

THE BOOK OF THE RIGHTEOUS

A COMPLETE PANTHEON FOR FIFTH EDITION



BY AARON LOEB

WITH ROBERT J. SCHWALB & RODNEY THOMPSON

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WRITING: AARON LOEB

ADDITIONAL WRITING: MALCOLM SHEPPARD, WILLIAM SIMONI
(THE FOUNDATIONS OF RONTRA, THE LEAVES OF ELIWYN, THE FLAIL OF RONTRA)

GAME DESIGN: ROBERT J. SCHWALB AND RODNEY THOMPSON
BASED ON DESIGN BY AARON LOEB AND CHRIS PRAMAS

FROM A MYTHOLOGY CREATED BY: ROBERT LAWSON, AARON LOEB,
SANDEEP RAO, AND WILLIAM SIMONI

EDITING: JEFFREY FISHER, KRISTIN SATTERLEE, EVAN SASS, AND
ROBERT J. SCHWALB

PROOFREADING: MALCOLM SHEPPARD

GRAPHIC DESIGN & ART DIRECTION: HAL MANGOLD

COVER ILLUSTRATION: BRIAN DESPAIN

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATIONS: PIOTR ARENDZIKOWSKI, BRITT MARTIN,
BIAGIO D'ALESSANDRO, STANISLAV DIKOLENKO, MAURIZIO GIORGIO,
FELIPE GAONA, CLAUDIA IANNCIELLO, JOHNNY MORROW,
SVETOSLAV PETROV, BRYAN SYME, ANDREY VASILCHENKO,
DAMON WESTENHOFER, AND JOHN WILSON

GREEN RONIN STAFF: JOE CARRIKER, CRYSTAL FRAZIER, JAYM GATES,
STEVE KENSON, NICOLE LINDROOS, HAL MANGOLD, JACK NORRIS,
CHRIS PRAMAS, EVAN SASS, MARC SCHMALZ, MALCOLM SHEPPARD,
OWEN K.C. STEPHENS, DYLAN TEMPLAR, AND BARRY WILSON

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Aaron, Chris, and William would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Sandeep Rao. He made an oath to himself, he got his share, he couldn't drink a cup of coffee without spilling it, and he never met a game he didn't like. We'll miss you at Gen Con every year, Deeper.

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FOREWORD

IN THE BEGINNING WERE THE GODS. WHETHER THEY'RE CALLED DEITIES, POWERS, immortals, divinities, the elder spirits, or the first ancestors, gods tell you more about a fantasy world than almost anything else. Many of the most epic tales in fantasy arise from the gods—from the gods' desires, splendors, failings, and rivalries. Who fashioned the cosmos and why? The answer lies with the gods. Where did that strange monster or ruin come from? Usually a god, or a mortal coveting a god's power, gave rise to it. Why have those kingdoms clashed for thousands of years? It's possible the kingdoms' gods battled each other before time even began. What is the meaning of mortal existence? Can suffering and decay ever be counteracted by mercy and beauty? Such questions lurk under the surface of most fantasy stories, and the answers are often hidden with the gods. And when a game master sits down to forge a new world, where does that creator start? Usually with the gods.

Ever since I was a kid and pored over the d'Aulaires' *Book of Greek Myths*, tales of the divine have enthralled me. When I first encountered the cosmic map in the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* and the pantheons in *Deities & Demigods*, I saw that mythmaking and gaming could go hand in hand, that a roleplaying game could be a stage for stories about gods, their creations, and the heroes who follow in their footsteps. Divine themes are at the center of my D&D campaigns to this day, and when I sat down to co-design the *Blue Rose* roleplaying game for *Green Ronin*, writing the story of the gods was the task I gave myself first. Once I understood the gods, I figured the rest of the design would fall into place.

Around when I was working on *Blue Rose*, I met Aaron Loeb, the author of the tome you're now reading. At that time, we both lived in Berkeley, California, and he was looking for a D&D group. Our group happened to be searching for a new member, so we invited him on board. He wanted to be the Dungeon Master, and we readily said yes. It was an easy yes to give, for I was already familiar with *The Book of the Righteous*, which is filled with things I enjoy: cosmic stories, well-realized gods, detailed religions, and new character options. Aaron wanted his book to be the basis of our campaign, and so it was. I played Symeon the Scribe, a wizard in service to the god Tinel, the Heavenly Archmage. Symeon and his companions journeyed in a world shaped entirely by this book, and much fun was had in it, as we faced the glories and horrors hatched by the book's pantheon. I can say from firsthand experience that these pages are filled with things that can brighten any fantasy campaign.

After we became gaming buddies, Aaron and I co-authored the material on the gods in the second edition of *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, allowing our shared love of storytelling and divine dramas to spread into another fantasy world. When it came time for me to finish the *Player's Handbook* for the fifth edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*, it was vital to me to include a version of the cosmic map that had appeared in the first edition of the book and to detail pantheons from many of D&D's worlds. Those things are at the heart of the D&D multiverse and at the core of my love of roleplaying games. I know the same is true of my friend Aaron, as evidenced throughout this book.

Get ready to delve into this trove of ideas, whether you use the pantheon as written or you poach your favorite bits to spice up a pantheon of your own. I've enjoyed reading the tales herein as inspiration and entertainment, and the game material in this new edition has been ably updated by Robert Schwalb and Rodney Thompson, both of whom worked on fifth edition D&D with me. They provide a variety of ways to alter your character with a touch of the divine. Perhaps the game options will inspire you to devise some new ones!

However you decide to use this book's riches, may your stories be glorious, may your characters escape the gods' wrath, and may those heroes forever enjoy the favor of the heavens.

Jeremy Crawford
Lead Rules Developer of *Dungeons & Dragons*
May 2017



I: MYTHOLOGY & COSMOLOGY

THE MYTHOLOGY DESCRIBED IN THIS CHAPTER KNITS TOGETHER THE GODS AND CHURCHES DISCUSSED IN LATER chapters. The information here is intended to establish the relationships between the gods, but, more importantly, their relationship with mortals and the cosmology in which they live. The information presented here can replace an existing cosmology, add mythological details to an existing cosmology, or spark the imagination for creating a new cosmology.

THE STORY

In the beginning, the universe was a realm of serene emptiness, naught but absolute law and goodness. Then came chaos and evil, in the roiling power called the *Shachté* or *Corpus Infernus*. In the meeting of perfection and change, there was a flash and the **Nameless One** (the neutral creator god), an all-powerful being, uttered the first sound: His name. In speaking His name, He summoned Himself from nothingness.

HOW THE ELEMENTS WERE CREATED

In the **First Epoch** of creation, the Nameless One was alone in the darkness. He created a palace for Himself in the void and pondered His existence. At last, He began to create. Speaking four words, He created the four elements: **fire, water, earth, and air**. Knowing He could do anything with these four powers, He created a vision of what would come. He watched this vision for some time, seeing that by His action a world would be created, and would be filled with life. Then He acted as the vision had foretold.

HOW OUR WORLD WAS CREATED

In the **Second Epoch** of creation, the Nameless One built **four pillars** from the four powers (the Elemental Planes). Each pillar was one of the powers in its purest form. Then He created a **great sphere** and placed it on top of the pillars. This sphere is our universe. The universe was filled with nothing but ether, until the Nameless One created a central sphere (the **Material Plane**), filling it with all the parts of the sky: suns, moons, stars, winds, and vapors. Then He created land under the sky: mountains, hills, valleys, plains, and cliffs. Then He surrounded the lands He had created with the waters: oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, and streams.

THE BIRTH OF THE FIRST BEING, THE GOD OF FIRE

Having created a world where life would grow, the Nameless One waited, but life did not come, so He created it in a companion He called **Kador** (the lawful evil God of Fire). To Kador He gave the gifts of life, will, and fire (these three forces form souls), and ever after, only creatures with these three gifts were complete. The Nameless One was so pleased with Kador that He gave will to the earth, the sky, and the waters also. Then He delivered to Kador three prophecies.

First, He declared that much life would come to the world and that it was Kador's duty to give the gift of fire to all those born of the world. Second, He whispered a long decree into Kador's ear. Third, He proclaimed that as all of creation was born with the uttering of His name, so too would all creation cease when His name was spoken again. This said, the Nameless One departed from the sphere and was never heard from again.

THE BIRTH OF THE ELEMENTAL GODS

The earth, sky, and waters, having heard that much life would come to the world, tried to create it, but were unable. Eventually, Kador tricked them into unifying. All the parts of the earth unified and awoke with life as **Rontra**, the Earth (the lawful good Goddess of Earth). All the parts of the sky unified and awoke as **Urian**, the Air (the neutral good God of the Air). All the waters unified to awake as **Shalimyr**, the Water (the chaotic neutral God of the Waters). Kador gave fire to these three.

THE BIRTH OF THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE CURSING OF THE FIFTH FRUIT

From the joining of Shalimyr and Rontra arose a great and lovely tree, called **Eliwyn** (the neutral Tree of Life), and on it blossomed five fruits, tended to by Urian. Kador demanded the fifth fruit on the tree for himself, but the other three would not allow it. Kador became corrupted by the *Corpus Infernus*: the power of pure corruption. The assumed state of all life is lawful good, but the *Corpus Infernus* can drag life away from good, lawfulness, or both. Kador was drunk with power, and believed himself a higher being than the others. He likened himself to their father. Their refusal to give him the fifth fruit angered him, and he cursed it so that the child within would be weaker than a god but more plentiful—and would rebel against those who grew in the other fruits.

THE BIRTH OF THE FOUR MAIN GODS

The other four fruits ripened, and in them grew four young gods: two brothers, **Terak** (the lawful good or neutral God of War) and **Tinel** (the chaotic good or neutral God of Magic), and two sisters, **Morwyn** (the lawful good Goddess of Healing) and **Zheenkeef** (the chaotic neutral Goddess of Inspiration). Terak, Tinel, and Zheenkeef could not wait for their fruit to ripen, so they forced their fruit to fall. Tinel and Terak landed at the same moment. Then their sister Zheenkeef fell. At last, Morwyn's fruit finished

ripening and she fell. When all four gods emerged, Kador came to them and offered fire to the eldest. Each brother insisted that he was the elder. Kador gave all four the fire, pleased at having sown dissent among them, and then tried to steal the fifth fruit he had cursed.

THE BIRTH OF THE FIRST RACE, THE DIV

The fifth fruit burst open at his touch, and from it came the **div** (the precursors to genies), the first race of the world. They were weaker than the gods but more plentiful, for there were thousands of tiny div. Their blood was fire, and they did not age or grow ill. They ran all over Kador and he shook them off, scattering them across the world and forming three great tribes: the **Marid**, the **Shaitan**, and the **Shee**.

THE FIRST WAR AND DEATH OF THE GODS AND TREE OF LIFE

In the **Third Epoch** of creation, the races of the div spread further across the world. Terak, Tinel, and Zheenkeef engaged in the **lesser war of the gods**, using the fire given them by Kador to make weapons. Terak made the axe; Tinel made magic; Zheenkeef made inspiration. Terak and Tinel fought to be the eldest, and Zheenkeef believed if she destroyed them both, she would gain that title. Morwyn watched in horror. All four gods began teaching the div and granting them powers. Eventually, Terak and Tinel were tricked by Zheenkeef, and killed each other using Eliwyn, the Tree of Life, which was also destroyed.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOD OF DEATH, THE CORRUPTION OF THE GOD OF FIRE

In the moment that the two gods were killed, **Mormekar** (the neutral God of Death), the Shadow, was created. He told Morwyn that while death was in his power, so too would be rebirth if he possessed fire. Morwyn, Mormekar, Urian, and Rontra called to Kador for fire, but he refused to give it, even though he had been commanded to do so by the Nameless One; Kador had become so corrupted by the *Corpus Infernus* that he was now completely evil.

REBIRTH OF THE GODS AND THE TREE

Since Kador had betrayed his duty, Morwyn gave Mormekar her fire, which she had never used to make a weapon. Mormekar used it to burn the bodies of Tinel and Terak on a pyre built from the wood of Eliwyn. Zheenkeef so loved the dancing flames that she threw herself on the pyre and was consumed. When all was burnt to ash, nothing happened, and Morwyn fell to her knees and wept. When her tears hit the ashes, Eliwyn sprouted forth anew with five fruits, and at the foot of the tree were three infants: Terak, Tinel, and Zheenkeef reborn.

THE FIRST GOD BORN OF THE WOMB, THE CREATION OF THE CELESTIALS

Morwyn and Mormekar raised the three infants and had a child of their own, which they named **Maal** (the

lawful neutral God of Justice). As Maal and the other gods grew, Morwyn made her three great works. First, she called the mightiest of the div to her. Many had been given great powers by her siblings in their war, and these div she made into the celestial host, separating them from their people but teaching them the songs and wisdom of the gods. The chief of this host was the archangel **Iblis** (a solar who is now a lawful evil Duke of Hell). Second, she discovered, with the eyes of a healer, why it was that her siblings had gone mad and killed each other, and she created a cure. Third, she concocted three great laws.

THE CASTING OUT OF THE DEMONS

When Morwyn's works were complete, the gods were all fully-grown. She called them to her and explained their illness—the *Corpus Infernus* had infected them. To cure them, she had used her power and the power of the celestial host to build a prison outside of the world. This place she called **Hell**. Opening a portal to Hell, she expelled the *Corpus Infernus* from the gods and the celestial host, and this raw stuff of chaos and evil became what men call **demons**. This done, the gods would descend no further into evil.

THE FIRST LAWS OF THE GODS

She then shared the three laws with the gods: first, that the gods would never make war against one another; second, that the gods would use their strength to guide the div and the new races ripening in Eliwyn's fruit; and third, that no one god would rule the others. As the eldest, she would lead, but she could not order the other gods to obey and follow.

THE CREATION OF THE DEVILS

These laws agreed to, the gods all turned their attention to Kador, who had turned evil and had to be cured of the *Corpus Infernus* or cast out. Kador had prepared for this and had given powers to several div, making them as great as any of the celestial host—perhaps greater. His servants were named Lilith (with whom he procreated, giving birth to countless dark beasts), Baal (his fiercest warrior), Dispater (the clever), Mammon (the mad and power-hungry), and Leviathan (a Marid he had stretched into a sea-creature larger than any ocean). He also sought to make a creature in his own image, as the Nameless One had created him, and this creature he called Mephistopheles. He would call his servants “divils,” which would later become the word “devils.”

WAR OF THE GODS, BIRTH OF THE DRAGONS

The gods attacked Kador and his minions in the **Great War of the Gods**, but were driven back by a great deluge of fire unleashed by Kador, just as Leviathan swallowed Shalimyr so that the waters could not douse the flames. Fire spread everywhere, and those div caught in the deluge had their skin burnt away. Most died, but some were transformed into creatures of pure fire and power—the first dragons.



IMPRISONMENT OF THE GOD OF FIRE

The gods attacked a second time and broke Kador. The fire he was entrusted with was taken from him and placed into the five fruits of the tree so that all the children of the world born from those fruits would possess it. Kador and his servants were cast into the prison Morwyn had made for them, Hell, and most of the children spawned of Kador and Lilith went with them.

BIRTH OF THE YOUNG GODS

The gods had prevailed, and there was peace for a time. Morwyn took Terak as a second husband, and together they had twins: **Anwyn** (the lawful good Goddess of the Hearth) and **Korak** (the neutral good God of the Forge). Tinel and Zheenkeef married and begat the twins **Darmon** (the chaotic good God of Travelers and Messengers) and **Aymara** (the chaotic good Goddess of Art and Love). They raised these children happily, and all was well.

REBELLION OF THE DIV

Before long, the remnants of the Marid and the Shaitan grew restless. The div had been used and abused in every divine war. They now sought to overthrow the gods. They rose up as Kador had foretold, and were put down by the celestial host led by Iblis. The gods knew they had to expel the div from the world, for they were cursed by Kador. The Marid were sent to the pillar of water and the

Shaitan, to the pillar of fire. But the Shee, the silent third race of div, had never partaken in any war. They remained hidden about the earth, but Kador had cursed them too.

BIRTH OF THE FEY AND THE ELVES

The gods gave each Shee a choice—to be stripped of the fire in their blood and become mortal, or to be stripped of the gift of will. Those who agreed to be stripped of the fire were gathered by the gods and placed, sleeping, under Eliwyn, for they were a new mortal race called the **elves**, and would wait for the ripening of the other fruits. Those who agreed to be stripped of will were allowed to remain in their hiding places around the world, and were called the **fey**.

BIRTH OF THE DWARVES

The children of the gods grew, and yet the fruits still did not ripen. Finally, Zheenkeef grew impatient and went to the tree. She grabbed the sleeping elves to play with them, but they awakened and bit her hands. Yelping, she shook her hands and the elves were spread all over the world. Some even falling into the water, creating the sea elves. Her hand covered in blood, she grabbed the next fruit and hurled it across the earth. Meanwhile, Korak, the none-too-bright son of Terak and Morwyn, was playing on the other side of the world. He was hit in the head by the bloody fruit and gained some of Zheenkeef's inspiration, but was knocked unconscious for many years. Out of this fruit rose the **dwarves**, and they made great halls in Korak's head.

WHO IS THE NAMELESS ONE?

Although Great Church writings refer the Nameless One as a masculine figure (with pronouns to match), this tradition exists purely to placate those patriarchal cultures the faith preaches to. In fact, sages have argued long and hard about whether the Nameless One has a body, much less a gender. The Great Church and many other religions have a taboo against depicting the Nameless One as anything more than a humanoid outline, for such a depiction might be equivalent to uttering “his” name, ending the universe. Other faiths believe it acceptable to depict aspects of the Nameless One in various genders: a female Creator and a male Destroyer, for example. These are understood to not depict the true form of the Nameless One, but rather provide symbolic images to aid contemplation.

Thus, even though this book describes a masculine Nameless One so you can quote the most common liturgies directly, don't be surprised if you encounter texts and art describing the deity in other forms, both in this book and in campaigns that acknowledge the Nameless One's existence.

BIRTH OF THE GNOMES

Zheenkeef plucked another fruit, and noticed she had bled all over it. She licked off her blood and hurled the fruit across the world. From it came the **gnomes**, who had been touched by her inspiring blood, tongue, and breath.

BIRTH OF THE HALFLINGS

The next fruit she kicked, and it bounced across the world. This squashed the people inside, who were supposed to be tall and willowy, to half their size. Thus were born the **halflings**.

BIRTH OF THE HUMANS & THE FIFTH FRUIT

Hungry from her labors, Zheenkeef plucked the fourth fruit and gobbled it up. This made her quite ill, and Morwyn came at the sound of her bellowing. Morwyn made her vomit up the fruit and all the gods worked to reconstruct the contents. The people inside the fruit, **humans**, lost something of themselves in the process, which is why they are so short-lived. They were made into many different forms by the gods, which is why they look so different from one another.

The fifth fruit remained untouched, and still has not ripened.

MAKING OF THE LAND OF THE DEAD

The children of the gods grew to maturity after this, and there was an **Age of Heroes** when the gods walked among the mortal races, giving them great gifts and teaching them countless tricks. During this age, Maal and Korak built a great realm for Maal (the land of the dead) under the earth, beneath the roots of Eliwyn, so that he might oversee the souls of the dead.

THE THREE COMPANIONS

FIND THE THREE SISTERS

Some short time after the completion of the realm, Maal, Darmon, and Korak went adventuring together looking for wives. On their journey, they found three sisters: **Naryne** (the lawful neutral Goddess of Nobility), **Thellyne** (the neutral good Goddess of the Hunt), and **Canelle** (the chaotic good Goddess of Victory). While Maal and Naryne immediately agreed to marry, Darmon and Korak's love for the other two sisters (Darmon's for Canelle, Korak's for Thellyne) went unreciprocated. Regardless, these three sisters joined the family of the gods.

THE GODS DIVIDE OVER CHAOS AND LAW

In the **Fourth Epoch** of creation, the age of heroes ended. The gods, forbidden to fight against one another directly, taught the mortal races to think like them. They cultivated followers and used them against one another. Although *Corpus Infernus* didn't burn within them, they still had powerful disagreements. Some believed strongly in the importance of individualism, while others wished to see strong societies and laws. The two sides gave some of their followers great powers to work their will on the world, spoke to them directly, and even walked with them.

THE SEPARATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Eventually, though, the struggles of the servants of the gods grew so ugly and intense that the gods almost went to war again. To prevent this, the gods agreed on a Compact: a system of laws that prohibited them from directly ordering the mortal races to do their bidding. The gods had been living in the earthly sphere (the Material Plane), but they then set themselves apart, creating a great mountain away from the world and living at its spire (the Seven Heavens). Maal's Kingdom was also separated from the earth, with only a dark river connecting them.

THE CREATION OF THE COMPACT, GEHENNA, AND ELYSIUM

Rather than instructing mortals directly, the Compact created a system in which mortals might be given powers to serve the will of a god only if they came, of their own free will, to worship that god. This new order gave the gods power from the belief and prayers of mortals. To make the mortals' choice to serve the gods meaningful, the gods agreed to allow the dark forces to tempt mortals. In their effort to contact the demons to arrange this, the gods discovered that Kador had conquered Hell with his followers, the **devils**, and ruled under a new aspect, as **Asmodeus**. Concerned by this, the gods developed a method to keep Asmodeus in check, allowing the devils and the demons (now located in an infinite **Abyss** that they had burrowed out of the sphere) to battle over the souls of the wicked. The gods then created the **dae-mons** and the **guardian angels** to track all small acts

MYTHIC TIMELINE

OTHER RACES

The mythology presented here describes the origins of the most iconic races, but the *PHB* and other rulebooks add other races to the game world. These appeared during and after the Age of Heroes and might have been created by accident, for some divine purpose, or as branches of other the races created from the fruit of the One Tree. If you want these other races or new ones of your own creation to have a stronger connection to the mythology, you can simply say the One Tree bore more fruit and other races sprang from them.

of wickedness and goodness, placing them in their own planes (Gehenna and Elysium, respectively).

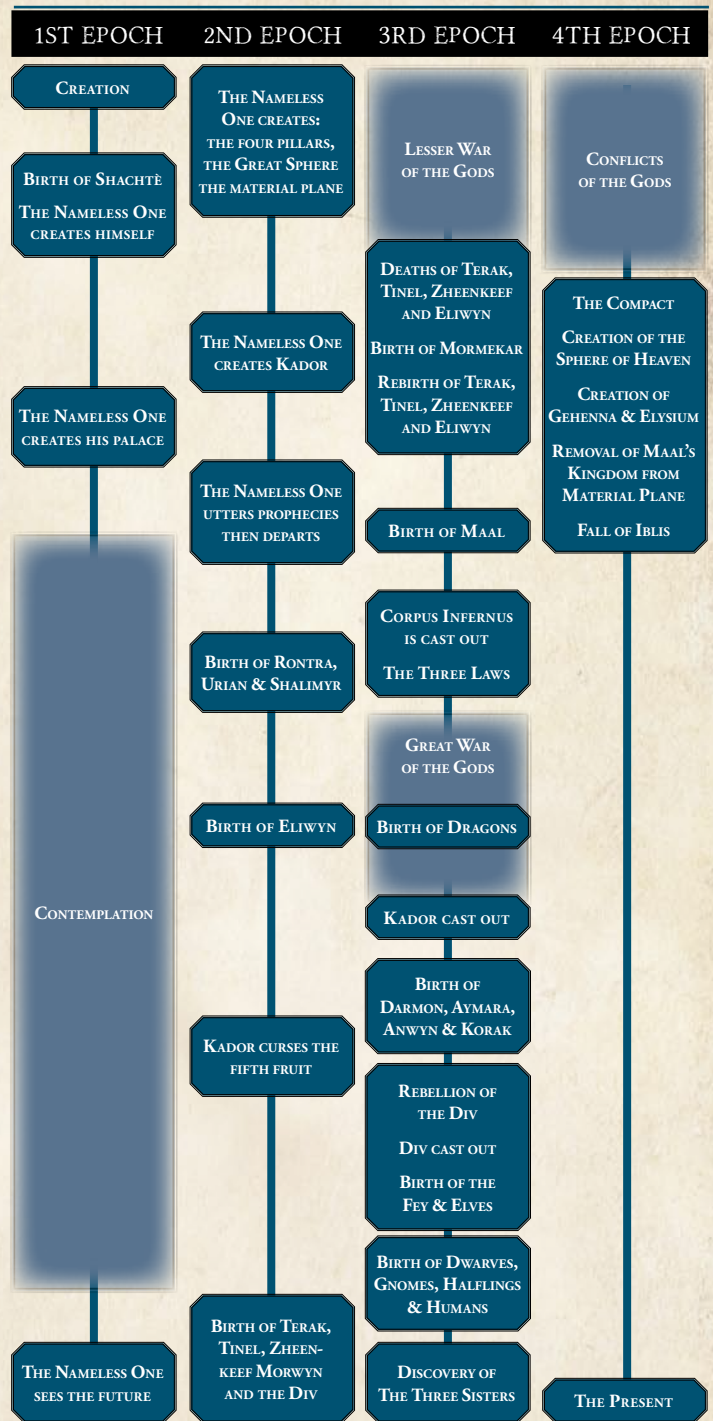
HOW THINGS STAND

The gods put in place the order of the world, which prevails to this day. Mortals have free will. They are instructed by the earthly servants of the gods (clergy and other mortals who worship the gods) to do good, but are tempted by evil mortals and the powers of Hell and the Abyss to do evil. At all times, they are watched by the guardian angels and the daemons that keep great ledgers of their deeds. When they die, their souls are claimed by Mormekar and led down the dark river to **Maal's Kingdom**, where they stand before the King of Souls and tell the tale of their lives.

If they led undistinguished lives, they wait in Maal's Kingdom to be reborn. If they led lives of brutal, chaotic evil, they are sent to the Abyss for punishment. If they indulged in petty, neutral evil, daemons claim them for punishment in Gehenna. Acts of cunning, lawful evil consign a soul to Hell, and the embrace of devils. If a person led a life of great good or terrible tragedy, they may be admitted to the halls of Maal to live in bliss for eternity. The most devoted are claimed by their gods; they ascend the mountain of Heaven and become servants of their gods for eternity.

THE FALL OF IBLIS

This is the order of things as it stands now, with the gods drawing the mortal races toward good—though arguing over the nature of good—and the creatures born from or severely tainted by the *Corpus Infernus* drawing mortals toward evil. This system, with the heavens and the dark powers united to focus their attentions on the mortal races, did not sit well with everyone, and eventually the chief of the archangels, Iblis, revolted against the gods in protest. His rebellion failed, and he was cast into Hell to abide with the devils he had helped defeat long before. Since the creation of the compact and the uprising of Iblis, there have been no major conflicts of the gods, and the mortal races have come into their inheritance of the world, which they enjoy to this day.



THE END OF THINGS

There are many theories about the End Times, when the apocalypse will come, and the order of creation will collapse, or transform beyond imagining. Some believe a being will speak the Nameless One's name, and bring an end to existence. Some say Asmodeus, the dark face of Kador, will free himself from Hell and unleash his vengeance upon the gods, burning existence. The last great theory holds that the fifth fruit, that still hands on from Eliwyn's bough will ripen and fall, and that which emerges from it will change creation.

COSMOLOGY

The map on page 11 shows the cosmology associated with the myths presented in this book. Descriptions of the various places start at the top and move clockwise.

HEAVEN

In the fourth epoch, the gods set themselves apart from the world, building for themselves a magnificent home outside the Material Plane. Heaven is a great mountain with seven shining cities. Six array themselves before you as you ascend—one on each great slope. An archangel (a **solar**) watches over each city. The spire of the mountain is where the seventh city can be found, and though it is at the top of the mountain, it is said to be infinite. This is the city of the gods. At the center of the city stands a great hall, where the gods sit on their thrones to debate with each other, and watch the Material Plane.

ELYSIUM

To follow the Compact, it was necessary to observe the good and bad deeds of all mortals. The gods created Elysium, where a “light shadow” (essentially, a likeness made of light) of every living mortal walks about. These likenesses are constantly observed by the guardian angels of Elysium (usually **devas**), who record their good deeds, great and small, in enormous ledgers that they deliver to Maal’s kingdom when each likeness’ corresponding mortal dies.

THE DARK RIVER

With the Compact, it became necessary for souls to travel from plane to plane, sometimes without guidance. Thus, the gods created the Dark River, which flows through every plane of the sphere, and is even said to have a source in the Material Plane. Although the Dark River gets its name because the waters appear black as moonless night to most travelers, it begins to shine as it approaches Elysium and the mountain of Heaven and eventually transforms into a bright river of light.

THE GREAT SPHERE

The Nameless One formed the four pillars and then placed the Great Sphere on top of them. When he created it, it was filled with emptiness in the form of ether

and shadow. He pushed these into the center of the Great Sphere and created the Material Plane among them. He filled the rest of the Sphere with energy, ideas, images and sounds: the Astral Plane. Outside the Great Sphere, the infinite void stands apart from creation. Besides mystics and sages, few people discuss the Great Sphere as anything other than a container for the Material Plane. Indeed, “the Sphere” is mostly used as a synonym for the Material, even though it is a distinct realm that contains multiple planes.

THE ASTRAL PLANE

When the Nameless One first created the Material Plane and bound Shadow and Ether, he left the rest of the Great Sphere filled with the energy that was most like him: a stillness thrumming with the power of possibility. This energy has no substance, but forms the great expanse that is found between the planes of existence. This is the vast emptiness of the Astral Plane, filled with light, sound strange phenomena.

THE FOUR PILLARS

The elemental planes exist as pillars supporting the Great Sphere, and even the gods who hold sway over the elements in the Prime Material do not control these pillars. Each one contains the purest form of the elemental energy it represents.

WATER PILLAR

The plane of water is filled with its element, which flows with arcane currents, rippling with light or unseen in uttermost darkness. The Water Pillar is full of life, some of which comes to the Material Plane from time to time. The Marid div dwell here.

EARTH PILLAR

This pillar is filled with every form of rock, dull and precious stones, dirt, sand and the pure energy of the earth, element. The creatures that reside here rarely come to the Material Plane, as they lack curiosity.

AIR PILLAR

In this realm of elemental air, endless sky and strange clouds (made of condensed elemental air, not water vapor) host an array of flying and floating creatures. Some of them frequently visit the Material Plane, but they’re invisible or hidden in the world’s clouds.

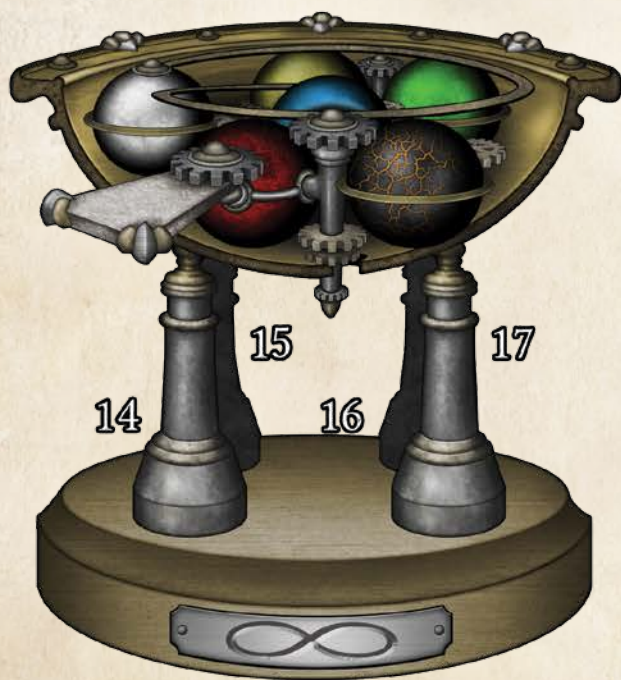
FIRE PILLAR

The Shaitan div were exiled to the Fire Pillar, dwelling between blinding flames and smoke that erupts without a source. The realm’s nature makes it hostile to beings that do not contain the old div’s inner fire.

GATES

During the time of the compact, Tinel and Korak built many gates between planes, so that one could travel from place to place by knowing their locations and means of access. The only gate that is considered truly impassable by force or treachery is the gate to Heaven.

A MAP OF THE COSMOS



LEGEND

1. HEAVEN
2. ELYSIUM
3. THE DARK RIVER
4. ASTRAL
5. THE GREAT SPHERE
6. NEGATIVE ENERGY
7. POSITIVE ENERGY
8. ETHER
9. SHADOW
10. THE PRIME MATERIAL
11. HELL
12. THE ABYSS
13. GEHENNA
14. FIRE PILLAR
15. AIR PILLAR
16. EARTH PILLAR
17. WATER PILLAR
18. LAND OF THE DEAD

FEYWILD AND SHADOWFELL

The cosmology of the *Book of the Righteous* is silent about the Feywild, the traditional home of the fey creatures, and the Shadowfell, a dark reflection of the mortal world, so how they fit into your game and whether they exist is up to you. Perhaps the best way to introduce these planes into the cosmology is to embed them inside the Ethereal and Shadow Planes. The Feywild could be a realm drifting within the ether, where portals allow the fey and others to travel to and from the Material Plane. Similarly, the Shadowfell could be a gloomy, distorted reflection of the Material Plane that has manifested in the darkness of Shadow. You can learn more about these planes in the *DMG*.

HELL

The nine circles of Hell were built as a prison for the creatures called demons. It is now ruled over by Asmodeus, once the god of fire, and now the king of deception and lord of Hell. This is where lawful evil souls go when they have been condemned to punishment by Maal.

GEHENNA

Created by the gods on top of a battleground of demons and devils, Gehenna is the place of observation. Just as every person casts a light shadow of herself into Elysium to be seen by guardian angels, so too does she cast a dark shadow of into Gehenna, where the daemons watch her, whisper vile little temptations in her ear, and record her crimes in dark ledgers. This is where neutral evil souls go for punishment when they've been condemned by Maal, and where demons and devils often do battle.

THE ABYSS

The most powerful demons, the qliphoth, are like dark shadows of the gods, and pure beings of *Corpus Infernus*. Using their incredible might, they long ago burrowed through the Great Sphere, and out into the void. Thus, the Abyss in which the demons reside is infinite, stretching out forever until it mingles with nothingness. They build themselves strange dark citadels there, and from them launch forces against Hell, marching across Gehenna and through planar gates. This is where chaotic evil souls go when they have been condemned by Maal.

THE LAND OF THE DEAD

Originally found at the center of the earth in the Material Plane, the Land of the Dead was set apart as its own plane when the gods formed their Compact. This is where Maal rules with his wife Naryne, judging all souls based on the great ledgers kept by the guardian angels and the daemons. Those who have led exceptional lives live here for eternity in one of four great halls of reward. Some scholars consider those halls separate planes of existence. Those who have led lives of great evil are sent to one of the three evil planes for eternal punishment. A rare few are sent to Heaven to be with their gods. Most return to the Material Plane after a time and another chance to find the afterlife by their mortal deeds. From time to time, Maal's

half-brother Korak comes to the Land of the Dead to "reforge" a soul, hammering out all of its flaws and sending it back to earth.

It is believed that only members of the five mortal races stand before Maal to be judged, and that other races lack the souls necessary to be sent to such destinies.

THE HEART OF THE GREAT SPHERE

Mortal races live on the Material Plane in the core of the Great Sphere, but are enclosed by the Crystal Sphere of positive and negative energy, and share their place with other mystic energies, strange realms, and of course, all of the beings that dwell within them.

THE POSITIVE & NEGATIVE PLANES

When the Nameless One entered the Great Sphere and created the Material Plane, he contained the two forces from which all of creation came to be—positive and negative energy—within the Crystal Sphere. The Crystal Sphere encloses the Material Plane, and positive and negative energy roils out from corresponding poles like air currents. Violent maelstroms rage where they meet within the crystal. Few visit the surface of the crystal, much less describe the bizarre beings that might life there.

THE ETHEREAL & SHADOW PLANES

Within this crystal sphere, the Nameless One gathered the energies that filled the Great Sphere when he first created it. These energies, ether and shadow, were perfect but had no substance. The Nameless One created the skies, earth, and seas on top of the ether and shadow by combining power of each with his own great words of power. So it is to this day that the shadow and ether are all around the world of substance, the Material Plane, but go mostly unnoticed.

THE MATERIAL PLANE

Everything a normal mortal can see and touch is a part of the Material Plane—the sun, moon, stars, land, sky, and water. With great magic, a person can see the Ethereal and Shadow Planes that coexist with the Material Plane within the Crystal Sphere. With even greater magic, a person might travel outside of the sphere, to other planes, communicate with their distant denizens, or summon them for worship or service.

II: THE GREAT CHURCH

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS THE GREAT CHURCH, A RELIGION THAT HONORS THE UNITED GODS OF THE TREE. The church encompasses an array of good and neutral deities, making it a fitting choice for clerics, paladins and other religious characters who need not necessarily honor a specific god or goddess. The Great Church can be the default religion in your campaign, or a rising force that adherents of specific deities view with curiosity or suspicion.

THE LORDS OF HEAVEN

THE GREAT CHURCH

GODS OF THE TREE,
LORDS OF GOOD, HOLY ONES

Members of the Great Church worship the gods equally as a family, so the organization occupies a broad and nebulous place in the world. As a group, the gods are called the Lords of Good for a reason: They are associated with all that is holy and sacred. Together they represent life, its many wonders, and its prolific disappointments. The Church recognizes three groups of gods: the old gods, the treeborn gods, and the young gods.

The old gods are associated with the fundamental elements that are everywhere, with or without the interference of the mortal hand or mind (rocks, oceans, stars). Scholars sometimes call these the “chthonic” gods. The treeborn gods represent the individual, with Terak being the body, Tinel the mind, Morwyn the spirit, Zheenkeef the emotions and dreams, and Mormekar the body’s ultimate failure, death. Finally, the young gods represent the concepts of society, or groups of individuals: nobility, forging, diplomacy, love, and woodcraft. The Great Church, therefore, ministers to everything that lives and thrives in the world as personified by the Gods of the Tree, from the smallest monetary transaction to the unfathomable workings of the heavens.

The Great Church represents the gods with icons, showing them seated in a semi-circle on thrones of gold. Each god appears in his or her most common likeness, as described in the gods’ various entries. The symbolic representation of the Lords of Heaven is a white tree with five golden fruits growing on it. A cleric of the Great Church’s holy symbol is usually a tree crafted from white gold with five yellow-gold fruits.

The tree symbol is simplified when scrawled or put on small surfaces, as an inverted pyramid containing five circles in a star pattern. This is a much less formal symbol than the tree, but it can be made quickly or crafted out of basic materials and used by a cleric of the great church as a holy symbol in times of crisis. It is the symbol used by the very poor.

The Gods of the Tree are not particularly strongly associated with any one group of people, or any one race. The Great Church certainly is, though, and its associations are explained below.

The gods are predominantly neutral good. Although the pantheon is divided quite strongly between the chaotic-tending gods and the lawful ones (necessitating the Compact), they are united in their opposition to the works of evil—slaughtering infants, slavery, making bargains with devils, and other, darker deeds. The Great Church,

however, is largely lawful good, and because of this, the chaotic gods rarely bother with the organization.

MYTHS

FIRST THUNDER

IN MIDSUMMER, EONS AGO, ZHEENKEEF HIT UPON A CURE FOR her boredom. She would enchant a lump of normal marble so that whosoever beheld it would swear the rock was a statue in the likeness of the beholder. Her enchantment would be so powerful that to look at the rock would be to become utterly convinced it was a statue. Such a thing would reveal the vanity of all around her, for every member of her family, all the Lords of Heaven, would look upon her creation and believe it was a monument in his own honor and preen and strut at the sight of it.

When she had crafted this glorious work of mockery, Zheenkeef put the statue in the middle of the great hall of the Holy Ones. That night, when the Gods of the Tree assembled for their dinner, each one came upon and the rock and gazed in wonder. “Who has put this statue of me in the middle of the hall?” shouted Terak with a great laugh, so delighted was he at its workmanship. “Was it you, Korak, my loving son?”

Korak thought perhaps his father had gone mad, or played him a trick, for he stared quite plainly at his own face hewn in the marble. He was about to respond when Tinel called out, “Why do you always spread your lies, brother? Can you not stand even one statue of me, that you must demean it by calling it your own?”

It was not long before the argument of the gods reached such a volume that Urian shook and Thunder was born. Whenever the gods argue to the exclusion of all else, Urian shakes and rumbles so that all the world might hear.

FOUNDING THE GREAT CHURCH

THE STATUE WAS NEVER FORGOTTEN BY ANY OF THE HOLY Ones. Though they put aside arguing about it for a time, hiding it under Terak’s great chair, occasionally one of the Lords of Good would mention it and the shouting would begin anew. After some time of this, Darmon grew tired of the ceaseless arguing. “It is quite clear that we will never agree on what this statue represents. Clearly, it is important that we decide this matter, or Heaven shall be sundered over a lump of rock.” Darmon had ever a honeyed tongue and the gods could not help but agree with him. “What does my clever brother suggest?” Aymara asked.

Darmon suggested the statue be destroyed, which was not a popular notion. Each of the gods presented a different way to resolve the problem, each more ludicrous than the last, until at last Anwyn, the gentle little sister, suggested that the gods pluck a lowly mortal from the world and have him tell them what he saw. He would be beyond guile and other such problems, for he would be the simplest fellow they could find.

And so Darmon set out to tour the mortal sphere and find such a mortal. One day he stumbled on a drunken shepherd asleep in his pasture after a night of long drinking. He grabbed this fellow by the collar and shouted at him, "Awake, shepherd! For you have much to do! You must resolve a great dispute among my family," and he took the shepherd to the Celestial Palace.

As would soon become apparent, this drunken shepherd was in fact a religious scholar. Named Hefasten (HEH-fuh-stun) the Wise, he had been exiled by the king of his country, for the monarch was jealous of his wisdom and influence. At the time, each of the gods had a church dedicated to his or her honor, but faith in all the Gods of the Tree had never been unified. Hefasten, a scholar and faithful member of Morwyn's Healing Halls, was known as a peacemaker and had negotiated settlements in many conflicts between churches.

Despondent at his exile, Hefasten found shelter with a poor family in a neighboring land. After four years of drunken ostracism, the wise man found himself taken by Darmon to an opulent house. There he was surrounded by a large family of the most beautiful people he had ever beheld. It took him only a moment to realize he stood before the gods in their mortal guises, but before he could prostrate himself and make proper obeisance, the woman at the head of the family spoke: "What is your name, simple shepherd?"

"My name is Hefasten, who was once Hefasten the Wise, and is now Hefasten the Drunk, milady Morwyn, the compassionate." So saying, he fell to his knees and touched his forehead to the ground three times, as is fitting.

This was precisely what the gods had not wanted. Instead of a simple peasant, they had a religious leader, and one who had sworn himself to Morwyn. The Holy Ones began to argue once more, and thunder shook the heavens. At last, they came to a solution:

"Hefasten, who was once the Wise, we would ask this of you: Help us solve a riddle," Tinel said to the blessed shepherd. "But before we ask for your aid, we ask that you cast aside your worship of my sister, Morwyn. We ask that instead you swear that you will give homage to each of us equally, and swear to obey us all when we have need of your service."

To this Hefasten agreed. Once he had done so, the gods asked him what he saw when he looked at the statue. And when he gazed at it, he beheld the likenesses of all the Lords of Heaven standing before him. When he said so, "I see all of you," the argument was resolved. For indeed it was a statue of them all.

They gave Hefasten the statue and returned him to his flock. The scholar journeyed back to his homeland with the lump of marble upon a cart, and he went about the land preaching the worship of the Lords of Good together, without exclusion. The king who had exiled him was converted upon beholding the statue—which seemed to him a magnificent statue in his

own likeness—and, when he heard it was a gift from the gods, he built for Hefasten the Wise a great cathedral in which to house it. It rests there today, the central cathedral of the Great Church.

ADVANCE THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD

As a family, the gods' motives are complex. Each god seeks to further her own ends, bringing mortals to her way of thinking. As determined by the Compact, gods grow stronger with worship, so each god strives to influence the world through followers and promote those forces that lead worshipers to them. This often brings two or more gods into conflict. Furthermore, a schism divides the two families of gods. One is unruly and believes that the individual is the strongest force in the universe; the other believes that organization and societal structure are the keys to strength.

Now, while the gods have much to argue about, they are unified behind the principles of good. They oppose senseless destruction, murder, and the many other trappings of evil. The destruction that evil brings leads to fewer followers (or at the very least corrupts the mortal races away from the ways of the gods). The gods are quite fond of the mortal races and would see them thrive, and the treeborn gods were nearly destroyed by murder and mayhem in their youth, when they were moved to war against one another. They have learned the perils of the dark path. Therefore, the gods aid the mortals in their struggles against evil as a unified group.

CHOIRS OF HEAVEN

Each god commands many celestials to perform their bidding, but three great choirs of Heaven exist to serve the gods and mortals without prejudice. Thus, the entire celestial host serves the Lords of Heaven. There are three choirs of angels, ranging from the mightiest Seraphim to the lowest Ischim. Principal among the Heavenly host are the Seven Archangels (all of whom are the mightiest **solars**).

MIKA'IL (mee-kah-EEL)

Mika'il, chief among the Archangels, protects the down-trodden and is the champion of those in need. Mika'il is a being of such profound goodness some worship him as a god in his own right. He was once a great div king who was elevated to great power by Morwyn, and raised to be chief of the Archangels after the fall of Iblis.

JIBRAIL (zheb-rai-EEL)

Jibra'il, the herald of the gods, marches at the front of the Heavenly host. She is the most charismatic of the Archangels, and it is said that to her voice is so beautiful it makes all other music sound like artless dirges.

RAFAIL (ra-fai-EEL)

Rafa'il, the guide of the lost, is the giver of charity from the gods. It is said that if the gods send a mortal aid, it is Rafa'il who delivers it. Rafa'il oversees Elysium.



URIEL (YUR-ee-el)

Uriel is the protector of Heaven. Mortals only meet with Uriel if they seek entrance through the locked gates to the mountain of Heaven. Uriel also watches over the celestial host, and it was he who cast down the fallen. It is also said Uriel, who is the favorite of Tinel, gave magic back to the mortal races after they lost it out of pride (see the Church of Tinel).

SARAQAEI (say-RA-kai-el)

Saraqael is the magistrate of Heaven. Saraqael oversees the laws of Heaven and sees to it that all celestials perform their duties under the Compact. She is not well liked by the chaotic gods.

RAGUEL (RA-gyoo-el)

Raguel is the vengeance of Heaven. Raguel is charged by the gods to smite down those who have grown too high and think themselves equal to the gods (such as all-powerful wizards researching spells to kill the gods), as well as the servants of Asmodeus, when they trespass on the Material Plane for reasons other than upholding the Compact. Raguel is described in **Chapter X**.

CAMAEI (CAH-mai-el)

Camael attends the thrones of the gods. Camael is, essentially, the minister of the kingdom of Heaven and stands behind the gods. Camael oversees all the workings of the

gods' court and arranges audiences with some of them—a commune spell directed at the Lords of Heaven is a plea to her for a god's ear. (Some of the gods have servants who communicate for them, and these are mentioned in the appropriate church sections.) The Great Church believes it receives its powers from Camael on behalf of the gods.

THE CHURCH

The Great Church, whose members simply call themselves “the Faithful,” is an enormous organization spanning nations. Its primary goal is to ensure every population center in the world has a church dedicated to all of the gods, that performs their holy work. Its secondary goal is to make the worship of the gods accessible to everyone. Thus, one can find a church dedicated to the entire pantheon in almost every city. In communities with large Great Church structures, other churches sometimes set up shrines within the Great Church's halls, to make it a central gathering place for members of any faith.

The Great Church enjoys good relations with most of the other churches, particularly lawful churches, which is why clerics of individual gods are willing to offer services under the Great Church's roof. These relations appear pleasant, but in many cases they're superficial alliances. The leaders of the Great Church believe all the other churches focus their worship incorrectly, on single gods and strange notions, and condescendingly humor them. Many of the leaders of the other churches are jealous

of the Great Church's significant wealth and authority. Because it is easy to avoid alienating any religious group by supporting the Great Church, many secular leaders give generously to its missions, support its efforts to expand, and otherwise interact with it as the accepted legitimate religious center of power in the world. Furthermore, the leaders of the Great Church are free to involve themselves in politics and other earthly matters since they do not have direct rapport with any one god, and are not being used regularly by the gods as instruments for their plans in the mortal sphere. This freedom means many secular leaders have a cleric or paladin from the Great Church as an advisor, and members of the local Great Church hierarchy are often on town and city councils. All of this amounts to a church that can exert an enormous amount of influence on political affairs.

To be clear: The Great Church is less connected to the gods than any other church, and the other churches are in no way loyal to or subservient toward the Supreme Patriarch of the Great Church. While some of its clergy receive spells, and its paladins are a force for righteousness throughout the world, the gods rarely reveal themselves to members of the Great Church or call upon its faithful to perform great deeds in their name. The gods rely on their own churches for such purposes.

While the Great Church welcomes worshipers of any race, its membership is mostly human. Other races seem to find its highly unspecific worship of the gods unappealing. It is therefore rare to find a Great Church in a dwarven hold or elven wood.

The Church's congregations are generally made up of those who do not have the time or inclination to worship one god in particular. Religion is an important part of nearly everyone's life, but the average person has no real reason to worship a specific god constantly. When crops fail, a farmer goes to the Great Church and prays to Rontra. When heavy with child, she goes to the same church and prays to Morwyn. In the Great Church, she sets aside some worship for the other gods as well. This is done for simplicity's sake, and to avoid offending any of the gods. Legends are quite explicit: If you pray to all the gods and accidentally leave one off, that god will grow angry and might seek vengeance against you. The Great Church takes these sorts of concerns out of the common person's hands and provides complete, non-mysterious ceremonies for all occasions, making religion far more accessible to the average peasant or layperson. Its popularity with the common folk also helps account for its wealth, as a tithe to the church is customary, swelling the church's coffers as its congregations grow.

The Great Church is terribly unpopular with religious zealots of all varieties. They accuse the Church of

making the gods commonplace, decreasing their worship to a few perfunctory gestures made out of duty or habit instead of devotion. There are many people deeply concerned with what seems to be the unstoppable growth of the Great Church; the concerned are often elders from other churches.

The gods view the Great Church with some ambivalence. Although the Great Church's prominence makes them very powerful, the organization is not as useful to them as their own churches. That being said, the Compact allowed Hell and the Abyss to become very powerful. The paladins and other members of the Church working against evil have proven valuable in the struggle against Asmodeus and the demon princes. Once in a great while, a figure arises in the Great Church who is so good and pious she becomes a favorite of all the gods and receives special boons from the entire pantheon. This is exceedingly rare, and has not happened since the time of Saint Anne.

DOCTRINE OF PURE GOOD

"If the people shall not come to the gods, verily, verily, we shall bring the gods to the people."

—From Saint Hefasten's *A People, A Doctrine, A Faith*

The Doctrine of the Great Church can most easily be described as pure good. One should strive to give, not take; to love, not hate; to befriend, never shun. It is the moral imperative of every mortal to try to do as the gods have done, offering shelter to the weak, raging against terrible wrongs, and protecting their families. Of course, the Church knows the world is filled with fallible people and believes if mortals ask for forgiveness, the gods will forgive them as they once forgave each other for great wrongs. The Church also believes, however, there are sins that cannot be forgiven: trying to topple the gods as Kador did, making bargains with devils or demons, and giving up one's soul for any reason. These behaviors take one outside the realm of forgiveness, and offenders become as demons in the eyes of the faithful. All else, including

the most heinous crimes against another person, can be forgiven by the gods, though likely not by the law. It is in this that the Church's lawful side is seen, for while its faith in the gods is one of pure good, the Church professes a very legalistic worship of the gods. The clergy discusses the laws and commandments of the gods that all people should obey. The Church sees itself as bringing the rule of the gods to the uninformed.

The Great Church has two great schools of thought in approaching this doctrine, and while they usually operate in harmony among church elders, they are occasionally drawn into conflict.



GODS' WORK

The first philosophy, one adhered to by both the clergy and deacons, is the ministry of the gods' work. According to this school of thought, the Great Church exists to spread the legends and worship of the gods, particularly to foreign or barbaric lands with different faiths. Part and parcel with this is the Church's goal to consolidate its power base and make sure the lands where the gods are worshiped never lose sight of the faith. This involves making sure the Church has many chapels and cathedrals throughout the land. One of the many reasons the Church puts such a focus on secular matters is that it serves the Church's goals to have close relations with the nobles who own the land and run the nations.

It would be easy to assume the clergy pushes for expansion because its hierarchy is made up of rank opportunists seeking to line their pockets with donations. In fact, the Church really is a good organization (as far as anyone can tell—GMs might have other plans) and most of the clergy believe deeply in this idea. It began with Hefasten, the first Supreme Patriarch: he whom the gods commanded to end their quarrel, and solve the riddle of the holy statue. At the core of Hefasten's teachings is the notion that every person's life is bettered when she comes to pay proper homage to the gods. When Hefasten was writing his earliest screeds, most people had no idea how to pray or pay proper respect to the gods; instead, they let their priests do it for them. Hefasten believed in the democratization of faith, and it is still important to the Great Church that the ways of worship be made understandable to anyone, so everyone can pray to the gods themselves. This is clearly a good goal, even if the Church's rate of expansion and political power threatens other churches.

OPPOSE EVIL

The second major branch of Church philosophy states that the Church's mission is to tirelessly oppose all forms of evil. One can see this requires a very different mindset than actively spreading the religion, and over the years, the two doctrines have led to a friendly split in the clergy. While most focus on the strengthening of the Church and the spread of the faith, a core group of adventuring clerics seek simply to do good in the world in the name of the Gods. Supporting this group of "good works" clergy is an entire holy order dedicated to fighting the good fight: the paladins.

PRAYERS OF THE GREAT CHURCH

Most Great Church prayers invoke all the gods by referring to them as "Holy Ones," "Lords of Good," or "Lords of Heaven." An example, called "The Passage," is from the naming ceremony where the Church recognizes a child after its birth:

*"May the Lords of Heaven shine on thee,
May they lift you up in their great presence,
For thou art named in their hallowed halls,
And the Holy Ones shall know thee in the last."*

However, the most common prayer, which is used as the invocation for important events and is said by many common folk when they need a formal prayer, is the Order. The Order refers to each of the gods by name. In important ceremonies, a priest lights a candle or rings a bell when each name is read:

*"Lords of Heaven, bear our prayer!
That Rontra's earth will feed us,
And nourish those who hunger;
That Urian's skies will warm us,
And shelter those in need;
That Shalimyr's waves will wash us clean,
And cleanse those who have failed us;
That Morwyn's wisdom will guide us,
And her compassion aid the lost;
That Terak's strength will embolden us,
And protect those who are weak;
That Tinel's teachings will open our eyes,
And lift up those who are in ignorance;
That Zbeenkeef's inspiration will better us,
And her wine will bring us happiness;
That Mormekar's hands will take us at our time,
And pass over the young and the innocent;
That Maal's judgment will not find us lacking,
And his laws prevail over darkness;
That Naryne's rulership will forever prevail,
And her servants share in her wisdom;
That Korak's forge will provide for us,
And his skill will be reflected in mortal hands;
That Anwyn's hearth fire will always burn,
And give sanctuary to the weary;
That Thellyne's prey will be plentiful,
And that her gardens will flourish;
That Canelle's swift feet shall carry us,
And we may all be victorious;
That Darmon's trade will prosper,
And that we may share in his fortune;
That Aymara's eyes will shine on us all,
And we each shall know love.
So we pray, Oh Holy Ones,
So we entreat you as your servants."*

Most of the prayers are less elaborate, and many situation-specific prayers call upon one god, though it's usually after a quick acknowledgement of the other Holy Ones. Before a competition, a cleric might invoke Canelle. Before a birth, Rontra, Morwyn, and Anwyn are all named. At weddings, funerals, and other great life-changing ceremonies, however, all the gods are called on for blessing.

Paladins say the prayers of the Church in ceremonies, but their prayers are far less elaborate. They usually involve a quick invocation of "all that is holy" or "may the gods protect us." It is rare for a paladin to appeal to just one of the gods, but there have been members of the order who feel closer to one god than the others. Many times, these paladins become members of the church of that god as well as the Great Church (and yet retain their status as paladins, as this in no way violates their holy mission or oaths).

HOLY DAYS

The holy numbers of the mythology are three (three good elemental gods, three sisters, three tribes of div) and five (five fruits on the tree, five mortal races, five treeborn gods, five gods born of woman) and so holidays take place on third and fifth months, and days multiplied by three and five. Along with these two months of celebration, the Great Church has weekly religious services.

THREE SORROWS

The third month of the year is called the “Three Sorrows.” For the deeply devout, one must fast during the day, and contemplate all of one’s misdeeds over the past year at night. Custom permits one to continue work and perform one’s secular duties during this time, including adventuring. On the third, ninth, and 27th nights of the month are daylong services followed by solemn feasts. Each such holiday is an observance of one of the great sorrows. Those of the faithful who are not particularly devout do not fast during the month, but nearly everyone attends the three ceremonies of sorrow.

THE FIRST SORROW

On the third day of the third month, this service mourns the fall of Kador, whose name is not spoken in the service and is instead called “First Born” and “Fallen Fire.” This service reminds the faithful of the pitfalls of personal greed and pride, and all in attendance see themselves and their failings in Kador.

THE SECOND SORROW

On the ninth day, the service recalls the first murder, brother upon brother, when Terak and Tinel killed one another and the great tree. The service reminds all in attendance to be forgiving of their neighbors and to live in harmony.

THE THIRD SORROW

On the twenty-seventh day, the service recalls the departure of the gods from the world with the forging of the Compact. In this service, the faithful pray to be reunited with the gods in death, and hope for a time when the gods might rejoin the world of mortals in peace. The ceremony expresses the belief that the gods left the world not only for their own struggles but for mortal weaknesses, lamented in the ceremony.

FIVE BLESSINGS

The fifth month of the year is called the “Five Blessings” and is a month of great celebration. If possible, the devout avoid being far from home during this month, though church business has certainly taken servants of the faith far from home even during the five blessings. Every five days of this month, there is a great festival day, including a noontime service in the local parish (which usually spills out into the streets, as these ceremonies bring so many people to the church) and an enormous feast. Even those who are not devout members of the church observe these

five holy days, and it is considered wrong to work during the festivals.

THE FIRST BLESSING

On the fifth day of the fifth month, the faithful thank the gods for the blessing of life. All the babies born during the past three months are dressed up in ceremonial costumes and given special names. Each name is whispered to the baby by the cleric performing the ceremony after reciting “The Passage,” so it’s generally unheard of for any of the faithful to know their baby name. It is said if the baby dies before it can speak, this name grants the soul an immediate audience with Lord Maal. Babies born more than three months before this ceremony have usually already had a small ceremony and received their name.

THE SECOND BLESSING

On the tenth day, the faithful thank the gods for the blessing of food. Everyone in the parish prepares the most sumptuous dish they can imagine, usually spending more than they can possibly afford on ingredients, and the faithful feed one another all day long in a festival that takes place in the streets.

THE THIRD BLESSING

On the fifteenth day, the faithful thank the gods for the blessings of home and family. The faithful hold a great festival where the parish builds a home for anyone who needs it. In small communities, this might involve raising a barn if no one needs a new home, but often the community builds a new house for newlyweds married in the past year who, up until this time, lived with the bride’s or groom’s parents. In large communities with many beggars, the congregation builds a home for one person the church’s dean selects to be a symbol of divine generosity.

THE FOURTH BLESSING

On the twentieth day of the fifth month, the faithful celebrate the greatest festival—and the one that brings the Church its most converts. On this day, the faithful thank the gods for the blessing of joy. Also known as “Fool’s Day,” this holiday sees no poor performers. Acting troupes, jugglers, jesters, and other entertainers who can bring out a laugh are paid handsomely by the church to perform in the streets for the faithful. There is a great deal of wine consumed, and all the faithful dress up in outlandish costumes, usually in animal forms.

THE FIFTH BLESSING

On the twenty-fifth day, the faithful thank the gods for the gift of death, which brings mortals into the gods’ embrace. At this festival, likenesses of all those who have died that year are placed on a dais, and those in attendance hold a great feast in their honor. Custom demands that the family of the deceased accomplish something this day that the departed left unfinished.

SAINTS

Saints are named only by the Supreme Patriarch. Candidates must have been dead for at least a decade before they can be named a saint, and must have accomplished a deed of tremendous importance to the Church's work. Nearly always, this includes the most pious members of the Church who have worked great goods in their life, but it also occasionally includes secular figures who have aided the Church greatly with land grants and other gifts.

A saint's name is remembered with great reverence, and the holy orders often have sub-orders named after saints. For instance, there is an Order of St. Edrien among the paladins. Saint Edrien was a Lord Protector who, it is said, journeyed to Hell and won back the immortal soul of a Supreme Patriarch that was wrongly stolen by the servants of Asmodeus. The order in his name is especially dedicated to protecting those who are attacked by Hell for their goodness.

Most churches are named after saints from the area. The two most famous saints are Saint Hefasten and Saint Anne, who founded the Great Church and the order of paladins, respectively.

HOLY ORDERS

The Great Church has three powerful holy orders: clergy, paladins, and deacons. There are also two lesser holy orders: the churchguard and the friars. Of these orders, the clergy are dominant and they decide the direction of the faith. The paladins are important and influential, but they operate almost entirely apart from the Church. The deacons, however, are the Church's greatest strength: While they are officially referred to as "teachers," they are dedicated to influencing the secular leaders and steering the course of history in the world. The diaconry is made up of Church members skilled in political matters, and secular leaders who've been given given status in the Church to seal their loyalty.

The Supreme Patriarch or Matriarch, the highest-ranking member of the clergy, heads the Church. The Supreme Patriarch is seated in the Great Cathedral, located in the city where Saint Hefasten founded the church. A great rock stands at the center of the Cathedral: the lump of marble enchanted by Zheenkeef. Most people looking at it see their own likeness on the surface, but once in a great while, someone, presumably chosen by the gods for greatness, sees something other than themselves in the rock, as Hefasten did. This has not happened for hundreds of years, and when it does, it usually signals an event of potentially cataclysmic importance. The Great Cathedral supports the Supreme Patriarch, an archbishop, a bishop, twenty-five clerics, three lords protector, ten captains, one hundred paladins, twelve archdeacons, twenty deacons, and fifty churchguard.

The Great Church's other places of worship vary wildly in size, however. Most cities and large towns have Churches, each led by a dean with the support of three or four clerics, one or two paladins, and six to ten churchguard. Deans, with consultation from those they oversee, make all

decisions pertaining to the Church. The paladins can follow their own paths, but they do obey orders from the deans, and paladins certainly consult with the deans about their quests and matters requiring spiritual guidance.

CLERICS OF THE GREAT CHURCH

The clergy stands at the center of the Great Church's five holy orders. From them arise bishops, archbishops, and the Supreme Patriarch. Members of the order focus on missions for the church, spread the faith wherever they go, perform doing great deeds in the name of the gods. The clergy of the Great Church is vast, and accommodates a range of different beliefs. The Supreme Patriarch, however, determines the order's official attitude, missions, goals, and actions. Therefore, the role of the Church in any world varies based on the heart of its highest-ranking cleric.

Most clerics of the Great Church are lawful good, as is the Church. However, there are strong contingents of neutral good and lawful neutral clergy. The lawful good clerics are dedicated to the furthering of the Church's goals



for the spiritual salvation of every common person, and strongly believe this can be best accomplished by doing the Church's work and spreading its teachings and laws.

Lawful neutral clerics of the Church care for little but the Church itself. Most involve themselves in Church politics and secular affairs, seeking to expand the influence of the faith. Because they are so dedicated to their work, lawful neutral clerics are among some of the most powerful in the Great Church. They are also the most closely tied with the deaconry.

Neutral good clerics are usually politically unskilled, but are particularly good at fulfilling Church doctrine. It is from the neutral good group that most of the adventuring clerics come, with many of them gone from their home Church for years on end, performing the gods' works abroad. For this reason, among others, they make terrible deans, and almost never receive the opportunity to rise further in Church hierarchy.

JOINING THE CLERGY

Anyone of faith might find a place in the clergy by spending several years as an acolyte, working and studying in a church to learn all the prayers and how to perform the various services. Those who complete the training become clerics and are assigned to a church determined by the dean of the church where they trained. Since the Great Church encompasses all the gods, clerics can take almost any domain for the Divine Domain class feature, though domains of an obvious evil bent such as Corruption, Death, or Tyranny are not permitted. Clerics use their church as a base of operations, and undertake missions determined by their deans. After some time and experience, clerics are free to do the gods' work in whatever manner they choose. Adventuring clerics favor weapons that resemble the tree of their faith, so most use clubs and maces. Particularly powerful or important clerics carry massive maces made to look like trees, with green heads and studs that look like golden fruit.

DEANS

Clerics who prove themselves might lead their own churches. Those who do are called deans. The bishop who oversees the region makes the appointment, usually for political reasons. Ambitious clerics might petition the bishop for the post, but their petitions can be rejected for any reason. Once elevated to the position, deans oversee all the goings-on of their churches, issuing assignments to all the clergy serving them. Deans are addressed as "reverend father" or "reverend mother," and introduced by full title.

BISHOPS

By decree, the Supreme Patriarch divides each nation under the Great Church's protection into regions, and the nation's Archbishop assigns each region to a bishop, whose office is called a bishopric. Limited numbers mean advancement occurs only when there's a vacancy. The Archbishops usually make their selections for political reasons, choosing individuals for their piety, of course, but equally for their loyalty to the higher office. Bishops

oversee large geographic areas and reside at the area's largest church, from which they instruct the deans and participate in the political affairs of the area. Bishops are addressed as "blessed father" or "blessed mother," and introduced by full title. Bishops, archbishops, and the Supreme Patriarch can all be addressed as "your eminence," "your holiness," or "your grace."

ARCHBISHOPS

The Supreme Patriarch alone can elevate a bishop to archbishop of a nation or large region. One cannot petition for this position; the method by which archbishops are chosen is shrouded in mystery, and known only to the Supreme Patriarch. As with bishoprics, an archbishopric is only available when a new region becomes available to the Church, or an existing archbishop dies (or is elevated to Supreme Patriarch). An archbishop is granted control of the Church's presence in an entire nation or other significant political body, is addressed as "holy father" or "holy mother," and is introduced by full title.

SUPREME PATRIARCH OR MATRIARCH

An archbishop can be named the Supreme Patriarch or Matriarch only by a unanimous vote of all the archbishops. When the existing Supreme Patriarch dies, the archbishops convene at the Great Cathedral. Together, they determine who among their number might be an appropriate Supreme Patriarch. All such candidates cannot vote on which of them rises to the office. One can imagine that this is a very useful political tool for removing dissenting voices, and raising a candidate some of the archbishops might oppose fiercely—and it is a method that has been abused in the past. Each archbishop can only name one appropriate candidate, and no more than half of the deliberating body can be forced to sit out the decision. Once appropriate candidates have been selected, the remaining archbishops must come to a unanimous conclusion to name the new Supreme Patriarch or Matriarch. This process can take months. The Supreme Patriarch is the voice of the Church and commands the clergy and the faithful alike. The Supreme Patriarch is addressed as "Most Reverend Lord/Lady" or "Most Holy Father/Mother," and introduced by full title.

PALADINS OF THE GREAT CHURCH

Paladins are the warriors of the Great Church. Founded by Saint Anne, the first paladin (or according to the Church, the first "modern" paladin, as the many mortals who fought at the gods' side before the Compact were all paladins), the holy order of paladins is vast, and dedicated to opposing evil wherever it arises. Saint Anne was a pilgrim who came to see the wondrous marble statue in the Great Cathedral soon after the founding of the faith. When she looked at it, she saw herself in shining armor flanked by a thousand warriors. At Saint Hefasten's urging, she founded the order, and its numbers soon began to swell as people from all over the world heard the call to rise up and fight evil.

The paladins do not pay homage to any single god. They worship them all, receive power from the angelic Choirs, or so Church scholars assert, and fight evil in the name of the gods. They are loyal to their order and, therefore, the Church—but were the Church to become corrupt, it likely would not take the paladins with it, as they have a deeper connection to the heavenly than most.

Loyal as they are, paladins are not the enforcing arm of the Church's will, or servants and protectors to the clerics. Paladins are great heroes with their own wills and purposes. They wander the earth to fight evil in its many forms. Every paladin heeds a very personal call to do this, feeling destiny-bound to perform her duties. The primary purpose of paladins is to go questing, traveling widely and righting wrongs wherever they go.

CAPTAINS

Paladins ascend to the rank of captain in time and with experience. No one's permission is needed for this promotion. All other paladins recognize the character as captain and thus obey any commands the captain gives. In cases of more than one captain ordering a group, the less experienced captain defers to the more experienced—no argument necessary. Deans of churches (and higher authority figures) and any cleric of the Great Church recognize captains for the commanding figures they are without needing to be told. Deans always welcome captains to use their churches as bases of operations. A captain continues to be addressed and introduced as a paladin.

LORD PROTECTOR

Finally, the greatest captains become lords protector. Again, this simply happens and does not require anyone's permission. Throughout the world, lords protector are figures of legend and renown. Kings bow to them, the infirm beg them for healing, and those of evil heart leave the area when they hear a lord protector is coming. Lords protector are addressed as "lord" or "lady," and is introduced by full title.

JOINING THE PALADINS

Becoming a paladin is simple enough: Those who hear the call know instinctively what they must do. They go to a Great Church and pray for three days without food or sleep until they are lifted up by the local paladins and taken into the order. For ten years, they are trained exhaustively in warfare and holy doctrine. In cases where the new paladin already knows much of this (a character with a religious education, for example), this period is reduced to a year. Paladins can choose any oath, but most swear the Oath of Devotion. Paladins are addressed as "sir" or "dame," and introduced by full title. They are usually based at Churches where captains are regularly present.

DEACONRY OF THE GREAT CHURCH

The deaconry is the third great holy order of the Great Church, dedicated to political and secular matters. Deacons work with prominent members of the community to further



the Church's goals and are experts at diplomacy, languages, and the subtle arts of intrigue, all learned in the name of the gods' good works. Deacons are addressed as "deacon," while archdeacons are addressed as "archdeacon." The order works to secure the Great Church's secular position, influence political leaders, and steer historical events. Deacons are often expert diplomats, performing missions abroad for their bishops. The greatest archdeacons have the ear of the Supreme Patriarch, and work closely with him.

Deacons have access to resources and wealth to spread the Church's influence. They are generally influential, smooth and clever speakers, and experts at getting people to see things their way without resorting to ugliness. Many famous adventurers over the years have been made deacons, and eventually archdeacons, for bringing back great treasures and giving them to the Church—or simply for aiding the Church greatly in times of crisis. Upon becoming deacons, archdeacons or the bishops send these agents to perform diplomatic missions in the name of the Church, so every deacon must possess some diplomatic ability.



JOINING THE DEACONRY

The deaconry recruit candidates from all backgrounds, though they tend to bestow the title of deacon onto political allies or grant it in exchange for a sizeable donation. Potential deacons must demonstrate some skill at intrigue and they cannot be members of different orders within the Great Church. Finally, openly evil individuals, or those with evil reputations, are never considered.

Bishops or higher officials in the Great Church might bestow the title of deacon as a reward for some great service performed in the church's name. It can be a title only and left at that, with no special powers attached to it. It is quite possible to be a full-time politician and dedicate no time to one's order—the deaconry welcomes members who are out in the world, influencing events. People can also earn the title by donating time and money to the Church, though monetary donations must total 10,000

gp or more. The completion of a significant quest, such as the recovery of an artifact, or donations of 100,000 gp or more, might earn an individual the title of archdeacon.

SPECIAL STATUS

As a deacon, you are an important figure in the Great Church and as such enjoy privileged status. You need never pay for food or lodging at a Great Church chapter, and you receive significant discounts from merchants who are faithful to the Great Church. You can access the Great Church's extensive libraries, including many secret collections. Finally, when you ask for audience with political figures, you will only be rejected if that political figure wishes to alienate the Great Church.

As an archdeacon, you enjoy even greater benefits. Not only do you receive all the benefits from being a deacon, but you also enjoy free spells and possibly loans of magic items from the Great Church larder, subject to availability of course. Merchants faithful to the Great Church are unlikely to charge you for smaller items. Important political figures might invite you to their courts if they hear you are nearby.

PERSONAL GUARD

Because you are extremely valuable to the Church, you receive special protection from the Church's clergy and paladins. If you find yourself in difficulty, you can call upon the Church for help and receive it at the GM's discretion. As well, you are provided a retinue of bodyguards from the Church. You have the protection of **8 guards** if you're a deacon, or a detail of **64 guards** if you're an archdeacon. Your bodyguards are loyal to you, but their primary purpose is to defend you against harm. They obey your commands, but they reject any order that would put you in danger, or excessively trouble their consciences. Fallen guards can be replaced in any city loyal to the Great Church.

OTHER ORDERS

Two other orders round out the organization of the Great Church. These are the Churchguard and the Friars, both of which are represented as backgrounds in **Chapter X**.

The Churchguard is an order of devout warriors charged with protecting the clergy and the churches. Dressed in distinctive red uniforms with tabards bearing the Tree and the five fruits on their chests, they are always found standing guard at churches or in the company of deacons and higher-ranking officials.

Friars make up the second order, and all walk away from their lives to reflect on the teachings of the gods. Friars have no possessions and simply wander the land, taking what people offer them. They are fed by the Great Church and given shelter there, participating in holy services, but often make pilgrimages into distant lands. Friars do much of the spreading of the faith. Many members of this order serve only a few years, and then go back to their prior professions. Some friars are trained monks, able to fight against evil powers with their fists and their inner strength.

III: THE OLD GODS

IN THE MYTHOLOGY, WE ARE INTRODUCED TO THE OLD GODS—THOSE CREATED BEFORE THE FRUITS HATCHED ON THE tree. These gods are still worshiped and are quite powerful. The old gods are in two places at once—they are the personification of the forces of the earth (the air we breathe, the water all around us, the earth under our feet), but they are also walking, talking gods. They are said to reside still in the mortal sphere, but they are sometimes represented among the other gods on the mountain of Heaven. This is one of the mysteries their faithful must strive to understand. The old gods include Rontra, the Earth, Urian, the Sky, Shalimyr, the Waters, Eliwyn, the Tree of Life, and the Nameless One.

GOD OF THE AIR AND SKY

URIAN

THE RADIANT, THUNDEROUS, THE WIND LORD, SKY KING,
SKY FATHER, GREAT SKY, THE MOON AND STARS, WINDWRIGHT

Urian (YUR-ee-uhn) is the neutral good god of the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the winds, freedom, and salvation. His voice is heard in thunder, and his countenance is seen in lightning. To most, he is the father of storms, though all agree that rains come from Shalimyr, the waters.

Icons show Urian as a mighty old man, with a great white beard made from the winds, and wild hair that crackles with lightning. In his eyes are stars and the moon, and when his mouth is open it shines with the light of the sun. He is sometimes shown with four beasts behind him on leashes of chain—the four winds, two of which are shown to be snarling, fierce beasts, while the other two appear placid and kindly.

Urian's faith visually represented with an orb of half gold, half silver. The gold half casts off the golden rays of the sun. Urianath clergy and some lay followers both wear this symbol. In times of haste when such symbols are not possible, this is made as just a simple orb flanked by four lines: the winds. This symbol is not used if the more formal symbol is possible, but can be found stamped on the bottom of weapons or items fashioned to honor the god.

The god of the sky is associated with no animal more than the eagle, though all the beasts of the feather are considered his children and wards of his domain. He is associated with the griffin, which is part eagle and was born of his servant.

Urian is ardently worshiped by primitive people everywhere, and has among them more names than can be counted. The odds are very good that barbarians and nomad societies worship Urian, or some aspect of Urian (like the sun, stars, or lightning), under some name of their own devising. Among those who understand Urian's place in the pantheon, he is most often worshiped by the elves, who love his stars and the moon, and by humans and halflings, who love his sun and sky. Subterranean races care little for Urian.

MYTHS

DRAGGING SUN AND MOON

FOR AGES UNCOUNTED, THE SUN AND MOON SIMPLY HUNG IN the heavens as a part of the Great Sky. There was no need for them to move, and it was eternally day in one part of the world

and night in the other. Into this world, the div were born, and before long those in the dark pleaded with Radiant Urian for light; those in the eternal light cried out for the restfulness of night. But how can this be? For a man can no more move his eye from his head to his toe than the Sky Father could move the Sun to the dark parts, and the Moon to the bright.

Yet Thunderous Urian was moved by their pleas, and so he set to earth in his common guise and wandered among the div, finding the two mightiest of the race—Ali Mustafis bin Omar and Farouk al Ban. These two div were the greatest heroes of the time, and had come to be renowned among the Shaitan and Marid for their rivalry. They had wrestled 12 times before, and never had one of defeated the other.

When Urian came upon them, it was before their 13th match. Every hundred years div from around the world (who did not wither with age) would gather for great athletic contests between the strongest and swiftest among them. All eyes were upon the great champions, each of whom swore that he would be victorious this time. The Sky King came to them and made each this offer—should he win, Urian would place him in the heavens for eternity. Both readily accepted.

The two strove for three days, their longest match yet, and at the end, neither was victorious. When the Windwright came to them afterward and sighed sadly that he only had room for one in the sky, each demanded the place. Each swore fervently that he would serve gladly and diligently in the heavens just to keep his rival from the honor. At the end of their oaths, Urian smiled, for he indeed had room and need for both.

And so, Ali Mustafis bin Omar was renamed Alimus and set in garments of pure gold. Urian placed in his hands a great flaxen cord that was lashed about the sun, and every day Alimus drags the golden orb across the sky.

For his part, Farouk was renamed Faro, and he was set in raiment of shining silver. Into his hand was committed a perfect thread of mithril that girded the moon. His commission was to drag the moon across the heavens in the evening.

To this day, the two uphold their duties, though sometimes Faro shows up his rival by racing onto the field of the sky early, and so the moon can be seen in the heavens during the day. And sometimes, though rarely, the two ancient rivals come to wrestle once more and the sun and moon are eclipsed as they strive; to look at the sky at such times is folly, for the wrestlers have such might and glory in them that to gaze at them with the naked mortal eye is to be blinded.

THE CHAINING OF THE WINDS

WHEN DARMON AND KORAK TAUGHT THE MORTAL RACES TO build great water vessels and Wily Darmon taught them to sail those tall ships across Shalimyr's back, there were many obstacles to the learning. The mortal races needed to overcome their fear of floating on the water, which was as unnatural to them as flying like a bird. They needed to learn to navigate the great and chartless sea, and harness the winds to travel upon it.

While Urian the Wind Lord tried to keep his winds in check for the benefit of these mortals, still they were wild and untamed. Just as one's mind can wander and contemplate that which horrifies him, so were the Sky King's winds raging against his will. The winds were a part of him, but had possessed spirits of their own from the beginning. Two of them hated mortals who walked the world and sailed the seas, and sought to destroy such fragile travelers.

The bitter North Wind called out, "I'll bite at all I see, tear their flesh and turn them to ice!"

The terrible East Wind responded, "I'll shake them and break them, rip them and strip them! I hate them all!"

But the South Wind and the West Wind tried to stop East and North from destroying mortals. Thus the winds would clash in the skies, causing terrible gales that tore up everything in sight.

At last, the raging winds became too much to withstand. The mortals had learned to sail their tall ships in sight of land and build beautiful homes at the water's edge, but whenever they set out on the great journeys that would someday connect mortal races in trade, the winds would rise—South against North, East against West—and ships would be dashed against the rocks, or lost at sea. One day, Darmon Silver Tongue came to Urian to entreat him to calm his winds:

"Sky Father! Will you not still your raging winds? Do we not all love these clever mortals and wish to see them travel across the land and sea? Yet they cannot travel, for your winds destroy their ships; you rage where even your mad brother Shalimyr does not."

And the Sky King thought on this. Little Darmon was right, for Urian truly wished to see mortals travel across the seas and someday, perhaps, high in the air. He spoke to his winds and demanded they be still. But they would not!

"Nay, Lord! We will rage and blow and destroy, for our hearts hate!" the North and East said.

"Nay, Lord! We must oppose our brothers, or they will destroy the world!" the South and West said.

And at this Urian started, for surely the winds were a part of him, as were the stars, and the Sun and Moon, yet they resisted his will. And so, he reached into himself and plucked the winds from him, as a man might rip out an offending eye, or cut off his own hand were it to spite his desires. Urian Windwright then sent Darmon forth to summon the twins, Korak and Anwyn. For the Sky King, Master Korak built four mighty halls in the clouds and mountain peaks to house the winds, and chains to hold them. In these halls, Blessed Anwyn made homes with furs and fires and splendid feasts.

Urian now resides in these four halls, moving from one to the next, unchaining his winds for a while when he sees fit, knowing that the North and East seek to scour the earth, and the South and West seek to give succor. It is said that two of the halls are in caves atop the tallest mountains in the North and South of the world, and should any be foolish or brave enough to climb these

peaks, he might find Urian Windwright or, at the least, one of the winds bound in mighty adamant chains forged by Master Korak. And in the highest clouds of the East and West, one might find two more halls, and in them imprisoned those winds. But in all four halls one thing is assured—winds that were once a part of the Sky King are shackled, yearning to be free.

Let us never forget, therefore, that Radiant Urian, who cherishes freedom, so loved the mortal races that he pulled from himself his most vital parts and enslaved them to be our servants; we must forever honor this sacrifice.

BRING LIGHT TO THE WORLD

Urian is the sky and the heavens. His purpose is to shine on the earth with his sunlight and make the landscape glow with the silver light of the stars. Bound up in this, though, is the central mystery of the worship of Urian, Shalimyr, and Rontra; all three gods are the elemental parts of the world, but they are also the guardians of those elemental parts, wandering among them and looking after them. There is a legend of Darmon stealing stars from Urian, and Urian finding the fakes with which the Wily Darmon replaced them. How is this possible if Urian is the stars? It is a mystery that anyone who worships him must ponder.

Urian wishes to reach the world's ignored nooks and crannies. There are places in the that none care for—perhaps they are ugly, horrible, or devastated by evil, but Urian reaches them still with his sunlight and starlight, his moon and his winds. He brings the beauty of the heavens to all peoples and all places, and for this he is dearly loved by those imprisoned and enslaved, for he represents their hope and their freedom. The most common visual theme among these faithful is a prisoner reaching through the bars of his cell for the stars.

Urian is profoundly uninterested in the various petty conflicts of the gods, and he straddles both sides of the disputes between chaos and law. Sometimes he sides with one, sometimes the other; sometimes he takes no side at all. This is because Urian, more than any other of the gods, has a dual understanding of the world, and a dual interaction with it. Sometimes he is radiant and lovely and sometimes he is dark and cold. He sees both as legitimate, and he contemplates what is the proper time for each—when must he unleash the warm and gentle winds, and when must he let fly the bitter and cruel?

SEVEN SERVANTS

Urian has seven principal servants. The four winds, discussed above, can go alternatively by the names Rigyl or North, Ragyl or East, Wyndyl or South, and Wandyl or West. The Sky Father chains all the winds in his four great halls and unleashes them only when needed, under his careful control, to avoid the destruction of all in their path.

Alimus and Faro are forever bound to the sun and moon. Some cultures worship these two as gods, and believe they're brothers who forgot their true origins. Indeed, they are quite powerful, for they have borne the loveliest of the heavenly orbs aloft for thousands of years, and it has affected them to the core. It is unclear whether

worshippers of the two receive power from them or from Urian, but Alimus and Faro are so powerful it is quite possible that they grant power to their followers.

Closest companion to Urian, though, is Grifynne, his magnificent golden eagle. Grifynne is mother to the griffins (which are named after her), which were begat from her by Terak's golden lion, Metteron. Grifynne has a wingspan as long as a mighty river, and her cry can be heard across the heavens. Her origins are mysterious, though most assume that Urian created her before the gods of the tree were even born.

THE EYRIES OF URIAN

The church of Urian has weakened in the civilized world, though worship of the god remains strong in wild places. As people move into cities and have ready shelter and warmth, the need to fear the winds and revere the sun is sublimated to reverence for more earthly forces like commerce, craft, war, and medicine. For this reason, the eyries of Urian (as his Churches are called) and the Urianath (YUR-ee-uhn-ath) who worship there have become rare in cities.

The eyries are not secularly strong, and one of their holy orders has vanished from the world. Indeed, the greatest eyries stand high in the mountains, ancient and magnificent structures that offer a commanding view out across hundreds of miles of valleys. These eyries are remote and hard to reach, and it is rare for the sky-larks—priests—to journey down from them. This does not make for a popular religion. And yet, for those who seek freedom from enslavement—of the body, the mind, or the spirit—there are few greater places than the eyries. Homes of contemplation, beauty, and austere wisdom, the eyries are a boon to many in their deepest need.

The eyries are roused to action when asked to aid the enslaved and the downtrodden. Just as Urian's wind reaches every corner of the world, the Urianath believe Urian's care should be available to all people and therefore abhor slavery. However, the Urianath are now so marginalized that, should they seek to topple a major power, they would need aid from another church to carry out the task.

The stance against slavery is universal in the faith. There are other points on which the Urianath vary. There are some devoted most to the sun and light of the Sky King. These Urianath strive against the undead and other forces of unlife. Others among the Urianath revere the Sky Father's cold light of the moon and stars above all, and seek individual strength and glory, as the stars are individual points of beauty and light.

Urian has a peculiar view of the world: He either focuses on the highly specific details of peoples' lives, or pays attention to trends across hundreds of years. This is best understood as the sun and the stars. The sun rises every single day; its cycle is one of the daily repetitions. Stars hang in the heavens, unchanging, for thousands of years, their fire never dimming. Their cycle is either so slow as to be immeasurable, or they are not on a cycle at all.

Urian sees the world through these eyes: the day-to-day



and the very, very long term. Nowhere is this clearer than in his attitude toward the Urianath faith. He can become intensely involved with the mission of one skylark in a very specific predicament while ignoring everyone else in her eyrie, or he can go for hundreds of years without sending guidance or aid to any of the Urianath—even the most powerful. Most of them accept this as the reason the order of the griffins (see below) have been gone from the world for so long; they imagine the Sky Father hasn't even noticed yet.

Urian certainly has no reason to mistrust or dislike his church, but he also has the very practical details of being the heavens to attend to. And if he is capricious and uninvolved in his dealings with the Urianath eyries, he is even more so with the various nomads and barbarians who worship him on the fringes of the world.

DOCTRINE

“The sky is light and dark. The wind is hot and cold. The sun gives life and death. But the sky is dark when the world needs dark, and death comes of necessity. Can we question and rail against the cold while we praise and hallow the warmth? Can we hate the sun in the desert when we love it in the winter? All are part of the Sky Father, and all have a purpose in his plan. We must be grateful, even for darkness and death.”

—Skylark's Song Abu Goldfeather's “I Have Tasted the Stars”

The Urianath practice a good-aligned faith, even though they sometimes praise and glorify things others find evil, like bitter cold, the blood moon, or darkest midnight—and it is precisely because others find them evil that they praise them. The core premise of the Urianath faith is that Urian loves the world and its peoples. After all, he guarded the tree, he opposed Kador bitterly, and he pulled the winds from his own body and enslaved them—he who loves freedom most! He gave light to the dark parts of the world, and gave evening to the light parts. It is therefore unquestionable that he loves the world and the mortals who inhabit it.

So why, then, does he sometimes let the wind rage and destroy ships? Why does his cold winter wind come down and kill unprotected children? Why does his sun burn the skin and suck the water from a man's body, leaving him to the vultures in the desert? Why does the night serve as a haven to thieves and evil beasts?

The contemplation of these questions, and their reflection in every mortal spirit, is the heart of Urianath practice. For these great and difficult questions are reflected in the hearts of men: Why does a good and happy woman

consider hurling herself to the rocks below whenever she stands at the edge of a cliff? Why does a loving father consider casting his own child into an open fire? Why do good people do terrible things? The contemplation of these questions is of central importance to the Urianath, and

their understanding is that it is the freedom to do evil that makes people good. Just as the Great Sky must sometimes let awful things happen so that the mortal races fully appreciate the good of the world, so too must all people contemplate the darkness in their own souls to fully appreciate the good.

One can see, therefore, why the Urianath so oppose tyranny and slavery. A slave is not free to walk the good path, to explore the depths of her spirit. Tyrants seek to control the thoughts and hearts of their subjects, though thoughts and hearts must be free to soar or sink.

But just as the Urianath

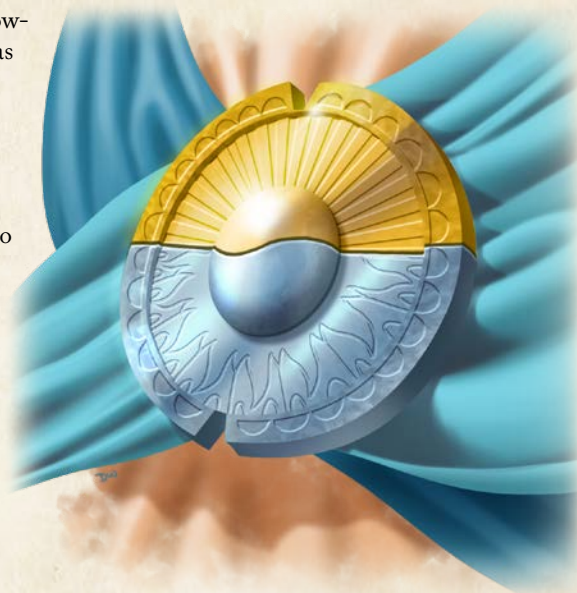
oppose the extremes of law, they oppose the extremes of chaos. They believe that discipline and rule are necessary for a person to fully appreciate his goodness. The path of the Urianath lies between law and chaos. It embraces contemplation and balance on the road to good.

The eyries are most often visited by those wrestling with the darkness of their own spirits, just as the sun and moon wrestle, and just as the North and East Winds battle with the South and West. Those who strive to conquer what they see as their worse natures, those who feel imprisoned by past deeds or wicked desires, find succor in the faraway and hidden eyries, high in the mountains. Whenever they are apart from their eyries, the Urianath seek to bring spiritual guidance and support to people across the land. They bring freedom of the mind, the heart, and the body to all they encounter, so that all people can explore the dual sides of their nature—the light and the dark—and understand that both are necessary for goodness.

URIANATH PRAYERS

The Urianath have many sayings they utter repeatedly, as they contemplate the world and their own spirits. One of the most common is a meditation on light:

*“Father Sky, the Sun and Moon,
Giver of the golden boon,
Silver twilight, radiant dawn,
The cycle ceaseless carries on.
“Hallowed heavens, pitch and star,
Thou kindle even near and far.
Thy light shines out when all is dim,
Thy darkness forms the nightly hymn.”*



HOLY DAYS

The Urianath view each dawn and dusk as holy events, and most are sure to be outside to observe these events daily. Whenever there is a complete solar or lunar eclipse, the Urianath celebrate indoors, as they consider it a taboo to be under the sky at such times. Some cultures have special celebrations of the sun at harvest or planting time. These are usually festivals to Urian, and the local skylarks will aid in the celebration, but they are not universal celebrations across all cultures.

The eyries do not have regular times for services; they are places of constant meditation.

SAINTS

The Urianath recall the names of saints as those who have made significant contributions to freeing all people. If someone deterred an empire from conquering the world or stopped an infernal plan to subjugate the mortal races, she would find herself revered as a saint by the Urianath, regardless of her faith. Usually for the Urianath, sainthood requires martyrdom, as it is not likely for one to achieve such ends without the loss of one's own life.

The most notable of the saints revered by the Urianath is Griffin Saint Mathilde, who was the last of the sect of griffins. Her entire order was wiped out by a demonic cult working to bring forth one of their most powerful dark princes. The cult did not realize Mathilde had survived, however, and in the last moments of its vile rite to call the demon, she sacrificed herself to close the gate. Her act wiped out the cultists and barred the prince from entering the material plane for one hundred years and a day. Since that time, there have been no griffins, for there is no one to train them, but their sacrifice is remembered, for they saved the world from certain doom.

HOLY ORDERS

The eyries have four holy orders, two of which are nearly extinct, and one of which was last active so long ago it is now but a dim memory. Each order is named after a beast of the feather. The skylarks are clergy, and the dominant order. They have two levels of status: the wings and songs. The eagles are holy warriors with two ranks: the talons and the eagles sworn. The hawks are an order of protectors who recognize no ranks among themselves. The now-extinct griffins once mastered the mystical elements of Urian's manifestations. In addition, a member of any sect might be named eyrie lord, to manage one of the faith's strongholds, but must abandon prior affiliations to oversee the other sects fairly. Not all eyries select a lord, and some simply grant authority to the highest-ranking resident, though in all cases the senior skylark will be the authority on spiritual matters.

The average eyrie has five or six skylark wings, two skylark songs, a couple of eagles' talons, and a presiding eyrie lord. Four hawks might be resident, but rarely participate in eyrie business, as they simply use the place as a base of operations. However, some eyries have no eagles whatsoever, and are instead protected by the hawks.

SKYLARKS OF URIAN

A contemplative order, most skylarks live high up in the mountains, dedicating their entire lives to pondering the two faces of Urian and the mortal races. They are quiet and kind, revering the sunshine and moonlight. The skylarks value contemplation, compassion, and gentle guidance far more than harsh action. There are other orders of the Urianath dedicated to fighting brutal wars and saving the downtrodden; the skylarks are the spiritual and mystic order instead, and are often difficult to talk to. They speak of mysteries, and constantly analyze the lessons learned from happenings in the world. However, for those with heavy hearts burdened by sin, the skylarks prove marvelously helpful. They have ready ears, are never judgmental, and are always eager to offer guidance to those who seek it.

Some skylarks leave their eyries to go on a quest. They collect themselves, inform the songs, and head down the mountain. No one orders these quests; rather, the skylarks feel the pull in their meditations. Sometimes this is based



BRYAN SYME

on a vision, other times on a hunch. Sometimes they are even certain they heard the command in the wind. Many skylarks are slain on their spontaneous journeys. Others come back quickly, with a minor quests fulfilled. A rare few live lives of spectacular and heroic adventure, returning to the eyrie when they are old, and ready to impart the wisdom they gained from their journeys.

The skylarks have only two titles, and they are not based on power or prestige, but age. A young or middle-aged skylark is a wing. The wings are charged with carrying the faith, learning, growing, and performing any physical labors necessary. A wing is addressed as “skylark’s wing.” All Urianath addresses follow this form, and all are introduced using just this address—the order name is not repeated. So, Idrin would be addressed as “Skylark’s Wing Idrin,” and introduced as “the Skylark’s Wing Idrin, of the eyries of Urian.”

When wing reach old age, they become songs, addressed as “skylark’s song.” It is their duty to teach others the ways of the skylarks, oversee students and visitors to the eyrie, and generally live out the remainder of their lives in wisdom and grace. Songs contemplate the faith, and defer to eyrie lords on secular matters.

There are three dominant alignments among the skylarks, though the most common is neutral good. The neutral good skylarks hew closest to the doctrine of the faith. They spend their days in contemplation of the dual nature of heaven and man. They are filled with the certainty that goodness can be found in the dark and the light, the cold and the warm, the individual light of a star, and the radiant glow of the sun that blankets everything. They are a serene and kindly group.

Lawful good skylarks certainly follow the doctrine of the Urianath, but focus on the goodness of light and warmth: There must be darkness for the light to be perceived in all its glory. There must be cold for the warmth to be felt in its splendor. These skylarks focus on what they call “Urian’s Order,” meaning all things and people have a place under the sun, and all bad things happen so we can learn our place in that order. The lawful good skylarks can truly be said to revere Urian’s sun-face more than any other, and are quite close to sun-worshippers. They feel that when he shines, he is the center of life and holiness, and they hope to bring that light and warmth to the world. Such skylarks are profound enemies of demons and undead.

Chaotic good skylarks are almost the reverse image of their lawful good comrades. While they too hold that Urian is the center from which goodness flows, they believe sunlight and daytime are Urian’s way of aiding the mortal races to overcome their weakness, but that nighttime is the true time of purity. They see the stars as the best guides to holiness: thousands of brilliant lights, standing out individually, making the most beautiful work of the heavens. Urian wishes the mortal races to be like the stars, standing out as brilliant individuals doing wonderful things, and only in the dark, when we have no light to guide us, are we truly alone, and able to stand as such individuals. Urian gives mortals the sunlight because they are too weak to embrace their individual destinies; they are frightened by loneliness, so he brings them together with solar brightness.

JOINING THE SKYLARKS

Skylarks are clerics devoted to Urian through the Light or Air domains, with the latter described in **Chapter X**. Adventuring skylarks favor weapons that represent lightning, such as javelins and whips, for Urian smites his foes with lightning, which cracks from his clouds when the gods argue and he thunders.

EAGLES OF URIAN

The eagles are a noble and beautiful order of holy warriors. They wear tall, golden helms and carry greatswords of silver, decked with gems like the stars. They speak with the song-like voices of birds and are magnificent to behold. Sadly, they are rare, and it is uncommon to see the glorious eagle-riders sweeping down upon an evil foe from the backs of their winged steeds.

The eagles stand for the freedom of all people to achieve their potential. They wish to break the locks and gates of the world that obstruct the winds of freedom. They oppose any force, mortal or immortal, that would enslave or imprison the spirit. This often takes them into opposition with infernal forces, particularly devils, but it also leads them to oppose rulers who dominate by fear or other evil methods. This ends up being a wide assortment of foes, as they will oppose lawful evil, chaotic evil, neutral evil, even lawful neutral and chaotic neutral regimes. Any that seek to outlaw the freedom of thought, and certainly any that allow slavery, will be opposed by the eagles. With so many enemies, is it a wonder they are rare?

As raptors soar above, looking for the dark scurrying things of the world, so do Urian’s eagles. They sally forth looking for evil deeds to set right. In doing this, they must never knowingly commit an act of evil or allow one of the mortal races to be enslaved (imprisonment for crimes does not count). They must never contribute to any plan that forces one viewpoint or way of thinking on a people. This is a fine line—a society that worships dark gods and believes people should have their hands cut off might or might not be overthrown by the eagles of Urian. If the people all believe this is the best way, it would be wrong to force them to stray from their beliefs. Of course, the odds of a whole society willingly cutting off its hands are slim, and the eagles would be quite skeptical of any assertion to the contrary.

Eagles of Urian associate with any who are good of heart, though they will not stay long with those who are so convinced of their righteousness that they seek to impose their order on other mortals, or those who are so opposed to order that they tear apart functioning systems and societies in the name of freedom. Those who are openly evil will not find an eagle long in their company.

JOINING THE EAGLES

Becoming a talon is as simple as climbing to an eyrie and asking to join. The eyrie lord examines the prospective eagle and determines, through some strange second sight all eyrie lords have, whether this young person has truly heard the call to take up arms in Urian’s name. The student is then taught the language of the heavens (Auran,

a dialect of Primordial), given training in weapons, and becomes a paladin. With basic training complete, the eagle is called a talon, addressed as “Eagle’s Talon,” and is sent abroad to learn what she might find under the heavens. Most eagles are neutral good.

Talons learn by doing. Just as the winged eagle learns to feed by swooping down and attacking the prey of the fields, the eagles of Urian must learn to oppose evil by fighting it. They wander the world, taking up any mission they can to improve the lives of others. They make friends with those who are good, and bitterly fight those who are evil. They soak up knowledge and skill, until the day they can swear the oath of the eagle, for the paladin’s Sacred Oath class feature.

After a long life of fighting, and winning glory against evil forces, the eagles sworn return to the eyrie to become its protectors. They train and examine new talons who come to the eyrie, oversee the eyrie’s secular affairs, and ride forth in times of greatest need. When such eagles become eyrie lords, they are addressed as “Eagle’s Lord” to acknowledge their past deed.

HAWKS OF URIAN

The hawks are thought to be a less noble order than the others, for they act as guerilla warriors against the forces of evil. While the eagles soar above things, hawks aren’t afraid to fly low seeking enemies under the cover of the forest. They are addressed as “Hawk,” regardless of seniority.

The hawks of Urian are trained to serve Urian as hunters of evil, just as the birds for which they are named can be trained by falconers to seek prey. Hawks are master archers, skilled at calmly sneaking near their foes and sniping from hidden places, but when drawn into melee, they fight ferociously. Their fighting style is furious and fearless, and they do not hesitate to get their hands dirty. As the faith of Urian says, there is good in the light and the dark; the hawks believe the only way to effectively fight those who would do evil to the mortal races is to engage them in the mud, mete out brutality and destroy them utterly. To this end, the hawks are wild, passionate warriors, and when they come upon the forces of evil they abandon any sense of “honor” or “mercy” and instead seek to ravage their foes completely. This horrifies those who see goodness in honorable combat, but others understand it as a philosophical stance toward the wicked. To a hawk, the only language evil understands is violence.

Hawks are sometimes found alongside armies, moving with them against evil forces. They are marked by the symbols of Urian worn on their breasts or, more often, tattooed on the backs of their hands; they dress in colors that blend with their surroundings. They often move with a force’s vanguard, or as scouts. Hawks happily work with outsiders, but their tactics are not often embraced by other good people, who might find them extreme. Bands of hawks are rare, but profoundly dangerous.

GRIFFINS OF URIAN

The order of griffins were magnificent warriors who took on the spirit of the griffin. They gained the strength of the lion and the courage and nobility of the eagle, bound together by secret teachings said to be been whispered by Urian’s winds. These powers furthered their tireless war with infernal forces. Sadly, there are no longer any griffins in the world.

JOINING THE HAWKS

Barbarians often become hawks. When barbaric peoples who have long worshiped Urian under different names enter his eyries, they readily take on the hawk’s mantle. Such hawks often take the Path of the Harrier, which is described in **Chapter X**. Other hawks are rangers (Hunter), fighters (Eldritch Knight), or rogues (Assassin), though any character sworn to Urian and skilled with a bow might join the order.



THE GODDESS OF THE EARTH

RONTRA

GRANDMOTHER, VENERABLE, THE EARTH, THE WELLSPRING,
THE EARTH MOTHER, THE FOREMOTHER

Rontra (RAHN-tra) is the lawful good goddess of the earth, plants, farms, dirt, gems, metals, farmers, miners, and all others who revere the earth. She seeks the greatest good for the greatest number of her children through an ordered and structured society. Grandmother Rontra says, “You do not cast your seeds to the wind and hope they grow; you must plan, and plan well.”

Associated not only with the earth above, upon which all things grow and live, but also with the places beneath the earth, Rontra stands for the fertility of the land, as well as the people that inhabit it. She is the grandmother of all people and of the gods themselves, having grown the great tree Eliwyn in her soil. She is therefore the patron of grandmothers and old women. She is known as the Foremother, as she offers the gods and mortal races the loving embrace of their ancestral mother.

Rontra is often linked with the animals of the deep places and caves of the earth, including moles, voles, wolves, and cave bears. Of all the animals of the earth, though, she is most closely associated with rabbits and hares, which live in warm homes in the earth. They are gentle and fertile creatures, just as Rontra is gentle and stands for the fertility of all the creatures and plants of the earth, and they desire nothing but peace, yet they will not hesitate to protect their young, even against impossible odds. Among mystical creatures, she is often associated with treants, which some say are her children, but were born of the blood of druids (see the church of Eliwyn). She is most closely tied to the divine and gentle celestial animal spirits called pookas (see **Chapter X**) that sometimes aid humans in need. They usually appear as monkeys or rabbits, and stand at the good counterparts to rakshasas.

Rontra has been depicted in icons as an elderly woman of the race worshiping her. Whatever the race, she has grey hair, approaching silver, and in her face, thousands of wrinkles lie like the furrows of the earth and the farm. She is usually depicted in robes of flowing white, though when she is prayed to for fertility, she is shown in robes of red. Her feet are always unshod, to remain ever in contact with the earth. Her eyes are black as coal with flecks of gold, silver, and iron.

In ancient times—and some of these icons and primitive statues remain—Rontra was shown as a heavyset woman with five exposed breasts. These represented the five mortal races; further, they represented fertility and life, signifying that mortals suckle at her breasts and take life-giving sustenance from the earth.

The symbolic representations of Rontra’s church vary slightly, with different regions using different symbols to honor the earth. Those who revere the strength of the soil and its life-giving power represent Grandmother Rontra with a bundle of corn, or another crop appropriate for the locale. Miners use the symbol of a sparkling diamond, shining as if lit by a bright light, to represent the treasures

of the earth. All groups recognize the simple shorthand of a single majestic mountain on a field of white, however, and if there is a “universal” symbol of her church, this is it, rendered simply as a tall triangle.

Rontra is worshiped by farmers and others who work the soil, who pray that their fields will yield a rich harvest. Miners honor her for her gifts of precious metals and wondrous gems. Women pray to her when they desire children, because it was within the bosom of Rontra that the great tree Eliwyn grew and gave birth to the wondrous diversity of life in the land. Her worship is popular among all five races, though for different reasons—the elves love her natural splendor, the dwarves love her deep and rich caves, the gnomes love their homelands in her hills, and the halflings love her rich soil for farming. Humans love her for all these reasons and more, depending on their culture. Half-orcs rarely worship Rontra, as they are considered unnatural by her church. Any character who comes from a farming community is likely to have been raised worshiping Rontra, though most of her adventurer worshipers are rogues (who specialize in scouting), rangers, barbarians, and druids who honor the gods, not impersonal natural forces..

The worship of Rontra, Morwyn, and Anwyn are all very closely integrated, as they are three generations of the same line of women, and are often shown together: the grandmother, the mother, and the maiden. While Morwyn is the patron of pregnant women and those giving birth, it is Rontra to whom people appeal when they desire children, for the Grandmother is the giver of fertility. Similarly, while Morwyn is the patron of mothers and those raising children, it is Anwyn, the daughter, to whom they appeal for a quiet and restful home.

MYTHS

THE FATE OF DURGAS THE UNMERCIFUL

LONG AGO, WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG, AS WERE THE CHILDREN of the Tree, there arose a leader and warrior among men who was a scourge to the earth. His countenance knew only rage and his hands bore naught but death. Durgas the Unmerciful he was called, may his name forever be cursed, for he cut a bloody swath across the land. All who dared oppose him were crushed beneath his might; his cruelty and malice were unrelenting, and only exceeded by his hunger for power. Those conquered by the Unmerciful found their lands, homes, and very families ruthlessly pillaged.

Durgas had fought wars on many fronts, but had never extended his conquests eastward, for that way lay a powerful nation that opposed him bitterly. After a time, the wicked warlord became determined to conquer his Eastern neighbor, and focused his forces for an all-out assault. This was no normal conflict. The pride of Durgas was unending, and he felt it an affront that this nation had opposed him for so long. He



therefore had no plan to capture and keep his enemy's lands; his mind was on more sinister machinations. He would kill these Eastern people, make their King eat his own family, destroy their cities and salt the earth. If he was successful, there would be nothing left but desolation and death. Then all would know the price of resisting Durgas the Unmerciful.

The campaign began as had so many others. Armies of men started out strong against his onslaught, but soon retreated, hoping to fight another day. The horde of Durgas set about slaughtering those left behind. Homes were burned, crops destroyed, and the earth poisoned; the stench of death and roasted flesh was everywhere.

Then he saw her.

She was a solitary figure, silhouetted by the fires raging behind her. She stood stooped over a cane, seeming ancient and tired. As Durgas rode forward to strike her down, the old woman uttered these words: "Hold, warrior! Stay your hand! You must abandon this path of murder—of destroying the people and their lands. Remember, warrior: The Earth gives life, and life it can take away."

Durgas roared back, "You are a fool, woman! Death is before you and all around you. Only I can give you your life now, but I choose to take it away!" With that, the Unmerciful beheaded the old woman.

Her head rolled on the ground and turned face up. Durgas saw the eyes of the old woman staring right at him. Then the lips moved, speaking thus: "You have made your choice, Durgas the Unmerciful. We shall see who lives and who dies." With that, her head and body turned to dust before him.

The campaign continued, as Durgas and his army moved further and further into enemy territory. Again, they destroyed

everything in their path, leaving nothing but death and destruction behind them.

And again, he saw her.

Venerable Rontra, though Durgas still did not know who she was, stood in the center of a burning field. Heedless of the destruction around her and the approach of Durgas, she stood patiently, waiting for him to approach. At first, Durgas thought it a coincidence, but when she spoke, he knew it to be the same voice he had heard before.

"Durgas," Rontra the Wellspring said, "You have yet to learn. I ask you again to give up your war and go on your way. Only your doom awaits you along this path."

Durgas hesitated for a moment this time, looking down from his saddle at this stooped grey woman who spoke with such authority. His men were stunned, for they had never seen him think over a killing blow. But if there had ever been a place in Durgas' heart where mercy might find root, it was now as scorched and barren as the lands he had left ravaged in his wake. Raising his blade, he hewed that old grey head, saying, "You will not stop me, woman. I am Durgas! I am invincible!"

Again, before turning to dust, the last words of Grandmother Rontra were, "You have made your choice, warrior. We shall see who lives and who dies."

Now Durgas was filled with an incredible rage. A fey light kindled in his eyes and he drove his men to unspeakable acts. No home was left standing, no field left unburned, no life untaken in his path of destruction.

Again, he saw the old woman!

She waited for him as before, though now she seemed not so frail. She stood unbent and unbowed at the crest of a hill. As Durgas approached, his men fell back, for whispers of this

old woman had now spread through the camp and even the Unmerciful's mightiest captains feared her. Only Durgas dared approach, and he dismounted to climb to the top of the hill and stand face to face with the Earth Mother.

She spoke to him: "Warrior, I ask you now only for the sake of the earth, provider and nurturer of all life, stay your hand. Leave this place unharmed. It is in your power to do this. All you need do is walk away. Think ere you strike."

"I do not need to think, old woman," responded Durgas. "You have been unable to stop me and you will not stop me now, so close to the end. On the morrow, I will have the king of these lands beneath my heel. Durgas stays his hand for no one! I strike you down for the last time. Begone! Trouble me no more!"

This time his cruel stroke split the old woman in half. There were no words from her, and her body dissipated into dust.

Durgas continued his onslaught, cruelly destroying his enemies and their lands, making them uninhabitable. When there were none left to kill and nothing left to plunder or pillage, he turned his tired army homeward.

The march was long and the land was dry and parched. There was no water and no food—for all around, in every direction, was the destruction that Durgas had wrought. One by one his men died, as they had nothing to eat or drink. At last, only Durgas was left.

As he stumbled forward and fell to the ground, he looked up and saw the Foremother standing before him, her cane in her hand. She was robed now in purest white, and her old grey hair shone in the light of the day like threads of pure silver. "Help me!" he said to her. "Please help me."

The old woman looked down on him, and even for this worst man among men, there was pity in her gaze. But there was no sorrow in her voice when she spoke: "Look now on the mighty Durgas. The Unmerciful! The Invincible! Look how you have been laid low. You did not heed my warnings. You did not respect the land. Now you taste death, not at the hands of another warrior, but at the hands of the earth you so sorely abused. For behold! I am Rontra, the Earth, and had you obeyed me, I would have nurtured and sustained you as I do all others who respect me. But in your pride, you destroyed all you saw. From dust you were born, to dust you will return. Go, and be judged!" Finished, the Wellspring plunged her cane into the earth before him.

With that, Durgas turned to dust and his remains seeped into the earth. The cane remained, marking the spot of his demise. It grew to a mighty oak tree in time, as the earth around it recovered, growth spreading out from that spot like ripples in a pond.

NURTURE THE WORLD

Rontra has seen what strife and hatred can do to the land and its people. She knows only constant vigilance can make certain that the gods, as well as mortals, do not turn to destruction and death over petty squabbles. To this end, she views herself as an advisor and nurturer of her people. She counsels her grandchildren and shows them the paths of righteousness. Together with Morwyn, she is the conscience of gods and mortals alike.

For Rontra, there is only one way, and that is the way of moral good, no matter how difficult its demands. In this, she is uncompromising and does not equivocate,

nor does she believe good ends can ever justify ill means. That said, Rontra is the most "natural" of the gods, for while she mourns the terrible events and crimes of the world, she does little to stop them. As is shown in the myth of Durgas, Rontra might warn and cajole, she might plead with the wicked to find the right path, but she rarely opposes them. As the earth, she sees all things happen for a reason and all in the world is part of a great cycle of life, even destruction and war.

Rontra protects life in all its forms, through subtle means whenever she can. Legends are filled with families strangely overlooked by marauding armies because a small copse of trees obscured them, or a cave they had never noticed suddenly appeared near their home and gave them shelter from the raiders. Of all the gods, Rontra moves in the most mysterious ways, rarely showing her hand or making her intentions clear. But those who worship her and study her ways know she values all living things, from the least insect to the greatest god, as sacred and worthy of her attention. Whenever life is taken for granted or wanton destruction is spread, her agents are there, offering an alternative and attempting to convince those who destroy that the path of life holds more value.

If there is anything that Rontra does actively oppose, it is the unnatural forces that pollute her lands. The Earth Mother despises the undead and their masters. They represent unnatural life not born from the earth. Her servants seek them out, to return them to the peace of death.

CELESTIAL SERVITORS

Rontra has four main celestial servitors: allies and friends who do her bidding when she calls.

THE SHEPHERDESS

When she needs to take shape, this servant of Rontra appears as a tall female of an appropriate race, with flowing robes and long golden hair. Her hand holds a shepherd's crook carved out of fresh oak. When the land is being desecrated or otherwise misused, the Shepherdess makes subtle appeals to those responsible to change their ways. She is called the Shepherdess because she is the figure credited in most legends for subtly herding those in danger out of trouble. Some believe the Shepherdess is actually Morwyn, not a servant of Rontra at all. Theologians consider this foolish folklore though, for they know the Shepherdess by the name Gwainlath, said to be a great leader who served Rontra in the earliest days of the five races.

THE MINER

Known to dwarves as Barik-tharn, the Miner appears as a stout dwarf with a pick made of pure light. He is the protector of the earth's treasures, but most importantly, he warns those who are beloved of Rontra when they are in danger of delving too deep or too dangerously. When miners feel gut intuition telling them their tunnels are unsafe, they claim it is Barik-tharn whispering over their shoulders.

SAINT MARLESSA

Reputedly the founder of the first Rontran foundation, St. Marlessa is the ear of Rontra, walking at the Grandmother's side and listening to the pleas of her worshipers. She only brings the most pressing petitions to the goddess herself. She is invoked as "Saint Marlessa, sister of the people" by common folk, and is often named in private prayer by Rontra's followers.

THE SERPENT

The more mystical worshipers of Rontra believe the surface of the world is an enormous serpent biting its own tail, that is sometimes called Ouroboros. They believe the serpent is the chief of Rontra's servants, and all strength and power, particularly the power of fertility, is given to mortals through it, for it holds the power of life and death. Most legends of the serpent are not so grandiose. The more common belief is that the Serpent was created by Master Korak, who ripped off its legs to woo Thellyne (see the church of Korak in **Chapter V**). These legends hold that it came to Rontra in terrible pain and she took to her bosom. The Serpent now visits those in mortal agony and eases their pain, for Rontra cannot abide suffering.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF RONTRA

The foundations of Rontra, where the Rontrians worship, can be found throughout most lands, for her followers are quite numerous. In rural areas, where farming and living off the land are a necessity, there is almost always a Rontran foundation present. Farmers offer prayers there daily, so Rontra might bless their crops.

In cities, the foundations of Rontra are far less common. When found, they are most likely concerned with her fertility aspect. Women of all social classes pay homage to the Wellspring of Life, hoping they will be able to "bear fruit," as the tree of Eliwyn did through Rontra's grace. Quite often, the churches of Rontra and Morwyn are linked, as they are considered the grandmother and mother of the people, respectively. In Great Church cathedrals, their altars are always found together.

The main goal of Rontra's church is to sustain life and the earth that supports it. Those who kill and maim for no reason, or pillage the earth without cause, are enemies of the Rontran faith. Priests of Rontra view themselves as counselors more than leaders of the people. They provide guidance to the faithful and maintain the health of their flock through wisdom and advice. They lay down their lives if necessary to defend the land and the living things that derive sustenance from it, but they rarely tell people

what they should or must do.

Most Rontrians take pleasure in the treasures of the earth, such as gems and precious metals. They often make these into beautiful works to honor their goddess. There are many within the Rontran faith who are expert at such matters, and in mining societies the worship of Rontra is closely tied with worship of Korak, the artisan, who taught mortals to craft such wonders.

The foundations of Rontra are always constructed from stone or brick, derived from the strength of the earth. The Rontrians never raise their buildings more than one story above the ground, and often construct many subterranean levels and chambers. The floor of Rontran foundations is always bare earth. Those entering the temple must remove their footwear out of respect and walk barefoot. Thus, they are always in contact with the Earth Mother. Many faithful Rontrians avoid wearing shoes for this reason.

Rontra has never believed in actively influencing events or telling mortals what to do, even in the time of the div, but since the Compact, she has become even less involved in the daily lives of mortals. Though she is as bound to the sphere as the land itself, she observes mortals from afar.

She is pleased with most aspects of what her church has become, although she thinks that more focus should be put on the overall welfare of people throughout the world. She believes her faith has become too focused on farmers and those that work the land. While she appreciates the reluctance of her faithful to instruct others and lead them toward the right path—they are taking a page from her book, after all—she does pressure the most powerful of her followers to assume a more active role promoting peace among all people.

When she can, she sends servants such as the Shepherdess or the Miner into the mortal sphere to right a grievous wrong, stop the wanton destruction of the earth, or (most commonly) subtly influence mortals to do it for themselves.

PEACE THROUGH ACCEPTANCE

"We cannot mourn that we die, for all things die. It would serve us just as well to mourn birth. The fields are planted and grow full, and then they are harvested and made bare. They are planted once more, and again harvested. Do not mourn the cycles of life; do not resist their wonder. When we are at peace with life, then we will be at peace with each other. This is what our Grandmother wants for us."

— *Great Elder Grombir Ironbrand's "I Have Seen the Glory"*

Rontran teachings are not universal; each foundation focuses on the aspect of the faith its sowers consider most important. For example, inside a dwarf hold there might be a foundation



that dwells on the beauty of the earth's treasures, and ministers mostly to miners. In this foundation, there would be no mention of planting crops at all. Conversely, a foundation in the middle of a farming community spends most of its time focusing on the health of the crops, not on the precious metals and stones hidden beneath the earth. As mentioned earlier, foundations in cities usually dwell on fertility. But the treasures of the earth, farming, and fertility are all merely aspects of Rontra's love for those creatures living on and in the earth. On this, all sowers agree.

From this understanding, a core philosophy of the Rontran faith has emerged and can best be understood as "peace through acceptance, sharing, and love." Rontran teaching focuses on the ramifications of wanting more than is rightfully yours—as with Durgas in the myth, it invariably results in downfall and sorrow.

Rontrans believe we each have our place in the world and we must learn to accept it. Death is inevitable, and the greed and pride that moves some to seek to extend their lives is wrong, and ends badly. We all meet with tragedy in our lives, perhaps the death of a loved one or the theft of something we prize. To rage against these tragedies and try to achieve vengeance against the person responsible, or worse, against the world that makes such tragedies possible, always results in even greater tragedy. Only when all people accept their place and learn to share, to love their neighbors and to be kind and gentle with one another, will we have peace. And peace is what Rontra desires for all.

The Rontran philosophy is a gentle one, accepted by many people for its simplicity and comfort. It is easy for those who live small lives without pretension to riches or glory to see themselves, through this teaching, as fulfilling their place in a very holy order.

Beyond these teachings, the Rontrans have some basic commandments that all devotees must follow. To disobey these teachings is a grave sin, and one must seek out a religious leader of the foundations to seek atonement if one does so.

- Do not consort with devils, demons, or other evil creatures that are not of this earth.
- Do not create the undead, or consort with those that do.
- Do not join in physical union with any race not born of the tree of life.
- Do not eat the flesh of any creature not born of the earth; only natural beasts and fowl are appropriate meat for a Rontran.
- Do not sow the land with salt or any other substance that will ruin it for planting.
- Do not waste seed for planting or the seed of your own flesh.
- On the first day of each week, in remembrance that the beasts of the earth came from the same fruits that gave life to the mortal races, eat no meat whatsoever.
- If you have food that you can spare and others are hungry, share.

- If you grow food from the earth, one-tenth of all you grow must be given to those needier than you, unless none are needier.
- If you pull treasures from the earth, two-tenths of all wealth you take from the Earth Mother's treasures must be given to the needy, unless none are needier than you.

RONTRAN PRAYERS

There are many common prayers used by sowers and worshipers of Rontra, and part of a sower's training is learning the hundreds, if not thousands, of traditional invocations that have been written over the years. One of the first they learn is the prayer of sowing. This is invoked by farmers during planting seasons to help ensure the strength and fertility of the soil.

THE SOWING PRAYER

This last stanza of the Sowing Prayer is commonly used by farmers to ask for Rontra's blessings in their endeavors. Many say it almost absent-mindedly, as a common invocation.

*"Great Earth Mother, hear my prayer.
With these humble hands I till the soil,
Prepare the earth for the seeds of life.
"Great Earth Mother, hear my prayer.
I place each seed within your embrace
And ask that you welcome each into your arms.
"Great Earth Mother, hear my prayer.
As Eliwyn grew within your life-giving bosom,
So, too, I pray that my seeds will grow.
"Great Earth Mother, hear my prayer.
As I water the earth in due time
And tend the crops with loving care,
May your blessings be upon the land."*

HOLY DAYS

There are three main holy days of the Church of Rontra: the Fertility Festival, the Sowing of Seeds, and the Harvest Festival. Depending on the church and its locale, each holy day or period takes on more or less significance. For example, the Sowing of Seeds and the Harvest Festival are very important to farmers, while the Fertility Festival might have a greater significance in cities.

THE FERTILITY FESTIVAL

This festival takes place on the first day of spring. This is normally an all-day affair to celebrate the end of winter, along with the hope and life promised by the coming spring. Most farming villages shut down during this day as everyone gathers in the town square to eat, play games, and attend services to honor Rontra. The young test themselves with physically rigorous activities to prove they are ready to be adults. In more "civilized" areas, the Fertility Festival is an excuse for a day of revelry. The test of adulthood is often reduced to showing off one's prowess with a sword or bow, or besting someone at a game of chance.

THE SOWING OF SEEDS

The Sowing occurs at the start of the planting season. This roughly coincides with the months of March and April in a real-world calendar, depending on the climate of your campaign world. During this holy day, members of rural communities attend services at the local foundation to ask Rontra to bless the coming planting. It is customary on this day for each farmer to plant a young sapling to repay and honor Rontra for her annual gifts of crops. Devout farmers protect their trees with religious zeal, often hiding them away in secret groves.

THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

This weeklong affair occurs during the harvest full moon, which would roughly coincide with October on a real-world calendar. The festival gives thanks to Rontra for the gift of the harvest, and is an opportunity for farmers to celebrate the successful completion of another season. The occasion is marked with daily worship, followed by contests that award prizes for agricultural products, such as the best pie, the biggest pumpkin, or the sweetest corn. Dancing is also popular, and many a barn is lit up and cleared to make room for the revelers. The long, hard winter is ahead, and this festival allows the people to enjoy themselves before its struggles begin. This is a favorite holy day among halfling worshipers of Rontra.

In mining communities, this festival refers to a harvest from the rocky depths, and is celebrated with displays of precious stones and metal from prized lodes.

SAINTS

The Rontran Church has one famous saint, Marlessa, who established the foundations and has the ear of Rontra, but generally there are no universal rules for naming saints. After popular acclaim, a well-liked deceased person might be named a saint by the unanimous judgment of a body of prelates. They are normally known only to the local area foundations where they lived and worked. In most cases, saints were sowers or wardens who served the community and Rontra in some extraordinary way. On occasion, a member of the congregation who has made an incredible sacrifice for the church can also be so honored. The title of such a saint is normally her name followed by the phrase “Defender of the Earth” or “Protector of the Land,” based on the deed that resulted in beatification.

HOLY ORDERS

The Rontran foundations have no centralized hierarchy. Each is independently managed by its senior member, though some foundations in one kingdom or geographic area might form a council. Even without a central authority, each member knows where they stand in the religion.

There are three holy orders within the Rontran church: the sowers (clergy), wardens (holy warriors), and gleaners. Sowers have three levels of status: prelates, grand prelates, and elders of the faith. Wardens and gleaners do not have

such formal ranks. Sowers run the foundations, and are considered the authorities in any matter concerning the Rontran faith.

A typical foundation hosts at least five prelates and one grand prelate. In fact, a foundation cannot be established without a grand prelate. Larger foundations have three or four wardens in residence. Gleaners are almost never found in foundations, and are instead inhabit shrines found in the remote wilderness.

SOWERS OF RONTRA

The sowers are the clerics of the Rontran faith. Their name comes from farming, not because they are all farmers, but as a reference to what they do: plant the seed of Rontra’s wisdom and goodness in the hearts and minds of all they meet. Just as a farmer cannot make a seed grow by himself, so are the sowers unable to make this seed of peace take root. It is up to people to nourish their own moral strength.



Most sowers reside in foundations, ministering to Rontra's worshippers. There are those in the order who eschew connection to any establishment, seeing the earth as their ministry. These wandering sowers are usually quite popular, for they heal the sick and the maimed, and always seem to show up just when they're needed most. Although the Rontran faith has no higher order than that of the sowers, they need not work at a foundation, but most do because it's the best way to study, and perform Rontra's works.

Many small farming villages across the land benefit from Rontran foundations' charity. They often build small shrines to the Earth Mother in outlying communities, stationing prelates at these shrines for periods up to five years. Ideally, the prelates train acolytes to take over their ministries once they move on to other duties.

Wherever a sower is stationed, whatever his duty, the order sees his function as offering all people, common and high, a helping hand and advice to help them accept their varied places in the world and be at peace. Sowers sometimes speak in what seem like riddles, to avoid telling people what to do. They shun confrontations when dealing with people who are good of heart, but when faced with evil, particularly unnatural and fiendish forces, sowers become implacable foes.

Most sowers are lawful good and, like Rontra, believe there must be an order to everything in nature, including peoples' lives, for the world to be at peace. They desire the happiness from all people, high and low, and work within the established order to promote it. While they oppose tyranny, they see nothing wrong with a system of peasant farmers and wealthy landowners. In fact, they convince those who want to rebel against this established order that they must accept their place in life. This is one of the cores of their belief: accept who and what you are, and you will find unbounded joy. They espouse moral good in other ways, though, and oppose efforts oppress the people or steal from them.

The neutral good sowers are more ambivalent about established social orders. They see many cases where change can improve lives. However, they continue to adhere to the basic tenets of the faith, and do not command good-hearted people to change their lives, preferring to advise. Many neutral good sowers are wanderers, less interested in the foundations than their counterparts. They seek out the world's most dangerous areas, where they can do good deeds.

Oddities among the brethren, lawful neutral sowers seek and obey authority almost compulsively. They create hierarchies where none exist. Most sowers with this outlook believe the flaw in mortal reasoning is easily found—and it's their dissatisfaction with order. If everyone accepted their place unconditionally and performed their role properly, the world would function perfectly and peacefully. Lawful neutral sowers try to guide those who have fallen out of their place back into it, and wage personal crusades against forces outside the natural order, such as the undead.

PRELATES

Initiate sowers are named prelates, a title they bear for the first many years of their careers. The Rontrians hold that all prelates are equal. Once admitted into the order, they

can go where they believe Rontra wants them—unless commanded directly not to by the grand prelate of the foundation. The foundations have lawful good tendencies, however, and most prelates obey even implied instructions even they're not strictly required to. A prelate is addressed as "brother" or "sister," and introduced by full title.

GRAND PRELATES

The only person in a foundation empowered to command others is its grand prelate. When a foundation loses its grand prelate through death or departure, or when a new foundation is established, all the local prelates gather for a great council to name a new grand prelate. All voices are equal in these councils, called moots, regardless of age or experience. Prelates run the moots in a very orderly fashion, with every attendant getting a chance to debate the matter before them. Thus, moots can take as long as a month before these prelates agree unanimously on the identity of the new grand prelate. Grand prelates are undisputedly in charge of the foundations and, since there is no higher authority, they become the area's arbiter of religious law. Prelates obey the grand prelate from their foundation, even if they don't want to. A foundation must have a grand prelate to be considered a foundation—otherwise it is a shrine. If a grand prelate cannot be decided on, the foundation is reduced to a shrine and put under the authority of the nearest foundation with a grand prelate. Grand prelates are addressed as "mothers" or "fathers," and introduced by full title.

ELDERS OF THE FAITH

Whether grand prelate or not, eventually a sower becomes so powerful that all recognize him as an elder of the faith, or "great elder." These venerable leaders have usually performed great quests or other monumental tasks in the service of Rontra. It is considered odd for great elders to continue to serve as grand prelates if they hold the office. Most give up the position. They travel throughout the land. Visiting foundations, they lend their wisdom and aid when required, harrying the weaker members of the faith simply cannot approach. A great elder is addressed as "grandmother," or "grandfather," and introduced by full title.

JOINING THE SOWERS

To become a prelate, a person must show a gift of understanding Rontra's teachings. The faith is complex, with thousands of recorded prayers and three different forms of ministry (farming, treasures of the earth, and fertility). A prelate must understand all of these, and be just as prepared to tend to the spiritual needs of dwarven miners as those of young wives hoping to get with child. Training usually takes five years, though wise candidates have been admitted into the clergy in only two years. A prelate might serve in a foundation, wander, or even run a small shrine. Prelates become clerics upon completing their training and must choose a domain associated with Rontra for the Divine Domain class feature, such as Earth (see **Chapter X**) or Nature.

WARDENS OF RONTRA

Wardens are protectors of the earth, guarding the world from those who would abuse her gifts, but primarily from those powers that would pollute or pervert the natural order. While sowers protect and guide the mortal races, wardens seek out and end incursions of unnatural forces such as the undead and fiends such as demons and devils. While they take orders from grand prelates or great elders, wardens tend to be inveterate wanderers on a lifelong mission against evil.

Wardens defend the earth from the depredations of the unnatural. They consider all life sacred, and strive to protect and nurture Rontra's children. They must always remember the reason for their struggle against the unnatural is to protect innocent life. Any warden who kills without just cause, or defiles the earth and its treasures, immediately loses her standing and is considered fallen. Wardens must never imagine the ends justify the means—they do not for Rontra, so they do not for her servants.

In determining what is “unnatural,” the simple rule to follow is this: If it's good or was born on the Material Plane, it is not “unnatural.” While wardens do not like orcish brutality, they do not wish to eradicate orcs, as they are part of the natural order. Undead aren't alive and fiends come from other planes, and thus face the full force of the wardens' wrath. Wardens do not oppose celestials, because these holy beings do not actively pollute and destroy the natural order.

Wardens enjoy the company of any who oppose evil through just means. They are closely tied with Morwynites and other lawful churches, and might ally themselves with other divinely-powered, virtuous individuals from other faiths. They shun the company of those who resort to torture or brutality in the name of what they perceive to be good, or anyone who knowingly commits evil acts. They actively oppose anyone who creates undead, or summons evil beings from other planes.

JOINING THE WARDENS

Rontra sometimes calls people to serve her. When she does, they feel her voice in their bones, and become wardens. Intuition tells wardens their duty to oppose the unnatural forces that inhabit the world, whatever the cost, so many leave behind established trades and lives to heed Rontra's call. Any warden can name an initiate warden who's heard the divine summons; this act makes the initiate a paladin. The induction process and ceremony vary based on the inducting warden and the prospective member's personality. Many initiates are taken into secluded areas by their sponsors and told tales of Rontra's splendor for many days, with little to sustain them but conversation's distractions. Other wardens lead an entire foundation in prayers for the initiate's mission, for days on end. There are even wardens who were inducted into the order by being buried in dirt up to their necks, for three days and nights. Regardless of the ceremony, the newly created warden becomes master of her own destiny, and may wander the lands freely on her order's universal quest to destroy the unnatural.



Once initiated, a warden has no other office of rank, is addressed as “sir” or “dame,” and is introduced by full title. Wardens require no training to be considered such, though most are wise enough to seek out martial training. When it is time for wardens to swear their Sacred Oath, they normally swear the Oath of the Ancients. Most wardens are lawful good.

GLEANERS OF RONTRA

The third holy order of the Rontrans has little to do with the foundations, and its members spend their time in small farming communities. Called the gleaners, they take their name from the poorest of the poor. At harvest time, after the reapers cut the wheat and take it to be stored, gleaners come in and pick up the small pieces of grain dropped in the process. They live off these scraps; a more wretched people cannot be found in any countryside.

Rontra's order of gleaners are mendicants, living off what they are given by nearby farmers. They settle on the outskirts of rural communities and ponder the nature of Rontra's teachings, while protecting the land from evil

incursions—natural and unnatural alike. The order came into existence on the uncivilized fringes of society long ago, when the greatest threat to farmers were roving bandits who raided them for food. The gleaners were warriors inspired by Rontra, who rose from farm communities and drove off bandits in exchange for food. Eventually, they coalesced into an order and now they are respected, if little heard from, members of the faith.

It is not an easy mantle to wear. The gleaners have no property or families, and often live rough, without roofs of their own. Eventually, they become tied to the land they protect. While there are certainly traveling gleaners seeking out rural communities in need of aid, by the end of their careers (should they live long enough), they invariably settle in a single region.

GOD OF THE WATER

SHALIMYR

THE RAGING, MAGNIFICENT, ENDLESS, THE WAVE, GRANDFATHER OCEAN, SEA FATHER, THE GREAT SEA, THE WATERS OF THE WORLD

Shalimyr (SHALL-uh-meer) is the chaotic neutral god of the waters of the world: ocean, rivers, lakes, streams, and rain. He is the god of sailing, fishing, and all other mortal endeavors that rely on the water. To those living on coastlands, Shalimyr is the lord of sea storms (to landlocked peoples, Urian is usually considered father of storms). He is the patron of fathers, for he was the father of Eliwyn, the tree from which the gods and mortal races arose, but he is also the patron of grandfathers, for from Eliwyn came the races of the world.

Shalimyr is shown as a great blue-skinned figure, with his hair and beard made of white sea foam. He wields a mighty falchion name Seacrest, and wears armor made from seashells. In his eyes dance the wild waves of the sea.

Common symbols rely on a single cresting blue wave capped with foam. Those wearing a holy symbol of Shalimyr often display it as a wave made of painted shell, though elaborate versions may be crafted out of lapis lazuli and alabaster. In a hurry, when such symbols cannot be made, or when the area on which the symbol will appear is so small that such detail is not possible, a more basic form is acceptable: a simple triangle inside a circle, meant to show that at the center of all things is “the Wave,” as Shalimyr is called from time to time.

In nature, Shalimyr is often associated with the frightening beasts of the sea, such as the great kraken, but he is more commonly identified with simple fish. His favorite creatures are said to be whales, sharks, and dolphins, and certainly Shalimyr’s several faces can be seen in them, from the indifferent whales, to violent and dangerous sharks, and even friendly, helpful dolphins.

Shalimyr is worshiped most ardently by the aquatic mortal races: the sea-elves and merfolk. These two revere Shalimyr over all other gods. On land, he is worshiped by those who live by and with the water—primarily elves and humans.

JOINING THE GLEANERS

Anyone who has a love for common people, and is prepared to take up arms to defend them and their lands, might make an appropriate gleaner. Fighters, rangers, barbarians, and monks (especially monks who practice the way of the four elements) are all likely to become gleaners, and more than a few rogues have joined as well. It is unheard of for those who require books and other trappings of civilization, like wizards and bards, to become gleaners, as it is a calling that requires poverty. Gleaners do not have titles, and many abandon their names. They are simply called “friend” or “brother” by those they protect. Admission to the order does not require any rite of passage; a person is simply called to serve the order and takes on the mantle of gleaner.

MYTHS

THE ORIGINS OF THE MERFOLK

WHEN ZHEENKEEF HURLED THE ELVES AROUND THE WORLD, some landed in the sea, and became the sea-elves. While most of the mortal races over which the gods have dominion reside on land, the sea-elves rarely touch earth. But the sea-elves are not the only mortal race to reside under the waves; the merfolk also have souls, and go before Maal upon their deaths to be judged. They are humans who were changed to live under the sea—but how is this possible?

Long ago there arose a seaside kingdom of proud men who sailed tall ships across Grandfather Ocean’s back. When he marked them, Shalimyr the Wave loved these humans well, for they respected the waters and wrote joyful songs praising its foam and waves. The sounds of these works were soothing to Raging Shalimyr’s ear. But the attention of Shalimyr, the Waters of the World, is fickle, and he forgot about these people whom he so loved.

So it was that the seaside kingdom, unprotected and unfavored, came to war with a powerful empire that wielded fell magic against its foes. The men of the water cried out to Shalimyr to crush their foes, but he did not—his attention was on other matters, and his affections belonged to others, now.. Battles raged for many years. Wave-lords conquered the ports of the mages for a time, but the mages drove them off with fire and lightning.

At last the mages who waged this war against the proud men of the ships devised a tactic to destroy their foes. Calling upon terrible magic, they sank the entire kingdom of the seafaring men to the bottom of the great, wide sea! It is said that Mormekar, the Grim Wanderer (as he is called by all folk doomed to meet him), may claim any few souls without even sparing them his attention; but in that hour so many thousands died at once that Mormekar was required to walk among them himself. For many long moments, not one of them died though they clawed at their throats, unable to breathe.



Their terrible suffering reached Endless Shalimyr's ears, and he too went to the site of this cataclysm. He asked Mormekar to spare them, but the Grim Wanderer does his duty and stays his hand for few—or perhaps none. “They cannot breathe, Shalimyr, and they must die. The choice is not mine.” And indeed, Shalimyr understood: The choice was not Mormekar's but his own, to let these people who loved him and revered him die and be erased from the world, or to save them. And Shalimyr so loved these folk, every one of them doomed to death, that he transformed them. He gave them the tails and gills of fishes so that they might live on! In wonder at this transformation, the merfolk called out their thanks. And thus do they revere Endless Shalimyr to this day, for he saved them from death and made them what they are.

THE LOST CONQUEROR

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A PIRATE KING CALLED ERIKUL who claimed dominion over the many seas. When Erikul was a child he had gone to the water's edge and cut his hand, letting his blood spill into the sea. “Sea Father,” he said, “I dedicate my blood to you. Let me ride your back to glory!”

His prayer was heeded, and by the time he was full in manhood, he was the greatest sailor in all the lands. He served on a pirate ship and, in the winking of an eye, became captain of a dread fleet. By the time the first traces of silver were in his beard he was known as the Terror of the Seas.

One day, while sailing on the back of Shalimyr, the Great Sea, his vessel was hailed by the kindly sea-elves who swam at its side. The pirates welcomed the sea-folk aboard. At their

head was their queen, Shawaliasha, the most beautiful woman on land or water. At once, Erikul was smitten in love and demanded the queen's hand.

“I have forsworn marriage,” the queen responded, “until I find a man who is the lord of all he surveys.”

Erikul thought this awfully strange, for surely the queen of the sea-elves had heard of Erikul, the Terror of the Seas. “But that is I, lady. I am Erikul, the pirate king, and I am master of all the seas. There are none who would dare oppose me or my fleet. No one sails on the wide back of Grandfather Ocean that I do not know of, and none stand against me should I seek to board or take their ships. While other kings rule the weak land, I rule the seas!”

“That is well, King Erikul, but you are not lord of all you survey.”

This was terribly vexing to the pirate king, and he looked out over the bow of his mighty ship. And then he turned back. “You are wrong, lady! I am Lord of all I Survey! I see nothing before me that I cannot take for my own, including you and your folk. I have been kind thus far, but should Erikul seek to conquer your folk, he shall! I am the King of all the Seas! I am Master of all the Oceans!”

At this, the queen smiled, for she knew that Raging Shalimyr had heard this claim. Within moments, Shalimyr, the Waters of the World, opened wide his horrible maw and swallowed up Erikul and all his ships. Thus did the queen of the Sea-Elves rid the world of the Terror of the Seas. For no man is King of the Ocean; only Endless Shalimyr may claim domain over the waters. Any man who forgets this is doomed to die as surely as Erikul, who is now bones at the bottom of the sea.

CONSTANT CHANGE

Not as wild as Zheenkeef, Shalimyr does have a great love for dramatic shifts and changes in the world. He believes the world should be in constant flux, or risk stagnation, as his tidal pools grow stagnant with stillness. This is not to say that Shalimyr has no appreciation for the calm and the quiet. Indeed, he is as fond sometimes of silence and gentleness as he is of raging storms and tossing waves. There is a joy in both, but unlike his brother Urian, Shalimyr does not believe there is good in both. Nor does he care. Shalimyr loves to watch things break as much as he loves to watch them grow. He has as much appreciation for cruelty as he does for love, and believes they are equally valid instruments of change. This has been noted by his worshipers; they call the loving side of Shalimyr Grandfather Ocean, whereas the cruel and stormy Shalimyr is named Sea Father. All children of the world love the Grandfather and fear the Father, and Shalimyr seems to enjoy being both loved and feared. What he does not care for is what he sees as the arrogant illusion of permanence.

Shalimyr hates those who are proud and believe that they have built something that will never fall or fail, for they forget that eventually, everything collapses—even the world will crumble someday, when the Nameless One's name is spoken again. Nothing lasts, no matter how strong or virtuous, and to believe something will endure forever is pure hubris. Because of this, Shalimyr, more than any other god, levels the proud. Like the myth of the Pirate King above, tales abound of men, women, or nations that believed they had achieved perfection, only to have everything they were so proud of destroyed by the waters of Shalimyr.

While he loathes pride in others (including the other gods), Shalimyr is himself quite proud. He works his way into every crevice, slips into every available space, all to make sure he can see everything, destroying or nourishing as he chooses. He is unlikely to try to destroy the world, but he loves the power of knowing that drop by drop, he can undermine the foundation of any building, or topple any kingdom. After all, water is everywhere—it is in the air, in the dirt, in the blood of people. Thereby, Shalimyr is in all things, and all the people of the world live by his permission and through his grace. Or so he believes.

All this said, Shalimyr can perform acts of incredible generosity. Since the earliest days, Shalimyr allowed the mortal races to sail on his back. Sometimes he rages at ships with his terrible rains, and sometimes he destroys a ship or two, but usually he is quite kind to sailors. The merfolk would have all died but for his grace. Whenever a town is thirsty and finds a new well, it is Shalimyr's grace made manifest. While it is true he is capricious and quite often a force for destruction, he is no more purely destructive than he is purely nurturing. He can give gifts to the mortal races that are every bit as magnificent as his punishments.

Among the gods, Shalimyr is usually aloof, except where Zheenkeef is concerned. His protectiveness eventually became an obsession, for Shalimyr the Wave is hopelessly besotted with the Mother of Madness. It is

said he and she couple often and feverishly, all without the knowledge of her husband Tinel, the god of knowledge.

ABUNDANT SERVANTS

Shalimyr has many children from his copious couplings with mortals over the years, and they serve as his attendants. Chief among them are his four daughters, Ocean, River, Lake, and Stream, each overseeing some part of his vast waters for him. It is said Shalimyr lives in a mighty palace made of pearl and alabaster drawn through the waters by twelve colossal whales, each large enough to swallow a small fleet of ships. These whales are named after the sounds waves make when they hit the various types of land.

THE BASINS OF SHALIMYR

The churches of Shalimyr, found in most seaside towns and cities, are called basins of Shalimyr, for they collect the outpourings of his worship. His worshipers, the Shalimyn (SHALL-uh-min), congregate before any great sea journey to bless the sailors and their vessel, and pray to Grandfather Ocean for their safe passage. For particularly important journeys they make elaborate sacrifices in the water, cutting open chickens, lambs, and even bulls, letting the blood and water commingle. This is to symbolize that all things owe their life to the water.

For common sailing expeditions, such as the daily voyage of fishing vessels, most sailors meet at the beach before dawn, where a mariner of Shalimyr joins them and prays for their journey. Sacrifices are uncommon in such settings.

The basins collect worship, and their clergy and other holy orders help others honor the god. But just as Shalimyr hates pride outside his faithful, he hates it within their ranks. The holy orders must not, and do not, represent themselves as necessary for a connection between the individual and Shalimyr. They are wise and the basins are there for guidance, but a faithful Shalimyn does not require a basin, a member of the clergy, or anyone or anything else to connect with Shalimyr—his is a highly individual faith.

While the basins are usually places of religious devotion and pious prayer, they are also home to wild and raging festivals accompanied by hard drinking and sometimes more carnal activities. The Shalimyn are both peaceful and wild, just like the waters.

Shalimyr is more involved with the daily lives of his worshipers than any other god. He is so involved that it is likely he oversteps the boundaries of the Compact. None of the gods complain because just as often as Shalimyr sends one of his saints to aid one of his worshipers, he sinks a ship filled with them or wipes out a town of Shalimyn who have grown fat and arrogant.

Worshipping Shalimyr is hard. It involves constant wrestling with one's faith and, often, with one's god. It means tests of one's humility, the constant threat of death,

messages from the sea, and aid or doom from a god's hand. It is a dramatic religion, as Shalimyr is a dramatic god, and its practitioners are rarely weak-hearted.

Shalimyr feels as though his worshipers are the only mortals who truly understand him. While all people who worship the gods of the tree and travel on the sea or river pay homage to Shalimyr, they do not live a life of constant servitude to Him as he believes is warranted. Among the gods, Shalimyr constantly murmurs he will destroy them all someday, but none of the other gods take him seriously. However, some scholars believe the day will come when Shalimyr floods the world, destroying everyone but his worshipers. Most view these scholars as only slightly less batty than the Shalimyn themselves.

Regardless, because they have developed a system of showing Him such elaborate respect, Shalimyr is quite involved with the Shalimyn, is fond of them, and is saddened a bit when he must wipe out entire ships of them because they have made him angry.

DOCTRINE OF HUMILITY

"Somewhere stands the greatest wall ever built, and the men that built the wall do stare at it with pride. But o'er that wall, there hangs a bough, its leaves laden with the water. And every day the bough does drip down on the wall its precious drops. A thousand men may live a thousand lives, and look upon that wall, but one day the water will prevail. Drop by drop, the mortar will be undone. Bit by bit, the wall will crumble and fall, and those proud men will be proud no longer of their mighty wall, broken into dust. I obey the water."

—*Shalimyn Shipwright Kellyne Seafarer's "A Daughter of the Sea Father"*

The Shalimyn faith preaches profound humility. We live and die from the water; without it we are nothing. It is to the water we must always show our gratitude. On the surface, this makes the Shalimyn seem like a downtrodden, dour lot, but it is not so. The Shalimyn are humble before the waters, but they are fierce to their enemies and unafraid to die, ready to enjoy hard drink and the joys the body offers. They believe they live only by Shalimyr's grace, that every day they might be swallowed by the waters—even when they stand in a scorching desert—and this belief and recognition of impending death makes them fearless, at least in theory.

However, when not in wild festivals or raging against enemies, a Shalimyn's faith is based on personal sacrifice. The Shalimyn shed things that are important to them and constantly mourn the losses, but temper mourning with gratitude for the sea's gifts. The more a person sacrifices, the holier she is thought to be.

The Shalimyn faith is based on three primary principles, referred to by the Shalimyn as the "Three Blessings."

HUMILITY

If every drop of water believed itself more important than the drop ahead and behind, the river would not flow. If the river thought itself greater than the ocean, the seas would grow thirsty and dry. Every individual must accept that his fate is not in his own hands, and must flow where the river takes him. The practical effect of the doctrine of humility, though, is not a sea of Shalimyn faithful waiting for orders from elders (as one might imagine from a lawful church with a similar doctrine). This is because all mortals must be humble. No mortal can determine another's path, so every man and woman must listen for the call of Grandfather Ocean, the inevitable pull of fate, the flow of the river tugging them this way or that. This "pull" would be described by a modern person as the unconscious: the raw emotional voice buried away by most, but heeded carefully by the Shalimyn. This makes for a church of people who, through their humility, are prepared to obey their every animal instinct; and perhaps among the truly righteous Shalimyn, these instincts are the call of Shalimyr. Regardless, it makes for a chaotic faith.

SACRIFICE

We come from the water empty-handed. We must return to the water empty-handed. All things are granted by Shalimyr, and the belief that anything we have in hand is our property is absurd; it all belongs to Shalimyr. Because of this, Shalimyn obsessively tithe anywhere from ten to eighty percent of everything they own. There are wealthy Shalimyn sea-traders who give away all their wealth when they are old (often to their own children or grandchildren), so this custom does not mean the Shalimyn are all paupers. However, it is ingrained into the Shalimyn in their earliest lessons that they must be prepared to sacrifice everything for the Sea Father, even their lives, for everything they own belongs to him. Nearly all Shalimyn rites involve a sacrifice of some kind, usually mingling the blood of an animal with the water.

GRATITUDE

Every day we awaken with our homes still intact, our vessels still held together, our sails still whole, it is because the Sea Father has let us. Every man, woman, and child must thank Shalimyr for his gifts at least

three times daily: in morning prayer, in mid-day meal prayer, and in evening prayer. Prayers must not be missed. The prayers involve pouring water on the palms, touching water to the lips and eyelids, and reciting the Beatitudes of the Sea Father. If prayers are missed, the penitent Shalimyn



SEACREST

In a contest among the gods, long and long ago, Shalimyr challenged Master Korak to make him a blade out of water. This was a task that drove the King of the Crucible to utter distraction, until one day he hit upon the secret: that water holds reflections. So he made a magnificent falchion of the most shining metals and gems, and then caught its reflection in a pool. He bade Shalimyr to take the reflection from the water, and because the water was a part of the Endless, and thereby the reflection, Shalimyr could do so. Holding aloft this great curved blade, Seacrest, the god of the ocean looked upon Korak with gratitude and offered to pay him with a boon.

Master Korak thought on this a time and could not think of what he would ask of Shalimyr the Endless. He did not ask for anything for many an age, until one day Shalimyr was prepared to flood the many mountain tunnels forged by the hands of dwarves. The Sea Father was infuriated that the stout folk hated the water and did not sail upon it. So Master Korak asked for this boon: that the dwarven people be forgiven forever by Shalimyr for their arrogance. It has allowed the dwarves, more than any other race, to build lasting monuments of stone, and great cities unmarred by erosion and time. Shalimyr is as good as his word and forgives them the arrogance of believing that anything they build will last.

What happened to the original blade, from which the reflection was caught? None can say.

must make painful sacrifices to Raging Shalimyr. He kills one of his finest livestock, gives his best sword to a pauper, and so on. Gratitude is also shown with regular periods of fasting, during which the Shalimyn eat nothing, and drink only water for a week at a time.

The Three Blessings are so important to the Shalimyn because they know Shalimyr is a vengeful and angry god. He nurtures those who show him the proper respect, and destroys the arrogant utterly. The Shalimyn themselves are happy to cheer on this destruction. The bar brawls begun by Shalimyn are legendary, and easily set off, for they take it as a religious duty to deflate the egos of pompous men. Should a man brag in a seadog bar about his brave and mighty exploits, he can expect a mug against his head soon after.

The Shalimyn faith is likely the only (nominally) “good” faith where one does his religious duty by cold-cocking someone in a bar. But the Shalimyn truly believe they are helping such people, for if they find such men arrogant, imagine what Raging Shalimyr will do to them! In fact, the truly devout Shalimyn can be heard to mutter “this is for your own good, in Shalimyr’s name” as they hit an unsuspecting, pompous fool in the head with a chair.

Of course, not all Shalimyn indulge in this sort of behavior, as the faith runs a wide gamut, from chaotic good to chaotic evil worshipers. Yet nearly all Shalimyn find the imposition of elaborate codes of law ridiculous and laughable. Authority must come from personal

respect and devotion. This is how the captain of a ship might lead an incredibly loyal crew, all of whom would gladly die on his word, and not be thought arrogant—each member of the crew knows the Captain and respects him. However, try telling one of the Shalimyn, “You must obey me because those are the rules,” and it won’t get you far. Add to this the fact that the Shalimyn are prepared to lose their lives should Shalimyr call, and you have a potential riot brewing at every port in the world.

It warrants saying, though, that like every other religion of the gods of the tree, not every Shalimyn is devout to the point of an impassioned willingness to die on a moment’s notice. There are many more “rational” followers of Shalimyr the Endless. But the Three Blessings make for a volatile religion.

PRAYERS OF SHALIMYR

The Beatitudes are the Shalimyn prayers, to be repeated three times daily. The Beatitudes’ words are said as Shalimyn perform the actions of prayer, pouring water on their palms and touching their lips and eyelids. They are often followed with less formalized prayers.

MORNING

*“Blessed art thou, Grandfather Ocean,
From whom all blessings flow.”*

MID-DAY

*“I praise thee, Grandfather Ocean,
For all thou givest daily.”*

EVENING

*“I thank thee, Sea Father,
For sparing me this day.”*

HOLY DAYS

The main holy days of Shalimyr revolve around the fishing seasons, and depend on climatic conditions. The night before fishermen sail out again after winter is called Return Night, and is a festival of absolute abandon. The Shalimyn drink and eat to excess, dance and sing, all to show their gratitude to the Sea Father. Often a great bull is sacrificed in thanks, and all Shalimyn feast upon its uncooked meat after its blood has mingled with the waters.

The first week of winter, when the fishermen must dry-dock their ships, is a somber time, and none of the Shalimyn eat for the week, surviving on only water. All Shalimyn must fast during this week, praying in all three daily prayers for a short winter, even if they aren’t anywhere near a fishing community at the time. It is considered an unforgivable sin for one of the Shalimyn to eat anything during the first week of winter; there are tales of men who grew sick during the week and, after being force-fed by friends, cut out their own tongues in abject shame. While most aren’t that zealous, it is not a matter to be taken lightly.

SAINTS

Martyrdom is important to the Shalimyn, for it is their belief that if they die heeding Shalimyr's call, they are taken into his bosom forever after. They do not believe their spirits are carried to Shalimyr's side to live as his assistants—that would be a haughty, self-aggrandizing belief. Instead they are made into water, a small part of Shalimyr the Endless, and it is the greatest boon any mortal might receive, for they are transformed into part of a god. Whether true or not, it does help to explain the fervor with which many Shalimyn fight, prepared to lay down their lives without hesitation. Should they die performing the will of Shalimyr, the reward is magnificent.

Saints are a very different matter. Saints are folk so holy they would certainly become part of the water when they die, but are so profoundly good of spirit, humble, and sacrificing, they reject the opportunity to exist eternally, as part of Shalimyr. Instead, they live on as his servants, aiding mortals lost at sea, heeding their prayers to Shalimyr, and performing great acts of compassion for the Shalimyn. This amazing sacrifice earns the name "saint." Quite often saints come from the holy order of the ascetics, and rather than continuing to go by their waternames (see below), they are addressed once more by their birth names.

The Saints of Shalimyr actually appear in the Material Plane regularly. After their death, extremely devout Shalimyn are called upon by their Lord and become celestials—ghaeles (an old spelling of the word "gale," because they fly to the aid of the Shalimyn as swiftly as gales blow across the sea) in celestial nomenclature. Ghaele servants of Shalimyr introduce themselves as "Saint" with their birth name from their mortal life, even though they have more beautiful names in the heavens.

HOLY ORDERS

While the worship of Shalimyr is likely quite different among races that live under the waves, the focus here is on the basins of land-bound mortals. There are three holy orders of the basins, all of which are tied to the waters. The central order, as with most churches of the pantheon, is the clergy, called mariners and divided into shorehands and shipwrights. There are also the ascetics (holy warriors), who respect three ranks: neonates, ascetics, and waternamed. The sail masters recognize two levels: sail masters and sail lords.

The only order that regularly resides at the basins is that of the mariners, with the Shalimyn shipwrights of each basin determining its policies and interactions with secular affairs. There is no central authority of the Shalimyn faith; that position is taken by Shalimyr himself. Indeed, the mariners are considered guides and teachers more than authority figures. Every member of the faith is said to have a personal tie to Shalimyr, and do not require clergy to act as intermediaries.

A typical basin has six or seven shorehands in residence at any one time, and at least one shipwright. Ascetics and sail masters are almost never in residence at a basin, but in major port cities there might be one or two members of each order convalescing or temporarily living at the local basin.

MARINERS OF SHALIMYR

The mariners are spiritual leaders to the often wayward, chaotic Shalimyn. In a faith where one's gut instincts can be either benign or malignant, and most of the faithful heed them regardless, guidance is necessary to avoid all-out pandemonium.

These clergy are the undisputed (and only) authority figures in the basins. They perform religious ceremonies, help the faithful interpret Shalimyr's will, call on Shalimyr's blessings for outgoing and incoming vessels, and even occasionally ride important vessels to keep them safe from Shalimyr's rage. All that said, they are not necessary to the faith, and are not seen as conduits between the faithful and Shalimyr; they are only guides and resources for the faithful (if well-respected ones).

The mariners collect the tithes of the faithful, see to the upkeep of the basins, build new basins when called for, and act as the spokespersons of the faith in all secular matters. This leads to an order with a great deal of wealth, making it more powerful secularly than it is spiritually. Sometimes the mariners from a given basin are completely corrupted by their



power and wealth, but should they grow too bold and arrogant, Shalimyr will destroy them spectacularly, so corruption rarely goes beyond petty evils such as undermining or killing political rivals, using the church's money to promote political programs outside the scope of the Shalimyn faith, or minor abuses of personal authority. Shalimyr has no trouble with this sort of behavior—but mariners who take church money to build themselves enormous mansions might be found soon, in chunks floating in a series of small puddles.

Nearly all the mariners of Shalimyr are chaotic, but their worldviews (apart from chaos) vary radically. The most common alignment for Shalimyn mariners is chaotic neutral. These mariners believe that the world is in constant flux—anything built today might be torn down by the waters tomorrow. They put no stock in plans for the distant future, and believe instead that one must strive to live only by the edicts of Shalimyr. One must be humble and obey his will—wherever it might lead you. While they usually counsel against casually throwing away one's life, these mariners are not known for their cautious outlook, and they certainly have no concerns for a community outside the Shalimyn. Instead, they live only to serve Shalimyr and the Shalimyn faithful, and do whatever their hearts tell them is the right way to act accordingly.

Chaotic good mariners extend their concern to those outside of the faith. They believe the virtues of humility and sacrifice are exemplars for all people, so they try to live by them. They preach against the arrogance of those who claim to have the answers to all the great questions, or those who say they know “the way.” They're rabble-rousers and troublemakers to be sure, but they aim to improve the lot of all people through the abiding beauty of Shalimyr. Often these mariners are adventurers, as the basin shipwrights find them too interested in affairs outside of the Shalimyn. Such interest is often condemned as pride; accused mariners must leave the community. There are, however, a few basins dominated by chaotic good mariners, and these places are havens to all Shalimyn of a like mind.

Unlike nearly all other churches of the gods of the tree, where evil worshipers have separate cults reviled by the main church, chaotic evil mariners have a place in the basins so long as they don't act against their fellow Shalimyn. A sort of “activist” offshoot of the basins, chaotic evil mariners believe Shalimyn wills that the arrogant and proud be rooted out. It saddens Shalimyr, their reasoning goes, whenever he must destroy mortals with his waters, because it shows his followers are too weak and cowardly to eliminate the prideful themselves. Chaotic evil mariners take the duty to heart by wreaking havoc. They might break into the homes of pompous nobles, kill them and their families, and burn their houses down. While the basins routinely deny any knowledge of such activities, many support these works as necessary evils.

SHOREHANDS

Initiate Shalimyn called shorehands almost belong in a caste lower than the rest—below even the meanest drunken sailors. This is because they must forswear sailing or riding on the open sea, which is beloved of all Shalimyn. This

sacrifice is thought to be the highest one can make, short of losing one's life, and is done as a sign of love for Shalimyr and devotion to the Shalimyn. Shorehands are addressed as “brother” or “sister” and introduced by full title. Shorehands serve the rest of the Shalimyn. They are present at births, weddings, and funerals. They stand on the shores and bless their ships at launching, and greet them at their return. Shorehands make regular and elaborate shows of their lack of pride, and constantly give away their possessions, keeping just enough to eat and live. Becoming a shorehand takes a very short time, usually six months. One must be devoted to Shalimyr, have a great love of the sea, swear not to ride on the waters while a shorehand, and learn the various prayers and rites of the Shalimyn. Shorehands can leave their community if they feel Shalimyr calls them to do so, and many wander the world, away from the sea, on great adventures they believe Shalimyr has called them to perform.

SHIPWRIGHTS

In time and with experience, elder shorehands may be released from their vows and go on great journeys by sea to the “heart of the ocean.” What is referred to as the heart of the ocean changes from culture to culture, but it's usually out in the middle of the nearest sea. Once there, they leap into the water and either emerge moments later, or never surface. Those who emerge are ceremonially cleansed and are hailed as shipwrights, the wisest of the Shalimyn. To avoid confusion with actual shipwrights, these holy men and women are always referred to as Shalimyn shipwrights. They are addressed as “father” or “mother” and introduced by full title.

A Shalimyn shipwright maintains the humility they showed as shorehands, or at least they are supposed to, but are treated with reverence by the Shalimyn. If any have a right to be treated nobly, it would be these high representatives of Shalimyr in the world. Common Shalimyn do not speak directly to the shipwrights and must address them through shorehands; this is done to show the humility of the speaker, though it certainly elevates the self-importance of the listener. Shalimyn shipwrights run the basins and there is always at least one shipwright present. Unlike the shorehands, they can sail on the water whenever the need or desire arises.

The great Shalimyn shipwright Faroan T'urketh was once asked why the shipwrights are treated with such reverence in a faith that so abhors pride. He explained, “After a lifetime, I have become so used to the ways of humility in the face of Grandfather Ocean, blessed be his name, that they have become second nature. I do not think of the meaning and purpose of humility any longer; I have become so easily humble that there is almost a pride in it. The shipwrights are treated so well, like kings, so they can be reminded of the meaning of pride and the need for its purgation. Humility should never be easy.”

JOINING THE MARINERS

The clergy of Shalimyr, all of whom are clerics with the Tempest or Water domain (see **Chapter X** for the latter) are divided into two groups: the young and hot-blooded

Shalimyn clerics, and the old and wise ones. If a cleric lives long enough to become an elder in the clergy, it is because Shalimyr loves him.

ASCETICS OF SHALIMYR

The ascetics of Shalimyr are a peculiar bunch. Uninvolved with the basins, they are understood by the Shalimyn to be holy people whose terrible sacrifices must take them away from the faithful. Just as the shorehands of Shalimyr cannot ride the waters as a sacrifice to show their humility and faith, ascetics give up the comfort of home and community and wander the wide world, doing what they can for everyone but themselves. By living a life of perpetual goodness and aiding others whenever and wherever they can, they show humility as servants to the mortal races, and offer perpetual self-denial to Shalimyr.

They are therefore one of the common “adventuring” holy orders of all the churches. Since their faith requires them to be away from the basins, traveling by land and sea to aid others, they are often found in towns where trouble is near, or in the depths of dungeons.

Ascetics must never hoard wealth or property. They must never seek a home or status in a home. They can never own a ship or other means of transport. Ascetics must be prepared to die empty-handed and alone. They have no fear of death, and generally do not wish to be raised from the dead. Any ascetic who comes to wish for a family or a home or any kind of comfort or possession must leave the order, and loses all her special abilities unless she atones and sheds all her attachments once more.

Ascetics are selective about the company they keep. They cannot abide the proud and never associate with people who seek glory, fame, or status, particularly if their desire for these things is reflected in the actions of the group and how people perceive them. Ascetics have no problem with those who seek wealth and keep personal property; they do not expect all people to live under the same onus of sacrifice as they do. They speak to their friends about the perils of desire for property, but do not condemn them for it. An ascetic can even abide greed, if it is tempered with sacrifice. Ascetics often travel with wizards, monks, druids, rangers, and rogues—and those who keep low profiles for one reason or another. They are rarely found with paladins or clerics from other churches. Ascetics almost never travel together.

As an ascetic grows older and more experienced, she sheds all the trappings of glory. Later, she sheds the markings of holiness, because in them is a kind of braggadocio. Eventually, she abandons even the trappings of “self,” as there is a kind of arrogance in asserting a personal identity, when one is really nothing but a servant of Shalimyr.

In time and after neonates have learned proper humility, and are ready to be full ascetics, they cease to have any titles whatsoever, and give their tabards away. This is usually done by training someone else to become a neonate, and presenting the initiate with the tabard at the completion of her training. Neonates who have been carrying a refined or well-crafted holy symbol give the item away, and replace it with the symbol a peasant might wear. Anything that

might make it clear to a casual observer that an ascetic is a member of a holy order is given away as well. The only things neonates keep are arms, armor, and other tools they gained in their journeys to help them serve people. Once they’ve let go of their old trappings, neonates become proper ascetics. They have no titles, only their names, and they continue wandering. They have no honorifics in address, but if they introduced as religious figures, are called “ascetics of the basins of Shalimyr.”

Once ascetics show their full devotion to Shalimyr and cleave to a path of service and humility, they sacrifice all that is left of them: their names.

They cease to be called by the name by which they have been known their entire lives and take the names of parts of water or water sounds. Lake, Stream, Rush, Falls—all are appropriate water names. Such ascetics are called “waternames,” and continue to walk the world and sail, fighting for the good of all people and awaiting death, when they might become part of the waters.

JOINING THE ASCETICS

Anyone of the proper alignment and devotion to Shalimyr can join the ascetics. After a year of training by an elder

member of the order, the ascetics abandon all the trappings of their previous lives. They cut their hair and give away anything not fit to be burned.



They take up the blue tabard of the order (marked with the wave) and receive the title of “neonate,” having been reborn into the new order as a paladin. Neonates are addressed as “child” and not introduced by order or title but as “a child of the basins of Shalimyr.” While most paladins in the order are considered knights-errant, or heroes, neonate lives a life of servitude. They wander the world, offering their swords freely and begging for meals. And when it’s time to swear their oaths, they take the Oath of the Ascetic (see **Chapter X**). Most ascetics are chaotic good.

SAIL MASTERS

“The wind is my brother, the ship is my sister,” the sail masters say, “and the water is my father. I respect my siblings but I obey my father.” The sail masters have brine in their blood, it is said, and no finer sailors live. Having a sail master on deck is a good omen, a promise of success, and a harbinger of a speedy journey, all in one. To attack a vessel with a sail master on board, or worse, a sail lord, is considered sheer folly. The sail masters see themselves as



the bearers of Shalimyr’s good word; they are missionaries who reside on ships. Incredibly, exhaustingly pious, they lead the crew in the three daily prayers, talking constantly of the gifts of Grandfather Ocean and the wrath of the Sea Father. Their order was founded to aid and serve those who are closest to Shalimyr, sailors, and to remind them of the tenets of the Shalimyr faith.

The sail masters are the third and most evangelical of the Shalimyr holy orders. They are known everywhere for their great skill as sailors and their uncanny abilities with ship-to-ship combat. The order was founded by an ascetic, known as Saint Isyl, who was visited in dream by a series of visions from Shalimyr. Isyl prophesied, through those dreams, of an ultimate day of reckoning for all Shalimyr, when the Sea Father will visit every ship on his waters in a single day. If he finds the hearts of the sailors around the world to be pious and humble, as he demands, he will give a great boon to all Shalimyr. But if he finds that those he has graced with permission to ride upon his back are selfish and wanting, he will destroy them all and never again allow ships upon his waters. While the mariners believe Saint Isyl’s vision was metaphorical, the sail masters believe it quite literal, and seek to avert disaster by constantly reminding sailors of their duty to Shalimyr. Thus they are driven in their evangelism, and almost always out at sea.

Sail masters are most often found on the water, serving vessels great and small. They rarely bother with those who are not Shalimyr or sailors, so a person booking passage on a ship might never even realize a sail master is aboard. If one travels aboard the flagship of a major fleet, it is almost certain to have a sail lord aboard. Members of the order make odd first impressions. Quiet, contemplative, a bit spooky at first, they eventually reveal their religious ardor. Most sail masters shave their heads and wear simple robes adorned with the wave of Shalimyr. It is uncommon to find two members of the order together, unless one is being trained.

New sail masters seek out captains to take them onto their vessels in return for service. Sail masters work with their crews until satisfied that they’re properly pious, and move on to other ships soon after. This continues for most of their careers. Sail masters are addressed as “sail master” and are introduced without their order name.

Eventually, sail masters might seek out someone in control of a fleet—a lord, a powerful merchant, or a pirate king—and offer their services as sail lord. They usually hold these positions until death, riding on fleet flagships, but ministering to all of their sailors. They are addressed as “sail lord,” and introduced with full title.

JOINING THE SAIL MASTERS

Any deeply faithful Shalimyr can join the sail masters, though fighters and rogues are the most common professions. Wizards, sorcerers, members of the Shalimyr clergy, even holy warriors of Shalimyr have all been known to join the order. It requires only a deep understanding of the sea and an abiding love for Grandfather Ocean. Initiates must complete one year of training under a sail lord to earn the title of sail master.

THE TREE OF LIFE

ELIWYN

THE PRECIOUS, THE ONE TREE,
THE TREE OF LIFE, THE GIVER OF LIFE

Eliwyn (EL-uh-win) is the Tree of Life. She is the neutral “god” of nature, undiluted innocence, purity, the abundant life of the world, and hope. She is associated with treants, which are also connected to Rontra, but most especially with unicorns, the guardians of nature and purest of beasts. Eliwyn’s “worshippers” are druids and some rangers and are from those races that revere nature—primarily humans, elves, half-elves, and halflings.

Eliwyn is represented as a great flowering tree with golden leaves and silver blossoms. From it hang five great, golden fruits—or, if the representation is meant to be mythologically “current,” one fruit. However, the druids and other “worshippers” of Eliwyn do not represent her in icons or with symbols, as all trees are born in her image, and all of life is a reminder of Eliwyn’s glory.

MYTHS

THE COMING OF THE DRUIDS

WHEN THE MORTAL RACES WERE AT LAST BORN FROM THE fruits of Precious Eliwyn, the gods born of the same tree determined it was time for them to depart the mortal sphere. They set themselves in the heavens, building great and shining cities. But on earth, the One Tree was still in bloom, heavy with an unripe fruit. She eventually came to be watched over by Thellyne the Huntress and Rontra, from whom Eliwyn sprang, in case any of Asmodeus’ brood might try to harm the Tree of Life.

It was not long, though, before mortals who loved the woods and beasts and all of nature’s bounties formed an order of their own, without guidance from the gods. They turned their attention from the heavens and instead found all they revered in the dirt and grass, hills and valleys of the world. They did not heed the dictates of the gods, and were interested in nothing but the flowing power of life, from which they drew sustenance and strength.

Before long, the most powerful of these mortals, who came to call themselves druids, sought out and found the sacred grove wherein Precious Eliwyn was hid. Though the Giver of Life was shrouded from the eyes of mortals by the power of Rontra and Thellyne, the druids had become so mighty in their ties to the natural world that they saw through all veils and illusions, and came to stand at the foot of the mighty Eliwyn, who grew ten thousand spans high. Her branches reached through to the heavens, and her mighty roots shot down to the very foundations of the earth, where once the lands of the dead were found. All life came from her branches.

When Thellyne saw that these mortals assaulted the tree, she struck with her hunter’s bow. In three breaths she killed the three mightiest of their number, so great was her skill, so mighty her bow, so deadly her aim.

The blood of the first druid spilled by Eliwyn’s roots; from it spouted forth a field of red poppies, forever showing their

sorrow for the great druid’s passing, and the offshoots of Eliwyn’s roots that bathed in the blood came suddenly to life, and walk the earth still. These are the treants, protectors of the wood.

The blood of the second druid spilled in the glade around Eliwyn; from it burst forth a great bramble of roses, red from his blood and thorny to protect the Tree of Life. Out of the thicket burst the naga, a great protector spirit, like a snake born of bramble and thicket.

The third druid killed was the greatest among them, and from her blood, which spilled at the edge of the glade, there grew the most perfect of all flowers: red lotus blossoms with white hearts. And from the pure white center of the lotuses sprang the most perfect of creatures—white horses with golden horns, the unicorns.

When Thellyne saw the pure and good creatures that came from these dead mortals, she realized she had committed a grave error. She approached the druids who remained, none of whom had moved, though arrows flew in their midst, and spoke with them. When she had learned who they were and understood that they wanted only to observe and protect the Tree of Life, Thellyne agreed to share the grove with them. In sorrow for the deaths she had caused, the goddess of the hunt agreed to let the grove be known among the druids and no other mortals, and so she does not even reveal its location to her most blessed worshippers, nor does Rontra.

Thus, the mightiest of druid groves is also the most serene and sacred place on earth: the grove of Eliwyn, the One Tree, the Giver of Life. To this day, the greatest of druids call the grove home, and among mortals, only they know its secrets.

A SILENT PATRON

Eliwyn is not sentient, does not communicate, and does not have a spirit. She is a great and powerful tree, and her purpose is to live until she dies, to give off sprouts that will grow into new trees, to bear the remaining fruit until it falls, and then, perhaps, to bear fruit again. Eliwyn’s purpose is the same as the purpose of all trees, only on a grander scale, because she is the first tree, and from her the cycle of life began.

GUARDIANS OF NATURE

The chief servants of Eliwyn are her guardians: the treants, unicorns, and naga. All three came into being to protect her. Since then, the treants have come to protect the forests around the world, as the unicorns have come to protect the animals. The most powerful of the naga still lie coiled about Eliwyn, attended by druids, though long ago many naga were captured and corrupted by evil sorcerers.



THE CREATOR GOD

THE NAMELESS ONE

THE CREATOR

The Nameless One is the neutral Creator god, the dispassionate one, the beginning and the end of all things, the creator and future destroyer of the universe. He is not associated with any animal or other part of the mortal sphere, since he is beyond the Great Sphere. He is “worshiped” by monks and some rare, disciplined members of other classes, such as wizards, who believe understanding him is the key to understanding all of creation. His followers are rare among all the races, but are mainly found among humans.

The Nameless One is never represented in icons, due to an ancient superstition that even to reproduce His likeness would end the world. In great works showing the history of creation, the Nameless One is shown as a being of light, shaped like a humanoid, but with no features. Symbolically, the Nameless One is represented either with a black dot. In three dimensions, the Nameless One can be represented by a strip with a half-twist in it, curled into a ring, which has no beginning, end, inside, or outside.

DRUIDS OF ELIWYN

There are no holy orders in the “church” of Eliwyn. Her cathedrals are the druid groves found throughout the world, and her servants are the druids themselves. If she has holy warriors, they are rangers and paladins of the Oath of the Ancients. The worship of Eliwyn is not like the worship of other gods; she does not provide power to the druids and they do not pray to her. She is simply the most perfect and pure form of what they revere: the balanced beauty of the natural order, the perfection of living and blooming things, and the beautiful nobility of death in the winter.

Druids can belong to any Druid Circle, and the mightiest among them reside in the great grove of Eliwyn, where they serve as her protectors. They tend to her and keep her safe from any who might harm her.

There are druids in the world who pray to gods, though, and they usually revere a sort of trinity: Rontra, from whom all nature was born; Eliwyn, who is nature; and Thellyne, the first of the gods to truly respect and tend to nature. However, these druids receive their spells from the power of life and nature just like others, and are not considered clergy of Rontra or Thellyne.

In some lands, a new cult is rising, though. Called the “Cult of the Fifth Fruit,” it put aside worship of the living gods, and instead pays homage to the unripe fruit on Eliwyn’s bough, which represents for them the great unknown and hope for a better tomorrow. Such cultists are thought mad by many, for revering a non-existent god. Many such cultists call themselves druids, though they do not (as far as anyone has recorded) possess druidic powers. This misappropriation of the name “druid” has infuriated some actual druids, while others view it as part of the great cycle, and remain indifferent on the subject.

MYTHS

THE 101 STEPS TO ENLIGHTENMENT

LONG AGO, LONGER THAN MOST REMEMBER, THE WISE AND ancient Limmik Kunar came to realize that mortality leads to all things unworthy. His reasoning was simple enough: Because we die, we become attached to life. Because we are attached to life, we are attached to the trappings of life. Because we are attached to the trappings of life, we will commit evil to have them. Because we will commit evil to have the trappings of life, we can be manipulated by those who claim they can help us achieve more in life, or a greater reward in death.

Master Kunar understood that the primary manipulators of those attached to the trappings of life were members of the religious castes. From the wayfarers of Darmon to the matriarchs of Morwyn, every church offered mortals an understanding of how to please the gods and be rewarded in the afterlife. Yet even the afterlife was an illusion, a series of trappings that continued the cycle of life, in which the mortal races could be

manipulated into acting against their natures. The gods of the tree and their priests promised one of three paths beyond death: a life of eternal happiness, torment perpetual, or rebirth into the world to continue the cycle. All three paths seemed to Master Kunar to be continuations of the unworthy aspects of mortality, for is not eternal life under the thumb of the gods simply a life of service to their beliefs and manipulations? And is not a life of torment perpetual a terrible evil that none would desire to suffer? And is not rebirth to try again simply rebirth into the same manipulations?

And so Limmik turned his study to the Creator, the Nameless One who made all things and then departed from them. Surely, the only way to be free of the veil of tears that is eternal rebirth and death, punishment or subjugation at the hands of the gods of the tree, is to leave the sphere. Only by being free of existence entirely can one be assured of freedom from the unworthiness of mortality.

Master Kunar spent his life discovering the 101 steps to Enlightenment, the mantras and contemplations necessary for his own escape. And at the end of his life, it is said that Limmik Kunar became one with the power of the Nameless One, or departed the sphere or became a being of pure energy from beyond the Great Sphere. While there are conflicting reports and understandings of the old master's final fate, all agree that he did not die, but simply disappeared.

Sadly, Master Kunar's 101 steps, which he painstakingly documented for his disciples, did not grant his followers freedom from the Great Sphere. The earliest steps were quite useful for harnessing the power he called "ki," but later in the process the steps, though clearly useful for Limmik, had no meaning for his disciples. And so all who wish to depart the sphere, break the cycle, and be free of existence must walk a new path of discipline and set down their own steps.

MYSTERIOUS AND DISTANT

The Nameless One's motivations are entirely mysterious. It is assumed He watches existence still, but many believe He cares no more for the universe than a giant cares for the

smallest mite. He provides no divine powers to followers, never answers prayers, and could be entirely imaginary for all the impact He has on the universe as it exists today.

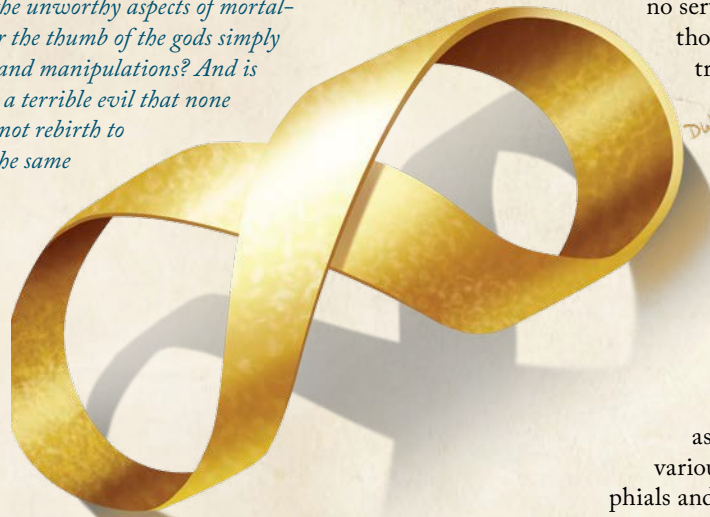
The Nameless One is said to have no servants in the universe, but those who have sought to travel outside the Great Sphere using magic have encountered powerful guardians blocking the way. Some believe the Nameless One has made many universes, and places barriers between them to keep them from commingling, as a wizard might keep her various experiments in separate phials and beakers to keep them from interacting.

THE FOLLOWERS OF THE NAMELESS ONE

There is no church of the Nameless One. Rather, the monasteries act as places of study for those who walk the path of master Kunar. They seek to become one with the Nameless One or to leave the Great Sphere as He did. Therefore, monks are the equivalent of "worshippers" of the Nameless One—at least, that is how worshippers of the gods of the tree might understand it.

While there are now orders of monks who have learned to harness ki and yet do not seek to leave the Great Sphere, but study physical perfection, their roots are found in the work of the old master, Limmik Kunar.

The "Vola Ulfhedin" referred to in **Appendix I** is also best understood as a worshiper of the Nameless One. There are barbarian societies that know the full tale of the pantheon and refuse to worship the gods. They see them all as children of the real god, the Nameless One, and believe people live in a world abandoned by any authority that matters. They seek to lead good lives despite this abandonment, and tell the tales of the gods as lessons to lead one's life by. They bear no holy symbols and offer no prayers to any god, even the Nameless One.



IV: THE GODS OF THE TREE

FIVE GODS WERE BORN OF ELIWYN. THEY REMAIN THE MIGHTIEST LORDS OF HEAVEN. FOUR EMERGED FROM THE FRUIT of the tree, and the fifth was born from murder by divine hands. In this chapter, we explore the faiths of these five gods: Morwyn, the merciful; Terak, the mighty; Zheenkeef, the mad; Tinel, the magnificent; and Mormekar, the shadow.

GODDESS OF HEALING AND WISDOM

MORWYN

THE GENTLE, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE WISE,
THE MERCIFUL, WHITE LADY, QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Morwyn (MORE-win) is the lawful good goddess of healing, wisdom, peace, forgiveness, mothers, childbirth, and mercy. From her come charitable instincts and acts of contrition, mercy, and redemption. She is the Queen of Heaven, and her name is therefore usually invoked first in lists of the gods.

She is associated with the lamb, for she would have all people be as gentle as lambs. She is also sometimes associated with dogs, for long ago she turned wicked men into dogs rather than smite them, and it is said that all dogs are still grateful to her for this. So it is that dogs often make excellent shepherds of lambs, as it is the only way they can manage to repay Morwyn's kindness. In the sky she is likened to the white dove. As she is the peaceful lady in white among the gods, the dove is the peaceful white bird of the heavens. Finally, she is associated with the winged serpents—the couatl—creatures of the greatest beauty, wisdom, and virtue.

Morwyn is shown as a tall woman with long black hair and brown, olive, or deeply tanned skin. Attired in flowing white robes, she shines like a star. There is often a silver circlet on her brow, with a single gem in its center. She has a motherly nobility in all representations, for she was the first ever to bear a life in her womb. Usually, she is shown with a warm smile, though sometimes she has the regal bearing of a queen. She nearly always bears a deep resemblance to Rontra, and seems to be a younger version of the Grandmother.

Although she is often represented by a white lamb, two simpler symbols are more commonly used to represent the goddess. There is no division in the church surrounding the use of them; it is merely a matter of personal preference. One is a wreath of white blossoms. This can be figurative or real, with some clerics wearing painted symbols of white wreaths, while others adorn themselves in actual garlands of cherry blossoms. Wreaths have been worn of old by peacemakers, and those negotiating under truce. The other is a crystal tear, meant to remember the tears shed by Morwyn over the corpses of her brothers long ago. This is a very practical symbol, and the one most clerics most often wear around their necks. Also, it is the simplified form one uses when it must be made in haste, or etched on small surfaces. The symbol is sometimes extended to three teardrops formed into a triangle, with one drop on top and two below.

All five mortal races revere Morwyn. The people who hold her in the highest esteem are mothers, healers, and those in desperate need of succor or forgiveness. However, as the Queen of Heaven and goddess of wisdom, she is

also revered by those who lead, though they are not noble. Mayors of towns, for instance, or town council members, say prayers to Morwyn for guidance, for she was not the strongest of the gods, nor the most powerful, yet she was given the reins of leadership and held them well. Most folk, though, see Morwyn as a reminder of how much better they could or should be, and take her teachings to be for saints, not common people.

MYTHS

REIGN OF PEACE

LONG AGO, WHEN THE GODS FOUGHT THEIR FIRST WAR TO determine who was eldest, they used the div in their struggles. Alone among the gods it was Morwyn, Gentle Morwyn, who cared for the fiery race. She did not exploit them, but rather taught them many secrets. It is said that she would go into their cities and whisper a different secret in every ear—secrets of why flowers bloom, and why the sun sometimes looks red. She showed them that the world is lovely, and that it is lovelier still when your heart is at peace.

The path she set them down was noble, and these div built great societies, with thriving cultures of art and beauty. But Morwyn the Compassionate was not yet Morwyn the Wise, for she had not yet had to temper her love with the bitterness of tears. Her brothers were not yet murdered, and she had not yet experienced the horrors of war. She taught these div to not build walls or defenses, and said that the good in the hearts of their kin would come forth. Though war raged around them, she told the div that peace was stronger than war, and that when their hostile cousins saw their beautiful homes, savage hearts would ease, and all would walk once more on the path of peace.

Sadly, the White Lady was wrong. When the war of Tinel and Terak reached the peaceful people Morwyn had instructed, these gentle empires paid war's bounty in tears and blood. Their homes were burned and their temples were destroyed. The adults were slain, and their children were enslaved. Soon, there was no sign there had ever been peaceful empires. Morwyn, Gentle Morwyn, wept.

She found her brothers then, and falling upon them wailed and gnashed her teeth. She tore the hem of her robe, crying out, "Why? Why would you tell your servants to do this to my people?" And for a short time, Tinel and Terak put aside their war and went silent, for Morwyn was beautiful and terrible to behold in her sorrow, and their hearts were moved by her tears.



"Sister, I promise you, I never ordered such a thing. I have fought for my rightful place and have no time to tend to them. They are told to destroy Terak's usurpers." Tinel stood tall and proud. He knew the truth: His hands were clean of the matter, and so he mourned not.

But Terak's heart was more than moved; he was wounded to think he had caused his beautiful and peaceful sister such sorrow, for this was never his intent. He knelt before Morwyn and kissed the torn hem of her robe. "Beloved Sister, I swear to you it was not I that did this thing, for you are the treasure of the Tree, who I fight to preserve. I make this war so that you will be safe." And truly, Morwyn saw the love her brother bore for her, and knew then that she loved him also. She saw clearly that they would be married in time, but how much that is sorrowful would come to pass before there would be joy. And touching his hair, she walked away from her brothers, and let them fight their war.

If her brothers had not ordered her people, the gentlest of the div, to be so abused, she determined it must have been Zheenkeef. And she found her sister playing a game in which she lit two bulls on fire and tried to put them out with her urine. Morwyn watched her sister running around, squatting over the flaming bulls to douse the flames; but always the bulls, crazed by the pain, would run from beneath her and kick and buck. At one point in this painful ordeal, the sisters' eyes met. In that moment Morwyn the Wise saw the truth—her sister had never ordered such a thing, for she would never care enough about the races of the earth to give such a petty command.

So now she knew the div who perpetrated these crimes were ordered to do so by Kador the Wicked. It was the only explanation, and she sought these div out to punish them for aligning themselves with the dark power. But when she found those who had savaged her people, they had been enslaved by an even more powerful kingdom of the div, and they wailed to her to release

them from their torment. And when she asked what commands they had taken from Kador, they did not know of what she spoke, for they had taken no order from any god. "We have waged war, lady, and for this we are sorry. We killed your people not because anyone told us to, but because we could. Please, release us!" And she did, breaking their chains and setting them free, for she could not abide seeing anyone suffer. And she found those that remained of her people, and she took them to secret places of the world and made them safe, but they were few and nevermore built wonders.

It was then that the White Lady learned that which she knows to this day: The races of the earth do not need the will of the gods to justify horrible acts against one another, for they are no purer than the gods. They have a secret fire burning in their breasts that tells them to hate, and if ignored, that fire spreads. But she also knew they had other secrets in their hearts.

Morwyn the Compassionate saw that all people desire peace. Deep in their hearts, perhaps less fiercely than the savage fire of hate, there glows another, warmer light. There will come a time, she knew then, when all mortal people will at last heed their calmer voice. There will be a day, though it may take a thousand, thousand years, when all people will be washed clean of the dark fires, and live in peace. They will no longer kill and burn simply because they can. Until that time, it must be the work of Morwyn, Gentle Morwyn, and those who would walk at her side, to make the damage done by hatred and war the least it might be. They must tend to the flock of the good and gentle, keep them safe, and defend them against those who hate. Never again would Morwyn preach the casting aside of blades, for some, she saw then, must bear blades to protect those who cannot. And the Queen of Heaven looks for signs of the Reign of Peace, as she calls it, and where she sees them protects them, blowing on the embers of compassion, as one kindles a fire in the rain.

PERFECT GOODNESS

Morwyn's motives are pure, and can only be described as truly good. She loves all mortals, and desires to see them thrive and do well, but she holds a special place in her heart for the kind and gentle. She is a guardian of the downcast, but even more, a guardian of those who spend their lives caring for the downcast. While her husband Terak protects the weak and frail, Morwyn seeks to create a world in which they do not need protection. Her all-consuming purpose is to move the world toward goodness, and see the hearts of mortals shift toward decency over desire, peace over power.

Because of this, she doesn't spend a great deal of time concerning herself directly with those who are weak and cannot care for themselves, or those who live in isolation doing no harm. Rather, she spends her energy guiding the powerful of all races toward caring for the injured and indigent. Her chosen people are healers, municipal leaders, mothers—people who have day-to-day power over lives and who, if evil, might work the most long-term mischief.

Morwyn believes the Nameless One created the universe so that it will constantly progress toward perfection. It is inevitable, in her view, that goodness will prevail. The question is how much pain, darkness, and misery the gods and mortals must wade through before this perfect state is achieved. She believes that in every epoch, good and evil come into great conflict, and eventually good will prevail so mightily it will thrust the universe into perfection. Morwyn works to move events toward that state; she fears there might be several more disastrous conflicts before it will come to pass. The world might go through another decimation of its races (as the div have been decimated and banished), the gods might die, or the entire order of the gods may fail, to be replaced by another. Morwyn believes if good is weak in the world, these cycles will be more devastating, as the Nameless One's creation shudders toward perfection.

Among the gods, Morwyn is called queen and elder, but rarely wields this authority, particularly because she has decreed that no one god rules over the others. She seeks to move the gods' hearts toward good, and agreed to things like the Compact because she knows she cannot command the chaotic gods. Rather, she hopes the Compact and other acts of the gods will draw them together against evil. She does not suffer from pride in these matters, and uses any honorable method to bring the gods and the mortal races to the path of virtue.

SERVANTS OF THE GODDESS

Morwyn has three chief servants, each of whom is dear to her. No one knows from whence these three servants came. They are often at Morwyn's side, and spread comfort in the world. If they once were mortal, they surely are not now, and in some isolated cultures they are revered as gods in their own right.

MERCY

It is said that when someone's heart is heavy with rage and they're about to smite an enemy, they might suddenly feel their hate lifted, as though by a cool breeze. In those moments, Morwyn's beloved Mercy visited, invisibly, and took hate from their heart. Mercy is a beautiful maiden with flaxen hair, wearing a white gown like that of her mistress. Morwyn sends Mercy to chosen individuals based on mysterious criteria, for some of the hateful are never visited, and continue to vent their wrath. Yet Mercy still enters a few hearts from time to time. Many who have been so stricken change at their very core.

THE MIDWIFE

Called upon by women during a difficult labor, the Midwife sometimes comes to their aid. There are women fated to die giving life to their children, and the Midwife can no more save them than can Morwyn herself, but should the Midwife, invisible like Mercy, come to the bedside of a woman in labor, she might ease the delivery and save the mother's life. If this is not possible, she can at least take away the woman's suffering, and let her die in peace. Most women call out to the Midwife and Morwyn during ordinary childbirths as well. The Midwife is said to be a heavy woman with broad hips, her breasts heavy with milk. If a baby dies in the first weeks of its life, people say the child "nurses with the Midwife now."

THE GUIDE

An ancient woman with a lantern, the Guide eases men and women into the wisdom of old age. It is said that many elders do not deserve to have lasted so long, but something about age seems to mellow and refine even the fiercest hearts. This is because the Guide comes to the aged in their dreams, reminding them of the stories of their families, of their people and their heritage. The Guide also eases women through the loss of their monthly moonblood, and helps them find comfort in it. Many who are old call to the Guide to show them wisdom, and she is said to visit them invisibly, like Morwyn's other servants, to ease their troubled hearts. It is known that the Guide also warns a select few in the moments before Mormekar arrives to claim them. Therefore, history is filled with tales of those who declare they are about to die moments before they do, making final amends for old grudges and hurts.

THE HEALING HALLS OF MORWYN

The healing halls of Morwyn, as her churches are called, are run by her followers, the Morwynites. Morwynites are enormously popular wherever their healing halls are found, for they cure diseases and heal their hurts. All people love Morwynite healing, but not everyone loves the Morwynites themselves. Many people see them as impossibly holy, even self-righteous. For this reason, healing

halls are not as common as they could be. Morwynites receive many donations from their patients and fill massive coffers, but lack common people to staff a healing hall in every major population center.

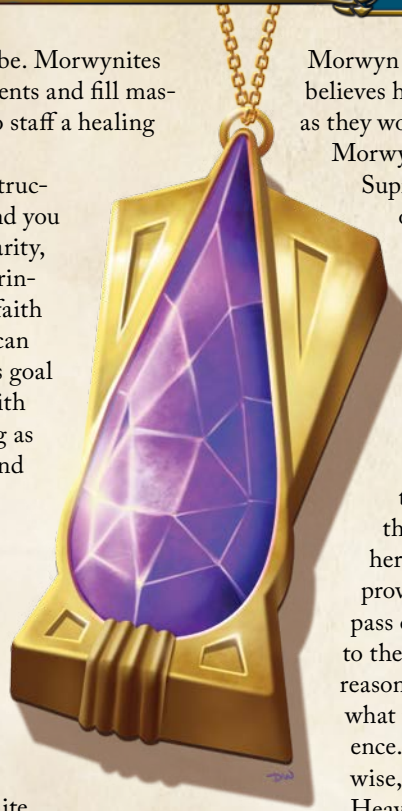
Add to this the somewhat peculiar structure of the healing halls (see below), and you have a church which, despite its popularity, has difficulty spreading its faith. The principal temporal goal of the Morwynite faith is to increase its lay membership, so it can build and staff more healing halls. This goal places Morwynites in direct conflict with the Great Church, which offers healing as well (though as one service of many), and like the Morwynites, wishes to attract devout laity and expand its reach. This yields the strange result of two lawful good churches, which eye each other suspiciously. Yet the churches are quite similar. It is no coincidence that the head of both faiths is called the Supreme Matriarch (or sometimes Patriarch, in the case of the Great Church); Hefasten modeled the Great Church after his native Morwynite faith. The Great Church exists to add members, and the Morwynites fear that if they don't do the same, they will cease to exist.

And it is possible. The Morwynite message is one of peace, harmony, charity and love for all; the average person is entirely unprepared to commit his life to the doctrine. Few believe they can live up to the standards of the church and its deity. More importantly, it is a difficult life. Morwynites constantly give of themselves, in spirit and earthly labor. Morwynites hold only those possessions they must have to survive, giving everything else to the healing halls for charitable distribution. While most are happy to give to the Morwynites in return for healing, or when attending a service in thanks for a newborn child or cured illness, that is the extent of their involvement with the healing halls. Since the Morwynites never refuse healing to anyone, there is no real incentive for its beneficiaries do more. Thus, only the purest, most caring souls end up among the Morwynites. There aren't many such folk.

Quite often, the healing halls neighbor or adjoin a foundation of Rontra, as the goddesses are considered to be intrinsically linked.

Morwyn looks upon her followers with great affection. As the instigator of the Compact, Morwyn commits to its terms. She sees the healing halls as her best and strongest hope for opposing evil, and making an impact on the mortal world. However, she also sees how the Compact has bound her hands in those same efforts, and is sometimes frustrated by her inability to take direct action in the world.

Morwyn's primary concern with her church is its apparent inability to draw new people to the faith. The entire purpose of the Compact is to promote the works of the gods through mortal agents, yet other gods enjoy greater benefits under its terms, even though it was her initiative.



Morwyn finds this profoundly disappointing, yet also believes her worshipers properly represent her beliefs as they work in the healing halls.

Morwyn is in direct contact with the Morwynite Supreme Matriarch, and gives her guidance on spiritual matters. The entire faith was founded by a priestess named Tyngelle, in whom Morwyn put her faith long ago to build a lasting church in her honor. The order established by Tyngelle lasts to this day, and Morwyn sees each Supreme Matriarch as a direct descendent of the first, in whom she put her faith. Morwyn never tells her representative exactly how to behave, nor does she dictate the direction the healing halls should take. Morwyn lets her children make their own decisions, but does provide the Supreme Matriarch with advice to pass on to spiritually troubled seekers who come to the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand. For this reason, these inquisitive, disturbed souls often find what they seek in the Supreme Matriarch's presence. The head of the Morwynites is incredibly wise, and sometimes speaks with the Queen of Heaven's voice.

DOCTRINE

"When I was young and righteous, it seemed to me that the world was a place of abundant goodness, and I asked, 'Why do men do evil?' But I am old now, and I have no time to wonder at this anymore. Now I see that evil is everywhere, its path perilously easy to walk. At my age, I wonder why men ever do good, for what rewards do good deeds offer? They are few, and many years in the delivering. No, I will let the young cry out in the streets about the wickedness men do. I will leave it to the righteous to shake evil from men's souls with hard words and harder steel. I choose to spend my remaining days tending to hearts that are safe for goodness, for good is not easy to find, and harder still to embrace."

—*The Final Ruminations of Supreme Matriarch Ana Codhwyn*

The healing halls are homes to those of truly decent and merciful dispositions. Their residents are neither politically motivated nor cunning plotters who hoard secrets. The faithful of Morwyn are exactly what they appear to be: the most loving, kind people in the world. They value hope and joy over victory and dogmatism. They purge themselves of pride and self-importance, and live to protect, serve, aid, teach, and heal a wounded world. In this they try to live out the mystery of Morwyn, who purged herself of the power of fire, given to all the gods, to heal her family.

It is easy to see why the Morwynites grow scarce. Most people do not attend their services or join their numbers because they feel they simply are not up to a lifetime of service and personal perfection.

For those who are members of the healing halls, either as congregants, clergy, holy warriors, or white hands, the

principles of the faith surround a four-word maxim: Charitable, Merciful, Gentle, and Wise. Following this maxim, the Morwynites lend aid to all people and seek out those who are good, or who might be good if lent a hand, to help them spread the four virtues.

CHARITABLE

If it is in your power to aid another, why would you not? In her grace, Morwyn has given a limitless bounty to the children of the earth. If we can aid others, what could dissuade us? Morwyn gave up her fire, the very power of the soul, so the other gods might live; what might the faithful give that could match this, the ultimate act of charity? For this reason, Morwynites do not demand money for their healing unless there is a good reason (see Wisdom, below) and they gravitate toward areas where the needy congregate. This doctrine stymies the church's recruitment efforts, as there is nothing to be gained for oneself by joining, except a sense of peace. One does not attend a healing hall to make political connections or business deals.

MERCIFUL

If you are wronged, you must forgive. If you have an enemy in your power who is redeemable, you must seek to redeem him, even though your heart tells you it is folly. Redemption is always better than punishment, and sometimes the mere example of mercy is enough to redeem even the hardest heart. For this reason, Morwynites never kill people of one of the five mortal races if they can avoid it. Instead, they work tirelessly to redeem the person in question, offering them chance after chance to better themselves.

GENTLE

War is never the first resort or second resort, and not even the third resort. Morwynites believe violence against kin—meaning the mortal races—should be avoided at all costs unless self-defense requires it. Morwynites are not pacifists; they take up arms against evil races, undead, dangerous beasts, and fiends. However, against the redeemable (which they tend to define as any person of one of the five mortal races, though individual Morwynites may believe in redemption for other beings—or rarely, that a group within one of the mortal races, such as dark elves, *can't* be redeemed), Morwynites do not raise hands in anger. They fight only if attacked.

WISDOM

It should be obvious that the first three parts of the Morwynite maxim could result in a group of people who are easily exploited, but Morwyn is the goddess of wisdom and her followers are no fools. They are not being taken advantage of when they give freely. For example, a Sister of Beneficence might regularly heal a man who has money, but pretends he does not, and who does not donate to the church. She does not do so naively, and eventually makes it clear to the man, when he least expects it, she knows exactly what he is up to. It is this doctrine that keeps the faithful from doing things that are clearly foolish. A Morwynite

shopkeeper does not give up his shop simply because someone else needs it, but believes he does the most good by owning a successful business and donating his surplus to the healing halls. While the Morwynites are thought foolish by those who would exploit them, they in fact hold to the hope they can save such people through good deeds.

MORWYNITE PRAYERS

The life of a Morwynite is understandably difficult. People disappoint them all the time, and their hopes are often shattered by the petty wickedness of common folk. In their most trying times, the Morwynites utter the following invocation.

*“Holy Mother, heed my prayer.
Lend me your wisdom,
So that I might see clearly;
Give me your patience,
That I might bear what I see.”*

HOLY DAYS

The Morwynites have two primary holy weeks. Every spring the Morwynites celebrate the rebirth of Eliwyn, Tinel, Terak, and Zheenkeef in what is called The Five Tears. The celebration takes five days, and is marked with fasting in the daytime, and celebratory feasting at night.

The other holy period takes place in the mid-winter and is called the Week of Gifts. All Morwynites remember the many gifts given the mortal races by the gods. They show their gratitude by giving gifts to those in their community who need them most. It is a week in which the poor are fed and clothed, and the homeless are given homes. On the final night of the week, friends and family members give one another gifts. On that final night, they have a great dinner, in which they recite prayers of thanksgiving, and discuss the history and gifts of the gods.

SAINTS

The Supreme Matriarch of the Morwynites delivers the roll of saints and martyrs every seven years from the great healing hall where she resides. Those named are henceforth referred to as “Saint,” regardless of whether they are included on the roll for having been beatified or martyred.

A saint is someone who has done great work in the name of Morwyn, such as retrieving an artifact, saving an entire people, standing in the way of some profoundly evil plot. It must be a work of enormous importance, and must be done in Morwyn's name. It is possible to be sainted in one's lifetime, and some of the most powerful adventuring Morwynites have been named saints. A saint is introduced as “Saint” and his name, so Amno would be introduced as “Saint Amno,” overriding all other church titles.

A martyr is someone who has been killed specifically for her faith by forces opposed to Morwyn. A Morwynite matriarch murdered by Asmodean cultists, her body desecrated, would be declared a martyr if her sad tale reached the ears of the Supreme Matriarch. An adventuring faithful son killed by an ooze would not be martyred, even if he was on a very important quest for the healing halls.

HOLY ORDERS

Because the Morwynites emulate Morwyn in all things, the heads of the healing halls are those most like Morwyn, starting with gender. The Morwynite faith is the only one of the great churches divided along gender lines. Women shape the direction of the faith from its central church, the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand. There the Supreme Matriarch, the ultimate authority on all matters Morwynite, watches over the faith and sets religious law.

There are three holy orders of the healing halls, as with most churches, and two are limited to certain genders. The matriarchs (clergy), heads of the healing halls, are all women and have four levels of status: the sisters of beneficence, the holy mothers, the high matriarchs, and the Supreme Matriarch. The faithful sons (holy warriors) are all men, live to serve the matriarchs, and have three levels of status: the brothers, the masters, and the fathers. The white hands, now the most numerous of the three holy orders, are educated in eight circles of healing and are divided by the level of education they have completed. Morwynites of any gender may join the white hands.

The average healing hall has three to four sisters of beneficence in residence and one holy mother. There will be as many faithful sons as there are matriarchs, and sometimes one or two extra. Most healing halls have two or three white hands who have achieved a high circle of learning; they reside there to teach others the secrets of the order.

The White Hall of Morwyn's Hand holds the Supreme Matriarch, six high matriarchs, twelve holy mothers, and twenty-four sisters of beneficence in residence at any one time. At least forty-eight faithful sons, including ten fathers, serve as the Supreme Matriarch's personal guard. The nearby Tower of the White Hands houses the heads of that holy order, and has at least sixty white hands in residence at any time, including the white hands of the eighth circle, who head their order.

MATRIARCHS OF MORWYN

The matriarchs are an order of profound goodness, compassion, and love. Made up only of women, they are a part of an ancient tradition, as the healing halls of Morwyn have maintained their structure for more generations than even the longest-lived elves can count. The matriarchs hold only those possessions they need to perform their duties, giving everything else to the healing halls, or to the needy they meet on their travels, and they swear oaths of charity, gentleness, mercy, and wisdom. They follow the doctrines exactly—but unlike common members of the faith, they do not waver in their adherence to these strictures. If they do, they must atone. A faithful son always accompanies a traveling matriarch unless something peculiar is going on.

Most matriarchs are lawful good. They follow the four principles of the faith to the letter and are some of the kindest, gentlest people in the world. They do not think twice about their own well-being, often wading into disease-ridden or otherwise dangerous areas to help the needy. They have no greed in them, and are heroic women.

These Morwynites want nothing more than to be united with Morwyn in spirit, by walking in her footsteps.

Neutral good matriarchs are less common, and less interested in obeying the set structure of their church. They find the clear-cut definition of goodness a little silly, though they do not say so out loud very often. To think the soul of Morwyn's goodness can be captured in a four-word maxim seems rather outlandish to them, so they look for the good in all people, no matter how small the spark, and try to bring it out through any means at their disposal. Rather than tell a petty-hearted merchant (who nonetheless loves his daughter as a devoted father) that he must learn to be compassionate, merciful, gentle, and wise, the matriarch would focus on the man's love for his daughter, and urge him to extend his goodwill to others.

Rarely, and as a disappointment for other matriarchs, lawful neutral matriarchs hold office. These women believe



the four-word maxim of the faith is almost like a set of powerful incantations. They say the words to those they meet as though their very repetition will compel people to obey them. While they obey the rules of these principles, they do not do so because they have a deep sense of their rightness, but because, in their minds, Morwyn wants them to obey them. Others in the healing halls find these matriarchs lacking, for they seem unable to grasp the true spirit of Morwyn's teachings.

SISTER OF BENEFICENCE

New matriarchs are called sisters of beneficence. It falls to them to perform those duties assigned to them by their superiors, who are any matriarchs with greater experience and standing, but most take orders directly from the holy mother of their healing hall. Superiors regularly order sisters of beneficence to travel and spread the good works of Morwyn around the world. Sisters of beneficence are healers and avoid conflict. They depend on their faithful son companions to shield them from violence. Sisters of beneficence are often referred to as the "beneficent sisters" and are addressed as "sister." They are introduced with their order title first, so Nimmeril would be introduced as "Sister of Beneficence Nimmeril, a matriarch of the healing halls of Morwyn."

HOLY MOTHER

A sister of beneficence can go on a three-month spiritual retreat into a remote area in an act that follows in the footsteps of Tyngelle, who spent three months in the desert and saw there a vision of the White Lady touching a rock, and witnessed a fountain of light springing forth from it. Standing in the fountain of light, Morwyn asked Tyngelle four questions, which all those who follow in her footsteps are still asked. Afterwards, Tyngelle searched for and found the rock, and upon it built the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand. The great seat of the Supreme Matriarch rests atop the rock to this day. Thus, each sister of beneficence follows in Tyngelle's footsteps, hoping to be visited by the White Lady in a vision that will lead her for the rest of her life. When these matriarchs return from the retreat, they tell a holy mother all they experienced. The returning matriarch is then clothed in white, brought before all the faithful of her healing hall, and named a holy mother. She is addressed as "mother" and introduced with her order title first.

HIGH MATRIARCH

An experienced holy mother eventually goes on a pilgrimage to the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand, where the Supreme Matriarch sits. Upon reaching it, she speaks to the Supreme Matriarch herself, telling of her long-ago vision and all she has learned in her life. The Supreme Matriarch then asks her the four questions that Morwyn asked Tyngelle so many years before: What is the nature of compassion? What is the greatest gentleness you have witnessed? Where can the hopeless find mercy? Who is wiser than the wise? Assuming the holy mother answers these questions to the Supreme Matriarch's satisfaction (and often the answers, and their

discussions, take a full day), she is elevated to the rank of high matriarch the next morning. She is clothed in rich robes of white, gold, and red, anointed with holy ointments, and brought before the faithful after a morning of prayer. Once so named, she is given a great task to undertake by the Supreme Matriarch. This task often takes up the rest of her life. High matriarchs are addressed as "reverend mother" and are introduced by full title.

SUPREME MATRIARCH

When a Supreme Matriarch dies, the matriarchs residing at the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand follow the exact rules of succession as handed down by Tyngelle. They paint the names of all the world's high matriarchs on stones and place them in a great barrel, though there are few enough high matriarchs now that the barrel is rarely filled even halfway. They then go and find a young and innocent shepherdess who is usually around thirteen years old. They bring the child to the barrel, tell her there is one stone in it more valuable than all the others, and ask her to find it by whatever method she might choose. The woman named on the selected stone becomes the new Supreme Matriarch. A contingent of faithful sons is sent out to find her, for she might be doing great works on the other side of the world, and the high matriarchs of the White Hall act as a council in her absence. The Supreme Matriarch is addressed as "Your Holiness," "Your Eminence," "Your Grace," or "Most Hallowed Mother." She is introduced without her name and, indeed, her name is never spoken on formal occasions; she is called "The Supreme Matriarch of the Healing Halls of Morwyn."

JOINING THE ORDER

Any woman who shows an aptitude for learning the rites, strength of character, and a sense of goodness, can become a matriarch relatively quickly. Matriarchs are all clerics (of Life) devoted to Morwyn. Morwyn is never shown wielding a weapon, and there are no legends in which she lifts a weapon in anger. Her clergy have adopted the quarterstaff as a preferred weapon, since a few legends refer to the White Lady carrying a walking staff.

FAITHFUL SONS

The faithful sons of Morwyn are the gentlest of all holy warriors. They strive to resolve disputes rather than raise blades in anger. They are peacemakers and diplomats, careful men who are always on the lookout for danger, and seek to defuse volatile situations. This is because their primary role is to protect the matriarchs, who are constantly going into the gravest dangers—battlefields, plague-ridden settlements, evil lands—in their efforts to do Morwyn's works. The faithful sons see themselves as men striving to make the world safer for goodness, starting with the deeply good women they are sworn to protect. They are unafraid to fight if they must, but they always try to avoid conflict with a person of the five mortal races, if possible. Most faithful sons come off as profoundly wise, happy, resolute, and cautious. Less civilized folks think them cowardly for their unceasing efforts to avoid violence.

Faithful sons are assigned to the protection of matriarchs for most of their lives; it is considered a disaster if one of them allows his charge to be killed. Essentially, it is assumed faithful sons will die to protect their matriarchs, and it is hard to imagine how one could still live if his charge was killed. A faithful son returning to a healing hall after the death of his charge must go through years of atonement and contemplation before being assigned the protection of another matriarch. If the matriarch died because he was negligent, or did not wish to risk his own life to protect her, the order casts him out. Atonement for such men is quite difficult, but Morwyn is the goddess of mercy, so it is possible.

Other than their unwavering devotion to their matriarchs, the faithful sons are dedicated to the protection of the innocent and the preservation of the ideals of Morwyn. They do not attack people without provocation. They do not steal, take vengeance, or act out of pettiness. They show mercy and compassion in all things. They are charitable and kind, thoughtful and peaceful.

Because they are so tied to the matriarchs, faithful sons usually associate with whoever their charge finds appropriate, though they object strenuously to traveling with obviously evil companions. The Morwynites believe all mortals are redeemable, though, so a faithful son might find himself with unsavory companions in hopes of turning them to the good path. He never participates in or abides the commission of evil, however, so if his companions start behaving in an evil manner, he will oppose them.

BROTHER

A new faithful son is called a brother, and is addressed and introduced by that title. He is usually assigned to a sister of beneficence for her protection for when she travels outside the healing halls. These relationships are complex, with the two adventuring together for years. Love sometimes blossoms between a faithful son and a matriarch, and marriages born of such relationships are considered quite fortuitous. While it is rare for a brother to be given a task that does not involve accompanying a matriarch, it does happen from time to time.

MASTER

After adventuring far and wide, and keeping his assigned matriarch (or matriarchs) alive and healthy, an experience brother is sent on his own, to do some great deed for goodness and the Morwynite faith. His superiors within the order of the faithful sons give him this task. When he returns from the quest, he is named a master, and begins to oversee the training and command of the brothers of the order. He is addressed and introduced as “master.”

FATHER

A master eventually makes a pilgrimage to see the Supreme Matriarch of the healing halls. When he reaches her, she asks him the same four questions that all high matriarchs are asked at their elevation. After the questions are answered, the master is dressed in white robes and anointed with holy ointments. He is presented with the shield of the fathers, which bears a snow-white field



with the argent tear of Morwyn at its center. The carriers of these shields are called the fathers of the faithful sons, and are addressed and introduced as “father.” They are the greatest and wisest men of the Morwynite faith. Many fathers serve the Supreme Matriarch directly, but even more reside in healing halls on the borders of dangerous areas, where they might ride forth, do the greatest good, and accompany matriarchs doing likewise. Fathers are considered to have no superiors in their order, and can only be given orders by the Supreme Matriarch herself.

JOINING THE FAITHFUL SONS

Men who become faithful sons receive the call when they are young. They go to a healing hall, where they receive training that usually takes three to four years. Sometimes, though, an established adventurer will suddenly receive the call to become a faithful son; such men are considered blessed additions to the order and are welcomed with open arms. Faithful sons are all lawful good paladins. When it comes time to swear their sacred oath, most swear the Oath of Mercy (see **Chapter X**), though some might swear the Oath of Devotion.

WHITE HAND OF MORWYN

Long ago, one of the Supreme Matriarchs determined the Morwynites could do great good if they educated others in the arts of healing, charging them with the spreading of those arts. Called the White Hands, these healers were formed into a third holy order of the healing halls, and given a formal education in the ways of healing—and of Morwyn. Across the lands, the White Hands of Morwyn are revered for their amazing powers of healing. Skilled in healing disease, madness, and other afflictions of the body and soul, the white hands are not ceremonial clergy but dedicated healers who serve in all walks of life. Some are attached to large military groups; others have shops in great cities where they offer their healing for a mere pittance. They are trained and educated by the Morwynites for the express purpose of spreading healing and comfort throughout the land. Most of them are not religious zealots, but highly skilled individuals with a desire to help.

Over the years, the Morwynites stressed Morwyn's teachings less and less in the education of the White Hands. To spread healing, the healing halls now embrace the White Hands as an almost secular order, existing more for healing than spreading faith. Because of this, the order has boomed in size and its numbers now outstrip the rest of the church's. Their education is superb and nearly free, and members of the order are considered part of the healing halls.

White Hands are usually people with other responsibilities. They might be soldiers, nobles, officials, or even barmaids. All of them are driven to learn the ways of healing for any number of reasons, and because the education is readily available and inexpensive, it is widespread—at least in the lower circles. Upper-circle White Hands are rarer and are usually serene, dedicated practitioners, kind and gentle. Either way, it is not particularly common for them to travel in groups, or even to perform specific duties for their order. They go about their lives, helping people whenever they can.

JOINING THE WHITE HANDS

A character must be proficient in medicine to join the White Hands and take the Healer feat at the first opportunity. As the skills of the White Hands are so useful among those who often find themselves in battle, many fighters (especially those who choose the Hospitaler martial archetype described in **Chapter X**), rangers, and monks become White Hands so they can better tend the wounds of their fallen brethren.

Anyone desiring to become a White Hand must swear the following oath.

*I am the White Hand against the Red Wound,
I am the hope for the hopeless, the help for
the helpless.
I swear to provide healing to any child of the
tree in need,
If it is within my power to do so and if that person
is not an enemy of goodness.*

Within the confines of the oath, White Hands can ask to be remunerated for their aid, but cannot demand it. Few patients take unfair advantage of this, but some do cheat the healers. The “enemy of goodness” portion of the oath allows White Hands not to heal evil cultists, but soldiers in wars with other mortal soldiers must tend to their enemies' wounds if it is within their power to do so. Triage and the care of prisoners beyond just healing them are matters left to White Hand's discretion, but must follow the Morwynite ethos.

If a White Hand violates her oath, her palms turn blood red until she atones for her violation.

The greatest among the White Hands are former matriarchs who dedicate themselves to teaching of others, though one need not have been a matriarch to become a member of this order, and it is open to men and women. The heads of the order reside in the Tower of the White Hands. These women (for the heads of the order are all former matriarchs) are powerful healers, able to repair the damage done to armies. Their students are perhaps



less formidable, but are great healers too, sought for the excellent addition they make to expeditionary forces and other groups.

The education of the White Hands is an eight-step process. As one progresses, one moves on to greater circles of healing until certified in the eighth and final circle. A White Hand tells people her circle whenever she introduces herself—"I am Idri, a White Hand of the fourth circle," for instance—but gains no other honorifics. In formal introductions, their circle of learning is added to whatever other titles they might hold in the format, "a White Hand of

the (individual's) circle." It is important to let people know how competent a healer the White Hand is, so they do not expect results she is not capable of delivering.

A White Hand moves up a circle by being educated and trained by a White Hand at least one circle above her. To become a white hand of the eighth circle, she must travel to the Tower of the White Hands and meet with the heads of the order. They will administer a test that takes several days, making sure she knows every nuance of the healing art. Once she passes, the White Hand is admitted to the eighth and final circle.

GOD OF WAR AND VALOR

TERAK

Terak (TAIR-ack) is the god of the body, valor, war, physical struggle, brotherly unity, and battle. He is worshiped by soldiers and warriors of all stripes, those who need the protection of physical strength, and protectors of the weak.

Terak is shown as a powerful figure, broad of shoulder and with a great barrel chest. His hair falls to his knees and is either braided or left loose, depending on the culture that made the icon. He is also usually shown with a long beard, blonde hair and icy blue eyes. He is often armored, always carries his battle axe, and is represented wearing a cloak of fur and bones—bones taken from his son, Aerix.

Two symbols represent Terak. The first, used by those who follow the lawful neutral interpretation of his teachings, is the *fascis*: a bundle of sticks lashed together with a golden cord. When one is in a hurry, this symbol can be fashioned as several small circles around a central circle. This is used for stamps on weapons, low detail work, and hasty scrawls. This set of circles cast of bronze is often used as a holy symbol, even though it is not supposed to be.

The second symbol, and the one used by his lawful good worshipers, is Terak's axe. Forged in the first epoch and the first weapon made, the axe was used by Terak against his own brother and the tree of life, Eliwyn, but also against Kador, and the dark god's wicked progeny. The double-headed axe of Terak bespeaks this contradiction. Weapons have two sides. They can be used for great harm, or great good. This lesson is dear to Terak's lawful good followers. The simple version of the axe is a circle with a line that moved from its top, through the middle, and past, to become the axe's handle where the circle stands for the blade.

The correct holy symbol of Terak, and the one worn by most of his faithful, is a bronze likeness of the axe. Sometimes one head of the axe is golden and the other, black, but this is an ornate symbol only worn by commanders and similarly powerful faithful. Even though this is the "correct" symbol, many lawful neutral clerics wear the *fascis*, and have no trouble casting their spells.

He is associated loosely with animals of war like dogs, horses, and hawks, but his closest association is with the lion. He is served in the heavens by lamassus (see **Chapter**

THE VALIANT, BOLD, THE MIGHTY,
KING OF HEAVEN, MARSHAL OF THE GODS

X), the mystical creatures with which he is often associated, and the children of his animal companion, Metteron (see below).

Terak is worshiped most fervently by the mortal races that wage war in an organized and tactical manner: humans and dwarves. Elves, halflings and gnomes certainly pay their respects to Terak as one of the gods, but his worship is not especially popular in their homes. Because of the religion's strict belief that all five mortal races are equal, the worship of Terak is incredibly popular with ostracized half-orcs and half-elves.

Terak is lawful neutral or lawful good. There is a pronounced rift among Terak's worshipers and holy orders. He is worshiped in two distinct ways and, depending on which group you ask, can be described as either alignment. Most religious scholars consider him lawful good, and his church primarily follows this alignment, but clerics may be lawful good or lawful neutral.

MYTHS

FROM ONE TO MANY

IT WAS LONG SAID OF TERAK, KING OF HEAVEN, HUSBAND TO Morwyn the Wise, that reason was not his most pronounced quality. In the earliest days, Bold Terak believed that all could be accomplished by the perfection of self, and so he came to struggle with his brother Tinel, for his brother also held the same belief. But if two seek to be the best, only one can succeed, and the other will be bested. This is the tale of how Terak came to leave such beliefs to his brother, and became Marshal of the Gods.

On a late summer's day, long ago, Terak was approached by one of his many children he fathered with mortal mothers. This child, who was full in his manhood, was named Aerix, and he was wondrous to behold. Perfect in form, face, and temperament, Aerix was the greatest warrior in the world. He had never met a man or beast he could not slay with his keen spear. He wore armor made from the scales of three of the eldest dragons, each of whom he had slain with a single blow. His long hair was braided with beads of bone—one bone from each of a thousand evil men he had slain in a single battle. The tales



of Aerix's heroism are long and many, but we are concerned herein with his death.

When Aerix found his father that day, he asked him for a boon. Valiant Terak, blinded by love for his greatest mortal son, offered him any godly boon he might ask for. "Father, I have faced every foe the world holds," his son began, "and it has become clear to me that no challenges remain. I can defeat any foe of this land—nay, any land—but for you and your kin. I ask you, father, if there is anything on this earth I cannot easily defeat, show it to me!"

Terak the Mighty, who fears nothing and no one, recoiled from this request. "Do not ask me this, my son! For it is in my power to give, but I would not see you killed before my very eyes!"

But Aerix, swollen with the pride only possible in a man who has led a lifetime of victory, laughed. "Then I shall not let you see it, for I'll fight my best and will fell any foe! No, father, I must insist. You said any boon, and I will have it!"

So, shaking his head sadly, Terak waved his hand in a gesture of summoning. For quite some time, nothing happened. Summer became autumn, and still the glade where father and son stood was silent. Eventually, Aerix nodded and said, "Ah! Father, you have confirmed what I thought! Nothing comes, for nothing can defeat me!"

But Terak only shook his head sadly and said, "No."

When they had waited quite some time longer and autumn became winter, Aerix again laughed his mighty laugh, "Oho! Father, I see now! You remind me that I am not immortal, and there is an enemy that will destroy me in the end that even I cannot fight: Time! It shall level me, surely. I understand, and shall endeavor to be humble." And thinking that he had understood his father's riddle, Aerix moved to embrace his father. But Valiant Terak shook his head.

"No, my son. I wish this were so, but it is not. There is no trick. Your doom comes."

Only now did Aerix begin to show fear. They stood there in silence some time longer, and winter became spring. Throughout spring, Aerix guessed at what came, growing increasingly more frightened. "Is it fear, father? Fear will destroy me?" "No, my son." A thousand guesses, and each met with a heavy sigh and a denial. It was not until late summer, a year later to the day, that Aerix's fate became clear.

Early in the day, Aerix began to note that the glade's grass was growing dark. After some time, he realized that the entire area was covered with tiny black ants, all marching across the glade toward him. Looking at them he wondered, "This is my foe, father? But they are small, and I can destroy them—and even if there are more than I can destroy, how can they hurt me?" And in his pride he stood and fought the ants, as his father knew he would, when he should have fled.

He drank potions that made his breath into fire and burnt a thousand, thousand ants. He stepped upon them. He felled trees and lit them ablaze to destroy them. But still they came. Terak had called all the ants in the world. It had taken them a year to form their army and reach the glade, but there was no stopping them once they attacked. After days of fire and other attacks from Aerix, they reached his feet, this sea of ants. He stomped and shouted, but before long they were to his knees, an endless horde, unstoppable.

As Terak watched his son flail about, screaming for his father's help, the ants continued their inexorable march, eventually covering Aerix. The greatest mortal warrior in history of the world soon fell to his knees, but the ants did not accept his surrender. Before long, there was no sign that a man was underneath the teeming mountain of ants. Within a week, the ants had left the glade with no sign that Aerix had ever been there but for bones—they had carried away everything else.

Terak took the bones to his son Korak, and had a cloak fashioned from them, which he wears to this day as a reminder. For Bold Terak realized that his beloved son Aerix had only believed as Terak did: that if a man perfects himself he may do anything, and nothing may stand in his way. On that day, Terak came to realize that it is through the strength of many that all things are possible: One stick, no matter how thick, no matter how strong, may be broken by any force. Bundle together enough sticks, no matter how small, against that force, and they remain unbroken. And so Terak, King of Heaven, husband to Morwyn the Compassionate, took it upon himself to form and command the armies of the heavens.

MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

Most myths and many scholarly works present Terak as a sort of knuckle-dragging, violent maniac. The reasons for this are simple: First, he really *was* a violent maniac in his youth, as were his siblings Tinel and Zheenkeef. Second, these sources are usually written by the worshipers of Tinel, Zheenkeef, or one of the other chaotic gods.

Terak is best understood as the wily king or general from a warrior culture. He sits on his throne pondering warfare and the strengths of nations. Elaborate aesthetics, matters of learning, and books hold little appeal for him. However, he is no longer the simpleton he is represented as. He loves sincere songs, and poems without double meanings or bits of hidden cleverness. He enjoys the simple pleasures a life of decency brings.

Since the death of his son Aerix, he has ceased pursuing the expansion of his personal power. In the past, Terak was a primitive god who sought glory, strength, and supremacy, which brought him into conflict with his brother Tinel. Now, while he is still in conflict with his brother, it is for different reasons.

Terak sees there is one thing that truly matters in the world: strength. While his brother Tinel puts faith in the strength of the individual and the power of knowledge, magic, and other abilities an individual might possess, Terak puts his faith in the power of the many. He sees true strength in a unified society. And while he sometimes makes it clear he opposes the use of that strength for evil, at other times he seems to support the power of unity without question. These mixed messages led to a schism among his followers that is generally cordial, but sometimes grows fiercely argumentative.

Terak wishes to see the mortal races unified. He would see a world where the will of the many prevails over the few. He is fondest of the common people, and those who protect and serve them, such as soldiers. He has little love for those who consider themselves superior because of their knowledge or magic, or because they possess greater wealth. He

seems to have no problem with those who use their physical prowess to unify people against the elite and learned.

In Heaven, Terak is king because his wife is queen. He bears no special authority as king over his chaotic brother and sister—indeed, they resent his status. Terak would like to unite Heaven under goodness, but his pride keeps him from extending much friendship to Tinel.

MARSHAL OF THE HEAVENS

Terak is the Marshal of the Heavens. Against anyone foolish enough to bring an army against the gods, Terak stands as the general of the divine forces. He has a personal retinue of one thousand heroes, all of whom are half-mortal children who became part of the Celestial Host upon their death. His closest lieutenant among them is Aerix, who was humbled by the circumstances of his death, and is now a radiant figure of goodness without pride.

Lying before Terak's throne in heaven is the Lion, Metteron (see **Chapter X**). With golden hair and fur, and teeth long as a man's arm, Metteron is said to be the strongest beast on any plane. He is father to the glorious lammasus, winged lions with human heads, and the magnificent griffins, winged lions with eagle heads.

When Terak sends a message, or aid, it comes from one of Metteron's progeny, a lammasu. In particularly dangerous cases, when a lammasu is not enough, Terak might send one of his progeny or another celestial. On rare occasions, Metteron himself might come to the aid of one of Terak's faithful.

THE TEMPLES OF TERAK

The churches of Terak, called temples, enjoy great popularity in lawful nations, and among folk who find themselves at war. Soldiers, mercenaries, and others who must rely on military prowess daily are usually worshipers of Terak, and are called the Teraketh.

The faith is split between those who see Terak's teachings as a call to almost blind unity and order, sublimation of the self to the will of the masses, and those who see Terak's wisdom as a reminder that strength and power must be used for the good of the many, not just the individual. Where this division of thought would cause a public and deep divide in most faiths, Terak's laws promoting order, structure, and discipline have kept the temples united thus far.

That said, there is no world-spanning organization for the Teraketh faith. Because the religion so strongly promotes the idea all mortals are equal and that personal prominence is only worthy in pursuit of the good of the common man, temples are gravely suspicious of any oligarchic power structure. Instead, every region has a council of commanders who determine what actions the local faithful will take. In the faith, one ministerial region is defined as any area that can muster a council of seven commanders, typically across multiple temples. Those

temples raise support for a region's righteous military actions, and supply clerics to barracks and units.

The three most common functions of Terak's faithful are military service, martial leadership, and protection of the common folk. To serve these ends, most temples also have superlative teachers who instruct in matters of warfare and weaponry. Many consider these teachers the best in the world, and their services are well worth the time—and the money they ask for in donations.

Terak is very fond of his church, sending what aid he can to the soldiers and crusaders of the temples without violating the Compact. He is particularly impressed with the laws that have arisen from the faith and thinks of them as his own inventions, though they were not.

Perhaps than any other god, Terak has been as affected by the mortal races as they have by him. When first born from the tree, he was in fact the battle-hungry barbarian represented in myths. Since the mortal races were born, and even more so since the creation of the Compact, Terak has come to love them and wish for their happiness and prosperity. For this reason, he is very fond of the lawful good followers of the church.

He has also been influenced by the death of his mortal children, and has watched as they have faded into obscurity and myth. While they all live on at his side, history shows him that no act of individual heroism appears to have a lasting effect, but powerful societies and empires live on for generations. For this reason, he believes the unconditional unity of the mortal races is their only path to happiness, so he is also very fond of the lawful neutral faithful.

That he is equally supportive of both sides of the schism helps to keep it going, as neither side has any reason to believe it is wrong. This is also what keeps temples together, despite their powerfully disparate philosophies—there is no clear reason for either side to believe Terak disapproves of the other.

Terak is most fond of the truly pious, who carefully follow the Teraketh laws, and strive to unite people in faith. He has no tolerance for hypocrites, or those who think highly of themselves, their wisdom, or their martial prowess. He personally takes such members of his faith down a peg or two if these offensive behaviors grow too prominent.

DOCTRINE

"There is no weakness that cannot be made strength, no frailty that cannot be made firm, save one: the weakness in our spirits that tells us we have done enough, that we may rest, that we have achieved all we can achieve. We must always strive, always improve, always struggle against weakness within, and without."

—From the War Chants of Lord Commander Silas Redbrook

The worship of Terak, and the schism dividing his faithful, can best be understood when one looks at the roots of the Teraketh faith. In the earliest days of the mortal races, Terak was worshiped as a god of strength and personal,

physical struggle. From this religion the current church arose, and many of its oldest prayers are still common prayers in Terak's temples.

The body is rebellious. It grows old and frail. It does not always work properly. The earliest cult of Terak was based on the overcoming of that rebelliousness—the imposition of order onto the body. As the religion matured, the body came to have greater meaning. It became the body of society, of nations, of the mortal races, and so on.

Over the years, the faith of Terak has come to embody the following clear principles based on those earliest ideas, which today's faithful try to follow:

- All people of the five races are equal. Social rank, gender, or race does not make one person better than another. While there might be status in the world for good reasons, it must be earned by strength of character, not accidents of birth.
- The faithful must show only one face to his brothers and sisters. A follower of Terak must never knowingly lie to another person of one of the five mortal races. A worshiper must also never engage in adultery (defined as pre- or extra-marital sex). These restrictions are commonly broken by the faithful, other than those who belong to a holy order.
- The faithful must be true to their bodies and, thereby, Terak. This means the faithful must never:
 1. Cut their hair, except once when they reach maturity
 2. Get tattoos or other permanent marks on their bodies, though they can pierce their flesh for adornment
 3. Drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, or use any other intoxicant (this is routinely violated by the casual worshipers of Terak, particularly members of militias and armies)
 4. Eat the meat of any unnatural creature
- The faithful must shun the trappings of social superiority or elitism. They do not accept, demand, or give wedding dowries, nor do they refuse to marry or bar the marriage of their children based on class, status, or even race (many of the faithful fail to adhere to this, barring their children from marrying outside of their race). They do not raise elaborate markers on their graves, using simple stones etched with names instead. They do not associate with those who live off the work of others without working themselves. They cannot open a business unless they work at the business.
- The faithful must tithe once a month, giving a tenth of all they own to aid the sick and invalid.
- The faithful must bear the five symbols of the faith (see below).
- The faithful must constantly train their bodies and improve their martial skills to be prepared to defend the weak among their brethren.

Many of these beliefs come down to conquering the body's weaknesses, and its cravings for things that make it weak. That same philosophy branches into societal beliefs, against the weakness that the body of society has in mistrusting those who are different, or worshiping wealth.

There are five symbols of faith always found about the person of one of the Teraketh. All worshipers of Terak who bother to identify themselves as such wear or carry these symbols. Even if he smokes, drinks, and commits adultery regularly, he has these symbols, or cannot claim to be of the faith.

UNSHORN HAIR

The Teraketh do not cut their hair, so they are easily recognized by their long braids or beaded hair. In very hot climates, they wear head wraps to keep their hair off their necks.

VAMBRACE

All followers of Terak wear armor (of leather or metal) on their right forearms. This signifies the protection a warrior wears and the bond of service all the faithful bear, to Terak and to their brethren of the mortal races. When the faithful sin or violate the strictures of the faith, they are chastened when another simply casts a glance at the vambrace—a visual reminder that the bond is violated. For those who cannot wear a full piece of armor for whatever reason, a simple leather wristband suffices.

HOLY SYMBOL

All followers of Terak wear his symbol, the two-headed axe, openly—though some now wear the *fascis* instead. This is not meant to show off their piousness but to inform all who see them that they are duty-bound to protect the weak. Technically, it is considered a sin for any worshiper of Terak to turn down a request for help from any member of the five mortal races who cannot help themselves. This has grown into something rather different, with many turning it into a justification to form mercenary bands and armies, offering services to the weak for a “nominal fee.”

A WEAPON

Even though the holy symbol of Terak is the axe, all manner of weapons please him. A worshiper of Terak must always be ready to stand in the defense of his brethren. Even while the faithful sleep, they wear “sleeping daggers.” Small and ornamental, these cost 1 gp and

weigh 1/2 lb. They deal 1d3 piercing damage and possess the finesse and light properties.

THE FORELOCK

All Teraketh carry on their person a lock of the hair removed when they came of age. This is to remind them that they were once young and frail and required the protection of others.

The forelock is the “hidden” symbol, in that it is the one Teraketh do not wear openly.

The doctrinal division between the lawful good and lawful neutral followers of Terak arises from their interpretations of the *reasons* for the above restrictions, laws, and symbols, not from the restrictions themselves—both groups adhere to these laws and wear these symbols. Essentially, the schism can be seen in the understanding of the myth of Aerix.

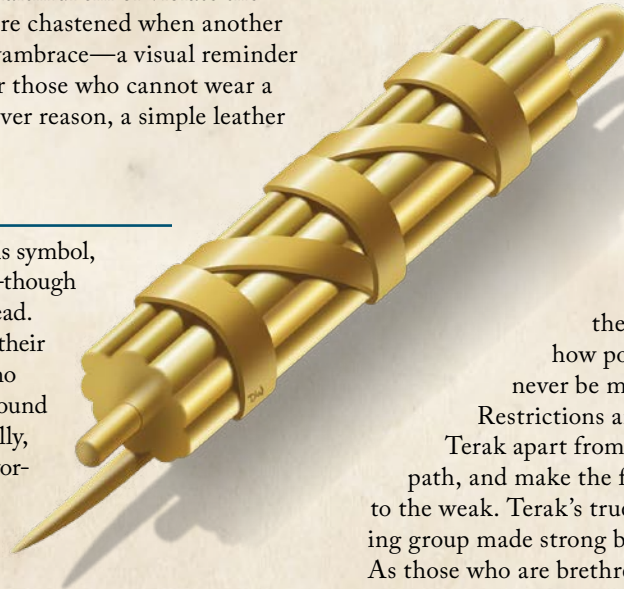
Lawful good worshipers see themselves in Aerix. He should never have believed his strength to be perfect. Every man and woman must be humble, realize all people are equal in the eyes of Terak, and know that strength has more than one

meaning. The frail old man who defends a helpless child has done a greater service than the powerful warrior who is too busy adventuring to help. The lawful good worshipers see the above restrictions as lessons in humility, fidelity, and faith.

Lawful neutral worshipers see themselves in the ants. No matter how powerful the individual, he will never be more powerful than the many.

Restrictions and laws set the followers of Terak apart from those who do not walk the true path, and make the faithful shine out as an example to the weak. Terak's true faithful form an ever-expanding group made strong by its denial of carnal desires. As those who are brethren (but do not worship Terak) see the Teraketh walking tall, clean of base desire, they see this is the true path, and take up the worship of Terak too. When all the world's mortals properly follow Terak and respond to his call, as the ants of the world did in the legend of Aerix, they'll be equal, and happy for eternity.

While this division is deep, it has not yet sundered the temples. Most councils host commanders of both groups. Clergy from both groups teaching the faithful the two interpretations. It is considered a decision each Teraketh must make in his lifetime, embodied by the question, “Where do you stand, brother?”



TERAKETH PRAYERS

Some of the oldest prayers to Terak are quite poetic, and still used. One prayer for soldiers before battles is so ancient that scholars are uncertain of its ultimate origin, with many maintaining that it is what Terak himself uttered before the final assault on Kador.

*"I am the river and the mountain.
As the river, I rage in times of torrent,
And decrease in times of drought.
I swell to overflowing with my wrath,
And my rage is dry in calmer seasons.
None can control my run,
None can alter it.
None can stand against me.
As the mountain, I am strong.
I do not wax or wane.
Age shall never o'ercome me.
I will not be moved.
I will not be shaken.
I will not be broken.
I am the river and the mountain,
Unstoppable and unbreakable."*

HOLY DAYS

The temples of Terak do not celebrate any universal holy days. Instead, each regional council organizes celebrations of local holy days tied to local great battles. The temples take it upon themselves to commemorate all fallen heroes from such wars, regardless of their faiths.

Among each of the faithful there is one particularly important and holy day, which is the day of adulthood. Called the sword day (shortened to Sworday and pronounced Soreday, a favorite pun among those mocking the Teraketh), it marks the day when a member of the faith comes of age. The young boy or girl is given a family weapon, usually an axe or sword crafted just before his or her birth, but sometimes one passed down from generation to generation, and the child's head is shaved, removing the hair of youth. This is the only time the hair of the faithful is ever cut (though they can shave their faces) and the forelock from the occasion is saved and carried by the Teraketh for the rest of their lives.

Once the weapon is bestowed and head shaved, several stout warriors from the community gather around the newly minted adult and, depending on the culture, either beat him or her into unconsciousness against the adolescent's fierce opposition, or stage a ceremonial fight.

SAINTS

Because of the strict belief among the Teraketh that all are equal, sainthood is never bestowed or spoken of. Also, since it is the duty of every worshiper of Terak to fight in the defense of the weak, all who die in battle are considered glorious martyrs, no matter how ignominious the death. It is not part of the faith to throw away one's life to become a martyr. One should live on to fight another day, unless his death will be meaningful and help others.

HOLY ORDERS

The temples of Terak have three holy orders: The soldiers (clergy) are the dominant order and have five levels of status, or ranks: helms, lieutenants, banners, commanders, and lord or lady commanders. The crusaders (holy warriors) are rare, and observe only one level of status. Masters of the Way are martial instructors and the oldest order of the temples. They are divided into four levels of status: weapons experts, weapons masters, senior masters, and grandmasters.

There is no central authority to the faith; councils of seven commanders (or lord and lady commanders) are its highest authority, determining local policy and religious law for the faithful.

All members of the church are addressed by church title, or military rank if they are in active military service (as many are), but comparative ranks in secular military organizations have no effect on one's status within the church.

The average temple hosts one commander or lord commander, one or two banners, three or four lieutenants, eight to ten helms. One or two masters of the Way provide training. There usually aren't any crusaders in residence, as theirs are a wandering order.

SOLDIERS OF TERAK

Soldiers are the clergy of the Teraketh temples, found in large military units serving as chaplains or leaders, in towns or cities that often face attack, or wandering in troubled areas defending the weak. Soldiers of Terak often attach themselves to adventuring groups to serve as spiritual advisers and healers, or to join quests.

While soldiers have four alignment groups, only two are large, and a third, lawful evil faction is considered heretical. The two main groups oppose one another on matters great and small, but their conflicting opinions have never led to blows. Councils have been known to split up due to the alignment division, but that is the most divisive the issue has ever become.

On one side of the divide, lawful good soldiers believe it is the duty of the church to protect the weak, improve themselves physically and spiritually, and help others do so. These soldiers are closely aligned to the crusaders, but rarely control councils. Most members of this alignment are found adventuring, often aiding people in catastrophically dangerous areas. For instance, dwarves planning to recolonize an ancient mine overrun with strange, tentacle-laden, mind-sucking beasts might have a few lawful good soldiers along to help. Their typical life expectancy is quite low.

Typified by lawful neutral soldiers, the other side believes it is the duty of the church to unify all common folk in the worship of Terak. They proselytize, defend villages, serve with armies, and obey the orders of their commanders. They believe in unity and conformity, and the strength that can be achieved through the two. Lawful neutral commanders are the majority in most councils.

Far more rare than lawful good or lawful neutral followers, neutral good soldiers hold the roots of the Teraketh faith. They do not embrace a “societal” outlook on the religion, but hold to a personal faith in Terak. They believe every person is responsible for bettering himself, which is only possible if one is not oppressed by evil or in constant mortal danger. Therefore, neutral good soldiers are almost entirely adventurers, freeing the weak from oppression so they might find their own way. These soldiers face grave dangers in their constant quest to improve their bodies and spirits, and frequently die in the process. This helps make them the rarest of the faithful.

Lawful evil worshippers of the lawful neutral aspect of Terak are considered heretics by most. If there are any in the temple structure, they are well hidden and do not reveal themselves. They maintain a “might is right” ethic, believing they are Terak’s chosen people. To them, “protection of the weak” means conquering the vulnerable and telling them what to do for “their own good.”

All soldiers of Terak are addressed by rank, followed by “a soldier of the temples of Terak,” when necessary. So, a helm named Matthius would be addressed as “Helm Matthius,” and introduced as “Helm Matthius, a soldier of the temples of Terak.”

HELM

Junior soldiers are called helms. They adventure, serve in the military, or act as *aides de camp* to senior members of the clergy. Mortality rates among the helms are astonishing, as their only qualifications are a love for Terak and a willingness to fight. Helms serve in the front lines of combat to demonstrate their faith and strength.

LIEUTENANT

With experience, helms might be promoted to “lieutenant,” and expected to be a little wiser in battle. They serve as healers and chaplains to the troops instead of wading in the thick of the fight. The only requirement for lieutenant is experience, and a willingness to serve.

BANNER

Lieutenant who distinguish themselves in many campaigns or adventures are promoted to “banner.” Banners serve with battle troops and, in some cases, act as unit commanders. Banners are fierce warriors, as their spells enable them to call upon Terak’s might to turn the tide of battle.

COMMANDER

After a banner gains a wealth of knowledge about warfare, tactics, and command, the region’s council of commanders summons him and promotes him to “commander.” Anyone in need of a chief officer or strategic advice would be hard-pressed to find a better aide than a commander of the Teraketh. If a commander lives in a region that already has seven on its council, he is expected to found or join a new council elsewhere, or leave on campaign until there is an opening in his council. Openings on a council

remain vacant until the surviving commanders find an appropriate replacement.

Each of the seven commanders on the council is given charge of his own temple, meaning a region cannot have more than seven Teraketh temples, and any commander wanting to control his own temple must either find an open temple in another region, or found a new region. Any Teraketh church built in a region that already has seven other temples is considered a “shrine,” no matter how big it is, and is beholden to the orders of the nearest temple. The commander of that temple assigns a soldier to run the shrine until it either replaces an existing regional temple (as may happen if the soldier in charge becomes a commander, while her predecessor’s temple, lacking one, is demoted to a shrine) or is accounted as part of a new region with room for a full temple. Because shrines and council seats remain open until a commander rises to take them, it is quite possible for a banner to be promoted to commander, given authority over the temple that was his shrine, and admitted to a council, all in the same day.



LORD OR LADY COMMANDER

Commanders who win countless battles, fight more wars than they can recall, and slay more foes than they can list, eventually become the most powerful figures in the Teraketh faith. Called lord or lady commanders, they are revered, far and wide. The king of a great nation might govern many Teraketh “regions” within his borders, each with seven commanders, but might not benefit from a lord commander at all—such is their rarity. If a lord commander is available, a wise ruler would surely seek his counsel in times of war. Becoming a lord or lady commander has no effect on council membership or temple command.

JOINING THE SOLDIERS OF TERAK

Anyone who feels called to worship and take up arms can become a soldier of Terak—no special training is required beyond learning the prayers necessary to cast divine spells and perform services. All soldiers of Terak are clerics (of War). Most carry battleaxes, though all weapons are valued, and there’s nothing strange about a holy warrior of Terak using a sword.



CRUSADERS OF TERAK

The lawful good crusaders of Terak are rarer than the paladins of many other churches. For whatever reason, it is uncommon to hear this call, and serve the faith as paladins do. The crusaders’ order exists to fight evil, stand shoulder to shoulder with common soldiers, give comrades hope in times of need, and conquer the most daunting foes. Some within the temples believe that one day, a sea of crusaders will rise to aid the mortal races against threats so dire they are too terrifying to imagine. Others believe the Teraketh faith’s rules of equality and readiness already make all adherents holy warriors.

Unlike most of the Teraketh, crusaders must follow all doctrine to the letter. They can never drink or indulge in intoxicants, cannot seek personal glory, and so on. Dedicated to the brotherhood of all mortals, they do not tolerate discriminatory remarks or slurs, and certainly never make them. Furthermore, crusaders are held to a much stricter standard regarding the protection of the weak. There is no rest for them, for they must pursue a constant quest to help the downtrodden. There is no such thing as retirement; they fight evil until they die, no matter how old they become or how much they might desire to set aside their burdens. It is a miserable life, or so it would seem to most, but they are consumed by their call to duty, and do not easily shrug off their responsibilities.

Crusaders associate with any who oppose evil and defend the weak. They do not associate with anyone actively prejudiced against other mortal races, no matter how well intentioned they might be. They might try to move them from the path of prejudice, but failing that, break company over what might seem like “innocent” comments. For instance, a dwarven fighter who constantly derides “pointy-eared elves” might be fine company for most, but a crusader will not accept his intolerance. Crusaders generally don’t care about their companions’ leanings toward chaos or law, if they are actively good. A party that seeks to help people will find a crusader their fast ally. Parties that must have their palms greased or need convincing to offer aid will not find the crusader in their midst for long.

Taking the teaching of Terak that all mortals are equal quite seriously, the crusaders put no faith in strict hierarchy or titles. They are all addressed and introduced as “crusader,” and the most senior or skilled crusader commands the others in times of need. For instance, if several crusaders band together to fight evil sorcerers, the crusader with the most knowledge of evil sorcerers takes command, even if she is the least experienced among them. Because of this (and the tenets of their faith), crusaders do not hold to honorifics and correct those who call them “sir,” “master,” or anything other than “crusader.”

JOINING THE CRUSADERS OF TERAK

Becoming a crusader takes very little time, with the candidate training with another crusader for just two or three months. In fact, the hardest part about becoming a crusader is tracking down a teacher. Seeing more than one crusader at a time is rare, and usually means there’s

trouble brewing. As it stands, the crusaders do not have a well-established order and refuse to pretend they do. Upon completing training, the new crusader becomes a paladin, and when it comes time to swear their Sacred Oath, most take the Oath of Battle.

MASTERS OF THE WAY

Every temple of Terak must have a commander, but it is also incomplete if it lacks a master. Almost every temple and shrine of Terak has training grounds where masters of the Way teach the arts of war. The masters of the Way is one of the most practical holy orders of any church, and one of the oldest.

The masters of the Way predate the soldiers and crusaders. Their abilities, which they call “the Way,” were first given to mortals during the Third Epoch, when the gods taught various tricks and crafts. When the first temples of Terak were built, the masters of the Way were his priests. Today they are the temples’ teachers. The masters of the Way learn to use every weapon they can get their hands on, and then instruct others who are prepared to pay for lessons in the arts of combat. Most of the fee goes to the temple, but masters keep enough of it to support themselves. The Way is a martial art focused on using a warrior’s weapons. Masters of the Way know every form and stance, and best of them make deadly foes.

WEAPONS EXPERT

Becoming a weapons expert requires extensive training in the Way—years for most, less time for a few prodigies. Upon reaching a minor degree of accomplishment (usually a level as a fighter or monk) a weapons master refers to her student as an expert. Weapons experts are called “expert” by students and to clarify their holy order, but do not use their titles otherwise.

GODDESS OF WINE, MADNESS AND INSPIRATION

ZHEENKEEF

RED-HAIRED, WILD-EYED, THE SHIFTING, OF THE MANY WAYS, THE GNOMISH, TITAN’S ROOT, MOTHER OF MADNESS, INSPIRATION

Zheenkeef (zheen-KEEF) is the chaotic neutral goddess of inspiration, intuition, wine, madness, invention, internal turmoil, creativity, tragedy, prophecy, oracles, half-wits, and geniuses. Put simply, she is the goddess of those living on the edge, who dare to peer into the darkest parts of their hearts.

Zheenkeef is usually shown as impossibly tall, with a wild mane of red hair. Her eyes are usually inhuman—solid black or red—and she is sometimes shown with the tail of a dog or with more than two arms. In such cases, these representations are symbolic, or come from an artist’s vision. Zheenkeef’s hand gestures and the items clasped in them usually bear some deep significance.

Zheenkeef accepts an infinite number of symbols, for those who worship her select a symbol for their faith on the day they dedicate themselves to her work. Common symbols include manacles worn on the wrists with the

WEAPONS MASTER

Weapons experts might seek out senior masters from whom they can learn the secrets of the Way. Many of these secrets are still beyond their ken, but when they can explain them, they become weapons masters. A weapons master is addressed as “master” and introduced by full title.

SENIOR MASTER

With experience, weapons masters become strong enough to “live in the Way.” They seek out grandmasters and receive further training to become a proper master of the Way, taking on the title of senior master. A senior master is still addressed as “master,” and introduced as such.

GRANDMASTER

Senior masters possess nearly legendary skill at weapons and must eventually put their training to the test. One must seek out three other senior masters and best them all in duels. Then they must seek out a grandmaster—usually the same grandmaster who made them senior masters. The grandmaster gives them a grueling test of physical prowess and spiritual fitness, the passage of which entitles the senior master to become a grandmaster. They are henceforth addressed and introduced as “grandmaster,” such as, “Grandmaster Matthius of the temples of Terak.”

JOINING THE MASTERS OF THE WAY

Most masters are monks who follow the Way of Iron (see **Chapter X**) or fighters (battle masters) who are more interested in the artistry of combat than in merely doing what they must to survive. Any other class that might be interested in mastering the art of weapon use can become a master of the Way, but it is rare for anyone other than fighters and monks to join the order.

connecting chain sundered, an eye tattooed on the forehead, or a creeping grape vine, dried and wrapped around the left arm, always. But these are just a few of many—truthfully, there is no one symbol of Zheenkeef. When those who are not adherents of the Zhenkefan faith (and the members of the Great Church) need to symbolize Zheenkeef, they use a cluster of grapes. This is usually simplified as an inverse pyramid of circles.

She is associated with the wolverine, the badger, the jackal, and the hyena. The strongest of these associations is the hyena, whose laughter is much like her own. Further, many hyenas have red fur like the hair of the Mother of Madness.

Zheenkeef is quite popular among many chaotic peoples, with barbarians and sorcerers holding her especially dear. Some sorcerers believe her blood courses through their veins, giving them their remarkable gifts. Oracles,



prophets, and seers of all varieties have held Zheenkeef as their patron for many ages, and so too have inventors and vintners. Among the five races, the gnomes hold Zheenkeef dearest, for they see her as their patron and lady, but the elves, humans, and halflings also revere her for the inspiration she offers. Dwarves name her in their prayers grudgingly, receiving all the inspiration they need from her nephew Korak.

MYTHS

THE COMING OF THE TITANS

WHEN ZHEENKEEF ATE THE FRUIT THAT HELD HUMANS, IT IS well known that all the gods worked to piece the race back together. And indeed, the Mother of Madness retched up nearly all she had eaten. But she had already digested some of the sacred fruit, and it was lost to the world—or so the other gods believed.

In the cover of night, when none of the other gods looked, Zheenkeef went to the deepest pool of the world, and by the water's edge she emptied her bowels. With clay from the river and her own excrement, she sculpted tall and beautiful figures. Because her offal held the very stuff of life from the fruit, she had only to breathe three hot breaths across these tall figures, and they came to life. She painted them up and made them beautiful, with skins of copper and tan, and keen eyes.

These figures not born of her womb, but born of her belly nonetheless, looked at her and said, "You are our mother! This we know well. But what are we?"

Before she should speak, behold! The waters of the pool rose and a figure stepped from its depths. "If thou art their mother, Zheenkeef, then truly I am their father, for thou hast taken the clay from my most sacred pool, and from it the seeds of my water." It was Shalimyr who spoke to her then, and the tall children at the water's edge trembled before him.

Zheenkeef only giggled. "You are no more their father than I am their mother, Shalimyr, but you have hungered for me since the earliest days. If you cannot have me, then you would have these children."

Shalimyr was shamed, for Wild-Eyed Zheenkeef saw his purpose and knew the lust that consumed him. He stood there by the water's edge, watching her with wolf's eyes.

"You are the Titans," Zheenkeef the Shifting told the tall figures then, "and you are not born, but made. You shall do great things and have adventures, and you shall never be dull, for I see clearly now that these mortals born of the tree shall forever vex me. They will concern themselves with simple matters, most of them, and will not surprise me much."

With this foretelling, she set the Titans out to thrive and do great deeds. And though they have no souls and do not go before Maal when slain, they are each of them like a living legend, with great adventure following in their footsteps. For this is what they were made to be.

And when they had gone, Zheenkeef lay with Shalimyr by the water's edge for the first time, but surely not the last, for it is said that Imperious Tinel is often cuckolded by his wife and the Wave. Of the Titans, much is written, but this first: that Zheenkeef created them, and Shalimyr watches over them out of love for their creator.

THE NEED FOR WINE

IT IS REMEMBERED BY MOST THAT ZHEENKEEF HAS BEEN THE cause of much of the world's worst mischief, and so the weak do not trust in her as they should. But all know the truth: More than mischief, Red-Haired Zheenkeef has brought the mortal races joy, wonder, and delight.

When other gods made their gifts to the mortals, Zheenkeef the Shifting watched with interest. The gifts were practical and made lives better. Yet, no matter how greatly the gods (such as her son, Darmon) gifted the mortal races, their lives were still hard, and they knew death and misery most of their days. They were given fire and shown how to build homes, how to smelt iron, how to sail the wide sea, and more. So many gifts, and yet the mortals had no life in them but toil. They lived to work, and worked to live.

Finally, Wild-Eyed Zheenkeef could stand no more of it and traveled her many ways to the mortal world. Assuming the guise of a red-haired mortal of each race, she went to the homes of the greatest among them. Appearing to them as a mad woman, which was not far from right, she showed the mortals many tricks. One she taught the skill of counting out rhythm. Another she showed catgut pulled taught, and plucked it to make a pleasing noise. This one she showed the warm sounds made by a hollowed-out gourd when blown upon, and that one she led through planned steps for dancing. Unlike the other gods, she gave no race a complete skill or art. Instead, she sat back and watched the races invent their own music from these basic tools, and their own dances from these simple beginnings. And soon they began sharing their inventions with other races, and music and dance grew among all peoples.

Yet still, the humans were not happy. Art gave them an outlet for their longing, a way of expounding upon their misery, but they were never free of their deepest sorrows. One day the Mother of Madness overheard a woman say to her friend, "I wish I could feel this way all the time" as the two of them spun and spun in a great circling dance that combined elven music and human steps.

So Zheenkeef the Gnomish went to her favorite folk among the mortals, the gnomes, who were so like her in temperament. She saw that they too enjoyed the arts and reveled in the skills they had learned from the gods. But they also longed for the exultation and freedom they felt when dancing to last longer. For a long while she walked among the gnomes as a red-haired lady of their kind, and she inspired them to experiment with dances and chants and contraptions of metal and fire that might capture that feeling for longer. And in those days the Gnomes came to know this red-haired lady as Inspiration, for so she was to them, an inspiration for all their wild schemes and foolish inventions.

Zheenkeef of the Many Ways walked nearly every part of the gnomish lands, and still they were no closer to capturing the sensation of euphoria. One night she stayed with a poor gnomish family, Glor and Glin. The old couple had a small grape farm and no children, and the Mother of Madness saw that sorrow was heavy on their hearts. Yet the two old folks, seeing her red hair, took her into their home and fed her like a queen. Glor, the husband, gave her his pipe and best pipe-weed, and Glin, the wife, stayed up all night baking bread for her travels. When Zheenkeef parted with them, she blessed

their grapes so that they should always give them the greatest happiness.

From this blessing, of course, great things arose. Within a year, Glor and Glin were famous among the gnomes for the spectacular drink they had invented from the grapes. Wine, they called it, and in it one found the euphoria of dance and the happiness of the sweetest music. But Glin and Glor were not proud, and they never accepted the praise, telling all who would listen that it was Inspiration who had given them this gift.

So it was that Zheenkeef brought music, dance, and wine to a world that was suffocating under the weight of blandness and toil. It was not long before the prayers of artists and musicians bored her, and she gave her daughter mastery over these things (yet another decision that has forever benefited the mortal races). Yet she never parted ways with her favorite thing, the best invention that came from her time among the mortals: wine. It is said by those who know the sacred drink best that if one drinks enough, Inspiration will pay a visit.

SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS

Zheenkeef seeks surprise and entertainment. She is a god of impulse and whimsy, caprice and insanity. To ascribe long-term motives to her is absurd, as she rarely concentrates on anything long enough to call it a plan. Her motives can be seen in trends rather than in histories, and repeated circumstances, not continuing traditions.

Zheenkeef wants the mortal races to be interesting, to do things differently from one generation to the next. She likes to see them give in to their passions, and has little or no respect for those who hold themselves in check. If a man wants to drink, he should drink. If he wants to sing, he should sing. If he wants to destroy the world, he should try to destroy the world. People who refuse to live out their desires for fear of change are among those she loathes most. When she influences the world personally or through her agents, Zheenkeef does whatever might make the world more interesting. Sometimes this means promoting grave evil, sometimes great good—neither interests her much. Rather, she works to ensure nothing stays the same for long.

Her favor falls upon some for a matter of years, other for minutes, but it rarely lasts a lifetime. Some of her most faithful servants have never even been noticed by the Mother of Madness, and are instead seen to by her celestial attendants. One does not revere Zheenkeef for her warmth.

Her mercurial attentions and moods are not always merry. She is considered the patron of tragedy for a reason, as legends tell of a feverish sorrow that consumes her from time to time. Her boredom with life and the world sometimes coalesces into a stultifying misery, thick and terrible, and in those times, she is wont to lash out at friends and foes alike or, worse for those who follow her, withdraw entirely.

SERVANTS OF ZHEENKEEF

Zheenkeef's servants are many, but she rarely keeps them in mind, and leaves them to wander her realm in Heaven without aim or purpose. Over the millennia, she has

accumulated countless odd followers, most of them formerly mortals, and at any point she can call upon one to do her bidding.

THE 1,001 HANDMAIDS

Almost any servant called to Zheenkeef's side becomes a "Handmaid," whether man, maid, or beast (see **Chapter X**). Zheenkeef determines their attire by whim—some dress in robes of gold, while others wear nothing but fish guts. Handmaids are usually powerful celestials, capable of performing any important task for their mistress in the world or in Heaven.

THE MENAGERIE

For her amusement, Zheenkeef keeps two of every kind of creature that has ever been in a great menagerie of Heaven. These creatures wander freely in her realm, and are sometimes sent earthward with a Handmaid on a task. In all the menagerie, Zheenkeef is fondest of Heka and Tekit, the two hyenas, and they accompany her wherever she goes.

THE TITANS

While not her servants, the various titans are Zheenkeef's children, and she takes more interest in them than in any of the mortal races.

THE VINEYARDS OF ZHEENKEEF

The vineyards of Zheenkeef, where the Zhenkefans (zhenn-KEFF-uhnz) worship, are raucous and lively places. Overseen by the oracles (or not, depending on the community), the vineyards are not places of strict authority, as each vineyard's members determine its hierarchy. One thing is, however, constant: The vineyards are places of celebration, invention, folly, and, sometimes, even danger. They are enormously popular among the common folk. They make some of the finest—if not *the* finest—wine in the world, and the oracles living there are the best source of prophecies one can find.

Many cultures disallow vineyards in their more important cities or, at least, in their "higher class" neighborhoods and temple districts, for the temples are home to wild revelries and sometimes, a fair bit of debauchery. The refined and lawful members of society therefore consider them a "necessary evil." Someone from the upper crust of lawful society might visit an oracle, but would do so hooded, to keep from being seen. Essentially, the vineyards are popular, but of ill repute. Few are concerned that shunning the vineyards will draw Zheenkeef's wrath, as everyone knows Zheenkeef cares little about the opinions of mortals. Regardless of high society's attitudes, the Zhenkefan faith is popular, and her apostles and oracles might be seen wherever one travels.

Zheenkeef cares about her church only as much as it keeps her entertained. She has never had much interest

in structures or organizations, but individual members of the faith often draw her eye. Particularly faithful members of the vineyards who seek change, alteration, insight, and inspiration sometimes find themselves protected and guided by their goddess. More often, though, they're not even noticed.

The Zhenkefans have a saying: "Her vision is not ours to fathom." They utter it when it seems like she cares nothing for them. It is a frequent problem for the faithful, as Zheenkeef seems just as likely to take an interest in a mad peasant as in the workings of her worshipers. For this reason, she watches vineyards, but does little to interfere with their affairs, and relies on her servants in the heavens to tend to such trivial matters as heeding prayers and supplying powers.

DOCTRINE

"We have no need for great men and their towering spires. We cast our lot with the outsider, the poet, and the fool. In the end times, we will all be remembered by the mad acts of the shunned and the outcast, not the rigid perfection of the pillars of society."

—*The Visions of the Prophet Glorik Hillock*

The Zhenkefan faith revolves around six sayings, called "The Vintner's Creed," or just "The Creed." The earliest oracles of Zheenkeef handed down these maxims at the founding of the vineyards. This was quite some time ago; vineyards have maintained their form of worship longer than nearly any other church. Perhaps this is because the traditions are captured in six simple sayings, and do not require a great deal of doctrine or dogma to be passed from generation to generation.

Whatever the case, all Zhenkefans contemplate and observe the Creed. It is supposed to be repeated daily, if the Zhenkefan remembers, but weekly observance suffices. The reason for the Creed is that the true worship of Zheenkeef is difficult to grasp for those who do not possess profound wisdom. As her greatest apostles, oracles, and joyous brothers understand, Zheenkeef's nature is highly mystical—for what does it mean to be the source of inspiration, to be the feelings below the surface that people rarely heed? The wise understand that the strength, the inner glow one feels when one has drunk too much wine, is Zheenkeef. There are those who can harness that deep assurance, that happy strength, without the aid of wine, but for most, accessing it requires drink in copious amounts. Just as those truly touched by the Mother of Madness can experience inspiration without the aid of wine, those who are wisest can contemplate her without the Creed. But for most, wine and these sayings are necessary.

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE IS SWEET. DRINK DEEP!

Always the first invocation of the Zhenkefan, this is a remembrance of Zheenkeef's gift of wine to the mortal races. It is also a rumination on the power of Zheenkeef—through her gift of wine, she makes life sweeter for the mortal races. A Zhenkefan seeks to savor the sweetness of life, finding the joy and vibrancy in all things, that

most find only in wine. There is only one terrible sin among them: to refuse to drink from the cup of life. Life is filled with wonder and despair, and many try to avoid the despair by living quiet lives of caution, and miss the wonder as well. Wine should not be sipped moderately, and neither should life. One must live to the fullest, and savor life's wonder and sadness.

THERE IS NO JOY WITHOUT SUFFERING

This is the saying in which the Zhenkefan ponders savoring despair. Zheenkeef is a goddess with bright red hair, but is also embodied in the grapevine. In the summer, the grapevine yields the grapes that make wine, but in the winter, the vines must be pruned constantly, or they will not produce their bounty in the following year. In legend, Zheenkeef is often joyous and wild, like the vines in bloom, but at other times she is dark and sorrowful, like the vines of winter, undergoing the pain of a thousand cuts. She is the patron of tragedy, sometimes filled with delight, but at other times overtaken by dark madness. Many of the ingenious artists and inventors for whom she is Inspiration suffer from similar tragedy.

ALL THAT THERE IS WILL BE UNDONE

Everything changes, and everything will change, regardless of the hopes and endeavors of the mortal races. For this reason, it is folly to become attached to societies, structures, or any other mortal work. They will all be washed away in the end. The Zhenkefans, therefore, do not become attached to their inventions or ideas. They happily turn them over to others who wish to waste their time building upon those works, just as Zheenkeef gave music to her daughter to look after. For this reason, Zhenkefans are more interested in the works of those on the fringes of society, unfettered by convention, than they are in the lives and times of the powerful and noteworthy.

ONLY THAT WHICH YOU HAVE NOT DONE IS WORTHY

Since nothing lasts, repetition of labor or ideas is an utter waste of one's life. Each person should broaden their experiences—visit new places and cultures, learn new things, and partake in new activities. It is particularly good when a Zhenkefan manages something mortals have never done before. Thus, invention and creativity are truly holy pursuits.

INSPIRATION'S VOICE IS FELT, NOT HEARD

Zheenkeef is the goddess of intuition, the gut feeling, the well of emotions deep below the surface, and harder to interpret than the love, loyalty, and courage other gods represent. Zhenkefans heed their intuition and act on

it, for it is the voice of Zheenkeef. It is in intuition that inspiration and invention can be found. Giving oneself over to one's intuition is likened, by most, to madness.

THOSE WHO CRAVE CONTROL ARE SLAVES

People who would impose law and structure on others are deluded. They are slaves to their beliefs, as much in need of liberation as those they seek to control. The Zhenkefans actively undermine lawful beliefs, usually through mockery or humor, sometimes through debate and argument, and in some rare cases, through violent overthrow. They know those who impose laws are wrong, and that the only sensible laws are those all people agree to abide by. Some Zhenkefans are so individualistic that they believe all laws are wrong, but most are more democratic. So long as people agree to laws, they are valid. These beliefs make vocal Zhenkefans unpopular with authoritarian governments. It is rare for vineyards take an active hand in politics, however (what could be more boring and repetitive?), so most authorities ignore them.



ZHENKEFAN PRAYERS

The Zhenkefans do not adhere to standard structures, symbolism, or even liturgy, and so there are no set prayers to the faith other than the Creed. Indeed, every Zhenkefan is expected to extemporaneously compose prayers for any given situation. There are some common themes in these prayers, however. They often begin with an invocation to Zheenkeef—usually, “Mother of Madness, heed my prayer!” Prayers are said while drinking wine, and are nearly always take the form of poems or songs. The more complex the rhyme scheme, the better.

HOLY DAYS

As with their prayers, the Zhenkefans do not standardize their holy days. In fact, vineyards often decide to have a ‘holy day’ with no notice. They announce to the community that the next day, or even that very day, just happens to be a sacred celebration. Other times, they spend months planning elaborate festivals.

One time is always kept sacred for the Zhenkefans, though: the first pressing of the new harvest of grapes. A great festival is held for the pressing, and celebrants mix some of the juice from the new harvest with the dregs of last year's wine to drink in celebration. Large congregations keep the party lasting long enough to bring new wine to full fermentation, and drink it to conclude their revels.

SAINTS

While the Zhenkefans do not name saints (they do not like such titles) they have a strong appreciation for martyrdom. Because the Zhenkefans have a fondness for

those at the fringe of society, they revere and remember those who give up their lives for change, innovation, and wild ideas. Sometimes big, new ideas are unpopular, deemed dangerous, and result in the innovator's horrible death. Zhenkefan vineyards remember such people with occasional toasts, honoring them as martyrs of the faith.

HOLY ORDERS

There is no “supreme order” of the vineyards; each determines its own power structure. Usually, the highest-ranking local oracle oversees the vineyard, but there are vineyards run by councils of children or the local half-wit—even a vineyard that takes its instruction from an enchanted gibbon. No matter how the Zhenkefans structure their faith, no one gainsays them.

Regardless of vineyard structure, though, there are three orders universal to the Zhenkefan faith. A person who dedicates her life to Zheenkeef's works can join one of these orders, whether it is powerful in her local vineyard or not. The clergy are called the apostles. The holy warriors are

called the joyous brotherhood, and have two levels of status: laughing brother or sister, and drunken brother or sister. The oracles, who most consider religious authorities, have two levels of status: seer and prophet.

There is no “average” vineyard, though most have an oracle in residence and three or four apostles. Yet there are many vineyards made up of local Zhenkefans, with no one from the holy orders.

APOSTLES OF ZHEENKEEF

The apostles are Zheenkeef's clerical order, but they are rarely found in the vineyards. They are wanderers, spreading the teachings of Zheenkeef and lending their hands to the goddess's works. The stereotype of this order's members is the wild-eyed man, with an unshorn and tangled mane of hair, dressed in simple robes and a rope belt, carrying an enormous morningstar in one hand and a flagon of wine in the other. Indeed, many apostles never shave or cut their hair, and their diet often consists of little more than garlic, onions, and wine. Many apostles are half mad, at least.

Apostles believe it is their duty to seek out the places of the world where the goddess' hand is not felt and her inspiration, not experienced. They speak out on street corners, from hillocks, and in dark places of the cities. They spread the lessons of the Creed to anyone who will listen.

That said, Zhenkefans do not seek to actively convert others to their outlook, and neither is it the function of the apostles. Apostles offer all people the lessons of Zheenkeef in the hope that, seeing the way of inspiration, they take up the Creed and live a free life. Zhenkefans see most evangelism as a kind of tyranny (one unique to religion), and therefore speak against religious leaders who say people must follow a certain path, or suffer. As the sixth Creed teaches, all people are free, and must choose their own paths. The preaching apostles do not use language such as “this is the only way,” “follow or be damned,” or other threatening inducements. Instead, they simply speak of Zheenkeef's way, and hope their words reach attentive ears.

The apostles hardly care about secular matters, and pay little attention to politics or issues of local concern. Heads in the clouds, they think only of the great teachings the Mother of Madness gave them.

Beyond the spreading of the doctrine, the apostles are also fierce opponents of stultifying and tyrannical forces such as devils, whose influence they cannot tolerate. They stride into the mouth of danger time and again to topple any force that threatens the freedom of the five mortal races. In battle, they have a wild look to their eyes, raging against their foes with their spiked morningstars.

Most apostles are chaotic neutral, and see it as their primary duty to spread the teachings of Zheenkeef. These are the untamed apostles that most know, who oppose the works of tyrants when they can, but mostly seek to change the world and undermine established orders. Apostles have little interest in politics and the workings of the vineyards; they are dedicated wanderers and mendicants.

Chaotic good apostles are far more interested in inspiration and uplifting the oppressed. They pay attention to



the workings of the world, learning about political leaders that wrong their fellow mortals, and speaking out against them. These apostles are often agitators and troublemakers, using their protected status as representatives of a god to promote freedom of thought and feeling.

There are chaotic evil apostles as well, but they are not openly welcomed in the vineyards, and tend to worship in dark, secret places. They are discussed in **Chapter VII**.

JOINING THE APOSTLES OF ZHEENKEEF

All members are named apostles upon joining. This is the only title a member of the order will ever bear, and they do not take on honorifics such as “father” or “brother.” If they are introduced, it is by name and the sobriquet, “an apostle of Zheenkeef.” A prospective apostle requires little training, and receives it either from another apostle, or from one of the oracles at a vineyard. Training takes only a few months, but requires absolute devotion to Zheenkeef. Upon completing the training, the apostles become clerics, with Madness as their domain (see **Chapter X**). Zheenkeef wields an enormous morningstar bound with iron and spiked with a thousand spearheads of divine fire. The weapon is called Askew, and its touch is said to drive the searing fires of madness deep into foes’ minds. Many clerics wield weapons forged to resemble the one used by their deity.

JOYOUS BROTHERHOOD OF ZHEENKEEF

The Joyous Brotherhood is made up of those who feel the very power of inspiration flowing through their veins and limbs. While Darmon is the god of joy and laughter, the joy in the hearts of the Zhenkefan brotherhood is more like religious euphoria and bliss than the simple joy of a good laugh. The members of this order are lent great strength and power by the elative forces of Zheenkeef, and slip into divine trances to aid them in battle.

Though they sometimes have a wild demeanor, the joyous brothers do not seem madness-stricken like apostles. Instead, they are an ecstatic people, moved from the very well of their beings to do great things. Unlike most apostles, they *do* care about secular matters, and involve themselves in local struggles and politics, befriending and aiding the underdogs, and those without a voice. In the classic feuds of legends, where two great families tear apart a town, the Joyous Brotherhood sides with faceless peasants caught in the middle. They are trained at noticing the people others ignore.

The order focuses its attentions on serving these ignored groups and opposing of all forces that enslave minds and hearts. Joyous brothers delight in matters great and small, fighting against evil with their massive morningstars and happiness. When confronted with the stolid considerations of decorum, they resort to mockery and japes. Good manners are not their forte, and for this reason many call them the “vulgar order.” They drink wine, often to excess, do not hold their emotions in check, and don’t stay their tongues when they feel someone is wrong. They are bold, brash, loud, and unquestionably empowered with

BROTHERHOOD? WHY NOT SISTERHOOD?

There are a few orders of the faiths referred to as brotherhoods or fellowships. This does not mean female characters cannot be members. In the case of the Joyous Brotherhood, a female member would be referred to as a joyous sister, but a member of the joyous brotherhood. If preferred, the gender of these terms can easily be switched so that the order is called the Joyous Sisterhood. Whatever you call these orders, it should not in any way reflect on who can be a member, with the sole exception of the orders of Morwyn, which are gender-specific.

the divine inspiration of their goddess. While many in power think them drunken buffoons, they are in fact terrifyingly observant, and often cut haughty men low with a single perfectly worded observation.

Every autumn, the joyous brothers see it as their duty to help harvest grapes and press wine. They disguise themselves and show up in communities where they are strangers, lending work to the farmers and departing days later, when the harvest is done. In this, they see themselves as walking in the footsteps of Zheenkeef, who also wandered the land, lending aid to strangers and departing, her identity unknown.

While there are other holy warrior orders, like the Eagles of the Urianath, who seek to oppose tyranny and free the enslaved, no order’s behavior is like the Joyous Brotherhood’s. While the brothers do seek to free those who are literally enslaved, they also wish to awaken the desires of those who are not drinking deep from the cup of life. “There is a kind of slavery in the heart,” they are known to say, “when a man lives free of physical bonds, yet never strays from what is expected of him.” The joyous brothers seek to move all those they meet to live life to its fullest, be bold, love all people, and speak their minds. More reserved folk find them insufferable.

The rules of conduct for the joyous brotherhood are more poetic suggestions than clear edicts:

Never accept the words of the powerful at face value.

Those who are too weak to afford beliefs should be offered aid.

Look for the detail no one else sees.

Remind all those you meet that life is sweet.

Never shrink from looking into the face of tragedy.

A person enslaved by his own beliefs should be offered the hand of friendship.

A person enslaved by the beliefs of others must be freed.

Remember the Creed each day.

Interpretations of these edicts vary, so it is unlikely a joyous brother would be ejected from the order for violating one unless that violation was patently obvious, such as becoming the obedient servant of a king. The command



to free the enslaved does not pertain to those who have been imprisoned for evil deeds. That much is universally accepted by the members of the order.

Whatever the interpretation of these edicts, if a joyous brother knowingly commits an evil act or actively aids in the commission of an evil act, she will lose her abilities until she atones.

Joyous brothers prefer chaotic companions. It is very rare to find joyous brothers traveling with, say, officers of the courts of Maal. They most often travel with fighters, barbarians, rogues, rangers, and others who do not mind the occasional song and large jug of wine. Those who take themselves very seriously, or insist that their companions obey every rule, are unlikely to find themselves in the company of a joyous brother for long.

LAUGHING BROTHER OR SISTER

Members of the Joyous Brotherhood are called laughing brothers or sisters. They are addressed as “Brother” or “Sister” and introduced by full title. A laughing sister is

charged to ride forth, often with other members of her order, and do great works against the powers of Law.

DRUNKEN BROTHER OR SISTER

After a laughing brother or sister has become powerful and filled with the inspiration of Zheenkeef, he or she is raised to the status of drunken brother, or sister. He or she is addressed as “Honored Brother” or “Honored Sister,” and introduced by full title. The accompanying ceremony is true to the name; a new drunken sister drinks for an entire day of the finest wine available, until she staggers. She is then stripped of her weapons and armor and sent to a remote area—a wilderness, a desert, a mountain—to wander alone for three days. Of course, by this time the drunken sister is quite powerful, and it is rare that one does not survive the initiation.

After the initiation, many of the order swear off wine for some long period, except for ceremonial celebrations. Indeed, they hardly need it any longer; they are called the drunken brothers (or sisters) because they can conjure up the deep joy of inebriation without wine and its side effects. A drunken sister laughs louder, speaks more freely, sees more clearly, and is inspired more deeply than ever she was as a laughing sister. She can be understood to be drunk with life, not wine.

JOINING THE JOYOUS BROTHERHOOD

A laughing sister is usually someone who heard the call of Zheenkeef at a young age, and went to a vineyard to train in the ways of the order. Quite often, the call is heard with the young person’s first sip of wine, for it is through wine that Zheenkeef speaks to her chosen. Training to become a member of the order usually only takes about two years. Nearly all are chaotic, and most (though not all) tend to be chaotic good. Unlike other militant orders, the joyous brotherhood is made up of sorcerers with Divine Inspiration for their sorcerous origin (see **Chapter X**). While they possess magical power, most are just as happy smashing their foes with their morningstars as they are channeling the power of their mad goddess.

ORACLES OF ZHEENKEEF

Most vineyards are run by the oracles, the oldest of the Zhenkefan holy orders. The motivations of this order are mysterious. They sometimes aid those who have nothing but contempt for the vineyards and its worshipers, but deny requests from the most ardent Zhenkefans. Whatever motivates them, their powers are unrivaled—they see far.

Oracles are eccentric leaders of the faith who, speaking in riddles and whispers, send people on bizarre errands only Zheenkeef understands. They are often found in rooms filled with clouds of stinking incense, or near chasms, smelling strange vapors from fissures in the earth. They read the many signs of the universe and converse

with voices none but they can hear—and perhaps, with the Mother of Madness herself. It would be easy and perhaps comforting to discount them as mad, but they know too much to be ignored. When two oracles meet, particularly two prophets, it is both propitious and terrifying; their visions might combine into premonitions of mighty deeds, or terrible disasters.

Frail, peculiar, a bit mad, the oracles of Zheenkeef see things they should not, and know more than they let on. They call on Zheenkeef to fill them with swirling, mad images of the future, most of which cannot be cast into words. Many do not reveal the secret knowledge they bear, believing others would be better off not knowing. Some compulsively reveal all they see, terrifying children with their dark futures. Most who spend time with these provisional leaders of the Zhenkefan faith end up asking themselves whether the fates they foresee can be avoided. To be an oracle is to live a life plagued by visions, most of which make no sense, but some of which tell the future.

FAR-SEEING MASTER

Prospective oracles must seek out prophets and request admission into the order. Often candidates are sent away, but if the prophet deems the applicant worthy, she puts him to the test. Applicants must answer twelve questions that can only be answered using divination, which culminates in the test of the chalices. In this test, the would-be

THE GOD OF MAGIC, KNOWLEDGE, AND TRUTH

TINEL

MAGNIFICENT, ALOOF, IMPERIOUS, ALL-KNOWING, ALL-SEEING, THE GREAT, THE WHISPERER, OF THE COUNTLESS LOCKS, THE HEAVENLY ARCHMAGE, LORD OF SECRETS, KEEPER OF THE KEYS

Tinel (tuh-NELL) is the god of magic, knowledge, the mind, secrets, truth, science, magicians, those who rely on or admire magic, scholars, scribes, the inquisitive, and seekers of truth. A strange and mysterious god, the Tinel worshiped by most is chaotic good, for he seeks the mastery of magic and all knowledge for the good of the world, and to defeat evil. However, there is also Tinel the Aloof: the same god, but with a different attitude. He sometimes seems to be a completely neutral god, interested only in the acquisition of knowledge and preservation of secrets, and otherwise disinterested in the mortal realm. For the purpose of determining followers' alignments, consider Tinel to be both alignments, but note that followers differ greatly, depending on which aspect they worship.

Tinel appears as a tall figure wearing flowing robes of white, with eyes and hair glowing gold. He has a red jewel on his brow, held there by a silver circlet. In his left hand he holds a tall staff engraved with countless runes, and from his waist hangs a ring, heavy with golden keys. His right hand is usually held aloft in a mystic gesture, as though casting a spell.

Symbolically, Tinel is represented by a golden key. The key symbolizes the keys to Heaven, but also to the world's countless secrets. When necessary, this symbol can be quickly sketched as a two-tined key with very little detail, but this is rarely used.

oracle must choose one of thirty chalices, all but one of which is filled with poisoned wine. Surviving the test grants admittance into the order, and the title of seer. A seer is addressed as "Far-Seeing Master" and introduced with the words "The Seer" before his name. So Karzgar would be addressed as "Far-Seeing Master Karzgar," but introduced as "The Seer Karzgar, an oracle of Zheenkeef."

PROPHET

Experienced seers can declare themselves prophets. The prophets, having known they would bear the title someday, prepare new robes and a staff of office for the day of their ascension. Seers who do not prepare robes or staffs either know they will find some in their journeys, or foresaw they will never become prophets. Prophets are addressed as "All-Seeing Master," and are always introduced with the words "the Prophet," before their names.

JOINING THE ORACLES

Only non-lawful characters devoted to Zheenkeef can join the oracles. Most are warlocks who made pacts with Zheenkeef in the aspect of oracle (see **Chapter X**), though some come from the rank of apostles, Joyous Brotherhood, or from outside the faith. Wizards (of Divination) and other divination magic specialists might join, should they feel so moved. Sometimes, powerful visions even inspire clerics of other gods to become oracles later in life.

Worshippers of Tinel displaying his holy symbol wear at least one key about their necks, and some wear keys all over their persons.

Tinel is often associated with cats, ravens, monkeys, and weasels, all highly curious and intelligent creatures. Cats and ravens are particularly common associations, because they have about them an air of mystery as well as inquisitiveness. But the animal closest to Tinel is the rook, a bird that not only shows great curiosity and intelligence, but also gathers with others of its kind to share secrets. The rooks, it is said, watch the world of mortals from their boughs and the air, reporting what they see to All-Seeing, All-Knowing Tinel himself. Tinel is also associated closely with pseudodragons. It is said Tinel was the first of the gods to befriend dragons, and it was through his magic that this offshoot species was born.

Wizards, bards, rogues, and others who seek knowledge or secrets worship the Heavenly Archmage. Those who live a life of the mind, or survive by their wits and knowledge, hold Tinel dear, for he smiles on almost anyone who loves learning. Tinel is also patron of those who seek the truth, so those who investigate crimes or seek to unravel mysteries often invoke his name. He is quite popular with races that revere magic and learning, particularly elves, gnomes, and humans. There are halfling and dwarven worshippers of Tinel, but they focus more on knowledge and truth than magic.



MYTHS

MAKING OF THE KEYS

TINEL THE GREAT HAS ALWAYS HELD THAT IN EXPLORING THE mind, the mortal spirit can be uplifted to great heights. He believes that the individual is capable of wonders unachievable by the many, and encourages his worshipers to explore learning, science, and the study of magic over all else. Twice in the history of the mortal races has this doctrine shown its limitations, and twice has All-Knowing, All-Seeing Tinel determined the best way to mend the damage done.

So long ago that it is recorded by few and remembered by fewer, there came to be a council of fourteen wizards. These men and women of tremendous power determined that all knowledge had been laid bare before them and that there was no crevice, no niche into which they had yet to peer—but one. No living mortal had ever journeyed to Heaven for the express purpose of learning its secrets. Certainly, some of the faithful had been called before the throne of one god or another, and returned in a babbling religious rapture, but the wizards were people of knowledge, not faith, and were determined to make maps, surveys, and a full exploratory journal of Heaven.

Mustering the length and breadth of their skill, knowledge, and power, the mortals opened a series of portals, powerful and terrible, and through their thresholds lay the kingdom of Heaven. When the fourteen stepped into the holy home of the gods, the Lords of Heaven were outraged. Shalimyr moved to smite them for their pride, and few were prepared to gainsay him, but Imperious Tinel spoke: "Hold thy hand, Sea Father, for these are my folk, and they are precious to me. I have told them to seek knowledge, and they have come seeking the greatest knowledge: the faces of their gods." For indeed, Tinel was overcome with the pride of a father for his children.

So it was that Magnificent Tinel came before these fourteen in the very halls of Heaven and showed them his glory. His face glowed with the light of one thousand fires. Each strand of his hair was a burning river of gold. In his hands power coiled, and on his brow shone the wisdom of all the ages. "Behold!" he declared to the fourteen, "Ye have come of my bidding, and I allow ye to walk in my halls, for I am Tinel, the Lord of Secrets!"

But the fourteen spoke among themselves and did not respond to him. And Tinel saw then that they made notes and drawings, and did not fall to their faces as he had expected. In their pride, many of the mortals turned their backs and walked from the presence of Tinel the Whisperer; these began to map the vaulted halls of Heaven. When Tinel ordered the celestials of his hall to gather these mortals together before his majestic presence once more so that he might explain to them their relative unimportance in Heaven, the celestials moved to do so. But these mortals were as powerful as they were arrogant, and working terrible magic they chained the celestials to the ground.

"How dare ye strike my anointed?" Tinel the Great bellowed, but the mortals ignored him and continued their exploration. When he took one into hand, a wizard called Mariliya the Red, and demanded an explanation for their impudence, the enchantress noted in her book: "It is capable of emotional response, raising its voice to demonstrate rage."

It was then clear to Tinel that the unfettered quest for knowledge hid the potential for his destruction within it. For these wizards were so pleased with themselves and their conquest of all laws—natural, magical, and spiritual—that they saw Magnificent Tinel and the other gods as mere creatures: like ducks, men or fiery giants. Should they convince the rest of the mortal world that this falsehood was true, it might become so, for lies become true when the whole world believes them. Such sorcerous power might defeat gods weakened by a faithless world. “I will not abide this,” the Lord of Secrets declared, and prepared to expel these mortals from Heaven, for there was still a father’s pride in him and he would not see them destroyed utterly.

The mortals had prepared for this eventuality, however, and with a shouted warning from Mariliya, they congregated in the winking of an eye. Together they worked grim spells and cast up mighty wards against Tinel, for their plan had been to lay low one of the Lords of Heaven to bring back to their tower and study. They intended to capture Anwyn, whom it was said was weakest of the gods, but they were confident in their abilities and believed they could hold Tinel at bay.

And Tinel looked at these wards with confusion, for though he is All-Knowing and All-Seeing, Lord of Secrets, and possesses many other names of might, it is possible for him to be surprised from time to time, and he could not discern what these mortals intended. They had prepared this assault in secret, weaving great spells to keep the Lords of Heaven from observing their work, and believed they would prevail. Seeing the Heavenly Archmage so amazed, the fourteen pressed their advantage and brought forth their mighty staves. Crafted in solitude over long years with the most powerful runes ever etched by mortal hands, forged in fires of pure magic and cooled in the blood of titans, each was, in its own right, one of the greatest wizards’ staves ever made. Together they shaped awesome power, and their light was seen in Heaven, on earth, and even in Hell, as they attacked Tinel the Great.

It was not until the magic from their mighty wizard’s lances crashed down upon him that Tinel at last understood what it was that these mortals meant to do. In that terrible moment, he reckoned the fullness of their plan, though he still could not believe it. For one terrible moment, the mortals believed they had conquered a god. For one terrible moment, the hosts of Hell cheered at the light they believed signaled the downfall of Heaven, whose hosts quailed.

But it was only a moment. With the wave of the Heavenly Archmage’s great hand, the fourteen staves were sundered. With one utterance that sounded like one word but also every word ever spoken by mortal tongues, the wizards were reduced to ash, and their spirits were caught in his palm. He placed them in a jewel, and this jewel he placed on his brow, so that for all eternity they could observe what he observed, and know they were fools. However, their folly stayed with him in more than the jewel, for he had seen that mortals might believe themselves his equal. It did not sit well with him. Since that time many mortals have called him aloof, for he has never again shown a father’s pride in their seeking of secrets. It is whispered in dark places that one of the demons of the Abyss now shows that pride in Tinel’s place, encouraging mortals to

seek out forbidden knowledge. This wicked prince of the Abyss, called Astaroth by his followers, has thus won many weak hearts from Heaven.

Having seen that the quest for knowledge must lead all mortals powerful enough to walk the planes to seek out Heaven, Tinel grew grave and despondent. First, with a wave of his mighty hand, he stripped magic from the mortal races. For some years, there was no arcane magic to be worked by even the mightiest wizard. That done, the Heavenly Archmage called upon his nephew, Korak. Together, Tinel and the King of the Crucible forged the locks of Heaven and their countless keys. These locks they scattered about the great sphere in a pattern, powerful in its weaving, known only to Tinel of the Countless Locks. No one who is not summoned by the gods may enter Heaven without coming to one of the locks and presenting unto it one of the true keys. And should one open one of these locks and seek entrance into the holy realm, he would encounter Uriel the Archangel, guardian of Heaven. Tinel is the Keeper of the Keys, and he has not once surrendered them to any mortal; none but those summoned have come to Heaven since the forging of the locks and keys.

From that day forward, the realm of the gods was locked away from uninvited mortals, even those powerful enough to walk the planes. It is said to this very day that any mortal who believes his knowledge makes him equal to the gods is visited by Tinel the Whisperer, and the Lord of Secrets speaks to the proud fool, warning him from the path he walks. Should the mortal persist in his beliefs, he is placed in the jewel on Tinel’s brow, and heard from nevermore.

THE NAME UNSPEAKABLE

THE MAKING OF THE KEYS IS THE TALE OF THE FIRST OF TWO times that Tinel of the Countless Locks had to intercede against a mortal quest for knowledge. Of the second, little is known and less is said. There came a time a people arose who sought to piece together the name of the Nameless One, utter it, and end all things. How much of the name they gathered is not known, or if it is, those who know will not say. Yet, it is known that Tinel the Great, Keeper of the Keys of Heaven, discovered their plan with the aid of his mortal servants. Descending upon this unholy cadre, the Heavenly Archmage destroyed them utterly and made this declaration: “This is the greatest crime any may commit, and the torment they shall know for eternity will be shared by any who would follow.”

So it is that little is spoken of this, for to even ponder this thing is to flirt with pain and torture unending.

MYSTERIOUS MOTIVES

Tinel is mysterious. His attentions are divided, for he knows the future. Tinel is more acutely aware than any of the other gods that someday he will cease to be, either because the Great Sphere will collapse, or because mortals will all become like the fourteen wizards who tried to chart Heaven. He believes the end is inevitable. For this reason, he slowly gives in to what mortal minds would call madness. Sometimes, he pursues knowledge, and promotes the study of magic and virtue, because these matter to him, but otherwise he is utterly lost in his studies and secrets, and cares nothing for the

numerous planes and their peoples. It is like he is two different beings, and because he is a god, can exhibit both personalities concurrently, even changing his appearance to fit each aspect.

It is not altogether unreasonable to call Tinel mad and perhaps his wife, Zheenkeef, has affected him. The Tinel focused on the world believes the individual is greater than the community, that one person who finds her true calling can achieve more than a thousand who do what is expected of them. For this reason, he drives those who seek him out in prayer toward quests of personal discovery and internal inquisition. There is no one dearer to him than someone who questions his own motives, accepts nothing at face value, and sees the entire world as a lesson.

Yet Tinel also suffers from a divine malaise. He retreats to his sanctum and studies every minute detail of the universe. Perhaps he seeks to unravel the mysteries of the Nameless One, to keep the world from ending, should his name be spoken. Perhaps he strives to ensure he and his family will never cease to be. Whatever possesses him, in this state he cares nothing for mortals, for individuals, or even for his own family.

These two faces of Tinel are sensed by those who worship him, which has led to a profound schism in his faith. The divide is so deep, his church has expelled a large movement of "heretics," and is often torn by internal bloodshed and rivalry. If this bothers Tinel, he seems to have done nothing to stop it. Some believe he waits to see which side of the schism prevails, to put to rest his own struggle, and in the end he'll become as the winning side sees him, forever.

Just as he does not seem to care about the rift in his church, he also pays little attention to the rift in his own family. Zheenkeef and Shalimyr couple in defiance of the chaos goddess' marriage to Tinel, yet he takes no heed. Many believe he refuses to admit his knowledge, just as even wise mortals often fail to see those hurtful things closest to them.

If there is one thing Tinel remains passionate about, it is his rivalry with his brother Terak. He opposes his brother in nearly all things. Like his brother, Tinel has changed the reason for continuing the vendetta from what it was in legendary ages. While he once fought to be the eldest, Tinel now argues with his brother because he sees in Terak's doctrines the likely downfall of the gods. Terak would create a world where mortals need no gods and live as one people, obeying their leaders, questioning nothing. In such a world, the leaders are gods; truth is unimportant. Terak's vision of the world is soulless, in Tinel's esteem, and the individual will be crushed and washed away, if his brother prevails. Thus, the old grudge remains, only weakening in the neutral aspect of Tinel, lost in his studies.

SERVANTS OF TINEL

Tinel has three primary groups of celestial servants, each with a leader.

THE SCRIVENERS

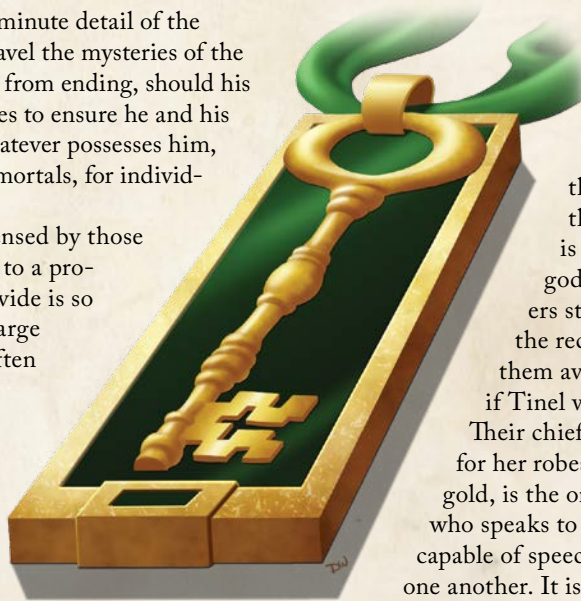
Tinel commands an enormous body of scribes, all of them mute and hooded. They take note of every event in the Material Plane and Heaven, thus writing the supreme record of history. Their chief is called the Black Scribe, as he alone among them wears rich robes of sable and ermine trimmed in silver as the symbol of his office. Only the Black Scribe speaks, and he conveys news to Tinel and orders to the Scriveners.

THE CATALOGUERS

It is said every book ever written by hand, mortal or immortal, is stored in the library of Tinel. Tinel learns all thoughts ever written,

though sometimes he must read them from his own library, which is in some ways an aspect of the god's supreme mind. The Cataloguers store the works of mortals and all the records of the Scriveners, making them available to Tinel (or other gods, if Tinel wills it) whenever necessary.

Their chief, the Grey Librarian, named for her robes of grey wolf fur, trimmed in gold, is the only member of the Cataloguers who speaks to Tinel. But all Cataloguers are capable of speech, and constantly whisper to one another. It is said their halls constantly echo with unearthly whispering and the scratching of their quills.



THE EYES:

Made up primarily of swift-winged rooks, the Eyes are Tinel's creatures, animals and other beings associated with him, who go from the Material Plane to Heaven and back, reporting on all they witness. The Eyes whisper their findings to the Scriveners, who take their notes to be catalogued by Cataloguers. Some Eyes are said to be far more frightening than rooks, ravens, or any natural animal. The chief of the Eyes is called the White Whisperer. Hooded in robes of snow-fox fur trimmed in ebon, the White Whisperer's true form is a mystery.

Beyond these groups, Tinel has close ties to the archangel Uriel, who is the guardian of Heaven and watches the gates Tinel locked long ago. The faithful of Tinel, particularly those concerned with magic, praise Uriel in their prayers, for after Tinel stripped magic from the mortal races, it was Uriel who convinced the Lord of Secrets to return it. Legend has it that the Archangel bore the power of magic back to the mortal races within a great chest, or ark.

THE SCRIPTORIUMS OF TINEL

The scriptoriums where Tinelites worship stand in most major population centers, and few shrines to Tinel haunt roadsides or the wilderness. There are a few scriptoriums in hidden towers, like the isolated mages' towers of legend, but in general, one must go to a city or town to find one.

Scriptoriums vary in size. Many are just small libraries with facilities for scribes. The largest are multi-story buildings with thousands of books, or sometimes complexes of buildings. They are mostly funded by people who pay for access to the faith's books or hire its scribes to copy texts.

Money gathered from these fees funds the schooling scriptoriums host. Teachers come to Tinelite centers of worship from miles around, where they may teach fundamental academics, or philosophical and esoteric matters, to reputable students—even each other. Beyond a base stipend provided by the faith, it is customary for those attending lectures to pay the lecturer a fee equal to what the listeners estimate the lecture was worth to them. The scriptoriums do not benefit from these transactions, and see them as part of their works in the name of Tinel.

For many years, the scriptoriums have been subject to the deep, ugly rift afflicting the faith. Most scriptoriums are controlled by the chaotic good side of the conflict, but a few are run by the neutral branch of the faith. The chaotic good scriptoriums are open to the world, whereas the neutral branches hoard their knowledge jealously, and do not follow the tradition of educating outsiders.

When Tinel pays attention to mortal affairs, he offers guidance through signs and portents to his faithful. However, the worldview of his church means he can appear distant, as the faithful are looking to learn through discovery, not to be ordered about. This suits Tinel; he views his followers as clever, wise, and worthy of his affections if they seek knowledge out of personal desire, not because he pushes them. It is almost unheard of for Tinel to appear or speak directly to one of his followers.

When a favored Tinelite is in terrible trouble, though, Tinel is not above lending a hand if a sign or small bit of guidance might snatch victory from defeat. He speaks to his followers in whispers of the wind, strange faces seen in clouds, creaking trees, and in other signs and noises, embedded in the world.

Tinel ignores the schism between his followers. They are both right, and both wrong, and he is content to let them battle out their differences. After all, it is through struggle that mortals learn best. Yet he keeps an eye on the neutral faction, which sometimes comes perilously close in its "knowledge is all" philosophy to the hubris of the Fourteen Wizards.

DOCTRINE

"When I walk down the road that I know I must walk, and I come to the path I know I must take, I hope to find myself opposed. For if there is a rock in my path, I will not say 'I must move this rock,' as might the practical man. I will not say, 'I will turn around,' as might the impatient man. I ask, 'Why has this rock been placed here before me?' Obstacles lie across our many paths in life to teach us the meaning of our journeys. There is nothing that happens to us without the knowledge of the Lord of Secrets. All that we experience in our lifetime is meant to edify. May we have the wisdom to learn."

—*the Journals of Madrigan Yewstaff*

There are many aspects of the scriptoriums of Tinel, and even a violent division between his faithful, but two beliefs are universal among all Tinelites.

First, there is Truth. There are incontestable facts about the universe, and it is the duty and purpose of the faithful to find and examine the Truth using their senses and empirical evidence.

Second, mortal life is a test. All beings are being watched and judged as they travel through life. The final reckoning takes place before Maal, and mortals do well in that final reckoning if they solve the personal riddle of our existence.

How these beliefs are interpreted varies based on which faction one belongs to.

THE FACTION OF TINEL, THE HEAVENLY ARCHMAGE (CHAOTIC GOOD)

The dominant faction of the scriptoriums believes Tinel wants everyone to be happy. However, mortals have free will, and cannot be made happy with the wave of the god's mighty hand. Mortals must find happiness themselves, by exploring the meaning of their own existence. Every person encounters a great riddle they are meant to unravel over the course of their lives. Almost no one does, and therefore mortals are reborn, sent by Maal to try again. Solving the riddle is only possible if one seeks out the Truth, which is sometimes hard and terrible, and that is only possible if one shares knowledge with others who also seek the Truth.

The followers of Tinel have an advantage over others in the quest to solve the riddle of their lives, for they know how to seek signs of the Truth. Tinel wants mortals to be happy, and makes signs and portents available to all people throughout the world. The most important of these is the Vision of the Opening Eye. When a Tinelite is young (or young in faith, for a late-in-life convert), they learn a series of meditations to open the closed "eye of the mind." After some time, usually a few months, the Tinelite is visited in sleep by an incredibly vivid dream. The dream is often filled with strange symbols. One Tinelite might wander a barren field and plant bloody seeds, as eight blue hawks fly overhead. This vision should be the Tinelite's passion for many years to come, as they seek to unravel its meaning.

Many never find the meaning of their visions. Those who truly understand them (and have an epiphany, instead of just pretending to know) take new surnames based on their understanding of the vision.

Comprehending the vision is only the first step, likened to finding one of the keys to Heaven. Tinelites spend the rest of their lives seeking out how the vision unlocks the riddle of their beings, searching for the lock to fit that key. The Tinelites explain each vision contains a great lesson they are expected to understand completely, before death. The true riddle is the process of uncovering and comprehending that lesson. Few manage it in their lifetimes. Those who do are among the most serene mortals one could hope to meet. Sadly, because their riddles are so personal, they cannot pass along answers future generations can fully comprehend, much less apply to their own mysteries, though they might help a seeker in some small ways.

This vision serves not only as a central pursuit for the members of the chaotic good faction, but also as an explanation of their view of Tinel. The god provides mortals with clues out of love, so they can find their way. Mortals must preserve and share knowledge to help one another on their journey to find answers. There should be debate, rancor, argument and struggle. The world is not pretty, and mortals must look at every aspect of it in their quests. Therefore, societies should be free, and lawful outlooks run counter to what is best for people. Highly lawful societies only work when there are questions people are not allowed to ask, and places they aren't allowed to go. Groupthink is the enemy; the greatest good is found in many free individuals, not in united slaves. However, simply looking at all aspects does not mean partaking in them all; these Tinelites are not evil, and do not give in to depravity. The quest seeks the knowledge to live a good life.

They regard the neutral faction as heretics who teach lies about Tinel.

THE FACTION OF ALOOF TINEL (NEUTRAL)

The neutral faction agrees that one must seek Truth. Life is a great test; upon this, they agree as well. Both factions use the Vision of the Opening Eye, and therefore both seek to comprehend their visions. But the followers of Aloof Tinel believe a person must collect knowledge and secrets to break the riddle of one's life for its own sake, not to help others. Secrets should remain within oneself. The vision is a map to the Truth that one must follow to serve Tinel. Once one discovers the secrets of the path, they should keep them hidden. Knowledge belongs to worthy Tinelites and their well-guarded scriptoriums.

To the Aloof faction, the mortal world is an illusion without consequence, created by the gods to separate the worthy from the worthless. When mortals die, those who have accumulated the most knowledge—the only thing that is real in this fleeting, illusory existence—are sent by Maal to stand before Tinel. Those who show they have unraveled the secrets of life are enlisted to aid Tinel in his studies to preserve the universe from the End Times. Nothing matters but the acquisition of the Truth,

to prepare for this final test before the Lord of Secrets. Therefore, this faction encourages the hoarding of learning. They believe it is wrong to give knowledge to those who are not be worthy, and will waste Tinel's time.

Adherents believe Tinel no longer cares about the Material Plane, that he places no signs in the world, and no longer offers his guiding hand to anyone. Tinel provides a vision not a loving embrace but as a way of seeing the pure and beautiful Truth one must seek forevermore. When the vision is comprehended, the Tinelite is well on the way to learning as much of the Truth as they need to pass the test, and serve Tinel.

They regard the chaotic good faction of the faith as deluded idiots, chasing phantoms. Tinel is too busy studying his secrets to pay attention to the inconsequential mortal races, when they must prove themselves worthy of him.

THE SCHISM

Much blood has been spilled in the past over the division between the factions, but since the faction of Aloof Tinel doesn't care about much beyond the accumulation of knowledge, it could not maintain the struggle against the dominant faction. For this reason, members of the chaotic good faction dominate the scriptoriums. Scriptoriums rarely mix factions, so it is not easy to find a neutral scriptorium. How long this will continue is unclear, but one thing is certain: The schism has not lost much of its rancor over the years, and members of these two factions still see each other as fools and heretics.

COMMON PRAYERS

The Tinelites believe the mind, when open, can perceive many things the naked eye cannot, including visions, portents, and symbols in the landscape. The opening of the mind's eye is a lengthy process, and involves the chanting of a daily meditative prayer. The following is one of many variations, as Tinelites tailor the words to their personal outlook:

*"I walk the road of light and shadow,
I see the blossom grow and die,
I hear the wind and feel the stillness.
I feel joyous and desolate,
I know everything and nothing,
I am open to all things.
My eye is open to all things."*

HOLY DAYS

The Tinelites have a calendar filled with holy days, many of them so minor most people, even the most orthodox Tinelites, do not bother to observe them. As a faith, they observe occasions of great historical importance, and moments of profound learning. For example, the birthdate of a great teacher who discovered a new method for preserving food is a holy day for Tinelites.

Not all holy days are so minor. The Festival of the Word and the Festival of Magic are the faith's greatest sacred events.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE WORD

More than any other faith of the gods of the tree, Tinelites revere the written word, books, scholarship, and learning. In the Festival of the Word, which takes place every year at the height of summer, they honor and reward the greatest scholars of the day. The event lasts eight days, during which there are great feasts, lectures, recitals, and other celebrations of the written word. Usually, the Festival takes place on a national scale, so all the scriptoriums in a single country band together to name the worthiest works of scholarship of that year, and bestow kingly gifts on the scholars who made them. In places where neighboring countries have friendly relations and cultural ties, the scriptoriums of all those nations might band together to issue only one set of awards.

THE FESTIVAL OF MAGIC

At the height of winter every year, the council of Five Hierophants decrees a single location where the greatest wizards and sorcerers of the world convene for a great celebration of the gift of magic. They arrive from all around the world for five days of festivities. Only those who practice the arcane arts can participate in the festival, which involves much debate about arcane pursuits, the relations between those who use magic and those who do not, the policies of the Council of the Five (see below), and other matters of interest to powerful magic users. Celebrants gather for a great competition, where powerful and rare magic items are offered as prizes. The Council of the Five determines the competition's challenges in the days before the festival, so the nature of the contests change every year. However, there are always at least one in which contestants demonstrate raw magical skill, and one in which they show cleverness and creativity in the use of magic. Sometimes there is even a contest for apprentices, but that is at the whim of the Five.

SAINTS

Almost anyone who has contributed to the furtherance of knowledge and magic might be named a saint, and recorded in Tinelite annals. Sainthood is always awarded posthumously, and carries little weight, due to how often the faith awards it—for inventing new food preservation techniques, as noted previously, or a host of other accomplishments, of petty or grand import.

HOLY ORDERS

There are five holy orders of the scriptoriums, but two are not particularly powerful. Most scriptoriums are run by the inceptors (clergy), who are divided into three levels of status: neophytes, teachers, and armarii. For those who practice the magical arts, the most powerful order is of the hierophants, which have two levels of power: the common hierophants, and the Five who oversee the order. Protecting the work of these

orders and seeking out lost knowledge is the responsibility of the mage guard (holy warriors), which has two levels of status: defenders of the word, and keepers of secrets. In the background of every scriptorium, the two lesser orders do their duties. The scribes, divide themselves into common scribes, and master scribes. The librarians rank themselves as common librarians, and chief librarians. The highest-ranking inceptors of each scriptorium determine its policies and interpretations of the faith. The order of the hierophants is overseen by the Five, the world's most powerful arcane spellcasting worshipers of Tinel.

The average scriptorium has at least one armarius, four teachers, and twelve neophytes in residence at one time. There are often as many as ten scribes, one master scribe, four librarians, and one chief librarian as well. There are usually only four or five of the mage guard at any one scriptorium, and the hierophants, who almost always have their own sanctums, are rarely found at scriptoriums.

INCEPTORS OF TINEL

The inceptors preserve both mystical and mundane lore. To be an "inceptor" means to be just beginning, to be taking everything in. While some inceptors possess vast knowledge, and have already taken in a great deal, the



title still pertains to them. No matter how venerable, inceptors always eagerly learn more.

An ancient order, the inceptors trace the names of their elders across many generations. They keep scriptorium records, meticulously noting of details great and small. They do not have the minds or demeanors of accountants and lawyers, though, for they focus their minds on exploration, discovery, and questioning. They question what they record. They doubt the facts, and test them constantly for veracity.

The Bard Imarillus once observed: “Morwyn’s matriarchs say, ‘How may I help you?’ The soldiers of Terak ask, ‘How may I defend you?’ The Zhenkefan apostles wonder, ‘What will inspire you?’ But an inceptor of Tinel asks only ‘Why?’ and ‘Why?’ again, until a man wants nothing more than the company of the unholy and unclean.” The inceptors wonder at everything, picking apart the details, and finding questions no one else would think to ask. Their inquisitiveness stems from their lifelong mission to understand the world, and help others to understand it.

There are two distinct phases in the career of an inceptor, whatever his faction. Younger inceptors wander and hunt lore, while the more powerful inceptors remain in the scriptoriums where they work. Exceptions exist, and history is filled with heroic inceptors who never had time to go back to their home scriptoriums to teach others all they learned. These adventuring inceptors are sometimes the source of legends and great tales, and nearly always spend their final days recording the exploits of their lives.

Most inceptors are part of the dominant (chaotic good) faction of the scriptoriums. They believe there is no holier act one can perform than to broaden the awareness of another. Their worship of Tinel is individualistic and revolves around small groups, and one-on-one interactions. These folk live as itinerate teachers and students, both to better themselves and others. They believe good results come from education, and offer people the knowledge they need in life. To them, the journey is the key. Exploration of knowledge, of the mind, yields the unexpected, and the worthiest answers are the ones one did not seek in the first place.

Other members of the faction are neutral good. This is a sizable minority, and while they also believe good should be done through knowledge, they do it through large organizations. Neutral good members expand the educational aspects of the scriptoriums. In cities and nations where they have real influence, the Tinelites involve themselves with governments to educate people on a mass scale. These inceptors are happy to use any kind and decent method available to expand the minds of those they encounter, and lack the suspicion of law and government that their chaotic good brethren espouse.

The inceptors of the neutral faction, on the other hand, care only about uncovering knowledge. They do not aid others in their learning. Instead, they join a cabal of the “worthy” and work together to solve the mysteries of the universe not for each other, but because cooperation brings better results they may apply to their own interests.

Their missions nearly always pursue a specific piece of learning, and bring it back to allied inceptors for study. To them, nothing done in this world matters, save what one does in preparation for serving Tinel in the next life. These Tinelites avoid secular concerns as much as possible, and are happiest when they are left alone with their books and studies.

There are many different alignments among the neutral faction: lawful neutral, chaotic neutral, and neutral evil. The lawful neutral members of the faction work as a hive. They organize cells of neophytes and teachers, work together on research projects, plan missions, and dispatch junior members to undertake them. Their influence has kept the faction from falling apart entirely, in the face of opposition from chaotic good inceptors.

Neutral evil members of the faction organize the resistance to the primary church. They see the hoarding of knowledge as a sacred right the chaotic good clergy deny them. They wish to topple the more powerful faction, and resort to evil acts to achieve their goals. Lust for knowledge consumes them to the point that most will kill for it.

Chaotic neutral members fit in neither faction, though they are loosely associated with the neutral faction. They love secrets—the collection and whispering of them. They are not only disinterested in secular affairs, but do not even care about church matters. They simply roam the world, hunting for hidden lore. This odd offshoot of the order arises from a mystical belief that the Visions of the Opening Eye are secrets Tinel reveals. If every person recorded their visions and put them all together, the combined result would tell the story of all creation, past, present, and future. There is no secret these inceptors love more than the details of a person’s vision, but they believe there is power in all secrets.

NEOPHYTE

All new members of the order are called neophytes, the title by which they are addressed and introduced, and remain so for many years—in some cases, for the rest of their lives—as they work to study the universe and its secrets. Neophytes travel widely, read constantly, debate contentiously, and, most importantly, learn.

TEACHER

Neophytes might become teachers. A council of inceptors made up of local teachers and armarii grill prospective teachers over a period of three days, asking in-depth questions on topics the neophytes have spent their careers studying. At the end of this time and if the neophytes prove knowledgeable enough, they are elevated to teachers. It falls to them to spread learning, through his scriptorium or by traveling from town to town, educating people. Among the neutral faction of the faith, teachers oversee large projects within their scriptoriums, assembling great reserves of learning on a single topic. Whatever the faction, teachers work to unravel the mystery of their visions. They are addressed as “master” or “mistress,” and introduced by full title.

ARMARIUS

At some point after becoming teachers, devotees might advance to the title of armarius. An armarius must have unraveled the mystery of his vision. Only a teacher who has come to understand his vision can attain this title. The teacher must deliver a lecture to a scriptorium explaining his vision and its interpretation, and at the end of this, he takes on a new surname pertaining to the vision. Because the Tinelites document matters so thoroughly, it is possible to go back through generations, and read the notes from very old armarii lectures about their visions. An armarius is addressed as “revered master,” or “revered mistress,” and introduced by full title.

The armarii oversee the scriptoriums and are their supreme authorities, issuing commands to all the other orders except the hierophants. If a scriptorium has several armarii, they make decisions for the scriptorium as a council where a simple majority rules. Once he becomes an armarius, it is the inceptor’s goal to aid others, but also to comprehend the riddle of his life through his interpretation of his vision. Even among these, the most knowledgeable of the Tinelites, it is rare to succeed completely.

JOINING THE INCEPTORS

Prospective members of the inceptors come to the scriptorium seeking training, and are made neophytes once they experience the Vision of the Opening Eye. One cannot become an inceptor without being on a lifelong quest to solve the riddle of one’s existence. A person who has already had the vision is immediately inducted into the order. Neophytes are clerics with domains related to Tinel, such as Knowledge. Most neophytes carry daggers, for Tinel is traditionally shown blasting the servants of Kador with five great knives of magic.

MAGE GUARD OF TINEL

The mage guard serves two purposes: to protect and recover knowledge, and to oppose anyone who seeks out forbidden knowledge, particularly malicious mages. The mage guard are experts at fighting arcane spell users. While friendly with, and fond of, good-aligned spell casters, their order was founded after a dread cult sought to use magic to reassemble the name of the Nameless One, and destroy all of creation. The elders of what would become the order determined that the world required a force that respected magic, but also knew how to oppose it. Too often, those who knew how to fight evil magic-users were superstitious and small-minded tyrants, who didn’t know the difference between a wizard and a warlock in the thrall of dark powers. If another evil body of wizards arose and threatened the world, no one of the Tinelite faith wanted to have to count on fools to stop them.

Since the world does not always need a force to oppose reckless magic use, the mage guard also protects knowledge, the knowledgeable, and important secrets. The

great libraries of the world attract mage guard members, and anyone with a vital secret in need of protection can plead with them to keep it safe. The mage guard protects the works of the past, and thus there are two edicts all the mage guard must follow.

Never allow the wicked to seize control of learning or secrets if by risking your life, you might prevent it.

Hold all secrets bestowed to you in sacred trust. Do not reveal them to any but those with whom you have been directed to share.

In addition, the world has lost a great deal of knowledge over the years. Thus, the mage guard seeks out lost lore and secrets. This takes up most of its time, since members of the order rarely find themselves ordered to seek out and eliminate users of arcane magic. Many in the mage guard go their entire careers without a mission related to the purpose for which the order was founded, but some happen to find themselves fighting evil wizards while questing for lost knowledge. When the faith discovers it’s possible to recover ancient or lost knowledge, it charges the mage guard with the task. Their mission is embodied in the following precept:



MINOR ORDERS

Two minor orders also exist in the scriptoriums, and are usually made up of devout Tinelites unable to join one of the other three holy orders. These orders have no disposition toward the schism, and their members are just as likely to serve in a neutral scriptorium as a chaotic good one. Most members are acolytes or sages.

SCRIBES

The holy order of scribes, each addressed and introduced by their order title, are charged with copying manuscripts new and old. They have no central authority figure, a scriptorium with any significant number of scribes will also have a master scribe. The master scribe reports directly to the armarius, or armarii council.

LIBRARIANS

The librarians catalogue the Tinelites' accumulated works. In larger facilities, they are of vital importance to a well-functioning scriptorium. It is not easy to keep track of thousands of books, so in scriptoriums with significant numbers of books, there are several librarians and at least one chief librarian who, like the master scribe, reports directly to the armarii.

If by the toil of your brow or the blood of your body, you find knowledge which is lost to the wise of the world, it is your sacred duty to recover it. You shall not sacrifice your life for it, if others might recover the knowledge on a separate quest. Rather, you are bound by oath to inform your brethren in Tinel of the lost learning at once, so they can recover it. If you are assigned this mission, you will pursue it using all your strength and skill.

The mage guard takes orders directly from the armarius, or a council of armarii at their home scriptorium. Only armarii can command the mage guard, for only one who has unlocked his vision bears the insight to direct this deeply holy order. In the field, when several of the mage guard work together, they obey the most experienced member of their own order.

The mage guard travels with any who value knowledge and individual purpose. They're irked by anyone whose outlook runs counter to the general Tinelite views, such as most Teraketh, but in general, anyone who is good, or even neutral, can make excellent companions for one of the mage guard. They never travel with evil magic-users, and actively work against them.

DEFENDERS OF THE WORD

All new members of the mage guard are addressed as "defender," but in introductions this is extended to the full title, such as: "Defender of the Word Morik, a Mage Guard of the scriptoriums of Tinel." They go to scriptoriums, where they serve an armarius. There, they might receive

orders to go forth and find lost knowledge, or stay at the scriptorium to protect its archives. Some mage guards work with others of their order, forming a "cadre," and work together on whatever mission their armarius gives them.

KEEPER OF SECRETS

The most experienced defenders of the word become keepers of secrets. To become a keeper, defenders must unravel their visions. Unlike inceptors, defenders tell none but their commanding armarius about the vision and its meaning, though they do take on new surnames. They keep their vision's meaning secret from all but one person, and it is in the imparting of her most personal and carefully kept secret to another that she becomes a keeper of secrets. Keepers of Secrets are addressed as "Keeper" and introduced in the same fashion as defenders.

The mage guard keeps many secrets: tales about the name of the Nameless One only they know, for instance. They hold them closely. Not even the armarii know these tales. Upon being inducted into the order, each keeper is given a book of secrets. This must be kept on their person, as a private chronicle, for the rest of their lives. These books pass down from keeper to keeper. When one dies, the book is kept in trust by an armarius, until another keeper is elevated and the book can be passed on. Only one living keeper may know the contents of the book at a time. As they travel, keepers add new secrets to the book. When the last page is reached, they hide it away, in a secret place. Many would love to find one of these hiding places.

Keepers of secrets do not share what they learn in confidence. Some political leaders, even those as important as queens and emperors, ask for their aid, knowing they can be trusted to pass on messages and lore they will never share with anyone who is not authorized to know them. Keepers never violate the oath of secrecy, on pain of expulsion, and perhaps punishments from Tinel or his servants.

JOINING THE MAGE GUARD

There is no explanation for why people are called to join the mage guard—they simply feel a pull, a need to take up the sword and fight for Tinel. Most initiates spend at least six years learning all the skills necessary to be a mage guard, though fewer are required for trained fighters. Candidates must also have had the Vision of the Opening Eye, and must not share it with anyone. Upon completing their training, they become defenders of the word. All the mage guard are fighters (eldritch knights) and most are chaotic good. If you're using feats, mage guards always take the Mage Slayer feat.

HIEROPHANTS

"The artist does not use every color; the poet does not include every word. Magic is just as surely a divine art, so why do some believe they should use every spell they might command? It makes only for ugliness and noise, like a song with every note." So say the hierophants, a powerful order of faithful mages as old as the scriptoriums themselves—perhaps older. The hierophants form a great council of powerful arcane magicians who agree

on reasonable laws and limitations for the use of arcane magic, such as bans on demonology and diabolism. The council is only open to those who are already strong in the magical arts, but most Tinelite mages, even apprentices, willingly adhere to the laws they set out. It is the council's job to determine the will of Tinel as it pertains to the use of arcane magic—an awesome responsibility.

The hierophants are almost entirely separate from the church structure and its members can only rarely, if ever, be found in scriptoriums. Certainly, any inceptor can point an interested party in the direction of the nearest hierophant, but the order maintains only cursory contact with most of Tinel's clergy. The chief inceptors at each scriptorium keep in contact with the order, staying abreast of its beliefs and policies, so they might guide arcane spellcasters who come to a scriptorium to worship.

The order was founded to ensure the Lord of Secrets never again strips the mortal races of magic. Thus, the hierophants interpret Tinel's will as it pertains to the use of magic. All members are powerful practitioners of arcane magic, but even apprentices outside the faith know the order's laws. Only the most powerful arcane magicians join the hierophants, to help define those laws. Depending on the strength of local Tinelites, their alignments, and the specific offense, violating the laws might lead to nothing, expose the offender to public censure, or even bring the mage guard down upon him. It's a gamble evil spellcasters are willing to take, but for those not steeped in wickedness, the hierophants draw a useful line between good and evil magic.

THE FIVE

Five of the order's most powerful members lead the hierophants. When one of the Five dies or passes out of ordinary existence by whatever mysterious means, the remaining Council of the Five convenes immediately, and elects a new member. The choice is usually obvious, but sometimes the election becomes rancorous. The remaining four of the Five do not have veto power, and ties are usually broken by contacting the deceased (or otherwise transfigured) predecessor, using the appropriate arcane rites. The Five are addressed as "your eminence" and introduced using this format: "Her Eminence, the Hierophant Amraila, Member of the Council of Five of the Scriptoriums of Tinel."

The Five oversee lesser hierophants' councils, and determine when and how to enforce the laws set by their meetings, but the order rarely concerns itself with lesser mages who use evil magic. Figuring such fools will meet their end eventually. The hierophants exist more to set and interpret laws than enforce them. They are only aroused when someone profoundly powerful and evil arises.

JOINING THE HIEROPHANTS

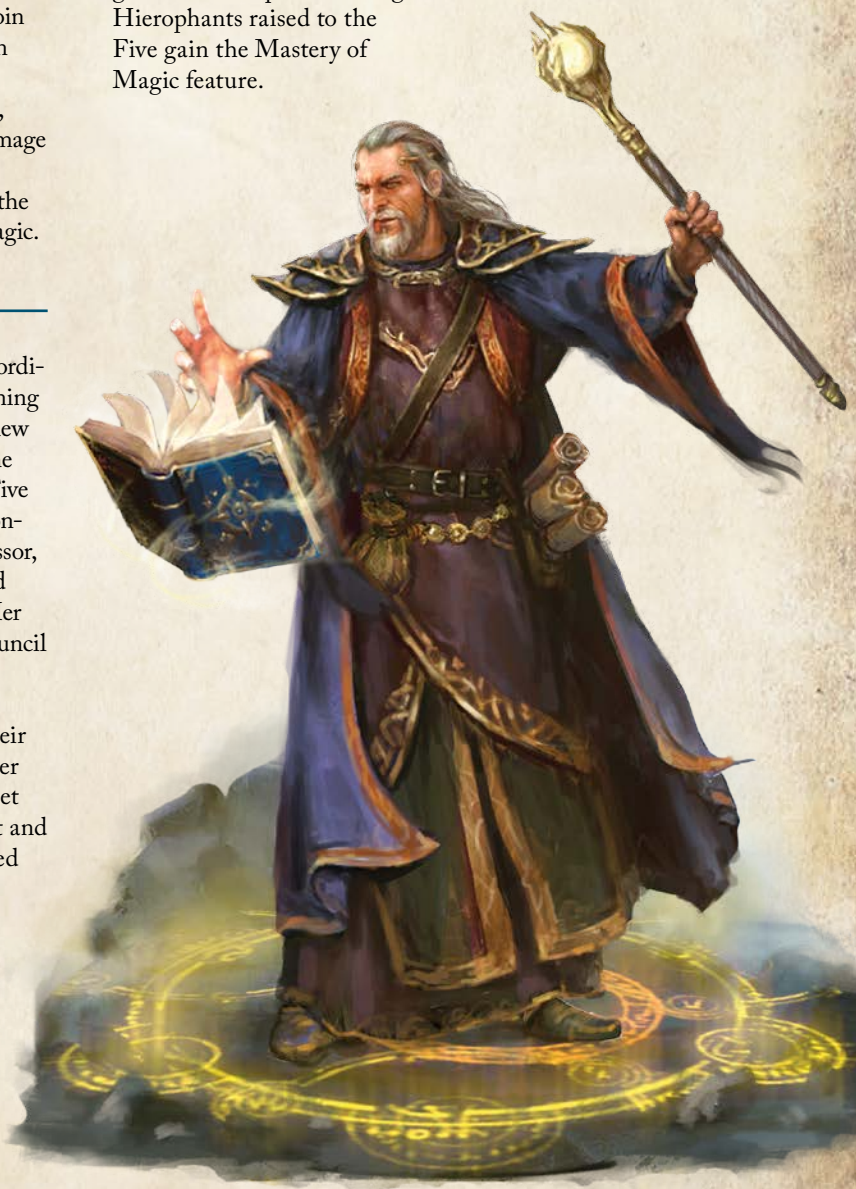
The rule of order demands that a region's hierophants meet in council at least once every three years to discuss matters of magical law, and induct new members. The order recruits strong arcane spellcasters (including wizards, sorcerers, and bards) who worship Tinel and are known for their virtuous conduct. An invitation comes with the meeting's location,

and enough information to allow a potential candidate to scry upon the site, and teleport there. A candidate who can't use this information to arrive when summoned is usually not considered worthy to join.

Upon meeting the council, candidates must explain if and why they desire to join. After the candidate has spoken, council members can ask questions before a vote is taken. This usually results in the candidate's induction, since she is typically deeply studied through magical and mundane means before being invited at all. But even if a majority on a regional council votes for the candidate, any of the Five can veto an induction for any reason. Addressed as "great lord" or "great lady" a hierophant is introduced by his or her full title.

The benefits of membership include respect from the faithful and even arcane spell users from other traditions, and influence over the body of law that (at least according to Tinelites) governs magic. The most powerful members learn great magical secrets, beyond those known to most mages. Upon entering the order, a hierophant gains the Comprehend Magic feature.

Hierophants raised to the Five gain the Mastery of Magic feature.



GOD OF DEATH AND REBIRTH

MORMEKAR

QUIET, FEARFUL, THE DELIVERER, THE SHADOW,
THE GRIM WANDERER, THE LAST GUIDE, DEATH

Mormekar (MORE-muh-kar) is the neutral god of death, rebirth, the dead, the dying, those who destroy undead, those seeking rebirth, and the reborn. The god's symbolic creatures include vultures, worms, coyotes, and others that feed on carrion. He is most strongly associated with the crow. Ignorant people connect him to the undead, but undead are anathema to him. The phoenix is one of his symbolic aspects, for the majestic bird dies, is consumed by fire, and reborn in it. In the burning flame of the phoenix, one might see Mormekar's face.

Mormekar is shown as the tallest of all the gods, but willow-wand thin. Cloaked in black and bearing a staff of charred wood (the last remnant of Eliwyn before she was reborn), it is never clear what mortal race he most resembles, for his face is rarely shown completely. His skin has the pallid color of the dead, and his eyes are a colorless white.

Mormekar symbol is his burnt staff, or another charred piece of wood. This recalls the pyre upon which the gods were burned, his staff, and the fire of death and rebirth he wields. When a simple, quick symbol of Mormekar is needed, people use a smear of soot.

He is worshiped by all people, including some who know nothing about the gods of the tree. The power of death touches all who are mortal. Worship is not gratitude, however, and most are quite wary of the power of Mormekar, avoiding his temples if possible. Yet all who die are, when they can be, brought to a temple of Mormekar for final rites, to ease passage to the land of Mormekar's son, Maal. In any case, it is not a popular church, and few join its holy orders. No single class is regularly associated with Mormekar, nor is any one class less likely to have his worshipers than any other.

MYTHS

THE GOLD MUST FALL

IT IS SAID THAT THE GRIM WANDERER, KNOWN AS Mormekar the Deliverer to some, and only as Death to others, cares for nothing. As the Last Guide, he neither relishes his duty nor hates it, but simply performs it, for it is his duty to bring death to all dying things, and renew those chosen to be reborn.

But those who seek deeper truths know that there is one thing for which Mormekar cares. Those who examine the world in autumn, when all things change from fair to dark, know what moves his heart: love for Morwyn the Merciful, his wife.

Yet this is love must be stymied every year. Long ago, when Mormekar first appeared in the world, when Terak and Tinel murdered one another and destroyed Eliwyn, the Grim Wanderer came to love the Queen of Heaven, whom men call Morwyn. Together they begat a son, Maal, who was

the first child ever born of a womb, and is now the Judge of Souls. In those days, death was rare, and Mormekar was not so icy in temperament. But Terak was reborn, and he had won Morwyn's heart long before the arrival of Mormekar. She took Terak as a husband as well, and she made him King in Heaven, not Mormekar.

Indeed, who could blame the fair Queen, for Mormekar is dark and grim. He laughs not, and knows little joy. Their bridal bed was never warm, nor were there many delights in their household, even when Maal was young and playful.

It was not long before Morwyn could no longer manage of a hall with two husbands. For when she smiled to Mormekar, Terak grew wrathful, and when she showed affection to Terak, Mormekar grew miserable. After some time, she told her two husbands that she would spend half of each passing year with them in turn. For six months, Mormekar would be her husband, and for the following six, it would be Terak. This suited all three, and ended much conflict.

Yet the first time Morwyn left Mormekar and took Terak back to her side, the Grim Wanderer grew more miserable than he had ever been. It was as though his heart had been cleft in twain, and he walked the world in sorrow. At last, love-struck madness consumed him; he began destroying the most beautiful things he could find. At the time, Korak the Hammer Hand had been sent on his impossible tasks by Thellyne, to prove his love for her. Korak had coated all of the leaves of all of the trees in the world with a thin layer of gold, and as Quiet Mormekar wandered from place to place he saw his sorrow mocked by trees' shining beauty.

So, Mormekar touched the trees, and made their golden leaves fall, and thereupon turned to other wondrous living things, to give them the embrace of Death. Soon, all the animals of the world fled from him, for they feared his terrible touch. In that time, many fantastic creatures fell to Death's touch, and have never been seen again, like the cat with a thousand heads and ten thousand tails, and the snake Korak had made, which had grown so large it surrounded a mountain, and gnawed on its own tail. The whole world hid away from Mormekar the Shadow, and even Alimus, who pulls the sun around the world each day, ran away, leaving the world covered in ice, snow and darkness.

Would that Mormekar's fearful sorrow possessed him but once. Sadly, it overcomes him every year. Just when the leaves of the trees begin to change themselves to gold in memory of Korak, Morwyn leaves Mormekar for Terak, and the Wanderer begins his journey through the world, changing autumn to winter, and all grow cautious, for Death has no mercy, then. But when Morwyn takes her first husband back spring comes, and Death has Mercy at his side once more.

DUTY OF DEATH

Mormekar's chief concerns are claiming the dead, and ushering the reborn back to the Material Plane. His duty rules him, save for his love for Morwyn. He's fond



of his son, and sees him regularly while he bears the dead to Maal's Kingdom, but Mormekar never joins Maal's arguments with the other gods. Mormekar cares nothing for the conflicts of Heaven, good, evil, and the rest. They're all the winking of an eye, here and gone in one slice of infinity. Thus he has no strong feelings about mortals, so long as they respect his authority. All things die, even worlds and planes. One day he will bury the gods, or burn them on celestial pyres. How death comes, and to whom, are not his concerns, so long as the order of dying is not unnaturally interfered with. Until the end of everything comes, the Wanderer attends to his duty, presiding over all the lesser endings of things.

Anyone familiar with the legends knows Mormekar's love for his wife is the only thing that takes precedence over his duties. Over the years, some have asked Death not to take them because they too know a stronger love, but this has never been known to succeed. Otherwise, the undead are an insult to him: a vile act that violates the sanctity of death. He charges all those who worship him to battle the undead, and the necromancers and other, vile beings who create them.

A SOLITARY GOD

Mormekar is a lonely figure among the gods, and has no servants. Prayers to him are heeded by Camael, and other members of the angelic host. There is no room in his wanderings for companions or servants.

THE SACRISTIES OF MORMEKAR

The sacristies of Mormekar, where the Mormekim (MORR-muh-kim) worship, were founded in their current form by a visionary justice of Maal. Named Alonzo d'Eriq, he claimed to have been visited by the Grim Wanderer himself. Mormekar told this Maalite of his deep displeasure, for the mortal races had come to lose respect for death. While they wondered at birth, the marvel for which his wife Morwyn is regularly praised, they hid from death. They celebrated the deceased's life and then left the body to the lowest members of society, for at the time, gravediggers and crypt-keepers came from the dregs of the mortal races. To make matters worse, some among the mortal races violated the sanctity of death, raising up the spirits or bodies of the departed to mock its stillness.

This lack of respect made Mormekar's duties more difficult to perform. Many who died had no idea they had passed. The god of the dead had to personally inform them, and lead them to Maal's kingdom. Worse, many rose as undead, created by foul necromancers.

The god charged d'Eriq with founding a church in Mormekar's name, to ease the passage of souls with funeral rites given by the Grim Wanderer himself. His church would also "give rest" to the undead, and remind mortals that, just as surely as they are unified by birth, so too are they united by death—the only two things they all share.

The Maalite swore he would spread these lessons and he was true to his word. He traveled to the four corners of the world, teaching all who would listen the rites of the dead, and the wrath Death would unleash upon the disrespectful and blasphemous. For Mormekar left d'Eriq and his church, with words of warning: If his duties were made any more difficult by disrespect, he might prematurely claim the lives of all mortals, or refuse to return the reborn to the world. D'Eriq swore to Mormekar this would not be necessary, and the Mormekim of today see themselves as the inheritors of that promise.

Mormekar is fond of his church. It's a rare attachment for the Grim Wanderer. As the Mormekim say, they perform a useful service for their god. Their rites properly ready the dead for Mormekar, and their opposition to necromancy pleases him.

That said, fondness rarely extends into actual interference or guidance. Mormekar rarely speaks to his clergy or anyone else who worships him, except at the moments of their deaths. Unlike other gods, he has no domain where his faithful go, so there is no chance of standing at his side in the afterlife. He is a god of little warmth; worshippers understand this, and do not expect rewards.

DEATH IS SACRED

"If I do not do my duty to Mormekar, what am I? I could ignore Death's decrees as others do, I could pretend death is beyond my ken as they do, but that would make me little more than a coward. I bear the burdens of duty, and all who would do what is right will follow in my steps."

—*The fourth decree of the Minister Alonzo d'Eriq*

The Mormekim faith is one of duty, followed by few. While nearly everyone who worships the gods of the tree comes to the sacristies for funeral services, most leave other matters of death to these strange folk, who are completely devoted to its ways. Donations given by the families of the dead more than fund the sacristies. Some people believe the more generously they give, the kinder Mormekar will be to their loved ones, so the sacristies often have far more money than they can use.

The faith can be explained in three utterances, often repeated by the Mormekim. Mormekar reportedly made these three statements to d'Eriq long ago:

Death is sacred. Minister to all those who have passed this rite I have given you, and you will be blessed.

Death is sacred. Obey my command: Seek out those who violate that sanctity and destroy them.

Death is sacred. When you come to my embrace, do not reject it.

Alonzo d'Eriq was the first to administer the rite when he founded the order of the ministers. He gave the order a twenty-step rite for preparing the dead, passed down from



Mormekar himself. The rite connects the minister with the deceased's body and spirit, so all may be properly prepared for Mormekar. It should be performed within one day of death. Mormekim believe if this ceremony is not properly performed, the spirit might become trapped in the world, rising as one of the restless dead. Knowledge of the rite leads some Mormekim believe, perhaps arrogantly, they alone perform a proper and useful duty for the gods.

If a person dies and does not receive the rite, most clergy of the gods of the tree can perform a fair approximation. An approximation is not the rite proper, though, and many faithful request their bodies be brought to the Mormekim if they die, even if they are far from civilization. Different societies have different notions about what happens after the rite—some burn bodies, others bury them. The rite is a preparation, not the entirety of the body's disposal.

There is more to the faith than the rite, of course.

The obedient brotherhood was formed to focus on the second utterance, though it is an edict all Mormekim obey. They stamp out the undead and those who would create the undead. Death must remain sacrosanct and inviolate.

The final utterance sets the Mormekim apart from other faiths of the pantheon: They expressly forbid any magic that brings a person back from death, and counsel their companions against the use of such magic. For this reason, it is usually impossible to raise a Mormekim, unless the deceased would return to perform a greater task for the sanctity of death.

Mormekim care little, if at all, about mortal society or matters of good, evil, law, or chaos. They strive to uphold their divine task. Their scriptures, prayers and everything else about their faith focuses on death, not life, and it is often said (and justifiably so) the Mormekim are more at home surrounded by the dead than by the living.

Finally, there are no holy days, festivals, or celebrations among the Mormekim. They are a grim people.

PRAYERS OF MORMEKAR

The core of the Mormekim faith is the rite of the dead. Sacristies are holy houses of the rite, where ministers keep all the materials necessary to perform it: sacred ointments, linens, incense, and scriptures, within chambers of dark glory. Administering the rite takes four or five hours, and includes chanting a long series of prayers, most of which are admonishments to the spirit of the deceased, preparing it for the afterlife. One of the earliest chants informs the spirit that it has died, as many deceased do not realize they've left the mortal coil. Unless informed, they might haunt the living. The following prayer prevents that:

*"I call upon you, (name of the deceased)!
Heed me this hour!
You have passed beyond living.
You are quick no longer.*

*The light has left your eyes.
The heat has fled your flesh.
Mormekar will claim you.
The final path is before you.”*

SAINTS

There are no saints in the Mormekim faith, but martyrdom is an important part of their observance. Any of the Mormekim who die opposing the undead, or the defiling of the dead, are considered martyrs, and Death’s priests add special step to the rite for them. Mormekim call upon martyrs to protect them. For instance, Brother Astafis is a famous martyr who died trying to destroy a large cadre of vampires, so Mormekim facing vampires might invoke Brother Astafis’ name.

HOLY ORDERS

Two orders make up the sacristies. The ministers (the clergy) see to the dead and prepare them for passage. The obedient brotherhood (holy warriors) fulfills d’Eriq’s promise to Mormekar by hunting and destroying the undead. There is no central structure to the faith, with each sacristy being run by consensus of the ministers. They all must agree on any decision affecting the entire sacristy. Each member of the faith is wholly independent, however, and can come and go as he chooses. No one gives orders. They all know their duties and do not need such things.

The average sacristy has no more than three ministers and one obedient brother or sister. They are small churches, often little more than a hall with an altar and a massive brazier in the middle, with a small rectory in back. They are austere, grim places, as one might expect. Some of the older sacristies lie over sprawling catacombs, however, and these major resting places of the dead have as many as ten ministers and up to twenty members of the obedient brotherhood keeping the bodies safe from those who would violate them.

MINISTERS OF MORMEKAR

The ministers perform the rite, and keep the dead safe from desecration. This is the whole purpose of their order and it keeps them quite busy as naturally, people are constantly dying. Ministers almost never involve themselves in secular affairs, and few leave their sacristy but to fetch supplies and bodies. Yet some make it their mission to travel the world, administering the rite to people who cannot reach a sacristy. Others leave to wage war against necromancers and the undead, pledging to destroy them all.

Most Mormekim ministers are neutral. They perform their duty for Mormekar and don’t give two figs about mortal society. While they sometimes perform “good” acts such as opposing the undead, they don’t do them because they believe necromancy is evil, but because it is their duty, and the undead defy the cycle of existence their god protects. This makes them seem quite lawful, but save for the rite and commands of Death, most the ministers don’t care about laws or rules. They don’t give each other orders



and recognize no ranks in their churches. They serve Death, not living morality.

Yet many Mormekim are lawful neutral, and care about structures, and authority. They see the Mormekim’s wealth and importance, and believe the only thing keeping the faith from having a more profound impact is its lack of organization. With a proper structure, including a central authority, the Mormekim could spread their faith all over the world and into the halls of power, influencing secular society so greatly that perhaps there would be no more necromancy.

Another vocal minority consists of neutral good clergy. They’re crusaders against the undead, wanderers who wish to extend the rite to those who might never receive it. They believe the withdrawal of the ministers into their sacristies allows much evil to be done in the world. They want to bring the mercy of Mormekar’s edicts to all people.

A very few ministers are chaotic neutral, and came to the Mormekim because the faith is about as different from the rest of mortal society as one can get. They enjoy being outsiders concerned only with death, scoffing at “the quick.” Many of these ministers play to the prejudices most folk have about the Mormekim, dressing in black and speaking in mordant voices.

A neutral evil Mormekim cult exists, and is discussed in **Chapter VII**. It rejects mainstream doctrine, reveres the undead and sanctifies killing, making it the sworn enemy of the sacristies.

JOINING THE MINISTERS

Prospective ministers go to sacristies and take a one-year vow of silence. During this time, they try to understand the stillness of the dead and learn the rite. When they have completed their time of silence, they speak the rite before any other words, and recite it perfectly and in its entirety. If they succeed, they become ministers: clerics with the *Repose* domain, described in **Chapter X**. A minister is addressed as “Father,” or “Mother,” and introduced by full title.

OBEDIENT BROTHERHOOD OF MORMEKAR

The obedient brotherhood upholds the covenant between mortals and Mormekar as expressed by the second utterance, “Death is sacred. Obey my command: Seek out those who violate that sanctity and destroy them.” Unlike ministers, obedient brothers and sisters are not dispassionate beings of duty. They are filled with holy righteousness, and stand opposed to the pure evil of undeath. They are just as concerned with protecting the living from the ravages of necromancy as they are with preserving the sanctity of the dead. They believe the utterances pertain to life as well as death. For instance, since death is sacred, it should not be brought on by something unholy like the undead. Thus, the living should be protected from the undead.

Members of the obedient brotherhood often join adventuring groups, happy to go on missions that might not involve the undead, but they always prefer war against undeath over any other venture. They have no authority structure, and are free to go wherever they will.

The order tends to attract grim specimens. Most of the obedient brotherhood are quiet, tend toward dark garb and whispering voices, and have childhoods touched by the ravages of the undead. There are exceptions, of course, and the order does not require a dark outlook. Nevertheless, every obedient brother and sister sees death as one of the two most sacred acts of the mortal races, with the other being birth. They do not shy from the dead and the dying, and wish to give them dignity.

A member of the obedient brotherhood must not permit the defiling of the dead, including creating undead or looting corpses. They oppose violators. Yet one could deprive one of the undead of its treasures, if these were taken after the creature was damned, or could take items from a body if they know (and do not just believe) that the deceased would have desired this. Furthermore, they are not opposed to all necromancy, but only that which disturbs the slumber of death. An obedient brother would rather die than let undead flourish. He administers the rite to any who need it.

Members of this order are excellent traveling companions. While they must give top priority to battling the undead and dark necromancy, they are otherwise completely free. The order commands them only to go forth and oppose the defiling of death, so if their companions aren’t defiling the dead themselves, they make perfectly

pleasant company. They have no disposition toward chaos or law, so other holy warriors, rogues, barbarians, wizards, sorcerers, monks, druids—all make fine associates for obedient brothers and sisters. If they will aid the holy warrior in her quest against the undead, even better.

Their favorite companions are Morwynites, who protect life and birth as Mormekim protect the dead and the dying. Together, they make a formidable team.

JOINING THE OBEDIENT BROTHERHOOD

Initiates to the order must find an obedient brother or sister willing to train them. Together they pray for guidance from Mormekar, and if they both feel the god wishes the candidate to become an obedient sister (or brother), she becomes one. She then trains for a year, learning the rite and the secrets of destroying the undead. It’s a very simple process. One is an obedient brother or sister all of one’s life, and there are no higher titles in the order. A member of the obedient brotherhood is addressed as “brother” or “sister” and introduced by name, followed by order: “Ming Tan, an Obedient Sister of the Sacristies of Mormekar.” Most are neutral good, and come from the ranks of rangers (hunter) or paladins (oath of vengeance).

THE RITUAL OF REBIRTH

Mormekar is the god of rebirth as well as death. This rarely has any impact on mortal society, as those who are reborn have no recollection of their previous lives. There are those, however, who believe it is possible to influence one’s rebirth, or even to be reborn in one’s lifetime. Some who have led lives of unspeakable wickedness come to the sacristies of Mormekar pleading to be reborn so they might set their unforgivable acts to rights. These acts are usually crimes that are certain to result in eternal punishment in one of the infernal realms—consorting with demons and devils, murdering family, or worse.

People seeking rebirth pray for days, sometimes weeks, to the other gods of the tree, begging for forgiveness. During this time, the ministers bring food and water but do not speak to the petitioner. At the end of this period, a penitent rises and ministers administer the rite, though she still breathes. The penitent then leaps into one of the massive braziers that sit at the center of each sacristy, showing they are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for forgiveness, and surrender to the will of the gods.

Usually, flames consume the penitent, and none know whether they attain forgiveness, or the afterlife torments they were destined for. Once in a great while, for reasons known only to the gods, the fires do not consume the penitent. They rise from the flames, and the ministers gather around her. They anoint her with three pure oils—one for birth, one for life, and one for death—and give her a new name. Under this new name, she is sent into the word to right the terrible wrongs she did in her prior life. She is now one of the reborn, the third holy order of the Mormekim. She receives no special address, honorifics, or introduction, but can ask for the aid of any faithful Mormekim by saying, “I am reborn.” For details on playing one of the reborn, see **Chapter X**.

V: THE GODS OF THE WOMB

AFTER THE WAR OF THE GODS OF THE TREE AND EXPULSION OF *CORPUS INFERNUS*, THE GODS OF THE TREE JOINED IN marriages that produced five children. The gods of the womb, though not as powerful as their parents, are nonetheless more popular among the mortal races, as they are far more concerned with the workings of mortal society than their elders. There are five gods born of the womb: Maal the Judge; Darmon the Traveler; Aymara the Singer; Korak the Maker; and Anwyn the Homely.

GOD OF LAW AND JUSTICE

MAAL

Maal (MAHL) is the lawful neutral god of justice, law, the dead, the land of the dead, retribution, lawyers, magistrates, judges, and all others who make their living through the law, or have a special love for it. Law is everything to Maal; his laws are perfect and wise, and would be thought to be “good” were they the laws of any mortal realm.

Maal is associated with the owl, a bird said to know no partiality, sitting in judgment of the world from its bough, and with the sphinx, the first of which was born from one of his many adventures.

When shown in icons, Maal stands as one of the tallest of the gods. He’s thin, with long hair, and adorned in shining black armor. He is shown to have steely gray eyes that pierce deep into men’s souls. He is always represented with Justice, his sword, either held before him with the point toward the ground, or held aloft in his right hand, tip skyward. When pointed down it means that Maal has found someone guilty or unworthy, or that he stands in judgment. The upward sword means he is pleased by an act of righteousness. Many people in the world, even those who are not adherents of Maal’s church, cheer a great deed by raising their swords aloft, tips to heaven.

Maal’s symbol is the sword Justice. Holy warriors of Maal have small silver swords, generally pointed upward, for their symbol. Clerics also use this symbol, but sometimes the sword lays sideways with an owl—Wisdom—perched on its edge, with the sword vertically behind the owl, or otherwise arrayed with it. Justice was carved from metals created by the Nameless One, so more expensive and formal symbols are crafted from the most exotic metals the faithful can find. The sword in these symbols usually has the word “Justice” carved into it in the cleric’s native language.

Maal is most popular among humans and dwarves, both of whom often have elaborately legalistic societies. Dwarves love him further because he was the first to delve into the earth and build a home. The King of Souls is also beloved of mixed races, particularly half-orcs who reject the chaotic nature of their orc brethren. This is because Maal’s law applies to all equally, and knows no prejudice. Regardless of popularity, all mortal races worship Maal, since they all come to stand before him in the end.

STEELY EYED, THE JUDGE, FIRSTBORN,
JUDGE OF SOULS, KING OF SOULS

MYTHS

FIRST VENGEANCE AND FIRST LAW

BEFORE THE COMPACT, WHEN MAAL FIRSTBORN’S KINGDOM WAS new, before the Three Sisters emerged and Naryne became Queen of Souls, Maal decreed vengeance to be the first great crime.

Steely Eyed Maal sat then in judgment upon his great throne, as he does now. His grey court was particularly bustling one day long ago, and his servants had difficulty holding back the throng. Eventually, a man in blue and white came to stand before the Judge of Souls.

“Speak your name and tell of your life,” Maal’s Voice demanded.

“I am Ceruill,” the man replied, “a simple bard who was in love.” Ceruill told Maal’s court of his life, often relying on song or poetry to capture important moments. He had been the minstrel in the palace of a great and powerful king, wherein he had fallen in love with the king’s daughter, Ophiel. Unfortunately for him, a neighboring prince named Faristel had also fallen in love with the princess, and had petitioned her father for her hand in marriage.

But the princess did not love Faristel. Ceruill’s songs and poems had won her heart long before, and when her father told her of Faristel’s proposal, she told her father of her abiding love for the court minstrel. The king had always loved Ceruill dearly, and decided he would allow his daughter to marry for love rather than riches and politics.

It was arranged, and Ceruill and Ophiel had the most magnificent marriage the kingdom had ever seen. But Faristel was consumed with jealous rage. How could this dotard of a king choose a lowborn minstrel for his daughter’s hand over a prince? He became increasingly convinced the entire affair was a wicked scheme, that Ceruill had cast the court under some sort of dire enchantment—an enchantment that would only be broken upon Ceruill’s death.

The night after the wedding, Faristel and five of his men-at-arms broke into the chambers of Ceruill and Ophiel as they slept in each other’s arms. Faristel bent down and woke Ceruill, whispering in his ear that he would save Ophiel and her father from the minstrel’s foul magic. And with that, he plunged a blade into the bard’s heart.

Ceruill’s tale told, Maal’s Voice bade him kneel for judgment. Maal the Judge pondered the story for some time and at last ordained, “Your heart has been rich with love, and you have brought beauty into this world. You shall abide in the fourth hall and be blessed.”



Ceruill was led away to the fourth hall to live out eternity in joy, rather than be reborn. Of the next eight men to come before Steely Eyed Maal, four were guards from outside Ophiel's chamber, and four were Faristel's men-at-arms. It became clear that moments after Ceruill died, Ophiel's screams summoned the guards, resulting in a terrible, bloody battle.

Finally, Faristel came before Maal, his heart having been pierced by an arrow as he tried to escape. For his crimes, Maal sentenced Faristel to suffer for eternity in the third pit. And once this was done, Maal thought the tale done with.

For weeks after, more and more men came before Maal from Ophiel's kingdom, and Faristel's realm. When he discovered his son was dead, Faristel's father declared war on Ophiel's nation. More and more souls came before Maal, of those slain because Faristel had killed Ceruill.

Eventually, Ophiel and her father both stood before the Judge of Souls. In her grief over Ceruill's murder, Ophiel had hurled herself into a river. Upon learning of his daughter's death, the king took his own life, out of misery. More of the king's subjects came before Maal then, for without a ruler, the nation was soon torn to pieces by its neighbors, leaving blood and fire in their wake.

When all was done, some fifty thousand souls had stood before Maal, all killed in a chain of events that began with one murder. It became clear to the King of Souls that some sort of order must be brought to the mortal world to prevent this sort of catastrophe in the future, so he summoned before him the representatives of twelve great rulers. These wise men and women journeyed to the lands of the dead to stand before the throne of Judgment, whereupon Maal decreed:

"Blood for blood shall not be law, but lawlessness. Say to your people, 'If you should kill my brother, then I will call upon my lord's law for justice and shall not seek to avenge my brother's death with my own hand.' I declare this day that none shall have a right to vengeance, but all shall have a right to justice."

The wise men and women bowed their heads, ready to take this decree to their lords, when Issama, the chamberlain of a great and powerful queen of the East, stepped forward. "Grave Lord Maal," she cried out, "What if my lord is a tyrant and shall not give me justice? Am I to allow the foul murder of my brother to go unavenged?"

The other eleven cringed, ready for Maal to lash out in fury. Instead, he was silent for a great while. At last he spoke: "You are wise, Issama, and you shall sit at my left hand when your time has come. Yes, you will allow this foul murder to go unavenged, because on this day I, Lord Maal, judge and king of your mortal souls, swear this oath to my short-lived cousins: There will always be justice. Though you may not see it in your time, though you may not understand its workings, you must trust in me. There will always be justice, and no crime shall go unpunished. I will take a dark view of anyone who should doubt me, and who lets his sword drip with the blood of vengeance."

With that, Maal was silent, and the mortal races knew his great law: A terrible and ancient doom lies upon any who avenges a crime done against him. All must trust in the law, and know that justice will prevail.

Over the years following this first edict, Maal summoned the servants of the twelve great rulers to give them laws several more times, in the end forming a great code from which the most

perfect of mortal societies could blossom. But the rulers failed to live by the laws; they were eventually all destroyed by wars, and the laws of Maal were lost to antiquity. To this day, only the first law passed from Maal's lips to mortal ears is remembered, and it is still powerfully difficult for mortal races to obey it.

JUDGE THE DEAD

Maal judges the soul of every mortal who dies, and it is through Maal the final reckoning comes for all. He stands beyond good and evil, but Maal determines whether a mortal has lived a good or evil life by listening to the tales of their lives, and then consulting the black and white ledgers of their deeds, as recorded in Gehenna and Elysium, respectively. Once he has learned all there is to learn, he hands down one of four judgments.

- The truly evil are cast down into Hell, Gehenna, or the Abyss.
- Those who led acceptable lives, but failed to distinguish themselves in thought and deed, remain in his realm until it is time for them to be reborn.
- The truly good, or those who have wrongly suffered, remain in eternal bliss in one of the four halls (see "Servants" below for details on the four halls).
- For those who led lives in total devotion to a god, their souls might find a place in that god's realm, if the deity requests them from Maal.

Wise like his mother Morwyn, Maal saw how mortal societies could function and, as detailed in the myth above, gave mortals laws that would guide them to perfect order. However, his laws were lost by mortals and evil flourished thus, making Maal weary and filling him with sorrow. Maal wants mortals to rediscover the ancient laws, but due to the Compact he cannot simply present them on tablets. This vexes him, since he wants nothing better than for the mortal races to live in happy order.

The Compact also prevents Maal from enforcing justice in the world, except in the most egregious cases when all the gods agree he must influence the Material Plane. He swore to the mortal races long ago that justice would always prevail, given time, so Maal must provide justice, or be a liar. Thus, he steers his church and servants in the mortal sphere to advance the cause of justice, in some cases righting ancient wrongs long forgotten by mortals. When a group of adventurers happens upon the site of an ancient injustice they might set to rights, it is said Maal's hand guided them there.

In addition to the judgment of souls and the enforcing justice, Maal is also king over the land of the dead. Most of the duties of rulership, however, he has passed on to his wife, Naryne.

SERVANTS OF MAAL

Maal's companion and servitor is Wisdom, an owl who sits on his left shoulder when he holds court. From time to time, Wisdom delivers messages from Maal to the Material Plane. The god's kingdom also teems with celestials who aid souls in their transition from the mortal sphere

to eternal life, guide reborn souls back to the Material Plane, take chosen souls to new homes with their patron gods, and escort the souls of the wicked to the infernal planes. Chief among these servants are the Four Riders, who were in the past sent to the Material Plane on great and terrible steeds, to enact the will of their lord. Ever since the Compact, the Four Riders have rarely entered the mortal world. The riders also act as the wardens of the four halls, where souls who performed great deeds in life are rewarded with eternal bliss.

ISSAMA, COUNSELOR TO THE KING

Issama is Warden of the First Hall, the resting place of those who are wise and good of heart. She stands to the left of Maal's throne, and advises the King of Souls on matters as varied as elven customs, legal loopholes, and contemporary marriage practices. She keeps abreast of the mortal sphere, though she rarely travels there on the back of her grey steed.

FRATRICIDE, RETRIBUTION OF BLOOD

The only member of the Four Riders who still ventures into the Material Plane regularly, Maal sends Fratricide to punish those who kill their kin. This doom is as old as the gods' fratricide, when Tinel and Terak slew one another, and Maal's father was born. While many who kill their own blood face mortal justice, Maal might still send Fratricide to punish such criminals, whether they've been apprehended or not. No one knows why some receive divine justice and others do not. Fratricide fetches these villains and hurls them into the pits of Hell. Fratricide is not a single figure, but an office inhabited by a living, loyal servant of Maal for one hundred years and a day, after which time the servant experiences the rest of his mortal life, and after dying, becomes one of the captains of Maal's kingdom. Fratricide rides upon a flaming, blood red steed. The Retribution of Blood also acts as the Warden of the Second Hall, wherein reside the souls of those who committed great acts of valor and loyalty. When Fratricide rides abroad former bearers of the mantle, who have died and become Maal's captains, oversee his hall.

REMORSE, WEEPER FOR THE WRONGED

No one knows how Remorse came into Maal's service, but her role in the kingdom of the dead is quite clear. When souls come before Maal who have been grievously wronged, Remorse asks the King of Souls to right the wrong, and give the wounded succor. Essentially, Remorse petitions on behalf of the most pathetic of the dead. Sometimes Maal ignores Remorse's pleading, but more often, responds by sending the soul to the Third Hall. Sometimes the tale of sorrow angers the King of Souls so much, he sends Fratricide to right the wrong if it is a blood crime, or names a talesman to do so (see holy orders below). Remorse rides a black steed, and is Warden of the Third Hall, where those who suffered such horrible pain in life reside, so that they need never return to the mortal sphere.

MAAL'S VOICE, HERALD OF THE COURT

If Maal's Voice ever had a name, it is long forgotten, but it is said he was once great among the div, and thus was chosen to be Maal's first servant. When Maal sits upon the Throne of Judgment, any word he utters is a lasting law or judgment, so for lesser matters of the court, Maal's Voice speaks for his master. Riding a white steed on the rare occasions he travels forth, Maal's Voice is Warden of the Fourth Hall, wherein reside those who brought great beauty into the world. Any spell that allows casters to speak with Maal, such as *commune*, is answered by Maal's Voice.

THE COURTS OF MAAL

Known as the courts of Maal, the god's church has only a few dedicated worshipers (called Maalites), largely due to the rigorous rules its members must follow. Nevertheless, the court is powerful, prominent, and well respected, since the courts and their representatives are known to be unbiased and wise. In nearly every major city or center of government in human, dwarven, and mixed-race societies, there stands a court of Maal. Locals go them to resolve thorny conflicts. Some local governments rely on the courts of Maal to serve as criminal justice systems. Even in cases where a government has its own trial system, leaders consult with the courts to help resolve important issues, especially if they involve powerful nobles.

A central court heads a large network of lesser courts. The Four Justices, who comprise the high court, issue edicts for the rest of the faithful about the legal policies of various nations, the goals of the courts, and the status of the search for the Sacred Laws. Maal gave mortals these laws at the beginning of the fourth epoch. If followed, they would create a perfect, harmonious society. These laws were all lost, except for the first: Maal's doom against vengeance. It is therefore the solemn mission of Maal's faithful to recover the Sacred Laws, to bring about a new age of enlightenment and peace for all. In all their years of searching, they have not found a single one, and fear diabolical or demonic influence keeps them from being recovered.

The faithful do not speak of this mission to outsiders, though some members of other churches know of it. While the faithful search, the courts maintain good relationships with secular authorities, and uphold their duties as legal arbiters and counselors. The courts also maintain fine relationships with other lawful churches, including the Great Church, which sometimes calls upon the courts of Maal to adjudicate disputes between its members when the case requires a neutral third party.

In ancient times, the courts were also places where mourners could gather and remember their dead, offering prayers to the King of the Dead to care for their loved ones. The churches of the Mormekim and Narynath have largely taken over these roles, but some still go to the courts to pray that the Judge of Souls will be kind to lost loved ones.

Maal depends on his courts to carry out justice in the world. He communicates to his followers through omens, or even direct messages via his Voice, or Wisdom. Maal believes his servants are just, but is saddened when some of them fail to mete out justice, or do not understand its true meaning. Those eager to inflict terrible judgments rarely climb high in the hierarchy of his faith, for he makes sure the leaders of the courts know his disapproval.

JUSTICE FOR ALL

"Though the world's injustices may fill the vessel of your heart with rage and hatred, though you may desire with all your soul to destroy those who have wronged you, remember that there is a true and greater law more perfect than any you might ever recite, more beautiful than you might ever hope."

—*The Writ of Maal, holiest screed of the courts of Maal*

The doctrine of the courts rests on four principles, which are described below.

THERE WILL BE JUSTICE

Even before Maal's first declaration, there were laws against murder and taking justice into one's own hands. If all involved in the tale of Ceruill and Ophiel had obeyed those laws, much suffering would have been avoided. While the Church of Maal knows mortal laws are fallible (though they are mostly lawful neutral, they do not believe all laws are right simply because they are laws), they know Maal's law is infallible. Maal promised all crimes would receive justice, so it is therefore a great wrong to commit another crime to see justice done. For instance, killing someone who has harmed your family because you believe it is the only way to receive justice is wrong—Maal has decreed it so, and you only prove you lack faith in Maal and his promise. "Trust in Maal," the justiciars say, "for he is compassionate, and his justice will be done."

MAAL'S WISDOM IS INFINITE

Gods see further and understand more than even the wisest mortal can. Maal understands society and the mortal spirit better than any king or holy leader ever will, so his laws and decrees are perfect. His Sacred Laws were lost to the mortal races through ignorance, and failure to



obey them. Most in the courts believe they still haven't been found because of outside interference. A few believe they will be found in sequence, once the mortal races master them in order. Thus, the second decree will not appear until all mortals understand and live by the first, surviving decree: Vengeance is wrong. Believers argue that Maal could give mortal races the laws despite the Compact, but refrains, because he doesn't want them ignored and lost again. Maal's faithful debate how many decrees Maal gave mortals, but most agree on twelve: one for each of the mythic leaders to whom they were given.

ALL PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE JUDGED

All people accused of a crime have a right to some sort of trial, and should not simply be executed or punished according to mere whim, so the courts are opposed to low justice, in which a noble punishes a peasant however they like. All mortals have the right to some sort of formal trial before mundane authorities, just as all people, no matter how evil, despicable or chaotic, have a right to appear before Maal, and receive final judgment. Believers therefore abhor any magic that entraps or destroys the soul, or prevents it from ever going to Maal. Transforming oneself into a lich qualifies. They refer to all such magic as "anarchic," and court officers tirelessly pursue those who use it.

THOSE WHO DENY THE RIGHT TO JUDGMENT ARE ENEMIES

Be it a king who gives legal protections to nobles, but allows peasants to suffer the chaotic whims of hetman and gangs, or a sorcerer who traps souls in a magical well to power his spells, the courts oppose those who seek to deny others their right to procedural justice from their own societies, or from Maal, at the cusp of the afterlife. At the very least, courts issue edicts and arguments against those who bar the way to judgment, but in the worst cases, the courts might take up arms. The courts are not egalitarian, however, and do not require a kingdom to treat all its subjects equally, or issue virtuous laws. A lawful evil empire might escape the courts' opposition, if all its people have access to some formal justice system.

PRAYERS OF MAAL

The justiciars and the officers of the courts of Maal pray to their Lord often, particularly when they wonder if a decision they made was correct or ethical. Most often, common folk pray to Maal in three cases: when they need the wisdom to make an important decision, when they're wronged and crave justice, and when a loved one has died.

The prayer recited most fervently is called the Entreaty, and it is a cry to Maal for justice, when wronged. While spoken from the perspective of one murdered, its meaning stands beyond any one crime, for any offense committed against the mortal races. The Entreaty is not said lightly, as it is a solemn plea to Maal. It is usually invoked by someone who knows who has wronged them, is desperately trying to control their rage, and wants to avoid taking matters into their own hands.

*"Father Maal, Judge of Souls,
King of the Dead,
Hear me in my need.
My blood runs in rivers,
And with it mingle my bitter tears.
I lay dying yet no crime have I done,
No man have I wronged.
My innocent blood I offer to you, Father Maal,
My angry tears are my libations;
I pray to you that those who wrong me will
find Justice,
By your hand or another's.
Let not my blood be washed away,
Let not my life be forgotten."*

HOLY DAYS

The courts of Maal observe many minor holy days, each generally tied to days of remembrance of the dead. The holiday all observe at the beginning of the year is called the "Day of Offering." On this day, people are expected to come to the courts, and pray to Maal to forgive them any transgressions they might have committed in the previous year. They accompany their prayers with an offering given to the wronged party. In cases where this is not possible, an offering it is given to the court, to be distributed to those who have been wronged, but received no offering. It is a day filled with tears and apologies. Most people go to the courts of Maal on the Day of Offering, including those who rarely pray to Maal, as it is considered one of the highest and most holy holidays of the gods. It is, after all, courting favor with the king who will ultimately determine the fate of your soul.

SAINTS

Saints are named by Maal himself when he judges souls. Tireless crusaders for justice who come before Maal sometimes find themselves greeted as saints. When Jerik, a hand of Maal who almost single-handedly toppled a goblin kingdom that had enslaved thousands, came before Maal to be judged, he knelt. The Voice of Maal greeted him by saying "Arise, Saint Jerik, and be judged." In that simple pronouncement, sainthood was conferred.

On occasion, servants of Maal in the mortal sphere learn in prayer that one of the fallen has been elevated to sainthood. From that point onward, the departed is referred to as a saint by all faithful. In the example above, Jerik's sister sought to commune with Maal, to ask for guidance some years after her brother's death. The Voice of Maal told her that her brother, Saint Jerik, would thereafter be a guardian of Maal's kingdom. After that, all her efforts to commune were answered by her brother, and from this incident, the courts of Maal learned Jerik had been named a saint.

Due to the unique nature of the ceremony to become a hand of Maal, there have been living saints of Maal who returned from the dead with their new title. Some also learn of their sainthood, only to be later resurrected, though most refuse to be brought back. The true roll of saints is known only to Maal's dead legions, and may include names never shared with the living. Those who are named saints by Maal reside in his kingdom in eternal bliss, and are not reborn.

HOLY ORDERS

The courts of Maal have two great holy orders: the order of justiciars (joo-STISH-ee-urs; the clergy) and the officers of Maal (holy warriors). A third order, the talesmen (TAYLZ-muhn), has few members, none of whom involve themselves in court matters. The Four Justices of the faith act as its central authority, and consist of two highest ranked justiciars and the two greatest known officers of Maal. The Four control the faith from a central court located in a small city, far from prying eyes.

The order of justiciars has four levels of status: justiciar, high justiciar, prolocutor (pro-LOOK-yuh-tur), and their two Justices. The officers of Maal are also divided into four groups: swords, shields, hands, and their two Justices. The talesmen are only ever talesmen, and never for long.

The high justiciars oversee the activities of the courts. The clergy below them see to the court's judgments, and the officers see to their enforcement. Justiciars who do not serve at a court mostly concern themselves with finding the Sacred Laws, and officers not found at court bring justice to the world through the strength of their blades.



The average court has one to three high justiciars, and eight to ten justiciars. There are usually five, ten or fifteen swords of the officers of Maal (almost always a multiple of five), and three to five shields. The prolocutors and hands are charged with wandering the world and spreading justice, so the most powerful members of the courts are rarely found within their walls.

JUSTICIARS OF MAAL

The justiciars are the clerical order of the courts of Maal. They keep the court systems operating, with the high justiciars overseeing the individual courts. They are looked to for their wisdom, good judgment, and counsel. The deepest purpose of the order is the recovery of the Sacred Laws, and this is what concerns most prolocutors, who are generally wandering, powerful clerics seeking these ancient artifacts of their god.

There are only two major alignments among clerics of Maal—lawful neutral and lawful good. Lawful neutral justiciars are the largest contingent of the courts. Their foremost concern is finding the twelve laws of Maal. While their complete dedication to legality makes them excellent judges, they often allow unfortunate outcomes by the standards of goodness, as they feel the preservation of the law is of paramount importance. For this reason, in cases where someone has broken the law but has done so for a good or very understandable reason, lawful neutral justiciars still condemn the criminal, and are uninterested in vague concepts such as “right” or “context.” Some people complain these justiciars do evil by adhering to law so completely, but the justiciars respond that the anyone who breaks the law for some short-term good will likely do a profound evil, in the end.

Lawful good justiciars, however, are much beloved, for they believe that law exists to better the lives of people. They are the “live and let live” sort, associating themselves with people who, perhaps, bend the letter of the law to achieve great good. While they themselves do not stray from the law, and while they certainly try to explain to such people the importance of maintaining laws, one can find a lawful good justiciar adventuring with chaotic good heroes. Such justiciars are paragons of virtue, seeking to aid others through their wisdom and strength. They do not lie, do not swear, do not strike others in anger, and do not raise their voices. All in all, they seek to be exceptional figures of morality, temperance, and wisdom, as Maal is. Lawful good justiciars typically do not rise far in the court system, and it is rare for one of them to sit as one of the Four Justices.

There are lawful evil clerics who call Maal their lord. Likely receiving power from an infernal source instead of the god they proclaim, these deluded few believe life is misery, and save people from it by sending them to Maal. The clerics of this secret and blasphemous order are discussed in **Chapter VII**.

Forms of address for the justiciars are varied, but all are introduced by name and position among the justiciars, such as, “Wilhelm, prolocutor of the courts of Maal.” When referred to without his name, a member of the order is called “a justiciar of Maal,” regardless of his personal title, or more

formally, “a justiciar of the courts of Maal,” since the most important detail about them is that they serve the courts and can mediate disputes. They represent the faith and their order first, in all things.

JUSTICIAR

New justiciars keep busy. Several justiciars operate in even the smallest courts, as running one involves a fantastic amount of work, given that most courts hear daily petitions from local people asking for help in serious matters such as resolving disputes and remedying cases of injustice. Justiciars operate as assistants to high justiciars, and must obey their superiors. New justiciars rarely adventure far from home, but it can happen when it involves court business. The courts consider it acceptable for justiciars not suited to minding the courts to defend the principle of organized laws abroad. Justiciars are addressed as “honored justiciar.”

HIGH JUSTICIAR

With sufficient experience, justiciars can attain the rank of high justiciar, and might be given authority over a court. In major population centers, several high justiciars work in a single court. They form a council and ponder their decisions, but one justiciar is given supreme authority over the court from the Four Justices. High justiciars rise from the ranks of the justiciars after a time automatically, and without needing approval from higher church officials, but they must petition the Four Justices in order to run a court. Petitions can take a great while to grant, with some waiting up to five years before receiving an assignment. If a high justiciar can build a court with her funds, or funds raised, she automatically gains authority over the court. High justiciars are addressed as “lord justiciar,” or “lady justiciar.”

PROLOCUTOR

High justiciars who distinguish themselves are eventually hailed as prolocutors and are henceforth placed above day-to-day matters, such as operating a court. Prolocutors travel the world, quest for the Sacred Laws, visit distant lands, and bring law to the world, speaking the will of Maal to any who would listen. Prolocutors speak for Maal. When they declare something unjust, anyone with a shred of sense listens. Those prolocutors who prefer not to wander find the Four Justices interceding, instructing them to put aside their mundane labors and do Maal’s work abroad. It is rare for this admonishment to be required. A prolocutor is addressed as “most honored justiciar.”

FOUR JUSTICES

When one of the two Justices from the order of justiciars steps down or dies, a prolocutor receives a mysterious spiritual call to sit on the council of the Four Justices. They simply know it is their time. No more than one prolocutor has ever answered the call; the faithful believe Maal chooses the Justices. The call doesn’t always summon the strongest justiciar, and some join the Four Justices just months after being named prolocutors. The call can sometimes tell a Justice to step down, too. A Justice from the

order of justiciars is addressed as “supreme justiciar” and might be introduced as, “Supreme Justiciar Mord, one of the Four Justices of the courts of Maal.”

JOINING THE JUSTICIARS

Prospective members must undergo years of legal training before they can join the justiciars. Those already familiar with the law could become a justiciar without additional training, but otherwise a character would have to stop adventuring for two to four years while he learned the law. Upon completing training, they become clerics with the Balance domain (see **Chapter X**). Most justiciars favor the longsword to symbolize the sword Justice, which Maal has wielded since the war with Kador.

OFFICERS OF MAAL

It is one thing to pass judgment or to demand that the law be followed, but quite another to enforce that judgment, or those demands. When criminals must be pursued or judgments enforced, the officers of Maal perform such duties. They do so because of an abiding belief that laws make the world better for everyone. It is not possible to become an officer if one secretly harbors a perverse pleasure in punishing people, or has too much love for her authority.

Officers of Maal must not lie, cheat, or in any way knowingly allow an injustice—great or small—to be done. The exception is in cases of tragedy, where an injustice would occur no matter what the officer does. In such cases, the officer must minimize damage to the innocent. Officers of Maal obey legitimate laws, and bring them to the lawless. Officers of Maal oppose anarchic magic or anything else that takes away the rights of mortals to stand before formal justice, or Maal’s presence after they die.

Officers of Maal tend to be most interested in their companions’ goodness. They do not expect everyone they know to be tireless champions for law, or the rights of the downtrodden. However, they stop associating with anyone who uses anarchic magic, and do not work with those who flaunt just laws. A rogue who ceaselessly violates the laws of a corrupt city to overthrow their tyranny, while using methods the officer might not use herself, is certainly an appropriate companion.

Members of the order are introduced with title preceding name, followed by, “an officer of the courts of Maal.” So, a shield named Gwaithin would be introduced as “Shield Gwaithin, an officer of the courts of Maal.”

SWORD

New officers of the court of Maal are called swords, and addressed as “sword.” Having gone through exhaustive training, swords serve courts. Most courts have five swords, each given a separate duty. The high justiciar might say, “You, Sword Pavel, serve as bailiff, to keep order and escort prisoners to and from proceedings,” or “You, Sword Hellyne, serve as a bodyguard to young justiciars whenever they journey beyond this court.” The swords serve and obey the high justiciar of the court, or any lesser justiciars they’re ordered to serve.

More mystical members of the court system refer to each sword as a “finger,” with each of their duties likened to the duties of the fingers of the hand. The sword who serves the bailiff is like the thumb, the anchor of the hand. The sword who helps victims find and prosecute their attackers is like the index finger, which indicates evil, and so on. This is an old-fashioned way to think of such things, but what remains of this tradition is that when five swords go out to capture a dangerous criminal, they’re called “fists.” The courts of large cities employ several organized fists, alongside a few unassigned swords. Some of the most promising swords don’t belong to fists. They go on adventures that, while not lofty enough for shields, still serve the courts of Maal. These “unsheathed swords,” as they are called, are the envy of other young officers of Maal, and are usually the very best of the order, allowed to wander because it would be wasteful to shackle them with bureaucratic work at a court.

SHIELD

After serving many years as a sword, officers go forth and protect people. The high justiciar of the court administers a mystical test involves strange visions and mysterious



questions. The high justiciar casts a spell called the *test of souls* (see **Chapter X**) on the promising sword, and delves deeply into her very being to affirm she is ready to serve Maal independently, protecting the innocent and preserving the right to justice. If the sword fails, she can never become a shield, though she maintains her status and powers as a sword of Maal. It is no great shame to fail the test; Maal simply wishes the failure to remain a sword. One who passes becomes a shield, expected to fight against lawlessness and anarchic magic, under the guidance of Maal himself. Shields obey high justiciars and, certainly, any edicts set down by the Four Justices, but are no longer subservient to a single court, and do not have to be involved in day-to-day legal affairs. Several shields often band together and form minor holy orders, though these are culturally specific and left to the GM to create. A shield is addressed as, “shield.”

HAND OF MAAL

After a shield survives many adventures, she might be moved to make the journey, no matter how far, to the Court of the Four Justices. There, she is tested by the Justices to see if she’s ready to be a hand of Maal. This time, the *test of souls* ritual includes fifteen hours of interrogation, culminating in the ultimate question: Is the shield prepared to stand before Maal? If so, she is given a drink of deadly poison. Upon her death, she goes before Maal for judgment. Four days after, the Four Justices bring her back from the dead. While no officer who has experienced this speaks of her time in Maal’s kingdom, it is clearly excruciating to return.

The restoration to life works only on willing participants, and by the time one is a ranking officer of Maal, the rewards of the afterlife must be rich indeed. A hand of Maal puts those awards aside to walk once more in this imperfect world, so profound is their desire to better mortals’ lot. Sometimes officers refuse to return, though such occasions are rare and spoken of sadly. Once brought back, the shield is elevated to the title hand of Maal, because it is said she is now the sword, shield, and hand of the King of Souls on Earth. She receives rich gifts from the Four Justices. Hands act as living agents of Maal’s will. They lead armies, topple evil kingdoms, slay terrorizing dragons, and perform other epic works of heroism in the name of law and justice. A hand is addressed as “grim lord,” or “grim lady.”

FOUR JUSTICES

When one of the two Justices from the officer order dies or steps down, a hand is supernaturally called to sit upon the council of the Four Justices, exactly as happens for the justiciars. A justice from the order of officers is addressed as “supreme lord” or “supreme lady,” and might be introduced as, “Supreme Lady J’oinelle, one of the Four Justices of the courts of Maal.”

JOINING THE OFFICERS OF MAAL

Officers are selected by Maal himself, it is said, for their goodness of heart and their courage to do what must be done. Thus, nearly all officers are lawful good. When it

comes time to swear their sacred oath, they usually take the Oath of Vengeance.

TALESMEN

The courts sometimes refer a third order, the talesmen. In ancient times, when Maal delivered his first laws to the mortal races, some cultures gave criminals a right to trial by jury. Whenever a jury needed to be convened, the lord of the area would issue a “writ of tales,” or an order commanding all those capable of appearing at the lord’s court to serve as a potential jury member. Once the candidates responded to the writ, lots were drawn and twelve talesmen, or jurors, were selected to hear the case. While the writ of tales is now rarely used, the talesmen remain.

From time to time, a crime happens that is so profound, the gods cry out for justice. It might be a crime somehow hidden from them for millennia through powerful magic, or it might be a recent atrocity committed against the worshipers of several of the gods, such as if a major city was wiped out by an evil sorcerer. When such an event occurs, the gods petition Maal for justice, demanding he find an impartial champion, or several such champions, to right the wrong. These champions must not serve any of the gods as clergy. Upon selecting a champion, Maal sends a writ of tales through one of his servants. If the champion accepts they become a talesman, and courts of Maal throughout the Material Plane consider it a duty to aid them in any way possible. A member of the order receives no titles, and none but members of the courts are likely to even know what a talesman is. When seeking aid from the courts, a talesman need only say “I serve the writ,” and whatever they might need will be provided.

BECOMING A TALESMAN

One does not choose to become a talesman; rather, Maal scours the world for a worthy champion to right a grave

GOD OF TRAVEL, WEALTH, AND JOY

DARMON

SILVER TONGUE, CLEVER, WILY, MERRY, THE TRAVELER, OF THE MANY FACES,
THE LAUGHING GOD, MASTER OF THE ROAD, LORD OF THE WAYS,
CHAMPION OF HEAVEN, THE GOLDEN MESSENGER

Darmon (DAR-mahn) is the chaotic good god of travelers, tricksters and rogues, joy, laughter, good fortune, trade, merchants, diplomacy, messengers, jesters, scouts, rebels, and thieves. He is associated with the fox, the otter, and the kestrel—the cleverest beasts of land, water, and sky. He is also associated with the djinn, who were once among those div confined to the pillar of fire. Darmon once went to the fire pillar, and found those div of good heart who’d been wrongly imprisoned. These he transported to the pillar of the air, where they rule to this day. These powerful beings love Darmon and are fond of his followers.

Darmon is called “many faced” because he has always disguised himself to walk among the mortal races. Every race shows him as one of their own in icons, generally as very handsome young male with laughing eyes. He is

TALESMAN ABILITIES

If chosen to become a talesman, the character gains all the following benefits for the duration of the quest.

Divine Nature: Your alignment changes to unaligned, and you count as having no race or type for the purpose of targeting you with spells. For example, you could not be the target of a *charm person* spell. You also gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.

Magic Resistance: You have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Protective Aura: Creatures attacking you have disadvantage on their attack rolls.

Divine Wrath: You may call upon the wrath of the gods to become instilled with terrifying power that lasts for 1 minute. Until the effect ends, you are immune to being frightened, you make Strength and Constitution attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws, and at the start of each of your turns, you gain temporary hit points equal to your level. Once you use this benefit, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

wrong. Maal selects only those of non-evil alignments who do not cast spells from a divine source, so no clerics or paladins qualify. Candidates must demonstrate exceptional skill in the areas necessary to battle the injustice. If this wrong can be righted by stealing a powerful ring, Maal would choose an exceptionally gifted rogue. Since these requirements depend on the specifics of the wrong, there is no one path to receiving a writ of tales, but those selected must be powerful enough for the gods to have noticed them.

always shown wearing golden laurels on his brow, bearing his short blade Laughter’s Sting, and wearing his cloak of the heavens.

Representational tokens for Darmon are extremely symbolic. A circle of gold, filled in, is all that is necessary to represent Darmon, and many merchants use this symbol to signify their trade. Those who wish to wear holy symbols of Darmon usually wear a large, round gold coin. When in haste, one need only paint a gold circle, though it is considered most fitting to fill it in.

Since Darmon has walked among the mortal races more than any other god, and in the early days could reveal himself when he did so, he is the most universally popular of the gods. All races engage in the crafts he taught them. If there is one race most fond of Darmon, though, it is the humans, who are most enamored with his ways.



MYTHS

THE MIGHT OF WITS

IN A PAST AGE, WHEN IT WAS COMMON TO MEET THOSE WHOSE bloodlines were intermingled with the gods', there was an elven princess named Mirien who was said to be fairer than any mortal ever born. She was descended from Aymara, and that goddess' features shone in her face and bearing.

When the time came for Mirien to take a husband, all the gods watched with interest, for she was no common mortal. Her beauty would fill legends, they all knew, but she also had her foremother's talent for art; to hear her sing was to hear a sound fairer than the heavenly choirs. When Mirien's mother began greeting suitors for her daughter, Aymara declared the princess her special ward, and that whosoever was worthy of her hand would be blessed, along with their union.

Each of the gods, inspired by Aymara's announcement, decided to take one of her mortal suitors as a ward, and the matter of Mirien's marriage became a great competition among them. As the suitors presented themselves to Mirien and her parents, Morwyn proclaimed, "Let us all agree then: Whoever's ward proves worthy of Mirien's love proves also that his sponsor is the best among us; for let it not be said that all the gods looked on and let the fairest mortal ever born take the hand of any but the worthiest among men." To this all agreed: The one whose ward was granted Mirien's hand would be named Champion of the Gods, the greatest of them all.

By this time, the Three Sisters had been found, and Darmon Silver Tongue had fallen in love with Canelle, the fiery one of the three. The Master of the Road expressed his passion by competing with her, and she enjoyed competing with him. Mere moments after Morwyn's proclamation, Canelle beat her chest and shouted, "Then my ward will win her hand, for all of us know that I am the greatest among the gods! What test has been devised that I cannot master? What contest of skill or speed has been set down in which I am not the victor?" While her braggadocio won her no favors among the rest of the gods, it only made Darmon the Traveler love her more.

Wily Darmon knew that the only way to Canelle's heart was to best her. They had played a thousand games of prowess and skill, and she defeated him time and again. She refused to play him at games of wit and chance, which he might win, and he was certain that if he ever bested her, she would finally see him as worthy. He pledged to win Mirien's hand for his ward.

While the others selected their wards for beauty, wealth, nobility, or strength, Darmon, clever Darmon, went to the side of a lad of low birth and weak frame named Rinalde Wolfcall. Rinalde was disliked by most in his village, for while they were strong and toiled in the fields, he was wily, and found ways to perform his labors with minimal effort. Where others were brave in times of war, he defeated enemies with stealth and treachery.

So the Lord of the Ways whispered into Wolfcall's ear about the fairest lady ever born. He arrayed Rinalde in rich robes of purple and crimson, and gave him a circlet to wear on his brow, as if he might be a prince from a faraway land. Picking up the clever lad in his mighty hand, Darmon Silver Tongue bore his

ward to Mirien's kingdom, just in time to strive for the lady.

Now, the suitors faced too many challenges to tell of. A great tournament was held, with splendid deeds and stupendous feats, culminating in the withdrawal of Morwyn's ward, who decided he and Mirien were not a fitting match. By the final contest, all the gods' wards had been eliminated except those of Terak the Mighty, Canelle the Swift, and Darmon the Traveler. They would face the champion of Mirien.

Before the last contest began, Morwyn and the other gods whose wards had been eliminated declared that the remaining three patron gods couldn't grant their wards special powers or skills. The suitor who won would have to do it on his own. And while Merry Darmon thought it unfair to change the rules of the game, neither Terak nor Canelle minded, for they were sure of their wards' impending victories.

When Mirien's champion strode onto the tournament field, the people of the kingdom cheered, and Mirien's mother, the Queen, rose, saying, "Behold! Sir Edrikul, whom none have ever bested!" Edrikul stood a hand higher than the others and wore grim, black, armor. His face was obscured by a great helm with the likeness of a dragon atop it. The Queen declared: "The champion of my daughter challenges each suitor!"

And so Edrikul came first to Lord Morgan, ward of Terak, known to be the mightiest man alive. When he was but a boy, Morgan had slain a bear with naught but his hands. "Lord Morgan, it is known to all that you are the mightiest man alive, so I challenge you to a contest of might!"

At this the crowd gasped, and Lord Morgan laughed, saying, "I accept!" Sir Edrikul responded at once, gesturing to a great hoist at the edge of the field. Its load was obscured, and at Edrikul's signal a squire removed the cover to reveal an awesome anvil, seemingly made for giants.

"Lord Morgan, this anvil was made for the King of the Cloud Giants long ago, and its weight is as great as a hill's. For the challenge, each of us will remove his armor, lie under it, and have it dropped on his chest. The mightiest of us should be able to lift it off. You go first."

Morgan stared at this terrible, black anvil and blanched. "This I refuse, for it is not strength you seek, but murder!" at which the crowd laughed and jeered. And so Terak's ward was bested without even beginning the contest.

Next, Sir Edrikul approached Canelle's ward, Donivere the Great. Known throughout the land as the greatest sportsman who ever lived, Donivere could strike the mark with his bow from a mile away, and sunder his arrow with a second shot. He had once outrun a horse for a bet. "Donivere, who is called Great," Edrikul pronounced, "you are the greatest bowman who ever lived, and the swiftest on foot. Thus, I challenge you to a contest of speed and archery!"

Now, Donivere was no fool and had seen the last challenge, so he hesitated. But with no choice, he eventually muttered, "I accept," and the crowd cheered. At this Sir Edrikul clapped his gauntleted hands, and a great bow of yew was borne out to him by two squires, which Edrikul drew back and strung.

"This is the mightiest bow in the kingdom, made by our greatest craftsmen. Each of us will draw it, and fire an arrow at the back of the other. The contestant must outrun the arrow shot from the bow. He that lives shall win the lady Mirien's hand. You run first."

Donivere thought something of the like was coming and, shaking his head in disgust, walked from the field without a word. At this the crowd booed and then laughed merrily, but Rinalde Wolfcall was not pleased. When Sir Edrikul approached him, Rinalde said, "A challenge of wits, Sir Edrikul, for I have proven myself wily? I accept."

Edrikul nodded and clapped again. Strong, tall men of the Queen's guard came onto the field with huge, keen blades and surrounded the two. "You and I shall engage in a war of words, Rinalde Wolfcall," the Champion of Mirien said, "regaling the Queen and all others with the worst insults each of us may conjure. We shall each of us tell the whole of the assembly what a base and vile creature we think Mirien to be, casting on her the most insidious attributes of perfidy imaginable for the entertainment of these, her most loyal guards." Sir Edrikul indicated the tall men with great swords. "You speak first."

All eyes were now on Rinalde Wolfcall. The hands of Mirien's personal bodyguards, each of whom loved her more than life, tightened on their blades in preparation for a stream of outrages. But rather than walking away from this task that meant sure death, Rinalde said, "I have seen Mirien many times in this tournament, and I have observed that she is the envy of gold, and that starlight seeks to emulate her beauty." At this the crowd gasped, amazed, for surely this was no way to win a contest of insults. And yet Rinalde continued for a full hour with a magnificent encomium to the princess' many qualities. Some of the greatest poems to love were composed that day, on that ground, as words tumbled from Rinalde's lips in song and verse, all hailing Mirien as the finest lady to grace the mortal world—and all said in earnest, for Rinalde had come to love the lady from afar with a passion unyielding. And when he concluded, the crowd laughed, for clearly this supposedly clever man had lost this contest of wits and been proven a fool.

But in a moment, the crowd hushed as Sir Edrikul raised his hands. They waited for the great knight to cast the pettiest insult at the princess to win the contest, for any ill word would win this challenge. And yet, he said nothing, instead unfastening his helmet and lifting it up. Spilling forth from under Edrikul's helm, long golden hair and tears revealed the champion to be Princess Mirien, wearing armor that made her seem tall and fearsome, and Rinalde's words had pierced her heart more surely than any barb or dart. Without a word, the armored princess embraced Darmon's ward and kissed his lips, for as Rinalde had fallen in love with her from afar, the words of the wily suitor had won her most worthy heart.

When the two were wed, the other gods bestowed golden laurels on Darmon of the Many Faces to signify him Champion of the Gods. For he and his ward alone knew that to win, sometimes you must lose.

LAUGHTER, JOY, AND RICHES

Like his sister, Aymara, Darmon is a preternaturally happy god. He tells jokes in Heaven and when he walks among mortals, improves their lives with humorous japes and beautiful creations. However, his love of golden things and beautiful objects is irrepressible, and he has taught this love to the mortal races, calling the mercantile trades "the finest of the arts."

Darmon gave the mortal races many of the basic tools necessary for civilization: writing, keeping time, crop rotation, sailing, trade, riding, the making of compasses, and many other useful tricks and trades. He did this with his cousin Korak, who at the same time taught the mortal races useful skills such as sewing, weaving, making steel, and building arches. They did this out of a love for mortals which has not diminished over the ages. Although Darmon delights in mischief, and is always happy to see horrible things happen to bad people (or even people who just think too much of themselves), he has never had a problem with mortals violating all sorts of laws. In his love for mortals, he would see them thrive.

Darmon wants a world free of stuffiness and useless restrictions. He wants to replace them with wealth, joy, good food, magnificent song, and, most of all, laughter. He's rarely serious, refusing to put away his tricks and fun, but when he is forced to abandon humor, his temper grows as fierce as his mother's, father's, and sister's. He sides with his parents in conflicts among the gods, but like the other young gods, he is less interested than his elders in such rivalries. He is endlessly inquisitive, loving to see and learn new things, but he prizes above all the freedom to travel and move.

Darmon is messenger of the gods, so he may venture into the mortal sphere to retrieve someone of importance, or deliver a divine decree. Although the Compact has made these occasions less frequent, Darmon is the god living mortals are most likely to meet.

SERVANTS OF DARMON

Darmon has one thousand servants running messages across the Material Plane and beyond. Because Darmon is entrusted with messages, he often relies on minions to bear notes from god to god. His closest companion other than his divine relatives is Ix, his silver fox. Darmon delights in watching Ix infuriate Metteron, the golden lion of Terak. Tales of Ix tricking Metteron are well loved, and told to children for entertainment.

MAAL AND DARMON

Darmonite freedom of organization drives conflicts with other churches, especially the courts of Maal. While Maal and Darmon are friends according to many epics, many Maalites do not treat Darmonites warmly, and assume they're all lawless vagabonds. The courts' official position is each house must be judged on its own merits, and houses that give succor to thieves and lawbreakers can earn no special treatment from the courts simply because they claim to worship Darmon. The religions respect and even love each other's gods, but treat their churches with mutual distrust. Most Darmonite houses are pained by the mistrust shown by the Maalites and seek to remedy it by joining with them against immoral houses and their members.

THE HOUSES OF DARMON

The churches of Darmon are called houses, and his faithful are Darmonites (DAR-muhn-ites). Houses litter the landscape, and few of them are particularly grand. Many are banks, since banking was invented by the houses, though many banks not affiliated with the Darmonite faith. No central authority oversees the houses, and even their spiritual leaders are rarely ordained, or even formally educated. Instead, the church keeps a vast oral history of the faith, including secrets passed through rote memory, along with books of aphorisms and tales.

The houses serve as meeting points for any interested in the teachings of Darmon. They sponsor fairs, teach languages and other skills, offer counsel and advice, sell items both wondrous and mundane, and resolve disputes among those who cannot, for whatever reason, seek resolution through legal channels. Houses often wind up as havens for thieves, which brings them into conflict with legal authorities, especially the courts of Maal.

A house's most common function is to provide a communication network. Not much is required to found a house. One must simply get a community of dedicated Darmonites together, erect a structure, and elect a high wayfarer. Houses crisscross the civilized world. For a modest fee, Darmonite houses will send a message from one house to the next, and from that house to another, until it reaches its destination. Runners might carry the messages, but houses also train carrier pigeons and other suitable birds to carry small notes. Some houses use magic to send messages. A message might be passed using several methods before it reaches its destination.

Generally, Darmon is not terribly interested in religions, and among the gods, he has the least need to be. He is celebrated in every culture, and prayed to by all those who travel. The houses manage only a fraction of the worship he receives from the mortal races, as even those who are steadfast worshipers of other gods pay him respect and homage.

That said, he does help those who worship him, here and there. Whenever he walks among mortals, he is sure to talk with one of his worshipers, and even goes to houses to join debates over things he said in ages past. He is fond of his worshipers, and wishes to see them succeed, but he rarely, if ever, issues edicts sending them on great quests or holy wars.

If ever some pressing threat came up against the general happiness and health of the mortal races, though, Darmon would not hesitate to use his worshipers to stem the tide of such evil. He only recently started supporting clerics, providing them with great power, at the urging of his beloved sister, Aymara, who reminded him Asmodeus threatens all joy. Thus he supports his servants, keeping in mind he might need to call upon them in the future, to commit great deeds for the good of all mortals.

DOCTRINE

“Each one of us is as different as the many faces that adorn the coins of countless nations. To judge one man by the actions of another is as foolish as valuing one coin by the weight of another.”

—High Wayfarer Vexx Dragonsaddler’s interpretation of Darmon the Traveler’s oft-recited statement, “I am not gold; I am more valuable yet.”

When someone seeks advice from a high wayfarer, the response is often, “That is a very good question. What do you think is the right thing to do?” The Darmonites encourage free thought, self-reliance, and wit. Darmonites who are serious about the teachings of their god understand that life is too short to be miserable. Joy and laughter should fill one’s days; mutual understanding and friendly debate are infinitely preferable to violence. They think of trade, diplomacy and the many other teachings of Darmon as the best ways to encounter as many cultures and people as possible. They crave new experiences, knowledge, and awareness.

Slavish devotion to dogma is unheard of, and any who cling to doctrine would be subjects of scorn and ridicule. All of them agree: Darmon wants them to be free, happy, and prosperous. Beyond that, the faith is as varied as the houses that observe it. If one were to try to categorize a universal Darmonite doctrine, it could best be described with four principles: debate, aphorisms, names, and freedom of organization.

DEBATE

The Darmonite faith is a constant quest for self-discovery and insights into the secrets of the spirit. On the surface, and as practiced by most casual participants, it is a simple religion that teaches mutual respect, love, joy, and freedom. Beneath that lies endless debates between its elder practitioners, in a quest to understand the countless teachings of Darmon of the Many Faces. Sometimes, learned members of the faith seem to enjoy thorny questions more than they do good answers, and one can commonly find a group of Darmonite elders debating some particularly obscure issue well into the night over many, many goblets of wine.

APHORISMS

The Master of the Road had thousands of encounters with mortals before the Compact, and in each of them he offered mortals tidbits of advice meant to enlighten them on matters of trade, love, happiness, career, and piety. Many of these sayings were captured in writing, but serious Darmonites might debate their meaning for

hours upon hours, endlessly discussing why the Lord of the Ways chose this word over that, this phrase instead of the other. It is this principle of the faith that most easily transfers from house to house. All Darmonites delight in learning a new saying of Darmon’s, and discussing its meaning.

NAMES

To better understand Darmon and his teachings, more mystically inclined Darmonites take new surnames at various times in their lives. These names are either based on or duplicates of the many names Darmon took while walking the earth. In her youth, Krys might be called Krys Boneblade because legends say Darmon called himself “the Blade of Bone” when he taught people how to fish. At some point in her life, Krys will learn why Darmon took that name—perhaps she sees a bone in an ancestor’s skeleton that looks like a blade, and understands Darmon was saying that all things die, and we shouldn’t fear the end. Perhaps she has some other epiphany, but whatever it is, she’s learned something from that name, and now takes another.

FREEDOM OF ORGANIZATION

Debate and taking on new names are important to most Darmonites, but not all. Many see the religion as a system by which to justify their poorly lived lives.

Thieves often understand Darmon’s teachings as “Have a good time, live out your passions, and die young.” This completely misunderstands of the Champion of Heaven, but without any centralized authority, there is no one to crack down

on such errors. Indeed, the freedom of the houses to determine their own structures and beliefs is the very heart of the faith, but it means one is just as likely to find a high wayfarer who preaches, “The rich have had too much for too long, and it’s time they get what’s comin’ to ‘em,” as one who says, “We are all of us brothers, and should strive for joy and mutual benefit.” The former is common in more chaotic locales (in the city of Freeport, for instance, Darmon’s house worships him as the god of pirates), making the Darmonite faith unpopular with authority figures.

DARMONITE PRAYERS

The worshipers of Darmon do not engage in common prayers as most religions do. As the religion is based on the nearly limitless aphorisms of Darmon, their version of prayer usually involves the recitation of one such aphorism followed by vigorous debate—with one’s self or others—about its meaning. Here are some sample sayings of Darmon, to give players and GMs an understanding of the ease with which they can be created:



LAUGHTER'S STING

Darmon spent a great deal of time with his mother's creations, the Titans, and learned as many tricks from them as they did from him. He once bet the King of the Titans that the greatest smiths of his people could not make a weapon powerful enough to cut apart a mountain, but small enough to fit in his pocket. The King ordered it done, and the smiths slaved away, night and day, to make it so. They would have failed, but Darmon's cousin, Korak Hammer Hand, played a trick on Darmon. Masking himself as a Titan, Korak helped the other smiths make Laughter's Sting, a tiny blade (well, tiny for Titans) mighty enough to level a mountain. When the King of the Titans presented the sword, Darmon lost the bet, and had to serve for one hundred years as the King's throne, bent on hands and knees to take the Titan's weight, day and night.

When Darmon found out what Korak had done he was at first furious but then, laughing, demanded his cousin repay the hurt with labor. Master Korak agreed, and Darmon made him craft ten thousand gems out of fire, silver, and adamantine. Korak mined the silver and precious adamantine from deep in the earth, and worked his most spectacular creations. When the gems were done, Darmon slipped them in a pouch and went to the mighty halls where Urian the Wind Lord resides. Asking the Sky King to drink with him, Darmon produced a bottle of his mother's wine. The two drank through the night and, by the end of it, Urian slept.

Seizing the moment, Wily Darmon slipped into the night and stole ten thousand stars from the heavens, replacing them with the gems of Clever Handed Korak's devising. These stolen stars he had sewn into his cloak, making his cloak of the heavens, which he wears to this day. Ever since then, Urian has hunted down these gems that are now stars and, when he finds one, he bashes it out of the sky. As they fall, they leave trails of silver and fire, for they become shooting stars. Sometimes they hit the earth, and when they do there's nothing left of them but the adamantine, which is why the mightiest of metals can be found deep in the earth, but sometimes fall from heaven, too.

"Do not use three words when you need only one: 'Yes.'"

"We paint our houses different colors for a good reason."

"No number is the best. Three builds better than two, two loves better than one, one thinks better than three."

"Wait for the good, seek out the bad."

"A man is not a rocking horse."

"Wheat is better than dust, but dust is better than nothing."

"No matter what the wicked say, I always know my mother loves me."

"Do not seek what you do not want."

"There are twelve houses in the river. They will all sink in the end."

HOLY DAYS

The last day of the calendar year is a one of enormous importance to the Darmonite faith, and is celebrated with an elaborate festival. Darmon taught the mortal races about time, and helped them set down their various methods for keeping it, so the last day of the year recalls this gift and others from the Master of the Road. A parade typically accompanies the festival, and children perform dances to commemorate Darmon's various gifts. Usually the people celebrate a gift of importance to their livelihoods; a seaside community might commemorate the gift of sailing, for instance.

Many of Darmon's gifts involved skills and practices for which he is not the god. He introduced the idea of crop rotation to the mortal races, but Rontra is the goddess of

farming. Also, many communities who worship gods other than Darmon most of the year celebrate the Laughing God at its end. In small towns that lack a house of Darmon, the clergy of other churches organize these celebrations.

SAINTS

The Darmonites believe all mortals are saints—that within everyone lies the ability to become skilled and virtuous. "You spend your lives whittling away at your better selves," Darmon once said, sadly, to a man repenting for a life of evil on his deathbed. There is no need to beatify the truly good, for they have only lived up to their potential.

While not a church of cowards, the Darmonite faith is not exactly a proponent of martyrdom or glorious death. Darmon was once encountered at an oasis by a nomad who had wandered the desert in a quest for enlightenment. When the nomad asked what is necessary for a good life, wily Darmon said, "Live. Laugh. Love." And when asked which of these was most important, Darmon said, "This above all else: Live." No believer honors how one of their own died, and instead celebrate glorious lives.

HOLY ORDERS

Long ago, Darmon told the founder of the house system, "Never give one person absolute authority to control what is most important to you, for such control will someday deny you the freedom I wish for you." From this simple phrase, the house system was created, whereby the faith is practiced and promoted without any central authority.

The Darmonite tradition is one of debate and constant re-examination. The members of a house decide who serves as its high wayfarer. Once selected this leader is introduced by title and house—"High Wayfarer Vynald of

the Wittenburg House of Darmon,” for example. The high wayfarer inducts the most devoted members of her house as subordinate wayfarers (addressed as “wayfarer,” and introduced in the same fashion as the high wayfarer) and these people serve as spiritual leaders for those who come to the houses. If members of the house determine they are no longer satisfied with the high wayfarer’s leadership, they can vote to strip her of her title. No high wayfarer from one house is more important than any other, and no member of the faith, no matter how senior or powerful, can order another into service. Decisions are made on a broad scale when high wayfarers from various houses congregate to debate religious matters. They do this often, as the Darmonite faith is not a finished thing, and is always expanding and changing its doctrines.

The Darmonite faith is not evangelical, but those who practice it can’t help but offer others guidance through the teachings of Darmon. Darmonites believe all places of a reasonable size should host at least one house, preferably several, as the worship of Darmon, and debating his teachings, forms the most useful of religions. “What use is dogma to a person with a really thorny issue?” they ask. “Teach a person to think for themselves, and you’ve *really* improved their life.” Established houses help nearby communities build their own houses, and aid them through their first few years of operation with money, advice, and even by sending them spiritual leaders. Other than this, the houses are not terribly active in politics, and really have no need to be. Travelers donating money and asking for Darmon’s blessings on road, and rich merchants tithing and donating property for the house’s upkeep and growth, all keep house coffers full. Houses also earn income from their message services.

The three holy orders of the Darmonite faith are the clerics, heroes, and runners. The clerics and the runners are often involved in local house politics and debates. The heroes wander, more concerned with adventure and travel into the unknown, than with the affairs of one town or another.

The average house has about eighty members, ten of whom are wayfarers, and one high wayfarer. Many have no clerics present, but those that do have at least two, and often as many as twenty the largest houses of major urban areas. Houses on important roads have at least six runners in residence, though they are often out delivering messages.

WAYFARERS OF DARMON

Since Darmon only recently began giving powers to his followers, the wayfarers are relatively new. It is impossible to be a cleric of Darmon without being titled a wayfarer—if the high wayfarer of a cleric’s house decides to strip the status from him, he can simply leave and go to another house, where he’ll be acknowledged as a wayfarer once again. Wise high wayfarers prize Darmonite clerics, who keep the more mystic traditions of Darmon. Any member of a community who studies the sayings and teachings of Darmon and has keen minds can become wayfarer, but only clerics know the special invocations Darmon taught his first empowered priests to use, to request divine magic.

Clerics know and can recite the countless names of Darmon (a few clerics know them all, but any small group



knows all the names between them). The quest to take on and understand one of those names is given to one of the faithful by a cleric, not by a normal wayfarer, and guidance is provided by a cleric on the way to interpret the name and its bearer’s experiences. This most mystical aspect of the faith is the province of clerics alone, not other wayfarers.

The clergy believe that in all his many meetings with mortals, Darmon set out an elaborate code to understand the very nature of the universe—all the planes of existence, the Nameless One, and the purpose of the cosmos. They believe that were one to truly understand all the sayings of Darmon, she could then see the world with what they call “the Golden Sight.” With the Golden Sight, one could know all things, understand all tongues, travel anywhere, speak with the gods, and know the universe for what it really is. So clerics of Darmon quest for lost aphorisms of Darmon, and interpret them to unlock the Golden Sight.

This work of the clergy of Darmon is a religious secret, known only to clerics—not even other members of the houses know they believe in a great, mystical combination of the sayings of Darmon. If everyone knew, the reasoning goes, then many would seek to stymie efforts to discover it. While it’s unlikely one would be killed over the secret, it’s not out of the realm of possibility.

Clerics of Darmon have the same titles as other members of the houses, and automatically become wayfarers, as noted previously. If a house's faithful have the option, they'll always make a cleric high wayfarer. No rules say the most powerful cleric of a house must be its high wayfarer, it is rare for it to happen any other way. If a novice cleric moves to a small community with an established high wayfarer who *isn't* a member of the cleric class, however, there is no reason to believe the community will suddenly oust a perfectly good leader in favor of an unseasoned one.

Most Darmonite clerics are chaotic good, and they roam the world or work with a particular house, seeking to advance the prosperity of all people, gain wisdom, share it, and further the quest for spiritual enlightenment through Darmon's aphorisms. Chaotic good clerics of Darmon are often adventurers, ministering to likeminded free spirits who seek travel, joy, and adventure over orderly doldrums.

There are many neutral good clerics of Darmon in the world as well. They usually serve as wayfarers and high wayfarers in houses, particularly in large mercantile cities and ports. They take the gifts of Darmon seriously, and try to help people understand one another. They are diplomats, language experts, and traders, often working to resolve disputes between merchants. Such clerics are absolutely in

love with the many splendid differences between all the races, and are ceaselessly fascinated by people. They love learning and exchanging knowledge.

Finally, chaotic neutral clerics of Darmon are nearly as common as chaotic good counterparts, though they are less likely to be found in cities. Such clerics believe Darmon's chosen people are rule-breakers, liars, thieves, pirates—people who live on the edge and seek enlightenment by disobeying worldly authorities. Such clerics travel far and wide, ministering to bandits in the woods, rebel armies in the mountains, and even the murderers found in dark places, throughout the world. Good and evil are of little import to them. They focus instead on the wisdom one can attain by flaunting rules. They are wild experientialists, trying as many new things and activities as they can, no matter how repugnant.

JOINING THE WAYFARERS

Only clerics devoted to Darmon can join the Wayfarers, and they choose the Travel (see **Chapter X**) or Trickery domains.

HEROES OF DARMON

The heroes of Darmon detach themselves from politics and even their religious houses. Unlike wayfarers, heroes abandon attachment to any one place or people and instead seek out new places, new adventures, and new glories. The goal of a hero is to do great things in the name of the mortal races. It's simple enough, and may lead to a life of terrific adventure, terrible danger, and fabulous wealth. While the hero embraces these things, they are not the objective—the hero strives to do good. The Darmonite faith is quite supportive of adventurers and the impulse to go forth and fight monsters, delve dungeons, win treasures, and conquer evil. The hero can be best understood as a perpetually blessed adventurer.

Like all members of the faith, heroes love debate, and argue over the many sayings of Darmon as fiercely as anyone else. They have the gifts of Darmon, and are excellent speakers, diplomats, and wily traders. Rather than blessing travelers, as the clerics do, heroes *are* the travelers, and possess all the skills necessary to live on the road.

Heroes have no titles and they do not even like to be called such. The Lord of the Ways has not paid much attention to the holy orders of his houses, so heroes have no reason to think much about what Darmon wants from them specifically, or to ask him for guidance. Instead, they strive to live as Darmon would live, were he mortal. They travel, teach, seek knowledge, smooth over conflicts, slay beasts, trick bad people, make fun of the pompous, and so on. They are perhaps the least obviously "holy" of all the orders, though members of the joyous brotherhood are certainly the most vulgar, and yet they gain his favor for they live as he would live, devoted to him and his ways. They wear his symbol, speak his name in their private prayers, and live to serve him. They simply believe that service to Darmon



does not involve much dogma or guidance from their god.

Because they do not like to be called “heroes of Darmon,” a hero of Darmon goes by “Sir,” or “Dame,” followed by her name. This is not a knighthood bestowed by any temporal power, but in Darmon’s order of arms.

The hero must live a life worthy of the name. The code of heroic conduct is as follows.

- **Valor:** Fight the good fight against the darkness; protect your companions and strangers alike; take the vanguard into danger, and the rearguard from it.
- **Joy:** Live your life as completely as any life can be lived; sponsor beauty and laughter with your wealth; contemplate delight, not despair, and happiness, not horror.
- **Unity:** Build the congress of mortality, do not take from it; ease conflicts and act as mediator; form fast and lifelong friendships; lead others to live more for their friends and family than for themselves.
- **Wealth:** Protect the wealth of the good people of the world; take away the wealth of the dark things; celebrate the wonders of prosperity, but do not become obsessed with your own wealth, for you can lead a wealthy life, but your other duties are more important.

Heroes prefer a balanced party of companions. Although powerful heroes are often found riding alone with their squires, pursuing great adventures, younger heroes form fast friendships with other adventurers, particularly warriors, rogues, and arcane spellcasters.

JOINING THE HEROES OF DARMON

Heroes are taught their skills by other heroes. Essentially, when one heeds the call to take up arms in Darmon’s name, one must find an established hero and ask her for training. These heroes take one such companion at a time. The companion is the hero’s squire, keeping the hero’s horse healthy, polishing their armor, and cleaning their weapons. Typically chaotic good, members of any class can join the heroes of Darmon, though most are fighters, rangers, and rogues.

RUNNERS OF DARMON

There are three orders blessed by Darmon, but only wayfarer clergy receive divine powers from him. The clerics and heroes are the obviously devout, and anyone looking at a member of either holy order would know immediately that they serve a god. Less obvious are the runners. Bruised and tattered from their travels, drinking in cheap alehouses on the way, and telling bawdy tales to dockworkers, the runners of Darmon hardly seem to be divine servants.

Found wherever people worship Darmon, the runners are society’s most skilled messengers. Necessary for war, diplomacy, commerce, and any other mortal endeavor waged across a vast expanse, message carriers are viewed with suspicion in some places for bringing the evils of the outside into secluded areas, and revered as heroes in others. Runners of Darmon care little for how they are



viewed and, instead, live to carry their messages wherever they must go. This fits well with a life of adventure, as many runners take messages off to faraway places, and go on side quests with their companions while they’re there.

Runners are blessed by Darmon. As the Master of the Road is the messenger for the gods, so the runners are the messengers of mortals. They emulate their god in his many travels, in his constant jesting, in his lust for life, but most importantly, in his perfect record. In all recorded history, there is no tale or myth that shows Darmon failing to deliver a message. The Champion of the Gods has followed men to the depths of Hell to deliver messages from the gods, and so too will the most powerful runners travel to the worst places, if necessary, to do their duty. Runners are instantly identifiable by their common uniform, for all runners wear cloaks in the likeness of Darmon’s Cloak of the Heavens. These are usually midnight blue, with bright pieces of glass sewn on, or silver stars painted on them, but some runners affix gemstones to their cloaks to represent the stars.

JOINING THE RUNNERS

Rangers and rogues are the best runners, but any class with a love of travel can take on the runner’s tasks. It requires a devotion to walking in Darmon’s footsteps, though, so it is highly unlikely that a cleric or paladin of another faith, a druid, or a monk will assume the role. It is also not a terribly lawful profession, and lawful-minded folk tend to stay away from it.

GODDESS OF LOVE AND THE ARTS

AYMARA

SWEET, LOVELY, FAIREST, THE GOLDEN, THE SINGER,
SISTER OF SONG, JEWEL OF HEAVEN, LADY OF LOVE

Aymara (ai-MAR-uh) is the chaotic good goddess of love, music, passion, romance, marriage, lovers, musicians, artists, and bards. She is associated with all aesthetic delights, and her name is spoken first by those who see the arts as the greatest achievement of the mortal races. Curiously, Aymara did not bring music and dance to the world. Her mother did, but none surpass Aymara's skill in the arts, and Zheenkeef has never been too interested watching over artists.

Aymara is usually shown as the most beautiful woman the artist can imagine, and therefore is whatever race the artist prefers. She is usually shown with golden hair, for she is remembered as Aymara the Golden, but occasionally her hair is dark, and her skin maintains the golden burnish. She is very tall and always dressed in the finest courtly attire. Many depict her with a lyre under her arm or in her lap, as she plays and sings for the delight of others. Other images show her singing so sweetly that even the rocks weep.

Musical instruments of gold or silver represent the goddess, but a silver lyre like the one she plays in so many legends has become the most common one. Members of her clergy wear small versions of the instruments they play, so a flautist might wear a small silver flute, or a harpist, a golden harp. If one simply needs a symbol, though, one always uses the lyre, the most universally recognized instrument of Aymara.

Songbirds (particularly the nightingale) are associated with the goddess. She is also closely tied to the pegasi, and rides a silver pegasus herself, for the only appropriate steed for the most beautiful of the gods is the most beautiful of beasts.

Aymara's worship is extremely popular among the elves and, in olden days, she was thought to be their mother and father. The elves still sometimes refer to her as mother, and show her in the comely shape of a female elf. The other races revere her, especially at weddings, but she is not particularly popular among dwarves, whose artists are usually adherents of Korak, and make clever and beautiful works with their artisans' hands. Among all the gods, Aymara is the only one regularly associated with the Shee, the last of the div races remaining on earth. Some believe she tarries in their forests, which are now fairy woods, and many dryads, naiads, pixies, and sprites have reveled under the moon with the Lady of Love.

MYTHS

LOVE'S CONQUEST

LONG AND LONG AGO, THERE WAS A POWERFUL KING CALLED Aragos. It was said Aragos, having once known love and happiness, and having lost it, became the greatest enemy of love and beauty who ever lived. He outlawed all forms of happiness

and delight in his kingdom, declaring music and dance to be treason, and love to be an illegitimate cause for marriage. All unions were to be arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, and all celebrations were to be sanctified with silence.

The gods found these decrees troublesome, but none more so than Sweet Aymara, who found the two things dearest to her banned in one of the most powerful mortal realms. All the other gods saw her distress, and many were moved to right this wrong, for there is no one more loved by the gods than Aymara the Golden, the Jewel of Heaven.

Darmon visited Aragos' kingdom first, and learned that none but the king could alter his dread policies. Aymara's brother whispered to counselors and nobles, but none had the power to change the law, no matter how swayed they were by Darmon's words. As Aragos' patron, Majestic Naryne paid him visits in his dreams and told him to move from his path, for nothing good would come of it in the end. Aragos refused, and convinced Naryne that it was his right as king to make such laws, for they did not strip his subjects of any of the rights granted them by the gods.

By the end, most of the gods had come to Aymara and told her there was little they could do to change Aragos' path. Her parents Tinel and Zheenkeef both saw Aragos' decisions as the sort of folly that yields greatness. "How will men know inspiration if they are never laid low? Contented lives rarely sow the seeds of invention," her mother declared. "Heroes are born of dark times, and dark times are made by such men. Are we as gods to save the mortals from their follies and their splendor?" her father asked. And soon the other gods agreed, telling her that in this case there was no real harm done; after all, it was only music and love being denied, and all would be righted in the end.

The Sister of Song grew cold toward her family. Aymara the Golden said, softly, "I do not wonder at this, for all of you are jealous of my skills in music and love, the greatest powers that exist."

Uproar arose in the hall, with some of gods shouting in outrage, and others laughing at Aymara's absurd claim. Only Darmon and Morwyn were silent, for Darmon loves his sister well, and would not see her so basely mocked, and Morwyn felt in her heart that her lovely niece might have the right of it. Once the laughter and shouting grew still, Morwyn, gentle Morwyn, put her hand on Fairest Aymara's cheek and said, "Oh, loveliest of children, you speak wisely, for indeed love and compassion are the most powerful of things. We forget this and think love a luxury, like bathing in pure water, when indeed it is the water itself, without which all things must shrivel and die."

This was too much for many of the gods, and soon Terak rose up from his throne and declared, "Love is a fine thing, it is true, but the strength of flesh is greater by far. I will break this king, this Aragos, and show you what is strongest!" And though it set him against his own daughter, Tinel could not allow Terak to make this claim unopposed. Magnificent Tinel stood

and declared, "Knowledge is greater than any fist, learning keener than any blade! It is within the mind that the greatest power is locked. I will show this king his folly and you will all know I speak true!"

And so, the gods assumed mortal forms and descended to Aragos' kingdom. The full family of the gods came to open court. It was a grim and bleak affair, for Aragos had forbidden laughter, and all spoke in humble whispers before him. But when the chamberlain called upon Terak in his mortal form, the King of Heaven strode forth and spoke boldly. "Usurper of love!" he named Aragos. "You will lift your laws, or by my axe you will suffer. I'll destroy half your kingdom with a single blow, and with each following blow destroy half of what remains, until you yield this folly! Look upon me and tremble!" And Terak suddenly cast off his mortal form, and revealed himself to be a shining lion of white and gold. There could be no mistaking him. All in the court knew Terak walked among them, and they trembled. But Aragos was unmoved.

"You are as clever as you are mighty, Terak, Marshal of the Heavens." Aragos bowed his head. "I will slaughter one hundred oxen in your name, and burn many bolts of silk. But this thing you ask I will not do, for by your threat you prove it empty. You will destroy half of my kingdom at a time until you leave only a nib, but in so doing you reveal that you know the madness of destroying a thing to save it. You threaten to destroy in such a manner that there will always be half of something left, betraying that you do not desire to destroy my lands at all, for otherwise you would threaten to destroy them all. And if you do not wish to destroy them, what good is your strength to change me? For I will not change short of being destroyed."

"Then I will kill you alone to save your kingdom!" declared Terak.

"For being a lawful king who cares for his people?" Aragos asked. "I think not! Let the haughty scribes and scholars say what they will about Terak the Mighty, he is no fool. You desire to see law and fairness prevail, and you know I am not evil. You will not kill me, for to do so will tell history that Terak is capricious and careless. I love you too well to believe you would be such as that."

Terak then grew silent for a long while, but at last he blessed Aragos, saving face by laughing. "'Twas a test I gave this hour, Aragos, and you have proved worthy! You show you love me well, and I have no quarrel with you," Terak declared, and so departed. He was gone but a moment before a wandering wise man appeared before the king.

"You have shown that might is useless against you, great king, but I wonder if reason will prevail. For your decree is wrong!" But Aragos was wise and knew this was Tinel who stood before him. The two argued the fairness of Aragos' law for many hours and, at last, Tinel conceded the point. Aragos showed the Keeper of the Keys that pain is only possible when one has something to lose. Joy in all its forms, particularly love, gives one a powerful thing to lose and, therefore, leads to the greatest pain. While it might not be kind of Aragos to outlaw music, dance, and love, it was certainly fair, for he was saving his people from pain, and was no hypocrite.

The two brothers bested by a mortal, the gods looked on in wonder. For Aragos had proven himself great among the mortals, and not the small-minded tyrant they had assumed



him to be. But then from the back of the hall came a singing, glorious to the ear. And the court parted to reveal the fairest maiden any had ever beheld. She sat in one of the attendant chairs in the corner; in her lap was a silver lyre with a shell of lapis and chalcedony. She sang a wordless tune and her voice filled all who heard it with joy, except Aragos. He rose in his seat and commanded the guards to stop her singing, but they could not, for they were entranced by her glorious voice. So Aragos went to her side to stop her himself, but when he drew close and gazed upon her, he too fell into a deep enchantment. The ice that once covered his heart was shattered, and he was soon sorely in love with this maiden fair. She was, of course, the Lady of Love herself.

The song completed, Aragos fell to his knees and placed his head in the lady's lap. He wept for forgiveness, and she gave it to him. At once, he lifted his bans. When the word was sent out that his proscriptions against song, dance, and love were quit, Terak and Tinel protested. "You have proven nothing, Aymara, for you enchanted him with song and love!" Terak grumbled and, for once, his brother Tinel agreed.

"And you were fair when you threatened to kill him and destroy his kingdom? Ah, but it is no matter, for it is not in Aragos that you will see the true power of love and music. Look out now, Father and Uncle, at the people of this land. Free now of their king's tyranny, will they take up arms to overthrow him in bitter rage, as you might, Uncle? Will they gather to debate a new government, and new laws to replace the old, as you would, Father?"

Of course, they did neither. For the many who had once played instruments of music went to secret holds where their gambols and viols and harps and gongs had been hidden away those many years. And when they beheld them, they wept with joy, and then gathered them together and made a great music that filled the entire kingdom. Even young folk who had always lived without music knew how to dance, delighting in the sounds of the instruments, and on every face shone a smile. Aymara then accepted the apology of her father and uncle, for they saw then that hers had proven a greater power in this struggle. And to them she said, "Anyone may kill, Uncle, but if the heart is set, death holds no fear. And though I love you, Father, one cannot rationally argue for love, for love is beyond reason. All hearts, lovely and hardened, may delight at music, even those that have been set against it for many years. And from music's glory arises love, the most precious of things."

Looking at Aragos, they knew it was true. For though he had professed a deep hatred for music for many years, he was now deep in love with this maiden who had played so sweetly on her lyre. And Aymara saw him then as the great king he might be, for he had stared unmoved at the white and golden lion of Terak, and unflinching, argued with her father. So, she took him as husband, and they gave one another three strong sons and four fair daughters. And each of them loved music.

ARTS AND DESIRES

Aymara is a true patron of the arts and desire. As the myth reveals, she cannot abide a place where music is not heard or where love is shunned. She works to make a world safe for love, delight, and art, but she knows the world is not so happy a place that people can spend

all their days in revelry. She is realistic about her wish. Aymara reminds mortals that in beauty they can find hope, and in love and music they can be reminded of why they persevere through difficulties.

Any seeking to ease pain through beauty are especially blessed by Aymara, and she often makes her blessing manifest by filling their lives with love and delight. However, she also sees deep into the artist's temperament, and knows the best among them might require sorrow to make their greatest works. She has been known to oblige, providing the tragedies and afflictions for some of the mortal races' greatest artists, resulting in the saying, "as unhappy as a singer." She believes the great art that arises from these sorrowful lives do such long-term good that one lifetime of pain is a worthy trade. Besides, these artists end up rewarded in death, abiding with her in Heaven, or in the Fourth Hall of Maal's kingdom.

Aymara is certainly mercurial. Her favor falls upon and departs from mortals with equal alacrity. She is very emotional, longing for true and immortal love. From time to time, she believes she finds a mortal couple with such a love, and heaps blessings on them, only to see them quarrel over nonsense, and then strips them of her blessings. Tales of such star-crossed lovers fill countless comedies and tragedies.

If there are two emotions in which she is constant, it is her love of her family and her hatred for Kador. She believes, rightly, that Kador, who is now Asmodeus, plots to destroy the kingdom of Heaven. Because of this, she remains forever vigilant, and even directs an order of mortals to watch over matters diabolical, prepared for a war against Hell.

SERVANTS OF AYMARA

Aymara has many servants, all of whom love her perfectly, for she inspires awe and love in all who behold her.

THE CHORUS OF THE BIRDS

In a great aviary of pearl and silver, high in the kingdom of Heaven, there live ten thousand birds. Each bird was, in mortal life, a great singer—usually one who led a miserable life, and was thereby inspired to create magnificent art. Now the birds sing all day in such glorious harmonies even the angelic choirs wonder at them. Aymara sometimes sends a member of the Chorus to earth to visit a singer and inspire him—though this is not as common as claimed by the bards, who often say they learned their latest song from a bird of the Chorus.

ARATHELLE

A silver pegasus, Arathelle is Aymara's steed in the vaults of Heaven as well as on the rare occasions she descends to the mortal world. Arathelle is a wise and lovely beast, able to call other pegasi to her side and to communicate with all manner of steeds, including the unicorns. Her coat and mane are silver, as though spun from the very metal of the earth, but her eyes are deep as wells, containing the insight and wisdom of the ages. Legends tell of heroes favored by Aymara who were saved from the brink

of death by Arathelle, swooping down from Heaven and carrying them to safety.

THE SEVEN

Aymara's seven children by Aragos are patrons of musicians: Aragoth, Barawyn, Celedynne, Dariun, Erylwyn, Fionali, and Geromul. They correspond to the notes of the musical scale, the seven rhythms and the seven types of instrument: reeds, drums, horns, flutes and whistles, cymbals and gongs, plucked and struck strings, and bowed strings, in that order. They visit composers and players, aiding their songwriting. Just as the Chorus of the Birds does not visit half so many singers as claim to have seen them, the Seven do not aid nearly as many musicians as claim to have been aided.



THE LYCEUMS OF AYMARA

The lyceums of Aymara, where the Aymarans worship, are sacred and lovely places. Popular among those dedicated to Aymara and others, the lyceums host concerts, plays, dances, and other performances. In major cities, there are events in the lyceums almost nightly. There are few performance halls finer than these.

The worship of Aymara is enormously popular, though few dedicate themselves to her wholly. As the goddess of love as well as the arts, people come to her lyceums at least once in their lives to pray to her when they believe they have found love. The lyceums play host to most marriages as well. While those sworn to only one of the gods in the pantheon or members of the Great Church are likely to get married in those other churches, most people get married at either a lyceum or a Rontran foundation. After all, Aymara is the goddess of love, and can bless a union's romantic heart, while Grandmother Earth is the wellspring of fertility. At either church, the other church's goddess is invoked during the ceremony.

On the surface, the Aymaran faith exists to promote love and the arts. It gives money to artists who are worthy of regard, holds festivals in its halls, praises love, and unites couples under its roof. However, the Aymarans are not content to merely celebrate beauty—they know efforts must be made to make and keep the world safe for beauty. This ethos lies at the heart of the Aymaran agenda. While the lyceums promote love and art, the holy orders of the faith work abroad, opposing the enemies of love and beauty, just as Aymara did in legend. Much of this effort is focused on opposing the work of Asmodeus. That is the deeper, more abiding purpose of the Aymaran faith: to oppose Hell and all its works. For if there is one being in all the planes who Aymara hates, it is him.

Aymara takes pride in her church, though she seems to have more interest in its public face than in the secret

order of the watchful eye.

While she does hate Asmodeus, and comes to the aid of the members of this secret order, she believes her church is at its best when it is promoting beauty, not combat.

Aymara has difficulty understanding the mortal need to attack what offends them. Hell is evil and Asmodeus is the greatest evil of all, but why can't her faithful be content with the joys of art? She gives them great power to protect those who pursue lives of beauty, and they make her proud, keeping artists and their works safe, yet her faithful don't just rest then, and make art themselves. They remain vigilant, questing against evil even when it's a distant threat. She admires their courage, persistence, and faith, but also knows their struggle, waged in secret, might take them closer to the darkness than is healthy. Spend too long studying the ways of the beast to destroy it, and you might become it.

While Aymara would prefer her church to pursue only love and beauty, this does not mean she tries to move them away from their vigilance and zeal. She simply worries over them, like a mother over her children.

DOCTRINE

"In all the history of the world, hatred and ugliness have never held sway for long. Not once. Though for generations some vile tyrant may seem unassailable, in the end, love and beauty have always prevailed. We must simply hold our faith in beauty deep in our hearts, and its victory is assured, in the end."

—*Celebrant Andivae Corallyn, on her 230th birthday*

While Andivae's statement might not have been true for the entire world—indeed, there might be evil empires that have stood the test of time—her statement holds the essence of Aymaran philosophy. These are not people who rage against the ugliness of the world, but preserve beauty.

Aymaran churches are places of celebration, joy, art and creation. Spending time within their confines, one might never suspect there is misery and ugliness in the world. The faithful do not dwell on such things, seeking instead to keep the lights of delight, love, and art burning brightly against the outside darkness. Each person, in exploring the greatest expressions of beauty she can make, serves to make the world better. The works of most will be forgotten as soon as they are made, but the mere act of making something beautiful, expressing your inner light, makes the world better. The Aymarans believe there is no higher or better force in the world than an individual striving for love and beauty.

Most Aymarans sees themselves as a part of a historical struggle against evil, where their part of the battle is to create beauty and appreciate it; and to love, and be loved.

SORROW'S SONG

In the wars against Kador, Korak made a light blade for Aymara with which she could strike quickly, while dancing. She called the blade "Sorrow's Song," since while wielding it she heard the music of warfare, and found it the most sorrowful sound she had ever heard. But even in war, Aymara heard music, danced, and was beautiful. Sorrow's Song is a rapier, and many of Aymara's followers, particularly the watchful eyes, seek to learn the song she heard in that great war, so they might better oppose evil.

Their faith is focused inward, and is based on self-exploration and creation. By being people who bask in beauty, they oppose those who would cover the world with hate and ugliness. "You're a soldier of love," is something often said to criticize people for their lack of militancy against wickedness. Indeed, most Aymarans practice a docile faith and meditate on fair things, not the threat of darkness.

Yet beneath this seemingly passive outlook, some Aymarans have a militant side. In deep places below the lyceums, in secret conclaves, they plan their unending war on Hell. Long ago, the elders of the Aymaran faith determined they could do the most harm to Asmodeus and his machinations if they moved against him in secret. Let the more lawful churches march out to war in their shining armor. The Aymarans would use the shadows to their advantage against evil. If the forces of Hell believe the Aymaran faith produces nothing more than meek, happy romantic artists, agents for joy and goodness can move freely, and strike where least expected.

Beyond simple alignment concerns, the Aymaran faith opposes Hell for two reasons. First, Aymara never forgot the damage done by Kador to her family, and hates him with perfect spite. Second, Hell would give the narrow-minded and spiritually ugly power; they'd ban beauty and crush delight.

AYMARAN PRAYERS

The daily prayer of the Aymaran faith says a great deal about their outlook. Each Aymaran strives to accomplish the points enumerated in this prayer each day, every day. It is typically sung or chanted in the morning, upon waking.

*"Sister of Song, guide me this day.
I seek the glory in my heart,
I seek the beauty in my soul,
I seek the love never ending;
Help me to find what I seek.
"There is a song in all things:
I will hear it, I will hear it.
There is love in all things:
I will find it, I will find it.
"Fairest Aymara, grace unending,
Show me the perfection that eludes me,
Lead me to the pure places of the earth,
Bring me to the unity of all that is best."*

HOLY DAYS

Lords and nobles with a sense of the artistic, or who wish to present themselves as artistically savvy, often work with the faith to promote the Aymaran Festivities. These usually take place in the spring and summer. Their size and importance depend on the wealth and prominence of sponsoring nobles. The festivals are often given peculiar, grandiose names which nearly always mention the sponsors, such as, "The Worthy Festival of the Five Perfect Blossoms in Spring, by Lord Pembroke Callington's Charity."

Local celebrants sanctify the Aymaran Festivities in opening and closing ceremonies. Once every fifteen years, a great council of celebrants convenes to organize a Bardic Championship. At such times, the celebrants spread word to the four corners of the civilized world to tell bards that the Championship is coming, though in times of peace, artists anticipate the event, and travel to where it will likely be held in any event. It takes two years to move from announcement to commencement. At the Championship, bards compete in contests of composition, playing, singing, drama, and comedy. The winners are proclaimed the greatest bards of the civilized world, blessed by Aymara, and are given beautiful silver medallions to mark their victories. A Bardic Championship is considered a profoundly holy time for Aymarans, and they come from all around to witness such grandeur.

SAINTS

Most Aymaran saints were talented artists, beatified posthumously, after a life of producing great works. A council made up of the fair fellows of at least three lyceums name the saint. Such councils are called by a unanimous vote of the fair fellows from one lyceum—usually the one where the artist in question worshiped.

The process of beatification involves a massive celebration of the artist's works. The council gathers at the sponsoring lyceum, where the works are displayed or performed for a week or two, depending upon how large the body of work is. At the end, council members must agree to beatify the artist and, if they do, the artist is henceforth referred to as a saint whenever her name is mentioned.

HOLY ORDERS

The Aymarans are thought to have two great holy orders: the fair fellowship (clergy) and the aesthetes (holy warriors). Most believe the fair fellowship controls the lyceums, the members of which are divided into the singers and celebrants. The aesthetes are the "active" order, working against the enemies of beauty.

But a third, secret order called the watchful eye controls the lyceums and leads the war against Hell. The church secretly funds the watchful eyes, whose members include the unsheathed blades, tireless sentries, songs unsung, and unblinking eyes. While the unblinking eyes, heads of this secret order, stand outside the day-to-day functioning of the faith, they do issue commands to the fair fellowship and aesthetes, when necessary. The church keeps the order

secret to protect its members and activities from Hell and its minions.

The average lyceum has at least twelve singers and two celebrants in residence. Aesthetes rarely reside at lyceums. One or all the fair fellowship in residence can be part of the watchful eye, as can any number of parishioners.

FAIR FELLOWSHIP OF AYMARA

A beautiful order, the fair fellowship focuses on love, song, and celebration. The amount of song and celebration varies by culture. Dwarven lyceums might stand out among their people because their clergy smile on occasion. Elven lyceums are even more filled with song and delight than the average elven household—and that’s quite an achievement.

A member of the fair fellowship who is hit with tragedy tries to rally against the darkness with delight. However, some lose the mirth necessary to be a member, and might wander away to pursue other interests until they find their hearts lifted once more. The fair fellowship has no place for the grim, conniving, heavy-hearted, ponderous, and sad. Of course, there is room for seriousness among the fair fellowship. Tragedians, dramatists, balladeers, and epic poets who deal with very serious topics are all welcome in the order. There is only difficulty when sorrow infects the person to the point where work becomes impossible.

Most fair fellows are chaotic good, and such members do not think much of elaborate systems of governance. Most authority is threatened by the raw honesty of real art, and fair fellows test their limits. If a line is drawn, they cross it artistically, and they strongly believe the lyceums are places for such expressions. They dedicate themselves to good, though, and never promote evil in their art. They desire all to be free and happy, and to live in abounding love. Since societies fail to fulfill these desires, the fair fellowship works to uplift people toward these goals with its art. The lyceums are thus places of freedom and goodness, where each person can explore what they need to find love. Outside the lyceums, they promote art and love in all the people they meet, convincing peasants to sing and dance, or nobles to recite poetry.

Some fair fellows are neutral good, and do not have the same rebellious streak common among Aymarans. Nor are they focused on each person’s individual quest for joy. Instead, the ideals of art and love interest them. These fair fellows want great art to fill the world, so they go to great artists and help them. They want love to fill the world, so they find people consumed by hate, and free them of its bondage. While most fair fellows believe it sensible to wander the countryside teaching farmers to dance, neutral good members of the order focus on their pursuits, finding the places in need of beauty and love, and dedicating themselves to working there.

A vocal minority of the order is chaotic neutral. These fair fellows focus on revelries of art and of love. They perform bawdy comedies, drink heavily, sing ribald songs, and proposition anyone they find appealing. They believe Aymara is best represented by lives free of modesty and convention, and that all people should experience physical love, song, and dance on a regular basis.



SINGER

Most members of the fair fellowship are called singers, and addressed as “kindly brother,” or “kindly sister.” They are introduced by full title. Upon induction into the order, singers are usually charged with spreading delight, love, and beauty in the world. They go abroad, learning the songs of distant cultures, and performing dramas for people in remote lands. Singers who remain at their lyceums assist the celebrants with day-to-day ceremonies and tasks.

CELEBRANT

Time and experience allow singers to become celebrants in a splendid ceremony of song and comedy. The ceremony culminates in a performance by the celebrants or a display of their work, after which the faithful lift them on their shoulders and carry them around the lyceum three times. Finally, they’re bathed in a fountain, or a great cauldron of cool water. This ceremony represents the legendary return of Aymara to Heaven after she converted one of the forefathers of the dragons to the path of good. She rode around Heaven three times on Arathelle’s back and then bathed in the river divine, at the foot of the Heavenly mount.

After the bathing, all proclaim the fair fellow to be a celebrant, at which time he rises from the water and takes on a new name. The name may come from a famous song, play, or poem, or might even be a musical instrument, a type of music, or a dramatic device. Celebrants take names based on the area of the arts that most interest

them. The new name is placed before the celebrant's birth name, and she is henceforth referred to with both names (such as Andivae Corallyn above, named after the famous comedic rascal, Andivae, but maintaining her birth name, Corallyn). Celebrants are world-renowned artists, and critics of art. In them, bards have loving patrons, and those with a tale to tell find a ready audience among them. They are addressed as "fairest brother" or "fairest sister," and are introduced by full title.

To the eyes of the world, there is no higher authority in the Aymaran faith than the celebrants. All celebrants are equal and decide matters by unanimous consent, or majority rule when unanimity is impossible. Most celebrants stay within a lyceum, which is nominally controlled by a council of all its resident celebrants.

JOINING THE FAIR FELLOWSHIP

Becoming a singer does not take much time; it only requires the proper mental attitude and devotion to Aymara. A prospective member of the order is taught all the traditional Aymaran songs of reverence and worship.



This takes a few months, but is not taxing. At the end of the time the new singer becomes a cleric with the Beauty domain, which is described in **Chapter X**.

AESTHETES OF AYMARA

The aesthetes are the fairest of all holy orders in the churches of the pantheon. Always attired in shining mail or fine cloth, wearing garland wreaths of roses and lilacs, the aesthetes are shining champions of love and beauty. They compose poetry, play lyres and harps, sing as they ride across the lands, laugh loudly, and delight in the company of all good people. Their horses are often covered in gaily ringing bells, and their shields bear the blazon of a golden harp, or some other happy image. The aesthetes seek out places in the world where beauty is threatened, or has been lost, and they fight to make sure beauty prevails.

Aesthetes must stay true to their selves and their love of art and beauty. Their credo is simple:

If you can make the world more beautiful, do so.

If your life and your toil can protect or recover a work of beauty, give it freely.

If love is opposed or stymied, do all you can to be its champion.

Aesthetes prefer the company of bards, with some becoming their personal champions and bodyguards. Aesthetes, like most Aymarans, are fond of the faithful of all the gods of the tree, since the Aymaran faith has universally positive relations with the other churches. For this reason, aesthetes travel with members of other churches. Aesthetes avoid keeping company with uncouth or hateful people, and certainly won't accompany petty thieves who steal and hoard works of beauty, but oppose them instead.

The order has absolutely no power structure; aesthetes report to no one, though most accept direction from the watchful eyes when necessary. Members rarely gather, and the only time one might see more than one aesthete, is when one trains another.

Upon joining the order, candidates receive the title of aesthete, which they maintain for the rest of their days, unless, of course, they fall from grace. They are addressed as "fair sir" or "fair dame" and introduced by full title. Newly made aesthetes each receive a token either from the aesthete who trained them, or from a celebrant who observes their induction to the order. The token is an instrument, a poem, a song, a play, or another symbol of artistic endeavor, and is hers to protect for all her days. This is purely symbolic, but the aesthetes carry the token always, so its beauty remains close and serves as a reminder of their duty.

JOINING THE AESTHETES

A prospective aesthete simply receives the call from Aymara. Once she hears the goddess summoning her to service, the initiate must find another aesthete for training. This process takes one year of traveling together, doing great deeds in the name of beauty and love. At the end of this time, the aesthete becomes a paladin. Most aesthetes are chaotic good, and when it is time to take their oaths, they typically swear the Oath of Perfection (see **Chapter X**).

WATCHFUL EYES

The watchful eyes make up the third and secret holy order, the members of which members refer to each other as “the watchers.” They oppose Hell and all its works, and represent its most dangerous enemies. The watchers understand the differences between the powers of the dark planes. Demons seek to destroy, consume, and wallow in vice, but devils, led by their horrid and ingenious mastermind, seek control. Hell moves to make Asmodeus king of the universe, which he believes is his rightful place, according to a unified, continuous plan devils have pursued for millennia. Someone must oppose it, and thus the order of the watchful eye formed.

Watchers train themselves to hear the angelic choirs, and sing notes in harmony with the crystalline ringing of the celestial sphere itself. They learn to dance to the song of the blades, just as Aymara did the wars against Kador. They direct lyceums to gather information on diabolical activities. They work as spies, whisperers, wanderers, and artists, all feeding a network that monitors Hell’s plan.

It’s not clear if Hell knows of the watchers. Certainly, Hell has moved directly against the church before, and the watchers still believe they secretly plot against the faithful. Someday this struggle will come to a head, and each side will reveal its preparations against the other.

Watchers rarely reveal their affiliation with the order. They do not wear symbols of office or refer to their order, though they do have a series of seemingly innocuous invocations that identify them to one another, particularly when strung together. For example, one might say “I hear the music clearly today!” Another would respond with, “What does it tell you?” This is answered by, “Aymara’s song is in every good person’s ear,” which is answered by “Indeed. I hear it clearly.” Anyone who blatantly identifies himself as a watcher instead is either lying, or is attempting to induct someone into the order.

As a secret society, the order has many levels of status. Those at lower levels know they serve a higher authority, and the heads of the order are called the unblinking eyes, but have no idea where they reside or who they might be. While there are titles among the watchers, they are for internal reference alone. For example, the unsheathed blades are called “blades.” No one would ever say “I’m Blade Kobor!” However, a message from one of Kobor’s superior to another might say, “Ten blades are ready to move. Blade Kobor has infiltrated the abbey.”

BLADE

A new watcher belongs to the unsheathed blades, referred to as “blades.” They are watched closely for anything that would indicate they are diabolical infiltrators. A new blade might wait months, even years, while assuming some position where they can gather intelligence on Hell’s forces, before being contacted with some active mission. Some blades are ordered to perform acts that seem senseless to them. For example: “Wear a purple cloak and walk about the market on such and such a day, but do not talk to anyone but the merchants, and only to buy what you need, as you normally would.” Each blade is supervised by a tireless sentry.

TIRELESS SENTRY

After years of service to the order, the cleverest and most useful members of the order become tireless sentries, referred to as “sentries.” The chiefs of a geographic region, sentries watch over local blades, disseminate orders among them, and pass information up to the song unsung above them. They do not inform blades under their command of the identities of other members of the watchful eye, except when necessary. Thus, if a blade is captured or turned, she cannot betray much of the order. Similarly, a tireless sentry doesn’t learn who her comrade sentries are unless the song unsung who commands her deems it necessary.

SONG UNSUNG

Eventually, tireless sentries learn more about the people who control the order. Such individuals receive a summons to one of the many secret enclaves of the unblinking eyes, who head of the order. There they learn the identities of other tireless sentries within a cluster of regions, and become their supervisors, coordinating their operations. At the meeting, the candidate takes the title of song unsung (or simply “song”). Songs operate with a good deal of autonomy, sifting through intelligence reports and directing subordinates’ activities. They report to one or two unblinking eyes above them, and regularly attend planning meetings for high-ranking officials of the order. A song unsung will know of others of his rank and if interrogated, might severely injure the order.

UNBLINKING EYE

A council of seven, the unblinking eyes (or just “eyes”) plan the Aymaran war on Hell. Only a unanimous vote by the sitting eyes can elevate a song to membership upon the death or retirement of one of the other eyes. The council oversees all operations, making sure the order remains a secret one as it battles Hell. They rarely meet in one place, preferring to communicate by magical means.

JOINING THE WATCHERS

Becoming a watcher requires being nominated by a sentry, and likely means one has been watched for at least a year by other members of the order. The induction usually involves the prospective member being kidnapped by friends and acquaintances in the order, and taken to a safe location. There, prospects are asked about their faith, their notions of Hell, and their deepest hopes. The candidates then undergo a *test of souls* (see **Chapter X**). At last, they learn about the order and may join. Refusal results in candidates having their memories erased by magic, but acceptance sees them begin their training to become blades, until they’re ready to act at a moment’s notice or engage in the long-term business of intelligence gathering.

Most members are bards (of any kind, though many belong to the College of Virtue, described in **Chapter X**), rogues (arcane tricksters), sorcerers (of divine inspiration), and others who value song, and pay homage to Aymara. Members of other gods’ clergies, monks, and druids almost never join the watchers.

GOD OF THE FORGE AND ARTISANS

KORAK

LORD OF WRIGHTS, GRAND WRIGHT, FORGER OF SOULS,
KING OF THE CRUCIBLE, MASTER, HAMMER HAND, CLEVER HANDED

Korak (CORE-ack) is the neutral good god of smiths, artisans, carpenters, masons, and laborers of all variety. He is the champion of the dwarves, the god of hard work, and the defender of cities, and other great symbols of mortal endeavor.

Korak's appearance varies from culture to culture. He, along with his cousin Darmon, traveled among the mortal races in disguise, and taught them many tricks and wonders, so each race represents him as one of their own. Regardless of racial appearance, he always looks powerfully muscled, with a great smith's hammer in his hand, and has deep, black eyes like coal. In some statues and paintings, he wears glittering armor as he did in times of war, long ago. The elves most often show him holding up some fantastic creation—a swan made of silver, or a crown of pearl and emerald—while dwarves usually represent him toiling away at the forge.

Korak wields a forge hammer that's as heavy as a mountain. Those who follow him and must fight wield any kind of hammer—warhammers, light hammers, even hooked hammers—to emulate the god. Some use mauls with enormous heads of metal on thick wooden shafts, but they must be strong to swing such a weapon.

The symbols of Korak are his hammer and the anvil. They can be shown together, or an adherent might use just one of them. When a symbol must be made simply or quickly, such as when it must be stamped on a sword's pommel, an outline of the hammer is sufficient.

Oxen, the mule, the horse, and other beasts of burden are associated with the god, but the bull is the strongest of his animal affinities. Its strength can be harnessed by those who treat it well, and its horns await those who treat it badly. People also associate Korak with creatures made from metal, particularly mighty gorgons and metallic golems.

Korak, like his cousin Darmon, is universally popular among the mortal races. All mortals make things with their hands, build monuments to their societies, and create wonders from metals and gems. Among the mortal races, though, the dwarves hold him dearest, for Korak taught them many crafts.

MYTHS

A DWARVEN LEGEND

FOR THE FIRST THOUSAND YEARS OF THE DWARVES' HISTORY, all our peoples were united in a great city. It was built in a fabulous series of caves, where each hall was lovelier than the last. At the end of the thousand years, the caves began to shake and shift. The dwarf-fathers thought themselves under attack, and many people fled. Eventually it became clear: Our city was not built inside of caves at all, but in the head of Korak, the Forger of Souls.

To His eternal glory, the Grand Wright was not angered that small folk had built homes in His head while He slept, and He did not smite them. Rather, He waited for all to depart from the caves of His mind, and then assumed a form in the likeness of our forefathers. Walking among us, He taught us many cunning secrets, and gave us many blessings. He aided us in building new homes, and taught the dwarves the names of all the gods, blessing each of them, but most especially His beloved sister, Anwyn, who had awoken Him from slumber. He showed us how to respect the Wellspring of Life, Rontra the Earth, as we built new homes in the deep places. He took us on great journeys to each of the highest mountains, introduced us to the other races, and even gave us an audience before His cousin, Darmon, who showed us the wonders of trade.

At the end of this golden age of the dwarves, the Lord of Wrights, Korak Hammer Hand, turned His thoughts back to His family. He decided to part company with the dwarves. At His farewell, He gave the dwarves three stones of incredible power that He had forged in our fires, and a promise more precious than any stone: that one day He would return to teach us new ways. We await him still.

ALL FOR LOVE

AFTER GRAND WRIGHT KORAK DEPARTED FROM THE dwarves, he came to the aid of his half-brother Maal, building for him a magnificent subterranean realm, where all the dead might be judged, and live on, if they were not reborn. He set down in that realm a great forge fire, in which flawed souls might be remade at the pleasure of the gods. Though it is rare, from time to time Korak will go to his half-brother's realm to mend a broken spirit.

After building Maal's realm, Clever Handed Korak returned to the mortal world and began to travel with his cousin, Darmon. Both went in disguise and taught the races of mortals many secrets, such as the making of steel, and the secret of arches. The Lord of Wrights came to be very fond of both his half-brother and his cousin, bringing them together on many adventures. They were the sons of an ancient conflict and their mothers opposed each other often, but Master Korak forged a friendship between himself, Maal, and Darmon, that lasts to this day.

Thus, the three quested together, searching for a wife for Maal, and they were known by gods and mortals both as the Three Companions. In this quest, they came upon the Three Sisters, and Korak Hammer Hand fell madly in love with the guardian of the trees, Thellyne the Huntress. There are many tales of his efforts to woo the lady of the wood, but the grandest is the tale of the seven impossible labors.

After years of Korak's courting, Thellyne the Huntress determined a way to be rid of him. She demanded of him seven impossible labors, to prove his love. If he succeeded, she would marry him. Master Korak readily agreed. First, she asked him to make the woods of the world more beautiful, so he journeyed

far and wide, coating every leaf of every tree in a thin layer of gold. Thus leaves turn gold every year, to remember Korak's journey, and it is why a thin layer of metal applied to a surface is called a "leaf," by craftsmen.

Next, she demanded a sign of endless love. So Korak made a perfect ring of gold, for rings have neither beginning nor end, and a perfect circle provides no waypoint at which a journey may stop, so love might circle endlessly. Though she did not accept the gift, mortals still exchange rings as signs of never-ending love.

Next the Huntress asked the Grand Wright to find her a creature that travels neither by walking on land, nor by swimming in water, nor by flying in the air. Master Korak went to the mountains and found one of the great dragons, whose name was Ouroboros. He took away its legs and wings, so that it could only slither on the ground. He called the new creature a snake.

But Thellyne was not pleased with the snake, and said she wanted it to be a different color. So, for his fourth labor, the King of the Crucible taught the snake to change its skin, and thus, snakes shed their skins in remembrance. Korak left the snake to its own devices. It retreated to its mountain home, where it eventually grew so big it began to gnaw on its own tail. There are many legends about the fate of Ouroboros, but they need not be spoken here.

For the fifth labor, Thellyne pointed to a sad-looking creature: a reptile that crept from a hole in the earth. It ran swiftly, but not as fast as the rains, which washed away its home. The reptile raced in circles, lost, until a wolf happened by and gobbled the miserable creature up. "Those lizards, the turtles, are the fastest creatures in the world, and dear to me. They would be happy, but they keep losing their homes. Make them homes with no doors, but which keep them safe; and which might be moved anywhere, but can never be lost." Master Korak decided to make them shells to carry on their backs, as he had seen snails do. He had trouble hitting upon the right shell. First, he created one of lapis and chalcedony, but it would not keep the turtles safe, since everyone would want to steal them. This shell he gave to his cousin, Aymara, and from it she fashioned the first lyre, upon which she plays to this day. The next shell he made was of steel and adamantite, but it was too heavy for the poor little creatures. This he gave to Thellyne's sister, Canelle, and she wears it as a breastplate. Finally, he crafted a shell like the shells of the sea, coloring it green like the wood to please Thellyne. He bound these to the turtles' backs and bellies, so they were safe and never lost their homes, no matter where they went. But the shells were heavy, and the once-swift turtles grew ponderous.

Now despairing that Korak would complete all the labors, and she would have to marry him, Thellyne demanded that Korak bring her the most beautiful thing in the world. This labor took many years, for the Lord of Wrights had seen many delightful things on his travels, and could not say which was most beautiful of all. At last, talking to his cousin Aymara, he determined what it was, and returned to Thellyne, empty-handed. "I bring you my love, for love is the most beautiful thing in the world," he told her, and she wept, for she knew he was right.

It was therefore time for the final labor to be decreed, and a weeping Thellyne did not know how to break free from



her obligation. So she asked Master Korak to give her what she most desired. Beholding her there, weeping, the Lord of Wrights knew that she most desired freedom from their bargain. He gave it to her, thus completing the seven impossible labors, but he did not win Thellyne's hand. For that he continues to strive, proving his love for the Mistress of the Wood whenever and however he may.

MAKE WONDERS

The greatest builder of the sphere, Korak's accomplishments with metals, stone, and wood rival even the creations of the Nameless One. He makes perfect things—weapons, homes, halls, even furniture—and is tireless in his efforts. His only distraction is his desire for Thellyne, the goddess of the hunt. He woos her still, though none know if he has influenced her heart.

Although he hails from the lawful side of the gods' family, Korak slumbered for many years with the chaotic blood of his aunt Zheenkeef coursing through his veins. He exhibits traits from both sides of the family, and has no patience for the petty struggles of his parents and their siblings. He often stays out of such conflicts, or calls for peace. It is perhaps this very neutrality that makes him such a popular god among mortals.

From time to time, Korak visits his half-brother Maal, in the Kingdom of the Dead, and reforges a few souls who have demonstrated potential despite living through many flawed incarnations. He places them in his great crucible and with his mighty hammer, bangs out their worst flaws. In doing so, he makes great heroes and renowned leaders. One who walks an especially extraordinary path in life, a great hero or a noble ruler, is often said to have been “forged in the King's Crucible.”

Most of the time, however, Korak dwells in Heaven with his family, the Lords of Good, making for them wondrous things of the richest materials. On his throne in the City of Gods, he watches over those who work with their hands, delighting in their efforts to make great and useful things.

THE FIVE APPRENTICES

Korak's five principal servants work with him in his forge as apprentices. Recently deceased followers of Korak, they serve in his smithies (in Heaven and in the land of the dead, traveling with him) for a century. His mortal followers hope to find a place by his forge in death, for it is a great honor to be chosen. They recite over their labors, “If my hand is steady and my work is true, then I shall stoke the fires for the Grand Wright.” After serving in this capacity, the apprentices go on to become journeymen in Heaven, making wondrous artifacts for the gods. They are journeymen eternally, for there is no Master in Heaven for such crafts but Korak.

The five apprentices are named after the parts of the forge: Bellows, Fire, Hammer, Anvil, and Tongs. For the century in which they serve, they lose all other identifications, and do naught but perform their function. Some great artisans taken before their time refused to return when called back by ceremonies of resurrection, because they became one of the apprentices. Anyone earning a place at Korak's side is unlikely to ever return from the dead.

THE GUILDHALLS OF KORAK

Koraketh worship in the guildhalls of Korak, also known by members as the Halls of the Grand Wright. Nearly every artisan who worships the gods of the tree belongs to a guildhall. Most who make their living through works

of the hand (see below) consider their guildhall their “home” church, even if they pay respects to other members of the pantheon. Thus, guildhalls are cornerstones of every community.

The guildhalls, and the entirety of the Koraketh faith, exist to *do*: to work, and make things. The guildhalls aid those who need advice to complete massive projects, and offer supplies when possible. They provide mediation between artisans in professional disputes, make sure apprentices aren't abused by their masters, and collaborate with community leaders on public works. The Koraketh keep clear of political struggles, and anything else that might distract them from their work.

Dedication to actual work in their community, and an intimate involvement in the goings-on of local artisans, make the Koraketh so popular that many towns don't have individual guilds for coopers, thatchers, masons, smiths, or other trades. Instead they all meet within the guildhalls of Korak, which happily makes space available for such purposes.

Korak favors the guildhalls, and goes to them when he walks the mortal sphere, when he's not wooing Thellyne. Although the Compact forbids him from directly teaching his faithful or giving them great powers to pursue his ends, nearly all the gods communicate with their churches through signs and portents. Thus, Korak delivers guidance as a blind old man, or a young artisan hoping to be taught a lesson or two. In this fashion, he observes the Koraketh and teaches them lessons through parables and hands-on examples.

Korak dearly loves those who live for artisanship. He believes Koraketh serve the highest calling any mortal can: perfecting the works of the hand. Therefore, the most powerful of Koraketh receive aid from their god in times of need, and the Forger of Souls always watches over them.



DOCTRINE

“It is the fool who believes himself above work. It is the greater fool who works to no purpose.”

—from the sermons of the Most Excellent and Venerable Master, Wise Brother Grathor Twicecut, Supreme Maker and Master Wright of the Guildhalls of Korak

The guildhalls of Korak preach creative and useful work above all else. They say the Grand Wright despises the lazy. Each order in the church has its own interpretation of Korak’s teachings, but all three agree: He loves those who live by the sweat of their brows, and loathes those who sit back and let others work for them.

The guildhalls also hold, however, one must not build for no purpose, or simply for the pleasure of building, as it is easy to manipulate one into doing evil with the thing created. Thus, one must always consider who will use his creation—who will carry the sharp sword, or live in the impregnable tower. Those who make and build must be ever vigilant that their creations do not fall into evil hands. Thus, many worshipers of Korak liberate holy sites, cleanse evil-tainted ancient cities, and restore lost homes. There are also those of the church who protect the great works of past artisans to ensure they never fall into evil hands.

In day-to-day life, the worshipers of Korak follow these simple laws:

- Never be hesitant to dirty your hands in labor, no matter high you rise, no matter how noble you are acclaimed to be. Every day, work.
- Do not hoard beauty. If you hold the magnificent work of artisans, let others behold it when it is safe to show it. (There is no sense among the worshipers of Korak that it is wrong to hide valuables while traveling, but misers who hoard great works of the hand so that only they can see them are thought to be wicked.)
- Always endeavor to aid goodhearted people with your labor whenever it is useful.
- Demand that your brother be paid fairly for his labor. Pay those who study with you a fair wage, even your apprentices.
- Do not hold any into service against their will—either past their time of contract, or as slaves—for to take a man’s labor is as grave as taking his life.
- Protect beautiful works of the hand. They must be guarded against all those who would steal or spoil them.

The doctrines of the three orders, which are described below, add to the core beliefs of the Koraketh.

The order of makers believes all those with skill are called upon to do great things, and should aid those seeking to do greatness. They are the “order of heroes,” and are called such with reverence by the other orders. They make items for champions, and artifacts of the greatest beauty.

The order of builders believes the most lasting labors are those which aid ordinary people. They celebrate the

achievements of the common person, and aid simple artisans in their labors, shoeing horses, building gates, sewing sails, and completing other works that keep society functioning. They are the “order of the commons,” and are called such with reverence, by the other orders.

The order of masons believes all people, common and heroic, are emboldened and enriched by great monuments. The Masons seek to build towering monoliths, magnificent temples, and glorious palaces so that the lives of mortals might be filled with wonder and reverence. They are the “order of kings,” and are respectfully called such, by the other orders.

KORAKETH PRAYERS

The most common prayer to Korak is said daily by nearly all his worshipers upon waking, and is simply called the Morning Prayer.

*“Master Korak, guide my Hand,
Give me strength to lift,
Precision to join,
Fortitude to labor.
“Master Korak, guide my Eye,
Grant me insight to plan,
Knowledge to understand,
Wisdom to teach.
“Master Korak, guide my Heart,
Lend me courage to fail,
Patience to continue,
Hope to succeed.”*

Another common prayer is said by an apprentice when binding himself to a master:

*“King of the Crucible, smile on me!
The first master among us was your apprentice;
I follow now, as my master did before me.
I swear to obey,
I swear to work,
I swear to serve,
I swear to learn,
And when I am a master,
I swear to teach.
I bind myself to this oath in your name,
Master Korak.
May your blessings be upon me.”*

Masters take oaths to fairly teach and compensate apprentices until they’re ready to become a journeyman, or until cannot meet the required standards of the trade despite the master’s earnest efforts to teach them.

HOLY DAYS

Most Koraketh holy days land when communities set aside to celebrate the work of laborers. Guildhalls organize such labor festivals, and sponsor the revels.

The high holiday of the Great Festival occurs once every ten years. The event always involves a grand competition, in which artisans from all traditions show off their wares and display their skill. Since the Grand Festival attracts skilled artisans from all across the land, the

WORKS OF THE HAND

“Works of the hand” is the most common phrase among the Koraketh to describe what they revere. For a time, many religious scholars sought to extend the meaning of building and artisanship to structures made purely of magic, as well as abstractions like culture. While the Koraketh certainly enjoy exploring the metaphysical meanings of “building,” they came to be dissatisfied with the regular aspersions cast on what such scholars began calling “petty crafts,” like blacksmithing. Before long, the Koraketh came to discuss their church in terms of “works of the hand:” physical things made by the hands of mortals, such as buildings, ships, tools, weapons, and so on.

heads of the three orders choose the location two years in advance, to allow artisans time to plan and embark upon their journeys.

The Grand Festival awards three main prizes, called Golden Laurels, for Making, Building, and Masonry. While makers, and usually builders, bring their entries to the Great Festival, those whose entries are magnificent castles, monuments, or other great structures must often provide magical means to present their creations to the panel of judges, who will not travel more than an afternoon’s journey to assess any masterwork. This is normally accomplished through scrying, but sometimes uses magical means of travel.

Eleven elders of the faith judge the contestants. The panel members cannot compete, to remain impartial. But the heads of the three orders *must* compete, because the winner of each competition becomes to the head of its corresponding order. Thus, one must compete or retire from consideration for leadership. Theoretically anyone could be vaulted into a high position, but winners have always been powerful members of the Koraketh faith. This likely a comment on the judges’ “impartiality,” but many Koraketh are unsurpassed artisans, so it might not be a matter of bias alone. In truth, the Golden Laurels usually pit the head of each order against another member of great skill. Even losing works of craftsmanship may be among the finest examples of their kind ever wrought, however, and losers could still find clients clamoring for their wares.

The Great Festival offers several lesser awards, meant to praise less accomplished artisans who have achieved great things with limited resources, but in the end, all eyes gaze upon the contest for the Golden Laurels. If the head of an order dies, falls from grace, or otherwise leaves his duties before a Great Festival, the remaining leaders hold an election. They select candidates to fill the vacant seat based on their past Grand Festival performance. In each guildhall, the candidates’ order casts ballots. The candidate that receives the most votes in each guildhall contributes one vote for that candidate from the guildhall as a whole, submitted by its reigning guildmaster. The winner of the election holds their position until the next Great Festival, where they must defend it or resign.

SAINTS

Koraketh saints are remembered at the Great Festival, when the heads of the orders bring out the faith’s ornate Roll of the Saints, and read the names inscribed on it. (They say Saint Dorrik Threehelms once worked through the night on his piece for the Grand Festival and missed his own beatification the following morning, by sleeping through it.) They add members of the faith, living or dead, by unanimous vote, just before the Festival. The three decide on the names of those to be beatified before the festival, add their names, and read them to public before the Grand Festival closes.

The heads of the orders look for truly exceptional deeds, not craft-skill alone, when they consider candidates for sainthood. Saints might be remembered for cleansing particularly splendid ancient elf or dwarf homes of evil sorcery, for recovering magnificent artifacts, or for saving important, beautiful locations from destruction. When the faithful die defending such creations, people remember them as local martyrs, but martyrdom is never acknowledged by the whole faith; Korak wants his followers to live and work, not just die defending what’s already been made.

HOLY ORDERS

The Koraketh have four holy orders, three of which know no boundaries from guildhall to guildhall. The last order is concerned only with the authority of individual guildhalls. The three main orders of the guildhalls are the makers, the builders, and the masons. Those who oversee individual guildhalls are members of the fourth order: the guildmasters.

Korak is the supreme authority of the guildhall system: the Grand Wright. The heads of the three cross-guildhall orders gain no authority within individual guildhalls, though the devout respect them as the greatest workers in their crafts.

Anyone can climb in status within the three main orders, if they are skilled craftspeople. Each of the three orders is concerned with a different area of artisanship, as follows.

THE HOLY AND REVERED ORDER OF MAKERS

The Holy and Revered Order of Makers is made up of smiths of all sorts (particularly goldsmiths and silver-smiths), jewelers, armorers, weaponsmiths, fletchers, and others who craft individual works for the use of heroes and common folk alike. They believe the individual’s tie to beauty is one of Korak’s greatest gifts, and that people should be adorned in jewelry, don the finest armor in battle, and wield the greatest weapons in war.

THE HOLY AND REVERED ORDER OF BUILDERS

The Holy and Revered Order of Builders is the largest order, and includes coopers, tanners, carpenters, woodworkers, thatchers, farriers, furriers, shipwrights, wheelwrights, and others whose skills are used to maintain communities. If a skill keeps a town running by its very nature, its practitioners join the builders. They believe Korak’s greatest gifts to the mortal races were the simple

arts necessary to survive and thrive, and they take great pride in making commonplace things beautiful.

THE HOLY AND REVERED ORDER OF MASONS

The Holy and Revered Order of Masons is the smallest order, and comprises stonemasons, sculptors, locksmiths, glasscutters, and others whose skills are necessary to build massive structures. If a skill helps build a city's works or some magnificent structure, its practitioners join the masons. They believe Korak's lessons are best poured into the construction of magnificent temples, halls and castles, to better glorify his gifts.

THE CRAFT ORDERS

All three of the main orders have the same structure. Advancement occurs by merit, and members ascend based on the works they create. The GM might let these achievements occur in between adventures, or use the downtime rules for crafting to determine when a character can advance to the next stage. Each order uses the following titles and degrees,

JOURNEYMEN

Apprentices fully inducted into the order become either "makers," "builders," or "masons." They are addressed and introduced by full title (such as "Maker Jason").

MASTERS

In time, one who creates something of great and lasting beauty becomes a master and is titled as a "master maker," "master builder," or "master mason." He might be called "Master Maker Jason."

GRAND MASTERS

The greatest masters become accepted by all as one of the great craftspeople of a large area. Such a figure is considered a Grand member of the guild, called either "grand maker," "grand builder," or "grand mason." They are addressed as "Illustrious Masters," and introduced by full title—"Illustrious Master Jason, of the Makers," for example.

SUPREME MASTERS

The most skilled and accomplished masters might unseat the current head of an order (see "Holy Days," above) and become the supreme members of the guild. The head of the order is either the "supreme maker," "supreme builder," or "supreme mason." He is addressed as "Most Excellent and Venerable Master," and introduced by that moniker.

One cannot be a member of more than one of the three major orders (makers, builders, masons). Once an order is chosen, a member must stay in it or go through a complex initiation, rejecting the old order and joining the new. In any given guildhall, the highest-ranked local member of each order lead their comrades. If there are no particularly powerful or revered members of the order locally, they look to reputable members of the order for instruction in



AREAS OF CONCERN FOR THE FOUR HOLY ORDERS OF THE GUILDHALLS OF KORAK

GUILD	TYPICAL TRADES
Makers	Crafting Items for Adventurers, Soldiers, or Personal Adornment: <i>Armorsmithing, Goldsmithing, Silversmithing, Bowmaking, Gemcutting, Weaponsmithing, Jewelry, Fletching</i>
Builders	Creating Community Improvements and Useful Items for Day-To-Day Living: <i>Blacksmithing, Bookbinding, Carpentry, Cobbling, Cooping (Making Barrels and Casks), Leatherworking, Painting, Pottery, Weaving, Tailoring, Ropery (Rope and Net Making)</i>
Masons	Creating Large Monuments and Lasting Structures (and Certain Esoteric Skills): <i>Locksmithing, Sculpture, Stonemasonry, Trapmaking, Architecture, Calligraphy, Runemaking</i>
Guildmasters	Any two trades from at least two of the other three orders to attain Wright status

other guildhalls, visiting when necessary for guidance and instruction.

The three orders maintain equal status in a guildhall, but even their most powerful members do not determine local guildhall policy. While each order might make policies and religious law for its own members, every guildhall

is an independent body, overseen by the local head of the fourth order of the faith, the guildmasters.

THE ORDER OF GUILDMASTERS

The guildmasters come from the three other holy orders of the Koraketh, and are members of the faith who wish to lead their local guildhalls in matters both spiritual and mundane. A guildmaster keeps their original title, but adds a title among the guildmasters. Guildmasters may continue to rise in their original orders. Only clerics, paladins, or others who receive spells from Korak can become guildmasters.

WRIGHT

To advance in the guildmasters, a member must demonstrate broad skill in Korak's arts, crossing the divisions of the other orders. A novice in this order has no special titles, though she might possess one from one of the other orders. To be named a wright—the church's term for small guildhall's leader—the novice must create two items of unsurpassed beauty, associated with the trades of two different orders. A wright coordinates the efforts of all three holy orders, and offers local communities use of the hall. She becomes leader and spokesperson for a small group of the faithful. A wright is addressed as "brother" or "sister," and this address always comes before his name. Old order titles are omitted; Grand Maker Jason, upon becoming a wright, is simply addressed as "Brother Jason." This reflects him putting aside his status to focus on his duties as a wright. When formally introduced, however, he maintains all titles and is announced as, "The Illustrious Master, Brother Jason, Grand Maker and Wright of the Guildhall of Korak."

MASTER WRIGHT

By creating a third item of unsurpassed workmanship from a trade associated with the order he did not work within to qualify for her office, a wright demonstrates her complete understanding of the three types of trades, and becomes a master wright. Master wrights manage the greatest guildhalls, for this is the apex of power in the guildmasters' order. A master wright is addressed as "wise brother" or "wise sister." Like a wright, she maintains all order titles for formal purposes and is introduced in the same fashion.

GUILDHALLS AND ARTISANS

None of the craft orders demand a monopoly on their trades. One does not have to serve Korak to be the village blacksmith. Conversely, one need not be an artisan to worship or bargain for services at a guildhall. Members of the church will provide training and spiritual guidance when necessary, but don't control a community's artisans, or ignore people who don't make things for a living.

The average guildhall has perhaps a dozen active members of each order associated with it, though few reside at the guildhall, and many are nominal members. One wright lives in residence. The wright is usually a cleric,

and supervises two other clerics in residence, and one or two arcstones (see below). A guildhall usually has one or two local artificers (see below) on their membership rolls, but they rarely live there.

CLERICS OF KORAK

Clerics are not their own order in the guildhalls of Korak. They are members of the three main orders, like all the other artisans. However, they have a special tie to Korak due to their superior wisdom, and call on him for divine power. This makes them especially revered members of their orders, and they tend to rise to leadership positions. Most wrights and master wrights are clerics, skilled at calling Korak's power to aid their guildhalls.

The clergy of the guildhalls, while universally good-aligned, vary in temper. Most clerics of Korak are neutral good, and believe they should use their gifts to help others in any way necessary. They make millstones and farm implements, and bless temperamental bellows. They take pride in common work, and might spend their entire lives in rural areas, helping the humblest folk thrive against adversity. The builders' order tends to promote this set of values, and the neutral good alignment.

Chaotic good clerics of Korak are known for individualism, heroism, and tireless adventuring. Some of the greatest saints of the Koraketh have been chaotic good, for in their wild adventures hither and yon, they've liberated magnificent artifacts from the clutches of evil. Such clergy focus on the good a single person can do in life, and perfect their own skills, while improving the craftsmanship of others, one student at a time. Their work and adventures can only be helped by powerful magic items, such as shields and weaponry, making chaotic good clergy a good fit for the makers, who create such things.

Lawful good clerics of Korak are quite common; most dwarven clerics of the Grand Wright are aligned thus. These clerics hold that works of the hand in stone and steel will outlast even the strongest and wisest of the mortal races. They work with others to build lasting monuments to goodness. Hopefully, these great cities, beautiful monuments, and powerful artifacts will tell future generations that goodness prevails over evil. This attitude brings many lawful good clerics of Korak to the order of masons, but some of the greatest makers of all time have also been lawful good.

JOINING THE CLERICS OF KORAK

To become a cleric of Korak requires a special apprenticeship. Initiates must find an established cleric willing to teach them. They then learn from their new master both a trade any apprentice might learn, such as blacksmithing, and the religious rites necessary to channel power from their god and serve as a spiritual leader of a guildhall. Training takes as long as any apprenticeship might, from five to eight years, though experienced initiates might cut down the training time, especially if they already have proficiency with artisan's tools. Those who complete their training become clerics with the Creation domain, which is described in **Chapter X**.

ARCSTONES OF KORAK

The arcstones take their name from the secret of arch building, imparted by Korak to the mortal races long ago. They live to defend and recover great artifacts, magnificent structures, and important monuments. They preserve works of the hand against outside forces, just as the keystone of an arch takes all the outside pressures on the arch, and helps it hold its shape.

Most communities with major monuments, fantastically old structures, or powerful artifacts host several arcstones who keep these treasures safe. Arcstones also organize expeditions to explore long-lost cities, recover corrupted temples, and retrieve lost artifacts.

Most arcstones live in one area, defending some local masterwork. They become pillars of their communities, and stay active in guildhall affairs, aiding local artisans and occasionally, pitching in on large projects. Fewer arcstones adventure, but aren't tied to a place or guildhall. Instead, they quest to reclaim ancient wonders. They might clear a grand dwarf-hold of goblins, or search for a mythic sword.

The arcstone must follow Koraketh doctrine carefully, and preserve the sanctity of certain great works of the hand. An arcstone must never allow a great work such as a temple or an artifact to fall into evil's hands.

Adventuring arcstones tend to keep company with rogues, who have an eye for wealth, and strange devices. There have been several famous rogue/arcstone pairings, where the two hunting down artifacts. Arcstones often find rangers make useful companions as well.

Arcstones never adventure with willfully destructive people, or those who disrespect works of the hand. They rarely keep evil company, but can work with greedy sorts in quests to protect or liberate masterworks, as long as their allies don't demonstrate true malice by harming others for pleasure or avaricious need.

JOINING THE ARCSTONES

Korak typically calls neutral good individuals who are proficient with artisan's tools. Such a candidate finds an established arcstone to teach him a trade any apprentice might learn, such as blacksmithing, and the secrets of the arcstones: combat skills, divine rites, and legends of artifacts to be recovered. This process takes as long as any apprenticeship might: five to eight years. An established character who receives the call can learn all that is necessary to become an arcstone in a dramatically shorter time, if she is already proficient in one set of artisan's tools. On completing training, arcstones become paladins. When it's time to take their oaths, they typically swear the Oath of Devotion.

ARTIFICERS OF KORAK

Artificers are members of the three holy orders like everyone else and, because they are such skilled artisans, they climb the ranks of the guildhalls quickly. Renowned for their amazing skills with item creation and structural

engineering, artificers are much sought after by anyone wishing to purchase the skills of a truly masterful craftsman.

Most artificers pour their magic into the items they craft to honor their god. Some can inscribe holy runes, enchant items with divine power, and call upon celestial aid for powerful projects. Artificers have no peer in the Material Plane when it comes to the creation of magical items.

Artificers can be found in a range of conditions, from the local blacksmith's shop working on something miraculous out back, to opulent forges covered in powerful runes with beves of apprentices running about on errands. Powerful artificers are boons to entire nations, for the power of the items they produce are legendary and can make the difference between victory and defeat in times of war. Such artificers are treated almost as nobility, receiving lavish respect from both the faith and allied secular authorities.

JOINING THE ARTIFICERS

Most artificers come from the ranks of guild artisans, having melded their commitment to their craft to their religious devotion. Many are clerics (of Creation) or arcstones of Korak who focus their talents for a time on crafting, though others are wizards (of Artifice). Any character with a deep and abiding love for making things, and worships

Korak, might find a place among the artificers.



GODDESS OF HOME, HEARTH, AND SERVANTS

ANWYN

THE HOMELY, THE BLESSED, GOODLADY, THE FIRE KEEPER, LADY OF THE FEAST,
THE PLENTIFUL, GIVER OF GIFTS, SMILING LADY, BRIGHT LADY, HEAVENLY MAIDEN

Anwyn (AHN-win) is the lawful good goddess of the hearth, the home, housewives, servants, peasants, and small folk of all variety. Mortals associate her with comfort, contentedness, and the warm happiness of a good life, whether wealthy or low.

Domesticated dogs, which are the servants of men that best love the hearth, are thought to be blessed by the goddess. In some cultures, such as those that do not keep dogs, she might be associated with the domestic cat, which also serves mortals by keeping their homes and farms free of mice. (Many find this association absurd, as cats are too aloof to be linked with the Giver of Gifts.) Finally, she is associated with blink dogs, and many believe they were taught much by Anwyn long ago, and serve her to this day.

Goodlady Anwyn is loved by halflings and in many of their communities, she is the only god with a full temple in her honor, but all people revere the Lady of the Feast, for she taught them to keep fire and make offerings to the gods, saving them from darkness. She is loved among women who keep homes, for it is Anwyn who keeps families safe and happy, and makes even the simplest meal a feast.

Anwyn is depicted as a lovely lady in a well kempt, simple dress. She has flowing black hair like her mother's, and eyes often made of some bright and sparkling stone, so that the light of the hearth can be seen in them. Anwyn the Plentiful is often drawn or carved as a stout maiden with a glorious smile, but some cultures show her instead as a thin, smiling lady with the downcast eyes of a servant.

Anwyn's symbol is a warm fire in a circular stone hearth, sometimes with a dog or child curled up next to it. The dog or child can be found on the signs of taverns, or other businesses involving food and comfort, more often than in her churches. For instance, an inn called "The Goodlady's Rest" might have sign featuring a dog curled by a fire. For haste or simplicity, her symbol can be drawn as a flame rising out of a flattened circle. Her maniple clergy wear depictions of elaborate golden flames fires contained by silver hearths.

SECRETS OF ANWYN

Most know Anwyn's church as a happy home to servants, home-keepers, and others who see to the comfort of others, and much of the information presented here supports this idea. However, the church has a terrible secret, revealed in a section called, directly enough, **The Secret Church**. If you are a player, ask your GM before reading that section, even if you play a member of the Anwynite faith. Your GM should read it before you do.

MYTHS

FIRST FIRE

WHEN THE MORTAL RACES FIRST AWOKE FROM THE FRUITS OF the trees, they had the fire of life, but not a burning fire with which to keep the dark and cold at bay. Nights were cruel then, so this was a bitter lack.

The gods took pity on them, and sent Darmon to all the mortal races but the dwarves, who were hidden away at the edge of the world, inside the head of Korak. To each of the four races he found, he gave fire, but each race lost it as soon as it was given. While they received the fire, they did not know how to make it for themselves, or how to contain it. Sometimes it raged wildly, lighting their forests and huts, and they had to flee. Otherwise, it simply blew out. In all cases, they could not bring back the flame.

The gods commanded Darmon to bring fire to them once more. Again, it was lost nearly as soon as it was given. And a third time, he walked among the mortal races to give them fire, and for a third time it was lost. The gods were perplexed; these poor peoples were likely to die without fire, and would never thrive and make wonders in the dark.

Goodlady Anwyn offered to bear fire to the mortal races. The gods argued against this, for Anwyn, called the Heavenly Maiden, was the youngest of them. She was perfectly innocent, and had never walked apart from the other gods. But after much debate they acquiesced, and Anwyn went to mortals and taught them how to make and keep fire. In her journeys, she came across her sleeping brother Korak, and awoke him, but he would not rise, and asked her to leave the fire beside him. So it was that while Korak gave fire to the dwarves, it was borne to them by Anwyn.

The Smiling Lady made her way to the other races. She showed them how to make their homes comfortable, and how to properly prepare food so it wouldn't poison their weak bodies. She taught them of the many perfect cuts of meat that do not rupture an animal's inner organs, and ruin the fruits of its flesh. She showed them how to harvest food that grew untended from the earth, such as berries and fruits and nuts, and how to prepare these things in many wonderful ways. Eventually, she found her way back to her brother and joined him in instructing the dwarves, so that they too learned these lessons. It was for these many teachings that the mortal races call her the Giver of Gifts, Anwyn the Blessed, and many other names of honor. And in temples erected to her glory, they place hearths at the center, watched over by the manicles of her faith, where they burn the finest cuts of meat in sacrifice to her splendor. At the harvest, all people, whether dedicated to one god or all, bear gifts to her temples, presenting them at the hearth in memory of those gifts she gave. Truly, Goodlady Anwyn was the savior of all peoples.

But she was also savior of the gods—or at least of their comfort. Before her descent to give the mortals fire, the

Lady of the Feast was least among the gods, much by her own design. For the Giver of Gifts does not desire power or greatness, as do others, and her heart swells to its fullest when she is of service. So Anwyn the Homely was both a god and chief among the gods' servants, seeing to their houses, their great hearth, and their comfort, and she did so gladly. But when she departed from the heavens for so brief a time, the other gods did not know how to tend their hearth, for all, deep in their hearts, were afraid of fire, the province of their great enemy, Kador. They appointed Shalimyr, lord of the waters, to keep the hearth, for who better to tame fire than the god of water?

It took little time for Shalimyr to douse the fire in a mishap, and soon after, the halls of the heavens grew chill and bleak. The gods were quite cross with Grandfather Ocean, yet none of them could rekindle the flames. Before long, they were desperate for fire and called out to Anwyn, but the Smiling Lady was not to be found, so intent was she on her lessons and service to the mortals. In desperation, they fetched the sun from the skies and brought it to their halls to keep themselves warm and happy, enshrouding the earth in an unearthly darkness, which mortals remember to this day. It was not an eclipse, as happens when the sun and moon wrestle. Indeed, the sun was simply gone from the sky, and all on earth trembled.

Taking this as a sign that not all was well in the heavens, Anwyn the Plentiful returned, rekindled the hearth with the sun's fire, and sent the sun back to the heavens. The mortal races rejoiced, for she had given them fire and returned to the Sun. They called her the Bright Lady, and burned many offerings in her honor, as she had instructed them. And in the heavens, the gods too rejoiced, for Anwyn, least among them, was the only one unafraid of fire.

BRINGING PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS TO THE WORLD

Anwyn seeks the pleasure and happiness of her family, and all the peoples of the world. She craves neither gain or glory, but she accepts harvest offerings and sacrifices with humility. She delights in the small kindnesses of mortals, putting less stock in the great acts of heroes than in the simple goodness of the baseborn. Alone among the gods, she spends her time watching the poor and forgettable, and has long believed that when mortals finally reckon with the evils of Hell and the Abyss, their salvation will come from common stock, not a line of aristocratic heroes.

SERVANTS

Anwyn believes herself a servant among the gods, and keeps no servants of her own. However, tending to the home and happiness of the gods is a difficult task, and requires many hands. Thus, she oversees the labors of many angels, particularly those led by archangel Camael, who attends the throne of the gods, and directs angels who tend to their halls. With their aid, Anwyn makes Heaven comfortable and happy. If Anwyn must send a message to one of her servants in the Material Plane, she either calls upon an angel, or sends it herself.



THE HEARTH OF ANWYN

While they are not frequented by high people seeking greatness, or lords seeking guidance, the common folk of the world go the hearths of Anwyn, as the temples of the Anwynites (AHN-win-ites) are known, for rest and counsel. Even in realms where nobles are kind and merchants stick to fair deals, a servant's or commoner's life isn't easy. Toil wears them down. Servants from all lands go to hearths for strength and succor, and the heads of common households, who keep fires burning and cupboards full, also go to the hearths to rekindle their resolve.

Hearths in most communities are not only holy places, but communal kitchens. In great ovens, people bake bread and prepare dinners for their families. This creates buzzing communities around the hearths, where commoners and servants gather around, discussing politics, gossip, and other matters great and small. The hearths are usually built with a great, high-ceilinged hall, its large, eponymous hearth at its center. This is where offerings are burned. Before the hearth stands a great stone altar arrayed with food, candles, and wine. Large stone ovens for baking, and great cauldrons for communal stews, stand around the hall's edges. They are warm, comfortable places, with little fringe or ornamentation, that revere the common acts of human life. Connected to the common hall, a wing of the hearth contains the living quarters of the manicles, Anwyn's clergy. They see to the faithful's wellbeing, and care for anyone else who seeks the hearth for comfort. They maintain many secrets of cooking and comfort, and teach the ways of the home: how to cook well, clean efficiently, manage meager resources, and thrive under everyday pressure.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Real medieval societies set gender-specific social roles which typically gave woman dominion over the household. A medieval manor was a quasi-military organization, and not to be trifled with, but fantasy stories often focus more on wandering, individual heroics, where (usually male) knights slay dragons, but nobody gets into how the knight got fed and armored, or what it means for his prospects as a member of a dynasty, seeking marriage.

Ancient people who gave women household authority had gods to represent it, but of course, their religions reproduced those societies' entrenched sexism, too. Anwyn should be thought of as having a parallel in Ancient Greece's Hestia, but with a gentler image, and without necessarily tying the women of your campaign to household roles. Characters of any gender can command hearth and home in her name, or abandon it for a life of traveling adventure.

DOCTRINE

"Glory be to the servants! Praise be to mothers, toiling in the pre-dawn dark! Hallowed be the wrinkled hands that work lands they own not. For without these hands and their toil, all would cease. Yet they work. They work for love, they work for duty, they work and sustain us, and they never receive praise. No statues are erected in their name. But in the hearths, we build them statues of bread. We pour them offerings of wine and burn the flesh of beasts in their names. Inside the hearths, the least are Kings and Queens, and we sing great songs in their names."

—High Manciple Tobius Featherboffin,
from "How Shall I Know Thee?"

Anwyn's manicles present a simple doctrine, quite old, and based on the core teachings of Anwyn. Little altered in thousands of years, this doctrine is publicly professed in all hearths, but is followed with special sincerity by halfling hearths.

SERVICE AND HUMILITY

Through service to others, we make ourselves holy. Through care for others, we are ourselves cared for by greater and more loving powers than any who draw mortal breath. The most treasured people are those who give their lives in the service of others, for love or for money.

QUIET JOY

There are those who believe that joy is to be found in drink, or carnal pleasure, or other, wilder delights. But the wise know that it is in the simple things that true joy can be found: the companionship of family, a warm home, and friendly conversation.

FOOD

Our ancestors are remembered in our prayers and family rituals, but they are felt most keenly in our food. Family recipes keep them in our memories. Certain spice blends and ways of preparing foods are older than any written record, and preserved from generation to generation. Using them, we feel as though our hands are moving in unison with the hands of our grandmothers. Preparing food together and sharing recipes are cherished, hallowed acts.

CHARITY

There are those who can no longer care for themselves, or who do not have enough to eat. Feeding such folk is a great and blessed thing. This sort of charity must be provided daily, at the hearths.

COMMON PRAYERS

Anwynite celebrations are sanctified by pouring a glass of wine (called the Gift of Zheenkeef, but accepted by many churches as an offering), breaking a loaf of bread, and lighting a candle. All three are necessary for a proper ceremony. Most commoners celebrate in the Anwynite fashion at least once a week. During the ceremony, the

family member who manages the household (by cooking and cleaning, managing its money, and so on) traditionally invokes the three blessings, but anyone can say them.

At the pouring of the wine:

“Praise be! Praise be!

For we have lived through the darkness,

For we have survived the cold!

Praise be! Praise be!

For the Goodlady Anwyn has aided us,

And we may drink this libation in her honor.”

At the breaking of the bread:

“Smiling Lady, smile down on us,

For we break this bread in your honor!

Bread cannot rise without warmth,

Bread cannot bake without fire,

We break this bread that we have because of you.

Smiling Lady, smile down on us,

And know that we are grateful.”

At the lighting of the candle:

“Bright Lady, kindler of hearths,

We light this fire in memory,

For without you, there would be no fire,

Not in Heaven, nor in the world.

Bright Lady, keeper of hearths,

We thank you for the flame!”

HOLY DAYS

The week after harvest signals the Anwynites' primary festival, the Keeping, from which many hearths have grown wealthy. It comes fast on the heels of the Rontran harvest festival. People come to hearths and offer livestock and other foods to Anwyn. Many offerings are burned, but most of them go into the hearth's larders. While farmers bring wagons filled with food, lords traditionally offer coins, gems and other treasures in lieu of the commoners' offering. These monies help hearths maintain themselves and feed the poor.

Anwyn is not connected to the ways of farming, and does not bless the growing of crops or animals. During the Keeping, celebrants ask her to help make food prepared from them stay nourishing and delicious, even when families must bring forth the oldest stores of pickles and salt meat. The faithful ask for a mild winter, and thank Anwyn for bringing fire to mortals. The festival is marked with much feasting, prayer, and the constant burning of offerings in the central hearth. The manacles burn that which smells sweet or enticing, to proclaim their hearths as places of comfort and plenty.

SAINTS

There is no sainthood in the Anwynite faith, which reveres humility and common people over heroic glory. Even the most pious and charitable of Anwynites go without special praise, in life or after death, as it is considered unseemly.

HOLY ORDERS

Only one holy order of Anwyn remains: the manacles (MAN-suh-pull), clergy of the hearth. The religion suffered great losses in the past, and reorganized itself in the aftermath. Once, the holy warriors called hearthkeepers protected the faith. In its zeal, the Great Hearth dispatched these warriors across the world on missions to establish the faith in places consumed by evil. It was thought that once they were lifted out of lives of pain, the oppressed would rise against their dictators. But these missions were, one and all, disasters. The hearthkeepers never returned, and the eldest of them died without training replacements. The Supreme Manacle admitted that his council had erred, and it was not Anwyn's way to make war. Therefore, he disbanded the order, and declared that warrior-priests should serve the faith no more.

Once, a holy order called the goodwives shared the countless secrets of home, cooking, comfort and medicine and wisdom, as traveling missionaries and servants. When the hearthkeepers perished, the hearths found themselves lacking the numbers needed to perform their holy duties, so the Grand Hearth called them home, and integrated them into the order of manacles.

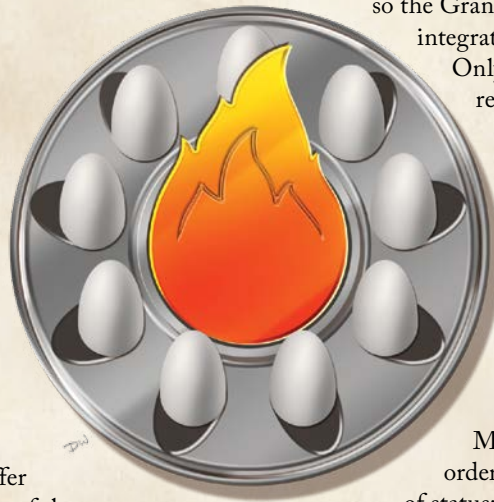
Only a few of the original goodwives remain, and they are greatly respected, but retired—they have no formal power in the faith.

The structure of the manacles, the sole remaining order, is simple enough to understand. Located in an ancient, great city, the Great Hearth is the faith's preeminent place of worship, where Anwyn's feasting table and the cornucopia are kept. Here sits the Supreme Manacle, who oversees the church and order, which is divided into four levels of status: manacles, high manacles, elder manacles, and the Supreme Manacle. The high manacles control individual hearths, while the elder manacles and the Supreme Manacle himself reside at the Great Hearth.

MANACLES OF ANWYN

With the other orders destroyed or disbanded, the manacles now comprise the only remaining order of the Anwynite hearths. The manacles are a tightly organized order, devoted to the ethics of lawful alignments. Junior members obey superiors without question. Even among members of the same rank, the less experienced member defers to her elder. This ingrained obedience comes from the church's dedication to humble service, and is what allows them to feed multitudes and manage hearths in great cities and distant hamlets.

Anwynites can be of any of the following alignments: lawful good, lawful neutral, and neutral good. Most orthodox manacles are lawful good, as is most of the Halfling



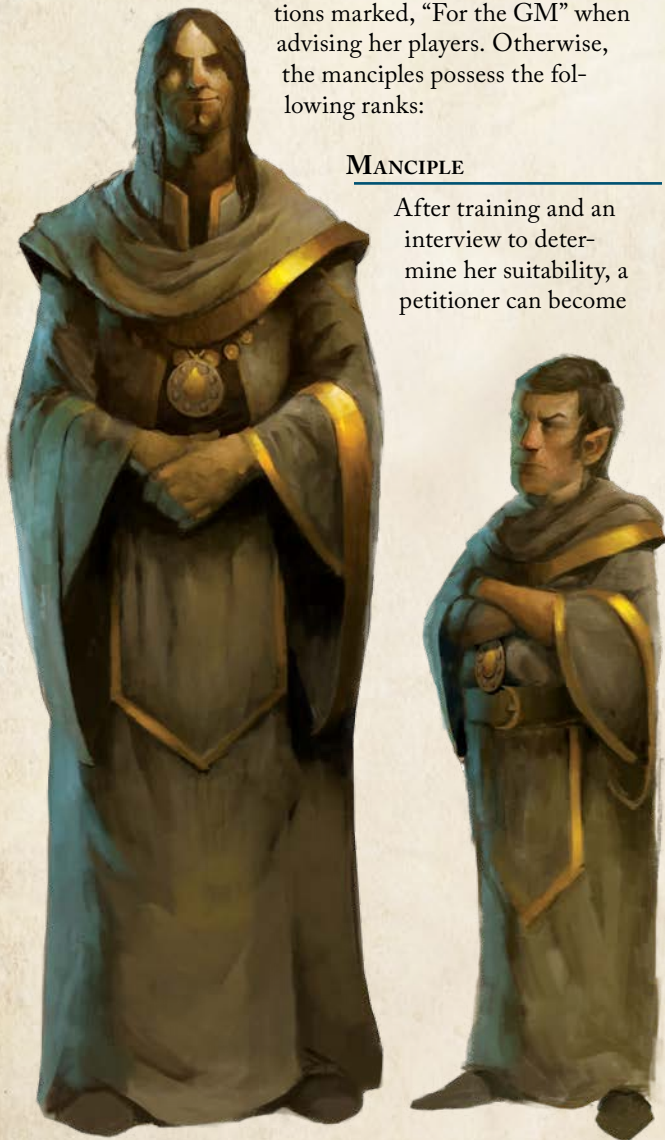
branch of the faith. They believe fully in the Anwynite doctrine of service, and praise the lowest in the social order over nobles and the wealthy. They take great joy in serving their flock. Neutral good clergy are most interested in the community aspects of the Anwynite faith. They delight in sharing meals and tales with the congregation. They are often walking repositories of old family recipes and enjoy sharing such knowledge. Many Halfling clergy are neutral good. Lawful neutral manciples are usually human, and support the church as a way of maintaining the social order. Even the poorest people must be integrated into society. To serve, they must be fed, clothed and given a sense of purpose. Lawful neutral clergy are least interested in the notion that servants are holier than their masters. This may be part of the doctrine, but such clergy believe masters also have a role to play, to bind many people to a common cause.

Despite what some would call a dispassionate approach to Anwyn's mission, lawful neutral manciples tend to rise quickly in the hearth's hierarchy, though they prefer working within it, instead of talking to peasants themselves.

Certain alignment restrictions apply as a manciple rises in rank. The GM should consult sections marked, "For the GM" when advising her players. Otherwise, the manciples possess the following ranks:

MANCIPLE

After training and an interview to determine her suitability, a petitioner can become



a manciple. She is addressed as "friend" and introduced as such. The word "manciple" means steward, servant, or even slave, and indeed, the role of the manciples is to serve their flock. They tend to the hearts, souls and small hurts of common people who come to the hearths to prepare meals or pray. They are taught to be caring, excellent listeners, and outwardly loving of even their basest congregants.

HIGH MANCIPLE

A high manciple oversees the entire hearth, and all its operations. This rank is reserved for hearths of a certain size, or those in major settlements. Small, remote hearths are not permitted the rank—instead, all manciples work in a common council. Furthermore, the order only chooses those with a talent for organization, and certain capabilities known only to the elders, to hold the post, so even a revered priest might never attain the rank. A high manciple is addressed as "goodfather" or "goodmother," which used to be the address for senior goodwives. When that order was disbanded, the Supreme Manciple gave their titles to the high manciples to preserve the lost order's traditions. High manciples are introduced by their full titles.

In halfling hearths, a high manciple can be named by the unanimous consent of three other high manciples. Once a halfling is so named, he can found a new hearth, take over an existing one, or wander as he sees fit. There is no higher authority among the halflings than a high manciple, so such clerics are masters of their own fate.

ELDER MANCIPLE

Experienced high manciples may be called by the Supreme Manciple to come to the Great Hearth and join its council, as elder manciples. The great feasting table there has room for hundreds, but has never come close to being filled, for it is rare for the clergy to rise to such heights. Therefore, there is no upper limit on the number of elder manciples; one can be named to such a position at the behest of the Supreme Manciple, and need not wait for a vacancy. Elder manciples are addressed as "beloved master" or "beloved mistress" and introduced by their full titles.

SUPREME MANCIPLE

Upon the death of the Supreme Manciple, the order's elders cloister themselves and through a secret ritual, select one of their own to replace him. The Supreme Manciple is addressed as "hallowed lord," or "hallowed lady," and introduced by his or her full title.

JOINING THE MANCIPLES

Anyone can become a manciple. It requires a little training, oaths of obedience to the hearths, and a knack for listening. Upon completing their training, acolytes become clerics with the Fire domain (described in **Chapter X**). Most carry quarterstaves, for Anwyn carries a staff shod with iron, and uses it to prod the embers of the hearth, move its logs, and give its kindling room to breathe.

THE SECRET CHURCH

THIS SECTION IS INTENDED FOR THE GM.
GET PERMISSION BEFORE READING IT IF YOU ARE A PLAYER.

Anwyn's church is most often joined by common women seeking better lives, but the dark-hearted sometimes know the Anwynite faith is a secret refuge for their kind. They are drawn to its service.

A SECRET HISTORY

When the hearths of Anwyn were first kindled, Anwyn the Plentiful smiled on her servants and gave them gifts. Many were consumed with time, or passed from hand to hand, and vanished from knowledge. But two of gifts remain to this day: a great feasting table that might sit some two hundred men and women, and a golden drinking horn that her faithful servants called the Cornucopia. It is said that magnificent foods poured from the Cornucopia as surely as wine from a lesser horn, and to eat them would cure any hurt, or soothe the most savage breast.

Years passed, and the great feasting table became the center of her greatest temple. At it, the highest of her faith would gather and debate matters both secular and spiritual. They feasted on food from the Cornucopia as they did so, and all hearts were merry. Yet as the years passed, the very highest of her faithful began to take her gifts for granted, for indeed, is not Anwyn the most giving of all the gods? And is it not always the way with those who give gladly, that they will give to the ungrateful long after they should? For years, the greatest among her faithful ate the food of her Cornucopia, collected the annual offerings of the many who visited her temples, took payment for blessings and healing, and gave little in way of thanks or offering to the goddess in whose name they acted.

The day came when Anwyn could no longer bear it. She appeared before the mightiest of her faithful, standing in golden robes at the center of the great feasting table. "Ungrateful whelps!" she pronounced them, and she made the Cornucopia grow barren. "Your hearts have no love for me. You love only food and wealth, and are not worthy of my service." No longer would she heed their prayers, nor would she aid them until they atoned, and changed their ways.

When she left them to consider this, many began at once to tear their rich clothing and to pray for forgiveness. But the chief among them, Supreme Manciple Mitallis, called out, "We have tasted the fruit of the Cornucopia! Have you any doubt that, even if we atone, she will deny us such splendor again in our lifetimes? We have built a great church, revered by all common people, and she would take it from us! But she has signed to this Compact, as have the other gods, and may not interfere in mortal matters overmuch. We are her church; we are her agents. Let us ignore her! Let us make bargains with others, for if she will not feed us, they will!"

The others agreed. Calling to the darkest infernal power, they made the Cornucopia flow once more. They continued to take annual offerings at harvest time in the name

of Anwyn, but unknown to the common folk, they served Asmodeus, the highest lord of Hell. Asmodeus delighted in this perversion of such an important church, and by the terms of the Compact, the Anwynites were protected from the wrath of the gods. They became wily agents of Hell.

Thus it has continued to this day. When a good-minded person joins the Anwynite faith, her superiors slowly convert her to the path of greed and gluttony: the way of Anwyn's elite disciples. Should they prove impossible to corrupt, they vanish in accidents or mysterious circumstances, often while called somewhere unfamiliar, at their church's behest.

THE SECRET SIDE OF THE HEARTH

A cozy communal center is the temple's public face, but in the shadows cast by the hearth's fire, evil lurks. When all the worshipers have gone, many so-called servants of Anwyn slip from her sacred halls and kindle great bonfires in the thick woods. There, manacles dance about the red light, naked and painted in the blood of infants stolen from paupers. They perform unspeakable rites of blood and sacrifice to honor Asmodeus. They receive their true strength from him, the old master of fire.

In the light of day, they undermine the societies they pretend to serve. There are no better ears to own than those of a servant if you seek to work mischief—and unknown to the servants who attend hearth services, their ears are owned by Asmodeus, and his followers. They are cunning, careful, and patient, and they almost never mix their true missions with their role as manacles. They deal with their flock honestly and charitably, appearing to be the good-hearted clergy of Anwyn. They work for Asmodeus through agents who know nothing of who hired them. These proxies assassinate and burn, steal and ransack, all to destabilize the good elements of society. They plan their actions to inflict the most suffering, but it all starts by listening to servants and common folk, and the secrets they share.

No greater threat to good exists than the subverted hearths of Anwyn, but the gods allow it, because it is part and parcel of the Compact. Manacles who serve Asmodeus are not ensorcelled by the King of Hell. They choose the dark path out of free will. Though it is a source of great sorrow for Anwyn and other gods, they know, as Maal has said many times, that justice will come in the end.

Anwyn mourns the evil that has taken her church, but does nothing to root it out. She, more than any of the gods, puts her faith in the Compact, and believes it is not only necessary to let the conspiracy run its course, but that it will lead to great good in the end, by bringing the forces of darkness together in one place, where they might be exposed and defeated. Rather than toppling her church, which she might do with the acquiescence of all the other gods, she works subtly, through her lowest servants. A time will come when the simplest of her worshipers will rise, and guided gently by her hand, overthrow the evil that infects her church. Until that time comes, Anwyn keeps a careful reckoning of all the wrongs done in her name, and undoubtedly plans to make some final restitution when this evil is at last lifted from the world.

Only halflings remain unaffected; none of their kind agreed to the dark pact. The rest of the faith stands apart from halfling hearths. The halflings remain pure, but as they are shunned by the Anwynite high clergy of other peoples, do not suspect them or wrongdoing beyond a certain degree of haughtiness.

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

The corrupt church follows the following secret doctrine, as an elaborate justification of their betrayal.

HUMILITY

The mortal races are mere reflections of the gods. The pride of mortals is but a pale thing compared to the pride of the gods, who rejected their rightful lord, the King of the Universe, and cast him into Hell. Asmodeus committed no crime; he was usurped by the ungrateful and weak. We must reinstate him in his glory. To prepare the world for this, all people must learn to be humble, for if they resist him, he will destroy them—as is only proper. All people must humble themselves before the King of Hell, who will become, in the end, the lord of all Creation.

THE JOY OF POWER

Asmodeus gives power to those who serve him faithfully, and will reward the faithful even more, once he returns to his rightful authority. This power comes from the rightful ruler of all, and one should use it unflinchingly, enjoying one's reward, but never in any way that would harm the overlord's interests. Anyone who seeks power they do not deserve, by betraying the secret faith, should be destroyed, and the power given by other gods is undeserved, for it flows without Asmodeus' permission.

NOURISHING READINESS

The day of reckoning will come when the conspiracy is exposed. All members of the secret order must be ready to defend themselves when it happens, and must kill any outsider who learns of the cult before the appointed day. As the weak nourish themselves on our bread, strengthen yourself by practicing the arts of war, accumulating weapons, and recruiting warriors and agents for the cause. When the day comes, your army should be ready.

LOYALTY

None of Asmodeus' generals and viceroys can stand alone, but must accept the commands of the cult, and the ranks given by the Great Hearth and its high command. Betrayal and disloyalty are punishable by death. Leaders are not to be challenged unless those of similar rank disdain them. Obey your superiors, and as we give bread and succor to common fools, give the proper arms and guidance to subordinates when sending them forth. As the needy return to our hearths daily, so will the well-treated servant return from his missions. But we are not unlimited in our charity, and the worst failures must be cast into the fire.

THE SECRET HIERARCHY

"We inherit willing lambs, ready for the slaughter. Our secret order will thrive in this church, and this is truly why we were chosen for this destiny by the King of the Universe."

—Supreme Manciple Mitallis when the Great Hearth Council swore to serve Asmodeus

The secret structure of the hearths is quite different from its public form. It's organized into nine circles of power, just as there are nine circles of Hell. Evil members of the hearths call themselves "the Order of the Secret Flame," but avoid speaking its name, to prevent discovery. Nevertheless, a few intrepid investigators have heard the name, and know it refers to an evil conspiracy inside the faith. Even they do not suspect that this cult effectively controls the faith, except for its autonomous halfling branch.

As noted above, special restrictions exist on candidates for high manciple. No member of the Anwynite faith can rise in rank without joining the cult, and converting to the lawful evil alignment. In fact, in addition to the alignments listed for the manciples, lawful evil candidates may join, but they already worship the faith's true master: Asmodeus. The conspiracy has the most success in converting lawful neutral manciples. If they can't be converted they're usually killed; they're the sort of people who'd try to report their recruiter, after all. The exceptions are dimwits who never noticed anyone was trying to recruit them at all.

In addition, there are those of evil hearts who come to the hearths, attracted by wealth, ease and constant feasting. They are not accepted as clergy unless they discover the discipline of lawful evil, and they must do so without the cult's help, for members won't expose themselves for the sake of these rakes.

There are a few members of the Anwynite clergy who are not part of the conspiracy. Every now and then, one of them suspects something, or sees some sinister evidence: a bloodstained ritual knife, or a grotesque mask, perhaps. Unfortunately for them, they are surrounded by the enemy and rarely survive after they report their suspicions. Those who bide their time and collect evidence might report it to the Great Hearth, which rewards them with torture, to determine who their "loyal servant" shared information with. Lucky or particularly witless members of the uncorrupted get shipped off to remote hearths before they can get into trouble. Ironically, this punishment ensures that a few impoverished, distant hearths are filled with true Anwynites, and some of them know about the conspiracy.

The Order of the Secret Flame uses a cell structure, where each group knows only one other member or group above them, and usually only one below. If the order is ever compromised, the damage is limited. The full system of "circles" is not known to most of its members, for few members know that the corruption extends higher than one level above him. When the order gathers to perform its dark rites, members wear masks. Senior members tell their subordinates that those they do not recognize come from other groups which worship Asmodeus, not the Anwynite faith. One must rise high to even know if the entirety of one's hearth serves Hell.

The Anwynite faith's lawful ethics serve the Supreme Manciple well, and disguise the conspiracy. He can move suspicious, uncorrupted clergy away from prying eyes, and issue unusual edicts without fear of being questioned. In other churches, one might expect that once dissident clergy find themselves vanishing or shipped off to remote hearths, they might split from the Great Hearth, or demand representation on the Great Hearth's council. But the lawful nature of the order ensures this never happens. Instead, they go where they're sent, and usually keep their "disloyal" thoughts to themselves.

The Order of the Secret Flame employs the following structure:

THE FIRST CIRCLE

Those in the first circle of the order do not know of their position, as they are just "likely candidates" for corruption, observed by those in the second circle.

THE SECOND CIRCLE

Cultists of the second circle are recruiters. They watch younger members of their hearth and identify first circle candidates, passing their identities to a member of the third circle. However, they do not know the whole truth of what they serve. They are told that long ago, Anwyn realized her family had wrongly deposed Kador, so she made a pact with Asmodeus, true master of the fire, to forgive him and release him from Hell. They still pray to Anwyn, but Asmodeus provides their powers. To learn this secret and join the second circle, a first circle prospect is given years of observation and many subtle tests. If it becomes clear the candidate will not turn evil and serve, she is either left to live in ignorance or, if shown too much, killed. Most cultists never rise beyond the second circle, and it is here that petty, corrupt manciples can be found: gluttons who indulge themselves with the church's food and wealth.

THE THIRD CIRCLE

Members of the third circle head second circle recruiting cells or work as "listeners," eavesdropping on conversations in the hearth. Pretending to listen and advise the faithful, they hoard the embarrassing secrets of commoners and the elites they serve. Third circle cultists know only the identity of the fourth circle member from whom they receive instruction, who they believe to be the head of the cult, of the second circle cells they command, and of the first circle candidates they test. To recruit a first circle member into the second circle, they must gain the approval of the fourth circle leader.

THE FOURTH CIRCLE

Fourth circle members direct several recruiting cells and listeners, limiting themselves to direct contact with third circle lieutenants. They also perform small missions for the order, but always through outside agents such as paid assassins or misguided adventurers. Upon being raised to the fourth circle, the true nature of the order is revealed, and members pray to Asmodeus instead of Anwyn. They receive commands from a lone member of the fifth circle.

THE HALFLING CHURCH

The corrupt Supreme Manciple and his council determined that most of Anwyn's halfling clergy would never serve Asmodeus. In time, the wisest halflings would discover its diabolical rites. But they also knew there was no easy way to kill them all.

Thus, the Supreme Manciple removed halfling hearths from the Great Hearth's authority. In an edict, the ruling council proclaimed halfling ways of worship to be distinct from those of other hearths, and named the high manciples of the halfling hearths chiefs of their own version of the faith. Most halflings saw this as a great honor, but some found the move curious, and wondered what motivated the Great Hearth, which had never separated its worshipers by race before. For many years, a small cadre of halfling Anwynites searched for the Supreme Manciple's true motives. They even asked Anwyn herself, but she only answered with a telling silence. She believes they'll win the war, but must fight it under the strictest interpretation of the Compact, to reap the greatest good out of victory. If the GM wishes, she can flesh out this sect of curious halflings and their investigations. Players may join them, or help them track vanished comrades, who walked too close to the truth of it all.

The leaders of the corrupt church know their reckoning will come, though many believe it won't happen until Kador escapes Hell, and will help them prevail. Prophecy says Anwyn's humblest, most sincere servants will be their downfall—naturally, they believe that's the halfling church. Thus, the Supreme Manciple and his council monitor halfling hearths, undermining them whenever they can. Whenever they find the rare halfling with a corruptible heart, they recruit him into one of the dark hearths ("bringing the branches of the faith together") and convert him to the wicked path. Those so corrupted return to halfling hearths to work mischief from within. This plan has yet to bring down any halfling hearths of note, but the infiltrators are patient.

THE FIFTH CIRCLE

Members of the fifth circle learn how the cult has infiltrated much of their hearth. They believe the entire order is headed by their sixth circle overseer. Fifth circle cultists manage one task or another within a hearth. A hearth's fifth circle might include a head of recruitment, a head of listening, and so on. Fifth circle members know that others of their rank dwell within the hearth, but do not meet without wearing masks. Yet the all know the identity of their overseer: He's the hearth's high manciple.

THE SIXTH CIRCLE

One must be a high manciple to be raised to the sixth circle. He oversees the entire cult within his hearth, though he only meets with fifth circle subordinates for its secret business. Sixth circle members know the order reaches beyond their hearths, for they were admitted

into the circle by their predecessors, who now guide them from the seventh circle. If a high manciple dies unexpectedly, his seventh circle overseer comes to the hearth and raises his proper successor. Having risen through many lies about the size of the cult, members of the sixth circle dare not speculate about its full extent, but believe their seventh-circle overseers are influential enough to pull strings with the Great Hearth, and elevate high manciples. A sixth-circle member knows other regional high manciples are members of the secret order, but not which ones.

THE SEVENTH CIRCLE

Seventh circle high manciples command powerful hearths, and oversee all the other local high manciples. They set their sixth circle vassals on complex schemes to strengthen the secret order. Commands flow down to the lowest cells, so that each will do their duty to Asmodeus. Members of the seventh circle rarely meet others of their rank, and only in situations where they can all conceal their true identities. A seventh circle high manciple receives commands and dark blessings from one member of the eighth circle. He does not know if there are others, or even what the overlord's rank in the church is, if any.

THE EIGHTH CIRCLE

All masters of the eighth circle know each other's true identities, for they're all the elder manciples of the Great Hearth. They only speak to cult subordinates while magically disguised, or through messengers with code words. If anyone ever tracked the conspiracy to the eighth circle, any one of its members would gladly die before revealing that other elder manciples were his dark brethren. Disciplined and organized, they do not indulge infighting. They accept accolades and punishments when deserved, and if found incompetent, commit suicide. They receive orders directly from the Supreme Manciple.

THE NINTH CIRCLE

There is only one ninth-circle member: the Supreme Manciple. He's cunning, powerful, and evil to the core, and perhaps the most important servant of Asmodeus on Earth. The King of Hell might have tougher and more magically adept vassals, but none rule a cult so influential. The Supreme Manciple rules the cult with cunning and forethought—in fact, he's a better servant of Asmodeus than most of his devils, who are given to bickering and impulsive acts of evil. Thus, Asmodeus speaks to him directly.

When the Supreme Manciple dies, his body is spitted and cooked over the Great Hearth. The council of elder manciples feasts on his flesh, ritually taking from him the power he was lent by the King of the Universe. As they chant to Asmodeus, chins covered with the grease of their former leader's roasted flesh, they receive instruction of the King of Hell himself. One of their number, summoned by Asmodeus, climbs onto the feasting table, where he fornicates with, or otherwise shames himself

before, all the other elders, who then follow suit with one another. Thus, all share in a dark secret, strengthening their bond under Hell. When this is done, the candidate is dressed in the Supreme Manciple's robes.

Sometimes, babies are born when coupling occurs during the ritual. They're raised as faithful servants, unless they're children of the Supreme Manciple himself. Such babes are sacrificed to Asmodeus a week after being born: hurled into the Great Hearth out of fear of their potential. Anyone with the blood of the Supreme Manciple running through their veins descends from the King of Hell's greatest worldly servant, and might use such power to overthrow the conspiracy.

THE LOST ORDERS

Those hearthkeepers who survived the suicide missions they were sent on were murdered. The suppression of the goodwives was far more peaceful, for it was based on sound reasoning, even though the goal was to prevent the order from discovering the Great Hearth's corruption. A few goodwives never returned to the hearths, and some petition the elders to restore the order, now that the crisis that dissolved it has passed. The Great Hearth's agents suppress such movements as quietly as they can.

THE HEARTHKEEPERS

The hearthkeepers were mostly paladins, and always lawful good warriors who delighted in story and song. They protected anyone who came to their hearths. If a congregant was being abused by his master, employer or partner in life, a hearthkeeper would find that person a safe place to stay in the hearth, and confront the abuser. (The manciples no longer allow members of the flock to seek refuge thus, unless they desire them as sacrifices.) Some still feel the call to serve as Anwyn's paladins, but no hearthkeepers remain to train them, unless some of them hid from the Great Hearth's purge. Most would-be hearthkeepers are halflings, in whom Anwyn sees hope for the restoration of the order.

THE GOODWIVES

The goodwives were keepers of family secrets, genealogists, experts in common medicines, and midwives. As the name implies, they were a predominantly female order, but there were "goodhusbands" and "goodfolk" as well. Those who took a gendered title specialized in lore related to it, based on tradition and practical considerations. In many societies "goodwives" possessed herbal knowledge, and "goodhusbands" knew how to raise hardy livestock because of traditional associations, but other cultures believed in variant or even opposite connections, and taught order members accordingly. The goodwives traveled widely, serving people they met with their knowledge and often, simple, sweaty labor. This order has been absorbed into the manciples, though a few elders exist outside the hierarchy. Most are clerics, though a few are bards.

IV: THE THREE SISTERS

THE LAST THREE GODS TO JOIN THE LORDS OF GOOD, THE THREE SISTERS' ORIGINS ARE SHROUDED IN MYSTERY. THIS section is intended for the Game Master; players should avoid reading it until the GM gives them the okay, or if they're playing a follower of the Three Sisters. Unlike the other gods, the Three Sisters share one church, divided into three distinct sects—one for each goddess. The Three Sisters are: Naryne the Noble, Canelle the Swift, and Thellyne the Huntress.

THE GODDESSES OF FAMILIAL UNITY

THE THREE SISTERS

The Three Sisters are most often worshiped in a joint temple, called a triad. Some small shrines or chapels are dedicated to just one sister, but large temples always have three altars: one for each goddess. The clergy and holy warriors of the Three Sisters travel widely and pursue duties away from the triad. Thus, a peculiar power structure rules their faiths. The ruling cleric of a triad may follow one of the Sisters, but in her role as overseer, becomes a representative of all three goddesses.

This goddess' three holy orders have been bound together for as long as the Three Sisters themselves, who awoke on the bank of a mythic river (theologians dispute its name and location) as siblings and boon companions from their first divine breaths. They squabble like all gods, but help each other in adventures across Creation, and in serving it through their holy purviews. The Sisters' awakening, and their eastward journey across the world, rests at the heart of triad philosophy. It's a spiritual mystery that inspires the triad's shared holy order: The Unity.

Triads are homes to the three faiths of the Sisters, each of which sets its own outlook and holy orders. Most triad visitors seek blessings from just one goddess. Nevertheless, each of the Sisters represents familial unity and cooperation and their clerics never omit mention of this, even while serving individual goddesses' altars. Triad tapestries depict 3,333 tales of the Sisters' journey to the East. Each represents one story, so triads constantly rustle as wind and passers-by disturb the many, many flowing tapestries.

The triad uses three intersecting rings as its symbol, arrayed in a triangle with one circle above the others. (At altars to individual sisters, the top circle is that of the relevant goddess; at places of collective worship, the sign is often designed to be spun in prayer, so no goddess is pre-eminent.) Each ring represents one of the Sisters' crowns: a red circle for Canelle, a black circle for Naryne, and a gold circle for Thellyne. Every altar in a triad features this symbol, inscribed alongside with the sign of the Sister the altar honors.

MYTHS

The following legend is kept secret, but taught to the Three Sisters' clergy, to keep the three primary evil gods hidden from public knowledge. People learn the Sisters were born by the river, and some public sermons talk

about them overcoming "darkness" in the form of personal conflicts, but the Brothers are never mentioned. If the GM prefers the Evil Ones be publicly known, the myth isn't a secret, but by default, the Three Brothers never appear in the Great Sage Matalou's writings.

THE WAKING OF THE SISTERS

WE DO NOT KNOW WHY THE SISTERS AWOKE. MYSTICS BELIEVE they arose because they were needed, or the Nameless One created them for some secret need. Those who ascribe to a more scientific school of thought believe that the Compact created the Sisters, for it created an order in which belief is power, and the mortal races believed in forces that none of the existing gods represented. Others say the quest of the Three Companions created the Sisters, or that the Sisters were mortals who cast a spell to become gods, and sacrificed their mortal memories in the process.

Whatever the reason, the Sisters awoke there by the water's edge. Which river? It is lost to antiquity, though some say it is the oldest river in the world, left unchanged by the cataclysms of the ages. As the Sisters stirred, they found they were not alone, for beside them, the Three Brothers awoke, as alike in form to the Sisters as to one another.

All six of these new gods were born a family, for in nose, hand, eye, jaw, ear—all the common markings of family likeness—they were similar. But in disposition, they could not be more hateful to each other. The Sisters argued about all manner of things, but eventually found a common bond in their charitable hearts. But the Brothers battled each other instantly, ceaselessly, by the shore of the river. Each wished to prove himself strongest.

The siblings learned their names from the winds, the sounds of the water, or in secret sounds, relayed by divine energies. Each Sister shared a name with a corresponding Brother who was alike in nature, though the names changed as differences in temperament arose. This was cause for some small wonder but also unhappiness, for each disliked their counterpart.

The dark-haired Sister with keen eyes and a noble mien found her name was Naryne, from the tall rocks that looked down on the river valley. But her dark-haired Brother with the cruel gaze and the powerful shoulders called himself Naran, for the rocks that blocked the entrance to the same valley. She believed moral laws should prevent the strong from abusing the weak; he believed the strong must make their own rules, to be obeyed until they weakened, and were overthrown.

The golden-haired Sister of careful manner and skill, who loved woodcraft and nature, called herself Tbellyne, or "Gentle Wind." Her straw-haired Brother, of red cheeks and constant appetite, called himself Tbellos, or "Hungry Wind." She believed that nature should be respected for its gifts, and protected; he believed nature's bounty should be plundered for pleasure, and once consumed, should be abandoned for new, ripe territory.

The Sister with red hair, swift feet, and strong arms called herself Canelle, which sounded to her like the swiftest beasts in the river's cradle. The red-haired Brother, with his pointed teeth and angry growls, called himself Canarak, which sounded to him like the fiercest of creatures. She believed she should perfect herself with discipline for discipline's sake, with no true opponent but herself; he believed in mastering strength to destroy his enemies, or dominate them with terror and pain.

The Brothers struck a truce, and agreed to divide the world between themselves. Each Brother would take his closest Sister as his wife. They'd let their children war with each other until one dynasty remained. The Brother who ruled it, would rule Creation.

The Sisters were not party to this plan, and were cleverer than their fierce Brothers. Shadows on the tall rocks, the gentle wind, and the swift beasts told them of the Brothers' plot. Therefore, when the Brothers came to them with false smiles, the Sisters pretended to be charmed, and cooked a feast for them. But the Sisters put nightshade in the Brothers' portions, and the evil ones slipped into dreamless slumber.

The Sisters ran east, beyond the tall stones. They discovered people, lands, and creatures that they had only known from wind-whispers and shadows before. They did not teach mortals, for they were creatures of divine instinct, not learned skill, and knew not how knowledge was shared thus. They learned of learning itself from mortals, and marveled at how creatures so weak could strengthen themselves with knowledge alone. They applied these methods to themselves, and refined their power with wisdom. In the 3,333 tales of their journey they formed perfect bonds of sisterhood, which we revere to this day.

At last, they came to a lovely pool on the edge of the world, and there they abided, until the Three Companions, descendants of the Tree, found them, and were amazed, for they knew not of these river-born goddesses. Each Companion fell in love with one of them. Naryne returned Maal's affection, and they were wed, but the other Companions' love went unrequited. Nevertheless, all Sisters were admitted to the Heavens, and made part of the family of the gods. While all the gods must know of their wicked Brothers, it is not known if the Sisters ever again stood against the evil ones. It is said that if the Sisters and Brothers meet again, it will be in a war that ends the world.

THE TRIADS OF THE SISTERS

Triads are places of quiet worship, infrequently visited. Their facilities are available to worshipers of any of the Three Sisters, but few laypeople worship them so fervently as to require a temple. Thus triads are usually found only in major population centers, such as capital cities, and other places where nobles congregate. The noble worshipers of Naryne keep the triads in operation, with generous donations that go to all three faiths. Some cultures which revere sport support large, popular triads where people pray for their favorite athletes. They donate to Canelle's portion of the church. Barring these circumstances, the average mid-sized city has little need for a temple to Three Sisters. Most worshipers resort to visiting the Great Church, which keeps adjoining altars to them.

Triad clergy think of the Three Brothers as metaphors, not gods. In their recounting of the journey, they say the Sisters awoke by the river and there, confronted and rejected their evil halves. (Chapter VII explains, that the Three Brothers truly exist, and have acted in secret for centuries, but of course the GM determines the truth of it). Thus, few scholars to believe the Brothers are truly gods. If anyone outside the faith learned their myths, further studies would tell them that the Brothers are nothing but symbols of the Sisters' "shadow sides," which they rejected.



DOCTRINE

What did they teach on this eastward journey, from childhood to adulthood, from sleeping to waking, from doubting to knowing? The Three Sisters, blessed are their names, came to us in innocence, and did not instruct us, but provided their perfect examples. They showed us that no great thing can be done alone. Without the breath of life, the eye cannot see and the arm cannot act. Without the eye, the breath knows not its purpose, and the arm goes astray. Without the arm, breath and eye cannot act, but only contemplate. We must have difference, they taught us, for we are all parts of a greater Unity. We must experience the world in its different lights, dark, red, and gold, acting together as the colors of Creation do, or we are lost."

— An interpretation of the Journey to the East by Reverend Mother Grywin Estalla, Variegate Priestess of the Eastwatch Triad

Each of Sisters and their faiths contain many differences, but they all turn upon the Journey to the East. The thousands of stories (officially 3,333, but varied local traditions increase that number) focus on ways in which the Sisters

learned to work together. Mystical interpretations of these tales form the core doctrine of the triad:

Each of us must balance our desires to control, observe, and act

In tale after tale, the Sisters bickered. Naryne set down rules and issued commands. Thellyne hid and observed, and Canelle aggressively charged at every challenge. In these acts, the triads see three primal impulses. Only those who combine and balance them can lead happy lives.

For every person, two others exist to lead them to perfection

Triads believe that two people might be good enough for ordinary love and companionship, but in great adventures and life's most difficult struggles, everyone is best supported by two others, who the gods have hidden until it is time for them to unite, even if only for one task. The complementary two might never be found, or might be members of one's family. In any event, truly propitious unions come in threes.

We will find paradise when Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld are unified

It is no coincidence that at the end of their great journey, the Three Sisters separated. Canelle resides on the mountain of Heaven beside the other gods, Thellyne wanders the world, and Naryne sits beside Maal, in the land of the dead. The sins of the mortal races, their distance from the gods, and their desire to do evil required the separation of Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld. Mortals do evil, so they must be judged by Maal, in a separate place. Even the gods must separate themselves from the mortal affairs, for the sake of the Compact. When mortals find balance in their inner natures and relationships, and obey the gods, the three realms will reunite.

Few people worship the Sisters in the form of the triad, but most serious worshipers of any one of the Sisters comes to study the journey and its interpretations. Anyone seeking to become a variegate priest or priestess must contemplate these matters at length.

HOLY DAYS

Two holy days unify the three faiths of the Sisters. The first is celebrated early in the year. Called Waking Day, it commemorates the waking of the Three Sisters by the riverbanks, their eventual rejection of evil, and their departure. Waking Day is observed in silent contemplation, followed by a children's morality play that portrays the Waking and one tale of the Journey to the East. These skits don't mention the Three Brothers at all, and portray evil as a whisper urging the Sisters to argue until after a dream, they work together to escape the river valley.

Later in the year, the faithful observe the Ascension, remembering the day the Sisters were embraced by Heaven and made Lords of Good. On the Ascension, the faithful make many sacrifices to the Sister they worship, or all three. They pray for forgiveness and guidance. In the evening, adults reenact several stories from the Journey to the East, and finally the Meeting, when the Three Companions met the Sisters.

HOLY ORDERS

Because the triads are not terribly popular, and the Sisters' clergy and holy warriors are often absent on missions, it is all but impossible to staff a triad with a high-ranking member of each Sister's clergy. Instead, the three churches have a long-standing arrangement, in which any cleric of a Sister can serve as a "variegate priest" or "variegate priestess" for a period of no less than one year and no more than five years.

A variegate priest puts aside the trappings of the goddess he has served, and wears robes of the three sacred colors: red, gold, and black. He oversees a triad, determining its position on matters both secular and religious. Acting as a cleric of all Three Sisters, he offers spiritual counsel to worshipers of any of the three faiths, and sees to the training of each of their clergies. A variegate priest is addressed as "revered father," or "revered mother," and is introduced as a variegate priest, omitting any titles related to a specific Sister.

Variegate priests induct members into the Unity: an order of triad-worshipers. From time to time, three people come to a triad seeking to be bound together as special companions, fates and lives tied together as surely as the Sisters' were. If the variegate priest believes their intentions are true, he can induct them into the Unity (see "The Unity," following), after which they are so bound.

The average triad has one variegate priest in residence. A few holy warriors and clergy of the individual altars come in from time to time. There are also various acolytes and students in residence, but they do not perform religious functions beyond study and meditation.

VARIEGATE PRIESTS OF THE TRIAD

Only members of the clergies of Naryne, Canelle, or Thellyne can become variegate priests. They must train for at least six months (but usually, at least a year) with devotees of the other two Sisters; at the end of this time, the candidate is tested by all the clergy of the triad he seeks to lead. The woodwardens come in from their woods, the red masters return from their athletic training circuits, and the seneschals descend from the palaces where they serve. The candidate is questioned for several hours on the intricacies of all three religions. The priesthoods then votes by secret ballot. A majority must approve of the candidate, who serves for five years. Reappointments (which require new elections) are rare, but possible.

THE UNITY

When three people believe themselves as united as the Three Sisters at the end of their journey, They can petition a triad to be inducted into the Unity. The Unity has no formal titles, and its members have no status within the churches of the individual Sisters. In fact, they need not be particularly devout worshipers of any Sister.

Becoming part of a Unity means agreeing to tie yourself to two other people in the eyes of the gods. The variegate priests perform an ancient ritual that does this, at the end of which the three members of the Unity are, for all intents

and purposes, a family. Triads perform the ritual because they believe it is in the forming of such unions that the perfection of the mortal races will be achieved, and paradise will be realized. Priests require a genuine bond, without coercion or inequality, and use *test of souls* to ensure it exists. The exact nature of the emotional bond varies, ranging from the forms of love that mortal races feel toward one another, to a sense of camaraderie greater than the usual ties which hold teams of hardened adventurers together.

When the ritual is complete, the three emerge as a Unity. They take on a new name that all three share, to signify

their new familial bond—and indeed, they are all now family in the eyes of the gods. By becoming a Unity, the three live out the mystery of the Journey to the East. One becomes the Breath, as Naryne is sometimes called, the speaker for the three. One becomes the Eye, as Thellyne is for the Sisters, and observes for the three. One becomes the Arm, as Canelle was, and takes direct action for the Unity. As the three explore their bond it grows stronger, and they develop the ability to perform miraculous deeds together.

Characters interested in forming a Unity can do so by taking the Triad Feats, as explained in **Chapter X**.

GODDESS OF NOBILITY

NARYNE

HIGH, GLORIOUS, LADY OF LADIES, QUEEN OF QUEENS,
THE BREATH, THE NOBLE, QUEEN OF SOULS, THE DARK SISTER

Naryne (nah-REEN) is the lawful neutral goddess of nobility, royalty, kingdoms, leadership, rulership, kings, queens, and nobles. She is founded of orders of nobles among the mortal races, some of which endure to this day. She is also associated with the dead and the departed, as their queen. She is more interested in the orderliness and proper succession of noble lines, than in any one instance of good or evil.

Cultures associate the Dark Sister with beasts that represent nobility, such as the lion, but she is more often symbolized by the swan, which her own church uses, and considers the Queen of Beasts. Naryne is also associated with dragons, the greatest, oldest, and most powerful living creatures. Each culture prefers a particular color or breed of dragon.

Naryne is painted as a glorious queen, as tall as her husband, with dark hair and piercing eyes. She wears a crown and royal robes. In her hand, she holds a scepter, symbol of her authority in Heaven, Earth, and the lands of the dead. Her crown holds five shining stars, which she won from Urian during the Journey to the East.

Naryne's followers use her gold crown and its stars as their faith's symbol. It marks her shrines and triad altars, and it serves as part of the heraldry for her most faithful worshippers. This is often simplified to just a golden crown, or a simple drawing of a crown with stars on it. Simple versions of the starry crown are used to decorate small things, or as improvised markings.

Naryne counts the nobility among her most ardent followers. They have the wealth to make her faith, and the triads where it resides, powerful and opulent. Many rich, important nobles have chapels dedicated to Naryne in their castles, palaces, and manses. Other lords and ladies support their local triads with generous donations. Outside of the nobility, people honoring the long dead appeal to the Dark Sister. For instance, if a peasant family believes one of its ancestors was admitted to the third hall of the land of the dead, they'd pray to Naryne in remembrance of her. Though Maal is King of the Dead and the Judge of Souls, Naryne rules over the afterlife itself, and all souls therein fall under her dominion.

MYTHS

THE LINE OF KINGS

DURING THE JOURNEY TO THE EAST, GLORIOUS NARYNE WAS THE Breath of the Three, blessed may their names always be. She was calculating and wise, and seeing things as they were, spoke the truth. Thus she agreed to marry Maal, King of Souls, for she saw the union's benefits for her family. The marriage united the Sisters with the Lords of Heaven, assuring their place in the world.

Once they were so united, her thoughts went to the mortal races she had observed in their great journey. In their folly, mortals warred with one another, the strongest seizing power from the weakest. This belief had been Iblis' folly, and she knew it well, for it was an evil she banished from her own heart, to escape the river-lands of her birth. Having married Maal, she would now be queen of these mortals when they died, and she felt no small responsibility to improve them. She resolved to teach mortals law and leadership.

Thus, she walked among the five races once more. Maal was lonely in the realm of the dead, but he had his mother's wisdom, and was not jealous. He knew his wife sought to bring law to the mortals, and that all would be well.

High Naryne had searched the highs and the lows of every lands. She supped with the simplest dwarven craftsman and the mightiest human warlords. She found the wisest, kindest, fairest, cleverest, and sometimes even the strongest mortals, until a hundred of these paragons assembled before her. She offered them one hundred crowns, wrought of gold that had once paid for the passage of souls, and said, "You bear my blessing to be kings and queens of the mortal races, for you are worthy of these crowns. Should anyone question your right, remind them that in the world below, where all your kin go in the end, I am queen, and will not look kindly upon any who would usurp these crowns. They are of my chill gold, given to Death, and whosoever wears them falsely, by usurpation or unworthy rule, must repay me, in my black halls."

So Naryne, the Lady of Ladies, became the Queen of Queens, for she began lines of nobility that, in some places, survive to this day. Even when mighty lords do not descend from the First Kings and Queens, they invoke Naryne as their protector and advisor. As Queen of Queens she is worshipped

by nobles alone, for in that aspect she is their personal goddess, who gives their bloodlines, and thrones Heaven's protection. When she returned to the land of the dead, Maal was pleased, for he saw that the lady he loved was not only fair, but just and wise. Although their union would never produce offspring, they would rule well together, for all eternity.

RULE THE LANDS OF THE DEAD

Naryne sanctifies noble bloodlines and rules the land of the dead. The Compact prevents her from going to mortals uncloaked, and declaring new rulers when an old line dies out, so she finds modern nobles less moral, strong and clever than their ancient forebears. She sometimes travels in disguise to hint her preferences during succession crises in the old bloodlines, but the contenders know Naryne's blessing strengthens their claims, and research stories of old visitations, so they often invent visions and omens that support them. By the terms of the Compact, she Queen of Queens cannot answer these lies directly, so from her point of view, the wrong candidate often wins the throne.

Naryne offers guidance to rulers who seek her out with prayers and virtuous works. She also encourages her followers to support the aristocracy. To the Dark Sister, rightful succession is always more important than the qualities of any individual ruler. The institution itself binds society together, and in the long run, true bloodlines mostly produce good lords—or at least, reliable ones. She encourages vassals to maintain their oaths, and for the well-born to respect the rules of precedence. Thus, a righteous noble who overthrows a tyrannical king wins no blessing from Naryne. The king was the rightful ruler. Toppling him injures the line of kings, which could have served the people for another thousand years.

But the land of the dead takes up most of her attention. She rules over the kingdom Maal built. Its attendants and celestials answer to her. Even the four wardens who serve Maal do so with her leave. Unlike the marriage of Zheenkeef and Tinel, where secrets abound, or Morwyn's two marriages, in which the affections are often faint, Maal and Naryne share an unquestionable love. Their union is the strongest, and their loyalty to one another is unshakable.

SERVANTS OF NARYNE

Naryne commands an ebony chariot drawn by twelve giant swans. The chariot bears her from the land of the dead to Heaven and sometimes even to the Material Plane, though she usually visits the mortal realm in disguise. The twelve swans all speak every mortal and immortal tongue that ever existed, for the spirits of the dead taught them. The swans are Inixos, Yaili, Marit, Oona, Pilai, Weili, Uxos, Darila, Marila, Tani, Sa'ool, and Jeini. Every one hundred years, each swan descends to the Material Plane in the form of a powerful, beautiful bard, and walks the world, unburdened by duty, for a year. They display deep wisdom, for they know nearly every tale of mortal history. Many swans, as mortals, marry and bear children, only to abandon their progeny when they return to the land of the dead. The separation never lasts long, for all mortals must come to Maal and Naryne's kingdom.



Naryne's other key companion is her seneschal Wahilla, who was the fairest and wisest of all the mortals the Sisters met on their eastward journey. Wahilla was a halfling maiden. People of all races came for miles around to sit with and take counsel from her. Legends claim she was the wisest mortal to ever live, for she saw as clearly as the gods themselves what courses lay before mortals, as well as their true desires and greatest fears. When Naryne returned to the mortal world after marrying Maal, Wahilla was old and childless. Naryne could not make her Queen of the World, for the halfling could not found the mightiest bloodline, to which all other kings and queens would do homage. Instead, she came to the old woman's side and revealed her true form. Wahilla wept and said, "I knew when I first saw you, in those days of my youth so long ago, that you were not made of mortal stuff. You have been the star that guided my heart all these long years, and I have missed you." The goddess and the old woman wept in one another's arms, and from that moment, Naryne could not bear to be parted from her. So Wahilla never died, but rather was taken to Heaven bodily, where Morwyn, as a wedding gift to Naryne, healed the ancient halfling of age and affliction, though not barrenness. The two have never been separated since, and Wahilla's counsel guides Naryne, as the counsel of all great seneschals guides their rulers. Thus, many seneschals make offerings to Wahilla as well as the Dark Sister, for they would learn the halfling's great wisdom.

THE CHURCH OF THE DARK SISTER

The Narynites occupy the dark altars of the triads, and the serve richly appointed chapels dedicated to Naryne in the palaces of kings. Her orders draw their membership almost exclusively from nobles who support the faith. In many cultures, aristocrats give their lesser sons and daughters—those children least likely to inherit—to the church, to join one priesthood or another. As many nobles are educated and raised by Narynite priests, they often choose the Dark Sister's church. Thus, members of the clergy usually have noble blood, though they can be bastards, and need not descend from the hundred the goddess blessed in mythic times.

Common folk do join the faith, but they are few. Most are holy warriors, called by Naryne to serve for reasons known only to her. Many assume these are great nobles, reborn from the land of the dead as commoners, returning to their proper status in new lives.

Narynites serve as the companions and advisors of nobles, and rarely visit their triad altars, preferring to join the clergy of a private chapel, in a noble's castle. Noble patrons usually build altars to all the gods, but the grandest is usually consecrated to Naryne. Since Narynites



rarely dwell at the triads, a variegate priest performs most of her services for commoners, such as helping them pray to ancestors in the land of the dead.

Naryne has little time for her church, tending as she does to the land of the dead. As it is, the holy orders of her faith have more in common with Wahilla. She appreciates that mortals work to preserve the bloodlines she established long ago, and she does what she can to aid them without violating the Compact. However, she does believe that when the line of succession is unclear, her servants should not favor descent over worthiness to rule, for she gave crowns of gold to mortals for their actions, not their ancestry.

DOCTRINE

"I knew a man who many called wise who said to me, 'Kings exist to take from common folk. How will there ever be freedom when we have kings?' I called upon the powers given to me by the Dark Sister to make this wise man sleep, and in his slumber, I bound his hands and took him to the docks, which are kept peaceful and tidy by the order of our king, may the Lady smile on him. There I woke this fellow, who many called wise. Before he could protest, I said, 'In a land without a king, there would be slave ships here on the docks, and I could have sold you to them. How can there ever be freedom in a land without kings?'"

—from *"A Life of Service,"*
by Seneschal Ualda Ionesse

In the Journey to the East, Naryne distinguished herself from her sisters with wisdom, intellect, and a talent for command. She guided them through treacherous paths that required thought and moral reasoning instead of physical brawn, or nimble fingers.

When she returned to the mortal world, her followers believe she used all she had learned to choose the First Kings and Queens.

Yet nobility is not a matter of descent, but character. All but the basest villains keep some nobility in their hearts. Those entrusted by Naryne to lead the mortal races are part of a greater order, able to pass the spirit of true nobility to their children, and their children may pass it further down the ages, to rule with wisdom. This blessing is the Queen of Queens' to give. Narynites seek out and serve such nobles, from emperors and queens, to the dukes of city-states. They aid landed knights, and even the lord-governors of distant colonies. Certainly, there are petty, wicked and greedy nobles who aren't worthy of their titles, but the Narynites serve them too, to guide them to the just path. They look at nobility as an institution, and believe that wisdom lost to one generation can be recovered, so long as aristocratic institutions endure.

The gods left the world to its own devices, and now watch it, to see how mortals behave without divine stewardship. But the world is a wicked place, and its

inhabitants, left to themselves, become monsters, brutally killing one another to take whatever they desire. Only nobility, in the hearts of people and in noble-born leaders, stands between society and murderous darkness. Order prevents mortals from turning to evil.

Most practicing Narynites have noble blood, or belong to one of the holy orders founded to serve the nobility. However, many who make a life of service to nobles, such as chamberlains, heralds, footmen, and handmaids, also worship Naryne. The faith tells them they serve the highest calling, promoting nobility in all mortal hearts.

NARYNITE PRAYERS

At the ascension of a new king or other high noble, a great book of prayers is opened that contains scriptures only read for the nobility. The following prayer is read just before the crown is placed on the noble's head.

*“Once there were one hundred crowns of gold,
But we no longer have the crowns.
Once there were one hundred kings and queens,
But they have all of them long ago died.
Once we were visited by the Queen of Queens,
But she has long since quit this wicked world.
Yet you are charged,
In the name of Naryne, the Queen of Souls,
To remember the crowns,
To remember the first chosen,
To remember your Queen.
Though they are gone,
They are not forgotten.”*

SAINTS

Faithful Narynites who performed some historic deed to preserve the true order of nobility are those most likely to be named saints. If someone recovered one of the one hundred crowns and gave it to her king, she would be named a saint by all Narynites. If a proper ruler was overthrown by rebels, but put back on the throne by a small group of dedicated followers, those followers might all be recognized by local Narynites as saints. The magnitude of the deed determines how likely it is for someone to be revered as a saint, but the deed must be truly spectacular and maintain the strength of a noble line for a long while.

Martyrs are those who die protecting their noble lord. Using this doctrine, the Narynites inspire honor guards, telling them they will receive accolades from the Queen of Queens in the land of the dead, should they die defending their charges.

HOLY ORDERS

The Narynites serve secular authority more stridently than other churches do. Called seneschals, the faith's clergy advise the nobility, and see to proper successions whenever they can. A second order, the swan knights, was founded to protect and serve the nobility, usually by tying themselves to a specific aristocrat or family. In their service to nobles,

Narynite holy orders often drift from the triads, which is one of the many reasons variegate priests are necessary.

SENECHALS OF NARYNE

Advisors, protectors, and educators of the nobility, the seneschals tie themselves to a bloodline or household for a lifetime. An elven seneschal might serve generations of human kings. They swear to protect the members of the bloodline, educate their children, and give spiritual advice, including guidance on how to honor the gods of the tree, and counsel during successions. Seneschals guard family relics, noble regalia, and artifacts that prove the rights of those they serve to occupy their thrones.

Many seneschals travel across the world, often accompanying adventurous young nobles. Some, not bound to a noble family, might venture in search of one, while a few go on quests for the lost one hundred crowns, and the families that once held them. Many seneschals of noble



blood end up serving their own families, but some search for a family of higher station to improve their house's position, or find other nobles to escape conflicts among their own relatives.

Most seneschals are lawful neutral. They focus on proper service to the nobility, caring little about whether the noble they serve is good or evil, wise or foolish. They guide the nobles they serve toward wisdom, but failure does not instill in them a crisis of confidence; rather, they continue to serve faithfully, knowing they must instill the spirit of nobility no matter the difficulties they face.

Some seneschals are lawful good. They seek out the wisest and finest nobles to serve, tying themselves only to the greatest examples of nobility among the mortal races, or never attach themselves to anyone at all. Unattached seneschals scour the world for the one hundred crowns and one hundred bloodlines, believing that if the crowns and their lineages could be restored, peace would prevail.



Many end up attached to Maalite counterparts who seek their lost Sacred Laws. Some say the crowns and the Laws will be found together.

There are also lawful evil seneschals who attach themselves to the most powerful and selfish nobles, teaching their masters how to bleed more from their people, crush their enemies, and ensure the dominance of their bloodlines. These seneschals believe nobles only deserve their titles if they're strong, and prepared to do whatever it takes to maintain law. If that means murder, torture, war, or tyranny, so be it.

Seneschals maintain the titles they were born with, and continue to be addressed by those titles. Since most seneschals are already nobles, this can include "sir," "lord," "duke," or even "prince," and all their feminine counterparts. They are introduced as "consecrated seneschals of the Narynites" before any noble introductions, such as "defender of the third march." In the rare case a seneschal has no noble blood, he is addressed as "master:" a non-noble indication of respect.

JOINING THE SENESCHALS

Becoming a seneschal requires about three years of education by another seneschal in the mysteries of Naryne, the religious ceremonies of her faith, all religious matters, to better serve as an educator. Upon completing training, the new seneschal becomes a cleric with the Knowledge domain. Seneschals favor maces, which symbolize the scepter Naryne always carries.

SWAN KNIGHTS OF NARYNE

The swan knights of Naryne are mostly noble-born, and protect and serve those of noble blood. Some might serve nobles seated on thrones, but many protect children, keeping them safe through youth and adulthood, traveling with them, and teaching them martial matters. Swan knights act as sacred bodyguards to the nobility. They've sworn to give their lives to keep their charges safe. To see them is to behold the very flower of chivalry. They wear helms ornamented with the white swans of Naryne, and are laden with shining armor and shields. Fair as they are dangerous, they protect what is truly noble in the hearts of mortals, and would die before letting that light be extinguished.

Noble status isn't enough to earn a swan knight's protection. They seek out the best, most virtuous charges. This could mean they protect the one good child in an otherwise greedy and wicked family. The darker the lands, the more commonly evil festers in the hearts of nobles, and the less likely one is to see a swan knight.

Swan knights must not knowingly allow their charges to be maimed or killed, must not willingly do evil or allow evil to be done, and must not turn a deaf ear on the pleas of those who are good of heart. Swan knights must not offer services to someone who is only noble in blood, not spirit (any known non-good noble). Thus, most swan knights are lawful good. A swan knight keeps the company of good nobles, and

associates with anyone that noble chooses for companions. The knight might advise her charge to steer clear of evil associates, but if the noble chooses to travel with such folk, so too will she, keeping her charge safe from them. Swan knights who have not yet found a noble to serve (or older swan knights whose charge died without issue) choose companions who can help them meet good-hearted nobles. They are quite driven about this; without a noble to serve, they consider themselves pointless.

A swan knight is addressed by whatever titles he already bears as a noble, and introduced as a “sworn knight of Naryne.” In the rare case that a knight has no noble titles, she will be addressed as “dame” (or “sir”) at the very least.

THE GODDESS OF VICTORY AND STRENGTH

CANELLE

TALL, SWIFT, FLEET-FOOTED, TRIUMPHANT, THE VICTORIOUS,
THE RED SISTER, THE RUNNER OF HEAVEN, THE ARM

Canelle (cuh-NELL) is the chaotic good goddess of victory, athletics, competition, raw physical strength, glory, running, games, athletes, and competitors. She is associated with swift horses and the hippogriff, which is both swift horse and soaring eagle. No finer beast lives to symbolize victory.

All mortal races play sports and games, and therefore all have some reverence for Canelle. However, most of her worshipers are humans, who have an obsession with sport. Anyone in need of victory, including in battle, might invoke her name. Thus, she is often mentioned in prayers along with Terak. Fighters, barbarians, rogues, and others who make their way by physical prowess tend to worship her, and it is rare to see those who follow more cerebral pursuits, such as wizards, espouse faith in Canelle.

Canelle is depicted as a very tall woman (though a little shorter than Naryne) with perfect musculature. She is usually shown wearing a steel breastplate, or garb appropriate for a sport popular with the artist's culture—perhaps wrestling, running, jousting, or chariot racing. Indeed, she is often shown behind the reigns of a chariot with four snorting chargers rearing up, about to leap into a full gallop. In all portrayals, she has red hair and often wears some item of red clothing too, for she is the Red Sister. On her brow, she wears a wreath made of leaves—usually laurel, holly, or another thick, waxy leaf that holds its shape well. This is the symbol of athletic victory because, like such victories, crowns of leaves are impermanent, and their value is purely one of honor.

As with her sisters, Canelle is represented by a crown. Hers is a wreath of leaves. Members of her clergy wear such wreaths on their brows, or around their necks. This might be ostentatious if the cleric in question isn't a great athlete, but most of them are. The wreath is rarely simplified, as such symbols are easy to draw, or make out of local materials, but if necessary, it can be drawn as the bottom half of a circle or a low-slung arc, with four dots representing leaves. This might be used on weapon pommels and other small items.

JOINING THE SWAN KNIGHTS

One becomes a swan knight by heeding Naryne's call, and finding an established swan knight for training. As most swan knights are nobles, so this can be as simple as receiving training from a knight already in his household. Becoming a swan knight requires one to forever relinquish all noble privileges, including the protection of a swan knight, if the initiate enjoyed that privilege. Training takes about five years, though this is almost all martial training, so one versed in the martial arts could become a swan knight very quickly. Upon completing their training, swan knights become paladins, and swear the Oath of Devotion.

MYTHS

THE LONELY RUNNER

ON THEIR EASTWARD JOURNEY, EACH OF THE THREE SISTERS observed something in the world that became dear to her. For swift Canelle it was the many games mortals invented in the short time since emerging from the fruits. She came to love these games, and their many contests of strength and speed.

Once the fate of the sisters became tied to that of the gods of the tree, Tall Canelle spent more time among mortals than gods. This was for two reasons. First, Darmon's passion for her perplexed and annoyed her, making time among the gods irksome. Second, she found herself happiest testing her speed and might against mortal athletes. But this passion for competition with mortals dissipated, for she never found a challenge. As her power waxed, it seemed the skills of mortals waned. As the years accumulated, the mortal races diminished in power, length of life, and prowess. But what they lost individually, they gained collectively, for their numbers swelled, and they filled every land.

When Canelle the Victorious had lost all hope of ever being challenged by a mortal again, there arose from the East a great champion. No one knew his name; he was called the Lonely Runner, because when he ran a race, he left everyone else so far behind, that he always ran the finish alone.

Seeing an challenge, Canelle entered herself into a great tournament held by the archons of the West's largest city. The finest athletes of the five races had come to compete for the prize: a hart, five hands high, made of pure gold. The tournament grounds were littered with champions, but only two had any chance of winning: The Lonely Runner and Canelle.

In the archery contest, each achieved perfect marks; in every following contest, they both achieved the highest possible scores. At last, the competition was to be decided by the final race. None of the other competitors even took to the field, for none might win but this strange Easterner or this red-headed giant of a woman. The crowd roared as the two walked onto the field, and all fell silent when the flag fell.

Fleet-footed Canelle and the Lonely Runner left their starting positions more swiftly than arrows. Side by side, they shot



around the field, neither giving the other an inch of advantage. Absolute silence reigned throughout the crowd. Around and around the runners went, still elbow to elbow, breath to breath. As they reached the finish, neither sped past the other, and they crossed the line at the same moment.

"We will run again!" Canelle demanded at once. "A month from now! A year! We will run again, and know who is best!"

But the Lonely Runner hunched over and panted. He could not speak for some time, for he had run his greatest race, and was but a man. When at last he could, he said, "Great lady! I'll run against you if you command it. But should we run again and again and again, it is sure to go sore against me, in the end. I may run at your side for another year, or many years, but in the end I will age, and you will not."

At this, Triumphant Canelle was amazed, for mortals did not yet worship her and her sisters, and her name was not known to the temples of the world. The Lonely Runner saw her face and remarked, "Indeed, milady, I know who you are, for you raced my father's father before I was born, and he told me of you, the Red Lady who will run against only the best, defeat them, and then disappear. My father told me that you come to teach us humility, to remind us that no matter how great we think we are, there is one better. But as I grew greater in skill and speed, I learned the truth: You come for the challenge. They call me the Lonely Runner, and so I am, for I have not been challenged in many years, and my heart is heavy with misery. I have spent all my days becoming the best, and it is a lonely path. You have given me joy this once, for you have challenged me, and I hope I have returned the delight, but if you race me again, some day you will be victorious over an old man, and your joy will be gone again."

And Tall Canelle knew he was right; someday she would outrace him, not because she was better, but because she was immortal. She left him there without a word and went to one of the great houses of Urian. The lord of the heavens was not sure what to make of these three sisters who had come into his family so suddenly, but he heard Canelle's plea, and agreed to its terms.

So it was that Canelle the Victorious returned to the mortal realm and found the Lonely Runner. Taking him by the hand, she led him into the heavens, and placed him among the stars. There he can still be seen, running across the night skies. The race between him and Swift Canelle has been preserved for eternity, for he will never age.

TRIUMPH OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Canelle and Terak both revere strength and physical prowess, but where Terak puts his faith in the strength of united effort, for the preservation of society and law, Canelle believes the greatest good is accomplished through individual effort. She is wholly individualistic, often arguing with her sister Naryne that promoting law and nobility robs individuals of the ability to achieve their best. All people must be free to pursue their own path to personal perfection. If achieved, it leads to goodness, for the individual becomes self-reliant, and can find joy purely through their own efforts. Canelle finds most lawful gods arrogant, wanting to impose their laws and orders on people, encouraging them to be weak, for if you offer someone protection long enough, he loses all incentive to earn his own strength.

When interacting with mortals, Canelle values bold physical action over cunning or calculation. She loves the competitive spirit, where athletes and other rivals spur each other to greater heights, no matter who wins. She cannot abide those who desire victory at any cost, however. Those who cheat or ruin others for their own glory earn her deepest animosity. She has little tolerance for weakness, but understands that some people cannot gain the kind of strength she loves. She despises malevolence, considering it the deepest sort of weakness, so even the slow, clumsy weak people gain her esteem when they demonstrate honor, seeking victory without weakening others, and strength of character, which gives people the power to endure hardship.



Canelle is almost as involved with her faith as Shalimyr is with his, but she does not violate the Compact, as her involvement has little effect on the world. She sends her horses to race against her worshipers' steeds, disguises herself to compete against the faithful, tests their commitment to their paths of personal perfection, and in other ways, challenges Canellans constantly. Powerful members of her faith have certainly encountered Canelle, through signs or personal interactions. Her interest and involvement comes from the fact that her faithful truly understand her. She *does* want mortals to achieve personal perfection, and looks forward to more races like the one she had with the Lonely Runner. She finds her followers endlessly fascinating and entertaining.

SERVANTS

As the most self-reliant of the gods, Canelle has no servants in Heaven, and considers the need for such a sign of weakness. She does, however, rely on the archangel Camael, as other gods do, to ensure she hears prayers. Although she has no servants, she does raise horses; her limitless stables hold the greatest steeds in existence. There are legends of Canelle giving one of her celestial steeds to a particularly devout follower. While there are too many of these horses to name, they are all keenly intelligent, strong, and swifter than the wind. Canelle's most faithful servants find themselves elevated to grooms in her stables after their death.

THE CHURCH OF THE RED SISTER

People who seek personal perfection practice the Canellan (cuh-NELL-uhn) faith. Even though most hold the faith in high esteem, few seek out its clergy for advice or guidance. After all, personal perfection is a private process; people develop personal relationships with Canelle, praying to her in the mornings before they exercise. Some seek Canelle's aid to overcome personal weaknesses, such as a chronic injury. Those who require victory in massive athletic competitions or in battles, might also seek aid from the Canellan faith. None of these instances are common enough to form a strong church, and like the other Sisters' faiths, the red altars of Canelle are often quiet and ignored, tended to by a lone variegate priest.

Triad altars are the most commonly found Canellan places of worship. Most athletic venues, however, have small shrines or altars dedicated to the Red Sister. Often, the altars stand before statues of Canelle and the Lonely Runner, depicted racing together. Most Canellans do not require these altars, since they believe their bodies are temples to the goddess.

DOCTRINE

"When the Red Sister comes for you, will you be ready? Will you run your greatest race? Or will you plead for another chance? There is only one race, and you are running it now."

*—The Red Master Rindon,
"Make Ready Your Soul"*

While the Journey to the East stands at the heart of the triads' theology, the story of the Lonely Runner is the core of the Canellan faith alone. It echoes many of the Three Sisters' adventures, or Canelle's part in those adventures, and brings one lesson to the forefront: Mortals die, but they should first truly live. Everyone dies in the end, but within every person lies the potential to become almost godlike in strength, speed, and power.

This is not hubris—Canellans do not preach becoming gods, or greater than the gods. They believe if people strive their whole lives to perfect their bodies and self-discipline, they can experience divine joy, and feel oneness with Canelle and the other gods, as the Lonely Runner felt when he ran in step with the swiftest god of Heaven.

Devotees of the Canellan believe the gods want every person to gain personal strength and discipline. The Compact proves it, for it trusts mortals to master themselves. To reject the gods' will is the worst folly. Canelle watches over mortal efforts at self-mastery, guiding them to victory and personal perfection, so that by running his swiftest race, or enduring mortal pains for the sake of self-improvement, people might please her, and the other gods. Thus, the body is the only essential temple to Canelle, for it is where the struggle for victory takes place. Holy places merit respect, but one can worship without ever visiting them.

When everyone achieves self-perfection, peace and joy will spread across the world. Canellans believe the cause of most evil is craving of things without being willing to work for them, and hoarding things for no reason but greed and status. Physical perfection would reduce needs

to a minimum, and living without luxuries would leave plenty for everyone. On the way to personal perfection, all Canellans must obey these laws.

- A Canellan must work to improve his body daily
- A Canellan cannot imbibe spirits (beer and ale are fine), smoke tobacco, or use other intoxicants
- A Canellan must always obey the rules of fair competitions and contests
- A Canellan must never purposefully lose a competition for any reason
- A Canellan cannot gamble on or against himself in any competition



CANELLAN PRAYERS

The runner's prayer is said just before a competition of any kind.

*"Red Sister, arm of the Three,
Lend me your strength.
Fleet-footed Canelle, Runner of Heaven,
Lend me your speed.
I run to please you;
By your grace, victory is mine."*

SAINTS

The Canellans recognize no saints or martyrs in their faith. People who achieve personal perfection are celebrated in Heaven, and enjoy the fruits of their labor while they live.

HOLY ORDERS

The two holy orders of Canelle are the red masters (clergy) and the purified (holy warriors), both of whom deal with the world from such personal and individual points of view it is impossible for them to muster any sort of structure or chain of authority. The red masters guide those seeking personal perfection, and the purified seek to achieve it. Becoming a member of the Canellan faith requires seeking out a red master, and training in the ways of either order. Once training is done, one can do whatever one believes is right; there are members of the holy orders of Canelle who haven't stood before a red altar since they were inducted into their order.

RED MASTERS OF CANELLE

The red masters train, guide, and inspire those who need or seek victory. They advise leaders and support the near-perfect athletes, warriors and a smattering of others who've proven themselves adept at some challenging pursuit. Red masters must have already excelled in some personal sport or vigorous art, so few of them are young. The order is for athletes and other disciplined folk, not those who merely aspire to become such.

Most red masters are chaotic good. They seek out people who can be elevated to greatness and, by achieving that greatness, do good in mortal society. For instance, a mighty athlete who serves as an example to many mortals should be taught spiritual greatness, for her victory inspires others to strive for perfection. These red masters rail against any effort to force people into societal roles or deprive them of opportunities to achieve their potential. For instance, a society strongly divided between nobles and serfs requires the serfs to work all day in the fields growing food. The serfs stand little chance of testing their potential; they must be free to leave the fields and seek personal perfection. The more restrictive the society, the more ardently the red masters oppose it. Several victorious revolutions have been supported by cadres of red masters who wished to help peasants achieve perfection.

Neutral good red masters, only slightly less common, take a step further, leading massive groups of people

to sports and other physical arts for physical self-improvement. They organize schools and gymnasiums, travel to the countryside to train peasants in military drills, and support many sports. They believe the order should raise as many as people as possible toward physical betterment. Many fighters from rural settings first realized they possessed special physical prowess when a neutral good red master came to their community and trained them.

Chaotic neutral red masters care less about the betterment of the people than they do about contests and victory. They oversee gladiatorial competitions, delighting in struggles between mortals. They revere raw competition and love the thrill of victory. These red masters train and bless gladiators and pit fighters, even those that are enslaved, believing that by participating in such contests they come closer to divinity than most free men could.

Students address red masters as “teacher,” or “master,” and this is the title they maintain for the rest of their lives. A red master is introduced as, for example, “Red Master Garonai of the Canellan Altar.”

JOINING THE RED MASTERS

To become a red master, one must have won a major victory of some kind, such as a great athletic contest or major battle. One then trains for a year with a red master (tracking one down can be quite challenging). Upon completing their training, red masters become clerics with the War domain. Red masters typically carry bows and spears to emulate their mistress, who is always shown with these weapons, though she never uses the bow for any purpose other than target shooting.

GODDESS OF WOODCRAFT, NATURE, AND THE HUNT

THELLYNE

LIGHT-FOOTED, KEEN-EYED, SILENT, THE HUNTRESS, THE ARCHER, THE FAIR SISTER, THE EYE, THE WOODLAND GUARDIAN, THE GOLDEN SISTER

Thellyne (thell-EEN) is the neutral good goddess of the woods and woodcraft, including hunting, trapping, tracking. She’s the matron of woodsmen, hunters, rangers, and all others whose lives rely on the forest. She is associated with the hunting hawks, dogs, and horses, but most closely with the hunted: the stag and the hart, greatest of all hunted creatures. Unicorns are also sacred to her, for she helped to create them when she first met the druids.

All people who love the woods love Thellyne, which means she is not terribly popular with dwarves. Elves favor her, but so do the humans, halflings, and gnomes who reside in or by wooded regions. Rangers and barbarians are her most frequent worshipers. Rarely, druids revere her over Eliwyn. She has few followers among those interested in cities, high culture, or refined learning.

Thellyne is shown as shorter than the other two Sisters. She has long golden hair, knit into a long braid or left flowing behind her. She wears greens and browns to blend into the woods, and a long white leather cloak, attached

PURIFIED OF CANELLE

Canelle calls the purified to achieve personal perfection and, in their quest to constantly improve their bodies, struggle against evil. They believe that their bodies are temples to Canelle, walking vessels of holiness, and that they’re charged by Canelle to use their bodies’ power to battle the enemies of self-mastery.

The purified have no formal structure and, like the red masters, are free to go and do whatever they like, in their efforts to live up to the order’s ethos. One of the purified becomes a pure brother or sister. She is addressed as “pure sister,” and introduced by this title. This is the only title the purified ever attain in the order, as purification matters more than social rank.

The purified seek personal perfection through daily rituals and grueling exercises, but channel the resulting abilities against evil. The purified also abide by the laws of the Canellan faith, and mustn’t knowingly use their strength and power to commit evil acts, or allow them to happen. They are living, holy vessels, and tend to be chaotic good. They enjoy the company of all good people, but cannot tolerate evil companions.

JOINING THE PURIFIED

To become purified, one who receives the call must track down a red master and be trained in the ways of personal purification, which takes three years of physical training and education. The purified perform a daily ritual of physical training, prayer, and ablutions, the last of which keeps them pure and holy in the name of Canelle. At the end of this time, they become paladins. Later, when they swear their sacred oaths, they take the Oath of Perfection, described in **Chapter X**.

to a great helm made the White Hart’s skull. From this helm protrude the enormous white horns of that mythical beast. She is usually depicted as an elf. On her back or in her hand rests her great yew bow, Gwedryl, which means the True Seeker.

Like her sisters, Thellyne is represented by her crown—in this case, a pair of great, white horns. Those faithful to her will often wear a pair of actual horns about their necks or affixed to their helmets, though they can use a painted symbol. Sometimes the symbol is the full image of a stag or hart.

MYTHS

THE WHITE HART

LONG AFTER THE THREE SISTERS WERE WELCOMED INTO THE family of the gods, long after Korak had pleaded his troth to Thellyne the Archer and been rejected many times, long after Silent Thellyne had welcomed the druids into the grove of



Elirwyn and chosen to live on the earth, rather than in the heavenly sphere among the other gods, the Fair Sister won the horns of the White Hart.

Word of the Hart had spread to forests across the land, and nearly every hunter who revered Thellyne the Huntress prayed to her to set the beast before him. From old men who had felled a thousand stags, to young huntresses new to their bows, all desired to win the horns and hide of the Hart. The legendary creature was said to stand ten feet high at the shoulder, and fifteen from the tip of its great horns. It had been seen in only fleeting moments, and was the loveliest game beast that ever lived.

Of all the hunters of the world, only one did not hunger in her heart to win this beast's hide. Her name was Nayariel, and she was born and raised in a great elven wood. It was said that none of her race had a keener eye, and no elf, man, or any other mortal ever lived who was as perfect a shot with a bow. Nayariel was known to be the greatest hunter of her day, perhaps the greatest ever, and she did not wish to still the great White Hart—for she and the Hart were the same.

In her youth, Nayariel had asked a great wizard to help her become the greatest hunter who ever lived. The wizard obliged by transforming her into every game beast under the sun. Before long, she knew their ways, thoughts, and very souls, and possessed the keen insight necessary to slay any beast. But the wizard did not tell her that for the rest of her life, she would transform back into these beasts. As time went on, Nayariel found herself adopting the forms of rabbits, foxes, wild hens and other lesser game on fewer and few occasions, until she only transformed into the White Hart. She traveled across the world looking for some means to lift this curse, for the wizard who had granted this 'gift' had disappeared. In her travels, she continued to transform, spreading the Hart's legend.

In time, a great field of hunters from around the world assembled in an ancient wood where the Hart had last been seen. Indeed, Nayariel had hidden herself away there, hoping none would find her. Every day she prayed to Light-footed Thellyne to spare her and lift from her this curse, but the Woodland Guardian did not do so, for she had other plans for the White Hart.

The great mass of hunters, which included legendary heroes from all the mortal races, descended on the wood, sending their hounds before them and beating the brush to call out the White Hart. Some noted that all the world's greatest hunters but Nayariel were there; but if they thought much of this, it did not slow their progress. After a day of hunting, they set up camp, sang songs, drank beer and mead, and slept the sleep of the innocent.

But in the night, Thellyne appeared in a dream to the hunters. She showed them a vision of the White Hart, pierced in the heart by an arrow—and where it was pierced, a river of tears sprang forth. The river flowed into the sea, and where it passed trees they hung their boughs low in sorrow, and when it met the great sea the waters turned red with blood. On the morrow, those of the hunters who were wise, including the great heroes among them, turned from the path. Ulfik, a renowned hunter and champion, declared to the others, "This way is folly! For the Fair Sister shows us we must not hunt this beast, and any who kill it will bring great sorrow to the world!"

But some of the hunters did not listen, and continued, lusting for the horns and hide of the Hart. That afternoon, they saw their quarry, for Nayariel was transformed into the fair White Hart, and ran before the hunters. Their hounds gave chase as the field of hunters loosed arrows at her. It was not long before the White Hart staggered and fell, pierced by a dozen shafts. When the hunters came to the Hart, they cheered and blew their horns. And when they cut open the Hart to dress it, they found the body of Nayariel inside, pierced with a dozen wounds.

It was then that Thellyne stepped from the woods before them. "I denied you this beast, and yet you slew her. You are not faithful to me—you are snarling wolves, hungry for blood, and you will know this poor child's curse for the rest of your days!" And with these words the hunters who slew the White Hart were transformed into wolves for a time; and they changed again with every full moon. Thus were the first werewolves born, and their evil persists to this day.

Though Nayariel was killed, Silent Thellyne took her spirit as a companion, for great hunters need companions to help them beat the bushes and dress their quarry. As for the precious hide and horns of the White Hart, Thellyne and Nayariel dressed and tanned the hide so that Thellyne the Huntress might wear it as a cloak. They hollowed out the head, so that Thellyne might pull it over her brow as a helm; when she does so, the great white horns jut out before her to remind her followers that they must never kill the fairest beasts merely for the sport of it.

GUARDIAN OF NATURE

Thellyne is known as the Woodland Guardian by mortals and gods alike. She places the woods and nature above other concerns. She observes the classical ethos of the hunter: respect for the woods, love of the animals, and gratitude to those creatures who give their lives to the hunt. She ignores mortal society, and conflicts between law and chaos bore her. Rather, she loves the calm and beauty of the woods and opposes any evil which would destroy it. Thellyne also opposes the organized efforts of good people to ruin the natural woodlands, even if it would benefit their communities. Unless shown proper respect and appeased by sacrifice, mortals have learned it's unwise to clear her woodlands, no matter how worthy their reasons.

Thellyne stays out of Heaven's politics. She remains in the mortal world and, while she adheres to the Compact, dwells in the world's deep woods nonetheless. Most assume she associates with the powerful druids in the grove of Eliwyn, hidden from all but a few mortals, or abides for long stretches of time among the fey, in their fairy woods. Regardless, she is an elusive and private goddess. While she provides powers to her clergy, she rarely answers prayers.

NAYARIEL

Although there are legends of Thellyne being attended by dryads and naiads, the Golden Sister's sole companion is Nayariel. She accompanies Thellyne on her hunts, and shares her fire. On rare occasions when the goddess

THE LONER IN THE UNITY?

Thellyne is referred to as shy, individualistic, and uninvolved with other gods. Yet she is also part of the Unity of the Three Sisters. This mystery is part of the triad faith. The Three Sisters live apart, in Heaven, on Earth, and in the land of the dead. Canelle focuses on individual strength, Naryne on leaders, and Thellyne on the isolation of nature. Despite their differences they are loving sisters, forever bound to one another in the Unity. So it is with the mortal races and all good creations, where individuals and elements differ, but find completeness together.

involves herself in mortal or Heavenly matters, Nayariel minds the wilds in her stead. Nayariel is a fair elf maiden who still has the skills of the greatest mortal hunter who ever lived. She can transform herself into the shape of any natural beast at will, and sometimes even becomes the White Hart once more.

THE CHURCH OF THE GOLDEN SISTER

The "church" of the Thellynites, if it deserves so lofty a name, is a loose collection of clergy and holy warriors, all of whom prefer the isolation in the woods to the company of other people. The golden altar to Thellyne in the triads usually stands unattended, except by a variegated priest, as the triads are usually found in the cities Thellyne's clergy abhor.

Thellyne is popular among trappers, hunters, and those who live in the woodlands, but such poor folk do not make her church rich or prominent. Hidden away in the woodlands, small shrines honor her. They're built by devout commoners, or by her wandering clergy. These simple, small shrines are altars made from natural outcroppings, with boughs of trees gently bent into shelves. They are found in serene and lovely parts of the woods, and dark things dare not disturb them.

Thellyne is almost unaware she even has a church, and fittingly, the church barely exists. Thellynites revere unspoiled nature, and just as they rarely disturb the forest, they avoid calling on Thellyne, nature personified, so that they won't degrade her with petty, mortal desires. This is exactly as she likes it. She is perhaps the humblest of the gods (though Anwyn has a strong claim to that title) and doesn't avoid prayer out of haughtiness, but a desire to be one with beasts, birds and endless trees.

Thellyne grants clergy powers, but rarely visits or guides them. Only the most powerful members of her faith stand a chance of knowingly meeting her in the deep woods, but these are rare occasions. Yet Thellyne loves those who respect the woods, and smiles on her followers. She gives them gifts if she meets them, but they do not always know that the lone elf, hunting cat or whispering winds were her.

DOCTRINE

“There was nature before the Eye opened. Trees grew tall before the Fair Sister ever stirred. Our lady reveres a power greater and older than she, and so too must we. It is a fool who believes himself greater than nature, and folly has its price.”

—Woodwarden Hillace,
“The Fair Sister Speaks”

The Thellynites believe the lesson of the White Hart is easy to understand, though perhaps difficult to fully accept. As the mortal races grow in power, one might assume it eclipses that of anything else in the world. The Three Sisters gained power on their Journey to the East too, yet still saw forces greater than themselves. So too must mortals learn to respect the Earth, which came before Thellyne, and set her upon the riverbank of her birth. Nature is more powerful than mortals will ever be, so the Thellynites seek to follow its laws, as follows:

SILENCE

Thellynites learn to be still, listen deeply, and observe, rather than to act. All the best things in the world are so subtle that if you traipsed and trammed through life, you’d miss it all. The Thellynites sanctify celebrations with silence, and their religious ceremonies involve more listening than speaking. They are an observant people, like the Sister they serve.

NATURAL CYCLES

Even the most powerful mortal will die someday, his flesh consumed by the worms and turned to dirt. If we believe we are above the cycles of nature, we are fools, and will be destroyed. There is more power in the little animal that knows its place, than in a great wizard who believes he can break the natural order. This doctrine ensures Thellynites oppose anyone who would twist nature by, for example, changing animals and plants, raising the undead, or living forever.

CAUTION

The woods teach dangerous lessons. Assume you are safe, and the woods send a bear to eat you. Trust the firm ground

GWEDRYL

Thellyne won her bow, Gwedryl, on the Journey to the East, when she drank the blood of twelve dragons. This gave her pure sight, which led her to the bow, hanging in a forest glade.

beneath you, and the woods send quicksand. A Thellynite must always show caution and never assume he knows his surroundings, even if he’s been there a thousand times.

RESPECT

Thellynites demand respect for the ancient places of the Earth: woods, ancient caves, stony mountains, and other grand, natural places. They oppose those who disrespect or mar these places, whether for selfish gain or to win some advantage for their people.

The key to the doctrine is the premise that the natural cycle is innately good. Thellynites believe that left to its own, the natural world would grow into perfection and goodness. However, evil forces both mortal and unnatural, undermine the natural cycle. Thus, Thellynites oppose them.

THELLYNITE PRAYERS

The most common Thellynite prayer is silence. The length of the silence is determined by the holiness of the occasion. Sometimes a group of Thellynites sit silently in the woods for an entire day, simply listening to the sounds of nature.

SAINTS

There is no sainthood or martyrdom among the Thellynites. They see every member of their faith as simply part of the natural cycle. To glorify one is as absurd as loving one year’s summer or spring above another’s—civilized folks might do that, but followers of the goddess do not think of their experiences, but nature’s transformations alone. Where other religions would honor an individual for great deeds, Thellynites ascribe noble to parents, allies, enemy mistakes, and nature’s favor. All deeds arise from the web of life, which no mortal escapes.

HOLY ORDERS

The Thellynites have two holy orders: the woodwardens (the clergy), who protect forests from dark powers and minister to the humans and beasts who live in them, and the hallowed hunters, who destroy any creature or power that would defile the wilderness. One woodwarden might unite with a lone hallowed hunter to protect a chosen wild region. This alliance, called a greenbond, is the closest thing to a structure that the Thellynites possess.

The Thellynite faith has no central authority; no one member may command another. In the greenbonds, the senior member usually leads, but this isn’t a hard and fast rule. Once indoctrinated into one of the Thellynite orders, the initiate chooses her own path, much as Canellans do.



WOODWARDENS OF THELLYNE

Young woodwardens wander the world, seeking a forest in need of a guardian. When they find one they take up residence, protecting the people and animals living there. He balanced their needs, but never allows people to ravage the wild. Hunted animals must rebuild their numbers. Gathered plants must be allowed to regrow. Among some primitive or woodland societies, the woodwarden might be the spiritual leader of an entire people. Unlike druids, their order does not require reclusive behavior. They are clergy after all, and minister to groups, small or large. In remote areas, their only congregants might be the animals, but they serve nonetheless, keeping dark things from the woods.

Some woodwardens never settle in a single forest and adventure around the world, battling the enemies of nature. These priests are rare, but considered just as devout as their settled counterparts.

All woodwardens share the same basic tenets: The natural world should be protected, the people and animals who reside therein served, and the laws of the Thellynite faith observed. The differences between the three alignments of woodwardens are based on where they choose to practice.

Most woodwardens are neutral good. They protect the largest wild places, seeking to do the most good. Lawful good woodwardens seek woodlands near civilization. Taking up residence in the forest or a neighboring town, they teach people to honor nature, and tread lightly upon it. Many of these woodwardens minister to towns of loggers, teaching them how to properly respect and replenish the trees. Chaotic good woodwardens might settle anywhere. Those who live near civilization dissuade people from damaging the woods in any way. This might lead two woodwardens into conflict; lawful good woodwarden tolerate some exploitation of the forest, but their chaotic good brethren do not.

Members of the woodwardens are addressed as “warden.” In the rare formal introductions, the woodwarden is introduced as, “a woodwarden of the Thellynites.”

JOINING THE WOODWARDENS

Initiates seeking to become woodwardens must find an established member of the order and become her apprentice, spending up to five years learning woodcraft and Thellyne’s teachings. When the master deems his training complete, she leads him to the depths of the woods, strips him of all possessions, and leaves him to find his way back. Students who manage this become woodwardens, clerics with the Nature domain, and masters of their own destinies.

HALLOWED HUNTERS OF THELLYNE

Like many rangers, hallowed hunters drive evil creatures from the woods, but unlike rangers (who they often count as allies), however, they receive powers from Thellyne, the goddess of the hunt. Thus the order trains powerful hunters, who might even lead good rangers against nature’s enemies. Hallowed hunters must protect woodlands, and must not willingly allow evil to take over natural places. Hunters cannot knowingly

do evil, or assist in the commission of evil. Most of them are neutral good.

Hallowed hunters keep the company of those who love the woodlands, especially rangers and woodwardens. While they might join other good people, they do not stray from the woodlands for long, and have no real desire to spend time in cities or towns. They do not long abide the company of those who do evil, and actively oppose those who would harm the natural world.

Hallowed hunters are called “hunters,” or “huntresses,” and are addressed as such.

JOINING THE HALLOWED HUNTERS

When one receives the call to become a hallowed hunter, she must track down a member of the order. If the initiated hunter agrees to take the candidate as her apprentice, the training can take up to eight years, as the two travel together, and the young hunter-to-be learns the secrets of the woods. In some cases, a ranger receives the call, and requires only training in the ways peculiar to Thellyne. This training only takes six months. Once trained, the hallowed hunter becomes a paladin, and is free to go wherever he believes he’s needed, as there is no authority to gainsay his desire. These paladins always swear the Oath of the Ancients.



VII: FAITH IN EVIL

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS THE FOUR CENTRAL EVIL CHURCHES AND SEVERAL EVIL “SECTS” OF THE ESTABLISHED churches described earlier in this book. The existence and orders of evil gods are mysterious to most people—even those who belong to good faiths. After all, people don’t openly worship the god of eating babies. No one reveals to the rest of the tavern that they are a high priest of the god of killing grandmothers and slaughtering puppies—no one, that is, except for the supremely confident or stupid.

Mortal cultures, unless they’ve become highly perverted (like big pirate cities), do not think of themselves as evil, nor does obvious evil benefit the average person. Banal evil that benefits the individual, like common greed and selfishness, does not require worship of an evil god—one can worship a good god and do evil and petty things. Even in a town with large numbers of nasty people living in it, most people are artisans, merchants, and other common folk. Why would these people donate money to build a big temple in the town square to the Unseeing Horror that Consumes Souls—and even if they didn’t donate money, why would they let it stay there?

Any god who is openly identified as a “god of evil” does not likely receive many converts, and any church that proclaims itself evil is liable to get thrown out of town by an angry mob—or worse. Thus, the few evil churches provided are collected here, and it’s recommended this chapter be read only by those playing evil characters or—if no one in the campaign is evil—by the GM alone.

THE EVIL GODS

The mythology of the gods of the tree includes four main evil churches. The worshipers of Asmodeus, who was Kador, make up the primary evil faith, but each of the Three Brothers, as mysterious in origin as their Three Sisters, has a dark church consecrated in their names. Much to the sorrow of goodhearted folk the world over, these four wicked faiths have a secret alliance of sorts, skulking together in the thick of night to perform hideous crimes. As the GM, you decide how much anyone in “respectable” society knows about these churches. They could be a complete secret, or the common enemies of all good people in a war that has been raging for a thousand years. Either extreme or anything in between will work.

MYTHS

The following myth is written from the perspective of evil worshipers, who are assumed to know the names of all the evil gods. This may or may not be the case in your campaign.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF EVIL

WHEN THE THREE SISTERS AND THREE BROTHERS AWOKED BY the river, the gods of the tree knew nothing of these new beings. But Asmodeus, King of the Universe, sees farther than any other god, and knew at once of their awakening. When the Three Sisters fled from their brothers, Canarak, Thellos, and Naran thought to give them chase.

“I want the smell of them. I want to keep them forever,” greedy Thellos said, licking his lips, and his brothers agreed—but then a voice held them fast.

“I would be cautious, if I were you,” the Dark Lord Asmodeus said as he emerged from the shadow. His horns shone in the moonlight, and the Brothers knew a figure of great power stood before them.

“What’s it to you, pus-face?” vicious Canarak snarled, but Asmodeus the Great only laughed, for he liked the spirit

of these brothers, and saw in them the key to his re-ascendance to glory.

Asmodeus told the Three Brothers the secrets of the world—of the Nameless One and the war of the gods; of Hell and the Abyss; of the tree of life and the gods born of it, who had betrayed him. He told the Three Brothers that the heavenly gods would surely embrace their sisters, make them a part of their wretched family, and make war on the Brothers. The Perfect One told these three newborn gods the only path to safety for them was to trust in the largesse of the King of the Universe. He would keep them secret; he would keep them safe.

This did not sit well with Canarak, who thought this fallen god was a liar and secret weakling. The Fierce Brother hurled himself at Asmodeus, seeking to rip out the heart of Fire’s Father. This struggle went poorly for Canarak, who Asmodeus lit on fire and hurled into the river. Canarak’s savage hand was stilled, for he found respect for the Dark Lord.

Thellos also needed convincing. The Hungry Brother asked Asmodeus what the three would gain if they trusted him. The King of the Universe showed the Feasting Maw the glories of Hell, with its golden-spired pain-halls and its delights of blood and flesh. “This man will show us great pleasures, brothers!” Greedy Thellos declared, and he too was won over by the lord of Hell.

But Naran, Lordly Naran, was never easily swayed, and his heart never lightly moved to a new course. “I mistrust you, Asmodeus who was Kador. You seek a throne that has been denied you; when you have it, you will cast us aside. I see this clearly.” Indeed, the Piercing Eye, as Naran is called, saw correctly.

“You are wise, Naran, and you speak truly,” Asmodeus said with a smile. “All that you see before you, above you, below you, is mine. It is my right, my domain, and I do not wish to share. Yet, you three are mightier than any of my servants, and should I win my throne, it will not be through my efforts alone. I therefore propose a bargain, for share I must.” So it was that Asmodeus set out the Dark Pact, the only agreement ever made by the Perfect One with any beings other than the Creator, his father.

The gods born of the tree are myopic and think only of the world of mortals; this Asmodeus knew well. They treat the four great pillars upon which the universe rests as prisons for the div, strange outlandish places that do not matter short of their support of the sphere. Yet they are the foundations of existence, and should they be ruled by these four great and assembled powers, the reign of the gods could not last long. Therefore, the King of the Universe proposed to the Three Brothers that each of them seek control of one of the pillars, working in secret through followers, mortal and otherwise, to gain the power of the very roots of existence. Asmodeus, the Father of Fire, would seek control of the fire pillar, where the div were outcast. Canarak would take the raging pillar of water. Thellos would gain the pillar of air, where the winds are as hungry as he; Naran would win the pillar of earth, binding its strength and riches.

They agreed that when the pillars were won, the four would wage war on the gods, until Asmodeus conquered Heaven and was named King of the Universe. Canarak would win over

the demons of the Abyss. Naran would be placed in command of Hell in Asmodeus' stead, and Thellos would wander the earth, sating his unholy hungers. This was the Dark Pact.

For generations, the four pillars of evil, as we call them, unearthed the secrets and powers necessary to gain control of the pillars of Creation. On the eve of their victory, the so-called "Lords of Good" imposed their Compact on the Great Sphere. While the Three Brothers were not a part of this Compact, and may continue to work freely, though in secret, all four were bound to work their greatest deeds through the mortal races.

Because of this Compact it is the way of things that we, the mortal races, are the key to success for all divine powers. Our faith, prayers, blood, and souls fuel their might. So it is that we must aid the four pillars of evil in their quest to topple the wretched whelps of Heaven; when we do, we will be kings of the world, lords of all we survey, and servants only to the four great powers that deserve our obedience. These four are strong and worthy, and they must rule. They will rule.

GOD OF LIES, POWER, AND FIRE

ASMODEUS

THE PERFECT ONE, KING OF THE UNIVERSE,
THE GREAT, THE DARK LORD, FIRE'S FATHER

Asmodeus is the lawful evil god of lies, power, and fire. Rarely seen, descriptions of him are generally fanciful. Some say stands 10,000 leagues tall, with a tail of fire and horns as black as midnight. Others say he is a small figure, robed in red and deepest blue, wielding a scepter of might, with two small horns on his forehead. None but the mightiest powers of evil know what Asmodeus looks like since he was cast into the pit of Hell, and his worshipers do not make statues in his likeness, for they believe it would anger the King of the Universe if mere mortal hands sought to cast his form.

Asmodeus is the master of Hell, but unlike the other lords of Hell, he has a purpose that goes far beyond power in that foul place. He is the god of fire, of those wrongly usurped, of power for power's sake, of lies and revenge. He believes himself to be the King of the Universe, the rightful heir of the Creator, the Nameless One. All that is good is his enemy, for it has no right to exist without his blessing. The Lords of Good occupy his palace because they betrayed him; his hate for them is limitless. He would topple the heavens, destroy all established orders of goodness, and rule the Great Sphere. He is a ready sponsor for all who do evil in the name of power, or anyone seeking revenge for betrayal, usurpation, or other wrongs, perceived or real. Asmodeus is the father of deceit and is the greatest liar in the universe, capable of deceiving even other gods,



save for Morwyn, Naryne, Maal, and Naran: the wisest among them.

Asmodeus charges his mightiest followers and most trusted worshipers with one goal: the conquest of the plane of fire in his name. All powerful worshipers of Asmodeus are directed toward this goal. Because of the Compact, Asmodeus can only gain real and meaningful control of the pillar if mortals give it to him.

The faithful of Asmodeus represent their church with the symbol of a burning tree. The tree is usually made to look like Eliwyn, the Tree of Life. All people, good and evil, know it as the fearful brand of the Asmodean cults. His followers do not wear it openly, lest they be hunted down. Most Asmodean cults have local, secret symbols that reveal themselves to each other and no one else—for instance, one group might wear what looks like a military medal, and easily explained as such to the unsuspecting, but which clearly broadcasts their affiliation to other members of that organization.

One universal Asmodean symbol exists: Any Asmodean worshiper in distress can strip a holly branch (or similar branch in lands without holly) of all its bark and carry it in his left hand. Recognizing this symbol, another Asmodean is to say to the person bearing the branch, "Are you in distress?" to which the branch-wielder says, "I have lost that which is mine." This is a rarely used and highly secret way for an Asmodean in a foreign culture to find like-minded followers when in dire trouble.



THE PYRES OF ASMODEUS

The Asmodeans are the oldest evil religion in the world, with beliefs dating back to the div. In the earliest days of the mortal races born of the tree, some mortals uncovered ancient div tomes detailing the secrets taught to them by Fire's Father. In memory of this, the Asmodeans all take on secret names fashioned after the names of the div. They get these from ancient scrolls listing the div followers of Kador. In Asmodean functions, they refer to each other only by these secret names.

They call themselves the Ancient and Secret Brotherhood of the First Fire, naming their places of worship "pyres," for at the pyres they burn away weakness, sentimentality, and any attachment to the trappings of so-called "good" cultures. Permanent structures housing pyres are rare, though in evil empires and places that openly allow the worship of Asmodeus, pyres are magnificent temples with golden spires. These are rare, however; as the enemy of good, Asmodeus is more often so hated that worshipers must hide and practice only in the dark of night, lest they be hunted down and destroyed. Asmodeus is a jealous and angry god, and his worshipers are always careful to show him the utmost respect.

The pyres have no central authority, as it would be difficult to sustain such a thing in secret. The ranking pyromancer leads each pyre, commanding local worshipers to commit evil acts in the name of their dark lord, including the undertaking of missions far from home. The sole unholy order of the pyres, the pyromancers are the supreme authorities of the faithful, but they must not grow too full of themselves. Powerful pyromancers receive direct instructions from Hell, and are kept in line by Asmodeus' mortal and infernal servants. Weaker pyromancers learn of their failures swiftly, when they're killed in the night by other pyromancers, or by the creatures of Hell. A pyromancer is addressed (in private) as "Great Father" or "Great Mother." Pyromancers, like other worshipers of Asmodeus, must keep their identities secret in good societies, which means they do not cast spells when any non-Asmodean can see, unless they can be assured of the witness' destruction.

The conspiracy at the heart of the Anwynite church is in no way connected to the pyres, by design. Though the heads of that conspiracy are aware of the pyres and their deeds, they keep them at a distance so as not to compromise their own secret order.

DOCTRINE

"Do not speak to me of what should be. Do not tell me of the injustice of the wicked or the terrors of evil. Injustice rules every house! Your so-called goodness suffocates the world! Your gods are criminals; your priests and priestesses are whores and whoremongers who belch lies from their pulpits."

—The Pyromancer Horatio "Krafalimus Hazan" Gorrik on the hour of his execution

The Asmodean faith revolves around the "Great Wrong," or the "Wicked Injustice," as they call the toppling of Asmodeus from his palace in the skies by the Lords of Good. To the Asmodean mind, Asmodeus is the rightful overlord of the universe, who had his authority wrongly

usurped. One can see the kind of people attracted to his faith by considering who this story would ensnare: those who feel they've been overlooked, wronged, or denied their rightful power and authority. The faith is home to the formerly mighty who've toppled, and to sniveling narcissists who feel they've never been given their proper due. Asmodeus promises real power, revenge for these wrongs, and trembling respect from all who have wronged them.

This promise comes with a cost. The Asmodeans tie their souls to their Father's Fire and agree to do anything, no matter how wicked or awful, to receive this power. Part of the pyres' philosophy is the burning away of attachment and sentiment, leaving nothing but loyalty to the cult and the desire for power. New worshipers cast their infant children into the pyre, kill loved ones and drink their blood, or commit similar hideous acts of willful evil to show they will serve the Dark Lord with utter fidelity.

As a day-to-day doctrine, the Asmodeans preach a path both lawful and deeply evil.

OBEDIENCE AND HUMILITY

Asmodeus is the greatest power in the universe, and the faithful must serve him without question. If a pyromancer commands a subordinate to do a deed in the name of the Dark Lord, one must obey without question. Pyromancers must loyally serve any Hell-priest of greater standing, and obey legitimate commands from the Father of Fire, relayed through servitors or nightmare visions.

POWER WITHOUT QUESTION

Life is a tiny little thing. The only way to really live is to attain great power. With power, one can survive, control people and one's surroundings, and crush one's enemies. Never question the will to power. Do whatever you must to attain and increase it, unless your plans run counter to the will of Asmodeus.

GOD OF DESTRUCTION, VIOLENCE, AND RAGE

CANARAK

Canarak is the chaotic evil god of violence, rage, bloodlust, carnage, brutality, savagery, and murder. He is only happy when he rages and destroys. He has no great plan or idea. He spent the years since his awakening by the river seeking out like-minded races and leading them in battle, appearing as one of them. In this way, he has become the favored god of most of the chaotic evil races of the world. The orcs, for example, see him as a powerful orc god-king who will lead them into the final battle against the pathetic dwarves and elves. He drives these races on under hundreds of names and in hundreds of shapes, but his followers among



GOOD IS WEAK AND FALSE

By their very definition, good powers and people are weak and worthless. They only attain power by theft. Yet they lie to themselves, hiding behind false doctrines like "honesty," or "honor," while using cowardly means to achieve what they desire. Asmodeans lie, cheat, beg, or steal, but never allow themselves to grow weak-hearted by believing in false doctrines like "valor." Asmodeans are honest with themselves, even if they're false to the rest of the world.

Pyromancers of Asmodeus must be lawful evil. While it is possible to begin learning the ways of the pyres while neutral evil or lawful neutral, one must eventually obey the word of higher pyromancers (become lawful) and give oneself over completely to the evil ways of Asmodeus. Otherwise, the Hell-priest ceases to advance in rank, and may be killed or manipulated by stronger comrades in the faith.

Lawful evil pyromancers spread the faith and serve Asmodeus. They build recruitment systems, contact Hell regularly for instructions, train new pyromancers and worshipers, and in every way conceivable, act like an evil virus in good societies. The most powerful work toward the goals of the four pillars, researching the plane of fire and assembling mighty expeditions of evil adventurers to work toward the conquest of that plane.

JOINING THE PYROMANCERS

One becomes a pyromancer by becoming a member of the Asmodean faith, and demonstrating talent for its rites and dark philosophy. One is then trained by another pyromancer, which takes about two years. At the end of this time, the pyromancer becomes a cleric with a domain associated with Asmodeus, such as Fire or Tyranny. Most pyromancers wield wavy and flanged blades (resembling shimmering and branched flames) of any sort, from daggers to great swords.

THE FIERCE BROTHER, THE SAVAGE HAND, VICIOUS

the five mortal races know him for what he is: the father of destruction and bloodlust. Canarak is not bound by the Compact and can influence mortal events directly, but he must be careful, lest he bring the wrath of Heaven down on his head. The Compact does not protect him either.

Canarak keeps himself secret and works to fulfill the dark pact with the Three Brothers because, like many mad pack animals, he is somewhat loyal to his family, and wants to ascend to power alongside his kin. Of course, if that ever comes to pass he will likely turn on them, but for now, he doesn't want them to fall behind. He works with them, but his



special concern is conquering the pillar of water so that Heaven will fall, and the Abyss will become his personal domain. Though he is chaotic evil, there is no alliance between Canarak and the Abyss. He would conquer the demon princes and make their home his domain. Thus, the denizens of the Abyss fear and despise him.

Canarak is a tall, feral figure with long red hair, matted with dirt and blood. His mouth is filled with sharp teeth and his hands hold two wicked, curved blades. He is never shown in armor but usually naked, ready to pounce on a foe.

The symbol of his worshipers is a humanoid hand with bestial claws. This is the symbol that even good people recognize as the sign of Canarak, if they've heard of him. As a secret sign, Canaraketh wear fangs, claws, iron nails or sharpened bones arranged in a group of four, with one other set apart: the four clawed fingers and thumb of their god.

ABATTOIRS OF CANARAK

Evil humanoid races worship Canarak under countless names and guises. The Canaraketh have no established order and rarely even meet for religious "services," if they can be called that. It is a highly erratic faith, with each worshiper believing if they are strong enough, they will stand at Canarak's side when the pillars are conquered and the end times come. They strive for a personal connection with Canarak, which they experience in the thrill of destruction and murder.

When they do meet, the Canaraketh call their places of worship—usually secluded glades or hidden underground temples—abattoirs. They are sites of slaughter and carnage. Most religious services involve stripping bare captured innocents and placing them at the center of the abattoir, where worshipers fall on them, ripping them apart with hands and teeth. The Canaraketh are an awful and horrifying people.

These ceremonies, and inductions of new worshipers (which usually involves cannibalism) are overseen by the clergy of Canarak, the reavers. A reaver receives no special address, and his authority is only respected as long as he is powerful and dangerous. Old and frail reavers are torn to pieces by their fellows.

DOCTRINE

"You shudder with delight when you rip open a foe's belly with a well-placed blow. So do I. The difference between you and me is that I embrace it. I am alive! What are you?"

—The first question to a prospective convert of the Canaraketh

The beliefs of the Canaraketh are easily summarized as follows.

CANARAK IS THE JOY OF SLAUGHTER

Canarak is the rush and thrill felt when one sees a foe's head explode after being struck by a mallet. The Savage Hand is present in those times, and the only way to feel close to him is to continue to feed that appetite for death and mayhem.

CANARAK WILL DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES

Canarak aids those who please him in the destruction of all those who oppose them. And in the end times, he will have his exalted at his side when they destroy all they hate.

ALL THAT IS ESTABLISHED MUST BE DESTROYED

Canarak is denied his rightful position in the heavens and must hide and consort with the worthless, evil races. So too must his followers. Indeed, the Canaraketh make alliances with chaotic evil humanoid races to serve their aims. This humiliation will end when all lies in ruins and flame. Canarak whispers to humanoid priests that only *their* race is fit to fight with him, and loves it when followers from two such deluded races kill each other—the strong survivors are better servants, after all. Followers from the five mortal races often command evil humanoids.

Canaraketh are wildly evil, but the faith has appeal to those who feel powerless and wish to see established orders overturned. There are even some bookish worshippers of Canarak who seek the destruction of established ways of thinking.

Most reavers, and indeed most Canaraketh, are chaotic evil. These destructive miscreants work to topple everything, with one peculiar exception. Ranking reavers

focus on Canarak's conquest of the pillar of water. In this mission, many of them ally themselves with the Shalimyn. Since there are active members of the Shalimyn basins who are also chaotic evil, this is often a fruitful friendship, but what Shalimyr thinks of it, none can say.

Some reavers are neutral evil and care only about the personal power that Canarak provides them. While most of the Canaraketh destroy simply for the sake of joyous destruction itself, these reavers work within an established order if it will give them power and might. This includes adventuring with good people, which most reavers will not do.

A few Canaraketh reavers are even willing to do good things. They are the chaotic neutral followers of the Fierce Brother, and they seek only to undermine and destroy established orders—even evil ones. They fight against any established society, battling lawful evil empires as fiercely as lawful good ones.

JOINING THE REAVERS

The process of initiation is dark and savage. Initiates indulge in acts of horrific brutality to gain the dark god's favor. All reavers are clerics with the War domain. Most favor scimitars and curved weapons.

GOD OF GREED, GLUTTONY, AND DESIRE

THELLOS

THE HUNGRY BROTHER,
THE FEASTING MAW, GREEDY

Thellos is the neutral evil god of gluttony, selfish desire, greed, and lust for things and people. He is pure selfishness. He desires to make himself fatter, wealthier, happier, and mightier by any means. He does not care who he must steal from or what he otherwise must do to improve his situation. There is no sharing for him, no sense there can ever be enough. He wants only to feed his desires.

Like Canarak and Naran, Thellos appears in many guises, appearing to the neutral evil humanoid races of the world as one of their own. The goblins see him as the fat goblin lord who will lead them to the land of milk and honey, where they will no longer have to fear bigger creatures.

Thellos is part of the Dark Pact to improve his situation, but if he thought he could better himself by allying with the lords of good, he would. He cannot understand loyalty, love, or anything else decent. For now, he works to conquer the pillar of the air to gain power. He hides most often on the Material Plane, where he satisfies his appetites with his followers and others. He is not bound by the Compact and often appears to those who worship him, influencing mortal affairs directly.

Thellos is shown as a fat god with a pig-like nose, sandy hair, and watery blue eyes, surrounded by a feast and a mountain of gold.

His faithful represent themselves with a gaping maw: a wide-open mouth with a lascivious red tongue dripping with desire. This is a secret symbol known only to skilled religious scholars. The symbol most known for Thellos is rarely used any longer: a fat old man suckling at the breast of a gaunt and impoverished woman. This was painted on the banners of his worshippers in ancient times, when they marched openly. His cult's weapons, armor and ornaments often use the motif of a mouth with a protruding tongue, which might be rendered subtly so that followers can identify each other.



HALLS OF PLEASURE

The Thellosh, as his worshippers call themselves, congregate in what they call the halls of pleasure.

More than one brothel or gambling house hides a secret Thellosh temple. In these depraved halls, the Thellosh hold gluttonous feasts and crazed orgies. They also work together to establish the cult's economic dominance. There are several trade consortiums secretly controlled by wicked merchants; they follow Thellos out of avarice.



The halls of pleasure are overseen by a council of the wealthiest members. One buys into the position, in return for which one receives a percentage of the hall's profits. They invest in illicit activities and legal ones, all in secret. Members of the council often murder one another to cut down the number of shares, though the hall of pleasure itself is considered neutral territory. The council sets the buy-in price, which usually increases with time. Not all the money goes to the council members; much of it furthers the investments of the halls, and expands Thelosh influence. Many thieves' guilds are secretly overseen by a Thelosh council, and the faith is enormously popular with thieves who find Darmonites too good-gooey.

The clerics of the uncharitable brotherhood serve on these councils, or otherwise aid them in their efforts to dominate economies. As the clergy of the Thelosh, the uncharitable brotherhood works to extend the power and selfish splendor of the faith by recruiting new members and strengthening the financial positions of existing ones. It is forbidden for one of the Thelosh to harm an uncharitable brother, no matter the potential for personal gain. An uncharitable brother is addressed as "uncharitable brother" or "uncharitable sister."

DOCTRINE

"Everything that I might have, I will have. Why should I not take what I can while I can? What use is charity? The only reason anyone helps anyone else is if they stand to gain; that's the way of the world. At least I have the sense to admit it."

—*Uncharitable Brother Forist Timberlane*

The doctrine of the Thelosh is simple: Do whatever you can to improve your position. Murder, cheat, lie, or even tell the truth, if you'd profit by it. Save the little girl from the fire, set the fire that kills the little girl. It's all the same, if it improves of your personal position. The faith attracts the most selfish people in the world with its simple premise: We owe others nothing. We get where we get by our own talent, skill, and power, and if I have more than someone else, it's because I deserve it. Charity is for idiots. The poor would destroy us if they thought it would get them ahead, so crush the poor before they get the chance.

Most Thelosh have little interest in their faith except for how it will improve their lives. Only the most pious actually care about Thellos. The faithful believe his dark favor is greater than any other wealth. They serve the greed of others to glorify Thellos. These are the most dangerous members of the cult, and not so easily manipulated by their own base desires. They seek to conquer the pillar of air in their master's name.

Most uncharitable brothers are neutral evil. They strive to improve their personal positions while also aiding the growth of their halls. Most seek the wealth necessary to buy a seat on the local council. Ideally, they would then dominate of the council and earn greater wealth and personal prestige. All this is an effort to sate unending hungers and lusts. They are very selfish people.

A few uncharitable brothers are lawful evil; these are perhaps the most dangerous additions to a hall of pleasure. They differ from most Thellosh, but since they are uncharitable brothers, they won't be killed for it. They serve their council and hall in any way necessary, thinking more of the well-being of the organization than their own profit. They'll stoop to any level of depravity to further the goals of the hall.

Even fewer members of the order are chaotic evil. These unhappy clerics take resentment to a new level; while they are willing to serve their council for a while, they eventually become convinced the whole hall should serve their desires. They refuse to cooperate with others or exhibit any patience, demanding the instant gratification of any

GOD OF TYRANNY, PRIDE, AND CUNNING

NARAN

Naran is the lawful evil god of cunning, tyranny, pride, slavery, plots, villainy, and conspiracies. He is the leader of the Three Brothers, and he seeks to move them into a position of world dominance. He trusts Asmodeus only as far as the Dark Pact, knowing its terms will not be violated. However, once the pact is fulfilled, he expects the self-proclaimed King of the Universe to betray him and his brothers. For this reason, Naran plans a multi-tiered war. He stays hidden, manipulating the mortal races toward evil; he moves to take control of the earth pillar; he plans to topple the gods of the tree once the pillar is taken; and he plans to destroy Asmodeus once that war is won.

Naran is capable of plotting so carefully because he is the most cunning of all the gods. He is perhaps as wise as Morwyn, but where she turns her wisdom to good, his is directed toward pure malevolence and control. He is the lord of evil schemes.

Naran, like his brothers, manipulates evil humanoids into believing he is their personal god. To the hobgoblins, he appears to be a great hobgoblin general god, leading them into the great war in which they will conquer the world. Among mortal followers, he is known to be the patron of those who use cunning and a lordly mien to control others.

Naran is shown as an imperiously tall man with long dark hair, clearly a twin to Naryne. His gaze is piercing, like Maal's, but he does not seem as noble. He has a wicked sneer, and in religious art, usually leads a thousand slaves on black chains. Naran wields a mighty three-headed flail. One head burns with the fire of desire for power and the heat of a cunning mind. One head moves with the weight and ponderous strength of self-control. The third head crackles with the lightning of the oppressor's whip.

whim. When powerful, they usually wipe out the council members of their hall and become depraved monarchs over the faithful, building petty empires dedicated to their personal pleasure.

JOINING THE UNCHARITABLE BROTHERS

Only clerics sworn to Thellosh can become uncharitable brothers. When they complete their training, they become clerics with the Corruption domain, which is described in **Chapter X**. Thellos famously wields a blind man's cane, stolen because he wanted a walking stick. His followers simulate this by wielding quarterstaves and clubs.

THE WISE BROTHER, THE PIERCING EYE, LORDLY

His followers use a metal collar attached to a black chain as their sign. This is the symbol of the slave master, and many of his worshipers make their living capturing and selling slaves. This symbol is well known to people who oppose the Naran. Those in need of a secret symbol of Naran wear two or more black metal rings on their fingers (two adjacent fingers, or two joints on a single finger is common) connected by chains. This is a secret symbol known only to followers of Naran, explained away as a foreign piece of jewelry.

REDOUBTS OF NARAN

The Naranath regularly attend services, either publicly in evil homelands, or in secret places elsewhere. In either case, their temples are called redoubts, for these places of prayer to the Wise Brother are fortified to resist assault or imprison the enslaved. In societies that practice slavery, Naran is worshiped openly as the patron to slavers, and slave sales take place on the footsteps of the redoubts.

Each redoubt is run by the highest-ranking member of the local clergy. As with all the evil faiths, the Naranath cannot have a worldwide organization, not only because of the difficulty of issuing orders, but because its high leadership would become the targets of every good power in the world. The clerics of the Naranath are called overseers. They oversee not just the faithful, but also any plans for war or political subversion their redoubts are part of. In good societies, they might undermine an expedition against a slaver colony; in evil societies, they might direct the redoubt's slave trade. An overseer is addressed as "Redoubtable Lord," or "Redoubtable Lady."

The Naranath are a cunning and proud people, and any slight to their honor or power is likely to be met with a response ten times as cunning, a knife in the dark, or if it is to their benefit, an open fight to demonstrate their power. They are cautious, though, and bide their time if necessary.





DOCTRINE

“The weak must be protected? If it wasn’t so dangerous, the idea would be laughable. The strong must be servants to those who need their aid? The very notion defies everything nature tells us. Does the strongest lion serve the weakest? I am strong, and I will not serve the weak. I will take what I want and do what I will, and damned be he who stands in my way!”

—*The Naranath Declaration of Duke Farvan Ulgost*

Naran teaches his followers to look for weakness, seize opportunities, and be strong. Unlike the Thellosh, the Naranath do not practice a selfish religion. They believe the strong must rule, and obey those who are stronger than they, to gain power as vassals. They work together to build up the Naranath, recruiting converts with promises of power and working closely with various infernal cults. If Asmodeus is King of the Universe, the Naranath see themselves as servants of its Crown Prince. But someday, the Prince will be King.

The Naranath preach that cunning, self-control, and control of others are all equally valuable and necessary. For instance, many Naranath are officials in good governments who bide their time, waiting to seize authority and power. They wait in lesser positions, keeping their desire for power in check until they hit upon just the right moment to pounce.

While the faith has no worldwide organization, all high-ranking Naranath are visited personally by their god, who directs their actions. Of the Three Brothers, he

has the tightest control of his faithful, all in his efforts to rule the pillar of earth, the first of several steps toward greatness.

Almost all overseers are lawful evil. They work closely with the members of their redoubt, using the resources of the faithful to build their organization’s power base. They put their faith over their own well-being because they know they will be rewarded for it in the end. Some loyally undertake suicide missions; others live in false identities for decades. If Naran wills it, or it’s part of an intelligent plot, it must be done.

Some overseers are neutral evil. They see themselves as part of a large power structure that keeps them safe and builds their personal power and prestige. These selfish overseers, many of whom skim money from their redoubt’s operations, do not last long. If they grow too powerful and continue to manipulate their church for personal gain, they are killed by Naran himself, and made examples of.

A rare few Naranath overseers are lawful neutral. These worshipers only develop in evil nations where the faith has a strong public presence. They enforce the foul law of the land and the principle of “might is right” without prejudice. They take no pleasure in this, but simply believe they are doing their duty. They tally slaves with a certain degree of sad indifference, and temper their compassion with loyalty to church and state.

JOINING THE OVERSEERS OF NARAN

Overseers are clerics with the Tyranny domain, which is described in **Chapter X**.

EVIL & HERETICAL CULTS OF THE TREE

Many gods of the tree have evil worshipers. Some of these followers are heretics, but many more are wicked people who exploit one of the dark interpretations of their god's doctrine.

While the Narynites, Shalimyn, and Tinelites allow evil clergy to participate openly in their churches, most of the other churches do not. Thus, these evil worshipers form secret cults. Their fiercest foes are the orthodox clergy of their faith. In an evil cult, clergy who are only one alignment shift from the alignment of their god usually continue to receive powers, though the reasons remain obscure and troubling to religious scholars. Fully heretical cults' clergy stand two alignment shifts from their god, and likely receive power from some other entity: another god or one of the infernal powers in disguise. No one can be sure. Whether a cult is corrupted or heretical is marked next to its name.

Cults have only one alignment, meaning that the clergy of those cults and almost all their members possess the same alignment, listed early in the cult section.

THE CULT OF THE BLOODY BLADE

LAWFUL EVIL CORRUPTED CULT OF MAAL



Long banned from the courts of Maal, these people believe justice cannot be served by the faint of heart. There are crimes that must be dealt with in the most brutal and merciless manner possible—and if a few mistakes are made along the way, so be it—Maal's wisdom is infinite, and he promised justice would come.

The members of the Cult of the Bloody Blade are a profound disappointment to other members of the courts of Maal. They are generally justiciars who showed too much zeal in the prosecution of the wicked, and becoming what they persecuted. These outcasts hold their own courts in hiding, often hauling the accused blindfolded before them, to respond to secret evidence. These courts have their own "officers," who are usually money-driven mercenaries, but sometimes actual fallen officers join the dark courts. These warriors form fists like other Maalites, and hunt "criminals" (defined in strange ways, depending on the dark court) with sadistic zeal.

The Cult of the Bloody Blade is quite powerful in some evil cultures, serving as their only law enforcement group. Their symbol is Maal's longsword Justice, dripping with blood.

The cult tries to follow the same power structure as the courts of Maal. It even has three "Justices" who claim to

be its central authority. How they keep in contact with the many tendrils of the outcast cult is unclear. All the cult's members, especially these false Justices, are considered enemies of the mainline courts of Maal. The mother church is their most implacable foe.

DOCTRINE

"All have the right to justice; some have more of a right than others."

—Justice Willem Baneblade

The stereotypical witch-finding inquisitor is a member of the Cult of the Bloody Blade. These cultists are so convinced they know what is right and just they'll brutally murder children they believe have been "infected" with the criminal element. The ends justify the means.

The Cult of the Bloody Blade is unconcerned with fiends, undead, and other obviously evil powers. In fact, they might even make bargains with such beings, for the cult believes the greatest threats to the mortal races come from within, in the forms of lawlessness and anarchic magic. They'll torture and mutilate a known thief to track down his "ringleader." They have no pity for criminals; if they accidentally kill an innocent, they believe Maal will make amends, for the god has guaranteed justice, in the end.

THE CULT OF THE BOUND ROD

LAWFUL EVIL CORRUPTED CULT OF TERAK

In areas plagued with racial strife, the Cult of the Bound Rod is never far away. The members of the cult see themselves as full members of Terak's temples. They're only being kept outside the faith for a while, until it rids itself of its absurd lawful good members.

The soldiers of this order usually meet in secret, but in areas rife with evil or racial conflict, they speak publicly, and build temples with the bound rod symbol prominently displayed.

The cult has no central organization, but it operates along the same lines as the main temples, with each temple headed by a commander. Because the cult is outcast and small, a commander is the highest figure in the cult; there is no council of commanders.



This cult prefers to represent itself with the fasces, but to distinguish itself from lawful neutral worshipers of Terak, the cult uses a wooden rod with five bands of iron as its symbol. Most evil worshipers display both symbols.

DOCTRINE

“I will wear the five symbols; I will wear them with pride. I will give the tithe; I will give it with pride. I will treat my body well; I will treat it with pride. But I will not pretend that I am brother to the elf if I am a man. He is what he is, and I am what I am, and we shall not seek to bring our ways together—our separation will make us stronger.”

—The first oath of a new member of the cult of the Bounded Rod

The cult embraces the doctrine of the Teraketh, except for the assertion that all races are brothers. The cult believes the greatest misery comes upon mortal races when they commingle, and the only path to pleasing Terak the Mighty is to separate the races into distinct groups. Each race is like one of the bands of iron—they never touch, but together they make the rod stronger.

The cult is split into five distinct bands—one for each race—though the halfling and gnome bands have few members. Among humans, dwarves, and elves, many young people gravitate toward this cult, seeking to promote the purity of their culture and reject “corrupting influences.” For instance, dwarf members speak only dwarven, and often refuse to visit communities where other races live.

Theoretically, the different bands of the cult work together but of course, do not share members. Their goal is to undo racially mixed societies and to lead all five races to “racially pure” homelands. They do not hesitate to resort to violence to accomplish their goals, beating and even killing anyone who offends their sense of purity. The dwarf who happily trades with elves is likely to get a beating from a roaming band of dwarven cultists. All these cults rely on fear and hatred to spread their message, their hearts set on cruel evil.

Of course, each band has an inner mystery: *Their* race is the only one Terak trusts to lead the peoples of the world. The other races are imperfect, and while cooperating with them to separate their peoples is acceptable, they must ultimately serve, or be destroyed. Indeed, each band claims other races secretly plot against “Terak’s truly chosen,” and conceal horrific cultural practices that demonstrate that they’re unfit to be anything but servants. For instance, dwarf and elf bands often claim that humans, who bear children more frequently, secretly eat unwanted babies or sacrifice them to Asmodeus. Ultimately, one band—one race—must command the Teraketh faith.

This is not to say the bands treat their own races well. On the surface, cultists seem very respectful and kind to their own, but they punish anyone who fails to conform to an idealized, violent and bigoted vision of what their respective races represent. Lawful good members of the Teraketh oppose them adamantly.

THE CULT OF THE BLOODY LIBATION

CHAOTIC EVIL CORRUPTED CULT OF ZHEENKEEF



Cultists of the Bloody Libation wander the woods holding wild orgies, drinking wine until they are sick, and summoning demons to dance with them beneath the moonlight. They have no established order and congregate under each full moon, called to their meeting spots by some unseen force. There they commit acts of debauchery to impress the goddess (but which in truth would bore her—decadence is hardly novel). The cult’s symbol the image of five babes, one from each race, drinking the blood of a jackal struck with five wounds, but this is reserved for high rituals. The simple image of a bleeding heart is commonly used instead.

DOCTRINE

“I see her when I think I will die from drink, not when I show caution and temperance. Could there be any clearer sign of her will?”

—Apostle Migudrum Ophellus

“The grape is like the blood of the mother of madness,” they say. “It nourishes her children, and we do her a disservice when we do not drink to our fill and beyond.” The cult believes the most holy thing any person can do is engage in the worst kind of excess. Their belief is easily understood in their addition to the Vintner’s Creed: “If there is a line drawn by society, Zheenkeef wants you to cross it. You honor her when you do so. If they tell you it is wrong, it is right.”

Thus, cultists engage in madness, murder, and carnal atrocities of the worst kind, all in the name of their god. This includes consorting with demons, who they believe were born of Zheenkeef’s womb.

The main church cannot be bothered to oppose or embrace the cult, but most Zhenkefans find them utterly distasteful and refuse to have them as part of their vineyards. However, in some societies, the cult makes up the main body of the vineyard and *is* the established Zhenkefan church.

THE CULT OF THE ICY BREATH

NEUTRAL EVIL CORRUPTED CULT OF MORMEKAR

Wandering the world and meeting in hidden places—caves carved into temples, catacombs of lost cathedrals, dungeons from ancient kingdoms—these cultists celebrate the horror and splendor of death. They pray to Mormekar, the only power that matters, calling for his might to enter them. They raise the undead, and their mightiest members become liches. Why Mormekar grants them power is a mystery that none of his followers can comprehend, and most refuse to believe that he does. The cult represents itself with a jagged shard of ice. Cult members who are clerics choose the Death domain instead of the Repose domain.



DOCTRINE

"I will do only one thing that matters in life, and that is dying. It is a gift I give you now, your death, for you will feel his icy breath before I."

—The ceremonial utterance of an assassin of the Icy Breath

In doctrine, the Cult of the Icy Breath stands a world apart from the sacristies. While they agree death is sacred, they neither believe undead violate death's sanctity, nor hold that resurrection or other life-restorative magic is wrong, if those it is used on would linger to share the gift of death widely. They believe death is the only significant and beautiful thing of which the mortal races are capable. They celebrate it and bring others to it—with or without their permission.

If a cultist meets an imprisoned man, she kills him to set him free. If a cultist finds a hungry child, he kills her rather than feeds her. The cult believes death is the highest state any mortal might aspire to, but adherents make the sacrifice of continuing to live for a while, so they might help others across.

When all mortals feel Mormekar's icy breath, they'll find true peace and bliss within the god's embrace, for when the last funeral dirge ends, Mormekar will free of his awful duty. Therefore, cultists kill as many people as they can before they die. They use whatever means they can to achieve their goal, though the cult accepts that there's room to consider individual talents, and creative expression. A general can get a lot more people killed than a thug, so members are not opposed using both lawful and chaotic methods.

Obviously, the rest of the Mormekim oppose these maniacs fervently.



THE CULT OF POSSESSION

CHAOTIC EVIL HERETICAL CULT OF DARMON



Members control the houses of Darmon, so there are heretical clerics of Darmon who encourage evil congregations to commit acts of escalating wickedness in his name. Located in houses of Darmon, they wear the same holy symbols, utter the same aphorisms as other adherents, and rarely refer to themselves as part of a cult. It is only upon studying their actions one sees they are evil—profoundly so. It is likely that the house of Darmon in Freeport, which was established to revere and protect pirates, is run by heretics of this cult. These cultists represent themselves in the same manner as other wayfarers, with signs of wealth—particularly the gold coin.

DOCTRINE

“Will you buy your way into heaven?”

—Utterance of Darmon

These heretics, taking a rhetorical comment by the Champion of Heaven, formed a cult based on the accumulation and preservation of wealth. Unlike the Thellosh, they don’t accumulate it with careful planning, but preach theft, fraud—anything that accumulates hard cash as quickly as possible. Their logic is simple: They believe that each year, the 1,001 wealthiest people to die can buy their way into Heaven.

Since the members of this cult wish to be among those wealthiest people, they must enrich themselves at others’ expense (the poorer people are, the more easily wealth propels the elect to Heaven) and protect their hoards until they die. Once that happens, their wealth must be buried with them, entombed until the end of the year. After that, someone else can steal it.

One of the only rules among the brigands of this cult, who believe they are stealing their way into Heaven, is that the Houses of Darmon are sacred ground, and no one can be robbed or harmed within one hundred feet of one. Beyond that, it’s each person for themselves.

CULT OF EVERLASTING NIGHT

CHAOTIC NEUTRAL HERETICAL CULT OF URIAN



The Cult of Everlasting Night’s faithful congregate in the midnight dark, around makeshift shrines built by moonlit pools. The cult has no central authority, but its powerful members communicate with one another on their tireless quest to fulfill their “revelation.” Members of this cult represent themselves with a moonless night shining with twelve stars, one for each generation since the cult’s doctrine was revealed.

DOCTRINE

“I have seen the Sky Father, and he has commanded me to kill him.”

*—The opening words of Skylark’s Song
Ionus Poin’s revelation*

Ionus Poin, born twelve generations ago, claimed in vivid detail to have seen the Sky Father, Urian, in a dream. Urian told him that in sixteen generations, the sun and moon would come to Earth and destroy all the mortal races. The only way to stop this holocaust was to destroy the very sun and moon in the sky. By means of prayer, magic, and powerful pacts with outside forces, these two parts of Urian must be destroyed. That’s the cult’s revelation.

This doomsday cult seeks out neither evil nor good. None of the cultists wish to harm anyone, nor do they seek to help people with day to day problems—their concerns are cosmic, bent toward destroying the sun and moon. Many members are unhinged wizards who believe that if they destroy the lights of Urian, they’ll prove themselves masters of the arcane arts, beyond even Tinel’s ability to bind. Who gives these bizarre heretics their power? None can say, but it is clear that something has bent their minds beyond ordinary reasoning. When their clerics pray, sometimes they speak a language unknown to any creature in the Great Sphere—mortal or god.

The cult believes it must keep its mission secret to avoid an all-out panic, but should someone come across their plans, they will not kill them to preserve the secret. The cult isn’t evil. They’re polite religious zealots who absolutely believe they can—they must—annihilate the sun and the moon.

VIII: DIVINE CAMPAIGNS

NOW THAT YOU'VE SEEN THE COMPLETE MYTHOLOGY, AND CHURCHES FOR ALL ITS GODS, INCLUDING A FEW OF THE evil ones, we'll provide ideas for incorporating these rules into a campaign world, from top-level concerns, like alignment, to nitty-gritty specifics, like geographical locations and adventure hooks. Obviously, nothing provided in this chapter *must* be incorporated into your campaign to use the material in this book. Rather, it provides suggested hooks to integrate the mythology into your campaign.

The mythology and churches described carry with them some serious campaign-affecting specifics—that there is a Hell ruled by Asmodeus, for instance. This chapter provides even more ways to integrate the contents of this book into your world. If you're only looking for ideas on how to use selected parts of the material, move on to the next chapter.

ALIGNMENTS

The meanings of alignments often shift from player to player, which is fine because they represent an effort to capture characters' outlooks—and as we all know, people change outlooks often.

However, alignments as metaphysical concepts should be constant, because they represent cosmic forces in a perpetual struggle with one another. Thus, it is important to define the alignments not from the eyes of a single person, but as eternal concepts. After all, a god is above the petty concerns of the average individual; he's not chaotic good because he just doesn't like the pressure of rules. For a god, alignment represents an outlook on how the universe should be structured, what should be valued in mortal societies, and what should be opposed and wiped from the world.

Of course, the gods do things that might seem evil from a mortal perspective in pursuit of these principles. For example, Terak kills his own son to teach him a lesson, and because his son asks him to, in a sense. In the eyes of a mortal, this might appear evil, but for an immortal, who knows mortal life is fleeting and the soul is all that really matters, it might be no more severe than a spanking. For this reason, the alignments of the gods represent conceptual leanings more than individual behaviors.

With that in mind, here is what the alignments mean from a cosmic perspective—particularly from the view of the gods of the tree. A religious philosopher who has studied the gods of this mythology might interpret the alignments like this.

LAWFUL GOOD "CHARITY"

There must be an established order to things, with leaders and followers, kings and commoners. The role of those at the top is to protect those below them and aid the weak when they are in need. The role of those at the bottom is to work, obey their lords, and live happy, unremarkable lives in peace. Lawful good deities see the world through the eyes of righteous authority and benevolence. It is expected that most people will live small, uninteresting lives—that's good. The alternative, as has been shown in earlier epochs, is a life touched by war and death. The more protected the common person is, the more they're blissfully unaware of evil, and the greater the success of good. To make this possible, a few must lead dangerous, bold lives. These powerful few, who risk their lives to

protect the little people or bear the weight of crowns, stand at the pinnacle of goodness.

NEUTRAL GOOD "HOPE"

The mortal races have free will. Many people pursue self-aggrandizement at the expense of the happiness and sometimes even the lives of others. The mortal world is awash with wickedness, but the neutral good perspective is that there's always hope for the redemption of the wicked and the betterment of all. Person by person, deed by deed, the world can be made better. Neutral good deities want a world where all people are equal, and live in harmony and peace. They hope those ends will be achieved through good deeds on the small and great scales, and therefore consider all goodness worthy, for it represents hope.

CHAOTIC GOOD "FREEDOM"

The individual is the most powerful force in the world. The moment you turn a person into a face in the crowd, their ability to achieve greatness and do the most good vanishes. Within every mortal lies the secret to making a better world. Anyone who wishes to quash that creativity, that spark, is either a tyrant or a misguided fool who thinks it possible to make rules applicable to all situations. It's not possible; the chaotic good deities know it. They therefore strive for the liberation of the minds and spirits of all people, believing the ideas of a peasant, and his dreams and yearnings, are no less valid than those of a king.

LAWFUL NEUTRAL "ORDER"

All mortals are petty people. Left to their own devices, mortals would live in squalor, darkness, and misery. They need rules and instructions, like children, so they know how to behave and build societies. These rules must be expertly crafted. If followed, they will lead to utopia. Lawful neutral deities believe rules and structures are more important than specific moral problems. Laws make societies more perfect than anything achievable in their absence.

NEUTRAL "DETACHMENT"

All of existence was created in a moment with the utterance of a single word, and it will all disappear in a moment with the utterance of that same word. Everything in between is

fleeting and illusory. The lives of mortals, of gods, of everything is a brief tale, ending in the wink of an eye, compared to the ageless, infinite emptiness surrounding it. Neutral deities know this, and are utterly detached from great mythic struggles. They perform their duty, their cosmic function, because it is their role in the play, but they refuse to believe there is any salient difference between good and evil, law and chaos, or that the end of existence will come out any differently if one side or another prevails.

CHAOTIC NEUTRAL “CHANGE”

From stagnation comes oblivion. The world is a test, or a dream, or a challenge, and the only way to fail is to be boring. Think of the world as large empty box into which you have been thrown. You can sit, doing nothing, or you can exert every influence, perform every act you can imagine, do everything you can think of to escape the box. And if escape is impossible, at the very least you can help yourself to forget about the box for a while. Change is the only path to discovery. Overthrowing established orders, rethinking long-held positions—these are necessary to pass the test, to still be around when the dream ends, to win the challenge. Chaotic neutral deities know this and seek to be ever-shifting, changing the rules whenever possible in hope of new discoveries.

LAWFUL EVIL “TYRANNY”

All of existence is filled with scared, pathetic fools. If you give control of the world over to the gods born from the tree (mortal societies aren't even worthy of discussion) you are left with anarchy. Only the strongest and smartest should control things, and all who serve them should obey unconditionally. This is the way the world was intended to be from the very beginning and, inevitably, it is how it will be in the end. The lawful evil powers are certain they are the rightful rulers of it all.

NEUTRAL EVIL “GREED”

In a sense, this is the pettiest of the evil alignments. It doesn't matter whose side you are on, who wins conflicts, or what you must do. Come out on top in the end. You don't need to have the most power or be exalted above all others. But if you're in a better position at the end than you were when you started, no matter what it took to get there, you've done well. Neutral evil powers are the most easily manipulated and won over because they are so predictable. They simply want to improve their positions.

CHAOTIC EVIL “BRUTALITY”

The appetites of the chaotic evil powers have no end. Hunger for blood, for wanton pleasure, for destruction—nothing will ever sate it. There is no higher purpose driving the chaotic evil powers. Such powers are the absence of reason, the embodiment of dark urges. They will destroy, consume and corrupt for all eternity.

GODS BY ALIGNMENT

Alignment is important to religious characters and their gods. They determine a character's worldview, as well as her disposition toward other characters, gods, and creatures. Many of us decide what sort of character we want to play by class and alignment before we worry about such fine details as religion.

Thus, the religions in this book have been distilled into two important factors in the following table. For each alignment, there's a list of the gods, noting each deity's “base” alignment. It also shows which gods a character of given alignment may worship and still be within one alignment shift of the god's “base” alignment. This is important, because a cleric can only worship a god within one alignment shift of their own, and cannot be neutral unless her god is. Thus, a lawful neutral cleric can only serve as clergy for a lawful good, lawful neutral, or lawful evil god.

GODS AND CHURCHES BY ALIGNMENT

ALIGNMENT	GODS OF THIS ALIGNMENT	POSSIBLE CHURCHES FOR CLERICS OF THIS ALIGNMENT
Lawful Good	Morwyn, Terak*, Anwyn, Rontra	Morwyn, Terak, Anwyn, Rontra, Urian, Korak, Thellyne, Maal, Naryne, The Great Church
Neutral Good	Urian, Korak, Thellyne	Urian, Korak, Thellyne, Morwyn, Terak, Anwyn, Rontra, Darmon, Aymara, Canelle, Mormekar, Tinel, The Great Church
Chaotic Good	Darmon, Tinel*, Aymara, Canelle	Darmon, Tinel, Aymara, Canelle, Urian, Korak, Thellyne, Shalimyr, Zheenkeef
Lawful Neutral	Terak*, Maal, Naryne	Terak, Maal, Naryne, Morwyn, Anwyn, Rontra, Mormekar, Tinel, The Great Church, Naran
Neutral***	Mormekar, Tinel*, Eliwyn**, The	Mormekar, Tinel, Nameless One**
Chaotic Neutral	Shalimyr, Zheenkeef	Shalimyr, Zheenkeef, Darmon, Aymara, Canelle, Mormekar, Tinel, Canarak
Lawful Evil	Asmodeus/Kador, Naran	Asmodeus/Kador, Naran, Terak, Maal, Naryne, Thellos
Neutral Evil	Thellos	, Naran, Canarak, Mormekar, Tinel
Chaotic Evil	Canarak	Canarak, Thellos, Shalimyr, Zheenkeef

* Due to a very real schism in this god's outlook, he is considered to have two alignments.
 ** This god provides no powers to clergy, and is therefore not listed in column 3 of this table.
 *** Clerics cannot be “true” neutral unless their deity is.

DISPOSITION

Understanding the relationships between churches throughout the world reveals the prevailing feelings of the faithful toward one another. Obviously, you can decide any church has a different attitude than what has been provided in this book. The information herein assumes a civilized society where outright armed conflict between the churches would not be tolerated by the religions' members or secular authorities. However, given the history of the gods and the volatility of mortal societies, one church could engage in a long war with another. Throughout human history, there have been bitter religious conflicts between and within societies, so it is certainly sensible to place such a conflict within your world. Perhaps one nation has Zheenkeef as its patron, another Morwyn—or one is a nation of warriors loyal to Terak, while the other is ruled by magistrates who honor Tinel, and their religious differences have brought them into armed conflict for centuries. Each accepts the other's god exists and is powerful, but sees the other side as heathens who make the wrong patron preeminent. Remember, the peculiar nature of a polytheistic religion is that it is uncommon for someone to say "this god does not exist." Rather, conflict arises from how one of the gods is worshiped or how much status one ought to have compared to the others. There are so many kinds of religious conflicts possible between well-meaning people that you should be able to dream up countless reasons for wars in the names of the gods.

The guidelines do as little "world defining" outside of the churches as possible, making this book useful as

an add-on to an existing campaign. Perhaps your religious characters have never really had a sense of who their gods are or what they stand for. You can just throw the mythology of the gods of the tree into the world for instant church structures, sets of beliefs, and doctrines for every religion. However, it would be risky to just make up a conflict between the churches without thinking it through, so if you don't have time to closely integrate the religions of *Book of the Righteous* into your world, consider using the following chart as a default when questions come up. Remember, this is for interactions between the churches, not their gods, though churches are influenced by the mythic social ties of the gods they represent.

KEY

Read from left to right, the table explains how the church on the left feels about each of the churches above. Each entry pertains to the members of the church whose line you are reading. It is possible that these feelings are not reciprocated.

H: Openly hostile. Members of the faith are more likely to attack adherents of this church on sight than talk. Devout members are willing to die opposing the work of this church.

An: Antipathy. Members of the faith have an absolute mistrust for this church. The faithful will not happily adventure with people from this church and might pepper their speech with insults and taunts when talking to them.

CHURCH ATTITUDES

	G	N	E	R	U	S	T	M	Z	Ti	Mo	Ma	K	A	D	Ay	C	Th	N	As	Ca	Na	Ts
THE GREAT CHURCH (G)	X	N	N	F	W	W	F	F	S	W	W	F	F	F	W	F	W	W	F	H	An	An	An
ANWYN* (A)	F	N	N	F	F	N	A	A	N	W	N	F	F	X	W	F	W	F	F	H	H	H	H
AYMARA (Ay)	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	A	X	F	F	F	H	H	H	H
CANARAK (Ca)	H	N	N	H	H	W	H	H	S	H	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	W	X	A	A
CANELLE (C)	W	N	N	W	F	F	N	W	W	F	N	N	F	W	F	F	X	A	A	H	H	H	H
DARMON (D)	W	N	N	F	F	F	W	W	F	F	N	F	F	W	X	A	F	F	F	H	H	H	H
ELIWYN (E)	N	N	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
KADOR/ASMIDEUS (As)	H	S	An	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	X	F	F	F
KORAK (K)	F	N	N	F	W	W	F	F	W	F	W	F	X	F	F	F	F	F	F	H	H	H	H
MAAL (Ma)	F	N	N	F	F	S	W	F	S	N	F	X	F	F	S	F	W	W	A	H	H	H	H
MORMEKAR (Mo)	W	N	N	N	N	N	N	F	N	N	X	F	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	An	An	An	An
MORWYN (M)	F	N	N	A	F	W	F	X	S	W	F	F	A	A	S	F	W	F	F	H	H	H	H
NAMELESS ONE (N)	N	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
NARAN (Na)	H	N	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	F	A	X	A
NARYNE (N)	F	N	N	F	W	S	W	F	An	N	N	A	F	F	S	F	A	A	X	H	H	H	H
RONTRA (R)	W	N	F	X	F	W	W	A	N	N	N	W	F	F	W	F	N	F	N	H	H	H	H
SHALIMYR (S)	S	N	W	N	N	X	S	S	A	W	N	S	W	N	F	F	F	F	An	H	S	H	An
TERAK (T)	W	N	N	W	W	W	X	A	S	An	S	W	A	A	S	F	F	F	F	H	H	H	H
THELLOS (Ts)	H	N	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	F	A	A	X
THELLYNE (Th)	W	N	F	A	F	F	W	W	W	W	N	N	F	W	F	F	A	X	A	H	H	H	H
TINEL (Ti)	W	W	N	W	W	W	An	S	F	X	W	W	W	W	F	F	W	W	W	H	H	H	H
URIAN (U)	W	N	W	A	X	W	W	F	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	F	W	A	W	H	H	H	H
ZHEENKEEF (Z)	S	N	N	W	F	A	S	An	X	F	W	S	W	W	F	F	F	W	S	H	S	An	S

* This line represents the attitudes of true Anwynites. For conspirators, use the Kador line.

S: Suspicion. Members of the faith look upon adherents of this religion with caution, skepticism, and care. They would travel with such folk and even befriend them, but are likely to think of such friends as “exceptions to the rule.”

N: Neutral. Members of the faith have no positive or negative prejudices toward worshipers of this god.

W: Warm. Members of the faith are openly warm and receptive to members of this church. They view them as good people with whom they have something in common, though they are not particularly closely aligned. They will happily travel with such folk.

F: Friendly. Members of the faith see the worshipers of this god as their friends and people with whom they share much. They will take the words of such people seriously, and offer aid if possible. There is no question they will travel with such folk.

A: Allies. Members of the faith see this church almost as an extension of their own. They will gladly attend the religious services of this church and find them almost equal to their own church’s services. They view leaders of this church as authority figures to be respected as highly as the leaders of their own church.



GEOGRAPHICAL INTEGRATION

There are several areas of the text that call for “world specifying,” which are marked with a symbol. For example, there is the old city where the Great Cathedral of the Great Church is located. If you have a fully defined campaign world, pick an appropriate city for this cathedral if you want to integrate the mythology and its churches into your world.

The book provides only church-based landmarks you should define for your game world. The mythology references many locations you can place wherever you find suitable. The following entries describe places of mythic significance along with a few other locations that might be interesting to establish in your world.

ARAGOS’ KINGDOM

It might be fun to have a kingdom in your world that is the historic home of Aragos, the king who outlawed music and happiness, but went on to repent and marry Aymara. Such a place might now be dedicated to Aymara, or perhaps it has fallen on dark times.

BATTLEFIELDS

There are several mythical battles in the mythology, including multiple clashes between Tinel and Terak. You might pick several places on your campaign map where titanic struggles occurred, and mark them with odd geological phenomena or powerful magical effects.

BIRTHPLACES OF HEROES

There are a few heroes mentioned in the mythology. They’re mortals who became immortal servants of the gods. Examples include Terak’s son Aerix, Maal’s advisor Issama, and Thellyne’s hunting companion Nayariel. The earthly homes of these people, if preserved, would be major landmarks and holy places.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE TITANS

Somewhere in the world is a deep, still pool by which Zheenkeef sculpted the Titans, and where she and Shalimyr first lay together.

CARASON

The site of the ancient struggle between Morwynites and Zhenkefans might still be a city today.

THE DARK RIVER

Instead of an entrance to Hell or the Land of the Dead, or in addition to them, you might want to have a place on your map where mortals can find the Dark River that flows through the Great Sphere and comes to the Land of the Dead, the Abyss, Gehenna, and Hell—and even goes on to flow through Elysium and Heaven. The Dark River need not flow through the Material Plane—this is optional.

THE ENTRANCE TO HELL

You might want to have a place in your world where the gates to Hell can be found. These gates would be locked to any but a god or similarly powerful figure, but can play an important role in your campaign nonetheless.

THE ENTRANCE TO MAAL'S KINGDOM

It's a common mythological theme for mortals to journey to the underworld, and plead with the lord of the dead for a life back. If you would like to have such an event take place during the history of your campaign world, or even over the course of your campaign, you might want to place a legendary entrance to Maal's Kingdom on your map.

THE GROVE OF ELIWYN

Hidden away from all but the most powerful druids, Eliwyn is in a sacred grove protected by Rontra the Earth and Thellyne the Huntress. From what myths say about the place, it's near a seashore, but little else is known about it. Of course, the world has been through so much upheaval since Eliwyn first grew that the grove might now be on top of a mountain or in some other unlikely location. All that's certain is that mortals can't find it unless something remarkable happens.

THE HALLS OF URIAN

Urian has four great halls where the winds are caged. It is possible, if you like, for a mortal to find one or all those halls and meet the winds.

THE LANDING PLACES OF THE FRUITS

Three of the fruits of Eliwyn were hurled across the world by Zheenkeef. The places these fruits landed can be placed on the map if you like, and might be sacred places to each of the races in question.

THE MOUNTAIN POOL OF THE SISTERS

The Three Companions found the Three Sisters at a mountain pool, singing to one another. The pool is said to be far in the East, and is sacred to all six gods and their followers.

THE RIVER VALLEY OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS

The Three Brothers and Three Sisters awoke at the edge of a river in the middle of a river valley surrounded by great rocks. That valley is said to be far in the West. Many have searched for this river valley, and indeed it can be a place of great power for the followers of the siblings.

THE RUINS OF THE MOUNTAIN PALACE

The Nameless One built a palace at the top of the tallest mountain but it was destroyed in the war between Terak and Tinel. These ruins might no longer exist, but if you like, you could put them in your campaign world.

THE TEMPLE OF REBIRTH

This ancient temple of Rontra, high in the mountains, has been there for a thousand years (at least), and contains an ancient library. If you do not want to have this temple in your campaign, and are playing as though the Great Sage Matalou's treatise was written long before the time of your campaign, it could easily be long destroyed.

THE UNDERWATER PALACE

The palace of the Nameless One in the sea can be an important location if your campaign ever takes characters deep below the waves.

INCORPORATING MYTHOLOGY

When plugging the myths into your campaign, you can do a lot more than place clerics and temples of the gods across the landscape. You can include symbols of the gods in numerous settings—for instance, a tavern that uses a reference to one of the gods in its name, indicating to the players that the proprietor is one of the faithful. These references go beyond just using the holy symbol of the god. One can also rely on the signature weapons, animal affinities, or special words (for churches, priests and doctrines) of each god.

In many myths, interactions with the gods are indirect. The hero doesn't necessarily meet someone on the road who glows brightly and says, "I am your god!" Instead, interactions with gods happen in dreams or through symbols. A Teraketh cleric hunting Asmodean cultists might dream of a golden lion swallowing a fire—though that might be a little obvious if the player knows these symbols well. It is possible to use any element of the god's church or myths to represent the god in your campaign.

CAMPAIGN AND ADVENTURE HOOKS

Little hooks and ideas for adventures fill this book, as do as huge ideas that can span an entire campaign. Depending on the religions your PCs follow, many permutations of religious-themed adventures become available. We list here various campaign-spanning ideas and single adventure hooks for your convenience, but your players will also develop personal hooks based on their faiths. A Darmonite character seeks to understand the name she has chosen, while a Maalite quests for the Sacred Laws.

If you give your players rumors of very difficult adventures, they might pass on them and instead tell their church hierarchy about the rumor. Many players, once their characters belong to a detailed church hierarchy, grow to rely on their heroes' connections to the faith. This is fine and should be encouraged. However, you can put pressure on players through that hierarchy as well, perhaps by sending their characters on quests they would otherwise not attempt.

The biggest difficulty will be when the players want to drag along a large contingent of fellow church members to help them on such quests. For instance, a group of PC Maalites might know they are about to fight a dragon who has an artifact of the faith in its hoard. The PCs might ask their court to send a couple fists with them to help dispatch the evil beast. There are three ways to handle this. First, allow it—and ramp up the challenge by making the creature stronger, and able to call on its own servants. Second, have the church hierarchy tell them the aid is simply not available, though you'll need to keep this fact consistent—don't have twenty holy warriors from that same temple show up during the next adventure to save the day. Third, the church hierarchy, perhaps in the form of a powerful priest, might tell the PCs they are fated for this task. The will of the gods is real. However, make sure you develop the reason for this destiny. The PCs might be so fated to prepare them for some even greater challenge down the road.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- The player characters happen upon an ancient temple of one or more gods (likely gods they worship) which was long ago desecrated by followers of Hell. In the temple's catacombs lies the burial place of a great holy warrior of the faith, whose remains have been disturbed, and whose soul the desecrators have trapped there. Her remains might be surrounded by infernal guardians who make sure her spirit cannot escape.
- The player characters find a stronghold of one of the Three Brothers and must wipe it out, discovering along the way the true history of the Three Sisters and the Three Brothers.
- The player characters meet a town that has been deluded by false priests. They use magic items or strange spells to simulate clerical abilities, or might be clerics who serve dark forces, instead of the gods they pretend to represent. The heroes must discover the truth, expose them and depose them. The characters can't just make accusations, as the town is more likely to believe the priests they trust. The heroes need proof.
- The player characters happen upon an evil humanoid temple and discover, after defeating its residents, that it honors one of the Three Brothers under a different name—a name it's been using to disguise itself elsewhere.
- The player characters get an opportunity to recover one of the artifacts of the gods, such as one of the three gems Korak gave to the dwarves' forefathers. The artifact sits in the hoard of some hard to defeat monsters. Retrieving the artifact makes them heroes, but fame and the suggestion that the characters are acting according to certain prophecies complicate their lives. This could be the campaign's focus.
- A common evil humanoid (such as an orc warlord) has grown incredibly powerful. People claim he has unbelievable strength and crushes foes far more easily than even the strongest of his kind. In their quest to destroy this orc, the PCs discover he drinks blood from a pool that collects in his cave home. The cave is an ancient temple to one of the evil powers and, through whatever means you like, the characters trace back the source: a servant of one of the gods, chained for eons and bleeding. The blood might drip from a distant dungeon or even another plane. A titan or unicorn are both very appropriate subjects of this torment. They must stop the bleeding and either free the prisoner, or, if it's an evil or violent creature, better secure it.
- An invading fleet approaches the characters' country. The heroes must find a mythic house of Urian and convince him to unchain one of the winds against the fleet—or they must unchain the wind without permission, and risk his wrath.
- The adventuring party, likely high-level and old friends, is approached by someone who secretly serves a deity. They enlist characters to aid their "noble patron" against the "dark lord" who rules distant land. The characters must recover an artifact capable of shifting the odds in the patron's favor. Gradually, it becomes clear that the characters serve one god against another. The patron might be a virtuous deity abiding by the Compact, or an evil god turning good heroes against Heaven.
- Clergy escort a holy relic from one church to another, across a great distance. They enlist the characters to help guard the relic from bandits, evil forces, or heretical branches of their own faith.
- Spells to commune with the Lords of Heaven aren't functioning. In severe cases, certain clerical abilities might not function. Religious leaders are perplexed. The player characters must track down one of the many locks to Heaven and somehow open it, to visit the gods and discover why they've fallen silent.
- The characters encounter the nine apostles of Zheenkeef from Carason. They still wander the world, accursed. The heroes must help them make restitution so they can find peace.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

- An apocalyptic cult tries to collect all the sounds of the Nameless One's name, to end the world. The sounds are distributed across the world in texts, bells, mountain halls, and other mysterious places. The player characters must stop the cult. Along the way, they find themselves allied with the powers of both good and evil, as everyone has a vested interest in stopping the word from ever being uttered. For such a plan to even function, the cult must counter Tinel, who guards against this very circumstance. What power stands behind the cult, protecting it from Tinel's wrath? Is it the cause of the god's growing indifference? The ultimate enemy must be strong enough to stand against the gods, making it a suitable final foe. Candidates range from Asmodeus, who wishes to learn the name to hold Creation hostage, to one of the legendary sorcerers who once battled Tinel, and has somehow escaped imprisonment.



- The player characters quest for the Laws of Maal, following clues scattered around the world. Whether they find all the laws, or even one of them, is up to you, but along the way they are certain to be opposed by chaotic-aligned powers.
- The player characters unravel the conspiracy infesting the church of Anwyn. They must track the secret cult to its source and destroy it. This won't be easy; the cult covers its tracks well, and will sacrifice one of its own branches to make the heroes believe defeating it finished off the sect for good. If the characters grow successful enough, Asmodeus intervenes with devils and mighty mortal servants, for the conspiracy is precious to him. Should he respond with sufficient strength, other gods may feel compelled to act, threatening the Compact.
- The signs point to the ripening of the fifth and final fruit. It is a time of great change in the world, and Hell and Heaven begin to war on earth. The player characters must find the fruit and protect it so that Heaven can prevail. In their journeys, they discover the reason for Asmodeus' obsession with the fifth fruit, which is bound in the second prophesy of the Nameless One.
- The player characters, all low-level religious figures, are assigned by their churches to serve as spiritual advisors to a small, half-founded wilderness settlement. The heroes help shepherd the settlement's growth from a tiny outpost under assault, to a thriving town with temples to each of their gods. This campaign can incorporate "Western" themes (protecting hardy frontier-dwellers, clinging to faith as a source of civilization) or revise them. Perhaps this colony impinges on the territory of people with a better claim to the land, so by colonizing the area, even followers of the good gods unwittingly do evil.
- One or more of the player characters are deeply religious Urinath and go on a quest to discover the lost secrets of the order of the griffins, to bring it back.
- The player characters are drawn into the plans of the Aymarans Order of the Watchful Eye. The time of struggle between the Aymarans and Hell is approaching, and the heroes must prepare for war with Hell.
- Over the course of the campaign, good people lose all power over fire, then air, and then water. The player characters discover that the pillars of these elements have been taken over by Asmodeus and the Brothers. The PCs must stop the followers of Naran from gaining control of the pillar of earth. If they fail, it spawns a war of the gods in which the player characters become heavily involved.
- Shalimyr has decided that mortals are wicked. It's time to flood the world, wiping out all but the properly obedient. This pitches the gods into internecine conflict, and your player characters must either oppose Shalimyr, or aid him in "purifying" the Material Plane.

PERKS

Many players expect perks from joining a religious organization. The reasoning is simple: “I am a cleric of Terak. The Teraketh have magic axes; gimme a magic axe. Why wouldn’t you? I’m out risking my life for the temples daily, I should have a magic axe. Give it!”

It’s a compelling argument. If you don’t mind giving your players perks, feel free. However, there should be a little give and take. Characters who avail themselves of such benefits should be expected to help their church in return, in direct proportion to the aid the faith provides. This includes heavier tithes, onerous services and sometimes, donations from the heroes’ own supply of magic items. (Where do you think those magic axes come from?)

Faithful PCs who are neck-deep in perks from their churches might be buried in religious bureaucracy. If the Teraketh give a soldier a magic axe and twenty *potions of healing* before his adventure, it means the soldier is essentially adventuring for the temple. His superiors want to know every detail of the adventure when he returns, and will be quite upset if the PC hasn’t looked after the temple’s interests when it comes to divvying up treasure, particularly if some of the soldier’s companions represent interests counter to the temple’s, and walk away with important magic items that the soldier had a legitimate claim to.

The PC who goes to the trough of his church should soon learn that life is a lot simpler for the more chaotic-leaning clergy, who have no real hierarchy to call upon for perks.

Regardless, consider the following recommendations.

LOANING MAGIC ITEMS

A church should be willing to loan common magic items to members of its own holy orders for a period of time, usually in return for some financial investment or special favor. Other devout heroes may also qualify, but must either provide greater favors, or use the items as directed by the church, on specific quests.

CASTING SPELLS

Clergy who reside at a church should be willing to cast spells for holy order members for free or at cost (if there are costs), unless there are extenuating circumstances. There should be an additional charge or service required for non-clergy to be so blessed. If the benefactor isn’t a member of the church, resident clergy may charge an even higher price, or refuse to help.

REQUIRED DONATIONS

A church should request that faithful heroes who have extra magic items or money donate them to the faith. The clergy may grow fairly intrusive about looking into a fellow church member’s possessions, especially if the hero has benefited heavily from church sponsorship.

This grows more complex if the requested recipient of a church’s generosity is of an opposing ideology. For instance, a Teraketh soldier might have befriended a like-aligned Tinelite armarius. That armarius is killed in a

region without a Tinelite scriptorium. The soldier takes his friend’s body to the local Teraketh Temple for a *raise dead* spell. Had the soldier been killed instead, the spell would be cast for free, unless extenuating circumstances prevented it. However, as fond as the PC soldier might be of his armarius friend, it is unlikely he will be able to convince a fellow soldier to call upon the power of Terak to bring a servant of his rival back to life. The argument from the PC soldier to do so would have to be incredibly compelling. In a less extreme case, the casting soldier might bring a friend of the PC’s back to life for free only if, for instance, the dead friend has done some great service for the Temple, or saved the life of the PC soldier.

JUS COGENS

In the real world, we have a notion of *jus cogens*, which includes crimes every nation must condemn. No treaty may permit such a crime. In our world, such crimes include genocide, slavery, piracy, and attacking a diplomat. It’s fantastically useful to establish such a set of laws for your game world, based on the notion that good and neutral gods lay down taboos none may violate, regardless of sect. Players find it handy to know what is considered unquestionably evil. This way, when they encounter someone committing such a crime, they don’t have to ask, “Is that evil in our world?” Of course, just as people still violate such principles in our world, people in the campaign may find excuses for breaking even the fundamental moral rules gods set down.

If you don’t have the time or desire to define the *jus cogens* rules for your world, you use the following list or a modified version of it. This is a list of behaviors that all people who worship the gods of the tree acknowledge are evil. Evil gods agree—they just believe “evil” acts are what the faithful must perform to break the shackles of “weak” morality.

- Assaulting an anointed member of the clergy of one of the gods of the tree without provocation
- Cannibalism, defined as eating a fellow sapient being, regardless of race or species (though eating a member of the five mortal races is considered especially heinous)
- Consorting with demons or devils
- Creating the undead
- Denying the existence of one or more of the gods of the tree
- Desecrating or destroying a temple to one of the gods of the tree (though a temple may be deconsecrated, converted, or dismantled with its religion’s permission)
- Destroying or imprisoning a soul
- Genocide directed at one of the five mortal races (and perhaps other beings—the gods are not of one mind about the exact parameters) and specific classes of people within them (such as by gender or even alignment—one may not kill all evil-aligned beings simply for possessing an aura of evil)

- Incest, sexual assault and any form of sexual contact without consent between adults
- Killing a member of your own family, or any prepubescent member of the five mortal races (some make exceptions for judicially authorized executions, formal duels, and wars)
- Slavery (though some accept servitude in the education of an apprentice, or of imprisoned criminals, or of debtors, the gods all condemn slavery by birth, or capturing people to be enslaved)

Absent from the list are many laws that are commonly understood as moral wrongs, like murder or theft, as some of the gods and their faithful might argue people commit these crimes without an evil heart—one of the Shalimyn might find some murders justified, while a Darmonite wayfarer might argue that many thefts are acceptable. The above crimes are ones that any of the faithful would agree mark a person as willfully evil. How the various followers of the gods respond to the discovery that a person is willfully evil is another matter entirely.

You might wish to add or remove behaviors. It would be reasonable to decide all the faithful in your world agree that torture and the use of poison are evil. Then again, you might feel that the Shalimyn, Zhenkefans, and many Darmonites have no problem with these behaviors (which is why we did not include them on the list). In making such a list of “universal evil,” you do a great deal to codify the moral outlook of your world—something many players find extremely useful.

EVIL CREATURES

Are certain humanoids inherently evil? Some prefer campaigns where orcs and goblins have thriving cultures with which the players interact, and fight other creatures out of circumstance, not some innate enmity. Others like to establish that orcs and goblins are innately evil—created, perhaps, to be the soldiers of dark gods.

Saying all humanoids (such as orcs, goblins, bugbears, hobgoblins, gnolls) are evil by definition might run counter to the feel of your campaign, but it may also fit with the mythic origins you give them. Either way, answer this question for your players, because it will provide moral assumptions they can apply during adventures. This also says something about the natures of those beings. If humanoids are inherently evil, it means they *cannot* make meaningful moral choices by, say, deciding to perform good deeds, and act on *evil instincts*. This affects their social organization, legendary origins and even biology. Can innately evil beings even form normal families and societies? If not, what arises in their place?

As an alternative, the gods may decide that despite being capable of making moral decisions, certain humanoids fall outside their “grace.” In this book, creatures outside of the five mortal races are often considered to dwell outside the grace of the gods of the tree. Their deeds are not recorded in the black and white ledgers; they do not confront Maal’s judgment. This means that as far as the gods are concerned, how one treats them is not a moral question based on what

THE GOBLIN CHILDREN

A paladin (or other holy warrior for good), after slaying goblin marauders, discovers their unattended children. An ancient, clichéd moral question in fantasy games arises: Should the paladin kill them, care for them, or what? Here are some options using the discussion above for guidance.

- **Goblins aren’t innately evil.** If this is the case, the paladin must care for goblin children. She might have to raise them herself, find foster parents, or take them to another goblin community.
- **Goblins are innately evil.** In this case, the paladin might be able to kill these children, but ask yourself: Is it accurate to portray the young of an innately evil species as being like ordinary kids? They would be unlikely to have development stages that resemble actual people, who devote brainpower to learning moral agency, and have altruistic parents. It’s more likely innately evil goblin young are small, swift, sharp-toothed predators. In any event, killing a helpless creature might be considered evil nonetheless, because it dishonors the paladin’s soul.
- **Goblins are outside the gods’ grace.** If goblins are not beings the gods believe are subject to such questions, they have no answers for the paladin, unless they teach that deeds themselves, rather than who they are done to, decide moral questions. As above, it might be “ignoble,” or otherwise spiritually polluting.

harm it does to them, but to the members of the five mortal races interacting with them.

If orcs are innately evil or outside of the gods’ grace, killing an orc might not be considered wrong because the orc was harmed, but it might be thought to “pollute the soul” of anyone in the five mortal races who commits the act without a reasonable justification. Such distinctions call into question how good the “good gods” really are, of course, and give evil gods an excellent argument for why goodness is a lie.

HERETICAL TEACHINGS AND BLASPHEMY

You might desire a world where heresy is a major issue. Doctrinal arguments influence real-world faiths, but need not exist in fantasy religions, where the gods can correct errors. The difference between heresy and the list of evil acts above is that heresy is a belief or pronouncement counter to the establishment’s teachings about the religion. The list of evil acts above are just as likely to be punished in the afterlife or by a celestial servant of a god as they are by a mortal servant. Heresy, on the other hand, might not offend the god it pertains to at all.

For example, a cult could profess that Terak is a lion. Believers might claim his core form is not like that of a man at all, and when he first emerged from the fruit, he was like a lion standing on its hind legs. They might represent Terak as a lion-headed figure in statues and paintings, keep lions, and observe taboos against killing or otherwise interfering with them. In some fantasy worlds, this wouldn't matter at all. People might find it an interesting belief, and agree to live and let live. But such a teaching might be decreed heretical instead, condemning believers to death or routine discrimination. Terak might not care. He might believe the heresy is wrong (assuming his true form emulates that of the mortal races) but not worth bothering about. He might even tell each side their interpretation is correct for some mysterious purpose. If Terak communicates an opinion either way, it's liable to end the schism quickly, barring certain strange circumstances (such as, for example, some other lion-god pretending to be Terak).

How your culture and the powerful churches of your world treat dissent is an important decision. Keep in mind that there is a difference between blasphemy and heresy (or at least *we* think there is). Heresy is a crime against the earthly establishment that bears the name of the god, disagreeing with their beliefs about the god, but doing so out of faith in the god. Blasphemy is the act of insulting, defaming, or slurring the god in question. The two biggest examples of blasphemy made their way onto the cavalcade of evil above: destroying or desecrating a temple, and denying the existence of a god. All religious characters should agree blasphemy is evil, remembering that in a world with multiple pantheons, you need not deny the existence of the other pantheon, or try to destroy its works, to worship your own.

WHAT FORM, FAITH?

While this book includes extensive descriptions of all the gods' churches, there are some questions you need to answer to ensure the material fits into your world. Here are some key questions your players will likely want answered as they step into roles as characters with thoroughly defined religions.

- **How popular are the various churches in the regions where your game takes place?** Your players should know how popular their local church is, how popular the faith was in the area where they grew up, and the religion's general reputation. This should be easy to define, and helps flesh out their characters. Characters might believe their religions are more or less popular than they really are as functions of their upbringings, or out of a certain degree of self-delusion.
- **Where are the major centers of worship in the region?** Deciding this is of paramount importance to your players. Place churches, great and small, in the area. If there is a small chapel in the players' base of operations, is there a greater church in the nearby city? This will include rival churches; your players should know the religious landscape where you set your game, because it tells them where their superiors are, and their options for moving up as they gain prestige.
- **Who runs the churches?** If the players portray characters whose church has a supreme authority, they need to know where it's based, and either who the leader is, or who ruling council's most prominent figures are. More importantly, they should know the names of the local leaders of their faith, from immediate superiors to the highest-ranking local church official. Supplying this information helps players feel their characters are part of a living, breathing faith.
- **How do people interact with the faith?** The sections describing each church include suggestions as to how people usually perceive the faith. The information is meant cannot possibly replace specific details about how a church is perceived and interacted with by a particular community. Tell the players the status of local clergy or holy warriors, whether they are expected to administer religious rites, and if people are likely to come to them for spiritual advice. Perhaps their local church is an exception to a description which calls it a popular religion. It's ignored, even disliked. Why?
- **What are services like?** Rites, rituals, and services have been given light detail only, since few games demand them, and because doing so might feel too restrictive. However, questions might arise. Do the clergy stand on a pulpit and speak in an ancient tongue that none of their congregants can understand? Do all the faithful sit in a circle, with everyone speaking when they feel moved to? If you want to take your campaign into the church and explore religious rites and ceremonies, do it. Make up the exact procedure of a Darmonite wedding ceremony if you'd enjoy it.
- **How do people choose between churches, and why?** Essentially, if you think about a world with a complete pantheon and churches for each of the gods in the pantheon, as well as one for the pantheon in its entirety, it begs this question: How does a person decide to become a member of one church over another? There are some clear explanations for this. Smiths are likely to worship Korak over any other god, and artists are most likely to worship Aymara. But wouldn't a smith who isn't terribly pious—and there are always such people in the world—just worship all the gods and make offerings to them whenever appropriate? Why tie oneself to a specific church? There is no definitive answer because it is, essentially, a matter of culture. It's up to you to decide how it works in your world. Perhaps the central kingdom of your game has worshiped Darmon and Aymara for generations, considering them its patron gods. In such a place, most people belong to one or both churches—it's possible for people to be faithful members of two or more churches if you want it to be—and the reason for their faith is obvious: They were raised that way, and never imagined questioning it. This is something for you to define for your players, if you wish, and is one of the strongest steps to take in tying the religion to your game world.

IX: DO IT YOURSELF

IF THIS BOOK WAS ONLY WRITTEN TO SERVE NEW CAMPAIGNS, IT WOULDN'T BE VERY USEFUL AT ALL. MANY OF US already have existing campaigns and, in thus, an existing set of gods. Whether those gods are just names and domains, or well developed deities with existing churches, it can be difficult to combine those existing faiths with the religions in this book. In this chapter, you will find ideas for changing or integrating the contents of this book.

COSMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

If you already have a cosmology defined for your campaign, you might find it impossible to incorporate the material in this book without some modifications. In this section, some of the broader cosmological implications of the mythology are considered. The rest of the chapter provides ideas for modifying the material to work around elements that do not fit into your cosmology.

The following list provides a breakdown of all the major cosmological elements in the mythology. Using this list as a reference can help you isolate any conflicts.

- The universe was created by one creator god
- The elemental planes (earth, air, fire, water) are four pillars
- The known universe is an enormous sphere supported by the four pillars
- Inside the Great Sphere stands the mortal world (Material Plane), the land of the dead, the mountain of Heaven, Elysium, Gehenna, the Abyss, and the nine planes of Hell
- Each of these planes are contained in their own sub-spheres (see Chapter II for a diagram), except for the Abyss, which burrows through the Great Sphere and out into the infinite void
- Between all these spheres flows astral space
- The Material Plane is contained in a great crystal sphere formed of positive and negative energy
- The Material Plane coexists with the ethereal and shadow planes
- The creator god made the first living creature of the sphere, called Kador, who turned evil, and is now lord of Hell under the name Asmodeus
- The creator god left the sphere and was never heard from again
- There is a tree of life with five fruits from which the pantheon's four main gods were born
- The tree's roots touch the center of the earth and its branches reach to Heaven
- There was a race that populated the earth before any of the "player character" races, called the div, ancestors of "geniekind"
- It is possible for the spirit of a dead person to be reborn
- Kador/Asmodeus almost destroyed the world and the gods
- There is a Hell with nine layers, ruled by Asmodeus
- There is an Abyss of infinite layers, ruled by the demon princes
- On the two opposing planes of Elysium and Gehenna, all mortals are watched and their deeds, recorded—all good deeds by the guardian angels of Elysium, and all evil deeds by the daemons of Gehenna
- There is a land of the dead where two gods rule; one of them judges every soul that comes before him
- Upon their death, mortal souls might be sent to Hell, Gehenna, or the Abyss for eternal punishment; reside in bliss in the halls of the dead, or await rebirth in those same halls; or ascend to Heaven to live beside their gods
- Many div fought the gods and were cast into the pillars, to be imprisoned for eternity
- Good div who served the gods were elevated into the celestial host: angels, archangels, and major servants of the gods (like demi-gods)
- The five mortal races—dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, and humans—were also born from fruits on the tree of life, making mortals and gods "cousins"
- The gods did not create any of the mortal races, so there are no "racial" gods
- Elves are descended from the div and are essentially the same race as fairies—but where fairies chose to maintain their immortality and lose free will, elves chose free will in exchange for mortality
- The primary pantheon of the gods has no evil gods in it. They are either good or neutral, and oppose the evil gods, devils, and demons
- The pantheon has agreed to a Compact that subjects them to several laws
- Mortals have free will and can live however they like, receiving guidance and temptation from the agents of Heaven and Hell
- No one god rules over all the others
- No god in the primary pantheon can directly interfere with mortal affairs, and other, evil gods meddle cautiously and secretly
- When a mortal worships a god, it gives that god power
- When a mortal follows the teachings of a god, even without formal worship, it gives that god power
- When mortals do evil, it gives Hell and the Abyss power
- There is an unripe fruit still hanging from the Tree of Life, and no one knows what will happen when it ripens
- If the name of the Creator is ever spoken again, it will end the universe



There is a lot more detail to the mythology, such as the origins of all the races, or where dragons and orcs came from, but these parts can be discarded without altering the fundamental core of the mythos. The elements listed above are “key” parts of the mythology, and you need to do some rewriting or use other fancy footwork if you don’t want one of these points in your game world. The rest of this chapter shows how you might do this.

STANDARD COSMOLOGY

Over the years, fantasy gamers and supplements have developed a standard set of cosmological assumptions for fantasy campaigns, which we have tried to adhere to in many ways. Let’s explore this book’s key departures, and ways to pull this mythology back toward that standard.

Alignment is the universal designator for most standard cosmologies. The Material Plane is surrounded by different planes for each of the many alignment possibilities. The seven kingdoms of Heaven comprise the lawful good plane. Hell is the lawful evil plane and devils represent the lawful forces of evil. In this system, the neutral good and chaotic good gods have their own planes and might be disconnected from the gods of other alignments. Thus, in the “standard” cosmology, when people die, their souls go to the plane of their alignment. In *Book of the Righteous’* cosmology, the members of the five mortal races (dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, humans and part-humans) all go to Maal’s kingdom, at least at first, and there are no specific planes for alignments such as chaotic neutral, or neutral good.

TWO ASPECT THEORY

If you want the gods appropriate to reside in planes of that match their respective alignments, we recommend you institute the following cosmological set-up. Perhaps as your characters grow in power they theorize the existence of these additional planes, and prove they’re real through planar travel.

The great thing about being a god is that you can be in two places at the same time. In the “two aspect” scenario, the gods are two-faced (literally). One face is their personality: names, relations with one another, and family structures. The other face represents their raw supernatural power, defined by domain and alignment. For example, Terak’s personality is that of the blustering King of the Gods, married to Morwyn; his power consists of pure Valor and War.

In such a cosmology, the gods reside in two places. Their personalities dwell in the three planes where gods reside according to our mythology (Heaven, Earth, and the land of the dead), but as beings of pure divine energy, they also dwell in planes that match their respective alignments. As Terak and Tinel both contain deep schisms and potentially, multiple personal alignments, they each manifest on multiple alignment planes. Alignment planes are the “backstage” of the gods’ mythic theatre. Each god has an existence deeper than its legends, and usually only invites the most trusted servants and companion deities

to witness it, though some are not so secretive, and truly dwell where the myths say they do.

In this scenario, your world would have all the following planes (keeping in mind that we're not offering names for or descriptions of the new alignment planes as, we assume, you will want to provide them):

MATERIAL PLANE

The earth, sun, moon, stars, and seas are all in the Material Plane. It is neutral, and is the mythic home of Thellyne, Rontra, Urian, and Shalimyr. Unbound by the Compact, the Three Brothers of evil also wander the Material Plane in mythic guises.

THE UNDERWORLD

The home of the dead and the Kingdom of Maal, the underworld has the four halls of final judgment, and grey places where the dead await judgment. It is also neutral. It is the mythic home of Maal and Naryne.

ASTRAL PLANE

The dark parts of the Great Sphere between the planes where there is, essentially, nothing. This plane is neutral. Strange gods might dwell here, but this book doesn't cover them.

LAWFUL GOOD

The seven-cited mountain of Heaven is the primary mythic home of the gods. It is the peak of goodness, and the "natural order" of the universe. This is where nearly all the lords of Heaven live in their legendary guises, sitting on their thrones in the great palace at the peak. This is the place mortals mean when they say "Heaven." But it is also the primordial home of Charity and Mercy (Morwyn), Valor and Honor (Terak), Home and Service (Anwyn), Life and Growth (Rontra). Morwyn can be "Queen of Heaven" because the mythic home of the gods also her true home.

NEUTRAL GOOD

The halls of virtue, the hallowed fields, Elysium—whatever you wish to call the neutral good plane, it should be a place of pure kindness, creation, and joy. It is where the guardian angels reside and watch over all mortals, recording good deeds. It is also the primordial home of Creation and Labor (Korak), Nature and Natural Beauty (Thellyne), and Benevolence and Nurturing (Urian).

CHAOTIC GOOD

The domain of celebration and glory, standard cosmologies often tie this plane to Valhalla or some other real-world mythological place of hunting, drink, song, and wild splendor. However you wish to establish the plane of pure chaotic good, it should be primordial home to the powers of Travel and Tricks (Darmon); Art, Song, and Love (Aymara); Knowledge and Learning (Tinel); and Competition and Strength (Canelle).

LAWFUL NEUTRAL

The "clockwork plane" of perfect order, planning, and structure. However you wish to represent it, it would be home to the true powers of Justice and Law (Maal), Unity (Terak), and Nobility and Order (Naryne).

NEUTRAL

The grey places, usually a land of mists and nothingness as far as the eye can see, the neutral plane is often a gateway to all the other planes. It is the home to the true powers of Death (Mormekar) and Secrets (Tinel).

CHAOTIC NEUTRAL

The shifting realms of non-stop chaos, where the ground changes and moves under your feet and entire landmasses float off into nothingness in the wink of an eye. It is home to the true powers of Madness and Inspiration (Zheenkeef) and Change and Destruction (Shalimyr).

LAWFUL EVIL

Hell. The nine circles of Hell contain the structured punishments and horrors that await those who have lived lives of selfish tyranny. Ruled by Asmodeus and his eight subordinate lords, Hell is the primordial home of Lies and Power (Asmodeus, who has a mythic presence here as well), and Pride and Tyranny (Naran).

NEUTRAL EVIL

Gehenna, land of dark horrors, where daemons watch over the mortal races and record their evil deeds in black ledgers. It is also home to the primordial powers of Greed and Gluttony (Thellos).

CHAOTIC EVIL

The Abyss. Home to demons, this plane is a place of constantly shifting power, war, and destruction. The Abyss is the true home of Murder and Bloodlust (Canarak).

TRAVELING THE PLANES

With this structure, characters can travel many more planes, but the GM doesn't need to substantially rewrite the mythology. You might decide Maal consigns the dead who most typify a specific alignment, and are not to be reborn, to the appropriate plane—thus sending the most chaotic evil mortals to the Abyss and lawful evil to Hell as written, but also sending chaotic neutral souls to the chaotic neutral plane, and so on.

A possible twist on this scenario is that the planes listed here but not mentioned in the mythology were created by the various gods whose powers call them home. For instance, the plane of chaotic good was built by Darmon and is a place where the gods of chaotic good reside when not with the other Lords of Heaven. This way, the alignment plane is always home to the "power" aspect of the god, but the "personality" aspect of the god dwells there some of the time as well. You'd need to decide what that means, exactly, in your game world. A

god whose mythic self was away, might have a “power” self that behaves differently, or its energies might be contained in an artifact or place.

PLANES OUTSIDE THE SPHERE

The other simple way to introduce more planes without having to rewrite the mythology is to say the Nameless One did, in fact, create more spheres than the planes of the Great Sphere, leading to a potentially limitless number of planes. In fact, since the Abyss has broken through the Great Sphere and spirals out through the emptiness, it might have tunneled into another sphere of the Nameless One’s creation, and acts as a bridge between the known and “outer” planes. The elemental “pillars” might fuel other spheres, and may only be pillar-shaped from a limited, mortal frame of reference.

In this scenario, characters using planar travel might reach the locked gates of Heaven, Hell, the Abyss, the land of the dead, or the ether, and still dwell in the Great Sphere, but it might be within their power to travel from their Great Sphere to another one, through intermediary realms or the void between realms, and thus see alternative Material Planes, Heavens, Hells and other connected realms, with their own gods and peoples.

OBJECTIVE TO SUBJECTIVE

Appendix I is written from an “objective” point of view, meaning it states the Great Sage Matalou’s scriptures are essentially correct. While he does not know the answers to some of the mysteries raised in the mythology, anything he addresses is accurate.

The simplest way to use the material of this book in its entirety without having to make any significant modifications is to simply tell your players that the Great Sage was wrong about many things. It is easy enough to position the mythology of **Appendix I** as an ancient and outdated one. This helps deal with any inconsistencies between this book’s myths and your pre-established cosmology.

This shift does not help with the church sections, however. Some myths use elements that might conflict with your established campaign setting. For instance, you might have already told your players that there is no afterlife; in such a case, the church of Maal, particularly the myths of the god upon which it is based, would make little sense. You can continue to incorporate the church into your world under the idea that its “objective” beliefs are, perhaps, wrong; your players know there is no afterlife, but in the game world, it’s a matter for debate. The church of Maal would become a deluded group of people who believe that their god, who is really just the god of justice, rules over a non-existent afterlife. People believe contradictory things in our world, so there’s nothing wrong with such controversies in the campaign world, too. One group might say there is no afterlife, another says there is. Only the gods themselves can say which is right, and they aren’t

always forthcoming about such things. Thus, if you want to leave the churches as written to contradict your cosmology, it still works, in most cases.

If you want to make something contradictory to a church’s faith a universally known and acknowledged fact (such as everyone in the campaign world knowing there’s no afterlife), then you should make the church either prophetic, or heretical. The faith either knows something no one else knows, or insists on believing something blatantly counterfactual, similar to real people who believe the world is flat. In either case, most people would hold the church in low esteem.

NAMES

One easy way to use the material of this book in a campaign that’s already started is to simply change the names of the gods and their servants to match those you already have. For instance, if you have a cleric who worships Cycrikkal, the god of magic, and you’ve merely alluded to other gods in Cycrikkal’s pantheon, it can be very easy to use this material. Change Tinel’s name to Cycrikkal, change the names of the other gods to names appropriate to your game world (or leave them as they are), and away you go.

However, you might find the names of the gods presented here do not fit with the kinds of names you have in your campaign. For instance, if you’ve populated your world with Jeans and Alains and Marcells, it would be very odd to have a group of gods whose names are in no way Gallic. For this reason, we provide some explanation of the system we used to name our gods below.

We’ve used two methods for naming the gods and their servants in *Book of the Righteous*. Asmodeus and his servants, the archangels, and the div are all based on real-world mysticism that has arisen from the religions of Abraham (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism). This might seem odd, given that we made everything else up. But these legends have become part of the fabric of many fantasy worlds. Everyone expects to oppose devils, and everyone expects those devils to be headed by someone with a name like “Asmodeus.” People expect gods to be served by angels and archangels. Classic fantasy games combine these with Greco-Roman and Fertile Crescent myths from all eras. For this reason, we kept names strongly influenced by Roman and Middle Eastern sources. Just as one might see a griffin or a centaur in a game and not wonder what those two creatures from Greco-Roman myth are doing in this world, we believe one might see Asmodeus without wondering why medieval mysticism has encroached upon a fantasy world.

Beyond devils and angels, we relied on what we can best described as “fantasy naming conventions.” These are names without a meaning in any real-world language, that are generally European in sound—they don’t rely on tonality or clicks and glottal stops, and can be easily spelled out in English: Alaric, Karentellak, Morik, Rimel, and so on. We have adopted some naming conventions like those of real languages like Gaelic in an effort evoke a feeling of

consistency. For instance, we use the fake suffix ‘wyn’ to signify femininity, and the suffix ‘ak’ to signify masculinity. The idea is to make names that sound like they come from the same language. We named Zheenkeef using a series of sounds dissimilar to all the other gods, including the relatively exotic ‘zh’-sound, because it helps set her apart.

It should be very easy, therefore, to create new names that follow rules that better fit your game world. For instance, if you’ve created a Germanic-sounding setting with cities called Arkenheim or Bernbad, then you probably want to change the names of the gods to use Germanic phonemes. You might even use rough translations of their domains as new names, or borrow the names of old Germanic deities. Thus, Terak might be called Kriegsherr (“warlord”), or might use the name Ziu (Old German for the Norse Tyr).

EXISTING PANTHEONS

You might have a very complete set of gods already named, in which case you might want to keep that list of gods and merely use the churches and mythology (altered where appropriate to your campaign) under those names. In such a case, it might be useful to know which of the gods from this book match up with gods from other fantasy pantheons. The *PH* lists gods and domains from historical and fantasy pantheons as examples. If your characters have been worshiping the god of magic under a different name, you can keep that name and introduce the rules for the church of Tinel to that character’s church, while, say, adding the healing halls of Morwyn (or whatever you choose to name her) as a new element.

COMPLETE RELIGIONS

What if you’ve already designed a complete game world with a thorough religion, hundreds of gods and several myths? Or, what if you’ve already established that the culture your PCs are from is monotheistic? No matter how much you like the mythology in this book, these scenarios make it a challenge to work it into your world, right? Not necessarily so.

THE PAST RETURNS

Put your characters in the middle of a storyline where the old gods return, in the form of earthshaking events or newly-uncovered mythology. In the case of a game set in a monotheistic society, perhaps people have been worshiping just one of the gods of the pantheon or, worse, Asmodeus masquerading as the only god. Over the course of the game, through visions, lost documents and destroyed temples from the ancient times, the characters find out about the old religion and the gods found in this book. Some of them can even become founders of new churches to these rediscovered gods.

In a situation where many gods already exist in the campaign world, characters might discover that the

material in this book represents old names for some of these extant gods. Others might be divine servants who’ve been worshiped as gods. When characters discover the truth, how will the followers of such “defrocked” deities react?

The Past Returns scenario usually leaves most of the information about churches and how they are set up unused. However, if you include this information in artifacts from the past, you’ll give characters the challenge of rekindling lost religious orders and forms of worship. For instance, a fighter who has worshiped Ignak, god of war, all his life, discovers the real name of Ignak is Terak, uncovers the old ways of worshiping him, reestablishes his order of crusaders, becoming the first such holy warrior in a thousand years. Many players enjoy such opportunities to make lasting changes to the game world.

THE FRIENDLY FOREIGN CULTURE

Campaign worlds often possess several continents and nations, not all of which are known to your heroes. The easiest way to introduce them to the information in this book is through a mouthpiece for one of those foreign lands. Perhaps they journey to a far-off continent and see the gleaming temples of Terak, Tinel, and Morwyn in the city square. They meet a foreign bard who says, “In my land, your gods all have different names.”

In any case, tweak details here and there to make the similarities between the gods of this book and the existing gods in your campaign obvious to the characters. Through this mechanism, they’ll discover all sorts of lost lore about their gods, such as the creation myths and other stories presented throughout this book, and decide what to do about this new information. Perhaps they share and investigate Tinel’s myths, but use the name of the campaign’s established god of magic. Perhaps they’ll even adopt the names and holy orders they found in foreign lands.

THE WARRING FOREIGN CULTURE

Your campaign might revolve around a culture that worships three gods—of snow, of fire, and of darkness, say—and there’s no easy way to incorporate the highly disparate mythology of *Book of the Righteous*. However, you might decide it belongs to a hostile culture that comes into conflict with what you’ve already established. Perhaps a society that worships the gods of the tree attacks the heroes’ nations—or the characters’ expansionistic empire invades a country where people worship the Lords of Heaven. The enemy benefits from thoroughly thought-out cosmology and religious structure characters can exploit, destroy, or even learn to respect.

THE JOINING OF MYTHOLOGIES

In real mythology, conquests, alliances and migrations joined disparate legends together. Rome adopted Egyptian gods, for example, and deified historical figures. The Egyptian god Set became a god of foreigners, then kings, based on the fortunes of its priesthood. If the mythology

in this book was analyzed, an anthropologist might believe the Three Sisters were once gods of a separate mythos, but were incorporated into the gods of the tree after the people who worshiped them were either conquered or migrated to places where the gods of the tree were preeminent. The Sisters' Journey to the East might be a myth that remembers their followers' travels.

It's easy to use this principle in your game world. Suppose that the kingdom to which the heroes belong gets swallowed by another kingdom through political marriage, war, or other means. The new rulers do not simply impose their religion, but add the new lands' faiths to their own. This can lead to some real fun, as you design myths explaining how your characters' gods joined the gods of the tree, or vice versa. Usually, the friendlier the joining of cultures, the more important the role of the new gods. By this logic, the Three Sisters would have come from a peaceful joining. A conquered culture might find their gods become handmaids to Morwyn, hunting companions to Thellyne, or otherwise subservient to the conquerors' gods, but in some empires, new gods become equal aspects of the old ones, or combine under completely new names.

THE WANING MYTHOLOGY

You might have characters who already worship a completely different set of gods from the ones in this book, but you want to incorporate this book into religious makeup of the very region where your heroes live. However, you don't want to make the gods that already exist in your campaign part of the gods of the tree. We recommend the Waning Mythology gambit.

Book of the Righteous assumes it presents a society's central religions. Conflicts swell between churches of the mythology, and there is a sprawling Great Church to which many people belong. It is quite easy to say this was the case some thousand years ago, or more, before the time of your campaign, but since then, the mythology of the gods of the tree has waned. People who still worship them follow the "old ways," and are considered archaic bumpkins. This can make for some very interesting conflicts between your religious characters and those who worship the old gods, as the followers of the gods of the tree will try to re-elevate their pantheon.

FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION

If your game world allows planar and interdimensional travel, the gods in this book might come from some supernatural realm: existing divine planes, alternate Material Planes, or even whole universes with their own systems of planes. The Great Sphere might exist as a separate continuum the heroes discover through gates in the Abyss or elemental planes, mishaps in planar travel, artifacts, or the workings of gods—Lords of Heaven, gods known in the campaign, or other deities. This works particularly well if your campaign is set in a universe where evil and destruction is rising. The PCs can go to a better universe, where the gods of the tree have managed to make things peaceful, and might try to bring good gods back to their home to help repair the damage.

SINGLE GODS

You might want to incorporate individual gods from this book into your world, but not the whole mythology. This is easy; none of the gods require their connection to the overarching mythology or each other to function, though in some cases you'll have to do a little bit of rewriting to decouple the gods and remove certain references. Where myths include other gods, it should be easy to change them to the gods you've already developed for your world. For instance, if you want to add Korak to your existing pantheon, rename Thellyne to one of the goddesses in your pantheon. Away you go.

Perhaps you like the way the Temples of Terak are structured, including their titles and core philosophies. These hardly ever require the entire mythology, but may refer to certain elements. In the Teraketh example, the temples are highly influenced by the legend of Aerix. You can either keep the myth specific to that church or rewrite it. Individual church structures should work as-is, with two exceptions. First, the Great Church honors all the gods of the tree, and needs to be reworked to represent your campaign's pantheon. Second, the evil cult hidden among the Anwynites should either be removed, or changed to a sect worshipping a different lawful evil deity, to stand on its own.

RACIAL GODS

The rules imply the gods are real—they give followers magical powers, after all. This in turn suggests people can decipher the gods' true natures, since they are as real as scientific phenomena. Gods command natural and conceptual domains: winds, music, nature, and so on. The mythology of the tree doesn't include much duplication among the gods, so Korak, the god of artisanship, is not one of many craft-gods. Thus, blacksmiths seeking spiritual understanding will usually become aware of Korak, regardless of race. Dwarves love him, but he is not just "god of the dwarves," and when a dwarf goes into battle, she remembers Terak, too. And when she dies, her soul stands before Maal, just as the souls of humans, elves and other mortals do.

Therefore, this book doesn't present racial gods. Rather than naming Aymara the goddess of the elves because she's good with music and love, she's the goddess of music and love: domains the elves especially value, but which are not theirs alone. The mythology of the tree rejects racial gods as well. None of the gods created mortal races. "Racial mythologies" are often like the Pygmalion myth: The god of the dwarves carved the dwarves out of stone, creating them to be like him, and that's why he's god of the dwarves.

If you prefer gods for individual fantasy races, you can adopt them, however. The myths in this book are all written from mortal perspectives. It would not be hard for dwarves to disagree with everyone else's creation myth. They might believe the fruit that hit Korak had been turned to stone by Zheenkeef's blood; Korak carved that stone into shapes in his image, creating the dwarves by his own hand. They even

might believe Eliwyn doesn't exist, and that they were Korak's thoughts, which grew solid because of his crafty mind, and dug their way out. It's in your hands. Similarly, elves might believe Aymara created them, and while she's the goddess of music and love for others, the elves reverse her as the Great Mother of them all.

The extreme way to create racial gods is to say the book presents "human mythology," adhered to only by humans and a few members of the other races. Humans insist they know how and why all the races were created, and when the other races refer to their gods, they're describing human gods under different names. This is extreme, but reconciles clashing mythologies, and can inspire adventures fueled by religious strife between the mortal races.

ALTERING THE CHURCHES

Perhaps you intend to use most of the material in this book, but you've already established that the god of magic is lawful good and has a completely different church structure than that of the Tinelites. Yet the gods themselves stand beyond mortal concepts of alignment, and you should feel free to bend the rules about required alignments for clergy if it would better suit your campaign. For example, Tinel might seem chaotic good or neutral most of the time, but perhaps in your world, he has a lawful good aspect that his priests honor—or perhaps, he loathes some chaotic evil sect, and has established this church to crush it.

Thus, it's easy to alter information about the gods, but keep the rest of the mythology intact. Their divine responsibilities are more important. Even gods that have strong alignment tendencies could have strange stories justifying an unexpected change. For instance, Maal and Zheenkeef seem to represent the essence of law and chaos, respectively. But what if Maal is a capricious, chaotic judge, who judges souls unfairly unless propitiated through ritual phrases, good acts, or, like some real-world underworld gods, bribery? What if Zheenkeef is really a lawful figure who generates change according to some mysterious cosmic timetable? She transforms into an ascetic goddess whose followers strictly schedule periods of debauchery and self-denial.

Altering the churches becomes a little more complicated if you want to remove one of the two main holy orders. If you want a church to do without clerics or paladins, be sure to examine and rethink its power structure. As it stands, almost all churches rely on high level-clerics, high-level paladins, or both to function. This obviously isn't possible if one such order doesn't exist at all.

If, as in the case above, where you want Tinel to be lawful good, and his church to work entirely differently, you might have fun with one of the scenarios from the "Complete Religions" section. It can be quite amusing to have your character who worships Tinel, "of Law and Light," encounter a foreigner who worships Tinel "the Uncaring."



ALTERING THE MYTHOLOGY

Several key features of the mythology might not work with your world or its cosmology. We'll get to cosmological changes in a little bit. But first, let's approach some of the most important features of the mythology that might need tweaking.

THE SINGLE NEMESIS

Many fantasy mythologies possess a large pantheon of evil gods. Sometimes that pantheon is as large, or even larger than, the roster of good gods. The mythology in this book focuses around a single, powerful evil god who is now the lord of Hell. While there are also the Three Brothers, they are not a primary part of the mythology. We've included them as an example of how easy it is to add more evil gods. Just give them a connection to some part of the mythology, and slide them in with the understanding that their followers are "evil churches" that have hidden throughout history—until now.

If you want a world divided between the gods of good and evil, the mythology presented in this book can handle it. Create a second mythology for the evil gods and their followers, which provides an alternative explanation for the creation of the world and the mortal races. The struggles between good and evil gods become not just a battle for the mortal world, but for history; whose idea of creation will prevail? The strange thing about gods and creation myths is that it might be the case that both myths are right (or wrong), but the winner of the war determines which

legends are true. If there are some small crossovers between the two mythologies (like the history up until the fruits first ripen), even better.

GENDER AND RULE

Many legends that have survived the ages—Greek, Norse, Finnish—describe a single, powerful king of the gods. In some of them, the king is so powerful he could destroy all the other gods, and thus commands complete obedience. We offer Morwyn: a matriarch who is likely one of the weakest deities, though clearly the wisest, and whose power is only legalistic. This doesn't present the same masculine-centered power as a lot of mythologies. There's a "King of Heaven," Terak, but he's more of a consort, and despite his personal strength is neither an overall political leader (though he commands warriors, if necessary) nor particularly respected for his title.

The game explicitly states there is no gender limitation on any profession—a woman is just as likely to become a fighter as a man. Similarly, gender doesn't determine which gods rule Heaven. While many of the gods have somewhat traditional genders for their portfolios, only a few place gender restrictions on membership, and these can easily be changed. Furthermore, ancient and contemporary cultures define genders other than the male/female binary, and do not always associate gender with a specific physiology. Whenever a church describes a gender role, it should be broadly inclusive of several genders defined by your campaign's cultures.

As for the gods? Although cultures assign them genders, the gods don't have to stick to them, and may encourage different groups to assign them other genders. In some nations, Terak might be known as Terwyn, goddess of war and wisdom. Other countries might honor Terak and Terwyn together, or as aspects of a non-binary deity, Tereef.

It should also be noted that in the case of Zheenkeef, the appellation of "goddess" isn't necessarily accurate. Zheenkeef is partly inspired by Dionysus and Loki, who are both strongly associated with transgender and gender-shifting roles. Note also that Zheenkeef doesn't use the gendered naming conventions of other gods.

However, some cultures might impose more restrictive gender definitions. In such a case, you might want a strong god of the dominant gender: a patriarch, matriarch or non-binary ruling deity. This often reflects cultural norms, so the gender of the supreme deity is either the privileged gender in that society, or the gender expected of rulers or high officials. In such a case, we recommend using either Morwyn or Terak (changing their genders if necessary) and eliminating the portion of the mythology where Morwyn declares that no god shall ever be the leader of all the others. If you want a matriarch, Morwyn might become the true Queen of Heaven, and commands all the other gods, most of whom she raised. If you want an utterly dominant patriarch, when Morwyn married Terak he became King, and now rules Heaven in name and deed. Then again, Terak might be Queen of the Gods, as Terwyn, and Morwyn might be King, as Morak, or they might not possess binary gender roles, as Tereef and Moreef.



THE COMPACT

The point of the Compact is to keep the gods from showing up all the time. There are a lot of informal rules to the Compact that aren't thoroughly spelled out (it can be violated if all the gods agree, and sometimes a god blows it off) to leave your hands untied when playing with the gods. However, the main point is that the gods aren't just descending from Heaven and solving problems that should be left to the players' heroes. Aristotle had an expression for such interventions, which you've likely heard: *deus ex machina*, or "god from the machine." It was a reference to Greek dramas that worked the hero into an impossible conundrum, only to have a god descend and resolve it with the wave of a hand. Aristotle complained it was the worst possible way to resolve a story—and he was right, where roleplaying games are concerned. We've included the Compact to make sure your players know they can't expect the "airstrike of the gods," when things get bad.

However, you might like games where gods walk among mortals. If so, set your campaign in an Age of Heroes before the Compact, or in some apocalyptic conflict where they break it. In the latter case, we recommend the gods abandon the Compact because Asmodeus has grown too powerful, before or over the course of your campaign. In the latter case, you can have the Compact shattered due to something the players' heroes do or witness, changing the tone of the world. The strangeness and wonder of a world where the gods walk among men will be far more evident to your players if they've gotten used to a world where the gods stay in Heaven.

In a world without the Compact, think hard about the power level of manifested gods. If they bring down the kind of might ascribed to them in certain myths, or implied by their ability to empower clerics and paladins, their battles may crack the world, and the heroes become more witnesses than participants in their stories. Then again, you might use Homer's *Iliad* as an example, where great mortal heroes can defy and even injure the gods. It might be the case that the gods cannot manifest their full power, which is largely bound up in answering prayers and minding their domains, and take forms that are awe-inspiring, but can still be defeated.

THE GREAT CHURCH

Perhaps one of the more "controversial" elements of the churches presented in *Book of the Righteous* is the combined church of the pantheon. This is not a very common device in fantasy RPGs, especially in worlds with large pantheons of deities. Usually a single unified church shows up in a monotheistic religion. However, we've added the Great Church because it makes sense that eventually, the faiths would coalesce into a single religious group.

However, the interaction between the Great Church and the other faiths (the tacit conflict over influence) might not be the sort of religious conflict that interests you, or the idea of a Great Church in general might not be to your liking. No matter your feelings on the subject, it's been intentionally kept separate from the other faiths, and from the mythology in general. If you don't like an aspect of the Church, change it, or if you want to axe the idea entirely, do

so; such a cut will not hurt anything else in the book. You can still allow paladins and clerics who aren't tied to any one god; they just don't have a large religion backing them.

ADDING GODS

The Three Sisters were included in part to show how easy it is to add new gods. There are several ways to approach this, and all of them require no major changes to the material supplied in this book.

EXISTING DEMI-GODS

Suppose you have a character who worships the god of the moon, and you don't want to change that to worship of Urian, who is the god of the moon, the sun, and everything else in the skies. There is already a legend about the moon in the book, with Faro pulling the moon across the heavens. It is completely reasonable to say Faro, though not as powerful as Urian, is powerful enough to provide followers with divine gifts.

If you like, you can then define a church of Faro, write some myths about him, and away you go. You have a "god of the moon" with a foundation in the broader mythology. Most of the gods have their servants listed, and any one of them can be turned into a demi-god capable of bestowing divine magical abilities.

NEW GODS

Like the Three Sisters, the gods can easily have met and befriended other deities over the years, as suggested above in *The Joining of Mythologies*. As opposed to the suggestion in that section, you could determine that another set of gods joined the mythology long, long ago.

All this requires is for you to make up a church and a series of myths about the new god or gods, and provide one or two myths explaining how the new gods came join the gods of the tree. You should do this for gods with different portfolios than those belonging to the existing gods and you could even have gods overlap. For instance, Canelle and Terak have some overlap, in that both are gods of physical strength. However, they also possess unique features, including different alignments and perspectives on the use of strength. Similarly, you might choose to have a god of magic with a very different profile from Tinel. Having two gods of something specific, like hunting, might make less sense and bears some scrutiny, but historical mythologies have managed it. Artemis and Apollo are both hunting deities, for example—she is the goddess of game hunting, and he destroys monsters with his bow.

Something that happens quite often in real-world myths is that the children of a major god become the gods of some sub-set of their parent's province. For instance, if you wanted a god of soldiers, it would make a great deal of sense to say one of Terak's children plays that role.

The gods as we have provided them cover a broad swath of divine provinces. You can subdivide their areas of concern, creating less powerful demi-gods tied to the more senior god. All you must do is make up the demi-god and create the connection.

INTRODUCING A COMPLETE RELIGION NECESSITATES RULES TO HELP REALIZE THE RELIGION IN PLAY. ALL THE OPTIONS presented in this chapter support the various churches described in the opening chapters to cover those areas the *PH* cannot cover. Thus, you will find new class features for most of the classes, and a selection of backgrounds, feats, spells, magic items, and creatures.

CLASSES

The gods welcome followers from any of the twelve classes presented in the *PH*. Certain classes have stronger ties to the divine than do others. Clerics and paladins, for example, have direct ties to the gods, while druids along with some monks and rangers might see themselves as champions of the divine. Characters from other classes might have strong religious inclinations and use their talents and skills to advance the cause of their gods in the world. This section expands the features available to all classes in the game to support characters who choose to join one of the orders described in the earlier chapters. Even if you're not using the pantheon described in this book, the following options are available to any member of these classes at the indicated levels.

BARBARIANS

Barbarians can come from any land, but most live in the remotest parts of the world, where they must contend with dangers and hardships without the comforts and trappings of civilization. As most barbarians live in nature, they favor the Old Gods who embody the primal and elemental forces. Of them, barbarians are drawn closest to Urian the Sky, Rontra the Earth, and Shalimyr the Waters, though many also honor Eliwyn, the Tree of Life.

PATH OF THE HARRIER

Barbarians channel their rage in many ways. For some, it brings about a near-mindless frenzy, an overpowering urge to slaughter. For others, it provides clarity, focus, and a drive to eliminate any obstacle that stands in their path. The Path of the Harrier leads to a place where barbarians can control their rage and focus it in constructive ways. Unlike many other barbarians, those who follow the Path of the Harrier favor ranged weapons, loosing missile after missile with frightening alacrity and accuracy.

DEADLY FOCUS

When you choose this path at 3rd level, you focus your hatred on your enemy whenever you rage. While raging, you gain the following additional benefits:

- Targets of your ranged attacks do not benefit from bonuses to AC that originate from any cover less than total cover.
- Your speed increases by 10 feet if you aren't wearing heavy armor.

- When you make a ranged attack, you gain a bonus to the damage roll that increases as you gain levels as a barbarian, equal to the bonus in the Rage Damage column of the Barbarian table for your level.

FEROCIOUS ACTION

Starting at 6th level, while you are raging, you can take a bonus action on each of your turns in combat to use either the Dash or Disengage action.

INFLECT HORRIBLE WOUND

Beginning at 10th level, when you score a critical hit, you can forgo rolling one of the additional weapon damage dice from your Brutal Critical class feature to instead inflict a horrible wound upon the target creature. The target creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Dexterity modifier) or become maimed in some way—you take out one of its eyes, or lop off a few fingers or perhaps an ear. The creature becomes stunned for 1 minute or until it takes damage. A creature stunned in this way can make a Wisdom saving throw at the start of its turn; if it succeeds it is no longer stunned.

BLOODY MURDER

When you reach 14th level, whenever you kill a creature within your reach while you are raging, you can use a bonus action to tear off the creature's head or some other body part and raise it in the air. Each creature within 30 feet of you that can see and hear you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier) or be frightened until the end of your next turn.

BARDS

Most bards find welcome wherever they go. Entertainers without peer, their music and stories can move the hardest of hearts and inspire courage and hope in the most downtrodden. They keep the lore and histories of the land, carry news from far-flung places, and might even bear messages and warnings. Bards also play a part in the spread of religion, for most are versed in the old myths and recount them for audiences, reminding them of who they are and from where they come. Bards can be found among the followers of any religion, but most follow Aymara, the Sister of Song.

COLLEGE OF VIRTUE

The movements of the celestial bodies and the delicate dance of the planes of existence create a form of music, one reflected in the orderly universe. The College of Virtue emerged as an institution devoted to its study and to preserve the universe's harmony against those forces of chaos and destruction that would disrupt it. Steeped in religious mysticism, the College's bards act as forces of good and order in the world, working to thwart evil wherever they find it and uplift others with the music they create. Most see themselves as holy warriors, champions of the gods, and they commit their lives to furthering their interests in the material plane.

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

Upon joining the College of Virtue at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in medium armor and shields. Additionally, you gain proficiency in Wisdom saving throws.

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Also at 3rd level, you learn how to make the music of the heavens and inspire others to greatness. When a creature you can see within 60 feet of you makes an attack roll, you can use your reaction to expend one of your uses of Bardic Inspiration. Roll a Bardic Inspiration die and add the number to the total of the creature's attack roll. You can use this feature after the creature makes the roll, but before the GM determines whether the attack roll succeeds or fails. If the target of the attack is a fiend or undead, it takes extra radiant damage equal to the number rolled on the Bardic Inspiration die.

EXTRA ATTACK

Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, when you take the Attack action.

BOLSTERING WORDS

At 14th level, you speak with the voice of heaven. Your words bolster confidence and awaken courage in others. As a bonus action, you can choose one creature within 60 feet of you. If the target creature can see and hear you, you can expend one of your uses of Bardic Inspiration and roll the Bardic Inspiration die. The target creature gains a number of temporary hit points equal to the number rolled. These temporary hit points last until they are lost or the target creature completes a long rest. While it has these temporary hit points, the creature becomes immune to the frightened condition.

CLERICS

Of all the mortals in service to the gods, it is clerics on whom the gods depend the most. These devotees pledge their lives to serve the gods, becoming tireless champions of their causes. They might found temples in which they can offer succor to the needy and religious instruction. Or, some venture into the world to fight the enemies of their faith. Each church has a clergy which is usually made up

of priests and clerics, thus most clerics devoted to specific deities join the appropriate orders or, less likely, belong to a corrupted or heretical group. Clerics sworn to the Lords of Heaven pantheon typically join the Great Church.

AIR DOMAIN

The wind and the sky are the province of the Air domain. The powers of this domain are granted by gods who claim the boundless skies as their dominion, and for many worshipers of these gods the Air domain serves as the more placid counterpart to the raging Tempest domain. While the wind does sometimes surge into a gusting gale, the domain of Air also represents the tranquil calm of a still night, or the soothing breeze that sends ripples across the pond. It is the wind that lifts birds to soaring heights, and in every swooping eagle clerics of the Air domain see the hands of their gods at work.

AIR DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>feather fall, fog cloud</i>
3rd	<i>gust of wind, hold person</i>
5th	<i>fly, wind wall</i>
7th	<i>conjure minor elementals, freedom of movement</i>
9th	<i>conjure elemental, hold monster</i>



BONUS CANTRIP

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the *fist of air* cantrip if you don't already know it.

REED IN THE WIND

Also starting at 1st level, you can surrender your motion to the divine winds, flowing out of the way of incoming harm. When an attacker that you can see hits you with an attack, you can use your reaction to halve the attack's damage against you, provided you are not restrained or prone.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: EYE OF THE STORM

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to create a swirling vortex of air that encircles you, yet leaves you unruffled at the center of the tornado.

As an action, you present your holy symbol, and you become surrounded by swirling air that lasts for 1 minute. During that time, you become immune to inhaled poisons and any spells whose effects can be dispersed by a strong wind.

Additionally, the vortex has a number of charges of divine power equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum one charge). When you or a creature that you can see within 30 feet of you is attacked by a creature that you can see with a ranged weapon, you can expend 1 of these charges as a reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll, using a gust of wind to bat the weapon aside. Alternatively, when you cast *fist of air*, you can expend 1 of these charges to add 1d6 to the damage dealt by the cantrip.

ONE WITH THE WIND

Beginning at 6th level, you can use your action to cast *gaseous form*, targeting only yourself. When affected by *gaseous form*, your flying speed is equal to your normal base speed and you can talk. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a long rest.

POWERFUL SPELLCASTING

Beginning at 8th level, when you deal damage with any cleric cantrip, add your Wisdom modifier to the damage.

REED IN THE STORM

Starting at 17th level, when you use your Reed in the Wind feature, instead of halving the attack's damage, you take no damage from that attack.

BALANCE DOMAIN

There cannot be good without evil, law without chaos, light without dark. These forces act in the cosmos, striving for dominance, but always checked by their opposite. Their conflict creates stability in the universe—a stability that must be preserved so existence can continue. Gods of balance preserve the delicate equilibrium between cosmic forces to ensure all things work as they should. They tend

to be impartial gods, moved to action only when the scales tip toward one side or the other. They then throw their weight behind the weaker force until balance is restored. Most gods of balance focus on one of good versus evil or law versus chaos.

BALANCE DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>detect evil and good, sanctuary</i>
3rd	<i>calm emotions, warding bond</i>
5th	<i>dispel magic, tongues</i>
7th	<i>banishment, freedom of movement</i>
9th	<i>dispel evil and good, geas</i>

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain proficiency with heavy armor and Insight.

SERVANT OF BALANCE

Also starting at 1st level, you can use your action to touch a willing creature other than yourself and spend 1 Hit Die. Roll the die and the creature touched regains hit points equal to the number rolled.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: DIVINE RETRIBUTION

Beginning at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to restore balance on the battlefield.

When a creature other than you hits you or a creature within your reach, you can use a reaction to make one weapon attack with advantage.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: EVEN THE FIELD

Starting at 6th level, when a creature within 30 feet of you becomes blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, invisible, paralyzed, poisoned, restrained, or stunned, you can use your reaction and use your Channel Divinity to force one creature you can see within 30 feet of you to make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, you bestow the same condition on that creature. The condition lasts until the triggering condition is removed.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 radiant damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

PARAGON OF BALANCE

Beginning at 17th level, you cannot be charmed or frightened. In addition, once per round, when you take damage, a creature you choose within 30 feet of you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or take psychic damage equal to the amount of damage you took.

BEAUTY DOMAIN

Gods of beauty embody all that is lovely, charming, and beautiful in the world, from the qualities of attractiveness to the profound beauty of nature. They are often gods of love, lust, or sexuality as well, although some are more focused on purely aesthetic beauty, or patrons of the arts or performance. Although usually kind and good, deities of beauty can sometimes be vain and petty, especially in contests of skill or attractiveness. Beauty can also be deceptive, and not all gods associated with this domain are as pleasant as they seem. Aymara, a God of the Womb, includes Beauty in her portfolio.

BEAUTY DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>charm person, heroism</i>
3rd	<i>enthrall, suggestion</i>
5th	<i>bestow curse, remove curse</i>
7th	<i>compulsion, confusion</i>
9th	<i>dominate person, geas</i>

BONUS CANTRIP

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the *friends* cantrip if you don't already have it.

ALLURING PRESENCE

You become proficient in Deception or Persuasion. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make using the skill you chose.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: BEGUILING BEAUTY

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to infuse your appearance with the power from your god to ensnare a creature with your beauty.

As an action, you present your holy symbol, and one creature you choose within 30 feet of you that can see you must make a Wisdom saving throw. If you or your companions are fighting it, the creature makes the saving throw with advantage. On a failed saving throw, the creature becomes charmed by you for 1 minute or until you or one of your companions do anything harmful to it. When the effect ends, the creature knows you charmed it.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: BLINDING BEAUTY

Starting at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to become a vision of divine beauty so profound it causes those around you to become blinded by weeping.

As an action, you present your holy symbol and are enveloped in a vision of divine beauty; all creatures within 30 feet of you that can see you must make a Wisdom saving throw. Blinding beauty has no effect on creatures that cannot be blinded or charmed. On a failure, the creature is blinded for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can make another saving throw. On a success, the effect ends for that creature.

POWERFUL SPELLCASTING

Beginning at 8th level, when you deal damage with any cleric cantrip, add your Wisdom modifier to the damage.

PERFECT BEAUTY

Starting at 17th level, you become transformed into a vision of perfect beauty. A creature charmed by your Beguiling Beauty remains so until you or one of your companions does anything harmful to it or you use Beguiling Beauty again. When the creature is no longer charmed in this way, it becomes hostile toward you and might attack you, depending on its nature as the GM decides.

CREATION DOMAIN

Almost every culture has a legend about where the world came from, and many of them center on the idea that the world as the mortal races know it is a creation made by a divine hand. The gods of the Creation domain might be revered as the creators of the world, or they might simply be worshiped as the gods who hold dominion over forges, craftsmen, shipwrights, artists, and other makers. Of course, there is also an aspect of creation that clears away the rubble of the old before the new can be made; for every making, there is also an unmaking. Clerics gifted with the powers of the Creation domain are highly valued by the leaders of expeditions, as their ability to conjure up just what the expedition needs on a moment's notice allows the group to quickly deal with any adversity that might come their way.

CREATION DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>create or destroy water, identify</i>
3rd	<i>magic weapon, shatter</i>
5th	<i>glyph of warding, tiny hut</i>
7th	<i>fabricate, stone shape</i>
9th	<i>creation, wall of stone</i>

DISCIPLE OF CREATION

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain proficiency with all kinds of artisans' tools. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make that uses artisans' tools.

GIFT OF MAKING

Also when you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the *thaumaturgy* cantrip if you do not already know it, and can use it to create a nonmagical trinket or tool that can fit into your hand. The object created lasts until the end of your next turn.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: DIVINE FABRICATION

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to create objects using the powers of the divine forges.

You can spend 1 minute presenting your holy symbol and describe a nonmagical inanimate object that can fit entirely within a cube that is 10 feet on each side. The object



appears on the ground in an unoccupied space you choose within 30 feet of you; if there is not enough room for the object to be created in such a space, you cannot use your Channel Divinity in this way. The object you describe must be one that you have seen before, and must have a value of less than 3,000 gp. The object is visibly crude, though perfectly functional, obviously magical (covered in a shimmering sheen visible even in dim light), and lacks any kind of fine detail or ornamentation. The object disappears after 1 hour, or if you use this feature again, or if you are ever more than 30 feet away from the object.

SIMPLE ENCHANTMENT

Beginning at 6th level, when you cast the *magic weapon* spell, it does not require concentration to maintain its effect. If you cast *magic weapon* and then cast it again before the spell ends, the first casting of the spell ends immediately.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 bludgeoning damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

SUPREME FABRICATION

Starting at 17th level, when you use your Divine Fabrication feature, the object you create must fit entirely within a cube that is 50 feet on each side.

CORRUPTION DOMAIN

The Corruption domain embodies the darkness that lurks in all creatures and the act of giving in to evil impulses. Only evil deities are ever associated with corruption, for they work through their servants to lead others down the path to evil. Clerics of corruption are as cancers in the world, tempting others toward wickedness to gain favor from their gods. Most conceal their true agenda and nature, wearing pleasing masks to conceal the horror they would visit on others.

CORRUPTION DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>charm person, disguise self</i>
3rd	<i>crown of madness, suggestion</i>
5th	<i>fear, major image</i>
7th	<i>confusion, polymorph</i>
9th	<i>modify memory, seeming</i>

TOOLS OF CORRUPTION

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain proficiency in Deception and gain the *friends* and *minor illusion* cantrips if you don't have them already.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: INVEIGLING WORDS

Starting at 2nd level, you can use Channel Divinity to influence another creature and make them amenable to your vile suggestions.

As an action, choose one creature that you can see within 60 feet of you. If that creature can hear you and

understand what you say, it must make a Wisdom saving throw. If the creature succeeds, you can't use this feature on it again until you finish a long rest.

If the creature fails its save, it becomes charmed for 1 minute or until you or your companions do anything harmful to it. The charmed creature regards you as a trusted friend and confidant and you have advantage on Charisma checks you make against it. When the effect ends, the creature knows it was charmed by you.

CORRUPTING WORDS

Starting at 6th level, when you have a creature charmed from your use of Inveigling Words, you can use an action to end the effect and cast the *suggestion* spell against the target without expending a casting.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 necrotic damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

CORRUPTING CHARM

Starting at 17th level, creatures that become charmed from spells you cast or from your class features change their alignment to evil, if they are not evil already. If they are already evil, they have advantage on attack rolls and saving throws until they stop being charmed. When a creature stops being charmed, it must succeed on Wisdom saving throw or the change to its alignment becomes permanent.

EARTH DOMAIN

The gods of the earth have dominion over the solid foundations upon which the world is built. These gods not only command stones and move mountains, but also hold sway over the fertile soil in which plants grow, the precious gems and metals mortal races draw from mines deep beneath the ground, and the deep caverns and subterranean realms that form the pillars upon which the surface world rests. There is a strong bond between the Earth domain and the mortal races; it is in the earth that farmers work to grow the crops needed to feed their families, and in the earth that miners delve to retrieve the stones and metals necessary to build the fundamental structures of civilization. Clerics bestowed with the powers of the Earth domain carry with them the strength and immovability of stone, and use their divinely-granted gifts to protect those around them from harm.

EARTH DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>entangle, heroism</i>
3rd	<i>acid arrow, shatter</i>
5th	<i>meld into stone, plant growth</i>
7th	<i>conjure minor elementals, stoneskin</i>
9th	<i>conjure elemental, wall of stone</i>

STRENGTH OF THE MOUNTAIN

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain proficiency with heavy armor. Additionally, you have advantage on Strength saving throws.

ENDURANCE OF STONE

Also starting at 1st level, your hit point maximum increases by 1, and increases by 1 again whenever you gain a level in this class.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: SHELTER OF THE LAND

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to shield your allies against harm.

As an action, you present your holy symbol and lay a protective blessing upon your allies that radiates outward from you. For 1 minute, whenever a creature other than you that is within 60 feet of you and that you can see takes bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, you can choose to reduce that damage by an amount equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1).

POTENCY OF THE SOIL

Beginning at 6th level, when you cast a spell that targets only one creature and doesn't have a range of self, if that spell causes the target to regain hit points, you can choose for a different creature in range to also regain the same number of hit points.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 force damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE DEEP EARTH

Starting at 17th level, you become immune to petrification and, if you are not incapacitated, you cannot be moved against your will.

FIRE DOMAIN

The mortal races have long had a strong connection to fire; it is the mastery of fire that is the first technology developed by any group clawing its way toward civilization. Fire is a primal force, and the gods who claim fire as a part of their portfolio are often similarly primal. Fire is a cornerstone of civilization, and yet at the same time it is never truly tamed; its presence invokes wariness of danger, and it remains strongly associated with unpredictability, destruction, and catastrophe. Clerics who have been granted the blessings of the Fire domain are often similarly regarded: though on the outside they might appear calm and in control, inside them roils a dangerous power that, when stoked and unleashed, can do as much to unmake civilization as to prop it up. Even at their calmest, clerics with this domain give the impression that

smoldering embers lie just out of sight, waiting on the right trigger to fan the flames waiting at their fingertips.

FIRE DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>burning hands, hellish rebuke</i>
3rd	<i>flaming sphere, heat metal</i>
5th	<i>daylight, fireball</i>
7th	<i>conjure minor elementals, wall of fire</i>
9th	<i>conjure elemental, flame strike</i>

BONUS CANTRIP

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the *fire bolt* and *produce flame* cantrips if you don't already know them. These cantrips count as cleric spells for you.

ALLIED TO THE FIRE

Also starting at 1st level, you gain resistance to fire damage.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: STROKE THE BLAZE

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to cause the flames created by your spells to burn with an intensity stoked by divine power.

When you roll fire damage, after you have rolled you can use your Channel Divinity to deal maximum damage to a single target, instead of what you rolled.

SEARING RADIANCE

Beginning at 6th level, when you would cast a spell that deals fire damage, you can choose for half of the damage dealt to be radiant damage, and the rest to be fire damage. You must make this decision before you resolve the spell's effect.

POWERFUL SPELLCASTING

Beginning at 8th level, when you deal damage with any cleric cantrip, add your Wisdom modifier to the damage.

UNTOUCHED BY THE FLAME

Starting at 17th level, you become immune to fire damage.

MADNESS DOMAIN

The gods of madness might be frightening, inscrutable beings lurking at the frayed edges of reality or they might simply be hedonistic gods who urge their followers to seek excess in all things and delight in the chaos and insanity that often results. Gods of madness might be worshiped in secret by strange cults seeking forbidden power, but they could be beloved deities who bring gaiety and joy to the lives of ordinary people. Their clerics are sometimes dangerous figures, working to tear down propriety and disrupt the status quo. They can be erratic and capricious, acting with enigmatic motives and a desire to expand—or sunder—the minds of people they meet.

MADNESS DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>dissonant whispers, hideous laughter</i>
3rd	<i>crown of madness, suggestion</i>
5th	<i>fear, hypnotic pattern</i>
7th	<i>confusion, phantasmal killer</i>
9th	<i>dominate person, modify memory</i>

BLESSING OF MADNESS

Starting at 1st level when you choose this domain, your mind becomes unhinged, flooded with strange thoughts and ideas. You gain periodic bursts of frightening clarity, which are fueled by special dice called madness dice, which are d6s. You have a number of madness dice equal to 1 + half your level (minimum 2 dice). You can expend a madness die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw you make. When you do so, you have disadvantage on all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the end of your next turn.

You regain all expended madness dice when you finish a long rest.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: AFFLICT MADNESS

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to flood your foe with erratic thoughts.

As an action, you present your holy symbol and invoke the name of your deity. One creature of your choice you can see within 60 feet must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become insane until the end of your next turn. Constructs are immune to this effect. While insane, the creature cannot use actions, bonus actions, or reactions, though it can still move on its turn.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: FLOOD OF MADNESS

Beginning at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to amplify your own madness.

When you would expend a madness die, you can use a bonus action to turn your madness die into a d12. If the ability check, attack roll, or saving throw succeeds, you do not have the usual disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws from expending a madness die.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 psychic damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

INFECTIOUS MADNESS

At 17th level, you can no longer be charmed or frightened. In addition, whenever you expend a madness die, you can also bestow a madness die to one creature you can see within 60 feet of you.

REPOSE DOMAIN

For some cultures, death is a thing to be feared, and as such, those cultures' gods of death are often figures of foreboding and evil. For others, death is merely a transition, and the gods of death are shepherds of souls, carrying them on to the next realm. For clerics of this latter kind of death god, the Repose domain represents the gifts of these gods, focusing on ensuring that malign forces do not interrupt the natural cycle of life and death. Clerics with the Repose domain also gain mastery over many things that are a part of death, such as stillness, unawareness, and nonexistence. More than anything, clerics of the Repose domain excel at seeking out the abomination that is the undead, and correcting the flaw that their existence has introduced into the natural order.

REPOSE DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL SPELLS

1st	<i>false life, sleep</i>
3rd	<i>gentle repose, hold person</i>
5th	<i>glyph of warding, speak with dead</i>
7th	<i>banishment, death ward</i>
9th	<i>raise dead, hold monster</i>

POWER OF THE GRAVE

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you learn two necromancy cantrips chosen from any class's spell list.

BARRING DEATH'S DOOR

Also starting at 1st level, creatures that you are friendly to that are within 60 feet of you have advantage on death saving throws.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: SENSE UNDEAD

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to sense undead creatures and seek them out unerringly using your divine senses.

As an action, you present your holy symbol and speak the mystic words, granting yourself a sense of unlife nearby. For the next minute, you know the direction of the nearest undead creature within 60 feet of you, but not its distance from you. You can sense the presence and direction of undead that are ethereal, invisible, disguised, or hidden, as well as those in plain sight. The effect ends if you become unconscious.

RESTORE THE NATURAL ORDER

Beginning at 6th level, your cleric level is treated as being 6 higher than it actually is for the purposes of the Destroy Undead cleric feature.

POWERFUL SPELLCASTING

Beginning at 8th level, when you deal damage with any cleric cantrip, add your Wisdom modifier to the damage.

SANCTITY OF DEATH

Starting at 17th level, when a creature within 60 feet of you dies, for 1 day the creature's body cannot be reanimated as, or transformed into, an undead creature. Additionally, spells and monsters cannot create undead creatures within 60 feet of you.

TRAVEL DOMAIN

The great civilizations of the world are scattered far and wide from one another, and it is the greatest gift of the gods of travel to connect those civilizations with safe journeys. Gods who bestow the gifts of the Travel domain upon their clergy concern themselves not just with making haste, but also with finding shelter, leaving no trail, and letting no obstacle stand in the way of the journey. While the blessings of the Travel domain certainly allow its clerics to make long, arduous journeys safer and shorter, the gods of travel also help their followers move quicker in the heat of combat. When a traveler is waylaid by highwaymen, the clerics of the Travel domain not only protect the devout traveler, but also give them the ability to flee more easily, or get into a position to turn the tables on their assailants.

TRAVEL DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL SPELLS

1st	<i>expeditious retreat, longstrider</i>
3rd	<i>pass without trace, rope trick</i>
5th	<i>tiny hut, water walk</i>
7th	<i>dimension door, freedom of movement</i>
9th	<i>teleportation circle, tree stride</i>

SHIFT

Starting when you choose this domain at 1st level, as a bonus action you can move up to 10 feet. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

FAR STRIDER

Also starting at 1st level, you and up to 6 companions, along with one mount for each companion, do not suffer levels of exhaustion for traveling for more than 8 hours each day. Additionally, while doing nothing but traveling, you, your companions, and your mounts do not need to sleep, and you can travel at a fast pace without taking a penalty to passive Wisdom (Perception) checks because of that speed.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: PROVIDENT FLEETNESS

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to allow your companions to swiftly move into a place of safety (or dash to the front lines of battle) before your enemies have a chance to react.

As an action, you present your holy symbol, and invoke the divine power of your god of travel to allow any creature you choose that you can see and is within 30 feet of you to use its reaction to move up to its speed, plus an additional 30 feet, if it is free to do so. Additionally, this movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: VANISHING STEP

Beginning at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to move so quickly that your enemies barely have time to register that you are gone.

When a creature misses you with a melee attack, you can use your Channel Divinity as a reaction to teleport up to 30 feet away to an unoccupied space that you can see. If you teleport to a space that is within 5 feet of the creature that missed you with the melee attack, as a part of your reaction you can make a melee attack against that creature with advantage on the attack roll.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 damage to the target. The extra damage is of the same type normally dealt by the weapon. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

UNTOUCHABLE STRIDE

Starting at 17th level, you do not provoke opportunity attacks by moving.

TYRANNY DOMAIN

At heart, the Tyranny domain reflects the urge to impose one's will on others. Expressions of tyranny can be found throughout the world, from the monarch whose word is law, to the powerful crime lord who takes control of a city's underworld. Merchants who have a monopoly over a crucial commodity, a benevolent dictator whose good intentions mask intolerance for competing views, or even the conquering general who always looks ahead to the next nation to fall under her control are further representations and find appeal in serving gods who would strengthen their authority. The gods of tyranny send their clerics to support these individuals, to help them expand their dominions, and silence any opposition they might face.

TYRANNY DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>charm person, command</i>
3rd	<i>hold person, suggestion</i>
5th	<i>bestow curse, fear</i>
7th	<i>banishment, compulsion</i>
9th	<i>dominate person, hold monster</i>

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

At 1st level, you gain proficiency with martial weapons and heavy armor.

BLESSING OF THE TYRANT

Starting when you choose this domain at 1st level, you can use your action to touch a willing creature other than

yourself to give it advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks. The blessing lasts for 1 hour or until you use this feature again.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: INVOKE AUTHORITY

Beginning at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to impose your will on other creatures.

As an action, you present your holy symbol and channel divine authority at one creature you can see within 60 feet of you. Constructs are immune to this effect. The target creature must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the creature becomes immune to this effect until you finish a long rest. On a failure, the creature becomes compelled until the start of your next turn. While compelled, when the creature takes its next turn, you can tell it what to do on its turn, deciding how it moves and uses an action. If the creature refuses, it takes psychic damage equal to 1d6 + half your level.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: FEAR THE TYRANT

Starting at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to fill an enemy attacking you with dread.

As a reaction, when a creature you can see attacks you, it has disadvantage on its attack roll. If the attack misses, the creature becomes frightened until the end of its next turn. Creatures that cannot be frightened are immune to this effect.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 damage to the target of the same type normally dealt by the weapon. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

UNASSAILABLE AUTHORITY

At 17th level, you can use a bonus action to cast the *command* spell. You must still expend a slot as normal.

In addition, creatures have disadvantage on saving throws against enchantment spells you cast.

WATER DOMAIN

Few clerics are granted powers that encompass elements that are simultaneously fundamental to the flourishing of life and capable of wiping away all traces that life was once there. Water takes many forms; so too do the powers granted to clerics of this domain. A cleric devoted to a god with dominion over water can call to hand the force of a rushing river current, summon the relentless, crashing power of the tides, or conjure the bitter cold of a blizzard. Clerics with this domain can summon or vanish into blinding mists, walk across the bottom of a lake without harm, and harness the catastrophic power of a flood. Many different deities grant the powers of the water domain to their followers: gods of the sea, gods of the rain and snow, and gods of rivers, lakes, and streams.

WATER DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>create or destroy water, fog cloud</i>
3rd	<i>blur, misty step</i>
5th	<i>sleet storm, water breathing</i>
7th	<i>conjure minor elementals, control water</i>
9th	<i>conjure elemental, cone of cold</i>

RELENTLESS AS THE TIDES

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain proficiency with heavy armor. Additionally, wearing heavy armor does not affect your ability to swim or encumber your movement in water.

DESTRUCTIVE AS THE FLOOD

Also starting at 1st level, your damaging spells are more effective. Whenever you roll damage for a cleric spell of 1st level or higher, add your Wisdom modifier to the damage (minimum of 1).

CHANNEL DIVINITY: CRASHING WAVES

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to summon the power of the crashing waves to strike at your enemies.

When you hit an enemy with a melee weapon attack, you can use your Channel Divinity as a bonus action to cause a wave of divine power to wash out over each enemy you choose that is within 10 feet of the target of the attack. For each of those creatures, if the attack roll of the weapon attack equals or exceeds that creature's Armor Class, that creature takes bludgeoning damage equal to the weapon's damage die + your Wisdom modifier (plus any extra damage gained from the Divine Strike feature once you reach 8th level).

PLACID AS THE LAKES

Beginning at 6th level, when you are charmed, you can use your action to end the effect that is causing you to be charmed.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with divine energy. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 bludgeoning damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

UNTOUCHABLE AS THE MISTS

Starting at 17th level, you are permanently under the effects of the *water breathing* spell, and whenever you cast one of your domain spells, you gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage until the end of your next turn.

DRUIDS

An ancient order devoted to nature in all its forms, druids nurture the land, protecting it from despoilers and destroyers. Druids do not usually join the churches of the other gods, for their temples are in the wilderness, their gods found in the beasts in the fields, the trees in the woods, and the stars in the sky. While some druids might have affinity with the old gods, most instead see themselves as servants of Eliwyn, the Tree of Life from which all living things spring.

CIRCLE SPELLS FOR DRUIDS OF THE TREE

The circles of druids that tend to Eliwyn, the Great Tree, are shaped by the Tree of Life's presence, their magical abilities cultivated to reflect not only nature's verdant growth but also the life, hope, and purity that Eliwyn represents.

THE TREE OF LIFE CIRCLE

DRUID LEVEL	CIRCLE SPELLS
3rd	<i>aid, calm emotions</i>
5th	<i>beacon of hope, revivify</i>
7th	<i>conjure woodland beings, death ward</i>
9th	<i>dispel evil and good, hallow</i>



FIGHTERS

Although committed to attaining martial mastery, fighters can be as devout as anyone, seeking comfort and inspiration from the gods. Some fighters honor all the gods in the manner taught by the Great Church, offering prayers to whichever god might intercede on their behalf or who can give aid in a particular situation. Many fighters, though, have strong ties to specific gods, especially those who embody strength, valor, and the arts of war. Gods commonly worshiped by fighters include Terak, Morwyn, Mormekar, Maal, and Canelle the Red Sister. Evil fighters might pray to Canarak, Naran, or Asmodeus.

HOSPITALER

The hospitaler archetype stands at the crossroads of martial mastery and devotion to one or more gods. Hospitalers approach their faith much as clerics do, but draw on their religious convictions to help them overcome their enemies in battle. Where paladins are called to fight in the name of righteousness, hospitalers use their devotion to the divine to advance the cause of their patron deities in the world and might serve as combat healers, chaplains, or simply devout warriors who took up arms in the name of the gods. Hospitalers pray for and receive a small number of cleric spells, and most focus their spell selection on healing magic.

SPELLCASTING

When you reach 3rd level, the gods infuse you with divine power, which augments your combat capabilities. See the *PH* for rules of spell casting and for the cleric spell list.

- **Cantrips:** Choose two cantrips to learn from the cleric spell list. You learn another cleric cantrip of your choice when you reach 10th level.

HOSPITALER SPELLCASTING

FIGHTER LEVEL	CANTRIPS KNOWN	—SPELL SLOTS PER SPELL LEVEL—			
		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH
3rd	2	2	—	—	—
4th	2	3	—	—	—
5th	2	3	—	—	—
6th	2	3	—	—	—
7th	2	4	2	—	—
8th	2	4	2	—	—
9th	2	4	2	—	—
10th	3	4	3	—	—
11th	3	4	3	—	—
12th	3	4	3	—	—
13th	3	4	3	2	—
14th	3	4	3	2	—
15th	3	4	3	2	—
16th	3	4	3	3	—
17th	3	4	3	3	—
18th	3	4	3	3	—
19th	3	4	3	3	1
20th	3	4	3	3	1

- **Preparing and Casting Spells:** The Hospitaler spellcasting table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your spells. When you would cast a spell of 1st level or higher, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

You prepare the list of cleric spells available for you to cast, choosing from the cleric spell list. When you do so, choose a number of cleric spells equal to your Charisma modifier + half your fighter level, rounded down (minimum of one spell). The spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots. You can change your list of prepared spells when you finish a long rest, though doing so requires you to spend at least 1 minute per spell level for each spell on your list in prayer and meditation.

- **Spellcasting Ability:** Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for your cleric spells, since the power you draw to cast them comes from your devotion and understanding of the deity you serve. You use Wisdom whenever a spell refers to your Charisma modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a cleric spell and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

Spellcasting Focus: You can use a holy symbol as a spellcasting focus for your cleric spells.

DEVOTED HEALER

At 3rd level, you learn to how to channel your faith, which is represented by special dice called faith dice, into healing. You have two faith dice, which are d6s. Whenever you cast a 1st-level or higher spell that restores hit points to a creature, you can expend a faith die, roll it, and add the number rolled to the total number of hit points the creature regains. You regain all your expended faith dice when you finish a short or long rest.

You gain another faith die at 7th level and another one at 15th level.

IMPROVED DEVOTED HEALER

Starting at 7th level, your faith dice turn into d8s. At 18th level, they turn into d10s.

HEALING SURGE

When you reach 10th level, any time you use your Action Surge, you can expend one faith die. Roll the die and each creature you choose within 30 feet of you gains temporary hit points equal to the number rolled. After 1 minute, any remaining temporary hit points are lost.

BURGEONING FAITH

Beginning at 15th level, when you roll initiative and you have no faith dice remaining, you regain one faith die.

MONKS

The monasteries scattered across the face of the world offer ways to attain enlightenment. What enlightenment means varies from monastery to monastery. For some, it could be to unite body and mind to transcend the limits of the physical form and for others, it might mean to become one with the universe. While the methods and motives vary, almost all monasteries find their roots in the efforts of Kunar, who left the Great Sphere to become one with the Nameless One.

WAY OF IRON

Adherents to the Way of Iron seek tranquility in the art of combat. Unlike other monastic traditions, the Way of Iron focuses on the use of weapons, treating them as extensions of the monk's own body. Followers of the Way of Iron are usually front-line combatants, leaving their temples behind to join in the dance of battle shoulder-to-shoulder with the rank and file soldiers. Grandmasters of the Way of Iron wield any weapon with such grace and ease that the weapons seem to have always been a part of them, the way a hand or an eye would be, and their movement and attacks are full of graceful arcs and twirling flourishes that make battle seem to be more of a dance than a conflict. Adherents to the Way of Iron train relentlessly with one another, and are among the most exceptional duelists in the world, having honed their skill against the best warriors their temples have to offer.

ROILING STORM OF IRON

Starting when you choose this tradition at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in all weapons and armor, and if you are wearing armor you can use your Unarmored Defense feature if the AC it would provide is higher than your AC in armor. Furthermore, all melee weapons that do not have the heavy property are monk weapons for you.

TEST OF SKILL

Also starting when you choose this tradition at 3rd level, you can compel other creatures to engage you in a test of martial skill. One creature that you can see that is within 30 feet of you and that can hear and understand you must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, for 1 minute the creature has disadvantage on attack rolls made against creatures other than you, and must make a Wisdom saving throw each time it attempts to move to a space that is more than 30 feet away from you; if the creature fails this saving throw, it cannot move to a space more than 30 feet away from you this turn. This effect ends if you attack any creature other than the affected creature, if you cast a spell that targets a creature hostile to you other than the affected creature, if a creature friendly to you damages the affected creature or casts a harmful spell on it, or if you end your turn more than 30 feet away from the affected creature.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again for 1 minute.

SHIFTING BLADES

At 6th level, attacks you make with monk weapons count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

WHIRLWIND OF STEEL

Beginning at 11th level, when you would use a bonus action to make one or more unarmed attacks (either the attack granted by your Martial Arts feature, or when spending a ki point to make a Flurry of Blows), you can make attacks with monk weapons instead.

PERFECT STRIKE

At 17th level, you learn to combine an economy of movement with perfect angles of attack, allowing you to strike hard with precision. When you use the Attack action and make only one attack, if the attack hits you can spend 1 ki point as a bonus action to add a +25 bonus to the damage of that attack, provided that you made the attack with a monk weapon.



PALADINS

The holiest of warriors, paladins take up arms to fight injustice, tyranny, and wickedness. By swearing sacred oaths to the gods they serve, paladins gain a measure of divine power to aid them in their campaigns. Most churches described in this book have orders made up almost exclusively of paladins. The oaths these paladins swear align with how the order serves its patron deity.

OATH OF THE ASCETIC

The Oath of the Ascetic is a rejection of possessions and material wealth, positing such things lead only to temptation and corruption of the spirit. Ascetics live simply, embracing their poverty to better understand themselves and their devotion to their god. As noble and virtuous as other paladins, they strive to be examples to others, to live unimpeachable lives and devote themselves to helping others. Ascetics wear simple and unadorned armor, if they bother with it. When not fighting, they don simple clothing, looking like the commoners they fight to protect.

TENETS OF POVERTY

The Oath of the Ascetic liberates the paladin from temptations and encourages humility and virtue. It has four basic tenets:

- **Humility:** Be humble in all dealings with others. All are equal in the eyes of the gods.
- **Charity:** Keep only what you need to survive and give all excess to those in need.
- **Temperance:** Your body is a temple, so treat it as such. Eat and drink only what is needed to sustain you.
- **Courage:** Do what must be done with enthusiasm and zeal, but have the wisdom to know when such action would be futile.

OATH SPELLS

You gain path spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF THE ASCETIC SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>mage armor, purify food and drink</i>
5th	<i>lesser restoration, warding bond</i>
9th	<i>create food and water, mass healing word</i>
13th	<i>aura of purity, freedom of movement</i>
17th	<i>greater restoration, mass cure wounds</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you swear this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options:

- **Armor of Faith:** As an action, you can surround yourself in an invisible field of force using your Channel Divinity. For 1 minute, you add your Charisma

modifier to your Armor Class and to all saving throws (minimum +1). In addition, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Charisma modifier + half your paladin level (minimum of 1 temporary hit point). The temporary hit points remain until lost or you use this Channel Divinity option again. If you fall unconscious, this effect ends.

- **Blessings of Courage:** You can use your Channel Divinity to bestow a blessing onto an ally. As an action, one creature within 30 feet of you gains temporary hit points equal to your Charisma modifier + half your paladin level (minimum of 1 temporary hit point). While the creature has these temporary hit points, it has advantage on saving throws made to resist being frightened.

AURA OF SACRIFICE

Starting at 7th level, your selfless nature manifests as a palpable aura that protects people around you. Whenever a creature within 10 feet of you takes damage, you can choose to take some or all of that damage on behalf of that creature.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

TEMPLE OF FLESH

Beginning at 15th level, you become as a living temple. You cannot be physically scarred by any means. You are immune to petrification, poison, and any effect that would change your form. You no longer need to eat or drink, though you can do so if you wish. Finally, you appear to be at the prime of your life and do not physically age, though you still die when your time is up.

EMBODIMENT OF VIRTUE

At 20th level, you achieve a state of physical perfection that exemplifies the best qualities of your race. You permanently gain 20 hit points and when you spend a Hit Die to regain hit points, you always regain the maximum number of hit points. In addition, whenever you would make a saving throw using an ability other than Charisma, you can make a Charisma saving throw instead.

OATH OF BATTLE

While all paladins are, in one respect or another, the faith militant of their respective traditions, those who swear the Oath of Battle place themselves at the forefront of armed conflict. Crusaders of their faith, paladins that swear this Oath spend as much time studying military history and strategy as they do their tenets of their own religion. They are often born leaders, men and women who would rise through the ranks of command in a military organization even without the aid of their deity. More than just good in a fight, paladins who swear the Oath of Battle are invaluable on a battlefield when armies clash, drawing the opposing forces to them and inspiring the troops on their side to ride head-on into battle and win the day.

TENETS OF BATTLE

The tenets of the Oath of Battle come from hundreds of years of military tradition. Despite the differences in the loyalties and composition of varying military orders, there are certain rules, unspoken or otherwise, that have evolved over the years into a creed that paladins who swear the Oath of Battle hold as dear as their own lives.

- **Lead from the Front:** Go gallantly and willingly to the front lines, placing yourself in danger to stir the hearts and minds of your companions. You need no standard-bearer; be the standard that draws the eyes of enemies and allies alike to the thickest part of the battle.
- **Comrades Before Oneself:** A soldier alone is merely a soldier; many soldiers together are a force to be reckoned with. You are nothing without your comrades in arms; you must put the wellbeing and safety of your battle companions before your own, and when an ally falls, it is your duty to pick them up and carry them to safety if need be.
- **Never Forget the Mission:** Do not let anger, revenge, or despair come between you and your goal. Every battle is fought for a reason, and there is an objective to be won that must be remembered always. In every facet of life, remember your mission, and place it before your own desires.
- **Defeat is Not an Option:** Never surrender when the fight can still be won. Never abandon your position unless commanded to do so by a superior officer. Never do anything to endanger the chance for your force to emerge from battle victorious. Fight to the last, but remember that the war is more important than the battle.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF BATTLE SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>healing word, shield</i>
5th	<i>flame blade, spiritual weapon</i>
9th	<i>beacon of hope, spirit guardians</i>
13th	<i>guardian of faith, stoneskin</i>
17th	<i>greater restoration, mass cure wounds</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options:

- **Sacred Armor:** As an action, you can imbue heavy armor that you are wearing with positive energy, using your Channel Divinity. For 1 minute, you add your Charisma modifier to your AC (with a minimum bonus of +1). If you fall unconscious or are no longer wearing the armor, the effect ends.

- **Sacred Shield:** As an action, you can imbue a shield that you are holding with positive energy, using your Channel Divinity. For 1 minute, any ranged attack made against a creature that you are friendly to that is within 30 feet of you targets you instead. If you fall unconscious or are no longer holding the shield, the effect ends.

AURA OF BATTLE

Beginning at 7th level, the very spirit of battle flows outward from you, causing you to become a supernatural locus point in combat that keeps your allies ever-wary of incoming attacks. Enemies cannot gain advantage on attack rolls against you and creatures within 10 feet of you while you are conscious.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

BLESSED OF BATTLE

Starting at 15th level, you are always under the effects of a *divine favor* spell.

AVATAR OF BATTLE

At 20th level, as an action, you can channel the spirit of battle and cleave through hordes of opposing enemies as a scythe clearing wheat. For 1 minute, when you hit an enemy with a weapon attack, if that enemy has fewer than 30 hit points, your attack automatically reduces that enemy to 0 hit points. Additionally, for the duration, when you take the Attack action on your turn, after you have finished making your attacks you can use your bonus action to make a weapon attack against an enemy you have not attacked this turn.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

OATH OF THE EAGLE

The paladins that swear the Oath of the Eagle see the eagle as a symbol of all that should be aspired to, and the Oath takes the attributes of those majestic birds and transforms them into edicts to live by. These paladins admire eagles not only for their beauty and splendor, but also their nobility, their speed, their awareness, and their skills as hunters. Most of all, paladins who swear the Oath of the Eagle look up to the sky and see the eagle in flight as a symbol of liberation, and seek to break the chains that bind any mortal and prevent them from soaring just the same.

TENETS OF THE EAGLE

The tenets of the Oath of the Eagle transform the eagle from a symbol into practical guidance on living one's life. While most who swear this Oath recognize that these tenets are built heavily on symbolism and allegory, they nonetheless willingly embrace the idealistic mantras.

- **Freedom Above All:** None can reach the heights that the eagle does when they are chained to the ground. Fight slavery and imprisonment wherever you can,



and oppose those tyrants who would restrict the freedoms of their people.

- **Shine as a Symbol:** You are an example to others; just as you once gazed up to the skies and saw the soaring eagle above you, so too will others look up to you and see your deeds and triumphs. Always remember that you exemplify not only the tenets of your Oath, but all those of your order. Give those who look upon you something to aspire to.
- **Be a Relentless Hunter:** Do not flag in your pursuit of your enemies. When you drive off slavers and tyrants, give them no chance to escape; pursue, and bring them down. The enemies of your order cannot be allowed to flee from the justice of your grasp.
- **Soar to the Greatest Heights:** Always strive to achieve great things. Reach for the skies in all things, and never be satisfied with your deeds. There is always more to be done, and every triumph you complete elevates both you and the other members of your faith.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF THE EAGLE SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>feather fall, jump</i>
5th	<i>gust of wind, levitate</i>
9th	<i>fly, wind wall</i>
13th	<i>dominate monster, freedom of movement</i>
17th	<i>cone of cold, wall of force</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

- **Sacred Hunt:** As a bonus action, you can set your sights upon a single enemy, using your Channel Divinity to mark them as your prey. You choose one enemy that you can see, and for 1 minute if you start your turn and are not within 5 feet of that enemy, before moving or taking any actions you can move up to 30 feet toward that enemy by the safest direct route without using any of your movement for the turn. This effect ends if the chosen enemy drops to 0 hit points or becomes unconscious.
- **Sight of the Eagle:** As a bonus action, you can take on the eyesight of the eagle, using your Channel Divinity. For 1 minute, you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks related to sight, can see up to ten times as far away as normal, and have darkvision.

AURA OF SPEED

Beginning at 7th level, you can use the Dash action as a bonus action, and when any creature you are friendly to starts its turn within 10 feet of you, for that turn the creature can also use the Dash action as a bonus action.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

DIVINE SPLENDOR

Starting at 15th level, you are always under the effects of the Eagle's Splendor effect of the *enhance ability* spell.

ALLY OF THE EAGLES

Also beginning at 15th level, if you cast the *find steed* spell, you can choose the form of a giant eagle for the steed that you summon.

SUPERIOR PREDATOR

At 20th level, you can use your action to become one with the divine spirit of the eagle. For 1 hour, you gain the following benefits:

- Feathered eagle wings sprout from your back and grant you a flying speed of 60 feet.
- You can see invisible creatures that are within 60 feet of you.
- When you fly at least 30 feet in a straight line immediately before making a melee attack, you have advantage on that attack roll.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

OATH OF MERCY

Though armed and armored, not all paladins seek out battle as the primary means of spreading their faith. For many, the sword and shield are tools of last resort, and a victory on the battlefield is bittersweet at best. Paladins who swear the Oath of Mercy dedicate themselves to using their divine gifts and physical strength to healing the wounded, tending to the sick, and defending those who cannot defend themselves. In many ways, these paladins follow a path much closer to the clerics of many orders, yet they still retain the ability to be a dangerous force in any battle. For the paladins who adhere to an Oath of Mercy, their offensive weapons are to be kept in reserve until there is no other option, and they use their inherent charm to defang arguments before their venom can spill over into physical conflict.

TENETS OF MERCY

The tenets of the Oath of Mercy are similar in many ways to the doctrines adhered to by clerics of the Life domain. Paladins who swear an Oath of Mercy dedicate themselves to bringing peace and restoring the health and vitality those who suffer, and the tenets of that Oath guide them along a path of gentility and kindness.

- **Seek Peace:** Be ever the diplomat and peacemaker. When a conflict threatens to erupt in violence, be at the ready to defuse it with words and overtures. It is not enough to avoid conflict yourself; you must seek out those who would fight and do your best to placate them without violence.
- **Give Succor:** If you are not able to prevent the outbreak of violence, it is your sacred duty to tend to those who are its victims. You have been gifted with the ability to heal wounds, cure poisons, and lift diseases; such a gift is wasted if it is not used. Tend to the wounded, the weak, and the ill and put them before yourself.

- **Protect Those Who Need It:** Your strength is more than just a weapon; it is a shield. Interpose yourself between those bent on violence and those who cannot defend themselves. Put yourself in harm's way to spare another the pain that violence brings. Do not be afraid to sacrifice your own wellbeing to protect others.
- **Choose Violence Last:** Though you should always strive to leave your sword in its sheath, there might come a time when words fail, and you must meet violence with violence. Mercy is not pacifism, and from time to time a rabid dog must be put down for the safety of those around it.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF MERCY SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>healing word, sanctuary</i>
5th	<i>calm emotions, prayer of healing</i>
9th	<i>create food and water, mass healing word</i>
13th	<i>death ward, spell</i>
17th	<i>mass cure wounds, modify memory</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

- **Benevolent Sacrifice:** When a creature that you can see that is within 30 feet of you would take damage, you can use your reaction to quickly form a bond between yourself and that creature, using your Channel Divinity. The creature takes no damage, and you take damage of the same amount and type as the creature would have taken.
- **Warding Touch:** When you use your Lay on Hands feature, you can also bestow upon the one you heal a blessing of true mercy, using your Channel Divinity. That creature gains temporary hit points equal to half of the amount of hit points you healed. These temporary hit points last until the creature finishes a long rest, or until you use this Channel Divinity option again.

AURA OF MERCY

Beginning at 7th level, when another creature that is within 10 feet of you regains hit points as the result of a spell of 1st level or higher, that creature regains additional hit points equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

SENSE MALADIES

Starting at 15th level, you are always under the effects of a *detect poison and disease* spell, and you do not need to concentrate on it.

AVATAR OF MERCY

At 20th level, as an action, you become a vessel of pure divine mercy, radiating the gentle peace of your god outward from you. For 1 minute, you gain the following benefits:

- Bright light shines from you in a 30-foot radius, and dim light shines 30 feet beyond that.
- All creatures within 60 feet of you have disadvantage on attack rolls and advantage on saving throws.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

OATH OF PERFECTION

Though many would perceive those who swear the Oath of Perfection as arrogant and prideful, nothing could be further from the truth. Paladins who swear this oath are driven to excel, and fear no hard work to do so. The Oath of Perfection urges paladins who swear it to become the best swordsmen, peerless riders, paragons of virtue, and fearless leaders. A paladin who swears the Oath of Perfection seeks flawless beauty—beauty in the most perfect strike of a sword that wastes no effort, beauty in the perfectly chosen word to sway the mind of the king, beauty in taking that one perfect step to avoid the charging manticores. The paladins who swear this Oath are constantly honing their skills and seeking to better themselves, and their internal perfection is often reflected by an outward flawlessness.

TENETS OF PERFECTION

Swearing an Oath of Perfection is a pledge to always strive to be the very best and eradicate one's flaws. An Oath of Perfection is an oath of personal achievement and refinement; while some who swear such an oath might encourage others around them to similarly strive for perfection, the tenets of an Oath of Perfection bind only the paladin who gives it.

- **Eliminate Flaws:** To reach the apex of your skill, you must focus first on eliminating flaws. Keep yourself free of corruption, vice, and weakness. So too should you strive to eliminate those who corrupt and wound the world around you; if something is willfully making the world worse, it is your sacred duty to stop it.
- **Perfection Comes Through Practice:** There is no such thing as natural perfection; you might be gifted in an area, but you are not born perfect. Only through hard work, continuous practice, and constant reflection and self-evaluation can perfection be achieved.
- **Blemishes are to be Pitied, Not Scorned:** Not everyone can devote their lives to the pursuit of perfection and mastery, and the world is full of people who are flawed, physically or otherwise. They are not to be scorned, shunned, judged, or rejected. Instead, it is your duty to offer them comfort, succor, and aid.
- **Only the Gods can be Truly Perfect:** No matter how great your skill, no matter how perfect your

execution, no matter how beautiful your appearance, you will never achieve perfection. Do not allow yourself to give into the flaw of pride by believing that you are perfect in any way; only the gods can be truly perfect, and you are no god.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

OATH OF PERFECTION SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>comprehend languages, healing word</i>
5th	<i>enhance ability, lesser restoration</i>
9th	<i>dispel magic, protection from energy</i>
13th	<i>death ward, freedom of movement</i>
17th	<i>greater restoration, mass cure wounds</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

- **Divine Skill:** As an action, you can imbue yourself with positive energy, using your Channel Divinity. For 1 minute, your proficiency bonus is doubled for ability checks you make that use one skill that you choose at the time that you use this feature. You cannot choose a skill in which you already gain double your proficiency bonus when used. If you fall unconscious, the effect ends.
- **Unearthly Precision:** When you make an attack roll, after you roll you can suffuse the attack with positive energy, using your Channel Divinity. You use a 19 instead of the number you rolled on the die for that attack roll.

AURA OF THE UNBLEMISHED

Beginning at 7th level, you and friendly creatures within 10 feet of you are immune to petrification and any effect that would alter your physical form against your will.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

UNMARRED

Starting at 15th level, when you are at your maximum hit points, you reduce all bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons by 10.

APEX OF PERFECTION

At 20th level, as an action, you can transform into a perfect specimen of your kind, shedding all flaws and blemishes like a snake shedding its skin. For 1 minute, you are immune to being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, or stunned. Additionally, for the duration, at the start of each of your turns you regain 10 hit points, and any severed or destroyed body parts reform instantaneously.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

RANGERS

As wilderness warriors, rangers roam the forests and mountains, walking the lonely roads between. Their knowledge of nature magic has much in common with druid magic. Thus, many rangers follow the old gods. Rangers honor the One Tree or worship Urian, Rontra, and, sometimes, Shalimyr. A great many rangers follow Thellyne, the Golden Sister, while evil rangers might worship Canarak or Thellos.

HUNTER

Where some rangers specialize in slaying dragons or giants, many rangers seek to purge the world of unliving creatures. Those who face the undead learn to strike hard to ensure a zombie's destruction; to steel themselves against the curses, diseases, rot, and necrotic energies that suffuse many undead attacks; and to lash out at a ragged swarm of shambling ghouls before it can get too close.

The following options expand on those found in the *PH*.

HUNTER'S PREY

At 3rd level, you can choose the following feature as your Hunter feature for that level.

- **Zombie Killer:** When you damage an enemy with a weapon attack, that enemy has disadvantage on the next saving throw it makes before the end of your next turn.

DEFENSIVE TACTICS

At 7th level, you can choose the following feature as your Hunter feature for that level.

- **Resist Death:** You have advantage on saving throws made to avoid being cursed or paralyzed and you have resistance to necrotic damage.

MULTIATTACK

At 11th level, you can choose the following feature as your Hunter feature for that level.

- **Skirmish Attack:** You can use your action to choose up to 3 creatures within 30 feet of you that you can see and make a melee attack against each of them. Each creature must be within your reach to attack it, though you can use your movement before and after each attack to put those creatures within your reach.

SUPERIOR HUNTER'S DEFENSE

At 15th level, you can choose the following feature as your Hunter feature for that level.

- **Superior Resilience:** When you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a Constitution saving throw, such as a ghast's stench or a wraith's life drain, you can use a 20 instead of the number you rolled on the die for that saving throw.

You can use this feature up to three times. You regain all expended uses of this feature when you finish a short or long rest.



ROGUES

Rogues might engage in all manner of skullduggery, but they need the gods just as everyone else. As rogues find themselves in tough spots, few rogues find it hurts their situation to offer a quick prayer to whatever god might be listening. Some feel drawn to unrestrained Zheenkeef, while those dealing in death as assassins might follow Mormekar, but it is Darmon, the patron god of rogues, who draws them in the greatest numbers.

SCOUT

You focus your training on travel and exploration. As a scout, you might be a guide, a hunter, a messenger, an explorer, or even a commando in service to an army, sabotaging the enemy encampments while gathering crucial intelligence about their numbers and movements. Being successful as a scout requires speed, sharp senses, and the ability to move unseen and unheard. Mastering these techniques will help you stay alive as you venture ahead into the most dangerous areas.



BONUS PROFICIENCIES

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with Nature and Survival. As well, your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make using either proficiency.

FORWARD OBSERVER

Beginning at 3rd level, whenever no other creature is within 30 feet of you, you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on Dexterity checks made to roll initiative.

FLEET-FOOTED

Starting at 9th level, while you wear light or no armor, your speed increases by 10 feet and neither climbing nor swimming costs you extra movement. In addition, you have advantage on saving throws made to avoid gaining levels of exhaustion from forced march.

PATHFINDER

Upon reaching 13th level, you become a master at overland travel. For any destination you have visited at least once, you always know how far it is away from you and in what direction the destination lies from your current position. When traveling one hour or longer to such a destination, you gain the following benefits:

- Difficult terrain doesn't slow your group's travel.
- You cannot be lost except by magical means.
- You are always considered alert to danger regardless other activities you engage in while traveling.
- Finally, if you travel alone, you can move stealthily at a normal pace.

SKIRMISHER

Beginning at 17th level, whenever you move half your speed or farther before you take the Attack action, you have advantage on your attack roll, and your movement after the attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

SORCERERS

As the innate ability to command magical power can arise in anyone, sorcerers come from a variety of backgrounds and religious beliefs. Their religious views might evolve with the understanding of their power's source or it might reinforce their commitment to their patron gods or turn them toward gods with magic in their portfolios, such as Tinel, to gain understanding of their gifts. Some sorcerers receive their magical abilities from the gods directly, in which case the sorcerers might join one of the orders of their church or become an agent for their church. Zheenkeef, for example, touches the souls of people who interest her to awaken power within them. Most touched in this way join the Joyous Brotherhood, the second order of the goddess's church.

DIVINE INSPIRATION

When you discovered sorcery, it was not through an awakening in your blood, but rather through a blossoming in your mind. The hand of the divine reached down to touch you, and in that instant the inner workings of magic exploded in your mind like a thousand doors being thrown open all at once. When you recovered from the shock, you found that you could bend the laws of reality with a few words and gestures. Faster than thought, you could transform your instincts and inspirations into spells. You were changed by your fleeting contact with a god, and though you might not know why that deity bestowed the gift of understanding upon you (or, indeed, which deity did so), the result is that your mind has opened to the currents of magical power that flow through the world in a way that no amount of studying could ever recreate.

KNOWLEDGE BESTOWED

At 1st level, you choose one divine domain from the cleric class, and add the corresponding domain spells to your sorcerer spell list.

Additionally, whenever you gain a level in this class, you do not have to choose which spell you learn immediately; instead, you can wait and choose which spell at any later time, though you must be conscious at the time you choose it. If you would gain another level and have not chosen a spell to learn from your previous level, you must choose the previous level's spell before gaining that level.

AWAKENED MIND

Starting at 1st level, you can use magical energy to reclaim some of your mind's fleeting touch with the divine; when you make an Intelligence check, you can expend a spell slot to gain a bonus to that roll equal to 1 + the level of the spell slot you expended. You can only use this feature once per Intelligence check.

MAGICAL INSIGHT

At 6th level, the divine inspiration that first opened your eyes to the currents of magic reaches its full illumination, and you gain two Metamagic options of your choice.

DIVINE UNRAVELING

Starting at 14th level, the divine inspiration that sparked your sorcerous magic gives insight into the weavings of arcane power that create spells, allowing you to pick them apart with ease. You can spend sorcery points to cast the *counterspell* spell; you choose the level at which you cast it (minimum 3rd), and the sorcery point cost of casting it is equal to that level + 2.

MIND OF A GOD

Beginning at 18th level, your consciousness has awakened to the point where you think and perceive on a level more divine than mortal, and you are permanently under the effects of a *mind blank* spell.

WARLOCKS

Warlocks make pacts with otherworldly beings, many of whom are ominous and dreadful, pledging service in exchange for magical power. People with strong religious convictions do not readily make such bargains, as the power their patron holds over them conflicts with devotion to the gods. Warlocks who have religious inclinations tend to follow gods of magic and knowledge, such as Tinel or Zheenkeef, or, possibly, one the servants of these gods.

ORACLE

The gifts bestowed upon you by your patron are those of foreknowledge. The Oracle is a being of prophecy and mystery, and manifests to you in ways that leave you questioning the nature of your patron. The Oracle communicates to you through whispered words that only you hear, visions that only you see, writings that only you can read, and hazy manifestations in the incense braziers and crystal balls that you use as a medium to call upon your patron. The Oracle might be a god, a fiend, or even a mortal of vast power, though you would never know it; you know only the prophecies that your patron bestows, and the arcane knowledge you are granted to conjure such visions for yourself.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The Oracle lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

ORACLE EXPANDED SPELLS

SPELL LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>guiding bolt, identify</i>
2nd	<i>augury, detect thoughts</i>
3rd	<i>clairvoyance, speak with dead</i>
4th	<i>arcane eye, divination</i>
5th	<i>commune, legend lore</i>

FORETELLING

Starting at 1st level, you can listen to the whispered words of your otherworldly patron and interpret the fates that they foretell. You can spend 10 minutes imparting the knowledge you gained from this foretelling to your companions. When you do so, choose up to six friendly creatures (which can include yourself) within 30 feet of you who can see or hear you and who can understand you. Each creature gains a single foretelling, which they can expend at any time for one of the following benefits:

- Gain advantage on a single attack roll, ability check, or saving throw before making the roll.
- Gain a +5 bonus to AC against a single attack before the attack roll is made.
- Gain 5 temporary hit points, which last until the creature takes a long rest or uses another foretelling.

A single creature can have no more than one foretelling at a time (from you, or any other source), and if a creature with a foretelling finishes a long rest, that foretelling is lost. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

FORETELL DISASTER

Starting at 6th level, the visions you can impart upon your allies can reveal ambushes and potentially devastating attacks, allowing your companions to avoid them. Any creature that has a foretelling granted by you can choose to expend it to gain one of the following benefits:

- When the creature would be surprised, it is instead not surprised.
- When the creature succeeds on a saving throw to take only half damage from an effect, the creature instead takes no damage.

FORETELL BATTLE

Starting at 10th level, any creature that has a foretelling granted by you can choose to expend it to gain advantage on a roll for initiative.

PROPHECY

Starting at 14th level, when you grant creatures a foretelling, you give them two foretellings instead of one, and each creature can have up to two foretellings at a time, provided they both come from you.

WIZARDS

The pursuit of magical knowledge might not leave much time for reflecting on religion or the gods' ultimate purpose, but many wizards have ties to the gods and a few even serve them directly. As with members of other classes, wizards favor gods whose portfolios overlap their interests. Many wizards adopt Tinel as their patron god, as this power is the god of magic, knowledge, and the truth. As well, Korak, the god of the forge and artisans, counts many wizards among his followers, especially those interested in crafting magic items. Evil wizards favor Asmodeus, Thellos, or Naran.

ARTIFICE

The magic taught by the School of Artifice encompasses a broad spectrum of schools of magic, but all of it is concentrated on transferring that magical power into magic items. Students of the School of Artifice can accurately identify magic items and their properties as a matter of course, and are among the most skilled magical craftsmen

THE WAY OF THE HIEROPHANTS

To join the Hierophants of Tinel (see p. 84-85), you must be an arcane spellcaster and a devout follower of the god. Membership in the hierophants confers the following benefits. Note that these benefits are maintained even if the hierophant leaves or even betrays the order, since they are matters of special training. Characters who learn hierophant secrets and then leave the order are widely despised by followers of the Gods of the Tree, and especially by loyal followers of Tinel himself.

COMPREHEND MAGIC

At 7th level, you learn the secrets of magic as a divine power of the universe mastered by Tinel. You become so in tune with the very power of magic that you are always under the effects of the *detect magic* and *see invisibility* spells.

MASTERY OF MAGIC

You may become one of The Five when another one dies or "retires" (vanishes into mystery, usually), provided you are at least 12th level—though you may be required to be of higher level to outshine competitors for the position. The Five possess ancient tomes of wisdom written when the world was young and the mortal races first learned to use magic from Tinel himself. These secrets are considered exceptionally dangerous and none but the Five may study them. This feature confers the following benefits: You have a +10 bonus on Intelligence (arcana) checks. You either add *counterspell* and *dispel magic* to the list of spells you know, or count as if you always have them prepared. In addition, you have advantage on ability checks made because of casting either spell.

in existence. Beyond that, the School of Artifice teaches its students how to enchant magic items with a speed unmatched by other wizards. Though the magic imbued in such items often does not last long, they produce magical devices in hours that it would take other wizards days, weeks, or longer to produce. Wizards that study in the School of Artifice are sometimes called artificers, and are frequently hired by adventuring companies looking to gain some magical support.

ARTIFICE SAVANT

Beginning when you select this school at 2nd level, you halve the amount of time it takes you to craft a magic item. Additionally, you add *detect magic* and *identify* to your spellbook, if they are not already there.

ARCANE RELICS

Also at 2nd level, you gain the ability to create temporary magic items that your companions can use, known as arcane relics. These can be held in one hand, and you determine the actual shape of the object, as fits the item's powers. You can spend the time during a short or long rest to create a single arcane relic and explain its use to any creatures that are nearby and can hear and understand you during that time. When you create the relic, you choose a single wizard spell of 1st level or higher from your spellbook that requires 1 action to cast, and use a spell slot equal to that spell's level. From that point on, the arcane relic is a magic item, and any creatures to whom you explained the relic's use can, while holding the relic, use an action to cast the spell you chose (following the same rules as magic items that allow you to cast spells). If the spell requires an attack roll or saving throw, it uses your spell attack bonus or spell save DC. Once the spell has been cast, the arcane relic loses all its magical power and crumbles into shards and dust.

The arcane relic's magic persists for only a short period of time, and the magical energy that you use to create the relic can only maintain a single arcane relic at a time. If you create another arcane relic, or if 24 hours pass and the relic has not been used, it loses its magic and crumbles to dust.

RAPID ENCHANTMENT

Starting at 6th level, you add the *magic weapon* spell to your spellbook, if it is not already there. When you cast *magic weapon*, you can target up to two weapons.

IMPROVED ARTIFICE

Beginning at 10th level, you can create two arcane relics during a short or long rest, and can maintain up to two relics at a time, instead of just one.

SUPREME ARTIFICE

Starting at 14th level, you can create three arcane relics during a short or long rest, and can maintain up to three relics at a time, instead of two.

BACKGROUNDS

Backgrounds tell you something about from where characters come and the training they received. The following backgrounds supplement those described in the *PH* and tie-in to the churches presented in this book.

EMISSARY

You fight a battle using wit and words. A skilled negotiator and shrewd diplomat, you spent much of your life in the halls of power, influencing opinion and brokering deals to advance your agenda and the agenda of those people you represent. You might have learned the techniques as a courtier, engaging in intrigues in a lord or lady's court, or you might have been chosen by an organization to act as their ambassador, going where you were needed to gain allies and defuse tensions.

As an emissary, you represented an individual, people, or institution. Work out the details with your GM to determine who you served, what kind of connections you made, and whether you still have ties with your employer. If you remain in service to a group, you have the power to speak on their behalf, but that power could be fleeting if you botch a negotiation or cause grave offense in the people you hope to court.

Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Persuasion

Languages: Two of your choice

Equipment: A set of fine clothes, a badge of office, papers identifying you as an agent of an institution (such as the Great Church), and a purse containing 25 gp

FEATURE: ACCESS

You have free access to movers and shakers with whom your patron organization has connections. You can petition for and usually receive an audience from a noble, guild head, or crime lord, provided they are amenable to the group you represent. While you are on official business, your host will usually provide you with accommodations, sustenance, and entertainment, provided you remain on good terms.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Emissaries earn their place for their social graces and diplomatic skills. Emissaries might have been slaves, elevated from the ranks of the wretched for their unique talents or could be minor nobles in their own rights, working on behalf of a liege. Whatever their circumstances, emissaries maintain their composure in the toughest situations, seemingly always able to propose a solution that, if not accepted, at least sounds reasonable.

REBORN

You are a warrior for redemption, reborn and risen from your own ashes. You strive to mend the terrible deeds you committed in your previous life. After the fire of rebirth swept through you, you were made into a powerful figure and sent forth to undo whatever horrors you had committed. Why the gods chose you to be reborn and yet allow

EMISSARY

D8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 *I'm adept at picking out a person's qualities and complementing them for them. I do this to win friends and make allies.*
- 2 *I have never met a stranger.*
- 3 *I pay attention to my appearance. First impressions are everything.*
- 4 *I always take time to learn the local customs so I can make people feel comfortable.*
- 5 *People are puppets, dancing on my strings. I enjoy manipulating others and getting them to do what I want.*
- 6 *I am most comfortable among the elite. I have little love for the unwashed masses.*
- 7 *Although I appear to maintain my composure when insulted, I never forget a slight. My revenge, when I get it, will come from out of nowhere.*
- 8 *I am effusive in my dealings with others, deferring to them in everything, while subtly offering suggestions to steer them to my way of thinking.*

D6 IDEAL

- 1 *Nation or Organization. Everything I do, I do for my people, guild, nation, or monarch. (Any)*
- 2 *Peace. Violence solves nothing. If there's a peaceful solution, I will find it. (Good)*
- 3 *Order. Civilization depends on order to survive. (Lawful)*
- 4 *Power. I crave power over others and do whatever I must to attain it. (Evil)*
- 5 *Good. I strive to make the world better than how I found it. (Good)*
- 6 *Aspiration. I hope to make a name for myself by my deeds and achievements (Any)*

D6 BOND

- 1 *Everything I learned about negotiation I learned from a master. I hope to live up to their memory.*
- 2 *The people I serve depend on me to represent their interests. I take my responsibility seriously.*
- 3 *A past failure led to the deaths of many people. I refuse to make the same mistake again.*
- 4 *I will protect my interests and those of my employers with my life.*
- 5 *I undertake dangerous missions to gain favor from my employers.*
- 6 *My loyalty to my employers is unimpeachable.*

D6 FLAW

- 1 *I see people as tools to be used and discarded.*
- 2 *I secretly despise people in power and find it hard to mask my disdain.*
- 3 *I sometimes use my position and my employer's name to enrich myself.*
- 4 *I suspect my employers have sinister motives and that I must represent them worries me.*
- 5 *I am the most important person in any room.*
- 6 *I see the flaws in everyone I meet.*

REBORN

D8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 *I sometimes fail to stop myself from starting sentences with, "Before my rebirth..."*
- 2 *I have great patience for those who wrong me, having seen how misdeeds can return to haunt you.*
- 3 *I spend longer than most people contemplating my actions, judging my every move fiercely.*
- 4 *I am the first person to forgive anyone that asks for forgiveness.*
- 5 *My rebirth has given me a strong faith, and though I am no zealot I am more devout than most.*
- 6 *I am solemn to the point of being dour, due to the weight of guilt on my shoulders.*
- 7 *I relish every moment; I have been given a second chance, and intend to make the most of it.*
- 8 *I advocate for the harshest punishments; everyone must atone for their sins in some way.*

D6 IDEAL

- 1 *Penitence. I have a great debt to work off, and I must spend every available moment making things right where I once was wrong.*
- 2 *Zeal. The gods have given me a second chance, and I must pursue the task that was set before me to the exclusion of nearly everything else.*
- 3 *Duty. In my past life, I preyed on the weak because there was no one to defend them from me. Now I will be the defender.*
- 4 *Covenant. There is a bargain between myself and the gods; when I have paid for my sins, my life will be my own again.*
- 5 *Irresistible Command. By divine edict I was reborn, and by that same edict must I atone for the life I once wasted on evil.*
- 6 *Gratitude. Once I walked a path that would have led to my own damnation; being given a second chance is a gift I must not squander with inaction or evil.*

D6 BOND

- 1 *There is one person that I wronged to whom I owe atonement more than anyone else.*
- 2 *I would do anything to erase any records of my former life.*
- 3 *I have sworn to bring vengeance upon someone who was my ally in my former life.*
- 4 *I will do anything that I am told to do by someone I wronged in my past life.*
- 5 *I will always protect the temple where I was reborn.*
- 6 *I must seek out and destroy those who once served me before my rebirth.*

D6 FLAW

- 1 *I am single-minded in my pursuit of atonement, even when it means ignoring the needs of my allies.*
- 2 *I can never forgive myself or others for their sins. Once guilty, always guilty.*
- 3 *I am reckless when I am working to right the wrongs of my past life, and care little for keeping myself safe.*
- 4 *I only see the worst in other people, because I know how evil I once was.*
- 5 *I will not suffer the wicked to live; I know what they are capable of in the darkest, blackest parts of their soul.*
- 6 *I will never give up when I think I can mark something off my list, even if I am about to collapse from wounds or exhaustion.*

others to burn, none can say, but you are the deepest proof that redemption is possible in the eyes of the gods.

When you emerged from the flame, your appearance changed. Your hair color, eye color, the shape of your nose—every aspect of your physical appearance changed in the process. Perhaps your new face is even one of someone you killed in your prior life.

Many reborn are lone figures who are very personally involved with a quest or task. You might be seeking to destroy evil cultists, yet in your former life you might have once been those same cultists' high priest. You aid those who seek to undo the evil you once wrought. Reborn are incredibly rare, and it's profoundly unlikely that you will ever meet more than one in a lifetime—if even one other than yourself.

Skill Proficiencies: History, Religion

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools or musical instrument

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A walking staff (quarterstaff), a list containing items that you must do to right the crimes of your prior life, a set of ragged traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp

FEATURE: ECHOES OF ANOTHER LIFE

As one of the reborn, you have an entire previous life's worth of memories and experiences to draw on, and sometimes you come across people or places you recognize from that past life. When you select this background, choose a single organization that is relatively widespread; for example, you might choose the religious orders of a faith from your past, the military forces of a kingdom, an order of monks, or the cabal of cultists that once served you. In your past life, you had a strong relationship with that organization—whether friendly or antagonistic, as you choose when you select this background. You have a strong familiarity with the traditions, practices, hierarchies, and trappings of that organization, enough so that you can convincingly converse with a member of that organization and pass yourself off as a member. You can draw upon your knowledge of that organization at will.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Reborn have nearly full memories of their past lives, if some knowledge has dimmed following their rebirth, and their drive for penance shapes their personalities. Their actions and deeds in a former life might still affect their personality traits, though their ideals are now far nobler after emerging from the crucible of rebirth. Their flaws might be born of their guilt over past misdeeds, and they still retain strong bonds to allies—and victims—from their former lives.

VARIANT HERMIT: FRIAR

You felt called to join the friars, a contemplative order of the Great Church. You spent your life on the road, living in poverty, and dependent on the charity of others. Each town you visited, you made sure to stop at the church to offer prayers and receive shelter for a time before moving on to spread the faith wherever you went. Your experiences broadened your mind as you saw much of the world.

If you choose to join the friars, you start with a holy symbol instead of the scroll case stuffed with notes. You can also choose the Wanderer feature from the Outlander background instead of the Discovery feature.

VARIANT SOLDIER: CHURCHGUARD

You joined the churchguard, one of the many orders of the Great Church. You and your fellow members were tasked with protecting one of the many churches found across the world against the myriad enemies of the faith. Much

of your time spent in that service involved standing guard, protecting the clergy, and training in the arts of battle. While not especially glorious, you knew you were doing the gods' work by protecting their holy houses.

If you choose to have joined the churchguard, you gain proficiency in Perception and Religion instead of proficiency in one type of gaming set and vehicles (land). As well, you have the churchguard uniform and holy symbol instead of a trophy taken from a fallen enemy and the set of dice or deck of cards.

FEATS, SPELLS & MAGIC ITEMS

The following feats, spells and magic items may be directly taught or crafted by a deity, brought into being by a religion, or represent the effects of religious doctrine in a campaign. The descriptions of deities, religions and religious orders throughout this book indicate which of these abilities and items match specific gods, goddesses and religious concerns.

FEATS

If you use feats in your game, the following options reflect the benefits of serving the gods.

MASTER OF A MINOR DOMAIN

PREREQUISITE: Divine Domain class feature

You worship a deity that has dominion over more than one divine domain, and have access to spells that fall within your god's extended portfolio. Choose a Divine Domain other than the one you already possess. The domain spells for that domain are added to your domain spell list.

SAIL MASTER

You're an old hand when it comes to the sailing of ships and you know just what to do when danger strikes. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength or Dexterity by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You are proficient in navigator's tools and vehicles (water) if you aren't already. As well, you double your proficiency bonus for any checks that involve these proficiencies.
- You ignore the effects of moving across difficult terrain caused by moving across the deck of a ship.
- Swimming doesn't halve your speed.

TRIAD FEAT: THE ARM

The Arm acts for the Unity, learning to stand in the path of danger, slay foes, and take blows intended for her sisters, just as Canelle did on the Journey to the East. You can only select this feat at the same time as other characters take the feats for The Breath and The Eye, and you can never take either of those feats. You and those characters form your Unity. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength or Constitution by 1, to a maximum of 20.

- You have proficiency in all saving throws in which other members of your Unity have proficiency.
- You can communicate with the members of your Unity telepathically, even if you are not on the same plane.
- While you are within 60 feet of both of the other members of your Unity, the other members of your Unity have resistance to all damage, and when they take damage, you take the same amount of damage.

TRIAD FEAT: THE BREATH

PREREQUISITE: The ability to cast at least one spell

The Breath speaks for the Unity, learning to understand and influence people as a leader and lawmaker, and to comprehend the world for her sisters, just as Naryne did on the Journey to the East. You can only select this feat at the same time as other characters take the feats for The Arm and The Eye, and you can never take either of those feats. You and those characters form your Unity. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Wisdom or Charisma by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You can communicate with the members of your Unity telepathically, even if you are not on the same plane.
- When you cast a spell with a range of touch, another member of your Unity can deliver the spell as if they had cast the spell. That member of the Unity must be within 100 feet of you, and they must use their reaction to deliver the spell when you cast it. If the spell requires an attack roll, you use your attack modifier for the roll.
- When you cast a spell of 1st level or higher on another member of your Unity that targets only one creature and doesn't have a range of self, you can also target the other member of your Unity, provided he or she is within the range of the spell. To be eligible, the spell must be incapable of targeting more than one creature at the spell's current level.

TRIAD FEAT: THE EYE

The Eye observes for the Unity, learning to see details others miss, to hear the sounds others ignore, and to protect her family with her observations, just as Thellyne did on the Journey to the East. You can only select this feat at the same time as other characters take the feats for The Arm and The Breath, and you can never take either of those feats. You and those characters form your Unity. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity or Intelligence by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You can communicate with the members of your Unity telepathically, even if you are not on the same plane.
- While you are within 60 feet of both other members of your Unity and none of you are Incapacitated, none of you can be surprised, and you (but not other members of the Unity) have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.
- As an action, other members of your Unity can see through your eyes and hear what you hear until the start of their next turn, gaining the benefits of any special senses that you have. During this time, they are deaf and blind with regard to their own surroundings. This benefit can be used at any distance, even across planes, provided you are conscious and not incapacitated.

CLERIC SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)	<i>Ward Against Undeath</i>
1st Level	<i>Armor of Earth</i>
4th Level	<i>Power of the Earth, Test of Souls</i>
5th Level	<i>Fair Light, Light of the Moon</i>
9th Level	<i>Anwyn's Elysian Palace, Judgment of Maal</i>

DRUID SPELLS

1st Level	<i>Armor of Earth</i>
4th Level	<i>Power of the Earth</i>
5th Level	<i>Light of the Moon</i>
9th Level	<i>Shooting Stars</i>

SORCERER SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)	<i>Fist of Air</i>
1st Level	<i>Armor of Earth</i>
4th Level	<i>Power of the Earth</i>
9th Level	<i>Shooting Stars</i>

WIZARD SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)	<i>Fist of Air</i>
9th Level	<i>Shooting Stars</i>

SPELLS

The new spells presented here speak to the gods and their place in the cosmology presented in this book.

ANWYN'S ELYSIAN PALACE *9th-level conjuration***CASTING TIME:** 1 action**RANGE:** Touch**COMPONENTS:** V, S, M (ash from the central hearth of a site consecrated to Anwyn)**DURATION:** Instantaneous

You and one creature you touch are transported to the great palace of Anwyn on the plane of Elysium. The palace is one of her many homes, though she is rarely present there. There is, however, a 1 percent chance for Anwyn to be in residence. If so, and if you are Anwynian, you might be granted an audience with the god, with the effects of such an audience determined by the GM. In any event, five solars—Atteretix the body servant, Miallira the handmaid, Rigar the door warden, Ayalla the chamberlain, and Yovarra the chef—staff the place. You and your companion arrive in the palace's atrium. If your companion is hostile, the solars immediately attack.

You can use a bonus action to return to the spot where you cast this spell at any time. Each hour you remain in the palace after 24 hours, you take a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to your Constitution score. If your Constitution score drops to 0, you die and your soul moves to its proper destination.

Anyone spending 8 hours or longer in the palace enjoys splendid feats and perfect restfulness, conferring the following benefits:

- A creature regains all hit points and Hit Dice. 8 hours in the palace also cures the creature of all diseases, removes all poisons, and lifts all curses other than those bestowed by a god or a being of similar status.
- A dead creature is restored to life as by the *true resurrection* spell.
- A creature can ask the solars questions that can be answered with a yes or a no as if the creature cast the *commune* spell. A creature can ask up to twenty questions and has no chance of receiving no answer.
- For 24 hours after leaving the palace, a creature benefits as if under the effect of the *bless* spell and is immune to the frightened condition.

Once you cast this spell, you cannot cast it again until one year, one month, and one day pass.

ARMOR OF EARTH *1st-level abjuration***CASTING TIME:** 1 action**RANGE:** Self**COMPONENTS:** V, S, M (a bit of dirt)**DURATION:** 8 hours

You rub dirt into your skin, causing it to assume the appearance of earth that lasts for the duration or until

you don any armor or you become immersed in liquid. Until the spell ends, your base AC becomes 11 + your spellcasting modifier and you ignore the effects of moving across difficult terrain made from earth, stone, or plants.

FAIR LIGHT *5th-level evocation*

CASTING TIME: 1 action
RANGE: Self
COMPONENTS: S
DURATION: 1 hour

A 60-foot-radius sphere of sparkling light spreads out from you. The sphere is made of bright light, and sheds dim light for an additional 60 feet.

Golden halos form around the heads of good creatures illuminated by the spell, while shadowy halos form around the heads of evil creatures. Furthermore, good creatures illuminated by the light roll a d4 and add the resulting number to the number rolled on the d20 when making attack rolls or saving throws. Conversely, evil creatures illuminated by the light must roll a d4 whenever they make attack rolls or saving throws and subtract that number from the number rolled on the d20.

If any of this spell's area overlaps with an area of darkness created by a spell of 5th level or lower, the spell that created the darkness is dispelled.

FIST OF AIR *Evocation cantrip*

CASTING TIME: 1 action
RANGE: 30 feet
COMPONENTS: V, S
DURATION: Instantaneous

You strike at a creature or object in range with a sudden concentrated blast of air, impacting it with incredible force. The target must make a Strength saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage and is pushed 5 feet in a direction you choose.

This spell's damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

JUDGMENT OF MAAL *9th-level necromancy (ritual)*

CASTING TIME: 1 action
RANGE: 30 feet
COMPONENTS: V, S, M (black sapphire gem worth at least 1,000 gp)
DURATION: Permanent

You draw forth the soul of one evil creature that has been dead no longer than one hour and is within the spell's range. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be sent to the land of the dead to be judged by Maal, and be imprisoned in that place for the duration of the spell. The creature's corpse remains, but is now an empty soulless shell.

While imprisoned, the creature to whom the soul belongs cannot be restored to life by any means. Shattering the black sapphire gem ends the spell and enables the soul to escape the land of the dead.

LIGHT OF THE MOON *5th-level evocation*

CASTING TIME: 1 action
RANGE: Self (60-foot line)
COMPONENTS: V, S, M (an opaque lens of white glass)
DURATION: Concentration, up to 1 minute

A beam of soft light flashes from your hand in a 5-foot wide, 60-foot-long line. Each creature in the line must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature gains one level of exhaustion and must then succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or fall unconscious until it takes damage or someone uses an action to shake or slap the sleeping creature awake. Shapechangers make their saving throws with disadvantage and if they fail, they instantly revert to their original form and cannot assume a different form until the spell ends. Undead and creatures immune to being charmed are immune to this effect.

Undead creatures in the line must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 4d8 radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

For the duration, a mote of soft light shines from your hand, shedding dim light in a 30-foot radius. This light is moonlight.

POWER OF THE EARTH *4th-level transmutation*

CASTING TIME: 1 action
RANGE: Touch
COMPONENTS: V, S, M (a bit of clay)
DURATION: 1 hour

You touch a willing creature in contact with an earthen or stone surface. For the duration, the target gains a number of benefits while it remains in contact with such a surface:

The target cannot be moved against its will by any means and has advantage on any check or saving throw made to avoid being knocked prone.

The target gains tremorsense out to a range of 60 feet. See *MM* for details on this special sense.

The target gains 3d6 temporary hit points. If the target breaks contact with an earthen or stone surface, any remaining temporary hit points disappear until the target resumes contact with such a surface.

SHOOTING STARS *9th-level evocation*

CASTING TIME: 1 action
RANGE: 1 mile
COMPONENTS: V, S
DURATION: Instantaneous

Tiny motes of cold radiance fall to the ground at eight different points you can see within range. Each creature directly below a falling mote must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or be struck by the mote. On a failure, you decide whether the creature takes 12d6 cold damage or regains 12d6 hit points.

Then, center a 30-foot-radius sphere on each point you chose. The sphere spreads around corners. For each creature in an area other than one struck by the mote, you decide whether the creature takes 3d6 cold damage or regains 3d6 hit points.

TEST OF SOULS*4th-level divination (ritual)***CASTING TIME:** 1 action**RANGE:** Touch**COMPONENTS:** V**DURATION:** 1 hour

You touch a creature to test their heart. The target must be willing, or the spell has no effect. When you cast the spell, you and the target are transported in your minds' eyes to a testing ground, where the target undergoes a series of tests of a metaphysical and metaphorical nature to reveal their attitudes toward life, the gods, death, and more. You observe these tests and can put the target to tests of your own devising.

The testing lasts for the duration, during which time you and the target are unconscious. If either of you take any damage or are slapped or shaken, the spell ends.

At the end of the hour, you learn all the following information about the target:

- Alignment
- Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores
- Religious affiliation and degree of piety
- Race
- Whether the target has told you any lies during the preceding 24 hours and what those lies, if any, were.

WARD AGAINST UNDEATH*Necromancy cantrip***CASTING TIME:** 1 action**RANGE:** Touch**COMPONENTS:** V, S**DURATION:** 10 days

You touch a corpse, or other remains. For the duration, the target can't become undead.



MAGIC ITEMS

The following magic items have story ties to the gods of the tree and supplement those found in the *DMG*.

CELESTIAL QUILL

Wondrous item, legendary

Made from the feather of an angel, the *celestial quill* shines with the perfect light of Heaven, emitting bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light 30 feet beyond that distance. An evil creature that willingly touches a *celestial quill* takes 10d8 radiant damage, and the limb that touched it becomes permanently withered and useless, the effects of which are determined by the GM. The withering can be reversed by a *wish* spell.

Any other creature can touch and use the quill. If used as a writing implement, it cannot be used to write any untruth. Furthermore, when used to create *spell scrolls* to contain cleric or paladin spells, the quill halves the creation cost (see *DMG* for details on creating magic items).

THE LEAVES OF ELIWYN

Wondrous item, legendary

Eliwyn still grows in her sacred grove. Once every century, she sheds her leaves. Most of them are gathered by the druids tending her. Some, though, are carried away on the wind and reach mortal hands beyond. These leaves are imbued with life-giving and healing powers. The leaves are large and oval, about twelve inches long and six inches at the widest point. The tops of the leaves are deep green while their undersides are bright silver.

A leaf has several possible uses. First, as an action, you can crush the leaf, which causes it to emit a sweet odor and ooze milky sap that functions as six *potions of healing* to anyone who consumes it. Second, as an action, you can apply the leaf to the body of one creature you can reach, which causes the creature to be instantly cured of any disease, poison, curse, madness, or any other harmful ongoing effect. Finally, you can use the leaf in place of the material components required by the *raise dead*, *reincarnate*, *resurrection*, or *true resurrection* spells. When you do so, the target suffers no ill effects from coming back from the dead. Using the leaf in any of these ways consumes its power.

SHIELD OF THE FATHERS

Armor (shield), legendary (requires attunement)

The *shields of the fathers* were made to resemble the fabled artifact of the same name. They are entrusted to the most powerful champions of Morwyn. Each shield has a distinctive shining white field with a silver tear of Morywn at its center.

While holding this shield, you have a +1 bonus to AC, and are immune to the charmed and frightened conditions.

THE FIVE STAVES

Staff, legendary (requires attunement)

The staves of the hierophants were forged by the founders of the sacred order of hierophants long ago. Every member of the order had a hand in their making, which is why they are so terribly powerful. They all look like one another, though each one bears distinct markings that pertain to the sense to which it is aligned. Just as the Tinelites seek to solve the mysteries of life using the five senses, each of the hierophants (and her staff) represents one of those five senses.

- **Magic Resistance.** While carrying one of the staves, you have advantage on saving throws against spells and resistance to spell damage.
- **Spell Storage.** Each of the staves can store spells cast into it, holding them until the attuned wielder uses them. A staff can hold up to 15 levels' worth of spells at a time. Any creature can cast a spell of 1st through 5th level into the staff by touching it as the spell is cast. The spell has no effect, other than to be stored in the staff. If the staff cannot hold the spell, the spell is expended without effect. The level of the spell slot used to cast the spell determines how much space it uses. While holding the staff, you can cast any spell stored in it. The spell uses the slot level, spell save DC, spell attack bonus, and spell-casting ability of the original caster, but otherwise is treated as if you cast the spell. Once cast, the stored spell leaves the staff, freeing up space to store another spell.
- **Spells.** While holding the staff, you can cast each of the following spells once per day using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus: *dispel magic*, *geas*, and *teleport*.

In addition to the powers common to all five staves, individual staves have unique properties as described below.

STAFF OF THE SCENT

You become so attuned to the scents of the world around you that you can detect subtle changes in your environment no one else would notice. While you hold the staff, you are constantly under the effects of the following spells: *detect poison and disease*, *find traps*, and *see invisibility*. You are also aware of the location of each creature and plant within 30 feet of you such that creatures within this range cannot hide from you. You count as if you do not need to breathe for the purpose of resisting certain attacks and spells such as *stinking cloud*. Finally, you add *stinking cloud* and *cloudkill* to the list of spells you can cast once per day from the staff.



STAFF OF SIGHT

You see with perfect clarity while you hold the staff, such that you count as if you are always under the effect of the *true seeing* spell. Additionally, you have advantage on Intelligence (investigation) and Wisdom (Perception) checks that involve sight, while creatures making checks against your passive Perception do so with disadvantage. You cannot be blinded and you are immune to gaze attacks such as the medusa's Petrifying Gaze. Finally, you add *eyebite* to the list of spells you can cast once per day from the staff.

STAFF OF SOUND

You can hear what few others do, becoming able to make out ultrahigh and ultralow frequencies. While bearing the staff, you can cast *clairvoyance* at will, but you can only choose hearing when you cast the spell this way. Furthermore, you have advantage on Intelligence (Investigation) and Wisdom (Perception) checks that involve hearing, while creatures making checks against your passive Perception do so with disadvantage. You are immune to thunder damage. Finally, you add *sending* and *thunderwave* (as a 5th-level spell) to the list of spells you can cast once per day from the staff.



STAFF OF THE TONGUE

The staff enhances your palate and your skills as an orator. While carrying the staff, you do not need to eat and you are constantly under the effects of the *tongues* spell. You have advantage on all Charisma checks. You are immune to poison damage and you cannot be poisoned. Finally, you add *create food and water* and *heroes' feast* to the list of spells you can cast once per day from the staff.

STAFF OF THE HAND

The staff enhances your sense of touch. While carrying the staff, you are constantly under the effects of the *mage hand* spell, and the staff doubles your proficiency bonus to spell attack rolls when you would touch a target. Finally, you add *arcane hand* to the list of spells you can cast once per day from the staff.

STOLE OF DIVINITY

Wondrous item, rarity varies (requires attunement)

The *stoles of divinity* are prized relics belonging to the various churches dedicated to the gods of the tree and are a key part of the religious vestments worn by the clergy. Each is a long scarf, usually silk or linen, which is embroidered with the symbol of the church. It is worn over both shoulders. They might be highly ornamented for use in a church, or simpler, when designed for adventuring clerics,

paladins, and other holy champions. The benefits stoles confer depend on the church to which they are associated.

- **Sacrifice (Shalimyr, Rare).** You do not need to eat or drink while wearing this stole.
- **Inspiration (Zbeenkeef, Rare).** You double your proficiency bonus for ability checks made using tools in which you are proficient while you wear this stole.
- **Beauty (Aymara, Very Rare).** While wearing this stole, you can cast the *charm person* spell at will.
- **Heroism (Darmon, Very Rare).** You gain a +1 bonus to AC and to saving throws while wearing this stole.
- **The Wrestler (Canelle, Very Rare).** Your Strength score increases by 2, to a maximum of 20, while you wear this stole.
- **Nobility (Naryne, Very Rare).** Your Charisma score increases by 2, to a maximum of 20, while you wear this stole.
- **The Hunter (Thellyne, Very Rare).** Your Dexterity score increases by 2, to a maximum of 20, while you wear this stole.
- **Health (Rontra, Very Rare).** Your Constitution score increases by 2, to a maximum of 20, while you wear this stole.
- **The Judge (Maal, Very Rare).** Your Wisdom score increases by 2, to a maximum of 20, while you wear this stole.
- **The Sacred (Mormekar, Rare).** You are immune to necrotic damage while you wear this stole.
- **The Mage Guard (Tinel, Legendary).** You have advantage on saving throws against spells and you have resistance to spell damage while you wear this stole.
- **Protection (Terak, Legendary).** You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage while you wear this stole.
- **Healing (Morywn, Rare).** While wearing this stole, you can cast the *heal* spell once per day.

ARTIFACTS

The following two artifacts have strong ties to the gods of the tree.

THE ARK OF MAGIC

Wondrous item, artifact

This is the golden ark in which the archangel Uriel bore magic to the mortal races. It has been lost since the time of antiquity, but scholars believe it is still hidden somewhere in the mortal sphere. Legend has it that in the time of greatest need, when the mortal races stand on the precipice of destruction, four great heroes will arise, bearing the ark.

The ark has four handles to bear it by. In classical depictions, Uriel stands before four unnamed angels who hold

the ark by these handles. When these four handles are held, the ark provides the bearers with the raw power of magic. Each bearer must have one hand on the arc (usually holding the arc on the shoulder) for these powers to be available. This means that the bearer cannot move away from the arc by more than 5 feet.

The ark has 1,000 charges for some of the following properties. It replenishes all expended charges once each day at dawn.

- **Divine Aura.** When borne, divine light washes out from it and coalesces in a soft radiance that spreads out in a 30-foot-radius sphere. Creatures bearing the ark have advantage on all saving throws and other creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against them. In addition, when a fiend or an undead creature hits a bearer with a melee attack, the aura flashes with brilliant light. The attacker must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or become blinded for 24 hours.
- **Spells.** When carried by four creatures, they can agree to use any of the following powers at the cost of 50 charges each. Any one of the four can use an action to cast *power word kill* or *time stop*.
 - The bearer on the front left, the handle of fire, can cast any of the following spells at a cost of 10 charges: *delayed blast fireball*, *meteor swarm*, or *sunburst*.
 - The bearer on the front right, the handle of water, can cast any of the following spells at a cost of 10 charges: *cloud kill*, *mass heal*, or *storm of vengeance*.
 - The bearer on the back right, the handle of earth, can cast any of the following spells at a cost of 10 charges: *antimagic field*, *earthquake*, or *regenerate*.
 - The bearer on the back left, the handle of air, can cast any of the following spells at a cost of 10 charges: *chain lightning*, *control wind*, or *thunderwave* (as 9th-level spell).

With this ark, armies might be leveled and even the greatest foes toppled. However, tinkering with such powers can be dangerous to both the wielder and the world. Since the ark is the container that bore the raw magic to the material plane, if all the charges for a single day are used, magic in the mortal world ceases to function until the charges have

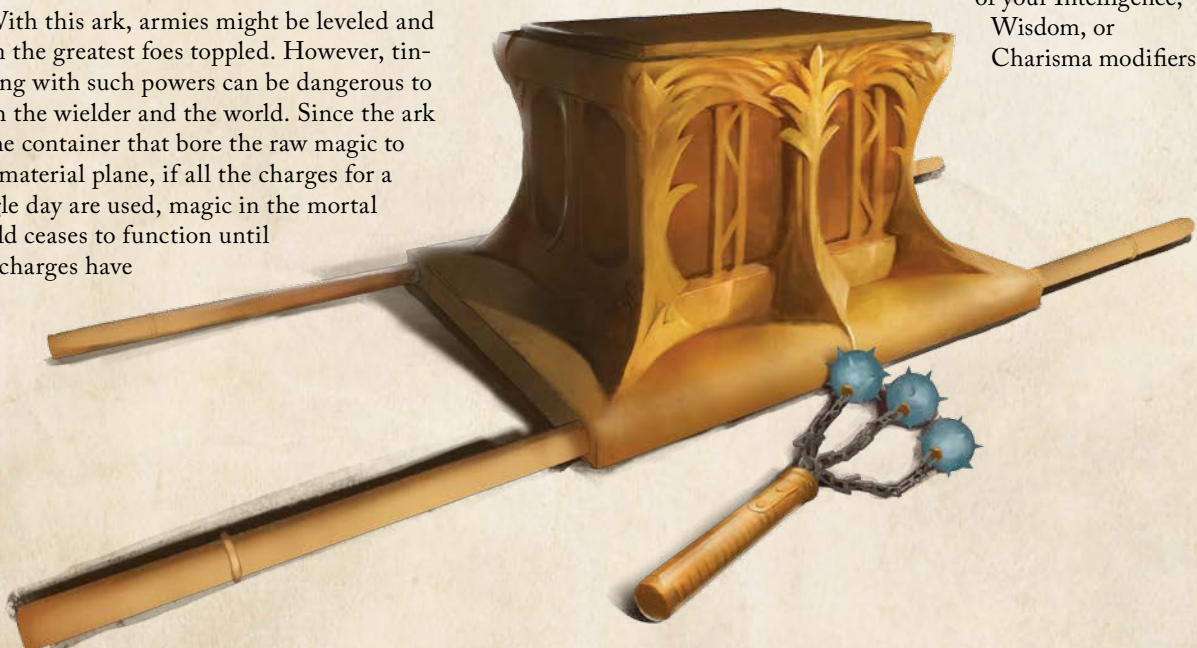
been restored. Further, there is a 50% chance that everyone touching the ark when the last of its daily power is drained will be utterly destroyed. Some scholars hold that, should the ark be brought forth and its bearers defeated, it will mean the end of magic in the world.

THE FLAIL OF RONTRA

Weapon (flail), artifact (requires attunement)

Rontra gave this mighty weapon to her mortal worshipers long ago, before the forming of the Compact. It is currently lost somewhere deep in the earth, its whereabouts known only to the Earth Mother herself. Legend tells that in time of need, when the land and its people are in grave danger, Grandmother Rontra will send one of her chosen mortal worshipers on a quest to prove their worth. If successful, she will bestow upon them this dire flail, with its haft of purest silver and solid gold chains. The spiked balls are as clear as crystal, each bearing a sparkling light within. Although it appears delicate, the weapon is indestructible and powerful. But until the hero of prophecy wields it, scholars say it appears to be a common flail, as much like a farm implement as a weapon of war.

- **Magic Weapon.** The *Flail of Rontra* is a magic weapon that grants a +3 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls. In addition, when you hit a fiend or undead with the weapon, that creature takes an extra 3d10 radiant damage.
- **Rontra's Ward.** While you carry the flail, you are immune to necrotic damage, you emit dim light in a 5-foot-radius, and any fiend or undead that hits you with an attack must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 round.
- **Spells.** You can cast the following spells from the weapon each once per day: *earthquake*, *move earth*, *stone shape*, and *stoneskin*. The spell save DC equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + the highest of your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifiers.



NEW CREATURES

A selection of divine servants can be found below and they represent just some of the beings one might encounter in dealing with the gods of the tree.

ANIMAL SPIRITS

In the mortal world, animal spirits are plentiful, but the greatest animal spirits serve the gods directly, with two spirits particularly close to the gods.

HANUMANIS

Medium celestial, chaotic good

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Wis +4

Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +4

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages all

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Celestial Weapon. The hanumanis's weapon attacks are magical. The hanumanis treats all weapons as if they had the finesse property. When a hanumanis hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 2d8 radiant damage (included in the attack).

Innate Spellcasting. The hanumanis's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13). The hanumanis can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

3/day: *hideous laughter*

1/day: *dimension door*, *invisibility*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hanumanis makes two staff attacks.

Staff. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target(s).

Hit: 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

Change Shape. The hanumanis magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating equal to or less than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the hanumanis's choice). In a new form, the hanumanis retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and special senses are replaced by those of the new form, and it gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that it lacks.

REACTIONS

Spring Away. The hanumanis makes an attack with its staff and moves up to half its speed when a creature it can see misses it.

Divine Rebirth. These spirits presented here embody the personality of a type of beast, but they are far more than the beasts they represent. Religious scholars believe they are the souls of mortals who felt so tied to animals that they asked to be reborn in animal form. Upon their death in that form, they become spirits with the personalities and intelligence of mortals (or even better, divine spirits) and the form of animals. Some of these divine creatures attain almost godlike status. One might consider that the greatest among these spirits would be worshiped as a god by the common animals of its ilk, were they to understand such things.

HANUMANIS

As mischievous as their monkey forms might lead one to believe, these spirits are clever, often quite funny, and closely tied with the chaotic gods, particularly Darmon. They are expert martial combatants, often relying on their staves to perform miraculous feats of melee. They cannot tolerate bullies of any sort, but they are most particularly the celestial foes of the rakshasas. Whenever one of the hanumanis can help a mortal against a rakshasa, it will seize the opportunity.

Hanumanis enjoy confounding their foes with their magic. When fighting rakshasas or other lawful evil opponents, hanumanis drop the playful act and use their enchanted quarterstaves with deadly precision.



POOKA

Medium celestial, chaotic good

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	22 (+6)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +9

Skills Acrobatics, +9, Medicine +6, Stealth +9

Damage Resistances cold, fire, and radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages all

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The pooka's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14). The pooka can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

At-will: *detect evil and good*

3/day: *cure wounds* (as 4th level), *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *lesser restoration*

1/day: *dimension door*, *remove curse*

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Bestow Luck. The pooka grants advantage to one attack roll, ability check, or saving throw made by a creature within 60 feet of it. The pooka must be able to see the creature.

POOKA

A pooka is best understood as a rabbit spirit, but the truth is, pookas can be from any of the gentle woodland spirits. They are immensely charitable creatures, and the suffering of man or beast fills them with sorrow. Closely tied to Rontra, these gentle creatures are happy to come to the mortal sphere, usually invisibly, to aid the most unfortunate beings of the Material Plane. They usually travel alone, though in the outer planes they can be found in large groups, particularly in Elysium, where they like to observe the mortal world.

Pookas are peaceful creatures by nature and do not usually fight. When involved in a combat, they lurk invisibly, providing aid to those in need.

HANDMAID OF ZHEENKEEF

The handmaids of Zheenkeef do not make sense to a sane mind. Once mortal servants of the mother of madness, they are now so a part of her strange view of the universe that they are constantly shifting and changing, spouting nonsense one moment and profound wisdom the next.



Agents of Chaos. In her desire to see the world change and be interesting, Zheenkeef often allows her handmaids to wander the world. Since they do very little of actual practical consequence (they certainly don't go conquering nations), it rarely ends up violating the Compact. Instead, they topple existing orders then rebuild them, send people on quests that might have interesting repercussions, and generally promote chaos. Adventurers encountering a handmaid might find themselves needing to prove they are entertaining and interesting, or suffer unhappy consequences.

When powerful clerics of Zheenkeef call for aid from their goddess, it often comes in the form of these bizarre heralds.

Chaotic Foe. A handmaid of Zheenkeef is utterly unpredictable in combat. One round she might dominate the toughest-looking fighter and make him cry like a baby, and the next she might try to convince a wizard's familiar to seek the joys of freedom. The only thing certain is that she'll never take the same action in two consecutive rounds. That is far too boring for her chaotic mind.

HANDMAID OF ZHEENKEEP

*Medium aberration, chaotic neutral***Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 105 (14d8 + 42)**Speed** 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	24 (+7)	22 (+6)

Skills Deception +10, Perception +11**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, and poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 21**Languages** all**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The handmaid's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 19). The handmaid can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

3/day: *confusion*, *dimension door*, *dominate person*, *greater invisibility*, *hideous laughter*, *polymorph*

1/day: *dominate monster*, *mislead*, *plane shift*, *teleport*

Magic Resistance. The handmaid has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Touch of Chaos. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 55 (1d100) damage. Roll a d12 to determine the damage type: 1, acid; 2, bludgeoning; 3, cold; 4, fire; 5, force; 6, lightning; 7, necrotic; 8, piercing; 9, poison; 10, radiant; 11, slashing; 12, thunder. Creatures with the incorporeal movement trait are immune to this attack.

Touch of Chaos. Handmaids eschew weapons. Instead, they harm their foes with the dreaded *touch of chaos*, an infusion of magical power capable of twisting and melting flesh, steel, and bone.

IX

Ix shares his master Darmon's love of a good joke. The joyful silver fox of Heaven often journeys to the Material Plane to play a good prank, or simply to observe a new work of comedy. As comfortable in the guise of one of the five mortal races as in his true form, Ix will often aid adventurers and heroes through subtle means. He is renowned in legend for his love of riddles and games, and he will rely on these methods happily.

Divine Trickster. When summoned by a *gate* or similar magic, Ix usually responds if the caster is a valued servant of Darmon. When he does, he stays back and use his magical and stealth abilities. He rarely confronts a foe directly; he is, after all, a fox. Ix never sticks around for a straight-up fight. If cornered, he curses his foes to make them even more susceptible to his ruses and tricks, or simply teleports away and comes back to haunt them later.

IX

*Medium celestial, chaotic good***Armor Class** 21 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 120 (16d8 + 48)**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	24 (+7)	17 (+3)	25 (+7)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Int +11**Skills** Acrobatics +11, Perception +7, Stealth +11**Damage Resistances** radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17**Languages** all**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

Fortune's Blessings. Ix is blessed with good luck and has advantage on all saving throws. As well, all creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against him.

Innate Spellcasting. Ix's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 19). Ix can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

3/day: *dimension door* and *greater invisibility*

1/day: *plane shift* and *power word stun*

Magic Resistance. Ix has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. Ix is a 16th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared.

Cantrips (at-will): *dancing lights*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st-level (4 slots): *charm person*, *color spray*, *silent image*

2nd-level (3 slots): *blur*, *hold person*, *mirror image*

3rd-level (3 slots): *fear*, *hypnotic pattern*

4th-level (3 slots): *confusion*, *phantasmal killer*

5th-level (2 slots): *dominate person*

6th-level (1 slot): *programmed illusion*

7th-level (1 slot): *mirage arcana*

8th-level (1 slot): *antipathy/sympathy*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ix makes two claw attacks and one bite attack.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d4 + 7) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than a construct or undead, it must succeed on a DC 19 Intelligence saving throw or become cursed for 24 hours. While cursed, the target makes Intelligence attack rolls, checks, and saving throws with disadvantage for 24 hours. If the target is already cursed this way, it takes an extra 2d6 psychic damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d4 + 7) piercing damage.

Change Shape. Ix magically polymorphs into a humanoid that has a challenge rating equal to or less than his own, or back into his true form. He reverts to his true form if he dies. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (Ix's choice). In a new form, Ix retains his game statistics and ability to speak, but his AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and special senses are replaced by those of the new form, and he gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that he lacks.

LAMMASU

The noble beasts of legend, the lammasu are regarded as protectors of all good beings, champions of the virtuous, and defenders of the holy places. Utterly sworn to oppose evil, the lammasu concern themselves mostly with thwarting the efforts of evil in all its forms. For this reason, they readily offer aid and comfort to adventurers who share their purpose, mostly offering counsel, but, against significant threats, accompanying the would-be heroes on their quest to defeat their sworn foes.

Lammasu are rare in the material plane, favoring temples and shrines standing in the ruins of fallen nations, where they spend centuries guarding these holy places and welcoming pilgrims seeking wisdom or to offer prayers to the gods of heaven. Most lammasu live in the upper planes, where they serve the gods of law and good directly.

Scions of Metteron. Metteron, chief of Terak's servants, sired the lammasu and dispatches them to carry messages and aid to his most loyal and devout servants. Lammasu are unswervingly loyal to their maker and take great pride in their role as divine messengers.

METTERON

Metteron is the lord of all animals in Heaven, the greatest of their number, and father to some of the world's most noble beasts. He is the sire of the griffins and the lammasu.

LAMMASU

Large monstrosity, lawful good

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Wis +6, Cha +5

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. A lammasu's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14). A lammasu can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

3/day: *greater invisibility*

1/day: *dimension door*

Pounce. If the lammasu moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn that target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the lammasu can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d12 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.



METTERON

Huge celestial, lawful good

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 312 (25d12 + 150)

Speed 50 ft., fly 150 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +12

Skills Insight +12, Perception +12

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, petrified

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

Divine Awareness. Metteron knows if he hears a lie.

Divine Claws and Teeth. Metteron's weapon attacks are magical. When Metteron hits with his claws or teeth, the weapon deals an extra 8d8 radiant damage.

Innate Spellcasting. Metteron's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 20). Metteron can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

At will: *detect evil and good*

3/day: *plane shift*

Magic Resistance. Metteron has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Pounce. If Metteron moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn that target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, Metteron can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Spellcasting. Metteron is a 20th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared.

Cantrips (at-will): *guidance, light, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st-level (4 slots): *bless, healing word, sanctuary, shield of faith*

2nd-level (3 slots): *aid, enhance ability, prayer of healing*

3rd-level (3 slots): *beacon of hope, dispel magic, magic circle*

4th-level (3 slots): *banishment, death ward, freedom of movement*

5th-level (3 slots): *commune, dispel evil and good, mass cure wounds*

6th-level (2 slots): *blade barrier, heal, heroes' feast*

7th-level (2 slots): *conjure celestial, divine word, fire storm*

8th-level (1 slot): *antimagic field, holy aura*

9th-level (1 slot): *gate*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Metteron makes two claw attacks

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d8 + 9) piercing damage plus 36 (8d8) radiant damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (2d10 + 9) slashing damage plus 36 (8d8) radiant damage.

Roar of Courage (recharge 6). Metteron roars. Each creature Metteron chooses within a 150-foot radius becomes immune to the frightened condition and makes attack rolls with advantage. The effect lasts for 10 minutes.

Legends often have this great golden lion as the butt of the joke. Like his master, Terak, Metteron is prone to bellowing and bravado. But also like his master, he is an implacable foe to evil. Kindly, kingly, gentle to his friends, wise to his children, Metteron is truly an awesome sight for any mortal to behold. He can change his size at will; in Heaven he is as large as a mighty hill. On the Material Plane, he can appear to be a normal-sized lion.

Metteron will often heed requests for aid from powerful clergy of Terak using a *gate* or similar magic, and he has descended to the world on more than one occasion to turn the tide of a battle when summoned. He is a gracious champion for goodness at such times.

PHOENIX

A phoenix is the world's most beautiful bird. Some believe it's somehow related to the roc, but most believe phoenixes were born from the fire of rebirth when the gods Terak, Tinel, and Zheenkeef were burnt on a pyre of the remains of Eliwyn, the tree of life. Legend says that five phoenixes burst up from those flames, and the birds have changed little in the years since.

Fiery Rebirth. As most know, when a phoenix dies, it is consumed by the fire of rebirth. Supposedly, if one gazes into the flames as it burns, one will see the faces of the gods—one of the many reasons people seek these rare birds out. Within a day of consuming itself, the phoenix is reborn. Scholars debate whether this reborn phoenix is really the same one, but one thing is certain: Those who attack a phoenix unprovoked will find themselves haunted by its many reborn forms for the rest of their lives. Fiercely territorial, the phoenix does not look kindly on those who invade its home, and will certainly fight to keep outsiders at bay. This is particularly true when a phoenix has laid an egg.

Precious Eggs. A phoenix's eggs appear to be made of red gold and are among the most precious substances in the world; a phoenix egg can fetch 80,000 gp or more on the open market, as it is believed consuming one will result in immortality. Unfortunately for egg hunters, phoenixes typically mate once a century.

RAGUEL

ARCHANGEL OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION

When Iblis, chief among the archangels, fell, it was Raguel, his friend and the Vengeance of the Heavens, that broke him. When blasphemous cults arise, seeking the destruction of the gods or the order of the world, Raguel descends upon them. His visage is both terrible and beautiful—he has the fairness of the angels, and is among the mightiest of the seraphs. But he also has the fearful might of the gods at his back. With his flaming sword, he is a worthy adversary to even the mightiest evil.

Calling Raguel. It is quite rare for an archangel to be sent to aid the mortal servants of the gods, but any high-level cleric in truly desperate need of incredibly powerful

PHOENIX

Gargantuan monstrosity, neutral good

Armor Class 19 (natural)
Hit Points 370 (20d20 + 160)
Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	13 (+1)	26 (+8)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)

Skills Perception +11

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 21

Languages all

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Death Throes. When the phoenix dies, it explodes in a blinding flash of light, flames, and smoke. Each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 70 (20d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The explosion ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried. In addition, smoke and swirling embers fill the area of the explosion for 1 minute and cause the area to be heavily obscured. Any creature that ends its turn in the area or that enters it must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Holy Senses. The phoenix is always under the effects of the *detect evil and good* and *detect magic* spells.

Innate Spellcasting. The phoenix's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 20). The phoenix can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

3/day: *color spray*, *dispel magic*, *wall of fire*

1/day: *fire storm*, *incendiary cloud*,
plane shift

Magic Resistance. The phoenix has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The phoenix makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target.
Hit: 17 (2d8 + 8) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target.
Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 22). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the phoenix can't use its talons on another target.

Phoenix Blessing (4/day). The phoenix touches another creature, which regains 38 (6d10 + 5) hit points. In addition, the phoenix removes any curse or disease affecting the target and removes the blinded, deafened, frightened, or poisoned conditions from it.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The phoenix can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The phoenix regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Sbrick. Each creature within 30 feet of the phoenix must get a success on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or drop whatever it is holding and become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened by this effect, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from the phoenix by the safest available route on each of its turns, unless there is nowhere to move. If the creature ends its turn in a location where it doesn't have line of sight to the phoenix, the creature can make a Wisdom saving throw and the effect ends for the creature. Once a creature saves against this effect, it becomes immune to the phoenix's shriek for 24 hours.

Phoenix Dance (Costs 2 Actions). The phoenix performs a complex dance and at the end of this time can choose up to two creatures it can see within 60 feet of it and divides the following effects between the targets.

Dispel. The target is affected as if by the *dispel magic* spell cast as a 6th-level spell.

Exile. The target must make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw. A celestial, elemental, fey, fiend, or undead that fails the save instantly returns to its home plane if it is not there already—fey go to the Feywild and undead go to the Shadowfell. A creature of any other type ceases to exist until the end of the phoenix's next turn. When this effect ends, the creature returns to the last space it occupied or an open space nearest to it.

Blinding Flare (Costs 3 Actions). The phoenix targets one creature within 30 feet of it. If the target can see it, the target must get a success on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or become blinded for 1 minute.



RAGUEL

*Huge celestial, alignment***Armor Class** 23 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 957 (66d12 + 528)**Speed** 50 ft., fly 150 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	18 (+4)	26 (+8)	20 (+5)	30 (+10)	30 (+10)

Saving Throws Int +13, Wis +18, Cha +18**Skills** Acrobatics +12, Athletics +17, Perception +18**Damage Resistances** radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned**Senses** truesight 240 ft., passive Perception 28**Languages** all, telepathy 120 ft.**Challenge** 27 (105,000 XP)

Angelic Weapons. Raguel's weapon attacks are magical. When he hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 6d12 radiant damage (included in the attack).

Divine Awareness. Raguel knows if he hears a lie.

Innate Spellcasting. Raguel's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 26). Raguel can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components.

At will: *detect evil and good*, *invisibility* (self only)

3/day: *blade barrier*, *dispel evil and good*, *earthquake*, *fire storm*, *resurrection*

1/day: *commune*, *control weather*, *power word blind*, *power word kill*, *power word stun*

Magic Resistance. Raguel has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Raguel makes two greatsword attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (6d6 + 9) slashing damage plus 39 (6d12) radiant damage.

Slaying Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, range 120/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 39 (6d12) radiant damage. If the target is a creature that has 120 hit points or fewer, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or die.

Healing Touch (4/day). Raguel touches another creature. The target magically regains 49 (8d10 + 5) hit points and is freed from any curse, disease, poison, blindness, or deafness.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Raguel can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Raguel regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Teleport. Raguel magically teleports, along with any equipment he wears or carries, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

Searing Burst (Costs 2 Actions). Raguel emits magical, divine energy. Each creature of his choice in a 10-foot radius must make a DC 26 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage plus 22 (4d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Blinding Gaze (Costs 3 Actions). Raguel targets one creature he can see within 30 feet of him. If the target can see him, the target must succeed on a DC 26 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until magic such as the *lesser restoration* spell removes the blindness.

Thunder of Heaven (Costs 3 Actions; Recharge 6). Raguel unleashes the thunder of Heaven at a point he can see within any distance. A cacophonous roar fills a 50-foot-radius sphere that spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a DC 26 Constitution saving throw, taking 90 (20d8) thunder damage and becoming stunned for 1d4 rounds and deafened for 1d6 minutes on a failed save, or just take half this damage on a successful one.

aid (and opposing a profoundly evil foe) might receive such aid from the Vengeance of Heaven himself.

Vow of Silence. According to legend, Raguel does not speak, and has not since his friend Iblis spoke the words that led to his fall. There are few mortals who know whether this is true.

APPENDIX I: A TREATISE ON THE DIVINE

THIS APPENDIX IS A HISTORY OF THE GODS, CALLED *A TREATISE ON THE DIVINE*, WRITTEN “IN CHARACTER” BY A famous sage. If you are planning to play a religious scholar, or if you are a GM wanting to introduce plenty of religious detail into your campaign, this section will be very useful. However, if you lack the time to get through it, everything else in this book should make sense without it if you read Chapter I.

In general, we recommend that this text be considered long-accepted truth in the game world – meaning that this book was written, in the game world, hundreds of years or more before the events of your campaign. The text is written as though many of its details are revelations, which, if the text is quite old, they would have been for your characters’ forefathers.

It is possible to make this a brand-new text. For instance, if you want to hit your players with a slew of revelations about the gods they hold dear (“No, your god didn’t create the world. He grew on a tree.”) that’s another potentially exciting way to use the text. It would add a tone of apocalypse, as all the world’s religions’ assumptions about their gods are turned upside-down. It also allows for some fun reversals of expectation. Perhaps the churches of the war god and magic god have been embroiled in a centuries-long conflict over which of them created the world, only to discover that neither of them did.

The third possibility, and the most campaign-affecting, is to treat the mythology as though it is thousands of years old, lost in the mists of time. The churches have developed new and interesting assumptions about their gods, but the characters, on their quests, uncover snippets of this ancient text that radically alter the nature of faith in their world. This puts your characters in the middle of an enormously complex religious and political imbroglio—or it just provides clues to ancient monsters, ruins and relics tied to these forgotten myths.

A TREATISE ON THE DIVINE

BY THE GREAT SAGE MATALOU

INTRODUCTION

Speak in my voice, you gods, you Lords of Heaven, for it is your tale I tell! Let my tongue grow dry and my eyes shrivel in my head if I lie!

Some men journey to the ends of the world in the name of Honor. Some stand alone, against a marauding army with nothing but a sword and a prayer in the name of King and Country. All I have done, and all I will ever do, is in the name of Truth.

Know this, my reader: What you read is true.

Though debate still rages among scholars regarding the true history of the gods, I can assure you that this history, and all the dark truths it reveals, is correct. I have walked into the jaws of danger time and again to discover the knowledge you now hold. This is my life’s work, and what you read is the most accurate history of the gods that man will ever know.

CHAPTER I

FIRST EPOCH

I have assembled this history of the beginning of the world, the First Epoch, from several old and forgotten texts. It will amuse you to know that the most valuable of these texts was bought from a junk merchant in the wretched town of Freeport for two silver. That tome was written in an ink I had never seen before, and have not seen since. Perhaps it’s the blood of a long-extinct beast. The book was easily over two thousand years old, preserved by some ancient magic.

PART I

THE BEGINNING

After absorbing that book, after reading it over and over, I came to realize that it is for good reason that he beginnings of our world have been forgotten. Most of us believe that the principal gods as we know them, having always been, created our world. This is a comforting belief, for within it is the assumption we were not put here by random chance. The Great Sage Mordekai insists that we were put here as part of an elaborate game between the gods. The priests of Tinel believe that all of life is a test, an exam of sorts, for the time when we might rejoin the gods in the Heavens. There are countless explanations for our existence, but all of them share one thing: the assumption that along with our world, we were created for a reason. The truth is, I fear, far darker.

You see, there was a time when silence and darkness reigned. I do not mean silence as in the stillness of the forest when no bird chirps and no wind blows. I mean an absence of sound only possible in a universe yet to discover the very idea of sound. So too was it with the darkness: a void so complete as to deny the very existence of light. The nothingness was absolute. In a sense, it was perfect order and peace. The emptiness was constant, without beginning or end.

And yet, the void did not last. In the darkness, something began to change. The tome I found in Freeport referred to this change as “Shachté,” which means, “The moment before the dice decide which face to show.” I think we can best understand it as pure change and violence, invading that vast sea of silence and peace.

OTHER BELIEFS ABOUT THE BEGINNING

The Great Sage Matalou's discovery that the universe was created in a moment of chaos is not, in fact, the most frightening claim ever made by a scholar. In his widely-distributed tome *Gods or Monsters: an Investigation into the Nature of Divinity*, the Great Sage Curfas asserts that the gods not only didn't create the universe, they came to our world from another place to prey on the weak-willed, and convince the foolish to offer them worship.

Curfas goes on to assert that the universe was created by the mortal races, who were once powerful sorcerers. It is his assertion that the individual is all-powerful, but must throw off petty beliefs and take whatever they want. While the Great Sage Curfas' work is usually dismissed as the ravings of a madman, mere piffle compared to the well-researched findings of Matalou, there are some who find it very alluring indeed.



Though Shachté had no face or name, it changed the void. Silence and peace were now interrupted with tremors of searing light and shrieking noises. The tremors grew more frenzied, the peace and the violence tearing at one another, changing one another. Light and shadow were thus coupled, and sound and silence were joined as opposites, for until this struggle none of these forces had existed to be opposed. All the positive and negative energies of the universe were made in that eternal moment, and in their creation, they were so infected with one another that rarely might one find a pure light without darkness, or a pure sound without silence.

The war of creation continued, creating a maelstrom that flashed across the void, lasting for a million years, or for just the winking of an eye, for time had no meaning then. And then, all at once, from the intersection of silence and sound, a Word was formed; and in the heart of the storm, there coalesced an Image. In that moment, the Nameless One (so He must be called of necessity) created Himself by uttering the Word: His name.

You may doubt this to be true, dear reader. Please believe me when I say that I wish it were not so. I wish the universe came from the careful plans of our loving gods as we have always believed. But I have known since my youth that this is not true; our world was created in less than perfect circumstances. As an apprentice to the Great Sage Artonik Sellowyl I came across this passage in my research:

*“Nothing is sacred
For something is from nothing made
And when the end of something comes
Only nothing will remain”*

Innocuous as it may seem, it was in a tome about the beginning of things. Reading this passage was the first time, I encountered the notion of nothingness. No gods, no life, no existence. Even then, I knew there had to be more to the beginning of time than we have always believed.

Perhaps the significance of the Nameless One's creation and this poem escape you. Let me explain. When the Nameless One created Himself in that moment of Image and Word, time began. Everything we know and hold dear began. But the roots of creation are in Shachté. The universe was created not from the perfect stillness of logic and peace, but from its clash with chaos and violence. The Nameless One, the creator of all, was a being born not just of perfection, but also of pure change and randomness. Therefore, so are we. We are not here by the plan of the gods; everything we know is an accident of creation, and all of it will someday come to an end. When the end of something comes, only nothing will remain.

PART II

PONDERING

The book I purchased in Freeport told me nothing of what happened for much of the rest of the first epoch. It took many years of following rumors of rumors and clues to learn more. I had heard for years of a barbaric people from the frozen lands, who denied the power of our Lords of

Heaven and worshiped only one god. It took me years of looking for mentions of the Nameless One before I realized that their “one god” and the Nameless One are the same. I still laugh that it took me so long.

After learning from a fur trader who often journeyed in the frozen wastes that these barbarians call their god “He Who Will Not Be Named” or other such permutations of “Nameless One,” I immediately journeyed to the wastes.

My travails there will be the subject of a different book, I am sure, but for now know that the truth was not easy to discover. After several brushes with death, I managed to befriend the Vola, or wise man, of one of the great tribes. Ulfhedin, as he was called, was an exacting taskmaster, and in return for the knowledge I sought I cleaned his house, chopped his firewood, cooked his dinner, and performed many other household chores. It was worth every moment. By night, Ulfhedin and I would sit out on the tundra by a fire, and he would tell me the stories of the Nameless One that he had learned from his master, and his master had learned from his master’s master, as far back as the beginning of memory. From Ulfhedin I learned the truth of the creation of our world, the birth of the gods we worship, and the terrible secret of Kador, the evil lord of fire, exiled by the gods.

“Before Wolf had his howl and Snow had her cold.” that is how Ulfhedin began every night’s lesson. That is how I will begin this one. Before Wolf had his howl and Snow had her cold, the Nameless One created Himself. Surrounded by the void, in which He was the only interruption, He grew restless. He spent eons pondering His existence. How had He created Himself? How had He spoken His name before He was born? These riddles gave Him food for thought but eventually, He grew weary of pondering.

He decided that He needed something to occupy His time, so He began to create. At first, He made a tremendous palace in the void. Crafted of light and sound, the palace filled the void with a great glow and swelling music. In this palace, the Nameless One made himself a throne; He crafted this lofty seat from the void itself. There, in the center of the palace of sound and light, sat the Nameless One on His throne of silence and dark. He reflected on His work for eons more.

He decided that it was not enough to create with light and sound, or even darkness and silence. To truly explore His power, He must create something entirely new. He began to work without rest in the small, hidden rooms of His palace. He strove to create, to imagine forces beyond His comprehension. He created tools of light and sound to forge new existences out of darkness, to smelt light and silence. His labors were fruitless.

As He journeyed back to His throne, He was struck with inspiration. He had created Himself by speaking His name. He understood in that moment that to create, He need only form sound to speak words: names.

With that, He spoke four great words of power. The speaking of those words alone took days, if days were measurable. After the speaking, four new forces lay before Him: Fire, the power of life, or rather raw power itself; Earth, the power of solidity, in attitude and function; Air,

the power of movement, in thought and form; and Water, the power of change, within and without. With these four tools, the Nameless One knew that He could create anything He imagined. He left the palace, went out into the void, and looked about Him.

The emptiness was still all-encompassing, but He began to see an image of what would be. He saw a world covered with life, a crystal sphere contained in a greater sphere that was held up by four pillars of power. He would watch this world, and see it grow and change. And He knew this image was truth.

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND EPOCH

The Second Epoch, we have always been told, was the time that the gods created the world and mortals. It is true that our world was created and populated in the Second Epoch, but the circumstances of creation, as I have learned, were far different from what we have always believed. It was in the Second Epoch that the Nameless One created our world, and from our world the gods were born.

PART I

CREATION

Vola Ulfhedin told me that after seeing the Image of what would be, the Nameless One summoned to Him the fire He had created. Uncontrolled, flame swelled in the void, but He contained it and shaped it into a pillar. He did the same with earth, air, and water, and soon the four great pillars were arrayed before Him. Then, using the strength of the four pillars, He crafted a sphere. This Great Sphere is what we call our universe, our existence, and is supported by the four pillars. In it can be found our world, Heaven, Hell, the land of the dead, and everything else we know to exist. Whether the Nameless One has created other Great Spheres, other universes, we will never know.

Entering the sphere, He saw that it was empty, and needed a world. First, He gathered up all that was contained in the sphere and forced it to the center. Once everything was there, He formed around the center places of His creation a perfect crystalline sphere made from the positive and negative energies of creation. Inside the crystal, He cried a litany of new words. With the words for Fire and Air, He created the suns, moons, stars, winds, and vapors by giving them names. These He bound to the crystal sphere. He surveyed what He had done, and determined that it was in here, in the crystal sphere where He had placed the sky, He would do His work. He strode to the center of His creation, where there was nothing but the air and the ether and the shadow, and there He used the words of Fire and Earth to name the mountains, hills, valleys, plains, and cliffs, dismissing ether and shadow to the corners of His making. Now the sphere had a place for the life He had seen, but life would not come without water. So, with fire and water He gave names to the oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, and streams. He had before

WHAT'S IN A SOUL?

A being must possess life, free will, and the inner fire of power to truly possess a soul. The order established by the Nameless One imposes these three requirements. There are many things in the world that have only life, but not the other components. Many “lesser” races, including animals and certain wicked creatures of the land, have life and free will, but not spiritual fire. Very few beings have all three. These include the gods, dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, and humans, and most beings directly descended from them. Living things (and certain magical entities) have “spirits” that are not souls—or to be more precise, while all souls *are* spirits, the reverse is not true. Similarly, all beings with the inner fire have corruption and rage within them. These can exist without spiritual flame, but in such cases, must be imposed from without, and in any case, can be permanently removed, which the fire’s taint is constant.

It is believed that the inner fire, entrusted to Kador to be passed on to other races, is necessary to separate the spirit from the body, so that it can be counted as a soul. Without it, when living being dies, its spirit dies with it. Kindled by the flame of power, the spirit can transcend the flesh and go beyond the body upon its death. Yet without free will, a spirit’s deeds would not be recorded in the black and white ledgers, and it could not be judged, and would simply be dispersed into the world. Therefore, the inner fire cannot make a spirit into a soul without free will—and if would not exist in the first place without life to generate it.

Him now a home for life. Indeed, it is this center sphere of crystal that our world lies.

In our world, He built for Himself three fortresses. From air, He built a castle in the sky; shaping earth, He constructed a palace at the peak of the highest mountain; and with water, He crafted a keep at the bottom of the deepest ocean. For an eon, He wandered His world, until He became restless. Though the valleys, the moons, the rivers and all His creations spoke to Him, they only answered when spoken to, and did not have life as He hoped. He decided to create once more.

Rather than create a place or a thing, He created something new. Giving it arms, legs, body, heart, and mind, He called it Kador. To Kador He gave three gifts. First, He gave Kador life, so that Kador could move about like the Nameless One Himself. Second, He gave Kador will, so that Kador could do as he chose. Third, He gave Kador fire, the essence of life and vitality. From these three gifts, the Nameless One crafted for Kador a soul, and so it is today that only those with the three gifts have souls.

Of course, I was as shocked as you to learn all this. Vola Ulfhedin swore it was so. Kador, the god at the center of the war of the gods, the only god ever to be cast out from the Celestial Host, was firstborn of the gods.

Ill-fated Kador wandered the world with the Nameless One, who was pleased. Kador acted as he wished, and even surprised the Nameless One with his choices.

And yet, the Nameless One suffered from restlessness once more. He enjoyed what the gift of will had done for Kador, and so decided to impart it to all His creations. He spoke to the mountains and the valleys, the suns and the seas. He gave them will and whispered to each a secret that set it apart. When He was satisfied that His creations would live as they chose, He proclaimed three prophecies.

First, He spoke to Kador alone. All of His creations listened, though, and overheard: *“To you, Kador, first-of-will, I have given Fire. Others like you will be born in this world, and to them you will give this gift.”*

Noticing that others of His creations had listened, He whispered His second prophecy to Kador. None know what He said, but they noted it took many years in the telling. Vola Ulfhedin believes He told Kador all that had passed before, and all that would come to pass, but there is no knowing. Volas have debated the nature of the second prophecy for as long as those priests have existed.

The third prophecy was spoken aloud to all the world. The Nameless One said, *“When I spoke My name, I created Myself. When I spoke your names, I created you. When My name is spoken again, time will stop, and all names will be undone.”* There can be little doubt from this prophecy why the Volas call the Nameless One “He Who Will Not Be Named.” Should He be named, the world will end. Before I learned this, I’d foolishly believed His name was merely unknown.

After speaking the third prophecy, the Nameless One left the Great Sphere, and has never spoken again. Vola Ulfhedin believes He still sits in his palace of light and sound, upon his throne of silence and darkness, and watches His creation. I believe the Nameless One has gone on to create countless other spheres, and no longer remembers which was the first, or no longer cares.

PART II

BIRTH

Vola Ulfhedin’s knowledge became sketchy after the Nameless One’s departing. He spoke of the gods we know and called them children. He said that as we are to them, so are they to the Nameless One.

He had given me much of the knowledge I needed for this treatise, but it was not enough. I asked how the gods were born. Ulfhedin told me to look no further than my own birth. The Volas of the Nameless One had always denied the worship of our gods, he said, because the gods were our siblings, not our parents. He knew no more than that, but that was enough. I knew exactly what it meant. From his words, simple as they were, I had learned the history of the gods’ birth. I needed only evidence.

The journey south from the frozen waste was, of course, arduous. I was driven, though, by the thirst for knowledge. For me, knowledge is sustenance. When a man dying of thirst in the desert happens upon a caravan of strangely dressed people, he asks them for water, but I would ask them about the function of their clothing, the stories of their people, and the constellations they use to guide themselves through the wastes. It is my nature.

Rather than return home, I set out for an ancient

foundation of Grandmother Rontra, the Earth. The Temple of Rebirth, as it has been known for a thousand years, is a storehouse of artifacts. It is the location of one of the oldest libraries I know and more importantly, one containing a book I now desired very much to read. I believed this book might support my burgeoning theory.

Of course, you are wondering what my theory was. If the gods were not our “parents” as we have always believed, but our siblings, they too must have been born of Eliwyn, the Tree of Life. It seemed inconceivable. There had been five fruits, from which sprang the five mortal races. I knew that. Everyone knows that. What I found at the Temple of Rebirth proved that to be mostly true, but there was so much more we had not realized.

Buried in the library, I found what I was looking for. I had heard of a preposterous text shelved therein, that espoused heretical beliefs. A crumbling tome called *A Treatise on the Divine*, by an anonymous author, the book was known for its theory that the gods were born from Eliwyn. As tribute to the long-dead anonym, I have used that title for my own work.

The Treatise is written in a dead language. Because it was considered heretical, only choice passages had ever been translated. My efforts to translate were hindered because the author, bless his soul, had different names for all the gods, and knew nothing of the Nameless One. It was difficult to tell where the Treatise ceased to be fanciful imagination and started to be useful history. I did the best I could and assembled, from the Treatise and other sources in the library, this complete history of our gods.

The story of the birth of the gods begins simply enough. Having overheard the Nameless One’s first prophecy, all the world knew that others like Kador would be born. Each part, in its vanity, wished to be solely responsible for that birth. The mountains tried to create life, and made only rocks. The rivers tried, and made only ponds. The stars tried, and made only comets. Alone, none of them could create, though they strove for eons.

Kador watched their efforts from his seat in the Nameless One’s castle in the sky. At last, he too grew restless. He traveled down to the land, and spoke to the mountains, hills, valleys, plains, and cliffs. He used a conspiratorial tone, telling them that the skies and the waters were close to creating life. He whispered that they must unite or lose in the struggle. At first, they resisted. “*I will create life myself,*” cried the valleys, and all the others echoed their cries. Kador insisted, though, that life would never be born of any one of them alone. He said that only the united lands could defeat the upstart skies and waters. And so, the parts of the land became one, and was called Rontra, the Earth, mother of gems and living plants both.

Seeing the land united and alive, the skies became jealous. The suns, moons, stars, winds, and air became one, and was called Urian, the Sky, whose lights spin and array themselves in prophecy, to the rhythm of time, and whose winds are the breath of all beasts and birds.

Thus, seeing the land and sky become gods, the oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, and streams united and became Shalimyr, the Water, who all life drinks from for



SUNS AND MOONS?

The Great Sage Matalou says that in ancient eons, Urian was made of many suns and moons, each possessed of a chill light. In this legend, he unites the suns, but not the moons. Yet one myth about Urian implies the existence of a single moon. We know that many folks like to have several moons in their fantasy worlds, so we haven't mentioned how Urian made the Moon, or the many moons of your campaign. Just interpret the earlier myth so that it refers to the primary moon on your world.

Urian made one or more moons in your setting just as he made the One Sun: by binding lesser bodies with the Fire of Kador. Yet after he had made the One Sun, Urian had little fire, and could not make his second creation as warm and bright. Thus we have cold nights, lit by a moon (or moons) dimmer than the One Sun.

sustenance, and who is the source of all living blood.

Kador smiled. Surely, he was as responsible for the birth of these new lives as the Nameless One had been. He gave each of them his Fire, saying, *"I grant you this gift, my children."*

Rontra put the flame in her soils, making them fertile. Shalimyr used the flame to rise and create nourishing rain, and crawl across the world as rivers. Urian united the cold, small spinning suns in flame, and created the One Sun, giver of day and warmth. Kador was pleased.

It is here that the Treatise speaks of the birth of the Tree of Life. On the shore where Shalimyr and Rontra met, Shalimyr impregnated Rontra with his waves. From Shalimyr's seed planted deep in Rontra's womb grew a tree they called Eliwyn. With Rontra's fertile soil, Shalimyr's nourishing rains, and Urian's warming sun, Eliwyn grew.

Urian took the responsibility of tending Eliwyn. As the tree grew, Urian noticed it bore five fruits. Seeing this, Kador came down from his castle. He proclaimed that the largest fruit on the tree belonged to him, and he meant to take it.

It is here that we begin to see Kador's evil. Of course, I have discovered the reason for his madness, but never why he was obsessed with the fifth fruit. In all my research, I can find no explanation, though I have searched for years. It is here that I must apologize to you, dear reader, for here my history is incomplete.

Kador told Urian, Rontra, and Shalimyr that he would pluck the fruit and tend to it himself, but they would not allow it. As he moved to take it, Urian blew him back with fierce winds. Shalimyr lashed at him with a great storm. Rontra opened a fissure a hundred leagues deep beneath his feet.

Defeated, Kador shook his head in disgust, and turned to leave. But before he did he spoke these words, writ quite clearly in the old *Treatise on the Divine*.

"Each of these fruits bears a new life. As I am the child of the Nameless One, so are you my children, and the children within the fruits are my progeny also. As your sire, I demand my right: the largest of these fruits. You oppose me in defiance of my

right, so I lay a curse upon the fruit. Rather than bear a strong child, powerful like its siblings, this fruit will bear a thousand young in my image and, as you rebel against me, so shall they rebel against you. I lay this curse, and upon the Flame that is mine, you know it is so." With that, he returned to his castle in the sky.

After he left, four of the fruits ripened. They contained children who began to speak amongst themselves and to their parents through the fruits' skins. The fifth fruit, the fruit cursed by Kador, remained silent. However, it began to bulge, growing much larger than the others.

As the four children grew, they would ask their parents whether it was time to come out. Always, Rontra would tell them they were not yet ripe. Urian would rock them at night with a low wind, and Shalimyr would sing them to sleep with the sounds of waves crashing on the shore. They gave the children names as they grew. One child, who would kick at the skin of his fruit with such force that all Eliwyn would shake, they called Terak. The child who always asked questions about the world outside of his fruit, they called Tinel. One of the children sang along with Shalimyr every night, and danced within her fruit; her they called Zheenkeef. And the quiet one who only commented on the beauty of her fruit, or the loveliness of Shalimyr's song, they called Morwyn. The fifth fruit they did not name, for it looked ready to burst, and sound never issued from it.

Soon, the children were nearly fully grown. As Shalimyr sang them to sleep, Terak's kicking became more violent, Tinel's questions more insistent, and Zheenkeef's singing and dancing more wild. As she danced and Terak kicked, Eliwyn began to shake, until Shalimyr stopped singing and Urian told them to be calm. But it was too late. Zheenkeef's dancing did not stop, and Terak and Tinel's fruits fell from the tree early, with Zheenkeef's soon to follow. Tinel and Terak hit the ground and so were born at the same moment. Only Morwyn remained on the tree until her fruit was fully ripe, and then she fell, coming out of her fruit last. The fifth fruit remained, over-ripe.

Kador saw all of this and was pleased. He came down to the tree from his castle for a third time and spoke to the four young ones.

"Do not listen to him," Rontra warned, but Terak and Tinel ignored her. They demanded to know who he was and what he wanted.

"You four shall be lords of this world, but you will need fire. I give it as a gift. Allow me to give it to the eldest first, and the youngest last."

"I am the eldest," Terak and Tinel said in unison.

"You cannot both be the eldest," Kador said. And with that seed planted, he gave fire to each of the four, starting with Tinel, and moved to depart. However, before he did so, he plucked the fifth fruit from the tree. As soon as he did, it burst open. Springing forth from the fruit came a thousand burning children, and they began to run all over Kador's hand and arm. Terrified, Kador flailed about, hurling the children all over the earth. Against his will, though, these creatures took the Gift of Fire from Kador as they crawled over his arm, and thus won souls. According to the

Treatise, these children were the div, which means “bright ones.” As I discovered in later research, the div are known today mostly by many names: genie, jann, djinn, efreet and more. But when they were first born, they divided into other tribes. The greatest were the powerful but rare Marid, the less powerful but plentiful Shaitan, and the silent Shee. Instead of one god, they were born of Kador’s curse, as a multitude in his image.

One part of the tale confuses me. Why was Kador terrified? The div had been cursed by his own lips and were like him. He was Lord of Fire, and yet frightened of a thousand fiery children? It is this mystery that I will research for my next work, though my heart tells me that his demand for the fifth fruit and his fear of its contents must come from the same source.

All the gods were astounded, as Kador fled the div, and retired to his castle. He scattered the div to the four corners of the world, where they began to grow and procreate. The Marid built huge cities and great palaces by the coasts, for they loved the water. The Shaitan wandered the deserts and the mountains. The Shee hid themselves in Rontra’s caves and deep in the waters of Shalimyr’s rivers and lakes. In fact, I will speak of the Shee very little from here, for they kept themselves secret, and were not involved in most of the events of the Third Epoch. But the Marid and Shaitan grew great and plentiful across the earth. The Treatise has this to say: “The bright ones were the first race of the world, but the gift of the world was not enough to satisfy their pride.”

CHAPTER III

THE THIRD EPOCH

Of course, some of the Third Epoch is well known. We all know of the first war of the gods. For much of the knowledge in this chapter, I must credit The Great Sage Laico’s famous work, the *Folio Divinicus*. What young student hasn’t been forced to memorize that dusty tome forward to back and recite its contents?

PART I

THE LESSER WAR

So, to those of you who’ve read the work, I apologize that parts of the following will be familiar. However, much of the Third Epoch is different from what we have long believed. For instance, none of the children of the gods were yet born during this epoch. The legend of Korak coming to his father Terak’s aid against Tinel, a much repeated and beloved tale, is entirely impossible. Korak was not yet born. Also, the war did not begin over an argument pertaining to the div, as stated in the Folio. You may still be wondering why I spoke of the universe’s dark beginnings earlier, of Shachté. It was during the Third Epoch that Shachté’s effects were made clear, causing the lesser war of the gods.

While the gods grew in the fruit they were perfect beings, possessed of divine intellect and pure motivations.



THE DEATH OF THE GREAT SAGE MATALOU

While it is true that the teachings of the Great Sage Matalou would go on to alter the perceptions of the faithful everywhere, his insistence on continually reminding his readers that the gods are all a bit tainted with madness did not sit well with his contemporaries. Even today, it is a point best not to belabor.

Soon after the publication of Matalou's *Treatise on the Divine*, he was burned at the stake by a coalition of priests. They were threatened by his work but, even more importantly to them, found it vile heresy. Matalou's tongue was cut out and his eyes were plucked from his head before he was burned, and these organs are preserved today as relics of the church of Tinel, which reveres Matalou for his courage in telling the Truth.

But Shachté took its toll. It is here, dear reader, that I must tell you history's darkest secret. The world was born of madness and destruction. The invasion of Shachté – the light breaking the dark, the sound shattering the silence, was not creation, but destruction, or both: a paradox only the Nameless One might resolve. Nevertheless, before His birth, the universe was perfect. His birth killed that perfection. And what does this mean, you ask?

All things that are born are doomed to die. All existence will rot and decay. There can be no pure life or pure creation. It is all corrupted with Shachté. And what is most corrupted with that force? The Nameless One! The creator of all the things we know! The universe was born in madness, and to madness, sickness, and death it will always revert. The only thing that can be pure in our universe is Shachté itself, because creation and life cannot alter primal corruption.

So these pure gods, beings of sweet life and precious reason, were corrupted by Shachté while they grew on the tree, which was itself corrupted while growing from Rontra's womb, for the living Earth was corrupted from the time of her own creation as the multitude of lands and stones. When the gods came forth from their fruits, and the div came forth from theirs, they were already tainted with it.

When Kador, who was the most corrupted by Shachté (for he was the first created, and therefore first stricken), came to the gods and asked them who was firstborn, and would lead, it sparked the flame of madness within them all. Terak and Tinel looked at each other, both knowing they could not allow the other to think he was older. Each devised a plan to destroy the other. Zheenkeef knew that if both died, she would be eldest, and so planned to help them destroy each other. And Morwyn, gentle Morwyn, did not know what to do.

To defeat his brother, Terak, the strongest among them, pulled iron from Rontra's womb and with strength and fire forged his weapon: an axe. To best Terak, Tinel, the most knowledgeable among them, melded his knowledge with fire to make his weapon: magic. Zheenkeef, who embraced Shachté and was the maddest among them, blended chaos

and fire for Inspiration, to help her destroy both brothers. Morwyn saw what her siblings did and declared that the fire would destroy them all, so she did nothing.

With weapons in hand, Tinel and Terak resumed the debate as to who was the eldest. Urian tried to intercede, but they would not listen. Rontra demanded they cease their argument, but they ignored her. Shalimyr made no effort to stop them, for violence and roiling temper is the way of flowing water.

Soon, Tinel and Terak came to blows. Each demanded the other take back the claim he was older. They ran through the rivers, over the hills, and upon the winds, Terak swinging his axe, and Tinel hurling his magic. For years, they battled, scarring the world with their powers, while Morwyn begged them to stop, yet Zheenkeef ran between them, inspiring each with a newer and better way to destroy the other. Mountains were leveled by the forces of Terak's blows. Seas were dried by the strength of Tinel's magic. The Nameless One's mountain palace was leveled by their battle. Before they fought, the world had been one land, surrounded one Ocean. Now the land itself was torn asunder by their struggle. Islands rose in the water; rivers disappeared. The one land was split into the many continents that cover the world today, and the ancient Ocean became many oceans and seas.

During their struggle, the gods found tribes of the Marid and Shaitan all over the world. The div tribes were at war over who among them would rule everything. The gods saw them as useful tools, and dragged some into their struggle. To a few of the Marid and Shaitan tribes the gods gave great power, making them personal armies. Tinel gave his div the gift of magic. With their powers, they raged across the world, crying out Tinel's name. Terak made his div allies mighty beyond reckoning, capable of incredible physical feats. They descended upon the other div, slaying in droves, calling out Terak's name. Zheenkeef taught a few div the tricks of natural philosophy, and the secrets of making machines, and they built engines destruction and leveled cities in the name of their god. And Morwyn, gentle Morwyn, taught some div the ways of peace and reason. These few built great nations of loyal and happy followers, but when they would not fight in the war, the other div destroyed their nations.

The war swelled across the newly sundered world. Rontra could not act, so pained was she by being ripped apart. So too were Urian and Shalimyr effected by the tumult. Their children were destroyed, and they could do little but watch. The div pursued the war amongst themselves, while Terak and Tinel continued their cataclysmic battle.

At last, when it seemed they had fought to a standstill, Zheenkeef realized how best to kill her brothers. She told each to use Eliwyn, the tree, as a shield. Each took up a position behind it, Terak hurling his axe, Tinel lofting his magic. The blows shattered Eliwyn, leaving nothing but a blackened stump. Her great, heavy branches landed on the brother-gods, killing them, both. Splinters of the tree flew across the world and where they landed, trees, plants, mosses, grasses, and flowers sprouted up.

PART II

DEATH AND REBIRTH

Morwyn looked at the corpses of her dead brothers in horror. Zheenkeef giggled with glee. Urian, Rontra, and Shalimyr wept at the folly they had failed to prevent. In his castle in the air, Kador, who had remained silent during the war, smiled. The div ceased fighting; they had their fill of killing. Those div who had been gifted by the gods came now to the foot of Eliwyn, mourning the destruction of war and pleading for forgiveness. From the remaining stump of Eliwyn, a new being arose. Swathed in black, he spoke to the bodies of Tinel and Terak.

"I am Mormekar. In killing one another, you created me. You are my fathers and my brothers both; I have come to claim you."

Mormekar is a god like no other. When the div killed each other, he came into being in some way that I do not understand. He was there beside each div who died, invisible, capable only of ending their time on Earth. But with the death of two gods and the Tree of Life itself, Mormekar was given the power of a god, for Death must match the stature of the dying. And verily, he is Death, Shachté's ultimate consequence, made of the void beyond, which would regain peace in the absence of existence.

Morwyn pleaded with Mormekar not to take Tinel and Terak, for there were no lives beyond life then, and to die was to be dispersed into the world like floating ashes, or cast beyond the Great Sphere, into the abiding void from where Death was born. Yes, the gods were dead, and Mormekar's power was to be an agent of the scattering, that void. Yet he knew that Fire could give them life again, for their souls could bind to it like the One Sun, and shine once more. But the gods' flame was insufficient, and Mormekar, being of the void, had none of his own. And though the other gods possessed the inner fire, none could remove it from where it was bound within them, for they did not master it. Therefore, Urian, Rontra, Mormekar, and Morwyn cried up in chorus to Kador, demanding he give the Gift of Fire to Mormekar.

I assume, dear reader, that you have never read or seen *The Cycle of the Tree*, those marvelous plays written by the Bard Alzhere. This is no shameful thing, as the *Cycle* has not been performed for three thousand years. While the *Folio Divinicus* explains how Terak and Tinel are reborn, the *Cycle* dramatizes it, and includes many details left out of the *Folio*. For instance, in the *Folio*, Kador refuses to give flame to the gods to bring back Tinel and Terak. The Great Sage Laico declared that Kador was evil, and pleased to see other gods perish, but the *Cycle* shows Kador's true reasons. Quoth the second play:

KADOR: *When I claimed the fruits as mine, did you not resist? When I asked for my due, did you not rebuke me? Ungrateful children will receive all the gratitude and favor they have given. Nothing will I give, and nothing will I do to aid any of you.*

RONTRA: *Traitorous Kador, you are charged to give flame to those who would come. Fulfill your duty.*

THE MYSTERY OF MORWYN

Alone among all beings in the universe, Morwyn has no inner flame, yet possesses a soul. This mystery is at the center of the Morwynite faith, which sees it as the purgation of all malice and rage through self-sacrifice. That Morwyn managed to do what no other being could is what makes her divine; contemplation of this, the ultimate act of charity, fills the lives of many of her chosen. If one emulates Morwyn's gentle ways and becomes truly divine, they believe, one need not possess the Fire which gives the soul power and rage.

KADOR: *I am the keeper of the flame, Rontra the Earth, not you. I will decide its use, not you. What would you be, were it not for Kador? I am Kador the creator, Kador the father. I have wandered this world for an eternity, and if I had not seen fit to teach the earth to be Rontra, the skies to be Urian, the waters to be Shalimyr, you would not be. And yet, you seek to demand of me.*

URIAN: *Do you so easily shirk the Great Father's edict?*

KADOR: *He Who is Not and Will Not Be Named is gone. He has given me this world, and I have given you everything you have. Do not anger me, winds, or I will still you.*

SHALIMYR: *As surely as the river meets the ocean you will fall, Kador.*

KADOR: *If I am to fall, so shall you all. Fire cannot be bested, not by wind, nor rain, nor earth. Heed my words: If I see fit to take, you will give. If I see fit to give, you will take. That is all you need know.*

Kador had become convinced that he was responsible for the birth of the gods and the div, and so refused to give them fire. To his increasingly corrupted way of thinking, his "children" had betrayed him.

With Kador's refusal to give flame to Mormekar, there was nothing to do but inter the bodies in Rontra's womb. But Morwyn could not bear to let her brothers die. She gave to Mormekar her own flame, which she had never used. Building a pyre from the stump of Eliwyn, Mormekar blended death and fire and made the Flame of Rebirth.

Terak and Tinel were consumed by the flames, which reached as high as the Moon. Zheenkeef danced around the fire, laughing and singing, whirling and giggling. The chaos of the flames was so beautiful to her that she hurled herself upon the pyre and danced until she too was consumed, so tainted by Shachté had she become.

Soon, there was nothing left of the three young gods or the tree but ash. Morwyn looked at the ash and asked, "When will they be reborn, Mormekar?"

"I do not know," he replied, smearing a streak of the ash across his brow, "but my duty is done."

Saddened by the loss of her siblings, Morwyn fell to her knees before the remains of the pyre and wept. Three of

ARE WE EVIL?

At the time Morwyn and the gods cast Shachté into Hell, the five mortal races (save for the div ancestors of the elves) still grew inside the fruits of the tree, but Shachté was cast out of them as it was expunged from Eliwyn. It is believed by most scholars that this separation of Shachté from the world prevented existence from succumbing to the call of chaos. However, the world, including our forefathers and foremothers, was already affected by Shachté's taint and thus, was not wholly pure and good.

Because of this history, it is generally believed that any one of us might give in to the seed of darkness that has been a part of us since the beginning of time. It is for this reason parents kill their children, brothers and sisters kill each other, wars are fought over gold, and many other terrible deeds are done. However, just as it is possible to succumb to darkness, it is also possible to resist it, which is why there are so many great and decent people in history.

Without Shachté, perhaps we would never have known evil, but either way, we are not doomed to wickedness.

her tears hit the ashes and Eliwyn sprouted forth from the ground, reborn. The tree bore five fruits once more, and at its base lay three crying babes: the gods of the pyre, reborn.

PART III

CORPUS INFERNUS AND THE 3 LAWS

The war between the young gods was over, with only Morwyn left alive. With Mormekar, Death, at her side, she took up her three reborn siblings and descended to the Nameless One's castle in the ocean. There they raised them, while Urian, Rontra, and Shalimyr once more nurtured Eliwyn. While the three children grew, Morwyn and Mormekar wed and begat a child named Maal, called Firstborn, for he was the first god born of a womb. Meanwhile, Mormekar used the Flame of Rebirth to give new life to the souls of all the div who had died in the war of the gods. There was not yet any method to judge them, so they were all reborn.

While the child-gods grew, Morwyn wished to know what caused her siblings to fight their vicious war. She traversed the div nations, which grew once more across the sundered remains of the land. They squabbled for territory. Even div who had not fought for the gods waged wars with one another, seemingly consumed by an instinct for violence.

Morwyn called those div who had been given powers by the gods. With the aid of Mormekar, Rontra, Urian, and Shalimyr, she raised these div beyond mortality and taught them secret songs known only to the gods, and even the ancient names of the gods, uttered only between themselves. The ascended div were thus made the Celestial Host, angels and choirs of hallowed beings, servants of the gods. Chief among them were the seven Archangels and their master, the Archangel Iblis. Morwyn set him to the task of dividing the Celestial Host into three great

choirs. He did so, and there in the watery palace they sang the songs of the first days.

With the host in place, Morwyn called upon the cleverest of the celestials, who had once been div given power by Zheenkeef, to help her discover the cause of the madness that led to war and death.

By the time Terak, Tinel, and Zheenkeef were at last fully grown, Morwyn had discovered the source of the madness that had eaten at them. She had discovered Shachté's taint, and given it the name *Corpus Infernus*. On the eve of her discovery she summoned Mormekar, Maal, Tinel, Zheenkeef, and Terak to the foot of Eliwyn. There she spoke to all the gods, including Urian, Shalimyr, and Rontra. This, the second play of the Cycle says:

MORWYN: *I am now both the eldest sister and the mother of this family, and you will attend me. Your war has torn our mother, the earth, asunder. Your war has dried our father, the seas. Your war has caused our once gentle nurse, the air, to be filled with raging winds and storms. But you cannot be blamed. I call a meeting of the gods to set down laws.*

TINEL: *Of course I am not to be blamed, sister-mother. It was Terak that began the affair. And so, I gladly lend my hand to your laws, which I am sure will end in Terak's exile.*

TERAK: *I'll squeeze your head like a pimple!*

TINEL: *You see? My brother is too violent for his own good. Cast him from the Great Sphere, and watch as he floats away, away, into the vast emptiness.*

TERAK: *I'll make you eat your spleen!*

MORWYN: *Enough! We have been corrupted. None of you are to blame for your actions. You have lost the understanding that we live to create, not destroy.*

ZHEENKEEF: *Yet I live to destroy.*

MORWYN: *You do not, sister.*

ZHEENKEEF: *I know. I was being scary.*

MORWYN: *Will you please listen to me? There is a black wickedness that suffuses everything. I call it the Corpus Infernus. It is responsible for your madness.*

SHALIMYR: *Your siblings are not mad, Morwyn, only playful.*

MORWYN: *Nay, they are mad. They should not kill each other. I will prove what I say. I have clothed the Body of Evil in chains, and cast it forth. Behold!*

A Phantasm appears: an iron gate.

At the point in the play, the troupe's illusionist creates an image of Hell, where Morwyn intended to imprison the *Corpus Infernus*.

Morwyn showed her siblings, her son, and her parents how to cast the *Corpus Infernus* out of themselves. Then they cast it out of Eliwyn and her fruits, the Celestial Host, and the div roaming the world. Once exiled, it transformed into hundreds of horrible, deformed beasts. The gods named these creatures "demons," and the strongest of them, which are likened to the shadows and exact

opposites of creation and all that is good, were called the qliploth. There were some qliploth that were made up of the darkness taken from within the gods themselves, and some of these beings exist today as the demon princes. To keep the world safe from their evil, the gods sealed these creatures in Hell, or so they thought.

This done, the gods' corruption ceased to grow. Zheenkeef became no madder. Her rebirth had cured her of the impulses that caused her to burn herself to death in the age before, but left unchecked she might have renewed her madness. Maal had hardly been affected at all by Shachté by the time Morwyn discovered its undoing, and remained sure-hearted as ever.

With *Corpus Infernus* imprisoned, Morwyn decreed three laws. She and her son, Maal, had spent the years of his youth discussing these laws; now, in the hour of his adulthood and the banishment of the degrading force into Hell, the time was ripe to bring the laws to bear. First, she decreed that the gods would never openly war amongst themselves. That is to say, the gods would never physically fight one another again. Tinel and Terak immediately began to plot how to use the div to best one another.

Second, Morwyn declared that the gods would use their power and strength to guide the div and the other beings now growing in Eliwyn's fruits. The div would be given dominion over the Earth, and guidance from the gods. To this, Zheenkeef objected. "*Why should we concern ourselves with these least and most boring of things?*" she asked. Morwyn explained that the div and the others were their weaker kin, also born of the tree. It was their duty to protect their kin.

Third, Morwyn proclaimed that no one god would ever have absolute sway over all. As the eldest, it would fall on Morwyn to make many basic decisions for the gods, and to lead in times of strife. But all living gods would need to congregate at the foot of Eliwyn and agree, to create any new law that would fundamentally alter the order of the gods.

The gods now had a structured order. However, all was not yet resolved. Confident that among themselves there would never again be such carnage, Morwyn knew that there was still a greater threat. Kador, utterly consumed by *Corpus Infernus*, still sat in the palace of the sky. Though he was quiet now, he would surely rise.

PART IV

THE FALL OF KADOR, THE GREAT WAR OF THE GODS

Of course, dear reader, we have all read the epic poems, heard the songs, and watched the plays about Kador's fall. And, as you have no doubt realized, these are entirely inaccurate. They show all the gods, including gods not yet born during this part of the Third Epoch, working together to best Kador with the aid of mortal races who had not yet awakened.

My research has shown me that the gods did indeed work together, but the war was far more involved than previously believed. Instrumental to the struggle was the Celestial Host. While the gods had empowered div in



their war, so Kador had empowered his own minions. For years, he had hoarded his power and made plans with those he had transformed with his cunning and might. His disciples were as follows:

- **Lilith, the Mother of Beasts.** Beautiful and cunning, from her womb sprang the countless wicked things that made up Kador's army.
- **Baal, the Destroyer.** Kador's strongest servant, he was a crazed hunter and great warrior.
- **Dispater, the Learned.** The craftiest of Kador's servants, Dispater studied the ways of great magic and was so powerful as to make even today's mightiest archmages look like fools.
- **Mammon, the Greedy.** Kador gave Mammon the gift of hunger unslakeable. Mammon would never retreat from battle with the gods, for he desired to consume all the world.

HELL AND THE ABYSS

According to the mythology, Hell was once ruled by the demons, which are made from the pure powers of chaos and evil that the gods cast out of themselves, and the world. Devils are the brood of Kador, and the corrupted div who followed him against the gods. Because they were trained and created by Kador to follow his laws and serve his tyrannical aims, they are creatures of pure law and evil.

When Kador and his followers were cast into Hell, they found but few demons residing there. In their constant wars, metamorphoses and acts of evil creation, the demons had quickly outgrown Hell's structured nine layers, which had been designed by the ordered mind of Morwyn as their prison. Led by their powerful forebears, the qlipthoth, the demons constructed great and terrible machines and burrowed out of Hell. They tore at the fabric of their prison, building great hives and mounds from their offal and other excretions as they went. They built layer upon layer through the astral emptiness until, at last, they came to the edge of the Great Sphere, constructed by the Nameless One.

As war raged in the Material Plane between Kador and the gods, the demons worked their way through the very stuff of the sphere and out into the emptiness beyond. For this reason, the Abyss the demons have built for themselves is truly infinite. However, they still had a use for Hell, as a prison for unworthy, weak demons. Thus, when Kador and his devils were cast into Hell, they easily overcame the long-defeated demons trapped there.

Old hives, ruined war machines and infernal bridges provided connections between Hell and the Abyss, and once the devils took command of Hell, they activated and explored them—and began their war with the demons, who also claimed possession of these places, and of Hell itself. The war continues still, but the ultimate reasons are obscure. Scholars suspect that even the Great Sphere isn't big enough for two forces so profoundly evil, so the war between them is simply a natural inevitability.

- **Leviathan, the Endless.** Kador had always hated Shalimyr more than any other god, so he made one of his servants into an endlessly expansive monster of the seas, in hopes that Leviathan might drink up the lord of the waters.
- **Mephistopheles, the Mighty.** Chief among Kador's disciples was his student Mephistopheles. As the Nameless One had created Kador, so Kador sought to make a child of great power in his own image. Rather than making one of the div more powerful, Kador built Mephistopheles from his own essence, making an almost godlike being, wise in the ways of magic, strong in the ways of war, and every bit as evil as his father.

And so Kador sat with his six lackeys and the army of Lilith's brood in the palace of air, waiting for the other gods to come for him.

After Morwyn explained the threat still posed by Kador, other gods planned to rise from their ocean keep and assault his walls. When their plotting was done, they struck. Zheenkeef let loose her ingenious engines of war, which hurled Tinel's magic over the walls. Terak struck at the gates with his great axe. Urian aided by pitching the castle to and fro in his skies. At last Kador came to the top of his walls.

"*You dare defy me?*" he cried. "*I am your creator!*" And with that, the war truly began. The Celestial Host attacked the walls and was met by the spawn of Lilith's womb. These giants, trolls, goblins, and other evil races are today mere shadows of their might in the time of legends, for then they had the fire of power that their father, Kador, had given them.

The gods had believed Kador to be alone, and so were not prepared for this great onslaught. As the fighting raged, Kador and his six disciples began to hurl down fire and other assaults on the world. The gods, unprepared for this, fled from the fire to their ocean keep. But Rontra—who could not flee, for she is the earth itself—was scorched from top to toe by the vicious flames. Her forests were kindled, her mountains melted. Shalimyr's great lakes were swallowed up by Leviathan in moments, so he could not put out the flames. Urian, expending all his might, kept Eliwyn safe from the attacks. And, though the other gods were safe from the flame, only those div who found shelter with the mysterious Shee tribes were protected. The rest of the div were caught in the fire. Most were consumed, but some few were not destroyed by the conflagration. They were, after all, born in Kador's image as he had prophesied, and their blood ran with fire like his. While they could not survive within the fire hurled down from the Heavens in any form they had known, the flames transformed them into great beasts of fire and energy. According to the original *Treatise on the Divine*, it is from this apocalypse, from these tortured div, that the forefathers of the dragons were born.

In the ocean keep, the gods and their hosts (which had retreated from Lilith's brood) regrouped. Zheenkeef began to bemoan their fate. "*Their might is unstoppable,*" she said. "*They'll hunt and kill us all. We're doomed! Doomed to die like buzzing insects swatted by giant hands!*" Morwyn

calmed her and the rest of the gods. Her quiet reasoning led them to a new plan. When the fires above had finally burned out, they sprang into action.

This time, all the gods assaulted the sky palace. Maal crafted for himself a sword made from metals he took from the ocean palace, which had been made by the Nameless One. He called this sword Justice, and to this day it is his symbol. He and his father, Mormekar, assaulted the Kador's fortress from the rear. From one side came Terak and his host, led by Iblis, wielding weapons of iron with which they tore at the walls. From the other flank came Tinel and his host, bringing torrents of magic down from the sky, shattering the battlements. And from the front came the barrage of Zheenkeef's machines, built by her Celestial Host, tearing the gates of the palace asunder. All the while, Urian showered the sky palace with lightning and Rontra assaulted it with stones. Shalimyr forced himself into Leviathan's belly, to burst it from within. Together, the gods broke the palace of the air. Morwyn strode through the sundered gates, and there found Kador and his followers smoking pipes and playing at dice. The army of Lilith's brood was nowhere to be seen, for while the gods had plotted their second assault, the brood had descended to the land to find treasures in the dark places and caves of the earth. Thus, Morwyn came upon Kador and his disciples alone.

"A delightful show you have put on, child," said Kador with a wide, black-hearted smile.

"Kador, we cast you out. You are broken," Morwyn declared, and from behind her came the other gods, and the assembled Celestial Host, all standing to back her.

"Of course I am, girl. But I will not be broken alone." With that, Kador and his lackeys rose and began to call down flame to split the world and crack the crystal sphere of existence itself. *"If you will not give me my due, we will all die!"*

As planned, the gods opened the portal to Hell. They and the host hurled their combined might at Kador. His arms and legs were broken with a sickening snap, hanging limp and useless at impossible angles. As this happened, the flame he had been entrusted with by the Nameless One was stripped from him and all his followers. The gods placed the fire of power into Eliwyn and the five fruits she bore. The creatures growing inside thus became complete beings with life, free will, and the fire of power. Lilith's brood, which had been given fire by their father, had it stripped from them, which is why even today the evil races of the earth lack souls.

With the fire torn from them, Kador and his six cronies were hurled back through the portal and banished to Hell. The power of the gods' banishing of Kador was so great that most of Lilith's brood was plucked from the deep places of the earth and hurled down with him. It is said by those who study such things that, once there, Kador was imprisoned for eons in a lake of ice at the bottom of Hell. Morwyn had hoped that he would be kept in check there by the demons she and the gods had cast out from themselves. Little did she know that by the time Kador was imprisoned in Hell, the demons had already left, using their strength to tear open the Abyss in which they now reside.



The gods rebuilt the castle in the air, proclaiming it and the ocean keep their realms. The land would belong to the children in the fruits Eliwyn now bore. And to teach the newborn children of the fruit all they needed to know about the world, the gods gave the surviving div the power and freedom to rule over the world as first among the races.

PART V

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED

With Kador banished, and peace prevailing, the gods took up their crowns as rulers of the sphere. Tinel and Zheenkeef begot twins, Darmon and Aymara. Darmon was a cunning child who loved nothing more than to hear his mother laugh, and learned every trick the other gods would teach him. Aymara was the most beautiful of the gods, inspiring those around her to feel deep and abiding love. Morwyn took Terak as her second husband, sharing time between him and Mormekar. By Terak she bore twins, Korak and Anwyn. Korak was a happy child, strong and quick to laugh and play, but not very bright. Anwyn also had a pleasant demeanor, but she seemed to want to be taken seriously even in her youth, perhaps because she was the youngest of them all.

As the gods and their children watched from their castle, the fruits ripened, but not fast enough for Zheenkeef. Years went by as the fruit grew heavier, and all the while the div built their kingdoms and grew in power and knowledge. Though most had been wiped out in the war against Kador, after thousands of years they had rebuilt their strength and numbers.

It came to pass, only a short time before the fruits of Eliwyn finally opened, that the div fulfilled Kador's prophecy that they would rebel against the gods. For generations, the Marid and Shaitan had been united under a single Marid caliph, Gian ben Gian. Gian ben Gian's court dripped with opulence, and his people were beloved by Tinel, for they had learned every trick of magic put before them.

One day, Gian ben Gian called together his counselors and the other great div leaders and asked them this: *"Why do we continue to obey these gods in their palaces of air and water? They have had two wars, and each time we have nearly been destroyed. I say we take their palaces with all our might, and retrieve our birthright! We should be gods, not them! We were born of fire, not them!"* So, the div made plans for a great war against the gods.

Darmon observed all of this. Master of craft and guile, Darmon had spent a year and a day disguised as a servant to Gian ben Gian so that he might better understand the div. He immediately fled to the palace of the gods and told them what he had observed.

Gian ben Gian's reach far exceeded his grasp. His people were not half as mighty as he believed, and the gods were more powerful than he had ever dreamed. Rather than descending upon him themselves, the gods sent their host, led once more by the mighty Iblis, to undo Gian ben Gian's plans. The div were wholly unprepared, and were utterly defeated when Iblis personally slew Gian ben Gian.

Having come to understand the complete ramifications of Kador's prophecy, the gods knew they could not allow the div to remain in the sphere, especially since the young races would soon be born, and would likely be attacked and destroyed if the div were permitted to roam free. So, the gods banished the Marid to the pillar of water, and the Shaitan to the pillar of fire, where they remain today. But the Shee had done nothing but remain in their fastnesses under the earth, in the forests and deep in the sea. They had never participated in a war, and remained wholly peaceful. But the gods, fearing that Kador's curse would one day lead the Shee against them too, called forth these secret people.

It was the gods' decree that the Shee must decide whether to be stripped of the fire that coursed through their veins, and therefore their immortality, or to abandon the free will that was their birthright, and be bound to the earth. Most of the Shee decided to be rid of the fire in their blood. These were set about the foot of Eliwyn and made to sleep until the fruits still on the bough came to ripen. They would awaken as the first elves. Those who chose to be stripped of their free will returned to their homes in the secret places of the earth, where they remain today as the many water sprites and fairies of the wood, still bright ones but forever bound to the earth and unable to choose their lot in life.

PART VI

THE CHILDREN OF THE EARTH

A short time after the div were banished from the sphere, Zheenkeef was no longer able to wait for the fruit of Eliwyn to ripen. One day, while most of the other gods were deep in conversation and debate, Zheenkeef went down to the grove of the tree.

"What do you want, Zheenkeef?" Urian asked suspiciously.

"I want them to come out."

"Must you always be so impatient?" Rontra asked her.

Zheenkeef laughed and danced around the tree in response. Soon Urian and Rontra were dizzy from watching her. Seeing this, Zheenkeef ran up to the great roots of Eliwyn. Shalimyr lifted a wave to stop her, but then lowered it again. Zheenkeef had always been Shalimyr's favorite among the gods. Her mad ways reminded him of his own whirlpools and sea-storms and, indeed, he harbored for his granddaughter a secret love.

Once she knew she could play with the tree undisturbed, Zheenkeef began to ponder what to do first. It was then that she noticed the sleeping Shee all about the roots, and these she scooped up into her hands. *"This should wake them,"* she said, and hurled them across the world into the great woods that had grown since the war with Kador. However, she did not rid herself of all of them, for some of the Shee were awoken by being lifted and, terrified, began to bite the hand that had lifted them.

Zheenkeef hopped up and down in pain and shook her hands wildly. The Shee she still held flew all over, some into the seas and others into the ground.

Of course, the Shee were no longer the Shee, for they had had their fiery blood taken from them and had been

transformed into a mortal race. Those who landed in the woods are to this day known as the elders of the earth and are the longest lived of the races—for they are now called the elves. Those who flew into the seas are the magical sea-elves that sailors speak of in legend and song. And I believe that those who flew into the earth became the wicked drow, angered by their cruel awakening and forever embittered, though this is not the story the dark elves tell.

After ridding the tree of the elves, Zheenkeef thought to throw the fruits of the tree as far as she had thrown the sleeping firstborn.

The first fruit she plucked became covered in her blood, for the Shee who had bitten her hand had drawn blood. Zheenkeef hurled this fruit all the way to the mountains that marked the edge of the earth. By pure happenstance, those mountains were the playground of stolid, pleasant-tempered Korak. On this day, Korak was playing his favorite game of lifting mountains and seeing what was under them, when the first-plucked fruit came flying with terrible swiftness from across the world. Before the son of Morwyn and Terak had time to react, the fruit covered in Zheenkeef's blood hit him in the head, splitting open his skull and mingling his aunt's blood with his own.

From this fruit sprang the dwarves, strong and dour, and they made a home in the head of the wounded and unconscious god. Later, Korak awoke with a splitting headache and the genius of Zheenkeef's blood. The simpleton son of the First Mother taught the dwarves the secrets of mining, smithing and many other tricks. To this day, the dwarves hold Korak dearest among the gods for his aid.

But long before Korak awakened, Zheenkeef plucked a second fruit. Noticing this fruit was also covered in her blood, the goddess healed her wounds, and licked her blood off the fruit. Then she lobbed it to the hills. From it sprang the gnomes, touched by the blood, hot breath, and warm tongue of Zheenkeef and, therefore, suffused with her inspirational madness.

The third fruit Zheenkeef kicked, because she grew tired of throwing. It landed in the cliffs, but bounced to the plains. This fruit bore the halflings, meant to be proud, tall and willowy race. However, the bounce had squashed them down to less than half their size, and made them round and perhaps, humbler than they might have been.

From the skins of the three fruits sprang the animals and beasts of the world. Kin of the mortal races and the gods, they had life and free will from their mother, Eliwyn, but they never received the fire of power, which passed through the skins and into the mortal races. Thus the animals of the world have spirits, but not souls.

The fourth fruit Zheenkeef decided not to throw at all. In fact, all the hurling and kicking of fruits had given her quite an appetite, so she gobbled it up. The fruit gave her a terrible stomach ache, however, and she began howling in pain. The other gods heard and came to see what was the matter. When Morwyn and the others arrived, they found Zheenkeef leaning against the tree, clutching her belly and groaning.

WHY WE KNOW THIS IS TRUE

Long after the Great Sage Matalou's martyrdom, the most powerful Armarius of Tinel's Scriptoriums at the time, Madrigan Yewstaff, was inspired to investigate the veracity of Matalou's claims. While the Great Sage's treatise had been called heresy and blasphemy by most, it had nonetheless caused secret doubts to spread throughout the religious world.

Matalou's passages about the div led Yewstaff to discover that the tome's claims were true. Expending a great deal of his church's wealth and his own power, Yewstaff performed one of the greatest rituals the church of Tinel has ever known. He summoned to their great cathedral the spirit of Gian ben Gian, the only div he knew by name. He bound the spirit so that it would speak only truth, and answer thirty questions. And then, with a council of his wisest inceptors, Yewstaff made the spirit tell him the true history of the gods.

The div lived in a time when the gods routinely walked the earth. As the caliph of his people, Gian ben Gian had supped with many of the gods himself, and learned at their feet all the creation stories they would tell him. And while the caliph's spirit wanted nothing more than to lie to Yewstaff and mislead the usurper races that had taken over a world that rightly belonged to the div, Yewstaff's ritual was too powerful, and the Marid could tell nothing but the truth.

After Yewstaff had finished asking his thirty questions, he made a proclamation to the leaders of the faith throughout the world. The Treatise on the Divine was true, every word of it. He declared the Great Sage Matalou a martyr of the faith, and ordered that the record of Gian ben Gian's thirty answers be writ into only one tome and locked in the most secure hold of the Scriptorium, called the Cathedral of Truth. Often when one of the major religions chooses a new leader, she makes a pilgrimage there and reads the sacred tome.

It is said that Gian ben Gian revealed many hidden truths in his questioning – truths that most are not prepared to hear. But since the leaders of the assembled faiths came to read the text, few serious scholars have questioned the veracity of the Great Sage Matalou's claims.

"I shouldn't have eaten that," she muttered. Morwyn rushed to her side and forced her to vomit the fruit back up. Sadly, the race that had been inside was now in pieces, and the gods could not determine what they were supposed to be. It was Tinel who came up with a plan for dealing with the disaster his wife had wrought. Each of the gods would take some part of the fruit and try to reconstruct it. When they were done, they would all meet back under the tree and put the fruit back together from the pieces.

As the gods departed, Zheenkeef noticed that there was one fruit left. Anticipating that she might win this little game the gods were playing by peeking at the contents of the last fruit, she grabbed for it. Rontra noticed this, however,

THE BURIAL OF BODIES

Because the fire of rebirth, given to Mormekar by Morwyn, was necessary for the rebirth of the gods, many cultures assume that the dead must be cremated. And yet others believe that the fire of rebirth is held by Mormekar and Mormekar only—if you burn a body, he cannot wash the corpse in the fire of rebirth, and your loved one will never be reborn. This is a religious debate with a long and toothsome history. The position of a character's culture on burial and burning is entirely up to the GM, keeping in mind that a history of burning bodies makes physical undead far rarer.

and cried out. *“No, Zheenkeef,”* she pleaded, *“I entreat you. This fruit must be left upon the tree. It must be allowed to ripen.”*

Surprisingly, Zheenkeef obeyed and danced off, clapping her hands and turning cartwheels. No one knows what is in this fifth fruit, for it has never ripened. There are those who believe that when it ripens, it will herald the fifth epoch, the time of great change and endings. I, dear reader, am sorry to say that I simply do not know.

PART VII

THE FIFTH RACE AND THE THREE SISTERS

And so, the family of the gods each took a part of the fourth fruit and reconstructed it in an image that he or she thought fitting. Terak pieced together a tall race of strong people, whose men had great beards and icy eyes. Morwyn molded a beautiful dark-skinned people in her own image, with green eyes and a peaceful wisdom. So it was with each of the Lords of Heaven (except Korak, who still slept, unnoticed by the other gods, at the edge of the world). When the gods reassembled at the foot of Eliwyn, they realized that they had all rebuilt the fruit differently, but all from the same seeds and pulp. This was one people with many faces, able to change at the command of the gods, or against challenges of the world. These were the humans. And while the gods made humans the most varied and adaptable of the races, Zheenkeef had digested a part of their essence, which is why humans are so short-lived, and lack the gifts possessed by other races. Furthermore, because the gods spread them all over the world, humans have always been, and continue to be, the most plentiful of the races.

And so, with the races of the tree born at last, a time of peace prevailed. The children of the gods grew to maturity, and so did the races of the tree. They built temples to the gods, giving them a variety of names. Each race acknowledged their existence.

Among the young gods born of the womb, Maal First-born was the oldest, with a keen mind, a sense of fairness, and his sword, Justice. It was decided by all the gods that he would be the judge of these new races. He would have a kingdom in the center of the earth beneath Eliwyn's roots, where souls would go if their bodies were properly buried

or cremated. He would judge them to decide whether they would be reincarnated in a new form, or enter his halls to be punished or rewarded.

In building his kingdom, Maal sought the help of his half-brother, Korak, who had grown nearly as strong as his father, and practical like his mother. Since the accident in his youth, Korak had proven to be a clever artisan. He crafted four great halls for the heroes who would remain in Maal's realm as reward, and many terrible pits and tortures for those who would be punished. When he was done, Korak began to wander the world with his cousin, Darmon, and there taught the mortal races many skills and crafts, particularly those of the forge. Maal also asked his half-sister, Anwyn, to bless his hearth and home, for Anwyn had become quite skillful in the ways of comfort and contentedness. She had changed the gods' castle in the sky from an enormous, cold place of majesty to a warm and happy home.

For the children of Tinel and Zheenkeef, matters were different. They were both dreamers like their parents, and not so concerned with practical matters. Darmon, their son, often wandered among the races of the tree, teaching them games and gambling. He also taught them the ways of commerce and trade, and at night, thievery and spying. Of Aymara, it is said there exists no being of greater beauty. Best loved by the gods, Aymara spent her time sculpting and painting, playing music and singing. Consumed with a passion for beauty, she often traveled with her brother, observing the mortals and their arts. It is said that if her heart knows hate, it is only for Kador, who so ruthlessly manipulated her father into killing and death.

It went very well for gods and mortals for quite some time. Mortals grew prosperous and spread across the world into great cities and nations. Shalimyr allowed them to build ships that would sail on his back, and they began to trade among themselves, forming great alliances. At the same time, the offspring of Lilith came out of their hidden places, and the forefathers of the dragons began to rise from their slumbers. It was the age of heroes, of the greatest adventures and tales, all of which are recounted in epic poems and songs that you have no doubt read or heard. The various heroic epics from the earliest days of the mortal races took place during this period in Third Epoch, not in the Fourth, as is generally assumed.

During this time of great heroism, this golden age of the gods, Maal decided to hunt for a wife. He gathered his cousin Darmon and his half-brother Korak, and the three of them, remembered to this day as the Three Companions, went on a great journey across the sphere, seeking a suitable wife for the judge of the dead.

One day the three gods heard the most beautiful singing they could imagine. Unlike the perfect voice of Aymara, this sound was three magnificent voices singing in harmony. Rushing toward the sound, the three gods came upon a mountain pool where bathed three maidens, each more perfect in form and beauty than the last. The three gods were smitten at once.

As you no doubt know already, these three maidens were the Three Sisters. No one knows from whence they

came, but they were as different in temperament as they were beautiful. The tallest of them, Naryne, was noble in bearing, with a piercing gaze. Wisdom sat on her brow, and to hear her voice was to obey her command. The strongest of them, Canelle, was swift as the wind. She could best any man at wrestling, and was a champion at every sport. The slightest of them had branches and leaves in her hair. Thellyne preferred the company of the beasts and the birds to that of any other than her sisters.

When Maal, Darmon and Korak approached the Three Sisters to profess their undying love, the sisters' reactions were mixed. Thellyne ran from Korak, Canelle challenged Darmon to a fight (which she won), and Naryne was smitten, falling in love with Maal.

While Maal and Naryne were soon married, the tales of Korak and Darmon wooing the other two sisters provide some of the most entertaining tales of the faith. The Three Sisters were brought back to the water palace, where Morwyn and the others welcomed them into the family of the gods. To this day, however, no scholar or theologian has suggested a plausible theory as to where the Three Sisters came from.

CHAPTER IV:

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH EPOCHS

At last, my dear reader, we traverse well-known ground. My history of the Fourth Epoch is almost precisely the same as the history we have believed in for a thousand years. We all know of the Compact, and the last great conflict of the gods. Please forgive me as I repeat the material, but I must present it for a complete history.

PART I

THE FOURTH AGE AND THE WOE OF CARASON

The end of the Third Epoch was a golden time of peace and heroism. But peace could not last, for Morwyn's laws could not foresee the new conflicts among the gods. Those gods who were more chaotic in spirit wanted the mortals to fight, have adventures, and be free to wreak havoc or do great deeds as their spirits dictated. For in doing these things, they paid homage to these gods, making them more powerful. Those gods who preferred an ordered world wanted mortals to be peaceful, build nations ruled by law, and create societies to last through the centuries. And so, both groups of gods traveled among mortals to manipulate and command them. Many of the gods began to sire children with mortals, so their progeny could act as their earthly agents.

On top of these difficulties, Terak and Tinel, the patriarchs of the two great households of the gods, continued to pursue their ancient grudge, manipulating of the races of the tree to fight on their behalf.

These machinations nearly destroyed the order of the gods. As Tinel and Terak had feuded for ages, so

Morwyn and Zheenkeef had come to struggle. But the two sisters never fought in person. Instead, Morwyn's followers built great nations, and cast the worshippers of Zheenkeef out. Nations obeisant to Zheenkeef raided the homelands of Morwyn's followers. These struggles took place across the world, except in a select few nations, where all the gods were worshipped equally.

In one such nation's capital, the city of Carason, two of Morwyn's priestesses were loved by the people. The sisters Menara and Tora were known to walk among the impoverished and the infirm, offering succor. The nine apostles of Zheenkeef grew jealous of the love Carason's people bore for Morwyn's priestesses. They devised a plan, independent of Zheenkeef, to ruin the sisters. It is important to note that the evil that followed was the work of mortal hearts and human design, for there has never been any indication that Zheenkeef commanded this disgrace.

Tricking Menara and Tora into leaving Carason, two of Zheenkeef's apostles disguised themselves as the sisters. They then invited the elders and dignitaries of Carason to the healing halls of Morwyn for a great feast. When the feast was complete, the Zhenkefan apostles revealed that they dined on the sisters' husbands and children. *"So great is our love for you and this city, that we served you our own flesh and blood, that you might prosper and know our love,"* the disguised apostles told them.

The elders of the city were so outraged that they burned the healing hall of Morwyn to the ground, pulled out the foundation, stone by stone, and salted the earth upon which it had been built. They even destroyed other shrines to Morwyn, and smashed her likenesses. The apostles of Zheenkeef who had masqueraded as Menara and Tora fled, returned to their true identities, and upon their return, urged on the destruction.

When the real sisters returned to the city, they were almost killed on sight. They were arrested, and discovered what had befallen their families and their temple. Menara died of sorrow on the spot. Tora broke her bonds in rage, and plucked out her own eyes to spare them from profanity. Despite her pain, she did not die. Morwyn sent an angel to Tora, which transported her bodily into Heaven.

Morwyn was moved to a rage unlike any had ever witnessed. Upon the nine apostles of Zheenkeef she called down the most horrid of curses, that they should wander the earth forever, eternally hungry and festering with painful disease. Should anyone feed them, the apostles would erupt with sores and their skin would break open with terrible wounds. Should anyone try to heal their wounds or cure their diseases, the apostles' eyes would erupt in flame and from their mouths would burst clouds of blood and stinging black nettles. The apostles of Zheenkeef wander the world still, terrified of any who are good of heart, and might offer them the succor that Menara and Tora once offered the poor of Carason.

Morwyn's wrath extended also to the elders of Carason, and to the city itself, for they should have known this trick for what it was. How could they imagine the gentle servants of Morwyn capable of such an atrocity?



As she prepared to destroy the city for its sins, its leaders pleaded with her in tearful prayer to spare the innocent of Carason and punish only them, for it was the elders who ordered these crimes against Morwyn's temples and shrines. To prove their faith in the matter, they burnt down the temple of Zheenkeef as they had the temple of Morwyn. It too they razed stone by stone, salting the earth beneath its foundation. And when they were done, Morwyn forgave Carason its crimes against her, and punished the elders of the city only by turning them into dogs, for dogs are forever loyal, and do not question their masters.

For her part, Zheenkeef was prepared to let the curse laid upon her apostles go without remark. They had committed grave atrocities, after all. But when Morwyn all but forgave the elders, who destroyed her temple and ate the flesh of her priestesses' children, it was more hypocrisy than Zheenkeef was prepared to stomach.

One night, when the gods were feasting, Korak was not among them. Zheenkeef said aloud, *"I suppose you've fed me your son Korak as revenge for Carason, sister?"*

This erupted into a terrible row, luring almost every god into supporting one side or the other, more to renew old grudges than out of the logic of it. Terak and Tinel exchanged dark words, threatening violence, as each supported his own wife, but also wished to settle other arguments. Only Aymara and Mormekar remained neutral during this struggle, and when they saw Terak and Tinel preparing to duel, they stepped in their midst.

"What madness possesses you? Father! Uncle! Stand back!" Aymara said.

"Will you defy Morwyn's laws?" Mormekar demanded, staring with his unblinking black eyes. *"Did she not revive you from death? Did she not lead you against Kador? Will you sunder what even Kador could not: the order of the gods?"*

Tinel and Terak relented, but the conflict between the gods of law and chaos could not be so easily calmed. The gods decided they needed to allow the mortals to choose their own paths. After all, mortals had free will, and should be allowed to use it. The gods agreed to meet in fifty years at the foot of Eliwyn, each with their own proposal to resolve the conflict, and free mortals to do as they desired.

PART II

THE FOURTH AGE: THE COMPACT

When the time came for the assembly of the gods, each had prepared a treaty to solve the dispute in a manner satisfactory to his or her goals. Zheenkeef suggested turning all mortals into furniture, automata and mechanisms for the gods' convenience. *"If we treat them as mere servants, why bother with will? Let an elf be my footstool,"* she said. The gods knew she said it to inflame their arguments, so they might choose the opposite and abandon mortals completely—such chaos would serve Zheenkeef, who cared little for worship. And indeed, Rontra suggested as much: that the gods should do nothing but watch mortals, and would no longer provide the slightest whisper or blessing.

Debate lasted for years, for no god would compromise. Meanwhile, mortal kingdoms grew, collapsed, and were replaced by greater kingdoms, often led by progeny of the gods. These kingdoms warred among themselves but the gods didn't notice. No humans were judged, for Maal did not attend to his duties; but his father, Mormekar, continued to reap their souls and give them new life, so they were reborn as infants. The mortals were abandoned by the gods, left to their own devices. They built great cities and leveled them. They were neither punished for misdeeds, nor rewarded for goodness.

Eventually, the gods saw the strife-torn product of their neglect, and realized they needed to choose their course. They agreed upon an arcane document, called the Compact, which would allow the gods pursue their goals, but give mortals freedom to walk their own paths.

The Compact set gods apart from mortals. The gods crafted their own plane, outside of the mortal sphere: a

THE COMPACT

If the gods still walked the world, warring among themselves and crushing mortals who annoyed them, it would be a very scary time to be alive. Thankfully, the Compact prevents this. This is agreement between the gods that keeps the world from exploding into religious warfare. While religious scholars assume the gods have written it down, no mortal has ever seen the text—they know the basics from inference. Here are the fundamentals:

- The gods can't go down to the world and influence major events as themselves. Taking over kingdoms, fighting wars themselves, and wiping out enemies on the Material Plane are all prohibited.
- The gods may go to the Material Plane in their earthly forms, simple avatars that look like people, and they may set into motion cryptic events. They may offer advice, give small gifts, and give aid to their favored that will not have world-altering effects (it is acceptable to save the life of your favorite cleric).
- If some majority of the gods agree (it is unknown whether this requires all the gods to agree, some overwhelming number, or a simple majority), they may directly influence people and events, overriding the first rule.
- The primary way the gods influence the world is through their agents. All godly agents receive similar boons from their gods—so Morwyn's servants' divine spells are just as good as Zheenkeef's—and through these agents the gods' wills are enacted. The agents receive their spells through the celestial servants of the gods.
- Celestials may descend and aid mortals in times of need. When angels and other members of the Celestial Host must spend time on the Material Plane, they occupy the palace of air, which is invisible to mortals.
- Mortals may live how they please, though should any mortal dare threaten a god's person, the recipient is allowed to take whatever vengeance they like. If mortals threaten all the gods, the gods may respond with a coordinated plan, which they can act upon directly or through Raguel, the archangel of divine retribution.
- All the deeds of mortals, good or evil, are recorded by the guardian angels of Elysium and the daemons of Gehenna.
- When mortals die, they are judged by Maal. Those who are good (or not terribly bad) stay in Maal's kingdom awaiting rebirth as another member of the five mortal races. Those who are very good reside forever in Maal's kingdom, in one of the four great halls. The particularly favored ascend to the mountain of Heaven, to serve the god they revered in life (or all the gods, in the case of paladins and clerics of the Great Church). Those who performed especially evil deeds are cast down to Hell, Gehenna, or the Abyss for the pleasure of the devils, daemons, and demons there.
- Devils, daemons, and demons are permitted to tempt mortals.
- Each Lord of Heaven is individually strengthened by the deeds of mortals done in their service and all prayers spoken in their respective names. All the gods are strengthened by acts of good. Therefore, it is to the advantage of the gods to promote goodness, but it is even more to their advantage to promote their own faith.

great mountain, with seven great cities as the mountain ascended. This was Heaven, and at its pinnacle was placed the home of the gods. In that city, the gods built a great palace from which to watch the Material Plane. Maal's underground kingdom was moved to its own plane as well, and the gods made a long dark river that flowed from the mortal sphere into the land of the dead.

By the terms of the Compact, the gods would no longer directly manipulate mortals, but would accept the power of their worship, or from actions aligned with the gods' morals and divine domains. They would only speak to mortals who sought them out, and only give power in return for worship.

But this was not the most dramatic change. To the dismay of the other gods, Tinel logically demonstrated that any system in which the gods spoke to mortals, rewarding good deeds and punishing evil, denied them free will. For if mortals truly knew the gods watched them, and that anyone who their will would be punished, it made the choice of wickedness so foolish as to be absurd. It became a simple decision to avoid pain: the sort of reflex any animal would possess. Unless wickedness also had its rewards, free will would not prosper. Thus, the

gods decided they would allow Hell's creatures to tempt mortals. The gods opened a portal to Hell, and demanded that its demon princes come forth and be appraised of what would be permitted.

It is here, dear reader, that we come to the shocking discovery I have made about this epoch. In the Treatise I have used as the basis of my own, there is an exacting description of this moment. As I said earlier, Kador's fall is not all that we have been led to believe. For when they demanded that the leaders of the demons come to them, only Kador that came to the portal.

He demanded they call him Asmodeus, Lord of Hell. There were no longer any demons in Hell, for that he and his disciples had banished them. In Hell, Kador took a new name and appearance. He took the mantle of rule for himself and his *divils*, a word the Treatise uses that has obviously become "devils" in our tongue. Thus, when the churches say Kador suffers in Hell, they tell a half-truth, for while he may be tormented, he dwells there as overlord, not prisoner.

The gods withdrew at once from the portal. Having learned that Kador ruled Hell, they were prepared to abandon the Compact, but Darmon convinced them to continue as planned. Having traveled widely among the

GEHENNA AND ELYSIUM

While the gods have an arrangement with the powers of Hell and the Abyss through the Compact, the lords of Heaven know that those powers would be just as happy to destroy the Heavens as to cooperate with them. Gehenna, however, is a place of strange and dangerous alliances. The war of Hell and the Abyss rages across it, and the daemons that call the place home fight in the war, but also serve a greater purpose in the Compact. They watch all mortals and tempt them to small sins – not the sort of sins of titanic evil that become legendary, like wiping out nations or defiling temples. Daemons are the small voices that tell a person to ignore a hungry man begging for alms, or the tiny lust that wells up in a good man's heart for his brother's wife.

The daemons record a mortal's sins in a great black ledger that's preserved until the sinner's death, and sent up the dark river to Maal's Kingdom him to consult, when the mortal must be judged. But just as a person is watched and tempted by the daemons, she is also watched and guided toward goodness by the guardian angels of Elysium. Again, their influence does not lead to the great heroism of legend. They are little voices that move us to charity when it is inconvenient, and the small sighs in our heart that lead us to forgive those who harm us.

If you were to look at a mortal in the Material Plane with the eyes of a god, you would see a person in the middle of a pillar of light. As the pillar extends upwards, to Elysium, it becomes a white light; once it reaches that land of beauty, the pillar becomes a reflection of the mortal formed from pure light – it is this reflection the guardian angels watch and speak to. As the pillar extends downward, to Gehenna, it becomes pure darkness; once it reaches that scarred and putrid plane, it becomes a dark reflection of the mortal that the daemons watch and whisper to. The pillar works much like the silver cord that connects a person's astral form to his body, but it is invisible to all but the mightiest magic and cannot be severed, except by the will of a god.

mortals, he had come to understand a fundamental principle of the wicked heart. *"If we give something to the demons and something to the devils, they each shall want what the other has!"* he told his family.

"Nonsense!" his father called it, but it was easy enough for clever Darmon to demonstrate.

"Father, when Kador offered fire to the eldest, you suddenly wanted to be the eldest, didn't you? You wanted it because your brother did, but until you knew he desired it, until Kador mentioned it, you did not care whether you were the eldest or not," Darmon said. *"So shall we trick Kador and the demons, as Kador once tricked you."*

To Kador, who was now Asmodeus, they offered the right to tempt mortals and to win their souls, should they walk the evil path. But the gods made the same offer to the demon princes, and let it be known that Hell and the Abyss would both enjoy the right to capture wicked souls.

Thus the enmity between demons and devils, already powerful, was redoubled, and extended to their influence in the world, for each would prevent the other from claiming souls. Asmodeus recognized Darmon's plan, for even a god cannot trick one whose wicked mind was made by the Nameless One. However, Asmodeus understood that the only way back to power was to accept the offer. Souls turned to evil denied Heaven power, and might be used to fuel his conquest of the universe.

Therefore, demons and devils are permitted two modes of influence. First, they may engage in the Lesser Temptation, offering whispers and petty favors to lead mortals away from fair dealing, love and virtue. Second, they may provide true magical power and other great gifts, in the Greater Temptation. While Maal may judge any who fall to the Lesser Temptation with occasional mercy, sending them to rebirth or some period as a joyless shade in his realm, those who do not repent of the Lesser Temptation or who give themselves to the Greater, are cast to Hell or the Abyss. Indeed, Maal's halls or torment are closed, for demons and devils now perform such tasks.

Maal did not close the pits of punishment with a light heart, for he saw that this new order had a great flaw. *"We give Hell and the Abyss much power,"* he warned his family, *"and make it difficult for me to judge the acts of mortals. For indeed, they will be tempted to darkness, and they may do evil, but who shall record all their deeds? Before now, I have asked mortals to tell me of their lives, and I have known their words to be true, but now the truth may be obscured by the power of great evil. It is to Hell's advantage to make lies on the lips of the damned, for they will thus win souls, and with the souls, power. All deeds must be recorded. This I see."*

The gods agreed, and sought out those demons and devils who had fought on the bridges and in the hulking ruins between Hell and The Abyss for so long that they were an order of beings unto themselves, with dark nations who no longer swore allegiance to either side, and were thus punished by both as traitors. The gods offered to strengthen their citadels and give them an alliance with Heaven, if these creatures would watch the souls of mortals, and record evil deed on black ledgers. The rebel nations agreed, and became the daemons, and their homes were bound to a new plane, Gehenna. Thus, every person has at least one daemon watching her as she goes through life. It knows her darkest fantasies and most private thoughts. The daemon is the whisper we hear to do ill, made possible by the gods. These wicked spirits record all sins, so Maal might receive a true reckoning when we stand before him.

But the gods are merciful, this we know, for they did not rest with the making of Gehenna. They also formed a sphere outside of Heaven, filling it with a plane of light and joy that they called Elysium. And there they placed a new order of the Celestial Host, the guardian angels, and these beings were charged with watching us for moments of virtue, and encouraging us to act on our better instincts. As daemons write in black ledgers of our sins, guardian angels write of our good deeds, in white ledgers. So it is that each of us is watched not only by the whispering daemons of

Gehenna, but also by the singing angels of Elysium. And when we die, Maal receives the ledgers of white and black and knows the truth of our lives, so he may judge without fear of deception.

PART III

THE FOURTH AGE: THE FALL OF IBLIS

While the Compact was wise, and has prevailed to this day, it did not sit well with all of Heaven. Some of the Celestial Host was placed in the Nameless One's palace of the air, which once served as Kador's fortress. From there, they would serve the mortal races and act as a conduit for their prayers to pass from the mortal sphere onto the choirs of Heaven and, in some cases, directly to the gods themselves. Chosen members of the faithful would be granted powers by the gods, and would receive the ability to call up miracles sent to them by the Celestial Host. Other angels were sent to Elysium, to watch the mortal races for eternity and record their deeds.

When the gods told the three choruses of the celestials of this new order of things, most happily went about their duties, but a large group became greatly disgruntled. Led by the first among the archangels, Iblis, these celestials wondered how the gods expected them to go from being soldiers at their side, their instruments of wrath against the rebellious div, their army against Kador, to errand runners and messengers for the lesser races. Iblis cried out, *"I was first born, made of fire, and ye want me to bow before these, who are made of dust?"*

The gods, who had always loved Iblis well, sought to reason with him. This was the highest calling, for all of creation had been about this moment, when the free will of mortals would allow greatness to unfold. But Iblis would have none of it, nor would a legion of celestials at his back, many of whom had just returned from making war on the demons of the Abyss. None were willing to bow to the mortals, or join an order of things that included Hell, and the Abyss. They demanded the gods give them homes in newly-made Heaven, to spend their days singing. *"This Compact is folly,"* said one of this rebellious host, who would later be known as Belial. *"It makes us stand shoulder to shoulder with evil, in the service of gnats, these mortals you would have us serve."* Iblis agreed, and said as much to the gods he had served.

This was more than the Lords of Heaven could bear. *"You have overstepped, Iblis, and you and all your rebels will be undone!"* Maal called down, and he and the treeborn gods prepared to smite every celestial in Iblis' host. But Naryne stayed their hands. *"If you strike them down yourselves, you allow others in the host to sit by idly and watch, without ever choosing for themselves how they would stand if asked. We can allow no such doubts among the host, for any who have learned to doubt us, or feel they are our equals, will surely rise against us someday."*

And so, based on Naryne's wise counsel, the loyal members of the Celestial Host were set against the rebels, and fought a great war in Heaven. When all was done,

Iblis and his compatriots were defeated and cast down into Hell, where it was hoped they might be punished by Asmodeus and his devils.

With the Compact in place and the rebellion quashed, the gods forever left the mortal sphere. And though they still return on occasion as their earthly avatars, and still influence mortal events through their agents on the earth, such as the priests and holy orders of their churches, they do not directly intervene. They leave mortals to make their own choices, to be tempted by devils, demons, and daemons, or swayed by their agents, and watched carefully by the Celestial Host and the guardian angels.

This is how we now know the world. Morwyn, Terak, Tinel, Zheenkeef, and Mormekar; their children Korak, Anwyn, Darmon, and Aymara; and one of the three sisters, Canelle, all sit on their thrones, only stepping into the mortal sphere during dire times. While they watch the mortal races, Mormekar claims them when their time has come. He sends them to Maal's kingdom to be judged. Maal issues sentences, but his wife Naryne rules the underworld itself. And within the mortal sphere are the earth, the skies, and the waters, Rontra, Urian, and Shalimyr, who watch over the gods and advise them like dutiful parents, while shy Thellyne hides herself in the woods, watching over Eliwyn. Occasionally Korak, who has never given up his unrequited love, visits her. Each god has his place, each goddess hers. This is how it has always been in our time and, gods preserve us, this is how it shall always be.

PART IV:

THE FIFTH EPOCH: UNDOING

Of course, dear reader, no history would be complete without speculation upon the future. For hundreds of years now we have heard talk of a coming Fifth Epoch. Some say it will be a time of great change, when mortals ascend outside the Material Plane, to explore and discover other spheres created by the Nameless One. Others say that in the Fifth Epoch, the Nameless One will be named, and all that is our world will be undone.

I cannot tell you what will happen in the future. I am a sage, not a soothsayer. And yet, I believe that the Fifth Epoch may well be coming and that it will be time of great change. I believe the fifth fruit left on Eliwyn will at last ripen, and perhaps Asmodeus will escape his bonds in Hell. It will be, I think, the third great apocalypse of mankind, but we will survive. We will always survive.

CHAPTER VI:

EPILOGUE

I hope that you have enjoyed this simple history. It is the fruit of my life's research. I imagine some of the revelations I have provided may well be shocking, and many who read this will doubt its accuracy. Rest assured, dear reader, every word is truth. It is my life's pursuit; it is who I am. Without truth, a sage is little more than a talkative old man.

APPENDIX II: GODS AND RACES

HERE YOU WILL FIND A GENEALOGY OF THE GODS AND RACES, AS WELL AS A GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS. FOR easy reference, the glossary explains nearly all the names from throughout the book and defines several of the thornier pieces of terminology.

GLOSSARY

100 Crowns: The gift of Naryne to the first nobles of the five mortal races when she sanctified their bloodlines and named them rightful kings and queens. They are all thought to be lost.

1,001 Handmaids: See the Handmaids of Zheenkeef.

Aerix: Greatest of the mortal children of Terak, Aerix is the hero of many tales of adventure. He is also the central figure of a parable in which, craving a challenge, he asks his father to send against him a foe he could not best. The tale ends in tragedy. He now stands at his father's side in Heaven.

Air Pillar: A place of pure air and cloud; many clever creatures live here and seek to travel to the Prime Material Plane to learn and investigate. This is now the home of the good-hearted div, usually called djinni, who were liberated from the fire pillar by Darmon.

Alimus: Originally named Ali Mustafis bin Omar, Alimus was one of the two greatest athletes ever born of the div. He and his rival, Farouk al Ban, were promised places in the heavens by Urian. Alimus drags the sun across the heavens with a golden cord every day, though he is sometimes drawn into conflict with his old rival, who drags the moon, and there is an eclipse as they wrestle.

Alonzo d'Eriq: The founder of the sacrifices of Mormekar, d'Eriq was a justice of Maal visited by Mormekar. He was instructed to begin administering the Rite and to protect the dead from the deprivations of necromancy.

Anarchic Magic: The Maalite term for magic that destroys a soul or denies it its right to be judged before Maal.

Anvil: See the Five Apprentices.

Anwyn: Goddess of the hearth, the home, and contentedness, Anwyn is the youngest of the gods. She is noted for her quiet smile and gentle ways, like her mother, but also for her deep desire to

preserve and protect the sanctity of the home, like her father. Anwyn is lawful good and desires a world where simple folk may live in peace. Her mother is Morwyn, her father is Terak and her twin brother is Korak.

Aragos: A mortal king who outlawed joy to save his people from sorrow. While the gods tried to change his mind to please Aymara, they all failed. Finally, Aymara turned him away from his decree by winning his heart with song. She married him and they had seven children together, now called the Seven.

Aragoth: See the Seven.

Arathelle: Aymara's animal companion, Arathelle is a silver pegasus and most lovely of all the beasts of Heaven. She is considered endlessly wise as well.

Arcane Magic: Originally called "arkane," this is the power of magic overseen by Tinel that was stripped from the world by him long ago and returned in the ark of magic. It is literally magic from the ark.

Ark of Magic: The vessel in which Uriel returned magic to the mortal races after Tinel severed them from it for the crimes of the Fourteen Wizards.

Askew: The morningstar of Zheenkeef is spiked with a thousand spears of fire. Its touch is said to drive the searing fires of madness deep into the minds of her foes.

Asmodeus: See Kador.

Astral Plane: When the Nameless One first created the Great Sphere, it was filled with shadow and ether. He pushed the shadow and ether into the center of the Great Sphere, forming from it what would become the Prime Material Plane. The rest of the Great Sphere was filled with the energy that was most like Him: stillness thrumming with the power of possibility. This energy has no substance, but forms the great expanse that is found between the spheres of existence contained within the Great Sphere. If a

person leaves such a sphere, she will find herself in the vast emptiness of the Astral Plane, which has traces of light and sound and little else.

Aymara: The fairest of all the gods, Aymara is the goddess of love, music, and art. She is chaotic good, seeking a world filled with beauty and love. She cannot bear any measure that represses the natural affinity of the mortal races to love one another and celebrate life with art. For this reason, among others, she hates Kador more vehemently than any of the other gods and seeks his destruction, as he has always sown dissent and hatred and created ugliness. Aymara has been in love with many mortals, and long ago had seven children with a mortal king; they serve her to this day (see the Seven). Aymara's mother is Zheenkeef and her father is Tinel.

Baal: One of the most powerful warriors among the div, Baal became one of the servants of Kador and was the fiercest warrior of all. He is now a lawful evil lord of Hell.

Barawyn: See the Seven.

Barik-tharn: Known as "the Miner," Barik-tharn is the guardian of the treasures of Rontra's womb – silver, gold, gems, etc. He is also the force that warns miners when they delve too deep.

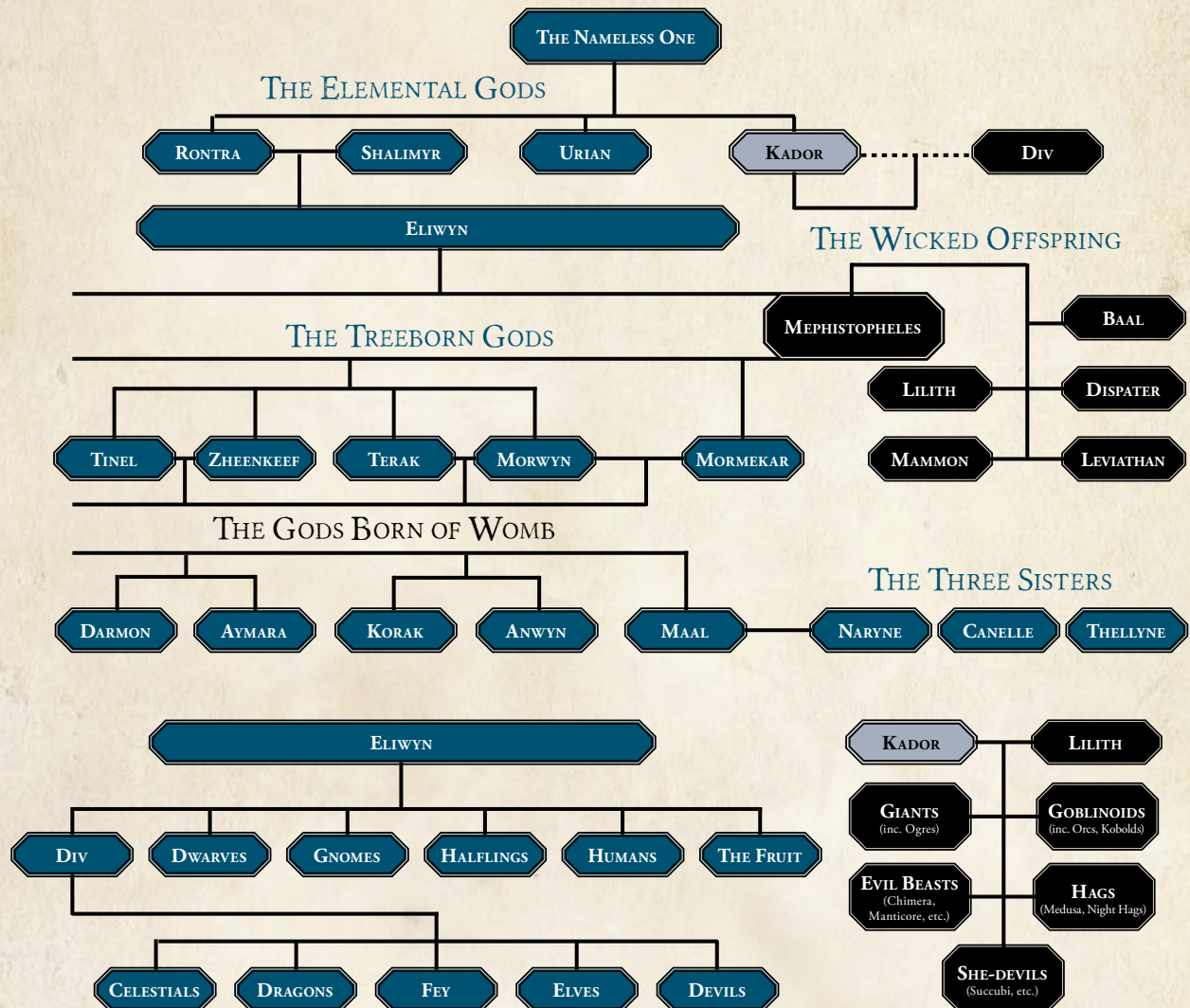
Beatitudes: The prayers all Shalimyn must say thrice daily.

Belial: A member of the rebellious host of Heaven who, standing with Iblis, rejected the command of the gods to serve the five mortal races. Belial served as an instigator of the rebellion and is now a lord of Hell, having surpassed Iblis in power and status.

Bellows: See the Five Apprentices.

Black Ledger: The book in which all a person's misdeeds are recorded by the daemons of Gehenna that observe him. The black ledger is sent to Maal's kingdom along the Dark River when he dies,

GENEALOGY OF THE GODS AND RACES



its contents read aloud at his judgment. The black ledger is sometimes called the Book of the Wicked or the Book of the Damned.

Black Scribe: Chief of the celestial order of the Scriveners, mute scribes who serve Tinel by recording history. Of all the Scriveners, only the Black Scribe speaks, and he conveys news to Tinel and orders to the Scriveners. He is called the Black Scribe for his rich robes of sable and ermine trimmed in silver, a symbol of his office.

Camael: Attendant to the thrones of the gods, Camael the archangel is the minister of Heaven and stands behind the Lords of Good. It is Camael who oversees all the workings of the gods' court and arranges audiences with some of them. As a servant and the humblest

of celestials, Camael is the seventh and last of the archangels; yet, she alone is in the constant presence of the glory of the gods and is therefore accounted by some as first.

Canarak: The god of bloodlust, wrath, and carnage, Canarak is the most feral of the gods. One of the Three Brothers, he has red hair and teeth that are sharp like fangs. He has an insatiable hunger for violence, and often influences his mortal worshipers to commit unspeakable atrocities. He secretly plots to take control of the pillar of water.

Canelle: The goddess of sport and victory, Canelle has fiery red hair and an equally fiery temperament. She is arguably the strongest of the gods in any game or test of skill. She is chaotic good, seeking a world where each person can

find and achieve their personal best. Her sisters are Naryne and Thellyne. Darmon has loved her for over an age, but that love is unreciprocated.

Castle in the Air: Built by the Nameless One, the castle in the air is one of three ancient strongholds of the Creator. It was the fastness of Kador for most of the second and third epochs and then became the home of the gods after Kador's defeat. It is now the residence of those celestials who remain in the Prime Material Plane acting as intercessors for the faithful and providing them with their divine powers.

Cataloguers, The: These celestial servants of Tinel tend to his library, which contains every work written by mortal hands and all the records of the Scriveners. Their chief is called the Grey Librarian.

Cathedral of Truth: The home of the tome that contains Gian ben Gian's answers to Madrigan Yewstaff's 30 questions. This tome proves the Great Sage Matalou was not a heretic, but apparently contains other disturbing revelations. It has never been copied and is only read by major religious leaders of the many faiths of the gods of the tree.

Celedynne: See the Seven.

Celestial Palace: The name for the palace of the gods. In the third epoch and the beginning of the fourth, this was found in the castle in the air constructed by the Nameless One. It is now at the summit of the mountain of Heaven.

Celestials: During the Lesser War of the Gods, Terak, Tinel, Zheenkeef, and Morwyn all gave great powers to their favored among the div to help them in the struggle. After the war, Morwyn took these div, far too powerful to coexist with their "unelevated" brethren, and made them into something more powerful and holy – the first celestials. They were formed into three choirs and taught the old songs that the world learned when the Nameless One first named all places and things. At the head of the celestials are the seven archangels.

Central Sphere, The: The central sphere, often called simply "the sphere," is where the mortal races live – and so much more. Found at the center of the Great Sphere of existence, the central sphere contains the Prime Material Plane, the planes of positive and negative energy, the shadow plane and the ethereal plane. In the earliest days it stood alone in the universe, surrounded only by the astral emptiness of the Great Sphere. Over the eons, though, the gods have created many other spheres around it, particularly Heaven, Hell and the Land of the Dead.

Ceruill: A bard whose marriage to the princess, Ophiel, enraged a prince named Faristel. Faristel murdered Ceruill on his wedding bed, setting off a chain of revenge killings that resulted eventually in the deaths of 50,000 people or more. This sorry tale led to Maal's first great law, a proscription on revenge.

Chorus of the Birds, The: An aviary of pearl and silver in Heaven contains these ten thousand song birds who sing together in perfect harmony. They sometimes visit mortal singers to inspire them.

Compact, The: The great understanding of the gods that they will not directly control the mortal races as this denies them their free will. Through the Compact, great matters are to be decided by mortals. The gods may influence these mortals to do their bidding through their agents (clerics and holy warriors, generally), just as Hell and the Abyss may tempt mortals toward evil. A god may only directly decide major events on the Prime Material if all the other gods agree to allow it.

Corason: The site of a terrible conflict between the followers of Morwyn and Zheenkeef that resulted in the death of the clerics of both churches and the destruction of the temples to both goddesses. This tragedy resulted in the Compact, as the gods came to see that the conflicts they were inspiring in their people could only lead to disaster.

Cornucopia, The: A gift from Anwyn to her followers that is forever overflowing with the most delicious feasts.

Corpus Infernus: Pure chaos and evil, Corpus Infernus infected all the world, including the creator god, the tree of life, the gods of the tree and earth and Kador First-Born. Corpus Infernus is why there is evil in the world. When cast out of the world into Hell, it formed the demons. Corpus Infernus is sometimes called "Shachté," which is more accurately a term for pure chaos alone.

Dariun: See the Seven.

Dark Pact, The: This refers to the secret alliance between Asmodeus and the Three Brothers and their plan for world conquest.

Dark River: With the Compact, it became necessary for souls to travel from plane to plane, sometimes without guidance. So the gods created the Dark River, which flows through all of the planes of the sphere – and is even said to have a source in the Material Plane. It is called the Dark River because it seems murky to most who ever travel it. However, as it approaches Elysium and the mountain of Heaven it becomes a bright river of light.

Darmon: The god of travelers, tricksters, rogues, joy, and laughter, Darmon is called the Champion of the Gods, because he once used his wits to best all the other gods. He is the messenger

of the heavens and it was he, in his many travels with Korak, who taught the mortal races many of their most useful skills. Darmon is chaotic good and believes that the gods and mortals should strive toward happiness and playfulness. His joy and laughter are as irrepressible as his fascination with, and love for, the mortal races. He is one of the Three Companions. On their great journey he fell in love with Canelle, who does not return his affections. His mother is Zheenkeef, his father is Tinel and his twin sister is Aymara.

Daemons: Created by the gods from the renegades of Hell and the Abyss, the daemons are charged with overseeing Gehenna – the buffer zone between Hell and the Abyss – and monitoring every mortal on earth. They do so by watching the dark reflection every mortal casts into Gehenna through the dark pillar. The daemons tempt people with petty villainies, whispering into the ears of their shadow forms. When people commit evil, the daemons record their misdeeds in the black ledgers.

Dark Pillar: Every person is surrounded by a pillar of light (usually seen only by the gods and their servants). As that pillar extends downward, it becomes pure darkness. It is through this dark pillar that each person casts a dark reflection of himself in Gehenna that is observed by the daemons there and through which the mortal is tempted by Gehenna's denizens.

Demons: Born from the Corpus Infernus cast out of the gods and the tree of life, the demons were first imprisoned in Hell by Morwyn. The greatest of them were a race called the qliploth, but the qliploth created other races of demonic power, which overthrew them. Not content to remain in the ordered prison of Hell, the demons burrowed out and across the Great Sphere, eventually forming a hole in the Great Sphere itself and building themselves the infinite Abyss that spirals out into nothingness.

Devils: In the Greater War of the Gods, Kador made soldiers for himself in his struggle against the other gods. These soldiers were div given formidable powers by their lord. These elevated div are the forefathers of the race now called devils, a word that comes from Kador's name for them: divils.

Dispater: The cleverest of Kador's servants, Dispater was given great magical powers by his master. He is now one of the lawful evil lords of Hell.

Div: The first race of people born from Eliwyn, the div (meaning "bright ones") did not age and had blood made of fire. They had three tribes: the Marid, the Shaitan, and the Shee. The div learned much from the gods during their wars, and many amassed incredible powers for good and ill. Eventually, the div rose against the gods and were nearly all cast out, save for the Shee, who became the elves and the fey.

Divine Magic: Powers provided from the gods to mortals through the conduit of the celestial host. An entire order of the Celestial Host provides these powers to clerics, holy warriors and others. As part of the Compact, all divine powers are equal, which is why a senior cleric of a less powerful god is just as powerful as an equally senior cleric of a more powerful god – to do otherwise would provide a tacit inducement to worship the more powerful gods.

Dragons: During the Greater War of the Gods, in the first failed onslaught against Kador, the earth was bathed in fire. The gods escaped destruction, but countless div were killed. The fire transformed some into beings of pure flame and energy, the forefathers of the dragons.

Durgas: A human warlord who is the center of a Rontran parable instructing mortals to respect life and the earth.

Dwarves: Born of the first fruit plucked by Zheenkeef from Eliwyn reborn, the dwarves first awakened near Korak, who had been knocked unconscious by their fruit. Their first homes were in his head, and when he awoke he taught them all he knew of the smithy and other works of the hand. For this reason, Korak has always been dear to them. They are one of the five mortal races and Maal judges their souls upon their death.

Earth Pillar: A pillar filled with nothing but rock and dirt and the pure energy of the earth. The creatures that reside in the plane of earth rarely come to the Prime Material Plane, as they lack curiosity.

Eliwyn: The Tree of Life that sprouted from Rontra where she and Shalimyr met. Eliwyn bore five fruits, from which came the gods of the tree and the div. She was destroyed in Terak and Tinel's war

and, when reborn, had five more fruits, from which came four of the five mortal races. She is now the neutral icon of the druids, but provides no powers.

Elves: The forefathers of the elves were members of the third tribe of the div, the Shee, who chose to give up their immortality and become one of the new races of the earth. Zheenkeef awakened them by playing with their sleeping forms. She hurled the elves across the world, but some of them bit her hand, causing her to hurl them into the sea and the earth. They are one of the five mortal races and Maal judges their souls upon their death.

Elysium: With the Compact, a system was necessary to observe the good and bad deeds of all mortals. The gods created Elysium, where a "light shadow" of every living mortal walks about, cast by the pillars of light that shoot upward from all mortal souls. The light shadows are constantly observed by the guardian angels of Elysium (usually devas), who record their good deeds, great and small, in enormous ledgers that are delivered to Maal's kingdom when each person dies. The guardian angels also whisper to the mortals, guiding them toward decency and charity.

End Times, The: The term used by many to discuss the "inevitable" apocalypse. Many believe that someday the Nameless One's name will be spoken and the universe will come to an end or that the fifth fruit will ripen and the world will enter another period of war, as Asmodeus is freed of his bonds. Whatever the reason for their arrival, the End Times are not likely to be a cheery time.

Erikul: The central figure of a Shalimyn parable, Erikul was a pirate king who believed he was lord of the seas. Shalimyr drowned him for his hubris.

Erylwyn: See the Seven.

Ethereal Plane: Within the central sphere, the Nameless One gathered the energies that filled the Great Sphere when he first created it. Those energies, ether and shadow, were perfect but had no substance. Combining their strength and his own great words of power, the Nameless One created the Material Plane. But the ethereal plane still co-exists in the central sphere with the Material and the shadow, as it did in the first days. It is visible only using magic.

Evil Beasts: Gorgons, chimaeras, hydras, manticores and the other evil beasts of the world are said to have sprung from Lilith's womb. In the time of the Greater War of the Gods, they were the most dangerous part of Kador's army; today these beasts are less than half the size of their ancestors.

Eyes, The: Often called the Eyes of Tinel, these servants of Tinel are made up primarily of rooks and other animals. The Eyes go from the Material Plane to Heaven and back, reporting on all of the events of the sphere. They report their findings to the Scribes, who take their notes to be catalogued by Cataloguers. The chief of the Eyes is called the White Whisperer.

Faristel: A jealous prince who murdered his rival for the princess Ophiel. This murder spawned a series of revenge killings that ended in the deaths of more than 50,000 souls. Because of this tragedy, Maal gave the mortal races their first great law—the proscription on revenge.

Faro: Originally named Farouk al Ban, Faro was one of the two greatest athletes ever produced by the race of the div. He and his rival, Ali Mustafis bin Omar (now called Alimus), were promised places in the heavens by Urian. Faro drags the moon across the heavens with a mithril cord every night, though he sometimes rushes ahead and appears in the sky before Alimus has left. Occasionally, the two wrestle once more and there is an eclipse.

Fionali: See the Seven.

Fey: The forefathers of the fey were members of the third tribe of the div, the Shee, who refused to give up their immortality and their powers and chose instead to be bound to the earth—to lose their free will. To this day, the fey are more powerful than the mortal races, but they do not participate in earthly matters; they are forever tied to their homes and their functions.

Fifth Fruit, The: The Tree of Life, Eliwyn, has borne five fruits in both of her incarnations, and in both cases the fifth fruit has been the source of mystery. The first time, Kador tried to steal the fifth fruit and, when he could not have it, cursed the god within so that it became a race of fiery beings, the div. When Eliwyn was reborn, the fifth fruit never

ripened and was not plucked early by Zheenkeef, so it hangs there still. What is inside, no one knows. There has arisen a strange cult that worships this mysterious fruit to the exclusion of the other gods called “The Cult of the Fifth Fruit.”

Fire: See the Five Apprentices.

Fire Pillar: Most of the div were exiled to the fire pillar, the plane of fire, which is a dangerous place of nothing but flames raging for eternity. Travelers beware.

First Epoch: The beginning of history, when the Nameless One created Himself and discovered the words for the four elements.

First Hall, The: See the Four Halls.

Five Apprentices, The: Korak’s servants are apprenticed to him for 100 years and then are named journeymen of the heavens. The apprentices are among the greatest mortal craftsmen, receiving the honored position after death. Their names while they serve are: Bellows, Fire, Hammer, Anvil, and Tongs.

Five Fruits: Eliwyn has borne five fruits twice. In her first incarnation, these fruits contained the gods Morwyn, Terak, Tinel and Zheenkeef and the fiery race of the div. After she was destroyed by Terak and Tinel, she was reborn with five fruits, four of which contained humans, gnomes, halflings and dwarves, the fifth of which is called the “Fifth Fruit” and has never ripened.

Five Symbols of Faith: The Teraketh believe all those devoted to the god of valor must wear five symbols, always: a holy symbol, a vambrace on the right forearm (or a wristband), unshorn hair, a weapon, and the forelock from their hair when they were children.

Four Daughters of Shalimyr: Named Ocean, River, Lake, and Stream, these beautiful daughters of the sea help their father to oversee his enormous realm—the waters of the world.

Four Pillars, The: The elemental planes exist outside the Great Sphere, and even the gods who hold sway over the elements in the Prime Material do not control these pillars. They are the purest forms of the energy they represent: Earth, Air, Fire and Water.

Fourteen Wizards, The: A council of wizards that sought to map Heaven and

capture a god for their experiments. Their folly led Tinel to strip the world of magic for a time and to put up locks barring mortal travelers from Heaven unless they are brought there by a divine power.

Four Halls, The: Where those who led exemplary lives reside in eternal bliss. The first hall contains those who are wise and good of heart and its warden is Issama. The Second hall is where those who have committed great acts of valor and loyalty reside; its warden is Fratricide. In the third hall abide those who have experienced such horrible pain in life that they need never return to the mortal sphere, and its warden is Remorse. The fourth hall is home to those who have brought great beauty into the world and its warden is Maal’s Voice.

Four Winds, The: Called Rigyl (North), Ragyl (East), Wyndyl (South), and Wandyl (West), the four winds were divided between violent and passive. The North and East wished to destroy everything while the South and West fought against them to protect everything. Urian had to pluck them from himself to save the mortal races from their struggles. He now has all four chained in his four halls, releasing them when the world needs wind. This is considered the central sacrifice of Urian, who loves freedom above all else, yet imprisoned part of himself for the good of the mortal races.

Fourth Epoch: The current epoch; the age of mortals. During this epoch, the gods formed the Compact, empowering mortals to determine their own fates based on the temptations of evil and the guidance of good.

Fourth Hall, The: See the Four Halls.

Fratricide: More an office than a person, Fratricide is a loyal servant of Maal who serves in this capacity for 100 years and a day. Maal sends forth Fratricide to punish those who kill someone of their own blood (a mother, father, sibling or child). Fratricide rides upon a flaming, blood-red steed and is, for the term of office, the Warden of the Second Hall.

Gehenna: Created by the gods on top of a battleground of demons and devils, Gehenna is the place of observation, where petty crimes are solicited and recorded by the daemons in their black ledgers. They can see these mortals through the reflection cast by their dark

pillars. This is where neutral evil souls go when they have been condemned to punishment by Maal.

Geromul: See the Seven.

Gian ben Gian: The most powerful Marid leader of the div, Gian ben Gian declared that the div were more numerous and stronger than the gods. He led them in a war against Heaven, which was put down by the celestial host. Gian ben Gian was killed by Iblis in a duel.

Giants: The evil races of giants, like ogres and trolls and fire giants, are said to have been born of the unholy union of Kador and Lilith. Those members of the races that live today are a pale shadow of those that fought in the Greater War of the Gods against the celestial host.

Glin: One of two gnomes, the wife of the pair, credited with the discovery of wine, which was a gift to the couple for their hospitality to Zheenkeef.

Glor: One of two gnomes, the husband of the pair, credited with the discovery of wine, which was a gift to the couple for their hospitality to Zheenkeef.

Gnomes: The race from the second fruit of Eliwyn reborn, the gnomes were touched by the blood, tongue, and breath of Zheenkeef and therefore share in her inspiration. Their fruit was hurled to the hills, and this is where they made their first home. They are one of the five mortal races and Maal judges their souls upon their death.

Goblinoids: The goblinoid races, like orcs and goblins, are said to come from the union of Lilith and Kador long ago. They bear little resemblance to the terrifying creatures that Lilith mothered, having degraded over the years.

Golden Sight, The: A mystical belief of the Darmonite clergy holds that should one piece together all the aphorisms ever spoken by Darmon to mortal ears, it would contain the secrets of the universe and one would be immediately granted the Golden Sight. The Golden Sight would allow one to see the universe with absolute clarity.

Greater Temptation: When a mortal has given himself over to the temptations of evil outsiders, it is possible for him to succumb to the Greater Temptation. This is the assignation of one’s immortal soul to the evil outside forces. Usually a contract,

it is through the Greater Temptation that a mortal agrees to become a mortal agent of one of the evil outside planes (usually Hell or the Abyss). After agreeing, the mortal's soul is completely owned by the evil power and will certainly be sent to its plane at death.

Greater War of the Gods: When Kador refused to give Mormekar the fire that was Mormekar's right, it became clear to the gods that Kador had become evil and was a threat to the earth. They attacked Kador in two great onslaughts, the first failing utterly and the second resulting in Kador's downfall. The war pitted the gods and their elevated div (the celestials), against Kador and his elevated div (the devils).

Great Hearth: The center of the main Anwynite faith. This is where the Supreme Manciple sits and where the magnificent round feasting table and the cornucopia may be found.

Great Sphere, The: The Nameless One first formed the four pillars, and then He placed this sphere on top of them. When He created the Great Sphere, it was filled with emptiness in the form of ether and shadow. He pushed the ether and shadow into the center when He created the Prime Material, filling the rest of the sphere with image and sound or, as most know it, the Astral Plane. Outside the Great Sphere is the infinite void. When one says "the sphere," it is usually a reference to the center sphere, the Material Plane. Few but scholars refer to the Great Sphere.

Great Wrong, The: The Asmodean name for the toppling of Kador by the gods of the tree. It is also called the "Wicked Injustice."

Grey Librarian, The: So called for her robes of grey wolf fur trimmed in gold, this celestial servant of Tinel is the head of the Cataloguers. She is the only member of that heavenly order to speak to Tinel. She runs his library and makes sure he has whatever materials he needs in his eternal research.

Grifynne: The first eagle, and servant to Urian, Grifynne is golden and glorious with a wingspan as long as a mighty river and a cry that shakes the heavens. She is the mother of the griffins and the lamassus, which were fathered on her by Metteron, Terak's golden lion.

Guardian Angels: A special order of angels created as part of the Compact, the guardian angels reside in Elysium and observe the deeds of all mortals through their bright reflections cast by the pillars of light. They speak in whispers to all they observe, guiding them toward goodness and recording all their kind deeds in the white ledgers.

Guide, The: An ancient woman with a lantern, this servant of Morwyn eases men and women into the wisdom of old age. The Guide lessens the trauma of becoming old and comes, sometimes, to those who are about to die of age and tells them that they are in their final moments; this is how many manage to make amends for old hurts with their final breaths. Like other servants of Morwyn, she usually comes invisibly to those she aids.

Gwainlath: Often called the Shepherdess, Gwainlath is a servant of Rontra's who provides aid in dark times. When the land is being desecrated or otherwise misused, the Shepherdess makes subtle appeals to those responsible to change their ways. She is called the Shepherdess because she is the figure credited in most legends for subtly herding those in danger out of trouble (e.g. folk who suddenly find shelter in a cave they never noticed before).

Gwedryl: Thellyne's bow made of yew. Its name signifies "True Seeker." It was with Gwedryl that Thellyne slew the Three Druids.

Hags: Some of the daughters of Lilith and Kador, the hags—medusas, night hags, sea hags—were beloved of their mother and, it is said, still have contacts with her and their sisters, the she-devils, in Hell. The Hags have today only the barest scrap of the power their foremothers had in the Greater War of the Gods.

Halfings: The race from the third fruit of Eliwyn reborn, the halfings were supposed to be tallest of the races, willow-wand thin. However, Zheenkeef kicked their fruit across the world and it bounced from the cliffs to the plains, squashing them to half their original size. They are one of the five mortal races, and Maal judges their souls upon their death.

Hammer: See the Five Apprentices.

Handmaids of Zheenkeef: These are Zheenkeef's favored mortal servants who come to reside at her side on their death. They are constantly shifting and changing, and are sometimes even sent to the Prime Material to stir things up.

Heaven: In the fourth epoch, the gods set themselves apart from the world, building for themselves a magnificent home outside the Prime Material Plane. Heaven is a great mountain with seven shining cities on its slope as you ascend. An archangel (in general, a huge solar) watches over each of those cities. The spire of the mountain is where the city of the gods is found, and though it is at the top of the mountain, it is said to be infinite. At the center of this seventh city is the celestial palace, where nearly all the gods sit on their thrones to debate and watch mortals.

Hefasten: The founder of the Great Church, Hefasten was an exiled scholar of Morwyn who was selected by the gods to settle an argument about a statue. The statue, which looks to whoever beholds it as though it is carved in his own likeness, now stands in the Great Cathedral that is home to the Great Church. He was the first Supreme Patriarch of the Great Church.

Heka: One of a pair of hyenas that accompany Zheenkeef. The two are part of the menagerie Zheenkeef keeps of all the creatures of the earth.

Hell: The nine circles of Hell were built as a prison for the creatures called demons. It is now ruled over by Asmodeus, once the god of fire and now the king of deception and lord of Hell. This is where lawful evil souls go when they have been condemned to punishment by Maal.

Humans: The race from the fourth fruit of Eliwyn reborn, no one knows what humans were supposed to be like, because Zheenkeef ate the fruit that contained them. All the gods had to put the humans back together, and each god made them in an image pleasing to him or her, which is why humans are more varied in appearance than any other race. Zheenkeef digested some of the race's essence, however, so humans are the shortest-lived of the five races. They are one of the five mortal races and Maal judges their souls upon their death.

Iblis: Once the greatest of all the archangels, Iblis led the celestial host in war against Kador and against the div. But when he and the other angels were made servants to the five mortal races, he believed it was a terrible mistake – particularly the inclusion of the evil powers in the compact. His uprising was put down, and he is now one of the many lawful evil powers of Hell.

Issama: As a mortal, Issama dared to question the decree of Maal. Maal deemed her question wise and made her his counselor upon her death. She stands to the left of Maal's throne and advises him on matters as varied as elven customs, legal loopholes, and contemporary marriage practices. She is the Warden of the First Hall.

Ix: The silver fox companion of Darmon, Ix is a joyful and mischievous creature. He is known to come to the aid of Darmon's followers. In legends, he is either seen accompanying his master on a splendid adventure or tricking the blustering lion of Heaven, Metteron, into some highly compromising position.

Jibraiiil: The herald of the gods, Jibraiiil the archangel marches at the front of the Heavenly host. It is said that to hear her unmuted voice is to hear a music so perfect that the mortal heart will break with joy. She is second among the seven archangels.

Journey to the East: When the Three Sisters escaped their brothers, they embarked upon an epic journey across the world. The ended their famed Journey to the East, after 3,333 adventures, at a perfect pool on the eastern edge of the world. It was in this pool where the Three Companions discovered them singing.

Justice: Forged from the strange metals with which the Nameless One built his Keep in the Sea, Justice is the blade of Maal, wielded in the Great War of the Gods. To this day, Maal uses it when he sits in judgment of a mortal soul, raising it aloft for the worthy and pointing it downward for the damned.

Kador: The first creature created by the Nameless One, Kador was given dominion over fire and trusted to give it to all those that came after him. He was corrupted, however, and became convinced that he was the rightful king of the universe. Kador ended up in a war

with the gods, resulting in his imprisonment in Hell. He is lawful evil and now goes by the name Asmodeus, the “god” of fire, power, lies, and vengeance. He has a secret alliance with the Three Brothers; as his part of the bargain, he plots to take control of the pillar of fire.

Keep in the Sea: Built by the Nameless One, this underwater keep was the redoubt of the good gods during the third epoch when they made war against Kador. No one is certain what it now contains, though many believe that Shalimyr has made it a part of his home that is drawn by his twelve giant whales. It is sometimes called the Underwater Palace.

King's Crucible, The: This is the tool sometimes used by Korak to reforge the souls of those who are perennially wicked, but not so wicked as to warrant eternal damnation. It is believed that those so reforged become the noblest of mortals.

Korak: The god of the forge and physical labor, patron of the dwarves, Korak is one of the favorite gods of the mortal races. In his many travels with Darmon he taught the mortal races many of the practical skills, like smithing, that they use to this day. Korak is neutral good and believes that all people must work, by whatever method is available to them, to improve their world. Korak is one of the Three Companions; he is in love with Thellyne, but that love is unreciprocated. His mother is Morwyn, his father is Terak and his twin sister is Anwyn.

Kunar, Limmik: The first monk to achieve oneness with the universe and leave the Great Sphere (or so most assume). Many monks walk in Master Kunar's footsteps, seeking to emulate his success.

Land of the Dead, The: Originally found at the center of the earth in the Prime Material Plane, the Land of the Dead was set apart into its own sphere when the gods formed their Compact. This is where Maal rules with his wife Naryne, judging all souls based on the white and black ledgers kept by the guardian angels and the daemons. See the entries on Souls and the Four Halls for the potential fates of the judged.

Laughter's Sting: A short sword crafted by the titans with the help of Korak to win a bet with Darmon. Because he lost

the bet, Darmon had to serve for a time as the king of the titans' throne.

Lesser Temptation: The tempting by any evil outsider to convince a mortal to do evil. The Lesser Temptation is the primary role of the evil outsiders (particularly demons and devils) within the Compact. It can lead to the Greater Temptation.

Lesser War of the Gods: The struggle between Terak and Tinel to determine which brother was eldest is called the Lesser War. At the beginning of the war, Zheenkeef determined that if she could get each brother to kill the other, she would become the eldest, and in the end, she accomplished just that. The two gods murdered one another and Zheenkeef hurled herself on their funeral pyre, ending the whole sad affair. The three gods were reborn through the intervention of Morwyn and Mormekar.

Leviathan: Once one of the water-loving Marid, Leviathan was stretched and altered by Kador into a massive sea serpent large enough to swallow the oceans. He is now one of the lawful evil lords of Hell.

Light Pillar: Every person is surrounded by a pillar of light (usually seen only by the gods and their servants). As that pillar extends upward, it becomes pure light. It is through this bright pillar that each person casts a reflection of himself in Elysium that is observed by the guardian angels there and through which the mortal is guided toward acts of conscience and faith by the whispers of the angels.

Lilith: Often called “mother of beasts,” Lilith was once a powerful queen of the div who was corrupted and transformed by Kador. With Kador she gave birth to many of the evil races of the world. She is now one of the lawful evil lords of Hell.

Lonely Runner, The: Likely the greatest mortal athlete ever born, the lonely runner was the only competitor ever able to match pace with Canelle. He is the center of an important parable of the Canellan faith. His form is now seen as a constellation in the night sky.

Maal: The god of justice, judgment, and the dead, Maal is often called “firstborn,” as he was the first god to be born of the womb. Maal is lawful neutral and believes the world would be perfect if

only it were structured around the perfect set of laws. He judges the souls of the dead to determine their fate, making him one of the most powerful gods. Maal is one of the Three Companions. On their great journey he found his wife, Naryne. His mother is Morwyn and his father is Mormekar.

Maal's Kingdom: See The Land of the Dead.

Maal's Voice: Herald of the Court of Maal, his true name is long forgotten. When Maal sits upon the Throne of Judgment, any word he utters is lasting law or judgment, so for lesser matters of the court, Maal's Voice speaks for his master. He is Warden of the Fourth Hall. Spells, such as *commune*, that allow one to speak with Maal, are answered by Maal's Voice.

Madrigan Yewstaff: A powerful inceptor of Tinel who put the Great Sage Matalou's claims to the test. Yewstaff summoned Gian ben Gian and questioned his spirit about the contents of Matalou's treatise. The results proved Matalou was not a heretic and were committed in a single tome. Those thirty answers are found locked away at the Tinelite Cathedral of Truth where only major religious leaders may read them.

Mammon: Power-hungry to the extreme, Mammon was a div lord given great abilities by Kador, all of which he used in his efforts to accumulate more power and to destroy. Mammon is now one of the lawful evil lords of Hell.

Marid: Known for their love of the sea, the Marid were the strongest of the three tribes of the div. Some had hearts of pure good, and these became servants of the gods, but others knew little but pride and arrogance. It was a Marid chieftain, Gian ben Gian, who led his brethren in their disastrous uprising against Heaven.

Matalou, The Great Sage: The author of *A Treatise on the Divine*, Matalou was the preeminent religious scholar of his day. Unfortunately for him, like many preeminent scholars he was ahead of his time and was killed for heresy. He is now a saint of the scriptoriums of Tinel.

Material Plane, The: The Material Plane is contained within the Central Sphere. Everything a normal mortal can see and touch is a part of the Material Plane – the sun, moon, stars, land and water. With

powerful magic, a person can see the ethereal and shadow planes that coexist within the sphere with the Material Plane, and with even greater magic a person may travel outside of the sphere and to other planes.

Menara: One of two beloved sisters and priestesses of Morwyn. She and her sister Tora were victims of a vile trick at the hands of the Zhenkefan apostles in their home city of Corason. The ensuing tragedy resulted in their Menara's death (and the death of her whole family) and the formation of the Compact of the gods.

Mephistopheles: A being created by Kador in his own image. Mephistopheles is quite powerful and every bit as wicked as his creator. He is now one of the lawful evil lords of Hell.

Mercy: Beloved servant of Morwyn, it is Mercy that lifts hate from hearts and leads them to spare their hated enemies. Mercy is a beautiful maiden with flaxen hair in a white gown, like that of her mistress. Many who are affected by Mercy change at their very core, for to experience her touch is to feel as though a holy hand has reached straight into your heart.

Merfolk: Once a nation of seafaring humans, the merfolk's island nation was sunk by a nation of sorcerers with whom they'd made war. Shalimyr saved them from death by transforming them into people with gills, able to survive in the sea.

Metteron: The golden lion of Heaven, Metteron is the king of the beasts of Heaven and earth and the greatest animal in the universe. He is servant and companion to Terak and lies at the foot of his throne. He can be as high as a mountain or as small as an earthly lion. He is bold, quick-tempered and limitlessly valorous like his lord. With Grifynne, he is the father of the griffins and the lamassus.

Midwife, The: Called upon by women in the midst of difficult labors, this servant of Morwyn clarifies matters. Should the Midwife come invisibly to the bedside of a woman in a difficult labor, she may speed the delivery and save the woman's life. If this is not possible, she may at least take away the woman's suffering and let her die in peace. Most women call out to the Midwife and Morwyn during childbirth. The Midwife is said to be a heavy woman with broad hips and breasts heavy with milk. When some infant dies in the

first weeks of its life, it is often said that she "nurses with the Midwife now."

Mika'il: Chief among the Archangels, Mika'il protects the downtrodden and is the champion of those in need. He was once a great div king who was elevated to great power by Morwyn and raised to be chief of the Archangels after the fall of Iblis.

Miner, The: See Barik-tharn.

Mirien: An elven princess, reputedly descended of Aymara, who was both wise and fair, said to be the most beautiful mortal ever born. When she and her parents began to accept suitors for her hand, it was the occasion for a great contest in Heaven, with each god selecting a champion. Her selection of Darmon's ward, Rinalde Wolfcall, as her husband rendered Darmon the Champion of the Gods.

Mitallis: An ungrateful mangle of Anwyn who refused to change his greedy ways and brought others in with him in his rebellion. This had disastrous consequences.

Mormekar: The god of death and rebirth, Mormekar is an outsider, even among the gods. He is neutral and sees himself as a creature of duty, fulfilling a cosmic function – some even question whether he has free will. Mormekar is married to Morwyn and is the father of Maal.

Morwyn: The goddess of healing, mercy, wisdom and motherhood, Morwyn is the eldest of the gods born of the tree. She is their "queen" in that she leads them, but by her own law may not command them. Morwyn is lawful good and believes the universe is on a constant progression toward perfection. It will grow better if all people find charity and love in their hearts. Morwyn is married to Mormekar and Terak; with Mormekar she has a son, Maal, and with Terak she has twins, Korak and Anwyn.

Nameless One: The creator of the universe. The Nameless One created Himself by speaking His own name. If His name is ever spoken again, the universe will cease to exist. He has left the Great Sphere and has not been heard of in two ages.

Naran: The god of tyranny and pride, Naran thinks himself the prince of the universe, second only to Asmodeus.

Someday, he will topple the king and rule the universe with his brothers at his side. One of the Three Brothers, he is the most visible, acting as open patron to slavers and tyrants the world over. Like Naryne, he has black hair and dark eyes. He secretly plots to take control of the pillar of earth.

Naryne: The goddess of nobility, primarily kings and queens, Naryne is the queen of the dead. One of the Three Sisters, Naryne is often called the Dark Sister for her black hair and dark eyes. She is lawful neutral and believes there would be a perfect world were all the mortal races to properly obey and follow rightly appointed nobility. Her husband is Maal and her sisters are Canelle and Thellyne.

Nayariel: The most skilled hunter who ever lived, Nayariel was an elf accursed so that she would transform into the shape of animals against her will. She usually became a beautiful White Hart, and all the world's greatest hunters eventually came after the Hart for her magnificent horns. Thellyne sent them a dream not to kill her, but some disobeyed and Nayariel was killed. Thellyne transformed these miscreants into the first werewolves. Nayariel is now Thellyne's hunting companion.

Ophiel: A fair princess whose love for her base-born court bard, Ceruill, inspired one of her suitors, the prince Faristel, to the bard's murder. This murder spawned a series of revenge killings that ended in the deaths of more than 50,000 souls. Because of this tragedy, Maal gave the mortal races their first great law – the proscription on revenge.

Ouroboros: See The Serpent.

Palace in the Mountains: Built by the Nameless One, this great earthly palace was atop the highest mountain spire in the world. It was destroyed in the Lesser War of the Gods, and its ruins have never been found. The world was changed during that war, and the remains of this palace may indeed be underwater now or below the earth, for the mountain upon which it was built was likely lowered in the struggle.

Planes of Positive and Negative Energy, The: When the Nameless One created the Prime Material Plane, He formed a perfect central sphere to contain what is mortal existence. Within that crystal

were the two forces from which all of creation came to be: positive and negative energy. Called light and dark, sound and silence, life and death, all creation requires a balance of these two forces. So the central sphere is made of these two forces, and where they meet within the crystal there are huge and dangerous maelstroms. Few ever go within the crystal to one of these planes, but those that do find them terribly dangerous.

Poin, Ionus: Founder of the Cult of Everlasting Night, Poin believed he was visited by Urian and commanded to destroy the sun and moon. Since that time, members of the cult he founded, mostly harmless lunatics, have sought some method to obliterate the sun and the moon.

Rafaïil: The guide of the lost, Rafaïil the archangel is the giver of charity from the gods. It is said that if the gods send a mortal aid, it is Rafaïil who delivers it. Rafaïil is charged with overseeing Elysium. He is third among the archangels.

Ragyl: The East wind, Ragyl is hateful and wishes to destroy everything he touches. Ragyl is now chained in the easternmost hall of Urian. See the Four Winds for more.

Raguel: The vengeance of Heaven, Raguel the archangel is charged by the gods to smite down those who have grown too high and think themselves equal to the gods, as well as infernal powers when they trespass on the Prime Material Plane for reasons other than the Compact. He is sixth among the archangels.

Remorse: Called the “Weeper for the Wronged,” no one knows how Remorse came into Maal's service. When someone comes before Maal who has been grievously wronged, Remorse petitions the King of Souls to right the wrong and give the wounded party succor. She is the Warden of the Third Hall.

Retribution: The pure ethic of legal justice that appeals to a higher authority and removes passion from punishment. Retribution holds that a person who commits a crime owes a debt not just to his victims but to the higher authority as well (the gods, the nation, the village, etc.). That debt must be repaid and must be extracted by an impartial authority. For instance, a man kills a woman's husband.

That woman must not seek to kill the man herself, but instead appeals to a higher authority for retribution. In this case, the higher authority is the church of Maal. The Maalites hunt down the man, try him impartially, and extract from him the retributive price for murder (which in many societies is his life; this will vary by campaign setting). Maal stands for retribution and against revenge.

Revenge: Often defined as “repaying evil with evil,” revenge is a mortal ethic of justice stating that if someone commits a wrong against you (or your family) it is your right to commit a wrong back against him as bad or worse. Revenge is particularly characterized by its inclusion of those who have nothing to do with the original crime. For instance, a man kills a boy's father and that boy goes on to kill the man's daughter. The daughter had nothing to do with the crime but is drawn in by blood-for-blood vengeance. The Maalite faith is opposed to revenge (as is Maal himself), believing that a person must never seek to mete out justice for a crime committed against him; crimes must be punished with retribution from an impartial authority to keep a truly just society, and avoid escalating acts of evil.

Rigyl: The North wind, Rigyl is hateful and wishes to destroy everything he touches. Rigyl is now chained in the northernmost hall of Urian. See the Four Winds for more.

Rinalde Wolfcall: A wily farmer who was selected by Darmon to be his ward in a contest among the gods over who would win the hand of Mirien, the fairest mortal ever born. Through his cleverness and genuine love for the princess, Rinalde won her hand and made Darmon the Champion of the Gods in the process.

Rite, The: The central function of the sacristies of Mormekar is the administration of the rite to the dead. It informs the dead that they have passed and prepares them for their journey to the Land of the Dead.

Rontra: Goddess of the earth, Rontra is the second eldest of the gods created by the Nameless One; only Kador is older. Rontra is the embodiment of all the lands of the material plane. She is lawful good and kindly, considered the grandmother of creation. She is the mother of Eliwyn, the Tree of Life.

Sacred Laws, The: In the Third Epoch, Maal gave the mortal races a series of perfect laws through which mortal society could live in harmony. However, the laws were lost because the mortal races did not follow them. Most say there were 12 laws. Only the first survives: Maal's proscription on revenge.

Saint Anne: The founder of the modern order of paladins, Anne saw herself flanked by hundreds of doughty warriors in the sculpture found at the Great Cathedral of the Great Church.

Saint Astafis: A Mormekim saint, Brother Astafis died wiping out a cadre of vampires. His name is invoked by Mormekim faced with vampiric foes.

Saint Isyl: A Shalimyn saint who saw that all sailors around the world must be faithful to Shalimyr or the Wave will destroy them all. He founded the order of the sail masters.

Saint Marlessa: Reputedly the founder of the first Rontran foundation, St. Marlessa is the ear of Rontra, walking at the Grandmother's side and listening to the pleas of her worshipers. She only brings the most pressing to the goddess herself. She is invoked as "Saint Marlessa, sister of the people" by common folk and is often named in private prayer by Rontra's followers.

Saint Mathilde: Griffin Saint Mathilde was the last of the Urianath order of Griffins. Her order was destroyed by a demonic cult planning on bringing one of the most powerful demon princes to the earth. St. Mathilde survived, however, and sacrificed herself to close the gate to the Abyss.

Saraqael: The magistrate of Heaven, Saraqael the archangel oversees the laws of Heaven and sees to it that all celestials perform their duties under the Compact. She is fifth among the archangels.

Scriveners, The: An order of servants to Tinel in Heaven, these mute and hooded celestials take note of every event in the mortal world and Heaven, making the supreme record of history. Their chief is called the Black Scribe.

Seacrest: The falchion of Shalimyr was forged by Korak out of the reflection of a metal sword caught in water. In return for this fine gift, Shalimyr agreed not to destroy the dwarves for their arrogance

– for dwarves do not praise the water and believe they might build structures safe from it beneath the earth.

Second Epoch: The time of creation, when the Nameless One created the Four Pillars, the Great Sphere, the Prime Material Plane and Kador. In this time the Nameless One spoke the Three Prophecies and left the sphere. Kador convinced the earth, the waters, and the skies to unite into three gods, Rontra, Shalimyr, and Urian, and these three gods gave rise to Eliwyn, the tree of life. From the tree were born the four chief gods, Morwyn, Terak, Tinel and Zheenkeef, and also the race of the div. With their birth, the epoch ended.

Second Hall, The: See the Four Halls.

Serpent, The: A peripheral character in many myths, some believe that the surface of the world is actually the serpent biting its own tail (he is sometimes called Ouroboros). They believe that the serpent is the chief of Rontra's servants and that all strength and power, particularly the power of fertility, is given to mortals through the serpent, which contains in it the power of life and death. The more common belief is that Master Korak, who ripped off its legs to woo Thellyne, created the serpent. These legends hold that it came to Rontra in terrible pain and she took to her bosom. The serpent now visits those in mortal agony and eases their pain.

Seven, The: The children of Aymara by Aragos, the seven are charged with inspiring and watching over musicians. Each one of the seven corresponds to one kind of instrument and one of the notes on the scale. Their names are Aragoth, Barawyn, Celedynne, Dariun, Erylwyn, Fionali, and Geromul. The instruments they correspond to (in order of name) are: reeds, drums, horns, flutes and whistles, cymbals and gongs, plucked and struck strings, and bowed strings.

Shachté: An ancient word for the moment before the dice decide which face to show, Shachté is best understood as pure change or chaos. It is often understood to be evil and is generally used interchangeably as a term with Corpus Infernus.

Shadow Plane, The: Within the central sphere, the Nameless One gathered the energies that filled the Great Sphere

when He first created it. Those energies, ether and shadow, were perfect but had no substance. Combining their power and His own great words of power, the Nameless One created the Prime Material Plane. But shadows are still seen all around, co-existing within the central sphere with the ethereal and the Prime. The plane of pure shadow, though, is visible only with great magic. Some call this plane the Shadowfell.

Shaitan: The most numerous tribe of the div, the Shaitan occupied most of the world before the uprising of the div against the gods. It was also from the Shaitan that Kador found his most faithful servants, for they had the greatest affinity with fire of the three tribes of div. Most Shaitan are now either devils or efreet.

Shalimyr: The god of the waters, Shalimyr is wild. He is the personification of all the waters of the material plane. With Rontra, he created Eliwyn. Shalimyr is engaged in a long-lasting affair with Zheenkeef that is secret only to Tinel, who refuses to see it. Shalimyr is chaotic neutral and hates arrogance and pride over all else.

Shawaliasha: The queen of the sea-elves who tricked the pirate king, Erikul, into proclaiming himself lord of the seas and arousing Shalimyr's wrath.

She-Devils: The many she-devils of Hell are said to be born of the union of Kador and Lilith. Most now reside in their mother's circle of Hell at her side. At the time of the Greater War of the Gods, the she-devils were Lilith's personal retinue; they are not as faded in might as the other creatures born of Kador and their mother.

Shee: The members of the third tribe of the div, the Shee were always quiet and frightened. They stayed hidden away from all struggles, exploring nature and its wonders. When the Marid and Shaitan revolted against the gods, the Shee did not participate. But the gods fear they might also rebel and so the Shee were given a choice: become mortal or lose their free will. Those who chose mortality became the elves, while those who chose to lose their free will became the fey.

Shepherdess, The: See Gwainlath.

Sorrow's Song: The name of Aymara's rapier, which sings with the mournful music of war. Legends tell that it was

forged for her during the wars with Kador – but as the Great Sage Matalou’s Treatise proves, she was not yet born during those wars, nor was Korak who forged it. It was likely forged for her by Korak for her continuing struggle against Kador’s servants on earth (which were particularly fierce in her youth before the Compact). It is rumored that there are those who can hear its music and dance to it in battle.

Soul: A being has a soul if it meets three criteria: It is alive, has free will, and has received the fire of power. Religious scholars believe it is the fire that kindles the soul; without it, the spirit is attached to the body and dies when the body dies. There are many races that meet two of these criteria, but only the five mortal races meet all three. When a soul is separated from its body, it goes before Maal: There it may be rewarded in the Land of the Dead, sent to Heaven to serve the god it served in life, sent to one of the evil realms for eternal punishment, or, as happens most often, be reborn.

Tekit: One of a pair of hyenas that accompany Zheenkeef. The two are part of the menagerie Zheenkeef keeps of all the creatures of the earth.

Terak: The god of war and the body, Terak has always opposed his brother, Tinel. Terak believes the greatest force in the world is the unification of people into nations and armies; if the many band together against those who would harm them, much good is possible. He is married to Morwyn and is the father of Korak and Anwyn. Terak’s heart is divided – he is both lawful good, in that he desires to see the strong protect the weak, and he is lawful neutral, in that he desires to see mortals unite their strength first and foremost.

Thellos: God of gluttony and greed, Thellos has sandy hair and a piggish nose. The most hidden of the Three Brothers, he pulls strings from the background. He prefers to collect wealth and indulge himself than to come into conflict. The goblins revere him as their god; he appears to them as a fat goblin god who will lead them into a land of milk and honey. He secretly plots to take control of the pillar of air.

Thellyne: The goddess of the woods and the hunt, Thellyne is the shyest of

all the gods. One of the Three Sisters, she is rarely seen even by her siblings. Thellyne has golden hair and is a master of all woodcraft. She is neutral good and seeks to protect and promote the natural beauty of the world. She is also the guardian of Eliwyn, the Tree of Life. Korak is in love with her, but the feelings are unreciprocated. Her sisters are Naryne and Canelle.

Third Epoch: The time of the gods. In this epoch, Terak and Tinel slew each other in the Lesser War of the Gods; Zheenkeef killed herself on their funeral pyre. These tragedies gave birth to Death, who is called Mormekar. The three gods were reborn by Morwyn’s grace and raised by her. During this epoch, Morwyn discovered Corpus Infernus and cast it out of the gods. She declared the Three Laws of the gods, gave birth to the first god born of the womb, Maal. The gods battled Kador, and in the Greater War of the Gods eventually cast him into Hell. During the peace that prevailed after Kador’s fall, the twins were born (Korak and Anwyn to Terak and Morwyn, Aymara and Darmon to Zheenkeef and Tinel) and the div rose against the gods in rebellion and were cast out into the pillar of fire for their rebellion. At the end of the epoch, the five mortal races (humans, gnomes, halflings, elves and dwarves) were born.

Third Hall, The: See the Four Halls.

Three Blessings: The central beliefs of the Shalimyn are these three blessings: Humility, Sacrifice and Gratitude.

Three Brothers: Born by a river beside the Three Sisters, these three gods are one of the secret forces of evil in the world, unbound by the Compact. They are: Naran, Canarak, and Thellos.

Three Companions: This is a reference to Darmon, Korak, and Maal, who once traveled across the mortal world looking for a wife for Maal. On their journey, they had many great adventures often told of in myth and song, culminating in the discovery of the Three Sisters.

The Druids: When the druids first came upon the sacred grove of Eliwyn, Thellyne mistook them for invaders. In three quick breaths, she released three shafts from her bow and slew the three mightiest druids. From their blood arose

red poppies, red roses, and red lotus blossoms with white hearts. Also from this accident came the treants, the naga and the unicorns, all of which still protect the sacred grove.

Three Laws: Declared by Morwyn in the third epoch, the first laws of the gods predated the Compact and were: first, that the gods would never make war against one another; second, that the gods would use their strength to guide the div and the new races ripening in Eliwyn’s fruit (that would turn out to be the five mortal races); and third, that no one god would rule the others.

Three Prophecies: The last words of the Nameless One before He departed the sphere, the three prophecies told to Kador were: first, that much life would come to the world and that it was Kador’s duty to give the gift of fire to all those born of the world; second, a long and secret decree whispered into Kador’s ear (to this day, only Kador knows its contents); third, that as all of creation was born with the uttering of the Nameless One’s name, so too would all creation cease when His name was spoken again.

Three Sisters: Born by a river long ago beside the Three Brothers, these three goddesses were found by the Three Companions in their search for a wife for Maal. They are Naryne, Canelle, and Thellyne.

Three Stones, The: Korak left the dwarves these three stones of enormous power after teaching them the arts of smithy and masonry. The fate of these stones is unknown.

Three Utterances, The: Spoken by Mormekar to Alonzo d’Eriq, these utterances are the pillars of the sacristies of Mormekar. Each begins with the words, “Death is sacred.”

Thunder: The sound heard in the heavens when all the gods argue to the exclusion of all else and cause Urian to tremble with the force of their voices.

Tinel: The god of magic and knowledge, Tinel has long struggled with his brother, Terak. Tinel believes that the individual is the supreme force and that nothing is greater than a single person’s quest for knowledge. He is married to Zheenkeef and is the father of Darmon and Aymara. Tinel’s heart is divided

– he is chaotic good, in that he is most interested in the good an individual can do when she seeks knowledge, and he is neutral, in that he sometimes cares nothing for the mortal world and wants only to collect knowledge.

Titans: Made by Zheenkeef from the clay of a sacred pool and her own excrement, these powerful creatures exist to amuse their creator with their adventures and struggles. While they revere Zheenkeef as their creator, they are fonder of Darmon, her son, who has accompanied many of them on adventures.

Tongs: See the Five Apprentices.

Tora: One of two beloved sisters and priestesses of Morwyn. She and her sister Menara were victims of a vile trick at the hands of the Zhenkefan apostles in their home city of Corason. The ensuing tragedy resulted in Menara's death (and the death of her whole family) and the formation of the Compact of the gods. Tora did not die, but was so filled with sorrow that she plucked out her own eyes. Morwyn ended up ascending her bodily into Heaven while she still lived, to ease her terrible suffering.

Tower of the White Hands: The headquarters of the order of the white hands of Morwyn, found near the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand.

Twelve Swans, The: Naryne rides a chariot drawn by these magnificent birds. Once every 100 years, they come to the Prime Material Plane and assume the form of mortal women, often falling in love and having children before they must return to their duties. Their names are: Inixos, Yaili, Marit, Oona, Pilai, Weili, Uxos, Darila, Marila, Tani, Sa'ool, and Jeini.

Twelve Whales: It is said that Shalimyr lives in a mighty palace made of pearl and alabaster that is drawn through the waters by 12 colossal whales, each large enough to swallow a small fleet of ships. These 12 whales are named after the sounds that waves make when they hit the various types of land.

Tyngelle: The first Supreme Matriarch of the Morwynite faith, Tyngelle was a priestess wandering the desert and saw a vision of Morwyn touching a rock and a fountain of light springing forth from it. She then went on a pilgrimage and found the rock she saw in her vision. On

that rock, she founded the White Hall of Morwyn's Hand.

Underwater Palace: See Keep in the Sea.

Urian: God of the air, Urian is the heavens and the winds. He is kindly and gentle, but also gives in to the stormy side of his nature from time to time. Urian is neutral good and loves all life.

Uriel: The protector of Heaven, Uriel the archangel is only seen by mortals should they seek entrance through the locked gates of Heaven. Uriel also watches over the celestial host; it is he who casts down the fallen. Uriel returned magic to the mortal races when they lost it long ago. He is fourth among the archangels.

Vintner's Creed, The: Often called simply "The Creed," this six saying maxim is the core liturgy of the Zhenkefan faith. The sayings are: "The fruit of the vine is sweet. Drink deep!"; "There is no joy without suffering."; "All that there is will be undone."; "Only that which you have not done is worthy."; "Inspiration's voice is felt, not heard."; and "Those who crave control are slaves."

Vision of the Opening Eye: A sacrament of the Tinelite faith, all Tinelites seek to receive this vision in which they are presented with the key to the central mystery of their lives in the form of a hazy dream. Much of their lives are spent interpreting the vision. Once they do so, they seek to use what they have learned to solve the problem of their life.

Vola Ulfhedin: A barbarian of the frozen north who told the Great Sage Matalou stories of the creation of the world that helped him in the writing of the Treatise. Vola is a title of respect, like "wise man."

Wahilla: Counselor to Naryne, Wahilla and Naryne met during the goddess' Journey to the East. When Naryne returned to the world after marrying Maal, she intended to make Wahilla queen of the world, for the halfling lady was the wisest mortal ever born. But Wahilla was ancient and on deaths door, so instead Naryne took her to Heaven with her, where Morwyn healed the halfling of her age. Wahilla, therefore, never died and serves the queen of the dead purely from choice and love.

Wandyl: The West wind, Wandyl is gentle in nature but fought with Ragyl,

the East wind, to protect the mortal races from his rage. Wandyl is now chained in the westernmost hall of Urian. See the Four Winds for more.

Water Pillar: This pillar is a plane of pure water. Many creatures have come to live in this plane, and even visit the Prime Material Plane from time to time.

White Hall of Morwyn's Hand, The: The central cathedral of the Morwynite faith.

White Ledger: The book in which all a person's good deeds are recorded by the guardian angels of Elysium that observe him. The white ledger is sent to Maal's kingdom along the river of light when he dies, its contents read aloud at his judgment. The white ledger is sometimes called the *Book of the Righteous*.

White Whisperer, The: Head of Tinel's celestial order of secret gatherers, the Eyes, the White Whisperer is an enigma. Hooded in robes of snow fox fur trimmed in ebon, the White Whisperer is of mysterious form and background and speaks to no one but Tinel himself.

Wicked Injustice: See the Great Wrong.

Wisdom: Maal's owl companion, Wisdom's origins are mysterious. Maal sometimes uses Wisdom to send messages to the mortal sphere. The owl is often depicted on Maal's left shoulder or perched on the razor's edge of Justice, Maal's blade.

Works of the Hand: The most common phrase among the Koraketh to describe what they revere – those things actually made by the hands of mortals: buildings, tools, weapons, etc.

Wyndyl: The South wind, Wyndyl is gentle in nature but fought with Rigyl, the North wind, to protect the mortal races from her rage. Wyndyl is now chained in the southernmost hall of Urian. See the Four Winds for more.

Zheenkeef: The goddess of inspiration, wine, and madness, Zheenkeef is the wildest of the gods. She is chaotic neutral and believes the world is suffused with unavoidable tragedy and stasis. The only proper response, as she sees it, is to embrace newness, invention, madness, drunkenness, and change. Zheenkeef is married to Tinel but cuckolds him with Shalimyr. She is the mother of Darmon and Aymara.

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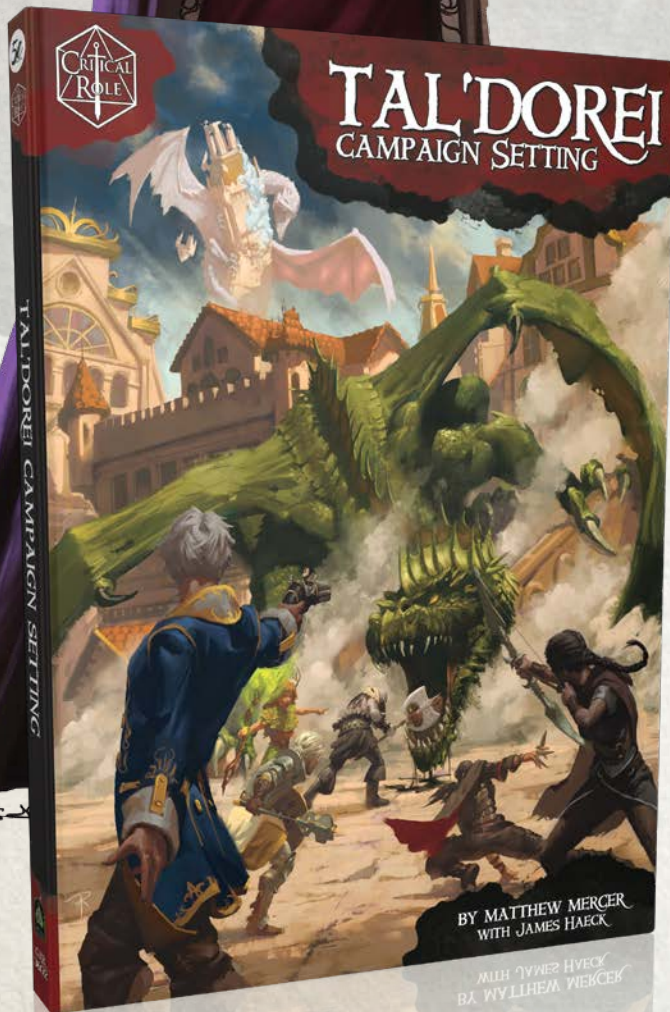
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