

MZC1

MAZTICA

The Maztica Campaign Guide



Kevin

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HISTORY



The True World is a continent of unknown cultures and strange magics that is teeming with opportunities for adventure. Once exploited by the Golden Legion of the Amnian general Cordell, recent trials and tribulations have allowed its people a return to normalcy.

INTRODUCTION

This netbook is designed to attract new players to the Mesoamerican based setting known as Maztica. Maztica is a continent of the greater world of Toril from the Forgotten Realms. It was originally introduced in 1990 with the novels **Ironhelm** (1990), **Viperhand** (1990) and **Feathered Dragon** (1991); each written by Doug Niles. It was subsequently followed up by a number of 2nd Edition gaming products, starting with the **Maztica Boxed Set** in 1991 (also by Doug Niles) and followed by two adventures (**FMA1 Fires of Zatal** by Jeff Grubb and Tim Beach, **FMA2 Endless Armies** by Jeff Grubb) and one accessory/adventure called **FMQ1 City of Gold** by John Nephew and Jonathan Tweet.

In later editions of Dungeons and Dragons, with a few minor exceptions, Maztica was summarily ignored or outright removed from the Forgotten Realms setting. With the advent of 5e and the Dungeon Master's Guild, Maztica is back once again in the Realms!

HISTORY OVERVIEW

Maztica has had a vibrant and eventful history that has left it disconnected to the continent of Faerûn for the majority of its existence and its varied peoples have only made contact with the wider world in the past century and a half. During that time, Maztica spent an entire century exiled to the twin world of Abeir. So despite foreign influence, most of the continent's primary cultures have managed to remain nearly untouched.

While Cordell and his legionnaires might have conquered many of its nations and greatest warriors, during the exile, much of its culture returned to what it once had been. After now having returned for half a decade, those who seek to plunder its riches once again might find the continent quite a bit more prepared.

This chapter first gives a narrative of Maztica's history, beginning before recorded time, and then gives an actual timeline with the date of a number of major events.

HISTORICAL ERAS

The history of the True World can be divided into different ages. Three of these ages, known as the *Immortal Era*, the *Golden Age of Payit*, and the *Dawn of Nexal* represent the vast majority of Maztica's history. Recent major changes have occurred with such frequency, however, that it is difficult for Maztican historians to give this period a single fitting title.

Although it might not accurately represent the plethora of changes, the time after the Night of Wailing will from this point forward be referred to as *The Return*. Qotal, the primary influence for good and the source of the fabled pluma magic, did in fact return at this time from a self-imposed exile.

Since the land itself has recently returned from exile, the name has stuck for those who require such classifications. Note that in this section, there are major spoilers for the Maztica Trilogy and it should not be perused if there is still an intention to read the novels.

THE IMMORTAL ERA

Long before mankind's dominance in the True World, avatars of the gods came to Toril in a flying pyramid of unimaginable size known as the Great Skyhome. Having embarked from another world far from Toril, some of these deities took new names upon themselves in an attempt to start fresh on this beautiful blue-green world. When they came to Toril, many of the deities scattered and fled to other lands, while a core group remained.

The journey itself was not easy on the gods, and one even perished for unknown reasons upon the ships' landing. This goddess, known as Cōātlicue, is said to be resting uneasily in her underground tomb.

It is also said that the gods were not the only ones who came to Toril in the Great Skyhome. The demoness Itzapaplotl, who was also known as the Obsidian Butterfly, stowed away on the gargantuan ship. She fled from the gods soon after their arrival and she has plagued the True World ever since.

The eleven deities who remained were a close family of powers and they would come to dominate the lands which would one day be known as Maztica. The patron and matron of this pantheon were known respectively as Kukul, the ancient Father of the Gods, and Maztica, the Mother of Life.

Kukul and Maztica were accompanied by the greatest of their children, Qotal. This noble deity was alternatively called the Feathered Dragon, the Plumed Father or the Plumed One for his manifestations as a great golden dragon with colorful plumage. Close behind Qotal followed his cruel brother Zaltec, whose name was often accompanied by the titles Bringer of War and the Eater of Hearts. Zaltec had a much more human-like appearance than Qotal, but his anger and hatred were always readily apparent in his ever-snarling mouth of jaguar-like teeth.

The three remaining males shared much of Zaltec's anger and vile appetites. Azul was the Giver of Rain and Taker of Breath and although his penchant for cruelty was great, his domain was essential to the survival of the True World and its inhabitants.

Tezca was the Ruler of the Sun and Fire, though his father was also often attributed dominion over the sun. Much as his brother brought life with his rains, Tezca, despite his cruel nature, brought life-giving warmth to the world.

Plutoq was not quite as bloodthirsty as his three brothers, nor was he as kind and compassionate as the eldest, but certainly the Master of Earth and Stone was just as influential and powerful.

As a general rule, the four sisters were not as demanding as their more ambitious brothers but their influence was no less important to the True World. Kiltzi was the sister known as the Giver of Health, Growth, Nourishment and Love. She was a compassionate goddess who cared mostly for love, happiness and the contentment of her people.



Eha was the Wind Sprite; a goddess whose powers were said to bring the breath to a newborn child.

Finally there was Watil and Nula; the Guardian of Plants and Animals respectively. These sisters were responsible for the well-being of the more natural aspects of the True World.

In the earliest of their days on Toril, the gods sought to find new playthings. They attempted to create man to both honor and fear them, though they were less than satisfied with their earliest attempts.

The first man was made of mud, but their amorphous forms were washed away and soon forgotten. Next, men of wood were created, and although they were not susceptible to the waters of great Azul, Tezca's fire proved their downfall. The third attempt was to create a man of gold. While remarkably beautiful and immune to both the rains and fires, this man had no tonalli (soul) of his own, and the gods were truly disappointed. Some say that there are ancient survivors still from each of these failed attempts, living somewhere in the most forsaken and hidden regions of the True World. Forgotten and unloved by their creators, these outcasts hold no love for the ones who brought them life.

Kukul, as the Father of the Gods, knew far more than his sons and daughters of the act of creation. In his wisdom, Kukul severed the fingers of his hand. As they landed, each finger found a life and breath of their own. These beings; mankind in its infancy, grew to love, honor and fear the gods and the powers rejoiced.

The gods enjoyed their new playthings greatly, and each bestowed wonderful gifts upon their toys. Tezca and Azul gave fire and water to help mankind survive the ravages of their uncaring environment. Plutoq and his sisters Nula, Watil and Eha worked to bring sustenance to mankind, though the life they offered was seldom simple. Desire was also given in many different forms. Desire to love from Kiltzi, to learn from Qotal and even the desire to war was given by Zaltec. All of these gifts caused mankind to expand and exalt in the worship of their creators.

Of all of the gods, Maztica herself was raised above all others in her role as the great Mother of Life. The eldest of her children grew jealous of his mother's position. Qotal decided to bring himself to the forefront of human love, so he gave them mayz. This grain was greater than all other gifts because it allowed mankind to settle and focus more of their time on worship and for honoring the gods. Their numbers continued to expand and mankind became civilized.

Much like the eldest before him, Zaltec also grew jealous. The Eater of Hearts harnessed the magic of claws, fangs, talons and venom and gave it to his priests in the form of magic known as hishna. This newfound power led to great strife among the humans and warring soon increased tenfold, all in the name of Zaltec. For a brief time, the darkest of the brothers was ascendant and in their endless war, mankind despaired.

Maztica and her son Qotal were infuriated with their cruel brother. This was not how the gods intended to be worshiped! Though Qotal could do nothing to counter his dark brother's will, Maztica, in her role as the Mother of Life, created the magic of life and feathers known as pluma. She bestowed this magic upon her son, who then passed it along to his own priests and worshipers. Balance was once again found among the gods' playthings.

The weapon of choice among the gods; passed along to man long ago, was the obsidian edged mācuahuitl (sometimes called abbreviated as a "maca"). Zaltec's mācuahuitl was mighty indeed, and in his anger over his family's perceived betrayal, he beheaded his mother with a single blow from this gargantuan weapon.

Kukul, who had up until this point remained distant from the brewing conflicts within his family, despaired at the death of his wife and the strife among his sons. It is not known if he simply fled the world in disgust or took his own life, but what is certain is that neither man nor god has felt his presence since.

Itzapaplotl may have been the only one to understand that some remnant of Kukul remained in Toril's great sun. She and her star demon servitors could not plague the world with their atrocities when the sun, who to them was known as the Eye of Kukul, could gaze upon the world. Only when the Eye was eclipsed could she visit her depredations on the lands of mankind.

After Maztica's murder and Kukul's disappearance, war erupted among Kukul's children. The female goddesses flocked to their brother Qotal and the males stood alongside their brother Zaltec.

The war was to commence at the site of a great pyramid created by mortal worshipers under the direction of their deities. Hidden somewhere in the blistering sands of the House of Tezca, this pyramid was known to be the greatest of any with the exception of the Great Skyhome itself. The people were blessed with food and water and toiled for decades. They built the grand pyramid and a city surrounding it which they named Tewahca, the City of the Gods. Upon the steps of the great pyramid, the gods called for sacrifice.

Zaltec called to his warriors and ten-thousand gave up their lives and cut out their hearts upon Tewahca's grand steps. Qotal too, required sacrifice, but the Plumed One need only release thirteen beautiful butterflies from a gilded cage upon its steps. Even in war, Qotal would not demand the hearts of his faithful. Upon their release, the presence of the freed butterflies wiped the blood clean from the steps and flowers bloomed throughout the world wherever they passed. It is not known what became of the butterflies, though it is thought that they still carry the essence of the divine in their beautiful forms.

The gods fought long and hard that day and the effects of the battle were felt all across the True World. The land shook as mountains crumbled and weather that was formerly unknown in the True World appeared and just as quickly dissipated. Eventually, it would be Qotal and his sisters who would emerge victorious. Zaltec, weakened and humiliated, shrunk into the shadows.

Watil, in her lordship over the flora of the True World knew her charges could not flourish without Plutoq's blessing so she pleaded for mercy on his behalf. Eha the Wind Sprite sought to spare her elemental brother Azul whom had depended so long on her winds to deliver his life-bringing rains. Likewise, the goddess Nula pleaded for Tezca even though his fire often frightened the animals under her own dominion.

Kiltzi, whose boundless love extended even to her dark brother Zaltec, knew that to remove Zaltec from the world would upset the balance that they had all fought so hard to create and she requested he be spared as well.

Not since the days when mankind had first been given the gift of mayz had they found such peace than in the years following the Godswar. There was still conflict, but man exalted their gods and held the ideals of Qotal as the greatest of all. Qotal observed how they loved and laughed and once again, he grew jealous.

Jealousy is a powerful emotion, and in Toril where the gods of Maztica are not the only powers that be, such strong emotion is liable to attract the attention of others. Shar, the Lady of Loss and Mistress of the Night turned her eye towards this distant land and sought to sow discord as she so often does.

Posing as a beautiful mortal known only as Diamond Eyes, Shar fooled Qotal into temporarily giving up part of his divinity though he ironically reacquired it with the help of his brother Zaltec. Qotal's jealousy had grown in this time and Shar encouraged this dark emotion in the Feathered Dragon. When he noticed that his sister Kiltzi resembled the human woman he once loved, he soon after he took her against her will.

Qotal slumbered long after his terrible deed and during his sleep Kiltzi fled to her disgraced brother Zaltec. The most heretical of rumors claim that Kiltzi was pregnant with Qotal's child, but what became of it is utterly unknown.



The people of Maztica suffered terribly during Qotal's absence. After hearing of their eldest brother's betrayal, Nula, Watil and Eha fled to Zaltec and with the absence of so many gods, the world could no longer flourish. As the crops died and famine threatened the land, the people once again turned to Zaltec. At first they tried to appease him with material gifts but Zaltec payed these no mind. Then they tried to bring to him precious foods despite the fact that they were themselves starving, but this only worsened their condition.

The Bringer of War and his equally cruel brothers would accept only one type of sacrifice and that was the hearts of the faithful! Soon afterwards, thousands upon thousands did exactly what their god commanded and gave themselves to the deities. Temporarily sated, the gods once again began performing their sacred duties and though their lives had become all at once more brutal, the people would once again begin to expand under the divine commands of the gods.

Long overdue, Qotal eventually did wake from his slumber, but he awoke to a world that he could barely recognize. The people had gone mad with bloodlust and his brother Zaltec had grown in power far beyond his own. In his weakened state Qotal attempted to punish mankind by taking away their very speech! His attempt, however, was half-hearted and only his remaining priests obeyed his call to silence.

Qotal decided to leave the land for a time and he departed from the shores of Maztica into the Trackless Sea. In response to the faithfulness of his priests, Qotal bestowed on them the Prophecy of the Cloak of One Plume in which he stated:

*The couatl will come to let them know the way,
My feathered snake of wisdom and might;
My chosen daughter shall greet me on the shore,
Know her; she wears the Cloak of One Plume;
And the Ice of Summer, frozen under heat and fire,
Will prepare the path to my door.*

When he departed, Qotal's faithful carved two magnificent heads, one male and one female, into the nearby cliff face to mark the point of his departure which would forevermore be known as the Twin Visages.

At around the same time Qotal left the True World, the first people to actually call themselves Mazticans arose in the north. They were a fierce and warlike people who only worshiped the deity Zaltec and their worship of the dark god was nothing short of fanatical. Zaltec began to plot for the Mazticans, his new chosen people.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PAYIT

With the departure of Qotal there was at least a temporary end to the strife that had besieged both the unpredictable immortal world and the human world over which they lorded. Mankind once again began to expand. Nearly every great city of men in Maztica was founded during this time (with the notable exception of Nexal).

The nation of Payit, and to a lesser extent Far Payit, led this growth with advances in learning that have not been matched to this day. Many roads and networks for travel were built during this time, bringing trade to new heights that had never been met in the past.

Pochteca, who were great traveling merchants, spread knowledge and normally unobtainable goods into every corner of the True World. In some cases, they spread far beyond the normal boundaries of the better known lands and into the foreign lands of Anchôromé in the north and Lopango in the south.

While knowledge of the heavens, medicine and travel flourished in Payit, other lands greatly expanded their own knowledge. Unlike Payit however, the lands of Kultaka and Huacli developed their military tactics and weapons in ways that had yet been seen. It was during this time that the Kultakans developed the very specialized atlatl. This "sling" could be used to hurl spears to incredible distances. They also perfected the use of the weapon of their gods, the mācuahuitl.

Though their god no longer answered their prayers, the people of Payit continued to revere, at the very least, the tenets that Qotal once held so dear. In other lands, temples to Azul, Tezca and Zaltec continued to war and sacrifice upon their bloodstained altars.

In Payit, plumaweavers created great works of beauty and power made of feathers while the others heightened their strength in the power of hishna and their hishnapers.

Perhaps the most beautiful princess ever known to Payit came to maturity during this time of plenty. Aliah by name, she had been destined to marry her half-brother Xetl in the capital city of Ulatos.

Prince Tacal of Far Payit's own capital Tulom-Itzi grew jealous and desired Aliah for himself. The noble decided he would abduct her on the evening of her wedding but was caught in the act and his entire retinue was slain to the man. Thinking them co-conspirators, even Tacal's family and other nobles of Far Payit were pushed to their deaths in response to the affront despite the fact that they were innocent guests of Aliah's wedding ceremony.

Seeing the slaughter of his family and people, Tacal flew into a fit of madness and beheaded the woman he had once sought to possess with his obsidian edged maca before being slain himself. It is often whispered that the spirits of the prince and princess are forever bound to the city of Ulatos and will not move on until reparations are made for both, or until both Payit and Far Payit are laid low.

Though it may not have been the direct cause, this terrible tragedy marked the beginning of a time of decline for Payit and Far Payit. They would no longer advance humanity's cause with the rapidity they had shown in the years prior, and most migrated from the great cities back into less civilized villages.

While Payit declined, the warlike folk of the west continued to hone the skills of war and they became increasingly bloodthirsty at the behest of their darker gods.

Around this time, though recorded history doesn't have an exact date, one of the war chiefs of the distant Mazticans was given a vision. This warrior, who was named Tecco, wandered the desert for a year before finding a huge pillar of stone from which his god Zaltec manifested.

Zaltec bid Tecco to return to the Mazticans and lead them south to a new destiny. When he returned to his people with the pillar of stone, they followed him on his journey. Soon after, the Mazticans arrived in the Valley of Nexal knowing only that Zaltec had chosen them.

THE DAWN OF NEXAL

To the valley of Nexal this wave of immigrants flooded in from the north. Acting uncharacteristically peaceable, the Mazticans took land that no others wanted and proceeded to build homes and a temple to Zaltec. This pyramid would be added to over the years and one day it would become a wonder to the world, but in its first days it was a humble place of worship.

A city known as Tezat was at the time considered the most powerful in the region. With two other great cities in close proximity (known as Azatl and Zokil) to form a balance of power however, Tezat never truly dominated the others. It was with this city that the Mazticans formed an alliance.

Under the influence of the bloodthirsty Mazticans, war and sacrifice grew to new heights. Tezat's newfound allies helped upset the balance in the valley and the city grew to prominence.

Unexpectedly, the Mazticans betrayed their allies in a battle against the combined forces of Azatl and Zokil and the Mazticans took the city for themselves.

Now it was the Mazticans' turn to dominate the region, and as the chosen people of Zaltec, they did so with ruthless efficiency. During their dominance, the Mazticans and their subjugated cities began to refer to themselves as the Nexala after the name of their valley. The war chiefs of the Mazticans also changed their title to the Revered Counselors of Nexal, and an empire was born.

The first Revered Counselor of Nexal was named Ipana and his reign began two-hundred forty years before the arrival of the Golden Legion. During Ipana's reign, Azatl and Zokil were fully subjugated and each city's temple to Zaltec was raised above all other gods.

Oddly, only Tezat managed to maintain any sense of independence from the empire during Ipana's reign and this continued all through the second Revered Counselor Tenoch's reign as well. Throughout his entire tenure, this grandson of Ipana attempted to finalize Tezat's absorption but was never successful. It wasn't until Ipana II's reign, through the use of poison and treachery, that Tezat became a full part of the empire.

It was Ipana III, the fourth Revered Counselor of Nexal, who began to lead the expansion of the empire. At first, Ipana III held "Feathered Wars" among his own subjects where the only goal was to capture opposing warriors for later sacrifice to the hunger of the gods.

Ipana III led his own army in one particularly large Feathered War and many of his warriors were captured. Because of this humiliating defeat, he decided to end the Feathered Wars and find his sacrifices elsewhere. Ipana III decided to take war beyond his borders.

Ipana III immediately defeated two city-states to the east known as Cordotl and Palul.

He then attempted to attack the fearsome Kultakans but was soundly defeated and decided to turn his wars westward. To the west, he took a city state of the nation of Huacli known as Ixtal and captured over 5,000 warriors for sacrifice.

Another Huacli city-state known as Pulco actually joined the invaders and helped Ipana III defeat three more in a ten year campaign. A city-state known as Otomi managed to hold off the Nexalans until the aggressors eventually had to give up.

Tolco, a great warrior and the grand-nephew of Ipana III was to succeed Ipana III after his death of extreme old age. While he was personally a superb warrior, Tolco failed to subjugate both the people of Kultaka and of Pezelac. Tolco was slain in his last campaign against the Kultakans just as he thought there might finally be a chance at victory.

Tenoch II, a great-grandson of Ipana III, was crowned the sixth Revered Counselor after Tolco's death. Tenoch II did not lead any truly grand wars during his twenty-one years as Revered Counselor but the empire strengthened its grasp on the nations it had already conquered and many roads and way stations were built to ease trade and travel.

Pezelac did attempt to revolt at one point during Tenoch II's reign but the Nexalans reacted with such a brutal and swift retaliation that all thoughts of rebellion quickly faded. Tenoch II's son Chimal led the war effort and brought back thousands of slaves and sacrifices. In celebration, Zaltec's temple was once again rebuilt to an even greater height.

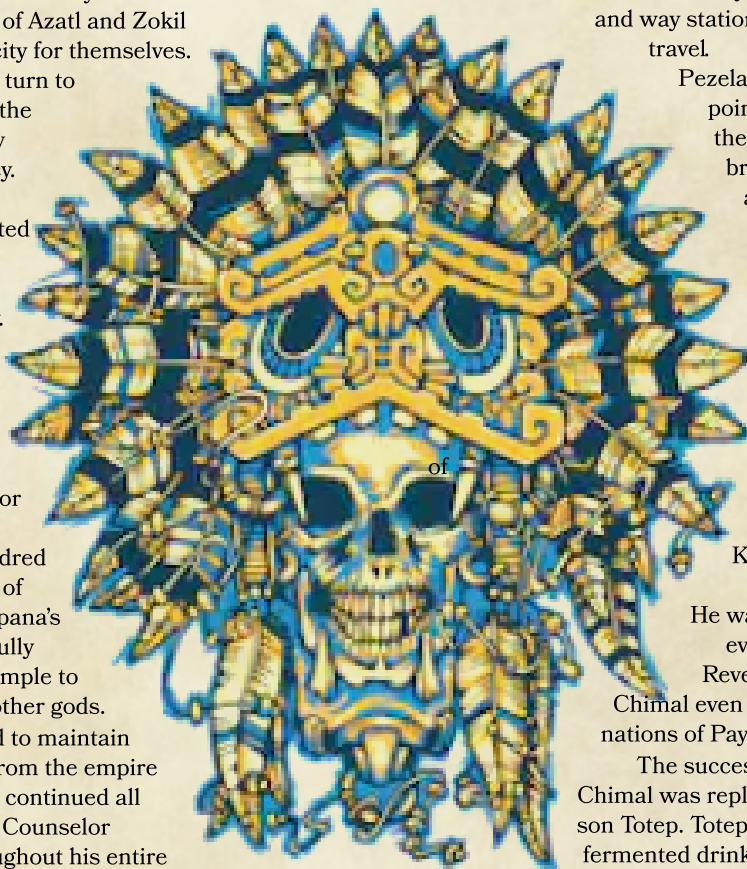
Chimal took the title Revered Counselor after his father's death and led only small skirmishes against the Kultakans to capture more sacrifices for the hungry gods. He was also known to expand trade even further than any of the Revered Counselors before him.

Chimal even opened trade with the distant nations of Payit, Far Payit and Otomi.

The successful leadership and life of Chimal was replaced with that of his weakling son Totep. Totep partook of concubines and the fermented drink known as octal rather than spend time governing the empire as the Revered Counselors before him. The reign of this eighth Revered Counselor only lasted a paltry six years before he was poisoned by his own war commanders.

Zomoc was next to rise to the title of Revered Counselor. His reign saw military victories previously unmatched. Across dry lands and far to the southwest, Zomoc led a twenty year military campaign against the people of Kolan. The Kolan fought long and hard, but Coyo eventually brought back a vast line of prisoners back from across the desert.

Coyo was hailed as a great war-leader and his popularity surpassed that of even the Revered Counselor. Zomoc feared for his position so he fooled Coyo into offering his own heart in sacrifice to Zaltec.



Zomoc eventually went insane after Coyo's death and spent his remaining years in debilitating paranoia. Some believe it was Coyo's tonalli returned from the very maw of Zaltec to make Zomoc pay for his treachery.

After Zomoc's tortured death exactly one hundred years before the Golden Legion's arrival, Izco ascended as the tenth Revered Counselor of Nexal. Izco and his son Izco II's reign were relatively peaceful times in Nexal, though tribute was still taken in the form of sacrifice, slaves and wealth.

The arts also flourished during this time and Zaltec's pyramid was raised yet again. When a paltry thousand hearts were given to Zaltec in celebration of the passing of leadership to Izco II, however, Zaltec grew angry and caused Mount Zatal to erupt.

The Feathered Wars were reinstated and this time ten-thousand hearts were offered to appease the Eater of Hearts.

Pakli was selected to replace Izco II upon his death. Pakli immediately enacted war once again throughout the True World. Unwisely, he spread his forces way too thin by simultaneously attacking both the Kultakans and the Otomi (while trying to maintain control in Pezelac) and his fourteen years drained Nexal's once vast wealth.

Having suffered from frequent defeat, the Nexala elected another war leader named Chalco as the thirteenth Revered Counselor. This great war leader seemed to be the first who was truly up to the task of defeating the Kultakans.

In the first days of battle, thousands were captured and Chalco seemed poised to take the Kultakan capital. The defenders, however, had a hero of their own.

A warrior named Takamal rallied his people and though they suffered thousands of losses, the Kultakans still managed to hold their lands.

The Otomis did not fare as well against the Nexalans, but they fled into the mountains rather than be subjugated.

Chalco also sent numerous expeditions into distant lands to find evidence of the cultural roots of the Nexalans. The Pyramid of the Gods known as Tehwaca was sought out, as was the cave where Tecco first found the pillar of stone in which Zaltec manifested.

Even the legendary Great Skyhome was sought by some of the more adventurous Nexalans. These explorers were said to have worked alongside some of the dreaded sea devils known as sahuagin in an attempt to find the Ship of the Gods.

Very few of the explorers returned and those that did had little to report. One group of a thousand strong literally disappeared altogether while searching for Tecco's cave.

Chalco had his successes and failures. However, there is no disputing the fact that when he died and the title of Revered Counselor was passed onto his grandson Axalt, the empire was truly at its peak.

Axalt fought relentlessly against the Kultakans but Takamal was always able to outmaneuver the fourteenth Revered Counselor. During Axalt's reign a great aqueduct was built from Cicada Spring on Mount Popol all the way to the center of the city. The Aqueduct of Axalt may very well have been the greatest accomplishment of his reign.





The fifteenth and final Revered Counselor of Nexal was Axalt's son Naltecona. Naltecona was a wise and brave military leader, but a new threat was soon to find its way to the True World and Naltecona's reign was only to last a paltry twelve years.

THE RETURN

Ten years before the coming of the Golden Legion, annual omens set into motion the inevitable demise of the Nexalan Empire. Naltecona built a grand palace for himself and the empire seemed to be at relative peace, but then the omens began.

First, a great light appeared in the skies above Nexal for twenty days. At the very moment Naltecona witnessed the lights, the temple of Zaltec suddenly burst into flames and a great statue of Zaltec melted to a lump of molten rock. Tecco's stone pillar remained safe deep in the pyramid itself, but this event gave "proof" to the priests that the gods were unsatisfied. The omen led Naltecona to order thousands more sacrifices and many captive Kultakans died upon Zaltec's altars that year.

The second omen came the following year. The sky turned a blood red color and it happened on the exact same day at the exact same time as the previous year's omen.

On the third year, again at the same time and day, Mount Zatal began to belch steam and ash. This omen lasted for a full twelve days.

The fourth omen was reported by a hunter who claimed to see a deer with a plumed ring about its neck. The hunter said that the deer spoke to him and he emptied his *mīcomitl* quiver trying to slay it. The deer simply ignored each arrow according to the hunter, but Naltecona thought the man mad and put him to death.

On the fifth year, Naltecona himself dreamed of a great canoe arriving from the east and it was at this moment that he began to suspect the omens were signs of the Return of Qotal.

The annual omens continued. On the sixth year, a great sandstorm rose from the House of Tezca and took the form of a great pyramid. Capitulating to Zaltec's priests who sought ever more sacrifices to appease the gods, Naltecona sent his nephew Poshtli to attack the Kultakans and the young Eagle Knight saw much success.

On the seventh year, the top of Mount Zatal turned a deep crimson as if covered in blood. Naltecona's child was born dead on the day of the eighth omen and the child's skin color was a pale white not seen in the True World.

The ninth omen saw three of the four lakes near Mount Zatal erupt with steam. Only Lake Qotal remained calm.

The final omen was the grandest of all. A wyvern-like creature landed atop the pyramid of Zaltec, and on its chest was a smoky black mirror. In this mirror, Naltecona saw the coming of Cordell's Golden Legion exactly one year before their actual landfall. The creature flew off, never to be seen again.

Cordell was a great military commander who was aided by his lover, an elf mage (later discovered to be a drow) named Darien. Cordell had defeated the great pirate army led by Akbet-Khrul for the Faerûnian nation of Amn and then set off on an expedition to the True World with five-hundred men he now named his "Golden Legion."

When they landed in Ulatos on the shores of Payit, Caxal, the Revered Counselor of Payit, did not quite know how to react. The daughter of the highest ranking cleric of Helm was captured and cruelly sacrificed soon after landing. This event precipitated a war, urged on by the young girl's father Bishou Domincus, and the Payit lost to Cordell's five-hundred men rather easily. After his victory, Cordell established the fort of Helmsport nearby.

After tasting the riches of the Payit and hearing rumors of the fabulously rich Nexal to the west, Cordell set his sight on continuing Maztica's conquest. With the help of Darien, who killed Takamal with her magic, the Golden Legion defeated the mighty Kultakans and subjugated their warriors in addition to the five-thousand or so Payit.

Though Naltecona originally considered a peaceful welcome for the invaders, his advisors convinced him that war was the only route acceptable to the gods. Through treachery, the Nexala attempted to end the war early, but the duplicity was discovered and any hopes of defeating the Golden Legion were dashed.



Cordell and his army entered Nexal and took all the treasure they could find, but Naltecona was allowed to live. A period of shaky peace was found but an attempt on Cordell's life and the urgings of a high priest of Zaltec named Hoxitl increased tensions, leaving the standoff on the brink of violence.

Hoxitl led a growing cult of fanatics known as the Cult of the Viperhand and their resentment of the foreign invaders grew with each passing day. The cultists eventually did attack, and Naltecona was one of the first casualties. The savagery of the cultists was on a level that the Golden Legion and their allies had not yet seen and many were slain or sacrificed on the altars of Zaltec.

Helm's cleric Bishou Domincus, like his daughter before him, was also sacrificed and upon his death the Night of Wailing had begun. In the chaos that followed, Bishou Domincus' bloody corpse was seen disappearing into a mist that came at once from nowhere and everywhere. Mount Zatal erupted and the strange magics that were unleashed transformed the cult of the Viperhand into beasts formerly unknown in the True World. For the first time, orcs, ogres, trolls, and a dreaded creature known as the jagre walked upon Maztica.

Cordell's one-time lover Darien eventually had her true nature revealed. Darien, with the assistance of the Ancient Ones (similarly disguised or hidden drow), was a driving force behind the strife that had fallen upon the Mazticans and the Golden Legion.

On the Night of Wailing, the drow became driders, and they too plagued the remaining humans. Those who managed to escape fled into the sands of the House of Tezca.

When all hope had appeared to be lost, a far gentler god made his presence known. Qotal had finally and truly returned! His power froze a lake to allow far more humans to escape than otherwise might have.

The Cloak of One Plume appeared in the hands of a woman from Palul known as Erixitl as well. This woman had seen the couatl, as the prophecy stated, and together all of the conditions had been met for Qotal's return. Aided by Qotal's intervention, the Mazticans and foreigners fled deep into the House of Tezca.

During the march of these one-hundred thousand refugees from Nexal with what was left of the Golden Legion, a number of events occurred that would forever shape the future of the True World. Many of these events occurred simultaneously and included inhabitants of the continent that did not yet know of what had occurred in Nexal.

The desert was home to a race of desert dwarves that had arrived in the House of Tezca centuries prior. These dwarves had been at war with the drow who would one day plague the True World. In an event known as the Rockfire, they were separated from their enemies and headed further through the Maztican Underdark from which they eventually emerged into the desolate sands of the deserts of Maztica. The dwarves had not had an easy existence in the desert, but they did know a relative peace. With the arrival of the beasts of the Viperhand, there was now a distinct possibility that the peace would be shattered.

The dwarves knew the location of the fabled city of Tewahca and one of their chieftains, a warrior named Luskag, discovered that the obsidian mined near the city had the strength of steel. This fact would be important in the days to come, but in the True World's farther future, the founding of this plumastone would prove world changing.

Now, with a material that could match the swords of the invading Amnians, the Mazticans would no longer be at such a blatant disadvantage.

Other outcroppings of plumastone were soon to be found in the rest of the True World once the signs of its presence became fully understood. Luskag called to the other chieftains of the desert dwarves and brought them to the Sunstone. This magical lake of silver was found in the caldera of a volcano and could bring visions to those who stared into its waters during the suns rising. The chieftains all shared a similar vision, and they were convinced that they could not sit out of the coming battles.

Poshtli, thought to have perished on the Night of Wailing, also revealed himself to Erixitl and her Amnian husband Halloran. In the form of a great eagle nearly the size of a man, Poshtli became perhaps the most well-known and powerful Eagle Knight ever known. Gultec, an honorable Jaguar Knight, also assisted the refugees in their march across the desert lands.

Poshtli, Erixitl, Halloran, a young scout named Jahtli, and a dwarf legionnaire named Daggrande separated from the rest of the refugees and managed to locate the fabled City of the Gods. Here, they discovered Erixitl's father Lotil, a blind plumaweaver of legendary skill along with Coton, one of the most devout of Qotal's silent priests. Trolls of the Viperhand pursued the heroes to Tewahca while a battle raged between Zaltec and Qotal in the great pyramid of Tewahca.

Qotal was weak and not yet fully formed in this world, so Zaltec prevailed against the Plumed Dragon. In the midst of the battle, the Cloak of One Plume was also thought destroyed, but this later proved to be untrue.

The four companions eventually escaped Tewahca through hidden tunnels and were assisted by the ancient spirit wardens of the once great city. The trolls maintained a dogged pursuit and all was thought lost when they caught up to the heroes. With little hope of escape, Halloran and Daggrande made a last stand to protect his now many month pregnant wife and the rest of the companions. With no time to spare, the desert dwarves (known to Mazticans as the Hairy Men of the Desert) led by Chief Luskag managed to turn the trolls away.

In the meantime, the main army of the beasts of the Viperhand caught up to the refugees from Nexal. A powerful defense against the horde was led by Cordell, a veteran of the Eagle Knights named Chical, and Tokol, the son of the legendary Kultakan leader Takamal. After defeating charges of orcs and after gravely (but not fatally) wounding

the jagre Hoxitl, the fierce defenders managed to turn back the horde of monsters.

Gultec had also broken from the refugees and traveled back to Tulom-Itzi in Far Payit at the call of his master Zochimaloc. When he arrived in Far Payit, he saw vast swaths of destruction in the jungle.

The drow, who had been changed to driders by their cruel goddess Lolth and the magic of the Night of Wailing, led an army of giant ants within the jungle, though Gultec was not yet aware. When he reached his master, Zochimaloc bid him to prepare the defense of Tulom-Itzi but the wise Jaguar Knight knew that the peaceful defenders could not withstand the drider and ant army.

Gultec advised fleeing into the jungle and Zochimaloc conceded. Under Gultec's command, the Itza managed to slow the giant ants enough for their very young and very old to escape, though the loss in life was great. Finally, the Jaguar Knight decided to make a stand at a border ridgeline between Payit and Far Payit known as the Verdant Crest.

Erixitl, Halloran, the desert dwarves and the remainder of their companions began to head east to the sea and once again north towards the jungles towards Ulatos and Helmsport. Separated from the others, Erixitl and Halloran were captured by savage halflings of the jungles who attempted to feed them to their Cat God (a Jaguar Lord).

Halloran used what little magic he had to defeat the creature and this unexpected victory convinced the halflings that he was the big folk of a prophecy who would one day lead them out of the jungle. The growing army of humans, dwarves and halflings continued northward.

Eagle Knights in Cordell's army reported to him that more men from Amn began to arrive in ships back in Ulatos and Helmsport. Having now been away from their families for more than a year, many in the Golden Legion celebrated the news, but Cordell remained only hopefully optimistic.

At the time he did not know that the army was led by Don Vaez and Bishou Domincus' apprentice Pryat Devane who were determined to show that Cordell had in fact gone rogue. Their intentions were opportunistic,

and they sought to prove that Cordell was no longer loyal to the crown of Amn.

When these men landed in Payit, they imprisoned the few remaining warriors of the Golden Legion who had remained in

Helmsport. Don Vaez,

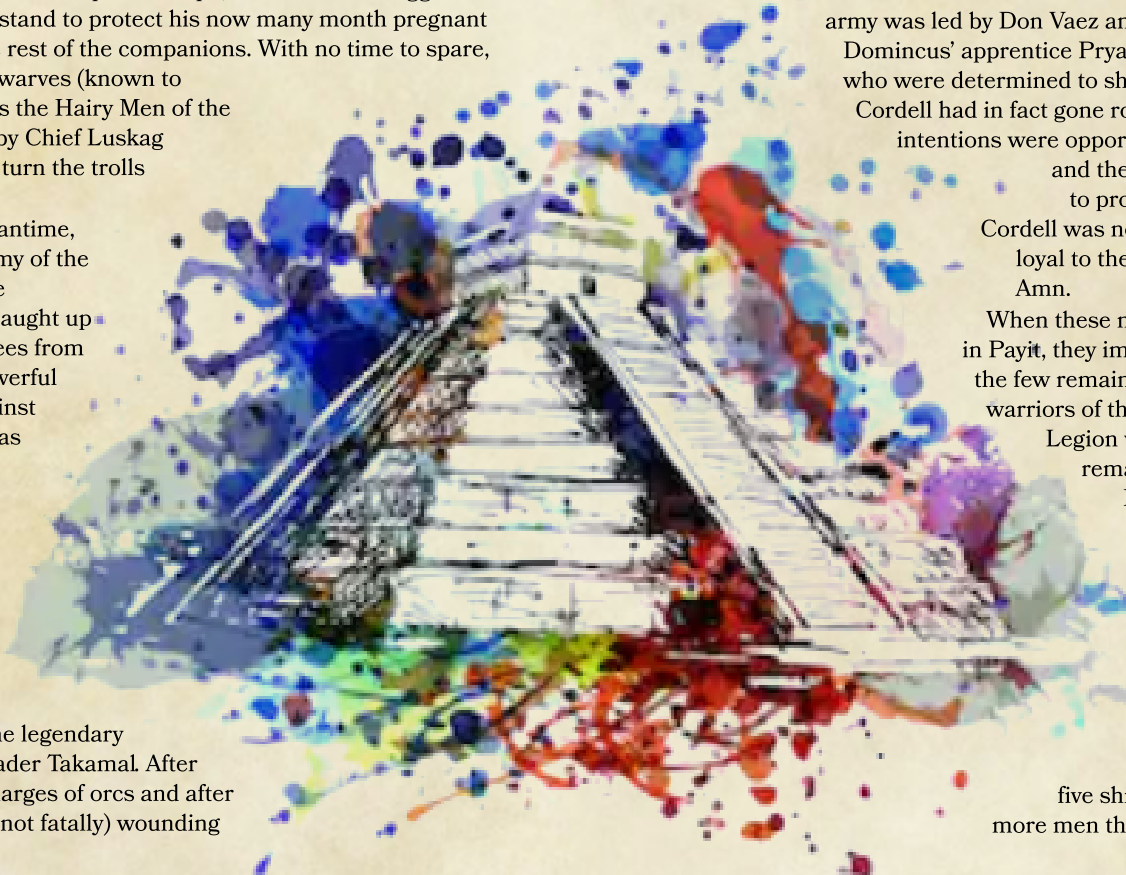
while not

generally liked by his men

stood at the head

of twenty

five ships and far more men than Cordell.



The betrayal was eventually reported to Cordell by his Eagle Knights, but despite knowing what awaited him Cordell decided to return to Payit. The monsters of the Viperhand were once again on the march. This time, the beasts were headed east towards Payit and were led by none other than the titanic stony form of Zaltec himself!

Gultec's defense against the ants and driders was a truly valiant stand, and over a thousand ants had been slain. When all seemed lost, Zochimaloc sacrificed himself to channel the growing power of Qotal and collapse a mountain upon the marching insects. It is unknown if he has truly died, or in fact ascended to become something "different."

Halloran, Erixitl and their diverse contingent of warriors caught up to Gultec's refugees shortly afterward and together they finished off what was left of the ant army.

Defeated but not dead, Darien and her driders decided to turn to hishna magic. The target of her rage had become the chosen one of Qotal, Erixitl.

All armies and players in this great epic converged upon Helmsport and the Twin Visages where Qotal was prophesized to return to the True World.

Cordell was at first captured and imprisoned by Don Vaez when he reached Helmsport, but he eventually escaped with the help of former associates in Don Vaez's employ. Eventually, the men of Don Vaez's expedition proved to be more loyal to Cordell and more trusting in him to lead against the oncoming monsters.

Halloran and his retinue also arrived, though he was carrying a sick Erixitl who had fallen to a mysterious ailment in the last days of her pregnancy. They did not know the cause, but Erixitl's condition was due to a hishna curse laid by the drider Darien.

As the monsters approached, Halloran sought to bring Erixitl to the Twin Visages thinking it the only place where her mysterious curse could be broken.

Led by the Zaltec monolith, the monsters arrived in Helmsport only days afterward. Cordell, while greatly outnumbered, held strong against the horde while he sent Vaez's ships to return to waiting Kultakan warriors that Cordell had left behind.

At the Twin Visages, Darien and her remaining driders assaulted a recently reawakened Erixitl, Halloran and their allies. All of the driders except Darien were slain by the powerful pluma magic of Lotil, though he too perished. Qotal also had finally returned to the True World as the Plumed Dragon and he and Zaltec commenced their epic battle!

Cordell's Kultakan reinforcements returned via Vaez's ships and Hoxitl's horde was finally turned back to Nexal. Cordell was hailed as a hero by Amnians and Mazticans alike, though the losses that had been suffered were great. The blood of monsters, desert dwarves, Amnians, Kultakans, Payits, and even the halflings all commingled in the fields of Helmsport.

While Qotal and Zaltec's battle raged, the True World was being torn asunder in this new godswar. The titanic battle was causing earthquakes, landslides and other cataclysmic events. Coton, the silent and devoted high priest of Qotal finally had had enough of the gods' treatment of their mortal worshipers and he broke his vow of silence to admonish his own deity!

Both Qotal and Zaltec stopped their battle momentarily to kill the man for his hubris, but before they could kill the blasphemer, Coton sacrificed himself and the still rampaging Darien.



The mixture of hishna and pluma slammed the door shut to the world that the gods had used to enter, and both Qotal and Zaltec were forced to return to their otherworldly domains.

Maztica itself had a few decades of relative silence after the huge shakeup that had occurred following Cordell's arrival. A connection had been established with the continent of Faerûn that would actually only exist for a few decades of time before the Spellplague tore Maztica from the world.

During this time, Faerûnians from realms other than Amn began to visit the True World. Most notably, Waterdeep founded their own colonies and even the folk of Lantan sent colonists and traders. New cities and towns sprung up within this time - locales such as Qoral, New Waterdeep, Trythosford and Fort Flame.

The cruel treatment of the native Mazticans by Helm's clergy and worshipers caused irreparable damage in his faith leading to a decline in the god's power.

When the Spellplague came, the Mazticans were caught completely unaware. The skies changed from the azure of Toril to the metallic skies of Abeir. Earthquakes, similar to the ones which occurred during Zaltec and Qotal's battle decades prior, once again tore the land apart.

Village elders thought the gods were angry with them and many returned to the old ways of sacrifice. Thousands of foreigners were expelled or offered for sacrifice though sacrifice as a whole never quite returned to pre-Cordell levels outside of Nexal.

In Nexal, the jagre Hoxitl still ruled with an iron fist and he sought only to ever please the Bringer of War. New beasts began to appear across Maztica.

Great lizards with terrible fangs and claws savaged the humans and halflings of the jungles. Ancient evils, once forgotten, began to appear on the continent.

Itzaplotl, the dreaded Obsidian Butterfly, decimated villages and tortured entire populations that had been captured by her dreaded tzitzimitl. She no longer seemed bounded by the rules of the gods that long ago curbed the worst of her depredations.

The worst thing of all was that the gods no longer answered the prayers of their faithful. On this new world and under a new sky, the gods no longer existed and the Mazticans despaired.

Born of the great god Kukul so many thousands of years prior, however, mankind and the other races of the True World did not give up on survival so easily.

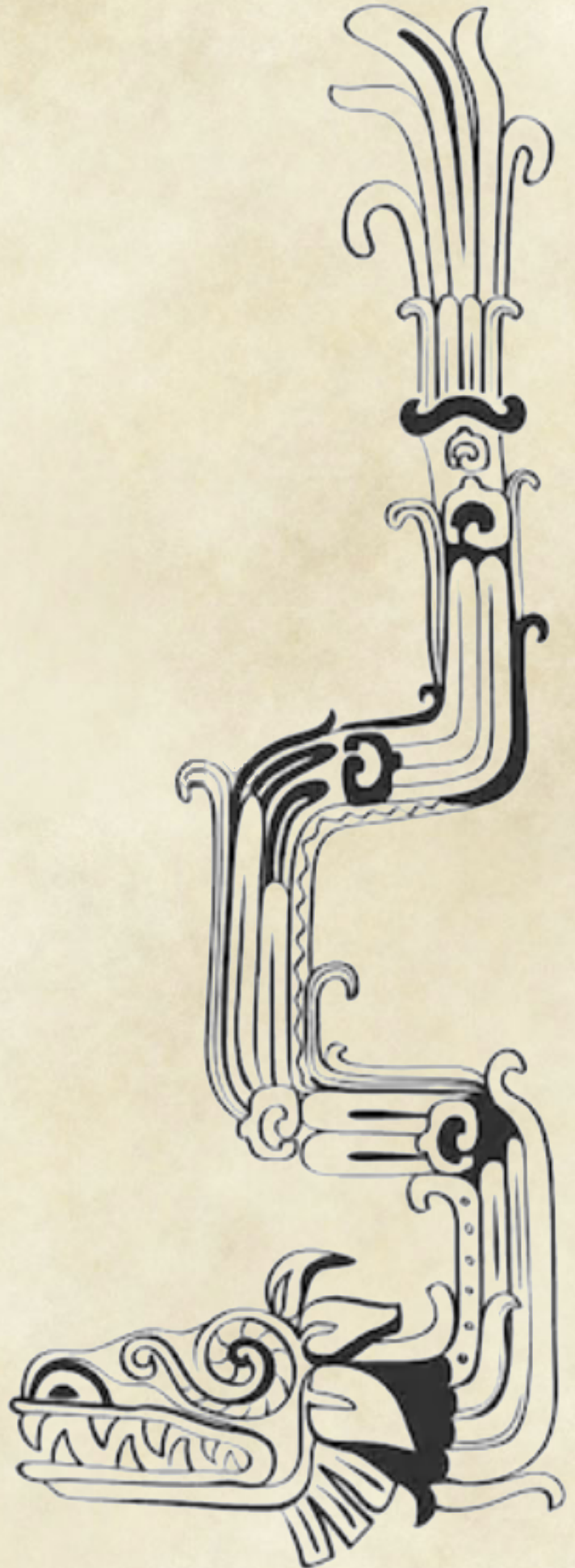
The plumaweavers and hishnashapers of Payit and Far Payit developed greater and more powerful magics to survive in their newer, harsher world.

Jaguar and Eagle knights, bolstered in strength by the discovery of plumastone, began to develop weaponry and combat techniques unmatched even by the Kultakans and Nexalans of old. The Faerûnians that remained had been cut off from their homeland and without continuing immigration, they began to naturalize in this once strange land.

A century passed and the True World not only survived, but thrived.

Just as equilibrium took hold, the skies have changed yet again. The few powerless priests who held onto the old ways have heard something in their dreams and meditations.

If these whispers are correct, then the gods have once again returned to the True World.



MAZTICAN TIMELINE

I am sworn to silence by my station. I say nothing to the mighty of Nexal. Instead, my tale becomes the Chronicle of the Waning. As my immortal master, the Silent Counselor, so wills, I observe and record, a witness but not a participant to the unfolding of history.

Coton, Silent Priest of Qotal
Ironhelm Prologue

Maztica has a history as long and as eventful as Faerûn itself, beginning far back in the Days of Thunder when the gods first came to ground, through numerous cataclysms and all the way to the modern day on Toril.

This portion of the history chapter attempts to catalogue major events both in the mortal and immortal world, and presents them in chronological order for easy reference. All dates are given in Dalreckoning (DR).

c. –32500 DR: The Immortal Era Begins

Deities from Aztec, Mayan and Incan mythologies send the greatest of their avatars to seek out a new world far from their home on an enormous ship in the form of a pyramid. The ship is given the name “The Great Skyhome.”

c. –32000 DR

The gods arrive on Toril and land in the ocean far west of the main continent of the lush world. Eventually, they occupy lands in the west but upon their arrival, some avatars disappear for other lands, never to be seen or heard from again.

Deep in the bowels of the Great Skyhome, the demoneess Itzapaplotl emerges, having stowed away without the knowledge of any of the deities.

The goddess once known as Coatlicue perishes upon arrival. Her massive bloated corpse disappears far underground where it begins to spawn terrible abominations that haunt the underground ways.

c. –31900 DR

Itzapaplotl makes her presence known only to Zaltec, who she seeks out as a lover. He initially spurns her advances but temporarily relents, until he discovers her desire to steal his divinity.

c. –31500 DR

After many centuries of a relatively lonely existence on their new home the gods attempt to create “new toys to play with” and labor to create mankind. The gods are not satisfied with their first attempts. Man created from mud, wood and gold are all deemed failures before Kukul severs his own fingers. The fingers wriggle to life to all the gods’ satisfaction and begin populating Maztica. Rumors persist to this day that not all of the “failed attempts” have been destroyed.

The First Man to stand is named Camazotz. He is initially favored amongst the gods (particularly Zaltec), but eventually deems himself greater than his creators and is subsequently struck down by Zaltec. He is raised back from the dead into unlife by the Zaltec’ Itzapaplotl and the First Man becomes the First Vampire.

c. –31000 DR

Aearee empires (avian creator race) dominate Faerûn and many migrate to Maztica. Interactions between the aearee and the primitive, young race of humans are rare due to their geographical habitats, though when they do occur, they are generally peaceful.

Camazotz makes a second play for power among mankind and learns how to coopt the souls of female humans who die in childbirth. These souls are sacred to all of the deities, though it is the elemental brothers Plutoq, Azul, and Tezca who issue their wrath upon the would-be-deity and his city known as Chacobben. Camazotz is thought slain and the city is buried in a great mudslide, effectively erasing it from history.

Itzapaplotl’s duplicity is discovered in her resurrection of Camazotz and she is beset upon by the brothers as well, this time including her former lover Zaltec. She uses much of her power to rip great swaths of land and casts the molten rock into the sky. She escapes the god’s wrath by forming her Void Kingdom of Tamoacha upon this floating stone and occupying it forever more. Itzapaplotl kidnaps shepherd spirits of the dead known as zizimime and slowly transforms them into her subject star-demons. An edict is written where Itzapaplotl or her children may not come to ground as long as Kukul’s Eye (the sun) is upon the world.

c. –30000 DR

As the Time of Dragons begins, the aearee empires collapse. The pattern continues in Maztica due to conflicts with powerful green dragons. Qotal, also known as the Feathered Dragon, reaches out to a tribe of decimated aearee and changes them into the fierce quetzaldaun, who are then able to overcome the greatest of green dragon threats. The quetzaldaun never reach the heights of power once reached by the aearee, but they no longer have fear of extinction.

c. –12000 DR

Due to generous gifts from the gods, mankind begins to flourish and spread out. They advance from their primitive state to become inquisitive, honorable and loving, but the gifts also bring war and cruelty. Agriculture, particularly in the cultivation of mayz, becomes a driving force behind humanity’s success. Many towns and great cities are built, most in honor of the firstborn of the goddess Maztica, Qotal. The newfound piety is in part due to mankind’s appreciation for his gift of mayz.

The sand elder giants arrive in the house of Tezca from a portal to an unknown desert plane or demiplane under circumstances which they either do not remember or do not care to speak of.

c. –8500 DR

Zaltec creates the magic of fang, claw and venom known as hishna and introduces it as his own gift to mankind. War and cruelty reach new heights among the toys of the gods. Hishnashapers begin to appear at this time in addition to a breed of warriors known as jaguar knights.

c. –8100 DR

After hundreds of years of never-ending war, the goddess Maztica gives her favored son Qotal the gift of pluma magic, which he passes on to mankind. Plumaweavers and eagle knights are seen for the first time.



-8060 DR: The War of the Gods

In a fit of rage over Maztica and Qotal's "betrayal," Zaltec murders his mother using a single blow from his darkness edged mācuahuitl. The weapon shatters and shards from its obsidian edge lodge into her body, birthing the first plumastone in the mortal realms of the True World.

Zaltec takes Maztica's heart and takes it with him to feed upon its energies to the current location of Mount Zatal. The heart's inherent life magic is corrupted, spawning the terrible energy known as the Darkfire (alternatively, Darkfyre).

Kukul disappears in despair over the death of his wife and disgust over the behavior of his sons.

There is war among the gods. All the male gods side with Zaltec while the females side with the enraged Qotal. Humans create a great pyramid known as Tehwaca at the command of their gods where the war is set to occur.

Sacrifice, which is a practice already common among the god's worshipers, is brought to a new height as ten thousand warriors give their hearts to Zaltec. Qotal responds with a sacrifice of his own by freeing thirteen beautiful caged butterflies upon the pyramid. Qotal defeats Zaltec not long after battle is commenced.

The mainland goddess Shar is drawn to the loss of the whole event and takes notice of Maztica.

-8059 DR

Zaltec feeds from the Heart of Maztica, but it regenerates as quickly as it can be consumed.

-8055 DR

Zaltec encounters a sarruhk named Mixcoatl, also known as the Viper, who pledges his service to the dark god in guarding and maintaining the Darkfire. The mountain grows rapidly and eventually becomes a volcano.

-8051 DR

Zaltec senses the interests of his brother gods outside the earthen walls of Mount Zatal. Their power manifests in the four lakes that surround the growing mountain.

-2225 DR: Diamond Eyes

In the guise of a beautiful mortal woman known only as "Diamond Eyes," Shar tricks Qotal into giving away some of his divinity. Qotal seeks aid from his hated brother Zaltec and together they easily recover his stolen power. Once the battle is over, the alliance ends as quickly as it began. Qotal is given a vision of his sister Kiltzi in which he recognizes her resemblance to Diamond Eyes and he lusts for her.

-1106 DR: Qotal's Seduction

For more than a thousand years after his vision of Kiltzi, Qotal observed mankind's love and play and he grew increasingly jealous. The seed of lust Shar had placed in his mind germinated until he could no longer deny it. Against her wishes, Qotal took his sister Kiltzi and proceeded to fall into a deep slumber.

The darkest rumors claim that a child was born of this union, but no evidence of the rumor's veracity can be found.

-1105 DR

Kiltzi flees to her brother Zaltec in shame along with her sisters Watil and Nula. Terrible droughts, plagues and natural disasters decimate mankind as Qotal continues to slumber.

-1095 DR

A majority of the human race also turns to Zaltec who demands tens of thousands of sacrifices. The droughts and famine end as the gods once again begin performing their duties.

-812 DR: Departure of the Feathered Dragon

Qotal finally awakens after centuries of slumber to a land all but dominated by the worship of crueler gods. He attempts to punish mankind by taking their speech, but his power is no longer what it once was and only his few remaining priests comply. Qotal begins a self-imposed exile, though he leaves the Prophecy of the Cloak of One Plume to indicate when he would return to the shores of the eastern land of Payit.

Two massive faces are carved into a rocky bluff where Qotal sets off on brightly feathered canoe by his remaining worshipers. These faces become known as the Twin Visages.

c. 400 DR: Golden Age of the Payit

Despite the absence of their patron deity Qotal, the nation of Payit in Maztica sees six hundred years of great peace and plenty beginning around this time. Ulatos, Tulom-Itzi, Pezel and Kultaka are all founded during this period. Nexal as a nation does not yet exist, but the Valley of Nexal is heavily settled. Written language is developed in Payit.

As Payit progresses in the sciences and trade, more westerly peoples become increasingly warlike. Many new weapons and tactics for war are developed in these regions.

Sea exploration which had begun in order to find greater and safer trade routes lead to many deaths, but also the populating of many of Maztica's surrounding islands.

The science and magic of astronomy is further developed by the Payit.

H'Calos the Star Worm falls to the world encased in an enormous egg-like meteorite in the Vale of Ixtzul in Far Payit. The creature is discovered by a minor chieftain named Osctl Sleeping Turtle who is the first to be consumed by the great beast as H'Calos emerges from the egg and causes vast destruction. The creature eventually falls into a deep slumber.

418 DR Year of the Eagle's Flight

After years of migration, some aarakocra of Maztica arrive in mainland Faerûn more than thirty thousand years after the fall of the progenitor aearee race disappears. The quetzaldaun remain in the high places of Maztica with barely greater numbers than at the time of their creation.

A great road is built by the Payit that connects Ulatos to Tulom-Itzi as trade reaches its height.

429 DR Year of the Cat's Eye

The people of the Valley of Ixtzul bind the creature H'Calos to his slumber, but also discover a means to control the creature for small periods of time. H'Calos makes an effective guardian for Ixtzul.

431 DR The Year of the Hearth

After countless ages of clawing his way to the surface, Camazotz unburies himself and flees into the True World night, thoroughly convinced that he is fated to grow beyond the gods.

c. 600 DR The guardianship of the eternal slumber of H'Calos passed onto a magically created race of ant-men known as the bacar, whose creation is sponsored by the last evered Counselor of the valley, Greyst Seven Cloud. Humans abandon the Valley of Ixtzul.

Cualli and Itzamna Manik, married plumaweavers of great power create the plumazotl in a grand act of powerful plumaweaving. Tezca and Zaltec send xihcouatl to slay the plumaweaver for her hubris.

951 DR Year of the Empty Hourglass

On her wedding day, the Princess Aliah of Ulatos is murdered after a failed kidnapping attempt by Teacal, the young prince of Tulom-Itzi. This event is said to mark the end of the Golden Age of Payit.

987: Year of the Flaming Dwarf: The Rockfire Disaster

Seeking fortune in the west, dwarves travel tunnels under the Sea of Swords. They are pursued by drow and battle follows the dwarves throughout the long journey. Drow spells weaken the unstable walls of the Underdark and both magma and ocean water fills the Underdark. Many on both sides are killed but others flee further west, trapped under Maztica. The dwarves arrive in the Sands of Itzcala in Maztica while the drow travel farther south until they arrive in the foothills of the Axapoztlan Range.

1008 DR Year of the Treacherous Path

In a cave hidden in the Axapoztlan Range, the shaman known as Tecco is confronted by the god Zaltec. Zaltec commands the shaman to lead the Maztican people south to conquer all the lands before them. Tecco carries the stone pillar from which Zaltec formed his avatar back to the Mazticans.

1038 DR Year of the Spreading Spring

The Maztican tribe settles in the Valley of Nexal and allies themselves with the city of Tezat. They are led on this journey by Tecco's grandson Cattl.

1060 DR Year of the Fantastic Spectacle: The Dawn of Nexal

Cattl is slain by his son Ipana and the truce with Tezat is broken in an act of great betrayal. Ipana raids the city and destroys the temple of Tezca. He also returns to the Valley of Nexal with many sacrifices for their bloodthirsty god.

Ipana changes the tribe's name to the Nexala and its capital city, Nexal. Ipana becomes the first Revered Counselor of the Nexala.

The cities of Azatl and Zokil are absorbed into the fledgling Nexalan Empire. Tezat continues to resist.

1095 DR Year of the Dawndance

Despite thirty-five years of warfare and attempted subjugation, Tezat remains independent of Nexal. Ipana's grandson Tenoch becomes the Revered Counselor of Nexal upon the death of his grandfather, and is no more successful than his grandfather in conquering Tezat.

1115 DR Year of the Haunted Herald

Tenoch's son Ipana II takes the title of Revered Counselor of Nexal after his father's twenty year reign. Ipana II's reign lasts twelve years.

1120 DR Year of the Perplexing Sphinx

A great banquet is held to celebrate the sixtieth year of Nexal's might by Ipana II and within a year all representatives from Tezat who attended sicken and die. Nexal finally overtakes Tezat due to the lack of strong leadership.

1127 DR Year of the Luminar Procession: The Reign of Ipana III

Ipana II is murdered by the same poison used to overcome Tezat by his own nephew. Ipana II's son, Ipana III takes the title Revered Counselor at only ten years of age.

1137 DR Year of the Falling Menhirs Ipana III's reign is credited with introducing the ceremony known as the Feathered Wars, in which the armies of different cities would war simply to take captives for sacrifice to their hungry god Zaltec.

1138 DR Year of the Sharpened Teeth

All of the captives are sacrificed and a second Feathered War is enacted. In this second war, many warriors of Ipana III's own army are taken captive and sacrificed. This convinces him to seek war outside the Valley of Nexal to find suitable sacrifices.

1139 DR Year of Shining Waves

Nexal, led by Ipana III, easily overcomes the small city states of Cordotl and Palul and then heads northwest to battle the Otomi. The battle lasts three years until the Nexala abandon the campaign. The fierce warriors of Kultaka are also forced to hold off Nexal's predations, and manage to do so for a full two hundred years.

1142 DR Year of the Sword's Oath

After his defeat, Ipana III moves westward to battle the isolated Huacli people, from which he takes the city of Ixtal. Soon after, the other city-states of the Huacli fall and become subjugated. The fresh flow of sacrifices comes annually from these city-states.

1178 DR Year of the Secret Rider

After a reign of fifty-one years, Ipana III dies of old age and his grand-nephew Tolco takes the throne.

1179 DR Year of the Stalking Satyr

Tolco leads Nexal's armies into a humiliating defeat with the Kultakans and turns to Pezelac. Slaves and sacrifices are taken, but the battles grind to a stalemate and Pezelac is not subjugated.

1190 DR Year of the Poisoned Quill

Despite greater losses, the Kultakans repulse a second invasion by Nexal's forces when Tolco is slain. After their Revered Counselor's death, the Nexalan army abandons the field of battle. Tenoch II, great-grandson of Ipana III becomes the sixth Revered Counselor of Nexal. His reign lasts a full twenty-one years and the Nexalans prosper under his rule. Many new roads are built and after a successful raid led by Tenoch II's son Chimal; the pyramid of Zaltec was raised to the highest in all the nations of Maztica.

1211 DR Year of the Crimson Crag

Tenoch II dies of natural causes and his son Chimal ascends to become the seventh Revered Counselor of Nexal. His eighteen year reign is marked by an increase in trade, even with nations as far as Payit for the first time in Nexal's history.

1229 DR Year of the Carrion Crow

Chimal is replaced by his weakling and disinterested son Totep, whose reign as eighth Revered Counselor lasts a paltry six years.

1235 DR Year of the Black Horde

A solar eclipse occurs this year, and the tzitzimtl of Itzaplotl wreak havoc among mankind. Far Payit is hit particularly hard in villages surrounding Tulom-Itzi.

Totep is poisoned and his death is rumored to have been caused by his own military leaders.

Zomoc, one of Totep's generals, assumes the title of ninth Revered Counselor. Zomoc immediately sends his chief general Coyo to begin a campaign of warfare against the Kolan tribes of the southwest coast across difficult terrain.

1255 DR Year of the Raging Flame

After twenty years of constant warfare and frustration, Coyo finally subjugates the Kolan people and leads a long line of slaves and sacrifices back across the desert to Nexal.

1256 DR Year of the Dusty Throne

Fearing Coyo's threat to his throne, Zomoc magically coerces Coyo to offering his heart to Zaltec after a year of celebration and feasting.

1260 DR Year of the Broken Blade

Zomoc dies in his sleep after years of paranoid insanity. Izco, nephew of Coyo ascends as tenth Revered Counselor of Nexal. The reign of both Izco and his son Izco II is marked by great advances in the artistic and cultural growth of Nexal.

1272 DR Year of the Shrieker

In order to celebrate the passing of the title of Revered Counselor from Izco to his son and to consecrate further construction upon the pyramid of Zaltec, one-thousand hearts are offered to Zaltec. This paltry amount offends the god who awakens the Viper. The Viper uses the power of the darkfire to cause Mount Zatal to erupt and cause thousands of additional deaths. A grand Feathered War is enacted and ten thousand hearts are offered to Zaltec as the temple is re-consecrated.

1288 DR Year of the Roaring Horn

After the death of Izco II, the great and venerable warrior Pakli is chosen as the twelfth Revered Counselor. Pakli immediately begins campaigns against the Otomi, the Kultakans and even mounts expeditions to rein Payit under Nexal's control. The wars drain Nexal's treasuries and end in disaster. Revolts form in various city-states, Pezelac and Kolan which Pakli spends his remaining years attempting to quench.

1290 DR Year of the Whelm

The Kultakans elect the young warrior Takamal as War Chief.

1302 DR Year of the Broken Helm

Chalco, a great warrior, is appointed thirteenth Revered Counselor of Nexal by nobles of the city with the hope that he will bring military glory back to the empire after recent humiliating defeats. Chalco attacks the Kultakans and sees far more success than Nexal had in the past, but the capital city of Kultaka rallies around Takamal and once again fights the invaders back.

1303 DR Year of the Evening Sun

Chalco begins a new campaign against the Otomis, bringing a huge army formed in part by Huacli subjugated states. Chalco razes the Otomi's capital city despite heavy losses. Many Otomi flee into the mountains, retuning only once Chalco has departed.

1306 DR Year of Thunder

Chalco sends expeditions to find both the original cave from which Tecco first encountered Zaltec and to find the fabled City of the Gods, Tehwaca. The expeditions are not successful and most do not return.

1328 DR Year of the Adder

Chalco dies and his young son Axalt ascends as fourteenth Revered Counselor of Nexal. His reign is often considered the peak of the Nexalan Empire. Nexal's continued campaign against the Kultakans fail due in large part to the cunning of Kultaka's own War Chief and Revered Counselor, Takamal.

1345 DR Year of the Saddle

Axalt's own son Naltecona leads the most successful forays into Kultaka as Axalt builds an aqueduct and a grand palace. Other than the Great Pyramid of Zaltec, the palace is the grandest structure in the whole valley.

1350 DR Year of the Morningstar

Naltecona ascends as the fifteenth Revered Counselor of Nexal after his father dies at a relatively young age. This time marks the end of the Rise of Nexal.

1351 DR Year of the Crown

Naltecona orders yet another failed invasion of Kultaka. The first in a string of omens occurs this year which herald the coming of Cordell. Each year on the anniversary of the first, a new omen occurs, including the bursting into flames of Zaltec's temple, the changing of the color of the sky to that of blood, and a twelve day eruption of Mt. Zatal.

1359 DR Year of the Serpent

Cordell defeats the pirate captain Akbet-Khrul, earning the gratitude of the royal family of Amn.

1360 DR Year of the Turret

As Cordell requests funding for an expedition to Kara-Tur that eventually leads him to the True World, three out of the four lakes in the Valley of Nexal begin to boil and emit steam.

1361 DR Year of Maidens: Discovery of the True World

The Amnian general Cordell sets off with his Golden Legion from Amn and "discovers" the continent of Maztica. The Amnians defeat the native Payits and conquer the city of Ulatos. Helmsport is founded. Other Faerunian nations hear rumors of the newly discovered land.

1362 DR Year of the Helm: The Return of Qotal and The Night of Wailing

In mighty Nexal itself, Cordell's lieutenant Darien reveals herself to be drow and Cordell's religious leader Bishou Domincus is sacrificed by Zaltec's high priest, Hoxitl. This action and the will of both Zaltec and the spider goddess Lolth lead to the Night of Wailing. The dark magic of the darkfire transforms men and women who wear the mark of the Viperhand into terrible and vicious humanoids such as orcs and the new breed of shapechanging ogres known as jagres. Naltecona is slain this year as well. The combined forces of the Golden Legion and the remaining native Mazticans flee into the Sands of Tezca. They are led by a former Golden Legion commander known as Halloran, his wife and Chosen of Qotal Erixitl and the Eagle Knight Poshtli.

The Prophecy of the Cloak of One Plume is fulfilled and Qotal returns to the world to battle Zaltec in the newly rediscovered city of the Gods, Tehwaca.

Tukan is founded by the fleeing humans.

Two battles between Zaltec and Qotal during this time, cause earthquakes and other natural disasters throughout the True World. There are many repercussions, one of which is that Chacobben reveals the tops of a number of its structures. One revealed temple is discovered by the cihuateteo and wife of Camazotz known as Yolyamanitzin who converts it into a tavern, which helps her feed her spawn.

1364 DR Year of the Wave

The Golden Legion opens a new colony further west in Maztica known as Qoral. North of Kultaka, the Flaming Fist mercenary company builds Fort Flame, though they do not fare nearly as well as Cordell's original mission.

1365 DR Year of the Sword

Cordell refuses to allow trade ships from Waterdeep to dock at Helmsport. The ships continue north until they reach Maztapan Island and forms a colony inland known as New Waterdeep off the jungle coast north of Mount Plutoq. New Waterdeep forms a bond with their southerly Kultakan neighbors to Cordell's displeasure.

The Cloak of One Plume is discovered to have survived the Fall of Nexal and it is taken from the possession of the tlaloatl (rain dragon) that had been its guard.

The Waterdhavian colony expands northward and forms a second settlement known as Trythosford. The remaining Waterdhavian ships head home, and even though three sink on the journey, the remaining ships (five of the original twelve) dock in Waterdeep Harbor.

The Tlincalli scorpionfolk of Maztica's underdark finish a three year ritual in response to Cordell's invasion transporting over a thousand scorpionfolk to Amn. The colony burrows deep to find the abandoned dwarven kingdom of Xothaerin and begin to modify the city for habitation. Once the city is cleaned out of its resident elemental creatures, the new settlement is dubbed Oaxaptupa.

1366 DR Year of the Staff

Tensions flare between Cordell and the colonies of New Waterdeep over weapon trade agreements with the Kultakans.

1368 DR Year of the Banner

Trade increases as both New Amn and Waterdeep compete for the highest profits. Some suspect sabotage as ships from New Waterdeep continue to sink en route.

1369 DR Year of the Gauntlet

Kultakan invaders destroy New Waterdeep and force the survivors to flee north to Trythosford. Sahuagin attacks prevent aid from reaching shore.



1370 DR Year of the Tankard

An assassin is unsuccessful in murdering Cordell in his sleep. The jaguar knight assassin disappears before being captured and is never found.

Fort Tussin is founded by New Amn along its western frontier.

1371 DR Year of the Unstrung Harp

H'Calos the Star Worm is awakened by Mirandos of Helm and it destroys Ixtzul, Maju, Coxl, and everything in between before finally being confronted and defeated by the Golden Legion in the city of Patil.

Alanza DaNosta, the acting captain of the Golden Legion in its battle with H'Calos, founds a colony along the east coast of the Bay of Coxi.

The bacar guardians of the Star Worm, no longer being needed, freely roam the world without direction other than to serve their queens.

1373 DR Year of Rogue Dragons

New Waterdeep is resettled on Maztapan Island while the old site remains under Kultakan control.

1374 DR Year of Lightning Storms

The tlincalli of Oaxaptupa raid Murann and the Trade Way. They demand reparations for the plundering of Maztica as they perform all manner of atrocities.

1376 DR Year of the Bent Blade

Oaxaptupa is sacked by an uneasy truce of the Swordbelt Alliance. The alliance first discovers that the tlincalli are utilizing a portal to the Abyss for reinforcements from their demonic patron Obox-Ob. Remaining tlincalli escape into the Underdark wilds, but Oaxaptupa as an independent city state is no more.

1380 DR Year of the Blazing Hand

A deadly plague kills the vast majority of horses that were brought to the True World practically overnight. The lack of transportation allows for the rise of an ancient tradition in the True World known as the pochteca – which is the name of influential traveling merchants who spend the vast majority of their lives going from settlement to settlement.

The pochteca make contact with distant lands all over the True World, interconnecting Maztica, Anchorome, Lopango and even Katashaka in some rare cases. The leadership of Kolan is given to the greatest of these merchants, known as the Grand Pochteca.

1385 DR Year of Blue Fire

As the goddess of magic is murdered, the Weave that is the source of all native magic on the planet of Toril unravels and one of the worst (if not the actual worst) upheavals in all history known as the Spellplague occurs.

Maztica, potentially due to the otherworldliness of the magic of pluma and hishna, is spared most of the chaos that engulfs magic. However, tragically, the entire continent is shunted to the twin planet known as Abeir and replaced with the primal realm of dragons known as Laerakond back on Toril.

Mazticans see the change as a shimmering of the blue sky which, after a few moments, becomes a steely gray. The crossing causes a brief moment of nausea in all who observe the change.

The initial days of the Abeiran Maztica are wrought with confusion and social chaos as priests of every deity known lose connection to their gods. Zaltec, Tezca, Azul and even Plutoq's priests order formerly unheard of numbers of sacrifices in order to appease what they think is simply the anger of their hungry deities. The priests of Qotal and his sisters do their best to stem the onslaught, but are rarely successful as they too are nearly powerless.

The brunt of the attacks is suffered by foreign born men and women as priests convince the general populace that it is their presence that so angers the gods. New Waterdeep, Qoral, Fort Tussin and Trythosford are duly sacked, and the only settlements which still retain a significant population of Faerunians are Helmsport-Ulatos, Fort Flame and Tukan to a lesser extent.

The famous Eagle Knight Poshtli disappears during the transition.

1386 DR Year of the Halfling's Lament

The demoness Itzapaplotl detects that the ancient edict that binds her to her Void Kingdom of Tamoacha does not hold true on Abeir. She sends her dreaded star demons – the tzitzimitl, down to the True World to torture and maim as they see fit. Star demons who capture folk for her own amusement are particularly rewarded. All races, nations and regions are targeted equally and even the Viperhand of Nexal feel her depredations.

A rare few folk make pacts with Itzapaplotl for power and become her warlocks.

1388 DR Year of the Tanarukka

Men and women who formerly had no training in either pluma or hishna start to manifest spontaneous abilities. They become known as the nahualli, and join Jaguar Knights and Eagle Knights in fighting the tzitzimitl. Gultec, the current leader of Tulom-Itzi in Far Payit organizes a battle that delivers a blow to Itzapaplotl's star demons that they never fully recover from, but he dies in battle with the demoness herself.

With a lack of divine magic, the magic of hishnapashers and plumaweavers becomes more influential and the magic of pluma and hishna is expanded by many. Hishnacasters and plumacasters emerge with powers that rival the wizards of the invading Amnians.

1389 DR Year of the Forgiven Foes

The first instances of encounters with plumed thunderers (dinosaurs) happens this year, mostly in the southern jungles of Far Payit. For the most part, they either do not reach the more populated regions or are turned back by heroes and defenders. Hunters who travel deeper into the jungles alone, however, often do not return.

1487 DR Year of the Rune Lords Triumphant

Maztica returns to Toril as the skies once again change back to bright azure and the sun returns to its golden yellow.

The gods return and Zaltec is the first to awaken deep in the lowest chambers beneath Mount Zatal. Itzapaplotl seeks him out through one of her star demons known as the Runt. Zaltec forms an agreement to sponsor Itzapaplotl's rise to divinity (though they never succeed).

Anxelli, a young woman of Far Payit meets Cualli, the ages old plumaweaver who created the plumazotl. Cualli trains Anxelli who becomes a powerful plumacaster and the Chosen of Qotal.

Cualli gets to rejoin her husband Itzamna Manik in paradise as she is slain by a fiery minion of Tezca known as a xihucouatl.

Anxelli eventually destroys the xihucouatl and the Runt and indirectly causes Zaltec and Itzapaplotl to fight in her Void Kingdom of Tamoacha. Zaltec, still weak from his recent awakening, is gravely wounded, and Itzapaplotl is apparently slain or at least thrust into the darkness of the void above Toril. Anxelli obtains the fabled Cloak of One Plume from an ancient tlalocouatl in Mount Zatal and becomes a great heroine of her time.

Anxelli decides to travel from village to village to pass on the teachings of plumacasting.

Though he has long remained somnolent in death, Hoxitl was resurrected by Zaltec shortly before his battle with Itzapaplotl. When Itzapaplotl was defeated, he somehow captured and absorbed her unutilized divine power and has become a deity in his own right. It is unknown if this was Zaltec's intention and the gods have since become far more distant from the affairs of men.

Hoxitl was revealed to not have been the only mortal who has ascended to divine status as the eagle knight Poshtli presented himself to the citizens of Helmsport as a radiant eagle nearly 60 feet tall that its citizens could barely look upon. Hoxitl and Poshtli represent evil and good jaguar or eagle knights respectively.

1488 DR Year of Dwarvenkind Reborn

Incidentally, a few Faerûnians discover that Maztica has returned and their interest renews in trade. Mazticans as a whole, having been through centuries of upheavals however, do not welcome any sort of mass migration. Trade is mostly shunned and only the occasional visitor is allowed. Heroes are always welcome to help rid the True World of many of the horrors that have plagued it.

OTHER HAPPENINGS

The epic of Maztica is in not an exhaustive story nor does it cover every event of importance in the continent's long history. In roughly chronological order other events of importance are detailed below, yet even with these, the full story is not told.

THE ORIGIN OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE

When mankind first took shape, they were given forms that pleased the more martial gods Qotal and Zaltec the most. Strong and imposing, humankind was practically bred for war.

Kiltzi and her sisters, however, sought smaller things to play with and thus they took the molds that gave mankind their shape and forged life of their own. They created these beings in the shape of man, but far smaller - half sized in fact. They led their new playthings deep into the verdant jungles where neither their brothers, nor mankind would find them. In these jungles, the halflings of Maztica would remain hidden.

THE DEVASTATION OF H'CALOS

Over a millennia in the past, a great amber shard fell from the sky to the Ixtzul Vale. People from all over the True World bore witness to this event and even heard the violent screech it made as it passed. A minor chief of the people of Ixtzul Vale named Osctl Sleeping Turtle was the first to find the object and he saw that it was in fact a great egg. This egg cracked before him and he saw a great serpent or worm inside. A wiser chief might have fled immediately, but Osctl approached the hatching creature in the hopes that somehow, it might increase his standing among the six other chieftains. For his curiosity, Osctl became the first meal of the great star worm known as H'Calos.

Luckily for the True World, H'Calos' awakening was a short lived one. After engorging himself on the inhabitants of nearby villages, the star worm settled into a great sleep underground in the valley of Ixtzul. The people knew of the creature but considered it a guardian of their land and built a city atop the creature's resting place. For two centuries, the creature slumbered and did not wake to feed.

Some say the Revered Counselor of the city of Ixtzul convinced the creature to settle as their guardian, others claimed that the creature was defeated in battle before its long rest. The truth became known many years later when it came to light that the last Revered Counselor of Ixtzul named Greyst Seven Cloud used a powerful staff to keep the creature in a perpetual state of slumber.

H'Calos wasn't the only threat to the valley however. Overpopulation destroyed the once fertile valley and it could no longer support its people. Greyst Seven Cloud determined that the valley was in fact doomed, yet it was his sacred duty to prevent the valley's guardian from awakening to threaten the whole of the True World in its great hunger.

Using the power of both hishna and pluma, Greyst forged great lines of magic that would keep the creature in its state of slumber perpetually. With the people gone, he knew there would need to be guardians, however. When he looked upon the ants at his feet he realized that they would be ideal and thus he created the bacar to forever guard the star worm.

Mirandos of Helm, while burning Maztican scrolls in Maju, came across a particular scroll penned by a Maztican scholar eight decades prior. The scroll described the guardians and the cursed city of Ixtzul in fine detail and Mirandos believed she had found a road to great treasure and more importantly, power.

Mirandos managed to enter the city and she enslaved the bacar guardians to her will using the staff looted from Greyst's tomb. When the planet H'Catha (the rumored home of the star worm) rose into the sky one evening, Mirandos performed a ritual which freed the creature from its long slumber. Greatly miscalculating the power of the staff she attempted to use it to control the great beast but it only shattered and the creature was loosed upon the True World.

Mirandos, like Osctl in ages past, was eaten as a reward for her hubris, and the star worm proceeded to destroy what remained of Ixtzul for a full month's time. He then destroyed Maju, Coxl, and everything in between before finally being defeated by the Golden Legion.

Alanza DaNosta, the acting captain of the Golden Legion in its battle with H'Calos, finally defeated the creature. She soon after founded a colony along the east coast of the Bay of Coxl once the battle was concluded.

LOCATIONS IN MAZTICA

The True World of Maztica is a full continent for players to explore. There are hundreds of locations, mysteries to be solved and years worth of adventures. This chapter goes into some depth for geographical locations in Maztica, but it is by no means exhaustive.

There is a huge variety of cultures across the True World. If one considers all of the humanoid races, the number actually becomes staggering. Most folk never even come into contact with members of other nations with the exception of the more cosmopolitan cities like Ulatos, Tulom-Itzi or Tukan.

Nations tend to be less clearly defined in Maztica as they are in Faerûn. Borders are not as carefully delineated, nor does every village identify with the country in which it is located. For defensive purposes and the inevitable taxes that such service incurs, there is at least a modicum of national identification. Nexal, Kultaka, Huacli, Kolan, Pezelac, and Payit are the major regions to consider.

The inhabitants of Far Payit, the Desert Dwarves, the Green Folk, the Tabaxi, the Dog People, and the Little Folk are all examples of populations that are simply too scattered to be considered an actual nation, but whose numbers are significant. Independent city states like Tukan, Tulom-Itzi, New Waterdeep, and Trythosford are also major players in the True World, but do not have the territory of the greater nations. The more well known regions of Maztica are described below.

HUACLI

The Huacli nation is a nation of mountain valleys on the west coast of Maztica. With one notable exception, this collection of city-states was once firmly under the thumb of the Empire of Nexal. After the Night of Wailing, Nexal's firm grip was broken overnight.

Prior to the Night of Wailing, however, Otomi was the only city-state that maintained its independence. Most of the Huacli people were fierce warriors, but the Otomi in particular stood out.



MAZTICA



In the mountains closest to Otomi, there were massive deposits of copper, which they (and to a lesser extent, the other city-states) learned to smelt and forge weapons and armor. The metal was soft, but still superior to the obsidian blades and spears of the Nexala.

After gaining full independence, the chieftains formed an alliance and a council with the Otomi at their head.

Ethnically, the Huacli are a mixed bunch, but there is a strong streak of an independent tribe that is not known elsewhere in the True World. From these folk comes the language of the Huacli which is a mix of words and phrases from Nexalan and Téenek, a language unknown elsewhere.

Other than in rare ancient scrolls, Téenek is no longer spoken in its pure form, and the new hybrid is known simply as Huacli. Those who speak Nexalan can understand about 10% of Huacli, and the same is true in reverse. A large percentage of the Huacli ethnicity is also of the Dog People, particularly in the northern city-states.

For most of their existence, the Huacli city-states have been independently governed by male chieftains. The chieftains pass their title on to their heirs upon death. If no heir is apparent, a new chieftain is often selected through widespread popularity.

In Otomi, the chieftain has evolved into a nationwide ruler and he has adopted the name used in the more easterly nations. Huasteco is currently the Revered Counselor of Huacli, and he is in fact the first to use the title.

Before the discovery of plumastone (and to a lesser extent the magically created hishnahide), the Otomi kept a jealous guard over their stores of copper. Though their forged weapons have not become obsolete, they do not have the same value they once held in a time when most weapons would shatter on contact with anything other than flesh.

Copper is now freely traded throughout the True World and this has actually become somewhat of a boon to the Huacli. There are also well known artisans in Huacli who produce art that commands a high price elsewhere. For this reason alone, Huacli is a favored stopping point of various pochteca, despite the relative distance.

The Huacli worshiped all of the deities with equal fervor, but much of this faith was lost during Maztica's exile on Abeir. Plutoq's worship has become ascendant among chieftains and males since the Return, however and Nula and Eha have become popular among many of the women.

In the first decades of the arrival of the newcomers, the Huacli often mistook the newcomers as beasts of the Viperhand. Amnians and other Faerunians were slain on sight.

There are few pureblooded Faerúnians remaining in the True World, but the Huacli have become a bit more cosmopolitan in recent years. Much of this has to do with the urgings of the pochteca, from which the chieftains often accept advice.

Huacli has not always been occupied by its current ethnicities and in ages past there was a people known as the Zateca, whose ruined cities still dot the landscape.

Not much is known of this ancient culture, but occasionally jade artifacts and ancient scrolls will appear in Otomi, discovered by the few who survive the horrors of their crumbling ruins.

KOLAN

Kolan is another nation on the west coast of Maztica and is separated from the hot sands of the House of Tezca by the Chimatepec Mountains. Within these mountains and approaching the shores themselves lay fertile valleys. The four major cities of Kolan are quite independent and can be self-sufficient on their own. The climate and terrain of this southern nation is ideal for growing crops and the people generally have want for nothing.

Baya, Guatl, Kolatl, and Cabez are the four major cities which are cut deep into cliffs on the shore lines, with dwellings accessible only through rope ladders, pulleys and elevators. Kolatl for example, exists entirely in a grand cliff overlooking the golden waters of the Bay of Kolan.

Kolan has flourished in the last century, with new settlements growing and expanding eastward into the House of Tezca. Much of this growth is due to increasing trade with the desert city of Tukan, of which Kolan has developed a fine, but distant trade alliance. Ethnically, the Kolans are of both Green Folk and Maztican stock. Their language is also unique (known as Kolan), and it has more similarities to the languages of the Green Folk than it does actual Maztican. Those who deal in trade with Tukan are typically bilingual.

Though they might be more frequent in Huacli, Kolan is the origin of the pochteca, and the closest thing the nation has to a leader is the Grand Pochteca. This old traveling merchant is known by no other name and is said to be welcome in almost every other nation. Forever enemies of Nexal and its terrible beasts, the Grand Pochteca is only not welcome among the beasts of the Viperhand.

Though it was once a terribly poor nation after years of Nexalan abuse, Kolan has come far under the guidance of the Grand Pochteca. Many lesser pochteca serve him as spies and he knows more than most of major happenings throughout the True World.

Sacrifice remained a common practice in Kolan for far longer than it had in other nations, mostly due to its isolation from the foreign influence of Faerúnians. However, when Maztica became part of Abeir and the gods disappeared, the need for sacrifice disappeared as well. The Grand Pochteca does not approve of the practice, but since the return of the gods and their clerics, it has made a slow return in some parts.

KULTAKA

Kultaka is as it has always been; a nation of warriors. Despite their proximity, Nexal's grand empire had never fully conquered the Kultakans and without the Kultakan army, Cordell could never have defeated Nexal.

The land itself is a fertile coastal plain separated from the water by a vast salt marsh inhabited by lizardfolk, sahuagin, and worse.

The greatest threat to the nation is still in Nexal and without the Kultakans; the beasts of the Viperhand would surely plague the rest of Maztica in far greater numbers. Kultaka is eternally at war with these creatures, but they continue to control the upper hand and orc blood flows freely upon its plains.

Kultaka is unusual in its form of leadership for the region in that they are almost always under the command of a war chief, rather than a Revered Counselor. Icnoyotl is the current war chief and is a direct descendent of Takamal and Tokol, said to be the greatest warriors ever seen in the True World.

Kultakans speak Kultakan, which is a harsher, deeper sounding language related to Maztican. Typical Kultakans are able to speak both languages despite the fact that the Kultakans have limited contact with other nations.

Kultaka used to have a significant portion of their population worship Zaltec. After the Night of Wailing, centuries of conflict with the Viperhand, and the gods' subsequent disappearance and reappearance, his worship is has dropped dramatically. The other cruel gods such as Tezca and Azul are still popular however and though sacrifice is officially banned (a law left over from the days of Amnian dominance), it still occurs in remote temples.

A century ago, large veins of gold were found in Kultaka's mountains. They have yet to run out and a community of dwarves has sprung up within the mines. These dwarves consider themselves natives of the True World but are in fact nearly an equal mix of the ancestors of dwarves from Faerun and desert dwarves who came from the Sands of Itzcala. The dwarves consider Kultaka their home and defend it alongside their human brethren in continuous war.

Hishna magic is ascendant in Kultaka, and some of the best hishnashapers and hishnacasters in the True World are known to reside here. The *hishnahide* spell was developed in Kultaka before spreading to the world at large and the gold from the mines is often used to power castings of this spell. Kultakan warriors are outfitted better than any others in Maztica.



NEXAL

Once the greatest empire in the whole of the True World; Nexal is now the dreaded domain of monsters.

Small streams of lava pour forth from Mount Zatal today, but the dark slopes of the volcano stands as a reminder of the devastation that occurred over a century ago, and whose repercussions are still felt today.

Orcs are now the dominant species of Nexal; cruel and violent, they have cut the hearts from hundreds of thousands of captured Mazticans in the previous century. Though no longer human, the orcs hold to the old ways of Maztica more consistently than any other remaining nation in their love of this cruel practice.

Troll and ogre overseers keep the unruly orcs in line, though they themselves frequently have difficulty controlling their base urges.

The trolls and ogres are commanded directly by powerful shapeshifters known as jagres. The jagres are led by their semi-divine immortal leader Hoxitl, who is Chosen by Zaltec.

Man is not welcome in Nexal. For a time, evil men and scoundrels could at least eke out a pitiful existence among the cruel beasts, but when the skies changed and Zaltec's voice grew silent, every last man and woman was brought to Mount Zatal for sacrifice. Now, none remain – Nexal now solely the land of the Viperhand.

Were it not for the common cause of war and raiding, Nexal would implode in on itself, but as it stands, Hoxitl's semi-divine power is enough to keep the worst destructive impulses in check.



Were they not so fecund, the population of Nexal might not have lasted as they have. The beasts are incessantly raiding nearby nations and war with Kultaka is perpetual. As it was when Nexal was a human land, the Nexalans have yet to best that nation of warriors.

Nexalan was once the common tongue of the True World since the empire had spread so far. Since the empire's downfall, Nexalan itself has now come to be known as Maztican. Ironically, the current inhabitants of Nexal are rarely literate in this language of their own origin.

Zaltec has and will always be ascendant in Nexal. The worship of no other gods is accepted or tolerated. Even during his silence, the beasts continued his rites. Hoxitl managed to convince an entire population that their god was angry with them, and this was the cause of his silence. The jagre's immortality and power was a sure sign that he was the voice of Zaltec. Now that Zaltec has returned, "proof" has been given.

PAYIT

Payit is a great nation whose invasion by Amn nearly cost it its identity, but has bounced back all the stronger for its trials. There is intense national pride these days and the original invaders have mostly integrated or died off.

Today, Payit once again excels in leading the True World out of dark days with its research into pluma magic and the fine talismans of pluma created by its artisans.

When Maztica was sent to Abeir, Itzapaplotl visited her worst depredations on the Payit and the Faerunians who had once defiled it themselves. Without the plumaweavers, jaguar and eagle knights of Ulatos, many more would have suffered.

Helmsport and Cordell's old estate still exists near Ulatos, but the only other obvious reminders that the Amnians settled here is the skin coloration of the locals. Some Faerûnian traditions remain, particularly in the celebration of some holidays and certain foods found nowhere else in Maztica.

Horses disappeared after a virus wiped out the majority of their population and it was discovered that the creatures known as hakuna favored horse flesh above all others. Attacks on the trade roads by these creatures became all too frequent and the use of horses as a pack animal or traveling companion became more trouble than it was worth.

Outside of Helmsport and Ulatos, Payit itself is a mix of patches of jungle, woodlands, grass plains, and vast swaths of agricultural land. Trade routes can be found everywhere leading into Kultaka and Pezelac.

Payit still has smatterings of the Faerûnian common speech but it has been dying as a language with Payit and Maztican becoming the more dominant languages. It is not unusual for natives of Helmsport or Ulatos to in fact be fluent in all three.

While estates of the Amnian invaders once dotted the countryside, Itzapaplotl's raids and time itself has seen many of these fall into ruin or disrepair. The locals do not seem to care very much about that current state of affairs.

Payit is ruled by Coaxoch, a relatively young Revered Counselor who some claim is the greatest plumaweaver alive. Others claim that this is impossible given her young age and the fact that many of her talismans were actually simply taken from the treasury.

The worship of the foreign god Helm was once growing in Payit but it has since morphed into a cult known as the Cult of Hunab-Kuum. Qotal and his sister Kiltzi officially have the most worshipers and the most beautiful temples, but the Cult is growing in popularity. The leadership of the cult is now firmly entrenched in Cordell's old estate.

PEZELAC

Pezelac has always had difficulty finding its own identity in a region surrounded by powerful and aggressive nations. There are few truly native folk of Pezelac, though there were a few indigenous folk. Mostly, Pezelac is a conglomerate of all the surrounding nations such as the Payit, Kultakans and Nexalans that fled from their ruined homeland.

With the growth in trade of the recent century, Pezelac has grown in wealth despite the barren nature of the land itself. Its capital city, also named Pezelac, has grown to rival Ulatos and Tukan in its cosmopolitan nature. There are few goods sold in Maztica that cannot be found in the city's marketplace. As in Huacli and Kolan, the pochteca thrive here and even the Little Folk and Desert Dwarves can be found in its markets.

The common Maztican tongue (formally Nexalan) is the primary language spoken in Pezelac, but particularly in the capital city, all languages can be heard being spoken.

Pezelac is not known for its fierce warriors but its close proximity to Nexal has forced it to find potent means of protection. Pezelac's newest Revered Counselor, the first woman to ever hold the title in fact, is an incredibly clever old sorceress named Tonatzin. She has reached out to the neighboring nations of Kultaka and Payit to petition for protection against the beasts of the Viperhand. In exchange for lucrative trading rights, both nations have responded with significant contingents of warriors, including a thousand-strong atlatl-wielding unit from Kultaka and eagle knights from Payit.





The nahualli also first started appearing here in the scrublands soon after the True World was brought to Abeir. The beasts of the Viperhand have difficulty overcoming the versatile magics of these spellcasters.

With the exception of Zaltec, the entire Maztican pantheon is worshiped in Pezelac. There are also numerous less known deities that are typically worshiped in small communities in the countryside. Once a fervent nation, the silence of the gods and the influx of wealth has tempered their devotion.

FAR PAYIT

Far Payit once had great cities with pyramids that rivaled the pyramid of Zaltec in Nexal during that nation's heyday. These pyramids had a slightly different architectural style than the rest of Maztica and tended to be tall and narrow.

Most of these cities now lie in ruin. The jungle has crept back into the structures and the eerie howls of beasts permeate the old marketplaces. The people have long since moved back into small villages within the jungles.

It was and is still a jungle nation, only occasionally opening into clearings set aside for the cultivation of mayz and other crops. There are mountains as well, typically jutting straight from the jungle floor and high above the canopy. These mountains are said to hold many ancient secrets and very few who enter their hidden tunnels come back out alive.

There is almost no military remaining in Far Payit, but the villages typically have some well-known defenders or heroes. Far Payit was hit the hardest when the True World was brought to Abeir because great fanged, spiked and taloned lizards began to show up in the jungles nearly over night. Villages without powerful defenders were destroyed while others had to remain in constant vigil. The situation got continually worse until the skies changed yet again. Today, the lizard threat has abated slightly.

Tulom-Itzi and Maxal remain the only cities of note in Far Payit, yet there are hundreds of small villages scattered throughout the jungle. Tulom-Itzi is the cultural center of the local people who are known as the Itzas, and great magics of pluma and hishna have been developed within its walls. Maxal was utterly destroyed by the great star worm H'Calos, though it was subsequently rebuilt by the determined Itza. H'Calos' hitherto unknown offspring known as H'Calans have plagued any who dare enter Far Payit's underdark.

The Itzas, despite their trials, are known to be some of the kindest and gentlest folk in the True World. Sacrifice or slavery is not permitted here and Zaltec's worship is practically unknown. Qotal is ascendant and remained so even during his long bouts of silence. The Itzas speak Payit, though most villages have at least one elder that can speak Maztican as well.

The Itzas do not have revered counselors or even tribal chieftains. Rather, they tend to follow the advice of the wisest or occasionally the most powerful among their populations.

Far Payit is known for its incredible variety of beautiful plumage which plumaweavers from all over Maztica send pochteca to come and trade for. They will often bring plumastone to assist Far Payits local heroes in defending their villages.

The terrible lizards which populate the jungles also have fangs and claws that are highly prized by hishnashapers. Far Payit's artisans in fact, are well known for their workmanship and many unique talismans have been created here. Other than this, the Itzas are not generally known for their trade goods. The people have all they need and are mostly entirely self-sufficient.

TUKAN

Tukan has remained a bastion of hope for the True World in the past century. It was founded out of desperation as Qotal led the refugees of the Night of Wailing across the desert to a newly formed lake in the desert grand enough to support the 100,000 or so men and women.

Tukan has a similar layout to Nexal. The inhabitants are mixed but are mostly native Mazticans. Tukan is also unique in that it has the largest population of desert dwarves known in the True World, and even a significant population of the Little Folk!

Trade occurs mostly with Ulatos, but the distance and proximity to Nexal and its beasts have led Tukan and its pochteca to seek trade elsewhere. There have been a number of overtures made to Kolan in general and Otomi specifically.

Tukan's architecture is a blend of traditional Maztican pyramids and Faerunian estates. The estates have fallen out of favor in recent years and few new ones are erected, but the ones which have already been built remain in good repair.

All of the gentler gods are worshiped in Tukan but Tezca and Azul also have a significant following. Human sacrifice is banned and those who ignore the ban are mercilessly hunted down, even by members of their own faiths.

The current Revered Counselor is an aged cleric of Qotal named Tuahemoc. Tuahemoc is said to have been descended directly from the famous eagle knight Poshtli.

Tuahemoc was the first to claim that Poshtli had ascended to serve at the right hand of the Plumed Father, and he has a number of shrines to his ancestor in addition to Qotal's.

THE DOG PEOPLE

The Dog People are a savage folk who live in the Sands of Itzcala. They are semi-nomadic and generally live in small villages of 50-500 individuals in these northern wilds.

The Dog People are intolerant of most others with the exception of the Otomi, whom they share some ancestry. For generations, the Dog People were captured and sacrificed by Mazticans and this has left them defensive and resentful. Trespassers in their lands are now generally caught and tortured.

Often, an individual will be bound and buried up to their necks in sand and dirt near the mounds of a nasty breed of fire ant that inhabits this part of the True World.

Occasionally, the Dog People will be suitably impressed by a person or group at which point they are accepted into the tribe. The Dog People are extremely loyal to their own kind and this extends to those who are so fortunate.

The Dog People have curious superstitions about the desert dwarves which they share common lands, and though they are not allies, they tend to leave the dwarves alone. Conflicts and misunderstandings do occur, however.

The only people that the Dog People trade with are the Otomi, and even this is rare. There is very little that they want or have to offer, but the occasional curious item is found in the desert from civilizations far more ancient.

The gods of the Dog People are generally not gods at all, but rather local animal and ancestral spirits. They do not understand the concept of gods as actual divine beings.

The Dog People speak their own language, and occasionally Huacli.

THE GREEN FOLK

South of the House of Tezca, before entering the strange and mountainous land of Lopango lays the jungles of the Green Folk. Though their lands are not vast and their populations are not great, their isolation has kept them safe from aggression.

The Green Folk lands are littered with ancient temples and ruins that are complete mysteries. Not even the greatest of the Green Folk elders knows from where they came or who built them.

The Green Folk are not as cruel as the Dog People can be, but they too tend to kill trespassers. They have very little magic, however, and are easily impressed by flashy displays. Magic with impressive optics can send entire villages running, or it could cause them to drop in awe of the caster. Even most pluma and hishna magic is unknown to them.

In the jungles, all that is needed is provided, and the Green Folk do not participate in trade. They speak their own language and ethnically do not appear similar to any other Maztican humans. They tend to be exceptionally short when compared to the average Maztican.

The Green Folk worship what is thought to be the Maztican pantheon, but the names are wildly different. Calor, for example, is the name given to a deity in the myths of the Green Folk that appears quite similar to Azul.

THE LITTLE FOLK

The Little Folk of Maztica are also known as jungle halflings or the Little People. They are a savage race of halflings with little similarities in culture to their Faerûnian counterparts. The different tribes have many opposing origin stories but the general belief is that they were created by Kiltzi.

The Little Folk were once located only in the jungles of Far Payit, but have since spread to others, and they occasionally come into conflict with the Green Folk.

One particularly large tribe of jungle halflings was led by Halloran into the war against the beasts of the Viperhand over a hundred years ago. Halloran, the halflings claimed, had been destined to lead them "out of the jungle," and the prophecy has since come true. Many halflings now live in Ulatos, Tukan and even as far as Trythosford.

The majority of jungle halflings still live deep in Far Payit along mountain bases and they rarely come into contact with humans. Most still hold to their old ways and when humans are captured (usually unlucky Itzas), they will sacrifice their victim to some form of local "god." Most commonly, the local god is in fact a jaguar lord or other monstrosity which they keep in a pit in the village center.

The Little Folk are also known for their powerful poison known as kurari. This is a highly effective paralyzing poison ideal for hunting and taking down "big folk."

Jungle halflings who intermingle with humans speak their own language and the language of whatever local culture they have adopted. The tribes who follow the old ways generally only speak their own language.

Chiefs rule their tribes with an iron fist and tolerate little dissension. In fact, conflict usually leads to the offending party being thrown into the pit of their god.

THE DESERT DWARVES

The Desert Dwarves are not a nation per se, but they have a significant population and have become the dominant people of the sizeable lands of both the House of Tezca and the Sands of Itzcala.

The desert dwarves were once exploratory miners from tunnels under the Moonshae Isles who were ambushed by drow in the year 987 DR. The drow used powerful magics which unleashed magma from below and ocean water from above. This effectively cut both groups off from each other and the pathways back to Faerun's underdark.

This event came to be known alternatively as the Rockfire Disaster or the Rockfire Cataclysm, and it stranded the dwarves in Maztica.

The dwarves first emerged in the Sands of Itzcala but have adapted well to their desert environment and have spread to all the deserts of Maztica. Their greatest population is in fact in the House of Tezca.

The desert dwarves tend to dwell in caves or crags in small communities of no more than a few hundred. In the House of Tezca their leaders are known as chieftains, and in the Sands of Itzcala they are often referred to as cragwardens.

The Desert Dwarves of the Sands of Itzcala tend to remain hidden and aloof when it comes to other Maztican nations. They often come into conflict with the Dog People of the wastes, but this dislike rarely leads to open warfare, and the two races generally avoid each other.

When the dwarves encounter other humans, they react accordingly to the given situation. An entire community of the desert dwarves has moved into the gold-laden mines in Kultaka and joined their Faerunian cousins to form a newer, larger, and far richer community.

In the desert, the dwarves will secretly observe travelers for many days before contact and will know a good bit about the players' tendencies. This branch of dwarves has also come into conflict with the scorpionfolk from lands beneath the sands.

The desert dwarves from the House of Tezca were once known to other Mazticans as "The Hairy Men of the Desert," but that old moniker is rarely used these days.

Led by the great warrior Luskag, this branch fought valiantly against the beasts of the Viperhand at the conclusion of battle for Helmsport.

Though there are many chieftains, Luskag still lives, and he is widely considered the "Chieftain among Chieftains." Should the dwarves ever make race-affecting decisions, they would surely follow this charismatic leader's direction.

Luskag's clan also is credited with the discovery of plumastone near the city of Tewahca and this has made him popular and welcome everywhere but Nexal.

Luskag's clan still mines the material and though it has since been found elsewhere (as well as being magically created), the plumastone of Tewahca is by far the most popular.

The desert dwarves are not particularly religious but have managed to merge the pantheons of Maztica and the dwarves.

Dumathoin is popular, but Plutoq also seems to appeal to these stone loving people.



THE TABAXI

The jaguar men of Maztica populate the jungles and at one time had only fleeting encounters with mankind. When the encounters did occur, they often erupted in violence, particularly when the tabaxi were answering to a jaguar lord.

The Green Folk have always known to avoid the tabaxi, but the newer, more adventurous humans in Maztica are rarely so wise. The jaguar-folk have responded to the frequent trespasses by trespassing themselves, and it is not uncommon to see tabaxi in the streets of the more cosmopolitan cities these days.

The tabaxi occupy just about every known jungle in Maztica but are typically located far from other settlements. They build tree homes which they find easy to climb into, but aggressors have severe difficulty locating.

There are three main groups of tabaxi. The tribes which interact with humans the most are powerful hunters, but typically leave sentient species alone. They will trade for weapons in the nations of men, usually bringing rare pelts from the jungles. It is from this stock that most tabaxi who have traveled to foreign lands comes.

Jaguar lords rule over a large percentage of tribes and these jaguar men are both aggressive and cruel. They are more than willing to eat manflesh, saving the choice parts for their lord.

Lastly, there are the ocelōtl. This enigmatic race is an offshoot of the tabaxi, but has more in common with the smallish cats known as ocelots than they do the proud jaguars.



They are even more reclusive than the jaguar folk and only rarely leave their hidden jungle domains. There are rumors that the ocelōtl command a strange magic unseen elsewhere in Maztica.

Tabaxi worship the Maztican pantheon but do not use the same names as mankind.

THE QUETZALDAUN

Many believe it was to Maztica where the progenitor race of bird men known as the aeree once fled. The aeree either became or created the aarakocra which populate Toril and can sometimes be found in Maztica, though it is said there are many more in Anchôromé to the north.

The aarakocra have suffered the predations of dragons throughout the world, driving them to extinction in some areas. Such was the case for large tribes in the True World. Dragons followed the aarakocra from Faerûn and destroyed their nests with a sadistic glee.

Some aarakocra began to abandon their gods and seek a new lord, one who would save them from the extinction promised by the dragons and ironically, a draconic god answered their plea.

Qotal took pity on the bird-folk but he is not an easy god who breeds complacency in those he chooses. Qotal offered the aarakocra a choice; he would equip them with the tools needed to defeat the dragons if they would only worship him forevermore. The aarakocra agreed and were changed into the quetzaldaun, powerful new bird-folk whose keen senses and powerful forms were able to destroy the dragons that plagued them.

It is because of the quetzaldaun that dragons are almost nonexistent in the True World (the rain dragons known as tlaloatl tend to leave them alone), and even during the days following the Spellplague they had a major hand in keeping the powerful beasts at bay.

Quetzaldaun have other enemies however, and many have been forced to leave their homes and enter the lands of mankind. The populations of hakuna exploded when Maztica returned from Abeir, and the quetzaldaun have recently lost many nests.

To this day, the pact with Qotal has stood even though the god was silent when Maztica was on Abeir, but other deities are making inroads. Whether or not this trend continues as the quetzaldaun come into contact with other cultures or not remains to be seen as does any repercussions from Qotal.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Maztica has secrets and mysteries that remain unexplained and in many cases unexplored. The following places of interest make excellent locations for adventure and exploration.

Azatl (Nexal). Azatl shares a similar history to Tezat in the days since the Night of Wailing. Knowing that they are as likely to be killed and eaten in Tezat by the trolls; the more numerous orcs have taken this city as their own. Perhaps because of the influence of Hoxitl and other jagre (who maintain a strong presence in this city), the orcs are surprisingly organized and can mobilize in case of a concerted attack.

The Bay of Shoals (Pezelac). This shallow bay in Pezelac has a great variety of wildlife and rare plants. It is known for its mangaroo trees which form mazes in the bay formed of small islands. It is rumored that there is lost magic somewhere in one of these mazes, but only from the writings of one of Cordell's legionnaires who went mad shortly after his return to Helmsport.

Canoes are the only boats small enough to navigate the shoal, but the enormous crocodiles that live within the bay keep traffic low.

The Caves of Far Payit (Far Payit). The underdark permeates the True World much as it does mainland Faerûn. Unlike Faerûn, the entrances are rare and only known to few. In Far Payit however, there is a system of caves with far more obvious connections. The cave system is remarkably intricate and contains equal portions of underwater caverns.

In general, these caverns are thought to be uninhabited by intelligent races and remain ripe for exploration or even occupation.

The Fountain of the Gods (Far Payit). When the Little Folk first came out of the jungles they spoke of the legends of the Fountain of the Gods; an artifact created by the deities at the dawn of mankind's emergence as the dominant species of the True World. The Little Folk claim that it was made to test the will of man and to reward bravery where it was deserved.

It is also a place of death, and friendly Little Folk know better to go anywhere near it. The terrible lizards that have populated the jungles in the past century are particularly active here. Also, the most savage and cruel of the Little Folk guard the jungles within dozens of miles of the Fountain's hidden location. They are said to sacrifice all who approach – even other Little Folk – to their enormous crocodilian god. The ruin in which the Fountain lies is also inhabited by five Jaguar Lords who are said to have been given immortality and a spark of the divine themselves.

In a hundred years of searching, not a single survivor has ever returned from an expedition to the Fountain of the Gods.

Itzcatli (Bay of Cordell, Payit). Not much is known of this underwater kingdom of sahuagin who are mostly by their moniker “sea devils.” The sahuagin frequently raid the shores near their kingdom in the Bay of Cordell and even further north into the Bay of Balduran.

Itzcatli was responsible for nearly destroying Trythosford about 50 years ago, before a troupe of paladins wiped out the invading forces. Though the sea devils were turned back, the paladins were also killed nearly to a man and the order has never recovered. The fabulous weapons and armor carried by the paladins were lost at sea. The sea devils also indirectly prevented reinforcements from reaching New Waterdeep when it was razed by Kultakan raiders over a century ago.

In the distant north of Anchôromé, the sahuagin remain a relentless thorn in the side of the people of Fort Flame, which makes it difficult to pinpoint where the actual kingdom has its base and primary population center.

Kultaka City (Kultaka). The Kultakans are indisputably the greatest warriors (as a whole) in Maztica and their capital city is representative of this fact. The community sits on a steep rocky outcropping which is extremely difficult to climb. The city to this day has only fallen once to invasion despite hundreds of attempts through the centuries of its existence.

Lake Pezel (Pezelac). This shallow lake was discovered to have a significant population of plesiosaurs that prey on boatman who stray too close to its center reaches. The lake is excellent for fishing however, and most fishermen have found that they are left alone if they stay close to its shores.

Maxal (Far Payit). Maxal is known to be one of the few Maztican cities with a “naval” presence. It is the second largest city in Far Payit, but it is better known for having the highest population of the Itza people in the True World.

The “ships” of Maxal are actually large canoes, but this mode of transportation is ideal for trade up and down a coast where the jungles can be quite hostile. Maxal has gone so far as to occasionally trade with the far off Green Folk, but terrible sea lizards including vicious families of plesiosaurs, have made this journey a difficult one.

The city itself is located on a large cliff overlooking the sea, and is said to have one of the most pleasing views in all of the True World.

Mount Zatal (Nexal). The magic of the Night of Wailing spewed forth from Mount Zatal with the confluence of godly magics and the power of sacrifice. The transformative power was spent but hot lava still poured from the mountain for decades following that awful evening.

Mount Zatal had gone relatively cold when the True World became part of Abeir and to this day the mountain is avoided by all but the beasts of the Viperhand. It is said that a massive complex lies underneath the mountain populated by fire newts, orcs, and far worse. As the gods reawaken, rumor has it that Zaltec himself stirs beneath the mountain.

Nexal City (Nexal). Nexal is a ruin and has been so for well over a hundred years, but it is occupied. The orcs, trolls and jagre still sit within dilapidated buildings worshipping their cruel god Zaltec who has only recently begun to answer their prayers once again.

The homes and pyramids are unrecognizable from the days of the height of the Nexalan Empire, and the fighting in its streets is nearly continuous. It is testament to the fecundity of the beasts of the Viperhand that they still survive in such great numbers.

Nexal is ruled from the old Temple of Zaltec by the jagre-turned-demigod known as Hoxitl. This immortal being is said to share in the divinity of his dark god, and that without him, the beasts would lose what little organization they have.

Great treasure is rumored to still lie in the depths of Nexal and it is unknown whether Hoxitl has recovered what was buried on the Night of Wailing so many decades ago.

Olbi (Sands of Itzcala). The strange ruins of Olbi are hidden in the desert known as the Sands of Itzcala. The Dog People are said to know of its location, but they avoid it for fear of an unknown darkness that lingers within.

The ruins are older than Tewahca and are a series of caves carved by unknown hands with very little resemblance to architecture found elsewhere in the True World. There are images of Maztican gods throughout the caverns however and rumors abound of powerful magic and plentiful gold.

The Salt Marsh (Kultaka). The salt marsh of Kultaka is teeming with horrors including numerous sahuagin from the Itzcala undersea kingdom. It is used as a training ground for new jaguar and eagle knights who often return with trophies from these fell creatures.

The Sunstone (House of Tezca). The desert dwarves know of a strange lake of silver located in the crater of a lone volcano. The lake is over 600 feet in diameter from shore to shore and looks like a massive circular mirror.

The origin of the Sunstone is completely unknown but its powers are well documented. If one sits upon its shores and meditates on the lake as the sun crests the volcano's caldera, a vision of things to come might be given to the seeker. If the intelligence behind the Sunstone feels that the seeker's motives are not pure, however, it might strike them dead on the spot or send them far away from its shore. Touching the lake itself is assuming too much and one of these effects always occurs should an offender attempt to do so.

Tewahca, The City of the Gods (House of Tezca). The city of Tewahca was built in the Immortal Era as a staging ground for a planned battle of the gods. A city sprung up to assist in this express purpose in the middle of the desert and following the battle, the people dispersed just as quickly.

What remained was a wonder of the desert which had not been found by man for many centuries. The desert dwarves however knew of the city and its enormous Pyramid of the Gods. It was fully rediscovered by mankind preceding a second battle between Qotal and Zaltec.

The city itself contains many hidden treasures from the Immortal Era and is guarded by undead known as the spirit wardens.

While not necessarily evil, the spirit wardens do not take kindly to intruders unless they are given an offering of magic. There are various other undead creatures such as shadows in the crypts of the city as well and should the wardens be placated, they have even been known to protect travelers from this evil.

Not far from the city, massive outcroppings of a natural, red-hued plumastone can be found. The desert dwarves, led by their chieftain Luskag, mine the precious material. The dwarves leave the dead alone and generally stay clear of the city.

Tezat (Nexal). Tezat, along with Zotil and Azatl, was one of the four cities at the center of the Nexalan Empire before it all came down on the Night of Wailing. Briefly, the beasts of the Viperhand allowed humans to enter Nexal and while still unsafe, many managed to eke out a violent existence in Tezat. When Zaltec stopped answering prayers, however, Hoxitl declared that humans were naught but food for Zaltec, and every human remaining in Tezat was brought to Zatal to be sacrificed.

Now Tezat is the domain of trolls. There is barely a remaining intact building in the whole of the city, and the place smells of offal. There is little reason to attempt to enter Tezat, but it is told that there are treasures here that remain from the days of the Empire.

Tulom-Itzi (Far Payit). The cultural center of the Itza people and the capital city of Far Payit, Tulom-Itzi is a truly wondrous city. No other city in the whole of the True World has such prominent displays of gardens, topiaries and beautifully carved architecture.

The city itself is surrounded on all sides by jungle and there are no roads which lead directly to it. People still brave the jungles to visit the city however, whether for its abundance of rare feathers for pluma magic, the kindhearted nature of its native people, or just the sheer beauty of the city itself.

Once long ago, a road did travel directly to Ulatos, but that road is long since disappeared.

The jungles around Tulom-Itzi are kept relatively safe for travel by patrols that are often led by a plumaweaver or plumacaster and numerous jaguar knights. The terrible lizards of the southern jungles are only somewhat active in the area.

Giant fire ants led by the powerful drider Darien once destroyed the city, but it has recovered remarkably. Remnants of these ants still live in the surrounding forests and the Itzas cannot seem to eradicate them once and for all.

The Twin Visages (Payit). Outside of Tehwaca, the Twin Visages are considered perhaps the greatest holy site for Qotal's faithful. It was here that Qotal battled Zaltec after returning to the True World before he was betrayed by his high priest Lotil. Some say that Qotal has since forgiven the tonalli of Lotil, having not realized that the battle was causing so much havoc elsewhere on the continent.

The Twin Visages take the form of two 30 foot high faces, one male and one female on a 300 foot bluff overlooking a beautiful lagoon full of coral.

The Twin Visages also stands as a symbol to the Mazticans. It was here that Cordell first landed before his plundering of the True World.

The Mazticans were conquered by so few because they did not stand together that day, and the Twin Visages remind natives what they cannot allow to occur once again.

The Ulatan Marsh (Far Payit). Across the bay from Maxal is a swamp of disease and decay which is sometimes known as the Great Salt Marsh. This dangerous place is known for its diseases, massive crocodiles and another nation of sahuagin that may or may not be related to the Itzcatli. The marsh frequently floods and the sahuagin use these times to hunt deep within the center of the marsh. For the most part, these sahuagin stay clear of human kingdoms, but in the marsh, all living beings are considered meat for consumption.

Ulatos (Payit). Ulatos and its satellite town of Helmsport were the capital and center of the Amnian invasion of the True World. Once, the city was bustling with folk of many nationalities and sights that had never before been seen in Maztica. When Maztica became part of Abeir, its inhabitants were abruptly cut off from the mainland. While terrible in many ways for the True World, the shift did bring about some positive change. Without a connection to their home, it was the Amnians who began to naturalize. There are remnants of those long ago days, but traces of Amnian (and to a lesser extent some Waterdhavian and Calishite) culture have slowly disappeared. Ulatos is now firmly back in the hands of the Payit. Through interbreeding with the invaders, the Payit of Ulatos have coloration unknown elsewhere in the True World.

Cordell's old nearby estate has been kept up over the last century and now houses the young Revered Counselor of Payit, Coaxoch.

Zotil (Nexal). On the Night of Wailing, the city of Zotil was submerged in lava that was spewed by the eruption of Mount Zatal. For many years the ruin sat quiet, but the dead no longer sleep soundly. Zotil is avoided even by the beasts of the Viperhand.



RELIGION

Maztica, their gods, and the afterlife to which they are connected is different from the folk of mainland Faerûn. While the Outer Planes are the same, particular metaphysical "regions" are set aside for the True World's departed.

THE PLANES

Maztica's planar cosmology is a part of the Great Wheel cosmology of greater Toril, but its locations stand apart from these planes in remote regions that are difficult to reach.

The souls of Mazticans and those who worship the Maztican deities are known as tonalli and upon the moment of death, they arrive in a grand temple. This temple lies atop a pyramid that stretches beyond the range of vision. The skies are a sterile, pure white light that bathes the pyramid in a surreal glow. This makes it difficult to look beyond the edges of the pyramid, and even the immediate vicinity is given a hazy, dreamlike quality. This pyramid is known as the Great Pyramid, but is actually a part of the Outlands.

From the haze, spirit-beings known as zizimime come forth to guide the tonalli to a realm which better represents the soul's disposition in life. The gods themselves have multiple domains and worshipers of many alignments may come face to face with their god as they spend eternity despite the plane their tonalli resides.

Tonalli who had a true neutral outlook in life are directed by the zizimime to stay where they are as the temple slowly changes around them to their permanent domain of rest in a region of the Outlands known as Maztlan. Other souls that have at least some tendency towards neutrality are led onto the next platform which directionally corresponds to their alignment. These platforms have the following names.

Direction	Alignment	Name	Great Wheel Plane
N	LN	Itzli	Mechanus
E	NE	Mictlan	Hades
S	CN	Mayel	Limbo
W	NG	Xilen	Elysium

Some spirits are then instructed to stay at which point their surroundings change, while others continue on further still. The spirits who are instructed to continue moving go onto one of the following at the base of the Great Pyramid.

Direction	Alignment	Name	Great Wheel Plane
N-NW	LN (G)	Tlalocan	Arcadia
N-NE	LN (E)	Tlatocalli	Acheron
E-NE	NE (L)	Exbal Ken	Gehenna
E-SE	NE (C)	Zompantli	Carceri
S-SE	CN (E)	Xipetlan	Pandemonium
S-SW	CN (G)	Tochitl	Ysgard

W-SW	NG (C)	Xitonco	The Beastlands
W-NW	NG (L)	Catlampa	Bytopia

Purely lawful good, lawful evil, chaotic evil or chaotic good tonalli are led directly to the corners of the great pyramid and arrive in one of the following planes based on their alignment.

Direction	Alignment	Name	Great Wheel Plane
NW	LG	Tlaxcautli	Mount Celestia
NE	LE	Xibalba	The Nine Hells
SE	CE	Teotli Itic	The Abyss
SW	CG	Teotecan	Arborea

Tonalli have no choice as to where they end up regardless of whom they claim to worship. There are many who paid lip service to Qotal in life but whose disposition led their souls to the pits of Xibalba to their unpleasant surprise. The following descriptions give a brief overview of each planar region.

MAZTLAN

When the Great Pyramid fades and the zizimime leaves a neutral spirit to its fate, the tonalli sees a massive island surrounded on all sides by an endless sea. Seven caves dot the landscape which are said to be the homes of all spirits before birth. A specter of the mother goddess Maztica is said to inhabit the island as well.

ITZLI

Itzli is a plane of endless outcroppings of obsidian and plumastone. Spirits live here in echoes of their mortal existence. Regimented an organized wars between the tonalli are relatively common and those who break rank are said to be devoured by some foul being of chaos as punishment.

Upon each new morning (a yellow-red sun rises and sets over the glassy fields), the souls are reborn, no matter their fate on the previous day.

MICTLAN

Also known as the true "Land of the Dead," Mictlan was long thought the final destination for all souls. It is a hell of nine levels that must be traversed over many years of travel. The levels range from fields with winds of flesh scraping knives to rivers of blood packed with swimming jaguar-spirits. The first level, however, is rather plain and only inhabited by spider and owl-like beings.

It is unknown what becomes of tonalli who complete the journey, but a demon-being is known to occasionally assist stranded spirits. This spirit is known by the name Xolotl. There is also said to be a king and queen of Mictlan known as King Mictlantecuhtli ("Lord of the Underworld") and his wife, Mictecacihuatl ("Lady of the Underworld").

MAYEL

Mayel is a plane of swirling winds and tempestuous storms. A spirit can spend an eternity here being thrown around in permanent cyclones that only rarely fluctuate in strength. Eha maintains a zone of calm here where those faithful to her in life can spend eternity without fear of the powerful winds.

Mayel himself is the name of a once human consort of Eha who holds significant sway among the spirits.

XILEN

This heavenly paradise consists of endless fields of mayz on an island of abundance. Children who have yet to form their own morality before death end up here and are tended by angelic zizimime known as Ihuilcapatlani. Xilen has plant life seen nowhere else in the multiverse, some of it highly magical.

There are fruits that bear milk for the children and others that calm minds infected with madness. It is because of the former that Xilen has also been given the name, "The Heaven of Milk Trees."

TLALOCAN

This heaven was oddly created by the cruel god Azul to please his wife before her name was lost to the ages and he became bitter and cruel. The realm rains constantly, but it is a warm and gentle rain that often continues even when bright sunshine fills the sky.

Tonalli here rest well, but are eternally drenched by the rains.

TLATOCALLI

Tlatocalli could be confused for an obsidian-free extension of Itzli for the endless wars that rage across its surface. The battles here, however, tend to be crueler but no less organized. Spirits who slay their enemies here enjoy making them suffer beforehand.

Frequent and powerful earthquakes are common and can change the outcome of a battle in moments.

EXBAL KEN

This terrible plane is a realm of gore and sacrifice. Exbal Ken was in fact, the name of the first antihero to sacrifice another human being to placate the gods. Spirits here continue on without their hearts and frequently without their heads, but they feel the pain of their sacrifice eternally.

When new spirits arrive on this hellish plane, they rarely last a day without being brought to the altar.

ZOMPANTLI

This is a realm inhabited by as many evil undead as there are tonalli. Walls, homes, and even the flora and fauna all seems to be composed of disembodied skulls. Most are silent but many scream eternally or speak forever in maddening riddles.

XIPETLAN

Also known as the Flayed Land, this realm is a desert which lies in eternal darkness. Sandstorms powerful enough to rip the skin from flesh tear through the desert and give this realm its common moniker.

Tezca is said to dwell here often when he is not attending his duties. The lack of sun and fire discomforts him, but he is said to reside here anyway in recompense for some long past transgression.

TOCHITL

This is the primary home of the goddess Nula and she enjoys her time here more than in any of the other planes. It is full of animals and the tonalli that come here eventually become animals themselves, though they have the capabilities of awakened beasts. There are many powerful predators here, including giant sized versions of common creatures. When she is here, Nula is tended by the largest of these specimens.

XITONCO

Xitonco is a pure pastoral wilderness full of game and gentle weather. With the exception of the occasional roc, there is little to fear on this plane. The spirits too are generous and welcoming. They are often blissfully unaware of their own existence as spirits and cannot be convinced otherwise, despite evidence to the contrary.

CATLAMPA

The most honored dead of the Maztican continent, even beyond the greatest of warriors, are women who die in childbirth. Even the darker and cruel gods respect the sacrifice they have given. By the decree of the entire pantheon, women who pass in such a way may forgo their eternal fate and be brought to Catlampa.

Catlampa is a desert, but it is not barren, nor is it overly uncomfortable. In fact, massive lakes split the desert with oases of pastoral heaven. The mothers and any other tonalli whose disposition earned them a place in this heaven are allowed to occupy the vast swaths of land alone. They are also given the powerful wings of an eagle so that they might fly the vast distances to greet their neighbors.

TLAXCAUTLI

This favored home of Qotal stands as a massive pyramid of its own. Spirits who come here are often visited by angelic beings in the form of giant eagles. They enjoy frolicking with children on the steps of the pyramid despite lawful and often regimented nature.

There is eternal peace here among the masses and the spirits only ever show eternal love for each other.

XIBALBA

A massive ball game similar to the one popular among Mazticans is played here eternally by both spirits and the occasional deity. The penalty for failure is sacrifice and eternal oblivion. Victors are consigned to one of ten demon lords who then hideously transform the victors.

These unique creatures come in pairs and are known as Xiquiripat (Flying Scab) and Cuchumaquic (Gathered Blood), who sicken a tonalli's blood; Ahalpuh (Pus Demon) and Ahalgana (Jaundice Demon), who cause a tonalli's body to swell up; Chamiabac (Bone Staff) and Chamiabolom (Skull Staff), who transform their spirits into skeletons; Ahalmec (Sweepings Demon) and Ahaltocob (Stabbing Demon), who repeatedly stab their spirits until they are naught but a bloody mess.

Finally there is Xic (Wing) and Patan (Packstrap), who caused spirits to cough up blood for the remainder of eternity. Xibalba is a terrible place of no hope.

TEOTLI ITIC

Similar to Mictlan, Teotli Itic consists of nine layers of hellish landscapes. Pits of fire, acid and burning blood are unavoidable in a spirit's eternal journey on this plane. Many are grabbed by demonic zizimime and buried up to their necks while swarms of ants bite at their faces for years on end.

TEOTECAN

Teotecan is a vast mountain where Kiltzi, the goddess of love frequently resides. It is a pleasant realm of gentle mountain forests, few predators, and little cruelty.

There are rumors of something terrible living in the forests however; a devourer of souls that does not venture far from the place where Qotal once violated his sister's trust. Kiltzi herself does not speak of the darkness, but the spirits believe it is a disease that can affect the whole of the plane if left unchecked.



GODS

The main nine gods of the Maztican pantheon are described below with their given alignment, suggested domains and a description of their symbols.

In addition, a number of lesser and dead gods are provided, though their worshipers are either few, or no longer exist.

This list is by no means comprehensive and there are countless local gods and racial gods that remain off this list.

MAZTICAN DEITIES

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol(s)
Azul , <i>giver of rain, taker of breath</i>	LE	Death, Tempest	Rain, Ice, Octal, Fish, Frog
Eha , <i>wind sprite</i>	CN	Life, Tempest	Clouds, smoke, steam, wind, flutes and horns
Hoxitl , <i>lord of the viperhand</i>	CE	Death, War	Snarling displacer beast
Kiltzi , <i>giver of health, growth, nourishment, and Love</i>	CG	Life	Flower buds, pregnant women, babies, rainbows, the moon
Mictlāntēcutli and Mictēcacihuatl , <i>lords of Mictlan</i>	NE/LN	Death	Skeleton, bone throne, skull with headdress
Nula , <i>guardian of animals</i>	CN	Nature	Jaguar, Hummingbird, Snake, Buzzard, Monkey
Plutoq , <i>master of earth and stone</i>	LN	Knowledge, Nature	Mountain peaks, Obsidian, Copper, Adobe, Dust, Jade, Turquoise, Clay and Pottery
Poshtli , <i>the great eagle</i>	LG	Light	An eagle with outstretched wings
Qotal , <i>the feathered dragon, the plumed father</i>	LG	Life, Light	A plumed dragon or serpent
Tezca , <i>ruler of sun and fire</i>	CE	Light, War	Flame, the Sun, Fireflies, Snakeskin, Lava, Smoke, Fire, Lizards
Watil , <i>guardian of plants</i>	NG	Nature	Lily Mayz, Cactus, Leaf, Blossom
Zaltec , <i>bringer of war and eater of hearts</i>	CE	Death, War	Hearts, Skulls, Macas, Knives, Bloody Hand, Talons, Fangs, Jaguars, Rattlesnakes

DEAD DEITIES

Deity	Alignment	Domains	Symbol(s)
Kukul , <i>ancient father of the gods</i>	N	Knowledge, Life, Shaman	Stars, meteors, gold
Maztica , <i>mother of life, the world</i>	N	Life, Nature, Shaman	Mountains, Soil, Silver
Cōātlīcue , <i>the serpent mother</i>	CE	Trickery, Death, Shaman	Skirt made of snakes

AZUL

Azul is a cruel deity whose existence is crucial to the survival of the True World and the flourishing of its people. He is the god who commands the spirits such as the chac and the tlalocoatl to bring the rains and if he stays his hand, it can mean drought and famine.

He appears as a smiling cherub, yet the god holds an ancient shame and secret which has led him down the darker path. When foreign men came to Maztica they were nearly as horrified of Azul's priesthood as they were of Zaltec's because Azul's preferred sacrifice was of innocent children who were often drowned in a ritualistic pool.

CōātlīcUE

Cōātlīcue has been a dead goddess since the very first days of the Immortal Era, yet somehow she maintains a small presence within the True World. She once appeared as a witch or shaman who wore numerous fetishes, but her most defining feature was her living skirt of terrible serpents.

Cōātlīcue's corpse is said to lie somewhere deep under the earth where no man has tread. The caverns for miles around are rumored to have a chattering sound that can be maddening and there are strange creatures known as the koatlīcan which guard their goddess' corpse from all trespassers.

EHA

Eha is a smoky, insubstantial goddess of wind. Her impossibly long hair flows about her body and it is Eha who is said to bring breath to newborn children thus her role as a goddess of life.

Eha also has domain over the winds, but her control over weather is considered more gentle than what Azul or Tezca bring to the world. Eha is generally regarded as a gentle goddess, despite the fact that she has sided both with Zaltec and Qotal in their past battles.

HOXITL

Hoxitl was once *Chosen of Zaltec* who maintained his faith and sacrifice from the days of Cordell and all the way through the Spellplague, despite the fact that he could not hear the voice of his terrible deity.

Zaltec abuses his greatest servant and has both taken and returned his living heart in the past, but since Maztica's return to Toril and Zaltec's awakening, the powerful jagre has ascended to a demigod of sorts. None worship Hoxitl alone, yet he is accepted as the patron of the Beasts of the Viperhand and the mouth of Zaltec when the Eater of Hearts himself does not choose to speak.

KILTZI

Kiltzi is the undisputed and beloved goddess of love and joy. She is respected by all, and with perhaps the only exception of the Beasts of the Viperhand, she is respected by all beings. Even they admit she is a necessary part of the world and a priestess of Kiltzi might be the only human that could find herself let be when attempting to cross the land of Nexal.



Kiltzi's flock focuses on healing the sick, performing wedding ceremonies and welcoming children into the world. she herself is often depicted as a beautiful and pregnant woman. All women who die in childbirth as ushered by her personally into Tlaxcautli, the most honored and finest of heavenly realms.

KUKUL

It is said that when Kukul left the world because of the death of his wife Maztica, he left behind his body as well in the form of the gold that can be found throughout the continent. He was the creator of mankind, a god of the sun, and the father of all other deities. He is now believed to reside within the sun itself, which is known today as the Eye of Kukul. The demoness Itzaplotl cannot enter the realms of mankind as long as he stares upon the world, so Kukul certainly still wields some bit of power.

As a "dead god", he no longer formally has any worshipers and there is no sacrifice given in the name of Kukul, but Maztican elders, sages, chroniclers and users of magic still occasionally mutter a prayer to the great father long thought dead.

MAZTICA

Maztica's death at the hands and mācuahuitl of her son Zaltec was a terrible blow to the pantheon of the Maztican gods and the mortals of the living world. She, more than Eha, Kukul or any of the other deities was the true mother of life and she was beloved by all.

Though the elder goddess is dead, she is said to live on through the land itself, and a her spirit is still said to roam the Outlands realm of Maztlan. Her woship still exists on the tongues of druidic folk and shamans of the more remote tribes. Even the Dog People of the northern deserts are said to revere her, though not always in name.

MICTLĀNTĒCUTLI AND MICTECACIHUATL

While they once had much greater standing among men, the married god and goddess of death have retreated into the bowels of Mictlan and are not active among the people who call them patrons. Instead, the god and goddess quietly deal only in the matters of the dead and together they are said to guide the skeletal spirits known as the zizimime.

The worshipers of the lords of Mictlan tend to quietly collect the bodies of the dead and dispose of them in proper ways so that they may enter the proper regions of the afterlife whether that be a heaven or hell. They are also responsible for making sure bodies do not pollute or spread disease among the living folk.

NULA

Nula is the only deity that does not have a commonly depicted anthropomorphic form other than the Plumed Dragon himself. She has many depictions, but the most common by far is that of a wise, long-limbed monkey.

Nula is wild and known for her hilarious antics, but she does not afford the respect garnered by many other deities. Mazticans in general are more reliant on plant life than animal life for survival.

Coastal communities tend to sacrifice parts of their catch to her and occasionally throw trinkets into the sea believing that they end up in the hands of the goddess.

PLUTOQ

Like Zaltec, Plutoq's form is gigantic and stony, but takes the appearance more of an elemental than a titanic statue. Plutoq is a powerful god who goes about his own way and has remained neutral in many of the conflicts of the gods in the past. If one deity were to gain his abject approval, the scales of balance would most certainly tip.

Plutoq is the lord of the earth and is particularly undisputed among the mountains. He is a patron in Huacli and to a lesser extent Kolan, but he is universally respected elsewhere.

The god is not bloodthirsty, nor does he refuse the occasional sacrifice to ensure his blessing.

POSHTLI

Poshtli was widely regarded as the greatest eagle knight of all time and his mighty abilities extended far beyond what a typical eagle knight was capable of. Secretly, and unknown even to him, in the time before the Spellplague, Poshtli had been made *Chosen of Qotal* in part to counter the power and influence of Hoxitl in the valley of Nexal.

Poshtli has ascended under Qotal's blessing and is now himself the patron of eagle knights. Like Hoxitl to zaltec, he is thought to be the mouth of Qotal who has taken a step back in his involvement in the world of mankind.

QOTAL

Qotal is the Plumed Father and Feathered Dragon. his appearance is reminiscent of the grandest of dragons, though his frill of brightly colored plumage differentiates his appearance from most other than the little known mirage dragon of the Feywild.

More than any other deity, Qotal abhors sacrifice and his priests work to eradicate it from the stubborn cultures of the True World as a holy mission.

Qotal has not always been such an innocent god and he has done some terrible things in the past, but he is growing more aware of his own actions and learns with every mistake that he has made. Today, after the long silence while Maztica was confined to Abeir, Qotal listens carefully and intently to the prayers of his faithful. Gone is the petty, jealous deity of ages past.

TEZCA

This titan of fire resides in a great pool of fire and magma in the tunnels of the Flayed Land, Xipetlan. He is usually depicted as being surrounded by his corrupted flame couatl servants known as the xiuhcouatl, though just as often, one is depicted as being his actual weapon of choice.

Tezca, like his brother Azul, is believed to be an evil that is necessary to the survival of the True World, and thus he is tolerated and placated even in the most holy bastions of the more gentle gods. Tezca is believed to have taken over the responsibilities afforded to the god of the sun when Kukul passed from the world. Without Tezca's blessing, its life giving warmth would not even be visited upon the world.

Tezca is not well received by Qotal or Zaltec and has been known to oppose both deities under differing circumstances. His practices, however, share much in common with the darker brother.

WATIL

Watil is the benign goddess of the flora of the True World. She is often depicted as a lush and sensuous female that shares much in common with her sister Kiltzi, though her hair and face is typically framed in the white petals of a lily.

Watil refuses sacrifice, though she is often believed to be beholden to her brother Azul, who has a demanding and abusive relationship with his sister. Watil has never given up on Azul, however and she maintains a quiet strength in the face of the cruel god that is widely respected among other deities.

Watil is served by both druids and clerics who are always the best horticulturalists. Some have developed plants with bizarre and useful powers and many have plant-like guardians that serve loyally.

ZALTEC

Zaltec is a terrible and wholly evil god who hungers eternally for the sacrifice and consumption of the hearts of mankind. He is often depicted as a titanic stone statue with a bloody maw into which every heart ever given to him has been thrown. This appearance has certainly been confirmed as the god himself has made appearances on the mortal world in the past.

He is the eternal enemy of his brother Qotal and stands for the diametric opposite of whatever his brother has stood for. Despite this abject hatred, they have had to work together on occasion and will always do so should a foreign power attempt to make forays into the True World. Together, they have thwarted Shar, Lolth, and to a lesser extent even Helm together.

Zaltec is the slayer of the mother goddess Maztica and patron of the Beasts of the Biperhand. Hoxitl sits at his right hand, but the god does not treat his greatest servant well. In the deepest caverns of Mount Zatal, his stony form is said to brood where it has ultimate control over a power known as the Darkfire.

OTHER DEITIES

There are literally dozens of other deities, most of them local, among the people of the True World. Some of the more well known beings that are worshiped (though it is unknown if they are true deities) are the 400 Rabbits, said to be the patrons of drinking and the drink known as *octal*. Priests of Azul dispute that claim and believe octal is in fact a gift from their own god.

An enigma among some of the folks of Helmsport and Ulatos is a phenomenon known as Hunab-Kuum. This "god" has a small cult-like following and his worship is believed to be an amalgamatin of a small local deity, along with tenets of Helm and even the great overpower Ao. There are vast similarities between Hunab-Kuum and the cult of Ao which one time held some popularity in the overseas city of Waterdeep.

Itzapaplotl has worshipers of her own, but mostly warlocks take her as a patron and make pacts with the demoness. In her ambitions to become a true goddess, she encourages actual worship more often than not, and her dark desires are on par with those of her one-time lover Zaltec.

CHARACTER OPTIONS

New subraces, classes and subclasses are all part of what makes Maztica special. At one time, Mazticans did not have the sheer power to stop the onslaught of a foreign invasion, but no more. Characters in Maztica have as much power as their Faerûnian counterparts.

RACES AND SUBRACES

Humans might currently be the dominant race in Maztica, but there are many others to choose from who interact with humans on a daily basis. The invasion of Amn made some significant changes in mankind's culture and some parts of the True World have become more cosmopolitan. This is particularly apparent in integrated cities like Tukan, Ulatos and Trythosford.

Many of the more common races have subraces unique to Maztica. The jungle halflings known as the little folk, the fierce desert dwarves, the Jaguar and Ocēlōtl offshoots of the tabaxi, the quetzaldaun aarakocra and even the various human cultures are described in this section.

HUMANS

Mankind is known for its ability to adapt and survive. In a world with beholders, dragons, and even the dreaded Tarrasque, the fact that humans can be found nearly everywhere gives testament to this extraordinary ability.

Maztica is no different. There are many origin myths in the different cultures but the most common one involves the wisdom of the great sun god Kukul. The gods failed in a number of attempts to create beings to honor them. Men of clay, wood and gold were created but each in turn disappointed their creators.

Kukul, the Father of the Gods, understood their folly and realized that if they were to create beings that would truly worship them, it would require a sacrifice. So Kukul took his great mācuahuitl and severed his own fingers. When the fingers struck the earth, they began to wriggle and crawl; eventually standing and honoring the gods from which they were created.

While many share this origin story, every man or woman is not the same in Maztica. There are many different ethnicities; each with their own appearance, passions and culture.

MAZTICANS

Due to their predominance in the lands of Nexal prior to the Night of Wailing, the Faerûnian newcomers to the True World once believed there to be only two ethnicities of men in Maztica, the Maztican and the Payit. The typical Maztican man or woman has a rich brown skin tone and jet black, fine hair.

Originally, these folk came from the northern wilds of the True World, but were led to the valley of Nexal by their dark god Zaltec. Since then, their language (Maztican, once known as Nexalan), culture and outlook has spread all over the continent. Maztican is the common tongue of the True World.

Male Names. Acalan, Coatl, Naltecona, Nochehuatl, Tolco

Female Names. Ahuiliztli, Erendira, Meztl, Teiuc

KULTAKANS

The Kultakans share much in physical appearance with the Mazticans, but are generally taller and more muscular. They are bred from birth to be warriors and for generations the weakest were left to die in the wilds (not even being fit for sacrifice).

Male Names. Acamapichtli, Takamal, Quautli

Female Names. Citlali, Citlalmina, Hutamana, Pochilli, Quixitl

PAYITS

The Payits have similar skin tone and hair coloration to the Mazticans, but are generally softer in body. There is a high frequency of light skin tones and eyes appearing due to generations of interbreeding with Amnians and Waterdhavians.

Male Names. Atl, Cuauhtémoc, Tetuahemoc, Xiupilli

Female Names. Centehua, Erixitl, Hucilli, Quinapotl

ITZAS

The Itzas are the fun loving, gentle folk who live primarily in the jungles of Far Payit. Short and lean, they are generally self-sufficient and unassuming. It is still rare to find an Itza outside of their small villages in the jungle.

Male Names. Chimapopoca, Huitzilin, Itzli, Itzcoatl, Tochtl

Female Names. Chalchiuitl, Itzla, Teyacapan, Xilonen



DOG PEOPLE

The dog people are the savage folk of the northern wilds, badlands and desert. Long haired and lean, their skin can be described as having more of a coppery tone than brown. The dog people were persecuted for centuries by Mazticans, and they rarely offer any kindness in return. There is also little variation in male and female names.

Dog People Names. Achak, Adohi, Apiatan,

Bemidii, Edensaw, Enyeto, Gaagii, Hakan, Igasho, Moab, Mojag, Nahele, Niyol, Onida, Pilan, Sani, T'iis, Viho, Wakiza, Zyanya

THE GREEN FOLK

The green folk live in the far southern jungles of Maztica, though some of their physical traits can be found in the nation of Kolan. They are a tall jungle folk, often adorned in earthy tones and paints. Their skin tone is brown, but not nearly as dark as their northern neighbors. The Green Folk are easily recognizable on the rare occasions that they enter cities like Tukan.

Male Names. Chicomecoatl, Matlal, Tlaloc, Tototl

Female Names. Centehua, Cozamalotl, Tlacotl

DWARVES

Since Cordell's invasion of the True World, dwarves have become relatively commonplace. There are both shield and gold dwarf communities (particularly near gold mines), but no type of dwarf is more populous than Maztica's own subrace of desert dwarves.

DESERT DWARVES

Desert dwarves are descended from clans of shield dwarves that were exploring for new veins of gold ore but were ambushed by drow and trapped underneath the True World. When they emerged, they did so in the great deserts of Maztica and despite their hardships, they managed to thrive in their new home.

The desert dwarves are very similar in appearance to the shield dwarves of northern Faerûn, but their skin has the appearance of being perpetually sunburned. This condition has no detrimental effects, however and is simply an adaptation to their sunbaked environment.

Desert dwarves have all the standard dwarven traits plus the following.

DESERT DWARF TRAITS

Desert dwarves have all the standard dwarven traits plus the following.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution increases by 1.

Extra Language. You can speak, read and write one other language of whatever group is closest to you geographically.

Enhanced Desert Stamina You can ignore the detrimental effects of the first two levels of Exhaustion, but levels are still gained and you suffer the effects of levels 1, 2 and 3 once you reach the 3rd level of Exhaustion.

Desert Dwarf Metabolism Your body retains water better than most and you are able to survive on half as much water as normal.

Desert Dwarf Vision You lose your darkvision, but gain advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight in bright light conditions only.

HALFLINGS

Halflings originated in Maztica completely independent of their origins elsewhere. There are some Faerûnian halflings in Maztica but these are exceedingly rare. Far more populous are the Little Folk; jungle-dwelling halflings who envenom their arrows with a powerful paralytic poison known as kurari.

LITTLE FOLK

The little folk of Maztica live deep in the jungles throughout Maztica and with the exception of a few tribes, are generally hostile to outsiders. They are said to have been created by the goddess Kiltzi in the Imortal Era of the True World.

LITTLE FOLK TRAITS

Short Ones have all the standard halfling traits plus the following.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution increases by 1.

Short One Fortitude. You receive advantage on all saving throws against poisons and natural diseases.

QUETZALDAUN

The hakuna were particularly ornery this time of year and Huitzi knew she would need to be vigilant in defense of her nest. Twice before had the dragon-horse come to steal and eat her precious eggs and twice she hurled the creature's broken bodies to the rocks below.

Huitzi had found her home a few moons past following the death of her husband. Now the last of his offspring was set to hatch and the growing boys in her nest had yet to find their first flight.

Huitzi scanned the horizon and saw the glint of the sun off of many golden scales. Three hakuna approached and she was certain that she couldn't handle the odds. Huitzi turned to prepare her children but then the two eldest emerged from the cave. Oh, how Aaracotl and Xiatem resembled their father!

With a look of grim determination in their eyes and a spear embedded with razor sharp obsidian, her children spoke nearly in unison. "Mother, we stand ready to fight beside you. Do not fear for us."

In the highest mountains and cliffs of the True World dwells a race of bird like humanoids that have been practically unknown for generations. Similar in many ways to aarakocra, yet also different in not so subtle ways, these bird folk are more akin to eagles than to parrots. They are the quetzaldaun. The eagle folk claim that they indeed were once of the progenitor race of creatures from which the aarakocra were created, but the god Qotal blessed them long ago with their current powerful forms.

The quetzaldaun avoided humanity for untold generations but recent events have left many without a home. Harboring an intense hatred for all dragonkind, these humanoids have found that mankind can be excellent allies in the quest to preserve what is left of their once proud culture.

Whether they are an offshoot or whole separate species to the aarakocra now is left to sages to debate. However, a complete set of character statistics is included on the following page so that the quetzaldaun are a playable race.

AARAKOCRA PLAYABLE RACE

Original statistics for aarakocra as a playable race can be found here.

https://media.wizards.com/2015/downloads/dnd/EE_PlayersCompanion.pdf

CLIFF DWELLERS

The quetzaldaun have managed to remain hidden from mankind for so long because they lair in the most remote reaches of the highest mountains. Deep tunnels are often dug into the sides of the steepest cliffs where only those with the ability to fly can reach. Climbing in such regions is far too treacherous.

Unlike aarakocra who tend to dwell in large communities (or “rookeries”), the quetzaldaun are fairly independent and live in smaller, tight families. Elders claim this is a survival adaptation from ancient days when dragons wiped out entire communities of their predecessors, the aeree.

DEVOUT AND GRATEFUL

The quetzaldaun were saved from extinction and changed into their current forms ages ago by the Plumed God Qotal. This part of their history is well known and passed down through the generations. Quetzaldaun pray thanks to the god in daily observances and it is a rare eagle folk that does not worship the Feathered Dragon.

It is ironic to many that the quetzaldaun are so fanatical in their devotion to this draconic god considering that in all other cases, dragons and their kin are the sworn enemies of the quetzaldaun.

QUETZALDAUN NAMES

The quetzaldaun have names similar to other humanoids in the True World, but each has a root or single syllable that means “eagle” in one of the local languages. Family names are generally similar to both male and female first names with the syllables *quet-* or *qot-* appended to the front. For example, *Quetaquitl* is the name of a well-known (and rather large) family.

Male Names. Arascotl, Aquitl, Arvidotl, Cuauhtemoc, Ethonitl, Mokotl, Orelipochtli, Xiatem

Female Names. Akilina, Arnaudl, Aquilitil, Delinipactli,

QUETZALDAUN TRAITS

Your quetzaldaun character has the following traits in common with all other quetzaldaun.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 2, and your Wisdom also increases by 1.

Age. Quetzaldaun are not known to live terribly long lives. They are considered to have reached maturity at a very young age. Anywhere from 6-8 years old a quetzaldaun attempts its “first flight” and is forever after considered an adult. In rare instances a young quetzaldaun fails to be ready and can end up dead or severely injured. Quetzaldaun can live to 60 years but rarely go beyond that limit.

Alignment. Quetzaldaun follow the edicts of their god Qotal strictly and even eagle folk who are raised outside of a quetzaldaun family feel the deity’s pull. Therefore, most tend towards an inherent goodness and maintain a generally lawful outlook. There are certainly exceptions to this tendency.

Size. Quetzaldaun are tall but light. A typical adult stands anywhere from 6 to 7 feet tall, yet might only weigh 120 lb. The weight is mostly attributed to their hollow bone structure as the eagle folk in no way appear frail.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Flight. You may fly at 40 feet, To use this speed, you can’t be wearing medium or heavy armor.

Eagle Eyes. Quetzaldaun vision is outstanding. They can see three times the distance of humans in near perfect detail. They also gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) rolls based on sight.

Fear Resistance. Quetzaldaun have advantage on any saving throw against a fear effect.

Dragon Foes. Quetzaldaun gain advantage on all Wisdom (Survival) checks when attempting to track a dragon or any dragon kin, as well as Intelligence checks to recall information about them.

Talons. You are proficient with your unarmed strikes, which deal 1d4 slashing damage on a hit.

Language. You can speak, read, and write Maztican, Auran and Draconic.



TABAXI

His maca had long since been lost, but with his powerful claws, Ichtaca felt no fear. In fact, using the weapons of man made him feel less feral, less tabaxi! His quarry passed beneath him, a great taloned lizard of the deep jungles. Its pack had preyed on his clan too long so he and seven other warriors set out to hunt the hunters. All but he had been slain, and the lizard pack had been reduced to this last, the largest of them all.

In perfect silence he stalked his prey from the trees. Silence was not enough, however, as the wind turned and the predator suddenly began to sniff vigorously. With a snarl it turned in Ichtaca's direction.

In the deepest jungles of Maztica, a race of cat folk has kept mostly to themselves and their territory. Devotees to the life of a predator, these tree-dwelling folk have perfected the art of hunting, but do not often extend their predations into human lands. In their wisdom, the shamans of the tabaxi have advised their charges to keep far from the other intelligent races of the True World.

For ages, the tabaxi followed their advice, but when mankind made himself known to them and started to appear in tabaxi lands, traditional wisdom began to change. Many tabaxi have since begun to abhor the worship of their old gods and have traded their feral nature in for a more civilized existence. Most of these tabaxi have fled to the east to the foreign land of Faerûn, where they live amongst humans even more strange than those they have encountered in the true world.

Yet some of the cat-folk have chosen to remain, and those are the cat-folk described here. These subspecies are still found almost exclusively in the jungles of Maztica and remain unknown to foreign folk. The two subraces in question are the fierce jaguar folk and the contemplative ocēlōtl.

TABAXI IN FAERÛN

Volo's Guide to Monsters has given statistics for the playable race of tabaxi. The tabaxi indicated here have the same base statistics, with notable changes specific to the jaguar folk and the ocēlōtl. The differences represent different subspecies of tabaxi that have remained behind while many tabaxi have traveled abroad to greater Faerûn.

Tabaxi, as they appear in VGtM are also located in Maztica, but in lesser numbers these days.

THE JAGUAR FOLK

The jaguar folk of Maztica thrive in harsh conditions where nearly everything that moves must eat or be eaten. Typically led by either wise elder shamans or at their most debased by cruel jaguar lords, the tabaxi are almost always loyal to their clan. Laws are almost unnecessary, but should a tabaxi sin against his own, the punishment is almost always fatal.

These tabaxi are the consummate hunters. Their greatest warriors are able to take down prey many times their size, sometimes using only what the gods have given them. These proud creatures are willing to work in groups or alone, but they rarely, if ever shy away from a challenge. It is a great mark of shame for tabaxi to run from a threat and doing so has a tendency to make them quite ornery.

Brave does not mean stupid, however, and tabaxi will sometimes take days to plan a hunt correctly. Their natural camouflage, senses, cunning and weaponry makes them generally the most successful predators in their territory.

JAGUAR FOLK NAMES

Tabaxi have their own language that incorporates numerous growls which are difficult for others to pronounce. Clan names always use specialized syllables that require practice to speak and are impossible to record.

The younger, adventurous tabaxi typically adapt names similar to their newer companions.

Male Names. Igrrtaca, Mirrintic, Otrri, Patrri,

Tezcacoatl, Tlacelel, Tupac, Yorrotl, Zarrtic

Female Names. Cuarritl, Citlarri, Eztlii, Izerr,

Nene, Pattri, Tlarri, Yarretzi, Zuma, Zyanya

THE OCELOT FOLK (OCĒLŌTL)

The ocelot folk are a smaller, gentler subrace of tabaxi that are known to be the most reclusive of all. The race as a whole remains hidden from the eyes of humanity, with the exception of some of the Green Folk in the southern jungles.

Ocēlōtl are known for their strange powers as well, and are known to use the magical powers of psionics. They are a contemplative creature that sees no reason to ever leave its jungle homes. Only the rarest individual develops a wanderlust, and these are generally looked down upon by their elders. They are never welcomed back, particularly if they bring groups of humans with them.

TABAXI TRAITS

Your tabaxi character has the following racial traits.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity increases by 2.

Age. Tabaxi have lifespans equivalent to humans.

Size. Tabaxi are taller on average than humans and relatively slender. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. You have a cat's keen senses, especially in the dark. You can see in dim light within 60 feet as if you were in bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Feline Agility. Your reflexes and agility allow you to move with a burst of speed. When you move on your turn in combat, you can double your speed until the end of the turn. Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you move 0 feet on one of your turns.

Cat's Claws. Because of your claws, you have a climb speed of 20 feet. In addition, your claws are natural weapons, which you can use to make unarmed strikes. If you hit with them, you deal slashing damage equal to 1d4 + your Strength modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.



CAT FOLK TRAITS

The following additional traits are afforded standard cat folk tabaxi as they appear in *Volo's Guide to Monsters*.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma increases by 1.

Alignment. Tabaxi tend toward chaotic alignments, as they let impulse and fancy guide their decisions. They are rarely evil, with most of them driven by curiosity rather than greed or other dark impulses.

Cat's Talent. You have proficiency in the Perception and Stealth skills.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language of your choice.

JAGUAR FOLK TRAITS

The following additional traits are specific to the jaguar folk tabaxi. As one of the jaguar folk, you tend to be stronger than other tabaxi.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength increases by 1.

Alignment. Jaguar folk tend towards chaos though they can be quite loyal to their clans and its fairly well defined hierarchy. Their concerns are rarely similar to the petty obsessions of man, but clans ruled by a jaguar lord often sink into the depths of evil.

Increased Claw Damage. Your claws deal slashing damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength modifier instead of the standard 1d4 + your Strength modifier.

Jungle Camouflage. When hiding in a jungle surroundings, you are proficient on your Dexterity (Stealth) check.

OCĒLŌTL TRAITS

The Ocelōtl are known for their sharp wit and maneuverability in the treetops.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence increases by 1.

Alignment. As the kinder of the tabaxi subspecies, you tend more towards good than the others.

Quick Climber. Your climb speed increase to 30 feet.

CLASSES

Maztica and the True World were once fully ignorant of the powers that resided in the larger planet of which they were a part. When Cordell and his Golden Legion landed on the shores of Payit over a century past, they were wholly unprepared for the raw power of the Faerūnian wizards and in particular the drow wizard Darien.

The destruction she wrought, and the visible might of the many that followed had been a terrible bane for the True World at the time, but the lessons she inadvertently taught the people might have prevented even greater catastrophe in hindsight.

As always, the great artisans known as plumaweavers and hishnashapers have kept Maztica's unique culture thriving. They practice a form of magic that has grown greatly in power due to necessity and the desire to avoid a repeat of Darien's devastation. If Darien were alive to this day, she would not be pleased with her legacy.

The growth of magic did not stop with the artisans, however. When the skies changed and Maztica became part of the unknown world of Abeir, the gods stopped answering the calls of their faithful. The void in power needed to be filled to stop the new threats that plagued the world. Using techniques mimicked from Faerūnian wizards, plumaweavers and hishnashapers began to record their magical workings into great feather quilts or to etch them into the bones of various predatory animals.

Research and experimentation became a part of the life of these new native wizards and soon they became known as the plumacasters and hishnacasters of the True World.

As always, the brave eagle and jaguar knights continued to protect their charges, though they no longer retained the close connection to Qotal and Zaltec that they once had. The gods had disappeared and instead of guarding the temples of their demanding deities, they began to find other reasons for the existence of their respective lodges. The first true Maztican "adventurers" came from this brand of warrior, and like the artisans, they too learned new techniques and grew in power.

Finally a whole new type of Maztican caster arose once the True World touched upon the world of Abeir. These spontaneous casters were able to touch upon a world of spirits and find animal-like mirrors of themselves whom they could bring back to the world of mortals.

The animal spirits were known as the nahuālli, and so too were the casters who brought them from the Spirit World. In addition to their spirit companions, nahuālli were the only casters known who could call upon the powers of both pluma and hishna, though they would not master either.

Out of the Maztican culture also grew a rogue that had long been known in the True World, but had never been able to fend for themselves quite like they were now. These traveling traders were known as pochteca, and they became a force in their own right. Perhaps they could not stand toe to toe with an eagle or jaguar knight, but their clever minds would more often than not compensate for their lack in physicality.

Now that the gods have returned and the sky is once again the clear blue of Toril, so too have the priests of these gods. In Nexal, where the beasts of the Viperhand endured, the strongest and most intelligent of the creatures maintained the old traditions of sacrifice and slavery. The clerics of the brighter deities took an oath of silence in honor of their missing patrons and patronesses, which they continue to honor despite the Return.

A common saying throughout the True World has always been that, “the people shall endure.”

Necessity in the ever-changing world has driven Mazticans to adapt and they are more capable than ever. The Golden Legion would have barely made it past the shores of the Twin Visages had they arrived in the modern Maztica.

THE ARTISAN OF MAZTICA

The wise old man holds his most recent weaving aloft in front of the rampaging orcs. He turns the blanket of finely spun feathers in his hand and colors pour forth. The foul beasts of the Viperhand are no match for his powerful magic and every one of them stand transfixed by the display.

The tzitzimitl smiled in wicked glee when naught but a single female stood between it and the group of human children. They would make fine tribute to his mother Itzaplotl. The female raised a staff adorned with various fetishes and multiple jaguars appeared as if summoned from thin air. Too late this star demon realized its folly.

Sometimes feared, sometimes loved, the Maztican artisan is almost always appreciated for the protection they afford. Wise and powerful, the artisans give hope to the common man in a dangerous world.

TALENTED CRAFTERS

As their name implies, artisans are crafters with many similarities to the artificers of other realms. The typical artisan spends the vast majority of their downtime developing great talismans of pluma or hishna magic.

When battle eventually comes and the enemy does not fall to a barrage of arrows or stones, these items can turn the tide of battle.

DEVOTED GUARDIANS

Though many live as hermits outside of the major centers of population, the artisans almost always chose a community which they feel is under their protection. The size of the community is not generally proportional to the power of the artisan and woe to the attacker who believes a small jungle village to be easy plunder.

CREATING AN ARTISAN

Though many artisans feel perfectly content to remain in their home villages or cities, there are many reasons for one to become an adventurer. You need to decide for your character exactly what this reason is. Is she motivated by increasing her power? Does she believe that they are serving their community better by exploring the world? Perhaps there is a specific threat which they want to end?

Many artisan adventurers quest to find inspiration in their craft and some even do so to collect rare feathers (plumaweavers) or the fangs and talons of terrible beasts (hishnashapers).

QUICK BUILD

You can make an artisan quickly by following these suggestions. First, Wisdom should be your highest ability score, followed by Dexterity. Choose the hermit background whether you are a plumaweaver or a hishnashaper. As a plumaweaver, choose the cantrips *featherweaving*, *ray of frost*, *tickle* and the first level spells *bird charm* and *feather darts*. As a hishnashaper, choose *jaguar claw*, *net*, *shocking grasp* and the 1st level spells *cat charm* and *obsidian shards*.

CLASS FEATURES

As an artisan of Maztica, you have the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice. 1d8 per artisan level

Hit Points at 1st Level. 8 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels. 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per artisan level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor. Light Armor

Weapons. Simple weapons, tlahhuītōlli (plumaweaver) or ahtlatl (hishnashaper)

Tools. Artisan's bag

Saving Throws. Dexterity, Wisdom

Skills. Choose four from Animal Handling, Arcana, History, Medicine, Nature, Insight, Perception, Sleight of Hand, Survival



EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment in addition to the equipment granted by your background.

- (a) An ahtlatl with 20 yāōmītl or (b) a tlahhuītōlli with 20 arrows
- A component pouch
- An artisan's bag

SPELLCASTING

The talented and dexterous fingers that allow you to create such amazing talismans also allow you to manipulate the powerful forces of pluma or hishna.

CANTRIPS

At 1st level, you know three cantrips of your choice from the artisan spell list. You learn additional artisan cantrips at higher levels as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the Artisan table. If you are a plumaweaver, you may not choose a cantrip with a hishna tag, and if you are a hishnashaper, you may not choose a cantrip with a pluma tag.

SPELL SLOTS

The Artisan table shows how many spells you have to cast for spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these artisan spells, you must expend a spell slot of the spell's level or higher.

You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

SPELLS KNOWN OF 1ST LEVEL AND HIGHER

You know two 1st-level spells of your choice from the artisan spell list. The Spells Known column in the Artisan of Maztica table shows you when you learn more artisan spells of your choice.

Each of these spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots. When you gain a level in this class, you can choose to replace one of the artisan spells you know with another on the artisan spell list. This spell must also be of a level for which you have spell slots.

If you are a plumaweaver, you may never choose any spells with the hishna tag, and if you are a hishnashaper, you may never choose any spells with a pluma tag.

SPELLCASTING ABILITY

Wisdom is the spellcasting ability for your artisan spells because the power in your magic relies on you to weave magic into the world using your devotion to your craft. You use your Wisdom whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability.

In addition, you use your Wisdom modifier for setting the saving throw DC for an artisan spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

Spell Save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus +
your Wisdom modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus +
your Wisdom modifier

SPELLCASTING FOCUS

You can use your artisan's bag as your spellcasting focus for your artisan spells.

ARTISAN ARCHETYPE

Choose an artisan archetype, which describes the source of your power and the type of crafting you will undertake. Choose either plumaweaver or hishnashaper. Both are detailed at the end of this class description.

Your choice grants you features when you choose it at 1st level and again at 7th, 11th and 15th level.

CRAFT TALISMAN

Crafting talismans of pluma and hishna are the main abilities of artisans and their great works are known throughout the True World. There are four levels of ability for crafting talismans. At 2nd level an artisan may craft a minor talisman, at 9th level they may craft normal talismans, at 17th level, major talismans can be crafted and finally at 20th level, the artisan may make a legendary talisman.

Minor talismans are one shot items, which have a single use and then become inert. Such magical items may emulate a spell of levels 1 or 2 which is on the artisan's spell list. As long as the crafter has an artisan's bag, the cost in making the item is negligible. A crafter may have no more than five minor talismans crafted at any given time.

When the artisan reaches 9th level he is able to craft normal talismans which are similar to *common*, *uncommon* or *rare* magic items. *Common* items take a day, *uncommon* items take a week, and *rare* items take a month to craft. Normal talismans cost half the amount to craft as a normal magic item. There is no limit to the number of normal talismans the artisan can craft, but each *uncommon* or *rare* talisman must have attunement as a requirement. The artisan may also attune to one additional item as long as one is a talisman.

At 17th level, the artisan can now create items similar to *very rare* magic items. The items take three full months to craft but cost one-half the normal amount to do so. There is no limit to the number of major talismans the artisan can craft, but each major talisman must have attunement as a requirement.

At 20th level, the artisan may spend a full year crafting an item of such magnificence, that it will be spoken of in legends for years to come. The Cloak of One Plume, for example, was an act of legendary plumaweaving said to have been created by Qotal himself. Using this ability is the crowning achievement of an artisan's lifetime and can only be done once. A price cannot be put on the actual construction as the artisan must gather the rarest of feathers from the most magical of creatures (for a plumaweaver), or the fangs, claws and venom of the most terrible beasts (for a hishnashaper).

Artisans may continually craft even while adventuring. In brief moments of peace between encounters, the hands of an artisan continually work to create their marvelous items. Artisans do not need to continually focus on the task in order to craft.

Crafting talismans is actually therapeutic to an artisan and when one is in the process of creation, the artisan gains advantage on any save against psychic damage or to recover from any type of magical or nonmagical disease.

THE ARTISAN OF MAZTICA

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features	Cantrips Known	Spells Known	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+2	Spellcasting, Artisan Archetype	3	2	1	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	Craft Minor Talisman	3	3	2	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	Ranged Weapon Bonus +1	3	3	2	1	—	—	—
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	3	4	3	1	—	—	—
5th	+3	—	3	4	3	2	—	—	—
6th	+3	Long Ranged Weapon Spell	3	4	3	2	—	—	—
7th	+3	Artisan Archetype Feature	3	5	4	2	—	—	—
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement	4	6	4	3	—	—	—
9th	+4	Craft Talisman	4	6	4	3	1	—	—
10th	+4	—	4	7	4	3	2	—	—
11th	+4	Artisan Archetype feature	4	8	4	3	3	—	—
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	4	8	4	3	3	1	—
13th	+5	Ranged Weapon Bonus +2	4	9	4	4	3	1	—
14th	+5	—	4	10	4	4	3	1	—
15th	+5	Artisan Archetype Feature	4	10	4	4	4	1	—
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	4	11	4	4	4	2	—
17th	+6	Craft Major Talisman	4	11	4	4	4	2	—
18th	+6	—	4	11	4	4	4	2	1
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	4	12	4	4	4	3	1
20th	+6	Craft Legendary Talisman	4	13	4	4	4	3	2

RANGED WEAPON BONUS

As part of their training, both plumaweavers and hishnashapers become excellent marksmen with specific ranged weapons. Plumaweavers train in the use of the Maztican war bow known as the *tlahhuītōlli*. At 3rd level plumaweavers receive a +1 bonus to hit when attacking with one of these weapons. At 13th level, this bonus increases to +2.

Similarly, the hishnashaper receives the same bonus when using an *ahtlatl*.

LONG RANGED WEAPON SPELL

At 6th level an artisan gains a spell which increases the range of their preferred weapon. Plumaweavers can cast *arrowflight* once in between short or long rests without using a spell slot.

Hishnashapers receive all the same benefits with the spell *spearflight*.

ARTISAN ARCHETYPES

Upon creation of an artisan, the source of the artisan's power must be decided. The two brands of magic are wholly different and determine the majority of abilities. The ranged weapon bonus, the long ranged weapon spell, the types of talismans they can create, and the spells on their spell list are all affected by this initial choice.

In addition, the artisan has the following abilities based on which archetype is chosen.

PLUMAWEAVER

Artisans who choose to become plumaweavers revel in the soft down and secret power of life that resides within feathers. They are consummate weavers and their hands are constantly working. After a time, the fingers of a plumaweaver become calloused and thick skinned.

BIRD CHARMER

At 7th level a plumaweaver gains becomes attuned to the natural world of avians and can communicate with all such creatures. Bird calls become entirely understandable to the plumaweaver and the avians can understand the plumaweaver as well. In addition, any attempt to charm a bird or bird-like creature (determined by DM) has advantage.

DEVOTED GUARDIANS

At 11th level a plumaweaver is immune to all fear affects when acting in defense of his home, community or friends.

INCUBATOR

At 15th level, a plumaweaver is under the effect of the spell *incubator*. This may only be used once per year, and the incubation chamber must be created as described in the spell's description at full cost.

THE HISHNASHAPER

Hishnashapers draw power from claws, fangs, talons, stingers and other natural attack forms given to a variety of creatures.

Typically, they wear such small fetishes all about their person as decoration, but on many occasions, the fetish is actually an item of true power.

VIRULENCE

At 7th level, the hishnashaper can add poison to the damage caused by the cantrip *jaguar claws*. This is an additional 2d4 poison damage, but a successful Constitution save (against the hishnashaper's spell DC) will only amount to half damage. This damage increases to 4d4 poison damage at level 11 and 6d4 poison damage at level 15.

FEARSOME APPEARANCE

At 11th level, a hishnashaper's features change subtly to become more predatory. All normal beasts must make a Wisdom save (DC 8 + the hishnashaper's Wisdom bonus), or they will suffer disadvantage when attacking the hishnashaper.

NATURAL POISON IMMUNITY

At 15th level a hishnashaper is immune to all poisons which are derived from the natural venoms of creatures. They gain advantage on saving throws against all other poisons as well.



ARTISAN SPELLS

CANTRIPS (0 LEVEL)

Dancing Lights

Shocking Grasp

Tickle [pluma]

True Strike

1ST LEVEL

Ambush [hishna]

Animal Friendship

Animal Senses [hishna]

Arrowflight [pluma]

Bird Charm [pluma]

Cat Charm [hishna]

Color Spray

Cool [pluma]

Create or Destroy Water

Elevate [pluma]

Expeditious Retreat

False Life

Feather Darts [pluma]

Feather Fall

Fisher's Luck [pluma]

Hishnahide [hishna]

Identify

Jaguar Pounce [hishna]

Longstrider

Obsidian Shards [hishna]

Plumastone [pluma]

Snake Charm [hishna]

Speak with Animals

Spearflight [hishna]

Stoneflight [pluma]

Stonefoot [pluma]

Talonblade [hishna]

Tezca's Touch [hishna]

Venomblade [hishna]

Warmth [pluma]

2ND LEVEL

Animal Messenger

Barkskin

Breathsense [pluma]

Continual Flame

Eagle Flyby [pluma]

Gentle Repose

Guardian Owls [pluma]

Gust of Wind

Heartsense [hishna]

Hold Person

Huntsman's Call [hishna]

Kiltzi's Love [pluma]

Locate Animals or Plants

Magic Weapon

Mirror Image

Scalesnare [hishna]

Featherweaving [pluma]

Jaguar Claws [hishna]

Scrollsee [hishna]

Slashing Plumage [pluma]

Stonefall [hishna]

3RD LEVEL

Bafflement [pluma]

Bestow Curse

Blossom [pluma]

Breath of Qotal [pluma]

Exhausting Wave [hishna]

Eyes of the Jaguar Lord
[hishna]

Feign Death

Gaseous Form

Haste

Hypnotic Pattern

Hypnosis [hishna]

Magnificent Headdress
[pluma]

Nondetection

Protection from Hishna
[pluma]

Protection from Pluma
[hishna]

Remove Curse

Sending

Slow

Water Breathing

Water Walk

Windrider [pluma]

Zaltec's Fury [hishna]

4TH LEVEL

Blight

Confusion

Control Water

Fabricate

Giant Eagle [pluma]

Greater Invisibility

Hallucinatory Terrain

Locate Creature

Pestilence [hishna]

Stoneskin

5TH LEVEL

Awaken

Breathweird [pluma]

Creation

Dream

Geas

Hold Monster

Insect Plague

Legend Lore

Omen [hishna]

Light

Message

Path of the Pochteca [pluma]

Passwall

Plutoq's Strength [hishna]

Seeming

PLUMA SPELLS

CANTRIPS (0 LEVEL)

Featherweaving

Tickle

1ST LEVEL

Arrowflight

Bird Charm

Cool

Elevate

Feather Darts

Fisher's Luck

Plumastone

Stoneflight

Stonefoot

Warmth

2ND LEVEL

Breathsense

Eagle Flyby

Guardian Owls

Kiltzi's Love

Slashing Plumage

3RD LEVEL

Bafflement

Blossom

Breath of Qotal

Magnificent Headdress

Protection from Hishna

Protection from Pluma

Windrider

4TH LEVEL

Giant Eagle

5TH LEVEL

Breathweird

Path of the Pochteca

6TH LEVEL

Great Screech

Incubation

Mayz of the Plumed Dragon

7TH LEVEL

Power Word Blind

Ward of Esmeralda

8TH LEVEL

Wind Warrior of Eha

Net [hishna]

Ray of Frost

9TH LEVEL

Avatar of the Plumed Dragon

HISHNA SPELLS

CANTRIPS (0 LEVEL)

Jaguar Claws

Net

1ST LEVEL

Ambush

Animal Senses

Cat Charm

Hishnahide

Jaguar Pounce

Obsidian Shards

Snake Charm

Spearflight

Talonblade

Tezca's Touch

Venomblade

2ND LEVEL

Heartsense

Huntsman's Call

Scalesnare

Scrollsee

Stonefall

3RD LEVEL

Exhausting Wave

Eyes of the Jaguar Lord

Hypnosis

Protection from Pluma

Zaltec's Fury

4TH LEVEL

Pestilence

5TH LEVEL

Omen

Plutoq's Strength

6TH LEVEL

Swarm Form

7TH LEVEL

Heartripper

Obsidian Tomb

8TH LEVEL

Soulmerge

9TH LEVEL

Avatar of Azul

Hishna Curse

CLERIC DOMAIN

The clerics of the True World choose a wide variety of domains with the most common being War (Zaltec) and Life (Qotal). The Maztican Shaman however is a new domain which is used primarily by some of the more savage clerics, particularly the tabaxi and the Dog People.

MAZTICAN SHAMAN

Rather than worship a specific god, you revere the spirits of your ancestors or the spiritual energy of the world itself. The spirits are your close, trusted friends and you can see them wherever you go, even if others cannot.

Shamans are usually prominent members of a tribe, but sometimes they take to the road and become loners, or are adopted into another group. Your connection to the Spirit Realm allows you to summon a spirit companion to the physical world that aids you in your endeavors. As the need arises, you can call on other spirits for assistance and each has its own personality and abilities.

BONUS SPELLS

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the *druidcraft* cantrip if you don't already know it. In addition, you receive bonus spells noted on the Maztican Shaman Domain Spells Table.

MAZTICAN SHAMAN DOMAIN SPELLS

Spell Level	Spell Names
1st	<i>cure wounds, speak with animals</i>
3rd	<i>animal messenger (takes form of spirit companion), locate animals or plants, see invisibility</i>
5th	<i>revivify, speak with plants (speaks to spirits which inhabit plants), spirit guardians</i>
7th	<i>death ward, locate creature</i>
9th	<i>commune with nature, mass cure wounds</i>

SPIRIT COMPANION

You have an animal spirit companion chosen from this list: Bear, Boar, Cougar, Coyote, Eagle, Lion, Monkey, Owl, Panther, Snake, Tiger, Vulture, Wolf, or Wolverine (Work with your DM to create other spirit types, if desired). your spirit companion has the statistics shown along with the following qualities.

Your spirit companion cannot be healed. When it drops to 0 hit points it disappears, leaving behind no physical form. During a short rest you can perform a brief ritual that restores all the spirit's hit points or causes it to manifest again at full hit points. During a long rest, you can dismiss your current companion and choose a different one.

Your companion acts independently of you, but it always obeys your commands. In combat, it rolls its own initiative and takes its own actions on its own turn. It can use the following actions: Dash, Disengage, Dodge, Hide, and Search.

SPIRIT COMPANION

Small or medium fey, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 12 +3 hp per level beyond 3rd
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Add your proficiency bonus to Dex and Wis saves

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Same as yours

Challenge 0 (0 XP or 10 XP if it does damage)

Incorporeal Movement. The spirit companion can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Animal Specific Trait. Spirit companions have the following traits based on their form:

- Bear: +1 AC, +1 HP per level, proficient in Athletics
- Boar/Wolverine: Resists all damage, proficient in Constitution saves
- Cougar/Lion/Panther/Tiger: Speed 40 ft., darkvision 30 ft., proficient in Acrobatics, Athletics, Stealth, reduce falling distance by 20 ft.
- Coyote/Wolf: +2 AC, proficient in Perception, Survival, can track by scent as a 1st-level ranger.
- Eagle/Hawk: +2 AC, Speed 5 ft., fly speed 60 ft., proficient in Perception.
- Monkey: +2 AC, climb speed 30 ft., proficient in Sleight of Hand.
- Owl: Speed of 5 ft., fly speed 50 ft., darkvision 120 ft., proficient in Perception.
- Snake: +5 initiative, darkvision 30 ft., proficient in Perception.
- Vulture: Speed 5 ft., fly speed 40 ft., proficient in Perception, Survival, can track by scent like a 1st level ranger.

While you are within 120 feet of your companion, you can communicate with it telepathically. Additionally, as an action, you can see through your companion's eyes and hear what it hears until the start of your next turn, gaining the benefits of any special senses it has. During this time you are deaf and blind with regard to your own senses.

Finally, when you cast a spell with a range of touch, your companion can deliver the spell as if it had cast the spell. Your companion must be within 120 feet of you, and it must use its reaction to deliver the spell when you cast it. If the spell requires an attack roll, you use your attack modifier for the roll.

SPIRIT BOON

Choose one of the following spirit boons. You can select a different spirit boon any time you are allowed to choose a different spirit companion. If your companion takes the Dodge action, you lose access to the spirit boon until it is no longer dodging.

Guardian Spirit. Your spirit companion can use its reaction to take half the damage of an attack or spell that damages a creature adjacent to it.

Harrier Spirit. Your spirit companion can use its reaction to cause an adjacent opponent to have disadvantage on an attack roll.

Protecting Spirit. When you damage a creature with an attack or spell, your spirit companion can use its reaction to grant temporary hit points equal to your Constitution bonus to a creature adjacent to it.

Assisting Spirit. Your spirit companion can use the Help action.

Watcher Spirit. Your spirit companion functions as if it had the *see invisibility* spell active at all times.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: CALM UNDEAD

You lose the Turn Undead ability and gain Calm Undead. As an action, you present your symbol and invite the undead spirits to return to the Spirit Realm where their ancestors await them. It is identical to Turn Undead except that undead creatures that fail the saving throw are stunned for 1 minute or until they take damage. While stunned, the creature ponders its past life and its current actions.

Shaman of 5th level or higher gain the Destroy Undead feature as normal, however the spirits of undead destroyed by a shaman depart peacefully for the afterlife.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: CALL SPIRIT COMPANION

As your action, you dismiss your current spirit companion (if present) and summon a different spirit companion anywhere within 30 feet. It can be the same type and grant the same boon, or you can change one or both.

HEALING SPIRIT

Beginning at 6th level, your healing spells are echoed by your spirit companion. Whenever you cast a spell of 1st level or higher that restores hit points, your spirit companion or another creature of your choice adjacent to it regains hit points equal to 2 + the spell's level.

VICIOUS SPIRIT

Beginning at 8th level, your spirit companion can use its action to make a melee attack. Its attack modifier is equal to your Wisdom bonus plus your proficiency bonus. On a hit, it deals damage equal to your Wisdom bonus.

If you are good or neutral, the damage is radiant. If you are evil, the damage is necrotic.

SPIRIT REALM AMBASSADOR

Beginning at 17th level, you and your spirit companion resist necrotic damage. You always function as if you had the sanctuary spell active, however it only affects undead. If your actions end the sanctuary effect, it is reinstated at the end of a short rest.

Finally, once per day you can use the *etherealness* spell as a ritual, affecting only yourself and your spirit companion.



PALADIN SACRED OATH

When Maztica was invaded long ago by the forces of Amn, it was the brave eagle and jaguar knights that had nearly turned the tides of battle in favor of the natives.

These paladin sacred oaths produce the most well known and exclusive True World warriors. All know to fear the Mazticans wearing their famous armor.

OATH OF THE EAGLE KNIGHT

Once associated exclusively with the temples of Qotal, upon his disappearance (for a second time), the eagles branched out and became far more secular. They still hold to their ancient traditions however, and much of the power afforded the class is still granted by Qotal. Joining the eagle lodge is one of the highest honors given to a Maztican warrior.

Poshtli, a hero of the past centuries, was widely known as the greatest eagle knight of all time and when he flew off into the sky never to be seen again in mortal form as Qotal sponsored his rise to divinity.

EAGLE ARMOR

At 3rd level an eagle knight is given his eagle armor from the artisans of his lodge. This armor will be the focus of many of his future powers and is always the eagle knight's most valued possession.

Should the armor be lost, the eagle knight can petition his lodge for a new set. However, this is a huge embarrassment regardless of the surrounding circumstances and the lodge will always require the eagle knight to complete a major task before replacing the eagle armor.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

Paladin Level	Spells
3rd	<i>bird charm, cool</i>
5th	<i>eagle flyby, animal messenger (bird)</i>
9th	<i>breath of Qotal, protection from hishna</i>
13th	<i>giant eagle, greater invisibility</i>
17th	<i>breathweird, hold monster</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

Resistant Armor. As an action, you can imbue your armor with the resilience of the Plumed Dragon, giving it extra ability to protect you from harm. Your armor gives you resistance to one damage type of your choice for 10 minutes.

Retaliatory Armor. As an action, you imbue your armor with the will of Qotal which seeks to defeat your enemies. The first time you are hit by a melee weapon attack, your armor sends forth a wave of force as a reaction in a 10 foot radius doing 10 (3d6) force damage to all enemies in range.

EAGLE SHAPE

At 7th level you may use an action to assume the shape of a giant eagle once between every short and long rest. The eagle knight may only transform while wearing his eagle armor.

This ability lasts a number of hours equal to one half of your eagle knight level rounded down. Your statistics are replaced with the statistics of the giant eagle except you retain your personality, alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma. You also assume the hit points and Hit Dice of the giant eagle, but if you fall to 0 hit points, you revert to your human form (possibly resulting in falling damage). Any excess damage is subtracted from your hit point total.

Any other benefits of your class are kept except you also assume the senses of the giant eagle. You cannot cast spells in this form, and your equipment merges with your giant eagle form.

You may not cast spells in your giant eagle form or use your Channel Divinity ability, but active spells remain.

Your eagle armor gains a +1 bonus at this level when you are wearing it.

ARMOR DANCING

At 15th level you may choose to perform a ritualistic dance once between short and long rests. This ability is a reaction to taking weapon damage and halves the damage of the attack against you. When you assumes the form of a giant eagle at this level, you provoke no attack of opportunity when flying out of enemy reach.

Your eagle armor gets a +2 bonus when you are wearing it.

COUNTENANCE OF QOTAL

At 20th level you can use the *great screech* spell once between long rests with a duration of 2 minutes. The superimposed eagle head in the spell description takes on more of the features of a dragon if you are in eagle form and the sound that emanates is as much a roar as it is a screech.

Your armor gets a +3 bonus at this level when you are wearing it.

OATH OF THE JAGUAR KNIGHT

Jaguar knights were once the primary defenders of temples to the evil god Zaltec, but their dedication has always been circumspect at best. In fact, despite the enmity of their respective deities, jaguar knights have always had a healthy respect for their eagle knight counterparts.

When the gods disappeared and the skies changed, the jaguar knights split almost completely from their roots with the Eater of Hearts and only a few (particularly the beasts in Nexal) continue the old ways, but Zaltec continues to supply the divine power necessary for many of their abilities.

Like Poshtli of the eagles, Gultec is a legend among the jaguar knights. They aspire to the levels of greatness and heroism shown by this greatest of all jaguars.

JAGUAR ARMOR

At 3rd level a jaguar knight is given his jaguar armor from the artisans of his lodge. This armor will be the focus of many of his future powers and is always the jaguar knight's most valued possession.

Should the armor be lost, the jaguar knight can petition his lodge for a new set. However, this is a huge embarrassment regardless of the surrounding circumstances and the lodge will always require the jaguar knight to complete a major task before replacing the jaguar armor.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

Paladin Level	Spells
3rd	<i>cat charm, obsidian shards</i>
5th	<i>animal messenger (cat), scalesnare</i>
9th	<i>Zaltec's fury, protection from pluma</i>
13th	<i>greater invisibility, pestilence</i>
17th	<i>hold monster, insect plague</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

Supple Armor. As an action, your armor become supple and aids your movement. Your walking speed increases by 10 and you gain advantage on Dexterity saving throws for 10 minutes.

Fearsome Armor. As an action, you imbue your armor with the will the fearsome countenance of Zaltec. The first time an enemy makes a spell or melee attack against you it must make a Wisdom saving throw (against your spell DC) or freeze with fear, ruining the spell or attack.

JAGUAR SHAPE

At 7th level you may use an action to assume the shape of a Maztican jaguar once between every short and long rest. The jaguar knight may only transform while wearing his jaguar armor.

This ability lasts a number of hours equal to one half of your jaguar knight level rounded down. Your statistics are replaced with the statistics of the Maztican jaguar except you retain your personality, alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma.

You also assume the hit points and Hit Dice of the Maztican jaguar, but if you fall to 0 hit points, you revert to your human form (possibly resulting in falling damage). Any excess damage is subtracted from your hit point total.

Any other benefits of your class are kept except you also assume the senses of the Maztican jaguar. You cannot cast spells in this form, and your equipment merges with your Maztican jaguar form.

You may not cast spells in your Maztican jaguar form or use your Channel Divinity ability, but active spells remain.

Your jaguar armor gains a +1 bonus at this level when you are wearing it.

ARMOR DANCING

At 15th level you may choose to perform a ritualistic dance once between short and long rests. This ability is a reaction to taking weapon damage and halves the damage of the attack against you. When you assume the form of a Maztican jaguar at this level, you provoke no attack of opportunity when moving out of enemy reach.

Your jaguar armor gets a +2 bonus when you are wearing it.

CLAWS OF ZALTEC

At 20th level you can use the *heart ripper* spell once between long rests. Your hands have a ghostly set of bloody claws superimposed over them.

Your armor gets a +3 bonus at this level when you are wearing it.

ROGUISH ARCHETYPE

Even the kindest of the nations and regions in Maztica have strict, if not brutal punishments for crime. It is not unusual to find a thief sentenced to death by hanging or stoning on the spot when convicted. The native Mazticans rarely use prisons so punishment must be swift and efficient.

Because of this deterrent, thievery has always been kept to a minimum, with notable exceptions among foreigners. However, the skills of a rogue have certainly found importance elsewhere in the True World.

THE POCHTECA

The pochteca are traveling merchants of the True World. They trade their goods from one side of the continent to the other and a venerable pochteca has seen more of the True World than any other dozen folk combined.

Pochteca are also consummate spies and are greatly valued by Revered Counselors and other rulers. Typically, a pochteca has a standing just below most nobles in Maztican society and harassing one is often punished with swift death.

Natural explorers, the pochteca are ideal for an adventuring party.

DIRECTION SENSE

At 3rd level, you always inherently know which directions are north, south, east or west. You also gain advantage when making a Wisdom (Survival) check in order to not become lost and to forage while doing so.

TOOL USE

You gain proficiency in the use of a disguise kit and herbalism kit when you reach 3rd level.

EXPERT TRAVELER

At 9th level you gain blindsight out to a range equal to your normal sight. You do not require light in order to be perfectly aware of your surroundings. You also learn two new languages due to all the time spent in foreign lands.

BUILT FOR SPEED

You can dash as a bonus action for your turn when you reach 13th level. Also, difficult terrain no longer affects your movement.

UNCANNY AWARENESS

At 17th level, you can no longer be surprised and you have advantage when rolling for initiative.

SORCEROUS ORIGIN

Sorcerers have not always been known in Maztica and few have had the bloodlines to allow for the manifestation of that kind of power. As in many instances, however, the True World has changed greatly in the previous few centuries.

NAHUĀLLI

When Maztica was torn from Toril over a century ago, the pervasive magics of pluma and hishna divided and combined in unpredictable ways.

Most of the raw, unleashed magic was lost into the ether, but some found its way deeper into the world of spirits and from there into the souls of unborn children. These children found that they could tap into the powers of both magics. Their tonalli also twinned, forming an animal-like spirit-half which are also known as nahualli (but is usually referred to as a "spirit twin"). Generations of these sorcerous men and women have now come and gone and no one can predict when or where these blessed folk might appear.

PLUMA AND HISHNA PRACTITIONERS

Nahualli are identified early by their uncanny ability to manipulate the forces of both pluma and hishna. A nahualli may choose spells or cantrips from either the pluma or hishna tag to add to their spells known at each level.

SPIRIT TWIN

At 1st level, you travel into your dreams to the world of spirits and meets your spirit twin. You coaxes this being to accompany you to the land of mortals in order to serve you.

This early connection is very similar to the connection a caster may have with a familiar from the *find familiar* spell. The spirit twin can appear in the form of a bat, tapir, constrictor snake, mastiff, jaguar, poisonous snake or wolf.

The spirit twin may only choose one of these forms but otherwise acts the same as a familiar. Thus, it always obeys your commands; it can communicate telepathically with you within 100 feet, and can temporarily be dismissed or recalled from the Spirit Realm with a bonus action.

Your spirit twin may also deliver touch spells of as if you had cast them. The spirit twin is either a celestial, fey or a fiend and cannot be slain. If the spirit twin would otherwise have been killed by an attack it is banished to the Spirit World where you may once again summon it in your dreams during a long rest.

Having a spirit twin does not prevent you from also having a familiar.

The spirit twin may travel whatever distance from you that you wish on the same plane, however, it does not generally like to do so.

SPIRIT TWIN SHAPECHANGER

Starting at 6th level, your spirit twin can shapechange as a bonus action on any round into one of the shapes listed under Spirit Twin above.

It may also change into the form of a brown bear, dire wolf, giant eagle, giant spider or reef shark.

ADVANCED SPIRIT TWIN

Starting at 14th level, choose one of your known spells. You may transfer the ability to cast this spell to your spirit twin. If it does cast the spell, the spirit twin uses one of your spell slots just as if you had cast the spell yourself and as long as the spirit twin has this ability you are incapable of casting the transferred spell yourself.

The spirit twin does not need to use verbal or somatic components to cast a spell, but material components must be in the possession of the sorcerer. If the spell description indicates the components are consumed, they disappear from your possession as if you had cast the spell yourself.

Your spirit twin may not summon a familiar of its own. After a long rest you may swap the transferred spell for another which you know. At this point, the spirit twin is also better at keeping itself alive and can become invisible as an action on its turn. If it then takes an attack action, the invisibility is dropped. It must use an additional action to become invisible once again.

SHARED SOUL

Beginning at 18th level, your spirit twin becomes so in tune with your own spirit that the two of you almost become one. Add the hit points of your spirit twin (based off of whatever form it is currently using) to your own and then divide the resulting hit points among the two of you.

If the spirit twin changes shape, adjust the hit points accordingly. An extra hit point from an odd total goes to the sorcerer. The spirit twin however, is now resistant to all forms of magical damage and therefore any spell damage other than piercing, slashing or bludgeoning made against it by a spell. As a reaction when you take damage, you can dismiss the spirit twin to transfer all of its remaining hit points to yourself. If this reaction is used, however, the spirit twin may not be summoned again until after a long rest.

WARLOCK PATRON

Warlocks have long existed in Maztica but with the rise of their patron, have recently played a far more prominent role.

THE OBSIDIAN BUTTERFLY

The demoness, goddess, or completely unique entity known as Itzapaplotl has long granted power to those who make a pact with her. This being, who is alternatively known as the Obsidian Butterfly, has unknown motivations and the depths of her evil is uncertain.

Warlocks who make a pact with the Obsidian Butterfly are given great power, but her dark plans are sure to one day involve those who make a pact with her.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The Obsidian Butterfly lets you choose from an expanded spell list when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

OBSIDIAN BUTTERFLY EXPANDED SPELLS

The Obsidian Butterfly lets you choose from an expanded list of Spells when you learn a Warlock spell. The following Spells are added to the Warlock spell list for you.

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>jaguar pounce, talonblade</i>
2nd	<i>scalesnare, stonefall</i>
3rd	* <i>exhausting wave, eyes of the jaguar lord*</i>
4th	<i>fire shield, pestilence</i>
5th	<i>breathweird, flamestrike</i>

MARK OF THE OBSIDIAN BUTTERFLY

Starting at 1st level, Itzapaplotl makes her presence known by emblazoning her symbol permanently on your forehead. This symbol forever brands you as an outcast but also causes all within sight of the brand to fear you.

All creatures in sight of the brand must make a Wisdom save against your warlock spell DC or become frightened by you.

They may attempt to save again at the start of each of their turns and once they have successfully saved they do not need to again for a full day.

You are not able to suppress this ability, but the mark can be covered with a simple hood or hat.





STAR FIRE

Starting at 6th level you may enact a wreath of bright white and blue flames around yourself as a reaction to taking damage. These flames shed bright light in a 10-foot radius and lasts for 10 minutes or until you use an action to dismiss them.

The flames erupt with a bright flash from the damage and cause 2d8 fire damage to your attacker.

This ability can only be used once between short and long rests.

CONJURE TZITZIMITL

Starting at 10th level, you may call forth a star demon of Itzaplotl to serve you which materializes in a space adjacent to you. The tzitzimitl serves your wishes as long as your concentration isn't broken or until an hour has expired at which point the creature disappears in a puff of smoke.

The tzitzimitl is not generally friendly to you but it must follow your commands explicitly. Careless commands can allow the tzitzimitl to betray you if not worded properly. This ability can only be used once between long rests.

VISION OF TAMOACHA

The torture chambers of the void realm of Tamoacha are horrors than few minds can accept. Starting at 14th level, as an action you may project a vision of this hellish location to any creature that can see your mark.

This creature takes 8d10 psychic damage and must make a Wisdom save against your warlock spell DC or become paralyzed. The creature remains paralyzed until it is successful on the Wisdom save which it may attempt once at the start of each of its turns. This ability can be used once between short and long rests.

WIZARD ARCANE TRADITIONS

At one point the artisan was the prominent caster of Maztica. There is no denying their power or contribution to culture in the True World, but magic for magic's sake was never their sole purpose.

When the Golden Legion came, the practice of recording spells in tomes and scrolls of papyrus was introduced. Research into the inner nuances of pluma and hishna magic grew as well, and with it so did the level of power involved.

Soon, plumaweavers and hishnapapers had to begin devoting all their time to the study of magic and actual crafting fell by the wayside. Within a few short decades, the plumacasters and hishnacasters were born.

THE PLUMACASTER

Pluma magic is the magic of feathers created by the goddess Maztica herself and bestowed upon mankind by her son Qotal. You are trained as a wizard in the ways of the foreigners who arrived long ago, but you have managed to stay true to the native magics of your homeland. All spells with the pluma tag are added to your class spell list.

The magic you command is of a level not seen in previous generations and many of your fellow Mazticans look upon you in awe. As a pioneer in your craft, you also forever seek to develop new spells and find magic in the most hidden corners of the True World.

PLUMA MAGIC SAVANT

Beginning when you select this type of magic at 2nd level, the gold and time you must spend to copy a spell with the pluma tag is halved.

VARIANT FAMILIAR

At 2nd level, you add the *find familiar* spell to your spellbook if it is not there already. When you cast *find familiar*, you may choose to summon a plumazotl bird or a corollax in lieu of the other choices given in the spell description.

LIGHT AS A FEATHER

At 6th level, you can cast *feather fall* as a reaction to falling 30 feet or more without using a spell slot. You may also add the spell to your spellbook if you do not already have it. This use of the spell, however, has a range of self only.

AVIAN CONJURATION

At 10th level, you can double the number of bird or bird like creatures you conjure when you cast a conjuration. This cannot be used on spells with an instantaneous duration, such as *find familiar*.

BIRD WINGS

At 14th level, you gain the ability to sprout the colorful wings of a parrot from your back. You gain a flying speed equal to your current walking speed and you can create these wings as a bonus action on your turn. You may keep these wings indefinitely until you dismiss them as a bonus action on your turn.

You may not wear armor while your wings are manifested and clothes worn on the back are typically ruined if worn while the wings sprout.

This ability may only be used once between long rests.

THE HISHNACASTER

The magic of talons, claws and venom was a gift given to mankind by the god Zaltec, the Eater of Hearts. Like the practitioners of pluma, you have learned much from the invading Faerûnians, but have incorporated the power of the True World.

Your magic is often violent and unforgiving, but such is the necessity when living in a cruel land. You constantly seek to find and create new spells to add to your repertoire. The level of power you command was once nonexistent among your people.

HISHNA MAGIC SAVANT

When you select this type of magic at 2nd level, the gold and time you must spend to copy a spell with the hishna tag is halved. All spells with the hishna tag are added to your class spell list.

MIGHTY LEAPER

At 6th level, on your turn as a bonus action, you may cast the spell *jump* on yourself without using a spell slot. For the duration, your appearance becomes noticeably cat-like and your skin becomes spotted like that of a jaguar. You also add the spell jump to your spellbook for free.

FELINE CONJURATION

At 10th level, you can double the number of cats or cat like creatures you conjure when you cast a conjuration. This cannot be used on spells with an instantaneous duration, such as *find familiar*.

HISHNA STRIKER

When you reach 14th level and cast a spell which requires a successful attack roll, you may add your Intelligence modifier to the amount of damage caused. You also gain advantage on the attack roll. You may use this ability once between short and long rests.

NEW FEATS

A number of new feats can be taken by natives of Maztica or characters that are trained by a Maztican.

AHTLATL MASTER

Prerequisite: Proficiency with martial weapons

You master the use of an ahtlatl, allowing you to utilize the best qualities of both types of ammunition no matter which you use. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength score by 1.
- When using an ahtlatl with a tlacochtli dart, your range increases to 80/150.
- When using an ahtlatl with a yāōmītl arrow, you increase the damage to 1d10 piercing.

FEATHERED FAMILIAR

Prerequisite: Ability to cast the find familiar spell

You have an attunement to the special creatures of the True World. You gain the following benefits:

- You increase any of your ability scores by 1.
- When you cast the find familiar spell your familiar may take the form of a corollax or chickcharnee.
- Your telepathic connection to your familiar, including the ability to use its senses, extends to 150 feet.

FEATHERWEAVER

Prerequisite: Wisdom 13 or higher

While you do not boast the same skills as a plumaweaver, you have picked up some of their tricks. You may use the cantrip *featherweaving* at will.

You also may *identify* any pluma talisman as if you had cast the spell.

MĀCUAHUITL MASTER

Prerequisite: Proficiency with martial weapons

You have mastered the difficult balance in wielding a mācuahuitl one handed. You may wield a mācuahuitl with one hand and still use its two-handed damage (1d10).

MAZTICAN MAGIC

Trained in the ways of Maztican spellcasters, you can use one form of their potent magics. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You choose a form of Maztican magic, either pluma or hishna, and add spells with that tag to your class spell list.
- You add the Maztican language to your known languages.

SHARPCLAWS

Prerequisite: You must have a claw attack either as a natural attack or a feature from a spell or class.

Your claws harden and dig deeper wounds. You deal an additional 1d4 slashing damage to any damage you do with claws. At 4th level and every four character levels thereafter you deal +1 additional hit point of slashing damage..

TALISMAN WIELDER

You have a special connection to the magical talismans created by plumaweavers and hishnapers. You increase the number of magical items you may attune to by one if one of those items is a Maztican talisman created by pluma or hishna magic.

MAGIC AND EQUIPMENT

Some new equipment, special items, magic items and even spells are found in the True World and nowhere else. Pluma and hishna magic in particular permeate the continent. The magic of feathers and fangs, claws or talons are both prevalent in the great land of Maztica.

PLUMA AND HISHNA

In the Immortal Era, the gods vied for the attention of the mortals that were their worshipers. They created pluma and hishna so that mankind could better honor them.

Zaltec, the Bringer of War and Eater of Hearts, brought together the essences of talons, claws, teeth and venom that form the magic of hishna and bequeathed their power to his mortal worshipers.

The magic became the purview of both his priests and powerful new artisans who became known as the hishnashapers. Hishnashaper continually worked the fetishes of this new magic day and night, and before long, Zaltec was the most honored among the gods. Sacrifice flowed freely and mankind rejoiced in their newfound, yet often cruel power.

Qotal observed the carnage and imbalance that his brother had wrought but it was his mother Maztica, the Goddess of Life and matron of all the True World who created the magic of feathers known as pluma.

She passed this knowledge to Qotal who then taught it to his own priests. Overnight, the plumaweaver was born and like his brother Zaltec, Qotal became ascendant among mortals. Once again balance was found in the True World and ever since the two magics have worked in tandem to advance the lives of mankind.

SPELLS

The following new spells all have the [pluma] or [hishna] tag and are used by a variety of classes and subclasses within the True world.

AMBUSH

1st-level illusion [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

When you cast this spell you touch a willing creature. That creature and all its allies within a 30 foot radius gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks as long as they remain within range.

The spell is based on a subtle camouflage illusion so any actions that draw attention end the effect.

ANIMAL SENSES

1st-level transmutation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 hour

A willing target of this spell is granted the senses of the wild world. For the duration of the spell, the target has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing, sight and smell.

ARROWFLIGHT

1st-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You touch a tlauhuitōlli. Until the spell ends, the weapon's ranges are doubled. The tlauhuitōlli cannot be shared from one person to another, otherwise the spell immediately ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd or 4th level, the ranges increase by a factor of 2.5. With a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the ranges of the weapon are tripled.

AVATAR OF AZUL

9th-level conjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a gift of gems, jewelry or works of art worth 1000 gp or more; items made of hishna magic can cost half that in price to the summoned dragon)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You summon a young tlalocouatl which appears in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. The dragon disappears when it drops to 0 hit points, is dismissed, you lose concentration, or the spell's duration ends.

The dragon is friendly to you and your companions for the duration. Roll initiative for the dragon, which has its own turns and it obeys verbal commands.

AVATAR OF THE PLUMED DRAGON

9th-level conjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a gift of gems, jewelry or works of art worth 1000 gp or more; items made of pluma magic can cost half that in price to the summoned dragon)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You summon a young mirage dragon which appears in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. The dragon disappears when it drops to 0 hit points, is dismissed, you lose concentration, or the spell's duration ends.

The dragon is friendly to you and your companions for the duration. Roll initiative for the dragon, which has its own turns and it obeys verbal commands.

BAFFLEMENT

3rd-level enchantment [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

You lace your words with pluma magic. A creature of your choice within range that can hear you becomes disoriented. The creature must make a successful Wisdom saving throw or it drops any weapons and equipment it is holding and cannot take an action or reaction until the start of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th or higher, the duration is Concentration up to 1 minute, and the target cannot take an action or reaction until the spell is dismissed, your Concentration breaks, or the spell's duration ends.

BIRD CHARM

1st-level conjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small coral or jade whistle worth at least 10 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You blow into the whistle, and summon one to three birds. Typical birds summoned include parrots, hummingbirds, or even eagles. The birds are under your control, and can understand simple commands such as Attack or Retrieve as long as they can hear you. The birds use your initiative.

The type of bird that you can summon is up to the DM's discretion, though they must be a beast with CR 0.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th or 5th level, you may summon birds that are beasts or monstrosities with CR 1/2 or less. When you use a spell slot of 6th level or higher, you may summon birds that are beasts or monstrosities with CR 2 or less.

BLOSSOM

3rd-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 150 feet

Components: V, S, M (an ear of mayz and a skin of water)

Duration: 1 hour

Blossom channels life energy into plants within an area. If there are no plants within the range of the spell, this spell has no effect and the spell is wasted.

All plant life within a 100 foot radius of a point within range becomes more robust and any flowering plants instantaneously bloom.

All creatures hostile to the caster within the area are subjected to the overwhelming calming smell of the blooming flowers. This forces them to make a Charisma saving throw and if they fail, they become indifferent to the caster while in the zone affected by *blossom*.

At the end of each of their turns they may once again make a Charisma save to shake off the effect. If they are attacked during this time, the indifference also breaks.

BREATH OF QOTAL

3rd-level evocation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a handful of gold dust worth at least 20 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

You inhale the gold dust. As you exhale, blinding bolts of light shoot from your mouth in a line 80ft. long and 5ft. wide. Each creature in the line must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 8d6 radiant damage on a failed save and is blinded until the end of its next turn. A creature takes half damage and avoid being blinded on a successful save.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 3rd.

BREATHSENSE

2nd-level divination [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

When you cast this spell, you are able to sense the breath of all living creatures within 120 feet for the duration of the spell. The area of effect moves with you and is centered on you. It also cannot be blocked by obstructions such as walls. You cannot detect creatures with no breath.

With this knowledge, you know the number, type, size, and general distance to each creature.

BREATHWEIRD

5th-level conjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small quaff of water)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You vomit forth a line of water five feet wide and any length up to the maximum range of the spell. The water does 2d8 bludgeoning damage to the first target it hits, though the target may make a Dexterity save to take half damage.

The water then animates into a water weird (Monster Manual, pg 299) under the mental control of the caster. The water weird remains animated until the caster dismisses it, loses concentration, or the duration expires.

CAT CHARM

1st-level conjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a turquoise studded collar worth 75 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You raise the collar toward a point within range. One to three cats spring from the ether. The cats can understand simple commands such as Attack or Retrieve as long as they are able to hear you. The cats use your initiative.

The type of cat that you can summon is up to the DM's discretion, though they must be a beast with CR 0.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th or 5th level, you may summon cats that are beasts or monstrosities with CR 1/2 or less. When you use a spell slot of 6th level or higher, you may summon cats that are beasts or monstrosities with CR 2 or less.

COOL

1st-level abjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a duck down feather)

Duration: Concentration, up to 24 hours

You touch one willing creature. That creature has advantage on all Constitution checks required due to oppressive heat. You do not gain resistance to fire damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you may choose to cast this spell on up to 5 willing creatures.

EAGLE FLYBY

2nd-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a wing feather from a bird of prey)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You choose one willing creature that has a flying speed, that you can see, and is within range. For the duration of the spell, the target does not provoke attacks of opportunity when they fly out of an enemy's range.

ELEVATE

1st-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration

You touch a nonliving object weighing up to 200lbs. and make it as weightless as a feather. Left unattended, such objects will remain in place or will move with even the gentlest of wind.

EXHAUSTING WAVE

3rd-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a handful of sand)

Duration: Instantaneous

You raise your hands and a shimmering wave of heat emanates from you in a 30 foot cone. Creatures in the area must make a successful Constitution saving throw or suffer the effects of 1 level of exhaustion.

Multiple castings can lead to stacked levels of exhaustion, to a maximum of 5.

EYES OF THE JAGUAR LORD

3rd-level illusion [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a cat's eyeball, which is consumed in casting, or a cat's eye gemstone, which is not)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You either smush the eyeball, or palm the gemstone. Your eyes change to resemble a jaguar's. Each creature in a 30 foot cone must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or immediately fall into a deep slumber for the remainder of the duration.

The victims fall unconscious until the spell ends, the victim takes damage, or someone uses an action to awaken them. In addition, the caster has darkvision within 30 feet.

Undead and other creatures that do not sleep are immune to this spell.

FEATHER DARTS

1st-level evocation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You conjure three darts of bright energy that fly from your fingertips to strike creatures of your choice. The feathers all strike simultaneously and can strike a single or multiple targets based on the desires of the caster. Each dart causes 1d4+1 radiant damage.

At Higher Levels. When casting this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the spell creates one additional feather for each slot above 1st.

FEATHERWEAVING

Evocation cantrip [pluma]

Casting Time: Special

Range: Self

Components: S

Duration: Concentration

A caster who knows the cantrip featherweaving can heal him or herself when creating talismans or even simple nonmagical items of art.

The caster may cast this spell as long as he or she is not engaged in battle or otherwise breaking concentration.

At the end of each consistent and unbroken hour of featherweaving, the plumaweaver regains 1d4+1 hit points.

FISHER'S LUCK

2nd-level enchantment [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (golden fish scale worth 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You choose a point anywhere within 60 feet of you. Any fish or fish-like creature (including creatures like sahuagin, at the determination of the DM) within a 30 foot sphere must make a Wisdom saving throw or be drawn to that point and remain as close as they are physically able for the duration of the spell.

At the end of each of their turns, affected creatures can make another Wisdom saving throw to break the effect.

Noncombatant regular fish do not receive a saving throw (fish worth 0 XP only).

GIANT EAGLE

4th-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You choose one to three eagles. They are transformed into giant eagles. The giant eagles obey all verbal commands as long as they can hear you but otherwise act independently and are friendly to you.

The eagles remain in this form until they drop to 0 hit points, you dismiss the spell, break your Concentration or the duration ends.

GREAT SCREECH

6th-level evocation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You open your mouth and let forth an ear-piercing screech. The ghostly image of a great eagle is superimposed over your head while the spell is in effect. Each creature that starts its turn in a 60 foot cone in front of you must make a successful Dexterity save or take 6d8 thunder damage and be deafened until the start of your next turn.

On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and avoids being deafened.

You can redirect the cone as your action on any turn until the spell ends. The spell continues until you use another action or reaction, dismiss the spell, break your Concentration or the duration ends.

GUARDIAN OWLS

2nd-level abjuration (ritual) [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (owl beak wired with silver worth 10 gp)

Duration: 8 hours

Choose an area within range that is no larger than a 30 foot cube. Until the spell ends, the sounds of screeching owls alert you whenever a creature of Tiny or larger size enters the area.

If you are sleeping the sounds will awaken you. In addition, 1d4+1 spectral owls (treat as owls from PHB) are summoned if the invading creatures have hostile intentions and attack.

The owls last until destroyed or until the invading creatures are otherwise engaged by you or an ally. At that point, the spectral owls simply disappear.

HEART RIPPER

7th-level necromancy (ritual) [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Make a melee spell attack against a creature you can reach. A hit on a creature that has a heart and 100 hp or less causes the creature's heart to instantly burst from its chest and into the hands of the caster.

The spell has no effect on creatures without a living heart such as undead, no heart such as most constructs, or creatures with more than 100 hp. Affected creatures die instantly. This spell can be cast as a ritual only upon a victim who is incapacitated for the entire duration of the ritual. Typically, this use of the spell occurs during sacrifices to Zaltec with a bound or drugged victim.

HEARTSENSE

2nd-level divination [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

When you cast this spell, you are able to sense the heartbeat of all living creatures within a 120 foot radius for the duration of the spell. The area of effect moves with you and is centered on you. It also cannot be blocked by obstructions such as walls. You cannot detect creatures with no heartbeat.

With this knowledge, you know the number, type, size, and general distance to each creature.

HISHNA CURSE

9th-level abjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 100 miles

Components: V, S, M (flesh, hair, or other material from the target creature mixed in a hollow clay effigy shaped like the target with exotic ingredients and oils costing 500 gp per Hit Die of the target creature)

Duration: Until dispelled or ended by the caster

You spend a few days carving a small effigy of a creature. You fill it with a piece of the creature's body and other exotics elements, and cast this spell. As long as the target creature is within 100 miles of you, it must make a Wisdom saving throw or it falls comatose. If it makes the save, the effigy melts in your hands and must be recreated.

While they are comatose, the target does not need to eat, drink, or breathe, and does not age. You may then choose to keep the victim in this state indefinitely or cause 10d10 damage once of a damage type of your choice (burning the effigy causes fire damage, throwing it off a cliff causes bludgeoning, putting it on a raft in a thunderstorm causes lightning, etc.)

Once the victim suffers damage, the spell ends, they awaken from their coma, and cannot be affected by you casting this spell again for a year.

The spell can be ended if the victim's overcomes your Spell DC in the casting of a successful *dispel magic*.

HISHNAHIDE

1st-level transmutation (ritual) [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (see below)

Duration: Instantaneous

Animal hides can be permanently transformed into the highly durable material known as hisnahide. This spell increases the strength and protective abilities of hide armor, but also stiffens the hide and greatly increases its weight. Enough hide for one set of armor can be created using this spell.

The hide in all ways retains its original appearance, but in all ways is now considered heavy armor. Casting this spell can change the effective AC and weight of the hisnahide to match either ring mail, chain mail, splint or even plate. The wearer of the hisnahide is subject to stealth disadvantage while wearing hisnahide and it has the same strength requirements for the equivalent armor.

The material components for this spell are costly. In addition to the cost of the hide armor, the spell requires special oils derived from the venom of rare animals worth 50 gp (for ring mail), 100 gp (for chain mail), 500 gp (for splint) or 2,000 gp (for plate).

HUNTSMAN'S CALL

2nd-level enchantment [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (golden tapir statuette worth 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You concentrate a point within range. Any beast or monstrosity within a 30 foot radius must make a Wisdom saving throw or be drawn to that point, using all their movement to get and remain as close as they are physically able for the duration of the spell.

At the end of each of its turns, the target can make another saving throw to break the effect. Beasts and monstrosities with CR 0 automatically fail their saving throw.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd or 4th level, beasts and monstrosities with CR 1 automatically fail their saving throw. The CR increases by 1 for every 2 slots above 4th.

HYPNOSIS

3rd-level enchantment [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

When you cast this spell, you attempt to charm a humanoid within the spell's range that you can see and that can also see you. It must make a Wisdom saving throw and if it fails it will mindlessly follow all of your commands.

This effect ends if the victim is harmed or attempts to harm itself.

During the time that the creature is under your influence, you may command it to take a single action, as per the spell *suggestion*, which may take up to one week to manifest.

When the spell ends, the victim has no recollection of what occurred, what they did, or why they did it, during the time they were under your influence.

INCUBATION

6th-level necromancy [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a 3ft. by 3ft. gold foil and feather embroidered stone chamber worth 3,000 gp total which is consumed in the casting)

Duration: Instantaneous

You can cast this spell on a creature of no larger than Huge size that has died within 24 hours. Their body collapses into a pile of feathers. If the feathers are searched, you will find an egg. The size may vary, depending on the size of the creature, from the size of an apple for a Small creature to the size of a plump pumpkin for a Huge creature.

If the egg is brought to the specially prepared chamber, the egg will finish incubating after a full 24 hours and the creature will be reborn as an infant.

The infant grows to full age within an additional hour and it has full hit points, is cured of any diseases and poisons, and returns any missing body parts. Magical curses like lycanthropy remain.

JAGUAR CLAWS

Transmutation cantrip [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Your hand briefly becomes the claws of a jaguar. Make a melee weapon attack against a target. On a hit, the target takes 1d8 slashing damage.

The spell's damage increases when you reach higher levels; 2d8 at 5th level, 3d8 at 11th level, and 4d8 at 17th level.

JAGUAR POUNCE

2nd-level transmutation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (sinew from a great cat)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You choose a willing creature that you can see within range. For the duration of the spell, if the recipient moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and hits it with an attack, the recipient's target must make a successful Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

If the recipient's target is knocked prone, the recipient may take a bonus action to make an additional attack against it with one of its attacks.

KILTZI'S LOVE

2nd-level enchantment [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small piece of chocolate)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You outstretch your hands towards 5 creatures within range who are already friendly towards you. They develop strong feelings towards you.

They are immune to fear effects if you are in danger and will protect you even if doing so puts them in mortal danger. If you attack any of the targets, the spell is dispelled.

MAGNIFICENT HEADDRESS

3rd-level illusion [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (the feather of any beast, Fey, or monstrosity that has a magical power)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

The phantasmal image of a vibrantly plumed headdress adorns your head and glows with multicolored light. Each creature in a 30 foot radius that can see you must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or fall to their knees and remain prone for the remainder of the duration.

The headdress provides bright light within the radius and dim light for another 30 feet.

The prone creature cannot attack you, but can choose to attack other targets.

MAYZ OF THE PLUMED FATHER

6th-level conjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 day

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (ten to fifteen topaz gemstones worth 100 gp each)

Duration: Instantaneous

You plant the topaz gems into soft ground. For a full day you must nurture the crop, watering and keeping pests away. You cannot move more than 100 feet from the crop or they will not grow.

The crop will mature in 24 hours and produce one full ear of golden mayz per gem planted. If the mayz is not picked and eaten within an hour, it will wither and become useless.

Anyone who eats one entire ear, prepared in any manner, will recover full hit points, is affected by a *remove curse*, and receives the benefits of the *bless* spell for the next hour.

NET

Conjuration cantrip [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

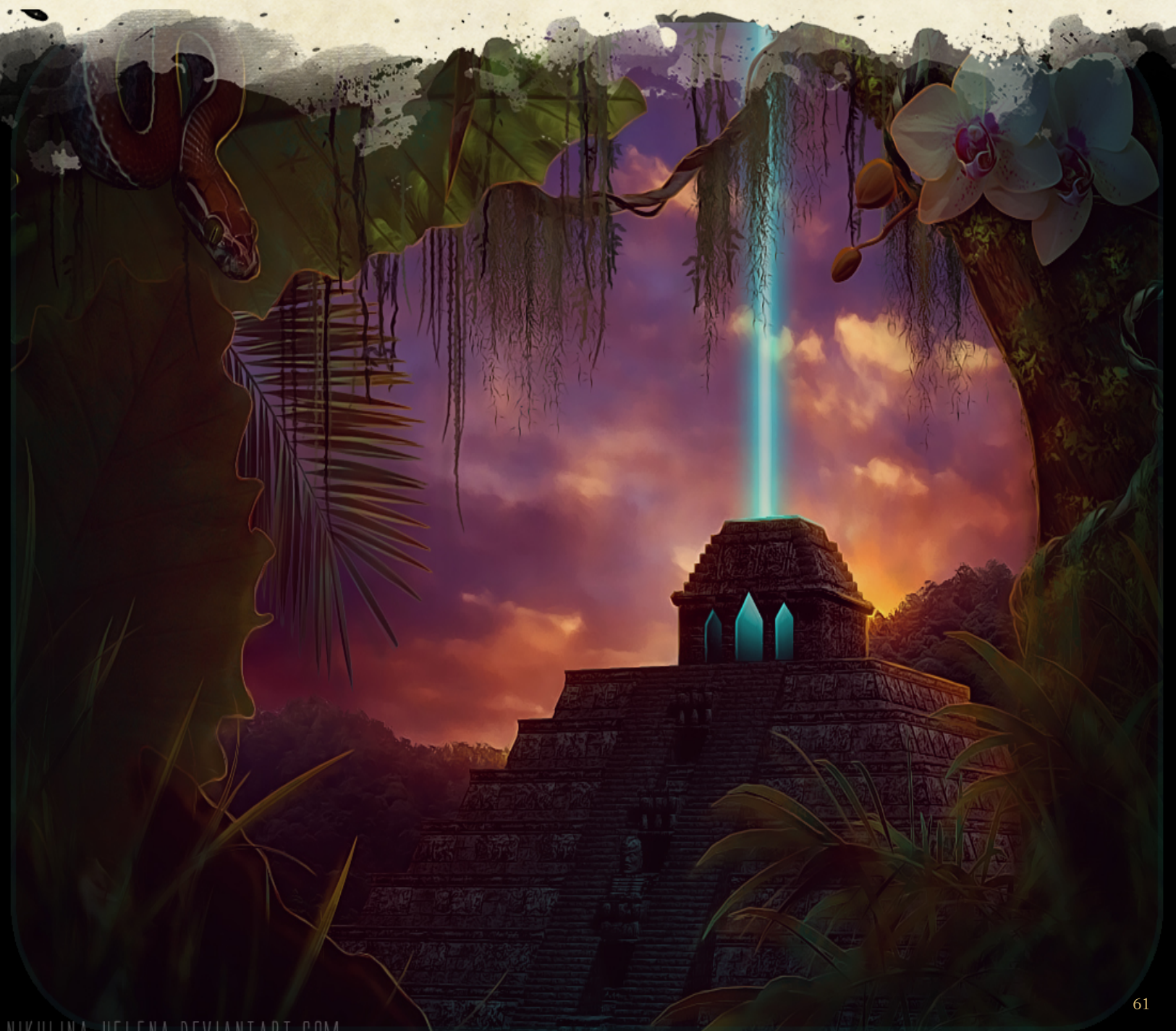
Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You conjure a rope net from your outstretched hand and fire it in the direction of a creature. You can make a ranged spell attack against a Large or smaller creature.

If successful, the creature is restrained until freed or the net dissipates. The net has no effect on creatures that are formless or larger than Large.

A creature can make a Strength (Athletics) check against your spell DC to free itself. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the net will destroy it and the net dissipates by itself after 1 hour.



OBSIDIAN SHARDS

1st-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You conjure three shards of dark energy from your fingertips. The shards strike single or multiple targets of your choice that you can see within range. Each dart causes 1d4+1 necrotic damage.

**At Higher Levels.* When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd or higher, the spell creates an additional shard for each slot above 1st.

OBSIDIAN TOMB

7th-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 100 feet

Components: V, S, M (a miniature carved obsidian cage worth 1000 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

A cocoon-like shell encases the target of this spell who you choose within its range. An encased creature cannot move or speak and immediately begins to suffocate.

They can however make a Strength check each round. One successful check damages the shell enough so that the victim can begin to breathe, and a second successful check allows the creature to escape, effectively ending the spell.

The target must be medium sized or the obsidian tomb will not fully entrap the creature.

At Higher Levels. If an 8th level spell slot is used to cast this spell, large creatures can be affected. Using a 9th level slot can affect creatures of any size.

OMEN

5th-level divination (ritual) [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 day

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (the caster must cover his skin in gold powder worth at least 50 gp, the powder is consumed in the casting)

Duration: Instantaneous

You cast this spell which causes an event in the local environment. This event might be as simple as a bright shooting star or as fantastic as the change in color of a snow capped mountain to that of blood. The effect is never permanent, but can last for hours at the discretion of the DM.

This environmental change can then be read by the caster to determine a cryptic understanding of major events in the following year. For example, "dark death on wings of fire" might be read indicating a dragon attack.

This spell may only be cast once until such time as the actual event to which it refers occurs. Using the above example, immediately after the dragon attacks, the spell may be cast again.

PATH OF THE POCHTECA

5th-level conjuration (ritual) [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Unlimited

Components: V, S, M (gold dust worth 10 gp per mile which is consumed in the casting)

Duration: 1 year

In order to cast this spell the caster must embark on a journey by foot. The distance of the journey is up to the caster and is only limited by the amount of gold dust used in the casting.

This gold dust is sprinkled all along the path traveled. For a full year following the trip the caster may then use the teleport spell to end up anywhere along the path once resulting in no chance of mishap and always ending up on target.

A caster may have only one *path of the pochteca* active at a time.

PESTILENCE

4th-level conjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 150 feet

Components: V, S, M (a piece of rotting mayz)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You conjure thousands of tiny crawling insects at a point within range. These tiny biting vermin fill an area within a 60 foot radius of the point.

Hostile creatures that enter the radius suffer 1d4+1 points of damage per round. In addition, the maddening itching forces spellcasters who enter the area to make a Wisdom saving throw or lose their Concentration if they have it.

Finally, hostile creature have disadvantage on all Dexterity checks made within the spell's area due to constant itching and scratching.

This spell's effects last for its duration, until it is dismissed, or until concentration is broken.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th or 7th level, the damage per round increases to 2d4+2. When you use a spell slot of 8th level or higher, the damage per round increases to 3d4+3.

PLUMASTONE

1st-level transmutation (ritual) [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (100 gp in alchemical ingredients which are consumed in the casting)

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell can transmute up to 1 cubic foot of obsidian, flint or chert into a material known as plumastone. Plumastone maintains the appearance of the original stone type, but is as hard and durable as normal steel.

PLUTOQ'S STRENGTH

5th-level transmutation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Your arms turn into massive limbs made of stone until the end of your next turn. Until the spell ends, melee unarmed attacks made by you have reach 15ft. and do 2d12 bludgeoning damage. In addition, your Strength is increased to 20.

POWER WORD BLIND

7th-level enchantment [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

You speak a single word of power which causes a single target you can see within range to lose its sight. If the target has 150 hit points or less, it is blinded.

It may still "see" if it has blindsense, but both regular sight and darkvision do not function.

A blinded target may make a Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns in order to end the effect.

PROTECTION FROM HISHNA

3rd-level abjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

For the duration of the spell, a willing creature you touch has advantage on all saving throws against hishna, including spells, magic items, and hishna talismans.

PROTECTION FROM PLUMA

3rd-level abjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

For the duration of the spell, a willing creature you touch has advantage on all saving throws against pluma, including spells, magic items, and pluma talismans.

SCALESNARE

2nd-level transmutation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (shed skin of a snake)

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell transforms the discarded skin of a snake into a grasping tentacle. You use it to make a melee spell attack on a Large or smaller creature.

On a successful hit, the target creature is restrained and remains restrained until it makes a successful Strength saving throw against your spell save DC. In addition, the target drops any objects or equipment it is holding.

You must make the spell attack on the same turn that scalesnare is cast.

SCROLLSEE

2nd-level illusion [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, M (one blank scroll of expensive parchment worth at least 20 gp)

Duration: 1 minute

Casting this spell only requires a word and a blank scroll in your possession. The scroll then records whatever you see and hear for a full minute. At any point from there on, the scrollsee can be commanded to play its recorded observations. It can only be played once, at which point the scrollsee crumbles to dust.

In some libraries (such as in Tulom-Itzi), hishnashapers have figured out how to make them permanent, though at a great expense.

Scrollsees otherwise last as long as the parchment, and due to the fact that this is an ancient spell, it is not uncommon to find crumbling scrolls hundreds of years old with still functioning magic.

SLASHING PLUMAGE

2nd-level conjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (an eagle feather)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

The air surrounding you in a 30 foot radius is filled with spinning feathers with hardened, sharp edges. A creature takes 2d8 slashing damage when it enters the spell's area for the first time on a turn or if it starts its turn there.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 2nd.

SNAKE CHARM

1st-level conjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a miniature golden snake statue worth 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to one hour

You summon and control the actions of 1-3 poisonous snakes. The snakes can understand simple commands such as Attack or Retrieve, but no mental connection is formed to the caster so the snakes need to be able to hear commands in order to follow them.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th or 5th level, you may summon snakes that are beasts or monstrosities with CR 1/2 or less. When you use a spell slot of 6th level or higher, you may summon snakes that are beasts or monstrosities with CR 2 or less.

SOULMERGE

8th-level necromancy [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a chunk of coal which you crumble in your hands)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

Casting this spell allows you to briefly transform into black smoke which then seeks out a humanoid target within range. The target must make a Charisma saving throw or your tonalli (soul) merges with its body. Though the humanoid is completely under your control, you share the body with the humanoid and you can hear one another's thoughts clearly.

You now have all of the targets physical characteristics including their Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, hit points and Hit Die, but you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, personality, alignment and class abilities.

You do not gain any of the target's class abilities but you can use available racial abilities. The humanoid still retains its turn and at the end of every turn it may attempt to cast you out of its body by making another Charisma saving throw. If it succeeds, you are expelled through its mouth and reform in an available adjacent space.

Damage you incur while in possession of the body does not carry over to you when you reform your body, but if the possessed humanoid is killed, you immediately reform and suffer 10d10 psychic damage.

SPEARFLIGHT

1st-level transmutation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to one hour

You touch a ahtlatl. Until the spell ends, the weapon's ranges are doubled. The tlahhuītōlli cannot be shared from one person to another, otherwise the spell immediately ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd or 4th level, the ranges increase by a factor of 2.5. With a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the ranges of the weapon are tripled.

STONEFALL

2nd-level abjuration [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a sling stone)

Duration: 1 minute

You touch a sling stone. For the next minute, if the stone is used as ammunition to make a ranged weapon attack with a tēmātlatl or a sling and the attack hits, the target creature of the attack has a flying speed of 0 on its next turn and unless it can hover, it falls.

As per the rules of falling, the creature takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet that it falls.

STONEFLIGHT

1st-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to one hour

You touch a tēmātlatl. Until the spell ends, the range of the ammunition fired from the tēmātlatl (both normal and long) is doubled. Tēmātlatl cannot be shared from one person to another; otherwise the magic immediately ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd or 4th level, the range increases by a factor of 2.5. With a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the range of the ammunition is tripled.

STONEFOOT

1st-level abjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a sling stone)

Duration: 1 minute

You touch a sling stone. For the next minute, if the stone is used as ammunition to make a ranged weapon attack with a tēmātlatl or a sling and the attack hits, the target of the attack has a walking speed of 0 feet on its next turn.

SWARM FORM

6th-level transmutation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a golden bracelet with charms of each creature whose form you wish to assume worth 500 gp per creature type)

Duration: 10 minutes

You assume the form of one of the swarms listed on pages 337-339 of the Monster Manual. You gain the swarm's physical statistics but your alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma are retained.

Though you assume the hit points and Hit Dice of your new form, you gain a bonus of 1 hit point per your caster level. You also retain the benefits of any features of your character class, race, or other source, and can use them provided you are physically capable of doing so.

This spell does not require that you maintain concentration, and you may continue to cast spells in your swarm form, even if they require components (as long as you had the material components in your possession when you transformed).

Any equipment you carried with you when you transformed either merges with your form or falls to the ground (your choice), but either way, you do not receive their benefits. If you are reduced to 0 hit points in your swarm form, you revert to your original form, and any damage you have received is subtracted from your normal total.

TALONBLADE

1st-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

After you cast this spell your weapon grows talon-like protrusions. If you strike an enemy with that weapon, it causes an additional 1d6 points of necrotic damage. In addition, at the start of every one of the target's turns, it must make a Constitution saving throw or suffer an additional 1d4 points of necrotic damage as the wound bleeds out.

The effect ends on the first successful save, a break in concentration, or when the spell's duration ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the necrotic damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

TEZCA'S TOUGH

1st-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (small bit of rock sulphur)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Your hands glow with the fire of the god Tezca. You can make a touch attack and if it succeeds you cause 2d6 fire damage to the target. If the target fails a Dexterity save, it is set on fire and must take an additional 1d6 points of fire damage at the beginning of each of its turns until the fire is put out or the spell's duration ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the additional fire damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

TICKLE

Conjuration cantrip [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

A small animated feather appears near a target of your choice and can be used to attempt to break concentration by tickling the target.

The target must make a Constitution saving throw in order to maintain concentration while casting a spell. Targets with natural armor cannot be affected by this spell.

VENOMBLADE

1st-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

After you cast this spell your slashing or piercing weapon begins to seep a green sticky poison. If you strike an enemy with it, the weapon causes an additional 1d6 points of poison damage and causes the target to become poisoned.

At the start of each of its turns until the spell ends, the target must then make a Constitution saving throw to end the condition. At the conclusion of the spell's duration, the poison disappears from the victim's bloodstream and the effect ends.

WARD OF ESMERALDA

7th-level abjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (an emerald worth at least 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

When you cast this spell, a shimmering emerald globe surrounds you in a 30 foot radius. In this area, spells of 5th level or lower cannot affect you or allied creatures. Spells of these levels can target creatures or objects within the globe, but cannot affect them. Similarly, area effects from such spells cannot extend into the globe, though they can flow around it.

Finally, for everyone except the caster or those he designates as allies, magic items that are of common, uncommon, or rare in frequency are suppressed. Such items do not function within the globe's radius.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 8th level, spells of 6th level or lower are blocked and items that are considered very rare are suppressed. If a 9th level slot is used, 7th level spells are blocked and even legendary items are suppressed within the globe.

WARMTH

1st-level abjuration [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (goose down)

Duration: Concentration, up to one day

You touch one willing creature. The target has advantage on all Constitution checks required due to a cold environment.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you may cast this spell on up to 5 willing participants.

WIND WARRIOR OF EHA

8th-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a golden bracelet with charms of each creature whose form you wish to assume worth 500 gp per creature type)

Duration: 10 minutes

You assume the form of an air elemental. You gain the elementals statistics but your alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma are retained. You can use any of the elemental's special abilities for the duration of the spell. You also retain the benefits of any features of your character class, race, or other source, and can use them provided you are physically capable of doing so.

Any equipment you carried with you when you transformed either merges with your form or falls to the ground (your choice), but either way, you do not receive their benefits. If you are reduced to 0 hit points in your elemental form, you revert to your original form, and any damage you have received is subtracted from your hit point total.

WINDRIDER

3rd-level transmutation [pluma]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a gold quill worth 10 gp, which is consumed in the casting)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

This spell can be cast on any nonliving object which weighs 1,000 pounds or less that is within range of the spell. The object then flies at the will of the caster with a speed of 30 feet. Should the caster lose concentration or prematurely end the spell, the object gently floats to the ground.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level, the duration is extended to 1 hour while maintaining concentration. If a spell slot of 5th level or higher is used, the duration becomes a full day while maintaining concentration.

ZALTEC'S FURY

3rd-level evocation [hishna]

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 150 feet

Components: V, S, M (the fang of a poisonous serpent or lizard)

Duration: Instantaneous

A small fang of a serpent flies from your hand continuously growing until it reaches a point within the range of your spell. Once it reaches its destination it explodes into needle-like shards in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point. Each creature located within the sphere must make a Dexterity saving throw. A target takes 8d6 poison damage on a failed saving throw, or half damage on a successful one.

The shards do not necessarily fly in straight lines and ricochet off of non-living material so damage from the spell can spread around corners easily.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 3rd.

MAGIC ITEMS

The vast majority of magic items in Maztica were carefully crafted by an artisan. These items, known as talismans of *hishna* or *pluma*, act similarly to magic items described in the **Dungeon Master's Guide**.

The tags “*hishna*” and “*pluma*” will be added to such items in their descriptions below, and lore specific to Maztica is provided for each item as well.

BANDS OF MIGHT

Wondrous item, varies (requires attunement) [pluma]

Small woven bands of feathers that seem innocuous enough, but are capable of greatly enhancing a warrior's strength. There are three versions of the band of might available. One raises the wearers Strength to 18 (*uncommon*), another to 19 (*rare*) and a third to 20 (*very rare*).

If your Strength score is already equivalent to or greater than the strength given by the bands, the bands have no effect on you.

Lore. Halloran, a member of the Golden Legion, hero of the conquest of Maztica, and husband of Qotal's Chosen Erixtil was known to have used the most powerful version of these items.

CLAW OF GRASPING

Weapon (claw), uncommon [hishna]

A claw of grasping appears to be a two foot wooden pole with a large raptor talon fused into one of its ends.

The claw can be used as a weapon when open causing 6 (1d10+1) slashing damage on a successful hit and it receives a +1 bonus to hit.

It may also be commanded to close tightly as an action (at which point its damage becomes 4 (1d6 +1) bludgeoning damage, but once closed it is very difficult for others to force open. This action can clasp a door shut (DC 20 Strength check to remove) at its hinges so that it can't be opened, or it may serve as a wall mount to anchor a rope. The claw can grasp onto any substance including stone.

As a bonus action, the owner can cause the claw to release from a range of 120 ft. and it can hold up to 1000 lb. without releasing its grip.

The claw has an effective Strength score of 25.

Lore. Created by *hishnashapers* as a weapon, clever users have found the claw of grasping to have a multitude of other purposes. Creative players may figure out other uses for its powerful grip.

CLOAK OF ONE PLUME

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement) [pluma]

The cloak of one plume grants its attuned wearer the following. Great Charisma. When the cloak is worn and the wearer is attuned to it, the wearer has a

Increase Charisma Your Charisma score becomes 19. If you already have a Charisma of 19 or higher, this ability has no effect.

Magnificence. Once between each short and long rest, you may cast the spell *magnificent headdress* once between long rests, but the spell effect emanates from the cloak instead of an illusionary headdress.

Flight. The attuned wearer of the cloak of one plume may fly at 30 feet. If the wearer already has a flying speed greater than the one granted by the cloak, this ability has no effect.

Fire Resistance. Despite its feather composition, the cloak of one plume is immune to fire and it grants fire resistance to you when it is being worn. This ability may be extended to another individual of the same size as you or smaller if they are in an adjacent square. You (or any whom you chooses to extend protection to) do not need to be attuned for this protection.

Lore. The cloak of one plume is a legendary item that has disappeared and resurfaced many times through Maztica's history. It is formed of one giant feather and is said to be the creation of the god Qotal himself. Its powers and current whereabouts remain unknown. It was last lost when Maztica became part of Abeir, though with the return to Toril, rumors of its sighting have spread once again.

EARPLUGS OF PAHTLI

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement) [pluma]

The earplugs of Pahtli are bone plugs an inch in diameter that are worn as earrings. They magically extend normal ear piercings to accommodate their size. Earplugs of Pahtli function as a ring of protection and also give the wearer resistance to damage that has thunder as a descriptor. The attuned wearer can also use an action to listen in on any verbal conversations that are in the range of sight and all languages are automatically understood.

Lore. Pahtli was a *pochteca* that spied for the Revered Counselor of Nexal, Naltecona. As a merchant, he was welcome almost anywhere, and would use these earplugs to gather information for the Empire of Nexal.

FEATHER DARTS

Weapon (dart), uncommon [pluma]

These red feather fletched wooden darts can be thrown as an action. Once used, they multiply and behave exactly like the *feather darts* spell cast at 5th level. Each dart can only be used once and packs are typically found containing a dozen.

Lore. Feather darts were created centuries ago by the famed plumaweaver Itzamna Manik who is also known for creating the race of beings known as the *plumazotl* (and subsequently being punished by the gods for doing so).

The darts were his weapon of choice and he was said to have killed over a dozen *xiuhcouatl* with them before finally succumbing to their attacks. Some *plumazotl* still pass on the secret of feather dart creation.

FEATHERTOKEN

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement) [pluma]

This is a powerful talisman that offers the holder who is attuned and any allies within 10 feet advantage on saving throws against spells of one particular school of magic. It might also function against hishna magic instead of a school. The feathertoken also affords you a +1 bonus to your AC and allows you to cast *feather fall* on yourself only without the need of a material component at will as a reaction to falling.

Lore. Feathertokens have existed since the earliest days when Qotal taught the way of the plumaweaver to his worshipers. It is typically one of the first items created by a plumaweaver when they are capable of creating such an item and usually they feathertokens which protect against hishna magic are created.

GIZZARD OF ENOTEPEC

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement) [hishna]

This bladder like device can be worn like a small pouch or bag. As an action, you can command it to miniaturize and store a full set of armor or clothing. From that point forward the wearer may switch their current armor or clothing with the set stored in the gizzard as a bonus action. This can be done once between short and long rests.

Lore. Enotepec was a child of both Amn and the Payit. He was raised in Payit by his native born mother and did not know his father. For years he admired the set of shining armor his father had left behind and eventually became proficient with its use. In the heat of the jungles, this armor was impractical to wear.

Eventually he commissioned a hishnashaper to create this magical storage device so that he could call upon his father's armor when needed. It was forged from the gizzard of a Maztican ahuzotl that he had slain. Since those early days, the item has been copied numerous times.

HEADDRESS OF AWE

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement) [pluma]

The headdress of awe is comprised of the long and magnificent feathers of unknown birds and creatures. When worn and attuned to its wearer, it raises the owners Charisma to 20, unless the wearer already has a Charisma of 20 or higher. It also gives the owner advantage on all Charisma based skill checks.

Finally, once between long rests, the owner may use an action to cause the headdress to glow brightly (bright light in 30 foot radius, dim for an additional 30 feet) for 1 minute. During this time, any humanoid who can see the headdress must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or fall to their knees in awe for the duration of the effect. Creatures on their knees are considered prone.

Lore. These headdresses are sought after by Revered Counselors and war chieftains across the True World. Beyond being a badge of leadership, it is difficult to resist commands from one who wears one of these items.

It is believed that only two exist and their whereabouts are unknown. Their creation is also a mystery but the existence of these items has been rumored since the time of the first Revered Counselors of Nexal.

HEARTSEEKER

Weapon (tepoztōpīlli), legendary, requires attunement [hishna]

One of the deadliest and most famous weapons in Maztica, the heartseeker is a tepoztōpīlli spear with a deadly ability. If you are not attuned to this weapon you may still use it, though it simply gives a +1 attack and damage roll bonus with an additional 1d6 in necrotic damage.

The spear gives you the following advantages when you are attuned to it:

Increased Potency. Heartseeker's bonus on attack and damage rolls is +2. It also deals an extra 2d6 in necrotic damage.

Seek the Heart. If a creature with a heart is struck by heartseeker on a natural attack roll of 20, the target is automatically brought to 0 hit points. This does not work on creatures without hearts of those with more than 100 hit points. On creatures with more than 100 hit points, heartseeker causes an additional 10d10 necrotic damage instead of 2d6 when this occurs.

Lore Heartseeker is the legendary weapon given to the greatest war chieftain of Kultaka. It is a badge of honor and a reminder that the Kultakans are not to be trifled with.

HISHNACOILS

Wondrous item, rare [hishna]

A hishnacoil is a 5 inch living ball of tiny snakes that intertwine and squirm incessantly.

You can use an action to speak a command word and throw the hishnacoils at a huge or smaller creature that you can see within 60 feet of you. If you make a successful ranged attack roll (using your Dexterity modifier plus your proficiency bonus), the coils unwind and grow, wrapping around your target and restraining it.

Six snake heads appear among the coils threatening and hissing at the restrained creature. Once restrained the hishnacoils may automatically bite the creature for 2 (1d4) piercing damage and an additional 5 (2d4) poison damage as a bonus action on each of your turns. The hishnacoils only attack on your command and you may speak the command word again at any time to release the restrained creature as a bonus action.

Once released, the hishnacoils returns to its original form. A creature, including the one restrained, can use an action to make a DC 20 Strength check to break the hishnacoils. On a success, the item is destroyed and the restrained creature is freed. If the check fails, the coils tighten and any further attempts made by the creature automatically fail until 24 hours have elapsed.

Once the hishnacoils are used, they can't be used again until the next dawn.

Lore. Hishnacoils were created by a powerful hishnashaper from Far Payit who enjoyed capturing his enemies before killing them in order to torture them as he pleased.

KILTZI'S RINGS OF ETERNAL LOVE

Ring, rare (requires attunement) [pluma]

These featherwoven rings always come in pairs.

They are typically used as to symbolize eternal devotion between two married humans. When a wearer is attuned to the ring they receive a bonus of +2 to their Charisma scores (with a maximum of 20) and gain advantage on all saves that are Charisma based.

Finally, once between each short and long rest, the wearer may cast *Kiltzi's love* as a spellcaster of their class level.

Lore. These wedding bands were first created by the little folk and only their plumaweavers knew the magic necessary to create such items. Even wearing mundane bands was an unknown practice among human Mazticans. Since the founding of Tukan, however, the practice has spread throughout the True World.

KULTAKAN DEATH WHISTLE

Wondrous item, common [hishna]

The Kultakan death whistle is carved from wood and has an image vaguely reminiscent of a human skull. Its sound is horrifying and can strike fear into opposing warriors.

The whistle can be blown as bonus action and affects all creatures hostile to the blower within a 30 foot radius of the whistler who fail a DC 12 Wisdom save. Affected creatures suffer disadvantage on their next attack roll.

A creature may only be affected by a death whistle once in a 24 hour period.

Lore. Kultakan death whistles are carved from wood found only in Mictlan. When at war, regiments of Kultakan warriors typically have at least one who is using a death whistle as they march into battle.

MOCCASINS OF FREE MOVEMENT

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement) [pluma]

Wearers of moccasins of free movement have advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) checks while wearing the moccasins if they are attuned. Also, the wearer is effectively weightless when crossing liquid surfaces such as water, tar or even lava (though the wearer would be affected by the heat of the lava).

Lore. *Moccasins of free movement* were originally made by a hermetical plumaweaver whose abilities were often sought after by folks from local villages. These moccasins helped him avoid such pests as he typically walked across the lake near his hut after sneaking away. Those who have copied his techniques have found far greater uses for the item.

MOCCASINS OF THE POCHTECA

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement) [pluma]

When you wear these moccasins your walking speed becomes 40 feet, unless your walking speed is already higher. Your carrying capacity is also measured as if you were one size category larger.

In addition, in your travels, you may designate a location as a "point of return" to which you may teleport to unerringly once between long rests. The return point, once designated, cannot be changed unless you reattune.

Lore. The pochteca are the famed traveling merchants of the True World. The Grand Pochteca, merchant lord of Kolan, is said to have created the first of these moccasins personally and grants them to those who have performed tasks for him.

MOTHER'S TOKEN

Wondrous item, uncommon [pluma]

This small token is made of tightly woven feathers and has a tiny, but recognizable image of the goddess Maztica on one side.

Once each week, A character can mutter a small prayer as a bonus action to Maztica at which point the character will be granted inspiration.

If the character has inspiration already the token will not work and its use will be wasted for the week.

Lore. Maztica's druids work in tandem with plumaweavers to create these tokens and spread their goddess' influence in the True World despite her current condition as a dead goddess. They are typically given to heroes who perform some great task for the goddess or for her worshippers.

OBSIDIAN CHUNK (IOUN STONE)

Wondrous item, rarity varies (requires attunement)

Obsidian chunks come in a variety of irregular shapes and types, typically no more than an inch wide. They follow the same rules as the Ioun stones found on page 176 in the **Dungeon Master's Guide**. Different forms of obsidian chunks confer different abilities.

Fire Resistance (rare, hishna). This snowflake obsidian chunk gives you resistance to fire.

Absorption (very rare, pluma). This rainbow obsidian chunk will negate one spell of each type of magic (abjuration, conjuration, divination, enchantment, evocation, illusion, necromancy, transmutation, pluma and hishna) of 6th level or below as either a reaction or action. For each spell canceled it will lose a bit of its coloration before becoming dull gray when completely used up.

Ablation (very rare, pluma). Made from plumastone, this reddish/black Ioun stone absorbs 50% of weapon damage that is bludgeoning, piercing or slashing) as a reaction for a maximum of 20 hit points each day.

Lore. Obsidian chunk Ioun stones are occasionally found naturally in obsidian and plumastone quarries. Where the magic comes from is generally unknown, but assumed to be a result of the goddess Maztica's life force that permeates the entirety of the continent.

OCTLI OF STRENGTH

Potion, rare [hishna]

Octli is an alcoholic beverage made from the fermented sap of the agave plant. Octli of Strength is an enchanted version known to be both a blessing and a curse. It typically comes in sealed clay containers with 1d4 doses.

One dose of Octli of Strength gives its imbiber advantage on all Strength and Constitution based saving throws and skill checks and disadvantage on all Dexterity and Wisdom based saving throws and skill checks for 1 hour. It also functions as a potion of hill giant strength giving its drinker 21 Strength for the hour.

Lore. Octli of strength was created by the Kultakans for special regiments that like to overwhelm enemies quickly. In Kultaka, it is a serious offense for any but these warriors to imbibe or even own such an elixir.

PLUMADRESSING/HISHNADRESSING

Wondrous item, rare [pluma/hishna]

Plumadressing consists of leather straps decorated with blue feathers that can be wrapped or tied around other objects. Hishnadressing is similar, but made of sinew and decorated with a variety of animal fangs.

A magic item that is bound in plumadressing or hishnadressing does not count against the limit of magical items that a character may be attuned to. A character may only receive the benefits of one plumadressed or one hishnadressed item, effectively raising the maximum number of attuned items to four. This cannot be stacked with abilities gained from character classes (such as the artisan).

Lore. Plumaweavers and hishnashapers are known for their creation of powerful items at higher levels and their ability to use more than the usual amount. These items were developed to allow allies to emulate that ability.

During Maztica's exile on Abeir artisans of both forms of magic worked together to develop these charms in order to help combat the horrors of that foreign world.

PLUMALITTER

Wondrous item, uncommon [pluma]

This large blanket of interwoven feathers is approximately 6 feet wide, 10 feet long, 1 foot thick and can hold up to 750 lb. while still allowing its magic to function. A plumalitter hovers approximately 5 feet above the ground when a command word is spoken and can move up to 30 feet per round in any direction including upwards.

Lore. The plumalitter is one of the most common items created by plumaweavers which many use to sleep upon in addition to assisting with carrying and movement.

SCALE OF THE XIUHCOATL

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement, see below) [hishna]

A scale of the xihucouatl appears to be a fiery red/orange serpent scale about an inch in diameter. It is always warm to the touch.

As a bonus action, the owner of the scale can force it to merge into any melee weapon. For an hour each day, the weapon then has the flame tongue property from page 170 of the ***Dungeon Master's Guide*. After the hour is up, the scale emerges from the weapon and is inert until the following morning.

The scale requires attunement normally, but if it is added to a weapon that the wielder is already attuned to, this requirement is negated.

Lore. Tezca is said to create these scales personally and pass them on to the greatest of his clerics and warriors. They are said to all come from his most favored servant - an actual xihucouatl of gargantuan size.

SERPENT TLALOCHTLI

Weapon (tlacohtli), uncommon [hishna]

These darts are enchanted snakes carried in a burlap sack which typically holds 2d6 of the snakes. The snakes are deadly poisonous but do not attack those in possession of the bag.

When a snake is grabbed it immediately stiffens and takes the appearance of a tlacohtli dart. The dart can then be launched from an ahtlatl normally. These darts do an additional 7 (2d6) poison damage to victims who are struck by the dart. A Constitution save can be made with a DC of 12 to half the poison damage.

The darts remain in dart form but can be retrieved by the owner; at which time they revert into snakes. If the owner is killed before a dart is retrieved it may be retrieved by anyone who claims ownership of the bag.

Lore. These enchanted serpents are used by the greatest ahtlatl wielding warriors of the Kultakan armies.

SKIN OF POURING

Wondrous item, uncommon [pluma]

This waterskin is formed of tightly interwoven feathers. It is always full of sweet tasting water and can pour water at the rate of 5 gallons each minute.

SANDALS OF SPEED

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement) [hishna] These sandals allow you to increase your movement by 10 feet. You also may travel an additional 6 hours per day without danger of suffering the effects of exhaustion.

Lore. Another favorite of pochteca, sandals of speed are in many cases responsible for the efficiency of the traveling merchants.

SPIDERWALKER

Wondrous item, rare [hishna]

What initially appears to be the dried husk of a dead tarantula spider is in fact an item of hishna magic.

When activated, the spiderwalker grows and becomes a living giant spider (though its type is a construct). The spider obeys the commands of the one who activated it and control cannot be turned to another. The spiderwalker can be deactivated but then cannot be reactivated until the following evening. This is also true if the spider is slain.

TALON OF ZALTEC

Weapon (claw), rare [hishna]

This weapon is fashioned from a desiccated jaguar claw at the end of a small wooden stick. It causes 1d6+1 slashing damage, has a bonus of +1 to hit, and contains a virulent poison which does 2d6 poison damage (Constitution save DC 13 for half damage) and gives the poisoned condition for 1 minute on a failed Constitution save.

The user may forego a claw attack to spray powder from the claw's palm in a ten foot cone that causes victims who fail a DC 13 Constitution save to be blinded for 1d6 hours. There is enough powder for 3 uses of this ability each day.

Lore. Clerics of Zaltec favor this weapon both as an offensive and defensive device. The white powdery substance is said to be a gift from Zaltec himself, who demands a dozen sacrifices every time the powder is used. He has personally caused this magic to fail in the past with clerics that do not maintain his quota.



SENTIENT ITEMS AND ARTIFACTS

The following items are powerful artifacts and a sentient weapon thought to be one of, if not the most powerful weapon in the True World.

ONOTLATLATZIN

Weapon (tepoztōpilli), legendary (requires attunement) [hishna]

Once owned by the legendary warrior Necalli, Onotlatlatzin is a sentient spear that glows as if made of lightning when wielded in battle. You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon.

It has the following additional properties:

- **Immunity.** Whenever you wield Onotlatlatzin, you are immune to lightning damage and resistant to thunder damage.
- **Call Lightning (Recharge 6).** As a bonus action, you may call lightning if you are under an open sky to infuse the spear with the ability to cause an extra 10 (3d6) damage when you strike a creature.
- **Sentience.** Onotlatlatzin is a sentient lawful neutral weapon with an Intelligence of 13, a Wisdom of 10 and a Charisma of 17. It has hearing and darkvision out to range of 120 feet. The weapon can speak, read and understand Maztican.

- **Personality.** Onotlatlatzin is bombastic and aggressive but is usually protective of its owner. It wants glory for itself and its name and believes that by properly serving its master, it will achieve these things. It loudly encourages its owner to take on challenges of increasing difficulty, but it is not suicidal. The only way to incur a conflict with the spear is to truly behave cowardly – typically by fleeing from a weaker foe.

Lore. It is unknown where the great Necalli obtained this weapon, but he is well known to have wielded it for many years. A warrior of the far off land of Kolan, long before the Empire of Nexal invaded, Necalli is legendary in his destruction of many terrible creatures. It is said that he once slew an enormous scaled serpent with the six heads of a jaguar. The spear's whereabouts are currently unknown.

THE THIRTEEN BUTTERFLIES OF QOTAL

Wondrous items, artifact (requires attunement) [pluma]

The thirteen butterflies of Qotal appear to be exquisitely crafted golden butterflies encrusted with gemstones. Each is just under 6 inches in length but are so perfectly crafted that they might fetch up to 20,000 gp each just for their beauty and materials alone. Anyone who holds one of the butterflies may cast *commune* once between long rests, but only to contact Qotal.

Each individual butterfly has two minor beneficial properties from page 219 of the **Dungeon Master's Guide**. In addition, the thirteen butterflies each has a unique special ability. Once this ability is used the power of the butterfly is temporarily drained and the butterfly dissipates into a golden mist. After the passing of a century, the butterfly of Qotal reforms somewhere elsewhere in Maztica.

The butterflies are sought out in times of great need. They are hidden by Qotal himself, and cannot be found without his express will. In order to acquire one, Qotal requires that a potential owner undertakes a great adventure and typically places the butterflies at the bottom of great ruin or ancient sites where none will ever be found accidentally.

The individual butterflies and their powers are listed below.

Summon Gargantuan Butterfly. An attuned owner of this butterfly can cause it to titanic proportions and come alive. The massive creature has 800 hp but has no form of attack. Up to 1,000 Medium sized creatures can fit upon its back. This butterfly can be found if a large village or small city is in need of evacuation.

Part Waters. An attuned owner of the second butterfly may part entire seas for up to a tenday of travel. Much like the first butterfly, this one can be found when a population must be relocated. However, this butterfly is more often found when environmental threats are occurring.

Imprisonment. This butterfly can be used to imprison a creature of up to CR25 in a deep slumber many miles below the surface of Toril. The creature is not allowed a save, but each time it is used on a new creature, the prior is freed. Its use might unfortunately replace one threat with another. It is rumored that this butterfly was sought out by Cordell's men to combat the star worm H'Calos, but it was never found.

Lifespring. This butterfly can come to life and fly towards a specific location up to a thousand miles away. Anywhere the butterfly passes in its flight becomes verdant and life supporting.



The butterfly has only 4 hit points with an AC of 10 and can easily be destroyed (at which point it dissipates as if used). This butterfly is said to have been activated just over a century ago to help guide the refugees of Nexal in order to found Tukan.

Resurrection. This butterfly can resurrect a hero from ages past with unlimited time between his or her death and the current age as long as some remnant of the hero is used (a body part as small as a fingernail clipping may be used). Prior to the resurrection, the butterfly's user is permitted to speak to the hero's tonalli (spirit) and convince it to return. If the hero chooses not to (DMs discretion), the butterfly dissipates and the hero is not resurrected.

Transformation. This butterfly can be used to permanently change the nature of hundreds of creatures in some subtle ways. A hero of Qotal was said to have used this butterfly to transform the dinosaurs of Abeir into the plumed behemoths that protected mankind during the first days of Maztica's exile.

Love. This butterfly is encrusted with rubies and can fully cause one creature to fall in love with the owner. This love can cut across species and affects creatures up to CR17 without a save. If it is used to lead to actions that will cause the affected creatures death, the charm is broken. Otherwise it is real, permanent and cannot be dispelled.

Celestial Motion. This butterfly can temporarily affect the motion of a celestial object. For example, it could be used to prevent an eclipse, or draw Selúne momentarily closer to Toril. An impending asteroid collision could also be averted.

Weather Control. The lapis and turquoise inlaid golden butterfly can alter weather patterns for up to a year. A drought can be ended and famine could easily be averted using this power. The range of the ability is up to the DM and depends on need, but the power of the effect dilutes as the radius increases.

Divine Audience. This butterfly can be used to have a face to face audience with the Plumed Dragon himself. Typically, Qotal will be amenable to one request made by its user if the butterfly was earned. Otherwise, Qotal will seek to destroy the hubristic trespasser.

Instant Ziggurat. Much like a Daern's instant fortress, this butterfly can cause a structure to spring into being. However, the ziggurat is massive, and can be used to house or defend hundreds.

Dragon Polymorph. The user of this red tinged golden butterfly can polymorph into a dragon that has the statistics of an ancient red dragon but appears much like Qotal himself.

Unknown Ability. The last butterfly is left for the DM to decide, but should only appear to combat a specific threat to the whole of the continent of Maztica.

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

The following weapons, armor and miscellaneous gear or items can be found exclusively in the True World land of Maztica.

ARMOR

Maztican armor holds a great importance to the people and their culture. Cordell's metallic "skins" were obviously more protective than the hide and cotton Mazticans typically wore. Warriors would frequently find out that obsidian weapons would shatter on contact.

The Mazticans refused to adapt to the metallurgy of the newcomers, however, and rarely do they wear even stolen metal armor. A recent development in hishna magic has given the Mazticans an alternative. Hishnahide (see the *hishnahide* spell) has greatly improved protection without significantly altering the appearance or traditions of Maztican warriors.

The great eagle and jaguar knights, the most elite of Maztican warriors of course use their own armor which are not inherently magical by themselves, but do channel the magic of the knight's powers.

What is given below are a few types of armor that do not use hide and are still in common use in the True World.

MAZTICAN ARMOR

Name	Cost	Armor Class	Strength	Stealth	Weight
<i>Light Armor</i>					
Ichcahuipilli	20 gp	12 + Dex modifier	—	—	10 lb.
<i>Medium Armor</i>					
Ēhuatl	50 gp	13 + Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	20 lb.
Eagle/Jaguar Armor	—	14 + Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	12 lb.
<i>Shield</i>					
Chīmalli	15 gp	+2	—	—	5 lb.

Chīmalli. These are the shields of the Maztican warrior almost exclusively. They are made with different materials, but most often with the cane of mayz. Often, these shields are decorated with bright feathers. Some of the most beautiful are not used for war but rather only decoration.

These chīmalli are known as māhuizzoh, offer no bonus to AC, and are worth anywhere from 100-500 gp.

Ichcahuipilli. This armor is made of quilted cotton which is then soaked in salt water brine and left to dry. The salt crystallizes and strengthens the cotton so that it becomes quite resistant to damage.

Ēhuatl. This tunic is worn by noble warriors and bears the motif of the warrior's station. Under the tunic, cotton armor known as *tlahuiztli* is typically worn. On its own the *tlahuiztli* weighs 10 lb. and offers the protection of typical padded armor.

Eagle/Jaguar Armor. This is the exclusive armor of the eagle and jaguar Knight lodges. To be caught with this armor without earning the right (by becoming a respected member of the lodges) is punishable by immediate death, even among the most peaceful folk. This is considered to be a crime as terrible as murder in Maztica.

The armor itself is flawlessly crafted. It is made from treated hide, but generally includes a coif from which the only the face of the wearer is exposed. The face is positioned so that it appears to come from the eagle or jaguar's mouth. The means of crafting this armor is known only to artisans who work closely with the respective lodges and the secrets have never otherwise been made available.

WEAPONS

Much has changed in Maztica since the Night of Wailing, and the weaponry of the True World has improved tremendously. If the Golden Legion were to invade Maztica today, the war would end up far differently than it had just over a century ago.

The Faerūnians brought knowledge of metallurgy previously unknown in the True World, yet even still, this new knowledge has been all but abandoned in favor of the working of plumastone. This wondrous variant of obsidian is the material of choice for Mazticans across the continent, and almost every weapon incorporates its use.

Mazticans use many of the weapons found on other parts of Toril (nets in particular), but it is far more common to find the weapons described below. In many cases, even the descendants of the invaders have adjusted to the native weaponry.

Cuahuitl. This simple baton was often made of some form of hardwood and given the shape of an agave plant's leaves.

Tepoztōpilli. After the mācuahuitl, this spear-like weapon is the most commonly used among Maztican warriors. Its head had a very broad edge and all along the edge of the head were imbedded plumastone shards.

Cuaholōlli. In appearance this weapon is very similar to a mace and was quite simple to make, yet it could also be quite effective. The handle was made out of wood and capped with a stone, wood, or copper sphere.

MAZTICAN WEAPONS

Name	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
<i>Simple Melee Weapons</i>				
Cuahuitl	1 gp	1d6 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Light
Tepoztōpīlli	2 gp	1d8 piercing	4 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), two-handed
Cuauholōlli	3 gp	1d6 bludgeoning	4 lb.	—
Huitzauhqui	4 sp	1d8 bludgeoning	8 lb.	Two-handed
Tecpatl	20 gp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	Finesse, light, thrown (range 20/60)
<i>Simple Ranged Weapons</i>				
Tēmātlatl	1 sp	1d4 slashing	—	Ammunition (range 30/120)
<i>Martial Melee Weapons</i>				
Mācuahuitl (Maca)	10 gp	1d8 slashing	5 lb.	Versatile (1d10)
Itztōpīlli	4 gp	1d8 slashing	3 lb.	Special
Mācuāhuitzōctli	4 gp	1d8 slashing	5 lb.	Special
<i>Martial Ranged Weapons</i>				
Ahtlatl (with Tlacoctli)	10 gp	1d10 piercing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 60/120), loading
Ahtlatl (with Yāōmītl)	10 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/150), loading
Tlactalhuazcuahuitl	1 gp	1 piercing	1 lb.	Ammunition (range 25/100), loading
Tlahhuītōlli	35 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 150/600), loading, heavy, two-handed

Tecpatl. This long double sided plumastone blade has an elaborate stone or wooden handle, seven to nine inches overall in length. The weapon is used most commonly in sacrifice and is a favorite of the beasts of Nexal for their foul ceremonies.

Tēmātlatl. A sling made from maguey fiber. The Mazticans use hand molded clay balls filled with jagged chunks of obsidian as ammunition. When the clay balls shatter, the obsidian does actual slashing damage rather than a normal sling's bludgeoning damage.

Mācuahuitl (Maca). This is the most common weapon used in the True World and its use is unbounded by cultures and even races. Among the gods, Zaltec is known for his great black mācuahuitl which he used to behead his mother Maztica.

It is also claimed that he taught mankind the secrets of its creation and design. The maca is essentially a flat, wide wooden sword with sharp plumastone blades embedded into its sides. When wielded using two hands, it is said that a blow from this weapon could decapitate a fire lizard.

Itztōpīlli. This weapon was similar in design to a standard axe, but one side had a blunt protrusion rather than a second blade. Generally, the sharp edge is used in battle, but if the wielder chooses, the blunt edge could be used for 1d6 bludgeoning damage instead of the normal 1d8 slashing.

Mācuāhuitzōctli. Generally, this weapon was used as a club and was slightly over one and a half feet long. Four knobs and a pointed tip protrude from its end and the tip could be used to deal 1d6 piercing damage rather than the normal 1d8 slashing if the wielder so chooses.

Ahtlatl. This weapon is known among Faerûnians as the "Maztican Dart-Thrower," but in the Maztican tongue it literally means "Extended Arm." Typically, this weapon is used to hurl darts called "tlacoctli" with greater force and from greater range than they could be thrown by hand. It can also be used to hurl arrows known as yāōmītl. The people of Tulom-Itzi developed this weapon shortly after Darien's army of marching ants decimated their city, but its use has spread to all corners of the True World, particularly in Kultaka.

Tlacoctli. These are the darts that are typically launched from an ahtlatl. In actuality, these darts are more similar in size to a spear (at nearly 6 feet long). The darts are typically tipped with plumastone heads.

Yāōmītl: These are the versatile war arrows that can be thrown from an atlatl or launched by a tlahhuītōlli. They are barbed with plumastone and typically fletched with turkey or duck feathers.

Tlactalhuazcuahuitl. This blowgun is made of a hollow reed and it almost always uses a poisoned dart as ammunition. The darts themselves are made of sharpened wood fletched with cotton. This is a favored weapon of the halfling tribes of Maztica.

Tlahuitōlli. This weapon is the most commonly used Maztican war bow. It is made from extremely flexible wood and is approximately five feet long strung with animal sinew.

OTHER GEAR

These items found in Maztica consist of various foods, adventuring gear, trade items and tools. This list does not include items that Mazticans may use that appear in the **Player's Handbook**.

In addition to these, items such as cloaks, gems, feathers, animal skins, beans, cotton, shells, building materials, and stones are also traded and sold.

Artisan's Bag. This relatively small hide bag contains all the materials necessary for a Maztican artisan to continually work his craft. It also holds many material components for spells much like a wizard's component pouch.

For plumaweavers, the bag typically holds a variety of mundane feathers, while a hishnashaper's contains various small teeth and talons.

Axayacatl. This is the primary food of the beasts of the Viperhand and perhaps is the sole reason the creatures have remained populous even in their barren land. The axayacatl is a water bug that is harvested in the thousands.

OTHER GEAR

Item	Cost	Weight
Artisan's Bag	25 gp	2 lb.
Axayacatl	1 cp	—
Blood Salt (dose)	150 gp	—
Chicle	1 sp	—
Chocolate	10 gp	—
Kurari (dose)	200 gp	—
Fire Peppers (dose)	150 gp	—
Mīcomitl	1 gp	1 lb.
Nezca (dose)	10 gp	—
Octli (cup)	4 cp	—
Tarqa Root (dose)	200 gp	—
Uictli	5 sp	5 lb.
Xocoatl	25 gp	—



They are often dried in the sun and ground into dough. After being cooked in lime water they are wrapped in cone shaped mayz husks and eaten.

Blood Salt. Near mineral deposits in the House of Tezca, a red salt can be found which causes severe nausea if imbibed. For up to an hour after ingesting the salt, the imbiber is poisoned (Constitution check DC 12 to avoid). It only requires small amounts of the salt to have this effect and when dissolved in water it can easily go unnoticed.

Chicle. This product is the hardened sap of the evergreen tree known as sapodilla. It is chewed rather than eaten outright.

Chocolate. Made from sugar and the cocoa bean, chocolate is considered a true delicacy in the True World and beyond. The relatively high value of the cocoa bean is in fact due to this demand.

Kurari. Typically held in coconut containers, kurari poison is a powerful paralytic poison created from plant sap that is primarily used by the jungle halflings. Kurari is a viscous yellow/green liquid and anyone hit by a slashing or piercing weapon to which it is applied must make a Constitution save (DC 13) unless they are immune to poison. If they fail the save they are paralyzed for 1 minute. At the start of every one of their turns, the paralyzed creature can save again to shake off the effects.

One coconut full holds anywhere from 20-50 doses (and is priced accordingly). A single dose can coat one weapon for a single attack, but up to three arrows each, which it is typically used for. Unlike basic poisons, the viscous material does not dry up quickly and can remain potent up to an hour.

Fire Peppers. Far more powerful than normal spices, with a successful attack, fire peppers could be used to blind one creature for 1 minute. Also, if a creature ingests at least one entire fire pepper, it must make a Constitution save (DC 10 + number of fire peppers consumed beyond the first) or become incapacitated. This spice is popular as a foodstuff among the Far Payits who appear to be resistant to its negative effects (advantage on the Constitution saving throw).

Micomitl. This is the name of the typical Maztican quiver and is usually made of animal hide. It could hold up to twenty arrows.

Nezca. The mushroom known as nezca grows in the shadows of jungle trees in the foothills and mountains. The Dog People sometimes foray into these areas outside of their desert homes to find the fungus in order to induce visions and “commune” with their ancestral spirits. The effects that it has are not in fact magical, but chemical. When eaten the imbiber must make a Constitution save (DC 10) or become incapacitated for 1d4 hours, though the save can be intentionally failed. The “visions” continue for days but do not otherwise have any game effects.

Octli. This milk-colored, viscous liquid produces light foam. It is made by fermenting the sap of certain types of maguey plants and is an alcoholic beverage.

Tarqa Root. The tarqa plant has deep woody roots from which a poisonous white powder can be extracted. If inhaled, this powder causes debilitating seizures if a Constitution save (DC 12) is failed. The root does 2d4 poison damage and causes the creature to act as if stunned for one round.

Uictli. Wooden digging sticks used by farmers and other commoners. Uictli bear some resemblance to a spear and a character proficient in the use of spears could gain their proficiency bonus when using the uictli as an improvised weapon (yet still only doing 1d4 damage).

Xocoatl. This is a spicy and hot chocolate drink popular with the rich and nobility. It is made from a mix of cocoa beans, flour from mayz, water and fire peppers.

CURRENCY

The standard in currency has been in flux for a long time in the True World. Originally, most of the exchange in Maztica was done using a barter system that included goods and services as much as precious metals, stones and artwork. Due mostly in part to the pochteca, a standard was needed to represent the high value of foreign goods from all parts of the continent.

The “cocoa bean” (cb) eventually came to represent the basic unit of currency and is roughly the equivalent of a Faerúnian copper piece. In areas where the crop was more common, the cocoa bean could be worth far less, worthless in fact – except in large quantities.

Yet in other regions a cocoa bean could be exchanged for up to an entire silver piece. Around the time of Cordell, Faerúnians found the bean to be delicious (and profitable for exchange merchants) so they fetched a much higher average price in Ulatos, Trythosford and New Waterdeep.

In the larger cities, other forms of currency were used including ears of mayz, coral buds, copper blades, quills filled with gold dust (gq), and sizeable chunks of uncut turquoise or jade.

Since the time of the Golden Legion, most of the True World has adopted the foreigners’ system of minting coins. The first gold coins were printed with Cordell’s face on one side and an eagle on the other which was rumored to represent Cordell’s eagle knight ally Poshtli. Apparently, Cordell’s narcissism didn’t go over well with the lords and ladies of Amn, so this coin was only in print for a few years. Collectors are now willing to pay up to ten times the actual gold value for such rare coins.

Coins have since been printed with popular Revered Counselors and the eagle backside has been kept. A jaguar representing the great jaguar knight Gultec has also been used regularly. When found, treasure in the True World could contain any version or mix of the currencies given, but typically the older the horde, the less likely each will be found. Older hordes typically find most of their value in pure precious metals, stones and artwork.

AVERAGE EXCHANGE RATES

Currency	cp	sp	ep	gp	pp
Cocoa Bean (cb)	1	1/10	1/50	1/100	1/1000
Ear of Mayz	1	1/10	1/50	1/100	1/1000
Copper Blade	10	1	1/5	1/10	1/100
Coral Bud	50	5	1	1/2	1/20
Quill of Gold Dust (gq)	500	50	10	5	1/2
Uncut Jade	1000	100	20	10	1
Uncut Turquoise	5000	500	100	50	5

ADVENTURES

Adventuring in Maztica is a unique challenge and experience for both players and DMs. It is a fantastical approach to cultures that might not be familiar to either. The following sections can be used to spark adventures (or used in their entirety) for years to come.

HOOKS AND RUMORS

It cannot be forgotten that Maztica is in fact a continent, and the possibilities for adventure are virtually limitless. The novels and to a lesser extent the 2nd Edition boxed set define an adventure of epic scope, but there are many more than what can be covered in just those few pages.

The following section is devoted to a few additional rumors and adventure hooks that the DM could easily expand upon. Some are specific to locations while others are easily placed anywhere within the True World.

THE THIRTEEN BUTTERFLIES OF QOTAL

In ancient days the gods commanded their worshipers to build them a pyramid of such splendor that none like it had ever been known before in the True World. The gods directed them to build this pyramid deep in the desolation of the House of Tezca, where the gods could battle within its gargantuan temple. Qotal and Zaltec provided for their devoted in the desert and soon a city formed with numerous homes, palaces and additional places of worship. This City of the Gods was known as Tewahca and before the battle was to commence, the gods demanded sacrifice.

Zaltec called to his throngs of warriors and soon ten-thousand strong offered their hearts upon the pyramid's blood soaked steps. Qotal, ever the gentler of the brothers, brought only a gilded cage of thirteen butterflies for his own sacrifice. As he released the butterflies, they flew from the cage and all signs of Zaltec's gory deeds were cleared. Zaltec roared his rage and battle commenced between the siblings.

To the delight of his devout, Qotal emerged victorious that day.

After the battle, the desert began to once again dry up and soon after, the human inhabitants fled to other lands. Tewahca was lost to the sands of time and remained hidden for centuries (though in more recent events it has been found!). Qotal's butterflies too, had never been seen again, though it is said that wherever they flew, the most verdant and colorful regions of the True World were born. In Far Payit, blight has affected the lush jungles. Slowly, vast swaths of the wooded realm have turned pale and lifeless. Elders of Tulom-Itzi have determined that this destruction has been caused by the smallest of creatures.

This insect, known to the white skinned immigrants as a "beetle" is not an enemy that can be defeated with maca or magic. It seems as if the forests and jungles are doomed and only the gods themselves could save Far Payit now. Watil, Maztica's goddess of plants and nature, has provided one of her highest priestesses with knowledge of a possible solution.

This priestess was given a vision during her sleep that she was flying through the jungles at a great speed. After what may have been moments or hours, as time was incomprehensible in her vision, the priestess came upon a sheer cliff in the jungle. A narrow cleft in the rock, only large enough for travelers to pass one at a time became visible under thick vines and foliage. High above the cleft, she noticed a symbol. Her eyes, or rather her awareness, could not focus on the image to begin with, but soon the symbol began to glow, beckoning her deeper into the cleft. The now golden image was unmistakably in the form of a beautiful butterfly. Perhaps the very ones that Qotal had so long ago unleashed upon the world!

As the priestess forced her consciousness into the cleft, a new feeling fell upon her; this one was of menace and darkness. Before she could go much further, the feeling became overwhelming and the last thing she could remember was the feeling of teeth and the smell of rank breath surrounding her.

THE MEN OF MUD, WOOD AND GOLD

When the gods first came to the True World they sought to create man to worship and honor them. First, they created men from the mud of the great riverbanks. At first, these men pleased the gods, but when Azul's first rains came, the men were washed away and the first playthings of the gods were lost to them. Next, the gods attempted to make man of wood. The rains came and the wooden man could withstand even the greatest deluge. The gods were pleased until the lightning of Tezca set the wooden man on fire, and once again the gods had failed. They then forged a man of gold. While these beings were immune to both the rains and fire, they had no true tonalli to speak of and the gods were not satisfied with their worship. The gold man was soon discarded and the gods despaired.

Finally, the Father of the Gods, great Kukul - took his macuahuitl and severed his own fingers. The fingers fell to the world and wriggled until they stood and mankind as we know it was born. The gods were finally pleased.

There have been stories handed down from the greatest plumaweavers that not all of these men perished in those ancient days. The legends hold that those that survived felt abandoned by their creators and hold no love for their gods, or for their favored creations...

In a remote part of the True World, these proto-men do still survive. The men of mud (lutum), wood (evil treants) and gold (golems) still survive in hidden valleys far from major human population centers. Perhaps one of these hidden enclaves is found and the creatures vent their rage on the interlopers. After tasting a small bit of revenge, perhaps they seek more and begin terrorizing local villages and towns. Can the adventurers stop them? Perhaps the gods themselves could be convinced to accept their long lost creations? Kiltzi as the goddess of love, for one, might favor acceptance and forgiveness, but do these "original men" even want to be accepted?

PRINCESS ALIAH OF FAR PAYIT

The tragedy of Princess Aliah is a well known story throughout Maztica which is used by elders to teach the evils that might come from unhealthy obsessions. Though it might not have been the direct cause of the end of the Golden Age of Payit, it certainly heralded the beginning of the end.

During the Golden Age of Payit, mankind had moved into grand cities and advanced in the arts, astronomy and trade like at no other time in history. A young princess of Ulatos known as Aliah was said to have been the most beautiful woman in the land and many suitors sought her hand. She was betrothed to her half-brother Xetl when she came of age and men across many nations despaired. The proud prince Tacal of Far Payit, however, would not accept anyone but himself as her rightful husband.

Tacal believed himself to be the only one suited to marry such a bright jewel and with a small group of conspirators, he formulated a plan to take her. On the evening of her wedding to Xetl, Tacal and his allies infiltrated the grand ceremony. When the time was right, he signaled his men and before she could make her vows she was bound, gagged, and whisked away to the edge of the temple. The eagle and jaguar Knights of Ulatos were too persistent and canny to be outmaneuvered and Tacal was soon caught. His retinue was slain to the man.

Tacal was a prince of the city of Tulom-Itzi in Far Payit and his whole family had been invited to the ceremony. They too were slain in the chance that they might be in league with the abductor. When Tacal saw his plans foiled and his entire family thrown from the edges of the temple, his mind was shattered. With an obsidian dagger he cut the throat of Aliah and murdered the object of his obsession. Though war never blossomed between Payit and Far Payit, something certainly changed in the True World after the tragedy.

Trade diminished, art and learning no longer flourished, and soon the families began to move back into the jungle and the much smaller villages. Civilization, it seemed, was to take a step backwards.

Recently, apparitions have been seen in modern Ulatos and even in nearby Helmsport. It is said that the spirits of both Aliah and her tormentor have never quite rested fully. In truth, Aliah has moved on to her just reward in the afterlife, but the rumors are true about Tacal. His jealousy and betrayal have caused him to arise as a powerful mictlanec, and he forever seeks his "betrothed."

Tacal has remained buried in his unmarked grave for centuries but was released after recent construction in the outskirts of Ulatos. He has since located his former co-conspirators and they serve him again as shadows. Now, Tacal searches in the darkest hours for Aliah and he is more than happy to enact revenge on the people of Ulatos during his search.

CAMAZOTZ

The name Camazotz has been spoken in stories both ancient and new. A "boogeyman" as the white men of Faerûn would say, or a god that only a tortured soul would honor. As dark Zaltec eats the hearts of his worshipers, this divine being is said to drink the blood spilled both in sacrifice and on the fields of war.

Though they share a moniker with another dark being, the "obsidian butterflies" of the True World (bats, to Faerûnians) are said to heed his every command and when a child is found pale and bloodless on a morning after particularly starless nights, they are said to have fed the god. Children are not the only victims of the god's deprived appetite and many careless men and women have disappeared in the jungles only to be found days later, completely drained. The disappearances have occurred much more frequently as of late.

While Camazotz might be the name of a true deity, the being who takes that name in Maztica is nothing of the sort, yet he is no less horrifying. Camazotz was one of the first men of Maztica, possibly one of the actual fingers of Kukul that first wriggled to life in untold ages past. He was the first to worship Zaltec as his dark patron, though before long he developed his own taste for blood and the hearts of sacrifice.

Camazotz began to believe himself greater than his deity and more worthy of sacrifice than the Eater of Hearts himself. His powerful personality convinced more than a few sycophants of his claims and they were forced to build temples to the man-god. It is said that Zaltec himself slew the pretender upon the summit of one of his own blasphemous temple-pyramids and with that the time of Camazotz was thought to be over.

Itzapaplotl, the true Obsidian Butterfly and demoness of the Maztican pantheon was at the time a lover to Zaltec. Their "relationship" as it was, was fraught with jealousy and grabs for power, and in Camazotz she saw a way to hurt her dark bed mate. She raised Camazotz as the undead; one who forever depended on blood and would forever take what he could grab from the mouth of Zaltec himself. Knowing that Zaltec would seek his demise, Camazotz stuck to the dark places of the world and hid.

Over the centuries he grew in power and fed from the lost and the unwanted. This ancient Maztican vampire now has followers hidden in all parts of the True World and he still plots to one day take the divinity that he rightfully deserves.

RUMORS FROM THE SOUTH

One of the survivors of Cordell's original invasion and attempted subjugation of Nexal was a soldier named Jalimar Trollslayer. He was a greedy man who cared all too much for the gold that the expedition sought after and he was not well-liked by the natives for this reason.

However, Jalimar was a brave soldier in battle and he was awarded a large tract of land by Cordell which became a plantation. Jalimar in his lust for gold was never satisfied in his role as a plantation owner and he eventually sold the land to a petty noble from man from Memnon known as Drakosa.

Jalimar set forth on an expedition of his own, following rumors of vast amounts of wealth far to the south. Along with him, he brought ten other Amnites and fifty native Payits. Not a single member of this large expedition was ever seen again. The story of Jalimar Trollslayer was a deterrent to others who might have sought wealth of their own in the south. For decades, the only knowledge of these far lands has remained its name – Lopango.

Jalimar's standard was recently found in the possession of a pochteca and identified by a scholar of Tukan. Emblazoned on a golden disk, the sign of a trolls skull split by a broadsword and emblazoned with a motif of fire was unmistakable. What was even more surprising, was the fact that the coin had been printed with a date, and that date was only two years ago!

PRODUCT NOTE

This hook is developed off of the description of Plantation Drakosa from page 7 of **FMA1 Fires of Zatal**. In addition, it is designed to give a reason for sending players to the southern continent of Lopango.

THE DARK MOUND

Dark Mound is a short series of encounters designed for new characters in the setting of Maztica. By the end of the adventure, depending on the PCs actions and the number of encounters that occur, the players should have gained a few levels. It is designed to begin at 2nd level for four players.

BACKGROUND

Tulom-Itzi was once decimated by thousands of marching giant ants spurred on by Lolth's dark magic and the bidding of the albino drider Darien well over a hundred years ago. The ants were eventually killed and Tulom-Itzi was rebuilt, but the ant threat never truly disappeared.

Some ants, led on by pure instinct, founded their own new colonies and new queens were born in their dark tunnels. The Itza inhabitants of Far Payit are not old enough to have been alive when this horror occurred. However, they have been taught by their parents and their parents' parents to eradicate colonies whenever they should pop up, lest the terror of a century past come again.

SET UP

In Far Payit, the Itza people are always on the lookout for new folk to help guard the numerous jungle villages. Even Tulom-Itzi itself, the great capital city of the jungle realm, has need of heroes and the party looks like just the bunch. A village elder attempts to hire the party to eradicate a colony of fire ants. This is not just any colony, however, and the party is in for quite a surprise if they believe themselves above killing simple ants.

In fact, the colony in question is of deadly giant fire ants! The elder in question, a doddering old plumaweaver names Atl, will offer the party a princely sum of 30 gold quills should they slay the colony queen and bring back evidence of her demise. With their queen destroyed, the individual ants will likely disperse or sicken and die on their own. Either way, they will no longer be an impending threat.

Entrance. Read the following description to the PCs as they approach the entrance to the anthill.

This is by far the most massive anthill you have ever seen. Rising twenty five feet or so into the air you can only imagine the size of the ants that live within. You have agreed to your quest however, and no time is as good as now to begin.

As long as you stay close and cover each other's backs, you should be able to get to the queen's chamber and slay her. Or at least, you hope you can.

Once the PCs have entered the mound, they will have to navigate a lair of dozens, if not hundreds of chambers.

The interior is pitch black and there is little sound except for the slight sounds of movement from elsewhere in the mound.

Random Encounters. The players will have to search the interior of the ant colony for 1d8 full hours in order to have the encounter in each of the named chambers. During their exploration, they will have to roll every four times (every 15 minutes or so) to determine if they have a random encounter. You may decide how long it takes to travel between each named chamber, but they should come in relatively rapid succession towards the end of the search.

Some of these encounters occur within the tunnels themselves in which case the PCs will have to fight in single file from a prone position.

Roll 1d20 and check the following table to determine if an encounter occurs, and under which conditions.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d20	Encounter	Conditions
1-11	None	None
12-13	1d4 Worker Giant Fire Ants	None
14-15	1d4 Worker Giant Fire Ants	Must fight Prone
16-17	1d4 Male Giant Fire Ants	None
18-19	1d4 Male Giant Fire Ants	Must fight Prone
20	1d4 Males + 1d4 Workers	None

Rewards. In each ant encounter listed above ants, there is a possibility that one of the ants is dragging a corpse of some unfortunate human (an Itza man or woman) to the mushroom farm or directly to the larva chamber. Roll 1d8 at the completion of each encounter. Each of the following can only be rewarded once. If a result is repeated, treat it as if the result was "none."

REWARDS

Roll 1d8	Reward
1-4	None
5	A bag with five uncut pieces of jade and 2 uncut pieces of turquoise (150 gp total)
6	A belt with a gold buckle (50 gp) and a <i>potions of healing</i>
7	A featherwoven <i>+1 ring of protection</i>
8	A <i>+1 tēmātlatl</i> and 10 quills of gold dust (50 gp)

Chambers. Though there are hundreds of tunnels and chambers in the ant colony, the true heart lies deep in the lowest chambers. The named areas are the only keyed encounters but the DM may want to develop others to expand the adventure. E



CROSSROADS

The party is entering the heart of the dark mound and this is the area with the highest traffic. Roll once on the random encounters table when the party first enters these chambers, then again after each five minutes.

DEAD END

Years ago a curious myconid and some myconid adults broke through to this portion of the ant colony. They were quickly overwhelmed by the ants and all were slain but the king. The ants instinctually collapsed the majority of the tunnel but if the DM chooses to allow it, the players could dig here and find the entrance to the underdark.

The digging would take two hours, requiring a roll on the random encounters table every 15 minutes. The uncovered tunnels then lead into areas outside the scope of this adventure.

There is something else of interest in the room. Read the following to the PCs when they enter.

As your light reaches the back of the chamber, you notice something that all adventurers like to see. A wooden chest sits in the center of the chamber. It is closed, but you can only imagine what treasures lie within!

When things appear to be too good to be true, they likely are. The moment the first PC comes within striking range, the chest will reveal itself to be a **mimic**. The mimic did not expect to see humans in its current location but it had no use in fooling the ants, so it has remained in its chest shape indefinitely.

FUNGUS FARM

The fire ants are perfectly willing to eat raw meat, but the vast majority of their food comes from fungus that is carefully cultivated by the ants. This is a particularly large fungus farm that is used primarily to feed the queen and her larvae. When the party enters read the following.

You have just entered the largest chamber you have yet to see within the dark mound. Your light source shows that from end to end, the chamber is probably over 200 feet in diameter. The ceiling also looms about 50 feet above you.

As you look inside, you notice a white fungus covers nearly the entire chamber. When you walk, you find yourself ankle deep in the material. Protruding from the rot are dozens of human, halfling, jaguar and other less easily recognizable corpses.

There are no ants here at the moment but when you peer into the back of the chamber you notice some brown and red hued fungi as well. The fungi begin to move in your direction!

The ants might not be intelligent but their instincts are incredible when it comes to the design and well-being of their home.

The ants have trapped a **myconid sovereign** here that came in through the Dead End before that exit to the underdark was closed off.

The ants, perhaps due to the effects of eating the strange fungus that grows here, seem immune to all of his spore attacks. They have left the creature here alone in the farm, but whenever the myconid attempts to escape it is torn apart by male and worker ants. They always leave the myconid just clinging to life.

The myconid's presence here encourages the growth of the fungi which the ant queen seems to understand. Its sad situation bears a stunning resemblance to imprisonment.

Unfortunately, long years of solitude have driven the myconid sovereign to insanity. It is now effectively a chaotic creature and will attack anyone entering the farm on sight (with the exception of the ants). It will begin its attack with hallucination spores.

The corpses are all in varying states of decay, and a grand total of 300 gp in small items of jewelry and loose coins can be found. However, it takes a full hour to search the room completely and the random encounter table should be consulted once again every 15 minutes (ignore the prone condition).

QUEEN'S CHAMBER

The **giant fire ant queen** lairs in this chamber and she is continually attended by 4 **male giant fire ants**. The queen is in the process of laying eggs and is not actually mobile at the moment. She is, however, capable of using her acid spray attack and will do so whenever it is available and there are PCs in range.

If the males are slain, she can easily be picked off with ranged attacks. There is no treasure in the room, but the PCs should remove a mandible or some other form of proof that the queen has been slain should they wish to collect their reward in Tulom-Itzi.

EGG CHAMBER

Five **worker giant fire ants** continually attend the larva and eggs that occupy this chamber. There are currently close to 100 wriggling larva (noncombatant) and over 200 eggs!

If the queen has been slain the message will already have been relayed to these workers through chemical means and they will be berserk. This causes the ants to behave erratically and at the start of every one of their turns, roll a 1d4. If a 4 is rolled, one of the ants begins to attack another ant rather than the PCs.

MUD CHAMBER

The ant mound is truly a wonder of architecture, particularly for creatures that are supposedly unintelligent. Whenever heavy rain falls, excess water flows into this chamber. Without it, some of the nastier weather might otherwise cause the ants to drown.

It has not rained severely in months so the bottom is actually just a mud pit that PCs must make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with a DC of 13 to prevent themselves from getting stuck each turn they use movement in the chamber (the character is restrained, requiring a successful Strength check with a DC of 13 to escape).

The mud also acts as difficult terrain for movement purposes. What's worse yet, is that a quintet of *mud mephits* have made this pit their home. The ants leave these planar nuisances be as they don't even appear as living beings to the ants senses.

The mephitis will wait until one or more PCs is stuck in the mud to attack. They have collected small trinkets from the victims of the ants over the year, most of them worthless, but a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check will uncover a *skin of pouring* hidden in the muck.

CONCLUSION

Exiting the mound once the queen is dead will be a much simpler ordeal than entering as the ants will be in a state of confusion. If they have had an easy time at it, perhaps the PCs can have a few more battles coming their way.

In Tulom-Itzi, Atl gives them their due reward if they present proof of the queen's demise. The PCs could easily be contacted in the future now that word has gotten around about their bravery.



MONSTERS

There are familiar enemies like the displacer beast and trolls waiting to challenge and kill upstart heroes in the True World, but there are also many creatures that are virtually unknown in Faerûn or anywhere else in the world. This collection is just a small sample of those creatures.

GIANT FIRE ANTS

Giant fire ants are terrible and aggressive beasts that once decimated the city of Tulom-Itzi and have since plagued the nearby jungles.

Unlike most giant ant species which tend to bite and spit acid into a wound, giant fire ants actually use their mandibles mostly just to grasp at prey and position themselves while they sting with their abdomens, injecting a venom that has a powerful burning pain, thus giving the ant their common moniker.

Giant ants are broken up into three different "castes" with different duties. The workers can defend a nest but are more useful for basic maintenance, tending to grubs and farming. Males are primarily for defense and inseminating the queen, and a single queen spends most of her existence eating and laying eggs. Queens are incapable of moving while reproducing but they do have an acidic spray which they can use to defend themselves.



MALE GIANT FIRE ANT

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Chemical Communication. Giant fire ants can pass information to other ants using chemical secretions instantly. If each ant is at least within ten feet of another, unless each ant is surprised, none can be surprised.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage

WORKER GIANT FIRE ANT

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Chemical Communication. Giant fire ants can pass information to other ants using chemical secretions instantly. If each ant is at least within ten feet of another, unless each ant is surprised, none can be surprised.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage

QUEEN GIANT FIRE ANT

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +5

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Chemical Communication. Giant fire ants can pass information to other ants using chemical secretions instantly. If each ant is at least within ten feet of another, unless each ant is surprised, none can be surprised.

Immobility. When a queen is laying eggs its movement is 0.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage

Acid Spray (Recharge 6). The queen giant fire ant can spray acid spittle in a 20 foot cone for 5 (2d4) acid damage to any in its range.

MAZTICAN JAGUAR

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 50 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Smell. The Maztican jaguar has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pounce. If the Maztican jaguar moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the panther can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

MAZTICAN JAGUAR

Slightly larger and more powerful than its relatives in other parts of Toril, the legendary Maztican jaguar is not a beast to be trifled with.

For thousands of years, mankind has emulated the creature to learn stealth, how to hunt and even gain fighting tactics. It is largely considered a sacred animal and some villages find it taboo to kill one, even in self defense. Others think it a right of passage for young hunting parties to find and kill their first Maztican jaguar.

Maztican jaguars are the totem creature for the jaguar knights and it is not entirely unknown for a particular lodge to keep a few as guards or allies.



AZURE SKIES



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AZURE SKIES

At one time, Mazticans might not have understood or accepted the speed at which the world around them changed. But in the past century and a half, world-shaking events are occurring at least once a generation. The Sundering was no exception, where once again the skies returned to azure.

Azure Skies is a short narrative showing how the native folk of the continent of Maztica experienced the worldwide event known as the Sundering.

PROLOGUE

Anxelli was running through the jungle, ignoring the brush scratching at her face. Famous in the northern reaches of Payit for her exceptional speed, the village elders knew that she was perhaps the only one capable of surviving this task. Anxelli however, knew that even the fastest of humans couldn't outrun the raptors which pursued her. The bird-like lizards rarely needed a reason to hunt but the fact that she carried an entire clutch of their eggs in a feathered sack gave them a sense of purpose uncommon for such creatures.

Even in her panic and state of mortal danger, Anxelli's thoughts went to the remarkable calls of the hunting bird-lizards.

Similar in some ways to the calls of jungle birds, the hoots and whistles were actually quite beautiful. The startling variety and inflection gave her the impression that the raptors might communicate just as effectively as man with his language. She knew that if this was so, their words could only mean, "We have her now."

As the calls got closer, she heard the approach from all sides. The raptors were surrounding her. It would not be long before she ran headlong into the one whose calls now came from her front. As she ran, Anxelli removed the obsidian knife from her belt pouch, knowing full well it would not be enough to protect her from these powerful predators. She thought that she might be able to take one of the beasts with her as she prepared herself to enter whatever world might come next.

Under her feathered headdress, Cualli, smiled at her "children" as she had for the past eight centuries. They were beings of impossible beauty, yet the plumazotl never showed even the slightest hint of trepidation when addressing her horribly disfigured form. In a time long past she and her husband Itzamna Manik created them in what many consider the greatest feat of plumaweaving ever performed by a mortal or possibly even immortal being.

Cualli and Itzamna suffered terribly for that act. They were tortured and burned for decades under the ministrations of the xihcouatl; flame-like perversions of her deity's own most favored creations; the couatl. The terrible flame serpents had been sent by both the deity of fire Tezca and the murderous god Zaltec for what they deemed was an act of unsurpassed hubris. Itzamna eventually succumbed to the flames but Cualli lingered on.

DEDICATION

This story is dedicated to my mother.

Her name can be found in the hero Anxelli, and her loving wisdom in the soul of Cualli.

For the remainder of her existence, she had been forced to live with virtually no discernible face. Her eyes remained, but her once beautiful lips, nose and ears had been literally melted from her face so that only the gaps in her pink skin remained. As if to torture her more fully, the xihcouatl left her senses intact, thinking that she would suffer more as she experienced her disfigured form. Her lasting suffering in truth came only from the loss of her husband. Even after hundreds of years, the death of Itzamna Manik still felt like a fresh wound that no scars could ever seal.

The chieftain of the plumazotl, a favorite of hers who went by the name Makuatua, approached and her pride swelled. The existence of these beautiful beings was the reward for her endurance. Composed entirely of beautiful feathers sculpted into the shapes of birds or men, they were a wonder to behold. Despite her emotional pain and the sacrifices she made, Cualli knew that if she had to do it all over again her choice would be no different.

In her stone palace deep in the rocky sky kingdom Tamoacha, Itzapaplotl scratched her taloned feet on the still squirming pale white bodies beside her throne. Itzapaplotl, who had also been known across the ages as the Obsidian Butterfly, found herself above all things bored. Only a month ago her star demons (or *tzitzimitl*) captured an entire clutch of the parrot-like humanoids known as aarakocra for her sadistic pleasure. Since the gods had disappeared over a century past, her minions have been able to raid the world below at their leisure.

In the first days long before the changing of the sky – Kukul, the Father of the Gods, decreed that Itzapaplotl could not prey upon his creation as long as his eye was turned toward the world. Only occasionally would the *The Eye of Kukul* be obscured from the world's view by Toril's satellite – and during these eclipses, she could do as she pleased.

In a joyous turn of events just over a century ago the entire planet below disappeared and was replaced with a new steel skied version of the original. The lands of the True World somehow remained, but on this new world no god was present to hold her to Kukul's ancient dictate. This century had allowed her to slaughter at whim!

There had been less fortunate changes as well. No longer dependent on their gods, mankind began to grow significantly and rapidly in strength. Their magic of *hishna* and *pluma* was not as weak as it once was and tempered by a more primitive and brutal world, human warriors had grown more fearsome. Mankind had even turned back her *tzitzimitl* on occasion. She cared for her creations only as tools for her depredations, but still this turn of events drove her into fits of rage.

Itzaplotl was nearly lost in her own musings when to her pleasant surprise she found a single feather on the still living, but mostly unconscious aarakocra that lay to the right of her throne. She took pleasure in violently removing it, knowing that the creature still had a little suffering left to endure.



Though she could detect the faint odor of rotting meat as if the breath of a raptor was upon her, Anxelli found a reason to hope. She heard the sound of running water and believed it to be that of a nearby river. Though Anxelli was not entirely sure how effective raptors were as swimmers, she was certain that she stood at least a better chance entering a swift stream if only she could make it in time. Hope renewed her determination and Anxelli ran faster than she ever had before.

The calls of the raptors grew faint as the sounds of running water intensified. For a brief moment she thought she might make it, but then a trio of raptors stepped directly into her path.

They had herded Anxelli like the fowl she once ran down with her childhood playmates. The river also proved to be a false hope. It lay far below a cliff face she now approached and even if she could get by the raptors, she doubted the possibility of her survival with a jump. The three stood blocking the cliff face and more could be seen arriving to her left and right. Clever creatures, it was obvious that the raptors behind her now had her completely trapped.

Acting purely on instinct, Anxelli ran towards the closest of the plumed lizards and slashed her blade. She stabbed at it hard and scored a direct hit to its fanged mouth, but if it felt the slight wound she caused in its front shoulder it certainly did not react as such.

The raptor bit at her but she managed to use her momentum to slide under the beast. Not that it mattered, but her obsidian blade had fallen from her hand when it struck and now she was left utterly weaponless. All three raptors charged her as she stumbled back to the very edge of the cliff. Anxelli had to decide at this moment if it would be teeth or the jagged rocks below that would end her life.

Perhaps there was another way? In desperation she removed the pack full of eggs and held them before the raptors. Anxelli held the eggs high; making it obvious her intentions to smash them should the creatures make a move. Their intelligence was obvious so Anxelli knew the raptors would understand her intentions. For a brief moment her plan seemed as if it might work and the raptors hesitated. Then, in blatant defiance of her bluff, a raptor with blue-green plumage struck out at Anxelli's belly with its vicious talon.

The wound was deep and the pain caused her to nearly faint. Instead of dropping the eggs, in one last desperate attempt, she threw them high into the air to cause a distraction before she jumped to her doom.

On her way down Anxelli saw that one of the raptors caught the thrown bag in a remarkably delicate manner. "Good for them," she thought. Anxelli was satisfied knowing she hadn't taken the lives of so many unborn along with her own. In her last moments, she regretted taking the eggs and believed the creatures didn't deserve what her elders had planned for them. Her village's *hishnashapers* believed that they could call upon the power of *hishna* to make alterations in each egg. They hoped to create guardian creatures against the depredations of the dreaded star demons that had decimated her home. The desperate experiment had been made before, once in days long past. This first attempt, before the skies changed from azure to steel, was a legendary disaster. Terrible creatures had been birthed, but they were as savage as their forebears and uncontrollable. The resulting magical monstrosities certainly were no boon to the safety of mankind.

Three clutches of eggs had been captured recently at the expense of dozens of lives of good jaguar and eagle knights. These experiments too had been for naught as every altered raptor that hatched died within minutes. Anxelli questioned why she accepted the mission to begin with.

On the way down, Anxelli felt the pain in her belly subside. After what seemed like an eternity but was in reality only a few seconds, all went black.



The Obsidian Butterfly never named her *tzitzimitl* despite their unique personalities, but she recognized the particularly scrawny specimen that stood before her. Of all her pets, this one was perhaps her favorite since its cruelty was a near match to her own. When this particular star demon brought her captives, they were rarely in good enough shape to live more than a day or two under her own ministrations. Normally, such greed among her minions would drive her to destroy the offender, but she saw so much of herself in the runt that she let him sneak his tortures. When the star demon blamed others of his kind for each victim's sorry state she usually destroyed the accused to sate her own bloodlust despite her awareness of the truth.

"Runt, what is it you wish from your queen and your mother? Speak quickly or I will put out your star fire and leave your undying bones to float in the void for eternity!"

In a humble voice, the Runt responded, "Dear Queen and Mother, I bring news from the True World. The sky changes once again! As it did a century ago, there is reason to believe that once again the worlds are sundering."

"And why do you bother me with such trivial news? What does this mean to an eternal such as me? If my playthings hail from one world or another what should it matter to me?"

The star demon shifted, showing some fear in continuing, but it held its ground and Itzaplotl admired its bravery. "Forgive me, Queen and Mother, I know your evil is all powerful and independent of the world itself, but would it not cause you some consternation should the gods return and reclaim their ancient edict?"

Obsidian Butterfly blasted the creature with fire, knocking it backwards but causing no real damage. "How dare you assume the gods had such a hold over *my* fate? They are nothing to me now and could not possibly have the power to enforce the terms of such an unfair contract. Go from my sight now before my decision to keep you as my *living* servant changes!"

Itzapaplotl managed to keep herself from appearing any less than the ultimate power her servants thought her to be, but in truth, the Runt had struck a chord. She noticed what had been occurring below but thought nothing of it. Itzapaplotl was many millennia old and change had come before but this is the first time she actually feared the change. What if the gods returned? Would she be able to continue down her current path with her lofty plans?

None but the Obsidian Butterfly knew the true reason behind the endless murder and torture. When the gods disappeared and her presence in the world was no longer limited, Itzapaplotl learned that she derived power from her depredations. Each corpse that lay rotting in her filth pits gave some part of its *tonalli* to her. She fed upon this raw soul power and felt herself changing into something greater. The spark of true divinity had at one time been an unreachable goal but now she thought it a distinct possibility.

The steel skied world had its own obscenely powerful beings but these primordial creatures worried little over the True World's inhabitants or the ambitions of the Obsidian Butterfly. It was true that the mortal denizens of the True World had grown in power but they were still no real threat to her might. Itzapaplotl feared that her perfect world and perfect plans might soon come to a screeching halt.



In the depths of Mount Zatal a great stone form stirred. A century of rest after his attempt at fratricide was not nearly enough for the god to recover from his wounds, but he would awaken regardless. He could feel his brothers and sisters begin to stir as well but he was unable to take advantage of the weakness he sensed in them. Right now it would be challenge enough for Zaltec to simply remove himself from the tomb from which he awoke.



CHAPTER 1

"Hold child, and be still. Your bandages are strong and enchanted to heal your broken body, but there is no need for you to endure any more pain than you have already suffered."

Anxelli's head spun. Though she could not yet make out the face of her healer, the words rang true. Every movement caused her back to explode in pain that nearly caused her to vomit.

"Water, please."

Her two word request was even too much for Anxelli's body to take as she emptied the contents of her stomach onto the plush feather bed that she lay upon.

"Not very much of a listener are you? That can change in time. Bodies can be mended, worlds can depart. Even as the macaw can be taught to repeat the words of humans, mankind can always be taught change."

Anxelli did not know the meaning of the words, but they were somehow soothing. Were she not in so much pain, she would have thought her tonalli had begun its journey in the Afterlife. Her recent fall and encounter with the raptors should have sent her screaming into one of the *seventeen tenemos* of Maztican myth. Instead, she slowly opened her eyes. Ready to thank her savior, Anxelli's eyes focused on a smiling face of horror.



"Calm yourself child. I often forget how disconcerting my appearance can be, but I am no foul being of *Xibalba* come to take your soul into the eternal pits of despair. I witnessed your fall and protected you as best I could, but your tonalli had nearly fled by the time Makuatua was able to reach you."

Anxelli soon realized that the woman was horribly disfigured, but otherwise human. Embarrassed, she hoped that she did not offend the one who had in fact saved her life.

"What is a Makuatua, fair lady? My apologies if I offended you. The pain has me delirious and I did not..."

"Easy child, do not bother yourself with concern. You meant no offense and there is none taken. My name is Cualli and this is 'a' Makuatua." The disfigured woman gestured to what initially appeared to be no more than a large pile of feathers. Anxelli thought the woman mad until the pile stirred and what once might have seemed formless took a very manlike shape.

"Greetings princess, I am Makuatua and I am at your service."

"Princess?"

As if anticipating her confusion, Cualli held her hand up and said, "Child, there is much more about you than you know, and I will tell you all in good time. For now, you must rest."

Anxelli closed her eyes and fell into a comforting slumber. The suggestion was more of a command than she would ever know, and the power of pluma magic was behind those words.



Cualli let the young princess sleep and as she looked upon Anxelli's still form she felt relief in her ancient bones. When the azure skies returned, she could feel the march of time once again.

The couatl, a servant of her god Qotal, once long ago came to her with a request. Burned and disfigured, Cualli felt as if she had no reason to live on that day centuries ago. The couatl, however, offered her a choice. She could serve her god and find purpose in her life once again if only she would accept his gift of an undying body. Cualli, who had only wanted to die and join her husband initially refused. The couatl said that Qotal would not beg, but what he offered was more than just a long lifespan. She would be able to look after her plumazotl children and with her care they would truly be blessed by the god himself. In addition, in a time of great need, the couatl told her that she could pass on her gift and be allowed to rest at last. He assured her that Cualli would then join her husband in the heavenly tenemo *Tlaxcautli* for eternity, if only she could be patient for a time.

After close to eight centuries Cualli rejoiced at the knowledge that she would soon see Itzamna Manik once again. In all that time she never once forgot the love of her husband.

The girl who lay before Cualli did not know she was the descendent of the heroes Erixitl of Palul and Halloran of the interloper god Helm, but that was not the only surprise the girl would soon face. Equal parts honor and burden, the girl would soon find out that she too had in fact become...Chosen.



"*Hearts and blood, sacrifice and devotion!*" Zaltec hungered as the fresh flow had gone silent for well over a century. Zaltec was the Eater of Hearts and Bringer of War, yet his thirst had not been slaked for far too long. Zaltec felt the debris fall from his stony body and he called to some of the greatest of his children.

"*So few now to bring me nourishment!*" The deity's anger was felt in the world above when Mount Zatal erupted, much as it had done long ago on the Night of Wailing. He knew that his remaining children rejoiced at his return, but all he cared for now was his hunger.

It wasn't long before the god tasted the first heart, and more came soon after, but in his immortal knowledge he knew it would never be enough.



The Obsidian Butterfly watched the blue flamed forms of a dozen of her tzitzimitl streak towards the True World from her scrying bowl. She smiled at the fear that the sight of them must be causing in every village, town and city within miles of their approach.

The thrill of capturing, torturing and eventually murdering the aarakocra had faded and now it was time to feed her divinity with some human suffering.

She watched as the tzitzimitl dropped into what was likely the village marketplace. The bright softness of pluma adorned this central square, but the vast majority of the village's decoration was of the darker hishna.

Talons, claws, and even skulls of what could only be the great lizards of the deeper jungles adorned almost every household. Each household also had a steam room known as a *temazcalli* built somewhere nearby. In these buildings, Itzapaplotl knew the humans would place a fire against the wall, and then water was poured on the hot wall creating the steam. Itzapaplotl thought the humans were clever creatures at times, occasionally worthy of a minimal amount of respect. The nation of which this village was a part was called Kultaka and in the past its warriors had lasted longer under torture than those of any other nation.

There was a temple, but its size was in proportion to the village itself. Itzapaplotl did not know to what god it belonged, but it certainly looked as if it had been used recently.

A small black altar adorned the clearing in front of the temple, and it was stained with copious amounts of blood. When the gods disappeared, the need to perform sacrifices had gone with it, but now this obvious display only increased her agitation.

"Oh my lover, if you truly are back, I will take from you what is rightfully mine. You were not strong enough when the world changed and yet I remain eternal. It is not you that deserves the power you once held." Itzapaplotl wondered if Zaltec was aware enough to hear her mock him, but she did not care. For at this moment, she planned only to enjoy the carnage that was about to ensue.



The first tzitzimitl to land was a fine specimen. Faster than the others and certainly more powerful, she always sought out the greatest warriors to bring home to her queen. She heard the others land behind her and the screaming commenced almost immediately. The powerful star demon was also patient and after burning just a single human child with her starfire, she waited.

A flash of movement from the corner of her eye grabbed her attention and the tzitzimitl thought to investigate. While it could have been nothing but a shadow, or even one of those vile small canines the humans were so fond of, the child she had murdered left her wanting more. Why couldn't she indulge her own pleasures before she captured a suitable plaything for her queen?

The tzitzimitl turned a corner looking for her prize but was disappointed to see nothing worth her time. Then the star demon heard the sound from the dark places surrounding her. The throaty growl brought an emotion that she had herself invoked many times, but never truly felt herself. Fear was unknown to the tzitzimitl until now.

All she saw was a spotted flash of yellow and black. Whatever it was, its movements were fast enough that she could barely follow. Then the pain came, the star demon looked down at its skeletal body and noticed there an entire leg had gone missing. Balancing temporarily on her remaining leg she saw her tormenter. It was a jaguar, but bigger than most of the basic animals that roamed the jungles of the True World. Adorned with jewelry and carrying her flickering leg in its mouth, she knew that her life had been stolen by a jaguar knight; one of the elite human warriors who had given himself completely to the power of hishna. Before her light was fully extinguished, she saw more; perhaps dozens more come from the wood beyond the village. Itzapaplotl would not have her playthings this eve.



"Coward! Fool!" Itzapaplotl screamed in anger at the sole survivor of her latest raiding party. She raked at her servants face, neatly removing a fleshy blue orb that served as the otherwise skeletal creature's eye.

"Mother, please!"

"How dare you call to me even now! There is no curse, no torment your feeble mind can invent that will even compare to what your imminent future holds. Even the endless void will not give you succor!"

The tzitzimitl's flames went dim, a subconscious choice that the star demons could control, but usually reflected their mood. The creature knew it was doomed, and rightfully so, but it reserved its greatest fear for the torments it would surely endure before oblivion.

"Come to me, and accept the punishment for your cowardice."

The one-eyed tzitzimitl approached its queen as slowly as it could without further angering her. An obsidian dagger he knew to be enchanted lay on a dais only a hands-width from her throne. The star demon grabbed at it before Itzapaplotl could react and stuck it deep within his own throat. The shock of its open defiance reverberated through the throne room and the hundreds other tzitzimitl lowered their eyes.

"Be gone from my sight! All of you! All except you, Runt. Come to your queen. I have a task for you. An old acquaintance of mine stirs, and I require an emissary."



"You must not force the magic. It is in all living things already, you need only release it. The pale skinned folk see power only in their steel because it is hard and solid. The spirits care nothing for solidity or weight. Life is magic Anxelli, and the weightless feather carries more in its beautiful form than you could ever imagine."

“Thank you, Mother Cualli.” Anxelli replied as she attempted to befriend the corollax using her newest pluma spell. Anxelli had been told of many wonders from the lessons of her elders in Payit, but she never heard of a corollax until she met Cualli. Mere months after her near death experience with the raptors and she had already learned more than in her previous seventeen years.

Cualli continued, “You are not to be the bird’s master, remember – such coercion reeks of the taint of hishna. Rather, you must understand that you are reaching out to its tonalli and asking it to join your own. This is not an easy decision, even for what you see to be only a bird. Be patient with him.”

In appearance, the bird looked like a simple red parrot (albeit a beautiful one), but Anxelli had seen firsthand the effects of startling the creature. Twice before when attempting her spell, the bird released a splash of colors that were quite beautiful but left her stunned and blinded for a time. The throbbing in her head she suffered afterwards reminded her of the aftereffects of imbibing too much *octli*. In years before her responsibilities truly began, Anxelli often stole cups full of this fermented nectar of the maguey plant from the elders. The thought made her snicker.

“Focus princess or you will lose him! This magic was not intended for creatures such as this – yet I sense you may yet succeed should you only open your tonalli.”

Anxelli heard the words of her mentor and obeyed. The corollax became aware of her presence and through her pluma magic; her tonalli had touched upon its own.

She could feel the creature’s life in a way that she could never fully comprehend, much less explain. The corollax had become part of her and she had become part of it. Their life forces had intermingled and Anxelli felt a profound connection to the creature.

“Blessed by Plumed Father! Do you realize what you have accomplished?”

Cualli had been training Anxelli for months now in the ways of the plumacaster, and today she thought to help her apprentice find herself a familiar. As a creature of magic, the corollax should not have answered the call, but Anxelli insisted she saw this in a vision during the night.

Makuatua, ever vigilant and sensing the commotion from nearby rushed in after a particularly loud squawk from the magical bird.

“No Mak! Look out!” Anxelli shouted. But it was too late; from its perch above, the corollax released the contents of its bowels atop the feather-man’s head.

“A good luck omen” Cualli chuckled. Makuatua sighed.

With a face as red as the corollax’s plumage Anxelli repeated, “Yes, good luck indeed. *Maohltli*”

She spoke the word for good luck in the language of the Payit. “That shall be his name.”

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CHAPTER 2

“There is no sacrifice, no more nourishing a heart, than one offered willingly. Welcome to my tomb, human, your offer is accepted.”

“Hold, oh Eater of Hearts, I can think of no greater honor but I already serve another master and I am certainly no human.”

The Runt let his starfire flare, illuminating his skeletal form in electric blue light. Zaltec’s chamber was lit by the glow of small streams of fire and molten rock. The volcano known as Mount Zatal in which he lay once again began to awake around him.

Zaltec laughed, “*Ah, so I have before me one of the Obsidian Butterfly’s star demons. No matter, I would gladly accept your heart as well if your wretched form could only supply one.*” *What is it that my old slave seeks of me? Speak quickly, for I grow curious about other parts I might seek to feast upon.*”

“Bringer of War, my master only desires to once again serve you. She has grown greatly in power, and with your help...”

“*Divinity!*” Zaltec roared. “*The bitch wants me to sponsor her ascension! So predictable.*” His massive form shed rubble and his excitement caused the mountain around him to tremble.

The star demon shook and responded with what he suspected might be his last words, “That is correct, Hungry One.”

“*I will help.*”

The Runt was not expecting the quick response.

“*Yes. Why not? I don’t care for her useless cruelties but they do not slow the flow of fresh sacrifice. Foolish men will likely feed me more as they beseech my assistance. Tell her I will sponsor her ascension if she truly has the power you claim, and if you – as her representative, complete one small task for me.*”

And there was the catch. The Runt knew it was all too easy up until this point.

Zaltec reached out with his stony hand and presented a beating heart to the *tzitzimitl*.

“*This is the still-living heart of the greatest of my servants. Hoxitl served me well in life, but ultimately proved to be a failure. This, I could not accept so he serves me still.*”

As he uttered the last word, the heart collapsed in a mass of wriggling worms and filth. As the worms dispersed a smaller, desiccated heart emerged on a braided string of leather.

“*Take the Heart of Hoxitl and find me the last descendant of the Queen Erixitl and her fool outlander husband, Halloran. Great power lies in her bloodline and her sacrifice, here at the Heart of the True World, will give your master the divinity she seeks. The end of that accursed bloodline will also weaken my brother – the fool entrusted too much of himself in it and now it is ripe for the taking.*”

The Runt bowed his head in thanks and asked, “Great One, my thanks and surely the gratitude of my master shall be unending, but what am I to do with the heart?”

“*It is an item of great hishna and it has much power. For now, all you need to know is that it can change your form so that you may travel undetected among man. Its hatred for the blood of Erixitl is great as well, and in its presence, the heart will beat fiercely once again. Now be gone from my sight, I hunger.*”

The Runt smiled as his features shifted. The star fire faded and flesh knitted itself into his skeletal body. He looked at his hands in a brief moment of wonder and strung the talisman around his new fleshy neck. It was time to commune with Mother, who he might one day soon call goddess.

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"My dear, I am fine. I have lived for centuries and it will take far more than a clumsy trip to lay me low."

"Then why do you not heal?"

Anxelli was no fool and she knew that Cualli was dying, but the ancient plumaweaver only seemed to relish the thought. Whenever Anxelli, Makuatua or the hundreds of plumazotl who paid their respects to Cualli showed any sort of concern, the woman would stare off into the sky as if she could see the tonalli of her long lost Itzamna.

"It is not fair, my training is not done. How will you teach me if you cannot even stand?" Anxelli, seeing that simple concern would do her no good, attempted to appeal to guilt.

Cualli giggled like a child. "Oh, Anxelli – you know full well that I can teach you nothing more. You are ready, and I am also ready."

Anxelli began to sob.

"You must return to your people." Cualli said more forcefully than she intended. "I have sent my plumazotl to check on them and they are well, but they have not given up the search for you."

"I know, mother. And I shall return to them soon, but can I not wait until at least your leg has mended?"

"No child, it is time. But I want you to take Makuatua with you. Your journey will be long, but with your power and his strength and cunning..."

Maohtli squawked.

"...and of course your brave companion, you can return home having fulfilled the quest in ways your elders could not have guessed. *You* will protect your people, and you must go now. As the skies changed, the gods have reawakened."

Anxelli thought of the star demons and the horrors they have brought to Payit. Though she was very young, she remembered the day when sixteen streaking blue stars fell from the sky and took the lives of dozens from her village. Her mother and father fought the creatures bravely, managing to slay a few of the beasts. She found their burned forms the next morning, still smoking from the dreaded star fire.

Cualli had spent the last few years training Anxelli as a plumacaster. Though feather magic had been known in the True World since the days Qotal first bestowed it to man, plumacasting was a relatively new and powerful take on what had come before. Unlike Cualli, Anxelli could record her spells through woven featherwork, and prepare a selection to suit her daily needs each morning.

She thought to travel the villages of Payit and bestow this knowledge to the worthy so that no longer would the tzitzimitl encounter the unprepared. Soon, Cualli had explained, when the gods had fully awakened, the tzitzimitl would only be able to return to Toril in the event of a solar eclipse; but Anxelli wanted her people prepared nevertheless.

The young plumacaster packed her spells, a sack of supplies with enough fruits and nuts to keep Maohtli at least temporarily satisfied, and left the next morning with the stoic Makuatua by her side.



Huitzilin heard the mewling coming from the brush. He silenced his hunting party with an upraised palm, and approached the sound cautiously. The crying was piteous and he was certain he approached a creature that was wounded and in distress. Halflings of Payit appreciated the natural world around them, but his clan needed to eat. Perhaps he could both end the creature's suffering and return with a feast.

As a hunter, Huitzilin and his party were no strangers to death or gore, but what he saw when he pushed the brush aside turned his stomach. Blood was splashed everywhere and entrails hung from low hanging branches like vines.

The source was not hard to find. Two black jaguar corpses – barely recognizable, lie next to the bodies of three young kittens. Two were missing their heads and another, just its eyes, tongue and entrails. All five bodies were scorched as well, and the smell of burnt hair caused the hunter to gag.

The last of the kittens still squirmed in the arms of a smallish man, who seemed prepared to plunge an obsidian dagger into the kitten's belly and did not yet notice the hunter. Even as a halfling, Huitzilin thought the human a runt. Still taller than a halfling, but his frame was nowhere near as strong, almost as if he had only recently recovered from some long sickness.

"Fiend!"

The halfling fired a dart laced with kurari poison and it struck the runt directly in the neck. The shapechanged star demon stumbled for a moment, but pressed onwards towards Huitzilin. At that moment, at least six more darts flew by the hunter's ear as the rest of his hunting party arrived. The man finally collapsed at Huitzilin's foot.



The Runt awoke in a massive dirt pit with earthen walls too tall to jump and impossible to climb. As his senses returned, he realized that he still maintained his human form with the Heart of Hoxitl in his possession. The star demon realized what a fool he was for letting his base desires get the best of him. He would not fail the Obsidian Butterfly simply to satisfy his sadism.

In his natural form, the tzitzimitl could easily fly out of this prison, but he didn't want to reveal his true self to the crowd of halflings and humans that had gathered above just yet. Earlier, while torturing the jaguars, he noticed that the Heart of Hoxitl would fail him while he used his innate powers, and his skeletal structure would glow from within the sack of meat he inhabited. Perhaps it was a trick of Zaltec's to ensure his failure?

From the corner of the pit, he heard a growl that had it not been so harsh, could have been mistaken for a bird call.

He turned towards the sound but was a moment too late. A plumed lizard twice the size of a man leaped from the shadow and pinned him to a corner between the dusty floor and earthen wall. He felt sharp talons pierce his false flesh, seeking out a vital organ that the star demon did not possess. Up above, the gathered humans and halflings gasped for what they thought was a certain kill, and had he truly been human – the crowd would not have been disappointed.

The Runt knew that he could withstand far more damage than his form suggested, but the raptor was a fearsome foe and would soon kill him if he did not act. The star demon feared he would either have to use his formidable powers and reveal himself, or he would perish.

The raptor bit down hard on the tzitzimitl's shoulder and the Runt lost all feeling in his arm. The skeletal frame that was his true body cracked under the power of those jaws.

In desperation, the star demon used his considerable strength to shove the raptor back to the opposite wall. The bird-lizard was momentarily dazed and the Runt saw an opportunity. The cavity from whence the raptor came was just out of sight of the crowd above, if he could only get there in time.

The raptor renewed its attack, this time clamping down fully on the Runt's already disabled arm. It shook its powerful neck violently and the star demon was thrown across the pit – directly where he had intended in the first place.

The tzitzimitl was slipping from consciousness for the second time this day as the raptor closed on him in the darkened corner. With Itzapaplotl's name on his lips he released more star-fire than he had ever attempted in the past.

The Runt's last thoughts before slipping into darkness were of how much he enjoyed the sense of smell; something his natural form was incapable of. Never before did he have the olfactory capability of enjoying death.

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"There is great power in that man, he can help us!"

Huitzilil looked at the human in disbelief and responded "Did you not hear my description of the wood and the evil he has brought?"

The surviving black jaguar kitten rubbed against the halfling's leg and began to purr.

"What difference does it make? They were animals. She is the last of her blood! We must find her – the seers claim the fate of the True World may lie in her hands!"

Huitzilil laughed, "Then why did you send her on such a treacherous journey to begin with, you fools?"

The human's grip on his mācuahuitl tightened. The halflings lifted their blowguns and spears.

"Calm down, all of you."

Huitzilil recognized the more sensible human; an elder and cleric of Qotal the Plumed Dragon.

"We sent the girl because we were told to in a vision by Qotal himself. I have always felt the presence of the Plumed Father in her, even when the gods refused our call and the heavens were of steel. Now that the azure skies have once again returned, I hear his voice – and his first command was to set her on her way. You do know who her ancestors are of course?"

Huitzilil conceded the point, but that did not make him trust the sickly little man any more than he already did.

"Elder, you have the power to discern the truths and falsehoods of a man's tongue do you not?"

Huitzilil realized he had discerned the solution.

"Yes, of course. If he submits to my magic, I will know if he can assist us. Well done, halfling."

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"What fools!" The Runt thought to himself. Centuries of surviving in Tamoacha alongside the Obsidian Butterfly made all tzitzimitl, and the Runt in particular, masters of half-truths.

Having willingly accepted the effects of a spell of truth telling, the star demon still managed to avoid explaining his actions in the jungle, convince the humans and halflings to heal him, and turn the interrogation to his advantage.

Only the jaguar kitten, who growled mightily for one so small, remained hostile to the disguised tzitzimitl.

The elder who cast the spell and performed the interrogation was a cleric of that vile snake Qotal named Olin. When finally satisfied, he offered the Runt a chance at freedom if only he would swear to search for a young girl named "Anxelli" in the jungles to the south and west.

Of all the luck the star demon could have, Anxelli was the last true descendant of Erixitl – exactly the one Zaltec had tasked him to return! The cleric, of course, did not share such an important secret willingly, but the tzitzimitl's superior hearing heard this and more from a private conversation between Olin and the halfling hunter.

"Anxelli."

The star demon spoke her name aloud and the Heart of Hoxitl squirmed on his neck.

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CHAPTER 3

"Those calls – they are here, trust me." Anxelli said to Makuatua who stood by silently and nodded.

"Danger!" Maohtli squawked.

"Be silent bird! Raptors from the very heart of the jungle must know our location now," Anxelli whispered angrily. She started to regret teaching her familiar so many words of the human tongue.

Makuatua held his tepoztōpilli before him; a broad tipped spear with incredibly sharp plumastone embedded all along its edges. Plumastone was commonplace for warriors these days; obsidian so hard and unbreakable that it easily rivaled the steel weapons still sometimes forged in New Amn.

The man of feathers and pluma magic stepped forward into the brush and thrust his tepoztōpilli into what Anxelli thought was simply vegetation. The spear struck a small raptor directly between its eyes, and the creature wailed for but a moment before it dropped dead to the jungle floor.

The brush on all sides exploded with commotion as an entire pack leaped from their camouflaged positions and howled at the trio. Maohtli, following his instincts and Anxelli's instantaneous mental commands, let forth a splash of colors that at least temporarily halted the raptors' advance. Anxelli and Makuatua, having trained with the corollax, knew to keep their eyes covered and remained unaffected.

Anxelli noted the blue-green plumage of the largest of the beasts and thought to herself, "I remember you."

The corollax had given them an opportunity, but the effects of the color spray would wear off momentarily. Anxelli readied a spell, pulling its gold dust component from a pouch in her pocket.

As if the raptors could sense the danger, two charged her with their fangs bared.

Anxelli opened her mouth and a blinding bolt of light streamed forth. The closest of the charging raptors wailed piteously and collapsed but the second managed to avoid the deadly radiance. It leaped at Anxelli who was for the moment defenseless.

With practiced grace, the plumazotl placed himself and his spear directly in the raptor's path. It impaled itself, driving the spear fully through its body. Makuatua, almost as if he was dancing with the dying beast, released the spear and spun around its body before it could crush him under its weight. Continuing his motion, the plumazotl grabbed the tepoztōpilli just below its plumastone head and yanked the remainder of the shaft through the raptors body.

Three more raptors charged; one of them being the blue-green plumed beast.

Maohtli, courageous for one so small, swooped in from above and released a second spray of color. By getting so close, the corollax managed to blind two of the beasts, but the blue-green raptor was unaffected and turned toward the bird. The lizard leaped as the corollax sped for the safety of the sky and with a snap like a crocodile; its jaws caught the feathers of Maohtli's tail. The bird screeched and Anxelli gasped. She smiled just a bit when the bird communicated through its thoughts that it was not badly hurt.

The raptor looked almost comical with its mouth full of bright red tail feathers.

"Makuatua, take the blinded beasts, I will finish this one."

The plumazotl took to the air and called on one of its innate abilities. Three bolts of bright energy resembling feather-fletched darts flew from his fingertips and struck a raptor that had shaken off the effects of the color spray. The creature stumbled, and was temporarily out of the fight. Its pack mate sniffed the air, cleverly attempting to discern the plumazotl's location with senses other than sight.

Anxelli prepared to cast another spell, this one taught to her by the plumazotl himself. She took the feather of an eagle from her pouch and spun it while muttering arcane syllables. The feather floated from her hand, visibly stiffened, and began to circle her body of its own volition. Within moments it was joined by others of its kind and together they formed a barrier of slashing plumage that the beast could not pass without taking significant damage.

The blue-green plumed raptor and Anxelli stood facing each other in a standoff, but neither rushed to make the next move. Anxelli looked to Makuatua who had just put his spear clean through yet another raptor and was headed for the last.

She sighed, "It does not have to be like this."

The raptor bared its teeth, but still did not approach the whirlwind that encircled Anxelli. The corollax approached, likely ready for another spray of color, but Anxelli waved him off. Makuatua, sensing Anxelli's hesitation, took to the sky again rather than finish off the blinded bird-lizard.

"Why is it that you still burden me, beast? I have done nothing to you, the eggs were returned!"

The raptor barked, and the blinded lizard followed the sound to stand by its side. It stood near, but behind the blue-green plumed raptor – confirming Anxelli's belief that he was a leader of this pack.

Anxelli's spell only had moments left in duration for her slashing plumage, but she did not begin preparing another spell. The plumacaster did not want to slay this marvelous beast and felt a sickening guilt for what had already occurred.

The barrier disappeared in a puff, and the raptors remained silent and still. Anxelli was contemplating her next move when a huge blast of bluish fire incinerated both raptors, leaving only smoking corpses behind.

Anxelli jumped and the words to a spell immediately came to her tongue.

A runt of a man stepped from the woods and began to speak.

"Ease yourself Anxelli, I was sent here by your elders – and some rather unpleasant halfings, to rescue you."

He could feel the Heart of Hoxitl beating on his neck and hoped the sound was not audible to others.

Anxelli let the words of her spell die on her tongue, but the urge to annihilate the runt hardly abated.

"What is wrong with you? Did you not see the plumed lizards halted their attack?"

"So what?" the Runt replied.

Makuatua returned to the ground with his tepoztōpilli held ready. The corollax squawked on a tree branch above.

"So what? So what if I leave your unconscious body lying here on the jungle floor as an offering to its brood?"

"Oh, come now. You were in danger and I reacted, the elders were very clear on just how important you are, princess – and I wasn't about to let my promised reward slip away."

The Runt smirked at his own cleverness. Even though he was under no truth spell, every single word he uttered had remained so – yet the reward he sought was certainly not from some backwater village. Itzapaplotl would have admired his twist in intent.

"Princess? The elders know? They told you? Who exactly are you anyway, I do not remember your face and where did you come to wield such power?"

Still on his game, the Runt showed Anxelli the Heart of Hoxitl and said, "Much of my power comes from this."

"Hishna, I should have known," she hissed.

Satisfied that he had successfully explained his presence and that of the Heart, the Runt continued to press his ability to speak half-truths, "I have been sent not only to find you, but to escort you to the Heart of Mount Zatal."

"Why?"

The Runt responded, "Your hold great power which is sought by many. The gods awaken, and you could be either the key to a new Night of Wailing, or its prevention."

"So I am to trust you? I have known you for mere moments and already I despise you."

"And that is your right, but it doesn't make what I say any less true. Use your magic if you must to confirm my words, but I assure you it is no falsehood."

Anxelli didn't need to test the truth of the small man's words. In her bones, she knew it was so. Cualli had said much the same to her long ago in their training, just not when or where her destiny would take her. She would accompany the stranger, but like he said – she didn't have to like it.

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CHAPTER 4

In the darkened desert of the tenemo of Xipetlan, also known as the Flayed Land – the fire god Tezca stirred in his vast pool of magma and fire. His glowing realm held little respite from the darkness and raging sandstorms for the tonalli who earned this afterlife.

Hundreds of xihucouatl – cruel and fiery corruptions of his brother Qotal's favored serpent emissaries, swam lazily through the molten pool.

Tezca thought of his brothers. He was the first of his family to awaken from a century of slumber, and when Qotal and Zaltec awoke soon after, he knew they would begin their meddling once again in the affairs of men.

“So Zaltec has sought to sponsor the ascension of his whore?” he said to no one in particular.

Ages ago, a human man and woman sought to create life as only the gods were meant to do. They succeeded, and Tezca and Zaltec punished them for their act of hubris. Qotal favored these humans, however and one has survived the long centuries to pass her knowledge onto the key to Zaltec’s current endeavor. Tezca did not approve.

“Xiatemoc, Kitilli, come to me my servants.”

Two xihucouatl surfaced in front of the terrible deity.

“How may we serve you lord Tezca?”

“An old enemy has played her hand. You are to burn her and all that she loves. Do not fail me in this.”

Cualli could smell the smoke in the air long before their arrival. She sent away the dozens of bird and human shaped plumazotl that had attended her so lovingly in her final weeks. Her hut was simple, it kept the elements from making her uncomfortable, but the only item of any remark that remained was her plush bed of plumage. Cualli did have a small vice for comfort throughout her long existence.

“Tezca seeks his due! You have violated the edicts of the gods and for this you will suffer!” The two flame serpents burst through the door of reeds and the thatch roof caught flame instantaneously.

Cualli responded, *“I have suffered, and I have rejoiced. I have created and I have destroyed, but mostly I have loved – and this, not even your lord of fire can take from me.”*

“Platitudes! You face the fires of the Burning One and that is all you have to offer?” hissed the male xihucouatl known as Xiatemoc.

“Perhaps when you remove what is left of her face, she will show our lord respect,” added the female.

Xiatemoc turned to face Cualli, who still hadn’t moved from her pluma bed and said, *“No, when we burn all that she holds dear to ash and pain – then she will understand.”*

Cualli began a fit of coughing, mostly from the smoke that now began to fill the hut, but also from the sickness that permeated her ancient body. The xihucouatl let her continue – whether it was to let her suffer or as a modicum of respect she did not know or care.

Cualli’s fit slowly changed to laughter. The xihucouatl who thought their adversary thoroughly intimidated expressed shock on their serpentine faces.

“You are too late. Tell your master you have failed! I wish I could be there with you, in the very Flayed Lands themselves – just to see how you bring that bit of news to your lord.”

“What do you mean?” Kitilli responded with a hint of panic in her sibilant voice.

Cualli continued, *“The one you seek is already prepared – you cannot stop, or even slow her destiny. And as for me? Your lord will never mete out his punishment, I am so sorry to disappoint him. I go now to see his brother and my own husband in Tlaxcautli; a reunion that I have too long been denied.”*

With her last words, Cualli smiled and gently closed her eyes. The xihucouatl advanced with fires raging and fangs bared, but Cualli’s body disappeared and her blanket of feathers gently fell to the floor. The xihucouatl manifested their anger with a burst of fire hot enough to ignite the wood outside the hut.

Xiatemoc turned to his mate, *“We find the Chosen, and we find her now.”* Kitilli nodded in agreement as they set off into the torched wood.

“Ahhh my Runt, you have done well!”

The tzitzimitl could commune with their mother should she seek out an audience. He was glad that his companions slept, because her voice caused great pain inside his head and he cried out. He knew the torment was intentional and it aggravated him.

“Thank you mother,” he thought back. Having communed with her shortly before finding Anxelli, she knew the whole of his quest and Zaltec’s promise.

“There is an alteration in my wishes, and you are to obey me.”

The Runt remained obedient but could not understand why she would offer a change so close to their goal. They were scant days from Nexal and he was on the verge of delivering Zaltec’s prize and key to her divinity. The star demon’s head throbbed.

“A great magic of old lies within the mountain. It is a magic of pluma, and it too contains the essence of the Plumed Dragon. With its destruction, and the heart of Qotal’s chosen, I will rise above Zaltec himself! The gods will bow to me, and I will feast on their suffering.”

The Runt thought her insane – intoxicated with the promise of power. In his ages of existence, for the first time he doubted her wisdom. Unfortunately she sensed it.

The pain was excruciating, even for one who had felt her ministrations in the past.

“You disapprove?” Itzapaplotl asked with sibilance in her voice.

“Mother, I obey as always. I have always followed your orders to the word.” Again, he avoided lying.

“Of course you obey. You must obey; you are my star demon, my precious little Runt.” With her last word she sent a shock into his head that nearly knocked him unconscious. Her power had undoubtedly grown. *“It is no matter, for you are nothing to me. Seek the Cloak of One Plume in the Mountain of Fire. In the fires of Zatal, you will recover this relic of the foul serpent Qotal. Bring it to me before you deliver the child. I will use it first to ensure the Eater of Hearts keeps his promise to me.”*

The Runt seethed for half the evening. This cursed form required that he sleep like a human, and he greatly resented that part of his transformation. He was tired, and drifted off to the sounds of the nocturnal life that surrounded their camp here in the mountains of Kultaka.

“They are the jaguar knights of Kultaka and we are in their lands, perhaps they could help us?” Anxelli said to Makuatua. She generally avoided talking to the Runt directly, but she knew he heard, and would undoubtedly voice his unwanted opinion soon enough.

"We don't need any help," the Runt responded on cue.

The four unlikely companions stood on a massive cliff where both the nations of Kultaka and Nexal could be seen. Many great battles between the two powerful nations had been fought in this very spot, but of the companions; only the star demon was aware of the history.

In the distance, Makuatua and Maohtli had spotted a pack of jaguar knights headed in their direction. Nexal had long ago become a nation of monsters collectively known as the Viperhand, and the jaguar knights likely were patrolling their borders.

Anxelli finally addressed the disguised tzitzimitl directly, "We are close enough to fiery Zatal to see her glow in the night and yet sometimes I cannot tell if you wish to guide me on this mission or make it more difficult. In fact, I still hardly know what it is I am to do. Tell me now or I will go no further. I have been a fool following you blindly for too long as it stands."

The Runt had given Anxelli just enough to get her to follow him, but he knew the clever girl suspected that he was in fact no ally. Perhaps he could gain some trust by giving her a bit more of the truth.

The Runt asked Anxelli, "You know of course the tale of the coming of the pale skinned men?"

Anxelli nodded.

"The Night of Wailing that they brought upon the True World was the first time the creatures known as orcs, ogres and jagres had even been seen in the True World; though all but the latter are known well in other parts of the world. These beasts have been the scourge of the True World for over a century now."

The Runt went on to explain how Mount Zatal had erupted on that evening so long ago, and the faithful to Zaltec were transformed by its strange energies into all manner of beasts. Hoxitl, the greatest of the jagre, led these creatures in an assault on the remaining humans who would never had escaped had it not been for the actions of a few heroes and the nearly direct intervention of the divine. Those very people went on to found the desert city and oasis known as Tukan.

"I appreciate the history lesson," Anxelli responded. "Yet I still do not see my place in all of this." She was growing frustrated with the discussion.

The star demon continued, "Your ancestor, Erixitl of Palul, was chosen by Qotal and it was her actions following the Night of Wailing that halted Zaltec's strength in the True World. You still carry her power in your bloodline – and with the loss of your father, you are the last. This gift of your birth is what makes them call you 'princess' and it is said that you are destined to either rule in the True World – or help destroy it."

Cualli had explained to Anxelli that she had been chosen, yet she had simply assumed this was a mantle the ancient plumaweaver had passed on to her. She did not know that it had actually been a part of her all along.

Anxelli knew that the Runt could not be trusted, but Makuatua, who stood by listening to the conversation, confirmed the truth in the story.

"Tell me what it is that I must do when we arrive at the mountain," Anxelli commanded.

"There is an item of great power that had been returned to Zatal many years ago," the tzitzimitl explained.

"The Cloak of One Plume," Anxelli interrupted.

"Yes! It is the item of legend once wielded by your ancestor. Zaltec hates the Cloak – he indeed fears its power! Qotal has placed much of his own essence within the Cloak and it can prevent all but the weakest of the gods' manifestations on the True World. You must find the cloak before the beasts of the Viperhand, for even now Zaltec searches to corrupt its magic."

CHAPTER 5

The Runt had decided to play an enormously dangerous game. No tzitzimitl had ever betrayed the Obsidian Butterfly in the past, and now he was planning on betraying both her *and* a deity! The star demon had not seen the possibility earlier, but as he gave the truth to Anxelli, he realized that with the Cloak of One Plume *he* could be the one to ascend! A new god of the star demons – Itzapaplotl would have to suffer for him!

The tzitzimitl's musings were interrupted when the jaguar knights crested the ridge. After he disclosed the significance of their quest to Anxelli, she demanded they signal the warriors from their vantage. Three came in human form and one in the shape of a jaguar; the knights did not arrive seeming overly hostile or agitated.

A jaguar knight in human form addressed Anxelli in Maztican, but with a harsh and guttural accent that she had some difficulty understanding. "Strangers, why are you in our lands. Under the orders of Icnoyotl, War Chief of Kultaka and descendant of Takamal, explain yourselves or surrender." The jaguar knights didn't quite know what to make of Makuatua and eyed the man of feathers warily.

Anxelli responded, "We seek to enter the heart of Nexal and only cross through your lands inadvertently. We did not mean to trespass, but have little to offer as recompense. Know that our mission is of great importance to the whole of the True World, and we could use the assistance of mighty Kultaka!"

The jaguar knights stood down just a bit, but remained vigilant. "The beasts of the Viperhand have emptied from their decaying cities and have all but opened a path to the mountain of fire. Do not be fooled into thinking such an event good fortune! Though the great Eater of Hearts protects us from the evils of the star demons, it would not be in the interest of Kultaka to find him once again manifest on the True World. You no doubt step into a trap."

When the jaguar knight spoke of the star demons, he gestured to his waist where the fanged skull of one of the creatures hung upon a hemp rope. The Runt looked to the Kultakan and snarled. Each knight – even the one in jaguar form, displayed some sort of fetish from the corpse of a tzitzimitl.

"Lies! You seek the power in the mountain for yourself!"

The Runt screamed his accusation at the knights, two of whom readied their mācuahuitl and one shapechanged to join his growling brother. The powerful weapons of the Kultakans' were a staple of a True World warrior – each a flat wooden board ridged with razor sharp plumastone; they were prepared to wet them with blood.

"Stand down!" Anxelli commanded with a powerful voice for one so young, but it was too late.

No longer caring if he exposed his true self, the Runt let starfire loose upon the jaguar knights. The two who were in jaguar form evaded the flames unharmed, but one in human form was badly burned on the left part of his torso and arm.

Makuatua stood between Anxelli and the fourth of the jaguar knights, tepoztōpilli in hand. The jaguar knight swung his mighty maca at the feather-man with a swing that could easily have beheaded the plumazotl. Skillfully, Makuatua used the shaft of his spear to deflect the blow, but the maca shattered the plumastone edge of his weapon. Makuatua surmised that the maca was enchanted to have exactly this effect.

Anxelli once again began to cast her protective slashing plumage, and it was nearly complete when a jaguar collided with her exposed flank. She was amazed by the knight's incredible speed and ability to remain unseen.

She cursed the Runt as the jaguar once again closed in on her prone form. When he displayed his power, Anxelli saw him for what he truly was. All along she had followed the word of one of Itzaplotl's own. The Runt was a star demon, and she was a fool!

The jaguar knight prepared to bite down on Anxelli, but Maohtli released a spray of color directly into the knight's face and he fell blinded to the ground.

More flames – this time from behind a nearby crest mirrored a flash from the star demon and the red and blue reflections intermingled. The unknown assailant represented a third party who had now entered the fray.

Two great and fiery snakes fought independently – one facing Runt and the other against the jaguar knight who had been burned at the battle's onset. The larger of the snakes bit down on the jaguar knight and tossed his screaming body from the cliff. It was engulfed in fire as it fell far to the rocks below.

The snake looked directly at Anxelli and smiled with a vile toothy grin and she heard its voice in her head.

"Greetings princess, I am Xiatemoc and this is my mate Kitilli. The Lord of Fire sends his regards and like your master Cualli, you too shall suffer in the flames of Tezca for eternity – the Flayed Lands await you!"

Anxelli recognized the creatures from Cualli's lessons. These were the dreaded xihucouatl of the flame god Tezca – a brother to Zaltec and her own lord Qotal. They were the instruments of Cualli's suffering and she welcomed the chance to avenge her mentor. She did not believe the foul creature's lies about Cualli but she was enraged regardless.

Makuatua charged the flame snake. The Runt, sensing that he stood between the remaining jaguars and the plumazotl, took to the sky and fully dropped his disguise. His skeletal form crackled with bluish flames and the coward disappeared beyond the cliff edge.

Three jaguar knights remained, though the one in human form still rubbed his eyes in an attempt to gain back his sight. The two in jaguar form charged the xihucouatl named Kitilli.

Maohtli released a spray of color, but the attack had no effect on the xihucouatl.

Makuatua was the first to make contact with the larger snake and his spear stabbed at the scaly one's chest. It left a large gash in the snake's hide, but the man made of feathers was particularly vulnerable to the snake's intense heat. Anxelli could see his form begin to char – yet he battled on. Over the years, she had grown to love this honorable and brave creature. She thought of him more as family than as a simple bodyguard.

Makuatua struck again but this time he only managed to make contact with the dulled edge of his tepoztōpilli and it hardly had an effect. The fire snake smiled an evil grin and bit down on the plumazotl's weapon arm. The snake began to glow brighter and his flames intensified. Anxelli screamed as she witnessed the death of her truest friend.

Anxelli did not even notice the no longer blind jaguar night step beside her as she lost herself in sorrow. The knight placed his hand on her shoulder and said, "He fought with the spirit of a Kultakan and the story of the man of feathers will be told among my people. This I swear to you."

Anxelli kept her sight on Xiatemoc and released her Breath of Qotal. The radiance seared the wound already inflicted by Makuatua and the snake roared in pain.

The two jaguar shaped knights pounced on Kitilli and bit deeply into her side.

Wailing, the xihucouatl intensified its flames instinctually – but these were warriors of Kultaka! They did not release nor relent their grip, and systematically they began to tear chunks of flesh from the serpent. In one last desperate attempt, the servant of Tezca flung itself from the cliff, taking the two brave knights with it. They did not release the xihucouatl until the ground below stole all three of their lives.

Anxelli and the jaguar knight squared themselves to Xiatemoc, emboldened by the bravery of their fallen companions. The plumacaster launched a barrage of feather darts from her outstretched hands – far more than the spell typically allowed. Each struck unerringly as the jaguar knight closed the distance and the creature grimaced in pain.

The xihucouatl, using innate magic of its own, put up a wall of fire between itself and the knight. The wall was angled so that the knight had become trapped between the cliff and the deadly flames. The serpent headed towards Anxelli seeking to rip out her throat and fulfilling his promise to his lord Tezca.

With only inches separating her from the xihucouatl's snapping jaws, Anxelli managed to raise a barrier of slashing plumage. The serpent raised the flames that naturally surrounded it and Anxelli felt her face start to redden. With her magic nearly depleted and the temperature rising, she knew her remaining spells needed to count.

She looked to the wall of flames that surrounded the jaguar knight and reached into the tendrils of magic that gave it power. Her dispelling was successful and the jaguar knight bounded from the flames before they had even fully died down.

Brandishing his enchanted mācuahuitl, the jaguar knight closed the distance to Xiatemoc within moments. Before the serpent could even react, the mighty maca cleanly removed its head from its body. Xiatemoc's head rolled to within inches of Anxelli's feet.

The jaguar knight, though burned and bruised, looked up to Anxelli and smiled.

From above, Maohtli suddenly cried out a warning. Realizing its inability to affect the xihucouatl, Anxelli had mentally informed her familiar to keep away early in the fight, but the corollax was not the only missing combatant.

The Runt, fully ablaze in blue starfire flew up from the cover that the cliff face offered him and released his starfire on the jaguar knight. The flames engulfed the knight and when they passed, only a smoking husk remained.

“Ah, dear Anxelli – why is it that every time you find yourself a new friend, they end up dead? Your parents, Cualli, Makuatua, and now this unnamed warrior all have fallen to defend you – I simply don’t understand the waste.”

Anxelli cast her final feather dart spell at the tzitzimitl who took the full brunt of the spell in his chest. A rib from his skeletal form, still glowing blue, fell from his body and down to the jagged rocks far below.

“I am going to miss that. Oh well, I have eleven more where it came from.”

Anxelli could still hurl the weakest of her magics at the star demon and was willing to take him apart one bone at a time. The tzitzimitl – despite its bravado, wisely moved itself out of her range.

Anxelli swore.

The star demon flew further from Anxelli and headed directly for the glow of Mount Zatal. “I will see you at the mountain, yes? There we can finish this. Good luck princess, and get some rest – you will need it for the challenges to come!”

Maohtli landed on Anxelli’s shoulder as the young woman surveyed the wreckage and wept. There was truth in the Star Demon’s words. Always did that vile creature speak the horrible truth!

The battle had left her exhausted and night had come just as the battle had drawn to a conclusion. It was already well past those early evening hours, and she realized she must rest if she intended to continue. Mount Zatal rumbled in the distance and this evening its glow seemed ever more ominous. Anxelli drifted off into slumber.

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Anxelli awoke to the sound of Cualli’s cooking as she so often did. She smelled the delicate aroma of jungle fruits and berries, and heard the soothing sounds of water boiling in a steel pot – a relic the pale faced men brought to the True World that Cualli found ever so useful.

“Good morning, child. I am glad you have rested – you seemed so very tired last night. Perhaps your studies keep you up too late into the evening hours?”

Anxelli looked to her mentor confused and she responded, “Well, yes, that must be it. I was just tired. What have you prepared this morning and how may I assist you?”

“Eggs, fruit and berries – all of your favorites in fact, dear. And yes, I would like your help please if you do not mind. Would you fetch the eggs for me? My old legs ache and do not wish to go all the way to the hut.”

“Of course, mentor.”

Anxelli went to her mentor’s hut admiring the beautiful day and smiling at the dozens of macaws she spotted high up in the jungle boughs.

When she entered the hut she found the basket of eggs sitting next to a gold foil and feather-embroidered box that she had never seen in Cualli’s possession before. Cualli studied the box – more of a chamber really, and she committed its design and construction to memory; not knowing exactly why she felt the need to do so. Anxelli opened the chamber and found a multihued egg whose coloration reminded her of...a friend?

Her memories came back in a flood and she suddenly noticed the hut was in flames. Fire rose up all around her, leaving only a single path to the hut’s door. She grabbed the egg and fled towards the door but the image of a giant ghostly snake’s head manifested before it. Flames came from the apparition’s mouth and it barred her exit with its toothy maw. Having no choice but to go forward, Anxelli barreled right through the spectral image and when she passed she found herself once again in the calm quiet jungle.

Cualli put her hand on Anxelli who was startled, but quickly settled at the calming touch of her mentor. She noticed that the hut had not truly been on fire, and it was likely only part of a terrible dream.

“Not all your friends have left you my dear. Though I have passed on to be with my husband, I love you still and will never truly leave your side.” As she spoke her words, Cualli’s face grew the features of a beautiful and youthful woman, erasing the tortures of the xihcouatl almost casually. A smiling man stepped from the jungle and called to Cualli.

“Itzamna doesn’t like it when I am gone from his side for too long, the fool can’t even wait just a few simple minutes.”

When Anxelli’s thought of the couple’s age long separation, she found great irony in Cualli’s words.

“I leave you with these parting words, daughter. While it is true that I can no longer spend my days physically by your side, one you thought lost is not truly gone at all. He is right there in the palm of your hands.”

Anxelli looked down at her hands and they were still holding the egg that she found in the gold-feathered chamber. When she looked back up, Cualli and her husband, the hut, the macaws and everything else was gone; replaced by the still smoking cliff face on the Nexal/Kultaka border where she had lost so much.

She knelt in the exact spot where Makuatua had been laid low by the flames of the xihcouatl, having somehow walked there in her sleep. She found her hands resting in the charred pile of feathers that had been Makuatua’s body and as she shifted the pile she found a melon sized egg – the same multicolored oval from her vision. Anxelli felt a feeling of intense relief – this was the way to bring Makuatua back; she knew it to be so! It appeared that Cualli had come to her in her sleep to teach her still in the ways of pluma magic, though the realization of her passing was bittersweet.

As if the instructions had been written directly into her mind, Anxelli knew she could build the chamber that she committed to memory once this whole quest was over. Having gained full knowledge of this powerful new spell, she knew that Makuatua would be born again as the same noble warrior that had given his life for her.

Anxelli felt reinvigorated and her magic came back; stronger than it had been just a day ago. She was ready for the Runt, and set off for the fires of Zatal with hopeful determination as she sought out the artifact of her god and ancestors.

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CHAPTER 6

If she had doubted the jaguar knight's description of the Valley of Nexal before, she certainly did not do so now. The cities of Azatl, Tezat and even Nexal itself had all been thoroughly abandoned by their foul inhabitants. It was a not-so-subtle invitation by Zaltec, this Anxelli knew; a trap that she willingly stepped into.

She thought of all the players in this cosmic game. Zaltec, Tezca, the star demons and their queen – she wondered if there were any true alliances among these awful beings. The clever girl figured that on some level, they would all undermine each other, hopefully to her own benefit.

Though obviously abandoned, ominous sounds still came from each city; Nexal in particular. She gave them a wide berth when it was possible and used her considerable speed to run through areas she could not avoid. Beyond foul Nexal, she finally stood at the base of Mount Zatal.

Long ago, the lakes that surrounded the mountain teemed with life and were a true bounty to one of the greatest population centers in the whole of the True World. On the Night of Wailing, the lakes had fouled, though somehow the Viperhand still finds sustenance within its low waters and mud flats.

The volcano itself was massive. Its base was nearly twenty miles wide and it reached so high into the sky that it could easily been seen from leagues away. The caldera itself was relatively small, but it continually belched forth plumes of smoke and hot ash. The glow of lava had become a permanent sight since the mountain reawakened.

Maohtli flew up the mountain side and searched for some kind of opening but had been unsuccessful. Anxelli followed her familiar slowly, as the terrain became jagged and barren. Further up, strange fiery lizards came into view, but they were easily avoided and did not seem overtly hostile. Anxelli prayed to Qotal to guide her steps.

After a full day of traveling, Anxelli set up camp and rested. The next morning she continued ever upwards on the mountain until the heat grew and the mountain grumbled.

Maohtli had just disappeared over boulders of basalt when the ground disappeared from underneath Anxelli's feet. She jumped to grab hold of a ledge but could not get a grip on the crumbling earth.

She fell for hundreds of feet into the darkness, but managed to quickly mouth the words of a spell – allowing her to float to the earth like a feather.

“And so it begins,” Anxelli said silently

Alone in the unbearable heat and dark; Anxelli heard dozens of footfalls coming from both directions. She grabbed a fallen basalt stone and cast a spell; enchanting the stone to light her way. As she lifted the glowing rock, she was startled by the eyeless face of a pale skinned humanoid that stood only a few feet from her. The creature raised its club of bone and swung violently but the Chosen of Qotal narrowly dodged the blow. The sounds of footsteps grew louder and she realized she needed to finish off the creature immediately. Anxelli cast her feather darts at the humanoid and felled it instantly.

She allowed herself a moment to look at the vile corpse and remember Cualli's teachings. She believed the creature was called a grimlock who were at one time the human inhabitants of the valley. Cualli told her that evil men once thrived alongside the beasts of the Viperhand and they were tolerated – for a time. When the skies turned to steel and Zaltec ceased answering the prayers of the faithful, Hoxitl and the other jagres ordered the orcs, ogres and trolls to round up the humans and bring them to Zatal in hopes that the sheer number of sacrifices would awaken their god. Hoxitl brought the humans to the mountain, but he was beset upon by a great two headed dragon known as a tlalocuatl. The humans escaped into the underground caverns and lava tubes of Zatal and were never heard from again. The confluence of their evil natures, the act of betrayal, and strange mystical energies of the Heart of the Mountain eventually transformed these piteous humans into the creature she now saw before her.

The footsteps grew louder, and she muttered a prayer to Qotal.

The horde first arrived from behind and she turned to run. Unfortunately a second group of the blind creatures turned a corner and she was effectively trapped with nowhere to turn.

Anxelli unleashed the Breath of Qotal upon the first group and in its radiance; nearly a dozen of the creatures were laid low. She turned to face the second horde but was struck with a bone club before she could even finish the motion. Anxelli saw stars, felt a few more blows, and lost consciousness.

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Anxelli woke with a pounding headache and found herself bound and gagged with filthy rags that smelled and tasted of blood. She opened her eyes to see an enormous chamber and a slow moving lake of magma. The flow came from under the rear wall and out once again in a spot uncomfortably close to her position; the heat made her sweat uncontrollably.

Dozens of the foul grimlocks pushed, shoved and bit at each other to claim small morsels of food. They were notorious cannibals, and she had no desire to see what awful meal they fought over.

For the moment, none had noticed the plumacaster's awakening. She thought to cast one of her spells, but without the use of her voice or hands it was impossible. Anxelli attempted to summon Maohtli to her side as well, but this too could not be done. Somehow she had lost contact with the corollax when she first entered the mountain.

Effectively helpless; how long would it be before the grimlocks fought over small pieces of her?

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Minutes passed but they seemed like hours and Anxelli grew desperate. She could think of no avenue of escape that would lead to her survival and she gave up any sense of hope. If only she had not lost her obsidian dagger in the jungle against the raptors!

As an act of defiance, the Chosen of Qotal decided that she would be the one to decide the way she would die. The magma river was only a few feet from where she lay and she found herself able to roll slowly even though her hands and feet were bound to each other. She began to turn end over end in order to bring herself to the molten rock. A quick death by incineration was better than being eaten one piece at a time.

A portly grimlock stopped gnawing on a femur in order to turn in her direction. It called the attention of grimlocks who stood closer to Anxelli's position and they headed towards her in a sprint.

The room shook violently and the grimlocks were knocked to their knees from the thunderous boom. The creatures and Anxelli both looked confused – could it be that the volcano was becoming active once again?

No, a second boom was definitively not the rumbling of an earthquake. A crack appeared in the wall behind the river of fire as if something was breaking through and the grimlocks began to scatter. The one who first noticed Anxelli's attempt at suicidal defiance fell into the magma along with half a dozen others.

A third boom sent shards of jagged rock and a cloud of dust billowing into the room and Anxelli felt the unlikely comfort of a cool, misty breeze.

The massive head of a great serpent came through the mist and grabbed a panicked grimlock; swallowing the creature whole. Three of the vile humanoids actually attacked the serpent's head with their bone clubs. A second head then appeared through the mist, but this one had the features of a jaguar of massive proportions. It opened its jaws and released a cloud of scalding steam that caused the grimlock's skin to boil and slide off the bone.

Anxelli realized that the two heads that had destroyed the cavern were not from separate creatures. Rather, both the serpent and jaguar heads belonged to a tlalocouatl – a dragon in service to the rain god Azul and possibly the very creature that drove the grimlocks underground a century ago. The room shook with every movement of its serpentine body and the river of lava began to creep slowly outside its normal path. Only inches from Anxelli now, the heat became unbearable; and she could not escape the burn.

Just as the magma began to redden her skin, Anxelli felt a billowing cloud of cool mist encompass her. The molten rock whistled and sputtered, but its orange and red glow dampened within moments. The tlalocouatl – a servant of a deity no less cruel than the fire lord Tezca had saved her from certain death! The jaguar head came through the steam and lifted the bound Anxelli in its powerful jaws. It bit down gently on her garments and lifted her much as a true jaguar would carry its kittens from danger.

The tlalocoatl exited with Anxelli back towards the cracked rock face. Magma flowed in front of the fissure now and she noticed a large lava tube leading deeper into the mountain. The serpent head reared back and let forth a cone of ice crystals that halted the remainder of the magma flow – the room became pleasantly cool.



The rain dragon raced through endless tunnels deep into the mountain. It made dozens of turns, sometimes even upward or downward. Anxelli knew there would be no way for her to find her way back but it didn't really matter; she had long ago become lost in her encounter with the grimlocks.

The tunnels were tubes carved by lava long ago, but they were so moist that small pools formed in depressions. Some of the deeper pools stirred with life, but nothing dared challenge the two-headed serpent. Anxelli lost her light stone, but luminescent lichen covered the walls of the lava tubes, giving the whole underground region the ambiance of a lunar evening in the jungles of Far Payit.

Finally the tlalocouatl came upon a massive stone disk carved with ancient engravings that blocked any further travel. Anxelli could not recognize most of the engravings, but they included many of the typical depictions of Azul and the motifs all dealt with rain, clouds, lakes or rivers. One in particular grabbed her attention – a carving of what was undoubtedly a great flood. Humans and many beasts she did not recognize fled the deluge. Though she did not have a chance to look for long, she thought she noticed a strange man-scorpion hybrid within the group.

For the first time, the heads spoke – answering Anxelli's unspoken question to whether or not they (it?) were capable. The words it spoke were mystical and in perfect unison – the effect was almost melodic, and the stone disk began to slide into the cavern walls of its own volition.

A great chamber opened up beyond the disk and Anxelli was gently dropped near a pool that smelled of morning dew. The dragon spoke more mystical words and Anxelli felt what she initially thought was a breeze. Wispy hands formed in the wind and removed her gag and bindings.

The walls of the chamber were tiled, forming a vast mosaic of blue and green designs – many of which resembled the carvings on the stone disk. A dragon sized cavity in the ceiling allowed sunlight to filter down from far above, illuminating the entirety of the chamber. Likely, it also served as an exit for the tlalocouatl.

The jaguar head spoke a single word to Anxelli.
"Drink."

After her ordeal with the magma, Anxelli was terribly dehydrated. She feared the dragon and did not yet know its intentions, but she obliged its command more than willingly.

The tlalocouatl waited patiently for her to finish. A dragon of its size was likely quite ancient and surely had developed remarkable patience in its long existence.

When she finished, Anxelli looked into the dragon's eyes – all four stared at her intently.

"Chosen of Qotal, you stand in the chamber of Quiyahui; servant of Azul and Architect of the Great Flood. My master bid me assist you and to give you this gift."

The dragon's words once again became the voice of magic – and the waters of the pool began to recede. Dry and untouched by the sweet smelling waters, a carved pillar stood within the depths. Atop the pillar lay the grandest feather Anxelli had ever seen.

Multicolored and glowing with power, Anxelli understood she was in the presence of the Cloak of One Plume. It had always been an item of great power; a pluma talisman that some say had been crafted by Qotal himself. Cualli once explained to her that Qotal sensed a calamity before the gods went silent and he invested much of his power and divinity into the cloak.

"Though our patrons do not always see eye to eye, they now honor a pact made long before the sky turned to steel!"

Anxelli only nodded. She had accepted her destiny long ago, but the presence of the divine was overwhelming.

The tlalocouatl continued, "Among all the gods, my lord has grown weary of Zaltec and Qotal's incessant interventions in the world of men. Qotal has agreed to leave mankind to his own devices, should Azul and the other gods hold dark Zaltec to the same standard. Only fiery Tezca has abandoned his family to find his own way."

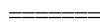
Anxelli spoke for the first time, "I understand great one, but if I may ask – what is my role in this?"

"Your blood is the catalyst that can return the divinity that Qotal relinquished. You need only don the Cloak of One Plume and will it to be so. There are many others who sought to either steal its power for themselves, or destroy it outright. You have done admirably well in following your destiny."

Anxelli stepped onto the pillar and took the cloak in her hand. She thought she would be consumed by the immense power she felt within the item, but by the time she wrapped it about her shoulders, she grew accustomed to the sensation.

"Now, release the power to your lord."

Anxelli somehow knew exactly what to do. The divine glow in the Cloak of One Plume intensified and visibly seeped into her hands. The multicolored energy flowed up her arms as slowly as the molten rock in the mountain. It eventually passed into her heart and upwards towards her mouth. She tilted her head upwards to the cavity in the ceiling and opened her mouth to the sky and experienced a brief moment of silence as time stopped within the room – droplets of water from the moist air hung suspended in tiny globules. The silence grew to a roar as a beam exploded from Anxelli's mouth straight up into the sky above. Somewhere, she heard the approving roar of a dragon far greater even than that of Quiyahui.



"Betrayed!"

Zaltec did not have to say much more, his fury spoke ten thousand words.

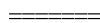
"Divinity? Sponsorship? No, the only gift I will bring her is the gift of oblivion!"

Mount Zatal had always been sacred to Zaltec, but even the greatest of his priests could not understand why the Bringer of War took such an interest in the Mountain of Fire. The inhabitants of the True World spoke of the heart of the mountain as a metaphor; something dark emanated from within its depths for certain. But among the faithful, only Hoxitl knew there was a tangible – literal translation. When Zaltec beheaded Maztica; his mother and the mother of the whole of the True World, he ripped her still beating heart from her chest and brought it to reside below the mountain. Its power of life was corrupted and it is the source of the dark energy that emanates from the mountain and brought the Night of Wailing.

Zaltec entered the Chamber of the Heart and looked at his prize. Blackened with rot, the heart grew tendrils like veins into the surrounding stone – which held it aloft like the pulp in an open gourd.

The heart occasionally beat, which caused the mountain to shake and rumble. Even as far as Kultaka, its irregular beat could be heard.

Zaltec stepped close to his mother's heart and bit deeply. Its magic infused him and he felt his stony form crumble, only to reform in the void kingdom of the Mother of the Star Demons.



In eons of existence, Itzapaplotl's kingdom of Tamoacha had remained inviolate. Far above the world in the airless reaches of the void – she reigned without question.

Yet here he was in front of her; Zaltec, the Bringer of War and Eater of Hearts. He approached with his mācuahuitl raised high, intent on battle. Perhaps if he would not assist her in her ascension, she would have to take it from him!

Itzapaplotl grew to a size which matched the stone titan that was Zaltec. Their forms collided and the sky kingdom shook.

Magics were unleashed which, had they been on the surface of the True World, would have torched the forests and laid mountains low.

The Obsidian Butterfly was no match for the Bringer of War. Her claws and magic ripped great chunks of stone from his flesh, but the Eater of Hearts scored hit after hit with his terrible mācuahuitl.

Hundreds, if not thousands or tzitzimitl came to the aid of their mother; each unleashing torrents of star fire. They too were crushed by the dozen with every swing of Zaltec's maca, but their starfire began to weaken him.

Temporarily ignoring the star demons, Zaltec thrust his fist into the prone Itzapaplotl's chest and ripped out her beating heart. He swallowed it whole and threw her still living body deep into the void. The Obsidian Butterfly's scream was silent, but her face remained twisted in pain long after her form was no longer visible.

Witnessing the likely death of their queen and mother, the star demons released their fire simultaneously on Zaltec. The light was so bright that the mortal inhabitants of the True World thought that a star had burst – many saw it as a powerful omen. When the blue flame subsided nothing remained. Zaltec, the tzitzimitl and Itzapaplotl were all gone and the void kingdom of Tamoacha floated silently.



When Zaltec feasted on the heart of his mother, an earthquake struck the cavern of the tlalocouatl. Boulder sized stone began to fall from the ceiling, ruining the beautifully engraved mosaic.

Anxelli was quick to avoid the worst of the falling rock, but small stones pelted her on her back and shoulders and she cried out in pain.

The shaking subsided, but a particularly large rock fell from above and Anxelli did not have time to evade it.

The serpent head of the dragon thrust itself between her and the falling rock and it struck with great force. The serpent head grew silent but the jaguar wailed and spoke, "Go now! You command the power of the Cloak of One Plume. Return to your people and tell them that Azul has brought them succor!"

The Cloak imparted its abilities on Anxelli and she knew one of its greatest was the gift of flight. Stones still fell in the chamber and the large body of the dragon took hit after hit.

"Go!!!" The dragon screamed.

Faster than Makuatua or Maotli ever could, Anxelli launched herself into the air with hardly a thought. She spared one last glance on the dragon and muttered a word of sincere thankfulness. She was concerned that the majestic serpent could not fly without both heads being conscious, but she needed to leave the chamber before it was too late.

She flew upwards into the cavity in the ceiling. The dragon must have carried her upwards in their escape from the grimlock cavern; because they were she realized they were surprisingly close to the surface. Anxelli burst out into the open air once again – finally free from the oppressive mountain.

CHAPTER 7

Anxelli marveled at the Cloak of One Plume and its powers, but she did not particularly feel like celebrating. Maohtli was not just some stupid bird to her, he was her familiar – and since that day long ago with Cualli, she had felt a persistent connection to the corollax. When she entered Zatal, Anxelli thought the evil energy of the mountain itself had somehow suppressed her connection, but now she had flown far beyond the mountain and still there was nothing.

She had temporarily returned to the mountain and searched for days for her brave little friend, but there was no sign of him to be found. Eventually she was forced to move on. Anxelli worried that he might have fallen victim to some predator on the mountain, perhaps one of the fiery lizards that wandered its surface. In her recent search she had come into conflict with a few of the beasts and found to her delight that the Cloak also gave her resistance to its fiery breath.

A familiar, once slain, could be recalled with a ritual similar to when she first bonded with the bird – but she couldn't bear the thought of yet another of her friends suffering because of her. The Runt' old accusations echoed in her mind.

Through her ordeal, Anxelli managed to maintain possession of the egg that was Makuatua; hiding it in a small feathered pouch that had been a gift from Cualli. The pouch was itself a talisman of plumamagic that could fit far more on its inside than its size would suggest, yet it was nondescript and easily ignored.

She decided she would see to her friends first. She would build the chamber whose design Cualli had brought to her in her dreams first. Her knowledge of this spell – incubation, as it was called, would “hatch” her old friend so that he could once again stand by her side. She missed the warrior's silent company.

The familiar ritual would soon follow – and if the corollax had been slain, he would return to her. At the very least, this awful occurrence would explain his disappearance.

Anxelli flew each day and rested only scant hours each evening; first through Nexal, then fierce Kultaka and idyllic Pezelac. When she first entered the jungles of Payit she felt a wave of nostalgia and realized how much she had missed home.

Far off on the horizon she spotted black smoke rising in the jungle. She knew very well the region – it was the home of a mixed community of Payit and jungle halflings who had become unlikely allies in the preceding century. Even from her distance she could see the damage was extensive.

The smell of burst flesh was overpowering when she came upon the village, but the smell wasn't the only thing that would give Anxelli nightmares for years to come.

The men and halflings who had been incinerated were perhaps the luckiest of the inhabitants. Entrails were everywhere – it was gore unlike Anxelli could ever imagine. This was not the clean kills of sacrifice which the priests of the dark gods performed, but rather an act of pure malice. She had to duck to avoid the hanging corpses and the plumacaster vomited.

The silence was unbearable. A small village such as this should be teeming with the sounds of children playing – but they too had fallen victim to whatever cruel force was responsible.

She heard a faint growl from the edge of the jungle. Though she was cautious, it seemed more of a warning than the prelude to an attack. She looked into the foliage and a small black jaguar stepped out and flattened its ears. Anxelli walked towards the animal and it rolled onto its backside in a sign of submission.

“So there has been a survivor,” Anxelli said wistfully. In the midst of the horror, it was a small victory, but the cat made her smile.

“I wish you could tell me what happened here little beastie.” The young jaguar rubbed up against her leg lovingly. She bent over to pet it and it suddenly growled.

Anxelli was slapped in the face with a cold wet object that did not hurt overly much but certainly startled her. The jaguar bounded into the woods.

“Oh my, I told you that you were a poison for your friends; look at what you have caused!”

She knew that voice and she wanted to lash out at it. Above her, the skeletal runt of a star demon hovered; still fleshless, but wearing a cloak of his own draped about his body. She looked down at the object that had struck her face and she gagged for the second time today.

“Yes, do you recognize your friend? His bright plumage bothered my eyes so I plucked them from him one at a time. Oh wait – I don't have any eyes, foolish me!”

Anxelli screamed, “No!” and the Cloak of One Plume flared with scintillating colors and a ghostly image of the Plumed Dragon roared above her head. Anxelli stood tall in its naked power.

Maohtli's corpse disappeared in a puff, having finally been released from whatever magic the Runt used to keep the familiar bound.

The tzitzimitl was taken aback by the girl's display of power and nearly fell prone, but he quickly recovered.

“It pleases me that the Cloak of One Plume has retained some of its might; I will gladly take it from you momentarily – but first understand that I too have drunk from the divine!”

As he uttered his last word, the Runt opened his cloak to Anxelli and revealed his skeletal chest. Within his ribcage, she could see a black beating heart – undoubtedly the Heart of Hoxitl, but far more alive. The hishna talisman had become a dark mirror of the Cloak of One Plume; perhaps absorbing some of the divine energy released in Zaltec's battle. It had become a part of the Runt and the two sworn enemies stood on equal ground.

Anxelli used the flying power of the Cloak to reach eye level with the Runt. Before her eyes, the star demon began to grow until his feet touched the ground. The Heart had always allowed its wielder to transform, but it was no longer constrained by size or strength. Anxelli saw the irony in the Runt's new stature.

“How will you face me now, Chosen? My power is far too great.”

The tzitzimitl released a great blast of starfire that engulfed Anxelli. What remained of the village behind her was instantly incinerated, leaving hardly a trace that there had ever been a settlement.

The flames died out and Anxelli stood untouched; the power of the Cloak had protected her and now it was her turn.

Anxelli preferred her spells of pluma, but they were not all she carried in her arsenal. Using the breath of the great Quiyahui as inspiration, she released a blue ray of terrible cold from her fingertips that struck the giant star demon unerringly. Frost formed over his shoulder and he grunted in pain.

“Not so cocky now, demon,” Anxelli quipped.

The star demon’s skeletal hand struck Anxelli and knocked her out of the sky. She knew her right arm was broken, but was surprised the attack hadn’t killed her.

She responded with the Breath of Qotal and the radiance struck the tzitzimitl. The star demon had continued growing throughout the battle, however, and the damage she incurred was not enough to stop him.

The star demon’s fist struck down at Anxelli but she narrowly evaded the attack. Though her magic was strong she did not know if she could defeat him.

Having now grown taller than the trees, the star demon grabbed at Anxelli and she could not escape him this time. He held her tightly and began to squeeze. Her broken arm was pinned in the skeletal grasp and the pain was unbearable; she knew that she would soon be crushed in his grasp.

The tzitzimitl abruptly stopped and looked down at his feet. The young black jaguar had returned from the jungle and was tearing at the star demon’s leg with all its might.

“Beastie!” Anxelli yelled out.

The jaguar’s attack could not truly hurt the giant, but the momentary distraction was all that Anxelli needed. She mouthed the words and made the motions with her free arm to summon a small spectral hand within the star demon’s chest. A simple spell really, she more often used it to assist in chores when she resided with Cualli. The hand clamped on the beating Heart of Hoxitl and pulled it through the gap formed by the missing rib in the star demon’s chest.

Instantly, the star demon shrunk back to a pathetic runt. Anxelli dropped hard to the earth but she rose once again before the weakened tzitzimitl could react. The jaguar stood beside her.

This time, when the Breath of Qotal struck the tzitzimitl it did not recover. It’s smoking form lay amidst the devastation it had wrought, having left this world with hardly a whimper.

EPILOGUE

Long after the battle with Runt Anxelli visited her third village with Makuatua, Maohtli and her Beastie beside her. She never felt that the title “princess” fit, and she certainly did not accept it when they had called her “queen.” Anxelli chose instead to honor her teacher Cualli by passing the great gift of plumamagic throughout Payit. In each town she visited, Anxelli found an apprentice to whom she passed along her knowledge.

Never again would cruel beings like the Obsidian Butterfly or her star demon minions find the peaceful folk unprepared. The tonalli of Cualli occasionally looked in on the one she considered a daughter and she smiled.

Exbal Ken is the tenemo of the torturers and priests of the cruel gods after passing from the mortal world. The tonalli here have a choice to either continue to suffer or cause suffering. It is difficult to find a being that still retains its heart within its chest in the whole of the eternal plane.

Zaltec brooded among the carnage and called to his greatest servant.

“Hoxitl, come to me my slave.”

The massive jagre appeared instantly in the presence of his master.

“Yes, my lord. What is it that you wish of me, Bringer of War.”

“There is one who has defied me and I wish to feast upon her heart. Bring her to me.”

From his maw, Zaltec produced a blackened heart that beat furiously in Hoxitl’s presence. He thrust the heart forward and veins like tendrils reached to a gap in the jagre’s chest. As if it were a burrowing lizard in the House of Tezca, the heart crawled into the empty cavity and the wound closed over instantly.

Hoxitl smiled a toothy grin.

THE END



WELCOME TO THE TRUE WORLD!

Maztica is back once again, literally and figuratively! After a century of exile on the twin planet of Abeir, Maztica returned during the miraculous event known as the Sundering.

So what exactly has come back from the savage world with strangely colored skies?

What are the Mazticans like today and have they ever fully recovered from the invasion only a few short decades before the Blue Breath of Change?

Qotal had returned, but then the gods were left behind once again. With so much trauma and so many changes, it is a wonder that civilizations did not collapse.

Well they didn't, and the Mazticans have proven the old adage many times over that what doesn't kill you, only makes you stronger.

Cover Art: "*The Shaman*"
Dragos Jeanu

THE MAZTICA CAMPAIGN

This netbook is designed to attract new players to the Mesoamerican based setting known as Maztica.

Maztica is a region of the greater world of Toril from the Forgotten Realms. It was originally introduced in 1990 with the novels **Ironhelm** (1990), **Viperhand** (1990) and **Feathered Dragon** (1991); each written by *Doug Niles*. It was subsequently followed up by a number of 2nd Edition gaming products, starting with the **Maztica Boxed Set** in 1991 (also by Doug Niles) and followed by two adventures (**FMA1 Fires of Zatal** by *Jeff Grubb* and *Tim Beach*, **FMA2 Endless Armies** by *Jeff Grubb*) and one accessory/adventure (**FMQ1 City of Gold** by *John Nephew* and *Jonathan Tweet*).

In later editions of Dungeons and Dragons, with a few minor exceptions, Maztica was summarily ignored or outright removed from the Forgotten Realms setting. With the advent of 5e and the Dungeon Master's Guild, Maztica is back once again in the Realms!

A NEW, NEW EDITION!

The first time I started writing for Maztica was way back in the latter days of the 3rd Edition. Floating out there on the internet somewhere there is a nightmarish early version of this book which I highly recommend you avoid!

But time passed and with dozens of additional books written, I have tried to hone both my writing skills and game knowledge to eventually come back to my first love. While loaded with errors, I believe the first version of this book was headed in the right direction. But now, with the advent of wonderful programs like GmBinder, it was time for a new update. If you have the first version (which is also available here for download) you'll notice some major differences, beyond even the rules clarifications.

