

THE WANDERER'S CHRONICLE
DARK SUN[®]

Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs





DARK SUN

Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs

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Wanderer's Journal

My journey to the jagged Cliffs was arduous and harrowing but that sojourn is not the tale I wish to tell. My story is of life—life on cliffs that cleave the surface of Athas like a jagged scar. As I approached those unimaginable precipices, I encountered a sight both wondrous and bizarre. A thing appeared, a creature I suppose, it seemed more bubble than beast, drifting out of the curtains of mist that rose before the cliffs.

Attached to its belly was a sort of carriage. Inside this fixture was a lone figure.

As the beast and its cargo (I knew not at that point if the figure was the creature's master or captive) approached, I could see that the rider was a halfling. This fellow showed no signs of the wild nature common to his people. He stood proud and tall, his long hair streaming; I took him for a halfling noble. He coaxed the floating creature to land and approached me, obviously as curious as I—perhaps more.

He spoke a version of an ancient tongue that I had heard before, one not completely dissimilar to the common tongue spoken in the Tablelands. He named himself Gen-onath of the rhul-thaun. Gen-onath seemed as unfamiliar with my race and appearance as I was with his. Nor did he recognize the term "halfling," with which I hailed him. I braced myself for a confrontation.



INTRODUCTION

Masters and Servants

"The fundamental forces of life, being what they are, have left us with no other option. We had to either master them or be mastered ourselves. Despite this, we have never treated our creations as anything less than they truly are: living extensions of the energies that permeate our world. As such, we use them only insofar as the needs of the world require. We are both the masters of the world and its humble servants. Let that forever be our creed."

—The Dal-erat

So it is written and recorded in the Dal-erat, the word of the people. This ancient device dates back thousands of years and remains the most cherished artifact of my folk. We are the people of the cliffs, and we have placed its words deep in our hearts.


I am Loi Far-oneth, a keeper of the secrets of life. It is my duty to preserve the memory of the elder ways. The mastery of life and its shaping are mine to maintain. Long ago my people learned how to harness the energies and the stuff of life itself, creating that which we needed to make our will a reality. We call this ability life-shaping. Much is now forgotten, but we cling to what we can, performing the rituals and creating the tools. We hold fast to the knowledge of our ancestors as tightly as we hold to the sides of the Jagged Cliffs where we make our homes.

Here on the cliffs we watch the hated kreen and their vile practices. We guard against their presence, while gazing down into the horrors of the dismal swamp. And we wait. We wait for High Lord Rhan Thes-onel's return.

In ages long past, the greatest of us, Rhan Thes-onel, left his home on the cliffs in search of what lies beyond, promising that he would return with a true purpose for us, our place in relation to all things. Though Lord Rhan has not yet returned, many of us still believe that he will, in one form or another. As both the masters and the servants of the world, we must discover our legacy as heirs of our ancestors within the grand design.

Yet, to my sorrow, there are those who itch to wander. Many of our young long to see what lies beyond our home here on the nurturing cliffs. And if they satisfy that longing, I know it will bring disaster upon us all.

—From the Journal of Loi Far-oneth



Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs is the first accessory supporting the expanded DARK SUN™ campaign setting. All that is needed to use this product is that box and the AD&D® rule books. Please note that references in this accessory have been abbreviated: *DMG* is the *Dungeon Master® Guide* and *PHB* stands for the *Player's Handbook*.

This accessory describes the Jagged Cliffs, the enormous rocky mountains to the west of the Tyr Region. The cliffs separate the highlands from the endless savanna plain inhabited by the thri-kreen and their indomitable empire. More importantly, however, *Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs* details the rhul-thaun, a society of halflings that has endured from the ancient days of Athas. These people cleave to the cliffs on ledge-villages, using an arcane art called life-shaping to survive in this strange environment. The art of life-shaping is a carryover from the days when water was plentiful and all forms of life thrived before existence on Athas became ruthless. It enables the halflings to form organic tools, weapons, armor, and even buildings. It also allows them to create the living, flying craft they use to ride the wind from ledge to ledge along the cliffs.

Please note that while “halfling” and “rhul-thaun” are used interchangeably in this product, the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs are different from normal Athasian halflings, who are usually characterized by savagery and a feral, ravenous nature. Indeed, the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs are unlike any of their cousins to be found in other AD&D world. In many ways, the rhul-thaun are a more sophisticated and detail-oriented people. They are caretakers of an ancient lore. They use their nimble fingers in the arts of life manipulation and scaling the enormously high cliffs. Quick eyes and impressive senses guard them against the terrifying and peculiar monsters that make their lairs on these ledges.

Accustomed to a harsh, survival-based lifestyle, they are as alien to their counterparts in other settings as the elves, dwarves, and thri-kreen races of Athas. However, inhabitants of the immediate campaign setting, the Tyr Region, will find these halflings very different from any they have ever encountered. The Jagged Cliffs are not the dry, lifeless deserts with which DARK SUN players have been familiar. The humid mists that blanket the region carry their own challenges and dangers, however, and are just as deadly as the water-starved desert.

The life-shaping arts of the rhul-thaun and their fragmentary knowledge of the past will be completely new to existing DARK SUN characters. The rhul-thaun can also provide adventurers with a great deal of valuable information regarding the thri-kreen threat beyond the Jagged Cliffs. If treated properly, these halflings could prove to be invaluable allies to those explorers outbound from the city-states of the sorcerer-kings.

To understand the rhul-thaun, however, one must examine their strange, ritualistic society, their links to the dim past, and the effects of living a vertical life on the cliffs that have shaped their culture. Each clan of these halflings possesses unique attributes for living in the Jagged Cliffs.


Since all of the accessories of life are produced by their ancient arts, even the tools and weapons used by the halflings are different, unique, and strange. This accessory describes the arcane practice of life-shaping and the organic creations formed through its implementation—aspects of an Athasian society never before encountered. The following passage from the journal of the life-shaper Loi Far-oneth describes the geographic area of the Jagged Cliffs, the strange climactic patterns there, and many of its unique features in detail.

The Jagged Cliffs

The cliffs on which we live mark the division of the highlands of the east and the low savanna of the west. Even in the days of old, when water dominated the world, the barbs of these cliffs rose above the waves—creating the island chain upon which we once lived.

The Jagged Cliffs stretch upward from the base almost two miles in most places. If an ascent were to be made from the base to the very top, most of the journey would be up sheer, vertical cliff faces. Only occasionally would a ledge be found, and most are narrow, short, and unstable, ready to collapse if too much weight is placed upon them.

Many of these rocky shelves, however, are large—large enough, in fact, to hold entire villages of my people. Some jut outward from hollows within the cliff wall, while others are the result of openings of large caves cleaving the sides of the cliffs. Such cliffs can be hundreds of feet wide and up to a mile long.



Occasionally, the cliffs are buffeted by winds blowing along their rocky faces, generally from north to south. The treacherous winds can be dangerous to climbers, but most of our villages are built in sheltered areas, safe from the deadly gales.

Like the cliffs, the Misty Border also serves to separate the lowland savanna from the much higher tablelands to the east. The mist is generated by the large, mysterious swamp that lies at the base of the cliffs and seems to defy many of nature's true laws. We know that the swamp is the site of ancient and uncontrolled energies whose effects still shape and distort the way of things. We call these energies *Rajaat's Curse*, for reasons lost to antiquity—a curse they truly are, nevertheless. The effects are to be avoided at all costs, for many a cliff climber caught within the magic of the mists has been lost forever.

Rising high into the atmosphere, the wall of mist is an effective barrier separating the two areas visually. It has also successfully discouraged most travel through it from either direction, although the Jagged Cliffs themselves are an even greater deterrent in that regard. Visibility within the mist ranges from 10 to 60 feet, and changes literally from minute to minute. Many of our villages are always within its bounds and those who live there have learned special methods of adapting.

The mist consists of a thick, warm vapor that leaves a slippery residue on everything it touches as it rises into the air. When the wind blows, it is never enough to completely dissipate the Misty Border, although it causes turbulent swirls and storms within its envelope. The mist from the swamp clearly is not a true part of our region's weather, but something outside of the normal climactic conditions that only occasionally interacts with the real forces of nature.

The swamp at the base of the Jagged Cliffs is immense, seemingly endless, and swallows anything that enters. Its fetid stench often accompanies the mist as it rises unnaturally from the stagnant pools within the bog. Those more learned than me regarding these matters have suggested that the swamp does not contain nearly enough water to account for the wall of continual mist, but that only repeats what we already know—this marsh is an aberrant place of twisted nature.

The swamp runs virtually the entire length of the Jagged Cliffs, stretching out 20 to 30 miles from the base. It is comprised primarily of shallow pools and streams running through soggy marshlands of heavy vegetation. Hidden dangers, including quicksand and underwater drop-offs, are woefully frequent when journeying into the swamp.

Although many of my people who dared to enter the swamp never returned, there are always brave adventurers seeking to learn its secrets. Explorers report that ruins can be found within the marsh, deep within the thick growths and permeated with the terrors of *Rajaat's Curse*. Horrible creatures of singular natures, born from a soup of fetid water, unwholesome soil, decaying plant life, and unknown energies make their homes in the swamp. Worse, these beasts sometimes leave their lairs to make their way up the cliff walls to get a taste of *rul-thaun* flesh.

Because of the high amount of moisture from the mist rising from the swamp, many plants find purchase amid the rocky crevices and ledges. The clusters of plant life growing on the cliffs' faces form thick, verdant, vertical forests. We send trained climbers to harvest these forests of fruit, roots, and other edible, usable plants. At one time we life-shapers were able to create enough food for all our people without having to gather plants or hunt animals, but those days, unfortunately, have long since passed.

The vertical forests are also home to many animals and other creatures. Birds nest within the foliage, and climbing creatures use the shelter of the vegetation to make their hidden lairs. Many and varied are the beasts that call the cliffs home and some of them are quite dangerous. Sloths, air drakes, rocs, *zhackals*, and other creatures are found here. Those that don't live in the forests make their homes in the crevices and caves that dot the surface of the cliffs. None of these is as terrifying as those that rise from the swamp below to menace our villages. The dangers for my people are great, but there is nothing that can keep us from carrying on our beliefs and preserving the ways of our ancestors. Nothing.

—From the Journal of *Loi Far-oneth*

The Wanderer's Journal

These so-called rhul-thaun are at the very least close cousins of the halflings with whom I have been familiar. Physically they are very similar—nimble, lithe, yet more muscular than they appear. All of them are climbers with exceptional skills—survival on these rocks demands mastery.

The Jagged Cliffs themselves are an intriguing phenomenon. Two miles high in places, these cliffs are some of the most dramatic sights on all of Athas. A cloud of nearly perpetual mist hangs like a barrier in front of the crags, rising unnaturally from what the halflings call the swamp far below. I have never made

the journey to the bottom of the precipice, nor do I plan to make the trip. From their descriptions, it sounds as though that horrible, soggy place is the home to what we call nightmare beasts, cistern fiends, water drakes, bog waders, and other creatures of which I have no knowledge. The upper cliffs themselves are populated with monsters such as cha'thrang, tul'ks, mountain spiders, mastyrials, and gaj. The rhul-thaun cling to these cliffs, making their homes on the ledges and among the vertically growing forests spreading up the sides of the cliff.

In the depths of my being I find this sort of life unappealing. Every moment these halflings dangle, nearly falling from an incomprehensible height. Every movement hides a threat of falling. They seem oblivious to vertigo, however and think of climbing as a human would think of walking.



CHAPTER 1: Children of History

The rhul-thaun, the people of the cliffs, are living remnants of a bygone age. Their culture is based upon a period of time no longer spoken of even in the legends of the other races of Athas. Because of this, rhul-thaun society is unique in all the world.

During the Blue Age, the rhulisti made Athas their own. They tamed the forces of nature and learned to work with the elements rather than struggling against them. The present-day rhul-thaun retain some of their ancestors' knowledge, although much of it is buried in the rituals and traditions that govern the halflings' society.

There are many reasons why the rhul-thaun are different from the other halflings of Athas, and special in their own right compared to all of the races known to the Tyr Region. Physically and mentally, the rhul-thaun peculiarities are worth noting.


Physiology

*Strong of back and sturdy limbs,
blackened hair and fair of skin,
Nimble fingers grip the stone,
I must face the cliffs alone.*

—Verse 117 of the *Cliffclimber's Chant*

Like all of the other major humanoid races of Athas, the rhul-thaun are the descendants of the rhulisti. While all of the other races have changed and mutated radically, the rhul-thaun closely resemble the rhulisti in almost every respect.

Like the feral halflings of the outside world, the rhul-thaun are short with wiry,



nimble bodies. The average height for rhul-thaun males is 3 feet, while females are an inch or two shorter.

Light of bone and build, the physique of the people of the cliffs is sinewy and tough. Even with an abundance of water, however, their lives are still quite harsh, fostering a need for strong, sturdy bodies. Their skin is fairer than that of most Athasians and appears to be smooth and wrinkle-free throughout most of their lives. Their resilient musculature betrays little of the deterioration caused by time, and they are active even in old age. Rhul-thaun hair color is black or brown, but rare individuals are blond or, more rarely, red heads. A typical member of the race has virtually no body hair other than on his head. Facial hair is unknown to them (its presence on members of other races would probably cause them to believe that person to be an animalistic, monstrous, or barbaric individual). Eye color varies greatly, with green, gray, and brown being most common.

Racial Abilities

Halflings of the Jagged Cliffs do not have infravision or the sense to innately determine direction that halflings of other worlds have. Obviously, they are not divided into hair-foots, tallfellows, and stouts, and they do not gain any special starting languages.

Unlike their Athasian halfling cousins, rhul-thaun ability scores are not greatly modified. Because of their small size, rhul-thaun subtract 1 from Strength scores, although their quick and nimble forms do grant them an additional point to initial Dexterity scores. The race's purity of mind and spirit and the unity they feel with living things allows rhul-thaun characters to add 1 to initial Wisdom scores.

Climbing: Because they have lived on the Jagged Cliffs since before records were kept, the rhul-thaun have developed an affinity with vertical thinking and positioning. This, combined with years of experience and training, enables them to excel at activities such as rock climbing. All rhul-thaun characters, regardless of class, begin with a base 80% chance to climb rocky inclines, rather than the 40% listed for unskilled climbers on Table 65 in the *PHB*. Furthermore, rhul-thaun thieves do not subtract 15% from the ability to climb walls as other DARK SUN campaign halflings must. (See the *Age of Heros* rule book in the campaign set.)

Resistance to Poison: Like all halflings, rhul-thaun gain a +1 to their saving throws vs. poison for every 3% points of Constitution they have. They are a hearty people with an effective immune system.


Resistance to Magic: Halflings are resistant to magic. Rhul-thaun in particular know nothing of magic-working and rarely develop the talent to use magic, except in the case of a rare cleric or druid. Add a +1 bonus to all saving throws against rods, staves, wands, and spells for every 3% points of Constitution.

Surprise: Halflings can surprise their opponents when not wearing metal (something rhul-thaun would never do, even if it was available) and while alone (at least 90 feet away from any nonhalfling or nonelven companions). In such a situation, opponents must subtract -4 from their surprise rolls, unless the halfling has to open a door to reach them, in which case the penalty is -2.

Hurled or Thrown Weapons: Like other halflings, rhul-thaun have a predilection for thrown and hurled weapons. Attack rolls made by halflings using these weapons gain a +1 bonus. Rhul-thaun children make a sport of throwing stones, often with great accuracy.

Stages of Life

A rhul-thaun proverb states that "age is a measurement of experience, not an assurance of ability." These halflings do not judge an individual by his age unless he is obviously very young (and therefore inexperienced) or very old (and deserving of respect). It is difficult to tell the age of the rhul-thaun by appearance alone. Not only



does the skin of the halflings remain relatively smooth and unblemished throughout their lives, but most healthy members of the race remain active and spry until death.

Rhul-thaun live 150 years, longer than halflings of the Tyr Region. Their environment is a healthy one, and most individuals live full, hearty lives.

Birth and Childhood: Smatterings of biological knowledge left over from the rhulisti remain within the birthing rituals of the rhul-thaun. Because of these practices, greater numbers of halfling children (and mothers) survive the birth process than those of other Athasian races.

Children are given birth names immediately. Names are determined in a special naming ritual known as the *rhin-noss*, the Rite of Beginning. This ritual involves random elements in the form of ceramic bits inscribed with the names of the child's ancestors. The names carry both literal meanings and symbology based on the deeds of the ancestor whose name is recalled. At the end of the ritual, the shards are shaken in the mother's hands and cast to the ground. The baby is placed near the cluster and the first piece the child touches bares his or her birth-name.

Young children are cared for by their parents, older siblings, and the rest of the clan's extended family. Early on they learn the importance of family ties, as they are forced to rely on so many members of their families to instruct and care for them.

Adolescence: At age 10, rhul-thaun children are expected to begin studying a vocation. At this age, they begin learning important skills that will help them in their lives, the first being rock climbing. Young halflings also begin learning the details of rhul-thaun rituals and are expected to know and take part in many of them.

Males and females are instructed in the same ways regarding the same things. No duties, roles, or professions are regarded as solely belonging to one gender or the other. Training begins with general studies including: history, biology, and philosophy. Then, as the children mature, they begin to make their way along the path toward their desired professions. Skills such as literacy, mathematics, and physics are common, but not everyone is taught them.

Over the next 10 years, the young halflings not only learn a great deal, but their aptitude is measured by those who teach them. Those who seem to possess special qualities (for example, those that befit a life-shaper or a priest—see Chapter 5) are rigorously tested. When young individuals are found who meet the rigorous standards of the special field (as judged by those already within that field), they are apprenticed to appropriate older, more experienced halflings.

Adulthood: Age 20 is generally considered the point of adulthood among the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs. By this time an individual is fully-grown, and his personality is fully developed. Training should be finished at this point and any good halfling should be ready to enter society as an adult member of the clan.

The ritual of adulthood usually occurs on the young person's 20th birthday. This formality is more of a ceremony than an actual "rite of passage" and it is not something that can be failed. During the ritual, an individual's name can be changed if that is desired. This occurs frequently, especially when the name chosen at the Rite of Beginning has become inappropriate to describe the adult individual's nature.

Adulthood brings with it certain rights. An adult has the right to make a case before the clan's *har-etuil*, or judgment makers (see Chapter 3). Such an action requires learning the proper rituals, but is necessary when appealing against an injustice or airing a personal grievance with another individual. Adult rhul-thaun can even speak before the Conclave (a gathering of *har-etuil*) in order to present an issue regarding their clan's well-being (although this is generally the job of the clan's own *har-etuil*).

Adults can also own property, marry, and conduct formal economic transactions.

Middle Age: Around age 60, a rhul-thaun begins to feel the work of time on his body. Although there is little change in appearance, strength and endurance diminish at this stage of life. Most individuals, however, refuse to allow these effects to stop them from continuing with their duties or work. What they lack in physical abilities they more than make up for in experience and wisdom gained over the years.

Rajaat's Curse

Deformities among the rhul-thaun, indeed even diseases that have no visible causes, are always ascribed to "Rajaat's Curse." Rajaat (whose name and legend survives only in the curse) was responsible for the discovery of magic on Athas. At the time he conducted his experiments, he was, as yet, ignorant of the forces he was trying to control. When he pried into the dark side of nature, he unleashed destructive, negative energies—energies that turned a lush forest into a dismal swamp, energies that corrupted the life forms of the forest into things better left to tellings by campfires than encountered in the flesh.

Those afflicted with Rajaat's Curse are treated by the rhul-thaun as belonging to the mysteries of the swamp and shunned. Others who encounter these tormented halflings can sense something malignant about them, even if the mutation is not readily apparent, and leave them alone.

It is at this age that many rhul-thaun take on training and teaching duties, instructing the young in rituals, reading and writing, and professional skills. Teaching is considered an honored position, well-respected and rewarding. Subtract 1 point from Strength and Constitution but add 1 point to Intelligence and Wisdom.

Old Age: At the age of 90, a rhul-thaun is considered to be old. At this point, many individuals strive to become clan leaders, while others are content to settle in with their families, assuming the honored role of family elders.

Those who reach this stage of life are exalted by their families and acquaintances. Theirs are the best rooms of rhul-thaun homes. They are the first served at mealtime and the first heard at tale-telling time.

Disease takes a heavy toll on halflings of advanced age. Limbs are not as quick and fingers not as nimble as they once were. Strength and constitution drain away, leaving a still-sharp mind in a weakened frame. Rarely do rhul-thaun of this age climb the cliffs or ride the wind. Subtract 2 points from Strength and Dexterity and 1 point from Constitution; Add 1 point to Wisdom.

Venerable Age: Any age beyond 120 is ancient to the rhul-thaun, although many live as long as 150 years. These individuals gain the most respect, for the people of the cliffs see life as a valuable treasure. Long life is viewed as a great blessing and a reward for living well. Their wisdom is often sought out to settle matters of importance, and even the judgement makers consult the wisdom of the venerable elderly.

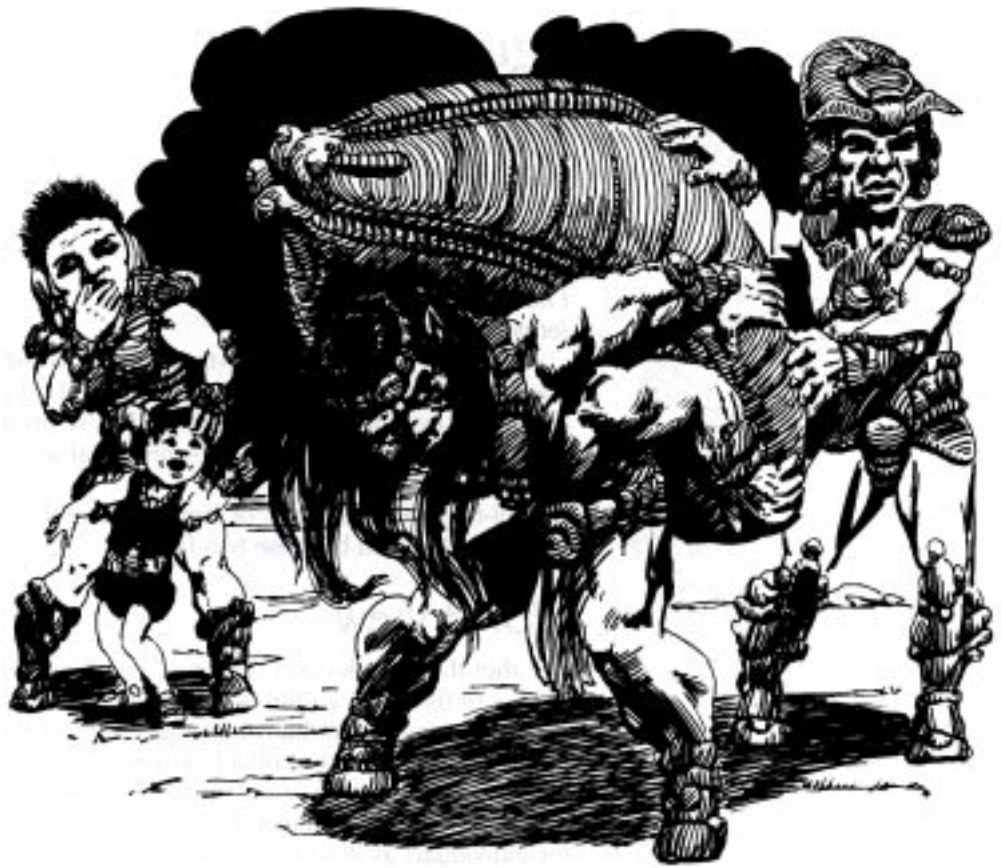
Even those unacquainted with these halflings can recognize the ravages of time upon people of this age. Old, worn flesh becomes leathery and wrinkled, backs begin to curve, and hair whitens. Subtract 1 point from Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution and add 1 point to Intelligence and Wisdom.



Oddities

Occasionally, a child is born who displays marked differences from its parents or any of the other members of the race. These "mutations" are a result of the close proximity of the swamp at the base of the cliffs. Because of the force known as Rajaat's Curse, the rhul-thaun are more susceptible to mutation than other races. Their vulnerability lies in the inheritance of the mutable nature of the rhulisti, from whom they are directly descended. During the Rebirth (see Chapter 2), when the rhulisti were altered into the various races of Athas, the newly changed breeds were intentionally made to be stable, while the stock race kept its mutability. The rhul-thaun retain this quality to a degree, and they occasionally find themselves changed by what they regard as the evil energies of the swamp.

The changes are usually minor, causing slight alterations in build or coloring. Individuals affected in this way can reach a height of 4 feet 6 inches; others have a tendency toward obesity or multiple or disproportionate limbs. Those whose alterations involve color have skin, hair, or eyes with bluish or greenish tints.



Major changes are rarer still but can literally include any sort of variation. Extra limbs, bizarre facial configurations, internal organ modifications, prodigious strength, and remarkable dexterity are just a few mutations that have been documented in the past.

The base chance of any mutation is 1%, and 90% of all of these changes are minor in nature (many so minor they are not even noticeable). The remaining 10% of those altered are changed in a major way. There is no limit to the extent of a major change, but if a simple random die roll is needed to determine the nature of the mutation, use the following table.

RHUL-THAUN MAJOR MUTATION TABLE

| Roll | Mutation |
|-------------|--|
| 1-8 | Extra limb (random type, only 30% are usable) |
| 9-15 | Missing or deformed facial feature |
| 16-20 | Enhanced muscles and bones; add 1d4 to Strength |
| 21-25 | Strengthened heart and internal organs; add 1d4 to Constitution |
| 26-30 | Flexible bones and enhanced nervous system; add 1d4 to Dexterity |
| 31-38 | Improved eyes; increase visual range by x2 |
| 39-46 | Improved ears; increase audio range by x2 |
| 47-57 | Improved eyes; provide 60-foot infravision |
| 58-65 | Leathery skin; provide natural AC 8 |
| 66-73 | Improved muscles and tendons; allow 15-foot leaps |
| 74-80 | Primitive gills; allow underwater breathing for 1 hour per day |
| 81-86 | Altered immune system; provide immunity to disease |
| 87-92 | Altered internal systems; +4 resistance to poison |
| 93-96 | Roll twice, ignoring rolls over 92 |
| 97-00 | DM's option |

Any character who has a visible or discovered mutation suffers a reaction roll modification of -4 when encountering other rhul-thaun, since they will recognize such a character as infected with Rajaat's Curse. Reactions from other races are at -2.



Psychology

*Sing to me gently, rising wind,
and carry me where I will.
Every thought now given flight,
life-wine flows through my ride.
My focus fast upon my task
the powers of life to guide me.
I have the will to stay my creed
let none my way impede!*

—*The Mantra of the Windrider*

The psychology of the rhul-thaun is different from other races, and shows a marked separation even from other halflings. This stems from their unique environment and their links to the halflings of old—links that are much stronger than those of other Athasian races.

Rhul-thaun views of life, of family, and of the world around them have all been heavily influenced by these two factors.

World View

The rhul-thaun look upon the world much as the rhulisti did. This means that to the people of the cliffs, all life is sacred, and nature is a force to be respected. So extreme have these notions become that most rhul-thaun venerate the elements as unknowable and uncontrollable forces.

They also know that in nature all things serve a purpose, and therefore try to find their own purpose in life and in relationship to the rest of the world. This is as true for individuals as it is for the people of the clans.

Rituals

As they look upon the random, indomitable forces inherent in the world, the rhul-thaun seek at least a thin veneer of reason to give the appearance of control. To accomplish this, and to preserve what was left of their ancestors' knowledge, they devised a complex set of rituals, one for virtually every conceivable event and activity in their lives. Birth, marriage, and death rites are found in most societies, but the rhul-thaun make formal ceremonies of greeting, meals, dressing, trade, war, dance, and all aspects of life requiring relationships with others.

The repetition of familiar rituals gives them the assurance that they are imposing order on chaos and allows them to conceal their own feelings, hidden behind the mask that formality provides.

Religion


Despite their universal passion for ritual, and like all other inhabitants of Athas, the rhul-thaun know no gods. While nature is revered and respected, the rhul-thaun seldom worship its attributes—except for a rare few. These individuals follow the paths of the elemental priests who pay homage to the power of the forces of earth, air, and water—fire is forbidden.

The halflings see earth as solid, steady, and dependable. Climbers in particular recognize the importance of earth and rock. It is their source of safety and assurance as they scale the tremendous heights of the cliffs. Of the three, however, earth has the fewest number of devotees in a culture that has little religious fervor.

The importance of air is clear, for it is the bringer of storms and wind to the cliffs. Air is the medium of the mists that suffuse their lives. Furthermore, air carries the windriders to their destinations and brings them home again.

Water is the source of life. It represents all organic matter, including the life-shaped creations so vital to the rhul-thaun. Though not as scarce as it is on the rest of Athas, water is a sacred thing to the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs.

Fire, alone of the elements, is forbidden as an object of veneration. The rhul-thaun



view fire as a destroyer, a killer. There may be a few hidden, criminal sects of rhul-thaunian fire priests, but they are very uncommon.

Some venerate the memory and promises of High Lord Rhan Thes-oneI. Indeed, he has become a minor deity of a sort. They wait for his return with the fanatical assurance that he will bring with him a purpose for his people. Most realize that no halfling could live long enough for Rhan to still be alive, but they speculate that his coming will be in the form of a spirit, a vision, or a sign of some mystical nature.

Magic

Wizardly magic remains an unknown quantity among the rhul-thaun. Their culture entered its cloistered isolation before the power of sorcery was developed. The vast majority of rhul-thaun continue to be completely ignorant of the power of magic, its effects, and its practitioners. It is not that they actively *disbelieve* in magic, they are merely ignorant of it—the words *wizard* and *magic* are not even in their language.

What they do recognize is the energy that emanates from the swamp at the base of their precipices. Referred to as Rajaan's Curse, it is a source of fear and mystery among the halflings of the cliffs. They certainly do not know enough about magic to realize that the same power that creates Rajaan's Curse can be used to allow others to cast memorized spells that produce effects of both good and evil.

When they experience the power of magic, their response is to react with horror. The more stalwart occasionally attempt to explain the process through concepts they can understand or at least are aware of, such as psionics. These attempts are usually met with frank stares of disbelief.

Psionics

Compared to their appreciation of magic, rhul-thaunian understanding of psionics is tremendous. But when weighed against most of the other intelligent races of Athas, however, the halflings of the cliffs lack a true grasp of the nature and power of the Way. They have long recognized its existence and many individuals have displayed natural mental powers in their own culture. (Some rhul-thaun have extraordinary wild talents, but most touched by the Way simply have defense modes or other abilities that are not dramatically obvious.)

Because its origins do not lie with the ancient halflings of the Blue Age, however, the rhul-thaun do not regard psionics very highly. In fact psionic ability is seen as a taint rather than a blessing and the use of an ability is considered to be in poor taste. Those halflings with powers learn to use them subtly, when alone, or not at all. Those with known psionic talents are looked upon as contaminated by the "pure" rhul-thaunians.


None of these halflings have ever thought therefore, that psionics could be something to be manipulated or focused into a far greater source of power. None have ever done an in-depth study of the nature of psionics or learned the secrets of the Way—most likely, none ever will.

Clothing and Fashion

Using the ritualized arts of life-shaping, the rhul-thaun organically produce clothing from creatures created specifically to shed their own skins, spin silky excretions, or grow fine coats to be sheared. Thus, rhul-thaun clothing appears to be made of fine, beautiful cloth, wool, and leather, though it truly is none of these.

Each rhul-thaun clan has its color or colors to represent it. At official functions and on special holidays, the members of the various halfling clans are expected to wear their colors to show clan affiliation and pride. At other times, however, everyone is free to wear whatever they choose. Even the lawkeepers do not wear uniforms, sporting only identifying cosmetic graft patches.

Males usually wear their hair long, allowing their tangled locks to flow freely. Females wear their hair cropped short in most instances. Both sexes often dye part or all of their hair—often in unnatural colors with dyes organically produced by life-



shaped creatures. Clan preferences are observed in these fashions, so many times it is possible for those who know to identify someone's clan affiliation by simply looking at his hair color and style.

The rhul-thaun also frequently use patterned face and body paint to individualize their identities and many of them alter the patterns on a daily basis. The designs for body painting vary from very simple starbursts to complex series of symbols, heavy with cultural meaning and significance. These motifs are based on individual preference rather than clan fashion, so personal details, including history, tendencies, taste, and even mood can be understood by observing rhul-thaunian body paint.

Obviously, grooming is an important part of this society and a great deal of time each morning is spent dealing with cosmetic effects. Personal appearance is a very serious matter among the rhul-thaun and even the most unrefined individuals recognize its importance. Grooming time is not considered frivolous and those who maintain a seriously crafted look are not thought of as vain. In fact, the notion of vanity is not found in rhul-thaun culture.

Feral Halflings

Environment and circumstance mold and shape individuals and even entire peoples. The halflings of the Tyr Region and beyond are also descendants of the rhulisti. Nevertheless, the conditions in which the feral halflings found themselves changed them into wild, nearly uncivilized savages. Except for size and relative build, newcomers to the Jagged Cliffs will notice virtually no similarities between the rhul-thaun and the familiar halflings of the Tyr Region.

Halflings from the outside world who encounter the rhul-thaun find the experience unsettling. Despite many similarities, the two groups have very little in common when it comes to their fundamental philosophies of life. Isolated, recalling their great past, the rhul-thaun respect nothing more than life and are loathe to destroy it. But the feral halflings, whose history has devolved to legend and whose culture has been corrupted over the years by neighboring cultures, look upon every living thing as a potential source of food.

Creating Rhul-Thaun Characters

If a player wants to play a character with interesting role-playing challenges and a very different background from his fellows, a rhul-thaun character is a good possibility. Such a PC would carry out ritualized activities that others would regard as odd and possibly silly; would look at taking life, the forces of nature, and even something as simple as horizontal distances in a different way, and possess useful skills not available to other PCs. A rhul-thaun character might also possess life-shaped equipment, providing a new look, feel, and a number of different options for the party.

Players wishing to create halfling characters who hail from the Jagged Cliffs should consult the Dungeon Master. These characters may be privy to information regarding Athas's history and this new territory that other PCs from the Tyr Region would not have. A DM may not want to allow this option to players. It may also be difficult to justify adding a rhul-thaun player character to a standard DARK SUN campaign.

The best way to integrate a rhul-thaun into an adventuring party is to have them visit the Jagged Cliffs and befriend one of the halflings there. Many of the rhul-thaun are curious to discover what lies beyond their ledges, so a halfling PC may certainly accompany a party wherever its adventures take them. Chapter 5 contains rules for operating life-shaped creations beyond the boundaries of the Jagged Cliffs region if a rhul-thaun character plans to take any organic equipment with him.

Alternatively, DMs may wish to have a campaign in which all of the PCs are rhul-thaun, as a group of climbers, windriders, or even halfling explorers of the thri-kreen savanna. Even if the DM plans on using the Jagged Cliffs and the rhul-thaun culture as a setting for an existing DARK SUN campaign territory for PCs to explore, the following section should be studied in order to create halfling NPCs.



Character Class

Except as noted here, all aspects of character creation are the same as those in the DARK SUN rule book. The following rules apply only to rhul-thaun characters regarding character class:

- **Warriors:** Most halflings are of the warrior class but halflings of the Jagged Cliffs are not permitted to be gladiators. While not lacking in courage, the value their culture places on life prevents them from inventing or taking part in games in which people are actually injured. There are few halfling rangers.
- **Priests:** Priests are infrequent among the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs, but they do exist. Rhul-thaun characters can be elemental priests. The elements of earth, air, and water are revered, but priests of elemental fire and their beliefs are forbidden.

Druids are even scarcer than priests. Those that do exist seclude themselves within the vertical forests dotting the sides of the cliffs. None of them, however, attempt to preserve the swamp below, for it is tainted by Rajaat's ancient magic and no longer a true creature of nature.
- **Rogues:** A great many halflings focus their natural dexterity, quickness, and inbred climbing ability and become rogues. Not all of them devote their lives to crime and dishonesty, however. Many members of the thief class use their abilities to become professional climbers, scouts, and spies. Even windriders find their skills useful.

Because of their isolation, rhul-thaun traders and traveling minstrels are extremely rare. But on the cliffs, the rhul-thaun have their own entertainers, and windancers are prized performers.
- **Psionicists:** Like all intelligent beings on Athas, the rhul-thaun have psionic potential and many possess wild talents. Most common halflings own simple defensive and subtle abilities, though a few individuals can wield dramatic, fearsome powers.

Since psionic powers were not among the abilities of the ancient rhulisti, most halflings of the Jagged Cliffs think of them as uncouth, distasteful, and suspect. Even those halflings who possess great powers are socially constrained to suppress them, at least in public. Individuals with psionic abilities are viewed as tainted, lesser beings.

RHUL-THAUN CLASS LEVEL LIMITS TABLE

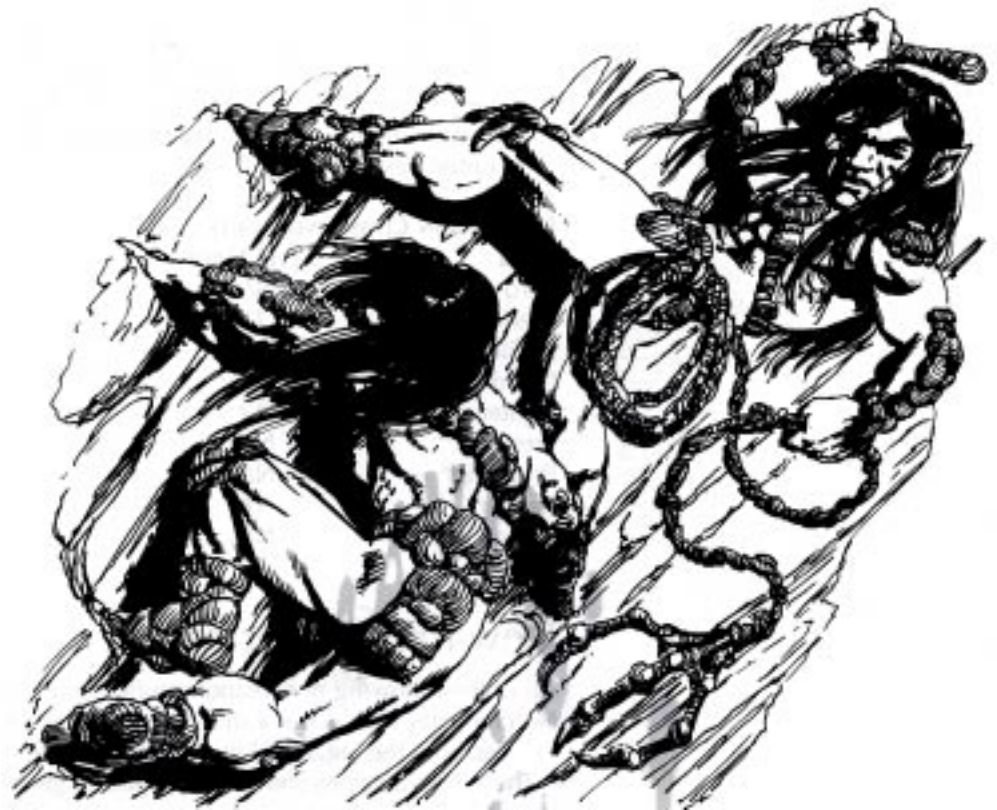
| Class | Level Limit |
|------------|-------------|
| Bard | N/A |
| Cleric | 12 |
| Defiler | N/A |
| Druid | 16 |
| Fighter | 12 |
| Preserver | N/A |
| Psionicist | N/A |
| Ranger | 16 |
| Trader | N/A |
| Thief | 16 |

New Proficiencies

All of the following nonweapon proficiencies are specific to the peoples of the cliffs. No character who is not a rhul-thaun should have access to these skills without a teacher from the Jagged Cliffs region who is at least a journeyman in the proficiency.

These proficiencies should be treated as general category proficiencies, available to any class.

- **Cliff Fighting:** The ability to fight, maneuver, and evade while standing on or clinging to the narrow ledges of the sides of the cliffs are necessary survival skills for halflings. The cliff fighting proficiency not only negates penalties normally accrued in these critical situations, but gives the proficient a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls when fighting on cliff faces and ledges. These modifiers only apply when the combat has vertical aspects and there is a chance of falling. For example, a halfling could use these modifiers clinging to a narrow ledge and attacking a foe on the ledge above him, or standing at the edge of a large, rocky shelf and throwing spears at enemies thronging below him. It would not apply faced against a thri-kreen foe in a desert oasis or fighting in the back alleys of a sorcerer-king's city-state—unless climbing walls This skill takes into account the rhul-thaun's natural, vertical orientation and can never be mastered by other races.
- **Life-Shaping:** This is a very specialized skill that is difficult to learn and harder to master. It includes all of the rituals needed to create common life-shaped creatures. It also entails the ability to repair damaged creations. Only life-shapers possess this knowledge (it is forbidden to tenders) and it is virtually impossible for someone outside of that highly structured guild to learn this craft.
- **Ritual Knowledge:** All rhul-thaun characters have this proficiency. It includes the basics of all of the rituals upon which the rhul-thaun society is based. It would be impossible for a halfling of the cliffs to function in his own culture without this skill. Outsiders may be taught ritual knowledge so that they too can operate within this ancient society without seeming barbaric or uncultured.
- **Tending:** With this ability, a character is able to adequately care for a life-shaped creation. This includes the knowledge of what the creation needs for sustenance, preferable temperatures and humidity, and other specifics necessary for the life of the life-shaped creature.





- **Windancing:** This skill is not so much taught as it is inherent. Those with inborn grace and agility begin to practice at an early age, imitating the graceful wind-dancers flitting above their roofs. Sometimes practice in the art begins even before one's life's work is chosen, but dancing up the vertical is not for everyone.
- **Windriding:** This is a very specialized skill that allows one to control a flying mount within the constantly challenging climactic conditions of the Jagged Cliffs. This includes operating in high winds, dealing with the mist, flying near the cliff faces, and maneuvering on a creature while hovering (in order to harvest plants, fire a missile weapon at prey, and so on).

Social Status

To determine the social status of the character, based on the family that he was born into, roll 1d8 and 1d12 together and consult the following table:

SOCIAL STATUS TABLE

| 1d8 & 1d12 | Status |
|------------|-----------|
| 2 | Very Low |
| 3-5 | Low |
| 6-12 | Average |
| 13-19 | High |
| 20 | Very High |

The result of the die roll determines the starting wealth of beginning characters as well as their place in rhul-thaun society.

Very Low social status suggests that the character literally grew up “on the streets” or in the wild. While such characters may be self-sufficient and capable, they are very poor and looked down upon by almost all other members of society. Their appearance is generally shoddy, at least at first (dirt and grime cake their faces and their clothing is torn and filthy) and so their Charisma scores are reduced by 2 until they get a chance to wash themselves and their clothes. These characters subtract 1d8 from their starting money roll. This means that they could start with no money at all—unfortunate, but all too common. Their only chance to purchase equipment or food honestly is through barter for their labor. DMs are encouraged to give characters their choice of a single item from a select list with which to begin.

Low social status indicates that the character is from an impoverished background, but not to the degree of the very low die roll result. These characters grew up in the poorer sections of a city or village, which are generally the lower sections. They and their families usually hold menial jobs requiring greater amounts of manual labor. Many criminals are members of this social class. If a character is determined to be of low social status, 1d4 is subtracted from his starting money roll.

Characters of Average social status are the most common people in rhul-thaun society. These sturdy folk make up most of the ranks of the windriders, climbers, tenders, merchants, and other major occupations. They have no modification on their starting money roll.

High social status characters live in the upper reaches of communities and come from wealthier backgrounds. These people make up much of the life-shaper ranks (although these can come from any class) and are also merchants, windriders, and other professionals. High social status characters can also be involved in organized crime. These characters add 1d8 to their starting money die roll.

Very High social status characters live in the highest towers of their communities and generally occupy themselves with only the most respected and prestigious occupations. Some Very High status characters will be related to har-etuil or even administrators. Such characters add 2d8 to their starting money die roll.



Starting Money and Equipment

When all other aspects of character creation are finished, players must equip their rhul-thaun characters for their adventuring careers. To do this, each character must begin the game with a certain amount of money. This amount is determined by rolling 5d4. The result of this die roll is then modified by social status. Finally, the total is multiplied by 30. The result is the number of rhul-thaun coins, called ghav-egoths, that a character has at the beginning of the game.

Character Kits

The following kits are specific to the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs. The use of these kits is optional, and players should always discuss creating a character using a kit with the Dungeon Master.

Kit Descriptions

Each character kit presented here is described and detailed individually, with an overview presented at the beginning of each section. In addition, each kit is also described with the following criteria:

Role: Every rhul-thaun pays particular attention to how he fits into society and the world. This section reveals the roles that those characters created with the kit would play in the total scheme of things.

Weapon Proficiencies: Certain kits may require a character to take particular weapon proficiencies. These proficiencies are acquired normally.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Some of the kits may also require that a character possess particular nonweapon proficiencies. Bonus proficiencies are gained automatically and are free. Required proficiencies are gained normally and must be taken. Recommended proficiencies are optional (but useful and appropriate to the kit) and are gained normally. If a recommended proficiency comes from a group not listed for the character's class, the proficiency costs one additional slot (unless the specific kit states otherwise).

Equipment: Some kits impose restrictions concerning a character's use of equipment and these are presented here. Other kits may allow characters who use the kit to begin the game with certain items. This section also describes these benefits.


Special Benefits: Every kit has advantages that make it worth dealing with the restrictions and mandatory proficiencies. These benefits are presented here and vary greatly from kit to kit.

Special Hindrances: Some kits have drawbacks peculiar to them, these restrictions are presented in this section.

Wealth: Modifications to starting money roll (see above) because of specific kits are given here.

Chahn Terrorist (Warrior)

The Chahn are young radicals who seek to overthrow rhul-thaun society, leadership, and traditions. They reject the ancient precepts on which rhul-thaun society is founded: ritual, clans, and most importantly, the isolationist policy of staying on the cliffs. They do not see themselves as terrorists but rather as freedom fighters struggling against the forces of stagnation and oppression. They want the rhul-thaun to forget the ways, beliefs, and taboos of the past and progress into the future. Chahn want to explore the outside world to see for themselves what has happened in the thousands of years that have passed since their separation from the rhulisti.



Some of these halflings do not believe that violent means are the way to effect change. These are not the evil, murderous individuals most people think of when they reflect on the Chahn. Nevertheless, they believe that action must be taken to stimulate a stagnant society and that change is necessary for the rhul-thaun to thrive in this harsh world.

Most Dungeon Masters will probably want this kit to stay out of the hands of players, restricting its use to NPCs. It may be that such a fanatical character would not fit in well with a party of adventurers. A DM who wishes to involve the PCs in the political intrigues of the rhul-thaun, may encourage one or more players to secretly create characters with Chahn affiliation unknown to the other players. Another option is to have all of the player characters play Chahn agents, involving the adventurers in “freedom fighting” missions.

It is important to note that not all members of the Chahn use this kit. In particular, thieves and even a few priests belong to this group.

Role: The Chahn are criminals, wanted by the lawkeepers for their terrorist acts and radical beliefs. Even though not all Chahn members believe in violent or evil action to achieve their goals, they are all implicated by their association with those who have no such reservations.

Weapon Proficiencies: Characters using this kit must take dagger and garrote as proficiencies; these are easily concealed weapons.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the Chahn members are as follows.

Bonus Proficiencies: Forgery.

Required Proficiencies: Weapon improvisation.

Recommended Proficiencies: Local history, sign language, cliff fighting.

Equipment: Chahn receive an organic knife, organic mace, or an arblade.

Special Benefits: Because of their fanatical beliefs, Chahn receive a +1 bonus on attack rolls, proficiency checks, and saving throws when performing actions they believe will help overthrow the current social order. Furthermore, their contacts with other Chahn members give them access to equipment, information, and favors if performing a task for the organization (DM’s discretion).

Special Hindrances: Chahn fanaticism causes other rhul-thaun to subtract 2 on all reaction rolls against the character if the Chahn affiliation is known.

Wealth: Chahn have no modifications to their starting money.

Climber (Warrior/Rogue)

This kit is for multiclassed warrior/rogue halflings. Climbers are those who make their living by scaling the cliff walls and crossing the distances between the villages found on the ledges. They often use ropes, spikes, and harnesses, but are also skilled at climbing without relying on such equipment.

Although not all climbers are alike, they are generally self-sufficient and some even take this self-reliance to the extreme and become overconfident. Although a climber could easily be a part of an adventuring party (for adventures on the cliffs a climber is necessary), they generally stick together. Some work in small groups, and nearly all fraternize with other climbers when not working. Many settlements have safehomes (rhul-thaun taverns and inns) that cater specifically to climbers and their generally rough tastes.

Role: Climbers provide a vital role in rhul-thaun society, and most people regard them as rough, rugged, and extremely capable.

Weapon Proficiencies: Climbers never use heavy or unwieldy weapons, therefore starting out with a proficiency in either dagger or spine thrower.



Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the climber are as follows.

Bonus Proficiencies: Mountaineering.

Required Proficiencies: Direction sense, rope use, cliff fighting.

Recommended Proficiencies: Tightrope walking, jumping, survival, hunting, at least one more slot of mountaineering.

Equipment: Every climber starts out with the tools of his trade: 200 feet of organic rope, 10 organic climbing spikes, an organic mallet, and a grasping hook.

Special Benefits: Climbers can climb safely (using either their climbing ability or mountaineering proficiency) at twice the normal speed for 1 minute per Constitution point. Because of special packing techniques, climbers carry 150% of their normal weight allowance without becoming encumbered.

Special Hindrances: Climbers are so adapted to a vertical environment that they sometimes have problems with horizontal distances. Reduce ranges on all missile weapons by 25% for those using this kit.

Wealth: Normally, beginning climbers must invest their money in equipment. Reduce the starting money roll by 1d4 for climbers, they are sure to earn it back tenfold in no time.

Windancer (Rogue)

Windancing is an art form that combines dance and acrobatics into one graceful, athletic frolic between the spires and up the walls of the cliff towns. Windancers seem to sail up, and up, and up at heart-stopping speeds, tumbling, hands hardly touching stair rails; leaping, feet skimming over bridge supports, and always, always, climbing toward the stone-covered sky. These are the ones wealthy merchants sometimes hear tap-dancing above them in their pinnacle homes.

Windancing is lucrative as well, for when they finally return to earth they find that respect for their skills has been paid in full coffers of contributions. They also take on less savory assignments if the price is right and individual ethics permit.

Role: Every society has its artists, bards, and rogues. The rhuI-thaun have windancers. These performers are self-taught, though occasionally an experienced artist takes on a promising amateur in an informal apprenticeship.

These masters of the ceilings play to the crowds at festivals, special occasions, or whenever they feel like it.

Weapon Proficiencies: Like climbers, windancers shy away from heavy weapons for practical reasons, starting out with a proficiency in either dagger or spine thrower.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Windancer proficiencies are as follows:

Bonus Proficiencies: Mountaineering and dancing.

Required Proficiencies: Direction sense, tightrope walking, and tumbling.


Recommended Proficiencies: artistic ability, jumping, and juggling.

Equipment: Windancers begin their practice with two organic grasping hooks and two quick-release suction gauntlets specially designed to hold smooth surfaces.

Special Benefits: Windancers climb walls and dance over bridges at three times normal speed, safely, for 2 minutes per Constitution point. They also receive a +10% bonus to move silently and a +5% to hide in shadows.

Special Hindrances: because of their need to remain as unencumbered as possible, they can carry only 50% of their normal weight allowance.

The windancers' working environment, while vertical, is one unexposed to weather, hostile creatures, or the Misty Border. When forced to operate in exposed conditions, all bonuses return to normal.



Wealth: Windancers must first invest in their equipment. Subtract 1d6 from starting funds. Windancers are very much appreciated on the cliffs and a first-time performance collection should return at least 10 times the cost of the starting equipment.

Windriders (Rogue)

There is no more enviable position in rhul-thaun society than that of the riders of the wind. Soaring the skies on the back of a steed specifically designed and grown to serve its master and maneuver within the restrictions of the cliffs and mist is the dream of most young halflings.

Windriders are carefully trained and highly talented. Mounted hunters, harvesters, and couriers, these individuals are capable, daring, and flamboyant. They are the swashbucklers of the Jagged Cliffs.

There is no reason why windriders could not be a part of an adventuring party, although most of their talents would not be put to use in ground adventures. Still, one cannot ride the wind all the time and most riders' flamboyant natures stay with them even when on the ground.

Role: Like climbers, windriders fill an important niche in rhul-thaun society. They are envied and respected by virtually all members of their culture.

Weapon Proficiencies: A windrider's first weapon proficiency must be a missile weapon.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies of the windrider are as follows.

Bonus Proficiencies: Windriding.

Required Proficiencies: Riding, airborne.

Recommended Proficiencies: Weather sense, direction sense, hunting.

Equipment: Windriders rarely own their own mounts. They begin with no special equipment.

Special Benefits: Windriders operate on the backs of airborne mounts with no penalties. They receive a +2 modifier to reaction rolls, and can usually find free food and shelter at an air temple (if one can be found). The priests of the air temple in Thamasku treat windriders as special holy men and women.

Special Hindrances: Windriders may never develop a proficiency in riding land-based animals.

Wealth: Windriders receive a bonus of 1d6 to their starting money. Unlike climbers, they have no equipment to buy, and, in fact, are usually given great gifts by wealthy patrons when they officially become windriders (in the hope that they will later give the patrons discounts or favors—a windrider is a good friend to have on the Jagged Cliffs).

Adventuring on the Jagged Cliffs

Adventures in the Jagged Cliffs with the rhul-thaun will encounter conditions not usually faced on Athas. The following information should be kept in mind when designing adventures for the Jagged Cliffs.

Operating in the Mist

The base of the cliffs acts as a natural drain, collecting run off from the highlands and water emptying from the western lowlands. Hot springs, open lava tubes, and magma pools heat the water, producing clouds of steam that rise to the top of the rock wall and create the Misty Border. This is where the mist is thickest (100% of the time), visibility is always 1d6 feet during the day and 0 at night. Artificial light in the form of torches or life-shaped bioluminescence is always restricted to a maximum



equal to the daytime visibility range.

Two factors come into play when dealing with the mist. The first and most obvious is the lack of visibility. There is a 90% chance each day that the mists are thick and billowy anywhere on the Jagged Cliffs. This means that visibility is restricted to 1d6x10 feet during the day and 1d4 feet at night. If the mists are thin on a particular day, visibility is normal.

The other factor that affects races not native to the cliffs is humidity. Characters from the rest of Athas aren't accustomed to the damp, soggy air produced by the mists. Outsiders not used to living in the vapors are one encumbrance category higher than they would be normally. Thus, unencumbered characters are lightly encumbered, moderately encumbered characters have heavy encumbrances, and so on. This is because of the energy draining effects of the intense humidity. Characters adapt to the conditions and ignore these penalties after 3d4 days.

Climbing the Cliffs

All rhul-thaun have a greater than normal (80%) base chance for climbing. This is because it is the easiest and most common means of getting from place to place. Additionally, many halflings—and all professional climbers—have the mountaineering proficiency, giving them an additional 10% chance.

Rhul-thaun climbers have marked paths with good handholds and numerous ledges that stretch between various important locations on the Jagged Cliffs. The paths are marked with special symbols that tell a trained professional climber the details of the path—its direction, length, potential dangers, and the like. When on a path, climbers gain an additional 40% chance to climb.

The mist, however, covers everything with a slippery coating of water. On days when the mist is heavy (90% of the time), all climbers must deduct -25% from their total chance to climb. This means that an average rhul-thaun climber (base 80% chance) with one slot of mountaineering proficiency (+10%) climbing when the rocks are slippery (-25%) has a 65% chance to climb successfully (80+10-25=65).

More experienced climbers have more slots of mountaineering, as well as life-shaped devices (like climbing boots and gloves) that raise this even higher. Then too, keep in mind other modifiers because of encumbrance, wounds, and the effects listed in the *PHB*. Lastly, note that the bonus for climbing on a path is not cumulative with the use of ropes to climb, although most rhul-thaun climbers only use ropes to secure themselves and rely on their own skill for the actual work of climbing.

A failed climbing roll does not always suggest a fall down to the bottom, of course. (That would be fatal no matter how many hit points a character had.) If a character does fail the roll, the following optional table can be used:

FAILED CLIMBING ROLL RESULTS TABLE

| d100 | Result |
|-------|--|
| 01-50 | Stumbling and poor handholds slow climbing to half-movement rate. |
| 51-60 | Harrowing near-death falls force a climber to pause for 1d10 rounds. |
| 61-70 | Climber falls 10 feet before catching a new handhold. Character takes 1d6 damage. |
| 71-80 | Climber falls 1d6x10 feet to a ledge. Character takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet. |
| 81-90 | Climber falls 1d20x10 feet, finally coming to rest on a ledge. Character takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet. |
| 91-97 | Climber falls 1d100x10 feet. Character takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet to a maximum of 20d6. |
| 98-00 | Climber falls 1d100x100 feet, or to the base of the cliff, whichever is shorter. Character takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet to a maximum of 20d6. (To implant a note of realism into the game, the DM may rule that falls from heights more than 1,000 feet are always fatal.) |

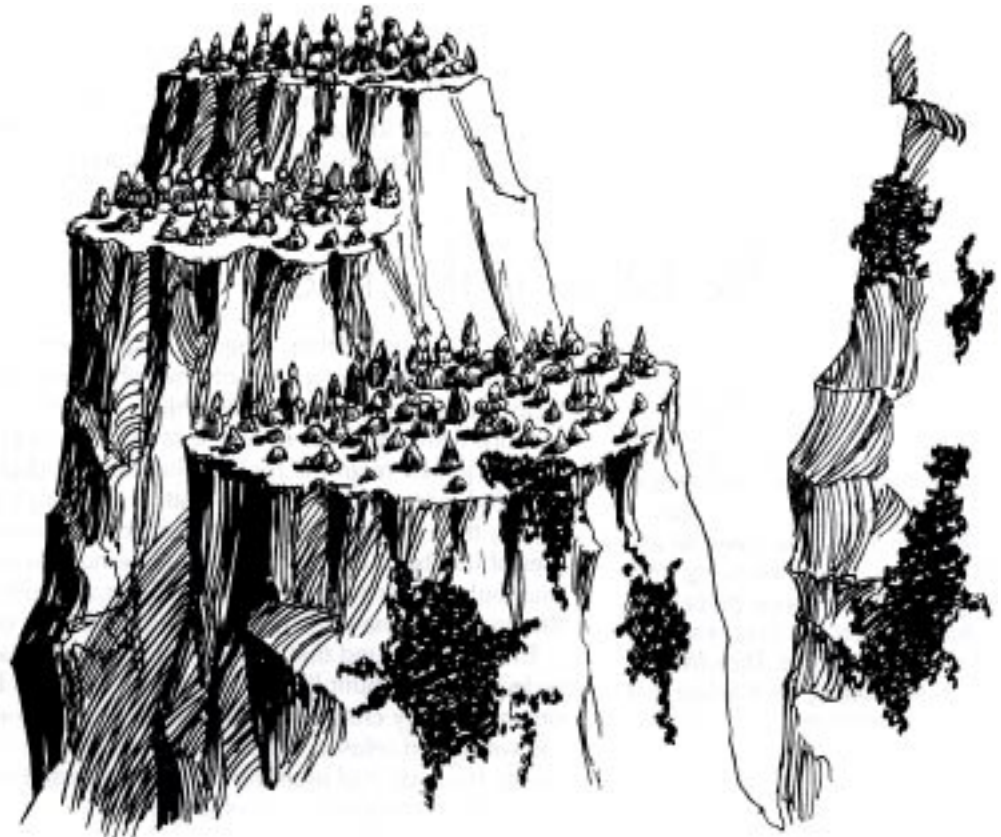
The severity of the falls assumes no rope or pitons are being used to secure the climber. Climbing checks should be made about once an hour, less frequently if conditions are good and more often in hazardous circumstances.

Living in a Halfling's World

Obviously, when outsiders find themselves in a halfling village the first thing that they notice is that everything is small. For example, humans and elves have to duck to get through doorways, while extremely large characters, such as half giants, may not be able to go through some doorways at all. Furniture, utensils, clothing, equipment—everything is very diminutive. The DM should emphasize this strangeness throughout the adventure.

The organic nature and appearance of everything the PCs encounter in rhul-thaun society should also be stressed. For example, this culture is so devoid of straight lines that even inorganic articles are given smooth, angle-free appearances resembling life-forms.

As the realm of the rhul-thaun is vertical, so are their lives. It is important to remember that the halflings are very well adapted to their surroundings. If PCs from the outside allow themselves to be drawn into combat situations with rhul-thaun while climbing or in situations conditions involving vertical surfaces, they are in for a terrible surprise. With the cliff fighting proficiency, not only do the rhul-thaun avoid the normal penalties associated with climbing (-2 to saving throws, attacks, and damage rolls while climbing, no Dexterity bonuses to AC while climbing, -2 for attacking from below, and others that may apply). However, the proficiency does give them a bonus to attack and damage. While other PCs face stiff penalties, the rhul-thaun perform with ease and panache.



Wanderer's Journal

And so I found myself learning about a folk that I had never heard described even in rumors. These halflings are an ancient people—in fact, they gave me a new measuring stick for “ancient.” Their race is older than any other on Athas. They remember times before the Warbringer, before magic, and before the advent of the Way.

Their devotion to the past is so all-consuming it governs the way they think and act on a daily basis. They are unaware of the forces of sorcery, and, because of it's “recent” introduction, they reject psionics. These are the very powers most Athasians accept as integral to the world and most archaic in origin. The rhul-thaun believe that the recent development of psionics makes it a crude and unsophisticated practice.

The entire race is waiting. A time-lost ruler, a hero who once left the cliffs, promised to return with knowledge of a rhul-thaunian purpose in the world. They are still waiting, still needing a purpose, a reason for living. They need to discover their place in what they see as an ordered and structured universe. They live in the past, waiting for a future that may never come.



CHAPTER 2

The Ages of the Rhul-Thaun


The history of the rhul-thaun is the history of Athas. Their origins lie with the rhulisti themselves, the one-time masters of the entire world and all who lived upon it. The people of the cliffs are the last remnants of that ancient, powerful race, and remain the keepers of many of the old secrets and customs. (See *The Wanderer's Chronicle* in the DARK SUN campaign set for more details about that ancient time.)

The Dawn of Time

In the Blue Age of Athas, when rich, sparkling water practically covered the world, the rhulisti flourished for a span of time whose measure is unknown today. This great race formed a union with the world unlike any breed of Athas today. They quickly learned to work with the forces of nature rather than oppose them.

During their reign the rhulisti plumbed the depths of physical investigation and revealed many of the secrets of nature. Although their knowledge encompassed many things, they reached the height of their enlightenment when they harnessed the energies of life itself. Under the sea they found a living, porous stone that they could manipulate to grow into any desired shape. From this basic substance, they learned the process of manipulating the building blocks of living things.

The rhulisti found that living creatures, both plants and animals, could be redesigned and built like any other sorts of tools but they refused to think of the organisms they created as mere commodities. They respected life as they respected the world and refused to abuse it or to take any of it for granted. Armed with this new ability to shape and mold life, they constructed living buildings, vehicles, tools, guardians, and other useful objects.



Becoming true masters of the world, the rhulisti prospered for centuries. They had many communities, including the great city of Tyr'agi, in what is now the Tyr Valley. They also settled themselves on a chain of islands to the north and west of Tyr'agi. These islands would one day be the tops of what are now the Jagged Cliffs.

The Birth of the Rhul-thaun

At the end of the Blue Age, the seas began to die. The death of Athas's oceans was due to an accident. The inadvertent creation and release of a life-leaching brown plant caused the waters to recede. Thus, the Jagged Cliffs were born. (In truth, the rhulisti's monumental feat was the use of the sun's energy to kill the tide of brown sludge that caused the seas' volume to decline.) The island halfings descended the now-exposed cliffs and discovered that the retreating waters had uncovered a number of large ledges upon which whole communities could be established. While the rhulisti of the Tyr'agi area were busy engineering the Rebirth, those on the cliffs were isolated on the rocky ledges.

And so the rhul-thaun, the people of the cliffs, became a separate and distinct people from the other halfings of Athas. After the Rebirth, when the rhulisti transformed themselves into humans, demi-humans, and other humanoids, the rhul-thaun discovered they were isolated in a steadily changing world. A few other unaltered rhulisti halfings remained in far-flung locales, but these people eventually forgot their origins and became wild, uncivilized savages. Not so for the rhul-thaun—they remembered and struggled to preserve what once was.

Because of their isolation and their early struggles for survival, the rhul-thaun were unaware of what actually occurred during the Rebirth or why the world had changed. In fact, they are still oblivious of these things. In the following era, known as the Green Age, the halfings of the cliffs remained separated from the rest of the world. As the new races—humans, elves, dwarves, and the rest—built cities and carved out roads, the rhul-thaun remained in their cliff-clinging villages, waiting for some sign of what had happened to the rest of their people. They could see that the sun had changed from sapphire blue to a golden yellow, and that the sea had receded far from them. Beyond their own observations, they had no idea of the changes that had been wrought upon their world, nor of the reason for them.

Isolation

Approximately 14,000 years ago, during the early Green Age, the rhul-thaun created the city of Thamasku. (This was soon after the waters of the Blue Age began to recede.) At that time (and even today) water from the tablelands flowed toward the low lands in the west, winding through the area near Thamasku and creating a lush and fertile forest.

Shortly afterward, the halfings began to descend the sides of the cliffs. There they found a number of large ledges where they established camps and homes, particularly for those who wished to dwell in isolation. It wasn't until much later that they would actually build whole communities on these ledges.

In those days a strong ruler led the rhul-thaun, known as the High Lord. His name was Rhan Thes-one! and they remember him as the greatest of them all. In fact, he is the only high lord whose name they still remember.

High Lord Rhan Thes-one! left the Jagged Cliffs with an expeditionary force to find out what had happened to the rest of the rhulisti and to discover more about the changes that had occurred on Athas. He directed his people to stay on the cliffs and wait for his return. When he came back, he told them, the rhul-thaun would again know their place and purpose in the world. Lord Rhan's exact fate is unknown, but he never returned to the cliffs. The rhul-thaun, however, took his well-spoken words to heart, and vowed to remain on the Jagged Cliffs until he brought them the knowledge that they needed to take their place among the societies of Athas. They still wait patiently for his triumphant return.

Because of their self-imposed isolation, the halfings settled on the cliffs themselves


as their population grew. They established villages on the ledges, making climbing and windriding necessary occupations. The first of these kept the ancient names that they had held when the first rhul-thaun used the ledges to build secluded homes for nobles. By this time, however, rhul-thaunian language had already changed considerably from its rhulisti roots, and new villages took names that reflected this fact. Thus, the vertical culture of the rhul-thaun began. The halflings began to focus on the cliffs and their vertical nature, forgetting their old lives in the cities and the seafaring ways of the rhulisti.

Throughout the Green Age, the transformation of Athas and its inhabitants became ever more evident. Living things prospered and many new creatures appeared along the cliffs, some of them posing threats to the safety of the rhul-thaun. More significantly, and like most other living creatures on the Athas, the people of the cliffs began to develop wild psionic talents. Unaccustomed to such powers, the halflings never learned to master or refine these abilities. In fact, most of them chose to look down on such powers and those who possessed them. Since psionics did not exist in ancient times, they thought of those who wielded such powers as lesser beings.

Many centuries passed and rhul-thaunian culture further identified itself with its rocky cliffs and its isolation. Unknown to them, however, an evil enterprise was afoot, literally under their noses. At the base of the Jagged Cliffs, a mighty river washed along the rocky faces. At the edge of the river, in a thick, secluded forest, an immortal pyreen conducted experiments the likes of which had never been seen on Athas. (The pyreen appeared during the Rebirth, and the new race had the characteristics of many newly created peoples.)

This pyreen, called Rajaat, discovered the powers of magic at the base of the Jagged Cliffs. Although his skills were limited at first, his experiments into what became defiler magic caused plant and animal life to mutate. The flourishing woodland transformed into a huge swamp filled with the strange, uncontrolled energies released by Rajaat's investigations into this uncharted territory. Then too, many of Rajaat's experiments had ended in failure and these he released into the bog. The energies twisted





and corrupted the swamp and the creatures that dwelled there, and plagued the halflings on the cliffs above with Rajaat's Curse.

The fearless halfling explorers who braved the journey into the swamp encountered Rajaat in his lair. The twisted pyreen attempted to share his gift with them but the rhul-thaun were terrified of what they saw, for they did not understand it. They fled the swamp, returning to their people with stories of horrible monsters and fantastic powers that defied the laws of nature.

Rajaat left the swamp and ushered in the Time of Magic, the next age of Athas. Again, however, the rhul-thaun were completely ignorant of events that occurred beyond their limited domain. Rajaat, who had a special affinity for halflings and wished to keep their culture unsoiled, kept his silence concerning the rhul-thaun to the end of his life.

The Old Ways Decline

Although it devolved so slowly it was nearly imperceptible, the knowledge of their rhulisti predecessors was fading from the rhul-thaun. They found themselves unable to employ some life-shaping skills the old ones possessed. As they struggled to hang on to the lore of the rhulisti, they developed rituals of rhyme and repetition to help them remember the actions necessary to practice the art.

As the centuries passed, the art of shaping life became less a detailed system of knowledge and more of a ritualized, quasi-religious set of rites and observances. The rhul-thaun lost the knowledge to explain how and why things worked and retained only the actions necessary to create the life-shaped creatures, structures, and tools they needed. With the decay of true understanding, the life-shapers desperately needed to remember the rituals of their art. If they forgot a ritual, that aspect of the practice was lost forever. None among them possessed the understanding to deduce what needed to be done to regain a lost skill.

The lack of ancient knowledge also made it impossible for them to modify or alter their creations. The rituals only contained the knowledge necessary to produce specific results. They couldn't comprehend how to modify or even adjust the process. Attempts to do so resulted in utter failure, or worse—disaster. They produced horrible, misshapen creatures in blind experiments in modification. They destroyed many unfortunate results, but given their reluctance to kill anything produced by life-shaping, some creatures escaped. These accidental monsters fled into the crevices and caves within the cliffs or into the swamp below. There, many survived and somehow even reproduced. Because of these tragic failures, all investigations to alter the life-shaping rituals are now expressly forbidden.

The ritualistic basis for life-shaping spread into all other aspects of society—law, economics, family, politics, and the very rhythms of life. Politically, the rhul-thaun began to expand and develop a number of divergent communities. The people were too separated and different to be ruled by a single individual, so they formed a council known as the *Conclave*. Members of the Conclave are elders of the halfling clans and chosen according to experience, respect, and accomplishments. They call these judgment makers the *har-etuil*.

As these political and economic changes were taking place, rhul-thaun society began to break down into a rigid class structure. The importance of merchants who sold goods transported by climbers and windriders increased, resulting in a society driven by commerce and trade. Those who were wealthier than their neighbors in the new system began to link themselves together into an elite, privileged class, while those who remained in occupations of manual labor or menial work sunk into the newly forming lower class. Most of the merchants, climbers, and windriders remained in what was now the middle class. Crime, never a real problem before, now became rampant as those with little began to take from those who had much. Worse, some of these malefactors established criminal organizations and became very wealthy themselves, joining the upper class.



A Threat From Beyond

Although as a race the rhul-thaun await the return of High Lord Rhan to reveal to them their purpose in the world, many individuals feel that the purpose of the rhul-thaun is obvious. Beyond the Jagged Cliffs to the north and west lies the flourishing, growing thri-kreen empire. The expansionist insects have even made forays into the swamp at the base of the cliffs, looking upward to the halflings as potential prey. Two different natural phenomena defend the halflings—the sheer cliff faces that the thri-kreen find nearly impossible to scale, and the humidity of the swamp, which repels the invaders because of its tendency to cause a rotting affliction in their carapaces.

Nevertheless, the rhul-thaun gained some information from brave explorers and captured raiders, and soon they developed the idea that it was their responsibility to defend the rest of the world to the south and east from the incursions of the thri-kreen. Windrider patrols watch the edge of the swamp closely for kreen (as the rhul-thaun call them) raiders and spies.

Because of the natural difficulties the insectoids face in the region, there has never been anything resembling true warfare between them and the rhul-thaun. Occasionally, thri-kreen with special equipment have reached some of the lower halfling communities and attack, ever probing their defenses, looking for weaknesses and easier methods to ascend to the top of the cliffs. Even to this day, however, these incursions have only served to strengthen the halflings' resolve to repel the invaders and save both themselves and the rest of the world.

Cleansing Wars and Sorcerer-Kings

Because Rajaat wanted to return the world to the halflings, he specifically made sure that the rhul-thaun were not involved in the Cleansing Wars. He told his Champions that they were forbidden to enter the Jagged Cliffs region, a command that they obeyed, although some of them suspected what they might find there.

Likewise, when Rajaat was betrayed and the sorcerer-kings rose to power in the Tyr Region, the rhul-thaun were unaffected. Instead, the halfling society continued to grow and prosper. During this time, the newest of the cliff villages were founded (these being Sahr-tosh and Vir-rath). The importance of clans and clan affiliation began to decline, and an organized resistance to the rhul-thaun way of life began to develop in secret. Those discontented with the society named themselves *Chahn*, after the ancient rhulisti word meaning freedom.

Recent Events

Just last year a terrible earthquake rocked the Jagged Cliffs. Though its epicenter was far below, in the thri-kreen savannas, the effects were felt with tremendous force throughout the region. The villages of Reg-tol, Glerran, and Sunnil were struck particularly hard. Fortunately, the organic nature of halfling buildings prevented serious earthquake damage, so most of the lives and structures in those communities were spared. All contact was lost with the village of Mir-sath, however.

It did not take the windriders long to realize that the unthinkable had happened. Mir-sath, a small city of over 2,000 inhabitants, had simply fallen off the cliff. The earthquake caused the ledges on which they built the village to crumble and fall into the swamp, taking the community and its entire population with them.

Unknown to the halflings, however, the cliffs far to the south had collapsed entirely—they split and formed a great rift. When the dust finally settled, that rift proved to be a pass from the high tablelands to the savanna below. Communication and travel are now possible where, historically, it was not. The thri-kreen finally have their passage through the cliffs. The inhabitants of the Tyr Region are now more aware of the Jagged Cliffs area as a whole. How this opening will affect the rhul-thaun has yet to be seen, although it makes contact with outsiders inevitable.

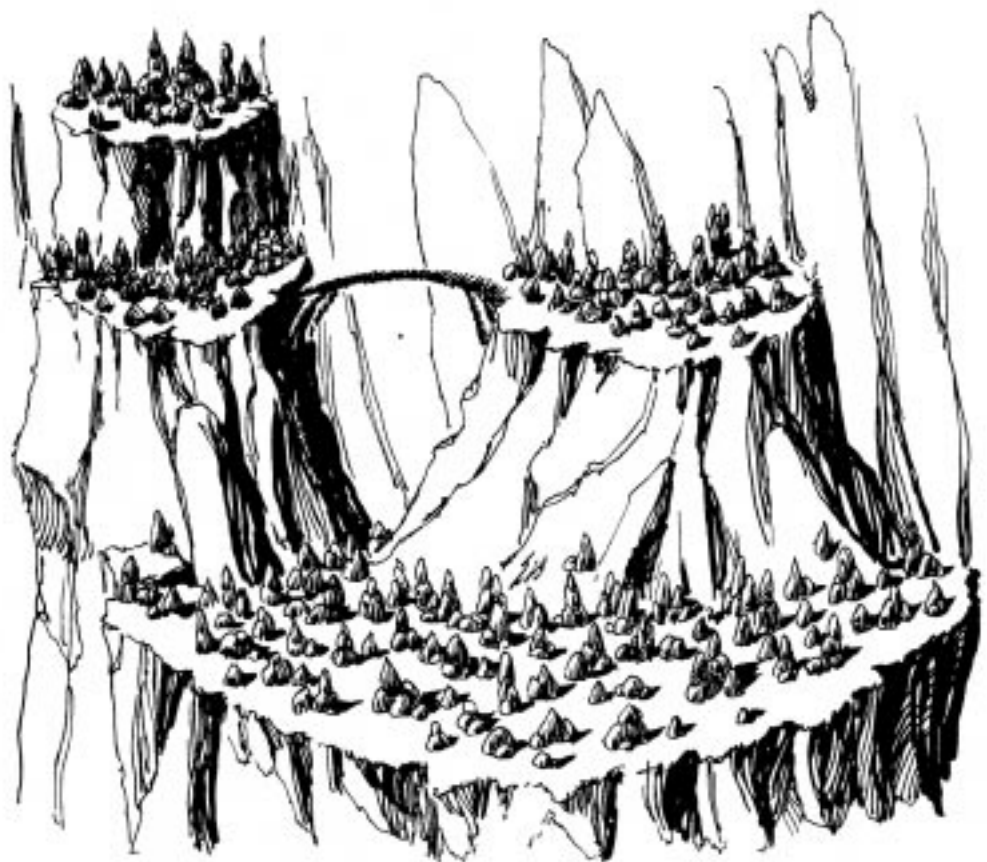
Halfling History

While they know more about the Blue Age of Athas than any other Athasians, the rhul-thaun do not know everything detailed in the previous historical sections, nor are they aware of any events that have occurred beyond the Jagged Cliffs. The rhul-thaun relate their history orally, in mantras memorized in as much detail as the rituals they cherish.

The halflings know that the rhulisti once ruled Athas, when water covered the world. Their power came from life-shaping, which was a far greater art than the remnants of it are in rhul-thaun culture today.

An accident created the brown tide that forced the ancient halflings to alter the color of the sun. The people of the cliffs remember these events, but not with any more detail than that. The change in the sun caused the waters to recede, and the rhul-thaun found themselves isolated on the cliffs. They don't know what became of the other halflings.

Most of their remaining knowledge of history is limited to their own experiences. They know nothing of the people or events of the Green Age. Although halflings confronted Rajaat as he developed the art of magic and created spells right beneath them, the halflings know nothing of the effect that he had on the rest of Athas.



Wanderer's Journal

*So different in thought
and deed are these half-
lings from the other
peoples of Athas!*

*Living on the cliffs for
untold centuries has
given them a unique
outlook—a vertical per-
spective, if you will.
When you and I stand 10
feet apart, we think that we
are close together. If I stood
on a ledge,*

*10 feet above
you, how-
ever, you
would claim
that I was far
away—high
above and
out of reach.
To the rhul-
thaun, this
process is
reversed. To*

*them, distances of height are
more familiar than those of hori-
zontal space. Ten feet above is
nearby to*

*these half-
lings, but
something*

*10 feet away
is at a distance.*

*The fact that they live their
lives shrouded in mist also seems
to have changed their perception
of distance as well, since they
can usually see only a few dozen
feet in front of themselves at any
given time. Additionally, the
great mist covers everything with
a thin coat of slippery dew. The
rhul-thaun have, of course,
learned to adapt to the dampness
and even have used their talent
for shaping life to create living
structures to absorb much of the
moisture, keeping the insides
warm and dry. In so many ways,
the craft of the life-shapers has
allowed them to adapt and thrive
in the most adverse of conditions
and in the most unconventional
of environments.*



CHAPTER 3:

Life on the Cliffs

The past and the present continually collide in rhul-thaun society. Their faithful, enduring support of the old ways has shaped their society as profoundly as the Jagged Cliffs on which they make their homes.

A Society of Ritual


Del-omihn gave the herb merchant a formal greeting, touching both temples and then, moving his hands upward and away, flaring his fingers outward. The merchant returned the salutation and began to recite the short version of the Merchants' Chant of Opening Sale. As he did so, Del-omihn examined the orderly pouches of herbs the dealer had displayed before him on his cart.

When the merchant finished his ritual, Del-omihn indicated the three different medicinal herbs in which he was interested. As required, the merchant asked him three times if he was sure that those herbs were what he wanted. Each time, as the ritual demanded, Del-omihn assented by bowing curtly from the waist. The two of them spent a few moments haggling over the actual price and the method of payment.

As Del-omihn gave the handler the few coins that they agreed upon, he recited the Short Mantra of Payment. The herb seller clasped his hands in front of him twice and then opened them wide in the ritualized showing of thanks. Smiling, Del-omihn took his herbs and moved down the street to another vendor in the marketplace.

The significance of ritual is deeply rooted in the culture of the cliff dwelling halfings and ceremonial behavior is ingrained into every aspect of rhul-thaun life. Everyday activities, communications, economics, special events, and even lawmaking involve highly developed protocols.

In fact, the ritualistic movement defines the rhul-thaun, so greatly has it shaped their societal and individual characters that it cannot be separated from either of them. Their need for structure is intense, and their interpretation of the world's design is centered around the steps they take to define and control it. Their culture, based on ideas they don't truly understand (life-shaping), involves rituals designed to organize and interpret the world in their own terms.



The wind upon which they ride, the mist that rises from the swamp, and all of the other forces of nature that are so important to rhul-thaun life terrify the halflings with their power and unpredictable nature. To help understand and perhaps control these forces, the people of the cliffs have developed specific activities and patterns of thinking that they believe give them power over the world—the same dominion that their forebears the rhulisti once held.

Their connection with the forces that shape life pales before that of their ancestors, but there is still a strong, deeply felt bond. To maintain this link, the rhul-thaun have formulated rites to explain, or at least interpret, life-shaping. Their whole way of life is based upon this art, yet they truly understand only the most basic principles. To mask their ignorance, they use rituals grounded in the basic actions required to perform specific operations. The rhul-thaun have forgotten more of the ancient conventions than they remember, but enough accurate information survives in ceremony so that they can still achieve much with this fantastic art.

Other rituals within rhul-thaun society accomplish less in a real way, but they hold great significance for the people of the cliffs. The rites give them a feeling of power over their own lives. This should not be confused with any sort of religious belief, however. Rhul-thaun rituals and beliefs are more similar to superstitions, but even that is not quite accurate. If one were to ask the rhul-thaun, they would say that their ceremonial performances do not require luck or supernatural assistance for their success. They are simply necessary elements, just as a weapon must be hefted before it can be used to strike an enemy, as armor must be worn before it can offer protection. The rituals bind life's activities and give a veneer of order in a chaotic world—not to better the odds of success by providing good luck (or avoiding bad luck) as superstitious human rituals might do.

When a halfling from the Jagged Cliffs encounters an individual from outside his own culture, the stranger's lack of ceremonial knowledge is disorienting and confusing. The outsider seems uncultured, perhaps even rude in his ignorance. Some rhul-thaun find it easy to forgive a newcomer for his lack of awareness regarding their rituals, but others will not, refusing to deal with a "savage."

Formal Rituals

Without exception, every formal activity in this culture involves a rite. Rhul-thaun rituals can easily be broken if they are performed incorrectly. In these cases, the participants must begin again. Sometimes, the ritual becomes as important as the desired action itself. Many young activists, especially the Chahn, struggle to convince the rest of society that they have placed too much emphasis on ceremony and not enough on reality, but ancient traditions are not easily vanquished. It will take many generations to extinguish these practices, if such a thing is even possible.

Legal actions, whether they involve settling a dispute, bequeathing an inheritance, or proposing a new law, all require specific and complicated rites. There are no professional lawyers or counselors in rhul-thaun society, so individuals who take part in the process must learn the rituals themselves. Much of the time, legal ceremonial is verbal in nature, requiring complex speeches memorized and recited by all concerned parties.

Economic transactions, even the purchase of a simple comb or brush, require some ritualized activity. An outside observer watching these negotiations would assume that what is taking place here is simple barter, haggling in the historic manner of many cultures (and often it is), but the reality is that these mercantile activities are actually ordered, social rituals of sale rather than arguments about price and quality. Botched rites can ruin a well-bartered deal.

Politics and diplomacy are no different. When a member of one group, such as the life-shapers, makes a case before another group, like the judgment makers, certain rituals of protocol are mandatory. Even simple diplomatic messages are delivered by specially trained messengers armed with the proper ceremonies.

When the judgment makers meet and hold court, the routine of making important decisions and rulings commands exceptional formality. If they breach these solemn protocols, they must either perform the rites again or the judgment is declared invalid.



Everyday Rituals

Unlike formal activities, not all daily activities involve this kind of prescribed behavior. Nevertheless, these practices are so inherent in rhul-thaunian culture that most are unaware of including them.

Simple rhul-thaun speech, including greetings and the proper forms for addressing authorities, elders, children, and relatives, incorporates ancient, spoken forms. Sometimes hand gestures or other body movements are attached to verbal forms as well, giving them a physical component.

Ceremonies are always attached to the use of life-shaped creations. Short rites must be performed before an organic tool or weapon is used. This is normally done before the object is touched and involves special gestures and verbal expressions.

Living a Vertical Life

*Three young men climbed up to the sky,
One falls down, doomed to die.
The other two rule, kings at the top,
Power on high, impossible to stop.*

—rhul-thaun children's poem

Along with ritual, the aspect of rhul-thaun life that has most influenced this society is the fact that they live on the Jagged Cliffs. While the halflings have greater access to water and food than those of the Tyr Region, life holds many challenges on the cliffs.

For obvious reasons, climbing is an important skill among these halflings. Many of these folk make their living by scaling the vertical forests that grow up the sides of the cliffs. They collect nuts, berries, fruits, and roots that are used for food and medicines and gather wood for cooking and heating fires. Other professional climbers carry messages or deliver packages to distant villages along the faces of the cliffs. Climbing hunters stalk the nesting birds, rodents, and reptiles that live in the chinks and cracks of the bluffs.

The most common mode of transport, however, is *windriding*. Using the life-shaping arts of their ancestors, the halflings create creatures they call *gon-evauth* (soar whales), *ber-ethern* (breeze sprites), and *yihn-eflan* (gust climbers). Each of these creatures is designed to be used as air transport. They create them by a variety of methods (see Chapter 5) to take advantage of the powerful winds and the rising hot, humid air to stay aloft.

The vertical arrangement of rhul-thaun cities is their answer to the limitations of space on many of the cliffs. Additionally, the cliffs themselves have conditioned the halflings to think more in terms of an upright orientation than horizontal one. Their buildings are stacked one upon the next and connected by ladders and stairs as often as by horizontal walkways or bridges. In rhul-thaun society, the upper classes are just that—the most prestigious and lavish dwellings, those at the roofs of the towns, belong to those who occupy the highest positions in the villages.

With two strong, prevailing weather conditions along the cliffs—high, dangerous winds and (far more commonly) the thick, rising mist—the halflings have had to adapt to these climactic conditions. The wind gives the riders a medium of transportation along the bluffs. Nevertheless, it presents a hazard to life there as well. The powerful air currents can, at times, literally whip an unsecured or unprepared halfling off a ledge and fling him to his death. Most climbers carry life-shaped spikes and leather harnesses in case they are caught in a windstorm while climbing. With these tools they can secure themselves to the solid rock until the winds subside. Most rhul-thaun villages are built deep into recesses on the sides of the cliffs so that the winds present less of a danger. Naturally, the cliff-dwellers are aware of the dangers of intense winds and most exposed objects can quickly be secured during gales and storms. The organic buildings of the villages are more than adequate to protect everything within their walls from the force of the winds.

The thick wall of mist that rises from the swamps at the cliffs' base presents another sort of challenge. While infrequent strong winds cause problems, climbers face the most

extreme danger from the mists. The dense, steamy clouds sometimes reduce visibility to 0, making even simple movements demanding and perilous. At best, visibility ranges from only 10 to 60 feet. Worse, condensation from the mist coats everything within its envelope. The slick, icy, water makes climbing extremely hazardous. To compensate, climbers use life-shaped tools known as dry anchors to climb along slippery surfaces.

The wall of mist has influenced rhul-thaun culture to such an extreme that the half-lings have grown accustomed to the idea of not being able to see very far at any given time. This in turn has shaped their notion of distance. To the rhul-thaun, a “far away” object is usually much closer than it would be, described by a person of another culture. Newcomers visiting from the Tyr Region will find this minor quirk to be confusing at first, but should soon adapt.

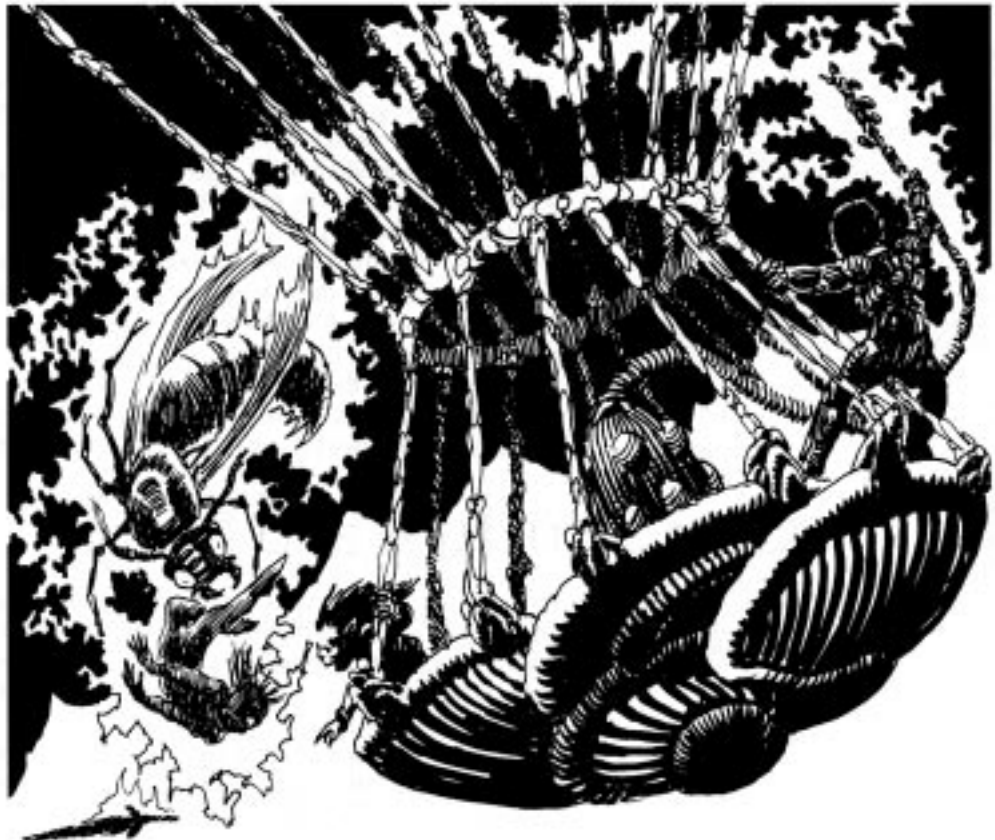
Life-View


To the rhul-thaun there is no world view, there is no existence, without a purpose. Everything in nature, they believe, has a purpose within its ecosystem—even in the harsh deserts beyond the cliffs that so confuse and frighten them. It follows then, that everything else should also have a purpose in life. This idea is instilled in every member of their society, from the very young to the very old.

The individual's purpose often takes the form of an occupation. In his lifetime, each individual chooses a role that in some way benefits the community as a whole as well as himself.

Each rhul-thaun must know the purpose and function he or she fulfills, to know one's place in the broader scheme of things. Alone, one must define a purpose of one's own. When rhul-thaun are feeling tense or anxious, simply focusing on their purpose usually makes them feel more at ease. A rhul-thaun without a purpose soon gives in to despair.

The focus of purpose also includes the entire society. As a people, the rhul-thaun





need to feel that they have a status and a mission within the vastness of the world. This is why many believe that High Lord Rhan, who promised to return with the knowledge of that purpose nearly 14,000 years ago, will return. He is their messiah who will lead them to a higher purpose and a greater destiny.

In addition to purpose, structure and order are the linchpins of rhul-thaun culture. All of the rituals that make up their lives have cloaked their perceptions in structure. Their government is a surprisingly complex web of judgment makers, administrators, lawkeepers, and minor bureaucrats, all of whom are there to keep order.

Lastly, the sanctity of life in all its forms is pivotal to the halflings. While they are not beyond hunting for food and killing to defend their homes, they respect all living things. Rhul-thaun never take a life casually—even the lives of those creatures other races would consider vermin, like rats and insects. In accordance with their beliefs, there are life-taking rituals to be performed before and after killings take place.

This philosophy of the exalted nature of life has been preserved and passed down, directly from the rhulisti, for centuries. For it was their belief that life itself was the mightiest force in the world. The development of the art of life-shaping was a direct result of this belief. The ancient halflings treated their shaped creations with the utmost regard, although they were tools and weapons, mere objects to be used. The rhul-thaun continue this traditional reverence for their creations, treating them as precious treasures.

Murder, the killing of another halfling, is a very serious crime among the rhul-thaun. Even in dangerous situations, when the lawkeepers have cornered a band of thieves or two feuding clans clash, lives are never taken without careful consideration. However, when the decision to kill is made (and justified to one's own conscience), it is done swiftly and without hesitation. To hesitate before taking a life is the way of outsiders. The destruction of a nonhalfling is more easily justified in the minds of the rhul-thaun, however, than killing their own.

Religion and Reverence

Like many Athasian societies, the rhul-thaun have developed what might be called a "religion," one centered around the elements. Their religious convictions are not strong, however, and the priests supporting them are few. Elemental clerics and their followers can be found in most halfling settlements, but their influence is slight.

The priests serve the elemental powers of earth, air, and water. Water is the most commonly revered element, and air, particularly among windriders, is also well-served. Earth too has its place, but serving fire is forbidden. They see fire as a destroyer, a taker of life.


Although life-shapers are not holy men and life-shaping is not a religion, many halflings have elevated these men and their hidden rituals to something that closely resembles worship. The life-shapers wield power not only because they provide the things that support the entirety of rhul-thaun civilization, but also because most of the population holds them in reverence. It is difficult not to look with awe upon those who provide homes, transportation, tools, weapons, protection, food, clothing, and virtually every other necessity and luxury within the culture.

Clan Structure and Family

Rhul-thaun society is well defined and divided into extended families called *clans*. The clans are large enough, and the actual blood relations so distant, that intermarriage among clan members is common and without risk to the children who may be born as a result. The clans are defined more in terms of political alliances than actual ties to family and kin.

Moreover, the idea of the delineating structure of the clans is a fading notion. The halflings identify themselves more closely with their communities than with the clans. Nevertheless, halfling clans still provide a point of reference for each individual. Everyone has the right to take his clan's name as his surname, and each clan owns colors, patterns of clothing, and hair styles that identify affiliation.

Each clan has a leader or group of leaders called *har-etuil*. They act as clan chieftains



and judges. Each has a physical base of operations called a *clanhouse*. The clanhouse is used for meetings, important ceremonies (like marriage and naming rituals), and various community events.

Immediate families among the halflings are close, and strong ties form between siblings and cousins. These family members often remain in close proximity to each other throughout their lives, even working in the same or similar occupations. Rhul-thaun hunting parties, food gathering bands, and adventuring teams commonly consist of related halflings, for example. On average, each family has two to six children.

Elderly family members are honored and given positions of respect and importance (those who grow too old or too weak to perform physical tasks sometimes become *har-etuil*). The younger members of the family delight in the stories told by their elders during the ceremonial tale-telling time each week. These familial meetings take place with a great deal of regularity, a shared responsibility recognized by all members of society.

Marriages are formal events, filled with long rituals. At one time, they arranged marriages within a clan or with nearby clans. This rarely takes place now, and people are free to choose their mates. Because of their deep sense of purpose and obligation, rhul-thaun marriages usually last for life.

Halflings recognize differences between the sexes only in most literal sense. Both genders are afforded the same rights regarding property ownership and the ability to hold positions of power, importance, or influence. Family lineage is traced through both mother and father, usually focusing on prominent ancestors, regardless of sex.

All occupations are open to everyone. Since there is practically no difference between male and female rhul-thaun in physical strength, heartiness, or dexterity, they make equally good warriors, climbers, windancers, and windriders.

The Har-etuil

The halflings of the Jagged Cliffs are governed by clan chieftains, known as *har-etuil*, or judgment makers. The *har-etuil* are not so much rulers as they are the representatives of their people, speaking for their clans when the judgment makers meet to discuss issues. They hold these meetings, called Conclaves, when necessary, but at least twice a year. The Conclave meets in the city of Thamasku. Most of a *har-etuil*'s time is spent serving as a judge, however, settling disputes and adjudicating small-scale issues.

Each of these men and women are selected by the other *har-etuil* from prospective candidates of the clan they will represent and govern. Aspirants make it known that they would like to be considered for the position when one becomes available. New *har-etuil* are chosen when one retires, dies, or is removed by a vote of the others.

The number of judgment makers in each clan depends on the clan's size. Generally, there is one *har-etuil* for every 200 adult clan members. When the leaders assemble and hold council sessions, all the *har-etuil* of a clan represent their clan and its needs, and so larger clans have greater representation and a greater voice.

Crime and Punishment

When the Conclave meets, it makes decisions and passes laws that affect all rhul-thaun. Most laws are straightforward. They define such crimes as murder, assault, rape, and theft, and assign them punishments. The *har-etuil* alone passes judgment on accused offenders, handing down sentences of punishment to the guilty.

Punishments for crimes range from fines to serving time at hard labor, from restitution to banishment into the swamp at the base of the cliffs (the sentence for murder). The jails are run by the lawkeepers and are only used to detain offenders until they can bring them before the *har-etuil*. Imprisonment is never employed as a punishment. No *har-etuil* has the right to sentence anyone to death, although little remorse is felt concerning a violent criminal killed by a lawkeeper in battle.



Economics

The economic system of the rhuul-thaun is based on an ancient currency of small, oval leaf-like growths created by their life-shaping ancestors. These organic coins have the feel and weight of very hard pieces of animal shell or reptilian scales. The oval pieces, called *ghav-egoths* (“life wealth” or “the value of life”) can no longer be created—the methods and rituals of their manufacture is lost. Because of this, there is a shortage of ghav-egoths and much of modern commerce is conducted by the barter system detailed in the DARK SUN campaign setting.

Merchants, of course, prefer the use of the organic coins. They are simple, straightforward, and easily measured and recorded.

Because the rhuul-thaun use ghav-egoths as currency, the coins, gems, and other valuables of outsiders are mere curiosities. Some halflings may ascribe a value to them, but only out of aesthetics or perceived collectability. Likewise, outsiders most certainly consider ghav-egoths as worthless, for they simply appear to be bits of animal shell or reptile hide to those not familiar with the art of life-shaping.

There is no actual exchange rate between ghav-egoths and the ceramic pieces of the Tyr Region. Despite this, a ghav-egoth will purchase an amount equivalent to that of the ceramic piece. The point is, however, that this “currency” cannot purchase anything in a marketplace in Tyr or Balic, for example, and a ceramic piece is not recognized as having the same value as a ghav-egoth to rhuul-thaun merchants.

Prices and Values

Many of the items found in the *PHB* are not available in rhuul-thaun society. Instead, the halflings use life-shaped creations that serve the same purposes. The rhuul-thaun do not mine or smelt metals, they have no smiths or casters, so no metallic items are to be

found in their marketplaces. Items made of stone and wood can be purchased at a rate of 5% of their listed value, while life-shaped creations resembling bone and leather are worth 1% of the listed price.

Food, lodging, and services cost 1% of their listed value in the *PHB*. Values for life-shaped creations are given in Chapter 5.

Note that 1 ge = 1 cp and 10 ge = 1 sp

Fees, Taxes and Wages

The following prices are all given in terms of ghav-egoths. All are variable, subject to the specific situation and location.

MONTHLY EARNINGS TABLE

| Profession | Single Job Fee | Monthly Wage |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Administrator | — | 30 ge |
| Clerk (government) | — | 9 ge |
| Climber (per 3 miles) | 1 ge | Varies |
| Craftsman | Varies | 4 ge |
| Har-etuil | — | 40 ge |
| Healer | 1-5 ge | 15 ge |
| Unskilled Labor | — | 1 ge |
| Skilled Labor | — | 4 ge |
| Lawkeeper | — | 5 ge |
| Life-Shaper | — | 50 ge |
| Merchant | — | 10-50 ge |
| Teacher | — | 5 ge |
| Tender | — | 3 ge |
| Windancer | Varies | Varies |
| Windrider (per 3 miles) | 3 ge | Varies |



Each community collects taxes from each populace. Taxes range between ½ and 3 ghav-egoths a month, collected bimonthly. Clans also impose a light taxation (3 to 6 ghav-egoth annually) to pay the har-etuil.

Commerce

Most commerce takes place in village marketplaces. Climbers and windriders bring in the harvests and the game they have gathered, craftspeople display their wares, and laborers offer services, all in the colorful cacophony to be found in markets everywhere.

Life-shapers also present their living creations for the consideration of the merchants who sell them to the public, taking a small percentage of profit on each sale.

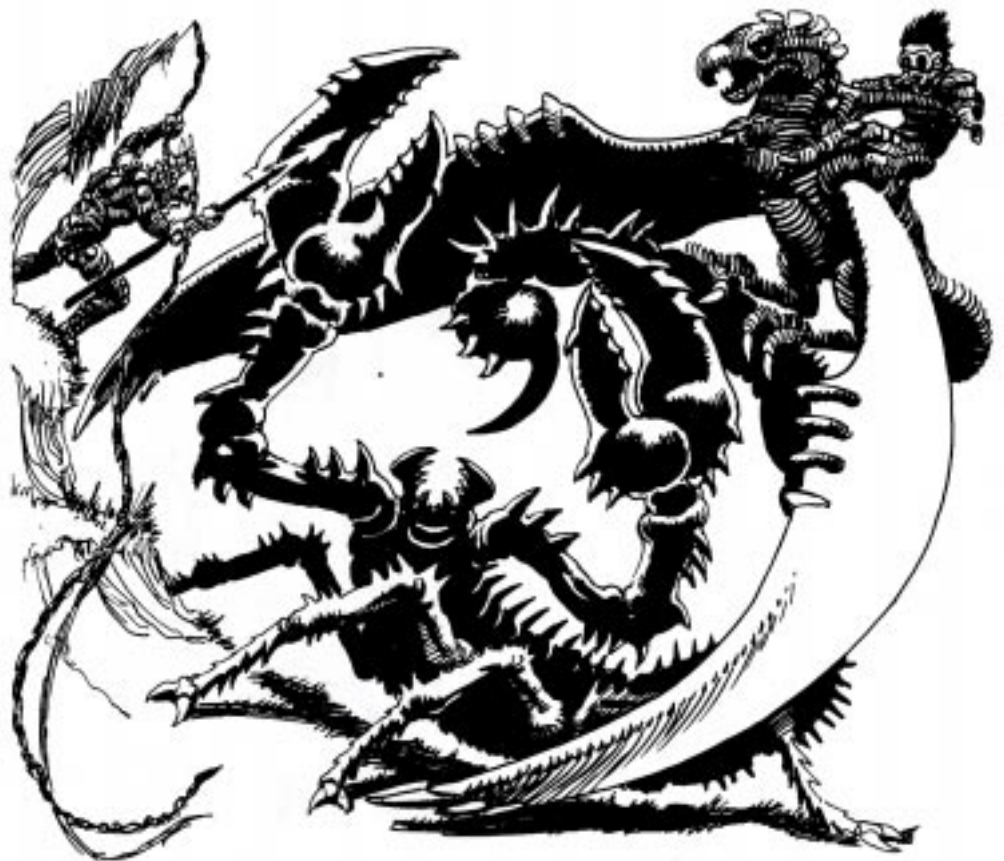
Occupations


To these people, a purpose in life is vital, and in most cases individuals are defined by what they do within the community and what benefits the society gains from their labor.

Many of the professionals and craftspeople in this culture wear cosmetic graft patches to identify themselves as members of a particular group or as “advertising” to display to those around them that they are available to provide a service. The patches are life-shaped, organic tissue grown in specific shapes with distinctive colors. The tissue can be attached to a person’s skin and resembles a raised tattoo. They can be easily removed, although they shrivel and “die” if kept from a “host” for too long.

Climbers

Obviously, climbers are essential in a society that dwells on the ledges of these imposing cliffs. From the early years of life, hardy, dexterous children are sought by professional climbers to be trained for a life in this arduous career. Likely candidates undergo a two-





year apprenticeship during which all but 10% of their earnings go to their masters.

They use ropes, hooks, harnesses, and even some life-shaped climbing gear as secondary equipment, but prefer to scale amazing distances up the sheer cliffs employing nothing but their bare hands and feet.

Climbers not only scale the cliffs vertically, but travel along them laterally, back and forth between the various halfling settlements and the vertical forests. Climbers normally use well-traveled routes across the face of the Jagged Cliffs. The paths are marked by stones bearing carved symbols unique to the climbing profession. Young climbers are taught to read these signs, which not only show the proper trails, but give warnings regarding monsters, potential landslides, and other dangers.

There are three basic missions for climbers. The first is to seek out the vertical forests found on the sides and ledges of the cliffs. From there, they gather valuable plants used for food, medicine, and a variety of other purposes. Because they are limited to what they can carry on their backs, however, they normally gather only rare and costly plants, relying on the windriding harvesters to gather mass quantities. The food and vegetation gleaned from the forests only supplements what is created through life-shaping. Harvesting the forests has just become necessary within the last few hundred years, ever since the rhul-thaun population outgrew their capability to produce life-shaped crops.

Like harvesters, climbing hunters are relatively new to the rhul-thaun. These brave men and women descend to stalk the animals and monsters that live in crevices and caves. Since many of these beasts are extremely dangerous, climbing hunters often travel in large groups working together to bring down their prey and haul it back to a waiting village.

Finally, climbers travel between the scattered villages and camps, delivering messages and packages. Sometimes climbers double as traveling merchants, journeying from one settlement to the next, selling or trading the wares they carry on their backs. There are those who work as independents, but most belong to organizations and guilds that encourage them to work in teams. These associations are small, often consisting of a few family members and friends. Occasionally guilds become larger, having 20-30 members, but always limiting membership to citizens of a single community. Guild climbers usually have their fees-for-service set by the guild. Independent climbers are free to demand whatever rates they believe they deserve. Guild climbers are usually cheaper, but unaffiliated climbers are more willing to take larger risks for larger fees.

Although many climbers live in the large rhul-thaun communities, some live in camps situated on the smaller ledges and in the caves of the cliffs. The camps consist of a few climbers and their families, usually numbering less than 20.


Healers

Since priests are rare and magic is unknown, the rhul-thaun do not rely on them to heal their wounds and cure their diseases. Instead, professional healers set broken limbs, assist during childbirth, instruct the sick in various cures and remedies, and sometimes administer herbal and life-shaped medicines. Although they no longer remember all of the principles behind life-shaping, many of the details of that art have given the halflings a better understanding of the operation of the body than that of most other Athasian races. Few of these healers' cures are based on superstitions or deceptive nostrums.

The life-shapers produce some constructs that aid in healing, but they believe that the ancient rhulisti could cure *all* diseases and heal *all* wounds using their knowledge of life.

Life-Shapers

If windriding is the most glamorous profession, then life-shaping is the most revered and the most critical. Only children of the highest intelligence are encouraged to focus their studies toward life-shaping. These studies require a precise knowledge of hundreds of different rituals and a detailed, specialized knowledge of the care and handling of life-shaped creations and the raw materials needed to produce them. Life-shapers, as the only technicians in this society, acquire a great deal of power and high degree of respect, a respect bordering on veneration.



The life-shapers are a secret society of knowledge and ritual. The members of this elite order presume that they are superior to the rest of the rhul-thaun, with stronger links to the past. Because their lore comes from ancient times, the life-shapers revere the rhulisti to a degree that approaches worship. They long for the ancient days when life-shaped objects met every demand and they developed innovative creations to meet new challenges and needs. The shapers guard their knowledge closely, preserving the rituals necessary to work their craft with great care and devotion.

Study and dedication are not enough to make one a life-shaper. There is a strange and secret initiation for candidates who wish to become life-shapers. This involves a process in which they immerse the aspirant in biological fluids and creation matter, in a life-shaped device called a womb, to see whether he or she is accepted “by the fundamental forces of life.” Those it rejects are cast out, unconscious but still alive, while those accepted are sustained by the pod and live within its walls until removed.

Once accepted, the new apprentices are allowed to begin their work, directed and guided by their superiors. They leave rhul-thaun society and join isolated life-shaper communities. The shapers are a separate subculture within rhul-thaun society. The high number of life-shaped grafts and additions to their bodies often identifies them. Most wear cosmetic skin-grafts bearing the image of a green, outstretched hand, the insignia of the life-shapers.

In practice, the shapers take various protoplasmic ingredients (the most basic of which is called pith) and perform the rituals which instruct them in the methods that mold the protoplasm into the desired creation. Most components take 3 to 10 weeks to grow and develop, and the larger and more complex organisms can take up to a year to mature.

Life-shapers work in special sanctuaries, operating in large groups. With few exceptions, every halfling community has a sanctuary. The shapers' work is so all-consuming that members normally live within these retreats, rarely leaving their labor, and outsiders are prohibited within their walls.

These secular monasteries are viewed by others as shrines to the power of life itself. Although there is no real religion, no doctrine, and certainly no religious services, there is no better way to describe the feeling that others have for the life-shaper preserves than that of hallowed temples.

In rhul-thaun perceptions, the life-shapers are the priests of life within their temples. Even those who do not hold them in high regard respect them for what they provide to the rest of society. The rhul-thaun know of the intelligence and dedication required to become a life-shaper, and admire the shapers for these traits. In the eyes of the outsiders, they are connected with the forces of life and have a grand purpose in the preservation of that link. How could they not be worthy of the highest esteem?

What few realize, however, is just how much political and social power the life-shapers wield. Their influence on the har-etuil is extensive. The judgment makers know that the life-shapers' craft holds rhul-thaun society in the collective palms-of-their-hands. They have told the har-etuil that they cannot only withhold new creations, but have assured them that they have a process by which they can ravage all existing life-shaped objects. This is a fabrication, a lie well-guarded and secret among the ranks of the shapers.

Without life-shaped creations, society would collapse—the rhul-thaun have become totally dependent upon the comforts they bring. Moreover, they have no way of easily replacing even the simple items, such as weapons, tools, or armor. The rhul-thaun mine no metals and have but limited access to wood, animal hides (especially without windrider mounts to fly down into the vertical forests to gather or hunt), and other basic materials necessary to create even the simplest tools and clothing.

Further, because their creations are so vital to society, the life-shapers can charge whatever rates they see fit for their work. Through such financial manipulations, they completely, if subtly, control the rhul-thaun economy. The merchants are aware of this, although it is not a topic of ordinary conversation. The dealers do not want to publicly admit that the shapers wield so much power.

Unlike the other professions, the life-shapers have a definite hierarchy. Their main sanctuary is located in Thamasku, and their leaders are the highly respected Loi Faroneth and his very influential lieutenant, Gil-ogres. Below these two, each sanctuary has its own leader and each leader has one or two assistants.



Scholars and Teachers

Rhul-thaun with an academic bent are given the opportunity to focus on their studies. These professional scholars are sponsored by the government, by individual clans, or work directly for the life-shapers and other organizations in a specific field of study.

There are no libraries in rhul-thaun communities. What they call paper is really a material more similar to cloth. A product secreted and spun by a creature grown for that purpose. The substance is rolled into scrolls—never bound into books. Written works are rare and many rhul-thaun are only literate enough to read shop signs and the crude marks on the cliff walls that mark safe climbing routes. A few bright individuals keep journals and are accomplished readers, but there is little for even these people to read. Scholars keep their scrolls to themselves in private collections, hoarding them as treasures.

These intellectuals study history, physiology, botany, zoology, meteorology, and other fields in order to better understand the world. The life-shapers employ some of them in an attempt to recover lost shaping knowledge through research, deduction, or conjecture. Climbers employ scholars to make maps of the cliffs showing the best climbing routes. “Order is brought through understanding,” states a well-known maxim, so most people are perfectly content to allow these intelligent women and men to attempt to bring more structure to their world.

Teachers, though, seldom pursue their professions for life. It is customary for older men and women who have worked in other occupations to retire and become instructors of the young. Experience is a valued commodity and so these well-seasoned people are welcomed as teachers.

They teach the young the basics of reading and writing, but studies usually focus on ritual, history, and even such esoteric subjects as ethics and philosophy. Educators also tutor their students in practical skills such as climbing, self-defense, barter, and handling the life-shaped creations that fill their lives. There are no formal schools, however. Instead, teachers open their homes to their pupils. They have the right to turn away any student for any reason—lack of discipline, overcrowding, or simple dislike.

When an occupation is chosen, the students usually leave their instructors to learn specific skills from someone who works in a desired field. Teachers start the process and often attempt to guide students into professions that suit the intelligence and temperament of each child.

Tenders

The most common profession is that of tender. These are the people who are responsible for life-shaped creatures once they have been created and have matured. Those who become tenders are usually caring, nurturing sorts who prefer occupations with fewer risks than those who climb the cliffs, dance up walls, and ride the winds.


Tenders are not life-shapers but rather shepherds of their strange flocks. Many of the life-shaped creations need to be cared for when placed into service, whether the needs are simple watering and feeding or more specialized treatment. Many are plant-based in nature and require farm care, while others display the characteristics of animals and need to be tended as a guard might care for a herd. The needs and requirements of shaped creations vary considerably. For example, the creatures that produce leathery or wooly coats need to be sheared, while those that produce fruit-like growths need to be watered, pruned, and harvested.

Tenders generally work alone, taking on only as much responsibility as they can handle by themselves. Their work can normally be done at home with a minimum of tools. Food and water for their charges are their only expenses. They make their money by selling the products of their charges (usually food, leathers, hides, and special medicines) to merchants for resale.

Merchants also buy life-shaped tools and building materials directly from the life-shapers, but these do not need to be tended.

Windancers

Fearless and colorful performers, windancers are at the heart and spirit of rhul-thaun society. They embody both the structure of ritual and freedom from its constraints.



Windancers are always self-taught and never recruit, for they believe that the spirit of the wind and the passion of the dance must reside in the heart of any would-be performers. Young men and women who possess the hunger to dance on the walls of the world learn by observing. They begin by imitation, copying the low level tumbling moves of the dancers and climbing short distances. Awkward and ungainly, their desire soon pushes them to attempt more complex moves and higher, more exuberant sprints. Their progress is observed by experienced dancers and, when the time seems right, the older dancers invite the new ones to “join them on the roof tops.”

Windancers are highly respected members of their communities and their performances are expected on all major occasions and appreciated when they are merely spontaneous.

These dancers pride themselves on not setting fees for their appearances. Instead, they place open pottery vessels along the streets over which they flit and frolic, making their living from the voluntary contributions of enraptured audiences.

Some windancers add storytelling, song, or mime to their acts, the conclusions always leading to a point where they leap into air and begin their rise to the pinnacles.

Unique among the rhul-thaun, the dancers wear costumes and paint their faces and grafts. This is in part tradition, but it is also because windancers are drawn from all classes of society—even a few life-shapers hide beneath the colorful paint and harlequin costumes of the windancers.

Windriders

The rivals of the climbers are the windriders. These brave men and women are some of the most esteemed and envied people in all of rhul-thaun society. Many young half-lings dream of riding the winds that flow along the cliffs and drifting through the clouds of mist. They thrill at the freedom and peace of flying, unfettered by the shackles of gravity.

The living creatures the windriders use are among the most difficult and time-consuming creations of the life-shapers. Because of this, those who possess the potential to become windriders are observed closely, tested, and trained very carefully. Only the most able and talented are allowed to join the select ranks of this unique company.

Training takes almost two years. Anyone who wishes to become a windrider must first find a teacher willing to train a newcomer in the rigors of the craft. The student usually pays the teacher, although other arrangements can be made. There are no training guidelines and no official method of measurement once a student has learned the necessary skills. However, it is in the teacher’s best interest to train the student as best he can and reject those who cannot handle the responsibilities—because a mentor is forever accountable for the actions of his apprentices. The windrider’s associates monitor the performance of a master’s pupils and they can remove careless or dangerous proteges. Their opinions mean a great deal.

Once young hopefuls are declared windriders, they are allowed to wear the cosmetic graft showing that they have earned the right to soar the skies. The light blue graft is in the shape of a flying bird. For every five years a windrider plies his craft, he earns a new graft in a deeper shade of blue. The oldest and most experienced among them wear grafts so dark they appear to be black.

Despite the fact that there seems to be a rigid structure among them, the windriders have no guild organization—there is no leader and no special regulations. There is, however, an oath that is sworn when they learn the craft, and that they follow closely. The creed swears to the importance of skill, acknowledges the value of their mounts, and pledges duty while on accepted missions. If a windrider does not maintain the tenets of his oath, there is no official method, no authority to correct or punish a violator. This is the duty of his peers. The threat of ridicule, reprimand, or forcible removal by fellow windriders is usually enough to preserve their honor.

Windriders often work in teams of two to eight. In the case of the larger flying beasts, the riders always work in teams, since the great creatures cannot be handled by single riders. Each individual or team is free to establish fees for services.

Like climbers, windriders have three established duties to perform, and, while some may prefer one task to another, there are no specialists. Harvesters fly down to the vertical forests and load their mounts with important wild plants used for food, spices,



medicines, and construction materials. The largest single advantage that these windriders have over climbers is that they can carry a great deal more back to the villages.

Hunting from the backs of flying beasts is difficult, but often rewarding. Using ranged weapons, they can bring down prey without a windrider ever getting near dangerous claws or slashing teeth. More large carcasses can be carried back to a settlement on the flying beasts than on climbers' backs. Because of the dangerous nature of some of the creatures that dwell on the Jagged Cliffs, however, no hunting expedition is ever without risk. The ranged psionic abilities of many monsters (such as *gaj*) and attacks from other flying creatures (like *razorwings* or *pterrax*), can easily mean death for a windrider and his mount. Monsters with ranged attacks, like the *cha'thrang*, are also a serious threat.

The final responsibility of the windriders is the transportation of cargo and people from one community to another. The *gon-evauth*, the largest windrider mount (also known as a *soar whale*), is generally employed to haul heavy cargo and large numbers of passengers. Since hauling is the safest and most common use of the windriders' services, many riders restrict their services to moving goods and people as much as possible.

Messages are also considered cargo. This is the most rapid method of communications among the *r hul-thaun*, particularly when a windrider uses a *ber-ethern*, the smallest and swiftest of the life-shaped flying mounts.

Obviously, there is a great deal of competition between windriders and climbers, since both occupations have a similar focus. The windriders can do anything the climbers can do and do it faster and deliver larger payloads. Windriders can handle more cargo, harvest more plants, and take bigger game. Nevertheless, there are far more climbers than windriders, and their rates are much lower. Then too, climbers hunt rarer plants and more exotic game animals—they seek quality not quantity.

Other Occupations

While *r hul-thaun* society differs from most other cultures, traditional occupations are also important on the Jagged Cliffs. Merchants, for example, drive the economy, buying and selling merchandise of all sorts, purchasing the wares of the life-shapers, harvesters, hunters, tenders, and craftspeople and selling them in the village marketplaces throughout the Jagged Cliffs. Others who are not merchants choose to sell their own goods, but most enjoy the convenience of the intermediaries, and do not care what they make in profits.

Craftspeople, such as stone masons, leather workers, tailors, potters, and cobblers work with a variety of materials to produce necessary, if mundane, items. Except for stone masons and potters, who work with only the most basic materials (remember the *r hul-thaun* do not mine, quarry, or smelt precious metals or minerals), most of the craftspeople work with substances produced through life-shaping. The life-shapers have creations, cared for by tenders, which produce leathery hides, silks, wool, and other fibers. Crafters use these fabrics to make clothing, shoes, belts, tack and harness, bags, rope, and similar goods. Artisans dealing in nonorganic materials produce stone tools and weapons, dishes, pottery, and decorative items.

Food is normally prepared in the home, but there is still a need for cooks and bakers to produce bread, cheese, and the hot meals sold in the marketplace. Taverns and inns, called *safehomes*, also require cooks to produce meals for travelers. Brewers produce beer, ale, and other alcoholic beverages from life-shaped ingredients. The *r hul-thaun* have no wineries.

Entertainment is an important aspect of life in *r hul-thaun* settlements and actors, comedians, singers, dancers, and (most importantly) tale-tellers hold respectable positions. Much of the culture's history and tradition is maintained by tale-tellers and the stories passed on during family tale-telling.

Finally, clerks, accountants, tax collectors, and other government administrative positions are available to those seeking employment. These jobs garner little respect, but the *har-etuil* make sure that those who take them are well paid.

Because the *r hul-thaun* do not need metal (and even in the cliffs there is precious little of it), there are no halfling miners or smiths. Likewise, there is little need for those who can work with wood, since anything a carpenter could make can be better grown by the life-shapers—even buildings are created with their amazing skills. Woodcrafted items are but novelties at best.



Sinister Work

Not all of the rhul-thaun are willing to content themselves with mundane professions, choosing instead to operate outside clan-law as thieves, hired thugs, extortionists, spies, even professional killers. Many of these criminals hold other occupations as “covers,” while others exist completely beyond the constraints of normal society.

Although these individuals usually act alone, some communities are plagued with organized groups of thieves and thugs who serve corrupt masters. They have a complicated network (often operating between communities) of thieves, climbers, and windriders for communication and transport, merchants who are willing to sell stolen goods and “protection” in the form of well-armed warriors. One very powerful company is the *Ban-glesh* in Thamasku. This is a wealthy, powerful assembly of criminals who are involved in virtually every aspect of life in that city.

The obvious enemies of the criminal organizations are the lawkeepers. While most solitary thieves do their utmost to avoid them, the well-armed forces of the master criminals often clash violently with the vher-elus.

One final issue concerning the rhul-thaun underground and their illicit activities that must be discussed is the *Chahn*. This radical party includes revolutionaries who wish to overthrow rhul-thaun society. The members of the Chahn do not hesitate to use violence to achieve their goals—in fact, the utter sanctity of life is one of the societal values that most of them reject. Yet, this group also claims those who are merely discontented youth. The malcontents don’t want to see any blood shed, but they do feel that drastic changes are necessary in rhul-thaun government and society. They reject ritual, isolationism, clan-rule, and virtually every other traditional aspect of rhul-thaun culture. Despite the nonviolent nature of some members (a fact most ordinary people refuse to accept), the vher-elus have branded the Chahn a threat of the highest magnitude and the general population lives in fear of these radical terrorists.

Architecture

Virtually without exception, the halflings’ buildings are life-shaped constructs. This means that their structures are grown rather than built. Because they are organic, rhul-thaun buildings have smooth, curved surfaces without angles or corners. In addition, the rhul-thaun preoccupation with vertical thinking means that most structures are taller than they are wide. When it is time to expand a community, it is more common for the life-shapers to grow new compositions on top of old ones rather than expanding the settlement horizontally into new territory.


A halfling village or town, therefore, consists of tall, shapely towers, many of which take the form of elongated teardrops. Others are round and flattened pods, stacked one on top of the other, high into the air. Another favorite design is that of a dome with a round top, a conical tower capping it. All buildings have smooth, rounded contours and an organic feel.

Doorways, windows, inner rooms, and halls are circular. The interiors of the buildings are so organic in appearance and feel that outsiders may feel uncomfortable, the resemblance to being inside an actual creature is so real (and usually, that is true). Doors are usually round and have organic locks.

There are two kinds of life-shaped formations. The first are those grown from an organic, porous-stone material called *nen*. This ancient matter has a consistency much like a deep sea sponge (and in fact, the rhulisti discovered this organic stone aeons ago at the bottom of the sea). When a nen building is completed, however, the nen itself ceases to live in the truest sense and remains as it was shaped. Legends say that when the rhulisti used this material, it scintillated with all the colors of the spectrum in a constant and beautiful display. This no longer true, nen is simply dirty white in color today.

The second, less common structural material is called *rahn-rath*. While rahn-rath is a more recent development, it is still ancient. This medium was first created by the rhulisti at the end of the Blue Age, unlike nen, which was the first organic material they shaped.

The difference between this substance and nen is that rahn-rath remains alive even after the structure is completely grown. It must be planted in fertile soil, tended, and exposed to moisture. Because it is still living, it can be slowly, carefully reshaped as



needed. This process requires the skills of an experienced tender, the advice of a life-shaper, and takes several weeks to complete.

If a rahn-rath building is “slain,” which, except for total destruction by fire or crushing, usually only happens through starvation, the material hardens and crumbles within three to four weeks. Therefore, these buildings are more risky to grow and require much more attention.

Rahn-rath can be altered while it is growing so that it secretes a powerful adhesive. This is done to create cliff houses, which are structures that literally cling to the sides of the cliff. These have the advantage of taking up little or no ledge space. They do require ladders, swings, or bridges to get to them, however.

Both types of organic materials are as rugged as stone, with a close cohesiveness that completely prevents crumbling. A well cared for rahn-rath building, besides all of that, repairs minor damage simply by healing normally. Windows and doors consist of the same material as the rest of the structure, although windows are transparent forms of nen or rahn-rath.

A Day in the Life

Tel-amen woke early. She glanced out the window as she performed a quick waking ritual. The crimson sun shone through the thick mist that cloaked the village. As always, a wall of mist filtered the sun’s rays, casting a pinkish glow on the street below. She could see the house across the way, but the haze hampered her vision beyond that point.

Already there were people on the street, including old Rev-onim, the pastry merchant who hawked his wares on this street every morning. She also saw Don-osith of the vherelus on patrol. Invariably, he looked handsome with his shaped warstaff held proudly at his side. The other people on the street nodded and waved their hands in rituals of friendly respect.

Tel-amen dressed and hurried down to the level below to eat breakfast before the rest of her family began to rise. This was certainly not a common practice, but today was special. Her meal consisted of bread and cheese made from life-shaped creatures and growths and some wild berries that her climber uncle had gathered in the nearby vertical forest. She ate hurriedly and rushed out of the house.

The streets were filling with people as she hurried through the forming crowds. Her destination was the home of her teacher, Ril-onev. Since he was quite wealthy after a life of windriding, his home was high above the level of her own family’s dwelling. Tel-amen climbed more ladders and stairs than she walked streets in order to complete her journey.

She arrived at Ril-onev’s home and, even in her hurry, paused to take in the view around her. From this height, she could see the entire Village of Glerran and much of the cliffs face before the mist obscured her vision. Taking a deep breath of the warm, moist air, she entered the house.

Today was the day of her final testing. Today she would take the ber-ethern out on her own. Tel-amen would finally ride the winds of the cliffs alone, soaring through the mists using only her own skills and knowledge.

She performed the rite of entering as she crossed the threshold. Ril-onev was still finishing his morning meal, but greeted her with the solemn ritual of greeting. He was always very formal on occasions of importance. Though it was not discernible from his appearance, he was four times the age of Tel-amen and long-retired from his days as a windrider. She noted that Ril-onev still wore his rich, dark blue graft, revealing him to be an accomplished rider of long service.


“Are you prepared?” he asked.

Tel-amen gathered her courage. “Yes.”

“Then let’s go. The wind is an impatient ally,”

Ril-onev led her out onto the balcony on the other side of his home. The ber-ethern waited to be given a command, mindless in its servitude. Its thin membranous wings quivered slightly in the breeze, the only indication that the giant insect was truly real. Behind the creature’s wings, its carapace dipped slightly and then rose quite sharply where the life-shapers had fashioned a saddle-seat for the ber-ethern’s single rider,

Ril-onev walked up to the beast and attached a clingbag to its side. Inside, he



explained, was an important message that needed to be delivered to a climber's camp that lay south and below Glerran. Tel-amen nodded as she attached a clingbag to her side containing a small meal and some water for the trip. The mission would take until sunset, according to Ril-onev.

As she approached her mount, both halflings recited the mantra of the windrider. Tel-amen climbed atop the creature as she spoke. When she was finished, she glanced at Ril-onev, who backed away and nodded formally. Without another word, she signaled the breeze-sprite to take to the air.

Instantly, the creature lifted Tel-amen off the balcony and soared over the village. From her vantage, she could see the community and the sprawling mass of organic structures that comprised it. The smooth, rounded shapes of the multitude of towers reminded her of a patch of fungus one might find growing on the side of a rock.

Almost instantly, however, her awareness of Glerran below was consumed by the thrill of taking to the skies. No longer a slave to the cliffs she could move as she pleased, without scrambling over the rocks like a lizard. Tel-amen, the windrider, was free at last.

Language

"The spoken word empowers us, allowing us to impose structure upon the cacophony of life. Our language is order given voice."

—Ther-onos, renowned har-etuil of centuries past

The language of the rhul-thaun is directly descended from the speech of the ancient rhulisti. Time has modified the language, but it still sounds like its forbearer. Both are breathy, elegant tongues, pleasant to virtually every ear. To represent the breathy forms of the spoken language, an "h" is often inserted between a consonant and vowel when words are written.

Naming

The rhul-thaun assign short, simple words to uncomplicated actions, minor concepts, and things of little significance, while important words are longer and more elegant. Combining two or more existing words easily forms new words, and in particular names, usually manipulating them slightly so that they follow a set pattern: the first syllable of a new word is stressed and begins and ends in a sounded consonant while the second begins with a softer vowel. The vowel tone is added to the beginning of the syllable, determined by the gender of the named person or object:

| | | | |
|--------|---|---------|---|
| male | o | neuter | e |
| female | a | revered | u |

The "revered" gender is a special case. Certain things, especially ideas, in rhul-thaun society are particularly respected or revered (or simply feared). These include life, purpose, the elements, and nature.

Inanimate objects and unintelligent creatures are always considered neuter. Certain concepts or terms without gender, such as the name of their race or the names of places, sometimes do not have the sounded vowel inserted at all. There is no rule for when the vowel is to be dropped entirely, so this varies from case to case. A tendency to drop the neuter "e" sound has developed in recent years, and eventually it will probably be lost from the language.

Rhul-thaun names are usually formed by combining two existing words to describe that which is being designated. For example, those in charge of keeping law and order are the vher-elus, or lawkeepers.

It is common for an object, idea, or even a person to have more than one name. Multiple names describe different aspects of the same thing, and thus are all equally valid and accurate. Usually, however, once a name comes into common usage, popular consensus determines which name is most frequently used.



Terms Used to Create Names

The following list of simple rhul-thaun words can be combined, using the rules above to create names.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|--------------------|------|---------|------|---------|-------|--------|
| Bal | Strong | Gon | Soar | Naer | Leg | Sul | Swift |
| Ban | Dark | Goth | Wealth | Neg | Courage | Taen | Long |
| Bech | Voice | Han | Great | Nish | Male | Ter | Day |
| Dar | Bright | Har | Judge | Noar | Hear | Thar | Fight |
| Dern | Eye | Heon | Slow | Nos | Dance | Ther | Dream |
| Dhev | Race (of speed) | Jiun | Distant | Pav | Take | Thaun | Cliff |
| Fen | Charm | Kuhv | Hand | Pish | Beast | Tosh | Storm |
| Fin | Fly | Lahr | Seek | Pur | Calm | Tuil | Make |
| Fin | Fly | Lech | Back | Rath | Shape | Val | Female |
| Furth | Ride | Lind | Tend | Rean | Arm | Vher | Law |
| Futh | Stride | Lus | Keep | Ruth | Sturdy | Vios | Love |
| Ghav | Life | Mak | Hunt | Sach | Teach | Wir | Wind |
| Ghesh | Wise | Moar | Plant | Sahr | City | Yihn | Climb |
| Ghoun | Beautiful | Mus | Hair | Ser | Master | Zohr | Talent |



Typical Rhul-thaun Names

Male:

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| Bal-orean | Strong arms |
| Bal-olech | Strong back |
| Dhev-ovaun | Cliff racer |
| Ser-ogoth | Master of wealth |
| Thar-osul | Swift fighter |

Female:

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| Fen-aghoun | Beautiful charmer |
| Yihn-aruth | Sturdy climber |
| Wir-avios | Wind lover |
| Val-agoth | Wealthy woman |



Clan Names

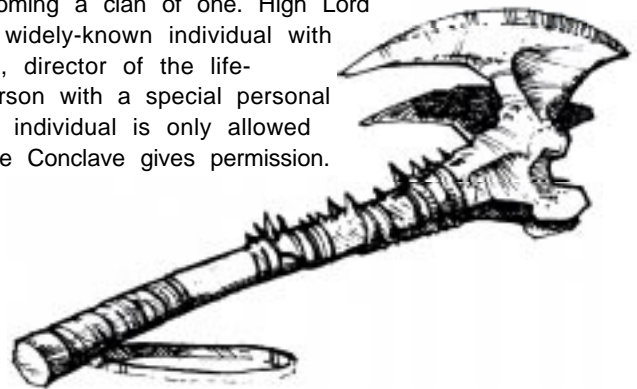
Beyond these given names, every individual can also join the name of his clan to the end of his own. Thus, Val-agoth becomes Val-agoth of Taen, or simply Val-agoth Taen. The clan designators are used less today since the importance of the clan has declined in modern rhul-thaun society.

The clan names are too numerous to list here, but all are short, one-syllable rhulisti names like Bein, Glahr, Taen, and Sul.



Special Personal Names

In extremely rare cases, those who achieve a level of greatness far beyond that of their peers are allowed to drop their clan names and take on special personal names, in effect becoming a clan of one. High Lord Rhan Thes-onel is the most widely-known individual with this designator. Loi Far-oneth, director of the life-shapers, is the only living person with a special personal name. In modern society, an individual is only allowed to take on such a name if the Conclave gives permission.





Important Terms

The following list of the terms and names are frequently used in this book. They are important to know when discussing the rhul-thaun. Their literal meanings are given first, and then full definitions or explanations are presented.

ban-ghesh, dark wisdom. A guild of criminals in Thamasku.

ber-ethern, breeze sprite. The smallest of the life-shaped windriding mounts.

cam-rahn, nourishing gift. The organic nourishment fed to life-shaped creations.

chahn, freedom. A group of revolutionaries, terrorists and discontents who wish to radically change rhul-thaun society.

dhev-sahr, city racer. A swift, four-legged, life-shaped creature used as a mount in Thamasku.

ghav-egoth, life wealth. A small life-shaped oval coin used as currency by the rhul-thaun.

ghav-nosh, life takers. Professional assassins in the employ of the life-shapers.

ghav-urath, life-shaper. One of the keepers of the ancient knowledge of life-shaping.

gon-evauth, soar-whale. The largest of the life-shaped mounts.

har-etuil, judgment-maker. One of the judges/rulers of rhul-thaun society. Each serves and rules his own clan and meets in a council to make decisions for all rhul-thaun.

lor-rahn, bath of nourishment. The solution in which all life-shaped creations formed from actual living tissue should be soaked and stored.

rhin-noss, the Rite of Beginning. The ritual of naming after a child's birth.

rhul-thaun, people of the cliffs. The halflings of the Jagged Cliffs.

rhulisti, the people. The ancient halflings from which the rhul-thaun are descended.

ven-pahr, hated destroyers. One name for the reggelids, an evil, magical race of the Jagged Cliffs.

vher-etuil, law keeper. One of the military constables who keep peace, law, and order in rhul-thaun communities.

wir-enos, windancer.

wir-efurth, windrider

yhin-e, climber

yihn-eflan, gust climber. A medium size life-shaped mount.

Other Languages

Most of the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs do not speak any language but their own. Multilingual rhul-thaunians are extremely rare. Since their contact with the outside world is slight, there is little need to learn other tongues. In fact, the opportunity to study a language other than their own virtually never presents itself.

Although numerous halfling adventurers have dared to enter the land to the west and spy upon the activities of the thri-kreen, none of them have attempted to learn the insects' language. Admittedly, it is an alien language and difficult for noninsects to try to decipher.

No halfling has ever deciphered the language of the reggelids, the "hated destroyers," that evil, magical race of the Jagged Cliffs. A few of those living in the village of Vir-rath have learned a smattering of the bvanen tongue spoken by their neighbors to the north of the cliffs. Likewise, some in Sahr-tosh have learned to speak a bit of the pterran language spoken by the infrequent and mysterious traders who appear out of the mists and vanish again. The inhabitants of these two villages have found that understanding these languages is beneficial, though the halflings, as a rule, avoid all other cultures.

Newcomers to the Jagged Cliffs will find their own language, Common, is a derivative of the same tongue as rhul-thaun, but mutated to a much greater extent, having become rougher and more guttural as words, constructions, and idioms changed. Still, those who attempt to communicate unaided by a tongues spell or similar aids find that about 10% of their thoughts can still be understood by their listeners, and vice versa. Such conversations are difficult and clumsy and often require repeating the same message frequently, rephrasing continually

Wanderer's Journal

Though many believe this entire world to be a dry and desolate place—a desert without borders, eternally blowing sand and dust across a barren, near lifeless landscape—I know it to be a place of infinite variety.

No more definitive proof exists than the sight which greets the eyes of a traveler reaching the Jagged Cliffs for the first time.

If the veil of mist is thin, one can see the cliffs below them and perhaps even catch a glimpse of a halfling village nestled into the face

of the stone like the lair of some rock-dwelling lizard. If the veil is completely parted, the endless savanna presents itself; rolling off to the ends of the world where, so whispered tales rarely told, even among the mantis warriors that live there, lies a great body of water. The kreen have forged a great empire for themselves, one which claws even now at the Jagged Cliffs looking for a way to scale the heights to conquer the Tablelands above them.

At the base of the cliffs is a swamp so dark and dismal that experienced travelers know that nature had little to do with its formation. Rhul-thaun tales tell of horrors beyond reckoning or recognition that rise from this bog to threaten their villages.

The halflings truly live on a border that separates two completely different worlds.



CHAPTER 4:

Life on the Ledge

Although the rhul-thaun are not an expansionist people and have no real military, the area controlled by them is quite extensive. Well over 500 miles of the Jagged Cliffs' face is dotted with their cities, villages, settlements, and camps. Most of these are small bivouacs of less than a dozen inhabitants, living on the tiny ledges of the cliffs. The villages found on larger, wider ledges have much larger populations. This section presents descriptions of some of these communities. They are listed here in order of size from the largest city, Thamasku, to the smallest camp.

Organization

The har-etuil Conclave rules over all of the rhul-thaun, making decisions that affect the lives of every citizen. Each city, village, or settlement consists of a limited number of clans, and the har-etuil of these clans form governments when they are needed.

Nevertheless, each community has an administrator. This person, chosen by the local har-etuil, oversees the day-to-day operations of the district, including local law enforcement, tax collecting, road maintenance, and all other details of civic life.

Every administrator, as well as each har-etuil, keeps in close contact with the others, using windriding messengers to relay information. Thus, while each clan and community is autonomous, the entire rhul-thaun society is closely linked. Each individual owes allegiance first to his clan and community, but after that, they all share a sense of loyalty to the race. Even the Chahn act out the same sense of fealty to the rhul-thaun as a people.

News and rumors travel with surprising speed along the cliffs. Important events in one community are soon heard throughout the cliffs within two to three days. Major disasters usually summon voluntary assistance from neighboring communities, for the halflings consider all of their kind as kin.

Thamasku

The streets bustle with harried shoppers, merchants, and lawkeepers. A long-legged dhev-sahr carries two males wearing life-shaper grafts through the crowd, its normally rapid pace hindered by the thick swarm of people. The shapers should have known not to try to cross the city at midday.

A heady odor of life fills the city, despite the most sophisticated waste disposal system of all rhul-thaun settlements (and probably all of Athas). Certain areas of the city are overcrowded, and the life-shapers are constantly occupied growing new buildings and elevating existing ones, raising the wealthier upper classes higher above the noise and smell of the lower city.

Spires and towers reach up to the hazy sky, and the summit of the tallest of them allows one to see all the way across Ghavin Lake. Even the smaller towers give a clear view of the caravans going in and out of the forest that surrounds the city and the lake.

A Windrider's Chronicle

Thamasku is the single exception to many rhul-thaun rules. While most halfling communities are villages on the ledges and in the crevices along the cliff side, Thamasku is a bustling city of 12,000 inhabitants, on a lake in the middle of a forest.

The city was built in the center of a large ledge, carved out of the side of the cliffs by tidal waters when the world was young. This shelf stretches back 80 miles from the edge of the cliff, and most of it is covered with large, hardwood trees and thick foliage. Runoff from the tablelands to the east collects in Ghavin Lake, a body of clear, fresh water almost 20 miles across. A wide river runs from the lake to the cliff's edge, then crashes over the side, creating what the largest and most dramatic waterfall on Athas. The waterfall empties into the swamp at the bottom of the cliffs, contributing to the rising wall of mist.

Thamasku is extremely ancient, built before the rhul-thaun existed as a separate group—when the rhulisti ruled the world. The name *Thamasku* is an ancient rhulisti word. Indeed, so archaic is that name that its actual meaning is lost. Scholars are fairly sure it has something to do with great altitude. Since those long-lost days, halflings who have taken advantage both of the lake and the surrounding forest have occupied the city.

Thamasku actually has a few buildings made of stone and wood, in addition to the organically grown towers that fill most of its streets. The halflings ply the waters of Ghavin Lake with boats made of wood, since the ability to create life-shaped water craft is now a lost art. They catch fish in organic trap-nets, providing a delicacy virtually unknown to the rest of the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs.

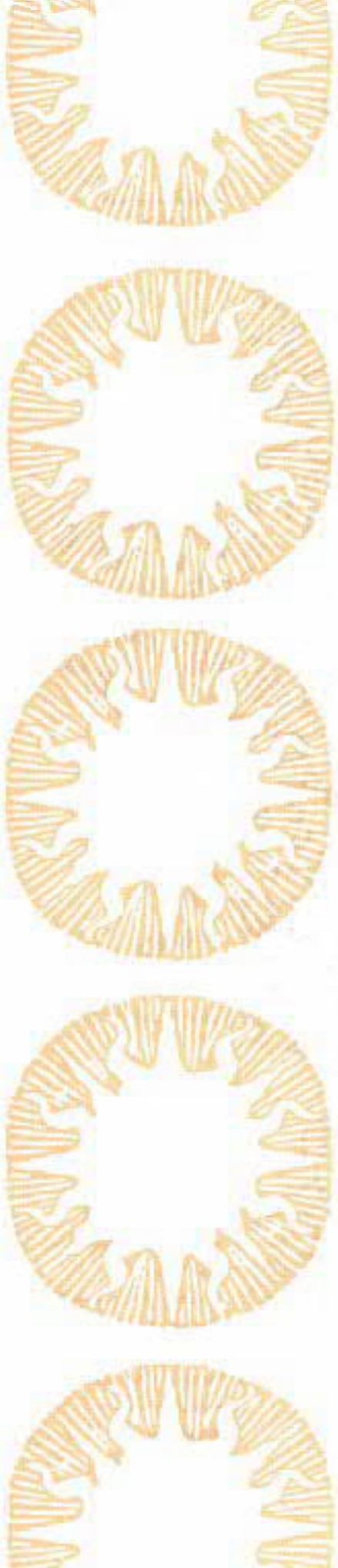
The city is also unusual in its horizontal nature. The effects of living on cliff ledges that influence other rhul-thaun are not in evidence here. Climbers are few, though there are many of them in Sol-fehn at the top of the falls. There are a few in Thamasku, however, who scale the cliffs up to the edge of the Tablelands.

The city's life-shapers use their skills to make running creatures called *dhev-sahr* and the halflings use them as mounts to travel through the forest and the green. *Dhev-sahr* are of little use anywhere else in the Jagged Cliffs.

Thamasku is more spread out and more horizontal in its orientation than any of the other halfling communities. The towers and spires common to all settlements are there, but so are single-story buildings, long and wide, primarily used as store houses on the edge of the city. Given the proportions of normal halfling communities, Thamasku should cover only half of the land it does and stand over twice as high. Given the limitations of even the amazing life-shaped building materials, this would be a physical impossibility—one that will always prevent the villages of the ledges from getting substantially larger than they are at present.

Leadership and Political Organization

The position of city administrator of Thamasku is one of the most politically powerful appointments anyone can possibly hope to hold. Currently, Vher-asach (haf/T10/LN), the young but capable daughter of the former administrator holds the office. The har-



etuil actually nominated her to the position only as a tribute to her dead mother, who served the city well. They expected that she would remain only a short while, and then a more experienced person would be chosen to replace her. However, Vher-asach is more than competent in the job, and it appears that she will continue as administrator for the foreseeable future.

Nowhere in the Jagged Cliffs is clan affiliation as significant as it is in this city. There are 28 different clans in Thamasku, and 37 har-etuil who serve and govern them. This is far more than in any other rhul-thaun community, but overall, the numbers do not present problems. Occasionally there are periods of clan strife, when one clan is offended or somehow challenged by another, but these are usually settled peacefully.

The life-shapers, who are called life-masters here, wield a great deal of political power and influence in Thamasku. Despite the fact that woodsmen bring in timber to use as an alternate building material, and hunters and gatherers use the nearby forests to provide more food and herbs than in other rhul-thaun communities, the life-shapers are kept busy meeting the needs of the city's huge population. Vher-asach learned from her mother long ago of the importance of the shapers, and almost always bows to their wishes. In return, however, her shrewd dealings with the wealthy life-masters have garnered enough money and life-shaped creations to provide the city with conveniences and necessities the government otherwise might not have been able to grant.

A secret guild of thieves and assassins, known as the *ban-ghesh* (dark wisdom), also has some political clout in Thamasku. Their wealth allows them to pay off the authorities, giving them virtually total control over some of the lower parts of the city. In Thamasku, wealth speaks with power and influence.

Sol-fehn, at the top of the waterfall created by the river flowing from Ghavin Lake, is virtually an outlying quarter of Thamasku. It is a small village, with a population of less than 300 people, all of whom make their living in the transport of cargo, people, or information to and from Thamasku. Sol-fehn serves as a connection to the rest of the rhul-thaunian society. Its administrator, Rath-omak (ham/F5/LN), answers directly to Vher-asach. He does whatever the administrator of Thamasku tells him to do. Moreover, the village is primarily populated by members of two clans that chiefly reside in the larger city, so this village does not even have its own har-etuil.

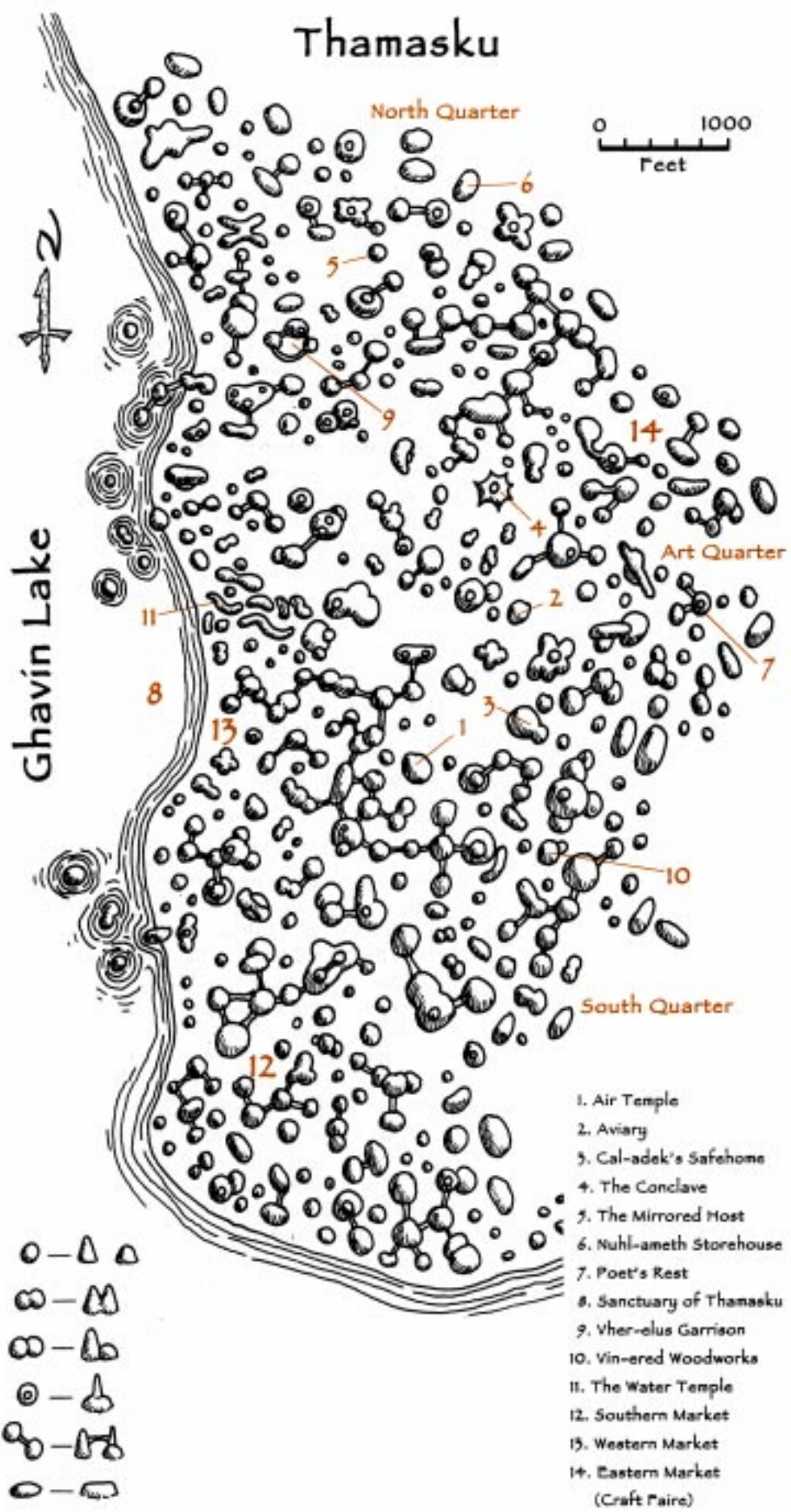
Economics

Because wealth is more important than anything else in this city of commerce, everyone is deeply involved in economics and trade. Because of the city's unique location, products such as fish and woodcrafted articles are among some of the items available here that cannot be purchased in other communities. At the same time, however, there is little call for these items elsewhere, so there are virtually no exports to the other communities of the cliffs.

The exception to this is the village Sol-fehn, to which Thamasku sends food, life-shaped creations, and various goods that the smaller community does not produce. Sol-fehn is almost solely involved in transportation and related occupations, making it the hub of travel and transport between Thamasku and other locales.

Within Thamasku itself, there are three marketplaces where various merchants sell their wares. Although created as a convenience, so that everyone in the city would be close to a market, each of the three has taken on a distinctive flavor and style. The southern market, also known as the fish market, primarily sells fresh fish and other foodstuffs. Though the other two marketplaces do sell provisions, the freshest, best quality items are found here. The western market is controlled almost completely by life-masters. The merchants here sell life-shaped creations of every description to all who need them. The eastern market is a craft faire. Artwork, woodcrafts, stonework, pottery, and other crafted items and supplies are found in great numbers. No finer merchandise of this kind can be found anywhere on the cliffs.

The whole eastern district of Sol-fehn is called the Art Quarter, and it is filled with galleries, studios, theaters, and related businesses. There are few centers of culture in all of Athas that can rival the talents found here.





The People

Thamasku is the center of rhul-thaun society. The wealthiest rhul-thaun live in this city, although there are plenty of common and poor folk within its confines as well.

The people of Thamasku find themselves spending less time struggling to survive than most other rhul-thaun, less in fact than most of Athas's inhabitants. The city's size reduces the risk of monster attacks, provides a vast range of conveniences and services, and generally means that citizens have better access to health care and finer food. Life-shaped engines pump water from the lake into the city, bringing it indoors to every home and building. The life-masters have also set up an incredible waste disposal system with underground conduits, regulated by organic water-pumping engines, and life-shaped disposal units that consume trash and all manner of wastes. The city's systems of water delivery and garbage elimination makes Thamasku a clean and comfortable place in which to live.

Because the people of Thamasku have a great deal of leisure time, theater and the arts are more prevalent here than in other communities. Music and the artistic expression are important to all rhul-thaun, but here in Thamasku they are taken to new heights. Fantastic galleries, theaters, and music halls line the Art Quarter. Dancing, music, visual arts, theater, tale-telling, and other performance arts are all practiced here. Young and old, rich and poor, life-master and city laborers find entertainments and amusements to suit their tastes. Poets, songwriters, composers, artists, and performers can make their livelihood creating art and diversions for the people of the city. In Thamasku, the arts are not idle pastimes, but rather big businesses.

Many of the halfings who travel to the city eventually end up deciding to live here, prompting the saying that you can take the villager out of the heart of Thamasku, but you can't take Thamasku out of the heart of the villager.

Most of those who come to the city seek recreation, dining, and living opportunities that exist nowhere else. Others, however, have a very different reaction. They believe that "stout and hearty" folk live only on the ledges. The lives of "true rhul-thaun" should be spent in the cloying mists and blustering winds of the ledges, clinging to the cliff faces that they call home, carving out their lives with bare hands. They view their city cousins with great disdain, sometimes calling them "shaped rhul-thaun."

And some who come to Thamasku from the villages find the city too exposed, too spacious. The villagers are used to the secluded, protected ledges of the cliffs. The fact that the city is in the center of a green, flat expanse of land is disorienting and frightening to them.

Places of Note


The Air Temple: The largest of the rare temples of the rhul-thaun, the air temple is in the lofty reaches of the city's sprawling towers. This temple is the home and base of operations of over a dozen priests (13 ham & haf/P1-6/NG). Thim-obec leads the temple (ham/P12/NG). The few devout followers in the city come here to pay their respects, but this priest's real duty is to the windriders.

The air temple serves as a place where windriders can find berths for their mounts to roost and be cared for as well as free food and lodging for their flyers and themselves. The priests feel that windriding is the best technique of truly communing with the great power of elemental air, and therefore windriders are holy men to be respected. Ironically, none of the priests are windriders themselves—they see their own role as caretakers.

Air priests have little interaction with the rest of the community. The temple takes no official interest in politics, community action, or any of the events that develop within the city.

The Aviary: This tall tower is home to the hundreds of birds that fly about the city, and of the strange individual known only as the Birdmaster. The tower is designed so that there is room for even large flying creatures to land and roost. For this reason, it is occasionally used by windriders who come to the city. The Birdmaster (ham/D16/N) favors windriders, charging them no fees to use his roosts.

The Birdmaster is a druid of great power who, unlike others of his profession, concerns himself with the activities of a city. He watches over events in Thamasku, communicating with his birds psionically. They are his eyes and ears, and no one in all of Thamasku knows more about the comings and goings of the city's populace or of the things they do in secret.



Cal-adek's Safehome: This tavern is well-known throughout the city as the meeting place for warriors, mercenaries, and adventurers. It is also a place where spies, thieves, and even killers can be hired to perform less-than-legal assignments. Cal-adek (haf/F8/N) asks no questions of her customers, she simply demands that everyone "keep a peaceful head about them while they stay here." Wise customers heed this simple request, for Cal-adek has a fair amount of hired muscle herself (8 ham/F5/N).

Whispers say that Cal-adek is involved in the criminal underworld of Thamasku. Others claim that she harbors members of the Chahn. Neither of these rumors is true, although at times she can be convinced to finance potentially profitable operations—the legal status of these endeavors is irrelevant to her.

The Conclave: This grand structure is the meeting place of the har-etuil when they gather to make laws and pass judgement on matters concerning all rhul-thaun. Although vacant more often than it is used, a small contingent of professional warriors (20 ham & haf/F4/LG) are permanently stationed here to guard the structure, preserve its appearance, and maintain it.

The Mirrored Host: This tavern is an upscale safehome for those wishing a luxurious night's stay or an elegant meal. Mirrors, which are uncommon among these halflings, cover many of the interior walls, giving this place its name.

The cost of a night's stay is 25 ghav-egoths, meals are 5 ge.

Nuhl-ameth Storehouse: This is one of many storehouses on the outskirts of the city. It is also the secret headquarters of the Chahn, the terrorist organization that wants to overthrow and transform rhul-thaun society.

A secret entrance in the main storage area leads to an underground labyrinthine, the lair of these desperate terrorists. From here they launch attacks upon the vher-elus, the Conclave, and even life-shapers traveling in the city. Their strikes are swift and of limited effect—they want to make a statement rather than inflict actual damage. The Chahn are careful not to allow themselves to be followed back to their base, and have successfully used it as their headquarters for more than a year.

At least 50 members use this secret stronghold, including the Chahn's leader, Col-olin (ham/T12/CN). Col-olin is a small, angry halfling crossed too many times by the authorities. He seeks destruction on a large scale, though he possesses a conscience that sometimes gets in the way of his passionate, devastating plots.

Poets' Rest: This safehome, located in the Art Quarter, is frequented by artists and performers of all kinds. The place is inexpensive and the food is of poor quality, but its patrons keep coming back for the atmosphere of the place.

Sanctuary of Thamasku: Besides its status as the largest life-shaper sanctuary, this structure's unique feature is its location. It is underwater, submerged in Ghaven Lake, with secret entrances and exits throughout the city, connected by tunnels under the earth.

The sanctuary lies at a depth of about 300 feet. Shaped like a mushroom, the sanctuary's domed main structure narrows beneath it to form a base that is set into the lake's floor. The structure is alive, of course, and its gill system exchanges and filters oxygen and hydrogen out of the water, converting the elements to a gas that provides a livable atmosphere for those who live and work inside. Over 150 life-masters work here, producing organic creations at a feverish pace to try to keep up with the city's needs.

Loi Far-oneth (ham/F12/LG), the master of all life-shapers, lives and works here. He is a man consumed with the past, its preservation, and its effects on the present and future. His chief adjutant is a Gil-ogres (ham/T12/LE), who is subtly manipulating events to gain personal power. When the har-etuil convenes in Conclave, it is not Loi whose name is spoken in fearful whispers—it is Gil-ogres. Loi seems unaware of his lieutenant's secret control of the organization, so preoccupied is he in scholarly pursuits.

In Thamasku, Gil-ogres's plans are simple. The life-shapers' dominion over the buildings, tools and other shaped articles gives them nearly complete economic control of the city. The only area where they do not have actual mastery is the city's entertainment business. To this end, Gil-ogres is sending agents into the Ban-ghesh Guild. He wants to infiltrate the organization and take it over from the inside, thus adding their resources to his own. The guild has the strongest hold upon the entertainment district.

The sanctuary is also the keeping place of the Dal-arat, the oldest rhulisti artifact in existence. This life-shaped device is actually a recorder (now impossible to recreate) that replays an ancient account of the beliefs and creeds of the rhulisti.

"The fundamental forces of life, being what they are, have left us with no other option We are both the masters of the world and its passionate servants. Let that forever be our creed and our vow."

Vher-elus Garrison: This small fortress has a garrison of more than 150 lawkeepers (ham & haf/F4/LG). From here, they patrol the city and respond to reports of trouble. In times of great need, they can call upon an organized, voluntary militia of over 200 additional able-bodied men and women.

Vin-ered Woodworks: Unique in rhul-thaun society, this huge emporium exclusively displays and sells items fashioned of wood. The cost of their goods is moderately high, but Vin-ered quality is exceptional.

The Water Temple: The second largest halfling temple, the Water Temple is found on the lake's edge. The buildings of this complex are designed to appear like long, snaky fish, swimming through the winding course of the temple grounds.

Under the guidance of high priestess Hiv-anad (haf/P12/N) the priests of this temple maintain close relations with the life-masters of Thamasku. In fact, the water priests operate in the city as spies for the shapers, and are well paid for their services.

The Dark Side

The Ban-glesh Guild, consisting of thieves, assassins, and muscles-for-hire, is the driving force of the less-reputable, darker side of Thamasku, which is usually considered to be the lower sector of the central part of the city. The slimy hands of this criminal organization are involved in many aspects of life in the city, including the extortion of merchants, entertainers, and tenders. They own merchants willing to sell illegal goods, crooked lawkeepers on-the-take, and administrative officials devoid of ethics. The guild operates and invests in theaters, casinos, safehomes, storage facilities, and virtually every money making business opportunity or venture they can acquire. In fact, when businessmen first start ventures they often approach the guild, offering them a percentage of their profits in exchange for a guild investment. The guild is also available for loans (at exorbitant interest rates).

One could argue that the Ban-glesh could make a decent profit in purely legal activities (investments, loans, legitimate enterprises). Nevertheless, a great deal of its substantial treasury comes from extortion, murder, and theft.

In the lower northern quarter of Thamasku lies a secret, forbidden Fire Temple, offering its evil followers a place to revere the element of death and destruction. This temple maintains a contingent of Ban-glesh armed guards for defense, in case of discovery. Rumors abound that the high priest, who many very well be insane, plans a massive showing of the power of elemental fire that will inflict tremendous damage upon the city and the people who have turned their backs on the proscribed element.

Important NPCs

Vahv-ostes (ham/F11): AC 4 (sheath armor); MV 6; hp 61; THAC0 10 (9 with Strength); #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+1 (warstaff); SZ S (3'4" tall); ML Champion (15); AL NG; XP 3,000.

S 17, roll 5d4 for attributes other than Strength.

Personality: gruff, surly

Special Equipment: sheath armor, warstaff, vher-elus badge graft

Vahv-ostes is the commander of the vher-elus in Thamasku. He also hires himself out as a mercenary occasionally, along with a few of his compatriots who can be spared from their official duties for a week or two.

Like most males, Vahv-ostes keeps his black hair long, but prefers it pulled straight back and tied, to keep it out of his eyes. His face and body show a number of scars, and when he seeks to impress others he uses body paint to highlight and draw attention to them.

Jhen-athin (haf/T9): AC 7 (Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 32; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quickstrike); SA x4 backstab; SZ S (3' tall); ML Elite (13); AL N; XP 2,000.
D 17, Ch 18, roll 5d4 for other attributes.



Pareth

Personality: seductive, crafty.

Special Equipment: clingbag, 50 feet of clingrope, shaper lockpick, thieves' tools, quickstrike.

Thief Abilities: PP 60, OL 80, F/RT 50, MS 95, HS 80, DN 50, CW 95, RL 10.

Jhen-athin is a member of the Ban-gshesh, and is considered to be one of the best infiltrators in the business. Her specialties are her charm, wit, and pleasant demeanor. She uses these as tools to slip past guards and deceive the vher-elus.

She keeps her brown hair short (as is the fashion), and often wears a painted blue stripe down the right side of her face. Her charm truly comes from her gentle behavior, not from her average appearance.

PCs could encounter Jhen-athin when she is on a job (perhaps attempting to infiltrate the same organization the PCs are investigating). In that situation, she ignores the player characters unless they have something that she needs or they can assist her in some way. If the latter, she attempts to charm her way into getting what she wants.

"The winds blow kindly on Pareth."

—old windrider proverb

The second largest community of halflings is much smaller than Thamasku, and nearly as old. In the rhulisti tongue, its name means "hidden," which is a fine descriptor for the secluded village. It is recessed back from a ledge that lies between two large, vertical outcroppings of rock and built even further to the rear, into a wide but shallow cave.

The community is huge by rhul-thaun standards, with a population of 3,500, but still called a village. Its administrator, Bal-olech (ham/9/LG), is a retired windrider yearning for the old days. He wants to be young and spry so that he can ride the winds again. Since this cannot be, he lives vicariously through other windriders. Because of his feelings, Pareth has become particularly attractive to windriders. Bal-olech's administrations have given merchants, safehome keepers, and others, encouragement to offer special incentives and services to windriders. Since this attracts new commerce, the har-etuil of the local clans does not oppose his mandates.

Places of Note

Ger-orif's: This is the safehome favored by windriders throughout the Jagged Cliffs. Although it is quite expensive, the riders receive discounts based on how much time they have been in the profession.

The five-story tavern offers food, drink and entertainment of high quality. There is a huge fountain and even a pool where guests can swim—a rare opportunity on Athas. The 35 opulent rooms above and around the pool offer relaxation and comfort unknown in most other places on Athas. Water flows freely throughout the structure, and servants are ready to cater to any whim.

Prices

Entry Fee (paid at the door): 3 ghav-egoths

Room (per night): 10 ghav-egoths

Meal (light): 1 ghav-egoth


Meal (sumptuous): 3 ghav-egoths

Drink: 2 ghav-egoths

Discount: 30% discount for windriders, plus 1% per year of experience, to a maximum of 50%.

Sahr-enor Plaza: This large plaza is located near the center of the village. Windriders use the open area to ground their mounts. The flyers are then turned over to tenders in the employ of the city who care for them. For a fee of 1 ghav-egoth, a tender will oversee the needs of any size windrider flyer for one night. The plaza is also used for public gatherings, large entertainments (sponsored by the city to attract windriders), and other affairs.

Sanctuary of Pareth: This sanctuary is another major shaper stronghold, a complex



built into the side of the cliff. Using long-forgotten organic digging methods, the ancient life-shapers created a series of rooms and corridors within the cliff. Rumor has it that the shapers only use a small portion of this underground domain. The vast majority of its rooms and galleries are unused—and for the most part, unexplored. Other rumors assert that ancient tunnels honeycomb the entire cliff, and may be filled with knowledge and artifacts from the distant past. Regardless, the sanctuary of Pareth is the only existing rhul-thaun subterranean structure.

The leader of the sanctuary is Mag-aven (haf/F8/NE), a twisted soul in a twisted body. An accident during a life-shaping experiment disfigured her long ago and drove her partially mad. Though she has supposedly recovered from the insanity, she has since developed a penchant for pain and the macabre.

The Wind's Song: This small shrine dedicated to elemental air is built high atop a tall tower. The builders designed this organic structure as a unique wind organ. When the wind blows through the various holes and tubes carved into its walls and floors, it creates an ever changing melody of varying pitches.

There is a single cleric caring for this temple. Her name is Fen-adan (haf/P10/CG), and she mostly keeps to herself and to her temple. Fen-adan's self-imposed duties are to maintain the temple and to keep the tubes and orifices of the wind organ clear and clean.

Important NPCs

Las-aren (haf/F7): AC 4 (hidden sheath armor and shield); MV 6; hp 43; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6 or 1d10 (flashlance); SZ S (2' 11" tall); ML Champion (16); AL CE; XP 975.

S 16, D 15, C 15, W 14, Ch 12.

Personality: cruel, backbiting

Special Equipment: climbers' shield, climbing boots, flashlance, grasping hook, hidden sheath armor, sleep spore pod.

Las-aren is a professional climber who lives in Pareth. She is completely evil and thoroughly untrustworthy, but still manages to get enough work to make ends meet. Occasionally, she lures prospective employers into secluded areas in order to kill them and strip the valuables from their pockets.

Las-aren has long black hair—unusual for a rhul-thaun female. Her features are deceptively delicate, for she is strong and capable. She prefers drab clothing and tries to project a plain, homely appearance.

The PCs may encounter her as a hired climber, a guide, or even a rival adventurer. She may even be a long-term rival or enemy. Las-aren is not a foe whose first response is combat with the PCs—unless she is sure she can win. She is more likely to use subterfuge or deceit to defeat opponents.

Flar-onib (ham/C10 [earth]): AC 1 (shell armor and shield); MV 6; hp 47; THAC0 14 (12 with Str); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (mace); SA gate 4 cubic feet of earth; SZ S (3' 1" tall); ML Fanatic (17); AL CG; XP 2,000.

S 18, D 10, C 12, I 10, W 16, Ch 14.

Personality: kind, quiet

Special Equipment: lens grafts, shell armor

Spells (6/6/3/3/2): 1st; *bless, cure light wounds, elemental bonding, magical stone, pass without trace, sanctuary*; 2nd; *dust devil, draw upon holy might, enthrall, hold person (x2), silence 15'r 3rd; locate object, meld into stone, stone shape*; 4th; *cure serious wounds, divination, return to the earth*; 5th; *anti-plant shell, transmute rock to mud*.

Flar-onib is a wandering priest. He has no temple to support him, but instead travels about helping the downtrodden and poor in the name of elemental earth. He frequents the village of Pareth more than most, having a special affection for its people. Fen-adan, the priestess of air in the city, dislikes him and it is rumored that they were once lovers.

This holy man has long, unkempt brown hair and a scraggly appearance overall. He chooses to use a simple, life-shaped mace rather than more sophisticated weapons.

The PCs may encounter him as a benefactor or he may himself serve as the basis of an adventure, requiring the aid of the PCs to accomplish some good task he has undertaken.

Glerran

*"Glerran, jewel of the cliffs,
guard my love's restless sleep
until I return to lie by her side."*

—unknown rhul-thaun poet


The village of Glerran was one of the oldest established communities of rhul-thaun still in existence today. Glerran is even older than Pareth, but it is not as large a community. Its name, in the language of the ancient rhulisti, simply means "green." In the village's heyday, the name had meaning—it was literally surrounded by a vertical forest. The forest is long gone, but the community still thrives as a climber's haven.

Numerous pathways, trails, and branches of the climbers lead to Glerran. One leads to the spot where a vertical bridge once provided a walkway *around* the great waterfall issuing from Ghavin Lake above. The organic bridge has long since collapsed and no attempt has been made to repair it. Only the most talented of climbers can cross the barrier of the falls, and it is this fact that caused the windriders to petition a number of har-etuil to argue against rebuilding the bridge in the Conclave. The windriders do not want increased competition.

Glerran is a village of 2,500 inhabitants. Most of the population makes its livelihood as merchants and tenders, but Glerran has a greater than average number of climbers who are employed to maintain communication with Sol-fehn.

The village administration is actually performed by two people, Kal-odot (ham/Ps12/NE) and Fren-anan (haf/Ps15/CE). These twins, brother and sister, are psionics with mysterious and hidden talents. The twins can switch personalities, exchanging minds with each other so that each may occupy the other's body by an agreement of wills, across virtually any distance. They can also communicate telepathically at all times without barriers. These special abilities have allowed them to coordinate their





actions and rise to a position of power. It is actually only Kal-odot who holds the position of administrator. His sister is seen merely as a popular socialite who often opposes her brother's decisions. (Fren-anan does this to play the gadfly, infiltrating organizations of opposition, deluding enemies, and confusing competitors.) The twins are the only functional psionicists in rhul-thaun society. They are self-taught, and use their abilities to further their ends.

Places of Note

Bid-unos: This is the largest temple of elemental earth in rhul-thaun society. Its name means “earthdance,” and in an annual display of clerical power, the priests of the temple animate a great mass of rock outside the temple. The Festival of Great Earth creates a tremendous amount of thunderous clamor, which is annoying and frightening to many villagers, most of whom do not associate with the temple or its religion.

There are five priests who manage this temple. Concealed from virtually everyone outside the priesthood, the high priest of Bid-unos (ham/P12/CG) is in possession of a magic item. Untold generations ago, at the dawn of the Age of Magic, a group of outsiders came to the Jagged Cliffs. A lowly cleric whom the temple of elemental air had punished met them. He rejected the faith of air and began to worship the power of earth. And so they exiled him for heresy.

The tribe of outlanders was an evil band out to exploit unexplored territory. They captured the halfling cleric and were beginning to torture him with hot coals on his tongue, seeking information. A pyreen who witnessed these events attacked the group and killed them all, saving the life of the cleric.

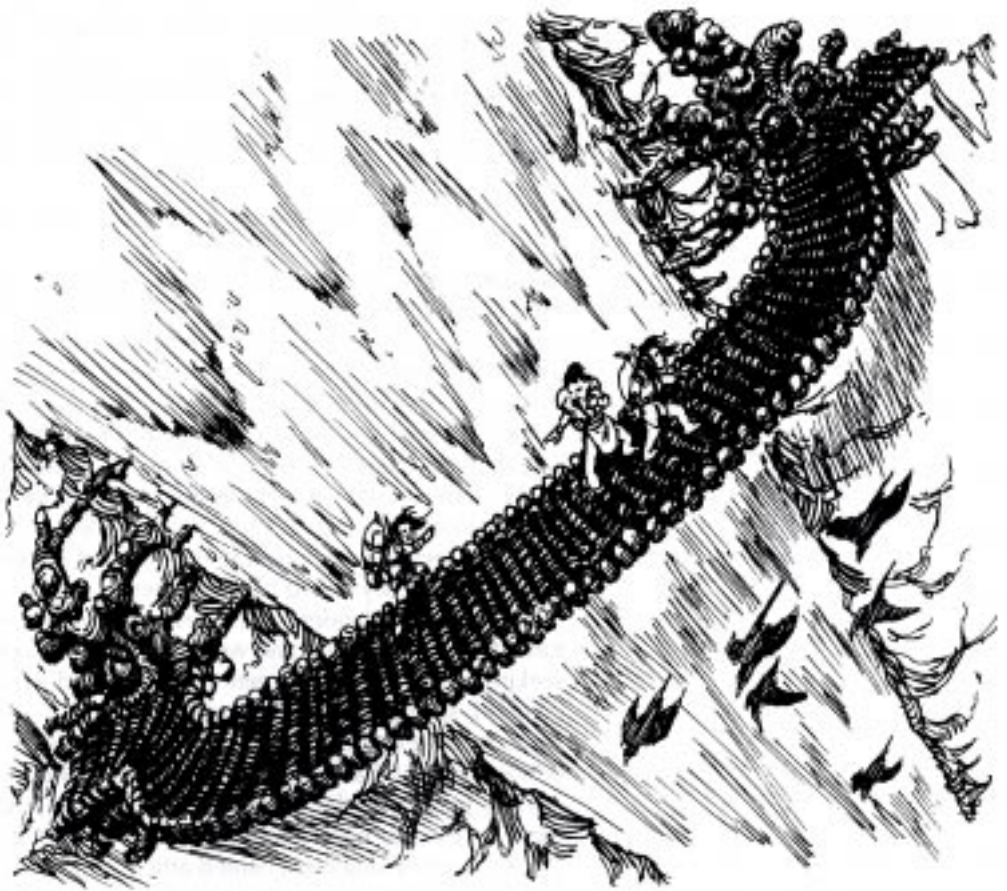
The halfling cleric was terrified, but when he regained his composure, he seized the odd equipment that had belonged to the strangers. There were certainly other magical devices found that day. (Artifices that were lost, inadvertently destroyed, or stolen—these may yet be encountered somewhere among the rhul-thaun.) The cleric's attention was drawn to a single enchanted article: a device called an *earth wand*. This wand had the power to cause stone to move and act as commanded by the wielder (like the 7th-level priest spell, *animate rock*). Believing he had been given a sign and a gift from the greater element of earth, the cleric made his way to Glerran, founded the temple, and began a tradition of animating stone every 10 years to display the power of his personal element. In the years since, the wand has always been in the possession of the high priest, and in recent times the traditional celebration of the wand's power has been changed to an annual festival. The clerics of the temple, however, are unaware that the wand only has two charges left.

Because of that ancient cleric's encounter with the pyreen, the temple preaches a doctrine of the reality of amazingly powerful beings of nature at the top of the cliffs, who guard the rhul-thaun and all earth worshipers from harm.

Sanctuary of Glerran: This large structure houses over 100 life-shapers who live and work here, growing and nurturing their creations. The life-shapers of Glerran are a free-willed and independent group which resents the sinister edicts that come from the leadership in Thamasku. Under their local superior, Dehm-acov (haf/F8/CG), the Glerran shapers are about to make their independence known to Thamasku. They expect the inevitability of actual conflict, but they also believe they can overcome any force Gil-gres sends to force the sanctuary into submission.

Teblish: This place is not actually as old as its name, which means “thorny” in the tongue of the rhulisti. This large, organic safehome was grown within the confines of its predecessor's decaying and rotting walls. For reasons lost to time, the previous structure on this spot was grown so that the walls sprouted long, dangerous thorns. The old, shriveled thorns are still visible on the outside walls of the building, along with the remnants of the former establishment. Inside, however, Teblish is a new and obviously thriving enterprise.

The safehome also doubles as a theater and drama, music, and tale-telling are all performed here. Meals and drinks are served to everyone in the theater. The second and third floors hold rooms for paying guests to spend the night. The entertainment is free, and draws a large crowd each night. Rooms cost only 3 ghav-egoths and meals run about 1 ge.



Important NPCs

Seth-opal (ham/T8): AC 5 (hide armor and Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 29; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (armspike); SA x3 backstab; SZ S (3' 1 inch tall); ML Steady (12); AL NE; XP 1,400.

S 12, D 15, C 10, I 17, W 14, Ch 11.

Personality: aloof, uncaring

Special Equipment: armspike, hide armor, deathspray, lockpick, stealthboots

Thief Abilities: PP 45, OL 30, F/RT 35, MS 90, HS 70, DN 45, CW 60, RL 0.

Seth-opal is a cruel and heartless killer who secretly operates out of the Teblish safe-home, posing as a merchant named Ren-odar. While he won't do anything to jeopardize his cover at the Teblish, he can be hired to work as an assassin or thief. Most of the time, however, he works on his own, for himself, killing wealthy merchants for their money and goods, breaking into homes, and committing other nefarious deeds. This evil character will always be an opponent of the player characters, who may encounter him as he attempts to rob one of them.

Completely average in appearance, Seth-opal is a master of disguise. He keeps his thick, black hair close-cropped to enable him to wear wigs and other disguises. His eyes are brown, and he rarely wears the same style of clothing or makeup paint twice unless he is posing as Ren-odar, in which case he wears long, bulky clothing to make himself appear heavier.

Sahn-abish (haf/F9): AC 4 (half shell and shield); MV 6; hp 64; THACO 12; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SZ S (2' 9" tall); ML Elite (13); AL N; XP 2,000.

S 16, D 14, C 17, I 10, W 9, Ch 12.

Personality: self-serving, inquisitive

Special Equipment: coolcloak, climbing boots, spineshield



Sahn-abish is virtually unique in rhul-thaun society—she is a rogue life-shaper. She left the sanctuary of Thamasku nine years ago, and has been on the run from the shapers and their assassins ever since. She was (and is) a talented crafter, but she disapproved of the shapers' methods and plans. She came to Glerran because she heard that the sanctuary in this village was discontented with the way of things coming from Thamasku. She has made secret contacts with Dem-acov, voicing her support for a schism within the shapers. At this point, however, she chooses to keep her presence concealed.

Sahn-abish has long red hair that she keeps tucked up inside a leather cap when she is traveling incognito. Her clothing too is simple, in order to avoid attracting attention.

Sahr-tosh

"You can go to Sahr-tosh, if the wind will take you there."


—a line from the play Stormriders

Known as the city of storms, bitter winds and inclement weather often besiege this village. The reason for the savagery of the storms here is simply that this is the most exposed ledge settlement of the rhul-thaun. Nevertheless, storms are more frequent in this part of the cliffs, and Sahr-tosh was built in an unfortunate location. The population remains steadfast despite the danger, however, and approximately 2,000 halflings make their homes in Sahr-tosh.

Because of an odd effect of Rajaat's Curse from the swamp below, the mist near Sahr-tosh often takes on a rainbow cast. Colors cascade, pulsing and scintillating for hours at a time, day or night, in patternless, random intervals.

Rel-anir (haf/F10/LE) is the city's administrator *and* chief life-shaper. In Sahr-tosh more than anywhere else, the shapers are in complete control. With Rel-anir as their superior, they wield absolute economic and political power.

Sahr-tosh is a rough and rugged community, with few places of luxury or comfort. Most of the people are common folk, working hard to make a life for themselves on this



ledge. Many of the inhabitants are tenders, caring for the creations of the many life-shapers who work in this village.

Pterrans dwell dangerously close to Sahr-tosh, and villagers require protection as do windriders, climbers, and travelers. Therefore, many of its citizens follow the warrior trade. Mercenaries are easy to find here, as well as other, less savory freelancers—many of them seeking less than reputable employment.

The pterrans have never assaulted the village itself, and most likely will not. They occasionally attempt to isolate climbers and attack them or swoop down on windriders, striking from the backs of their pterrax mounts. In similar fashion, patrols of climbing and windriding rhul-thaun warriors—vher-elus under the command of the *life-shapers*—hunt pterrax that stray near the village.

The life-shapers, as a group, harbor a particular hatred for other intelligent races. While this is an inherent contradiction of the philosophy that “all life is sacred,” raising this question in Sahr-tosh is unwise. Expressing anti-shaper sentiments is not a crime, as such, but those who do are usually punished nonetheless.

Places of Note

Sanctuary of Sahr-tosh: This sanctuary is disproportionately large for the community in which it finds itself. Because they are in total political control of the village, the Sahr-tosh shapers are rarely taken to task for the excesses of their actions.

Furthermore, since they are practically immune from prosecution, they use their sanctuary to carry out extremely dangerous experiments and to hide their failures and deepest secrets. It is here, too, that they keep their prohibited servants, the *ghav-nosh*, the takers of life. The *ghav-nosh* are the shapers’ personal assassins. They use unique, and particularly deadly shaped weapons to eliminate their masters’ enemies. They are, ironically, killers in the employ of the masters of life.

Stormtower: This is the highest tower in the village, and functions as a prison of sorts. Long ago, 14 different, powerfully shaped creations of the rhulisti were sealed into cocoon-like pods. No one remembers how they can be safely opened, nor exactly what lies within the pods. Semi-transparent nodules on the pods reveal cloudy, uncertain shapes, and certainly some of them are intelligent creatures. Rather than destroy them, the life-shapers have chosen to keep them here, locked away and well guarded, until such time as someone can determine what they are and what they can do. All that the people of the village know about Stormtower is that something dangerous and forbidden is kept under guard in the top of the tower.

Important NPCs

Typical ghav-nosh assassin (ham & haf/T5): AC 10 (none); MV 6; hp 20; THAC0 18. #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quickstrike); SA x3 backstab; SZ S (3’ tall); ML Champion (15); Int Average (8-10); AL NE; XP 420.

Special Equipment: grasping hook and 100 feet of rope, poison nodule, quickstrike.

Thief Abilities: PP 40, OL 45, F/RT 20, MS 70, HS 70, DN 50, CW 70, RL 0.

The assassins are very loyal, and have few qualms about killing or committing any loathsome actions their masters call upon them to perform. Ghav-nosh usually wear black cloaks and red face masks. Some ghav-nosh are warriors wearing hidden sheath armor.

Wem-osun (ham/F11): AC 0 (sheath, shield, and Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 73; THAC0 10; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6 (shockstick); SA shockstick inflicts additional 1d6 electrical damage every 6 rounds; SZ S (2’ 10”); ML Fearless (20); AL CG; XP 4,000. S 14, D 17, C 16, I 17, W 16, Ch 15.

Personality: noble, self-sacrificing

Special Equipment: directional sensor, sheath armor, shockstick

Psionic Summary: Dis 2/Sci 1/Dev 4; PSPs 54; Att EW, PB; Def MB

Player’s Option: #AT 1; MTHAC0 14; MAC 7

Telepathy: Sciences—psionic blast; Devotions—ego whip, mind blank

Psychometabolism: Devotions—chameleon power, heightened senses

Wem-osun is the life-shaper's main enemy in Sahr-tosh. He leads a small underground movement to strike at them and the ghav-nosh. He is an ally of the shapers in Glerran, who secretly send him supplies and assistance when they can. He makes full use of his psionic abilities to aid him in his fight.

A handsome rebel, despite the fact that he is getting on in years (even for a halfling), he is a robust man and a formidable foe. Though he won't tell, some say that he is over 100 years old. His medium-length black hair is greying.

Player characters may encounter Wem-osun in Sahr-tosh if they are friends of the Glerran shapers. They might also meet him as he attempts to convert them to his cause. He will speak to them for a few minutes, telling them that the shapers are actually an insidious organization, seeking to control the lives and livelihoods of citizens, and then disappear into the alleyways before the vher-elus show up to apprehend him.

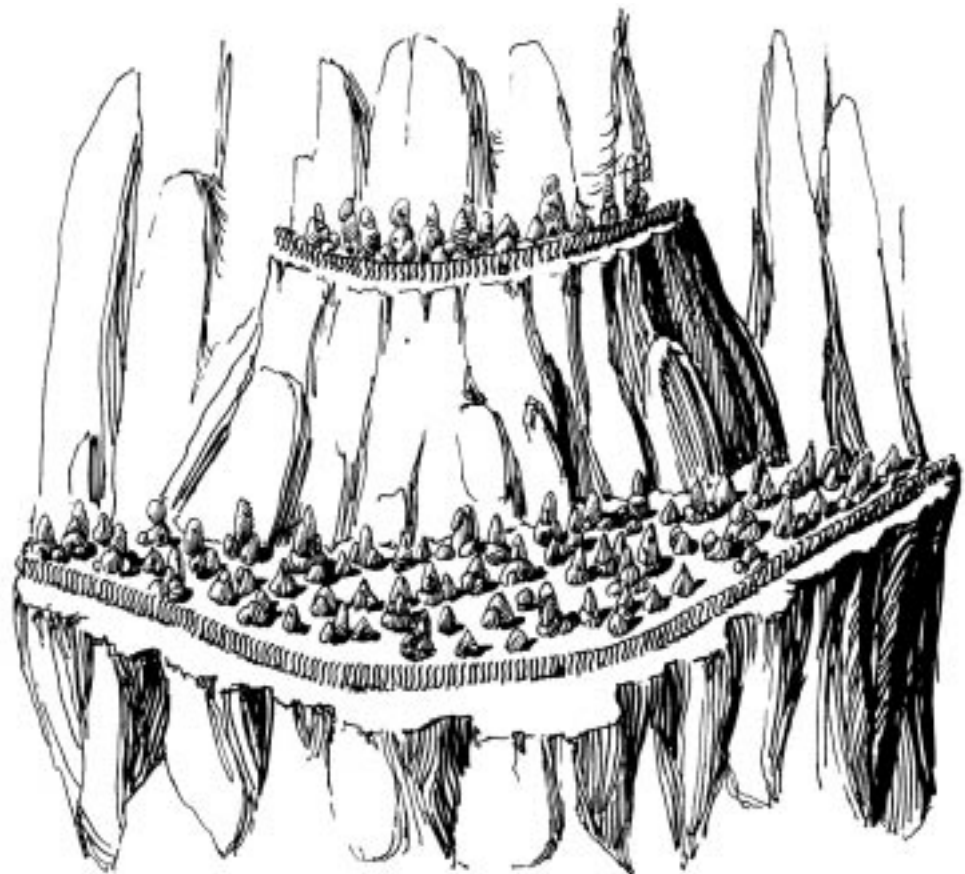
Yihn-tol


"These aren't just stories for your amusement, you know—there is danger down there."

—Sahl-oren, a halfling swamp explorer

The village of Yihn-tol gained the name *Climber's Home* in times past when it was the center for the climbing profession. While that role has diminished, Yihn-tol is still a successful village of 1,800 inhabitants. It is also situated further down the cliff side than any other halfling settlement on the Jagged Cliffs. This presents two unusual challenges for the community.

The first problem is Rajaat's Curse. Being the village closest to the swamp means that terrifying effects emanating from it present a greater risk to those who live here. The mysterious incidents caused by the swamp's energies sometimes result in disaster. Fire, sickness, blight, and mysterious disappearances are all traced to Rajaat's Curse. The curse alters people, warping the bodies and even the minds of the inhabitants, particularly the newborn.





The second trial is yet another threat from the swamp, this time from the monsters down below that seek a purchase a little higher on the cliffs. All manner of horrors breed within the swamp and some of them leave to ascend the bluffs. Most are clumsy climbers, ill-used to the bright and open ridges, and the city's defenders easily ward them off.

Yet far worse are the reggelids, who live at the base of the cliffs and wield strange powers. Thankfully, they rarely seek to come as high as Yihn-tol. Finally, and worst of all, are the rare but dangerous assaults of the thri-kreen. When the mantis warriors seek to find a way up the cliffs, they often choose to attack Yihn-tol first.

Because of these threats, Yihn-tol is the only truly fortified halfling community. Walls of stone and other defenses protect the village. A large, well-armed garrison of vher-elus stands vigilant and ready to repel any attack. Unique among the vher-elus, however, their attention is directed outside the settlement rather than within it.

There is no life-shaper sanctuary in Yihn-tol. The shapers refuse to risk either themselves or their growth chambers to the tender mercies of Rajaat's Curse and swamp-born monsters. All of the shaped constructs required by the community must be shipped in from other villages. Life-shapers are flown in when a new building is to be created, and leave immediately upon completion. Because of this, The people of Yihn-tol have taken steps to reduce their needs for organic tools, products, and even structures. (The DM should add 50% to the prices of all life-shaped goods.)

Places of Note

Brewefam: Housing producers of wonderful leather goods, this place is named for its odd appearance. Apparently, a flaw during its growth caused the building to "sweat." The walls of Bren-efam draw moisture from the air and the earth and secrete it out of the tiny pores in its surface. The seepage is a thick, syrupy ooze that is strangely sweet to the taste and quite harmless.

Ter-ogon's: This safehome caters to adventurers. Daring halflings occasionally decide to brave the dangers of the swamp or the kreen-infested savanna to learn what secrets and treasures they hold. When they do, they come to Yihn-tol first, and always end up at Ter-ogon's.

Ter-ogon's is also a hideout for Chahn terrorists and other, even more disreputable, types. The comforts it offers are few, but pickings in Yihn-tol are slim. A night's stay costs 2 ghav-egoths, and a meal costs 1 ge.

Important NPCs

Pev-ovas (ham/F10/T10): AC 3 (hide armor and Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 53; THAC0 11; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8 (armblade); SA x4 backstab; SZ S (3' tall); ML Elite (14); AL CE; XP 3,000.

S 17, D 17, C 14, I 12, W 9, Ch 8.

Personality: brutish, cold

Special Equipment: armblade, chameleon cloak, 100' clingrope, hide armor, lightvisor graft.


Thief Abilities: PP 70, OL 65, F/RT 45, MS 70, HS 65, DN 75, CW 65, RL 0.

Pev-ovas is chief of the Chahn in Yihn-tol. He is a homicidal, megalomaniacal lunatic. He cares little for the feelings of others or for the cause he "supports." He uses the Chahn as a vehicle for personal power and as an outlet for his destructive aggression. He has a number of subordinates, some of whom delude themselves into thinking that Pev-ovas is fighting for the cause of right. The rest are as dangerously evil as he.

Ter-omak

*And Ter-omak said, "Back coarse beast,
back to your foul and blackened grotto.
This village, my people, are ever lost to you,
or you will face my angry wrath anew!"*

—Stanza 758 of Ter-omak, a rhul-thaun epic



The Ter-omak was named for a great warrior, whose name meant day hunter. When an earthquake weakened the ledges where two halfling villages were located, threatening to destroy them both, Ter-omak led the people to a site he had found while hunting—a place for a new village. He coordinated the mass exodus while the har-etuils of the concerned clans were still debating what should be done. So great was the gratitude of the people that they named the new consolidated community after him. His popularity convinced the har-etuil to appoint him the community's administrator, a position the hunter was ill-prepared for, but one he held until his death decades later.

Today Ter-omak is a community of 1,500 residents. Nicely placed at the center of the settled portion of the Jagged Cliffs, this village is a hub of climber and windrider traffic. Several safehomes indulge the needs of travelers.

The current administrator of Ter-omak is Vit-obaer (ham/F5/LG), a man with his hands full of problems. There are essentially only two clans in Ter-omak (each formerly belonged to one of the two tiny villages that were united by Ter-omak), the Flaht and the Bein. The clans are currently in a state of feud, and occasionally the fuss turns violent. The reasons for the conflict are diverse and number in the hundreds, including property rights, lovers' quarrels, lies, counter lies, false dealings, and a myriad of personal affronts.

The two factions keep the lawkeepers constantly employed, dealing with everything from small acts of vandalism and terrorism to the violence that sometime erupts throughout the village.

Places of Note

Bein Clanhouse: Unlike other clanhouses of the rhul-thaun (many of which are no longer in use), the Bein Clanhouse is a virtual fortress. The Bein believe that the only way to eliminate their enemies is through open warfare, to force the Flaht to submit. Therefore, war in the streets is inevitable. In order to prepare themselves, they are stockpiling weapons of all sorts, food, and other supplies. Though the clan is obviously far too large to ever be able to bring everyone inside and protect them, it is fortified against attack and can keep up to 100 clansmen safe and supplied for a limited time. Their self-appointed military leader, Fin-ahoon (haf/F9/N), constantly upgrades their defenses and military plans.

Flaht Clanhouse: The Flaht clanhouse is as fortified and well-stocked as that of the Bein. Reth-olus (ham/F8/T8/LN) is a har-etuil for the Flaht clan who also serves as its commander in time of conflict.

The safehomes: Six establishments purvey food, drink, and lodging to the large amount traffic that passes through the village. Unfortunately, casualties of the feud between the clans are not just local clan members. Simply staying the night at a safehome run by one clan automatically makes one an enemy of the other. Each controls three safehomes, and prices are low in all of them. A night's stay is 2 ghav-egoths, and a meal is only 1 ge.

Important NPCs

Tkaun-osir (ham/FG): AC 1 (shell armor and shield); MV 6; hp 47; THAC0 15 (13 with Strength bonus); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (hurling titan); SZ S (2' 8"); ML steady (12); AL NG; XP 975.

S 18, D 12, C 15, I 10, W 6, Ch 10.

Personality: Well intentioned, unintentionally foolish.

Special Equipment: glowing graft, sleep spore pod, shell armor, organic shield, hurling titan.

Thaun-osir is also known as the Peacemaker. He is doing whatever he can to stop the conflict between the two feuding clans. He has a large heart, but very little idea what he is doing. When news of a battle or potential confrontation between the clans reaches him, he races off to try to stop it. Usually, his unwise and ineffective endeavors only exacerbate the situation.

Though short, even for a halfling, Thaun-osir's strength and battle prowess is great—unfortunately, he loathes violence. His long brown hair is often falling into his face, getting in his eyes.

Vir-rath

*"Climbing to Vir-rath,
where the brew is stout
and the food is warm
all the day long."*

—Rhul-thaun drinking song

This village is named for the odd shape of the ledge on which it is built. In fact, it really isn't built upon a ledge at all, but rather at the top of a pinnacle of rock that thrusts upward from a cliff slope. The pinnacle top consists of three separate levels and the village is built on these.

One of the greatest demands on the villagers of Vir-rath face is the inaccessibility of water. Windriders and climbers are needed to haul water up from nearby pools and waterfalls. Thousands of years ago, life-shaped engines pumped water up to the top of the peak in huge, organic pipes. Now, however, the pool has long since dried-up and the engines have fallen into disrepair. No living shaper remembers how to repair them and new ones are just too expensive.

The population of this village is around 1,300. Most of the people are employed as tenders, though there are many fine craftsmen here as well, working in stone, leather, cloth, and other materials. Finally, Vir-rath is known for its painters and sculptors.

Nowhere else in rhul-thaun society are class distinctions as apparent as in Vir-rath. The three levels of the village are inhabited by the poor, the middle class, and the wealthy in ascending order.

Places of Note

The Crook of Her Arm: This safehome is the favored establishment of painters because of its wide, open views of the surrounding community. Prices are inexpensive—a night's stay costs 1 ghav-egoth, and a meal is usually less than 1 ge.

Pinnacle: This is another safehome, but it is located at the top level of the village and is the highest point of the settlement. It is an expensive place to stay and eat, although the prices seem quite arbitrary, based on the whim of the owner. Res-ohin (ham/F12/T12/CN), is a fat halfling whom most of his patrons believe is insane. A room for one night here can range from 2 to 20 ghav-egoths, and a meal can cost from 1 to 10 ge.

Important NPCs

Zohr-otosh the Water Keeper (ham/P9 [water]): AC 4 (half shell armor and Dex bonus); MV 6; hp 35; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (lifeleech); SA *Gate* 3 cubic feet of water, lifeleech drains 1d12 hp when first used against a particular foe; SZ S (3' 1"); ML Average (10); AL N, XP 1,000.

S 10, D 15, C 9, I 12, W 16, Ch 17.

Personality: cautious, meticulous

Special Equipment: clingbag, grappler, half shell armor, lifeleech

Spells (6/6/3/2/1): 1st— *command, create water, cure light wounds, detect poison, protection from evil, purify food and drink*; 2nd— *clear water, goodberry, hold person, know alignment; silence, withdraw*; 3rd— *create food and water, water breathing, water walk*; 4th— *lower water, neutralize poison*; 5th— *cure critical wounds*.

The city administrator appointed Zohr-otosh water master. His duties are to watch over water supplies and make sure the city's reserves are maintained and safe. This makes him a powerful individual, since the price of water is so high in this village. The cleric takes his job very seriously, and has hired a number of trustworthy guards to help him watch over the city's reservoir.

In appearance, Zohr-otosh is unremarkable. His brown hair matches his brown eyes that match the brown clothing he wears under shell armor. He keeps his armor and weapons ready at all times—just to be safe.



Sunnil

*"And you'll find yourself on Sunnil's shelf,
and then where will you be?"*

—Popular dance-hall song

As one might gather from the construction of its name, Sunnil's roots are ancient. The city has declined since its founding, and now finds itself one of the least of the ledge communities. Sunnil is a village of 1,000 residents, known for its breweries.

Sunnil's administrator, Mak-amoar (haf/F5/N), is extremely ill—a victim of the debilitating effects of Rajaan's Curse. The har-etuil are loath to have to find a replacement for this popular official, but there may be little choice. She is bedridden and barely able to keep up her duties even through assistants.

Places of Note

Clon-sin Bridge: This stone bridge connects the two ledges on which Sunnil is built. It is the longest bridge ever erected by the rhu-thaun that is still in existence, stretching nearly 500 yards. The bridge is wide enough for 20 halflings to walk abreast. Organic buildings grow along the sides of the bridge to utilize precious space. Most of these buildings house lower-class homes.

Hast-ulon Temple: This temple of elemental water is maintained by two clerics, Thav-adern (haf/P11/NG) and Lus-okuhv (ham/P10/LG), a married couple who have a great deal of political influence in this small village. They are consulted by the local har-etuil on matters of importance, and even those who pay no heed to the faith of water respect these two.

Important NPCs

Ther-adar (haf/F9): AC 6 (Dex bonus); MV 6; hp 51; THAC0 12; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d10 (flashlance); SZ S (2' 11"); ML Elite (14); AL N; XP 1,000.

S 14, D 18, C 10, I 11, W 16, Ch 10.

Personality: preoccupied, distant.

Special Equipment: flashlance, shield swarm, spinethrower, yihn-eflan.

This windrider makes her home in Sunnil. She is the daughter of the current administrator, but she has no desire to take her place. Her home is in the skies, and no one can make her believe otherwise. Nevertheless, she feels guilty about letting her mother down.

Ther-adar is rugged and tough. Her black hair is cut very short, and she is rarely seen in anything but sturdy work clothes.

Reg-tol

*"And High Lord Rhan did take shelter in Lordshome, meditating on his great journey.
Only the contemplative solitude of the cliffs could aid him now."*

—fragment of an ancient text

The small village of Reg-tol, known as Lordshome, was once a community of the wealthy—a retreat where the rich and powerful could escape the rigors of life in Thamasku. Before that, it was the traditional dwelling place of the rhu-thaun high lord—a position not held for thousands of years. Since its founding, however, it has grown into a lively but respectable village. Eight hundred people live in Reg-tol, making it the smallest inhabited community of the cliffs, but it is still larger than the tiny camps that dot the cliff face.

Important NPCs

Dhar-ahan (haf/F4/T4): AC 8 (climber's shield and Dex bonus); MV 6; hp 24; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (clawgrafts); SA x2 backstab; SZ S (3'); ML steady (12); AL NE; XP 420.

S 12, D 15, C 13, I 16, W 12, Ch 11.

Personality: devious, selfish

Special Equipment: clawgrafts (5), climber's shield, poison nodule, stealthboots.

Thief Abilities: PP 75, OL 55, F/RT 10, MS 50, HS 65, DN 20, CW 70, RL 0.

Dhar-ahan is a professional pickpocket, cutpurse, and burglar. If that were all, she would be just one of the many who tread on the dark side, and nothing more would need to be said. Dhar-ahan is different, however, for not long ago she uncovered a thri-kreen plot to use psionics to infiltrate and destroy the rhuI-thaun. Worse, she agreed to help them in exchange for her life.

Dhar-ahan has medium-length black hair, and dark, bloodshot eyes. She wears wildly flamboyant body paint, particularly on her face.

Bav-rem

*"The songs of Bav-rem still fill the heart
of my heart with rising joy."*

—Anonymous poem

Bav-rem is now an empty ruin of abandoned basement pits and discarded articles. Once this was a small but thriving community in the north, near the falls of the same name. (The village was named for the waterfall, whose name means "death drop.") Just a few months ago, a group of climbers carrying messages and provisions to Bav-rem found—nothing. All of the inhabitants and even the village's buildings, had vanished.

Subsequent expeditions determined that something large and amorphous strayed



through the village. Disturbingly, according to the tracks it left, it seemed to grow larger as it slithered through the community. Everything organic—halflings, buildings, life-shaped creations, and even the wild plants growing nearby—were no more. One of the explorers noticed that there were no insects in the area. Only inorganic materials and objects remained.


The Truth

The cause of the disappearance of Bav-rem has not yet been discovered, but it has alarmed a great many people. Many felt that other villages would be attacked in a similar way, but as of yet, nothing has happened. Most believe that a horror from the swamp destroyed the village. Others fear that the kreen were again on the move and this time made it all the way up to Bav-rem.

The actual origin of the calamity was a furtive life-shaping experiment gone awry. Three life-shapers in the local sanctuary had discovered an ancient formula for producing a new life-shaped construct. Although it contained principles they did not understand, they chose to use the formula anyway, thinking that if they were successful, their fame would be assured. As it was, the fateful consequences of their actions were so pervasive and complete that they did not even achieve infamy.

The accidental formulation created a semi-sentient creature with the ability to absorb other organic substances into its body, convert the material, and add the substance to its own mass. It began first as a tiny blob of protoplasm, then it started to grow at an alarming rate. It consumed the life-shaped creations in the laboratory where it was born. Next it absorbed its creators and the other life-shapers in the sanctuary, consuming their constructs as well. Spreading out from the shapers' sanctuary, it groped its way through the village, drawing every living thing into its ever expanding bulk. Nothing escaped. The creature then wandered to a nearby cave to rest. The giant protoplasmic creature has lost much of its mass, and eventually it must feed again. To make matters worse, the beast may go into mitosis and produce a duplicate of itself.





Adventurers may go to Bav-rem out of simple curiosity, or as investigators searching for clues to the causes of the destruction after the disappearance of an entire vertical forest near their own community. The creature, again on the move, could have devoured the forest and is hibernating again, with the PC's village being its next target. Player characters who explore the ruins of Bav-rem can probably determine that the creature's swath of destruction originated at a point where once stood a life-shaper sanctuary. Perhaps that knowledge could give them a clue about how to stop or destroy it.

Other Races of the Jagged Cliffs

"The thing raised a long, shriveled arm and waved about like a creature maddened by the heat or the wind. It flexed too many extravagantly long fingers as it murmured words that seemed meaningless, but disturbing, gibberish. It finished its odd finger dance and solo vocalizations with a smile that I will take to my grave. As it did so, a smoky flash of yellowish light appeared in its hand, creating tiny daggers of piercing, numbingly orange energy. The missiles flew from its fingers and struck down Han-amak and wounded my brother, Gon-obal. I knew that I could take no more of this bizarre scene, and I fled up the cliff side again, lest I too lose my life to unknowable powers."

—Account from the Journal of Taen-onos, the first halfling to encounter a reggelid

Sharing the Jagged Cliffs are creatures too numerous to ever completely catalog. The halflings are not even the region's only intelligent inhabitants (only the most sophisticated, and probably the most prevalent). Presented here are the other races with whom the rhul-thaun contend and struggle.

Bvanen

When the rhul-thaun first encountered the bvanen, they thought that these amphibians were simply monsters. Long ago they waged great battles against them, for the rhul-thaun believed the carnivorous bvanen were a threat to the villages near the cliff bottoms where the amphibians apparently lived. It was not until two halflings escaped from the bvanen cave-city, after capture by one of their hunting parties, that the truth was discovered. The escapees reported a surprising level of sophistication, intelligence, and benevolence.

The city, they reported, was found in a subterranean cavern accessed by a narrow entrance well hidden in a crevice near the base of the cliffs. An entrance evidently lay below and 30 miles north of the village of Vir-rath. Half submerged in an underground lake, the city consists of individual nest-homes fashioned of mud, sticks, and other plants, coated overall with a shell of hardened ooze secreted by the bvanen.


The amphibians showed a great deal of organization within their community. Every member had a position in a hierarchy—a sort of pecking order. The position of each was symbolized by scars carved into the bvanens' flesh, as were important nonverbal messages of status, current duty, and personal designs.

The individuals in the city were divided into two groups—warrior/hunters and caretakers. The warrior/hunters protected the city and obtained food. The caretakers looked after the young and the needs of the community and domesticated beasts. The Bvanen keep an amphibious form of inix, some large fish, and a variety of other relatively harmless animals. These are used as pets, food, and in the case of the inix, transport.

The halfling prisoners were well-treated. The bvanen, once they had learned that their captives were also intelligent creatures, refused to eat them, but apparently held them as curiosities. Attempts at communication were unsuccessful until a bvanen with the psionic mindlink power came to them. He probed their minds, presumably learning a great deal about rhul-thaun culture.

Overall, the halflings found their captors to be gentle and kind to them and their animals. They used almost no tools or weapons, relying solely on their own psionic abilities and natural strength. Nevertheless, they were a successful and thriving race, content to keep to themselves.

This, of course, happened hundreds of years ago. Since then, many halflings have



wondered why the two prisoners were allowed to escape with their knowledge. Perhaps the bvanen hoped this would end the hostilities between the races. Certainly the amphibians have not initiated any conflict with the halflings. The rhul-thaun, in turn, have simply avoided the bvanen whenever possible. The Conclave of Har-etuil has never made an official ruling regarding the bvanen, or how they should be treated when encountered. Many cynics claimed that if the bvanen produced anything that could be sold or traded, the har-etuil, in a fit of mercantile zeal, would have successfully communicated and established relations with them long ago.

For more information about the bvanen, see the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix at the back of this book.

Reggelids

The reggelids are few, a fortunate thing for the halflings. These slender humanoids don't much like the rhul-thaun, and particularly despise the art of life-shaping. For reasons still unknown to even the life-shapers, organic creations reject all contact with reggelids, an instinctive abhorrence on a fundamental, biological level. Some life-shaped creations even transform into caustic substances at the mere touch of reggelids.

The reggelids are a magical race, possessing powers misunderstood and terrifying to the rhul-thaun. Among the greatest goals of this race is to find all lore and artifacts left over by Rajaat. To accomplish this, the reggelids continually scour the swamp in small parties of three to ten. Fearing the dangers of that dread region, however, they make their homes on the safer ledges near the bottom of the Jagged Cliffs.

These hateful, evil brutes attack rhul-thaun on sight, particularly if they possess life-shaped goods. They attempt to use spells to destroy or neutralize the organic equipment, favoring *polymorph other*, *cloudkill*, and a special spell they developed to counter them, called *organic disruption*.

The halflings count the reggelids among their greatest enemies, including the thri-kreen. Those rhul-thaun explorers who venture down the cliffs and into the swamp must be guard at all times for these magical enemies. Fearing their powers, the halflings kill reggelids on sight, without mercy. Calling them "ven-pahr" (hated destroyers), they hold the maxim that the "only good reggelid is one whose corpse is reduced to ash." Many falsely believe that the gaunt reggelids are undead. If so, there is no life in them, and therefore no transgression in killing them.

The halflings have found that occasionally a life-shaped creature (never a natural organism) is altered by the touch of a reggelid. The chemical composition of the organic tool then becomes caustic and can inflict 1d6 points of damage per round on the offending reggelid. Unfortunately, this also destroys the construct. This seems to happen about 25 percent of the time. Even the briefest contact (including a reggelid being struck by an organic weapon in combat) may cause this change. Purposely trying to injure reggelids by touching life-shaped tools to their flesh is acceptable only as a last resort, in a life-or-death situation. No rhul-thaun willingly destroys an organic tool or weapon in such a horrible manner without a powerful, overriding reason.


For more information about reggelids, see the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix at the back of this book.

Pterrans

Several tribes of reptilian pterrans roost in heights of the cliffs, in the northern reaches of the region. Although neither evil nor particularly expansionist, these territorial creatures have endured many misunderstandings with the halflings that have resulted in bloodshed. Their alien outlook and suspicious nature make true peace and understanding between the races virtually impossible.

Like their cousins in the Hinterland, these pterrans use pterrax as mounts as they hunt along the cliff face. This often brings confrontations with windriding rhul-thaun hunters. Aerial battles are common, although both sides usually avoid them whenever possible, since they are difficult to fight and harder to survive. A wounded flying mount may take itself and its rider to their deaths, either dashing into the cliff face or plummeting all the way to the swampy bottom.

Unlike the reggelids or the bvanen, some pterrans have learned to use the life-shaped



creations of the halflings. They do not have the knowledge, the skills, or the facilities to maintain and tend the creatures in most cases. Nevertheless, they enjoy stealing them and using them until they die. This, more than anything else, infuriates the rhul-thaun, for the pterrans have no respect for life-shaped creations or even for life in general. Many halflings—even some har-etuil—believe that steps should be taken to drive off the pterrans or to eradicate them altogether. Such a war would be bloody, with great losses of life on both sides. Those halflings who believe most strongly in the sanctity of life are obviously set against any attempts at genocide.

The pterrans are nomadic, but keep to the upper regions of the cliffs and avoid settling close to halfling villages.

Pyreen

The pyreen are powerful supporters and benefactors of the rhul-thaun. They know the actual history of the halflings, and see them as the last vestige of ancient times. For this reason, they do whatever they can to protect and preserve the halflings' culture, preventing potentially dangerous travelers from making contact with the rhul-thaun.

The pyreen are found in the lands directly above the cliffs. In their devotion, keeping the rhul-thaun free of outside influence, they themselves avoid direct contact with the halflings. A few select individuals have encountered the pyreen, and those who do usually believe they have had an encounter with singular, semi-spiritual entities rather than members of a race nearly as ancient as their own.

The pyreen observe. These self-appointed protectors carefully watch explorers and adventurers from beyond the Jagged Cliffs heading for an encounter with the rhul-thaun. They prevent any confrontation that may be dangerous for the halflings if possible, either by simple misdirection or with more violent, more direct measures.

Likewise, if a number of outsiders are seen stealing life-shaped products, the pyreen will intervene with whatever force is necessary. They do what they can to keep the halflings and their technological art isolated and protected.

Even rhul-thaun explorers who leave their homes in the cliffs to see what lies beyond may be stopped by the pyreen. The halflings' benefactors are gentler, more kind to them than they would be to outsiders, but the pyreens' dedication is absolute. Obviously, however, it is a simple matter for travelers to pass through the region without attracting the attention of the pyreen. The pyreen are powerful, but few.

Thri-Kreen

The most ancient enemies of the rhul-thaun are the mantis warriors. The thri-kreen empire is powerful and expansionistic, but for many millennia the Jagged Cliffs and the swamp that lies at their feet have stymied its advance. The halflings have long viewed the thri-kreen as a threat to the entire world, which they believe is still populated almost solely by halflings. The kreen—as the halflings call them—are seen as evil, insidious monsters with no relation whatever to the halflings or life and its sanctity. Somehow, the halfling mind-set holds that the thri-kreen existed apart from the rhulisti and the nature that they mastered.

Communication between the rhul-thaun and the kreen has never been successfully achieved. Contact has always been limited to the brief, violent encounters that occur when the mantis warriors attempt to find yet another method to navigate the swamp and scale the cliffs. Prisoners are never taken by either side (the thri-kreen, in fact, eat theirs). The rhul-thaun know that the attacks intensify 1 year in every 25. While the reasons for this cycle are not understood, they also know that every time these major offensives come, the main kreen force is somehow different both in its appearance and its abilities.

For example, mantis warriors seem to have new physical adaptations that allow them to scale the cliffs more swiftly, acclimate to the dampness of the swamp, or counter the life-shaped weapons of the halflings. The rhul-thaun believe that this is because there are many species of thri-kreen, but the real reason is that the mantis warriors have skills and techniques that allow them to modify their bodies and adapt to new situations. This is very similar to halfling life-shaping, but rather than creating new organisms as tools, they recreate themselves.

All the knowledge of the thri-kreen that the rhul-thaun possess comes from one of two



sources. The first are the reports of brave adventurers and scouts who ventured into the savanna the thri-kreen call home. These forays did not delve too deeply into their deadly territory, for hunting parties of kreen are quick to bring down halfling explorers on the open plains. Many spying parties, in fact, never returned. No death is more distasteful to the rhul-thaun than to end up in the mandibles of hungry kreen. The adventurers who do return tell of current activities and movements of large numbers of mantis warriors, as well as a glimmer of kreen society, culture, or lore. For example, spies have learned that beyond the empire of the kreen lies a body of water that may even be larger than the swamp. They also know that kreen come in many types and colors, rather than just the singular form with which those in the Tyr Region are familiar.

The second source of information about the kreen is, in reality, speculation and outright fiction. Stories of imperial kreen as told by family elders and the professional storytellers of the safehomes are popular forms of entertainment. Myths commonly spread about the kreen include tales that the farther one travels into the savanna, the larger the mantis warriors become (some “as tall as 20 or 30 rhul-thaun standing on each others heads!”), rumors that kreen can hypnotize prey by staring and moving rhythmically, and the singular legend that they create towering cities built from the crushed bones of their foes.

The Lost Clans

Halfling fables tell of a number of clans to the far, far north who long ago lost contact with the rest of society. Different versions of these tales each cite a distinct reason for the isolation. Some claim that the lost halflings left to find a better land in which to make their homes. Others contend that they were outcasts and nonconformists who disliked the way rhul-thaun society worked. Still others tell tales of a great disaster, an earthquake, plague, or invasion that drove the clans away. Even the pterrans, during a period of rare communication, have alluded to other halfling communities on the cliffs beyond those known to the rhul-thaun.

In any event, the surmised existence of the lost clans has never been confirmed. Sometimes climbers and windriders claim to have seen the villages of the lost clans—or even claim membership in the clans of lost names. No real evidence exists to prove their reality. If halfling clans do lie to the north, several unanswered questions are still to be raised. How has their society deviated from the rhul-thaun during the thousands of years of separation? What life-shaping skills might they have retained that are lost to the rhul-thaun? What else lies to the mysterious north?



Wanderer's Journal

The fundamental word of the Jagged Cliffs is, of course, life. The very forces and energies of life obey the halflings' commands, forming tools, weapons, buildings, and guardians. It is not magic, nor is it any ability within their minds that allows them shape life so completely. What is this strange lore? I believe that they practice an esoteric art of some sort, but its secrets lie beyond me. The masters of this craft are called life-shapers and they control not only the facets and shapes of living things, but they hold most of the political power in halfling society.

Do not let the irony of the shapers be lost upon you. The most revered of all rhul-thaun precepts is the sanctity of life. The shapers work with life as potters work with clay. Yet these masters of life are the dark shadows behind the halflings' entire culture. They employ assassins to eliminate their enemies and seek nothing short of complete domination of the race. Their lust for power is not commonly known, but those halflings whom I have encountered suspect the shapers of hidden motives and they are consumed with suspicion.



CHAPTER 5: The Shapers of Life

Life-shaping is the art that allows the rhul-thaun to create everything from simple tools to large buildings out of living tissues. This ancient, arcane craft is the unique aspect of the civilization established by the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs,

The Life-shaper

"To hold a living creature in your hand, and truly understand the power and majesty of what you grasp. To shape and create not a tool or an object, but a creature to work for you. To see that what you have wrought is what others see as the purview of nature itself. This is what you must desire above all things."


—An excerpt from the Exhortation of Apprentices, by Ges-afith

The life-shapers are a powerful and influential circle in rhul-thaun society. Each shaper is rigorously trained and vigorously indoctrinated. Because of the limitations these skills would place on adventurers, player character life-shapers should not be permitted. Native Rhul-thaun life-shapers would not be allowed to leave on adventures and they would never teach outsiders the necessary skills, even if they were willing to devote the years of study required.

Place in Society

The apparent purpose of the shapers is to provide the rhul-thaun with life-shaped tools and structures. Their true purpose, however, like the shapers themselves, is cloaked in the shadows of their sanctuaries.

Although the leader of the shapers is the well-known and highly respected Loi Far-



oneth, those privy to the inner councils of the organization would say that it is his right-hand man, Gil-ogres, who truly holds the reins of the group. While Loi focuses his attention on lofty, philosophical issues—preservation of the old ways through ritual and intense devotion—Gil-ogres manipulates the shapers to do his will. He seeks total mastery of rhul-thaun civilization.

Most people are not aware of these ambitions or of the organization's questionable, subtle machinations. They believe that the shapers are selfless creators struggling to preserve the past and maintain the present. As a group and individually they garner great respect. People outside the order view them as quasi-religious figures. Those who do not particularly revere them, at the very least, respect their skills and power.

Those few who know or suspect the truth, fear the shapers. These fears are justified, for Gil-ogres is a ruthless man who never hesitates to eliminate an enemy if the need presents itself. The shapers actually have a covert legion of assassins and thugs under the control of Gil-ogres. The assassins are called the *ghav-nosh* and are based out of the sanctuary in the village of Sahr-tosh.

Organizational Methods and Goals

During the formative years of their education, shapers are taught that they are superior to their fellow halflings. Since their skills are beyond the ken of other rhul-thaun and the preservation of shaper knowledge is the most important duty a halfling can perform, they view themselves as the elite of rhul-thaun society.

Their goals include the preservation and proliferation of their art. Many shapers believe that if situations were different, they could even regain some of the skills and bits of knowledge lost over the centuries. They believe that they are the keys to recovering and rebuilding their civilization to its former glory, to the splendor it possessed during the Blue Age of Athas. The restoration of ancient greatness is their ultimate goal.

To further their ends, they believe that manipulating the larger society to foster life-shaping is necessary as is the reconstruction of the past. Gil-ogres believes that the complete domination of rhul-thaun society is mandatory if the shapers are to be allowed to properly fulfill their ambitions. Beyond the loftier goal, of course, his interest lies in accruing personal power.

To manipulate and control the society in which they live, the life-shapers have a major advantage. They alone produce the most important commodities in the Jagged Cliffs. Their skills provide food, clothing, shelter, tools, weapons, transportation, and every convenience available to the rhul-thaun. Their control of these goods gives them the power to manipulate the economy, raising or lowering their prices as they see fit. A change in the prices of life-shaped products either inflates or deflates the value of money, thereby altering even the prices of products that have nothing to do with the shapers. They are the puppet masters of the rhul-thaun economic structure.

Further, the life-shapers can influence those in power. The har-etuil are well accustomed to the subtle threats of the shapers. If the judgment makers cross the life-shapers, their clan or community may lose access to life-shaped goods. In sly whispers, the shapers have even suggested to the Conclave that they might withhold all of their creations from sale if their views did not prevail in certain key decisions. They also claim to have the means to destroy all shaped creations with a powerful virus.

Not even most of the shapers are aware that the virus is a lie, merely a bluff. Their superiors tell them that it really does exist, stored in a secret location known only to the higher echelons. However, the shapers lost the knowledge necessary to make viral constructs long ago, and there is no significant virus stored in any known location.

Other clandestine operations that the shapers keep well-hidden from public scrutiny are their experiments. In order to regain the power of the ancient life-shapers, they manipulate rituals for which they possess only fragmentary records. These investigations are dangerous and supposedly forbidden. Unknown to them all, it was just such a trial that consumed the village of Bav-rem just a few months ago.

Shaper Worldview

"Fear the future, revere the past. All good things are ancient of days, Life now is dark and hard compared to our time of glory and power. It is our duty to bring back the days of triumph. We must return to the ways of the past. We must recapture the essence of the old ones, the essence of ourselves.

Today, people have no respect for these truths. They reject the very idea of history as valueless. They hold our most cherished rituals in contempt and scoff at the recitations of our honored chronicles. Some even believe that we should leave the cliffs to seek what lies beyond them. It is our duty to guide our people along the right path, whether they see the righteousness in that path or not.

The mental aberrations that befall some of our people are not blessings, but curses. These powers appeared long ago, true, but the rhulisti never had them and never needed such crude, base skills. They relied upon their intellects, imaginations, and ingenuities.*

Other so-called intelligent beings are an anathema. In ancient days, there were no races. The rhulisti were the sole masters and controlled the whole world. Races such as the pterrans and bvanen had no place. The kreen are obviously the enemies of all that is good. We must not let our people have congress with those of lesser races, nor should we allow them to pay heed to the rumors that even more races exist beyond the cliffs."

Portion of a graduation speech given by Loi Far-oneth 10 years ago—still frequently quoted.

* Psionics





The Life of a Shaper

Not surprisingly, most of a shaper's day is taken up working the craft. The shapers conduct their rituals, working with pith in order to grow their creations. Furthermore, they must monitor the development of the new forms, feeding and nourishing them as they mature. This is time-consuming work, filled with long and complicated rituals.


The few moments remaining are devoted to the organization, carrying out required tasks, depending on station. These duties include delivering completed products to merchants for sale, carrying messages, and other menial tasks. Shapers on errands within a community at least reap the benefit of the respect that they receive from others.

All shapers live in the sanctuaries that are found in virtually every rhul-thaun community. Life in the sanctuaries is communal, stark, and rigorously regimented. Like any monastic religious order, shapers (particularly low-level shapers) have a rigid structure of life that provides a spare, meager existence. They devote all of their attention and most of their waking hours to their craft.

The Lore of Life

Life-shaping is a craft that may, in some ways, resemble magic or even psionics in its ultimate effects but it has nothing to do with either. Shaping is, in its purest sense, the physical control of the fundamental forces of life itself. This ancient art gives a shaper the ability to create and mold living tissues and entire organisms as he desires. By working with the processes of growth and function in living creatures, life-shapers can fashion organisms that fulfill specific needs just as a blacksmith of another culture would craft a tool or weapon from iron.

Unfortunately, the rhul-thaun of today do not truly comprehend the art they practice. The concepts are lost to them, as are many specific skills involved in the creation of



life-shaped organisms. Rather than any real understanding, they maintain only the knowledge of the motions necessary to perform some of the tasks necessary to use the craft. The rhulisti could fashion complex living tools and creatures far beyond the capabilities of those of who practice the art today.

The ancient rhulisti began their researches using a porous, rocklike plant. This simple life-form was easy to manipulate and difficult to injure. From this rudimentary beginning, they learned to handle and exploit more complex forms of life—they became masters of the world with their skills.

The basic building block of life, as the rhul-thaun understand it, is a substance they call pith. This organic mush is the most basic substance common to all creatures of the flesh, and is absolutely essential to grow and form the shapes. They fashion the pith matrix into a thick, clear syrup. Various processes are needed to stimulate raw pith and force it to develop specific creations. Often the use of other life-shaped tools, such as shockwands, is necessary for more complex devices.

Considering that the shapers conduct these activities during rituals, an outsider would probably guess that the processes were magical.

Classifications of Shaped Objects

There are three types of life-shaped creations: Those that comprise living tissue but are not actually independent creatures; living *creatures* themselves; and the organic *products* of living creatures. Much of the difference between them lies in their care and requirements. It should also be noted that the organic products in the last category are not alive, but merely organically derived. The other two classes of shaped objects are alive.

Besides these three varieties, shaped products can be further separated into different classifications according to their use. These may also be found under three headings. Some of the objects are straight forward, tools, weapons, armor, and medications, others require additional explanation.

Some of the most common life-shaped creations are *grafts*. Grafts differ from other shapes in that they physically attach to their wearers, who are called “hosts,” and form symbiotic relationships with them. This means that a graft absorbs nutrients from the host’s body, but the host gains some benefit from the graft as well. Grafts are presented in their own section, although a few special grafts are listed under *Armor* and *Weapons*.

Producers are shaped creations whose sole purpose is to manufacture other products. Some grow long, woolly fur that is then sheared, spun, and woven. Others produce edible eggs, shed leathery hides, or secrete valuable medicines. Engines are shaped that drive other devices—they may be used to heat a structure, power a flour grinder, or pump water from a pool.

Damage, Disease, and Death

All living shapes and tissues have hit points and Armor Classes. As a rule, Small shaped creations have 1 HD, Medium size shapes have 2 HD, and larger items have 3 HD.

Obviously, there are exceptions. Weapons and armor, meant to take a lot of punishment, have more HD. Tougher, longer lasting armor can be purchased from the life-shapers at 20 gp per each additional HD.

Weapons take 1 point of damage per strike (whether offensive or defensive). If the DM chooses to use critical hits and damage, weapons take 2 points of damage.

Left alone, damaged life-shaped creatures heal at the rate of 1 hp per day. There are healing tools that can speed the recovery rate. Organic products, because they are not living, are repaired like any normal item.

Composition determines shaped Armor Class. Soft creations, such as clingbags, have an AC of 8 to 10, harder items have an AC of 4 to 6, while very hard articles, such as armor, can have an AC of 0.

In the case of armor, the Armor Class is the amount of protection it provides. Sustained damage is divided equally between the armor and the wearer. If the armor dies or is reduced to 0 hit points, it ceases to provide any protection.

If a character is attacked while wearing a shaped creation or has one on his person, it is always assumed that the character, not his shaped item, is being attacked. Area effect

attacks, such as a *fireball*, however *do* affect shaped objects. Shaped creations can be also targeted in an attack if the assailant wishes. In this case, use the creation's AC and when its hit points reach 0, any additional points of damage affect the character.

The saving throws of shaped creations are as for a warrior of the same level (HD) as the shape. Constructs with less than 1 HD save as level 0 warriors.

If exposed to any sort of disease, virus, or infection, living shaped creations must make saving throws. Additionally, there is a 1% chance per week that a living object becomes infected with a virus, disease, or malady of some sort. There is a 10% chance that these conditions are fatal. If they are not, the shape suffers for 1d10 days. During such times, the creation is only 50% as effective as normal. Shaped weapons attack with a -2 penalty to attack and damage rolls and Armor Class is reduced by 2.

Since the organic products of life-shaped creatures cannot die, they simply use the normal item saving throws and damage rules in Chapter 9 of the *DMG*.

Armor

With the exception of wood, stone, and bone clubs, the rhul-thaun life-shape all of their armor and weapons. Through elementary, ritual processes, they produce daggers, maces, axes, short swords (simply called swords), slings, shields, and spears. They also produce some unique weapons and armor, and these are detailed below.

Class restrictions on armor and weapons are fairly straightforward. Priests can use all of the armor and the titan hurler, shock stick, grappler, life leech, and spore pods. Specialty priest weapon restrictions always vary. Since these weapons cannot be strictly defined as "edged weapons" because of their organic nature, a DM may want to allow elemental priests and druids access to all of them. Rogues can use all of these weapons except the warstaff, flashlance, and hurling titan, but they restrict them to hide armor. Warriors can use any of the armor or weapons. Wizards, though there are none among the rhul-thaun, cannot use any of the armor and can select only clawgrafts, life leeches, spore pods, and shocksticks as weapons.



Armor

ARMOR TABLE

| Armor | AC | Wgt | HD | Cost |
|----------------|-----|-----|----|------|
| Half Shell | 2 | 35 | 5 | 50 |
| Hide | 7 | 10 | 3 | 20 |
| Sheath | 4 | 12 | 4 | 80 |
| Sheath, Hidden | 8/5 | 10 | 4 | 100 |
| Shell | 0 | 50 | 6 | 150 |

Half-Shell Armor (Tissue, 5 HD, AC 2): This armor consists of tissue hardened to the strength of stone. It covers the torso with a single, inflexible breastplate and smaller pieces that cover the shoulders and upper legs. Half shell armor can be made to fit any humanoid creature up to and including half-giants.

Hide Armor (Product, 3 HD, AC 7): This armor is similar to the leather armor worn by other cultures, although it is designed to be tougher, more protective, and less cumbersome to wear. Negative modifiers to thief abilities from wearing leather armor are halved when wearing shaped hide instead.

Sheath Armor (Tissue, 4 HD, AC 4): This armor is applied to the entire body of the wearer as though it were a thick black paste. It conforms to the wearer's body perfectly, hardening in most areas, but remaining flexible and tough in areas that bend and move. Since it is nothing more than a pot of paste before it is put on, it can be applied to any creature or surface.

Sheath Armor, Hidden (Creature, 4 HD, AC 8/5): This sophisticated armor resembles normal sheath armor, but it is transparent and not as thick. It remains in a flexible state at AC 8 until struck, at which point it hardens to become sheath armor, AC 5. After 10 rounds pass without the armor being struck, it reverts to its flexible, transparent state. While transparent, it is only noticeable 20% of the time and only 10% of the time if clothing is worn over it.

Shell Armor (Tissue, 6 HD, AC 0): This armor is identical to half-shell armor except that its plates cover the entire body with fibrous tissue connecting the joints. It can be produced to fit any humanoid smaller than a half-giant.

Shields

SHIELD TABLE

| Shield | AC | Wgt | HD | Cost |
|-------------|----|-----|----|------|
| Climber's | 2 | 8 | 3 | 10 |
| Spineshield | 4 | 6 | 2 | 10 |

Climber's Shield (Creature, Graft; 3 HD, AC 2): This is one of the most sophisticated and coveted bits of life-shaped equipment, particularly for climbers. This device looks like a round, hard, chitinous shield mounted on a 3-foot long tentacle. The tentacle attaches to the host (virtually anywhere on the torso). With a sophisticated vibration sensing organ, the shield can detect incoming attacks and move to intercept them. This gives the host the benefit of a shield but without the necessity of using hands or arms. Climbers use these shields to protect them when they are climbing.

Spineshield (Creature, 2 HD, AC 4/10): This formidable, medium size shield has dozens of 1 to 3 inch spines covering its surface. In many ways, the spineshield operates like a spine thrower (see Weapons), firing its spines at nearby foes. It also functions as a normal shield, however, and can even be used as a melee weapon inflicting 1d8 damage in combat. If used as a weapon, either melee or ranged, it cannot be used as a shield in the same round and is AC 10 in that case.



Weapons

WEAPONS TABLE

| Weapon | Wgt | | Type | | | Damage | |
|---------------------------|-----|----|------|-----|----|----------|----------|
| | | | | | | L | L |
| Armlade | 75 | 5 | M | S | 5 | 1d8 | 1d8+1 |
| Armspike | 50 | 5 | M | P | 6 | 1d6 | 1d4 |
| Clawgraft (each) | 5 | 3 | S | S | 4 | varies | — |
| Flashlance | 30 | 8 | S/M | P | 6 | 1d6/1d10 | 1d8/1d12 |
| Hurling Titan | 35 | 9 | M | B | 9 | 1d8 | 1d6 |
| Mandibles | 150 | 8 | L | — | 7 | — | — |
| Quickstrike | 50 | 5 | S | P | 3 | 1d6 | 1d4 |
| Shockstick ¹ | 25 | 3 | M | B | 5 | 1d6* | 1d6* |
| Spinethrower ² | 75 | 3 | M | P | 5 | 1d6+1 | 1d6 |
| Warstaff | 150 | 10 | M | P/B | 10 | 1d8+1 | 1d10 |

¹ This weapon inflicts 1d6 additional points of electrical damage every six rounds

² This weapon can also fire 1d6 spines each inflicting 1d3 points of damage.

SPECIAL WEAPONS TABLE

| Weapon | Cost | Wgt | Size | Type | Speed | Damage | |
|-------------------------|------|-----|------|------|-------|--------|-----|
| | | | | | | S-M | L |
| Deathspray | 100 | 12 | M | — | 8 | — | — |
| Grappler | 75 | 10 | M | — | 12 | — | — |
| Life Leech ¹ | 100 | 8 | M | — | 10 | 1d6 | 1d6 |
| Spore pods: | | | | | | | |
| Irritant | 1 | 1 | S | — | 2 | — | — |
| Sleep | 2 | 1 | S | — | 2 | — | — |
| Poison | 3 | 1 | S | — | 2 | — | — |

¹ The first time this weapon strikes a particular foe, it inflicts 1d12 damage

MISSILE WEAPON RANGES

| Weapon | ROF | S | M | L |
|--------------|------|---|----|----|
| Deathspray | 1 | 1 | 1½ | 2 |
| Grappler | 1/10 | ½ | 1 | 1½ |
| Spinethrower | 1d6 | 1 | 2 | 3 |


Armlade (Tissue Graft; 4 HD, AC 4): This weapon grafts onto a host's forearm. It has a long blade that extends outward and forward from the arm. The entire blade is about 2 feet long and 5 inches wide. The weapon can be used to slash and stab foes in combat. Because it is fastened directly onto the arm, it frees the user's hands for other things.

Armspike (Tissue Graft; 4 HD, AC 4): The armspike also welds itself to a host's forearm. It has from one to three spikes, 3 to 6 inches in length, projecting outward from the wielder's arm. The weapon can be used to slash and pierce foes in close quarter combat. Because it grafts to the arm, it frees the user's hands for other things.

Clawgrafts (Tissue, Graft; 4 HD, AC 6): These tiny grafts attach to the host's fingers. Each is a claw approximately 1 ½ inches long. They allow the wielder to rake and slash foes like natural claws. Damage inflicted depends on how many claws are worn. One claw inflicts 1 point of damage, two or three inflict 1d3 points of damage, and four or five inflict 1d6 points of damage. Evil characters with clawgrafts often add poison nodules to increase the deadliness of their attacks.

Deathspray (Creature, 4 HD, AC 6): This creature resembles a 2-foot long, scaled tube with a wide, bulbous nodule on one end and a narrow opening at the other. The creature produces a caustic, poisonous venom that can be sprayed from the aperture to a distance of 15 feet. An attack roll is required. The spray inflicts 1d6 damage, but a saving throw vs. poison is required. The poison is Class H (Method: Ingested; Onset: 1-4 hours; Strength: 20/10). The venom must be sprayed in the eyes, nose, or mouth.

Flashlance (Creature, 6 HD, AC 2): This weapon is a 3-foot long spear that can be used as a stabbing weapon. When activated by squeezing the handle, the lance rapidly extends outward, telescoping a razor sharp point into a foe. When activated, the lance



extends itself to a length of 6 feet for an instant—just long enough to inflict 1d10 points of damage rather than the normal 1d6. The lance retracts automatically.

Grappler (Creature, 6 HD, AC 2): This ranged weapon is a creature approximately 28 inches long. Like a deathsprayer, it has a pod on one end and an orifice on the other. When activated, the grappler fires a stream of long, sticky cords, which resemble frog tongues, to a distance of 30 feet. Anyone struck by the cords becomes entangled. Fifty percent of the time, the target's arms are trapped and no attacks or actions requiring the use of arms can be undertaken. The victim loses all shield and Dexterity bonuses and can be pulled about, with a 25% chance of being pulled to the ground. The victim can escape on a successful bend bars/lift gates roll. A grappler cannot be reused while a victim is entangled, and even after the target is freed, it can only be used again after 1d6 rounds—it takes that long for the cords to retract.

Hurling Titan (Tissue, 4 HD, AC 4): This weapon resembles a large mace or (especially in the hands of a halfling) a maul. Like other shaped melee weapons, it consists of hardened tissue. The hurling titan's head has a liquid core, however. When swung, the nucleus creates a momentum of centrifugal force, allowing it to do great damage despite its size.

Life Leech (Creature, 3 HD, AC 4): This is a 7-foot pole with a 2-inch ball on one end. When the ball is touched to a living creature, the weapon rapidly absorbs nutrients and water from the victim. The draining effect is reflected in the target's loss of 1d12 points of damage. The first strike of a leech injects a mild sedative around the wound. The sedative reduces the effect of further attacks so that additional hits on the same target within a 24-hour period inflict only 1d6 damage. This weapon requires a special combat technique since it is not sturdy enough to be swung with great force, its touch must be light.

Life Leech Sword (see *Rhulisti Artifacts*).

Mandibles (Tissue, 3 HD, AC 6): This weapon is identical to the mancatcher described in the *PHB* except that it can be used to "bite" for 1d6 points of damage without "catching" a foe if the user so desires.

Quickstrike (Creature, Graft; 4 HD, AC 4): Like the armband, this graft is worn on the forearm. It is thin enough so that it can be hidden underneath a loose, long sleeved shirt or a cloak. When activated by pressing on the back of the creature, an 8-inch long spike protrudes from the graft at the host's wrist, roughly parallel with the arm.

Shockstick (Creature, 3 HD, AC 4): This club-shaped creature consists of a hard outer shell. It absorbs and stores static electricity (like an electric eel), discharging it into those struck with the weapon. It can only release a shock once every three rounds, but the electricity inflicts an additional 1d6 points of damage.

Spinethrower (Creature, 4 HD, AC 4): This weapon resembles a spiked mace. The head is covered with 1d4x10 spines, from one to three inches long. Besides its use as a melee weapon, however, it can be stimulated to fire its spines at foes at a distance of up to 90 yards. It fires 1d6 spines per round, each inflicting 1d3 points of damage (each requires its own attack roll and all of them must be thrown at the same target). The spines grow back in 1d4 days.

Spore Pod (Tissue, 4 hp, AC 8): These small weapons are organic spheres that look like tiny eggs. Each can be thrown at a target. They burst open on contact and release a cloud of tiny spores. The spores explode in a radius of 10 feet and have the potential to affect every breathing creature in that area, though life-shaped breathermasks do protect against spores and dangerous gases. There are three types of spore pods, and the spores they contain can have one of three different effects.

The effect of the first type of spore is *irritation*. The spores cover living foes and cause them to itch, break out in a rash, sneeze, and suffer from blurred vision. When a spore pod opens, everyone within 10 feet must make a saving throw vs. poison or be debilitated for one round (no actions possible). After that, they suffer a -1 penalty to attacks and damage for 1d4 days.

The second kind of pod produces *sleep* spores that their victims to fall into a deep hallucinogenic fit of unconsciousness. The effect lasts for 1d4+1 rounds and must be resisted by a saving throw vs. poison by all within 10 feet of the spore pod.

The last type is the most dangerous. *Poison* spores act as Class I poisons (Method: Ingested; Onset: 2-12 minutes; Strength: 30/15) on all those within 10 feet of the pod's burst.

Warstaff (Tissue, 4 HD, AC 4): This weapon is 5 feet long and made of hardened tissue. One, and occasionally both ends, have heavy, spherical heads on which are fixed five 6-inch blades. Four of the razor-sharp knives project outward in the four compass points. The fifth barb extends directly out from the head.



Equipment

The following sections detail most shaped creations made by r hul-thaun life-shapers. It should be noted that these are but pale reflections of the great shaped creations of the r halisti when they ruled Athas.

The life-shapers are also able to reproduce any item on the *PHB* equipment listed as leather, bone, or wood. Furthermore, even items such as iron spikes or rope can be reproduced from pith by life-shaping. These substitutes are all organic products as opposed to actual living creatures.

Life-shapers can slightly modify only a few of these creations. If any such modifications are possible, they are noted in the description.

Tools

Shaped tools come in many varieties. This category includes actual tools as well as clothing and special, unique items. All prices are given in ghav-egoths.

Air Burster (Creature, 4 hp, AC 4): This creature looks like a foot-long tube with a large, membranous air sack on one end and a round, 6-inch wide pod on the other. When pressure is placed on the underside of the tube, the creature's membrane fills with air. An object smaller than 6 inches in length is then be inserted into the pod. When the air sack is squeezed, air pressure ejects the object from the pod with an explosive burst of air. Virtually any small object can be launched up to 100 yards. Charges commonly used in air bursters include grappling hooks (attached to ropes), spore bombs, and small nets (wadded up inside the pod). In desperate situations, small, sharp objects can be placed in the pod and fired as projectile weapons.

Air Filter (Creature, 4 hp, AC 8): This 1-foot diameter, spongy globe continuously recy-

Price list

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Air Burster | 50 |
| Air Filter | 25 |
| Acidic Spawn | 35 |
| Bond | 14 |
| Breather | 16 |
| Chameleon cloak | 90 |
| Climbing Boots | 60 |
| Climbing Gloves | 55 |
| Clingbag | 10 |
| Clingpad | 5 |
| Clingrope | 5 per foot |
| Coolcloak | 25 |
| Directional Sensor | 27 |
| Disposer | 60 |
| Dry anchor | 15 |
| Drycloak | 30 |
| Gillmask | 45 |
| Glowpod | 10 |
| Grasping Hook | 25 |
| Grasping Rod | 30 |
| Lifechair | 10-30 |
| Lock, Hard Key | 75 |
| Lock, Soft Key | 100 |
| Lockpick | 65 |
| Malleable Tool | 40 |
| Poison Nodule | 55 |
| Scrubslug | 5 |
| Sensor | 80 |
| Shockwand | 30 |
| Slicksuit | 42 |
| Stealth boots | 55 |
| Storage Pod | 10 |
| Warmcloak | 12 |
| Water Absorber | 35 |
| Water Condenser | 55 |

cles air, breathing in carbon dioxide, smoke, and even foul odors, and breathing out pure, clean air. After one month of use, the creature should be washed to rid it of dust, smoke particles, and everything else it has filtered out of the air. If this is not done, it chokes to death.

Acidic Spawn (Creature, 5 hp, AC 8): This creature looks much like an urn or flask made of pulsing flesh. At the “mouth” of the urn a bowl-shaped depression secretes a powerful acid when the creature is squeezed. The acid is strong enough to eat through fabric in one round, leather in two, and wood in five. It is not vigorous enough to destroy stone, so it is useful for cleaning dirt and debris from stone objects. Living creatures receive 1 point of damage per round of contact with the acid. Acidic spawn is immune to its own acid.

Bond (Creature, 4 HD, AC 6): This creature looks like a tube, 6 inches long, closed on both ends. One end has a small aperture from which a syrupy gel is produced. The gel hardens quickly, bonding with whatever materials are to be joined. It makes a powerful, permanent adhesive seal and is used as a tar sealant to fill or repair holes in constructions and fix broken equipment. A bend bars roll is required to break the bond. Because of its organic nature, the gel can even repair damaged life-shaped items comprising living tissue. It cannot be used to good effect on creatures, however—it is too crude a treatment.

Breathermask (Tissue, 4 hp, AC 8): An organic face mask, this shape fits over a wearer’s lower face, covering the nose and mouth. A complex series of tissue layers filters the air, removing most impurities and toxins and allowing the wearer to breathe normally. The filtration system gives the user a +4 bonus to saving throws in situations having to do with poison gas or any other attacks that assault a victim’s respiratory system. The mask fits nearly all beings smaller than half-giants.

Chameleon Cloak (Creature, 2 hp, AC 8): This living garment responds to variables in light and temperature and allows its wearer to blend into his surroundings. While not nearly as effective as invisibility, this cloak adds 10 to the wearer’s hiding abilities. If the wearer has no special hiding abilities, the cloak provides a 15% chance not to be visually detected in any environment. The cloak does not fit humanoid creatures larger than halflings, nor can it be altered to equip larger creatures.


Climbing Boots (Tissue, 1 HD, AC 8): While they appear to be normal boots of hard leather, these living boots add a +5 bonus to a climber’s chance of climbing (maximum 99%). They accomplish this by being reactively pliable—their shape alters to conform to the contours of whatever substance the wearer is climbing. Since they are malleable, any humanoid creature smaller than a half-giant can wear these boots.

Climbing Gloves (Tissue, 1 HD, AC 8): Like climbing boots, these living gloves change texture and shape to give climbers better adhesion on whatever they are climbing. They add a +5 bonus to climbers’ chances to climb. The bonus is cumulative with bonuses from climbing boots, but the maximum chances are still 99%. Because of their malleability, climbing gloves can be worn by any humanoids smaller than half-giants.

Clingbag (Tissue, Large; 2 HD, AC 8. Small; 1 HD, AC 8): These leather bags come in two sizes, large (40 pounds maximum) and small (10 pounds maximum). The unique aspect of the clingbags is that one side of the bag is made of living tissue that secretes a powerful, adhesive web that can support the bag and its contents when pressed against another object. Clingbags can be stuck to walls, belts, people’s backs, or any other surface. With a firm pull, they are removable and can be attached to different surfaces.

Clingpad (Tissue, 1 HD, AC 8): These pieces of leathery tissue are 1-foot in diameter, have the same properties of clingbags, and can support up to 20 pounds of weight. Both sides secrete the same adhesive, enabling them to be used to join different items. In fact, many people use clingpads to attach glowpods to ceilings and walls.





Clingrope (Tissue, 4 HD, AC 8): Made from the same material as clingbags and pads, clingrope has patches of adhesive tissue that make it easier to tie them firmly around other objects. Those skilled in rope-use simply fling one around an object, loop it a few times, and the rope creates a strong grip. If this trick is used to grapple a living creature, treat the clingrope as an adhesive lasso. Creatures tied up with clingrope find it twice as hard to slip or break their bonds. In all other respects, clingrope should be treated as normal rope.

Coolcloak (Creature, 4 hp, AC 8): These living creatures were created to maintain very cool body temperatures and may be used to alleviate discomfort in hot climates. The hoods of these cloaks have organic, adhesive clasps. They can be adjusted during their creation to fit any humanoid creatures smaller than half-giants.

Directional Sensor (Creature, 2 hp, AC 8): This tiny, cone-shaped creature always senses north, pointing its narrow end in that direction whenever placed on a flat surface.

Disposer (Creature, 2 HD, AC 4): This pod creature is 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide. It has an aperture at its top that is as wide as its body and functions as the creature's mouth. The disposer is entirely digestive system. It can break down virtually any organic waste material—food scraps, human waste, dead creatures, or plant material. It converts these substances into gases—and into the soupy paste known to the shapers as pith.

Dry Anchor (Tissue, 1 HD, AC 8): This sticky blob of organic putty secretes a strong adhesive that is unaffected by moisture. Climbers use it to counter wet surfaces. By sticking dry anchors to the rocks, they can use them as dry handholds or anchors for hooks and ropes despite the mist.

Drycloak (Product): This cloak is not a living creature, but merely an organic product of life-shaped engineering. It appears to consist of a particularly slick, shiny cloth. The cloaks main function is to keep the wearer dry by repelling water. Rain and mist droplets simply bead and run off the cloak in rivulets. It can be modified during crafting to fit any humanoid creature smaller than a half-giant.

Gillmask (Creature, 1 HD, AC 8): Similar in some respects to a breather, the gillmask fits over the mouth and nose of the wearer. Along its sides, it has gill slits that perform like those of fish. The wearer can breathe underwater while wearing the mask. The masks fit virtually any creatures smaller than half-giants.

Glowpod (Creature, 4 hp, AC 8): Living spheres of bioluminescent tissue, glowpods are similar to the abdomens of fireflies. The pods are roughly 1-foot in diameter and extremely lightweight. Each gives the illumination of a torch, but provides no heat whatever. The halflings mount them on sticks fastened with thin clingrope to create torches and keep them in their homes to provide light and mood settings—covering one with thin, colored gauze produces colored light. Virtually every community uses glowpods for lighting streets, walkways, and alleys at night.


Grasping Hook (Creature, 2 HD, AC 8): Similar to conventional grappling hooks, this tool resembles a claw with four talons spaced equidistantly around a central palm. When the palm is stimulated, the claws reflexively clench. Attached to ropes and flung to grasp secure objects, grasping hooks are very useful to climbers. The hooks have a grasping Strength of 20.

Grasping Rod (Creature, 1 HD, AC 8): This is a grasping hook mounted on a sturdy, organic pole, 10 feet in length. It is useful for reaching and snatching objects that are otherwise out of normal reach.

Lifechair (Creature, 4 hp, AC 8): More than just a chair, this shape actually includes a number of different kinds of furniture. Sofas, beds, lounge chairs, and even life-shaper designed tables, each grown to be soft, sturdy, and either comfortably warm or pleasantly cool. Many find the pulsing of the lifechair's body fluids to be restful when they retire. Strangers to life-shaped objects are unable to distinguish between this furniture and that of the normal, nonliving sort—until they sit and feel one for a moment.

Lock, Hard Key (Creature, 1 HD, AC 4): This resembles a normal lock and key, similar to those found anywhere on Athas. It is made of hard organic tissue, though, and the key does not trip the mechanism. Instead, the symbiotic key stimulates a reflex within the creature-lock to clench or unclench its clawed clasp. When purchased, the lock comes with the symbiotic key, also made from hard, organic tissue. (The key is not alive, but rather an organic product.) This lock can be picked.

Lock, Soft Key (Creature, 1 HD, AC 6): This is a special lock, resembling no other on Athas. It has a clawed clasp, but there is no key hole, or at least not a conventional one.



The main body of this lock appears to be a simple pod with the ability to chemically decompose organic molecules and “read” them, identifying patterns unique to each living creature. The only way to cause the lock to open or close is to place specifically designed living tissue against the pod, allowing the chemicals within the pod’s outer layers to read the tissue’s organic signature. A soft-key lock can be tailored so that the required tissue is the flesh of a specific individual. Thus, the lock can only be opened or locked only by the touch of a particular person. The key could also be another specific shaped creation, such as a warstaff, or a coolcloak, or a special living key can be made to fit the lock. There is no way to pick this lock.

Lockpick (Creature, 4 hp AC 6): This creature is made of malleable tissue that can be inserted into a hard key lock. It adapts and attempts to match the shape of the key required to open the lock, giving lock pickers a +10 bonus to their chance to pick a lock.

Malleable Tool (Creature, 4 hp, AC 4): Similar to a lockpick, this creature’s tissue is malleable, and can be shaped like putty. It can be worked, however, only with smooth, soft strokes. It is resistant to firm pressure and hard blows, making it a useful tool when shaped into the form of a blade, an ax, a pick, a crowbar, a small shovel, a hook, or any other necessary form. The tool has enough mass to be shaped into any of those tools, or virtually any other item weighing 10 pounds or less.

Poison Nodule (Tissue, 2 hp, AC 10): This is a tiny ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter) organic pod that produces and secretes a virulent toxin. Like clingbags, they have adhesive backs that allow them to be attached to other things. Commonly, they are placed on bladed weapons to coat them with the poisonous secretion. Poison nodules produce Class B poisons (Method: Injection, Onset: 2-12 minutes; Strength: 20/1-3).

Scrubslug (Creature, 2 hp, AC 8): As its name suggests, this creature looks like a large, foot-long slug. It moves silently through a home or business place devouring dust, lint, dirt and other particle matter. It also absorbs spilled liquids, crumbs, and food messes. It converts these materials into a quick-drying waxy polish that is excreted in a slimy trail behind it. It is organically programmed to move methodically over floors and walls, leaving behind spotless, shiny surfaces. Since they move slowly, large buildings are best served using a number of these creatures.

Sensor (Creature, 4 hp, AC 8): This creature looks much like a pair of pods, 6 inches in diameter. The pods stick together with a sticky sap, but they can be pulled apart easily without harm to either. One is the sensor pod, and the other is the baffler. As long as the baffler is within 50 feet of the sensor, the sensor remains inert. If the baffler is removed, however, the sensor begins to constantly monitor that area for its return. As a consequence, if anything larger than an insect enters the radius without the baffler, the sensor begins to emit an alarming screech until the baffler is brought back.

The sensor is actually a motion detection alarm system. It can even observe invisible creatures moving through its radius, but not those that are ethereal or out-of-phase. While one is useful, a number of these can protect an entire complex.

Shockwand (Tissue, 3 HD, AC 4): A shockwand is a rod of hardened tissue, 6 inches in length. The wand absorbs static electricity from its surroundings, storing it for later use. When one end is squeezed, the other releases an electrical charge. The shockwand was designed for use in the life-shaping process (where electrical stimulation is often necessary to achieve the proper biochemical reaction state), but it can have other uses as well. As a weapon, it inflicts 1d4 points of electrical damage per touch. It is useful for prodding along large herd beasts and for evil characters when interrogating prisoners.

Slicksuit (Tissue, 2 HD, AC 4): This full body suit is crafted solely to fit halflings and half-ling-size humanoid—no other sizes exist. Its surface is very smooth and it secretes an oily, slick liquid that coats the entire suit. The effect of this is similar to the magical *oil of slipperiness*, making it impossible for the wearer to be grabbed, grasped, constricted, or hugged by an opponent. Bonds such as ropes, chains, and manacles can easily be slipped loose. It requires a great effort for the liquid to be generated by the suit, however, so once used, the effect lasts for only four hours before the tissue suit requires a full 24-hours to replenish its supply of oil.

Stealthboots (Tissue, 3 HD, AC 6): These seemingly normal leather boots are grown in a way that reduces the amount of noise made by a wearer’s footsteps. Thieves gain a +10% bonus to move silently (to a maximum of 99%), while nonthieves (or thieves with a move silently skill of less than 10%) who wear the boots have a base 20% chance to move without sound. The boots can be designed to fit any size humanoid up to a half-giant.



Storage Pod (Creature, 3 HD, AC 6): These creatures are egg-shaped, with dark shells covering their hides. They open by peeling down their outer skins to expose large, empty cavities. Up to 5 cubic feet of material can be placed inside one of these pods and then sealed within it. Either hard or soft keyed locks may be attached to keep the contents secure, but soft keys are preferred.

Warmcloak (Creature, 2 HD, AC 8): Similar to a coolcloak, this thick wooly cloak maintains a high body temperature that keeps the wearer quite comfortable in cold weather. There is little call for this item, Athas being what it is even on the cliffs, but the shapers make a few of them for climbers who must deal with harsh night winds out on the open rock. Then too, tragic experience has taught the shapers that when an item ceases to be crafted, the knowledge of its making is soon lost. These cloaks can be altered to accommodate any humanoid creatures smaller than half-giants.

Water Condenser (Creature, 2 HD, AC 8): This creature looks like a 3-foot diameter bowl. It extracts moisture from the air and stores up to 50 gallons of water in the bowl. The bowl can be covered by a flap of skin to prevent evaporation. It condenses water automatically and continuously until it senses that the bowl is full.

Watersponge (Creature, 3 HD, AC 6): This creature can expand up to five times its normal size of 2 feet in diameter, absorbing and storing all water with which it comes in contact. Pressure forces it to expel the liquid on demand.

Transport

Price List

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Ber-ethern | 500 |
| Dhev-sahr | 350 |
| Gon-evauth | 800 |
| Yihn-eflan | 500 |

The creatures in this classification are animal-based automatons. Some resemble natural beasts, but they obey their masters mindlessly—operating without fear or emotion, and without any inherent drives or instincts. Most of these shapes are windriding mounts, well-known to most, but available to only a select few.

For more detailed descriptions and information, see the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ Appendix pages in the back of this book.

Ber-ethern (Creature, 3 HD, AC 6): Ber-ethern means breeze sprites, and these creatures are the smallest of the windriding mounts. They are insect-based flyers with room to carry only one halfling rider and 25 pounds of cargo. They can fly up to 75 miles per hour fully loaded.

Dhev-sahr (Creature, 3 HD, AC 6): The dhev-sahr is the only land-based mount made by the rhul-thaun life-shapers. Its body is round with four long legs allowing it to move very quickly. Two halflings can ride comfortably on top.

Gon-evauth (Creature, 4 HD, AC 6): This windrider mount is also called a soar whale and sometimes (usually by outsiders who see them from afar) an airship. A gon-evauth is huge and balloon-shaped, able to keep itself aloft in the winds of the cliffs by filling its large inner cavities with hot, moist air. Windriders ride either atop the floating beasts or in a gondola affixed underneath the beast that can carry up to eight halflings or one windrider and a ton of cargo. Fully loaded, a soar whale moves at a top speed of 30 miles per hour.

Yihn-eflan (Creature, 3 HD, AC 6): Yihn-eflan are windriding mounts whose name means gust climber. Larger than a breeze sprite but smaller than a soar whale, the yihn-eflan is an avian creature with huge, oversized wings. One to three riders can ride safely on its back, or 200 pounds of cargo and a single rider. Fully loaded, a gust climber can reach speeds up to 50 miles per hour.

Guardians

Price list

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Climbdog | 80 |
| Darkstrike | 60 |
| Protector | 100 |
| Shieldswarm | 150 |
| Watcher | 80 |

The term guardian applies to any life-shaped creation designed to actively protect or aid a rhul-thaun in combat. Thus, creatures to assist in stalking and hunting prey are included as well as those that watch over homes and villages. Like transport shapes, the creatures in this classification are animal-based automatons. Some resemble natural beasts, but they obey their masters mindlessly, behaving fearlessly, emotionlessly, and without any instinctive drives.



Each guardian creature is created with a set of instructions about those actions it should or shouldn't perform. Additionally, the climbdog, protector, and shieldswarm obey simple, verbal commands.

For more detailed descriptions and information, see the MONSTROUS MANUAL Appendix pages in the back of this book.

Climbdog (Creature, 2 HD, AC 8): This beast resembles a wolf with wide, grasping paws and extremely flexible legs, to allow them to climb even sheer, rocky slopes. They accompany climbers, providing them with protection and aiding them with keen senses of smell, hearing, and eyesight. These senses are all twice as good as the average half-ling's. In times of danger or combat, they sacrifice themselves without hesitation to protect their masters.

Darkstrike (Creature, 1 HD, AC 8, #At 1, Dmg 1d4 [bite]): These guardian creatures are attached to walls, doors, or other surfaces, with an adhesive like that of a clingbag. If possible, a darkstrike blends into the shadows. Usually, they are placed within nooks, alcoves, or around corners so that they can hide, waiting to pounce. When preselected conditions are met, this snake-based creature strikes at any and every available target with a fearsome bite. The darkstrike has the ability to sense motion even in the dark (with sonar similar to a bat's), so conditions are usually based on movement. Conditions include the detection of movement based on the amount of light (day or night), the number of figures passing by the creature, the size, race, or species of the figures passing by, or any similar criterion.

Protector (Creature, 1 HD, AC 8, #At 1, Dmg 1d6 [bite]): This creature is essentially a guard dog, although it actually appears more feline. It can be instructed to recognize intruders and attack. The protector can flawlessly discriminate between those it is to protect and those that present an obvious danger.

Shieldswarm (Creature, ½ hp, AC 8, #At 1, Dmg 1d2 [bite]): These insectoid creations are 6 inches long and can fly up to 30 miles per hour. A swarm consists of 50 to 100 of these creatures, individually called shieldbugs. They accompany windriders on their mounts (usually resting on the windriding mount until needed), flying up and around their master screening out intruders and attacks. Each can detect a light ranged attack and the swarm as a whole can obscure the rider. They can also be commanded to swarm and harass the rider's foes in battle.

Watcher (Creature 4 hp, AC 8): A watcher is a reptilian creature with large, bulbous eyes possessed of virtually 360 degree vision. If the watcher observes a specific sight preselected by its master, it lets out a loud keening sound.

Rhulisti Artifacts

Price List

| | |
|---------------------|--------|
| Eyehand | 300 |
| Eyestalk | 350 |
| Life Leech Sword | 500 |
| Lightning Generator | 1,000 |
| Mimicskin | 900 |
| Overmind | 10,000 |
| Psi-cloak | 1,200 |
| Recorder | 600 |
| Senselink | 850 |
| Womb | 50,000 |


Also called special creations, these are shapes that can no longer be produced, yet one or more of them do exist. Most of these were made by the rhulisti, who knew secrets that enabled their shapes to live much longer than those produced by modern life-shapers.

Note that the prices presented below do not take into consideration such factors as rarity or cultural significance.

Dark Cloak (Creature, 2 HD, AC 5): These shapes are the result of an accident, and, unknown even to the life-shapers who created them, they have acquired psionic powers similar to wild talents. A dark cloak is really a psicloak, a living wrap that gives its wearer psionic protection. It offers a physical and a mental AC of 5.

Eyehand (Tissue, Graft; 1d4 hp, AC 8): An eyehand is a strange graft that can be placed on the palm of a humanoid's hand. It resembles a flattened eye and feeds visual information through the nerves in the host's arm as if it were a normal eye. When the eyehand is used, the wearer's normal eyes should be closed to prevent sensory overload and disorientation. The eye has a thick eyelid that closes when the hand is used so that the eye is protected. The eyehand is useful for looking backward, peering around corners, and similar situations.

Eyestalk (Tissue, Graft; 1d4 hp, AC 8): This graft can only be used if the host has an available empty eye socket. The graft is placed within the socket and is indistinguishable from a normal, natural eye 75% of the time. It operates as a normal eye, but has the added feature of being mounted on an extendable, prehensile eyestalk measuring 1-foot in length.



The eyestalk is not visible until it is used. The stalk allows the eye to move up and around the host's head, peering around corners, behind the user, and into small openings.

Life-Leech Sword (Creature, 1d4+4 HD, AC 4): This halfling short sword rapidly absorbs nutrients and water from its victim. The draining effect is reflected in the target's loss of 1d12 points of damage. The first strike of a life-leech sword injects a mild sedative around the wound. The sedative reduces the effect of further attacks so that additional hits on the same target within a 24-hour period inflict only 1d6 damage. In addition, the sword inflicts normal damage with every hit.

Lightning Generator (Creature, 2 HD, AC 8): This creature is a barrel-shaped pod approximately 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide. It generates and builds up static electricity within specialized organs, releasing the energy as a 6d6 *lightning bolt* cast by a 6th-level wizard. The lightning bolt is directed by an operator with a 3-foot long wand connected by a flexible cord to the generator. These tools are actually parts of the creature itself. One bolt can be fired every 15 minutes, but the generator only produces if left idle (that is, it cannot be jostled, damaged, carried, or otherwise disturbed). This makes a useful weapon for defense, but it cannot be carried into battle. If placed in the carriage of a soar whale, there is a 25% chance that even the slow, gentle movement of that creature prevents it from operating at any given time.

Mimicskin (Creature 1d4 hp, AC 8): This is applied much in the same way as sheath armor. It provides no protection, however. Instead, it can obey the mental commands of the wearer and alter his outward appearance (making it one of the most sophisticated of all artifact-shapes.) The limits of this disguise are as an *alter self* spell. Simply put, the wearer can appear as any humanoid creature with 50% of his mass. The skin, however, can only make the wearer appear the same size or larger, never smaller.

Overmind (Creature, 3 HD, AC 4): Only one of these creations is still known to exist. It is an artificial brain, designed only to hear, think, and speak. The overmind can be used to make decisions or evaluate probable outcomes. This creation is 8 feet high and just as wide, made of tissue resembling the gray matter of a humanoid brain. The lower portion of the creation has a normal, halfling size mouth placed next to a single ear. The overmind has no means of perception other than hearing (unless it is connected to another creature via a senselink—see below), so it must have information spoken to it, in as much detail as possible. The overmind can formulate decisions and make evaluations based on probability and logic, limited only by the extent of its knowledge (which is quite extensive). There is a base 75% chance that it gives the correct answer or best decision if given adequate data.

Recorder (Creature, 1d4 hp, AC 8): This device resembles a cube, 5 inches to a side. In a manner unknown to even the most enlightened modern shaper, the cube is able to capture sounds and replay them any number of times. One recording of up to 10 minutes in length, can be stored for each cube face. There is only one known in existence today, and it is never used to store new sounds. It holds the Dal-erat, or the *word of the people*, a message from ancient times regarding the values of life spoken by an unknown life-shaper or high lord.

Senselink (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): This strange organic cord is 3 feet in length. Each end has a small nodule that can be placed on the temple or forehead of any creature. Through the senselink, a user can view the memories of another creature. Any sight experienced by one can be viewed by the other, any sound encountered by one can be heard by the other. Thoughts, ideas, and opinions cannot be transmitted, only actual memories. Those with access to these rare devices often send out a trained animal or life-shaped guardian to explore an area and, when the beast returns, use the senselink to experience exactly what the creature felt. A senselink could also be used to preserve an image of the past and pass it down through many generations.

The Womb (Creature, 6 HD, AC 0): This singular creature is unlike any other life-shaped creation. It is truly ancient, its workings and creation completely unknown to even the most experienced life-shaper today. The womb's only use is the testing of potential life-shapers. The creature rests within and completely fills a 100-foot square chamber within the Sanctuary of Thamasku.

At sometime during their indoctrination, young life-shaper trainees are literally dropped into the womb. They pass through long, intestinal tubes, through peristalsis, into strange organic chambers. What actually occurs within the creature is unknown because all memory of the experience is erased from the minds of those that emerge. Those accepted

by the womb are placed, unharmed, in a chamber below the womb. These individuals can go on to become life-shapers, for it is assumed that the forces of life have bonded with them and pervaded their beings. Those subjects rejected are deposited either dead or comatose. The comatose are nursed back to health and returned to their families to take up some other occupation, wearing their shame all their lives.

Engines

Price List

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Air Pump | 500 |
| Furnace | 650 |
| Motive Engine | 750 |
| Water Pump | 350 |

An engine is a living organism life-shaped to move in a particular way or to generate energy. These creatures are usually large and complex, powering or driving operations with great energy. They each require 10 doses of cam-rah each day because of the requirements of their massive size combined with the tremendous power they generate. Because of cost and upkeep considerations, these drivers are beyond the reach of the average citizen.

Air Pump (Creature, 3 HD AC 4): This creature has a huge, expandable lung as well as a large, central organ that holds air. The creature uses two trunk-like appendages to draw in and exhale air. A single air pump can draw up to 30 cubic feet of air per round. The creature itself is a bulbous mass of flesh with a prehensile trunk on either end. Its body is 10 feet across and each trunk is 6 feet long and 3 feet around. Sometimes branch tubing is installed in the exhalation trunks to direct the airflow to different locations.

This creature is useful for circulating air in large structures, ridding enclosed spaces of befouled atmospheres, and providing underwater chambers with fresh oxygen (large pipes or tubes often connect one trunk with the surface if deep underwater).

Furnace (Creature, 2 HD, AC 6): This globular creature is about 3 feet across. It generates an inordinate amount of heat—the equivalent of a several large, roaring campfires.

Motive Engine (Creature, 2 HD, AC 6): This creature is made to drive or move simple machines like flour grinders, pulley systems, elevator platforms, and even gates. A motive engine looks like a large mass of muscle with one to four huge arms that pull, push, turn and manipulate large, simple objects.

Water Pump (Living Creature 2 HD, AC 6): This creature has a huge, expandable lung as well as a large stomach organ that holds water. Two appendages shaped like trunks draw in and expel water. A single water pump can displace up to 10 gallons per round. Like the air pump, the creature is a bulbous mass of flesh with prehensile trunks on either end. The creature's body is 10 feet across and each trunk is 6 feet long. Sometimes tubing reeds are attached to the expulsion trunk to allow the water to travel greater distances.

Grafts

Price List

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Cosmetic Skin Graft | 25 |
| Glider Graft | 90 |
| Glowing Graft | 20 |
| Lens Grafts (pair) | 50 |
| Lightvisor | 75 |
| Swim Fins (four) | 50 |
| Touch Pads (six) | 40 |

Grafts are life-shaped creations that physically bond themselves to other living creatures. They always provide some useful service and, in exchange, they gain sustenance from the body of the host, forming a symbiotic relationship.

All grafts may be attached, removed, and reattached to the flesh of a living creature.

When attached, the graft holds itself in place with a mild adhesive and inserts microscopic filaments into the host through which it drains tiny amounts of water and nutrients. After removal, the flesh of the host displays a redness and a slight rash, but no other lasting effects are evident. The rash fades after 24 hours.

Unless otherwise noted, a graft requires its host to increase his food and water intake by 10%. Failure to do so results in a loss of 1 hit point per day after the first three days of graft use. Short-time graft connections, for a few hours each day, result in no noticeable draining effects.

Cosmetic Skin Graft (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): These grafts are minor and the drain upon hosts is negligible no matter how long they are worn. Most of them are designed as symbols displaying the wearer's membership in an organization, such as the vher-elus. These are often called badge grafts, others are merely decorative.

Glider Graft (Tissue, 2 HD, AC 8): Composed mostly of large, thin membranes, these grafts attach to their host's back and the backs of his arms. Most of the time, they are compactly withdrawn, curled up in the small of the host's back, looking like small back-

packs. When unfurled, the membranes spread between the host's back and arms, allowing him to soar and glide through the air. The user must launch himself from a height of at least 30 feet, and can then glide up to 100 feet for every 10 feet of launch-height.

Glow Graft (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): These grafts are similar to glow pods. They create light through bioluminescence and produce light to equivalent to that of a torch.

Lens Graft (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): Appearing as tiny, clear, concave lenses, these tiny scraps of tissue attach directly to a host's eyes. They improve the host's vision, allowing him to see twice as far as normal while still viewing close objects as usual. A single graft is not enough to produce the effect—using one lens only results in blurred vision. A pair of lenses drains a host as would a single graft of another type.

Lightvisor (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): This complex and sophisticated graft fits over the eyes of a host like a blindfold or a mask, although it can be pushed up onto the forehead when not in use. The visor resembles a hat brim. When the host looks through the reddish membranes covering the eye holes, the lightvisor allows him to see normally in situations where there is very little light. It is useless, however, in total darkness.

Swim Fins Graft (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): These grafts attach themselves to a host's hands and feet. As the name suggests, they are swimming aides. Swim fin grafts can increase a user's speed and the amount of time he can swim without tiring by 50%. Each of the fins absorbs nutrients from the host, so wearing four can be draining.

Touch Pads Graft (Tissue, 1d4 hp, AC 8): These grafts are tiny, circular pads that attach to the host's fingers and hands. They increase the host's sensitivity to touch. Searching for traps or picking locks is easier with these grafts, the chances for the success of such actions are increased by 10% (to a maximum of 99%). One is needed on each finger, thumb, and the palm to be effective, although six of these grafts only drains the host as much as one normal graft.

Producers

Price List

Food Producers

| | |
|------------|------------|
| Bar-edum | 8 |
| Don-eguth | 5 per bulb |
| Chuhn-egil | 10 |
| Vash-erat | 10 |

Textile Producers

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Drun-sahn | 9 |
| Fis-evar | 10 |
| Ghov-erad | 15 |

Producers are shapes designed to create useful raw materials and finished commodities. They make food, fluids, medicines, textiles, and other goods. These creatures demand the most attention from tenders. Presented here are a few of the most common producers, although there are others that create even rarer products.

Food Producers (Creatures, 1d4 hp, AC 8): Food producers come in many varieties. Bar-edum are soft-backed, turtle creatures that produce eggs. Don-eguth are small tree growths that sprout from bulbs and produce sweet, reddish fruit. Chuhn-egil give milk from their bulbous bodies and vash-erat sprout large amounts of tiny grains on their body that is then sheared and ground into flour.

Textile Producers (Creatures, 1d4, AC 8): The shed skin of the snakelike drun-sahn can be cured into strong leather, while the slow-moving herd animals known as fis-evar grow long wool that is sheared and spun into fabric. The ghov-erad is a flat, nonmobile creature that secretes a thin film. The film hardens into the material used to make dycloaks.

Building Materials

Like all operations involving life-shaping, only life-shapers are able to construct organic structures for the halflings. This is one of the few shaping processes that the public ever gets to see. Nen, an organic stone-like material, is grown from a single sponge creature and shaped as it grows into its desired form. This process takes one to three weeks of constant attention on the part of a team of life-shapers. Once formed, the nen dies and the structure that remains never changes.

Rahn-rath is a living building material grown in shaper laboratories and brought to construction sites in pieces. Shaper skills then fit the pieces together and meld them into a single organism. Rahn-rath structural shapes can be altered, with the attention and care of at least one life-shaper and a skilled tender. Walls, doors, windows, even entire rooms can be moved or altered in just a few days.

Medicinal Applications

Price List

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Bloodclot | 5 |
| Detoxifiers | 5 |
| Healing Patch | 15 |
| Joiner | 20 |
| Preservation Fluid (25 gallons) | 25 |

Inherent within the art of life-shaping is a fairly detailed, albeit ritualized, knowledge of the processes of life and medicine. Rhul-thaun healers are able to use medicinal herbs and preparations to aid the wounded and sick. Besides these basic healing arts, life-shaping has produced some cures and restoratives of its own. These applications work on both shaped and natural creatures.

Bloodclot (Tissue 1 hp, AC 10): A bloodclot shape is small, 3 inches in diameter, a circular patch of flesh. When placed on a wound, it stops all bleeding, prevents further hit point loss, and restores 1 lost hit point. After 1d10 minutes the wound heals completely, leaving some of the bloodclot flesh enmeshing in the patient's own flesh. The excess skin tissue from the bloodclot flakes away, dead.

Detoxifiers (Creatures, 1 hp, AC 10): These tiny creatures are suspended in a liquid that the patient consumes. These tiny, virtually microscopic organisms enter the patient's bloodstream and vital organs, isolating all toxic substances. In 2d4 rounds they completely neutralize all poisons. They do not repair damage already sustained, but they can prevent damage from occurring if taken in time. Once they have performed their function, they are flushed from the system and die.

Healing Patch (Tissue, 1 hp, AC 8): More potent than bloodclots, which they resemble, these fleshy patches release healing chemicals and medicines into the systems of the creatures to which they are applied. The healing patches restore 1d8 points of damage. After this immediate use, they wither and die.

Joiner (Tissue Graft, 1 hp, AC 8): A joiner is a sophisticated healing graft that facilitates the rejoining of severed limbs. It is a thin mass of tissue that is literally placed between a severed limb and the stump to which it was formerly connected. The joiner mends bone tissue, reconnects blood vessels and muscle tissue, and reestablishes nerve connections. For 2d6 days after this operation, the patient cannot move *at all*. After this period there is a 75% chance that the joiner has successfully facilitated the reattachment of the limb to the body. At this point, the graft becomes part of the host, and no longer drains nutrients. If the part to be attached was not an original limb of the patient, the chance of success is only 50%.

Preservation Fluid (Product): This organic soup preserves organic material from decay and decomposition. It may be used to preserve severed limbs so that they can be reattached with a joiner.


Tending the Shaped

Taking care of shaped objects once they are fully mature is so important that the tenders' job is one of the most common occupations among the rhul-thaun. The tenders are the caretakers of life-shaped creations and most of the time tenders take care of the class of shapes known as producers. They usually specialize, taking care of a specific class of producer or other shaped creation.

Nourishment and Rest

All shaped, living creatures require nourishment, water, oxygen, and other substances for maintenance. The life-shapers bottle a nutrient solution called *cam-rahn* that supplies the shapes with food and water. Shaped creations require one dose of cam-rahn per Hit Die per day. Cam-rahn costs 1 ghav-egoth per dose. Nearly all of the creatures are equipped with the ability to inhale and exhale and provide themselves with oxygen (most breathe it in from the air. However, a few have gills that extract oxygen from water). Shaped living creatures can exist for 1d4+1 days without nutritional supplements; shaped tissue creations survive but 1d2+1 days.

All living shapes need rest at least equal to the amount of time of use, and no constant use may last longer than 24 hours. If a shaped engine works for eight hours, it must rest for eight. If it labored around the clock, it should rest for a full 24 hours. Violating this guideline results in the loss of 1d4 hit points from the overworked shape for every four hours of additional use without rest.



While not in use, creations of tissue are suspended in an organic, oxygenated solution called *lor-rahn*. When they are in use, tissue creations must be immersed in *lor-rahn* for at least 30 minutes every 24-hours. If they are not, there is a 20% cumulative chance that the shapes wither and die. *Lor-rahn* costs 1 ghav-egoth per gallon. Shapes that are living creatures outlive those that are simply masses of tissue. Treated well, a life-shaped creature lives for 3d4 years. Tissue creations' life-span is only 1d2 years. Organic products are not alive and continue to function until damaged or worn out.

The Effects of Magic

Because many of the shaped creations are actually living creatures, certain magical spells affect them in strange ways. Generally, a living creation can be an applicable target for any spell that affects living creatures. Life-shaped objects cannot be summoned like animals or monsters. Obviously, *magic missiles*, *fireballs*, *lightning bolts*, and similar destructive spells harm the creations as they would any other vulnerable target. Similarly, *cloudkill*, *deathfog*, *death spell*, *maze*, *imprisonment*, and *temporal stasis* can all affect the life-shaped as well. Some spells have special effects when cast upon the shaped. These are detailed below.

Wizard Spells

Animal growth: This spell functions exactly as *plant growth*.

Animate dead: Dead shaped creations can be animated. As a rule, undead shaped creatures are half as fast, effective, and strong as a living one.

Charm monster: Since the shaped objects display qualities of both animals and plants, spells such as this have a 50% chance of working on them. If the spell succeeds, the caster has complete control of the shaped item for 1d6x10 days. The shaped creation cannot be used to harm the caster and it obeys his verbal commands. The object cannot defy its basic limitations (a weapon cannot animate and attack on its own). Nevertheless, it can temporarily alter its own shape to a limited degree—a clingbag can remain shut, a warstaff can bend, and so on.

Charm person: This spell does not affect the life-shaped, although *charm monster* and *charm plant* may.

Charm plants: This spell functions exactly like *charm monster*.

Clone: Shaped creations can be cloned by use of this spell. There are no detrimental effects when two duplicate, life-shaped creations exist at the same time.

Enchant an item: Shaped creations can be made magical, like any other item.

Energy drain: This spell can slay any shaped creation.

Forget: When cast upon a shaped creation, the target ceases functioning for 1d8 rounds.

Grease: This spell, if cast directly upon a graft, causes it to slide off the host if the host fails to make a successful saving throw.

Haste: *Hasted* shaped creations, like any living targets, move twice as fast as normal. Those without any sort of mobility or action are not affected. This spell would be of little use if cast upon a clingbag or a warstaff, but can be very useful when cast upon a flash-lance or a windriding mount.

Hold monster: This has a 50% chance of working on a shaped creation. If effective, the creation cannot be used for the duration of the spell.

Major creation: As *minor creation*.

Minor creation: This spell can be used to create a shaped creation categorized as a product of a living creature. This assumes that the caster is very familiar with shaped creations and, in particular, the shaped one to be created.

Otto's irresistible dance: This spell affects shaped creatures, causing them to be useless for the duration of the spell.

Plant growth: This spell has a 50% chance of working on a shaped creation. The effects of the size change vary from creation to creation, although this may not be a terribly useful spell overall.

Polymorph any object: As *polymorph other*, below.

Polymorph other: The spell functions normally on the shaped. Casters with extensive knowledge of life-shaped creatures can even polymorph other creatures into specific life-

shaped creations. The caster must be familiar with the creation that the target is to become. The resultant shaped creature has all of the normal benefits and limitations.

Polymorph self: As *polymorph other*, a caster can polymorph himself into a life-shaped creation.

Power word, stun: This spell affects life-shaped creations normally. Stunned creations are unable to function.

Ray of enfeeblement: This spell weakens shaped creations. If cast upon a weapon or a creation that can inflict damage, the creation suffers a -2 to attack rolls and -1 on each die of damage (to a minimum of 1 per die). Armor Class is reduced by 2.

Reincarnation: This spell does not affect the shaped, living or dead.

Repulsion: This spell affects shaped creations.

Shape change: As *polymorph self*; above.

Sleep: This spell affects one shaped creation, making it limp and useless for 1d6 rounds.

Slow: As *haste*, only the shaped creation is slowed.

Stone to flesh: The reverse of *stone to flesh* can affect the life-shaped and this spell can too, to restore petrified shaped objects.

Stoneskin: This spell can be cast upon a life-shaped creation as any other target.

Strength: When cast, this spell makes creations stronger. Weapons gain +1 to attack and damage rolls. Armor gains one step in Armor Class.

Transmute water to dust: If cast upon shaped creations, which are so dependent upon water, the life-shaped creature dies.

Vampiric touch: This spell affects shaped creations as it would any other creature.

Priest Spells

Animal growth: This spell functions exactly as *plant growth*.

Animate dead: Dead shaped creations can be animated. Generally, undead shaped creatures are half as fast, effective, and strong as a living one.

Animate object: Shaped creatures can be affected by this spell.

Anti-animal shell: This spell has a 50% chance to keep out shaped creations of any sort.

Anti-plant shell: This spell has a 50% chance to keep out shaped creations of any sort.

Charm person or mammal: This spell has a 50% chance of working on the shaped.

Cure light wounds: Healing spells of all types work on the life-shaped normally, repairing any damage.

Hold animal: This has a 50% chance of working on a shaped creation. If effective, the creation cannot be used for the duration of the spell.

Hold plant: This has a 50% chance of working on a shaped creation. If effective, the creation cannot be used for the duration of the spell.

Invisibility to animals: This spell has a 50% chance of working on life-shaped creations. If successful, the shaped do not recognize the presence of invisible targets. This applies only to shaped creations with sensory abilities like the sensor.

Plant growth: This spell has a 50% chance of working on a shaped creation. The effects of the size change vary from creation to creation, although this may not be terribly useful.

Raise dead: Dead shaped can be *raised*. This spell functions normally.

Regenerate: This spell restores severed parts of life-shaped creations. Its reverse destroys shaped creations.

Reincarnate: This spell does not affect the shaped, living or dead.

Restoration: While this spell has no applicable use for the shaped, its reverse destroys them.

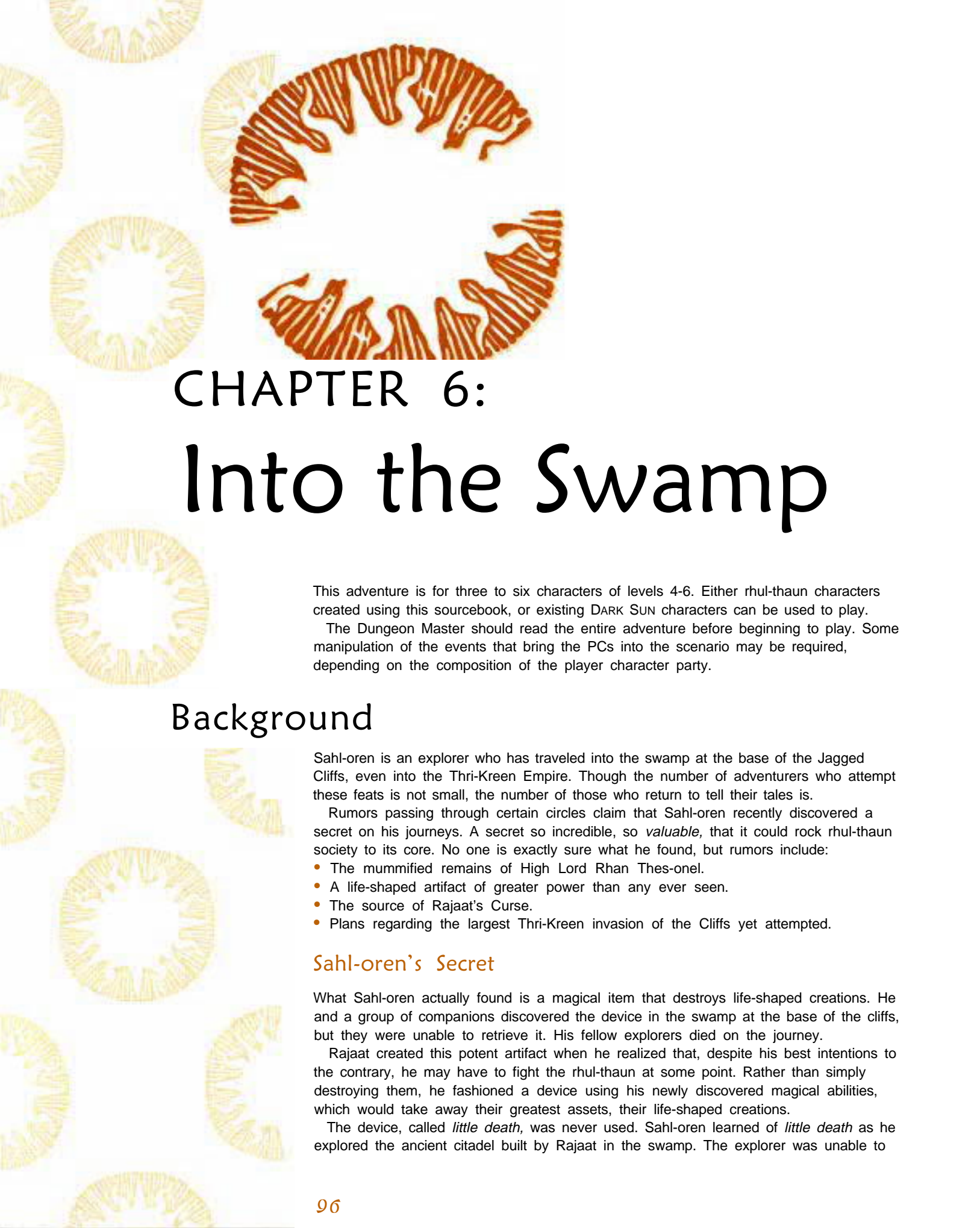
Resurrection: Dead shaped can be *raised*. This spell functions normally.

Speak with animals: It is impossible to speak to normal life-shaped creatures. The DM may rule that it is possible to speak with certain life-shaped "artifacts" that have intelligence.

Speak with plants: Speaking to normal life-shaped creatures is impossible. The DM may rule that it is possible to speak to certain life-shaped "artifacts" with intelligence.

Speak with monsters: Speaking to normal life-shaped creatures is impossible. The DM may rule that it is possible to speak to certain life-shaped "artifacts" with intelligence.

Transmute water to dust: If cast upon shaped creations, which are so dependent upon water, the life-shaped creature dies.



CHAPTER 6:

Into the Swamp

This adventure is for three to six characters of levels 4-6. Either rhul-thaun characters created using this sourcebook, or existing DARK SUN characters can be used to play.

The Dungeon Master should read the entire adventure before beginning to play. Some manipulation of the events that bring the PCs into the scenario may be required, depending on the composition of the player character party.

Background

Sahl-oren is an explorer who has traveled into the swamp at the base of the Jagged Cliffs, even into the Thri-Kreen Empire. Though the number of adventurers who attempt these feats is not small, the number of those who return to tell their tales is.

Rumors passing through certain circles claim that Sahl-oren recently discovered a secret on his journeys. A secret so incredible, so *valuable*, that it could rock rhul-thaun society to its core. No one is exactly sure what he found, but rumors include:

- The mummified remains of High Lord Rhan Thes-oneI.
- A life-shaped artifact of greater power than any ever seen.
- The source of Rajaat's Curse.
- Plans regarding the largest Thri-Kreen invasion of the Cliffs yet attempted.

Sahl-oren's Secret

What Sahl-oren actually found is a magical item that destroys life-shaped creations. He and a group of companions discovered the device in the swamp at the base of the cliffs, but they were unable to retrieve it. His fellow explorers died on the journey.

Rajaat created this potent artifact when he realized that, despite his best intentions to the contrary, he may have to fight the rhul-thaun at some point. Rather than simply destroying them, he fashioned a device using his newly discovered magical abilities, which would take away their greatest assets, their life-shaped creations.

The device, called *little death*, was never used. Sahl-oren learned of *little death* as he explored the ancient citadel built by Rajaat in the swamp. The explorer was unable to

get past the traps and magical protections defending it, however. He returned to the cliffs and was apprehended by members of the Chahn when he let his secrets slip. Now his captors seek to force Sahl-oren to lead them to the device.

Getting the Heroes Involved

One of the trickiest aspects of an adventure is constructing a plausible introduction that brings the heroes into the story. Getting the Player Characters involved in this adventure depends on whether the characters are outsiders or rhul-thaun themselves.

Rhul-thaun Characters

A PC group composed entirely of rhul-thaun halflings, such as a climbing group or a group of explorers, might hear the rumors and attempt to investigate on their own. Alternatively, a wealthy or influential individual could hire them, someone with a stake in Sahl-oren's discovery.

Another possibility is that the heroes could be searching for Sahl-oren himself rather than his secrets.

Outsiders

If the adventurers are Athasians from beyond the Jagged Cliffs, the DM has a good deal more work in store. Player Characters from the Tyr Region must be introduced to rhul-thaun culture before they can be used in this adventure.

There are two ways to approach the task of presenting the rhul-thaun to the heroes. The first is to have them suddenly and surprisingly show themselves to the isolated halflings. With the rift opened by the recent earthquake, people from the Tyr region are sure to find the rhul-thaun one way or another.

Most of the halflings react with hesitant friendship toward the newcomers while others are unable to hide their distrust, speaking against the outsiders and wishing to hide their culture's secrets from them.

Another method of integrating the heroes into this new society is through subterfuge and trickery. Various spells, disguises, and magical items can be used to make the heroes appear to be halflings or at least of races with which the rhul-thaun are familiar (such as pterrans—whom, of course, they hate).

A major motivation for outsiders to find and deal with the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs is that the rhul-thaun are privy to knowledge that the outsiders and the heroes are not. Possible areas of information include details about the thri-kreen empire, Rajaat, and the ancient history of the world. In these situations, the DM should make it appear that Sahl-oren's secret deals with the information that the heroes seek.

The Set Up

For the purposes of this adventure, it is assumed that the PCs are rhul-thaun in Thamasku, hired by an individual to find Sahl-oren and his secrets. Only a small amount of changes need be made should either of these facts prove to be untrue.

Cohg-agon is a wealthy merchant who is an information broker besides selling more obvious goods.

She bases her operations in Thamasku. The party hears that she is interested in hiring some adventurers to perform a task for her. Upon inquiring, one of her assistants gives the heroes a place and time to meet Cohg-oren. They are asked to meet her at The Mirrored Host, an upscale safehome in the North Quarter. Cohg-agon pays for drinks and even dinner if her prospective employees so desire. After a bit of small talk, the merchant settles in and tells the heroes the following tale.

As individuals of capable means and clever minds, you have probably already heard the rumors regarding a gentleman by the name of Sahl-oren. This fellow seems to have stumbled upon something of great value—a secret that may be priceless.

At this point, the heroes will probably interject something if they have heard the rumors. Cohg-agon listens to them politely, feigning interest, and then continues.

His secret is something I desire to share. I know that obtaining it will be difficult, so I have contacted the best and most capable adventurers available—you. Are you interested?

The heroes will most likely give their opinions and request more information. Though she does not know the nature of the secret, she has heard all of the above-mentioned rumors. Any secret along those lines is definitely worth knowing and worth selling to the right people. She will pay each character 500 ghav-egoths for the mission, and she will give the group a 20% cut on any profit she makes from the information if they agree to give her exclusive rights to the secret (this cut could be as high as 1,000 ghav-egoths). This means that they can reveal their findings only to her. If asked about her ability to enforce the agreement, she merely states “you don’t want to press that issue, let me assure you. I am not someone you would wish to cross.” If the heroes have any contacts in the underworld, they are informed that it is common knowledge that Cohg-agon uses efficient and deadly hired thugs to enforce her will. There is even a 15% chance that they learn that she has connections with the life-shapers.

If the heroes accept, she will give them the following details.

Sahl-oren was last seen in the Village of Glerran three days ago. He has since completely disappeared. There are a few knowledgeable people who may give you some idea of his current whereabouts. I will give you their names and locations, as well as transportation to Glerran, but after that you are on your own. I will pay you upon your return.

The names that she provides are as follows:

- Lech-ohar, a tender in the village
- Tehl-atuil, a painter in the village
- Zohr-ovios, the barkeeper at the Rouster’s safehome

Cohg-agon (haf/T10): AC 9 (Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 39; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quickstrike); SA x4 backstab, poison; SZ S (2’11”); ML Average (10); AL N; XP 2,000. S 11, D 15, C 10, I 15, W 17, Ch 13.

Personality: flattering, clever

Special Equipment: clingbag, quickstrike with poison nodule, touch pad grafts

Thief Abilities: PP 80, OL 67, F/RT 65, MS 78, HS 63, DN 60, CW 95, RL 0

Cohg-agon is a merchant deep in the pockets of the life shapers. She is a dealer in information as well as life-shaped creations. Although she is interested in Sahl-oren’s secret for herself, ultimately it is to her shaper masters that she must provide the information.

Cohg-agon is middle-aged, but of course that is impossible to tell from her outward appearance since she is a halfling. Slightly overweight, she maintains an impeccably groomed appearance for business dealings. She crops her hair very short and displays a solitary flair in the red cosmetic graft surrounding her left eye.

On the Trail

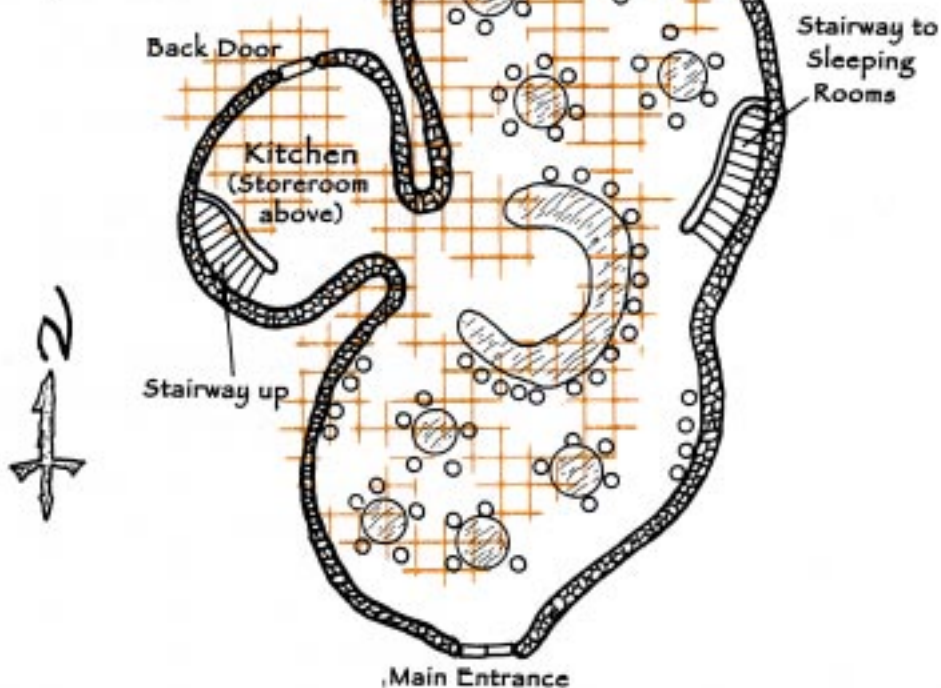
The transport Cohg-agon provides is a soar whale guided by a windrider named Trav-osald (ham/F4/T5/NG). Although the windrider leaves from a high tower mooring in Thamasku, he wishes to make a short stop in Sol-fehn (the journey takes about 75 minutes). It is during this short stop to pick up some needed supplies (including cam-rahn to feed his mount), that the PCs have their first encounter.

A Brief Stop

Trav-osald tells the group that they can go where they will in the tiny village, but please meet him back at his tethered mount after one hour. It does not matter what the heroes do—after 10 minutes, have each player make an Intelligence check at -3. Anyone who is successful will notice that they are being watched from a nearby tower. If the heroes attempt to investigate, their secret observer will try to flee if he notices them approach-

Rouster's Safehome

1 Square = 3 Feet



ing. If unable to flee, he uses clerical spells to defend himself and elude capture.

Ruv-odesh (ham/C7 [water]): AC 1 (shell armor and shield); MV 6; hp 42; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (hurling titan); SA Summon 7 cubic feet of water; SZ S (3'3"); ML Average (9); AL N; XP 975.

S 16, D 12, C 14, I 10, W 17, Ch 8.

Personality: nervous, contemptuous

Special Equipment: shell armor, hurling titan, coolcloak

Spells (5/5/3/1): 1st— *command, create water, cure light wounds, cause fear, sanctuary*; 2nd— *augury, hold person (x2), know alignment, spiritual hammer*; 3rd— *feign death, summon insects, water walk*; 4th— *giant insect*

Ruv-odesh is a minor priest of water and a secret member of the Chahn. He is thin, tall (for a halfling) and very ugly. The Chahn sent word that the life-shapers had directed agents to Sol-fehn to search for Sahl-oren and that he was to watch for them. They also provided the PC's physical descriptions, given to them by spies in Thamasku.

If pressured or threatened with physical harm, Ruv-odesh tells the heroes everything he knows. He even gives them a minor rundown on the Chahn if they are unfamiliar with the organization. If this occurs, the characters know that the Chahn is somehow involved and is aware of their activities. They may also discover that there is apparently a connection between their employer and the life-shapers.

Glerran

The flight to Glerran only takes about an hour and consists almost entirely of a single, slow, vertical descent. The heroes are dropped off and left on their own. Their investigation most likely begins with the contacts provided by Cohg-agon.

Lech-ohar (ham/T0/LN). This elderly man is a tender, caring for a "flock" of thag-erims. These life-shaped creatures are slug-based beasts that produce nodules containing an organic curative for many infections. Lech-ohar dabbles in the healing arts as well, occasionally seeing patients and helping with the odd cold, scrape, or bruise. Most people think very highly of him.

Lech-ohar is also an old friend of Cohg-agon, having worked for her father as a merchant's assistant long ago. He passes information along to her when he can, and if the heroes introduce themselves as acquaintances of Cohg-agon, the old man will tell them what they want to know.

Sahl-oren's in a heap-a trouble. The Chahn is after his secret. I never did hear what 'twas he found, but it's big enough to git their notice. I heard they was gonna nab him and force him to take them to what e'er he found.

Lech-ohar doesn't know anything else, and doesn't remember where he heard his information.

Tehl-atuil (haf/T3/CN). This woman is a painter in the village. Tehl-atuil is a loner, but very observant. She knows Cohg-agon and occasionally sends her information—for a price. If the adventurers give her at least 5 ghav-egoths (or the equivalent), she tells them the following.

I saw the explorer named Sahl-oren and a few companions leave Glerran many days ago. They were on an expedition down to the swamp at the base of the cliffs, looking for some mysterious relic. Something to do with Rajaan's Curse.

She then shows them the quick sketches she drew of the explorers as they prepared to leave. Astute characters notice that she has literally hundreds of sketches and paintings of events in Glerran, keeping a visual record of virtually all that transpires in the village.

Tehl-atuil has no knowledge of what happened to Sahl-oren on his expedition or when he returned to Glerran.

Zohr-ovios (ham/F3/N). To find this man, the heroes need to go to the safehome known as Rouster's. This is a rough place, full of criminals and ruffians. There are 22 patrons at the safehome when the PCs visit. Zohr-ovios runs the bar and serves drinks.

If questioned, the barkeep is suspicious and cagey. Nothing can loosen his tongue, not even money. The Chahn has already spoken to him, threatening him with his life if he talks to the heroes.

After the characters have spoken to Zohr-ovios for a few minutes, four Chahn agents attack them.

Chahn warriors (ham/F4 [4]): AC 6 (hide armor and shield); MV 6; hp 21, 23, 24, 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SZ S (3' tall); ML Steady (12); Int Avg (10); AL NE; XP 270.

Special Equipment: one Chahn warrior has a grappler, another has a sleep spore pod.

On the first round of the attack (check for surprise at -2), two warriors come in through the main entrance, while two more Chahn rush in through the back door. One throws his sleep spore pod into the crowd to create confusion and detain the throng. Another uses a grappler on a PC while the rest advance to melee. Their orders are to kill the heroes.

If things go against them, or if they fail a morale check, the Chahn attempt to flee. They will not surrender and if captured provide no information other than that they were sent to kill the characters. If, however, the heroes are hard pressed, some (1d8) of the safehome patrons can move in to help. Treat the patrons as 1st-level warriors.

If the adventurers have defeated the Chahn agents and prevented a great deal of harm to the safehome or its patrons, Zohr-ovios is so grateful that he answers all of the heroes' questions.

The Chahn captured Sahl-oren after they heard about his secret find. I don't know exactly what he found, but I heard him say himself, as he sat at this very bar, that he and some companions found some sort of citadel in the swamp. Apparently, they followed a climber path down to a camp at the base of the cliffs, almost straight down from here. From there, they blazed a trail of their own, following directions they got from a windrider who spotted the place from the air. The trail, he said, was clearly marked to make it easy to follow.

He doesn't know where the Chahn is holding Sahl-oren, but he suspects that they have already left for the swamp with him leading the way under duress—a fact he won't reveal unless asked. Zohr-ovios knows little else except that the windrider's name was Kan-achiv. He won't reveal this without being asked, either.

The Chahn has indeed already taken Sahl-oren down into the swamp. The heroes find it impossible to root out the radical group's secret base of operations here in Glerran. Their only option is to attempt to follow the explorer's path down, into the swamp.

Downward

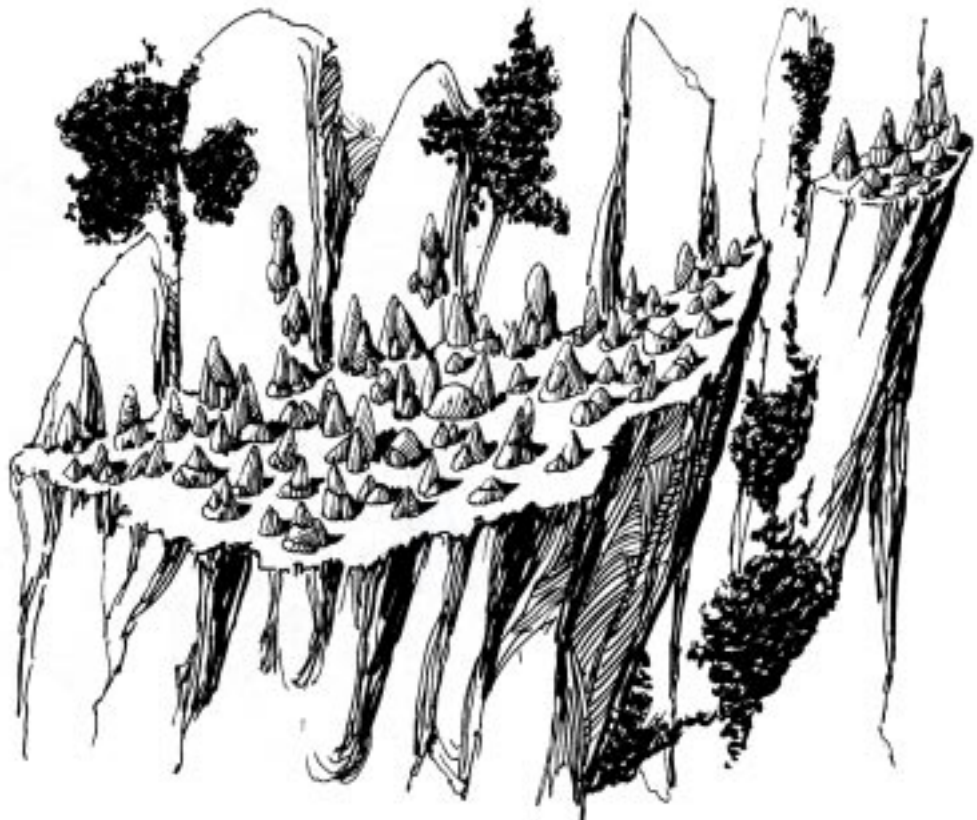
There are essentially two ways to get to the swamp, unless the heroes can use a magical device or spell, such as *fly* or *teleport*.

The first is to climb down, like Sahl-oren and company did originally. If one or more of the characters are rhul-thaun climbers, this is easy to accomplish. They can immediately find the climbing path that the bartender mentioned. If the heroes are not climbers, their best course of action is to hire a climber or a group of climbers to help them. The DM should stress that without professional assistance, even characters with the mountaineering proficiency face incredible risks attempting the mile long trek downward. Climbing down takes two full days with an appropriate amount of time for rest and sleep in between on the ledges. If all of the characters are mountaineers or professional climbers, this cuts the time by a half day.

The second method of going down is to hire a windrider to ferry them to the swamp. This gets the PCs to the swamp *much* faster (it takes about an hour), but it is more expensive and the windrider may not know the climbing paths well enough to know where to put the characters down.

If, however, the player characters know the name of the windrider who originally gave Sahl-oren the information, they can pretty easily track her down by asking around.

Kan-achiv is a skilled and experienced windrider. She happily tells the characters all about the day that her mount took ill and she almost crashed into the swamp. On that day, she was forced to fly very close to ground level, where the mist is always thickest. As she nursed her ber-ethern back to the cliffs, she spotted a floating fortress of stone



between the trees and brambles of the swamp. She can provide them with rough directions (see Map #4), but under no circumstances will she go there. She has a great fear of Rajaat's Curse and the horrible monsters that live in the swamp.

In fact, the heroes are not able to find any windrider in Glerran willing to take them that far into the swamp. Setting them down at the edge is their only option.

The Base of the Cliffs

Whether they climb or fly, the heroes end up at the base of the cliffs. If they climbed down, it was a harrowing but relatively uneventful trip. With experienced climbers, a climbing path, and the right equipment, falling is almost impossible. The DM should require climbing rolls only if the heroes set out on their own, without proper knowledge or equipment. Stress to the PCs that they are being foolish, but if they persist, allow them to fall. Due to poor visibility, slippery conditions, and their inability to follow the marked path, characters who do not know what they are doing make climbing rolls with a penalty of -50%, the check is required every hour of the 40-hour climb.

Flying down is less dangerous, but the environmental changes become more obvious. The heat and humidity increase as the heroes descend and the mist thickens until visibility is reduced to a mere 1d4 feet at any given time.

The Climber's Camp

This small camp rests upon a ledge only 100 feet above the bottom of the cliffs. This is an abandoned camp with a few hide tents, a fire pit, and a few other signs of former habitation. From this shelf, the dark swamp can be surveyed just under the canopy of mist, allowing for brief moments, visibility of up to a mile during the day.

A hive of wild kank, with adapted claws for climbing, has recently taken up residence nearby (just below and to the north, at the edge of the swamp). Any living creature pausing near the nest, looking for food, for the colony, or its queen are attacked by 3d6 kank soldiers. Even if the kank are killed, another wave of the insects will plague the heroes if they remain on the ledge. The hive has a total of 500 kank.



Wild Kank (3d6): AC 5; MV 15; hp 12 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6 or 1d6/1d8; SA bite carries poison that causes paralysis for 2d12 rounds, attack rolls of 15 or over are grapples that inflict 1d6 additional damage; SZ L (8' long); ML Average (10); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 175.

Note: Grappled foes must make a Strength check at -2 to be freed, or companions can inflict 5 hp damage on the pincers.

The Swamp

Once in the swamp itself, the characters find that the mist is actually thinner in most areas. This is because it mainly rises in streams from the occasional steaming pools found in the swamp, combining immediately above the swamp to form a wall of mist. Most places within the swamp are dark and foggy (very little sunlight penetrates the misty barrier this far), but visibility stretches to 2d10+10 feet during the day (dropping to 0 at night) or in bright light, such as that from torches.

Except for the infrequent island, the level of water in the swamp is at least a foot, with frequent hidden holes and pits of quicksand.

Green and black trees with which the PCs are unfamiliar grow in abundance, stringing mossy vines back and forth creating a thick, webbed canopy over the soft earth beneath them. Everything constantly drips with a slimy wetness.

At most times, the swamp seems to be dramatically quiet. Except for the sporadic buzz of insects and bubble of boiling pools, the swamp is silent. Many denizens of the swamp move silently, ambushing their prey in sudden attacks out of the silence and darkness, making them even more terrifying.

Swamp Encounters

The DM should note that many of the possible monsters the heroes may encounter may be too powerful to defeat. The deeper they travel into the swamp, the worse the encounters and magical effects become. Water drakes, nightmare beasts, cistern fiends, and other fearsome creatures are found in large numbers, along with beasts corrupted by the magic of the swamp.

There is a 1 in 6 chance of a random encounter. Check every four hours.

Random Encounters Table

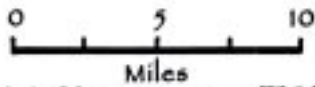
d100

| | |
|-------|------------------|
| 01-20 | Quicksand |
| 21-30 | Steam burst |
| 31-38 | Giant Crocodile |
| 39-45 | Frog, giant |
| 45-50 | Frog, poisonous |
| 51-55 | Strangling vines |
| 56-60 | Bog Wader |
| 61-65 | Hydra |
| 66-70 | Shambling Mound |
| 71-75 | Behir |
| 76-80 | Leech, giant |
| 81-85 | Bvanen |
| 86-88 | Will o'Wisp |
| 89-93 | Reggelid |
| 94-97 | Monstrosity |
| 98-00 | Rajaat's Curse |



Quicksand encounters. It takes 1d4+1 rounds to sink in the quicksand. Assistance from another character or something to grab (such as an available branch from a nearby tree or a hanging vine) are ways to escape. Pulling oneself or another out requires a Strength check. Every round that a character struggles or attempts to swim, decrease by one round the amount of time remaining before being completely submerged.

The Swamp



Steam bursts occur when a fissure of unnaturally heated gas opens, spouting a blast of superheated steam. In this situation, 1d4 characters are in the radius of the burst and take 3d6 points of damage. Characters may make a saving throw vs. breath weapon to reduce the damage by half.

Giant Crocodile: AC 4; MV 6 Sw 12; hp 34; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 3d6/2d10; SA -2 to foes' surprise rolls; SZ H (21-30' long); ML Steady (11); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 1,400.

Frog, giant (5d8): AC 7; MV 3, Sw 9; hp 8 each; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA -3 to foes' surprise rolls, tongue grapples and frog swallows whole on an attack roll of 20; SZ M (5' long); ML Average (8); Int Non (0); AL N; XP 175.

Note: Tongue has a 15' range and is +4 on attack rolls. Those struck are pulled into its mouth in 1 or 2 rounds and bit for maximum damage. Those swallowed whole die in 3 rounds.

Frog, poisonous (2d6): AC 8; MV 3, Sw 9; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA Poisonous bite and touch with +4 on saves; SZ T (6" long); ML Unsteady (6); Int Non (0); AL N; XP 65.

Strangling Vines: AC 5; MV Nil; hp 26; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10; SA Strangle foes for 1d6 damage per round, -1 to foes' surprise rolls; SZ H (25' long); ML Nil; Int Non (0); AL N; XP 650.

Note: Strangled foes can make a Strength check at -5 to break free.

Bog Wader (1d2): AC 4+3; MV 3, Sw 15; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 5; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d3/1d3/1d4; SA Impale foes for 2d4 damage; SZ M (6' tall); ML Steady (11); Int Low (6); AL CE; XP 420.

Note: Impaled creatures are held under the mud (and may drown) until a bend bars roll is made.

Hydra: AC 5; MV 9; hp 56; THAC0 13; #AT 7; Dmg 1d8x7; SW Every 8 points of damage inflicted upon the hydra severs a head; SZ G (30' long); ML Average (9); Int Semi (4); AL N; XP 2,000.

Shambling Mound: AC 0; MV 6; hp 50; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/2d8; SA -3 to foes' surprise rolls, two successful hits entangle foes; SD Immune to blunt weapons and fire, half damage from edged or piercing weapons, half or no damage from cold, lighting adds 1 HD; SZ L (8' tall); ML Fanatic (18); Int Low (6); AL N; XP 7,000.

Note: Entangled victims suffocate in 2d4 rounds unless bend bars roll is made or the shambler is killed.

Behir: AC 4; MV 15; hp 66; THAC0 9; #AT 2 or 7; Dmg 2d4/1d4+1 or 2d4/1d6 (x6); SA Breathe lightning bolt that inflicts 24 points of damage, swallows whole on an attack roll of 20; SD Immune to lightning and poison; SZ G (40' long); ML Champion (15); Int Low (6); AL NE; XP 7,000.

Note: Foes swallowed whole die in 6 rounds, losing 1/6 of their hit point total each round.

Leech, giant (4d4): AC 9; MV 3, Sw 3; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA After successful attack, bite drains 4 points of damage per round; SW Salt will kill them; SZ M (5' long); ML Unsteady (7); Int Non (0); AL N; XP 270.

Bvanen (6): AC 4; MV 6, Sw 12; hp 16 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d4+1; SA Ooze secreted hardens on foe, partially immobilizes until a bend bars roll is made; SD Immune to bleeding wounds, all wounds are reduced by 1 point SZ M (5' tall); ML Avg (9); Int Very (11); AL NC; XP 420.

Note: On round after being struck, foe cannot use body part struck (roll 1d8: 1—head, 2-3—right arm, 4-5—left arm, 6-8—either leg) until a bend bars roll is made (either foe or companion). A hit to the head indicates that foe suffocates.

Psionics: Dis 2/Sci 3/Dev 10; PS 10; PSPs 40

Att: EW, II, MT; Def: MB, MBk, TS

Player's Option: #AT 1; MTHAC0 16; MAC 4

Psychometabolism: Sciences—animal affinity; Devotions—displacement, flesh armor, immovability

Telepathy: Sciences—domination, mindlink; Devotions—attraction, contact (send thoughts), ego whip (sight link), id insinuation (inflict pain), mind thrust (synaptic static), phobia amplification

Will o'wisp: AC -8; MV Fl 18 (A); hp 50 each; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d8; SD Immune to all spells except *magic missile*, *protection from evil*, and *maze*; SZ S (3'); ML Fanatic (17); Int Exceptional (15); AL CE; XP 3,000.

Note: Damage inflicted by electrical discharge

Reggelid (1d8+2): AC 7; MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (staff); SA Spells; SW Life-shaped creations cause 1d6 damage by touch; SZ M (7' tall); ML Elite (13); Int Genius (17); AL NE; XP 175.

Spells (2/1): 1st— *magic missile*, *detect magic*; 2nd— *web*.

Monstrosity encounters are extremely dangerous, the sorcery inherent within the swamp has mutated these beasts. To create monstrosities, the DM should take a monster, one native only to Athas, and alter it. Alterations include extra arms, heads, eyes, mouths, or legs, additional tentacles, wings or other appendages, chitinous armor, breath weapons, and psionic powers. Usually, it should be obvious what the creature once was—in a few instances, the creature is so changed that telling its origin is impossible. In every case, the monstrosity should be more powerful and horrible than the original with additional HD, attacks, damage, powers, movement, and defenses.

For a random determination of monstrosities, use the following tables.

MONSTROSITY TABLE

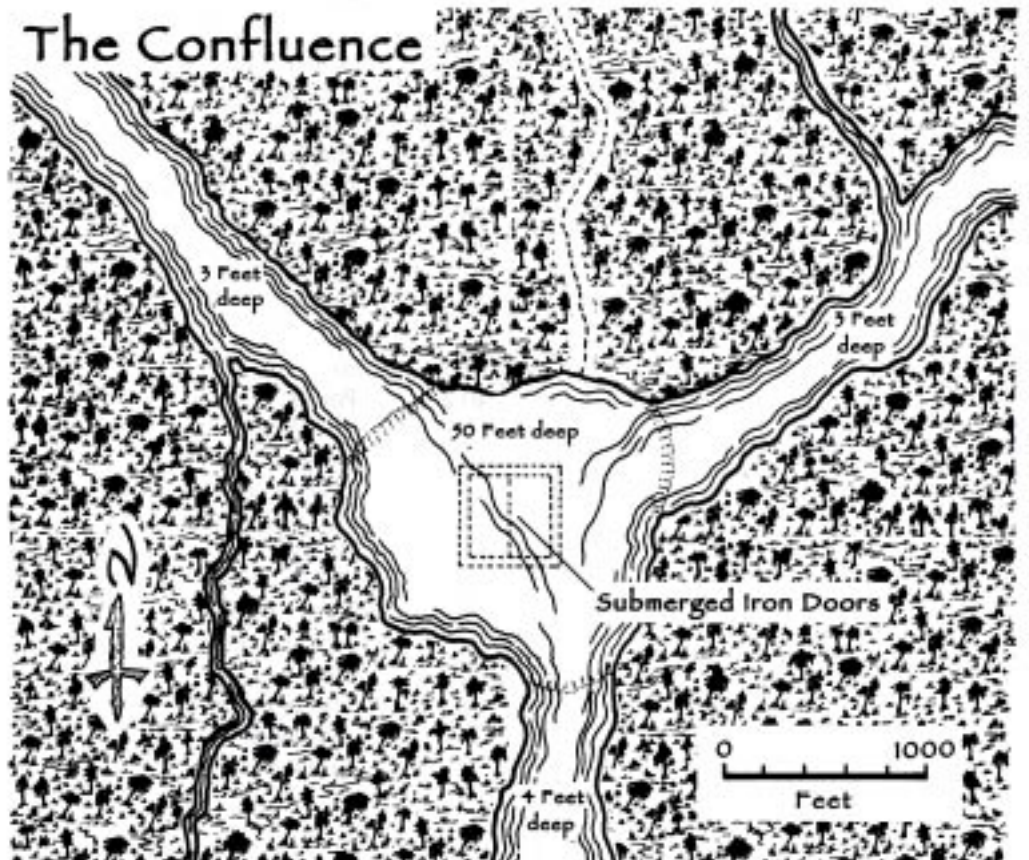
| Base | Monster |
|------|------------------|
| d10 | |
| 1 | Giant, beasthead |
| 2 | Aarakocra |
| 3 | Psionocus |
| 4 | Feylaar |
| 5 | Thri-kreen |
| 6 | Pterran |
| 7 | Lirr |
| 8 | Halfling |
| 9 | Human |
| 10 | Crodlu |

INNATE POWERS TABLE

| d12 | Power |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 1 | <i>Invisibility</i> |
| 2 | <i>Teleport</i> |
| 3 | <i>Levitation</i> |
| 4 | <i>Polymorph self</i> |
| 5 | <i>Blink</i> |
| 6 | <i>Charm person</i> |
| 7 | <i>Flesh to stone</i> |
| 8 | <i>Hold person</i> |
| 9 | <i>Slow</i> |
| 10 | <i>Energy drain</i> |
| 11 | <i>Blindness</i> |
| 12 | <i>Confusion</i> |

MODIFICATIONS TABLE

| d100 | Modification |
|-------|--|
| 01-10 | Additional 1d4 limbs (and corresponding attacks) |
| 11-20 | Double normal size (and Hit Dice) |
| 21-25 | Double head size (bite now inflicts double damage or 1d8 damage, whichever is more) |
| 26-30 | Double size for 1d4 or all limbs (attacks yield double damage or 1d10 damage, whichever is more) |
| 31-35 | Additional 1d4 eyes (cannot be surprised) |
| 36-40 | Add 1d4 tentacles (with grapple attacks inflicting 1d8 damage each) |
| 41-45 | Add wings |
| 46-55 | Skin/hide thickness increases, lowering AC by 1d4 steps |
| 56-60 | Replace 1d2 limbs with tentacles that inflict 2d6 damage |
| 61-63 | Replace 1d2 hands/claws/paws/hooves with bladed appendages that inflict 2d8 damage |
| 64-66 | Touch paralyzes foe for 2d10 rounds |
| 67-70 | Disruptive touch inflicts additional 1d10 points of damage |
| 71-73 | Attacks become poisonous (save or die in 1d3 rounds) |
| 74-78 | Casts spells as a 1d4+5 level mage |
| 79-82 | Breathes fire for 3d10 damage and 100-foot range |
| 83-86 | Breathes poison gas (save or die in 1d3 rounds) in a 30' diameter cloud |
| 87-90 | Body covered in spines that increase all melee attack damage by 1d4 |
| 91-93 | Body is amorphous and can stretch up to five times its length |
| 94-96 | Body is shrouded in flame inflicting 1d6 damage to all within 10 feet |
| 97-99 | Roll on innate power table below: power can be used 1d4 times per day |
| 00 | Roll on Innate Power Table below: power can be used at will once per round |





Creatures created using these tables are bizarre, misshapen, incongruous beasts, but that is the desired goal. The monsters should look like they have been haphazardly altered.

Rajaat's Curse encounters are direct confrontations with the twisted magic of the swamp and its effects. This foul sorcery can manifest itself in many ways. In its most basic form, it twists and mutates life, transforming normal plants into carnivorous ones, trees into shambling mounds, mud into evil elemental creatures, or player characters into evil monsters like sligs, t'chowb, belgoi, anakore, or something completely alien (if a saving throw vs. polymorph fails).

Also, the sorcery can take on a more subtle tone, draining or adding magic to PCs or their equipment. The DM should come up with various random effects, always encompassing alteration, magic—changing and twisting living creatures.

Mapped Dangers and Obstacles

The map of the swamp shows a number of potential hazards and encounters. The streams are 10 to 50 feet wide but only 1 to 3 feet deep in most places, with smaller tributaries running through the marshy ground. Crossing these streams is not a problem most of the time, although leeches, hidden sharp rocks and sticks, and other deterrents are always present. At times, deep holes are discovered while trying to cross a stream (1 in 8 chance per crossing), surprising characters as they fall into deep water. These holes are only an actual danger to overburdened characters or those who cannot swim. There is a 30% chance however, that a character loses an item that is not securely fastened.

Steaming pools are more obvious dangers. These magically heated pools spew out steam and mist and reduce visibility in a 50-foot radius around them to 0. The heated steam causes 1d6 damage to all within 100 feet of the pool every 10 rounds, while immersion into the water itself inflicts 2d6 damage per round.

At any steaming pool, there is a 1 in 20 chance for an encounter with 2d6 mudmen, the creatures spawned from the intense heat and supernatural forces of the swamp.

Mudman (2d6): AC 10; MV 3; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg Special; SA throw mud to reduce foes' movement by 1 or throw body to lessen movement by 4, foes at 0 movement take 1d8 damage per round and die in 5 rounds from suffocation; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, immune to poison and mind affecting spells; SW *dispel magic* and *dig* act as *fireballs*, *transmute mud to rock* slays; SZ M; ML Fanatic (18); Int Low; AL CE; XP 120.

Note: Foes are treated as AC 10. A mudman hitting foes with its entire body is considered slain.

Following the Trail

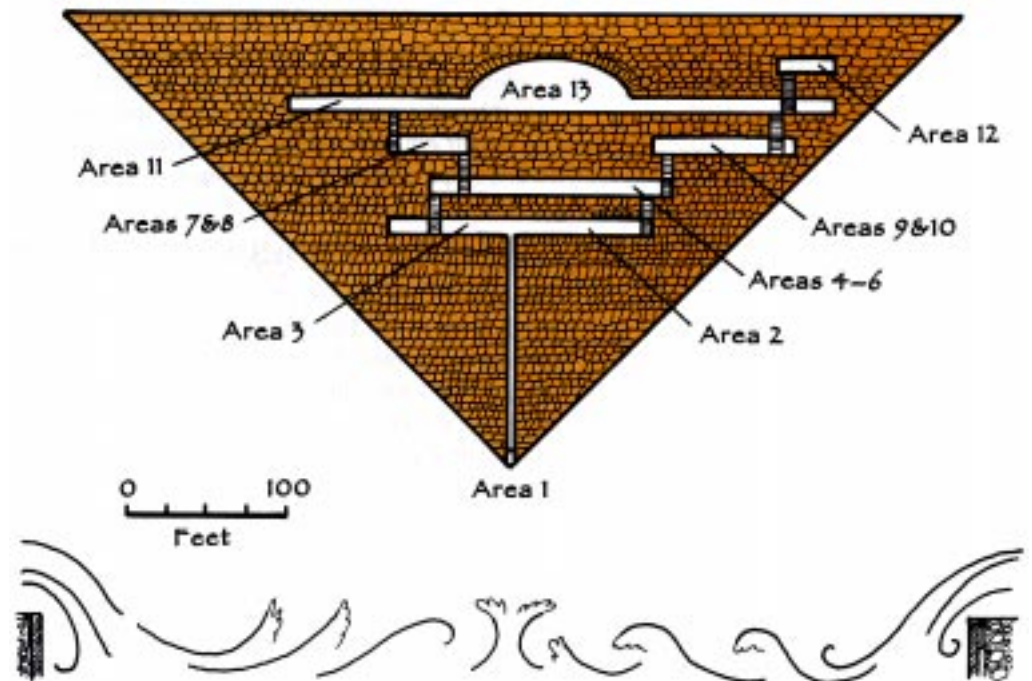
The heroes will need to follow Sahl-oren's trail to get to his secret find. Fortunately, the halfling explorer and his companions intentionally made the path easy to follow so that they could find their way back. Any character with the tracking proficiency will have no problem in following the track, and characters without the skill can make intelligence checks at -1 each day to keep to the course.

The Bvanen's Everpresent Eye

Bvanen camps are the temporary homes of 5d4 bvanen, with 1d6 domesticated monsters such as giant frogs, giant leeches, crocodiles, and similar creatures. The bvanen are looking for more creatures to capture and train, and are not necessarily hostile to the heroes, although they are both wary and curious about them.

Not very long after the heroes enter the swamp, allow each to make an Intelligence check. Those who are successful begin to feel that someone is watching them. Further Intelligence checks at -5 are required to notice that just at the edge of their visual range, 1d6 bvanen are watching them warily. If the heroes do not approach or threaten the bvanen, the amphibians will leave them alone (but continue to watch them curiously). The characters notice that the Bvanen follow them all the way to their objective and even all the way back to the cliffs when they leave. There is a 30% chance that, if the

Inverted Pyramid (Side View)



heroes are hard pressed in any other encounter, the Bvanen actually help them. If the characters react in an aggressive manner during the initial encounter, the bvanen panic and may even react with violence against the party.

The Inverted Pyramid

Sahl-oren's path ends at the edge of a confluence of two thick, mossy streams. If the party arrives during the day, the adventurers see nothing out of the ordinary. The trail cannot be picked up again anywhere on either side of the streams. It seems that the path is a dead end.

The water at this confluence is much deeper than it appears. The entire area is 50 feet deep, and a pair of gigantic, rusty iron doors lies at the bottom of the confluence. The water is far too murky to see through, but divers can probably feel them. Each door is 250 feet wide and 500 feet long. There is no way of physically opening them, although magic (even a simple *knock* spell) can accomplish the task, forcing the ancient portals to slide open. If the doors open, an inverted stone pyramid, each of the four sides of its base over 400 feet long, rises from the shaft below the doors, thrusting up through the water to float 100 feet in the air. The shaft beneath the doors is empty, other than the pyramid, and filled with water down to its bottom, 500 feet below.

At night, the doors magically open on their own, and the pyramid rises from the depths, dripping mosses and slimy water from its smooth stone surface. If the player characters arrive at the confluence at night, they see the inverted pyramid already hanging magically in the air. If they arrive by day but camp at the side of the confluence until dark, they will see it rise, apparently of its own volition. The next sunrise, the pyramid sinks down into the shaft and the doors close again.

The Nature of the Pyramid

This is a magical citadel, constructed by Rajaat himself. The Warbringer fashioned this place so that various sectors within it reflect the nature of one basic focus, or "school" of magic. The ancient pyramid was created as a magical storehouse, complete with traps and guardians, although Rajaat took almost everything out of it to arm his champions during the Cleansing Wars. Sahl-oren and his group entered it one night, however, and learned the location of at least one great treasure.

The Reggelid Threat

In addition to the chance for a random encounter with reggelids, the DM may wish to have these monsters also attempt to gain entrance to the inverted pyramid—the activity in the area has drawn them to it as well. Six of the spellusing creatures see the characters approach the pyramid from a nearby hiding place. They lie in wait, watching the PCs, letting them figure out how to get in. The reggelids then follow them into the pyramid and attack them in the entry room or in Area 2.

The reggelids are confident they can defeat the heroes and they neither hold back nor worry about retreat. While fighting, they concern themselves with those they perceive to be true threats—spellcasters. While they do not ignore warriors and rogues, they concentrate their attacks on the spellusers first, hoping to take them out quickly.

If given the time, the reggelid leader will cast the *tongues* spell on himself before engaging the player characters. While fighting, he tells the adventurers that he knows that this citadel is a storehouse for magic—one that the reggelids have been seeking a long time. He attempts to get any information concerning the place from the heroes while they fight, even using trickery if necessary. For example, he might say something about the pyramid that he knows is wrong to see if the heroes correct him.

For five of the creatures, use the statistics given above. The DM may wish to modify their spell selections so that each individual has a few different spells. Additionally, one wields a broadsword and has an active *shield* spell. Another has an *armor* spell as well as *strength*. For their leader, use the stats presented here. Note that the 3rd-level spell, *organic disruption*, is found in the reggelid statistics in the back of the book.

Reggelid Leader: AC 6 (*armor* and *stoneskin* spells); MV 12; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (staff); SA Spells; SW Life-shaped creations cause 1d6 damage by touch; SZ M (7' tall); ML Elite (13); Int Genius (18); AL NE; XP 1,400.

Special Equipment: Scroll of three spells: *tongues*, *polymorph self*, *wall of ice*.

Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st— *burning hands*, *charm person*, *grease*, *shield*; 2nd— *invisibility*, *levitation*, *Melf's acid arrow*; 3rd— *lightning bolt*, *organic disruption*; 4th— *dimension door*.

The Chahn and the Prisoner

The other external threat to the party is the Chahn, which is also attempting to find Sahl-oren's secret. The explorer is their prisoner, entwined in clingrope bonds. They are ahead of the heroes, but have encountered a number of threats in the swamp themselves (including the reggelids) and their numbers have been worn down. Sahl-oren has given them all the information he can, and they are now at a loss for what to do next. As with any group of Chahn, not all are evil or wanton killers. They should be encountered while exploring the pyramid, in areas 2, 4, 8, and 10.

Chahn warriors (ham&haf, F4 [6]): AC 5 (half shell); MV 6; hp 27 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (armblade); SZ S (3' tall); ML Elite (14); Int Avg (10); AL CN; XP 270.

Special Equipment: armblade, 50' clingrope, half shell armor, misc. climbing equipment

Zas-athil, Chahn Leader (ham/F7/T7): AC 3 (hide armor and Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 43; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (spinethrower); SA x3 backstab; SZ S (2'10" tall); ML Champion (15); AL N; XP 975.

S 15, D 17, C 12, I 13, W 12, Ch 11.

Personality: Determined, hardheaded

Special Equipment: hide armor, spinethrower, climbing gloves, chameleon cloak

Thief Abilities: PP 55, OL 55, F/RT 55, MS 60, HS 70, DN 40, CW 95, RL 10.

Zas-athil and her band of Chahn have been charged with taking Sahl-oren into the swamp and obtaining the strange object that he claims to have found. Zas-athil herself is not even sure that the thing exists, but she is willing to give anything to the cause. She is a sturdy, rugged woman with short brown hair, her face and features are heavily masked in red cosmetic graft adornments.

Sahl-oren (ham/F6/T6): AC 9 (Dexterity bonus); MV 6; hp 41; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 or 1d10 (flashlance); SA x3 backstab; SZ S (3' 1"); ML Champion (15); AL N; XP 650.

S 14, D 15, C 15, I 13, W 9, Ch 12.

Personality: Bold, confident, braggart

Thief Abilities: PP 55, OL 50, F/RT 45, MS 80, HS 45, DN 20, CW 95, RL 0.

Sahl-oren is currently at 14 hit points. He is tied with clingrope and has no equipment. He will be grateful for any assistance the PCs can give him. Nevertheless, he entertains no thoughts that anyone but he should get the *little death* he discovered.

If the heroes are kind enough to give him some equipment, he gladly takes anything they can spare. He is proficient with flashlance (his weapon of choice) quickstrike, short sword, dagger, grappler, and armblade.

Getting Inside

The pyramid is proofed against all sorts of physical attacks. There is no way to cut, bore, smash, or dig into it, even if the heroes figure out a way to get *up* to it.

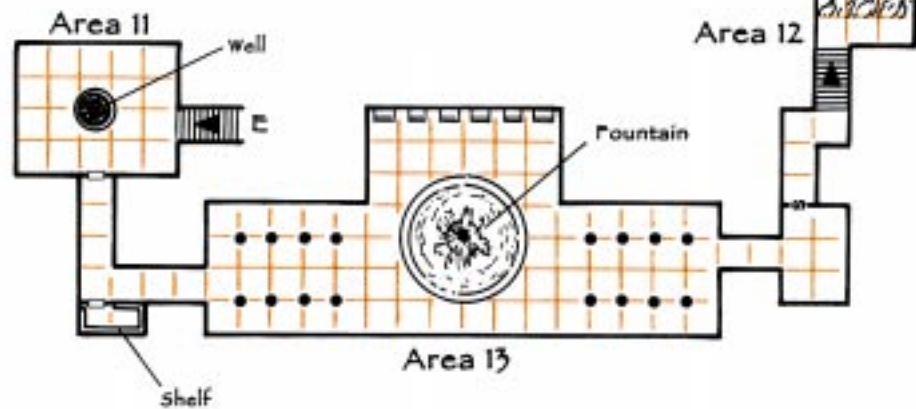
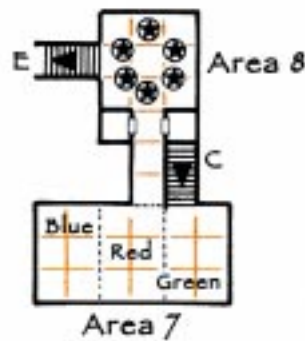
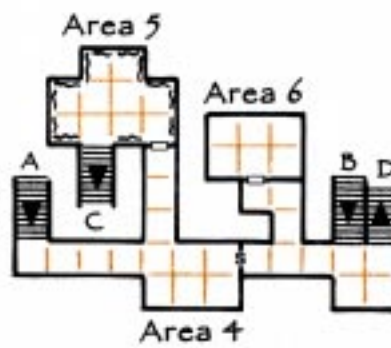
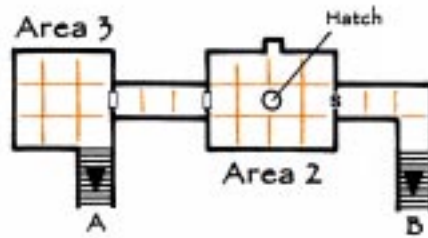
There are only two ways to enter the pyramid. One is to use a magical means of entering such as *teleport*, or *passwall*. The other is to trigger the entrance spell stored on the bottom pinnacle. This spell is activated when anything moves directly beneath the point of the pinnacle, above the surface of the water. When this happens, a beam of golden energy, 10 feet in diameter, issues from the tip and engulfs whatever is within its field, drawing it up and into the pyramid in a single round.

Inverted Pyramid—Interior

1 Square = 10 Feet



-  Door
-  Secret Door
-  Statue
-  Stairway Up
-  Iron Vault
-  Curtain
-  Pillar



No matter how the heroes enter, they begin in Area 1. Even if they use a *passwall* spell on a different section of the pyramid, they still find themselves in Area 1.

Map Key

Area 1: Entry Chamber

Because the powerful magical energies that surround and permeate the pyramid are focused here, this is the spot where all intruders first find themselves—no matter how they entered the structure. The room is round, with smooth stone walls polished to a sheen that belies their age. The room measures only 15 feet in diameter. A silver hatch is set into the center of the ceiling, but there is no apparent way to reach it.

About the perimeter of the room, five shallow alcoves, each 1-foot high, 1-foot wide, and 3 inches deep are set into the wall 4 feet above the floor. Inlaid into each is a blue gem of remarkable size (2 inches across). Beneath one of the alcoves lies the blackened corpse of a halfling, still clutching a gem. Her life-shaped equipment is equally dead and blackened—she was one of Sahl-oren's companions.

A powerful spell that inflicts 6d6 points of electrical damage on anyone touching it protects each gem (successful saving throw for half damage). The gems, however, are the keys to getting to and going through the hatch above. Anyone wishing to exit the room must pass his hand over each gem without touching it. A transport beam then magically lifts him up, the hatch opens, and the character finds himself in Area 2. If the activator of the gems wishes to leave the pyramid, the transport beam returns him once more to the area below the pyramid. There is no other way to leave the pyramid.

Area 2: Divination

The gems' magic transports the characters up a long shaft and opens the silver hatch into this room, where they are gently deposited. A single blue gem sits in an alcove similar to those found in Area 1. Passing one's hand over it takes a character back down to Area 1 by the gem's transport beam. Above the alcove, there is strange writing on the wall. This script is in foot-tall letters. Nevertheless, it is in the unique tongue devised by Rajaat to describe his new magical principle, so a *comprehend languages* or *read magic* spell is required to read it. It simply says, "Divination," reflecting the informative nature of the room and the magic of it.

This room is the cataloging room. Rajaat kept records of all of the magical items he created or gained from various (and sometimes otherworldly) sources. On the eastern wall is a stone bookcase filled with ancient tomes regarding magical items, penned by the Warbringer. All crumble when touched. Against the south wall, a silver plaque lists all of the items kept here. Most are gone now, but a few remain.

The list reads (in the ancient tongue of the rhulisti):

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| Sword of Sharpness | Vault 1 |
| Staff of Power | Vault 2 |
| Rod of Rulership | Vault 3 |
| Ring of Gray | Vault 4 |
| Circlet of Life | Vault 5 |
| Little Death | Vault 6 |

Furthermore, the magic within the plaque allows anyone touching one of the items on the list to know its basic powers. These descriptions are conferred mentally. The first three are described in vague terms, but conform to the entries in the DMG. The last three are unique items, and have the following descriptions.

Ring of Gray: This wrought-iron ring allows the wearer to open a portal to the nether realms of the Gray, summoning forth a spirit into this world to do its new master's bidding.

DMs' note: The exact nature of this item is unknown since it is gone from its vault and has apparently vanished from Athas.

Circlet of Life: This coronet allows the wearer to shape living beings, molding them to fit his needs.

DMs' note: This item's exact location is unknown, but it is believed to have passed into the empire of the thri-kreen long ago.

Little Death: This wand allows the user to slay the shaped living creations of the ancient halflings and their descendants.

DMs' note: This wand is the prize sought by Sahl-oren. *Little death* and the *rod of rulership* are the only items mentioned that are still in the pyramid. A complete listing of its capabilities is presented in Area 12.

The door on the west wall is stone and opens into the room, exposing a short corridor and another stone door. A secret door on the east wall is connected to the bookcase and the whole assemblage pushes open easily once found.

Area 3: Enchantment/Charm

This is the site of the ultimate defeat of Sahl-oren's group. It is the home of two ensorcelled thri-kreen, trapped here long ago and forced to become guardians after Rajaat experimented on them with his new creation.

The three dead corpses of Sahl-oren's remaining companions still lay on the floor with their equipment. The equipment (all, of course, organic) includes a mace, a short sword, a warstaff, a suit of hide armor and a half shell, two clingbags, 100 feet of clingrope, a lockpick, and a climber's shield. The living items are all close to starvation.

When the PCs open the door to the room, the thri-kreen attack. The first has been modified with a bizarre and permanent form of *stoneskin*. This allows the insect to ignore the first blow he is dealt in every round. The other has had her arms replaced with crystalline prosthetics that magically give her a Strength of 20 (+3 to attack, +8 to damage).

The thri-kreen have become nothing more than automatons, mindlessly serving as guardians in this place for untold centuries. They have no need for food or sleep.

Thri-kreen (2): AC 5; MV 18; hp 39, 41; THAC0 13; #AT 5 or 2; Dmg 1d4 (x4)/1d4+1 or 1d4+1/1d6(gythka); SA bite causes paralysis; SD can dodge missiles on a roll of 9 or better on a d20, immune to hold person and charm person; SZ L (11' long); ML Fearless (20); Int Average (10); AL N; XP 1,400.

Note: Small creatures are paralyzed for 2d10 rounds, medium 2d8 rounds, and large for 1d8 rounds.

This stark room has no furnishings, but there is more strange writing on the eastern wall (as in Area 2). It reads: "Enchantment/Charm."

Area 4: Empty Chamber

At one time this was a guard room where some of Rajaat's charmed halfling guardians resided. These guardians are now found in Area 5. The room has old, rotting furnishings including five beds, a low table, two benches and five chests, all made of wood. The chests are empty now, and the beds have no mattress or blankets.

The secret door is behind one of the benches and slides to the left when found.

Area 5: Necromancy

The door to this room is locked with a conventionally keyed lock. Once inside, the characters see that the walls here are still covered in tattered black drapes and the floor with a dirty, stained rug that was once bone-white. Three tall, silver candelabras stand in the southern portion of the room, their ancient, black candles still waiting to be burned.

This room has become the permanent home of yet more mindless guardians created by *Rajaat's spells*. When these charmed halfling warriors fell in combat with a beast from the swamp, the Warbringer animated them into wights, although they are as mindlessness as zombies. Until the door opens, the undead remain in the northern portion of the room. After that point, they attack. They will not go beyond Areas 4 and 5.

In combat strength, these small undead warriors are no less powerful than a full-sized wight, except where noted below. In appearance, they are gaunt, pale-skinned halflings dressed in tattered rags with withered, undead (but essentially useless) life-shaped creations hanging off them.

Halfling wights (5): AC 5; MV 6; hp 26 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA Touch drains 1 level; SD Affected only by silver or +1 or better magical weapons, immune to sleep, charm, hold and cold-based spells as well as poison and paralysis; SZ S (3' tall); ML Elite (14); Int Non (0); AL LE; XP 1,400.

Rajaat has inscribed the word "Necromancy" on the northern wall.

Area 6: Refuse

A small room behind a locked door, this chamber is full of discarded magical items. Broken staves, rods, wands, weapons and shields, bent rings, spoiled potions, and other ruined miscellaneous enchanted objects can be found here. No amount of regular searching uncovers anything of value here, but a *detect magic* spell reveals two items with magical power remaining. The first is a *necklace of missiles* with one 5d6 missile and two 3d6 missiles thrown here by accident. The second is a slightly bent *ring of free action* whose dweomer has been spoiled and it is now malfunctioning—it operates as a *ring of clumsiness*.

Area 7: Alteration

This area is a trap to keep intruders from passing any farther into the pyramid. The trap is magical and involves two different alteration spells.

The room itself appears to be completely empty. An intricate pattern of inlaid colored stone tiles decorates the floor. The primary colors of the pattern change at the points on the map where dotted lines cross the room. The colors of the tiles from left to right are blue, red, and green. The western wall bears Rajaat's inscription: "Alteration."

The green zone of the room casts a *slow* spell on anyone touching the floor. In the red field, characters are the targets of beams of reddish energy that fire from random placements in the wall once per character per round (this trap is not dependent upon characters touching the floor, as in the green area, so even flying or jumping heroes are subject to attack). Each character must make a saving throw vs. petrification/polymorph (Dexterity bonuses apply) to avoid the beams. Those affected by the *slow* make their saving throws at -4. Characters struck by one of these beams are *polymorphed* into random 1 HD animals such as rats, snakes, lizards, and bats.

The blue tract has no special effects unless a character polymorphed by the green area crosses into it. Such characters are automatically restored to their former bodies and (if applicable) minds (no saving throw or system shock roll allowed). Crossing back into the red section, however, may result in further polymorphing, so characters may be trapped in the blue area.

Area 8: Abjuration

When characters come down the 30-foot corridor that leads to this room, the doors on either side of it automatically open and a statue slides out of each on large bone wheels. One statue is made from ebony, the other ivory. Both resemble life size, snarling watchdogs (these are large versions of the material component for the *repulsion* spell—a spellcraft proficiency check will reveal this information).

When the statues show themselves, all characters in the hall must make successful saving throws vs. spell or be forced back through Area 6 (and the magical traps there) and even back down the stairs into Area 5, as a repulsion spell. This effect lasts only one round (after which the dogs return to the little rooms), but attempting to cross the hall again triggers the effect again. The only way to pass the guardian canines is to make the saving throw, prevent the doors from opening, or find the other way up using the secret doors in areas 2 or 4.

The side rooms are empty other than the dog statues, while the 30-foot square room has a half-dozen more graven images. These six statues are not magical, and depict a halfling, a human, an elf, a dwarf, a thri-kreen, and a gnome all preparing to cast a spell (although some of these races are thoroughly nonmagical).

The north wall bears Rajaat's inscription: "Abjuration."

Area 9: Invocation/Evocation

This room is, of course, another trap, designed to protect the vaults beyond as well as above. A large (3-foot diameter) brass sphere hangs from a chain connected to the ceil-

ing at the center of the chamber.

Characters who enter this room are the unfortunate recipients of a random evocation spell (roll 2d6):

RANDOM EVOCATION TABLE

| 2d6 | Spell Effect |
|------|--|
| 1 | <i>Lightning bolt</i> 6d6 damage |
| 2 | <i>Cone of cold</i> 10d4+10 damage |
| 3-7 | <i>Magic missile</i> 2 missiles |
| 8-10 | <i>Forcecage</i> lasting 160 rounds |
| 11 | <i>Web</i> lasting 200 rounds |
| 12 | <i>Wall of fire</i> cast at 10th level |

These effects occur soon after a character enters the room. Roll 1d10 and add it to the character's base movement rate. The result is the number of feet into the room the character can travel before the spell is cast. Area of effect spells such as *cone of cold* or *wall of fire* may affect more than one character if they are close together (so determining how far into the room the character went is important) within the spell's normal area.

Rajaat's inscription, "Invocation/Evocation" is on the north wall.

Area 10: Minor Vault

This room was used for storage of minor magical items. The walls are lined with stone shelves and two long, low tables fill most of the room's center. Cases, flasks, bags, sheaths, jars, boxes, and all manner of containers are scattered about the shelves and tables, almost all of them empty. A careful search of this room (taking at least 20 rounds) yields the following: *potions of levitation*, *healing*, and *treasure finding*, a *long sword +1* (iron), a *rod of security* (5 charges), and a *ring of protection +1*.

If any of the containers in this room are disturbed, an *alarm* spell is activated that sounds throughout the pyramid. Since the place has fallen out of use, however, this spell has no actual effect.

Area 11: Summoning/Conjuration

This room is empty except for what appears to be a large well at its center. The walls have carvings in bas relief depicting all kinds of creatures, each displaying many more limbs than it should—obviously twisted by magic. If the player characters enter this chamber, a spell of *summoning* conjures up a four-armed monster that rises out of the well and attacks—either one feylaar (30% chance) or two b'rohng (70% chance).

Feylaar: AC 4; MV 9; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 5; Dmg 1d6+1x4/2d4+1; SA -2 to foes' surprise roll, if two fists hit, a foe is grabbed and crushed for 2d10 damage; SZ L (8' tall); ML Elite (16); Int Very (12); AL NE; XP 2,000.

Note: Grabbed foes can break free by making a Strength check at -4.

Player's Option: #AT 3/2; MTHAC0 14; MAC 2

Psonics Summary: Dis 3/Sci 4/Dev 12; PS 13; PSPs 50; Att: EW, II, MT, PB; Def IF, MB, MBk, TW

Psychometabolism: Sciences—death field, shadow form; Devotions: adrenaline control, cell adjustment, chameleon power, displacement.

Psychoportive: Sciences—nil; Devotions: blink, phase.

Telepathy: Sciences—psionic blast (mindlink), domination (ultrablast); Devotions—ego whip (conceal thoughts), id insinuation (false sensory input), inflict pain, invisibility, plant mind, mind thrust (psychic drain).

B'rohng (2): AC 10; MV 15; hp 32, 40; THAC0 15 (17 with 2nd pair of attacks); #AT 4; Dmg 1d8+10 (stone clubs); SZ H (15' tall); ML Average (10); Int Low (6); AL N; XP 650.

The conjured creatures are compelled to attack the intruders in this room, pursuing them anywhere and fighting to the death if necessary. The feylaar will attempt to use psonics to its advantage while the b'rohng simply attacks blindly.

Worse, every five rounds that there are intruders in this room, another *summoning*

occurs (roll again for type). Rajaat's inscription, "Conjuration/Summoning" is on the west wall.

The small room to the south of this area is empty except for a number of white candles in iron candleholders arranged on the shelves of each wall. Rajaat used this room to teleport (only he had access—all others teleport into Area 1) from outside the pyramid.

Area 12: illusion

This chamber is the highest in the inverted pyramid. Both approaches to it are stairways leading up from the lower levels. Running through the center of this room is a *permanent illusion* of a *wall of fire*. Characters see the flames and feel the heat—they even take damage if they approach the wall or attempt to pass through it. Like a *wall of fire*, the illusion inflicts 2d4 points of damage on anyone within 10 feet of the wall. Unlike a *wall of fire*, no damage is inflicted at 20 feet, and the heat radiates toward both sides of the illusionary wall. On the south wall is Rajaat's inscription, "Illusion," which is a helpful clue to those coming into the room from the south, provided they can read it.

The secret door at the bottom of the southern stair is only concealed from the south. It pivots to open.

Area 13: Vault Room

This large chamber has a domed ceiling at its center, stretching upward to 40 feet. A three-tiered, magical fountain, almost 30 feet high, dominates the room, with columned pathways in the east and west. The fountain and the columns are all adorned with images of magical creatures—unicorns, naga, lamia, elementals, beholders, dragons, and other creatures, many of them now extinct on Athas.

To the north, six iron vaults line the wall, each 8-foot high and 3 feet wide. All are covered with magical inscriptions to preserve the contents rather than to protect them from the outside. The first five stand with their doors hanging open, while the sixth remains closed. Its door is locked (the key is long lost), but not trapped. Instead, if any of the vaults are touched, the room's guardian, Tethire, a wraith summoned from the Gray, attacks the violator.

Tethire (Wraith, Athasian): AC 2; MV 9; hp 51; THAC0 14; #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg 1d4 or by weapon; SA can inhabit the bodies of others, animate objects, chill touch drains 1 point of Strength per touch; SD +2 or better weapon to hit, magical weapons used against it lose 1 magical bonus, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *paralysis*, and *cold* spells, poison; takes only ½ damage while inhabiting person or object; SW *raise dead* slays instantly; SZ M (6' tall); ML Champion (16); Int High (14); AL NE; XP 2,000.

Note: Chance that magical weapons lose bonus is 75% if metal, 50% if stone, 25% if bone, wood, or other organic material.

Personality: Intensely loyal, forgiving, sad

Tethire attempts to inhabit and animate one of the heroes' weapons, using it to attack them relentlessly. Rajaat commanded him to guard these vaults forever, but he loathes killing—if the heroes beg for mercy or ask for quarter, he gives it to them—as long as they leave the vaults and their remaining contents alone. At such time he ceases animating the weapon and appears to the heroes as the wraith that he is.

The *little death* is in the last vault. The wand is a 1-foot long ebony shaft capped with silver tips. When activated, it fires a black beam up to 50 feet from its tip which automatically slays any life-shaped creation regardless of size, even engines. At a cost of 3 charges, it can vent a cone 50 feet long and 5 feet wide at its terminus that slays life-shaped creations, but the targets get a chance to make a saving throw vs. wands. It has 43 charges.

If the DM desires further adventures in the swamp dealing with Rajaat's sorcery, the heroes can make Intelligence checks to notice that there is an inscription hidden on the carvings on the central fountain. This inscription gives directions to another citadel of Rajaat's—one where he actually developed some primary sorcerous knowledge. This place is filled with monstrous creations and random magical energies and effects. The monsters should be much more powerful than those found here, including horrors like

nightmare beasts, so-uts, elemental creatures, and imprisoned fiends from the Lower Planes. The farther they push into the swamp, and the more closely the PCs get to Rajaat's true citadel (where most of his actual magical research and experimentation took place), the more horrible the monsters become and the more the bizarre and potent magical effects and alterations increase. Rajaat's true citadel should be a place so twisted by magic that all natural forces and laws break down—twisted and changed by aeons of out-of-control defiler sorcery.

Ending the Adventure

If the player characters recover *little death*, their agreement binds them to take it to Cohg-agon. If they accomplish this task, they should receive a reward of 5,000 experience points to divide equally among themselves. Cohg-agon gives the magical item to her life-shaper masters (for a huge fee) and they will most likely attempt to destroy it. The merchant demands that the heroes swear not to tell anyone else about the find (since her business is information, and that is why she paid them so well).

If the heroes rescue Sahl-oren, however, he does everything he can to stop them from turning *little death* over to Cohg-agon. He claims that he has the rights to it since he discovered its existence. He may even attempt to steal it from the heroes if he must. In any event, the characters gain 2,000 experience points to split for rescuing the adventurer.

Should the characters choose to keep the device for themselves, they make enemies of both Sahl-oren and Cohg-agon. If the life-shapers in any way discover the nature and existence of *little death* they will do whatever is necessary to obtain or destroy the wand, which they know is the bane of all they hold sacred.

Jagged Cliffs Adventure Hooks

The following are brief ideas for other adventures on dealing with the halflings and the Jagged Cliffs region.

First Contact

This adventure can be played two ways: as standard DARK SUN characters coming upon the windriders for the first time, or as rhul-thaun adventurers meeting outsiders as they come through the newly created rift. In either event, the adventure involves a great deal of diplomacy and tact and (hopefully) not a lot of combat.

Rhul-thaun PCs meeting outsiders for the first time need to role-play ignorance of these large intruders' ways. Special attention on their part would be given to feral halflings.

An encounter may precede any outsiders' first meeting with rhul-thaun by one of the pyreen that watch over and protect the halflings from outside influences. The pyreen attempt to judge the characters and their motivations to determine whether they can proceed to the Jagged Cliffs.

Secret Infiltration

This is a variation on a first contact meeting. In this adventure, the heroes (outsiders from the Tyr region) have been told of the existence of the rhul-thaun, and the fact that the halflings have a great deal of knowledge regarding the thri-kreen. A minor ruler concerned about a potential invasion from the mantis warriors hires the heroes to infiltrate the rhul-thaun and learn what information they can (and possibly even go into the western lands themselves).

Sneaking into rhul-thaun villages requires disguise, magic, or psionics to make the heroes appear to be halflings. The characters are required to learn a great deal about the rhul-thaun if they are to succeed, and possibly just to survive.

Dangers include discovery and apprehension by the vher-elus, the life-shapers, or even one of the criminal leagues. The latter two groups would be as interested to hear about the outside world as the heroes are about the halflings and the thri-kreen.

Life Shaper Rebellion

The shapers of Glerran maintain an independence from the rest of the shaper organization, disapproving of that group's motivations and methods. In this adventure, the life-shapers based in Thamasku send enforcers (including some of the dreaded ghav-nosh) to apprehend Dehm-acov (the leader of the Glerran Sanctuary) and restore control. The beleaguered rebel shapers look to any help they can get, including the PCs.

To help the Glerran shapers, characters must contend with life shaper assassins, a veritable siege of the Sanctuary there, and longer lasting repercussions no matter what the results. The life-shapers are an unforgiving enemy, but at the same time, the Glerran shapers are valuable allies.

Alternatively, the life-shapers can convince the heroes outside Glerran that the rebels there are evil. In such a case, the player characters are among those trying to storm the rogue shaper sanctuary and apprehend those inside.

Esperhunt

A small group of wild talent halflings defiantly begins to use and refine their psionic powers. They believe that ingesting crushed esperweed can enhance their powers. They hire the heroes to hunt along the Jagged Cliffs for these rare plants. The PCs encounter any number of horrible monsters in their search, such as Athasian sloths, rocs, and more. The vertical forest in which the player characters eventually do find esperweed is dominated by four powerful gaj, who have eight rhul-thaun climbers whom they have snared under their psionic control. The heroes have to deal with these 3rd- to 10-level rogues and multiclassed fighter/rogues (preferably rescuing them, not simply killing them) as well as the gaj. Experience point awards should be given out for the amount of esperweed delivered and the number of dominated climbers they manage to free.

This adventure is particularly appropriate for a party of player characters who are windriders or climbers looking for employment. Many interesting adventures can be developed for such a group—searching for rare herbs, lost climbers, rogue monsters, wanted criminals, and all manner of other quarry that could be found amid the nooks, crags, and crannies of the cliffs.

Return of the High Lord

A halfling shows up in Reg-tol claiming to be the High Lord Rhan Thes-one!, returning as promised after so many millennia. The heroes are hired to guard him, as it turns out a number of groups want to see him dead—including the Chahn. Others hate him, claiming he is a fraud, a threat to the status quo, or a challenge to the existing order. The halfling in question expects to be taken to Thamasku to speak before the conclave.

On the way there, Chahn assassins—both warriors and rogues—attack the party and their charge. Other rogues (backed by some of the less ethical har-etuil) attempt to stop the heroes from making it to their destination—they don't want to see things change. Priests of a rogue water sect want to capture "Rhan" to learn whether he is telling the truth (and control him if he is the true High Lord).


As they fight to protect him, the player characters are confronted with questions of their own. Is he the real High Lord Rhan? Is he an impostor? Is he undead?

Monster?

A monstrosity emerges from the swamp and climbs to the village of Yihn-tol. It resembles a gorgon, but it has been altered by the magic of the swamp so that it has four arms with five-fingered hands instead of a front pair of hooves—it also sports a vast intellect.

It comes to the village and immediately the halflings around it begin to turn to stone because of the effects of the beast's breath. The village calls the heroes to come to the rescue and confront the horror, only to find that it regrets that the halflings were petrified and wishes to harm no one.

If the heroes give it a chance to speak, they find that the creature not only has gained intelligence, but has developed a conscience and a code of ethics. Its alignment is now



neutral good, and even tends toward lawful good. Unfortunately, it refuses to go back down into the swamp. It no longer wants to live amid the foul sorcery and dangerous monsters, the monstrosity wants to live among the rhul-thaun.

Now the heroes must champion either its cause and try to integrate the monster (and its dangerous breath) into the village, or they must convince the good creature to return to the swamp or drive it back.

Lost Caverns of the Rhulisti

Rumors abound of strange caverns with perfectly round openings and perfectly ridged, round walls, not unlike the interior of intestinal tubes, which reach far back into the darkness of the cliffs. These strange caves are rare, but reports place them throughout the Jagged Cliffs. The rhul-thaun universally avoid them and there is a taboo regarding them.

The caves are left over constructions of the rhulisti. The tubes are caves grown rather than dug, deep into the sides of the cliffs. They actually crisscross much of this district of Athas, stretching back all the way under the Tyr region from the Jagged Cliffs.

Those brave explorers willing to enter the forbidden caves find relics not only left over from rhulisti life-shaping (many still alive and functioning). However, they encounter psionic and magical items left over from previous ages of Athas when people were still aware of these tunnels and used them. Huge organic caverns can be found deep under the surface, housing great wonders—and guarded by horrible life-shaped monsters, psionic, and magical traps. Certain areas are filled with legions of undead, unliving remnants of the Green Age and the Age of Magic.

Death by Fire

If the rhul-thaun were to put together a list of their primary fears, one of the top 10 would most likely be the rise of the evil worshipers of fire. Most, however, probably don't realize that this is a fear most real.

In the village of Sahr-tosh, an evil priest named Rag-ovoth (ham/P12(fire)/CE) worships the forbidden element and seeks to wreak vengeance on what he feels is a society that has rejected the center of his life for far too long. He and his fellow priests and priestesses of flame (six in all, ranging from 4th to 8th level), as well as a number of evil followers (warriors and rogues of 3rd to 10th level), begin a reign of terror in the small village, burning living buildings of the community, killing halflings who get in their way, and destroying all life-shaped creations they encounter (except those they can use), setting them ablaze.

In a sudden surprise attack, they overwhelm the vher-elus of the community, and set themselves up as the village's rulers. At first, those who wish to see the village independent of the control of the life-shapers assist the marauders, but when they see the evil and chaotic nature of their allies they soon regret what they have done.

The worshipers of fire hold the har-etuil, the city administrator, and a number of life-shapers hostage. The entire village is awash in fire, confusion, violence, and death. Even the infamous ghav-nosh, the assassins of the shapers, are trapped within the village's now burning sanctuary, cut off from the village and their masters in Thamasku. Can the heroes restore order in this chaos? Will the pterrans take advantage of this situation and use the village's weakness to attack?

Perhaps the player characters are hired by the shapers themselves to do what they can for the city and to deliver orders to the cornered ghav-nosh. Antishaper rebels, like Sahn-abish and Wem-osun, may wish to help the heroes save the city, but not just to give it back to the shapers. Caught in a three-way or four-way battle, the heroes must choose sides and choose quickly.


Reggelid

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Climate/Terrain: | Lower Jagged Cliffs, Swamp |
| Frequency: | Very Rare |
| Organization: | Bands |
| Activity Cycle: | Nocturnal |
| Diet: | Omnivore |
| Intelligence: | Genius (17-18) |
| Treasure: | V |
| Alignment: | Neutral evil |
| No. Appearing: | 1d8+2 |
| Armor Class: | 7 |
| Movement: | 12 |
| Hit Dice: | 3 (Varies) |
| Thac0: | 19 |
| No. of Attacks: | As level and class |
| Damage/Attack: | 1d6 (weapon) |
| Special Attacks: | Spells |
| Special Defenses: | Nil |
| Magic Resistance: | Nil |
| Size: | M (7' tall) |
| Morale: | Steady (11-12) |
| XP Value: | 175 |

Reggelids are tall and angular, looking something like ugly elves with flat faces and an extra finger on each hand. Their origin is unknown, even to them, but they seem unconcerned about preserving their past or their heritage. Their only passion is magic.

Combat: Each reggelid is a defiler wizard or a fighter/wizard of at least 3rd level. Those





of higher levels have correspondingly higher Hit Dice. They are born with magical abilities and strive to expand and increase them throughout their lives. They normally use staves in melee combat, although using magical items—even weapons of all sorts is also very common for reggelids.

When reggelids use magical items, there is a 75% chance that they can use their innate abilities and acquired knowledge to use the items even more effectively than it was designed to be used. If successful, the devices' power is increased by 25%. This means that a *wand of fire* that can fire 6d6 fireballs in the hands of a reggelid can potentially inflict 2d6 (1.5 rounded up) more damage.

In combat, reggelids respect only wizards (and to a lesser degree, other characters with spells or inherent magical abilities) and focus their attacks upon them. When in battle, the reggelids use their spells in conjunction to complement each other. Often, while one is throwing an offensive spell, another is casting a defensive spell that aids both.

Habitat/Society: Reggelid communities comprise little more than wooden lean-tos or shallow caves. They remain uninterested in any sort of luxury or creature comfort, providing for themselves only enough to survive and continue their magic studies. Lore is kept on stone tablets guarded by the young males of the community.

Magical power and knowledge determine leadership among the reggelids. This being the case, in any band of reggelids, a defiler wizard leader is encountered whose level is at least equal to the number of individuals in the group. Reggelid communities are commonly lead by individuals of 15th to 20th level, regardless of size.

Ten percent of any reggelid group are of a level of 4-9 (1d6+3), 30% of the band are fighter/wizards levels 3-8 (1d6+2) wielding broadswords rather than staves and using magical items tailored for fighters.

Like the bvanen, the reggelids keep to areas on the lower portions of the cliffs. They seem to search forever for Rajaat's magical legacies within the swamp.

Ecology: Some halfling scholars believe the reggelids to be the result of some of Rajaat's strange activities or victims of the curse (they do not understand magic, but what they are postulating is the idea that they are somehow some leftover creations of Rajaat's—a very plausible idea).

There is never any conflict among the reggelids themselves. They instantly recognize members of their race that are more magically adept or skilled than themselves and defer to them automatically. Their lust for all things magical is not to promote themselves within their own society but to advance themselves on a general level. It is the means that interest them more than the end.

Though they bear only ill will for all other races, reggelids despise the halflings of the Jagged Cliffs and their life-shaped creations most of all. The reggelids developed the following spell specifically to combat the halflings and destroy their shaped tools and weapons.

Organic Disruption (Necromancy/Alteration)

3rd-level Wizard Spell

Range: 50 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 10-foot radius

Saving Throw: Reduces Dmg by


This spell allows the caster to strike at life-shaped creations and those who use them. When the spell is cast, a 10-foot radius sphere of dark energy appears around the desired location and then quickly fades. All life-shaped creations within the sphere must make a saving throw vs. death magic or be slain instantly. Nonliving organic material such as wood and leather must make a saving throw vs. acid or crumble to dust. All other organic targets are dealt 2d6 damage, although a saving throw vs. spell reduces this by half.

The material component for this spell is a drop of mild acid.

Bvanen

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Climate/Terrain | Base of the Jagged Cliffs |
| Frequency: | Very Rare |
| Organization: | Tribal |
| Activity Cycle: | Nocturnal |
| Diet: | Omnivore |
| Intelligence: | Very (11-12) |
| Treasure: | Nil |
| Alignment: | Neutral Good |
| No. Appearing: | 3d4 |
| Armor Class: | 4 |
| Movement: | 6, Sw 12 |
| Hit Dice: | 3+1 |
| Thac0: | 17 |
| No. of Attacks: | 3 |
| Damage/Attack: | 1d3/1d3/1d4+1 |
| Special Attacks: | Secreted ooze |
| Special Defenses: | See below |
| Magic Resistance: | Nil |
| Size: | M (5' tall) |
| Morale: | Average (8-10) |
| XP Value: | 420 |





PSIONICS SUMMARY: Dis 2/Sci 3/Dev 10; PS 10; PSPs 40

Att: EW, II, MT; **Def:** MB, MBk, TS

PLAYER'S OPTION: #AT 1; MTHAC0 16; MAC 4

Psychometabolism: Sciences—animal affinity;

Devotions—displacement, flesh armor, immovability

Telepathy: Sciences—domination, mindlink; Devotions—attraction, contact (send thoughts), ego whip (sight link), id insinuation (inflict pain), mind thrust (synaptic static), phobia amplification

Bvanen are a race of intelligent, benevolent amphibians that dwell in the swamp at the base of the Jagged Cliffs. Their hesitant, distrustful nature often forces them into conflicts they would otherwise choose to avoid.

Combat: These amphibians use a claw/claw/bite routine (never weapons), but are not strong fighters. They do have a special attack power, however, which they use to partially immobilize their foes. Every bvanen secretes a sticky, quick-hardening ooze through pores on its skin. This hardened ooze provides not only a protective shell around the bvanen, but a weapon that can be used to stick to foes on a successful claw attack roll instead of inflicting damage. On the round after a blow has landed, the foe cannot use the struck body part (roll 1d8: 1—head; 2-3, right arm; 4-5, left arm; 6-8, either leg) until a bend bars roll is made (either by the character or a companion). A hit to the head indicates that the foe suffocates as if drowning. A group of bvanen can quickly completely incapacitate an enemy when working in conjunction.

This secretion has one other use. It seals over the bvanen's wounds as soon as they are inflicted. Bvanen are therefore immune to the effects of *swords of wounding* and similar magical weapons that cause bleeding. Further, the ooze and its healing abilities effectively reduce all damage taken by 1 point.

Approximately 1 in 6 bvanen possesses the listed psionic powers.

Habitat/Society: The bvanen live in partially submerged caves at the base of the Jagged Cliffs and in temporary camps throughout the dismal swamp. They use their hardened secretions to build nests out of wood and plants. Their society is divided up into two groups: caretakers and hunter/warriors. Caretakers see to the needs of the tribe and the tribe's domesticated animals. Every bvanen camp or village has domesticated animals—giant fish, giant frogs, aquatic inix, giant insects, and others. They are used for transport, food, and sometimes as guardians.

The bvanen have their own language, and use a series of scars on their flesh to indicate rank and position within society. The bvanen have a strict hierarchy, each individual has a specific place within the social structure. The scar symbols show rank, the scars becoming more intricate as one raises in the social order.

Although they are generally a kind and gentle race, the bvanen are reclusive and suspicious of strangers, often choosing to fight defensively rather than risk letting their guard down and trusting a potential enemy.

Ecology: It is unknown whether the Bvanen are natural creatures or bred from the sorcerous soup of the swamp. They have never been encountered anywhere other than the Jagged Cliffs. They hunt and raise animals for food, but they will never knowingly eat an intelligent creature.

Life-Shaped Creations: Guardians

| | Climbdog | Darkstrike | Protector | Shieldbug | Watcher |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| Climate/Terrain: | | | Jagged Cliffs | | |
| Frequency: | | | Very Rare | | |
| Organization: | | | None | | |
| Activity Cycle: | | | All | | |
| Diet: | | | Special | | |
| Intelligence: | Semi (2-4) | Non (0) | Animal (1) | Animal (1) | Non(0) |
| Treasure: | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Alignment: | | | Neutral | | |
| No. Appearing: | | | Varies | | |
| Armor Class: | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 10 |
| Movement: | 6 | Nil | 8 | 24 | Nil |
| Hit Dice: | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 hp | 1 |
| THAC0: | 19 | 19 | 17 | Nil | Nil |
| No. of Attacks: | 3 | 1 | 3 | Special | None |
| Damage/Attack: | 1d3/1d3/1d4 | 1d8 | 1d4/1d4/1d6 | Special | None |
| Special Attacks: | Nil | Poison | Nil | Special | Nil |
| Special Defenses: | Nil | Nil | Nil | Special | Nil |
| Magic Resistance: | | | Nil | | |
| Size: | S (3' long) | S (4' long) | M (5' long) | T (6" long) | S (3' long) |
| Morale: | | | Special | | |
| XP Value: | 65 | 65 | 120 | 7 | 35 |





These life-shaped creations are organic automatons. Some have a modicum of independent intelligence, but all mindlessly obey the commands of their masters. They gain nourishment from cam-rah rather than food and do not need the attention and care of real animals.

Climbdog: These canine beasts have wide, grasping paws and extremely flexible legs, allowing them to climb even sheer slopes. They accompany halfling climbers, giving them protection and aiding them with their keen sense of smell, hearing, and sight. These senses are all at least twice as good as the average halfling's. In times of danger or combat, they sacrifice themselves without hesitation to protect their masters. Climbdogs attack with two claws and a bite, suffering no penalties if attacking while climbing but being limited to only one claw attack instead of two.

Darkstrike: These guardian creatures look like snakes with large bulbous nodules at the end of their serpentine bodies. The nodules secrete an adhesive like clingpads so that they can be attached to walls, doors, or other surfaces. Their dark flesh allows them to blend into the shadows, becoming 90% invisible in dim light. Usually, they are placed in nooks, alcoves, or around corners so that they can hide, waiting to pounce. Foes surprise rolls are modified by a -2 when first attacked by a darkstrike. When a preselected condition is met, the serpentine creature strikes at any available target with its fearsome bite. Poison nodules often accompany darkstrikes so that their bite carries with it a virulent poison. A darkstrike can sense motion even in the dark (sonar, similar to bats), so conditions are usually based on movement. Conditions include the detection of movement based on the amount of light (day or night), the number of figures passing by the creatures at the same time, the size, race, or species of figures passing, or similar criteria.

Protector: These feline creatures have the grace and power of large cats. They can be instructed to recognize intruders and attack them. The protectors flawlessly discriminate between those they are to protect and those who present an obvious threat. They attack with two huge claws and a tooth-filled maw that rend and rip its foes. Unlike predatory cats, however, these life-shaped creations do not eat their kills or attack out of hunger.

Shieldbug: These wasp-like creations are 6 inches long and can fly up to 30 miles an hour. Singly they are virtually useless, but in a swarm they can be a windrider's best defense. A swarm comprises 50 to 100 of these creatures. They accompany windriders on their mounts (usually resting on the windriding mount until needed), flying up and around their master, screening out intruders and repulsing attacks. When a ranged attack (magical or missile) is determined to hit the windrider or his mount, there is a percentage chance equal to the number of shieldbugs in the swarm that the attack strikes one of the insects instead of the windrider. The attack automatically kills the bug, reducing the number in the swarm by one. A shieldswarm cannot protect against area of effect attacks, although all of the bugs within the area of effect are slain. Against melee attacks, windriders surrounded by swarms have their AC improved by 2 places due to the swarm obscuring them and fouling the enemy's attacks.

Offensively, the swarm can be commanded to attack and harass the rider's foes in battle. Every round within the hostile swarm, a character takes 1 point of damage and must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation to be able to take an action other than defending against the bugs.

Watcher: A watcher is a reptilian/plant creature with large, bulbous eyes possessed of virtually 360 degree vision. If a watcher observes a specific sight preselected by its master, it lets out a loud keening sound. It makes no attacks and never moves.

Life-Shaped Creations: Transport

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: _____
 FREQUENCY: _____
 ORGANIZATION: _____
 ACTIVITY CYCLE: _____
 DIET: _____
 INTELLIGENCE: _____
 TREASURE: _____
 ALIGNMENT: _____
 NO. APPEARING: _____
 ARMOR CLASS: _____
 MOVEMENT: _____
 HIT DICE: _____
 THAC0: _____
 NO. OF ATTACKS: _____
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: _____
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: _____
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: _____
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: _____
 SIZE: _____
 MORALE: _____
 XP VALUE: _____

| | Ber-ethern | Yihn-eflan | Gon-evauth | Dhev-sahr |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | | Jagged Cliffs | | |
| FREQUENCY: | | Very Rare | | |
| ORGANIZATION: | | None | | |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | | Any | | |
| DIET: | | Special | | |
| INTELLIGENCE: | | Animal (1) | | |
| TREASURE: | | N/A | | |
| ALIGNMENT: | | Neutral | | |
| NO. APPEARING: | | Varies | | |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 4 | 5 | 10 | 7 |
| MOVEMENT: | Fl45(A) | Fl32(C) | Fl24(B) | 18 |
| HIT DICE: | 4 | 6 | 9 | 4 |
| THAC0: | 17 | 15 | 11 | 17 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 1 | 2 | Nil | 1 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 1d4 | 1d4+1/1d4+1 | Nil | 1d6 |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | | None | | |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | | None | | |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | | Nil | | |
| SIZE: | M (6' long) | L (8' long) | H (20' long) | L (7' long) |
| MORALE: | | Special | | |
| XP VALUE: | 120 | 270 | 975 | 120 |

These life-shaped creations are organic automatons. Some have a modicum of independent intelligence, but all mindlessly obey the commands of their masters. They gain nourishment from cam-rahn rather than food, and do not need the attention and care of real animals.

Ber-ethern: Breeze sprites (which is what *ber-ethern* means) are the smallest of the windriding mounts. They are insectoid flyers with room to carry one halfling rider and 25 pounds of cargo. They can fly up to 75 miles per hour fully loaded. Their long, thin wings are twice their body length, allowing them to fly with not only great speed but superb control. Ber-ethern can hover, pivot, and move straight up and down. Designed expressly for rapid, controlled movement, ber-ethern can move with speed and grace unequalled in nature. Their attack is with a small, poisonless stinger.





Windriders choose this mount for quick trips or for operating in situations where maneuverability is essential. They can fly through narrow crevices and hover next to the cliff face, allowing a rider to harvest plants from a vertical forest.

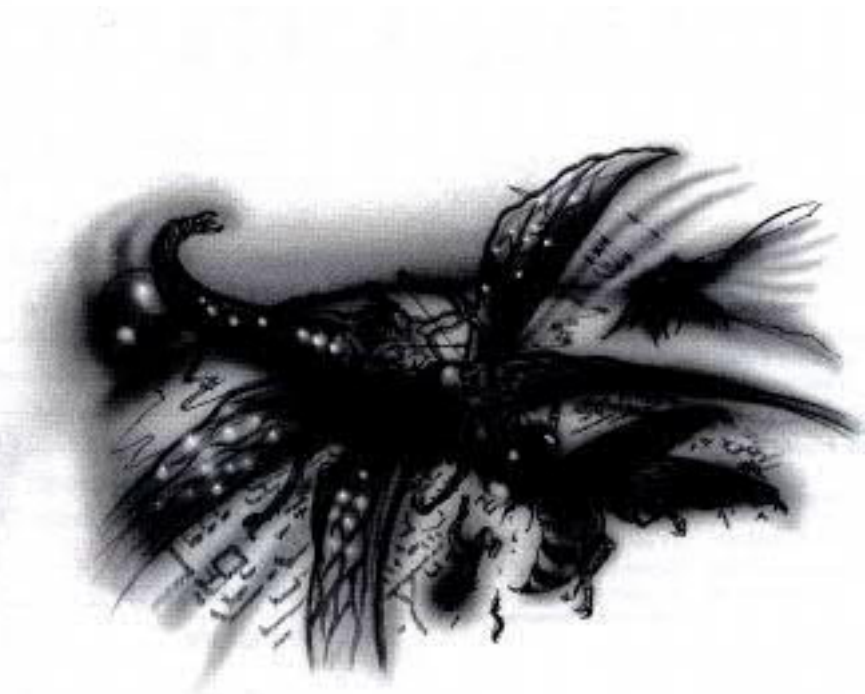
Yihn-eflan: Yihn-eflan are windriding mounts whose name means gust climber. Larger than breeze sprites but smaller than soar whales, the yihn-eflan is an avian creature with huge, oversized wings. Their bodies are covered with feathers, and their heads have hawk-like beaks. Their only method of attack, however, is to rake foes with their large talons. One to three riders can rest safely on its back or 200 pounds of cargo and a single rider can be carried. Fully loaded, a gust climber can reach speeds up to 50 miles per hour.

This is the medium windriding mount, still very fast but able to carry more weight than a ber-ethern. These are chosen mounts of windriders who know they are going into battle, for yihn-eflan dives upon foes with a terrible ferocity and rake with their talons besides its rider's attack.

Con-evauth: This windrider mount is also called a soar whale, and sometimes (usually by outsiders who see them from afar) an airship. Con-evauth are huge, balloon shapes, able to keep themselves aloft in the winds of the cliffs by filling their large inner cavities with hot, moist air. Windriders ride either atop the floating beasts or in gondolas attached beneath the beasts that can carry up to eight halflings or one windrider and one ton of cargo. Fully loaded, a soar whale moves at a top speed of 30 miles per hour. It has no means of attack or even self-defense, and if it takes more than 25% of its hit points, it must descend—its air sack has been punctured.

This is the most common windriding mount, chosen when speed can be sacrificed to move great amounts of cargo or many passengers. Additionally, for extremely large and heavy loads, several soar whales can be hooked together and flown in teams. Due to their slow, gentle movements, they are good for vertical forest harvesting, and their undercarriages provide excellent steady platforms for hunters with spinethrowers and lightning generators.

Dhev-sahr: The dhev-sahr is the only land-based mount made by the rhul-thaun life-shapers. Their mammalian, hair-covered bodies are round, their heads resemble those of the camels. The creatures' four stilt-like legs allow them to move very quickly at what appears to be an awkward gallop. Despite appearances, however, dhev-sahr are graceful and steady. Two halflings can ride comfortably on top.



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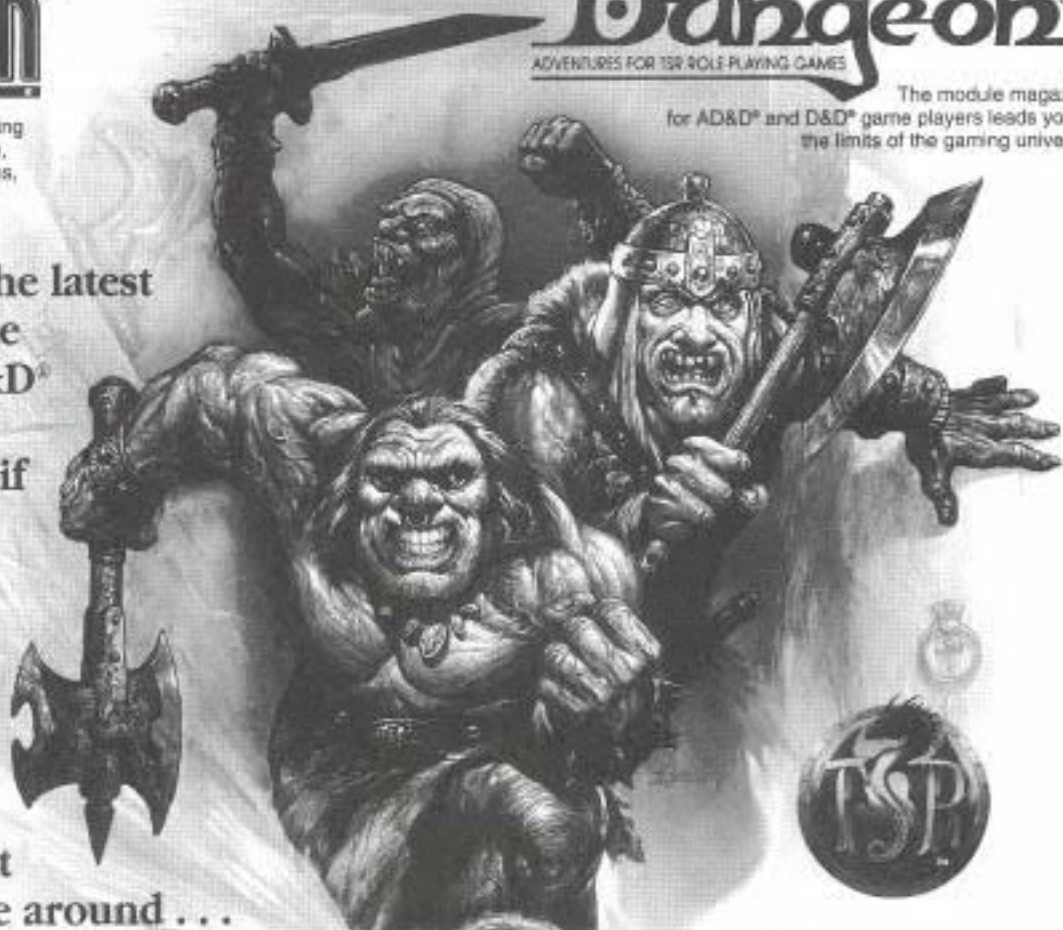
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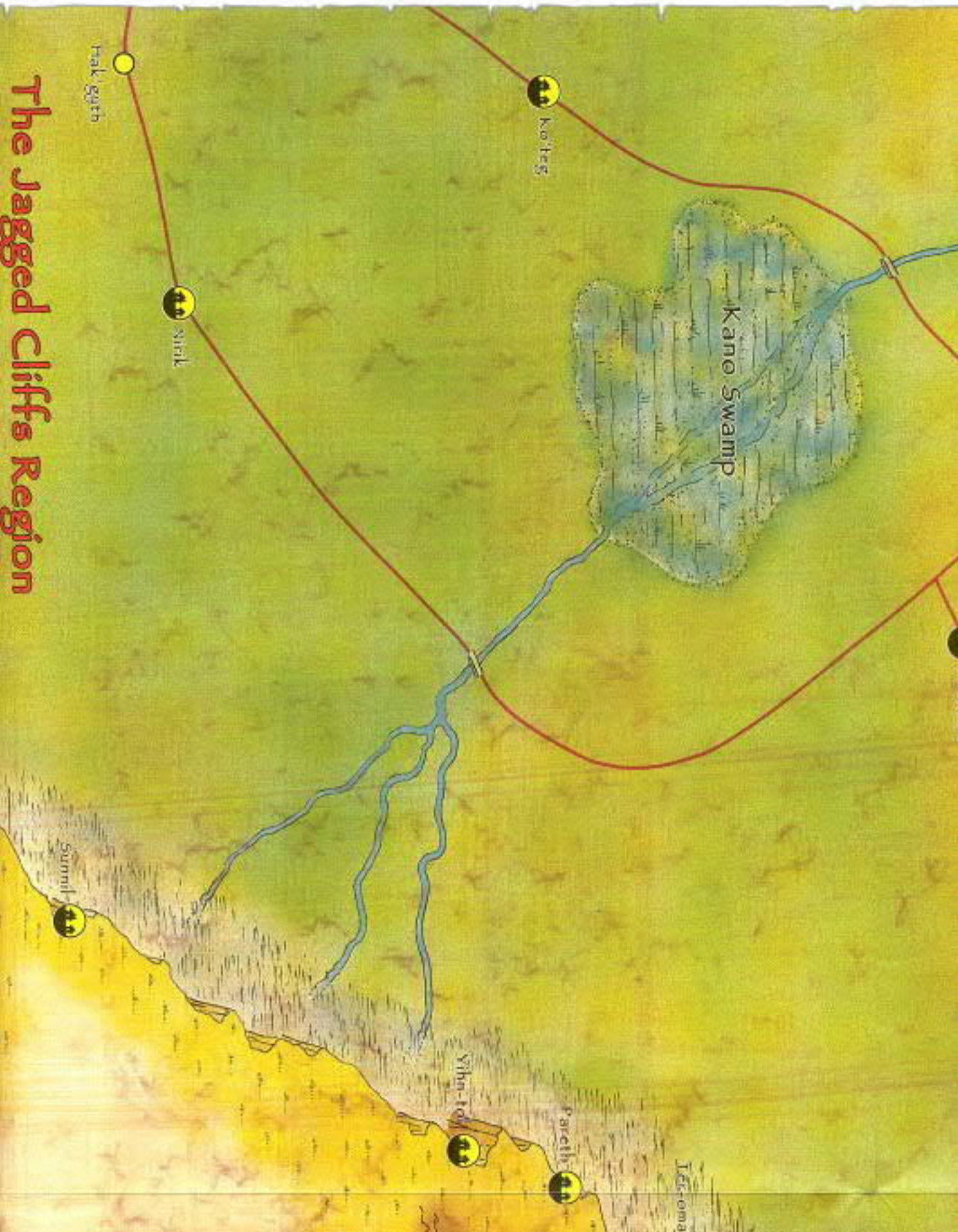
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Kazim

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Koiteng

Sank

Kano Swamp

Sunnil

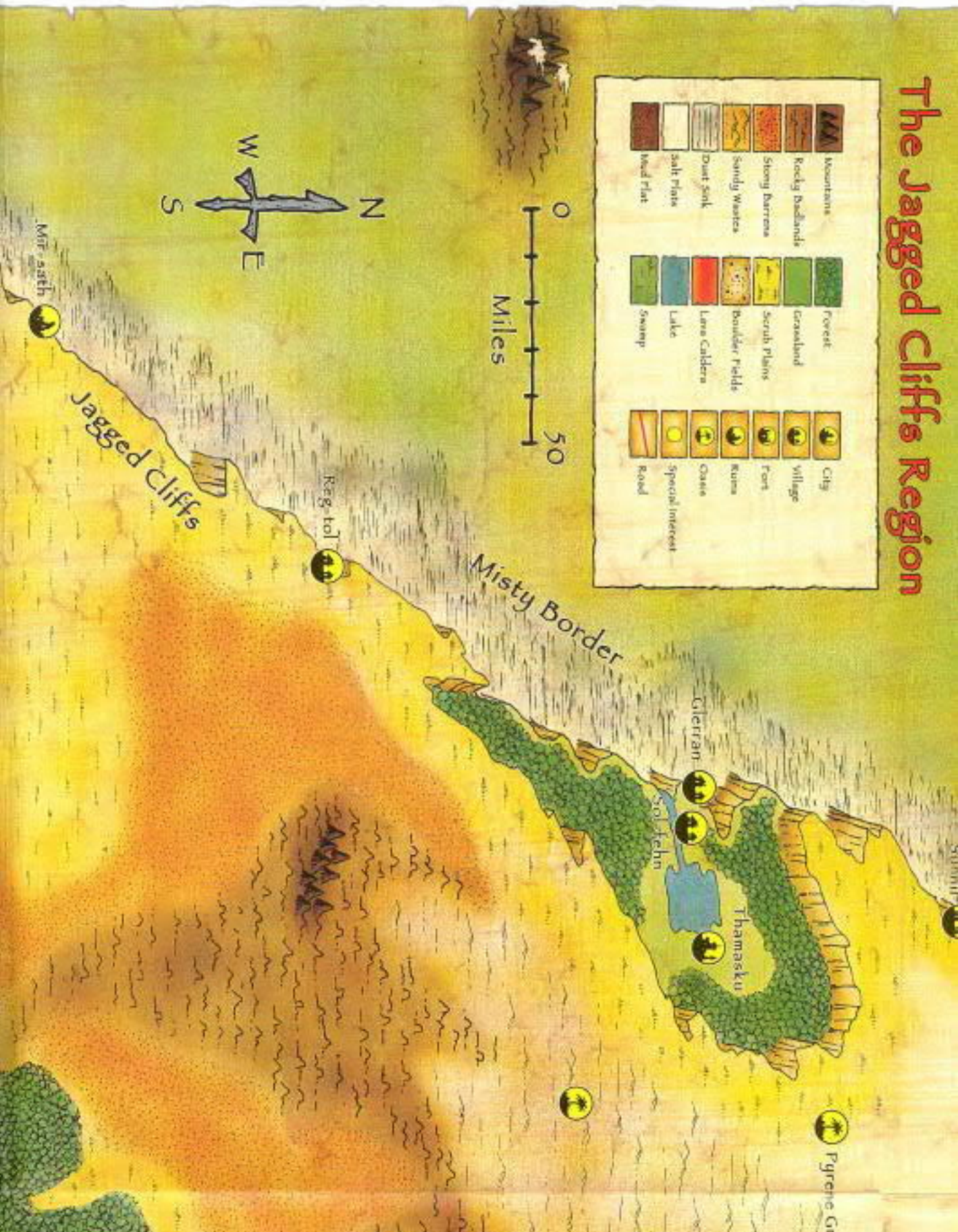
Vihn-Id

Pareth

Istoma

The Jagged Cliffs Region

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|
|  | Mountains |  | Forest |  | City |
|  | Rocky Badlands |  | Grassland |  | Village |
|  | Stony Barrens |  | Scrub Plains |  | Fort |
|  | Sandy Wastes |  | Boulder Fields |  | Kuma |
|  | Dust Sink |  | Lava Caldera |  | Cave |
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Great Rift

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Mountains

The Forest Ridge

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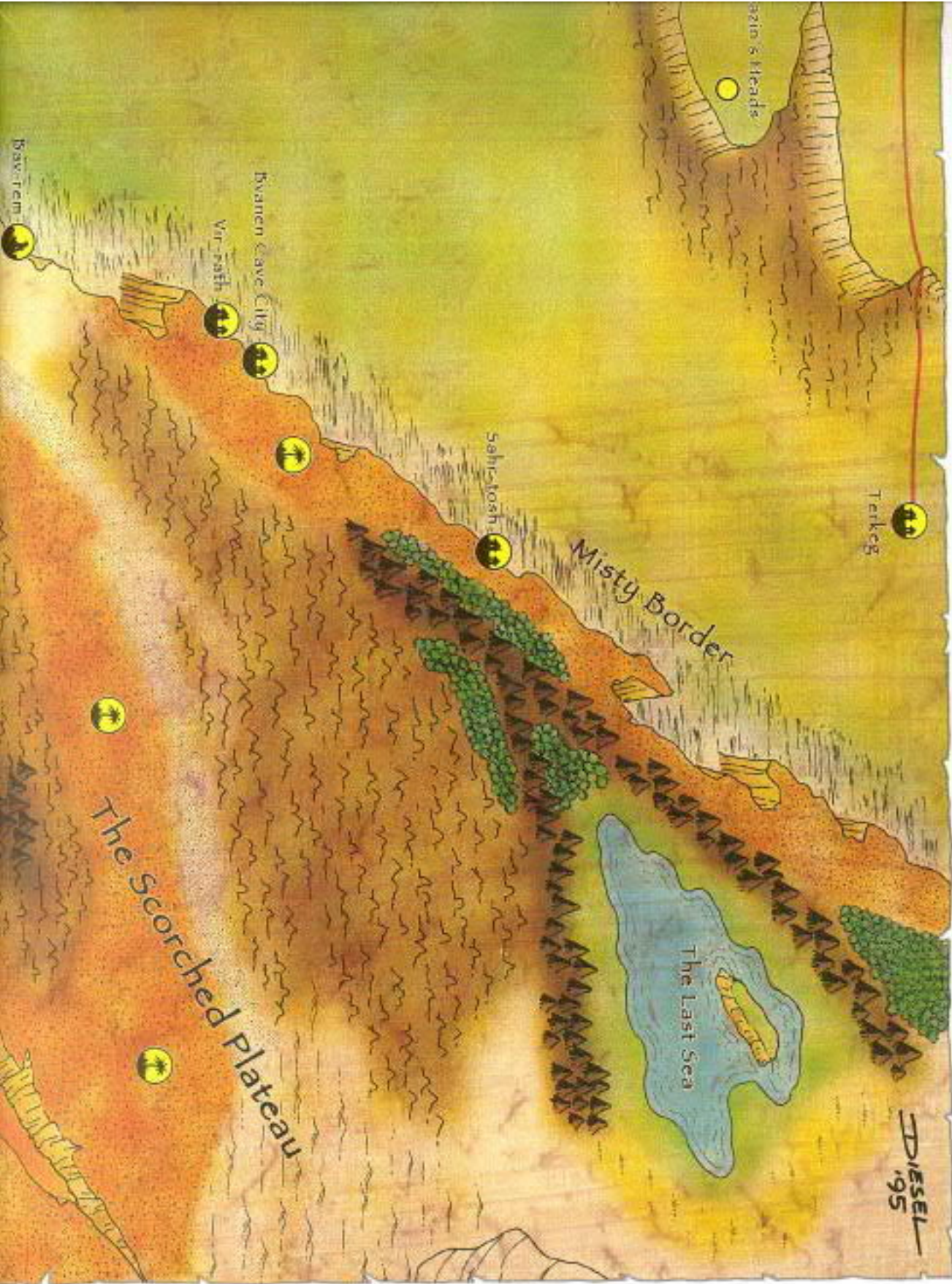


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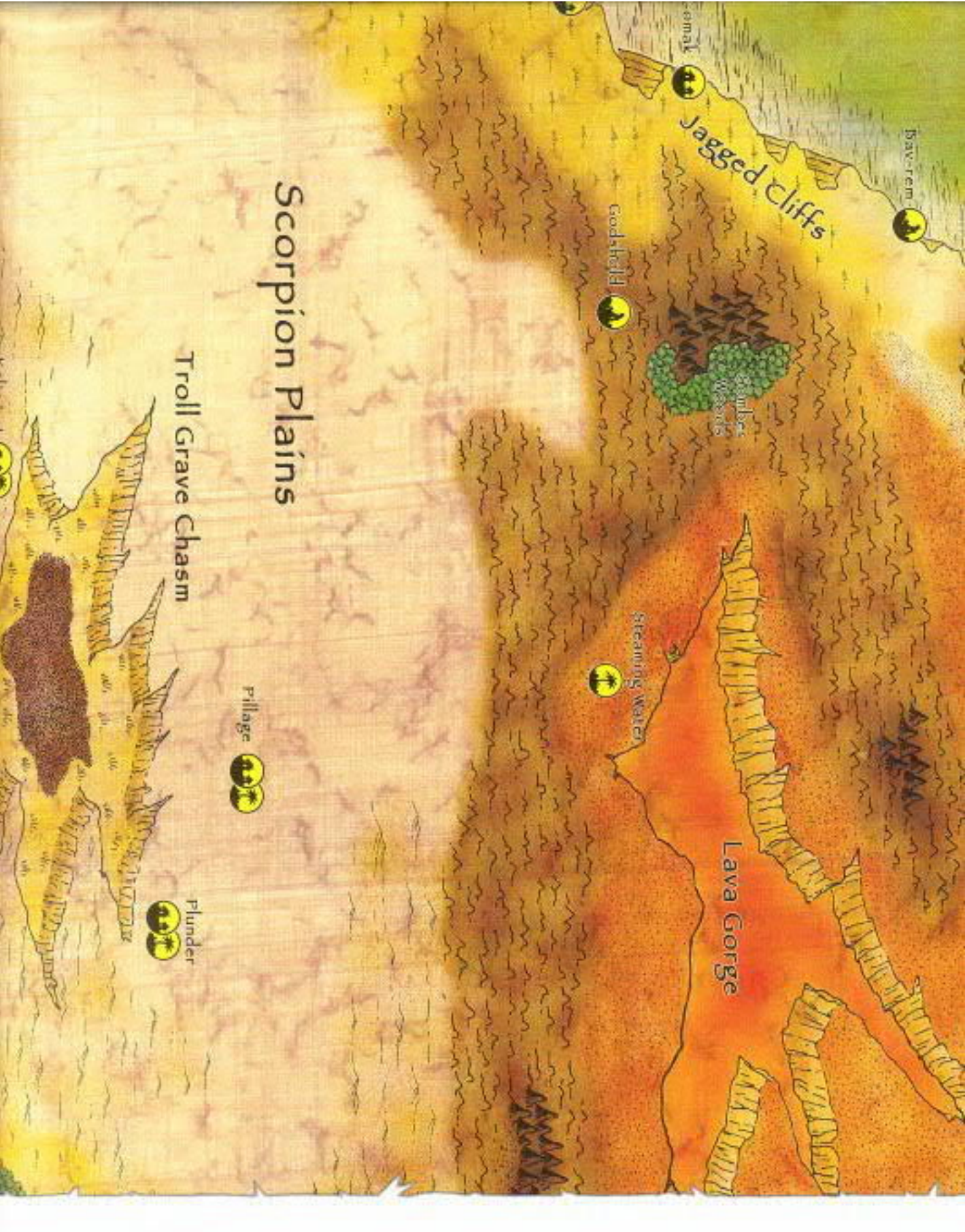
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The Last Sea

The Scorched Plateau

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Jagged Cliffs

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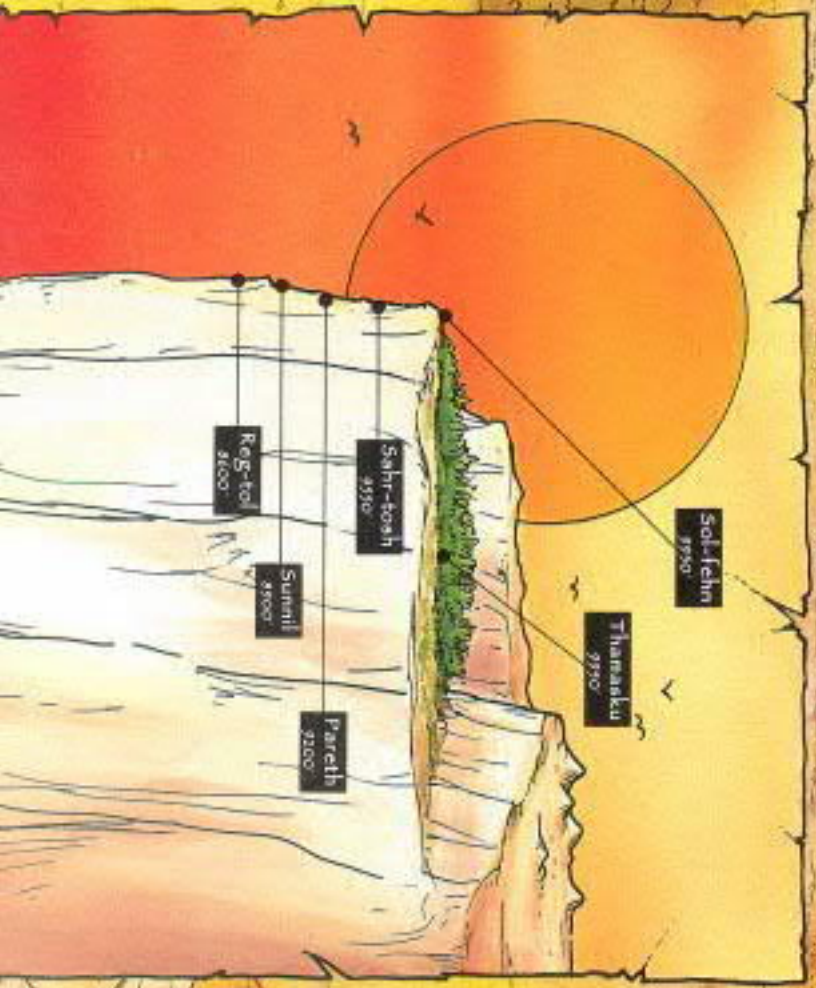
Ravage

Kavish

Glowing

Desert

Wrath



Sol-feln
8950'

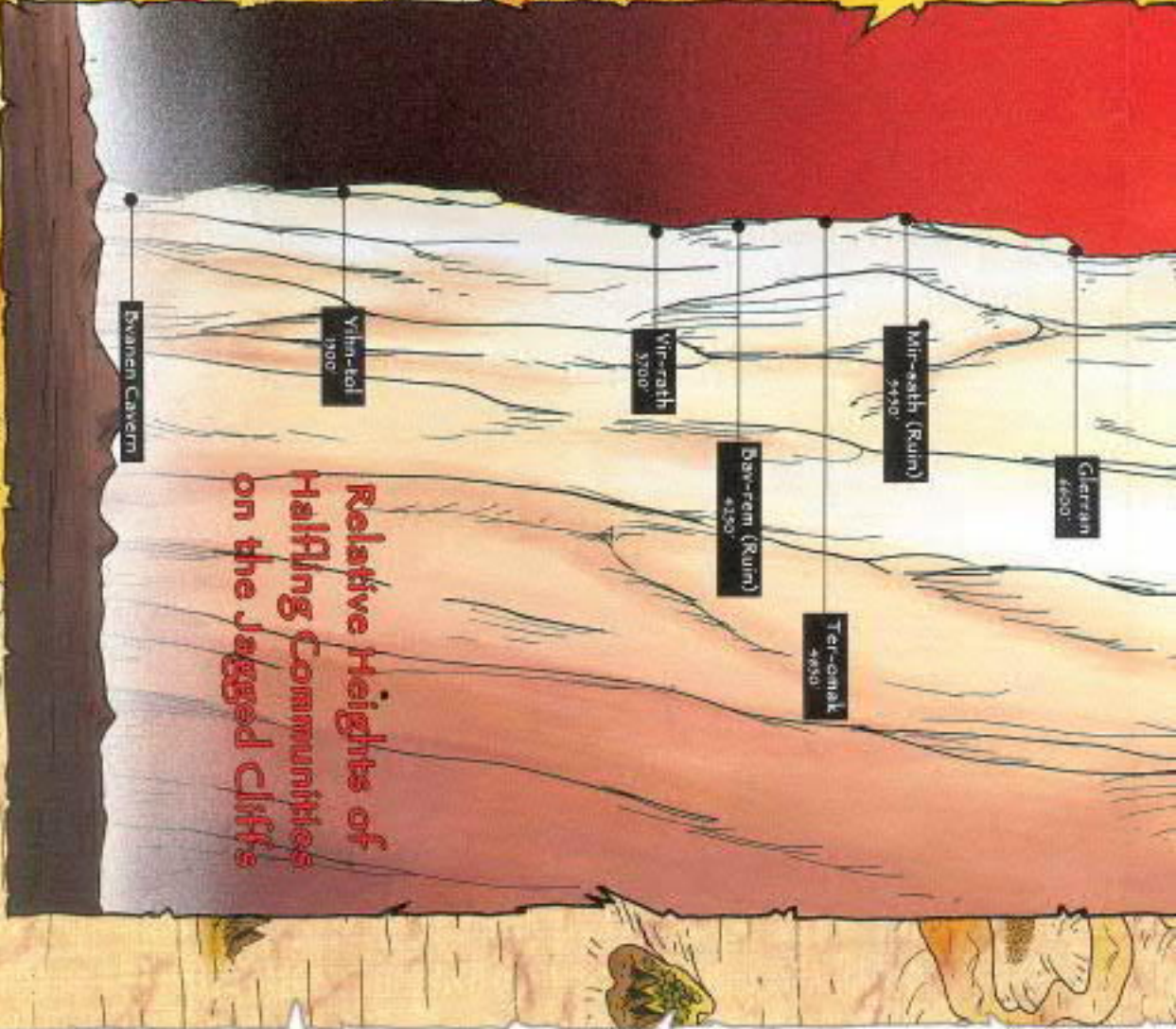
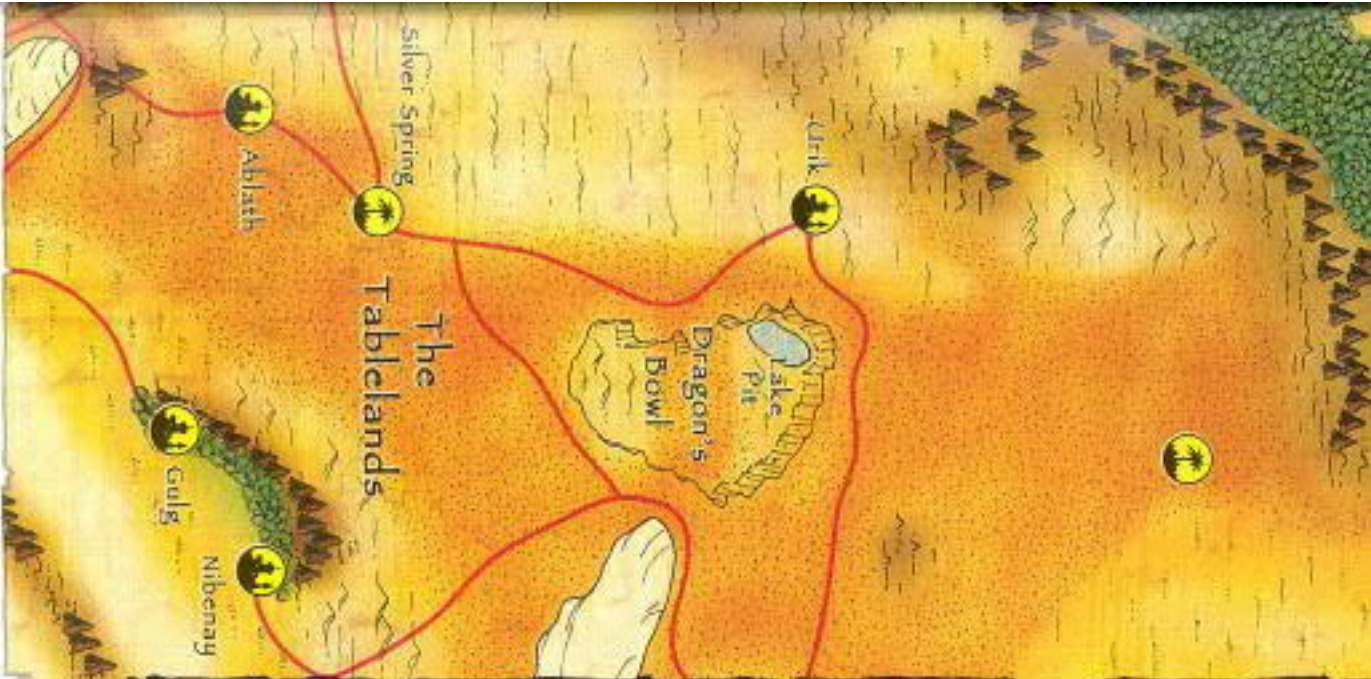
Tharensku
9750'

Sahr-toosh
9350'

Sunnill
8900'

Reg-toil
8600'

Pareth
9200'



**Relative Heights of
Halfling Communities
on the Jugged Cliffs**

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THE WANDERER'S CHRONICLE
DARK SUN

Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs

By Monte Cook

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