



# ANCALLIA

## THE BROKEN TOWERS

A GAZETTEER FOR GODBOUND

BY KEVIN CRAWFORD

# Ancalia

## The Broken Towers



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# Ancalia Before



Ancalia is a blighted land, one desperate for heroes and for the hope of rescue. In the pages of this gazetteer a GM will find the tools they need to bring this cursed nation alive in their own *Godbound* campaign, whether as a birthplace for PCs or as a venue for mighty deeds of divine valor. This book gives you the tools you need to challenge even demigods.

First you'll read of the history of *Ancalia Before*, a framework to describe the strong and well-ruled nation that existed only a few short years ago. With an understanding of how things were, you can better portray the collapse that has flooded over the kingdom ever since. Then you can read of the *Land of Ancalia*, with a map of the nation, details on its geography, and a summary of points of interest for heroes to encounter. With it, you'll get further details of a half-dozen cities and fastnesses crammed full of adventure hooks. Then turn your eyes to *the Five Families*, the transhuman nobility of Ancalia and their unique gifts. They can be used as NPCs cast adrift in Ancalia's chaos, or as potential character concepts for PC nobles who find themselves infused with the Words of Creation.

But these nobles are but chaff before the terrible *Uncreated*, the four awful courts of Uncreated Night that now rule over blighted Ancalia. Any of their monstrous lords would be a fearsome challenge for a pantheon of Godbound to overcome. Their seemingly unstoppable conquest has driven some to mad despair, such as the wretched *Mercymen* who seek to give euthanasia and soul-safety to every living human on the peninsula. The *Cousins* do not number among these humans, for they are the misfit transhuman lineages that could not adapt to the present age, forced back into the wilderness to prey upon humans and dwell in places of hidden power. Resentful, bitter, yet powerful, they might yet prove allies in the struggle against the Uncreated.

The *Undead* are no human's ally, neither the monstrous swarms of half-mindless husks that clot the ruined cities of the peninsula, nor the dire energumens who rule their rotting brethren. Even the *Great Orders of Ancalian Knighthood* have been decimated by their decaying numbers, with only a few courageous knights left to struggle against the impending doom of their people. From this grist, you'll be given the tools for *Creating Ancalian Adventures*, assembling elements from the setting into pre-designed outlines that give you an evening's adventure with but a few minutes of work.

This gazetteer assumes that the disastrous opening of the Night Roads has already come to pass in your campaign. Ancalia has fallen, disaster covers all, and only divine heroism can save the nation from certain destruction. Even so, this is not the only way to use this book. If you wish, you can use the information here to craft a campaign set before the terrible events of 995 AS, or one in which these awful things haven't come to pass.

And what of those campaigns that have nothing particular to do with Ancalia? What if you're running a campaign set elsewhere in Arcem, or in an entirely different setting? Even then, you can harvest the calamities of this book for your own game, plucking out the monstrous Uncreated Courts and their titanic masters as enemies for your heroes, or using the adventure creation tools to build situations and challenges applicable to any place of crisis and privation. Even the seemingly setting-specific elements can be lifted and planted elsewhere to serve your greater purpose.

## What Is To Be Done?

Ancalia is a nightmare land of ravenous corpses, otherworldly abominations, savage warlords, and merciless plunderers. Perhaps nine-tenths of the entire population has died within the past five years, and those who survive often do so in conditions of unimaginable privation. Plagued by the Uncreated, shunned by its neighbors, Ancalia is doomed without some miraculous aid.

The Godbound can provide that miracle. They are perhaps the only beings in Arcem with the power and the opportunity to aid Ancalia and free its people from the scourges that torment them daily. The calamity is so total that virtually any Godbound can provide *some* kind of desperately-needed help. Any divine aid would win the fanatical loyalty of men and women who are presently ready to count themselves among the dead. Whether a sword wielded against the undead, a harvest called from dry ground, or hope hurled in the teeth of Uncreated Night, any Godbound can find some welcome use of their Words.

This assumes, however, that the pantheon is actually interested in altruistic heroism. If a GM is running a less conventional game, with heroes that can only be motivated by more personal interests, they'll need to take care to seed the setting with suitable enticements. Several elements can be used to tempt less altruistic deities as well as reward those who fight for a noble cause alone.

First, the Ancalians are ready-made cult material. While they have always been a fiercely pious people devoted to the Creator, the recent disasters have shaken enough of them to make them a rich field of harvest for those Godbound who seek loyal worshipers. Even the Unitary faithful might be lured if the Godbound is presented as a saint or chosen of the Creator, a role that the Godbound hero might honestly believe is true. For that matter, it may actually *be* true; it's not as if the Creator is available for comment.

Second, Ancalia's treasures lie ripe for the picking. Foreign adventurers and Ulstang looters pillage the coast, but inland expeditions are lethally dangerous to mortals. Godbound have less to fear, and can break open vaults and bore into citadels to carry off artifacts and celestial shards kept there since antiquity. By placing knowledge of such things or keys to bypassing their defenses in the hands of desperate mortals, the GM can give the most self-centered band of heroes a reason to involve themselves with the locals.

Third, Ancalia is a power vacuum. No real government exists in the peninsula outside the shadow of an enclave boss' sword, and the Uncreated Courts are more natural hazards than ruling bodies. A pantheon that is able to close the Night Roads and destroy the four Uncreated Lords will be the unquestioned masters of a substantial portion of the entire realm. Even though Ancalia's population is much depleted, the survivors would doubtless deify them as living miracles of the Creator's own mercy. Even smaller sections of the peninsula can be made habitable redoubts for the pantheon if the Night Roads there are closed and the Uncreated driven out.

Ancalia is a land cursed by misfortune and plagued by monsters, but it is not a land beyond salvation. A pantheon determined to drive back the Uncreated, close the Night Roads, and rally the dispirited survivors can turn this blighted realm into a bastion of hope. To understand Ancalia's present, however, it is necessary to know its past.



## **The Polyarchy of Kham**

In the beginning, long before the conquest of Heaven and the Last War and the Shattering that undid the old nations, there was the Polyarchy of Kham. From the far tip of Ancalia, down the northeastern coast of Arcem and all through the hot south, the Polyarchy ruled half of Arcem under its riot of nobles, hierarchs, and elders. Once a squabbling patchwork of disparate post-scarcity ideotribes, the constant pressure from the Din nations of the northwest and the seaward threat of the All-Under-Heaven Empire had forged Kham into an uneasy federation. Few of the ideotribes loved each other, but they preferred their Akeh kindred to their ideological rivals from the north and their encroaching foes from the sea.

Most of the ideotribes of Kham subscribed to one or more varieties of Individual Aretist thought, believing that the highest and best function of a society was to enable the moral and personal excellence of its members. Of course, each ideotribe had its own conception of that excellence. In the southwest, the colonial ancestors of the Vissians cherished aesthetic and artistic prowess, exploring new modes of beauty, while the proto-Patrians of the south were adherents of Collective Aretist thought, imagining perfection in the virtue and discipline embodied by a whole community. In the middle regions of Kham, the tribes that later became the Oasis States were Transhuman Aretists who sought to excel the condition of humanity itself, experimenting with theogenetic engineering and new modes of family structure.

But in the northeast, the ideotribes that would become Ancalia had a more nuanced view of excellence. More moderate Transhuman Aretist ideotribes from the southwest blended with a temperate Collective Aretist philosophy, one that imagined a future of steadily-increasing communal excellence. New strains of theurgic transhuman modification and improvement would be implanted in certain sacrificial lineages, and while many of these modifications would prove sub-optimal or have regrettably unexpected side-effects, the successes could be folded back into the ideotribe's soul-gene. In the meanwhile, these nobly self-sacrificing lineages would be honored by their tribes for the price they paid for the advancement of all.

Like so many other nations, the Polyarchy of Kham participated in the siege of Heaven and the eventual discovery of the empty Throne. The years that followed were bitterly predictable. The Polyarchy and all its rivals laid about in a furious drive to spread their ideals and way of life before it was blotted out by their neighbors. The Khamites developed a number of Made Gods to defend and prosecute the ideals of their people. Their foes included their Din rivals to the northwest and the hostile overseas Ren loyal to the All-Under-Heaven Empire and the Made God they called "the True King". As the Last War progressed, Din war machines scourged the Polyarchy's northern lands and the Empire's neo-Taoist war hermits and Li-magic armies extinguished or assimilated many southern ideotribes entirely.

## **The End of the Former Days**

The chaos of the Shattering that broke Arcem free from the rest of the world did not spare the Ancalians. The transhumanists to the southwest were forced to fall back to their pyramid-city strongholds and became the ancestors of today's Oasis States, while the Din nation of Lom to the west was filled by desperate escapees from the dying machine-gods of the Bleak Reach. Ancalia was cut off from the rest of the Polyarchy and forced to fend for itself.

The damage to the celestial engines made further theogenetic research virtually impossible. New modifications and augmentations

were more likely to transform a subject into a misshapen monster than to confer any useful trait. The transhumanists were forced to abandon their dreams of exploring new modes of humanity and the modified lines lost many of their more drastically-altered members due to the hostile new environment and the lack of functioning medical support.

The theurgic infrastructure that allowed so many ideotribes to spend their time intent on matters of culture and personal improvement collapsed along with the decay of the celestial engines. Blessed fields that once generated crops without human effort became barren, protein tanks that fabricated tons of artificial meat ceased to function, and the skimways and airships that had survived the Last War succumbed at last to a lack of automated maintenance. The Ancalians found themselves reliant on a world that no longer existed.

## **The Birth of Ancalia**

The first few decades after the Shattering were horrific years of famine, chaos, and slaughter. Surviving installations were stripped of their magical and technological resources, with the latter regularly wearing out or becoming useless due to the damage done to natural law. Theurgy that had been reliable for centuries ceased to function or killed its wielders, and whole bodies of magical knowledge became useless or outright lethal. The ideotribes melted away as their founding rationales became impossible. Who had leisure to question the meaning of human existence when there was nothing to eat?

The only groups to retain their own identity were the transhuman lineages. Marked by their unique gifts and bound by their shared change, each lineage held together in a way that bonds formed of ragged ideology could not equal. Their ties were of blood and likeness, and they formed the nuclei around which Ancalian society slowly began to recrystallize. Many lineages died out in the chaos, but five of them were large enough and fertile enough to survive and spread.

Not all the altered lineages died out due to simple violence or privation. Some were too drastically changed to coexist with the degradation of the magical laws that once allowed them to exist. Most of these unfortunates died off soon after the Shattering, but others were forced into the wilderness, there to cluster around places of power that could sustain them. Others engaged in dangerous magical experimentation, learning ways of extracting necessary sustenance from their fellow humans. Many of these lineages degenerated over the years, becoming dreaded monsters and cruel, pitiless predators of the deep Ancalian wilderness. The common folk call them "faeries", or "the Cousins", and pray earnestly to the One to keep them far away.

The dark years passed slowly. The loss of life was tremendous as the Ancalians were forced to rediscover the primitive arts of farming and artisanship that had so long ago been abandoned for magical and theotechnological manufactures. The special gifts of the transhuman lineages helped sustain those who followed them, and their former strongholds became the seeds of the later Ancalian cities. Within a century after the Shattering, a life was possible in Ancalia for those who were loyal to the Five Families and their noble scions.

## **The Time of Five Lords**

Each of the Five Families had their strongholds where their influence was strongest and their followers most numerous. The acutely perceptive Kalay held the city of Anderaccha, the physically powerful Tilahun were masters of northern Janjero, the island city of Bakare was ruled by the sea-lords of Henok, the delta city of Saro was home to the Senai, and raider-lashed Adal was guarded by the grim Alazar.

These five cities formed the heart of five domains that together controlled most of the Ancalian peninsula. They traded, intermarried, and fought each other, often at the same time, and dealt with the scattering of smaller statelets and minor domains that sheltered in the peninsula's interior. Many ancient ruins date from this "Time of Five Lords", when some of the pre-Shattering theurgy and technology still worked, and still-standing buildings from those ages were transformed into border forts and clan strongholds. Most of these ancient dwellings were abandoned as Ancalia became more peaceful, but others were forced to be more rapidly vacated when some ancient sorcery went sour or some piece of lost theotechnology failed disastrously.

The Time of Five Lords came to an end with the rise of the mighty Ezana Kalay, the Great Unifier, who forged the five domains into a single united government in 355 AS through a mixture of diplomatic marriages, economic pressure, and the ruthless exercise of force. In the shining cathedral of the One in Anderaccha, he was crowned Ezana I, High Negus of Ancalia. For the first time since the Shattering, Ancalia was united under a single crown.

### **The Early Kingdom**

Ezana's wisdom was as great as his might. He wove the Five Families into his new administration, rewarding them with official control over their former domains and allowing them to appoint lesser officials throughout Ancalia, not only in their own traditional lands. Leaving that much power in the hands of former enemies would have been lethal to a lesser king, but the insight of the Kalay lineage was strong with Ezana, and he was able to pick out loyal men with supernatural ease. By the time Ezana I died, his empire was founded on a faithful nobility and a populace grateful for an end to the wars of the Time of Five Lords.

Most of the great knightly orders of Ancalia trace their existence back to the early years of the kingdom. The Five Families had more restless sons than they had land to give them, and to defuse the threat the High Negus began to enlist them into elite bands of noble warriors charged with the defense of the frontier and the careful monitoring of his officials for crime and corruption. These knights owed their standing and property to the High Negus' pleasure, and became a reliable tool of internal observation and law enforcement among nobles who might be too strong for less well-armed judges to reach.

The cruel raiders of the Ulstang Skerries made regular incursions along the coast, and Lomite antipriests led their own share of raids from the west. The Ancalian army met most of these thrusts, but the knights were the spine of these forces, the brave souls with the training and determination to face elite Lomite Reason-zealots or the deathly ice priestesses of the northern isles. Terrible monsters and grim faerie lords with their hungry courts still lurked in the high mountains and against them, too, the knights rode with blessed steel in hand. Countless tales of brave knights and their valiant deeds are still cherished around Ancalian fires. Recent disasters make their memory all the dearer to those who still remain.

For centuries, a succession of High Negusa ruled over the noble kantibas of the cities and the jantirars of the countryside. There was skirmishing between these nobles from time to time, and a civil war erupted in 765 on the death of the vile High Negus Teodoros III who sought to deal with Uncreated powers, but Ancalia persisted in its ways. The common folk labored in villages and towns, the nobles managed the business of rule, and the priests of the One promised a peaceful grave and eventual salvation for those who lived a virtuous life.

Ancalian art and literature still bore the traces of their ancient Arestist forebears, but had largely calcified into traditional styles, though they were beautifully executed. Classical poems, magnificent religious statuary, and proud architecture marked the great achievements of Ancalian artisans. Their cathedrals to the One were especially distinguished by their soaring, high-flown stone and the beauty of their many-colored glassworks and luminous mosaics of precious stones.

### **The Coming of the Night Roads**

In recent years Ancalia was yet a strong and prosperous country. Countless small villages and fishing hamlets produced more than enough for the common folk to eat, and if there were occasional corrupt nobles or dangerous monsters in the wilds, the knightly orders would see that matters were corrected. The High Negus Arad was not so gifted a king as his father, perhaps, and men murmured that he had dark moods, but his rule was no worse than many before him. The mines gave forth silver, the priests offered up prayers, and life went on as it had for centuries.

This ended five years ago, in 995. Without warning, nine massive Night Roads erupted in locations throughout Ancalia. Yawning gates of devouring darkness belched forth a sky-blackening miasma and an endless swarm of savage Uncreated abominations. While the darkness in Ancalia's sky cleared after nine terrible days, the tide of Uncreated had already overwhelmed most of Ancalia's cities and towns. Worse still, the darkness brought with it the Hollowing Plague.

Victims of the plague grew light-headed and feverish, their spittle turning black and their chests sunken. A gnawing pain inside their bellies grew worse and worse until the delirious sufferer could only dull it by choking down gobbets of still-warm entrails. The pain was so great that it robbed its sufferers of their reason, and many committed horrible acts against their own families simply to still the mad hunger.

Those who sought death as a relief from the pain were cheated by the grave. When their heart ceased to beat and the blood no longer flowed in their veins, the sufferers rose up once more as lesser undead that came to be called "husks". They mimed the worst habits of their former lives in hideous, blasphemous ways, as if all goodness had fled them with their lives. A few displayed an almost human intellect in their hunting, but most were no more than mindless undead beasts, craving the hot viscera of living humans. Animals and the Cousins did nothing to satisfy this hunger, and so these undead were driven to seek and devour their still-living countrymen.

There was no cure for the Hollowing Plague that mortal art could devise. It swept over the nation, decimating the survivors. It even managed to infect the corpses of the freshly dead, with perhaps one in ten lurching up from the charnel fields to hunt fresh prey. The worst outbreaks of the Hollowing Plague seem to be over, but anyone who lingers within Ancalia runs the risk of infection. Close contact with a husk may increase the chance, but no clear vector has been determined, nor any sure way of keeping back the sickness. A thousand folk preventatives are mustered, but none seem sure.

Within six months, Ancalia was broken. The knightly orders were shattered, their bravest members dead in defense of their people. The cities were horrific slaughterhouses filled with stumbling corpses. Holy cathedrals to the One had become lairs for Uncreated abominations, and even the back-country villages were not safe from packs of ravenous husks or prowling Uncreated. Ancalia became a nation of desperate survivors and those who had come to prey upon their wretched misfortune.

## A Cursed Land

Ancalia's neighbors had never loved it. The raiders of the Ulstang skerries had scourged its coast for a thousand years, while Lom in the west had always hated its devotion to the Creator and the Unitary Church. Its old kinsmen in the Oasis States had maintained trading relations, but the Ancalian distaste for their eugenic traditions left matters chilly between the High Negus and the God-Pharaoh. Most of Ancalia's trade had come on Kasirutan ships from the south, as precious few merchantmen would dare the northern coast of Arcem and the Ulstang reavers.

Ancalia's few friends fled her with the coming of the Night Road. Almost as one, the nations of Arcem were convinced that Ancalia's torment was somehow its own fault. The High Negus Arad must have been another Teodoros III, guilty of unspeakable sorceries and in service to unknowable powers. If he weren't to blame, it surely was the work of Ancalia's nobles, some secret cabal of sorcerers who pacted with dark forces. Or perhaps the entire country was a hotbed of evil and their terrible fate was only a just consequence.

In truth, no one wanted to admit that it could possibly have been a random misfortune. The idea that their own lands could be blasted so easily, for so little reason, was unendurable to the rest of the world. Because of this Ancalian refugees are not welcome elsewhere in Arcem. If they aren't accused of being secret cultists plotting to open more Night Roads in their host country, they're feared as vectors for the Hollowing Plague. There are many stories of the sickness springing up where Ancalians have passed, but very little in the way of hard proof. How much of the talk is genuine warning and how much is peasant rumor-mongering is yet unknown.

Individual Ancalians have been able to escape their nation, often by moving far enough that no one around them even knows what an Ancalian looks like, let alone how to tell one from an Oasian border raider or a Tongueman from Lom. Only those who can find their way aboard a ship have much chance of making it off the cursed peninsula, however; crossing the ruthlessly-policed Lomite border is beyond ordinary refugees, and getting across the Oasian desert in the south is all but impossible for anyone not gifted with a sand prince's cunning.

Most survivors have been forced to shelter in place, scabbling up what security they can in makeshift enclaves of refugees. The enormous loss of life and the general disinterest the undead have in local animal life have allowed these enclaves to eke out an existence with hunting and gathering. A few are able to grow sheltered fields of crops, though such farming is dangerous. The husks have no interest in crops, but bandits and other starving survivors certainly do. Other enclaves are still surviving on looted food supplies and abandoned grain silos.

These refuges have a temporary character, as any that grow too large inevitably draw the destructive interest of Uncreated or catch the regard of a husk horde. A tiny few are strong enough to maintain their place, but even these only last until some great power takes notice.

The only ships that come to Ancalia now are those of looters and a handful of merchants who know no fear. There are always adventuring bands ready to assail Ancalia's cities and coasts in search of abandoned treasure, or mercenary groups eager to loot what smaller bands can't plunder. While perhaps even more rapacious, less overtly plundering merchants remain who are willing to bring a shipload of vital supplies to trade with survivors who've done the hard work of looting for them. These expeditions are conducted quietly, lest the authorities back home burn these adventurers inside their own ships for fear of the Hollowing Plague.

## All That Remains

Ancalia is now a land of death and sorrow. Enclaves of surviving humanity can be found along the coast, where defensible terrain and fishing can combine to make a meager existence, and deeper inland there are mountain valleys that can be farmed while watchful eyes keep off husk packs. The old cities and towns are all abandoned, save for a small handful of hill-towns on plateaus that are defensible and have room enough to farm a little. No one is certain, but it would be a miracle if even one in ten Ancalians still live from the time before.

Aside from these outposts, there are an unknown number of small hamlets, hidden refuges, and survivor cells scattered throughout the peninsula. Most are terrified of their neighbors, having had hard experience of bandits and desperate refugees. The usually survive by hunting, though some still feed on salvaged granaries and other parched grains that can last a decade or more before becoming inedible. With the dramatically lowered population of the peninsula, these makeshifts are enough to keep them alive, if not well-nourished.

Communication among these remnants is extremely limited. The coastal settlements can get small boats between them when some sea-abomination isn't active and the Ulstang raiders aren't prowling, but the inland communities rely on scouts, knights, and fearless mountain rangers to slip past the monsters and the husks. Messages can sometimes get through, but inland trade is desperately hard.

As a consequence the inland communities have been driven to scavenge the ruined cities and towns they once lived in, slipping in to steal metal goods, tools, weapons, and all the small and vital things that their survivor outposts can no longer practically fashion. The scavenger bands are always small in number, as large groups draw the husks and the monsters, but many of them never return with their precious cargo. Most communities will send them out only in dire need, for as badly as they might need the goods, they can't afford to lose their able-bodied members.

Roaming traders still sometimes travel from outpost to outpost, they and a handful of trusted guards and porters bringing precious necessities and vital news from other communities. These men and women are hard as black iron, many of them former knights who find this the best service they can offer their surviving brethren. Even the more brutal outposts will often deal fairly with them, if only because theft would cost more blood than the trader's bags of nails and sacks of salt are worth. Their only coin is barter; silver is worthless now.

Many of the surviving enclaves are under the hard-handed rule of former nobles of the Five Families, or peasant warlords who have proven their capability. They are desperate places in the best of times, with hunger always near and the constant fear of the Uncreated and the husks hovering over the inhabitants. Some of their lords are cruel by hard necessity. Others do it for the pleasure. The best are no harsher than they must be to keep their people alive, waiting for the plague to pass or the Night Roads to close or some shining hero to come and save them from their calamities.

There is ample room for heroism in these dark places. Many enclaves are desperate for some kind of strong protector, anyone who can ensure that their inhabitants will live to see another day. After five years of this nightmarish existence, many survivors are perfectly willing to accept any kind of leader at all provided that food and safety can be had from them. If such a hero could also provide a cure for the Hollowing Plague and a shield against the Uncreated, they could expect a fanatical loyalty from these wretched men and women and a worshipful devotion to their cause.

## A Time for Heroes

As hard and terrible as the times may be, not everything is lost. The heroic Patriarch Ezek holds fast in his mountain sanctuary of Hadiya, praying with the surviving Unitar bishops for the salvation of his people and mercy for their souls. Thanks to a tremendous trove of Unitary relics and sacred objects, the patriarch's sanctuary has become a beacon for the souls of those slain in Ancalia. From the northern cape down to the Alero river to the south, all who die are preserved from Hell's flames and allowed peaceful sleep in the earth. Even unbelievers are spared by the power of the patriarch's holy devotion, leaving behind only empty shells.

Yet this salvation comes at a price. The strain of the holy rituals and prayers is slowly killing off the surviving bishops, leaving all the greater burden on Patriarch Ezek's shoulders. The time-consuming rituals and need for specially-consecrated ground also mean that the patriarch cannot leave the sanctuary or lend his holy theurgic powers to the defense of Ancalia. For him to leave off his prayers would mean the damnation of countless wretched souls who die without benefit of proper funerary rites. Ezek feels that however terrible the situation may be for the living, it is his holy duty to preserve their souls from the everlasting agonies of damnation. He and his loyal bishops can maintain this guard for perhaps five years more if no disaster strikes, but eventually, the strain will overcome him.

Meanwhile, the surviving knights of the realm do what they can to protect their people. These heroic men and women are often found as leaders of the more upright communities or wandering paladins who lead frightened cells of survivors to safety. They are few, and grow fewer every season, but their example gives hope to the common folk. Their heroism and self-sacrifice speak of ideals that cannot be broken by disaster. It is not unheard-of for common folk to claim membership in one of the orders, proving it by their deeds, if not their noble pedigree.

A few knights are attempting to recruit new members for their orders, choosing worthy heroes among the common folk and giving them what little training they can. The quality of these "hedge knights" varies wildly, but however questionable their noble education, none can deny that they are extremely good at fighting the Uncreated.

The faith of the Ancalians is sorely tested by their trials, but their belief in the Creator and the people's trust in His mercy sustain many refugees who have no other reason to live. Among those who have lost everything, those who see nothing but certain horrible death before them and inescapable loss behind, some few still burn with a holy defiance. They refuse to break under their sorrows, finding purpose and meaning beyond this present life, finding strength in their determination to do the will of the Creator. They fight for their God and their people, and they do not ask for hope.

And now, so recently, come the Godbound. A very few have manifested among the people of Ancalia, while a handful of others have entered from other lands. Of these, some die early, when they dare too great a danger, or try to face down an Uncreated monstrosity that's more than they have strength to defeat. Yet a few have escaped such a fate, and have become wild cards in this blighted peninsula. Their gifts can sustain whole communities, or cure the horrors of the Hollowing Plague, or even seal the terrible Night Roads that belch forth their horrors over the land. They have the power to aid so many... and so many have cause to seek their favor. Some will use their powers wisely and nobly, fighting to free Ancalia of the horror that has befallen it. Others will find more self-satisfying use for their precious gifts.

## Important Historical Events

Ancalia has been a functioning nation under a single monarch for more than six hundred years. A great deal of history has been made in that time, but PCs are likely to be most interested in the current crisis. Still, some past events can be the seeds for lost ruins, dark secrets, or lingering afflictions. The list below numbers only a few of the more interesting events.

- 365 AS The Self-Directionists, or "Pointers", the last remnant ideotribe from before the Shattering, are crushed by High Negus Ezad. Their democratic and individualistic attitude is no longer timely, but their secret base is never found.
- 420-460 Lomite forces take a substantial piece of western Ancalia, holding them for forty years. When the Army of Reason is driven west at last, they leave their geometrical garrisons and logic traps behind. Most are sealed as places of heresy.
- 435 Abbess Lidya the Commingler develops a theology that marries Unitary principles with Lomite rationalism. Both groups seek her death, but she leads her small sect into the Kaffan mountains, taking along numerous stolen Lomite treasures.
- 532-536 The Cold Uprising on the far northeast coast, where villagers begin to worship the Witch Queens of the Ulstang Skerries in exchange for promises of eternal "life". Grim inquisitors burn out the cults, but incite a peasant uprising. Their leaders are said to have frozen themselves to await their queens' coming rule.
- 755-765 High Negus Teodoros III, later known as the Unking, takes the throne. His network of secret Uncreated cults is penetrated by Lady Sadira Senai, whose courtly allies rally defiance and overthrow him ten years later. Sadira's efforts found the Invidian Order of knighthood and win her eventual sainthood.
- 810 The Loving Prophet, an Oasian flesh-sage, incites certain cadet branches of nobility to begin incestuous eugenic experiments to strengthen their lineages, "marrying" into each others' families to conceal the crime. Rumor has it that the process worked, but the guilty families were forced to flee into the hills by their disgusted peers. The Prophet herself was never found.
- 980 Sir Nahar Bayiz prophesies horror and destruction for the nation. The Glorificant knight is pitied for his obvious madness, but escapes incarceration in his motherhouse and flees into the back country. Some wealthy or paranoid adherents construct refuges against the coming darkness, some of them stocked with precious Ancalian cultural treasures or vital supplies.



# The Governing of the Nation

**B**efore the coming of the Night Roads, Ancalia was a monarchy under the hand of High Negus Arad, a brooding king who was little engaged with affairs of state. What authority the king possessed rested on three legs: the loyalty of the royal knightly orders, the tax gold sent by the kantibas he appointed to govern Ancalia's cities, and the prayers and preaching of the Unitary Church and its patriarch.

The High Negus was strong, but he was never more than the strongest of Ancalia's lords. Rivaling his power were the jantirars, the hereditary lords of the great domains of forests, plains, and mountains. The kantibas ruled the cities, but the jantirars were masters on their own land, and nine of ten Ancalians could be found living under their rule. These peasants and men-at-arms formed the bulk of the nation's armies and agriculturalists, and if the jantirars were not so wealthy as the kantibas, they had bread and steel in plenty. The king was obliged to be careful in their management, lest he anger enough of them to form a faction that the blades of his knights and the gold of his cities could not put down.

## The Theory of Rule

Rulership in Ancalia was expressed in two ways: the way it was taught to the common folk by the priests and the magistrates, and the way it was understood by the actual rulers. These two ways had their similarities, but every noble worth his fief knew that the scribblings of monks were not to be confused with actual political competence.



In theory, the king was the absolute autocrat over all Ancalia. He appointed the kantibas from talented minor nobility, and these chosen officers repaid the grace with loyalty and the sober oversight of their cities. The kantibas then enfeoffed various businesses and tax monopolies on other worthy nobles, giving them rights to the king's enterprises in exchange for certain yearly sums of tribute, which were passed along to the royal exchequer. The kantibas and their "coin lords" dutifully obeyed the king's laws, judging crimes according to royal writ.

Alongside the kantibas, the noble jantirars were faithful servants of the king, making a tribute of their household troops to defend the borders from Ulstang raiders, sand prince bandits, and Lomite zealots, along with suppressing the occasional rebellious lord or outbreak of monsters in the hills. The king generously confirmed the jantirars in their noble estate, and each new heir received his father's lands only by the king's favor and permission. The jantirars sub-enfeoffed portions of their land to younger sons and worthy nobles of minor allied houses, creating "blade lords" loyal to them in turn. These vassals were responsible for keeping order in their portion of the domain and were granted the judgment of crimes short of those deserving death.

Outside both kantibas and coin lords, jantirars and blade lords, were the great orders of royal knighthood. These seven orders were filled with the excess nobility of Ancalia, with strong-armed sons and sufficiently martial daughters able to carry out the king's justice with sword and steely faith. All but one of the orders maintained the right of high justice in the land, able to overrule the verdicts of anyone short of a kantiba or jantirar. Accomplished members of the orders were granted their own small fiefs out of royal lands and a stipend to maintain them in dignity. When not occupied in rooting out injustice and corruption, the knights fought raiders, slew dire beasts, and served the nation each in the special ways of their chosen order.

The final authority that theory would recognize was the Unitary Church of Ancalia, led by its Patriarch Ezek. The holy patriarch had unquestioned authority over the fifty pious bishops of the land, the bishops overseeing episcopates well-stocked with monasteries, nunneries, abbeys, and churches. A host of monastic brethren and secular priests prayed unceasingly for the Creator's blessings upon Ancalia and piously served their fellow man. Secular lords could not try a cleric's crimes; only the bishop's clerical court could judge a priest, monk, or nun, and of course, their justice was inevitably correct.

Abbeys and monasteries were under the discipline of an abbot chosen by the brethren or the local bishop, while nunneries accepted the pious guidance of an abbess. Crimes and other disorders on church land were to be judged by the abbot or abbess save in heinous matters of treason or in affairs that compelled the notice of the knighthood.

Beneath these layers of rule, the humble common folk of Ancalia were expected to lead lives of simple service and contentment, sheltered by the strong hand of the king and the wise stewardship of his vassals. Such protection had its price, of course, in fairly-exacted taxes of grain, labor, or silver, but it was no more than justice would require.

A common laborer could not expect to rise far above his station, but with determination and a little luck, his children might be able to buy a little land and become respectable yeoman farmers. Clever progeny could find a place in the cities as clerks or minor officials serving the kantiba and his coin lords, and those with unusual wit and piety could hope to be accepted into the clergy.

## The Practice of Control

The reality, of course, was more complex. While Ancalia was never a particularly harsh or oppressive land, particularly compared to the savagery of the Ulstangers to the north or the cold cruelty of the Lomites to the west, it had its flaws and blemishes. Many of Ancalia's knights and nobles were good and honest stewards of the people, but there were tensions even among the best of them. The three sharpest divides were between the kantibas and the jantirars, between the king and the jantirars, and between the knights and the other nobles.

The kantibas ruled the cities and found their wealth almost entirely dependent on trade and crafting. They depended on the jantirars for raw materials, food for their population, and passage for their merchants, all of which came at a price in silver. Many jantirars and their blade lord vassals scorned the kantibas and the coin lords as mere soft-handed merchants and money-grubbers, while the latter often viewed the rural nobles as half-savage nitwits who thought fine steel weaponry was to be acquired from up a coin lord's backside rather than through honest trade.

The jantirars often balked at obeying the king. The High Negus could command as he pleased, but unless he made it worth a jantirar's time with silver or threatened them sufficiently with his knights the jantirar would tend to "interpret" the royal order the way he liked best. Open defiance was rare, as it would give their rivals an excuse to suppress them, but jantirars had half a hundred ways of misinterpreting the royal intent when it didn't suit their own ideas.

The royal knights were almost universally distrusted by the other nobles. The knights never had any reason to be loyal to anyone but the king and their own kindred, and as they were customarily sent where their family members were not, they had very few reasons to go easy on the small peculations and minor bribes that officialdom the world over has always thought their right. Lone knights were known to occasionally have tragic "accidents" while on a tour.

And beneath these conflicting interests were the common folk, largely ignored by their betters. Their business was to pay their taxes and obey their lords, and for the most part, that's exactly what they did. Rebellions were rare in old Ancalia, rare as truly terrible lords, but there were times when some foaming demagogue or tyrannical master could provoke even sturdy yeomen into torch-lit rampages. When violence was impractical, an organized tax strike could bring fiscal calamity on an unworthy master.

## Since the Catastrophe

The old verities collapsed with the Hollowing Plague and the coming of the Night Roads five years ago. The High Negus has vanished, the cities have become charnel houses, and the countryside is scourged by roaming packs of husks and terrible Uncreated abominations. Organized government has disintegrated throughout Ancalia, though most settlements maintain a pretense of it, mimicking the old lines of authority even if their liege-lords were long since eaten alive or their own noble blood is nonexistent.

There are at least a half-dozen High Neguses scattered through the peninsula, a double-bushel of jantirars for every original domain, and every moss-veiled cave hideout seems to have its own kantiba. Even when a title is patently ludicrous, the people of Ancalia cling to them because they call back to a time when the world worked the way it should work, and was not overrun by these monsters out of nightmare.

At their best, these old noble titles call back to virtues of heroism and self-sacrifice, to ideals of bold leadership and the law upheld by

## Precedence and Address

The nobility and high clergy of Ancalia follows a strict social precedence. While higher-ranked nobles have no power to command the lesser unless they are actual vassals of the greater lord, each is jealously aware of the honors, courtesies, and social standing they are due. From highest to lowest, the precedence is as follows.

### Noble Forms of Address

The High Negus, addressed as "Your Majesty"  
The Patriarch of Ancalia, "Your Holiness"  
The Negiste, the queen, addressed as "Your Majesty"  
Jantirars of the greatest domains, "Your Grace"  
Grand masters of the royal knights, "Your Valiance"  
Kantibas of the great cities, "Your Excellency"  
Bishops, addressed as "Your Reverence"  
Jantirars of lesser domains, "Your Grace"  
Kantibas of minor cities, "Your Excellency"  
Senior knights of the royal orders, "Your Honor"  
Abbots and abbesses, addressed as "Father/Mother"  
Blade lords, addressed as "Your Honor"  
Coin lords, addressed as "Your Honor"  
Knights of the royal orders, "My lord/lady"  
Nobles without fiefs, addressed as "My lord/lady"

### Non-Noble Courtesies

Non-noble gentry, "Squire/Mistress"  
Monks and nuns, "Brother/Sister"  
Priests, addressed as "Father"  
Wealthy commoners, "Master/Mistress"  
Common folk, addressed by their name alone

Nobles may be addressed as "my lord/lady" in informal settings without offense. Clerical dignities supersede lay titles; thus, a nobly-born priest is addressed as "Father" and not "my lord".

a strong hand. Sadly, these days they are just as often used as excuses to justify the pillaging of strangers and the collection of "taxes" in the name of a nonexistent right. Still, the common folk remember the virtues of a romanticized past, and many are desperate for a true noble to follow in these terrible times.

Within these ramshackle communities, the people tend to fall back on old habits of address and social relationships. Those who claim a noble title are implicitly declaring their power and ability to protect their followers, and they will attract those who desire a capable guardian. Of course, the lord will then have to *prove* their ability to protect and lead their charges, and not all prove equal to the task. Those who fail catastrophically rarely survive their mistakes, but those who simply fail to manage the sentiments of their followers can sometimes find themselves on the business end of a personal peasant revolt.

Some nobles have taken advantage of the chaos to lay claim to lands and titles their family had long since lost. In most cases this is a mad and useless ambition, a craving to be lord over ruins and desolation. Many of these nobles have fought for these prizes so long, however, that they simply cannot comprehend how worthless their goal is now. Some are so deranged with their ambitions that they might even pact with Uncreated powers to seize their "just due".

# People, Languages, and Names



The vast majority of the inhabitants of Ancalia are derived from the old Akeh stock of the Polyarchy of Kham. They are a tall people of slim lines, with men often topping six feet and women averaging a little more than five and a half. Their skin is dark, with shades ranging from polished ebony to a light tan. The most common shade tends to be an even cafe-au-lait, and their hair is straight, dark, and thick, though often braided.

The Ancalians were always considered a handsome race by their neighbors, as the heavy admixture of transhuman modifications in the population smoothed out many of the usual small flaws of the human form. Ancalian faces were symmetrical, their skin was bright and clear, and their lines were well-proportioned. Tooth decay was almost unknown, and even the ravages of age tended to weather their beauty rather than gnarl it beyond recognition. This transhuman vigor was not so pronounced as to spare them from ordinary sicknesses and the scars of battle, but until the recent catastrophe the beauty of Ancalian maidens and the manly handsomeness of their young knights was a favorite topic of northeastern ballads. Now, of course, the calamity has made these ballads take to sadder topics.

While the baseline Ancalian "look" was common on the peninsula, drastic variations were not unknown. The old transhuman blood sometimes expressed itself in strange ways, granting peculiar colors, shapes, or textures to a child's form. Anomalies that matched the inheritance of one of the Five Families were greeted with excitement, for they suggested the child might be gifted with the special virtues of those transhuman lineages, and so earn a place among the nobility. Those with less traditional differences were viewed with wary hope, that they might show some remarkable talent of an unpredictable kind. Those who reached adulthood with no apparent talent were disappointing to their families, but still had hope as a marriage prospect, as most families were eager to breed in "noble blood".

Other unusual appearances came from a more prosaic history of intermarriage with foreigners. Kasirutan sailors from the south sometimes left their almond eyes and smaller lines among their lovers' children, and Lomite defectors left their blond hair and paler skin in the west. The savage depredations of the Ulstang raiders have made their own mark along the coast, but such children are invariably told of a decent Lomite father, even if everyone knows otherwise. Even now, calling a man a "son of a raider" is an insult that will draw swords.

## Clothing

Ancalian commoners favored tunics and trousers for the men, and blouses and heavy skirts for the women. The cool climate encouraged warm dress, and cloaks and mantles were common for both sexes. Nobles dressed with more luxuriance and finer cloth, often imported Dulimbaian silk carried by Kasirutan merchant ships, but the basic outlines of the clothing were similar among all classes.

Ancalians loved bright colors and vivid patterns, and their clothing often had an enthusiasm for brilliant shades that might strike their Vissian cousins as vulgar. Even a humble shepherd might proudly sport a tunic dyed in rich blue and a hat stained red with madder, while a noblewoman would go about dressed like a dark jewel in silks of gleaming richness. In these latter days, however, the dangers of the wild have muted such colors, leaving dull browns and greens as less conspicuous wear for hunters and scavengers.

## Attitudes Toward Foreigners

Ancalians were not very cosmopolitan before the catastrophe. Port cities got plenty of Kasirutan trade, and the border villages of the Sere Plains in the southwest received caravans from the Oasis States, but their neighbors to the west and north were invariably hostile. The deserts, Lomites, and Ulstangers combined to leave Ancalia somewhat isolated from the rest of the world.

Foreigners were recognized mostly by their clothing and speech rather than their physical appearance, as an Ancalian could never be quite sure the white-skinned stranger with gem-blue eyes wasn't simply a noble of some transhuman lineage. The treatment a foreigner received depended greatly on what their native land was thought to be.

Ulstangers were bitterly hated. On the coast, a blond-bearded Ulstanger in furs and mail would be lynched in minutes if discovered by the locals, along with anyone who seemed to be helping him. Further inland, deeper than Ulstang raids could penetrate, the big warriors were less perfectly recognized. From the stories mothers told their children, most inlanders expect Ulstangers to have six-inch fangs and be drenched with the blood of Ancalian children.

A pale Lomite from the west could survive in Ancalia if he kept to the company of Ancalians who knew him and believed him when he said he was a defector from that cold-hearted state. Such defectors were expected to demonstrate their sincerity by zealously adopting the Unitary faith, and a Lomite who couldn't recite his prayers to the satisfaction of a suspicious Ancalian was in for trouble. The children they had with Ancalian spouses were somewhat better-accepted, though these "half-bloods" still suffered from a certain degree of mistrust.

Their cousins from the Oasis States were viewed with a certain ambiguity. While caravans from the pyramid-cities brought precious medicines and valuable plant products, sand prince raiders regularly attacked the southwestern border. Perhaps worse than that, the Oasians are by no means Unitary believers, and their worship of the God-Pharaoh was considered frankly blasphemous. The Ancalians did business with the people of the desert, but any Oasians who wanted to live among them were expected to cleave to the true faith.

For strangers from other lands, the Ancalians knew so few of them that prejudices and expectations had no occasion to form. Most peasants viewed such strangers as potential trouble, people best avoided if opportunity allowed, and if not, to be hustled along their way. City-dwellers were somewhat more cosmopolitan, but still there was always a keen awareness of the difference between a true Ancalian, one heir to Kham and of its people, and an outsider to the polity.

## Since the Catastrophe

Now that Ancalia's old verities have collapsed, the idea of a "stranger" has begun to encompass even other Ancalians. Wanderers from other survivor enclaves and refugees from collapsed communities are now as frightening to the average survivor as any outsider ever was. Those with familiar Ancalian faces might get a longer hearing than an obvious foreigner, but every survivor is keenly aware that their own community stands at risk from the depredations of other humans as well as the ravages of husks and monsters.

At the same time, the disaster has also broken down certain prejudices. While most outsiders can expect a cold welcome, a *useful* outsider can gain far more standing and respect than they ever could before.

d100	Male Names	Female Names	Family Names	Place Names
1–4	Abel	Adina	Abdimelech	Akesta
5–8	Admassu	Altaye	Adamu	Amara
9–12	Amir	Amara	Basliel	Amoma
13–16	Amsalu	Aster	Berhanu	Asaita
17–20	Asmerom	Bathsheba	Caleb	Dabat
21–24	Baslios	Bethania	Dagmawi	Deleta
25–28	Bazin	Bila	Degu	Fincha
29–32	Belachew	Candace	Dejen	Gatira
33–36	Boru	Chuni	Ebissa	Gidami
37–40	Brük	Delilah	Fikre	Hanan
41–44	Dawit	Eden	Gedeyon	Hareto
45–48	Eskinder	Fana	Goliad	Jido
49–52	Ezana	Hawani	Habtamu	Lasarat
53–56	Fassilidas	Helina	Ketema	Nebelet
57–60	Gebreel	Lalla	Kidane	Oboki
61–64	Hagos	Lia	Markos	Samre
65–68	Kidus	Lidya	Mihret	Shambu
69–72	Liben	Masresha	Nazwari	Shawira
73–76	Melaku	Miniya	Nebiat	Shekosh
77–80	Mirtus	Muna	Rada	Sidamo
81–84	Selemon	Rohama	Sirak	Suntu
85–88	Seth	Semhale	Teshale	Tarcha
89–92	Tariku	Sitina	Wakeyo	Tora
93–96	Teru	Yohanna	Yideg	Waja
97–00	Zufan	Zenna	Zewedu	Yismala

## Languages in Ancalia

The common speech of Ancalians is Kerez, a language descended from the regional dialect of Ancient Akeh spoken in the Polyarchy of Kham. It's partially comprehensible by their Menet-speaking cousins in the Oasis States, but largely unintelligible to Patrians and Vissians. Some Ulstangers speak enough of it to order around Ancalian slaves, and a few border Lomites speak it as a family inheritance, but it is not a language much known elsewhere in the world.

The holy scripture of the Ancalian Church is maintained in Ancient Akeh, a tongue known to learned priests, scholars, and sorcerers in Ancalia. Village priests and laboring monks might only know enough of it to recite the proper prayers and religious rituals, but sages find it a vital language for discussing the specifics of ancient transhuman soul-gene research and other esoteric legacies of the past. Even foreign scholars sometimes find it necessary to understand it in order to deal with the ancient remnants of the Polyarchy.

Trade cant is found most often on the waterfronts of port cities, though many city-dwellers speak at least a little of it in order to deal with foreign traders. Deeper inland, the language is rarer, but most hamlets have at least one old sailor or trader who can interpret for foreigners. Kantibas and coin lords all know the trade cant, but jantirars and the blade lords of the rural interior find it beneath their dignity.

A traveler who seek to learn enough Kerez to get by can get a crude, monosyllabic grasp of it in a few weeks, fit for basic needs and ideas.

## Ancalian Names

Ancalians follow naming traditions recognizable to most modern Westerners. Every Ancalian has two names: a family name, inherited from their parents, and a given name with which they are christened two weeks after they are born.

Mercenaries, harlots, and other practitioners of socially-scorned professions usually take a working name to conceal their origins and protect their family from the shame of their vocation. These working names often include fanciful epithets or details of their past triumphs, to whatever degree of ornateness they can get away with. Bald Yom the mercenary or One-Eyed Saina the whore are likely to be unremarkable practitioners of their trade, as opposed to the famous Khez of the Hundred Red Banners or the hotly-desired courtesan Jaila Lips-Like-Dawn.

Nobles have both a family name and a fief name. Thus, the Akkez family might hold the hereditary blade lordship of the Khemez fief. Young Baran Akkez might be blade lord of the domain, and thus be called Baran, Lord Khemez, or simply "Khemez" by his fellow lords. Even if his family later loses the lordship due to their jantirar liege's displeasure, they would remain the Akkez family, and their scion would bear the name accordingly, becoming a mere Lord Baran Akkez, or "Lord Baran".

# Religion in Ancalia



ncalia was a fiercely pious land, where the dominant faith was and is that of the Unitary Church. Foreigners were permitted to hold private ceremonies for their gods and ancestors, but public worship was strictly disallowed.

Ancalia prided itself on the piety of its people and the strength of its church, and even humble peasants who understand little of fine theology were fierce in their devotion to the Creator and the saints.

## Basic Doctrine

The Unitary Church teaches that the Creator exists, that He has given His laws to the world in the form of sacred scripture, and that it is humanity's duty to follow those laws. Believers who strive to live righteously will be redeemed in the future, when the Creator returns to liberate all souls from Hell and glorify the sleeping shades of their faithful on earth. Righteous unbelievers are thought to be promised eternal peace in the grave then, while the wicked of all faiths will be cast back into a purified Hell, there to be cleansed of their sins before being allowed eternal sleep. The precise details are matters for theologians to debate and heretics to preach on more freely.

Angels are despised as traitors to the Creator. Those few remaining loyal angels are revered and occasionally petitioned by the faithful, as useless as this generally is. Worshiping the rebel angels or conspiring to further their goals is blackest blasphemy and grounds for death.

The Ancalian Church had a special hatred of atheism due to their long-smoldering conflict with the Atheocracy of Lom. An infidel who worships their ancestors or some foreign god is in the wrong, and risks the loss of eternal joy when the Creator returns, but they at least can be trusted to have *some* moral standards. The Church teaches that atheism is the rejection of the Creator's law and is the inevitable seed of depravity and vile actions. Those who actively preach the idea that no god should be worshiped can expect harsh punishment. Careless freethinkers might be fined, whipped, or imprisoned, while actual partisans of Lomite atheism will face the hangman's noose.

Particularly pious and holy figures may be proclaimed saints by the patriarch after their death. These saints are said to maintain awareness even in the sleep of the grave, and can extend their aid to those believers who call on them for help. Most saints are associated with particular places or professions, and those who share their origins or their trade light candles to their memory and pray for their aid. Theologians make it clear that saints are not to actually be worshiped, but merely revered as exemplars of the faith. Common folk don't always draw such a distinction, and sometimes revere figures that the patriarch would certainly not find sufficiently saintly.

## Things Forbidden and Required

A believer of the Ancalian Church is forbidden certain things, some of which are also outlawed by secular laws. They are forbidden to murder, to steal, to have sexual relations outside of marriage, to tell lies, to assault other people, to worship any entity but the Creator, or to rebel against legitimate authority. Those who break these rules are expected to confess their sins to a priest and accept the penance he assigns, after which they may rest assured of the Creator's forgiveness, even if secular law may require a more tangible recompense.

Aside from the things a believer is forbidden to do, the Book of the Creator also teaches of the moral duties of believers. They are to act

with forgiveness towards those who have wronged them, provided the culprit is penitent. They should share their possessions with the deserving needy, and they should act to uphold the righteous and defend those in need of protection.

And above all, perhaps as the most crucial duty, they should ensure that every believer gets at least a minimal care for their funerary rites. Even red-handed bandits in the forest will take a moment to pray over their victims, just in case the bodies aren't discovered in time for better rites. To willfully murder someone and conceal their death, preventing them from receiving due rites within the necessary time, is considered the worst possible sin a person can commit.

## Funerary Rites

Priests hear confession from believers as a day-to-day function, but their most crucial role is in administering the funerary rites to a dead believer. Such rites must be performed within a month of death and require the presence of the corpse, or some fragment of it, though exceptionally skilled and talented priests can consecrate the souls of earnest believers using only their names. The more faithful the believer and the more gifted the priest, the more likely it is that the rites will be enough to give them peaceful rest in the earth and spare them from Hell's flames. This giftedness does not necessarily relate to a priest's personal sanctity, but only his talent at focusing on the rituals.

The priests of the Church charge a customary fee for burial rites scaled to the wealth of the dead, but even in the face of outright refusal to pay no honorable priest will ever refuse to perform the rites. Of course, they might mention the questionable power of the rites to save in the face of such arrant ungodliness, but such pressure on the living will never be allowed to interfere with the rites. Even traitors and other universally-hated reprobates are not denied a minimal grave.

Common folk who find themselves surrounded by death can perform an abbreviated version of the rites that requires no more than a few minutes and the "dead man's prayer" learned by all Ancalian children, a prayer often recited as a talisman against evil. Unfortunately, the prayer alone is unlikely to save a soul unless the deceased was exceptionally pious in life or the commoner is exceptionally talented. Adding in burial or reverent cremation is usually enough to spare a soul if it wasn't unusually wicked in its breathing days. The wealthy and powerful can receive funerary rites that last for days, though anything more than a day-long ritual is considered to be bad taste, as it implies that the dead person was so wicked that only tremendous prayer can hope to keep them out of Hell.

There are particular rites and rituals which a priest can use to determine whether or not a soul has been safely secured in its grave. These rituals are not complicated, but by prudent custom they are never used lightly. In the best case, the priest learns that the subject is safely sleeping in the earth until the return of the Creator, while in the worst case the priest can only confirm to the bereaved that their loved one is burning in Hell until the return of the One.

The existence of these rituals has allowed many survivor enclaves to realize that the souls of their dead are not being consigned to the flames, but are somehow finding refuge in a terrestrial grave. Very few of them realize that this is the work of Patriarch Ezek, though a few of the most skilled theologians and sorcerers who survive have guessed at his hand in this seeming miracle of mercy.

## The Book of the Creator

The doctrine of the Unitary Church is drawn from the Book of the Creator, or simply "the Book". Its exact origins are lost in the era before the Last War, but the Ancalian Church believes it to have been the product of direct divine inspiration and a pattern for human morality. The book contains both lengthy passages on moral principles and descriptions of the funerary rites and religious practices that ensure peaceful repose after death. The Book contains everything an aspiring priest needs to know in order to perform the rites of the Church.

While thorough and encompassing, the Ancalian version of the Book is written in rather academic Ancient Akeh. Theologians have been known to compare it with those versions written in Old Din, but even with this parallel study, many of the moral passages are obscure or admitting of different interpretations. The patriarch or matriarch of each nation's Unitary Church is expected to resolve any confusion, though these resolutions are sometimes overturned by their successors, or turn out to be unacceptably unconvincing to the populace. The faith of the common folk often has little in common with that of priests.

## The Structure of Authority

The Patriarch of Ancalia was counted the wisest and holiest of the land's clerics, and his judgment in matters of faith could be controverted only by his successor. It was the obligation of every true believer to follow the teachings of the patriarch, though broad-minded believers would admit that adherents in other lands should follow the teachings of their own patriarchs when there is a dispute.

Beneath the patriarch, fifty bishops oversaw the church in specific geographic regions, usually based out of a city or market town and the episcopal cathedral built there. Bishops consecrated priests, maintained church discipline, and acted as exemplars of the faith for others to emulate. While they could not promulgate new doctrines, they could teach accepted beliefs and judge dubious preaching for its conformity with existing doctrine.

Bishops were also responsible for monitoring the host of monasteries, nunneries, and hermitages that dotted the Ancalian landscape. Such establishments were run by abbots or abbesses, monks and nuns chosen by their brethren or by the bishop for their exceptional holiness and competence at leadership. Monastic clerics were expected to seclude themselves from the world, dealing with secular affairs only so much as their monastery's survival required. Most of the monasteries subsisted on their own labor, with illiterate brother-monks and sister-nuns toiling in the fields or at the loom and their more educated brethren chanting the sacred hours and conducting the more abstract religious rituals and funerary rites.

A few lone hermits and anchoresses dwelled in the wilderness, seeking solitude for prayer and holy reflection. While these, too, were theoretically subject to the bishop, the extreme holiness of these persons and their unworldly disregard for secular matters sometimes gave them more prestige than their supposed superior. Many were said to have magical powers, and sometimes desperate seekers would venture into the wilderness in search of their aid.

Aside from monks and nuns, the bulk of clergy were ordinary secular priests. These men served in village churches and noble chapels, providing spiritual services and funerary rites for the people of Ancalia. Many also served as tutors and educators for the children of the wealthy and noble, or ran cathedral or monastery schools for poor but clever pupils. Some such students later joined the Church, but others went on to be officials and clerks for secular masters.

## The Church Since the Catastrophe

Currently, the great majority of Ancalia's souls are being saved by the titanic prayers of Patriarch Ezek in his mountain sanctuary of Hadiya. There, most of the surviving bishops of Ancalia are cloistered with holy relics saved from throughout the nation, feverishly performing rituals to secure and sanctify the countless numbers that have died in the catastrophe. The patriarch's prayers are amplified by the rites and the relics, but the strain of the process is killing the bishops one by one, and half of them have died over the past five years. Within five years more at most, the last will perish, and then the patriarch himself will die. A sufficiently powerful Godbound might be able to amplify the patriarch's prayers with the correct artifacts or found relics, or ease the burden by closing some of the Night Roads or finding additional holy persons to aid in the prayers.

The greatest anguish of many of the survivors is their terror over the souls of their beloved dead. Surviving clergy have enormous prestige in many enclaves as the strength of their funerary rites is considered superior to the effort of laymen. While many clergy have come to realize that *all* souls in Ancalia appear to be finding their way to peaceful graves, they understand full well that the common folk would not believe their assurances, thinking the priest was lying to them to console them in their loss. To comfort these bereaved, even those priests who understand the situation will perform the rites.

For enclaves and groups without the aid of a priest, other clergy have been stepping into the breach, or even laypersons who can put up a convincing facsimile of the rites. Ancient custom in Ancalia has reserved the funerary rites to priests, but that same custom has allowed for others to perform them in situations of grave need. The present hour can hardly seem graver, and so monks, nuns, and anyone who can utter a convincing "dead man's prayer" have been coming to the fore. Many of these extemporaneous undertakers are too poorly-educated to use the more subtle rites of the Church, and so have no way of knowing whether or not their prayers are effective. They can only do what they can.

Unsurprisingly, different survivor enclaves have responded to the crisis in different ways. Some have become fanatically zealous, convinced that Ancalia's impiety brought down this disaster upon the nation, and only through ferocious piety and unflinching obedience to the Book can salvation arrive. These men and women cling to ever-more exacting interpretations of the scriptures, performing strange sacrifices and uncustomary rites, or enacting elaborate taboos and hunting out evil-doing of every kind among their members. They do these things out of naked fear and terrible guilt, preferring to blame themselves than to imagine that this horror could be undeserved.

Other enclaves take the opposite tact, abandoning the Church and all shreds of their former faith. Some openly worship and revere the Uncreated abominations that prey on them, sometimes making contact with an entity of the Shackled Court and paying its terrible price to earn another month's survival. Others are simply numbed to the horror, convinced that the Creator has abandoned them and all hope is lost. They survive like animals, doing whatever they must to satisfy their immediate hungers and indulge in sordid desires.

Most enclaves have charted a middle route, clinging to the clergy to preserve the souls of their dead, but too pragmatic to hope for any divine deliverance after five years of nightmarish suffering. Many wilderness monasteries and defensible hermitages have been turned into enclaves as refugees who once sought the places for divine protection now use them for more secular survival.

# Family Life



In Ancalia, the heart of the family was always the married couple and their children. Same-sex marriage was inconceivable to most Ancalians, as it was considered the common duty of every man and women to raise up heirs to carry on their family line and take up their duties when old age, sickness, or battle took them. Children were loved, but raised from their earliest years to understand their place in Ancalian society and to be ready to take an adult's duties by their sixteenth year

This nuclear family was woven together with cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces into a larger pattern of relationships. These ties were important, allowing humble folk the comfort of numerous allies and contacts, while tying nobles into assorted court factions and regional dynasties. While a cousin couldn't claim the kind of loyalty a brother or a grandfather could, hospitality and minor favors could be expected under all but the most unusual circumstances.

The elderly and disabled usually were found under their eldest child's roof, one they'd often deeded over to their offspring. Sometimes these arrangements led to neglect or abuse, but most Ancalians loved their parents too well for such mistreatment. Younger children remained at home as laborers for the inheriting sibling, or sought their fortune on other farms, as a soldier, or as a city worker.

## Men and Women

Men and women were held to have very different roles in Ancalia's old society. Men were to fight, to do hard labor, to manage legal affairs in the community, and to serve in the priesthood. Women were to bear children, manage the house, do lighter labor, and become nuns if they so wished. While men were considered the more commanding of the sexes, this patriarchal attitude was often softened by the Ancalian love of chivalry, courtly romance, and noble display.

For the most part, both men and women were contented with this state of affairs. Most Ancalian women desired nothing more than many children, a good home, and a loving husband, while most of their menfolk wanted only the prosperity that would win them a good woman's favor and the respect of their peers. The egalitarianism of the Bright Republic or the exotic familial relations of their Oasian neighbors never had much appeal for the Ancalian people. Still, there were always some who felt stifled by the expectations of society, and who wanted different paths than their neighbors were willing to bless.

The quickest way free of these social boundaries was to be born with noble blood. A scion of the Five Families could chart their own course, and the same local squire who would laugh at the idea of the miller's girl going off to war would find it incomprehensible to deny as much to a hulking Tilahun hellion. Those who bore the marks of transhuman nobility were expected to surpass ordinary boundaries, and were supported if their families found their desires useful.

The other, harder road was through sheer competence. Failure would be mocked and occasionally punished, but an unlikely candidate who somehow proved their skill and capability for a role would be given a grudging respect in it. While female priests were forbidden, common-blooded female warriors skilled in sword and spear could be found in every district, each one of them marked by fierce determination and unquestionable skill. So too could guildmistresses, sea captains, magnates of great estates, and other capable women prove their worthiness to have what their society said they should not.

## Marriage and Sex

Marriage for common Ancalians was usually between a successful young farmer somewhere in his late twenties and a fresh young maid not much past eighteen. Those common men without land or coin had little hope of making a marriage. The poorest class would wed with nothing but their good hope, but those of some property or status held out for better matches. Those well-born women disappointed in making a suitable match often found their way to a nunnery by their thirtieth birthday, their novitiate bought by donations from their parents. While it wasn't what they had hoped for, they acquired a measure of dignity and respect from the nun's habit.

Nobles made their alliances while younger, both brides and grooms rarely past twenty. The conservation and enhancement of their transhuman lineage was considered to be of the utmost importance to the family, and a woman was expected to bear as many children as her other duties allowed. Even those who showed no signs of transhuman lineage would make good marriage partners with wealthy common families who wanted the hope of future nobles in their line. While marriages were theoretically to be voluntary on both sides, the unhappy lad and rueful maiden are stock characters in sad Ancalian ballads of marriages compelled by heartless families.

Dowries went with the bride, to the extent her parents' wealth allowed, and divorce was extremely rare. Only newly-discovered consanguinity, infertility, adultery, severe physical abuse, or impotence were permitted as grounds for divorce. The bride took back her dowry with her, though the children customarily went with the wealthier or higher-status parent. Divorce due to personal incompatibility or unhappiness was unacceptable to most, the desire for it being considered a sign of childishness and ignoble disregard for one's duty to the Creator and to society.

Ancalia was a land where cool weather and strict faith combined to encourage modesty in both sexes. Adultery was a serious offense that could shame even the well-born, and while many kantibas, jantirars, and other nobles had mistresses or male lovers on the side, such arrangements had to be kept decently discreet, especially if their spouse belonged to an important family that would take great offense at such an insult. Prostitution was common in the shabbier parts of Ancalian cities, but visits to brothels were things to be done discreetly for all but unmarried sailors, dockworkers, and other low rabble who could not be expected to live decently.

Sex outside of marriage was a serious matter to respectable persons, and "besmirching" a well-born daughter might win a man a private and fatal visit from her father, brothers, or burly male cousins. The woman who made light with her own affections would inevitably doom any chance of making a good marriage, and their fate in old age made for numerous cautionary tales. The bastards they bore could expect to be reminded of their condition regularly by better-born peers.

Homosexual and transgender people fared badly in this sexual schema, along with others who fit poorly into customary categories. Any relations outside those hallowed by tradition and custom were considered undesirable and best and disgracefully sinful at worst, earning ostracism and scorn. Still, the Ancalian reluctance to recognize homosexuality often allowed for "friendships" and "lodgers" that would be transparently obvious in other cultures, so long as it was never openly acknowledged.



### **The Clergy and Marriage**

In Ancalia, clergy were not permitted to marry, and they certainly weren't permitted to indulge in sexual activity. This prohibition included everyone with a clerical rank, from the lowliest parish priest up to the patriarch himself. Marriage was thought to detract from a priest's proper focus on service to the Creator and their flock, and naturally sexual activity outside of marriage was an even greater sin for the clergy than it was for the ordinary lay person.

Not every cleric was enthusiastic about this prohibition. Some theologians pointed to the habit of the Raktian and Nezdohvan priest-hoods, where priests could marry even if monks and bishops could not. Others took more pragmatic steps, and jokes about a priest's "housekeeper" or a nun's "confessor" were old staples of Ancalian humor. Even so, only in the most clerically lax backwaters and heretical monasteries were such things tolerated openly. A good priest was a chaste priest.

### **Since the Catastrophe**

In many communities, the family is now the only social structure that remains remotely functional. Parents, children, siblings, and other near kinsmen can be trusted in a way that strangers cannot, and can be relied upon for help even when the petitioner would be discarded as a useless burden by other survivors.

The tremendous casualties of the catastrophe have inevitably forced the Ancalian family into new forms. Men and women unrelated by blood now sometimes join together in manufactured kinships, becoming "found-relations", such as found-sisters or found-brothers. Others know to treat them as kindred to each other, subject to the same customs and old laws as the community might preserve. Most of these relationships arise among refugee groups, wilderness survivors, or others who have experienced great afflictions together and have come to trust and rely on each other.

Clerical marriage is still as forbidden as it ever was, but many of the surviving clerics are less concerned about that prohibition. Some have grown fanatical from events, and now sweat and strain to please the Creator and win His forgiveness, but many others take their relief where they find it, taking priestly wives or husbands for nuns in all but name. Nuns are usually forgiven such things in light of the need for a male protector in this terrible new world, but a nigh-married priest can still expect hard looks from his fellow survivors. The prayers of such a man can't be trusted to be efficacious, and few would want him praying over their grave.

Sexual mores now vary wildly depending on the community. Among those survivors convinced that the catastrophe was a punishment for sin, sexual morality is policed with the same savage intensity that every other form of vice earns. Any suggestion of anything but the most chaste and moral behavior brings exile or summary execution in these communities.

In other refugee enclaves, all moral reserve has collapsed. Bodies are bartered freely, unspeakable desires are satisfied for a few scraps of food, and some members of the community are nothing more than entertainment for the powerful or well-supplied among them. Even in less degraded enclaves, it's now common for few questions to be asked about what two or more adults do in their tents so long as their share of the community's work gets done.

Behavior that would have won a person social exile or legal punishment in the old world is now readily ignored if the practitioner is useful in other ways. Most enclaves are so hard-pressed that they can't afford to concern themselves with anything but the next meal, the next husk attack, and the next fight among the frightened remnant. A person who can clearly benefit the enclave's chances of survival is apt to be accepted, whatever the priests say about the state of their soul. Some have taken advantage of this new laxity to form bonds and arrangements that would never have been tolerated before.



# The Land of Ancalia



Ancalia is a land of several different climates and terrains, with the broad spine of the Kaffan mountains shading down into forests of pine and broadleaved trees and rugged, rocky hills. On the north side of the peninsula, cold winds from the north and the chill of the boreal sea make agriculture less generous and the forests lean more toward pines and the occasional cold swamp. On the southern side of the Kaffans, gentler air currents and the warmer sea waters make for better growing seasons.

## Climate

The Ancalian peninsula's weather is strongly influenced by the sea. There is hardly any part of the peninsula that's more than sixty or seventy miles from the coast, and the worst winters or hottest summers are tempered by the great mass of water. Still, differences in air currents, water temperatures, and theurgic causality slips have made for three major climates to be found in Ancalia.

The colder of the two is found on the northern side of the Kaffan range that runs up the middle of the peninsula. Winters are long in this region. Sometimes the cold drags on from early December to early April, but the temperatures tend to hover slightly below freezing for much of that time, making it difficult for large amounts of snow to accumulate. The summer months average temperatures around 27 degrees Celsius or 80 Fahrenheit at their hottest, with a relatively short, cool spring and a longer, damper autumn.

The warmer regions of Ancalia on the southern side of the range are more temperate, with three-month winters, a more even spring and an autumn that lingers in summer's heat. Snow is usual throughout the winter months, but it rarely sticks very long or builds to troublesome depths. In the southwest, around the Sere Plains, the usually-even Ancalian rainfall is scarcer, with the fiery influence of the Oasis States robbing the locals of anything like a real winter.

The third major climate region of Ancalia is the highlands, including the near foothills of the Kaffan mountains and their craggy peaks and valleys. At these higher elevations the tempering effect of the sea is less, and thick banks of snow can linger for months in the hills, or year-round on the higher slopes. Summers are short and hot, and spring sees the opening of passes through otherwise-impenetrable stretches of the range. The hillfolk who dwell here grow rye and raise sheep and goats. More luxuriant forms of agriculture have little purchase.

## Flora

Ancalia is a heavily forested land, especially toward the center of the peninsula. The northern side's forests are largely pine, spruce, and fir, with the occasional patch of alder or paper-barked birch. Large portions of this forest have light, mossy undergrowth marked by game trails, though some forests are "covers," where the towering pine trees have killed off everything beneath their branches to leave only a cathedral-like gloom and a thick layer of browned needles underfoot. Cedar swamps are also common near rivers and lakes, with snags and broken limbs tangled together in impenetrable snarls. Such places were once popular lairs for bandits, and now refugees hide there too.

The forests on the southern side of the range have more in the way of broadleaf trees, with oaks, elms, and maples in amid the evergreens. The undergrowth in these southern forests is thicker and more dif-

icult to navigate, though assorted berries and edible plants always made foraging a popular pastime with Ancalian peasants. So long as they weren't found with bows or hunting spears, the jantirar or blade lord who ruled the land tended to turn a blind eye to such gathering.

The coastal regions of Ancalia have been lumbered off over the centuries, and what forest remains is usually for hunting parks or common forest-land dedicated to a particular village's use. These open fields were once filled with crops or pasturage, but since the coming of the Night Roads they've slumped into brushy wastes, with the grasses and volunteer grains growing waist-high in summer and autumn before dying back with the winter. These abandoned fields are particularly dangerous for wayfarers, as torpid husks are easily missed in the grasses until they leap up and charge their prey.

Crops in Ancalia were mostly wheat and root vegetables before the catastrophe, with hardy rye planted in the colder hills. Peas, beans, onions, greens of various kinds, squashes, and the occasional sturdy melon occupied the gardens of commoners and lords alike. Spices were most often imported from the Oasis State arcology-pyramids in order to flavor this somewhat tedious fare. Despite the recent devastation, substantial silos remain from before the disaster and are full of grain that has yet to become inedible. More than one enclave is centered around such a silo, subsisting on old grain and caught meat.

## Fauna

Ancalia's coastal lowlands were well-tamed, with the occasional wolf pack, bear, or cougar prowling down from the hills, but few other large predators. Deer favor the forests, with moose more common on the north side of the peninsula and wild boar in the south. The latter made excellent hunting for blade lords, jantirars, and rich merchants.

In the mountains and hills, the fauna is more dangerous. Wolves and bears are more common outside the reach of human habitation, and cougars prowl through the brushy slopes. Mountain goats prance insolently along narrow cliffs, and the occasional flock of bighorn sheep roam the high country. Black bears are fairly common in the forested hills, with persistent tales of bigger, more fearsome "mountain bears" lurking in the most remote valleys.

One of the more bizarre dangers of the Ancalian forests is the dreaded razormoose, said to be the product of a completely inexplicable Khamite theoegenic program in the waning years of the Polyarchy. Razormoose are said to always be female, genetic sports that arise at random from the general moose population. Despite being cows a razormoose will grow splendid palmate antlers every year. Unlike normal moose, these antlers are edged in invisible, razor-sharp sheaths of telekinetic force easily capable of punching through a knight's armor. Popular stories credit razormoose with human cunning, a taste for cruel deception, and an insatiable spirit of malice, but they are sufficiently rare that many consider them mere Cousin-tales.

The bell-nosed horror of the razormoose is not the only theoegenic peril to be found in Ancalia's back country. Gengineered monsters of various kinds are known to crop up in the deeper forest or further hills. In the days before the catastrophe, one of the more important roles of the great knightly orders was to hunt down and kill these dangerous aberrations. Now there are few left to care, and these creatures have begun to intrude on lands once inhabited by men.



Sabet

Janjero

Mercygarden

Coldvigil

Razad River

Adal

Debredamo

Gera

Nekiok

Binai

Bashilo River

High Banner

Keleta River

Kaffan Mountains

Hadiya

Atab River

Bakare

Iyasu

Sava Narrows

Zarima River

Anderaccha

Honor's End

Tongue of Ages

Beles River

Sadira's Eye

Gifar

Anderaccha Lowlands

Bay of Gojeb

Gojeb River

Saro

The Sere Plains

Asyut

The Red Watch

Wadjet

Alero River

The Oasis States

Kamo

Khasut

The Dry Ports

Bight of Khaf

Nepata



# Points of Interest

The locations keyed on the map of Ancalia are just some of the more adventure-relevant places in the blighted peninsula. Several locations are elaborated in more detail on the following pages, but most of them are sketched lightly as seeds for further deeds of glory.

## The Ancalian Countryside

When describing the general countryside of Ancalia, keep in mind that the desolation has gone on for five years. Buildings have remained largely intact over that time, but there are predictable signs of decay and dilapidation progressing in most places. A roof might be fallen in here, and a wooden building collapsed there from lack of maintenance and repair, but major structures of stone or well-crafted timber are likely still perfectly usable.

The largest amount of damage has likely been caused intentionally by survivors, either to trap husk swarms or to create barriers. Buildings might have been dropped on narrow city streets and barricades thrown up from boards torn from the sides of nearby buildings. The husks themselves have no interest in anything but meat, though some Uncreated or demented energumens might find reason to smash human constructions. To take one instance, the city of Saro has been half-melted by the Burning King simply out of his Incendiary nature.

The spaces between former communities have gone wholly wild. Even where there were wheat fields or pastures, the grasses have grown up and small saplings have started in the shadow of forest-eaves. The tall grass and thick bracken make for dangerous travel during the

growing months, as it's impossible to spot prone husks until a wayfarer is almost on top of them. Most roads have been thickly overgrown in the past five years and are no longer fit to bear anything heavier than a horse and rider.

Wildlife has made a tremendous comeback since the human communities of Ancalia were wiped out. The husks and Uncreated usually have no interest in animals and the abandoned fields made excellent grazing for deer and other fauna. Many survivor enclaves now exist essentially as hunter-gatherers, harvesting patches of volunteer crops and hunting for their meat.

## Danger and Safety

Cities, towns, and other population centers are the most dangerous places in Ancalia. Husks roam, but generally remain in the basic vicinity of their deaths, and so places that were heavily inhabited before the catastrophe can be seething cauldrons of undead. Most of these husks are mindless enough to be dodged or avoided by canny scavengers, but the intelligent "energumens" among them are dangerously cunning and capable of directing their mindless brethren.

The wilderness has a different set of dangers. Hungry Cousins, the occasional wandering husk pack, and Uncreated looking for fresh victims are all real perils in the distant wilds, but they are perils that a refugee enclave can hope to survive. For this reason, only the most desperate and determined survivors try to set up an enclave anywhere near the former towns of Ancalia.

**Adal:** Fortress-city of the Alazar, described later in this section.

**Alero River:** The ancient southern border of Ancalia, flowing from dislocated springs in the sandy dune-hills along its southern banks. The cursed environment of the Oasis States keeps the water from flowing naturally to the south.

**Anderaccha:** Once the seat of the High Negus, described later in this section.

**Anderaccha Lowlands:** The rich breadbasket of Ancalia, well-watered and warm, now choked with the corpses of villages and market towns and plagued by sand prince looters from the Oasis States.

**Asyut:** An Oasian pyramid-arcology, now much impoverished by the lack of Ancalian trade and a desperate turn to autarchy. They deal with no outsiders, neither Ancalian nor Oasian.

**Bakare:** Throne of the Chained Lady, queen of the Shackled Court. This hive of Uncreated villainy is described later in this section.

**Bashilo River:** Rolling down from the Pavian motherhouse at High Banner, the banks of the river are scourged by Lomite looters and haunted by refugees from Binai seeking river-fish and a fast road for flight.

**Beles River:** Fed from the High, Middle, and Low branches that come down from the Kaffans, the river is haunted by the restless shades of the dead of the Anderaccha Lowlands. These wraiths confuse the living with the husks that slew them, and bring death to all they encounter.

**Bight of Khaf:** Lined by the Dry Ports of the Oasis States, the bitter waters of the bight see much trade from Nezdohva and the Kasirutans, bartering at one remove with those who dare plunder the ruins of Ancalia.

**Binai:** Once a city populated by many Lomite defectors, Binai fell in the chaos, crushed under the weight of refugees. Further details can be found later in this section.

**Bonaya:** Once a villa-estate owned by the jantirar of Welega, this cursed village is now the seat of the Leper Prince, lord of the Poxed Court, and it is the site of a Night Road rupture.

**Coldvigil:** The surviving Vindict knights of the motherhouse at Coldvigil have abandoned any hope in the direct confrontation of the Uncreated. Instead, masters of the order use their power over husks to lead small groups of survivors from enclave to enclave, passing on news and coordinating survival efforts. A few less-capable knights remain at Coldvigil to provide a relatively secure home base, though Uncreated attention is increasing.

**Debredamo:** An abbey of the Unitary Church that was once a nunnery reserved for daughters of the high nobility. It now is the lair of the Pale Abbess, lady of the Rotting Court, who emerged here when a Night Road opened over its altar.

**Dry Ports, The:** A handful of ragged Oasian towns and fishing villages cling to the arid shores here, the scarce freshwater supplies giving them their collective name. They are a notorious haunt of pirates, sand princes, exiles, and worse. Ancalian refugees are less than welcome as anything but slaves.

**Gera:** The streets of the city of Gera are filled with a perpetual, nigh-impenetrable fog that clears at unpredictable intervals. Anyone caught outside in the fog perishes in minutes from an accelerated version of the Hollowing Plague, though these undead are reluctant to go where the fog does not. A few refugees hide within the buildings, while looters wait for the brief hours of clear air.

**Gifar:** Once a sparsely-inhabited island of fishing villages and the villas of rich mainland nobles, the difficulty of sea travel has made it unclear just what kind of survivors remain on the island, or the degree they've fallen under the sway of the Chained Lady in Bakare.

**Gojeb River:** Placid and picturesque, the Gojeb was lined on both sides with the villas and pleasure-estates of the wealthy nobility of Anderaccha. Since the catastrophe, these residences have been infested by refugees, husks, and looters from the south.

**Hadiya:** Mountain fastness of Patriarch Ezek and most of the surviving bishops of Ancalia. They use the holy relics held in the fortress-monastery's vaults to fuel their mighty prayers for Ancalia's unblest dead, though the cost to their own life energy will inevitably kill them in four or five years more.

**High Banner:** Once the motherhouse of the Pavian Order of knighthood, its members dispersed to the lowlands to aid their people. The motherhouse and its treasures were left alone under the guard of restored Khamite defenses repaired by Pavian artificers.

**Honor's End:** While the disgraced knights of the Purgatist Order never had a true motherhouse, the isolated prison of Honor's End served as a training ground for those members selected from the more capable villains and blackguards taken by Ancalia's justice. It also served as a prison-tomb for sorcerers, Uncreated cultists, and other beings for whom simple death may not have been sufficiently final disposition, with proven Purgatists serving as warders. The fate of these guardians and their wards is unknown.

**Iyasu:** A grassy island haunted by the blighted city of Bakare and the Chained Lady who rules there. The surviving fishing villages and refugee enclaves shun all forms of bargaining, considering such activity to be a harbinger of Uncreated influence.

**Janjero:** Former stronghold of the Tilahun noble lineage, which has now been warped by the Leper King into a monstrous den of cannibal giant nobility described in this section.

**Kaffan Mountains:** The great mountain range that forms the spine of the Ancalian peninsula, fading down into rolling, forested foothills on all sides. Many ancient Khamite ruins and lost sanctuaries of the Time of Five Lords are hidden away in the peaks. Crossing the range is usually possible only at certain passes during the warmer months, and almost impossible during winter.

**Kamo:** An Ancalian refugee camp composed mostly of Sere Plains villagers. They're preyed upon by Oasian nobles, who defy a pharonic ban on contact with Ancalians in order to harvest the more promising for experimentation. Some refugees help to catch others in exchange for food and protection.

**Keleta River:** A cold mountain-fed river now infested with Uncreated squid-creatures that make crossing nearly impossible.

**Khasut:** An Oasian port town largely ignored by the God-Pharaoh as a contemptible nest of pirates. Some prey on Kasirutan trade, while others conduct business with sand princes. There's some semblance of rough frontier order here under the cult of the True Blood, which keeps things in line and taxes trade for their efforts.

**Mercygarden:** Isolated in the northern forest, the Surcessant motherhouse of Mercygarden was established on the remains of a Khamite medical research site where numerous powerful medicinal drugs were grown. Rumors persist of a demented knight conducting unspeakable experiments in curing the Hollowing Plague; investigation is hindered by the site's active Khamite security systems.

**Nekiok:** A ragged sanctuary composed mostly of refugees from Gera and a villainous mix of pirates, traders, and adventurer-looters. Captains who don't dare trade in Bakare make port here, bartering escape for looted treasure or willing slaves. Few of them find reason to keep their bargains once out to sea.

**Nepata:** The worst nest of depravity on the Bight of Khaf, and one of the Dry Ports. Run by the cult of the Pure Blood, a radical offshoot of their kin in Khasut, once dedicated to eugenic refinement and now collapsed into utter perversion and debauchery. Custom-created slaves can be acquired here, with the place being one part cult laboratory, one part pirate haven, and one part forbidden pleasure-den.

**Razad River:** Longest river in Ancalia, winding through deep pine forests on its way down from the mountain springs that birthed it.

**Red Watch, The:** Motherhouse of the Invocatant Order of royal knights. The knights have dispersed and Oasians from across the Alero have encircled the motherhouse. If rival Oasian noble house weren't too busy fighting each other than breaking through the defensive wards, they'd have looted it to the walls by now.

**Sabet:** A rocky and defensible cove enclave currently under the undead rule of the female kantiba Nizah, a beautiful but pitiless eaten princess. Her death-powers and husk minions fend off the Ulstang raiders, but she demands terrible prices from those who accept her protection. Several lesser energumens serve as her enforcers. Details of the eaten princes are in the Undead section of this book.

**Sadira's Eye:** Named for Saint Sadira, their founder, the motherhouse of the Invidian Order was renowned as the largest warehouses of blackmail, dirty secrets, and illicit information in Ancalia. The Invidians kept records on the whereabouts and secret refuges of innumerable nobles, including information on overcoming Khamite security systems. Even so, finding this data amid the clutter of ballrooms, training salons, and monstrous intruders from nearby Anderaccha is a different matter.

**Saro:** Seat of the Burning King, ruler of the Incendiary Court of Uncreated. Once a place of unparalleled architectural beauty and delicacy, the city is now a molten ruin surrounded by fanatical blood cultists of the Incendiary Court.

**Sarsa Narrows:** Sheltered strait between the mainland and the islands of Iyasu and Gifar. Once rich in fishing, now distressingly infested with sea monsters.

**Sere Plains:** A dry, grassy plain somewhat influenced by the aridity curse that blights the Oasis States. Most villages are of rammed earth and adobe rather than wood, built around deep-cut irrigation wells and spring-fed ponds.

**Tongue of Ages:** The ancient archive and motherhouse of the Glorificant Order. Its knights are scattered to their bleeding nation, but the walls are still manned by heroes, as the ancient wards of the motherhouse have been activated. Stories and legends kept by the Glorificants have assumed tangible form like the soul-eidolons of ancient Kham and now repel anyone who can't prove the nobility of their spirit and glory of their deeds.

**Wadjet:** Formerly the gateway to Ancalian trade with the Oasis States, with a small Ancalian population resident year-round in the pyramid-arcology. These Ancalians are now either expelled beyond the river or barely tolerated. Wadjet itself suffers badly from the lack of Ancalian trade in metal, leather, and wood despite the arcology's abundant food and drug-gardens.

**Zarima River:** The Hollowing Plague is exceptionally virulent around this river, with those who drink its water inevitably becoming infected. This contagion has left both banks of the river teeming with vast swarms of undead villagers and townsmen.

# Blighted Cities and Fastnesses

With the coming of the Hollowing Plague and the scourge of the Night Roads, Ancalia's cities now all bear a considerable similarity of destruction. Old distinctions have collapsed with the general calamity, and one maze of tumbled buildings and ravaging husk swarms tends to look much like another.

Still, an attentive eye can pick out differences in some of these cities. A few of them still have inhabitants of a kind, though rarely ones that make for pleasant dealings. This section contains more detailed descriptions for six important cities or fastnesses spread throughout the peninsula, along with some guidelines for creating your own.

When devising your own cities and ruins, a few basic considerations should be kept carefully in mind.

## Walls Are Thin

In most fantasy games, a map of a city or ruin can play an important role in shaping a party's experience. Physical barriers and the tangible arrangement of structures affects where they can go and how they can approach or even find their desired destinations. Walls are meaningful.

This is less certain when dealing with a pantheon of Godbound. Most pantheons are going to have at least one PC capable of rapidly revising the barriers around himself, whether through a Might hero's tremendous blows, a Sword hero's cleaving of stone, an Earth hero's effortless molding of rock, or a Sky hero's casual flight. Even those demigods without a Word to physically trivialize a barrier can often practically ignore it through superior insight or scrying.

## The Nine Night Roads

Of the nine Night Roads that opened to belch forth the Hollowing Plague and the Uncreated lords, only five of them have known locations. The remaining four have opened in places far from ordinary human habitation, and the heroes who wish to shut them will have to find them first. Miracles of Knowledge could reveal the truth, as could the plague-sensing powers of the Word of Health.

- Anderaccha's Night Road opened in the central plaza of the capital.
- Bakare's Night Road opened inside the kantiba's palace.
- Bonaya's Night Road erupted in the throne room of the jantirar's country estate.
- Debredamo's Night Road opened directly above the nunery's primary altar.
- Saro's Night Road lies in the ruins of the city's massive statuary-museum, its contents now scattered and the portal itself often buried under rubble caused by some recent chaos.

Of these five, only Anderaccha's Night Road is away from the direct attention of an Uncreated lord. The four hidden Roads are likely also protected, but may be easier for a pantheon to close in the absence of titanic guardians.

What this means is that you should worry more about defining a place by its interesting or characteristic locations rather than spending effort in deciding how the PCs are to get to those interesting places. The *Godbound* core book offers a number of tools for generating a ruin, and you can generalize them to a city as necessary. An area dedicated to transport might be a dock, a carter's inn, or a river lock, while one dedicated to maintenance might be a poor quarter of shacks once inhabited by ragpickers and cleaners. You can use the hazard table to suggest particular dangers in an area, and the ruin rewards can be interpreted as the sort of prize that might be found in a ravaged city.

## Survivors Are Afflicted

Any surviving inhabitants of a city have endured five years of unspeakable horror, Uncreated torment, and hopeless despair. They've survived by looting the bones of their loved ones and by doing things they never could have imagined before the Night Roads opened. They are the thin remnant of a city's citizenry who have been able to maintain their lives in the face of the apocalypse.

Most of these city-dwellers are also profoundly deranged. Cannibalism, abject paranoia, degenerate social structures, inexplicable trauma responses and other mental afflictions are common among such survivors. You might choose to give a ruin enclave a characteristic derangement or shared madness, or you might give the individual members their own personal scars. Enclaves found outside a city ruin might share these madneses, but the tremendous pressure and danger of the ruined cities is much more corrosive to survivors than the relative security of the remote wilderness.

Powers of Passion or Knowledge can mend these afflictions or mute their terrible emotions, while other Words can manage sufferers long enough for the pantheon to deal safely with them. PCs who work to heal the anguish of survivors might need to develop specific Gifts to alleviate mental illness, use Influence to manage the community so long as they're close enough to help, or wield Dominion to create a divine aura of healing forgetfulness about the community.

## Problems Are Appropriate

While cities are favored nests for the worst Uncreated abominations in the peninsula, not every city or market town is going to have inhabitants capable of giving a serious fight to a pantheon of Godbound. Many smaller communities will have nothing worse than a Vast Mob of husks stumbling through their streets, and even those with worse dangers might find them thinking better of confronting famed heroes.

Still, it's important that the locations you build have some sort of challenge attached to them, and if it's not a martial trial then it should be something else drawn from the *Godbound* core book's section on creating challenges.

Keep pantheon abilities in mind when choosing these challenges. If the PCs have access to a Word or a gift that will utterly trivialize a given difficulty, then you're going to need something additional. Don't drop the trivial problem; instead, add on more to it to complicate the situation, or make it a symptom of some other, less tractable problem.

Giving a pantheon these superficial but easily-overcome challenges helps the players appreciate the use of their powers and feel like they're actually useful in the game world. The PCs are demigods. Some things really *should* be easy for them.

# Adal

Adal is a freakish anomaly in Ancalia; it's a city that still retains a minimal level of human control. The noble Alazar lineage still rules the high-walled city's streets, offering a ragged kind of refuge for a few thousand surviving Ancalians. Adal's fortune was the result of cold ruthlessness and ample foresight, qualities its lords have always had in great measure.

The Alazar bloodline has always been martially-inclined even by Ancalian standards, and the city's location in close proximity to the Ulstang skerries had given them centuries to refine its defenses. An enormous store of grain and other vital supplies was always kept in readiness in the city so as to ensure its survival against a siege. When the Night Roads opened elsewhere in Ancalia, Adal had the resources it needed to hold out against hunger.

Among the knights in service at Adal was a Sir Tobas, a Purgatist knight formerly of the Surcessant order who had been condemned to the black for a crime of passion. An expert in magical diseases, Tobas heard of the Hollowing Plague's effects from his former comrades among the Surcessants and had the genius to devise a successful test for it in a matter of days. When the larger part of the refugee swarm approached Adal, Tobas was able to identify the plagued among them before any visible symptoms could show.

The lords of Adal did what they thought they had to do. All infected and their families were slaughtered in a single terrible night, whether refugee or Adal-born. It was said that the killing of their kindred was necessary in order to contain the infection, but everyone knew that Adal's stored food could not possibly have fed so many mouths for long. To this day, Adal refuses to accept any permanent refugees save those with useful skills, and even nobles and wealthy gentry are turned away from their gates if they can't demonstrate a needed talent.

The result has been a savage squatter camp near Adal's gates, one tolerated by its lords for the trade in scavenged goods that goes on there. Adal's residents can get what they need, while refugees trade or plead vainly for a pass into the city. Monsters both human and otherwise gnaw at the edges of "the Camp", but the Alazar are strong enough to keep them out of the city proper.

Sea travel is almost impossible around Adal. The Ulstangers make a point of allowing ships to dock at Adal, knowing they'll be filled to the rails by desperate refugees from the city or Camp, each offering priceless treasures for a chance at escape. These fat ships are harvested when they try to flee, their inhabitants impressed into slavery and their passage-fees collected by the blond raiders. This does not dissuade all the refugees, some of whom are foolish enough to imagine that "life" in the skerries will be better.

## People

The common folk of Adal carry on a shadow of normal life, working and living as if the world were sane. Their leaders haven't this luxury.

- **Kantiba Orai** is the grim-handed lord of the city. Graying and past his prime as a warrior, he was planning his retirement when the disaster struck. Since that black day he's been struggling to keep his city intact and preserve some semblance of normal life. The lives of his people mean everything to him, and the lives of outsiders mean nothing. He has sacrificed too much to preserve Adal. He will not let foolish compassion waste what he has done.

- **Sir Tobas** still labors as the head of the Hospice of St. Jenai, once a place of healing and comfort and now a grim terminus for countless lives. Locals or would-be citizens whom he discovers to be infected with the Hollowing Plague are taken here for quick, clean euthanasia and honorable burial. Sir Tobas is haunted by all the deaths he has presided over, but and is beginning to wonder if the Mercymen haven't got the right idea after all.

- **Sister Minna** is a huge woman, a seven-foot Tilahun nun with fists like oak boles. She negotiates with most strangers who seem more interesting than the usual run of desperate refugees, and it's on her say that outsiders are allowed into the city to be tested by Sir Tobas. Outsiders need to prove their usefulness to Adal before Minna will let them get past the gates.

## Places

A good portion of space inside the walls has been cleared for crops and gardening, but the important military structures remain intact.

- The **Hospice of St. Jenai** contains scores of Hollowing Plague victims, some kept alive so that Sir Tobas can study the disease further. Some of these victims were once very important people.
- The **Great Silo** is a thick stone tower at the heart of the city's fortifications, a granary still full enough to support the city for several more years. If it were destroyed the community would begin starving in weeks.
- The **Camp** lies a bowshot outside Adal's walls, crudely palisaded and filled with ragged tents and huts. The refugees within will do absolutely anything to get inside the city, including making bargains with powers they ought not to entertain.

## The Bleak City of Adal

<b>Power:</b>	2	<b>Action Die:</b>	1d8
<b>Cohesion:</b>	2	<b>Trouble:</b>	6
<b>Features:</b>	The Alazar nobility are fearsome warriors. The inhabitants will do anything their lords command in order to remain in the city.		
<b>Problems:</b>	Ulstang raiders haunt the seas.	1 point	
	Camp refugees constantly agitate for admission and help.	1 point	
	Monsters infest the near environs.	2 points	
	The population is beginning to lose hope in any kind of salvation.	2 points	

Adal is on a slow but steady slope to destruction. While the city has sufficient stores to hold out for several more years, the despair of the inhabitants and the mad desperation of the refugees outside ensure eventual catastrophe. The city is almost paralyzed with its problems, and it's all the Alazar can do to just keep things going for one more week.

# Anderaccha

A jewel of ancient Khamite architecture and broad, splendid avenues, the former capital city is now a charnel ruin littered with the bones of the dead. The Night Road that tore open in the center of the city disgorged a horde of monstrous Uncreated abominations that swiftly moved to trap the humans within the walls before beginning to prey upon the wretched inhabitants. Surviving groups of royal knights were able to punch a few holes in the encirclement to allow a handful of civilians to escape, but the noble Kalay families that dwelled in the city were almost obliterated. Now nothing walks the streets but Uncreated horrors and packs of roaming husks.

Perversely, Anderaccha's ancient Khamite defense systems are largely intact. The catastrophe happened too quickly for the inhabitants to activate the defenses, and those important officials with the authority to trigger them were among the first to fall to the Uncreated. A theotechnical archmage, a Godbound of Artifice or Sorcery, or a living heir of the High Negus could all trigger the defense system if they're able to reach the control node deep within the haunted halls of the High Negus' palace, as could a possessor of the High Negus' regalia.

Anderaccha is also particularly well-stocked with gold and artwork. The riches of the peninsula found their way to the High Negus' court, and survivors were too few and too scattered to have made off with any real portion of it. It has been largely protected from foreign looters over the past five years, as the Gojeb River is the only water route to the city, and the river's banks are teeming with bandit enclaves, monstrous lairs, and remnants of the old river-chain system the Ancalians used to defend the city from Ulstanger raids. Looters must take a dangerous land route to the city, and then survive to carry off whatever plunder they take.

## People

Only a handful of demented hermit-survivors still live within the walls of Anderaccha, but there are several figures of importance in the area.

- The *High Negus Arad* is thought to be dead, one of the first victims of the swarm of Uncreated who stormed the palace. There are persistent rumors that he had something to do with the great catastrophe and that he was not devoured, but instead elevated to

a great and terrible form within his palace. Dead or alive, his ancient Khamite regalia can act as a master key to the city's defenses.

- *Hjarta Icelock* is an Ulstanger ice priestess determined to shame Ancalia by looting the bones of its noble dead and the artistic treasures of its dead king. An Eldritch of Sky and Death, she's marched overland from the coast with a terrible warband of mortal warriors and draugr war-slaves, and uses her powers to commandeer control of the husk swarms around the city. She builds her strength for now, wary of the Uncreated monsters within the walls.
- "*High Negus*" *Basir* is a petty Senai nobleman, once a minor coin lord of the city and now convinced that he is the legitimate heir of Arad. Charismatic as all his kind are, he's gathered a number of surviving royal knights and tattered gentlefolk to his banner, operating out of a fortified country manor dangerously near the city. Basir is not an evil man, but he is absolutely obsessed with gaining recognition as Ancalia's rightful ruler.

## Places

Several locations of interest remain within the city.

- The *High Negus' palace* crowns a hill on the west side of the city. It swarms with Uncreated horrors, but if Arad's bones are anywhere in the city, they'll be here. The control site for activating the city's defense systems is somewhere deep within the palace, magically hidden from unblest eyes.
- The *Night Road* opened in the central market square of the city. While there are dangerous abominations in the area, there is no organized defense of the gate.
- The *Cathedral of St. Simon* was one of the grandest churches in all Ancalia. Now it houses a tiny enclave of desperate locals who rely on the steadily-fading holy wards of the place to keep back the husks and Uncreated while they live on rats and looted grain. They know the city and its dangers intimately well.

## Ancient Khamite Defenses

Anderaccha is one of the only inhabited sites in Ancalia with still-functioning Khamite defense systems dating back before the Shattering, systems originally intended to fend off Din invaders from the west. Most other Ancalian cities cannibalized these relics long ago, or were founded after the Shattering and never had them emplaced. The defenses come in three main kinds, all of which can operate for three months before needing a month's recharge time.

*Eternal Heroes* are ideofom-golems patterned on the soul-energies of great Khamite heroes. These glowing automatons use the stat block for a Major Hero, with gifts appropriate to the original hero's abilities, but they are also immune to non-magical weapons. About fifty remain concealed in the city, awaiting activation.

*Arete Klaxons* are sirens that wail a strange, driving tone that inspires and bolsters allies of the system's controller. Their sound is audible anywhere in the city. Mortals allies of the sounders who hear the klaxons gain 2 hit dice and a +2 bonus to their hit rolls.

*Javelins of the Perfected* are a modified form of Eternal Hero that launches flying versions of these soul-golems to hang suspended in the sky over the city. These entities hurl bolts of focused force at hostile aerial attackers; their cloud of incoming blasts inflicts an automatic 1d8 normal die of damage per round to all flying enemies within three miles of the city. The system does not target grounded enemies. Destroying this cover requires 60 points of damage to an AC 4 target; they're too spread out to be treated as a Mob for area-effect damage. The system heals at a rate of 1 hit die per hour.

If the Night Road is closed, activating the defense systems would be enough to purge Anderaccha of the Uncreated and husks within 24 hours. The city cannot be effectively secured while the Night Road remains open. Replicating these defenses in other cities would require performing an Impossible Dominion change for each defense, but each would qualify as a useful Feature for relevant defensive purposes.

# Bakare

Once the ancestral seat of the Henok lineage, Bakare was always a sinister city to the rest of Ancalia. Its kantibas were notoriously corrupt in matters of tariffs and smuggling, and its Henok coin lords clannishly suspicious of outsiders. When the Night Road opened in the former kantiba's palace and the Chained Lady stepped forth with her multitudes of Uncreated servitors, those who could not flee either perished or swore their submission. Now the port trades Ancalian loot and vile secrets to the most unprincipled of foreign adventurers, along with wretched slaves who've sold themselves in hope of escape.

## People

Bakare still has something resembling a civic life under the rule of the Chained Lady, albeit it's restricted to the dock district. The former coin lords and Henok gentry of the city have either died, fled, or become slaves to their new mistress.

- Bakare is the seat of the *Chained Lady*, who dwells in the former kantiba's palace surrounded by her Uncreated minions and miserably affluent human slaves. She ignores most dealings in the city, but traders seeking the darkest occult artifacts and foulest secrets can sometimes win her attention in exchange for certain loathsome favors to be performed elsewhere.
- The former *Kantiba Izekar* was a notoriously corrupt Henok nobleman who stole much of the city's trade income for his own use. He is said to have been eaten by a deranged lover shortly after the catastrophe, but his secret vault was never found, nor the ancient artifacts rumored to be kept within.
- *Master Yalt* is the current favorite of the Chained Lady, a nebulously foreign human Eldritch who exhibits a hideous mastery of occult gifts of Fertility and Passion. He and his addict servants enforce a minimal decorum on the docks and report any greater problems to the Lady. Yalt's convinced he's going to be replaced soon and is determined to experience every possible physical satisfaction before his inevitable damnation. He will pay desperate prices to experience novel sins and has no real loyalty to the Lady.
- *The Charwoman* is one of the greatest Invidian knights of Ancalia, a heroine of supernatural adroitness in Deception and disguise. She was on a mission to investigate Kantiba Izekar when the catastrophe happened, and she's been trapped in Bakare ever since. She's stayed to scout out the Lady's defenses and aid escapees, lingering in the increasingly-despairing hope that some kind of help will arrive.

## Places

The city has been marked by the sea from its first days, and its massive stone walls encircle a protected harbor that once served countless fishers and traders. The docks still retain a measure of human civilization, but the rest of the city is a haunt of monsters and cultists.

- The *dock quarter* of Bakare is almost normal, with inns, loot markets, provisioners, and houses of debauchery. Order is kept by the favored slaves of the Chained Lady, who dwell in opulence deeper in the city in mansions thick with treacherous underlings.

- The *walled harbor* of Bakare is guarded by a maze of artificial reefs, cursed fogs, and entropic mines planted before the Shattering. Only members of the Pilot Guild can guide a ship to the harbor mouth, though the Sea or Knowledge Words can defeat the defenses, and ships that don't actually sail on the water can bypass them.
- The *former kantiba's palace* is the lair of the Chained Lady, filled with whispering servitors seeking to prove each others' treachery or incompetence to advance their own position. The disfavored and those who can't keep their bargains are made entertainment for the more sadistic favorites. In the basement, well-guarded by minions, a Night Road opening disgorges occasional Uncreated abominations.
- The *guildhall of the Pilot Guild* is still occupied by the survivors, all in hopeless thrall to the Shackled Court. They bring foreign ships through the sea-maze in exchange for an "honored" place among the residents. Kept as a secret from outsiders, their weekly guild rituals in the cellars of the guildhouse are what maintain Bakare's wards: a Mundus Ward of level 1, and an Empyrean Ward of level 5. If the sacred chamber is destroyed or the guild disrupted, the wards will permanently fail. The Chained Lady and her servants are all attuned to these wards.
- The *small fishing villages* that dot the coast of the island of Iyasu are largely deserted now, though a few small enclaves hold on with their Henok gentry. The villages have a taboo against deal-making of any kind due to the Shackled depredations; all exchanges and agreements are indirectly arranged to be coincidences. Outsiders who propose bargains will be viewed with near-paranoiac distrust.

### The Shackled Court of Bakare

<b>Power:</b> 2	<b>Action Die:</b> 1d8
<b>Cohesion:</b> 2	<b>Trouble:</b> 3
<b>Features:</b>	The Chained Lady knows everyone's price. The Chained Lady has access to tremendous material wealth and hapless slave labor. A network of cultists and favor-owers exists throughout northeast Arcem.
<b>Problems:</b>	The Charwoman leads a fragile resistance from within the city. 1 point The Chained Lady can't resist ruining her own cultists. 2 points

The Shackled Court is an insidious power with agents and cultists embedded in most major power structures throughout the northeastern continent. It's very well-equipped to use manipulation and resist infiltration, but it has little way to project military power. While Bakare's fortifications are impressive, the Shackled Court's servants and Uncreated abominations are too unmilitary to employ them as effective defenses against conventional attack.



# Binai

Binai was always a hardscrabble city by Ancalian standards, with poorer people and less generous soil than the lands of the warmer southern coast. It had an unusually large percentage of Din refugees from the Atheocracy, with a quarter of Binai's citizens born as heirs of deserting border soldiers or the fleeing losers of lethal Lomite intellectual disputes. Even the latest governor of Binai, Kantiba Simeon, was of part-Din blood along with his Kalay lineage.

As a reaction to Lom's atheism and a way for the refugee Din to prove their loyalty, Binai was also one of the most pious cities of a pious nation. Binaians didn't even pretend to tolerate anything but pure Unitary Church doctrine and belief, and the Din there were some of the fiercest believers in the kingdom. The stone churches of Binai were finer than the kantiba's own palace, and the city's coin lords were all tacitly subordinate to the wishes of the local bishop.

Binai died a slow, hard death with the coming of the catastrophe. Peasants sick with the Hollowing Plague made desperate pilgrimages to its holy shrines, only to rise as monstrous husks. The bishop and the kantiba struggled to maintain order as long as they could, but they and their servitors were overwhelmed in the end by masses of husks and the increasing threat of Uncreated abominations.

Now the surrounding land is full of Din survivors in scattered enclaves. They fear being mistaken for Lomites if they head further east, and they know that a fate worse than death awaits "traitors" in Lom. Bereft of help, with nowhere to flee, their fate promises to be as slow and terrible as that of their empty city.

Binai's situation is worsened by the eagerness of Lom to take revenge on its apostates. Several Lomite warbands have penetrated Ancalia from the west to visit "just retribution" on these heretics, though some of these bands seem to be seeking particular Lomite refugees, almost as if to ensure that they are either recovered by the Atheocracy or permanently silenced.

## People

Almost all of Binai's important civic figures died during the collapse, fighting to the last to preserve some remnant of order and safety in their beloved home. Those who lived were the ones who fled the city early, before the husk swarms became overwhelming. Along with the locals, several outside forces have taken an interest in Binai's corpse.

- *Arch-Logician Abstemious Wheelwright* is leading Lomite operations near Binai. His superiors are deeply divided over the wisdom of entering Ancalia, and he has a dark suspicion that he and his men will be purged on their return in order to contain any infection. Wheelwright is a skilled sorcerer of the Holy Colloquy and leads a hundred crack Lomite border riders and a pair of simple-minded Stifler god-suppressors. His mission is to kill apostates, but his primary goal is to avoid untimely death.
- *Bleeding Kiss*, an Angelic Regent secretly summoned by Lomite preceptors to corrupt and pervert Binaian faith so as to make them more susceptible to collapse. Unfortunately for Kiss, by the time the preceptors had finished calling her to this world Binai had already utterly collapsed. She's gone freelance in the nearby enclaves, masquerading as a holy Unitary saint returned to aid believers. She's working on building trust for now and discerning how to most effectively betray it.

- *Lady Tefezi* is a Din-blooded noblewoman blessed with a strange soul-genome mutation that grants her incredible powers of elusiveness, not unlike those of the Word of Deception. Having escaped the fall of the city, she's desperate to find help to save the surviving Din of Binai. She's greatly embittered against the Akeh, as she feels the rest of Ancalia abandoned Binai because of its Din heritage. She advocates plans that regularly come at great cost to the Akeh enclaves in the area.

- *Merciful Tanner* is a hunted Lomite heretic who took advantage of the Ancalian chaos to escape east with his small corps of heavily-armed followers. While a devout atheist, Tanner believes in a far more humane and temperate rationalism than the Holy Colloquy. He's trying to marshal the Ancalian Din to join him in fomenting a probably-hopeless commoner uprising in eastern Lom, but the locals are far more faithful Uniters than he was expecting.

## Places

Binai is relatively well-preserved as a city, having fallen to an overwhelming numbers of husks rather than a direct assault by Uncreated abominations. Most of the buildings are still intact and habitable.

- The *Grand Cathedral of Binai* was the most glorious cathedral on the northern coast of Ancalia, a veritable mountain of Kaffan marble quarried into a severely traditional, beautiful monument to Binai's faith. A large number of priceless holy relics remain hidden within, secreted in the last days of Binai before the undead overwhelmed the city.
- *Quarantine Camp Five* was on a coastal inlet a short way northeast of the city walls. The camp commander ordered the summary execution of quarantined subjects immediately on their arrival, sparing the camp staff from the husk uprisings that swamped the other quarantine sites. The commander was killed by refugee brigands shortly after the city's final collapse, but the camp, its buildings, and its food stores have attracted a desperate scattering of survivors.
- The *Rational Retort* is a secret fastness for Lomite atheocrats drawn from discontented Din refugees and agitators dispatched by the Holy Colloquy to cause trouble in Binai. While these fifth columnists were never very successful in disrupting religion in Binai, they still received copious support from Lom. The Rational Retort doubtless still contains an impressive supply of weaponry, rations, Lomite artifices, and silver with which to help ignite the eventual atheocratic revolution that the Holy Colloquy desired for the city. Surviving agents of Lom may have retreated to the underground tunnels of the fortress, somewhere near the city.
- *Serenity* is the name of a small enclave of survivors that has managed to eke out an existence in one of the city's more defensible quarters. Word of the refuge attracts surviving Din, but unbeknownst to these outsiders, the Serene are all actually well-preserved greater undead, madly convinced that they are still alive. Anyone who dares allude to the truth is slaughtered, with that fate almost inevitable for any outsider who tries to live among them.

# Hadiya

High in the Kaffan mountains, this ancient Khamite fortress was long ago repurposed as a monastery-redoubt for the Unitary Church. Threatened by coastal raids, Lomite incursions, and the occasional rebellious lord, the ancient patriarchs thought it best that the holy Church have at least one stronghold beyond the easy reach of secular powers. Hadiya's inherited defenses, theurgic bolstering, and Former Empire construction made it the strongest known fortification on the peninsula.

In the centuries since it was claimed by the Uniters, Hadiya has remained a high, cold citadel for the Church. Promising royal knights spent time in sacred study there, while those bishops with the aptitude necessary to become theurgists were initiated into its deep secrets within the high halls. Patriarchs who renounced their position due to age or ill health commonly retired to Hadiya, the better to meet God in a holy place. The isolation and stillness of the fortress made it an unpopular monastery for more worldly clerics, but that simply ensured that those who volunteered to serve there were among the most pious and unworldly of Ancalia's monks.

The vast accretion of patriarchal relics and saintly remains formed a storehouse of holiness for the Church. With pious theurges to ward walls already thickly-woven with enchantments, the stronghold was a perfect repository for the holiest relics and most sacred treasures of the Church. Neither sorcerer nor raider nor rebel warlord could hope to plunder these cherished artifacts, and the steady stream of pilgrims the monastery attracted spread its fame far and wide.

When the Night Roads opened, the holy Patriarch Ezek swiftly realized the scale of the disaster and the horror that awaited the souls of the untended dead. He left his guard to fight a heroic delaying action in the Negus' palace while he invoked the *Path to the Bright Sanctum* to reach the patriarchal sanctum of Hadiya. Once there, he beckoned the surviving bishops of Ancalia to the monastery with the invocation of the *Trumpet of Far Utterance*. Some refused to leave their flocks and others perished on the way, but before a month was out most of the survivors had reached Hadiya.

Once there, Patriarch Ezek began a great and terrible ritual laid down in former ages against just such a horrific event as this. By using the sacred relics to fuel his prayers and the aid of his fellow bishops to guide and control the unleashed power, Ezek was able to sanctify the recently dead throughout the entire peninsula. Thanks to this tremendous invocation, not a single Ancalian soul has plunged into Hell since the Night Roads opened. Even unbelievers and the flagrantly vile now sleep peacefully within the earth, safe until the return of the Creator.

This ritual comes at a price. Not only does it consume irreplaceable holy relics, but the power that crackles through Ezek and his bishops is inevitably fatal to the wielders. Of the twenty-eight bishops who survived to reach the monastery, twelve of them have died of the strain over the past five years. The strain is slowly increasing as their numbers lessen, and the remainder can't last more than four or five years more before death claims bishops and patriarch alike.

Ezek can't leave Hadiya without ending the ritual, nor can his bishops. A small garrison of knights and monks remains in the monastery, but they're barely sufficient to hold the walls against the inevitable assaults of Uncreated monsters who seek to destroy the patriarch and his bishops. Strangers from afar are scrutinized ruthlessly before being allowed anywhere within the fortress' walls.

## Defenses of the Monastery

Hadiya is a single large fortress complex built into the side of a sheer-sloped mountain, only one narrow road leading over a ridge line to its massive golden gate. Its Khamite defenses are the same in type and number as those found in Anderaccha, all focused on a single citadel. The fortress' embedded Empyrean Wards are of strength 4. Attunement to the wards requires a week of ritual prayer and purification in a sacred chapel deep within the citadel.

Patriarch Ezek can be treated as a Greater Eldritch bound to the Words of Sun, Health, and Passion. Of the sixteen surviving bishops, six of them are competent theurges in their own right, though they're treated simply as Skilled Mages who are capable of using Invocations of the Gate. Aside from the patriarch and bishops, a Large Mob of fanatically dedicated monks and lay soldiers with Elite Warrior statistics serve in the citadel, led by a dozen royal knights.

## Aiding the Patriarch

There are several ways a pantheon of Godbound could help Patriarch Ezek, should they choose to do so. The patriarch himself would be perfectly willing to accept aid from any source that doesn't appear tainted by the Uncreated, even if it doesn't have a strictly Unitary cast. While he will not turn from his faith under any circumstances, he would be willing to work with Godbound and their cults. Given the situation, he'd simply consider it a sign from the Creator.

The most pressing concern for Ezek is the ritual. His first priority is to acquire more holy relics that can be consumed by the invocation, and he'll tell the pantheon where to find these precious things and warn them that the most important have probably already been looted or seized by the Uncreated.

Bolstering the ritual so it lasts permanently is an Impossible change requiring at least two celestial shards. The base price for affecting the entire peninsula is 16 Dominion points, but this cost is increased drastically if any of the Uncreated lords remain active, or any major supernatural abominations still lurk. If any Uncreated lords remain, they count as Resistance 8, increasing the price to 48 Dominion points. If any major Uncreated or undead enemies are still active, then they count as Resistance 4, making it cost 32 Dominion. Unless the entire peninsula is scoured of Uncreated and significant supernatural monsters, the least Resistance is 2, making the price equal 24 Dominion. For purposes of this ritual, mundus wards can be ignored.

Optionally, due to the particular nature of the ritual, the Godbound can use their own divine power to fuel it instead, directly sacrificing some portion of their celestial might in order to weave the invocation into Ancalia's soil. The price is simple; two permanent points of Effort per PC in the campaign. This sacrifice can be performed in a single day. The ensuing surge of divine might will incinerate Patriarch Ezek and the bishops, but they are willing to make this sacrifice.

In both cases, the ritual becomes permanently embedded in Ancalia until disrupted by another Dominion change of comparable magnitude. This sure and certain salvation from Hell would be a tremendous draw to men and women from throughout Arcem, and the land would doubtless swiftly acquire a reputation as a "holy land" blessed especially by the Creator and the evident sainthood of the Godbound who made it so. Of course, it would also draw the intense anger of the angelic princes of Hell, who would be deeply disturbed at the prospect of other nations being spared their awful spiritual harvest.

# Janjero

Once the great seat of the noble family of Tilahun, the gigantic scions of that line have been monstrously altered by the Hollowing Plague. While the city was never cursed with a Night Road, the wave of refugees from less fortunate areas helped spread the plague and ensure the city's doom. The machinations of the Poxed Court encouraged this downfall, as the Leper Prince managed to catalyze the sickness with the innate power of the transhuman Tilahun bloodline.

The result were the "glutton lords", Tilahun made swollen and ravenous by the plague and their own power. The Poxed curse contains the plague in them and prevents them from becoming feral, but it does nothing to lessen the terrible hunger that gnaws their minds. The smallest of the lords have grown to twelve feet in height, though by a cruel jest of the Poxed, they've retained the handsomeness and beauty of the Ancalian nobility. Only the wild hunger in their eyes betrays their monstrous nature, and they can feign gentility for quite some time if well-fed.

The glutton lords have become raiders, slavers, and harvesters of flesh, roving out of the city to seize huge rolling cages of living humans to bring back to their walled lair. Rather than personally capture these "serfs", the glutton lords extort obedience from enclaves in the area, leaving them to produce the necessary victims by whatever means the enclave can manage. Those on the periphery of Janjero's reach fill their quota with raiding and banditry, while those close to the city scavenge the slums and abandoned buildings for goods to trade with border enclaves for lives in place of their own. There are few Uncreated or husks within the walls, as the Poxed are bored with the glutton lords and the undead are unpalatable to the former nobles.

There are perhaps a hundred surviving glutton lords within the city, broken up into a half-dozen noble families with their retinues of deranged cannibal servitors. They yearn to devour each other, but know that the first to openly slay and eat one of their own kind would ignite a likely-ruinous mutual war of all against all. They plot disappearances and nameless deaths, and staff secret kitchens with mad-eyed cooks. They prize spices and fine viands above all other things, and there are Ulstang raiders who dare bring them such goods in exchange for plundered gold. Of course, some of these crews find only waiting spits for them.

## People

The towering lords of Janjero still rule within the walls, and any ordinary human is either a meal or a useful slave not yet ripe for eating.

- **The Kantiba Heng** once ruled Janjero in trust for the High Negus. One of the first to fall prey to the altered Plague, he and his dozen remaining family members now squat in the kantiba's palace, maintaining a warped facade of their former gentility. Heng demands the right to eat any nobles captured by the glutton lords, and has a prison in the palace where he keeps his stock fresh.
- **Lady Maryam** is one of the clearest-minded of the glutton lords, a towering but beautiful woman who despises what she has become but lacks the strength to resist her hungers. She may seek to secretly contact the PCs if she has some reason to believe they can cure her hunger, but she'll likely snap partway through any negotiations and find herself frantically seeking to devour the heroes, apologizing all the while.

- **Kom Earthshaker** is a giant even among the glutton lords, standing sixteen feet tall. He wears a great cuirass of spiked metal, children hanging from the prongs to keep his favorite provender close to hand. He leads the tribute-collecting expeditions that gather slave stock from vassal enclaves. He is determined to imagine himself a courteous nobleman still, and neither he nor his minions will attack strangers unless they are insulted.

## Places

Most of Janjero's interior is desolate and empty of inhabitants.

- The **Pens** are the stockades where the glutton lords keep their wretched tribute stock. A few of the more gourmand-minded families have set up creches for the birthing of tender infants; their mothers are allowed to live so long as they keep producing children.
- The **Ratways** are the city's old sewer system, where runaway slaves hide in tunnels and passages too small for the glutton lords. Trusted slave thralls are sometimes sent in to roust them, if the lords are confident that hostages or promises will bring them back.
- The **Promise House**, a cursed mansion once inhabited by the Leper Prince in his sojourn here. He may have left behind friends.

## Glutton Lord

AC: 7, or 3 if armored	Move: 40' stride
Hit Dice: 10	Save: 10+
Attack: +10	Damage: 1d8 straight
Morale: 9	Effort: 3

Glutton lords are tremendously strong, dwarfing their Tilahun brethren with their unholy might. A casual backhand can crush a man's ribcage, and they can shoulder a horse the way an ordinary man could hoist a lamb. When they fight, it is with great iron forks and cleavers. All such weapons are beautifully worked and engraved by slave laborers who are desperate to avoid death.

While powerful combatants, the glutton lords are slaves to their appetites. The first time they down a human foe during a fight, they'll helplessly spend 1d6 rounds feasting on the fallen victim before they can think to kill any remaining foes. If encountered as a terrible Mob, they'll spend every even-numbered round feasting if there are mortal victims to devour.

A patriarch or matriarch of a glutton lord clan is more powerful still, and may have lesser gifts from the Might, Sword, or Endurance Words. They usually have twice the hit dice as well.

Miracles of Health cannot revert a glutton lord to their former height; the change has become part of them, though an Impossible Dominion working might further change them. Health can cure the hunger of the plague, however, and Passion can constrain the urge. The lord must either be willing or incapacitated to be affected. Without their mind clouded by need, the glutton lords could reason and think as anyone else could, albeit most of them would be deranged by the horror of what they'd done.

# Random Ruined City Generation

There are more market towns and minor communities in Ancalia than are listed here, and sometimes a GM will need to brew up such a ruin on short notice. The tables provided below will give you some ideas about what happened to a particular place, and some possibilities for the potential allies and hazards that might still be embedded there.

Not every town or city needs to be a fearsome challenge to a pantheon of Godbound. If they're swaggering into Saro or Bakare to call out the Uncreated lords who rule there, then they can expect to have a grand melee in short order, but most ruined communities aren't infested by demi-divine eidolons of madness.

When you build a new community, remember to keep in mind its role in your game. Some places will be the lairs of terrible foes, but other locations will just be set dressing for a different conflict, or will be a site to place some important macguffin that the PCs are seeking. Try to see clearly what kind of benefit or playable content you'll get at the table for going through the effort of building the city.

Maps and city layouts are rarely very necessary in play. Most pantheons have ways of bypassing barriers or altering terrain. In a pinch, just grab a random historical map off the net and describe its features in a fashion suitable to the setting.

<b>d4</b>	<b>How Quickly Did It Fall?</b>
1	Almost instantly when the Night Roads opened.
2	It held out for a few days before collapsing.
3	It lasted for several months before it fell.
4	It actually crumbled relatively recently.

<b>d6</b>	<b>Who Were The Last Holdouts?</b>
1	The nobles and ruler held on until the last.
2	Clergy of the Unitary Church were the last to fall.
3	Refugees who thought there was shelter here died last.
4	An organized local commoner resistance died out here.
5	A military garrison or knightly detachment held out.
6	Quisling collaborators remained until no longer useful.

<b>d8</b>	<b>Why Is This Place Worth Having?</b>
1	Substantial food stores remain intact in the ruin
2	It's surprisingly defensible against husks and Uncreated
3	It's a site with an important Ancalian cultural artifact
4	It's a nexus of river travel or commands a vital pass
5	It's still largely unlooted of its treasures
6	A functioning enclave of capable survivors remains
7	It defends substantial tracts of protected farmland
8	It's the legitimate political seat for the general region

<b>d10</b>	<b>What Potential Ally is Still Alive Here?</b>
1	An extremely capable hermit-survivor remains here
2	An appealing waif or orphan still ekes out a hidden life
3	An ancient Akeh soul-eidolon golem remains intact
4	A trader has a post here or comes here regularly to loot
5	A half-crazed knight defends some part of it still
6	A foreign adventurer would entertain an alliance
7	The mayor or headman somehow still lives
8	A priest or nun still offers some solace here
9	A not-entirely-hostile Cousin lurks in the ruin
10	A former military officer still holds a garrison here

<b>d12</b>	<b>What's the Worst Thing Still Living Here?</b>
1	A horribly treacherous mortal who seeks to lure trust
2	A brutal Uncreated abomination that hunts the ruins
3	Massive hordes of shambling husks choke the streets
4	A swarm of half-crazed human cannibals
5	An aspiring mortal tyrant with his or her cowed serfs
6	A twisted magical artifact with a malign aura
7	An Uncreated manipulator who bargains deceitfully
8	A lair of human degenerates indulging in horrible acts
9	An enraged arch-ghost with a grudge against survivors
10	Someone with an unsolvable yet PC-attractive problem
11	A heartless sorcerer using the place as a base
12	A terrible monster with a nature sympathetic to PCs

<b>d20</b>	<b>What's a Particular Local Hazard?</b>
1	Pockets of hideously virulent Hollowing Plague
2	Exceptionally abundant husks stalk the streets
3	Volcanic vents or other magical terrain deformation
4	Murderous magical fogs or mists fill the street
5	A river left its banks and deeply flooded the area
6	A cyclical swarm of Uncreated vermin waxes and wanes
7	A magical curse infects intruders with a dire blight
8	A dying emotion fills the streets and oppresses minds
9	The ruin is full of traps left by the last defenders
10	Ancient Akeh defense systems were triggered
11	Foreign looters are constantly intruding on the place
12	Cousins flock to the place as a nexus of magical force
13	The undead here are exceptionally powerful and clever
14	The restless dead magically trap intruders in the ruin
15	Much of the ruin has collapsed into ancient tunnels
16	Angry spirits blindly attack everyone who enters
17	Undead are extremely hard to permanently kill here
18	Magically-hostile plants infest and cover the ruin
19	A particular sense lies cruelly to its owner in the ruin
20	Uncreated get a large power boost within the ruin

# The Five Families

The Five Families are the most widespread Ancalian lineages that still retain significant transhuman alterations. While the strength of these changes has dwindled in the centuries since the Polyarchy of Kham fell, even the lesser scions of the modern day can perform remarkable feats. Even so, many heirs have no special gifts at all.

The transhuman gifts of the Five Families are based chiefly on blood potency. While they've never tolerated the eugenic incest of their Oasian cousins, the Five Families prefer to wed among their own lineage as much as possible, and first cousin marriages are common among those with the strongest powers. Those less gifted or with no visible powers are encouraged to marry worthy commoners or lesser nobles of the other Five Families in order to keep the bloodline healthy and forge useful dynastic ties.

While the strength of their blood is mostly hereditary, there are always rogue instances of bloodline gifts showing up in commoners or even in heirs of another transhuman lineage. These wild cards are eagerly desired as husbands and wives by the Five Families, as they combine the vigor of outside blood with the potency of an impressive gift. Any commoner who demonstrates a lineage's gifts can expect offers of advantageous marriage to pour in rapidly. As such gifts usually manifest young, there's plenty of time for the child's guardians to decide where their best interests may lie.

An Ancalian only demonstrates the gifts of one lineage, save in the very rarest cases. Most nobles show only the lesser gifts of their lines,

and usually no more than one of those. Such men and women can expect to have decent positions in noble society, though they might not be chosen as occupants for posts of particular importance. Even the least of them can claim noble status, and should poverty pinch too badly there is always a rich merchant's son or daughter to invite a match, or service to the High Negus as a royal knight.

Those who demonstrate the greater gifts of a bloodline can expect to have an important role in governing Ancalia. Those with physical gifts serve as knightly heroes and martial champions, while those with social or mental talents can expect to be entrusted with important offices.

Those who exhibit remarkable gifts that have nothing to do with the known lineages are also considered noble-blooded, though without a family to support them they may not get very far in the hierarchy. These rogue nobles are usually enlisted as agents of the local great family, carrying out the tasks their gifts best suit them to manage.

## Playing a Transhuman PC

Players can choose to make a PC from the Five Families if they wish and if they assign an adequate attribute score as listed under each bloodline. Godbound heroes may purchase their characteristic talents, paying half a gift point each for the lesser talents and a full point for the greater. Optionally, they can buy one apposite lesser gift from an appropriate Word for one point. Mortal PCs may buy the talents normally as their type of mortal PC allows, whether common or heroic.



## The Alazar, the Thirsting Blades

The Alazar lineage was a late development, one thrown together hastily in the last years before the Shattering. With the impending disaster becoming more and more evident, the ancient Khamite transhumanists threw a desperate mixture of experimental traits and unproven theurgic rites into the genetic mix that became the Alazar. Their goal was to create a combat-focused lineage that could serve as a living wall against their Din enemies to the west and north.

They were successful, albeit barely. The resulting Alazar lineage was blindingly fast, but it was unstable, and it appeared for a time that the entire bloodline would die off during the Shattering, if not from the destabilized magical environment than from the combat losses they incurred. Some sub-lineages vanished entirely, becoming dread Cousins in the mountains where they survived as best they could... for the Alazar had "special needs".

Their unstable soul-gene required regular reinforcement from a baseline human life pattern. In the absence of sophisticated theotechnical medical facilities, the only way to get this was through the consumption of fresh human blood. Fortunately, this need was amply satisfied by the brutal combat that the Alazar lineage saw, and as the bloodline's purity dwindled, so too did their thirst for blood. Even now, however, Alazar kindred will ritualistically taste the blood of other humans they kill as a symbol of their lineage and purpose.

Alazar tend to lean, whipcord builds and have noticeably sharp teeth. Even those with the most diluted bloodlines are noticeable for their stillness when not in motion; it's said that an Alazar schedules an eye-blink a fortnight in advance.

## The Henok, the Ones Who Live

The Henok received a bitter cast from fate's dice. The nucleus of the lineage was a remote Khamite gene-temple on the island of Iyasu. There, a renegade band of theotechnicians was determined to breed a line of transhumans who could survive the Shattering that was going on all around them. This new lineage would sacrifice every other consideration to sheer invincible fortitude. Their experiments were utterly devoid of the usual safety measures and would doubtless have been forbidden entirely by the ideotribe's leadership had they known.

The result was a qualified success. The Henok were incredibly tough, capable of subsisting on starvation rations, enduring terrible injuries without lasting harm, and laboring without rest for days on end. Admittedly, the unbalanced soul-gene of the lineage resulted in both deformations and physical debilities, but the Henok could overcome these through sheer effort and grinding determination.

For the first few centuries the theotechnicians acted as divine leaders to the Henok families on Iyasu, using them as brute labor and faithful minions to keep the rest of the islanders in line. Henok labor preserved countless lives on the island, and Henok fishermen and farmers toiled when others were too weak. By the time of Ezana I, however, the Henok families had overthrown their former god-rulers and driven the surviving theotechnicians into hiding. Their neighbors acknowledged them as lords of the island, where they rule still.

Henok come in many shapes and seemings, but those with a strong bloodline are always marked by some sort of physical deformity. A missing hand, a blinded eye, facial deformities, a persistent limp, or some other noticeable malformation is the curse of the bloodline, and one that resists any low magical cure.

### Alazar Lineage Abilities

All true-blooded Alazar heirs will have a Dexterity attribute of at least 16. Those scions who don't drink at least a pint of fresh human blood once a week lose any legacy gifts until they satisfy their thirst. This blood can be drawn from a willing volunteer, leaving them at half their usual hit points or hit dice for a day but otherwise unharmed.

### Common Legacy Talents

**Savage Strokes:** Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to reroll a missed Dexterity-based attack roll. This talent can be used only once on any given roll.

**Inhuman Quickness:** Commit Effort for the scene. As an Instant action, cause a single physical attack against the Alazar to be treated as if the attacker rolled a 1 on the hit roll. Automatic hits cannot be dodged, nor can powers that don't require a hit roll.

### Heroic Legacy Talent

**Faster than Fate:** As an On Turn action, Commit Effort for the day. Gain one bonus normal attack, and all Dexterity-based attacks you make this round will hit on anything but a natural 1 on the attack roll. You can use this talent only once per scene.

### Henok Lineage Abilities

The Henok are all tremendously tough, and must have a Constitution score of at least 16. They require only a tenth as much food, air, sleep, or water as a normal human. All have some physical deformity that can only be cured or effaced by divine magic or similar effects, though this deformity need not have any game-mechanical penalties to it.

### Common Legacy Talent

**Hardy as a Weed:** The PC gains an extra hit point per level, including any levels they had before they took this talent. They can function for up to a month without any sleep or rest whatsoever.

**Henok Resilience:** The PC can continue acting for one round after reaching zero hit points, and will recover with 1 hit point an hour later if no one finishes them off while they're disabled.

### Heroic Legacy Talent

**Shrug It Off:** Commit Effort for the day to ignore a physical attack or physically-injurious effect. This resistance applies to only one attack and the damage it does *appears* to be done to the Henok, it just doesn't slow them down or otherwise inconvenience them. If the Henok uses this ability on damage that brings them to zero hit points and then plays dead, they might appear to have suffered a blow that no one could possibly survive.

## The Kalay, the Seers Enthroned

The Kalay were the product of experiments in human sensory input, part of a plan to expand the range of human experience through augmented senses and increased perceptual throughput. Aside from more technological means of augmentation, rituals and arcane augmentations were woven into the nascent Kalay lineage in an attempt to open up entirely new realms of perception. The early generations produced a predictable number of nonviable specimens, but the lineage stabilized shortly before the Shattering ended further experimentation.

The Kalay family is the lineage of kings. While the High Negus of Ancalia has occasionally been drawn from others of the Five Families, more than two-thirds of the kings in the past six centuries have been drawn from heirs to the Kalay bloodline. Those with strong blood have an almost supernatural ability to detect an interlocutor's true thoughts and see patterns that would elude a more ordinary human mind. These talents make them superb judges of character and intention.

The centuries of intermarriage have worn on the Kalay bloodline, however, and few modern scions have anything more than a knack for noticing the out-of-place. Even so, the thinnest-blooded Kalay commands great respect when they speak on matters of hidden truth and subtle plans.

Kalay are marked by their eyes, which have a remarkable jewel-toned brightness to them and shine like a cat's in the dark. Unusual or striking eye colors are common among the lineage.

## The Senai, the Bright Beloved

Influenced by the Aesthetic Aretists of what is now Vissio, the researchers who developed the Senai bloodline wished to focus on physical beauty and grace. They declined to participate in the more exotic experiments of the Oasis States, and instead sought to evoke the perfect physical expression of human beauty in the bodies of the Senai lineage.

They were arguably successful. Not only were the Senai perfect in proportion, form, and symmetry, their very bones and tissues were woven into subtle mandalas of desire and grace that influenced all around them. In a very real way, the Senai warped the perceptions of those around them until whatever guise they took was the very soul of beauty to all who beheld them.

Their survival during the Shattering was a direct consequence of that beauty. Even the most savage bandit or brutal raider could hardly help but be bewitched by the Senai's beauty, and many came to dominate their supposed husbands, wives, or owners. Their ascent to one of the ruling Five Families was inevitable afterwards, as those around them found their requests so very reasonable, their presence so very delightful. Of course, it is also said that the Senai lineage was almost as unstable as the Alcazar line under the hostile magical conditions after the Shattering, and that many of the strongest lineage-families were forced by necessity into the wilderness to join the Cousins.

While it's a common politeness to refer to a particularly beautiful woman or handsome man as "graced as a Senai", a true scion of the lineage is hard to mistake. The almost inhuman symmetry of their form and the compelling effect they have on men and women around them is soon obvious to an observer.

### Kalay Lineage Abilities

A true scion of the Kalay must have a Wisdom score of at least 16. All of their lineage can see in the dark as well as a cat.

### Common Legacy Talents

**Anticipate the Pattern:** You cannot be surprised without the benefit of magic and automatically act first during a combat round. If your foe also automatically wins initiative, such as a Godbound, then roll initiative normally between the two of you.

**A Kingly Ear:** Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action. You can tell when someone is trying to deceive you with their words, though you can't automatically tell which part of their words are deceptive. This talent cannot penetrate the Word of Deception.

### Heroic Legacy Talent

**A Lordly Eye:** Commit Effort for the day and focus on a piece of evidence or a fragment of a deeper mystery. Gain an intuitive sense of whether it's related to any other information in your possession and an impression of the person you should talk to or investigate to find out more about it. You gain an image or sense of this person even if they are currently unknown to you. If the datum is irrelevant to anything you're interested in, you realize as much.

### Senai Lineage Abilities

The beautiful and imposing Senai all require a Charisma score of at least 16. Human lesser foes will not offer life-threatening violence to a Senai unless they have orders to do so or have an immediately compelling reason to resort to lethal violence.

### Common Legacy Talents

**A Little Favor:** Commit Effort for the scene. A lesser foe will perform any one favor for you that does not greatly inconvenience them or put them at significant expense. Worthy foes get a Spirit save to resist this charm.

**Map of Desire:** Commit Effort for the scene. By reading the subtle flows of emotion between two targets in sight, the Senai can get a two-word description of how each of them feels about the other.

### Heroic Legacy Talent

**Frustrated Desire:** Commit Effort for the day. A human target in sight becomes utterly smitten with the Senai, willing to do anything in order to have their favor. They will not force or compel the Senai, but will attempt to cozen them with all favors not entirely against their nature. If the Senai does not give some plausible hope to them or reward their efforts with tokens of special approval, the infatuation wears off in a day and cannot be enacted on them again. Otherwise it persists as long as their efforts are rewarded and the Effort remains Committed. Lesser foes get no saving throw, while worthy ones can save versus Spirit to resist.

# The Tilahun, the Towers Who Walk

Gigantic men and women, the Tilahun were an upscaling experiment of Khamite researchers, one meant to test the practicality of various methods of increasing human size without overtaxing human organs. At the dawn of the bloodline, even the shortest Tilahun female would pass seven feet in height, and the tallest males of their lineage were more than eight feet tall. Once this greater physical size was perfected and stabilized, the researchers could begin to explore different body configurations that were reliant on great size.

The lineage never had time to be altered further. The Shattering and the chaos that followed left the Tilahun to their own devices, and their tremendous strength and size proved much more practically useful than their designers had ever anticipated. A strong arm was no longer an aesthetic statement or a platform for future development, it was a vital tool for surviving the devastation that followed the fall of the Polyarchy.

In the centuries since, the Tilahun have largely bred down to more human sizes, though it's still common for a strong-blooded lord of a related family to reach seven feet in height, with the most powerfully-gifted members towering higher still. The "great destrier" of Ancalian fame was specially bred to bear such knights, and the sight of a Tilahun knight thundering down on a line of rabble is enough to put terror in the stoutest bandit's heart.

In the current age, Tilahun nobility are honored for their physical prowess and their ability to protect their charges from conventional perils. Sadly, such strength is not always enough when facing the horrors of the Uncreated and the Hollowing Plague.

## Tilahun Lineage Abilities

Those of strong Tilahun blood must have a Strength score of at least 16. They can perform any feat of strength that four ordinary men could perform without rolling an attribute check for it.

## Common Lineage Talents

**Titanic Strikes:** Commit Effort for the scene. For the rest of the scene, roll any Strength-based attack damage dice twice and take the better result. This affects only normal attacks, not Smites or other powers.

**Hulking Strength:** Commit Effort for the scene. Perform any one feat of strength that four harnessed oxen could achieve without needing to roll an attribute check.

## Heroic Legacy Talent

**Effortless Might:** You can perform any humanly-possible feat of strength automatically and can carry weight on your shoulders as heavy as an ox at your normal movement rate. These heavy objects are too clumsy to make good weapons. The magical nature of your strength keeps you from bogging down under extremely heavy loads or having lifted objects collapse under their own weight.

## Minor Lineages

The Five Families aren't the only transhuman lineages in Ancalia, though they are the most common. Dozens of smaller bloodlines are found scattered throughout the peninsula, each usually forming the gentry leadership of some market town or blade lord march. Few have cadet branches outside of their ancestral lands, and it's not uncommon for them to be unknown outside their home region.

Even so, they are nobles still, and due the respect that Ancalia's transhuman nobility demands. Any family that can demonstrate an intergenerational gift can claim their place in Ancalia's nobility.

The place of these minor lineages is not particularly glorious, however. Their limited numbers and narrow geographic reach makes it difficult for them to form the kind of alliances that are necessary to win truly important posts in Ancalia's government. Most of them are obliged to settle for minor posts as coin lords of market towns or blade lords on their ancestral lands. Particularly capable clan leaders can sometimes set themselves up as arbiters between the Five Families, selling their cooperation for suitable reward.

Other minor lineages lack even this limited influence. They might be modern-day mutations or unexpected sports of natural law, but they lack any traditional landholdings or ancestral alliances. These rogue lineages are forced to cut whatever deals they can with the Five Families for support and station. Many of their scions join the great orders of knighthood, and there are a few small bloodlines that derive their entire influence from their traditional service to the High Negus as loyal and fearsome knights.

As the GM, you might want to create a new lineage for your own campaign, or a player might have an idea for a particular lineage of their own. Creating these minor bloodlines isn't difficult, though the steps depend on whether or not a player wishes to have one for a PC.

If a Godbound PC from these lesser lineages is desired, the player should just describe the particular way in which the Khamite theogenists modified their ancestors. The PC can pick a single lesser gift from an appropriate Word to represent their lineage abilities, paying only one gift point for it whether or not they've bound the appropriate Word. It's not usually necessary to worry about the mechanical details of the lineage's lesser talents.

If a GM wants to create an NPC lineage, they'll want to create these lesser and heroic talents, if only to get some idea of what NPCs of the bloodline might be able to do. The lesser talents should be relatively minor, weaker than a lesser gift of a Word but sufficient to give the transhuman a major advantage over an ordinary human. The heroic talent should be about as powerful as a lesser gift. Two lesser gifts and one heroic is usually all that's required, though a lineage might demonstrate other talents with a similar theme.

When creating a lineage you might also want to choose a particular town or area of Ancalia as its ancestral home. Outside of that region other Ancalians might not even recognize the lineage, though any display of superhuman abilities would be proof of nobility.



# The Uncreated

Nine great Night Roads opened in Ancalia five years ago and through them poured the black tides of the Uncreated. Four great lords are monarchs over the bulk of these misshapen horrors, and each of these lords has stamped its own nature on its minions. These four courts do not number every unspeakable horror that haunts this cursed land, but they include the far greater part of its woes, and their masters are the mightiest shadows over the realm.

These titans are indifferent to each other, neither cooperating nor fighting amongst themselves. Each embodies a different principle of destruction, and their only perceptible motivation is to expand the reach of their particular flavor of ruin. They do not normally plot and scheme as human tyrants do. Instead, they simply preside over the slow, inexorable expansion of their influence as their countless minions and cultists pervade the unhappy land.

While some of the Uncreated titans have taken human forms, theirs are not human intellects. They have a keen understanding of Ancalian society and human weaknesses, but they understand these things in a purely negative sense. They know how to break, to despoil, to defile, and to ruin. They neither know nor wish to know anything else. Any peaceful interaction with a human can only be understood as a necessary step in some awful intention, and even then, only the most cunning Uncreated can maintain a human facade for very long.

Of the invaders, survivors have distinguished four major courts, each sharing certain traits and inclinations, and each obedient to their titanic leader. Most Ancalian enclaves do not understand this taxonomy and are not aware of the finer details of the abominations that scourge them, but some who are well-traveled enough to have come in contact with other fighters against the Uncreated have realized the fourfold nature of their foes.

## The Incendiary Court

These Uncreated destroy by means of overwhelming and overt violence. They crush, burn, smash, and scatter, rejoicing in the savage undoing of human efforts. While their presence is as erosive to natural law as any of their kind, the Incendiaries tend to be a more physical, direct threat to survivors and favor simple, brutal violence as their main interaction with humanity. Subtlety is rare among them, but when an Incendiary takes on the role of corrupter or pactmaker, the outcome is one of fomented violence or destructive action. Their acolytes are encouraged to break things and kill people, preferably those who will start a further cascade of awful consequences.

The greatest of the Incendiary Court is the incandescent titan known as the Burning King. His charcoal pilgrimages throughout Ancalia leave a terrible swath of ruined land behind him, and his personal attentions left the city of Saro alight with flames so hot that the very stones ran like red wax.

## The Poxed Court

A font of perversion, distortion, and negation, the Poxed Court destroys by means of mispurpose. Whatever the emotion or object, the abominations of the Poxed Court use it the wrong way, directing it against its own purpose and causing it to destroy itself or become utterly unrecognizable. Good and wholesome things are turned into weapons of perversion and hideous longings, and are scraped out into

mere pleasant facades over bottomless hungers. Perversions of sexual instincts are a common tool of the Poxed, but so too a mother's love might be turned into suffocating obsession, or a rich field of crops into a seething nest of monstrous parasites. Whatever is good, the court seeks to make terrible.

The Leper Prince is the greatest of the Poxed Court, a decaying idolon of unclean lusts and twisted purposes. He induces hungers that can never be sated and terrible inspirations to use good things in awful ways. His villa is filled with whimsically vile objects, all used in bizarre and unnatural fashion, and servants who are tormented by needs they can only temporarily sate with their delirious excess.

## The Rotting Court

Patrons of hopelessness, despair, and decay, the Uncreated of the Rotting Court destroy by enervation and wretched collapse. Some cause physical decay in objects and people, but this court is more likely to function in more metaphorical and psychological ways, infecting victims with utter hopelessness and causing them to abandon themselves to their inevitable destruction. They tear the green shoots of revival from the land, kill infants in their mother's womb, blight crops in the fields, and cause newly-built structures to crumble and collapse. It is common for such a Rotter to let its victims almost succeed in some effort before causing it all to fall to pieces.

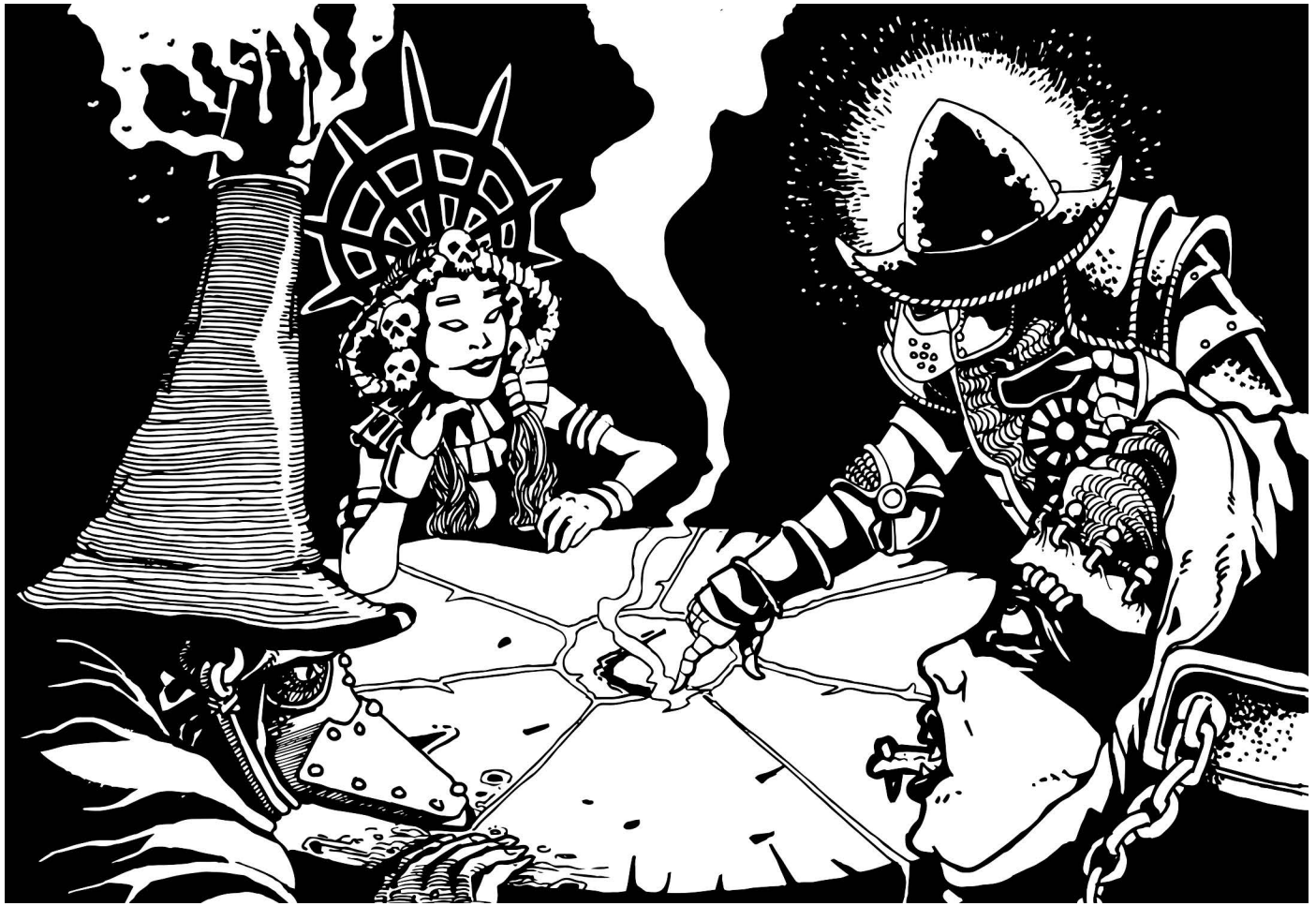
The heartless Pale Abbess is their ostensible leader, secluded in the morbid shell of the once-glorious abbey of Debredamo where the daughters of negusa and jantirars once went to be nuns. She cultivates the hopes of her prisoners and devotees like the flowers in a garden, bringing them to full bloom before slicing them off at the root. Rather than personally crushing her victims, she often prefers to use her devotees to destroy each other, but she's not above personally intervening when some particularly spectacular display of entropy is required.

## The Shackled Court

These abominations bind their prey with treasures, bread, and longing. They offer things to human survivors, bartering them what they so desperately need for the coin of trust, love, and hope. The great majority of pactmaker Uncreated are of the Shackled Court, and their bargains always focus on trading the good things the petitioners already have for the monstrous perversion of what they think they desire.

Even when a Shackled directly assaults an enclave or victim, it tends to do so in ways that make the victim sacrifice their belongings or friends in order to win themselves a few more minutes of terrified life. The Shackled always keep their bargains after a fashion, for to do otherwise is contrary to their nature, but eight of every nine pacts they make turn monstrous sooner or later. The ninth is a clean bargain, the better to lure in more fools.

The Chained Lady rules in the broken port city of Bakare on the isle of Iyasu. She alone of the four great titans is in any way safe to approach, and some mad merchants and soulless traders can be found bargaining on the nighted docks of the city with her cultists and petitioners, trading their goods for slaves, sacrificed treasures, and monstrous services. As with every gift of the Lady, the things bought here bring only enough good to coax in the next desperate buyer before they turn cancerous and vile.



### Using the Uncreated

The Uncreated are intended to provide a worthy set of large-scale opponents for Godbound heroes. Each of the titans that lead the courts would be a fit challenge for a pantheon of four 7th or 8th level Godbound to overcome so long as their *Cold Breath* was in play, but if the heroes were able to find some artifact to suppress it, they would drop down to appropriate challenges for 5th level Godbound. Their lesser minions can bulk out Mobs or provide more manageable opposition for novice heroes to face. If you have more or fewer Godbound in your game, remember to adjust the enemy's actions and attacks according to the guidelines on page 144 of the core book.

Most of the Uncreated are not grand plotters. With the exception of the Chained Lady, they don't throw vast webs of intrigue over the realm, scheming to bring a coordinated ruin on the survivors. Individual abominations might have vile plans that prey on human weakness, but the Burning King is not hatching conspiracies on the Red Throne. They are content to let the horror of their minions gradually erase any surviving enclaves in the most lingering fashion possible, and they have no fear of any real opposition. Their attitude is perhaps best understood as that of diners sitting down to a sumptuous repast and in no hurry to draw the meal to a close.

This attitude makes them convenient targets for the PCs. The heroes have time to do something about these monsters, and don't need to worry about defusing some grand scheme before they move in to attack the creatures. Of course, actually *getting* to them is a heroic challenge in of itself if the heroes are not to be swamped by their swarms of cultists and minions.

### The Cold Breath

One important trait to remember with Uncreated is their *Cold Breath* ability. Every Uncreated has this effect, forcing every foe in its presence to Commit a certain amount of Effort before they can Commit Effort for any other power or ability, though this doesn't include automatic saving throw successes or receiving healing. Only the worst *Cold Breath* effect applies in a fight, so if the Chained Lady is fighting along with a Mob of peddler-imps, the *Cold Breath* counts for four points.

Artifacts cannot Commit Effort to their own powers unless their wielder has already Committed enough Effort to overcome the *Cold Breath*. Constant and other passive powers function normally for both artifacts and heroes. Effort Committed to overcoming the *Cold Breath* can be reclaimed as soon as the hero has killed the Uncreated or fled.

Powerful PCs can overcome the *Cold Breath* with the sheer weight of Effort, but less potent heroes might need to focus their inner might more efficiently. The Universal gift below can be purchased or implanted in an artifact by these impatient heroes.

### Fire of the Word Within

Constant

This Universal greater gift automatically decreases the penalty of the *Cold Breath*, a Mundus Ward, or an Empyrean Ward by one point, treating the Breath or the Ward as one point less in potency. This benefit applies to the user and their companions. This gift can only be taken once or wielded in a single artifact by any one Godbound, but multiple allies with the gift stack the benefit. Uncreated can instantly sense the presence of those using this gift.

# The Incendiary Court



They are the blight that burns, the damnation that comes upon those who struggle. They bring fire and regret upon their victims, twisting their actions and poisoning their aims until nothing remains but bitter repentance and their victim's knowledge of their own complicity with their fate. The Incendiary Court is comprised of those Uncreated who destroy by actions, whether their own or those of their victims.

## How They Harm

An Incendiary focuses on actions that cause pain, loss, or regret. The simplest and most direct of these monsters induce that suffering with their own deeds, behaving as ravening monsters that slaughter and burn. The more intelligent and sophisticated Uncreated prefer to trick, force, or beguile their victims into performing the very actions that bring about their own ruin.

Those Incendiaries a cut above simple berserk violence will coerce their victims, threatening their lives or loved ones unless they do some hurtful or destructive action. A victim might be commanded to destroy a vital enclave resource or murder someone important in the community, knowing that while they might be executed for their crime, at least their loved ones will live... or that the hangman's noose will be a quicker death than the Incendiary offers them.

More subtle Uncreated prefer to avoid brute coercion in their cruelties. Instead, they rely on trickery and misdirection. They rarely reveal their true nature until it is far too late, working instead to plant false evidence, induce alien emotions, conceal awful perils, and otherwise gull their victims into doing something hideously destructive.

However subtle the Incendiary might be, it is still a creature of violent entropy. Victims that resist its blandishments or see through its trickery tend to provoke immediate and savage assault. The creature's patience is extremely limited, and even when its plans are going well, it can rarely resist the temptation to murder, torture, and burn more peripheral victims while it awaits its prime prey's fall.

## Servants of the Flame

There are relatively few Incendiary cultists. The average Uncreated of this court is too focused on immediate destruction to have much patience with human cultists, and the deals they offer to humans tend to be of the "cooperate or die hideously" variety that rarely inspire much enthusiasm in a potential servitor.

Still, a few communities might find themselves serving an Incendiary as shock troops, torturers, or walking sacrifices. The complete self-abandonment of total surrender is unsatisfying to these Uncreated, so they prefer to have thralls that are in some degree unwilling to serve, but do so because they've consciously chosen to curry the creature's favor. Enclaves that seek the strength to destroy husk swarms or rival enclaves might pledge to an Incendiary, giving it offerings of their own flesh and blood in order to gain its aid against their enemies.

As with all Uncreated cults, this leads to an inevitable doom for all who deal with them. The Uncreated will keep the bargains it strikes, but it always ends up demanding more and more from its victims, greater and greater sacrifices and pyres, until the cultists either destroy themselves or hurl themselves on a foe they can't possibly defeat. The Incendiary desires their self-destruction, however it comes to them.

d20	Favored Appearance	Method of Ruin	Present Desire
1	A place that induces murderous violence	Ambush, murder, and flight	Burn down a vital structure
2	Animate cloud of screaming knives	Builds trust before luring to a black fate	Cause an unwinnable war
3	Beautiful girl with flame-red hair	Clinical disassembly through combat	Cause leaders to cruelly abuse subjects
4	Bloated red web-spinning spider	Creates compulsion for a ruinous act	Destroy every structure in an area
5	Book full of misleading information	Deludes victim as to what they're doing	Frame an innocent for a terrible crime
6	Burning swarm of frantic insects	Demands a foul act or the victim's death	Get people to burn each other alive
7	Charming young man with bad plans	Demands progressively viler obeisances	Get the victims to kill a potential ally
8	Cloud of vile-smelling purplish fire	Frames allies as monstrous traitors	Incinerate many helpless victims
9	Contagion of light, infecting torches	Goads victim into desperate folly	Induce a terrible communal mistake
10	First viewer's dearest friend	Gulls victim into fatally useless project	Induce savage violence between allies
11	Giant fashioned of tied, ravaged corpses	Lures victim into hopeless quests	Kill everything they meet
12	Grossly brittle, long-limbed man	Lures victims into lethal environment	Make someone kill a loved one
13	Infectious song in a victim's throat	Makes necessary act terribly hard to do	Make them burn their own vital stores
14	Iron centaur dripping with gore	Provokes mad desire for an impossibility	Provoke berserk violence in victims
15	Rat swarm that moves in perfect unity	Raw, direct violence in frenzied rage	Provoke murder for an empty prize
16	Shape only perceptible in spilt blood	Tricks others into killing their allies	Provoke subordinates into bloody revolt
17	Twitching warrior studded with arrows	Tricks prey into wasting vital resources	Trade a favor for a victim's awful choice
18	Whimpering, badly-hurt young girl	Turns love into devouring obsession	Trick a victim to burn their own home
19	Wolf pelted in stinking burgundy fire	Turns ordinary act into lethal mistake	Trick prey into committing an awful act
20	Woman talking only by prey's screams	Wastes a vital resource increasingly fast	Turn an ordinary process into tragedy

# The Burning King

The half-melted city of Saro was once the seat of the noble Senai lineage, famed for the beauty of its slender towers and lissome people. Now the entire city is a melted ruin, with stone left to run like wax and blackened bones lying in heaps. Above it all looms the slumped mass of the kantiba's palace, its halls and towers collapsed and run together into a vast hillock of rubble. Atop this heap is a throne fashioned of broken sculpture and shattered artistic masterpieces, its surface sooty and smeared with the ash of the city's new master.

The Burning King is gigantic, forty feet tall and wreathed in crackling flames. He wears armor fashioned of broken breastplates, shattered weapons, and the other debris taken from the corpses of his would-be destroyers, with rumors speaking of certain potent artifacts carried by defeated Ancalian knights now embedded in his harness. He carries a black iron mace that is tall as two men standing, and he speaks with a voice of screams and crackling flames.

The Burning King has no human cultists in Saro, and his court consists entirely of a Vast Mob of Moaner-dogs and a half-dozen Blazing Angels who serve as his beaters and huntsmen. He spends the winter months seated atop his throne in Saro, but with the coming of spring, he starts a slow, random roaming through southern Ancalia that brings death, flame, and ruin to all in his path. His Moaner-dogs flush out prey and take down minor victims, while the Burning King himself crushes more interesting foes beneath the fall of his iron mace.

There are some blood cults of the Incendiary Court who have laired near Saro to be closer to their god, but these humans are only barely more tolerable to the Incendiaries than random Ancalian peasants. So long as the cultists keep murdering people and destroying things, the Burning King tolerates them, but any flagging of their violence earns them the same fate as any other human. Many are forced to turn on each other simply to provide a sufficient blood ransom for their continuing survival. Still, the opportunity to plunder in the wake of the Burning King's fire pilgrimage keeps them lurking along behind him, like dogs at their master's heels.

If the Burning King is confronted while in Saro, he will have a Vast Mob of Moaner-dogs and a dozen Blazing Angels immediately available to aid him. All will attack with blind ferocity, with little coordination or mutual support. The Burning Angels in particular despise each other, and will do nothing to help each other in combat. The sheer number of these malevolent Uncreated might prove overwhelming to the pantheon, however.

If the heroes strike the King while he's making a fire pilgrimage, they'll find a Vast Mob of Moaner-dogs with him but only four Blazing Angels in attendance. At least two or three Incendiary cults will be in the general area, however, acting as Large Mobs of Elite Warriors with Minor Hero leaders. These cults don't dare get close enough to the King to move to his aid in a timely fashion, but if they're attacked or destroyed, survivors will warn their god of the presence of dangerous infidels. If the Burning King expects a serious fight, he can summon eight more Blazing Angels to arrive within ten minutes.

The Burning King himself does not communicate in a way intelligible to humans. While he is highly intelligent and capable of fighting with tactical prudence, he will only do so once it is obvious that blind, unfocused violence is not defeating the PCs. He does not set traps, lay ambushes, or otherwise prepare a battlefield, though he will call for allies to join the fight if caught alone or in a vulnerable position. When not threatened, his only delight is in large-scale destruction.

## The Burning King

<b>AC:</b> 3	<b>Move:</b> 60' stride
<b>Hit Dice:</b> 50	<b>Save:</b> 5+
<b>Attack:</b> Autohit x 2 attacks	<b>Damage:</b> 1d12 smash straight
<b>Morale:</b> 11	<b>Effort:</b> 10

Graced by fire and ruin, the titanic Burning King can produce miracles from the Words of Fire, Might, and Passion. He strikes with his gigantic black iron mace and can smash any inanimate object up to the size of a small house with one blow. He has an invincible defense against fire and mind-influencing effects. Like all Uncreated, he can use his Words to defensively dispel incoming direct gift effects by Committing Effort, whether or not his Words particularly fit the effect he's resisting.

The Burning King's flaming powers are not wholly of natural fire, and so enemies with invincible defenses against fire still take half damage from them, rounded down.

The Burning King's *Cold Breath* forces any Godbound engaged with him to Commit three points of Effort before they can Commit Effort to any other purpose. This Effort can be taken back once the Godbound disengages, but not until they leave the King's presence.

The Burning King may take two actions every round. Each of the powers listed on the table below consumes one action to trigger.

### d6

### The Burning King's Tactics

- 1 Smash something that an enemy is using as cover or standing on. Falls inflict a 1d6 damage die for every 10' fallen by the victim.
- 2 Sweep rubble or debris in a fan of flying projectiles, doing 5d6 damage to every foe in his front arc and forcing a Hardiness save to avoid falling prone. Prone foes must spend their movement allowance to stand.
- 3 Commit Effort to exhale a choking cloud of ash and smoke, blinding all foes within 100 feet. If a creature tries to act within the cloud, they suffer 2d6 damage from choking. The cloud lingers until the end of the King's next turn. Blind foes take -4 to hit rolls.
- 4 Commit Effort to cause walls of blazing gases to erupt from the earth within sight, herding foes into his reach or into dangerous positions. If the targets within the chosen area don't spend their next round's movement moving to the "safe" zone chosen by the King, they suffer 4d8 damage from the heat and fumes. The fiery walls last for two rounds.
- 5 Commit Effort to tear a lump of blazing flesh from its giant corpus and hurl it at a foe within sight, doing 4d6 straight damage with an Evasion save for half.
- 6 Commit Effort to target an enemy who's using a gift that lasts longer than an instant. The enemy must immediately deactivate the gift and leave it off for the rest of the fight, or else they catch alight and suffer 1d10 straight damage for every round in which they activate the ability or leave it active.

# The Incendiary Swarm

Incendiary Uncreated rarely have anything to do with humanity that doesn't involve immediate, overwhelming violence. While humans are the favorite targets for these monstrous creatures, they'll content themselves with destroying buildings, artwork, and material goods if no better prospects are available.

Occasionally an Incendiary shows a more sophisticated side and will cultivate a group of devotees. These blood cultists are invariably used as weapons against other humans, and it's not unknown for different cults to fight each other at the whim of their masters. The only purpose of these cults is to destroy things by their actions, whether those things are enclaves, human lives, or social institutions. These cult-leading Incendiaries offer physical strength to their followers and the prospect of glorious conquest, but in truth their minions can expect only endless war until the last of them are slaughtered.

Moaner-dogs are among the most common Incendiaries, and are unthinking creatures of slaughter and ruin. Unlike most Uncreated of the four courts, they'll attack even animals and Fae, inflicting a torturous death on whatever they encounter. Most roam the land in packs large enough to butcher a hunting party, though they're intelligent enough to avoid attacking obviously superior foes.

Blazing angels are a more sophisticated variety of Incendiary, and can interact with humans in at least a partially-comprehensible way. Their most usual means of acquiring a cult lies in the instructional slaughter of a bandit chief or enclave head before informing the survivors of their new lot in life. The inevitable flight or resistance of a few of the survivors gives the others a chance to prove their loyalty.



## Moaner-dog

AC: 7	Move: 40' run
Hit Dice: 5	Save: 13+
Attack: +6	Damage: 1d10 maw
Morale: 10	Effort: 2

Among the many lesser Incendiaries of the court, the Moaner-dogs resemble huge hunting-hounds that stand as tall as men, their bodies covered with fanged maws. The beasts are constantly trying to howl, but the breath is expelled through these countless maws as a low, quavering moan. Most Moaner-dogs are encountered in packs of four or five. Their *Cold Breath* has a strength of one point, and a pack usually has two combat powers among them.

### d6 Moaner-dog Tactics

- 1 Fling itself bodily at a foe, automatically hitting it but allowing the target to make a normal melee attack first.
- 2 It and another dog both use their actions to attack a standing foe; if either hit, the target must save versus Evasion or fall prone, requiring a move action to rise.
- 3 Savage a prone foe, automatically hitting.
- 4 Lunge for the most badly-injured foe.
- 5 Get between an injured target and their friends. Any attempt to reach the target will draw an attack.
- 6 Commit Effort as an Instant to do maximum damage on a successful normal attack.

## Blazing Angel

AC: 5	Move: 60' flight
Hit Dice: 12	Save: 5+
Attack: +10 x 2 attacks	Damage: 1d12 burning sword
Morale: 11	Effort: 5

Winged with fire, these terrible Incendiaries resemble armored warriors that bleed constantly through the cracks in their scant armor. Each is bound to an appropriate Word, and their Cold Breath has a strength of two points. They act twice per round, and usually have two combat powers and two corrupting powers to call on aside from miracles appropriate to their Word. While they smolder with perpetual flame, their impure nature leaves them vulnerable to normal fire.

### d6 Blazing Angel Tactics

- 1 Charge into melee with the most vulnerable-looking target, whether injured or simply weak-seeming.
- 2 Use a power or miracle to destroy something an enemy is standing on, hiding behind, or using.
- 3 Finish off a downed enemy or seek to complete the destruction of a partially-damaged thing.
- 4 Commit Effort; a visible target who has attacked the angel with a ranged attack is dragged next to it by tendrils that do 2d10 fire damage. Save vs. Hardiness to resist.
- 5 Mutilate a corpse or downed victim in a frenzy of blood.
- 6 Slash wildly, doing 2d6 damage to all within 20 feet.

## Combat Powers

The dark flame that is characteristic of Incendiary powers is neither natural nor entirely flame. It ignites blood as if it were oil, consumes flesh like tinder, but can't burn anything that's not of some value to a person: houses and ships, but not random trees and brush. Subjects with divine immunity to fire take only half damage from it, rounded up. Whatever Words they might have bound, Incendiaries are not immune to natural flame, and suffer full normal damage from fire effects.

**Bloody Repercussion:** As an Instant action, it can Commit Effort; a hit or damaging effect on it does an equal amount of damage to the assailant. It will usually only use this power on big, damaging hits against it, compelling its victims to use smaller attacks or run it out of Effort first.

**Frenzied Repetition:** As an On Turn action, target a visible foe and Commit Effort. The enemy must save versus Spirit or spend their next turn doing the exact same thing they did last turn, including Effort commitment, even if the action no longer makes sense or was an attack on a foe now out of range.

## Corrupting Powers

The powers that an Incendiary uses to twist the unwary tend to revolve around warped perceptions, unbidden cravings, and numb, irrational certainty about things that are obviously incorrect. The best and most delicious destruction is born from actions taken freely, but most Incendiaries will settle for magically-provoked folly if they must. Corrupting powers are usually meant to work on NPCs and to give the GM ideas on how the Incendiary's corruptions might spark adventure.

**Imp of the Perverse:** The Incendiary kindles an idle or reluctant desire of the victim, turning it into an obsessive craving. Three successful Spirit saves taken once a day for three days will crush the urge. Failing one will make the victim act on the craving in ways morally acceptable to them. Failing two will provoke actions as extreme as their nature allows. Failing all three turns the craving into a mad need they'll do absolutely anything to satisfy.

## Words, Gifts, and Abilities

Fire, Deception and Passion are common Words for major Incendiaries, though the dark fire they create behaves as described in the combat powers above, and the passions they create can only ever be dark and destructive. They cannot induce feelings of hope, compassion, or real love; only desperation, scorn, and possessive obsession.

Its powers of Deception tend to be basic in nature, tricking people into seeing illusions, failing to notice critical details, or believing basic and traumatic lies. Sophisticated deception or imposture is usually beyond an Incendiary.

Incendiaries prefer offensive gifts or powers that cause damage to a target due to the actions they take over purely defensive abilities. Most of them will have relatively high hit dice, but a mediocre armor class and few ways to shrug off an attack. Counterattack powers and abilities that cause damage to assailants are common, however.

Incendiaries make less use of cultists and thralls than most of the other courts. They're much more likely to have a single deluded meat shield or simply rely on their own monstrous might as a lone terror.

**Lure of Destruction:** As an action, target a visible foe and Commit Effort. The victim must save versus Spirit or spend their next action performing some lethal or foolhardy act. This can't make a victim perform direct violence on their own person, but it can make them run off a cliff, into a fire, or hurl away their weapons.

**Orgy of Blood:** As an Instant action, Commit Effort when it hits a victim and does damage. Gain another single automatic hit on the target. It can only use this once per target, per round.

**Screaming Ache of Exertion:** As an action, curse a foe who must save versus Hardiness to resist. If it fails, it suffers 1d6 straight damage every round it moves more than five feet until the scene's end. Creatures that need not rest are immune to this effect.

**Searing Exhalation:** It exhales a billow of dark fire that inflicts a quarter of its maximum hit dice on every foe in a cone before it.

**Sleight of Sight:** As an On Turn action, Commit Effort. It and a creature it is in melee with exchange appearances and locations as a flawless illusion. The victim can make a Spirit save to resist, but only onlookers using anti-illusion powers can detect the swap.

**Blind Consequences:** Then victim becomes oblivious to the unwanted consequences of a particular action. A target that fails a Spirit save will light a bonfire that a screaming brother is hanging over, chop a log his mother is tied to, drink a wine-cup they've just seen poisoned, or otherwise act as one oblivious to the danger.

**Reckless Advance:** Used on a group, it causes them to continue doing a thing or pursuing a cause that's harming them or a useless exertion of effort. Men will drown themselves digging a well, exhaust themselves building an endless palisade, or die to the last man attacking a superior enemy. Victims can save versus Spirit.

**Blood Thirst:** A target of this effect gains strength and vitality by hurting other people. Causing severe pain or emotional anguish is as nourishing as a good meal. Shedding blood restores like a night's sleep, and killing someone does all of the above, regenerates one lost hit die, and grants a feeling of euphoria.

## Weaknesses

Incendiaries are manic in their evil, constantly goaded to action even when such actions would only complicate a plan or disrupt a careful deceit. They have enormous difficulty in resisting the temptation to commit random acts of torture and slaughter whenever the opportunity presents itself, and many dark schemes of these creatures are revealed when a sudden spate of murder draws too much attention.

Incendiaries are impatient. If a first gambit fails to trick a victim or lure it into making a terrible mistake, the Uncreated will often reveal itself, and then try to coerce the victim with threats. Only the most cunning can adjust their plans to deal with major complications.

These Uncreated also tend to get into clashes they have not fully prepared to win. If confronted by heroes, their first instinct will be to attack, and only after it is obvious that the heroes might well be able to destroy it will it seek to escape. Its abilities don't lend themselves well to flight, so it will often force its thralls or victims to cover such retreat with suicidal self-sacrifice, or else create a situation where pursuing the Uncreated means letting some other disaster happen.

# The Poxed Court



erersion lies at the black heart of the Poxed Court. Not only sexual perversion, common as that may be, but the mispurposing and twisting of every act and object into a use that wounds both user and subject. The Poxed turn ordinary lives into hellish fugues of violation and betrayal, or transform innocent objects into implements of hideous consequence. Nothing is safe and good and true after the Poxed have had their way with it.

When choosing a target for a Poxed's attentions, start with a place, a human motivation, or a type of relationship. If you choose a place, identify its function first; maybe it's a wheatfield, or a tavern, or a court, or a simple home. Boil that function down into a short phrase: "it feeds people", "people drink there", "it gives justice", or so forth. From that point, you can flip subject and object, "it feeds on people", or invert the verb, "people thirst there", or invert the object, "it gives injustice". Apply any magical distortion or defilement necessary to explain it, and the target is set. The same principle can be used for relationships, along with grotesque magnification of a human motivation, or directing a desire or ambition toward a wrongful or immoral target. The key theme of the Poxed is a natural thing turned vile and perverse.

As the GM, you need to be particularly careful about how you handle a Poxed Uncreated and their victims in play. The worst of their curses and activities are often best left undescribed or unspecified, even under direct questioning or a Godbound's powers of insight. Just specifying "It was horrible" is enough for most groups, and the typical imagination will supply horrific details without further grist that might disgust or distress your fellow players.

## Thralls of Perversion

The Poxed are almost as likely to have cults as the Shackled, ones that often directly worship the Uncreated as the font of the unclean needs that the monster has awoken in its victims. As with all the Courts, the cults are fundamentally self-destructive. The worshipers do things and submit to uses that will inevitably destroy them in time, dropping away one by one until the last remains to be unspeakably consumed by their "god". The process may be slower or faster depending on the nature of their vice and the rapacity of their monstrous deity.

When building a Poxed cult, choose at least one fundamental relationship that has been destructively perverted. Sexual relationships are one option, but also familial ties, oaths of fealty, commercial relationships, and religious ideals can be turned into mutually-wounding ties. Once you know the relationship that's been defiled, choose a direct benefit that comes from this perversion, explaining why it is the cult has an incentive to behave this way. A noble lady who tortures and abuses her vassals might be granted great personal prowess sufficient to protect those she doesn't slaughter herself. A father who terribly misuses his family might be given the power to provide nourishment and safety for them from monsters other than himself.

Cults happen for a reason, and the temptation of the Poxed doesn't rest entirely on their corrupting powers. The Uncreated always offer something to those who abandon sanity and morality. Whether protection, food, hope, or the simple, bestial pleasures that drive back terror for a time, the Uncreated always offers something that its victim-cultists crave. It's simply that the price will eventually be more than any mortal flesh can bear.

d20	Favored Appearance	Method of Ruin	Present Desire
1	A refuge-place that digests its "guests"	Causes organic growth to run backward	Cause a group to embrace a dire threat
2	Angel with putrescent hands	Destroys all pleasure in innocent things	Cause enclave-destroying individualism
3	Animate scarecrow or mannequin	Human touch always inflicts agony	Cause subjects to murder a good leader
4	Beautiful human with perfumed ulcers	Inspires horribly deviant sexual craving	Compel parents to kill their children
5	Burrowing bird that attacks from below	Makes a natural resource toxic or vile	Corrupt a notably upright priest
6	Cheap bauble that inspires mad greed	Makes everyone voice their worst wishes	Corrupt an institution to go awry
7	Cloud of sickly-sweet stench	Makes objects break at the worst time	Elevate a totally unsuitable leader
8	Domestic pet turned grim predator	Makes water a slow, addictive poison	Goad Uniter into zeal-driven self-ruin
9	Grinning man in backward clothes	Men and women birth unnatural beasts	Induce parricide in young children
10	Hideously dried and wizened "child"	Poisons love between family members	Introduce a hideous practice to a group
11	Human with swapped arms and legs	Produces insatiable, agonizing hunger	Make a critical resource into their doom
12	Man with corkscrewed limbs	Turns children into feral man-eaters	Make a food source into a slow poison
13	Misshapen animal-human hybrid	Turns domestic animals to predators	Make a leader utterly betray their wards
14	Painted wanton with half-melted face	Turns food into infectious doom agent	Overuse and ruin a vital resource
15	Shape swathed in rotting skins	Turns living things inside-out, but alive	Pervert a custom into an lasting atrocity
16	Skinned patchwork androgyne	Turns trust into active desire to betray	Provoke fierce hate between spouses
17	Song that nests in a host's brain	Victims can see only vile and ugly things	Provoke someone into betraying a trust
18	Syphilitic satyr with purulent fur	Victims need an unnatural food to live	Regiment a group's rules to a mad code
19	Titan formed of copulating thralls	Victims only find peace in masochism	Turn a trade link into bloody warfare
20	Weapon that maims every owner	Warps the bodies of its victims terribly	Use a precious thing to ruin its owner

# The Leper Prince

The splendid villa of Bonaya was the jeweled refuge of the jantirar of Welega, a great rural domain long ruled by the noble family of Senai. For generations, the jantirars and their families had lavished care on their palace in the forest, whole families of craftsmen employed in beautifying it generation after generation. A village grew up in the shadow of the palace's marble walls, and rich merchants found occasion to have summer houses close to the well-paying jantirar's retreat.

That ended five years ago when a Night Road tore open in the palace's throne room. The Leper Prince capered out of the yawning darkness with an army of Gamines and Backwards Men in his wake. Many of the palace's inmates were slaughtered out of hand, and those that survived were terrorized into horrific obedience to the Prince and his lesser Uncreated lieutenants.

Three major cults of human servitors now dwell in the ruins of the once-luxurious village. The Cult of the Skin is dedicated to carnal perversions of unspeakable character, the Cult of the Tongue strives to devise ever-more abhorrent philosophies and ideals, and the Cult of the Eye is frantically determined to present paintings and tableaux vivants that thoroughly disturb the senses. The followers of each cult hate each other bitterly. They spare no opportunity to kidnap and torment each other, though they dare not do so in an open way, lest they earn the anger of the Leper Prince at such artless violence. Trickery, kidnapping, and vile bargains are the preferred means of seizing other cult members.

Most of these cult members are hopelessly deranged by the inhuman demands placed upon them. A significant number, however, retain enough memory of their former lives to hate what they have become and what they do. They only obey out of terror at what the Leper Prince will do with them if he becomes bored with their offerings. While they are utterly demoralized, a hero who can convince them of some chance of escape might win their cooperation in getting inside the palace itself, where only the most devout of the cultists are permitted to go... along with those slated to be the court's entertainment.

The Leper Prince himself is a gnarled, emaciated figure with a yawning grin, a tinsel crown, and purulent sores oozing over every inch of his body. He moves with manic energy, and those who bore him or fail to demonstrate an enthusiasm for the perverse can expect a hideous fate at his bony hands.

The Prince does not leave the palace unless the flow of entertainment from the village is somehow made to cease. Within the palace, he is surrounded at all times with three Large Mobs of cultists, one from each sect, all with the statistics of Elite Warriors. Those capable of suborning a sect or killing its high pontiffs will throw the group into chaos and leave it unable to provide its warriors to the Prince. Each pontiff counts as a lesser Eldritch, and they will murder each other at the slightest opportunity to do so without being detected.

Aside from the bodyguard of slave-entertainers, the Prince is always accompanied by two Backwards Men who serve as his bodyguards and executioners, along with overseers for the cult minions. For each Backwards Man that is slain, one of the cult Mobs will turn and flee, trying to escape the palace before the Leper Prince can turn his attention on them once more.

The Leper Prince has limited interest in dealing with humans as anything but convenient sources of torment, hunger, and shame. Unlike the Chained Lady, he is not interested in bartering anything from humans, only in infecting them with unendurable, terrible desires.

## The Leper Prince

<b>AC:</b> 4	<b>Move:</b> 60' leap
<b>Hit Dice:</b> 50	<b>Save:</b> 5+
<b>Attack:</b> Autohit x 2 attacks	<b>Damage:</b> 1d12 straight
<b>Morale:</b> 12	<b>Effort:</b> 10

An eidolon of perversion and misrule, the Leper Prince can wield miracles as one bound to the Words of Command, Passion, and Fertility. He smites the unworthy with his corrosive touch or by commanding their clothing or equipment to murder its bearer. Each such command counts as one of his attacks, but the rebel possession will inflict 1d12 damage straight on its owner. Magical possessions cannot be so perverted, but mundane ones can be, even if the use destroys them.

The Leper Prince is sometimes distracted in combat by the prospect of compelling an enemy to do something exceptionally irrational or foolish. He might spend an action invoking a miracle of Command to compel them rather than doing something more tactically sound.

The Leper Prince's *Cold Breath* forces any Godbound engaged with him to Commit three points of Effort before they can Commit Effort to any other purpose. This Effort can be taken back once the Godbound disengages, but not until they leave the Prince's presence.

The Leper Prince may take two actions every round. Each of the powers listed on the table below consume one action to trigger.

### d6 The Leper Prince's Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort to caper gleefully about the battlefield, immune to all forms of harm until the start of his next turn, but unable to attack this round. The Prince may manipulate objects normally while leaping about.
- 2 Commit Effort to detach an arm, which drops off and behaves as an allied creature under the Prince's command. It has AC 6 and takes 10 of the Prince's own hit dice. The arm can attack once per round as if it were the Prince, or can manipulate objects on its own turn. It instantly leaps back to the Prince if he needs his missing hit dice to be returned, assuming it's not destroyed.
- 3 Commit Effort to cause a visible victim's own skin to rebel, peeling away and assaulting its owner. The target suffers 2d12 straight damage and must save versus Hardiness or lose their next round's action to the attack.
- 4 Commit Effort to cause all foes within 100 feet to suffer purulent buboes and fragile flesh. Victims must save versus Hardiness or take maximum damage from the next injury they receive. Once damage is suffered, the effect ends, otherwise persisting until the fight is over.
- 5 Commit Effort to reverse gravity in the 50 feet around him for one round. Victims suffer a 1d6 damage die per 10' fallen. If no roof is available, the victim falls about 600 feet when gravity returns at the end of the next round, suffering a maximum of 10d6 damage. The Prince and his allies do not fall.
- 6 The Prince wastes an action in frivolity, perversity, or useless japes at his enemies.



# The Poxed Rabble

The Poxed are almost as likely to deal with humans as are the Shackled, though the deals they offer are much less voluntary in nature. The Poxed prefer to infect victims with terrible longings or mad cravings, and then present themselves as the only means by which the victim can get their hungers satisfied. They help their prey to commit greater and greater enormities, until the pitiable monster is so broken to their needs that no more satisfying self-horror can be wrung from them. Then, of course, they are consumed.

Poxed cults are abhorrent in every way. Some are based around loathsome carnal needs, but many are built around other forms of perversity: the destruction of social order in favor of some monstrous ideological regime, the systematic destruction of some resource vital for the cult's own survival, or determined violence against some outside group that could help the community survive. The more radical the rebellion against sense and humanity, the better the Poxed savor the inevitable anguish that comes from it.

Gamines form the greater part of the Poxed, and tend to pursue lone figures or marginal members of an enclave. Their favorite prey are those men and women who are struggling against desires or ambitions they know are wrong. The Gamine helps break their self-control down and ensure they take these appetites to hideous extremes.

The sinister Backwards Men are the elite of the Poxed, responsible for the deprivation of important enclaves and major human strongholds. They work more patiently and subtly than the Gamines, and often focus on corrupting an entire community through careful subversion of their leaders and best-loved figures.



## Gamine

AC: 5	Move: 40' run
Hit Dice: 5	Save: 12+
Attack: +5	Damage: 1d8 claw
Morale: 9	Effort: 2

The Gamines allure with blasphemous temptations and strange thoughts. They wear many shapes, as do all Uncreated, but each has a strange sort of mesmerizing appeal, while simultaneously inspiring a strange, queasy urge to misuse them in some foolish or immoral way. They have one combat power and two corrupting powers, most often, and their *Cold Breath* has a strength of one point.

### d6 Gamine Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort as while targeting a visible foe. The victim must save versus Spirit or do something directly opposed to their intentions with their next action.
- 2 Use a combat power against a victim they've already struck or harmed so far in the fight.
- 3 Give way to an overwhelming urge to self-harm, allowing the next weapon attack against it to auto-hit.
- 4 Commit Effort and choose a target. The victim must save versus Spirit or spend their next action confessing an immoral or personally-distressing desire they have.
- 5 Scuttle away from a melee assailant, fleeing for cover.
- 6 They hit automatically, but suffer a free hit in return.

## Backwards Man

AC: 5	Move: 40' jump
Hit Dice: 12	Save: 5+
Attack: +10 x 2 attacks	Damage: Special
Morale: 10	Effort: 5

The dreaded Backwards Men appear as humanoids with backward-turning joints, each bound to a fitting Word. They inspire madness with their gaze attack; on a successful hit, the target hits themselves with their own most recently-used weapon, rolling straight damage. They have two combat powers, three corrupting powers, and their *Cold Breath* has a strength of two points. They act twice a round.

### d6 Backwards Man Tactics

- 1 Leap to a better vantage point, away from melee foes.
- 2 Commit Effort and target a visible foe, who must save versus Hardiness or lose an action as their joints twist.
- 3 Walk backwards 30'. No one else can follow in that direction, but must circle around the creature's path.
- 4 Commit Effort. For the next round, no enemy can perform the same action they did on their prior round.
- 5 Use their Word to create a miracle that provokes or goads a foe into doing something foolish or irrational. If the victim resists it, they take 1d8 damage straight.
- 6 Commit Effort. For one round, no one can get closer to it without facing away from it and walking backward.

## Combat Powers

Poxed aren't as given to direct physical confrontation as Incendiaries. Still, they're more than a match for an ordinary warrior, and strong Poxed can readily overcome a hero. The diseases a Poxed spreads can be resisted by the Health Word, and their mental compulsions can be automatically resisted by those with invulnerability to emotion-influencing effects, such as some Words can grant their bearers.

**Blind with Fury:** The Poxed Commits Effort as an Instant when struck by an attack or damaging gift. The assailant must save versus Spirit or see their hit damage redirected to an ally within range.

**Consume the Plague:** The Poxed Commits Effort as an action. For every human with a severe disease within 30 feet of them, they regain one lost hit die and the human suffers one hit die of damage as the disease advances explosively through their flesh.

**Mended By Hate:** The Poxed Commits Effort as an Instant, instantly regaining hit dice from an attack instead of taking damage.

**Mirrored Boils:** The Poxed spends its last action for the round standing perfectly still. Until its next turn, anyone can hit it automatically,

but the Poxed can Commit Effort as an Instant to reflect an instance of incoming damage on its originator, taking no damage itself. It can decide whether or not to Commit Effort after damage is rolled.

**Sympathetic Shield:** The Poxed Commits Effort as an On Turn action. Until the start of its next turn, every assailant must make a Hardiness save or automatically miss their attack or spoil their hostile gift use. Assailants who are diseased or crippled will automatically hit the Poxed every time, however, and do maximum damage.

**Torrent of Filth:** The Poxed Commits Effort as an action and exhales a gout of crippling, deforming disease that inflicts 1d8 damage per two hit dice of the Poxed, up to 10d8 maximum. Victims reduced to zero hit points aren't killed, but are left hideously ulcerated and helpless to defend themselves.

**Treachorous Iron:** The Poxed Commits Effort as an On Turn action. Until the start of its next turn, no manufactured weapon can successfully hit them. Improvised weapons and objects not meant for violence will hit them automatically, however, usually doing a 1d4 damage die.

## Corrupting Powers

The Poxed are more patient about their victims than the Incendiaries. They'll cultivate an enclave for some time, growing perversions and compelling their targets to take up unnatural acts. Magical compulsions often are the initial seeds of this change, but the best and sweetest ruin is made when their victims choose to take up the madness of the Uncreated, out of error, greed, or natural fear.

**A Misplaced Hand:** The Poxed chooses a single resource or type of good in the community. The locals become unable to use that good or resource for its normal purpose. They might use grain to fill sandbags rather than eating it, or knives to stake tents rather than cut food. They will view any suggestion otherwise with horror.

**Ecstatic Depravity:** Some specific type of crime, sordid imposition, or cruelty is made enormously enjoyable to members of an enclave, providing an addictive delight to those who enact it. There is no

compulsion to do so, but few have the moral strength to resist forever, and the weak will rapidly seek to make it acceptable to the group.

**Mark of Sin:** The crimes of each person in the enclave become plain on their face. A week after this is clear, false marks start to appear.

**Taboo Implement:** A particular type of tool or item in a community will kill or maim those who use it as it was intended. It might magically animate, or burst into searing flame, or simply provide atrocious bad luck. Clothing, weapons, and furnishings might all fall under this ban.

**Undetectable Crime:** A particular type of crime is absolutely undetectable in a community. Its aftermath may be discovered, but even a victim can't pin the culprit without the aid of magic.

**Unnatural Lust:** Whatever a victim's original orientation, it becomes depraved and directed toward unfitting subjects. The target is not compelled to act on it, but it is a constant, gnawing temptation.

## Words, Gifts, and Abilities

Passion, Deception, and Fertility are common Words for major Poxed. While they are capable of producing feelings of happiness and delight in their prey, such emotions come only as rewards for self-destructive acts or horrible crimes against decency.

A Poxed's powers of Deception are usually used to conceal its nature and hide itself completely from its prey. While it can maintain a human facade for short periods, the more people that are around it and the longer and more detailed the contact, the more likely it is to behave in some totally inappropriate fashion.

Fertility is almost inevitably used to pervert the natural course of birth or cause horrible things to be vomited from fertile soil or human flesh. Poxed are quite even-handed about sharing this "blessing" with victims, and males are just as likely to be made broodmothers to monsters as are females.

Poxed aren't enthusiastic combatants. While they'll fight if necessary, they prefer to evade direct conflicts and sow disputes among enemies. Only when trapped or clearly at an advantage will they stand and fight.

## Weaknesses

Poxed find it almost impossible to use tools and relationships they were meant to be used. Whereas another Uncreated might seemingly befriend a person and use that "friendship" to leverage their obedience, a Poxed simply cannot imagine doing so. They will manipulate the situation around their chosen target, turning love into hatred, drying up warm feelings, and inducing unclean cravings to indirectly get the target to do as they will.

By the same token, a Poxed will never prefer to use a thing the way it was meant to be used. They'll never wish to use a weapon to attack, a vehicle to ride in, a building to dwell in, or a gift to win favor. They may use things correctly if their plans or role depend on it, but they'll almost always twist the use in some small way.

Like all the Uncreated, Poxed also have a tendency to let their appetites run away with them. They'll tip their hand before they're completely ready, and take advantage of a community's anguish and desperate hungers before they're completely unable to resist. If driven off, they might abandon their plan entirely, or redouble their effort.

# The Rotting Court



low and sad and forgetting, the Rotting Court is the domain of apathy, dissolution, and enfeeblement. Bravery gutters into cowardice, strength crumbles into febrile trembling, and solid earth melts into a slough of mud. Nothing worthy endures long under the attentions of the Rotten, and they seek every opportunity to poison and enervate any good thing they can reach. When their work is done, their victims have neither the ability to act nor the will to desire action.

The Rotten prefer to attack strong and capable targets or those fired with a great hope or determination. Those who are already wretched seem to lack the special savor that comes from bringing down a hero or dragging a holy person into hopelessness. The brighter and more promising the circumstance, the more satisfying it is to the Rotten to bring it all down in miserable collapse.

The magical powers of the Rotten revolve around enervation, forgetfulness, and physical decay. They can kill hope, make even vital duties seem pointless, and rob the strength to resist from their prey. Warm and loving relationships are forgotten under their toad-like gaze, and depressive misery seeps into every thought. Those brought low by poisonous hopelessness will sometimes commit suicide even when help or victory is easily within reach.

The Rotten work by a kind of negative manipulation. Instead of provoking their victims into acts of folly as the Incendiary do, or making them obsess over self-destructive perversion as the Poxed prefer, the Rotten excise desires and motivations that serve to keep their targets alive. Critical tasks are made unappealing, old ties of loyalty and duty are dissolved, and the very acts that would save a

community are made impossibly difficult to contemplate. Outside observers might initially see an enclave of exceptionally cowardly or thoughtless survivors, and only with more careful observation detect the irrational ennui that infects the locals.

The Rotten do not favor direct confrontation, preferring to work by insinuation and psychic oppression. When confronted by heroes or desperate victims, they'll fight with miracles of decay that transform their enemies into slumping piles of filth. Some make particular use of swarms of rats or other scavengers, bewitching their enemies into apathetic stillness while the swarms feast on their living flesh. Any death by means of torpor or decay is one pleasing to these vile creatures, and the slower it comes, the better.

## Minions of Decay

Rotten cults are rare, even rarer than those of Incendiaries. The Rotten offer very little to their devotees, and when they do, it is usually only a temporary exemption from their favors or a promise of turning their awful curses on rivals. The Rotten are worshiped not for their approval, but so that they might go elsewhere.

Perversely, this kind of worship is often easier for the pious Ancilians than that of outright adoration. To conduct something like spiritual bribery, to pay off an Uncreated in obeisance, seems less traitorous than to swear loyal devotion to such a thing. There are Rotten cults where every worshiper sincerely hates their god, and they perform the rites only to buy time. In this, they succeed; the Rotten will only take them when it no longer matters to them what they worship.

d20	Favored Appearance	Method of Ruin	Present Desire
1	Carrion bird with jeweled eyes	Cause food to rot in people's mouths	Break the faith of a saintly leader
2	Cheerful simpleton who has "accidents"	Collapse large structures onto people	Cause enclave to ignore a critical task
3	Corpulent man who eats all supplies	Create muddy sinkholes in an area	Condition victims with despair and pain
4	Dead friend of the viewer, well-rotted	Curse projects to fail at the last moment	Crush an inspiring figure of hope
5	Emaciated man too starved to be alive	Force family members to forget ties	Defile a guarded spring or resource
6	Fine house that promises security	Healing stops and infants are stillborn	Degrade or corrode a vital facility
7	Horror that seeks to pen its victims in	Make any movement seem pointless	Despoil a holy relic or magical ward
8	Human head wreathed in tentacles	Make eating unbearably hard to do	Destroy an enclave's hope or ambition
9	Human shape half-sunk in the mire	Make slight pains seem unbearable	Destroy treasure before it can be gained
10	Hypnotic songbird with brass talons	Numb a healthy sense of fear in prey	Get victims to do nothing amid peril
11	Leprous infection spreading on a host	Plague prey with miserable reveries	Make enclave totally consume supplies
12	Lovely child that distracts and wearies	Prey succeeds only at unimportant acts	Make family abandon each other
13	Normal human entirely filled with dust	Produce infectious decay in supplies	Make prey be still while a beloved dies
14	Painted lovely, cosmetics over pox	Savage bad luck attends any major act	Make victim give up a tool of salvation
15	Parasite thing that burrows into hosts	Sleep no longer refreshes in any way	Provoke nihilistic despair in an enclave
16	Serpent-insect lurking amid deep muck	Strong emotions bring physical pain	Rob a brave person of their courage
17	Squalling infant that never sleeps	Victims lack will to rise in the morning	Ruin a great deed at the last moment
18	Stinking ooze pit with a malign intellect	Vital equipment breaks at worst time	Seed a poisonously nihilistic creed
19	Sullen storyteller with bewitching voice	Vital tools are made to crumble or rust	Steal something vital to an enclave plan
20	Tree of leprous bark and parasite-fruits	Work accomplished is undone magically	Torment a hero with grave weaknesses

# The Pale Abbess

The abbey of Debredamo was once a jewel in the Church's crown. Founded a few short centuries after the Shattering, its mighty walls and vaulted arches once stood guard over the most nobly-graced nunnery in all Ancalia. Daughters of negusa took their vows in the shadow of its altar, and Invidian knights retired to its cells for peace and prayer after their hard lives of service. Its abbesses were high noblewomen as well as holy mothers, and the fame of their piety and strict morality was a perfume to the nation.

Thus, it was wholly unexpected when then very altar of the Creator split wide and buckled into a Night Road entrance five years go. The monstrous Uncreated known as the Pale Abbess came forth with her legion of Sorrows and Mouldering Children, slaughtering the nuns and overwhelming the ancient wards that once protected the place. It was only through the heroism of the graying Invidian knights who had retired there that any of the nuns survived at all. Of the handful that lived, some whisper that Negus Arad's own daughter, Princess Soreti, was among the novice nuns who made their escape. Where she is now, or if she even lives at all, none can say.

Now Debredamo has become a black cloister of sorrow and night. Runners of unwholesome, fleshy vines creep over the walls and down the corridors, blossoming in hand-wide blooms of black and white that breathe fragrances that summon only unhappy memories. Most of the inhabitants are Sorrows drawn to the terrible desolation of their mistress, but a substantial number of human cultists also occupy the abbey, living on what food they can find... not uncommonly each other.

These cultists are the specially-favored of the Sorrows who found them, each of them a man or woman of remarkable drive and determination. They are sent or herded here by their patrons, made to perform agonizing deeds or terrible acts in return for food, mercies, or triumph over their rivals here. None are ever permitted to truly escape, for the Pale Abbess basks in their frustrated misery, drawing them on to greater and greater atrocities that end only in failed hopes. Only when these fiery humans are drained of the last drop of determination does the Pale Abbess consume them. Some of the humans realize this, and so desperately seek to keep up their own spirits lest they be chosen for the monster's next feast.

The Pale Abbess herself usually takes the form of a cowed woman, her face modestly veiled save for a pair of bottomlessly dark pits where a woman's eyes should be. Her voice is dry and wearisome to hear, and she favors the recitations of Unitary prayer made mangled and strange in her chanting. She is invariably accompanied by at least two Sorrows in the semblance of novice nuns.

So long as she remains in the abbey, a shout is sufficient to call for aid. As soon as the Pale Abbess raises an alarm, a Small Mob of human cultists with Elite Warrior statistics will come running two rounds later, becoming a Large Mob the round after that. Each round thereafter, the Mob will regain 12 lost hit dice as reinforcements arrive. If the Mob is entirely destroyed, it will revive as a Small Mob with 12 hit dice with the next round's reinforcements, and become a Large Mob again the following round. There are an effectively unlimited number of human cultists in the massive abbey unless the PCs somehow seal off the battlefield.

The Pale Abbess has little interest in affairs outside the cloister. She is content to send her Sorrows forth and let them plant new sadness in the world, relying on the slow but steady spread of the Night Road's influence to bring all Ancalia into a final gloom of despair.

## The Pale Abbess

<b>AC:</b> 5	<b>Move:</b> 30' walk
<b>Hit Dice:</b> 50	<b>Save:</b> 5+
<b>Attack:</b> Autohit x 2 attacks	<b>Damage:</b> 1d10 despair straight
<b>Morale:</b> 10	<b>Effort:</b> 12

This heartless figure in white commands the Words of Passion, Command, and Earth. In combat, she will use direct psychic assaults in the form of counsels of despair and hopelessness, inflicting mental damage that cannot be resisted with Endurance miracles or other physically-protective gifts. Passion or Command miracles can defensively dispel these attacks, however, and anyone with an invulnerable defense against mental influence suffers only half damage, rounded up.

If necessary, the Abbess will resort to miracles of the Earth, particularly those that conjure sucking mud pits and crushing falls of decayed architecture. She will not hesitate to flee if there is no immediate threat to her rule or her Night Road entrance in doing so.

The Pale Abbess' *Cold Breath* forces any Godbound engaged with her to Commit three points of Effort before they can Commit Effort to any other purpose. This Effort can be taken back once the Godbound disengages, but not until they leave the Abbess' presence.

The Pale Abbess may take two actions every round. Each of the powers listed on the table below requires one action to trigger.

### d6

### The Pale Abbess' Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort and target a visible foe. The next time the target Commits Effort in order to use an ability or gift, they realize that everything they thought they did that round was merely a delusion and that the Effort and their round have both been wasted in inaction.
- 2 Commit Effort. All foes engaged in the combat automatically miss their next hit roll. This curse lasts on each until they miss or the fight ends.
- 3 The Pale Abbess turns her despairing attention on a foe. If that target does anything with their next turn except defend and remain where they are, they suffer 2d12 psychic damage straight at the end of that round.
- 4 Commit Effort. For every foe in the fight who attacks her or targets her with a harmful effect within the next round, she automatically gains five hit dice after their action is taken. This can take her above her maximum hit dice for the duration of the fight.
- 5 Commit Effort. Jagged spikes of obsidian erupt to encircle all foes within 100 feet of her. If these foes move through the spikes, they suffer 1d12 damage straight. Flight or teleportation can bypass the spikes, which remain where they are until the end of the fight.
- 6 Commit Effort. Growing burdens of sticky white clay form around the limbs of all foes engaged with the Pale Abbess. Foes must spend an action scraping away the clay or else make a Strength ability check at -4. Failure on the check means automatic failure on Strength or Dexterity-based attack rolls until the clay is removed.

## The Rotting Horde

The Rotting Court tends not to favor direct interaction with humans. They haunt, lurk, and blight from a near distance, concealing their presence from the wretches they torment and spoiling their victim's plans and hopes from their hiding-places. Exceptionally bitter miasmas of hopelessness and despair can sometimes draw them out of their concealment, however, to better savor their handiwork.

Weaker varieties of Rotten will continue this skulking assault until the enclave or victim is in utter disarray and can present no meaningful resistance. The final murder and consumption of the victim takes place only after their target has abandoned all hope, and indeed, many Rotten find suicides to be far more satisfying a meal than any living, resisting human could be. Some will put off the murder for some time, trying to goad their victims into killing themselves until they succeed or their own hungers overwhelm their dainty palates.

More powerful Rotten sometimes strike more overtly, visibly slaughtering inspiring members of the enclave, tearing down important works, and playing with their victims like a cat might toy with a wounded bird. These stronger abominations sometimes form the locus of a Rotten cult, with its petitioners desperate to give the thing anything so long as it leaves them alone. The Rotten will sometimes consent to this arrangement, but only if it feels confident that greater and wider-ranging despair can be wrought from it.

Mouldering Children form the bulk of the Rotting Court, while powerful Sorrows serve as their leaders and guiding directors. These shadowy creatures are often found assaulting human strongholds with their powers of naked despair and psychic oppression.



### Mouldering Child

AC: 6	Move: 30' creep
Hit Dice: 6	Save: 12+
Attack: +6	Damage: 1d10 entropic gaze
Morale: 8	Effort: 2

These abominations come in many shapes and seemings, and form the greater part of those Rotten who scourge Ancalia's people. Their very gaze makes flesh decay and solid matter slough away into rot. They usually have one or two combat powers and two corrupting powers. Their *Cold Breath* requires Godbound to commit one Effort point before they can activate any other powers that require Effort.

#### d6 Mouldering Child Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort to cause a structure to collapse on or under a foe, usually doing 4d6 damage if they fail an Evasion save to dodge it.
- 2 Trigger a combat power at the nearest enemy.
- 3 Scramble to find a better position, fleeing if the enemy has not been substantially weakened by now.
- 4 Commit Effort. All non-magical weapons wielded by foes in melee range collapse into dust or rust.
- 5 The ground turns soft and clinging underneath a visible foe, leaving it unable to move from its place until it spends an action extricating itself. Evasion save to resist.
- 6 Attack the most badly-damaged enemy.

### Sorrow

AC: 4	Move: 60' teleport
Hit Dice: 12	Save: 5+
Attack: +10 x 2 attacks	Damage: 1d12 psychic woe
Morale: 9	Effort: 5

Sorrows have many physical shapes, but whatever form they do take is slightly hazy and insubstantial in clean sunlight. Each is bound to an appropriate Word, and like other major Uncreated, only magic weapons or energy attacks can harm them. Most have three combat powers and three corrupting powers. Sorrows may take two actions each round, and their *Cold Breath* has a strength of two points.

#### d6 Sorrow Tactics

- 1 Teleport to a location outside the easy reach of attackers.
- 2 Attack an enemy who succeeded at whatever they were trying to do in the prior round.
- 3 Use a miracle of their Word to debilitate or demoralize enemies, concentrating on those that seem weakest and most susceptible to the blight.
- 4 Commit Effort. A foe who missed or otherwise failed their most recent action suffers 5d6 damage and must save versus Spirit or lose their next action to despair.
- 5 Commit Effort to enervate a foe for 10d8 psychic harm.
- 6 Commit Effort. All foes spend their next action shaking off its psychic assault or suffer 2d12 mental damage.

## Combat Powers

The Rotten fight with both psychic oppression and physical disintegration. Those heroes with an immunity to mind- or emotion-influencing powers can resist the former abilities, but there's no such simple ward against their powers of entropic decay. Even those creatures immune to disease or physical erosion will suffer the consequences, though miracles of Health or Endurance can often resist individual powers if used for defensive dispelling.

**Crushing Indifference:** The Rotten Commits Effort as an Instant action just as an enemy declares a desired action. The target must save versus Spirit or lose their will to perform the action, wasting any Effort or action time committed to it.

**False Death of Hope:** The Rotten Commits Effort as an On Turn action. It's immune to damage until the start of its next round, but appears to be killed if any damage at all is inflicted during that time. It rises up 1d6+1 rounds later at full hit dice unless its enemies have continued to attack and maul its corpse throughout that time, in which case it dies.

## Corrupting Powers

The Rotten focus on powers that sap the vigor and determination from their victims, preferring slow mental miasmas that gradually wear down hope into utter despair. When more direct dissolution is required, they can turn necessary goods and structures into mounds of dry rot and powdery filth, but it's the hopelessness of the living that satisfies them best.

**Mouths of Filth:** Foodstuffs rot and decay in the cursed area, becoming noisome but just edible enough to slow down starvation to a crawl. Some victims are forced to eat their meat still-living.

**Resignation to Oppression:** The targets stop caring about injustices or oppression inflicted upon them, accepting their lot with dull misery. They suffer, but are unable to imagine any resistance.

**Scalding Purity:** Clean objects in the enclave sear the skin, and clean skin itches and burns. Only by living in filth can this pain be avoided.

## Words, Gifts, and Abilities

Powerful Rotten most often exhibit the gifts of Fertility, Command, and Passion, albeit usually in their inverted and destructive forms. What they have, they use to destroy, and they much prefer the draining of will and forbidding of necessary action to direct violence against their prey. It's sweeter to them to see their victims give up and sink into the mire of depression than to simply deliquesce their bodies.

Fertility is used to rot plant goods and edible substances, or promote the growth of saprophytic fungi and other scavenger-life. Preventing pregnancies within an enclave is another common trick, or the infliction of terrible birth defects on infants. These defects are carefully chosen to preserve the infant's life long enough to torment its parents.

Command is most often used to produce psychic blocks against certain necessary behaviors, or forcibly prevent a victim from doing something they know is vital for their own survival.

Passion is almost always used in a plainly negative way, draining away hope and motivation. The Rotten never use it to create desires, but only to wipe out the feelings that people might otherwise have.

**Numbing the Blows:** If a damage die rolls more than half its maximum possible, it does no damage to the Rotten. Thus, a 1d6 damage die does nothing if it rolls a 4, 5, or 6.

**Stillness of Decay:** The Rotten Commits Effort as an action and targets a creature. The victim's skin turns loose and fragile. Any violent motion, such as combat or moving more than five feet in a round, will inflict damage as if from a hit by the Rotten. This damage can hurt a creature only once a round. The curse lasts the rest of the fight.

**The Burden of Repetition:** Every enemy in combat with the Rotten must save versus Spirit each round. If they fail, they can't perform the same basic kind of action they did last round, be it an attack, a gift use, or movement.

**Vain Efforts:** The Rotten Commits Effort as an Instant action. A target must save versus Hardiness or fail its current check or attack.

**Vortex of Stillness:** If the Rotten does absolutely nothing in a round, enemies in combat with it can likewise do nothing and activate no powers for one round afterwards unless they Commit Effort for the scene. The Rotten's allies or minions can still attack normally.

**Sealed Lips:** The victims don't bother to eat, gradually wasting away as the effort of finding or cooking food becomes insurmountable to them. They might last for more than a month before starving.

**The Whip of Failure:** A subtle power used when a large project is underway, it actually encourages the effort's success with "good luck". The curse inevitable causes the project to fail catastrophically just when success seems assured.

**Thousand-Ton Shoes:** The victims become unwilling to move from their current location, however dangerous or unhealthful it might be. They conjure all manner of rationalizations for this, however thin, but they will recover if physically carried from the area.

**Withered Devotions:** Emotional ties between victims in the enclave become thin and irrelevant. No one cares what happens to their own kin or beloved, their thoughts consumed by their own loneliness and their inability to feel important to anyone else.

## Weaknesses

The Rotten are among the slowest destroyers of enclaves. Their favored methods of ruin are leisurely, and only in the most extreme cases is it obvious that something is magically amiss in an enclave under attack by a Rotten. In less pronounced cases, it just looks as if the locals are suffering from the typical despair and hopelessness that plagues Ancalia's current condition.

The magical nature of the despair is obvious to those with the appropriate Words, however, and even mundane eyes can tell something is wrong when an entire enclave can't be bothered to eat or care for their children. The Rotten's need to stay close to their victims and maintain their psychic influence can make it hard for it to avoid heroic detection, particularly since it lacks the deceptive gifts of other Courts.

Once discovered, Rotten rarely have many allies. Lesser Uncreated might come to its aid, but any cultists or other minions are likely only serving it out of fear and coercion, and lack any positive reason to fight for it. Its powers are not conducive to forcing others to act on its behalf, and so it often faces its foes alone and unaided.

# The Shackled Court



ile harbingers of black bargains, the Shackled Court are still the most approachable of the Uncreated of Ancalia. The dead city of Bakare is the throne of the Chained Lady, and under her shadow come merchants, refugees, and fools of every description. Like all her Court, the Chained Lady offers her prey their dearest desire in exchange for the few good and true things that the petitioner still has. In the end, the bargain always shows itself to be a ruinous one.

The Shackled will move directly to violence if they must or if a pact obliges it, but they much prefer to barter with humans, especially those in some dire need. They'll offer the thing the petitioner desperately needs, but only at some terrible price: their love of a child, the sight of their eyes, a beautiful woman's loveliness, a brave man's courage, their trust in their friends, or some other virtue or intangible. The Shackled choose carefully, always offering a price that their prey can at least find thinkable, however horrific it may be.

The goal of the Shackled is to convince humans to willingly give up their virtues and subtle blessings in exchange for limited, temporary aid that doesn't permanently solve their problems. A Shackled will always keep its bargain, even if it means its own destruction, but they'll interpret the terms in whatever way is necessary to make their promise an eventual curse to the recipient.

Of course, this can't happen too quickly or too obviously, or there is small temptation to deal with it. Indeed, one in every nine bargains is perfectly fair, even generous. These "lucky" petitioners are meant as judas goats for other humans, luring them in with tales of how they "cleverly" overcame the Shackled and won the best of their deal.

If driven directly to combat, the Shackled are among the least effective of the Uncreated. They lack the raw violence of the Incendiaries or the mind-bending influence of the Poxed and the Rotten. Instead, they fight with their slavish cultists, or rely on magically excising vital capabilities from their assailants. These thefts are never permanent unless the victim willingly assents to the loss, but they last long enough to complicate a bloody combat.

The Shackled are particularly ready to retreat from a losing fight. The only time they'll stand without fail is when a pact has pledged their martial service to a petitioner.

## Debtors to Hell

The Shackled are notorious for their cults. Indeed, a hunter is more likely to find a Shackled at the heart of a cult of desperate pact-makers than they are to find one preying upon victims in the wild. Every petitioner to the Chained Lady's court in Bakare must make obeisance to her as a goddess, and the rituals that those "highest" in her favor must perform are enough to damn a petitioner in both body and soul.

The Shackled love their cults, if perhaps in a way only comprehensible for an Uncreated. They are marvelous engines of lust, need, and betrayal to their patrons, seething morasses of anguished men and women who trade more and more to their master in exchange for the strength to ascend higher in the cult. These devotees see the tremendous wealth and munificence bestowed upon their leaders, but they cannot understand the gnawing terror and desperate fear that poisons these black hierarchs. Even surrounded by the treasures of their god, these ecclesiastics can only remember what they have paid.

d20	Favored Appearance	Method of Ruin	Present Desire
1	Beautiful maiden with teeth of jewels	Asks for petty acts that combine to evil	Convince enclave that trash is precious
2	Book that writes itself to communicate	Buys the treachery of a client	Crush a potential source of vital goods
3	Box containing the prey's dear desire	Cheaply empower a totally vile client	Destroy a persecutor of its cultists
4	Bright treasure-object that whispers	Drive an honest trader out of business	Devour a person's dearest treasure
5	Dragon with its treasure embedded in it	Gives free foretaste of addictive things	Enhance its cult's influence in the area
6	Emaciated thing that walks behind you	Gives too much of the promised good	Get a lightly-held trait that's very rare
7	Golden bull with a voice of char and ash	Goad a client to mad terror at their deal	Get an enclave to waste its vital goods
8	Grinning peddler draped with goods	Goads buyer into self-destructive act	Get enclave to commoditize human life
9	Huge blood-drinking insectile thing	Gulls the clever into thinking they'll win	Get someone to seek protective slavery
10	Huge serpent with solid gold eyes	Leads clients into needing greater aid	Get useful tools for its own cult's use
11	Hulking shape dripping sweet fragrance	Offer an easy "solution" to a dire burden	Incite warfare with well-placed gifts
12	Hunched woman with fists welded shut	Plant bargains to activate at dire times	Make a gifted innocent its cult leader
13	Manikin with a huge sack of evils	Provides a good that destroys the client	Make an unfit person an enclave's lord
14	Maw fringed by many tentacles	Reveals their dealings to create mistrust	Persuade a holy person to join their cult
15	Mirror-dwelling man of gold	Steals the purchased thing from another	Persuade client to sell their own family
16	Spider-thing with webs of woven gold	Takes what the client will need later	Plant a new cult in a strong community
17	Squat, huge-mawed swallower of joys	Targets fools for terrible bargains	Provoke person to trade a life for a good
18	Tree fruited with treasures and poison	Targets outcasts as vectors of treachery	Strengthen its cult's military ability
19	Wears the face of a familiar merchant	Trades foolish desires for a vital good	Trick an enclave leader into a dire deal
20	Withered miser with burden of gold	Twists wording to be excessively literal	Want to obtain someone's great treasure

## The Chained Lady

On the cursed isle of Iyasu, in the broken city of Bakare, there is a great vault door. The door is thrice as tall as a man and wrought of leprous gold and soft, gelatinous gemstones. It yawns wide in its chamber beneath the former kantiba's palace, and from this Night Road pours a thousand and one servants of misery. Greatest and worst of these servants is the mighty Uncreated known as the Chained Lady.

Her shape is entirely lost under a voluminous mesh of beautiful golden chains, piled and coiled around her in such profusion that she cannot stand, and must be carried on a golden palanquin carried by her slaves on their ulcerated backs. Only glimpses of the ravishing shape below can be caught through momentary partings of the links, only the flash of jewel-nailed fingertips and the curve of lush red lips. Her voice is ambrosial to all who hear it.

She is queen both of her court and of the cursed city of Bakare, once the stronghold of the Henok family and a great trading port. Unlike the other Uncreated, she welcomes visitors and merchants from far lands, offering them those treasures that her servants have gathered from wretched human bargainers in exchange. She sells them for human sacrifices, exotic occult components, and promises of deeds of blasphemous evil to be committed back in their homelands. The Chained Lady never cheats, but her prices are terrible and inescapable.

Slaves are a regular currency in Bakare, but these slaves are willing thralls, having paid horrible prices to Shackled patrons for the chance to be taken from their hellish homeland. Most imagine that nothing can be worse than the husk-haunted ruin of their former home. Few understand that the merchants who buy them could never allow them to mix with the public and reveal the merchant's unholy trade with Uncreated powers. The slaves sold in Bakare are intended for uses that leave no witnesses.

Most actual business is conducted with the lesser Shackled abominations that squat on the wharves of the city. Only the richest and most interesting traders are permitted an audience with the Chained Lady herself, and these men and women are offered precisely those treasures or services they most desperately desire. Very few of them have the will to deny the Lady's price for such things, though those who resist are permitted to depart in peace. The Lady does not coerce business.

The bulk of Bakare's population is made up of Shackled cultists, those clever and useful enough to have won a place on the island. They live in sumptuous splendor compared to their mainland brethren, but they are owned body and soul by the Shackled, and must serve them in a hundred horrible ways to avoid being discarded in gruesome fashion. They can be redeemed if their worship is accepted by a Godbound or other deity, but their souls are otherwise doomed to a terrible fate.

The Chained Lady is always in the company of at least two Bound Oligarch chamberlains and a Large Mob of human cultist servitors who have the statistics of Elite Warriors. If assailed, the Bound Oligarchs will hold their actions each round, using them to offensively dispel any enemy powers used against the Chained Lady if their Words can plausibly do so. They will do nothing else, not even defend themselves or defensively dispel attacks used against them. The Chained Lady will use her own actions to attack the interlopers, but will seek to retreat as soon as the Bound Oligarchs are destroyed. The Large Mob must still have at least 10 hit dice left to carry her palanquin to safety at a rate of 60'/round. If they too are destroyed the Chained Lady will not be able to flee, and will instead use her Knowledge powers to try to buy her life with offers of dearest desires.

## The Chained Lady

<b>AC:</b> 2	<b>Move:</b> As carried
<b>Hit Dice:</b> 50	<b>Save:</b> 5+
<b>Attack:</b> Autohit x 2 attacks	<b>Damage:</b> 1d10 chain straight
<b>Morale:</b> 9	<b>Effort:</b> 11

The terrible Lady wields the Words of Wealth, Knowledge, and Command. Her direct combat abilities are not as formidable as those of her peers, but she has access to a much wider variety of minions in her service, and she will never be found without at least a Large Mob of them present to serve her with their lives. When under attack, she fights with lashing tendrils of golden chain that can stretch to the horizon to strike a foe. If fighting a foe resistant to physical damage, she can instead use a psychic assault of unspeakable promises to inflict the same 1d10 straight damage.

This veiled queen among the Uncreated can be carried at a rate of 60' per round by her bearers, provided they have not been slain. Without minions to carry her jeweled palanquin, she cannot move.

The Chained Lady's *Cold Breath* forces any Godbound engaged with her to Commit four points of Effort before they can Commit Effort to any other purpose. This Effort can be taken back once the Godbound disengages, but not until they leave the Lady's presence.

The Chained Lady may take two actions every round. Each of the powers listed on the table below consume one action to trigger.

### d6 The Chained Lady's Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort and make a request of a visible foe, one that does not require them to physically harm themselves or their allies nor spend more than one round doing it. If they don't use their next action to comply, they take 2d10 damage straight from psychic strain, with a Spirit save for half.
- 2 Commit Effort and target a visible foe. They must save versus Spirit or become obsessed with looking past the Lady's veil of chains, closing to melee range and spending their action vainly pawing at the links. They may make a new save at the end of each round to break free.
- 3 Commit Effort and target an enemy. That enemy may instantly choose to take a round's worth of extra action. If they accept, they take 2d12 straight damage at the end of the bonus round. If they refuse, they must make a Hardiness save or lose their next round's action.
- 4 Commit Effort. Any gold, silver, or jewels on assailants instantly turn molten, inflicting 1d6 straight fire damage for every point of Wealth they carry before it cools.
- 5 The Lady briefly parts her chains, ensuring the success of the next hit roll against her. The enemy who chooses to make this roll will instantly lose a friend or lover chosen by the GM. Ordinary mortals will die, while others lose feelings for the PC. The Lady veils herself again at the end of the next round or after she is struck by a hit.
- 6 Commit Effort. The Lady consumes 2d6 hit dice worth of allies, gaining that many hit dice from the sacrifice.



## The Shackled Band

Most Shackled Uncreated work alone, using their corrupting powers to provide any necessary goods and their own cunning strength to satisfy any demands of service. In the case where a Shackled is too weak or unable to provide a good or service personally, it will seek to make bargains with humans who can. One in nine of these bargains is perfectly fair and even generous to the client, the better to lure them into deeper, darker promises or persuade them to entice their friends and family into similar deals.

The Shackled don't do overt deception as well as some other Uncreated. They can offer trick bargains, but they don't usually have strong powers of illusion or false seeming. Instead, they commonly catch their potential clients alone, subdue them if they struggle, and make their offered deal. They'll honestly release a victim if they refuse to bargain, but few victims believe their assurances, and some poor fools have gotten themselves into deals from which they could have just walked away. More appealing-looking Shackled can often get close to a client without having to use main force to restrain them.

Peddler-imps are the most common variety of Shackled, and usually appeal to lonely survivor bands, harried hermits, or small and weak enclaves. They can't stand up to even a small mob of angry humans without cultist defenders of their own, so they prefer to catch their clients alone or when the potential buyer is helpless.

Bound Oligarchs represent the stronger variety of Shackled, one that usually targets strong enclaves or worthy heroes. They can provide much with the miracles of their Word, but still prefer to have cultists or Mob of peddler-imps close when dealing with dangerous sorts.



### Peddler-Imp

AC: 6	Move: 30' scuttle
Hit Dice: 4	Save: 13+
Attack: +4	Damage: 1d6 bite or punch
Morale: 9	Effort: 2

These Shackled are neither especially clever nor possessed of great power, though they can provide amply for the usual requests of desperate Ancalian survivors. They have at least one combat power and two corrupting powers, and their *Cold Breath* requires a foe to commit two Effort before they can commit Effort to other powers. They usually act alone, though major entities can summon Mobs of them.

#### d6 Peddler-Imp Tactics

- 1 Offer a bargain to the most susceptible-looking assailant, who can take it or leave it at their discretion.
- 2 Attack an enemy who refused the creature's bargain.
- 3 Scuttle to a more advantageous position on the battlefield, climbing with effortless nimbleness.
- 4 Hurl flecks of molten gold at an opponent, doing its normal damage as a fire-damage ranged attack.
- 5 Lash a cultist ally into more zealous obedience, giving them an immediate extra action. If used on a Mob, the Mob gets to reroll its next attack and take the better roll.
- 6 Use a combat power on the most badly-injured foe.

### Bound Oligarch

AC: 4	Move: 30' stride
Hit Dice: 12	Save: 5+
Attack: +10 x 2 attacks	Damage: 1d12 crush
Morale: 10	Effort: 5

The Oligarchs are the officials and factotums of the Chained Lady. Each one is bound to a Word appropriate to their kind, and their *Cold Breath* requires Godbound to commit three Effort points before they can activate any other powers that require Effort. Most have two combat powers and two or three corrupting powers. Bound Oligarchs may take two actions each round.

#### d6 Bound Oligarch Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort to summon up a Small Mob of human cultists equivalent to a Mob of trained soldiers. The cultists appear at the start of the next round.
- 2 Attack the most richly-dressed enemy present.
- 3 Commit Effort and offer a bribe to an assailant to cease their attack. The target must save versus Spirit or spend their next action considering the offer.
- 4 Commit Effort and turn all Wealth a visible target carries into muck and filth.
- 5 Use a combat power on the most intimidating foe.
- 6 Relocate so as to be behind cover or allied protectors.

## Combat Powers

The Shackled fight by tearing away portions of their enemies, stealing both physical objects and insubstantial capabilities from their prey. They have unusually strong *Cold Breath* auras, forcing commitment of one more point of Effort than an Uncreated of similar power from one of the other Courts. Mundane objects taken by a Shackled are destroyed, while magical ones merely pass into the creature's possession. Intangible qualities or physical abilities that it "steals" return at the end of the encounter, unless the victim consents to the theft.

**Bartering Pain:** When hit with a normal attack, the creature can Commit Effort as an Instant; the attacker must then either immediately reroll the attack, taking the second roll even if it's worse, or be automatically hit by the next attack that targets them.

**For A Life:** When the Uncreated drops a target to zero hit points, including Mobs, it may Commit Effort as an Instant. The target must choose either to die or to revive instantly with full hit points, but if it lives it is completely enslaved to the Uncreated until dawn. Such thralls are usually set to attacking their former allies.

## Corrupting Powers

Shackled give their wretched victims the things these victims think are precious, be they gold, food, survival, or revenge. In exchange, they take much that the bargainer can't afford to give. This bargain must always be at least semi-voluntary on the victim's part; they cannot be given a choice between agreement and some dire death. Once the pact is sealed, however, the Uncreated can take their full measure of price. It's possible that a Shackled could be persuaded to give a trait back, but that would doubtless come at its own terrible price.

**Familiar Friend:** The Shackled can attach itself to a powerful leader or "interesting" victim, acting as a familiar and appearing instantly when called, assuming it finds it pleasing. The Shackled often takes the form of an animal or comely companion while doing so.

**Pactmaker's Promise:** The Uncreated can sanctify a freely-made bargain between it and a petitioner. Both must carry out their agree-

## Words, Gifts, and Abilities

The Shackled usually display gifts of Wealth, Knowledge, and Passion, using them to provide for their petitioner's needs, identify their true desires, and manipulate their hearts as part of their bargains.

Wealth gifts and miracles most often revolve around giving a desperate seeker the supplies they need to survive another week in Ancalia. It's not unknown for a Shackled to simply steal the goods from a nearby enclave, leaving enough of a trail to track them to the new possessor. Such likely-fatal tricks will be avoided if the petitioner seems like they could be an interesting long-term thrall.

Knowledge identifies a subject's true, deep desires, including those it would never voice even to itself. The Shackled will not scruple about satisfying these wishes, sometimes using one thrall's promised obedience to fulfill the dark needs of another.

Passion is usually used in a negative sense to carve away virtues or feelings as part of a petitioner's price, but the Uncreated can use the Word to inspire false feelings in others. "Love spells" are a common request for the young and foolish. They do not end in happiness.

**Opening the Shackled Way:** As its action, the creature exposes its vulnerabilities to a chosen enemy. If the foe attacks it during the next round, the hit is automatic and for maximum damage. The assailant automatically and inevitably fails their next saving throw, however.

**Raise the Price:** Once per round, as an Instant action, the Uncreated may Commit Effort when an enemy does something that requires Committing Effort. The target must Commit an additional point of Effort, or their triggered ability fails and they lose their remaining actions for the round.

**Rob the Right Hand:** Once per round, the Uncreated can steal a weapon or object from a visible foe's hands as an On Turn action. Worthy foes can save versus Evasion to keep hold of it. If the creature Commits Effort, it can do this to all foes in melee range at once.

**The Price of Pain-Ease:** As an On Turn action, the Uncreated may target a creature they've just harmed with their normal attack and Commit Effort. The creature continues to suffer damage at the start of each of their rounds as if from one successful hit by the Uncreated until they obey an order from the creature or the fight ends.

ment, following both letter and spirit. The Uncreated always will, even to its destruction, but if the human does not, their mind and body become utterly subject to the Uncreated forever after.

**Purchased Truth:** The Shackled can act as an oracle, giving a petitioner the knowledge they most desperately desire. They may do so for no price at all if their information can be canted to lead the seeker to their own destruction.

**Slivering the Soul:** The Uncreated is able to excise emotions or relationships from the subject. Courage, faintheartedness, love for family, fear of a foe, or any other emotional trait or social bond can be carved away into nothingness. Once excised, the creature can never feel that emotion or reforge that bond again, barring divine miracles.

**The Jewel of Desire:** The Uncreated can provide any mundane good the petitioner might seek, in volumes appropriate to the Uncreated's power. These goods function normally and appear quite ordinary.

## Weaknesses

The Uncreated of the Shackled Court are fearsome manipulators and swift to build a cult of desperate devotees, but they are weaker than their brethren in direct confrontations. The extra burden of their *Cold Breath* can complicate things for novice Godbound, but they don't hit as hard as Incendiaries, and they haven't got the direct-damage abilities of the Rotten or the Poxed.

They're also short on easy escape abilities, as they can't disappear as quickly as some other Uncreated. If a pantheon can get past a Shackled's cult and its evil bargains, the abomination is likely to be in trouble. This trouble is compounded if it's promised to protect an acolyte. The thing may have expected the human to die too soon to concern itself with such things, but until that happens, it's forced to remain and fight on his behalf.

The excisions and thefts that the Shackled take are merciless and can't be remedied with conventional magic. The divine gifts and miracles of the Godbound can fix these spiritual wounds, however, if the heroes have the right Words to remedy the ills.

# The Mercymen



mid the wandering hordes of husks, the alien cruelties of the Uncreated, and the looting parties of foreign adventurers, Ancalia has its own native predators. Some of the strangest among them are the ravagers known as the Mercymen, zealots fired by a desperate desire to protect their fellow Ancalians the best way they know how – by sheltering them in the safety of the grave. Led by the renegade Bishop Lazar, bands of these reavers seek out Ancalian survivors to kill them, sanctify the corpses, and take their belongings. Lazar knows that the patriarch's strength is waning, and the frantic cleric is desperate to see Ancalia's people safely dead before it is too late.

## The Birth of the Mercymen

Bishop Lazar was among the surviving prelates who made it to Hadiya with Patriarch Ezek, and he was present for the great council at which Ezek decided to enact the great ritual that presently protects the souls of Ancalia's fallen. So long as Ezek's mighty prayers and the strength of the other bishops holds, those who die within Ancalia's ancient borders are safely ushered to the dreamless sleep of the grave, safe from Hell's inexorable pull even without the customary funeral rites. Even after Ezek's strength inevitably fails, those who have already died under this great sanctification will remain secure from the torment that awaits the untended dead.

The ritual's eventual failure is certain. The prayers and ceremonies drain the life from Ezek and his prelates, and only the destruction of countless precious relics has allowed them to hold out as long as they have. The hidden fastness of Hadiya contains many treasures that can be burnt on this holy pyre, but eventually they will run out, and the priests will have to fuel their theurgy with an even greater tax on their life force. At most, the ritual can be maintained another four or five years. If the monastery's relic-seekers can't salvage more sacred fuel for the rite or the bishops start to die early, it might not continue more than four or five seasons.

Bishop Lazar is one of the greatest theurges in Ancalia, a hero to the people for his piety and devotion to the common folk, yet he fled Hadiya just as the rite was to begin. With his help, Ezek might have been able to add another year, perhaps two to the ritual before their strength failed... but Lazar could imagine no salvation coming for Ancalia in that small margin of reprieve. The nation was doomed. It was a fool's hope to imagine that the poor wretches still alive in Ancalia after the ritual ended would have any hope of a decent burial and proper funerary rites. Lazar was haunted by the thought of all those countless tens of thousands torn to pieces by husks or ravaged by Uncreated, enclaves wiped out with none to tend the dead or protect them from the Hell that waited for them. Ezek's ritual bought time for a salvation Lazar knew would not come.

If Hell awaited the living after Ezek's rite failed, true mercy was in death before it was too late. Like other Unitary believers, Lazar has faith that Hell will be emptied by the Creator when He finally returns, but an unknowable span of agonizing torture was an unendurable thought for the tens of thousands of Ancalians still alive when the ritual failed. The vast majority of them would doubtless die without funerary rites and be damned to Hell, so it is Lazar's self-conceived mission to ensure that they reach the safety of the grave before then.

His message horrified the first survivors who heard it, but the bishop's intense charisma, obvious love for his people, and potent theurgic powers have been enough to spark an organization dedicated to this grim and holy work. These "Mercymen" are preachers and killers both, dedicated to the bishop's vision of an Ancalia sheltered in death and determined to share his protective care with every survivor left on the peninsula.

## Organization and Conduct

Most Mercymen are organized in roving bands, each one usually numbering up to forty or fifty hardened warriors, enough to make a Large Mob. Each band is under the iron-handed rule of a layman "deacon" who is a Minor Hero invariably assisted by at least one priest or monk. The rest of the band is comprised of healthy veterans. Any who become crippled or too wounded to travel are "given the mercy", and replacements are impressed from the next survivors who are captured by the band.

Each crew is usually composed at least partially of men familiar with the region and the local enclaves. Bands will scout an enclave, with members sometimes posing as traders or lone wanderers, before the deacon comes to a decision about how to handle the populace. Peaceful negotiations are only offered to those enclaves that look desperate enough to find mass suicide a plausible option. By now, most survivors that remain have enough fight left to make more direct measures necessary.

Mercymen prefer to conduct their business "decently", executing people in as quick, clean, and painless a way as possible. Beheading is a favored method, or crushing blows to the skull. Mass poisoning is avoided as being painful and unreliable, and strangulation, drowning, or other methods are usually considered no better. Death in combat is considered the least preferable way to "give the mercy", as the victims tend to die terrified and in great pain, to say nothing of the risk of losses among the band's believers.

New recruits are inevitably forced to participate in the "salvation" of their brethren, personally dispatching family members or others close to them. Those who refuse are given the mercy with the rest. Some recruits will flee the band afterwards, but the Mercymen's bloody mission offers many of them the only way to justify their own acts, and only by committing wholeheartedly to their grim duty can they excuse the blood on their own hands. If they stay, they're heroic crusaders who've paid a terrible price, and if they run, they're just a coward who murdered their own kindred to save their own life. The Mercymen don't chase such recruits, or even try to keep them; such distractions from their mission are a waste of precious time.

Once an enclave of survivors has been "saved", their remaining supplies are looted by the Mercymen, and anything that can't be taken is destroyed or ruined. The bands are expected to support themselves on this plunder, burning themselves out in their bloody crusade if necessary. They do not form long-term bases or hole up for longer than it takes to endure a hard winter, as they need to keep moving if they're to supply themselves and do their holy work.

Inevitably, some bands will degenerate utterly into mere murderers and looters. They'll take the Mercymen code as an easy justification for their bloodshed, but these savages want nothing more than food,

women, and liquor, and will do whatever they can to obtain them. Bands that have remained loyal to their purpose despise these backsliders, though to the wretched survivors they both prey on, the only difference between them seems to be the amount of suffering delivered before the inevitable death.

### The Bishop and the Bitter World

Lazar himself leads a band composed of the elite of the Mercymen, those old companions who first threw in their lot with him five years ago. Unlike the other bands, he prefers to use his tremendous charisma and theurgic potency to take over the strongest surviving enclave in a given area, convert it to his cause, and then sacrifice the women, children, and noncombatants of the community once it's been driven to an appropriate pitch of zealous terror. The adult males are then formed up into bands and hurled out into Ancalia to shatter among the remaining survivors.

The Mercymen have only really been active in Ancalia for the past two or three years, long enough for news of them to have reached many enclaves in a distorted fashion. Some hear of them as holy protectors who will save those who trust to their strength, while others report them as cannibals, madmen, and servants of the Uncreated. Deserters are usually hated by survivors who know their true background, leaving many of them to drift in with bandit crews or enclaves so degenerate that their bloody past is of no importance.

Lazar and the Mercymen hate the Uncreated with a holy passion, of course, but they avoid direct engagements with the monstrosities. Defeating them seems utterly hopeless to the bishop, and every Mercyman dead under Uncreated claws is one fewer to grant salvation to Ancalia's survivors. Mercymen have been known to intervene in conflicts between Uncreated and humans, but only to attack and massacre the humans before the Uncreated can steal them away for their horrible purposes.

Lazar's own attitude toward the Uncreated is one of hopeless despair. The opening of the Night Roads was so catastrophic that he cannot imagine successfully resisting their incursion and he is thoroughly convinced that the rest of the world will soon be overrun by them. This conviction has now become a necessary obsession to save his own consuming guilt. If another power such as the PCs seems to be offering a successful resistance to the Uncreated, he will adamantly refuse to believe it, insisting that it's only the Uncreated Night toying with its prey, and that such "heroes" are only making it worse by discouraging people from the salvation of death. He's very likely to send the Mercymen to attack or interfere with such efforts.

Lazar himself is an anguished wreck of a man, one convinced that he deserves a deeper hole in Hell than anyone else on the peninsula. His only consolation is his idea of himself as a spiritual sacrifice for his people, his own soul irredeemably defiled so that his flock might be spared infernal torments. If it were ever proven to him that his choice was not necessary, that the killing he has incited has been in vain, he would be utterly broken, and likely seek his own death. The Mercymen left behind would likely refuse to believe in any such hope unless forced unavoidably to confront its reality. The bandits and murderers among them would be unmoved, but many of the rest would face their own moral horror in their own ways.

Lazar's innate Words make it very unlikely that magical forces can change his mind. Any attempt at converting the bishop would require overwhelmingly persuasive mundane evidence, proof of a hope so great that even he can no longer deny its reality.

### Bishop Lazar, Leader of the Mercymen

<b>AC:</b> 3	<b>Move:</b> 30' run
<b>Hit Dice:</b> 30	<b>Save:</b> 5+
<b>Attack:</b> Autohit x 2 attacks	<b>Damage:</b> 1d8 straight prayer
<b>Morale:</b> 12	<b>Effort:</b> 9

Lazar is a tremendously powerful Eldritch theurgist, one whose natural gifts have been fueled by his own desperate, unhinged state. He has effectively bound the Words of Death, Passion, and Command, and can employ spells and powers equivalent to miracles and gifts of these divine Words. Where relevant, he can also be treated as a theurgist of the Gate, with access to whatever invocations are pertinent. Lazar can take two actions per round, scourging enemies with the scalding psychic force of his holy prayers. His prayers have a range out to visual sight and allow him to inflict damage against everyone within ten feet of the target point.

Lazar is never found operating without a Large Mob of veteran and fanatical companions who've served him since he first fled Hadiya. These fearsome warriors have the stats of Minor Heroes and the Mob they form has expertise equivalent to the *Unerring Blade* gift from the Sword Word and an effective Morale score of 12. They can use their *Unerring Blade* gift at the usual cost in Effort.

The bishops is a skilled tactician and a ruthlessly pragmatic leader. His goal is the death of everyone on the peninsula, and while his companions are perfectly willing to enter into the Creator's peace early, Lazar has no intention of wasting them carelessly. He will not engage powerful supernatural foes unless he is confident of victory, and if forced to battle in unprepared circumstances he will attempt to use Death miracles to raise a screening force of undead to cover his escape. If necessary, he will sacrifice some portion of his companions, using Death miracles to keep them from dying until the rest of the group is safely away. If needed, the GM can calve off a Small Mob of Minor Heroes for such purposes, subtracting half the group's hit dice from the larger Mob to represent the division.

#### d6

#### Lazar's Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort to hurl a wave of utter hopelessness over his enemies, forcing a Spirit save or loss of their next action. On a successful save, forfeit their next action or suffer 5d6 damage from the mental strain of resisting.
- 2 Commit Effort to miraculously add up to 12 hit dice back to a companion Mob of mortal creatures as he raises the dead and slows the effects of mortal wounds.
- 3 Order his companions to screen him, taking 6 hit dice from his allies and adding 6 hit dice to his own score to represent their use as meat shields.
- 4 Commit Effort to conjure up a Large Mob of undead husks that will last only until the end of the fight. He cannot use this power again while anything remains of the original Mob.
- 5 Focus his attacks on the most injured or vulnerable-looking enemy, preferring to make coup de grace attacks on downed targets.
- 6 Rant about his cause to his enemies. Lesser foes would find it overwhelmingly persuasive; PCs less so.

# The Cousins



In the deep places of the forest and far back in the hills, there are those who dwell from the times before. These folk are called the Cousins or the Fae by the people of Ancalia, feared and remembered as kindred of a different breed. Once, they were men and women like any other, but the subtleties of the Polyarchy and the destruction of the Shattering made it impossible to live among their brethren. Now they wield their uncanny powers to survive the chaos that has befallen their home.

## The Many Breeds

The Polyarchy of Kham that once held sway in what is now Ancalia was composed of many different ideotribes, each of them dedicated to a different conception of excellence. Many of these tribes had access to extremely sophisticated soul-gene manipulations and theoeugenic techniques, and employed these arts to advance their physical bodies and mortal minds to new heights of ability. Not every tribe agreed on what constituted humanity's best form, but they were united in their fear of the technology-addicted Din of the west and the relentless philosophies of the Ren invaders on their southern shores.

Most ideotribes were determined to be careful and temperate in their human experimentation. Small improvements and slight augmentations were sought, things to better humanity by percentages and increments. While modest, these changes were relatively safe to make over several generations and they made no great demands of precision on a locality's natural laws. The modern inhabitants of Ancalia and the Oasis States are largely descended from these careful tribes.

Not every group was so reserved. Whether out of desperation at the increasing violence of the Last War, an unfettered ambition for excellence, or a misguided idea of what was possible, some ideotribes went further. They granted remarkable abilities to their sons and daughters, imbuing them with potential far beyond that of an ordinary human being. They made lineages that were swift as the hawk, or strong as the lion, or graced with piercing intellect. They strove to build new forms of humanity beyond the meager dreams of their less ambitious fellows.

These dreams crumbled with the Last War and the Shattering. The damage that had been done to the engines of creation was too great. The fine tolerances of natural law and the precise interlacings of theurgic art no longer existed. The crude flux and twist of subtle laws caught on the refined flesh of these transhumans and left them sickened, weakened, or dead. Only in special environments that had been reinforced to standard reality tolerances could they survive.

Some managed to endure this decay. The Five Families that became Ancalia's nobility were all heir to changes like these, but their alterations were just barely miscible with the new state of the realm. They could survive, and reproduce, and prosper in this lesser world, even if their bloodline was doomed to be diluted among their many kindred and their greatest strengths gradually sapped with time.

Most of the transhumans did not survive. They died when their superhuman bodies failed, or their minds gave way, or they found critical medical services no longer available in a ruined age. The flower of Khamite eugenics was cut off by the catastrophe, and only a few shoots were left to wither in a colder, more unfriendly world. These surviving lineages were forced to retreat to specially-reinforced facil-

ities that could sustain their reality requirements and maintain their unnatural bodies. They became known as the Cousins, or the Fae, and they became bitter.

Many brilliant fae were determined to find a solution to their dwindling. Imprisoned in their medical reservations, their old ideotribes destroyed by the failure of their dreams, they had no love or pity for the humans who had abandoned them to this. They learned ways of extracting vital humors and psychic resonance from human bodies and minds, and methods of converting normal humanity into fuel for their uncanny nature. Some Fae balked at these steps, and resigned themselves to living out their lives within the boundaries of the medical reservations. Others were more willing to hunt.

In the centuries since then, the fae have remained masters of their hidden domains. Most are something close to immortal, living for centuries and reproducing only to replace their fallen. Those that leave their medical reservations are forced to find nourishment in human minds and bodies. Some know ways of preying subtly on a human's hopes and passions, while others must drink the hot red blood or eat the steaming meat of their own kindred to live. Every peasant in his cottage or noble in her mansion knows to fear the Cousins... though that does not stop some from trying to make bargains with their bitter relations.

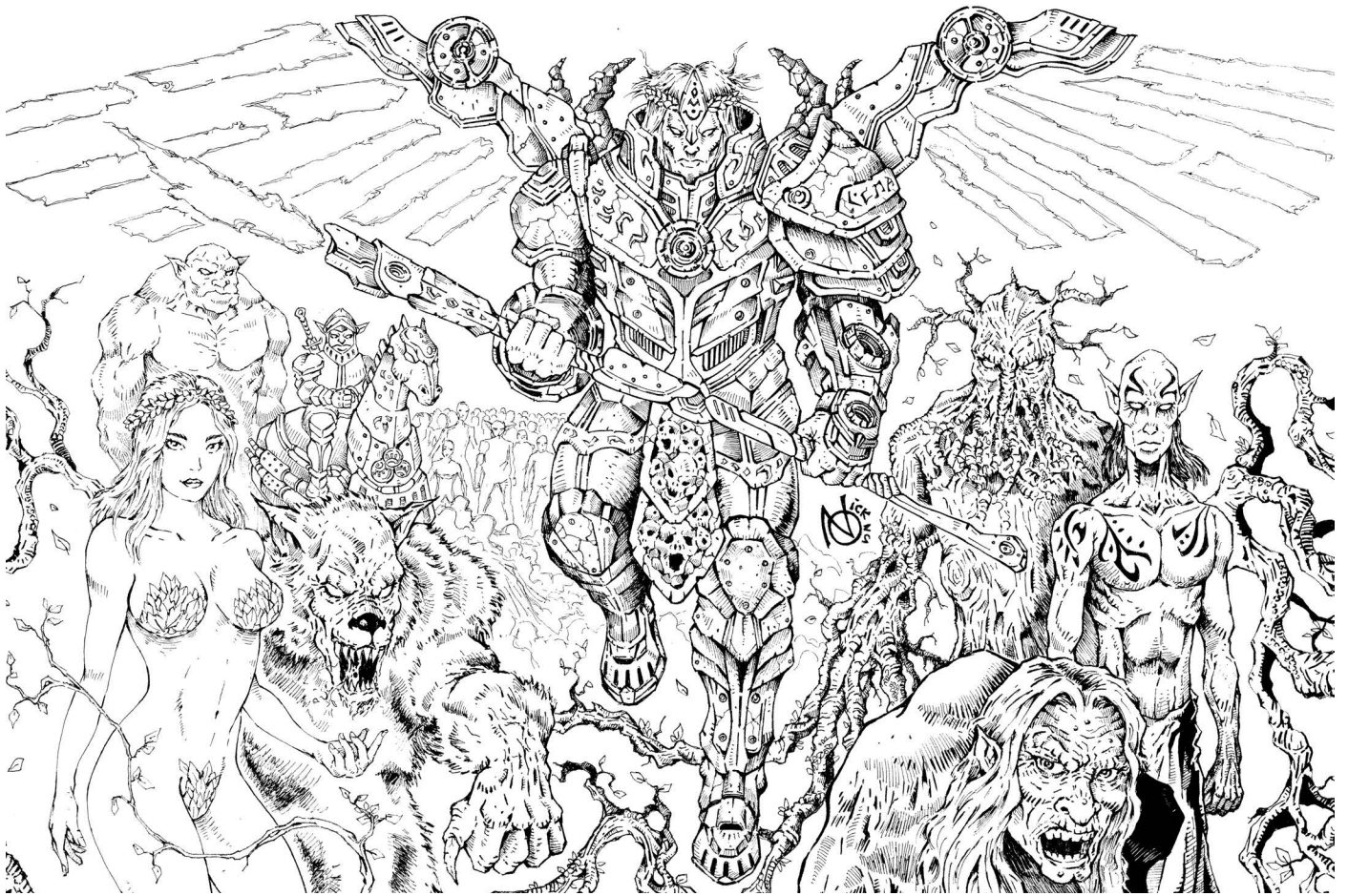
## The Barrows

The medical facilities designed to sustain the ancient transhumans were usually built at least partially underground, if only to protect them from Din attack. Where surface facilities existed, the thousand years since their creation has resulted in soil and plant life burying them in the characteristic mound of a Fae barrow. Ancalian peasants are particularly wary of any hill that seems to be standing alone in a meadow or forest; such places might be lairs to the Fae.

Access to a barrow was usually through a guarded entrance within the surface structure. Anticipating the risk of entombment, however, the Khamite designers built earth penetrator structures into the barrow's periphery; when activated, they thrust monolithic stone egress shafts up through the soul, creating a ring of "standing stones" as the modern Ancalians call them. The egress shafts can only be opened by a Fae or someone with sufficiently strong Ancalian noble blood, usually by smearing a small droplet of blood on the stone's surface. Some of these barrows have already had their penetrator rings activated, either in some ancient escape or out of the natural decay of the barrow.

Most barrow facilities were constructed in great haste as temporary refuges for the afflicted. A completely intact barrow is notable for its harsh austerity, dim blue emergency lighting, and endless rows of carved stone stasis-sarcophagi stacked in narrow passages cut into the earth. The sarcophagi are marked with the ancient Khamite lineage-symbols of their occupants, every one sealed with a mixture of lead, quicksilver, and hepatizon to ensure the quiet slumber of the occupant within. If the seal is broken, the occupant will awaken within a minute. Breaking the seal requires no particular strength, though a crowbar or other implement may be necessary to lever aside the lid.

Aside from the sarcophagus storage corridors, most barrows also had storage rooms for the essentials that newly-awakened transhumans would need. As the Last War showed no signs of ending at the



time, most of the storerooms are stocked with military equipment, including *tulpa glaives*, *Horses of Brass and Flame*, and other martial gear. Given the dire straits of the Polyarchy at the time most of this equipment was military surplus or castoffs, and none of it was the best the polity could offer. Even so, all of it is vastly superior to the ordinary weaponry of the modern age.

Near the storerooms were the staff quarters, originally intended to house the medical professionals and theoeugenic adepts who were to maintain the site and assist its occupants. Few remained to die in the barrows by the end of the Polyarchy, though the occasional dedicated healer's corpse can be found in the halls. Their sleeping chambers, meeting rooms, and laboratories can still give up interesting trinkets.

An intact barrow almost certainly still has its guardians, ancient Khamite ideofoms fashioned from the psychic energy of their finest warriors and champions. Theurgic artistry would take an "imprint" of these heroes' powerful souls and impress the image on a construct of raw arcane force. The end result was a golem-like guardian keyed to obey Khamite military officials, and there are usually at least half a dozen of these ideofoms prowling a barrow, to say nothing of the occasional undead wraith of some wretched Fae or dead medical official. The ideofoms use the same combat statistics as the Guardian Automaton on page 159 of the *Godbound* core book.

### Dens of the Fair Folk

Many barrows are not intact, however, having been broken open in ages past or used as refuges by modern Fae. Most such barrows operate under the rule of a "lord", a Fae with exceptionally strong transhuman lineage or a simple abundance of charisma. A Fae lord almost always obtains their position by raw force or cunning; more

democratic means of selecting a leader are largely unknown. By the same token, a Fae lord's authority often extends only so far as his blade.

Modern Fae are almost all descendants of the ancient transhuman lineages rather than being freshly-awoken citizens of the Polyarchy. Modern Fae are extremely reluctant to awaken their ancestors, as these ancient ones can't be expected to understand the modern world and may well be powerful enough to overthrow the barrow's lord. Now and then an ancient one will be revived if a lord or lady needs a consort or a solitary barrow-dweller becomes unbearably lonely.

Modern Fae often decorate and transform the interior of the barrow into something more serviceable to their own tastes, echoing the ancient color and splendor of the Polyarchy or mimicking the modern graces of an Ancalian lord. Stolen loot and the wealth of their victims is used to adorn the bare white walls, and the pelts of men and women swath ancient furnishings.

The Fae who dwell within barrows must be wary. The arcane food generators can only sustain so many mouths, and the more Fae a barrow hosts, the more likely its occupants will have to raid human settlements to get what they need. An overactive barrow is also easily located by human scouts, allowing knights and other heroes to ambush Fae parties coming and going from the site.

Most barrow-dwelling Fae instead spend large amounts of time outside the barrow, hidden away in camps and crevices within the wilderness. While they need to hunt to sustain their own transhuman forms, their elusiveness makes it difficult for human heroes to track them down, and the lesser Fae are free from the oppressive oversight of their more powerful kindred. Sooner or later, though, most Fae yearn for the soothing glow of a barrow's stable natural laws and the familiar faces of their kindred.

## Fae After the Night Roads

In the present day, the Fae of Ancalia are in a crisis. The husks and Uncreated show no interest in them unless the transhumans interfere with their monstrous purposes, but the catastrophe has massively culled the number of humans on the peninsula. Those Fae dependent on feeding on humans now have far fewer potential meals.

As a consequence, some Fae have been launching desperate attacks against weak enclaves, trying to capture humans for feeding. Others have tried to form a grotesque sort of symbiosis with the refugees, providing protection for them in exchange for regular sacrifices. A few have tried to flee into Lom or the Oasis States, but without the barrows as havens, they're all too easily found and rooted out.

Most Fae in the modern day are dangerous, desperate, half-starved creatures who cannot be trusted in the slightest. Whatever their hungers and special needs, however, the Fae still remain people, and can be bargained with by those who have the strength and wariness to keep the transhumans from their throats.

## The Prince of the Dawn

A persistent legend speaks of a "king" of the Fae, a great leader buried in a massive barrow deep within the Kaffan mountains. Legend says that he was the greatest and vilest of all that evil lot, and that he devoured entire lineages in his unholy hunger, until lacking sustenance, he was forced to seek the refuge of magical sleep. One day, the storytellers say, he will awaken, and with him all the countless thousands of Fae sleeping under the barrows and mountains.

Scholars scoff at this story, of course, but some point to ancient scraps of records and histories that speak of a "Prince of the Dawn", a theoeugenicist of sublime talent. It was he who devised the system of barrows and stasis that preserved the Fae, and he who holds the key to awakening the entire slumbering host.

In reality, the Prince of the Dawn does indeed exist, and he sleeps within an isolated barrow dedicated solely to his protection. If awakened, he does have knowledge of the invocation of the Way that will awaken every sleeping Fae in Ancalia, though he himself isn't sufficiently familiar with the modern magical environment to cast the spell.

The Prince will not reveal this secret unless something is done to repair the magical environment of Ancalia. He has no intention of awakening his brethren only to have them die off a few weeks or months later. He also has an intimate knowledge of the location and defense-deactivation codes for every Fae barrow in the peninsula. The sleeping Fae all know him and know of his fame, and he has the reasonable expectation that they would view him as their legitimate leader. And if they don't, he also knows their soul-genes and their weaknesses well enough to coerce cooperation from them.

If this "Wild Hunt" were successfully raised and the ancient Khamites summoned back to life, their tremendous power and their hidden military supplies would deal a devastating blow to the Uncreated assailants of Ancalia. The Wild Hunt might even be strong enough to free the peninsula from its horrors, though what path they would take during peacetime is a very uncertain thing. Ancalia is *their* land as they see it, and their diminished descendants are clearly not so fit to rule it as they are.

The common folk of Ancalia would be terrified by the rise of the Hunt, and probably view it as yet another plague sent down by a wrathful Creator. It would take great skill and diplomacy to convince the survivors that these ancient terrors were actually allied with them against the forces of Uncreated Night. Some Ancalians might not be

## The Wild Hunt

<b>Power:</b> 3	<b>Action Die:</b> 1d10
<b>Cohesion:</b> 3	<b>Trouble:</b> 3
<b>Features:</b>	They are a mighty army of transhuman warriors with ancient weapons. Their network of warbands reaches throughout the peninsula, and can act anywhere. They are united in loyal devotion to lost Kham and the Prince of the Dawn.
<b>Problems:</b>	They don't understand this world. 1 point Ancalians are terrified of them. 2 points

While it would require a heroic effort to raise the Wild Hunt, a pantheon that succeeds in doing so would win a tremendous ally against the Uncreated. While the faction would remain under the control of the Prince of the Dawn, the Prince would likely be willing to take "suggestions" from the PCs as to how best to employ the Hunt.

The Hunt's transhuman nature and Khamite weaponry make it an extremely effective group. It can add +2 to all military conflict rolls against forces not equipped with similar magical weaponry and +1 to any other conflict rolls where their innate strength, intelligence, and prowess might be helpful. This bonus doesn't apply to any conflict requiring a clear understanding of the post-Shattering world, however, until they've had a few years to adjust.

The Wild Hunt is a ferociously powerful military force, but it was never intended that they be awakened until after the Polyarchy had safely won its survival. As such, they lack the infrastructure and logistics necessary to keep them functioning indefinitely. Every faction turn, the Wild Hunt gains one additional point of the problem, "We lack vital logistical support". If the total Trouble of the Hunt reaches its ten-point limit, it will collapse in hunger and banditry.

This problem can't be lessened or halted in its increase until the Hunt has at least two Features related to developing a support base of peasants and laborers to supply it with food and upkeep. PC heroes might be able to mitigate it by supplying the Hunt with food and maintenance, but the far-flung nature of the Fae organization will make that difficult to sustain for long. PCs might also choose to help the Hunt develop its own support base in Ancalia, though doing so is apt to require great deeds of leadership in order to convince enough frightened survivors to willingly serve the dreaded Fae.

susceptible to this persuasion, and the Hunt may end up fighting survivor enclaves as well as their Uncreated foes. The risen Fae are not at all eager to fight their modern heirs, but will defend themselves from Ancalian attacks. More modern Fae might have reasons to mislead them, however, and convince them to act on their behalf.

Aside from this, the Prince will have his own motivations. Rather than fix them here, a GM is invited to roll on the random motivation table provided for the Prince, or to pick something that seems interesting. Ideally, the PCs will have to conduct their own investigations if they're to find out the real intentions of the slumbering arcanist.

# The Prince of the Dawn

Letion Si, Arch-Shaper of the Polyarchy of Kham, Seer of Sinew and Bone and Prophet of the New Blood was the greatest theoeugenic adept the Polyarchy ever produced. Born in the waning days of the ideotribes, he was personally responsible for a tremendous number of transhuman innovations and soul-gene modifications. Many of these innovations took place shortly before the Polyarchy collapsed, and not all of them were as perfectly refined as he might have wished.

As it was, Letion was forced into stasis by the destabilization of certain magical laws that underpinned many of his own modifications. Even if he's successfully revived, he'll need to remain within a magically-compatible location, one with sufficient theurgic stability to allow the functioning of his augmentations.

The site of the Prince's barrow is extremely well-hidden, and indeed, Letion's very existence is a thing only recollected in hazy, unclear fashion in the most obscure books. Many of them paint him as some sort of arch-demon, a fiendish father of the Cousins and architect of much misery. Finding the coordinates of his barrow would require a miracle of Knowledge or a delving into one of the Uncreated-infested great libraries of Ancalia. The barrow itself is doubtless heavily defended against intrusion by any but authorized Khamite personnel. Unfortunately, the last such badge-bearer died a thousand years ago.

## d6 Possible Motivations for the Prince

- 1 He's convinced that his vast superiority to any modern Ancalian gives him the moral right to rule the peninsula, though he may need some time to understand how completely society has "degenerated" since his days.
- 2 He has absolutely no interest in political matters, now that the Din are broken and the Ren are stymied in the south. He's only interested in restoring his engineering facilities and "uplifting" the current Ancalians, whether they like the idea or not.
- 3 He's obsessed with the destruction of the Din and the Ren, blaming them for Kham's downfall. He'll play along with modern humans until he's confident he understands the current situation, and then will use his expertise to unleash catastrophes on his hated foes.
- 4 He wants to restore the High Negus and the Five Families as the ruling nobility of Ancalia, and is eager to imbue them with "improvements" that will turn them into Fae. He expects the existing Fae to be taken on as new noble families or trusted vassals.
- 5 He wants to restore the Polyarchy of Kham, and is planning a slow transformation of Ancalia into a patchwork of ideotribes bent on different concepts of personal excellence. The revived Fae will act as teachers and the nuclei of these new tribes, and when Ancalia has been restored, it can begin the violent restoration of the old Polyarchy.
- 6 He desires nothing more than the restoration of the life the Ancalian survivors knew, the peaceful settlement of Fae lords on now-empty lands, and gradual improvement of human stock until they too are the equals of the transhuman Fae.

## Letion Si, Prince of the Dawn

AC: 0	Move: 60' wings of light
Hit Dice: 50	Save: 5+
Attack: Autohit x 2 attacks	Damage: 1d10 glory straight
Morale: 10	Effort: 11

Letion Si possesses tremendous personal power, thanks to decades of experimental theoeugenic research and a number of last-ditch modifications he made in the final days of the Polyarchy. He has the appearance of a majestic Akeh man in the prime of his life, sheened with a faint glow of restrained power. When wielding his abilities he shines with a blinding brilliance that can be used as a weapon, and sprouts wings of tangible light. His usual attitude towards humans is one of benevolent superiority and sympathy for their weaknesses, though he won't hesitate to use violence to cull a problem.

Letion possesses powers equivalent to having bound the Words of the Sun, Command, Artifice and Fertility. He has two actions per round and two attacks per action, both of which automatically hit. He strikes with bolts of blazing glory that wither and scorch a target within sight; those with an invincible immunity to fire damage suffer only half damage on a hit, rounded up, and only half damage from the powers listed below that rely on Letion's glory as a weapon.

## d6 Letion Si's Tactics

- 1 Commit Effort for the day and blaze with killing glory, inflicting 1d12 straight damage on every living enemy within 60' and 12 points of damage to Mobs.
- 2 Commit Effort for the scene and command a target to do some non-self-injurious action. If the victim tries to save versus Spirit to resist, it takes 1d10 straight damage, but if it obeys, it regains 1d10 lost hit points.
- 3 Commit Effort for the scene to command any Fae or Ancalian transhuman. Single targets can be controlled for the scene's duration while groups can be given one command. Suicidal commands are ignored, and PCs and other heroes can Commit Effort to resist the power.
- 4 Commit Effort to activate latent cancers in a target as semi-sentient tumors. The victim must spend their next action fighting the tumors; if they use their action for anything else, the tumors force them to take a second purely physical action afterwards, one that requires no Effort and is not self-injurious. This power lasts only one round and can't be used twice on the same target.
- 5 Fly to a better vantage point, casting a spray of burning light at the last foe to attack him and doing 2d10 straight damage as his action for the round.
- 6 Strike a Fae or an Ancalian transhuman with a bolt calibrated to damage the weakest elements of their soul-gene. The victim loses 1d6 points from their lowest attribute, with Letion choosing on a tie and NPCs taking it as hit die damage. If an attribute is reduced to zero, the victim dies. Only a divine miracle of Health, Endurance, or Fertility can undo the damage.



## Forms of the Fae

The ancient lineages of Kham came in countless varieties, each with their own transhuman augmentations. Those who have survived outside the stasis of the barrows have had to learn to deal with the disjointed magical environment of the modern world, and have developed various ways of siphoning off power or theogenetic stability.

As a GM, however, your chief interest is apt to be how to represent these entities in your game. The table provided below offers a few basic stat lines for common Fae, monstrous Fae beasts, powerful Khamite lords, and the mighty princes of a transhuman lineage.

Fae Type	HD	AC	Atks	Dmg	Move	Morale	Save	Effort	Actions per Round
<b>Common</b>	2–4	5	+4 to +6	1d10	40'	8	14+	2	1
<b>Beast</b>	6	6	+8 x 2 attacks	1d10	60'	9	12+	4	1
<b>Lord</b>	10	3	+12 x 2 attacks	1d8 straight	40'	10	10+	6	1
<b>Prince</b>	20	1	Two auto-hits	1d10 straight	50'	10	5+	10	2

### Varieties of Fae

The breeds listed below are some of the most common lineages, along with a typical ability or two they possess. Some sub-strains might have different powers, or more potent versions of these abilities. Most can appear in any of the power levels listed above.

**Bittermouth:** Knowledge's *The Best Course* and *Excision of Understanding*. Bittermouths are tall, gray, too-wise Fae who will tell a petitioner how to obtain what they desire, but always take some precious memory or skill in payment.

**Goblin Knight:** Sword's *Unerring Blade* and *Nine Iron Walls*. All armored, well-armed, and deeply disquieting in appearance, either through uncanny beauty or monstrous deformity. Many ride a *Horse of Brass and Flame*.

**Lady of the Green:** Passion's *Fashioning a Friend*. Generally female, but "swains of the green" aren't unknown. They lure the unwary deep into the woods, where the Fae then trap them and feed.

**Lost Lord:** Deception's *Perfect Masquerade* and *Liar's Flawless Grace*. Always disguised as waylaid lords or knights, the lost lords request favors or help that invariably causes their prey's doom.

**Mountain Hag:** Earth's *Earthwalker* and *Jewel-Bright Eyes*. Waylayers of travelers in the mountains, usually thin, earth-stained and wearing concealing clothing stolen from their prey.

**Ogre:** Might's *Falling Meteor Strike*. Hideously strong and often misshapen with cumulative genetic damage, ogres are notorious for their insatiable appetites for food, drink, women, and men.

**Rattlehob:** Artifice's *Faultless Repair* and *Hammerband*. These short, gnarled Fae strike deals with desperate farmers and artisans to do their work in exchange for serving the rattlehob's ends. Failure to keep the bargain results in catastrophic damage to property.

**River Wife:** Sea's *Crushing Depths* and *Secrets of the Deep*. Fond of destroying boats and feasting on the drowned.

**Weeping Wolf:** Might's *Fists of Black Iron*. Fae gone bestial with degenerative illness, the weeping wolves no longer appear human, but have monstrous strength in their jaws and talons.

**Woodwre:** Fertility's *Touch of Green Restraint* and *Seeds of Death*. These twisted Fae resemble grotesque amalgams of plant and human, and are known for the slow death they inflict on woodsmen.

To this basic stat line you can add the special abilities an individual Fae might deserve, also given below. Most are represented in the form of gifts to simplify their use, though only Princes have broader powers truly equal to those of one or two Words. Along with this, Fae outside of stasis should pick a feeding method to indicate how they stabilize their existence in the modern world.

Fae that share the same special abilities and feeding method usually belong to the same lineage. The varieties below are organized by the common Ancalian name for that type of Fae.

Fae Type	HD	AC	Atks	Dmg	Move	Morale	Save	Effort	Actions per Round
<b>Common</b>	2–4	5	+4 to +6	1d10	40'	8	14+	2	1
<b>Beast</b>	6	6	+8 x 2 attacks	1d10	60'	9	12+	4	1
<b>Lord</b>	10	3	+12 x 2 attacks	1d8 straight	40'	10	10+	6	1
<b>Prince</b>	20	1	Two auto-hits	1d10 straight	50'	10	5+	10	2

### Feeding Methods

A given strain of Fae usually has only one acceptable form of feeding in addition to the energies they can harvest from a barrow or other magically-rectified space. Not all forms of feeding are fatal to the victims, but most of them have strong negative side-effects at best. These side-effects allow no saving throws; the Fae must be driven away or be prevented from feeding in order to prevent the harm. Most Fae need to feed at least once per week or they begin to starve.

**Barrow-Dweller:** The Fae needs to sleep in a place of magical power or rectified magical law at least one night a week. Most Fae can benefit from this method, but a few strains can feed no other way.

**Cannibal:** The Fae depends on several pounds of human meat to supply them with necessary chemicals and spiritual components their own bodies can no longer create. Some varieties of Fae can get by on human blood alone, though sometimes in volumes too great for any ordinary man or woman to survive their feeding.

**Dream Eater:** The Fae consumes dreams, but must be close enough to touch the sleeping prey in order to eat them. While some nightmare-sufferers might find this predation a mercy, extended exposure to this feeding has negative effects on a person's creativity, applying a -4 penalty to relevant creative attribute checks after a week of feeding. This penalty ends a month after the feeding does.

**Pactmaker:** The Fae cuts bargains with humans, offering them some service or mercy in exchange for a difficult or emotionally painful act on the human's part. The emotional energy exuded by the prey sustains the Fae, but if the pacted human chooses to break the bargain, they must save versus Hardiness or die. A single pact can feed a Fae for a week, but if it breaks the pact itself, it must roll a d6, and will die on a roll of 4+.

**Passion Vampire:** The Fae feeds off a particular strong emotion, usually love, lust, fear, or hatred. When the emotion is felt by a human within visual range of the Fae, the passion becomes exceptionally sharp and compelling, and can drive a person to uncharacteristic extremes. This fervor also leaves the subject exhausted afterwards. If the subject suffers more "feedings" than their Constitution score, they must save versus Hardiness or die of apoplexy after each further feeding, until they've had three months of rest and calm.

## Weapons of the Wild Hunt

The artisans of ancient Kham fashioned a number of useful implements to arm the sleeping Fae, imagining that they might well be recalled to waking with no time to arm themselves from more conventional sources. Many of these ancient items remain safely lodged beside their owners in deep-buried barrows, but a few have managed to find their way into human hands.

Godbound can use all the minor magic items listed below, though they get no hit or damage bonus from the weapons. Godbound with the Word of Artifice may craft them as normal minor magic items.

### Arete Lance

The favored ranged weapon of the Fae of the Wild Hunt, an *arete lance* concentrates a wielder's vital energies and mental focus into a weapon. An inactive arete lance appears to be an ordinary staff worked with Khamite lineage sigils. When grasped and a point of Effort is Committed, a glowing force blade manifests at the tip. While active, the weapon counts as a 1d8 single-handed weapon that can use any attribute to modify its attack and damage rolls and can be thrown up to 120' distant and return. When wielded by one less powerful than a Godbound, it grants a +2 bonus to hit and damage rolls.

### The Horse of Brass and Flame

This steed is a product of late Khamite artifice, and resembles a saddled brass sled engraved with ancient Khamite sigils appropriate to its intended rider's lineage. Its underside is flat save for six energy vents that gout a red light when in operation. Two people can ride a *Horse of Brass and Flame* at its normal speed, or one person and two hundred pounds of cargo. Heavier weights than that will prevent the device from operating. The device itself weighs a hundred pounds.

When underway, the *Horse of Brass and Flame* floats approximately six feet off the ground, and can be "jumped" up to twelve feet for short bursts. It moves at a rate of 60' per round, or up to 30 miles a day over any relatively flat surface, including calm waters. It requires no fuel, but it must spend at least eight hours a day inactive in order to function the next day.

Riders of the device can use its movement in place of their own. Those without a Fact related to horsemanship or experience with these devices suffer a -4 hit penalty to all attacks made while mounted on one. The device has an effective AC of 5 and 6 HD for purposes of destroying it. Godbound can use a sled freely, though they are viewed as dangerous and frightening Fae artifacts by the Ancalians.

### Trump of the Hunt

A finely-carved hunting horn, a *Trump of the Hunt* is actually intended as a signaling device for Fae who might emerge far from known allies. When the right carvings are pressed as the horn is winded, only Fae and other Ancalian transhumans will be able to hear the blast. Any such listeners will be able to immediately identify the location of the horn, with the sound reaching up to two miles away.

Whether meant for Fae alone or not, if the user Commits Effort for the scene when blowing the horn they can encode one sentence worth of information in the blast. Anyone who hears it will intuitively grasp the information being imparted, even if they share no language.

Godbound may use a trump's special abilities, and those with the Artifice Word can create one as a minor magic item. Other modern artificers have since lost the technique of making these horns.

### Tulpa Glaive

A *tulpa glaive* is a magical weapon created in large numbers by the immediate predecessors of the Ancalians. Each glaive resembles a blunt-bladed sword or dull-edged pole arm. When grasped by a Fae or an Ancalian noble, the blade lights up in an intricate pattern of hardened light, gaining a razor-sharp blade and force-assisted guidance of its blows. The pattern created by an individual wielder is unique, and no two people produce the same appearance. The glaive grants a +2 bonus to hit and damage rolls with it, with single-handed versions doing a base 1d8 damage and two-handed models doing 1d10 damage. Both can use either Strength or Dexterity to modify attack and damage rolls. Godbound don't benefit from the +2 hit and damage bonus, as their power overwhelms the glaive's guidance.

*Tulpa glaives* can only be used by Fae or other transhuman heirs of Ancalia. Anyone else who attempts to activate one suffers 1 point of damage each round they hold the useless weapon. Those few weapons that have escaped Fae hands are cherished by Ancalian nobles as symbols of the strength of their blood and proof of their noble lineage. The secrets of their creation are lost to modern artificers, though a Godbound of Artifice could create one as a minor magic item.

### Underbarrow Bread

The product of barrow food synthesis generators, "underbarrow bread" is a variety of ancient Khamite comestibles meant to sustain the inhabitants. Modern Ancalians find it produces an addictive euphoria and energy. While this craving has no mechanical effects, it's enough to leave the weak-willed as hapless addicts after a dozen meals.

## Playing Fae as Player Characters

It's possible that a player might want to have a Fae as a player character, if the GM allows this option in the campaign. The guidelines below will help you generate such a hero.

Fae turned Godbound are created as normal Godbound heroes. Whatever natural powers their lineage granted them should be reflected in the Words the hero picks and the gifts they choose. The GM might allow them to pick appropriate lesser gifts at the normal one-point cost even if they don't bind the Word.

Fae played in a mortal campaign should all qualify as heroic mortals, usually starting at whatever level the campaign is using for the other PCs. Special abilities should be purchased with talents, with lesser gifts being available to mimic desired Fae abilities.

Fae heroes might reasonably start with one or two of the magic items listed in this section, though they may attract unwelcome attention. If a character is obviously a Fae and can't pass themselves off as an unusual variety of noble-blooded Ancalian, they may expect hostile reactions from the citizenry ranging from panicked flight to desperate attack.

Fae playing as player characters are assumed to have some way to deal with the limited magical energies of modern Ancalia. For Godbound Fae, their innate nature is potent enough to sustain them. For other heroic PCs, they might just have a lucky mutation, or a means of feeding that is unobtrusive, or a relic that can sustain them in the absence of a barrow or of prey. Constantly fretting over sustenance is rarely conducive to smooth play.

# The Undead and the Plague



f all the myriad miseries of Ancalia, the most pressing to the remaining survivors is the constant threat of the undead. Animated corpses known as "husks" roam in swarms over the landscape, concentrated in those places that were once human communities. The origins of these restless abominations lie in a magical plague that came to Ancalia, and a curse that mere mortal magic could not efface.

## The Hollowing Plague

The first symptoms of the Hollowing Plague appeared immediately after the opening of the Night Roads. The signs were fever, gluttony, and an irrationality driven by increasingly piercing hunger pains that could eventually only be satisfied by human viscera. The fever inevitably killed its victims within a month of the first appearance of symptoms, assuming that the victim wasn't killed by others in self-defense. By the time the Ancalians understood what was going on, it was too late. More than half the entire population was infected by the plague.

Anyone killed by a husk will inevitably rise as one within a few hours, if not immediately, as will anyone who dies from the plague's fever. The exact vectors of contagion are still not clear; bites don't necessarily seem to transmit it, nor does close contact with the victims. Instead, it seems to be a kind of psychic miasma that affects anyone within the former borders of Ancalia, potentially striking them down despite their best prophylactic measures. Some believe that being in the presence of large numbers of sufferers increases one's chance to fall ill, while others insist on the preventative power of one of a host of holy relics, peasant charms, or learned countermeasures. The reliability of such measures is altogether unproven.

Currently, the Hollowing Plague appears to be ongoing at a lesser rate of infection. There is a roughly one percent chance of developing the plague every month a person remains in Ancalia. Thus, the remaining living population of Ancalians is decreasing at a rate of approximately 11% a year, even aside from the violence and slaughter endemic to the peninsula. If the plague is not stemmed somehow, the population will be effectively wiped out within a decade from the disease's effects alone.

General scholarly opinion is that the plague does not manifest outside of Ancalia. Victims killed by Ancalian husks outside of the country will also rise as undead, but carriers of the Hollowing Plague do not appear to be infectious otherwise. As husks do not normally leave Ancalia unless driven by greater intellects, the chief danger of the infection is that some freebooter could take sick in Ancalia before returning to their homeland. Once there, a victim who dies, rises as a husk, and starts slaughtering their neighbors might form the nucleus of a dangerous outbreak.

Rumors insist that this has already happened in several cases in Lom, the Ulstang islands, and the Dry Ports of the Oasis States, but hard evidence is in short supply. Many people believe that the plague can be transmitted like any other sickness, and so strict quarantine rules have been applied to all travel into and out of Ancalia from the surrounding lands. Refugees from the cursed peninsula who seek to escape elsewhere must somehow disguise their origins or travel far away from their homeland if they are to avoid a swift execution and the burning of their remains.

Such rules particularly apply to those greedy adventurers who dare to slip across the Ancalian border to plunder their lost cities and abandoned treasures. Most such scavengers are forced to band together with unscrupulous merchants or ruthless pirates if they're to find a ship willing to dare that cursed coast. Any freebooter who comes in on a ship known to have landed at on Ancalian can expect a swift hanging and a swifter burning after. Some frightened portmasters haven't troubled to hang the quarantine-breakers before firing the ship they came in on.

## Overcoming the Plague

Unbeknownst to the populace of Ancalia, the plague is not so much a biological malady as it is an otherworldly curse. The nine Night Roads that opened throughout Ancalia brought with them this magical contagion, and they exude it like a form of magical radiation. The enormous mortality in the first few weeks of the catastrophe was due in large part to the fact that the Night Roads opened near some of the largest population centers in Ancalia, and so a large proportion of the populace was directly exposed to this malevolent influence.

Together, the Night Roads continue to spread and reinforce the plague. For each Night Road sealed away, the corresponding region of Ancalia will become free of the curse. Existing cases will progress as normal, but no new victims will become infected, and new husks will only be created from the kills of existing undead. If all of the Night Roads are successfully sealed the Hollowing Plague will cease entirely.

For more immediate or localized cures, miracles and gifts of the Health word can cure the plague. Resurrection performed by either Health or Death miracles can restore dead victims to good health, if the gift is employed within the allowed time frame. Low magic charms are generally incapable of curing the Hollowing Plague, though Master-level protections might be enough to avoid infection, and some rare relics or special locations might allow magic strong enough to cure the sick.

Heroes who want to work a change with Dominion to drive back the plague can do so. Accomplishing this feat is Impossible, with the scope depending on how large an area the Godbound wanted to protect from new plague infections. Thus, protecting a single village would have a scope of 1, a city would have a scope of 2, a substantial region of Ancalia would have a scope of 4, and banishing the plague from the entire nation without sealing all the Night Roads would have a scope of 8. Large-scale protection would also almost certainly require the use of one or more celestial shards to cement the defense.

This difficulty of this feat is increased by the hostility of the Uncreated and the dark powers unleashed by the Night Roads. If they're trying to clear anything larger than a city, this opposition counts as a resistance of 8 if the lords of the Uncreated Court are still alive, or 4 if only lesser abominations are still active within the area. If they're trying to clear a city-sized area, the resistance is 2 unless they've carefully purged it of all supernatural monsters. If they're trying to clear a village, there is no resistance, unless they've somehow neglected to snuff a significant monster that lairs nearby. Thus, cleansing the entire nation with the Uncreated lords still active would cost 48 Dominion, with an Impossible difficulty of 4 multiplied by the total of the kingdom-sized scope of 4 and the resistance of 8.

## The Anatomy of Death

Husks hunt in packs, even those with no remaining sentience. Most packs are relatively small, consisting of only one or two dozen undead, though massive swarms of hundreds of ravenous horrors are common near the major cities or the ruins of overrun enclaves. Large swarms may have leadership of a kind in the form of more powerful undead, but most groups have nothing resembling a guiding intelligence, and will respond strictly on instinct.

Packs roam a given territory close to the place where they lived and died. As a consequence, the cities of Ancalia absolutely teem with these monsters, and only speed and stealth can save human looters from being overwhelmed. A pack can be lured out of their territory by succulent prey or the will of a leader, and occasionally a large pack of husks breaks free from their home territory to go careening through the countryside in search of prey. These rogue swarms are a particular threat to enclaves, as even after they shatter, smaller packs scatter to attack any humans that cross their path.

Husks have reasonably good sight and hearing, though no sense of smell. They respond to noises and sights that are abnormal for their environment, though they usually lack the intelligence to follow tracks or otherwise extrapolate non-visible things. They are intelligent enough to climb, open doors, and clear debris, and will avoid obvious traps and physical hazards. They are not usually smart enough to build ramps or other tools to reach prey, though some are. Husks intuitively know their own, and it is impossible to masquerade as one without the aid of magic.

Husks have no interest whatsoever in non-human life, and even ignore the extremely altered transhumanity of the Cousins. They will attack if violence is initiated against them, but otherwise they will shamle past Cousins, Uncreated, and common animals without paying them any attention. Only normal humans or close-transhuman beings inspire their insatiable hunger.

Husk packs grapple their prey by instinct. They'll bite and claw to subdue the target, but their real interest is in restraining their prey long enough to chew open the victim's abdomen and feast on the hot viscera within. The attacks of a husk swarm can deplete a victim's hit points or hit dice, but their clutching and gnawing only truly immobilize a target when the victim is reduced to zero hit points or hit dice.

Unarmored victims will be eviscerated and begin dying the next round. Add one further round of reprieve for targets in light armor, two for medium, and three for heavy. Entities with natural armor based on toughness or resilience are treated as wearing equivalent armor. In a Mob, this pinning and devouring does not appreciably hinder the rest of the Mob's attacks, though if treated as individual monsters, the husk who reduced the target to zero hit points will be busy eating their helpless prey for the rest of the fight unless attacked by others. If the husk is slain or the mob is driven back before they can get through the victim's armor, their meal will be freed with one hit point or hit die and a new set of nightmares. Once a husk has started eating, no non-magical healing method will suffice to save the victim.

Scholars suspect the viscera-focused hunger of the curse was intended to ensure that the victim's corpse is still in a condition to rise as an ambulatory husk after their killers have finished the feast. Even so, some husks are more elaborate about preparing their prey or dealing with the remains. Those monstrous arch-husks known as energumens have been known to carefully open their victims with knives and stuff the ensuing cavity with hair or cloth batting so as to preserve their meal's external beauty for other uses.

Husks can continue functioning so long as they retain enough musculature to support their bodies and their skeletal structure remains largely intact. Crushing their skull is usually adequate damage, as is breaking their spine, smashing their ribcage, shattering their pelvis, or removing one or more major limbs. Husks do not rot while they remain intact, nor do they strictly require the food they crave, nor do they breathe, drink, or sleep. A husk will persist until destroyed, but damage inflicted on them will not naturally heal. Most mindless husks rapidly become torn and disfigured by underbrush, debris, the flailing of their packmates, and their own reckless indifference to pain.

## Husks and the Spirit

Husks are lesser undead. Unlike greater refugees from the grave, they lack the human soul that once inhabited them. These animate corpses are left with nothing more than a bundle of deeply-engraved habits from their living days and the blind, insatiable hunger of the Hollowing Plague. Some husks of particularly strong-willed people still retain some personal tics or behavioral habits, just enough to horrify their friends, but these twitches are nothing more than echoes of an absent soul. There is nothing truly left of a victim once they perish.

Such is the case *most* of the time. Sometimes a soul refuses to leave its corpse even after it's brought low by the plague or the teeth of the dead. Most souls instinctively sense the peaceful repose emanating from the prayers of Patriarch Ezek and will gradually fall into secure slumber over the course of a month, safe from the horrors of Hell and the agonies of their death. Yet those souls that led particularly vile or sinful lives may fear even this end, dreading what awaits them after death so greatly that their soul refuses to leave their body.

On other occasions, dark spirits infest a fallen husk, filling it with an evil intellect and an inhuman set of cravings. Sometimes these wraiths are Uncreated shades, while others are errant ghosts, constructs of dark sorcery, or malevolent natural spirits. They usually have access to the memories of the body's original owner, now put to the vile purposes they desire to pursue.

These inhabited husks are known as "energumens", or "possessed ones". They share many of the basic traits of a husk, such as their undead nature and their ravenous hunger, but have an intellect and a will that can contain this craving when necessary. Ordinary husks instinctively obey them to the limit of their decayed intellect, and these energumens can form the core of a truly massive swarm.

When two or more energumens conflict in their goals, the lesser husks in their presence split between them by the rough ratio of the rivals' hit dice. Thus, if a 10 hit die energumen quarreled with a 5 hit die competitor, any husks around them would split 2:1 in obedience to the greater evil. When splitting an amorphous Mob of minions, the Mob generally splits into two or more Mobs of the same size, but with the original Mob's hit dice divided accordingly between them. Such "wounded" swarms recover as fresh husks are added.

The commands of an energumen can also be overridden by the miracles and gifts of one who bears the Word of Death. Very powerful energumens who also are bound to the Word of Death as well can use their Effort to offensively or defensively dispel such hostile influence, but an undead tyrant facing a Godbound of Death is apt to drain its Effort rapidly trying to hold off the death-god's dread authority and bone-shattering gifts. Preventing a Godbound from commanding or destroying their minions would be an act of offensive dispelling, requiring a held action to execute, while those effects targeted directly at the energumen could be defensively dispelled as an Instant.



### Deviant Husks

While the usual husk is a predictable sort of shambling monstrosity, some husks are hideously changed by the Hollowing Plague. The energumens are only one type of deviant, while others include massive, ogreish corpse-titans, stone-fleshed reapers with claws of hardened bone, insect-raddled hive mothers, and beautiful masqueraders that devour the unwary. Between the variances of the Plague and the malevolent influence of the Uncreated, many different kinds of undead horrors can be created.

From a GM's perspective, most of these variant husks serve as decoration in a combat scene. Unless they're drastically more effective in a fight than a conventional husk, they're not likely to concern a pantheon of Godbound unless they come in large Mobs. The easiest way to simulate these mutant undead is to pick a few appropriate powers from the core book's bestiary section and add them to a conventional husk Mob. You might give the Mob an extra action per round that they can use to trigger their special ability against any enemy engaging them, but you don't need to build a particularly elaborate foe in order to give them some unique character.

On other occasions you might want to build a husk fearsome enough to actually compel a pantheon's full attention. You should place these sparingly, for if pantheon-worthy enemies were particularly common in Ancalia the entire peninsula would be razed flat by now. Even so, the occasional undead freak can be built with the guidelines for creating major foes in the core book. You might give them some Uncreated powers reskinned for use by an undead horror.

Keep in mind the abilities of any Godbound who've bound the Death word. Any lesser undead is almost certain to be snuffed out with summary ease by such a demigod, and even the resistance of an energumen or other protective magic can only hold out so long. Greater undead have a better chance of standing up against a divinity of Death, but they're still going to be taking serious damage from the PC or be constantly making saving throws to resist outside control. This doesn't mean you can't use undead against a pantheon with a death god, but it does mean that they won't be as big a peril to the group.

### The Eaten Princes

Some exceptionally desperate cults have formed around men and women who choose to be devoured by husks in hopes of rising as an energumen. These half-suicidal initiates understand that the more foul and reprehensible a soul's life, the more likely it is to rise as one of these self-willed husks, though few realize that this result is due more to a dead soul's terror of judgment than any quality of spiritual vileness they bring to their grave. By enduring the brief horror of being eaten alive, they hope to win survival for themselves and their cultists, to say nothing of the ageless immortality that undeath brings.

Despite whatever qualms they may have, these candidates perform horrible acts in a ritualized manner in order to prepare themselves for "the new life." When the cult's leadership is confident that they have properly prepared themselves fully, they are shackled to a rack and killed by a husk. Most such souls fall into the dreamless sleep of the grave, but a few spirits cling to their mutilated bodies with such fervor that they rise as energumens, strengthening the leadership of the cult.

Living devotees trade their service to these "eaten princes" in exchange for protection from the husk swarms, which the energumens control. Of course, the energumens themselves have their own hungers, but they have sufficient intellect to restrain their consumption to numbers their followers can sustain. Not all eaten princes are monstrously evil, and a few of them accepted "the new life" simply in hopes of protecting their people. After the things they've done and the terrible hungers that gnaw at them, however, few can expect to retain their good intentions for long.

Most Eaten cults are under the control of a single ruling energumen who has raised a variable number of lieutenants to help protect the cult and control larger swarms of husks. In some cases only a solitary eaten prince is found, one who prefers discretion to the power of numbers.

# The Energumens

Most energumens come in four different basic varieties, though there are inevitably various sports and one-offs that boil up through the spiritual miasma of the peninsula.

The *Depraved* are normal men and women who have led lives of such wickedness that their spirits dread the grave. A Depraved energumen is much more powerful than an ordinary husk and can provide lethally dangerous leadership for anything up to a Vast Mob of their lesser brethren. They tend to have few special powers, however, and ambitions that extend only to enjoying their living vices in their new undead state, as gruesome as that may be.

The *Spirit-Ridden* are those energumen created when a spirit inhabits an empty husk, either the ghost of a fearful victim or another spiritual entity in search of a corporeal housing. The Spirit-Ridden have more supernatural power than the Depraved, and are less likely to be addicted to hideous vices.

An *Uncreated Husk* has been inhabited by an Uncreated spirit, and thus possesses both an unquenchable malice and a *Cold Breath* aura of one or two points. Uncreated husks will control their mindless brethren with an eye for creating the most suffering possible in whatever form best suits their native court of Uncreated.

*Eaten Princes* are the most powerful variety of energumen, as they've carefully prepared themselves for the transition into an unliving husk. Most candidates fail the process, but those souls that remain clinging to the eviscerated shell of their former body gain great occult power from the gory transition.

Energumens are unlikely to present a serious combat challenge to any but the least experienced pantheons if encountered alone. If you mean to use them as combat challenges, make sure they're equipped with Vast Mobs of husk servitors, human serfs, and other monstrous abominations to split the pantheon's focus in the fight.

Energumen Type	HD	AC	Atks	Dmg	Move	Morale	Save	Effort	Actions per Round
Depraved	6	6	+7	1d10	40'	8	12+	3	1
Spirit-Ridden	8	5	+9 x 2 attacks	1d10	40'	11	11+	5	1
Uncreated Husk	12	4	+12 x 2 attacks	1d8 straight	40'	12	9+	8	2
Eaten Prince	15	4	Two auto-hits	1d10 straight	40'	10	8+	8	2

## Energumen Powers

Select one or more powers from the list below for each energumen. Depraved might have only one minor ability, while Eaten Princes and Uncreated Husks might have several powerful gifts. Don't worry too much about balancing combat effects; even very strong energumens are relatively fragile in combat, so it's permissible to give them a big offensive kick. All active abilities require one Effort to be committed.

**Anguished Vitality:** It regenerates one lost hit die each round.

**Ash Phoenix:** If destroyed, the energumen's spirit can inhabit any other intact husk within 100 feet, regaining all its hit dice and Effort and using its original statistics and abilities. If no husk is available, it dies permanently.

**Between Worlds:** The energumen can be treated as either a living creature or an undead one, whichever is best for resisting a hostile ability or benefiting from an effect.

**Breath of Life:** The energumen appears to be a normal living person to anything short of a Sun miracle of true sight.

**Contagious Famine:** As an action, the energumen can fill lesser foes with its own delirious hunger for human viscera, affecting all within 100 feet and causing them to attack the nearest human target regardless of alliances. Victims get a Spirit saving throw to resist. Affected Mobs attack themselves, doing maximum damage to their own hit dice with each of their normal attacks.

**Dark Sorcerer:** The energumen has theurgic abilities equal to an Adept of the Gate along with at least a half-dozen invocations.

**Explosive Minions:** Husks under its control explode with festering plague when disabled, inflicting one point of disease damage on the killer. When fighting a Mob of them, attackers suffer 1d6 straight damage each round they hit, unless they're using ranged attacks.

**Frenzied Hunger:** When activated as an Instant, a successful melee attack does double damage from its maniacal gnawing.

**Malevolent Cunning:** Husks under the control of the energumen gain human levels of intelligence and cunning, and can react to complex situations as capable warriors might.

**Mask of the Many:** Husks under their control appear as normal living people unless revealed with magic or a divine miracle.

**Plague Sermon:** As an action, the energumen speaks a blasphemy that inflicts its attack damage on every target within 100 feet as disease damage. Those killed rise immediately as husks under its control. If many are killed, treat them as a Mob of an appropriate size.

**Shambling Shields:** The energumen's husk minions instinctively interpose between it and threats; any husk Mob with the energumen takes the damage from attacks that would otherwise hit their master. Psychic attacks and other assaults that have no physical element cannot be so blocked by the swarm.

**Soulcutter:** A creature reduced to zero hit dice or hit points by the energumen is instantly killed and unable to be resurrected. God-bound can still use Divine Fury to avoid this instant death.

**Spirit Slaves:** A mortal bitten by the energumen must save versus Spirit or become its hapless thrall until it is destroyed. A successful save leaves the victim immune to further attempts for the day.

**Swollen With Power:** The energumen has been physically enlarged or hardened by their occult power; increase its hit dice by 50%.

**Ten Thousand Eyes:** The energumen can see, hear, and speak through its minions at any distance, though it must focus to do so.

**Unholy Fervor:** The energumen's husk minions are treated as greater undead for purposes of resisting hostile effects.

**Word-Bearer:** The energumen has powers equivalent to having bound the Word of Death.

# The Great Orders of Knighthood



For centuries, the great orders of Ancalian knighthood have been a bulwark against evil and a refuge both for surplus noble sons and the rare heroic commoner. Service with one of the orders promises a place of honor and respect for a thin-blooded noble son who might otherwise have no prospect beyond the Church or a needful marriage to some rich merchant's daughter. In return, the High Negus received a skilled warrior directly loyal to the crown rather than to a disturbingly independent jantirar.

In the days since the catastrophe the orders have been decimated. Most of the knights are dead now, either killed in the first chaotic weeks of the disaster or slain in the years since as they struggled to defend their people. Those who remain are the hardest, wisest, and strongest of the orders, whatever their original rank.

Ancalian knights traditionally were divided into newly-enlisted squares, veteran knights of long standing, and the lord knights who were responsible for guiding the order in its great councils. In this fallen age the ranks no longer necessarily correspond to personal prowess.

## Knights Amid Chaos

Surviving knights can be divided into two main types. One variety are those warriors who have abandoned their original nobility. They are nothing more than armored bandits and warlords, using their abilities and the luster of their name to control enclaves and reave another day's survival out of weaker, unluckier folk. Such is the misery of the present hour that some survivors are grateful even for this caliber of leadership, if only the knight protects them from worse perils.

The other sort of knights are those of true heroism, men and women determined to save their people from the monstrous legions that assail them. These knights have survived five years of Ancalia's nightmare, and have refined an exquisite balance of daring heroism and cold

practicality. Reckless heroes died soon after the Night Roads opened, and those who remain are the ones with a more pragmatic awareness of their limits. Some still choose to die in glorious last stands and heroic sacrifices, but it is a choice rather than a blind necessity.

These remaining heroes rarely remain with a single enclave. While they might guide refugees to a place of safety or provide a strong arm to help support an enclave's leadership in times of need, they are most useful as messengers and knight-errants for a region's enclaves. They bring vital communications between survivor groups, keep the locals updated on important events and new perils, and carry light, precious commodities where they can do the most good. When the opportunity permits, they also cut down monstrous foes and slay bandit raiders.

A few knights do remain in a single enclave, most often as its leader or guiding spirit. In the savage desolation of the new Ancalia, their noble name and the reflections they offer of a better, brighter past grant them a legitimacy of rule that no ragged coin lord could claim.

## Playing a Knight

In the likely case that a player would like to play an Ancalian knight as a PC, it's simply a matter of dedicating a Fact to that reality. Godbound PCs gain all the special abilities for their chosen order, much like Godbound practitioners of low magic master all levels of a school with a single Fact. It is not possible to belong to more than one order of knighthood. Once sworn, the only way out is as a Purgatist.

If the PC is a mortal, the abilities of each order must be taken as common talent picks, with squire talents taken before knight, and knight before lord. A PC must take the appropriate talent in order to be a knight of that standing; if you've only taken the first talent of the Glorificant order, for example, you're a squire of that order. Heroic mortals may use a heroic talent pick to gain all three abilities at once.

NPC Knights	HD	AC	Atks	Dmg	Move	Morale	Save	Effort
Squire	4	3	+5	By weapon	30'	9	13+	2
Veteran Knight	6	3	+8	By weapon	30'	10	12+	3
Lord Knight	8	3	+10 x 2 attacks	By weapon+2	30'	11	11+	4
Hero of the Order	15	3	Two auto-hits	By weapon+3	40'	11	7+	6

## Knighthly Abilities

The abilities below can be used to reflect a particular NPC knight's natural gifts or transhuman refinements. Squires should have one or none, veteran knights one, lords two, and heroes likely have three. These abilities are in addition to the gifts their order teaches them.

**Blinding Speed:** The knight gets two actions per round. This gift should be reserved to lords or heroes.

**Crushing Blows:** Instead of doing damage by weapon, the knight's attacks do 1d8 straight damage. This gift should be for lords or heroes.

**Hellscourge:** Against supernatural evil, including undead, the knight makes attack and damage rolls twice and takes the better.

**Holy Luck:** The knight auto-succeeds on the first save made each day.

**Invincible Defender:** Double the knight's hit dice when they're defending the helpless or their sworn charges.

**Leader of Men:** Mobs personally led by the knight gain a +4 bonus to hit and extra hit dice equal to half the knight's hit dice.

**Pure Heart:** The knight is impervious to supernatural curses and diseases of less than divine power, including the Hollowing Plague.

**Shieldwork:** The knight can Commit Effort to negate a hit in combat.

**Thundering Charge:** When mounted, the knight can attack after a full round of movement in a straight line. Maximum damage is inflicted on a hit with a charge.

**Tireless Faith:** The knight regains one lost hit die per round while in combat. Afterwards, any hit dice healed this way are lost, leaving them with 1 hit die at a minimum.

**Unflinching Will:** The knight can Commit Effort to auto-succeed on attempts to resist mental influence.

**Witchfinder:** The knight can sense the presence of supernatural evil when it comes within 30 feet, if not hidden by divine power.

## The Glorificant Order

The bright Glorificants are teachers and praise-singers as well as mighty warriors. They are the oldest of the seven orders, and they do not forget their place as models of heroism and justice for others to emulate. The Glorificants are entirely noble-born, mostly comprised of younger sons and daughters who could otherwise hope to inherit no more than a splendid name. In the order, they have a purpose for otherwise superfluous lives.

Glorificants are praise-singers, charged with the lauding of glorious deeds, the condemnation of sins, and the remembering of the laws of Ancalia. All knights are expected to understand the laws of the kingdom, but the Glorificants are versed in the most complex subtleties and deepest lore of ancient precedent. They are poets, musicians, and singers as well as warriors, and to be the subject of a Glorificant ballad is to be greatly honored... or to be immortalized in infamy. These songs also serve the order's role as teachers, instructing the nation in virtue and warning them from vice, all in service to the Church.

Those of this venerable order were always among the High Negus' strongest defenders and greatest champions. Their loyalty was to his law and his commands, not to the interests of the jantirars in their distant abodes. Of course, this loyalty sometimes shaded into blind obedience at times, with the rigid fidelity of the Glorificants used towards unworthy ends in the hands of a flawed king. The common folk sometimes say that the Glorificants will give you the law, but justice is up to the Creator.

The Glorificants who now survive do so most often as grimly determined beacons of law in the wasteland that was Ancalia. Their authority is now in their own strong right arms rather than the support of nobles or government. Their songs inspire the surviving refugees and their example reminds the people that law and virtue can exist even in the horror that was their home. Such reminders are not always welcomed by the warlords who have arisen in the wastes.

A few Glorificants have lost all hope for the future, or have gone mad with a desperate longing for order and peace. They enforce the rule of brutal pretenders and false lords, believing that even these miserable curs are preferable to the chaos of lawlessness. Others set themselves up as the rulers of enclaves, bringing with them a conception of justice that may no longer fit the land that Ancalia has become. Some of these fallen knights are simply looking for an excuse to hope once more.

**Squire:** Squires of the Glorificant order are all expected to be expert in the legal code of Ancalia and any other land where they operate. They may treat this as a helpful Fact when knowing or arguing the law. They also have an encyclopedic knowledge of noble families and persons of political importance in an area, and can recognize such figures on sight unless the knight is a total stranger to a land.

**Knight:** Full-fledged Glorificant knights are all superb in the arts of song, poetry, and musicianship, and may use their rank as a helpful Fact in such tests. The enormous corpus of praise-songs and genealogies they memorize helps them hone their memory; a Glorificant has a perfect recall of anything they've read or heard.

**Lord:** An elder Glorificant's mastery of ancient glories inspires their own great deeds. By singing out the heroic examples of former days, a critically-wounded Glorificant can continue to act in battle. This song takes up their move action for each round, but as long as they keep singing they can continue to act while at zero hit points. If injured and made to lose hit points in such a state, however, they will fall at last at the end of their next round, mortally wounded.

## The Invidian Order

An Ancalian knight is strong of arm and fierce in battle; this virtue has always been upheld by the orders, but not all orders uphold it in the same way. The founders of the Invidian Order were a circle of high-born daughters of Ancalian nobility who chafed at knighthood's demands for a brute strength that few of them were able to muster. The leader of this circle, the later Saint Sadira, used the subtle intrigues of her sisters and their deceptive graces to eventually uncover the diabolical sorceries of the False Negus Teodoros III and poison the demon-sorcerer in the very heart of his impenetrable palace. She presented her evidence to the heads of the orders and demanded her place among them by right of deed. Their assent was swiftly granted.

To this day, the Invidian Order is predominantly female. Their specialties are in gathering information and the targeted assassination of condemned criminals who are too well-guarded to be overwhelmed without unacceptable loss of life. To this end, the Invidians deploy poison, imposture, seduction, and a host of other techniques that would be unthinkable to a more conventional order. Many have one or more false identities they cultivate to get information and access that would be impossible for others, and play out roles as humble serving-maids, wanton mistresses, blowzy cooks, or harmless old fishwives.

The acts they perform would often be disgraceful or immoral to another order, and by custom they wear masks among all but their sisters and their dearest friends. For an Invidian to willingly unmask before a person is a gesture of deep trust: trust that they will keep the knight's secrets, and trust that they will understand the acts the Invidian has had to perform.

After the coming of the Night Roads, the surviving Invidians are a scourge to warlords and bandit chiefs, a constant threat to those who would prey on the wretched survivors. Any random lot of unhappy female prisoners might contain an Invidian assassin-knight, one who requires only a half-moment's inattention to apply a poison or a hidden blade. The threat of this violence keeps more than one tyrant cautious in their handling of refugees.

An unusual number of nunneries and Unitary convents survived the coming of the Night Roads thanks to the retired Invidian sisters among their numbers. Renegades of the order have proven exceptionally insidious, however, as they often masquerade as concubines and mistresses, puppeting warlords and worse at their whim. Their "innocent advice" equips these brutes with a dangerous degree of tactical competence and manipulative inspiration.

**Squire:** An Invidian squire begins to cultivate a humble alter-ego, whether a fishwife, craftswoman, harlot, charwoman, or other unremarkable sort. They learn the skills of their adopted trade and the basics of disguise and acting, allowing them to gain the benefit of a Fact in such matters. They may create additional identities by spending a Fact on doing so. If such an identity is compromised, they can replace it with a new one after a month of work.

**Knight:** An Invidian is murderously dangerous to an unwary foe. When attacking a completely unsuspecting target who is not currently in combat, their normal attacks automatically hit and do maximum damage.

**Lady:** Veteran knights of the order are amazingly talented with the disguises and poisons they use. They are immune to mundane poisons and can don a complete disguise in one round. They always have adequate components for an alter-ego's disguise with them unless it would be completely impractical to do so.



## The Invocatant Order

These are arcanists, curse-lifters, and magically-trained knights who learned their arts from Raktine curse-eaters, and who once stood as the magical investigators of the great orders. Their chapterhouse was once almost as much a school of sorcery as a training ground for knights, and their peers tended to view them with a certain wary caution. Their services were undeniably necessary, especially with the threat of Ulstang necromancy from the north, but their methods were difficult for the other orders to appreciate.

Invocatants are all scholars as much as wielders of the blade. While they are not as widely-read or magically talented as focused sorcerers, they have a vast practical knowledge of curse-lifting and the killing of magical monsters. Many of them trace their arts to Raktine curse-eaters who came north to settle in Ancalia. Even so, they rely less on magical incantations and more on correctly-placed steel to drive back the monsters of the night and the maledictions of the ice witches.

The coming of the Hollowing Plague and the awful tide of Uncreated has left the surviving Invocatants frantic to find some sort of remedy for the disaster. Some of their greatest scholars have already died in desperate magical experiments or fruitless rituals of abjuration. Some say that they're seeking to recover certain dangerous theurgic volumes and artifacts locked away in the ruins of their order's motherhouse in hopes of sealing away the Night Roads. Others whisper that the elders of the order are striking bargains with parasite gods and worse that they might gain the power they need to save their blighted land.

Surviving Invocatants in Ancalia rarely serve as leaders to enclaves. While they serve the same judging and investigating role as the other great orders, they've never had the kind of common touch that the Pavians have, or the inspiring presence of a Glorificant. Instead, Invocatants in these dark days now act mostly as monster-hunters and witchfinders, tracking down dark forces and dealing with them as only the Invocatants know how.

Other knights have abandoned their vows and turned to the embrace of evil powers. The Uncreated of the Shackled Court have a special love for warping Invocatants, offering them a wealth of unholy powers in exchange for the systematic defiling of their former beliefs. These monsters usually begin with an offer to grant the Invocatant the power they need to save those dear to them, painting it as a noble moral sacrifice for the heroic knight. They encourage their prey to cast aside their own soul and succumb to the Night in order that their loved ones might live. Those witch-knights foolish enough to embrace that particular melodrama usually end up drinking out of human skulls and sacrificing infants to the Shackled in short order. Once certain lines are crossed, some things just don't seem so important any more.

**Squire:** Squires of the Invocatant Order have a wide practical knowledge of monsters and curses, and can use it as a Fact when trying to identify a magical blight, recognize magical traces, deduce a way to lift a curse, or figure out a way to harm a magical monster.

**Knight:** Those with some experience in the order have a large selection of minor blessings and specialized banes for monster hunting. Their weapons can always harm a magical creature for normal damage, even if it's normally immune to mundane steel or the kind of weapon they're using, barring an invulnerable defense.

**Lord:** The sages of the order have developed some personal magical ability of their own, and are treated as adepts of the Curse-Eater low magic school. If they've already learned this art, they can substitute an adept's skill in some other low magic tradition.

## The Pavian Order

The bluff Pavians are largely drawn from the lower orders of society, taken from the sons of heroic villagers or upright laborers. Most men and women who do such deeds of courage or justice as win the order's attention are too old to become squires, but their sons and the occasional muscular daughter have the chance to become far more.

The Pavians are the defenders of the weak and guardians of the humble folk. They are expected to spend their time among their charges, hearing their troubles and knowing their lives, gaining skill in dealing with the trickeries and deceptions that the little have always employed against the great. Sometimes these tricks are justified by necessity, and sometimes they're just games to set the knights on their enemies. The Pavian is expected to be able to tell the difference.

While the Pavian Order has far fewer of the noble members that provide wealth and influence to the other orders, they are by far the best-loved of the orders among the humble folk. While a Pavian is expected to know how to fight on horseback at need, they excel at foot combat and the leading of peasant levies, and know how to get the most out of simple equipment and green troops. Most Pavians practice some common trade as an inheritance from their parents and as a way to usefully spend the time between trials and mediations.

This respect for useful labor has encouraged the Pavians to study and maintain more of the ancient Khamite relics than is usual in Ancalia. While few of them have the opportunity to become true theotechnicians, they've passed down a great deal of practical information about the maintenance and repair of common Khamite artifacts. The salvage of several centuries can be found at their motherhouse, all of it protected with restored Khamite theotechnology now that the Pavians themselves have scattered to aid their charges.

The Pavians have been savaged even worse than most orders by the coming of the Night Roads. Their leadership has provided the hard nucleus of strength to many small refuges for the survivors, and their skill in improvisation and artifice has given some survivor bands the tools they need to drive back the husks and defend themselves from the Uncreated. This comes at a steadily-increasing price, however, as that leadership puts Pavians on the front lines more often than makes for a long life.

**Squire:** Pavians know a practical trade as a matter of course, usually that of their parents. The squire can treat their mastery of this profession as a Fact when relevant. They also gain the benefit of a Fact in social dealings with Ancalian peasants and lower-class commoners, who tend to trust and respect the Pavians. Pavians are particularly skilled at identifying deceptions often practiced by commoners, and can spot deceit from all but the most gifted peasant grifter.

**Knight:** A trained Pavian knight knows how to lead their kinfolk. Commoners, semi-professional militia, and peasant soldiers led by a Pavian gain a +2 bonus to their Morale score and can be made to correctly follow simple military tactics even in the absence of proper training. The Pavian can always improvise enough weapons and crude armor to at least give spears and light armor to a unit of no more than a few hundred.

**Lord:** The Pavian lords are beacons of inspiration and hope to the common people. Once per battle, the Pavian can negate a failed Morale check made by commoner or militia forces under their command. When fighting to directly defend civilians or noncombatants, the Pavian automatically resists all non-divine mental control, influence, or Morale checks that would make them flee or stand aside.



## The Purgatist Order

The code of an Ancalian knight is a demanding one. Unflinching obedience to superiors, selfless dedication to duty, and the noble virtues of a warrior for the One are heavy burdens to a human heart. That some should fall short of these standards is inevitable. Assuming a crime is not so great as to merit death, the usual penalty for a grave moral failing is banishment from the knighthood. Sometimes, however, the knight's motivations are forgivable enough or their talents impressive enough to win them a measure of mercy. The Purgatists are the product of that mercy, an order of fallen knights offered a last chance at redemption.

Even so, not all of the Purgatists are fallen knights. Criminals of unusual talent and forgivable motives, disgraced nobles, rebels in understandable causes... all those marginal souls with too much talent to lose and failings that are not entirely beyond forgiveness have a chance of being offered a place in the Purgatists. In the order they know ruthless discipline, constant oversight, and unquestioning service to members of the other orders. If they die nobly in their cause or serve faithfully until great deeds earn them absolution, they can expect the redemption of their sins and the respect of the other orders.

Purgatists are denied the usual rights of an Ancalian knight to pass judgment over disputes. Instead, they are put in the service of other knights and chapterhouses, usually used for the bloodiest, most dangerous tasks, or those jobs that require a criminal's eye for a situation. While they do not have the standing that the other six orders can claim, they retain the wary respect of other knights. No one would be granted a place in the Purgatists unless they were so useful that even a grave trespass wasn't enough reason to be rid of them.

In the wake of the recent disaster, much of the Purgatist Order is dead, either from suicide missions to take out Uncreated abominations or from holding a rear guard long enough for civilians to escape the encroaching monsters. Of the survivors, however, some have fallen back into their old ways, becoming the sort of monsters and tyrants that their brethren always feared they'd be. Even so, their martial skill and cold-eyed understanding of human nature has left some of these fallen knights among the effective protectors in Ancalia.

**Squire:** Squires of the Purgatist Order are rare, and most were criminals or blackguards of some sort before being offered a knighthood in lieu of a cell. They each have had some criminal background, which counts as a helpful Fact when relevant. If the Purgatist was condemned from another order, they may instead take the Squire talent of their former brethren. So long as they obey the order, they have a blanket suspension of sentence on any prior crimes.

**Knight:** Most Purgatist knights were members of another order, consigned to their new lot in light of some serious moral failing. Those who come up as squires pick up arts from their new brethren. A Purgatist can pick a Knight talent from any of the other orders to reflect their past association or newly-acquired education.

**Lord:** The Purgatists had no honored lords among them, but some had been in the order long enough to have acquired a certain supervisory trust. This experience exposes such veterans to a tremendous range of human wreckage. A veteran Purgatist can locate thieves' guilds, murderers for hire, fences, procurers, or other criminal service providers in any particular location with a day's inquiry, or immediately if they've already spent time in the place. They can also recognize hardened criminals automatically unless the blackguard has some special ability of disguise or seeming innocence.

## The Surcessant Order

Where good things are broken, the Surcessants come to mend them. They are the healer-knights of the orders, devoted to the mending of flesh and the stitching of agreements between angry factions. While they are as versed in the sword and lance as can be expected of an Ancalian knight, their preferred tools are the measured word and the physician's pharmacopoeia.

Surcessants are particularly in demand for those times when a conflict lacks a crime at its heart. When two just causes grind against each other, or when lines of fault and culpability have been hopelessly muddled by events, the Surcessants come to piece together a conclusion that all sides can tolerate. They sift out mutual compromises with reasoned words, calming measures, and a mailed fist holding a very sharp scalpel.

All Surcessants are trained healers, with even the squires among them knowing how to treat childbed fever as readily as an arrow wound. Some specialize in this, becoming the favored physicians of nobles who value their diplomatic talents as much as their medical ones, while others train more to provide the steel that helps keep fragile agreements nailed firmly in place.

The Surcessant motherhouse was particularly famed for its elaborate gardens of potent Khamite pharmaceutical plants, most of which were impossible to grow outside the specially-consecrated soil of the enclosed greenhouses. The knights had inherited these facilities from Khamite forebears, with the original Surcessants being a splinter sect of Merciful Hand acolytes who eventually consented to serve the High Negus as knights.

While the order has since allowed many of the Merciful Hand's arts to lapse in favor of martial training, the motherhouse still remained the finest house of healing in Ancalia before the cataclysm. Since the disaster, the Surcessants have scattered in an attempt to provide what healing they could in the face of the Hollowing Plague. Rumor says that motherhouse is now being used for desperate experiments.

The Surcessant order has been overwhelmed by the coming of the Night Roads. With no cure for the Hollowing Plague and no meaningful government left, the surviving Surcessants have been left to give what help they can to the survivors. Many healer-knights have been driven back on their martial skills to fight the husk packs, Uncreated, and bandit raiders.

**Squire:** The squires of the Surcessants are all capable healers, and may use their training as a Fact when providing medical care. Their diplomatic skills are still being trained, but they've picked up enough of many different tongues to express basic ideas or simple requests in any common human language.

**Knight:** Surcessant knights are skilled diplomats and negotiators, and can use this training as a helpful Fact when attempting to strike a bargain or calm a conflict. Their medical knowledge is such that they are able to strike to incapacitate rather than kill; those reduced to zero hit points or hit dice by their physical attacks may be rendered unconscious for fifteen minutes before waking with one hit point or hit die.

**Lord:** The medical talents of a master Surcessant are remarkable. Once per day per creature, the knight's treatment may heal 1d6 hit points or hit dice of damage to an injured creature without any expenditure of Effort by either the knight or the patient. This healing treatment requires five minutes of tending. In addition, the Surcessant is immune to all natural diseases.

## The Vindicant Order

Sometimes a crime escapes justice. Sins fester in hiding, law is perverted by authority, or the agents of justice find the wrong culprit and leave the true criminal untouched. The Vindicants rake the ashes of the past to find crimes that escaped their brother-orders' sight. They are the appellate court of Ancalia, the reviewers of decisions and investigators of outcomes. While any can appeal to them, it is up to the knights of the order to decide which cases require a second look, and they rarely concern themselves with anything less than matters of life or death.

As investigators, Vindicants cultivate a bloodhound remorselessness and a number of minor necromantic rites for the interrogation of the dead. These low magic sorceries can make a corpse tell the truth of events that transpired before death, or identify the manner in which a man or woman died. Some say that otherwise mindless lesser undead have an instinctive sympathy for the Vindicants and their quest for justice beyond the grave, and that these undead will refrain from harming such a knight.

Their work tends to leave Vindicants a gloomy and cynical lot by the standards of Ancalia's knights. Constant exposure to miscarriages of justice and buried secrets sometimes goads these knights to despair, and not a few end up leaving the order rather than face another endless tour of charnel interrogation.

Perversely, these former knights now make up the bulk of the surviving Vindicants. Scattered as they were on isolated estates and in remote villages, they were not able to muster for the suicidal last stands that so many of the other orders were able to mount. Many of them have since returned to the banner of the order, if only to lend the swords against the numberless husks.

The majority of veteran Vindicants now serve as guides and scouts to the surviving enclaves. Lord-knights who have returned from retirement are largely invisible to husk swarms that are not directed by malevolent energumens, and their ability to lead groups through mobs of feral undead has been the salvation of more than one enclave salvage party. Less accomplished Vindicants help to maintain order within enclaves, sniffing out the truth of crimes that leave no witnesses.

**Squire:** Vindicant squires all cultivate the arts of stealth and information-gathering, and can use their training as a Fact when pursuing such ends. Their understanding of criminal forensics is unusual in Arcem, and they can identify the approximate time and manner of death of a fresh corpse with a few minutes of examination.

**Knight:** A full-fledged Vindicant knows certain rites of questioning that can be applied to a mostly-intact corpse that hasn't been dead for more than a week. The Vindicant can ask the corpse one question for every hit point or hit die they are willing to expend in the ritual. The corpse is very literal, and can answer questions only about what it has directly seen or done; questions about thoughts or conclusions cannot be answered. The usual answers take the form of single words or short phrases. Once a corpse has been interrogated once, it cannot be queried by these rites again.

**Lord:** Master Vindicants have a deep affinity for the wronged and the unjustly denied. Undead that were the product of a crime or injustice will not harm them or their companions so long as no violence is offered, and will explain their troubles to the knight. These knight-lords always understand an undead creature's communications, even if they shared no language in life. Ordinary husks will not harm such Vindicants unless lashed on by a greater power.

# Random Ancalian Knight Generation

There are times when a quick royal knight is needed for an adventure or bit part. By rolling one die of each type and consulting the tables below, a quick result can be generated for use in play. If necessary, apply the relevant stat block from the front of this section.

Any knight who's survived five years in Ancalia is almost certainly suffering from some kind of mental damage. The years of unrelenting horror, loss, and misery have extracted a brutal toll from men and women who have always been viewed as the heroes and saviors of the realm. The stories always said that they were supposed to win. There is nothing resembling victory in the Ancalia of the past five years.

Many knights will have charges, whether those are the remnants of their own families or survivors in a nearby enclave. Knights who are committed leaders or aspiring tyrants might be the rulers of their charges, while others are simply warriors with a special interest in the safety of these people. Threats to a knight's protected people are threats to the knight himself.

Most knights are still devoted believers in the Unitary Church. While they're unlikely to change their worship to Godbound without very persuasive framing, the situation is so desperate that most will cooperate with any power that seems to offer some shred of hope.

<b>d4</b>	<b>How Experienced Are They?</b>
1	They were dubbed by a knight after the catastrophe
2	They were a squire when everything fell apart
3	They were a veteran knight during the disaster
4	They were one of the elite knight-lords of the order

<b>d6</b>	<b>What Was Their Relation to Their Order?</b>
1	Retired. They had quit or retreated to a quiet life.
2	Trusted. They were charged with important duties.
3	Steady. They neither doubted nor were doubted.
4	Doubt. They had serious questions about their role.
5	Resented. The order thought them a troublemaker.
6	Disgraced. Some crime had left them a Purgatist.

<b>d8</b>	<b>What Did They Do in the Cataclysm?</b>
1	Tried to protect an important noble they were with
2	Attempted to save their family or hold their estate
3	Sought to save a peasant village where they were
4	Shepherded refugees to a place they thought was safe
5	Was trying to apprehend a criminal amid the chaos
6	Fought to keep open an escape route for refugees
7	Defended a church or holy place that was a refugee site
8	Hid like a miserable coward, much to their shame

<b>d10</b>	<b>What Have They Been Doing Since?</b>
1	Being a brutal tyrant over a desperate enclave
2	Escorting traders or envoys between enclaves
3	Hunting Uncreated monsters and hostile Cousins
4	Fighting foreign looters and Ulstang raiders
5	Extracting holy relics for safekeeping elsewhere
6	Drowning the horror in self-indulgence and hiding
7	Protecting former or new-found loved ones
8	Acting as a scout or messenger between enclaves
9	Training new knights or an enclave's militia
10	Seeking the release of death, though they don't admit it

<b>d12</b>	<b>What Immediate Problem Faces Them?</b>
1	Their charges are in desperate need of a certain good
2	A past sin threatens to destroy their present life
3	An overwhelming monstrous foe approaches
4	They're being betrayed by a trusted ally or charge
5	They're making terrible decisions from traumatic stress
6	A coping mechanism is getting entirely out of hand
7	They've convinced themselves of a lethal delusion
8	Their charges are being swayed by a false savior
9	An Uncreated monster has special plans for them
10	They've suddenly lost the sanctuary their charges need
11	A loved one or charge has been seized or lost elsewhere
12	Overwhelming despair is crushing the life from them

<b>d20</b>	<b>What Trauma Symptoms Have They Developed?</b>
1	Compulsive womanizer or seductress as a distraction
2	Can't sleep unless armed and wearing armor
3	Can't stand looking at or talking to children
4	Weeps uncontrollably at seemingly-random moments
5	Drinks to unconsciousness when supposedly safe
6	Compulsively sharpens weapons and maintains armor
7	Unable to form personal bonds for fear of loss
8	Has an irrational hatred of a particular class or group
9	Insomnia that can only be treated by drink or drugs
10	Wildly overreacts to mistakes in survivalcraft
11	Refuses to take prisoners even when it's useful
12	Can't touch inanimate corpses without panicking
13	Self-flagellates or cuts to focus or to distract
14	Refuses to explain their plans or purposes to anyone
15	Privately wants things worse, to be more necessary
16	Divides people into "expendable" and "not expendable"
17	Laughs hysterically at extremely inappropriate things
18	Constantly performs useless hedge-charms against evil
19	Prays constantly under their breath without thinking
20	Refuses food and comforts to the point of self-harm

# Creating Ancalian Adventures

**I**n this section of the gazetteer you'll find a set of tools for developing a basic adventure outline set in Ancalia. Readers familiar with other *Sine Nomine* books will recognize many of the ideas presented here, but will find them specifically keyed to Ancalia's particular setting. Of course, GMs inclined to use the contents of this book with other settings can easily tweak the descriptions of the various elements offered here to ones more suitable to their own campaign's environment.

## The Adventure Template

On the opposite page are a list of twenty potential adventure templates. You can imagine them as "mad lib"-style patterns, situations in which you can insert various different actors, places, and macguffins in order to make the skeleton of your adventure. As with any of the tables in this book, you should feel free to adjust details to fit your own needs or to conjure up new templates as your inspiration suggests. The tables are just tools to help bolster your own natural creativity.

The following ten pages include details on five different kinds of elements: *Enemies*, *Friends*, *Locations*, *Things*, and *Twists*. Each spread gives twenty Ancalia-flavored examples of such elements. Enemies are generally-hostile entities and powers, Friends are sympathetic characters and potential allies, Locations are characteristic Ancalian places and backdrops, Things are treasures and objects likely to be important to an Ancalian adventure, and Twists are narrative complications or situational tweaks that add something unexpected to a circumstance.

The templates have slots to insert these elements. Antagonists are usually Enemies, though you might want to complicate the moral situation by putting a sympathetic Friend figure into the role. Protagonists are usually NPCs who the players can find appealing or approachable, and contact with them may be the way the heroes find out about the adventure. Locations, Things, and Twists can be inserted directly from the relevant random tables in the section.

Once you've filled in the blanks, go over the outline and connect up the elements so they make sense. Find justifications for conflicts, flesh out any enclave leadership with the Court generator in the *Godbound* core book, and tweak any element that seems too hard to rationalize. If you're rolling things randomly from the tables, give your first results a good hard look before you start tweaking things. Sometimes an unlikely combination of results can spark inspiration.

After you've got the basic outline of the adventure drawn up, use the guidelines in the *Godbound* core book to add any necessary challenges, combat statistics, site maps, or other play aids you might need when you're running the adventure. If you don't plan on needing this adventure for your very next session, however, you might put off this detailed work until the adventure is imminent; it can be more useful to roll up three or four of these adventure outlines as general fodder for rumors and evidence that might attract a pantheon's adventurous interest. Once they've decided on a rumor to investigate at the end of a session, you can use the downtime to fully develop the chosen outline for the next evening's play.



- 1 An Antagonist and a Protagonist are both in conflict over a Thing at a Location. Due to a Twist, neither of them can get at the Thing, though they might not realize the Twist is involved until after they fail to obtain the Thing.
- 2 An Antagonist and Protagonist are both sharing the same Location, though a building hostility is promising a very grim outcome. A Twist is the root of this conflict, and what was once a tolerable situation is now becoming entirely untenable.
- 3 A Protagonist has a Thing that an Antagonist desperately needs, due to a Twist that is threatening destruction to the Antagonist. The Protagonist has a personally-compelling reason not to cooperate, though it may not be obvious to onlookers.
- 4 A Protagonist has lost or located a Thing at a particular Location, but an Antagonist is currently occupying the place. The Protagonist wants the Thing, but doesn't want to reveal their interest to others, so is manufacturing a reason.
- 5 A Thing has already caused tremendous havoc in a Location due to greed, a desperate sacrifice to obtain it, or the terrible price of keeping it. An Antagonist and Protagonist have different desires for it, both fueled by the awful cost of obtaining it.
- 6 An Antagonist has an old grudge against a Protagonist and thinks a recent Twist affecting them is a good opportunity to do them some dire evil. In truth, the Twist is part of the partial backfiring of a plan the Protagonist has to destroy the Antagonist.
- 7 An Antagonist and a Protagonist both occupy different Locations, but they're too close, and mutual hostility or resource depletion means one of them has to go. Both have more than pragmatic reasons for wanting to cling to their current Locations.
- 8 A Thing is left in a Location with the gory remains of a Protagonist and/or their allies scattered around the place. A Twist lies in wait to visit some awful doom on whomever takes the Thing, either magically or by a more mundanely dire circumstance.
- 9 Two Protagonists are fighting over control of a Thing, but it's actually been stolen away by an Antagonist who has used a Twist to make the two Protagonists blame each other for the theft. The Antagonist wants them weakened before an eventual strike.
- 10 A Protagonist desperately needs to claim a Location, and knows the location of a Thing they're willing to offer to anyone who can clear it out for them. An Antagonist makes a plausible case for treachery, one that might actually be a true warning.
- 11 Two Protagonists are fighting over a Thing or Location, but the object or place is actually somehow self-willed and in control of the situation, making others fight to see which of them is the stronger wielder or tenant.
- 12 A Protagonist and an Antagonist are fighting savagely over something of deep importance to an Ancalian, but that others might find baffling: a point of Unitary doctrine, a jantirar's fiefdom, a female relative's honor, or some other cultural artifact.
- 13 Both a Protagonist and an Antagonist want to seize a Thing that's hidden at a Location, but one of them is convinced the Thing is terribly dangerous and must be destroyed, while the other thinks it's a harmless tool. One of them is right.
- 14 A Protagonist appears friendly, but due to a Twist they're forced to betray the PCs after lulling their suspicions. An Antagonist in a nearby Location knows the truth and how to negate the Twist's pressure, but really wants to destroy the Protagonist.
- 15 An Antagonist and a Protagonist are locked in conflict due to a Twist produced by a third party, who has reason to want revenge against both of them, and who is using a Thing to finance or empower their grudge.
- 16 A Protagonist has set up in a conveniently-empty Location, but an Antagonist is going to return to the place soon, and the Protagonist has no hope of repelling them. The Antagonist is not immune to diplomacy, however, and wants a Thing.
- 17 A Protagonist's Location was once an excellent holding, but has recently collapsed or degraded due to a since-repelled Antagonist's efforts. A Thing could fix the Location, but only the Antagonist knows where it is, perhaps because they stole it.
- 18 A Protagonist is the only survivor of a destroyed enclave, or leader of a small clutch of survivors from the enclave. They crave revenge on an Antagonist, and will promise a Thing to the PCs in order to get their aid, but really, they don't have it.
- 19 A recent Twist caused severe problems for a Protagonist, who used a Thing to solve the issue only to inculcate a second, even worse Twist that set in shortly before the PCs find them. Situationally-vital information or guidance is at a nearby Location.
- 20 A sympathetic Protagonist at a Location comes off as a dangerous menace to outside observers like the PCs due to a Twist provoked by a hostile Antagonist. The Protagonist can't get out of the Twist until the Antagonist is dealt with.

## Overcoming the Myriad Horrors

While these basic steps are ample to give you an evening's adventure in the blasted ruins of the peninsula, there are some Ancalia-specific situations and problems that your players are very likely to try to address at some point. To make your life easier, here are some guidelines on how to handle their heroic efforts.

### The Hollowing Plague

The Hollowing Plague is a spiritual infection rather than one vectored by purely physical means. As written, it spreads only within the cursed borders of Ancalia, and sufferers who leave its boundaries can't spread it elsewhere. You might choose to change this fact, but if so, you should either make it a very rare contagion elsewhere or provide some other explanation why the Ulstang raiders and foreign adventurers haven't brought back a load of death in their holds.

The Hollowing Plague is impervious to all known mortal magical cures, but Godbound with the Health Word can cure it like any other disease, and the Endurance Word might be able to grant blessings that allow a victim to survive its onslaught indefinitely. Attempts to halt it completely within an area qualify as an Impossible change if the players have some relevant Word, with the scope cost based on the amount of land to be warded: 1 for a village, up to 8 for the entire peninsula. If any of the lords of the Uncreated Court are still alive and active within the area to be warded, apply a resistance penalty of 8. Thus, protecting an isolated village from the Hollowing Plague would cost 4 points of Dominion or committed Influence at a scope of 1 times an Impossible modifier of 4. Banishing the plague from the entire peninsula while at least one of the Uncreated lords still remained would cost a whopping 64 Dominion: 8 base for affecting the whole peninsula, plus 8 for the resistance of the Uncreated lord, times four for the Impossible difficulty. If players try to expand a warded area, charge them the difference in cost between the smaller and larger sizes.

If the players try to protect more than a city-sized patch of land from the plague, seriously consider requiring them to overcome a challenge and spend a celestial shard to fuel their accomplishment. Protecting still larger areas might require a full adventure to root out some evil nexus of spiritual blight and two to four celestial shards to cement the banishment of the sickness.

### Famines, Plagues, and Privation

Hunger, sicknesses, and the want of basic necessities are ubiquitous blights on the surviving enclaves. The *Sixteen Sorrows* supplement offers tools for personalizing these calamities and dealing with them in-depth as divinities, but there are a few general guidelines a GM can apply to any such situation.

First, let applicable Words help. A Godbound of Fertility is going to be able to erase hunger in almost any enclave, and a Godbound of Health is going to be able to cure the Hollowing Plague. If PCs have a Word or gifts that can actually fix a problem, *let them*. They wouldn't have taken those powers if they didn't want to use them.

Second, make sure there's a problem in the situation that their Words can't trivialize. Maybe the problem isn't the famine, it's the aftermath of suddenly becoming a beacon of hope to the region. Maybe the plague they cured is the work of a persistent Uncreated horror. If you know the PCs are going to fix a problem rapidly, make sure you have something else to throw at them after they cure it.

### The Night Roads

Once the Uncreated that guard a Night Road opening are dispersed or driven back, it's a relatively simple job to seal a beachhead. A miracle of Journeying can do the trick, as can any theurge of the Way with the *Shutting the Dark Way* invocation. Heroes who lack access to such things might try to simply seal the Night Road away under a ziggurat of solid rock or a Dominion-wrought orb of magma. The flow of Uncreated through the Night Road has dwindled sufficiently that most heroes should be able to do the work without being badly inconvenienced by new Uncreated.

Getting to a Night Road breach is apt to be the biggest challenge. The Uncreated lords tend to hover around them, along with a swarm of lesser minions. Still, some lords might be able to be lured away before the heroes move in to close the gate, and some are far from them.

Once sealed, a Night Road entrance is liable to remain sealed. The Uncreated cannot open such doors by their own powers, and so they'd need to find a theurge with the *Opening the Way* invocation to crack it open again. Even if such a mighty arcanist can be found, the Uncreated will need to induce him or her to commit such a heinous act, and the players may well be in a position to learn of their dark plans before they can bring them to fruition. Or it may be that the first thing the pantheon hears is talk of a fresh wave of abominations around a recently-closed Night Road that they had left inadequately guarded by their cultists and allies.

Heroes who choose to actually enter the Night Roads are probably making a very bad mistake. The Uncreated lords came from somewhere, and venturing into the roads is liable to lead the heroes directly to that horrible land. It's up to you to decide what nightmarish hellscape awaits them beyond the black portals... but even so, some wildly daring heroes might try to use the Night Roads to attack the other lords from the rear, coming at them from the very heart of their strongholds. The dark ways connect all the most crucial sites of Uncreated power in the peninsula, and a pantheon that can navigate the web with relative safety can strike the Uncreated with no warning.

### The Uncreated Lords

The four lords of the Uncreated Courts are extremely dangerous foes, easily capable of crushing a pantheon of novice Godbound. Midlevel heroes stand a much better chance against them, particularly if they plan carefully to attack the enemy's weak spots and separate them from their minions.

The two worst abilities of each lord are their *Cold Breath*, which stifles Godbound gifts and miracles, and their innate ability to defensively dispel any incoming power. Unless the pantheon can drain them of their Effort quickly by forcing them to constantly defensively dispel, a pantheon's best bet on taking them down is via naked steel. Miracles that alter the environment or boost their own or their fellows' attacks are much more useful than direct Smites that the lord can dispel, though a wave of those early can goad the monster into committing a great deal of Effort to dodge the damage.

If you want to further tip the scales, consider placing artifacts that counteract the *Cold Breath* or weapons that are unusually effective against the Uncreated. Getting these tools should be very difficult, requiring adventures to find and liberate them from their present keepers, who might well be agents of the Uncreated trying to keep such dangerous relics out of the hands of heroes.

## The Wild Hunt and the Fae

Some players might think to enlist the Fae as allies or co-conspirators against the Uncreated and the husks. The Cousins certainly have no reason to love the monstrous interlopers that befoul their lands, and if the local humans are all killed or made into undead, there'll be nothing for many of the Fae to eat. Individual barrow-lords and powerful Fae might be recruited on a one-to-one basis, but the simplest way to bring the Cousins into play is to find and awaken the Prince of the Dawn.

The difficulty of this is apt to be substantial, even for a pantheon of Godbound. The Prince had no desire to be discovered by enemies of the Akeh, and so most of the knowledge regarding his barrow's hidden location and the necessary codes and rites to bypass its security will have to be salvaged from lost security installations throughout Ancalia, many of them doubtless infested by the powers of Uncreated Night. Knowledge Word gifts would be unable to pluck this information easily from the ether, but they could likely give the PCs directions to the places where this lore could be found.

Once the Prince is found and awakened, he will only consent to raise the Wild Hunt after critical celestial engines have been repaired. To do so earlier would condemn his brethren to a slow, wasting death, and until the correct engines are repaired the world outside his barrow is too hostile to his existence to allow him to move freely. Fortunately, he does know which engines need to be repaired to bring Ancalia back in alignment with the Cousins' transhuman augmentations, and he'll be able to tell the PCs where they need to go. If the Prince is dead or uncooperative, a Godbound of Fertility, Health, Sorcery, or Knowledge could figure out the necessary fixes from the data in his barrow.

Some of these engines may be located in Ancalia itself, in cysts of celestial reality. Others might oblige them to cross a Night Road to reach a shard of fallen Heaven, possibly even a Road that's currently being guarded by an Uncreated lord. The precise number of engines that need to be fixed should be calibrated to the pace of your campaign, but it shouldn't be more than two or three at most.

Repairing these engines won't have any immediately obvious effect on Ancalia, and they won't allow for other exotic manipulations of elder science such as Bright Republic tech. They *will* make it possible for Fae to live without feeding, however, so long as they remain within the peninsula. With the repairs in place, the Prince of the Dawn will be willing to trigger the revivification process that will waken every sleeping Fae in Ancalia.

The resultant army of transhuman prodigies will immediately become a tremendous force on the peninsula, marshaling their legions in days and arming themselves from their ancient war-caches. While they may not be able to drive back the Uncreated single-handedly, they will give the PCs and the surviving Ancalians a huge advantage in fighting back against the monstrous hordes. Unlike modern-day Cousins, these ancient Fae will have no legacy of bitterness toward the modern Ancalians, and no reason to view them as anything but sadly fallen descendants of their own flesh and blood. While this pity may not be welcome among the survivors, their serried ranks of tulpa glaives and transhuman champions will be more appreciated.

Of course, the players may end up exchanging one calamity for another. The revived Fae are Khamites, loyal to the long-dead Polyarchy, and fired by a still-fresh hostility towards their Din neighbors in Lom. Their general physical and mental superiority over their human heirs is also apt to cause problems, and the Prince may have his own plans for Ancalia after the catastrophe is contained. Such things will be for the players to manage as best they can.

## What Caused the Apocalypse?

This book is intentionally vague about the exact cause of the disaster that scourged Ancalia. Deep secrets like that are most satisfying if the GM is the only one who really knows the answer until the players take the time and effort to unearth the truth. With that in mind, here are some potential reasons for the calamity.

- High Negus Arad was at fault. His motivation may have been a desire to drive back the enemies at Ancalia's borders, or strengthen his family's fading noble bloodline, or secretly assassinate a troublesome jantirar, or obtain unfettered rule over the nation, but whatever his motive his method was a disastrous failure. The sinister foreign theurges he used were in the employ of the Uncreated, or he himself pacted with these dark powers. If the truth comes out, Ancalia will be cursed for a hundred generations by its furious neighbors.
- The Ancalian people were at fault. Vile cults of Uncreated worshipers festered and hid within the population, drawing enough support from the dissatisfied and ambitious to enact the awful rites that led to the Hollowing Plague and the opening of the Night Roads. Most of these cults were destroyed in the chaos, but their surviving hierarchs now secretly rule as slave-viceroyes of the Uncreated. If the world learns of this, expatriate Ancalians throughout Arcem will be at terrible risk of their lives from frightened neighbors.
- Foreigners were at fault, either the witch-queens of Ulstang, secret angels of Lom, Dulimbai's regent testing a monstrous occult weapon against foreign Akeh, or some other machination of a rival or coldly-uninterested researcher. If this is found out, the culprit will face the united fury of all their neighbors, who will be terrified of the prospect of its horrific repetition.
- Nobody was at fault. It really was a horrible cosmic accident, the fruit of decaying celestial engines and divine mischance. Nothing the Ancalians could have practically done would have saved them, and this outcome may be more or less likely for their neighbors depending on the condition of certain important celestial engines. Heroes who can prove this, and more importantly, can *fix* this, will be worshiped as living gods or holy saints throughout Arcem.

You shouldn't necessarily feel obligated to work out the details of the truth before starting your campaign. The players may not be interested in it at all, preferring to focus on the immediate situation and solving what they can of their present troubles.

If you've reason to believe they're liable to be more inquisitive, however, it can be worth it to pick a reason early, and then salt events with clues and hints as to its true provenance. The PCs might decide to follow up on these leads, perhaps stemming an even worse repetition of the disaster, or at least delivering divine justice to the guilty wretches responsible for the horror that has overwhelmed the land.



# Enemies



ire foes and monstrous enemies are a fact of life in fallen Ancalia. While it's always possible to hurl a random bandit chief or generic monster swarm at an enclave or sympathetic NPC, a GM is often best served to use enemies and perils particularly characteristic of the land. Enemies that are custom-tuned to the setting help emphasize a sense of place.

These two pages contain twenty example enemies to torment a luckless target. You can roll on the table below or pick something appropriate or simply scan them to get an idea of the kind of vile foes most likely to give a refugee enclave a hard time.

Not all enemies present a purely physical threat to their target. In some cases, the challenge of an adventure will consist of finding and pinning the evildoer rather than snuffing them once they've been

run to ground. Godbound are tremendously powerful, but without the right Words they can have just as much difficulty winking out a secret as the next batch of player characters.

Not all foes are intrinsically evil, either. Uncreated are monsters, but a brutal warlord might be a savage with an excellent record of keeping his people alive. Players might well find some of these supposed evildoers a good deal more sympathetic than their supposed prey.

Combat statistics can be lifted from the core book. If you intend for the enemy to present a physical challenge to the PCs, you can use the guidelines for creating boss monsters in the *Godbound* bestiary chapter. If the foe isn't the sort that's fought with brute force, you can use the Court generators in the core book to figure out the negative consequences of simply smiting them where they stand.

**Brutal Warlord:** The enemy is a tyrant with a strong sword arm and a well-armed following. Many of these warlords will have a substantial following of men and women who are only looking for safety, and see it in the strongest, most savage leader to hand. Very few of these warlords are stupid; five years on from the apocalypse, only the smartest, most charismatic, most cunning bravos have survived the ensuing chaos. Many of them have come to relish it and the freedom it allows them, and will be quick to destroy any target that threatens to bring more civilized order to the area.

**Chained Assailant:** This Uncreated of the Shackled Court is directly attacking the target. Of course, given a Shackled Uncreated's general predilections, it's almost certainly attacking via proxies and cultists, sending wretched bargainers to do its violent work for it. It's not doing so subtly, however, or concealing its handiwork. The target knows that it's under attack, even if it might mistake the real motivation behind the proxy assailants' actions. Intelligent Chained will do much to encourage this confusion.

**Chained Subverter:** The Uncreated is acting as its kind most often do, bribing and bartering with some elements in the target in order to produce its eventual downfall. These creatures will give someone the thing they most desperately desire in exchange for something they really ought not to give away: betrayals, forsakings, abandonments, and other emotional losses and personal treacheries are preferred in place of demands for mere objects. Ultimately, the Chained is trying to get the target to give up the means for its own survival in exchange for prizes that only drag them to ruin.

**Faerie Assailant:** One of the Cousins of the deep wilderness is violently assaulting the target. The faerie might be a bestial thing, ogreish and grim, or it might be the leader of a band of faerie knights that desire something the target has. The faerie's opposition is overt and direct, but the target has enough strength or a position sufficiently advantageous to hold them off for a while, if perhaps not forever.

**Faerie Subverter:** This Cousin is subtle, working to manipulate the target to achieve its own end. Most such corrupters feed on particular neural patterns corresponding to powerful human emotions, using the energy to stabilize and sustain their own deviant soul-gene. As such, most subverters will seek to create situations of great drama and dark horror. While happiness is as nourishing to many of them as sorrow or terror, darker feelings are much easier to evoke in Ancalia's present hour.

d20

## Types of Enemies

1	Brutal Warlord and their ruthless soldier minions
2	Chained Assailant attacking with bound thralls
3	Chained Subverter offering sinister bargains
4	Faerie Assailant offering direct violence to the target
5	Fairy Subverter beguiling and manipulating the target
6	Feral Noble bent on revenge or a new rulership
7	Foreign Adventurer looking for plunder and power
8	Incendiary Assailant launching an open attack
9	Incendiary Subverter trying to provoke a dire mistake
10	Lomite Salvager trying to plunder Ancalian riches
11	Misbegotten Beast devouring the unwary
12	Poxed Assailant overtly warping the target
13	Poxed Subverter trying to seduce with dark pleasures
14	Religious Zealot of the Creator or a darker god
15	Renegade Knight trading on their order's repute
16	Rotten Assailant directly enervating the target
17	Rotten Subverter seeking to subtly dispirit the victim
18	Supernatural Foe such as a parasite god or spirit
19	Ulstang Raider Chief out for slaves, alive or dead
20	Vile Sorcerer taking advantage of the chaotic environs

**Feral Noble:** This enemy is a former noble of Ancalia made crazed by the situation. Their pedigree is undeniable, however, and whatever madness has seized them has left their general competence unhindered. The instinctive respect for authority and bloodline that suffuses Ancalia ensures that they have a substantial number of followers, and their own natural prowess and transhuman lineage make them personally dangerous foes. Most of these feral nobles entertain dreams of rule, perhaps even of becoming the High Negus. Others are looking to reclaim lost land or settle ancient feuds that have since been rendered wholly irrelevant by the disaster.

**Foreign Adventurer:** This bonepicker has come from the south to plunder whatever the target still has. Clearly, the victim has something important enough to the adventurer to make their destruction

or submission necessary. The adventurer may want an object, a person, or simply to become master of what the target possesses. It may be possible to bribe the adventurer or direct them to a more likely target, but few who choose to come to this plague-cursed land can be successfully intimidated.

**Incendiary Assailant:** This Incendiary Uncreated operates by brute force and violence. It's a creature of intimidating personal prowess, more than enough to overcome whatever physical defenses or martial protectors the target has at its disposal. The reason it hasn't already crushed the target is either because it's enjoying playing with its meal, or it isn't so overwhelming that it can afford to go in directly before the target is bled or weakened somehow.

**Incendiary Subverter:** Uncommon to most Incendiary Uncreated, this thing uses something resembling subtlety. It's trying to provoke an action from its target that will lead to the target's own destruction. It might be a crazed internal witch-hunt, a ruinous assault on a neighbor, an attack on an otherwise-valuable ally, or the commencement of a project doomed to catastrophic failure. Incendiaries don't have much patience, however, and if their plan is balked, they might rapidly turn to direct violence.

**Lomite Salvager:** The men of Lom have always hated Ancalia for its God-fearing ways, and now that the land is crippled this salvager means to extract its riches. Salvagers seek the conventional wealth of gold and gems, but they also are eager to carry out Ancalian artwork, scholarly books, and other aesthetic and intellectual treasures to be mocked, dissected, and destroyed by the antipriests in public displays of Lom's superiority. The target may have such prizes, or they might just be a hindrance to the salvager's free plundering of the area. Salvagers won't usually negotiate, but they will entertain offers to convert to Lomite atheism. Such new converts are usually worked to death in short order near the Lomite border, as the antipriests mistrust their sincerity.

**Misbegotten Beast:** A hideous monster has been spawned by the flux of arcane power in the area or some luckless human has been infected by eldritch forces. This Misbegotten is usually a purely physical peril to the target, devouring the unlucky and presenting a martial challenge to overcome. More sophisticated dangers might have unusual degrees of cunning, disguise, or unique magical powers to influence their prey.

**Poxed Assailant:** This Poxed Uncreated is unleashing a nightmare of perversion and misuse on the target with overt curses, obvious supernatural blights, and uncanny obsessions. There's no attempt at concealment in the attack, and the target is fully aware that they're being assaulted by a monstrous supernatural power. Even when attacking directly, however, the Poxed will prefer to inculcate such mad cravings or twisted plans in the victims as will result in their self-ruin, rather than simply stepping in and slaughtering victims directly. The target might also be a second-order victim, the "prize" to be awarded to a monstrous cult assault from Poxed servitors.

**Poxed Subverter:** The Poxed has infected persons affiliated with the target with a powerful impulse of perversion. They might have unspeakable cravings, or seek a violent distortion of order, or want to ban, twist, or corrupt the necessary activities for the target's survival. Poxed usually build up a cult rapidly by promising pleasures or fomenting urges, but they may need to steal or kidnap the raw materials for satisfying those needs if their cult is to grow stronger.

**Religious Zealot:** The enemy is driven by a mad faith. They might be a Mercyman determined to kill the target so as to ensure their

safety in death, a fanatic bent on extirpating a perceived evil of the target, an Uncreated cult leader seeking to appease its awful god, or a person affiliated with the target who has conjured up a demagogue's following among their own numbers. It's not uncommon for these zealots to have magical powers, either through their own studies, the blessings of Uncreated Night, or the perverse decay of the celestial engines.

**Renegade Knight:** Not every knight of Ancalia died valiantly in defense of the people, and some of the survivors have abandoned their principles in favor of more immediate survival. These renegade knights often cloak themselves in the honor of their order, but use it to ruthlessly plunder and enslave those they encounter. Some of them are merely hyper-protective of their chosen wards, whether family members or other refugees under their protection. These grim knights aren't intrinsically malicious, but they'll stop at nothing to protect and strengthen their own no matter how much havoc it inflicts on others.

**Rotten Assailant:** This Uncreated of the Rotten Court is leveling a direct attack on the target, which is unusual for a creature of its kind. It's inflicting blatantly supernatural despair, apathy, and enfeeblement on the target, and isn't pretending to hide its nature or work in subtle fashion. The Rotten may be too physically powerful for the target to directly confront, or it may just be too elusive to pin down.

**Rotten Subverter:** This Rotten Uncreated is poisoning the target, spreading a miasma of hopelessness, weakening some critical element of the target, or drawing the victims into a cult of servitude. It's trying to prevent the target from doing something critically necessary, blunting their efforts and sapping the resources they need to accomplish the vital task. Harvest complications, rebuilding calamities, hunting difficulty, or trade stifling might all be its work.

**Supernatural Foe:** A parasite god, wrathful spirit, vengeful undead not associated with the Hollowing Plague, or some other supernatural monstrosity is presenting a peril to the target. Some of these monsters may have predated the coming of the Night Roads, and are only now taking advantage of the chaos to expand their influence. Others might have been attracted by the chaos, or even produced outright by the suffering. Some will be flatly predatory in nature, bent on destroying or consuming the target, while others have more sophisticated uses for human thralls.

**Ulstang Raider Chief:** One of the terrible northern seamen has come to assail the targets. Most raider chiefs are interested in slaves and material wealth, in that order, and it's not necessary that the slaves be alive. If the raider chief doesn't have a necromantic ice priestess available to immediately transform corpses into draugr, however, he'll usually try to get his stock to the coast on its own feet, as it's prohibitively difficult to haul a village's worth of corpses. Most raider chiefs have at least one longship worth of hardened Ulstang warriors in their service, and may have a cadre of undead draugr war-slaves serving as well.

**Vile Sorcerer:** The slaughter and chaos have provided many opportunities for sinister arcanists to acquire what they might wish from the locals. The target has something that the wizard needs, either human sacrifices, vital arcane components, or possession of some place of arcane power. The wizard will rarely have the direct firepower necessary to blast out a well-prepared target, though they're often quite capable of summoning monsters or creating abominations that will eventually overwhelm their targets if their creator is not hunted down and destroyed.

# Friends



While most good adventures require an antagonist or two, it's often necessary to have more friendly faces involved in the play. These pages discuss some possibilities for allies, wards, and other sympathetic characters that the heroes might encounter in their adventures.

Most of these friends are suitable for placing into the leadership of an enclave or other survivor group. Many of them have the necessary toughness, martial talent, or charisma to convince others to follow them. When you need a friendly figure to lead an enclave you create, you can pluck one of these survivors from the list and put them into their place.

Other friends are meant to be sympathetic characters in need of the heroes' protection and aid. Young innocents, roving traders, investi-

gative scholars, and other less personally capable NPCs can inspire Godbound heroes to look for ways to help them out of their troubles and protect them from the perils of cursed Ancalia. Whether the heroes actually *will* feel sympathetic toward the NPCs is another matter. A GM will need to read their group properly to identify the kind of hapless victims that are most likely to spark their helpful instincts.

Even the most hapless friends should have some concrete utility to them, even if it's simply something they know or a relationship they have with some more puissant figure. Presumably the friend is in some kind of unfortunate situation and the PCs need to be given an adequate reason to go to their aid. Whether it's the allied cooperation of an enclave, the help of a powerful NPC, or friendly relations with some important figure, the friend needs to be worth having.

**Aspiring Lawbringer:** This friend is absolutely determined to bring some kind of law and order back to the chaos of Ancalia. They might be presently focused on a single enclave or small community, but they dream of bringing sanity back to the entire peninsula. They may or may not seek to be the one in charge of this new order, but if the latter, they can be trusted to support any power that seems capable of bringing peace back to the land.

**Clan Leader:** A patriarch or matriarch of a large extended family, this clan leader is chiefly interested in the survival of their own kith and kin, but they're willing to lend aid to others who look like good investments for the effort. While they may be physically weak with age, they have the unshaken confidence and loyalty of their family. Most patriarchs are gifted with a canny understanding of human nature, and will be quick to play on a person's vanities and fears in order to coax their help.

**Desperate Seeker:** This friend is looking for someone or something. It may be a missing loved one, a lost treasure, or a hidden sanctuary. What they're seeking might actually be something hazardous or malignant, but they probably won't realize this until it's too late, and probably won't be able to be convinced of it until then. If the desired subject is a person, they probably have some reason to believe in their likely survival, perhaps due to some special treasure or talent they possessed.

**Determined Cleric:** A priest, bishop, monk, or nun of the Unitary Church, this friend clings to their faith in the Creator and their determination to help their flock. Their theology may not be entirely sound after the catastrophe, however, and such deviation might provoke panicked hostility from other groups that fear outpourings of yet more divine anger.

**Driven Healer:** The friend is a physician, either natural or magical in nature. They may be an acolyte of the Empty Hand, or a simple village healer left with nothing but their mission. Some of them may have or think they have cures for the Hollowing Plague. Any true cure will soon bring the hostility of all nearby Uncreated, as they seek to squelch any escape from their plague.

**Fearless Trader:** This man or woman is mad enough to run trade between surviving enclaves, usually with the help of a few porters. Necessity obliges the goods to be relatively portable and high-value, like salt, medicines, metal tools, and cloth, but a trader's worth in information exchange is often as great as their goods. Trade is almost

d20	Types of Friends
1	Aspiring Lawbringer, seeking order and peace
2	Clan Leader and their many kindred and children
3	Desperate Seeker looking for a thing lost in the chaos
4	Determined Cleric bent on protecting their flock
5	Driven Healer trying to cure the wounds and plague
6	Fearless Trader roaming from enclave to enclave
7	Foreign Crusader come to aid this cursed land
8	Friendly Fae willing to lend their uncanny help
9	Grizzled Warrior protecting their chosen charges
10	Hapless Innocent freshly placed in a lethal world
11	Hermit Survivor living where others can't survive
12	Intrepid Scavenger salvaging vital supplies for others
13	Investigative Scholar looking for the real truth here
14	Kindly Monster of awful seeming but honest goodwill
15	Last Survivor of a destroyed enclave or refuge
16	Neighborhood Protector of a battered urban area
17	Obliged Noble determined to carry out their duties
18	Peasant Elder leading their neighbors with wisdom
19	Penitent Sinner trying to atone for their past evils
20	Solitary Knight fighting to defend their wards

exclusively barter, but most surviving traders don't really care about material profit any more, savoring instead the prestige of their role, the excitement of the work, and the vital service they provide to their countrymen.

**Foreign Crusader:** This well-meaning lunatic is a foreign adventurer who has come to aid Ancalia instead of simply looting its corpse. They may have substantial relief supplies with them, and those who've kept them usually have a number of guards and allies to protect their mission. The crusader may be seeking particular friends or relatives in order to help them.

**Friendly Fae:** Not all Cousins are hostile, particularly with their traditional domains now infested with husks and Uncreated abominations. This fae is willing to help local humans or aid outside pro-



tectors. More sinister entities might be offering help or protection in exchange for the sustenance only humans can provide.

**Grizzled Warrior:** Whether an old sergeant, a hard-bitten captain, or simply the toughest village bully in the domain, this warrior is able and willing to protect their charges from the more modest varieties of horror. They may have a trace of transhuman blood to help them, or a magical weapon, or simply be particularly good at whipping frightened survivors into fighting trim.

**Hapless Innocent:** This friend is pathetically ill-suited to surviving in Ancalia, and has probably existed in a bubble of normalcy until very recently. They may be a young person protected by their family, a foreigner suddenly cast up on Ancalia's shores, or some other sympathetic figure clearly in need of aid if they're going to survive a week in this blasted nation.

**Hermit Survivor:** This lonesome man or woman exists in the wilderness or hidden away in the city, surviving with a mix of good preparation and excellent skills. They originally might have been a social outcast or criminal who learned their skills in better times. Now, they may be the only one who knows how to get in or out of a particularly dangerous area.

**Intrepid Scavenger:** Fearless and acquisitive, this scavenger knows how to get into a town or city, strip out the most useful salvage, and escape before the husks and other monstrosities find them. They usually have a few helpers, oft-replaced, and an addiction to

the thrill of these quick infiltrations. They may have come across a dangerously powerful artifact in their plundering, or need outside aid in order to make a truly big score.

**Investigative Scholar:** Whether native-born or a reckless foreigner, this scholar is searching for answers. Most such academics are trying to understand the Night Roads, both the reason that caused them to open and the way to get them to shut. Some might be accomplished low magic sorcerers, while a few might be true theurges. In both cases, they usually have at least a small retinue to serve as bodyguards or fellow investigators.

**Kindly Monster:** Some poor wretches have been twisted by ambient magic or external curses, perhaps as a consequence of their desperate dabbling with ill-understood artifacts or forbidden zones of dangerous magic. This person is monstrous in some way, whether in appearance or behavior, but they mean well and they want to help and protect others.

**Last Survivor:** This friend's enclave was wiped out almost completely by some calamity or enemy. They alone survive to tell its tale, and they may be fueled by a mad determination to get revenge on whatever force slaughtered their friends and family. Many of them are decidedly careless with their own lives and the lives of the current allies when the chance for vengeance presents itself.

**Neighborhood Protector:** A crime boss, a neighborhood patriarch, a rich merchant, or some other urban grandee has survived to protect a town or city neighborhood. Extensive granaries, access to fishing, or defensible cropland within the walls allow them to hold out a tenuous existence, but this protector usually understands all too well that their days are numbered if the husks and monsters of the city aren't cleared out eventually.

**Obliged Noble:** Ancalian nobles usually take their role seriously, and this one is determined to protect his or her people at all costs. Some have dreams of greater rule, but they understand their duties to be ones of leadership, law enforcement, and careful planning. Most Ancalian commoners are relieved to be able to put their burdens on a trustworthy lord, and will follow them faithfully until some catastrophe breaks their trust.

**Peasant Elder:** This friend is a timeworn old man or woman of the village, trusted by their neighbors for their wisdom and social skills. The elder knows their people and what they can and can't do, and will manage them deftly for the common survival. These elders are hard by necessity, and they'll do whatever they have to do to keep their kin and neighbors alive.

**Penitent Sinner:** This person has done or been something horrible. A former Uncreated cultist, a monstrous criminal, an Ulstang raider, a Deliverer zealot, or some other person the heroes would normally consider an implacable foe. They've turned over a new leaf, however, and their former aptitudes are now being used to help a group. The depth of their sincerity and the true reason for their new behavior may not be entirely clear, however.

**Solitary Knight:** This knight has the strength and charisma to lead a desperate group of survivors, and the locals have a natural tendency to trust them and follow their leadership. The knight may belong to one of the royal orders, or they may be a last survivor of one of the lesser orders of knighthood, or even a Purgatist knight who happened to live where others died. The knight may be eager to take apprentices in order to keep their order alive in whatever way they can, or they might seek to reclaim lost treasures or find missing brethren.

# Locations



Conflicts can be about locations as much as they can be about people or things. A particular location might be so valuable to one of the parties involved that they're willing to spend lives and treasure to seize it. A safe refuge or a hidden storehouse can easily be worth more than the life's blood of a few dozen scavengers, and a hard-eyed leader might find it a price well worth paying to have it.

Other times, a location is simply the place where a conflict plays out. The object that the antagonistic sides are seeking is located there, or it's been taken to such a place for safekeeping. A person at the heart of a struggle might be holed up there, or trapped by enemy forces, or determined to go there and hunt something or someone for their own ends. The location serves as a backdrop for these people and things.

**Abandoned Mine:** The hills and mountains of Ancalia were passably rich in metals and precious stones. Many of these strikes played out long ago, but the mines make very defensible strongholds for survivors, and are easy to keep sealed against husk attacks or raider assaults. Many have adequate or too-adequate water supplies, but food is at a premium in these places, and they can turn into living tombs all too quickly if escape routes are neglected. Careless miners also occasionally dug into Fae barrows or dangerous cysts of disordered magical energy, and some long-sealed mines have had their original reason for closure forgotten in the centuries since.

**Ancient Ruins:** Ancalia is dotted with many ancient ruins dating back to the Time of Five Kings or even earlier before the Shattering. Sensible men and women avoided such places and their ancient guardians and protective mechanisms, but in these days a need for refuge can make the ruin's danger seem positively palatable compared to the attentions of husk swarms and Uncreated monsters. The details of a ruin can be generated with the tables in the *Godbound* core book.

**City Sewers:** Whether actual sewer tunnels or merely ancient passages built before the modern city rose, these voids serve as hiding-places for those few humans still remaining inside a city. Husks are usually too stupid to navigate such difficult terrain, and the city ruins above are rich sources of salvage. Unfortunately, such a site also places the enclave far too near a terrible assortment of Uncreated and more dangerous forms of undead.

**Coastal Fort:** Most common along the northern coastline, these small fortresses were meant to provide housing for troops intended to quickly respond to raider attacks. In the days after the disaster, they've now become refuges for survivors and their families, with fishing providing the bulk of their food. The disadvantage of these places is that everyone knows where they are, and raiders and worse often lie in wait for their hunting and salvage parties.

**Concealed Tunnels:** Caves, river passages, heretical hiding-places, mountain clefts, or some other void in solid stone provides a shelter here. While crude, most of these have been shaped to provide a source of water, and careful excavation can provide entrance to areas that would be too dangerous to reach in other ways. As with abandoned mines, however, a truly terrible monster that gets loose within the tunnels can slaughter an entire enclave as the inhabitants find themselves trapped in their own sanctuary.

As a GM, you can use a location as a cue for flavor and challenges. Some locations might still be laced with difficulties or threats worthy of challenging a pantheon, while others simply provide you with hints as to what kind of furnishing, inhabitants, and layout the PCs will find there. A location with no mechanical difficulties attached to it can still serve to add flavor and texture to an encounter, helping the players feel a sense of place in Ancalia's bleak environment.

Don't hesitate to mash up results on the tables below, if you want to add extra spice to a result. Both locations might be present on the same site, or the conflict might be positioned equidistant to them, or they might even be part of the same general complex. It may be that the location was originally the first type of result, and was only later transformed into its current state.

d20

## Ancalian Locations

1	Abandoned Mine, lost to common memory
2	Ancient Ruins of the Five Kings or the Polyarchy
3	City Sewers sealed against husk incursions
4	Coastal Fort protected against landward incursions
5	Concealed Tunnels hidden from surface-walkers
6	Country Villa of a dead blade lord or rich merchant
7	Defensible Manor built to repel human raiders
8	Fae Barrow hidden beneath the earth
9	Floating Refuge adrift on a lake or river
10	Foreign Camp, whether Lomite, Ulstanger, or other
11	Fortified Neighborhood within a ruined city
12	High Plateau with arable land and narrow access
13	Isolated Suburb outside a fallen city
14	Market Town that somehow held out against evil
15	Mountain Valley with terrain too rough to climb in
16	Protected Island with currents to sweep away husks
17	Remote Monastery with effective defenses
18	Secluded Nunnery that stood aloof from towns
19	Secret Cove once used by smugglers
20	Wrecked Hamlet half-rebuilt by its current occupants

**Country Villa:** This was once a pleasant country getaway for a coin lord, or a hunting lodge for the blade lord of the fief. The remoteness helps preserve it from the largest husk swarms and it's almost certainly been fitted out with water supplies and sturdy construction. This isolation can be problematic, however, when it comes time to salvage important materials or make contact with other groups of survivors. Aside from that, the rich fittings and furnishings of the place make it an enticing stop for raiders and foreign adventurers.

**Defensible Manor:** This manor is close enough to the coast or the Lomite border that its owner found it necessary to ensure its fortification. Most are two or three stories in height, with the main entrance on the second floor at the top of an easily-dropped flight of stairs. The ground floor is windowless, the whole construction is of

stone, and the building makes an admirable refuge for the desperate. Unfortunately, placed where it is, it faces not only the depredations of the husks, but strikes from Lomite raiders or Ulstang reavers.

**Fae Barrow:** The ancient lairs of the Cousins are still fitted with the ancient theotechnology of Kham, and are built as structures of steel, glass, and eldritch energy. The environment is magic-rich enough to sustain the fae inhabitants, but for some reason this barrow is either empty or occupied by fae willing to share their lodgings. The price charged for this charity is often harrowing, but the desperate refugees may feel that they have no choice. In some rare cases there might even be a kind of equality between the groups, but only when both have the strength to demand a mutual respect.

**Floating Refuge:** These refugees have taken to the water, dwelling on a ship, barge, or raft. They might be hiding out in an interior lake, or floating in some protected cove. It's unlikely that the refuge is actually fit for sea travel, as anyone with a serviceable ship and a functioning crew has almost certainly fled Ancalia. The water protects them from most ordinary varieties of husk and casual bandit attacks, but it also makes it difficult to hide from hostiles unless they can move the refuge to safer waters.

**Foreign Camp:** Foreign adventurers have made a camp here, defending it against the husk swarms and making use of the local refugees. Some of them may actually have a charitable purpose in their coming, but the great majority are just here to loot Ancalia's cities. Many of the refugees are perfectly willing to help them so long as the foreigners provide food and protection, but all too many of these interlopers have no real idea of how bad it is in the cities or the danger of the surrounding lands. If the camp is made up of Lomite soldiers or Ulstang raiders, any Ancalians there will be those unlucky enough to have been caught and enslaved. In the case of the Ulstang raiders, such victims might be considered more serviceable as undead thralls than living slaves.

**Fortified Neighborhood:** These urban dwellers are actually surviving inside a city's walls. They've somehow sealed off their neighborhood from the surrounding zones and there aren't yet any particularly monstrous Uncreated around to destroy them. Their existence is extremely precarious, but they're close to sources of valuable salvage and they've probably found granaries or other preserved food sources that can sustain their limited numbers for now.

**High Plateau:** This enclave is located on a high plateau with steep-walled sides, most likely in the foothills of the Kaffan range. Some sort of deep well or pressure-fed spring makes the place habitable, though there may be limited space for crops and people. Flowing water easily cuts passages through the limestone of these plateaus, and some enclaves find their end when foes boil up from the broken earth.

**Isolated Suburb:** This enclave is planted on the far side of a fast river or other natural barrier between them and a fallen city or town. The local buildings have been torn up for barriers and fortifications, and the open space converted to cropland. This close to the city, the refugees are in constant peril of massive husk swarms or Uncreated attack, but they're also very close to valuable resources. Some inhabitants might cherish dreams of retaking the greater town, but few enclaves have the manpower necessary to clear the streets, and any enclave populous enough to do so would need more protected farmland than can be planted within the old city's walls.

**Market Town:** This town has somehow escaped complete destruction, probably due to savagely-effective measures in the early days of the catastrophe. It was probably a walled community far away

from the major population centers, a market town with granaries for the country hamlets and a self-sufficient supply of artisans. If it's maintained some kind of civilization it's probably a beacon to the surrounding refugee enclaves, but it's also likely well-aware of its limits in supporting new citizens. Those few market towns that have survived this long are unlikely to have done so by kindness.

**Mountain Valley:** The high Kaffan peaks are riven with deep valleys, some largely inaccessible from the outside world to those not familiar with the maze of trails and tunnels necessary to reach them. Some of these valleys still support a hard sort of existence, with sparse agriculture and shepherding to sustain the inhabitants. While far from the husk swarms of the lowlands, these communities are also far from anyone who might be able to help them in a crisis.

**Protected Island:** The enclave has set up on a small island, either one in an interior lake or a dollop of land off the coast with currents strong enough to sweep away husks that dare the water. The environs usually allow for good fishing, but the loss of boats and a lack of raft material can leave the refugees stranded and desperate. Coastal islands are also exposed to Ulstang raiders and are easy pickings for these savage northmen.

**Remote Monastery:** Ancalian monasteries were well-suited for survival, as they are intended to be largely self-sufficient on the labor of the monks and their tenants. Their reputation as places of holiness tended to draw swarms of refugees, however, and many collapsed under the strain or the attacks of Uncreated. Those that survive are the most remote or the most ruthless, and the occupants are very often rather different than the original monastics.

**Secluded Nunnery:** Nunneries were also intended to be mostly self-sufficient, albeit depending more on the contributions of rich families and the toil of tenant laborers than the efforts of the nuns. All but the most brutal Ancalian bandit would flinch from harming a nun, so many more of these places survived than would be expected of an institution composed of pacifistic women. Of course, the fact that many of these nunneries hosted numbers of female Invidian knights helped encourage this survival. Some of the less fortunate and less defended establishments have been taken over by raiders or exceptionally savage bandits, with the nuns left to survive as best they can under their new circumstances.

**Secret Cove:** Smugglers and infiltrators have made use of a number of hidden coves on the Ancalian coast. Some are clefts in a rocky shore, others are small inlets veiled by vegetation, and a few are magically-enchanted bays that appear as featureless shoreline to the distant. A cove allows for easy fishing and even trade with the few reckless merchants who dare to sail to Ancalia, but it's also relatively exposed to Ulstang raiders and foreign adventurers. Most inhabitants will take care to hide the inlet from unexpected visitors, or else arrange their welcomes to eliminate any strangers who look more useful dead than alive.

**Wrecked Hamlet:** These farming villages are spread throughout Ancalia, small clusters of wattle-and-daub houses around a stone church, with perhaps a low stone wall around those villages that were uncomfortably close to the Lomite border or the reaver-scoured coastline. Most have been destroyed by the catastrophe, but those emptied out by plague rather than raiders are often intact enough to support a new population and possessed of fields sufficient to keep them alive. Few are in any way defensible against a serious threat, however, and most last only as long as it takes for the first major husk swarm to wander close.

# Things

**I**n a land blasted by evil forces and a cursed plague, some things will be more precious than they would be in a more pleasant clime. The objects and macguffins presented here offer some possibilities for equipping your adventures with such things as fit Ancalia's special situation and would be valuable to those survivors who've lasted this long.

In a pinch, almost any conventional fantasy macguffin can work for an adventure: magical geegaws, the keys to some sealed evil, the cure to a mystic curse, the one true king's crown, or so forth. Still, you can get more mileage out of the setting by choosing those elements that really fit Ancalia's special situation. Such tailored treasures help emphasize to the players that they're adventuring in a particular kingdom with particular problems.

**Blackmail Material:** Some evidence or witness exists that is being used to pressure someone important into obedience with someone else's wishes. Unlike ordinary criminal evidence or hidden answers, this information is being actively used right now to squeeze someone. It's important that the blackmail evidence be fairly well-contained and not amenable to easy dissemination; the only provable copy of an agreement, for example, or a particular witness whose testimony is beyond reproach. If it's too easy to copy the material, it decreases its specific importance.

**Celestial Shard:** Someone has laid hands on one or more celestial shards from the broken engines of creation. It's quite possible that they don't entirely understand what they've found, but even the less sophisticated arcanists of Arcem can make use of these shards for their enchantments and rituals. The tremendous power within these fragments is very difficult for mortals to exhaust, however, and the shard is much more likely to be the occult "engine" at the heart of some mortal working rather than a consumable component of a plan. If it is meant to be consumed, the pantheon must rush to get it.

**Criminal Evidence:** Ruinously persuasive evidence exists that someone important has done something terrible. Actors in the situation may be aware that the evidence exists, but without having it in hand they can't prove their case to others. If the guilty party is aware this evidence exists, they're probably doing everything they can to find and destroy it, preferably using agents who don't understand what it is they're erasing, or minions who can be discreetly killed after the situation is contained. In some cases the crime might not even have happened yet, but the proof that it's impending has somehow gotten loose from the guilty party's control.

**Food Cache:** Ancalia has been savagely depopulated over the past five years, but some enclaves are still too large to be supported by hunting and fishing. Even smaller ones might be so hard-pressed by husks or reavers that they don't dare leave their fortified homes. For these people, finding caches of stored grains, hardtack, casked saltfish, and other long-lived foods can mean the difference between life and death. The suddenness of the catastrophe has produced many abandoned warehouses and granaries throughout the peninsula, waiting for salvagers strong enough to get the goods away before undue attention is earned.

**Foreign Remains:** Pirates and adventurers all along the eastern coast share muttered tales of Ancalia's waiting treasures, the wealth of

It's also important to remember that the things here need not be terribly valuable to the PCs so long as they're precious to the other characters involved in the adventure. A group of Godbound PCs might have no need at all for a silo full of winter wheat, but it might spell the difference between life and death to a hard-pressed enclave.

When choosing things for your adventure, take a moment to make certain that they're not objects or information that the PCs can trivially produce with their own Words and gifts. If you have a pantheon with a Godbound of Fertility in it, any adventure that hinges on the importance of wheat stocks is likely to be resolved in moments. It's perfectly acceptable to put in a situation that you know the PCs can effortlessly overcome, but that shouldn't be the *only* situation to challenge them. Make sure to give them some real trouble to resolve.

## d20

## Nature of the Thing

1	Blackmail Material, currently being used on someone
2	Celestial Shard, awaiting Godbound hands
3	Criminal Evidence, lying ready for someone's use
4	Food Cache of grains, dried fish, hardtack, or the like
5	Foreign Remains of a failed expedition by outsiders
6	Hidden Answer to a question critical to the situation
7	Holy Relic that inspires or has magical powers
8	Key to a Place that someone needs to reach or open
9	Lost Plunder stolen and then lost by the thief
10	Map to Secrets, whether a physical map or a guide
11	Necessary Supplies to meet a specific present crisis
12	Needed Component for someone's master plan
13	Nemesis Object, a specific threat to someone's power
14	Noble Regalia that grants legitimacy to the bearer
15	Occult Tome with theurgic or low magic secrets
16	Powerful Artifact that might warp a mortal bearer
17	Precious Art with political, religious, or aesthetic value
18	Proof of Death to foil or enable someone's plans
19	Ward Key for mundus or empyrean wards
20	Weapon Store with arms and armor for many

cities lying in the street for bold men to gather. Some are daring enough to risk the Hollowing Plague and the husk swarms, but among them there are always those who are too reckless, too weak, or too unlucky to make it out alive. These foreign adventurers often bring goods and supplies that are impossible to get elsewhere in Ancalia, or magical tools they confidently believed would keep them safe from all harm.

**Hidden Answer:** A secret related to the situation is in desperate need of an answer: the hidden vulnerability of an Uncreated lord, the identity of a traitor within the enclave, the whereabouts of a missing member of the community... this answer is concealed, but sought by at least one person involved in the situation. GMs need to be careful about choosing these answers if there are Godbound of

Knowledge in the group. It's all right to choose an answer that their arts can discover, but you should then make sure that the challenge of the situation isn't trivialized by knowing it.

**Holy Relic:** The Ancalians are a pious people, and there are many holy relics of the Unitary Church spread throughout the land. Aside from the morale benefits of possessing one of these cherished trophies, many relics have actual magical powers associated with them, and some might qualify as outright artifacts to the right wielders. Most Ancalians are very uncomfortable with the idea of a relic being held by someone not of the Church, but they may not be in a position to do much more than grumble about it.

**Key to a Place:** Someone needs to get into a place, and this key is critical to that end. It might be a physical key that unlocks an impassable barrier to some hidden vault, or it could be a more metaphorical truth that unlocks the use of a magical artifact. The key might even be a person, someone whose cooperation and trust is necessary to win admission from the place's current inhabitants, or knowledge of the right time and place to access a sealed ruin.

**Lost Plunder:** Someone stole or looted something precious, only to lose it once more. The plunderer might still be alive, having been forced to abandon the item to save their own life, or having had it stripped from them by a greater rogue. It's also possible that the plunderer is dead, their gnawed bones lying scattered around the treasure's current resting place. Whatever the particulars, someone almost certainly knows that the plunder exists or has been stolen, and simply finding the loot may be much more difficult than actually collecting it from its current location.

**Map to Secrets:** There is a map to a hidden place of importance, and someone knows it exists. This place might be a fortified refuge for survivors, a vault of stored goods, a hidden trade anchorage where merchants cut deals with looters, or the concealed entrance into a preserved Fae barrow. Whatever the macguffin it's pointing towards, this map has been lost or hidden, and it's up to someone to find it or pry it out of the hands of its current holders, who may not realize what it is.

**Necessary Supplies:** Someone in the situation is in desperate need of a particular type of supplies, whether medical, edible, or mechanical. They have no chance of simply producing the necessary goods, so they need to find this cache in order to salve whatever need is driving them on. Given the nature of adventures, it's very likely that two or more participants in the situation need the same goods, and both of them might be sympathetic enough to make the ultimate outcome an open question for a pantheon.

**Needed Component:** A single specific object is vital to someone's plans. It might be a noble signet ring, an alchemist's specially-crafted furnace, a giant crystal of some eldritch mineral, or any other macguffin that has little use or value to anyone else. This component is probably either lost or in the possession of some hostile soul who has no intention of giving it over, especially if they realize how important it is to their rival's plans.

**Nemesis Object:** This thing is a physical threat to someone in the situation, a device or substance that can kill them easily or leave them critically vulnerable to an enemy. Uncreated, sorcerers, and other magical entities are most likely to suffer from a nemesis object, and may have been the actual, usually-unintentional creators of the thing. It may be a byproduct of their powers or a key to their abilities, and its destruction or use against them might pierce otherwise-impenetrable defenses.

**Noble Regalia:** This crown, scepter, signet, banner, or other token of nobility is more than a valuable chunk of metal and shiny stones. It's the actual implement that technically legitimates the ruler of a place: the sword that makes a jantirar, for example, or the golden scepter that entitles the bearer to stand as kantiba of a city. While it may seem irrational, these items are often magically powerful in of themselves, and a possessor of them is thus guaranteed to have the necessary prowess to fill the role. As a consequence, these items tend to be very rare.

**Occult Tome:** In these desperate hours, all too many Ancalian sorcerers are willing to turn to dark magics in the hope of closing the Night Roads or preserving their own loved ones. This occult tome might contain powerful theurgic invocations or some secret twist of low magic that someone in the situation is greedy to possess. The Unitary Church turns a jaundiced eye towards most forms of low magic and restricts theurgy to the handful of holy monks and nuns who can invoke it. The current situation is provoking a drastic broadening of opinion, however.

**Powerful Artifact:** This object is an artifact powerful enough to draw the attention even of Godbound. It might be a strange relic cast onto the peninsula through the Night Roads, or it could be part of some ancient storehouse of treasures broken open in the chaos, or it might even be something freshly-made by a frantic genius of an artificer or blindly lucky enchanter. At least one person in the situation knows that it exists, however, and is eager to lay their hands on it.

**Precious Art:** This art may or may not be valuable in a strictly material sense, but the artistry, history, or religious significance of it is tremendous. Holy icons, portable statues by long-dead masters, fragments of ancient Polyarchy craftsmanship, stained-glass windows of now-irreproducible hues... many things might qualify as precious art, and someone in the situation has a reason to want this object. Collectors might want it, preservationists might seek to save it from Ancalia's chaos, enemies might want it as a trophy of the kingdom's misery, and survivors might see it as their ticket to convincing a foreign ship owner to carry them elsewhere.

**Proof of Death:** Political processes can be frozen not just by death, but by the absence of certainty about death. Without knowing for sure that a former leader is dead, an enclave might not be able to choose a new one. Impostors are also common in this fallen age, canny vagabonds claiming to be jantirars or kantibas, knowing few would have any hope of proving them liars. Some groups might even be under threat from an outside party, one that won't be satisfied until the group hands over proof that their enemy is dead.

**Ward Key:** The cities of Ancalia had weak mundus wards, and many of their palaces had no functioning empyrean wards at all. Still, it may be possible to strengthen or reactivate these wards, hampering the spread of the Night Road influence and crippling the use of divine powers within the areas protected by empyrean wards. This object is a key to doing so, allowing its bearers to reactivate somnolent wards and immunize allies from their stifling effect.

**Weapon Store:** Ancalia is a land desperate for bread and steel now, and if an enclave doesn't have the former, the latter at least gives them a chance to acquire it. This cache contains a wealth of well-kept arms and armor, one sufficient to give an enclave a fighting chance against swarms of husks and mobs of desperate reavers. It might be a hidden Khamite store of Fae weaponry, or possibly a stock of ancient military artifacts or godwalkers left over from the Last War and the Polyarchy's desperate struggle against the Ren and Din.



# Twists



ventures that rely on a straight-up problem that is fully understood at a glance can be a great deal of fun. It's not necessary for every adventure to be a bait-and-switch trap or a false front over some more tangled situation.

Still, even when you want a relatively straightforward adventure for an evening's play, it can be helpful to spice it up with at least one twist to the original situation.

The suggestions offered here provide ways to complicate a basic adventure outline. You can assemble a simple plot with the templates earlier in this section or by means of your own devising and then tilt it slightly by applying one or more of the twists listed below.

Some of these twists completely invert the situation's initial appearance. The heroes might grab hold of an adventure hook that seems

to promise one thing, but more careful investigation will reveal the reverse hidden beneath the exterior of the plot. Other twists merely complicate the situation, making particular solutions less practical.

You can use twists to foreclose on simple solutions to a problem. If you know the pantheon could easily solve a problem with their Words or special abilities, you can apply an appropriate twist to make that straightforward application less feasible. A bandit clan that might be effortlessly overcome by a Godbound of the Sword might be tweaked with *Broken Amity*, and be composed of enclave members who fled an incompetent leader. A crop failure might be the fruit of a *Traitor Within's* soil-poisoning on behalf of her Uncreated master's bidding. Godbound might still choose to address these problems with brute force or raw power, but the final result may be less than satisfying.

**Averted Trope:** Pick a classic fantasy or Zombie Apocalypse trope related to the conflict: the knight in shining armor, the survivor enclave riddled with infighting, the impregnable castle, the fair maiden, or some other staple of the genre. Now twist it. You can invert it directly, such as making an abjectly cowardly knight, or simply turn it at an angle, such as making a grotesquely deformed princess who is the image of beauty to her misshapen followers. The goal with this twist is to offer the players a familiar piece of genre furniture, and then have them realize that it's not operating the way the players expect it to operate. Overuse of this twist can be somewhat annoying to some groups, however, as they wouldn't be playing a game of heroic fantasy if they didn't *want* to encounter some of the tropes and enjoy playing off of them.

**Broken Amity:** Two parties or groups in this conflict used to be allies or friends, possibly even relatives. At one point they had a good and useful relationship, but something happened to shatter that concord. It might have been a crime by one of them, or simply a misunderstanding, or the insidious machinations of a third party opposed to both of them. There may be some wish to restore their lost affection, but the current situation makes it impossible to contemplate.

**Conflict Expiration Date:** At some point in the relatively near future, the basic conflict of the situation will become a moot point. The magical macguffin will lose its powers, the spring crops will come in to avert starvation, the traveling traders will bring the vital component, or some other foreseeable event will nullify the problem. The parties involved in this situation know this, but for some reason it's not practical or desired to wait for the conflict to expire. The PCs might be able to defuse the situation by holding the matter down until it ceases to be a problem, or some outside malefactor might want to make things worse by visibly destroying the agent of impending resolution.

**Countdown:** Unbeknownst to those involved in the situation, there's a countdown after which the conflict will either become irrelevant or will result in all involved suffering. A husk swarm might be due to arrive in the area in a month, or the heir everyone's fighting to control might have a subtle, incurable disease, or the magic spring's enchantment is unstable and soon to end. The PCs will likely discover this countdown relatively early in their involvement, but the others involved might not believe it, unwilling to imagine that their sacrifices are useless. Conversely, the conflict might have to be re-

d20

Nature of the Twist

1	Averted Trope, a predictable element turned around
2	Broken Amity between former friends or allies
3	Conflict Expiration Date after which this is pointless
4	Countdown to an unforeseen disaster
5	Disproportional Conflict over some trifling dispute
6	Essential Misunderstanding of the conflict by someone
7	Grudge Fuel from an old injury or offense
8	Ignored Treasure that could change the whole situation
9	Impending Irrelevance of one or more parties
10	Misplaced Faith in a person or object that can't help
11	Mistaken Identity of a driving person in the conflict
12	Partly Visible Plan intended to do more than it looks
13	Puppetmaster moving a major actor from the shadows
14	Reluctant Struggle between rivals who'd rather not be
15	Straight Trope from the stories, delivered as expected
16	Third Party Involvement seeking their own interests
17	Traitor Within ready to betray their "allies"
18	Uncharacteristic Betrayal by an unlikely person
19	Unintentional Traitor who doesn't realize their role
20	Unstable Authority, unable to control their own

solved before the countdown goes off if success is to be had. The spring might be able to be stabilized if the conflicting parties work together, for example, or the husks might be repelled if the PCs' allies are made strong enough to survive the horde.

**Disproportional Conflict:** The conflict has gotten completely out of hand over a fundamentally trivial cause. The real dispute at the heart of things is something relatively minor, an issue that could be resolved with minimal fuss under most circumstances. Someone is throwing fuel on the flames, however, or is using the dispute as an easy excuse for more dramatic action. It's also possible that the sides have both suffered so much over the matter that they're no longer willing to listen to reason, and must have victory to justify their painful price.

**Essential Misunderstanding:** The parties to the conflict are operating under a fundamental error, one or all of them imagining that the conflict is about something else, or the object of the conflict is something that it isn't. The leader of the mistaken group might actually encourage this misunderstanding in order to add fuel to the conflict, allowing it to serve as a convenient excuse for a struggle they think is necessary. This error may be the product of honest mistake, a false impression given by the object of the conflict, or the active deceit of a third party.

**Grudge Fuel:** The parties involved in the conflict have hated each other for a long time, at least one of them feeling a sense of wounded propriety or offended honor. This grudge may or may not be justified, but they'll harry their enemy with the enthusiasm of the righteously wrathful, and will be disinclined to look for any less hostile resolution of the current conflict. A grudge may be involved on a more personal level too, with one or more of the individuals involved in the dispute driving it on in order to strike at a person they feel has wronged them.

**Ignored Treasure:** There's a tremendously useful or valuable object, person, or place involved in the conflict that everyone is overlooking. This artifact might be something they can't recognize, or a resource that could resolve the conflict entirely if it were employed in a way that's not intuitively obvious. The PCs may discover this resource early on, but it should be located in a dangerous place or in the unwitting grasp of enemies, requiring careful salvage or the deft extraction of it from enemies who could use or destroy it if they realized what they had.

**Impending Irrelevance:** The conflict masks the impending doom of a sympathetic group involved in the conflict. This difficulty might just be a foreshadowing of the impending collapse, or it might be a wholly irrelevant side issue against the background of some creeping, inexorable doom. The sympathetic group either doesn't recognize their onrushing fate or stubbornly refuses to admit it. Successfully resolving the conflict will do nothing to save the group; the PCs have to completely change the situation or resolve the dire circumstances if they're to preserve these people.

**Misplaced Faith:** Some group is putting their faith and trust in an unworthy object. A leader might be hopelessly incompetent, a magical protection might be fading, a resource might be soon depleted, or a rival group might not intend to honor an alliance. This misplaced trust will have dramatic consequences if it's not withdrawn in a timely fashion and more pragmatic actions are taken. The leadership may be unable to prompt this change of belief, as their own authority might be tightly bound with the object of the faith.

**Mistaken Identity:** At least one of the groups is wrong about the real identity of an important figure in the conflict. Someone might be claiming to be a noble leader, or a famed knight, or a powerful theurgist, or an insidious evil might be masking itself as a harmless helper. If this mistaken identity isn't revealed in time, it will lead the group to disaster. In some cases the mistaken identity might be benign, as an outside ally seeks to disguise their true nature.

**Partly Visible Plan:** The more antagonistic group's evident motivations are only part of the story. For instance, they may want to seize food supplies, but it's not just to feed their own enclave, it's to nourish an Uncreated abomination that's eating all their grain stores. Their apparent goal may be only part of a larger plan, and foiling their evident purpose might do nothing to impede the real goal they're trying to achieve.

**Puppetmaster:** One of the actors in this conflict isn't actually invested in it; they're being driven on by a puppetmaster who dictates their actions. This power behind the throne has their own purposes, and might even be in the pay of a rival force. The fruit of the conflict might be intended for their own personal enjoyment, or their desired outcome might just be one more piece in a grander plan.

**Reluctant Struggle:** No one involved in this conflict really wants to be in it, and everyone recognizes that it's ultimately doing them more harm than good. Even monstrous and wicked enemies might find the current fight to be untimely, while more neighborly rivals might be quarreling over an object or event that has no easy compromise outcome.

**Straight Trope:** Pick a classic trope for a heroic fantasy kingdom or zombie apocalypse and insert it straight into the conflict. The heroic knight really is a heroic knight, the deluded demagogue preaching "coexistence" with the husks really is a lunatic, and the noble-minded kantiba really is a selfless leader of his people. Players tend to instinctively mistrust obvious tropes, and may be tempted to feel the situation out before believing in it.

**Third Party Involvement:** An outside person or group unknown to the conflicted parties is actually causing the struggle or seeking to profit by it. Their fingerprints might be left on certain elements of the conflict, causing suspicious PCs to look elsewhere for the root of the trouble. They may want to exhaust all parties in the conflict before moving in, or seek to have them do the heavy lifting of retrieving an object or resource before they swoop in to take the prize from its exhausted seekers.

**Traitor Within:** A person embedded in one of the conflicting sides is actually a traitor in the service of a rival. This secret master may be an opposing party in the conflict, or it might be an outside force trying to harm all the local actors. This traitor might be placed in the antagonist's forces, feeding valuable information to the PCs at considerable risk to their own person. The traitor should have a comprehensible motive for their betrayal, and it can be helpful to foreshadow this motivation to the PCs early on so that their eventual discovery doesn't appear to be wholly conjured from dramatic thin air.

**Uncharacteristic Betrayal:** There's a traitor in one of the conflicting groups that would seem to be the last person likely to betray their own. They must have some very powerful motivation to turn on their allies, and this motivation should be clearly hinted at well before their inevitable betrayal. It may be that the traitor is someone the group leader can't afford to accuse, even though he or she may know the reality of the situation.

**Unintentional Traitor:** Someone in one of the groups is actually working for a rival, though they don't realize it. They might think they've been chosen for "special secret duties" by a legitimate authority, or they might just be doing innocent favors for a friend, or they might be sincerely convinced that their actions are in the best interest of their allies, no matter what the leaders say.

**Unstable Authority:** Some or all of the leadership of opposing groups is either unstable or irrational. They may not have the authority or legitimacy to actually make their subjects obey when the command isn't pleasing, or they may simply be too crazy to give rational commands. At best, the leadership can only "command" its followers to carry out courses of action that fit their subject's own preferred goals. Such leaders are usually very disinclined to admit their own powerlessness, especially to outsiders, for fear they might be deposed.

# A Player's Guide to Ancalia

## What Is Ancalia?

Ancalia is a peninsular kingdom, once part of the ancient Polyarchy of Kham. Formerly a civilized and peaceful land of peasants, artisans, and transhuman nobility, it has collapsed into nightmare since a great eruption of Night Roads five years ago. The castles, towns, and farming villages of the nation are now no more than charnel ruins choked with the animate corpses of the terrifying undead "husks".

## What Do Ancalians Look Like?

Ancalians are Akeh, dark-skinned, slim, and with straight black hair. Due to Khamite soul-gene manipulation, they tend to be handsome and healthy folk, albeit only the nobility have true transhuman gifts. Such nobility sometimes have striking physical differences. A few Ancalians are heirs of refugee Lomite Din, and so are pale of skin, hair, and eyes.

## Who Rules the Ancalians?

Their king was the High Negus Arad Kalay. In the cities, royally-appointed kantibas governed the people, assisted by appointed "coin lords" who ran monopolies and tax farms. In the countryside, great jantirars maintained their ancestral estates, sharing out fiefs with loyal "blade lords" who provided troops and tribute to their masters. Among the domains, noble knights of the seven great orders served as wandering justiciars who could pass judgment on anyone below a kantiba or jantirar, along with serving as champions against Lomite raiders, Ulstang reavers, or monstrous creatures of the deep wilderness.

All nobles in Ancalia were expected to have some transhuman lineage, and most have at least one remarkable gift related to that bloodline. The greatest lineages are the Five Families: the enduring Henok, the swift Alazar, the towering Tilahun, the ravishing Senai, and the sagacious Kalay. Aside from the Five Families, numerous smaller lineages also existed.

## What do Ancalians Believe?

Ancalians have always been fiercely devoted to the Unitary Church, loyal to the Patriarch of Ancalia and the fifty bishops he has ordained to govern the faith. Every village had its priest and every noble family their chaplain. Women were excluded from the priesthood but could serve as nuns, who dwelled apart from others in sanctified abbeys and nunneries.

A pious Uniter does not murder, lie, steal, assault others, worship anyone but the Creator, engage in sex outside of marriage, or defy the pronouncements of the Church. They *especially* do not permit anyone who dies to go without at least summary funeral rites. Intentionally neglecting funeral rites for the dead, however hated they were, is a sin worse than slow murder in the eyes of the faithful.

Foreign faiths are wrong, but so long as their believers keep them private the Ancalians did not object to them. Even so, adherence to the Uncreated, to angelic powers, or to overt atheism was a capital crime.

## What Do Ancalians Think of Foreigners?

Ancalia and Lom have hated each other for centuries due to their contrary religious beliefs. Border skirmishes regularly boiled into small wars. The Ulstangers were also despised for their merciless raids and abominable undead. While the Oasis States are also made up of Akeh people, their eugenic cults are repulsive to Ancalians, and the trade conducted with the south was always at arm's length. Other nations were too far away for the Ancalians to have developed strong opinions about them.

## What Happened in Ancalia?

Five years ago, in 995 AS, nine terrible Night Roads ripped open in various locations throughout the peninsula. A black miasma of disaster erupted from the roads, bringing with it a host of horrible Uncreated monsters. Just as awfully, the roads brought the Hollowing Plague; a maddening disease that turned its victims into cannibals before raising their corpses as ravenous, mindless undead "husks". In the five years since, roughly ninety percent of Ancalia's population has perished to the husks, the Hollowing Plague, the monsters, or other privations.

No coherent governmental authority remains. Only small enclaves of survivors still hold out, more of them collapsing with each passing month. High Negus Arad is thought dead, most of the nobility has been wiped out, and foreign looters and Ulstang raiders are finishing what the Night Roads began. It seems unlikely that any meaningful human population will remain on the peninsula in another five years.

Ancalia's neighbors have sealed their borders, though the Hollowing Plague seems not to be contagious outside the peninsula. Travel to and from the cursed land is strictly forbidden. Most foreign governments are convinced that Ancalia must have done *something* to cause this terrible calamity and they don't want refugees bringing it with them.

## Who Can You Be?

There are a number of backgrounds that could fit a hero from Ancalia, whether or not they're still dwelling in that blighted land.

- An *Ancalian noble*, gifted with the powers of your transhuman bloodline. See page 28 for details.
- A grim *royal knight* of one of the seven great orders, one of the last surviving defenders of the broken realm. Page 62 provides more.
- An *Ancalian peasant* or artisan infused with divine might to protect a people wholly bereft of aid. Page 14 talks about common life.
- A *nun, monk, or priest* of the Ancalian Church, suddenly blessed with unimaginable power to preserve. Page 12 gives more particulars.
- A *transhuman Cousin*, one of the "fae" lineages too strange to live in a damaged natural world. See page 52 for more.
- An *urban survivor* from one of the great cities of Ancalia, now with the power to change your terrible fate. Read more on page 20.

While Ancalia did not have a great deal of traffic with other realms, it did have its share of strangers who might have been trapped there when the catastrophe occurred.

## What Can You Do?

Save Ancalia. The nation is doomed if the Godbound don't come to its aid. Its neighbors would prefer to condemn it for supposed sins and its people have no strength left to resist the Uncreated and the Night Roads. You are the only hope that Ancalia has left. From the ragged enclaves of starving survivors to their champions of battered armor and notched blades, the best that Ancalia can do now is to die hard. Only your pantheon can save the nation from its impending destiny of ruin.

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