes

Common attributes for followers of Teos, also known as the *Bearers of the Light,* are described on page 63, in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies.* In addition to the abilities given there, the priors of Teos are also indoctrinated as guardians and promoters of their faith. Many among them take on the responsibility of long-term missionary work abroad, endeavoring to draw people to their creed in exchange for offering them services they might need. Though priors of other beliefs may do the same, servants of the *One True God* are the most driven in this effort. Their strategy is to demonstrate the munificence of Teos, with the use of spells.

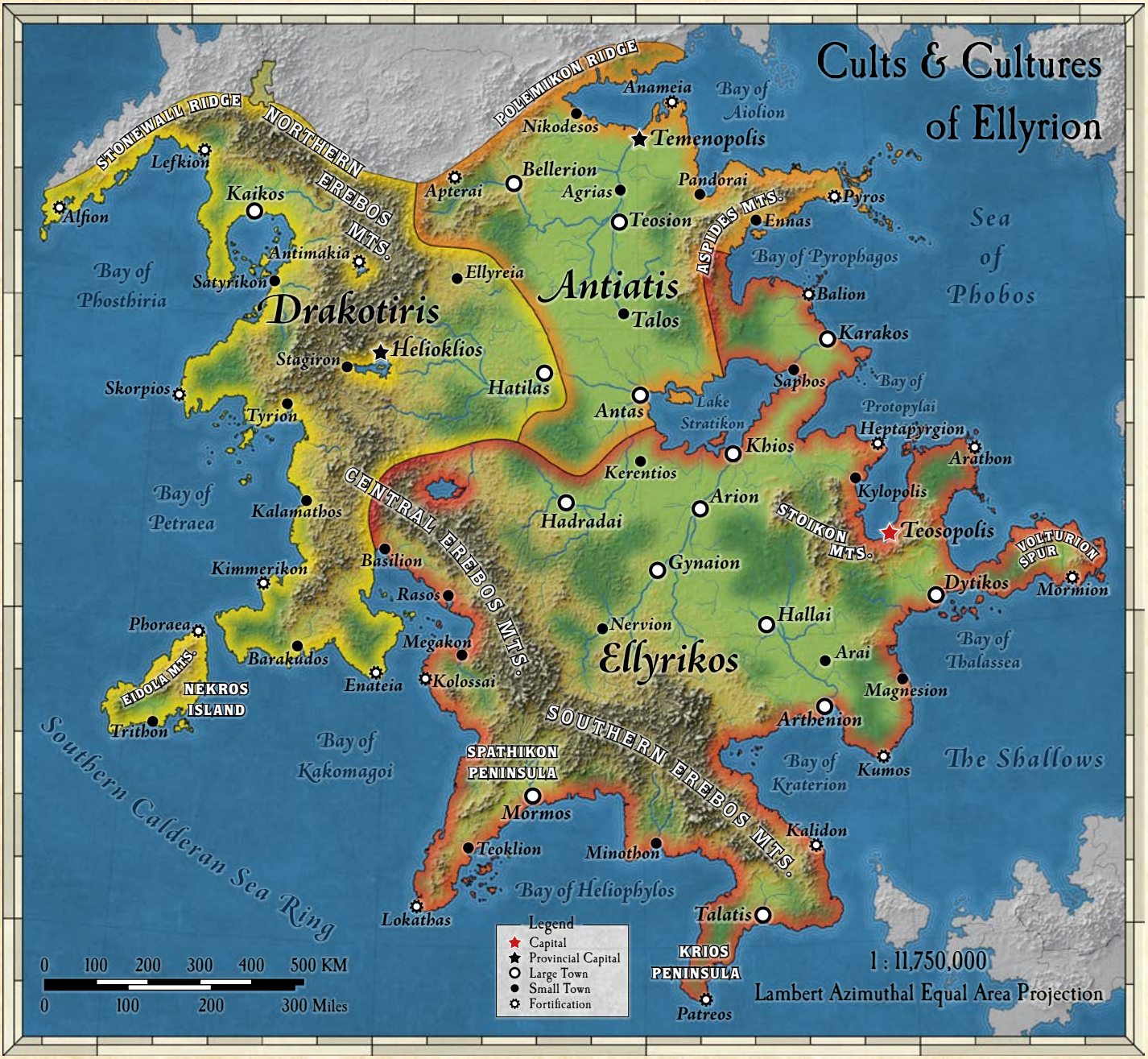
When casting magic to help someone, a prior must invoke Teos and the name of a specific beneficiary, aloud and in no uncertain terms. If all spells used in this manner have been reasonably successful in helping the beneficiary (at the referee's discretion), the prior gains a measure of influence, *once for each subject* at the end of the day. If the prior's Life Force rating is lower than the beneficiary's, 5 Influence Points (IP) are earned, 10 if Life Force ratings are comparable, 15 if the prior's Life Force rating is greatest. Priors of other faiths earn instead 3, 6, and 9 IPs respectively.

For each of the following, reduce IP gains –1: the subject is of a different race (at least –2 for a monster), of a different philosophy (PH), an *unrepentant heathen,* or a hated foe (such as a native of Caldwen or Narwan). Unintelligent or low-intelligence monsters, animals, wizard familiars, creatures inherently magical, constructs, the undead, demons, fanatical zealots, shamans, and priors cannot be converted with IPs (at least not by mortals).

Earned IPs are cumulative, as long as influence is earned within a month of the previous gain. Leaving for more than a month, or deliberately antagonizing a subject, cancels all previously earned IPs. Though influence cannot be dispelled, it is reduced or eventually eliminated when priors of competing faiths earn influence.

If cumulated IPs reach or exceed 50 or a multiple of 50, the subject must roll a defensive check. Any Wisdom-related modifiers apply (the prior's count as a penalty to the recipient's defensive check, while the recipient's count as a bonus). If the check succeeds, the prior must continue earning influence over the recipient. If the check fails, the recipient must adopt the creed of Teos as a *pious follower* (see page 188). If a check fails catastrophically (see *Critical Failure,* under Ability Scores, page 10), the recipient becomes instead a zealot of Teos. If a check yields instead a *Critical Success,* the prior suffers an immediate –10% Life Force loss or a *Divine Wounds* (see page 186) at the referee's discretion; all cumulated IPs are also cancelled, and the subject becomes permanently immune to this cult's influence. If the recipient is openly hostile to the prior's efforts, defensive checks incur a substantial bonus. This bonus, however, should be reduced for each new defensive check, provided the prior keeps working on the recipient despite earlier failures.

A prior who successfully sways a new faithful to the creed of Teos earns advancement equal to one tenth the recipient's own (though never more than 10% of what the prior needs to advance his/her own career). If the new follower is a monster, the prior earns the advancement bonus stated for defeating this monster. As an alternative to career advancement, Notoriety Points can be awarded (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*,



page 86). If at least one faithful with a greater Life Force rating was swayed, award 3 NPs, 2 if comparable, or 1 if lower.

Genesis

9000 BCE His name was as varied as the people dwelling on Munaan. Though Calidar's blue and white mass loomed large in their sky, his fiery halo ever so blindingly beckoned. None could behold *His Magnificence Beyond* for more than an instant, and thus did they lower their gazes and bow, for surely he was the greatest of gods. Nomads of all ilks traveled Munaan, engraving his hallowed shape on stones, weaving his light into tapestries, and painting his glory on pottery for millennia untold. Lords of Taneth gave him a face and a mind, and he spoke to them.

8000 BCE Other gods ascended, wretched beings who lurked in shadows, shunning Soltan's sacred light. Most came and went at the whim of historical irony, abandoned or forgotten. Others who dared defy him, Soltan smote and obliterated, thus scouring from rock and memory all traces of their existence.

6500 BCE During centuries of their rise, obscure kingdoms of Taneth engendered beliefs that divine companions should stand by Soltan's side. They knew Soltan as Arun-Te, and their faith

Early Munaani Timeline I.

9000 BCE: Soltan ascends as a personified deity of Taneth.
7900: Tribes of the Ucutan Range observe seasons and celestial cycles.
6700: First city built in the Yang basin.
6100: Arun-Te's cult introduces primitive clerical magic to the Taneth valley.
5800: Aó ascends.
5500: Horses are domesticated in the Wichipaw steppes.
5100: The Yang people smelt copper.
4600: Oil lamps are used in Munaan.
4400: Yang people develop oars.
4200: Shepherds begin to learn the dark arts from Gandarian demon lords.
4000: The Yang people establish warring kingdoms.
3800: Pictograms developed in the Taneth valley.
3700: The cult of Pachacuti prevails in the Ucutan Range.
3600: Formal clerical magic in use throughout Munaan.
3500: Inti-Suyu becomes an organized realm in the Ucutan Range.
3400: Gandarian demons introduce the wheel to Munaan.
3300: Inti-Suyu devises a numeral system and basic calculus.
3200: Tanethians introduce sails and riverine navigation to Munaan.
3100: Wax candles are used on Munaan.
3000: Munaan's bronze age begins in the Taneth valley; Taneth united as a single realm.
2900: Basic tenets of astronomy recorded in Inti-Suyu.
2700: Gandarians develop bronze battleaxes and armor.
2600: Lay wizardry branches out from clerical magic in Gandaria.
2500: Extensive lacustrine settlements spread in the Bongorese basin.
2450: Taneth builds docks and ship yards.
2400: Bongor discovers arcane alchemy.
2300: Inti-Suyu develops sophisticated astronomy; Sanga (Kahuul) and Draconia are identified.
2200: City states compete in Nicarea.
2100: Giganthippus domesticated in the Wichipaw steppes.
2000: Yang wizards develop advanced astrology.
1900: Gandaria implements war chariots.
1800: Nicarean alphabet is developed.
1700: Nicarean states adopt coinage.
1600: First swords forged in Taneth.
1500: Taneth is first to reach the iron age.
1450: Nicareans are united as an empire devoted to the cult of Teos.
1400: Nicarea develops glass blowing.
1300: Priors of Inti-Suyu confirm Calidar spins around Soltan, proving holy scriptures correct.
1200: Bongorese sages uncover first evidence of seitha.
1100: Stirrups and mounted archery devised in the Wichipaw steppes.
1000: Tanethian and Nicarean invasions of Gandaria begin.
900: Wichipaw tribes breed Munaani pteranhippus.
750: Nicarean lenses used in optics.
719: Thaëldar ascends as a god of Bongor and hides in the Ambrosian.
700: Nicarea deploys war galleys.
500: Varangians settle the Myrheim swamplands on Munaan.
493: Taneth and Nicarea quarrel over failed invasions of Gandaria.
450: Nicarea develops siege weapons.
398: Cult of Odin yields clerical magic; Varangian raids on Nicarea begin.

was strong. Meant to serve their master, the new gods ascended and bowed to his rule.

Together the new gods' elders helped him build a mighty golden vessel so they could go along as he sailed through the sky of the universe. Within its hull lay their magical domain, large enough for all of them to inhabit, and whose doors only opened into the Ambrosian.

5800 BCE The Yang summoned their own deity, Aó. He refused to bow before Soltan, but his wondrous shell protected him as he faded into the Ambrosian, awaiting others to take his side. The Yang then vowed to shun the rest of Munaan and its barbarian realms.

3700 BCE Soltan answered the calls of the Inti-Suyu mountain people. He was known there as Pachacuti, and his cult spread at the expense of lesser faiths during the next two hundred years.

2200 BCE Warlike city states of Nicarea fought each other for their patron gods' supremacy. One of them was Teos, another face of Soltan. Petty rivals fell one after the other during the next eight centuries, and their temples were razed as monotheism became law.

1000 BCE Soltan saw Gandarian demons as a threat. Priors of Nicarea and Taneth called for a great quest against the cursed desert. The two empires marshaled their forces against the demons. Aó refused to join.

500 BCE Out of sheer hubris, Soltan settled Norse survivors of the Vortex into the vast swamplands of Munaan. He sought to defeat their old faiths. A few decades later, he constructed an alias to impersonate Odin. His plan went awry when he failed to prevent his newfound Varangians from summoning Asgardians to life.

196 BCE Arun-Te influenced his priors to have Taneth's borders closed and its people to turn inward. It was a scheme favoring Teos at the expense of the Tanethian pantheon.

200 CE Queen Naha V proclaimed Arun-Te as the sole legal faith in Taneth, sparking a civil war. Facing defeat she called Nicarea for help, leading Taneth to become a Nicarean protectorate. Teos's empire stood as the dominant power in the region. Though most Tanethians were forced to switch their faith to Arun-Te alone, others more fortunate escaped in skyships and set sail into the Great Vault, hoping to preserve the cults of their old pantheon. These included a number of Arun-Te's followers who rejected Naha's edict. They later founded a new kingdom on Nakhem, a small world hidden in the Fringe.

278 CE Heeding the odious machinations in Taneth, Munaan's Varangians yearned for better lands, away from the Nicarean scourge. Facing a flood of prayers from mortal followers and pressure from their Asgardian gods, Odin relented. The Varangians vanished from Munaan along with their gods, reappearing much later in the Fringe, becoming the Wayfarers. Over time, Soltan's bond to his Odin alias was severed, and the Norse god became a separate entity.

310 CE As he suffered the pain and infamy of his failure to sway the Varangians, Soltan set his sight on Gandaria. He unleashed legions of divine servants and epic heroes upon demons and their gods. Nicarean auguries declared that an all-out invasion

Early Munaani Timeline II.

196 BCE: Taneth's power wanes; the old kingdom adopts a defensive stance.
174: Nicarea fields heavy cavalry.
150: Nicarea develops astrolabe.
100: Inti-Suyu wizards launch first atmospheric skyship of Munaan.
1 CE: Alorean skyship *Elvenstar* reaches Munaan; a new era begins.
100: Nicarea focuses its efforts on seitha and Calidaran colonization.
180: Nicarea becomes an imperial theocracy; clashes with Myrheim.
200: Taneth becomes a Nicarean province devoted to Arun-Te.
207: Migrating Varangian clans found Frostholm on Calidar.
240: The Yang develop block printing.
278: Munaan's last Varangians leave Myrheim and travel to the Fringe.
285: First Nicarean invasion of Bongor.
291: Invasion of Bongor fails; Nicarean and Tanethian survivors are routed.
300: Military alchemy leads to the discovery of "Nicarean Fire."
310: Tallas I *the Radiant* seizes power in Nicarea; creates the *Maces of Teos*.
340: Tallas I razes Karsa and conquers Gandaria.
343: Tallas II *Flameheart* invades the Yang realms.
346: The Yang people vanish from Munaan and reappear on Lao-Kwei.
351: Second invasion of Bongor.
359: Swamp kings of Bongor submit to Nicarea.
365: A plague strikes Munaan inflicting poverty and unrest in Nicarea.
372: Nicarean empire collapses during a Ghülean invasion.
700: Nicarea emerges from its dark ages.
705: The *Bearers of the Light* become demon hunters and inquisitors.
709: Nicarea reasserts control of Taneth and Bongor.
711: Kings of Bongor betray Nicarea, invade Taneth, and burn its capital.
712: Inti-Suyu, Gandaria, and Talikai join the Bongorese insurrection.
734: Nicarea triumphs at the *Battle of Six Crowns* and unites all of Munaan.
737: Nicarea found the provincial capital of Asgamon in Gandaria.
739: Nicarean governor names the tree-city of Oko as Bongor's regional capital.
742: Nicarea takes over Inti-Suyu at Chacamba, now the regional capital.
745: The Nicarean Inquisition is created to root out heretical cults.
746: Nicarea reaches Te-Awanui and takes command of the Talikai realm.
748: Wichipaw tribes pay tribute to Nicarea and retain their autonomy.
751: The cult of Nahwa prevails in the northern steppes.
774: A golden age begins on Munaan as better farming methods are found.
796: Nicarean settlers make landfall on Calidar.
806: Munaani population growth rises quickly.
815: Nicarean colonies are split between Eastern and Western Ellyrion.
c. 820: Main cities overpopulated in Taneth and Nicarea.
832: Nicarean temples begin charging fees for healing and other favors.
849: First Bongor settlements of Phrydias on Calidar.
858: First Talikai settlements of Meryath on Calidar.
885: First Gandarian settlements of Nav-Gandar (Caldwen) on Calidar.

of Gandaria would be most auspicious. Thirty years later, Karsa was razed, and the imperial banner prevailed in the cursed desert. A few years later, Nicarean phalanxes once more marched on Bongor. Gandaria's demise looming large in their minds, the swarthy gods dared not intervene, and the swamp kingdoms fell.

343 CE Emboldened by his mortal subjects' glorious victory, Soltan gave Aó an ultimatum: "Only for the followers of the *One True God* is there room in this world—leave now or meet your doom." Aó and his peers of the Celestial Garden rejected his demand. Loathing the fates of Gandaria and Bongor, Aó's divine servants clashed with Soltan's on the fields and in the skies of Ambrosia, as Nicarean armies marched into the middle empire. Facing defeat, Aó directed his peers to devise an enchantment to protect their mortal followers. It backfired. Demigods were destroyed, and the proud people of Yang vanished along with their divine lieges, reappearing on faraway Kahuul. They named it Lao-Kwei.

372 CE Observing Ghüle approach Munaan, Soltan hailed the invaders' impudent gods. No one responded. Offended, Soltan broke the Ambrosian Covenant, sending divine servants and epic heroes to inflict doom upon Ghüle. Soltan's champions slew a great many horrid things still dwelling within, but the invaders had already departed. Soltan found that he was unable to destroy the alien world. He realized then that he stood alone and before powers greater than his.

Meanwhile, Ghülean invaders laid waste to Calidar and its three moons. When they returned to Ghüle with plunder and slaves aplenty, the raiders clashed with Soltan's awaiting legions. Few of the raiders survived, but the world-artifact continued on its inexorable course across the Great Vault. A dark herald descended upon the orcs' foul world as Soltan's champions prepared to leave. It vowed in most wicked words the harshest of retributions for them and their presumptuous master, for its makers neither forgot nor ever forgave mortals and gods who dared defy them. Though the beast was slain swiftly thereafter, its ominous portent echoed eerily.

400 CE It became clear that Soltan's divine servants who'd returned from Ghüle had brought with them a celestial curse that even their liege could not undo. Many of them withered and faded from existence. Others turned into demons. Epic heroes went mad and scattered on Munaan and Calidar, babbling nonsense about the coming of dark gods. The most twisted were believed to have gone below ground to join stranded orcs awaiting the return of their world. These sullen hordes raked Munaan's surface with alarming regularity. Soltan was greatly weakened. As a similar languor struck all other gods of his universe, he survived and struggled to bring light where despair and chaos prevailed on Munaan. Gods of elves and dwarves blamed Soltan for breaking the Ambrosian Covenant, and possibly for bringing even worse situations upon their moons. They soon turned to mind their own troubles, and the matter was set aside, though not forgotten.

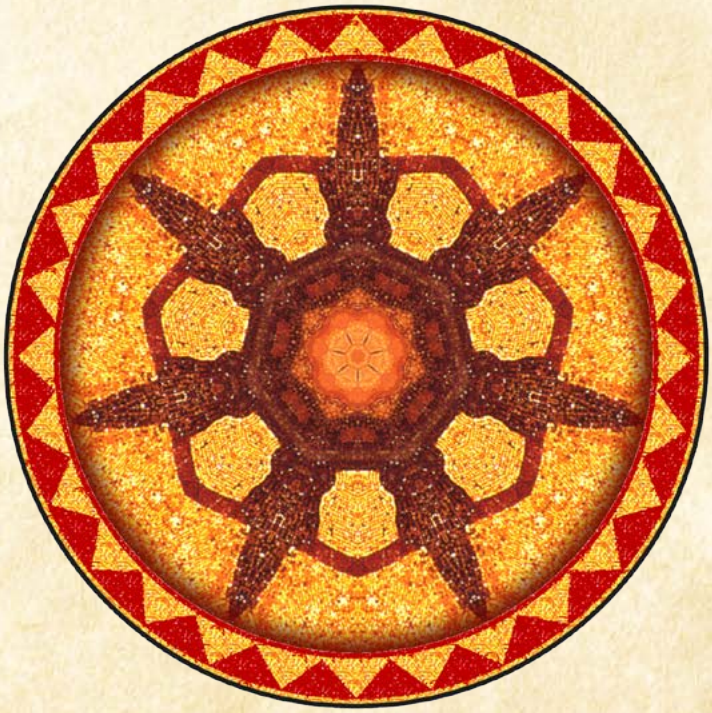
700 CE The followers of Teos were first to emerge from Munaan's dark ages. The rulers of conquered provinces had taken advantage of the chaos to claim themselves kings. Though most already honored the same god under different names—Soltan, Teos, Arun-Te, and Pachacuti, new wars swept through the land until the *One Empire* was rebuilt. What once had been Myrheim and Yang was resettled, mostly under the aegis of Teos. While a parallel cult of Soltan prevailed in Gandaria, the sun god also shone upon the Wichipaw steppes, under the name Nahwa.

Each of these faiths bore subtle differences due to cultures and languages, but Soltan was pleased. He was indeed the sole god on Munaan. With his blessing, priors of Teos established the Nicarean Inquisition to search for and annihilate the hidden cults of defeated gods. Prime suspects, Talikai, Bongorese, and Gandarians, suffered much at the hands of the inquisitors, as their old faiths had been partially revived during the dark ages. Satisfied, Soltan then turned his gaze toward nearby Calidar, for even more was needed there to rid this pristine world from the rot of shamanism and petty gods who had the audacity to think themselves his equals.

The Purple Tabernacle

Soltan's magical domain of Ambrosia is a most amazing dwelling, which takes the shape and appearance that his many followers believe it to possess. Each of these domains houses separate hosts of divine servants. None of the residents can see the other parallel dwellings. It takes the mind of a great god to exist in all these places at once.

Many, like the peoples of Inti-Suyu and Narwan, believe his domain lies at the center of the sun bearing his name, a kingdom of colossal roiling flames and blinding light. Munaan's Tanethians see Arun-Te's palace as an immense golden vessel traveling the Great Vault. Tanethians of faraway Nakhem have placed on this magnificent vessel the gods who still serve him. Although their mortal followers are now natives of the Fringe, Arun-Te still counts many more faithful on Munaan than on Nakhem and, therefore, he remains bound to Calidar's world soul. As Nahwa, he rules the *Forever Hunting Prairie*. In the cult of Teos, his magical dwelling is a vast palace, with walls and vaults of imperial porphyry, floors and columns of pink and white marble, and adornments of the most brilliant gold. At the center lies a great tabernacle, which holds much of his domain's power. Behind it stands Teos's throne from which he can see the alternate existences of his domain as well as the mortal universe, from Calidar to the Fringe.



Teos

Epithets: *His Magnificence Beyond, the One True God* (also known as Soltan, Pachacuti, Arun-Te, and Nahwa)
Ranking: Greater god of Munaan
Interests: Sun, light, fire, his own hegemony above all deities
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (truthful and generous at times, but also insensitive and vengeful), 💀 *Practical* (in some ways cold and analytical, yet opportunistic and unpredictable), 🗡 *Stern—7* (humorless, distant, haughty, pompous, conceited, egotistical, and colossally arrogant); Teos reflects conflicting views and aspirations of both Ellyrians and Nicareans, leading him not to take sides
Godly Cabals: None, though his philosophy bears similarities with *the Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: None
Hated Foes: Naghilas, Aó, Thaëldar, Istra, deities skimming power from their peers' mortal followers; ultimately all gods
Centers of Faith: Ellyrion on Calidar and the Nicarean Empire on Munaan (state creed)
Day of Ascendance: Circa 9000 BCE as Arun-Te, Munaan's first personified deity originating from Taneth (recognized in 2350 BCE as Teos, the patron god of the city state Nicarea)
Pronunciation: TEH-os

Mythology: An earthly watcher could not tell how much time went by, for it wasn't always as linear as mortals understood it—perhaps a fleeting instant or a year on Munaan, yet all the same in Teos's magical domain. Myriad visions emanating from the Purple Tabernacle transfixed his mind. Divine servants came and went continually, sensing what tasks their liege wished of them, bowing, and fading away. Teos looked up when a hierarch entered. She kneeled and lowered her head. The sanctum's inner glow glinted on her golden skin, her black feathery wings folded behind her.

"I know what troubles you, *Crimsonsoul,"* said Teos. "The ways of the mortal faithful are fitful and fraught with conflict."

"And yet, we must heed them," she answered. "But how must it be so? Inquisitors among the sons of Nicarea profess that none shall honor Your servants, and in Your Name will punish most grievously those who do. So it has been for glorious centuries. Yet, the sons of Ellyrion pray that I rise as Your scion of war, so that I may inspire them in battle, perhaps even against the old empire itself. Already they build shrines within Your Hallowed Temples. I can hear their relentless prayers and chants, calling me. Who among them is rightful? Who among them must I heed?"

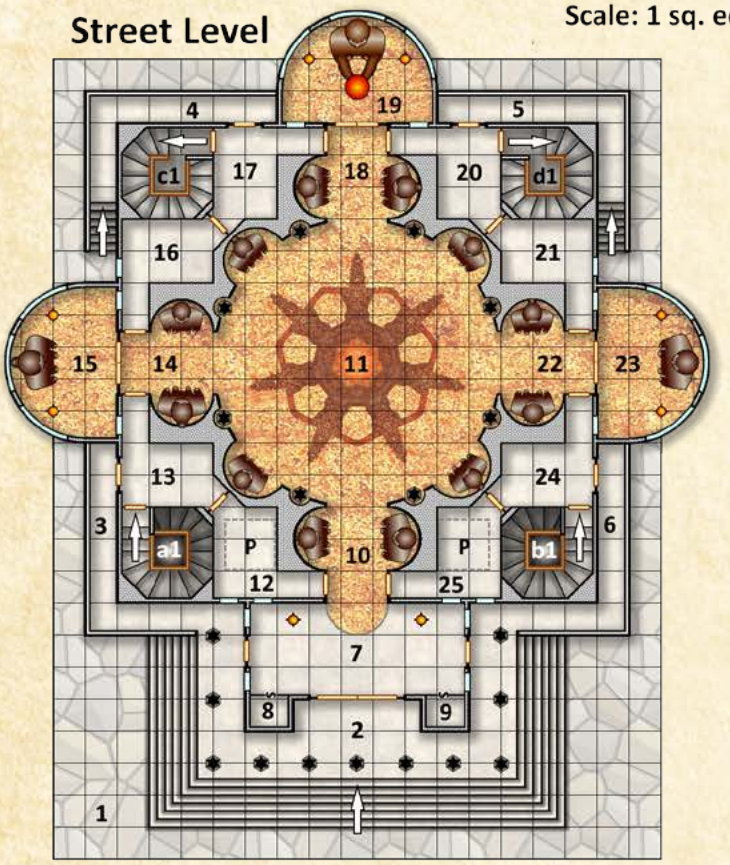
"Both you must serve, *Crimsonsoul,* for neither is rightful nor misled. I am Lord to multitudes who honor me in differing ways. Many among them are willing to fight and die for their own concepts of who I am. Whether they are right or wrong, I remain their divine liege all the same. As my servant, you are bound to do likewise, for such is the nature of our godly world."

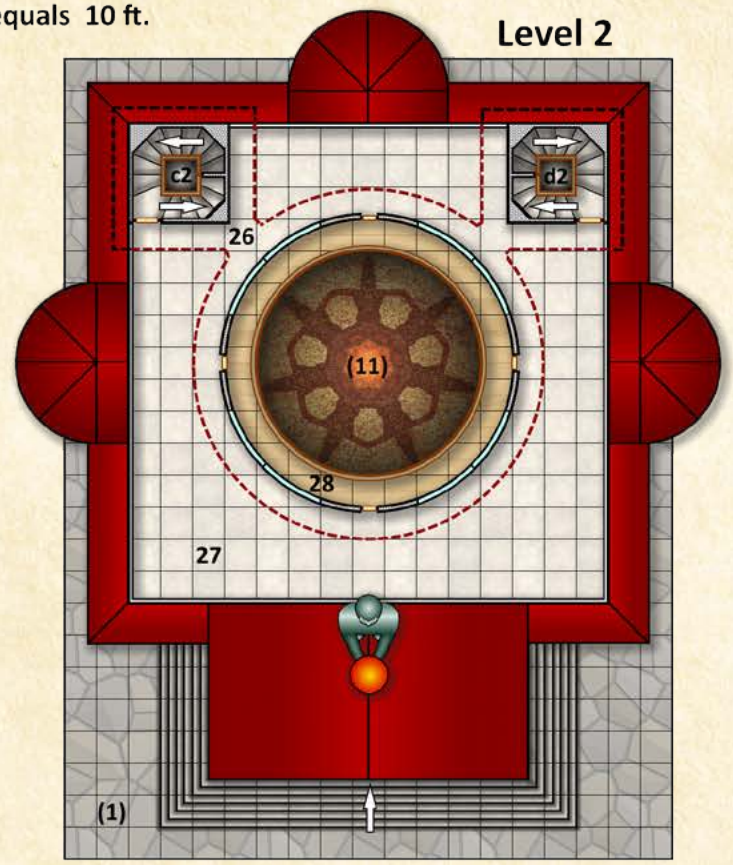
"And so shall it be, My Master. What answer shall I give to the Ellyrian plea for a scion?"

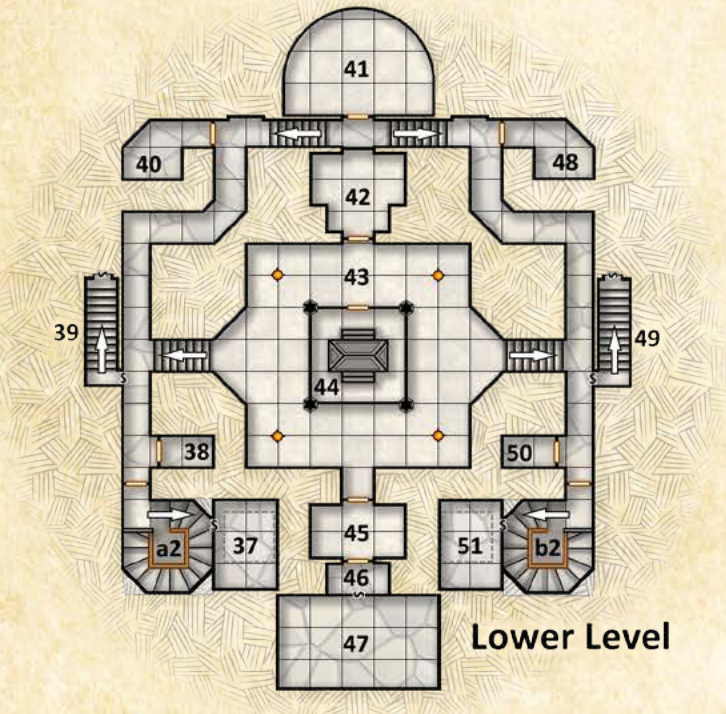
Teos waved a hand, and a purple ray shone from the altar, swathing the kneeling hierarch. "Tell them to honor you as Nikephora, *Mistress of War in My Name.* Here do I bestow upon you divine license and power to do what you must for as a long as your mortal followers deem your travails desirable. Provide guidance when requested and against whosoever seeks harm against their faith in Me. As to the sons of Ellyrion and Nicarea, favor neither but do your divine duty without shame or hesitation, for one or the other will eventually prevail, and all will be well."

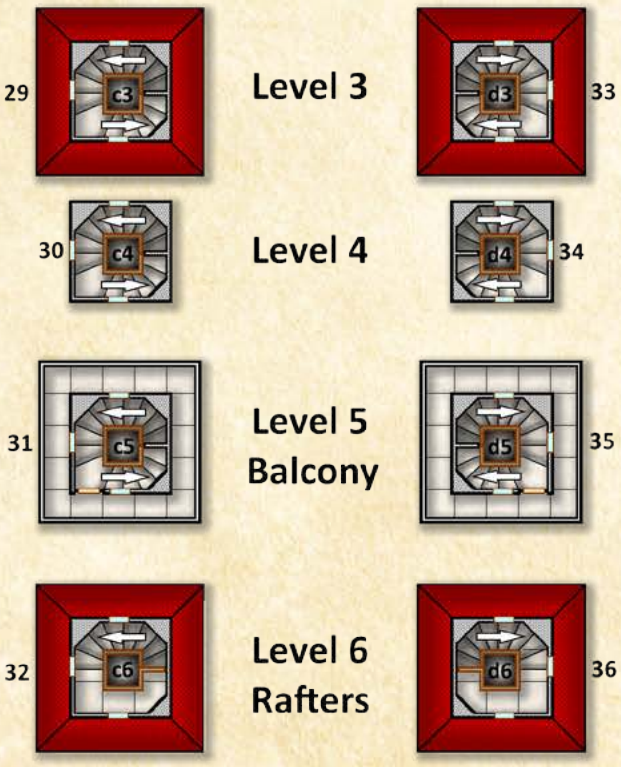
Temple of Teos

Scale: 1 sq. equals 10 ft.





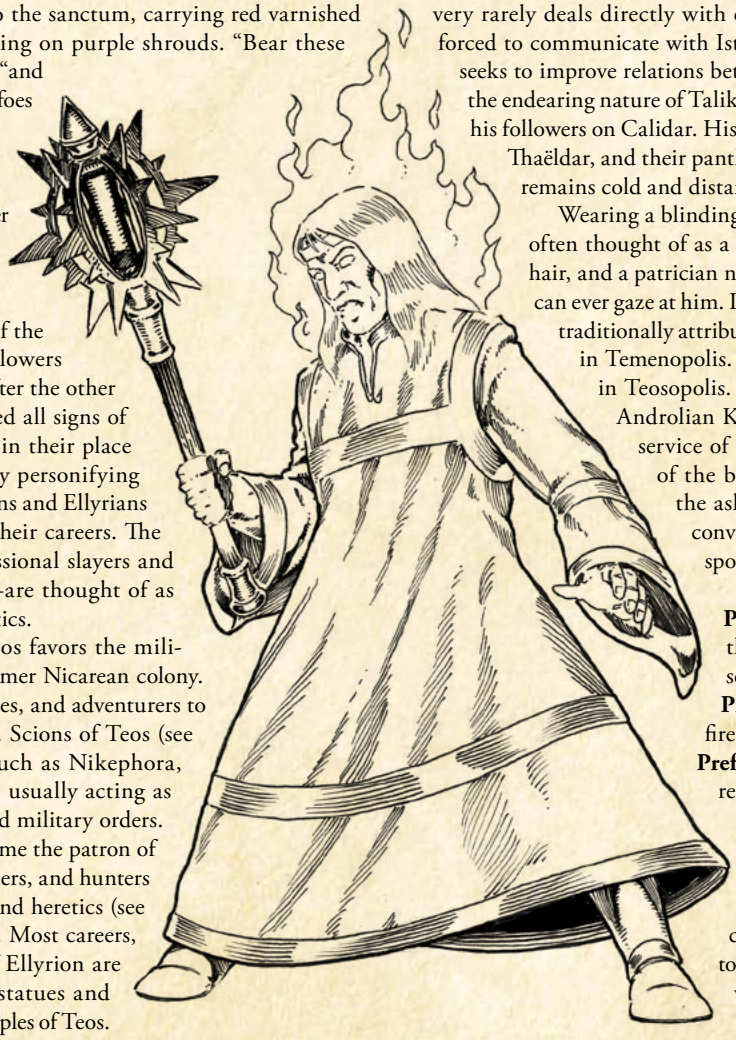




Bronze statue
Brazier
Secret door
Pillar
Stairs Up
Wooden door
Window

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Two empyreals stepped into the sanctum, carrying red varnished armor and a crimson sword lying on purple shrouds. "Bear these trappings of war," ordered Teos, "and embrace your quest fully, for my foes are legion and wicked."



Description: The concept of Teos emerged from Taneth's earlier worship of Arun-Te around 2350 BCE, when simple shrines were built in the hills of Nicarea. He became the patron god of one of the competing city states. His followers defeated their rivals, and one after the other razed their temples and removed all signs of their previous gods, imposing in their place the sole cult of Teos. As a deity personifying sun and daylight, most Nicareans and Ellyrians now honor him regardless of their careers. The most unsavory people—professional slayers and those who revel in darkness—are thought of as unrepentant heathens and heretics.

Specifically in Ellyrion, Teos favors the militocracy currently ruling the former Nicarean colony. He inspires his clergy, epic heroes, and adventurers to challenge servants of darkness. Scions of Teos (see *Godly Trappings*, page 215), such as Nikephora, are fairly common on Calidar, usually acting as the spiritual patrons of sects and military orders. Another scion, Teopathos, became the patron of godly wrath, revenge, executioners, and hunters of demons, undead creatures, and heretics (see *Daimonikon League,* page 230). Most careers, events, and cultural aspects of Ellyrion are associated with scions. Their statues and icons populate alcoves in the temples of Teos. Ellyrians see scions as holy figures rather than gods, making them at least conceptually tolerable to their divine liege.

Teos has no allies. If other gods dislike and mistrust his Ellyrian persona, his Nicarean alter-ego remains even more widely despised. Teos very rarely deals directly with other deities. Lately however, he's been forced to communicate with Istra (see *Gods of Meryath*, page 132), who seeks to improve relations between him and her pantheon. He dreads the endearing nature of Talikai cults and sees them as a direct threat to his followers on Calidar. His staunchest opponents are now Naghilas, Thaëldar, and their pantheons. His attitude toward all other gods remains cold and distant at best.

Wearing a blindingly white robe and golden laurels, Teos is often thought of as a typical Nicarean, with pale skin, brown hair, and a patrician nose. It is believed that only the worthiest can ever gaze at him. In war, he wields the massive mace artifact traditionally attributed to Soltan. His grandest temple stands in Temenopolis. The one shown in this chapter was built in Teosopolis. It is reputed for housing the remains of Androlian Kostamanikos, an epic hero fallen in the service of the *Maces of Teos*, now the patron scion of the brotherhood. Favored offerings include the ashes of felled creatures of darkness, or a converted infidel's oath of eternal faithfulness spoken before a consecrated altar.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Righteous Spell*—three spells related to light or fire can be selected (see Table 10, score of 10).

Preferred animal/monster: Salamanders/fire elementals.

Preferred weapon/spell: Large mace (or spells related to light or fire).

Epic Heroes and Demigods: Teos holds his epic heroes in the highest esteem. His Ellyrian followers sometimes come to believe that certain heroes ought to be demigods. Teos dislikes demigods and very rarely elevates heroes to this status. If he does, and demigods perish in his service, their spirits are almost guaranteed to rise as honored scions straight away (see *Godly Trappings*, page 215). If not, at worst, they become eternals among Teos's divine hierarchy. Teos does not elevate demigods to the status of godly peers—*ever*.

Temple of Teos—Map Key

Street Level
1. Grand Agora
2. Temple Portico
3. Southwest gallery
4. Northwest gallery
5. Northeast gallery
6. Southeast gallery
7. Public vestibule
8-9. Hidden guard posts
10. South archway
11. Main hall
12. Cloakroom (pit trap active after hours)
13. Service entrance
    a1. Stairs up from a2
14. West archway
15. Shrine of Teos at sunset
16. Meeting chamber
17. Guard room
    c1. Stairs up to Area 26
18. North archway
19. Shrine of Teos
20. Acolytes' commons
    d1. Stairs up to Area 26
21. High Prior's private chamber
22. East Archway
23. Shrine of Teos at dawn
24. Robes & service storage
    b1. Stairs up from b2
25. Guard room (pit trap active after hours)

Level 2. Terrace
26. Terrace level veranda
    c2. Stairs down to Area 17 & up to west tower
    d2. Stairs down to Area 20 & up to east tower
27. Open terrace level

Levels 3-6. Twin Towers
29-32. West tower
33-36. East tower

Lower Level
    a2. Stairs up to Area 13
37. Oubliette
38. Garderobe
39. Secret passage up to street level (north of Area 15)
40. Storage
41. Library
42. Scriptorium
43. Burial crypt
44. Mausoleum
45. High prior's office
46. Storage
47. Secret treasure chamber
48. Prison cell
49. Secret passage up to street level (north of Area 23)
50. Garderobe
51. Oubliette
    b2. Stairs up to Area 25
P. Pit Trap to Areas 37 & 51

Scale: 10ft per square

Gods of Meryath

Ardorín	Interests
⑧ ***Istra*** (aka. *Ise-Taora*)	Romance, adventurers
Akuamakue *(Spellweaver)*	Magic
Alana-Lifebringer	Water, fertility
Hakulu-Boneshadow	Death, underworld
Kahula[8] (*Mountain Mist*)	Fate, bards, seers, mountains
⑨ *Kaimana (Stingray Queen)*	Seas, fishermen
Kanemanu *(Many Feathered One)*	Sky, air, winds
Koanui (*The Horned One*)	War, conquerors
Makapono-Truesight[8]	Justice, revenge
Nuaka-Coral-Blade[9]	Peace, protectors, messengers
Teos-Fireking	Sun, fire
Ululani-Two-Pearls	Love, beauty

While these gods originated from beliefs of the Talikai people on Munaan, their cults prevail today in Calidar's Kingdom of Meryath. They barely survive as covert and marginal faiths on their original world, following Nicarean repression there. Unlike Caldwen's pantheon, which experienced the same conflict, gods of Meryath hesitate over joining Teos rather than fighting him. There is no love lost between Talikai deities and the sun god; on the other hand, Meryath has become an ally of Ellyrion, whose people are for the vast majority followers of Teos. The islanders' attitude toward Ellyrians and their faith reflects this alliance and, therefore, influences how the gods of Meryath view their ancestral rival.

Foreign cults are tolerated in Meryath, due to the large number of heroes hailing from faraway shores and living in the kingdom. The Talikai remain faithful to their original spiritual beliefs, and over time many expatriates adopt them as well. Nonetheless, a significant number of Ellyrians live in Meryath and honor Teos, openly and without too much trouble. Gods of Meryath are fairly weak compared to their peers of other pantheons because of the islands' limited population. Fortunately, their priors are often successful at converting foreigners to their beliefs. Cults of Meryath have an uncanny ability to spread easily to expatriates living on the idyllic islands. Their priors are as good as those of Teos when gaining clerical influence over foreigners living in Meryath or in Talikai communities outside the island realm (see *Common Attributes* of Ellyrians, page 107). Gods of other pantheons therefore consider Talikai settlements in foreign lands with some concern.

Another peculiarity of Meryath is the existence of forests granted to native fellfolk and their ancestral beliefs. These tribal lands overlap with the realm's provinces but remain largely autonomous. Though shamanistic rituals help preserve the rain forest, they are unable to summon spirit lords such as those of the Dread Lands. Other faiths are virtually absent from these regions, but shamanism also remains entirely circumscribed there.

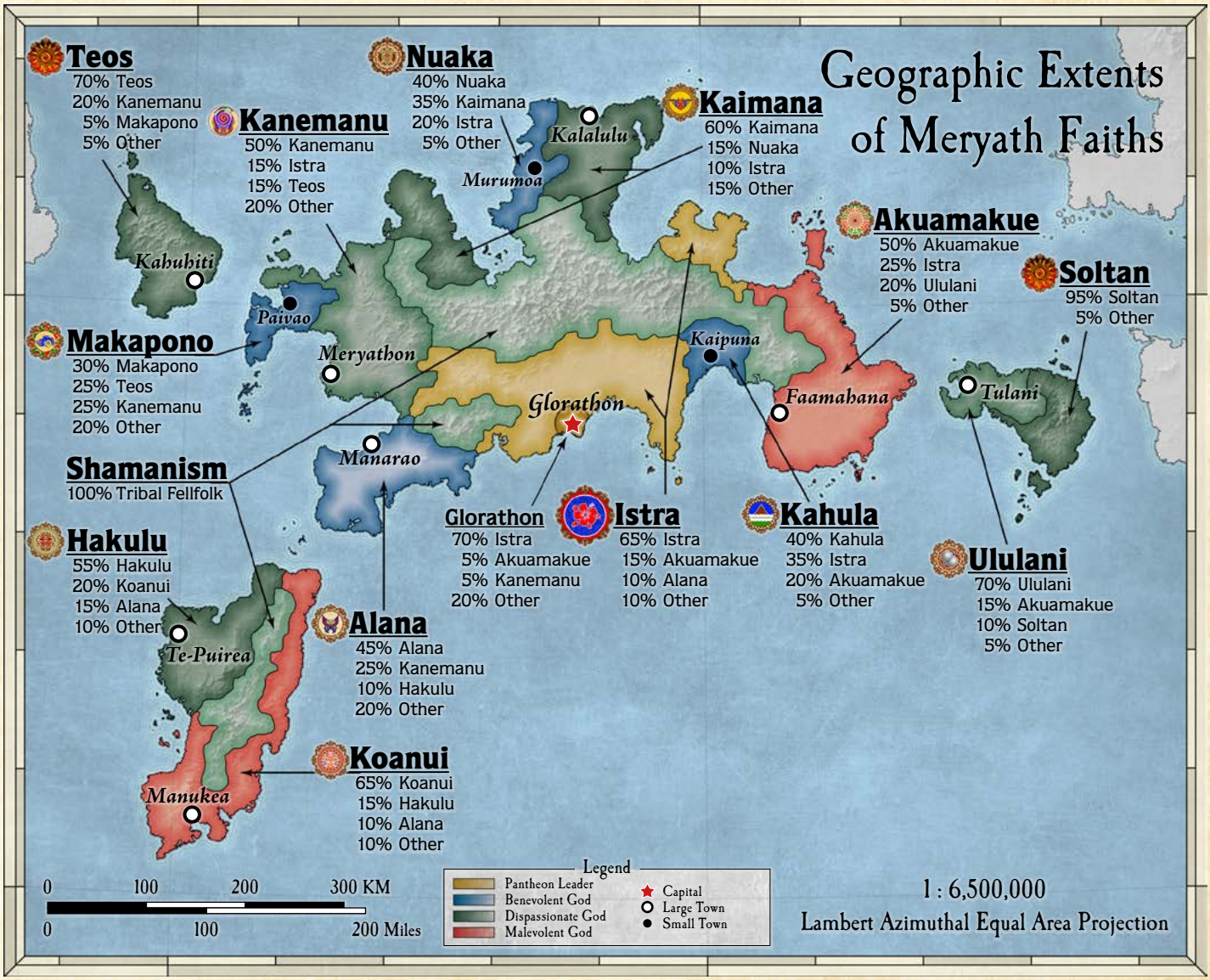
Gods of Meryath form the pantheon called the Halls of Ardorín, though this wasn't its original name. Known as Cloudsea on Munaan, it was renamed at the end of the war of independence between colonists and Nicarea in honor of Meríon the Great's accomplishments, which led to the rise of ancient Talikai faiths on Calidar. Istra, the pantheon's ruler, styled her Ambrosian domain after the hero's legendary sword. The weapon now lies in Istra's Great Hall, prominently displayed to remind her peers that the fates of gods and mortals are tightly intertwined.

Despite their ambiguous attitudes toward Teos-Soltan, the gods of Meryath still favor their Caldwen, Phrydian, and Nordheim counterparts because they faced the same conflict against the sun god. Fairly tolerant of other deities such as those of Kragdûr, Alorea, and Belledor, the Lords of Ardorín expect the same from their foreign peers. Though not unfriendly, the other pantheons respond with standoffish courtesy to their (mostly-) endearing neighbors.

Godly lore isn't recorded in books, or by paintings or engravings. It is preserved in the *Hallowed Winds of the Talikai*, a powerful enchantment. This ancient magic predates Istra's ascension to Cloudsea. A greater god by the name of Makani, who is thought to have departed this universe long ago, once committed holy wisdom to the winds of wherever his mortal followers lived. Priors could access this wisdom when they meditated or when they blessed those who traveled the seas (and later the skies) so that the winds, seen as the divine gift, would be favorable during faraway journeys. So when priors wish to learn of the gods' lore, about prayers, or about rituals, all they need is to listen to the wind. It speaks to them. When Makani cast his magic, he decided that whosoever should rule the gods would control the winds and what they spoke. Thus, Istra now provides the content of godly lore, the manner of rituals, and the form of prayers. Priors can be recognized from their crown-like headdresses, typically made from flowers, feathers, and palm leaves. Expatriates living in the northern climes use what is available locally.

Members of the clergy do not occupy official functions in Meryath's government system. The clergy provides voluntary advisors to the queen and heroes in positions of authority. No tithe is collected, but donations are common. Many heroes contribute fabulous sums to the temples of their chosen faiths as a way to earn fame and, perhaps, give their achievements a quasi-divine character. Priors seem therefore ever so eager to sing the praises of their most generous benefactors and illustrate how faith led their paths to glory. In a realm essentially ruled by heroes, temples advertise their spiritual worth through the legendary actions of their most extravagant backers.

To the eyes of foreign visitors, heroes and their clergy seem wholly interdependent and nauseatingly ingratiating. Clergies of foreign cults established in Meryath also have adopted this approach to help maintain their own appeal, something that embarrasses to no end priors in their respective homelands. Temples of Thor, Astafeth, or Sphiel competing for exclusive rights to household heroes can look rather odd, yet be perfectly in tune with Meryath's way of life. Priors of all cults will promptly descend upon a *casually-faithful* hero who hasn't yet associated with a specific belief, and try all that imagination can dredge to persuade the hero to choose their creed. As pushy and relentless as hucksters, spiritual solicitors abound on the docks of Glorathon's skyport, seeking emergent heroes who might be swayed to their beliefs. They assiduously await returning skyships, inquiring about their journeys' events, ready to pounce upon anyone showing the mere hint of nascent heroism. Fisticuffs commonly erupt between rival peddlers of faith coveting the same prospect. Others shamelessly attempt to proselytize anyone embarking or disembarking, hoping for that precious individual eventually rising above all others. Lastly, commissions on a skyship are highly sought after, as they enable a prior a free hand with an entire crew, unhindered by rivals, for weeks or months at a time. Some temples are willing to pay good money for such privileges. Aboard skyships of Her Majesty, chaplains are typically selected from the temple of Istra. Privately owned vessels are a different story.



Common Attributes

Pious followers of the Talikai cults all have in common a spiritual gift dating back to ancient times (see *Genesis* later in this chapter). These faithful have a talent to predict weather within a 60 mile radius for the next 12 hours. The prediction requires a successful wisdom check (one every 12 hours).

The referee chooses from the cells printed in blue on Table 5 what the actual weather should be (wind strength, humidity, and temperature), keeping in mind the local climate. The referee then makes a hidden wisdom check for the character's player and, if it succeeds, gives an accurate weather prediction. If the roll failed, consult Table 5 and roll a d6 for each of the first three columns. Odd scores shift rows up, even scores shift rows down. The extent of failure on the wisdom check indicates how many rows to shift up or down. If the number of shifts exceeds the number of rows available, wrap around to the table's opposite end. If the wisdom check had resulted in a critical failure, pick the most erroneous prediction possible. The Random Weather column is given here as an option for the referee (roll separately for each of the previous columns).

Temperature changes: They are relative to the current season's average, except for "steady", which is only relevant to the previous day (record temperature changes last at least 24 hours).

Freezing or near-freezing conditions: Replace rainfall with snowfall.

Arid climates: Replace rainfall with dust devils and sand storms, as appropriate; rainfall only takes place with unseasonable or record changes in temperature.

Humid climates: Add fog to drizzle and light rain with wind 10 mph or less; with cold temperatures, replace drizzle and light rain with frost, sleet, or freezing rain.

Warm weather: Thunderstorms and possibly hail accompany heavy rain or downpours with moderate or greater temperature changes; with winds above 60 mph, tornadoes or waterspouts can strike on plains or at sea.

Rainforest or monsoon weather: Frequent or sustained torrential rains will prevail.

If they predicted it correctly, priors and zealots have the ability to affect weather up or down two rows in any of Table 5's three columns. They can also cause wind direction to shift slightly (for example:

Table 5. Failed Weather Predictions			Random Weather
Wind (mph)	Humidity	Temperature	Roll 2d20
41-60	Dry	Record drop in temperature	2-3
61-80	Drizzle	Down unseasonably	4-5
81-100	Light rain	Down unseasonably	6-7
100+	Light rain	Down moderately	8-9
81-100	Heavy rain	Down moderately	10-11
61-80	Downpour	Down slightly	12-13
41-60	Heavy rain	Down slightly	14-15
21-40	Light rain	Down slightly	16-17
11-20	Drizzle	Steady (Seasonable)	18-19
0-10	Dry	Steady (Seasonable)	20-22
11-20	Dry	Steady (Seasonable)	23-24
21-40	Light rain	Up slightly	25-26
41-60	Downpour	Up slightly	27-28
61-80	Heavy rain	Up slightly	29-30
81-100	Light rain	Up moderately	31-32
100+	Light rain	Up moderately	33-34
81-100	Drizzle	Up unseasonably	35-36
61-80	Dry	Up unseasonably	37-38
41-60	Dry	Record rise in temperature	39-40

from west to northwest or southwest, or from a level current to an updraft or a downdraft). This ability extends to ethereal winds.

Genesis

1200 BCE Before the Big Makani, there were the spirits of the sea, of the wind, and of the ground. The Talikai also honored their many manifestations, such as the fire in the volcano, the storms at sea, and the birds of paradise. The people of the Thousand Islands lived far away from the mainland, in the vast but shallow waters known as the World Sea. They traded with faraway mountain people, the Inti-Suyu. From them, they heard the sun was their great god, who commanded all spirits. They wondered about this belief, but when some began honoring him, a great storm swept through the islands, devastating villages, lagoons, and forests on the tallest slopes. Offerings were given to the sea, but the storm continued. Kingly gifts were dropped into the roiling fires of the volcanoes, but the darkness in the sky howled stronger yet. Prayers were spoken in the winds and carried high into the clouds. At last the storm was becalmed, and the people of the islands knew that their great god was the Big Makani, Lord of Winds. He summoned the water from the sky, he made the sea's currents move in ways the Talikai understood, and he reigned over all, long after the sun had set or after the large blue moon soared through the night sky.

700 BCE For a long time, the Big Makani blew strong, filling the sails of the great canoes so the Talikai could reach the Inti-Suyu and return home, and all was fine. The bond between the two peoples grew strong. The islanders traded feathers, pearls, and coral, for which they acquired precious metals from the mountains, magic, and greater knowledge of the stars. The fortunes of trade, however, led some islands to grow wealthier than others. They commanded the use of iron weapons and experienced mages. Several rival powers emerged in the World Sea, and though peace had reigned among the tribes for as long as the Talikai could remember, a time of great bloodshed came.

600 BCE At the sight of greed and jealousy tearing apart the Talikai, the Big Makani held his breath. The sea became still. Clouds vanished from the sky. Rainwater became scarce under stifling heat. Though the old god was angry and punished his followers, the wars went on. Without wind filling their sails, the great canoes were fitted with long oars. Mages enchanted their hulls or summoned beasts of the deep to pull canoes and war rafts from island to island. In the absence of the Big Makani, other gods emerged from the minds of mortals, unruly and defiant. The warring gods sought to take his place, and in their names, the great powers of the Talikai fought each other ever more. Kaimana ascended first, rising from the sea. Koanui, the god of war, came next, born from the thunder of the volcanoes. Soon followed Hakulu, the god of death, and finally Akuamakue, the god of magic.

300 BCE Under the rivalry of the new gods, despair dominated without hope for peace. Unable to bring wisdom to prevail upon the islanders, the Big Makani summoned all the powers he still commanded, and bequeathed them to burgeoning cults. They brought younger gods to light, but in the process the old one was extinguished. No one knew for sure whether he'd simply died and returned to the world soul, or came to lie dormant and hidden somewhere in the Ambrosian. Legends abounded among mortals about his return. While some of his most celebrated priors and heroes vanished with him, the others became one with the new cults. The first beliefs hailed the rising of the Big Makani's son, Kanemanu, the *Feathered One*. Ise-Taora and Ululani came next. At once, the warring elders challenged them.

200 BCE With the conflict going poorly, the younger gods decided to choose a leader from among them so that they might work better together. They first thought of Kanemanu, the rightful heir, but he refused. The son of the Big Makani wanted none of his father's responsibilities, seeking only the freedom of ruling the winds and fighting in the skies. Ululani declined as well, not feeling confident as a marshal of war. They favored instead the daring and adventurous Ise-Taora. She accepted and, under her cunning leadership, the new cults defeated the mortal followers of the warring gods. A great many heroes stood out from the ranks of her followers, some already seeking to join her as devoted demigods. Somberly and reluctantly, the elders submitted to Ise-Taora's dominion and agreed to cease inspiring their followers to fight one another or against those of the new alliance. Peace finally prevailed, and Kanemanu released the winds of the Thousand Islands at long last. For their penance, the four elders built the spiritual domain of Cloudsea in Ambrosia. Soon afterward, the daughter of Kanemanu and Ise-Taora, Alana, ascended as a demigoddess.

50 BCE As the tribes mixed and changed, their languages evolved, adopting new words and an expanded alphabet. A standard dialect was chosen for the whole of the Thousand Islands. The tribes elected a council of kahunas, spiritual guides representing the tribes of the whole realm. They established their capital at Te-Awanui, a great port city that had come to prominence from the fortunes of war. They endeavored to teach the philosophies of Cloudsea as they communed with the *Hallowed Winds of the Talikai*. It was the Thousand Islands' golden age.

100 CE What no one had foreseen were the consequences of a gift that the Big Makani had bestowed upon the Talikai. It came when the first islanders took possession of the World Sea. They earned and refined a natural affinity with winds. It enabled them to shine as great navigators, explorers, and adventurers. Another side became more obvious with the advent of skyships on Munaan. It appeared the Talikai had within themselves an innate talent for understanding weather changes as well as the flow of ethereal winds. Expatriate Talikai became familiar sights onboard flying vessels, either as crew, officers, or captains, first aboard Inti-Suyu skyships and later in Gandarian and Bongorese fleets. It was then Nicarean commanders became more fully aware of the islanders' distant civilization and its benefits, and also its spiritual philosophies in opposition to Teos.

340 CE Nicarea conquered Gandaria and began the desert's spiritual cleansing. In the nick of time, a few Talikai skyships escaped the destruction of Karsa, mercenaries for the most part. Some were followers of Ise-Taora, but most were Koanui's faithful. The crew witnessed the fanatical brutality of the Nicareans. They returned to the heart of the World Sea, well past the mountains of Inti-Suyu. They told the stories of what they'd seen. Priors communed with their gods, sharing their concerns. Some forty years later, Ghülean hordes struck the Thousand Islands. Like other realms, they descended into darkness until the eighth century, but the memory of Nicarean repression survived in the minds of the Talikai.

705 CE As Munaan recovered from its dark ages, Nicarea resumed its attempt to control former colonies. Before the phalanxes marched on Inti-Suyu, the mountain people launched a surprise attack with the help of their Talikai allies and renegade Gandarian mages. Bongor soon joined the new alliance. But it was all for naught. The finest warriors of mountains, swamps, and islands fell at the Battle of Six Crowns fourteen years later. The coalition surrendered, and the faraway realms submitted. The first Nicarean inquisitors arrived at Te-Awanui and imprisoned the kahunas. Teos inspired his mortal pawns to suppress Talikai faiths. Multiple revolts were ruthlessly crushed during this century, as the Lords of Cloudsea grew weaker and become dormant. Tarkos V *Will of Teos,* installed Talikai collaborators as petty regional kings in the place of traditional kahunas to rule in his name. Nicarean advisers and inquisitors stood at their sides.

858 CE Holy Potentate Tarkos IX *Glory of Teos* and King Manaka III agreed to send Talikai settlers to Calidar and found a colony that would later become Meryath. Renegade priors rekindled the old indigenous faiths in the Great Caldera. Settlers adorned temples of Teos with figures of his servant spirits. To those in the know, they represented Talikai gods whose cults had been driven underground on Munaan. Over time, Calderan-born priors passed themselves off as followers of Teos, but in reality performed services for one cult of Cloudsea or another under false pretenses. Orthodox priors of Teos acting as advisors to the Nicarean viceroy struggled against the spiritual fraud spreading on the islands. Raids on delinquent shrines were frequent, and offending priors were sent to Munaan for sentencing. Nonetheless, Ise-Taora was first to awaken before the end of this century.

1043 CE Holy Potentate Kosyas IV *Firebrand* ordered the Inquisition to the Calderan colonies. Talikai faith suffered greatly and weakened again. Resentment grew until 1207, when the population as a whole overthrew the viceroy and rebelled against Nicarea. The Meryath-born hero, Meríon the Great, led a raid against Nicarean seitha reserves, forcing the Holy Potentate Teosophylakta I to sue for peace and formally recognize the new realm. The colony was renamed in honor of his actions. The old cults were reestablished. Many Ellyrians who'd fought at the side of the Talikai remained on the islands after the war, some honoring Teos, many others embracing local faiths. The cult of Ise-Taora was the most popular among Ellyrian expatriates, and she became known as Istra.

1238 CE Of Meruín and Talikai ancestry, Meríon championed the cult of Istra and led his mighty myrmidons on a quest to rid the land of dragons, following a second Ghülean invasion that had left the former colony in ruins. Vast treasures plundered from the great hoards of defeated dragons financed the rebuilding of Meryath. Meríon and his companions died in 1301 during an epic fight with an ancient red dragon. Their spirits could not be recalled and were presumed to have been incarcerated within an artifact kept in the ethereal or perhaps at the heart of Draconia. Ardorín, his legendary sword, was recovered and given to Istra as a temple offering in Glorathon. Istra accepted her followers' gift and renamed Cloudsea accordingly to honor the lost heroes. Meríon's remains were interred at a mausoleum in Paivao, his native town.

The Halls of Ardorín

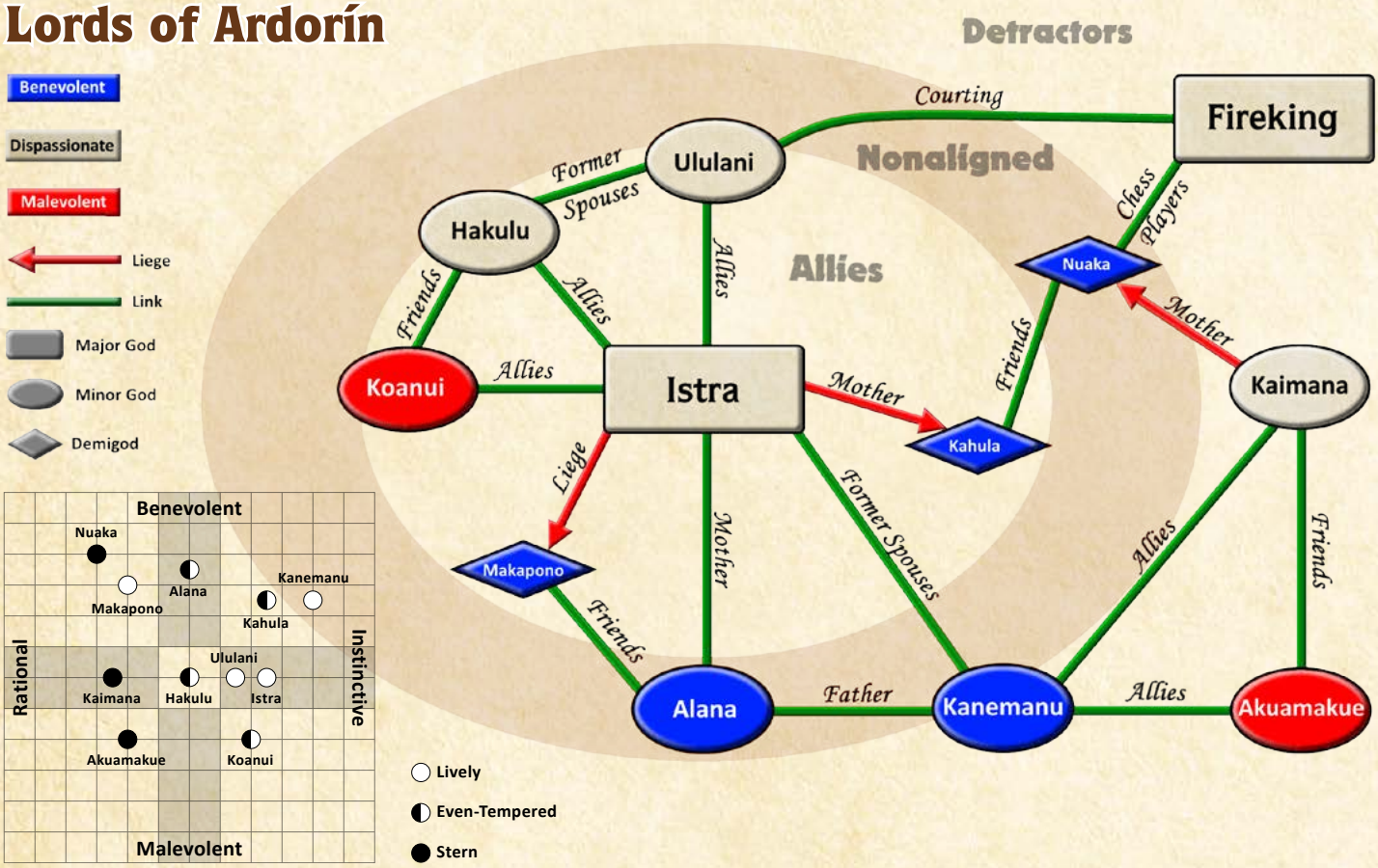
Formerly known as Cloudsea, the divine domain of the Talikai takes the form of a vast ocean of clouds. Far above it, a magical sun runs through the sky as it would on Munaan, a mere illusion far away on the pocket plane's outer vault. These clouds are semi solid, in that someone devoid of magic standing upon them would sink slowly, as if they were made of soft mud, until their center layer is reached, ten miles lower. There, the uneven and shifting "ground" feels soft and the air is filled with thick fog. If unguided, one would be slowly dragged toward a maelstrom at one end of the pocket plane.

Palaces of the gods rise from the clouds, with Istra's on the highest one at the center. As a whole, the palaces are referred to as the Halls of Ardorín, but this is in fact what hers is called. It is a place of beauty, built of fine woods in the tradition of the Talikai. Its main chamber, tall and glorious, houses the sword of Meríon the Great, Ardorín. Istra's chamber of audience stands nearby. Her demigods and the spirits of heroes live in the many wings extending from the palace. They are known as the *Cohorts of Ardorín*.

Unlike the other palaces, a dark maelstrom in the clouds spins where Hakulu's castle ought to stand. It is the entrance to his underworld, known as *Nethernight*. The passage leads through his residence, beneath the cloud's surface, to a place where the spirits of those who defied the gods are made to suffer at the hands of what they most feared in life. The maelstrom does not stop there. It continues below the clouds, where a great storm rages continually, with sheets of rain falling into a vast ocean. It is *Underdeep,* Kaimana's sea domain. The nature of visitors determines where they exit the maelstrom, at Hakulu's residence, *Nethernight,* Kaimana's domain, or back at the top through a column of wind at the center, not far from the Halls of Ardorín.

Ardorín, the Sword: It is one of Maëlrond's sentient creations, unrelated to his five elder blades, though some have debated this possibility. Ardorín inflicts triple damage against dragons and can slay a non-divine one with a critical hit.

Lords of Ardorín



Lords of Ardorín

A fundamental problem lies with the gods of Meryath and their followers' demographics. Due to the small size of the islands, there are fewer followers available to the Talikai deities compared with Teos himself. This has led him to call the leading gods of Meryath and Phrydias the "Miniature Gods and their Trinket Courts," offending many. In Meryath, Istra benefits from demigods who have spread out in the Great Caldera (and elsewhere) in search of followers they can't muster in Meryath. Istra, Kahula, Koanui, and Ululani have managed a place among the Calderan faiths, opening growth opportunities elsewhere—all along Osriel's eastern coast especially. For the others, Meryath's geopolitical location between Ellyrion and Narwan constitutes a monumental risk of native cults being overwhelmed by the major faith of Teos-Soltan. Its divine patrons need to work hard to prevent their own doom.

Istra and her backers believe that treating Teos with respect and forgiveness is the best way to sway him and his mortal followers to greater tolerance in the long run—perhaps to implement a spiritual "free market" between Ellyrion and Meryath. Unchallenged so far, Istra's present authority relies in part upon a loyal cadre of spirit champions and demigods, legendary myrmidons originating from Meryath's culture of epic heroes. Only the better-known demigods are described here. Kaimana, Akuamakue, and Kanemanu think her ambiguous strategy isn't working: temples of Teos are commonly found in Meryath, yet theirs in Ellyrion only cater to foreigners, with no change in sight. As for Narwan, not one Talikai temple stands there, nor will any in the foreseeable future.

Istra

Epithets: *Ise-Taora, Red Hibiscus, Lady of Good Fortune, Lady of Cloudsea*
Ranking: Greater goddess of Munaan; honored ruler of Ardorín
Interests: Romance, adventure, heroes, hope, fate, good luck, Eternal Glory
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though generally friendly and forgiving, she also is selfish and manipulative), 💀 *Instinctive*–5 (bold, curious, adventurous, cunning, crafty), 🗲 *Lively*–7 (mirthful, idealistic, romantic, sentimental, gutsy, eccentric, and shameless)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Koanui, Hakulu-Boneshadow, and Ululani-Two-Pearls (allies); Makapono-Truesight and Kahula (serving demigods), Cohorts of Ardorín
Hated Foes: Draconic knights, Queen Sayble of Draconia
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Glorathon area) and Osriel (São Salvação area; see page 166); covertly in Ellyrion and on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 6, 299 BCE
Pronunciation: EES-trah (or EES-seh-tah-OH-rah)

Mythology: Adventurers, travelers, merchants, and storytellers—the red hibiscus symbol was their token of good fortune when they left on long journeys, to be worn as medallions or tattoos, or kept in their travel gear. Small stone shrines often stood by the coves where the Talikai launched



their great canoes. Never would they set sail without garlands of hibiscus adorning their prows or the auspicious design resplendent on their sails. And then the Big Makani gave his last breath. With it, three spirits ascended. Among them was Ise-Taora. She adopted the red hibiscus as her own, and many were the Talikai who honored her as their *Lady of Good Fortune*.

Luck and hope were in dire need when she awakened, for strife and bloodshed had ravaged the Thousand Islands for more than three centuries. Her mortal followers and those of her two young companions parted ways with friend and kin, seeking to end the chaos. Under her guidance their cults prevailed, but at a terrible cost to all sides involved. At long last, Ise-Taora searched the Ambrosian for the once-mighty Koanui. She found him, brooding in a desolate ravine.

"Lord of Wars, I come here to put an end to our quarrel," she said. "Not a day goes by when scores of your followers do not abandon your cause to join mine. To persist will only bring your eternal demise." Grim-faced, Koanui leaned on his tall mace. "And submit to you? Never. I am of the elders, and neither I nor the other three yield to a lesser kin." Cautious, Ise-Taora approached. "They fight because you do. Your elder peers will not relent until you do because you are the spirit of war." Koanui lifted his mace, poised for a fight. "So it must be." Spirit warriors appeared behind him, stern and ready to march. So did Ise-Taora's. The ghostly armies filled the two ends of the ravine, some hovering above on flying mounts, as both sides performed their haka rituals. When the taunting and posturing ended, the clamor of battle followed.

Koanui jumped forward and swung his mace at the *Lady of Good Fortune*. She dodged the attack as the mace crushed a nearby boulder and knocked loose a storm of debris from one side of the ravine. "Enough," thundered Ise-Taora. She clapped her hand above her head, unleashing a concentric blast of power. Silence returned as the scene became frozen in time. Unable to move, Koanui observed the goddess lean close to his face. "Behold, Lord of War. You no longer have the power to undo my magic. Too few mortals now believe in you for this. Must they too die to satisfy your lust for blood? Join me in peace. Heal your wounds. Look beyond the islands of our faithful. Another war looms, and it will come from there. Let your mace and your skill be ready for it, for this one may destroy all of us."

Description: Ise-Taora was born from magic bequeathed to her by the passing of the Big Makani. That islanders already honored the idea of good fortune was all that was needed for the concept to coalesce into a sentient deity. Her many followers and success against the warring elders led her to rise as the ruler of Cloudsea. Nearly forgotten by the time Meryath was founded on Calidar, renewed faith enabled her to rise again (see CAL1, page 63). Her Talikai name became "Ellyrianized" as Istra. She favors above all romantic adventurers and epic heroes, tales of love and chivalry, feats of wit and daring, as well as good fortune and fortuitous glory. Her followers also include travelers, explorers, keepers of the lore, and bards.

Istra does not bear her peers' resentment of Teos. Though many of her mortal followers on Calidar are native islanders, just as many also descend from Ellyrian phalanxes who fought at the side of the colonists against Narwani forces. They adopted local customs and beliefs while garrisoning the isles. Istra's old legends telling her daring and steamy adventures fascinated more than one "continental" wary of the dour and pompous style of Teos's clergy. Ellyrian generals noted the troublesome shift in their troops' ideologies, and repatriated them as soon as they felt confident enough the islander realm could hold its own against neighboring Narwan. This enabled her faction to spread to the empire's mainland, exposing them to repression from cultists of Teos. As on Munaan, her faith there remains therefore covert since it defies Ellyrion's legal philosophy.

Istra believes that a fight with the living gods of Draconia will inevitably lead Meryath's allies to become involved. Either more Ellyrian troops will become exposed to her beguiling faith, taking it with them when they return to their homeland, or Teos might agree to a closer cooperation. She sees him as an old fogey, an egotistical, fiery, and confused relic of a god, in well over his divine head with absurd monolatrism and zealots fighting each other in his name. In the meantime, the Draconic knights have become her followers' worst enemies. Istra's two immediate servants, the demigods Kahula and Makapono, as well as a core of devoted dragon slayers, are determined to provoke Sayble, the dark queen of Draconic knights. Istra's three other backers, Koanui, Hakulu, and Ululani, hope to gain a head-start on the rest of the islander pantheon if her plan succeeds, and will do their part. Alana is one of her daughters, but she remains uncommitted to this strategy. Istra knows that Alana's father, Kanemanu, was an unfaithful spouse,

and she now shuns him. Kaimana and Akuamakue are detractors seeking to discredit her strategy and leadership.

Clad in swirling sea waves and pearly spray, she sports the dusky complexion of the islanders. With hair and eyes of the deepest indigo, she wears a red hibiscus above her ear. Her greatest shrine stands in Glorathon, a stone's throw away from the royal palace. Across the street on Temple Way stands Meryath's *School of Epic Elegance and Etiquette,* a must for Glorathon's resident celebrities. Favored temple offerings are swords or notorious symbols of vanquished foes of the cult.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Might*—this bonus applies either to agility or personality at the referee's discretion, regardless of the hero's career (see Table 10, score of 1).
Preferred animal/monster: Kiwis and giant flying weasels.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword (or defensive spells).

Akuamakue



Epithets: *Spellweaver*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan and elder peer of Ardorín
Interests: Magic, spiders, spies
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–4 (unforgiving, deceitful, vain, jealous), ☻ *Rational*–4 (sneaky, calculating, cautious, principled), ↯ *Stern*–4 (a brooding, haughty, enigmatic recluse)
Godly Cabals: *The Gallows* (see *Godly Trappings* page 221)
Allies: Kaimana (friend), Kanemanu (ally)
Hated Foes: Vipermen and Arthalas (see *Gods of Phrydias)*
Centers of Faith: Meryath (far-eastern Palatine); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 19, 385 BCE
Pronunciation: ah-KOO-ah-mah-KOO-eh

Mythology: Eight black and glistening eyes bulged from his elongated face as he peered at the scene glowing in the pool before him. His spidery fingers signaled spirit servants to leave him alone. The last rays of Cloudsea's sun vanished past the horizon, casting fiery hues into Silkwall before darkness claimed the godly palace. All that remained was the pool's feeble light. The image within revealed two demons slaughtering a party of spiderfolk. One was braver and stronger than the others—perhaps an epic hero—but wounded and in the face of certain death, she retreated into the ethereal. The demons did not follow. They were hunting for something else, something that worried Akuamakue. In turn, he vanished and transported himself to the ethereal.

The sound of a fight not far from the place he'd appeared greeted his arrival. Fearing the worst, he rushed in. Eight-legged, with an elf-like upper-body bearing a warrior's armor, the spiderfolk lay on the ghostly ground while a tall figure wearing a panther pelt headdress prepared to stab her in the heart with his spear. At once, Akuamakue cast a magical barrier between the two, and struggled to maintain the shield against the attacker's spearhead. The spiderfolk crawled away toward a mossy rock, as her attacker faced the source of the spell. "By what right do you interfere with Arthalas's hunt?" Cautious, Akuamakue approached the dark-skinned god, keeping up his invisible shield. "By the right of an elder peer of Cloudsea. This mortal is under my protection." The hunter god glanced at the spiderfolk before gazing back at the *Spellweaver*. "Her kind has done harm to those honoring me. For this she must die." Akuamakue

Temple of Istra—Map Key

Shrine—Street Level
1. Front porch
2. Street entrance
3. Main hall
4. Outside terrace
   4a. Stairs up to Area 6
   4b. Stairs up to Area 10
5. Courtyard

Shrine-Upper Level 1
6. East gallery
   4c. Stairs down to Area 4
7. Robing Room
   7a. Stairs up to Area 11
8. South gallery
9. Scriptorium
   9a. Stairs up to Area 13
10. West gallery
   4d. Stairs down to Area 4

Shrine—Upper Level 2
11. Acolytes' quarters
   7b. Stairs down to Area 7
13. Archives
   9b. Stairs down to Area 9

Shrine—Upper Level 3
12-14. Attic

A. Guards' Tower
A1. Guardroom
   A1a. Stairs up to Area A2
A2. Guards' quarters
   A1b. Stairs to Area A1
A3. Attic

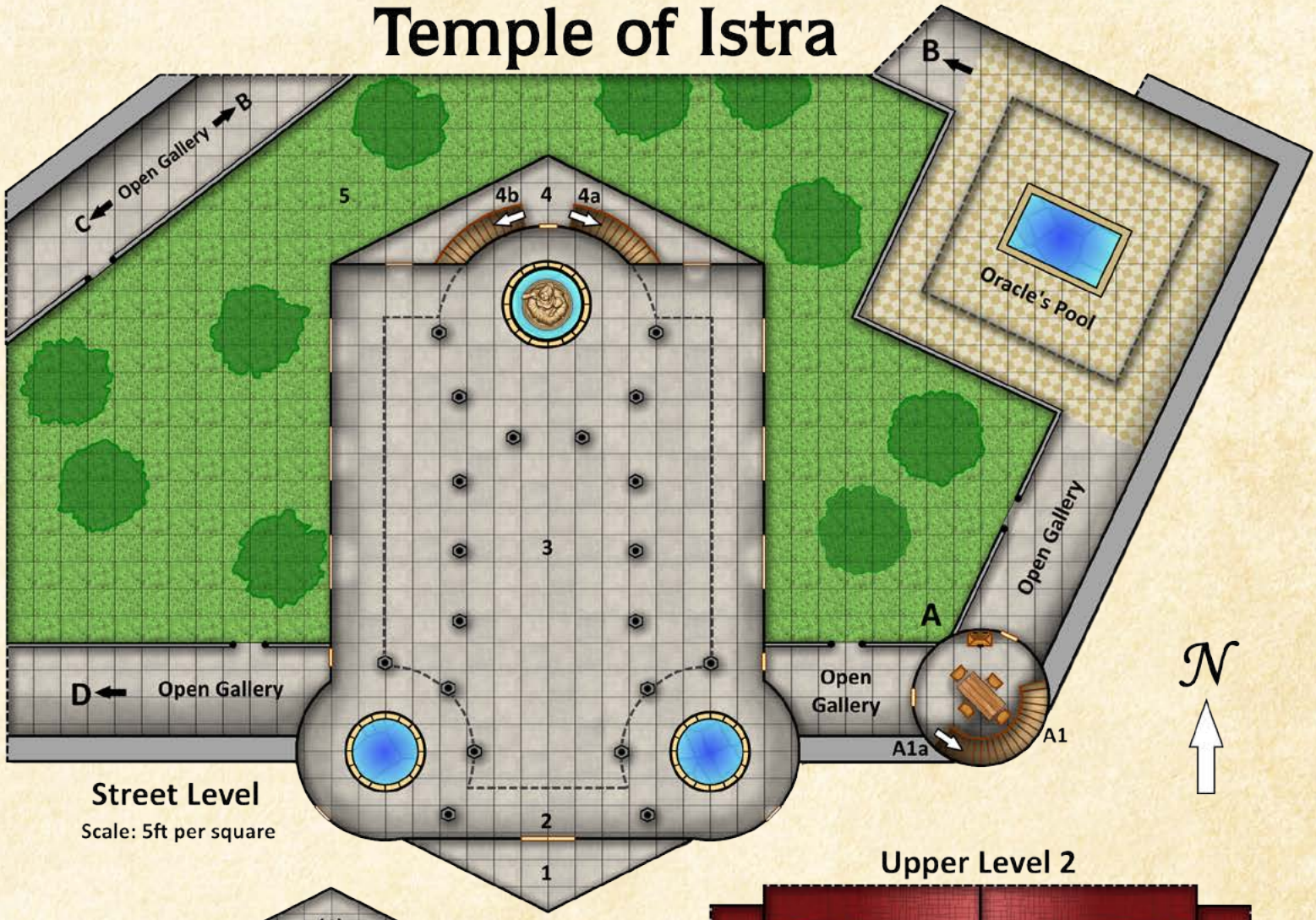
B. High Prior's Tower

C. Kitchen & Refectory

D. Guest Tower
T. Trap door
Scale: 5ft per square

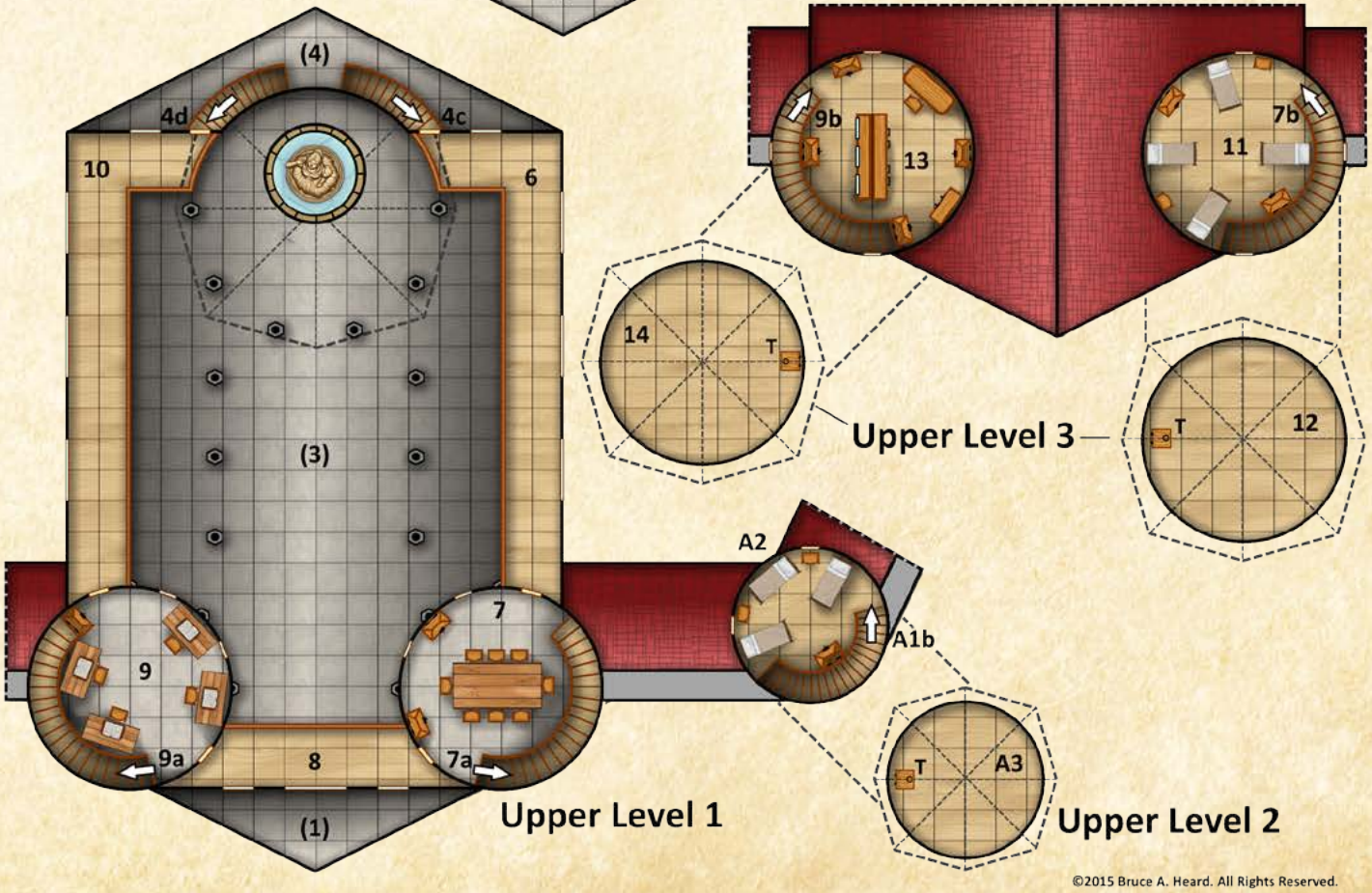


Temple of Istra



Street Level

Scale: 5ft per square



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maneuvered between Arthalas and his mark. "Perhaps, but not today," he answered. The hunter god considered the retort before turning to walk away. "Suit yourself, Web-Spinner. Tomorrow is another day." Over his shoulder, he added, "Keep her safe if you can."

Akuamakue faced the spiderfolk, now standing nearby. He raised his spidery fingers in a peaceful gesture. "Daughter of Aranith. I come here in peace," he said in her native language. He gazed at her wounds, hideous slashes that mortal magic could hardly mend, and healed them with a mere thought. "Long have your people defied other races," he said. "Many are your master's enemies, and they have grown powerful of late. On your own, your prospects are bleak. Peer into my eyes, and you shall know who I am. Serve me, and I shall have dominion over your fate and over others you may fetch. The gods of Bongor, for all their posturing, will not seek a quarrel with my peers. What say you?" The warrior lowered her arachnean body so that one knee rested on the ethereal ground. "Lo, I bow with the most profound respect, Great God of Magic. Do with me as you please, for I am bound to another master and for this I cannot accept your magnanimity." Disappointed with her answer, Akuamakue thought for an instant to crush her. After all, he'd defied another god for the sake of perhaps earning an epic hero. Then he had another idea. "As you wish, mortal. Fate may change a few things when next we meet. You would be well advised then to reconsider your choice." With a flick of his hand, he sent the warrior away, transporting her to the dwelling of her kin on Calidar's Venom Coast.

Description: Akuamakue was born during the time of chaos following the Big Makani's withdrawal. Believed to have risen from the beliefs of Talikai sorcerers, the spider god hides another aspect of his ascension. It came in the form of magic forfeited by Faëriad, the elven goddess of magic. Like a few other foreign gods, she saw the unrest and despair afflicting the Thousand Islands as an opportunity to quietly engender an alias. An extension of Faëriad, Akuamakue is otherwise autonomous and draws his power solely from Talikai followers. The elven goddess doesn't gain power from her divine alias, but uses him as a way to peer into the business of another pantheon. She and Akuamakue now play careful games to avoid revealing their connection. Faëriad and Munaani mortals honoring him shape his personality and interests. Akuamakue's followers are mostly mages and rogues. Many of his priors follow both careers simultaneously.

Akuamakue is believed to weave his spells like a spider would its web, thus the name *Spellweaver*. He is a quiet deity who weighs his decisions carefully. Like other gods of Cloudsea, he went mostly dormant when Nicarea subjected the Thousand Islands to the Inquisition. He was reborn when Meryath became independent. His Talikai followers at the time imagined their god as one who should catch their new kingdom's enemies like flies in a spiderweb. This led his priors to establish a secret sect (see *Shadow Spiders,* page 232). Intrigued, Akuamakue supported his followers' initiative. Soon, the sect ran afoul of vipermen, who are now its hated enemies. Along the way, Akuamakue saw an opportunity to join *the Gallows*. Not being against causing mischief on Munaan, he accepted (enabling Faëriad to stay informed about the cabal's moves). The *Spellweaver* detests Arthalas because the Phrydian god hunts spiderfolk. He also views Caldwen's Avraoth with suspicion, matching Faëriad's feelings about both.

Akuamakue dislikes Istra's idea of consorting with Teos. That he belongs to *the Gallows* reinforces this feeling. From Faëriad's point of view, he'd rather not help Istra gain more power than she already wields. This led him to befriend a former enemy, his elder peer Kaimana. The two became tacit allies after Meryath's insurrection. Later on, Kanemanu, the *Feathered One,* became associated with them out of bitterness after running afoul of his former spouse, Istra. Akuamakue thinks the god of skies is little more than a windsock, but treats him with respect as long as he remains an ally. He is annoyed at Koanui and Hakulu having sided with Istra. Though they'd once been his enemies, he thought they ought to have banded together against Istra. The *Spellweaver* otherwise bears no interest in any of the other residents of Ardorín.

Akuamakue is a dark human-like figure with eight eyes. His main shrine stands in Faamahana. Known as the *Manahale*, it houses a menagerie of spider-like creatures, from common spiders to giant breeds. The shrine is also connected with the Shadow Spiders' lair.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Feyskins*—this favor enables the beneficiary to turn into a giant spider (as an exception to the *Divine Favor's* description—see Table 10, score of 16) or, with a substantial penalty to personal charms, grow human-scaled chelicerae. Venom only becomes available when the beneficiary's Life Force is at least triple that of the chosen spider's. *No other powers are gained.*
Preferred animal/monster: Spiders of all types.
Preferred weapon/spell: Staff or short sword (spider summoning).
Other Benefits: Akuamakue's faithful receive a +1 bonus to personality checks with sentient spiders.

Alana-Lifebringer

Epithets: *Lady of the Lagoon*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan
Interests: Water, fertility, lagoons, pearls, healers, atonement for past evils
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–7 (friendly, humble, altruistic, merciful, truthful, trusting, tolerant), 💀 *Practical* (though patient, she also is creative and curious), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (sentimental yet somewhat impish, she can also prove wistful at times and self-conscious)
Godly Cabals: *The Hallowed Seven* (see *Godly Trappings* page 220)
Allies: Makapono-Truesight (friend), Sphiel (spouse, Alfdaín), Arëatha (daughter, Alfdaín)
Hated Foes: None
Centers of Faith: Meryath (southwestern Palatine); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 10, 107 BCE as a peer; Calidere 23, 198 BCE as a demigoddess
Pronunciation: ah-LAH-nah

Mythology: A slight murmur rose from the fruit as it reflected a nearby face. It called to the goddess, exuding a charm that only divine peers could resist. For the sake of their followers, long had the gods removed the wondrous trees from the world of mortals. The fruit glowed with a strange throbbing red-gold hue, partially hidden behind the silvery leaves of its limb. Alana reached up and pulled it free. Ignoring the temptation to bite into its flesh, she placed it into a basket at her feet, and approached another branch.

There a demon lord stood, ready to pounce upon the *Lady of the Lagoon*. Surely, he would have done so if he hadn't been smitten with Alana's beauty. He leaned past a tree, peering at the goddess. "By whose permission do you help yourself to my trees?" His voice rumbled, deep and dark. "I am known by some as Gorthal, and this orchard belongs to me, for I have owned it and have grown its fruits since my forbear relinquished it to my keeping." Alana looked up. "These were brought here many centuries ago by my peers. They aren't meant to be owned by anyone." The loathsome beast stretched a gnarled and leathery arm, and plucked a fruit. "But they are. They belong to those who can grow them, and only my kind does. For you, I shall make an exception. Be mine, and you shall own all that I command, my soul, and my heart. All you need is to take a bite of this fruit." Alana took the fruit and dropped it into her basket. "I already have your heart. All you need to do is look into my eyes."

Gorthal was about to answer when a winged intruder happened upon the encounter. Fair and radiant like a thousand stars, Sphiel of the Briarwoods raised his mace and cast a blast of light at the beast. Howling with pain, the demon fled into the Ambrosian mist. "Are you fine, gentle maiden of Cloudsea?" he asked, regal and mighty. Alana gauged with interest her visitor, his bare chest, and his skirt of fine feathers. "I was doing quite well, you know," she said, somewhat distracted. The elven god glanced in the direction Gorthal vanished. "One should not trust fiends, for they are foul and treacherous." The *Lady of the Lagoon* smiled. "So they are when you try to beat them senseless. With proper care, time, and patience, they can be redeemed." Somewhat perplexed, Sphiel leaned on his mace. "Why would you want to? It's easier and faster to return their essence to the world soul so their evil will be cleansed, and this without a chance of betrayal." Alana briefly admired the feathered pectoral adorning his powerful shoulders. "That's not my way. I celebrate life and try to preserve it when possible." The elven god turned and observed Ambrosia's mist-filled distance. "I sense the fiend still lurks nearby. He hungers for you." As Sphiel readied his mace, the *Lady of the Lagoon* lifted the edge of his skirt and peeked. "Pardon my curiosity," she said. "I wondered if you grew feathers there as well." The elven god raised an eyebrow at her effrontery. "'Tis no place for feathers, and I assure you that no fiend hides there." Alana answered with a knowing twinkle, "That could be a matter of debate." Amused, Sphiel nodded. "Perhaps it should."

Description: Alana is the daughter of Ise-Taora and Kanemanu, the *Feathered One*. The Talikai saw her as the *Lady of the Lagoon*, and so spoke the *Hallowed Winds of the Talikai*, echoing their thoughts. She embodies the life-giving bounty of fresh water. Her followers honor her as a mother figure and a peaceful protector of homes and families. She ascended as a peer when she forfeited her immortality to preserve the lives of islanders suffering from an epidemic. Alana favors lovers of nature, farmers, fishermen, midwives, healers, as well as druid-like elders.

Following a fortuitous encounter with Sphiel, the two became spouses and happily so. One being of the air and the other of the water, the two gods make strange bedfellows, yet they enjoy their cross-pantheon differences. Together, they engendered rambunctious Arëatha, who ascended as a peer of the Briarwoods. Alana often spends time looking for beings thought by others as forever forsaken, those lost to wickedness. She tries to sway them to a better philosophy. Sometimes she succeeds, and gains servants who still bear the scars and stigmata of their past. Those who aren't redeemed often fall under Sphiel's mace. Alana's contribution to make the universe a better place led her to accept a quiet invitation to join *the Hallowed Seven*.

Alana remains aloof to the quarrels between her parents. Those gods grew apart when Ise-Taora found out about her husband's infidelity. Though they see their daughter with goodwill, they argued at length about her union outside Cloudsea—a stranger from Istra's point of view, a fine and upstanding bird-like fellow in her father's opinion. Her mother tried to set her up with Makapono, who already was in a secret relationship with Melrenwë. He and Alana became good friends instead, and he stands as her best ally so far. The *Lady of the Lagoon* agrees with neither Kaimana nor Istra about addressing the immense challenge of surviving Teos's spiritual hegemony. Changing the sun itself is but a pipe dream, and expelling his cult from Meryath will only create conflict. Alana is convinced that altering people's minds is the key to changing their laws and their gods. For this, one needs many more natives of Meryath who would leave their beloved islands and spread their beliefs and customs to faraway shores, perhaps even to those of mighty Ellyrion and Alfdaín. Sphiel's followers haven't objected to her statues standing in his shrines, and fertility is the secret weapon for which Teos has no defense. His teachings do not lend themselves well to Alana's free-spirited and natural enjoyment of life.

Alana is often represented as a Talikai woman, with iridescent eyes and star-like glitter in her thick dark hair. She commands a great shrine in Manarao, on Palatine Island. It houses healing halls and a fountain of youth. Favored offerings are subdued beings of great evil brought to her temple so they can be made to atone for their past deeds. It is a long and dangerous process, because not all creatures can be redeemed. Those who succeed often end up as servants of Alana's shrines. Those who fail are heavily enchanted so they may neither bring harm to others nor seek to remove their magical bond. After a final branding of their skins, they are thereafter released in the Dread Lands.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Protection* (see Table 10, score of 6).
Preferred animal/monster: Manatees and water sprites.
Preferred weapon/spell: Net (defensive spells).
Other Benefits: When Alana's followers fight with a net, foes receive a –1 penalty to defense checks when trying to avoid being trapped.

Hakulu-Boneshadow

Epithets: *Bonelord*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan and elder peer of Ardorín
Interests: Death, underworld
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (tolerant and truthful, he can prove heartless and vengeful), 💀 *Practical* (though he is methodical and principled, he also is bold and cunning), 🗡 *Even-Tempered* (bitingly sarcastic and devoid of fear, austere and ominous are strong traits)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Istra (honored ruler of Ardorín), Koanui (friend)
Hated Foes: The undead and their masters
Centers of Faith: Meryath (northern Leiliti); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 22, 454 BCE
Pronunciation: ha-KOO-loo

Mythology: In the midst of chaos, when the Big Makani grew silent and war raked the World Sea, followers of a macabre cult of the dead dwelled in the swamps of the Thousand Islands. In a realm rife with death and sorrow, many were those who honored Hakulu to protect them and ward against inauspicious fates. In the wake of battles, great lords of undeath prowled in the night, hunting for spirits to corrupt and bring to their cause. Followers of Koanui welcomed those of Hakulu, who'd vowed

to protect the fallen from fates worse than dying. Thus did War and Death become inseparable companions.

"Come, my friend," said Koanui. "Today is a good day to seek a quarrel with demons of Ambrosia. I know a place where some perform hideous deeds, and I feel the need to smite a few of them. Will you join me, *Bonelord?"* As an ethereal breath blew through the long wisps of his white hair, Hakulu raised his skull-like face and looked up at the imposing war god. "Any day is good to cleanse this festering stench from the lands of my peers. I shall follow in your steps." An unstoppable juggernaut encased in armor edged with spikes, Koanui led the march. Several of his trusted spirit servants prowled nearby, acting as scouts on the lookout for some hidden horror perhaps awaiting in the mists of Ambrosia. The land of the gods was no safer to them than Munaan was to their mortal followers.

The war god motioned his companion to stop and be quiet when a spirit servant lurking ahead pointed past a large boulder. With a wicked grin, Koanui readied his fang-studded mace and charged into the midst of demons. They'd trapped a magnificent giant bird, which they'd planned to corrupt into some wicked being of their own ilk. Trampling right through them and roaring with divine glee, Koanui swung his mighty weapon, freeing some from their ugly heads, crushing others along the way. Several managed to call their minions, and a confused battle ensued between them and the spirit servants amid blood-curdling wails. As the orgy of reckless hatred raged on, Hakulu stood by, rubbing his long skinbound hands and occasionally slapping away an impertinent demon daring to challenge Death itself. Eventually triumphant, his eyes glaring, Koanui placed his foot on the carcass of the last defeated demon. Others had fled into the mist, but the war god motioned his spirit servants to stay and free the captive bird.

"You did not fight much," commented Koanui, eyeing the lack of dead demons in Hakulu's wake. "Was there something wrong?" The *Bonelord* snickered softly, halfway between a crone's cackle and a hacking cough. "Not at all, dear friend. I didn't want to spoil your fun. You did well enough without me." Like a voracious child suddenly feeling some guilt for eating all of his party's cake, Koanui gazed at the oozing mounds of demonic bodies twisted and torn at his feet. Trying to shake loose one still dangling from his mace, he looked at Hakulu with the expression of a cat that just ate a canary. "There's more, over there. But we'll have to chase them." Hakulu raised a hand and declined the offer. "Thank you, mighty friend, but I'll have my own way with those." He approached Koanui and plunged his fingers into a demon's chest, ripping out its black heart. "Behold," he said, before devouring the dripping remains. Once his ghoulish delight was consumed, Hakulu grew taller and more muscular while he took on the shape of the fallen demon. "We all have our ways of fighting. In this form I shall find the others and forfeit their existence in the Ambrosian."



Description: The *Hallowed Winds of the Talikai* originally described this deity as the ghost lord of the swamps, which are common on Munaan. In the minds of islanders, he became their god of death. Once mighty, his followers suffered grievously at the hands of Nicarea's Inquisition. Hakulu protects the faithful of all other Talikai gods when they come to the netherworld, in exchange for which he skims power from the spirits of the dead. He despises the undead, whom he sees as poachers and thieves. Undead hunters, purveyors of funeral services, and tomb guardians are his servants.

Much like Akuamakue, Hakulu is the secret extension of another god. In his case, he stands as Ashgaddon's alias (see *Gods of Caldwen,* page 95). His purpose originally was to earn followers among the islanders, taking advantage of the Big Makani's hiatus from the Thousand Islands. Defeated, his Talikai alias submitted to Ise-Taora. He later was mostly dormant during the Nicarean Inquisition on Munaan, but regained a bit of his original power with the advent of Meryath's independence. Through Hakulu, he runs Nethernight and quietly watches the pantheon ruler's scheming, hoping that it might lead him to gain a foothold in Ellyrion. His priors travel the islands in search of families who've suffered a recent loss. They proffer blessings to protect the spirits of the dead, purify bodies of the deceased to ward them from the undead, perform customary rituals, and conduct celebrations to honor the departed.

His closest ally is Koanui (who remains unaware of Hakulu's true identity). Since the war god decided to join Istra, so did the god of death. Hakulu entertained a short-lived union with Ululani, who lost interest in him when his powers began waning in the fourth century CE. She annulled their bond and remains estranged even though she too has cast her fate with Istra's.

With his skinbound face and wispy white hair, Hakulu maintains a sinister appearance. His foremost shrine stands in Te-Puirea, on Leiliti Island. It is a center for the lore of the ancients as well as the burial place for magical beasts defeated by the cult. Favored temple offerings are the bones of creatures whose remains have not been made the object of ritual devouring (see prior's benefits in the following section).

Preferred Divine Favor: *Devout's Immunity*—energy draining (see Table 10, score of 4).

Preferred animal/monster: Maggots/worm-like monsters.

Preferred weapon/spell: Barbed spear (or necromantic spells).

Kahula

Epithets: *Mountain Mist*
Ranking: Demigoddess, Temporal of Calidar
Interests: Fate, bards, seers, mountain mist
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (gracious, humble, merciful, trusting, magnanimous), 💀 *Instinctive*–5 (spontaneous, unpredictable, bold, imaginative, adventurous), 🗡 *Even-Tempered* (feisty and sentimental, she can also be wistful and distracted)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Istra (mother, divine liege, and honored ruler of Ardorín), Nuaka-Coral-Blade (friend), Armidal Copperpot (lover, Belledor)
Hated Foes: Sayble's followers, and fellfolk acting on their behalf
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Eastern Palatine, Kaipuna area) and parts of Osriel (Providência area, see page 166); unknown on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 13, 902 CE
Pronunciation: kah-HOO-lah

Mythology: The gate to the old palace high up in the mountain hung open from its rusted hinges. Low clouds veiled the thick forest on the Matai-Nui's foothills, and the diffuse rumble of an approaching storm rolled in the celestial billows. Sadness filled Kahula's heart at the sight of the place she'd known since she'd ascended to the Halls of Ardorín. Gone were the colorful guards at the entrance. The path once gloriously adorned with huge orchids was now fully overgrown. No one had answered her hail when she arrived. Darkness prevailed inside.

Kahula pushed past a panel of the rotting gate and stepped into the hallway. The sky's gray light reflected on the eyes of rodents peering at her. Water dripped sporadically from the mossy ceiling. The smell of mildew and decay suffused the atmosphere. "Father?" called the demigoddess. Yet again, no one answered. She summoned a halo of silvery light and proceeded deeper within. She knew her way to the throne room. A large door engraved with scenes of King Matai-Nui's past stood ajar. She squeezed in and observed quietly. The remains of guards, once proud warriors who bore the mixed blood of fellfolk and giants lay on the stone floor, their moldy skeletons partially scattered by carrion seekers amid tatters of once-glorious embroidered tabards. Arrows embedded in their bones offered a silent statement to what had happened. Immense remains Kahula knew had to be her father's lay on the steps to the throne. Perplexed and heavy hearted, she sat by her fallen forebear. No one had told her of his demise. But why did the forest fellfolk kill her father? He was a gentle giant. Kahula repressed a sob as she picked up his ring.

"Why so sad, little one?" asked a familiar voice behind her. The demigoddess turned and gazed at her father's spirit sitting on his throne. He smiled. "All mortals sooner or later must depart this world. It was my time to go." Kahula stood up, both delighted and sad at the sight of the ghost. "But why? Why did the Tukubu people kill you?" Matai-Nui pointed at nearby arrows. "They acted on behalf of others," he said. "Warriors in dragon-like armor came and convinced them to attack. They were minions of your mother's foe." Kahula kicked an arrow, which clattered across the stone floor. "You can't stay here, father. You must return with me to the Halls of Ardorín."

The old king's ghost smiled again and shook its head. "Such isn't possible, *Mountain Mist.* This is merely an illusion cast for you when I was felled. If you see this, then my spirit is forfeit or it has been imprisoned somehow. Leave this place, for it is no longer safe. It is probably watched. Leave now."

Description: The *Hallowed Winds of the Talikai* whisper the song of Istra's dream during which she mated with King Matai-Nui, a mountain giant who lived on Palatine Island when the Talikai settled this region. Unknown on Munaan, their daughter is the demigoddess of the wind that sings in the mountains and brings good tidings. She is thought to command mist to rise and shield her faithful. Her manifestations on a battlefield aren't rare in a tropical environment. She also governs the fates of those who venture away from home. She is revered not only by warriors who honor her ways, but also by thieves, spies, bards, messengers, and seers. Mountaineers and miners often believe in her as they dwell in her spiritual domain.

Her clergy is determined to convert tribal fellfolk living on and around the Matai-Nui Mountains. Their current quest is to find out who among fellfolk is in contact with Draconic knights. For this reason, her priors and heroes are likely to tangle with vipermen acting in Meryath. Kahula sometimes changes her appearance and dwells among the fellfolk to uncover Sayble's schemes (see CAL1, page 65-66). She has sworn to her mother that she will find her father's spirit and bring him to the Halls of Ardorín. In the wake of her macabre discovery, the thought crossed her mind that her father's fate seemed oddly similar to that of Meríon the Great (see Makapono-Truesight later in this chapter). She bears the hope that Matai-Nui may someday be reborn in the world of mortals. Meanwhile, his old palace remains taboo and a place now favored by random monsters.

Kahula faithfully serves her mother and divine liege in all her endeavors, and sometimes works as Istra's messenger. She stands as a good friend of Nuaka-Coral-Blade, but she keeps this relation quiet since he serves Istra's rival. He bears feelings for her, but she's already given her heart to Armidal Copperpot (see *Gods of the Gnomes,* page 67). He spontaneously offered to help Mountain Mist to the best of his abilities in whatever ways her quest demands, including tying the knot with Armidal. Neither Kaimana nor Istra would approve Nuaka's discreet friendship if they knew. Kahula is on good terms with her half-sister Alana and Makapono-Truesight. Koanui and Akuamakue find this small clan of well-intentioned godlings terribly annoying.

Kahula sports the coppery skin of the Talikai, with hair and eyebrows made of magical mists. Her main shrine stands about ten miles outside Kaipuna, on a rocky spur overlooking the Mo'o River. It sponsors a school of Talikai dance, music, and poetry. Favored temple offerings include fine poems and ancient tales of love or bravery. Clues about the true fate of Matai-Nui's spirit will be generously rewarded.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Battle Blessing*—the ability targets Draconic knights, vipermen, and fellfolk who serve them (see Table 10, score of 7).
Preferred animal/monster: Mountain parrots/giant four-winged keas.
Preferred weapon/spell: Mace or staff fitted with giant kea claws (cloud- and wind-related spells).

Kaimana

Epithets: *Stingray Queen*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan and elder peer of Ardorín
Interests: Seas, fishermen, tribal seafolk
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (generous and tolerant with her followers, she also is manipulative and vengeful toward those who defy her), 🧠 *Rational*–4 (calculating, tenacious, conventional, principled), 🗡 *Stern*–5 (austere, brooding, arrogant, haughty, dour)
Godly Cabals: *The Gallows* (see *Godly Trappings* page 221)
Allies: Nuaka-Coral-Blade (son and demigod subject), Akuamakue and Kanemanu (allies)
Hated Foes: Defiant seafolk and tribal shamans
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Northern Palatine, Kalalulu and Makarana areas); seafolk realm of The Shallows north of Meryath; covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 15, 605 BCE
Pronunciation: kah-ee-MAH-nah

Mythology: Deep within the unfathomable abyss, the blue-green halo hovered above Kaimana's shoulder as she completed her enchantment. It shifted around her, and with it, so did the anglerfish-like arm that connected it to the white-eyed spirit assisting the goddess. Under a great vault of solid water arching above, translucent walls and pillars throbbed and gleamed in the feeble light, like the innards of a gargantuan jellyfish. From dark green to crimson and purple, immense algae swayed slowly in the cold tide ebbing through the vast chamber. A frown barred Kaimana's forehead as she uttered the last words of her ritual. None but denizens of Underdeep grasped the aquatic language distorted in the unseen eddies of her watery world. She touched the liquid serpent coiling before her, and it opened a transparent eye. "Seek," she said, and the beast vanished from the hall. Satisfied, the sea goddess swam to her coral throne, sat, and closed her eyes to initiate a mental link.

The giant serpent reappeared in a world of sea, spray, and light, not far from the surface of the Calderan Shallows. It slithered past a marine gorge and into the Sea of Osriel, toward a settlement nestled within giant kelp. Armed seafolk darted from their dwellings like banks of fish suddenly maneuvering around a predator. An elder riding a fin-edged chariot pulled by a pair of killer whales stopped before the giant serpent, and raised a hand to halt the beast. Seated on her throne a universe away, Kaimana watched through her construct's eyes.

"People of Safeer," she said through the giant serpent, "too long have you dwelled in the shadow of the surface world. I come here to bring you protection and the ineffable exaltation of faith in a greater spirit, one with whom you may commune, find solace, and wield power unmatched by others of your kind. You know who I am. Your neighbors south of here already bask in my divine light. Join me, trust in me, and honor me so that I may serve you and bestow glory upon you."

"We know all too well who you are," said the elder. "And we do not bow to your will. The people of Safeer honor the great spirits, and they do not welcome those who would sweep aside the true ways of nature. Return whence you came. There is no place for you in our sea."

"So be it, shaman. Beware what you wish for." The giant serpent lurched toward him, but the two killer whales reacted more quickly and yanked the chariot out of the way. Three enormous creatures emerged from the screen of giant kelp, each twice as large as Kaimana's sea serpent, mind-bending masses of twisted tentacles, horns, beaks, and pincers large enough to snap a war galley in half. Kaimana jumped to her feet and sent her construct against the closest of the abyssal spirits. It ripped with divine frenzy through a dozen of its tentacles, but the two other beasts closed in upon Kaimana's magical champion. After a brief but violent struggle, the watery wyrm was dispelled.

The sea goddess sat back upon her throne, dejected and sulking. "Just you wait, shaman," she said, a feral expression darkening her traits. "You aren't the first mortal to defy me, and there is more than one way of dealing with your kind."

Description: Born of a mythical giant stingray, she is the sea goddess of Munaan's islanders. She commands the storms, denizens of the deep, and the mana of the abyss. The oldest of extant Talikai deities, she favors all who dwell within, above, or near the seas. Kaimana is the patron of fishermen, sea merchants, explorers, but also adventurers and pirates, as well as those who sail into the Great Vault. The *Stingray Queen* is also believed to watch the four straits leading out to the Calderan Sea Ring.

In the early days of her divine existence, she came close to reaching spiritual hegemony among the Talikai. But with Koanui and Hakulu bowing to Ise-Taora's coalition, she was forced to submit as well. She still bears



a grudge with the de-facto ruler of Ardorín, and did not forgive Koanui and Hakulu for caving in many centuries ago. Her cult was reduced to a shadow of what it once was, especially as a result of Nicarea's Inquisition. Though she is covertly honored on Munaan, her best option remains on Calidar. She once tricked seafolk of The Shallows, living just north of Meryath, into honoring her as a powerful sea spirit. During the following centuries, Kaimana gradually introduced the concept of sentient divinity among them. They've now adopted her cult, which sparked a war with the shaman-led tribes dwelling in the Seas of Phobos and Osriel who still cling to their old ways.

Her allies are Kanemanu and Akuamakue, along with the demigod Nuaka. None of them see a war with Draconia, which they suspect Istra is orchestrating, as a wise strategy. The *Stingray Queen* appreciates Istra's plan to sway Teos to greater tolerance, but doesn't believe it will work. She does not trust the *Fireking* and prefers his temples in Meryath be closed until such time as hers and her allies' can welcome Ellyrian citizens in the empire. Such a move could jeopardize the alliance between Meryath and Ellyrion, but she sees this as a necessary risk in the face of slow extinction.

In the minds of deep-sea followers, Kaimana is represented with great wing-like fins in the place of arms, and with a whip-like tail extending from her back. Surface dwellers see her as humanlike through bearing shark-like skin. Her great shrine rises at dawn from the sea just outside Kalalulu, off northern Palatine Island's shores, and returns to the deep at sunset. It is a haven for water-elementalists. Favored temple offerings include great treasures of the deep and forgotten magic gleaned from ancient wrecks and submerged ruins.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Loyal Companion*—a stingray, a seahorse, or a sea lion (see Table 10, score of 8).
Preferred animal/monster: Stingrays/giant sea serpents (or similar creatures, whether live or enchanted constructs).
Preferred weapon/spell: Harpoon or coral studded staff (water-related spells).



Kanemanu

Epithets: *The Many Feathered One, Birdking, Son of the Big Makani*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Sky, wind, birds, illusions, wealth of Meryath
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–5 (friendly, merciful, generous, trusting, tolerant—but terribly unfaithful in love), 💀 *Instinctive*–8 (impulsive, hasty, indecisive, restless, creative, intuitive, curious, adventurous), 🗲 *Lively*–8 (mirthful, extravagant, passionate, romantic, lustful, hedonistic, shameless, eccentric)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Kaimana and Akuamakue (rivals of Istra), Arëatha (granddaughter, Alfdaín), Oloroth (friend, Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Felines and cat-like beings
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Western Palatine, Meryathon area); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 29, 300 BCE (circa 1200 BCE, as the Big Makani)
Pronunciation: kah-neh-MAH-noo

Mythology: As always when he was nervous, the Birdking ran his hand through the fine iridescent feathers on his head. Ise-Taora purred as she nestled her head in the crook between his neck and shoulder. From the edge of the cloudlike bedding, he could see the divine domain's vastness swirling beyond the columns of her bedchamber. "We should really tell them I am with child, Kanie dear." The sky god cleared his throat. "Ah, well, yes. I worry my peers might get a bit jealous, you see. . . now that you stand as their ruler in this brave new world, that is." The Lady of Cloudsea propped her head on a hand and gazed at her consort with a knowing smile. "What are you afraid of?" He brushed her thick mane from her forehead. "We were at war not that long ago. Wounds are still healing. Some might take the news in a bad way." Ise-Taora laughed. "Oh, you silly bird. I do not share my bed with any of them. Ululani ensnared Hakulu the moment the war ended, and no one's feathers got ruffled." Kanemanu winced. "You're right, love. But let's wait a bit longer. Just in case."

A gong rang elsewhere in the palace, and Ise-Taora stretched like a cat. "Divine business calls," she said, crawling out of the bed. "I never imagined being the Lady of Cloudsea could be so tiresome." The Birdking grinned as he gave her bottom a gentle and playful slap. "I'm sure you'll show them who's in charge!" Kanemanu watched Ise-Taora leave the chamber. He quickly got

up after she'd departed, straightened his feathers, and stepped through a hidden gate.

As he headed down a hallway, a hand reached from the dimness of an alcove and pulled him in. From the smell of her intoxicating perfume, he recognized sweet loving Ululani. After a long and passionate kiss, she pulled away and gazed at him. "Well, have you told her yet?" The Birdking caressed her cheek before answering. "It's a bad time right now. She's been so busy, she's hardly paid any attention to me at all." Ululani took his hand and pressed it against her chest. "I have nothing to offer but the magic of love, but you'll have to let her go first. Don't keep me waiting." After another kiss, the goddess of love vanished. Soon after straightening his feathers, Kanemanu did the same.

In a blink, he reappeared in the Ambrosian, and bowed before a regal figure sitting by a brook. "Fairest Lady of Asgard, I salute you. Long have I awaited this glorious moment. I beg forgiveness for keeping you waiting." He kneeled and took her hand. "I offer naught but the freedom of my realm in the skies and my undying affection, for it springs from the bottom of my heart." Stately, nearly haughty, the goddess gauged the Birdking's athletic features. "This might be suitable for a queen of valkyries," she declared, "but you'll have to prove your worth, for I am in need of a strong line of offspring. Come to Asgard three days hence. My swordmaidens will show you the way to Fólkvangr. Do not keep me waiting again." Before he could answer, the Fairest Lady of Asgard vanished. Kanemanu readjusted his feathers, and promptly did the same.

His spell landed him back in his own quarters. He sat on the edge of his bed, and muttered with a sigh, "Busy day. . ." A shape stirred under the cloudlike covers behind him, and a familiar face emerged, grinning with an impish expression. "Lady Adamar!" said Kanemanu, his eyes wide with surprise and sudden delight. "I hadn't expected your visit. What a pleasure."

Description: This colorful deity of Munaan's past embodies all that dwells between earth, sea, and the heavens. Flighty and shamelessly so, the god of birds favors air wizards, skyship crews, illusionists, and those who value extravagance. Kanemanu is often associated with flamboyant and eccentric epic heroes, resulting in their lavish appearances. He became a patron of the arts and of wealth. As a result, he is also revered by performers, shopkeepers, innkeepers, and merchants of Meryath. The *Many Feathered One* sees hunting and courting as one and the same, and essential parts of life, earning him the support of both hunters and palace courtiers.

In truth, Kanemanu isn't anyone's son. He is the Big Makani under another name. He withdrew as the first deity of the Talikai because he did not want to fight against four others. Instead, he helped three new ones ascend, sacrificing his own mana in the process. He adopted Kanemanu's silly over-the-top persona to avoid suspicion (acting behind the curtains to deal with real dangers). Though they haven't noticed so far, he skims power from his younger peers, including Istra herself. The Birdking is thus more powerful than he seems. For now, he remains content with the Lady of Cloudsea running the pantheon's affairs. Meanwhile, he relishes the freedom of being a "minor" god. He despises felines, cat-like demons, and the gods of Felis Minor, who've crossed his path several times already.

Istra discovered Kanemanu's many infidelities and banned him from her palace. The unseemly dispute later convinced Freyja to look elsewhere for a progenitor. Ululani broke up with him when she heard news of Alana's birth. Adamar lost interest and became involved with another deity of her pantheon. Alana is embarrassed by her father's frivolous lifestyle. On the other hand, his granddaughter Arëatha loves her colorful forebear and encourages him to do as he pleases. She stands as his greatest ally.

Kanemanu's current alliance with Kaimana results purely from posturing in the wake of Istra's outburst. He was briefly tempted to court Kaimana, but he found her response remarkably dry for a sea goddess. He thinks she just plays hard-to-get. He would rather return to his first love, but any such relation is doomed by his free-spirited nature, for now.

The *Many Feathered One* is often represented as an athletic man wearing a mantle and headdress of large multicolored feathers. Part museum of art and part natural bird preserve, his grand shrine in Meryathon stands as a garishly mesmerizing lure for visiting foreigners. It also houses an excellent illusionist academy. Favored temple offerings include rare spell components for illusion spells.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Righteous Spell*—three illusion spells (see Table 10, score of 10).
Preferred animal/monster: Birds-of-paradise/giant four-winged greater birds-of-paradise.
Preferred weapon/spell: Staff with flames at both ends (illusion spells).
Other Benefits: When fighting in low-light conditions, pious followers twirling a flaming staff can disorient foes facing them, inflicting a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls with melee or ranged weapons. Once per day, zealots or priors fighting in the same manner can mesmerize any foe up to 60' away who fails a defense check. The effect lasts as long as the flaming staff spins or until the victim is wounded, during which the victim can do nothing else but stare at the flames. This ability does not prevent performing one attack with the flaming staff. These two abilities replace one in each of Tables 11 and 12 listed under "Sky, Air, & Winds" (see *Special Abilities*, page 188).

Koanui

Epithets: *The Horned One*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan and elder peer of Ardorín
Interests: War, conquerors, crab-like beings
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–4 (selfish, vengeful, unscrupulous, spiteful), 💀 *Instinctive*–4 (impulsive, bold, guileful, unruly), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (he is as dour and stubborn as is he arrogant)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Istra (honored ruler of Ardorín), Hakulu-Boneshadow (friend), Anwë (ally, Phrydias)
Hated Foes: Nuaka-Coral-Blade, demons, and the Tanareen
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Eastern Leiliti, Manukea area) and parts of Osriel (Boa Justiça area, see page 166); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 26, 531 BCE
Pronunciation: ko-ah-NOO-ee

Mythology: Silvery water dripped from the horns edging his carapace when his head slowly emerged from the water. Like a predator on the prowl, he watched Kaimana's servant follow the muddy shore, almost veiled in Ambrosia's mist and twisted mangroves. Nuaka-Coral-Blade stopped on a small rise for a moment before facing his stalker.

"I know you are following me, Horned One. You are not as discrete as you think. If you have something to tell me, speak now or leave." Koanui stepped from the water, nearly twice as tall as Nuaka. "Impudent runt. You have interfered with my affairs far too long. I have come to put an end to your puny meddling." The demigod took a step back as he looked around him, as if searching for something or someone. Koanui approached and



uttered a dark spell. "There is no one here to save you now, godling, nor will your mistress hear your calls for help."

Nuaka focused on the towering god of war before him. "I am on a mission for peace. The lives of many, including your own mortal followers, are at stake." Koanui's sneer rumbled in his chest, his black beady eyes gleaming with feral glee. "And I am on a mission for war, and I will gut you like a fish." Nuaka's hand lingered on his dagger's pommel before he reached for his shirt. "So be it, Lord of War," he said. He then revealed the open wound on his chest and his bleeding heart as it throbbed within. "If it is war you truly seek, then strike me and end my suffering."

Koanui bared his teeth in a wicked rictus. His gaze dwelled upon the demigod's wound before shifting to the sandy hillock on which they stood. He seemed pensive for an instant until, suddenly, his eyes widened with a ferocious resolve. He raised his fang-studded mace and brought it down with the full strength of a god's wrath. The massive weapon swung past Nuaka and slammed into the sand next to him. The hillock quaked and erupted where the mace had struck. A scaly head emerged with a roar of pain and rage, an eye dangling from its gaping and torn orbit.

"No!" Nuaka implored. "She's a herald!" Before he could say more, Koanui bellowed with exultation and swung his mighty weapon again and again. Ignoring bites and slashes failing to mar his mighty shell, he struck the dragon's head like a coconut. Thrice did her lethal bile spout harmlessly to the side. In a blood rage, Koanui pushed forth and inflicted a most grievous toll upon the beast. Her flanks slashed open and a wing already limp, the dragon faded from sight. Still seething with battle fury, the war god spun toward the demigod and drove down his mace. Refusing to flinch, Nuaka steadfastly glared back at Koanui. The weapon stopped a hair from Nuaka's forehead, Koanui heaving like a giant bellows.

The demigod dropped to his knees, misery welling in his eyes. "What have you done?" The Horned One lowered his mace and leaned on its shaft as he gazed down at the demigod. "By all that is sacred in the annals of Cloudsea, neither bleeding hearts, nor cries in the dark, nor prayers in the wind, nor whispers behind Ambrosia's swaying fronds will stop what is to come. War will prevail, and there will be blood, fire, and glory hailed in my name."

Description: The *Hallowed Winds of the Talikai* tell many legends of the one born of a mythical crab. In the view of islanders, he is their armored god of war. The *Horned One* favors all that is connected with the military caste. During the conflict against Nicarea, his followers became notorious for their ferocity. Many a Nicarean warrior called upon their faith in Teos not to flee from their foes' fearsome hakas.

Koanui chafes under his present existence. He once was a major god, but his status of previous centuries became a casualty of Nicarea's bloody repression. A fight with denizens of Draconia is just the sort of thing that he covets. Preventing by the bloodiest means any sort of negotiation between a dragon king's herald and partisans of peace is nothing that will give him pause. War is an end in itself. He hungers for a chance to regain his lost glory, and does not stop at making enemies in Ambrosia and elsewhere. Demons universally hate him, and their pawns seek to destroy his followers on sight. He once challenged spirit servants of Tokalmak, a Tanareen deity, while they hunted in the ethereal. These raccoon-like entities preyed upon giant astral crabs, which irritated Koanui and provoked a fight. Battles between the servants of these gods are not infrequent in Ambrosia, as the two sides search for the entrances to each other's hidden domains. The Tanareen are a race from the Fringe, though some dwell in the Dread Lands.

Though he dislikes Istra and her roundabout ways of getting things done, Koanui sides with her because he stands to gain followers among Ellyrian warrior circles, which he fiercely covets. He also has a soft spot for her many dragon slayers and their quest to challenge the Draconic knights. He cherishes the hope that it may lead to an all-out war with Sayble herself. Until then, his priors work hard to convince epic heroes of Meryath to join his cult. His temples often finance monster-hunting expeditions. Koanui may also grant favors to heroes who do well in his name. Proselytizing among their henchmen is a key strategy that pays off in the long run. If Istra's plan fails and a grand war does not blossom, Koanui is nearly certain to betray his ally and side instead with Kaimana. The god of war only has one friend: Hakulu.

A crimson shell impervious to all weapons but the most potent artifacts protects his spiked head, neck, and back. Thick leather covers the rest of his divine body. His mace, an artifact in its own right, is rumored to imprison the Life Force of those he kills, boosting the damage it inflicts in battle. His greatest shrine dominates the high slopes of Manukea, on Leiliti Island. Temple offerings include trophies taken from demons or Tanareen foes.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Godly Shield* (see Table 10, score of 2).
Preferred animal/monster: Crab-like beings.
Preferred weapon/spell: Fang-studded mace (protection spells).
Other Benefits: Pious followers can perform a haka before going into battle. The ritual takes a minute. Foes must succeed a defense check or receive a –1 penalty to all attack and defense checks during the encounter. This ability replaces one in Table 11 listed under "War & Conquerors" (see *Special Abilities*, page 188).

Makapono-Truesight



Epithets: *Beast Slayer, Wandering Myrmidon*
Ranking: Demigod, Temporal of Calidar
Interests: Justice, revenge, fate of Meríon the Great
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–6 (friendly, altruistic, merciful, truthful, tolerant, magnanimous), ♚ *Rational*–4 (honor-bound, deliberate, principled, obedient), 🗲 *Lively*–5 (proud, strongminded, outspoken, indomitable)
Godly Cabals: *The Fellowship of Watchers* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 219)
Allies: Istra (divine liege and honored ruler of Ardorín), Alana-Lifebringer and Kahula-Mountain-Mist (friends)
Hated Foes: Killer of Meríon the Great and related minions; the demon lord Rua'a Bilemonger and his fiendish followers
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Western Palatine, Paivao area)
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 20, 1377 CE
Pronunciation: mah-kah-PO-no

Mythology: He thought he'd seen it all during his existence as a hero and as a demigod. New to him were echoes of a vast city in the prime universe, sprawling eerily in the ethereal. Denizens of all ilks dwelled there, some seeking a quick taste of life forces extant in the nearby physical world, others looking for shadowy opportunities. A distant clamor beckoned Makapono. He made his way through maze-like slums, ignoring lingering stares in the shadows. Past a corner stood what looked like an arena, foreign, dark, and ominous. He sidled through a side entrance and climbed the glistening black stairs.

The steps led to a vast crowd of spectators, from sinister to monstrous, enjoying a fight in the pit below. There, Makapono recognized the one he'd been seeking, a former companion of Meríon the Great who'd vanished since their king's demise. Wounded and limping, barely able to hold his sword, he circled a nightmarish beast threatening him with clawed tentacles and a serrated beak large enough to snap him in half. His prospects seemed at their grimmest.

Makapono turned to gaze at a figure presiding over the games. He had no doubt this was a demon, one well over ten feet tall, perhaps a lord. On its lithe and muscular body sat the skull of a horned creature, fleshless and eyeless. The demon raised a twisted hand, and the arena grew silent while the beast in the pit recoiled. It turned to face the demigod standing less than a hundred paces from its stall. "The *Arena of Agony* is no place for the likes of you, islander. You'd be well advised to leave while you still can." Defiant, Makapono crossed his arms. "I've come to free my companion. His name is Alakai, and I'll not leave without him." An ominous rumble rose from the crowd. The demon raised its hand again, commanding silence. "You will have to pay dearly for him," the demon answered. The demigod, a hand resting on the hilt of his ivory sword, glanced down at his fellow myrmidon. "So be it. Name your price." The demon pointed a gnarled finger. "I covet that which I do not possess. Give me your eyes, foolish islander, and you can take your companion's place in the pit. I, Rua'a Bilemonger, vow that he will walk free while you fight for my eternal pleasure."

"I accept," answered Makapono without a hint of hesitation. Rua'a laughed when the demigod's eyes vanished and reappeared in the demon's skull. Meanwhile, Alakai faded away while Makapono stood in his place. The monster in the pit jiggled and crawled forth, oozing with anticipation. Though blind, Makapono sensed the beast and noted he'd fought one like it before. It had but one weakness, and that lay between its feral eyes. The demigod was no stranger at fighting sightless. Ducking and rolling between tentacles, claws, and beak jabs, he reached the abyssal creature's forehead and stabbed hard. The ivory blade plunged through flesh and bone, snuffing out the beast's life in an instant.

A clamor of fury rose from the malevolent crowd, its frustration palpable. Makapono extracted his weapon, wiped it against its victim's skin, and addressed Rua'a. "Here at my feet does your favored pet lie, demon. Send more. Cur, hellion, frack, or fiend, I fear none. Now that you have True Sight, behold what I am and whom I serve." Sensing the demon's wavering, the demigod continued. "I stand here, in your arena and before all those who chose to honor you, so that I may fulfill the terms of your bargain. If you wish to end it, return my sight, and I shall leave you to your games."

At once, the demigod found himself standing at the side of Alakai. The spectral arena faded from the ethereal city. Legend claimed that it since traveled to another city, enslaving hero and villain alike to fight for the pleasure of Rua'a and its minions. "Come, old friend," said Makapono. "Your peers await your return. There is much about which we must talk."

Description: This demigod is said to have risen from the ranks of Talikai colonists buckling under the injustice and brutality of the Nicarean Inquisition during Meryath's struggle for independence. Makapono became a companion of Meríon the Great in 1207 CE, and is therefore unknown on Munaan. It is said that he gained the ability to see through walls and into the souls of the living, leading him to become a legendary judge of character. Already an epic hero, this islander paladin swore to avenge his king when he discovered Meríon and his loyal myrmidons had been slain in 1301. Since then, he became a demigod of justice and revenge serving Istra. His followers are wandering heroes wishing to honor the path of Meríon's mighty myrmidons, benevolent warriors, paladins, dragon slayers, and adventurers in general, especially those seeking to avenge a fallen companion.

To this day, he seeks the arch-villain who killed the old king and enslaved the fallen monarch's spirit. Because Meríon's essence never reached the netherworld, he thus could not take his rightful place among the *Cohorts of Ardorín,* for surely he would have become their leader. Makapono is the one who found Meríon's sword and brought it to Istra's temple. This unfortunate tale lingers painfully in the islanders' minds, preventing them from creating a god straight out of their king's legend.

A good friend of Alana, Makapono tries to repair the damage between her and his divine liege, Istra, whenever he returns to Ardorín. He maintains a discreet relationship with Melrenwë of the Briarwoods. Koanui dislikes the wandering myrmidon, not for his bravery and combat skill, but for his final goal: Meríon's rightful ascent to Ardorín. The god of war worries because he sees the return of this king as a potential rival in the pantheon. Therefore, priors of the *Horned One* make sure the story of the king's demise isn't forgotten, something that rubs Makapono the wrong way.

This demigod often appears as an athletic Talikai warrior wearing dreadlocks fitted with small ornaments, one for each of his slain foes. His sword is a holy ivory relic fitted with shark-like teeth. Legends say that it is sometimes able to slay evil beasts with a single blow. His shrine sponsors a university of Talikai and Ellyrian law, as well as a penitentiary. Favored temple offerings focus on artifacts and precious objects recovered while on a quest to uncover the fate of Meríon the Great.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Innate Magic*—a spell or a combination of spells defeating invisibility, illusions, disguises, and other misdirecting magic (see Table 10, score of 9).
Preferred animal/monster: White moas, giant flightless birds.
Preferred weapon/spell: Shark-tooth-edged weapons (detection spells).

Nuaka-Coral-Blade



Epithets: *Bleeding Heart, Hand of Peace*
Ranking: Demigod, Paragon of Munaan
Interests: Peace and protectors
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–8 (humble, friendly, altruistic, merciful, truthful, trusting, tolerant, magnanimous), ☗ *Rational*–6 (cautious, farsighted, conventional, stalwart, principled, obedient), ↟ *Stern*–4 (melancholy, dreamy, wistful, soul-searching)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Kaimana (mother and divine liege), Kahula (friend), Teos-Fireking (regular chess partner)
Hated Foes: Warmongers, including Koanui and his followers
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Northern Palatine, Murumoa area); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 17, 186 CE
Pronunciation: noo-AH-kah

Mythology: The large white albatross gave Nuaka a quizzical look as it awaited his response. "I was worried about that," said the demigod. "I thank you for alerting me, my feathered friend." The bird-spirit squawked, deployed its large wings, and took off into the Ambrosian mist. Worried, Nuaka searched for a spot he knew lay under a huge silvery willow. There, he touched a knot in the wood and vanished. An instant later, the hot musty air of the tropical Dread Lands greeted his entry into the world of mortals.

Among the exuberant foliage, he spotted Kahula's familiar face several paces ahead. She glanced at him, looked annoyed, and summoned a roiling mist to mask her presence. "Wait!" Nuaka called. "Nothing good can come from what you seek." Only the muffled sounds of the forest's denizens responded as he began searching for his peer. "It doesn't do for us to tangle with mortals," he cautioned. A moment later, Kahula's voice pierced the mist. "He killed my father." Nuaka moved in her direction, careful not to trample the forest's chaotic growth. "But you know others have put him up to it, don't you? Whose fault is it but ours?" Kahula's response came from a slightly different direction. "My mother does what she must for Ardorín. It isn't the place for mortals to interfere. He knows whom he's defied, and he now hides here to save his neck."

A deafening roar shook earth, tree, and sky, where Kahula's voice last came. Nuaka hurried, frantically trying to find the demigoddess amid the thickening mist. "Do not fight it," he shouted. "Leave now or it will kill you!" Shouts of the demigoddess's rage and pain responded amid the cacophony of broken branches, trees uprooted, and gargantuan footsteps. Nuaka reached for his coral blade, but changed his mind. Instead, he turned from the fight and rushed around it. Moments later, as the battle continued between Kahula and what he knew had to be a spirit lord, the demigod stumbled upon a fellfolk tribesman. His eyes remained closed while he communed with the forest.

Nuaka kneeled and gently laid a hand on the shaman's shoulder. "Stop this madness now, shaman, and recall this beast which you have summoned. Nothing good will come of strife and hatred." The native fellfolk opened his eyes and slowly faced Nuaka. "Umak-Stone-Heart, him unafraid. If Umak die, de Great Spirit still kill de false god. De Tukubu, dem want back de big island, an' dem die for it too." Nuaka gazed into the shaman's eyes. "The people of Meryath are at peace with Umak's kin. Though they will not go away—*they cannot*—they have promised to leave the forest of the Tukubu untouched. Those who convinced your people to kill the Matai-Nui lied to you. They will betray you like they deceived many others before. They will not bring freedom."

The shaman bared his shark-like teeth in defiance and resumed his communion. The sound of the battle between Kahula and the forest spirit continued stronger yet. Worried, Nuaka unsheathed his coral blade and pressed its point against Umak's arm. As blood pearled and rolled off his green-dyed skin, the shaman glared at the demigod, anger twisting his face. "Look into my eyes," Nuaka said softly. The sound of the beast turning and approaching grew ominous. "Feel my pain," the demigod insisted. His feral expression fading into one of doubt and remorse, the fellfolk native lowered his gaze, and silence returned to the forest.

Bruised and battered, Kahula emerged from the thick fronds, glowering at the shaman. Nuaka stood and stepped between them. "Enough! He was tricked and so were you. Vengeance will not soothe your sorrow. If your mother bears a quarrel with Draconia, then it is between our people and theirs. Those of Umak's blood have suffered enough. Be noble. Be kindly, Lady of the Mist, as your father already has. Forgive and let them be." Kahula sighed and gazed down at the shaman. "I forgive, but I do not forget." Nuaka nodded slowly. "Time will heal your pain. Come now, dear friend. Let us leave this place."

Description: Son of Kaimana and a Munaani fisher king, this demigod became Cloudsea's defender of peace and protector of the meek. Perfectly at ease above and below the surface, Nuaka acts as the *Stingray Queen*'s herald, her messenger, and a shrewd negotiator for peace. He favors those who work to end wars, and protects the ones wronged or hurt by conflicts they haven't provoked.

He wasn't able to prevent Nicarea's repression against Munaani islanders when he beseeched Teos for leniency and divine magnanimity, but his interventions saved a number of persecuted mortals from being massacred. Though he is revered for his work, Nuaka still suffers from an unhealed wound sustained in ancient times. It stems from his feelings of guilt for failing to sway Teos. In the minds of his followers, the wound is a bleeding heart. When peace fails, Nuaka sometimes joins the oppressed and fights with a wondrous coral blade. Those stricken by it feel the demigod's everlasting pain and sometimes join his side.

Though he salutes Istra's desire to negotiate with Teos, he remains Kaimana's loyal servant. He knows what Istra is up against, and he doubts she will be able to move Teos despite her many Ellyrian sympathizers. On a personal level, he bears feelings for Kahula, who became somewhat of a confidante. He also enjoys a polite camaraderie with Makapono. His friendships, however, suffer from his criticism of Istra, the mother of one and the liege of the other. He feels her schemes are questionable and bound to provoke discord and conflict. Mutual antipathy between Nuaka and Koanui lies deep, something that his mother cultivates and Istra reproves. Kaimana shields her son from her own undersea mischiefs, encouraging him to stay focused on Istra's shenanigans to embarrass her—which Kahula doesn't fail to remind him about. Nuaka enjoys a special

relationship with Teos, whom he meets far more often than any other deity, to play a divine game of chess (see *Teos Fireking,* described next).

The demigod of peace sports a sleek aquamarine complexion with a wavy celadon pattern that makes him hard to perceive when moving underwater. Nuaka's long indigo-hued hair is tied at his nape, and his trusty coral blade hangs at his waist, sheathed in white sharkskin. Made of interlacing and magically grown coral, his great shrine stands on a beach just outside Murumoa. Favored temple offerings include objects coveted by rival parties, especially if their dispatch to the divine world ends disputes.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Heavenly Abode* (see Table 10, score of 19).
Preferred animal/monster: Sea turtles, dragon turtles.
Preferred weapon/spell: Weapon with coral-incrusted handle (protection spells).

Teos-Fireking

The sun god is more fully described in the chapters focusing on Ellyrion and Narwan (see pages 111 and 138). There are, however, peculiarities regarding his relationship with the Lords of Ardorín. Teos is a member of Meryath's pantheon. Known among the Talikai as the *Fireking*, this grand old deity has two sorts of followers among those whose sandals grace the hallowed floors of his temples.

The first are those of Ellyrian ancestry, who believe deep in their hearts that Teos is the one and only god. They see those of another creed as blasphemous heathens, perhaps gentle savages mired in their misguided superstitions and begging to be guided toward the shining path, for surely there can be no greater power than the sun resplendent.

The other believers are those of Talikai ancestry, who see "their" Fireking as but one of many gods in nature. In their view, there couldn't possibly be a sun without a sky, or light without darkness. They think orthodox Ellyrian rites unbelievably obtuse, narrow-minded, and just plain tiresome. What's the use of having only one god who does everything poorly, when so many others do much less but do it so much better? They smile at their dour brothers-in-faith, knowing that sooner or later, they'll figure it out. The wiser ones must be patient with them.

Meanwhile, Teos sighs and shrugs off the divine headache entirely. As much as he hates it, he pays tribute to Istra for his followers in Meryath, a small price for his spiritual foothold on the islands. Therein lurks a bigger risk, however, as some of the Talikai believers move to the continental west and bring with them their casual faiths in other gods. Meanwhile, the Fireking's regal march across the sky continues undisturbed, attracting followers like moths in the night and inexorably expanding his cult. Teos's tallest sanctuary outside Ellyrion shines like a beacon upon Tahakui, the island of Meryath closest to the empire. It is seen by many as Teos's hammer in the west, and Narwan as Soltan's anvil in the east.

Istra endeavors to maintain contact with the Fireking to keep the door open for negotiation. On the other hand and as a whole, Lords of Ardorín shun Teos. They do not trust him and will not share with him all that they know, even though he is a member of Meryath's pantheon. Aside from Istra, Nuaka-Coral-Blade is the one closest to the Fireking. The two meet regularly to play a divine game of chess. But this is a front for something else entirely. The demigod seeks to protect followers of Talikai deities living in the empire. This includes a significant number of Ellyrian soldiers, their families, and their descendants. Curiously, zealots of Teos haven't targeted them as much as they should have, given that Talikai faiths are seen as heresy in Ellyrion. It is because Nuaka agreed to secretly inform the Fireking of what happens behind Ardorín's closed doors, in exchange for which Teos holds back his most rabid supporters. Nuaka plays a dangerous game. He reveals just enough to satisfy the sun god, knowing that if he fails, followers of Talikai deities will suffer the full wrath of Teosian temples. His peculiar business has become even more delicate as another deity has recently been gaining audience with the Fireking, in the person of Ululani-Two-Pearls (see next entry). Nuaka isn't sure of her purpose.

Ululani-Two-Pearls

Epithets: *Beautiful One, Daughter of the Moons*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan
Interests: Love, beauty, destiny, desire in the night
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (although neither benevolent or malevolent in nature, Ululani is terribly manipulative), *Instinctive*–3 (intuitive, sly, but short-tempered), *Lively*–8 (charming, alluring, hedonistic, feisty, proud, opportunistic, ambitious to an extreme, and devoid of shame)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Istra (honored ruler of Ardorín), Hakulu-Boneshadow (friend and former spouse)
Hated Foes: Soltan and especially his Narwani followers
Centers of Faith: Meryath (Western Kamearea, Tulani area); Osriel (Porto Caridade area, see page 166); covertly on Munaan
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 10, 297 BCE
Pronunciation: oo-loo-LAH-nee

Mythology: Nuaka's love story is one often retold in Meryath's theaters. A few centuries ago, the Coral Blade developed feelings for Kahula, but at the time, so did the very young and irrepressible Armidal Copperpot of Berylea. It also was a time when Ululani herself became attracted to Nuaka, or so her mortal followers imagined it. He was one of the reasons she forsook Hakulu's austere affections, ending their strange union.

One night in Cloudsea, the demigod sat by a pool under the starlight, his mind wandering. Ripples in the water caught his attention. Ululani emerged, water rolling from her naked skin like tears of crystal. "Sweet Nuaka, my heart beats for you, and I languish for your tender embrace. Will you not gaze upon me, and accept my flame as your own?" At first he was dazzled by her appearance, yet thoughts of the Mountain Mist still lingered in his mind. "None rival your divine splendor, O Beautiful One," he answered. "But I'll not kiss you this night, for my heart's melancholy steals over me." The goddess approached and coiled her arms around him. "Bliss shall you have when the warmth of my lips banishes your pain, and forever shall you bask in the solace of my love." She closed her eyes and leaned forward, until Nuaka gently pressed the tips of his fingers against her pursed lips. "I beg your forgiveness, Daughter of the Moons. I must decline. A kiss may conquer my heart, but my spirit demands truth and clarity which eludes me this instant." Ululani's traits gained the cold hardness of steel as she

stood back. "Kiss me you will, this I promise you. While she faded away, her distant voice lingered, "You will know then what you've forsaken."

The following day, Kahula fashioned two life-sized wood carvings of herself. She had one sent to Armidal and the other to Nuaka. Pensive, the Talikai demigod studied the carving's facial features, his fingers wandering down its brow, cheek, and chin. In doubt following the previous night's encounter, he kissed the statue as if it would answer questions still jostling in his mind. The carving's eyes opened as it returned his kiss. Its face changed to Ululani's while her voice rose in the chamber. Nuaka realized the goddess had surreptitiously haunted the carving. "Thus have you kissed me, and thus do you learn the cost of spurning my love," she said. "Ululani Two-Pearls," he answered in anger, "I'll not give in to your trickery. Be gone!" As she departed, the goddess turned the carving into ashes.

Kahula later learned of the two carvings' fates. One was covered with flowers and sweet little nothings of all sorts. The other, reduced to dust, was gathered away in the wind. Puzzled and disappointed by the second outcome, the Mountain Mist chose the charming gnome and, in Berylea, she danced the next night.

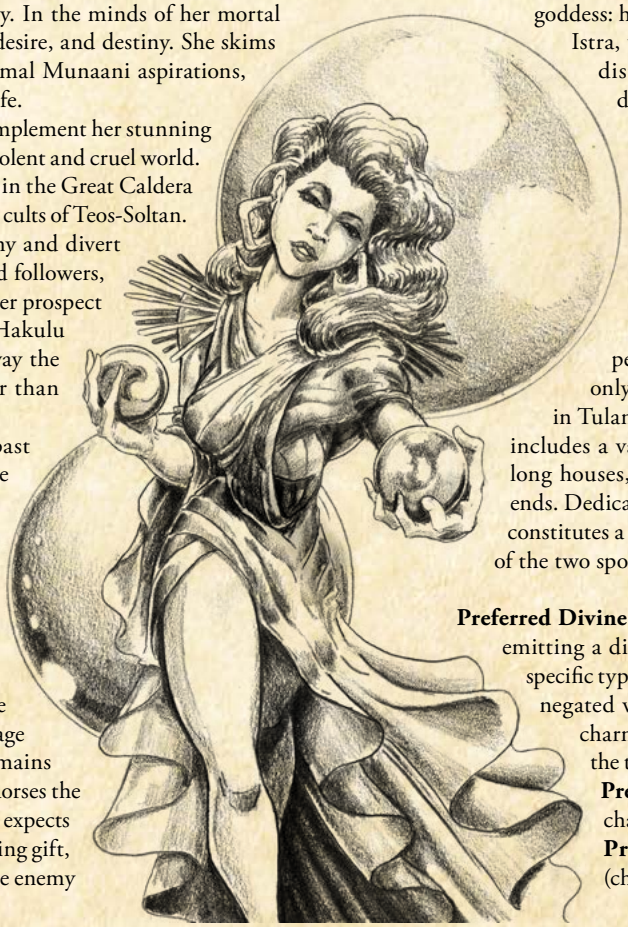
Description: The *Hallowed Winds* forever speak of Ululani's birth from a mythical seashell, stepping out of the sea under the pearly glow of Calidar and Alorea rising into the night sky. In the minds of her mortal followers, she became the goddess of love, desire, and destiny. She skims power from all Talikai. Ascended from primal Munaani aspirations, she bore expectations greater than eternal life.

Ululani learned to rely on intrigue to complement her stunning looks, for sentiment can only go so far in a violent and cruel world. Some honor her secretly on Munaan, others in the Great Caldera face mounting spiritual competition from the cults of Teos-Soltan. She'd espoused Hakulu to engender progeny and divert some of his followers to her cult. She gained followers, but her union yielded no issue. When another prospect came along, Ululani unceremoniously left Hakulu for Nuaka. In the wake of her failure to sway the demigod, she then set her sights far higher than anyone would dare.

Using various stratagems during the past few centuries, she endeavored to plant in the minds of Teos's mortal followers the idea he ought to have a spouse. Hotly debated, the concept sparked Nicarean and Ellyrian sects to emerge and the Inquisition to go hunting. Nonetheless, the nascent ideology affected Teos, who reluctantly pondered the prospect of divine matrimony. Orthodoxy implies that relatives of the sun god must be no more than scions of the cult (see *Godly Trappings*, page 215). If tolerable in Ellyrion, the notion remains profoundly divisive on Munaan. Ululani endorses the idea, but only as part of a grander scheme. She expects spiritual hegemony over Kamearea as a wedding gift, assuaging her followers that sleeping with the enemy may yet prove beneficial to them.

Ululani's hidden aim is to conceive ample progeny and then to repudiate her mighty consort on trumped up accusations. Never in the annals of divinity has a scion ever betrayed a liege. But then, never has an ascended deity consented to become the scion of another. In his arrogance, Teos believes such a union may work and further weaken Meryath's pantheon. Ululani knows herself skillful enough to sway her children to her side, becoming demigods in her service. She also intends to claim "her conjugal share" of Ellyrian followers as a consequence of separation, as well as her children's inheritance. Divine alimony and child support aren't out of the question either. To enforce her lofty demands, Ululani secured the discreet advice of Holmring's Khestrid Goldskald, a wise and talented advocate intrigued enough by the fantastic endeavor to prosecute this curious case before the Oortan Court. Teos-Soltan may well reject the court's decision entirely, but such defiance would incur the scorn and hostility of all gods involved, a troublesome prospect even for the mighty sun god. Whatever the outcome of Ululani's plot, the cult of Teos will undoubtedly suffer from it, as might peace on Calidar and its moons.

Within Meryath's pantheon, the goddess of love steadfastly and ostensibly supports Istra's plan to accommodate Teos; that is, until her own crafty plans reach their conclusion. After that, she may spitefully revert to Kaimana's faction or create her own. Makapono despises this goddess: he sees her for what she is. He's cautioned Istra, who now watches her. Nuaka keeps his distance, and worries about her discreet dealings with Teos. Hakulu still loves her. Other male gods find Ululani attractive but too invasive and quarrelsome for lasting companionship. Female deities bear little more than contempt for her.



The goddess of love sports a coppery complexion with highlights of gold. Fiery red garb enhances her stunning looks. It is believed she keeps two magnificent pearls on her body, mysterious artifacts she only reveals to her lovers. Her greatest shrine in Tulani is a place for traditional weddings that includes a vast wooden hall in the style of Talikai long houses, with a sweeping roof peaking at both ends. Dedicating one's marriage ceremony to Ululani constitutes a favored temple offering, especially if one of the two spouses isn't a follower of her cult.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Path of the Beast*—pheromones: emitting a discreet yet enthralling scent attracting a specific type of person or creature within 300' radius; negated with a defense check; acts as a magical charm; the beneficiary must be familiar with the targeted subject (see Table 10, score of 11).

Preferred animal/monster: Love birds, charm-wielding monsters.

Preferred weapon/spell: Bolas, nets (charm and illusion spells).


2016

Creed of Narwan



Narwan's cult of Soltan connects directly with those of Teos (see *Creed of Ellyrion, page 107*) and of Taneth's Arun-Te. It matches in many ways Nicarean tenets, with the main difference that Soltan must never be represented as a person but rather as the sun in the sky, an abstract yet sapient entity. Narwan's doctrine establishes that his servants are prophets who went to serve him at the heart of the Great Golden Orb. As with Soltan, his prophets are never to be given personified likenesses nor to be honored as scions (though there is evidence that they return as Incarnates—see page 213). Because of these differences, Narwan maintains difficult relations with both Ellyrion and Nicarea.

The Narwani generally benefit from better relations with other realms of the Great Caldera because of their visceral opposition to Ellyrion and Nicarea, at least up to the point where foreign beliefs are considered wholly illegal and offensive in Narwan. Whether they are residents or visitors, foreigners openly practicing their rituals in Narwan or either speaking or acting against the state's creed will be charged with blasphemy and either imprisoned, enslaved, or executed. The Narwani inherited Taneth's deeply-rooted mysticism, Nicarea's fiercely monotheistic ideology, and the desert efreet's fiery temper. As regards Narwan's Soltan, his attitude is very much the same as Teos's. He does not take sides but does what his followers expect of him. He will do so with all due diligence, anticipating that one side will inevitably prevail and, therefore, that all will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds. This has led scholars to wonder if Soltan, as Munaan's greater divine entity, isn't instigating all these versions of himself as a scheme to elaborate the most effective creed—*the one to end all others*.

The story of Soltan's rise from the darkness of ancient times is written in the *Al-Tamrir Al-Sahra,* the Scroll of the Desert. It is a very long scroll whose contents are forbidden for infidels to behold. It is said that prophet Al-Adhan-the-Blind, magically born of both man and efreeti, received the sacred words directly from Soltan while he prayed atop a rocky spur, where the city of Ta'izz now stands. He inscribed them in the scroll for a hundred moons, plus one day to honor the sun, and then his spirit went to serve Soltan-the-Munificent. It is written that the prophet's bones are blessed artifacts buried at the foot of the Holy Spur, now a place of Narwani pilgrimage at the center of a large temple complex. Prayers and rituals remain an oral tradition, known as the *Alayat Al-Sawfi,* the Mystic Verses. These are taught to priors throughout their lives. Clergymen wear black robes and turbans. Saffron-colored ribbons or golden cords adorn their headgear to signify their faith to Soltan. As marks of wisdom, pearls maybe added for the clergy's higher-ranking members.

The Caliph of Ta'izz stands as the spiritual leader of faith in Narwan. Secular power remains in the hands of hereditary emirs, of whom one takes on the responsibility of Grand Vizier for matters of state administration, foreign diplomacy, and the military. To this day, it is customary in Narwan for the progeny of infidels to be taken away and trained as elite warriors known as *Mamluks*. The caliph and the grand vizier collect tithes and taxes from sheiks. Emirs rule provinces of Narwan. Sheiks are

hereditary governors who control villages, districts of larger towns, oases, or nomadic tribes; they collect taxes, tolls, and fines from common residents and visitors, especially merchants and their caravans. Often land owners themselves, sheiks remain subject to the authority of their emirs. They retain a quarter of their earnings, while the rest is split equally between the ruling emir, the grand vizier, and the caliph. Emirs and sheiks are responsible for enforcing the faith. The *sharif* are noble folk who can trace their family roots back to the first prophet, Al-Adhan. *The rajul al-aemaa* are blind or blindfolded clergymen whose function is to call the faithful to prayer from the top of minarets—these slender towers are meant to symbolize the Holy Spur of Al-Adhan.

Common Attributes

Common attributes for typical followers of Soltan are described on page 63, in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies.* Attempts to convert faithful Narwani to another creed suffer a –2 penalty (see *Common Attributes* of Teos's faithful, page 107). As a general rule, they may never eat raw or unblessed flesh from any creature dwelling in rivers and seas, for they offend Soltan. At the beginning of their day, all priors can and must cast the elementary *spell of facing,* which will reveal to the prior the direction toward the Holy Spur. Effects last for the equivalent of a day, but can be dispelled. It is required of all faithful that they pray facing toward the Holy Spur three times per day.

Priors enjoy a strong affinity with the world of efreet, which grants them basic desert survival skills (Wis and/or Int) and a personality bonus (Per) when addressing them and closely related creatures (fire elementals, smoke imps, etc.) They have the ability to speak the efreeti language. Priors of Soltan can trade off any two spells to gain the ability to breathe smoke safely (like an efreeti), hide in smoke (like a rogue with equal career achievement), fly through smoke (like a magic carpet), and/or stand on top of smoke as it moves. The ability lasts until the smoke is dispersed (by wind or from lack of fire) or until the prior steps away from the smoke. The volume of smoke needed requires a 10x10 bonfire or equivalent source of flames, or smoke spell (SP10, 3 cu. ft. per LF, lasting 10 minutes +1 per LF—see *Spell Potency*, page 10 in *Game Mechanics*).

Genesis

9000 BCE Millennia before the Common Era, djinn claimed the Great Caldera's southeast. A handful had come from the outer planes, attracted by the magic of Calidar's world soul. Though their elders left or died out, their progeny remained, as they were natives of this world. They dwelled there peacefully, honored by the fellfolk as spirits of nature, whom they called the "hidden ones." From them, native tribes learned their language, one as harsh as sand-laden winds grinding against the desert's naked rocks. During the next centuries, fire-loving efreet became the most prevalent of the djinn while the jann scattered with the winds, the marid took to the sea, and the arad wandered into the mountains. Slowly, lands that were already warm and dry became even more so under the influence of the efreet, and a desert grew at their heart. As time passed, these efreet came to honor Al-Shams, the supreme fire in the sky.

796 CE All was fine until Munaani settlers made landfall on nearby coasts. It is said that divine inspiration led followers of Teos to choose these unkind, sun-drenched parts as their rightful land. There they established Eastern Ellyrion, the oriental half of Munaan's early colony on Calidar. Resenting the empire's heavy-handed laws, Tanethian followers of Arun-Te came along and, over time, outnumbered ethnic Nicareans in this region.

800 CE Native fellfolk suffered from the massive influx of off-world migrants—something the djinni folk increasingly resented. Swept aside or facing forced labor, the tribes fled. Their exodus left behind djinni folk and those who could no longer leave.

851 CE As Munaani settlers pushed inland, they ran afoul of the efreet, and a long struggle began. Colonists seemed puny at first, but they proved far more resilient than the djinn expected, especially with veteran Nicarean troops helping. With migration waves feeding their ranks, devout newcomers could replace their losses more quickly than the hidden ones. A stalemate was reached when Calderan djinn resorted to living *among* the settlers, concealing their true natures with their innate magical abilities. Meanwhile, it became fashionable for Calderan-born colonists to speak the harsh language of the desert and adopt local ways, which could be learned from fellfolk servants. Quietly, skillfully, the hidden ones also introduced their curvilinear script as an alternative to the Nicarean alphabet. Soon, people unwittingly referred to the arid hinterland by its efreeti name: Narwan.

Many a djinni found it easier to manipulate newcomers than fighting them openly, often pretending to be faithful followers of Arun-Te to avoid suspicion. Most lived in relative peace this way, enjoying Eastern Ellyrion's prosperity and quietly eliminating threats. Nonetheless, locals to this day often blame their misfortunes on the djinn. It isn't rare when a criminal caught red-handed claims: "The djinn made me do it!" Others, staring dreamingly at the nightly sky, might croon: "If you wish upon the djinn, doesn't matter who you are. . ." Settlers had a visceral fear of the efreet because they couldn't see them. They knew the djinn dwelled in their midst, perhaps a new neighbor, Taeen of Jaffoo, or Aran the fish merchant, or Naruk the water-monger. They believed with some good reason that the desert spirits were infidels with the powers of demons, and suspicion ran high.

1045 CE Unavoidably, the Nicarean Inquisition launched a djinni-hunt. Fear among colonial population and false accusations between rivals were all too common, complicating matters. Worse yet, local population disliked the Nicareans almost as much as the

Rock & Mausoleum of Al-Adhan—Map Key

Main Level

1. Ground level & gardens
2. Terrace of the *Rising Sun*
3. Worshipers' Entrance to the descending galleries
4. Levitation shaft up to the Upper Level's east end & northeast minaret
5. Levitation shaft down to Area 17
6. *Soltan's Rising* atrium
7. *Soltan's Setting* atrium
8. Worshipers' Exit
9. Levitation shaft up to Area 12 & southwest minaret
10. Terrace of the *Setting Sun*
11. Levitation shaft down to Lower Levels' west end

Upper Level

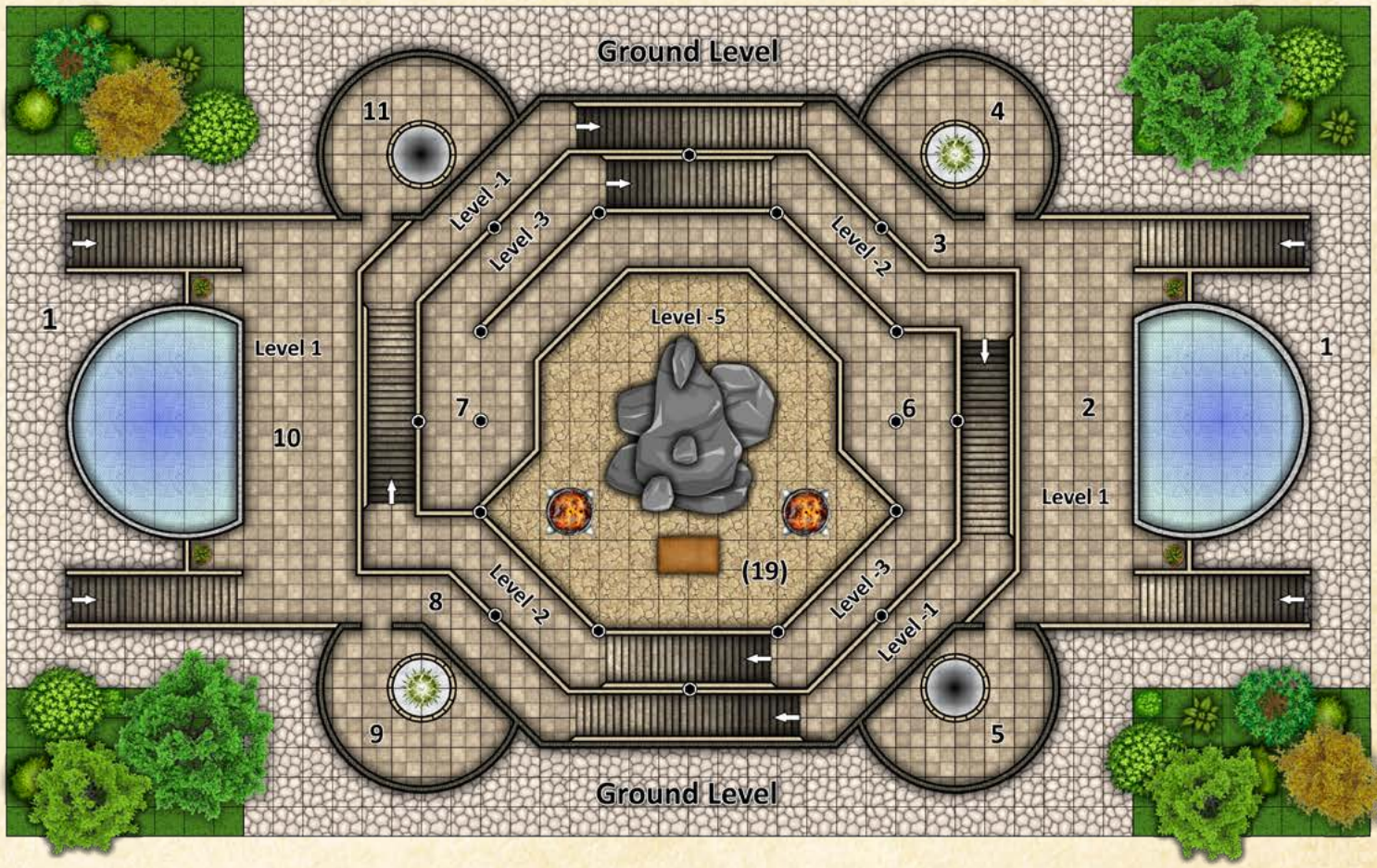
12. Levitation shaft up to the southwest minaret
13. Outside terrace
14. West entrance to the crystal dome
15. Circular gallery of the crystal dome
16. Levitation shaft down to Area 11 & the Lower Levels' west end

Lower Levels

17. Levitation shaft down from Area 5
18. Lower level atrium
19. Pit of Al-Adhan's rock & tomb, with invisible walls
20. Levitation shaft up to Area 4 & northeast minaret
21. Meditation chamber of the *Alayat Al-Sawfi*
22. Tunnel to the temple garrison
23. Most Holy Repository of the *Al-Tamrir Al-Sahra*
24. Reading room
25. Crypt of the golden golem guardian

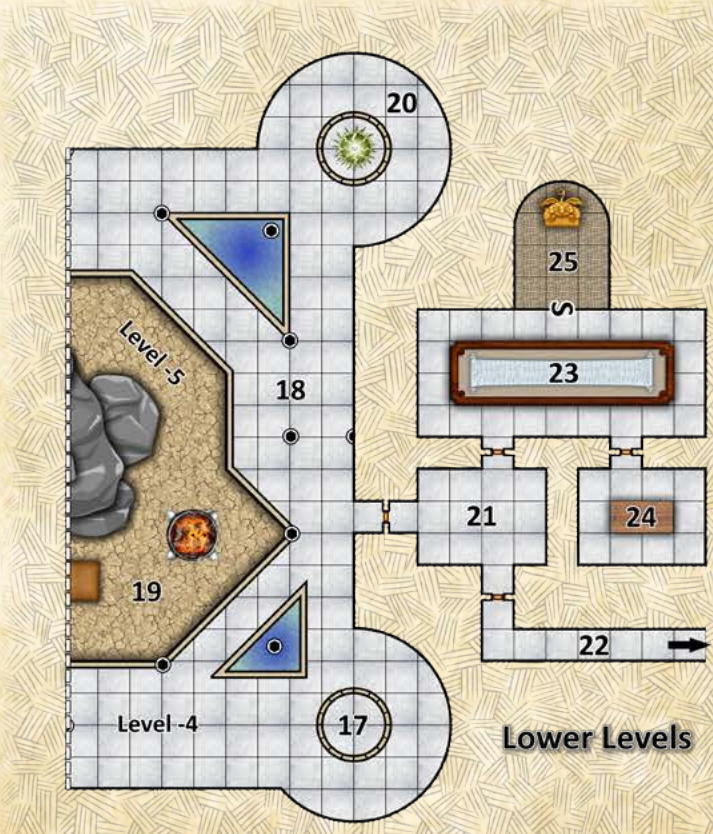
Only priors with a special ring can reach and come back down from the tops of the four minarets.

Rock & Mausoleum of Al-Adhan



Scale: 1 sq. equals 10 ft.





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djinn, since the Inquisition could just as likely turn against them. Between uncooperative locals and magical beings hiding among them, the inquisitors found themselves flat-footed. Eastern Ellyrion looked and felt increasingly foreign to them.

1071 CE It wasn't long before the hidden ones infiltrated Nicarean ranks as well, possessing or killing a number of their leaders. The fight raged on, resulting in compromised inquisitors and those suspected of such being gruesomely executed by their own brethren. As paranoia prevailed, the conflict widened. Djinn permeated all levels of colonial society along with local thieves' guilds. Commoners who suspected, or who plainly knew someone was a djinni, remained quiet because they benefited from the status quo. This led to mounting casualties among colonial population accused of consorting with the "demons." These were called the *Times of Sorrow.*

1122 CE An indigenous creed of Soltan began to emerge among nomads and villages nearest the desert (see *Companions of the Black Rose,* page 234). Soon afterward, the prophet Al-Adhan climbed the Holy Spur and recorded the sacred words of Soltan-the-Munificent. As strife raged in Narwan, the new cult slowly gained followers among colonial Tanethians. With time, native population grew increasingly hostile toward Nicarean authorities still ruling Eastern Ellyrion, while the Inquisition gradually lost its grip on the colony.

1208 CE Following a dispute about eastern Meryath (see *Historical Timeline* in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 80), indigenous Narwani overthrew the imperial overseers. The former Munaani colony was officially renamed Narwan. Old imperial districts grew into emirates, with a caliph overseeing all spiritual matters in Soltan's name. During the remainder of this century, the people of Narwan concentrated on swaying the efreet to their side in an effort to cohabitate and earn peace at last.

1331 CE The Caliph of Fuscat, Akram I, granted to efreet who fully adopted the cult of Soltan legal rights to live among the people of Narwan, provided they did so openly. He then negotiated a truce with hostile efreet, both sides agreeing not to encroach upon each other's domains. The Narwani retained their settled lands along coasts and rivers, while the efreet kept to their deserts, each addressing intrusions as they saw fit. By then, differences between the creeds of Soltan and Al-Shams had become minimal as the two cultures overlapped in many ways. Both sides understood that they were one and the same.

1348 CE Whether the caliph had meant to respect his promise to the desert efreet remains a mystery: he was assassinated in 1348 and his remains stolen. Intrusions and encroachments happened now and then, prompting swift and usually deadly responses. It never became clear whether the desert djinn would keep their promise forever. Efreet who lived among Narwan's upper class stood as guarantors of this fragile peace between Narwani and desert djinn because they often worked as advisers to the emirs or to affluent sheiks. Priors watched them to ensure their faith was true. Wizards did the same to prevent the djinn from abusing their powers at the expense of the Narwani and their rulers.

Today's laws prevent the djinn from holding office or clerical titles, barring them from leadership. Faith and culture of efreet and common Narwani have become wholly indistinguishable from each other. Half-blood offspring have emerged as a separate race, welcomed by some, reviled by others, and feared by foreigners.

The Golden Orb

Soltan's magical domain, as seen by the Narwani, is but one manifestation of the Greater Soltan's celestial realms. It is believed to lie at the heart of Calidar's central star on its inner surface, a concave world of elemental fire. All things that make up the Golden Orb, whether solid, liquid, or gaseous, radiate from a faint reddish glow to blinding white light that no mortal can sustain. Truly, one must be a guest of Soltan and receive from him all needed protections to last more than an instant in such an otherwise deadly environment, let alone survive and meet The Munificent himself. To one whose eyes are enchanted to perceive his world as one should, Soltan's abode shines as a magnificent palace of staggering proportions, with vertiginous stairs leading up to vast porticos, colossal pillars supporting cavernous onion-shaped domes, and countless minarets. At the top of each turret stands a *rajul al-aemaa* whose most magnificent voice calls the faithful to bow before the *Fire in the Sky*. Around it all, lies an endless plasma sea, swelling, rolling, and crashing sky high upon the gold and deep purples of flaming reefs. Divine servants—humans, djinn, or their half-blood kin who all adopted amber-hued appearances—dwell within this vast domain, from sea to sky and inside the palace, ready to serve the one true lord.

Soltan



Epithets: *Arun Al Malik Al Soltan, The Fire in the Sky, Soltan the Munificent* (also known as Al-Shams, Arun-Te, Teos, Pachacuti, and Nahwa)
Ranking: Greater god of Munaan
Interests: Sun, light, fire, deserts, his own hegemony above all deities
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (truthful and generous at times, but also insensitive and vengeful), 💀 *Practical* (in some ways cold and analytical, yet opportunistic and unpredictable), 🗡 *Stern—7* (humorless, distant, haughty, pompous, conceited, egotistic, and colossally arrogant)
Godly Cabals: None, though his philosophy bears similarities with *the Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: None
Hated Foes: Istra in particular and deities skimming power from their peers' mortal followers; ultimately all gods
Centers of Faith: Narwan on Calidar (state creed)
Day of Ascendance: Circa 9000 BCE as Arun-Te, Munaan's first personified deity originating from Taneth, and as Al-Shams among Calderan efreet (recognized in Narwan, in 1122 CE, as *Soltan the Munificent*)
Pronunciation: SOL-tan

Mythology: Soltan reclined on his fiery throne, basking in the warmth of the soft lava cushioning the smoldering red stones beneath. Blue-green flames emerged from a pool of darkness at the center of the chamber that meekly trembled before the great god.

"You who once were called Ahud Al-Jhufari, come forth," said Soltan. "The others, move along. Your mentors will assign you to your duties so you may serve me."

Six out of the seven flickering flames danced toward a colossal portal of blazing light. After it had closed behind them, Soltan focused on the

remaining one. Its flame took on the amber-hued likeness of its former mortal form with great fiery wings on his back. Ahud looked at them with some surprise, and then examined the strange glowing texture of his hands and body before daring to look up at the towering god.

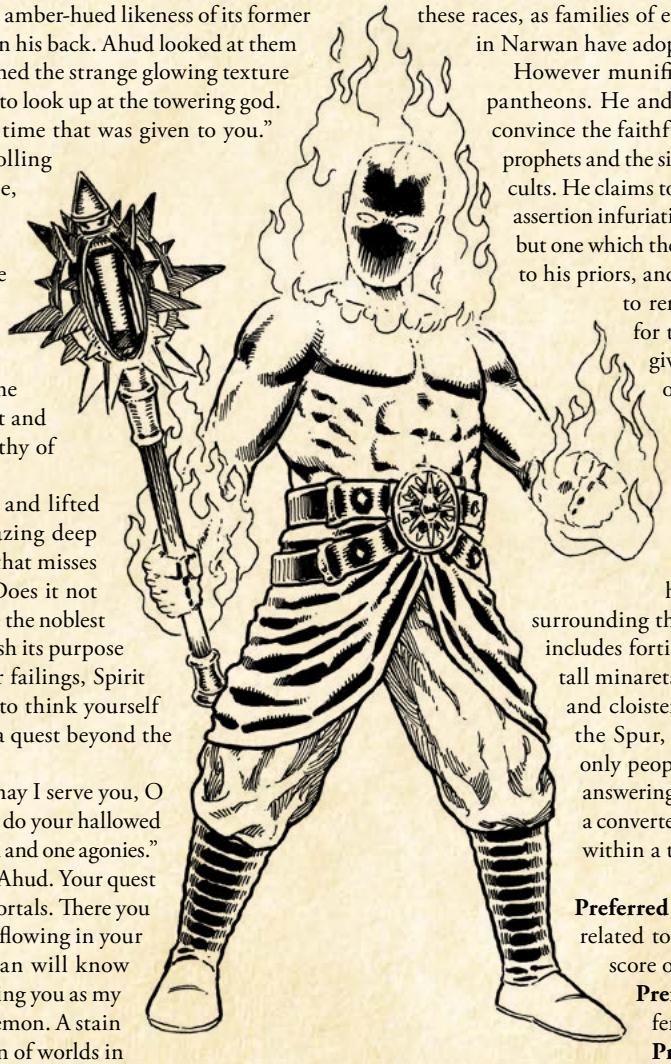
"You have done much with the time that was given to you." Soltan's voice rumbled like slow rolling thunder. "Hard was your existence, yet strong was your faith."

Ahud lowered his head. "But I have failed in the end, O Supreme Lord. My life's work was undone, my loyal followers slain, and the temple under my care defiled. Immense are my shame and sorrow. Strike me down, My Liege. Reduce me to dust and scatter my ashes, for I stand unworthy of your eternal realm."

Soltan scooped up his follower and lifted him from the pool of darkness, gazing deep into his soul. "Should the hammer that misses the nail be discarded in disgrace? Does it not take many strokes for iron to become the noblest of steel? Rarely does a tool accomplish its purpose on the first blow. Speak not of your failings, Spirit of Ahud, for it would be conceited to think yourself so perfect that you should succeed a quest beyond the scope of a single mortal life."

The spirit trembled. "How else may I serve you, O Mighty Sun? Ever shall I endeavor to do your hallowed bidding, or willingly suffer a thousand and one agonies."

"And endeavor you will, Spirit of Ahud. Your quest awaits your return to the world of mortals. There you will be reborn with the fire of efreet flowing in your veins. None in the realm of Narwan will know you. Some will shun the signs branding you as my servant, and they will think you a demon. A stain on your skin will show a conjunction of worlds in the Great Vault. When this time comes, a vessel will sail to Manzibar. She will be known as the *Elzabeth*. Join her crew. Leave Narwan and never return. Your journey will take you to the Dust Ridges of Udday, where you will resume your quest. Bring the Holy Word to the tribes there, and be my prophet among them. Only thus will you redeem yourself, Ahud-Hand-of-Soltan."



Description: Soltan is the latest manifestation of the universal sun god, having been recognized in Narwan in 1122 CE. Soltan manufactured this alternate aspect of himself when he created the Black Rose, an artifact that he later placed in the middle of the Ad-Dhimah desert (see *Companions of the Black Rose*, page 234). Part of its purpose was to give divine inspiration to the mortal first to lay eyes upon it. Fate drove Al-Adhan to be the chosen one, and he became Soltan's first prophet in Narwan. Since he is the sole deity permitted in the emirates, followers of all careers and philosophies, benevolent or not, honor Soltan.

The Most Holy Sultan of the Great Vault departs from earlier aspects of Munaan's sun god in that his followers include efreet, fire imps, and other elemental creatures of fire born on Calidar, as well as Narwan's demi-efreet. They refer to him as Al-Shams (الشمس) in their native language, meaning "the sun," a name as old as ten millennia. His cult is in no way limited to these races, as families of elves, dwarves, gnomes, and fellfolk residing in Narwan have adopted Soltan as their spiritual patron.

However munificent, he keeps to himself as regards other pantheons. He and his spiritual servants work continually to convince the faithful that the other gods are the spawn of false prophets and the sinful consequences of misguided, ill-informed cults. He claims to be the First God, the oldest divine entity, an assertion infuriating to all other divinities of Calidar's universe, but one which they cannot refute. The notion was passed along to his priors, and sacred texts today do not miss an occasion to remind everyone. It is a source of great pride for the Narwani, even more so for efreeti-kind, giving them a sense of spiritual ascendancy over other cultures. With it they expect to sway the entire universe—*insha'Al-Shams*.

Though the Narwani do not give a personified appearance to Soltan other than the sun in the sky, he retains the one given to him on Munaan: a black skin with eyes of pure gold and a fiery aura rising around him. His greatest temple is the compound surrounding the Holy Spur in Ta'izz. Aside from a wall, it includes fortified gates and bastions, a main temple with tall minarets, a university, a library, several mausoleums and cloisters, and barracks housing the Watchmen of the Spur, an elite force guarding the premises (the only people permitted to bear arms within the walls, answering only to the caliph). Favored offerings include a converted infidel's oath of eternal faithfulness spoken within a temple.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Righteous Spell*—three spells related to light or fire can be selected (see Table 10, score of 10).

Preferred animal/monster: Desert lions, fennecs, efreet.

Preferred weapon/spell: Large mace (or spells related to light or fire).

The Elzabeth: Blending Alorean and Draconian styles, this quad-masted wooden yacht is built for speed. Captained by the *Purple Princess,* a human rogue infamous for her disguise skills, this small skyship carries a crew of smugglers and spies. Lightly armed, the *Elzabeth* relies on a stock of Lao-Kweian single-shot rockets and smoke bombs to escape trouble. The ship also possesses a hidden magical engine giving her a short-term boost of speed that leaves a purple cloud in her wake.

Companions of the Black Rose are rumored to be in league with the *Purple Princess*. Narwani military know this rogue vessel as the *Al-Zabet;* a reward is offered for her capture or her destruction, and her captain's death. A similar offer also stands for the *Purple Princess* and the thief lord who sold her the rockets, posted by a Lao-Kweian governor from whom these had been stolen.

Combat Statistics: AR 18, SR 110, Class C (Class A with magical engine), Powered Speed (PS) 60 mph for 1d4+2 combat rounds, Sailing Speed (SS) +1.5 (ethereal sails or *seitha*), TA 3 Lao-Kweian *hwacha*-style rocket racks (amidships and stern), DR M+2 per volley (range 200/350/500—as scorpion, see page 11; limited ammunition; possible incendiary effect; possible smoke screen; possible light damage to 2d6 exposed crew), DC as captain, Size (110' length); Flag: Pirate.

Gods of Nordheim

Asgard	Interests
⑩ **Odin**	Time, wisdom
Baldur	Love, beauty
Bragi	Fate, bards, seers
Brokk[10] (D)	Blacksmiths, craftsmen
Forseti	Justice, reconciliation
Freyja (E)	Fertility, magic, war
Freyr (E)	Beneficial sun and rain
Frigga	Sky, air, winds
Heimdal	Peace, protectors
Hel	Death, underworld
Loki	Chaos, mischief
Njord	Seas, fishermen
Skadi	Winter, sleep
Thor	Thunder, lightning
Tyr	War, honor, law

The original followers of Nordheim's pantheon weren't natives of Calidar. They first came to Munaan through the Vortex, following an arrangement between Teos-Soltan and the Gate Keeper (see *Odin,* CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 65). Despite the sun god's best efforts, the newcomers tapped into the world soul to bring about the ascension of ancestral deities, at least Calidar's version of them. After Nicarea invaded the newcomers' lands, one clan escaped to Calidar, and later established the Kingdom of Nordheim. Not long afterward, their Munaani compatriots vanished from the moon. They reappeared later in the Fringe, eventually erasing their spiritual bond with Teos-Soltan. They became the Wayfarers. Meanwhile, many dwarves dwelled in the mountains of Nordheim, often mixing local cults with those of Araldûr. Elves became more common in the region between Kaldmyr and Ulvgård, and so did faiths from Alfdaín.

Odin and his companions ascended while their faithful lived on Munaan. These gods are plainly known to the Nordheimers today. Others emerged from the minds of Wayfarers. Because of occasional contacts between the two realms, the existence of the "Later-Born" was revealed on Calidar and widely accepted there. Wayfarers outnumber their Calidaran kinsmen; as long as this is true, Asgardians are spiritually tied to the Fringe. This doesn't affect how Calidaran priors gain their spells. Both Wayfarers and Nordheimers who depart the world of the living still go to the netherworld. The spirits of Wayfarers eventually return to the Fringe's world soul, while those of Nordheimers join Calidar's.

Ancient sagas predate the advent of Asgardians in Calidar's universe. These deities can't see where their people traveled from or why (Odin can, but he doesn't speak of it). The gods understand that their people awakened them from a shrouded past. Based on the sagas, mortals believe many more figures exist than those with whom their priors are able to commune. For their part, Lords of Asgard have concluded that their missing companions are "Lost Ones" who may still come. These sagas may allude to events that haven't yet happened within Calidar's context. They can be seen as mere poetry, imaginative gossip among mortals, or perhaps prophecies. Odin knows better, but chooses not to comment.

Asgardians favor the gods of dwarves and elves, as well as the Talikai and the Phrydians. The Lords of Sadarya, Berylea, and Morever Meadows seem altogether odd and less appreciated. Odin and Teos-Soltan dislike each other, but neither is willing to reveal their original connection. Though gods who ascended before their followers' journey to the Fringe share this antipathy, the Later-Born do not, as their mortal believers never endured hardship at the hands of the Nicarean Inquisition. For that matter, Nicareans, Ellyrians, and Narwani never set foot in anger in Nordheim or the Fringe. Asgard therefore is the least hostile to the sun god and his followers. Other pantheons remain circumspect regarding Asgard, considering the propensity of their faithful for raiding neighboring realms.

Nordheim cults are known for ancient runes, with which the story of Asgardians and their followers' rituals are written. The oldest ones appear on sheep or cow skins, as well as wood or ivory carvings. More recent parchments are bound together in large, solid books that appeal to dwarves. That talented dwarven crafters have indeed wrought fine ornaments for the covers, bindings, and clasps might have something to do with this. Elven artistry, on the other hand, can be recognized in the internal art and illumination. Many documents differ in appearance and sometimes in contents as well, most being poems that leave much to individual interpretation. Each mortal prior goes by what transpires through communion with gods or divine servants, who don't necessarily all agree on a single version of the facts. Skalds are the traditional way of sharing legends among Nordheimers.

Priors generally do not wear specific garb, but they do often cover their bodies with tattoos or scarring related to their faiths. It is said that these markings shift with the nature of their worship and the aims of their spiritual patrons. They may also carry the symbols of their cults, usually in the form of medallions made of wood, stone, ivory, or metal. Figures of authority often keep one or more priors as their advisors, usually those who share their faith. Although the clergy does not have an official say in the affairs of state, their influence on a personal level can be substantial. Nordheim temples survive on offerings from the faithful; their priors often are landlords who also collect rent or food from tenant farmers. They do not demand a tithe. Druids are also common in Nordheim. They favor gods relating to nature (fields, water, fertility, forests, and wisdom) such as Odin, Freyr, Freyja, Njord, and Thor. Their individual ethea aren't in conflict with druidic philosophy.

Common Attributes

Followers of Asgardian gods typically receive a spirit totem at the time of their births. Six are well known (roll 1d6): 1. Earth, 2. Air, 3. Fire, 4. Water, 5. Magic, 6. Steel. These are thought as protective spirits that remain with them for the rest of the lives. The first four provide a +1 bonus to defense checks against spell-cast magic based upon their element (spells and scrolls). The spirit totem of magic provides a similar bonus against all other forms of spell-cast magic. The steel totem's bonus applies to magical effects related to steel-forged melee weapons (especially swords, battle axes, and war hammers).

Genesis

500 BCE The people who became Calidar's Nordheimers settled on Munaani lands that seemed oddly unnatural to them. Theirs were sun-drenched, flat, and sterile, interspersed with muddy rivers, fly-infested swamps, a few barren hills, and a shallow sea thick with algae. Although their memories told them this was their homeland, the newcomers yearned for different horizons. As they clung to ancient legends that spoke instead of frost giants and icy mountains, odd clues came up about a greater faith to a sun god. Omens became more frequent and pressing. But these wayward Norse stuck to their old cults, their devotion growing stronger as portents appeared increasingly ominous. Thinking Ragnarok would soon be upon them, they banished all strangers from their lands, abandoned their meager farms, hung up their miserable fishing nets, and armed themselves to await death—some even suggested they should end each other's lives, so deep was their despair. When their prospects had sunken to their grimmest point, a prior claimed that Odin had spoken to him. As the Norse flocked around the prior, he claimed the god of wisdom

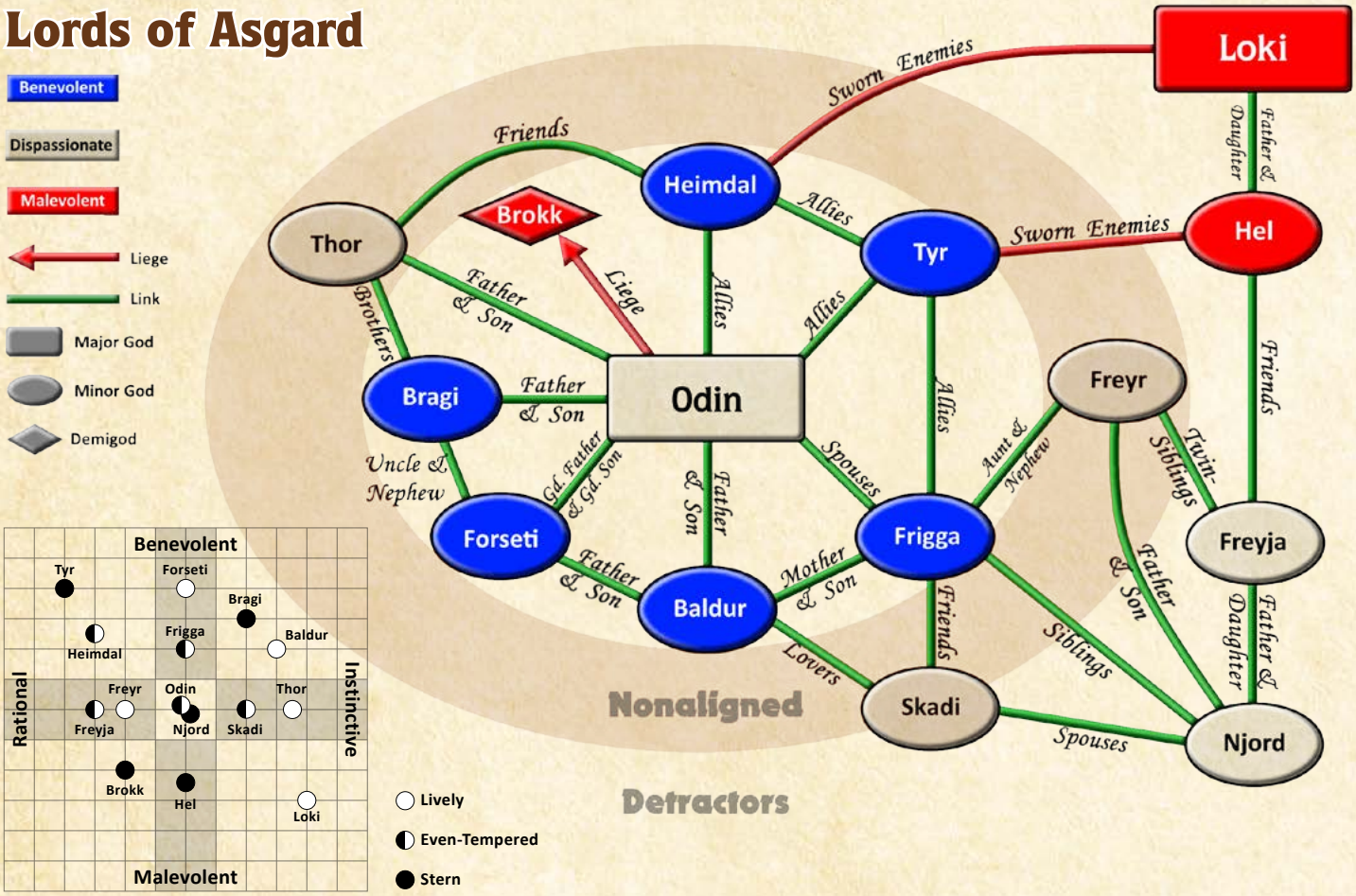


had promised salvation and the end of the eerie foretokens. Odin had awakened.

400 BCE Evidence of the Wise One communing with mortals became more widespread as priors confirmed the amazing news across Norse lands. Within the next century and a half, three more gods ascended. First came Njord, taciturn, proud, and aloof. Loki followed, distrustful and unsure of which god to throw his lot with, as he liked neither of them. Tyr ascended last and at once recognized Odin as the rightful party. He swore allegiance to him and announced his decision unambiguously to the other two. Njord recanted and joined Odin. Reluctantly, and bitter he hadn't been the first to awaken from the Shrouded Journey, Loki bowed to Odin's ascendancy and took his place among his elder peers. Satisfied, Odin heeded the voices of his people on Munaan and commanded the construction of Asgard, for other gods would follow and their servants would fill the great halls.

200 BCE To watch over Asgard's gate, Heimdal ascended soon after the turn of the century. His keen hearing caught Loki's seditious whispers to his priors. When confronted, Loki skillfully dodged the issue and forevermore veiled his communing with mortals. For all his scheming, the lord of mischief suspected a bond between Odin and the sun god, for neither would speak of the other or be seen together. Loki learned that Soltan's omens and the coming of his priors

Lords of Asgard



ended the moment mortals were able to commune with Odin. He wondered why. Ever so skeptical, he hoped the coming of more gods could offset Odin's hegemony. Impersonating Freyr and Freyja, he whispered to casual followers of Odin and called upon them to commune. He hoped to create spiritual puppets, extensions of his own mind with whom to challenge Odin's hegemony. Cautious about the news, Heimdal implored Odin to contemplate the matter. Sensing danger, Loki quietly withdrew while growing fervor for Freyr and Freyja followed its normal course. Thus did the twins ascend at Odin's expense, but free of Loki's influence.

100 BCE Disappointed, Loki chose a different strategy. While Odin's attention was focused on events brewing elsewhere on Munaan, Loki again whispered to followers of the Wise One. He spoke of death, dark places, and his daughter of ancient lore. Odin sensed a new disturbance in his mortal ranks, but kept quiet. Heimdal suspected Loki's meddling and confronted him. But Odin stepped in. In his view, it was a lord's duty to provide for those in his care. His followers were many, and a Keeper of Helheim was needed for evil spirits to atone. Thus did Hel ascend at Odin's expense, and she stood with Loki. Supremely leery, Heimdal surmised Loki's strategy and decided to use it as well. His guarded words of wisdom reached the ears of Loki's faithful. They heard the voices of Thor and Frigga calling to them. Newcomers happily hailed this news, with help from Heimdal's priors. Thus did Thor and Frigga awake at the expense of Loki. "You wish to act as a great lord, Loki?" Heimdal asked him. "How generous of you." The god of mischief never again tried this approach.

1 CE Still uncertain about Odin's true nature, Loki decided to meddle with a neighboring people. A rising nation calling itself Nicarea had declared Teos the sole and unique god under its laws. Quietly, patiently, Loki began influencing mortals there. His message was one of hatred toward Odin's followers. While his poison spread among Nicareans, he cautioned Tyr about the rising of Teos's zealots and the threat they posed to Asgard. "Mark my words," Loki told him. "These Nicareans look upon Odin's people with contempt and will inevitably demand from them obedience to their sun god. How long will we stay idle before death is upon us all?" But Tyr saw though the ploy and turned his back. Loki was more successful with Thor. Easily angered, Mjölnir's owner inspired his followers to plunder Nicarean lands, defile their temples, and spare no one. Loki stepped back and observed the situation slowly escalate. In his view, if followers of Teos and Odin clashed in an all-out war, it might unveil a bond's existence, if any, between them.

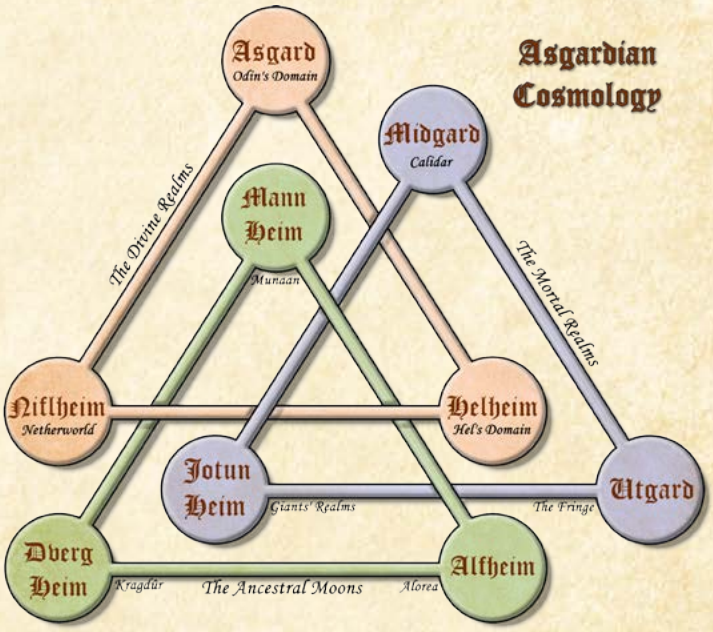
180 CE Though all of Asgard celebrated Baldur's ascent, a shadow was cast upon the mortals. Nicarea had grown into an empire ruled by fanatical priors devoted to Teos. They were defeating their neighbors one after the next, while founding colonies on faraway Calidar. Their scorn for Odin's people knew no bounds, and neither did their desire for revenge from decades of pillaging. For a time Odin called for caution and tolerance, but his people clamored for action. Thus did the Wise One

relent and brandish Gungnir. United for the sake of survival, the Norse locked shields and into battle they marched.

207 CE In the wake of disastrous battles, several Norse clans fled Munaan. They had acquired the magic and knowledge to navigate the skies and cross the Great Vault. A place on Calidar had beckoned to them, one of deep glaciers, frozen seas, and howling winds—one that Loki had found. They named it Frostholm. Few were the fellfolk dwelling there, and they left quickly at the sight of those they called skyfolk. For a time, Loki's faith grew strongest there. Meanwhile, the raging fight continued on Munaan. The clash of berserkers and zealots revealed none of what Loki had expected to see between Odin and Teos. The Wise One inspired his people to stand their ground. The sun god roused his to push forth. There could be no peace. There could be no victor. In the face of the senseless bloodbath, Odin's wisdom prevailed. With Heimdal holding his sword at Loki's throat, all Asgardians agreed to sacrifice a great deal of their magic. When the deed was done, the Norse vanished from Munaan. Their dream-like journey at the side of the gods took them to the edge of the stars. They had become the Wayfarers.

364 CE Close to a century passed while Wayfarers spread throughout the Fringe, traveling from one small world to the next as they collected food and resources, and left settlers. Their numbers grew vast and they became comfortable with their great ships and their strange new world. In Asgard, the gods celebrated Bragi's awakening. But these good times once again heralded a great disaster. Ghüle appeared in the Fringe, bringing death and horror. The mightiest of berserkers inflicted a terrible toll upon orc, ogre, and troll, until the Ghüleans sent a champion. The Wayfarers saw it as a wolf-like figure and they called it Fenrir, a terrifying shadow beast with many heads, deadly claws, and serrated tentacles. A mighty demon or perhaps some unholy god, they were powerless to stop it as it fed on man, woman, and child alike, destroying settlements one after the next. The Ambrosian Covenant was breached, and the Lords of Asgard entered the prime universe. Tyr was deeply wounded in the clash, enabling his Asgardian kin to capture Fenrir and imprison it deep beneath Asgard. Deprived of their champion, the Ghüleans fled, seeking easier prey nearer the heart of Soltan's ephemeris. It took Odin's people many centuries to recover from their losses. It was foretold then that a cosmic snake would come to free Fenrir. The Wayfarers recognized it as the *Jormungand* of their legends, and they began to fear what could come from the darkness in the Great Vault.

737 CE Skadi ascended among Asgardians centuries later, and the humor was again festive among the gods. Not long afterward, a Wayfarer flotilla reached Frostholm on Calidar. News of the vast realm in the Great Vault was passed along. Faith in Odin and other gods was rekindled in Frostholm, and both sides agreed to exchange sons and daughters to seal their alliance. Meanwhile, followers of Loki muttered bilious words in the shadows, questioning the wisdom of such an alliance. During the next few centuries, other gods awakened, re-enacting ancient legends of the Norse. More Ghülean invasions took place, some failing to reach Calidar and its moons thanks in part to the Wayfarers' ferocity. It became the custom for young warriors of Nordheim to pledge a decade of their lives to help hold humanity's first line of defense, for everyone feared that one day Ragnarok would come.



Asgard

It is a great city on a mountain surrounded with clouds. The gods each have their private estates. Servants of the gods dwell in the halls of Odin's palace, *Valhalla,* and the *Fólkvangr* meadows in a valley of Asgard.

Bifrost, a magical rainbow bridge, connects Asgard directly to the netherworld, easing the journey of spirits chosen to serve their Asgardian gods. It leads to Heimdal's great hall, *Himinbjörg*, the entrance to the gods' Ambrosian domain. Only the gods and their spirit servants can see *Bifrost*. *Jotnar*, demons, and creatures powerful in magic need spells to reveal the bridge when Heimdal summons it.

Calidar's Norse infer incorrectly that Asgard includes the whole of the Ambrosian dimension. *Niflheim* is where spirits go after death. *Helheim* is home to the goddess Hel, deep beneath the mountains. Those who must atone remain there until the gods decide their final fates. The prime universe, *Midgard,* includes Soltan's ephemeris. *Utgard,* the "outer yard," is the Fringe, while *Jotunheim* is an outer plane and the native homeland of giants. Finally, the ancestral moons are seen as distinct realms—*Dvergheim, Alfheim,* and *Mannheim,* where Calidar's Norse originally appeared after their voyage through the Vortex.

Jotunheim

Jotnar originally hail from four interconnected planes, which Wayfarers call *Jotunheim*. In the first dwell stone and mountain giants. Cloud and storm giants claim the second. Fire and shadow giants come from the third. Sea and frost giants hold the last. Natural portals open and close depending on an arcane cycle, allowing passage between Soltan's ephemeris and the four realms. Giants traveled through and settled various places, from Calidar to Lao-Kwei and the Fringe (as needed by game referees). Those straying into Calidar's Dread Lands perish fairly soon thereafter, though surviving youngsters may adopt the ways of the native tribes. Giants prevail in certain regions of Calidar's vast wilderness, from the soaring mountains of Naean and Dorial to the icy heart of Mormoroth.

Giants are major races in Calidar's universe that aren't necessarily friendly to each other. Wayfarers ran across their colonies in *Utgard,* not far from Felis Minor, leading to violent confrontations. Fights escalated, involving at their respective levels Asgardians and *Jotnar*, the

giants' own deities. This first conflict was settled thanks to Forseti's shrewd negotiation. For their part, gods have agreed to a fragile truce, sometimes taking brides to settle their bargains, following precedents already established in Norse sagas. Nonetheless, brief clashes and individual quarrels aren't rare between Asgardians and *Jotnar* (or between mortals on both sides).

The Lords of Asgard

The pantheon counts four elder peers, who include its ruler Odin, Njord, Loki, and Tyr. Thirteen gods traditionally siege at the council in *Gladsheim,* including the first nine male gods ascending to Asgard. Thought to belong to *Lost Ones* according to ancient lore, the last four seats have remained empty. The pantheon's extant goddesses have been petitioning Odin and his council for these seats. There are three presumed factions in Asgard: 1. Odin, those of his blood, and Frigga, 2. Njord and Odin's in-laws, 3. Loki and Hel. The latter party and the in-laws are very loosely allied, although Skadi and Freyr have adopted a neutral stance. Asgard's four goddesses typically reject the notion gods should model their behavior after the old sagas. Frigga's views on this are the most radical. The other three see the sagas as a means to an end, whereas Heimdal, Thor, Tyr, and Njord understand them instead as fundamental truth.

What Asgardians fear most are the monstrous gods who built Ghüle. They sense these gargantuan aliens covet *Utgard* and *Midgard*. Wayfarer encounters with outer-world hordes have proven bloody enough to worry the Asgardians. They know more battles will come. Their priors gained clues from abandoned artifacts revealing that even the mysterious starfolk fear what lurks behind these invaders. This thought has pervaded the minds of the mortal followers, giving the mythological concept of *Ragnarok* an entirely different nature. They are convinced that a time will come when mortals and gods will fight one last battle, side by side, against the devourers of worlds.

Odin

Epithets: *The Wise One, Allfather, Lord of Valhalla*
Ranking: Greater god, elder peer, and honored ruler of Asgard
Interests: Time, wisdom, awakening of the Lost Ones
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (Odin is altruistic and magnanimous, but he can also be deceitful and manipulative), 💀 *Practical* (though calculating and patient, he often proves adventurous and cunning), 🗡 *Even-Tempered* (passionate and outspoken at times, these qualities can be tempered by the reserve and inscrutability of one who speaks only when he must)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Fellowship of Watchers* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 219)
Allies: Frigga (spouse), Tyr and Heimdal (allies), Bragi and Baldur (sons), Forseti (grandson), Brokk (serving demigod)
Hated Foes: All creatures honoring or serving the gods of Ghüle
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Grimsvik, central Steinfold); The Fringe; Osriel (Lorical and Lichtenhausen areas, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Loreath 16, 399 BCE
Pronunciation: OH-din

Mythology: As the yearnings of his mortal followers stormed through his mind, Odin pondered their ancient lore. Driven by the beliefs of his faithful, the Allfather ventured to the edge of three worlds—that of the mortal, the spiritual, and the divine. His first quest led him to a region of Utgard claimed by giants. A forgotten place far older than the coming of giants lay hidden at the outskirts of Soltan's light.

Deep inside a rock of the Great Vault was a most curious dwelling. Dust covered all things, and lights in endless hallways flickered as if dying. Towering denizens of all sorts seemed devoid of life, yet impervious to decay. At the heart of a crypt lay a shaft from which ghostly images emerged. A tabernacle stood nearby, studded with gems faintly glowing. As Odin studied the chamber, a guard taller than Odin himself stepped from an alcove.

Its eyes gleaming like fey embers, the guard spoke an obscure language. With his magic, Odin unveiled its meaning: "The key I require, for the tabernacle is locked." Unsure of what to answer, the Allfather asked, "What do you call yourself?" The guardian stood by the tabernacle and gauged the visitor. "I am the Watchman of the Well. I have no other name." Odin nodded. "My people may know you as someone from their past. They would call you Mimir; 'tis what I shall name you." Peering into Mimir's mind, the Allfather found the symbols the Watchman expected, which he recognized as runes of power. He spoke the requested symbols, an endless combination that few mortals could remember.

"Your runes are forthright," said Mimir. His finger then touched the tabernacle, spinning and pushing through a wondrous lock. "You are permitted to go forth," he said. "Be brief, for the power of the tabernacle grows faint." Odin acknowledged Mimir's concern and studied the artifact. As its purpose grew clearer, the Allfather observed the shaft's ghostly scenes. They revealed what he sought. Like the old sagas foretold, he bound his consciousness to Mimir's well, so that he might invoke its images forevermore just as if he'd plucked his own eye and dropped it within. The scenes glowed more vividly for it. "The tabernacle's power has been replenished," said Odin. "You may now rest again, Watchman of the Well, for my visit here has come to its end. This place will remain eternally veiled from the sight of mortals."

(Unknown author, 450 BCE)

Description: The Allfather favors no one, for he is the god of all things. He embodies war, hunting, fertility, arts, poetry, cunning, trickery, charms, wisdom, prescience, and magic. In each of these roles he is the greatest, and it is why he rules Asgard. Nordheimers and Wayfarers, man and woman, good and bad, warrior and wizard, thief and justiciar, human and otherwise, all honor him. Berserkers are wholly devoted to him. His cult prevails among Nordheimers and Wayfarers.

Calidar's Odin originally emerged as an alias of Soltan (see CAL1, page 65), though the old sagas already pictured him as missing an eye. Soon after he ascended, Odin sought the power of prescience. His path led him to three artifacts. The first was a device abandoned by ancient starfolk. It was a gate to parallel worlds and alternate futures. Odin understood it as Mimir's well, as described in the sagas. The second lay in Niflheim, a place where boiling ether roils from a spring. It was a nexus where *Ætherian Scrolls* from different world souls connected. The Allfather recognized it as *Hvergelmir*. The third was another alien device focused on quantum calculation, which Odin interpreted as *Urdarbrunn*. He moved this artifact to Ambrosia, whereupon Asgard was later built, and magically



veiled its hidden crypt. The Allfather bound all three artifacts to his divine consciousness, thus creating *Yggdrasil,* the source of his prescience.

His sons and his spouse remain his allies, save for individualistic and defiant Thor. Odin champions the return of Lost Ones. His avatar often goes about the world of mortals in disguise, to speak of old sagas not often told, so that missing gods may not be forgotten. He uses many masks to check on the business of other gods, including those of Asgard. The Allfather does not dislike anyone in Asgard, but he remains cautious about weaknesses of character and temptations, which could harm his realm. Neither he nor Soltan ever speak to each other, as they both avoid the subject of their former connection. He remembers all that Soltan knew up to the time their bond was severed, but never speaks of it as it no longer matters in his view.

Odin appears as an old man with an ornate patch over his missing eye. When away from Asgard, he carries the mighty spear Gungnir and rides his eight-legged horse, Sleipnir. His greatest shrine on Calidar houses a great library and a magical pool. It is said to be deadly to the unworthy peering into the crystalline water. Those blessed by Odin may see events of the past, although the visions are tricky because not all is always revealed. Favored temple offerings are the eyes of defeated foes, as well as magical items and artifacts related to sight.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Peers of the Faith*—berserkers are most likely to appear at the time of the beneficiary's dearest need (see Table 10, score of 18).
Preferred animal/monster: Ravens and wolves.

Preferred weapon/spell: Spear engraved with the *god* rune of power (detection spells).
Other Benefits: Odin's faithful must be vigilant that no harm be brought to ravens and raven-like creatures. A failure to act could mean losing their abilities for some time. Priors and zealots must sacrifice one of their eyes (and never attempt to regenerate it).

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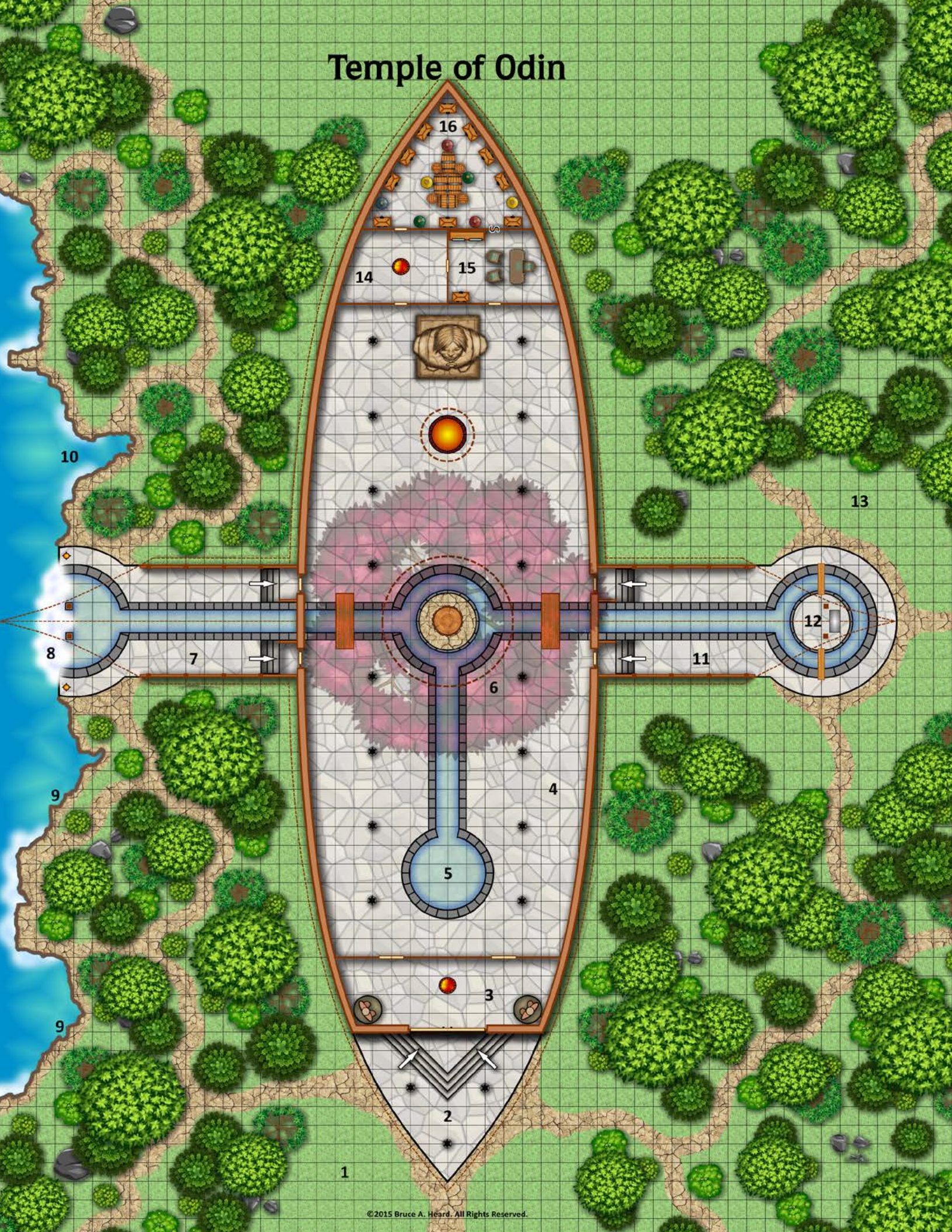
Baldur

Epithets: *Northern Sun, Prince of Asgard, Lord of Breidablik*
Ranking: Minor god, Munaan-born
Interests: Love, beauty, light, summer
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–4 (friendly, merciful, considerate, truthful), ☗ *Instinctive*–4 (intuitive, bold, creative, adventurous), ↯ *Lively*–5 (passionate, romantic, mirthful, flamboyant, and eccentric)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Odin (father and honored ruler of Asgard), Frigga (mother), Forseti (son), Bragi (half-brother)
Hated Foes: Creatures of darkness, and followers of gods who rule the night
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Krælir, southern Bergmark) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 13, 180 CE
Pronunciation: BAHL-der

Mythology: The young god casually sat on the white marble window frame, observing the hallowed valley spreading before Asgard. Frigga stood next to him, somber. "If the old sagas speak of your weakness to mistletoe," she said, "then the mortals will believe it, and so will you stand at risk. I'll not wait to find out, my beloved son. The plant has been forever outlawed in Asgard." Baldur turned from the amber and purple hued sunset. "Honored mother, let me face this threat on my own terms. You cannot be at my side at all times. If I be worthy, then mistletoe or any other danger will come to naught. I would rather my fellow Asgardians and those who put their faith in my name see me under this light—*my* light. I need a journey of my own to think this through."

Under his mother's worried gaze, Baldur faded from her sight. Heimdal dutifully summoned the Bifrost, and the young god departed on his ship, the magnificent *Hringhorni* rebuilt in honor of his awakening. The magical bridge vanished behind him as he sailed through the Ambrosian sky. Time went by while he pondered the nature of sagas and mortal beliefs. As his gaze drifted past the gunwales, he caught sight of a dark shape in the mist below. Baldur was unsure how long it had been there. Staying *Hringhorni* by a silver cloud, he blinked off the ship and, sword in hand, reappeared near the stalker.

But the mysterious presence was nowhere to be seen. Determined to shed light on the matter, the young god followed footprints he could see in the swirling mist. His path led deep inside a forest of majestic oaks. It is then he noticed extraneous growth dangling from the branches—without a doubt, dreaded mistletoe. The dark shape he'd tracked reappeared past a large boulder, a creature of animated wood not unlike the deadly frond. "Whom do you serve, woodman? Speak now or taste my steel," Baldur demanded. The creature hissed and blended into a nearby trunk, vanishing from sight.


Temple of Odin
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Cautious and not the least gullible as to the reason for his presence here, Baldur flipped his sword and thrust it behind him. The divine weapon found its mark. A wooden limb fell from the creature, who retreated into another oak. Suddenly, a darkness fell upon the woods, one that even he could not fathom. A slight sound to his right alerted him, and the young god dodged. Whizzing by, something narrowly missed his head and shattered against a tree. The bitter smell of mistletoe sap hung in the air.

"Enough," hollered Baldur. He was the god of light and he did not yield before the deepest of nights. Summoning a blinding aura, he dispelled the fey darkness at once. Caught within it, the woodman recoiled, its sap boiling and bursting through its supple bark. Baldur drove his sword into its chest. "Who sent you? Speak now, and I'll spare your miserable life." The woodman hissed from the pain, rasped, and began cackling before bursting in flames and turning to ashes. Baldur returned his sword to its scabbard and, when he looked up, not the smallest sprig of mistletoe remained. Frustrated, the young god vanished back to his ship. Standing at the bow, he hailed the mists around him. "I know of only one who can engender such impenetrable darkness. It is you, Hel, who cast this spell. If you hear me, know that I now watch you."

(Hlif-the-Mute, 1200 CE)

Description: The most handsome of Asgardians, the son of Frigga and Odin is also gifted in combat and bravery. It helps that most things thrown at him will always miss, save for weapons made of mistletoe. He enjoys success with the opposite gender. In accordance with the old sagas, he commands faithful from many walks of mortal life: warriors, artists, farmers, charismatic beings, and all those who seek the solace of divine light. He also is the god of truth, especially where light can dispel darkness and unveil treachery.

Thoughts dwell in his mind about a past wife, a fine goddess named Nanna, but she's a *Lost One*. Not one to stay alone for long (at least until Nanna's awakening), the god of summer relishes a steamy idyll with the goddess of winter, Skadi. His brother Bragi offered to keep their secret and allowed them to meet in one of his private halls. When outside, the two ply the heavenly clouds of Asgard aboard *Hringhorni*, Baldur's fabled magical longship, secretly mocking her cuckolded husband, Njord. He is wary of Loki snooping around him under various disguises, and despises Hel, a patron of darkness, even more.

Calidar's Baldur is often portrayed as a young, athletic, handsome man with golden curly hair and beard. Baldur's main shrine is an ever-shining golden hall. It is said that much magic was used to ensure it would glow as bright as the sun during the night, which certain followers of Teos-Soltan see as a slight to their mighty god. As can be expected, mistletoe and any derived substances or objects are illegal in all of Nordheim except Frostholm.

Temple of Odin—Map Key

1. Temple front yard
2. Open portico
3. Vestibule
4. Main hall
5. Magical spring (symbolizing Mimir's Well)
6. Sacred tree (symbolizing *Yggdrasil;* the tree's trunk extends through the temple's roof)
7. Seaside gallery
8. Waterfall (symbolizing *Hvergelmir)*
9. Seaside cliff
10. Sea level
11. Landside gallery
12. Sacrificial altar (symbolizing *Urdarbrunn)*
13. Hallowed grove
14. Meditation room
15. High prior's office
16. Temple stores

$. Secret door

Scale: 5ft per square

Favored temple offerings include items of art and fine clothing, whether magical or not.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Devout's Immunity* to non-magical missile weapons; such attacks always miss (see Table 10, score of 3).
Preferred animal/monster: Golden eagles, common or giant.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword engraved with the *sun* rune (charm spells).
Other Benefits: Baldur's priors and zealots earn a +2 bonus to defense checks vs. poison, unless it was made from mistletoe (–2 penalty to defense checks).

Bragi



Epithets: *Lord of the Harp, Oath Giver, Skald of Skalds*
Ranking: Minor god, born of the Outer Realm *(Utgarding)*
Interests: Bards, seers, fate, and oaths
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–6 (altruistic, modest, kindhearted, ingenuous, faithful, broadminded), ☗ *Instinctive*–6 (emotive, resourceful, inspired, artistic, curious, enterprising), ᛋ *Even-Tempered* (though mirthful and eccentric, he can also be sentimental and dreamy)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Odin (father and honored ruler of Asgard), Forseti (nephew), Thor (brother), and Baldur (half-brother)
Hated Foes: Cats and all cat-like beings
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Ingvarsgård, southern Steinfold) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Loreath 29, 364 CE
Pronunciation: BRAGG-ee

Mythology: Despite the dimness of the mountain's lair, golden rays danced as if alive, beaming from a wondrous harp. The sight brought relief to Bragi's sadness as he gazed upon the relic. "I've come for the harp," he announced. "Much do I desire it, for with it I may recall my fair Idun to life." The dwarven demigod eyed the divine skald with wicked interest. "Aye, me lord," answered Brokk. "But how will ye pay fer it?" Bragi lifted a brow. "What do you mean, dwarf? The sagas are clear. The harp was built for me." Brokk coughed and cackled. "I've had a bellyful of yer sagas. They speak of olden times that exist in naught but the minds of mortals. Nay, great lord. I'll not part with it so easily."

Bragi sighed with annoyance. "Fine. State your price, dwarf." Brokk ran his dark pudgy fingers through his beard. "Should it be so that ye perish or become dormant, my lord, yer essence will be mine forever." Bragi took a step back. "'Tis an outrage! Why not the Allfather's eye while you're at it?" Defiant, Brokk crossed his massive forearms. "Take it or leave it, 'tis no great matter to me which ye choose." Bragi glanced at the harp one more time and hesitated. "Fine. I agree." A long scroll filled with endless dwarven prose rolled open in Brokk's hand. "Put yer mark at the bottom, me lord, so this matter be sealed."

Bragi signed, seized the relic, and returned to his hall. As dawn rose upon Asgard, the god of skalds sat by the harp and played

a most magnificent tune that carried throughout Valhalla and to the very bowels of Helheim. But the fair Idun did not rise, and sadness overcame Bragi. Baldur came by. "Sorry I can't help, my brother. The harp is fine, but I think you should return it, as it didn't do what you needed." The god of skalds agreed and headed back to Brokk's lair.

"Break yer bond?" the dwarf said, aghast. "Not so fast, great lord. I sold ye me harp, and ye paid yer dues. The deal be fair, and the contract now lies safely in me vault." Bragi pointed a finger at him. "Do not toy with me, dwarf, for I'll inflict upon you a most-fearsome tune to render your miserable existence as joyless as Niflheim." Hesitant, Brokk grimaced. "Eh? The god of oaths breaking his promise?" he answered. "Betray yer bond, me lord, and all will learn of yer deceit. Nay! I propose a bet: yer music against mine. If ye win, forfeit be the contract and the harp be yers. If ye lose, the oath remains and I keep the harp. What say ye, me lord?" So certain he could defeat Brokk, Bragi relented.

The dwarf tapped against the wall, and the stonework revealed a colossal device with a vast keyboard, rows of pedals, immense steel and copper pipes, brass gauges, and steam hissing out its flanks through flared horns. Spirit servants scurried forth to activate giant bellows, jumping upon spring-loaded levers to stoke the fires within. At once, Brokk sat at the keyboard, using hands and feet to conjure a musical storm. Bragi responded in kind but, over time, the song of his harp drowned amid the dwarf's mechanical pandemonium. It seemed all was lost, when Bragi let go of the strings and instead composed a poem that told of his sorrow and the soothing memory of his beloved Idun. His divine inspiration was such that not even the monstrous calliope could overpower the skald of skalds. So fine were his words that the contraption fell apart, and Brokk's bond was forfeit.

(Ingvild-White-Hand, 1000 CE)

Description: A pantheon honoring glory on the battlefield features the obligatory skald of skalds. Such is Bragi who, armed with his golden harp, sings the praises of the gods and their heroes. Like many of Calidar's Asgardians, he rose from the memory of sagas told and retold by his mortal followers. Bragi favors bards, thespians, historians, orators, sages, keepers of the lore, and those who witness oath-takers.

The old legends speak of Brokk building a harp whose sound enabled Bragi's Life Force to ascend to Asgard. It is also said that his skill in poetry and music is such that, with the help of his harp, he can bring back to life those whose spirits have not yet returned to the world soul. In truth, he merely uses his music to call worthy spirits to serve in Asgard. He owns a drinking horn, the *bragafull*, which binds those who drink from it while making a vow. Elders in his clergy often carry such a cup, enchanted to cast a *geis* on oath-takers sharing its mead.

Aware of the affair between his brother Baldur and their cousin-by-marriage, Skadi, Bragi offered his private hall for them to meet. When anyone approaches in the adjoining hallway, especially Loki, Hel, or Njord, he sings their praises to alert the nearby lovers. Among his many allies, Bragi favors Odin, Tyr, and Baldur. He does also value Thor's courage. He has never sought companionship, and still hopes one day that Idun will return to Asgard.

Bragi is generally represented as an elderly man with white hair and a long white beard. His greatest shrine doubles as an illustrious school of bards and magical runes engraving. Favored temple offerings include lost poems of great artistry, fine tales of bravery yet unsung, and works of art dedicated to Idun.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Path of the Beast*—sirine: a singing ability capable of mesmerizing victims within a 30' radius; negated with a defense check (see Table 10, score of 11).
Preferred animal/monster: Nine song birds and creatures known for magical singing.
Preferred weapon/spell: Throwing disks or chakram engraved with a *praise* rune (spells related to reading, praying, speaking, singing, magical words, writing, and lore).



Brokk

Epithets: *Svartheimir, Keeper of the Netherfyre, Lord of the Undermountain*
Ranking: Dwarven demigod, Temporal of Nordheim
Interests: Blacksmiths, craftsmen, manual skill, engineering, mining
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*–4 (selfish, obtuse, vengeful, manipulative), 💀 *Instinctive*–4 (stubborn, short-tempered, quarrelsome, willful), 🗡 *Stern*–5 (austere, aloof, brooding, greedy, dour)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Odin (divine liege and honored ruler of Asgard)
Hated Foes: Defilers of forges, destroyers of fine works of craftsmanship
Centers of Faith: Mostly Nordheim (Hundstad, eastern Steinfold) and Osriel (Lubnica area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 2, 962 CE
Pronunciation: BROHK

Mythology: Deep under the mountains of mainland Frostholm lived an old dwarf. He'd dwelt there for many decades and became known for being able to create wondrous magical items. Little cared he for the clans of men living in the nearby valleys. His name was Brokk and he was as dark as the soot from his great forge. The village elders knew the old saga from before the Shrouded Journey. They spoke of a namesake, and his existence came to the attention of mighty Odin.

Disguised as a one-eyed crone, the Allfather approached the master crafter. "The great forge is no place for old hags. Away with ye!" said Brokk when the visitor appeared. "Long was my journey, dark one. I'll not turn back for I seek a fair bargain." The dwarf turned from his forge and observed the crone more carefully. "Eh? Ye seek a bargain? I do not deal with those who aren't what they seem." Odin approached the dwarf. "A curious thing, as the name you bear is no more yours than I am an old hag." Brokk squinted suspiciously at the visitor. "What seek ye here?" he asked.

"I desire the greatest of spears from the old sagas," answered Odin, "one that never misses and can slay the worst of evils lurking in the Great Vault. I see no other dwarf who could fashion it." Brokk ran a grimy hand through his long beard, a spark of interest glimmering in his eyes. "What ye request would be fit only for a god. Best ye ask not for things ye canst ill afford." Odin leaned past the dwarf to pick up a magical coal from the forge, and snuffed its fire with a breath. "State your price, dark one. I'll be the judge of its fairness," he said.

Brokk gestured for the coal, and when the Allfather placed it in his hand, the dwarf blew on it and rekindled its fire before throwing it back

into the forge. He then gave the visitor a sly, wicked grin: "I desire a night with the mightiest of queens, the one holding the keys of a realm where warriors dwell forever." Odin's crone-like appearance grew darker, taller, and more ominous. "What you demand is not fit for a dwarf. 'Tis in my power to offer you instead your own domain if you can craft that which I seek. It will be called Svartheim, and from it you will serve the lord of the realm as your liege." Brokk nodded. "Aye, 'tis payment fair enough for the spear of a god."

(Svartim-Forkbeard, 962 CE)



Description: Though described as wondrous craftsmen in the old saga, dwarves were never seen as divine. Brokk managed to ascend following his bargain with Odin. Rather than let anyone else benefit from the fabled blacksmith's skills, the Allfather wisely offered him a demigod's status in Asgard. It was also a means to keep a close eye on the swarthy fellow. Adopting Brokk's name from the old sagas seemed like a deliberate scheme to get attention—and Odin therefore questions what the dwarf's true game really is. In the minds of Nordheimers, Wayfarers, and dwarves in general, Brokk is now the master of Svartheim—the dark realm under the divine mountains of Asgard—and the protector of dwarven engineers, miners, and craftsmen. His gruff and mischievous disposition does not keep away more benevolent mortal followers.

Though a demigod subject of Odin, he is in fact an alias of Klangrîm Thunderforge, which no one else knows. Most of Brokk's followers hail from Nordheim. Because of this, Brokk is connected to Calidar's world soul. Should his cult expand significantly among Wayfarer dwarves, his allegiance would revert to the Fringe's world soul, eventually severing the alias's link with Klangrîm (which originally happened with Odin). Klangrîm does not actively seek followers in the Fringe. The alias is seen by his followers as greedy and malicious, which explains the difference in character between Brokk and Klangrîm.

As the Asgardian gods sought to recreate the wonders of the old sagas, the demigod has been busy crafting such artifacts as Odin's ring *Draupnir*, Freyr's golden-bristled boar *Gullinbursti,* and Thor's hammer *Mjölnir*. Since other dwarves of the old sagas still stand with the Lost Ones, Brokk became the primary master crafter. He thus forged Odin's wondrous spear, *Gungnir*. Brokk does not have any allies, although he craves Frigga's good graces. He avoids tangling with Asgardians, and prefers working on relics in exchange for Odin's protection.

Brokk's skin is black. Though coated with soot and grime, his hair shows the hues of silver and dark red. Stocky and massively muscled, he is the archetype dwarven blacksmith in the minds of his followers. His grand shrine includes a renowned weapons and armor manufacturing center. Many other shrines can be found in and near the Dvergarveg, of which he is the spiritual protector. Favored temple offering include magical objects, gems, and jewelry.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Might* (see Table 10, score of 1).
Preferred animal/monster: Fire salamanders; mythical imps dwelling by magical forges (minor smoke, fire, steam, or lava spirits).
Preferred weapon/spell: War hammer (or spells related to heating, bending, or producing metal).

Forseti

Epithets: *Divine Mediator, Lord of Glitnir*
Ranking: Minor god, born of the Outer Realm *(Utgarding)*
Interests: Justice, reconciliation, advocates
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*–8 (kindly, fair, unselfish, humble, forgiving, understanding, truthful, trusting), ☗ *Practical* (patient and obedient, he can also be shrewd and creative), ↯ *Lively*–3 (mirthful, sentimental, candid)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Odin (grandfather and honored ruler of Asgard), Frigga (grandmother), Baldur (father), Bragi and Thor (uncles), Heimdal (friend).
Hated Foes: Liars and false prophets
Centers of Faith: Mostly Nordheim (Økshus, Lisamby Island) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 15, 1288 CE
Pronunciation: for-SET-tee

Mythology: Hunched forward, the mountain giant studied the young god, his bushy frown nearly masking his eyes. "And who is this impudent 'Forayer' of whom you speak, Asgardian?" His voice was thick with Jotnar burr. "Freyr, my cousin." Forseti corrected with a respectful bow. "Long has he sought a bride since the Shrouded Journey. As the sagas alluded, he went looking for a suitable prospect in Jotunheim, and was smitten through the heart when he gazed upon your daughter's divine beauty. I hope you will forgive him for calling her by her name in the sagas, Gerth. It's an old habit of our mortal followers, you see."

The giant recoiled, one brow now rising enough to reveal dismay. "I've never heard of such tales," said the giant. "Your mortals should trust their gods more, and pay less attention to delusions from a forgotten past. They do not concern us giants." Forseti nodded with a smile. "Well, they don't. Not really. But the fact remains Freyr and Gerth are lovers. She seeks your permission to marry him and live in Asgard." The giant god sat back against his throne, disdain twisting his mouth. "I am no friend of Asgardians, and I do not consent to this union."

Forseti gave him a kind smile before responding. "It is true that many among us have clashed in the past. Isn't there peace to be had between our kin? Surely, such a union would bring benefits to all." The giant snorted. "I see no profit in this but the loss of a fine daughter to mine enemies. Ne'er will I trust an Asgardian." The young god showed his empty hands. "I came here alone, unarmed, and in peace. I'm no foe of yours, neither have I been, nor seek to be. A just bargain I offer in exchange for your daughter, and honored she will be." The giant bared his teeth. "And now I should sell my daughter like a whore? I shall have your head for this!"

Forseti gazed back at the giant, unafraid. "If not to the one she loves, to whom else would you give your daughter's hand? Though I hear it is customary among giants to compensate a father for his daughter. Would this not be as bad a bargain for the sake of your daughter's honor, and a cruel curse, for she loves another? Her first born male should rightfully come to be here at your side. In this way the offer is fair." The giant's frown returned as he leaned closer to the young god. "It may be a long time before a son ascends. Until then, I ask for your cousin's sword. I hear it is a mighty blade and worthy of a great god. While I hold it, he will surely not seek war." Forseti bowed. "A wise and forthright demand. You shall be known in Asgard as Gymir the Fair. If I so obtain what you seek, will you

drink of Bragi's cup? It is his nature to thus seal an oath that no Asgardian will break." The giant nodded. "That I will do."

(Bjarkmar-the-Old, 1300 CE)

Description: Forseti's claim to fame resides in a divine talent to make friends and resolve disputes. In the old sagas, he was the one who settled the conflict between Asgardians and the Jotnar. He protects political hostages involved in peace agreements and occasionally calls upon Bragi and his *bragafull* to guarantee oaths. Contrary to Tyr, who embodies law-making, Forseti is the one who best interprets laws in order to settle claims the most equitably. As such, he favors fairness among magistrates, arbitrators, diplomats, and paladins.

Aware of his father's amorous escapades, Forseti has foreseen a clash with Njord and anticipated a solution: Hel is unmarried as yet according to the old sagas, and she would benefit from a new companion; Njord's dour and brooding ways would appeal to her and produce a match to die for, certainly a better one than his with Skadi. The son of Baldur knows that Hel can overcome her morbid side, and, ever-so discreetly, he has begun his work as a matchmaker. (As a side note, this god is likely to be called upon to represent Teos in the upcoming case of Teos vs. Ululani-Two-Pearls.)

Though loyal to Odin, Forseti favors his immediate peers, Baldur, Frigga, Bragi and Thor. Bragi helped him settle disputes. Thor is also a good friend, considering the number of rows his rambunctious uncle has provoked, which Forseti settled. He remains more neutral as regards his in-laws, Loki and Hel, trying to prevent possible clashes between them and Odin's faction.

Youngest among the gods, Forseti is represented with a golden axe. His dwelling-place, Glitnir, is a resplendent hall made of gold and silver. His greatest shrine is also a school for lawyers and a famed court of law. His priors and associated adventurers are often hired to accompany negotiators into troubled lands. Favored offerings include signed settlements between injured parties which haven't been brought to his temples.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Heavenly Abode*—a place where the beneficiary possesses a wisdom one notch above that of a mortal when deliberating on cases presented to him (see Table 10, score of 19).

Preferred animal/monster: White weasels and similar giant breeds.

Preferred weapon/spell: Battle axe engraved with a *birch* rune (or detection spells).

Freyja

Epithets: *Ruler of the Valkyries, Mistress of the Runes, Lady of Sessrúmnir, Fairest One*
Ranking: Minor goddess, Munaan-born
Interests: Fertility, magic, war, praiseworthy death
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (truthful and tolerant, can also be manipulative and unscrupulous), 💀 *Rational*—6 (discerning, shrewd, pragmatic, disciplined, deliberate, determined), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (ambitious and indomitable, can also be sensual and romantic)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Hallowed Seven* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 220)
Allies: Njord (father), Freyr (twin brother), and Thor (step-cousin)
Hated Foes: Whosoever fells a hero through guile and treachery
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Ulvgård, Southern Steinfold), the Fringe, and Osriel (Lichtenhausen area, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 11, 156 BCE
Pronunciation: FRAY-yah

Mythology: It was a curious session at the Oortan Court, the first time a living god of Draconia had ever sent an envoy. Tall, upstanding, and with eyes like fire, the Red Dragon King's emissary wore over his scales a long crimson robe fitted with a stiff high collar. Supremely confident despite the motley audience of gods before him, Prince Krayvn pointed a clawed finger at a gloomy observer. "Klangrîm Forgemaster, four of your ilk have taken what belongs to my liege. It was made of *amberfyre,* which flows through my lord's heart. It is most sacred and it must be returned." The dwarven god bared his teeth in defiance before responding. "Know this, minion of a kingly wyrm, what lies in Holmring stays in Holmring. As fate has it, however, what you seek lies not in the possession of my peers. Your insolence is as misplaced as your presence here." Krayvn's reptilian eyes turned into slits as he pondered his response. "Then I ask you, *Hammer of Kragdûr,* who now keeps the sacred torc? Last I knew, the dwarves had it."

The god of blacksmiths looked to one side. "It has come to my attention that the four mighty craftsmen of Kragdûr were cheated of their most fine labor. She who tricked them now stands among us, wearing the ill-gotten fruit of her dark deed. Lady Freyja of Asgard, what say you for yourself?" Dignified, with one brow raised, the Fairest One stood. A magnificent torc, brilliant and shimmering like a river of stars, sat coiled like a serpent around her slender elven neck. "I know naught of any tricks,

Lord of Forges," she answered. "My bargain with the four craftsmen was fair and forthright. Each sought a favor of me. Each was satisfied to his fondest yearnings. Thus do I bear neither guilt nor shame."

Transfixed by the torc, Krayvn hissed. "These dwarves had sworn to craft the Torc of Amberfyre and received generous payment for their work. They were bound by their oath and had no right to sell it. The torc belongs in Draconia." Klangrîm bristled. "None but dwarven masters, each a glorious hero of epic lore, could craft such marvel," grated the god of blacksmiths. "It belongs to its makers!" Mumbles of dissent rose as the audience chose one side or the other.

While Thor and Freyr stood by their peer, Odin remained quiet, though watchful. His assessing gaze crossed that of Khrâlia and Krîma. A godly frost giant sitting in the back next to Loki observed the Fairest Lady with mounting interest when she raised a hand to bring quiet to the court. "No one is worthy who cannot protect what is most dear to them," she boldly declared. "*Brisingamen* now rests upon my neck. Whosoever wishes to challenge my right, meet me before the Bifrost. There will I stand with my valkyries and my peers."

(Teit-the-Wise, 1100 CE)

Description: Born from the minds of mortals recalling the old sagas, she stands as the daughter of Njord and as the twin sister of Frey more in spirit than in flesh. Thought of as an elf, she shares no common parentage with the Lords of the Briarwoods. Freyja is first among Asgard's valkyries. She is the mistress of Fólkvangr, wherein lies Sessrúmnir, her hall in Asgard. Magic and glory are the attributes she favors most in combat. Wizards and warriors, whether human or elven, honor her equally.

There is more to *Brisingamen*'s story. Her deed completed, Freyja sent the four master crafters to Svartheim to work forever under Brokk's supervision. Thus Klangrîm Thunderforge heard of the incident. With this torc, Freyja can dispense using Bifrost and go where she pleases, including other pantheons' divine sanctums. She avoids using it openly to conceal its true power (if this were known, it could cause a war among gods). Naghilas almost discovered her secret when he nearly bumped into her while she spied on him in his tower. Since then, she has developed an interest in the ruler of Sadarya. Her presumed husband being a Lost One, Naghilas seems like a worthy prospect with whom to father children.

The Fairest Lady respects Odin, but questions his sibylline habit of keeping secrets and not sharing reasons for making decisions. Freyja resents not having a seat on Asgard's council. She remains on good terms with Tyr, whom she encourages to regain rulership of Asgard. She expects him to grant her a seat in Gladsheim if he succeeds. Her immediate "kin" are her best allies.

Freyja is often represented wearing a feathered cloak and riding a chariot pulled by giant white lynxes. Her greatest shrine includes a school of wizardry and a workshop for the creation of magical runes. Carved on stone, wood, bones, or ivory, these runes are equivalent to scrolls found elsewhere in the Great Caldera. Favored offerings are golden lock-rings holding a lock of hair from fallen heroes.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Loyal Companion*—a white lynx or similar creature (see Table 10, score of 8).
Preferred animal/monster: White lynxes and giant felines.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword engraved with the *horse* rune (or spells related to healing or death).

Other Benefits: Once per adventure, priors can retain the spirit of a companion-at-arms felled in battle, to fight at their side as a spirit warrior or a Valkyrie. Spirit warriors possess the Life Force of the deceased, up to that of celestials, with similar abilities (see *Divine Servants*, page 211). They vanish when all foes are dead or have fled. This ability replaces one in Table 12 listed under "Fertility," "Magic," or "War" (see *Special Abilities*, page 188).

Freyr

Epithets: *Sunbringer, Elven Light, Lord of Ljosalfheim, Hated by None, Beli's Bane*
Ranking: Minor god, Munaan-born
Interests: Earth, fertility, wealth, life-giving rain, and beneficial sun
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (friendly and merciful, he also is selfish and as unscrupulous as his twin sister), 💀 *Rational*—4 (analytical, calculating, deliberate, stubborn), 🗡 *Lively*—4 (sentimental, passionate in love, eccentric, and high-spirited)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Freyja (twin sister), Njord (father), Frigga (aunt), Thor (step-cousin)
Hated Foes: Whosoever despoils furrow and farm, as well as followers of Ashebai (see *Gods of Alfdaín)*
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Kaldmyr, Central Steinfold) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Seithean 11, 156 BCE
Pronunciation: FRAY-er

Mythology: The mood in Valhalla was grim. Before Odin sitting on his throne stood Freyr, arms crossed and chin up. "Speak not of the sagas," said the Allfather. "A worthy prospect the giantess is not if she will cost you your sword. 'Tis an affront and a threat to Asgardians. Never will Gymir give it back." Nods and mutterings rose from the assembly witnessing the divine row. Defiant, Freyr responded. "If as you say the sagas matter not, then my beloved may never ascend from the Lost Ones. Long enough have I languished while searching for a suitable companion, and none here match my desires."

Odin pointed a finger at the elven god. "You are impatient, selfish, and unwise. You had a prospect with Floria Tanglemane. She was more than willing, and yet you casually dismissed her." Freyr rolled his eyes. "She is overly sweet like a child's candy. No sooner than I walked from her, she forgot the entire matter took place and returned to throwing flowers and love all around. I say Floria is no match for the one I call Gerth. A towering conquest she is, one to rekindle a god's broken heart and melt a glacier." The Allfather groaned with exasperation. "For Valhalla's sake," he said, "one does not measure a companion's worth from the curve of her hips and girth of her bosom! To give your sword away I forbid!" Not everyone in the assembly agreed. Frigga frowned. Freyja smiled. Her twin brother shrugged dismissively. "The deal is already done," shot back Freyr. "Old Gymir has the sword, and my beloved is on her way here as we speak."

Odin stood, threatening as few had ever witnessed. Brooding clouds veiled Asgard's sky like curtains suddenly pulled. Thunder echoed in the mountains. Surprised and dismayed, Thor lifted his hands and shook his head. "'Twasn't me!" he said. Odin's voice rumbled

like a brewing storm. "You are insolent and irresponsible, son of Njord! Henceforth do I ban you from leaving Asgard. Go to your hall!" Njord opened his mouth to intervene when Frigga approached her kingly spouse and laid a hand on his arm, trying to calm him. She glanced at Tyr, silently soliciting his assistance.

Not to be left behind, Thor summoned Mjölnir. "I swear to bash that giant's head at once," he declared, raising his mighty weapon. Tyr looked at him with a frown. "Do not throw oil on this blaze, Thor Odinsson," he said. "Ponder instead the wisdom of ill-inspired wars." An earth-shattering clap of thunder drowned Thor's heated response. Alarmed, Brokk, who was delivering a fine relic, slowly backed away, then ducked under a table. Skadi, standing close to Baldur, laughed. "Like, I'm so sure," she hollered, "have the giantess like, pick a pair of feet already!" The Prince of Asgard chimed in response. "Lo, I know of a most fine prospect, the stunning islander goddess Ululani-Two-Pearls. Surely, she. . ." Baldur grew quiet as he noticed Skadi's dubious expression. Loki, who'd caught the suggestion, grinned wickedly and nodded with glee. Heimdal glared at Loki, slowly reaching for his sword. In the wake of his wager with Njord, who was somberly eyeing Skadi and Baldur, Forseti pointed out Hel offering to take bets. As Bragi sang louder to cover the din of the gods' wrath shaking the halls of Valhalla, Frigga seized a cup of mead and glumly went to her hall. So passed another day in Asgard.

(Bjarkmar-the-Blind, 1400 CE)

Description: In the minds of his followers, Freyr governs farming and the bounty of the land. A fine warrior, he also stands as the protector of Nordheim elves. Warriors, farmers, land owners, and druids typically honor him.

After the initial controversy blew away, Freyr did marry buxom Gerth, but since they issued no children, his fabled sword remains with her father. The blade is notorious for being able to wield itself for the sake of its owner. It is customary for divine guests to adopt the size of Asgard's peers when dwelling there, a practical consideration for gods small and large. The trouble with his union is that the mountain giants have been at war with their fire cousins, possibly sparking unwanted trouble in the Fringe and with Asgard.

Freyr's best ally is his twin sister. Despite his row with Odin, he remains on reasonably good terms with the Allfather. Odin expects him to have many children and soon, therefore preferring Freyr got down to business rather than gallivant with his friend, Thor. Freyr sympathizes with both his aunt and his father. He doesn't see much appeal in Hel, as he favors sunlight and manly fertility over death and decay. He sees Loki as a counterweight to Odin's supremacy.

Like his twin sister, he is an elf in spirit and appearance, and is in reasonably good stead with the Briarwoods. A number of Nordheim elves joined Wayfarer clans in the Fringe and adopted their ways. His greatest shrine in Nordheim includes large food stores enchanted to prevent vermin and decay. Its contents are guarded against times of want, when crops fail and people go hungry. Favored temple offerings include enchanted torcs, armbands, or medallions in the form of golden boars.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Breath*—"solar burst," shadow creatures and most undead receive a –2 penalty to defensive rolls (see Table 10, score of 20).

Preferred animal/monster: Boars, giant boars.

Preferred weapon/spell: Sword engraved with the *sword* rune (or druidical spells).



Other Benefits: Pious followers enjoy a +2 Per bonus when interacting with giants and their servants. Once per adventure, priors and zealots can bind the spirit of a slain foe of the cult to an item crafted in the form of a golden boar. The foe must have had at least half as much Life Force as its slayer. The item provides a +1 AR bonus for each binding, up to +5. These two abilities replace one in each of Tables 11 and 12 listed under "Earth & Fertility" (see *Special Abilities*, page 188).

Frigga

Epithets: *Beloved, Mistress of Fensalir, Queen of Asgard, Lady of the Sky*
Ranking: Minor goddess, Munaan-born
Interests: Sky, air, winds, fate, good fortune
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*—4 (altruistic, humble, merciful, truthful), 💀 *Practical* (patient and obedient, she also is sentimental and intuitive), 🗡 *Stern–4* (dreamy, wary, ascetic, and somewhat self-conscious)
Godly Cabals: *The Hallowed Seven* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 220)
Allies: Odin (husband and honored ruler of Asgard), Baldur (son), Forseti (grandson), and Tyr (steadfast ally).
Hated Foes: All creatures honoring or serving the gods of Ghüle
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Birkehavn, southwestern Steinfold) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 5, 41 CE
Pronunciation: FREE-gah

Mythology: Sleipnir chuffed as it leaped into the rumbling gray roils of the netherworld's storm. A pack of spectral dogs howled at its sides as Odin brandished Gungnir and signaled the Wild Hunt to begin. The Allfather expertly handled the reins, his beloved sitting on his lap, nestled against his chest. The eight hooves of the fabled mount left a trail of gleaming ripples that faded in the ethereal distance. Somewhere behind, Skadi's horn bellowed mournfully. In the shadows of limbo ahead, terrified spirits fled as they should, while others who knew what was coming proudly stood their ground to meet their destinies.

Eager for the hunt, Freyr raced ahead, riding his golden boar as it grunted with glee. Hot on its hooves, Freyja stood proudly in her chariot. The thunder of Asgardians charging forth echoed in the netherworld's endless immensity as the Wild Hunt stormed through swarms of the newly departed. Claimed spirits were pulled into the gods' wake, gathering behind Odin or Freyja. While the accursed were bound to Hel, the remainder scattered into the storm to meet other fates.

"All this is so dramatic," said Frigga. "Yet I question why we act so." As he skewered a random demon spooked by the charge, Odin glanced at his wife. "'Tis who we are. 'Tis what we do," he answered. The queen of Asgard frowned. "But must it always be so, husband?" she asked. "We behave at the whim of mortals. And their whims spring from old sagas. What are they but echoes from a Shrouded Past? No one can tell whether they are accounts from olden times, prophecies, or mere fantasies. Whatever they are, I fear they will lead us to our doom." Odin steered his mount past a towering pillar of swirling darkness. "The sagas lie in our hearts and souls," he answered grimly. "It matters not whence they came."

"But it does," said Frigga. "Our peers strive to relive the legends, sometimes for the better or mostly for the worse. Your eye, your crows, your horse, your baubles, and your own wife all come from the sagas. These old scriptures, my husband, are vague, incomplete, and full of contradictions. Some say that I am Freyja, and she is me. What nonsense is this? They can only be the fruit of confused mortal minds, and as such, I say they are neither tales of our past nor prophecies. They must be destroyed."

Odin lifted Gungnir one more time to signal the end of the hunt, before steering Sleipnir to return to the Bifrost. "This we cannot do, my beloved," he answered. "The sagas keep our mortals together. Without the sagas, the Lost Ones are doomed. Without the sagas, our heritage fades into oblivion and so would Asgard." Undeterred, Frigga shot back, "And with them, our path leads to Ragnarok. Though we do not speak of it, we both know how it ends. The sagas must be forever veiled with a *Spell of Erasing*. Asgard must stand on its own merits. I beseech you, my husband, let Asgardians write their own destinies."

(Ingvild-White-Hand, 1000 CE)

Description: Frigga ascended from mortals imagining Odin's marital status. Though a minor goddess, the queen of Asgard rules in the Allfather's absence. As a patroness of love and fertility, she is a match for Freyja, Freyr, and Baldur. As Lady of the Sky, she stands up to Freyr (rain and beneficial sun), Thor (thunder and lightning), and Njord (wind and storms at sea). Frigga also governs fate and wisdom, and can wield a sword. She favors mothers, queens, scorned women, air wizards, fortunetellers, and all that dwells and travels in the sky.

Frigga weaves the heavenly clouds surrounding Asgard, and knows of all happening there. She summons even more to conceal Baldur's romantic cruises. Frigga also shares with Odin a talent for divination. The condition for her prescience is that she may never speak in plain words of what she sees. Her visions keep her edgy and troubled, especially as regards Ragnarok, leading other gods to think her Asgard's "Drama Queen."

Frigga is loyal to her husband and protective of Baldur, who, in her eyes, can't possibly do any wrong. Because of this, Loki deems Baldur a "mama's boy." On the other hand, she respects her dour brother. Though most of Odin's sons aren't of her blood, she tries to hold his rambunctious family in check. Wary of Odin's escapades, Frigga will aim her displeasure at his conquests.

Tall and stately, she wears a crown of heron plumes symbolizing silence, and white robes with a golden girdle holding a key ring typical of Norse housewives. The keys give access to all the halls in Asgard. Her grand shrine at Birkehavn includes a nunnery centered around an oracle. Her clergy seeks to rewrite or eliminate prophetic sagas predating the Shrouded Journey. Favored temple offerings involve the burning of such legends taken from skalds.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Protection* (see Table 10, score of 6).
Preferred animal/monster: Herons and long-legged avians.
Preferred weapon/spell: Javelins engraved with a *need* rune (or divination spells).



Heimdal

Epithets: *Guardian of Asgard, Keeper of the Bifrost Bridge, Lord of Himinbjörg, Bearer of Gjallarhorn, the White God*
Ranking: Minor god; Munaan-born
Interests: Peace and protectors
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*—5 (humble, merciful, tactful, truthful, magnanimous), 💀 *Rational*—6 (inquisitive, cautious to the point of paranoia, focused, stubborn, highly-principled, steadfastly loyal), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (outspoken and indomitable, yet ascetic and aloof)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Odin (honored ruler of Asgard), Tyr (ally), Thor and Forseti (friends)
Hated Foes: Whosoever intrudes upon Asgard; Loki and his followers
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Sølvdal, west-central Steinfold) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 7, 195 BCE
Pronunciation: HAYM (as in "hay" + "m") -doll

Mythology: Glum was the sentinel of the gods as he looked upon the Bifrost's gate beneath his great hall. Nothing but the vast expanse of Frigga's clouds swirled beyond, for he hadn't summoned the bridge, and no one had come in or gone out. "Whoever stole Freyja's Brisingamen must still be in Asgard," he thought. He listened. Nothing but the voices of his peers could be heard as he shifted interminably his keen senses from one hall to the next. All were present but one: Loki. His suspicion grew as palpable as the handle of his sword as he scoured every corner of the divine domain.

As he listened, Heimdal reflected upon the time of his ascension. He'd sworn to Odin to defend the Bifrost and protect his peers, including Loki. Yet the old sagas were full of stories about the trickster's deceit. To help with his duty, the Allfather had enabled the Bearer of Gjallarhorn to sacrifice an ear to Mimir's well, thus bestowing him with the ability to hear all which could be. This was foretold in the sagas, and thus did he stand convinced of their fundamental truth. The day would come when he would slay Loki, and if his fate was to die for that, then so be it.

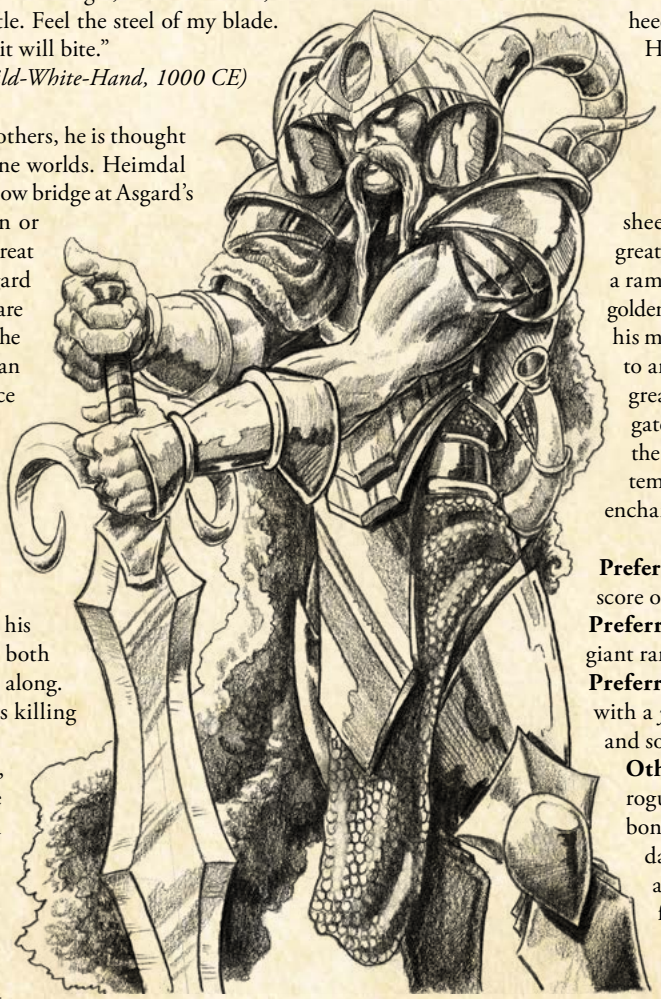
As his thoughts drifted, something unusual caught his ear. It was a voice, but its spoken words were magically veiled. Since all the gods were accounted for, it had to be Loki. Blinking in and out of various places, Heimdal ascertained the voice's correct location. It was a rock emerging from Frigga's clouds.

"You breathe with your mouth open," said Heimdal as he appeared on the rock. "I know it's you, Loki." The call of a shadow seal responded. "Your cheap tricks do not fool me," Heimdal shot back as he vanished from his vantage point. He reappeared on the other side of the rock just in time to see Loki fade away. His nagging voice lingered, "Catch me if you can, Keeper of the Bifrost!" After the two blinked out and popped into various places of Asgard, Heimdal at last caught his quarry and pressed his sword against his throat, just under Freyja's stolen torc.

The slyest of gods squirmed under the guardian's unflinching grasp, and then cackled. "O mighty warrior, spare me, spare me!" he pleaded with a mocking tone. His grin grew wider and more wicked as his captor recovered Freyja's stolen torc. "Yes, do take it back," said Loki. "If you only knew what it does. Heimdal, you old goat, of all Asgardians you are the greatest fool."

"Laugh all you wish, Loki Trick-Monger," said Heimdal, "but you are no match of mine in battle. Feel the steel of my blade. Stay familiar with it, for one day it will bite."

(Ingvild-White-Hand, 1000 CE)



Description: Born of nine mothers, he is thought to be made from the spirits of nine worlds. Heimdal guards the Bifrost, a magical rainbow bridge at Asgard's entrance, which he can summon or dismiss at will. He will sound his great horn, *Gjallarhorn*, if he senses Asgard is in danger. No matter where they are in Asgard or away in other planes, the gods will hear this call. The guardian of the gods favors sentinels, palace guards, and oath-bound warriors who defend the helpless.

Keen of hearing, he's become aware of Loki's perverse nature. He bides his time until he can prove to Odin that the son of Laufey is nothing but a felon. He hates the trickster, and has become his worst enemy. Mortal followers on both sides feel the same and do not get along. The old sagas sing of the two gods killing each other during Ragnarok.

Heimdal has feelings for Freyja, but does not declare them. He fears they would distract him from his duty as Asgard's watchman. The sagas do not speak of it, so he believes he wasn't meant to have a bride. Therefore, he lives a lonely existence in *Himinbjörg*, his great hall, sipping the finest of meads as he watches the Bifrost bridge. He did not heed Loki's mockery after recovering Brisingamen. He did, however, caution Freyja about the blood of evil dragons, for it is cursed and will bring sorrow to those who abuse its powers. Thor is a friend whom he will help when he can. Heimdal remains Odin's and Tyr's steadfast ally.

A great warrior clad in white armor and a sheepskin cloak, he bears a set of gold teeth. His great helm and sword's pommel connote the shape of a ram's head with golden horns. He owns a mythical golden-maned horse, *Gulltoppr,* born from the minds of his mortal followers. It possesses abilities comparable to an empyreal (see *Godly Trappings*, page 211). His greatest shrine on Calidar is a mighty silver-plated gatehouse guarding Sølvdal's western entrance and the passage toward the heart of the Steinfold. Favored temple offerings include the finest mead, preferably enchanted as magical potions.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Godly Shield* (see Table 10, score of 2).

Preferred animal/monster: Common or giant rams.

Preferred weapon/spell: Sword engraved with a *yew* rune (or spells related to hearing and sounds).

Other Benefits: Pious followers can hear noise as rogues with comparable Life Force (or earn a +15% bonus if they already possess such talents). Once a day, priors and zealots can cast magic as an innate ability enabling them to eavesdrop on a remote place for 1d4 minutes. They must have already visited the target area. These two abilities replace one in each of Tables 11 and 12 listed under "Peace & Protector" (see *Special Abilities*, page 188).

Beasts of Asgard

Asgard features a number of mythical creatures, which are summarized here. Unless noted otherwise, all creatures listed here have the abilities of empyreals (see *Godly Trappings*, page 211).

Fenrir: *(Fen Dweller)* It is a creature sages describe as a spawn of Loki. In Calidar's universe, it is a cosmic beast with wolf-like features. Ghülean gods created it on purpose to intimidate the more gullible gods of Asgard.

Geri and Freki: *(Ravenous* and *Greedy)* Odin's two wolves follow him at all times. It is said he feeds them from scraps in his feasting hall, but in truth they are known to devour the bodies of fallen foes in Ambrosia or the Netherworld.

Gullinbursti: *(Gold Bristles)* is Freyr's wondrous boar. According to the old sagas, Brokk and a lost brother created the beast which had bristles in its mane that glowed in the dark. Freyr either rides this boar, or stands in a chariot pulled by Gullinbursti.

Gullinkambi: *(Golden Comb)* A gold rooster lives in Asgard which, according to the sagas, will crow and warn Valhalla when Ragnarok comes. Another, a crimson rooster by the name of Fjalar *(Deceiver),* will do the same in the woods of Jotunheim. So will a dark one dwelling in Helheim. These three creatures have the abilities of celestials.

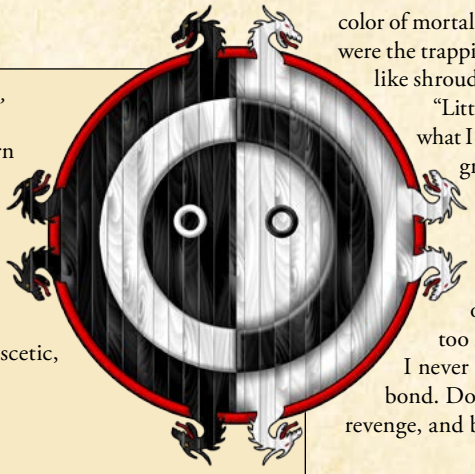
Gulltoppr: *(Gold Top)* It is Heimdal's horse, one of many fabulous mounts in Asgard. Sagas speak of other mythical horses that now roam Asgard freely, such as Alsvin, Alsvinder, Arvakr, Svaðilfari, Skinfaxi, and Hrímfaxi whose owners are now Lost Ones. These mounts may be loaned for a time to worthy heroes.

Heidrun: (*Bright Secret*) This she-goat's udders produces a never ending supply of divine mead to refresh gods and heroes of Valhalla during their feasts. Heidrun is a celestial.

Hildisvini: *(Battle Swine)* As Freyr, her sibling, Freyja also owns a battle boar created by dwarves of the sagas. Loki once spread a rumor that Hildisvini was none other than a lover of Freyja's who transformed into a boar to visit the goddess.

(Section continued on page 161)

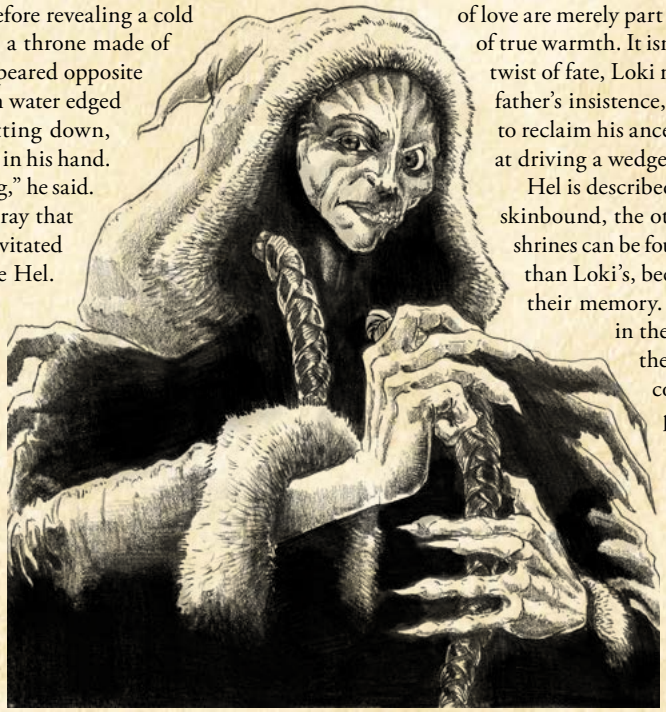
Hel



Epithets: *Hidden One, Lady of Helheim, Mistress of the Helungar*
Ranking: Minor goddess; Munaan-born
Interests: Death, the underworld, ancestry, graves
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*—5 (insensitive, heartless, vengeful, mistrustful, greedy), 💀 *Practical* (indifferent to the concerns of the living or of the dead), 🗡 *Stern*—5 (ascetic, brooding, haughty, vain, humorless)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Loki (father and ally), Njord (friend and possible lover)
Hated Foes: Those who despoil the resting place of the dead
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Østskjold, Håvardar Rock) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 26, 93 BCE
Pronunciation: as in "hell"

Mythology: Helheim's vast walls soared beyond sight and into its shadowy vault, where fleeting movement caught the eye but never dwelled long enough to reveal itself. A faint but eerie moaning lingered in the distance, as its massive iron gate ground open. "Come forth, Njord Storm King." The voice came from within, stern and commanding. The Lady of Helheim appeared from the dark to welcome her august visitor. On one side, her long face and hands were sickly white. On the other, skinbound flesh stretched on her bones like desiccated parchment torn in a few places. She wore a gray robe pooling at her feet, adorned with a few cobwebs and certain odd things scurrying through tears and folds in the fabric. Somber as ever, Njord saluted his host and stepped in.

The scene spun for an instant before revealing a cold but haunting hall. Lady Hel sat on a throne made of black, glistening stone. Another appeared opposite hers, made of roiling blue and green water edged with the sea's pale froth. After sitting down, Njord bent forward, a gift appearing in his hand. "Young Forseti arranged our meeting," he said. "This is but a token of courtesy. I pray that it serves you well." The ivory ball levitated from his fingers and hovered before Hel. Cold and haughty, she watched runes carved on its surface shift silently, before nodding her thanks. "Long has it been since the visit of a peer," she said. "Quiet and remote is my domain." Njord cautiously leaned back. "So is mine," he answered. "Few are those who do not linger at Odin's court. Perhaps we should create our own," he added. Hel's head rolled back as she laughed. As her voice echoed in the sepulchral hall, her cadaverous side turned black while the other took on the color of mortal flesh, both halves symmetrical and perfectly matched. Gone were the trappings of death, and a sumptuous red gown replaced her tomb-like shroud. Njord realized then her stark beauty and stunning appeal.



"Little time does your wife spend at your court," she said abruptly. "Is what I hear true, that she hides in another's arms?" Njord's expression grew more somber yet. "That may be so," he answered grimly. "I believe she coveted one party and earned another when she ascended. In this way, the old sagas must be true." Hel nodded slowly. "It is sad that those enjoying immortality treat it with so little concern. I know what brings you here, Njord of the Silent Deep. I can fill the void that ails your heart for I too know solitude all too well. Those few I choose as my friends I never deceive, but never do I forgive those who betray my sacred bond. Do not permit the frivolity of another to soil your honor. Seek revenge, and back you I will. Only then will I give you what you desire."
(Bjarkmar-the-Old, 1300 CE)

Description: Hel was born from the beliefs of Calidar's Norse in the old sagas that speak of her and her relation with the dead. She is thought to be the daughter of Loki, and most of the gods adopt this idea as fact. She finds the good looks of Asgardians and their fixation with love and fertility futile, as all decays sooner or later, including them. Her followers are those who tend to the dead and protect their graves.

Odin appointed Loki's spiritual daughter as the guardian of *Helheim,* the dark world of the cravenly departed beneath Asgard—the spirits of the lazy and those who died in their beds. It is a frozen wasteland populated with unspeakable monsters and the *Helungar,* children of the mist who guard her hall and its forbidden treasures. She views the dead in her charge as owing a debt of which they must acquit themselves before being released to the netherworld. The suffering of the living and the dead is not her concern.

She's loyal to Loki, even though his behavior remains entirely unpredictable. She sees Njord as a possible companion and ally, although somewhat pragmatically. Though his lust isn't unwelcome, passion and the trappings of love are merely part of her bargain, for she is heartless and devoid of true warmth. It isn't in her nature to have progeny (in a perverse twist of fate, Loki may prove more useful in this respect). At her father's insistence, Hel offered Tyr her support should he want to reclaim his ancestral right as ruler of Asgard. It is an attempt at driving a wedge between Tyr and Odin.

Hel is described as part dead and part alive, one side dark or skinbound, the other live but sometimes bluish and cold. Her shrines can be found throughout Nordheim much more readily than Loki's, because her clergy caters to the dead and honors their memory. Built of unmelting ice inset with or carved in the shape of bones, her grand temple dominates the port in Østskjold. Favored temple offerings consist in burning the blood of those guilty of plundering tombs consecrated to Hel.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Death* (see Table 10, score of 5).
Preferred animal/monster: Common and giant wolves.
Preferred weapon/spell: Battle axe engraved with a *death* rune (or necromantic spells).

Loki

Epithets: *Trickster, Beastbringer, Lord Wanderer*
Ranking: Greater god and elder peer of Asgard; Munaan-born
Interests: Needful change, chaos, mischief, thievery, monsters
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*—6 (dreadfully selfish, deceitful, unscrupulous, vengeful, perverse, spiteful), ☗ *Instinctive*—8 (utterly unpredictable, impulsive, irrational, emotional, antagonistic, meddlesome, cunning, defiant), ↯ *Lively*—8 (though playful and with a caustic sense of humor, he is irreverent, nihilistic, individualistic, psychotic, shameless, and ultimately cowardly)
Godly Cabals: *The Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Hel (daughter and ally), Ashebai (friend, Alfdaín)
Hated Foes: All gods of Calidar's universe
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Nordhavn, northern Frostholm) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 24, 297 BCE
Pronunciation: LO-kee



Mythology: Under the magical globes' green and purple glow, the cavern's massive walls shook as Fenrir pulled on *Gleipnir* with all its strength and ferocity. Forged by the dwarves of Svartheim, the wondrous bond imprisoning the beast held steadfast despite its reckless fury. The colossal wolf howled in pain, its immense jaws propped wide open by the steel of a great sword thrust within. Spittle, blood, and the vilest of bile dripped from its mouth, snaking into a crack in the cold, black stone. Made of the deepest shadows, the ungodly beast grew tendrils of hatred writhing from its back while feral eyes opened and shut on all parts of its flesh.

Loki stood behind the magical barrier separating the hidden hall from Fenrir's prison, glumly observing the captive. Though Fenrir's roars were muted, the ground still trembled. Odin appeared and stood quietly next to Loki. "The sagas say this creature is of my blood," said the trickster. "They tell of its breaking free at the end of all things, and of devouring you." Odin gazed longingly at the beast with his all-perceiving eye, and turned to Loki. "The sagas say many things, not all of which is always understood. If Fenrir is your kin, it was in another time and another place—perhaps a mere parable. It may not need be so today. Your ascending in this lifetime may have freed you from this bond." The trickster looked bitter. "How can you trust me?" he asked. "Everyone says I will betray Asgard when the time comes." Odin nodded slowly. "But will you, Loki?" questioned the Allfather. "Is this what you really wish?"

The beast on the barrier's opposite side gave Odin a sulfurous look, as if it had heard and understood what he'd said. "I know not what I want," answered Loki. "I know not who I am. Always angry. Always quarrelsome. The sagas speak of my treachery, and I greet the scorn of others with savage glee only to suffocate in deathly melancholy. I suffer, for a part of me lies in shadows. Doubt poisons my blood, and my questions forever echo in the dark." Odin's eye met the trickster's gaze, as if he searched deep within his younger peer's soul.

"Yes, Loki," he said. "Long and difficult is your path. Have patience. Seek what lies in your heart. Light will shine upon the truth, and the final choice will be yours to make."

(Bjarkmar-the-Blind, 1400 CE)

Description: Questions exist about the sagas and Loki's true lineage. Mortals argue over whether he is the son of Odin or Farbauti, a giant. The sagas are unclear, and much doubt remains over Loki's true nature. Though he is known as a trickster and a coward, he has risen to prominence in Asgard, skimming his power from all that is vile and perverse in Nordheim and the Fringe. To be more correct, Loki is the patron of chaos that brings needful change. Some often see it as a bad thing, but change needn't always be so. Odin believes it can be associated with improvement and, therefore, hope. Loki's followers are thieves, hunters of monsters or their keepers, and those who seek change in the world.

Though he isn't anyone's alias, his divine blood has harbored the germs of Ghülean godhood ever since he ascended as a Calidaran deity. Because he was born from perverted ideals, the fact went unnoticed by all, including himself. It contributes to his odious persona, but it also generates an internal conflict, which both he and Odin have perceived.

For Loki it is a source of doubt and bitterness, causing mood swings and desires to help Asgard one moment, and betray it the next. Odin, on the other hand, foresees alternate futures, including one where Loki alters Ragnarok's outcome for the better. Should the worst happen instead, the seed corrupts Loki irretrievably: he betrays Asgard and, should he survive at all, becomes the alias of a Ghülean god. . . *or its dinner*. Odin hopes for the former outcome, for if it were to come true, gods of Ghüle would not return to Calidar's universe. It is the reason for which he does not banish Loki. Odin works to influence the trickster while he dwells in Asgard.

Because of the seed he carries, Loki can conceive such beasts as those described in the old sagas (Fenrir, Jormungand, Hel, Sleipnir, etc.) As such, he stands as a god of shape-changers. Doppelgangers honor him under another name, and the great werebear infection in Nordheim may very well be his handiwork. Loki has no allies in Asgard, save for his spiritual daughter in Helheim (according to the old sagas). Though he seeks praise from other gods, especially Odin's, his affliction leads him to hate them all. Oddly, he struck a friendship with Ashebai. She warned him of Teos-Soltan's anger against the Norse mortals, and helped magically veil the Asgardians' exodus from Munaan.

Despite his great age, the trickster still appears as a fairly young deity. He commands a great shrine on Frostholm Island, dedicated to the benefits of individuality, change, and rebirth. Favored temple offerings include stolen valuables, especially if magical or of a great worth in the eyes of other cults.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Feyskins*—any of the following forms: a seal, a mare, a she-wolf, or a snake (see Table 10, score of 16).
Preferred animal/monster: Common or giant snakes.
Preferred weapon/spell: twin-fanged short sword engraved with a *laughter* rune (or spells related to speaking with animals and monsters, or shape-shifting).

Njord

Epithets: *Old Man of the Sea, King of Sea Storms, Lord of Noatun*
Ranking: Minor god and elder peer of Asgard; Munaan-born
Interests: Sea, sea storms, seafaring, fishing, wealth
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful and considerate, Njord can also be jealous and mistrustful), 💀 *Practical* (on the one hand cagy and stubborn, on the other easily angered and devious), 🗡 *Stern*—5 (austere, taciturn, gloomy, cold-fish, dour)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Freyr, Freyja (children), Hel (friend, possible lover)
Hated Foes: Gods and followers associated with the fire element (and for now, Skadi and her followers)
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Stålbrand, southern Frostholm) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 9, 352 BCE
Pronunciation: nee-ORD

Mythology: Sullen was her expression as a storm raged outside gloomy Noatun. She rolled her eyes with exasperation, glancing wistfully at Frigga's blanket of clouds spinning well above the seaside hall. Somber, Njord stood nearby, his arms crossed. "Don't believe for one instant that I do not know of your trysts with Baldur, wife," said the Old Man of the Sea. "You are making a mockery of godhood." The fair and bright Skadi twisted her golden locks round her index finger. "Umm like, that's totally news to anyone, as if! The mortals make up these stories like, totally just for you." Njord sighed in frustration at her response. "Do not take this tone of voice with me, Skadi Utgarding!" he said. "'Tis under my roof you dwell and, as befits a forthright goddess, you shall behave."

"Like, no way," answered the Lady of Winter. "I'm so sure, if you can't even live by yourself, find a friend or something. I got a life and, like, I'm totally not waiting around." Njord leaned close to her face, anger gleaming in his eyes. "I defy you to share another's bed. Your dwelling in another god's abode, Odin will never permit." Skadi stood away from the window sill and, with an expression of disgust, pushed the tips of her fingers against Njord's upper chest. "Umm, like, chill! I can totally stay at my sister-in-law's if I want, for sure." Njord followed Skadi as she retreated across the great hall. "How dare you!" he growled. "You made an oath to be my wife, so the sagas have said. Here is where you stay."

The young goddess rolled her eyes again, "What—ever! Like, I'm in love with your feet. Gag me green with an axe! The sagas are like, totally bogus. No way I'd kiss your toes. I'm so sure, mortals even say your first wife was your sister or something. Like, barf out!" Fuming, Njord seized her arm. "It's not your place to question the sagas," he said. "And last I checked, my unfaithful wife, your lover had a bride of his own. Her name is Nanna, and as the sagas speak of her as much as of you, so will she emerge and reclaim her husband. Mark my words, when she does what then will you do, for Odin will expect Nanna to take her rightful place. Once and for all, yours lies in your lawful husband's bed, here in Noatun and nowhere else." Stubborn, Skadi shot back, "Bogus! Like, seriously? This is the worst pickup-line ever. I so belong in Breidablik—I'm totally outta here now."

As she defiantly marched out of his great hall, Njord stormed after her. "Betray me once more, wife, and I swear I shall spend the rest of my existence destroying that which you covet!" he roared. "Tearing the walls of Asgard down to their last stone will be my ultimate quest. Know that I'm not alone in this. I'll not let you dishonor me. Mortals or not, you will respect your oath."

"Ugh. Creep!" Skadi said before vanishing. Her voice lingered in Noatun for an instant longer. "Like, Odin will let you, and stuff. Totally sketchy."

(Bjarkmar-the-Old, 1300 CE)

Description: In the minds of his followers, Njord is the ruler of all beneath the clouds surrounding Asgard where his seaside domain stands. Though mortals understand this as Midgard's sea, they also see him as the god of Calidar's squalls and marine monsters. His sphere of interest also includes the endless abyss of the Great Vault within Utgard. He favors sea- and spacefarers, explorers, and merchants. He is also seen as a god of wealth among the Norse.

According to the old sagas, he married young and bright Skadi when the Winter Goddess parlayed her entry into Asgard in exchange for a wedding. She had her eyes firmly set upon the handsome Baldur. But it so happened that she was only able to choose her groom from the gods' feet, the rest of their appearances being concealed. Still, according to the sagas, Njord owned the nicest.

After Calidar's Skadi ascended, her distant attitude soured Njord's expectations she'd act as his wife. He thinks she and

Baldur entertain a liaison, based on bitter words Loki whispered in his ear and the awkwardly nagging sagas. The god of the seas seeks answers from Heimdal, who refuses to speak. Following a divine argument, mortal followers of Skadi and Njord have been at odds. He now plots his revenge, with Hel and Loki acting in the shadows.

Njord is an old god, tall, muscular, and with blueish skin and dark green hair and beard. In wintertime, Stålbrand's harbor is frozen, and townsfolk honor him by skating around his shrine or fishing through holes in the ice. It is said that the lower level of Njord's sanctum reaches well below the surface of the ice. Favored temple offerings are objects of great value, primarily jewelry, ivory carvings, and adornments made of pearls, nacre, or coral.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Exalted Affinity*—narwhals and arctic/subarctic amphibious creatures, like walruses, polar bears, penguins, etc. (see Table 10, score of 17).
Preferred animal/monster: As above and giant whale-like creatures dwelling in the Great Vault.
Preferred weapon/spell: Battle axe engraved with a *sea* rune (or spells related to the water element).

Skadi

Epithets: *Snow Huntress, Lady of Noatun, Mistress of She-Bears, Winter Goddess*
Ranking: Minor goddess; born of the Outer Realm *(Utgarding)*
Interests: Winter, snow, hunting, mountain glaciers, frozen wastes
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though friendly and easy-going, she is selfish and spiteful), ☗ *Instinctive*–4 (hasty, bold, adventurous, unruly), ↗ *Even-Tempered* (pleasure-seeking, free-spirited, and feisty, Skadi can also be aloof, dreamy, and fairly vain)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Baldur (lover), Frigga (sister-in-law), Bragi (friend)
Hated Foes: Sea creatures (and for now, Njord and his followers)
Centers of Faith: The Fringe (mostly) and Nordheim (Tempelheim, northern Bergmark)
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 18, 737 CE
Pronunciation: SKAHD-ee

Mythology: "Umm, like, totally classic," the young goddess said as she settled in Baldur's arms. Pleased with himself, the Lord of Breidablik motioned his great longship to sail on, its golden prow cutting silently through the soft swells of Frigga's cloud sea. Despite a crystal clear azure and deep purple sky, falling snow appeared and covered *Hringhorni's* deck with a feathery layer. "Like, I'm so sure, it'll be totally harder to see us," Skadi added. As a few flakes landed on Baldur's bare chest, he smartly summoned flickering lights that danced around them, before pulling up a blanket of thick white fur.

Under this cover the two disappeared, their giggles muffled by the snow until the call of a shadow seal echoed in the surrounding clouds. Lowering the white fur enough for her bright blue eyes and nose to emerge, Skadi glanced out. "Like, what was that?" she worried. Baldur's head appeared as well. "'Tis nothing, my sweet," he answered. "The call of a stray seal. They are known to dwell in Asgard's clouds. Pay no attention." Skadi sat up at once, holding the white fur against her body. "As if!" she said, annoyed. "Like, I'm so sure, shadow seals so don't go that far from shore." Baldur huffed in annoyance. "Just ignore it, my love," he said. "It'll go away." The call echoed again, on the ship's opposite side. "Like, no way!" snapped Skadi. Casting aside the white fur, she jumped to her feet, summoned her bow and arrows, and ran to the railing. Baldur smiled as he admired the Winter Goddess's naked silhouette in the snow.

As the seal's call rose nearby, Skadi loosed an arrow that seemed to find its mark. At once, a misty swirl appeared on the ship's deck. When it cleared, Loki stood in its place. "Now, now, you could hurt someone with this," he said with a grin, dropping the arrow at her feet." Skadi notched another and drew her bow. "Like, grody to the max!" she protested. "You're so intruding! I'm so sure, I'll totally kill you and stuff if you don't leave!" Less amused, Loki unsheathed his snakelike twin blades when Njord appeared next to him, his mighty battle axe in hand. "Do not be so sure of yourself, wife!" he growled. Holding his sword in one hand and struggling to pull up his breeches with the other, Baldur hopped to Skadi's side. "Now that's enough. Get off my ship!" he ordered.

A new swirl rose between the two parties, soon revealing Odin. "There shall be neither fighting nor flyting today," he thundered. "Lower your weapons." He then looked at Loki, "Beastbringer, you do have a wolf to feed I believe." Visibly annoyed, the trickster vanished. Odin turned to Njord. "Why not let me settle this dispute, old friend?" The Lord of Noatun nodded reluctantly, and after a dark look at his wife, vanished as well. The Allfather raised a brow at Baldur. "Pull up your pants, son," he said. "I need a private chat with the Lady of Noatun." Baldur pointed quizzically at his ship, and Odin responded, "I think I'll take that away for a while." Crestfallen, the Lord of Breidablik vanished while Odin faced Skadi. "Unhappy you have been, Huntress of the North," he began. "A pity, that. 'Tis fair you should seek another party, but know that my son is spoken for. A more fitting husband will come, and together will you dwell in Asgard's mountains. It shall be called Thrymheim. But for now, you must return to Noatun." Distraught, Skadi ran her hand through her golden locks. "Like, I'm so sure, gag me with. . ." Odin raised an interrupting hand. "There shall be no gagging, if you please. Put on some clothes, young lady, and go to your hall at once."

Moments after both had vanished, Thor appeared on the deserted vessel as it sailed back to port. Hammer in hand and ready for battle, the god of thunder and lightning seemed confused. Heimdal's voice resonated next to him. "Sorry my friend, party's over, or so I heard."

(Bjarkmar-the-Blind, 1400 CE)

Description: Calidar's Skadi ascended from the beliefs of Wayfarer hunters. According to the old sagas, she unwittingly became Njord's bride after an agreement to settle a claim for her father, a frost jotun slain by Thor (see Njord for details, earlier). Since then, she was honored in Nordheim as well, as the goddess of winter. She favors rangers, archers, hunters, mountaineers, free-spirited barbarian types, ice druids, and female werebears.

Skalds tell legends of her many children engendered with Odin, but neither deity cares to acknowledge the old sagas (not with Frigga watching). Skadi has no interest in Njord or Odin. She much favors young and handsome Baldur, and the two have been secretly seeing each other. Her liaison threatens to provoke a rift in Asgard. Odin hopes that Ullr, an ice

god lost during the Shrouded Journey, will ascend soon, though he may never do so. According to the sagas, he should be best suited for Skadi's feisty temperament.

Tall, athletic, blond, and with icy blue eyes, Skadi is often portrayed as wearing a white wolf's pelt. Her shrine in Tempelheim harbors a fellowship of rangers and ice druids. Favored temple offerings include skins of rare and wondrous creatures dwelling in the far north.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Transcendence*—arctic/subarctic conditions (see Table 10, score of 14).
Preferred animal/monster: Arctic foxes, white wolves and similar creatures.
Preferred weapon/spell: Bow engraved with the *ice* rune (or ice-related spells).

Thor

Epithets: *Skyfire, Steel Fist, Scourge of the Giants, Lord of Bilskirnir*
Ranking: Minor god; Munaan-born
Interests: Thunder, lightning, great oaks, strength, werebears, bold defiance, freedom, individual battle prowess; struggles against foreign faiths
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (boisterous and truthful, Thor can also be thoughtless and intolerant), 💀 *Instinctive*–7 (impulsive, unpredictable, hasty, willful, easily-angered, bold, disobedient), 🗲 *Lively*–8 (mirthful, proud, ambitious, stubborn, fierce, indomitable, ruthless, and somewhat boorish)
Godly Cabals: *Calidaran Faiths*
Allies: Heimdal (friend), Bragi (brother), Baldur (half-brother), Freyr and Freyja (step-cousins)
Hated Foes: Giants and whosoever openly challenges Thor and his followers
Centers of Faith: The Fringe, Nordheim (Bjørnstad, central Bergmark), and Osriel (Wichtelland, Schwartzenstein areas, see page 166)
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 20, 58 BCE
Pronunciation: TOR or THOR (as in "thorn")



Mythology: Grim-faced and fierce-eyed, the Lord of *Bilskirnir* observed the gate into what he'd always known as *Muspelheim*. It was in many ways as the old sagas had foretold. The planets or the stars had reached some arcane positions in the Great Vault, and a passage thus tore open between the two universes. Beyond lay a scorched world of ashes and volcanoes. Footprints led inside, and he knew to whom they belonged, for a red prince of Draconia had walked through moments ago. He'd spied upon him since his earlier visit at the Oortan Court. Mjölnir resting in his steel-clad hand, Thor stepped in cautiously.

His warrior instincts led him past immense jagged rocks, bubbling pools, sulfurous mists, and jets of poison steam. The sky was impenetrably dark with reddish veins casting a bloodlike glimmer upon all things. Thor concluded the place must have been a neutral ground, for mortal giants roamed nearby, watchful and inquisitive. Fire-breathing hounds at their sides, others hurried toward the gate, carrying weapons and travel packs. Thor's trail ended at a ravine opening into an old crater. At the center stood Prince Krayvn and a towering figure Thor sensed to be of ancient jotun ancestry. Black of skin, with lava-like eyes and mouth, he carried a glowering sword eager to burst into flames.

"Surtr," muttered Thor. His voice must have carried, as the two stopped talking and stared at him.

The swarthy one snapped his fingers, and the red prince vanished at once. Thor stepped from the ravine. "What treachery brews in this place?" he thundered. "The jotnar agreed to peace, and yet they scheme behind Asgard's back." The god of fire giants glared at the intruder. "The Asgardians agreed to peace," he snapped back, "and yet they come here uninvited. When our people walk freely in Asgard, then will its gods be welcome here." As flames on the giant's sword came to life, so did fire course through Thor's veins. "The feet of scheming jotnar will never soil our hallowed realm," roared the god of thunder. Without further hesitation, he charged forth, only to clash with the servants of the giants' god. A bolt of lightning tore through half their ranks, while Mjölnir finished off the rest. Countless more rose from the broken land, but Surtr no longer was in sight.

Before Thor could raise his weapon, a white light flashed and the scene vanished. Odin appeared next him, facing the gate. He raised a hand and the crevasse faded from sight. The Allfather then turned to his son. "Sealed is this passage. None will come through here again," he

said. Thor pointed at the gate's previous location. "The giants are plotting against us. The servant of the red wyrm was there." Odin raised a hand. "You have disobeyed me, my son, and you may have provoked a war. That a dragon king speaks to the giants is no proof of treachery. A red prince did address the Oortan Court not so long ago. This means nothing."

Thor gazed at stars faraway past Utgard's rim. "Draconia's spawn is of the World Serpent's blood. The sagas speak of the jotnar siding with Jormungand when Ragnarok comes. War is better now, so we can smite the giants piecemeal." Odin interrupted his son. "You will end this madness at once," he shouted. "The sagas do not hold the key to Asgard's fate, and you shall respect Odin's peace." Thor sneered. "No, father. You are wrong. I shall do as I must because you will not."

(Teit-the-Wise, 1100 CE)

Description: A most popular Asgardian deity, Thor embodies primal strength and brazen ferocity. For this, Odin entrusted him with the magical hammer Mjölnir and the steel bracers, Járngreipr, forged by Brokk. He also is the patron of bold defiance and individuality, as well as the lord of great oaks, making him a protector of the forests. Druids, warriors and those who care nothing for wealth or royalty revere Thor. So do barbarians, and hunters of giants.

Thor is convinced giants are out to destroy Asgard. Odin and Forseti spend much time undoing damage he causes. His sense of individuality often puts him at odds with his father. Many a jotun has sworn revenge and dreams of facing the hated Asgardian. Thor lives neither for the past nor for the future. He favors improvisation and reckless glory. Loki enjoys nothing more than playing tricks on Odin's son, until he's found out, at which point much sparking and thundering follows.

Thor is neither aware of the links between Skadi and Baldur, or Hel and Njord, nor does he care unless matters require a good whack on the head. Bragi enjoys telling his tales, adding subtle jokes along the way. Heimdal and Tyr respect him and his prowess as a warrior, though the latter frowns at his disobedience. Frigga deplores her stepson's blind belief in the sagas, and fears it will precipitate Asgard's doom. Thor admires the strength of werebears in Nordheim and, to Loki's discreet astonishment, he took it upon himself to become their patron. Thor is also known for recent quarrels with Lara Umberlock.

Fierce-eyed and with ample red hair and beard, Thor is often represented as a mighty warrior riding a chariot pulled by two goats, Tanngrisnir and Tanngnjóstr. His greatest shrine in Bjørnstad provides the siege for a werebear council. Favored temple offerings include the remains of giants or artifacts stolen from them.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Personal Device* in the form or a war hammer (see Table 10, score of 12).
Preferred animal/monster: Mountain goats, common or giant.
Preferred weapon/spell: Hammer engraved with a *giant* rune (or electricity-related spells).

Tyr

Epithets: *Lawgiver, One Hand, Lord of Tyrsting*
Ranking: Minor god and elder peer of Asgard; Munaan-born
Interests: War, honor, law, traditions
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*—8 (self-sacrificing, altruistic, humble, merciful, truthful, trusting, chivalrous, magnanimous), 💀 *Rational*—8 (ultimately devoted to a greater cause, astute, tenacious, methodical, conventional, principled, steadfast, and obedient), 🗡 *Stern*—4 (Spartan, brooding, formal, and somewhat sentimental)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Odin (honored ruler of Asgard), Frigga and Heimdal (allies)
Hated Foes: Wolf-like creatures and pawns of Ghüle
Centers of Faith: Nordheim (Vargåsen, eastern Steinfold) and the Fringe
Day of Ascendance: Chelonea 22, 254 BCE
Pronunciation: TEER

Mythology: Heimdal heard it first. So terrible was the mortal Wayfarers' predicament that he blew *Gjallarhorn* to rouse the gods. Riding Sleipnir came Odin, followed by Tyr, Freyr, Thor, and Freyja. Behind them rose the clamor of spirit warriors, undying berserkers and valkyries eager for war. The Bifrost gleamed at Heimdal's gate, and into the world of mortals they rode, boldly defying the Ambrosian Covenant.

What magnificent sight struck Asgard's faithful as the gods appeared in their midst. Amid the Forever Stone Field, countless bodies drifted in the air-filled void. Their vast longships lay in disarray or engulfed in flames. The great floating reef spread as far as the eye could see, casting long shadows under Soltan's distant twilight. The gutted carcasses of giant worms and their odious occupants lay dead, riddled with arrows and mighty javelins, some torn by the rays of weapons taken from the starfolk. Yet, pandemonium reigned among the Wayfarers' fleet. The invaders had summoned a great beast, a champion of their alien gods. Thrice the size of Odin mounted on Sleipnir, the divine monster was made of the darkest shadows. All could see the silhouette of a massive wolf's head biting through longships and tearing them apart, its eyes like eerie glowing stars.

"'Tis Fenrir of the sagas," muttered Tyr. "Found us it has, despite our Shrouded Journey." He turned to his companions. "Fetch *Gleipnir* at once while I draw it away from the mortals. Only the work of the dwarves will hold this beast." For fear that such an event would come, a great bond had been crafted that no god could break. While Tyr's most trusted servants made it back to Asgard in great haste, the gods challenged Fenrir, keeping it from the retreating fleet and a city in the distance. More than once did Fenrir lash at Odin despite his great spear. While Freyja's magic failed to ensnare the beast, valkyries and berserkers swarmed around it, many vanishing between its horrid fangs. The cost was dear and growing, despite Thor's hammer and Freyr's mighty blade.

Boldly did Tyr close. Like he did sacrificing his hand in the old sagas, the mighty warlord forfeited a vital share of his own magic to stay the cosmic wolf. Much was sacrificed in this binding, as much as a mortal's own hand or perhaps that of the god of yore, as a massive shaft in the shape of a sword

flashed into prominence between Fenrir's jaws. Nearly fading from his sacrifice, Tyr fell back, satisfied that he'd played the part the sagas had foretold. At last, Gleipnir was brought forth and made to ensnare Fenrir's limbs. The gods and their quarry returned to Asgard, and the battle ended with a final clap of thunder.

(Bjarkmar-the-Old, 1300 CE)



Description: The old sagas told of Tyr's legendary sacrifice during Fenrir's capture, well before the Shrouded Journey. Thus did the patron of honor, courage, and tradition ascend with his hand already missing. Tyr focuses on preparing his followers for the next Ghülean incursion. His priors and oath-bound warriors patrol the outskirts of the Fringe, where the great evil may appear (see *Order of Tyr*, page 235). Warriors, seneschals, knights, paladins, and those who value above all bravery, honor, and loyalty to a higher authority revere him.

His more recent gesture when a beast of Ghüle clashed with the Wayfarers only reinforced Tyr's most valiant image. Suspicion remains, especially in Frigga's view, that somehow the Ghülean gods built their own ghastly version of Fenrir for mysterious reasons. Odin's spouse questions the wisdom of imprisoning this creature beneath Asgard. Tradition so far has prevailed, and Loki often visits its prison to ponder the roots of evil and the nature of the gods.

Freyja and Loki wish Tyr would reclaim his rightful supremacy over Asgard—Freyja to earn a seat at the Council of Asgard, and Loki to sow discord between the gods. Tyr has ignored their requests. He differs from Forseti in that he upholds the letter of the law, rather than justice in a broader sense. For him, Odin *is* the law, the *only* law among Asgardians, and he, Tyr, its defender and enforcer. The old sagas speak of him as the head of the pantheon who stepped down in Odin's favor. In Tyr's view, the Allfather is the better ruler. He bows to Odin's wisdom and his many skills, and vows ever to remain his loyal and obedient servant. Honor demands no less; pride begs for no more.

Tyr is often represented as an old warrior, with long white hair and a thick beard. Many among mortal priests and zealots sever their sword-hands to honor their divine patron. None resort to magic to heal their lost members, and neither would Tyr, though he could. For the god of war, it is his eternal token of loyalty. His main shrine in Nordheim functions as a war academy. Favored temple offerings include enchanted mead, or the flesh and blood of felled monsters.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Wound* (see Table 10, score of 4).
Preferred animal/monster: Hawks and hawk-like beings.
Preferred weapon/spell: Sword engraved with a *Tyr* rune (or fire-related spells).



Beasts of Asgard

(Continued from page 154)

Huginn and Muninn: *(Thought* and *Memory)* These two ravens travel Midgard and the Ambrosian, acting as eyes and ears for Odin, his messengers, and bearers of omens. They return every evening to tell their master of all that they saw and heard.

Jormungand: *(Huge Monster)* Also known as the Midgard Serpent, this beast was described in the old sagas as a spawn of Loki, and believed to herald the end of the universe. It is from Loki's feverish mind that Ghüle's hideous overlords may construct the world serpent, in their own gruesome style well beyond the range of divine servants, a great cosmic beast far more terrifying than Fenrir.

Níðhöggr: *(Malice Striker)* It is a great undead wyrm that feasts forever on the undying spirits of those cursed to atone in the dark mountains of Helheim. It is unknown whether it bears any link to the denizens of Draconia, as it may have ascended entirely from the old sagas. Or has it?

Ratatosk: *(Tusk Traveler)* An incorrigible gossiper and rabble rouser, this mischievous red squirrel delights in repeating to a concerned party insults spoken elsewhere about them, and vice versa. Some say it is a servant of Níðhöggr who hates all that dwells outside of Hel's domain. It stands as a celestial.

Sæhrímnir: *(Dark Sea Beast)* This enchanted creature comes in many forms. It is slaughtered and cooked each night to provide sustenance to the feasting heroes of Valhalla. The sustenance is merely spiritual and ritualistic in nature as Odin's *einherjar* need no mortal food to live on in Asgard. As with Heidrun, its existence originates from the old Norse sagas.

Sleipnir: *(Gliding One)* Odin's eight legged gray horse is the best of all mounts. It symbolizes the wind as it can gallop through the skies as easily as on land. It bears a dark side, as the old sagas reveal it to be a monstrous spawn of Loki; and it may freely enter or leave Helheim.

Tanngrisnir and Tanngnjóstr: *(Tooth Grinder* and *Tooth Barer)* These two goats pull Thor's chariot. Sagas state that its wheels produce Thor's thunder, and that sparks from his goats' hooves shoot lightning through the skies. Thor is able to eat these goats and later resurrect them with his hammer.

Gods of Osriel

The merchant republic hails cultural and racial diversity as one of its cornerstones. During centuries, people from all horizons have flocked to this land, bringing with them their languages and cultures. In this respect, Osriel's society looks very fragmented, but in fact it proved able to assimilate a kaleidoscope of differing faces and thoughts. For this reason, none of the world's major cults prevailed outright in Osriel. The Calderan Pantheon best represents gods whose faiths are commonly found there. Some have been enshrined as the spiritual patrons of the republic's businesses while many residents freely believe in others. Osriel's culture is by far the most complex and baffling of Calderan realms.

At least in temples and shrines, many gods take on appearances reflecting the minds of those who honor them. For example, a community of humans honoring gods of dwarven, fellfolk, or gnomish origins may have given them human appearances, perhaps even altered their names to better accommodate local accents. As a result of this spiritual pragmatism, gods of one origin accumulate worshipers from many others. Pantheon rulers do not mind Osriel's confusing state of affairs, since in the long run, one of their key objectives remains the acquisition of followers regardless of their actual ancestries.

Even more common if not ubiquitous, *scions of the cult* (see *Godly Trappings*, page 215) often stand as spiritual protectors of towns, merchant houses, banking dynasties, trade guilds, and noble families of ancient pedigree. In Lorical alone, prayers to more than a dozen such "private gods," can be heard in the wings of certain temples or near alcoves housing the statues of spiritual protectors. In one town, one may find a shrine dedicated to Teos, and in a neighboring community another devoted to Soltan. Though such divine diversity may create local frictions (and indeed, rivalry is fierce between towns and their cults), the overall spiritual cacophony offers little traction for a civil war fueled by zealots of a particular cult.

Gods and scions favoring prosperity and good fortune do reasonably well in a society driven by commerce and wealth. Not surprisingly, all deities present in the Calderan Pantheon concern themselves with some aspect of affluence, literally setting up shop in Osriel. It is the republic's legacy. This is a major asset for merchant princes, as their cults become tools prying doors open in faraway places to trade with people sharing the same faiths. The gods' business concerns come in addition to their normal spheres of interest, as described in their respective pantheons (see *Godly Listing*, pages 14-15).

Calderan Faiths	Interests
Arnmîr Tinkerbones[4]	Healers, alchemists
Arthalas	Justice, revenge
Ashebai	Shadows, secrets
Ashgaddon	Death, underworld
Astafeth	Night, mysteries
Balladoo-of-the-Hoo	Mirth, trickery
Brokk[10]	Blacksmiths, craftsmen
Dagleeth	Light, science
Dandomyr	Messengers, scribes
Delathien	Forests, hunters
Durandil	Seas, fishermen
Floria Tanglemane	Spring, youth
Freyja	Earth, fertility
Galadir Blackmattock	Peace, protectors
Gilla Amberbraid	Summer, abundance
Istra	Romance, adventurers
Kahula	Fate, bards, seers
Khrâlia	Earth, mountains
Koanui	War, conquerors
Kustrîm Stonebrand	Order, oaths
Lara Umberlock	Fall, elders
Malva Darkbrow	Winter, sleep
Myriël	Water, fertility
Naghilas	Magic
⑩ **Odin**	Time, wisdom
Oloroth	Deserts, volcanoes
Sphiel	Sky, air, winds
Teos-Soltan	Sun, fire
Thaleera	Luck, wit
Thor	Thunder, lightning
Thraldûr Silvertongue	Chaos, mischief
Ululani-Two-Pearls	Love, beauty

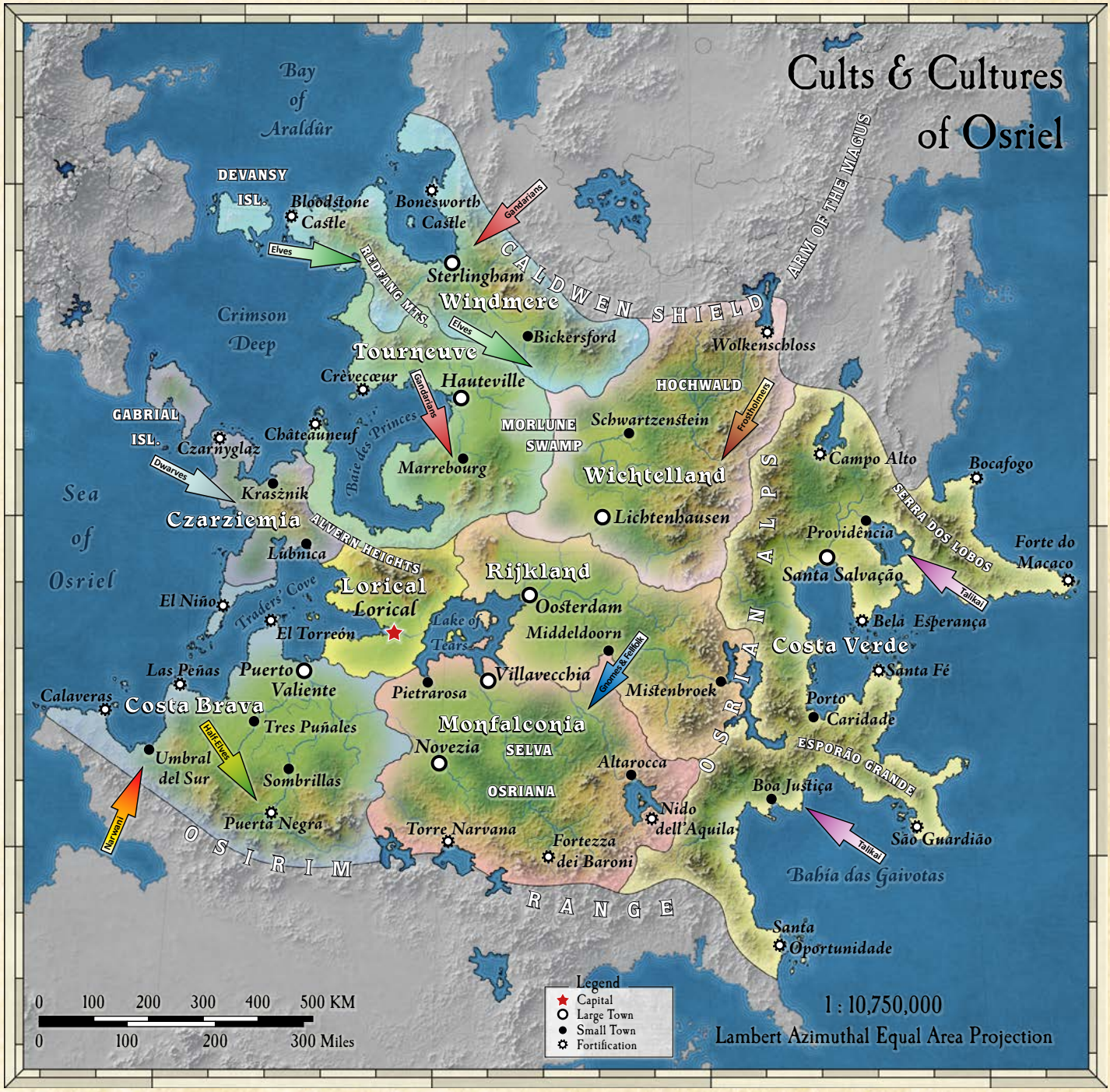
Genesis of Osriel's Faiths

800 CE In the early days, colonial powers knew as the Dawn Wilds the vast region tucked between what would become Nav-Gandar and Eastern Ellyrion. Tribal fellfolk owned these lands and they knew trouble was coming. By 848 CE, southern tribes began crossing through the Osirim Range, seeking refuge from Munaani settlers stealing their lands. During the next thirteen years, western clans migrated from the Great Mountain Island, along the Alvern Heights, while water tribes sailed up the coast to the shores of Crimson Deep. Disputes flared for control of ancestral lands until the shamans came to an agreement, and the new tribes settled. But peace was short lived.

A few fleeting years later, rulers of Munaan, Alorea, and Kragdûr watched as unclaimed lands of the Great Caldera were quickly being snatched. In a bid to grab more territories before all would be settled, Nicareans landed at the site of Lorical, and pushed across a large lake, claiming its southeastern banks. A great battle against the fellfolk gave it its present name, the *Lake of Tears*. Another Nicarean force disembarked close to the Osirim, marching in a pincer move to seize much of the south. With forces stretched thin and barely able to hold their ground, the Nicareans prayed to Teos for help. The sun god heard their prayers and turned to the Gate Keeper (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 63). Through the celestial Vortex came humans from another reality, joyous and sun-loving people taken from a world ravaged by the plague. They spoke an elegant-sounding language that sang to Nicarean ears. None of them remembered whence they'd come, but they honored Teos and that was good enough as far as the Nicareans were concerned. *Monfalconia* became the name they gave their new homeland.

861 CE Araldûr dwarves followed the same route as the native stone clans once did, driving them out of the Alvern Heights. Meanwhile, newly-invented Kragdûras steamers flew to the tall mountains in the east, prospecting for favorable construction and mining sites. They soon found themselves in the same predicament as the Nicareans and prayed to Khrâlia for help. The Gate Keeper dutifully fetched more people. These were good-hearted folk, northerners to be sure. They sounded awfully strange to the dwarves, but they fiercely praised the All Mother. Some still remembered the secrets of delicacies such as pierogi, kielbasa, and smoked cheese, and all was fine with the ravenous warriors of Kragdûr. The newcomers called their new homeland *Czarziemia*.

874 CE To prevent forces of Kragdûr and Nicarea from heading north, the Aloreans seized a vast area, arching from Devansy Island through to the great central valley and down to the outskirts of Monfalconia. This huge elven territory became known as Linnefarn. To help his faithful contain their rivals, Delathien resorted to the same stratagem his divine counterparts had used. Soon, humans joined the elves east



of the Lake of Tears. Shod in wooden clogs and with a penchant for growing tulips and erecting windmills, they honored Delathien just the same, and that was tolerable enough to the Aloreans. These newcomers soon gave this fertile region of Linnefarn a name that they liked better—the *Rijkland*.

Unable to summon the Dread Lands, fellfolk tribes were forced to flee wherever they could. In the wake of hopeless battles ending in disasters and epidemics, many natives resumed their northbound flight or scrambled to the shores of the Eastern Calderan Sea. Those who stayed became the servants of the fast-spreading newcomers who settled the tribal lands while warriors of Alorea, Kragdûr, and Nicarea remained entirely too busy squabbling over borders.

885 CE Gandarians chose this time to settle north of Linnefarn, inflicting further despair upon native tribes living there and those fleeing from the south. They established the new colony of Nav-Gandar stretching eastward from the sea shores, past the Lake of Whispers, to the Arm of the Magus, before expanding northward through the central valley.

As a fragile truce eventually prevailed, the peers of other pantheons observed with growing consternation the arrival of newcomers from the Vortex. The first to react was Istra. Circa 950 CE, she inspired Talikai adventurers who secretly honored her to establish privately-owned settlements along the Dawn Wild's far-eastern coast. For a time they escaped Nicarean scrutiny and oppression. To consolidate their holdings, Istra negotiated with the Gate Keeper for her share of newcomers, like other gods already had on the opposite side of the Dawn Wilds. Thus did a new people settle alongside the Talikai, seafarers to be sure and explorers of fortune who soon called their strange new realm the *Costa Verde,* all in the name of Istra.

1030 CE Phrydian auguries deemed auspicious a foray into Nicarean territory. Peacefully, Bongorese traders and their families traveled to the Dawn Wilds, eventually outnumbering Nicareans and their newcomer allies along the shores south of Traders' Cove. They brought with them the cult of Arthalas and, like his nearby peers, he schemed for newcomers to bolster his followers' ranks. He attracted a proud and ebullient people who enjoyed bullfights. Though puzzled at first, the Bongorese accepted them as they too honored Arthalas. Not until the 1200s did Phrydian half-elves become prevalent in these parts. By then, the Bongorese colony would be better known as the *Costa Brava*.

1060 CE A mere thirty years later trouble spilled over from Nav-Gandar. Fleeing the Nicarean Inquisition, wizardly households moved into Alorean lands. With the elven hold on this region somewhat tenuous, Gandarians easily spread along the coast down to the foothills of the Alvern Heights, bringing with them their strange cults. Annoyed, Delathien paid dearly for another share of newcomers to help his followers hold on to this region. These were industrious ones who introduced the elves to ale and kidney pie. They called their new capital Sterlingham and named other fine places, such as Bloodstone Castle and Bickersford.

In due time, Naghilas did the same, sending newcomers to help his Gandarian followers prevail farther south. Boisterous, stylish, and determined to enjoy the good things in life, these people were prompt to call their new capital Hauteville and its waterfront the *Baie des Princes*. Despite bewildering and sudden changes to their neighborhood, local elves remained in the area, determined to preserve their faiths in what became known as the province of *Tourneuve.*

1067 CE More trouble struck again, this time in Linnefarn's grand valley, when waves of Frostholm raiders came. Much of what lay north of the Lake of Tears was plundered and destroyed, pushing elven forces back to Windmere and Tourneuve, though Elëan troops flew eastward over the mountains. Worse, the Alorean garrison in Oosterdam fled as well, abandoning to the approaching raiders its erstwhile human allies, great throngs of fellfolk farmhands, and indentured gnomes. The hapless Rijklanders and their workers fled into nearby forests and up into the mountains while Frostholmers looted the newcomers' towns. With word of Alorean and Gandarian forces mustering in the north, the raiders withdrew north to the grand valley and settled there for the winter. To help his followers hold their recent gains, Odin wisely sent them newcomers of their own, a rough and rugged people not unlike the Frostholmers. From them came the province's name: *Das Wichtelland*—otherwise known as a land of imps and magical beings.

Soon afterward, the Rijklanders returned to their devastated homes. Neighboring Monfalconesi wisely offered them weapons to keep both elves and Frostholmers from returning. Fellfolk and gnomes, now culturally akin to Rijklanders themselves, earned their freedom in exchange for swearing to defend the land at the sides of resident newcomers. In so doing, they helped establish their faiths as the prevailing ones in this region.

1203 CE Peace remained ever so elusive for the next century and a half. Border clashes were frequent in the Dawn Wilds until the whole of the Great Caldera became engulfed in the wars of independence. The Kragdûras felt cheated out of lands they'd claimed. So were the Aloreans, bitter at the dismantling of Greater Linnefarn. Seizing the opportunity, the elves marched forth, seeking to regain lost grounds and gain control of Lorical, which had grown into an open city. The dwarves attempted to stop them, and the conflict came to a stalemate in 1220 CE when drafted settlers on both sides refused to prosecute a proxy war on behalf of their lunar masters. By the end of the insurrection, all three off-world empires stood defeated and licking their wounds, while the old colonies of the Great Caldera became sovereign realms. The Dawn Wilds remained but a chaotic backwater until another catastrophe came about, the second coming of Ghüle.

1237 CE Much was destroyed and Lorical was razed during the invasion. The orcs, the goblins, and the trolls left as quickly as they'd appeared. Stranded, some scattered into the mountains or found entry to the underground. Towns and settlements of the Dawn Wilds were rebuilt and wounded lands reclaimed anew. Fortunes of war led followers of some cults to depart and others to arrive. In the wake of the Ghülean horrors, a monk by the name of Fra Rocco, a Monfalconese native of great wisdom and charisma, endeavored to convince the provinces to join, so that their lands could be better defended from outsiders who coveted them. He succeeded. In 1250 CE, diplomats of surrounding realms met in Lorical and agreed to leave the affairs of the Dawn Wilds to its people. Local leaders came together in Lorical from all corners of the Dawn Wilds and founded the Republic of Osriel. Thus did citizens become free to honor their spiritual patrons, to speak whatever language they wished, and to pursue their quests for wealth and happiness, whatever their races and origins. This declaration became a cornerstone of the Calderan faiths.

Teos-Soltan: In his infinite wisdom, the Calderan pantheon's honorary chairman adopted an attitude of liberal *laissez-faire*. He felt a singular distaste for being personally involved with lesser entities whom he considered bargain-basement upstarts and godly wannabes encroaching in "his" divine backyard. He neither earned nor wished to earn any arcane benefit from heading the rag-tag plethora of idols, in his hallowed point of view an unscrupulous and puffed-up gaggle of rabble-rousers and also-rans. None of the members would indulge him with dues normally demanded by pantheon rulers anyway, other than a distant and polite celestial nod. The opportunity to expand his own following among mortals, however, led the mighty sun god to hold his eternal nose and stake his own share of Osriel's business. The cults of Teos-Soltan fared slightly above average compared with individual deities. As a whole, however, competing pantheons gained the upper hand over the sun god, as his cult only prevailed in four towns of Osriel, in part as a result of Narwani immigration in the south of the Costa Brava. Though squabbles abound, many godlings have proven reasonably successful in Osriel.

Merchant Gods of Osriel

Local deities often promote specific trades, which they consider their personal and jealously guarded purviews. Not all of these businesses are necessarily legal, nor is this list on Table 6 exhaustive, as *scions of the cult* may also focus on even narrower aspects of mercantile life in Osriel as well as other trades

Table 6. Divine Business

d%	Spiritual Patron	Spheres of Commerce
1-3	Arnmîr Tinkerbones[4] (page 45)	**d8:** 1. Magical potions, 2-3. Tea, 4. Medicinal herbs, 5. Healing amulets, 6. Midwives, 7. Surgeons, and 8. Apothecaries
4-6	Arthalas (page 174)	**d4:** 1. Notaries, 2. Lawyers, 3. Bounty hunters, and 4. Executioners for hire
7-9	*Ashebai* (page 24)	**d6:** 1-2 Pipeweed, 3. Spices, 4. Aphrodisiacs, 5. Narcotics, and 6. Poison and pest control
10-12	**Ashgaddon** (page 95)	**d6:** 1. Monster hunters & keepers, 2. Spell components, 3. Embalming, 4-5. Funeral services, and 6. Tanneries
13-15	Astafeth (page 96)	**d6:** 1. Innkeepers, 2. Gambling houses, 3. Massage parlors, 4. Public baths, 5. Carnal houses, and 6. Thieves
16-18	Balladoo-of-the-Hoo (page 68)	**d12:** 1. Pitch, 2. Tar, 3. Coal, 4. Peat, 5. Dark resins, 6-7. Coffee, 8. Black roses, 9. Curios, 10. Privy Scourers, 11. Slayers, and 12. All things murky and bizarre
19-20	Brokk[10] (page 148)	**d6:** 1. Artillerists, 2-3. Clockmakers, 4. Locksmiths, 5. Tinkers, and 6. Toymakers
21-23	Dagleeth (page 99)	**d8:** 1. Fine vellum, 2-3. Scrolls, 4. Rare books, 5. Ink, 6. Quill-makers, 7. Book-binders, and 8. Printers
24-26	Dandomyr (page 177)	**d8:** 1-2. Scribes, 4. Chroniclers, 4. Messengers, 5. Investigators, 6. Spies, 7. Sedan-chair bearers, and 8. Coachmen
27-30	**Delathien** (page 19)	**d8:** 1-2. Bowyers, 3. Fletchers, 4. Falconers, 5. Kennels, 6. Rare woods and barks, 7. Cabinet-makers, and 8. Woodcarvers
31-33	Durandil (page 26)	**d6:** 1. Ivory carvers, 2. Off-shore fishing, 3-4. Shipbuilders, 5. Carpenters, and 6. Fishmongers
34-36	*Floria Tanglemane* (page 82)	**d6:** 1. Flowers, 2. Perfumes, 3. Honey, 4. Soap, 5. Cosmetics, and 6. Wigs
37-39	*Freyja* (page 150)	**d6:** 1-2. Glass-makers, 3. Eyewear, 4. Spyglasses, and 5-6. Stained glass artists
40-41	Galadir Blackmattock (page 73)	**d4:** 1. Battle axes, 2. War hammers, and 3-4. Crossbows (custom sizes available).
42-44	*Gilla Amberbraid* (page 83)	**d6:** 1. Fruit, 2-3. Vegetables, 4. Livestock, 5. Millers, and 6. Bakers
45-48	***Istra*** (page 118)	**d6:** 1. Wine and spirits, 2-3. Tailors, 4. Cloak-makers, 5. Hat-makers, and 6. Haberdashers.

Table 6. Divine Business (continued)

d%	Spiritual Patron	Spheres of Commerce
49-51	*Kahula* (page 125)	**d6:** 1-2. Theaters & actors, 3. Masks & mirrors, 4. Musical instruments, 5. Bards and jesters, and 6. Fortunetellers
52-55	***Khrâlia*** (page 42)	**d6:** 1. Jewelers, 2. Marble carvers, 3. Stoneworkers, 4. Mining, 5. Brick-makers, and 6. Tilers
56-58	Koanui (page 128)	**d6:** 1. Swords, 2. Spears, 3. Armor, 4. Gladiators, 5. Bodyguards and mercenaries, and 6. Horses (sea, land, or winged)
59-61	Kustrîm Stonebrand (page 57)	**d6:** 1. Leather workers, 2. Cobblers, 3. Rope-makers, 4. Chain-makers, 5. Engineers (civil and military), and 6. Master masons
62-64	*Lara Umberlock* (page 84)	**d8:** 1-2. Potters, 3. Porcelain makers, 4-5. Butchers, 6. Cooks, 7. Cheese-makers, and 8. Basket-weavers
65-67	*Malva Darkbrow* (page 85)	**d6:** 1-2. Ice blocks, 3. Warehousing, 4. Famous frozen treats, and 5-6. Furriers
68-70	*Myriël* (page 179)	**d6:** 1. Riverine and lakeside fishing, 2. Salt marshes, 3. Preserved foods, 4. Ferrymen, 5. Bargemen and dockworkers, and 6. Water mongers
71-74	**Naghilas** (page 92)	**d6:** 1-2. Magic items, 3. Fine candles and wax goods, 4. Enchanters for hire, 5. Astronomers, and 6. Astrologers
75-78	⑩ **Odin** (page 144)	**d4:** 1. Mercantile investments, 2. Trade advisers, 3. Guild administrators, and 4. Business tutors
79-81	Oloroth (page 181)	**d6:** 1-2. Dyes, 3. Pigments, 4. Illumination, 5. Gilding, and 6. Lacquerwork
82-84	Sphiel (page 35)	**d6:** 1-2. Skyship building, 3. Sail-makers, 4. Silk traders, 5. Fine feathers, and 6. Bedding-makers
85-88	**Teos-Soltan** (pages 111 & 138)	**d6:** 1. Incense, 2. Myrrh, 3-4. Blacksmiths, 5. Foundries, and 6. Chimneysweeps
89-92	***Thaleera*** (page 64)	**d4.** 1. Wool producers, 2-3. Weavers, and 4. Tapestry makers
93-95	Thor (page 159)	**d6:** 1-2. Brewers, 3. Coopers, 4. Cartwrights, 5. Road-menders, and 6. Gong- and drum-makers
96-98	Thraldûr Silvertongue (page 58)	**d6:** 1-2. Bankers, 3. Money-changers, 4. Gold and silversmiths, 5. Gem-cutters, and 6. Fences
99-100	*Ululani-Two-Pearls* (page 132)	**d4:** 1. Pearls, 2. Corals, 3. Art dealers, and 4. Antiquarians

not listed there. Many of the professions in the republic are governed by trade guilds that are either limited to specific cities or to geographic areas within Osriel. Guilds usually select a deity as well (or a *scion of the cult*) to protect their business. Percentile scores can be used to select a specialty and its spiritual patron at random.

Spiritual Dominions: Osriel's population comes from two origins. Some traveled through the Vortex (see *Gate Keeper,* CAL1 *In Stranger Skies*, page 63) and the others from existing Calderan colonies. The first established a cultural and linguistic basis, as can be ascertained from the map. Colonial settlers on the other hand brought their cults and, in many areas, a demi-human component. While humans are present in all urban centers, racial demographics remain evenly split along spiritual communities. For example: Sterlingham's main cults include Durandil (E) and Dagleeth (H); this implies a population with primarily humans and elves honoring the two deities among other less prevalent cults.

Each urban center in Osriel features one or more leading faiths. There are many more available in the form of small chapels and private shrines, since most businesses can be found throughout the republic. A host of others honoring scions of the cults also exist there, as well as fortified areas, villages, private estates, and monasteries. Local faiths give some indication of prevailing races and philosophies. Residents typically speak the local vernacular in addition to any race-specific language.

Table 7. Spiritual Dominions		
Province of Windmere		
Sterlingham	Durandil, Dagleeth	Alfdaín (E), Caldwen (H)
Bickersford	*Ashebai*	Alfdaín (E)
Devansy Isl.	**Ashgaddon**	Caldwen (H)
Province of Tourneuve		
Hauteville	**Naghilas, Delathien**	Caldwen (H), Alfdaín (E)
Marrebourg	Astafeth	Caldwen (H)
Province of Wichtelland		
Lichtenhausen	⑩ **Odin**, *Freyja*	Nordheim (H)
Schwartzenstein	Thor	Nordheim (H)
Province of Rijkland		
Oosterdam	*Lara Umberlock,* ***Thaleera***	Belledor (F & G)
Middeldoorn	*Gilla Amberbraid*	Belledor (F)
Mistenbroek	*Malva Darkbrow*	Belledor (F)
Domain of Lorical		
Free City of Lorical	**Teos**, ⑩ **Odin,** Arthalas, Thraldûr Silvertongue, Balladoo-of-the-Hoo	Ellyrion (H), Nordheim (H), Phrydias (½E), Araldûr (D), Belledor (G)
Province of Czarziemia		
Krasżnik	Kustrîm Stonebrand	Araldûr (D)
Lubnica	Brokk[10]	Nordheim (D)
Gabrial Isl.	Arnmîr Tinkerbones[4]	Araldûr (D)
Province of Costa Brava		
Puerto Valiente	Arthalas, ***Khrâlia***	Phrydias (½E), Araldûr (D)
Tres Puñales	Dandomyr	Phrydias (½E)
Sombrillas	Oloroth	Phrydias (½E)
Umbral del Sur	**Arun Al Malik Al Soltan**	Narwan (H)
Province of Monfalconia		
Novezia	**Teos**, ***Thaleera***	Ellyrion (H), Belledor (G)
Villavecchia	**Teos**, *Floria Tanglemane*	Ellyrion (H), Belledor (F)
Pietrarosa	*Myriël*	Phrydias (½E)
Altarocca	Galadir Blackmattock	Belledor (G)
Province of Costa Verde		
Santa Salvação	***Istra,*** Sphiel	Meryath (H), Alfdaín (E)
Providência	*Kahula*	Meryath (H)
Porto Caridade	*Ululani-Two-Pearls*	Meryath (H)
Boa Justiça	Koanui	Meryath (H)

Free City of Lorical: The capital city of Osriel features a city militia enforcing law and order, and protecting the seat of the government. It is against the republic's constitution for this force to leave its domain. Lorical's armed forces are equally financed, levied, and led by the people of the provinces. Many a fight took place during the early years of the Dawn Wilds for control of this important trade and commerce center. Kragdûras, Nicareans, and Aloreans were the first to clash outside its walls and in its streets. Fights continued between Czarziemish, Costa Bravan, Monfalconese, Rijklandish, and Wichtellandish communities struggling to gain the upper hand. When the republic was born, Lorical became a so-called free city in that no representative of the provinces or foreign nations should fear political reprisals or harm while in the domain. It is the tradition that personal rivalries may not be prosecuted in any way while there, because it is accepted as a place for negotiation and enterprise. Long-standing feuds do persist elsewhere in Osriel, born from competition between cults, businesses, guilds, family quarrels, racial frictions, territorial disputes, and long-standing grudges connected with centuries of violence. Lorical is the most-populous city in the republic and an important crossroads for spiritual beliefs. Though as many as five cults have emerged as the most important ones there, all of the Calderan faiths maintain places of worship and fervent communities in the city's various neighborhoods.

Merchant Prospects: Commerce grants its patron deities greater influence where trade is performed, and opportunities to spread their creeds. "Low" market trends reflect goods and services commonly available or unwanted locally (thus relatively inexpensive). Most goods and services are unwelcome in, or entirely unavailable from, the Dread Lands. "High" flags businesses in demand or that are illegal (thus fetching higher prices). Market trends for unlisted trades are comparable to those in Osriel (unless corresponding business categories in Osriel are rated low or high).

Alfdaín

- **High:** Antiquarians, aphrodisiacs, art dealers, astrologers, bedding-makers, black roses, book-binders, butchers, cabinet-makers, carpenters, dockworkers, falconers, fine feathers, foundries, glass-makers, goldsmiths, horses (land & sea), incense, kennels, lacquerwork, narcotics, pigments, pipeweed, poison, potters, printers, rare books, road-menders, sail-makers, salt marshes, silk traders, spears, spell components, spices, spyglasses, stained glass artists, swords, thieves, woodcarvers.
- **Low:** Bargemen, bounty hunters, bowyers, cloak-makers, enchanters for hire, ferrymen, fine vellum, fishing (fresh water), fletchers, ivory carvers, medicinal herbs, pest control, preserved foods, quill-makers, rare woods and barks, rope-makers, scribes, scrolls, shipbuilders, skyship building, tailors, tapestry makers, tea, vegetables, water mongers.

Araldûr

- **High:** Bakers, bankers, bargemen, book-binders, brick-makers, chain-makers, cheese-makers, clockmakers, cooks, curios, dyes, fences, ferrymen, fishing (fresh water & marine), fishmongers, flowers, gem-cutters, haberdashers, honey, incense, ink, jewelers, lacquerwork, lawyers, leather workers, livestock, medicinal herbs, millers, myrrh, notaries, privy scourers, quill-makers, rope-makers, scribes, shipbuilders, tapestry makers, tilers, toymakers, wool producers.
- **Low:** Armor, artillerists, battle axes, blacksmiths, brewers, cartwrights, chimneysweeps, cobblers, coopers, crossbows, engineers, executioners, eyewear, foundries, glass-makers, goldsmiths, gong-makers, locksmiths, marble carvers, masks & mirrors, master masons, mining, money-changers, musical instruments, pest control, porcelain makers, potters, printers, road-menders, silversmiths, spyglasses, stained glass artists, stoneworkers, tinkers, war hammers, wigs, wine and spirits.

Belledor

- **High:** Apothecaries, bakers, black roses, brewers, coal, coffee, coopers, cosmetics, crossbows, curios, furriers, healing amulets, magical potions, midwives, millers, perfumes, pest control, porcelain makers, soap, surgeons, tapestry makers, tea, things murky & bizarre, weavers.

- **Low:** Bards & jesters, basket-weavers, bedding-makers, brick-makers, butchers, cabinet-makers, carpenters, cheese-makers, cobblers, cooks, dark resins, eyewear, famous frozen treats, flowers, fruit, gem-cutters, haberdashers, hat-makers, honey, ice blocks, investigators, jewelers, kennels, leather workers, livestock, medicinal herbs, mining, money-changers, peat, pipeweed, pitch, potters, preserved foods, privy scourers, public baths, road-menders, rope-makers, slayers, spyglasses, stoneworkers, tar, tinkers, toymakers, vegetables, war hammers, warehousing, wax goods, wigs, wine & spirits, wool producers.

Caldwen

- **High:** Antiquarians, bargemen, bodyguards, bounty hunters, brick-makers, butchers, carnal houses, cloak-makers, cosmetics, embalming, engineers, executioners, eyewear, ferrymen, fine candles, fortunetellers, fruit, funeral services, furriers, gambling houses, gem-cutters, gilding, gladiators, horses (winged), innkeepers, investigators, livestock, marble carvers, masks & mirrors, massage parlors, master masons, mercenaries, musical instruments, pearls, pigments, pipeweed, porcelain makers, public baths, rare books, scribes, slayers, spell components, spies, tailors, tanneries, theaters & actors, thieves, wax goods.
- **Low:** Apothecaries, artillerists, astrologers, astronomers, book-binders, coal, enchanters for hire, fine vellum, hat-makers, ink, magic items, magical potions, monster hunters & keepers, narcotics, pitch, quill-makers, scrolls, skyship building, tar, things murky & bizarre.

Ellyrion

- **High:** Armor, artillerists, astrologers, astronomers, blacksmiths, bowyers, chimneysweeps, coachmen, corals, dark resins, drum-makers, falconers, famous frozen treats, fine vellum, fletchers, gilding, ice blocks, illumination, ivory carvers, jewelers, lawyers, locksmiths, masks & mirrors, massage parlors, myrrh, narcotics, pearls, peat, perfumes, poison, porcelain makers, preserved foods, privy scourers, rare woods and barks, scrolls, silversmiths, skyship building, slayers, spies, things murky & bizarre, tilers, tinkers, toymakers, trade advisers, war hammers, warehousing, wax goods, wine & spirits.
- **Low:** Bakers, bargemen, cabinet-makers, carnal houses, cartwrights, chain-makers, cooks, cosmetics, dockworkers, embalming, engineers, ferrymen, fine candles, fishing (fresh water), foundries, funeral services, gladiators, healing amulets, horses (land), incense, marble carvers, master masons, messengers, midwives, millers, public baths, rare books, salt marshes, sedan-chair bearers, shipbuilders, surgeons, swords, tailors, tanneries, theaters & actors, water mongers, woodcarvers.

Meryath

- **High:** Apothecaries, astronomers, bankers, battle axes, brewers, business tutors, cheese-makers, chroniclers, cloak-makers, coopers, cosmetics, crossbows, enchanters for hire, famous frozen treats, fences, funeral services, gambling houses, gladiators, glass-makers, gong-makers, haberdashers, hat-makers, healing amulets, horses (winged), ice blocks, innkeepers, investigators, loans, magic items, magical potions, marble carvers, midwives, monster hunters & keepers, notaries, perfumes, pitch, sail-makers, silk traders, skyship building, spyglasses, stoneworkers, tailors, tar, war hammers, wigs, wine & spirits.
- **Low:** Armor, art dealers, bards & jesters, blacksmiths, bodyguards, clockmakers, coffee, corals, curios, dyes, fine feathers, fishing (marine), flowers, fortunetellers, fruit, honey, horses (sea), jewelers, masks & mirrors, mercenaries, messengers, musical instruments, pearls, pigments, pipeweed, poison, printers, rare woods & barks, spears, spices, swords, theaters & actors, thieves, toymakers.

Narwan

- **High:** Armor, artillerists, basket-weavers, blacksmiths, bodyguards, cabinet-makers, chain-makers, chroniclers, cobblers, dark resins, drum-makers, dyes, embalming, famous frozen treats, fine candles, fine vellum, fletchers, flowers, foundries, guild administrators, hat-makers, ivory carvers, locksmiths, mercantile investments, mining, peat, pest control, pitch, preserved foods, privy scourers, public baths, rare woods & barks, rope-makers, scrolls, sedan-chair bearers, slayers, spears, spices, stained glass artists, stoneworkers, swords, tanneries, tar, tinkers, vegetables, warehousing, water mongers.
- **Low:** Astrologers, black roses, brick-makers, carnal houses, chimneysweeps, coachmen, coffee, corals, dark resins, dockworkers, enchanters for hire, executioners, falconers, fishmongers, funeral services, gambling houses, gong-makers, healing amulets, horses (land), incense, innkeepers, lacquerwork, magic items, massage parlors, myrrh, narcotics, pearls, perfumes, rare books, sail-makers, salt marshes, silk traders, silversmiths, skyship building, soap, tilers, weavers.

Nordheim

- **High:** Bards & jesters, bowyers, business tutors, cartwrights, chroniclers, coal, cooks, corals, engineers, eyewear, fortunetellers, fruit, gong-makers, guild administrators, leather workers, magic items, pipeweed, potters, road-menders, soap, spyglasses, surgeons, swords, tea, vegetables, weavers.
- **Low:** Basket-weavers, battle axes, bodyguards, bounty hunters, brewers, carpenters, chain-makers, coopers, drum-makers, falconers, famous frozen treats, fishing (marine), fishmongers, furriers, gilding, gladiators, glass-makers, horses (winged), ice blocks, illumination, innkeepers, ivory carvers, kennels, locksmiths, massage parlors, mercantile investments, mercenaries, monster hunters & keepers, peat, privy scourers, sedan-chair bearers, shipbuilders, stained glass artists, trade advisers, war hammers, woodcarvers, wool producers.

Osriel

- **High:** Aphrodisiacs, bards & jesters, basket-weavers, battle axes, black roses, bounty hunters, carnal houses, cartwrights, chimneysweeps, cobblers, coffee, dockworkers, enchanters for hire, executioners, flowers, honey, horses (land), master masons, medicinal herbs, mercantile investments, mercenaries, messengers, money-changers, monster hunters & keepers, musical instruments, narcotics, poison, surgeons, tailors, theaters & actors, things murky & bizarre, tinkers, trade advisers, war hammers, water mongers, wigs, wool producers.
- **Low:** Antiquarians, art dealers, bakers, bankers, bedding-makers, business tutors, butchers, cheese-makers, chroniclers, clockmakers, coachmen, coal, cosmetics, fences, fishing (fresh water), gem-cutters, gilding, goldsmiths, guild administrators, haberdashers, horses (sea), illumination, ink, lacquerwork, lawyers, livestock, millers, notaries, perfumes, porcelain makers, sail-makers, slayers, soap, spies, tanneries, tea, thieves, tilers, warehousing, weavers.

Phrydias

- **High:** Art dealers, bedding-makers, bounty hunters, carpenters, clockmakers, coachmen, coffee, dockworkers, executioners, eyewear, fine feathers, fishing (fresh water & marine), fishmongers, goldsmiths, horses (sea), illumination, ink, kennels, messengers, mining, money-changers, potters, printers, quill-makers, rare books, road-menders, sail-makers, salt marshes, sedan-chair bearers, shipbuilders, silversmiths, spell components, stained glass artists, tar, thieves, warehousing, woodcarvers.
- **Low:** Antiquarians, apothecaries, astronomers, bankers, book-binders, bowyers, business tutors, chroniclers, cloak-makers, drum-makers, dyes, embalming, fences, fine candles, fine vellum, fletchers, fortunetellers, gambling houses, guild administrators, horses (winged), investigators, lawyers, leather workers, magical potions, mercantile investments, midwives, notaries, pigments, scribes, scrolls, silk traders, spears, spices, spies, surgeons, tapestry makers, trade advisers, wax goods.

Gods of Phrydias

Heavenly Valley	Interests
Thaëldar	Sky, air, winds
Anwë	Chaos, nightmares, necromancy, deserts
Arthalas	Forest, hunters, justice, revenge
Baëlyon	War, conquerors
Dandomyr	Messengers, scribes, mirth, trickery
Milánn	Time, wisdom
Myriël	Water, fertility
Nabulos	Healing, alchemy, poison
Oloroth	Earth, mountains, volcanoes
Saëroth	Thunder, lightning
Selenwë	Seas, fishermen

Culturally and racially, Phrydians are a blend of ethnic Bongorese from Munaan and of Calderan half-elves. The elven heritage strongly influenced the local language, a distant dialect of ancient Bongorese. From a spiritual point of view, the old Munaani gods prevailed, although their names now sound elvish. Of the half-elves' Ellyrian ancestry only remains a certain pragmatism, a sense of order, and a taste for the military. Alfdaín's heritage survives in art and courtesy. Phrydians are predominantly dark- to mocha-skinned half-elves.

These islanders essentially honor ancient gods of the Swamp Kings and those of the Calderan faiths. The same cults can be found on Munaan, in Nicarea's province of Bongor, despite being hidden. Although the cult of Teos isn't forbidden in Phrydias, it isn't a part of the local pantheon and it remains somewhat uncommon (most likely honored by half-elves of Ellyrian ancestry).

Local beliefs suffer the same troubles as those in Meryath: they've been ruthlessly suppressed on Munaan, leaving their gods with very small pools of followers on Calidar. It is fortunate that all gods share a basic amount of power coming directly from the world soul aside from what their faithful generate, else these deities and those of Meryath would be all too easily overwhelmed by rival pantheons. Painfully aware of the fragility of their cults, gods of Phrydias nonetheless seek to expand. Their primary focus is Osriel. Some efforts are also made for toe-holds in Meryath, southeastern Alfdaín, Belledor's Seahollow area, and in Nordheim's Kaldmyr region. Myriël, via her clergy, has been inspiring missions into the Dread Lands to find suitable settlement sites.

Bongorese deities are peculiar in that they have two prevailing appearances, one essentially human with or without elven features, and the other partially-anthropomorphic, such as the lion-headed god of war, Baëlyon. The spiritual patrons of Munaan's swamp kingdoms also personify denizens of wilderness dwelling in and around mystical fens. Natives of Phrydias may never have seen any such creatures, but tales from the original settlers describe them well enough that a host of obscure demigods may exist, each connecting with Bongorese wildlife.

Phrydian divinities are most sympathetic to Caldwen's and Meryath's, favoring especially the islander gods as they experience common challenges and shared historical hardships. They remain more guarded with the other pantheons of the Great Caldera. Efforts are made to maintain adequate relations with the gods of Alorea, but the tone remains a tad bittersweet. Elven heritage among Phrydian gods gains them some points, but Alorean deities proved somewhat standoffish as regards the Phrydians' Munaani origins. While the Sherandol and Elëan are agreeable, the Meruín and Tolarin remain neutral, and the Sòldor stand determined to treat their Phrydian peers with thinly veiled contempt.

Original Bongorese tradition is an oral one, though important themes can be found in art and decorative patterns on native clothing. Early on, members of the clergy learned singing, drumming, and dancing rituals, which detailed stories and concepts related to honoring the Lords of the Heavenly Valley (now forbidden on Munaan). Phrydias differs from this standard. Although Bongorese spiritualism prevails, elements of Alorean and Ellyrian philosophies found their place in it. On the elven side lies a love for calligraphy and fine prose, which are used to record rituals and legends in the form of poetry and metaphors. These only date back to Calidar's thirteenth century. The Ellyrian side fancies classical stoicism, theater retelling ancient stories in a stylized way, stone architecture, and the carving of statues or friezes to immortalize great feats of mortals and gods.

The Nicarean theocracy reigns on Munaan, which suppresses old faiths and traditions of Bongor. On Phrydias, the ancient faiths prevail, though they have been altered to better reflect a mountain-like realm surrounded with sea shores, whereas old Bongor was landlocked and devoid of high mountains. It is a complex multi-faceted society. Though the clergy does not rule there, its advisors are always present at the side of merchant princes, aristocracy, and the realm's ruling oracles (who are secular in nature). A small tithe is collected from city dwellers affiliated with the temples, and a much larger one from merchant princes and aristocrats. Oracles past and present are exempt from this tithe.

Common Attributes

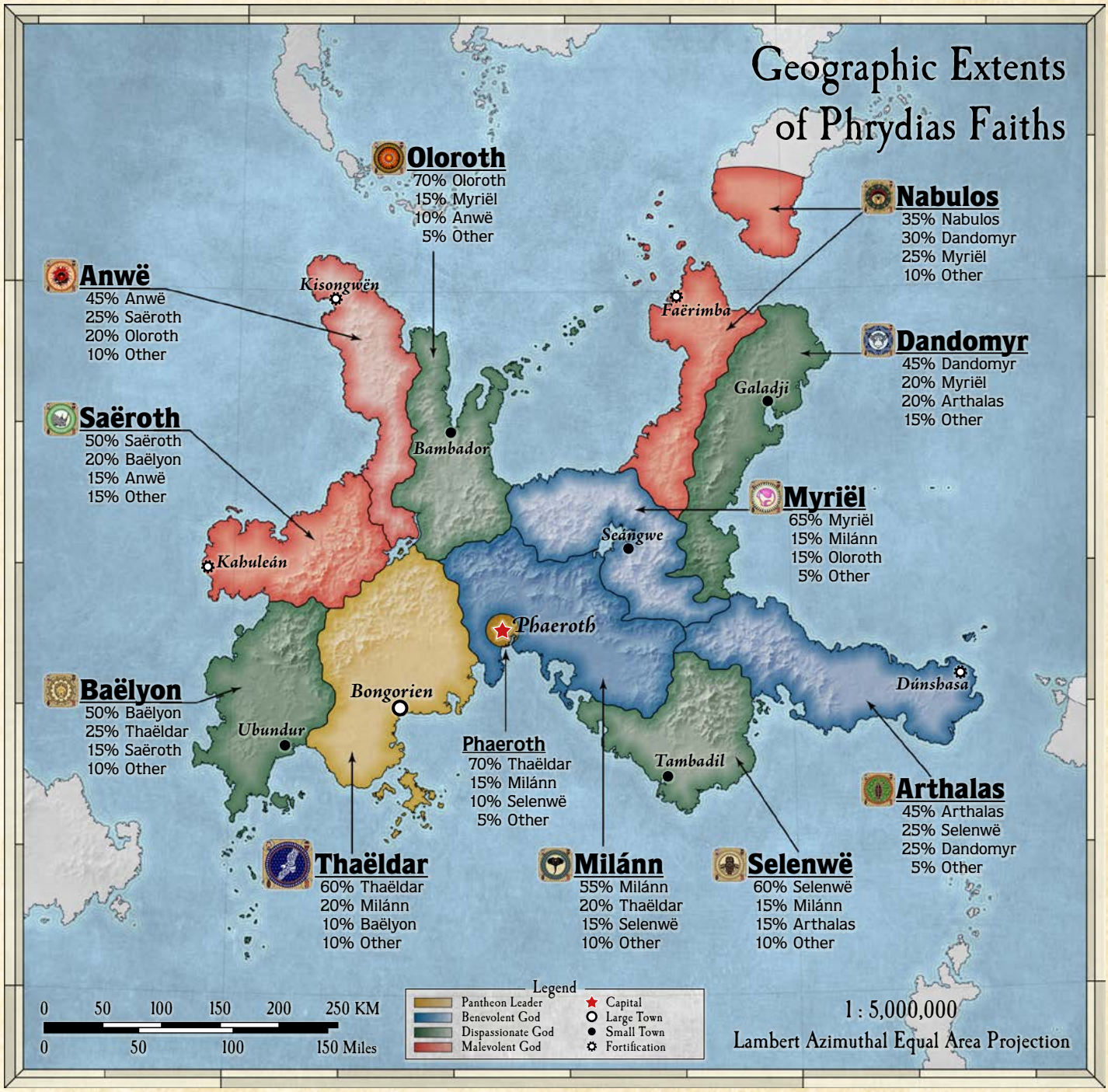
Pious followers of the Phrydian pantheon are taught a mystical ability to use large drums. The booming percussions were primarily used for communication across miles of nearly impassable swamps, originally to alert villages of monster raids. Made of hollowed tree trunks, similar to the great *boomboom* trees of Calidar's Dread Lands, Bongor's drums produce rumbling sounds able to reach the depth of one's soul. Depending on the beat and the number of drummers, they generate different effects.

Nowadays, a single Phrydian drummer fully consumed with the task can provide his/her companions with resistance to fear, magical or not, and a +1 bonus to Morale checks (as appropriate to the chosen game mechanics). A single drummer's range is 3 miles radius.

Ten drummers with the appropriate devices can instill magical fear (and a –1 penalty to Morale checks) to approaching enemies. Those who fail a defense check must flee until the sound of the drums can no longer be heard. Critical failure results in paralysis. Furthermore, the drumming prevents foreigners from sleeping and resting. Ten drummers can be heard up to 6 miles away. Messages can be relayed, typically traveling through the countryside at 100 miles per hour.

Thirty drummers (no less than 10 per nearby village able to participate) can cause an equal number of their warriors to enter a dancing trance, summoning their own spirits and sending them to ambush trespassers. It is a nocturnal ritual. These spirit warriors usually surprise their opponents, strike once, and vanish. Each village's warriors show up every few minutes apart, depending on how far away their drummers are. Magical weapons are needed to hit them (if hit first, they vanish). This ritual ends for the night when spirit warriors have all returned to their villages. The effect's range is 10 miles (all villages must be within 10 miles of the intruders, and be close to at least one other participating village). Different parts of marching Bongorese armies carry drums for just this purpose.

All ranges are halved during heavy rain conditions. The effect is also entirely negated near sources of loud noises, such as cataracts (of which there are few on Munaan, but quite a lot in Phrydias), or wherever magically muted.

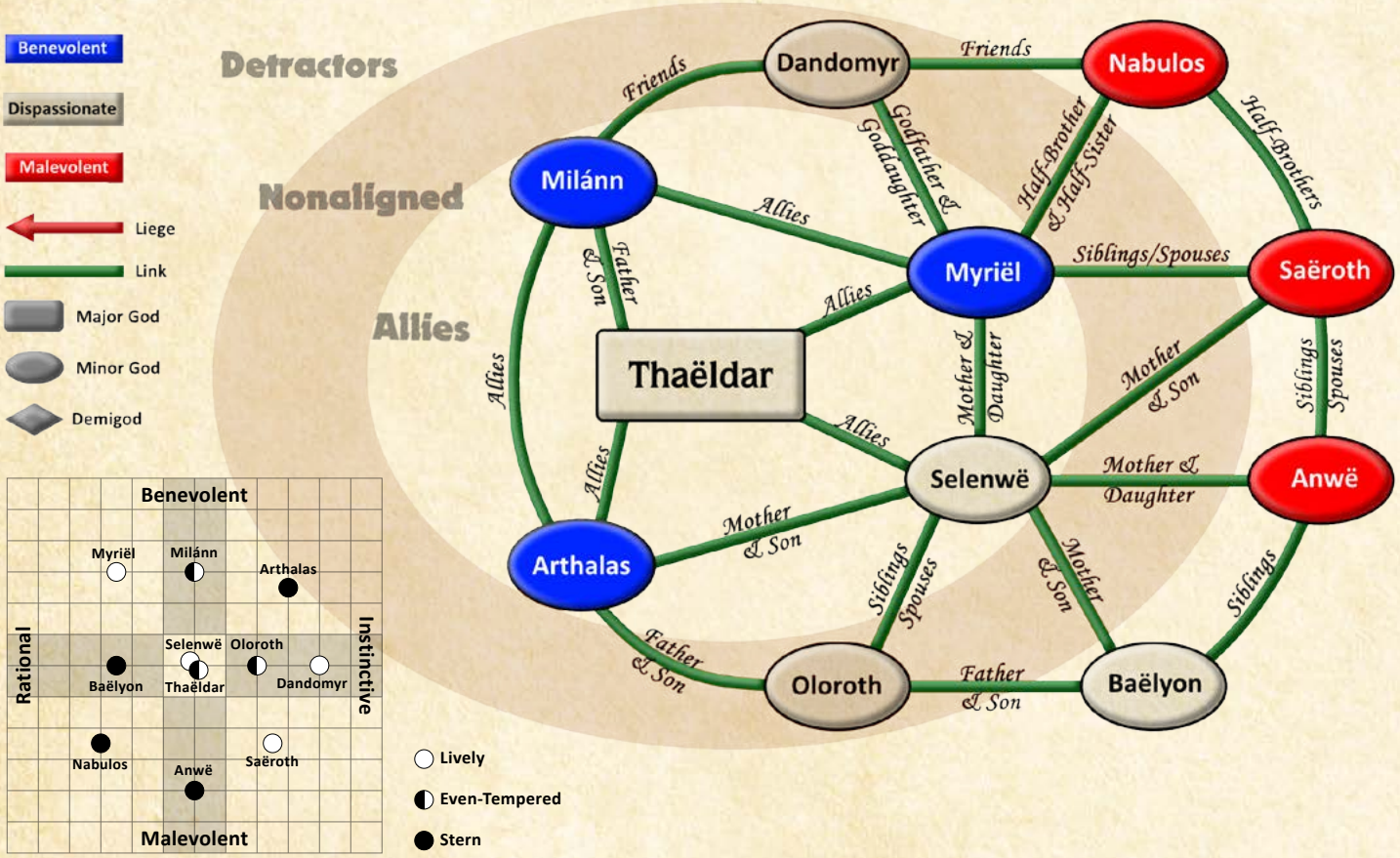


Genesis

2500 BCE Deep in Munaan's vast swamps dwelled tribes of hunters and fishermen. At times they traded, often they bickered, and occasionally they fought each other. These were ancestors of Bongor's Swamp Kings. Life was simple and food plentiful. Their villages sat on stilts, floating rafts, or the branches of immense *dyanga* trees. The people all had in common their faith in countless spirits of nature and ancient superstitions, much like Calidar's fellfolk, as well as monsters dwelling in the wilderness all around them.

1600 BCE From the constellation of spirits honored during Bongor's early millennium, one grew more prevalent when the swamp people saw the sky as their great protector. In their view, the blue vault lay above all else. It ruled the winds, the clouds, the storms, Calidar, Soltan, and two rival moons as they all traveled through its realm.

Lords of the Heavenly Valley



800 BCE During this era, Gandarians came by, looking for potential allies for their struggle against Taneth. Contact was uneasy at first. Though legends told of demons stealing children, shamans confirmed the visitors weren't spirits and decided to trust them. To ensure better relations, the visitors offered the chiefs of the most important tribes great gifts of magic, as well as the secret of iron, to help them with their continual war with swamp beasts. Their biggest contribution, however, was their (conveniently embellished) account of Naghilas, a god in their image. The shamans thought this idea absurd, yet the concept made some headway among the tribes. Weren't the swamp people children of the great sky spirit? If so, shouldn't it have a face and a name like theirs?

719 BCE Receiving the right answer to the wrong question, the good people of the vast Bongor basin led Thaëldar to ascend. He was the Mighty Eagle, King of the Skies. Though the shamans still clung to their beliefs in spirits of nature, priors of the nascent god appeared and led the people of the swamp along a new path. Within a century, shamans became hermits lost in the thick of the jungle.

344 BCE During the next few centuries, two more deities appeared at Thaëldar's side: Selenwë and Oloroth. They were his elder peers, but conflicts among their mortal followers provoked quarrels among the three gods. The rise of rival faiths in Bongor heralded sectarian violence. It was also a time when monsters became more restless, roused by a dark power. Chaos reigned during the next several centuries, while three great kings led their realms against one another in the name of their patron deities. A host of smaller tribes switched sides as their lieges' fortunes of war shifted.

91 BCE Desperate to forestall his rivals and the swamp horrors, King Katomba—a faithful of Thaëldar—sent warriors to fight for Gandaria, in exchange for which he obtained the secret of steel. Heroes of Bongor became familiar among Gandaria's land and skyship forces. Though little more than armed flying rafts, these vessels fascinated followers of Thaëldar. Avid students of aerial navigation and warfare, his disciples learned much from the Talikai, who were also involved. In the eyes of Tanethians and Nicareans opposing them, warriors of Bongor earned their enemies' intense and long-lasting grudge, and a reputation for daring and ferocity. Meanwhile three more deities appeared in Ambrosia—Saëroth, Dandomyr, and Myriël—along with splinter kingdoms devoted to these latest cults.

34 CE During the next twelve decades, Thaëldar's faithful made ample use of their new weapons. First they slew the worst of monsters. Next, rival kingdoms were put on the defensive. The coming of Milánn, a god of wisdom, brought an end to Bongor's internal strife. Though they remained sovereign, quarreling kings vowed to accept Katomba's granddaughter and high prioress of Thaëldar, Queen Niassa, as their arbitrator to settle demands and disputes. With peace reigning in Bongor, remaining swamp beasts were driven into hiding, and great canals

were built between the kingdoms. Lacustrine and sylvan cities flourished, as descendants of heroes who long ago had gone to fight for Gandaria returned, bringing with them great wealth and precious skyships.

100 CE The younger gods departed to explore Calidar's universe, with Dandomyr leading them. Their three elders stayed in Ambrosia to build Thaëldar's magical domain, the Heavenly Valley. The swamp people meanwhile enjoyed a golden age. Great riverboats plied the canals' waters, allowing trade between the kingdoms and keeping watch for the ancestral monsters. The faithful erected temples atop the rare hills dominating the vast swampland. In the rock beneath, they dug tombs for the monarchs and their heroes, or mined iron ore whenever possible, as well as gold and gems. Others collected ivory from felled monsters, which they traded with Inti-Suyu and Gandaria.

289 CE By then, Taneth had long ago succumbed to the rising Nicarean peril. Followers of Teos in search of fame and fortune spearheaded two invasions into Bongor, prompting fearsome Nabulos to ascend. His priors healed those he protected, and spread disease among invaders. A great swamp plague followed, leading the first invasion to fail in 335 CE. Better prepared, another was launched. Gandaria fell during that time, and despite prayers to their gods, the swamp kings were forced to submit as well in 358 CE. The old swamp cults were driven into hiding like the monsters had been in past centuries. Light grew dim throughout the Heavenly Valley.

372 CE Barely more than a decade passed when the first recorded Ghülean raids struck, spreading terror and destruction upon Calidar's moons. Overstretched, the Nicarean empire collapsed while its newly conquered provinces sank into dark age barbary. Chaos and lawlessness reigned. The swamps' old demons reawakened, and the Bongorese fought for their survival. For a time, Aranith roused horrors from the ethereal in a bid to establish a new kingdom on Munaan's surface. Out of fear and desperation emerged Anwë, gleefully feeding on sorrow and death. Out of pain and rage followed Baëlyon. The young god of war rekindled the bravery of exalted heroes, and step by step, the monsters fell back into obscurity. Stranded Ghülean hordes were hunted down, and new kingdoms were founded.

700 CE Arthalas ascended as the dark ages ended, but with peace returning to Bongor, so did Nicarean authority, heavy taxation, and the state-imposed cult of Teos. For a time, old allies rebelled against imperial tyranny, but their coalition was defeated. By order of the potentates, ancient temples were razed or reused for the benefit of inquisitors. Before the century's end, hallowed lights flickered one last time in the Heavenly Valley as silence and gloom prevailed. Bitter and not altogether convinced of Teos's self-righteous supremacy, mortal Bongorese went on with their lives. Under the Inquisition's watchful eye, the old kingdoms languished as client states of the Pan-Munaani empire.

849 CE The Imperial Condominium of Phrydias was founded on Calidar as a commercial enterprise under strict Nicarean administration, beckoning Bongorese settlers from every swamp kingdom. Meanwhile, dormant gods in the Heavenly Valley dreamed of their glorious past, unable to break free of their soul-numbing torpor. They stirred as oracles foresaw their return. The seers of Phrydias kept quiet about their visions until events yet to come would alter their colony's fate. A century and a half later, the great oracle at Phaeroth was built, heralding the condominium's heyday and attracting even greater numbers of settlers from Bongor.

1218 CE Wars of independence raged all around Phrydias, until a small army of Ellyrian half-elves set foot on the colony's shores. It was the event foreseen by the oracles. The seers spoke freely at last and eloquently, inspiring a revolt against the Nicarean garrison. With help from half-elven veterans, they prevailed and rejected the imperial yoke. A new dawn rose over the Heavenly Valley, tenuous and fragile, as the last inquisitor was expelled from the island. In time, a new kind of people adopted the old cults, and the gods welcomed them as their own.

The Heavenly Valley

Ancient Bongorese appeared on Munaan after crossing through the Vortex, very much like the Norse, preserving some of their culture along the way. They understood the world soul as the *spirit to whom our eternal destiny goes*. Many gods of Bongor are believed to be this mythical entity's progeny, including Thaëldar.

Followers of the Phrydian pantheon call its divine domain the *Heavenly Valley*. It resembles an immense savanna within a ring of volcanoes and cloud-reaching mountains. Beyond them stretches a wasteland known as the *Forever Desert*. At the savanna's center lies a great sea bordered with forested swamp and meandering rivers born from the mountains' mists.

Thaëldar's magical palace, *Heart-High,* travels the skies, perched on a gold and silver cloud. Saëroth, his warlike brother Baëlyon, and Thaëldar's son Milánn also live there. Ymuín, a vast hall of white marble and soft mists, serves as a council seat for the gods, as well as Thaëldar's throne room. Selenwë prefers her sea-like domain of *Souldeep,* while her husband Oloroth claimed the Stone Ring Mountains as his home. Their daughter Myriël owns *Brightflow,* a crystal palace spiritually one with the rivers. Her brother Arthalas maintains a great hunters' lodge in *Mystwood,* the forest where he and his spirit servants hunt forevermore. Dandomyr lives in the Outer Path, in a dwelling that appears and vanishes at different points on the savanna. The entrance to Nabulos's abode, *Darkdown,* lies hidden in the swamps' murk, scum, and miasma-shrouded mangroves, while Anwë's is a shadowy gate in the *Forever Desert*.

Lords of the Heavenly Valley

Thaëldar, the eagle-headed god, stands as the pantheon's ruler and one of the oldest Calidaran gods. His goal is to promote Bongorese cults among mortals and peace in the Heavenly Valley. Many of these deities are closely related, with siblings often married, and/or with multiple spouses. As they are of divine spirit rather than mortal flesh, the matter is genetically irrelevant and rather more a question of beliefs and old legends. The practice of consanguine unions does not normally extend to mortals on Munaan and Phrydias.

Special consideration goes to the pantheon's two elder peers, Selenwë (water) and Oloroth (earth and fire). Together with Thaëldar (air), they personify the four primordial planes.

Closest to Thaëldar are Selenwë, Myriël, Arthalas, and his son Milánn. Farthest removed are Nabulos, Anwë, Saëroth, and Baëlyon. These two extremes separated over two brothers' choices for their brides. Arthalas selected Fangrayne the Huntress, a Canisean deity, as his soulmate. Baëlyon chose Hurana-Starclaw, a Felisean goddess, as his. Therein

lies a dispute since the two brides do not treat each other kindly. Myriël and Milánn took the party of the Huntress, while Saëroth and Anwë chose Hurana's. In this dispute, Thaëldar is unwilling to pick sides though he otherwise favors for most other things peaceful Myriël over her sister Anwë. Another bitter rivalry opposes Myriël to her sister Anwë, which reaches far deeper than the matter of the two brides.

Thaëldar



Epithets: *Mighty Eagle, Supreme Ruler, King of the Skies, Venerable One*
Ranking: Greater god, elder peer, and honored ruler of the Heavenly Valley
Interests: Air, sky, winds
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (though truthful and magnanimous, he can be vengeful), 💀 *Practical* (principled and methodical, yet bold and cunning), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (feisty and indomitable, as well as haughty and formal)
Godly Cabals: *The Fellowship of Watchers,* high patron of the *Order of Sky Warriors* (see *Godly Trappings,* pages 219 and 238)
Allies: Selenwë, Myriël, and Arthalas (allies); Milánn (son); and Kanemanu (friend, Meryath), Sphiel (friend, Alfdaín)
Hated Foes: Swamp monsters and those to whom they pray
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Bongorien area); covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms), and in Alfdaín (Fëoros heights)
Day of Ascendance: Aereath 16, 719 BCE
Pronunciation: THAL-dar

Mythology: Hidden in the Ambrosian mist, Thaëldar watched dreadful dreams of mortals in a lake's crystalline depths. "I pray to thee, Supreme Ruler," said a voice rising from the water, "for our people are in great distress. Beasts of the swamp surround us and feast upon our hunters." In response, Thaëldar cut a gash in his hand and stretched out his arm so his blood dripped into the lake. From each tear-shaped drop, his most trusted followers earned a divine favor to help them in their struggle. "Grasp thy spears and fight in My name, for My spirit now flows in thy flesh," Thaëldar said. After dismissing visions from his faithful, the Mighty Eagle felt the feathers on his neck raise from a mix of anger and loathing. He'd sensed a wicked presence in the mist.

The young god stood quietly, certain that he'd cast an unbreakable veil upon the lake and its banks. No one would find him while he stayed in this most simple of sanctums, lost at the heart of somber Ambrosian woods. Yet something prowled nearby. Nascent and isolated gods weren't altogether safe in the realm of the divine, at least until the growing faith of mortals could bring them strength and might. For now, he remained wary of what might prey upon him.

"I know you are here," uttered a dark voice in the mist. "See you I cannot, but smelled your blood I have." Unwilling to step through his magical veil, Thaëldar responded, "And none of it will be yours. Who prowls this place?"

Mists swirled as a shadow glided past. "I do not give my true name so frivolously," said the voice. "And I know who you are, godling of Munaan. Yours are people of the swamps, and mine devour their flesh." The King of the Skies closed his eyes and focused on what dwelled around him. "The ancient darkness of Munaan is a thing of the past," said Thaëldar, as he raised his spear. "Long have demons ruled these lands, but the Time of Man has come and they concede no peace to the damned." The voice resonated again, elsewhere in the mist. "The swamps are mine, and I do not share them with weaklings lest they surrender kingly tributes in flesh and spirit."

Without hesitation, Thaëldar cast his spear through the veil. A roar of pain shook the Ambrosian forest. "You who do not speak your name," said the Mighty Eagle, "know that I relinquish neither flesh nor spirit vainly. Let yours suffer from my spear." More distant, the voice responded. "It takes more than a blade blindly thrust through the mist to strike me down, godling. Thus do I curse those you hold dearest to bear my eternal wrath."

Description: Ancient Bongorese had favored the great sky spirit long before Thaëldar ascended. The concept that his followers were created in his image led the Mighty Eagle to ascend, earn his name, and gain a human-like appearance. He sits high above all, ruling the firmament and the great blue vault arching over the land. He favors all denizens of the skies, such as skyship navigators, air elementalists, sky warriors, and aristocrats.



The King of the Skies rose as an alias of the Big Makani (see *Gods of Meryath*). The Talikai deity, however, deliberately severed their link in 600 BCE when, according to Talikai legends, he held his breath. Thaëldar became fully independent at this time. He is unaware of the actual connection between Kanemanu and the Big Makani. *Sky Warriors*, knights mounted on giant Calderan eagles bred in the Kaël Mountains, are devoted to serve him and his clergy. Elëan elves hold this winged deity in high regard, and his cult gained followers in northwestern Alfdaín as a result.

Like many gods, he worries about Ghüle's passage, which led him to join *The Fellowship of Watchers* (see page

219). His secondary goal is to promote the expansion of his cult and those of his kin. The Fringe is an option, although he much prefers finding a way to settle tropical regions of the Dread Lands that look and feel like Bongor's swamp kingdoms. His eyes rest upon Omfall's Katan Basin. Sky warriors have attempted more than once to trade with fellfolk tribes there, yielding uneven and short-lived results. Though he treats his ascended peers with an even hand, he enjoys Anwë the least as she delights in causing torment to mortals and gods. Another foe of his resides in Ambrosia's swamps. It is the demon-prince Kokumo, who seeks the destruction of the Heavenly Valley by any means.

The supreme god is often represented as an eagle-headed warrior, his human body as black as ebony, feathers of purest white, his eyes and beak gleaming like fiery gold. Thaëldar's main shrine dominates the fine city of Bongorien. Next to its gilded dome stands a slender tower fitted with mooring beams allowing skyships to dock. The shrine includes a sky academy focusing on airborne and seitha navigation. Favored temple offerings comprise the skins and heads of felled swamp monsters or valuables taken from their desecrated shrines.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Ultimate Wound* (see Table 10, score of 4).
Preferred animal/monster: White eagles (and similar creatures).
Preferred weapon/spell: Barbed spear (or combat spells).

Anwë



Epithets: *Lady of the Forever Desert, Laughter in the Night, Feral Fang*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan
Interests: Chaos, nightmares, necromancy, and deserts
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent—8* (wicked, egocentric, insensitive, vengeful, deceitful, mistrustful, jealous, spiteful), ☗ *Practical* (though scheming, she can be rash and impulsive), ↗ *Stern—4* (haughty, arrogant, vain, and narcissistic)
Godly Cabals: *The Pale* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 222)
Allies: Saëroth (sibling/spouse), Baëlyon (brother), Nabulos (half-brother), Koanui (ally, Meryath)
Hated Foes: Myriël, her allies, and her followers
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Kisongwën area) and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Drachean 21, 376 CE
Pronunciation: an-WEH

Mythology: Anwë trod carefully through the Ambrosian swamp. She knew what dwelled there. Yet, she found her fear strangely titillating. Gleeful, Anwë grinned at the idea that evil begat evil, for she had plenty of that. The answer she sought was well worth the risk of straying amid such a place of dread. Oozing murk besmirching the sleek ebony of her bare skin, she lurked past flooded gullies and hanging swaths of gossamer mosses until a smell suffused the jungle's mist, one she recognized at once. Wickedness was afoot.

"I know you are here," Anwë said calmly. "I came of my own free will." A voice responded some distance ahead. "You are bold. What makes you believe I'll not devour your essence? Others of your kind have crossed my path and barely survived to tell their tale." Anwë peered past a tree trunk. "I have knowledge you covet, and you hold answers I desire. I suggest a trade," she said at a mere shadow in the mist. "What is it you wish for?" inquired the dark voice. "I seek an ancient portal hidden deep in the swamps of Bongor," Anwë said, "and I wager you know where it stands." The mists stirred as the silhouette moved closer. "I do. What is your offer?" the voice answered. The goddess quickly drew a symbol in the air to ward off ill fortune before answering. "I know your most ardent foe's weakness, he who stung your essence with his spear." A soft, lingering laughter echoed ahead. "Not good enough," said the voice. "I have no need of such. For what you seek, I wish you to bear my child. Only then will I trust you for you are as wicked as I." Anwë recoiled from the offer. She had no appetite for such thing, let alone the sheer danger of the matter. "Alas," she answered. "I do not offer my womb so casually. Perhaps another time."

As she backed away, the voice spoke again. "Another time? No, my dear. Leaving isn't an option. I shall have you all the same." With mounting horror, Anwë realized she could not casually vanish. Something in the murk interfered with her magic. Transfixed, she watched the ominous silhouette growing in the mist.

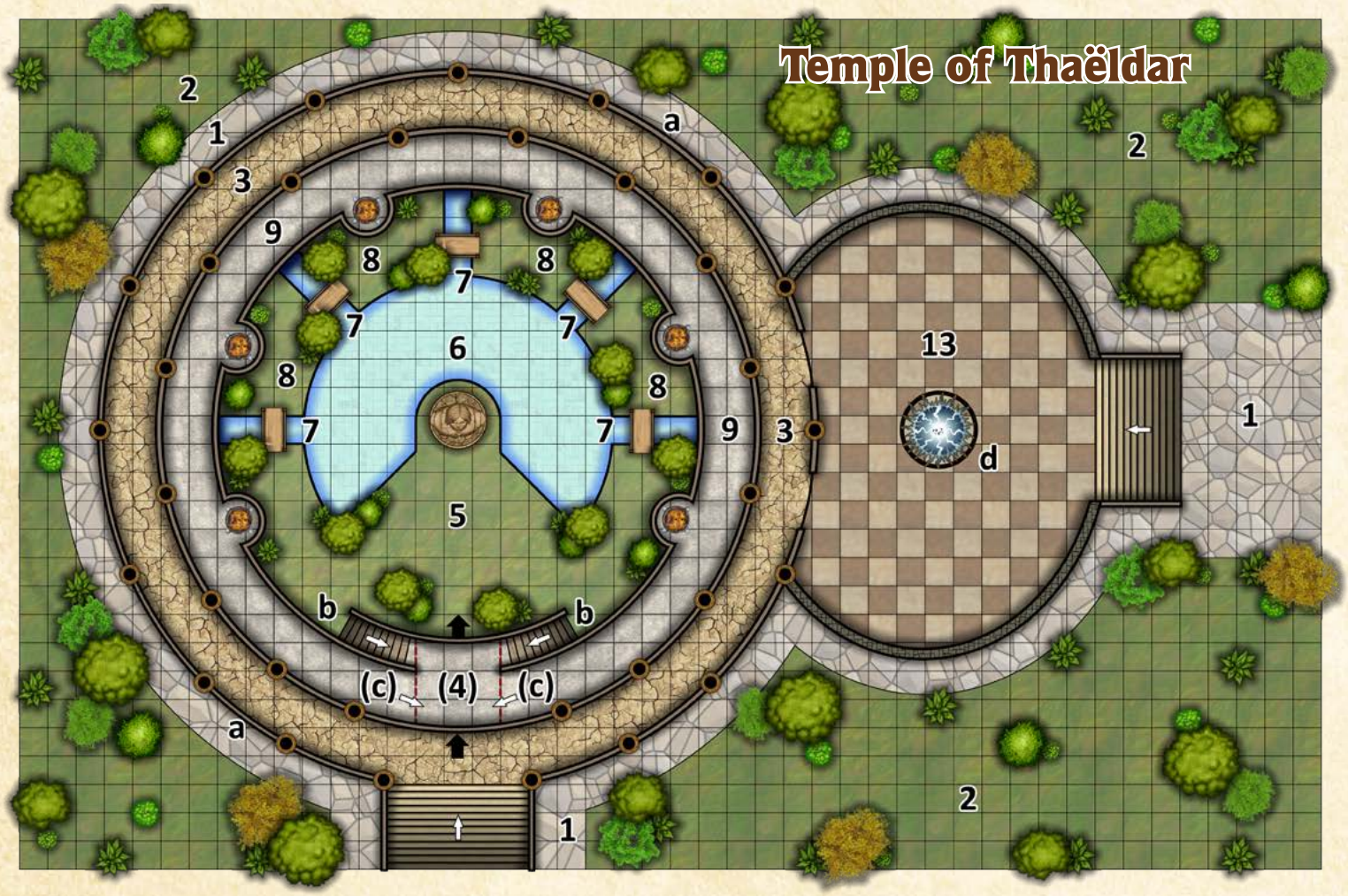
"Watch your left!" hollered a familiar voice. The goddess ducked as a claw-like branch attempted to seize her. She recognized her sister Myriël just behind her, an instant before a towering column of water threw them both sky-high, well out of the Ambrosian swamp's wicked dimness. Anwë knew Myriël had summoned it to save them both. Without further delay, the two vanished to Ymuín's vast hall.

"Spying on me, my beloved sister?" Anwë asked, acerbic. Myriël grinned, falsely innocent. "I wouldn't want anything bad happening to you. Aren't I the nice one." Her nose up in the air, Anwë shot back, "Aren't you the foolish one. I would have left you to your fate." As she vanished in a huff to her burning desert, her sister's voice lingered in the ether. "You're welcome!"

Description: Much of Anwë's power comes from fear she conjures in the minds of Phrydians and Bongorese. She rules the desert beyond Oloroth's mountains, where she torments the forsaken with blasting sands and fiery winds. Anwë is a patron of necromancers, shape-changers, dealers of death, dark knights, misfits, and pariahs at the cusp of society. Her priors handle funeral rites and burials; they also guard graves and hidden vaults. Followers pray to Anwë to safeguard them from untimely death, or to be lenient toward forebears banished to the burning desert.

While tormenting the spirit of a disgraced and failed prior of Selenwë, the Lady of the Desert learned from him of a portal hidden in Bongor's swamps, behind which lay the means to doom her divine peers. She failed to obtain its location from Thaëldar's ancestral foe, the demon-prince Kokumo. Intent on finding it before Selenwë, she surreptitiously leaked what she knew to mortal followers of Oloroth, especially the guardians of King Katomba's ashes, who seek a weapon of their own to obliterate the hated Nicareans. She expects to fool them if they find it, and keep the weapon for herself.

Ancient songs tell of Anwë riding to war alongside Baëlyon and her husband Saëroth, the god of thunder and lightning, leaving a trail of destruction and sorrow in her path. That she joined *the Pale* says much about her manner and motivations. It is where she became Koanui's ally of fortune. She is a schemer who dreams of slaying her husband and all who reside in the Heavenly Valley—her ultimate goal as a *Reaper of the Pale*. But first on her list stands her hated sister, Myriël. Until then, Anwë plays her part.



Temple of Thaëldar—Map Key

Main Level
1. Ground level
2. Heavenly gardens
3. Terrace of the *Forever Desert*
4. Gate to Areas 3 and 5 (under Area 9)
5. Thaëldar's garden
6. *Souldeep* pool
7. *Brightflow* canals & bridges
8. Outer Path of *Mystwood*

Upper Level
9. *Stone Ring* open gallery

Lower Level
10. *Darkdown* hall and aquarium
11-12. Ceremonial chambers (two of eight)

Heart-High Tower
13. Hall of *Ymuín* (lobby)
14. Hall of Eagles (one of three boarding chambers)

a. Temple dome outer edge
b. Stairs to Areas 5 and 9
c. Stairs to Areas 4 and 10
d. Teleporter up to Area 14
e. Teleporter down to Area 13
f. Skyship boarding piers

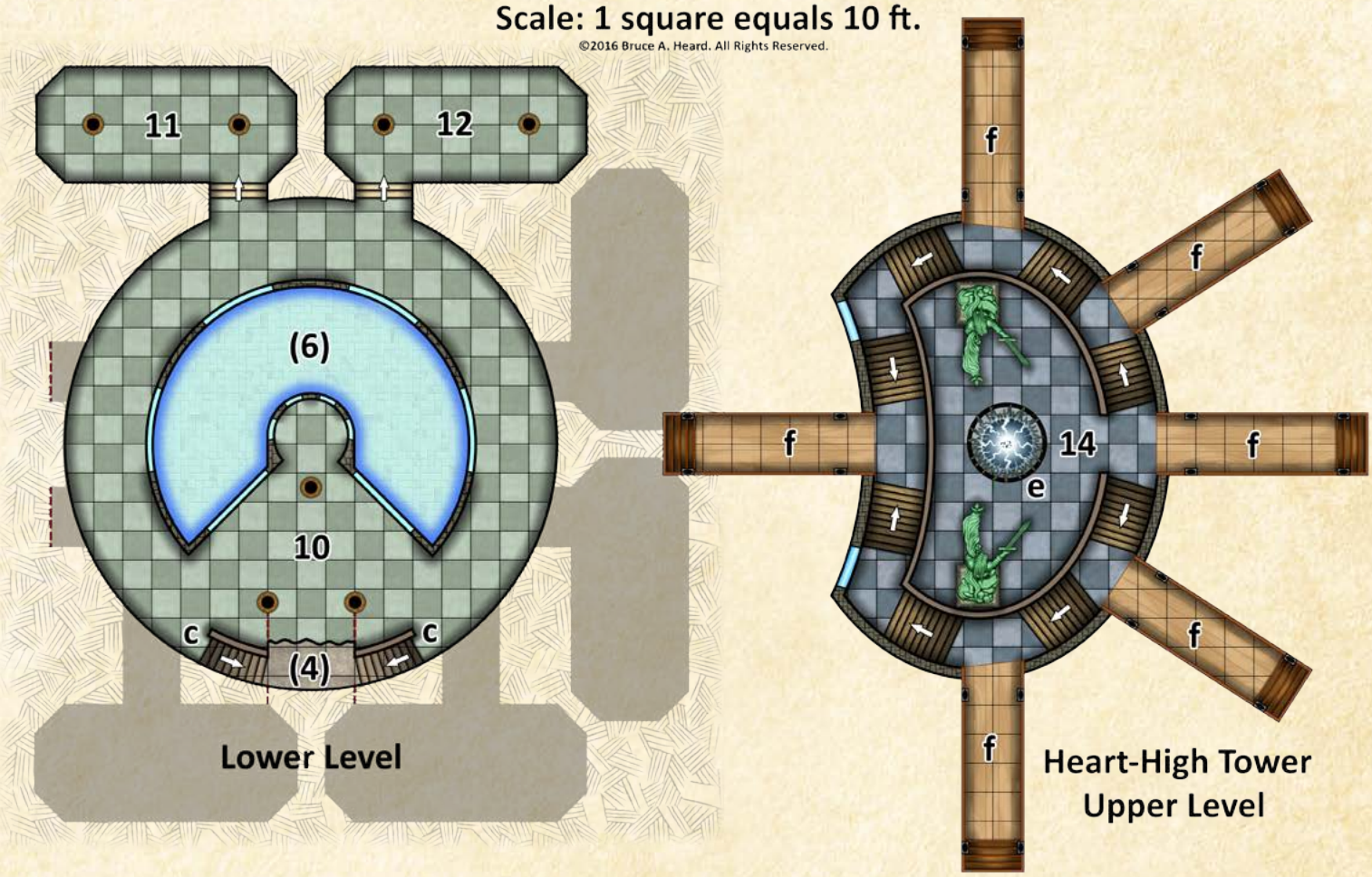
Her spirit patron is the ghostly hyena feasting on the dead, although she is never represented in this form. Rather, a woman's sinister cackle in a moonless night is more commonly associated with Anwë. Her main shrine includes a great mausoleum for mighty figures of Phrydian history, whose graves she protects. It sits in mountain foothills in sight of Kisongwën's fortress. Favored temple offerings include valuables taken from followers of Myriël.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Feyskins*—dire-hyena (see Table 10, score of 16).
Preferred animal/monster: Hyenas and shape-changing scavengers.
Preferred weapon/spell: Barbed or fiery whip (or necromantic spells).

Arthalas

Epithets: *The Hunter God, Shadow Jackal, Lord of Mystwood*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Hunters, forest, justice, revenge
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*—5 (friendly, humble, considerate, generous, trusting), 💀 *Instinctive*—6 (somewhat impulsive, opportunistic, bold, resourceful, risk-taking, cunning), 🗡 *Stern*—3 (austere, brooding, wistful)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Thaëldar (ally and honored ruler of the Heavenly Valley), Oloroth (father), Selenwë (mother), Milánn and Myriël (friends), Fangrayne the Huntress (spouse, Canis Major), Avraoth (ally, Caldwen)
Hated Foes: Spiderfolk of Aroth (see Faëriad, Alfdaín, and Akuamakue, Meryath)
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Dúnshasa area), parts of Canis Major, and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Vortas 18, 700 CE
Pronunciation: ar-THAH-las

Mythology: "Are you certain it's not going anywhere?" The divine she-wolf looked back at her jackal-headed companion. Arthalas nodded briefly. "An unbreakable bond it is," he answered, his gaze transfixed upon a spirit spider ensnared nearby. "Neither can one vanish to safety once caught in its strands. Nothing else will do when *She* comes for her servant."



"I've never fought another god before," said Fangrayne. "I heard she's grown strong of late." Arthalas nocked a barbed arrow in his bow. An enchanted bond connected the projectile to his girdle. "Depart if you must, wife. This quarrel is between our kind and hers," he answered. A gleam in the Huntress's eye betrayed something between anticipation and feral glee. "I knew when I accepted you as my love that the hunt would be good and glorious. I'll not miss this for all the magic in the world soul."



As she finished her sentence, a large portal opened in the Ambrosian mist. Out of the darkness stepped Aranith. Twice her stalkers' size and partly human, she bore eight legs and three pairs of arms with pincer-like claws. The white hooded robe covering her torso could not veil the immense arachnean legs and abdomen behind her. Dark red skin and wicked-looking bracers adorning her arms and legs caused the hair on the back of Arthalas's neck to rise.

At once, the *Hunter God* released his arrow, which drove solidly between her ribs. "No longer will you escape me, Queen of Chelisaria," he hailed. "You can have your servant and your freedom in exchange for all that was taken from my people. Only then shall I release you." Aranith hissed with pain as she failed to remove the arrow. She then returned the stalker's gaze. "Know that I do not bow to gods of a lesser kind," she answered, "and thus do I free my servant from his vows." A ball of divine flames engulfed and consumed the spirit.

Pandemonium erupted when the Mistress of Aroth unleashed a storm of magic. Deflecting her spells with his bow, Arthalas dug his heels into the ground and tugged hard on the unbreakable bond. Fangrayne grabbed hold of him, as the colossal spiderfolk retreated, dragging them both closer to the portal. The gods' two pairs of legs were no match for Aranith's monstrous eight while she slowly backed through the magical gate.

Another figure abruptly appeared next to Arthalas. "My, my, we are in trouble, aren't we," said the visitor with an odd buzzing twitch. The *Hunter God* recognized the dark, twisted, bug-eyed form of Avraoth. "Thanks for dropping by," said Arthalas, gritting his teeth. "I'm rather busy at the moment." Dodging a stray bolt of lightning, the demon-god peered past Aranith. "Seems really nasty back there." Arthalas released another arrow, enraging his quarry. "Will you just stand idle or help us?"

"Oh, fine," answered Avraoth, "if you insist." As spirit spiders began creeping out of the portal, the demon-god summoned a fiery storm to keep them at bay. "Hold on to him," growled the she-wolf, then she suddenly charged through the billowing flames. "Fangrayne, no!" bellowed Arthalas. She vanished through the opening, and a roar of agony rose from the dimness beyond. The portal was closing, but the bond felt loose. With a final effort, Arthalas and Avraoth yanked hard, and out came his beloved, holding a hunk of bone and black flesh still attached to the arrow. The huntress got back to her feet and spat out a torn heart, now devoid of divine life.

"She'll trouble you no more," she said, "but let's hunt something tastier next time."

Description: God of hunters, Arthalas is the patron of forests. Traditionally, he is also viewed as an avenger, a Robin-Hood-like

figure dispensing justice in rather unconventional ways. He favors forest-folk, druids, hunters, rangers, scouts, sentinels, bounty hunters, as well as good-hearted rogues who steal from oppressors and give much of their gains to the meek and the destitute.

As Thaëldar entrusted Arthalas with the sphere of justice and revenge, the young god vowed retribution against Aranith and her followers. During Munaan's dark ages, Scions of Aroth had defiled Bongor's royal tombs and shrines, offering their most precious plunder to their goddess. Since Aranith's death, he seeks her hidden domain. His mortal followers also look for abandoned temples that may yield a clue about how to find Aranith's magical realm. His quest made Arthalas a foe of Faëriad and Akuamakue, but it earned him goodwill from Caldwen's Avraoth.

Bongor's mythical hunter enjoys many friends. Milánn and Myriël both support his choice of a bride. Indirectly, so does Dandomyr, who prefers Arthalas's jackal spirit to the more threatening leonine aspect of Baëlyon. For anything else, Arthalas also gets a nod from Thaëldar. Saëroth and Anwë, however, remain his most ardent detractors.

His spirit patron is a shadow jackal. He is often represented as a dark jackal-headed archer, or a hunter with a jackal headdress. His greatest shrine stands in the vicinity of Dúnshasa's fortress, within a clearing in the nearby woods. Favored temple offerings are sacred objects from Bongor's ancient past reclaimed from the spiderfolk.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Peers of the Faith* (see Table 10, score of 18).
Preferred animal/monster: Foxes, jackals, and wild dogs.
Preferred weapon/spell: Bow and arrows (or druidic spells related to flora).

Baëlyon

Epithets: *Spirit Lion, Lord Warden of Heart-High, Blood Claw, Gold Mane*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: War, conquerors, blacksmiths, metalworking
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (true to his word and generous, but mistrustful and vengeful), 💀 *Rational*—5 (calculating, stubborn, methodical, principled, bound by honor), 🗡 *Stern*—4 (spartan, formal and haughty with underlings, boorish with rivals and foes)
Godly Cabals: *The Gallows* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 221)
Allies: Anwë, Saëroth, and Nabulos (siblings), Hurana-Starclaw (spouse, Felis Minor)
Hated Foes: Norsemen of the Fringe, as well as Bragi and Thor (Asgard)
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Ubundur area), parts of Felis Minor, and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Munaea 3, 522 CE
Pronunciation: BAHL-ion ("ion" as in "billion")

Mythology: At last, the hunt was at hand. Baëlyon slowly pushed aside the leaves of the willow masking his presence, enough to peer at his quarry. A stone's throw away, a cat-like goddess sniffed the air, as much a stunning black panther as he was a glorious lion spirit. Spooked by her presence, a song bird took off from a bush, much too close to her paws, and she caught the creature.

No sooner than her jaws had clamped upon the hapless prey, an old man stepped from the mist, flowing white hair framing his face, harp tucked under his arm. "What have you done, miserable wretch"? he cried, distraught. "I'll have you know this was a fine servant of mine, whom you've grotesquely devoured!" The goddess pressed an innocent paw on her chest, a quizzical expression on her face, were it not for a tell-tale feather landing on her snout. "Know this, goddess of Feliseans," he continued, "that Asgard shall learn of this outrage. Justice will I demand, and ruthless it shall be!"

After swallowing her kill whole, she stared at the old man. "Birds serve you?" she inquired, incredulous. "You should keep them in a cage. Now what? Will you smite me with that harp, old one? I tremble in terror."

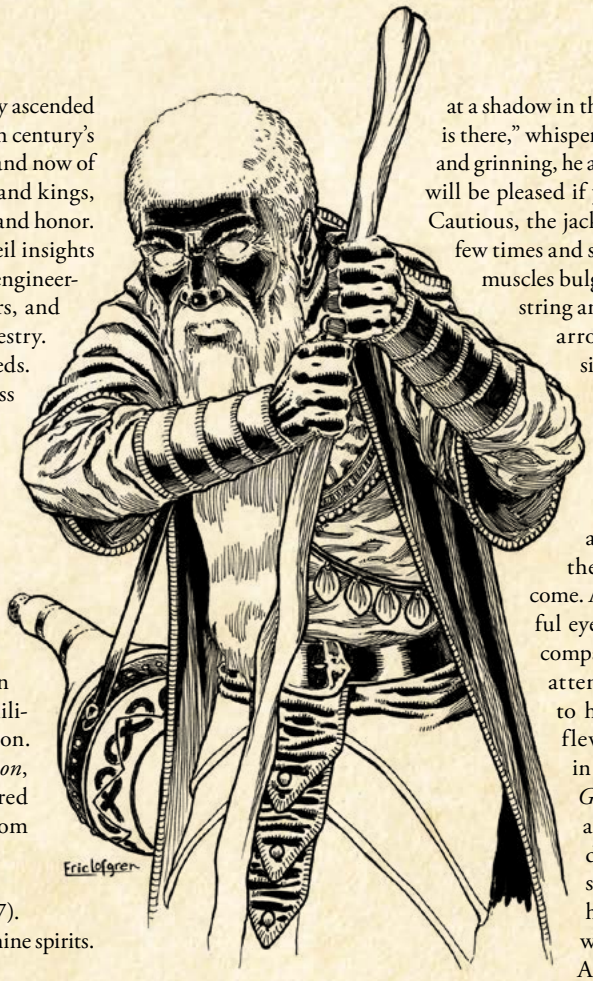
Anger flared in his eyes. A deeper, harder voice rose from the mist behind him. "For revenge, a mighty hammer is his." A warrior stepped forth and stood at his side. The goddess hissed, her claws and fangs bared, defiant and poised for fight. "I am Thor," thundered the warrior, "brother of Bragi. Your claws are puny and no match for Mjölnir!"

Without hesitation, Baëlyon stepped from the cover of willows and marched to the side of the goddess. Easily as tall as the great Asgardian, his own terrifying claws erect, he answered with a lingering, cavernous growl. "How about these?" Baëlyon prepared to pounce when the goddess placed a paw on his arm. She coughed and rasped oddly until her catch fell to the ground.

Unfazed, she looked at the Asgardians and said, "Tasted like chicken anyway." Shooting figurative daggers at her while he recovered his spirit servant, Bragi motioned Thor to back off. "They aren't worthy of your ire, my brother. Come. Better quests are to be had."

As the Asgardians vanished, Baëlyon gazed at his new friend. "Aren't you the bold one?" he said, amused. "And who might you be?" The goddess rubbed her paw on her cheek before answering. "Hurana-Starclaw," she said. "Or just Hurrah, to my friends." The lion spirit crossed his arms and introduced himself. "Baëlyon, at your service. A goddess of mischief, I wager?" Hurrah lifted her chin with pride. "Goddess of *battles* if you please," she answered. "A war god I am as well," Baëlyon added. "Imagine that."

Hurrah took a few steps, stopped, then looked back. "Care to share some Felisean elixir?" she asked. "I could do worse things," answered the lion spirit.



Description: God of iron, politics, and war, the great lion deity ascended to the *Heavenly Valley* during the raging chaos following the fourth century's Ghülean invasion. He became the ancestral defender of Bongor, and now of Phrydias as well, and the patron god of warriors, commanders, and kings, whether human, elven, or of feline persuasion. He favors bravery and honor.

Baëlyon seeks all things useful in battle, leading him to unveil insights on mining and metallurgy to the ancient Bongorese, battlefield engineering, siege weaponry, codes of conduct for honor-bound warriors, and military tradition, which appealed to half-elves of Ellyrian ancestry. The god of war gazes longingly at Klangrîm Thunderforge's deeds. Baëlyon covets the secret of dwarven metalworking so he may pass it on to his priors.

He serves Thaëldar loyally for all things related to war. For everything else, he sides with his allies, and with his beloved Hurrah in particular. He desires a chance to fight at her side because the two entertain a friendly rivalry. Godly one-upmanship clearly lies in their cards. His association with the Felisean goddess created a row with his younger brother, Arthalas, who took a Canisean goddess as his bride. Baëlyon also dislikes Milánn's sermons about the merits of wisdom.

The god of war is often represented as a warrior with a lion head or wearing a leonine headdress. Ubundur's citadel and military academy anchor the dominance of his faithful in the region. His main shrine lies within the massive plinth of the *Blood Lion*, a magnificent sphinxlike structure built of red granite. Favored temple offerings include valuable and magical booty taken from foes defeated personally.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Battle Blessing* (see Table 10, score of 7).
Preferred animal/monster: Large or giant felines, were-tigers, leonine spirits.
Preferred weapon/spell: Iron claws (or combat-related spells).

Dandomyr



Epithets: *Clever Old Mandrill, Lord of the Outer Path, the Unforeseen*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Messengers, scribes, travelers, mirth, trickery, thieves
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (friendly and generous, yet deceitful and unscrupulous), 💀 *Instinctive—8* (rash, unpredictable, disorderly, creative, curious, adventurous, cunning, and free-spirited), 🗲 *Lively—6* (mirthful, cheeky, shameless, eccentric, mischievous, cowardly)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14)
Allies: Nabulos and Milánn (friends), Myriël (goddaughter)
Hated Foes: Hyena- and vulture-like spirits and similar creatures
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Galadji area), Osriel (Tres Puñales area), and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Chelonea 25, 207 BCE
Pronunciation: DAHN-do-meer

Mythology: As he crouched behind an Ambrosian swamp bush, the *Clever Old Mandrill* looked back at the mighty *Hunter God* lurking behind him in the moss-covered trees. He raised a finger before his lips and pointed at a shadow in the mist ahead. "The beast is there," whispered Dandomyr. Nodding and grinning, he added, "*The Venerable One* will be pleased if you bring him its hide." Cautious, the jackal-headed god sniffed a few times and slowly lifted his bow. His muscles bulged as he pulled back the string and released it. His golden arrow surged through the silvery mist and found its mark. Mysterious and ominous, a deep bellow shook the somber woods.

"Nice shooting," said Dandomyr before abruptly darting into the woods whence they'd come. Arthalas raised a disdainful eyebrow as he watched his companion's hasty retreat. His attention quickly returned to his quarry as his arrow flew back, partly covered in black ooze. The *Hunter God* caught it in mid-air and, grimacing with pain, dropped it at once. The shadowy slime burned his hand and melted the wondrous arrow's shaft. An instant later, a loud hiss came from the mist, followed by putrid breath bearing a plague of poisonous pests biting and stinging the *Hunter*. Overwhelmed, he too fled the scene.

It wasn't long before he caught up with Dandomyr. "You did this on purpose," said Arthalas, furious. "You knew what was going to happen." The *Clever Old Mandrill* sat on a rock and smiled. "Come now," he answered. "Surely you didn't think you could defeat the *Mighty Eagle*'s most hated foe all by yourself. Perhaps next time will you be more careful." Arthalas raised his bow, as he would a club, threatening to strike the old god. "I need no lessons from you, you gutless trickster! Perhaps I will teach you one myself."

Dandomyr dropped behind the rock as the powerful bow came down. Just then, the son of Thaëldar appeared and stopped the weapon. He was the wise Milánn, the *Ebon Elephant*. "Now, my friend," he said to the god of hunters, pointing the tip of his trunk like a finger. "Quarrels between gods will serve no purpose, will they?" Arthalas gave him a dark look, huffed, and vanished.

The *Clever Old Mandrill* stood from behind his rock, breathing a sigh of relief. "Thank you, dear friend," he said. "I shall always remember your kind help." Milánn crossed his massive arms and gazed down at his friend. "You should know better than to trick your peers in the face of certain doom." Dandomyr climbed back on his rock. He scratched his chin as he thought of a response. He then shrugged. "True, but then that's why I keep you around."

Description: In his spirit patron form, he ascended from the world soul as the *Clever Old Mandrill*, the god of messengers, travelers, and changing fortunes. A trickster, he leads mortals to temptation as a way for them to earn wisdom. Those who choose poorly may very well find their tomb at the end of the road. Dandomyr favors those who seek change and new horizons. For this reason, travelers and explorers honor Dandomyr whose wits and protection they desire. His typical mischievousness also appeals to rogues. He guides and protects the spirits of the deceased so that they may reach the Heavenly Valley or Anwë's burning desert.

Dandomyr's natural spirit has an ancestral aversion to leopards and raptors, which explains an awkward dislike of Thaëldar. Above all, he despises hyena- and vulture-like spirits. He inspires his followers to fight them, as well as were-breeds, eaters of carrion, and any other beings somewhat related to these creatures or who bear similarities. As a result, he is no friend of Anwë.

Ever since Milánn saved him from Arthalas's anger, grateful Dandomyr has remained friendly with the god of wisdom. He accepted the honor to stand as Myriël's godfather when she ascended, and remains her quiet supporter. Though careful not to defy Thaëldar openly, the trickster often twists the meaning of the ruler's words and intent. He enjoys Nabulos's very odd, two-sided personality because it matches his own: Dandomyr tricks people, but always with the intention of teaching a hard lesson in life, while Nabulos uses healing and sickness in similar ways.

In Phrydias, Dandomyr usually looks like a withered old man, with a white beard, a gnarled walking stick, and a water calabash slung over his shoulder. His main shrine sits by the road in sight of Galadji, near the Bight of the Oracle. Galadji is the traditional port for Phrydians sailing to Osriel and Nordheim. Temple offerings include valuables taken from those his faithful have tricked, preferably given willingly in exchange for a lesson taught, or unwillingly seized after their deaths.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Loyal Companion*—a small primate or comparable lemur (see Table 10, score of 8).
Preferred animal/monster: Mandrills, clever apes, and similar creatures.
Preferred weapon/spell: Cudgel (or illusion spells).



Milánn

Epithets: *The Ebon Elephant, Lord Chamberlain of Heart-High, Son of Thaëldar, Sagacious One*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Time, wisdom, science, ancient lore, traditions
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*—6 (friendly, humble, considerate, truthful, tolerant, magnanimous), 💀 *Practical* (determined and dutiful if somewhat unconventional and sly), 🗲 *Even-Tempered* (mirthful and eccentric, Milánn also is dreamy and enigmatic)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Thaëldar (father and honored ruler of the Heavenly Valley), Dandomyr, Arthalas, and Myriël (friends), Gilla Amberbraid (friend, Belledor), and Bëlianda (friend, Alfdaín)
Hated Foes: Wererats and evil rat-like spirits, their minions, masters, and spiritual patrons
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Phaeroth area), and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Loreath 28, 34 CE
Pronunciation: mee-LAHN



Mythology: Surprisingly quiet and nimble, the towering god crept in the shadow of a giant boulder at the bottom of a deep Ambrosian gorge. He knew his foe lurked ahead, somewhere in the jumble of fallen rocks, for he could hear it scrounge about. He approached the spot, his mighty warrior's mace in hand.

"Hello there!" a voice said, a few paces behind him. Surprised, Milánn turned to see who'd dropped in so inconsiderately. An elven maiden stood there, smiling. "I hope I'm not interrupting anything important, am I?" The sound of his quarry scampering through the rocks and Milánn's disappointed expression informed her she might just have. *The Ebon Elephant* lowered his weapon. "Well, too late to worry about it now," he answered. "To whom do I owe this impromptu visit?"

"Sorry for intruding," said the slender deity. "I am Bëlianda of the Briarwoods. I watched a great comet shoot through the mortals' Great Vault. It bore portents of your ascension, and it seemed right to come greet you." His curiosity piqued, Milánn leaned against a rock and considered the maiden. "Are you a seer?" he asked. Climbing next to him, she answered, "I dabble." The *Sagacious One* raised an eyebrow. "Truly? How fascinating. Those who honor me among mortals are oracles and elders who seek wisdom. Pleased to meet you."

"You may think me overly bold to approach you in such a cavalier manner," said Bëlianda, "but I'd foreseen a friendship." Milánn fiddled with the lanyard on his mace's handle as he glanced over his shoulder. "I shall always welcome and honor a friend. So, a stargazer you are?" he asked. Bëlianda nodded. "I am, but mostly I sing. It gives me the inspiration I need for a glimpse into the *Ætherian Scrolls*." Milánn's eyes opened

wider. "You'll have to teach me this talent, though singing isn't my best skill. The trunk gets in the way, you see!" Her laugher sounded to him like a cascade of crystal. "Perhaps I'll sing for you," she answered. "But what was that you were hunting?" After an enigmatic grin, Milánn grasped his mace and suddenly swung it down hard behind the rock. He then leaned down and pulled up by its tail a rat-like spirit stunned by his mighty blow. *"This* is what I sought: a dirty, rotten thief, a scurrying and snooping scoundrel."

Reaching out to scratch its chin, Bëlianda observed, "But he's so cute!" The creature opened a glowing red eye and snapped at her fingers. At once, Milánn swung the creature back and forth, slamming it against the ground, before tossing it out of sight. "If you need help against such pests, do let me know," he suggested. The elven deity lifted a hand to cover her smile. "I do have some trouble with wandering shark spirits," she admitted. Bemused for an instant, Milánn answered, "Surely, I can devise a plan. You should visit the Heavenly Valley. Forsooth, you would be welcome there."



Description: The patron of wisdom, knowledge, and divination, Milánn is the god of Phrydian seers. He ascended from the world soul, following mortal beliefs of a union between Thaëldar and the great spirit of a comet hurtling through Bongor's night sky. This elephant spirit embodies not only indomitable willpower and eternal memory, but also hope in a better future. Milánn favors seers, prophets, librarians, sages, mapmakers, and pest hunters.

With the rise of Nicarea, Milánn foresaw that Bongor's cults would become hidden on Munaan. He inspired his followers and others to master sailing through skies and stars as a way to secure a brighter future. His priors were directly involved with the founding of Phrydias as a Bongorese colony under Nicarean control in 849 CE. He later inspired his faithful to build the Great Oracle at Phaeroth, their main shrine. Milánn always harbored a natural aversion for rat-like fiends. An unfortunate incident later on made the matter worse when an accursed were-rodent caused a fire in the Great Oracle's library, destroying innumerable volumes of priceless value. A silent war goes on beneath the streets of Phaeroth.

Milánn's closest friends are Myriël and Dandomyr. He also took Arthalas's side regarding his choice of spouse, which earned him points with Bongor's mystical hunter. Loyal to Thaëldar, he tries to reason with the ruler's detractors, copiously nagging them with wisdom in the process. Bëlianda has become his love interest, and he more recently connected with Gilla Amberbraid with whom he shares a hatred of evil rat-like beings.

Milánn's spirit patron is *the Ebon Elephant*. He stands as a towering muscular figure covered with glowing tattoos, sometimes represented with an elephant head and wings. He holds in one hand a pole with a lantern, and a book in the other. The light refers to his wisdom and clear sight in the night, and the book knowledge and science. Favored temple offerings include the remains of monstrous rodents or valuables taken from their shrines.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Protection* (see Table 10, score of 6).
Preferred animal/monster: Elephants and similar creatures.
Preferred weapon/spell: Flanged mace (or detection-related spells).

Myriël

Epithets: *Riverborn, Lady of Brightflow, Mistress of Feathers, Whispering Brook*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan
Interests: Water, fertility, beauty, charm, diplomacy
Personality: ♥ *Benevolent*—6 (friendly, merciful, humble, truthful, generous, tolerant), ● *Rational*—5 (patient, determined, discerning, honor-bound, obedient), ↯ *Lively*—5 (mirthful, passionate, hedonistic, romantic, sentimental)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Hallowed Seven* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 220)
Allies: Thaëldar (ally and honored ruler of the Heavenly Valley), Milánn (friend), and Arthalas (brother), Dandomyr (godfather)
Hated Foes: Anwë, her allies, and her followers
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Seángwe area), Osriel (Pietrarosa area), and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Nubeian 30, 91 BCE
Pronunciation: MEER-real

Mythology: ". . .and I say this, Esteemed Peers of Ymuín," Milánn declaimed, "that a great effort is essential to strengthen our ties with the Lords of the Briarwoods." Standing before the assembly, the Ebon Elephant continued his impassioned plea. Ensconced on his cloud-like throne, Thaëldar presided at one end of the great hall, facing nine peers seated in a semi-circle amid a lingering mist. Crowding the benches behind them, spirit servants mimicked their lieges' expressions. A diverse lot they were, the ancestries of some alluding not to human- or elvenkind but to the mystical spirits of leopards, hippopotami, giraffes, warthogs, ostriches, buffaloes, vultures, zebras, crocodiles, and so on. Above them all, a great vault ranged from azure to midnight blue with a hint of stars.

The *Mighty Eagle* having called for a recess, Myriël casually strolled along an open-air gallery, delighted at the majestic view of the Heavenly Valley far below. "You will stop following me," snapped a stern and bitter voice behind her. The goddess leaned against the balustrade and glanced at her sister, Anwë. Myriël smiled and asked with an air of guiltlessness, "Look who follows me now! Perhaps you have something to hide from me, my sister?" The *Lady of the Desert* pointed a clawed finger at her sibling. "What I do is none of your business. Watch yourself, lest you end up at the wrong end of things next time around," gritted Anwë. Myriël shrugged. "You have yet to thank me for saving you from your shady business in the swamps, my ungrateful sister. Should I mention the matter to Our Venerable One?" As haughty as ever, Anwë shot back, "You leave him out of this. One day, another will rule here, and you will no longer feel so proud then."

Myriël laughed at the dire prediction. "What, our mighty husband I presume?" Anwë smiled wickedly. "We all know he is most powerful, and I have his ear." The *Lady of Brightflow* raised an eyebrow. "Truly, is that all you have? If you own his ear, I possess all the rest. He knows I shall pleasure him eternally and bear many sons and daughters, something you loathe, for you are wicked and as alluring as a smelly old sock. Do enjoy that ear, second wife!"

Anwë was poised to cast a vengeful curse when their mother intervened. "Enough bickering, you two," ordered Selenwë. "Myriël, the Mighty Eagle requires your services at once. Anwë, return to Ymuín and ponder the benefits of diplomacy. It will serve you more than your secret schemes."

Description: Daughter of Selenwë and Oloroth, she embodies fresh water and life-giving rivers. Myriël ascended as a goddess of love, beauty, fertility, wealth, and diplomacy. She favors those who live on or near rivers and lagoons. She is revered by merchants, diplomats, and advocates, as well as artists and their patrons.

Myriël is Anwë's ancestral rival, and Saëroth's First Wife. Though he trusts Anwë and delights in her malicious side, Myriël retained her status as First Wife because of her sheer beauty and her vow to give him many offspring. However mighty his thunder, Saëroth dares not repudiate Myriël lest he face his own mother's wrath and possible banishment by Thaëldar. As for the Lady of Brightflow, she hopes to sway her brooding husband away from the dark side over time.

Myriël knows her evil sister is up to no good. Being a member of *the Hallowed Seven*, she is bound to spy on Anwë and interfere with her plans. Neither knows that they belong to rival godly cabals. Myriël overheard her sister speak to the demon-prince Kokumo about a portal in Bongor's swamps, and she is determined to find out about it. The goddess of rivers is highly placed and well-suited for her role in the Heavenly Valley, as Thaëldar often employs her as a trusted messenger. Along with Milánn, she has been instrumental in warming relations with the gods of other pantheons. Her priors are almost exclusively female, including stealthy avengers known as the *Order of the Whispering Brook*, whose mission it is to protect her shrines and her followers. They often act as bodyguards for prioresses on ambassadorial duties. Myriël also relies on this order to spy on Anwë's followers.

She is sometimes portrayed as a pink flamingo. These birds are sacred in Phrydias and must never be harmed. In her anthropological form, she stands as a goddess with translucent pink wings or a large halo of ethereal shimmering feathers. Her main shrine sits just outside Seángwe, rising directly from the mountain lake. It sponsors a nearby museum of art and a university focused on negotiation and trade. Favored temple offerings include valuables taken from Anwë's followers.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Divine Life* (see Table 10, score of 13).
Preferred animal/monster: Pink flamingos and colorful avians.
Preferred weapon/spell: Steel feather fan (or water-related spells).



Nabulos



Epithets: *Black Mamba, Lord of Darkdown, Father of the Swamps, Wrath of the Gods*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Healing/death, alchemy/poison, secrecy/revelation
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent*—5 (insensitive, remorseless, mistrustful, jealous, unforgiving), 💀 *Rational*—6 (calculating, patient, watchful, stubborn, principled, obedient), 🗡 *Stern*—6 (aloof, brooding, baleful, enigmatic, insidious yet true to his word)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Dandomyr (friend), Saëroth, Anwë, and Baëlyon (allies); Queen Sayble (Draconia)
Hated Foes: Dragon slayers of Meryath and their spiritual patrons, including Istra; Eilonna (Alfdaín) and her allies
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Faërimba area) and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Deirdea 27, 295 CE
Pronunciation: NAH-boo-los

Mythology: ". . .and then, *this* happened," said Arthalas, pointing at putrid buboes on his face and chest, and showing his burned hand to Nabulos. One squirted pus and demon maggots when the divine healer squeezed it. Full of disdain, he leaned from his seat and sniffed at the eruption. "Mine would have rotted through the. . ." began Nabulos, until the Hunter God raised a hand and cut him short. "This is not why I came to see you," he said. "Can you heal it?"

Nabulos leaned back in his seat, a bushy eyebrow raised above his reddish eye, then shrugged in annoyance. "'Tis but shoddy labor unworthy of gods," he diagnosed. While muttering a dark incantation, he shook an amulet about his patient's woes. Dangling tufts of silvery hair, iridescent feathers, gleaming horns, and odd skulls bounced and rattled, some of which the Hunter God recognized as a unicorn's and perhaps a gold dragon's. The offending sickness vanished at last from Arthalas's glistening ebon skin. The Black Mamba handed him a golden calabash. "This bitter brew will clear your spirit of burrowing pests."

After the two vanished from the bizarre grigri-cluttered cave-like dwelling, Nabulos wandered out of the Heavenly Valley and into the Ambrosian swamps. He swam soupy channels, investigating opaque eddies until he reached a muddy gully that bore the scent of Arthalas's infection. A voice hailed the intruder from within the mists. "How bold of you to stray into my domain," it said. "Bow before your master and pay homage, godling." Alert, the Black Mamba stood, poised to strike. "I suffer no liege in the swamps," he answered. "I honor no one who cowers beyond sight, nor do I offer tribute." The

Ambrosian mist stirred as a shadow glided by. "If no servant of mine, then a foe and a fool you are, and you shall pay for your insolence."

A hiss rose from the silvery billows, and with it came a deathly gust of pestilence and ravenous spirits flying between branches, gnarled roots, and hanging mosses. Eerie swirls of creeping and buzzing miasma oozed with sickly wickedness. As they reached Nabulos, he inhaled them all through his nostrils and mouth until they filled his chest. The Father of the Swamps then released his breath, and returned the ghastly plague along with new horrors dredged from the depth of his heart. A roar of pain shook the woods. "Speak not to me of death," said Nabulos. "*Here* is my realm, and know that I fear naught within it."

Description: Curiously, Nabulos is both healer and bearer of infectious diseases. Born of Selenwë like so many of his peers, he is also believed to be the spawn of a black dragon's spirit. He thus ascended as the deadly *Black Mamba*. He favors healers and those who make and use poison, as well as sages who research the myriad uses of venomous substances for healing, killing, sleeping, anesthesia, paralysis, memory loss, dreams, trances, aphrodisiacs, etc. Nabulos also protects the faithful who dwell in the swamps against monsters preying on them.



Both feared and loved, he personifies the wrath of the gods. He made a pact with Thaëldar that he would handle the Mighty Eagle's "dirty work" and that of the pantheon in general (he inflicts *Divine Wounds* on behalf of other gods). When he instructs his priors to spread diseases, he also encourages them to heal the worthy. Nabulos has used his skills to cull excess population, ending wars among them. Once very powerful in Bongor, his status has suffered greatly since, because epidemics do not spread through Phrydias's well-drained valleys quite as easily as they did through Munaan's swamps.

Nabulos, like all Phrydian deities, suffers for having such a limited number of followers compared with other pantheons. He seeks to expand the range of his cult. In his endeavor to do so, he came in contact with Queen Sayble, Draconia's living goddess to whom he discovered he was related. His mother, Selenwë, conceived him with a brother of Sayble's. A special bond connects Nabulos to Anwë, as he inflicts death upon unworthy mortals, and she banishes them to the Forever Desert. He enjoys bellicose Baëlyon, since war begets pestilence. He also sides with his half-brother Saëroth on many issues.

The Father of Swamps is often represented as a hooded man. Some see him as a snake-headed god. Nabulos's cult is strongest in the north, near Faërimba, and on Singe-Saari Island, which is a putrid, mosquito-infested swamp for the most part. His priors are widely reputed for being healers. They often visit the northern island in search of plants used to make medicines (or poisons). Temple offerings include magical potions intended to heal or slay.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Breath Weapon*—sleeping poison (see Table 10, score of 20).
Preferred animal/monster: Snakes and snake-like beings.
Preferred weapon/spell: Fork-like javelin (or healing/wounding spells).

Oloroth

Epithets: *The Rock, Fire Heart, Lord of the Stone Ring*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan, and elder peer of the Heavenly Valley
Interests: Earth, mountains, volcanoes, freedom, truth, sunlight
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (generally humble and altruistic, Oloroth does not hesitate to use wicked means against his foes), 💀 *Instinctive—4* (bold, adventurous, free-spirited, rebellious), 🗡 *Even-Tempered* (often passionate and feisty, yet ascetic and brooding at other times)
Godly Cabals: *Calderan faiths* (see page 14), *the Gallows* (see *Godly Trappings,* page 221)
Allies: Selenwë (spouse/sibling), Arthalas and Baëlyon (sons)
Hated Foes: Tyrants in general; Teos and his servants
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Bambador area), Osriel (Sombrillas area), and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Kragean 24, 463 BCE
Pronunciation: OL-oh-roth

Mythology: "Are you sure you can get through?" The young man considered the whispered question. His companions crouched at the bottom of a ravine, away from Kragdûr's feeble glow filtering through Bongor's hazy foliage. A nocturnal raptor screeched nearby. The young man grinned. "I know the place like the back of my hand," he answered. He wasn't lying. The temple had been built for him a thousand years earlier, but his mortal friends didn't know this. They only knew him as Toluwani, someone brave enough to defy the Nicarean Inquisition.

He had never gotten used to mortal forms. They felt puny, fragile, almost nonexistent. The avatar turned from his companions and climbed into a crack in the ravine's side. Unseen in the clammy darkness, pests nipped and stung his skin as he crawled through the filth of the claustrophobic drain pipe. Somewhere along the way, he reached a set of iron bars. Certain his friends couldn't see him, the young avatar bent them effortlessly and proceeded until he reached a slimy shaft. He lifted aside a heavy grate and climbed into a crypt. Water dripped from its ceiling and pooled by the opening. The Nicareans had spent little on maintaining the decaying temple. Statues of past Bongorese kings who'd once honored Toluwani's cult had nonetheless been removed from the surrounding alcoves and replaced with those of inquisitors. The avatar's divine anger boiled in his gut.

Without hesitation, he approached one and crushed its head, relishing the feel of crumbling rock between his fingers. Behind the statue lay a secret panel the temple's priors had magically veiled when Bongor fell to Nicarea. Toluwani opened it and recovered a small ivory box with King Katomba's ashes, a symbol of resistance against tyranny. The young man took it and promptly returned whence he'd come. Moments later, his friends helped pull him out of the stony crevice, awed at the sight of the ivory relic.

"Halt!" hailed a nearby voice. "Drop your weapons and surrender." The accent was unmistakably Nicarean. Crashing through the thick foliage, a score of armored guards advanced, spears in hand. Behind them stood what anyone in Bongor would recognize as an inquisitor, haughty and wearing a crimson robe. Toluwani tossed the box to his companions. "You know what to do. Run now while I delay them," he said. Summoning a haze to cover their retreat, the avatar then faced the approaching guards. Deflecting spear and sword, he plowed through his foes' armored ranks, crushing and swatting at will, but the inquisitor's magic was powerful. Slowed

by a fey willpower, Toluwani felt the point of a glaive sink into his chest and his consciousness fade.

Faraway from the world of mortals, Oloroth stirred and gasped for air. Selenwë leaned over him, worried. "I don't like it when you dwell among mortals, my husband," she said. "You could be trapped there, and your essence destroyed." Oloroth sat up from her bed and wiped divine sweat from his brow. "There are things I must do. This night, a small box changed hands. Tomorrow, the gate of a new future will open."

Description: Oloroth embodies mythical mountains and the unfathomable power of earth and volcanoes. He is also seen as a spirit of sunlight, indispensable for farming, abundance, and wealth. With his immense strength, he can bear great burdens and overcome impossible obstacles. His cult is most resilient among Bongorese on Munaan. Oloroth favors earth and fire elementalists, mountaineers, merchants, farmers, masons, stone carvers, potters, architects, and engineers as well as freedom-fighters, rebels, and popular heroes.

Oloroth stands as an "activist" opposing Teos's hegemony on Munaan. He takes on mortal forms, defying the Ambrosian Covenant to inspire Bongorese resistance against the Nicarean potentates. Defender of those who rebel against oppression, he was one of the gods inspiring Phrydian oracles to welcome half-elves as a means to overthrow colonial authority.

Spiritual brother of Selenwë, he is also thought of as her husband and the father of many deities. His oldest son is Saëroth, followed by Myriël, Anwë, Baëlyon, and Arthalas. His two youngest sons and his wife are his closest allies. He refuses to be pulled into the dispute opposing the Hunter God and the Leonine Warlord about their choices of brides, focusing instead on the fate of mortal Bongorese still under Nicarean supremacy on Munaan.

His spirit patron is the mountain gorilla, although he is rarely represented as such. Instead, Oloroth often appears as a colossus of prodigious strength, equally at ease with volcano lava and mountain mist, each of which he controls at will. His main shrine soars from a great stony spur overlooking Bambador, a tall white pyramid with magical mist hugging the top. Light rain always falls outside the structure, forming waterfalls on its sides. Favored temple offerings include valuables taken from tyrants and hated foes of the cult.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Godly Shield* (see Table 10, score of 2).
Preferred animal/monster: Large primates, as well as earth and fire elementals.
Preferred weapon/spell: War hammer (or either earth- or fire-related spells).



Saëroth



Epithets: *Thunderstones, Skyfire, Lord Seneschal of Heart-High, Rumble Deep*
Ranking: Minor god of Munaan
Interests: Thunder, lightning
Personality: ♥ *Malevolent—5* (selfish, insensitive, vengeful, mistrustful, jealous), ☻ *Instinctive—5* (hasty, unpredictable, bold, cunning, unruly, ↗ *Lively—3* (hedonistic, shameless, feisty)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Anwë (sibling/spouse), Baëlyon (brother), Nabulos (half-brother)
Hated Foes: Lords of elemental clouds, steam, and dust, and related monsters
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Kahuleán area) and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Solteane 19, 463 BCE
Pronunciation: SAY-roth

Mythology: Saëroth stood on a vast cloud peering at the strange world around him. All manners of clouds extended *ad infinitum,* from patchy to colossal and ominous. Though no sun was present, a region glowed in hues of gold and amber to pink and deep purple, while others lay resplendent in liveries of pure white and mist-like pearl, or cloaked in the brooding grays of impending storms. Somehow, he felt at home. He did not wish to return to the Heavenly Valley empty-handed, and his path had led him to Aerion's elemental billows in search of unknown treasures.

"What else lies in this place?" he wondered aloud. A whiff of air charged with the scent of rain caught his attention. A deep rumble resonated well below his feet, almost deafening. He liked that feeling. As if answering his wishes, the massive cloud parted before him, forming kingly stairs leading down into the stormy dimness.

At the bottom, Saëroth stepped into a passage lined with immense pillars, its walls, floors, and vault all made of the gloomy matter. The thunder came from a colossal hall farther ahead. On the opposite end, Saëroth found a black cylinder nearly as tall as he. Mist blew in through an opening above. As it cascaded and caressed the stone, it produced the soul-rending rumble. Intrigued, the young god touched the device. A deafening roar shook the monstrous hall and the entire universe around it. It felt both terrifying and utterly gratifying.

"Who dares disturb my realm?" said a cavernous voice behind him. Saëroth turned and looked up at a towering colossus, at least ten times his own height. "I am Saëroth of Bongor, God of Thunder. To whom do I speak?" the young god answered. The swirling colossus peered down at the puny visitor. "I am Sirrulian Tealskin, Lord of these parts, and I remember no servant of your name." Saëroth shook his head. "I am but a visitor and

an admirer of this. . .” He pointed at the device. “It is a thunderstone, the biggest, to my knowledge,” answered Sirrulian. “If you like it, it is yours for a price.” After a moment of hesitation, Saëroth responded, “Name it.”

“A part of your essence I demand,” said the elemental ruler, “as a token of good faith. Then will you come when summoned, for minions of steam and dust seek to befoul my domain, and champions I require.” The god of thunder crossed his arms as Saëroth answered. “Service will be given in good faith, but for not more than one century.” Sirrulian’s laugh shook the clouds. “Ten,” he shot back. “Four,” Saëroth countered. “Six, and I shall not bargain further, godling,” offered Sirrulian. “Done!” agreed Heart-High’s Seneschal.

“As you wish,” concluded the elemental ruler. Lightning flew from Saëroth to his host as the exchange took place. “Now take the stone if you can,” Sirrulian said smugly. Saëroth approached the device, gently placed his hand on its cool surface, and using much of his remaining magical strength vanished with his wondrous prize.

Description: Saëroth is the god of celestial lightning and thunder greeting Thaëldar’s life-bringing rain. Quick-witted though hot-tempered, he embodies willpower and manhood. His followers pray for courage, determination, and for success with the opposite gender. He favors *Blood Warriors* (Bongor’s equivalent of Nordheim’s berserkers), and wizards specializing in the elements of electricity and magnetism. Despite his tempestuous and vengeful nature, Saëroth also governs pleasures such as drumming, dancing, singing, feasting, wrestling, games of skill, and courting.

The god of thunder keeps his thunderstone at Heart-High. It is an object made from Aerion’s primordial sound, though he’d obtained it from Sirrulian Tealskin, an elemental ruler of clouds. Occasional fragments break off during the fiercest of storms. As a favor, he sometimes bestows one to select individuals who serve him best. When kept in presence of a drum or a group of drums, a thunderstone boosts their range by a half (rounded down—see *Common Attributes* earlier) and provides the drummer’s companions with a 25% resistance to non-divine magic.



Saëroth hated serving Sirrulian, and became his sworn enemy when he eventually betrayed him. He also made foes of elemental steam and dust rulers whom he fought in Sirrulian’s name. A shameless womanizer, he married his two sisters, Myriël and Anwë, who proved to be each other’s bitter rivals. He often sides with Anwë, Baëlyon, and Nabulos. He also resents being merely Thaëldar’s seneschal rather than the pantheon’s ruler.

His spirit patron is the mighty rhinoceros. Saëroth sometimes appears as a man-like being with the head of a rhinoceros and gray leather armor. More often, he stands as a warrior with a double-edged battle axe, one blade white, the other red. His main shrine is in western Phrydias behind a tall waterfall in the Gorge of Vultures in the Kaël Mountains. The faithful believe that a sacred thunderstone lies at the bottom, producing a constant roll of thunder as tons of water come crashing down. Favored temple offerings include valuables taken from foes related to the elemental plane of Aerion, especially demi-planes of steam, dust, and cloud.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Devout’s Immunity*—electrical attacks (see Table 10, score of 3); or the permanent gift of a thunderstone.
Preferred animal/monster: Creatures capable of electrical attacks.
Preferred weapon/spell: Double-headed axe (or spells related to electricity).

Selenwë

Epithets: *Womb of the World, Mother of Gods, Lady of Souldeep, Mistress of Sirenes, Secrets in the Sea*
Ranking: Minor goddess of Munaan, and elder peer of the Heavenly Valley
Interests: Seas, fishermen, motherhood, secrets, moonlight
Personality: ♥ *Dispassionate* (generous and merciful, but mindful and assertive), 💀 *Practical* (determined and stubborn, though unpredictable and highly intuitive), 🗲 *Lively*—5 (flamboyant, indomitable, romantic, idealistic, devoted to protecting her kin)
Godly Cabals: None
Allies: Thaëldar (ally and honored ruler of the Heavenly Valley), Oloroth (spouse/sibling), Baëlyon and Arthalas (younger sons)
Hated Foes: Evil sorceresses of the oceans, sea hags, those who serve them or their spiritual patrons
Centers of Faith: Phrydias (Tambadil area), and covertly on Munaan (in the Swamp Kingdoms)
Day of Ascendance: Calidere 1, 595 BCE
Pronunciation: SEL-en-weh

Mythology: The host of merfolk darted through the turquoise realm, leaping through the spray at the surface, and back into the thriving ocean of life. Selenwë followed in their wake, like a mother her children. Soon they reached a vast rock covered with pink and gold corals teeming with the mirror-like flashes of lesser creatures swimming about the magical domain. The lead merman slowed and pointed at a giant clam shell. The sea goddess touched it with her harpoon, and the chime that it produced coaxed it to open. A wondrous vessel stood inside, there but not there, for a fleeting instant in the present and already a figment in her memory. “I know of such magic,” she said. “It isn’t for mere spirits or mortals to fathom.”

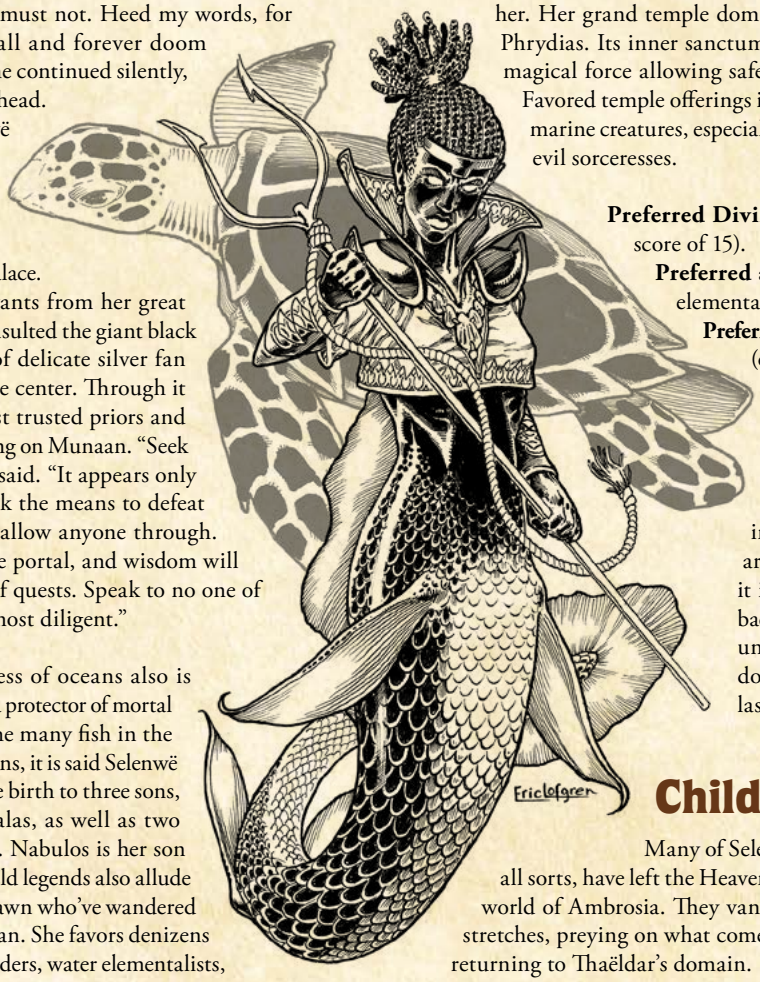
Selenwë set aside her weapon and shut her eyes to remember the strange vessel, though she’d never seen it before. She recalled unstoppering it and pulling out its hidden contents, as if in a dream. She then opened her eyes and, as her retinue gazed in amazement, she held the golden stopper in one hand, and a scroll in the other. It certainly was enchanted, as seawater could not damage it. Carefully, Selenwë unrolled the scroll and studied the first few words.

Suddenly somber, she lifted her eyes. “Away, all of you! Leave at once,” she ordered in a stern voice, “and never return to this place.” Her aquatic retinue darted away in a flurry of bubbles. When she was certain not one sapient spirit remained,

she summoned a fey darkness to close upon the submerged promontory, the shell, and everything surrounding her. All that remained was the soft pulsing glow of her weapon as she unfurled the message once again.

"I say this to the Gods centuries before my time," her lips whispered as she read on, "Bongor again will rise. Scions of the Swamp Kingdoms will own the stars, but they must not. Heed my words, for a fell darkness will engulf all and forever doom mortals and gods alike. . ." She continued silently, a deep frown barring her forehead. When she was done, Selenwë invoked blue watery flames and destroyed the ominous warning. She cast a godly veil upon the vessel, seized her weapon, and vanished to her palace.

After dismissing the servants from her great hall, the *Mistress of Sirenes* consulted the giant black pearl on an intricate stand of delicate silver fan coral with abalone shell at the center. Through it she communed with her most trusted priors and heroes of the cult—those hiding on Munaan. "Seek a portal in the swamps," she said. "It appears only to those such as you who seek the means to defeat a great foe. Do not enter or allow anyone through. Pray to me when you find the portal, and wisdom will be conferred for the holiest of quests. Speak to no one of your aim. Act alone and be most diligent."



Description: The goddess of oceans also is Phrydias's Queen of Mothers, a protector of mortal children, whom she sees as the many fish in the ocean of life. From old traditions, it is said Selenwë and her husband Oloroth gave birth to three sons, Saëroth, Baëlyon, and Arthalas, as well as two daughters, Myriël and Anwë. Nabulos is her son from a black dragon's spirit. Old legends also allude to countless other godling-spawn who've wandered off long ago into the Ambrosian. She favors denizens of the sea, navigators, shipbuilders, water elementalists, mothers, children, aquatic druids, and those who live from the bounty of the sea, as well as benevolent sorceresses.

Seen as a good-hearted deity, Selenwë also stands as the queen of altruistic witches who carry deep and dark secrets. She's hidden one ever since she found a message from Bongor's distant future. It alluded to a portal opening on a sanctum in Ghüle's universe. There, mesmerizing scriptures could overwhelm mortals who read them, beguiling them into using their powerful magic against a great foe. Instead, they could only lead the readers to become slaves of Ghülean gods, causing Bongor to annihilate Nicarea and its Munaani neighbors at the time the message was written. All in the name of a holy relic holding King Katomba's ashes, zealots eventually conquered the whole of Soltan's ephemeris, fostering a monstrously dark future with no gods but those of Ghüle. Selenwë kept this terrible revelation to herself and directed heroes among her followers to find the portal, so she could entrust them with an artifact to seal it shut and veil it for all time.

Selenwë's closest ally is her husband, Oloroth. She knows he unwittingly set in motion a terrible chain of events. She remains quiet, fearful of her secret reaching other ears as the portal hasn't been found by anyone yet. Meanwhile, some of Selenwë's followers keep an eye on her husband's most devoted faithful. The Lady of Souldeep is otherwise on neutral terms with most gods, as she is mother to many, and refuses to be pulled into her younger sons' disputes.

Her spirit patron is a dark-skinned mermaid, though she often manifests herself as a crowned queen with flowing gossamer robes glowing around her. Her grand temple dominates the port of Tambadil in southern Phrydias. Its inner sanctum features a giant aquarium fitted with a magical force allowing safe passage and breathing for the faithful. Favored temple offerings include remains or valuables from wicked marine creatures, especially sea hags, malevolent witches, and other evil sorceresses.

Preferred Divine Favor: *Hallowed Veil* (see Table 10, score of 15).

Preferred animal/monster: Sea turtles and water elementals.

Preferred weapon/spell: Double-pronged harpoon (or water-related spells).

Tanimola's Traveling Bottle:

It is an artifact able to travel to faraway destinations, seeking its intended recipient as best it can. Tanimola was a sorcerer in Bongor's distant future, who wrote the artifact's last message "to the gods" and cast it into the sea of time. The artifact drifted backward through time into the gods' current universe, crossing through their Ambrosian domains unnoticed, until Selenwë at long last read its somber warning.

Children of Selenwë

Many of Selenwë's offspring, godlings or demigods of all sorts, have left the Heavenly Valley to prove their worth in the wild world of Ambrosia. They vanished into thick forests or savannah-like stretches, preying on what comes along or seeking divine wisdom before returning to Thaëldar's domain.

Among them might be found Jafwën the zebra spirit of forever grasslands, Kwalathana the giraffe patron of tall but gentle people, Shakaniel the crocodile demigod of eternal hunger, Faënuru the toad spirit of spurned loves, Llanshana the hippopotamus goddess of water lilies, Glorangoro the wandering warthog and patron of good food, Naesala the ostrich spirit of running and hiding, Tanariel the meerkat demigod of facetiousness and clever name-calling, Gaëloroth the buffalo spirit of marshes and river crossings, Illithor the vulture god of carrion, Katangriel the leopard demigod of prowlers in the night, Bwalanthir the tortoise spirit of ancestors, Darthari the porcupine patron of plucky ones, or Olowana the gazelle goddess of temptations.

At times, they do show up especially when Thaëldar holds a grand council at Ymuín, often coming with siblings, spouses, and progeny of their own. Small shrines consecrated to these godlings can be found throughout Phrydias, honoring them lest they be entirely forgotten. Without a doubt, more exist, as varied and curious as the cults of ancient Bongor, some dormant, others wandering the far ranges of Ambrosia until they decide to return to the Heavenly Valley.

Rewards & Obligations

This section suggests benefits, divine favors, and special abilities for the faithful. Such heavenly rewards are predicated upon the piety of mortal followers, from the unrepentant heathen to the fanatical zealot. Referees can choose any of them when they are called for, or roll randomly.

Obligations

Once a hero has adopted a specific god to honor, the expectation is that this choice remains permanent. Any rewards can be earned, but in exchange, certain conditions must be respected. Failure to meet a cult's expectations, attempting to use rewards frivolously or abusing them, betraying one's ethos, or switching gods will result in rewards becoming forfeit. One whose profession is directly tied to a deity, such as a member of a clergy or a knight sworn to serve a god, can never turn from the original faith without dramatic consequences (being marked as a pariah at the very least). It is possible for ordinary believers to switch to a different cult, but there must be a clear and commanding reason for doing so. For example, witnessing an incredible feat performed in the name of another god, or some miraculous event unambiguously tied to another faith, may justify switching cults.

Gods are generally unkind to those who turn from them. Doing so for trivial reasons may also result in a curse or a nasty encounter as a parting gift. Those who abandon their faiths multiple times are increasingly at risk, not to mention becoming the object of suspicion on the part of the new spiritual patron. Most will not accept an individual's return to a previous cult, especially a former member of the clergy or someone who'd taken vows of absolute loyalty, such as a paladin. A time for penance, an atonement ritual, and a quest are otherwise needed to earn another deity's trust or regain what was previously lost. Gods of Calidar, though immortal, can be destroyed (see *Death Among Gods*, page 210). A god's untimely end does not result in overly harsh treatment of its followers when they seek to serve another. A question will remain, however, about the circumstances of that god's misfortune and whether its mortal followers should bear some responsibility. This being said, there are different ways for heroes to honor gods.



The Unrepentant Heathen: These are heroes without spiritual patrons or any sort of interest in seeking benefits from the divine. Heathens hardly ever set foot in a temple other than perhaps to steal or plunder. Naturally, they never receive anything good from the gods. When performing a wisdom check related to piety, if not an automatic failure, the unrepentant heathen suffers at least a –1 penalty. If this is your hero, put this book down and go roll some dice already.

The Casual Faithful: The hero honors no divinity in particular, but accepts the idea of related deities as a spiritual framework. A pantheon must therefore be chosen, reflecting the hero's birthplace or cultural background. The casual faithful can make offerings and pray to any of the divinities in this pantheon. Prayers are performed to earn luck, protection, success, revenge for oneself or someone else, and perhaps forgiveness. Rewards are few, but without any divine expectations and reprisals. These are described under Table 9, *Casual Benefits* later in this section. An opportunistic god may offer a *Divine Favor* (see Table 10) to heroes of the casual persuasion if they have proved worthy, as a way to encourage them to unequivocally adopt its cult (see *The Pious Follower,* next).

The Pious Follower: The next step is to adopt one specific deity's cult, while occasionally allowing casual prayers and offerings to other gods of the same pantheon, as described earlier. The follower must go through a ceremony to celebrate the event and some teachings, usually at a temple or a shrine, thereafter upholding a set of behavioral guidelines that reflect the chosen god's ethos. Occasionally attending services and making offerings is required. Wanton failure to adhere to these conditions may result at least in a temporary loss of *Followers' Abilities* (see Table 11). The follower may otherwise receive occasional rewards for outstanding behavior and achievements. These are described under *Divine Favors* later in this section (see Table 10). When rolling a wisdom check related to piety, the pious follower receives a +1 bonus.

The Fanatical Zealot: This most extreme devotion does not permit casual faith in other deities. Though it is understood that other gods exist, for the fanatical zealot there can be only one lord. In this group belong the clergy, warriors who have taken a solemn oath to serve their divine patron, and non-clerical fanatics. They value their faith more than their lives. Knowingly betraying and failing to uphold the lord's ethos is unforgivable and will result in the loss of special abilities described later in this section (see Tables 11 and 12). Inadvertently failing one's lord may result in a *Divine Wound* or physical handicap, which can only be healed when all the wrongs that were done are repaired (see Table 8). From a godly point of view, fanatical zealots are valuable assets, and therefore they receive *Divine Favors* more often than pious followers. Expectations are highest and come with grievous retribution, should zealots displease their spiritual patrons. When rolling a wisdom check related to piety, the zealot receives a +2 bonus.

Divine Wounds

Divine Wounds result from heroes displeasing their spiritual lieges. They should never result in a hero no longer qualifying for a specific profession when prerequisites fall below requirements. They are meant to give a hero an added challenge until the reasons for sustaining a *Divine Wound* are properly addressed. It is an opportunity for handicapped heroes to demonstrate their true faith and determination. Mortal magic cannot undo a *Divine Wound*—only a quest to regain a god's favor will, or earning a *Divine Favor*. Fanatical zealots are the most likely to suffer *Divine Wounds,* casual faithful the least.

Heathens may suffer the same fate if they despoil a consecrated site or repeatedly defy a god. Since heathens do not benefit from the protection of another spiritual patron, a god may feel all the more empowered and justified to punish their brazen insolence. Few in Ambrosia will fault them for this, provided their response remains within reason. After all, gods do worry about how their followers perceive them, thus they must defend their reputation and the interests of their flocks. The more powerful an offender is, the higher the odds rise that a deity will notice an affront and react. Vengeful gods are also more prone to punish those who disappoint them or damage their pride.

Table 8. Divine Wounds

d12	Handicap	Effect
1	*Beast Within*	The hero's persona and appearance change during night hours. Personality conflicts may be possible, depending on the cult. A simple approach could involve lycanthropy.
2	*Bleeding Wound*	Hero loses a quarter of his/her life points each day when dawn rises upon the god's temple. Though it can be healed magically, the loss repeats itself each day.
3	*Blessed Madness*	The hero speaks in tongues, twitches, and mutters continually: –1 personality and intellect.
4	*Divine Darkness*	The hero is blind, but his/her Armor Rating and attacks sustain a –2 penalty to hit. Blind-fighting skills or similar spells are negated.
5	*Exposed Heart*	When the hero accumulates more than 50% damage, any subsequent attack has a 1% chance of killing the hero outright.
6	*Golden Silence I*	The hero is unable to speak or scream. Though all spells can be cast silently, they sustain a 20% chance of failure.
7	*Golden Silence II*	The hero is thoroughly deaf and unable to act silently.
8	*Hallowed Aging*	+1 wisdom and intellect, –2 strength, agility, and stamina.
9	*Lame Leg*	The hero moves at half-speed, cannot run or jump, and may not benefit from attack bonuses when charging on foot into combat.
10	*Wheezing Breath*	–1 personality and stamina, and 5% chance of spell failure.
11	*Whispering Heart*	–2 stamina.
12	*Withered Hand*	–1 strength (if the damaged hand is involved) and manual dexterity. The damaged hand cannot be used at all.

Heavenly Rewards

This section includes *Casual Benefits* that could be granted to those who pray for them, and *Divine Favors* for those who earn them through their actions. As a general note, the tables and random lists provided in this book shouldn't by any means limit the referees' imagination. They are given here for consistency. Modifying and expanding these charts lies very well within a game master's purview in order to make penalties and rewards better fit an adventure's context, a hero's achievements, and the nature of the faiths involved. Though random rolls are acceptable, a referee's conscious choice may be better.

Casual Benefits

These rewards are earned through prayers and offerings. Once before leaving on an adventure or once a month (whichever is most frequent), a hero can visit a temple of his/her chosen pantheon to attend a service, pray, and donate one-tenth of his/her recent gains (from the previous adventure or those earned during the past month, whichever is highest). The value of offerings must not be any less than one-tenth, lest the deity becomes offended by the hero's greed, nor can it exceed one-tenth by much, for the hero may be seen as unwisely attempting to belittle a god. Funds remitted to a temple for the sake of charity or sworn duty never count in this context nor can they be expected to improve one's status in the eyes of spiritual patrons. General acts of charity to the faithful (if appropriate to the cult) and generosity to a temple will however earn sympathy from the clergy.



Table 9. Casual Benefits

Prayer	d4 or *d20*		Granted Benefit
Luck	**1**	*1*	The hero may reroll the next failed attacks or skill checks of his/her choice with a +2 bonus.
	2	*2*	In a melee situation, a foe (of equal or greater Life Force) trips and falls when fleeing or charging toward the hero.
	3	*3*	The hero notices a crucial secret passage or a hidden object which had been previously missed.
	4	*4*	When needed, the hero runs across a clever mount (flying, swimming, or magical) willing to provide a ride.
Protection	**1**	*5*	A nearby event provides a timely distraction enabling the hero to escape a major foe's notice.
	2	*6*	A mortal wound leaves the hero with the lowest amount of life to stay conscious.
	3	*7*	A failed defense check becomes instead successful if it would otherwise result in the hero's death or disability.
	4	*8*	For one encounter, the hero is immune to one attack type (fire, cold, electricity, poison, acid, mind-affecting, or energy-draining) most consistent with the cult. Benefit is triggered when the relevant attack takes place.
Revenge	**1**	*9*	The hero's next successful attack inflicts maximum damage to a hated foe (identified when praying) with a small chance of instant death.
	2	*10*	A dream reveals to the hero clues about a hated foe's misdeeds or about its present location.
	3	*11*	Wounds the hero inflicts upon a hated foe during the next encounter cannot be healed with magic.
	4	*12*	As a posthumous reward, if the hero is killed, the killer (or a hated foe of equal or less Life Force also involved) is destroyed as well.
Success	**1**	*13*	A dream warns the hero of an upcoming deadly trap, irreplaceable theft, tragic betrayal, or major conspiracy.
	2	*14*	The hero's share of a treasure hides a previously unnoticed item of high value and a treasure map.
	3	*15*	The hero inherits either a battered old skyship, a rickety tower and its surrounding lands, or a discredited nobility title. All bear a certain amount of debt, rival claims, or some sort of liability.
	4	*16*	The heir to a powerful or wealthy individual falls in love with the hero. Jealousy and intrigue may be involved.
Various Four	**1**	*17*	**Forbiddance:** When affected by a hostile life-threatening spell, the hero receives full immunity to magic for the remainder of the encounter.
	2	*18*	**Foresight:** The next time the hero forgets a crucial, life-threatening step, a reminder or a divine inspiration crosses his/her mind.
	3	*19*	**Forgiveness:** If the hero accumulates one or more of this benefit, a *Divine Wound's* effects may be attenuated or removed.
	4	*20*	**Fortitude:** The hero gains maximum life points *plus one* when reaching the next career threshold.

The solicited deity receives residual magical power from the hero's prayers and offerings. In exchange for this, the hero's prayer gets a base 5% chance of being heard; if not, then odds of the next prayer being answered increase +1%. When a *Casual Benefit* is granted, reset the next prayer to its base 5% chance. The referee may select a specific benefit directly, otherwise the hero's prayer determines what is sought (luck, protection, revenge, success, or one of the "various four" listed at the end of Table 9), and a d4 is rolled to select the actual benefit. Praying for a specific benefit incurs a –4% base penalty and is limited to one of the "various four."

The choice of deity to whom one prays also affects the odds of being heard and the benefit granted. Depending on which gods are available in a pantheon, it may be possible to ask for a benefit whose general category squarely fits a deity's general sphere of interest. For example, praying to Thaleera for casual "luck" benefit, to Arthalas for "revenge," or to Galadir for "protection," and so on, incurs a +2% base bonus. If the philosophies of the solicitor and the god are the same, the prayer receives a +2% base bonus, none if somewhat different, or a –2% base penalty if fundamentally opposed.

The d20 range is provided here if the referee wants to grant a random *Casual Benefit* for some other reason. *Casual Benefits* only work once after being triggered. Unless specified, the hero's player selects when a benefit comes into effect (if made aware of its nature), otherwise the game master does.

Divine Favors

These temporary rewards are granted to the faithful who uphold conduct becoming their chosen cult in the face of significant adversity, or for outstanding achievements consistent with the chosen deity's sphere of interest. What's important here includes the hero's chosen course of action, its outcome, and the manner in which it was performed (meaning role-playing spiritual intent to the hilt). Few things please the gods more than a grand gesture that is: 1. Successful, 2. Relevant to a quest, 3. Hailed explicitly in their names, 4. Perilous to the hero. If a hero achieves a truly outstanding feat, a game master should grant a *Divine Favor* at the end of the encounter (see Table 10). Heroes who behave in a more restrained fashion (either because of a player's more low-key gaming style or the nature of the chosen cult), can simply perform rituals to honor their spiritual patrons and make on-the-spot offerings after defeating a major foe or obtaining a key valuable. In this latter case, the extent of a personal sacrifice—*what a hero gives up*—becomes more germane than combat prowess, where personal risk is the key. Personal sacrifice and personal risk must be tangible and relevant to the adventure and to the hero's cult.

Favors should *never* be granted frivolously and can always be revoked in whole or in part. If a game master wishes to reward good play that doesn't quite warrant a *Divine Favor*, the reward could instead be a random *Casual Benefit* (see Table 9). Over time, the referee can grant a *Divine Favor* to a hero whose character is role-played well and consistently so. A *Divine Favor* can also be granted for every 250 Notoriety Points earned (see CAL1, pg. 86 about *Epic Heroes* and *Eternal Glory*). The game master can select a favor directly, as best fits the adventure's context or the hero's cult, or have the player roll for one at random. These rewards can be activated during the present adventure or the next, and last until the end of the selected adventure.

Pious followers only receive one *Divine Favor* at a time (although multiple favors can be earned for different reasons, at different times). In the same conditions, fanatical zealots receive two instead. However, the zealot's player may decide to make the first favor a permanent effect. If the first is permanent, then the second one is cancelled. The player's decision must be made *before* identifying the second favor. If the player does not wish the first favor to become permanent, then the second one is thereafter granted.

Table 10. Divine Favors	
d20	**Granted Favor**
1	**Divine Might:** +1 bonus to a prime-requisite ability score. If the customary maximum for a mortal hero has already been reached, this favor permanently increases his/her life points +10% rounded up.
2	**Godly Shield:** +2 magical bonus to armor rating (though its effect is cumulative, this favor can only be chosen once as a permanent one) as well as a +2 bonus for defense checks.
3	**Devout's Immunity:** The hero is immune to one attack type (fire, cold, electricity, poison, acid, mind-affecting, or energy-draining) most consistent with the hero's cult.
4	**Ultimate Wound:** Injuries the hero inflicts upon hated foes with his/her preferred weapon or spell* cannot be healed magically. (*) Choose the preferred spell when the favor is granted; area of effect spells allowed only if targeting one victim.
5	**Ultimate Death:** Hated foes the hero kills with his/her preferred weapon or spell* cannot be raised from the dead or revived when at *death's door*. Their spirits are destroyed. (*) Choose the preferred spell when the favor is granted; area of effect spells allowed only if targeting one victim.
6	**Divine Protection:** Hated foes of the hero's cult (from a hostile faith, clan, tribe, or race) receive a –2 penalty to their attack rolls against the hero OR a –2 penalty to their defense checks against the hero's spells (pick which when earning the favor).
7	**Battle Blessing:** Against hated foes of the cult (from a hostile faith, clan, tribe, or race): the hero earns a +2 bonus to damage OR adds a +1 bonus to each die of spell damage (choose a preferred weapon or spell when the favor is granted).
8	**Loyal Companion:** The referee selects an animal or non-magical monster most consistent with the hero's cult, which the hero can summon/dismiss once a day. The companion is intelligent but cannot exceed the hero's game abilities in any way. If killed, the companion can no longer be summoned.
9	**Innate Magic:** The referee selects a non-damaging spell most consistent with the hero's cult, which the hero can invoke once a day as an innate ability (range and duration as per the spell's description or the referee).
10	**Righteous Spell:** The referee selects three spells related to the hero's cult, which the hero can capture when targeted by a hostile spellcaster (once per day). The hero can cast these captured spells later, at the original spellcaster's ability regardless of the hero's chosen career path.
11	**Path of the Beast:** The referee grants a (non-ranged) monstrous ability most consistent with the hero's cult, which the hero can trigger once a day for two consecutive encounters (paralyzing touch, regeneration, wall-crawling, etc.).

Table 10. Divine Favors (continued)	
d20	**Granted Favor**
12	**Personal Device:** The hero is granted a +2 personal device (see CAL1 pg. 86). Increase its bonus if the hero already possesses one. The device is appropriate to the hero's adventuring career and/or chosen cult.
13	**Divine Life:** The hero is instantly revived and fully healed if killed. This favor only works once. Only catlike creatures can select this favor more than once (up to nine times). The hero can gift this favor to a fallen companion (must be done within instants of death).
14	**Transcendence:** The hero is immune to natural diseases and effects of conditions related to the cult (desert, arctic, high altitude, cosmic void, swamps, netherworld, etc.), possibly eliminating the need for water or air.
15	**Hallowed Veil:** The hero is immune to magical detection or spying (including all divination magic and magical items such as crystal balls.)
16	**Feyskins:** Once a day, the hero can adopt the shape of one or more non-venomous* animals (fish, mammal, bird, or reptile) related to the cult and/or revert back to his/her previous form. The change ends at the next sunrise, at the latest. Carried equipment vanishes for the duration. (*) Unless noted otherwise for zealots and priors of certain gods.
17	**Exalted Affinity:** The hero can calm and communicate with animals or monsters related to the cult and possessing a Life Force equal or less than the hero's. One such creature can be controlled once per adventure, during which it behaves to the best of its intelligence and abilities.
18	**Peers of the Faith:** Once per adventure, the hero may summon three *peers of the faith* (knights or priors with comparable career achievement, monsters, demons, or spirit servants at the referee's discretion). They vanish when they deem their service rendered.
19	**Heavenly Abode:** The hero earns a *microplane* as a dwelling he/she can teleport to/from, once a week. If one is made permanent, then heavenly servants are added (constructs), or heavenly guardians to keep it safer.
20	**Divine Breath:** The referee grants the hero a short-range breath weapon (30'-40' long) related to the cult, using one of the following attack types: *acid, blindness, holiness (vs. undead), charm, confusion, damnation (vs. divine servants), dancing, darkness, defoliant, disease, displacement, electricity, energy drain, fear, fire, glue, ice, insect swarm, itchy spores, kinetic impact, lignification, lust, madness, memory loss, microwave, nails, paralysis, petrifaction, plant growth, poison, rage, reverse gravity, rust, sand blast, silence, sleep, slippery oil, slow, sneezing powder, sonic blast, steam, strength-draining shadows, sunlight, taunting, time warp, unwashable psychedelic dye, wind blast, wood warp,* (etc.) or any other at the game master's discretion. It is usable once a day. If a breath weapon is made permanent and granted again, the same may be used one more time during the same day (or the size of the affected area is increased). Damage inflicted, if any, is equal to half the hero's life points (a successful defense check reduces the damage by another half).

Special Abilities

Pious followers and fanatical zealots benefit from special abilities as a result of their faiths. These are gained after going through proper indoctrination at the cult's temple. Time, efforts, and ordeals to qualify are up to the referees. Abilities for pious followers and fanatical zealots are listed separately. Zealots enjoy the abilities described for pious followers in addition to their own. These abilities are subject to obligations to the cult and to the chosen god's ideals. They can be revoked at any time, like *Casual Benefits* and *Divine Favors*.

Pious Followers

These believers start with a +1 bonus to attack rolls on hated foes (as listed in the gods' individual descriptions) when they adopt a spiritual patron and are recognized as pious followers. Second and subsequent abilities are earned each time the hero is granted a *Divine Favor.* They are listed in Table 11. *Pious Followers' Abilities,* and replace those described in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies.* Game referees are welcome to modify abilities or create new ones. Ideally, they should assign them directly to the heroes, as needed in their games.

Followers' abilities are specific to their gods' spheres of interest and, unless indicated otherwise, come in addition to other benefits listed under

the gods' individual descriptions (if any). Some divinities cover more than one category of interests; if so, players select which single category best matches their heroes' objectives. Referees may allow trading abilities from qualifying categories only if they are associated with the same scores (see Table 11). A follower can never earn more than five different abilities. All choices regarding divine interests and associated abilities are intended as final and should not be changed later.

Table 11. Pious Followers' Abilities

Interests	d8	Granted Ability
1-3 *Blacksmiths & craftsmen*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with clock-making and repairing skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus with forges and metalworking skills.
	5-6	+1 bonus with goldsmith and jeweler skills.
	7	Sustain half damage from non-magical fire.
	8	Once per day, the hero can detect objects bearing permanent enchantments, within a 120' radius. Spells of concealment negate this ability.
4-6 *Chaos & mischief*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with ability checks to reveal what irritates someone.
	3-4	+1 bonus with ability checks to reveal someone's greatest moral weakness.
	5-6	+1 bonus with persuasion and lying skills.
	7	Can imitate animal or monster sounds convincingly (if encountered at least once before). Sounds can be heard as far away as 100' from the hero.
	8	People or monsters speaking with the hero suffer a –2 penalty to Wisdom checks, at the hero's discretion.
7-9 *Death & underworld*	**1-2**	Can perform last rites to prevent fallen heroes from returning as undead.
	3-4	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, can sense when and what types of undead foes were present at a location within the past week.
	5-6	+1 bonus to damage when fighting undead foes.
	7	+1 bonus when making defense checks vs. undead foes.
	8	Once per day, can devour a small piece of a defeated creature that once held a greater Life Force (except undead beings) and regenerate light damage.
10-12 *Deserts & volcanoes*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to desert survival skills.
	3-4	Can track a quarry in a desert (80% chance per day).
	5-6	Can pass without trace in a desert (80% chance per day).
	7	Can sense toxic gases and if an eruption is imminent.
	8	+1 bonus to defense checks when fighting in environments where sand, rocks, and scrub-like, ashen, or volcanic badlands prevail.
13-15 *Earth & fertility*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with farming skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus with animal training and riding skills.
	5-6	+1 bonus with skills to facilitate birth and newborn care (people and normal animals).
	7	Can tread past common farm and domestic animals without provoking a response (no guard dog barking, no angry bull charging, no fearful chicken, etc.).
	8	Enjoys a free combat proficiency with any farming tool (including pitchforks, shovels, flails, sickles or scythes, mallets, large pestles, etc.).
16-18 *Earth & mountains*	**1-2**	Basic knowledge of rocks and gemstones. With careful scrutiny, an ability check reveals non-magical gemstone values, structural flaws, secret passages, intramural traps, shifting walls, floor, and ceilings. If an ability is already possessed, add a +1 bonus to the ability check, as appropriate.
	3-4	+1 bonus with mountaineering and spelunking skills.
	5-6	+1 bonus with tunneling and mining skills.
	7	Can tell a creature imitating the appearance of earth, stone, or water for what it really is. Requires a successful Wisdom check and concentration.
	8	Can bind one-tenth of his/her life points (rounded up) in a gem. If poison ever causes the hero's death, its final effects are negated and the gem is destroyed. Life points bound to the gem are permanently lost.
19-21 *Fall & elders*	**1-2**	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, can predict the weather for the next day within a thirty-mile radius.
	3-4	+1 bonus with banking and dominion rulership skills.
	5-6	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6 and a 20min search, the hero can find and identify 1d12 mushrooms in a forest. Roll 2d6: 2 toxic, 3-4 medicinal, 5-8 worthless, 9-11 edible, 12 hallucinogenic.
	7	Earns a +1 bonus to Wisdom-based ability checks.
	8	The hero is never surprised while dwelling in the hills and, if appropriate, should have the first move during a battle's opening stage.
22-24 *Fate, bards & seers*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with singing and playing a musical instrument skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus with advocate and orator skills.
	5-6	+1 bonus with acting skills OR with training animals (such as common lions, bears, elephants, horses, monkeys, song birds, etc.) for circus shows.
	7	+1 bonus to defense checks against magical charm effects.
	8	Can attempt to tame a monster once per adventure (except undead, demons, or as common sense dictates). The intent must be announced at the start of combat. Taming damage isn't actually lethal. It requires either a whip or a blunt weapon. If taming damage exceeds 75% of its life points, the monster submits. The monster breaks free of its bond later on if it sustains 75% or more damage.
25-27 *Forests & hunters*	**1-2**	Basic knowledge of plant life. With careful scrutiny, ability check (or +1 bonus to the check for a druid-like hero) reveals if a plant is toxic or sentient.
	3-4	Can track a quarry in a forest (80% chance per day).
	5-6	Can hide in a forest (80% chance per attempt).
	7	Earns archery or similar weapon proficiency regardless of the hero's career path, or gets this proficiency in addition to his/her normal allotment if already allowed.
	8	The hero is never surprised while dwelling in forests and, if appropriate, should have the first move during a battle's opening stage.

Table 11. Pious Followers' Abilities (continued)

Interests	d8	Granted Ability
28-30 *Healers & alchemists*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with skills to diagnose and prescribe treatments for non-magical maladies.
	3-4	+1 bonus with skills to detect if someone was poisoned, to determine the correct antidote, or to make non-magical poisons.
	5-6	+1 bonus with skills to treat and bind wounds, burns, and broken bones. Can heal enough damage to revive someone at *death's door*.
	7	+1 bonus to defense checks and ability checks related to diseases.
	8	+1 bonus to raw seitha refining skills (see *Seitha Trade*, page 205).
31-33 *Justice & revenge*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with the ability to gauge if someone has something to hide or is lying. Willful deceivers are hated foes of the cult.
	3-4	+1 bonus with persuasion and negotiation skills.
	5-6	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, can judge someone's character and identify his/her two most important behavioral traits.
	7	The hero may reroll *once* any failed Per check related to advocacy or arbitration.
	8	Can use a "called-shot" against hated foes, enabling a chance to hit a specific part of a foe's body during battle. A called-shot incurs a –3 hit penalty and is limited to short range when using missile weapons. If successful, it inflicts double the weapon's basic damage.
34-36 *Light & science*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with mathematics and astronomy skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus with alchemist and apothecary skills.
	5-6	+1 bonus with engineering and the basic understanding of machinery. Penalties: steam machines –2 unless if a dwarf; stolen starfolk tech –2 if spacefaring Varangian or –4 in all other cases.
	7	Can communicate with steam imps or other creatures dwelling within mechanical devices, earning a +1 bonus to Personality checks with them.
	8	30% chance of deciphering foreign texts or understanding their nature if magic (mortal, demonic, divine). The odds become a bonus if such skill was already possessed. Only one attempt can be made per written item, and doesn't trigger any spells inscribed therein.
37-39 *Love & beauty*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with social graces, etiquette, romance, and courting skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus with poetry and artistic skills.
	5-6	Foes need to succeed a defense check before initiating combat against the hero, unless/until they sustain any combat damage during the encounter.
	7	Once a day with a roll of 1-2 on a d6, the hero can sense if someone is the victim of a charm and how to break the bond.
	8	+1 bonus to defense checks vs. magical charm attacks. If the hero succeeds, the originator may become charmed by the hero instead. The originator is entitled a defense check as well.
40-42 *Luck & wit*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with gambling skills and luck-based games.
	3-4	Once per day, the player may request one specific die to be rerolled (any player's or the game master's). The new score must be accepted.
	5-6	When fighting alongside several allies, foes will target allies first before confronting the "lucky" hero.
	7	Once per day, a hostile party failing a defense check can be tricked into choosing the most favorable course of action for the hero, provided there are choices and none are suicidal.
	8	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, the player receives a clue from the game master about a flaw in a foe's defense or strategy (one attempt per enemy ruler, clan, tribe, party, army, etc.).
43-45 *Magic*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with defense checks against spells.
	3-4	+1 bonus with magical lore skills and understanding new spells.
	5-6	Foes receive a –1 penalty to defensive rolls against the hero's spells.
	7	Can cast one spell among those known by the hero without prior memorization; it replaces another that had been memorized.
	8	Once per day, can cast one additional detection spell (wizardly or clerical) selected by the referee, regardless of the hero's career path.



Table 11. Pious Followers' Abilities (continued)

Interests	d8	Granted Ability
46-48 *Messengers, scribes & travelers*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks against poison, curses, and other harmful effects directly related to scrolls, books, and any other written material.
	3-4	+1 bonus with skills needed to decipher coded messages or those written in a non-magical foreign language (one attempt for each).
	5-6	Two extra foreign or monstrous languages spoken on the hero's native world, preferably if spoken near the hero's birthplace.
	7	Can always tell the general direction toward the cult's main shrine, unless it lies on another plane of existence.
	8	The hero can recall, word for word, anything spoken within earshot. Foreign words are subject to the hero's talent to imitate accents and odd pronunciations (animal or monstrous sounds require a mimicry skill).
49-51 *Mirth & trickery*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to disguise and mimicry skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus with persuasion and lying skills when used as part of a con, a swindle, or any kind of trickery.
	5-6	Can speak, sing, or act in a way to cause those who fail a defense check to burst out laughing, spit out their ale, or lose concentration for an instant.
	7	Incurs a 30% chance of suffering a psychotic break when suffering 50% or more combat damage: +1 temporary bonus to intellect, defense checks, and Amor Rating. The event lasts for the remainder of the encounter.
	8	Once per day, a hostile party failing a defense check can be tricked into choosing the most unfavorable course of action for them, provided there are choices and none are visibly suicidal.
52-54 *Night & mysteries*	**1-2**	Can sense foes and surroundings through hearing only, and suffers no combat or movement penalty due to blindness or full darkness.
	3-4	Can hear all that is said or whispered in full darkness, up to 100' radius.
	5-6	With roll of 1-2 on a d6, can decipher the meaning of symbols as well as the purpose of magical circles and pentacles.
	7	+1 bonus to defense checks when fighting in full darkness.
	8	When in full darkness, foes suffer a –1 penalty to defense checks vs. the hero's magic, or a –1 penalty to their Armor Ratings when fighting against the hero.
55-57 *Order & oaths*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with the ability to gauge if someone has something to hide or is lying. Willful oath-breakers are hated foes of the cult.
	3-4	+1 bonus to defense checks vs. magical fear and mind-altering attacks when under oath.
	5-6	+1 bonus to lore skill related to the nature and outcomes of legendary or current-day oaths.
	7	If the hero's attack or spell inflicts less than average damage against an oath-breaker, reroll one die.
	8	If the hero witnesses the taking of an oath, portents will alert him/her when the oath is fulfilled or broken.
58-60 *Peace & protectors*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with persuasion and negotiation skills when used to resolve a dispute or a conflict.
	3-4	+1 bonus to defense checks when protecting someone, an object, or a place which the hero has sworn to defend.
	5-6	+1 bonus to perception checks.
	7	Can hear noise as a rogue with comparable Life Force (or earn a +15% bonus if they already possess such talents).
	8	If showing mercy to a foe of equal or greater Life Force, the hero earns a random *Casual Benefit* from the protection category (see page 186). The foe must be able to understand the gesture of reprieve, and agree to surrender (use a Morale check, as appropriate to the chosen game system). The benefit is canceled if the hero or his/her companions bring harm to a spared foe.
61-63 *Romance & adventurers*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to an ability check when performing an action with flair and great personal risk. Ten consecutive successes may earn a *Divine Favor*.
	3-4	+1 bonus with social graces, etiquette, romance, and courting skills.
	5-6	+1 bonus with leadership and bargaining skills.
	7	Once per day, the hero can earn Armor Rating bonuses equal to self-imposed attack penalties (or vice-versa). AR cannot be altered more than +/– 50%. This effect ends at the end of the encounter (or earlier at the hero's discretion).
	8	Once a day, can sense for the duration of a short prayer the presence of hated foes within 100' radius. This ability does not identify or locate them.
64-66 *Seas & fishermen*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks when fighting in an aquatic environment.
	3-4	Two extra foreign languages (sea dwellers only), preferably selected from those spoken near the hero's birthplace.
	5-6	Can harvest water-breathing algae near seashores with a roll of 1-2 on a d6 (one check for a full hour of searching). When consumed, harvested algae enables water-breathing for up to 4 hours.
	7	Non-aquatic creatures can never surprise the hero while submerged, and fight with a –1 penalty to their attack and defense checks.
	8	Can use sound waves to "ping" surrounding water within a cone 60'x20'x5'. This enables the hero to detect invisible objects or creatures so long as they possess a physical form, and the area of effect hasn't been magically silenced.
67-69 *Shadows & secrets*	**1-2**	Can see clearly up to 90' through shadows (such as a poorly lit dungeon, or outdoors during twilight hours). Complete darkness negates this ability.
	3-4	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, senses if a creature within 10' harbors a dark secret and, if so, earns a clue about it (one attempt per targeted creature).
	5-6	+1 bonus to defense checks vs. illusion or fear spells and enchantments in an area cast in shadows.
	7	When protecting a secret, the hero can never be made to reveal it against his/her wishes, regardless of torture or (non-divine) magic used.
	8	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, locates within 30' radius any hidden or invisible presence in an area cast in shadows.

Table 11. Pious Followers' Abilities (continued)

Interests	d8	Granted Ability
70-72 *Sky, air & winds*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks when fighting in an airborne situation (while flying, riding a flying mount, on a skyship, etc.).
	3-4	Two extra foreign languages (sky dwellers only), preferably selected from those spoken near the hero's birthplace.
	5-6	+1 bonus to skyship navigation and piloting skills, as well as a gut-level ability to appraise a flying vessel's airworthiness.
	7	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, can predict the strength and direction of natural and ethereal winds for the next 1d4 days.
	8	+1 bonus to AR vs. non-magical projectiles. Can also stir the air to repel non-magical gases and small flying pests within a 10' radius.
73-75 *Spring & youth*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with lore skills related to nature and woodland beings; +1 bonus to Per checks with woodland beings.
	3-4	Two extra foreign languages (woodland beings only), preferably selected from those spoken near the hero's birthplace.
	5-6	+1 bonus to defense checks against charms, supernatural aging, and magically-induced slumber.
	7	Plant-like creatures do not harm the hero if not interfered with.
	8	Immunity to pollens, spores, and plant pheromones.
76-78 *Summer & abundance*	**1-2**	+1 bonus with ceremonial and dancing skills.
	3-4	+1 bonus to defense checks and AR when in tall grasses, reeds, and unharvested fields.
	5-6	Can pass without trace through tall grasses, reeds, and unharvested fields (80% chance per day).
	7	Can hide in tall grasses, reeds, and unharvested fields (80% chance per attempt).
	8	Can build a *true scarecrow* from sticks and old clothes. The construct repels small-to-medium sized animals or semi-intelligent monsters failing a defense check. If undisturbed, a *true scarecrow's* effects last up to a season.
79-81 *Sun & fire*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks against fire-based attacks.
	3-4	Light-based attacks cannot blind or hamper the hero.
	5-6	Heals burn wounds twice as fast naturally; healing spell effects are doubled when applied to the hero's burn wounds.
	7	Sustains half damage from non-magical fire.
	8	Can bestow a flaming aura upon a non-living item, once per day. The object is unharmed, but only a faithful of the cult can hold it safely. Anyone else suffers continual Low damage until the item is dropped. The effect lasts up to an hour or until dispelled or dismissed.
82-84 *Thunder & lightning*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks against electricity-based attacks.
	3-4	+1 bonus with drumming skill to communicate short messages, inspire dancers, embolden warriors, or intimidate enemies.
	5-6	+1 bonus to defense checks against fear (including magical) and intimidation.
	7	+1 bonus to their Armor Ratings and defense checks while within clouds or fog.
	8	With a roll of 1-2 on a d6, locates within 30' radius any hidden or invisible presence in a clouded or foggy area.
85-87 *Time & wisdom*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to initiative rolls and reaction checks.
	3-4	+1 bonus to defense checks vs. illusions, fear, charms, mind-altering attacks, and magical aging.
	5-6	Rolls a second time when failing an ability check involving wisdom or intuition.
	7	Once per encounter, earns a free opportunity attack, either melee or ranged, when initiating combat against a foe.
	8	Once per day, the hero can earn bonuses to defense checks equal to self-imposed attack penalties. Bonuses cannot be altered by more than +/– 5 and critical failures still apply. This effect ends at the end of the encounter (or earlier at the hero's discretion).
88-90 *War & conquerors*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defensive checks against fear effects.
	3-4	+1 bonus with battle tactics and leadership skills.
	5-6	Earns a +2 damage bonus against a specific foe once per encounter, when issuing a personal challenge. Cowardly fleeing from his/her challenge may well earn the hero divine displeasure (see *Divine Wounds*, page 186).
	7	Can holler a battle cry as a free action once per encounter when facing a specific foe. If it fails its defense check, the foe loses its next combat action.
	8	Earns immediately a free additional attack when rolling maximum damage with the cult's preferred weapon.
91-93 *Water & fertility*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks against water-based attacks and magical abilities of water fairies and other water elementals.
	3-4	Two extra foreign languages (river or lake dwellers only), preferably selected from those spoken near the hero's birthplace.
	5-6	+1 bonus with skills to facilitate birth and newborn care (people and normal animals), and river fishing.
	7	Can detect the presence of freshwater within a 300' radius using a dowsing rod.
	8	Can harvest water-breathing algae near lake or river banks with a roll of 1-2 on a d6 (one check for a full hour of searching). Consuming the algae enables water-breathing for up to 4 hours.
94-96 *Winter & sleep*	**1-2**	+1 bonus to defense checks against ice-based attacks.
	3-4	Can track a quarry in a snowy or icy environment (80% chance per day).
	5-6	Can pass without trace in a snowy or icy environment (80% chance per day).
	7	Can walk on thinly frozen water without sinking or falling through, and move on ice without slipping.
	8	Can build a *frostling* from snow and old clothes. This construct attracts small-to-medium sized animals or semi-intelligent monsters failing a defense check. They remain in the vicinity. A *frostling's* effects last up to a season.
97+	Roll again on this table, ignoring scores 97 or higher, and grant a random *Divine Favor* (see Table 10) along with the new result.	

When a bonus is listed for a skill the hero does not possess, the skill itself is granted instead, in addition to those normally available to the hero (as appropriate to the chosen game system). Skill bonuses can be granted more than once and are cumulative.

Random scores (d%) are provided for convenience only, should a game master have a need for such. They are intended as a quick way to select a type of "generic" deity and an ability for an NPC or an intelligent monster.

Fanatical Zealots

The first benefit earned when a hero begins a zealot's or prior's career is a *Combat Advantage* (see later in this section). Subsequent abilities can be earned with every other *Divine Favor* (thus, the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc.) These abilities are granted *in the order in which they are listed* in Table 12, and according to the deities' spheres of interest. A *Divine Favor* which had been voided to make another permanent does not count in this total.

Some divinities cover more than one category of interest; if so, players select which single category best matches their heroes' objectives. Referees may allow trading abilities between qualifying categories as described for pious followers (see previous section). A fanatical zealot can never earn more than five different zealot abilities (in addition to pious follower benefits). All choices regarding divine interests and associated abilities are final and should not be changed later.

The categories' random scores (d%) are provided for convenience only. They are intended to be used as a quick way to select a type of "generic" deity and an ability for an NPC zealot or an intelligent monster of exalted faith.

Combat Advantage: This is the first ability earned. It isn't listed in Table 12 since it applies uniformly to all cults. The cult's favored weapon (as listed under the deity's description) receives a +1 bonus to damage. If the favored weapon is a non-lethal one (or at the player's discretion), it receives instead a +1 bonus to hit and to initiative. For wizards specifically, the cult's favored spell receives an enhancement. This bonus can be a +1 bonus per die of damage for a combat spell OR one of the following for spells that do not inflict damage: 1. Increased range and area of effect, 2. Increased duration, 3. Penalty to defense checks, 4. Increased number of creatures affected (or total Life Force affected, etc.) The referee determines the exact enhancement when this ability is granted.



Table 12. Fanatical Zealots' Abilities

(d%) Interests	Granted Abilities
1-3 *Blacksmiths & craftsmen*	Once a day, the hero can breathe upon a weapon and bestow upon it an enchantment enabling it to hit incorporeal foes or those immune to non-magical damage. The enchantment does not provide a bonus to combat. The effect lasts for one encounter.
	The hero can sense the magical nature of an object within sight: mortal enchantment vs. divine or demonic, benevolent vs. malevolent, whether it is related to a cult and which one (if the hero ever heard of it), and if it is possessed by a sentient mind.
	The hero can permanently sacrifice one-quarter of his/her life points rounded up to enchant a weapon. Intelligent and telepathically linked with the hero, its enchantment potency is +1 per previous *Divine Favor* obtained (up to the maximum allowed).
	The hero can build an intelligent automaton with Life Force and abilities matching his/hers (other than spellcasting). It is unerringly loyal but needs to be rewound or recharged each day if active. The hero can only own one at a time. Damage can be repaired unless the automaton is "killed" outright.
4-6 *Chaos & mischief*	The hero receives a +2 bonus to Personality checks when attempting to lie or deceive.
	Magical means available to mortals cannot reveal the hero's ethos and true character. Detection spells only show a philosophy similar to the caster's.
	Once a day, the hero may influence all within earshot if they speak the hero's language. If they fail a defense check, victims are set against one another until one sustains damage (creatures of foul disposition and lower than average intellect may continue fighting).
	Once per adventure, the hero can duplicate an encountered living creature with equal or weaker Life Force, if it is a spawn of chaos. The creature is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until dismissed or destroyed.
7-9 *Death & underworld*	The hero gains a significant bonus when repelling undead foes. If the hero does not possess this ability, an amount of undead Life Force equal or inferior to the hero's own is kept at bay until the affected undead suffer any sort of combat damage.
	The hero can identify the greater power an undead foe serves (a deity, a demon, a necromancer, or an undead lord.) Unless ordered by their liege to do so, undead creatures do not attack heroes serving their liege.
	The hero may dedicate him/herself as the guardian of a cemetery, a mausoleum, a network of catacombs, or a vault (as appropriate the hero's background), usually in or near the hero's temple. On these premises, no resident undead may harm their guardian. The hero may control resident undead amounting to half his/her life points, and receives a +1 bonus to all defense checks. The hero is obligated to retrieve or replace anything stolen from the premises.
	Incorporeal undead the hero reduces to less than a quarter of their life points are immediately banished to the hero's dedicated place of burial, there to act as resident sentinels until destroyed.

Table 12. Fanatical Zealots' Abilities (continued)

d% Interests	Granted Abilities
10-12 *Deserts & volcanoes*	The hero sustains half damage from magical effects while in a desert environment (sand, rock, and scrub-like, ashen or volcanic badlands).
	Once per day, the hero can summon a whirlwind-like, non-spell-casting, dust, ash, or sand devil with half the hero's combat abilities and Life Force. The creature can fly (or become undetectable if in a desert). It maintains a telepathic link with the hero and will serve him/her until sunset or destroyed.
	The hero is immune to poison or venom from creatures native to the desert.
	Once per adventure if in a desert, the hero can summon a sand storm and use it to transport a party of adventurers or an army. The travelers are either flying inside, unseen from the outside, or standing on top of the storm's roiling front. The sand storm lasts 3d6 hours and travels at 40 mph/65 km/h over predominantly desert terrain, rising as high as 15,000ft/5,000m.
13-15 *Earth & fertility*	The hero can create an empathic bond with a creature the hero assists at birth. Though the creature retains its own free will, the hero can see through its eyes once per day for up to an hour.
	Once per day, the hero can invoke a shield over a farm house, a field, or a pasture, up to 300' radius until dawn. Hated foes, enchanted creatures, undead, and demons whose Life Force is half or less than the hero's are kept at bay. The effect ends if dispelled, dismissed or if the creatures repelled sustain any combat damage.
	Once per day, the hero can blend with a creature for up to an hour or until dispelled. In this state, the hero can see and hear through the host creature. The host is unharmed. If of human intellect or better, the host may make a defense check to negate the effect.
	Once per adventure, the hero can duplicate an encountered creature with equal or weaker Life Force, if it is related to Tellurion's element of earth. The creature is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until dismissed or destroyed.
16-18 *Earth & mountains*	When below ground, the hero receives a +1 bonus to Armor Rating and defense checks (especially when stalagmites, rough terrain, and shifting lights are present).
	Once per day when below ground, the hero can blend with solid rock for up to an hour or until dispelled. In this state, the hero can see, hear, and move at half speed through the rock.
	Once per adventure when below ground, the hero can observe past events centered around where he/she stands. This effect lasts 10 minutes and enables viewing as far back as a day for each of the beneficiary's Life Force increments.
	Once per adventure and while on solid ground, the hero can turn into a large earth elemental. The transformation lasts until the end of the encounter, during which the hero cannot cast spells or use previously carried equipment. The transformation heals all previous damage to the hero, minus any wounds to the elemental.
19-21 *Fall & elders*	The hero sustains half damage from spell attacks during the fall season, and is immune to supernatural aging.
	Once per adventure, the hero can cast a mushroom on the ground. It grows to the size of a tower and can be used as a fortification with arrow slits, murder holes, and a magically locked reinforced door. The tower vanishes at the end of the season.
	Once per adventure, the hero and up to a dozen companions can shift through open space. The hero must be able to see a destination not more than 300' away.
	Once per adventure and while in a field, the hero can raise a jack-o-lantern. The creature has half the hero's Life Force and commensurate fighting abilities, and is empathy-bound to serve the hero until destroyed, dismissed, or the adventure's end. The jack-o-lantern radiates fear and is immune to mind-controlling attacks.
22-24 *Fate, bards & seers*	The hero is immune to magic relying on music or singing.
	The hero can converse with any animal (preferably the deity's favored creature) and request simple tasks, such as staying quiet, hiding, scouting an area, distracting someone, or relaying a short message to a prior of the cult.
	Once per encounter, the hero can attempt to harangue a crowd. With a 1-2 on a d6, a distraught mob will listen to the hero's suggestion for a plausible and non-suicidal course of action, such as returning home, overcoming fear, heading into a battle (with a morale bonus), etc. All within earshot who possess a weaker Life Force than the hero's are affected for the rest of the day. Only one such feat may succeed per adventure.
	Once per encounter, with a roll of 1-2 of a d6, the hero attempts to jump back in time to the beginning of the encounter, hoping to alter its outcome. If the attempt succeeds, the encounter is replayed entirely from this point on. None present remember the previous outcome. Only one such fate-bending feat may succeed per adventure.
25-27 *Forests & hunters*	The hero earns a +1 bonus to defense checks and Armor Rating when in a forest.
	Once per day, the hero can blend with a large tree for up to an hour or until dispelled. In this state, the hero can see and hear through the tree, and move at half speed through its roots to another nearby tree.
	Once a day when the sun rises upon the cult's temple, the hero can sense the general direction and distance to a quarry he's vowed to hunt down, anywhere in Calidar's universe. The hero will sense if the quarry has moved to another plane of existence.
	The hero forfeits half his/her life points when vowing to hunt a specific creature, but his/her attacks against the quarry require a defense check against paralysis (critical failure provokes the quarry's death). This loss is regained when the hero fells his/her quarry, and cannot be healed magically or naturally until then. The hunter cannot make another vow until an existing one has been fulfilled.

Table 12. Fanatical Zealots' Abilities (continued)

d% Interests	Granted Abilities
28-30 *Healers & alchemists*	If the hero is not a spellcaster, he/she receives the ability to heal Medium +1 damage by touch, once per day. If the hero already possesses this ability or is a prior, the healing effect is doubled. If the hero is a wizard, any spell can be replaced with a healing one.
	The hero may impart half his/her life points to heal a foe with a simple touch. Imparted life points cannot be healed with magic, but the hero earns one Notoriety Point for the gift. A healed foe becomes unwilling to harm or allow harm to come to the hero until imparted life points have been healed—one per day or as appropriate to the game system in use.
	Once per adventure, the hero can touch a flask of water or wine and turn it into a potion of his/her choice. Potions must be selected from those described in the chosen game's rulebook and cannot affect anyone else but their drinkers.
	Once per adventure, the hero can turn his/her blood into a sand-like compound, bestowing immunity to poison, paralyzing venom, energy-draining attacks, and diseases (including magical ones) until the following sunrise.
31-33 *Justice & revenge*	Though unable to lie or tell untruths, the hero senses the lies of others when making a conscious effort.
	Once a day when the sun rises upon the cult's temple, the hero can sense the general direction and distance to a foe who stole from or brought harm to a faithful of the cult, while anywhere in Calidar's universe. The hero will sense if the foe has moved to another plane of existence.
	A critical hit combined with a called-shot has a small chance of either killing a hated foe outright (at the referee's discretion), or of maiming it. A maimed foe fights with a severe penalty or flees; incorporeal creatures or those able to function as separate parts are immune to instant death or maiming. Lethal weapons are required.
	Once per adventure, the hero can utter vows of revenge and sacrifice up to half his/her own life points. Twice these sacrificed life points are added to the damage from the next successful attack against the foe named in the vows (no defense check). The hero cannot be healed magically until after the quarry has been slain.
34-36 *Light & science*	May know of ancient book lore (an Intellect skill). If successful, identifies a book's general contents, past owners, and magical curses traditionally associated with it.
	Once per day and with a roll of 1-2 on a d6, the hero can learn a random skill or uncast spell still lingering in someone else's mind (as appropriate to the hero's career). The hero must be able to touch the subject. Learned skills (or weapon proficiencies) last for the rest of the adventure. Learned spells last until cast; only one such spell can be recopied into one's spellbook during an adventure.
	The hero can summon 1d4 imp-like creatures once per adventure (using the chosen game's prevailing mechanics for summoning elemental beings). They can be used as servants or a way to help machinery function (clockwork devices or steam engines).
	Once per adventure the hero can summon a 30' diameter pillar of pure light. Shadow dwellers caught within and failing a defense check, suffer half as much damage as the hero has life points. Those who succeed sustain no damage but must flee from sight.
37-39 *Love & beauty*	The hero can sense who or what someone most desires or loves. The hero must be able to touch the subject; a defense check negates this ability.
	The hero can coax a victim into a catatonic slumber with a kiss (negated with a defense check). The slumber lasts until dispelled or until the next kiss.
	Once per adventure, the hero can pass him/herself off as someone else of great beauty, much like a doppelganger would. A transformation lasts until dismissed or dispelled. The hero must know or be able to observe a subject before creating a believable alter ego. Those to be fooled receive a defense check to sense the deception.
	Once per adventure, all foes gazing into the hero's eyes turn to stone unless they succeed a defense check. This ability lasts for one encounter. Its effects last until dispelled or until the petrified victim is harmed.
40-42 *Luck & wit*	When failing to throw an item accurately, random bounces remain in the hero's favor.
	Whenever the hero rolls a critical failure, a chain of events is triggered, eventually benefiting the hero or his/her party of adventurers in some unexpected way.
	When in battle, damage from the attack disabling or killing the hero is reduced instead to the minimum allowed by the dice rolled (if any).
	The hero always earns an extra Notoriety Point when one is granted (or cancels a negative one), and receives a random *Casual Benefit* whenever he/she earns a *Divine Favor*.
43-45 *Magic*	If a spell specifically targets the hero, a successful defense check causes the spell to be centered instead 30 feet away from the hero, in a random direction.
	Whenever the hero succeeds a defense check against a spell's effects, the magic heals any light damage the hero incurred earlier (if any).
	Once per adventure, the hero may cast one spell which he/she witnessed. This spell may be cast once regardless of the hero's career path, after which it is forgotten. If the hero isn't a spellcaster, the spell has 30% odds of fizzling. If the hero is a wizard, the spell can instead be learned and preserved in a spellbook for future use.
	Once per adventure, the hero may sacrifice all memorized spells (clerical or magical) to produce a kinetic blast. The amount of damage and the physical force applied to all within a 30' radius from the hero is commensurate with the number and potency of spells consumed. Anyone or anything failing a defense check is flung outside the area of effect; those succeeding only suffer half damage from the blast.
46-48 *Messengers, scribes & travelers*	The hero, his/her companions, and their mounts (see *Divine Favors* earlier) travel at twice their normal movement rate. This ability does not affect combat.
	The hero is immune to spells or magical effects intended to slow or immobilize.
	Causes a scroll's contents, magical or otherwise, to blend in with the hero's natural skin (or a willing subject's skin), after which the original scroll is wiped clean. The scroll's contents can be displayed as a tattoo on command.
	Once per day, the hero can blend with a library's contents for up to an hour or until dispelled. In this state, the hero can see and hear anyone touching the library's contents, and move at half speed within nearby books before reappearing.

Table 12. Fanatical Zealots' Abilities (continued)

d% Interests	Granted Abilities
49-51 *Mirth & trickery*	Once per day, the hero can whisper words of hate to a foe within sight. If failing a defense check, the victim believes the nearest ally to be a worst enemy. The effect lasts until the end of the encounter.
	Once per encounter and with a 1-2 on a d6, the hero's comical antics cause his/her foes to laugh hysterically, suffering a –2 penalty to attack rolls and preventing spellcasting as long as the antics are kept up. Only one such comical feat may succeed per adventure.
	Once per adventure, a victim seeing the hero's "mad gaze" must succeed a defense check or be wracked with fear and forget what happened during the past day.
	When the hero sustains his/her first damage during an encounter, the hero vanishes and immediately reappears behind the attacker.
52-54 *Night & mysteries*	The hero sustains half damage from magical effects while in full darkness.
	When succeeding a defense check vs. a spell attack directed at the hero, the spell's effect can be changed into magical darkness ranging 60 feet in diameter.
	Once per day, the hero and his/her equipment can blend with darkness for up to an hour or until darkness is dispelled or negated. In this immaterial state, the hero can see, hear, and move at half speed.
	Once per adventure, the hero can summon fearsome darkness up to 300' radius, regardless of his/her career path. The effect cannot be dispelled or negated with light. Foes failing a defense check must retreat from the affected area. If fighting within the affected area, all of the hero's bonuses and penalties due to full darkness are doubled.
55-57 *Order & oaths*	With a conscious effort, the hero senses whether someone bears a stain of guilt for having broken a formal oath.
	The hero can bind any one or two willing individuals taking an oath. Whosoever breaks this oath shall suffer a *Divine Wound* (roll randomly on Table 8), and free the other of the vow.
	Charms and other mind-altering magic are negated if they lead the hero to break a formal oath.
	If killed before fulfilling a solemn oath, the hero returns as an Incarnate within 1d4 days (see *Godly Trappings*, page 213) to address the unfinished business.
58-60 *Peace & protectors*	Once a day, the hero can cast magic as an innate ability enabling him/her to eavesdrop on a remote place for 1d4 minutes. The hero must have already visited the target area.
	The hero witnesses an ill omen when his/her temple is about to be attacked, or another place that he/she swore to protect during the current adventure. The omen awakes the hero if asleep, and negates charms, paralysis, and any other immobilizing magic.
	The hero receives *Ultimate Wound* powers (see *Divine Favors*, page 187) against a spared foe who later betrays or turns against its benefactor.
	Once per adventure, the hero can vow to defend a particular place (a gate, a bridge, a vault, a tower, a village, etc.) and summon from his/her temple three *peers of the faith* (oath-bound warriors or priors with comparable experience) to assist him/her protect the site. They vanish back to the temple at the end of the adventure. The oath is forfeit when the blood of all despoilers is spilled upon the site.
61-63 *Romance & adventurers*	The hero is immune to small non-magical pests (up to the size of rats) and the unsightly effects of travails in the wilderness (sweat, smell, dirt, mud, uncouth appearance; wet, frumpy, or torn clothing; rusting or rotting equipment, etc.), always looking his/her best at all times. *"Lah!"*
	The hero is immune to fear and mind-altering effects after making a vow to avenge a true love or a favored monarch. The offender must be either slain in the name of true love or brought before the monarch for justice and honor. The effect ends when the quest is complete.
	The hero earns the ability to assault a foe with witty retorts and verbal jabs. Each time a melee attack succeeds, damage inflicted is reduced to its minimum, but the foe receives instead a –1 penalty to hit. If the total accumulated penalties prevent the foe from ever reaching the hero, despair settles, and the foe either flees or surrenders.
	Once per adventure during one encounter, the hero earns twice the legal number of combat actions and is immune to magic intended to slow or immobilize. Meanwhile, a heavenly score plays in the background, illustrating the daredevil's gallant endeavors.
64-66 *Seas & fishermen*	Once per day, the hero can sing a fine melody. Foes of the opposite gender and within a 60' radius are enthralled and compelled to approach the hero if they fail their defense checks. The effect ends with the singing. This ability works as well whether the hero is submerged or not.
	Once per adventure, the hero either summons or dismisses foggy conditions or a sea storm (category 1: 85 mph/135 km/h lasting a day) within a 20 mile radius. The power can otherwise be used locally to upgrade or downgrade existing conditions.
	Once per day, the hero and his/her equipment can blend with seawater for up to an hour or until dispelled. While in this liquid state, the hero is invisible and can see, hear, and move at half speed.
	Once per adventure and while at sea, the hero can turn into a large water elemental. The transformation lasts until dismissed or the end of the encounter, during which the hero cannot cast spells or use previously carried equipment. The transformation heals all previous damage to the hero, minus any wounds to the elemental.
67-69 *Shadows & secrets*	The hero can hide in shadows (half as well as a rogue with comparable career achievement, or with a +20% bonus to this skill if they are rogues).
	The hero sustains half damage from spells while in a shadowy environment. The ability does not include effects from enchanted items or innate magical abilities of monsters.
	Twice per day, the hero can transport him/herself from one shadowy spot to another, up to 120' away. The ability takes a full action to complete. If needed, the hero always senses the location of shadows within range to get past non-magical obstacles. Complete darkness or full daylight negates this ability.
	Once per adventure and while in a shadowy environment, the hero can summon a creature of the shadows. It has half the hero's Life Force and commensurate fighting abilities, and is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until destroyed, dismissed, or exposed to full daylight/darkness. The creature radiates fear and is immune to mind-controlling attacks.

Table 12. Fanatical Zealots' Abilities (continued)

d% Interests	Granted Abilities
70-72 *Sky, air & winds*	The hero suffers half damage from falls, or may escape death from falls at odds equal to half his/her Life Force rating, rounded up (leaving him/her with as few life points as needed to remain conscious).
	Enchanted projectiles shot at the hero do not benefit from their magical attack bonuses (unless of divine origins).
	Once per adventure, the hero can duplicate an encountered creature with equal or weaker Life Force, if it is related to Aerion's element of air. The creature is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until dismissed or destroyed.
	Once per adventure and while in flight, the hero can turn into a large air elemental. The transformation lasts until dismissed or the end of the encounter, during which the hero cannot cast spells or use previously carried equipment. The transformation heals all previous damage to the hero, minus any wounds to the elemental.
73-75 *Spring & youth*	The hero sustains half damage from spell attacks during the spring season, and is immune to supernatural aging.
	Once per adventure, the hero can commune with forests or meadows and sense the presence and progression of intruders within a mile radius. The communion lasts until the hero travels more than a mile away from the original place of communion.
	Once a day, zealots and priors can cast a 30' cloud of raining flowers, butterflies, and chirping birds up to 180' feet away. The cloud follows its target unless it succeeds a defense check. Anyone within the affected area cannot see out and fights with a –2 attack penalty. As a secondary effect, if the target isn't hostile, the caster earns a temporary +2 bonus to Per checks when manifesting friendliness and affection.
	Once per adventure, the hero can summon a 300'-radius pool of life, healing all living creatures within. All except woodland beings and fairy folk is covered with growing mosses, fungi, flowers, roots, spores, and pollen dust, slowing intruders until they exit the area. Existing flora typically doubles in size as a result of this ability.
76-78 *Summer & abundance*	The hero sustains half damage from spell attacks during the summer season, and is immune to supernatural aging.
	Once per encounter with a 1-2 on a d6, the hero can invoke sunny summer-like conditions within a mile radius, causing arctic and other ice monsters to flee, or light-impaired creatures to fight with a penalty during the day. These conditions last for 3d8 hours or until dismissed. Only one such feat may succeed per adventure.
	The hero can bestow a *true scarecrow* (see pious followers' related ability) with instructions up to a dozen words. If anything happens within the scarecrow's field of vision that matches its instructions, a warning resonates in the hero's mind, strongly enough to dispel natural or magically-induced slumber or paralysis. Up to three scarecrows can be maintained simultaneously. The effect ends after it is triggered.
	Once per adventure if in an open plain, the hero can summon a 30' diameter tornado strike. Anyone or anything within failing a defense check suffers as much damage as the hero has life points, and is flung 40-100' out the area of effect in a random direction; those succeeding only suffer half damage. The tornado fades immediately after striking.
79-81 *Sun & fire*	The hero sustains half damage from magical fire.
	Once per adventure, the hero can duplicate an encountered creature with equal or weaker Life Force, if it is related to Pyros's element of fire. The creature is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until dismissed or destroyed.
	Twice per day, the hero can transport him/herself from one source of fire to another, up to 120' away. The ability takes a full action to complete. If needed, the hero always senses the location of a fire source (such as a candle, a fireplace, a fire elemental, etc.) within range to get past non-magical obstacles. Magical darkness negates this ability.
	Once per adventure and while near lava or a great forge, the hero can turn into a large fire elemental. The change lasts until dismissed or the end of the encounter, during which the hero cannot cast spells or use previously carried equipment. The transformation heals all previous damage to the hero, minus any wounds to the elemental.
82-84 *Thunder & lightning*	With a successful defense check, the hero returns an electricity-based attack to its caster.
	Once per day, the hero and his/her equipment can blend with clouds, fog, or mist for up to an hour or until conditions are dispelled or negated by wind. In this immaterial state, the hero can see, hear, and move at half speed.
	Once a day, the hero can summon a clap of thunder with a roll of 1-2 of a d6. It stuns all with a 30' radius who fail a defense check.
	Once per adventure, the hero can create a divine lightning strike jumping from one foe to the next, up to 20' away each time. Anyone within the arcing fire who fails a defense check suffers as much damage as the hero has life points, and is stunned; those succeeding only suffer half damage. The lightning can be aimed at an object initially.
85-87 *Time & wisdom*	Once per encounter with a roll of 1-2 on a d6, the hero time warps and actually stands 10 feet from his/her initial position (at the player's discretion). All attacks (melee, ranged, or magical) specifically targeting the hero while he/she shifts miss their mark.
	Once per adventure under moonlight glow, the hero can observe past events centered around where he/she stands. This effect lasts 10 minutes and enables viewing as far back as a day for each of the beneficiary's Life Force increments.
	Once per adventure, the hero can warp the passing of time and move at twice his/her normal movement rate while everyone else is slowed until the end of the encounter (no defense checks). The effect lasts until the end of the encounter.
	Once per adventure, the hero jumps back in time to an earlier point during the current encounter, hoping to alter its outcome. The hero is allowed 1 action in the past. If the attempt succeeds, the encounter is replayed entirely from this point forward (and no one remembers the previous outcome). If the attempt fails, the hero returns to the previous exit point and the current encounter's events remain unchanged.

Table 12. Fanatical Zealots' Abilities (continued)

d% Interests	Granted Abilities
88-90 *War & conquerors*	When striking down a foe, the hero immediately gains a free combat action.
	The hero ignores half the damage sustained from a hated foe's attacks until the battle ends, at which time the entire damage applies.
	The hero may go into *divine frenzy* once per day: 5% of his/her total life points (rounded up) are sacrificed each time the hero's attacks hits, adding the forfeited points to the inflicted damage. This loss is regained when the hero fells a foe. *Divine frenzy* ends when the battle is over or the hero collapses.
	Once per adventure, the hero can roar: all foes within a cone-shaped area 90' long and 30' wide in front of the hero must make a defense check with a –1 penalty. Those who fail are paralyzed for their next two combat actions.
91-93 *Water & fertility*	The hero can create an empathic bond with a creature the hero assists at birth. Though the creature retains its own free will, the hero can see through its eyes once per day for up to an hour.
	Once per adventure and while near fresh water, the hero can turn into a water fairy. The change lasts until dismissed or the end of the encounter, during which the hero cannot cast abilities other than the sprite's or use previously carried equipment. The transformation heals all previous damage to the hero, minus any wounds to the sprite.
	Once a day for ten minutes, the hero can touch a body of water and listen to all that is spoken within hearing range of its shores; the effect can reach as far a 90' for each of the beneficiary's Life Force increments. If too many voices are detected, the beneficiary must succeed a wisdom check to isolate what is being sought or determine its absence. The ability does not translate foreign languages.
	Once per adventure, the hero can duplicate an encountered creature with equal or weaker Life Force, if it is related to Hydros's element of water. The creature is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until dismissed or destroyed.
94-96 *Winter & sleep*	The hero sustains half damage from spell attacks during the winter season, and is immune to supernatural aging.
	The hero can bestow a *frostling* (see pious followers' related ability) with instructions up to a dozen words. If anything happens within the *frostling's* field of vision that matches its instructions, a warning resonates in the hero's mind strongly enough to dispel natural or magically-induced slumber or paralysis. Up to three *frostlings* can be maintained simultaneously. The effect ends after it is triggered.
	Once per adventure, the hero can duplicate a creature with equal or weaker Life Force than the hero's, encountered in it is native frozen region or a glacier. The creature is empathy-bound to serve the hero for the rest of the adventure or until dismissed or destroyed.
	Once per adventure, the hero can summon a freak blizzard and use it to transport a party of adventurers or an army. The travelers are either flying inside, unseen from the outside, or standing on top of the storm's roiling front. The blizzard lasts 2d4 hours and travels at 60 mph/100 km/h, rising as high as local mountain peaks. It can be summoned in winter, late fall, early spring, or at any time in mountains.
97+	Roll again on this table, ignoring scores 97 or higher, and add a random *Divine Favor* (see Table 10) to the new result.

Calling for Help

Adventurers may find themselves in such dire straits that the thought of imploring the heavens for help may cross their minds. The odds of a response are slim. Common folk have no chance of ever gaining divine attention unless they gather in great numbers and implore their deity for deliverance under a prior's supervision. Hallowed rituals make this approach possible. Uncommon to begin with and downright rare if they attained epic hero status, adventurers are a different kind of faithful entirely. They may already have become a source of godly interest, therefore their chances of gaining some attention are greater. Adventuring priors are generally seen as oddballs who don't quite fit in their clergy's hierarchy. Yet they are respected, if not revered, for their incredible feats—even more so if they relate directly to the cult and their spiritual patron's ethos.

Pious followers and fanatical zealots may not beseech a god other than their chosen one. A solicited deity will not intervene personally or send an avatar. In the unlikely event that a response is forthcoming, its nature can vary a lot. In most cases, a "divine intervention" may consist of a spell effect taking place, such as one healing the hero and select companions. An odd event may take place which could indirectly alter the heroes' fates, should they know how to exploit it. At best, an appropriate number of faithful NPCs, a monster, or divine servants (see *Denizens of Ambrosia, page 211*) can show up for a time. Likewise, if a hero has already benefited from a divine intervention, he/she and possibly closely associated companions may in turn be summoned to assist another supplicant calling for help. Obtaining a response almost always comes with a cost to the supplicant. The debt should be fitting to the nature of the beseeched deity. Gods are opportunistic and will redeem unpaid claims when services are needed. The cost increases with the number of calls for help, whether answered or not, and becomes dearest in the face of frivolity or abuse.

Whether a deity responds at all remains primarily a referee's personal decision, especially in a plot- or story-driven adventure. In a major campaign game featuring divine shenanigans, eternal rivalries, cross-pantheon frictions, temple politics, and epic heroes, the referee should exploit interactions of gods with mortals to develop story ideas and character motivations. In simple dungeon-crawls devoid of godly über-schemes, random dice rolls modified according to circumstances may be more expedient. A game master can also use suggested modifiers as a guide to make a conscious decision.

Table 13. Hearing a Call (d%)

Head of Pantheon	1%
Major God	2%
Minor God	3%
Demigod	4%
Scion of the Cult*	5%

• Add a +1% bonus for every 10,000 souls directly at risk.
• (*) See *Godly Trappings,* page 215.

If the referee elects the randomized method, a deity's response to a call for help requires two percentile rolls. The first check determines whether a deity hears a plea for intervention at all (see Table 13). The head of a pantheon is more prone to be busy and miss a call for help than a demigod catering to fewer followers. In their infinite wisdom, the divine never dwell very long on missed supplications, considering the sheer number of wishful solicitors. The second check helps resolve whether a call that was heard is actually answered (see Table 14). Greater gods have the advantage of wielding mightier resources, and are therefore more likely to intervene than their lesser peers. Odds of responding also reflect the solicitor's situation, allowing for many modifiers. As an option, the general nature of an intervention can be randomized as well (see Table 15). The number and power of beings summoned to help should be commensurate with the risk the solicitor faces and the consequences of the solicitor's demise.

Table 14. Answering a Call (d%)

Base chance:	1%
Deity's Standing *(pick one)*	
Pantheon Ruler	+1%
Major God	n/a
Minor God	–1%
Demigod	–2%
Scions of the Cult answer as their divine liege would (See *Godly Trappings*, page 215).	
Solicitor's Nature *(pick one)*	
Solicitor is a heathen who faithfully swears* to repent and adopt the beseeched deity as his/her spiritual patron in hopes of a response:	+4%
Solicitor is a fanatical zealot of the beseeched deity:	+2%
Solicitor is a pious follower of the beseeched deity:	n/a
Solicitor is a casual faithful of the beseeched deity:	–2%
Solicitor is a truly unrepentant heathen:	–4%
Career Advancement *(pick one, as appropriate to the chosen game system)*	
Solicitor is an epic hero/villain (as appropriate to the god's ethos):	+6%
Solicitor is nearing the top end of his/her career:	+3%
Solicitor is closer to his/her career midpoint:	n/a
Solicitor is closer to an apprentice:	–3%
Solicitor's Ethos *(pick one, as appropriate to the chosen game system)*	
Solicitor is of the same ethos as the deity beseeched:	+3%
Solicitor's ethos differs from the beseeched deity's:	n/a
Solicitor's ethos is diametrically opposed to the beseeched deity:	–3%
Solicitor's Purpose *(pick one)*	
Solicitor is on an quest directly ordained by the deity:	+25%
Solicitor is on an quest ordained by his/her temple:	+3%
Solicitor is on a private quest:	n/a
Solicitor is on a quest primarily benefiting another deity:	–3%
Solicitor is on a quest benefiting another pantheon:	–6%
Solicitor is on a quest benefiting a hated or rival deity:	–9%
Circumstances of the Call *(select all that apply)*	
The solicitor sacrifices an unredeemed *Divine Favor* in exchange for better odds of intervention:	+12%
The solicitor's immediate foe is a minion of a hated or rival deity:	+6%
The solicitor sacrifices an unredeemed *Casual Benefit* in exchange for better odds of intervention:	+3%
The solicitor makes a worthwhile offering and conducts a ritual:	+1%
The solicitor cooperates with undesirable** individuals:	–3%
The solicitor has already called for help*** in the past:	–3% per call
The beseeched deity has already answered earlier pleas for intervention*** from the solicitor:	–3% per call
The solicitor's call is frivolous, abusive, or blasphemous:	–6%
If more than one solicitor implore the same god, add a +1% bonus to the call from the most exalted faithful for each additional voice up to ten, OR +18% up to 100 voices, +36% up to 1,000, +54% up to 10,000, +62% up to 100,000, or +80% for more than 100,000 voices.	
If the solicitor's companions are copycats also beseeching *their* gods for the same reason, subsequent calls incur cumulative –3% penalties (in the order of their individual entreaties).	

Table 14 Notes

(*) The *Falsely* Repentant Heathen: If a response is forthcoming and the heathen later fails to make good his/her promise, divine reprisals may be expected in the form of a permanent curse (see Table 8, *Divine Wounds*).

(**) Undesirable Individuals: These include pious followers and fanatical zealots faithful to hated or rival gods.

(***) Earlier Interventions: When a deity summons a hero to assist another faithful in need of help, reset accumulated penalties for earlier calls back to zero.

Table 15. Optional Randomized Response

Subtract the supplicant's rolled score from the modified odds of intervention.
The remainder indicates the general nature of a beseeched deity's response.

0-2	Unforeseen event alters the solicitor's fate
3-5	Minor spell-like effect related to the cult affects the solicitor or a foe
6-8	A magical item with a single purpose remains temporarily in the solicitor's possession
9-11	Faithful NPCs indebted to the beseeched god are summoned and show up to help
12-15	One or more monsters related to the cult show up
16-20	Major spell-like effect related to the cult affects the solicitor's party or their foes
21-30	Several celestials* show up
31-40	A party of celestials led by an empyreal shows up
41-60	A large party of celestials led by an eternal shows up
61-80	A war banner of various divine servants with a hierarch** shows up
80+	Several war banners respond, with epic heroes/villains and/or related monsters accompanying them, and a demigod***

Table 15 Notes

(*) See *Divine Servants*, page 211.

(**) If a demigod or a scion of the cult, the beseeched deity shows up instead of a hierarch.

(***) A hierarch shows up instead of a demigod if the beseeched deity isn't a demigod's divine liege.



Calidar's World Soul

This section elaborates on the subject of Calidar's magical nature and its Dread Lands as much as is useful within the context of this book. The basics about Calidar's world soul appear in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* pages 60-61. All planets in Soltan's ephemeris and the Fringe itself harbor innate magic affecting them in unique ways, as well as the moons gravitating around them. This helps game referees rationalize what cannot be justified scientifically, and gives them a tool to modify their campaign games as needed. World souls are inherently magical and semi-sentient: their consciousness exists on a scale and time-frame beyond the grasp of mortals and their gods. The greater a world's natural biosphere is, the more magic its soul can store. The more magic it stores, the greater is the amount of sapient life, mortal and divine, it can support. In this context, "sapient" life refers to races capable of abstract reasoning and magic use, which includes people and many monsters (although few individuals actually are skilled mages, their races are generally capable of casting wizardly or clerical spells). Damage to the biosphere along with large scale manifestations of entropy (such as violence, crime, epidemics, pollution, consumption of natural resources) weaken universal magic, and may affect birthrates among sapient life. This can be seen as a world soul's self-defense mechanism. In a global sense, weakening a world soul may also result in a lower number of sapient beings able to acquire magical skills: though wizards and magical monsters would become rarer, their individual abilities would not be diminished so that, in practice, it wouldn't affect player characters or a referee's pawns. By definition, heroes, villains, and their monstrous counterparts are remarkably unusual beings (even if their longevity tends to be shockingly brief), therefore players can always choose to create and run magic-users if they want to.

Gods of Calidar know about its world soul in that they come from it and a part of their individual powers springs from it. They are also fully aware of the connection between mortal life, the spirits of the dead, the undead, and the divine. They understand the nature of the Dread Lands and why they exist. Nonetheless, gods do have a conflict of interest, since their individual powers vary with the number of mortals honoring them. Because gods are typically jealous of each other's powers, they compete for followers. Short term benefits lead them to inspire their flocks to grow and expand as fast as possible, sometimes at the expense of the world soul's natural balance. "If my rival does it, so will I," remains a prevailing philosophy among both mortal followers and gods, the latter being reflections of the former to a significant degree. Though most gods reside in the Ambrosian, they are nonetheless considered sapient life connected to their native worlds.

Kragdûr, Alorea, and Munaan are part of Calidar's world soul—they are extensions of it. Their inhabitants have damaged these moons in various ways, enough so that they no longer contribute to their world soul's health. They are in fact a source of weakness for Calidar. The flow of magic and life is sustainable there only because of the mother world's vast reserves. Divine shenanigans and great wars among mortals can upset this fragile balance. This may translate into weak spots appearing on Calidar, where the Dread Lands can no longer prevail. Such a failing resulted in the lunar empires colonizing the Great Caldera and locally negating the world soul's defenses. Although most gods perceive this conundrum all too well, short term gains and immediate threats lead them to disregard it more often than not, convincing themselves that they can worry about it later. Divine procrastination may one day prove to be the death of their kind.

Origins of World Souls

Gods cannot create world souls. When ice, rock, and gasses naturally combine in the Great Vault and form planets, two forces come into existence. One is physical, like gravity, magnetic fields, and such. The other is purely magical. Over time, this second force becomes the life-giving semi-sentient world soul. The star at the center of Soltan's ephemeris does have a powerful world soul, but the environment on its surface or within is only suitable for fire elementals and incorporeal beings. The Fringe is somewhat of an aberration, since it is a vast conglomeration of space debris and dwarf planets. As a whole, it was able to generate a single world soul with wildly unpredictable effects occurring locally (i.e. it is a game referee's imaginative scratchpad for anything that doesn't need to belong on other worlds).

Natural moons are governed by their mother planet's world souls. It is conceivable for a moon to become rogue when it ceases to be the satellite of a larger celestial body. Rogue moons can develop their own world souls, in effect becoming miniature planets. The process is immediate if life already exists on its surface. If not, the process may take millions of years while needed materials are collected from the Great Vault, geologic forces come into effect, an atmosphere is generated, and life finally emerges. Calidar's three moons, if they ever became rogue worlds, would be in terrible shape, considering the extant damage from their present population. Much life would be lost, magic nearly nonexistent, and their surface nearly barren until such time their new world souls could fully heal. The same would happen if planets and moons were deprived of their star's warmth and light. Over time, their world souls would adapt and preserve life (they already do so in the Fringe and Draconia, for example, which could not otherwise support life). Lao-Kwei was damaged through technological means, and its world soul is struggling to heal itself. On the other hand, Kumoshima could easily do away with Lao-Kwei because it is a healthy environment already brimming with life. Ghüle, on the other hand, does not possess a world soul at all because it is an object artificially created and enchanted by deities. It exists and travels across universes at the whim of its makers.

In the eventuality of Calidar's moons becoming rogue worlds, related gods would most likely intervene. How remains to be seen. Some might retain their links with Calidar, others might become subjects of the rogue moons' new world souls. Their pantheons would perhaps split up. Kragdûras dwarves would accommodate themselves the best to such a fate, and abandon the surface altogether. The Aloreans would suffer the most, as they would lose their forests. They would become desert elves. The Munaani, as always, would adapt. In any event, the dynamics of the Great Caldera's realms would change substantially, the Dread Lands certainly gaining an even greater vitality there. In the minds of some mortals or their gods, there may be a thought that completely suppressing sapient life on one of the moons could benefit Calidar's world soul and its lunar extensions. It is perhaps the reason the three empires cannot ever find lasting peace.

Of War and Armageddon

Some deities and their followers, typically the evil ones, believe that the nature of the universe demands that one of them, and only one, should prevail over all others. Extreme views imply that there can only be one god in the end, one who would rule all the others and eventually consume them. This grimmest of prophecies heralds a universal conflict, one that could doom Calidar's world soul. There also is an ulterior motive for one god killing another, which is described later in this chapter (see *Death Among Gods).* Teos-Soltan has been aware of this peril for a very long time, as new gods emerged around him. He may very well choose conflict if he has a chance of prevailing, but in the wake of Ghülean invasions, he may also temper a warlike strategy, relying more often on proselytizing to spread his cult and push his rivals to a slow extinction.





In the event of a conflict engulfing the whole of Soltan's ephemeris, a few gods may remain, or perhaps indeed just one. If so, the divine survivor(s) would unavoidably control followers residing on different worlds. Deities are initially connected to their native world souls. As their reach extends across the Great Vault, spiritual patrons tap instead into magical reserves of the world supporting their greatest number of followers. This already is the case with Nordheim's pantheon. Most of Calidar's Norsemen reside in the Fringe. Odin and his companions therefore are gods of the Fringe, yet mortals born in Calidar's Nordheim honor them as well. Deities use magic earned from their followers, no matter what their native worlds are. When they die, the essence of gods and mortals returns to their related world souls.

Depredations resulting from an apocalyptic clash would inevitably damage all involved world souls. Affected planets would become barren and magic-poor, like Lao-Kwei. Though this may not directly affect individual monsters or a player's wizard, magic-wielding beings would indeed become very rare among the surviving population. With such a catastrophic scenario, however, referees would be within their right, if they wish, to incorporate direct effects on clerical or wizardly magic-use, such as limiting how frequently powerful spells can be cast. Enchanting skyships might become vastly more expensive and time-consuming. The scarcity of *seitha* might also worsen, vanishing altogether from the moons and becoming harder yet to find on Calidar. Oil of seith is in part related to the Dread Lands—if the living wilderness disappears entirely, so too might *seitha* and the belief system of the tribal fellfolk. Before this happens, it stands to reason that tribal animism may take hold among outsiders who seek to reject divine hegemony and its depredations, adding yet another dimension to the conflict. Though priors could not be tempted, wizards evidently would. Mages do not actually need deities to cast spells, but they do need a natural source of magic, preferably a strong one!

The Dread Lands

Territories under the world soul's protection extend well beyond forested areas. These so-called Dread Lands stretch from pole to pole, including deserts, mountains, forests, oceans, and the sky. They form a natural barrier intended to prevent the expansion of sapient civilization. Weak zones may exist, hidden here and there on Calidar, where Dread Lands cannot prevail, allowing referees to place islands of civilization as needed in their campaign games. Reactive in nature, world soul manifestations materialize when danger is perceived or damage is inflicted upon those lands or their inhabitants. The practical question remains: *what triggers manifestations, and to what extent?*

Triggering Dread Lands' Reactions: The number of intruders and what they do determine the odds of provoking a response. Table 16 helps fit the odds of reactions with circumstances. A referee is always welcome to adjust these numbers for the sake of game balance and good story-telling. Creatures born in the Dread Lands aren't generally concerned with these charts unless they fight each other, harm their environment, or attempt to extract *seitha*.

Table 16 lists odds of triggering a reaction for a party up to ten human-sized individuals. Increase these odds +5% each time the maximum range of intruders present doubles (11-20, 21-40, 41-80, 81-160, 161-320, 321-640, etc.) Modifiers may result in automatic triggers. Use common sense when large creatures, such as non-native giants or dragons, are involved.

Table 16. Triggering Dread Lands' Reactions

	Activities	Odds & Check Frequency (d%)
A	Cautious walk, scouting	2% twice per day
	Hacking through brush, camping, prospecting for *seitha*, hunting, fishing, foraging	5% twice per day
	Chopping down trees, displacing rocks, altering or defiling the environment in a noticeable fashion	10% twice per day
	Building fortifications or permanent dwellings, digging mines, or performing construction work	15% twice per day
B	Fighting or using magic to inflict damage, such as fighting a monster or a foe other than a spirit lord	20% per encounter
	Inflicting massive and sudden damage to fauna, flora, or the environment	25% per instance
	Destroying a manifestation of the Dread Lands	Total Life Force as a percentage , up to 75% (see *Game Mechanics*, page 8)
	Excavating a well to reach a *seitha* deposit	2% per hour of labor (add up and make one check at the end)
	Extracting a *seitha* deposit	10%+1% per gallon; check when the very last drop is collected

If two checks per day are suggested, one is made during daylight hours, at a time most relevant to the activity described. The other check takes place during night hours only if an activity also takes place at that time. Increase odds +5% for nocturnal activities (thus, overnight camping always incurs 15% odds).

No more than two checks per day in total are ever needed for all of the A-rated activities, rolling only for actions most likely to trigger a manifestation. For example: daytime construction work requires a 15% check (which covers all other A-rated activities during the day), but nocturnal activity, perhaps just camping, still requires a roll at +5%. On the other hand, each instance of B-rated activities demands an individual check.

"Hiding" is an option for a party of ten or less (such as lying low under bushes or in the shadow of a boulder, limiting discussions to whispers, and not taking any physical or magical action). This is rated as "0% activity." This implies a no-risk situation.

Dread Lands' Reactions: If a response is triggered, what happens and how quickly varies with whether the action is rated A or B, and whether this is a first event or a subsequent one (see Table 17, *Dread Lands Reactions).*

Table 17. Dread Lands' Reactions

Activities	Nature & Timing of Responses					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
A	Warning	Monster(s)	Elemental spirit lord			
	d4+1 hours	d4 hours	d20+20 min	d10+10 min	d6+6 min	d4+4 min
B	Elemental spirit lord (plus tribal shaman if present)					
	d6+6 min	d4+4 min	Immediately			

The world soul and therefore the Dread Lands are conscious of the danger they face. If a threat persists, escalation will ensue regardless of which specific activity triggers an event. For example, the first manifestation could have been provoked while exploring, the next while camping, another while attempting to extract *seitha*, etc. The first response should be a dangerous warning: a hail storm, a lightning bolt, a disease-bearing gas cloud, attacking foliage, a small sand whirlwind, an improbable landslide, a plague of land, aquatic, or flying vermin, and so on as appropriate to the prevailing environment. The next reaction could be a native monster or a group of them roused by the world soul to attack intruders. The monsters can possess as much Life Force as the intruders' entire party. From this point forward, elemental spirit lords are stirred to life. They are summoned from materials locally available: roots and mud, ice and rock, sand and fire, sea and spray, cloud and lightning, etc. Local fellfolk tribes alerted by such events may very well come to investigate, and decide to ambush intruders surviving a manifestation (see *Tribal Shamans* later in this chapter).

The ongoing count of Dread Lands' events is reset when the intruders leave. Time and distance away from the encounter site, however, must amount to at least a week and 100 miles for each of the manifestations provoked. So, for example, if intruders fled from their fifth trigger, they would need to travel at least 500 miles away and not return for at least 5 weeks. Failure to follow these precautions would likely result in the next level of reaction at the time of their new trigger. Spirit lords will pursue fugitives if they can, until they sustain at least 50% damage. They otherwise linger near the site of their summoning for a certain length of time (see *Prowling* at the end of Table 18) before blending into the surrounding terrain.

Elemental Spirit Lords: These beings are avatars of the world soul, and as such, can be immensely powerful. Table 18 outlines the general abilities of elemental spirit lords. See *Game Mechanics* on page 8 to generate monster statistics compatible with the chosen game system. The scope of Dread Lands' manifestations grows according to the intruders' total Life Force and how many spirit lords have already been roused. If the situation warrants it (such as a Kragdûras warship crashing into the Dread Lands), referees are encouraged to "skip" to a more powerful creature with a short-term guaranteed reaction.

Shape/Size: It is given here in cubic feet ($36ft^3 = 1m^3$ approx.) Spirit lords may come in any shape, based on their prevailing element: a whirlwind of sand and fire, a watery beast, a mound of rock, mud, roots, and foliage, etc. They are typically no less than 10 feet tall or ten feet long.

Movement: They move according to their prevailing element. Earth/rock/ice spirits walk or crawl, fire and air spirits fly, and water spirits swim and leap (leaping above the surface is equal to a third of their MV rate: 60', 70', or 80' high). Water spirits can also move on the ground at half speed (45', 60', or 75'). Earth/rock spirits can burrow at half speed. Ice spirits can burrow into glaciers and icebergs at half-speed, and swim half as fast as water spirits. Flying spirits can reach the limit of Calidar's atmosphere. Also see *Phase Shift,* later in this section. Walking or crawling entities cannot run (and therefore are unable to "charge.")

Physical Attacks: This lists the total number of physical attacks the spirit may perform. Spirit lords possess a mouth with which they can roar or bite, and enough appendages to fight. Appendages may vanish from one side and reappear on the opposite to make an attack from there.

Physical Damage: It is likely heavy (referees are encouraged to modify damage rates as appropriate). Most damage is of the blunt/crushing type, save from desert spirits taking the form of a sand and fire whirlwind, which should be treated as fire-based. These attacks should be considered magical in that they are effective against any incorporeal foes and others requiring enchanted weapons. Critical hits should at least result in victims being stunned or knocked off their feet. Spirit lords can always inflict damage to creatures immune to non-magical weapons.

Special Attacks: These can be adjudicated according to the chosen game system's mechanics, as appropriate to the spirit's general nature.

Special Defense: Up to three times since their initial summoning, spirit lords can dispel a lasting enchantment affecting them or their surroundings. When they do, the magic is absorbed and used to heal combat damage. A spell's potency rating converts into Life Force on a 2-for-1 basis. For example, if magic with an SP of 30% is dispelled, 15% of the spirit's damage is healed. Dispelling magic is innate and does not require an action.

Basic Immunities: Semi-intelligent, spirits are immune to fear and all mind-affecting attacks (including charms, illusions, and subdual). Perception of their surroundings comes from the world soul itself, essentially stemming from every nearby knoll, twig, snow heap, shred of mist or smoke, sandy mound, water ripple, mossy patch, and breath of wind. Perception range is equal to a spirit lord's AR expressed in miles (thus AR30=30 miles radius, AR40=40 miles radius, etc.) Though they do not engage in any form of communication, they sense through empathy all life and *unlife* lurking around them, as well as their intents. As such, trickery, camouflage, and

Table 18. Elemental Spirit Lords

Abilities		Spirit Lords in Order of Appearance					
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Life Force		Party's Life Force +10%	+50%	+100%	+150%	+200%	+250%
Size (cubic feet)		90	200	450	800	1,300	2,000
Movement (as appropriate)		90' (30') *on foot* 180' (60') *swimming* 270' (90') *flying*		120' (40') *on foot* 210' (70') *swimming* 300' (100') *flying*		150' (50') *on foot* 240' (80') *swimming* 360' (120') *flying*	
Armor Rating		AR30	AR40	AR50	AR60	AR70	AR80
# Physical Attacks		1 bite + 1 limb per opponent	1 bite + 2 limbs per opponent				
Physical Damage	Bite	2Hi	2Hi+2	2Hi+4	3Hi+6	3Hi+8	4Hi+10
	Limb	2M *each*	2M+2 *each*	3Lo *each*	3Lo+2 *each*	3M *each*	4M+2 *each*
Special Attacks		As appropriate: trample and/or swoop					
Special Defense		Can dispel any single magical effect up to three times					
Defense checks		As a prior of equal Life Force (up to maximum score limits)					
Basic Immunities		Immune to fear and all mind-affecting attacks; ½ damage from certain weapons					
Magic Immunity		—	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%
Phase Shift		—	90ft	100 yards	½ mile	5 miles	40 miles
Roar Attack		—	—	Foes must flee unless they succeed a defense check			
Call Other		—	—	10%	20%	30%	40%
Swallow Whole		—	—	—	With a "critical hit" on main attack		
Breath Weapon		—	—	—	—	3/day (see Table 10)	
Morale Rating		MR100%					
Prowling		d4 hours	2d6 hours	4d6 hours	d4 days	2d6 days	d4+1 weeks

magical invisibility are ineffective. Spirit lords do not breathe or require sustenance. They are immune to the natural conditions of their environment, to poison, to energy drain, and to most diseases, including rot, lycanthropy, and so forth.

Spirit lords incur full damage from certain weapon types only, and from successful spells. All other weapons inflict half damage rounded up (which includes all modifiers except magic bonuses). Walking/crawling spirits take full damage from blunt weapons (hammers, maces), swimming spirits from piercing weapons (harpoons, spears), and flying spirits from slashing/hacking weapons (swords, axes).

Magic Immunity: Most of the spirit lords have a flat chance of completely escaping the detrimental effects of any spell or magical effect whether cast directly at them or not. If they don't, normal defense checks still apply.

Phase Shift: A spirit lord has the ability to blend into its prevailing element once, and instantly rematerialize at another location within the indicated range. It takes the form of the prevailing element at the exit point (effectively, the world soul manipulates the nature of its avatar). For example, a stone and ice spirit could vanish into a glacier, and rematerialize as an air and lightning beast. All previously accumulated damage remains. A spirit doesn't use this power if it has sustained combat damage exceeding 50% of its original Life Force.

Roar Attack: One ought not have a horrific monster that can't roar, at least for the sake of drama. Roars are effective as 60-degree cone-shaped attacks twice as long as the spirit's own movement rate. Only one fear check is needed per encounter. Silencing a roar will in no way diminish its potency (at least from the author's facetious point of view), as evidenced by the shaking ground, miscellaneous debris being flung about, and one's dreadfully disheveled hair.

Call Other: This ability grants a spirit a chance to call another of a lesser magnitude, once per encounter. Spirits will attempt to call another when they sustain 50% or more damage in combat. Called spirits promptly emerge from immediate surroundings, and may themselves attempt to call others if wounded (provided they possess this ability). Called spirits can be of any element most needed at the time, if available nearby. Bear in mind that destroying any spirit lord may trigger yet another manifestation of the next highest magnitude (see B-rated activities in Table 16, *Triggering Dread Lands' Reactions)*. For the same reason, be wary of inconsiderately casting area-of-effect spells, which may cause sudden and massive damage to the environment.

Swallow Whole: Some of the larger spirits can swallow a foe, with a "critical hit" (see *Game Mechanics*, page 10). Swallowing is only performed with the spirit's main attack form. The victim incurs 1Hi+2 damage for each subsequent combat action while inside the beast. Victims can attack the spirit from inside (its internal AR is the same as on the outside),

with a substantial attack penalty. Unless the spirit lord is destroyed first, swallowed victims and their equipment are disintegrated (except divine artifacts) when the entity blends back with its surroundings (see *Prowling* at the end of Table 18).

Breath Weapon: Some of the larger spirits possess a breath weapon. These can be chosen from Table 10 (see *Divine Breaths,* score of 20) and should be appropriate to the spirit's prevailing element. The area of effect and physical damage should be commensurate with that of a dragon of comparatively equal stature. Those who succeed a defense check suffer half this damage. Breath weapons cannot be used more than three times from the moment the entity is summoned. Lost Life Points turn into small elemental sprites scurrying away in all directions, slithering, hopping, swimming, or flying before blending into the surrounding nature. The spirit lord cannot perform physical attacks while using its breath weapon.

Morale Rating: Spirit lords are immune to fear. They do not retreat from combat, thus their 100% rating. They do pursue their foes, or one they perceive as potentially being the most dangerous. If called spirits are present, they will split to hunt down separate fugitives. Pursuit stops when a spirit sustains more than 50% damage; the entity then returns to the site of its summoning to prevent further incursions (see *Prowling,* next).

Prowling: This indicates how long spirit lords remain near the site of their summoning, when they aren't pursuing intruders. When this time is up, they blend in with their surroundings and vanish, rejoining the world soul. Any foes swallowed whole and still inside are disintegrated at this time along with their equipment. If intruders return while a spirit lord still prowls, it will sense their presence and recognize them from miles away (see *Basic Immunities* earlier for their perception range).

If what triggered the coming of a spirit lord is sensed to have been put to rest, the manifestation then blends in with its surroundings, as described above, and vanishes. Forces of nature are released at that time, restoring to its original condition much of what in the world soul's protected dominion had been damaged or destroyed. A forest's foliage grows thick and lush, and wildlife thrives wondrously within miles, attracting fairies. In a desert, an oasis may emerge. A forest of living ice might grow in a frozen domain, attracting frostlings. A warm sea current could form, teeming with banks of fish and, on a nearby coast, with penguins and seals. A great cloud could form in the sky, beckoning aeries and other denizens of the air. Shamans see these resting places of spirit lords as sacred sites never to be disturbed, or as burial grounds for their own people.

Guardians of the Great Vault: If it perceives a threat located outside Calidar's atmosphere such as a fleet of skyships bombarding the Dread Lands, the world soul would use phase shifting to dispatch a spirit lord. Normal trigger odds apply. Phasing can originate high in the sky, as little as 5 miles away from the source of the damage. The spirit lord wouldn't feature any of the Dread Lands' natural elements. Rather, it would be made of pure energy when materializing in the void, and only be visible to those who can detect magic.

As the previous paragraph implies, the world soul is capable of confronting external threats of many kinds. For example, a wizard somehow harming the Dread Lands all the way from the Great Caldera could provoke a spirit lord to travel the entire distance and attempt to terminate who/what lies at the source of the damage. Though the Dread Lands are circumscribed to a finite area, the world soul imbues all parts of its world. It can sense who/what harmed or schemed to allow harm to befall its protected dominion, and react accordingly. If the damage inflicted is severe enough and persistent, the world soul can enable a guardian of the Great Vault to travel through the netherworld without recourse to *seitha*. The most powerful spirit lords are also capable of dousing the magic of divine artifacts or killing gods if need be.

If Calidar's world soul ever faced a threat it perceived as exceeding its ability to eliminate, it would generate several colossal spirits, called titans, effectively bestowing much of its own planetary power upon its spawn. These titans would then scatter throughout Calidar's universe, leaving their mother world mostly bereft of its original magic (like Lao-Kwei). There, they sing a single divine note which summons dust, rock, ice, and gas from the faraway Fringe, and begin the genesis of new planets. Some could settle in the Fringe and become one with its world soul. Pundits among the gods have long assumed that the source of all life in Soltan's ephemeris is the sun's world soul itself, but this was never proven. Divine politics and the resulting dogmas among mortal priors tend to gloss over this concept, when not brutally discouraging its dissemination.

Native Monsters

The earliest Dread Lands manifestations occurred 700,000 years BCE. Monsters already existed on Calidar at that time and adapted to life in the protected wilderness. Others came from foreign worlds or even different planes. Although these late comers were for the most part eventually killed, some left behind eggs or very young progeny. In its own way, the world soul accommodated them, leading them to grow up as native beasts in tune with the realities of the Dread Lands. Fellfolk sometimes capture monsters straying into the Dread Lands, for the purpose of breeding their young. Over the centuries, these monsters escaped their fellfolk owners and became native breeds in their own rights.

Indigenous creatures do not generally provoke Dread Lands reactions when performing A-rated activities related to basic survival (see Table 16, *Triggering Dread Lands Reactions,* earlier). Hunting to acquire food does not instigate a response for natives. However, hunting for the sake of revenge, glory, pleasure, or profit isn't likely to end well. Native monsters do not prospect for *seitha*, do not damage or defile their environment, and if they build artificial dwellings, they are likely to use readily available materials (gathering dead wood and loose rocks). Caverns or the ruins of a civilization long ago reclaimed by the Dread Lands can be used as lairs. If they enjoy magical or shamanistic affinities, monsters are more likely to alter their environment so that a lair naturally blends in (such as growing giant foliage, reclaiming a hollowed out gargantuan tree, partly reshaping rock, sand, mud, or ice, and so forth).

Among denizens of the Dread Lands, one can count any monster of fantasy literature as well as the descendants of past Ghülean creatures stranded on Calidar, except the undead, which stand at the opposite end of life's spectrum. The fellfolk tribes occupy the top of the food chain, and as a whole, stand as the most powerful inhabitants. They live in competing tribes that may be allied or bitter rivals, like any other realm. Some are nomads, especially where food is scarce. They rely on the wisdom of their shamans to guide them in their relations with outsiders and rogue monsters. Calderan individuals "going native" aren't unheard of, especially among druids. They often are associated with a fellfolk tribe.

Seitha Trade

Seitha is a rare substance introduced in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies* (see page 119). Skyships of Calidar use it to travel through the Great Vault. A special blessing cast upon *oil of seith* enables objects and people to enter the netherworld and reappear after some time at another point, well beyond the reach of skyships moving by conventional means. Because of this, *seitha* has become a highly valued commodity. It is also hard to find and expensive to refine.

Prospection: *Seitha* can be found on Calidar's moons, although the odds of such are minimal. Much of what is used in skyships originates from the Dread Lands. Typically, *seitha* lies beneath the ground. A nearby deposit may yield some clues of its existence, usually a reddish coloration of rocks, mosses, or fungus. The intensity of the coloration indicates how deep the deposit lies. Direct sunlight will erase the fragile tint and destroy exposed *seitha*. Therefore, a search must focus on shaded areas, such as forests, narrow ravines, caverns, or deeps of the sea.

Typical odds of finding a deposit amount to a cumulative 3% per day of exploration in the Dread Lands for a single party sticking together (1% per week in any other wilderness setting; *none at all* in borderland or settled areas). If magic is used to help locate *seitha*, search odds increase to 4% with neophytes, or to 6% with more capable spellcasters. Trained dogs add another 2%. If a party of prospectors is able to split into separate groups with equal capabilities, odds of success increase proportionately, but so does the risk of triggering a Dread Lands reaction. It all boils down to how a referee wants to run an exploration adventure, keeping the game thrilling and the amount of *seitha* discovered to a reasonable quantity before something really bad happens and everyone flees. Several days should go by before a deposit is located. As a general rule, no two deposits would ever lie within less than 50 miles from each other (over time, new ones might form after older ones were extracted). The search odds are reset when *seitha* is discovered or if moving away from the area.

Sages have documented cases when virgin *seitha* pooled up like blood at the site of recent violent deaths, as if the ground had been wounded. Virgin *seitha* is the primal substance before spirits are trapped within. This pool is a gate to the netherworld, beckoning stray spirits to leave the land of the living. Most depart while some remain as part of the pool. This rare phenomenon, sometimes rousing a spirit lord if in the Dread Lands, has been seen on battlefields, usually at night or in a shadowy spot. The pool remains for a moment before sinking back into the ground, wherein it forms a deposit of refinable *seitha* some distance below. A spirit lord may consume the pooled substance (if nothing was trapped), before decomposing and releasing its Life Force. Known sites yield no *seitha* since they've been most likely searched long ago. On the other hand, unknown sites in the Dread Lands add a flat 15% bonus to prospection odds in the area for 3-4 days-worth of uninterrupted exploration.

Extraction: Conventional means require that a well be dug until such point the soil shows evidence of seeping *seitha*. Appropriate divination magic ought to inform prospectors about the location and condition of a deposit before excavation. Roll 2d6+8 to determine the depth (in feet) of a deposit. If a score of 11-12 was rolled, roll another d8 and add this score to increase the depth. If a score of 8-10 was rolled, roll another d6 and increase the depth further. If a score of 5-7 was rolled, roll another d4 and increase the depth accordingly. If a 2 was rolled, the extraction fails and no deposit is found.

Manual excavation takes 30mn for each foot dug out, assuming help is given bracing the walls, lifting soil out of the well, and dumping it nearby. If the soil is loose, water-logged, and/or riddled with large rocks, double, triple, or quadruple the excavation timeframe (if it's at all possible to actually dig a well at this location). Using magic to accelerate digging is entirely acceptable and recommended. A dwarf with mining skills will halve extraction time if magic is unavailable. If the excavation fails or is abandoned, or the deposit turns out to be depleted, reset prospection odds.

If the excavation succeeds, a stone tube needs to be inserted into the ground at the bottom of the well until it reaches the deposit, allowing *seitha* to flow out (about an hour's worth of time). Mineral material is required for opaque, waterproof containers (amphorae or porphyry vessels with well-fitted stone plugs; glass, jade, or alabaster if the outside is rendered fully opaque). Metals (unless the inside was magically enameled) and organic materials (water skins, calabashes, coconuts, bone or wood containers) quickly spoil raw *seitha*. The quantity extracted amounts to d4 gallons (approx. 4 liters to a gallon) for each 6 feet dug out (approx. 2 meters), or fraction thereof.

However well stored, raw *seitha* may spoil between the moment it is extracted and the refining process. The odds are 10% per week or fraction thereof, each container being checked separately. Calidaran amphorae typically contain 7-9 gallons (approximately 25-35 liters).

Refining: Raw *seitha* is a dangerous substance, effectively haunted with malevolent spirits trapped within for an incalculable number of centuries. Touching the unrefined substance with bare hands may result in poisoning, paralysis, rotting disease, energy drain, or possession. After extraction, it also attracts the undead, which crave the substance. The odds of such amount to a cumulative 1% per day (typically checked as a single cargo load), double that in the netherworld.

Refining requires either a fully equipped alchemist's lab or a prior expert in the matters of *seitha* purification with a consecrated altar. One uses alchemic processes, the other prayers and blessings. They both produce the same result: pure *oil of seith*. The refined substance is stable and safe to handle, though exposure to sunlight will still cause it to spoil. The undead cannot sense the final product from very far (although they do prize such a precious substance).

A gallon of the original raw material yields up to 10 ounces (approx. 30 cl). The process takes an alchemist or expert prior a full day's work. Refining can be performed aboard a transporting vessel, usually at half speed due to the ship's movement. If the refining equipment is less than adequate or working conditions troublesome, the amount of *seitha* produced is 1d8+2 ounces rather than the full yield. What remains of the raw substance is rendered inert or disintegrated in the process. Refined *seitha* can be stored safely in any type of container. A referee may require a skill check for each workday. Failure results in the current batch's destruction. Catastrophic failure may result in touching the raw substance or releasing spirits as incorporeal undead (though most would vanish into the netherworld, some might remain and seek vengeance upon the living).

Using Seitha: An official "dose" of refined *seitha*, for accounting and regulation purposes, equals 10 ounces. One dose enables a skyship the size of the *Star Phoenix* to enter the netherworld, travel through it, and exit at the intended point. As a rule of thumb, dosage varies with the relative length of a vessel and the size of its crew—thus a warship twice as large as the *Star Phoenix* requires two doses, while a single ounce may do for a skiff. Using *seitha* in this manner safely releases its spirits without a chance of undead appearing, and enables them to enter the netherworld. Based on the game mechanics chosen to run this setting, the monetary value of refined *seitha* should reflect the entire cost of the expedition to acquire the raw substance, losses incurred, refining fees, a 100% profit margin for all involved, and possibly local taxes (part of the refined substance

may be collected for use by the realm's authorities). *Seitha* is certainly worth many times its weight in gold.

Prospection, refining, sale, and ownership of *seitha* are typically regulated and licensed. Divination magic is most certainly used to verify all related business. An average market value often reflects local trade. It is likely high during a war, less so during peace time. Events may cause market prices to fluctuate (a major theft of the realm's reserves, some catastrophe that destroyed reserves, or a capture of smuggled *seitha).* Speculation and manipulation are to be expected. Piracy and rivalry between prospectors aren't unheard of either, especially out in the Dread Lands. In general, an expedition yielding a small amount of the substance earns little profit in the end, while one with many gallons in a ship's stores should hit pay dirt. With great risk comes great fortune. . . or disaster.

Tribal Shamans

Calidar's tribal fellfolk reject the concept of sentient godhood and personified deities altogether. They honor the world soul, which they perceive as the Great Spirit of nature. Its manifestations are seen as sacred, and the places they visit as taboo to foreigners. Native fellfolk often use these sites as burial grounds. All tribes enjoy vast repertoires of legends and dances telling about myriad spirits of their lands, entities that dwell in all things and animals that roam the land (see CAL1 page 62). Each tribe typically adopts a totem spirit, an invisible protector inspired from one of the many forces of nature. Fellfolk of the Dread Lands speak prayers and perform common blessings when they dispatch life, to appease the Great Spirit. When they gather resources and when they hunt or fish, they always leave something behind, a gift to the spirits from whom they took what the tribes needed.

Over time, shamans have learned that foreign races covet their lands and seek to replace their beliefs with faiths in personified deities. They think that such gods are no better, if not infinitely worse, than the mortals who created them in their own image. In the view of tribal elders, these gods are bound to fail because they are imperfect and because they crave power. Fellfolk of the Dread Lands fear that when these gods falter, they will take their followers with them into the pits of oblivion. Because of this conviction, denizens of the Dread Lands seek to make outsiders vie against one another, backing at one time or another agents of Calderan realms, Aloreans, Munaani, Kragdûras, Draconic knights, heroes, prospectors, pirates, renegades, monsters, starfolk, and so on. That being said, fellfolk tribes aren't always at peace with each other, affecting which outsiders they might choose to back at the time. Such alliances are not known to last. For these reasons, tribes can be as capricious and unpredictable as any Dread Lands shrubbery one might imprudently trample.

Powers of the Shamans

As regards faith, tribal fellfolk either believe in the spirits or they do not. There are no casual faithful, pious followers, or fanatical zealots. Shamans are both servants and protectors of the world soul. They perform blessings of their tribal totems based on natural rhythms, which provide them with spells commensurate with their Life Forces. They do not request spells; rather, magic is provided to them according to what the world soul senses to be useful (in many cases, the choices may seem entirely random and may include totally new spells).

Regardless of their needs for spells, shamans do pray to the spirits at certain times, and offer gifts. When to bless their totems (or amulets



they carry with them) depends upon a bewildering array of obscure conditions that a shaman must be able to observe, such as: dawn if not clouded (or sunset), when a certain moon rises (or sets), when lightning strikes the *boomboom* tree, when the desert *hookrat* catches a sneezing *tumbletrog,* when the wandering *gobblebush* howls in the steppes, when the boreal *frostsnout* catches a snowflake in midair, when the *tomtom* crab pounds its chest, when the *cuckoofish* snaps its beak, when the mighty thunderhead looks like a *grigri* bird, when a coconut (or for that matter any calabash or shrunken head) quashes the *cloudspider,* certainly when the wind shifts and the *mudgrumble* snorts, or without the shadow of a doubt when the tribe's totem animal darts by (and so on). For practical gaming purposes, a shaman's spells have a 33% chance of being reset/reshuffled every eight hours, whether or not any spells were cast. The best way to handle this is to create a collection of cards listing randomly chosen spell lists, shuffling them, and picking a new card when needed.

Rousing Spirit Lords: If fellfolk are aware of foreigners on their lands, they are likely to spy on them. If their shaman decides intruders are enemies, he/she can increase the odds of Dread Lands manifestations once per day. Odds for activities rated A (and the first two activities rated B) incur a 5 point increase. If a group of monsters appears, they will ignore the shaman's party. If a spirit lord materializes, the shaman and an accompanying war party may ride on its back, though they may not control its behavior. Fellfolk ride walking/crawling spirits, while seafolk ride swimming spirits. Only a shaman can stay with the beast if it phase shifts (provided he/she

can breathe water if it turns aquatic). A shaman can always ride a flying beast, as it forms a breathable shell around its passenger.

Tribes at war against each other cannot rouse spirit lords against their rivals. However, if depredations are significant, one or more entities will confront both sides to end their conflict. All parties will then immediately scatter and flee. A gathering of great shamans from several tribes has the power to summon one or more spirit lords, especially when these tribes are facing a major external threat. One entity of the 1st type is summoned for every 30 Life Force of great shamans present at the palaver. Each can be directed to attack a separate target, or to attack a single one together. Spirit lords can engage foes outside the Dread Lands, up 100 miles from the site of the palaver for every 30 Life Force of the summoning shamans. They fight until they or their targets are destroyed. Another wave of spirit lords cannot be summoned until the next moon cycle.

Appeasing Spirit Lords: If shamans decide to be peaceful with intruders, however short-lived these truces might be, they can help minimize Dread Lands manifestations once per day. Odds for activities rated A (and the first two activities rated B) incur a 10 point decrease. Shamans can always "stay" roused manifestations, in which case whatever was summoned simply waits, prowling nearby until intruders have left the area or a shaman unleashes it again. If it is attacked, a stayed manifestation resumes its purpose. This applies especially to living beings. Great shamans can also dismiss a spirit lord they summoned during a tribal palaver.

Shamans of the Great Caldera

Native fellfolk tribes are rare among the former colonies. Some still inhabit the jungles of Meryath and remote areas of Alfdaín and Belledor. Others went underground, living in caves beneath the other realms. The seafolk, however, abound in the inner seas. Tribes have retreated from the immediate vicinity of the shores since the Age of Colonialism, dwelling between 100' (30m) and 300' (100m), though their hunting parties commonly prowl kelp forests and reef areas, as well as depths up to 1,000' (300m), or shallow waters many miles away from the coasts. Some can also be found in lakes or hunting in large rivers. Though the depth of the Great Caldera's inner seas averages 3,600' (1,200m), fissures surrounding Araldûr can be much deeper.

Shamans of the Great Caldera still obtain their spells as described earlier. They no longer have access to Dread Lands' manifestations; they do, however, endeavor to engineer their return. The first goal of shamans is fellfolk survival as a culture and species, rebuilding their numbers, and opposing by any means possible the spread of belief in anthropomorphic deities. Native shamans of the Great Caldera and their tribes are almost always hostile to outsiders, perhaps even more so than those of the surrounding Dread Lands.

Most shamans are soul-eaters (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 93). Their strategy is to murder outsiders straying onto their lands, and to capture their souls within enchanted amulets. These devices are then buried throughout the Great Caldera. The goal is to hide vast numbers of them so that one day, a great spell will be spoken, and all captive spirits will rejoin the world soul at the same time. It is believed that in so doing, the Dread Lands may awaken, perhaps permanently. The regions most at risk due to their relative low population density are Alfdaín, Belledor, Nordheim, Narwan, and high mountain ranges. The inner seas are even more likely to see a return of the Dread Lands.

Shamans of the seafolk and of scattered fellfolk tribes communicate through dreams, so that they may coordinate their efforts. Native fellfolk (and to a certain degree seafolk) may not be recognized as such at first glance, especially those who've already traveled though the former colonies. Seafolk often elect to travel up waterways when seeking a place inland to bury an amulet. It can be at the bottom of a river, in a lake, or within a day's travel on foot from their banks. On the way back, native tribal folk may attempt to abduct isolated victims, and return with them to their homelands to continue the Great Quest.

The Netherworld

Regardless of what part of the Great Vault they came from, the spirits of all things that lived and have died transit through the netherworld. Also known as limbo or the astral plane, it is both infinite in size and minuscule, its dimensions, shape, time scale, and laws of physics being alien to Calidar's prime universe. There is only one netherworld for the whole of Calidar's universe. When their bleak journeys end, most lingering spirits rejoin their respective world souls, where they are later reborn in whatever manner might be required. Past identities, life stories, experiences, and inner thoughts of all spirits born of a world soul are preserved in the *Ætherian Scrolls*, magical records of all life forces since the birth of Soltan's ephemeris, which certain gods may consult. Each world soul features its own *Ætherian Scrolls*, including Lao-Kwei and its records of the ill-fated Kahuulkin (see *The Starfolk,* CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 59).

During this ultimate journey, which takes as little as a few days to as long as centuries, spirits face different fates that reflect their lifetime achievements. They are mere reflections of their past living forms. Sapient spirits remember who they were but they no longer have their past abilities. Rather, they dwell in the netherworld to relive their past in a dream state, going through stages of denial, anger, regret, and perhaps final peace as they weigh the good and the bad that they may have done. They respond to events around them if disturbed, they quizzically observe and follow visitors as if it might bring them back to life, or wander about, lost in their thoughts. Some evil ones might harbor ill will toward fellow spirits and much more so toward visitors.

Non-sentient essence, such as common flora and lower fauna, departs for the world soul, where their energy is collected and reused. Semi-sentient beings might remain as the companions of other lingering spirits. Sapient individuals face a number of possible fates. Gods claim the very best, who are honored and bound to remain at their sides in Ambrosia as their divine servants (see *Denizens of Ambrosia, page 211*). The most hated pariahs, on the other hand, are taken to a place of suffering. Most pantheons feature such horrid places somewhere in their magical domains. Other nefarious spirits linger in the netherworld to reflect upon their past deeds until reclaimed by the world soul. These include the unrepentant heathens, the casual faithful, and the masses of other unremarkable spirits ignored by their gods. Occasionally, deities do kick out disgraced servants and captives who've atoned long enough for their past offenses, sending them back to join the endless ranks of limbo dwellers. All those are eventually reborn, completing the cycle of life and death, except for the most corrupt, who are incarcerated in raw *seitha*.

Rebirth: World souls raise primordial spirits from their pools of magic to bring life to their planets. The youngest spirits inhabit the simplest forms of life, such as fauna and flora. Mature ones animate sapient individuals—be they people or monsters. Magical creatures able to wield great powers are host to elder spirits. At the opposite end of the spectrum, greater spirits become forces of nature, such as those in the Dread

Calidar's World Soul



Lands. In times of ultimate distress, some of these greater spirits can leave to become a new world soul elsewhere in space (see *Guardians of the Great Vault,* earlier). During the millions of years of their existence, world souls are able to grow in strength in order to support an expanding sapient population. An exuberant biosphere also helps in this regard. World souls can also "heal" damage to themselves or replace lost spirits (see *The Undead,* later in this section).

The world soul can return spirits to spark new life an infinite number of times. When they begin a new existence in the physical world, they lose their memories of previous lives. Magical rituals can unveil someone's past identities, but only the more recent ones. This ensures that past deeds do not somehow influence reborn spirits. Magic to resurrect the dead is highly uncommon in Calidar's universe. The gods do not casually enable priors to take away spirits whom they see as their servants or whom they have condemned to a place of eternal pain and sorrow. Gods may agree to such shenanigans from their mortal pawns in exchange for a meaningful quest. Unrepentant heathens and the casual faithful require their savior to first retrieve their spirits from the netherworld before reuniting them with their carnal forms, a tall order since the land of the dead is infinitely vast and mysterious. Calidaran natives are better off in this respect than denizens of other worlds, since *seitha* enables entry into limbo with relative ease. A bleak and perilous adventure lies ahead nonetheless. The time that a spirit spends in the netherworld is also limited; once it rejoins the world soul, no mortal or godly magic can ever take it back. For this same reason, magic decreasing one's age or blocking the effects of aging does not work in Calidar's universe, unless it is of godly nature. From a referee's point of view, these mechanics prevent very powerful individuals from living forever, which is *Eternal Glory*'s exclusive benefit, at least as regards Calidar (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 61).

World Soul Bias: Though they aren't sentient (rather, *they are,* but on a geological level), world souls naturally favor constructive behavior. Corrupted spirits in large numbers can damage a world soul, like a disease would a living body. Spirits can become corrupt as a result of fate, bad decisions during their hosts' lifetimes, unfortunate personality traits, poor teachings, magic, falling prey to demons or the undead, etc. Calidar's world soul processes in its own ways malevolent and destructive spirits before reabsorbing them: it sequesters them in the form of *seitha*. After the substance is consumed, emerging spirits are for the most part free of their corrupting evil, and rejoin the world soul fairly soon afterward. The others linger in the netherworld for some time before being banished once more as *seitha*. A few may become undead and escape the world soul's reincarnation cycle.

Netherworld's Appearance: At first glance, Calidar's limbo looks like a cold and vast emptiness. A weak and eerie green glow pervades its immensity, continually stirred by ethereal winds. In some areas, unending ectoplasmic forests rise like giant seaweed, swaying amid eternal eddies. Errant spirits travel with these currents, like banks of fish in an ocean, suddenly darting away as if spooked by some unseen predator. Mirroring events in the physical world, storms may prevail in limbo, strong enough to tear apart a visiting skyship. Occasionally solid features can be found, with a ground surface and buildings. These shadowy locales are mere reflections of former existences conjured by the memories of spirits languishing there. Wildlife is merely a ghostly echo of the worlds' flora and fauna.

In the place claimed by the dead of many worlds, no breathing, drinking, eating, or resting will ever satisfy anyone, alive or departed—neither can they reproduce in any way. Only individual magical protection, or skyships rigged for space travel, enable visitors to survive long enough to return among the living. While in limbo, one does not age, wounds do not heal, and medicinal spells fail.

The living naturally attract the departed, even more so if they know each other. Spirits entering the life-preserving sphere around a visiting skyship are generally harmless. Former crew members may be tempted to linger aboard. Their bond to their former duties is sometimes strong enough to enable them to emerge from limbo when the vessel returns to the physical world, causing them to become undead. Most spirits in the netherworld can only hope to accompany a visiting skyship, as dolphins would a seaborne vessel. They swarm in its wake, swoop by its sides, and glide through its sails, beckoning, moaning, and whispering in the ever-present ethereal winds. Some may even wander below deck.

Outside a ship's sphere or in the absence of adequate magical protection, the living are fully vulnerable to the denizens of limbo. Visitors can meet an untimely end while in the netherworld, despite its nearly-timeless nature, thereby severing the natural bond between body and spirit. When dealing with the departed and their strange environment, a prior whose divine patron governs death is more potent here than followers of other deities. This is especially true when they attempt to keep the undead at bay (as appropriate to the chosen game system).

One might wonder why the netherworld is so important to warrant a visit. This halfway universe matters a great deal to dwellers of Calidar's Ephemeris because it is their portal to space travel. Since distances there differ immensely from those in the physical world and, just as importantly, time does not flow here in the same manner, a visiting skyship can enter

limbo at one point and exit into the physical world at a much greater distance than can be reached through conventional sailing. The magical blessing allowing a skyship and its crew to penetrate the domain of the departed also determines the course to follow and the point at which the vessel needs to emerge to reach its final destination in the physical world. It becomes the crucial responsibility of the helmsman and the navigator to remain on course, lest they miss the exit point. If they do, they will appear elsewhere in space.

Navigational Hazards: The netherworld exerts a certain force intended to prevent spirits from wandering into other planes of existence. For the living who travel within, this can have severe consequences. The first is the gradual weakening of the bond between body and spirit. Even within the limits of a skyship's magical protection, this weakening parallels a desire to remain in what increasingly feels like a soothing, restful environment. From a game mechanics' point of view, one might base a traveler's ability to resist limbo's fatal attraction upon personal wisdom and Life Force, where both ratings are converted to 1-20 ranges and added together. The result indicates the amount of time (equivalent to Calidaran days) before spirits start departing their bodies. Each day spent thereafter in limbo requires a stamina check to survive. With each successful roll, the visitor's prime requisite ability scores also temporarily drop –5% (rounded up, or 1pt on a 1-20 scale). The growing desire to linger among the dead remains purely relevant to roleplaying, as best fits one's gaming style.

For example: a Life Force 25 adventurer with a wisdom of 60 is able to stay safely for 17 days before stamina checks are needed to survive. A Life Force score of 25 on a scale of 1-20 translates to 5 (rounded down), while a wisdom of 60 on the same scale equals 12 (rounded down); 12+5 = 17.

A neophyte crewmember averages 11 days in limbo. Because of this risk, many skyship captains plot several stops in the physical world along a distant journey for the crews to regain their mental bearings. Recovery requires an hour per day of immersion in the netherworld. Those who'd required stamina checks to survive are psychically wounded and need a day for each 5% of lost ability ratings, along with clerical counseling or secluded meditation.

Limbo sickness is also symptomatic of extended stays among the departed. Visitors who spend more than half their "safe time" in the netherworld must make an intellect check. If this check fails, morbid apathy sets in, and the afflicted character adopts a somewhat haggard appearance, often staring mindlessly into the distance. Further intellect checks are required to react to approaching dangers. A slap in the face only works for some time before lethargic indifference returns. Recovery in the physical world cures limbo sickness (there are no known spells that can heal this disease). Spirits, deities, outer-planar creatures, demons, and the undead are immune to its effects. Odds epic heroes/villains may contract limbo sickness are limited to a maximum 10% regardless of ability scores.

Another problem with navigating the netherworld lies in the risk of missing an exit point. The ritual blessing of *seitha*, which enables a skyship to enter the world of the departed, determines the vessel's bearing. The ship's mate (its navigator) and the helmsman work closely together to maintain a correct path, taking into account the direction and strength of ethereal currents. Contrary winds and random encounters can delay or force a skyship off course. Tacking and detours past spectral storms may be needed to reach the correct destination. A skyship can ignore its intended exit point and emerge at any time, but where it would appear in physical space remains somewhat random—it could be inside a world or in a dangerous region of Soltan's ephemeris. No reliable correlation exists between the physical world and various points along a journey through limbo because the netherworld's fabric stretches and bends in ways that cannot be accounted for on the outside.

Ship's mate and helmsman are subject to skill errors—navigation through limbo is much more confusing than flying by the stars. Spirit or undead helmsmen are best in this respect and should receive a skill bonus in this environment. Limbo sickness also increases chances of error and poor decision-making. A critical navigation failure means the skyship is lost in limbo. A new dose of *seitha* is required at this time to reset navigation and find a new exit point.

The Undead: A fundamental difference exists between the *undead* and the *rightfully departed*. Until their world soul summons them or they become the servants of gods, spirits of those whose mortal lives have ended on the prime plane can fall prey to more powerful beings while awaiting their fates in limbo.

If they are defeated in combat, spirits vanish and reform elsewhere in the netherworld as a general rule. This, however, isn't true when demons or the undead are involved. These evil creatures are able to enslave, corrupt, and devour spirits. The *rightfully departed* become undead when made to enter the world of the living. Spirits do not possess this ability unless corrupted or empowered to do so by a greater will, such as divine lieges, demons, and powerful undead lords. A lifetime of evil can also corrupt a soul, and so can powerful curses, hatred, or a burning desire to address unfinished business.

Because they are able to divert large numbers of spirits from their normal life and death cycles, demons and the undead could wound a world soul. They'd weaken all natural life on a global scale if allowed to proliferate and to do as they please. Certain outer-planar monsters may also find a way into limbo, prey upon spirits there, and consume them entirely, achieving the same result. Obliteration, corruption, and subjugation of spirits by the undead are all dutifully recorded in the relevant worlds' *Ætherian Scrolls*.

The undead are an odious aberration in Soltan's ephemeris. They largely remain in the physical world to prey on the living. Undead who enter Calidar's limbo can become masters of the dead easily enough, hated tyrants for most or acclaimed saviors for others. While uncorrupted spirits remain under the control of an undead lord, they cannot rejoin their world soul when their time comes. The undead often seek the most corrupt of spirits first, as the latter are easier to sway from their path to redemption. When the undead are destroyed or otherwise put to rest, their spirits reappear in the netherworld, where they begin a new birth cycle, possibly facing incarceration in *seitha*. The greatest of undead lords and demons are powerful enough to represent a threat to the gods.

This is a critical challenge in Calidar's universe, as the undead continually scheme to steal spirits from limbo, effectively draining energy from the world souls. If left unchallenged long enough, the undead can destroy worlds. The gods, whose magical powers derive from the world souls, know this all too well. This explains why most divine pantheons retain at least one deity whose sphere of interest concerns death. They usually seek to keep the affairs of limbo in good order, and therefore object to undead wrongdoing there. Priors and epic heroes can be summoned to counter undead depredations. Divine servants can also act as hunters on behalf of their gods. Their vast territory includes the netherworld, Ambrosia, the ethereal, and the outer planes. In the world of the living, the gods send instead Incarnates (see *Godly Trappings*, page 213) to dispatch specific foes, including the undead.

Death Among Gods

The world soul provides the primordial vitality for gods to merely exist. Mortals who honor them provide consciousness, thought, and power. Without followers, deities become dormant. During this period, the link between gods and their world soul can be severed, effectively killing them. While dormant divinities can be revived at a later time when new followers adopt their forgotten cults, deceased gods cannot. Dormant gods can be slain by epic heroes/villains, powerful monsters, divine spirits, demons of rascal or arch-fiend status, and demigods. Living gods can only be slain by:



- Another god
- A demigod of temporal or paragon status (see Table 23)
- A hierarch (when empowered by a liege—see *Divine Servants*, page 211)
- Divine servants (when under the command of and in the presence of an empowered hierarch, a demigod, or a divine liege)
- An archfiend (see *Demons*, page 215)
- Rascals (when under the command of and in the presence of an archfiend)
- A spirit lord of the Dread Lands
- Powerful monsters of a divine nature (see *Ambrosia and Other Planes*, page 6)

A demigod can be slain by epic heroes/villains, undead beings, demons, divine servants, and magical creatures with at least half as much Life Force (individually), or any creature armed with a godly artifact able to slay deities. When a deity truly dies, all followers sense the catastrophe. They know their god has been killed. For the casual faithful, this hardly is an issue—many other gods are available to whom one may pray. For the pious followers, the event is more damaging, but most Calidarans live in monolatrous or polytheistic societies, and many will turn to other cults eventually. Gods may accept their faiths in exchange for adopting the new clergies' philosophies. Proof of faith will often be demanded along the way.

Zealots and priors, however, do face an insurmountable problem: they've forever lost the powers associated with their cults. Gods may contact abandoned priors, those they feel could best serve their divine interests, and accept them in their temples. A time for learning is needed, after which climbing up a new temple hierarchy and earning spiritual powers will be facilitated until the priors' losses have been fully recovered. The same regard extends to valuable zealots whose dispositions are open to the ways of a new god. Some who aren't so fortunate become mad hermits drawing their powers directly from the world soul. Others leave on a quest to redeem their bitter loss. They may succeed in causing the ascension of a new deity, one standing as the "son of" or the "daughter of" the late god (likely the alias of an opportunistic deity). Alien priors may come through the so-called Vortex (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 63). This divine adoption process applies to them as well, especially if an alter-ego of their past spiritual patron does not exist in Calidar's universe.

The passing of gods, although possible, remains exceedingly rare. Disputes between deities could result in outright wars between them and their divine servants, and their eventual deaths. Many ancient divinities have become forgotten by all during the past several thousand years. Their dormant remains still lie hidden in Ambrosia or elsewhere.

There is a more sinister aspect to divine death. Those who slay gods inherit some of their powers, at least the part that came from the world soul. It acts as a spare "life," should the slayer suffer an untimely end later on. When this happens, the slain deity is reborn shortly afterward, physically and in the minds of mortal followers. If there are no followers, then the deity's spare Life Force is retained by the world soul until such time mortal worshipers can revive their spiritual patron. Such an outcome demands an epic hero's legendary quest to rally followers. When one god slays another, part of the fallen deity's faithful may also submit to the victorious cult, since it seems to have proven itself the greater one.

Dormant Gods

The hidden tombs of resting deities lie mostly in Ambrosia. Lost temples or ruined bas-reliefs may refer to these lost deities, unless affected by a *Spell of Erasing*. Ancient gods of the gnomes are therefore very hard to uncover, if at all possible. Others may still be found, usually as the end goal of a quest—such as those of Taneth still awaiting their revival by cults of Nakhem in the Fringe. This category also includes a plethora of godlings whose cults were defeated during Nicarea's expansion on Munaan, and spiritual patrons of lost civilizations whose remains lie buried in the Dread Lands and elsewhere in Soltan's ephemeris.

Deities do not become dormant instantly and without warning. It is often a slow demise reflecting the dwindling numbers of their followers or the fall of their divine lieges, which can be witnessed. Demigods become dormant as well if their sponsors do, or if they perish. Some choose to lie by the sides of their former sponsors. Others consume the last of their godly energy to better hide their resting places, and protect them with magic or creatures bound to them (undying monsters, constructs, demons, and undead beings). Approaching the grave of a dormant divinity never is simple or safe, even for epic heroes. Yet, it may be rewarding if they succeed.

Certain gods may have elected a resting place outside their magical realms, especially if their entire pantheons had been headed toward extinction, and their domains were at risk of becoming corrupt or ruined entirely. A grave hidden in the Ambrosian is much harder to track down. Some fallen deities may have concealed their graves on other planes, including the physical world from which they once drew their primal energy.

Godly Trappings

This final chapter introduces spirits dwelling in Ambrosia, from humble servants of the gods to nefarious archfiends, with their game abilities. It also details four divine cabals regrouping diverse deities sharing the same mindsets and secret interests. Last but not least come the sects and brotherhoods of devout priors, flying knights, demon hunters, sinister slayers, and other colorful pawns of Calidar's pantheons for each of the Great Caldera's realms.

Denizens of Ambrosia

Divine Servants

Gods enjoy the ability to retain in their service the best of their past followers. Taken from limbo before they are called to rejoin the world soul, these spirits remain at the side of their spiritual patrons to serve them in the Ambrosian or in their magical domains (the Briarwoods, Holmring, Asgard, etc.). They remain there indefinitely or until banished, destroyed, or their lieges are killed (if a deity goes dormant, so do its servants). Servants banished or defeated in combat typically return to limbo to resume their existences there and meet their final fates (see *The Netherworld, page 207*).

Divine servants are spirits who, during their lifetimes, best served their patron deities. These include deceased priors, zealots, a few pious followers, and monsters who qualify as any of those just described. Epic heroes who've met an untimely end are almost always selected to serve their patron deity. A divine servant's ethos most likely corresponds to its related deity's, although some flexibility exists to accommodate the truly devoted. Gods will not, however, choose spirits whose philosophies are diametrically opposed to their own. Neither are the casual faithful and unrepentant heathen often heard of as servants of any deity. "Lifeless" creatures such as magical constructs cannot become divine servants unless gods created them. Only gods of death can retain undead beings in their service, and always under strict conditions, such as not preying on *seitha* or the Life Force of other beings unless ordered to do so. Malevolent deities may also retain demons if they originally were loyal epic villains. These creatures can be bound permanently to serve. Other demons can be forced to submit; their terms of service are typically limited in time or subject to a specific quest.

Depending on the pantheon or the deity's personal "style," servants may retain their original appearance and have access to some or all of the abilities that defined them in their past lives. Others may adopt forms more appropriate to the domains in which they serve: merry pirates, winged guardians, valkyries, mighty beasts, lemures, manes, etc. Some simply grow ethereal wings, others horns and cloven hooves, or take entirely different looks somewhere between heavenly and monstrous. Spirits of human-like beings usually retain their facial traits, regardless of their final physical shapes. Their original personalities may prevail, but servants do not always remember their past lives. Though they were disembodied spirits in the netherworld, they become tangible after their ascension to their liege's domain. Defined as neither alive nor dead (much less *undead*), divine servants are *undying*. Like epic heroes, they do not age, but unlike them, they do not require notoriety among mortals to endure.

Table 19. Divine Servants

Abilities	Celestial	Empyreal	Eternal	Hierarch
Life Force (%)	14+6	31+12	50+18	100+24
Size (feet)	7'	8'	9'	10'
Movement: *walking* *swimming* *flying*	120' (40') 180' (60') 240' (80')	150' (50') 210' (70') 270' (90')		180' (60') 240' (80') 300' (100')
Teleport (times/day)	2	3	4	at will
Armor Rating (%)	AR30	AR45	AR60	AR75
Physical Attacks	Fists x2 or 1 weapon		Fists x2 or weapon x2	
Physical Damage	Fists: M+2 or by weapon +2	Fists: 2M+4 or by weapon +4	Fists: 2Hi+6 or by weapon +6	Fists: 3VH+8 or by weapon +8
Special Abilities	Spells and *all* special abilities available to priors of the cult, plus two *Divine Favors* (see Table 10). Require neither air, nor food, nor water, nor sleep to survive. Divine servants are never surprised, possess empathic abilities, and can commune with hierarchs and divine lieges. Eternals and hierarchs strike first at the beginning of a battle vs. non-divine foes.			
Exorcise/Repel Undead	n/a	as priors with comparable Life Force		
Call Other (%)	n/a	50	70	90
Regeneration (per hour)	10%	20%	30%	40%
Defense checks	as priors with comparable Life Force			
Basic Immunities	All mind-affecting attacks (such as magical fear, sleep, charms, possession), non-magical weapons, diseases, acid, poison (unless of divine nature), paralysis (and all similar powers), energy drain (and most magic of necromantic nature), and all netherworld effects. Sustain half-damage from breath weapons (quarter damage with a defense check).			
Magic Immunity (%)	25	40	55	70
Min. Int. & Wis. (%)	56+	67+	78+	89+
Philosophy/Per.	As the original mortal creatures			
Morale Rating (%)	MR67	MR75	MR83	MR92



Table 19 suggests game statistics for human-like servants. Referees are encouraged to adjust these numbers for monster-shaped beings to reflect their sizes, number and type of attacks, whether they have special attacks, and so on. Any combat weapons used are always magical and their minimum damage can exceed that of their natural attacks. Considered magical, natural attacks are effective against incorporeal beings and creatures immune to non-magical weapons. Intellect and wisdom can be no less than the original mortal creature's.

Hierarchs: They are the most exalted form of divine servants. Hierarchs act as envoys of the gods, their messengers, their most trusted agents, commanding generals of their warlike cohorts, and ubiquitous authorities among heavenly cadres. They are the epic heroes (or archvillains) of gods, standard bearers second only to demigods. Rare are those who aren't granted a personal device of great power (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 86). They typically only serve ascended peers of a pantheon, preferably greater gods.

Hierarchs are powerful enough to kill gods if their liege empowers them to do so. Lesser servants can only harm a hostile god when under command and in the presence of a hierarch, a demigod, or an ascended peer. Hierarchs are only vulnerable to magic and magical items wielded by beings with at least half as much Life Force, including epic heroes/villains, undead, demons, divine servants, magical creatures, gods, and demigods; this limitation does not apply if foes are empowered by a god or an archfiend, or if godly artifacts are involved.

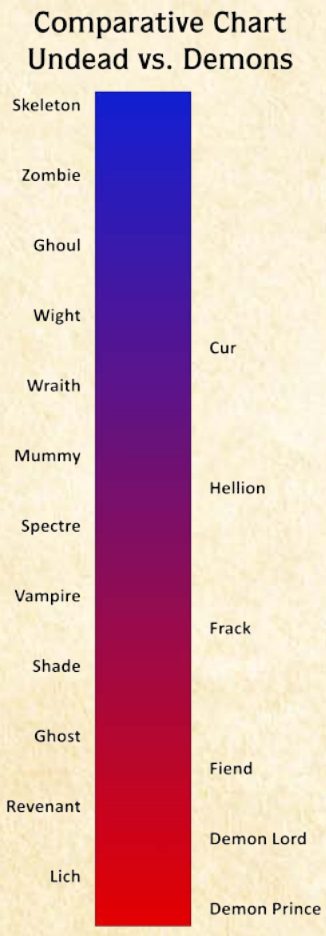
Movement: All divine servants can move at their normal rate when walking. Those without a natural affinity to water (as appropriate to their previous mortal shapes) move at half the rated speed when in water. Those without wings or a natural affinity to air or fire move at half the rated speed when flying.

Teleport: This power enables divine servants to teleport to any known place in the outer planes, limbo, and Ambrosia. This power does not enable a servant to teleport into the divine domain of another pantheon than their liege deity's. With their divine lieges' permission, hierarchs can create a gate to enter another plane, allowing anyone else present to come along.

Armor Rating: The numbers given here are for an unarmored servant. Any armor or magic worn will increase their AR. Referees are encouraged to adjust these ratings for creatures that bear thick hides, scales, or some natural armor during their mortal life.

Physical Attacks: Those listed here are intended for human-like servants. Adjust the number of attacks and damage to better reflect the form of the original mortal creatures.

Exorcise/Repel Undead: An exorcism is a ritual ridding a victim of a possessing spirit. Use mechanics from the chosen game system, or as follows—adjuration takes 1 hour for each of the possessing spirit's Life Force increments (in the chosen game system); at the end of the exorcism, the prior or divine servant makes an attempt to repel undead. If it succeeds, the possession is defeated. If it fails, another prior or servant with a greater status may try again. Repelling undead is a prior's ability to cause undead foes to flee (or to destroy them on sight). Use mechanics from the chosen game system. If none exist, give the possessing spirit or the undead a defense check with a substantial penalty if the divine servant or prior enjoys a greater Life Force. Demons are repelled as undead with a comparable Life Force.



Call Other: A divine servant sustaining at least 50% combat damage can summon another of a lesser kind, two *twice removed*, and four *thrice removed*. No less than two celestials can be summoned. For example, a hierarch can summon one eternal, two empyreals, and four celestials. By the same mechanics, an empyreal could call in two celestials for help. All called servants behave in the same manner if they possess this ability.

Regeneration: Divine servants can heal in the indicated percentage of combat damage per hour. Lost limbs and disfigurement are healed at the same rate.

Roles of the Servants: Given that the gods are not omnipotent, their servants' purposes are as varied as professions among mortals. A game master's imagination remains the limit. When not blissfully enjoying the eternal pursuit of heavenly happiness as rightful reward for their celebrated past deeds, servants handle lesser tasks when the gods are otherwise involved. Here are light-hearted examples of celestial bureaucracy:

- **Heavenly Switchboard:** Spirit-operators sift through unending masses of prayers and supplications to separate the wheat from the chaff, dutifully forwarding what requires a higher authority or another service.
- **Spells & Powers Dispatch:** Entry-level members bestow lesser magic and abilities upon followers; higher ups handle greater spells and *Divine Favors* (see *Rewards & Obligations*, page 187).
- **Board of Documentation:** Watchers and scribes observe the world of the mortals, duly taking note of who does well and who doesn't. This includes a record of temple offerings, requests, denials, fulfillments, and other grants. The "BOD" connects with all other areas of divine service.
- **Dweomer Support:** Former spellcasters examine cases of malfunctioning spells or godly artifacts, and request appropriate repairs or user compensation.
- **Psychopomp Department:** It regulates and enforces the selection of spirits to be taken from the netherworld based on records from the Board of Documentation. It is responsible for providing chosen ones with safe journeys to their master's domains (or to a place of atonement).
- **Templar Liaison:** It harvests the essence from miscellaneous temple offerings and sacrifices, and its appropriate delivery to the gods. Leftovers are transferred to the Calamities & Cataclysms Commission for redistribution.
- **Calamities & Cataclysms Commission:** Its mission is to bring spiritual succor to the faithful destitute. Its staff often handles catastrophic events afflicting the lands of mortals. The commission maintains a reserve of godly mana for such events, with duplicate records for the Board of Documentation.
- **Bureau of Reclamations:** It handles supplications to restore fallen heroes to life. Its answers are almost always a categorical "no," although some questionable requests may be forwarded up the chain of command.
- **Lost & Found:** Concerning itself with wandering spirits, it tasks, scrutinizes, and rewards divine servants, demonic bounty hunters, or faithful mortals to find missing entities and misplaced objects of godly concern.
- **Maintenance:** Handles repairs of and verifies the proper functioning of magical portals, domanial enchantments, utility constructs, and other defensive apparatus. Former engineers often oversee these activities.
- **Messengers' Hall:** This obscure service oversees the creation and operation of delivery methods within the mortal or spiritual domains; dispatch may involve servants, magic, or artificial constructs.
- **Domanial Labor:** Entry-level spirits carry out the bulk of ancillary duties to the gods and their guests, insuring comfort, convenience, and entertainment. High-ranking hierarchs may also benefit from this service.
- **Spiritual Outreach:** This organism regulates the career advancement of domanial spirits among the divine hierarchy based on merit and accomplishment, and oversees the "Spirit Servant of the Month" celebrations.
- **Cult & Preaching Affairs:** These spirits analyze the cult's expansion and the temples' proselytization efforts, and recommend promotional or corrective measures in association with Spells & Powers Dispatch.
- **Domanial Security:** Veteran spirits of godly wars often govern internal security. They are the first responders to breaches and intrusions, apostasy, curses, and corruption. They are warranted to investigate and pursue cases outside the confines of their lieges' domains (in the netherworld, the ethereal, the outer planes, and Ambrosia), and to commission Incarnates to operate in the world of mortals.
- **Customer Service:** A divine euphemism for the devoted cohorts accompanying their lords to war and guarding their realms. They can feast eternally at the sides of their spiritual patrons, retelling feats of glory and honoring celestial hosts in whichever ways are consistent with their cultures. Asgardian customer service is rumored among the best.

Incarnates



Gods do not often enter the world of the living, as their presence there might be seen as a provocation to other deities. A god can send instead an Incarnate for a specific mission, chosen from existing servants. Recently recruited servants with unfinished business may also be granted Incarnate status to finish their work, in particular if it was related to holy/unholy quests (or any other plot devised by the game referee). A request to raise someone from the dead can lead a spirit to return to life as an Incarnate, if circumstances warrant it. Such beings rejoin their masters' domains if they are destroyed or after they complete their tasks.

Table 20. Incarnates' Innate Powers (d20)

1	The Incarnate regenerates all physical damage at sunset or sunrise (or with some other specific event, such as a ritual offering, a sacrifice, touching a lake's or a river's waters, etc.).
2	A basic ability such as strength, intellect, stamina, or other, increases just past the very limit of mortal capability.
3	Roll 1d6: 1-2. The Incarnate only sustains half damage from spell effects; 3-4. Is immune to non-magical damage; 5-6. Is immune to a form of attack—roll 1d10: 1. Fire; 2. Cold; 3. Water; 4. Earth; 5. Air; 6. Electricity; 7. Poison; 8. Acid; 9-10. Certain weapons (roll 1d6: 1-2. Crushing; 3-4. Piercing; 5-6. Hacking/slashing).
4	The Incarnate moves at twice the normal movement rate OR is never hampered by vegetal growth, sticky webs, and any other magical effects intended to slow or immobilize.
5	Once per day, the Incarnate can transfer some or all damage between creatures within a 15' radius, including him/herself. The number of creatures receiving damage can never be less than those who suffered the original wounds. Damage is averaged among those receiving the wounds, healing the beneficiary/beneficiaries the same amount. Unwilling participants are allowed a defense check if death would result.
6	The Incarnate radiates a 15' radius aura of protection repelling incorporeal foes or a type of creature designed by the referee, OR the Incarnate obtains the loyal services of a monstrous creature, so long as the Incarnate does not intentionally harm the creature or makes no effort to protect it.
7	If desirable, the Incarnate may either (roll 1d6): 1. Rust ferrous objects when touched; 2. Rot organic objects; 3. Wither plants; 4. Summon a crawling mass of bugs; 5. Freeze liquids within 15' radius and cover surfaces with frost; 6. Cause fear on sight. As an alternative, an Incarnate may undo all of the above at will.
8	The Incarnate has a 20% chance of resisting mortal magic, either from spells cast directly at the Incarnate or from others cast nearby.
9	The Incarnate's attacks, whether inflicted with an open hand or some mundane weapon, are always considered magical in nature and at least sufficient to harm creatures relevant to the quest.
10	When touching a hated foe, the Incarnate can (roll 1d4): 1. Drain a foe's energy (as appropriate to the chosen game system), 2. Reduce a basic ability (strength, stamina, personality), 3. Cause a disease, 4. Inflict a withering wound. The Incarnate can reverse the selected effect, if desired.
11	The Incarnate is able to detect lies, illusions, traps, and secret passages.
12	The Incarnate can only be harmed with spells and (roll 1d10): 1. Bronze; 2. Copper; 3. Silver; 4. Gold; 5. Obsidian; 6. Ivory; 7. Bone (of a specific creature); 8. Jade; 9. Araldium; 10. Wooden stake in the heart.
13	If destroyed, the Incarnate can rematerialize up to nine times in the world of the living during the next full moon and resumes its assigned quest. Also, roll 1d12 for an additional innate power at each occurrence.
14-18	Roll a d12 twice for two innate powers, ignoring duplicated scores.
19-20	Roll a d12 thrice for three innate powers, ignoring duplicated scores.

Table 21. Stigmata of the Incarnates

d20	Hallowed Marks	Unholy Stains
1	The Incarnate's skin is slightly silvery or golden, and never soiled with dirt, blood, or sweat.	Skin appears somewhat scaly or with imperfections (moles or small scars which seem to shift when observed).
2	A lock of the Incarnate's hair glows and flies away as a butterfly when his/her name is spoken.	A lock of the Incarnate's hair grows into a spider and crawls away when his/her name is spoken.
3	When in pain, the Incarnate cries tears of blood.	In anger, the Incarnate's eyes turn entirely (roll 1d6): 1. White, 2. Green, 3. Blue, 4. Red, 5-6. Black.
4	The Incarnate's breath brings small plants and insects back to life.	The Incarnate's breath curdles milk OR spoils varnish on furniture.
5	When singing, the Incarnate attracts small birds and furry critters which happily tweet and chatter along.	Singing causes small birds and furry critters to (roll 1d6): 1-2. Flee, 3-4. Fight one another, 5-6. Explode in small balls of fur or feathers.
6	Cabalistic writings on the Incarnate's skin seem to change as events unfold.	If squeezed, sickly buboes squirt (1d6): 1. Acid, 2. Spiders, 3. Flies, 4. Worms, 5. Darkness, 6. Miasma.
7	The Incarnate radiates a faint golden aura when praying.	A sense of despair pervades a chamber when the Incarnate prays.
8	A birthmark or a scar appears on the Incarnate's forehead when in presence of the spiritual patron's unveiled holy symbol.	
9	The Incarnate's body bears one or more small unhealing wounds.	The Incarnate's flesh bears one or more small monstrous faces.
10	The Incarnate is unharmed when walking barefoot on embers.	The Incarnate can safely swallow nails and broken glass.
11	The Incarnate can survive with as little as an ounce of food per day.	The Incarnate eats and drinks as much as his/her own weight daily.
12	When the Incarnate is introduced to newcomers, everyone involved seems to perceive faint echoes of a heavenly choir for a fleeting but glorious instant.	When the Incarnate is introduced to newcomers, everyone involved seems to perceive ominous whispers for a fleeting but disturbing instant.
13	The Incarnate walks on all surfaces as if weighing no more than a feather.	The Incarnate's footprints are those of a creature with cloven hooves pointing backward.
14	When gazing into a mirror, a glimpse of the Incarnate's home plane shimmers in the background.	The Incarnate produces no mirror reflection.
15-18	Roll a d12+2 twice for two stigmata, ignoring duplicated scores.	
19-20	Roll a d12 thrice for three stigmata, ignoring duplicated scores.	

Incarnates are granted a living body suitable to the world of mortals. This can take many shapes: a baby abandoned in the reeds by a river, progeny born to an extant family, a diabolically clever monkey, a mighty warhorse with an attitude, a sniveling snake with sinusitis, a monster, a demon, the original character at the time of his/her death, etc. Memory of their very last identities may or may not be available, or may emerge after some time. Incarnations are rarely conscious of their true natures, but clues and dreams will guide them through their new lives until they meet

their final fates. They may, along the way, piece together who they are. The parents may or may not be aware of a child's divine nature.

Their Life Force and general abilities can be those of their previous mortal forms. Incarnates are living beings with innate powers (see Table 20) which manifest themselves the first time they are needed to survive or to complete their missions. Their appearance does not necessarily betray their origins, although certain divination spells may reveal their true nature. Birthmarks (either hallowed marks or unholy stains depending on their ethos—see Table 21) are in force since their entrance into the land of mortals. A game referee should assign or create new innate powers and stigmata directly, as best fits an Incarnate's quest, ethos, culture, or personal history. The following two charts provide examples with random chances if they are needed. When multiple choices are available, pick one (or roll for it randomly) and ignore the others.

Scions of the Cult

It may be that a divine servant is the recipient of prayers from the world of the living. For example, monarchs in their mausoleums may still be revered long after their deaths; heads of great noble houses and merchant dynasties may be honored through private family shrines; the memories of endearing artists and of those who distinguished themselves for their fabulous deeds may engender manifestations of gratitude and reverence. Though they do not necessarily see them as gods, mortals still think of some who passed as spiritual protectors and guides. Servants in this situation receive from their mortal followers a trickle of energy coalescing into the form of a wondrous fruit which feeds their masters. It is said that a mortal eating such a fruit would be wholly healed of all wounds, diseases, infirmities and curses. On the other hand, a fruit intended for a malevolent god could be a violent poison to all but divine creatures, with no known antidote.

Gods may choose to impart some of their energy to these servants, delegating them to act as narrowly-focused proxies. In effect, they become heavenly scions exclusively associated with a particular bloodline, certain holidays, bridges, vineyards, castles, battle sites, cemeteries, hospitals, orders of monks or knights, small shrines, etc. Occasionally, their statues can be found in the sanctity of the liege's temples, standing in alcoves with a place to burn incense, light candles, ring a bell, clap hands, spin a wheel, or make offerings.

Scions are indissociable parts of the cult honoring their divine liege and, therefore, cannot be adopted entirely in place of their affiliated god (an exception to the rule barring zealots from alternate cults, though a scion does not command priors exclusively devoted to its faith). Spells and *Casual Benefits* can be granted through them on behalf of the divine liege (see *Rewards & Obligations*, page 185), however, the base chance of a casual prayer being heard is 10% (rather than 5%). They may also hear calls for help (5% base chance), and respond as their divine liege. A spiritual protector does not otherwise affect the ability to obtain *Divine Favors* from the patron god.

The only people benefiting from these improved odds must be directly related to the scion's original mortal form or actively involved with the object of veneration. For example: inheritors of a royal lineage, the sole surviving heir to a usurped title, blood relatives of a great household's ancestor, the keepers of a castle, a lone hero who vowed to defend a bridge, the family of a cemetery's caretakers, the abbot and faithful brethren of a monastery, knights in a chivalrous order, sinister members of an assassins' sect, etc. When no relatives remain or their faiths become extinct, the divine liege retrieves all imparted powers, and the proxy resumes his/her normal servant activities.

Career Advancement

As some servants do climb their pantheon's divine ladder, it is conceivable to run a campaign game where all player characters are spirits in a magical domain. This could be the continuation of a quest during which all heroes perished and were subsequently called to serve their liege(s) in the world beyond. As everyone knows: "death is only the beginning." This could be possible if the heroes either honored the same deity or deities of the same pantheon, in which case the heroes could be together once again. They would therefore continue their careers as if they were alive, regularly tallying their achievements to reach empyreal, eternal, or even hierarch status (provided the gaming experiment lasted this long). Their abilities would therefore be no less than those described for celestials. Such heroes could otherwise be returned to the world of the living, as Incarnates, to put an end to their unfinished business there. It isn't altogether impossible for a hierarch to become a demigod, thus opening up yet another path to godhood. This might entail a hierarch endowed as a scion of the cult, with a growing number of devout mortal followers. If this "nested-cult" grows enough, a divine liege may consider the option of elevating a hierarch to demigodhood in the same manner epic heroes and villains attain the same. Demigods could also conceivably request from other gods the transfer of divine servants who were former companions in life.

Demons

Demons can be some of the most powerful and evil creatures in Calidar's universe. For the most part, however, they provide convenient punching bags for warlike deities itching for a good fight. As demonstrated with many of the pantheons' mythologies, demon-bashing offers good story and adventure opportunities. They can serve a higher authority, command lesser beings to serve them, or live as rogue creatures wandering the outer planes. Many are weak enough that mortals can challenge them. Others are more of a contest for epic heroes and demigods to defy. At the top end, only divine peers can confront demon rulers.

There are many ways for demons to awake. Some were epic villains who took on bestial forms when enough people believed them accursed; it is one of the manifestations of Eternal Glory. Malevolent gods can turn their servants or their captives into demons permanently bound to serve them, or beat others into submission for a time. Undead lords who are powerful enough can become demons as well. Others yet were born from demon flesh. Referees would be within their rights to devise beings with demonic ancestry, having one forebear of mortal flesh and the other of demonic blood. Such people may retain one or more symptoms and abilities related to their sinister lineage.

Table 22 gives ballpark figures for demons' abilities (replace these statistics with those from the chosen game system if more convenient). Within each of the categories listed, these beasts can take any shape: human-like, animal headed with horns, bat wings, and forked tail, snakelike, or altogether monstrous. Referees are encouraged to alter abilities (such as the number and type of attacks) for monstrous shaped creatures. As a general rule, demons do not age, but they can be killed. The Life Forces of slain wretches and rascals are destroyed fully and do not ever rejoin their related world soul. Slain archfiends, on the other hand, turn into ashes still imbued with their Life Forces. Unique rituals can permanently dispose of these ashes—secrets only the felled demons know. Epic quests may unveil the proper rituals. In some equally mysterious ways, archfiends can be restored from these ashes to their former existence.

So-called *rascals* and *archfiends* can ascend as gods or demigods, as demonstrated in Caldwen's mythology, in which case they may retain their appearance and character, but not their demonic nature. Because enslaved spirits, demons, and the undead are no longer connected with the world soul, they cannot help their masters ascend—only the living faithful can accomplish this. Though they aren't undead, rascals and archfiends can control undead beings.

All demons can dwell in mortal lands, and are immune to the nefarious effects of the netherworld on the living. Demons are especially infamous for being able to enslave their victims, corrupt their natures, or devour their essence. When a demon destroys a victim, be it of mortal flesh or spirit, its essence is unable to depart. Instead, it becomes bound to the demon and must serve it to the best of its abilities. A mortal being therefore turns into an undead creature with a physical form. A spirit becomes corrupted and soon rises as an incorporeal undead. Certain people or monsters can voluntarily serve a demon out of fear, blackmail, or because they are profoundly evil. Finally, demons can devour the Life Force of their victims, either to heal their own wounds or to increase their powers. This enables weak demons to grow into more terrifying beasts over a long period of time. Devoured spirits are destroyed fully and never return to the world soul.

Wretches: These weaker demons are vulnerable to spells cast by common mortals and all magical weapons. Wretches generally do not keep slaves. They seek to eat all their captives, regardless of their Life Force. Gods and demigods destroy these minor demons rather than keep them in their service. Wretches are never able to harm a god, regardless of who or what commands them.

Rascals: These are the sorts of demons that malevolent gods may want to keep in their service. If left to their own devices, rascals devour their captives if it benefits their advancement, and retain the weaker ones as their slaves. Rascals control spirits they have corrupted. They can also impose their will upon rogue undead they defeat in combat; these foes submit if reduced to less than half their Life Force or if they fail a Morale check (as appropriate to the chosen game system). Rogue undead are those that demons did not create from enslaved spirits. Though rascals can call other demons, they cannot subjugate them. Rascals sustain only half damage from attacks by common mortals unless they use godly artifacts. They sustain full damage from attacks by epic heroes/villains, divine servants, gods and demigods; they also require magical weapons +2 or better. Rascals can only harm an ascended god when under the command of and in the presence of an archfiend.

Table 22. Demons of Calidar

Abilities		Wretches		Rascals		Archfiends	
		Cur	Hellion	Frack	Fiend	Lord	Prince
Life Force (%)		6+4	17+8	28+12	44+16	89+20	178+24
Size (feet)		5'	6'	8'	9'	15'	21'
Movement:	*walking* *swimming* *flying*	90' (30') 120'(40') 150' (50')		120' (40') 150' (50') 180' (60')		180' (60') 210' (70') 240' (80')	
Teleport		(only if called)				at will	
Armor Rating (%)		AR15	AR30	AR45	AR60	AR70	AR80
# of Physical Attacks		1 bite + 2 claws		1 bite + 3 others or 1 weapon		1 bite + 4 others or 2 weapons	
Physical Damage	Bite	2M	2Hi	3M+4	3Hi+4	4M+6	6Lo+8
	Claws	VL *each*	VL+1 *ea.*	M+2 *ea.*	2Lo+2 *ea.*	Hi+3 *ea.*	4VL+1 *ea.*
	Weapon	n/a		By weapon +6		By weapon +12	
Special Abilities		Spells and abilities of past mortal forms, if any. They can enslave, corrupt, and devour Life Force. Demons possess empathic abilities and can commune at will with their masters (if any). They require neither air, nor food, nor water, nor sleep to survive.					
Possession		n/a		1 individual at any single time		Up to 4 individuals at any time	
Shape Change		n/a				twice/day	
Regeneration		+1 LP per spirit devoured worth at least LF3					
Advancement		10	100	250	500	1,000	n/a
Call Other (%)		n/a	10	20	30	40	50
Defense checks		as monsters with the same Life Force rating					
Basic Immunities		All mind-affecting attacks (such as magical fear, sleep, charms, and possessions), non-magical weapons, diseases, poison (unless of divine nature), paralysis (and all similar powers), energy drain (and most magic of necromantic nature), and all effects of the netherworld on the living.					
Magic Immunity (%)		n/a	5	20	35	50	65
Minimum Int. (%)		33+	44+	56+	67+	78+	89+
Philosophy/Per.		Malevolent (predominantly instinctive)					
Morale Rating (%)		MR50	MR58	MR67		MR75 (or 100)	



Archfiends: These unholy tyrants seek to enslave in order to raise armies and rule dark dominions in the outer planes. In addition to spirits they corrupt, archfiends possess the ability to enforce their will upon rogue undead as well as lesser demons (see *Rascals,* earlier). Unless they were created by gods, demon lords do not submit to them, fighting to their deaths if cornered. Though demon lords may submit to demon princes, the latter never capitulate to any other being, seeing themselves as equals to gods. If an archfiend flees from a fight, all demonic and undead minions with half or more Life Force than their master's become free and escape at once, taking with them a share of enslaved spirits.

Archfiends are only vulnerable to magic and magical items wielded by beings with at least half as much Life Force, including epic heroes/villains, undead, demons, divine servants, magical creatures, gods, and demigods; this limitation does not apply if foes are empowered by a god or another archfiend, or if godly artifacts are involved. Such powerful demons typically wield one or more *personal devices* of great power (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 86). They and anyone accompanying them are able to enter Ambrosia. Archfiends are powerful enough to slay gods.

Life Force: Due to their nature, demons cannot benefit from healing spells. They must devour their victims to regenerate combat damage (see *Regeneration,* later). As a comparison, gods rate from LF 167+45 up to 278+55, with elemental rulers and godlike monsters of the outer planes ranking around 200-240 and great beasts of Ambrosia 300+.

Size: This rating is appropriate for human-like beasts. Adjust accordingly for other forms of demons.

Movement: All demons can move at their normal rate when walking. Divine servants without a natural affinity to water (as appropriate to their shapes) move at half the rated speed when in water. Those without wings or a natural affinity to air or fire move at half the rated speed when flying.

Teleport: This power enables an archfiend to teleport to any known place in the outer planes, limbo, Ambrosia, or the land of the living. Demons cannot teleport into a god's divine domain. Rather than teleport, archfiends can open a gate allowing anyone else present to follow them through.

Armor Rating: The numbers given here are for unarmored demons. Any armor or magic items worn will increase their AR.

Physical Attacks: Demons typically have one bite and multiple lesser attacks (claws, talons, spikes, horns, wings, tail, etc.) Some can otherwise attack once or twice with a weapon, generally of large size and magical.

Possession: Rascals and archfiends may possess the minds of slain foes. One imprudent enough to disturb an artifact or a personal device bound to a demon may also become possessed. It is considered a mind-affecting attack. A defense check will defeat an attempt, with a substantial penalty if the victim has less than half the demon's Life Force. As long as it concentrates, a possessing demon can see and hear through its victim, read its memories, and control what it says or does (short of ending its own life). A victim generally bears a random unholy stain (see Table 21, earlier). For best effect, spitting pea soup, slugs, or clouds of flies is always an option, so are levitation and telekinesis effects. Possession also enables the demon to drain one Life Force (rounded up) per day—when a victim runs out of Life Force, its spirit is considered devoured. All demons are vulnerable to exorcism. When an exorcism is in progress, a possessing demon can do nothing else but concentrate fully on the event, and respond in its own voice if challenged. As a matter of personal notoriety, a demon never willingly gives up a possessed victim. An entity can never attempt to possess the same victim more than once.

Shape Change: Archfiends can switch appearance twice a day to look like another creature or impersonate another individual.

Regeneration: All demons can heal combat wounds and lost body parts at the rate of +1 life point (or whatever the lowest amount of damage is in the chosen game) per devoured spirit. A victim's total Life Force must rate at least 3% (or that of a neophyte adventurer).

Advancement: A demon earns +1 permanent Life Force each time it devours the indicated number of victims. For example, if a cur devours 110 spirits, it becomes the equivalent of a Hellion. Devoured spirits have to possess at least half as much Life Force as the devouring demon's to count toward advancement. In other words, demons cannot feed on ants as a source of relevant Life Force.

Call Other: A demon losing half or more of its life points may attempt to call in another lesser kin (though a demon prince cannot call a demon lord). All those summoned act in the same fashion if they possess this ability. Rascals do not control called demons. Archfiends generally call demons already in their service.

Demigods

Demigods stand as the hyphen between Ambrosia and the world of the living. As such, they are entitled to dwell in the prime universe, although their actions there are most likely scrutinized by gods of one or more pantheons. Their powers aren't as extensive as those of their ascended peers. Three different tiers are suggested here. Initiates are relatively "young" demigods who recently earned their status and have yet to prove themselves by some feat in the Ambrosian. Temporals are demigods who have already demonstrated their worth, and who may have gained respect from other gods of the pantheon. Paragons are more senior demigods whose existence exceeds five centuries. These deities are somewhat similar to divine servants. Only temporals and paragons can ascend as peers of a pantheon. Initiates dying in the service of their liege most likely become middle-ranking divine servants instead (empyreans or eternals, as appropriate). Temporals and paragons killed under circumstances other than serving their liege may also become mid- to high-ranking divine servants. Other general abilities are suggested here:

Communion: Demigods understand, speak, read, and write the languages of their followers. Casual faithful, pious followers, and fanatic zealots can commune with their demigod, regardless of its location.

Divine Might: When receiving a direct command from the demigod of their cult, its followers must obey. This ability can send adventurers on a quest.



Travel: Demigods benefit from instantaneous transportation (and summoning) only at the whim of their divine lieges. They must otherwise use their own spells for this purpose.

Godly Impunity: Common mortals have no means of affecting demigods, other than beliefs from vast numbers of pious followers. Demigods are only vulnerable to magic and magical items wielded by beings with at least half as much Life Force, including epic heroes/villains, undead, demons, divine servants, magical creatures, and ascended gods; this limitation does not apply if foes are empowered by a god or an archfiend, or if godly artifacts are involved.

Appearance: Demigods can adjust their natural size, general appearance, and voice to match mortals among whom they wish to dwell. Within a friendly pantheon, most gods adjust their appearance out of courtesy to each other.

Table 23. Demigods

Abilities	Initiate	Temporal	Paragon
Life Force (%)	78+20	111+30	144+40
Size (feet)	9'	12'	15'
Movement: *walking* *swimming* *flying*	150' (50') 210' (70') 270' (90')	180' (60') 240' (80') 300' (100')	210' (70') 270' (90') 330' (110')
Teleport (times/day)	at will		
Armor Rating (%)	AR55	AR70	AR85
# of Physical Attacks	Fists x2 or 1 weapon	Fists x2 or weapon x2	Fists x3 or weapon x3
Physical Damage	Fists: 2Hi+6 *each,* or by weapon +6	Fists: 3Hi+8 *each,* or by weapon +8	Fists: 3VH+10 *each,* or by weapon +10
Special Abilities	Spells and *all* special abilities available to priors of the cult, plus two *Divine Favors* from the demigod's divine liege (see Table 10). Require neither air, nor food, nor water, nor sleep to live. Demigods are never surprised, possess empathic abilities, and can commune with their followers and divine lieges. Demigods strike first at the beginning of a battle vs. non-divine foes.		
Exorcise/Repel Undead	as priors with comparable Life Force		
Call Other (%)	Three times a day, demigods have a 90% chance of summoning any single being that has embraced their faith, such as pious followers, zealots, priors, epic heroes/villains, divine servants, demons and other monstrous beings.		
Regeneration (per hour)	30%	40%	50%
Defense checks	as priors with comparable Life Force		
Basic Immunities	See *Godly Impunity* earlier. All mind-affecting attacks (such as magical fear, sleep, charms, possession), non-magical weapons, diseases, acid, poison (unless of divine nature), paralysis (and all similar powers), energy drain (and most magic of necromantic nature), and all netherworld effects. Sustain half-damage from breath weapons (quarter damage with a defense check).		
Magic Immunity (%)	55	70	85
Min. Int. & Wis. (%)	83+	89+	92+
Philosophy/Per.	As the original mortal creatures		
Morale Rating (%)	MR75	MR83	MR92

Godly Cabals

In many respects, despite their greater knowledge, fantastic abilities, and nearly ageless existence, Calidaran gods still behave like the mortals who created them. They experience fears and expectations much akin to those of their temporal followers. Deities sometimes overcome their natural suspicions and dislikes to work toward common goals. Mutual protection is another great incentive to prevail over differing races and philosophies.

Membership to and activities within other-worldly cabals are tightly held secrets, as many gods within the same pantheons often disagree on priorities and strategies. Among divine circles, much relies on personal influence, discrete suggestion, and skillful persuasion—if not odious blackmail. Force is the very last resort, especially as regards handling mortals.

Unless noted otherwise, mundane followers and their priors remain entirely unaware of godly cabals and their schemes. At best, a trusty hierarch may be aware of a liege's secrets. Divine patrons purvey no more than hints to priors, epic heroes, and archvillains about a course of action favoring their cabals' interests. Faith among the clergy does not demand justification, but rather loyal and diligent service, however mysterious their lords' ways.

One of the largest cabals has already been described at length: the *Calderan faiths*. Its role is ostensibly to promote the expansion of its members' cults in the Great Caldera. Less apparent is their desire to keep non-members out of their cabal. Four other societies also exist, though more can be created.



The Fellowship of Watchers

Goals & Strategies: Members look for manifestations of Ghüle's arrival. This consists of tasking divine servants and mortals to travel the faraway reaches of Soltan's ephemeris and search for signs of the evil world's coming. Their efforts also concern current or abandoned lairs hiding clues about beastly patrons, their natures, names, motivations, and powers. These may be unveiled from carvings, forbidden artifacts, or better yet, captured priors.

It is also the purview of the Watchers' mortal agents to help prepare their ranks against coming invasions. Alas, most are viewed as prophets of doom, often ridiculed when not run out of towns by those who ought to know better. Though Ghüle's hordes have appeared twice already since the fourth century, most Calidarans dismiss the odds of a third coming, like people knowing a volcano is liable to awake at any time, and yet continuing their lives as if it never will. Common responses include: "Ghüle? Never heard of it." "I'll deal with that tomorrow!" "They shall not return for they've learned their lesson." "Our fleets are mighty! We'll show them!" "The gods will protect us!" "Come on, you old windbag, these are ancient stories! Nobody believes them." "Ghouls? Just send the priors already!" "It's not my problem." "Surely you jest." "Don't give the lord a reason to raise our taxes!" "Who sent you and what have you done with my wife?" "I'm a pacifist! Give diplomacy a chance!" "Lizard on a stick! Lizard on a stick! Get yours before the world ends!" "Oyez, oyez! Read the latest news in the *Teosopolitan Inquirer!*" "Scaremongering will get you nowhere!" "Repent for your sins: save your soul and make a donation to the temple." "Don't get caught without your holy insurance scroll!"

On a more subtle level, members suspect that Ghülean gods manipulate mortal pawns to gain information about Calidar's universe. They fear that, in some century past, these monstrous entities might have even created aliases to infiltrate the ranks of the gods themselves. Because of this terrifying possibility, the Watchers remain somewhat suspicious of each other, spying on fellow members as if they could tell who among them might be a traitor. All have submitted to *geises* and magical pledges to ensure their discretion and loyalty, yet, doubt still gnaws at their divine innards. What

The Watchers

Durandil: Alfdaín, elven god of seas and fishermen Pg. 26
Kjorûn Gatekeeper: Araldûr, dwarven demigod of peace and protectors Pg. 53
Belgomeer Fablesong: Belledor, gnomish god of bards and seers Pg. 69
Samaz: Caldwen, Gandarian god of seas and fishermen Pg. 102
Makapono-Truesight: Meryath, Talikai demigod of justice and revenge Pg. 130
Odin: Nordheim, Norse god of time and wisdom Pg. 144
Thaëldar: Phrydias, Bongorese god of the sky, air, and winds Pg. 172

they fear most is the unknown. It would be an even greater conundrum if another god found them out and requested membership. Instant paranoia would be guaranteed. The suggestion that perhaps members from Lao-Kwei and Draconia ought to be associates produced divine shivers; the topic was promptly forgotten.

Internal Relations: Belgomeer is the most outspoken of the lot, often taking center stage when the gods meet. Fiery and flamboyant, he often jabs at the quieter and more brooding members, in particular Durandil and Samaz, whom he sees as a pair of cold fish. Kjorûn and Makapono respect the manner in which Belgomeer ascended and, therefore, often side with the gnomish deity. All three favor finding ways to infiltrate the Ghülean plane and learn more about their foes at the source, possibly creating their own aliases there. Samaz and Durandil prefer a more cautious approach, unveiling all there is in their own universe before boldly venturing into the monsters' den. In true dwarven fashion, Kjorûn has pledged his axe and immortal life to help stop Ghüle from reaching Soltan's ephemeris. Makapono's motivations include leaving no stone unturned as regards Meríon the Great's killer. He believes that Ghüle could possibly have had something to do with the king's death, and therefore wishes to investigate further. He is the most willing to explore Ghüle to settle the question, provided the gods of Calidar had a way to reach this alien universe, which they don't at this point. Odin and Thaëldar, the cabal's two most senior gods, remain the most pragmatic. Both prescribe patrolling the skies, preparing mortals for war, and promoting the construction of fleets among the followers. Odin has been the most successful in the latter respect, especially with the Wayfarers, who've fought massive battles in the Fringe with the monstrous invaders on occasions separate from the two experienced by Calidar. Since Odin remains quiet about his prophetic visions, Thaëldar tends to be viewed as the fellowship's speaker, the one who decides in the absence of a consensus.

Effect on Followers: Watchers may temporarily switch the abilities they grant their priors in order to better assist mortals directly supporting the cabal's interests. For example, a prior of Thaëldar facing peril at sea could have abilities that Samaz would grant his own clergy rather than Thaëldar's. None of their clergies know of the fellowship. They regard such mysterious changes in their priors' abilities as miraculous and a sign of great favor from their spiritual patron.



The Hallowed Seven

Goals & Strategies: The aims of this cabal are to defuse potential conflicts between pantheons, between realms, and between Calidar's moons. Their ideal is concord and prosperity in Soltan's ephemeris, with an eye toward further expansion into the Dread Lands to accommodate a larger population. Expansion should take place in a peaceful and progressive manner to minimize damage to the world soul, following the idea that higher sapient population living in harmony should make Calidar even more powerful (therefore benefitting the gods themselves). Theirs is an abstract and somewhat cosmic view of hegemony by sapient races over the forces of nature. For these goddesses' vision to come true, depredations resulting from growing civilization must be reduced as much as possible, while stamping out violence. Wars are seen as counterproductive to this effort.

The Hallowed Seven do not include or welcome any gods from Draconia, Lao-Kwei, or the Fringe (except the gods honored in Nordheim) because they aren't directly connected to Calidar and its moons. Members of the circle, called *Asters,* rely on hierarchs and mortal pawns to ferret out potential conflicts and intervene as mediators to help solve them before violence erupts. As a last resort, heroes sometimes find themselves in the midst of

Asters of the Coven

Melrenwë: Alfdaín, elven goddess of the Meruín Pg. 33
Ghedrun Evercraft: Araldûr, dwarven goddess of light and science Pg. 50
Thaleera-the-Wanderer: Belledor, gnomish goddess of luck and wit Pg. 64
Celendine: Belledor, fellfolk goddess of water and fertility Pg. 78
Alana-Lifebringer: Meryath, Talikai goddess of water and fertility Pg. 122
Frigga: Nordheim, Norse goddess of the sky, air, winds Pg. 152
Myriël: Phrydias, Bongorese goddess of water and fertility Pg. 179

an impending battle, trying to reason with both sides moments before the initial clash. They are the ones riding into adventure to thwart despicable schemes before they spark a war. *Asters* are crime fighters, bent on restoring justice when it has fallen by the wayside, or preventing order from being mercilessly trampled for the sake of personal gain or senseless pride. To further aid their agents among the living, *Asters* use their personal influence among their respective pantheons to oppose chaos and discourage warlike behavior for the benefit of diplomacy.

Internal Relations: Melrenwë supports the notion that elves ought to spearhead any concerted expansion into the Dread Lands, and that their way is best to live in harmony with nature. Concerned that the elven goddess is merely favoring Alorean interests at everyone else's expense, Ghedrun opposes the elven solution. She prefers a more rational approach involving better understanding of the mechanics triggering hostility in the Dread Lands as the key to harmonious development. Celendine follows her own agenda, centered on educating the tribal fellfolk in the ways of Belledor. She trusts neither Melrenwë nor Ghedrun. True to her own philosophy, Thaleera works to combine the ideas of Melrenwë, Ghedrun, and Celendine, so that all may benefit. The gnomish goddess is concerned about disputes among the circle and often acts as the cabal's speaker and arbiter. Alana favors sending missionaries to the tribal villages, to learn more about their customs and their spiritual connection with the Dread Lands; settlers could then adopt tribal ways to live among them. Frigga believes the Fringe has greater potential for settlement than the Dread Lands. The Fringe doesn't fight back (usually), and it needs people to hold its myriad tiny worlds. What she doesn't/cannot say is that the Fringe needs a larger population to hold back Ghüle and protect Calidar. This position has somewhat marginalized her standing in the circle. Myriël favors using trade and art as a way to bring the fellfolk tribes to appreciate what the Great Caldera has to offer. First, give things of beauty from the realms to educate the tribes and grant them knowledge. Then follow with trade to bring them wealth. In so doing, the tribes will welcome the Calderan presence as well as benefit from it.

Effect on Followers: Followers of *the Hallowed Seven* receive a protection contingent upon triggering the ire of the Dread Lands, whether at sea, on land, or in the air. A magical shell forms around them, their associated companions, and their skyship (if involved), whisking all to the safety of a micro plane. The shell remains until the forces of nature calm down, at which point the beneficiaries are returned to their original location. This power can only be triggered once per adventure for an entire party. Though involved, clergies are unaware of *the Hallowed Seven*'s existence, their ranks are generally more interested than those of other temples in promoting and supporting adventurous forays into the Dread Lands (or the Fringe, for Frigga).



The Gallows

Goals & Strategies: This small brotherhood is rooted in bitterness and desire for revenge as much as the need to regain lost followers. Its members, dubbed Hangmen (Hangwomen) of *the Gallows*, suffer from nostalgia of glorious days past. Their aim includes the revival of old faiths on Munaan and the weakening of the Nicarean Empire, if not its destruction as a single political entity. They generally oppose the spread of Teos/Soltan's faith on Calidar, beyond Ellyrion and Narwan. As a general rule, they also object to any foreign faiths growing within their Calderan bailiwicks (Caldwen, Meryath, and Phrydias).

The first and current stage of *the Gallows*' mission is to gain as much knowledge as possible about Nicarea's military and the internal powers of the empire's Inquisition. Their hierarchs may be involved, but the Hangmen are wary of risking such valuable assets. They prefer using mortal proxies instead, inspiring Calderan-born heroes to infiltrate imperial circles on Munaan, and gain the information they seek. Tasked in this manner, handfuls of unwitting mortals are eminently expendable for the sake of the greater good. Priors then share acquired knowledge through prayers or communion

The Hangmen & Hangwomen

Ashgaddon: Caldwen, Gandarian god of death and the underworld Pg. 95
Astafeth: Caldwen, Gandarian god of night, envy, and lust Pg. 96
Akuamakue: Meryath, Talikai god of magic Pg. 120
Kaimana: Meryath, Talikai goddess of seas and fishermen Pg. 126
Baëlyon: Phrydias, Bongorese god of war, conquerors, blacksmiths, metalworking Pg. 176
Oloroth: Phrydias, Bongorese god of earth, volcanoes, freedom, truth, sunlight Pg. 181

at their temples. The next stage is to weaken the empire or to divert its resources and attention elsewhere. If this succeeds, then the following step enables old faiths to be quietly revived among ancestral populations. The final goal is a general uprising on Munaan to strike down the empire, to reestablish the old kingdoms, and most importantly, to destroy the hated Nicarean clergy. There is no doubt that fanatical followers of Teos—of whom there are legions—will never go along with this development and that, therefore, a bloody repression will ensue. The Hangmen deliberately choose to ignore the grim conclusion of their plan, chalking it up to the unavoidable retribution for all the evils the Nicarean theocracy perpetrated upon the peoples of Munaan and Calidar. Ultimately, they seek to boost the numbers of their temporal followers (their own first), and those of their pantheon peers (eventually).

The Hangmen are mostly in agreement, rarely arguing or having cause to mistrust one another. The goal is clear. The end justifies the means. Therefore, the Hangmen have rolled up their divine sleeves, and focus on their given tasks.

Internal Relations: Ashgaddon stands as the speaker and arbiter of the cabal. His closest ally, Astafeth, looks for potential Nicarean traitors who could be turned, and weaklings susceptible to magical charms, possession, and blackmail.

Kaimana protects those who travel covertly to Munaan. Her chosen priors are expert smugglers and have become knowledgeable of Nicarean patrols around their moon, and of secure landing sites. Her favorite approach is to enable skyships to emerge from the netherworld under the surface of Munaani lakes, and hide there until the way out is clear. Akuamakue is devoted to "counter-espionage" on both Munaan and Calidar. It is aimed at ferreting out Nicarean spies from the ranks of those who serve the interests of *the Gallows*. He suspects something is wrong, as an increasingly growing number of his agents seem to have inexplicably vanished. He knows they aren't dead, yet they no longer commune. They remain hidden in a place he cannot see.

Baëlyon's agents focus on the Nicarean military, compiling information about imperial forces, their leaders, and their current activities. He often inspires his more fanatical followers to bring death upon the empire's most skillful strategists and field commanders, sometimes sacrificing themselves in the process. Oloroth is in charge of reconnaissance and cartography. His mortal pathfinders are the most active among agents of *the Gallows*, scouting cities, mapping out current-day Munaan, and keeping track of Nicarean inquisitors. In this respect, the clash of Kragean 8th 1512 (see CAL1, page 81) has earned Oloroth's undivided attention as a development with useful potential.

Unbeknownst to the Hangmen, Urthaala has uncovered *the Gallows*' existence while spying on Astafeth. A secret alias of Teos, she watches the Gandarian god's priors and their covert work. While her knowledge becomes Teos's, she also focuses on keeping Akuamakue in the dark. Captured agents are held in a living catatonic state, to prevent them from revealing what they know. Drug-induced ecstasy and dreadful torture follow, slowly bringing the victims into forgetful madness. Eventually, Urthaala sells them to the Vortex.

Effect on Followers: Priors who honor Hangmen of *the Gallows* have a greater chance of being heard during missions on Munaan or when acting directly against the hated Nicareans anywhere else. Whether praying for a *Casual Benefit* or *Calling for Help* (see *Rewards & Obligations*, page 186 or 198 respectively), a prior gains a +5% bonus to the odds of being heard while working for *the Gallows*.

The Pale

Goals & Strategies: The circle of *the Pale* groups a sinister bunch who believe that only one among the gods will eventually dominate or survive all others. Not surprisingly, these are some of the most nefarious deities of Calidar. Also known as *the Unholy Eight,* its members call themselves the *Reapers*. The process of slaying gods results in the victims' magical power being harvested, at least partially (see *Of War and Armageddon*, page 200).

One might question the logic of an association ultimately devoted to the destruction of all but one of its members. Evil gods see themselves as outnumbered, ostracized, ruled by despots, and therefore victims of the so-called "greater good"—*which isn't untrue*. The circle suggests Reapers should help each other cope with what they perceive as an inherently hostile and unfair hegemony. They do not see themselves as evil, but rather as *Keepers of the Truth* whose views aren't corrupted by weakness, hypocrisy, and fear. Though in the end, they will fight each other for supremacy, they agree that, until then, all their weaker-hearted nemeses should be the first to go. Thusly will the strongest of all gods rule a unified universe and be the one best suited to keep it safe.

The nature of Calidar's world soul favors constructive behavior. *The Pale* preaches instead destruction, which in the end will do more damage than good to the world soul and to the ability of a "Grand Lord" to defend it. The Reapers' evil is so deep that they are unable or unwilling to see this. Most only feel a burning desire for their instant of glory when they strike down their rivals. *The Hallowed Seven* are aware of a conspiracy revolving around the concept of a Grand Lord; the Reapers too sense a hidden will opposing theirs, which has become the primary focus of their angst. Members of one society do not known the identities of their counterparts. They veil their divine motivations and their influence on mortals. They rely on unrecognizable avatars and magical constructs to do their bidding. *The Pale* seeks war. *The Hallowed Seven* wish for peace and healing. Alas, evil is a hard thing to cure.

The Reapers

Ellorien: Alfdaín, elven god of death and Sòldor hegemony Pg. 29
Thraldûr Silvertongue: Araldûr, dwarven god of lies and chaos Pg. 58
Derrow Flickerhand: Belledor, god of magic and gnomish supremacy Pg. 71
Malva Darkbrow: Belledor, fellfolk goddess of winter Pg. 85
Avraoth: Caldwen, Gandarian god of skies, lies, and flies Pg. 97
Koanui: Meryath, Talikai god of war Pg. 128
Loki: Nordheim, Norse god of deceit and trickery Pg. 156
Anwë: Phrydias, Bongorese goddess of chaos, nightmares, necromancy, and deserts Pg. 173

Internal Relations: Loki was the instigator of *the Pale*. One at a time, he brought in each member, careful not to reveal himself in the process. Ellorien and Thraldûr are allies of fortune in their mutual dislike of Derrow Flickerhand. The gnomish god, however, enjoys an alliance with Malva Darkbrow. Avraoth keeps to himself, watches all others, and acts as *the Pale*'s eyes and ears. Koanui focuses on finding weapons to strike down Teos when the time comes, after he's had a chance to spread his own cult in Ellyrion. Anwë is his closest ally among Reapers. Other than unmasking *the Hallowed Seven*, *the Pale* awaits another catastrophe to befall Soltan's ephemeris, such as perhaps a Ghülean invasion. Should this happen, they will target weaker gods and contrive to have others blamed for their dark deeds.

Effect on Followers: Priors acting at the behest of *the Pale* only believe they are doing their divine liege's bidding. They aren't aware of the cabal's existence. They or those they send in their place retain a small amount of their victim's life points when they strike a killing blow. The gain is temporary, amounting to 10% of a victim's total life points (rounded up). The slayer's own total cannot be increased by more than 20%, the excess being ignored. These life points first regenerate existing combat damage; the remaining balance, if any, is then added to the slayer's total life points. Subsequent combat damage is subtracted from these extra points first. Extra points lost to combat damage cannot be healed. Gains over and above a slayer's own normal total otherwise last until the next dawn.



Sects & Brotherhoods

These associations group mortals under the authority of a grand master or a high prior. They are dedicated to a specific deity or concepts relevant to a specific pantheon.

Alfdaín: Rising Tide

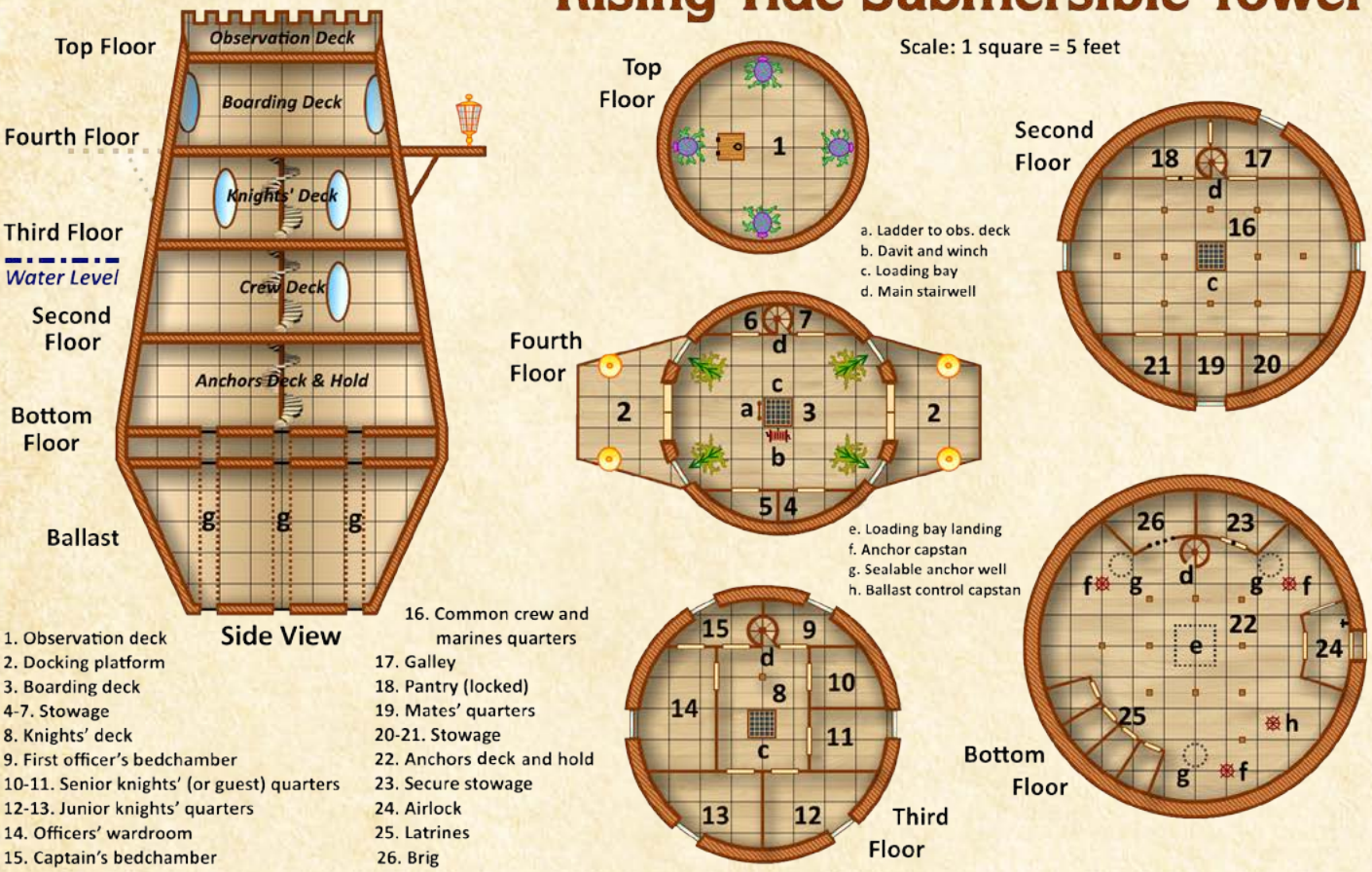
This order of sea knights honors Durandil. Its purpose is to spearhead the conquest of the Bay of Eyes. This small sea tucked between the shores of Alfdaín and Araldûr teems with aquatic monsters. In the absence of Dread Lands' influence within the Great Caldera, seafolk tribes spent many a century corralling the worst of creatures from the Sea of Phobos northward into the Bay of Eyes. Tribal warriors now guard the underwater straits between the two regions, relying on their shamans' powers to fend off marine beasts and foreign intruders. As a result of this strategy, horrific monsters began raiding elven and dwarven shores. The dwarves, uncomfortable at sea, prefer a defensive stance. Araldûr's response consists in coastal fortifications and heavily armed land patrols. The elves, adopting a more proactive strategy, called upon the Meruín to join a naval "crusade" under the command of the Rising Tide's grand master. Several offensives have been launched with some degree of success.

The knights established strongholds along shipping routes, above and/or below the surface. Meanwhile, Meruín elves built aquatic towns near the shores of Alfdaín. They rely on the Rising Tide's strongholds as their first line of defense. From there, the knights watch the sea, launch patrols beneath the surface, or gather crusaders for a foray into the dark when a den is found. That which spawns the worst of beasts remains untouched, however, lurking where the Bay of Eyes is deepest. None but the bravest dare venture into the abyss. Clad in studded sharkskin cuirasses, in enchanted suits of sea turtle shell armor, or even in sea dragon scale mail, and armed with harpoons and giant jellyfish stingers, knights search the marine gloom for the monstrous progenitors. They also carry spring-loaded grapnels to board hostile ships or immobilize large prey.

In addition to strongholds, the knights also deploy a fleet of submersible towers. After being towed into position, they are anchored and, using ballast tanks, winched well below or back to the surface. Entrances are magically sealed from inside. The towers' enchantment generates all air needed to breathe or blow the ballast, and protects the tower from pressure and leakage. Sea elves aboard can use airlocks to exit while submerged, without flooding the towers' internal quarters. Their mounts, typically giant seahorses, usually swim nearby. Deck weaponry consists of magically altered aquatic flora similar to that found on Alorean skyships, capable of launching underwater stingers, sepia clouds, and electrical pods. Their sap reserves remain in the hold. Anchor wells, portholes, and a dome protecting the observation deck feature one-way force fields enabling deck weaponry to shoot and anchor chains to slide through.

A belief pervades the sea elves' ranks that the so-called progenitors aren't of this world. Merely gazing at such beasts has caused more than a few knights to become insane. Spawn of the progenitors travel the sea nearly at will, striking where and when they please, and abducting townsfolk for reasons unknown. Those who fall before them are never heard from again. When the sun lies low on the horizon and the spray turns red, unsettling eyes from the deep can often be seen for a fleeting instant, just beneath the waves at the edge of one's peripheral vision. They gave the sinister bay its name. The knights know they are being watched and worry that perhaps something is awakening that should never have been roused.

Rising Tide Submersible Tower



1. Observation deck
2. Docking platform
3. Boarding deck
4-7. Stowage
8. Knights' deck
9. First officer's bedchamber
10-11. Senior knights' (or guest) quarters
12-13. Junior knights' quarters
14. Officers' wardroom
15. Captain's bedchamber
16. Common crew and marines quarters
17. Galley
18. Pantry (locked)
19. Mates' quarters
20-21. Stowage
22. Anchors deck and hold
23. Secure stowage
24. Airlock
25. Latrines
26. Brig

Sea Stinger: It includes a wrist-mounted aquatic crossbow used single-handed, and a dozen common steel-tipped darts (DR: VL, 30/60/90) or giant jellyfish spines (DR: VL-1 + defense check vs. paralysis, 20/40/60, no min. range). Paralysis lasts 2d4+2 minutes. If allowed to dry (or freeze), the weapon cannot be used.

Grabweed: This weapon consists of a large aquatic crossbow designed to catapult a grapnel and its tether. The grapnel is made of particularly tough seaweed enchanted to knot itself around objects, or plant its barb-like roots into any organic surface against which it is thrown. The weapon is mounted on a finned chariot typically pulled by two seahorses (DR: M+3, 120/240/260, min. range 60).

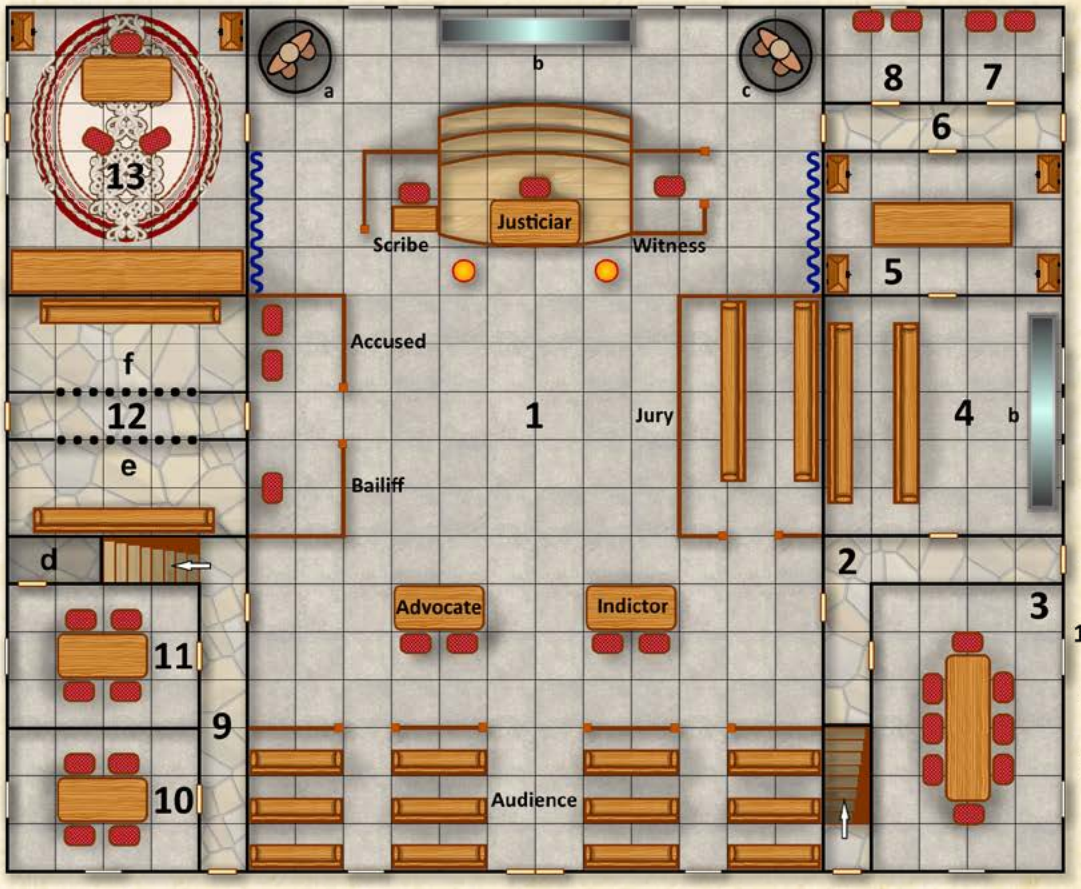
Araldûr: Comrades of the Hammer

Comrades of the Hammer are followers of Moltrim, Djurohr Hammerlaw's scion of the cult. The colleagues are warrior-monks whose quest is to fight lawlessness. The manner in which they accomplish their deeds varies with their personal philosophies. Some are benevolent, others less so, but all seek to put down harmful chaos and criminality. They travel Araldûr, going from one village to the next, offering their services as itinerant justiciars. Following the concept that a good whack on the head helps one see things the right way, confreres make ample use of their hammers. However hard-headed dwarves are, their skulls do crack occasionally, proving a subject too far gone to see the light. Others who perceive Scion Moltrim's thirty-six holy golden coins dancing before their eyes generally reach an epiphany and make amends for their errors. In all other cases, if the jangle of truth does not ring with the first whack, the next may do the job.

This cult is most powerful in Kragfold and southwestern Araldûr. Over the centuries, its members have become the traditional source of judges and law enforcement. However, such old ways have been changing. Secular authorities administering dominions where other deities prevail seek to replace them, sparking occasional uprisings. Adepts of Scion Moltrim often seize land from convicted criminals, on which they establish monasteries. These facilities and their possessions generate wealth, which is then used to equip and train comrades of the chapter. An abbot often serves as a permanent judge independent from local authorities, a status these associates will never agree to change on the grounds that the law could otherwise be corrupted. The warrior-monks are sufficiently well armed so isolated fief owners dare not defy them.

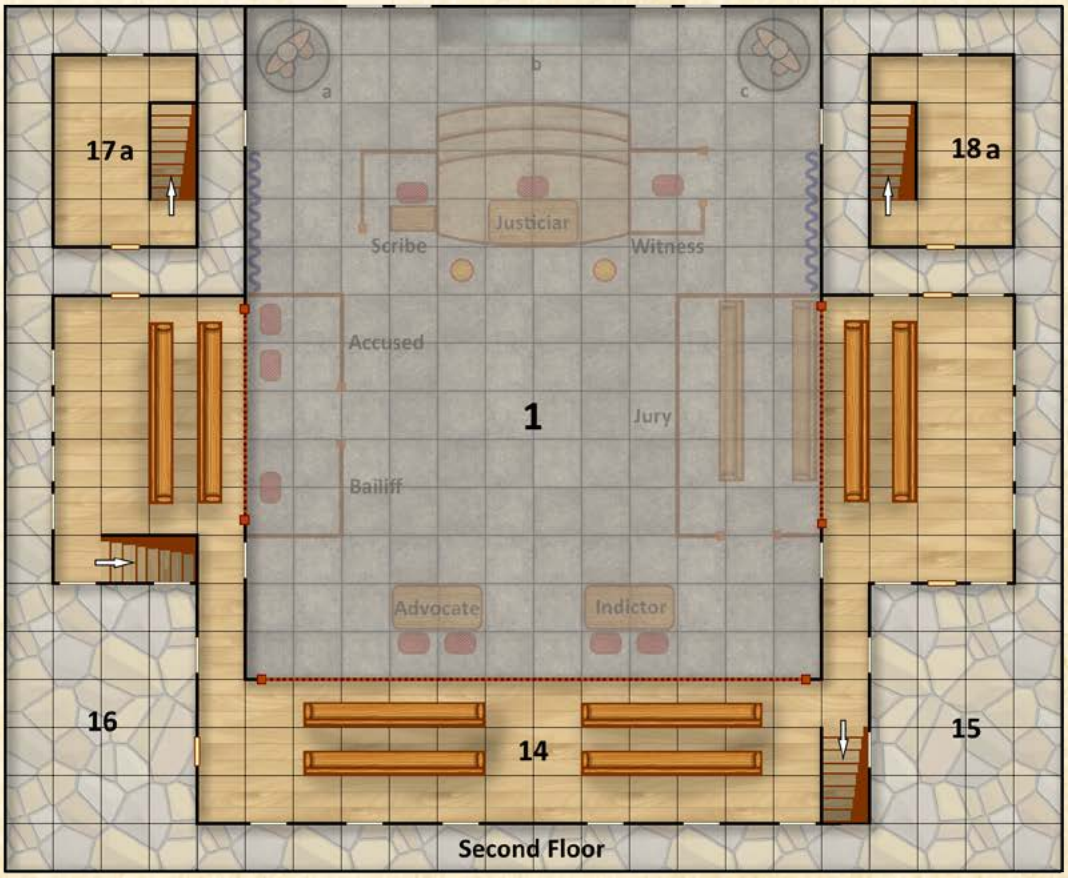
Monasteries, which come in various sizes, are fortified. Within their outer walls typically stand a courthouse, a prison, ancillary buildings, and barracks for common troops. Abbots, or Head Justiciars, govern monasteries and render justice on important cases. Two dozen itinerant comrades hail from a particular monastery, and will return hastily if summoned. Several of them are always found at the monasteries, tendering reports on their extramural activities, or assisting the Head Justiciars with their duties. *Brothers-at-Arms* are troops that guard fortifications and serve as bailiffs and collectors of fines. Humblest of all, acolytes tend to the monasteries' daily chores and surrounding properties, including farms, breweries, and mines. The Grand Adjudicator, elected for life to rule the chapter, resides at the temple of Djurohr Hammerlaw in Kragfold. Services are performed at the chapels at dawn and sunset, and every four hours in between. Silence is required during meals, while a Lector reads the *Precepts of Scion Moltrim*. The largest monasteries boast full-size shrines, usually under the administration of temple prelates overseeing regional affairs.

Courthouse of the Order of Moltrim



1. Courtroom
   a. Statue of Moltrim
   b. Symbol of the Comrades
   c. Statue of Djurohr
2. Jurors' Hallway
3. Deliberation Chamber
4. Chapel
5. Archives
6. Witnesses' Hallway
7-8. Waiting Rooms
9. Advocates Hallway
10-11. Consultation Chambers
   d. Storage
12. Hallway of the Accused
   e-f. Holding Cells
13. Justiciar's Office

Scale: 1 square = 5 feet





Courthouse Upper Levels

14. Indoor Gallery
15-16. Outside Terraces
17a-17b. Comrades Quarters
18a-18b. Comrades Quarters
17c-18c. Tower Battlements
   d. Ladders

Djurohr's Code is based on old royal laws dating back to the early centuries of dwarven civilization on Kragdûr. Royal law takes precedence over provincial law (connected with local nobility). Since King Rothbrîm essentially grounds his own authority and legitimacy upon such laws, he has been unwilling to interfere with the followers of Scion Moltrim. In exchange for the warrior-monks' political support and their oath to defend the powers of Araldûr's monarchy, the king does not impose a tax upon the chapter. The comrades keep an eye on provincial nobles, ensuring they respect the realm's laws. In effect, the order is a religious organization providing the monarchy with an autonomous, financially secure, and armed judicial system. The original chapter suffered a schism when Araldûr broke away from Kragdûr, in 1222 AC. The older ranks on the moon see their Calidaran kin as traitors and usurpers.

The order is wealthy. It collects fines or seizes property whenever possible, rather than incarcerate or execute convicted criminals, using prisons to detain until penalties are paid. As with all dwarven things involving payment, fines are typically heavy. Local nobles see the Comrades of the Hammer as an odious racket that comes in addition to royal taxes. Keenly observant and swift to confront law-breakers, the warrior-monks also seek to accumulate wealth from properties they own or administrate themselves. The chapter also functions as a powerful lending institution. Temple prelates handle such transactions. It is rumored that, somewhere in Araldûr, lies a great treasure hoarded by the cult.

Belledor: Belgomeer's Grand Circus

The original Grand Circus was destroyed a long time ago. Since then, Belgomeer's pious followers have devoted their lives and resources to rebuilding the traveling show. They are misfits living in the margins of society. All of them bear some bizarre feature, either physical or mental, leading those who should know better to call them freaks. They deem their strange conditions marks of uniqueness that would have earned them a place under Belgomeer's original tent. Among them stand former warriors, wizards, rogues, and priors faithful to the gnomish god.

The circus people have three goals. One is to recapture the traveling show's former glory. Another is to perform under its great tent. The last demands the recovery of artifacts, now scattered across the Great Caldera. These holy relics include wondrous objects that were once owned by legendary performers—a whip, a hat, a horn, a clown's outfit, a pair of shoes, a fake cannon, a card-reading automaton, a skull, a merry-go-round's missing horse, a copper token, etc. These quests lead the Grand Circus to travel far and wide. No one person actually "owns" the business; rather, in its own curious way, the traveling show is said to own them.

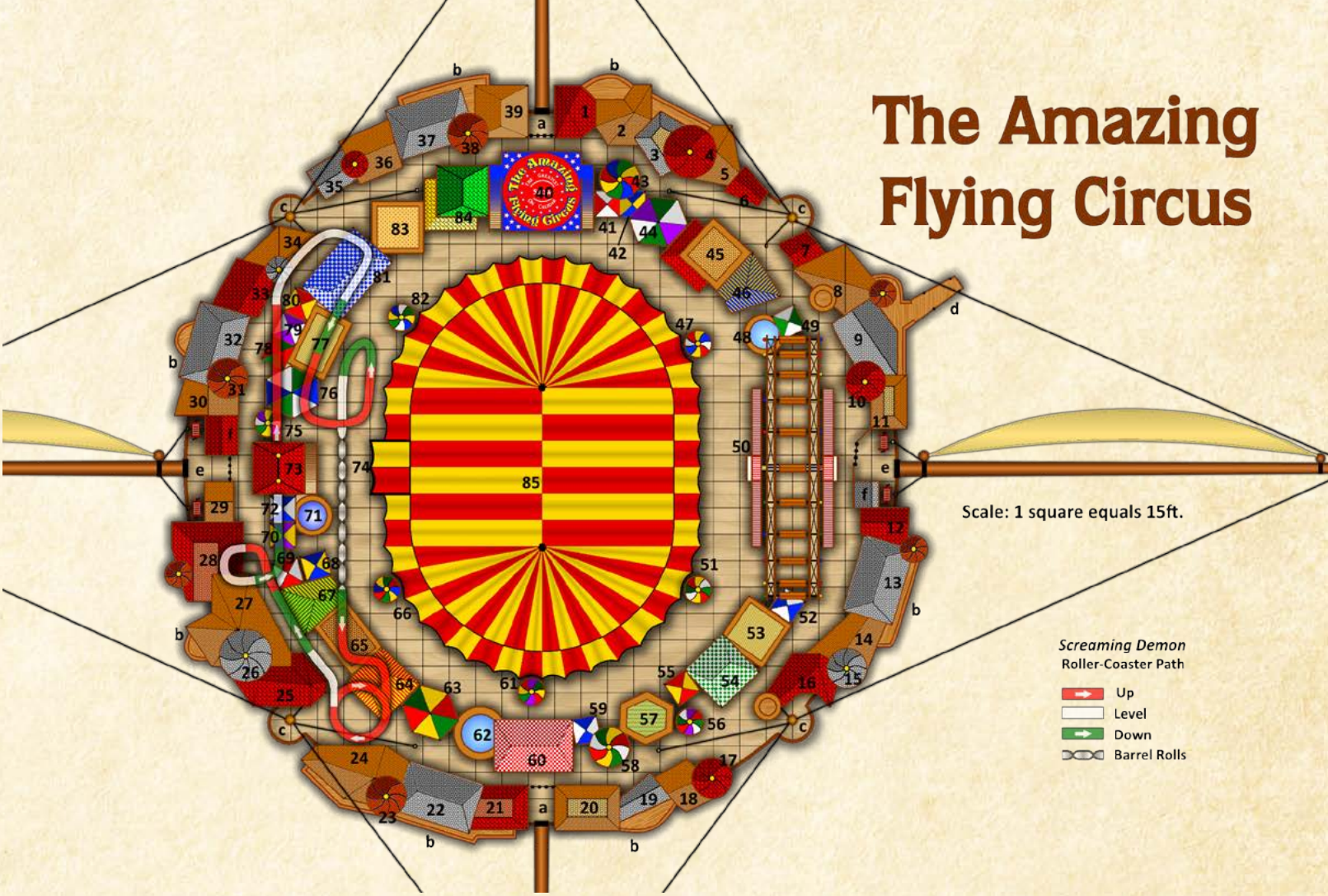
Already featuring amazing attractions, the circus possesses a levitating platform fitted with great sails to travel with the winds. In the winter, it flies eastward over Meryath or Phrydias, while in the summer, it travels westward across Belledor, rounding the kingdoms of the Great Caldera counter-clockwise. Rarely does it follow the same route, fate and the vagaries of weather prevailing. It is thought the circus has a mind of its own, choosing its path on mysterious whims. Large cities welcome the show every now and then but, in smaller towns, it may be a human's lifetime before another visit. Several garishly painted gondolas carved in the shape of mythical sky beasts fly the audience from towns and villages up to and back from the circus. During the time of their passage, workers go ashore and seek needful things that may help the growth of their most curious enterprise. Food and simple goods are the most common objects of their search. A fey thought sometimes forms in the minds of circus people, suggesting times when the enchanted platform seeks to grow—then fine timber is required, or canvas and ropes. They also sense when time has come to set sail. At other times, wild creatures need to be added to the menagerie, demanding a hunt. It may also happen that a rare talent for the show ought to be picked up along the way, perhaps just a crippled child at the time. No one knows for sure what the circus's enchantment most desires next, for it will sail in its direction sooner or later. Slowly, over the years of its existence, the Grand Circus grows, and not just in notoriety.

What circus people do best is perform under the tent. Everyone works during the show and between presentations. Aside from their strange conditions, all own the skills and talents needed to attract visitors, including jongleurs, acrobats, beast masters, comedians, musicians, magicians, and more. Around the tent stands a monstrous menagerie and shacks whose extravagant keepers gleefully hawk finger-licking good treats and bubbly beverages. Others tout an eclectic carnival of oddities and side shows from all parts of the Great Caldera. A hair-rising ride tumbles overhead, looping perilously above the giant crocodile's den and twisting right by the dire wolves' enclosure. Peering over the very limit of the circular platform, the dwellings of the enigmatic residents form a wall preventing the imprudent trespasser from falling off the edge. Far less obvious is what lies beneath street level, within the hollow platform's supporting studs and joists. Strange things do dwell there, right under the great tent, awaiting their cue to make a dramatic entrance on stage. Beyond endearing smells on the *Funhouse Promenade*, the clamor of *oohs* and *aahs* under the red and gold tent are drowned by the haunting music of the show's magical calliope, beastly roars, and screams of excitement as fireworks thunder in the night sky.

It is thought that the circus also seeks scattered objects from the original show. Some of the most dedicated workers sometimes leave the circus in search of relics of the show's past. They travel in small groups, investigating the existence of fabled items, seeking to retrieve them by all means available. Whenever possible, they buy or trade them for services. When an owner refuses to part with a wanted object, circus seekers sometimes try to steal it or take it by force. Almost invariably, these attempts coincide with the traveling show's departure. Once an item is taken, it becomes nearly impossible for the previous owner to find it. Not one of the workers will speak, and the platform's enchantment prevents detection spells from locating either the thieves or a stolen object. Should the circus be attacked, workers will release the menagerie, which curiously will side with their keepers. Residents are no strangers to fights, and will hold their own if challenged, relying on the shows' props and wicked tricks to defeat their foes.

Long ago, a prioress of Belgomeer had dreamed of her spiritual patron's fabled circus. Smitten by the vision, she made it her quest to rebuild it. She studied long and hard, until her path led her to unearth a bone that belonged to the god's earlier form. It was more than just a piece of dirt-incrusted skeleton. The gnome's tibia radiated strong magic, one that the prioress, *née* Tariana Tawnyhead, could not fathom. Its powers were many and beyond her control. At this news, legates from shrines of Belgomeer hounded her at once to remit the priceless relic to one of them, bickering and threatening each other about ownership. Fed up, Tariana went into hiding. She knew she wasn't wrong, for she could still commune with the servants of her good lord. The prioress spent the last years of her life hidden in a lost valley of Belledor's Wildlands, assembling a platform and painting it in garish colors. Penniless, deformed, or sickly folk came by and offered help: the gifted refuse of society who'd drifted her way inexplicably. A small circus tent was erected, with the abodes of Tariana's helpers huddling around it. Nearly blind and twisted from old age, the prioress died shortly

The Amazing Flying Circus



The Amazing Flying Circus—Map Key

Residential Circle
1-11. Forward dwellings & guesthouses, starboard
12-20. Aft dwellings & guesthouses, starboard
21-29. Forward dwellings & guesthouses, portside
30-39. Aft dwellings & guesthouses, portside

Funhouse Promenade
Unnumbered booths are shops and food vendors

40. Landing platform
45. Sambreville's haunted house
48. Dr. Tick's giant clockwork crab
50. *Skybound* big wheel
53. Grim Bill's dancing ours-garou enclosure
54. Nishnorf's gnomish tent of holding
57. Sir Pancelot's *Ride-a-Hippogriff* tower
60. Regolas's Alfdaín mead & specialties
62. Gallibog's fortune-telling jellyfish
63. Talisharr's *Flying Unicorn* merry-go-round
64. Praxis's *Whack-a-Troll*
65. Brika's singing wolves enclosure
73. *Screaming Demon's* boarding platform
74. *Big Top* entrance
77. Syranis Moonstone's fuzzy crocodiles den
81. Gamlîr's Araldûras ale & specialties
83. Baron de Shannivere's Belledoran crossbow shooting gallery
84. Guard house & hospitality hall
85. *Big Top* circus

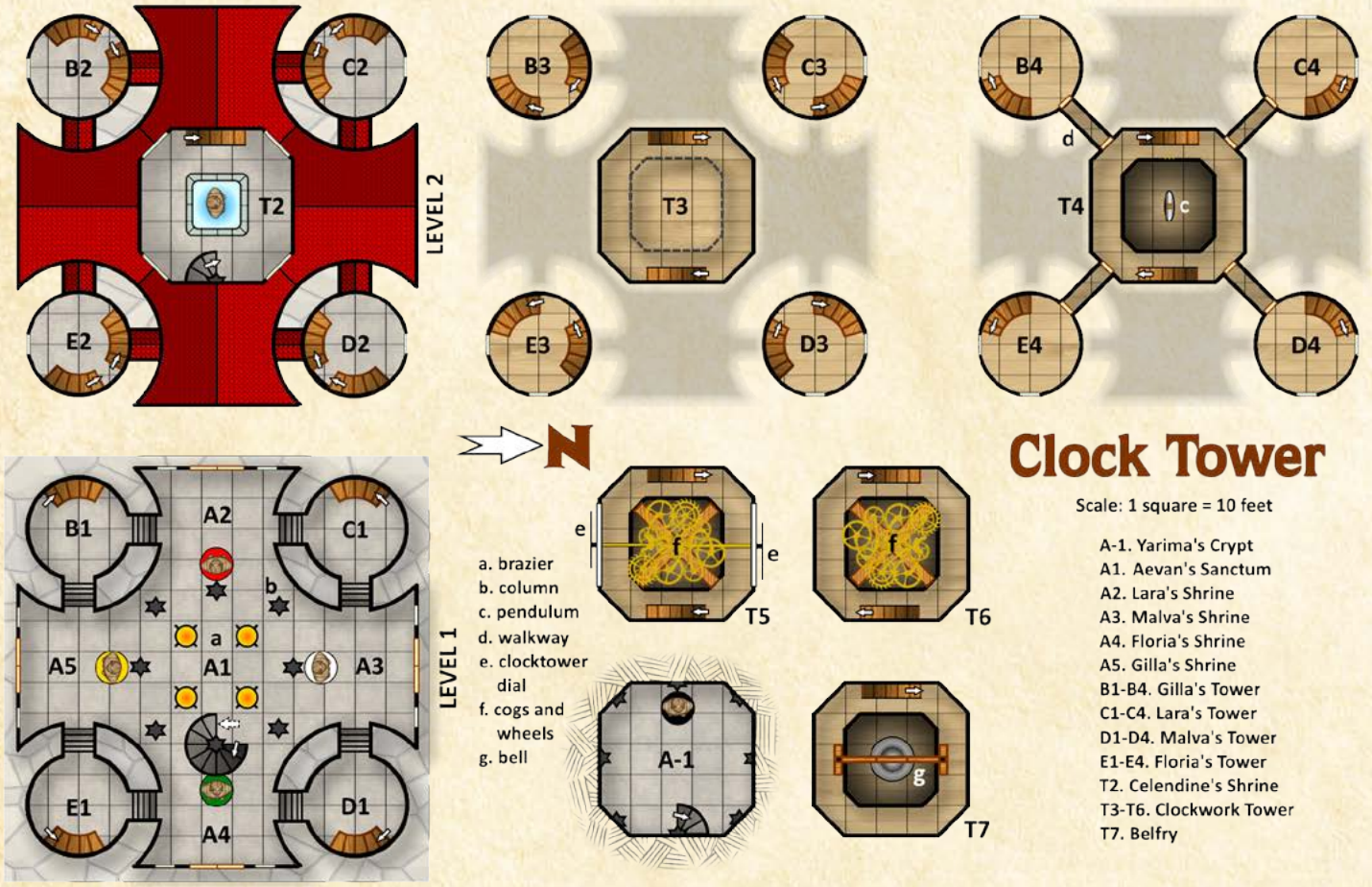
Miscellaneous
a. Access to fore & aft booms
b. Balconies & catwalks
c. Vertical spars & tethers
d. Private dock
e. Access to main masts
f. Stowage sheds

afterward, and was entombed within the platform along with the mysterious relic. Masts and sails were added beyond the stage, and the New Flying Circus was born with a new soul. A chapel dedicated to *Scion Tariana*, the traveling show's spiritual guardian, was later hidden beneath the haunted house. Over the years, the platform grew to include many more attractions. Infirmities of those who come seeking employment worsen over the years but, in exchange, their talents grow keener. Together, they serve an ideal so much greater than themselves—*the show must go on.* When they die, their spirits join many who passed away before them in the service of Belgomeer.

Belledor: The Hands of Time

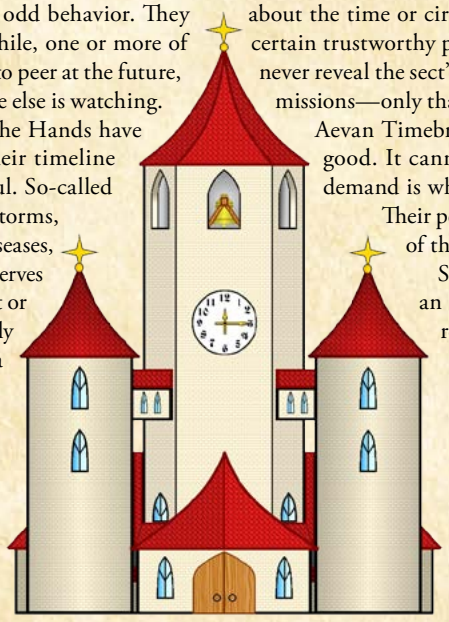
The so-called *Hands* are members of a secret sect faithful to Aevan Timebringer, the Belledoran demigod of time and wisdom. His clergy is unaware of this sect, including the cult's high prior. Low- to mid-ranked members of Aevan's temple themselves, the Hands are tasked with the clockwork tower's maintenance and cleaning at the main sanctuary in Torburrow. More ambitious priors generally see this line of duty as a dead-end career. The Hands never rise far in the temple's hierarchy. Being highly placed in the chain of command would make it harder for their secret work to remain unnoticed. In fact, they never give a hint of how smart they are, even deliberately acting as simpletons who can grasp the clock's mechanical wonders but fail miserably to relate to "normal" folk. Put simply, they are medieval geeks.

These are in truth very special followers of Aevan's, who can see the hidden nature of the clockwork tower. Though it faithfully keeps time and tolls every hour on the hour, its usefulness exceeds such mundane manifestations. The clock opens an invisible gate to a place not of



this world, where events of alternate futures may be observed. Based on the time of the year and of the day, the gate appears in different places inside the temple, usually within the tower, but not always. The opening is always hard to reach, but the Hands explain to their less-perceptive peers that they are trying to "clean the dust off that corner, way up there, near the vault, see?" Most priors look up distractedly, shrug, and walk away shaking their heads. They've become accustomed to the Hands' odd behavior. They think it best not to bother the simpletons. Meanwhile, one or more of the Hands slip through the gate, unseen. Being able to peer at the future, they can also predict when to return at a time no one else is watching.

Over the many years of the tower's existence, the Hands have become aware that events due to take place in their timeline connect directly with disturbances in the world soul. So-called disturbances can provoke natural disasters, such as storms, floods, crop failure, earthquakes, wars, crime, fires, diseases, monstrous outbreaks, etc. Depending on whom Aevan serves at the time, the Hands either interfere with the event or ensure it happens as predicted. Malva Darkbrow usually favors malevolent outcomes. Flora Tanglemane, Gilla Amberbraid, and Lara Umberlock prefer benevolent results. The Hands do not question their conflicting missions, remaining true to Aevan's changing nature. Events in question can be anything (the birth of a child, an accidental death, a marriage, a fateful encounter, the discovery of a spell, an unfortunate misunderstanding between two parties, Daisy the cow kicking over a lantern in the barn, an apple dropping onto a philosopher's head, and so on).



Aevan's Clocktower

There are exactly twelve Hands to the sect. When some of the companions die, others among the clergy begin to see what they could not before. The Hands always know whom to contact, since they are aware of this part of the future, and quickly bring in needed members. The Hands aren't omnipotent: they can't predict everything at all times. The gate only opens periodically, and what can be seen is limited to their missions. The Hands can never learn about the time or circumstances of their own deaths. They also rely on certain trustworthy people to help them with their missions. The Hands never reveal the sect's existence nor the bewildering reasons behind their missions—only that it is for the benefit of their sole and unique patron, Aevan Timebringer. The sect is neither truly evil nor completely good. It cannot ever be either. Whatever the Hands' missions demand is what their spiritual patron expects, no more, no less. Their personal philosophies do not change as a consequence of the actions perpetrated in the course of their duties.

Soon after Aevan's temple was erected at Torburrow, an old man approached the prior, a young successful reverend in the affairs of the temple. He offered to build a great clock, to everyone's delight in town. He pointed at the belfry, which at the time did not yet have its bell due to lack of funding, and bemoaned the empty space. Since the clergy's treasury was scarce of specie, he offered to work for bread and water mostly. . . perhaps with a bit of wine, herbs in warm water to bathe his aching bones, and an occasional boar's leg if such should come. For gold, he'd wait until his work was complete. The prior didn't object, thinking this was an old fool who'd never get anything done. Time would

tell. Months went by. Years followed. Everyone in town laughed at the mad old man in the belfry. At long last a bell was acquired. The prior, now graying and head of his clergy, took this opportunity to pay the clockmaker a visit. He found a young man working there. When questioned, the fellow said his master had taken to the woods to pray but didn't say when he'd return. The high prior thought the apprentice looked oddly familiar, but since much work had already been completed despite common belief, he left. When the clock was finished, the prelate, now a frail old man himself, returned to the belfry with an acolyte, a simpleton by anyone's standards, carrying the payment in gold. They found a child sitting amid the clock's inner workings. The prelate asked for the old man, and the boy pointed back at him, with a smile. The prelate frowned. "Do not waste my time, child!" The boy laughed. "Pardon me, Sir. Your time has not been wasted. It's just that you have none left." Dumbstruck, the acolyte watched the prelate drop dead. He lifted his gaze, but the child had vanished. He then heard a crystalline voice echo in his mind. "Keep the gold and take care of this great clock. Use both wisely."

Caldwen: Librarians of Dagleeth

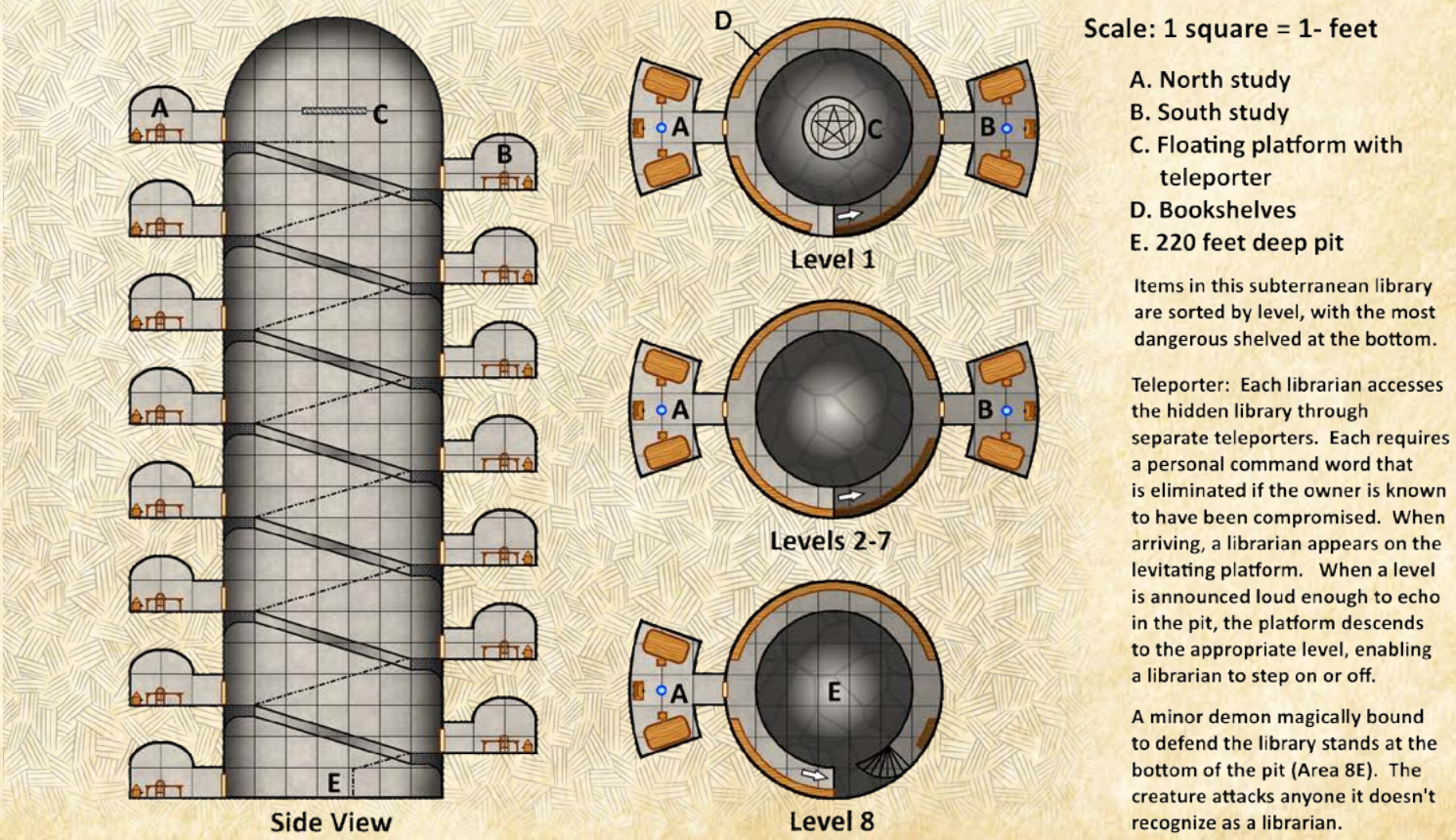
These well-meaning wizardly-priors are intent on removing forbidden knowledge from the public. Their communing with the divine determines if something they ran across should be branded as anathema. In other cases, a quest is handed down straight from Sadarya, requesting the Librarians seek a particular tome and remove it from circulation.

Dagleeth generally forbids works that could jeopardize his following among mortals, or that could damage the Sadaryan pantheon in general. This includes (among a host of others) works compiled by evil sorcerers, articles of condemnation written by Nicarean inquisitors, and alien knowledge regarding the honoring of Ghülean gods. The existence of dangerous magic, harmful knowledge, and corrupting beliefs are far more common than most people suspect, and therefore well protected. The fact that Dagleeth cannot readily see undesirable works attests to the authors' skills at hiding their works from all but a chosen few. The god of librarians and his divine servants resort to possessing people they suspect of being linked to forbidden knowledge in order to discover the true nature of what is hidden, and whether it should be removed. Execution of the removal is entrusted to mortal librarians. Ultimately, the worst of materials end up in Sadarya, in Dagleeth's own tower, to be studied and understood so their authors' legacies can be more easily eradicated.

Not all priors of Dagleeth are Librarians, at least not the sort tasked with fetching forbidden works. The latter form a closed sect, which answers only to the high prior of the cult and a few of his prelates. Even then, to protect their superiors, the Librarians remain tight-lipped about some of their most secret quests. It may happen that members of the cult become corrupted by undesirable knowledge and, until it is addressed, the issue remains circumscribed to the Librarians' circle. In this respect, they act as the cult's internal police. The Librarians may also break secular laws in Caldwen or in other realms in order to remove forbidden secrets. The sect's overseers are never informed of these actions. Instead, a Librarian may deliberately shoulder the blame or frame someone outside the faction.

Members of the Librarians are almost never chosen from the ranks of the common clergy, but rather from those so-called "adventurers," people driven to explore the world and its mysteries. Among them, faithful followers

Hidden Library of Lamerith



of Dagleeth may be hired to find a tome, a scroll, or any other suspicious writings, as a way to test their mettle. First contacts usually go through a book dealer or a sage in Lamerith or in Arcanial. These are "fronts" for the Librarians. If the adventurer performs as expected, a librarian may be offered a place in the circle. Wizardly-priors are favored, but other careers are acceptable as long as devotion to Dagleeth remains unquestionable. Once in the circle, death usually is the only way out. The elderly may retire as "sages" and book dealers working for the Librarians.

The first task of the Librarians includes fetching designated materials. The manner in which they accomplish this step is left entirely up to the members. The materials can be legally purchased up to a reasonable price or, usually, taken by force or trickery. Local laws are never a concern. Removing a source of danger is a greater consideration for Librarians than local customs. Such work is never performed openly in the name of the sect.

The next task is securing acquired materials. A special vault is necessary to prevent magical detection and common burglary. As part of this work, Librarians are responsible for protecting ancient tomes from the injuries of time, as well as mending any damage. Clerical spells are available to clean ancient works, restore them to their proper conditions, and magically lock them so that only members of the circle can access their contents. Librarians must never destroy books or allow another's actions to result in the defacing of books, a fundamental tenet of Dagleeth's faith. Members of the sect also protect their secret libraries with a curious enchantment, the *Dweomer-Decimal Chant*, which accurately and instantly sorts all books within the area of effect. It also produces an illusion changing their names, appearances, contents, and actual shelf location. Since secured tomes are magically locked, this illusion makes unsuspecting intruders think a book is opened when it never is. Librarians of the sect are immune to this enchantment's effects. If a book is ever stolen, it is most likely one of many "dummies" previously added to the library for this very purpose. Most works stored by Librarians cannot be destroyed by fire or other straightforward means due to their magical nature. Ancient arcane tomes usually demand secret methods for permanent disposal.

The final task concerns the fate of what was fetched. The most pernicious of works eventually undergo the *Ritual of Sending*. The ceremony involves reading the materials over a consecrated altar, page by page, each disintegrating in a process lasting sometimes for days, and reappearing in Dagleeth's library in Sadarya. If the process is interrupted, the sending fails entirely and all the pages reappear in the book. There are risks involved, as the reading of ancient and dangerous tomes of magic can be lethal or corrupting to mind and body. If the Librarian is unharmed, great status is gained and possibly career advancement. If he or she is hurt in some way, brothers of the faith regularly tend to affairs of health among the sect. The Librarians' mission is a most dangerous one, but potentially rewarding. Their enemies are legion, from former owners dispossessed of valuable materials to alumni of the College of Free Thinkers. The latter is a rival group of high-level wizards aware of the Librarians' existence. They reject the idea that a cult may act as censors of what is acceptable work among wizards. They and their minions hunt for the Librarians whenever possible. Their goal is to destroy the sect (if not the entire cult itself), and retrieve all sequestered literature.

Ellyrion: The Daimonikon League

Its members are covert hunters of demons and of all champions of darkness. At the center of their work lies an artifact, the *Periapton Daimonikon* (shortened to just *"Daimonikon"),* an ancient compendium that captures the essence of creatures and tells their stories within its pages. New folios are added as the league's foes fall. The trouble is that these leaguers will target all whom they think are heretics. This includes opponents of their spiritual patron, a scion of Teos named Teopathos, especially those actively spreading their cults within the confines of the Ellyrian empire, or the faithful who stray from Calderan orthodoxy. In the fanatical minds of these zealots, heretics and believers of foreign cults fare no better than demons. Occasionally, victims who aren't malevolent end up paying the ultimate price for the sake of their faith in another pantheon.

The first step of the leaguers' work consists in identifying their foes. For this, they watch individuals suspected of being heretics, possessed by demons, or those believed to consort with such. League members may attempt to interact with the individuals and get as close as possible to learn more about them and unveil their demons. When the time is right, a council convenes, during which leaguers vote whether action is called for. If an intervention is required, they endeavor to capture the victim or the demon, relying on tricks to lure their target to a place of their choosing, usually at night, away from prying eyes. Large Ellyrian cities are known for sprawling seedy quarters where arrangements can be made with local thieves' guilds. For this purpose, the hunters wield anti-magic bolas, effective against all magical foes, save for archfiends, ascended gods, scions of the cult, and hierarchs. These weapons prevent innate magical abilities from triggering, such as vanishing, summoning other creatures, or casting spells. The victim is then physically transported to their lair, deep beneath the streets of Temenopolis.

The place of incarceration features enchanted chains and a pentacle intended to prevent escape magically or physically. Flame whips are used to subdue the most restless. Cells must undergo regular maintenance; however, some captives can rust their bonds and corrupt the pentacles' magic over time, especially fracks and fiends (see *Demons* earlier). If leaguers fail in this respect, prisoners eventually escape. Merely destroying their physical form is insufficient and hardly desirable from the leaguers' point of view. They fear the demons' spiritual lieges would return them to the world of the living to pursue their original mission. To succeed in their war against the so-called "forces of darkness," the members must perform their complete ritual when the moons are right, in order for a captive's spirit to be extracted and infused into the *Daimonikon*. The corpse is then burned to ashes. The ritual can fail, usually because the captive is too powerful to be destroyed in this manner (too few members are present for the ritual). In this case, the captive remains sequestered until such time leaguers can muster greater forces. In truth, their prisons are brimming with starving yet undying creatures chafing to escape, each more horrid than the next.

The league suffers from internal dissent, especially between puritans and pragmatics. The latter do not believe they should target agents of neighboring faiths in such drastic fashion, especially benevolent ones. Those proven to be possessed ought to be exorcized rather than obliterated. The trouble with this approach is that the demon's spirit isn't actually destroyed and will, in time, find another victim. The more radical puritans view the league as a tool doing Teos's bidding, whatever it may be and regardless of imperial law. In their holy war against the forces of darkness, they accept that there will be casualties and, therefore, believe that exorcism isn't an ideal weapon. It merely addresses symptoms and fails to reach the source.



Aside from frictions between puritans and pragmatics, it is unfortunate that some members on both sides quietly manipulate the order for the benefit of certain high-placed Ellyrian personalities, notorious followers of Teos themselves including members of the clergy, who pay them well. Pragmatics are more likely to join the ranks of adventurers, following the logic that their path will sooner or later lead to uncovering minions of darkness whose essence belongs in the *Daimonikon*.

Imperial authorities condemn the league, not only because its members break the state's laws, but also because it looks like the hated Nicarean Inquisition under another name. Though the Ellyrian upper class are for the most part devout followers of Teos, they balk at the idea of an extremist sect challenging their authority (if not their personal safety) and the empire's political stability. The extent of the league's exactions reflects whether a pragmatic or a puritan has gained the upper hand as its leader. Called *Grammatyas,* the Secretary is usually voted to lead the sect for seven years or until death, whichever happens first.

New members are approached if at least three leaguers vouch for them. They are usually chosen from heroes reputed as having defeated some creature of darkness, or being involved in such. They must be pious followers of Teos, if not fanatics. Once the neophytes become true and accepted members acclaimed by the remainder of the group, leaving is no longer an option. Leaguers take an oath of secrecy. If it is broken, this results in death from which there is no return. The former leaguer can neither be raised from the dead nor spoken to through any magical spell a mortal can cast. Theirs is dangerous business, as escaped demons stalk members, intent on devouring them one by one. Imperial justiciars are also on the lookout for these cultists. They are universally hated in other realms, chief among them Caldwen, where possession is sometimes considered a godly manifestation.

Leaguers can reach their subterranean lair through teleporters scattered in five cities of the empire (Temenopolis, Karakos, Teosopolis, Mormos, and Helioklios). All are well concealed and require different command words to activate, inward or outward. Ceilings are about 30 feet high, and magical lights dispersed in the lair switch on when something within 40' moves (visible or not). Various magical wards protect the *Periapton Daimonikon*, chief among which is an enchantment preventing any outer-planar being (such as demons) from touching it or using magic to move it. Only Teos knows how to destroy the compendium, which is a godly artifact. Handling it without proper ceremony will (roll 1d6): 1-3. Permanently drain one's Life Force (demons and their minions); 4-5. Inflict a *Divine Wound* (see Table 8, page 186); or 6. Bestow a psychotic trait (see *House of Azameer,* Table 24, later in this chapter).

Tools of the Leaguers: Anti-magic bolas, the leaguers' favored weapon, are called *Teos's Holy Bonds.* These are provided to all new members. Leaguers learn to use them regardless of their career paths. They inflict little damage, but have an increased chance of hitting a difficult target and ensnaring it. They are generally rated like magical weapons, +1/+4 vs. demons. The cords are unbreakable for anyone with less than divine strength. While entangled, a victim cannot cast spells or use innate magical abilities.

Fire whips are intended to inflict pain to outer-planar creatures. Used to subdue, they can give leaguers control of a captive for a limited time. If they're wielded in combat, the pain they inflict is such that a

wounded demon with less than archfiend status must succeed a Morale Check or attempt to flee. Only senior leaguers own such weapons, and they require formal training to use properly. They rate as +3 magical weapons with incorporeal flames reaching up to 60' away.

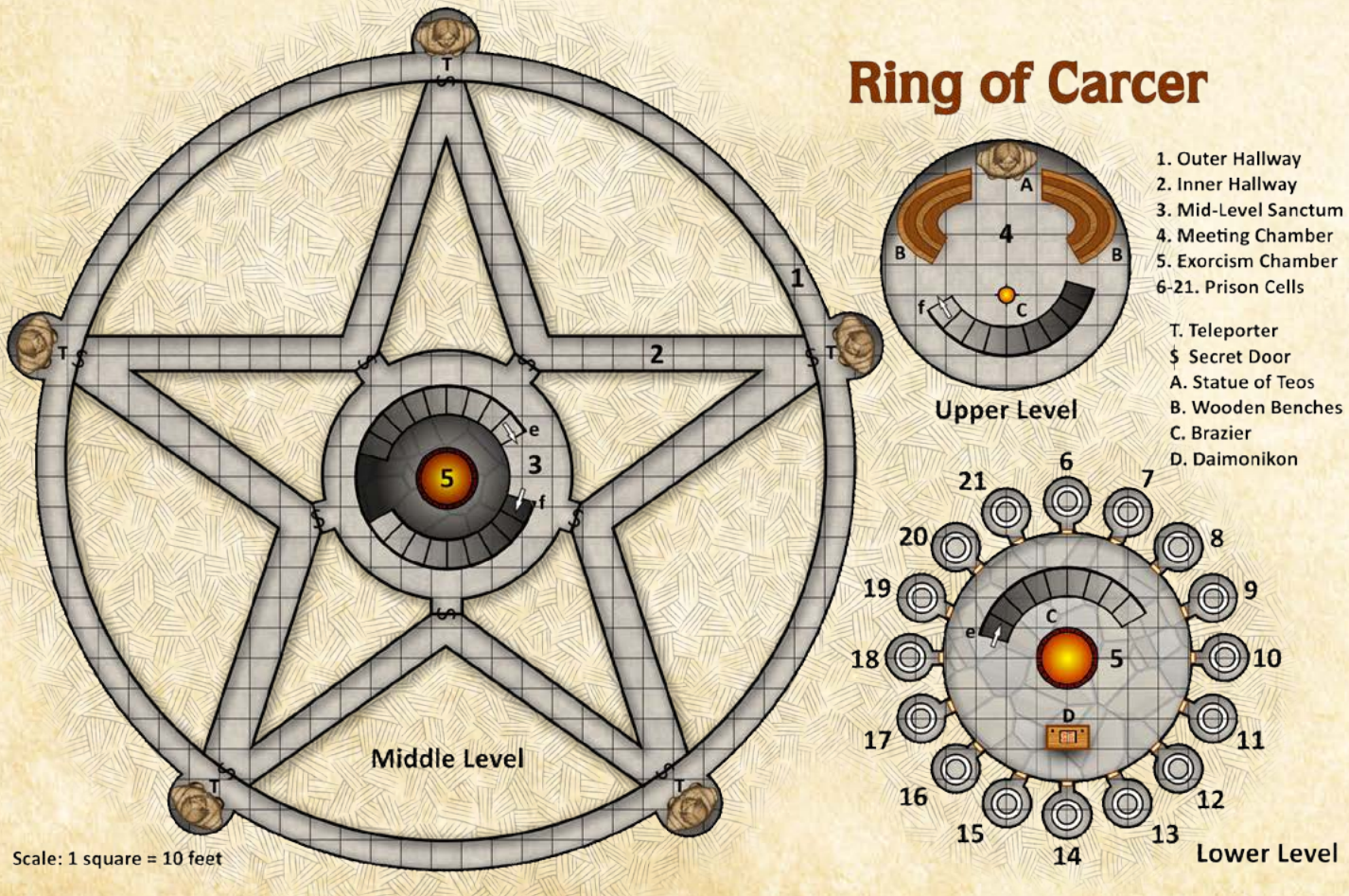
Exorcism is a skill taught to all leaguers (see Table 19, *Divine Servants* earlier in this chapter). Adjuration can be interrupted for short durations, but the lead exorcist must remain in the presence of the host at all times. This exorcist receives a +1 bonus to the attempt for each additional leaguer assisting. Depending on how well it succeeds, a demon spirit is either identified and/or expelled. Once expelled, an entity can never repossess the same host. If the attempt fails catastrophically, the lead exorcist is at risk of becoming the host, which isn't always obvious to other members present.

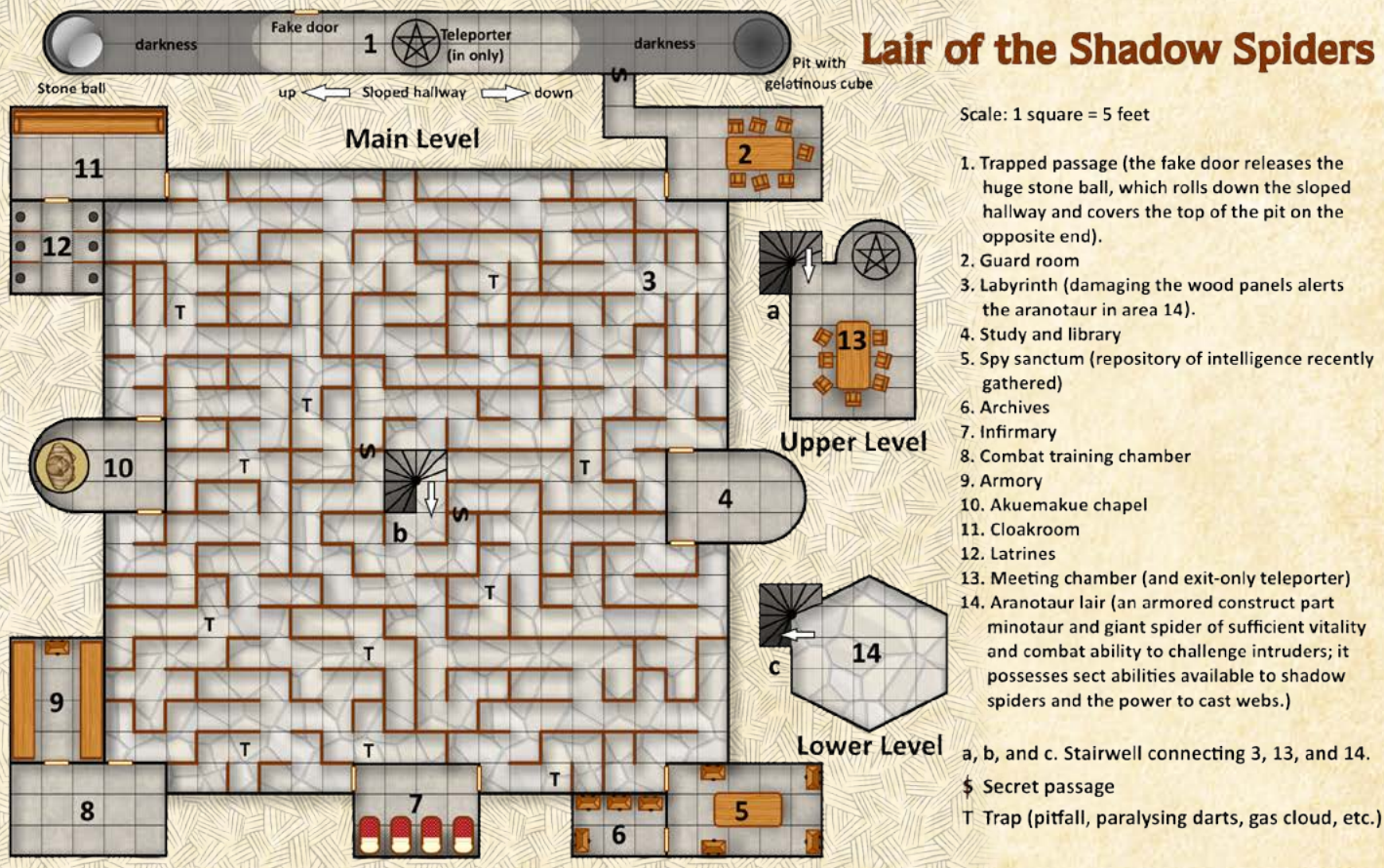
Leaguers may invoke the ancient *Daimonikon Ritual*, which requires at least seven participants in the presence of the artifact. It is a form of exorcism. If the ritual succeeds, the corrupted spirit is forcefully extracted from a demon's body (or a possessed host) and trapped within the ancient compendium. The original body must then be burned to ashes to complete the ritual. If a host was possessed, then the body of the demon must be located, often a difficult task. Archfiends can possess multiple hosts while remaining conscious and able to act. The ritual can be made to sever each bond, permanently wounding the demon each time. Unless the demon is physically captured, several such rituals are needed to sever bonds with its hosts until all is left is the demon's unconscious body, lying somewhere, well hidden from sight and protected from intruders. Many a leaguer has departed on private quests to find these missing bodies and return them.

Meryath: The Shadow Spiders

The most covert of Akuamakue's followers call themselves Spiders. They are priors and rogues with wizardly skills who form an autonomous counter-espionage service for the Kingdom of Meryath. Their targets are foes of Meryath and those who oppose the rise of the Talikai pantheon. Draconic spies and their clique of assassins working in Meryath head the Spiders' list of concerns, followed closely by agents linked with Narwan, and militant supporters of Soltan's cult. Their sect isn't connected with the islander's monarchy, and operates outside the law. Should Spiders be captured, the leaders of the cult deny any involvement by their temple or knowledge of the sect. Most natives of the islands suspect otherwise, as do foes of the cult. This explains why temples of Akuamakue look like fortresses. Though the monarchy publicly decries the so-called Spiders' private war, it tacitly approves of them as their covert work benefits the kingdom.

Spiders recruit members from followers and priors alike. They rely on baiting tactics to see if someone they're watching can be trusted. In the rare case where someone proves them wrong, the unwitting candidate is sure to become a target of the Spiders. If the bodies of their victims are ever found, disturbing them causes their flesh to turn into a crawling mass of small arachnids skittering away in all directions. The Spiders perfected a ritual that permanently masks the spirit of the deceased victim from magical detection, and blocks all contact attempts from the world of the living. One would have to find the individual in the netherworld before they vanish to their final end, a lengthy quest if pursued without magic.





Adepts of the sect also rely on another special feat of magic: Akuamakue's web of intrigue. A Spider can "shadow tag" a victim on contact (using a handshake, a pat on the back, etc.). The invisible tag remains in place for up to a month, creating an arcane link between victim and caster, which only the latter can perceive. It appears as a thin shadowy strand, which can extend indefinitely. Whenever the victim utters certain keywords (defined when the spell is cast, just before meeting the victim), a new tag connects with the other people involved in the discussion, including non-corporeal, undead, and outer-planar beings. A Spider can always follow strands in his/her shadow web to find out who else is linked with the original tag, which can involve entering another plane. Though victims do not receive a defense check, a tag can be dispelled easily, cutting off all later strands (unless future victims are cross-linked through someone else). Spiders use this stratagem to locate potential threats. Tags with different keywords cast at different times help narrow the possibilities of likely foes and hidden allies. When investigation yields enough evidence, the Spiders gather, and the hunt begins.

New recruits who aren't already members of the clergy are indoctrinated and trained in the art of spying before being released. They are often requested to join a band of adventurers to gain additional experience with worldly affairs of potential heroes. Should their meanderings reveal something suspicious, either among the adventurers, or most likely among the circles in which heroes gravitate, neophyte Spiders are disciplined to investigate and report to the temple, where they receive instructions. Over time, many Spiders find themselves nested within a society honoring heroes, waiting to be "activated." Early on, these investigators are taught the sect's death-masking ritual and shadow tagging, and how to turn away prying eyes when using such powerful tools. They make it a point to inflict these rituals upon the corpses of the cult's hated foes.

Spiders return to their temple for additional training and to learn new spells as they advance in their careers. These often relate to spiders, such as magic granting the ability to climb walls and ceilings, cast sticky webs, or change into giant araneae. Shadow Spiders have an innate affinity for all things arachnid. Given the option to learn additional languages, they may pick up the ability to communicate with sentient spider-like beings and receive at least a reaction bonus when encountering them. Experienced mages may raise giant spiders as pets or familiars, and fabricate shadow constructs with breath weapons able to cast magical webs. Such is the case of a sleepless guardian in their lair. On the other hand, because of a certain creepiness factor pervading the sect, Shadow Spiders incur a reaction penalty when dealing with anyone outside the cult of Akuamakue. People afflicted with arachnophobia feel a visceral dislike of them.

The entrance to the Shadow Spiders' lair is a private meditation chamber at the main temple in Faamahana. Dropping a silver coin into the nearby alms box unlocks the door. In the cell is a padded seat facing a small statue of the Spellweaver. A cup sits in an alcove, containing a sip of a magical potion that helps clear one's mind of mundane distractions. The liquid gives drinkers a slight bonus to understand a new spell or to pray (+1% bonus when praying for *Casual Benefits*—see *Rewards & Obligations*, page 186). When the individual puts the cup back in its alcove, an enchantment safely teleports them to a random spot in the temple's main sanctum. Frequent visitors know not to return the cup until they're done meditating. A Shadow Spider, however, never drinks from this cup and, instead, pours its contents into a funnel-shaped hole behind the statue. This action teleports the Spider to the sect's lair below ground after the cup is returned to its alcove. In both cases, a temple acolyte is responsible for refilling the cup after each visit.

The sect's most bitter enemies are vipermen and their assassin minions operating in Meryath (see CAL1, page 93). The two wage a merciless covert war, both seeking to remove all evidence of their presence whenever possible. Adventurers joining the Shadow Spiders (or unwittingly working for them) will almost invariably confront these vicious

foes. Pawns of the Draconic knights occasionally take hostages and leave clues for the Spiders, hoping they will stage a rescue mission (which is a trap). The kidnappers' goal is to identify Shadow Spiders and, if possible, capture and interrogate them. Akuamakue's sect, however, despises the more puritan activists actively promoting the faith of Teos or Soltan among the Spellweaver's followers. Sooner or later, they too will have to contend with the sinister Shadow Spiders.

Narwan: Companions of the Black Rose

The *Black Rose* was founded secretly during Narwan's *Times of Sorrow* (see Soltan's *Genesis*, page 136, 1071 CE). They are a tightly-knit band of Narwan-born ethnic Tanethians devoted to justice and their countrymen's protection. Known as the Companions, they became caught in the crossfire between djinnifolk and the Nicarean Inquisition, but as followers of Arun-Te, they had the tacit support of colonials, who saw them as avenging heroes. Teosarkha II outlawed this sect in 1101 CE. Tantalizing rewards were offered for information leading to the capture or execution of anyone involved with the Black Rose. Very often, it led those whom the reward had tempted to be questioned as to how they'd come across their information and why they hadn't brought it up earlier. Most ended up none the wealthier, and at the business end of a noose.

The sect adopted its name because of a mystical desert rose they had unearthed in the Ad-Dhimah wastelands. Rather than the common sand or pink-hued gypsum concretion, this one was black and made of something similar to obsidian, but infinitely harder. Divination revealed it was an ancient artifact, a holy relic of divine origins. It seemed to give its owners an edge against the djinn, stealing a portion of their abilities for some time. One of the companions who studied the artifact became blind and wandered into the desert. He was Al-Adhan, who soon became Soltan's prophet in Narwan. His writings taught his companions to see Arun-Te as "Soltan," the great lord of the sun but also of the desert—*their* god, the True Spirit of Narwan. They called him *Arun Al Malik Al Soltan,* not entirely unlike Al-Shams, the efreet's spiritual patron. Whatever his true name, it was Soltan who'd buried the object in the desert for reasons of his own.

While continuing to oppose the Inquisition, Companions also targeted the djinn at the heart of the conflict. As Companions fell, others took their places, all in the name of Soltan-the-Munificent. Universally reviled, the Nicarean Inquisition had nearly withdrawn by 1167 CE, limiting their actions in Eastern Ellyrion to spying (mostly on Nicarean forces there). A protracted fight ensued with the desert spirits, as the Companions endeavored to earn their support in the name of Soltan or to force them back to the wastelands. Likewise, the newly-styled faith also attracted disenchanted colonists from the ranks of established Arun-Te believers.

In 1208 CE, while Nicarea redoubled its repression of the colonies, the Black Rose and the "hidden ones" became instrumental in causing Eastern Ellyrion to secede from Munaan, both camps wishing to neutralize the hated Inquisition once and for all. Exploiting the clash with Talikai islanders, pawns of the djinn and of the Black Rose contributed to the imperial viceroy's expulsion (see *Historical Timeline* in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 80).

Despite their common achievement, the djinn and the Black Rose continued their struggle. With the help of efreet converted to the cult of Soltan, the Companions regularly gained ground during the next century, uncovering the infidel spirits hidden among the people of Narwan, swaying them to their side, expelling them, or slaying them. Most powerful and popular, the sect reached its zenith. Yet, in its success lay the seed of its downfall. Companions of the Black Rose had become a threat to Narwan's new ruling elite. The Caliph of Fuscat, Akram I, saw the faction as a growing political liability, an arrogant rival faction claiming the ability to convert desert spirits to the cult in whichever manner best served its purposes. By then, the existence of Soltan's artifact had also become common knowledge. The caliph thus demanded prominent members of the sect to hand over the holy relic at once to prove their loyalty. Its keepers promptly refused.

In the wake of this insolent rebuke, Akram secretly negotiated with the djinn. To seal the truce, the Caliph of Fuscat convicted the Companions of using forbidden magic at the *Trial of the Silk Turbans,* 1331 CE, branding them as pariahs. Those who failed to go underground and defied his authority were lured to places of ambush across the realm, and massacred during what was called the *Night of the Khanjar* in 1335 CE. Surviving Companions quickly moved the artifact to a desert hideout and once again resumed their secret lives.

Desert efreet, Narwani justiciars, and Nicarean spies still actively look for Companions of the Black Rose. They all covet the artifact. The djinn consider it an abomination which should be destroyed. The caliphs wish to hold it as the symbol of their spiritual ascendancy. The Inquisition hopes to use it as a weapon to regain control over what they still call Eastern Ellyrion. Though they do not submit to the caliphate's authority, Companions remain devout followers of Soltan and, therefore, their divine liege takes no action against them. Neither will he interfere with the caliph and those who serve him, or the Nicarean Inquisition, for they all serve the same god. The sect's mission is now to punish the sinful (of which there are plenty) and to protect the meek from their masters' abuses (of which there are even more).

The secret shrine of the Black Rose lies in the most deserted corner of the Emirate of Ad-Dhimah, in the Nizarim Ridge, a hundred miles south of Ras Al-Khat. Very few Narwani dwell in this inhospitable land. Desert djinn are more likely to wander about it, searching for the shrine and for imprudent travelers daring enough to trespass.

The Holy Relic of Soltan: Non-divine magic cannot detect this artifact's location. The Black Rose instantly destroys any outer-planar being coming in contact with it, unless its faith in Soltan is true. New Companions are required to touch the artifact (thereby insuring they aren't possessed or impersonated by someone else), after which they are bound to protect it (no defense check). Companions are zealots of Soltan. The djinn who have embraced the relic's power leave the shrine to spread the faith among desert folk.

The Black Rose isn't sentient and does not tell anyone what to do, other than infusing a fanatical sense of duty. It also bestows certain powers. Non-divine magic cannot detect the location or identity of its keepers, nor are they subject to mind-affecting attacks (including possession). At least three keepers remain nearby to tend the artifact's shrine. Other Companions are free to leave and spread the word of Soltan. When within 30' of a djinni or any outer-planar creature, Companions may randomly steal some of its magic, regardless of their chosen career paths. They may do so once per hour, up to three times a day (reset at dawn). They can use stolen magic as their next action or save it for up to an hour, after which the stolen magic returns to its owner.

The djinni is allowed a defense check with a –2 penalty for the first theft attempt, –1 on the second, and no penalty on the third. Critical failure on a defense check results in the stolen ability being permanently absorbed by the artifact rather than its keeper: *the djinni never gets it back*. While power is stolen, a djinni cannot make use of it.



Stolen magic includes (roll 1d4): 1-3. An innate ability lasting 1d4+2 minutes at most, or 4. A random spell, as described in the chosen game system. Innate djinni abilities, depending on their native element, include such things as becoming invisible, taking gaseous form, flying, turning into a whirlwind or a pillar of flames, creating illusions, mind control (through spell-like charms or possession—see *Demons,* earlier), granting wishes, etc. The ability to grant wishes, if stolen, is immediately and irretrievably absorbed by the artifact, no matter how far away it may lie, whether or not a critical failure was rolled. Djinn cannot grant each other wishes, nor can wishes be used to retrieve an ability permanently stolen.

Nordheim: Order of Tyr

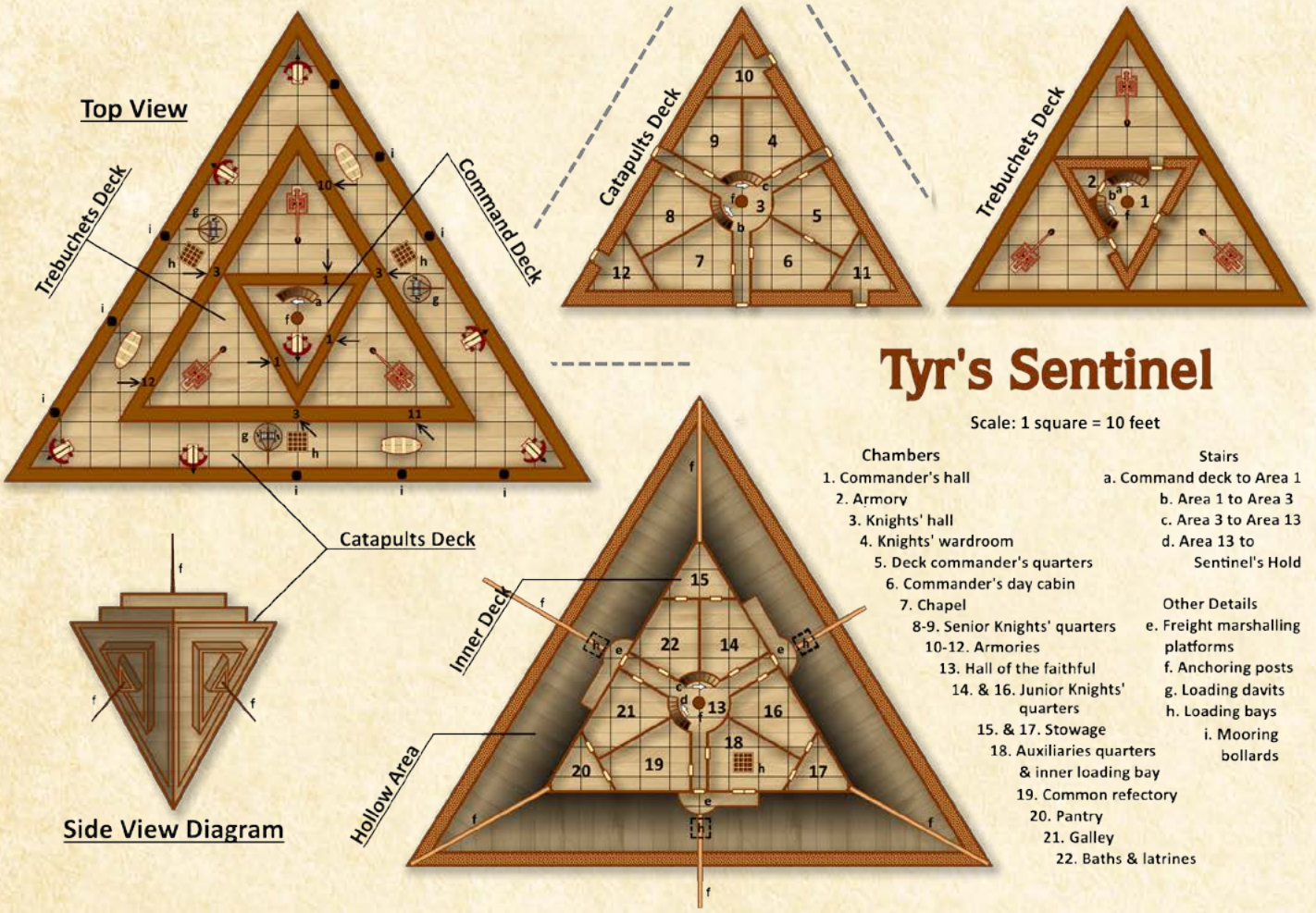
Knights of Tyr are best known as *hermit-watchmen,* who live in strongholds, far beyond the Fringe. They watch the great void, seeking portents of profound evil's coming. Their strongholds dwell in the region where Ghüle is most likely to appear, if ever it does. Until that fateful day, they train, pray, and gaze at the darkness beyond for an ominous shimmer among the stars. Should the harbingers of Ragnarok return, the knights stand ready to delay the onslaught so one of their number might escape and warn their kin of impending doom. Theirs is a fight to the death: not one hopes to survive, their ultimate sacrifice an homage to Tyr's own.

One can tell knights of Tyr from their severed right hands. Not all of them reside in space. Temple elders in Vargåsen, many now blind from decades of stargazing, inculcate their squires with the order's code of conduct, old legends of the gods, and necessary fighting skills. Glorious in their shiny armor draped in crimson cloaks, those who've taken their final vows are seen with admiration by common folk. Every few years, senior paladins and accompanying war priors leave Calidar aboard a visiting Wayfarer vessel. Long is the journey to the distant strongholds of the Great Vault. There, new ranks relieve those too sick or too old to remain.

Others among the knights choose a different path. They endlessly travel the land in search of clues that henchmen of the damned may hide among the good people of Calidar. They ride or they fly well beyond the mist-shrouded confines of Nordheim. To better acquit themselves of their duties, they drift as beggars through cities and villages, half-mad from years of hardship and fruitless searches. Yet their faith endures as strong as ever. Junior knights at times join adventurers, a marriage of convenience to be sure. Though they may choose not to reveal their true natures, they tirelessly promote faith in Tyr while delving deep into forbidden ruins, dismal dungeons, and other forsaken abodes for a sign of the hated foe's presence. The order's code of conduct demands the following rules to be followed at all times:

Be upright and without fear, that Tyr may hold you dear.
Honor your Lord and the Lord of your Lord in all things.
Be free of riches and bequeath them to the Order.
Speak the truth even if it leads to your death.
Uphold the law and your brothers-in-arms.
Safeguard the helpless and do no wrong.
Die with honor and, forever in Valhalla, take your place.

Aside from abilities typically granted paladins (as appropriate to the game mechanics in use), knights of Tyr also benefit from a +1 bonus to hit and to damage when fighting any Ghülean creature in melee (defined as a *native* of Ghüle or faithful to the monstrous gods). Knights are generally provided with a spyglass and a fist-sized crystal orb



within which glows a golden needle. In Calidaran orbs, this needle always points toward the grand temple in Nordheim, whether its owner stands elsewhere in Calidar's universe or in the netherworld. One ought to pray in this direction. The order also exists among the Wayfarers. Though an autonomous branch, it is allied to Calidar's order. Their sacred orbs point instead toward their grand temple in the Fringe. Wayfarer knights may carry recovered alien technology (such as multi-purpose powered goggles and navigational devices) with which they aren't necessarily entirely proficient.

Remnants of previous Ghülean invasions still survive on Calidar and in the Fringe. By now, these aren't native of the alien world, though they still claim allegiance to their monstrous gods. Some had brought with them seeds of horrific creatures, which they planted in remote areas of the world. The beings that spring from them have the power to corrupt. In the Dread Lands, some are powerful enough to "numb out" the spirits of nature's grip on flora, fauna, and the elements, so they may grow and spread like a disease. Sentient life confronting them is at risk of becoming their servants or turning mad. Such are the mysterious beings in the Bay of Eyes, currently waging war with Durandil's Rising Tide. Knights of Tyr seek these stains of evil hiding in Calidar's mountains and in caverns since centuries past. They hunt down the minions who now do the spawn's unholy bidding. If these entities reproduced in enough numbers, they could damage Calidar's world soul and cause a weakening in some remote region. Prelates of Tyr fear that such an outcome might presage a return of Ghüle, with its hordes seeking to take over the affected region and from there, unleash yet unseen monstrous horrors.

Strongholds of Tyr, such as the ones beyond the Fringe, are pyramidal constructions, similar to four-sided dice with concentric fortified decks on each surface. They are often referred to as Tyr's Sentinels. Each side is crewed with a banner of knights and their auxiliaries under a deck commander's authority. One of the four deck commanders is a powerful prior of Tyr acting as captain of the keep. Command decks usually feature a telescope of some kind. Sentinels are generally towed by a skyship to their positions in the Great Vault. With four decks facing in different directions, deck weaponry can target all approaching. Wayfarers occasionally replace catapults, scorpions, and trebuchets with alien weapons recovered in the Fringe. The structure's individual sides benefit from their own gravity planes perpendicular to the four decks. Hollow spaces below decks are used as cargo holds. Stairs (d) spiral down from the stronghold's four sides until they meet at the structure's center in an Escher-like manner. Gravity weakens progressively from the four inner decks to none at all at the center, or where gravity planes intersect. Supplies and equipment are lowered through loading hatches, and secured outward from the hold's center point, using thick lines or cargo nets. Anchoring posts (f) support the four inner decks vertically and horizontally. Bollards (i) or mooring booms are available for skyships to dock, enabling Sentinels to function as ports. At least one small skyship is assigned to each Sentinel for patrol and shuttling duties. Skiffs can also be used to board a hostile vessel.

Osriel: House of Azameer

Many of the gods honored in the merchant republic rely on scions of the cult to focus on small areas of their business. Such is the case of the House of Azameer, whose members adopted as their spiritual protector a forebear named Fortunia. The prodigal ancestor was a devout follower of Gilla Umberlock, better known as a human deity in the family's home town of

Lorical. She built her fortune from the work of their slaughterhouse and local butchers. They processed all manner of livestock and large game.

All was fine until one of the family members, third in line to inherit the business, had his two rivals abducted and murdered while the head of the household labored through her last hours among the living. Rumor had it that her passing was somewhat facilitated by a pillow pressed against her face. The new Lord Azameer, Malavant the Young, earned a dubious reputation as a result of his kinsmen's sudden disappearances. The old business suffered: a number of clients abandoned it, taking their trade to rival houses. Out of spite and greed, Malavant turned to shadier enterprises, and soon thereafter quietly pledged his loyalty to Balladoo-of-the-Hoo. Soon, riffraff set up suspicious businesses under Malavant's control. People started pointing fingers. The situation escalated as Malavant unleashed his thugs to bribe or blackmail city militia, and quieted detractors and any who threatened him. As the family slaughterhouse diligently turned old evidence into new sausage, dissent dwindled to a fearful whimper, and the Azameer fortune began to recover.

Next in line after Malavant, his sister Lady Millie, as yet unmarried, quickly fled the house, as did various more or less distant cousins. Millie relocated to Oosterdam. Being fiercely faithful to the original family protector, she took with her a priceless icon representing Fortunia and her legendary achievements, praying hard and long to keep her memory alive. The scion became irate with Malavant's betrayal of his sister and his family. Unable to intervene directly, Fortunia nonetheless regularly sends threatening visions to Malavant. She also endeavors to inspire her last true follower, Lady Millie, to keep fighting and wrench the family holdings from her despicable brother and his wicked master, Balladoo-of-the-Hoo. Helping her disciple stay one step ahead of his minions keeps the scion busy.

Living under the false name Farfalla Myrnkiss, Millie started a new venture, producing and selling fine porcelain. She now mulls the assiduous courting of young Joral Knuttenhus, whose mother regularly commissions work from Millie. Clever and insightful, Joral never told anyone that he'd unveiled Millie's real identity. To better his chances with the fair lady, he launched a quiet yet merciless war against crime in Lorical, targeting ruffians he connected with the House of Azameer. It helps that his family, prominent in Oosterdam, remains under the protection of Kinte Laëlin, spiritual scion of Arthalas's cult. Using his own funds, Joral hired bounty hunters connected with his father's profession, to capture, interrogate, and execute Malavant's minions.

Millie's main concern with her suitor involves Fortunia's ultimate fate. If she marries the son of Koban Knuttenhus, an influential magistrate in Oosterdam, Millie worries that her progeny may choose Kinte over her good Fortunia. It would be the end of House Azameer, which would become part of the Knuttenhus estate, the family's deity vanishing at the time of her last follower's death. Millie would only agree to a matrimonial union if her children's spiritual education remained entirely at her discretion, and if the Azameer inheritance was kept separate from her husband's. Though Joral would gladly agree to these terms, his father would not. In view of Koban's very long arm, eloping and marrying in secret are bound to fail miserably. Unbeknownst to all sides, the two scions have been negotiating details of an arrangement giving the oldest to Fortunia and the youngest to Kinte, should marriage and child-bearing come to pass.

Meanwhile, Malavant has been on the lookout for the treasured family icon. He wants it returned, and has accused Millie of stealing his property. While Malavant's pawns are scouting neighboring towns for clues, corrupt city officials in Lorical have posted a reward for Millie's capture. Malavant only wants to sell the icon's gems and gold, and will destroy the rest. Despite Fortunia's miscellaneous angry hauntings, Malavant managed to consolidate his control of Lorical's Slayers' guild. Their lair lies beneath the streets of the city slums, under the slaughterhouse. The proxy fight between Malavant and Joral goes on, though it remains an uphill battle. The wealthy always have need to deal with annoying competition; business has been good for Balladoo-of-the-Hoo and his dastardly disciples.

Slayers of Lorical are devout followers or zealots of Balladoo-of-the-Hoo, with diverse career backgrounds. Their ranks count mostly humans with a few elves and gnomes. They are usually recruited among natives of Lorical's slums. Normally, they don't operate outside the capital city, but on occasion, some of their more experienced members will stalk an assigned target wherever the individual goes.

One of the Slayers' abilities is to *shapechange* into another persona of their native race. It cannot be someone specific (another existing person or a past historical figure). Each time they switch, Slayers lose 1d4 stamina increments. Lost stamina is regained at least a day later at dawn. For example, if a Slayer switches appearances anytime during Day 1,

Table 24. Psychotic Traits

d20	Effect
1	Paranoia (+1 bonus to Int checks and –1 penalty to Wis checks OR the opposite)
2	Collects a specific body part from past victims (**d10:** 1. Eye, 2. Finger, 3. Thumb, 4. Toe, 5. Ear, 6. Scalp, 7. Heart, 8. Skin, 9. Brain, 10. Finger or toe nails)
3	Signs murders (**d8:** 1. Playing card, 2. Feather, 3. Flower, 4. Gold coin, 5. Toy, 6. Scar or mutilation on a victim, 7. Message or symbol on a wall, 8. Specific and unusual killing method)
4	Never bathes (–1 penalty to Per checks)
5	Carves a symbol into own skin after each kill (–1 penalty to Per checks)
6	Insomnia (–1 penalty to Int checks)
7	Twitches (–1 penalty to Agt OR Dex checks)
8	Lies pathologically (–1 penalty to Per checks)
9	Manic habit (**d8:** 1. Never turns left, 2. Never touches filth, 3. Never smiles, 4. Always smiles, 5. Rolls chiming balls in his left hand before approaching a mark, 6. Hums the same tune when nervous, 7. Always uses the same weapon, 8. Develops a persistent itch when stalking a mark, 9. Eats parts of victims' flesh, 10. Drinks victims' blood)
10	Pyromania
11	Short-term memory loss
12	Self-flagellation after a kill (–1 penalty to Str checks for a week)
13	Cherishes tokens belonging to past marks
14	Never cuts hair or shaves (–1 penalty to Per checks)
15	Honors victims with a poem after each kill
16-17	Phobia (**d20:** 1. Water, 2. Spiders, 3. Rodents, 4. Felines*, 5. Canines*, 6. Avians*, 7. Thunder, 8. Flowers, 9. Heights, 10. Clowns and jesters, 11. Crowds, 12. Darkness, 13. Dolls and puppets, 14. Mirrors, 15. Needles, 16. Batrachians, 17. Reptiles, 18. Open spaces, 19. Small spaces, 20. Blood. [*] Color: Odd—black, Even—white)
18	Cannot speak or sing (other than casting spells or praying)
19	Can only communicate through songs
20	Finds solace with a familiar item or fetish (**d6:** 1. Old blanket, 2. Teddy bear, 3. Momma's mummified hand, 4. Necklace of Daddy's teeth, 5. Music box, 6. First victim's hat, sock, undergarment, etc.)

the earliest stamina can be regained is at dawn on Day 3. There is otherwise no limit (other than the Slayer's total stamina rating) to the number of times personae can be changed. Reverting to the original appearance incurs a loss of stamina as well (automatic if the Slayer dies).

Shapechanging and dabbling with death perverts the Slayers' psyches. Each time they kill victims while using other personae, Slayers earn a *cumulative* 10% chance of developing a psychotic trait (see Table 24). These are permanent when gained, and the odds of contracting another are reset. A Slayer with at least one psychotic trait has a chance of felling a victim with one blow. This requires a *critical hit* (see *Damage Rating*, page 10). If the victim fails a defensive check, it is reduced to the lowest number of life points and the individual is knocked out. Unconsciousness lasts no more than 1d4+1 minutes. Roll the defensive check with a +2 bonus if the victim was aware of the attacker. The defense check sustains a –1 penalty for each psychotic trait the Slayer accumulated (otherwise known as the *Creep Factor*). This form of attack only works against human-like living beings. Psychotic individuals do not willingly seek to be healed from their affliction.

Phrydias: Sky Warriors

This order of half-elven knights originally formed in honor of an epic hero by the name of Bambathiel. His legends tell of the first recorded case of a Calderan eagle being tamed as a mount. The giant raptors are reputed for being particularly difficult to approach, let alone to befriend and ride like a horse. Magic sometimes works in this respect, but followers of Thaëldar see this as an insult to their deity. For them, Calderan eagles embody their Lord of the Skies. Being entrusted with one is nothing less than a holy gift requiring utmost respect and devotion.

Bambathiel died in a fight with a night howler, a great beast of evil that had been preying on Calderan eagles in the Kaël Mountains. Though he who became known as the *First Knight* defeated his mythical foe, his wounds and those of his majestic mount were awash with deadly poison. No prior in Phrydias could stop its spread, and both died in writhing pain. The High Prior of Thaëldar prayed for their return to life, but the Great God of the Skies decided to keep them both at his side. Since then, faithful followers of Thaëldar, those who are pure of thought and brave of heart, have created the Order of Sky Warriors in memory of their fallen hero. Bambathiel and *Oba Eagle-Lord* together became scions of the cult and the order's spiritual protectors.

Table 25. Raising a Giant Eagle

d20	Outcome
16+	Squire bears 1d6 permanent scars
14-15	Squire loses an eye (14—right, 15—left)
12-13	Squire loses a finger (d10 to select which: start with the right thumb, end with the left)
10-11	Squire loses a hand (10—right, 10—left)
8-9	Squire loses a foot (8—right, 9—left)
6-7	Eagle escapes (run a recovery adventure, and roll again if the eagle is ever brought back)
4-5	Squire suffers a serious wound permanently reducing one Ability score
3	Eagle dies while in the squire's care; the squire is disgraced
2	Squire is killed and devoured
1	**Eagles get in a fight:** (roll 1d6) 1. One squire is killed, 2. Both squires are killed, 3. One eagle is killed, 4. Both eagles are killed, 5. Three of the four protagonists are killed, 6. All four are killed. For each surviving squire and eagle team, roll 1d12+4 on this chart for an additional accident.

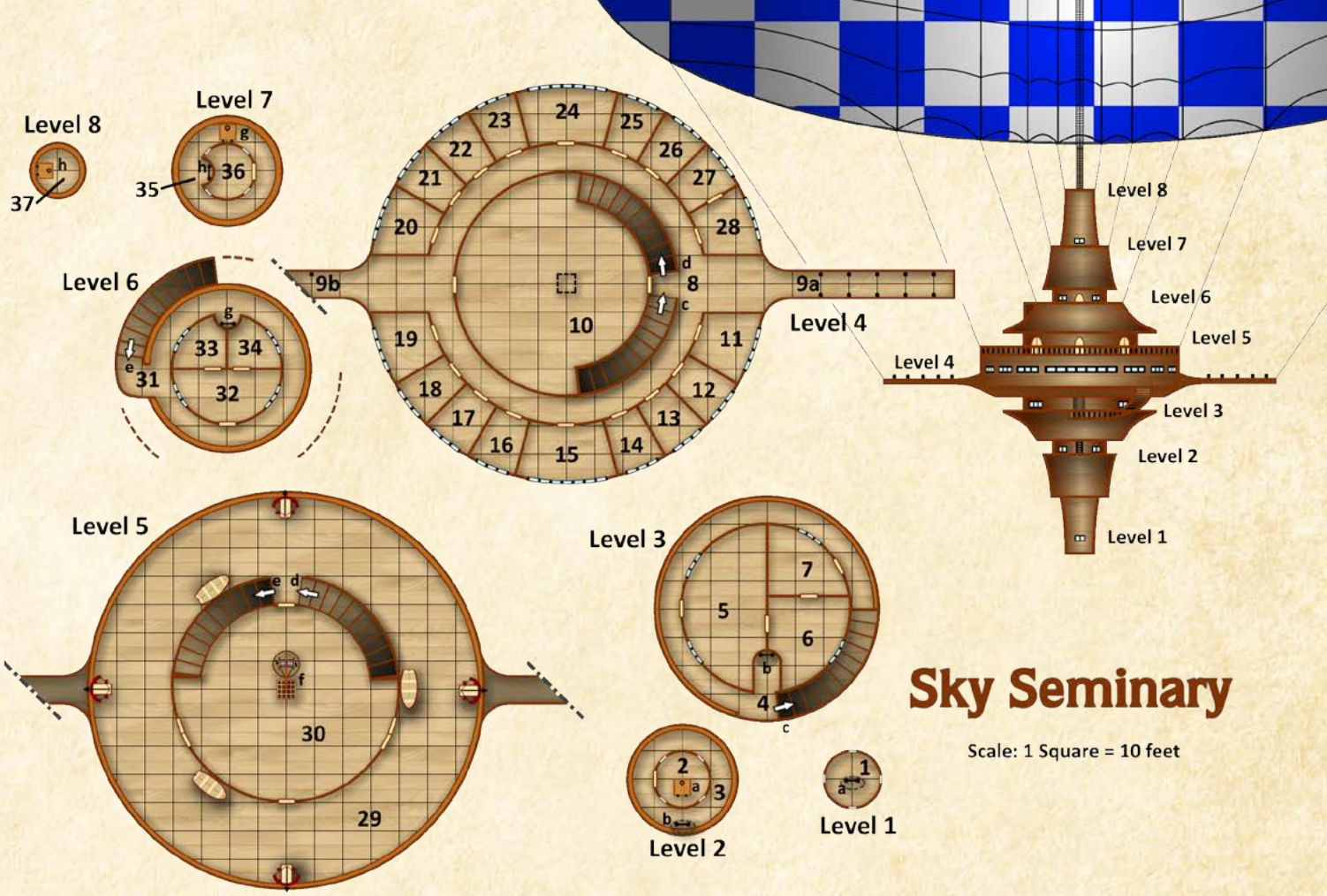
The night howler is an enormous beast that sometimes appears late at night. It is born from the nightmares of slumbering evil Phrydians, and vanishes before dawn. What is unclear, however, is why so many people would have the same horrid dream during one fateful night. No Bongorese literature had ever mentioned night howlers. A sect of malevolent wizards or perhaps a demon are thought to be at work, summoning the beast when the moons are right, perhaps as the consequence of an unholy ritual planting seeds of evil into many weaker or disturbed minds. Priors of Thaëldar have come to believe that in the heart of the eagles lies great spiritual power, which the wicked covet for their evil deeds. What they do with such wondrous power remains a mystery. As the evil beast unexpectedly rises again to wreak havoc upon Thaëldar's flock, the knights scramble to deny its odious harvest. In truth, the beast springs from a curse. It was cast by the demon-prince Kokumo, when Thaëldar cast his spear at him.

This order is the armed chapter of the Faith of Thaëldar. Aside from safeguarding breeds of eagles small and large, they live to protect the Sky God's temples in Phrydias and elsewhere. A contingent resides in northwestern Alfdaín, where the cult has found a significant following. Their ethos is neither fundamentally malevolent nor purely benevolent. Their philosophy concerns more specifically the order of all things in the universe. Most members of Thaëldar's fanatical legion stick together as a military organization. Others ride their fabulous mounts, traveling the world in search of clues about who or what lies behind the summoning of night howlers. They are avengers, adventuring warriors seeking a worthy cause for the purpose of acquiring goodwill regarding both quest and faith. Their beneficiaries watch for defilers of great eagles and for clues about the night howlers, and alert the knights if such come about. Following the belief that evil doers dwell in evil places, Sky Warriors aren't loath to exploring dungeons and other places of despair, for hints may lie there was well.

The title of knight isn't granted to anyone who desires it. Prerequisites include being at least a pious follower of Thaëldar. In this regard, race is not an issue. To become a squire, one must already be a fine warrior or a skilled prior (one with the experience of at least a dozen worthwhile dungeon expeditions should qualify). A time will come when the squire will have to seek out a giant eagle's nest high in the Kaël Mountains and earn its occupant's respect, a perilous quest on its own. Magic of any kind, clerical or otherwise, is not permitted, and the squire must act alone. Should glorious fate shine upon the squire, an egg will be available for the taking. It must be safely returned to the order's sanctum, wherein its new owner will have to care for it until it hatches. The squire must raise the young eagle, nurture its growth, earn its loyalty, and train it as a mount. Raising a giant eagle can lead to a tragic outcome, as accidents do happen. If randomness is desired, roll on the table on the left.

Priors of Thaëldar will not use their magic to undo any result from Table 25. These are fates ordained by Thaëldar, which should not be tampered with as a sign of faith and respect for the Sky God.

During their apprenticeship, squires spend time at the order's Sky Seminary, a flying school well above Phaeroth. There, they undergo intense training before and after having secured their eagles. Different curricula are taught during the year. Junior squires, those without eagles as of yet, earn the opportunity to study the giant raptors up close. For this purpose, elderly knights act as their instructors, featuring their own birds, older and more placid creatures that are a tad more forgiving than their younger kin. A high prior acts as the educational establishment's principal. The seminary is a lightweight structure built of wood and canvas hanging from a giant



balloon. Magical buoys prevent the structure from drifting away with the winds, enabling only the gain or loss of height to avoid storms. The seminary's exact position in the sky can be controlled directly from the chapel. Enchantments negate the effects of high altitude on temperature and air pressure. Generally, junior squires sail skyships to reach the seminary. More senior squires fly their own eagles. Onboard flying skiffs can also be used to pick up and drop off visitors.

Once a year, the order holds Sky Trials, during which squires and their mounts must demonstrate prowess and bravery. If the rider dies, the eagle returns to its place of birth. If the eagle dies, the squire has failed and must leave the order. If they merely survive, the two must continue to learn working together. If they prove themselves among the best, the squires become knights and the mounts their familiars, creatures forever bound to them. Riders and eagles, from this point on, communicate through empathy. If a prior originally, a knight ceases to progress along this career path and starts a new one as a warrior. All previous clerical abilities are retained; new warrior abilities become relevant when they exceed those already acquired as a prior.

Knights must take their final vows of loyalty and life service to the order at this time, becoming fanatic disciples of Thaëldar if they weren't already. They can choose between the *Path of the Sword* or the *Path of the Wing*. The former is the life of a militant knight, training for war and adopting army discipline. The latter concerns adventurers seeking to spread the faith of Thaëldar and unveiling clues about their hated foe in darker places and times. Commanding priors reserve the authority to recall any or all wandering knights for specific missions or, should war erupt, requiring the entire order's intervention.

Squires and knights are not permitted to replace mounts slain in wartime, and must either leave the order or become regular priors. If the second option is chosen, knights cease to progress along this career path and start a new one, as priors (or resume progress if they had originally been priors). All previous warrior abilities are retained; clerical abilities become relevant when they exceed those already acquired while a knight. In defiance of traditions, fallen eagle riders may seek to acquire another mount after departing the order and, should they ever succeed on their own, they become pariahs, blasphemous rogues hunted down by their past brother knights. This also entails abandoning their faith in Thaëldar.

Sky Seminary—Map Key

Lower Levels 1-3
1. Lower observation deck
2. Guard room
3. Lower gallery
4. Chapel gallery
5. Chapel of Thaëldar
6. Principal's quarters
7. Principal's office

Level 4—Main Deck
8. Main gallery
9a-9b. Mooring piers
10. Cargo hold
11. Instructors' lounge
12-14. Instructors' quarters
15 & 24. Classrooms
16-18. Acolytes' quarters
19. Latrines
20. Squires' wardroom
21-26. Squires' quarters
27-28. Galley & pantry

Upper Levels 5-7
29. Eagles' deck
30. Aviary
31. Library gallery
32. Library
33.-34. Scriptoria
35. Upper gallery
36. Guardroom
37. Upper observation deck

a. Trap door & ladder
b. Well and ladder
c-e. Stairs
f. Davit & cargo hatch
g-h. Trap doors and ladders

Ghastly Appendix

Although *Beyond the Skies* focuses on gods of Calidar, a few words would be useful here about great beasts of Ambrosia and gods of monsters. The former are ageless creatures that either were born in the Ambrosian dimension or were brought there in their distant past. Possibly able to reproduce, they can be as powerful as gods (or more), though they very rarely rely on followers to fuel their magic. Lacking any connection with world souls, some draw strength from Ambrosia's supernatural fabric while others feed on the power of divine prey they devour.

On the other hand, gods of monsters do enjoy followers, or they can act as metaphysical parasites, like certain evil gods drawing residual strength from the latent fears and sins of mortals. These entities are typically connected to a world soul. Supernatural patrons of evil monsters also include demons and beings native to the outer planes. These latter two do not necessarily conform to the established hierarchy of Calidar's gods—for example, demigods may have come into existence without a divine peer's tutelage.

Creatures of this *Ghastly Appendix* are defined as: 1. Great Beasts of Ambrosia, 2. Gods of Monsters, 3. Demons, and 4. Godlike Denizens of Outer Planes. Their aptitudes are described using analogies, such as greater or minor divinities, initiates, temporals, or paragons (see *Demigods*, page 218), demon lords or demon princes (see *Demons*, page 215), as well as eternals or hierarchs (see *Divine Servants*, page 211), if not scions of other gods. None of these analogies should imply these beings are subjected to a patron deity's authority. Their purpose is to offer referees an assortment of creatures to challenge the gods and terrify mortals, without getting lost in a complicated divine cosmology.

Abu al-Hul, god of sphinxes, riddles, and mysteries
Origins: Nakhem (in the Fringe)
Stature: Minor god, ♥ * 💀 *+3* 🗲 *
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia and outer planes (no magical domain)

This deity's adopted the appearance of a mighty lion with great wings and a Tanethian man's head. He has the ability to consume the life force of those who fail to answer his riddles, whether his prey are gods, spirits, or mortals. This being spared Faëriad after she answered his riddle (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 30). He rose from the beliefs of ancient Tanethians, ascending after their departure from Munaan, sometime after 200 CE. The *Abu al-Hul* name, meaning Father of Dread, is the one desert efreet gave him, and the one by which he is best known in Calidar's universe.

Status: At large, spinning new tales.

Ahghra Tal, *Lord of Seventeen Pits*
Origins: Ancient Gandaria (Munaan)
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–5* 💀 *–5* 🗲 *–3*
Hunting Grounds: Netherworld, ethereal, outer planes (no magical domain)

This creature, known as a Witness of the Vault, became powerful enough to transcend the bonds of mortality. Early in its demonic existence, it ran afoul of Barthazu, who ripped off its feeding appendage, which it was able to regrow since (see *Gods of Caldwen,* page 98). It now rules an area of the netherworld called the Seventeen Pits, where it keeps enslaved spirits.

Status: Awaits an opportunity to exact revenge upon Barthazu and his followers.

Aknaak, *Crystal Queen,* dynast of quartz elementals
Origins: Tellurion
Stature: Godlike denizen of elemental planes, ♥ * 💀 *+7* 🗲 *
Hunting Grounds: Netherworld, outer planes, Tellurion

This outer-planar autocrat enjoys a romantic liaison with Emeryl Starglitter (see *Gods of Belledor,* page 72). Like many primordial rulers, she looks forward to battles against competing Tellurian factions. One conflict at least is rooted in a dispute over an artifact stolen from a contentious arad sultan, the theft of which Queen Aknaak was accused. The *Star of Airy Crystal* was originally seized from a jann caliphate, where it was considered a holy relic. It is unknown whether Aknaak was really involved since no one has seen the relic since its presumed theft.

Status: At large. She hopes Emeryl will locate the age-old relic so she can keep it for herself and on her subjects' behalf.

Aranith, spider goddess, *Queen of Chelisaria*
Origins: Alorea
Stature: Temporal, ♥*–2* 💀 *+2* 🗲 *–4*
Hunting Grounds: Alorea, Calidar

Aranith was a massive spider that developed the ability to cast magic. She rose as a demigoddess of sapient arachnids, and established a hidden realm on Ambrosia, known as Chelisaria. Early in her existence, she captured Avraoth's companion, Talari, as the two sought to slay her (see *Gods of Caldwen,* page 97). In turn, Aranith fell victim to Arthalas and Fangrayne, upon whose mortal followers her faithful had been preying (see *Gods of Phrydias,* page 174). Faëriad took Aranith's place as a goddess of spiders (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 30).

Status: Slain. Chelisaria remains a concealed haven for demon spiders, independent of Faëriad's dominion or of Akuamakue's (see *Gods of Meryath,* page 120). They scheme for one of their own to ascend as a deity and to establish Chelisaria as a true magical domain. (See *Talari*, page 244 in this chapter)

Arkhroth Bloodboil, see *Hjarni Flametongue*

Arngoth the White, see *Fjalgar the Hazy*

Aroogh Dreadmaw, see *Qaraad Slimefang*

Baeleron Woldhound, spiritual patron of werewolves
Origins: Calidar
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–4* 💀 *–3* 🗲 *–6*
Hunting Grounds: Ellyrion, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Baeleron rose from the most evil of werewolves dwelling in wolds and forests at the foot of the Central Erebos Mountains. Once an epic villain, he turned to lycanthropy under the secret influence of Balladoo-of-the-Hoo. Contrary to popular belief, Baeleron's kind awake on moonless nights to spread their curse. They are seen as an affront to the sun god and his clergy who claim Ellyrion as their dominion. Arthalas resents the spread of the curse, which suggests wrong ideas about sapient beings who resemble him. Arthalas promotes benevolent werewolves, building a secret faction to oppose the evil ones under Baeleron's and Balladoo's control.

Status: At large. Bounty hunters have last reported him at the outskirts of Gynaion.

Baphbakbahal, *Holy Nigiste,* goddess of the Nāgá people
Origins: Draconia
Stature: Greater goddess, ♥*–2* 💀 *+4* 🗲 *–3*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, outer planes

Baphbakbahal rose from a race of draconic creatures that were part human and part snake. Most eventually fled their world during the early years of Draconia's Great War, as the dragons bid them take a side in their conflict. The Nāgá people scattered in Calidar's universe, a majority choosing Lao-Kwei as their refuge, others the Fringe, and a few Calidar itself. Priors of Djurohr Hammerlaw clashed with Calderan Nāgá people, badly straining relations between Holmring and the *Holy Nigiste* (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 49). That she devoured Djurohr's peace emissary didn't help. Matters worsened when Thraldûr Silvertongue stole her crown and other precious objects, a deed for which she holds a grudge with the dwarven god of

thieves. The worsening crisis drove her to make an alliance with the Black Queen of Draconia, who pledged an eventual revenge against all dwarves.

Status: At large. Baphbakbahal rules the Ambrosian domain of Nagmahal.

Boneyard Jack, patron of the jack-o'-lanterns

Origins: Osriel (Calidar)
Stature: Fiend, ♥*–4* 💀 *–5* 🗡 *+6*
Hunting Grounds: Osriel, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Boneyard Jack originally was an epic villain who stole freshly buried bodies from tombs in Sterlingham and Wichtelland for his brother, a necromancer in Caldwen. He later stole a magical tome from his sibling, which taught him magic to control the undead. When he found out about the theft, the sinister necromancer cast a curse upon his brother and banished him from the family estate. The spell turned Boneyard Jack into a fiend, and since then, he returns to his old hunting grounds in the fall to reap a new crop of victims. Like him, their spirits haunt pumpkins and follow him back to the netherworld before winter comes. Thus does Boneyard Jack build an army so that he may one day slay his sibling and recover the family estate.

Status: At large.

Chalybion the Younger, *Lordhigh of Ceruliax,* blue dragon ruler

Origins: Draconia
Stature: Paragon, ♥*–3* 💀 *–4* 🗡 *–5*
Hunting Grounds: Draconia, netherworld, outer planes

Maëlrond of the Briarwoods slew Chalybion the Elder as it attempted to establish its dominion over remote parts of Alorea (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 32). During the following decades, members of its past broods fought each other for succession. One who took the name Chalybion the Younger prevailed, killing its many siblings and its mother. Thus did it ascend as a "living god" and stand as Steward of the Cobalt Ring, an alliance of blue dragons opposed to the Black Queen's hegemony (see CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 65). Chalybion and its supporters hold a part of Draconia, building up their forces to oust Sayble from the hollow world.

Status: Chalybion the Younger rules the Draconian domain of Ceruliax.

Dagragol, *Lord of Lust and Depravity*

Origins: Ancient Gandaria (Munaan)
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–6* 💀 *–7* 🗡 *+5*
Hunting Grounds: Netherworld, ethereal, outer planes (no magical domain)

The divine enchantment imbuing the goddess of elven beauty, Adamar, turned Dagragol into ashes while he attempted to ravish her (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 22). Demonic remains being subject to misuse in the wrong hands, his were secured in an artifact functioning as a prison for felled demons. Tales long ago forgotten by mortals reveal that if it were ever destroyed, it would restore its contents to their former existence, one hell bent on wreaking havoc upon all that relates to elves in Calidar's universe.

Status: Slain. Ashes kept in the Ark of the Fallen.

Darkness in the Storm, *God Slayer*

Origins: Ambrosia
Stature: Great beast, ♥* 💀 *–5* 🗡 *
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia

This giant entity is a force of nature embodying Ambrosia's metaphysical fabric. It cannot be destroyed, lest all of the Ambrosian dimension be obliterated, a fantastic ability the gods of Calidar lack. Delathien, Durandil, and Sphiel faced this phenomenon; at best, they could only temporarily dispel it (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 35). Semi-sentient, the Darkness in the Storm forever wanders the dimension, cleansing it of creatures that do not belong there, as well as anything/anyone else getting in its way. It isn't able, however, to penetrate the magical domains gods created in this dimension.

Status: At large.

Dramongul, demigod of lizardmen

Origins: Calidar
Stature: Temporal, ♥*–2* 💀 *–3* 🗡 *–1*
Hunting Grounds: Dread Lands

There was a time when Hizzangul was little more than an obscure lizardman in a somber swamp of the Dread Lands. Fate led him to cross paths with Dramonak, a green dragon. She sought local help to gather gems from a volcanic cavern, on behalf of Lordhigh Viridar, her liege on Draconia. He served her well, regularly soothing her scales that had become infested with Dread Land parasites, and mated with her, after which Dramonak promptly devoured him and returned to Draconia with her hoard. She left behind an egg, from which hatched their son, Dramongul. Blessed with a few dragon-like features, Dramonak's scion attained demigodhood and began hunting spirit-worshiping shamans. He dreams of founding a lizardman theocracy worthy of him, and of ascending fully to Ambrosia.

Status: At large.

Espralyra, demigoddess of harpies

Origins: Aerion
Stature: Paragon, ♥*–5* 💀 *–7* 🗡 *+2*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, Aerion, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Espralyra is one of several rival demigoddesses yearning for full divine peerage. She and her kin possess voices able to mesmerize lesser deities or, more likely, divine servants unfortunate enough to cross their paths. Though these harpies dwell in the elemental plane of Aerion, they hunt in Ambrosia for the divine flesh they crave. Espralyra failed to subdue Khestrid Goldskald when the two met (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 52). The matter grew much worse when the dwarven goddess bested the immortal harpy at her own game. It is the reason for her mortal followers to harbor a very special hatred for bards and priors of Khestrid's cult.

Status: At large.

Fjalgar the Hazy, god of cloud giants

Origins: Jotunheim (outer planes)
Stature: Minor god, ♥* 💀 *+3* 🗡 *+2*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Fjalgar succeeded his father, Arngoth the White, after Krîma Ironblaze slew him, as she did many others of his kind (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 45). With his spiritual seed forcibly taken, she engendered a son, Arnmîr Tinkerbones. Fjalgar and Arnmîr are kinsfolk and on reasonably good terms, as the young dwarven demigod now stands between the cloud giants and his warlike mother.

Status: Rules the Ambrosian domain of Stormheim.

Gralтur Icecrown, see *Snjórbræði Gralтursson*

Grushgrom the Unshackled, patron of evil wereboars

Origins: Belledor (Calidar)
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–4* 💀 *+1* 🗡 *–3*
Hunting Grounds: Belledor, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Followers of this demonic swine once terrified the people of Belledor. He fell before Armidal Copperpot (see *Gods of Belledor,* page 67), but his ashes vanished at once. His master, Balladoo-of-the-Hoo, had cast enchantments on Grushgrom, one of which to veil whom he served, and another to recover his ashes, should he be felled. Wereboars honoring the demon lord vowed to find the secret to restore him to his former existence, and to seek revenge against Armidal and his mortal followers.

Status: Slain. His ashes remain in Balladoo-of-the-Hoo's possession. The gnomish god quietly provides spells to wereboar priors honoring Grushgrom, and inspires their minions to keep searching.

Gyrana, patroness of ghouls and the hanged
Origins: Ancient Gandaria (Munaan)
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–6* 💀 *–4* 🗡 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Risen from ghouls born of the wrongfully hanged, this demoness came to possess an artifact generating ethereal bonds strong enough to capture isolated gods, on whom she would then feed. The artifact wasn't intended for a demon to own, and it occasionally failed. Such took place when she captured Ellorien (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 29). In the ensuing fight, the elven god ripped off the demoness's lower jaw. She fled and was never heard of again.

Status: At large and starving, Gyrana, also known as the *Famished One*, seeks a way to regrow her missing mandible, as she can only ever heal combat damage when devouring captured spirits. Ghouls honoring her have become the most rabid of undead ever since. The Famished One also covets her old artifact, resting now in Ellorien's hands.

Hjarni Flametongue, god of fire giants
Origins: Jotunheim (outer planes)
Stature: Minor god, ♥*–4* 💀 *–3* 🗡 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, outer planes

Hjarni succeeded his father, Arkhroth Bloodboil, after Krîma Ironblaze slew him as punishment for refusing to serve her (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 44). With his spiritual seed forcibly taken, she engendered a daughter, Arkhâna Emberfury. Hjarni and Arkhâna are therefore kinsfolk. Like his father, Hjarni refuses to serve Krîma. He looks to Asgard as his protectors, using their truce as leverage.

Status: At large. Hjarni rules the Ambrosian domain of Eldurheim.

Itlaq-zul, god of minotaurs
Origins: The Fringe
Stature: Greater god, ♥*–2* 💀 *+2* 🗡 *–5*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Minotaurs originally hailed from Minos, a world destroyed in a very distant past, during an ancient Ghülean foray into Calidar's universe. Planetary debris contributed to the Fringe's formation. Vast numbers of Minos's inhabitants were abducted and devoured, or pressed into Ghüle's legions. Others who dwelled in outer-world colonies survived. From their ranks ascended Itlaq-zul. He later engendered the iron horns of Gheeth as a weapon against Ghüle. In his youthful quest for glory, Delathien hunted the sons of Itlaq-zul, and earned the minotaur god's eternal rancor (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 19).

Status: At large. He rules the Ambrosian domain of Itlaq-gor.

Ixthya, see *Yezilda*

Jaalzabath, *Dread Queen of Forest Hags*
Origins: Alorea
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–6* 💀 *–5* 🗡 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Netherworld, ethereal, outer planes (no magical domain)

Legends say that forest hags originated from sorceresses, epic villains of elven Sherandol or Tolarin birth. Over the centuries, folk tales led them to linger at the threshold between existences as monsters or demons (see *Eternal Glory,* CAL1 page 61). Since then, such popular beliefs extended to human cultures of Munaan and Calidar as well. Jaalzabath, one of the most notoriously evil hags, rose as a demoness honored by those of her kind.

Status: At large. She now seeks to rise as a Demon Princess.

Kabakuluk, demigod of kobolds
Origins: Draconia
Stature: Paragon, ♥*–2* 💀 *–3* 🗡 *–5*
Hunting Grounds: Calidar, Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

He hails from a race of diminutive reptilians serving their fearsome dragon kin. As various factions fled or vied for supremacy during Draconia's Great War, kobolds followed, handling menial work and fighting on the ground or below. It became so that their kind spread across Soltan's ephemeris, blues serving blues, reds obeying reds, or blacks honoring blacks, and so on. Sages of other worlds surmised that perhaps even gold kobolds existed, somewhere else or at another time. Of green ancestry, Kabakuluk rebelled against Lordhigh Viridar of Zarn when legions of his kin, expendable tokens of a callous strategy, fell before Ghülean invaders and were pressed into their alien ranks. He escaped the clutches of green dragons and Ghülean hordes. A hero in his own right and secretly honored by those still of this universe, he ascended as a wandering demigod. Kabakuluk later became a captive of Thaleera (see *Gods of Belledor,* page 64). He and his followers have entertained a visceral hatred for gnomes ever since.

Status: At large. Lordhigh Viridar would pay dearly for this pesky agitator's demise.

Kokumo, *Prince of Swamps*
Origins: Bongor (Munaan)
Stature: Demon prince, ♥*–4* 💀 *+3* 🗡 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Bongor, Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Originating from Bongor's vast swamps, Kokumo became Thaëldar's ancestral enemy when the then-young ruler of the Heavenly Valley refused to pay tribute (see *Gods of Phrydias,* page 172). The wound he suffered from Thaëldar's spear remains unhealed. His revenge was to curse the Bongorese with swamp monsters and later, the Phrydians, with a night howler (see *Sky Warriors,* page 238). Kokumo knows the location of Selenwë's portal on Bongor, but denied the information to Anwë when she requested it. He is loath to risk entering as he does not know what lies beyond, and will attempt to prevent others from going in.

Status: At large. He rules a ghastly region of the netherworld known as Quagmire, similar to Bongor's forested swamps.

Krath'nar the Ravager, god of sharkmen
Origins: Alorea
Stature: Minor god, ♥*–5* 💀 *–2* 🗡 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Krath'nar succeeded the previous patron of sharkmen, Squarn the Devourer, after the latter unwisely attempted to subjugate Bëlianda (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 25). The old sharkman empire beneath Alorea's inland seas collapsed as a result. Another now grows, hidden deep in the Sound of Bellíon, facing Mythuín. Led by their priors, sharkmen traveled through the elemental plane of Hydros to reach Calidar. Krath'nar and his kind have vowed revenge against all dwellers of the surface world.

Status: At large. Krath'nar and his divine servants hide in the ruins of Glaubrine, Squarn's destroyed domain in Ambrosia.

Malnibble, *King of Rats*
Origins: Belledor
Stature: Demon prince, ♥*–5* 💀 *–6* 🗡 *–3*
Hunting Grounds: Calidar, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

The King of Rats fled many times before Gilla Amberbraid's avatar as he grew from fiend to archfiend (see *Gods of Belledor,* page 83). He now sends lesser minions of his kind to spoil the rich lands from Belledor to Ellyrion. He is also active in major cities—or rather in their sewers, where

he promotes the spread of rodent lycanthropes. Their cult is demonic in nature, though it suggests a possible interest for Malnibble to attain godhood and claim his own realm in Ambrosia.

Status: At large. He rules a region of the netherworld known as Infestia, where enslaved spirits are turned into demon rats and sent back to torment the people of Calidar.

On-Gân the Faceless, god of thieves and doppelgangers

Origins: Lao-Kwei
Stature: Minor god, ♥*–3* 💀 *–4* 🗲 *
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Calidar's doppelgangers are an ancient race dating back to the time of the Kahuulkin. They were spies and assassins during the war that nearly destroyed Kahuul. Since then, their kind scattered throughout Soltan's ephemeris, and from their ranks rose On-Gân. He uses his divine servants to impersonate gods or their minions, and infiltrate their magical domains to steal valuables or information. Though gods of Calidar see On-Gân and his ilk as the riff-raff of Ambrosia, the equivalent of an outer-planar thieves' guild, they use their services to gain information about hated rivals nonetheless. Ghedrun Evercraft harbors a visceral dislike of the doppelgangers, something On-Gân finds ironic since she was built in someone else's image (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 50).

Status: At large. Rules a hidden lair in Ambrosia, called Ssai-khee.

Qaraad Slimefang, *Earl of Ogres*

Origins: Great Caldera
Stature: Demon lord, ♥*–7* 💀 *–5* 🗲 *–4*
Hunting Grounds: Netherworld, ethereal, outer planes (no magical domain)

Qaraad was prompt to seize the opportunity to replace Aroogh Dreadmaw, after Balir-the-Whispering slew him (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 46). He is the spiritual patron of native ogres of the Great Caldera, whose forebears had been stranded on Calidar after an earlier Ghülean invasion. Their descendants abandoned the old faiths in Ghülean gods and chose instead to honor one of their own powerful enough to attain demonhood.

Status: At large. Qaraad's servants prey on spirits of the dead in the netherworld.

Rontgruul the Pale, champion of stranded orcs

Origins: Calidar
Stature: Epic villain, ♥*–5*💀 *+4* 🗲 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Western Caldera

Born on Calidar of orc and man flesh, Rontgruul was a blood-thirsty chieftain and an unrepentant heathen. He spent more than a lifetime seeking isolated groups of orcs and subjugating them, executing shamans devoted to the old Ghülean cults to reinforce his authority. He founded the new tribe of the Polpol, still to this day traveling the mountains of the Great Caldera from Ellyrion to Nordheim whence they raid populated lowlands. He became notorious enough to attain epic status (see *Eternal Glory,* CAL1 page 61). Rontgruul actively seeks artifacts and agents of Ghüle to plunder or eliminate, intending to hamper the invaders' efforts to infiltrate Calidar. He also aspires to an existence as a demon.

Status: At large. Lords of Ghüle have issued a bounty for his death.

Rua'a Bilemonger, *Keeper of the Arena of Agony*

Origins: Outer planes
Stature: Godlike denizen of outer planes, ♥*–7* 💀 *+4* 🗲 *+3*
Hunting Grounds: Ethereal, outer planes

Demon-like Rua'a was born a beast of the outer planes. He became a thrilling attraction at the Arena of Agony, regularly fighting in the pit of death—and winning. He became powerful enough to defy and kill the previous keeper. Rua'a delights in abducting heroes from the prime universe, and pitting them against his dreadful pets. It was in doing so that he once lost face, after challenging Makapono-Truesight (see *Gods of Meryath,* page 130). The arena travels the ethereal until it reaches the echo of a great city in the prime universe. It departs when one of the keeper's pets is defeated. If a pet wins, the victim's spirit joins the spectators, and Rua'a earns residual power from the audience's cheers.

Status: At large. The arena currently dwells in the ethereal echo of Glorathon, which has provided a good number of quality abductees.

Sfyrtur Gralturkin, see *Snjórbræði Gralturssson*

Sirrulian Tealskin, elemental ruler, *Tsar of the Teal Clouds*

Origins: Aerion
Stature: Godlike denizen of outer planes, ♥* 💀 *–4* 🗲 *–2*
Hunting Grounds: Aerion, outer planes, netherworld

Sirrulian is one of countless self-appointed autocrats and inheritors of ancestral dynasties in the outer planes. He once met Saëroth (see *Gods of Phrydias,* page 182), whom he thought he could swindle. Saëroth prevailed and got away with the tsar's biggest thunderstone. Sirrulian has harbored since a dislike for all of Saëroth's kin and their mortal followers. He also is a foe of Kjosgor Stonecrown (see *Kjorûn Gatekeeper*, page 53). The tsar is a staunch ally of Jotunheim's cloud and storm giants. This does not prevent the colossal elemental ruler from ransacking the domains of wealthy jann sultans whenever an occasion presents itself. He is rumored to have accumulated a vast treasure in his cloud fortress.

Status: At large, dreaming of becoming the greatest monarch in Aerion.

Snjórbræði Gralturssson, god of frost giants

Origins: Jotunheim (outer planes)
Stature: Minor god, ♥*–3* 💀 *–5* 🗲 *+3*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Snjórbræði, son of Graltur Icecrown, succeeded his uncle Sfyrtur Gralturkin after Krîma Ironblaze slew him as a punishment for devouring Brâlkha Shadowfist (see *Gods of Araldûr,* page 48). After she ascended as a peer of Holmring from her earlier demigodhood, Brâlkha deliberately spread insulting rumors that Khrâlia hung Graltur's remains as a trophy on her wall to enrage frost giants. Like his father, Snjórbræði refuses to serve Krîma; Galadir Blackmattock (see *Gods of Belledor,* page 73) has since offered assistance to help keep the dreaded Ironblaze at bay.

Status: At large. Snjórbræði rules the Ambrosian domain of Ísheim.

Squarn The Devourer, see *Krath'nar the Ravager*

S'saithal, Gandarian sorceress, *God Bearer*

Origins: Gandaria (Munaan)
Stature: Epic heroine, ♥* 💀 *+7* 🗲 *+4*
Hunting Grounds: Incubael, Caldwen

S'saithal was the mother of Nekathal and Barthazu (see *Gods of Caldwen*, pages 98 and 101). Ashgaddon killed her but failed to capture her essence. Zarghadin had spoken a divine wish before her passing, causing her to be reborn under another identity, safeguarding her from Ashgaddon. The *Lord of Mirrors* then destroyed her previous mortal form and cast a veil to conceal her spirit. Forty years later, she became Head Mistress of the *House of Chimeras,* Zarghadin's school of illusions. Now an epic heroine known as Azathal Soulborn, she neither knows of her past life nor will Zarghadin tell anyone. His priors always celebrate Azathal's wizardly feats lest she be forgotten. Her spells are still taught at the *House of Chimeras.*

Status: She has not been heard of since 409 CE when Azathal departed on a quest for demigodhood under Zarghadin's auspices.

Talari, *Spider Grandee*
Origins: Gandaria (Munaan)
Stature: Lady demoness, ♥*–5* 💀 *–5* 🗡 *+6*
Hunting Grounds: Chelisaria, Ambrosian, outer planes, netherworld

Talari was Avraoth's consort (see *Gods of Caldwen,* page 97), circa 150 CE, when Aranith captured her (see page 240 in this chapter). The spider goddess kept Avraoth at bay in exchange for keeping her captive alive. For centuries, servants of Aranith regularly deposited eggs into Talari's body so their spirit spawn could feed on her at their birth. The demoness lived on, agonizing during centuries as her flesh was nibbled away and continually regenerated. Before Aranith was killed, circa 700 CE, she succeeded in turning Talari into a demon spider born from centuries of torture, magical conditioning, and physical alterations.

Status: Talari has become the leading demon spider in Chelisaria. She covets ascendancy as a goddess and the *Throne of Aroth.*

Tokalmak, god of the Tanareen
Origins: The Fringe
Stature: Minor god, ♥*–1* 💀 *–6* 🗡 *+7*
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

The Tanareen are small, raccoon-faced beings who, despite their endearing appearance, are aggressive predators more akin to wolverines and mongoose. They live to sack, deface, or put to the torch worlds that fall into their hands. These cocky and obstreperous spacefarers have become a nuisance to dwellers in the Fringe, including Wayfarers, Caniseans, Feliseans, as well as the Nāgá people, whose rich mausoleums stand as irresistible temptations, attracting them from as far away as Calidar's ephemeris. Their god, Tokalmak, and his servants crave ethereal crabs, which earned him Koanui's wrath (see *Gods of Meryath,* page 128). Baphbakbahal, the *Holy Nigiste* of the Nāgá, also despises the offending Tanareen god and mortals of his kind.

Status: At large. Tokalmak rules the Ambrosian domain of Vatanar.

Troïjchont the Trickster, champion of stranded goblins
Origins: Ghüle
Stature: Epic villain, ♥*–4* 💀 *–3* 🗡 *+4*
Hunting Grounds: Calidar

Forebears of this unique goblin came with Ghülean invaders and, like most humanoids of their sort, were stranded after their grön was slain. There is more to this goblin than meets the eye. A sworn enemy of Rontgruul the Pale, he is a stalwart shaman of Ghülean gods. Feigning meekness, he tricks his foes to earn their pity or their goodwill. In the end, he is wicked, the murderous agent of a monstrous god. Having benefitted several times from divine rewards in the form of magical mutations, he also exploited Calidar's peculiarity (see *Eternal Glory,* CAL1 page 61) to defy time itself. He leads a large band of goblin followers, and he is notorious among most humanoids of Calidar.

Status: At large. He was last reported in Osriel.

Verkhandyr, champion of the Auri
Origins: Elemental Plane of Pyros
Stature: Paragon, ♥*+4* 💀 *+8* 🗡 ***
Hunting Grounds: Pyros, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Verkhandyr is a paladin-like creature from the element of fire who struck down Astafeth after the latter had been tasked with capturing him (see *Gods of Caldwen,* page 96). This champion participated in many outer-planar battles at the sides of his brethren, which also led him to confront efreet as far away as the deserts of Narwan. Commonly involved in hunting demons, they see Caldwen as a place of corruption and deep-seated darkness that should be scoured from Calidar. Driven to fight evil, they do not hesitate to smite all that is associated with an enemy, for the sake of the greater good. When at war, Auri are easily recognizable from their fiery golden armor and swords.

Status: At large. Epic heroes/villains serving the Nicarean Inquisition steadfastly endeavor to sway the Auri to their cause.

Voarg the Croak, champion of Ghüle
Origins: Ghülean dimension
Stature: Temporal, ♥*–8* 💀 *–7* 🗡 ***
Hunting Grounds: Soltan's ephemeris, Ghülean dimension, outer planes

This beast is one of many bred to wreak havoc upon the foes of Ghüle. Arëatha gave up her life as a demigoddess in order to destroy this Voarg, when it was unleashed upon Meryath (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 23). Others go by such epithets as *the Gore, the Disemboweler, the Soulless, the Bone Crusher,* and so on. When struck down, Voargs are reborn stronger yet, somewhere in the dimension of Ghüle. They are then tasked with seeking revenge from their erstwhile slayers.

Status: Reborn, *the Croak* bides its time before it can inflict its revenge upon Arëatha's mortal followers.

Yezilda, *Dread Queen of Sea Hags*
Origins: Alorea
Stature: Minor goddess, ♥*–7* 💀 *–3* 🗡 ***
Hunting Grounds: Ambrosia, netherworld, ethereal, outer planes

Yezilda succeeded her older sister Ixthya, who perished during an ill-inspired attempt to subjugate Melrenwë (see *Gods of Alfdaín,* page 33). She and her forbears ascended from hags of the Alorean abyss. Legends speak of sorceresses of Meruín birth who became monstrous denizens of Alorean seas (see *Eternal Glory,* CAL1 page 61). Most of these creatures and a host of wicked fish people accepted Yezilda as their new spiritual patron. Their spread by no means remains limited to marine and lacustrine areas of Alorea, now reaching Calidar and Lao-Kwei, as well as their moons.

Status: At large. Yezilda rules the Ambrosian domain of Ixthus.

The Ghülean Plague

The original information about Ghüle and the alien universe whence it came appears in CAL1 *In Stranger Skies,* page 55. Minions of Ghüle are intended to be Calidar's bogeyman, a Damocles sword referees can hold above the heads of their players' characters. An appearance by the frozen world of Ghüle in Soltan's ephemeris may never actually happen during a campaign game. If it does take place, it likely will only do so once. Adventures can also be set in the wake of a recent invasion, where the Great Caldera and its moons have been laid waste, chaos reigns, and rampaging monsters are the norm—a post-apocalyptic medieval-fantasy world. Allusions to Ghüle in this book suggest instead a prelude to its coming. Aside from merely collecting slaves to feed the insatiable alien gods, however, the coming of orcs hides a bone-chilling scheme.

Smaller rocks than Ghüle itself infiltrate Soltan's ephemeris, acting as scouts and transports. They endeavor to insert spawn of their Dark Masters into various places on Calidar, Lao-Kwei, their moons, and most certainly in the Fringe. These monstrous beings are there to observe, breed, build followings, spread confusion and chaos, promote wars, weaken the faiths in Calidar's gods, and to find hidden ways into magical domains of Ambrosia. Spawn and those made to serve them often target the followers of gods who've warned others about Ghüle's coming. Without gods protecting Soltan's ephemeris, the Dark Masters can turn on the world souls and drain them fully. Feeding on mortals is mere sustenance. Devouring gods is a treat. Consuming entire worlds is the final and most coveted goal.



Curses and monstrous magic cast by alien spawn can corrupt mortal priors, epic heroes, divine servants, and gods as well, providing insights to Calidar's pantheons, their strengths, and especially their weaknesses. Gods of Calidar are a fractious bunch who can be easily manipulated—the makers of Ghüle know this all too well. These outlandish divinities are more powerful individually than any one of Calidar's greater gods or their related world souls, yet they can be kept at bay with organized efforts of the pantheons working together. It is the ultimate test of the gods. Thankfully, Dark Masters rarely work in concert, often being content with carving up entire universes amongst themselves, reaching for the bits and pieces they crave, each in their own repugnant and ghastly ways.

A troublesome Ghülean manifestation includes Durandil's sickness and what lies beneath the Bay of Eyes (see *The Rising Tide,* page 223). It is one of the prime places chosen as a starting point for the corrupting of Calidar. One of the Ghülean strategies involves secretly bringing creatures engendered in the other universe, so they may breed and prepare for the coming of the Dark Masters.

Other such places exist, at least one each on Lao-Kwei and Kumoshima, and any number of others in the Fringe. Eilonna seeking to cure Durandil of the horror that ails him, and Dagleeth's secretly helping her, has brought the two of them to the attention of Ghülean minions. The most hated among the Lords of the Briarwoods, however, remains Arëatha, who so handily defeated a champion and ascended as a goddess for her troubles. She too is now marked, along with her followers.

The so-called progenitors beneath the Bay of Eyes are aware of a renegade who abandoned the Dark Masters and fled to Calidar. Their agents are searching for him. The mysterious renegade is none other than Samaz of Sadarya (see *Gods of Caldwen,* page 102). Zarghadin himself has already been marked as someone they want to eliminate because he has the ability to observe them. That the *Lord of Mirrors* is connected with Samaz may put at risk the *Deep One*'s cover.

Another damning manifestation is Thraldûr Silvertongue's crystal sphere, as it lies inside Holmring and jeopardizes the gods of the dwarves though they are no strangers to Ghüle's peril. There is at least one horrid entity watching Holmring, waiting for an opportunity to creep in and inflict untold curses upon the magical domain. Kustrîm Stonebrand, suspicious of his shadowy peer, is now endangered for seeking the truth, along with Klangrîm Thunderforge, who has vowed revenge for the death of his beloved Belbryn Sunblade.

Just as disturbing were events of 400 CE when Soltan's servants suffered a celestial curse that even the sun god could not undo (see *Creed of Ellyrion,* page 110). The damage that was caused to him and his followers has yet to be undone, as some of his servants have indeed been corrupted and fled his magical domain, with weaker spirits at their beck and call. Invaluable insights about their former liege were thus unveiled. These fallen servants have become demons for the most part, dismal creatures now bound to the Dark Masters. Though they have come to hate each other, as demons do, they fear and dare not betray their overseers.

Even more terrifying was the battle of 364 CE when Asgardians captured Fenrir, reviving a prophecy about the coming of Ragnarok. Odin knows that Loki is linked to the end of their world, but that he may also solve the Ghülean peril, at least for a time. Tyr, of course, stands as an arch-enemy and prime target of the Dark Masters, along with Frigga, who yearns to lead Asgardians away from the old sagas, which Ghülean gods have been exploiting to their own advantage. As time passes, the Midgard Serpent—at least what would pass for such a creature in the grotesque universe of Asgard's foes—slowly takes shape. The great cosmic beast grows as endless throngs of captives are brought from faraway horizons. Sacrificed on altars of the damned, their spirits feed Jormungand's flesh and bones, beckoning its mind to consciousness, and imbuing its vast coils with ungodly power.

Meanwhile, the Lords of the Heavenly Valley face another and more insidious peril, one that would forever condemn all of Soltan's ephemeris. An alternate future aims to lead scions of Bongor to conquer all, using corrupting powers bestowed upon them by the Dark Masters. This path to glory, though wholly benefiting the gods of Phrydias early on, would irremediably lead to Ghüle's ultimate triumph. It is Selenwë who unveiled this plot, one that she quietly endeavors to foil, knowing full well that evil eyes are now upon her.

The Dark Masters are also aware of such a secret cabal as *The Watchers*, without being entirely certain of who all the members are—Durandil and Odin have been identified. Suspicion runs strong about Belgomeer Fablesong, as they know his past, but the others remain veiled. They suspect other cabals exist, and that perhaps they will become instrumental in defeating *The Watchers.* Until more is uncovered, agents of the Dark Masters continue their silent, unrelenting, and odious labor. So far, the Lords of Ardorín haven't interfered directly with Ghüle's business, but it may be so that unsung heroes of Meryath might become pawns, perhaps even players, on Calidar's cosmic chessboard, standing between mortals, gods, and things far more wicked and monstrous than mere dragons.

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