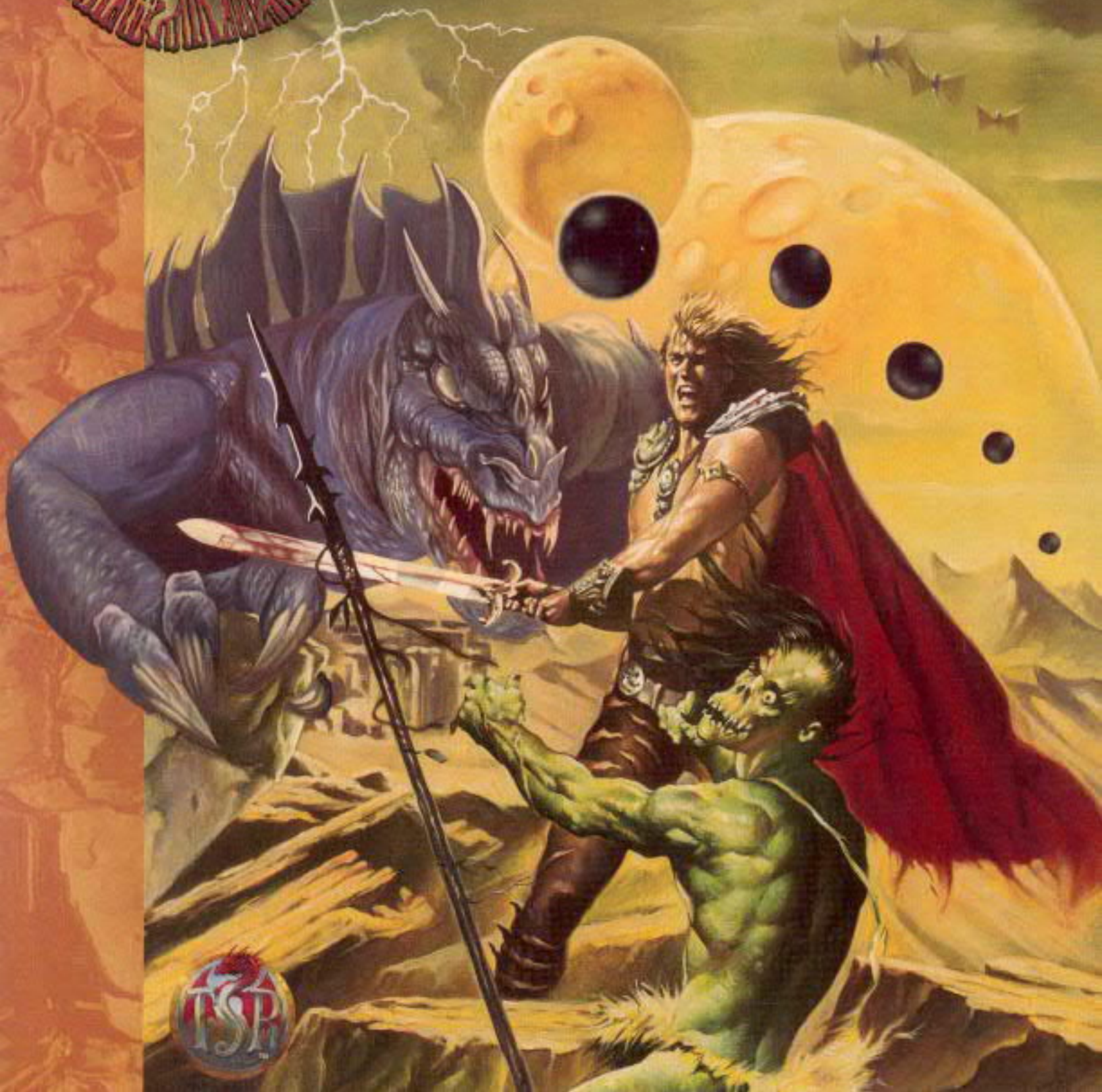




THE WANDERER'S CHRONICLE:

Mind Lords of the Last Sea



Advanced
Dungeons & Dragons

THE WANDERER'S CHRONICLE:

Mind Lords of the Last Sea





Mind Lords of the Last Sea

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Dedication: This is for Nik and Wendy Kolinskym, during whose wedding I wrote this, and for their son Jacob.

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Introduction	4
Who Should Read This	5
How This Book Works	6
Chapter One: The Lay of the Land	7
The Road to the Last Sea	9
The Lava Gorge	9
The Burning Plains	11
The Thunder Mountains	11
The Last Sea	11
The People	13
Saragar	13
The Mind Lords	14

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Two: Getting There	15
The Thunder Mountains	17
The South Pass	18
The Great Trade Days	18
The Burning Plains	19
Flashfires	20
The Border of Guardians	21
Border of Guardians Table	22
Chapter Three: Last Sea History	23
The Meeting of the Minds	24
A Dark Visitation	25
The Great Task	25
The Great Leap	26
The Reins of Power	27
The Border Raising	28
The Assault on the Last Sea	29
Chapter Four: The Mind Lords	30
Thesik	32
Kosveret	32
Enter Barani	34
The Entering of the Orbs	35
The Situation Today	36
Happiness is Mandatory	37
Chapter Five: The Last Sea	39
Cuarsen	41
Cubarto	42
Huddleston	43
Kharzden	44
Rivertown	45
Shallat	46
Sylvandretta	46
Waishiki	47
The Lonely Butte	49
Blufftown	49
The Lonely Giants	50
Criker's Pirates	51
Undertown	51
The Seaways	52

Chapter Six: Saragar: City by the Sea	54
The Government	57
The Lawmakers	57
The Lawkeepers	57
The Lawtenders	59
The Distillery and the Water Tower	60
The Palace	61
The Port	63
The Beach	63
The Underground	64
Chapter Seven: New Rules	65
Dehydration	66
Humidity	67
Example of Humidity's Effects	67
Catching Cold	67
Example of Catching Cold	67
Drinking Sea Water	68
New Proficiencies	69
Sailing	69
Sailboarding	70
Surfing	70
Wind	71
Last Sea Wind Table	71
Swimming	71
Drowning	71
Magic	72
Defiler Magical Destruction Table	72
Other Consequences	72
New Equipment	73
Surfboard	73
Raft	73
Sailboard	74
Kayak	74
Rowboat	74
Barge	74
Sloop	74
Yacht	74
Corsair	75
Appendix Random Encounter Tables	75
The Lonely Butte	75
Saragar	75
The Shores	75
Thunder Mountains	75
The Last Sea	75
Barani	76
Dolphin, Athasian	78
Giant, Crag	80
Guardian	81
Kosveret	82
Kreel	84
Lawkeepers	85
Lizard Man, Athasian	87
Puddingfish	89
Shark, Athasian	90
Skyfish	91
Squark	92
Thesik	94

The Wanderer's Journal

Over the many decades that I, the Wanderer, have traveled the sands of Athas, I have seen many strange things: lands and creatures wracked and twisted by the Sorcerer-Kings' ravaging of our once-fair planet. That foul defiling magic has robbed us of the world of plenty that our ancestors knew, a world that would still exist were it not for the Sorcerer-Kings' mad lust for power.

Imagine my amazement then, when I discovered the facts behind one of Athas's most popular legends: the valley of the Last Sea. Believe me when I say that the rumors are true, at least as far as they go. Far to the north of the Tyr Region, unknown even to most of its neighbors, the Last Sea lies nestled between the arms of the Thunder Mountains and the literally named Burning Plains. There, in a secluded valley protected from even the eyes of the Sorcerer-Kings, rests the only major body of water on all of Athas: a sea so great that its farthest shore is lost to the curve of the horizon!



INTRODUCTION

The day was long and hot, as all days on Athas are. Kabak Giantkiller lifted the wide brim of his shapeless hat and paused to wipe the sweat which dripped into his eyes from his hairless brow. The strip of colored cloth which was supposed to keep his perspiration from his eyes had long since soaked through. He stripped it off and wrung it out, heartily cursing all the while.

It was a labor to cross these mountains—the Thunder Mountains they were called, though Kabak had seen no rain since he left hated Tyr so many long and dusty weeks ago. Their peaks towered high above him, their tips painted with some sort of shiny, white material his guide called “snow.” While the air had actually grown somewhat cooler as he and she climbed into the pass, the going was still so strenuous that sweat poured off Kabak as if he were standing in the middle of the Lava Gorge itself.

“How much longer, old one?” he snarled, baring his sharpened teeth. The heat made it almost painful to talk. While nowhere near as hot as it had been when they had skirted the Lava Gorge, it was still enough to bake the inside of his mouth. An old wound he’d taken in the gladiatorial pits of Tyr was making him lame in his left leg, too, and that wasn’t making his mood any better or the going any easier.

The guide, a wizened elf woman, grinned back at him over her shoulder, her pointed ears seeming to twitch in anticipation. “Soon,” she cackled. “We are almost there. But . . .” she barked a laugh—to Kabak, she sounded like a hyena dying of thirst—and wagged a finger at him, “. . . when you find what it is you seek, you may discover that you are not seeking what it is that you wish to find.”

Kabak snarled at this nonsense and smacked the crone on the back of her head. Caught by surprise, she went sprawling.

“Quit talking in riddles, hag,” the ex-gladiator said. “I’ve no patience for such things. If you speak to me with a twisted tongue again, I will rip the very muscle from your withered mouth.”

The elf leapt up to face the mul, a knife in her hand as long and thin as the bones of the arm that held it. Though she appeared frail, her grip on the weapon was strong and steady. “Strike me again, half-breed,” she said, “and I’ll gut you where you stand.” Her cold gray eyes told Kabak that she meant it. He hadn’t known the elf to lie to him yet, and it didn’t look as if she’d decided to start now.

“Put the knife down, Sahanda. When I’m your age, I hope I’ll know enough to not start a fight I can’t win.”

She pointed at his battered leg. “I don’t need to fight you, mul. I could lose you in these mountains in a minute. What say I just leave you here? You’d never find your way out.”

He glared into her eyes darkly, and for a moment she met his stare squarely. In the end, though, she looked away. Kabak laughed coldly.

"Move on, Sahanda." He pointed up the trail. "Time is wasting, and you promised that we'd reach the Last Sea by day's end."

The elf ran the back of a weathered hand across her mouth and came away with a streak of red. Angered by the sight, she spat at the mul's feet. Her reddened saliva smacked onto the top of his left sandal and trickled between his toes. Kabak didn't give the slightest indication he even noticed, and after a long silent moment, the old guide continued on her way, the mul limping along behind her.

Welcome to Marnita, the Last Sea, the final remnant of an age long since past in the turbulent history of Athas, the world of the Dark Sun. Nestled in a distant part of the globe, far from the better-documented Tyr Region, the Last Sea is a true marvel, a brilliant, watery jewel that stands out all the more for being set in the desiccated sands of Athas's endless deserts.

The Mind Lords of the Last Sea is a product in three parts. The first is this book that you are holding, the 96-page sourcebook. The second is a 32-page adventure entitled *In the Lands of the Last Sea*. This adventure takes place primarily in Saragar, the largest city on the shores of Marnita, itself the home to the mysterious Mind Lords. The third part is the full-color mapsheet which depicts the Last Sea and the territory surrounding it, again giving special attention to once-mighty Saragar.

Who Should Read This

How much of this product you should read is up to your Dungeon Master. The DM should read through this entire product before deciding which portions of it to share with his players. Obviously, under no circumstances should players read the adventure. Doing so would spoil many of the surprises in it and make the game less enjoyable.

Of the sourcebook, players could certainly be permitted to read *Chapter One: The Lay of the Land*. This is a brief overview of the Last Sea, and it reveals no startling secrets better unveiled at a later date. As for allowing players to peruse the rest of this book, it all depends on how much you, as DM, want your players to know about the Last Sea region before their characters enter it.



Of course, DMs who like to play their cards close to their chest may not wish to let their players read any of this product at all. In this way, everything the players' characters encounter in adventures in and near Marnita will be entirely new to them.

How This Book Works

Chapter One contains a brief overview of the Last Sea and its surrounding lands. If the DM wishes, it can be read by players planning on possibly visiting the Mind Lords' realm. In any case, it serves as an excellent primer for everything else to come, no matter who happens to be reading it.

Since most player characters hail from somewhere in the Tyr Region, Chapter Two details the various ways by which a party of adventures might manage to make their way from more familiar territories to Marnita, and it reveals some of the inevitable hazards that lay en route to this legendary region. Once the heroes finally manage to reach Saragar, though, they still have to find some way to surmount the ancient wards that have kept the Last Sea isolated for so long from the rest of the world.

Chapter Three relates the unique history behind Saragar and Marnita. It reveals how they've remained connected to the Green Age of Athas for so long and just how their own history has developed, insulated as they've been from the changes that have ravaged the rest of the world.

As it turns out, the answer to how the Last Sea has survived is less of a what and more of a who. Chapter Four fully describes the three mysterious Mind Lords who have taken it as their sacred duty to protect the lands in which they reside, as well as the people who live alongside them.

Chapter Five moves on from the personalities behind the miraculous land to the very miracle itself. It covers the Last Sea and the lands directly surrounding it, as well as the last remaining settlement of lizard men living beneath the sea's sometimes turbulent surface. The druids and water clerics of Marnita are described here, as well. Rare characters elsewhere on Athas, here they have thrived.

The most important part of the Last Sea region is undoubtedly the fabled city of Saragar—the heart, mind, and soul of the Last Sea—and Chapter Six discusses it in great detail. Everything truly important about the area happens here. At one time, Saragar was the last bastion of an enlightened civilization, the only surviving remnant of a dead age. Today, things are different, as the situations which permitted the society to survive have also caused it to stagnate in unusual ways.

Most Athasians have never seen a full bathtub, much less an entire sea. Chapter Seven covers all sorts of new rules concerning how Athasians from drier regions (basically all of Athas outside of the Last Sea) manage things like swimming, sailing, and drowning.

The end of this book features a MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix. Here, you'll find full statistics on creatures from the region of the Last Sea, ranging from the unusual Athasian lizard men to the Mind Lords themselves.

Once you've read through this book, you'll have plenty of material to support as much adventuring in the Last Sea region as you're likely to ever need. Then, for a good example of how to get an adventure campaign rolling in and about Saragar, check out the adventure book that came with this sourcebook. You surely won't be disappointed.

The Wanderer's Journal

The very concept of an entire sea of water, a liquid jewel more precious than even the grandest diamond, defies conception by most Athasians. Few could truly conceive of such a place, no matter how fertile their imagination, no matter how flexible their mind.

To a people for whom a single, dirty well is a fortune, the very idea of such riches surpasses all sensibility.

Still, even among such apparent wealth, even in such a seeming paradise, there are disappointments and dangers. For one thing, the very water of the Last Sea, beautiful and inviting as it may seem, is thoroughly undrinkable. For another, the fine-looking city of Saragar is ruled by tyrants, the likes of which are not to be found elsewhere on Athas. And the seemingly placid surface of the Last Sea hides an entire world with menaces and intrigues all its own.



CHAPTER ONE: The Lay of the Land

Kabak stumbled to the ground and cursed the day that his parents had met in the slave quarries of Tyr, leading—inevitably, it seemed—to his accidental birth. He was not used to all of this climbing around, and his leg was killing him, almost literally. When it had been injured three years before, the doctors had wanted to amputate it. Kabak had killed the first surgeon with the man's own saw. The others decided to let him alone.

Despite the pain that his old wound now caused as he climbed down out of the Thunder Mountains, Kabak had never regretted his determination to keep the limb. To his mind, a bum leg was infinite/y better than none at all. His gladiatorial career was over, though, and despite this, he vowed to never become a beggar on Tyr's dirty streets. He worked for the next few years as a bouncer at a local tavern called the Last Gasp, and it was there that he had first heard the latest rumors about the Last Sea.

To him, the Last Sea had always been just another legend, something storytellers had rumbled about since he could remember. He had never met anyone who claimed to have seen the Last Sea, though, and so he had lent no credence to any of the tales told about it. Not, at least, until Kirka had stepped through the Last Gasp's door.

Kirka wasn't the most beautiful woman Kabak had ever seen, but he fell in love with her almost instantly. She was kind to him in ways that no one had ever been before—in ways he hadn't known were possible until he met her. Within a week, they were living together in his cramped room in the back of the Gasp.

It had been her who had first told him about the Last Sea. She claimed to have been there—actually to have been born and raised there. If it had been anyone else who had told him such a tale, he would have laughed them out of the room. With Kirka, though, he believed.

After the bar had burned down—following a particularly nasty riot that had started over the price of wafer (and who was going to waste the precious stuff then on saving such a dive?)—Kabak and Kirka had nothing left. It was then that she asked if he would accompany her back to her homeland, a place she called Saragar, where they would never have to worry about water again.

Kirka claimed that in Saragar, the greatest city on the shores of the Last Sea, the wafer was so plentiful, they gave it away. No one ever went thirsty. What's more, the ancient Mind Lords, the protectors of the city that had preserved it since the last age, ensured that everyone was always happy.

It sounded like paradise on Athas. It never occurred to Kabak to ask Kirka why she had left in the first place.

Sighing to push away these old memories, Kabak pushed himself to his feet. Kirka had died on the journey here, in an attack by a band of feral halflings. He had vowed that he would someday make her killers pay, but if that was to ever happen, he would need help. He hoped he would find it in Saragar.

"Get up, fool," hissed Sahanda. She was twenty feet ahead of him, crouching low over a boulder. When she saw that he was all right, she went back to peering over the rock and waiting for him to catch up.

He stumbled over to the rock, growling to keep his mind off the pain as he clambered up behind his guide. She was reaching back to shush him when his growl caught in his throat like the dust from the trail (to use the word loosely) had been doing all day long. There in the valley below lay the thing he had come so far to see: the Last Sea.

Kabak stared out at the seemingly endless wafer stretched out below. Green vegetation crept up nearly to its edges, held back only by a wide strip of bleached sand. Strange birds circled high in the sky, diving headlong into the water in some act of either suicide or joy, only to burst back out of the blue-green water seconds later, something gray wriggling redly in their beaks or claws. White ripples traveled endlessly across the surface of the sea.

"What are those?" he asked, pointing at the ripples.

The old elf gave him a look of mock disgust. She remembered the first time she had beheld these emerald shores. And truth be told, she had then been as ignorant as he—not that she would ever admit that to him. Still, his blatant curiosity moved her.

"That's how the wafer moves when the wind blows it from shore to shore. They're called waves."

Kabak repeated the word as if it held some kind of magic. It felt funny in his mouth, yet somehow familiar, as if he had heard it somewhere before, perhaps an age ago.

"You mean this . . . this sea has another shore?"

Sahanda chuckled coldly, "Of course it does, half-breed. It has to end somewhere, doesn't it?"

Too astonished by the view to even respond to Sahanda's slur, Kabak simply said, "I don't know. It doesn't seem so."

Sahanda stood up and reshoofed her pack. They still had a long way to go. "It ends," she said. "Everything ends."

Many centuries ago, in what was to later be known as the Green Age, water flowed freely across Athas's surface. The land was covered with large forests and open fields of tall grass waving in the wind, and the soil was dark and fertile. It was an age of plenty in which few creatures ever went wanting food, and a drink of clear, cool water was never hard to find.

Things on Athas have changed drastically since that time. The forests are gone; the fields of grass have turned to rolling dunes of endless sand; and the vast oceans that once separated continents have now been transformed into roiling seas of silt or at best-dangerous mud flats ready to swallow any foolhardy enough to dare tread across their sunbaked surfaces.

Most Athasians will tell you the entire world is drier than a thri-kreen's heart. Although not aware of it, they are wrong.

In the Tyr Region, the Last Sea is a fable, a legend that less scholarly bards use to

inspire wonder in those too young to have yet become jaded to such tales. Mothers sometimes scold their wayward children with ancient tales of the Mind Lords vicious creatures who will snatch them up from the deserts should they happen to be unfortunate to be caught out in the open after dark.

More learned people tend to speak of the Last Sea more quietly and seriously. Hardly a year goes by, it seems, that someone doesn't launch a much-ballyhooed expedition past the Lava Gorge and the Scorched Lands, with the aim of reaching legendary Saragar. Some of these excursions attempt to circumvent many of the more notable overland barriers by sailing the Silt Sea. This is, of course, an undertaking fraught with perils of its own.

The final fate of most of these investigatory parties is ever known. Of those that do somehow happen to return, the vast majority never managed to locate the lost body of water for which they were searching. The scarce remaining few who claim to have actually been to Saragar and back regale those willing to listen to them with tales of a place that is like a frozen pocket of time, a living museum piece that frightens as much as it delights.

Few people of the Tyr region give these tales any heed, however, regarding such ramblings as the results of heat-addled minds, baked by the northern sun to a crispy mess. Despite the fact that psionics have managed to verify that these people honestly believe they are telling the truth, their claims are not generally accepted. After all, the mad often construct elaborate fictions upon which to base their insanity, and they always find their own lies to be as convincing as the truth.

There are some people, though, who are less skeptical, who have spent some time studying these tales and have found some veracity among them, a set of common threads weaving through them all. These scholars have slowly come to believe that the accounts gathered down through the centuries are something more than the ravings of lunatic minds.

Perhaps more compelling than any other evidence are the warnings of Athas's legendary Wanderer. These speak cautiously of the Last Sea and especially so of Saragar.

The Road to the Last Sea

The Last Sea lies far to the north of the Tyr Region. It is a journey of many weeks to go from even the northernmost border of the Tyr Region to the fair city of Saragar, and the distance between is filled with horrors unseen closer to Tyr.

Even more intimidating than the endless rolling dunes of sand that occupy most of the intervening distance are the Lava Gorge and the Burning Plains. These two natural phenomena are strangely beautiful, and their savage natures inspire awe in those lucky (or perhaps unlucky) enough to witness their ineffable power.

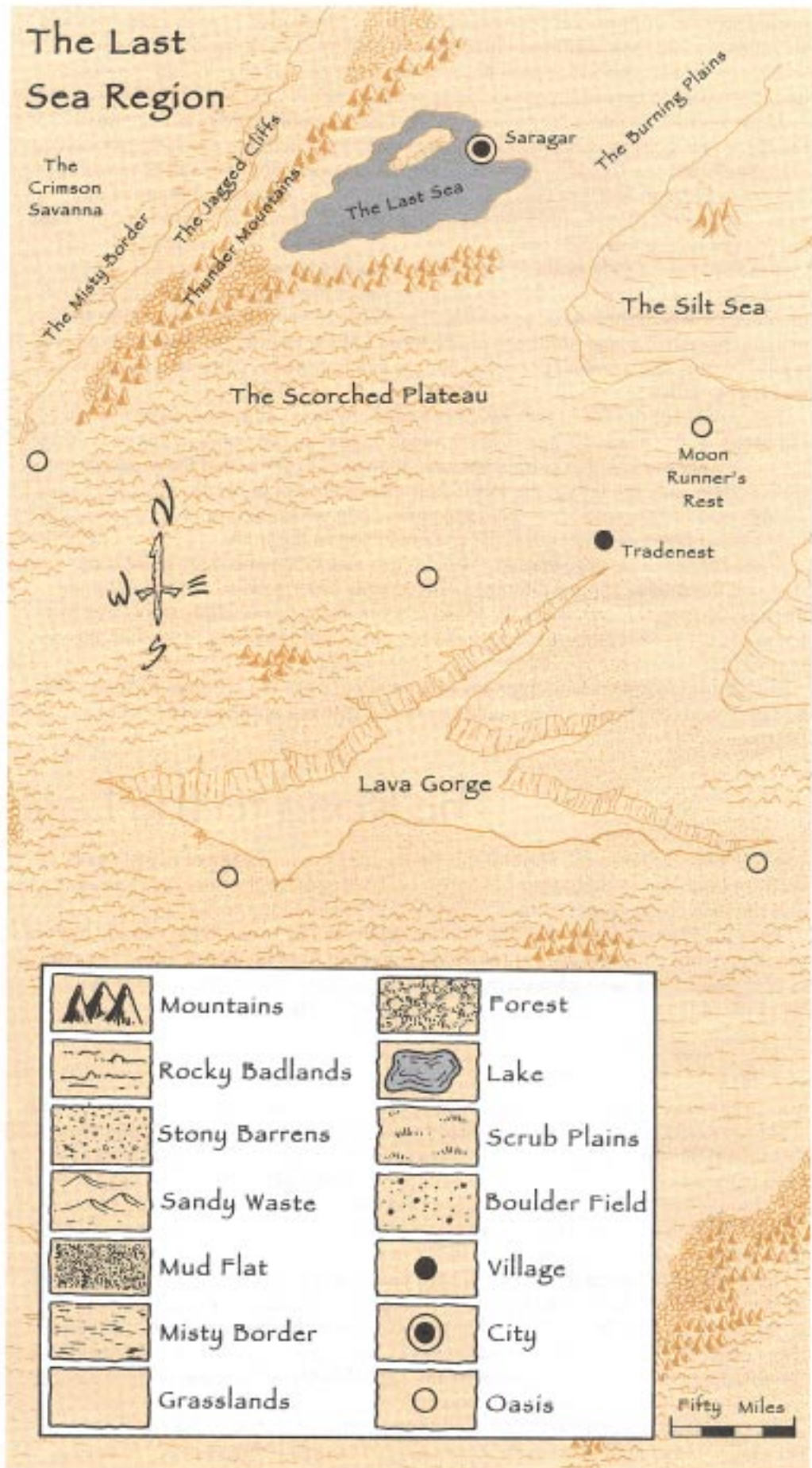
The Lava Gorge

The Lava Gorge is a tremendous canyon filled with molten rock which churns within it like water churning in a vast sea. Standing out like a gouge in the Athasian crust this incredible canyon lays open the planet's seething mantle to the brittle sky. The molten rock at its bottom roils like a boiling ocean, caught between the twin pulls of the planet's two moons and the gravity of the world itself, which jealously struggles to hold its lifeblood. No matter how many years have passed since this enormous gash was first inflicted, it seems that this is one wound that will never be healed.

To come within even a mile of the Lava Gorge is to find oneself nearly overcome by the heat. Those hardy few who have managed to get close enough to an estuary of the gorge to view the matter within tell of an unearthly beauty that nearly defies description by human tongues. Unfortunately, such visits must be short as even in the middle of the frigid Athasian night, the lava's heat inevitably forces even the most curious to retire to cooler regions.

Of course, in traveling from the Tyr region toward the lands of the Last Sea it is possible to simply circumvent the Lava Gorge, although doing so requires adding hundreds of miles to the journey. Once a traveler reaches the other side of the gorge,

The Last Sea Region



though, the most dangerous parts of his expedition are still in front of him. Once he finally makes his way off of the Scorched Plateau, he still has to find a way over the Thunder Mountains or across the Burning Plains.

The Burning Plains

The Burning Plains are one of the most mysterious phenomena on Athas. The region's soil is some of the richest remaining on the planet, fertilized by centuries of dead grasses mixed into the black earth. Most likely, when a traveler first comes to the Burning Plains, he will see vast stretches of tall grasses waving in the dry wind. Many newcomers take this as a sign that they have finally reached the Last Sea. After all, how could such bounty survive without vast sources of water nearby?

After walking a ways into the grassy fields, though, the traveler notices that the ground below the seemingly serene blanket of burnished white grass is covered in blackest ash. These ashes are the result of the countless wildfires that have ravaged the Burning Plains.

Although the prevailing winds off of Marnita occasionally bless the Burning Plains with a gentle rain, this water is not enough to keep the grasses from drying to straw beneath the terrible rays of the dark sun. Inevitably, whether from lightning or from overheated straw spontaneously combusting, fire breaks out on the Burning Plains. The desiccated grass goes up in flame like flash paper, and the entire plain is swept by a raging inferno.

More than one group of travelers has met a flaming doom after being caught in the middle of the Burning Plains when a wildfire broke out. Since these fires occur irregularly and unpredictably, most people wisely give wide berth to these deceptively peaceful fields. All too often, the alternative is to become just another cinder sifted into the fine ash that coats the ground of the Burning Plains.

The Thunder Mountains

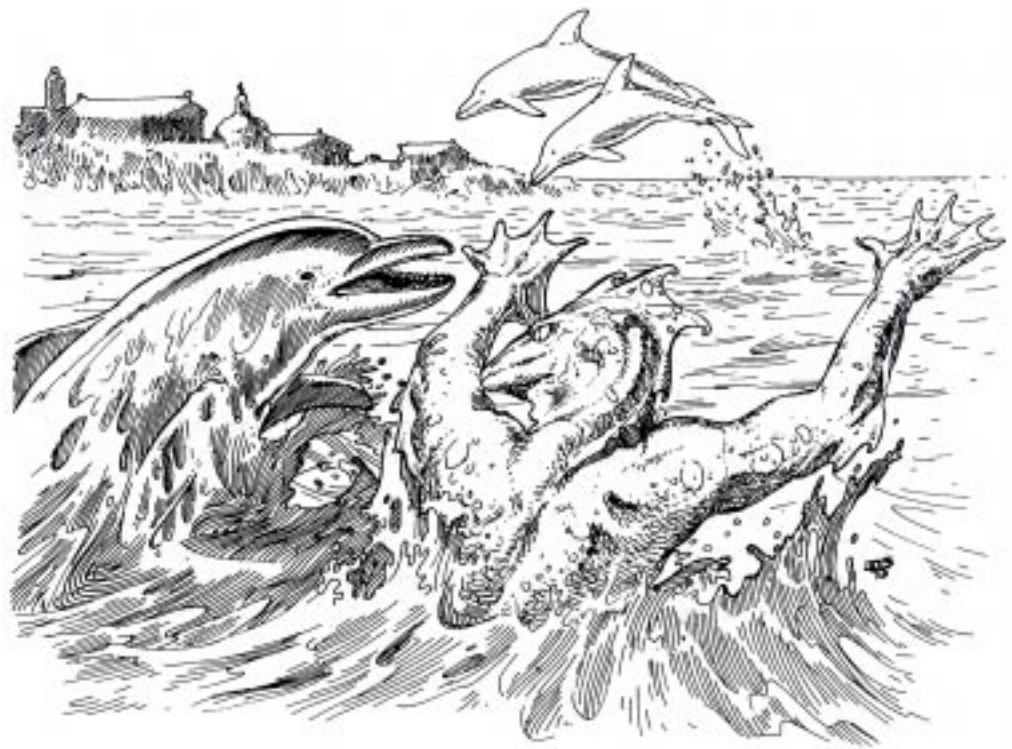
For the traveler who decides not to try braving the Burning Plains, the only other way to reach the valley of the Last Sea is by somehow traversing the Thunder Mountains. These tall, craggy peaks are so named for the fact that they are one of the few places on Athas that regularly sees thunderstorms. Due to the dryness of the atmosphere of Athas, water from Marnita evaporates into the air above at an astonishing rate. When this warm, damp air tries to escape over the western mountains the terrible cold of the heights leeches its moisture as snow and rain. The resultant storms ring out for miles around, and the thunder booming from their hearts echoes from the rocky peaks, to be heard by people clear across the sea in the city of Saragar.

The Thunder Mountains are steep and, in most places, nearly impassable. There are very few passes that cut clear through the high rocks, and in the few places that the walls are pierced in such a way, the Mind Lords' security measures ensure that none shall pass unhindered. Outside of the valley, legend has it that the mysterious and ancient devices which seal the passes have fallen into decay, and in some spots, a wayfarer can even walk right into the valley of the Last Sea. But none of the legends identify clearly where these unguarded passes are to be found.

The Last Sea

The Last Sea is the final surviving remnant of the Green Age, a time long since past. The lands around it recall happier days, before the coming of the monstrous evil of Rajaat and his genocidal Champions. It is a place unspoiled by magic, and its caretakers—Mind Lords and mortal residents alike—take great pains to ensure that it remains that way.

To most denizens of Athas, the Last Sea is the most amazing sight that they will ever behold. Nowhere else on the planet is there a body of water to be found anywhere near as large. In fact, on a world in which an entire town can be founded upon the existence of a single murky well, it seems that something as huge as the



Last Sea would support a metropolis of staggering size, or even an entire nation composed of such cities.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Marnita is surrounded mostly by small fishing villages inhabited by people who manage to eke out a living from the sea.

(Of course, the very idea of having enough water to put a boat on is astonishing to most Athasians. Sure, such craft work on the Silt Sea, but that's dirt—tiny pieces of solid stuff. How could something like water hold up something as heavy as a boat? Upon first hearing the idea, most Athasians think that such a contraption would sink like a pebble dropped into a glass of foamy ale.)

There are three reasons why the Last Sea isn't the site of the densest population center on the face of Athas.

First, the Last Sea is *salt* water. Most Athasians have run across a pool of foul water before, something so brackish as to be undrinkable. To a newcomer, the Last Sea must seem like the cruelest joke ever: to have enough water to actually swim in, but not to be able to drink a drop of it. The waters of the Last Sea are clear and a deep blue-green. They are full of interesting creatures that most Athasians outside of the valley have never seen—things such as fish, seaweed, and even sharks and dolphins. Sailing ships crisscross the Last Sea's surface like elves skating across the dunes that cover the rest of the planet.

Second, it's not easy for outsiders to get to the Last Sea. It is a long way from Tyr, a place from which so few people have been to the Last Sea that they nearly all consider Saragar to be something out of legend. As explained earlier, there are many physical barriers in the intervening distance, any one of which can be deadly.

Third, the Mind Lords like things the way they are within their valley. They have set up elaborate security measures (known as the Border of Guardians) to keep outsiders out and insiders in. For this reason, not even the ssurran traders that make occasional trips to rendezvous with envoys from Saragar have managed to settle on the shores of Marnita. They simply aren't allowed.

The People

The people of the Last Sea live relatively easy lives when compared with those of most of the other people on Athas. One thing that visitors might note about the Last Sea is that the only races represented here are humans, elves, and dwarves. There are no others to be found.

Occasionally a mul or half-elf might be born to a couple within the region, but this is extremely uncommon. There is very little crime in the valley of the Last Sea (due almost entirely to the efforts of the Mind Lords and the lawkeepers of Saragar) and unwanted advances are nearly unheard of. This means that the parents of such a child would have conceived the baby willingly, and since the races of the region tend to stick with their own kind, few children of mixed blood are ever born.

Those mixed-breeds who do exist are assimilated into the society without any problems. Unlike in the rest of Athas, where the races each have their own separate and distinct culture, in the city of Saragar, the peoples have banded together into a homogenous society tolerant of all. Muls and half-elves can truly be accepted here for who instead of what they are.

Of course, outsiders are outsiders. A mul coming to Saragar looking for acceptance will encounter just as many problems as a human, elf, or dwarf of pure blood—no more, but no less either.

In general, most people of the Last Sea region are suspicious of outsiders and many actually fear them. After all, outsiders are rare, and the people of the Last Sea have heard many legends of the descendants of those peoples not lucky enough to be protected by the Mind Lords from the ravages that ended the Green Age. The nearer to Saragar one goes, the more reactionary people become to the presence of outsiders. Within Saragar itself, if the city's lawkeepers get wind of the fact that someone has entered the city without authorization, there will likely be trouble for everyone involved.

Among themselves, however, the people of Marnita tend to be relaxed and friendly. Most of the villages around the sea have basically a beach culture in which there is little that can't be put off until tomorrow. "Tomorrow," the saying goes, "is the busiest day of the week, because that's when everything gets done."

Saragar

If Marnita is a wonder, the city of Saragar is a true miracle. The people who live elsewhere on the shores of the Last Sea have an average standard of living that's higher than just about anywhere else on Athas, with very few exceptions. Saragar is one of those exceptions.

Saragar is an automated city in which all of the drudge work which must be performed by the lower classes in other cities is taken care of by the minds of ancient criminals trapped forever in rather ordinary-looking obsidian spheres. The streets are kept clean by such apparatuses; cattle are herded, crops are tended, and garbage is removed by virtue of these psionic devices, which can be found throughout the metropolis.

Thirty thousand people live in Saragar, about three times as many as live along the entirety of Marnita's other shores. These people have a lot of needs, and they generate a lot of waste. This is all taken care of by the Mind Lords and their spheroid minions. The only price the people must pay for being taken care of so well is that they must remain happy. As the Mind Lords say, "Happiness must be maintained." The lawkeepers are prepared to execute this directive, literally if need be, at all costs. Sometimes their solutions to certain problems are "creative," as will be explained later.

In any case, their methods certainly seem effective. There is little or no crime in the valley, and matters seem particularly peaceful in Saragar itself. This is due to the fact that the lawkeepers can't be everywhere within the valley at once, so they concentrate their attentions on Saragar itself, devoting their time to the other cities only as needed. Given the enormous number of people in Saragar, as well as the fact that the city is home to all three Mind Lords, it only makes sense that the lawkeepers



concentrate their efforts here.

There have been some known to call such an effective government oppressive, but the people of Saragar believe differently. After all, without the Mind Lords' intervention, their home could very well have suffered the horrible fate that befell the rest of the world.

The Mind Lords

No one knows a great deal about the Mind Lords. After all, it was over nine thousand years ago that they were born, during the height of the Green Age. Since then, the entire planet has been transformed by the rampant misuse of magic, from a verdant globe to a ball of desert sand.

What is known about the Mind Lords is that they are three individuals, somehow still in the prime of their health, despite their incredible age. The three are Thesik (a male human), Barani (a female human), and Kosveret (a male elf). Together, they rule the city of Saragar with an iron fist encased within a velvet glove. While the rest of the valley of the Last Sea is also under their protection, people who live outside of the city of Saragar are usually left largely to their own devices-until something happens that demands the Mind Lords' attention.

The Mind Lords rarely make personal appearances on the streets of their city, but they can be seen on the battlements of the palace on festival days (which occur regularly), watching over their "children." Other than that, they are hardly ever seen. In their stead, the Lawkeeper Efkeno, the commander of the lawkeepers, regularly holds court in the palace.

The common people of Saragar have very little interaction with the Mind Lords. Only the heads of the Saragan government meet with them at all regularly. Those who wish to talk about the experience say that the Mind Lords are the best kind of rulers: benevolent dictators with only their people's happiness in mind at all times. Few citizens would dare to contradict such an assessment, for fear of their very lives

The Wanderer's Journal

Traveling about Athas is never easy. The omnipresent desert of the tablelands is an unforgiving and merciless foe to any who attempt to cross it, and the seas of silt are, if anything, even more deadly. Traveling from Tyr to the Last Sea is no less hazardous an undertaking. Once a traveler manages to escape the Tyr Region—in itself a not inconsiderable feat—he then must face the blistering heat of the Lava Gorge and the inhospitable lands of the Scorched Plateau. After that, he must cross the cacophonous Thunder Mountains or—even more foolheartedly—brave the Burning Plains. Then, of course, he must still somehow pass through the fabled Border of Guardians, set in place by the Mind Lords, specifically to prevent entry into the valley. Is the journey worth the arduous trouble? Ah, friend, not in my entire life have I been witness to something more worth seeing than the Last Sea. If you survive the journey, you will not regret having undertaken it.



CHAPTER TWO: Getting There

As Kabak rounded the bend in the path, he cursed, for his elven guide was nowhere to be seen. She had been little but trouble for him since he and Kirka had met her in the lands north of Tyr and persuaded her to show them the way through the intervening lands to the Last Sea. Kirka had always been the diplomatic one, the bridge between Kabak and Sahanda, but now she was gone, and the friction between the remaining two travelers was at times nearly palpable in its heat.

Certain that the elven crone would show up sooner or later, as she saw fit, Kabak continued down the trail. Here it was overgrown with lush green grasses, the likes of which Kabak had only ever glimpsed before, in the gardens of the nobles of Tyr. No one else could afford such luxuries back home.

Here, though, there were plants everywhere—bushes, vines, trees, even colorful flowers covered the land as he descended the trail from out of the mountains. This place truly did seem to be the paradise that Kirka had spun tales about all those long cold nights they spent together in his tiny shack back in Tyr.

Kirka's stories had turned dark sometimes, though, and at those moments, she usually cut herself off, as if there were some things she did not wish to remember about her homeland. Now, apparently alone in the Thunder Mountains that separated the vast sea below from the rest of Athas and its encroaching desert, Kabak wished he had pushed his mate a bit harder for details about how the Last Sea had survived untouched by the changes that had ravaged the rest of the planet for so many ages.

Suddenly, his train of thought was shattered, as a long, silver reptilian head popped over the rise in front of him. Kabak froze instantly. For a long moment, he watched the creature move, seemingly unaware of his presence.

It slithered forward, bringing the rest of its long, eel-like body up over the crest of the hill. It moved slowly, its black eyes the size of dinner plates, scanning back and forth searching for prey. Its long flanks—it must have stretched fifty feet from nose to tail—glistened wetly as if it had just pulled itself out of the Last Sea itself, still so far away

Even in the valley, the sun beat down warmly. Kabak figured that the creature must have been able to move like lightning to be able to travel so far so without having dried in the heat. If it were that fast, there was certainly no way he could outrun it. Reflexively, he reached for his sword, resting his hand on its bone hilt. The

momentary relief he felt drained away like water from a holed bucket when his movement attracted the creature's attention.

The monstrous thing stared at Kabak with flat black eyes, around which no whites showed. It began moving toward him tentatively, the webbing of skin that connected its front and hind legs together flapping loosely in a breeze he could not feel. Its nostrils flared wetly at him as if sniffing him out.

Then it opened its cavernous mouth and let loose with a horrible roar, its sharp, yellow teeth and long, glistening fangs bared for all the world to see. Kabak was sure the thing could swallow him whole and would do so if given half a chance. Not seeing any other options lying open before him, he drew his sword and charged the creature, determined to leave this life as he had entered it: a warrior.

As Kabak dashed forward, the enormous reptile raised its head high in the air like some tremendous snake having discovered a field mouse to have as an afternoon snack. The gladiator howled at it defiantly, racing toward its exposed underbelly hoping to be able to pierce its silver smoothness before the creature could strike.

Halfway to his goal, Kabak realized he would never make it. The thing's many-fanged head came rushing down like a load of loose rock tumbling from the mountainside. He raised his sword to meet the creature's strike. If this beast was going to make a meal out of him, he was determined to make it pay a price of pain.

As the teeth swarmed down toward him, Kabak swung his sword forward with all his might. Astonishingly, the blade passed through the creature's head as if it were smoke.

The unchecked momentum of the blow carried the gladiator forward, headlong into the creature's body and he stumbled to the rocky ground below. Cursing, he blundered about on hands and knees, surprised to discover that he could not see. For a dark moment, he figured he had been somehow swallowed into the snake's belly without first passing through its mouth. Then he heard Sahanda laughing.

Kabak scrambled to his feet and found himself standing on the path once again, obviously undigested. He looked down and saw that from the waist below he was enveloped in the creature's skin. As it slithered along, it parted around him like a stream around a stone, as if he were the butte stabbing out of the Last Sea in the distance and it were the water surrounding.

Then there was another roar from above, and Kabak looked up to see the creature's head diving down at him again. At that moment, he realized he had left his sword on the ground. He threw up his arms in a feeble effort to protect himself, though he knew it was too late.

Once again, the creature's head passed right through him.

The elf's laughter made Kabak realize he had closed his eyes. Opening them again, he saw Sahanda standing further down the path from him, doubled over with her cackling. He was about to curse her when he saw the monster turn its attention toward her. He shouted out a warning as it struck, but it only made her laugh the harder.

As the lizard's head and body passed right around Sahanda, Kabak gasped. Then he finally figured out what was happening.

"Is this some trickery of yours, elf?" Kabak bellowed, picking up his sword and stomping toward her.

Sahanda's laughter ceased as she recognized the murderous look in the mul's eyes. "No trick of mine, gladiator." She wiped her eyes. The way she said that last word, dripping with sarcasm, only fired Kabak's anger.

She raised her hand before him, and he stopped short. "Hold, warrior, What you are seeing dancing around us is but an illusion of a rain drake, a foul creature found only in those rare areas in which there is actually some sort of water. It cannot hurt you. It is not real.

"It is a device of the Mind Lords, intended to scare off people more cowardly than yourself, a thing part of the Border of Guardians."

The mul laughed harshly. "These ghosts have managed to keep this place safe for so long?"

"Hardly. Many of the other parts of the Border are stronger, more dangerous. The Guardian protecting this path, though, has faltered with the years. It is no substantial threat any longer."

"How did you know the creature was false?" Kabak demanded, confident that his senses were no less sharp than the elf's.

“Rain drakes come out only at night,” she explained, gesturing toward the sky, “As you can see, the sun shines brightly and would scorch real rain drake’s tender skin within moments.”

The rain drake lunged at Kabak again, but this time he refused to even flinch. “Let’s go,” he grunted. “I have no patience with such tricks.”

The elf allowed herself one last chuckle before turning back down the path into the valley. “You had better learn patience quickly, stubborn one,” she admonished as they began walking again. “Few things in the valley of the Last Sea are what they seem to be.”

The valley of the Last Sea has stood isolated from the rest of Athas for nine millennia. When the time of separation came about, the barriers that the Mind Lords set up to keep their charges in and the remainder of the world out were strong nearly undefeatable. Nothing could go in or out of the valley without the Mind Lords instantly knowing exactly who was making the attempt and why. No one ever succeeding in piercing the barrier without the Mind Lords’ permission.

Times have changed, though, and the barrier is not nearly as impenetrable as it once was. These days, outlanders (as people from outside the valley of the Last Sea are called by those who make their homes there) are slightly more common than they once were. Such visitors are occasionally seen in the towns and villages dotting Marnita’s western shore, where the Mind Lords’ control is more lax, opposite the city of Saragar. But spotting an outsider in Saragar is still cause for sounding a general alarm.

Nonetheless, some few outsiders do manage to find their way safely into the capital city. Fortunately enough for them, the Mind Lords are far too busy trying to shore up the psionic defenses that keep Marnita’s fragile ecosystem preserved. They simply don’t have the time to worry about intruders—unless, of course, they’re vegetation-despoiling defilers. That’s the job of the lawkeepers, Saragar’s psionically powered police force.

Over the millennia, though, even the lawkeepers’ legendary vigilance has grown a bit lax. Most members of this elite group seem more interested in personal power than in keeping the peace. Accordingly, they have also grown more abusive of the people they are supposed to protect. The original reasons behind the Mind Lords’ edicts are often ignored in favor of the letter of the law, or in favor of whatever interpretive stretch the lawkeeper on hand wishes to make. Thus, outsiders can travel within Saragar, as long as they avoid calling the lawkeepers’ attention to themselves. But woe betide the stranger who transgresses a law within that city. Like a nest of angry hornets, the lawkeepers will descend upon him, and rather than share his fate, the locals will avert their gaze from the “justice” their lawkeepers serve.

Outside of Saragar, however, there is actually a theory growing that the Mind Lords are intentionally weakening the Border of Guardians in order to allow a few hardy outsiders in. According to this reasoning, the society of Marnita’s valley has stagnated for too long, and it is ready for some new blood. Either that or the Mind Lords have realized that their time will soon come to an end, and they want to prepare their people for an eventual influx of many outlanders. To give their people a preview of the eventual disappearance of the Border of Guardians, then the Mind Lords are supposed to have weakened the barrier. They haven’t lowered it entirely though, as they want only the most powerful and the most determined visitors to be able to break through. Thus, these outlanders actually may be in the valley of the Last Sea with the Mind Lords’ tacit agreement.


No proof of this theory has been given, however, and of course the Mind Lords’ aren’t talking. As such, the actual reasons for the decay of the Border of the Guardians remain a subject of speculation.

The Thunder Mountains

The valley of the Last Sea is ringed on three sides by the Thunder Mountains. Only the eastern edge lies open to the Burning Plains instead. Together, these nearly impassable barriers make a formidable natural fence around the entire valley.

The Thunder Mountains are so named for the thunder that rings through them during the frequent rain storms that batter these towering peaks. Nowhere else on Athas





do these sounds rumble so regularly as they do here.

Of course, the Thunder Mountains were so labeled long before the Mind Lords determined to cut the valley off from the rest of the world. This had a great deal to do with the large population of “crag” giants (an off-shoot of the plains giant race; see the MC sheet in the appendix to this book) who lived in the western end of the mountains. In ancient days, during thunder storms, these creatures crawled out of their caves high in the hills and celebrated until the rain was over.

This same tribe of giants was subsequently chased out of the mountains by the Mind Lords. They were made an offer: stay where you are and be eventually defeated and exterminated, or concede to our might and move to the Lonely Butte, where you will be left alone for all time. A few of the nobler giants resisted, but they were quickly destroyed by the powerful psionics. Soon after, the remaining giants accepted the Mind Lords’ offer and took up residence on the Lonely Butte. A small clan of them remains there to this day.

The Thunder Mountains are nearly impenetrable, but for three passes. The North Pass is rarely used, as few civilized peoples live to the north of Marnita’s valley. The West Pass is a bit more traveled, but since it cascades out of the mountains and into the Crimson Savanna, there are also few visitors coming from that direction. The South Pass, on the other hand, is the main gate into the valley of the Last Sea.

The South Pass

It’s through the South Pass that merchants from Saragar make their twice-annual pilgrimage to the outlands to meet with caravans from distant Tradenest. It’s also the means by which most outsiders make it into the valley, especially if they are not willing to brave the Burning Plains.

Because of this, the pass is, of course, the most well-guarded of the valley’s entrances. The North and West Passes have almost no security measures outside of the Border of the Guardians. The South Pass, on the other hand, is guarded by a high watchtower. This small fortress is built on the inside of the Border of Guardians, so it is mostly a secondary line of defense, one that has rarely been used.

The watchtower is staffed at all times by a full patrol of 10 proctors and a single lawkeeper to watch over them. The patrols keep watch in split shifts of four hours each (four hours on, four hours off, four hours on, four hours off, eight hours to sleep). This way, they are always relatively fresh and alert.

Thus, the watchtower holds 30 proctors and three lawkeeper at all times. Fresh troops are brought in from Saragar fortnightly.

At night, the pass is lit by dozens of torches, making it difficult to sneak through unnoticed. Nevertheless, sneaky adventurers sometimes find some way to get past unnoticed.

The Great Trade Days

Every year just before midsummer’s and midwinter’s eve, the ssurran traders from Tradenest make their biannual journey to a sheltered clearing nestled in between the Thunder Mountains and the Scorched Plateau. To these meetings, they bring all sorts of exotic foods and trinkets, anything that might possibly catch the eyes of the Last Sea merchants who are permitted to travel outside of the valley’s boundaries for this express purpose.

In exchange, the homelander (as the denizens of the Last Sea are fond of referring to themselves) bring all sorts of unique things to trade: metal weapons, sails made from puddingfish hide (in high demand for the extremely different ships that sail the Silt Sea), and—most importantly—fresh water (directly from Saragar’s desalination plant, making it some of the purest water to be found on the entire planet).

The Great Trade has become a famous tradition in the valley. At the height of the festivals—far and away the two most important holidays in the entire valley—the caravans of merchant wagons return from beyond the mountains, overloaded with a veritable cornucopia of exotic foods and other items.

People from all across the valley arrive in Saragar for the festivals, and these are the only times of the year that the unity these people all feel, regardless of any argu-

ing they might do the rest of the year, is blatantly obvious. Even the Lizard Men normally reclusive in their undersea kingdom, surface and join the festivities of the air breathers for a few short hours.

The festivals are also the only times of the year that all of the lawkeepers can be seen to act like civilized creatures. Only the most horrid crimes are prosecuted during the festivals, mostly because the lawkeepers are having far too much fun and can't be troubled to go after someone for something like jaywalking.

Many of the people who have escaped from or sneaked into the valley of the Last Sea have done so during one of these festivals. The security at even the South Pass is notoriously lax at these times of year; only five proctors are on watch at any given time and they are often caught up in participating in their own miniature version of the festivals.

Under no circumstances, however, are the merchants ever willing to bring someone back across the border with them. They might do so unwittingly, but to knowingly invite the terrible repercussions of the lawmakers for such a transgression is something that not even the greediest merchant would do if he valued his life in the slightest.

The Burning Plains

The other way to get into the valley of the Last Sea is to cross the Burning Plains. While this may seem easy to the untrained eye, the knowledgeable or wise traveler will go many miles out of his way to avoid having to traverse such a dangerous stretch of land. After all, getting caught in the middle of the Burning Plains is a sure way to be transformed (rather unmagically) into a heap of smoking ash.

At their most innocent, the Burning Plains look like nothing more than chest-high fields of waving grass. On a windless day, they look amazingly inviting, and more than one unwary traveler has succumbed to this illusion, only to pay for it later with his life. If there is any sort of a breeze (80% chance), however, the air above the plains becomes hazy with a fine gray ash that sticks to skin and clothing, coating just about everything it comes into contact with.





While the ash can be extremely annoying, gumming nostrils and eyes and clogging throats, it is only a harbinger of disaster to come. The ash is, of course, the remnants of thousands of years of wildfires that have plagued the Burning Plains since the Mind Lords closed the borders of the Last Sea nine millennia ago.

In some places, the ashes have heaped up like massive dunes rising dozens of feet into the air. In most places, though, the ash is only knee deep. Still, this has the effect of slowing ground traffic across the plains. All overland movement rates across the plains are reduced by one third. Since the Burning Plains are 25 miles across at their narrowest point, this generally means that any trip across the plains is going to require at least two days to complete.

The grass on the Burning Plains grows extremely quickly, at the rate of more than a foot a day, starting at the surface of the ash. The roots of the firegrass (as the Last Sea residents call it) aren't very strong, though, and they don't provide enough of a network to actually provide a foundation across which travelers can walk. Anyone stepping onto the false floor formed by the bottom of the firegrass is in for a surprise, as they will instantly fall through the ash to the actual floor of the plains if they weigh more than about thirty pounds.

The same happens to any hapless creatures that wander through the area. The Burning Plains are populated, however, by mice, prairie dogs, and even meerkats which can walk along the false floor formed by the firegrass roots. They nest in tunnels clawed out of the ash, and when a fire comes, they burrow deep into the ash and even into the sandy ground beneath.

Adventurers may be tempted to try the same thing, but they should consider that, unlike most humanoids, the local rodents can live on very little air. When the fire comes, it can literally suck the oxygen out of the fauna's tiny tunnels if they are not sealed against such an occurrence. Unless travelers can accomplish something similar, they are doomed to suffocate, buried in the ash all around them and trapped beneath the raging fire above.

Flashfires

The firegrass that grows upon the plain goes up like flash paper every so many days, along with everything living above the level of the ash. The chance of a flashfire beginning is 25% each day. The chance is cumulative, starting at 25% on the day after the last flashfire. This means that flashfires happen at least once every four days (25% chance the first day, 50% chance the second, 75% chance the third day, and 100% chance the fourth), and generally more often than that.

The best time to travel on the Burning Plains is the day immediately after a fire (fires last 1-2 days), when the grasses are bare shoots above the ash, and there is little left to burn. That day, the chance of encountering a flash fire is only 25%. Of course, the journey will generally take at least two days, and on the second day the chance of a flashfire is already up to 50%.

For this reason, most travelers do not bother with trying to cross the Burning Plains, at least not on foot. Even the Thunder Mountains are more hospitable than this blistering land.

A flashfire starts at a randomly determined point on the Burning Plains. In fact, it often starts in a few different places at once. To find the spot closest to the travelers in question, roll 1d8 and consult the Random Direction Table to determine the direction the fire is from them. Then roll 1d20 to figure how many miles away the flashfire begins. If the result would place the start of the fire outside the Burning Plains, locate it on the edge of the Burning Plains instead (in the direction indicated).

The fire then spreads outward, expanding its radius at a rate of 5 miles per hour until the entire Burning Plains has been consumed. If it catches up with the travelers, each character caught in the fire takes 1d6 points of damage from flames and smoke each round.

The only chance a character caught in a flashfire has is to get out of the fire as quickly as possible. This can be done in a number of innovative ways, but note that any character caught in the air above a flashfire at an altitude of less than five hundred feet takes 1d4 points of damage each round from smoke inhalation and scorching heat.

In any given area, the fire lasts for 2d4 turns before burning itself out, the front of

Flashfire Direction Table

1	North
2	Northeast
3	East
4	Southeast
5	South
6	Southwest
7	West
8	Northwest

the fire having long since passed on. By running in the direction of the fire, a traveler can lessen his exposure to only 1d4 turns instead, but figuring out which direction is the correct one to run, while caught in the middle of a flashfire, requires a Wisdom check. If it is failed, the character will be caught in the fire for 1d10 turns instead.

The Border of Guardians

When the Mind Lords entirely isolated Marnita toward the end of the Green Age, they did it by installing a large number of psionically powered defense outposts. These outposts were connected into a telepathic web that joined the individual pieces in a nearly impervious security system. The outposts were each powered by a perfect obsidian orb imbued with the psyche of a powerful psionist.

During the Green Age, it was common practice to remove a criminal's mind from his body and transfer it into just such an orb. The condemned's mental energy could then be programmed to perform certain mundane tasks. More powerful minds could be made to accomplish correspondingly more powerful and complex tasks. The Border of Guardians consists of a tremendous array of these minds surrounding Marnita's perimeter and sealing it closed to outlanders and homelander alike.

When a traveler tries to pierce the Border of Guardians, it is (theoretically at least) intercepted by the guardian (obsidian orb) responsible for the stretch of border the character is attempting to pass through. The range of a guardian's power extends for up to one mile in any direction along the border in a disk approximately 100 yards thick. In this way, the Mind Lords also protected the Last Sea from invaders trying to get either under or over the border.

The Border of the Guardians entirely encircles the valley of the Last Sea, encompassing every inch of the Thunder Mountains and the Burning Plains. This may seem to be overkill considering the already formidable natural defenses surrounding the valley, but the Mind Lords were prepared to leave nothing to chance. In their younger days, they personally resolved any problems having to do with someone flying over or digging under the barrier they had erected, as well as the rare intruder who actually managed to pierce it.

These days, though, things have changed. The obsidian orbs that hold the guardians were meant to keep their guests contained, sane, and in control forever. Nine millennia of actual testing in the field has resulted in some unforeseen changes in the guardians, however.

Whenever a character tries to cross the Border of Guardians at a some random point, roll 2d6 on the Border of the Guardians table below to see what happens.

The obsidian orbs that house the guardians are each buried 4d4 feet beneath the ground, making it difficult if not impossible to locate them directly, much less harm them. To all practical purposes, the guardians are basically disembodied psyches that can only be harmed by psionic effort (not-so-coincidentally a whole lot like the Mind Lords themselves).

The guardians are under strict orders to allow no one *in or out* of the valley of the Last Sea—unless specifically ordered otherwise by a Mind Lord or lawkeeper—and to let only denizens of the Last Sea region back into the valley (again, unless ordered otherwise by a person of appropriate rank). They guardians are authorized to use any means at their disposal to dispatch any persons they deem to be intruders. If they fail to stop an intruder, they are instructed to use their telepathic abilities to send an alert down the Border of Guardians until it reaches the lawkeepers in Saragar.

For more specific information about the guardians, see their MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM sheet in the back of this book.

Once the lawkeepers receive an alert, they evaluate the information that they've received and decide whether or not to bother acting on it. Because the guardians grow less reliable with every passing year, many false alarms are sent out every week. Consequently, it is rare for the lawkeepers to instantly investigate a reported breach in the border, unless the report involves a readily identifiable and serious threat to Saragar.

Instead, it is more likely that the lawkeepers monitoring the Border of Guardians will simply file the reported incursion away. Most often it will never be looked at

again unless the lawkeepers have a run in with some undocumented outlanders. Then they will pore over the records to try to discover just where and when the newcomers entered their land. They will then visit the guardian that was bypassed and interview it, hoping to learn more about the outlanders—hopefully something that they can use against them in a future confrontation.

Border of Guardians Table

2d6 Roll Effect

- 2** **Nothing happens.** Happily, the guardian at this point in the border has expired. The traveler may walk through unmolested by any guardian and with no fear of having the incursion reported to the lawkeepers.
- 3** **Hey, stop!** The guardian is here, but it is mostly useless. It challenges the intruders, but it has no real power to back up its threats of mayhem. It will, however, notify the lawkeepers of the breach.
- 4** **Hello!** The guardian challenges the intruders, but it is pretty friendly. If the intruders don't attack it, it will likely let them pass—unless they are obviously bent upon harming someone sheltered in the valley of the Last Sea.
- 5-8** **Confrontation.** The guardian telepathically challenges the intruders. Only if they have any humanoid denizen of the valley of the Last Sea with them will the guardian let them pass.
- 9-10** **Hold it right there!** The guardian challenges the intruders, accosting them rather belligerently. It is looking for an excuse for a fight, and it will seize upon any that the intruders are willing to give it.
- 11** **Surprise!** The guardian surprises the intruders with an attack. If the intruders fight back, the guardian responds in kind. Otherwise, it simply follows its attack by challenging their right to enter the valley of the Last Sea.
- 12** **Ambush!** Without any warning at all, the guardian attacks. It cares not who it is that it is attacking. It considers everyone that crosses its path to be a deadly foe.



The Wanderer's Journal

The current situation in any locale is always inextricably linked to its past. The valley of the Last Sea is no exception to this rule, and in fact, this verity holds more truly there than in many other locations.

Ruled as it is by a triune of powerful psionicists reported to each have been whelped over nine millennia ago, the city of Saragar, in particular, can truly be said to be ruled by its history in more ways than one.

While the longevity of the Mind Lords has permitted truly long-sighted governing, it has also been a source of stagnation, and inevitable decay. Few new ideas have come to the Last Sea region over the millennia, and it is this fact which may prove to be the valley's ultimate doom.



CHAPTER THREE:

Last Sea History

The sun was falling toward the horizon as Sahanda called a halt to their march, "We camp here," she stated flatly and then set to readying the camp for the rapidly encroaching night. She and Kabak were still in the foothills of the mountains, and she had chosen a cozy hollow for their bed.

Trailing behind her, still on the crest of the last hill, Kabak stopped where he was and turned to watch the sun's dying rays as they reflected off the rippling waves of the last Sea. Not a poetic mul—some would claim that a contradiction in terms, though he knew better—he was stunned by the amazing beauty displayed before him.

The sun's fiery sphere had become easy to look at, almost pleasant, not at all like the blinding fury of midday. As it rode further down the heavens, it got darker and more bloated until it became a flat red disk hanging against the darkening sky. Kabak thought that he had never seen a red so pure and clean. It was the color that blood should be but wasn't, filled as it was with the impurities of life.

The reflection of sunlight on the water formed a crimson roadway that stretched from the far sky to the near shore. Kabak could almost convince himself that, if he could reach that road, he could step upon it and it would hold his massive weight, fashioned though it was of nothing more than daydreams and light. And if he could race along it fast enough, then maybe he could even catch up with the sun before it set and ride it on its long journey through the night.

He started forward to do just that, although he knew he'd never make it, and Sahanda growled at him. "Quit staring at the pretty lights and give me a hand here, half-breed. The sun will still be there tomorrow, but if we don't get some shelter set up here, we won't."

Kabak knew she was exaggerating, so he ignored her and continued to watch the sun as it buried itself in the sea, looking like it was flowing down the bridge of light right into the still-distant shore. At the moment it finally disappeared, somehow it seemed as if the brilliance had poured itself entirely into the sea.

At that instant, a great monstrous shape breached the far-off waves, hurling itself into the air. For one tenuous second, Kabak imagined that it would sprout wings and fly like the much smaller skyfish they had seen circling the mountains. Instead, it crashed back into its own roiling wake, splashing water high into the sky.

As the last rays of the sun stabbed through the fine mist, Kabak suddenly saw a burst of color, an entire spectrum of reddish light, and he gasped. It seemed he had truly found Kirka's paradise, the one she had spun tales of while they huddled together late at night in his run-down shack in one of the many poorer quarters of Tyr.

Why? he had asked her. How could she have ever left such a place behind? The deserts of the Tyr Region seemed even more harsh and inhospitable when compared to such a wondrous land.

As darkness settled, Kabak looked off to the east to see the stars peeking out into the swelling, purplish night. He let loose a long careful sigh and thought about how much he missed Kirka, how much he wanted her here to share this time with him.

Shaking these thoughts from his head, the mul snorted once and then went to help Sahanda with the preparations for the night. Later, in the darkness, Kabak told Sahanda of the things that he'd seen. "Why didn't you stop to watch the sunset?" he asked. "You surely could have spared the time."

He could almost hear her sardonic grin. "I've seen such things before, city boy. The things I've seen . . . they'd curl your hair, if you had any. They make that sunset seem like a campfire."

Kabak grunted. Sahanda the world traveler was too jaded to appreciate any of it any more, he was sure. But he was not so callused yet. "I think I'll stay here," he finally said as the warm wind from the sea caressed his skin. "I can't imagine a better place."

Sahanda cackled softly as she fell off to sleep. "You've got a lot to learn yet, mul. A lot to learn."

Over nine millennia ago, three powerful psionics served as advisors to the lawmaker of the fine city of Saragar, itself an emerald jewel even at the height of the Green Age. At their ruler's behest, this trio of mental giants peered into the future to learn what they could about the fate of their fair city. They hoped to discover that the city would prosper throughout the ages, maintaining its nearly unrivaled reputation as a seat of order and learning.

Instead, they witnessed Athas's doom.

Determined not to let this fate befall themselves or their chosen city, the three came up with a grand scheme to wrest control of Saragar, and indeed the entire valley of the Last Sea. By cutting off all contact with the outside world, they would be able to preserve the entire region just as it had always been, a fertile and festive land to be enjoyed by all who lived within.

At least, that was the plan.

The Meeting of the Minds

In many ways, the Mind Lords succeeded in putting their designs into practice. But time has a way of running its course no matter what obstacles might be put into its way. Inevitably it catches up with everyone, even the Mind Lords. Even so, this immutable fact didn't give them much pause for thought.

The first of the Mind Lords was Thesik, a powerful psionist who split his time between serving Saragar's lawmaker and acting as the dean of the Psionic Academy of Saragar, the most renowned institution of the higher education on all of Athas. Students flocked from all over the globe to study at the feet of the masters of the Way, and in even such celebrated company, Thesik's talent shone.

His second in command and his right-hand in all matters was Kosveret, a gifted elf with almost as much psionic power as Thesik, but not nearly as much ambition. The two had been close friends from soon after the day that they had first been admitted to the academy in the same entering class. They both were excellent students who elected to stay on after their graduation to do further research, and to share their gifts with the students to come after them.

One such pupil was a young lady named Barani. Her incredible beauty was matched only by the prowess of her mind, and she instantly became Thesik's favorite student. In fact, for a while, Thesik and Kosveret competed for Barani's attentions, but in this matter as in most others in which the two competed head to head, Thesik's desire simply outweighed that of Kosveret, and Thesik won Barani's affections.

A Dark Visitation

All the while, Thesik and Kosveret never let their romantic rivalry get in the way of their research. After all, they were working on a project of immense importance to the lawmaker of Saragar, a man named Mareet. One night many years ago, he was visited in a vision by an image from the future. That one night changed his life forever and would have ramifications for the entire Last Sea region, ramifications which would long outlast his own reign.

In the vision, a person came to him with a warning. The visitor seemed somehow familiar, but it was difficult to tell why, as his visage changed dramatically from one moment to the next. In the space of a minute, the visitor wore as many as seven faces. The ones he wore most frequently, however, were those of Thesik, Kosveret, Barani, and even Mareet himself.

Wearing Mareet's own face, the man in the vision spoke to the lawmaker. He said, "I have come from millennia into your future to bring you a message, a warning of things to come."

Next, he transformed into Thesik. "It is hard to reach back from so long away, but if you do not heed my words, all will be lost."

By now, Mareet was becoming upset. "What are you talking about, stranger? What have we of Saragar to fear?"

The mysterious visitor then metamorphosed into Barani. "They have become too powerful. They are mad. They must be stopped."

Mareet was confused. "Of whom are you speaking, stranger?" he asked.

The man then changed into Kosveret. "I feel my mind slipping. To help the future, you must take action today. If not, the others will have my head."

With that, the vision slowly faded away. Mareet called out to him, pleading for him to come back, but it was too late.

The lawmaker immediately sent for Thesik and Kosveret, the two faces he had recognized from the vision (he had yet to meet Barani). When they arrived, he related everything that had happened to him that night. They were confused by his story and unable to offer any sort of elucidation. Still, at his direction, they probed his mind and discerned that he was telling them the truth.

The Great Task

Mareet immediately charged the duo with performing a great task for him. They were to find some way to pierce the veil of time and peer into the future to discover just what it was that the strange visitor had been trying to warn him about.


At first, they told him it was madness. It was blatantly impossible. No one had ever been able to look so far down the stream of time before.

Mareet ignored such protests and immediately set them to work, placing the entire assets of the Psionics Academy at their disposal. But they were sworn to secrecy about the contents of his vision. If the people were to learn of this happenstance, it might cause a general panic.

To give Thesik and Kosveret the power to carry out his demands, Mareet immediately promoted them to vice-deans of the academy. They were to report only to him, and he would make sure that the current dean gave them no interference of any kind.

While the pair's sudden and radical ascension to their new positions was cause for much gossip in the academy's halls, there was no contesting the lawmaker's word. The two psionicians were given free reign to carry out his unusual request.

The research for the Great Task (as it became known in the duo's lab) was painstakingly hard and time-consuming. It took Thesik and Kosveret several years before they had even the principals down of how to move along the time stream. Mareet was unhappy with their slow rate of progress and often voiced his displeasure, but the two psionic masters simply reminded him that his nocturnal visitor had claimed to have come from millennia into the future. A few years of careful research could hardly matter when placed squarely against such an expansive backdrop.



In the meanwhile, the two plugged away at their experiments, teaching an occasional advanced-level class to keep up the appearance of actually being involved with the academy on any kind of academic level. It was in one of these classes that Thesik first met Barani.

Barani was such a promising student that Thesik soon made her his personal assistant. They worked long hours together on the Great Task, and during the time that they spent together, they became very close.

It was during one of Mareet's irregular visits to Thesik's study that Barani's fate became inextricably linked with Thesik's. When Thesik introduced his young protege to the lawmaker, Mareet fainted dead away.

When he awoke, he identified Barani as one of the faces that the mysterious stranger had worn in that midnight visit years ago. He insisted on making Barani's position as Thesik's helper permanent, and he pulled the young psionacist from any other duties. She would work under Thesik toward her degree, but this was only as a secondary goal to helping in the Great Task.

In this way, the three people who would become the Mind Lords of the Last Sea were united.

The Great Leap

The years wore on slowly. Barani got her degree and was eventually made a vice-dean. Thesik took over for the old dean when he retired. Kosveret, the great theoretician, wore away at the Great Task like water dripping onto a stone. Eventually, he broke through.

It was almost 20 years after Mareet had been visited in the middle of the night by the man with multiple faces, but all the hard work and perseverance finally paid off. Kosveret came to Thesik with his findings, and they decided to keep the news a secret from the lawmaker until they had been able to use this new breakthrough in the way Mareet wanted: to enter the future and find out what it was the visitor was trying to warn him about.

They let Barani in on their triumph, and she insisted on being the first to make the attempt to move through the millennia. Thesik was hesitant at first, but Kosveret pointed out that they would be better able to monitor her progress from the vantage of Thesik's study and consequently be able to step in quickly should something go wrong. If either of them were to go and encounter difficulties, his mind might be trapped forever in the future with no single person in the past powerful enough to step forward and free him.

So Barani went first.

She leapt almost three millennia into the future, landing in the time of the Cleansing Wars. What she saw there nearly broke her heart. The once-fertile land had been turned into a barren desert, and Marnita itself had dried up and blown away, leaving hapless Saragar a rapidly decaying monument to a long-lost age.

When she returned and told the two men what she had found, they were filled with disbelief. They could not comprehend that their age of enlightenment could be wiped so cleanly from the planet's face. To think that all of their accomplishments and hard work would be for naught flew in the face of everything they had ever worked for. There had to be something that they could do to avoid this fate.

The next year was filled with many more trips to the future, this time by all three psionacists, individually and all together. With each voyage, the reasons for the downfall of the planet became increasingly more obvious. The defilers would destroy Athas with their magic, especially Rajaat and his foul Champions.

Once the trio ascertained the means of the Green Age's destruction, they informed Mareet of their findings. The lawmaker was horrified by the news, and it almost stopped his aging heart. When he recovered from the shock, he notified the three researchers that he was going to go public with the information. He believed that only a ground swell of grass-roots activism against the development of magic could put a halt to the oncoming disaster that would spell an end for the Green Age.

The Reins of Power

The three master psionicists who had looked into the distant future for the lawmaker disagreed vehemently with his response to the problem that faced Saragar and indeed all of Athas. Unlike Mareet, they had seen their planet's destiny firsthand and they didn't believe that Athas could be saved by some kind of public relations campaign. More drastic measures were called for, and they were just the people to implement them.

They immediately agreed as to what had to be done. Emotionally scarred by their vision of the future, the trio were cynical about human nature, disbelieving that anything could be done to prevent the rise of magic across the world. They decided instead to cut their losses and at least save Saragar.

The three asked Mareet for a private meeting before he made their findings public. They argued with him, trying to get him to come around to their point of view but he stubbornly refused. In a moment of fury, Thesik reached into Mareet's mind, overcoming his formidable personal defenses, and made it his own.

At first, the other two were stunned by the horrible crime that Thesik had committed. In the Green Age, there was no greater transgression than to take another's mind. Still, considering the danger facing their world, they weren't about to turn him in.

Faced with a lawmaker entirely under his control, Thesik made a proposal to his compatriots which they readily accepted. They would rule Saragar through Mareet, making and implementing public policy as they saw fit. Seeing as how it seemed that Mareet was unwilling to budge on his plan to take the trio's findings about the future public, Barani and Kosveret assented to Thesik's quickly concocted scheme.

Over the next few years, the three psionicists steered the city of Saragar in the direction that they desired. They gradually engineered things so that the denizens of the Last Sea became more and more isolated from the world around them. Given



the geography of the region, this wasn't too difficult to accomplish.

Two decades after Thesik occupied Mareet's mind, they finally allowed the old man to die, but not before he named the three of them the new lawkeepers for life. At the time, no one knew that the three people who would someday become known as the Mind Lords of the Last Sea would outlive nearly everyone else on the planet.

The Border Raising

In the Green Age, criminals were punished severely. Their psyches were enslaved (much in the way that Thesik took Mareet) and then transferred from their bodies into an obsidian orb. These orbs were then programmed to perform certain specific functions, such as acting as part of a communications system or directing traffic at a busy intersection. In times of a shortage of real criminals, members of the underclass were taken instead, on one pretext or another.

As for the privileged classes, they led pampered lives, having to fear for little and having to do even less. The orbs did everything for them. The orbs were seemingly foolproof and tireless. They were incapable of revolt or even insubordination. They cared for the niggling details of life, and very little ever escaped their attention.

For this reason, the people of Saragar were well prepared to accept things when the Mind Lords proposed the raising of the Border of Guardians. By this time, the use of magic was on the rise in the world, and its detrimental side-effects were becoming well documented. Faced with the destruction magic was causing, the people of the Last Sea were definitely less than reluctant to go along with the Mind Lords' plan to protect their fair city from this ravaging new force.

The placing of so many obsidian orbs (now known as guardians because of their new duties) was a monumental undertaking, and the streets of Saragar were scoured of the poor and downtrodden to make up the number of guardians that were needed. There was some protest at this sweeping action, but those who spoke too loudly were simply enslaved themselves.

As for those in power, comfortable in the knowledge that they themselves would be unaffected by the Taking (and in fact would benefit quite nicely from it), few of the elite even thought of complaining.

When the border was first erected, it was purportedly designed simply to protect the valley from the use of magic. No wizards of any kind were permitted to enter the valley, and any who were found therein were either chased out or run down and enslaved. Since Saragar was the home of the Psionics Academy, it was hard to find a single person in the region who disagreed with this policy.

As the years wore on into decades, centuries, and even millennia, though, the Border of Guardians got tighter and tighter. At the same time, the Mind Lords' grip on the citizens of Saragar constricted as well. This was cemented at the time of the darkening of the sun.

While the rest of Athas was being turned to desert in the Cleansing Wars, the Mind Lords were busy creating the Burning Plains, sealing off the open end of the two arms of mountain range that Marnita nestled between. In this, they were aided by the defilers in that the ecology of Athas had been so destroyed that it made it much easier to manipulate it to their ends. While they found it impossible to heal the damage the Champions had done outside of the valley of the Last Sea, they were able to transform the Burning Plains into a deadly mockery of the open fields of grass that they had once been.

Eventually, no one was allowed in or out of the valley of the Last Sea without the permission of the Mind Lords, or of the lawkeepers who acted as their rulers' proxies. The tyranny of the Mind Lords was complete, and they had taken so long in implementing their master plan that almost no one had even noticed it happening. At each step along the way, the denizens of the Last Sea simply took each new measure in stride. By the time it was over, they had given away most of the rights that most Athasians had taken for granted.

The Assault on the Last Sea

At the height of the Cleansing Wars, the Champion of Rajaat known as Keltis, Lizardman Executioner, came calling at Saragar. He had been charged by Rajaat with the eradication of the lizard men from the face of the planet, and the colony of creatures living beneath the surface of Marnita definitely qualified as being on his list of things to kill.

Keltis brought over a thousand elite troops to the borders of the Last Sea, ready to waltz in and massacre the lizard men who waited for them in the sea itself. This was truly the Mind Lords' greatest nightmare come to pass: a defiler of almost unheard of power come knocking at their door, demanding to be let in.

For a while, the Mind Lords considered turning the lizard men over to Keltis in order to save the rest of the valley from his wrath. Getting all of the lizard men to comply with this desire would have been problematic, though, as they could hide in the bottom of the sea indefinitely. Instead, then, the Mind Lords called in the current lizard king for a meeting.

Within the week, the gates of the South Pass through the Thunder Mountains were opened to Keltis—under the condition that he not use any defiling magic while in the valley. He was to inspect the valley for the lizard men he believed were there, and then to leave. If he found any of the creatures within the borders of the Mind Lords' domain, he could continue his assault on the Barrier of Guardians, but if he came up empty, he would then go on his way.

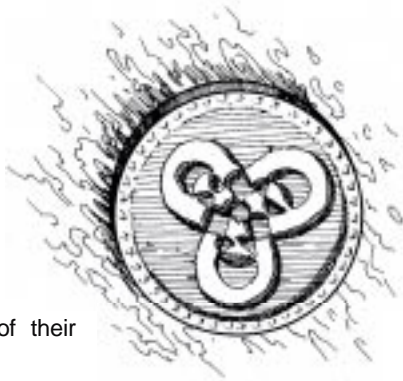
Ever a canny warlord, Keltis agreed to the Mind Lords' conditions. He entered the valley of the Last Sea alone, protected only by his own phenomenal power. Once inside, he was escorted to the Mind Lords' palace by the chief lawkeeper herself.

The Mind Lords met with the dread Champion of Rajaat and told him that there had indeed once been a colony of lizard men in the Last Sea, but they had sadly died out years ago. They took him to what they said was the site of the last lizard man village, to allow him to inspect it. It was, in fact, a real lizard man village that the creatures had abandoned soon after the darkening of the sun. The new rays that fell from the sky were too harsh for their skin, and so they retreated entirely to the safety of the depths of the sea.

Keltis seemed satisfied that the lizard men were gone, but he was hardly going to simply take the Mind Lords' word for it. Breaking their agreement, he stepped back and cast a powerful spell designed to ferret out the location of any lizard men in the entire valley. A circle of ash spread out around him for a dozen yards, but when he was done, he reported that he had ascertained that the Mind Lords were telling the truth: there were no lizard men living in the valley of the Last Sea.

Satisfied that he had no more business in the Mind Lords' domain, Keltis bid them farewell and left, taking his army with him back across the recently renamed Scorched Plateau.

When he was long gone, the Mind Lords returned to the bottom of Marnita and released all of the lizard men from the suspended animation they had placed upon them. Keltis's divination spell had been correct. No lizard men had been alive when the magic was cast, but neither were they dead. Revived now, they returned to their former lives beneath the sea, forever indebted to the Mind Lords for saving them from the horrible fate that befell every other of their kind at Keltis's hands.



The Wanderer's Journal

The Triune Mind Lords of the Last Sea are some of the most mysterious characters in any Athasian legend. Few facts are known for certain about these beings, and most of even this information has been so interwoven with fiction over the millennia that it is impossible to tell where the truth lies any longer.

Still, by now the Last Sea is an extension of the Mind Lords' will in a very real sense.

Boundaries between creators and their creation have blurred over the years, and for this reason, to understand anything about the Mind Lords is to understand something about the Last Sea and all of its people.



CHAPTER FOUR: The Mind Lords

When Kabak awoke, Sahanda was nowhere to be found. Figuring that she was out hunting up some fresh food or scouting out the territory, the mul set to packing up his gear. When he had finished, she still hadn't returned, so he set about collecting her things together as well. He could smell the sea off in the distance—dreams of the water had tantalized him all night long. He was eager to be on the way.

The sun had entirely cleared the mountain tops when Sahanda finally entered the camp. She was empty handed and wore a deep scowl on her face. Kabak greeted her in kind.

"Where have you been?" he growled at her. "The day is wasting."

She snarled at him. "Fear not, Kabak. The one thing I've got plenty of is time."

He got to his feet and tossed a chunk of cheese and a hunk of bread at the elf.

"We eat while we walk," he said flatly.

She caught the food and then tossed it back. "I'm not hungry."

Kabak looked her up and down. "Suit yourself."

The elf nodded silently, turned toward the distant water, and took the lead.

They walked together because the land was becoming open and easy, although they were still in the foothills of the mountains. They could only sometimes see the sea, and when they could, Kabak's wishes to quickly reach it warred with his equally strong desire to slow down to watch it as long as possible before it disappeared behind the rise of another hill.

As they crested a particularly large knoll, the sea suddenly lay out before them, the sun sparkling off its crystalline surface. Sahanda suddenly broke the silence. "Tell me, mul, why is it that you have come here?"

He snorted. "It was Kirka's idea."

"Yes, of course. But she's dead now. Why carry on? This was her dream, not yours."

Kabak looked into the elf's eyes and saw something that closely resembled honest curiosity. He grimaced and thought for a moment before answering. "It wasn't all Kirka's idea. I pushed her into it, in fact. She didn't really want to come back."

Sahanda arched her eyebrows in mock surprise.

Kabak shook his head. He didn't like talking about it much, but he supposed Sahanda deserved an answer. She'd been with him this far after all.

"Kirka grew up here, and she risked her life to get out. She was afraid of the people who rule this place, these Mind Lords." He paused for a moment when it seemed to him that the elf might be quietly laughing.

Sahanda coughed loudly. "Excuse me. Go on."

Kabak looked back down at the trail. "I don't know. This place always sounded like paradise to me." He looked all around himself, up at the mountains behind them and down at the sea below. "I haven't seen anything yet to change my mind."

"Well," said the elf, and this time Kabak was almost sure she was giggling, "the day's still young." The conversation ended there.

When they came out of the foothills several hours later, it was all Kabak could do to keep from running right down into the waves of that beautiful bounty of water. There was still a small wood between them and the sea, and they picked their way through the trees slowly and carefully.

As they were nearing the outer edge of the wood, a bloodthirsty scream suddenly split the air, silencing the sounds of everything else around. Kabak looked up just in time to see Sahanda diving out of the trees and attacking . . . another Sahanda!

The diving elf passed directly through the one walking on the ground as if one of them weren't actually there. Kabak drew his sword immediately, but then stood dumbfounded, unsure of what to do. While he was trying to figure out which Sahanda to side with, the answer suddenly became all too clear.

While he watched, the Sahanda whom Kabak had been walking with turned blue, then green, then gray. Finally she settled on a bright shade of red. "Foul impostor!" the other Sahanda cried as she swung at the double again with her knife, the blade passing right through her target.

By now, Kabak had a good idea of which old elf was which, but if Sahanda couldn't touch the creature, he doubted he'd have any luck himself. Instead, he reached deep into his mind and then lashed out with a blast of pure mental energy. He felt something connect for a second and then skitter off wide, leaving the target mind unharmed.

The double leaped up into the air, soaring twenty feet above Kabak's head. It somersaulted three times, and when it landed back on the ground in front of him, it now looked like Kabak instead.

"Hello, my friend!" said the double as it reached out a hand to greet him. Startled, Kabak almost responded in kind. But he remembered himself just in time, and lashed out with his mind again, this time searching for a way of affecting the baser parts of the thing's psyche. Again, he felt his effort fail.

"Ah, ah, ah." His mirror image waved a finger back at him in chastisement. "No fair hitting below the belt." The mock mul leapt over Kabak's head. When the ex-gladiator turned around, he saw Kirka standing before him.

Just then, Sahanda stepped forward and pierced the beautiful woman's chest with her blade. Kirka looked up at her angrily and spat, "My lady I am trying to have a conversation here, and you are growing to be a real annoyance." Daggers suddenly flew from Kirka's eyes—quite literally—and embedded themselves in Sahanda's chest.

Kabak was sure the daggers were little more than an illusion, but he could feel the psionic wave of force that accompanied them. Sahanda reached up and grabbed her head, and blood began pouring from her nose. Sensing what was coming, Kabak dove at the false Kirka, but it was too late. He passed right through the creature as Sahanda had, and by the time he scrambled back to his feet, the elf guide—his friend, he finally realized—was dead.

Enraged, Kabak cursed himself for never having studied the Way. Still, he used his anger to find his center and focus every ounce of mental energy he had into attacking his opponent's mind. In one incredible blast, he caught the creature squarely and sent its image sprawling to the ground.

When it got up, it had transformed into a tall, blond elf of a kind that Kabak had never seen. He almost looked . . . royal. Strangely enough, he was smiling.

"That actually hurt," he said, in surprise. "It's been a long time since anyone's been strong enough—or in your case, lucky enough—to hurt me."

Sure that this was the end, Kabak reached back into his mental reserves to find something with which to defend himself, but he was entirely spent and wholly at the elf's mercy.

The stranger seemed to sense his thoughts and grinned even more wildly. "I think I'm going to enjoy having you around. I won't even tell the others you're here. Just watch your step or you'll end up like her." He glanced sadly down at Sahanda. "You know, in her own way, she loved you." Then he looked up and winked at Kabak. "Be seeing you!" he said, before vanishing as if he had never been there at all.

The Mind Lords of the Last Sea are creatures out of legend. It seems only fair to call them creatures, as they have long since left behind being anything like human or even elf. Now they sit ensconced in the same sort of obsidian orbs that slaves were regularly forced into in these rulers' younger days, their life forces essentially made immortal, even as their minds decay for the lack of their bodies.

They weren't always this way, though. Once, when the deserts that now cover Athas from pole to pole were tall fields of long grass interspersed between lush bands of verdant jungle, the Mind Lords were people. They had ambitions. They hated. They loved.

Today is nothing like yesterday, even in the land of the Last Sea, a place where time seems to have stood still for ages. It might be better to say that the valley side-stepped time rather than avoided it altogether. The days in Saragar pass at the same rate as in Tyr. They just do so differently.

Thesik



Thesik, first among the theoretically equal Mind Lords, was once a young man who grew up in Tyr Region in the days before the Cleansing Wars and the Age of the Sorcerer-Kings. Tall and sandy haired with bright blue eyes, the kind that reflect back as impassively as the side of a glacier, he was gifted with a great amount of the Will. As a young lad, he was sent to Saragar to learn what he could of the Way.

His dazzling grin and easy way quickly won him many friends at the Psionic Academy. Even his chief rivals found it hard to hate or even resent him. In time, however, they would find that he would give them plenty of reason to view him with all the enmity in their souls.

Thesik was an ambitious man from his early days, and far and away the best student to ever attend the academy. During his years as a student and an associate professor at the academy, he made a great deal of time for socialization. To him, his studies were so simple that they afforded him a great deal of luxury.

It was during this period of his life that he met Kosveret. As the two top students at the academy, they spent a great deal of time together. They discovered that only in each other could they ever find anything approximating a challenge, and they became fast friends, always spurring each other on to greater heights, whether in the classroom or in the course of pursuing the ultimate practical joke to play on their professors.

Kosveret

A simple elf from the area now known as the Crimson Savannah, Kosveret was tall and thin, even for an elf, with long brown hair and steel-gray eyes. He came to the Psionics Academy at a tender age, particularly considering his race. Still, he had quickly learned all that his home's psionic masters had to teach him as a child. It soon became obvious that only at the academy itself would he find the resources to progress further down the path of the Way.

When he first arrived in Saragar, Kosveret was a quiet student. Even back in the Green Age, elves were greatly outnumbered in Saragar by the other races, and he felt quite alone and often homesick. To distract himself from his feelings, he hurled himself into his work. He would often spend weeks on end without ever leaving the academy compound. After all, everything he needed for his work was here. He saw no need to go anywhere else.



One night while he was working late in his room, he heard a knock at his door. When he opened it, he found that someone had leaned a full barrel of water against the door. It was so heavy that, even though he pushed against the door with all his might, the barrel's contents spilled into his room, leaving him standing in a full inch of water.

The war of practical jokes had begun.

Some elves in Kosveret's position might have taken such offense to this sort of an act as to actually pack their bags and head home. But for the first time since he'd come to Saragar, Kosveret had finally found himself a true challenge. The last thing on his mind was leaving.

Kosveret was patient about his revenge, though. He spent the next day listening around the library, hidden behind stacks of weighty tomes. The barrel trick was the talk of the student body, and eventually Kosveret overheard the name of the person who had "pranked" him: It was Thesik.

From there it was only a matter of coming up with a suitable prank with which to retaliate. Kosveret gave it barely a moment's thought before he had the answer.

He went to the Blind Pig, a tavern in town where Thesik was known to spend many a night carousing with his classmates amongst the fishermen from the docks. When he entered the place, everyone fell silent. Not everyone recognized him, but Thesik certainly did. The sea of people in the room parted between the two.

Kosveret nodded to everyone and then walked over to sit down across from Thesik at his table. For a moment, Thesik ignored the elf. Thesik was the smartest and most popular student in town, and he was actually starting to believe all the stories told about his genius, thinking himself destined to be the greatest psionicist who ever lived. As true as this might have eventually turned out to be, it certainly wasn't the case that night.

Thesik finally asked, "Can I do something for you, elf?" a look of casual contempt on his face.

Kosveret smiled. "Actually, no. I was hoping I could do something for you. We seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot—somehow."



Thesik laughed. "I don't have the slightest idea what you're talking about, elf. I've got nothing against you."

"Well, then," Kosveret returned Thesik's grin. "Would you allow me to get you a drink? What are you having?"

Thesik was confused, but his grin grew wider. "That'd be fine, elf. I'll have an ale—a big ale."

"As you wish."

Kosveret was almost out of his chair by the time the "drink" arrived. He had psionically teleported the contents of an entire barrel of ale into the air over Thesik's head. The elf was already in the street outside the tavern before Thesik realized why he was suddenly soaked in several gallons of premium ale.

Kosveret ran laughing all the way home.

The duo went on this way for weeks, the pranks escalating a bit each time. Just before the end of the term, Thesik approached Kosveret and offered him a truce. "Why?" was the ever-suspicious elf's first question.

"Against each other, we've pulled off some pretty amazing pranks, and believe me, no one's been more entertained than I. But just think of what we could do if we joined forces."

Kosveret thought about it for a moment and then began to grin. "Human, I think this could be the start of a long-lasting friendship." He had no idea of how truly he spoke.

Enter Barani



Over a decade later, the duo of Kosveret and Thesik were still working and laughing together. Their friendship would become strained, however, by the entrance of a third party, a dazzling young beauty named Barani. A girl who had grown up on the shores of Marnita, her father a failed psionist turned fisherman himself, Barani had a great deal of disdain for the Psionics Academy and no real desire to study the Way there.

Unfortunately, she had exhausted her father's store of knowledge on the subject of the mind, and she needed a new challenge. Despite his bitter experiences with the institution, Barani's father insisted that the girl attend the academy. He still had friends there from his old days, and they guaranteed him that such a bright student would certainly be given a full scholarship and treated with all the respect due someone of her Will.

Reluctantly, Barani left the shores of Marnita for the ivory towers of the Psionics Academy. Admittedly, when she first got there, she was not a wonderful student. She was too willful to easily suffer being taught by the same professors who had looked down upon her father.

It was in one advanced level class she had sneaked into that she caught the attention of the young associate professor leading the discussion, a handsome and powerful young psionist who was rapidly rising through the academy's ranks. His name was Thesik.

One night after class, Barani followed Thesik to the Blind Pig, hoping to meet with him in a non-academic setting. She certainly got her wish. She waited outside of the tavern for nearly an hour, trying to get up the nerve to walk into the obviously lower-class establishment. When she finally did, she saw Thesik engaged in a telekinetic struggle with a gangly elf. A frothy flagon of ale hung in the air between them as they each struggled to pour the contents of the mug onto the other's head.

As Barani stepped closer to the contest, she caught Thesik's eye. He lost his concentration on the mental battle before him, and he was suddenly wearing a pint of ice-cold ale.

Once he had dried himself off, he stood up and greeted Barani, who was doing her best not to laugh. Then he turned and introduced her to his opponent, Kosveret. As he turned to Kosveret, he saw the look of adoration dawning in the elf's eyes.

The battle for Barani's heart was on.

In the end, Barani's first choice became her only choice, and she and Thesik

became lovers and partners throughout their life. Kosveret took me news as well as he could. Over the years, he took a number of partners himself, but none ever satisfied him as Barani did Thesik.

Still, fate had brought these three together to peer into the distant future, so that they would know what had to be done to save today. Their reward would be eternity together. This would also be their curse.

The Entering of the Orbs

Over the next few millennia, the trio's power grew until they became like unto gods to the people of Saragar and the rest of the Last Sea. After the Cleansing Wars were over and the Sorcerer-Kings had learned to ignore the Mind Lords and their land, the three psionics turned their attention toward the more immediate problem of extending their own lives.

While the Mind Lords had been using traditional and not-so-traditional psionic means of extending their existences for centuries, their bodies were finally failing them altogether. It was only a matter of time-and not very much of it-before they would die.

While death itself held little fear for such people, the idea that their carefully wrought plans would be laid to waste did. They had worked so hard to preserve Marnita from the horrors that had happened to the rest of Athas, and they were anguished at the thought that the desert might finally win its age-old battle with the valley and take the Last Sea into its arms once and for all, were they not there to prevent that event.

The three Mind Lords spent several years trying desperate experiments to extend their lives, some of which may have contributed to their later madness. In the end all their experiments failed. It was Barani who finally spoke of a solution that none of them had wanted to consider.

For millennia before the Mind Lords had been born, the people of the Green Age had been placing enslaved psyches into obsidian orbs, programming them to perform menial tasks. These new entities were essentially immortal. They neither aged nor died, and barring any unforeseen problems, they survived for millennia on end.

Barani pointed out that there was no reason that an unenslaved psyche couldn't be put in one of these orbs as well. But the idea itself was reprehensible to the people of the Green Age, so much so that the Mind Lords were almost unwilling even to consider it. After all, the orbs were for slaves, not the most powerful psionic minds Athas had ever seen.

Still, it soon seemed apparent that there was no other choice but to do as Barani had suggested. In the end, the other two agreed.

To keep their people from learning of their horrible decision (and to prevent any ramifications their knowledge might have), the Mind Lords would have to construct and maintain an elaborate ruse that they were still alive.

First, they had a massive chamber constructed forty feet beneath the palace and then sealed off by collapsing the entire tunnel that led to it. Then they had three gigantic obsidian orbs crafted, each perfect in every way and polished to a mirror finish. When everything was ready, they secretly transferred their minds into the orbs.

Their first act upon entering the globes was to disintegrate their aged bodies, leaving no trace that they had ever "died." Then they each teleported the new receptacles of their minds down into the subterranean chamber they'd had fashioned, each orb settling upon a broad and shallow pillar of purest ivory.

Once they were settled in their new forms, the Mind Lords put their ruse into action, psionically projecting their images into the palace above. Their plan seemed perfect. They would be seen walking about the palace constantly, puttering around in their study and attending functions of state. When they needed to hold or touch something, all they must do was supply a skillful bit of telekinesis. They could even appear to eat and drink by placing the food or liquid in their image's mouth and then teleporting it away before it passed through them to the ground.

On the rare occasion when someone actually saw evidence that they were insubstantial, they could simply attribute it to the fact that they were handling a "phasing"

experiment. A bit more carefully applied telekinesis, and they could again show just how solid they were.

Over the next year, the Mind Lords gradually murdered anyone who might have had any information about the orbs or the chamber. The chances that anyone would make the logical connection were slim due to the same reason that the Mind Lords had resisted entering the orbs in the first place: the idea was simply too distasteful to consider. Still, the three psionics were terrified that the truth might someday be revealed. They were not willing to gamble with an eternity of living in shame.

The Situation Today

In the intervening millennia, the Mind Lords came to be viewed by their people as gods. They were not always good deities, nor even fair, but it was from them that all of Marnita's bounty came, and without them, the sea itself would vanish. These certainly seemed like good enough reasons for the people to worship them, and so they did.

The situation was taken full advantage of by the lawkeepers, the people's only means of communicating directly with the Mind Lords. In fact, only the chief lawkeeper (currently Lawkeeper Efken) ever spoke directly with the three lawmakers, and this privilege was jealously guarded.

Today the people of Saragar attend services and listen to the speeches of the lawmakers who run the church of the Mind Lords, long diatribes designed to make the populace appreciate all that the Mind Lords have given them. Mandatory donations are collected at every service, and failing to attend services at least once a week is considered a crime, punished by incredibly stiff penalties.

Barani is the lawkeepers' mother goddess. She is represented by the earth and the sea. All of the bounty of the world of the living comes from her womb. She is usually depicted cradling a young child in her arms and with flowers braided through her hair.

Thesik is the god of the underworld. It is he who shepherds the dying into the land of the dead. He is usually shown as a pale man with deep eyes, his hair swept back in a widow's peak. He wears clothing suitable for one living in the desert.

Kosveret is the god of happiness. He exemplifies the reasons humanoids have for living: triumph and joy. He is often depicted as a drunken elf with a woman on each arm.

The lawkeepers attempt to show "their holinesses" as a perfect trinity, none of which could exist without the others. Without life, there could be no death. Without death, there would be nothing against which to compare joy. Without joy, life would have no meaning.

In theory, this is all very fine, as each of the gods has the people's best interests at heart. After all, they preserved Marnita for the people. In fact, so much time has gone by since the trio originally walked the earth that most people actually consider the Mind Lords to be the creators of this most incredible oasis in the endless desert.

In reality, however, the lawkeepers are little more than caretakers for tremendously powerful beings who have slowly lost their minds. Of them all, Thesik is most firmly grounded in how things really are. He remembers the past all too well, it seems, for his memories fill him with terrible pangs of regret.

The loss of his body and his subsequent separation from Barani has hurled him into a terrible depression from which it seems he may never recover. It is rare that he does anything these days. He simply sits in his orb and contemplates the horror that his life has become. In this respect, he makes an excellent god of the dead.

In his heart, Thesik wants nothing more than to finally end his existence, but the responsibility of maintaining the Border of Guardians and the Last Sea weigh heavily on his insubstantial shoulders. He knows that the others are too far gone to be depended upon to keep things running should he allow himself to slip into death, and so he is caught firmly in a trap of his own design, from which it seems there is no possible escape.

Barani has become manic-depressive, and from moment to moment, it is almost as if she is two different people. The manic Barani is loving and caring and enjoys Thesik's company. She is the earth mother in all her radiant beauty. The depressed Barani, on the other hand, is literally a holy terror. She despises her life, and she holds Thesik personally responsible for her current situation. If she could, she'd probably commit suicide, but

during these times, she is too despondent to be clever enough to come up with a sure-fire way to do so. She is usually distant, but when prodded, she becomes cranky and irrational. She represents nature in all its horrible fury and matter-of-fact cruelty.

Kosveret is flat-out mad, encompassing many different personalities, few of which are actually aware of one another. He spends much of his time impersonating both real and fictional people out of fact and legend, wandering the streets of Saragar and beyond. He is often magnanimous one moment and then deadly the next.

Above all, Kosveret enjoys challenges and mysteries. If something catches his interest, he will follow it about, toying with it until it becomes boring to him. At this point, he either rewards or kills the object of his attentions, depending on however the person strikes him at the moment. He truly represents the arbitrariness of life.

Happiness is Mandatory

The credo of the Mind Lords, and thus of their priestly lawkeepers, is "Happiness must be maintained." How happy everyone has to be is up to the lawkeepers at hand. Often they are more concerned about their own happiness than that of the citizens of Saragar.

The laws have been written by the lawmakers to ensure maximum happiness among the people of Saragar. It's the duty of the lawkeepers to ensure that these laws are upheld. The penalty for any crime is arbitrarily set by the lawkeeper who catches the lawbreaker in question, but usually it is harmonization, a process by which the offender's thoughts are psionically shaped back into a pattern considered more socially acceptable by the lawkeepers. The lawkeepers who handle such operations are called harmonizers, and they are universally feared by all but other lawkeepers and the Mind Lords themselves.

This fact has had a surrealistic effect on the people of Saragar. They are exceedingly polite and efficient. They have the finest manners, and they are never crude or insulting. While this behavior may seem normal in a diplomat, it is unusual to see in a longshoreman. The lawkeepers have managed to turn Saragar into an entire city of diplomats.

For this reason, it is difficult to get anyone in the city to take responsibility for anything. This is so pervasive that it is even represented in the way that people express themselves. No one in Saragar ever says, "I dropped that glass." They claim that "The glass was somehow broken." If pressed, they might actually admit that "The glass fell from my hand," but to ever hear a firmer attachment of responsibility to themselves is rarer than a lost sea on a desert planet.

There are laws to cover nearly anything in Saragar. Littering is a serious offense (as are all other offenses). These laws can be liberally interpreted by a lawkeeper, and it is not unusual for them to be exceedingly easy upon an offender who makes a substantial and unsolicited donation to the church of the Mind Lords on the spot.

The key to every law, though, is happiness. If something could make someone sad, it's a crime, and if anyone can be found to be responsible, that person is harmonized. The process of harmonization is said to be unpleasant-though no one who has ever gone through it has complained afterward. After all, their mind has been programmed to forget any such trauma.

The old joke around the shores of the Last Sea (although never told in Saragar itself) is that the lawkeepers' motto is "Mindwipes will continue until morale improves." It is just as well that the joke is never heard in Saragar, as it seems likely that few people there would find the humor in it anyhow. To them, it is all too real.

One major law which (like any other) is rarely broken is that it is illegal to leave the valley of the Last Sea without express permission. In fact, it is illegal for citizens to leave the city for more than three days without permission. Conversely, visitors are only allowed to stay in the city for three days without the express written consent of the lawkeepers. An outsider caught without his papers is sure to be expelled from the city at the least, although immediate execution or harmonization is more likely.

Citizenship is determined by birth. People born in Saragar are citizens. Those born elsewhere are not.

These days, outlanders are not specifically forbidden in Saragar. It is just that, since they are very likely unfamiliar with the city's laws, they inevitably will run

afoul of them. Outlanders are more likely to be executed than homelander (for whom termination is extremely rare). After all, many fewer people will miss an outlander's presence in the verdant valley.

The only people in the city with real responsibility are the lawtenders—the city's bureaucrats—although to see them work, one would never know it. They are masters at equivocation, as it is only by this virtue that they manage to keep their minds and their jobs intact.

Socialization ensures that harmonization is rarely necessary, though. Everyone in Saragar has been raised to have faith in the lawkeepers and the Mind Lords' laws. Those who find the structure of Saragar's society too constrictive are generally given leave to live in the villages by the Last Sea's shores. Those villagers who wish to can apply for citizenship to the city as well, although this is rarely given, as even these people often have trouble assimilating themselves into Saragar's society. Most people from outside the city find life in it to be exceedingly dull, although the people of Saragar seem to like it just fine; they face each situation with a fixed smile.

The jurisdiction of the lawkeepers officially covers the entire valley of the Last Sea, but it is rare to see them very much outside of Saragar. They make irregular patrols of the other settlements, but they usually only make an appearance when requested by the local government. Even after they catch a wrongdoer, they will only hand him over the harmonizers if specifically requested to by the locals. Usually they let the local excuses for lawkeepers handle the miscreant's punishment.

If the offender or his crime was somehow connected directly with Saragar, however, the city's lawkeepers will show no mercy toward the criminal and will pursue him to the Border of Guardians itself. But under any other circumstance, they like to take a hands-off attitude. If it doesn't involve the city, it's not their problem.





The Wanderer's Journal

The Last Sea is a land of wonders, the likes of which cannot be found elsewhere on Athas. Almost as interesting as the salty sea itself are the humanoids who live along its edge, enjoying the Mind Lords' shelter from the desert that inexorably consumes the rest of the planet. dwarves, elves, and humans live in relative togetherness all along the Last Sea's shores, their lives extremely different from those that most Athasians know. Imagine how different your own life would be if you had never wanted for clean water or good food? What kind of a person would you have become? For those of us who live on this side of the Thunder Mountains, there may be no clear answer to these questions, but they are a good starting point from which to begin understanding the people of the Last Sea.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Last Sea

Kabak walked alone through the last stretch of grass leading up to the Last Sea. He had buried Sahanda's body on the edge of the forest in a shallow grave marked only by the great oak that stood over it. Kabak had never seen such a tree except in the garden of a noble of whom he had once been the champion. The oak above Sahanda was tall and thick, and its leaves were wide and green. He thought the old elf would have liked it. He knew he would have.

From the forest, the land had sloped down gently through a field of tall grass. Now it opened onto a wide beach of white sand. This sand was unlike the stuff he'd had to deal with his entire life, the fine, dusty sand that blew up into your eyes and clogged your throat and nostrils. This sand stayed on the ground where it belonged.

When he stepped on it, it gave way like mud, but it didn't slip from under his feet like the free-flowing stuff that made up the endless dunes he'd walked across all the way from Tyr to get here. He strode across it to the water's edge and stared out at the open sea. Off in the distance to the north, a large plateau stabbed out of the water in some pointless act of defiance. Kirka had called it the Lonely Butte in her tales, an untamed place filled with savage creatures: a good place to hide from the lawmakers of Saragar.

The water lapped at his feet, so he stripped off his sandals and pack and tossed them back up the beach. The water felt good against his legs as he waded into it. He bent down, cupped his hands in the water and brought a bit of it to his lips. It was salty as Kirka had warned him, unsafe to drink. That was fine. There had been no lack of fresh water in the valley. This water was for playing in.

Drawing a deep breath, he lowered his body into the sea. The sensation was like nothing he'd ever felt before. So much water, all over his body—it was amazing! And the things he could see beneath the waves!

There were all sorts of colorful, flat-bodied things swimming all around him. Kabak supposed they were fish, but they were nothing like the tiny dun-colored ones he had been familiar with back in Tyr. These were striped and swirled with all sorts of brilliant hues, and they came in all shapes and sizes. Once, a gigantic tortoise nearly as large as Kabak himself swam by, only in place of a tortoise's claws it had flippers.

Kabak was having the time of his life, and for one sweet moment he was able to entirely forget all of the troubles he'd had on the long road that had led him here. Then a giant wave slammed into him and scoured him against the sandy sea floor, knocking him roughly from his feet. He scrambled to grab onto something and right himself, but before his fingers could find purchase on anything other than the roiling sand, the rip tide dragged him back out into deep water.

For a moment, Kabak was fine. He'd never been in so much water before, and the sensation of floating weightlessly suspended in the middle of it was dizzying. It was then that he realized that, unlike the fish he'd been watching so attentively, he couldn't breathe water, nor could he swim.

Kabak floundered about for a few seconds before he started to really panic. He thrashed about for a minute until he realized it wasn't going to do him any good. In a last desperate measure, he screamed.

Once all the breath was gone from his body, he realized the kind of mistake he'd made: a deadly one. He clamped his mouth hard against the water struggling to make its way into his lungs, but he eventually passed out, and the water won.

When he awakened, he was lying face down on the wet sandy beach, the water still lapping at his ankles. He tried to breathe but just coughed and sputtered. When he finally forced all the left-over water out of his lungs, he drew the deepest breath he ever had and audibly thanked fortune for sparing his miserable life.

"Fortune had nothing to do with it," someone said.

Kabak's eyes darted up, his vision landing upon a pair of green feet. They were the color of a thri-kreen's, but were covered in scales like a reptile's—a giant reptile, he realized, as he lifted his head to stare up at the speaker.

"Greetings," hissed the creature as it looked down at him with a snake's wide yellow eyes. It smiled at him, baring all of its long, sharp teeth.

Kabak scrambled back as if he'd been bit. When he realized he was working his way back into the water, he stumbled to his feet. The lizard man, for that's what it had to be, stood taller than he, although it was not broader. Kabak decided he was



glad he had not met the creature in the arenas of Tyr. There was something horrible he had heard about lizard men, though, and it came back to him in a rush.

"Don't eat me!" he sputtered, his hand reaching for a sword that was no longer at his side, a sword he had left on the shore.

The lizard man stared at him for a moment. Then it began to laugh in a series of short hisses. At least it sounded a bit like laughter. Kabak wasn't entirely sure.

"Don't worry, friend. I won't eat you. I don't think I'd find meat as tough as yours very tasty."

Kabak was confused. "But the legends say that the walking lizards—"

"Eat humanoid flesh? I suppose this was true a long time ago, but things change, outlander. You can't expect even the Last Sea to have stayed frozen in time since the Green Age." The lizard man started walking around Kabak, heading back into the sea.

"But I thought. . . . Wait. How did you know I'm from outside the valley?"

The lizard man gave his hissing laugh again. "I saved your hide, didn't I? Anyone who lives inside the valley would already know how to swim. You obviously don't. You've got a lot to learn, air-sucker."

With that, the lizard man slipped into the sea and swam away. Kabak watched him move along the surface for a while until he kicked up his heels and headed for the salty depths.

"Yes," whispered Kabak, "it seems that I do."

The valley of the Last Sea is a large place, measuring 150 miles across at its longest stretch, and nearly 70 miles wide. A vast portion of this area is occupied by Marnita itself, but there is still plenty of land on Marnita's shores. This area features many small towns, each happily outside of the direct influence of the Mind Lords, although still profiting from their protection of the entire valley from the encroaching desert.

The sea itself is surrounded by a hearty band of tough grasses, inured to the rigors of living off of the sea water they can reach with their roots. This grass is strong enough to make good rope and even roofing (tiki-style), but it is awful for grazing. It is so salty that most Athasian cattle—even that local to the Last Sea—cannot stomach it.

Beyond this narrow band of salt grass, though, the land is extremely fertile, capable of supporting all sorts of vegetation, including palm trees and other plants of the tropical sort. The wider, flatter areas are covered with productive farms, the bread-basket of the valley. A large percentage of the food grown for the valley comes from these fields, and it seems that there is always plenty to go around.

This likely accounts for the fact that most homelander are several pounds heavier than the average outlander. Their skin is also softer and smoother, and the effects of age are often less pronounced. Additionally, the skin of most citizens of Saragar is much paler than that of outlanders. The high humidity in the region seems to form some kind of protection from the dark sun's rays, making the people less likely to be burnished by its still-harsh radiation.


The most amazing thing to outlanders is the number of rivers that cut through the Thunder Mountains and run in to Marnita. Homelander never lack for water that is clean and pure.

Cuarsen

This sleepy little fishing village is located on the middle of Marnita's southeastern shore, far from the influences of Saragar. Altogether, Cuarsen consists of approximately 50 people, but this number fluctuates to a great deal higher from time to time as the many druids that live on the shores of Marnita favor this tiny place with most of their attention.

For the most part, the druids of the valley of the Last Sea are genuinely different from those found in other parts of Athas. They live together in tiny beach communities of 10 people or less, spending their days surfing on the waves of the Last Sea, constantly searching for the perfect ride.

The hunt for the ultimate wave is a never-ending one, and it is the focus of these druids' days. Since a wave is an ephemeral thing by its very nature, these people are destined to never find permanent contentment. This is fine by them, though, as they enjoy the searching almost as much as they love the ride itself.



To these nature priests, surfing is a means of communing with the water that they have come to love so much. To learn to surf and then to practice the lessons of surfing is to come to know the sea and to show not only your undying respect for it as a force of nature, but also the joy you can feel when you are totally in tune with that force. This is represented by riding smoothly, almost poetically atop a wave, knowing that it will end at any second and enjoying it all the same for as long as is possible.

Most of the time, these druids live off of seafood they catch and fruits that they forage for along the shore. Eventually, though, this diet palls, even to such ascetics, and they come to Cuarsen for a drink and a meal. In exchange for these things, they trade ropes, mats, and hats they have woven from the grasses that grow just beyond the beaches.

On any given day in Cuarsen, there are usually one or two bands of druids in town for some good grub. They are typically dressed only in shorts, the women wearing sleeveless half-shirts as well. Each and every one of the druids is burnished a deep bronze from long hours of exposure to the sun. Long-time druids are wrinkled beyond their years, but they don't care.

Very little can get a druid inside any kind of shelter for longer than a few hours. The people like to sleep with the sand on their backs, sometimes even with their feet in the water. More than one druid has had a rude awakening when the rising tide has washed him out to sea, but they generally just see it as the sea calling out to them, promising a chance at some excellent body surfing.

It is rare to see a beach druid far from his board. Each makes his own board by hand, lovingly crafting and polishing it until it's ready to glide across the waves. It can take up to two weeks for a druid to make another board, and although druids do make boards for sale, they refuse to part with their personal boards except under the direst circumstances.

A druid's personal board adds a nonmagical +3 to any surfing proficiency checks made by that druid only. An experienced druid with his own board can perform nearly unbelievable stunts on the surf. These people generally disdain sailboards, though, except as a means of traveling long distances rapidly. Given a choice, a druid would usually rather simply surf along the coast to his destination, even if it took him 12 times as long to get there.

The people of Cuarsen are mostly friendly, and the merchants there are happy to get business of any kind. The same cannot be said for the druids, though. They are a closed group. Even amongst themselves, their bands are extremely insular.

While in the Sea Wax, Cuarsen's only tavern, druids are often friendly, open, and even talkative with people that they know. It will take them at least several days to feel comfortable enough to speak their mind in front of an outlander, though, if indeed they ever do. Bee, the Sea Wax's shaggy haired elven proprietor and bartender, makes sure to sit newcomers as far from the druids as possible, but it rarely works. Once the druids are not in complete control of the bar, they most times get up and leave as soon as they can finish their drinks.

Cubarto

Cubarto is the second largest mixed-race settlement on the shores of Marnita, following distantly behind Saragar with just over 1,500 people. Cubarto is located on the side of Marnita directly opposite Saragar. This position gives its citizens trading access to both Kharzden and Sylvandretta, an advantage the barge drivers of Cubarto exploit ruthlessly.

The people of Cubarto are loud and lusty. None of them would last 15 minutes in Saragar before being hauled before a harmonizer to be brought into tune with the Mind Lords' song. Just about everyone in Cubarto supports the Underground, although there are few who do so openly. Marnita is only so large, and the reach of the lawkeepers more than sufficiently covers it.

This is a port town and a fishing village. Boats of all shapes, sizes and descriptions pour through the port every day. Those citizens who don't support themselves in the shipping business make their living harvesting the fruit of the sea, hooking and netting the many delicious varieties of fish that call Marnita home.

Just as with elsewhere on the Last Sea, however, the fishers of Cubarto are careful not to overly fish any particular region of the sea. To do so is to invite a mass harmonization of nearly every fisher in town, and that's something that nobody in Cubarto wants. It has been over a thousand years since the entire village of Waishiki was harmonized in one fell swoop for their repeated violations of the fishing guidelines set forth for them by the Mind Lords. No one in Cubarto personally remembers it happening, but a visit to Waishiki will convince any skeptic of the veracity of this claim.

Cubarto is governed by a mayor elected by the people. He has very little real power, and the post is mostly an honorary one. The only thing he can do that no other citizen can is call in the lawkeepers when he feels that they are needed. If his judgment proves flawed, however, it can end up being he that is harmonized instead.

The current mayor is a well-tanned young man named Sentigo, with dark brown eyes and straight black hair he wears shaved close to his head. Sentigo believes in running a tight ship, and in his case, that means collecting taxes from each ship that uses Cubarto's port. He usually charges a measly two percent of any cargo carried, but he can go as high as 10 if his takes a disliking to the people he's dealing with. In any case, Sentigo is a popular man, and any attempts to get out of paying him his taxes will be met with stiff resistance from just about everybody else in town.

At the end of the year, Cubarto always has a surplus of taxes, and instead of hoarding the cash, Sentigo uses it to throw a great festival. People from all around the Last Sea show up for the party, especially for the fantastic spread of food and drink that the village provides for free. Even an occasional lizard man, as well as a ghost elf or two from Sylvandretta (see below) has been known to show up for Cubarto's infamous New Year's Eve celebration.

The people of Cubarto are open and warm. They like to drink and swim (not necessarily at the same time). They are suspicious of strangers, but openly so. Visitors may find this refreshing after having to deal with the implicit distrust found in many of the other villages on the shore. This mistrusting is only natural, of course. After all, anyone new in the village could be a spy for the Mind Lords, so until the newcomers are proven to be who they say they are, they can expect to encounter stubbornness bordering on open hostility from the Cubartan people.

The easiest way to earn a Cubartan's trust is to publicly curse the Mind Lords. No one from Saragar could do such a thing because of their real fear that they could be struck down for such a thing. (Of course, who's to say the outlanders won't be?) Not even a native Cubartan would be so bold.

Huddleston

Huddleston is a small farming community nestled into the nook north of Marnita, right between the last of the Thunder Mountains and the edge of the Burning Plains. This extremely fertile land sees a great deal of rain, and this, combined with the valley's long growing season, make the fields around Huddleston the most productive on the planet.


Visitors from afar will be astonished at the size of these farms, the row after row of luscious plants and trees bearing vegetables and fruits of all kinds. Perhaps the most famous farm in the area is the old Jenkins Vineyard, a place which has been producing the sweetest grapes and making the finest wines on Athas for millennia.

The vineyard is run these days by a man named Clay and his young wife Sherril. They happily care for the vineyard and watch over all of their workers, and each year they supply the drink for the New Year's Eve festival in Cubarto. There is always plenty of good, inexpensive wine to go around, and the Jenkins consider the year-end party to be the best advertising for their product they could ever find.

Never in the entire history of Huddleston has anyone ever had to be harmonized. They're simply all too well adjusted to ever even consider causing someone unhappiness. True, occasionally even a Huddlestonian gets down, but whenever that happens, another one is right there to help pick him right back up again. The villagers are determined that no one is going to spoil their perfect record.

The Huddlestonians (basically anyone who lives within 10 miles of the village) generally live solitary lives, each family working hard on its farm all week long. Come





the weekend, though, the villagers head into their tiny burg for a couple days of song and celebration. These communal moments are what bring these people together and give them a sense of unity with one another. They cherish their friendships above all else. Once you've got a Huddlestonian for a friend, you've got a friend for life.

The Huddlestonians are extremely friendly to outlanders and will extend such travelers every courtesy. Long ago, they simply called the lawkeepers every time someone made it through the Border of Guardians, but when the lawkeepers seemed to stop caring so much about it, the Huddlestonians did too. Today they call the outlanders into their homes and treat them like royalty, eager to learn everything they can about the world outside their little valley.

Huddleston is governed by a direct democracy. As there are less than 250 people in the entire community, they see no reason to elect any single person to carry out all of their wishes. The honor of dealing with any particular matter changes from matter to matter, generally falling to the person best suited to taking care of that particular task.

At the end of every weekend, the people meet (traditionally at the Jenkins Vineyard, although other places have been used) to discuss the issues of the week. Votes are brought up after everyone who wants to has had a chance to say his piece. A simple majority rules, and any resolutions are acted upon instantly.

No Huddlestonians ever willingly shirk a duty placed upon them by their fellows. Its rare that assignment of a duty even has to happen, though, as most people will simply volunteer their services to lend a hand in solving any problem that might arise. Consequently, Huddleston is an extremely competent community, and no one is ever left dangling in the delightfully cool sea breezes that sweep over these fields of plenty.

Kharzden

The dwarven colony of Kharzden is far and away the largest settlement in the valley, outside of mighty Saragar itself. It holds almost 2,000 dwarves scattered throughout the ancient mining shafts riddling the northern part of the Thunder Mountains. These dwarves live mostly underground like their ancient counterparts once did, although they have long since lost any special abilities to mine and forge metals.

Most of the veins of ore in the Thunder Mountains were mined out long ago. A few new ones have been discovered recently by hobbyist miners, and some new metals have been extracted and made into new items like mining tools and even axes. Most of the metal things that the dwarves have, though, are as ancient and worn as the bits that circulate throughout the rest of the valley.

The miners wear bandannas tied around their faces to keep them from inhaling too much of the subterranean dust. The people of Saragar have taken to jokingly calling them the only bearded dwarves on all of Athas. Traditionally these bandannas used to be brown always, but today they come in all sorts of different colors and patterns.

The dwarves' government is a matriarchal monarchy, and the current queen is an aged woman by the name of Elakta. In the dwarves' home under the mountains, Queen Elakta's word is law, and it is obeyed by all.

Elakta is as proud and stubborn as her people, and she refuses to have much to do with the lawkeepers of Saragar. She suffers their presence when they require it, but not willingly, and she has yet to break the long tradition the dwarves have had of refusing to call upon the lawkeepers for help. If she has her way (and she usually does), her people never will.

The dwarves live off of subterranean crops grown in massive chambers buried deep beneath the mountains, far from the burning rays of the sun. Their ancestors were as distrusting of the efficacy of the Mind Lords' ability to defend them from the sorcerer-kings as these dwarves are today. The ancient dwarves built an underground world for themselves that was almost entirely self-sufficient. In this way, they hoped to hide from the wizards and their power for as long as possible.

Since those days, the dwarves have become somewhat lax in their vigilance. The doors to Kharzden stand wide, their hinges long since rusted open. The colony has expanded since those old times, and the village now spills out onto the clearing on the edge of the mountainside.

The dwarves of Kharzden are stolidly against magic of any kind, or even the use

of psionics. They have a few wild talents in their group, but none of them has any training in the Way. The use of any kind of unusual ability within the halls of Kharzden is frowned upon and is grounds for immediate ejection for a time. If the offense is repeated, the offender is beaten unconscious before being cast out. The penalty the third time is execution.

Other than this, the dwarves are extremely friendly to outlanders. They see them as a potential source of revenue and information. The dwarves' metals are extremely valuable outside of the valley, and they are more than willing to trade small amounts for important information from distant lands. Queen Elakta strongly believes that the day will come when the Mind Lords' efforts will finally fail, and she will do everything she can to make sure that her people are prepared for that eventuality.

The dwarves also trade for all sorts of different things. They are especially fond of gourmet foods and intricate toys. They delight in these things above all else, although the queen makes sure that these "vices" do not overshadow the dwarves' more important work.

Rivertown

Rivertown is a tiny town that sits on the banks of the Big River, which flows out of the northwestern Thunder Mountains and into the sea. The town rests high in the foothills of this range, at a point at which the river runs wide and fast.

The Big River can actually be crossed by foot at this point, but it is 50 yards wide, and each round of time spent working across it requires a Dexterity check at -3. Those who fail their checks lose their footing, take 1d6 points of damage and are swept down the river at a movement rate of 30. They must then make a Dexterity check at -6 to regain their footing or grab onto a solid rock or branch as they pass by it. Each turn that the victims fail to save themselves, they take an additional 1d6 points of damage. If they are still being swept along after the tenth turn, they are swept over the edge of the Big Falls, a 100-foot waterfall that crashes down into a wide pool of water before continuing on toward the sea. Victims must save versus death to avoid being fatally crushed on the rocks below. Those who succeed manage to avoid the rocks, but they had better know how to swim, as they are in 20 feet of water.

Less adventurous souls can do what most of the villagers do: walk across the suspension bridge that wavers a mere six feet above the river's frothing surface. Still, some of the young men in the village like to challenge outlanders to a crossing of the river the old-fashioned way, and about once a year someone is swept down the falls.

The people of Rivertown support themselves by hunting and fishing. A large variety of woodland critters that are good eating make their homes in the mountains and these hills, and a lot of them come down to the river to bathe and drink. Also, a substantial population of fresh-water fish swim up and down the river, including a number of different types of trout.

When the salmon swim up the river to spawn (even managing to climb the falls), the Rivertown fishers haul in a load of these tasty fish. They then smoke them and store them so that they can eat them all year round. Smoked salmon is considered a fine delicacy around the entire valley, and it is Rivertown's number one export.

Rivertown is governed by a mayor elected from its populace of just over 600 people (including those who live in the outlying areas surrounding the small town). No one runs for the office. Votes are simply tallied every four years, and the winner becomes mayor. The only restriction is that once you've been mayor, you can never hold that office again.

This suits the people of Rivertown just fine, since no one really wants the job anyway. The mayor has to oversee matters in the town and act as arbitrator to settle any disputes. While this is all well and good, it gets in the way of more important things like being in the woods.

The current mayor is a young woman named Karpinnen. Tall, blond, and beautiful, with startlingly blue eyes, she is inexperienced with the vagaries of politics, having only held the office for a few weeks. Before this, her only claim to fame was that she had been horsing around on the bridge and fallen into the river. She was eventually swept over the falls but miraculously survived. People around these parts apparently figured

that anyone so darn lucky should take a turn at running things in Rivertown. Also, her parents actually campaigned privately for her, hoping that a little responsibility would help her mature quickly before she got killed in another one of her foolish stunts.

The Rivertownies are generally stand-offish with strangers. They don't trust anyone they don't know, fearing that strangers might be spies from the lawkeepers. Still, they enjoy playing pranks on outlanders just come through the mountains (like telling them that rubbing rash ivy on their skin will help keep away the mosquitoes found up in the forest). This is easy, as they know that the valley seems like another world to those from the desert lands. The pranks are generally harmless in the long run, though. The Rivertownies don't want to permanently hurt anyone; they just like a good laugh at outsiders' expense.

Shallat

Shallat is a small town on the northern side of Marnita, sheltered from even a view of Saragar by the intervening Lonely Butte. The people of this village are mostly fishermen, but a number of farms range from Shallat's borders to the edge of the Thunder Mountains, ensuring that the less than 300 people who live here have plenty of food without having to trade much with the other towns.

Shallat's main attraction is its healing facilities. The town is governed by a hereditary monarchy, each member of which is a physician of incredible skill. Most members of the ruling family are water clerics as well, people who have dedicated their lives to using the fertility of Marnita to aid in their healing ways.

The head of the ruling family is titled duke or duchess. The current Duke Jaan Shallat rules side-by-side with his lovely bride, the Duchess Shelistone. Both are impressively skilled physicians and 10th-level water clerics. They are admired and well-liked by their people. No one resents the pair their titles, as they are in fact mostly honorary. Additionally, the responsibility of being in charge of the village is something that no one really wants to volunteer for. Most people are happy to let someone else take care of the political stuff so that they can get on with their daily lives. Jaan and Shelistone, however, shoulder this burden gladly, happy to be able to help their fellows in any way that they can.

The Shallatians are a peace-loving people, and they are generally treated well by everyone living in and around Marnita, even by the brigands and pirates who live on the Lonely Butte. After all, potentially anyone might eventually find themselves in need of the village's services, and when they do, they want to make sure that the Shallatian healers will attend them with all due haste and without a single reservation.

Of course, the Shallatian healers would help anyone in need no matter how horrible a person he was. They have sworn a sacred oath to aid anyone in need, no matter what the circumstances may be. In all cases, they try traditional means of healing first, but if that fails, they will not hesitate to fall back on their priestly abilities.

The Shallatians charge reasonable rates for their services, and they are extremely understanding in cases of financial hardship. They will happily accept goods and services in barter for their assistance. Otherwise, they gladly extend generous terms of credit.

The Shallatians are so well-respected, though, that if it is discovered that someone owes them something, the people of the Last Sea will treat that person harshly until he makes good on the debt. Innkeepers will only put him in their worst rooms and sell him their cheapest fare, hoping to force him to save enough to be able to compensate the healers. Merchants around the sea will do the same.

If a person simply refuses to pay up a debt, someone (not a Shallatian, but a friend of theirs) will turn the delinquent over to the lawkeepers for harmonization. After all, this person's actions are causing no small amount of concern in the community, and it's up to the lawkeepers to keep the happiness.

Sylvandretta

Whereas the dwarves of Kharzden are friendly and open with strangers, the over 500 elves of Sylvandretta are cold and aloof. They believe that the purity of their bloodline

needs be preserved, and they hold this above all other concerns. Unlike most other elves on Athas, these creatures are fair skinned with light blond hair and pale blue eyes. Down the millennia, their line has grown even fairer than ever before, and they are now called “ghost elves” by the people of Saragar—even the elves of that fair city.

Sylvandretta is governed by a high council of seven elders elected from the ghost elves’ general population. These wise people rule over their people for 21-year terms. An election is held every three years, and a new elf is elected to the open position. No one is permitted to hold office for two consecutive terms, so they must take off at least three years between terms.

Sylvandretta is located in the Spirit Forest, a massive stand of ancient trees nestled between the two arms of the Thunder Mountains, in the southwest section of the valley of the Last Sea. Here, as far from Saragar as one can get and still be under the Mind Lords’ purview, the ghost elves live in harmony with their natural surroundings, sheltered as they are from the horrors the defilers and their ilk have visited upon the rest of the planet.

Sylvandretta is based upon a circle of twelve tremendous trees of life. These towering trees, each standing nearly two hundred feet tall, support a network of hand-worked tree houses in which live the twelve great families of the ghost elves. The network of rope bridges that crisscross between the trees, high above the ground, is nearly as complicated as the web of relationships that connect these twelve families.

Millennia of inbreeding among these creatures has caused their life spans to be cut to half of the traditional elven length. This has spawned a great debate among the twelve families and the members of the council. One side believes that the time has come to invite new blood into their breeding stock. The other staunchly holds that any such action would be tantamount to forever tainting their vaunted bloodlines in a manner that could never be repaired.

As such, while most ghost elves will steadfastly refuse to talk to or even allow themselves to be seen by a stranger (anyone from outside of Sylvandretta), a sizable minority are at least willing to converse with outsiders, even those from beyond the Border of Guardians. In either case, both factions group the lawkeepers in along with any other outsiders, except for a small force of ghost elf lawkeepers specially commissioned by the Mind Lords over five millennia ago as a concession to the elves’ extreme xenophobia.

These lawkeeper ghost elves are legendary even among their counterparts from Saragar. They are rarely seen outside of Sylvandretta, but when they are, they usually are out looking to capture a breaker of their laws. They don’t believe in harmonization—the best that such a hapless fugitive can hope for is a quick death.

Waishiki

Waishiki is a small fishing community situated at the rearmost point of the southern bay below the Saragan peninsula. The people there are extremely friendly and happy all the time. Strangely, this is because of the town’s tragic past.

Just over a millennia ago, the people of Waishiki were having a problem. Actually, they were causing it. The mayor of the town and the rest of the village elders had come out condemning the Mind Lords and their horrific practice of harmonization, a process (the elders claimed) that robbed people of their right to free will. By living under such a totalitarian regime, the people were being forced to give up that exact same right, and it was up to someone to finally stand up and speak the truth.

The Waishikans were supported morally by many homelander, but few of these people behind the scenes were actually nery enough to speak out loudly in unconditional support. In the end, they turned out to have been wise.

The protests were allowed to continue for as long as Barani was in one of her manic moods. She was the protector of the meek then, seriously considering any issue that her subjects cared to bring to her attention. To her fellow Mind Lords, she defended the right of the people to differ with them in their opinions. It was only by her efforts that Thesik’s hand was stayed from dealing punishment upon the village.

Then, as inevitably happened, Barani slipped into a state of depression. This spelled immediate disaster for the dissidents of Waishiki. Without even consulting

Thesik or Kosveret, Barani contacted the chief lawmaker and ordered him to take every last one of his lawkeepers into Waishiki and harmonize the entire town in one fell swoop. It would take too long to root out the real troublemakers, she said, and in the meantime, it was best to make the entire village obey the Mind Lords' wishes right away instead of waiting until a "better" time. The goddess's orders were carried out to the letter, and every man, woman, and child in the entire city was remade into the Mind Lords' image. In one fell swoop, the town was entirely loyal to the Mind Lords again.

Since then, things in Waishiki have pretty much remained the same. The faces have changed, but the attitude has not. They are each and every one model citizens. The lawkeepers are welcomed freely here, as the people have nothing to hide. Outlanders are not treated well by the Waishikans for the same reason. Although these new people don't have direct, immediate contact with the Mind Lords, they are devout worshippers of the Mind Lords, and if the lawkeeper who preaches to them had something against people from beyond the Border of Guardians, then so too do they.

One other thing that makes Waishiki stand out from the other towns is the monastery of water clerics that stands in the center of town, just as it has been for the past five thousand years. These water clerics (or at least their ancestors) were caught in the great cleansing of the town, their minds wiped clear of the very thoughts that they were passing on and the instigation rumors of rebellion that they had started.

The water clerics may live in Waishiki, but their sacred place is Marnita itself. These priests can often be seen riding sailboards around the coast and even across the sea, preaching their faith to each community in turn, their tiny crafts' puddingfish sails flapping in the wind. They are welcomed with open arms into each community that they travel to, but never as close friends. The people of the Last Sea know that these priests are really puppets of the Mind Lords, and they regard them as spies, so they are always careful to keep their wits about them whenever a water cleric is around.

These water clerics occasionally make pilgrimages into the forests or even the mountains searching for a clear spring of running water fresh from the highest peaks. For this reason, these priests may often be the first people that an outlander runs into on his way into the valley.



Water clerics do not inherently despise outlanders, and they will actually instruct them in the proper ways of handling both the water and themselves in the Mind Lords' vision of how a city should be. In this, they see themselves acting as a kind of harmonizer, although they work verbally and with reason instead of with brute-force telepathy.

As spell casters, though, the water priests are not permitted in Saragar without an escort of at least one lawkeeper. Most people don't bother to make the distinction between the different types of spell casters. To them, all cut from the same cloth—unless, of course, the Mind Lords say differently in a particular case.

The Lonely Butte

The Lonely Butte is a geographic wonder, a savage land that thrusts directly out of the water, surrounded on all sides by sheer bluffs falling over 200 feet to the sea below. The plateau atop the continuous cliff is covered with a lush jungle which all sorts of dangerous creatures call home. Fortunately for the rest of the Last Sea, the only way on or off of the butte, unless you can climb like a spider or fly, is through Blufftown.

Far behind Ordean's and Sitko's, (see below) there is another infernal contraption of a basket and pulleys designed to haul people occupants up a tall, narrow chimney to the top of the Lonely Butte. The elevator shares the binding space with a raging waterfall which occasionally wanders uncomfortably close to the swinging basket. This water rushes through a iron grating at the top and lands in a crystal pool far below, the source of all of Blufftown's water. A small gate in the grate opens automatically as the basket nears its journey's end, powered like the elevator itself by an unseen obsidian orb.

The plateau of the Lonely Butte is like a land that time forgot. Creatures and plants living here date back to even the Blue Age itself. Lizards of all shapes and sizes slither through the undergrowth, far below this tropical rain forest's canopy. Playful monkeys swing from tree to tree, and shy gorillas fade away from intruders, into the mist.

The main attraction of the Lonely Butte is that the lawkeepers generally refuse to go there unless specifically ordered to by the Mind Lords themselves. This is a land full of danger, a fact particularly true for those who support the Mind Lords. But there are many creatures on this island that care not for politics and will kill indiscriminately to fill their bellies.

Blufftown

This is a small settlement in the side of a bluff on the east edge of the Lonely Butte. It's a rough and tumble town where even the lawkeepers fear to tread, and for this reason, it's a haven for members of the valley's Underground (a clandestine group of people who actively—though secretly—oppose the Mind Lords' perpetual rule) and other fugitives from the Mind Lords' justice.

Blufftown is little more than a couple of inns sitting in a good-sized cave the winds and waters have carved out of the east side of the Lonely Butte. These inns sit inside this cave some fifty feet above the waves that crash against the base of butte, and the only way in or out of the area is by being hauled up in a precarious contraption consisting of a larger wicker basket and a series of ropes and pulleys.

The engine for this device is an obsidian orb stolen from the Mind Lords long ago by Ordean, the greatest pirate the Last Sea has ever seen. Over the years, it has gotten a bit finicky about who it hauls up into Blufftown, and there is only a 75% chance that it is working any given hour of the day.

The operators of the two competing inns are Ordean (a weasely man who claims to be descended from the dread pirate of legend) and Sitko, a relative newcomer to the business of catering to criminals. A prominent member of the Underground, Sitko won the inn from its previous owner in a poker match a little less than a year ago.

Ordean's is, simply put, a dive. The walls of this ancient place are rotting from

long exposure to the sea air without even a passing nod at general maintenance. Wind whistles through the slats, and even through the floorboards (which are raised about three feet above the uneven rock). Rain, when it can manage to be blown under the cave's sheltering roof, leaks through dozens of holes in the roof. The floors are nearly as dirty as the sheets on the beds, and the ale is watery and pale.

Still, if your money's good, Ordean is only too happy to serve you. The prices are outrageous—nearly double what they are in Saragar—but Ordean figures he's got a captive customer base, so he'll get out of them whatever he can. Ordean is a bit of a bigot when it comes to races other than his own (he claims to be human), but no matter who the customer is, as long as he's got money, he's fine in Ordean's eyes. Ordean treats everyone equally. The dusty-haired little man with the weedy mustache will rip you off no matter who you are—if you give him the chance.

Things have changed recently for Ordean, though. He had an arrangement with the previous owner of Sitko's. The two proprietors fixed prices in Blufftown ensuring a hefty profit for them both. Sitko, on the other hand, has balked at making the same kind of agreement. He's a revolutionary, not a capitalist. He refuses to lower himself to profiteering at the expense of his fellow Undergrounders.

Competition between the two inns has heated up a great deal since Sitko acquired his inn. Ordean's ire at the newcomer has been ameliorated a bit by the fact that most of his old patrons have stuck with him just because he's lowered his prices on ale to match Sitko's. Besides which, the rough and tumble sorts who like to hang out at Ordean's don't much care for the more intellectual Underground crowd that Sitko's draws in.

The Lonely Giants

By far the most notable occupants of the Lonely Butte are the small family of humanoid "crag" giants (see the MC sheet in the appendix to this book) who live in on the southwestern edge of the butte in an abandoned city dating back to the Blue



Age. Portions of the city seem to have almost grown directly from the rocks on which the buildings sit, but much of it has crumbled, and many walls and ceilings have been torn out by the giants to make room for themselves in buildings meant for a people just over a tenth of their size.

The city, the name of which has long since been lost, hosts about 30 giants (25 adults and 5 children). The inbreeding problems which have plagued the ghost elves are even more prominent here, and the crag giants are at their wits' end trying to determine what it is they should do to keep their clan alive.

Their fate has made the crag giants exceedingly crabby, and they tend to kill first and inspect the corpse later. Outlanders who manage to survive the initial onslaught long enough for the giants to calm down will find them friendly enough. They are interested to glean information about what is happening outside their butte.

The crag giants wait impatiently for the day that the Mind Lords become weak enough for them to finally wreak their revenge. To this end, they have made friends with certain members of the Underground, including Sitko. Sometimes they even offer shelter to such people. Anything that could cause the Mind Lords harm seems like a good idea to these sad creatures as it becomes more and more apparent that they are headed for extinction.

Criker's Pirates

The Last Sea has known several semi-successful bands of pirates over the years. They sail the waves on the hunt for booty to loot from cargo-laden craft scudding along the shipping lanes. Eventually, most make a fatal mistake and are brought down by the lawkeepers and hauled in for harmonization, but sooner or later another band of freebooters always crops up.

The latest and greatest group of thieves on the open sea is probably the most successful one ever. This is likely due to the fact that these pirates rob for principle instead of profit, most of the crew being members of the Underground. They sail under the command of a robust mul named Criker in a blazingly fast corsair called the *Marion*.

As the son of a mostly forgotten sailor on another ship of bandits, Criker has been a pirate his entire life. But only in the last few years has he found a cause he feels really worth fighting for: bringing the Mind Lords down once and for all. The lawkeepers finally caught Criker's father five years back and took him in for harmonization. The man hung himself rather than have his mind violated. Criker fights the good fight for his father and all people like him—those too proud to ever allow their will to be bent to another's mind.

A few other pirate bands sail the Last Sea, but they are mostly part-timers, opportunistic robbers in it only for the profit. Due to centuries of careful socialization in the valley, however, even pirate raids on the Last Sea are comparatively orderly things. People are not killed for the sheer sport of it, and property is not destroyed without a reason.

Criker's people have had a long and successful run for one reason: they're part of the Underground. As such, they have the support of many people. Perhaps most importantly, they have earned the friendship of the crag giants on the Lonely Butte, and it is in the shadows of the giant village that Criker's pirates make their home, safe from intrusion by the lawkeepers, if not from the jungle's other denizens.

Undertown

Undertown is the name that the people of Saragar have for the lizard man settlement deep beneath the surface of the Last Sea, though the amphibious people have a name for it that translates as Nesthaven. Few surface dwellers have ever been to this watery village, but an occasional water cleric has been there and back, and the tales told of the briny society are amazing.

The town itself contains three separate tribes of lizard men, each with its own loyalties and agendas. Any lizard man can instantly tell the tribe of another lizard man, but the differences are far too subtle for an air-breathing humanoid to discern with-

out spending many long hours studying the creatures.

The three tribes occasionally have their differences, but they all are entirely loyal (at least on the surface) to their king, a hale and hearty reptilian named Nelyrox. The lizard king's position is inherited by the eldest living male in the family's line, and this family stands outside of the tribal structure, thus implying that there will be no favoritism shown to any one tribe.

In fact, the king is a person like any other, able to be influenced by those he calls friends. His wife Malani is of the tribe of Kittos, and so she is able to curry favors for her people. Nelyrox's high advisor is a psionist named Mobji. As the co-leader of his own tribe (along with a creature called Jhoban), the mindbender obviously favors his own people, and his advice to his king unabashedly displays much of that.

The people of Xhenrid, the last tribal leader, are actually more loyal to her than to the king. If she were to call for a revolt against Nelyrox, it is certain that her tribe would rally to her side against all odds. Xhenrid has actually considered committing such an atrocious act, knowing full well that it would split her people and cause untold deaths. Still, the only thing keeping her ambition for the throne in check is that fact that her people are outnumbered almost two to one.

Despite her warriors' skill, it is certain that Xhenrid would be on the losing side of a civil war amongst the lizard men. Until such time as she can convince one or both of the other tribes to join her—or she manages to find help from some other quarter—she holds herself in check. She is only willing to begin a blood bath if she is sure the spilling of the red fluid into the frothing sea will be to her ultimate benefit.

To this end, Xhenrid has struck up an alliance with the Underground. The leadership of the Underground is wary about working with such an obviously bloodthirsty ally, but it is hard enough to choose your enemies in war, much less your friends. King Nelyrox is staunchly on the side of the Mind Lords, just as every lizard king has been since the trio saved the amphibians from Keltis. And so the Underground is in bed with Xhenrid, like it or not.

Undertown is an ancient and beautiful city, long untouched by the ravages of war. The lizard men have become a peaceful people over the millennia, even going so far as to set up their own Psionics Academy aimed at exploring the boundaries of their reptilian minds. The lizard men live off of k reel (cattlelike creatures that dwell in the depths with them) and kelp farmed from great beds of it which dot the sea. They supplement their diet with an occasional fish or even a wild mammal that wanders too close to the shores of the Last Sea.

The greatest threat to the lizard men's way of life is the squark, a giant half-squid, half-shark creature which roams Marnita's murky depths. Every so many years, the creature attacks Undertown unprovoked, wreaking massive destruction on the hapless city, despite the many fortifications the lizard men have built up over the centuries.

Many expeditions have been formed to hunt the squark over the years. Few of them have had any luck with finding the behemoth, and those which have certainly didn't survive the experience. Still, the lizard men hold out hope that they will someday be able to rid themselves of this seemingly immortal menace.

The Seaways

Long ago, the psionic masters who ruled the Green Age built a series of underground corridors of stone that stretched for miles into the water-filled ocean that is now the Sea of Silt. Standing upon ivory platforms, these people were able to travel nearly instantaneously from one end of the passageway to the other.

After the Mind Lords took control of Saragar, they began to build just such a series of tunnels for their own use. It was a massive project, but one that they felt was necessary for the continued defense of the valley of Marnita. After all, if it took their lawkeepers hours or even days to get from one end of the valley to another, they would find it impossible to respond to any threat that managed to breach the Border of Guardians.

The corridors, which became known as the seaways, linked up all of the places shown on the map on this page, providing the lawkeepers with easy access to each of the passes through the Thunder Mountains, as well as with each large settlement

in the valley. The very existence of the corridors was kept secret, as the Mind Lords were afraid that, if a powerful psionicist were to discover the transit system, it could be used against them.

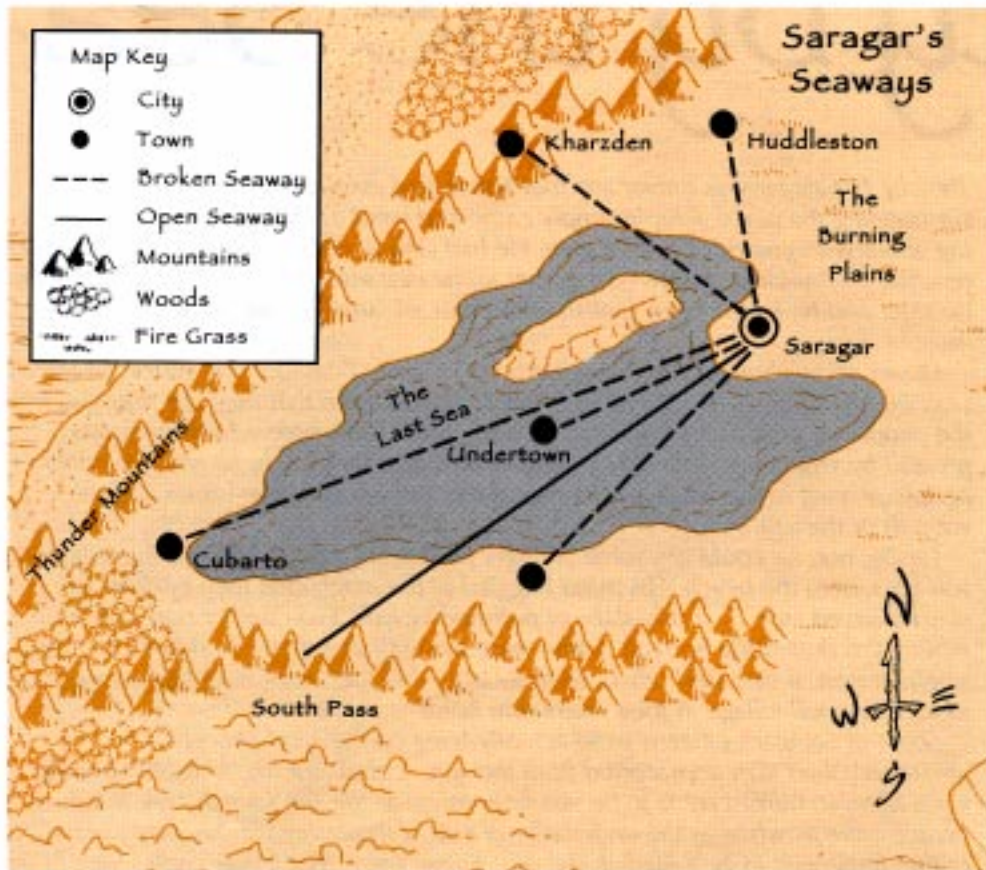
A special underwater access point even allowed the travelers to reach Undertown. In fact, it was inside the corridor from Saragar to Undertown that the lizard men's time-frozen bodies were hidden when Keltis came through the area on his final hunt to exterminate the creatures.

The tunnels were operated by obsidian orbs that moved the ivory platforms along at unheard-of speeds. Today, most of these orbs have malfunctioned, and only a few of the routes are entirely operational. These marked with a solid line on the map (as opposed to the disabled routes, which are marked with a dotted line).

The only line used today with any regularity is the one that runs from Saragar to the South Pass. This way, the large purchases made from the outside twice every year can be brought from the gate to the city without fear of attacks by bandits. Other than that, the passages are considered unsafe.

Travelers can try to walk down the passages if they like, but they are unlit and can sometimes house strange creatures unseen elsewhere in Athas. It's rumored that the seaways were long kept clean by gelatinous cubes, and if these creatures haven't all starved to death for lack of something to eat, they could still be down there. Perhaps they have managed to survive on the rats that they were summoned to get rid of.

Unbeknownst to the Mind Lords, Xhenrid of the lizard folk has reestablished the line between Undertown and Saragar. She hopes to use it to somehow give aid to her new friends in the Underground.



The Wanderer's Journal

Legendary Saragar, the fabled city by the last Sea, seems an unimaginable paradise to outlanders when they first lay their aching eyes upon it. Few denizens of the city have to work; physical slavery is unheard of and crime is nearly as rare.

Beneath this gilded facade, however, lies a horror only occasionally whispered of between even those so close as husband and wife. Everyone in Saragar is happy because, by law, they have to be! This rule applies to all within the city's bounds, and many an unwary traveler has inadvertently broken the law only to pay the ultimate price



CHAPTER SIX:

Saragar: City by the Sea

The city of Saragar was unlike any that Kabak had ever seen. There were no walls surrounding the place. People simply came and went as they pleased, with no fussing about with guards or even a gate. He had simply walked along the shore until he reached the buildings clustered together at the east end of the sea. There had been no sign, and he hadn't been foolish enough to ask anyone, but he was sure that this must be Saragar.

Down at the shore, strange-looking boats actually floated in the water, similar to craft he had seen on the Sea of Silt. Kabak was amazed that they did not sink, but the people loading crates and such on and off the ships seemed entirely unimpressed by what they were doing. Further on down the beach, he saw a number of people playing in the water, swimming about and enjoying the waves and the warmth of the sun.

Farther out, he could see some younger people standing on boards and riding the surf back onto the beach. His mind boggled at the magic that they must be using to stay balanced atop their tiny slabs of polished woods. Even farther out, sails from other ships dotted the horizon. Some were so small that they could have held only a single person, if that, and others were so large that they must have had enough room to carry a small village in their mammoth holds.

Some of Saragar's citizens were actually lying on the sand almost entirely unclothed, their skin unprotected from the sun. A gladiator like himself had long since been so burnished as to be nearly immune to the sun's harsh rays, but these people were as white as the underbelly of one of those tiny fish he used to haul out of that filthy well in Tyr's gladiatorial pits. Kabak knew that it was cooler here in the valley than in Tyr, but such a pastime for these people seemed like madness. Still, if he was to fit in here, he knew he should follow their example.

Kabak stripped to the waist and bundled his salt-encrusted shirt together with the

rest of his things. He lay back, using his tent as a pillow, and within a few short minutes, despite the fact he should have known better, he was asleep.

He awoke several hours later with a sunburn, despite his already deep tan. He had rolled on his back about halfway through, so the burn pretty much covered him entirely. Kabak turned over to find the sun near setting in the distance, and he noticed that he was surrounded by people who had come down to watch this nightly event. Pale clouds high in the sky had already turned purplish pink in the fading rays. It promised to be beautiful, so Kabak pulled his shirt back on to guard against the cooling air and settled back to watch.

"You are not from around here." The statement came as a whisper in his ear, but when he turned around, no one was there. For a moment, he thought he had imagined it, but then it came again. "Do not worry. I am a friend."

Kabak slapped at his ear as if an insect had flown into it, but the voice didn't stop. "Turn around slowly to your right. I am sitting alone behind you, wearing a blue tunic."

The mul did as he was instructed. A man was there all right. He waved quickly at Kabak and then turned away. Kabak did the same.

"Who are you?" Kabak muttered.

"As I said, a friend." Obviously the man could easily hear him, despite his lowered voice. "I am a member of the Underground, the resistance movement here in Saragar that is preparing for the day that the Mind Lords are to be overthrown."

Kabak snorted. "What's to resist against? Seems like this is paradise."

"You have a lot to learn, my foreign friend."

Kabak chuckled to himself. The sun was expanding into a bright orange ball as it dipped below the horizon. "So I've been told."

"You are an outsider," the voice continued. "My organization can help you."

Kabak considered this for a moment. "Why should I believe you?" he asked. He was finally learning to be cautious. He only hoped he hadn't started too late.

There was a long pause. "If you don't do as I say, you will be picked up by the lawmakers—"

"Who?"

"The Mind Lords' foot soldiers. The police force of Saragar. They will pick you up, and if you're lucky, they'll throw you in jail and 'rehabilitate' you with a little psychic surgery."

"I haven't been too lucky so far."

"In that case, you'll be killed on the spot."

Kabak looked back at the man to see if he was somehow joking with him. The fellow simply ignored him until he turned back to watch the sun dip lower into the sea.

"I'm going to leave now. Once I'm off the beach, come follow after me. Can you do that?"

"I got this far."

"Good."

"By the way," muttered Kabak lowly as he picked up a knife out of his bag and stuffed it into his belt, "I'm pretty good with this blade. If this is some kind of trap you're leading me into, know one thing: no matter what happens to me, you'll die first."

Kabak watched the man's steps quicken as he strode away. He could almost hear a nervous swallowing. "Understood," was the man's only response.

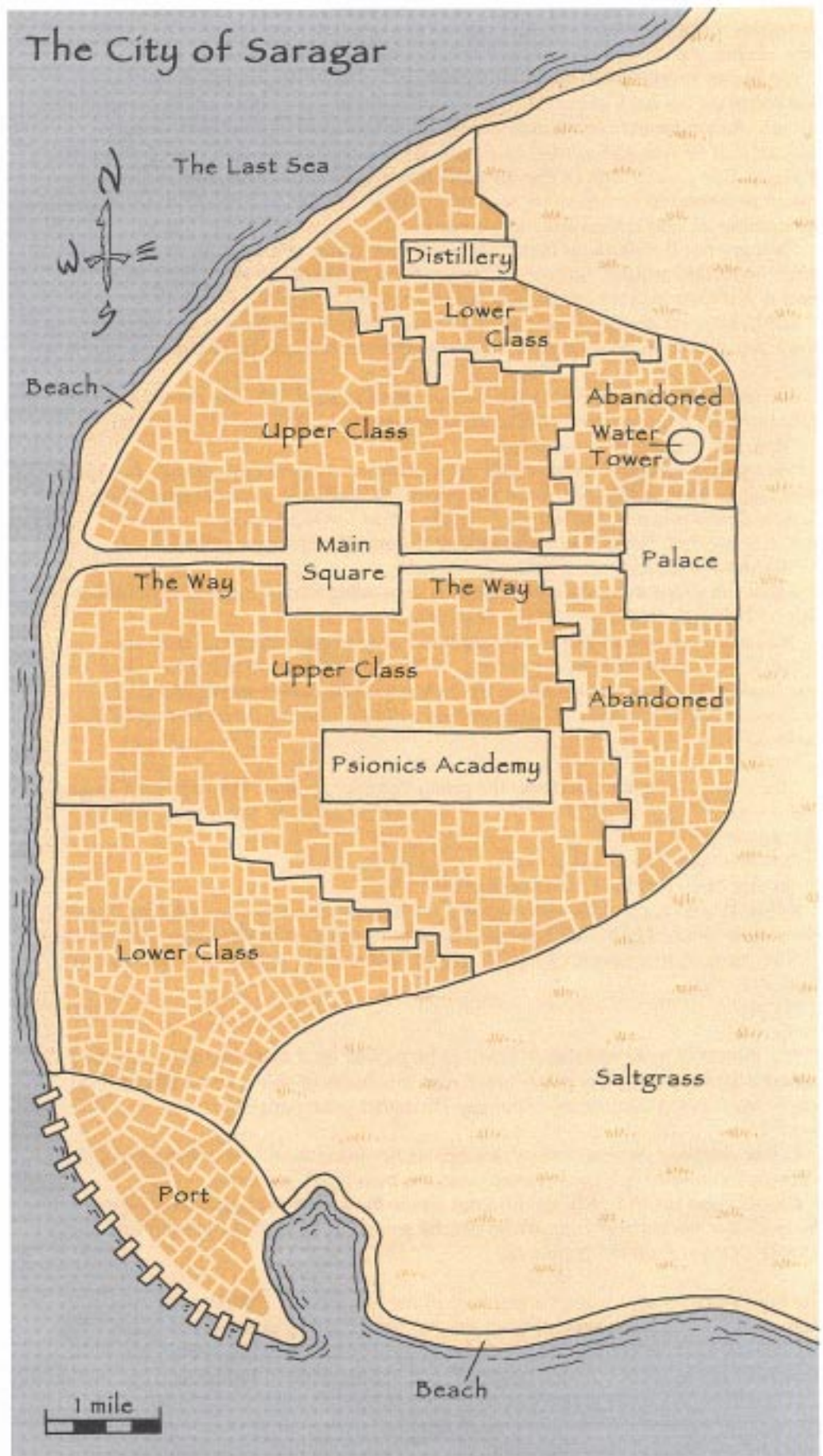
Kabak stood up and gathered his gear. Once the fellow had stepped off the beach, the gladiator started after him. As he did, he smiled to himself. Maybe he was finally starting to learn something after all.

The fair city of Saragar is the centerpiece in the Mind Lords' collective crown. To them, it is a shining example of what they were trying to preserve in the Green Age, living proof of their triumph over the disasters that cruel time has visited upon the remainder of the planet. It's everything they ever hoped for—and less.

When the Mind Lords started out, they wanted to build a place where everyone would enjoy themselves throughout all of eternity, a place where people could feel safe from one another and even from themselves. They just wanted everyone to be happy.

In a classic case of putting the cart before the horse, the Mind Lords decided that

The City of Saragar



the easiest way to go about doing this was to simply change their people's attitudes about things. While this worked well for a while, it meant that the problems that made the people unhappy often weren't being solved; they were simply being ignored.

Today, Saragar is a much different place than it was when the Mind Lords first wrested control of the region from Lawgiver Mareet so many millennia ago. The people have been socialized to have total and complete respect for the law, no matter how ludicrous or petty any individual ordinance may seem. They have basically given over control of their lives entirely to the Mind Lords, trusting them in their wisdom to know what is best for their people.

This makes a lot of sense, of course, when one considers that the people worship the Mind Lords as their gods. After all, creatures so powerful must be obeyed. Working against their wishes is pointless, considering their ineffable might, and their assumed divine wisdom. At least, that is what they citizens of Saragar are supposed to think.

Most Saragans do feel this way, of course, but a sizable and growing minority of them are coming to feel discontent with their "gods." The city itself is decaying in many different places; the guardians at the border are malfunctioning, letting strangers into the valley and malcontents out; and the lawkeepers seem drunk with their power, abusing it freely. Chaos is growing, slowly, steadily, and inevitably, despite the lawkeepers' commands. The time may finally have come for Saragar to make a change.

The Government

The theory behind the government of Saragar operates much in the same way today as did most of the enlightened cities of the Green Age. The city was ruled over by a lawmaker (or a council of lawmakers, as is the case with the Mind Lords). The laws the lawmaker handed down were enforced by a police force known as the lawkeepers. All of the bureaucracy generated by a large government was handled by the lawtenders, an army of paper pushers who made sure that things kept moving along smoothly.

The Lawmakers

Today in Saragar, things work a bit differently than they were originally intended to. In many Green-Age cities, the lawmaker was elected by the general populace, giving the masses at least some kind of reigns over their government. In Saragar, however, there have been no elections for endless millennia, and the common people have no say at all in their government, unless they join the lawkeepers or lawtenders. They don't even have a chance of outliving their governors—the Mind Lords are immortal, after all.

Worse yet, whether the populace consciously realizes the fact or not, the Mind Lords are insane, and they're usually distant, barely ever coming into contact with anyone besides themselves and Lawkeeper Efkeno. When they do, the results are often deadly. Like mad gods, the Mind Lords' perception seems to be that the value of humanoid life is less than nothing to creatures such as themselves.

The Lawkeepers

The lawkeepers are a farce. They enforce the laws arbitrarily, and ultimately only as it suits their own desires.

With the Mind Lords too busy trying to keep their consciousness from burning out entirely, the lawkeepers are pretty much on their own. In effect, then, they have absolute power over the common folk, and this has corrupted them terribly. The only people above them are their superior lawkeepers, and they only intervene in cases of gross abuse or when the inferior's plans interfere with their own.

- Rank One: The Proctors.

There are three ranks of lawkeepers in Saragar. The first is that of proctor. The streets of Saragar are filled with proctors, mostly second-rate bullies who would run crying for their mothers were someone to step up and bloody their noses. No one dares take such an action, though, as the penalty for doing so is harmoniza-

tion so severe as to ensure that they will never be capable of having such an impulse again. Consequently, most people are forced to stew in their anger and outrage, hiding it behind a thin facade of saccharine niceness.

- Rank Two: The Lawkeepers.

The second rank of lawkeepers are known simply as...lawkeepers. They are in charge of overseeing the proctors, but since they leave their offices only in the direst of emergencies (something which rarely if ever happens in Saragar), they have little real knowledge of what happens on the streets on a daily basis. Even if they did, it is unlikely they would act against the proctors. After all, they were once proctors themselves.

- Rank Three: The Chief Lawkeeper.

The top lawkeeper is called the chief lawkeeper, and the current one is Lawkeeper Efkenu. Efkenu has won his position by the simple fact that he actually has faith in the Mind Lords and their laws. He had better, since he's the only person in the entire city who communicates with any of them directly and on an sort of regular basis. One or another of the Mind Lords probes his mind regularly for treasonous thoughts, and they would know instantly if he were involved in some sort of plot to bring them or anyone else in the city to harm.

Lawkeeper Efkenu does a decent job of overseeing his forces, but the problem is that his interpretations of the laws leaves them open to a tremendous amount of abuse. In his eyes, all offenses are equal, so littering is as significant an indication of a mental deficiency that requires harmonization as is murder. And so it is the proctors who really run the city.

On the streets, then, the proctors are not only the people to catch a criminal, they also pass immediate judgment and sentence. The harshness of the sentence can be alleviated a bit if the accused offers to make an on-the-spot donation to the Mind



Lords' church. A willing proctor just might see this as a sign of repentance and let the offender off with little more than a warning.

For this reason, only the wealthy are especially willing to risk breaking the law, as only they can afford to do so. The poor are sometimes forced to do so, but with them the proctors have a one-bite rule: after the first offense they are harmonized. Of course, even the poor sometimes have something to trade for their mental freedom; information and other favors often buy a person's way out of a tough situation.

In Saragar, the proctors are on the top of the heap. Nearly everyone would like to be one-everyone, that is, who doesn't really want to help people

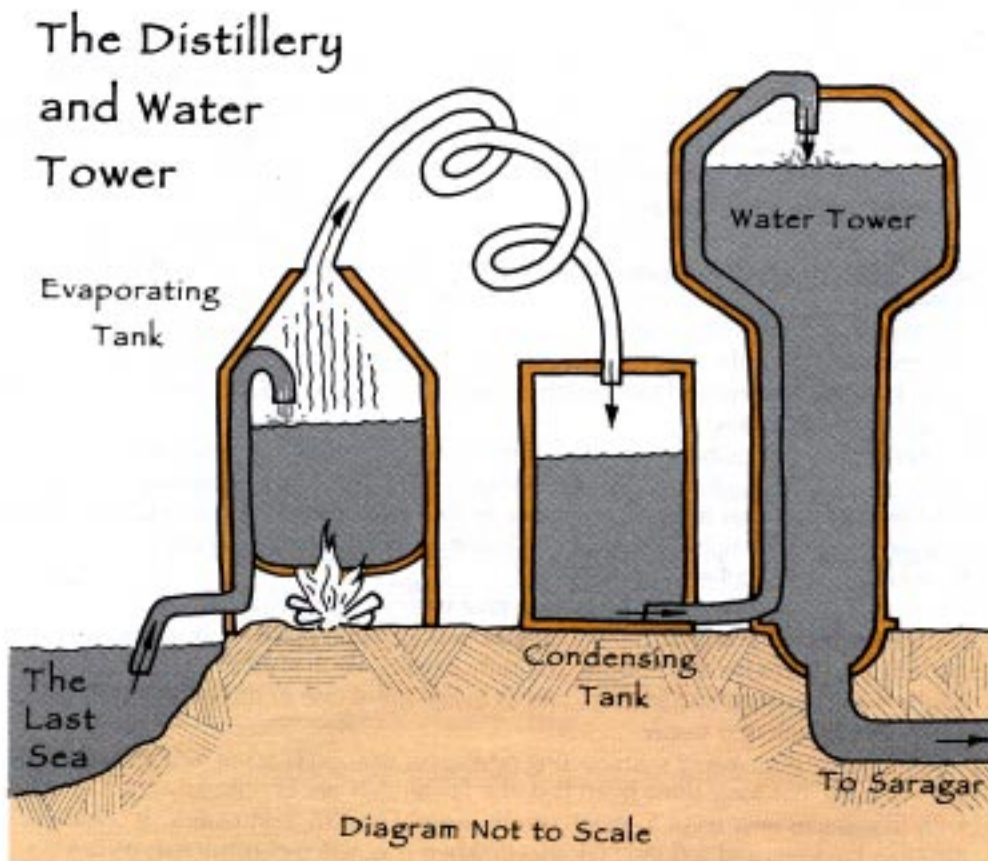
The other people can become lawtenders instead.


The Lawtenders

The competition for becoming a lawtender isn't nearly as stiff as it is for the position of lawkeeper. Lawtenders have a lot of the responsibility in Saragar and comparatively little of the power. Still, any lawkeeper who has put in a requisition for any kind of equipment or aid knows how important it is to keep the lawtenders happy. Otherwise, the lawkeeper may end up cooling his heels for several days or even weeks, waiting for an annoyed bureaucrat to forgive him for some offense.

Top-level lawtenders like Chief Lawtender Urupai (a lawful-good, 4th-level, human psionicist), do wield some real power in the city. They are secure in the knowledge that they are already harmonized naturally, so if a harmonizer gets hold of them, they will find little if anything to alter in their minds.

Lawtender Urupai is truly a woman of sweetness and light. In her mind, there is





no problem that can't be solved by a little old-fashioned determination and positive thinking. She acknowledges that there are some problems of corruption among the lawkeepers, but she has been assured by Lawkeeper Efkeno himself that measures are being taken to correct the situation. Urupai is not certain that she has as much faith in Efkeno's lawkeepers as he apparently does, but she is willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, as she is sure that is what the Mind Lords would have her do.

Like most lawtenders, Urupai is dedicated to her job, and she attends religious services honoring the Mind Lords once per day, usually first thing in the morning before she goes to work. Occasionally she has reason to skip services for one vitally important reason or another, but on these occasions, she is comforted by the fact that she knows that the Mind Lords want her to do what makes her happy: making other people happy.

Despite the fact that the lawtenders of Saragar are undoubtedly the most relentlessly optimistic people on the face of the planet, they are not excellent bureaucrats. They are unwilling to do the kind of wheeling and dealing that allows other organizations to survive (including that of the lawkeepers). They insist in doing everything by the book. The Mind Lords have told them that doing this will make people happy in the long run, and that's their job to fulfill.

The Distillery and the Water Tower

The one technological marvel which really permits Saragar to survive is its massive desalinization plant, set up by the Mind Lords during the time of the Cleansing Wars. Up until that time, Saragar had gotten all of its fresh water from a massive river that ran down through what is today the Burning Plains. The source of this river has long since dried up, and when this was just beginning to happen, the Mind Lords began designing plans for an arrangement to ensure that the citizens of Saragar would never want for fresh water again, no matter what happened outside the Border of Guardians.

To this end, the Mind Lords built an innovative, psionically powered factory designed to turn some of the plentiful supply of salt water near to Saragar into life-giving fresh water. The facility is basically a giant distillery. Water is pumped from the sea into a holding tank and then psionically heated to the boiling point. The steam is then captured and allowed to flow down sterilized copper coils until it falls into another holding tank on the other end.

Perhaps even more amazing is what happens next. The water is pumped out of the holding area in the distillery and up into a third massive holding tank atop a tremendous tower. This tank is hooked up to a citywide system of plumbing that pipes water into every building within Saragar proper. The tower is high enough to ensure decent water pressure throughout the entire city. This, along with the amazing piping, makes Saragar the only city on Athas with running water and indoor plumbing. Wealthy homeowners and finer establishments even have indoor water closets complete with flush toilets.

Having such an elaborate public utility has had a couple of significant effects on the culture of the citizens of Saragar. For one thing, they have an almost unbelievable level of personal hygiene. Everyone in the city bathes at least once a day. Also, problems with contagious diseases are lessened greatly, as the people can now wash their clothes and kitchenware regularly.

The fact is that the people of Saragar take their watery wealth for granted. After all, it has been in place for millennia, and to their mind there is no reason why it shouldn't be there for a few more. The only problem is that the entire system is run by the ever-present obsidian orbs, and as everywhere else in the valley, these orbs are slowly falling into decay.

Although the means of constructing new orbs, or even placing new psyches into the old ones, has long since been lost, the lawtenders are continually coming up with innovative new ways to patch up the current system. Fortunately, it contains multiple backups and redundancies from when it was first constructed, giving the lawtenders a lot of time to experiment with a solution to the incipient trouble. Also, the concepts on which it is based are fairly simple.

All that is really needed to keep things running, at least at a minimum of efficiency, are a few telekinetic orbs to pump the water around and an orb or two with the ability to generate enough heat to boil the water. That and the principal that water runs downhill pretty much sum up how the entire system works.

Still, pipes rust, burst, and sometimes just clog. An entire subdivision of extremely busy lawtenders called plumbers has been developed to care for the aging system and to shore it up wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the plumbers have developed all sorts of new ways to reroute the water around the problem areas as efficiently as possible.

Originally, many homes even had hot water, warmed up psionically by an obsidian orb. These days, the number of places with that kind of amenity is drastically falling off, as are places with psionically powered devices to clean house, move horseless carriages, and cook food smokelessly. The demand for the obsidian orbs far exceeds the supply, but since there is nothing that can really be done about it, the lawtenders simply do the best that they can with what they have. Meanwhile, the lawkeepers are ready and willing to order a harmonization of anyone who gripes too loudly, so there are few overt complaints.

The Palace

The political, religious, and architectural centerpiece of Saragar is the massive palace that overlooks the entire metropolis. There is literally not a street in the city from which an observer cannot see at least the top of the palace and the statues of the three Mind Lords slowly rotating above it all. The three sculptures stand atop a narrow circular base, each facing outward toward the city. The base is telekinetically rotated so that each member of the trio can see every part of the city once per hour.

The people of Saragar actually tell time by the statue's rotations. At the beginning of every hour, the statue of Thesik faces directly west. Metaphorically, this works well, since Thesik is the Saragan god of death, and it is he who beats out the time that eventually passes everyone by (except the Mind Lords themselves). He faces west, as this is where the "promised land" is in Saragan mythology, the land of the dead to which Thesik guides his people, after their time among the living has come to an end.

When facing west, Thesik is also looking out over the entire city and almost all of the valley of the Last Sea, the whole of the Mind Lords' domain. Not so coincidentally, at the same time that Thesik looks to the west, the Burning Plains lie directly behind him to the east. This land represents the eternity of flaming torment that awaits the spirits of the unharmonized when they die, those whose mental patterns do not concur with those of the Mind Lords and their laws.

The palace itself sits on a low hill at the eastern edge of the town, the highest point in the entire area. The Burning Plains lie many miles behind it, but the palace still marks the eastern border of Saragar. While many farms lie between it and the Border of Guardians, no part of the city may extend any further east than the palace.

Saragar holds more than 30,000 people (there are an additional 10,000 living elsewhere in or around Marnita), but since the place was built to accommodate up to 50,000, there is no lack of room here. For this reason, many of the streets around the palace are deserted. Although they would never admit to it, most people in Saragar would rather live closer to the beach and as far away from the Mind Lords as possible.

The palace is built more for awe-inspiring beauty than defense. The Mind Lords are confident in their ability to defend themselves (particularly considering their current state as obsidian orbs buried in a secret subterranean chamber). Besides which, any creature or army that could pierce the Border of Guardians would certainly have no problem with a restraining wall. At least, that was the logic when the palace was built. These days, the border is holed like a termite-infested surfboard, giving spotty protection to the valley.

Palace security is also surprisingly lax. The front gate stands open at all times, although it is watched by an assignment of lawkeepers day and night. Still, a canny thief or a fast-talker could likely walk right into the Mind Lords' bedchambers or even the council room in which the trio meets with Lawkeeper Efkeno on a more or less daily basis.



But the Mind Lords and the lawkeepers alike would find it nearly inconceivable that someone would even consider trying to do them harm. Occasionally a proctor is attacked on the street, usually by a malcontent desperately trying to escape harmonization, but it has been literally centuries since anyone was murdered in Saragar.

The palace does have a vast treasure vault which is guarded day and night and is only accessible by teleportation or tunneling through a ten-foot thick wall. The city's phenomenal wealth in jewels and precious metals is kept here, and it is only rarely used for any purpose other than to strike awe in visitors.

The only other place of real note in the entire complex is the armory, a vast building stacked with rack after rack of expertly fashioned metal weapons, each of which would be worth a merchant's ransom outside of the valley. Here they are kept out of the way on the off chance that they might someday be needed. In all of Saragar, only the lawkeepers ever carry anything more deadly than a knife. The proctors and their superiors tote around metal rapiers on their hips, but they rarely if ever are called upon to use them.

Still, since the art of working metals into blades has largely been lost in Saragar, the weapons in the armory are kept well-protected. They may very well have to last the city an eternity.

The Port

The way that most people get in and out of Saragar is by boat. Otherwise, it's often a long hike around to get to the peninsula on which the city rests. All of these people enter the city through the port located on the southeastern end of the Saragan peninsula. For this reason, the port is the part of Saragar that the lawkeepers watch most closely.

Most people pass through Saragar's port without a problem, but the lawkeepers collect their taxes on any cargo moving through the area. They also reserve the right to inspect any ship at will for any reason whatsoever. Ships hailing from outside of Saragar receive the most such attention, for the lawkeepers know that the people on these ships are less in harmony with the law of Saragar than those who were born and raised in their fair city.


As ports go (most travelers will only have those from the Silt Sea to compare it with), the one at Saragar is amazingly clean and friendly. Large ships are telekinetically towed into position in the harbor, and if there aren't too many of them there at a time, they are anchored into place by telekinesis as well. Some of the better ships actually have their own telekinetic anchors, but with working obsidian orbs becoming scarcer all the time, most boats use metal anchors instead (each of which would certainly be worth a fortune outside of the valley).

Like any other port, this one has the requisite fishmongers, taverns, and inns, but the character of the sailors is never belligerent or mean. The taverns are filled with male and female sailors drinking their fill, but a fight never breaks out, for fear that the lawkeepers would be called in to harmonize the entire bunch. If these people need to let loose some steam, they can do it in any one of the other ports along the shore of the Last Sea.

The Beach

Most people in Saragar spend at least a few days a week down on the gorgeous, white-sand beach that runs from the port all the way around the peninsula. The sun is almost always shining, and the people like to doff the loose-fitting gowns that they usually wear, and kick off their sandals to lie in the sun. Most are modest enough to wear a bathing suit of some sort, but nudity does not bear many taboos in Saragan society. The north side of the peninsula is "clothing-optional."

On the beach, children play in the sand, and teenagers and adults sail tiny boats or surf or sailboard around the peninsula's point. The waves crash endlessly against the sand, carrying all sorts of things up from Marnita's depths, and the older people like to spend a lot of time combing the beach for rare shells and the occasionally even more unusual object.



Few people in the city have to work much. Even with the number of obsidian orbs failing, most of the city's psionic infrastructure still exists. The dirty jobs of life, like cleaning and such, are all still automated. There are more homes in the city than people, so there is no need for building new ones. About the only actual work to be done anymore is maintaining what is already in place, and the lawtenders take care of most of that.

Consequently, Saragar is a hedonistic beach society. The motto is, "If it makes you happy, do it!" Of course, you have to be careful not to lessen another person's happiness with your actions. This might mean you have dissonant thoughts which may then have to be harmonized.

The Underground

Despite the relative pleasantness of life in Saragar and the valley at large, not everyone who lives there is content, although it would hardly be safe to admit that to the lawkeepers. There is no quicker way to guarantee yourself a visit to the harmonizers. But some people recognize that they are living in society in decay, one that relies on powerful immortals for just about every aspect of their existence—and they are coming to finally realize that these individuals are mad.

These people make up the infamous Underground which has been growing in the valley of the Last Sea for the last few hundred years. Its membership grows with each passing month, with every obsidian orb that fails, with every person who has a loved one taken away by the lawmakers for harmonization.

Still, the lawkeepers regard the Underground as one of the biggest jokes in Saragar. Confident that no one could stand up to the might of the Mind Lords, they feel entirely unthreatened by this clandestine crew. However, if it makes these people feel happy to quietly think of themselves as dissidents, that's fine. After all, the Mind Lords just want every one to be happy, right?

Of course, when dissidents grow voluble, as they sometimes do, they disturb other people and maybe even infect them with their own unhappiness. Such a thing cannot be allowed. These criminals are quickly hunted down and harmonized or, at the very least, chased from fair Saragar forever. Their kind are not wanted in this, the happiest place on all of Athas.

Most members of the Underground are just the sort of people that the lawkeepers think they are. They just like having something to complain about and someone they can complain to without getting arrested. A small minority, though, is a lot more active.

The members of the *real* Underground, as they like to think of themselves, frequently speak out on street corners against the Mind Lords, and then run away as soon as lawkeepers arrive. They are constantly cooking up all sorts of crackpot schemes that involve anything from destroying the Border of Guardians to assassinating the Mind Lords themselves.

Most people balk at the thought of "deicide," however. Some members of the Underground have been outside and know how much they owe to their mad gods for saving them from the disaster which has befallen the rest of the planet. They just want to get the Mind Lords' attention, to jar them out of their insanity and get the city back to the way it was in the days of its prime.

Oddly enough, many leaders of the Underground are the people most feared in all of the valley: the harmonizers themselves. After all, these master psionicists see into the minds of the disturbed on a daily basis. They know what is going on behind the scenes in the city, and if they have any sort of conscience at all, it deeply disturbs them to see what is happening to their people.

This fact has a decided benefit for the Underground, as any prominent dissidents who are brought in for harmonizing are usually released unharmed, the lawkeepers fully believing that the harmonizer has altered a mind which he has in fact left untouched.

As the city of Saragar falls further into decay and the Border of Guardians lets more and more people and even monsters through, it is only a matter of time before the lawkeepers find themselves facing a general revolt against them and their mostly silent masters. That day could come next week or it could come next year, but unless something is done to shore up the Last Sea's psionically engineered underpinnings, that day will certainly come.

The Wanderer's Journal

In new places like the Last Sea, there are always new rules and customs for the traveler to learn. Visitors cannot simply assume that they can conduct themselves as they always have in their homelands. Those who do inevitably find themselves in trouble.

The words I give you now I have said many times before, but they still bear repeating: When you are far from home, do not act as you would there. Respect the local peoples and their cultures, keep your mind open to new experiences, and always be wary, even in situations that seem familiar. Even the familiar can turn suddenly strange in a foreign land.



CHAPTER SEVEN: New Rules

Kabak Giantkiller cursed and vomited once again. The contents of his belly splashed into the waves with a sickening splat. He gripped the railing even tighter and groaned.

Kabak had never dreamed that he could hate water as much as he did at that moment. Ever since Kirka had first told him about the Last Sea, he had pined for it like he had for no other place he had ever known. Right now, though, he wished to be as far away from it as possible. The boat he rode took another dip into a rolling wave and left his stomach far behind.

The man from the beach—his name was D'Arsten—slapped him on the back and laughed. "Don't worry about it, outlander. You'll live."

The mul wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and looked up at this man who had gotten him into so much trouble with the lawkeepers. He tried to generate some hatred for D'Arsten, but he felt too weak. "That's what I was afraid of," he moaned.

D'Arsten laughed again. He straightened and pointed off into the distance. "There it is: the Lonely Butte. You'll be safe from the lawkeepers there. No one goes there unless they absolutely have to."

Kabak dipped his hand into the sea and rinsed his mouth with the salt water. The tangy liquid removed the sour taste, mostly. "If it wasn't for you, 'friend,' I wouldn't need to be on this blasted boat. People weren't meant to stand on anything that moves like the floor of this ship. How do you stand it?"

D'Arsten chuckled. Kabak was learning to hate that laugh. "It's not so bad once you get used to it, outlander."

"I'll take your word for it." But the gladiator wasn't planning on ever getting on a boat again. Still, his bile seemed to have settled back into his stomach for now—or he'd vomited it all out. He turned and set his back to the railing, looking up at the Undergrunder. "So what's this 'Lonely Butte'? Why won't the lawmakers go there?"

D'Arsten affected a far-away look as he stared off at the plateau rising out of the water in the distance. "It is an untamed place. The Mind Lords have declared it off limits as a kind of nature reserve, a haven for creatures of all sorts that survived the fall of the Green Age. If they leave the confines of the butte, they are fair game and can be attacked and killed by any who come across them. Over the centuries,

though, most of the creatures have figured this out, and now few of them stray from their home.”

Kabak's interest was piqued. “So what's the big deal?”

D'Arsten's demeanor turned grim. “With the exception of the Lonely Butte, most of the valley has been rid of monsters that would threaten the lives of innocents. Granted, there are some predators still about, but they rarely are foolhardy enough to actually attack a humanoid. The creatures of the Lonely Butte, though, are the deadliest monsters in the valley. Even the lawmakers fear them.”

Now Kabak was confused and more than a little disturbed. “Clear up one point for me then. If this place is so dangerous, why are we headed there?”

D'Arsten's disposition brightened. “Ah, my friend, I see that you do not trust me fully yet,” he said with a wicked grin. “Good, good! You are learning.”

Kabak stared at him, his face showing no reaction.

“Ah, yes. We are heading to the Lonely Butte for the very reason I just mentioned. The lawmakers will not come here. Only desperate men set foot on the Lonely Bluff.”

Kabak thought about it for a second. “And they don't get much more desperate than us.”

D'Arsten clapped his hands once and smiled. “You see, you are learning!”

Kabak grinned in spite of himself. He could almost end up liking D'Arsten if he weren't sure that the man was using him as a pawn in some kind of plot he had yet to fathom.

Kabak rubbed a massive hand across his jaw. The prospect of a fight with something that he could actually hit was taking his mind off of the rocking of the boat. “What kind of critters did you say were on this butte of yours?”

D'Arsten spread his hands wide. “Oh, all sorts of kinds. The most impressive, of course, are the massive crag giants who hurl lightning about in the middle of the massive thunderstorms that rock our fair valley.”

“Excuse me,” interrupted Kabak, “but did you say ‘giants’?”

D'Arsten looked worried for a moment. “Of course. They are legendary within the entire valley. Do you have such creatures in your homeland, my friend?”

Kabak grinned from ear to ear. “You might say that. I met a few in the arena back in Tyr. They don't call me Kabak Giantkiller for nothing.”

D'Arsten arched his eyebrows at the mul.

Kabak leaned back and laughed. He was starting to feel a lot better. “It's about time,” he rumbled, “about time I stopped learning lessons and started teaching a few of my own!” His laughter echoed against the oncoming bluffs as the boat sailed closer to the fabled butte.

The Last Sea is a unique place on Athas, and it therefore requires some new rules to cover the unique kinds of situations that are bound to crop up when adventurers from Tyr explore this strange new land. After all, a large body of water is an entirely new concept to most Athasians, and they will deal with in a different way than do people who have had easy access to water their entire lives.

Dehydration

Unlike on most of the surface of Athas, dehydration is not much of a concern in the valley of the Last Sea. The valley is still hot. The Mind Lords' efforts have not been able to affect the effects of the sun, only to prevent the debilitating side effects that magic could have on such lush terrain.

Still, the cooling effects of being near a large body of water have tempered the effects of the heat a great deal. The air in the valley is moist when compared to that of the desert outside, and this too helps the denizens of the valley beat the heat, as the continual breezes off the Last Sea cool the entire land.

In the valley of the Last Sea, characters and creatures only need about half as much water as they usually would. See the DARK SUN boxed set for specific information about how much this is.

Humidity

The flip side of living next to such a great body of water is the humidity. Last Sea denizens who have existed with such conditions their entire lives are used to this, but outlanders are not. A character who attempts strenuous activity before he becomes acclimated to the heavy humidity of the air is inviting trouble.

For the first 2d4 days that the outlander is in the valley of the Last Sea, the following rules are in effect. Every fifteen minutes (or fraction thereof) of strenuous activity that the character engages in during the daylight hours causes a temporary loss of 1 Constitution point.

These lost Constitution points can immediately be recovered at the rate of 1 point for each hour of rest in the shade.

Example of Humidity's Effects

While walking through the streets of Saragar, the newly arrived Kabak is accosted by a proctor. After a short exchange of words in which Kabak is unable to satisfy the proctor's demands for information, Kabak decides to punctuate his final response with a right hook to the proctor's jaw.

The ensuing brawl is short and sweet. At the end of it, the DM automatically deducts 1 point from Kabak's Constitution.

Leaving the proctor sprawled senseless on the ground, Kabak enters a bar and asks for a drink. He relaxes, enjoying himself immensely as he nurses his bruised knuckles. Before even 15 minutes have passed, though, Kabak hears a row being raised in the street. Soon after, three lawmakers storm into the tavern.

Realizing that they are looking for him, Kabak slips out through the back door of the tavern and sets off running. Twenty minutes later, Kabak decides that he's given his new friends the slip. He ducks into an inn and asks for a room.

The DM deducts 2 more points from Kabak's Constitution. Worn from the humidity, Kabak retires to his room for a midafternoon nap. After three hours of uninterrupted rest, all 3 lost points of Constitution will be fully restored.

Catching Cold

The fact is that it rains in the valley of the Last Sea, and it rains hard. Most outlanders, never having been witness to a real storm before, honestly don't know enough to come in out of the rain.

Whenever the outlanders are caught outside during a storm, chances are good that they will just revel in it. After all, water is literally falling from the heavens—and it is free! However, when they're all done doing that, have them each make a Constitution check.

Those who fail the check have chilled and caught a cold. For the next several days, the hapless hero will be ill, sneezing and coughing and generally feeling terrible. For the duration of the infection, halve each of the character's ability scores. Remember, outlanders have no built-up immunities to these colds, and their suffering is bound to be bad.

The best cure for a cold is bed rest. After a character contracts a cold, have him make another Constitution check every morning, assuming he slept the night before. If the character spent the full day resting in bed, use his full Constitution score. If he was active during the day, stopping to rest only at night, the check is made against his halved Constitution score. If the check succeeds, the character is well again. Characters who do not sleep at all are not entitled to a Constitution check to see if their cold is over.

Example of Catching Cold

While strolling along the shores of Marnita, Kabak is caught in a sudden storm which seemingly springs up out of nowhere. Enraptured in the novelty of the experience, he never stops to think how it might affect his health.

Kabak is a healthy mul, otherwise he would never have made it out of Tyr's gladiatorial

pits. His Constitution is 18. He rolls 1d20 and gets a 19, failing his Constitution check.

By the time Kabak returns to Saragar, he is as weak as a kitten. Not really understanding what's happening, he decides to tough it out. After pushing through a miserable day of exploring, he camps for the night, and the next morning the DM calls for another Constitution check. Since Kabak didn't rest the entire day, his Constitution is effectively 8. He rolls a 12 and blows it, so he's going to be sick tomorrow, too.

The next morning, Kabak's head hurts so much that he decides that the city will still be there for him to explore tomorrow. He lies in bed all day long and has the innkeeper bring him some kank honey soup.

After he sleeps that night, he makes another Constitution check. He rolls a 12 again, but since he rested all day, he gets to use his full Constitution of 18 this time, and he makes the check. The next day, Kabak rises feeling better, and goes out shopping for an umbrella.

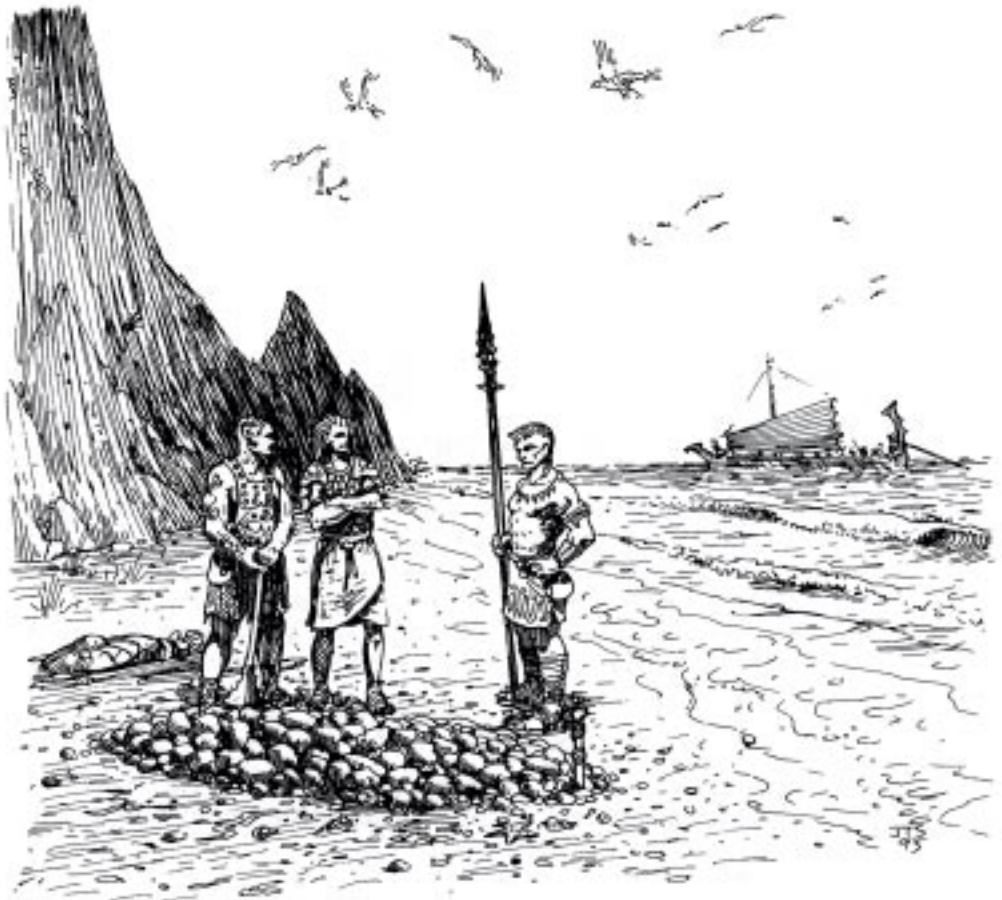
Drinking Sea Water

Outlanders may be so overcome with awe when they first lay eyes upon Marnita that they don't bother to wonder whether or not its water is fit to drink. There are few bodies of salt water on Athas, and this one dwarfs any of the brackish wells found elsewhere by several orders of magnitude.

When an outlander first tries to take a drink of Marnita, the DM should let him. The character should then make a check against his Wisdom to see if he figures out that the water is undrinkable.

The water tastes salty, and this should tip off the smart traveler to the fact that it's not potable. If this doesn't happen, though, the outlander may very well drink his fill of the stuff.

Anyone who drinks more than a glass of sea water ends up with a terrible feeling of nausea. Each affected character must make a Constitution check to keep down the contents of his stomach.



New Proficiencies

The Last Sea is a truly unusual part of Athas, and as such it requires a few new proficiencies that have not been covered elsewhere. Each of these new proficiencies is described in full here.

New Nonweapon Proficiencies

GENERAL

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Modifier
Sailing	1	Dexterity	0
Sailboarding	1	Dexterity	-2
Surfing	1	Dexterity	-3

Sailing

This proficiency allows a character to handle and operate a wind-driven water craft. The craft in question can be anything from a one-person raft all the way up to a triple-masted ship. Of course, the larger the vessel, the more difficult it is to operate, and the more hands are required.

Each seagoing craft has a certain number of crew required to operate it at peak efficiency (this is listed in each ship's description). For the craft to work perfectly smoothly, each member of the crew must make a check against his sailing proficiency. For each crewmember who fails his proficiency check, the ship's movement is reduced by 1 (down to a minimum of 0). If there are not enough qualified sailors on the ship, then the checks for the unfilled positions are considered automatically failed.

If the ship's movement ever equals 0, the ship is floundering. In the case of smaller craft (three crewmen or less), the ship may capsize. Each character sailing the ship must make a Dexterity check. If all fail, the ship capsizes.

Characters do not have to make a sailing check at any specified time, only when



something unusual happens that might test their skills. This could be anything from rough seas to a raging thunderstorm or an attack by a sea monster of some sort.

For each member missing from the crew, a penalty of -1 is applied to the proficiency check. Other penalties should be applied at the DM's discretion. For instance, if the ship is being attacked by a squark during a hurricane, a penalty of up to -4 might apply, not including any penalties for crew members taken from their posts to defend the ship against the squark.

Sailboarding

A character with the sailboarding proficiency can ride one of the sailboards used by denizens of the Last Sea to commute about the water. A Last Sea sailboard is a highly polished slab of wood similar to a surfboard. The major difference is that a sail is mounted to the center of the board.

To use the sailboard, the character grasps the handle that runs along both sides of the sail and turns so that the sail fills with wind. As the sailboard begins moving, the character leans back, steering the board in the direction that he desires.

Sailboarding is generally a solitary means of transport. Although some tandem models are in use on the Last Sea, they are generally held to be novelties more than serious transportation.

Surfing

A character with this proficiency can safely ride Marnita's surf. Most times, people use a surfboard to properly pull off such a feat, but skilled surfers can actually ride tremendous waves using only their bellies. This difficult feat carries a -2 penalty, however.

Surfing isn't really useful as a means of transportation. It is possible to ride or paddle a surfboard across the Last Sea, but there are many other, better ways to get across the water. Surfing is, on the other hand, a great way to spend a sunny afternoon, and many citizens of Saragar can be found out on the water catching waves when the weather is good enough for it.

Every time the character attempts to surf, he needs to make a check against his surfing proficiency. A failure means that the character has "wiped out." If the character fails by more than 10, he has suffered a terrible accident. The unfortunate surfer must then pass a Dexterity check or take 1d6 points of damage (from running into an unseen rock, getting hit by his own board, or some such thing.).



Wind

Sometimes it may be important to know from what direction the wind is coming. On the Last Sea, the prevailing winds are from the west. Still, the wind has been known to change from time to time. Any time you need to know the direction of the wind, roll on the table below. Every twelve hours after that, roll again.

Of course, if the conditions are stormy or even if there's just a big blow going on, you might want to check more often. In the middle of one of the infrequent monsoons that ravage the Last Sea, you may want to check every 15 minutes or so, or even more often than that.

Wind-powered vessels going with the wind can reach 125% of their full movement rate. Such craft going against the wind (and therefore having to tack from side to side) travel at only 75% of their full movement rate.

Last Sea Wind Table

2d10 Roll	Source of Wind
2-3	No wind
4-5	Southeast
6-7	South
8-9	Southwest
10-13	West
14-15	Northwest
16-17	North
18-19	Northeast
20	East

Swimming

On Athas, there is no such thing as an untrained swimmer (as defined in the *Player's Handbook*). A character who has the swimming nonweapon proficiency can swim; a character without this skill cannot. Unlike on other worlds where most people have had at least a little exposure to large bodies of water, on Athas, most people have never even dreamed of seeing a pool full of water for swimming, much less an entire sea of it.

Characters who can swim should simply use the standard rules. These cover everything a DM needs to know about any situations that may arise.

A character without the swimming nonweapon proficiency who finds himself in the water is in serious trouble.

Drowning

The *Player's Handbook* also has full rules for how long a character can hold his breath. One thing these rules do not account for is panic. If a character suddenly finds himself over his head in water (say, from being knocked over a sailboat's railing), he must make a Wisdom check to see if he manages to remember to take a good gulp of air before hitting the water. Other than that, the rules for holding your breath are pretty much the same.

Once a character who is underwater fails to hold his breath, he begins to drown. Within 1d6 rounds, the character will be dead. If the character is hauled out of the water, however, it is possible to resuscitate him.

Any character with any healing ability (a healing spell, a psionic ability that heals, or the healing nonweapon proficiency) can attempt to revive the drowned character. If the healer manages to restore at least 1 hit point to the drowning victim, the victim can make a Constitution check. If the check succeeds, the character is revived. If the check fails, the healer should feel free to try again.

Once the character has been drowned for over 5 rounds (beyond the 1d6 roll above), he is dead, and no normal means of resuscitation will have any affect.

Revived characters are temporarily incapacitated and can do nothing more than cough up water for 1d6 rounds. In addition to this effect, they receive 1d6 points of

damage. If this kills damage them, then no amount of resuscitation efforts will have any further effect upon them at all.

Magic

Magic is something that is simply not allowed within the borders of the valley of the Last Sea. When most citizens of Saragar see something that is undeniably magic, they immediately launch an alarm. No one that lives in the valley wants to see their home destroyed in the horrifying manner of the rest of the planet.

Still, this does not mean that wizards are never permitted within the boundaries of the Mind Lords' domain. It is just that these wizards had better not reveal themselves as such to anyone who cares about such matters. Even dedicated enemies of the Mind Lords are unwilling to suffer the presence of wizards gladly.

If a defiler draws spell energy within the valley of the Last Sea, use the following table to determine the radius of destruction of vegetation caused.

The Last Sea is a living body of water complete with an extremely hardy ecosystem. The amount of plants in it in the form of seaweed and algae and other microscopic bits make it the densest concentration of plant life on the entire planet. Therefore, it can withstand the casting of defiling magic better than even a mighty forest. This is one of the reasons that Marnita has managed to survive for so long.

Defiler Magical Destruction Table

Radius of destruction (yards), by terrain type and spell level

Terrain Type	Spell Level								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
The Last Sea	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Saragar	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	6
Shore	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4
Forest	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Mountains	10	14	17	20	22	24	26	28	30

Other Consequences

Whenever a magical spell is cast within the Border of Guardians, there is a chance that the Mind Lords will sense this and send a patrol of lawkeepers to investigate the situation.

For each level of the spell being cast, there is a 10% chance that the Mind Lords will detect its use. This chance is doubled if defiling magic is being used. The Mind Lords are particularly sensitive to the disturbances that such things cause in the fragile ecosystem that they have worked so hard to maintain all of their extremely long lives.

If the Mind Lords detect a spell being used, they will send a group of lawkeepers to investigate the situation. They will always send at least two lawkeepers for each level of the spell cast. In the case of defiling magic, this number is doubled.

If the spell caster is a cleric or druid, the lawkeepers will do nothing, as long as the offenders remain outside of the city of Saragar. The Mind Lords recognize the usefulness of such people, as they are firmly attuned to the land to which the Mind Lords are dedicated to protect. Still, the Mind Lords are uncomfortable having any magic at all in use inside the city. (Keep in mind, the lawkeepers don't make the rules, they just enforce them.)

If the spell caster is a wizard, the lawkeepers will certainly be a bit more hostile. They know what wizards as a group have done to the outside world, and if they are a bit overzealous in their defense of their sacred environs, can anyone really blame them?

The lawkeepers really don't care too much about the fine difference between preservers and defilers. Their letter of the law requires them to escort such people to the borders or the Mind Lords' realm, no matter what sort of reason they may have had for casting such a spell.

If the spellcaster offers any sort of resistance (like even, for instance, saying "Hey, wait!") then the lawkeepers are authorized to use lethal force to deal with the out-

lander and anyone who might be accompanying him or who is associated with him in any way.

If the first patrol of lawkeepers is somehow defeated or eluded, they will be supplemented by a force at least twice the size of the original. If this second force also fails to deal with the outlanders, one of the Mind Lords (likely Kosveret) will become personally involved in hunting the spell caster down and eliminating him. If this intervention somehow fails as well, all three Mind Lords will pitch in to ensure the spell caster leaves the valley of the Last Sea in one of two ways: on the run or in a heap of ashes spread on the wind.

New Equipment

Most voyages made on and around the Last Sea are done by boat. No real roads link the villages along the coast together, and there is rarely any need for anyone to travel outside of the region. For these reasons, seagoing vessels are an important part of life on Marnita.

The type of ships found on the Last Sea are different than those found in a typical AD&D® setting. They are listed on the table below. Each is then described in full thereafter.

Last Sea Ship Types

Ship	Base Move/Hour	Emergency Move	Seaworthiness*	Price
Surfboard	1	9	25%	15 gp
Raft	2/1	5	30%	20 gp
Sailboard	4/1	9	35%	30 gp
Kayak	2	3	40%	30 gp
Rowboat	2	3	40%	25 gp
Barge	1	2	50%	5,000 gp
Sloop	4/2	12	60%	2,000 gp
Yacht	5/2	13	70%	5,000 gp
Corsair	6/2	14	75%	7,000 gp

*See Chapter 14 of the DMG.

Note that if a surfboard, sailboard, raft, or kayak fails its seaworthiness test, the rider is dumped into the ocean, no matter how good he is at riding his chosen kind of board. Usually this means that the board, raft, or kayak was simply swamped. The character can get right back on (or in) and try it again.

Surfboard

A surfboard is a lightweight slab of polished wood about 6 to 9 feet in length. It is tapered at the front to make it easier to cut across waves, and it often has a small keel (or even two) under the rear side of the board to aid in the rider balancing the craft.

The main problem with a surfboard is that it is meant more for sport than for transportation. It can only carry one person at a time (unless being used as a makeshift raft), and the only way a person can make any real speed on it is by riding the surf. This generally makes it useless for long journeys, as the surf is obviously always pushing the board toward the shore.

To use a surfboard, the surfer must have the surfing nonweapon proficiency. Otherwise, the rider will certainly be dumped (make a seaworthiness roll every round the character is attempting to surf).

Raft

A raft is little more than a bunch of logs or planks of wood strapped together to form a floating platform. Rafts aren't very seaworthy, and they are disdained by proper sailors. Still, they are cheap, and are an easy way to get around the coast. Some rafts have sails. Other are simply pushed along by poles. Either way, they are not built for speed, but with a little luck, they will get you where it is you would like to be going.



Sailboard

A sailboard is basically a surfboard with a mast in the middle of it. The mast is attached to the board by a ball-and-socket hinge that allows the mast a great deal of play. The mast hoists a sail about 8 to 10 feet tall with a handle that runs along both sides of it.

Again, a sailboard is more useful for sport than transportation, but it is a bit more useful than a surfboard. But using one is strenuous. After each hour of sailboarding, the rider must make a Constitution check. If this is failed, the rider temporarily loses an amount of Strength equal to the number by which the roll was missed. When adjusted Strength reaches 0 or less, the rider is in serious distress, as he is too exhausted to ride the board any longer, although he can still drift along floating atop it. The rider's Strength returns at the rate of 1 point every hour of rest.

If the Constitution check is passed, the rider still loses 1 point of Constitution each hour, and the check must be made again after each hour of sailboarding (also known as windsurfing). The lost Constitution returns at the rate of 1 point per hour of rest, as well.

To use a sailboard, the rider must have the sailboarding nonweapon proficiency. Otherwise, the rider will certainly be dumped (make a seaworthiness roll every round the character attempts to ride the sailboard).

Kayak

A kayak is a small one- or two-person craft. Only about 8 to 10 feet long, it is powered exclusively by the rowing power of the people sitting in it. Kayakers use special paddles with a paddle blade on each side of the shaft to make it easy for paddlers to switch sides quickly and efficiently.

Rowboat

A rowboat is a common sight on the Last Sea, as it is an easy way to get around, and all sorts of sailors use such boats to get from shore to their ship, anchored in deeper seas. Rowboats range anywhere from 8 to 12 feet long, and they are rowed by one or two people, depending on their size. Rowboat oars fit into special locks on the side of the craft, allowing for easy leverage on the oars, resulting in relatively speedy travel.

Barge

Barges are a means by which large amounts of goods are shipped throughout the entire Last Sea region. They are slow, but they can carry phenomenal loads of cargo, up to 4,000 pounds. Barges range in size from 25 to 40 feet. They can be brought across the sea by sails on two masts, in which case they are crewed by at least 6 sailors. Otherwise, they are generally poled along the shoreline by crews of 10 seamen or more.

Sloop

A sloop is a small, single-masted sailing ship about 30 feet long and 10 feet or less in width. It is most often used to travel up and down Marnita's coastline, but it is capable of making journeys directly across the sea as well. The crew of a sloop usually consists of four people, but the craft can be handled by as few as two without any loss of speed.

Yacht

A yacht is a fast, medium-sized, double-masted sailing ship about 70 feet long and 20 feet wide. It's capable of sliding up and down the coast at good speeds and cutting across Marnita at its widest points. The crew usually consists of about 8 people.

Corsair

A corsair is a large, speedy, triple-masted sailing ship about 120 feet long and 35 feet wide. This kind of ship is the king of the Last Sea. Nothing can beat it for speed and seaworthiness. The crew of a corsair is usually comprised of about 15 well-trained sailors.

Appendix: Random Encounter Tables

These random encounter tables are for use in and around the Last Sea. Besides typical Athasian creatures, they list several creatures from the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* which are not found in any other part of Athas. But to Athasian adventurers, even a large fish would appear strange and horrific. Also listed here are creatures from the new DARK SUN boxed set, the *Terrors of the Desert* MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix, and the *Terrors Beyond Tyr* MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix II.

The Lonely Butte

1d12	Result
1	Storm giant
2	Elf
3	Human
4	Dwarf
5	Gorilla
6	Urchin
7	Esperweed
8	Dew fronds
9	Strangling vines
10	Spirit of the land
11	Zombie plant
12	Crocodile
13	Banderlog
14	Bhaergala
15	Jaguar
16	Jackal
17	Warthog
18	Badger
19	Porcupine
20	Wolverine

Saragar

1d12	Result
1	Elf
2	Human
3	Dwarf
4	Proctor
5	Lawkeeper
6	Rat
7	Pyreen
8	Halfling
9	Thri-kreen
10	Half-elf
11	Mul
12	Pterran

The Shores

1d12	Result
1	Elf
2	Human
3	Dwarf
4	Skyfish
5	Large scorpion
6	Athasian dolphin
7	Kreel
8	Water Drake
9	Horse
10	Quickwood
11	Constrictor snake
12	Phase spider

Thunder Mountains

1d12	Result
1	Elf
2	Human
3	Mountain Giant
4	Roc
5	Rain Drake
6	Dwarf
7	Common bat
8	Vulture
9	Hippogriff
10	Skyfish
11	Wild mul
12	Mountain spider

The Last Sea

1d12	Result
1	Dragon turtle
2	Kelpie
3	Strangleweed
4	Sea Lion
5	Athasian dolphin
6	Puddingfish
7	Skyfish
8	Kreel
9	Athasian shark
10	Athasian lizard man
11	Tako
12	Squark
13	Dragonfish
14	Electric eel
15	Lamprey
16	Manta ray
17	Sting ray
18	Giant seahorse
19	Common whale
20	Killer whale

Barani

Mind Lord of the Last Sea
Female Human Psionicist, Neutral Evil

ARMOR CLASS:	n/a	STR:	12
MOVEMENT:	12	DEX:	18
LEVEL:	28	CON:	18
HIT POINTS:	78	INT:	18
THACO:	7	Wis:	22
No. OF ATTACKS:	0	CHA:	17
MAC:	1		
MTHACO:	-7		
PSPs:	298		
PSIONIC ATTACKS:	All		
PSIONIC DEFENSES:	All		



Psionic Sciences: Complete healing, cosmic awareness, energy containment, hallucination, mass domination, megakinesis, precognition, psychic surgery, regenerate, suppress magic, telekinetic barrier, teleport, time travel, true sight.

Psionic Devotions: danger sense, probability manipulation, see magic, watcher's ward, sensitivity to observation, psionic sense, stasis field, control body, animate object, deflect, levitation, chameleon power, double pain, enhancement, pheromone discharge, prolong, suspend animation, blink, dimension walk, phase, teleport trigger, time shift, wrench, awe, conceal thoughts, inflict pain, mind bar, psychic drain, psychic impersonation, receptacle, pocket dimension, send thoughts, ESP.

Barani is one of the three Mind Lords of the Last Sea. Like her two compatriots, she has placed her psyche into an obsidian orb held in a secret chamber buried deep beneath Saragar's castle, ensuring herself a sort of immortality. The visage that she presents to her people is that of a beautiful woman perpetually in her mid-thirties, with long black hair and flashing green eyes, but this is simply a mental projection from her orb. This projection is no more substantial than the wind, but by combining it with some expert telekinesis, Barani has been able to maintain for centuries the illusion that she is actually alive.

As one of the Mind Lords, Barani is worshipped as a deity by the people of the Last Sea. To those citizens, she is the great mother, the goddess of life. She watches over them all from birth to death and helps them through times of sickness.

Barani is over 9,000 years old. When she was a young lass studying at the Psionic Academy of Saragar, she met and fell in love with one of her professors, a man named Thesik, himself one of the most powerful psionicists ever to exist. Thesik taught Barani well and came to rely upon her as one of his closest companions. Eventually he was to show her the way to immortality, as a self-appointed guardian of the Last Sea and its people. Barani gladly accepted the responsibilities Thesik thrust upon her.

These two, along with their friend, the elf Kosveret, became the high advisors to Lawmaker Mareet of Saragar. While working in the lawmaker's employ, Barani, supported by her two friends, made a psionic journey several millennia into the future, searching for the cause of the lawmaker's strange vision concerning a dark time to come upon the world. During her journey, Barani saw the ending of Athas's Green Age and the coming of the Age of the Sorcerer-Kings. She saw the drying up of the world's oceans and the destruction of nearly all life on the planet. And all of this

was to come about due to the ravaging effects of misused magic.

The experience nearly drove her mad.

When she returned, she related to Thesik and Kosveret what she had seen. At first, they doubted her. To prove it to themselves, they duplicated her journey into the future-and learned that everything she had said was true. When they returned, they formulated a plan of action: By barring magic from their homeland, and by making themselves its immortal guardians, they would preserve the region forever!

Role-Playing

Barani's mood changes with like wind, a result of the insanity that holds each of the Mind Lords in its grasp. One moment, she is terrible as a force of nature; the next she is as comforting and compassionate as a mother with her newborn child.

When acting in her role as queen of the region's three "gods," Barani is haughty and imperious, a cold, aloof beauty. She plays the role of royalty to the hilt. During these times, she is found almost exclusively in the throne room of Saragar's palace.

When pressed into the role of the mother goddess, Barani suddenly transforms into a personality of sweetness and light. She becomes warm, friendly and talkative, willing to do anything to help those in need. At these times, if she is not out and about in the city or surrounding countryside helping someone in pain, she can usually be found in the palace garden, braiding flowers into her hair and languishing on the lawn.

"Queen" Barani has long since fallen out of love with Thesik. She scorns any of his attempts at a reconciliation with a fury that could only have grown over multiple millennia of psychic imprisonment. When she is with him, it is obvious that she has little or no respect for his opinions any longer, and she will often contradict him out of simple spite.

As "mother goddess," on the other hand, Barani has nothing but affection for her ancient groom. When with him, she laughs and frolics playfully, although she is sometimes confused by the fact that he often distances himself from her. She typically tells herself that this is simply a phase Thesik is going through, blissfully unaware that this "phase" of his has already lasted several centuries.

Combat

There is very little chance that an attacker will never be able to actually engage Barani herself in combat. After all, the orb in which her consciousness resides is extremely well protected. And those who battle her projected image are in for a real surprise.

When attacked, no matter which personality she might be in at the time, Barani immediately switches to her "ice queen" persona. Although enraged at the attack, she will do anything in her power to ensure that the fiction of her physical presence is not dispelled. She will deflect or dodge physical attacks, choosing to engage her attackers exclusively in psionic combat. Should someone somehow manage to actually strike her a blow, it will, of course, pass directly through her image. To cover for the fact that she is really not there, she will laugh loudly and taunt her attackers with the claim that she has the power to phase into an insubstantial form, making it impossible for them to physically harm her. Barani then challenges them to meet her on the battlefield of the mind, and if they refuse, she presses the attack herself. She prefers to use a mind thrust at close range, but she is equally adept with other psionic combat tactics. Because of her long practice with maintaining her illusory self, all ranges should be calculated from her image rather than the orb in which her psyche resides.

If outmatched, Barani will use her supposed "phase" ability to "walk through walls" to make her escape. In particularly dire straits, she will simply deactivate her image, making it appear as if she has teleported away.

Dolphin, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	School
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Any good
No. APPEARING:	1-10
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	Sw 30
HIT DICE:	3+3
THACO:	18
No. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Save as a 5th-level fighter, psionic abilities
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5'-6' long)
MORALE:	Elite (13)
XP VALUE:	270
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Random Wild Talent
PLAYER'S OPTION:	MAC 7



Just as on other worlds, dolphins on Athas are intelligent, seagoing mammals. But Athasian dolphins, however, do have a few unique differences.

For one thing, the skin of an Athasian dolphin is thicker than usual for other dolphins, and it is entirely silvery white. The sun reflects brilliantly off of its surface, keeping the dolphins cool during even the height of the day's heat. Few sights are more beautiful on Athas—or more rare—than a pod (school) of dolphins racing along the surface of Marnita, arching in and out of the water in sparkling brilliance.

Also, the nose of an Athasian dolphin is a bit thicker and harder than that of a normal dolphin. This is a result of the species' constant war with Athasian sharks as they have evolved down through the millennia. A nose punch from an Athasian dolphin is something that few creatures can attempt to laugh off.

Other than these differences, however, Athasian dolphins are nearly identical to any others. Their bodies are long, compact, and muscular. They have a large dorsal fin, a powerful tail, and a blowhole atop their heads. When near to one another, Athasian dolphins communicate via a series of high-pitched squeals, some of which are beyond the upper range of human hearing. When further apart, the dolphins use their innate telepathy to keep in constant contact.

Combat: While innately peaceful by nature, Athasian dolphins have grown to be more warlike than their ancestors, as a result of their ongoing war with Marnita's native shark population. They generally attack only when threatened, but unless they are outnumbered at least two to one, dolphins will always attack sharks. Dolphins fight as an organized unit, taking commands telepathically from a leader of their group. They are especially ferocious when protecting their young, doing anything necessary—even sacrificing their own lives—to ensure their safety.

In addition to their telepathic powers, all dolphins are psionic wild talents. They simply don't have the discipline to study the Way and become full psionists, but they are more than happy to use their natural mental abilities to fight for their pod.

Habitat/Society: There is only a single species of dolphin found on Athas, and its members reside only in Marnita, the only remaining body of salt water in the world.

At one time, during the Blue and even the Green Ages, dolphins populated a good part of the planet. They were friendly to the halfings during their rule, even going so far as to enter joint ventures with them to construct incredible underwater structures, complete with air supplies, which they could use as shelter in times of storms.

They communicated with the halfings through a form of animal telepathy which all dolphins had. In this way, the halfings were able to learn a great deal about the dolphins and their amazing aquatic culture. Sadly, this knowledge has largely been lost throughout the ages.

During the Green Age, the dolphins were appalled at the damage that had been done to their precious ocean. They began to distance themselves from other sentient creatures, whom they blamed for the despoilment of their shared environment. Over the millennia, most of these races lost all communication with the dolphins. Only the lizard men, with whom the dolphins shared a great deal of their habitat, have remained in communication with the creatures.

At the end of the Green Age, nearly all dolphins on Athas were destroyed as their watery homes dried up, leaving their bodies to bake unprotected in the sun. The only exception to this tragic rule was the pod of dolphins still living in the Last Sea.

For many centuries after the region of Marnita was closed off from the outside world, the Last Sea dolphins had kept in regular contact via telepathy with their brethren in other parts of the planet. It was a dark day for the surviving dolphins when the last of their unprotected siblings beached itself in dismay on a not-too-distant mud flat, in what was eventually to become the Silt Sea.

Since then, the Athasian dolphins have vowed to carry on the great oral traditions of their people and act as a living legacy to those who have gone before them. Because the dolphins can communicate telepathically, they can transmit memories to their progeny down through the ages. Even the youngest member of the Last Sea pod remembers the days of the Blue Age and the times when the seas covered the face of Athas and dolphins filled the waters like the stars in the sky.

Ecology: Athasian dolphins are both hunters and hunted. In the relative safety of Marnita, their most typical foes are the Athasian sharks with which they share the water. The ongoing conflict between the dolphins and the sharks has only rarely broken into all-out war. Most times it only involves clashes between small patrols that run into each other more by happenstance than design.

Despite this and any other predators in Marnita (like the squark), the dolphin population thrives there. Although they generally refuse to communicate with the people living on the shores of the Last Sea, they have managed to strike up an implicit treaty of nonaggression with them. They are not hunted by the humanoids, and in exchange, people somehow stranded in the middle of the sea can count on assistance from a friendly patrol of dolphins that will carry them back to the shore—if they're lucky enough to get there before the sharks do, of course.

The dolphins cooperate a bit more readily with the lizard men population, although they only rarely talk to them about anything more than coordinating their defense efforts against the sharks. Still, upon a rare occasion, lizard men have even been seen riding on the backs of a group of dolphins, in order to travel quickly to a distant shore of the Last Sea. The relationship between these two races is based on mutual respect, though, and the lizard men are careful not to abuse this privilege by using it overmuch.

A few human fishers have managed to strike up a friendship with these creatures, despite the fact that the dolphins refuse to communicate with them telepathically in any but the direst of times. Such rare people realize fully how lucky they are.

Giant, Crag

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Lonely Butte
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	K (H)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic good
No. APPEARING:	5-10 (1d6+4)
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	16
THACO:	6
No. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d6+8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Hurl rocks
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	H (25' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (13)
XP VALUE:	7,000
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Nil
PLAYER'S OPTION:	MAC 10

Crag giants are 25-foot-tall humanoids with thick black hair, rugged human features, and skin color ranging from dusky gray to stony brown. Also sometimes called the Lonely Giants, these sad creatures are the only remnants of a once proud race, forced to flee their homelands and dwell in an environment that is assuredly leading to their ultimate extinction. Like other Athasian giants, the crag giants are savage in nature, though not as much so as the beasthead variety. The majority of crag giants are of chaotic good alignment, though other chaotic alignments are not unusual among them.

Crag giants speak their own language among themselves, but virtually all of them also use an archaic version of the common tongue.

Combat: Crag giants have a Strength score of 24, which provides them with a damage bonus of +8. In melee combat, they use jagged stone daggers, which inflict 2d6 points of damage. At range, they can hurl rocks at their opponents, with a range of up to 250 yards, inflicting 2d10 points of damage. A significant proportion of these giants are clerics aligned to the element of air, which explains their legendary status as tossers of lightning.

Habitat/Society: In millennia past, the ancestors of the modern crag giants originally inhabited the Thunder Mountains. According to ancient legend, when storms would rock those ranges, the crag giants would come out to dance in the thunder and play catch with the flashes of lightning. They lived with a savage joy for life.

But when Saragar's Mind Lords began reshaping the region to cut it off from the rest of Athas, in order to protect the Last Sea from the ravages of rampant magic, they presented the crag giants with a difficult choice: relocate their people to a reservation on the Lonely Butte, or be utterly destroyed.

Faced with the raw power of the Mind Lords, the crag giants chose to move, but their race has not taken well to their new home. Slowly but steadily, their numbers are declining, and they are headed for certain extinction. The one motivation for survival that remains to them is to gain vengeance on the Mind Lords.

Ecology: The jungle atop the Lonely Butte serves as an excellent source of food—both plant and animal—for the crag giants, and these creatures supplement that diet with some sea food. Despite this plenty, however, the race is dying out, still feeling displaced from their native mountains even after millennia of dwelling on the Lonely Butte.

Guardian

Disembodied Psionist, Chaotic Neutral

ARMOR CLASS:	n/a	STR:	0
MOVEMENT:	0	DEX:	0
LEVEL:	10	CON:	18
HIT POINTS:	50	INT:	18
THACO:	n/a	WIS:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	0	CHA:	0
MAC:	5		
MTHACO:	12		
PSPs:	133		
PSIONIC ATTACKS:	All		
PSIONIC DEFENSES:	All		

Psionic Sciences: Vary, but can include death field (or dis-integrate), hallucination, mass domination, megakinesis, teleport other.

Psionic Devotions: Vary, but can include amnesia, animate object, control light, control wind, create sound, double pain, ESP, inflict pain, molecular agitation, phobia amplification, psionic vampirism, psychic impersonation, return flight, teleport object, truthhear.



The guardians of the Last Sea are the working cogs in the societal machine that the Mind Lords have designed for themselves and their people. Once human, these disembodied minds are the source of nearly all working energy in the area, particularly in the city of Saragar. The guardians perform all sorts of tasks, from lighting the city streets at night, to motivating the driverless carriages that move people about in the city, to powering the day-to-day operations of the vital desalinization plant that supplies the 30,000 residents of the Saragar with precious drinking water.

All guardians were originally gifted psionists in the Green Age. During their mortal lives, they each, for one reason or another, were imprisoned in an obsidian orb and charged with specific tasks by the Mind Lords of the Last Sea. Many were outlaws who had committed some horrible crime against their fellow humanoids. But some were good people, innocents arbitrarily recruited by the Mind Lords to fill needed positions in the city of Saragar or the legendary Border of the Guardians.

Role-Playing

Guardians have little or no personality remaining to speak of—except for those who have gone mad from their long, incorporeal incarceration. There is a 10% chance that any given guardian encountered has gone insane. Those who have are usually paranoid maniacs, incapable of performing their set duties and only randomly confronting anyone that crosses their path, but then usually with deadly psionic force.

Combat

When threatened, or when required to by its orders, a guardian will attack with its psionic powers. If there are many opponents, the guardian will usually use mass effect sciences or devotions like death field or awe. Otherwise, the guardian will use its psionic attacks more directly. Most guardians are aware that they are limited by their inability to move (and thus have real problems with foes retreating out of attack range), so they will strike as savagely as they can, intending to incapacitate foes before they have any chance to react.

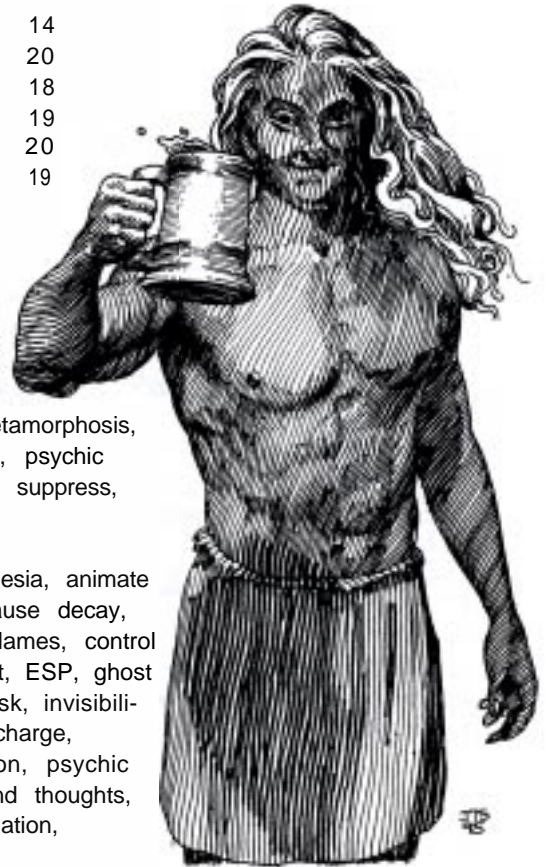
Kosveret

Mind Lord of the Last Sea
Male Elf Psionist, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS:	n/a	STR:	14
MOVEMENT:	12	DEX:	20
LEVEL:	27	CON:	18
HIT POINTS:	72	INT:	19
THACO:	7	Wis:	20
No. OF ATTACKS:	0	CHA:	19
MAC:	3		
MTHACO:	-6		
PSPs:	227		
PSIONIC ATTACKS:	All		
PSIONIC DEFENSES:	All		

Psionic Sciences: Complete healing, create object, mass domination, megakinesis, metamorphosis, molecular rearrangement, probability travel, psychic clone, subjective reality, superior invisibility, suppress, magic, teleport, teleport other, time travel.

Psionic Devotions: All-round vision, amnesia, animate object, attraction, aversion, awe, blink, cause decay, cause sleep, chameleon power, control flames, control sound, danger sense, deflect, displacement, ESP, ghost writing, heightened senses, impossible task, invisibility, know location, phase, pheromone discharge, pocket dimension, probability manipulation, psychic impersonation, receptacle, see magic, send thoughts, static discharge, summon object, time dilation, time/space anchor.



Kosveret is one of the three Mind Lords of the Last Sea. As with his two compatriots, his psyche has been placed into an obsidian orb, held in a secret chamber buried deep beneath Saragar's castle, ensuring his effective immortality. The image that he presents to the people of the Last Sea is that of a jolly elf in the prime of his life. His hair is long and blond and worn free and wild. This projection is no more substantial than the wind, but by combining it with some expert telekinesis, Thesik has been able for centuries to maintain the illusion that he is actually alive.

Unlike most elves elsewhere on Athas, Kosveret presents a personality that reflects a happier age, when his people were not nomads on the land but instead were settled in one spot, like the elves who dwell on the shores of Marnita. (He looks more like a regular elf than like an Athasian).

Thesik is worshipped by his people as the god of happiness, the trickster, the one who stands between life and death and gives each some kind of meaning. He is well known for his practical jokes and his sense of humor.

Kosveret's appearance actually changes regularly to suit his needs. If it suits him better to appear in disguise as a dwarf maid, so be it. His disguises are so perfect, though, that it's nearly impossible to recognize him when he is around. In the valley of the Last Sea, it is not uncommon then for a person who begins to act strangely or perform odd feats to claim that Kosveret must have taken his place. Sometimes this is true, and other times not. When not, it offers the people an excellent excuse for blowing off some steam from time to time. But when a well known barkeep punches someone on the nose and then goes sailing up through the ceiling, it is fairly certain that Kosveret has just left the room.

Unfortunately, the trickster's mind is degenerating, and occasionally he loses track of what is real and what is not. In the worst of his paranoid delusions, he imagines

that the Sorcerer-Kings have finally put aside their differences and are preparing a mass assault on the Last Sea, desperate to tap its green lands to feed their horrible magic. At such times, it is impossible to convince Kosveret of anything to the contrary, despite the fact that the few remaining Sorcerer-Kings are more in disarray now than ever before.

Kosveret is extremely suspicious of any outsiders, but he occasionally confuses people he has just met with people he has known since their birth. This has ended in some uncomfortable situations from which Thesik and Barani have been forced to extricate him. Sometimes he kills people at random, and it is up to his fellow Mind Lords and Saragar's lawkeepers to hush the matter up. After all, if the general populace was to learn that one of their gods was some kind of part-time, haphazard serial killer, the ensuing panic would devastate this last bastion of Green Age fertility.

Kosveret originally met Thesik, the chief of the Mind Lords, when they were both professors at the Psionic Academy of Saragar. There they struck up a fast friendship which has lasted until this day, although not without some strain. Today, Kosveret sometimes even imagines that Thesik is secretly in league with the Sorcerer-Kings in their bid for ultimate power.

Back in their early days, though, Kosveret and Thesik, along with Thesik's new wife Barani, managed to pierce the veil of time and peer into the future, seeking the answer to an enigmatic warning from ages to come. What they saw there was frightening enough for them to launch into action a desperate plan to preserve Marnita from the coming devastation of Athas, a plan that ultimately called for them to sacrifice their physical shells and imprison their psyches in obsidian orbs, so that they might survive forever as Marnita's guardians.

Role-Playing

Kosveret is flat-out insane. He has a few lucid moments, but they are becoming fewer and farther between. When encountered, there is a 40% chance he is effectively himself. Otherwise, he could be pretending to be just about anyone else.

When Kosveret is acting the part of someone else, he acts as sanely as they would, at least until he does something to give himself away, which inevitably happens within a half dozen hours or so. Until then, he looks and acts just like the person (or creature—he has been known to go around as a duck frequently) he is impersonating. Since he is not actually that person, though, he eventually makes a mistake that someone calls to his attention. When that happens, he snaps.

When that happens, the results vary. Sometimes he dances around the room until he trips and falls through the floor. At other times, he reveals himself for who he really is, tells a mad little tale, and disappears in a cloud of smoke, or some such thing. On some rare occasions, he decides that the person who has found him out is in league with the Sorcerer-Kings. If so, the innocent pawn in this mad elf's fantasy will be lucky to escape with his life.

When grounded in reality, Kosveret is a kind and generous elf, and no one can say a bad thing about him (they had better not—he is dangerous!).

One secret that Kosveret keeps strictly to himself is that he once had an affair with Barani, long ago, while posing as his friend Thesik. Not even Barani knows the truth of the matter, and it could be that guilt, combined with his never-ending fixation upon her, which has precipitated his madness.

Combat

Kosveret rarely sticks around for a fight. He hits his opponent once or twice with a generally fatal mental power (calculate ranges from his image, not his orb) and then disappears. This strategy has worked fine for him so far, but it is difficult to imagine what might happen if it someday fails. Sometimes he has been known instead to simply kiss his foes on the lips before vanishing.

When pressed by a powerful opponent, Kosveret simply beats a hasty retreat. He hasn't managed to grow old as he is by fighting foes on their own terms. Since he is really just an intangible image, physical attacks can't hurt him, and against a psionist of his power, most mental barrages are pointless as well. If someone manages to get his back against a wall, though, Kosveret will simply deactivate his image and hole up in his obsidian orb until he recovers.

Kreel

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	School
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
No. APPEARING:	2-20 (11-4 in 7 the wild)
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	Sw 12
HIT DICE:	3
THACO:	18
No. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (4'-6' long)
MORALE:	Unsteady (7)
XP VALUE:	65
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Nil
PLAYER'S OPTION:	10



Kreel are large domesticated eels that lizard men use both as a source of food and as beasts of burden. When mature, they range from four to six feet long, and can be up to one foot in diameter.

Their coloration changes in a chameleonlike way to help camouflage them against their background. When near the surface of the sea, their backs turn blue-green and their bellies white. This helps to protect them from predators both above and below. When nearer the bottom of the sea, they become entirely dark.

Combat: Kreel are peaceful creatures, and they will only fight to defend themselves. They are incapable of using group tactics to fend off predators, tending to rely upon their camouflaging abilities to hide from such creatures.

When cornered, kreel will retaliate, but even then they will flee at the first opportunity. They often use their relative slimness to slip into places in the sea floor where predators cannot fit. A kreel caught by a shark in open waters, however, is an easy meal.

Habitat/Society: While a few kreel can be found swimming wild in Marnita, most belong to flocks tended by pairs of lizard men kreelherders. These lizard men ensure that the flock is well fed on the kelp growing wild throughout the sea and that it is safe from any wandering predators. Long-time kreelherders carry the scars of many battles with sharks, and some even tell of seeing the legendary squark.

Ecology: Down through the centuries, even rudimentary cunning has been bred out of the kreel. After all, sneaky creatures are difficult to care for. There is little doubt that, were the lizard men to abandon them, the kreel would be hunted to extinction by their natural enemies within a very short period of time.

Kreel graze on wild kelp, easily available just about anywhere in Marnita. Their meat is tasty (at least to lizard men), and their hides are extremely useful in all sorts of ways. They are the basis of the lizard man culture in the Last Sea, for without them the reptilian humanoids would be forced to look elsewhere for a large portion of their meals.

Lawkeepers

The Lawkeepers of Saragar

Human, Dwarf, and Elf Psionicists, Lawful Neutral

	PROCTOR	LAWKEEPER	LAWKEEPER EfKENU
STR:	13	14	17
DEX:	10	12	15
CON:	12	14	16
INT:	14	16	18
WIS:	16	18	19
CHA:	10	12	16
ARMOR CLASS:	4	4	3
MOVEMENT:	12	12	12
LEVEL:	3-10	11+	12 F/13 Psi
HIT POINTS:	12-40	40+	83
THACO:	per level	per level	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1	3/2 rounds
MAC:	9	6	4
MTHACO:	per level	per level	9
PSPs:	per level	per level	151
PSIONIC ATTACKS:	Vary	All	All
PSIONIC DEFENSES:	Vary	All	All

The lawkeepers of Saragar follow the ancient tradition of the governments of the ancient cities long before the end of the Green Age. The head of the government is the lawmaker. In the case of modern Saragar, the Mind Lords share this position jointly. They create laws, ideally for the good of the people, and it is then up to the lawkeepers to ensure that these laws are enforced.

Lawmakers dress in thin white, knee-length robes underneath which they wear well-wrought chain-mail tunics, the kind of which are almost unheard of anywhere else on Athas. They also carry metal long swords and wooden shields banded with metal. Any single set of these items might be worth a king's ransom outside of the valley of the Last Sea, but here they are simply badges of office that all lawkeepers bear.

The body of lawkeepers come in two ranks: the rank and file are known as proctors; their leaders are simply called lawkeepers. Proctors are the men and women who patrol the streets of the city, always on the lookout for the slightest transgression against the law. The other lawkeepers are their superiors, and they deal only with the most serious of cases. They are often called in when proctors at the scene decide that they need help. Above all of these is Lawkeeper Efkeno, the de facto ruler of the city when the Mind Lords cannot be bothered to put in an appearance.

Role-Playing

All lawkeepers are lawful neutral in alignment. This means that they will uphold the letter of the Mind Lords' laws no matter what. They are obligated to do this even if the result flies in the face of common sense. It is not their job to determine what the laws should be. They are only enforce them.

The lawkeepers serve as judge, jury, and occasionally executioner. There is no court of appeal, and every citizen of Saragar knows what it means to run afoul of the law. The lawkeepers' jurisdiction ends (for most practical purposes at least) outside of Saragar, although this hardly ever prevents them from pursuing a guilty party to the ends of the Last Sea if necessary.

Saragar's laws apply to the lawkeepers as well. Any lawkeeper found to be delinquent in carrying out his duty in any way is brought up before a board of his peers, overseen by Lawkeeper Efkeno himself. If found guilty, the lawkeeper is put to death.

Over the years, the lawkeepers have become a kind of priest to the people of Saragar. After all, it is they who have a direct channel to the gods. Consequently, the citizens of Saragar respect them out of both religious awe and basic fear.

Lawkeeper Efkenu

Efkenu is an archetypal lawkeeper success story. He started out as a proctor soon after graduating from the Psionic Academy of Saragar. In his early years of service, he carved out a reputation for himself as having a flawless knowledge of the law, undiluted by any personal distractions of right or wrong. He climbed quickly up the ranks until he became the city's chief lawkeeper 12 years ago.

Efkenu is a somber elf. It is rumored that he has never once smiled. He is good at his job, and he is proud of that fact. The law is the most sacred thing in the world to him, and he is only too happy to punish any that would dare desecrate it.

As chief lawkeeper, Efkenu serves as something of a high priest of the Mind Lords. Only he is permitted direct communication with any of that trio. Everyone else must take his word for what the Mind Lords have said. They can be confident that he won't lie about the Mind Lords' words, however. To do so would be to invite the Mind Lords' retribution, and that is not a pleasant fate.

Efkenu knows that the Mind Lords are insane, but he doesn't really care. There is little he can do to remedy the situation, so he simply carries out their wishes as best he can, trying to ensure that the city is ruled by order at all times. He fears that the Mind Lords may someday leave, and he worries about what he may have to do then to preserve the peace. But for now, his hands are full just maintaining the status quo.



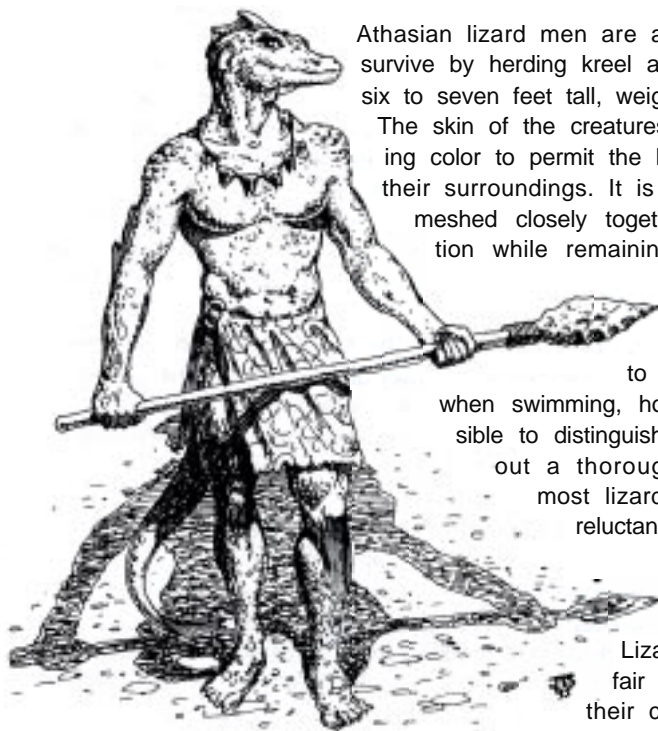
Lizard Man, Athasian

	Lizard Man	Lizard King
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribal	Tribal
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Omnivore	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)	Very (12)
TREASURE:	D	E
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	8-15 (1d8+7)	Unique
ARMOR CLASS:	4	3
MOVEMENT:	6, Sw 12	9, Sw 15
HIT DICE:	2+1	8
THACO:	19	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-7	5-20 (3d6+2)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M (7' tall)	L (8' tall)
MORALE:	11 (Steady)	13 (Elite)
XP VALUE:	65	975
Patrol leader	65	
Subleader	120	
War leader	270	
Psionicist, 3rd	175	
Psionicist, 5th	650	
Psionicist, 7th	975	

Player's Option:

MAC 8

MAC 6



Athasian lizard men are amphibious humanoids who survive by herding k reel and by fishing. Adults stand six to seven feet tall, weighing 200 to 250 pounds.

The skin of the creatures is chameleonlike, changing color to permit the lizard men to blend in with their surroundings. It is composed of thin scales meshed closely together which provides protection while remaining flexible.

The tail of a lizard man is three to four feet long, but not prehensile. It does help to keep the creature balanced when swimming, however. It is nearly impossible to distinguish between the sexes without a thorough inspection, something most lizard men (and women) are reluctant to let strangers attempt.

Lizard man clothing usually consists of a simple kreelskin loincloth.

Lizard men actually have a fair amount of control over their changing coloration. They

can change their skin to match just about any color of the spectrum. Normally, they let their reflexes automatically cause them to blend into their environment, but during special ceremonies, they can actually will their skin to color itself in intricate patterns, each with a special symbolic meaning.

While these creatures have their own language, most of them (especially their king Nelyrox) have at least a rough command of the common tongue. This helps them negotiate in their infrequent encounters with those who dwell along the shores of the Last Sea.

Combat: In combat, Athasian lizard men are ferocious fighters. They temper their bloodlust with cunning, however, and they are not ashamed to fall back from a fight they are losing, at least until reinforcements arrive. They are more intelligent than traditional lizard men, able to follow fairly complicated battle plans and intricate schemes.

For every 10 lizard men encountered, one of them is a patrol leader with maximum hit points (17 hp). There is also a 50% chance that one of them is a 3rd-level psionist. If more than one of the three Last Sea tribes is encountered, each tribe has a war leader with 6 Hit Dice, two subleaders with 4 Hit Dice and a 5th-level psionist, with a 50% chance of an additional 7th-level psionist by the name of Mobji. If Nelyrox is present (50% chance), Mobji is automatically there, and the patrol leaders form an elite body guard for their king.

Habitat/Society: The lizard men of Athas are a bit more civilized than the typical sort. Although they didn't start out this way, circumstances have forced them to adapt. After all, the traditional lizard man meal of human flesh was frowned upon by the Mind Lords, so in Marnita, if the creatures couldn't find another source of food, they were doomed to extinction. As their hunting grounds were severely limited the Barrier of Guardians, they took the only option open to them and domesticated the local kreel, becoming a society of kreelherders. As such, it's rare to see more than a dozen or so lizard men together at a time outside the lizard man city deep in the center of Marnita.

Athasian lizard men are advanced enough to use shields and weapons. They tend to prefer tridents with wooden shafts and heads carved from three long bones. On more formal occasions, they wear full kreelskin togas, but these are rarely used on a daily basis, as they hamper underwater movement.

Ecology: Athasian lizard men have few natural enemies. Sharks and dolphins alike tend to give them a wide berth, but it is not unheard of for a lone lizard man to be attacked and killed by a roaming school of sharks. The only true threat to lizard men in general is the squark, the behemoth with which they share the Last Sea. Once every so many years, on a more or less unpredictable basis, the squark attacks the lizard man city of Nesthaven. The walls of Nesthaven are strongly fortified against the creature, but they can only hold so long against its monstrous onslaught. Dozens of lizard men are killed each time the monster attacks.

Other than that, though, the lizard men generally live fairly sedate lives. They farm the kelp beds and tend their flocks of kreel and have wonderful underwater festivals. These are sometimes so amazing that the lights under the waves can be seen even in distant Saragar.

The lizard men have a great deal of respect for the Mind Lords and their children (as the lizard men think of the shore dwellers). After all, the Mind Lords saved them from hated Keltis, the lizard-man executioner. Without their help, the people (as they call themselves) would surely have been scoured from even the floor of Marnita.

The Lizard King

Nelyrox the lizard king is a wise and generous ruler, and he has the full support of the vast majority of his people. Those under the command of Xhenrid, one of Nelyrox's three war leaders, are more loyal to their leader than their king, but the royal reptilian has managed to keep his old rival and her people in line so far.

Nelyrox stands a full eight feet tall and weighs over 250 pounds. In battle, he arms himself with a great trident which inflicts 3d6+2 points of damage. If the attack roll is 5 or more greater than the score needed to hit the target, Nelyrox's attack scores double damage (with a minimum of 15 points inflicted).

As a leader of a civilized people, no Athasian lizard king has demanded a sacrifice of a sentient's flesh for centuries. In fact, the killing of sentients for any reason other than self-defense is held to be this society's most heinous crime. This is enforced by both the lizard man tribal government and by the lawkeepers from Saragar if need be.

Puddingfish

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	Sw 3
HIT DICE:	9
THACO:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3-24
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Paralysis
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	H (20+ long')
MORALE:	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	3,000
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Nil
PLAYER'S OPTION:	MAC 10



The puddingfish is a gigantic sort of jellyfish found only in Athas's Last Sea. It looks similar to a traditional jellyfish, only larger and slightly more substantial. Its dome is nearly eight feet across, and its tendrils drag down over 20 feet below it.

The creature is composed of a blue-green substance somewhat similar to that of a gelatinous cube. Due to its coloring, the puddingfish can be difficult to spot floating along in the water, and more than one fishing boat has run aground on a puddingfish's back. This is usually little more than an annoyance, however, as the creature is unable to lift its tendrils upward at all. As long as no one falls into the water, the occupants of the boat will be fine.

Combat: When a small boat or raft runs into a puddingfish, each passenger near an edge should roll against his Dexterity to avoid falling into the sea. Those people unfortunate enough to end up in the drink next to a puddingfish had better swim away as fast as they can. The puddingfish is deadly when in contact with a victim, but it is slow to move and can be outdistanced by a strong swimmer. Of course, there are very few such people on Athas outside of the valley of the Last Sea.

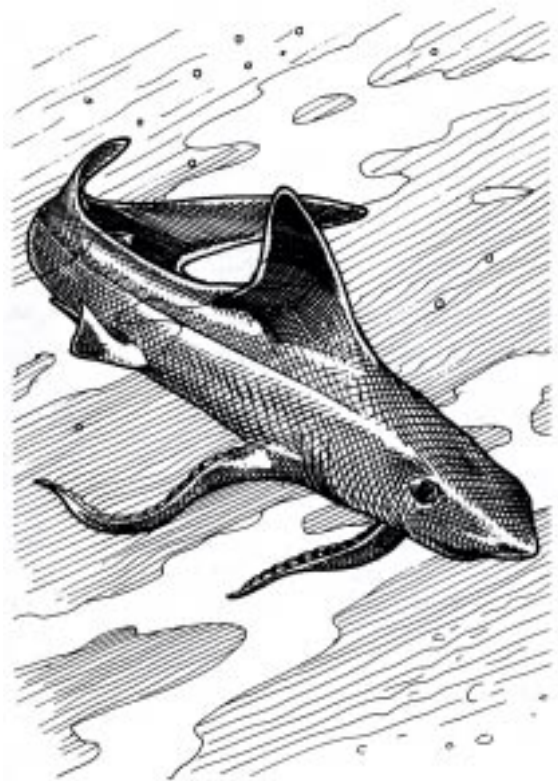
A character struck by a puddingfish's stinging tendrils must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed (anesthetized) for 4-16 (4d4) rounds. In the water, this can easily prove fatal unless the victim is fortunate enough to have a friend brave enough to haul his poisoned body out of the water. Once a victim has perished, the puddingfish's snakelike tendrils draw the corpse up into its dome where it is slowly digested over a period of 3-6 (1d4+2) days.

Habitat/Society: Puddingfish are solitary creatures. They are asexual and reproduce by dividing once they have reached a certain critical mass. They are hunted by the lizard men for their hides (which are not poisonous), out of which many useful things such as clothing and sails are made.

Ecology: The dome of a puddingfish is actually its stomach, a place filled with horribly corrosive acids. This material can actually be harvested by foolhardy adventurers willing to risk their lives to obtain such potentially useful materials.

Shark, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	School
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi (4)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Any evil
No. APPEARING:	3-12
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	Sw 24
HIT DICE:	5
THACO:	15
No. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (10+ long')
MORALE:	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	300
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Nil
PLAYER'S OPTION:	MAC 9



Athasian sharks are similar to sharks of other worlds in many ways. They are large, cartilaginous, seagoing invertebrates that are basically cold-hearted eating machines. They are long and gray, and their mouths are filled with row after row of sharp, vicious teeth. The skin of an Athasian shark is fairly tough, and it is from this material that most lizard man shields are made.

Combat: In a battle, sharks are deadly foes. They tend to hunt in packs, and a person floundering about in the water is usually easy prey. They are fast, striking like lightning, often hitting and darting away before the victim is even aware of what has happened. Because of this, up to 10 sharks can attack a man-sized opponent in a single round.

Habitat/Society: Sharks tend to travel in packs for purposes of both hunting and safety. There is very little that can stand up to a school of hungry sharks in their element. The one thing that poses a certain danger for them, though, is a dolphin. Make a morale check each time a group of sharks is outnumbered by dolphins. If the sharks fail, they immediately scatter and flee, leaving their wounded behind in their single-minded desire to escape the dolphins' wrath.

Athasian sharks (of which only a single species remains) are brighter than other sharks, but this translates more into animal cunning than any raw intelligence. They have been in constant conflict with the Last Sea's dolphin population since the valley's isolation nine millennia ago. Although they are bigger and stronger than their mammalian foes, they have no psionic abilities. Due mostly to this fact and their inability to formulate and stick to a decent battle plan, they have remained on the losing side of the majority of their battles with the dolphins. Occasionally they manage to victimize a lone dolphin, but rarely if ever are they able to sustain a serious attack against an entire pod.

Ecology: Little matters to sharks except where their next meal is coming from. While their favorite meal is undoubtedly dolphin, they are the ultimate omnivores, willing to eat pretty much anything. They can smell blood in the sea from up to a mile away, and once they get its scent, they will pursue it until either they find the source or discover that it has somehow gotten away.

Skyfish

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Flock
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi (2)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
No. APPEARING:	1-6
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	3, Fl 30 (B), Sw 24
HIT DICE:	1+1
THACO:	19
No. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5' -6' wingspan)
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	65
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Nil
PLAYER'S OPTION:	MAC 10



A skyfish is a special kind of amphibious creature that has the ability to survive both far below and high above the waves of Marnita. These creatures look like silvery sea bass with large batlike wings covered with scales instead of feathers. Their mouths end not in a beak but a ferocious set of teeth suitable for picking up and rending the smaller fish off of which they typically live.

The arches of the wings of a skyfish end in tiny claws which the animal can use to grip things while not using its wings for flying. When in the water, it folds these wings in close to itself so that it can swim with little resistance. To fly, a skyfish simply leaps out of the water and into the air and spreads its wings wide.

Combat: Skyfish rarely hunt in packs, preferring to take after their prey on their own. They like to circle high above the waves until they spot a smaller fish swimming near the surface. Then they dart in and carry the creature into the air, holding it in their mouth until it dies in the open air. Then they take the creature back into the water where they can finish their meal.

Skyfish will only bother people if the people are already bothering them. This happens occasionally when a fisher manages to catch one of these creatures on a line baited for other game. If the fisher can manage to reel the skyfish in, he is in for a tasty treat. Skyfish are considered to be one of the finest delicacies in Saragar. But to land his catch, the fisher is in for something of a battle.

Habitat/Society: Skyfish mate for life. They lay large, birdlike eggs, which they keep protected in underwater nests until hatched. While there are eggs or young to be protected, one of the parents stays with the precious things while the other hunts for food for the family. Skyfish usually hunt alone, but they have been known to band into flocks to take down large prey.

Ecology: The skyfish seems to have the best of both worlds. Since the creatures can breathe both air and water equally well, they can escape predators that are based solely in either element. For this reason, the skyfish population is always high. Were it not for the fact that the people of the Last Sea hunt these creatures for their tasty flesh, they might have literally overrun the entire valley. As it is, a canny fisher rarely has to wait long to find a skyfish in one of his nets.

Squark

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Last Sea
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (12)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
No. APPEARING:	1 (unique)
ARMOR CLASS:	5/0
MOVEMENT:	Sw 13, Jet 24
HIT DICE:	18
THACO:	5
No. OF ATTACKS:	9
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-12 (x2)/1-6 (x6)/3-18
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Constriction, psionics
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Ink, psionics
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	G (75' long)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	15,000
PSIONICS SUMMARY:	Dis 3/Sci 3/Dev 9; Ps 12; PSP 37 Att: Pb, Ew/Def: Mbk, Tw
PLAYER'S OPTION:	MAC 5



The squark is a legendary cross between a giant squid and a great white shark. It is unique in the Last Sea and therefore on all of Athas. It was trapped in Marnita when the Mind Lords closed the Barrier of Guardians. How old it was when this happened is unknown, but the monstrosity must be at least nine millennia old.

The squark has the front half of an extremely large shark, but instead of the tail and fins one would expect to find at the rear of such a creature, there are instead 10 long tentacles which make up the bulk of the creature's 75' length. The creature is entirely a deep crimson red from its nose to the end of its longest tentacle, except for the pinkish suckers on the inside of its tentacles, and its flat black eyes.

Combat: The squark's head is full of a dozen rows of three-inch-long, razor-sharp teeth. It can use these to rend a victim to shreds in mere seconds. The monster seems to favor this method of attack for its directness: This gets food into its mouth faster than any other way.

Two of the squark's tentacles are longer than the others. These are barbed and cause 2-12 points of damage when they hit. The other six do 1-6 points of damage each.

When the direct approach doesn't seem to work for whatever reason, the squark likes to grab a victim in its tentacles and constrict the poor soul while wrestling him into reach of its jaws. It can attack a single opponent with all eight of its tentacles at once, or it can constrict up to two foes at once with its larger tentacles, leaving the others free to attack normally.

Once a constricting tentacle hits, it then does 2d6 points of damage every round thereafter. A constricted character may have one or more arms pinned (01-25% both pinned, 26-50% left arm, 51-75% right arm, or 76-100% both arms). Constricted characters cannot cast any spells, but they can use weapons to attack the tentacle holding them, if they have at least one arm free. If one arm is free, the character's attack rolls suffer a penalty of -3. If both arms are free, the attack roll suffers only a -1 penalty.

The squark can drag a ship up to 40' long into the depths of Marnita by simply

wrapping its tremendous tentacles around the hapless craft and hauling it down. It can halt the movement of larger vessels with only one turn of dragging on their hulls. After six or more tentacles have squeezed the ship for three consecutive rounds, the vessel suffers damage as if it had been rammed, and it begins to take on water and sink.

The squark's head is AC 0, and its tentacles are AC 5. It takes 15 points of damage to sever a tentacle—20 for the larger ones. (These hit points are in addition to the hit points the creature gets from Hit Dice, and the tentacles will regenerate themselves entirely within two full weeks.) If four or more tentacles are severed, the monster will dive into the depths of the Last Sea to its nest, a full mile below the surface, squirting a cloud of ink behind it to cover its retreat. This ink cloud is 60 feet wide by 60 feet high and 80 feet long. The cloud is impossible to see through by any normal means.

In addition to all this, the squark is a wild talent. It has 86 PSPs, and its power of phase permits it to avoid nearly all deadly attacks. It also lets the creature enter and exit its subterranean lair buried beneath the deepest part of Marnita's floor. It uses the following attacks: mind thrust, psionic blast, and psychic crush. It also has these defenses: mental barrier, mind blank, and tower of iron will.

Habitat/Society: The squark is a solitary creature. There are no others of its kind. It has taken on a sort of legendary status with the people of Saragar, few of whom have actually ever seen the squark. This is for three reasons.

First, the squark hunts big game only rarely. It doesn't need much food, so it normally contents itself with the creatures that it finds on the bottom of the sea. The squark spends large amounts of time sleeping on the Last Sea's floor. Those who are unfortunate enough to somehow disturb its slumber can only hope that they will live to regret such a mistake.

Second, the Mind Lords know about the squark and have even managed to communicate with it upon occasion. They have made it clear that if the creature becomes too much of a nuisance to them, they will destroy it no matter what the cost. So far, the squark has respected the boundaries of the Mind Lords' people, and they usually respect its presence in return.

Third, since the squark lives in the deep sea, those who get close enough to actually see the creature often find that satisfying their curiosity their final act.

Ecology: The squark is at the top of the food chain in the valley of the Last Sea. The only creatures with any real hope to ever stand against it are the Mind Lords themselves. The squark is not a bully, though, and it has no delusions of taking over the entire Last Sea. It knows that without the Mind Lords' help, the Last Sea would disappear just like all others have, and that would mean its own end.

After nearly 10 millennia, the squark is content to simply live. Upon occasion, it becomes curious about a ship passing high overhead, and it hauls the vessel down to check out the contents for itself. Most of the sailors on the Last Sea know all about the squark, or at least about the no-go zone in the center of the sea. Those who cross the sea directly and regularly occasionally disappear without a trace. Although the local fishers believe it, no one can prove for certain what is the truth of the matter: that the squark is hauling such wayward vessel down into its domain.

The squark sometimes has some problems with young lizard men out to prove their bravery to their tribe. To touch the squark squarely on the nose is held to be one of the most insanely brave things that a person can do. Nearly all lizard men of patrol leader rank or greater have tried such a thing at least once. Some have even succeeded, but even more who left to try never came back.



Thesik

Mind Lord of the Last Sea
Male Human Psionicist, Lawful Evil

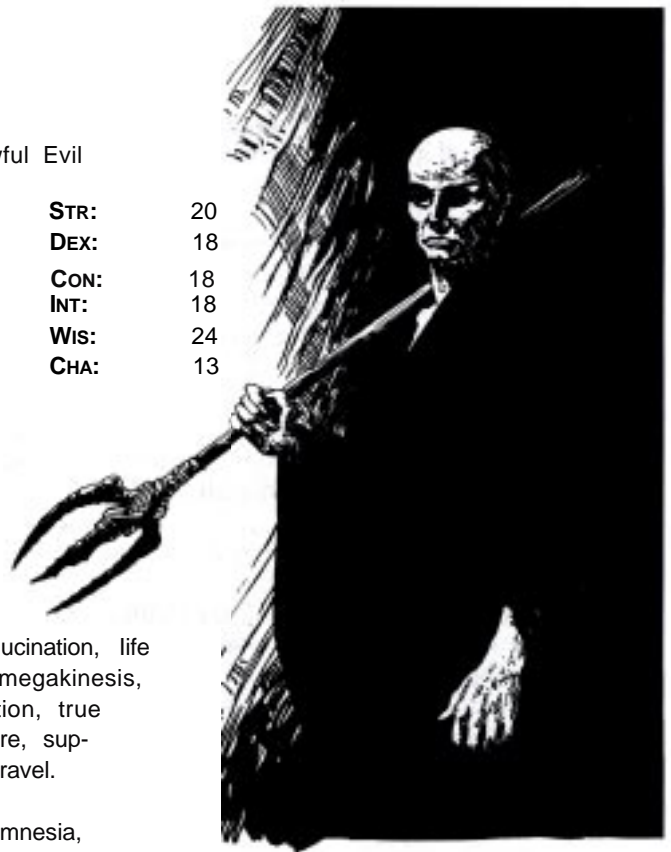
ARMOR CLASS:	n/a	STR:	20
MOVEMENT:	12	DEX:	18
LEVEL:	29	CON:	18
HIT POINTS:	84	INT:	18
THAC0:	6	WIS:	24
No. OF ATTACKS:	0	CHA:	13
MAC:	-1		
MTHAC0:	-8		
PSPs:	401		
PSIONIC ATTACKS:	All		
PSIONIC DEFENSES:	All		

Psionic Sciences:

Banishment, clairvoyance, death field, disintegrate, hallucination, life draining, mass domination, megakinesis, poison simulation, precognition, true sight, summon planar creature, suppress magic, teleport, time travel.

Psionic Devotions:

Aging, amnesia, animate shadow, awe, cannibalize, conceal thoughts, control light, create sound, danger sense, deflect, dimension walk, double pain, dream travel, ESP, ghost writing, incarnation awareness, inflict pain, invisibility, iron will, know location, mass manipulations, phobia amplification, predestination, prolong, psychic drain, radial navigation, receptacle, see magic, send thoughts, spirit sense, suspend animation, shadow walk, time dilation, time shift, true worship.



Thesik is one of the three Mind Lords of the Last Sea. As with his two compatriots, his psyche has been placed into an obsidian orb held in a secret chamber buried deep beneath Saragar's castle, ensuring his effective immortality. The visage that he shows to the people of the Last Sea is that of a tall, thin man in his late fifties. He is entirely bald, although his eyebrows are the same pitch black as his soulless eyes, but this is simply a mental projection of his orb. This image is no more substantial than the wind, but by combining it with some expert telekinesis, Thesik has been able to maintain the illusion that he is actually alive for centuries.

Thesik is worshipped by his people as the god of the dead, and he plays that role to the hilt. He is always seen dressed in long black robes, and his skin is so pale that it seem certain that he almost never stands for long in the rays of the sun. No matter how warm it may be, Thesik never sweats (he simply doesn't bother to make his image look like it does or even could). In short, to the Athasians of the Last Sea, he looks inhuman.

As the god of the dead, Thesik is reputed to visit people in their final hour and deliver them to the underworld. In one sense, this is true, as Thesik regularly collects the dead bodies of his people, teleporting them to his secret lab in the palace. There he conducts experiments on their dead brains.

Thesik believes that if he can ever fully understand the brain he might learn how to teach others to rapidly ascend to his level of power (which by then he will have left far behind, having truly become a godlike being). If this happens, it's conceivable that an army of such powerful psionicists would be able to exterminate the Sorcerer-Kings and subsequently every practitioner of magic on Athas. Then they could work to restore their planet to a new Green Age, a time that Thesik refers to as the Emerald Age.

Thesik claims to have seen this all come to pass in his mental journeys to the

future, but whether this is the truth or simply some figment of a mind unbalanced by so many years of living, it is impossible to tell. In any case, Thesik has been working on this research for many millennia now, and he seems no closer to a breakthrough than ever before. Still, such a mental leap forward could occur at any time.

Long ago at the height of the Green Age, Thesik was a top researcher at the Psionic Academy of Saragar. It was while he was teaching a class of promising novices that he met and fell in love with the fair Barani. She was bright and beautiful, his most promising student and the sole owner of his heart. She was everything to him.

For that reason, he brought her into his confidence and revealed to her exactly what it was that he was researching: the ultimate fate of Athas.

Thesik, along with his able colleague Kosveret, had finally come up with a means of mentally traveling forward in time. They had yet to perfect it, but with some fresh insights from Barani, they made rapid progress.

When they were ready, the trio sent young Barani forward in time far enough for her to actually witness the coming of the Sorcerer-Kings and the end of the Green Age. Upon her return, she was so distraught that the men originally thought the trip had unbalanced her mind. When they duplicated her trip themselves and came to comprehend the all-too-horrible truth, they hatched a scheme to take control of Saragar and protect Marnita from the ravages of time forever-or at least until Thesik's research is complete.

Role-Playing

Thesik's mind is usually occupied with things which he considers more important than the daily affairs of humanoid life. He generally ignores his people and any so-called matters of state unless they involve outsiders of some kind. He is vehement in his insistence that no wizardly magic be permitted within the Border of Guardians. If he finds that it has been, he will take matters into his own hands and may even pay the transgressors a personal visit.

Thesik is absent-minded and aloof. It seems that he has trouble maintaining his train of thought for more than a few minutes at a time. His research is always infringing on his every moment.

His rage can be terrible, though. The greatest source of that these days is Barani, his estranged wife. He knows that her mind has fragmented into two personalities: one that loves him and one that does not. He hopes that his research will provide him with the means to cure her (and possibly even Kosveret and himself) before it's too late.

He knows his mind is failing, and this is the most frustrating of all. After all, if the Mind Lords pass away, can the Last Sea be far behind?

Combat

In his guise as the god of death, Thesik uses his mental power to kill and maim opponents in loud and horrible ways. He prefers to use his awe power to cow potential attackers into submission before they even raise a hand against him, but when pressed, he fights back with devastating effect.

Since Thesik's image is insubstantial, it's immune to physical attacks (he attributes this to his phase power). If the Mind Lord is pressed mentally, though, he will simply deactivate his image, making it seem as if he has teleported to safety.



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Mind Lords of the Last Sea

by Matt Forbeck

“The very concept of an entire sea of water, a liquid jewel more precious than even the grandest diamond, defies conception by most Athasians. . . .”

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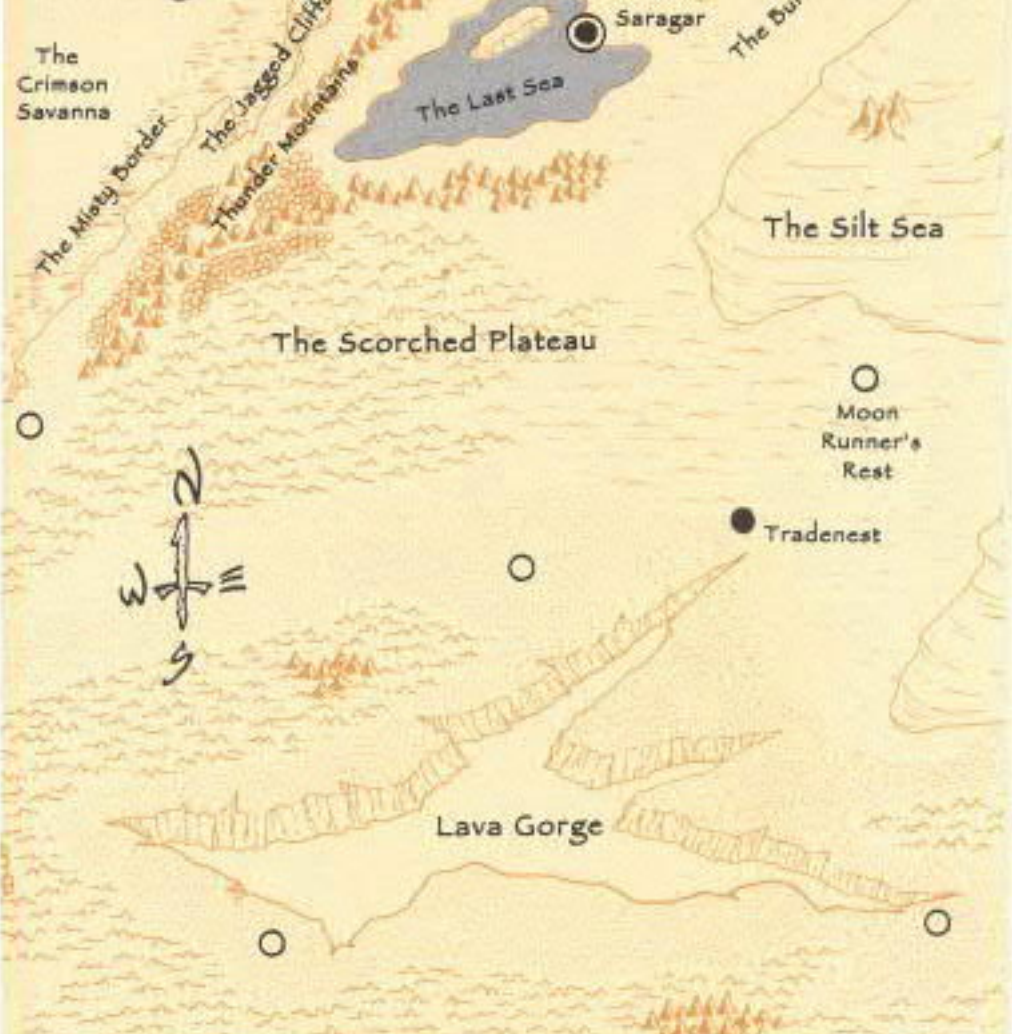
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In the Lands of the Last Sea



The Last Sea Region



	Mountains		Forest
	Rocky Badlands		Lake
	Stony Barrens		Scrub Plains
	Sandy Waste		Boulder Field
	Mud Flat		Village
	Misty Border		City
	Grasslands		Oasis

Fifty Miles

In the Lands of the Last Sea

An adventure for *The Mind Lords of the Last Sea*



by Matt Forbeck

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Dedication: This is for everyone who helped me in the Big Move.

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Introduction	4
The Adventure's Setting	4
The Adventure's Overview	6
Part 1: Welcome to the Last Sea	7
Prelude	7
Start	8
Outcome	9
Part 2: Allies and Foes	10
The Lawkeepers	11
The Underground	14
Blufftown	16

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Storm Giants	19
The Lizard Men	22
In the Halls of Kharzden	25
Part 3: Resolution	28
Kosveret's Lair	29





INTRODUCTION

In the Lands of the Last Sea is an adventure designed for a party of four to six player characters (PCs) of 6th through 8th level. The party should represent a good mix of character classes and races, although wizards would be well advised to keep the nature of their profession to themselves, as they will be welcomed by few residents of the Last Sea region.

If there is a chance that you as the reader will play a hero in this adventure, stop reading now. The information in this book is meant for the Dungeon Master (DM) only. If any player knows about the secrets contained in this book, such knowledge will destroy much of the tension otherwise brought about by encountering the unknown.

Before reading *In the Lands of the Last Sea*, be sure to examine the *Mind Lords of the Last Sea* sourcebook thoroughly. Knowing the information in that book is essential for understanding the material presented in this adventure book. *In the Lands of the Last Sea* refers back to the sourcebook for information on certain nonplayer characters (NPCs), customs, and locale information. Other NPCs and monsters pertinent to this adventure are included in this book. Some of them have notations in **color**; these are in reference to those players who are also using the PLAYER'S OPTION™ rules.

Besides this adventure book and the accompanying sourcebook, you will need copies of the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook (PHB)*, *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide (DMG)*, *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* accessory, and the *DARK SUN® Expanded and Revised Campaign Setting* boxed set. It would also be helpful to have copies of the *DARK SUN MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®*, Appendix I: *Terrors of the Desert* and the *DARK SUN MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*, Appendix II: *Terrors Beyond Tyr*.

Note that *In the Lands of the Last Sea* is only one of many different types of adventures that can take place in the region around Marnita. If you would like additional ideas for further adventures, simply read over the *Mind Lords of the Last Sea* sourcebook. Even if you decide not to run the adventure in this book, the information contained herein will aid you in your understanding of the dynamics of what goes on behind the happy facade presented by the Mind Lords of the Last Sea.

The Adventure's Setting

The tale of the Mind Lords and their efforts to save Marnita from the destruction that has occurred over the rest of Athas is described in some detail in the sourcebook accompanying this adventure. Still, there are some pertinent bits of information that have been left out of the sourcebook to keep them hidden from prying eyes.

The salvation of Marnita and its transformation into the Last Sea began nine millennia

ago with Marneet being visited by a strange phantom from the future. This vision wore many familiar faces (including those of each of the Mind Lords and even Marneet himself), and he went about making dire predictions. This event spurred Marneet into charging the Mind-Lords-to-be with a task: to find a way to peer into the future and determine what the mysterious visitor was trying to warn the lawmaker about.

Thesik, Kosveret, and Barani finally succeeded in fulfilling Marneet's wishes; these three learned the fate of their home world, and they were filled with fear. The Mind-Lords-to-be hatched a plan, however: If they could not save Athas, they could at least save their beloved Last Sea.

The trio wrested control of the region from Marneet, convinced they could forge a new future for Marnita, one in which happiness and prosperity ruled (perhaps sometimes by force). Their dream came to fruition, and they saved their adopted homeland from permanent destruction.

Since then, the dream has gone bad.

The people of the Last Sea are ruled mostly by fear of the lawkeepers and their harmonizers. Corruption runs rampant throughout the entire society, and even the vaunted Border of Guardians is leaking like a sieve. While the lives of most denizens of Marnita are far easier than those of the people of the Tyr region, they live under a more subtle kind of tyranny, one that many of the subjects have come to find almost pleasant.

The Mind Lords have gone mad, and now they pay little attention to their people. They have abandoned the populace to its fate while they struggle with the battles going on in their own minds, and that is the primary reason for why the "dream" has gone bad.

Barani's personality has fractured deeply, but when she is sad she keeps to herself, and when she's happy she is actually helpful to others—the beloved earth mother. Thesik's world is ruled by melancholy, and he rarely bothers to communicate with anyone, even his fellow Mind Lords.

Kosveret, however, is even farther removed from sanity. He is a dangerous lunatic. He is well known for his occasional random killings, but most people in the area look upon this as the price to be paid for living under gods who have ignored the rest of the world in favor of looking after their chosen children. What no one knows of, though, is Kosveret's new plan for remedying the situation at hand.

Kosveret has decided that something needs to be done to ensure the continuing salvation of the Last Sea. To his mind, the "salvation" of the Last Sea was quite possibly the worst mistake that the Mind Lords could have made. He believes it would have been better to have let nature take its course and turn the Last Sea into the same desert that has claimed the rest of the planet. If the Mind Lords can't be made to save the entire world, he reasons, they shouldn't do anything at all.

In his more lucid moments, Kosveret has concocted a daring scheme to psionically travel into the past to warn Marneet of the dangers that the Mind Lords present to both him and the Last Sea. If he succeeds in this, he believes he will be able to counteract the effects of Marneet's other visitor from the future.

Unfortunately for Kosveret, he believes he cannot reach back into the past without help. In the past, his trips through time were always assisted by Thesik and Barani. Since they will certainly not help him destroy all that they have worked so hard for, he must find another way.

In his madness, Kosveret has decided that there is a new kind of psionic ritual that he can perform that will amplify his power enough for him to be able to reach back into the past himself. The key component to this ritual is a number of humanoid brains taken fresh from live victims. Once Kosveret has collected enough of these brains, he will have the necessary power to pierce the veil of time and peer into the past.

As such, dead bodies have been turning up around the city, their heads strangely empty of the brains that were once housed in them. Since Kosveret actually teleports away the victim's brain after psionically destroying the person's mind, there are no physical markings to show how death has occurred. This fact is only noticeable after a thorough autopsy in which the skull cavity is cracked open.

Both the lawkeepers and the Underground have become aware of a rising murder rate, something entirely accountable for by the killings that Kosveret has committed. Since the mad Mind Lord wishes to keep his actions secret from Thesik and Barani (the only two with enough power to stop him), he has been trying to harvest his brains slowly. At first, he only killed one or two people a week, but the rate has

accelerated to nearly one person per day. Soon he will have all the brains he needs, and he will put his plan into effect.

The Adventure's Overview

The kicker, of course, is that the message Kosveret is attempting to prevent is actually the one he will personally deliver. If he succeeds in his mission, he will be the strange apparition who visited Marneet on that momentous night so very long ago.

It's up to the heroes to first figure out who is committing the strange murders. Once that's done, they need to determine why Kosveret is harvesting the brains and what he intends to do with them. Since they are very likely unaware of the big picture, they will probably attempt to prevent Kosveret from completing his scheme—at least they ought to!

Kosveret may easily be able to handle most parties of adventurers, so the heroes should feel free to call on the other Mind Lords for help. Of course, until they have some hard proof that Kosveret is behind the killings, the adventurers will be wasting their breath pleading with Thesik and Barani for aid.

If Kosveret manages to pull off his scheme, upon his return he will discover that nothing at all has changed. Realizing that it was he himself who went back in time and influenced Marneet, his madness will sicken his heart at what he perceives to be the folly of the Mind Lords. In a fit of rage, he will try to kill himself and anyone nearby.

If Kosveret's plan is foiled, the millennia between the time the mysterious wanderer was to have visited Marneet and the present is filled with desolation for the Last Sea. The area will instantly change into a desert, and no one that lives there now will ever have been born. The only one still around (besides the heroes, whose pasts are not involved with the Last Sea) will be Kosveret, immune to the change because he was attempting to travel through time when it occurred and was subsequently caught in a vortex for all those long centuries. Either the adventurers or Kosveret should be able to figure out what has happened. Upon seeing the utter destruction that has corrupted the once lovely region and realizing all the people who have died or were never born, Kosveret is filled with remorse, and his madness is lifted, at least temporarily. Working together, he and the adventurers should be able to repair the damage done, restoring the Last Sea to its pristine beauty.

In either case, the general status of the valley of the Last Sea remains unchanged in the end, although the stature of the heroes involved in the adventure is sure to have grown. This leaves the door open for many future adventures that should delight players for many sessions to come.





PART 1:

Welcome to the Last Sea

Assuming that the heroes have somehow made it inside the borders of the valley of the Last Sea, they still have yet to experience all that waits for them in this ever-mysterious land. Before they venture too far into the lands surrounding Marnita, though, they are accosted by a guardian of a different type: Kosveret himself. The psychotic Mind Lord is out hunting for victims again, and he is only too happy to take advantage of the arrival of newcomers to his land. After all, who's going to miss *them*?

The encounter will surely go badly for the adventurers unless they can somehow manage to distract Kosveret from his intended course of action. There are a number of ways to do this, some of which are outlined below. The easiest method is to hurt Kosveret, something which hasn't happened to him for some time.

The idea behind this encounter is to introduce the characters to the murderer lurking in the Last Sea and give them a personal stake in bringing about his downfall. If possible, Kosveret will steal the brain of one of the characters in the party. This should definitely get their attention-though at a tremendous cost.

At the end of the encounter, the heroes should be mad and scared. This creature that has killed one of their own is far stronger than any of them can possibly stand against, and that should set the tone for the adventure. Just as in a hard-boiled detective mystery, the adventurers are in far over their heads, and brains, not brawn, will carry the day.

Prelude

This encounter actually begins long before most of the adventurers are aware of it. One night while the heroes are sleeping, Kosveret teleports one of them away to his secret hiding place on the Lonely Butte. There, alone, the hero stands very little

chance against the Mind Lord, and he or she is soon knocked unconscious.

Once the victim has been rendered senseless, Kosveret assumes the hero's form and returns to the camp or room. During the following morning, Kosveret poses as the victim, entering into oddly inquisitive conversations with the heroes. Once they spot the inevitable discrepancies in the impostor's knowledge of the party and confront him with this, Kosveret reveals himself. The mad elf immediately attacks the adventurers, concentrating his efforts on the most powerful psionist in the party. Barring this, he'll go after the character with the highest Intelligence. He believes that more powerful brains will make his quest easier.

Before the game begins, take the character with the lowest Intelligence to one side and read the following to him or her:

As you sleep one night in the confines of the valley of the Last Sea, you are assaulted by strange dreams. When you awake, you are lying on bare stone in complete darkness. Suddenly, a light with no discernible source bursts into being above you. You hear the roar of unending thunder in the distance.

Looking around, you see that you are in a lofty chamber, perhaps 20 yards on each side. A large obsidian orb rests on an ivory pedestal in the far corner of the room. In another corner is what appears to be a large mound of brains of all shapes and sizes, packed in a tremendous bowl of crushed crystals from which a sensation of cold emanates. The brains appear to be perfectly preserved, almost as if they were still alive somehow, separated as they are from their rightful bodies.

You are distracted from gathering the rest of the details, however, by the sight of a skeletally thin elf standing in front of you. The elf's long blond hair is worn free, and it frames his face squarely. Your gaze is inevitably drawn to his burning eyes, which seem to be scorching directly into your brain.

At this point, Kosveret attacks the character psionically. The battle should be short and sweet. Once Kosveret manages to beat the hero's psyche into submission, everything fades to black for that character.

Explain to the player that you need him or her to run a different character for a period of time in the game. This character is identical to his or her own in form and function, except that it knows little or nothing about the rest of the party. In essence, it is a special sort of doppelganger. Feel free to mislead the player about the nature of the creature being played (perhaps implying that it is in fact a doppelganger or somesuch). That's the nature of a mystery.

Ask the player to make the new character as inquisitive and nosy as possible. At no point, though, can he or she directly tip off the other players as to what's going on. Pretend it's just some kind of twisted joke that the player is fortunate to be a part of.

Start

Once the prelude is complete, begin the morning after Kosveret has switched himself for one of the adventurers. Run through the day as you normally would, waiting for the rest of the heroes to figure out that their companion is not who he seems.

If need be, keep playing through the encounters in Part 2 of this book. Ideally, Kosveret shouldn't be with them by the end of that section of the adventure, though. If the heroes still haven't figured it out by the end of Part 2, however, Kosveret reveals himself to them, mocking their ability to observe their surroundings closely. How are they ever going to find him if they can't do so while he's right in their midst?

There are several ways in which the impostor can be revealed. Kosveret will not bother wasting energy on faking eating or drinking, refusing both when offered. Also, he will refuse to carry anything unless it is pressed upon him. If it is, he will drop the item at the nearest opportunity, no matter how valuable it may happen to be.

Kosveret is also extremely inquisitive. This fact alone could tip off some of the heroes if they stop to question why the character continues to ask questions about things he should obviously know about. Via his mind-reading powers, Kosveret knows a great deal about the character he is impersonating, but this does not extend any further.

Once the adventurers confront Kosveret about who he really is, read the following aloud:

You blink, and suddenly your friend is no longer there. One by one, the creature before you polymorphs into each of your forms in rapid succession. In the end, your friend has been replaced by a man who is tall and extremely thin, even for an elf. Long blond hair falls freely past his shoulders, it's pale sheen standing out in stark contrast to his well-tanned skin.

The elf's eyes begin to literally smolder and burn, flames apparently consuming his bushy eyebrows. He turns to [the most powerful psionist or most Intelligent person in the group], and says, "I'm so very pleased to finally meet you all for myself. I wish I had time to chat, but you've got something I need, and I'll be taking it now."

With this, Kosveret attacks. His first target will be the character he was talking to, but he can easily be dissuaded from taking this person's brain if things turn against him. In the end, it's likely that the heroes will be able to come up with some way to scratch Kosveret's cocky demeanor or, at the very least, escape the mad elf's attacks.

If this happens, Kosveret will turn to the most defenseless person around (either a PC or an NPC). After destroying this person's mind psionically, Kosveret teleports the victim's brain to his hideaway. When he does this, the elf will make a crack that implies that, while he didn't get what he wanted, he's not leaving the area empty-handed.

The Mind Lord will teleport back to his lair soon after and then teleport the person he had been impersonating back to join his or her fellows. Kosveret's first victim will be able to tell the others in the party of his or her strange experience.

It seems that Kosveret is getting sloppier as his plan gets closer to fruition. One might even think that the elf *wants* to get caught, and perhaps this is even true. His mind is stronger than just about anyone's, and his madness is correspondingly more subtle than most.

A full description of Kosveret and his powers and statistics can be found on page 82 of the *Mind Lords of the Last Sea* sourcebook.

Outcome

At the end of this encounter, one character will have returned from a near brush with death, and another will (most likely) be dead. If you are reluctant to have a player character die so abruptly, feel free to have Kosveret attack and kill a nonplayer character conveniently traveling with the party. If there normally isn't an NPC with the group, you can set them up with one earlier. This could be a native of the Last Sea or a guide or porter that the adventurers picked up on their way into the region.

In any case, the means of the character's death is mysterious. The only clue as to what has happened is that the corpse's nose is bleeding freely. Only a close inspection (an autopsy, for instance) will reveal that the victim's braincase is, in fact, empty.

This horrible state can only be entirely cured by a *resurrection* or a *raise dead* spell. The kind of high-level priests required to cast such spells can only be found in the tiny town of Shallat on the northern shore of the Last Sea. Both Duke Jaan and Duchess Shelistone are 10th-level priests, capable of casting *raise dead*, but for this spell to work, all essential body parts must be attached. Without the character's brain, the corpse would only live for bare minutes after the spell was cast. Of course, the brain could be *regenerated*, but this is a 7th-level spell, and *resurrection* (also a 7th-level spell) would be more effective.

Unless the characters have the means to cast *resurrection* themselves, the only way to restore their fallen comrade to health is to get back his or her brain and return it to its body. Only then will the Shallatian's healing powers prove useful to the dead adventurer.

Thus a race against time begins. The longer that the heroes' friend is dead, the harder it will be to resurrect him or her, and the greater the chance that the brain will be irreparably damaged. To find the culprit, the adventurers must interact with the people of the Last Sea, sometimes forcibly, to gather the information that will lead them to the person they seek—the mysterious elf with the pile of living brains.



PART 2:

Allies and Foes

Now that the adventurers' goal has been set, it's time for them to become even more deeply enmeshed in the strange scheme they have been involuntarily caught up in. These scenarios are designed to show the heroes that what has befallen their friend is not an isolated incident. In fact, a rash of such murders has plagued the valley for weeks now, although the incidents have been particularly bad in Saragar.

The lawkeepers of Saragar are tearing their collective hair out trying to track down the killer. Lawkeeper Efkeno has his own suspicions about who is responsible, but the Mind Lords have refused to discuss any such possibilities with him.

Barani is in her "earth mother" personality right now, and although she is concerned about the killings, she is more worried about caring for the victims' relatives than any kind of retribution. Thesik, on the other hand, is extremely worried about Kosveret, for he is aware that his old friend has removed the obsidian orb that houses his psyche from its resting place next to the other two Mind Lords' orbs, but Thesik has no idea where the mad elf has taken himself to.

The Underground (via some of its members that happen to be harmonizers) also has a good idea about what's happening. It wants to expose Kosveret for who he is, proving to the people of Saragar that they should rise up against him and their other secret oppressors, the trio that has tyrannically kept everyone happy for so long.

The lizard men have also had some of the mysterious murders plaguing their people. Those that support Nelyrox are entirely bewildered by the murders, but they suspect that this might be some sort of power-play by Xhenrid and her followers. Xhenrid, through her contacts in the Underground, believes that Kosveret might actually be behind the killings, but without proof she knows that King Nelyrox could use this opportunity to hang her out to dry.

Even the storm giants have suffered at the mind of Kosveret. He has taken two of their number in the last few days. These are the first unnatural deaths for a storm giant in the tribe's memory, and this fact has shaken them all to the bone.

As the heroes wander about looking for clues to the location of their friend's brain, they will have many encounters. If they are honest with those they meet, they will find people extremely willing to cooperate with them. These killings have got everyone scared.

That the characters are outsiders is a double-edged sword. On one hand, the fact



that the heroes are unknown will make them instant suspects. On the other, the fact that they are uninvolved in the politics of the region makes them instantly more trustworthy than most. In nearly all cases, the adventurers will be met with a great deal of initial suspicion. If things go well, though, they should be able to convince their new acquaintances of their innocence in the murders and the fact that they could be helpful in the search for the killer.

The following encounters can be run in any order that is appropriate for the players and the mood that has been set for them. Use as many or as few of them as is appropriate for the party. These encounters will provide valuable clues that the player characters need to figure out who is causing the murders as well as giving them information on what may need to be done to prevent the Mind Lord's nefarious plan.

Once the adventurers have figured out that Kosveret is behind the murders, the encounters in this part of the adventure show the heroes how they can find the Mind Lord. When they find that out, they're ready for the final confrontation, "Part 3: Resolution."

The Lawkeepers

The city of Saragar is today a city gripped by fear, what with the increasing number of murders and the mad actions of the three Mind Lords. Few in the area are as happy as the laws of the Mind Lords mandate that they should be. The lawkeepers are themselves almost in despair. They try to maintain a confident appearance for the benefit of the general public while they flounder about, hoping to be able to pin the murders on some convenient soul.

In fact, the lawkeepers have already hauled in nearly a dozen suspected murderers and "harmonized" them. Unfortunately, this hasn't done any good, for the killings have continued unabated. In fact, the last person to be harmonized was recently found dead—his brain missing.

As outsiders, the heroes are instantly suspects in the murders. As soon as a lawkeeper spots them, he will try to arrest them. If they resist, he will sound the general alarm. The entire city will then be after the heroes until they are either captured or chased well beyond Saragar's borders.

Read the following aloud as the adventurers walk through the city of Saragar:

You are strolling through Saragar's streets. This is a city unlike no other you have ever seen. The roads are clean and seemingly untouched by offal. The buildings are nearly all in good repair. The people seem inordinately friendly and helpful.

As you turn a corner, you nearly bump into a short man with short, dark hair. He looks up at you angrily, and you realize that his is the first unsmiling face you've seen since you've entered Saragar. He is wearing a short, white robe trimmed with blue designs along the hem. A glint of metal peeps beneath the pristine cloth—chainmail! A long sword in an exquisite scabbard hangs at his waist, and he carries a small wooden shield banded with steel. As he takes in your strange countenances and your obviously foreign dress, a smile grows upon his face.

"Hello, travelers," he intones, his smile broadening into a grin. "Welcome to our fair city of Saragar. I would be most obliged if you would come with me so that I may orient you to what we have to offer."

As you look around, you notice that the traffic on the street has come to a dead halt, and the eyes of all are turned on you, waiting to see what your response will be.

The lone lawkeeper is a man named Srantan. He has recently joined the ranks of the lawkeepers, and he is looking to make a name for himself. He figures that hauling in a group of outsiders single-handedly would work quite nicely. Likely outcomes are as follows:

- If the adventurers go along with Srantan, he leads them to the lawkeeper's headquarters, located in the palace. There he turns them over to Lawkeeper Efkeno himself in a highly pompous display.
- If the adventurers refuse to accompany Srantan, he demands that they do. If they continue to thwart his plan, he threatens to bring down the entire lawkeeping force on their heads. "Things will go better for you later if you cooperate now," he will tell them. If the heroes continue to defy Srantan, he makes good on his threat, psionically calling in enough backup to trap the adventurers and haul them in. There should be two lawkeepers for each member of the party, and more can be called in if necessary. When confronted by the force before them, most PCs will give in. If they continue to resist, however, the lawkeepers attempt to subdue them without hurting them (at least not too much). In defense of their own lives, though, the lawkeepers are only too willing to use lethal force.
- If the heroes are captured, they are taken to Lawkeeper Efkeno, just as if they'd come along peacefully. This time, however, they are stripped of everything they own other than their clothing.

In any case, when the heroes are brought before Efkeno, they find the chief lawkeeper to be an entirely reasonable man. He questions them briefly but thoroughly, occasionally probing their minds psionically to determine whether they are telling the truth.

Once Efkeno ascertains that they are not behind the killings (which should be fairly obvious if the adventurers are only newly arrived to the region), he turns to Srantan and berates the man for his idiocy. This dressing down is harsh and even more so if the adventurers had to be taken in by force. "It's one thing to abuse your power on the street, far from prying eyes," Efkeno states, "but it's another thing entirely to unwillingly drag half of the lawkeeper force into it with you."

After Efkeno finishes with Srantan, he turns his attention back to the heroes. Any items confiscated are returned to them immediately. Efkeno apologizes for Srantan's zealotry. "What with the killings," he says, "the entire city is on edge."

This is an opportunity for the heroes to ask Efkeno about the murders. They should now make the connection between the crime rash and their fallen comrade (if they haven't already). If they reveal their own story to Efkeno, the lawkeeper mulls it over for a moment and then makes the heroes a proposition.

The lawkeepers have been tracking down leads as to the killer's identity for weeks. Most of them have been dead ends. However, the one that they haven't been able to check out is whether the murderer is working out of Blufftown.

Lawkeepers discovered in Blufftown are hurled back into the sea without the benefit of the elevator system. As obvious outsiders, the adventurers would be beyond reproach. No one would even think to insinuate that they were connected to the lawkeepers.

Efkenu tells the heroes that there is supposedly a dwarf in Blufftown called Grantuo. Sources say that Grantuo knows something about where the murderer is located, but he's been holed up in Blufftown for weeks and isn't talking. Efkenu thinks the Underground might be sheltering the dwarf.

His pet theory (although he really knows better) is that the Underground has been committing the murders themselves with the eventual aim of pinning them on Kosveret, the mostly absent Mind Lord. This would so deeply shake the faith of the people of Saragar as to make revolution a real possibility for the first time ever.

In any case, after Efkenu is done with them, the heroes are freed and allowed to go on their way. Srantan catches up with them at the palace gate and hisses after them that their usefulness is limited. "Once you're through poking around for answers that you'll never find," Srantan declares, "Efkenu won't need you any more! And then you'll pay for embarrassing me so!" If the adventurers move toward him, he runs back to the safety of the palace, laughing maniacally the entire way.

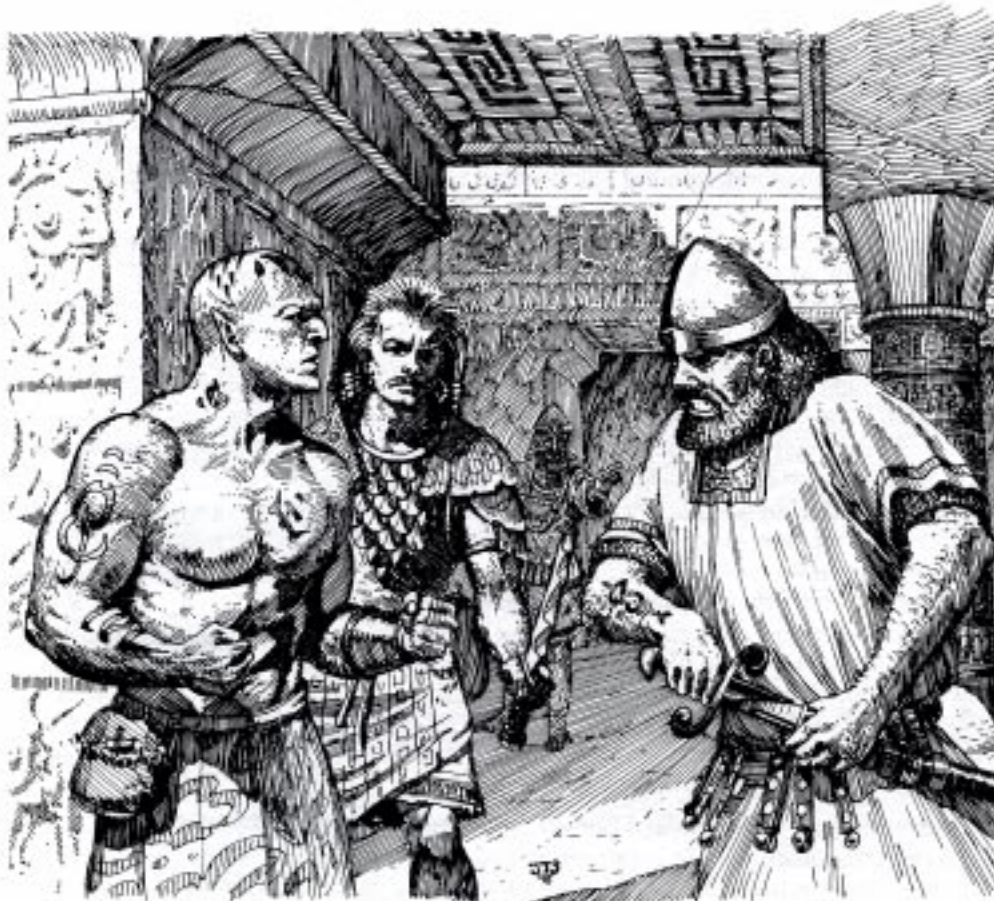
Encounter Statistics

Srantan (Proctor)

Human male psionicist (5th level): AC 4 (chain and shield); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18 (long sword); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); SZ M (5'4" tall); ML Steady (11); AL LN.

Personality: Brash, devious, bullying

Special equipment: None



Psionics Summary:

PSPs: 34

Psionic attacks: Ego whip, mind thrust, psionic blast

Psionic defenses: Mental barrier, mind block, thought shield

Psionic powers: Control light, deflect, detonate, domination, ESP, inflict pain, phobia amplification, stasis field, telekinesis, truthhear

Player's Option: #AT: 1; MTHACO: 16, MAC: 8

For Lawkeeper Efken's statistics, see page 85 of the *Mind Lords of the Last Sea* sourcebook. There is also a lot of information about lawkeepers there. For the standard proctor chasing after the heroes (if that does come to pass), use Srantan's statistics above, altering them a bit from proctor to proctor for variety's sake.

The Underground

The Underground is in a panic. The murders that Kosveret has been committing have had a dire effect on the organization's morale. Half the Underground feels that now is the time to reveal the identity of the killer. Once the people realize it is one of their "gods" who is stealing brains, the people cannot fail to finally realize the absolute horror of the regime under which they have been living—right?

The more cautious half of the Underground points out quite plainly that there is no direct evidence to connect Kosveret to the killings. Certainly, there are some eye-witnesses, but with so many psionics in the city, seeing a person commit a crime is hardly conclusive evidence that it was actually that person committing the crime; it could just as easily have been someone attempting to plant such a suggestion.

The lawkeepers may not need solid proof to convict someone of a crime, but the Underground's accusations will not be tried in any court of law. Instead, it will be the people who will determine for themselves the veracity of the claims of Kosveret's guilt. Predictably, people who have long worshiped a creature as a god are bound to be reluctant to think their deity capable of such a crime.

So it is that the Underground has reluctantly decided not to act until further evidence against Kosveret can be gathered. No one is sure exactly how much proof will be needed, but the best possible situation would be to catch Kosveret red-handed in front of hundreds of impeccable eye-witnesses, or to figure out what he's planning to do with all those missing brains.

To this end, the Underground has decided to approach the adventurers for assistance, basing their decision on reasons similar to those of the lawkeepers. After all, as outsiders, the heroes have no vested interest in pinning the crimes on anyone; they only want to get back their friend's brain.

After the adventurers wander into a tavern in one of the many towns along the shore of the Last Sea (not including Saragar), read aloud the following:

You step into the tavern, and all voices fall silent. A small fire burns merrily in the corner, its staccato crackling the loudest sound in the room other than the thrumming of your own heartbeat. All eyes are upon you and your comrades. Most of the faces you see belong to fisherfolk and barge drivers, hale and hearty men and women bronzed by long hours of exposure to the sun. In the far corner, one weathered old man—more wrinkled than even his amazingly ancient outfit—cackles softly to himself, oblivious to his surroundings.

Almost as one, the people turn away from you and turn their attentions back to their conversations, their card games, and their ales. A middle-aged man who is sitting with the withered old salt in the corner rises and looks at you. He is well tanned, with dark eyes and long hair bleached blond by many sunny days on the water's surface. He motions subtly for you to follow him and then exits the tavern through the rear door.

The man that has just walked outside is Severick, a lieutenant in the Underground. Since the Underground is constructed in the classic revolutionary cell structure, few people in the organization know each other (at least theoretically this

is so). In practice, outside of Saragar most Undergrounders know each other through other means, and the secret that Severick is a powerful member of the Underground is a poorly kept one.

Severick has taken it upon himself to contact these outsiders and petition them for aid in his quest to prove that Kosveret has been stealing his citizens' brains. He doesn't have the general support of the rest of the Underground (not that there's any means of gathering a consensus anyhow), but this will hardly stop him from misrepresenting that fact.

Out back of the tavern, Severick admits that he is in fact a lieutenant in the Underground. He tells the heroes about the Underground and their goal to overthrow the Mind Lords' rule over the Last Sea. He's a bit fuzzy about the exact means that the Underground plans to use to bring this dream into reality, and about just what the people of the Last Sea are going to do without the Mind Lords. But he knows that the lords are bad news and must be stopped.

Severick reveals that the Underground knows the killer is Kosveret. They have several eyewitnesses that are willing to testify to this fact, but none of them have been taken seriously by the lawkeepers or the general populace.

One of the witnesses is the old man Severick was talking to in the tavern. His name is Jalshton, a man who's been sailing the Last Sea for the past fifty years. If asked, Jalshton is happy to relate his story. It's hard sometimes to understand what he's saying, what with his mostly toothless mouth and nearly unintelligible slurring, but characters who listen carefully will be able to pick out what he's saying.

Jalshton's youngest son was killed by Kosveret while Jalshton was being held captive. He vows to do anything within his power to help the heroes bring the killer to justice. His story matches up exactly with that of the hero who was kidnapped by Kosveret during Part 1 of this adventure. This alone should lend credibility to the old man's story, but Severick also swears that he has at least six others of whom he knows personally that have similar stories.

The old man is sure the killer is Kosveret and not an impostor. When he was a boy, Jalshton was an athletic and daring young man. He used to sail the sea alone on his sailboard, often going much farther out than anyone should by himself. One day, he happened upon the squark, the mighty beast of the Last Sea's depths.

The squark tipped over Jalshton's sailboard and was about to make a feast of him when the boy was suddenly raised into the air by an unseen force. As the squark turned the youth's sailboard into toothpicks, Jalshton looked up to see Kosveret hovering above him, a wide grin on his face. "A sad world it would be," he said as he left the boy safe and dry on the shore, "if every daredevil died young."

Embarrassed by his foolhardiness and sure that no one would ever believe his miraculous story, Jalshton kept the event to himself, telling no one. When he was captured by Kosveret fifty years later, the elf said to him, "Some daredevils, it seems, live longer than others."

Jalshton is certain that this proves it had to be the Mind Lord who killed his son and not some impostor. Severick is quick to point out that someone could easily have probed Jalshton's mind to learn the details of such a story and used it to add to the illusion that the creature responsible for the murders was Kosveret. Regardless of his willingness to play devil's advocate, Severick clearly believes the old man is correct. The Underground lieutenant needs some help proving his claims, though. That's where the adventurers come in. Severick tells them that he believes Kosveret is hiding out somewhere on the Lonely Butte.

If the characters have already talked to the lawkeepers, they may ask if the mad psionicist could be in Blufftown. Severick will swear up and down that this is impossible. The Underground has many contacts in Blufftown through the owner of one of the two taverns there: Sitko.

Severick is unaware that Sitko is actually the leader of the Underground, and this is intentionally so. Sitko trusts no one, least of all a loud-mouth like Severick.

By the end of this encounter the adventurers ought to be fairly sure that Kosveret (or someone doing an excellent impersonation of him) is the person they're looking for. Finding him, however, is another matter entirely, particularly considering the conflicting information they're being given by the different parties with whom they are talking.

Encounter Statistics

Severick (Underground Lieutenant)

Human male psionist (5th level): AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 21; THAC0 18 (short sword); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SZ M (5'4" tall); ML Steady (11); AL LN

Personality: Brash, devious, impulsive

Special equipment: None

Psionics Summary:

PSPs: 34

Psionic attacks: Ego whip, mind thrust, psionic blast

Psionic defenses: Mental barrier, mind block, thought shield

Psionic powers: Control light, deflect, detonate, domination, inflict pain, phobia amplification, stasis field, telekinesis, truthhear

Player's Option: #AT: 1, MTHAC0: 16, MAC: 8

Jalshton (Elderly Sailor)

Human male fighter (2nd level): AC 10 (none); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4-1 (bone dagger); SZ M (5 feet tall); ML Average (9); AL CN

Personality: Garrulous, addlepat, vengeful

Special equipment: None

Blufftown

Blufftown is a rugged place in which the dregs of the Last Sea's many societies can find a home. There are no laws on the Lonely Butte, and the only justice than one can expect is the kind a man can carve for himself with the edge of a sword. It's just the kind of place where adventurers can find whatever sort of trouble that they're looking for.

There are two inns in Blufftown (the only two buildings in the entire town): Ordean's and Sitko's. The proprietor of Sitko's is secretly the elusive leader of the Underground, and his place is a haven for those who wish to overthrow the government of Saragar. Ordean's, on the other hand, is where those who have less politically motivated nasty streaks tend to make their home.

No one in Sitko's knows much about the killings, although most of the patrons believe Kosveret is behind them. In their way of thinking, it was only a matter of time before the Mind Lords decided that the best way to handle the Underground was to kill them all off.

It's true that some of the victims were members of the Underground, but hardly all of them. However, because of the secretive and cellular nature of the revolutionary group, it is conceivable that each of the victims was somehow connected to the Underground. Since many Undergrounders are paranoid (often rightfully so, it must be admitted), this theory has many supporters at Sitko's.

In any case, no one at Sitko's knows anything more about the killings than that they have happened and that Kosveret is likely involved. If the adventurers are smart, though, they'll check out Ordean's, where they'll find a solid lead as to the rogue Mind Lord's current location.

The DM will want to refer to the *Mind Lords of the Last Sea* sourcebook for further information on Blufftown and its inhabitants. This encounter starts with the characters being hauled up into Blufftown via the elevator's basket. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

You can taste the salt in the wind as the creaking wicker basket drags you out of the water and up the jagged cliff face, swinging back and forth gently, occasionally coming precariously close to scraping against the rocks. Deep gashes in the side of the basket offer proof of where this has happened before.

Blufftown is literally a hole in the wall, and as you get closer and closer to that hole, the lift suddenly creaks and then comes to a stop.

In one of its periodic fits of incompetence, the obsidian orb in charge of operat-

ing the lift has malfunctioned. It's up to the heroes to find a way off the thing before it decides to let go entirely, plunging the basket into the water 40 feet below. The basket isn't watertight, and it will sink rapidly if it falls into the water. Characters who cannot swim are then in for a real problem.

The heroes have 3d4 rounds before the orb holding the basket decides to give way. If the characters are smart, they'll take any method that can get them up to Blufftown (or down to the boat from which they've just left) before their time is up. Adventurers who are strong enough can try climbing up the ropes that haul the basket up and down. Or perhaps they can swing the basket back and forth enough so that they can reach the nearby wall and climb up it instead. This has the benefit of allowing many of the characters to exit the basket at once as opposed to climbing up the rope one at a time.

As soon as the lift halts, a crowd will form at the lift's landing, out of morbid curiosity. For the most part, the adventurers can expect no help from these desperadoes. Few of them believe in sticking their neck out for others.

Sitko is one exception to this rule. After 1d6 rounds, Sitko will arrive at the lift landing with a coil of rope. He will throw one end down to the heroes and persuade some of the patrons of his inn to give him a hand hauling them up. The customers will moan and groan, but they'll comply with Sitko's wishes. After all, without his good will, they might be forced to lodge at Ordean's instead.

Assuming the adventurers eventually make it up to Blufftown one way or another, Sitko invites them to his tavern for a drink to calm their nerves. The first round is on him.

If the heroes have already been approached by the Underground, Sitko identifies them by the description that Severick has put out on the Underground telegraph, a means by which Undergrounders that know each other can rapidly disseminate information via a telepathic net. Otherwise, Sitko is in the dark as to who they are.

In any case, Sitko knows that most Undergrounders are convinced that Kosveret is the killer, but he's not so sure. In a society populated by psionics, it's all too easy to frame someone for a crime. If it turns out that Kosveret is behind the slayings, Sitko plans to finally reveal himself as the head of the Underground and lead the revolution against the Mind Lords. He is not ready to do this without proof, though, as he knows it would be nearly impossible to garner enough public support otherwise.

If the heroes inquire about the killings, Sitko is of little help. He does know that the storm giants on the Lonely Butte have suffered some losses lately, and he offers that information. As powerful as these creatures are, he says, perhaps they have some special knowledge of what has happened and who is behind the murders.

Although Sitko has had good relations with the storm giants in the past, he has heard their mourning cries echoing out over the Last Sea for the last three nights, and he is afraid to venture topside to investigate what has happened. However, he is more than happy to send the adventurers off as a kind of advance scouting force to determine why the giants are in such obvious pain.

Thorough adventurers may decide to check out Ordean's as well. There they find a much less welcome reception. Ordean and his customers spend most of their time looking for trouble, and the heroes are fresh meat for their ravenous appetites. First off, they tease the adventurers mercilessly for getting caught in the lift and for the way that they got themselves out (if in fact they were graceless in their attempts).

If the razzing fails to get the PCs' collective ire, one burly pirate steps up to them and tries to pick a fight. He isn't willing to take no for an answer. He won't throw the first punch if he can help it (mostly because Ordean's policy is to have those who start the actual fight pay for any damages).

If the heroes finally respond to the pirate's taunts, suddenly everyone else in the room (with two notable exceptions: Ordean and a drunken dwarf) joins in. There are roughly twice as many patrons ready to fight as there are members in the party. The barfight continues until the heroes manage to knock out at least one opponent for each member of their party. By that time, the desire to fight goes out of the rest of the combatants; they retire to their respective corners, leaving the unconscious patrons on the floor to crawl away and lick their wounds later.



When the fight is over, Ordean tries to stick the heroes with a bill for any damages. If they pay up, he offers to buy them a round or two of drinks to show that there's no hard feelings. If they refuse, he demands that they leave. If they again refuse, the remainder of the inn's patrons rise to their feet again, ready to enforce the innkeeper's wishes.

Later, even if the adventurers are no longer in Ordean's, the drunken dwarf approaches them with a tale he insists they hear. He was part of a work detail of dwarves that carved out a secret room in the cliff wall behind the Big Falls. The job was commissioned by Kosveret himself. Once it was completed, the dwarves were paid off in blood—that is, Kosveret killed each of them off, one by one, all save this dwarf.

The dwarf, a sly creature by the name of Grantuo, managed to sneak off, escaping the Mind Lord's wrath. He made his way to Blufftown, figuring it was the only place in the entire region where he could find safety. Since then, he's been masking his misery in an ale-induced fog. He's hoping to find some way to get out the valley altogether, and he begs the adventurers to take him with them when they leave.

As Grantuo finishes his tale, his eyes fly open wide, and the alcoholic stupor in which he has been drowning himself vanishes. He pitches forward suddenly with a horrible gag as his last words catch in his mouth. When the heroes turn him over, blood is flowing freely from his nose. A thorough examination reveals that Grantuo's brain is gone.

By the end of this encounter, the heroes should have a good idea where Kosveret's hideout is. If they fail to run into Grantuo in Blufftown, they can always stumble across him elsewhere—such as at the town of Kharzden, a mining community populated mostly by dwarves, if that's the direction the adventure takes. Likewise, adventurers who have some familiarity of the region may think to inquire at Kharzden anyway, perhaps hoping to find some miner dwarves who might confirm rumors about Kosveret's new lair. See "In the Halls of Kharzden" (below) for how to handle this possibility.

Encounter Statistics

Sitko (Underground Leader)

Human male psionist (7th level): AC 7 (padded); MV 12; hp 34; THAC0 17 (long sword); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); SZ M (6 feet tall); ML Fanatic (18); AL CG
Personality: Loyal, charismatic, rebellious
Special equipment: None

Psionics Summary:

PSPs: 52

Psionic attacks: Ego whip, id insinuation, mind thrust, psionic blast

Psionic defenses: Mental barrier, mind block, thought shield, tower of iron will

Psionic powers: Alter features, complete healing, heightened senses, phase, probability manipulation, sensitivity to observation, superior invisibility, teleport, true sight, watcher's ward

Player's Option: #AT: 3/2, MTHAC0: 14, MAC: 7

Ordean (Innkeeper)

Human male fighter (6th level): AC 5 (chain); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (*long sword +1*), 1d4+2 (*heavy crossbow of speed*); SZ M (5'7" tall); ML Steady (11); AL N
Personality: Untrustworthy, bigoted, rough
Special equipment: *Long sword +1, heavy crossbow of speed*

Bar Patron

Human male fighter (2nd level): AC 10 (none); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 19 (knife); #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 (knife); SZ M (6 feet tall); ML Average (9); AL N; XP 35
Personality: Abrasive
Special equipment: None

The Storm Giants

The storm giant village atop the Lonely Butte is in mourning. Two of their number have recently been killed, their brains taken away by Kosveret for use in his arcane plans. Due to this, they are extremely suspicious of outsiders at this point, even more so than they usually are.

If the heroes are brave enough, though, and strong enough, they may be able to find a way to discuss Kosveret's attack with the surviving members of the tribe. If they succeed in this, they will gain a powerful set of allies.


Of course, getting to the storm giant village is not easy. First the adventurers have to get to the top of the butte. The most straightforward way of doing so is by taking the lift up the side of the waterfall that spills into Blufftown. After their experience in the other lift, the heroes may be wary of getting into such a contraption again, but unless they can concoct another solution to this problem, the second lift may be their only route into the jungle waiting above.

Once atop the butte, the heroes must struggle their way across the place's verdant surface. Characters that have always had a clear, cloudless sky to guide themselves by may find themselves lost under the thick, unbroken canopy of the trees that cover the butte like a moss on a log (something else the heroes are unlikely to be familiar with).

This is a perfect time for a random encounter or two. There are several creatures that live on the butte whose ancestors were trapped here at the end of the Green Age. Their like exists nowhere else on the entire planet, and they are bound to seem strange and wondrous to people from the Tyr region or anywhere else outside of the valley of the Last Sea.

Jhoot, the head of the rapidly dwindling storm giant family, is a pleasant and intelligent sort of giant. Considering the relative intelligence of most other giants on the planet, this may be a shock for the heroes. Jhoot's years have brought him hard-won wisdom, and he normally keeps a tight reign on the other members of the tribe.

The recent killings have made matters difficult, though. The younger members of



the family, most notably two youths named Krander and Branto, are itching to break free of their de facto island prison. They dream of hunting down and taking vengeance on the creature that killed their parents (Kosveret's victims were husband and wife). They evaluate all outsiders by two criteria determined entirely by their thirst for revenge: were the people involved in the killing? Or can they help the young giants in their quest?

Once the adventurers have been wandering around the Lonely Butte for long enough and you've determined that they are finally approaching the storm giant village, read the following aloud:

As you struggle through the jungle undergrowth, clearing the path before you with your weapons, you curse the plants and the water in a way that earlier that day you would have never thought possible. The greenery all about you and underfoot does nothing but get in your way so much that you almost find yourselves longing for an open desert to pad across. The air itself is so thick with water that you feel like you could almost drink from a passing breeze—if any such wind could ever manage to penetrate the thick trees or even the dead air.

Of course, although the air is not moving, it is hardly still. The cries and calls of dozens of strange animals fill the air, along with those of the colorfully feathered birds that flit to and fro over your heads. Occasionally the scream of a gigantic bird splits the air from high above the canopy, far out of sight, and shivers run up and down your spines despite the oppressiveness of the jungle heat.

Suddenly, a mammoth creature leaps upon you from either side of the rough trail—if it could be so generously called that. Although they remind you of the giants you've seen elsewhere on Athas, they appear more civilized and regal—hardly savage at all. They wear huge, rough-made tunics, belted at the waist, and their eyes gleams with intelligence. Still, they each have an extremely well-made and sharp-looking, mammoth two-handed sword leveled directly at you.

"Who goes there?" the one to your right rumbles lowly yet distinctly. You know by the fiery look in the creature's dinner-plate eyes that upon this answer may depend your very lives.

Krande and Branto are out patrolling the Lonely Butte, hoping to find some sort of clues as to who killed their parents and where they might be found. They are hampered by their inability to leave the island for fear of immediate repercussions from the Mind Lords, but they have been discussing between themselves attempting just such a feat.

Normally young storm giants such as these wouldn't have a chance of catching anyone unawares, but the heroes have been making a lot of noise stumbling through the unfamiliar terrain. The duo heard the adventurers coming from a long way off, and they have been lying in wait for them for the past half-hour, hoping that the intruders would come this way.

Now that they've got the heroes where they want them, Krander and Branto aren't really too sure what to do with them. At first, they poke their swords at them and talk rough and aggressive, trying to provoke a fight. If the heroes take the bait, then the two young giants do battle with them. If it becomes apparent that the heroes are too strong for them, Krander and Branto retreat toward the village, sounding the general alarm, convinced that they have found their parents' killers.

If, as is probably more likely, the two giants find the heroes incapable of standing against them in armed conflict, they stand down and lower their swords, laughing at themselves for thinking for even a moment that such people could have harmed two giants as powerful as their parents. In this case, they still want to talk to these outsiders. Criker and his pirates have not been around since the two giants were murdered, and Sitko has been afraid to set foot on the butte. As such, the giants have had no news from off the butte for over a week.

The storm giants had heard some rumors about the killings over the past couple months, but like most rumors from Saragar, they had considered them an external matter, nothing for them to be concerned about. Too late, they realized that what they don't know about actually can hurt them. They are eager now to learn more about what's happening without leaving the Lonely Butte, to which they have long since been banished.

Unfortunately, they don't know the identity of the killer or his location. There are some among the giants (Jhoot included) who believe that one of the Mind Lords is behind the slayings (who else would have such power to commit so heinous a crime with so much ease and so little compunction?), but no one has any solid proof. Without this, the giants are unwilling to break their covenant with the Mind Lords. They certainly will not do so on the word of a band of unknown adventurers, no matter how honest they may seem, nor how heartfelt their plight may be.

If the adventurers don't end up in a full-scale battle with the entire storm giant village, they hopefully find themselves in a conversation with either Krander and Branto or (if the conflict actually escalates to include the entire village, or the two boys bring the heroes to their homes) Jhoot.

If the heroes are honest with the storm giants, their kindness is reciprocated. When the adventurer reveal that they are after the same person that killed Karker and Briter (Krande and Branto's parents), every storm giant in the village vows to help them as much as they can. Unfortunately, this assistance is limited to the edges of the Lonely Butte. None are willing to break the ancient covenant that their ancestors made with the Mind Lords for fear of bringing the Mind Lords' wrath down on them all.

Although it pains Krander and Branto to not be of more help, Jhoot very firmly reminds them of their delicate position. Still, Krander and Branto are more liberal in their interpretation of the covenant. When the heroes leave, they follow them from a distance.

Once the adventurers leave the butte, Krander and Branto climb down the side of the butte and slip into the sea (perceptive heroes may spot them doing this—they are not quite as sneaky as they would like to believe). Using their innate water breathing ability, they follow the heroes around the Last Sea as well as they can. They refuse to cross over to the shores of the Last Sea at any time, though. The covenant's language permits the storm giants to swim the Last Sea for purposes of bathing and fishing, but under no circumstances can they actually set foot onto its beaches.

Note that Jhoot is a 9th-level priest. He has the power to raise dead. He would have used this spell on Karker and Briter, but for the lack of their brains. If the adventurers recover the two storm giants' missing cerebrums, they can count on having made a powerful group of friends.

At the end of this encounter, the heroes should either have a number of bruises, or they have made some powerful friends (or perhaps both). In the event that the party ends up in some kind of trouble within the boundary of the waters of the Last Sea, Krander and Branto will be available to help those to whom they have decided to lend aid. This assistance could come in particularly helpful in the encounters below.

Even if the heroes fail to befriend the giants, Krander and Branto will likely follow them off the butte, hoping to learn more about them and from them. If the adventurers land in some sort of trouble, though, there is no way to be sure who the giants will side with.

Encounter Statistics

Krande and Branto

Young storm giants: AC 0 (none); MV 15, Sw 15; HD 16+4; hp 112 (Krande) and 103 (Branto); THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (fist), 3d10+11 (huge two-handed sword), 3d6 (massive composite bow); SA control weather, levitate (up to 1,600 pounds twice/day); SD immune to electricity and lightning, catch large missiles (65% chance), water breathing, may move/attack/cast magic underwater with no penalty; SZ H (24 feet tall); ML Fanatic (18); AL CG; XP 7,000

Personality: Friendly, curious, distraught

Special equipment: None

Jhoot

Storm giant (9th-level priest): AC 0 (none); MV 15, Sw 15; HD 19+7; hp 135; THAC0 3; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (fist), 3d10+11 (huge two-handed *scimitar of wounding*); SA control weather, levitate (up to 1,600 pounds twice/day), call lightning (3 times/day, Dmg: 15d8 each), lightning bolt (once/day, Dmg: 15d6), control winds, weather summoning (once/day); SD immune to electricity and lightning, catch large missiles (65% chance), water breathing, may move/attack/cast magic

underwater with no penalty; SZ H (26 feet tall); ML Fanatic (18); AL CG; XP 17,000
Personality: Wise, cautious
Special equipment: Giant two-handed *scimitar of wounding*
Spells (4/4/3/2/1): 1st— *animal friendship, cure light wounds (x2), pass without trace, purify food and drink*; 2nd— *goodberry, messenger, obscurement, silence 15-foot radius, speak with animals*; 3rd— *plant growth, snare, spike growth*; 4th— *cure serious wounds, neutralize poison*; 5th— *raise dead*

The Lizard Men

Even the lizard men have suffered at Kosveret's hands. The murders have caused the general level of paranoia that exists in the lizard man society to increase to nearly unheard-of heights. The frequency of patrols of lizard men has been upped around Undertown, and special units have been sent ranging far and wide to see if they can discover who is behind the killings and why.

In Undertown (Nesthaven as the lizard men call it), theories as to who might be behind the grisly killings range from the Mind Lords themselves to minions of a long-forgotten sorcerer-king returned to finally finish the genocidal mission he failed to complete so many millennia ago. More prosaic minds have focused firmly on possibilities closer to hand.

Xhenrid, for one, is convinced that King Nelyrox is behind the murders. To her mind, his highness is obviously setting her up to take responsibility for these horrible killings.

Nelyrox is, of course, blissfully unaware of the machinations turning in Xhenrid's mind. His only concern is to find out who is behind the deaths and to stop the attacks from happening again-permanently.

Since most parties of adventurers do not have the ability or even the desire to travel to Undertown, the only chance they have of running into any lizard men is if they stumble into a patrol along the shores of the Last Sea. Try running this encounter sometime when the group is traveling along the shores of the Last Sea.



While the heroes are traveling along Marnita's edge, whether by foot or in a boat, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

It's another perfect day in the valley of the Last Sea. The sun is shining brightly, but the edge is taken off the harshness of its rays by the thickness of the air and the fluffy white clouds that scud slowly across the sky. Seagulls, as the natives call these strange white birds, circle high overhead, their keening calls beckoning you closer to the center of the sea.

If you were not here for business instead of pleasure, this would certainly seem like paradise. As it is, it's hard sometimes to concentrate on the task at hand. But then the bloodied face of your murdered friend comes back to your mind unbidden, and you push on.

As you move along the shoreline, your train of thought is viciously derailed by the sudden splashing noise. You turn to look at the shore, thinking perhaps you'll have a chance to spot more of those magnificent dolphins that you've seen earlier, playing in the surf. Instead, you spy a well-armed group of scaly humanoid, each bringing the nasty-looking points of a trident to bear upon your chests.

The one in the center of the group speaks as the color of their scales begins to mutate from its current sea blue to show red, warlike markings across their faces and flanks. "Outsiders are no longer welcome near our lands. Hold, or we will run you through!"

The lizard man patrol consists of ten lizard men, plus a patrol leader named Sleub and a shaman named Jusky. They are part of King Nelyrox's new task force assigned to sealing the borders of the lizard man kingdom. At his direction, the patrols are ranging further than ever before, far beyond his land's actual borders. The patrols are to take a more aggressive stance than before. No longer can they afford to try to simply protect their people. Now they must actively search out danger and extinguish it.

Sleub is a reasonable reptilian, but he does have some ambitions. He dreams of being the leader of the patrol that brings in the killers that they have been searching for these past weeks. Like many of the other patrols, Sleub's group has taken to harassing fishing boats that pass too closely to the kingdom's borders, as well as anyone strolling along the shore.

Most people in this area get around in boats, and anyone who chooses to walk or ride instead is cause for suspicion. Only the lawkeepers are immune to being interrogated by the lizard man patrols, and only then because of the power that they represent.

The lizard men are almost entirely unwilling to consider the fact that one of the Mind Lords might be behind the killings. After all, without the Mind Lords' assistance, none of them would have survived this long in the first place. They are entirely loyal to their de facto rulers from beyond the sea.

If the heroes proclaim the guilt of Kosveret, they'd better be prepared to back it up with some solid proof. The testimony of one humanoid really won't be enough. Chances are that the lizard men won't believe a word the airbreathers tell them. If the adventurers get abusive about it, then the lizards will likely decide to give them a good beating to drive home the fact that they side with the Mind Lords.

If the heroes keep an open mind, Sleub relates to them just what has happened in the depth of Undertown. Seven different lizard men have been killed in seven different attacks. There have been no witnesses, and in one case there was no way in or out of the murder scene. Besides this, the only thing that the killings have in common is the fact that each victim apparently died from the sudden lack of a brain.

If the adventurers reveal that they know more about what's going on than Sleub does, the lizard sees this as his big chance to make a name for himself in lizard man society. He orders Jusky to cast water breathing on the party that they can be brought down in to Nesthaven for an audience with the king. Before he does so, Jusky whistles, and an Athasian dolphin breached the surf. Jusky jabbars with the creature in the lizard man language for a moment, and the dolphin then turns and swims off.

Twenty minutes later, King Nelyrox appears off in the distance, riding on the back of the dolphin. As he slides from the creature's back and swims the last few yards in, the other lizard men all fall to one knee. His mighty trident the only badge of his office, but he radiates a reptilian confidence and power so strong that even a mammalian humanoid can perceive it.

As Nelyrox steps to the shore, he bids the others to rise. He then looks to Jusky for an evaluation of these people. Jusky has already cast a detect evil on the people, and if the results had been positive, he would hardly have bid his king to arrive alone to meet such danger.

The king pardons Sleub and his men, ordering them to stand off a ways so that he may converse with the outlanders. When Nelyrox has privacy, he reveals that his advisor, a noted psionist named Mobji, has come up with a theory for what is going on.

First, the king notes that he is aware that Kosveret is behind the killings. He has been unwilling to release this information to his people for fear of the riotous repercussions that could ensue. Second, Nelyrox notes that Mobji and Kosveret have met on several occasions and, although the reptiles do not worship the Mind Lords in the manner that the citizens of Saragar do, Mobji has made it his life's pursuit to study the Mind Lords so that he may better understand them and their people.

Nelyrox then relates the story of the nocturnal visitor Marneet received on that fateful night so long ago. He postulates that if this visitor had never encountered Marneet, the Mind Lords might never have come into power and the Last Sea would never have been preserved. It is Mobji's theory, Nelyrox reveals, that Kosveret aims to somehow intervene so that Marneet will ignore this visit as some sort of prank. This would be the greatest joke that the jokester god could play on his people, and it would paradoxically result in the end of even his own godhood.

Of course, this is only just a theory, and one that Nelyrox is loathe to repeat too often. If Kosveret is in fact innocent, the lizard king has likely signed his own death warrant for talking so loosely about the mad elf. But these are desperate times, and so it seems that Nelyrox is finally willing to take the necessary desperate measures.

The fact that the heroes are positive that Kosveret is the killer (by this point, they may well have corroborated this theory through sources from outside their own party), makes Nelyrox feel a lot easier about bringing up Mobji's "crackpot" theory. In any case, the lizard king pledges to aid the adventurers in any way he can to solve this mystery, as long as it does not involve unseemly danger for his troops. They can make regular progress reports by talking with the Athasian dolphins. They've lost some of their own to this killer, and they're being extremely cooperative with the lizard men until the murderer is caught. With that, he bids the party farewell until they meet again.

At the end of this encounter, the adventurers may have a better idea of just what it is that Kosveret is up to. If they haven't annoyed the lizard men too much, they might also have gained some powerful, though reluctant, allies. After this encounter, the heroes should be chomping at the bit to find Kosveret. If what the lizard king has told them is true, then more than just their friend's life could be at stake. It could well be the very existence of the Last Sea itself.

Encounter Statistics

Lizard Men

Patrol troop (10): AC 5 (scales); MV 9, Sw 15; HD 2+1; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (trident); SZ M (7 feet tall); ML Elite (14); AL N; XP 65

Personality: Distant, noble

Special equipment: None

Sleub

Lizard man: AC 5 (scales); MV 9, Sw 15; HD 2+1; hp 17; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (trident); SZ M (7 feet tall); ML elite (14); AL N; XP 65

Personality: Noble, ambitious

Special equipment: None

Jusky

Lizard man shaman: AC 5 (scales); MV 9, Sw 15; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (trident); SZ M (7 feet tall); ML Elite (14); AL N; XP 175

Personality: Noble, inquisitive

Special equipment: *Ring of water walking*

Spells (2/1): 1st— *cure light wounds, detect evil*; 2nd— *speak with animals*

Nelyrox

Lizard king: AC 3 (scales); MV 12, Sw 18; HD 8; hp 60; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6+2 (great trident); SA skewer (if attack roll is 5 more than what is needed to hit, the great trident does double damage [minimum 15 points total]), wild talent; SZ L (8 feet tall); ML Champion (16); AL N; XP 975

Personality: Friendly, noble, wise

Special equipment: *Ring of free action, ring of water walking*

Psionics Summary:

PSPs: 50

Psionic attacks: Ego whip, id insinuation, psychic crush

Psionic defenses: Mind block, thought shield

Psionic powers: Danger sense, phase

Player's Option: #AT: 1, MTHAC0: 17, MAC: 9

In the Halls of Kharzden

Of all of the different towns and societies that lie safe within the boundaries of the valley of the Last Sea, the one that has suffered most at the hands of Kosveret is that of Kharzden. In fact, the first of Kosveret's killings took place in Kharzden soon after the completion of the mad elf's new sanctum. After all, he was hardly willing to let anyone with knowledge of his secret headquarters live for long.

Fortunately, Kosveret's madness has made him far from thorough. When he set out to murder all of the dwarves that carved out his new place, he missed one: Grantuo, a poor soul that now spends his days drowning his sorrows at Ordean's Inn in Blufftown. That loose end will be taken care of soon, if it hasn't been already (see "Blufftown").

Still, Kosveret failed to take into account that some of the dwarves that he had sworn to secrecy before they began excavating his place weren't as tight-lipped as they had promised him they would be. Grantuo's estranged wife Mranzta knows of the location of Kosveret's haven, and after the hobbyist miner went missing, she brought this information to Elakta, the dwarf queen.

Elakta was extremely disturbed by this information. She has sought no counsel thus far, fearing more the potential for reprisals against her people than for her own life. As the number of killings across the land increases, though, her fear of whatever it is that Kosveret is planning grows stronger than her fear of the Mind Lord himself.

Queen Elakta has considered contacting the Mind Lords herself, but if one of the self-appointed gods has gone murderously mad, who's to say that the others aren't already aware of it. Worse yet, they could actually be in on the killings themselves.

As the heroes near the gates of Kharzden, read the following passage aloud:

You round a bend in the trail you've been following through the foothills, and there they are: the gates to Kharzden. Although you've heard tales about them from the dwarves that live in the outskirts of the village that spills out from the gates of the underground town, little could prepare you for the actuality. The frame of the gates stands over twenty feet tall and is embossed with all sorts of carvings in bas relief that tell the story of the dwarves of Kharzden in a mixture of frozen majesty and tragedy. You notice that there are several bare spots on the frame, indicating perhaps that this is a work in progress.

Most amazingly, though, is that the frame sparkles like gold, and the gates themselves are highly polished steel. Your minds boggle at the wealth of a society that could spare such precious stuff in this sort of an almost ostentatious display of wealth.

As you climb the last hundred yards up the trail, the five armored guards standing outside the gate heft their battle axes meaningfully. When you are within thirty yards, one of them, a burly creature with a magnificently wrought helm, steps forth and calls to you: "Halt, strangers. Who are you, and what is your business?"

Normally, the gates of Kharzden (which are decorated with iron pyrite-fool's gold—and, upon further inspection, rusted open) stand staffed only by the most perfunctory of guards. With the recent murders, security has been stepped up, but to no avail. Kosveret comes and goes throughout as he pleases throughout the entire val-

ley, and far as it might be from Saragar, Kharzden is no exception to this rule.

The sergeant of the gate is a dour dwarf named Clarstin. He has been charged with protecting his queen and her realm from outsiders, and as of yet, he has met with little success. He is aching to prove himself to his superiors and his fellows, and a party of adventurers coming up the path seems ready-made to his order.

Clarstin treats the heroes skeptically and abusively, heaping scorn and derision on them. They are obviously outlanders, people to be trusted even less than the normal outsiders they often meet hailing from elsewhere in the valley. If and when the adventurers finally mention that they have some information about the killings that have been taking place in the rest of the valley, Clarstin stops cold.

The dwarf sergeant suddenly switches his abuse from the heroes to the guards. "Don't just stand there," he bellows at one hapless dwarf. "Get word to the Queen!"

As the messenger stamps off into the subterranean kingdom, Clarstin beckons the heroes into a foyer just inside the gate. He invites them to sit and offers them some food and drink and asks them to please be patient. Fifteen minutes pass, and the messenger returns. The queen has generously decided to grant the heroes an immediate audience.

This sends a great deal of murmuring and muttering through the assembled dwarves (10 more have straggled in as support for the guards). Such speed is almost unknown in the dwarf government. Petitioners often have to wait hours or even days before receiving an answer as to whether or not Queen Elakta can fit them into her schedule, often sometime in the following week.

Clarstin orders the stragglers to take over the guarding of the gate (just in case this is some kind of trap) while he and his four fellows escort the adventurers to the royal hall. With Clarstin and two dwarves in the lead and the other two bringing up the rear, the sergeant leads the whole party deep into the caverns beneath the Thunder Mountains.

In the well-guarded royal chamber, Queen Elakta receives her guests. There are at least 20 well-armed dwarves there ready to give their lives to protect their queen. Some of these are fresh from the mines, still wearing the traditional bandannas



around their faces or necks. Once she is sure that they mean her no harm, Elakta bids her guards to stand off a bit so that she might converse freely with the strangers. She has no magical means for determining if the heroes might mean her harm. She is simply ruled by her own judgment.

Elakta listens carefully to the heroes' tale of their search for Kosveret. When they are done, she reveals that she knows exactly where the elf Mind Lord currently resides. She has been reluctant to do anything with this knowledge for fear of the horrible reprisals that Kosveret (and possibly the other Mind Lords as well) would visit upon her people. Now that it seems that things are coming to a head, she sees that she has little choice.

She tells the heroes that Kosveret resides in a cavern hollowed out behind the Big Falls, along the mighty course of the Big River to the northeast. They can get to it by taking the path to Rivertown and then climbing down and around the Big Falls. Getting through the falls to the cavern should be no problem for strong swimmers (which few of the heroes likely are).

Although Elakta is reluctant to consign her people to the apparently fruitless task of standing up to a Mind Lord, mad or not, she is more than happy to provide each of the characters with as many metal weapons as they need. If she discovers that they have been lying, however, the dwarves will hunt them down and kill them while they sleep.

These weapons are worth a king's ransom outside of the valley, and even inside the Last Sea region they would bring a handsome price. If the heroes succeed in their mission, they may keep the weapons. If they fail, the dwarves will hardly be able to collect them, but that's a risk that Elakta is willing to take.

If the adventurers are in need of a guide to show them around the Last Sea, Elakta is reluctant to help them. Clarstin speaks up at this point, revealing that he has been listening in on the conversation. Braving his queen's wrath, he volunteers to show the outlanders around. One of his brothers was among those killed by Kosveret, and he is ready to do anything he can to see this monster stopped.

By the end of this encounter, the heroes should know exactly where Kosveret is. If need be, they should even have a guide (Clarstin) to bring them right to where they need to be and to help fight when it becomes necessary. If the adventurers have already gone through the rest of the encounters in Part 2, then it's time to move on to "Part 3: Resolution."

Before moving on, make sure that the heroes have played through all of "The Lawkeepers." Things may go disastrously in the next section. If they do (and you're so inclined), you need to have a way to patch things up. The only way to do this is to make sure that the Mind Lords are aware of the adventurers and their activities.

Encounter Statistics

Elakta

Dwarf female fighter (4th level): AC 0 (*chain mail +3* and *shield +1*); MV 6; hp 36; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3 (*rod of lordly might* as *mace +2*); SZ S (3'10" tall); ML Fanatic (18); AL LN

Personality: Regal, compassionate, guarded

Special equipment: *Chain mail +3*, *rod of lordly might* (45 charges), *ring of spell turning*, *shield +1*

Clarstin

Dwarf male fighter (7th level): AC 1 (*chain mail +3* and *shield*); MV 6; hp 53; THAC0 13; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+4 (*battle axe +2*, plus Strength bonus); SZ S (4'5" tall); ML Fanatic (18); AL LN

Personality: Boisterous, cautious but friendly to those he trusts

Special Equipment: *Battle axe +2*, *chain mail +3*

Guard

Dwarf male/female fighters (3rd level; 35+): AC 4 (*chain mail* and *shield*); MV 6; hp 16; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (*battle axe*); SZ S (4 feet tall); ML Very steady (13); AL LN; XP 120



PART 3:

Resolution

Eventually the heroes should figure out who's killing everyone and where he's hiding. There are basically three avenues they can take from that point.

First, they can ignore it all and run away. This is their option, but hardly a heroic one. If the adventurers seem to be opting in this direction, do your best to discourage them. Point out that their dead friend will never be returned to them without his brain, and the fact that the entire Last Sea might be destroyed by Kosveret's actions. If that doesn't do it, there's likely no hope, so send them on their way and let them deal with the consequences.

Second, they can try to round up some help before taking on Kosveret. The only real problem with this is that the clock is ticking. If they take the time to sail to Saragar (or wherever) and back, they are wasting time that their dead friend can ill afford. Moreover, Kosveret has now has enough brains to attempt his journey into the past. He would like to gather some more to make things easier, but he's all set to try right now.

Third, the adventurers can take the battle to Kosveret right away. This being the most heroic and daring path, many parties will take to it without prodding, foolishly ignoring the fact that they are attempting to confront one of the most powerful people on the planet. But that's the stuff that legends are made of.

Once they make the decision to go after Kosveret, the heroes still need to get into the Mind Lord's new lair. After that, they've got to find some way to stop him. Of course, if they succeed, they will precipitate the kind of disaster that the Mind Lords have stopped from affecting the Last Sea for so long. The desert will pour right in.

Fortunately, Thesik has secretly been following the party around since their encounter with the lawkeepers. He's still unsure as to what Kosveret is up to, and he's willing to let the heroes act as his unknowing investigators. If the heroes stop Kosveret, Thesik steps in and takes Kosveret's place, traveling back into the past to give Marneet that fateful message he received so long ago.

If the heroes fail, Thesik permits Kosveret to keep his date with fate.

This final part to the adventure should be considered as the climactic act of a Greek tragedy. The DM should play it up as much as possible by emphasizing the dramatic. Constantly remind the heroes just how much is at stake for them personally and for the entire valley.

Kosveret is entirely insane. He laughs madly and bitterly much of the time, and little of what he says makes much sense, although he does have his moments of astonishing clarity. His image shifts constantly, moving through each of the Mind Lords' visages, as well as those of Marneet and all of those whose brains he has collected, including that of the heroes' dead friend.

Thesik, on the other hand, is cold, logical, and sad. He mourns for the loss of his friend's mind, particularly so since he can see the same long deterioration already affecting his dear wife Barani. Thesik knows that even he himself is not immune from the creeping darkness of total madness, but until the day comes that his mind is entirely gone, he struggles on to save his wife, his friend, and the Last Sea itself—for as long as he possibly can.

Kosveret's Lair

Getting into Kosveret's lair is not easy, located as it is behind the Big Falls. A character with the swimming proficiency (just about anyone in the valley of the Last Sea—dwarves included) can get into the cavern by making three consecutive proficiency rolls with a -3 penalty to each roll. They can make as many attempts as they like, but each failed attempt drains a point of Constitution that can only be recovered by an hour of full rest. Be careful of worn-out heroes drowning in the pool beneath the falls.

Once one character gets in, though, he can fasten a rope to a handy stalagmite and swim back through the falls to the shore. Even characters without the swimming proficiency should now be able to get through the falls. All they need to do is make a Strength check to keep their grip on the rope as they pass beneath the thundering waters.

When the characters manage to get through the falls and into Kosveret's lair, read the following aloud:

As you break through the pounding waters, you find yourself in a brightly lit room. The adventurer that was kidnapped by the mad elf recognizes it instantly as the very same chamber to which he was spirited away while the Mind Lord impersonated him.

The place has recently been cut from the stone, a natural chamber enlarged by the dwarf workers from Kharzden who were some of the first to have their lives sacrificed to Kosveret's insane plan. Some tools still lie scattered along the walls.

The room is a cube nearly 40 feet on each side. High in the wall above you is another hole in the cliff face over which the Big Falls run. A ledge shunts the water away from the chamber, but during the day, light spills in through the water, sparkling everywhere and lending the chamber a distinctly otherworldly feel.

In the far right corner sits an obsidian orb on an intricately carved ivory pedestal. It seems almost to radiate power, although physically it is unremarkable.

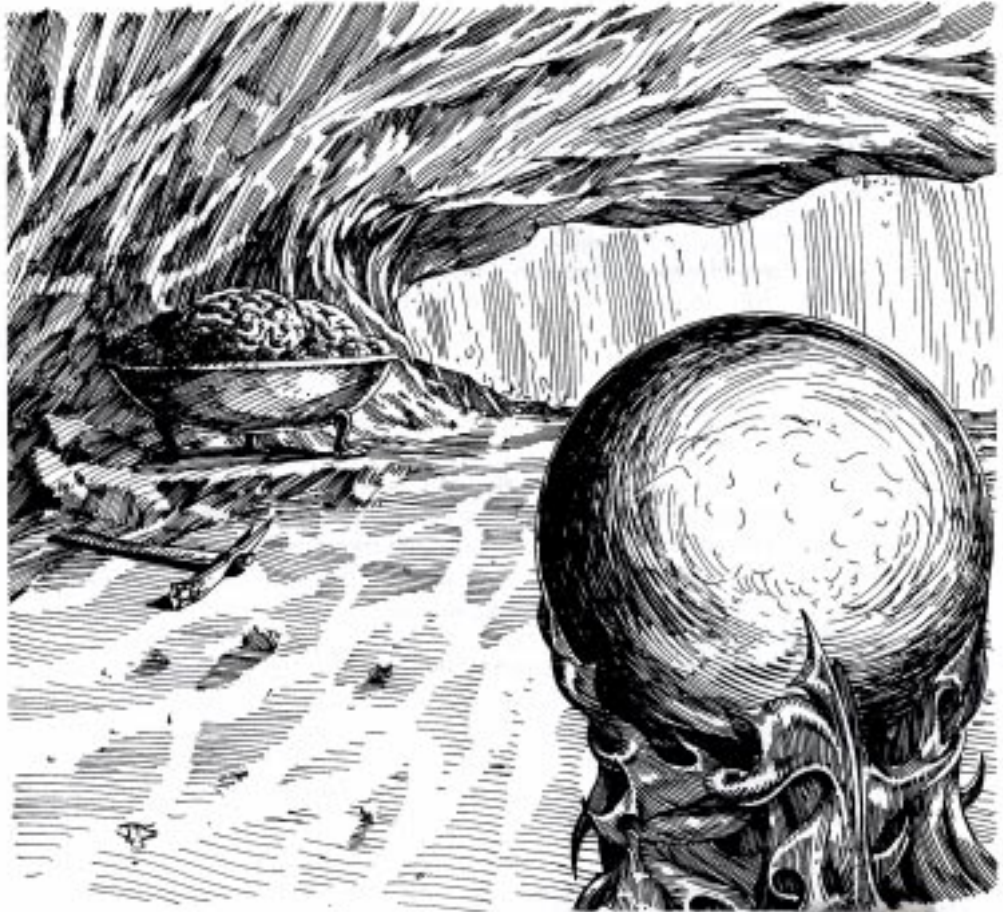
In the far left rests a gigantic bowl in which are stacked over a score of brains of all shapes and sizes. These range all the way from the easily identifiable humanoid organs all the way up to two tremendous ones which obviously belonged to the two murdered storm giants.

As you enter the chamber, an image suddenly shimmers to life before you. It is a slender elf with delicate bones and long blond hair worn free, framing his pale countenance. The most notable thing about this creature is the madness so clearly dancing in his eyes. The one of you who was kidnapped earlier recognizes the visage immediately and begins to shout, "It's him. It's him!"

Kosveret recognizes the heroes immediately and demands to know how they discovered his private chamber. He is bent on killing each one of them, but first he wants to learn as much as he can about these interlopers and how they found him.

Smart heroes will keep the mad elf occupied for as long as they can until they can figure out some way to defeat him. After a while, though, Kosveret will become bored with their equivocating. At that point, he announces that he needs only one more brain to be able to perform his ritual, and he's decided that one of them has will have the honor of providing that vital organ.

Kosveret then attacks whoever he perceives to be the most dangerous to his plans. If there is a spellcaster (especially a wizard) in the group, he goes after that person



first. He attempts to beat them down psionically. If he succeeds, he then teleports that person's brain out of its body and begins his ritual, confident that the heroes are unable to stop him.

Despite this, Kosveret has two obvious Achilles' heels. If the pile of brains can be destroyed (even just one of them), Kosveret will be unable to perform his ritual. This will only make him mad, though, as he'll then set about harvesting the rest of the adventurers' brains to replace the damaged one(s).

Alternatively, the heroes can attack the obsidian orb itself. The orb is extremely tough, though. It can sustain 100 points of damage before being destroyed. If he was in his right mind, Kosveret would simply teleport the orb away when it became apparent it was in real danger. Since this is not the case, Kosveret stays his ground, even when pressed, convinced that he can defeat each of the heroes before they can harm him.

If the orb is destroyed, Kosveret's spirit is released, and after nine millennia of watching over the Last Sea with his two comrades, the elf psionist finally dies.

If the Heroes Fail

If the heroes fail to stop Kosveret's plan, he goes ahead with the ritual and travels back in time to that fateful night in Marneet's bedchamber. While there, he delivers the very message that he was trying to prevent Marneet from receiving, thus fulfilling his fate. History is unchanged.

When Kosveret returns from the past, he finds Thesik waiting for him. Ignoring the dead, dying, or unconscious around them, Thesik enters a final battle with his friend who has become too dangerous to live. As Kosveret is still weak from his temporal journey, Thesik easily overcomes him, forcing the elf's image to disappear entirely. At the last moment, however, Thesik finds that he cannot end the existence of one who has been his companion for such an incredibly long period of time.

Tears roll down Thesik's face as he glares at the obsidian orb that houses his friend's psyche. With but a thought, he teleports the orb and its pedestal back to its

resting place in the secret chamber beneath the palace at Saragar. Then he turns to the heroes and administers to their wounds as best he can. It is beyond Thesik's power to revive the dead, but he telepathically alerts the Shallatian healers to the heroes' plight before he follows Kosveret back to the eternally dark chamber that they share with Barani.

If the Heroes Succeed

If the adventurers actually manage to defeat Kosveret, they've got bigger troubles to come. Since Kosveret's message to Marneet was never delivered, Marneet never promoted Thesik and Kosveret (and later Barani) so that they could manage the project that would allow them to peer into Marnita's future.

Since the Mind Lords never foresaw the destruction that Rajaat and his Champions would visit upon Athas with their defiling magic, they never bothered to start up the program that allowed them to protect the Marnita from the ravaging of their world. In fact, the Last Sea, as it is known today, tragically never came to be.

While the heroes are celebrating their victory, they may notice that the thunderous fall of the waterfall has ceased. Suddenly Thesik makes himself known. After allaying the adventurers' fears that he might be there to attack him, he points out the entrance to the chamber. There the heroes can see clearly down to the Last Sea, as the waterfall is no longer there. In fact, the Last Sea itself is drying up and will soon disappear.

Thesik explains to the heroes what they have done and that he can repair it with their help. Tapping the PSPs of any psionicists or wild talents in the party (this should be all of them) and adding that power to his own, Thesik can reach back into the past to visit Marneet and deliver the fateful message himself, posing as the mad Kosveret. Describe this scene to the heroes, letting them know that they are contributing to Thesik's power but that they are unable to actually have any effect on the visitation themselves.

When Thesik and the adventurers return to Kosveret's secret chamber, the waterfall is roaring again, and the Last Sea has been returned to its former splendor. Thesik thanks the heroes for all that they have done to help preserve the Last Sea. If any of them are dead, he telepathically notifies the Shallatian healers as to their plight and then bids them farewell. If they are ever in need of a favor, they are permitted to come to him for help. They have his eternal gratitude.

With that, he disappears, along with Kosveret's orb and its pedestal.

Encounter Statistics

A full description of Kosveret and Thesik can be found on pages 82 and 94 of the *Mind Lords of the Last Sea* sourcebook.

Epilogue

Few of the people of the Last Sea will believe the heroes' story should they find the need to tell it to them, but those in power will understand what has happened, and they will appreciate it. Despite this, all of these people implicitly agree to take part in the polite fiction that the mysterious killer was apprehended by the Mind Lords with the help of the adventurers. Everything is finally back to normal now, and they see no need to rock the boat.

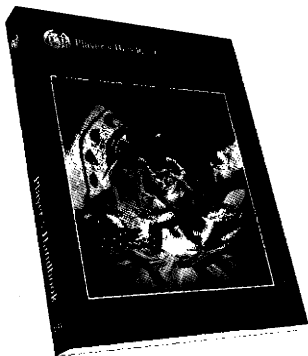
The only exception to this are the members of the Underground, but since they've been spreading seditious rumors about the Mind Lords since their inception, few who are not with them already will believe their fanciful tale, no matter how true it might be. As proof that Kosveret was not the killer, they point out that the elf Mind Lord has recently been spotted around the city of Saragar, playing the role of the god of happiness to the hilt.

Unknown to anyone, Thesik has taken on the responsibility of maintaining not only his own public image but Kosveret's as well. As far as most people know, everything is back to normal, and the brain-robbing killer will never plague the valley of the Last Sea again.

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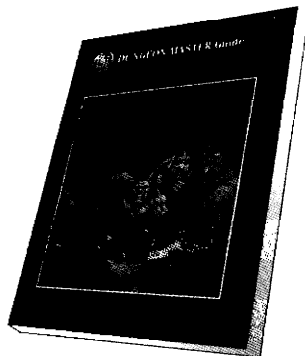
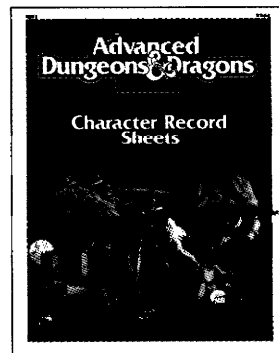
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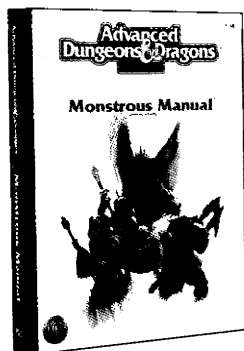
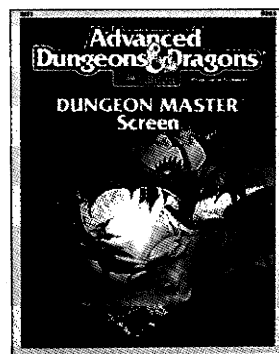
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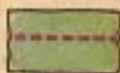
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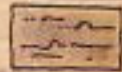
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Town



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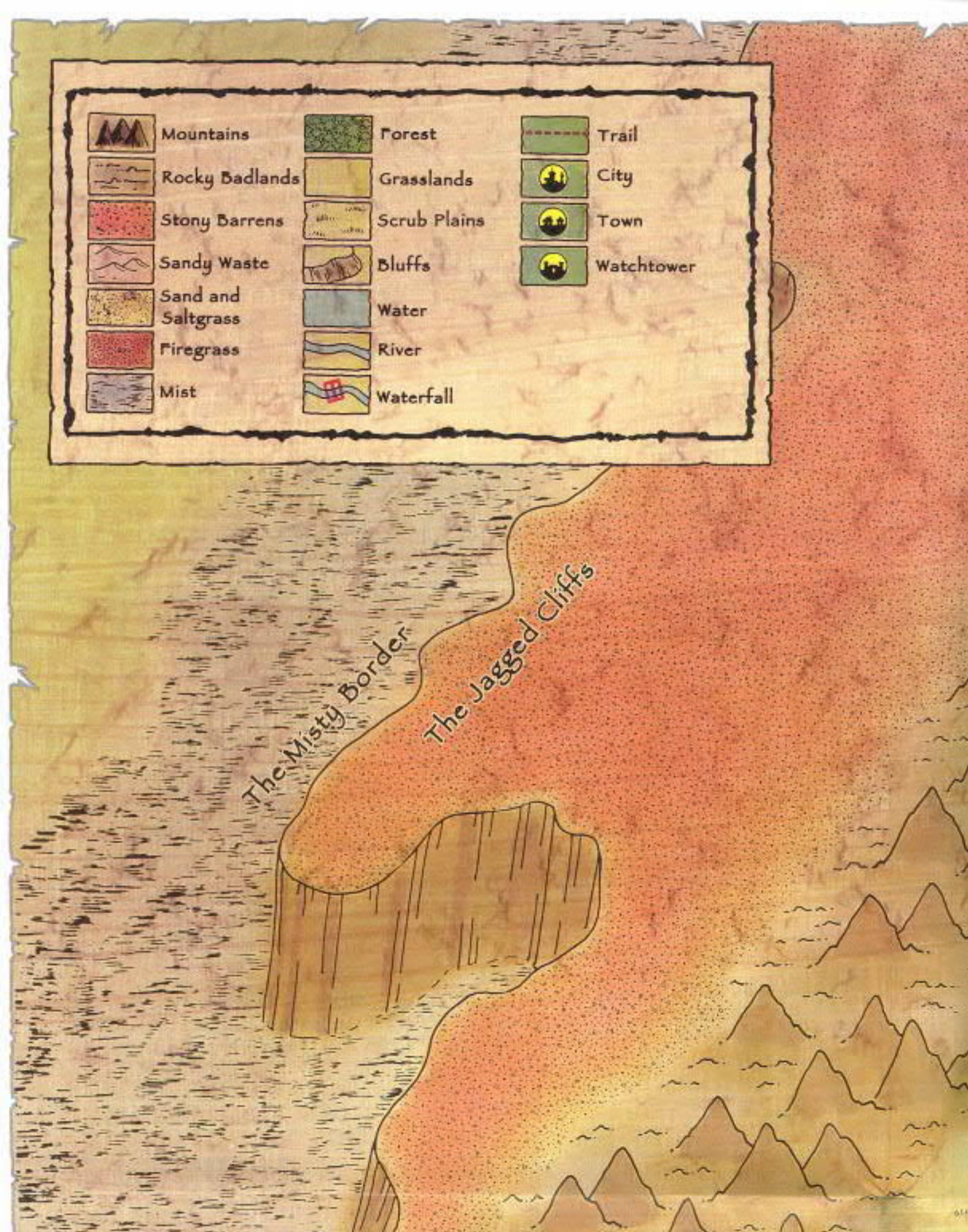


Mist



Waterfall

The Misty Border
The Jagged Cliffs





Thunder Mountains

North Pass

Khar

Shallat

Giants' Town



155

Kharzden



Huddleston

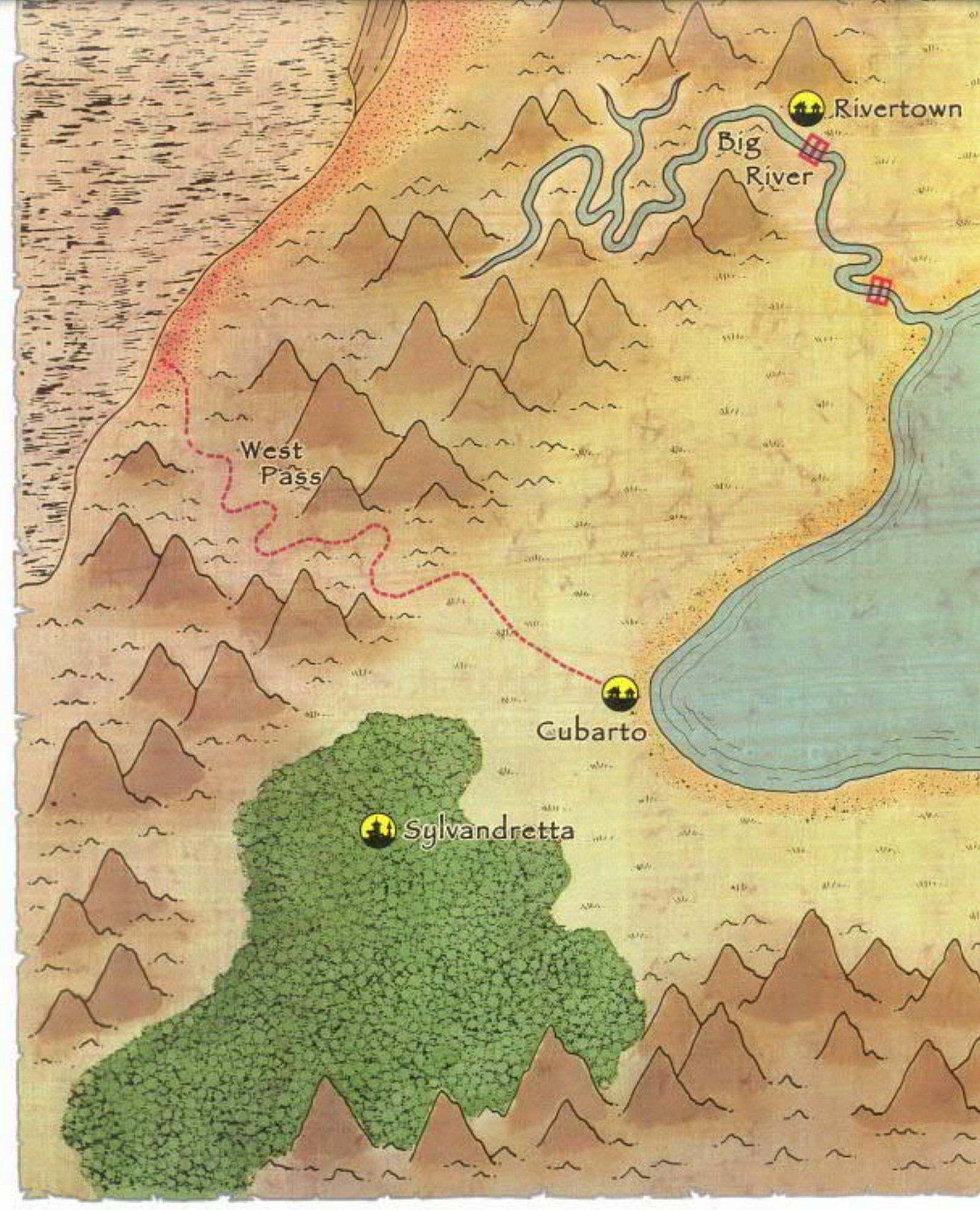


Blufftown



Saragar

The
Burning
Plains



Rivertown

Big River

West Pass

Cubarto

Sylvandretta

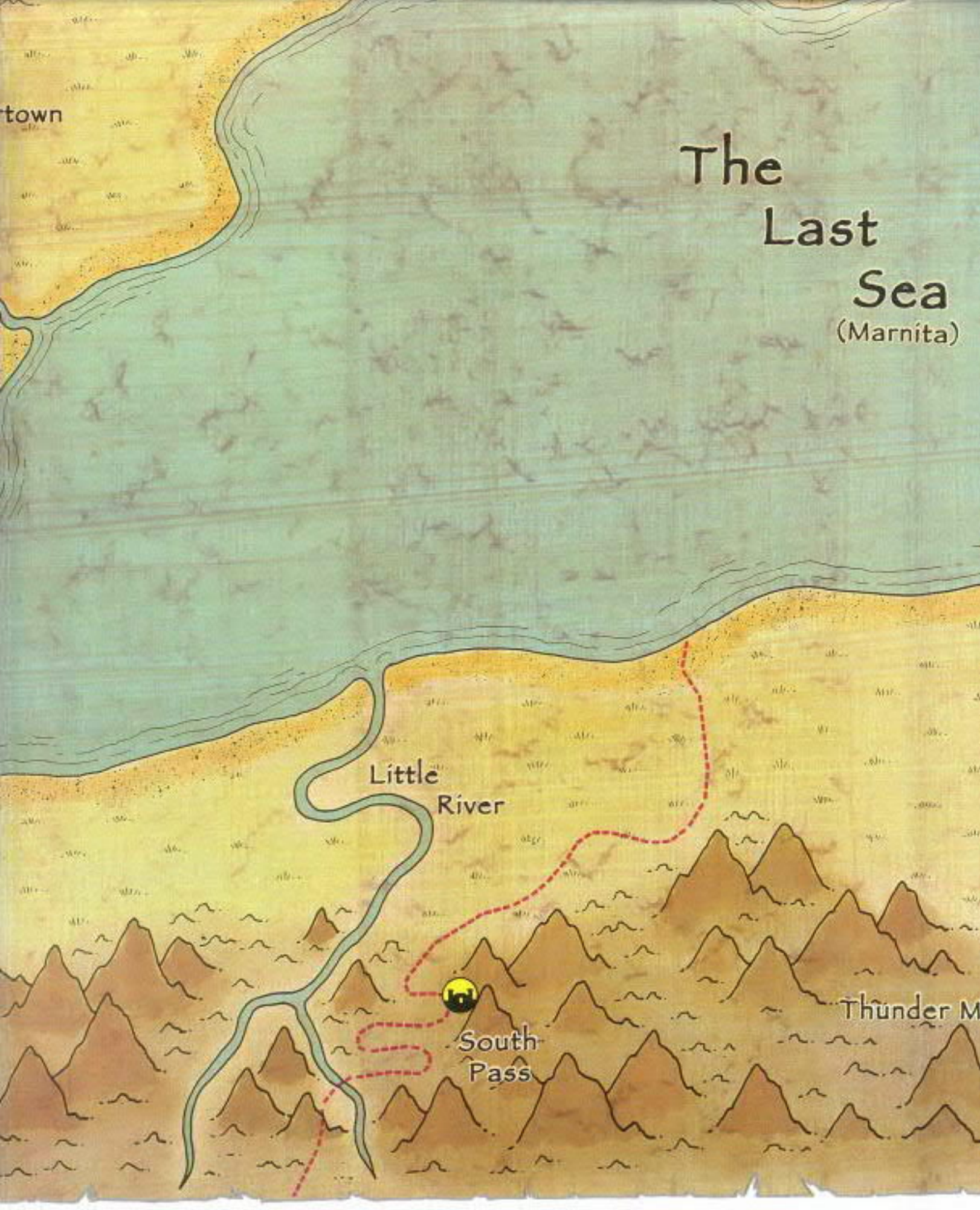
town


The Last Sea (Marnita)

Little River


South Pass

Thunder M



 Undertown

ea
(nita)

 Cuarsen



der Mountains



Five Miles

244+XXXX0701



THE WANDERER'S CHRONICLE

Beyond the Scorched Plateau, across the Burning Plains, in the shadow of the Thunder Mountains, the largest body of water beneath the crimson sun sparkles like a desert mirage. But the place is real, for I have seen it. I felt the cool spray on my skin, tasted the salt mist on y lips. It is the Last Sea, a remnant of a long-lost age hidden far to the north of Tyr. . . .

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