

Oathbound. Arena



Oathbound®

Arena

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The Oath of War

*With chains of steel we bind thee
On sands of red, never free*

*To enslave, to kill, all for gold
The fate of the strong set to unfold
From the depths the great shall rise
For only the strongest can claim the prize*

*The second of eight, whose flows blood red
On rusted wings, never to shed
Death by steel is thy curse
Forever true is this verse*

*Never shall you know true peace
Never shall your hatred cease*

OATHBOUND: *Arena* is intended to be used as a supplement to the OATHBOUND® campaign setting by Bastion Press. This book assumes the reader is familiar with information presented in the OATHBOUND: *Domains of the Forge* campaign book. *Arena* is the second domains sourcebook released for the OATHBOUND setting. The first domain, Penance, is detailed in *The Plains of Penance, Wrack & Ruin*, and the OATHBOUND: *Domains of the Forge* hardcover.

OATHBOUND: *Arena* details the largest domain on the world of the Forge. The lands of this domain are vast stretches of red sand, spent gold mines, and dotted with lush oases coveted by powerful warlords and those that serve them. Unlike the other seven domains of the world, *Arena* is a land ruled by vast armies commanded by strong warlords, who fuel their conflicts with gold and other precious commodities hidden beneath the sands. This cycle has gone unbroken for countless centuries, and is what makes the red sands of *Arena* one of the most dangerous places on the Forge for even the most resilient of adventurers.

The Forge is an old world, one created and maintained by seven powerful and enigmatic beings known as the Feathered Fowl. These divine seven, one for each domain of the Forge, are bound by an oath taken eons ago to hold fast the world against the escape of the Nameless One—a being of incredible power imprisoned within the heart of the world. The devices and desires of the seven have searched the multiverse for mortals to help further their ambitions on the Forge. Only the eccentric godlike psyches of the seven can understand how or why they do what they do on this world. *Arena*, and its feathered mistress Barbello, is no exception.

The strange world of the Forge is also one of outlandish creatures from a thousand worlds, and countless intelligent races and cultures that have been drawn here by the Seven from across the cosmos—all to serve as pawns in their effort to break free of their oath. The Forge is a world of high science, powerful magic and ancient mysteries waiting to be uncovered by intrepid adventurers. This is the world of OATHBOUND.

Product Summary

This product is organized into 11 Chapters, plus appendices. Game Masters should read the entire book, while players should avoid the adventure section (Chapter 11) or any texts contained inside a colored box.

- Chapter 1 gives a summary of OATHBOUND: *Domains of the Forge*, highlighting *Arena* as an entry point to the world and how it relates to other domains.
- Chapter 2 walks the reader through an overview of the lands of *Arena*. This section details the domain's unique geography, cultures and races, the major civilized areas, and the land's primary means of trade and commerce.
- Chapter 3 takes a look at the ecology of the *Arena*, detailing various flora, fauna, and non-monstrous animals. This covers the deserts, jungles, oases, and oceans that encompass the domain.
- Chapter 4 details the primary economic means of the warlords who rule the domain: mining and prospecting for gold. With gold a warlord can raise an army in which to conquer other territories, capture land and enslave labor, and mine more gold.
- Chapter 5 introduces the reader to the lords of the land, the powerful warlords of *Arena*. Learn who are the most influential, where they are located, and discover their desires and plans for the people and the lands they rule.
- Chapter 6 outlines the oceans that surround *Forge's* largest domain. Discover what races control the waves of *Arena*.
- Chapter 7 summarizes how *Arena* fits in with the rest of the domains of the Forge. The politics and trade between the warlords and rulers of other domains is detailed here.
- Chapter 8 is a GM and PC section that introduces the reader to the mass combat associated with the massive armies of the warlords. It also discusses how large-scale battles are organized, and gives ideas to the GM on how to treat this type of game-play in an *Arena* campaign.
- Chapter 9 covers new PC races and prestige classes unique to the domain, as well as new gifts and prestige races that are reflective of *Arena*.
- Chapter 10 brings forth the great war machines used by some warlords in their fight to gain territory and gold: large-scale artillery, siege engines, and magical war golems, just to name a few.
- Chapter 11 is a ready-made adventure that takes the PCs from the city of Penance to the harsh red sands of *Arena*, expanding the OATHBOUND campaign into the Forge's largest domain.

The World of the Forge

“They say that the crimson sands of Arena are stained with the blood of those lain on the altar of war. True that countless armies have savaged themselves here, but it is their dreams that stain this barren realm. Shattered, flayed, and stripped of all sentiment and hope, they gild the sand, making each grain a precious jewel of a dream lost and broken. This is why Arena is the wealthiest of domains. This is why I want it all.”

- The Grand Asherake to members of his court

The creation of madness and desperation, the Forge is a world fashioned from the collective will of godlike entities who find themselves bound by an oath they can neither sunder nor understand. It is a world of dichotomies, polar opposites residing side by side in relative stability, though never harmony. Composed from the prized pieces of thousands of worlds, the Forge was crafted by the will of the Feathered Flock, the Keepers of the Seven Locks that bar the door against an unspeakable secret. Populated by peoples and races as dissimilar as the land itself, it is more a collage of life than a carefully matured sphere of existence. It is these differences that make the setting of OATHBOUND unique in its thrills and dangers. It is a restless world where the Feathered Flock battle to uphold their oath while trying to undermine it. It is a land where unknown people become heroes who batter against the walls of a prison they unknowingly find themselves in.

Its Making

The Forge is a manifestation of hope and despair. It was conceived and birthed by servants of a nameless god who strove to overtake the entire universe with his cosmic authority. So mighty was this lord of gods that it took the entirety of the remaining deities to overpower him. Bereft of influence, the nameless god was imprisoned by the coalition, who sundered his creations and laid waste to his immense domains. Unchecked in their wrath, the coalition took his seven most loyal servants, beings of titanic power known as the Feathered Flock, and bound them as the Keepers of the Seven Locks. Forced to swear terrible oaths written in their own blood, each of the Seven was made lord of an empty citadel, the sealed portals of their master's prison.

An age of ages passed, during which the Feathered Flock mulled the Great Oath proclaimed against them, gleaning errors in its intent that only millennia of study could reveal. Armed with new hope they attempted to work within the constraints of their oaths, stealing the power it afforded. Though not allowed to venture from their plane of confinement, they were not forbidden from drawing others within. With vision strengthened by interminable longing, they scanned the worlds beyond their own. Their patience was rewarded as they began to draw bits of the far cosmos to them, coalescing them into a new



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world of churning possibilities. Empowered, the Seven gave peace to the chaos they had created, each sculpting a domain to their liking and personality.

Aware that their freedom could only be purchased with their defeat, but forsworn from allowing it to occur, the Seven began to populate the world with entities that possessed the potential for greatness. Most never amounted to the faintest glimmer of power, instead wasting themselves on petty designs or immediate gratification. Compelled by their oaths, the Fowl repeatedly swept their creation bare, remaking their vision with grim desperation. Eventually, a balance was achieved that allowed the Fowl to foster greatness in their seeds. Though prevented by their oaths from taking a direct hand in the fates of their charges, the Feathered Flock could influence their environment, exposing the seeds to crucial situations that could shape their rise to power. Though obliged to destroy those that threaten their position as celestial wardens, the Seven Fowl continue to nurture dreams of eventual freedom, realizing that eternity makes all things probable.

Its Makers

The rulers of the Forge are winged, four-horned, blindfolded beings that take residence in domains fashioned from their desires and attitudes. Each distinctive realm facilitates the goals of its Feathered Fowl. Wielding supreme power within the confines of their domain, the Feathered Flock use avatars to mold and reshape their vision of personal perfection, providing it does not invoke the dreadful Great Oath that dominates them.

Barbello

Barbello is the Mask of Fury, the volatile ruler of Arena and the most wrathful of the Seven. Naked of deception or cunning, she acts according to her will, never forsaking her passions for gain. Despite any intended goals, Barbello continually throws caution aside and ventures wherever her impulsiveness carries her. Battle is her weakness and her strength. An entity of war and destruction, she desires the return of the nameless god for the catastrophe it would impart. However, she secretly harbors a despondent resentment for her actions, desiring to simply walk away from the history she has created and endured.

Bathkol

The most reclusive and cerebral of the Feathered Flock, Bathkol rules the volcanic domain of Kiln. Less mindful of the physical nature of his creation, Bathkol treads the metaphysical realms, plumbing the depths of his inner being for reasons known only to him. His domain is the most ordered of the Seven and is becoming even more so, leading many to propound that he has elevated himself to a higher state of being. Whether this is true or whether it could allow him to deceive the oath is unknown and will remain so until Bathkol reveals his designs. Since he has not been seen in nearly ten centuries, the answer is not likely forthcoming.

Colopitiron

The only non-original member of the Feathered Flock, Colopitiron commands the northern domain of Eclipse, a region of perpetual night where honor and morality are eagerly quashed. Once a mortal rogue named Annoxus, Colopitiron still clings to the world he once knew before slaying the original Colopitiron and taking on his power—and his oath. Cruel and resentful, he places his harsh hand everywhere on his domain. His seldom pulls outsiders to his domain, instead relishing his ability to impose his will on the oppressed populace. Resigned to his current state, Colopitiron does not attempt to overturn his oath, but takes what fate proffers.

Haiel

The bestial heart of the hunter thumps in the breast of this Feathered Fowl. His domain is Wildwood, a vast expanse of jungle and thick forest wherein he pursues his quarry. Callous to the needs of his holding, Haiel sees its occupants as prey meant to offer him respite from the doldrums of his existence. Either individually or collectively, the inhabitants of Wildwood eventually draw the attention of the Blade of the Green, who sponsors hunts where they can prove their worth or provide entertainment. Relatively content with his existence, he vacillates over his feelings about the release of the nameless god.

Israfel

Israfel, the Queen of Penance, is the most influential of the Feathered Flock. She conceived that the Great Oath could be circumvented, and dreamt of the Forge and its seeding long before her compatriots ever rose above their despondency. As a keeper of knowledge and the spouse of the nameless god, Israfel attempts to guide the actions of her fellows, using her vast understanding of the limitations of the Great Oath to their best advantage. Though her knowledge is incomplete, it does permit Israfel to investigate potential avenues of exploitation. However, the vagaries of the Great Oath chasten any overt approach. As such, Israfel is careful to not reveal her complete designs to the other Feathered Fowl, lest she invoke their oaths.

Nemamiah

The eldest of the Seven, Nemamiah rules the southern domain of the Vault, a lifeless realm inhabited by foul undead bent on discovering the method of his destruction. Once the Charioteer of the Sun, Nemamiah ruled a lush and green domain, a paradise. That changed when a madman shattered the magic mirrors that heated the domain. The land perished in the frigid night, as did Nemamiah's will. He underwent a most grievous transformation, taking the epithet The Leper. Slipping into a hopeless darkness, Nemamiah transformed the dead inhabitants of his domain into undead, and to them laid the task of seeking his absolute oblivion.

Orifelle

The Scourge of the Wind, Orifelle is an emotional Fowl that is enveloped in the raw energy of nature. Howling winds are her herald and tall precipices are her abode as she rules the domain of Anvil. The scion of Israfel and the nameless god, Orifelle seeks her personal freedom from which she believes she can unfetter her parents. To this end she batters her people with tempests, storms, and colossal giants, driving them to the glorious heights of courageous endurance in the hope that one may be capable of unseating her.

Leaving the Forge

The factors that created the Forge also conspire to keep most everyone from leaving. A side effect of the Great Oath binding the Feathered Flock, it impedes planar travel and banishments, a restriction that can only be overcome by the construction of a magical seven-piece device known as the *key of binding*. This device allows the user to return to his physical point of origin prior to his pull into the Forge and results in the destruction of the *key*. If coupled with planar or banishment magic, the wielder can travel to where he wills, or banish others according to the dictates of the magic employed, though the *key* is not consumed unless the crafter leaves the Forge.

The *key of binding* is a unique device individually crafted for a single user and cannot be used by others even if stolen or sold. Composed of elements of the seven domains, it is a collage of commonly acquired items with one or two that demand extreme effort to garner. Most of the needed items can be purchased at any decent market. Glass made from the sands of Arena or a staff of century old walnut from the Wildwood is a typical example of common components. The exact composition is freely chosen by the crafter and can be replaced if lost. The rare elements are determined by the will of the Forge itself and seem to follow no logical pattern, save that their acquisition is difficult and fraught with danger. These elements generally are shards of blue crystal that radiate a powerful magical aura. Others can be very specific and reflective of the person searching for it. Examples might include a pinfeather of the Grand Asherake that is given with kindness or the blood of a carrier ceptu that has never touched air. The crafter of a *key of binding* becomes privy to the nature of the required rare elements in visions or dreams.

Unfortunately, the *keys* are not eternal, losing all power when the crafter leaves the Forge or gains a level. In such cases new *keys of binding* can be manufactured, though their components will surely be different. The cost to manufacture a *key* is 1,000 gp per character level, or the projected level at which the character plans to leave the Forge.

Passage beyond the boundaries of the Forge is an extremely rare occurrence, often leading to heart-pounding tavern talk of daring exploits. While many seeds attempt to escape the Forge, and begin to gather the required materials to do so, they falter at the end. The vibrant nature of the Forge licks at their senses, subduing their will

to depart. Eventually, most just cease their attempts, becoming bound to the domains as surely as are the Feathered Flock.

Planar Travel

It is possible for an individual to enter the Forge without being pulled by one of the Feathered Flock. Whether such persons enter to rescue an abducted comrade, or seek an enemy who fled to the Forge, their options are limited to a few proven methods. Either they can use planar magic to traverse the planes or they can locate a bird scout of a Feathered Fowl and offer themselves for admittance. Little realized by those aware of the existence of the Forge, any black-hued bird is a prospective link to the Feathered Fowl that harvests that world. If approached and addressed with the name of the respective Feathered Fowl, the bird can be provoked into gathering its kin, marking the character for the pull to that lord's domain. Offering proof of one's worth increases the chances of successfully arriving in the Forge, though that is never a guarantee.

Regardless of how a seed arrives in the Forge, he finds himself unable to leave save by means of a *key of binding*. Though not personally selected by a domain lord, he is hampered by all the strictures against planar travel and banishment. Also, such new arrivals do not receive gifts commonly given to traditionally pulled characters. They do, however, suffer the effects of the Sifter.

The Domains of the Forge

The domains of the Forge reflect the will of those who rule them, each a material embodiment of the Feathered Fowl that presides there. None of the domains, save perhaps the Vault, are truly detrimental to the living. Despite harsh and often frightful conditions, the domains are meant to nurture greatness, not squander it. Each domain is unique in its qualities, possessing a character that cannot be mistaken. Though interactions occur, there is no blending or blurring between realms. Either the boundaries are abrupt, or they are edged in gray regions of utter neutrality. It is in the latter areas that the Grey Wanderer travels. The quiet avatar of the nameless god, it flits amidst the gray borders attempting to affect its own release.

Anvil

This domain is ruled by Orifelle and is a land of towering mountain peaks, sheer cliffs, parched deserts, and violently tossed oceans. Its inhabitants secret themselves in isolated canyons of forest and prairie, fleeing inside the mountains if giants or marauding beasts make their presence known. Others roam the Sea of Sand or the warm waters of the ocean, trading with and preying on travelers. The weather in Anvil pounds the land without remorse, tearing at rock and the souls of its residents.

Arena

Ruled by Barbello, Arena is a vast expanse of combative energy and misery. Composed mostly of dunes of red sand, it is pockmarked by spent gold mines and the failed

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holding of countless warlords. Some of the mines have flooded, creating oases in an otherwise lifeless realm, offering some comfort from the ceaseless struggle between death and life. The armies of warlords continually march to war, fighting for dominion of the land and the wealth it secrets. Gold, water, and honor are the properties of value in Arena, properties readily paid for with blood.

Eclipse

At the top of the world, at the bottom of a miles-deep crater lies the domain of Colopitiron. Eclipse is a region where lawlessness is the norm and morality is a word spoken in hushed tones. Shielded from the warming radiance of the two suns, the domain is illuminated for only three days per month by the moon Zadkiel. Confined to an endless night, the domain is the home to beings of the darkest skills. Thieves, murderers, and slavers are as common here as artists are in Penance.

Kiln

Enclosed by the domain of Anvil, Kiln is a region ruled by the enigmatic Bathkol. Mystifying as well as insular, Kiln is a land of incredibly tall volcanoes, shattering earthquakes, and peculiar societies that stress the collective over the individual. Bordering a shallow portion of the Central Ocean, Kiln is home to fisher folk and pirates who are fiercely defiant in their independence. Gifted scholars and monks are rumored to serve Bathkol in the volcanic fastness of his citadel, guided by their lord's celestial insight.

Penance

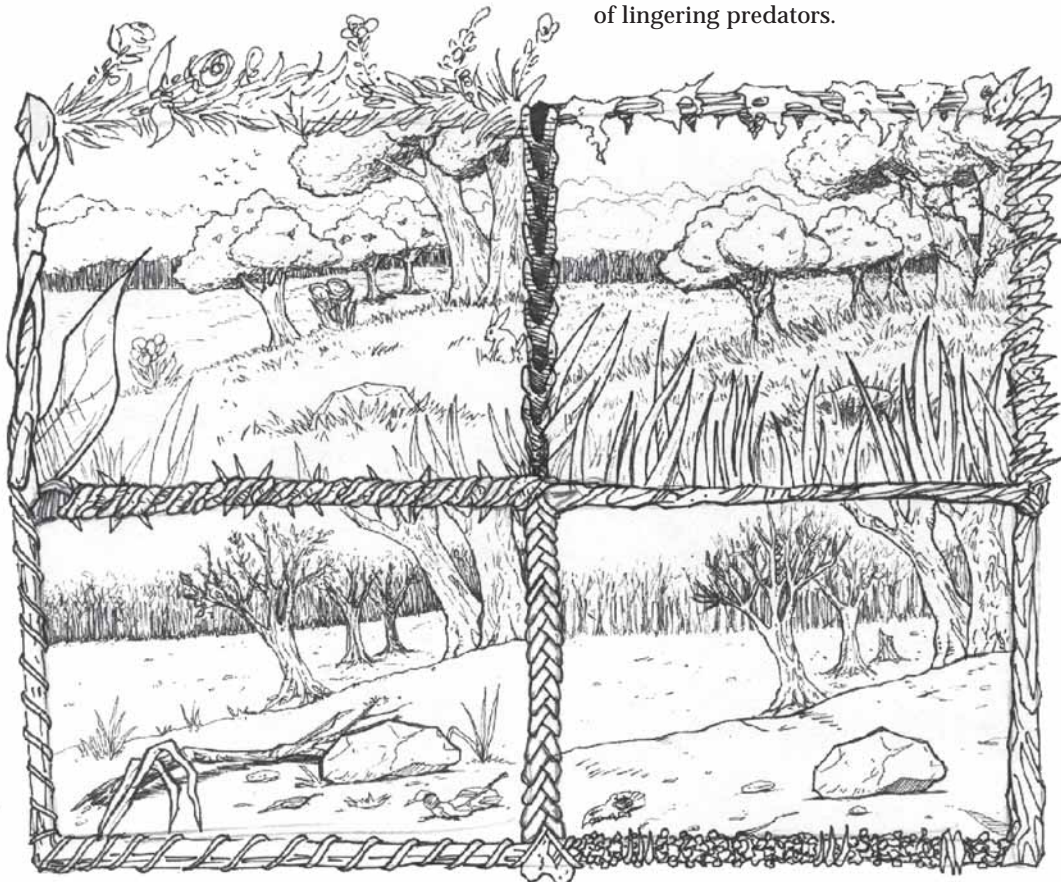
The Plains of Penance are seductively verdant and fresh, promising comfort and serenity from the turmoil that afflicts the other domains. Ruled by Israfel, Penance is the most settled of the domains. Millions of sentient beings call its hilled and forested plains home, most dwelling in the towering edifice that is the city of the Penance. Bursting with wealth and vivacity, the domain the most developed both socially and politically.

Vault

A tomb of what once was, Nemamiah rules this frigid domain. The Vault is a shadow of its former self, with its previous abundance withered and desiccated. Undead wander across its breadth, preying on anything living that should venture near. Warlocks, spurred by the insistence of Nemamiah, create artifacts and other arcane devices. Many of the unique items found throughout the Forge were crafted in the lifeless halls of the servants of The Leper.

Wildwood

Where the Vault is lifeless, the Wildwood is too alive. Choked with steaming jungles and impenetrable forests, the domain is ruled by Haiel. Raw life dominates here, making its inhabitants but trespassers in the wilderness. Favoring the triumph of nature over industry, Haiel draws entire communities to his domain, pitting them against the savage fury of his creation. Because of this the entire region is dotted with the relics of failed civilizations, overgrown and crumbling cities silent save from the screech of lingering predators.



Illustrated by Ben Eargle

The Ordering of the Forge

The cosmology of the Forge is as unique as its domains. The Forge rests motionless in its center, rotating slowly beneath its twin suns and moons and a host of stars. The stars are actually the circular conduits through which the Feathered Fowl pull their seeds and are so distant that only the Seven can travel there. Crux, the farthest and largest sun is yellow and the brightest of the pair. It revolves about the Forge once a calendar year, forming the foundation of timekeeping. Composed of 13 months of 28 days, the year lasts 364 days with no variation. The lesser sun, Storm, is much smaller and red, revolving across the heavens every calendar month. Storm's passage marks the seasons of the Forge, which changes on a weekly basis. The aberration of seasonal patterning is keyed to the rotation speed and axis of the red sun, which creates predicable periods of intensified sunlight.

The Seasons

The seasons are based on the availability of light and the length of the night periods. The clockwork motion of the suns enhances the seasons of the Forge, compressing them to a period of one week as opposed to three months. Crops bud, mature, fruit, and wither in the course of one month. The rhythm is endless and beneficial, allowing the land to yield 13 times more crops per acre than regular terrestrial worlds. The seasons and their effect on the lands are as following in Table 1.1

The Annual Calendar

The 13 months are marked by the passage of a single cycle of the red sun. Like the days of the week, the months are seen as empathically connected to events that occur during their reign. A number of common holidays mark the annual calendar and are events much looked forward to by the inhabitants of the Forge. Other regional or cultural holidays exist, though only those noted below have weathered the test of time. After each entry is a brief description of the significance of the month or the meaning of the holiday.

The Ordering of the Forge

The Moons, Days, and Hours

The two moons that orbit the Forge are Anahita and Zadkiel. The former is the larger of the two and is opposed in orbit to the red sun. Blue in hue, it is reasoned to be a water world and is known as the water moon. It is so reflective that some call it the False Sun for its ability shed light during the nighttime hours. The smaller moon is red and composed of stony metal and is singular in its ability to rotate perpendicular to the orbits of Anahita and the two suns. This quirk allows it to pass directly above Eclipse for three days each month, provided that realm its only illumination. It completes its orbit in seven days and is normally used to mark the days of the week.

The week is divided into seven days, each significant to the inhabitants of the Forge to some degree. This significance, as with the months, is symbolic and does not affect actual events, only the people's attitudes towards them.

The Days of the Week

- Anew** The beginning of a new season and the labor it requires.
- Demure** The continuance of labor to achieve the goals of the season.
- Hope** A day of possibilities as the season near fruition.
- Glory Sate** Season is in full effect and labor increases. The season begins to fade as the workers attempt to finish seasonal tasks.
- Linger Fade** A day spent on personal needs and tasks. The last day of the season that is usually spend on religious activities.

Each day is further divided into 24 hours, with each third hour named for the function normally associated with that time of the day. The hours of shroud start at midnight while the hours of spark start at noon.

Arena: Domain of Fury

Restless with the echoes of battle and sundering steel, Arena is a domain of endless conflict. Warlords pit their armies against all comers, each attempting to gather power and resources to continue the endless struggle for the prize of honor and prestige. A bizarre merging of death and

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Table 1.1 - The Four Seasons

Blooming	Days 1-7	The first week of the month and the period when plants bud and blossoms flourish. It is the most comfortable season.
Wasting	Days 8-14	The second week of the month and the period when plants bear fruit. The light and heat of the day increase, marking the harvest.
Seething	Days 15-21	The third week of the month and the period when plants begin to wither and perish beneath the relentless energy of the two suns.
Sleeping	Days 22-28	The fourth week of the month and the period when plants are barren or dead. The hours of darkness begin to increase as the suns near realignment.

Table 1.2 - Annual Calendar of the Forge

Months	Holiday Dates	Holiday Names	Descriptions
Prime	1	Firstday	The month of beginnings. The first day of the year.
	28	Queensday	A day of non-violence that is observed even in Arena.
Prosper			The most productive month of the year.
Sorrow			A period of listless decline after a month of hard labor.
Scheming	20	Knavery	New dreams of glory and hope are born. A day of harmless mischief, though in Arena or Eclipse it can often turn deadly.
Passion			Great transformations are brought forth as people seek change in their lives.
	4	Hedony	A day when people indulge themselves as they wish without social consequences.
Purity			A time of taking new responsibilities and recommitment to old ones.
Axis			A vague period of the year in which the emotional ebb and flow of the populace is said to determine the general tone for the entire year.
	15	Midyear	A wild day marking the middle of the year. It is the largest festival day on the Forge.
Stillness			A month of quiet as the inhabitants of the Forge recollects themselves for the rest of the year.
	28	Darkness	A day of introspection where the people are expected to seclude themselves inside their domiciles.
Stirring			A month of increased labor as restlessness sets in over the lingering year.
Savage			A time of uncontrolled bestial instincts, where any act save those of a criminal nature are socially acceptable.
	18	Frenzy	An orgy of insane activity punctuated by dancing, music and tawdry embraces.
Scourge			A period of self-control as the indulgences of the past is reined in and new focus is given to the tasks at hand.
	19	Lash	A grim day where participants inflict pain on themselves as a reminder of their responsibilities and familial burdens.
Ravage			A final loosening of the moral purse strings as people revel in blood sports and open conflict. This day is especially violent in Arena where mass combat is expected.
	11	Bloodbath	Horrific blood spectacles dominate the day as common citizenry take to the arena floors in a frenzy of pent up aggression.
Atonement			The last month of the year and a time of making peace with oneself and others.
	3	Giftng	A day of truce when gifts are given to mortal enemies.
	28	Lastday	The last day of the year when mementoes of the year are burned in remembrance.

the love of life, Arena is a profoundly affective domain that stirs even the most ardent pacifist.

The Pull to Arena

It is jokingly said that entering Arena is tragically easy...all you have to do is seek to avoid it. The Feathered Fowl Barbello, ruler of the domain, scry distant worlds looking for individuals or communities that share her violent nature. Warriors, murderers, traitors, and all manner of violent entities are prey to her attentions. Motivated by the most basic of natures, Barbello pulls these seeds to Arena to battle for the lifeless dunes and scarred pits of spent mines. Occasionally, she makes curious choices, selecting an order of beneficent monks or perhaps pulling a

paladin who was about to slay a great evil. She places these personages in the direst of circumstances, taking pleasure in their plights and victories, but forgets them at their ultimate defeat. Childlike and capricious, Barbello pulls forth seeds as an adolescent draws toy soldiers from a chest.

Once chosen, the pull is unavoidable and thankfully brief. Barbello employs black-hued birds that travel the cosmos looking for potential seeds. When one is located they gather, capturing Barbello's attention. If she agrees with their choice, the individual is instantly pulled into Arena to meet a fate of her choosing. Barbello relishes placing newcomers, and even entire armies, into combative situations to test their mettle. A proponent of culling



the weak, Barbello swiftly tests her selections so that only the best walk the sands of her domain. For her it is a matter of pride.

Seldom does Barbello actively recruit seeds to the sands of Arena, preferring to capture whomever she desires. The most notable exception to her proclivity for abduction is the Grand Ashrake, who willingly accepted the Feathered Fowl's promise of wealth, power, and ultimate death in the harsh domain. It is an offer seldom repeated.

The Sifter of Barbello

Every living being that enters Arena is subjected to the Sifter. The Great Oath that binds the Feathered Fowl Barbello to the domain of Arena permits her to sift through the possessions of all new arrivals. Ever conscious of the woe powerful artifacts or unique magic items could pose to her position, and constrained by the oath, Barbello takes pains not to allow such items entry into Arena. Items deemed threatening to Barbello are removed, deposited elsewhere for inspection or dispensed to other seeds. Items that are beyond the power of the seed are also removed, allowing the seed to fully experience the life and death struggle of the crimson sands without relying on a magical crutch.

Barbello typically removes all items that bestow greater invulnerability to damage, such as *shields* or *armor of heavy fortification*, *rings of greater fire resistance*, and similar items that greatly affect how a character can be damaged. She believes that these items do not promote the warrior's potential since they shield the wielder from harm and steal the insight a warrior must possess in order to survive the trials of pitched combat.

Barbello often bestows appropriate magic items to new arrivals, replacing confiscated equipment with useful gear. Items granted in this manner are seldom common, but unique arms and armor that have storied histories and interesting powers. Taken either from arrivals deemed not worthy or captured from slain foes, Barbello individually selects the items for the seed, picking equipment that will most greatly benefit him without overcompensation. It is a delicate decision, but one she has had millions of years to perfect.

Impressions of Forge and Arena

It is a land of extremes, populated by extremes. Blood-colored dunes encroach on pastoral oases, while forested expanses abut awe-inspiring mountain ranges, and amidst all are deep oceans thriving with life. There is a difference, however, that immediately makes its presence felt to all newcomers. The Forge takes form and strength from the nameless god it imprisons and from the Feathered Flock that ward the Seven Locks of his prison. That potent energy translates into a massive stimulation of the senses, making everything seem more pronounced and sensually intensified; as if the entirety had been rendered down to remove all humdrum and commonness. Birds are more brilliantly colored and sing with songs painfully longing. The clouds are of purest cotton, tinged with the echoes of the passing suns. The whole of the world is alive,

an echo strong and deep of the nameless god that lends it spirit.

Arena is a stark and magnificent land, possessing a regal elegance in its barren landscape that pulls at the emotions. A domain of war and contest, the manifestations here are much more personal than elsewhere. Where Anvil has the soul of raw nature and Penance strides through time like a young man's dreams, Arena carries the essence of life and its fated death. It is this panic of impending oblivion that gives everything its edge. Blades ring against armor with crystal tones and cut truer. The cries of victory reverberate over the dunes softened by the moans of loss. Thirst and hunger shake one's sanity with their wretchedness, while food and drink elate. Even death is more profound. As the heart beats its last the senses roar in an orgasm of memory that carries the soul beyond all caring.

This vibrancy filters to the inhabitants as well. Folk of all skills and vocations edge toward the extreme of their abilities. Mediocre talents are not tolerated, and seem actually contrary to the order of the Forge. Artists produce nary an inferior work, while farmers produce a cornucopia season after season. Musicians compose lilting ballads that fill the soul with cascading emotions, while assassins promise oblivion. Everything is augmented by the nature of the Forge, drawing strength from the forces that gave it birth. Natives seem inured to this affect—they have nothing to compare it to—so they take as a given, say, the quality of their craftwork or service.

Drawing Characters into Arena

As with the other domains of the OATHBOUND setting, any race is acceptable for game play in Arena, regardless of whether he originated from the Forge or an outside world. The vastness of the domain, and the diversity of worlds from which Barbello draws her seeds, allows for an unheralded diversity of cultures, ethnic traditions, and outlooks. Though it is assumed that new players to Arena will use characters and races from their old setting, they may just as easily use natives of the Forge. Seeds pulled into Arena are seldom powerful, but possess the potential to become so. In essence, it is the potential that attracts the attention of the domain lords, not the ability to use it. Weaving through loopholes they have discovered in the oath binding them, the Feathered Flock strive to generate powerful beings capable of freeing them from their prisons.

Entire parties can be pulled into Arena. This method maintains the integrity of an existing campaign, providing continuity and a common point of reference. Instead of being a collection of unconnected souls adrift in the beautiful chaos of Arena, they retain a sense of community, albeit a very small one. This distinction is important because it allows the party to function as a whole, making cohesive decisions that further bind them together. Without this adhesion, a party is truly adrift in the confusing cross elements that give Arena its own peculiar continuity.

OVERVIEW OF ARENA

“Radial coordinates? You must be joking. This is Arena pup, not Penance. Any seed worth his weight in gold knows every oasis, abandoned mine, and dune of red sand in the domain. Otherwise you quickly end up a slave—or dead.

- Og Brinkhand, Warlord of Nimble

The largest and arguably most dangerous of the seven domains of the Forge is Arena. Embittered in constant conflict, this land is not one where immigrants come to build homes, construct businesses, ply crafts, or raise families; Arena is all about the gold and gems beneath the sand, the slaves that dig for it, the mercenaries that guard it, and the armies that slaughter for its control—engineered by the warlords who command them all. This domain of blood-red sand has perhaps the most vicious circle of life on the Forge: Warlords mine gold, gold pays to hire mercenaries, mercenaries capture slaves and feed the ranks of the armies, and armies capture territory to mine more gold. It is a never-ending struggle for dominance and power, one that only a handful of warlords in the history of Arena have ever been able to master.

The lands of Arena are vast. Much like Wildwood, Arena is spread out across the landmasses of the southern hemisphere of the Forge, and only Wildwood shares a common border with more domains. Over the generations scholars have debated which realm is bigger, Arena or Wildwood, and at some point they decided that the former was larger for the sole reason that it was easier to chart than the feral lands of Haiel the Hunter. Arena is also the only domain that borders on each of the three oceans. Several aquatic races of the Forge have taken up the sword and become warlords in their own right, mostly along the coast of the Northern Ocean.

The majority of Arena's population is centered on its lush oases and rivers, the only areas of the domain that support any significant amount of flora, fauna, and fresh drinkable water. Though it is not uncommon for a warlord to stake a claim away from an oasis (such as near their mining territories), without fresh water and a steady supply of food such declarations of territory are short-lived and fleeting. For those who stray from the oases, death comes quickly for seeds without powerful magic or the obscure knowledge of where to look for food and moisture in the red desert.

Most all of the oases of Arena are extremely fertile, and though they are cultivated for crops or other foodstuffs it is not enough to support the forces that occupy them. The armies of the warlords consist of hundreds if not thousands of warriors, much more than could be sustained by attempting to grow crops year round. As a consequence much food is obtained from Penance, Wildwood, taken from others, or reaped from the indigenous creatures of the red sands that are actually edible.

While played-out gold mines and ruined structures litter the scarlet landscape of Arena, the sheer vastness of the domain has left many treasures still hidden beneath the sands. It is a misconception by the inexperienced that all of Arena has either been explored or conquered by the armies of the warlords. While this might be the case con-

sidering the eons the Forge has existed, there are still sections of Arena that have not been discovered and many enigmatic mysteries hidden beneath the sands still exist.

The Mask of Fury, the Feathered Fowl Barbello, is mistress of this wasteland of red sand. It was she that brought the gold and precious gems to Arena, covered it in sand, and then brought to the land those who would resort to violence to attain them. Now, countless generations after the first nugget of gold was found and the first drop of blood was shed to obtain it, there is still enough wealth and power to be found in the domain for those with the strength and intelligence to take it. That is the decree of Barbello, that only the strongest here are to survive, and the reason Arena is considered by some the most dangerous of the domains of the Forge.

GEOGRAPHY

Though its lands are jagged and scattered across the Forge, Arena's size is somewhere between 350,000 and 400,000 square miles of territory, which includes portions of the oceans that are considered by most to be part of the domain. This makes Arena as much as four times the size of the plains of Penance, but with less than half the population of Forge's largest city. Like many other domains of the world, the terrain of Arena is both unique and dangerous to the inexperienced seed. There are four major types of terrain in Arena: oceans, oases and rivers, red desert sands, and the barren hills of rock that are the result of countless centuries of mining.

As for Arena's populace, it is a mishmash of a thousand races, cultures, and beliefs like most other domains of the Forge. The one difference here is the constant threat of war and death that separates the strong from the weak, and in some cases, the insane from the sane.

Arena

Area: 5,371,956 square miles

Population: 14,100,000

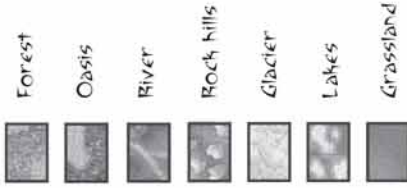
Racial Makeup: Asherakes: 19%, Haze: 17%, Chromithians: 15%, Humans: 15%, Nightlings: 8%, Faust: 5%, Dovers: 5%, Valco: 4%, Pickers: 4%, Silvers: 3%, Assorted Gobliniods: 3%, Others: 2%.

Other intelligent races in Arena include fey, giants, dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, orcs, trolls, ogres, lizardfolk, and hundreds of other variations of air-breathing half-breeds along with others never before seen on the Forge. The oceans races are also included in this fraction, and include ceptu, trusk, makkru, merfolk, sahuagin, and an occasional tribe of aquatic elves. Barbello's influence has spanned a hundred thousand worlds, and nearly any realm that has known war at one time or another is represented in Arena.

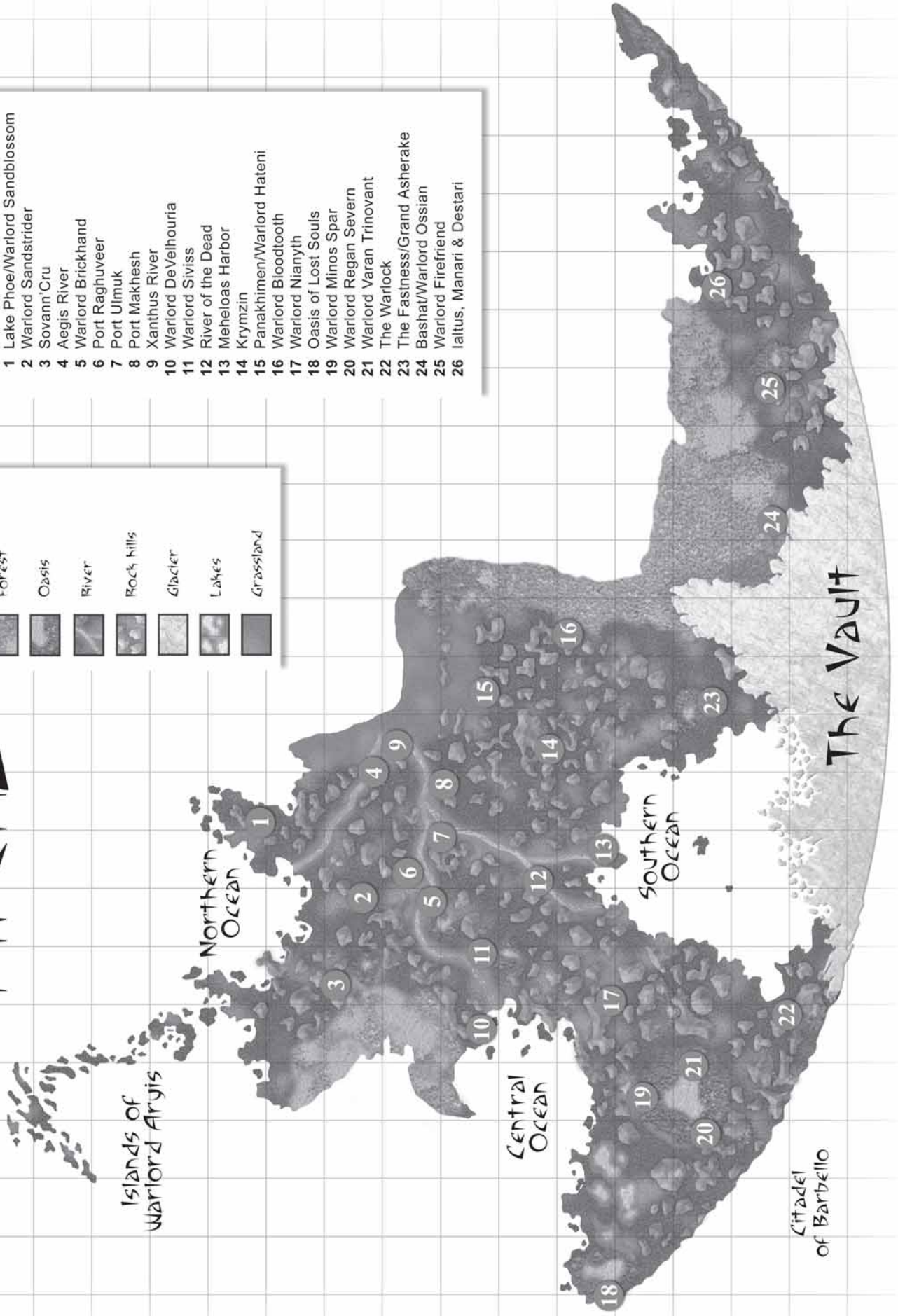
Of the more common races of the Forge the rarest in this domain are the lunars and the frey. The lunars prefer the darkness of Eclipse or the wrack of Penance, though they are sometimes captured by warlords for work in the deepest mines. The harsh environment of Arena also is unappealing to the frey; some few find solace in one of the lush oases that dot the land, but even these frey are commonly captured by occupying warlords and eventually commit suicide if they are not strong in both body

ARENA

KEY



- 1 Lake Phoe/Warlord Sandblossom
- 2 Warlord Sandstrider
- 3 Sovann'Cru
- 4 Aegis River
- 5 Warlord Brickhand
- 6 Port Raghuveer
- 7 Port Ulmuk
- 8 Port Makhesh
- 9 Xanthus River
- 10 Warlord DeVelhouria
- 11 Warlord Sviss
- 12 River of the Dead
- 13 Meheloaas Harbor
- 14 Krymzin
- 15 Panakhimen/Warlord Hateni
- 16 Warlord Bloodtooth
- 17 Warlord Nianyth
- 18 Oasis of Lost Souls
- 19 Warlord Minos Spar
- 20 Warlord Regan Severn
- 21 Warlord Varan Trinovant
- 22 The Warlock
- 23 The Fastness/Grand Asherake
- 24 Bashat/Warlord Ossian
- 25 Warlord Firefriend
- 26 Ialtus, Manari & Destari



Overview of Arena

and spirit. There are rumors of a large number of frey (or wild frey) inhabiting the Oasis of Lost Souls, but many discount this.

OCEANS

The warm expanse of the Northern Ocean that borders Arena is teeming with life that holds a symbiotic relationship with the denizens of the red sands. Ceptu who are not members of the Ceptu Nation that dwell in these waters are some of the more brutal members of their species and have taken to dominating the coastal waters of northern Arena with their formidable psionic powers. The coastline up to about 100 miles off the shores of Arena is shallow compared to the deep oceans, and the warm water temperature is perfect for the ceptu warlords and their aquatic domains. The single fortress of these ceptu is deep within the waters of Lake Phoe, which is said to have an underground connection to the Northern Ocean. These ceptu dominate these waters off Arena, and even the most skilled sailors of other races often end up as brainwashed slaves.

Several of these aquatic warlords have recently fallen under the control of a powerful ceptu psion who has subjugated others of its race along with humanoids from all domains. Many of the ceptu's slaves are captured from the waters surrounding Penance and transported to the northern shores to mine for gold and other precious metals. Those that can breathe water assist in the building of their underwater kingdoms, while others mine the sands along the coast. The ceptu psions are also building an army to conquer the northern island expanses of Arena, where untapped resources of precious gems are said to exist among the volcanic islands that reach far from the mainland. These island territories are also teeming with large schools of edible (by most humanoids) fish known as *veel*, which are a staple of the ceptu diet.

The Central Ocean lies off the western coast of Arena, and like its northern brother is shallow and teeming with sea life. Unlike the Northern Ocean these waters are cold the farther you get from the shores of Kiln, and unlike other waters of the Forge are strangely devoid of ceptu. The most dominant humanoids in these waters are a walrus-like race known as the trusk, who have been known to wage war against warlords using the Central Ocean as a means to move their armies. Most warlords in these waters cling to the shorelines, but occasionally come into conflict with the trusk in search of food and conquest. Though mostly peaceful, the trusk are fierce warriors when it comes to defending their territory and have always managed to secure their waters from any invaders.

These waters are also home to several thousand narwhales, gigantic mammals that have a relationship with the typically peaceful trusk. It is said that these whales can communicate with the trusk, and the two species have a pact to defend these waters together. The narwhales are neither pets nor common mounts for the trusk, but allies in defense of these waters. Unlike the southern shores of Kiln, the coastal waters off Arena contain few dangerous reefs. Instead, the icy waters are extraordinarily deep and dark beyond a few miles from the shoreline. These same bottomless waters are also home to a handful of gigantic sea monsters. These mammoth

beasts seldom venture from their homes in the watery abyss, though subterranean earthquakes and a lack of local food sometimes force them to the surface where they feed on the colossal besimi (see Chapter 6). These deep beasts are gargantuan, and nothing that gets in their path survives. The disappearance of entire colonies of trusk have been blamed on these monstrous beasts, though seldom are any intelligent creatures left behind to tell the tale. The only reason knowledge of these creatures exists beyond legends is the skeleton of one beached a dozen miles inland north of the Sea of Tears. How the beast got there and why it left its cold, dark home is one of the great mysteries of the Forge.

The Southern Ocean is the coldest, and said to be the most dangerous, of all the waters of the Forge. The Arena coasts are home to both warlord and pirates navies, with many of the latter having formed pacts with the Grand Asherake to attack the ships of opposing warlords. Since the Southern Ocean has very few islands to use as strongholds, pirates that do not wish to live under the commanding thumb of the Grand Asherake form pacts in order to establish bases along his coastlines. While this is common knowledge among the major warlords in southern Arena, the Asherake avoids certain political entanglements by using pirates instead of his own navy to secretly and strategically move his forces and agents further west and north. It is also well known the Grand Asherake wishes to extend his domain to the eastern tributary of the Xanthus River, and the use of his navy and pirates is key to this design.

These same pirates and other minor warlords often cross the cold expanse of this ocean to trade with and pillage the northern coast of the Vault. Such errands are exceedingly dangerous, and even the Grand Asherake considers such assaults a waste of resources (though it is likely he learned this through trial and error). Despite the risks, it is preferable to venture to the Vault via the ocean rather than overland, since forbidding glaciers make overland traffic difficult.

Among the abundance of cold-water fish in the Southern Ocean is the predator race of sharklike humanoids called the makkru. These creatures are both intelligent and malicious, and during the colder seasons venture north and west to the Arena coasts in search of prey. The makkru are not driven by insatiable need for wealth like the warlords of Arena, but instead require possessions not readily found in the frigid waters of the Vault. There are also numerous maritime tales of makkru having a taste for human flesh, and seldom do the warlords of Arena come into contact with this aquatic race. Generally it is unknown why the makkru have not traveled east in recent history towards the territories of the Grand Asherake, though some secret pact or trade agreement is suspected.

OASES

The centers of most life in Arena are the oases that cover the land. These oases dot the landscape with great frequency, and range from hundreds of yards to hundreds of miles in diameter. Scholars of Penance have often theorized that great underground rivers flow through the underground of Arena and feed most oases. The seeds of

various flora and fauna have traveled these rivers from the lush plains of Penance over the eons, bringing verdant life to the scarlet desert. It literally takes thousands of years for an oasis to form, and less than a fraction of that time for it to be crushed by an army or subjugated by a warlord.

There is also a misconception regarding the difference between an oasis and the many tepid pools of water that cover the domain. These pools are often the mines of greedy warlords who pierce subterranean rivers and water-fill underground caverns. Unlike the more lush oases of the domain these pockets of water do not occur naturally and are often contaminated by minerals found beneath the surface. These pools do not contain the biological life needed to oxygenate and cleanse the water, and only the most resilient of creatures can drink from these pools and not suffer ill effects—or even death.

Where there is water in Arena, there is more often than not a warlord that possessed it at one time or another. To obtain the precious metals coveted by these warmongers, food and water are needed to keep both the miners and those that guard them alive. Warlords must also protect their oases from other warlords, feral creatures of the desert seeking water, and even from themselves. Many a warlord has abused and even run dry smaller oases, reducing the once lush land to barren rock and sand. Some of the larger oases of Arena, such as the Sea of Tears and the oasis of the Grand Asherake have been groomed and cultivated to support thousands. In these areas druids and others with agriculture knowledge can be just as valuable to a warlord as an experienced warrior.

The second largest oasis in the domain is a thousand miles west of the Sea of Tears and is one of the most dangerous places in all of Arena. Called the Oasis of Lost Souls, this is the only oasis in Arena that has never been occupied by the forces of a warlord. Many have tried, and all have died; slain by creatures that do not care for gold or other precious baubles. The Oasis of Lost Souls is occupied by hundreds of thousands of predator dinosaurs, monsters that grow to gargantuan, even colossal size who mercilessly slay anything that crosses their path to feed their mammoth appetites. There are tales of a 70-foot-tall monstrous tyrannosaurus rex possessed of intelligence previously unknown in these creatures; it is said that this terrifying creature directs his brethren and devours all invaders. These accounts are greatly disputed, since stories of this great rex date back thousands of thousands of years—well beyond the lifespan of such a beast. However, the fact remains that the presence of these savage dinosaurs has stopped all incursions to the oasis' center. This oasis has also been a major stepping-stone in keeping Warlord Ossian from moving his troops closer to the Sea of Tears, as the predators have been known to venture many miles from the oasis for food.

RIVERS

Unlike the oases of Arena, the few and extensive rivers of the domain cut the red sands and barren rock like the bloody knife of an assassin. Where the oases of the warlords are lush and cultivated sites for their fortresses, the rivers of Arena are surrounded by thick tropical jungles running through nearly vertical overgrown chasms. These

temperate canyons are home to some of the most dangerous creatures in all of Arena.

The rivers of Arena have had many names over the generations. Only the Xanthus River and the River of the Dead have managed to retain their designations; so much so that with the exception of the latter the common moniker of all rivers branching from Penance is the Xanthus River. Inhabitants of the domain simply add such labels such as northern, western, central, and southern branches of the Xanthus to distinguish one from another. The Aegis River, which runs north from Cage, is less traveled because of the ceptu that dominate the Northern Ocean. The intellectuals of Penance generally use radial coordinates to denote locations, but such cerebral citations are beyond most Arena residents.

Over the eons the natural wildlife of the domain has also migrated towards the rivers, pushed out of the desert and oases by the wars that constantly stain the crimson landscape. Feral predatory cats, veiled poisonous snakes and arachnids, and other voracious creatures live here, transported from a thousand worlds by the whims of Barbello. There are also tales of a savage race of lizardfolk that occupy certain sections of the Xanthus River, which is one reason that very few warlords make their fortresses in or near these tropical grottos.

This race of lizardfolk is known as the ramzadi, who make their home in tropical jungles that surround the banks of the central Xanthus River basin. The ramzadi are much more aggressive and territorial here in their natural habitat than in other parts of Arena. It is a well-known fact that the ramzadi tend to “mellow” when they venture to the red sands. Ramzadi may also be found among the armies of some of the more powerful warlords where battles rage on an almost daily basis. One ramzadi in particular, Kosh S'sylainnas, has worked his way through the ranks to become one of Minos Spar's most trusted lieutenants. Additional information on the ramzadi can be found in *Torn Asunder* by Bastion Press.

The River of the Dead also holds great danger for residents of central Arena. Large coalitions of warlords within 1,000 miles (in any direction) of the Xanthus River have an unholy pact with the Warlocks of the Vault for the dead that litter their battlefields each day. Each such warlord has a group of 50–100 men referred to as “gatherers” (designated by the blood-red vests they wear on the field) who collect the dead after each battle and bring them to a fleet of barges for transport to the northern shores of the Vault. To slay a gatherer, by design or accident, is punishable by death.

Once a barge reaches the shores of the Vault a representative of the Warlocks gathers the dead and compensates each warlord's delegate with powerful magic and spells. The Warlocks always seem to know with uncanny accuracy exactly how many dead come from each warlord's army. Thus even in defeat a warlord reaps great rewards. Warlords who think they can lie or cheat the Warlocks are told never to return, and within six months they are typically defeated in one way or another by some force coveting their territory. One does not ask to join the coalition of merchants of the dead; the Warlocks choose with whom they shall engage in such grisly commerce

Overview of Arena

and inform them that they shall participate. Those who refuse suffer a fate similar to those attempting to defraud the rulers of the Vault.

The terrain surrounding the rivers is dense and untamed, but the ecology of the river itself is surprisingly calm by comparison, kept so by the presence of a piranha-like fish called the xial that thrives in every branch of the Xanthus River and can strip the carcass of most creatures in moments. The presence of the xial makes it safe for barges to travel along the Xanthus by keeping at bay hostile creatures and avaricious warlords.

Only the most powerful warlord or Penance bloodlord can build a fortress along the banks of the Xanthus River; no warlord holds claim to land on the River of the Dead. The majority of these fortresses double as centers of trade and commerce in Arena, gathering their wares from ships traveling from Penance. Such ships not only bring foodstuffs and other wares to the domain, but serve as unloading points for slaves, mercenaries, and those seeking fame and fortune in Arena. Representatives of each major warlord (and many minor ones) are usually here to buy or hire these travelers, while others take note of those seeds deemed easy prey. There are three major warlord “ports” along the Xanthus, though many minor ones exist closer to Penance and are under bloodlord control. Each port is named after the warlord in control of the land: a chromithian named Makhesh, a nightling called Ulmuk, and mysterious human known as Raghuveer who is suspected to be some sort of undead wizard.

Desert Sands

They say the sands of Arena are stained crimson with the blood of a billion dead. While such mythical legends are nothing more than fairytales told to scare the children of Penance, most battles in the domain are fought upon these dark dunes. On the surface the sands of Arena are fine and minute, but only a few feet below the composition of the sand changes. These rougher grains of sand are unlike the refined specks commonly found above, being course, even jagged in some areas in the western half of the domain. So treacherous are these sands that walking barefoot produces shallow cuts and even infection if footwear is neglected for long periods of travel. Since the composition of Arena’s sand is part sodium, should this salty sand seep deep into open wounds the result is extremely unpleasant over time. This also makes footwear one of the most important articles of clothing a seed can have for a possession in certain areas, as those

without it run the risk of becoming crippled by the pain of a severe foot wound.

Even worse are the occasional sandstorms that ravage Arena, mostly during the months of Scourge and Ravage. These unholy tempests can suffocate by choking lungs with sand, and in areas of course red sand can easily strip flesh in a short span of time. Full leather cloaks imported from Penance or tanned from the hides of kith, desert lizards, and other animal—along with cloth to cover the mouth—are worth their weight in gold. Traditional armor does little to protect against the ravages of a sandstorm, as both fine and serrated grains of sand work their way into small gaps in the armor to the victim’s flesh.

The sands of Arena cover the precious metals brought to the Forge by Barbello long ago. Depending on what portion of Arena a warlord is digging in, there can be as much as 500 yards of red sand to dig through before finding these hidden caches of wealth. Over the countless years the weather patterns of the Forge have blown the sands from west to east, and recently warlords have been finding it easier to reach the bedrock beneath the dunes

south and west of the Xanthus River. Finding the wealth beneath the sand is where a warlord’s seeker comes into play—a skilled warrior-mage gifted with exceptional knowledge of geology and special magical training that give them an uncanny knack for finding these hidden riches.

Rarely is a warlord able to rise to power without the skills of a seeker to supply him with the assets needed to build both a fortress and an army. A seeker that has been able to prove his worth in seeking out gold and other commodities lives a life of comfort in Arena, second only to their commanding warlord. Success is the only means by which seekers maintain their hold on such luxury; failure to find new sources of wealth to feed a warlord’s avarice often has a cost in blood. Seekers are deeply suspicious of new talent; many young novices fail to complete their training, struck down by some accident or another. Only a powerful warlord can “suggest” his seeker take on an

apprentice. It is said that Lord Belus and Lord Mabon of Penance have skilled seekers in their service, and for enough gold a warlord can have a seeker protégé trained in a short period of time.

Hills

Eventually a warlord burrowing for gold strikes the barren rock from which it must be mined. The refuse of a warlord’s avarice, the rock is often piled away from the



mine, carried there by slaves. It is said that one cannot look out across the landscape and not see a mound of rock that was once buried deep beneath the sand—a cairn for the slaves who died carrying the rock from the mine. Over the years these heaps of stone, rock, and dirt have been eroded and covered by sandstorms and what little rain that falls, eventually appearing as natural formations.

While a warlord's primary reason to dig is the search for gold and other precious commodities that is not the only ore hidden beneath the crimson sands. The lands of Arena are rich with various ores such as iron, lead, and copper as well, along with rare deposits of mithral, tin, and mercury, to name a few. With the exception of iron and mithral, many of these metals are left behind by minor warlords who do not have the means to properly use or identify the resource. Young and inexperienced seekers may also have difficulty identifying ores other than gold, for which they are specifically trained by their warlord masters who often care nothing for other resources. As a result many of the hills and mounds of rock covering the surface of the domain still hold some of these valuable non-precious metals.

There is a market for these metals in Penance, however, and those warlords with the means to smelt them often establish trade with various Bloodlords of that city. Mercury in particular brings top coin, nearly as much as gold or mithral, from representatives of Lord Mabon. It is believed the bloodlord craves this liquid metal for its poisonous properties, as it is common knowledge that he employs assassins in Penance and beyond. Given the fact that Arena's gold is becoming more and more difficult to uncover, several warlords have begun going back to these hills and abandoned mines in search of commodities left behind by the careless warlords of the past. Setting an example for those of lesser stature, the mining companies of the Grand Asherake have begun such excavations to the north of his territory. This lends credence to the rumors that the long-lived warlord has played out much of his lands and may soon begin a major offensive to expand his borders.

Geopolitical Breakdown

The life of a warlord is not all war and conflict, though without a strong arm and sizable army one cannot hold territory for long. But what about once a warlord's holdings are secure? There is more to claiming land in Arena than simply having the strongest army. While competition for gold is what pits factions against one another, there are other things a warlord must consider if he is to maintain his territory against all forms of intrusion. Most do not think political affairs hold a place in Arena's empire, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Like war, current politics in Arena is decided by those with the most power. Were it not for alliances between major and minor warlords and treaties between the most powerful warlords, Arena would fall into complete chaos. Even the Feathered Fowl Barbello understands this, since conflict cannot occur in her domain if there is one ruler over all. The struggle of the weakest warlords to obtain gold and territory is just as significant as the greater ones holding the land they already have against intrusion. While most of this is decided on the battlefield, some is

settled across the negotiating table. Trade, commerce, alliances, and other concords are sometimes what keep a warlord alive in the face of a superior force.

While the Grand Asherake has the greatest armies in Arena, he is not a master of the delicate political battleground. That title goes to Minos Spar, who is a master strategist in the theatre of war and the political arena. Though lacking in territory when compared to his asherake rival to the east, Minos has a hand in most dealings from the southern Xanthus River to the shores of the Central Ocean. Most conflicts there have something to do with Minos' whims, whether the pitting of one warlord against another or an alliance to insure no warlord in the Sea of Tears gains hold over another's lands. The key to any successful politician is also the muscle to back up his claims, which Minos has in the form of his Four Horsemen (see Chapter 5). These brutish bringers of death not only lead campaigns upon the sands, but also serve to sway with arm and steel those politically opposed to their master.

From their posh palaces in Penance the bloodlords also control much of the diplomatic aspects of the Xanthus River and a small amount of territory to its south—and beyond where the river splits to the west and south. The goods and coins of Penance reach into Arena along the Xanthus, and many warlords who make their claims within two thousand miles of the river owe various bloodlords some form of fidelity.

Deeper west and north of the Xanthus River, the political landscape becomes blurry and confused as if peering through muddied water. There is said that a dark network of thieves, assassins, and masters of other veiled activities determine who holds power along the river and lands to the north. Any bloodlord attempting to forage west of Port Ulmuk has met with considerable loss of coin, the caused of which is a mystery to some. Individuals serving this black network who are captured nearly always die under torture before revealing much, if anything, about their associates. To this day, no one knows much more than rumors and disinformation—and never has the leader of this organization been publicly identified. Many suspect the master of Port Raghuveer, the enigmatic human of the same name who founded the port over 500 years ago.

To the far north are the ceptu who dwell along the coast of Arena and, unlike other warlords, care nothing for the politically dealings of bipedal creatures. Quee'eetee Sandblossom uses his psionic prowess to subjugate rather than parley, and most representatives of various warlords looking to deal with the ceptu ending up as slaves in their mines.

CULTURES AND PEOPLE

Those that live in Arena come from thousands of world across the cosmos. Over the millennia Barbello has experimented with countless species in an attempt to find the strongest and most resilient warriors to bring her closer to breaking the Oath. Some of these species have survived over the years, others have not. Seldom does the Mask of Fury continue to seed her land with those that perish in short order. Unlike other members of the

Overview of Arena

Feathered Fowl, Barbello is known to pull in entire armies of humanoids into her realm on a whim to turn the tide of a battle, boost the forces of a favored leader, or to bring down a warlord that has somehow displeased her. Such armies are often dying or near defeat on their world, and relish the opportunity to have a second chance to win that last battle. Barbello also has a tendency to pull into Arena some of the most violent and psychotic combatants, as they have little fear of dying and take great pleasure in inflicting death upon others. This is one of the most dangerous things about the residences of Arena, since you can never be sure of the sanity of the next seed you meet.

The majority of Arena's inhabitants have been transported here by the Mask of Fury. Despite the enormously high mortality rate of Arena's population, there is a small minority of the populace that consider themselves native to the Forge and this domain. Most of these individuals live in areas under the protection of some of the more powerful warlords, such as those who rule the Sea of Tears or the lands of the Grand Asherake. Communities centered on the fortresses of these warlords, those in service by choice or not, may have been in Arena all their lives. Many warlords believe that this small minority of native humanoids born and reared in Arena are more hearty and vigorous than others across the Forge.

Populace

Like most other domains on the Forge, Arena is a melting-pot of races from a thousand worlds. In some ways there are more races in Arena than anywhere else, since other members of the Black Flock do not often pull in seeds prone to extreme violence such as goblins, orcs, and other malevolent humanoids. Unless she had a good reason, the Queen of Penance would have little cause to bring a bloodthirsty gnoll or a formidable giant to the heart of her city; such is not the case with the choices of Barbello. Any race she has encountered that has a predisposition to war and violence has been brought to Arena. Whether these races survive and thrive is up to them.

The most abundant races in Arena are asherakes, chromithians, valco, haze, and humans. The latter is the most fragile of these races, but their sheer numbers keep them among the dominant populations. Unfortunately, the delicate dispositions of humans often makes them slaves to the nonhuman races, making them the most common slave labor in the domain. Only those humans with skill in weapons or magic have any chance of limited freedom, and even then few ever achieve the status of warlord.

Ethnic and racial boundaries in Arena are based on the occupation of current areas by certain warlords and their dispositions towards others races. For example, while nearly any asherake is welcome in the realm of the Grand Asherake, most all valco that enter his realm are slaughtered for food. In all of Arena the area surrounding the Sea of Tears is the greatest melting pot of races, hosting the highest concentration of chromithians, valco and haze in the domain. Humans and other minority humanoids tend to congregate in central Arena, and the smallest population centers are in the northern territories beyond the Xanthus River. This is likely due to the presence of the mind-controlling ceptu that dwell along the

coast, and the lack of gold discovered in contemporary times. Recently, chromithian warlords have sprung up in the northwest regions and much like the asherakes have begun banding together in some sort of tribal unity for reasons known only to them.

Of the nonhuman races currently inhabiting Arena the asherakes are the most numerous, which is due in part to the armies of the Grand Asherake. Not long after coming to power the asherake warlord put out a call to all members of his race across Arena and beyond to join him in the southeastern lands. Many warlords were stunned when thousands of the winged humanoids answered his call, causing asherake devotees of other warlords to desert to the militia of the Grand Asherake. Many believe the warlord used some sort of powerful magic to compel his brethren to his cause, but the truth is the creature's power and charisma was too great for many to resist. Even Lord Pandarus of the Penance city of Beacon was hard pressed not to answer the warlord's call. Even so, it is thought that a pact had been struck between the two powerful asherakes that may one day change the face of both Penance and Arena.

Of the nonhumans, one of the great mysteries of Arena is the presence of a large number of haze. This race of noble warriors is known for its loyalty and lawfulness, qualities not common among the typically ferocious Arena population. What draws the haze to Arena is their need for combat and service in the mighty armies of the domain. The desire of the haze to serve a powerful lord most often outweighs the moral or ethical obligations common to their race. Still, a haze warrior will seek out those who are not callously evil and immoral, and a warlord with a handful of haze in his service eventually attracts more of their numbers over time. The combative nature and telepathic powers of the haze make them some of the most elite warriors of the domain.

Arena Society

Overall, the life expectancy of someone in Arena is extraordinarily short, less than a year for most seeds not born to the land or under the protection of powerful warlords. Those not born to Arena often suffer a terrifying period of initiation while learning the ways of the land, from which many never recover. Because of the short life expectancy there is very little culture to be found in the desert domain, though it is there if one knows where to look. Most warlords religiously follow the Forge calendar. Since many new arrivals to Arena actually come from Penance, or have spent time in the great city, the holidays and other observances of Israfel's city are commonly celebrated. Even the cruelest warlord recognizes the need for occasional amusement to keep his troop's morale elevated, though these reprieves are often few and far between if not the result of some great victory.

As for the common laborer or slave in Arena, there is little hope of living a long life let alone developing significant culture ripe with tradition and diversity. Seldom does Barbello pull in those who are culturally disposed—teachers, scholars, and others. Should a warlord have need of such individuals they are commonly sought in Penance or at any of the major ports along the Xanthus River. It is common knowledge that most of the population can-

not read, write, or even speak the same language. Intellectuals versed in dozens of languages and telepathic hazes are the communications specialists of the domain, usually versed as well in the crude sign language referred to as *battlespeak* (see below). This widely spread assortment of communication can occasionally become a warlord's worse nightmare when attempting to build and empire amongst the crimson sands.

Seeds skilled enough in magic or weaponry to survive the perils of Arena often bring with them their own beliefs and traditions. Often, these beliefs are adopted by those with whom they serve.

Many of the privileged and powerful tend to keep such things as customs and values, however distorted, hidden rather than speak them aloud. Such delicate actions could be construed as a weakness by rivals or superiors, and even the most nominal frailty can bring about a seed's death on the theatre of war that is Arena. For those who command the battlefield sands there is only an occasional prayer or petition to higher powers under one's breath, or a mumbled thanks for surviving a particularly bloody campaign or the tragic defeat of his or her warlord.

One reprieve for those in Arena is the orations of clerics and others with healing skill that tend to an army's injured. Most priests serve faiths of war and destruction. Not all priests serving the armies of Arena relish war and violence, however. Some are simple healers doing their faith's work amidst great suffering. Others are workers of magic that aid warlords in developing their holdings: nature priests tending to the tenuous life of the oases and rivers; earth priests seeking gold and other wealth; or craft priests creating tools, buildings, and other material necessary for survival in the harsh clime of Arena.

Even the most depraved warlord recognizes the benefit of having clerics in his service. Some warlords seek the services of clerics through agents and recruiters in other realms in Arena and beyond. Many simply kidnap those they need, including priests, and force them to work. Pacts with certain bloodlords in Penance accomplish this by means of threatening entire congregations with a lord's wrath if representatives of their church do not serve for a time in the armies of Arena. Taking great pleasure in war and carnage, even Lady Salamis of Divinia sends members of her congregation to serve with allied warlords. Often they are inquisitors who have displeased her or were not completely successful in some duty, requiring some time away from Penance to reflect upon their failings.

Most of the nondestructive clergy of Arena minister not to the warriors and mages in a warlord's employ, but to the subjugated miners and underpaid laborers who die upon and beneath the sands every day. Here is where the uplifting words of a cleric can bring hope to those that have none.

While overall traditions are rare in Arena, it is present if a seed looks hard enough or spends time amongst the downtrodden of the land. For those native to Arena there are traditions passed down through the generations that help them survive the harsh trials of the land, such as how to find water, traveling across the sands, and other survival skills. Refined skills and other aptitudes such as dancing, singing and other such proficiencies are useless

to a warlord, forcing Arena commoners to form other traditions to help ease the heavy burdens they live with each day.

Burning of the Dead

If there is one widespread ritual shared by most commoners of Arena it is the traditional burning of the dead. This practice was instituted by some warlords close to the border of the Vault long ago, since the dead in these areas often rose from their graves and began walking toward the icy domain to the south. While normally a warlord could care less about his dead slaves and paid workers, ignoring this practice often led to insurrection among the laborers causing considerable delays in mining and other such practices. It was economically easier for the warlord to give in to the tradition rather than contest them with whips and chains. With the onset of such diseases as the scarlet flu and Arena wastes, warlords began to see other benefits of burning the dead.

To the more unfortunate souls of Arena the burning of the dead has another meaning, one that is more spiritual and gives meager meaning to their lot in life. It is said that spirits of the dead of Arena, from slave to warlord, which are reduced to ash and spread liberally upon the sand find their way to the afterlife much more easily than those whose bodies are left to rot. The belief held by the commoners is that until the body of the deceased has been turned to dust it is still bound to the red sands of the domain by the devil-god Barbello to amuse her insatiable call for violence and destruction. There are tales of a seed cleric that started this belief long ago, and for those who would spit in the eye of the Mask of Fury, it is a conviction which is easily accepted.

Free Communities

There is also a growing contingent of what are being termed as "free colonies" in the lands of Arena. The thought of a gathering of uncontrolled beings claiming an oasis is not a new one in this domain of war and strife, but more often than not such communities are conquered and integrated into the attacking warlord's realm. Seldom are these free communities able to fend off such overwhelming odds. However, in recent years more of these pockets of peace and resistance have sprung up around Arena, though now they are centered in remote areas or those that hold no significance to neighboring warlords.

The keys to these unbound communities are commonly the presence of potent spellcasters, namely clerics and druids with the ability to create or locate food and water and hold a group of people together through the compelling guidance and effective leadership prevalent to those mystical classes. Through the use of magic a community has no need to be developed near an oasis, and as long as the land they are on is not rich in gold or other precious commodities local warlords may choose to spend their resources elsewhere.

As little as a decade ago there were a dozen of these small and insignificant communities of escaped slaves, laborers, and even a few mercenaries tired of fighting and looking to retire. It was just as some of the larger communities were starting to prosper that the Feathered Fowl



Barbello appeared and completely destroyed seven of the communities to the last man, woman, and child. The thought of havens of peace and tranquility was an affront to Barbello, for such places could do nothing to help her break the Oath of Binding.

It wasn't until Barbello assaulted a remote island in the northern reaches of Arena that the slaughter took an unexpected turn. There she met up with a man possessing both powerful weapons and magic, and in the span of a dozen heartbeats the Feathered Fowl's avatar was defeated and sent back to her citadel. When she returned to the island two days later both the warrior and the community he protected were gone. All that is known of this formidable foe was the golden sword and shield he carried, and Barbello has searched for him tirelessly ever since—a search that has had the unexpected benefit of turning the Black Fowl's attention away from the remaining free communities in Arena.

Currently there are fewer than six of these communities in the domain, though they are so well hidden that not even the most influential of warlords has been able to discern all of their locations (in truth, most consider it a waste of time). There is a legend of one such community, whose size is said to rival the Sea of Tears that has remained out of sight of both warlords and Barbello for hundreds of years. Even the name of this hidden society

changes over time, being referred to by names such as Eden, Haven, and most commonly Paradise Lost in recent years.

Battlespeak

The Forge is perhaps the greatest melting-pot in all of the multiverse, and with so many different peoples comes a wide diversity of languages and means of communication. Like the unending pursuit of gold, the ability of a warlord to speak with those under his command is the greatest of challenges for the savage, uneducated masses of Arena. In times long ago warlords were limited to taking on mercenaries and slaves that spoke a common language, making those with linguistic skills nearly as important as those with a strong sword arm. Only the telepathic abilities of a loyal haze were more important than some abducted scholar fearful for his life.

Since linguistic abilities are of no consequence whatsoever in Barbello's choice of seeds, many warlords resort to hiring or kidnapping linguists from elsewhere to meet their communication requirements. Any liability in a warlord's ranks is a detriment to both his territory and strength, and more than one conqueror of Arena has fallen because of miscommunication. A warlord who is able to effectively command the forces under his sway always holds a distinct advantage on the field of combat.

Many thousands of years ago, no one is exactly sure when, someone thought to use various signals and gestures to propagate meaning amongst the troops. With the help of the haze this universal means of interaction, termed *battlespeak*, was spread across Arena in the span of a few decades—and instantly changed combat on the red sands.

Battlespeak is a simple form of communication which, given the average intelligence and psychotic nature of an Arena soldier, is a godsend to an army's commander. Even if a seed takes the time to learn less than half of the known gestures and motions, it is enough for someone to request food or water, understand what to do in battle, and even report on an advancing enemy's actions. Battlespeak also has the advantage of being a silent language, making it only slightly less covert than the telepathy commonly employed by the haze.

The gestures of battlespeak are possible for races such as the silvers, valco, and even the hovara as well as others that have limited or different forelimb segments and digits. It is even thought that battlespeak could be learned by the pretentious ceptu, but the haughty aquatic race collectively believes this rudimentary form of communication is beneath them. Battlespeak is typically taught by a commander in a warlord's army, or at the very least one of his more intelligent and level-headed lieutenants. If a warlord is fortunate enough to have a haze or some other subordinate with telepathic ability, teaching battlespeak becomes even easier.

The core language of battlespeak consists of about three dozen gestures, often combined with grunts, whistles, or other uncomplicated and unintelligible vocalizations. For the more intelligent and higher-ranking soldier there is an advanced form of battlespeak involving hand and finger signals. Such forms of battlespeak are used to relay more complicated military or covert instructions to underlings.

Gestures: The most common gestures in battlespeak include motions in the air, pointing in a certain direction, indicating a specific object, or any combination of the three. Most gestures are common-sense movements: pretending to drink to indicate water, motioning across the throat to signal killing someone, or pointing upward to signify an aerial creature. In addition, one gesture can have multiple meanings, with the exact significance depending on the situation. Below are a few additional examples:

- Sleeping, Cannot See = Cover the eyes.
- Hungry = Spooning action into the mouth.
- Deaf = Cover the ears.
- Fast, Make Haste = Quick movement across the body.
- Gold, Treasure = One appendage over one ear.
- Hate, Enemy = Quickly pushing outward.
- Silence = Appendage vertically over mouth.
- Weapon = Pointing one appendage at the ground.
- Thanks, Friend = Point two appendages at the ground.

Symbols: It is a misconception that most inhabitants of Arena do not possess common educated skills such as read and write. On the contrary, most mercenaries-for-hire have need of elementary schooling so they know if they're being cheated by a warlord's sometimes unsavory recruiters. As a result, symbols are also used to convey visual images that rudimentary gestures cannot. Battlespeak symbols are often crudely drawn, but the

general message is clear if you know what to look for. Unlike gestures, symbols are typically used to indicate specific locations in Arena (or the Forge).

Examples of makeshift symbols are: a flower or palm tree for an oasis, three jagged peaks for mountains or hills, waves for any ocean, four vertical lines for the Xanthus River, three concentric circles for the Sea of Tears, and a circle within a circle to indicate Penance. Also, each warlord has a unique symbol used to mark both territory and property. These symbols can be easily drawn in the sand, and are also seen carved into stones, trees, gold bars, and even the foreheads of the enslaved.

Vocalizations: Grunts, whistles, and other primal sounds play only a small part in the lexicon of battlespeak. As the purpose of battlespeak is to convey meaning without the spoken word, only the most primeval vocalizations can be universally understood. One grunt for yes, two for no or to convey pain or pleasure, and a series of multiple squawks to communicate a numeric value. There are also those with an ear for the imitation of animal sounds, and the reproduction of creatures such as a kith's growl or a frey's purr is also commonplace. See Appendix A for skill information on Battlespeak.

Cities & Settlements

Though largely desolate, Arena does support several thriving cities centered on larger oases or along the Xanthus River. Most are controlled by warlords, bloodlords, or others of significant power and influence. Control of some of the smaller settlements changes hands as often as three or four times a year, while those under the thumb of major powers remain so for decades. Like the rest of Arena where the strongest rule each city, fortress or settlement is ruled by a single entity, be it a warlord or other with a considerable power base to back them up. Settlements under the control of major warlords are further detailed in Chapter 5, while others of consequence are outlined below.

Krymzin

Population: 24,699.
Warlord: Grand Asherake.
Overseer: Eshmunazar (Asherake male, Ftr5/Hone4/Sovereign2).
Major Industries: Airship & military port, ironwood, mithral.

Overview: The settlement (and oasis of the same name) of Krymzin has been under the control of the Grand Asherake for the past 200 years, and also marks the northern reaches of his vast territory. Those traveling towards the heart of the Grand Asherake's territory are required to stop here before proceeding, as without the proper consent to trek south the unwanted are quickly set upon by asherake airships and ground patrols. The Grand Asherake acquired Krymzin from the faust warlord Hasdrubal in what is considered by some to be the greatest battle ever to take place in the domain. The armies of the two warlords clashed for 60 days and nights, and in the final battle the Grand Asherake slew the weaker faust with his bare hands.

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Even though it is ruled in the name of the Grand Asherake, by his own decree Krymzin is to remain a neutral city that doubles as a trade and negotiation center for other warlords south and east of the Xanthus River. This was not the case before the Grand Asherake conquered Krymzin two centuries ago. Since then the Grand Asherake has discovered that by remaining objectively neutral he was able to make the city more profitable by taxing the transactions and travel of others. It also allows the city's overseer, which is currently an asherake named Eshmunazar, to call upon other local warlords to help in its defense should some brazen sovereign attack. The secondary reason for this move was that the mithral mines of Krymzin are becoming depleted, and the Grand Asherake needed to make the location profitable so it could support the large army stationed there. This also allows him to sustain a solid northern presence while maintaining an illusion of neutrality.

Assets: In addition to being a supposed neutral port Krymzin has one of the few mithral mines in all of Arena, and definitely the largest. The vein of mithral originally brought to the Forge by Barbello was enormous, spanning a mile deep and a hundred square miles across encompassing the oasis. By Eshmunazar's estimate nearly 80% of the mithral has been mined, but that which is left is still considerable. Ranking officers in Krymzin and to the south sport mithral chain mail shirts, and the Grand Asherake himself is known to occasionally wear a mithral gauntlet during times of war.

Since much of the rare mithral lies beneath the green of the oasis itself it went undiscovered for many millennia. Only within the past thousand years did some unwary seeker stumble across the primary vein, and the warlord who originally began mining it nearly eradicated the oasis in the process of extracting the ore. Since Eshmunazar became overseer of Krymzin one of his principal tasks was to restore vitality to the oasis to ensure its ability to sustain life, thus remaining a viable outpost for the Grand Asherake.

Another unique feature of Krymzin is the presence of ironwood trees. Unknown to Arena until 5,000 years ago, a druid from Penance was kidnapped and brought to Krymzin to grow these ironwood trees. From a small group of seeds he had brought with him the druid grew a small forest of ironwood trees. When the Grand Asherake occupied the oasis he cultivated the trees to be used in the construction of his airships. Such airships are treated as if they were constructed from iron, but gain the benefits of being made of wood. Without completely depleting the supply of ironwood there is enough to make one medium or smaller airship every five years (For more information on airships see the product *Airships*, also from Bastion Press).

Forces: The Grand Asherake maintains a force of 10,000 warriors in Krymzin; with another 4,000 within two days travel should they be needed. The majority of these troops are asherakes, and no non-asherake holds a position of command in these armies. Each army has one medium airship at their disposal for aerial assaults, followed by infantry consisting partly of subjugated humans and other humanoid who are used for frontline attacks. All opposing warlords and their armies are instructed to remain a minimum of ten miles from Krymzin. Violation of this

mandate is equal to slapping the Grand Asherake himself in the face, and all those fearless enough to try are usually crushed into the red sand by his forces.

Meheloas Harbor

Population: 12,549.

Warlord: Lady Desirata (Human female, Pal8/Inquisitor5).

Overseer: None.

Major Industries: Shipwrights, fishing, equines, leather textiles.

Overview: Settled on the tributary of the southern Xanthus River, Meheloas Harbor was founded by a sizable army pulled into Arena by Barbello 2,000 years ago. This army consisted of a thousand human holy warriors that were pitted against the forces of a cruel and malicious warlord in the lands now held by the Grand Asherake. It was a grand battle, and when the dust had settled the righteous warriors were victorious. Instead of taking up the throne of the defeated warlord the leaders of the holy army decided to take root along the Southern Ocean at the mouth of the Xanthus. The ancestors of these warriors still live upon these shores.

Named for the pious leader of the transplanted army, Meheloas Harbor has always been ruled by a descendant of the charismatic paladin with a vision of truth and righteousness never before seen in Arena. Over the years this image of morality twisted itself into that of intolerance and isolationism since time and time again the ideals of the rest of Arena conflicted with their increasingly purist standards. Today Meheloas Harbor is ruled by Lady Desirata Meheloas, the 49th descendant of the founding paladin in a city that is entirely devoted to the off-world goddess Creiddyladl, Mistress of Fidelity and Purity. It is this latter sobriquet, the decree of purity, which has been taken to the extreme over the past thousand years.

With the exception of a handful of converted humanoids, Meheloas Harbor is comprised solely of humans, the result of the death of the original Sir Meheloas at the hands of a nightling assassin several years after the city's founding. Since then very few nonhumans have earned the trust of these religious settlers, and fewer still have lived within the harbor's walls. Each man, woman and child in Meheloas Harbor is considered a holy warrior of Creiddyladl, and most human children learn to use a sword and bow with great proficiency before they've seen their 10th birthday. In recent years the forces of Meheloas Harbor have become embittered enemies of the Grand Asherake, who has attempted to wipe their settlement from the face of the Forge on two occasions. Were it not for powerful magic, devotion to the sword, and unconventional combat tactics on the part of Lady Desirata, the asherake's force may have been successful.

Assets: Meheloas Harbor is a self-sustaining community where each resident is required to make a productive contribution to society. There are only a few items Lady Desirata allows to be imported from outside sources, such as metal and foodstuffs, but she only does business with human traders and never those that emit immoral auras. Where Meheloas Harbor makes its most income is in the construction of ships, the export of fish, and the

Desirata commands 10 ships primarily used in her campaigns against the Grand Asherake, along with 2,000 mounted knights and archers. There are very few wizards in Meheloas Harbor, though some with ethics similar to those of Lady Desirata and her people have migrated from Penance over the years. It is also said that despite the difference in their deities the bloodlord Lady Salamis seeks an alliance with Meheloas Harbor, an accord that is still being considered by Lady Desirata and her lieutenants.

Lady Desirata

Groomed from birth to lead her people, Lady Desirata Ianna Meheloas is the only child of the late paladin Nabonidus Meheloas. Slain by assassins of the Grand Asherake over a decade ago, Desirata was only 20 years old when she assumed ancestral leadership of Meheloas Harbor. From the first day not one resident of the city doubted her ability, and when the armies of the Grand Asherake struck shortly after her father's death it was Desirata that lead her people to victory against a superior force. Afterwards no one, especially the Grand Asherake, had reservations about her capability of defending the strategically placed settlement.

Lady Desirata is the epitome of courage and righteousness in a land of death and destruction. She and her people are one of the few shining stars in the domain of Arena, and those fleeing the tyranny of some of Arena's more cruel warlords often come here seeking safe haven. Lady Desirata interviews each and every being that wishes to enter her city, giving shelter and doing business with only those of honest and virtuous nature are allowed within the harbor walls.

As for the honorable Desirata herself, she is the last heir to the Meheloas line. The council of elders for Meheloas Harbor has been pressuring on the paladin to marry to continue the line. While she knows this is the best thing for the community, Desirata has yet to meet someone worthy of her high standards.

Lady Desirata, Female Human Paladin/Inquisitor5: CR 13; Medium Humanoid (human); HD (8d10)+(5d6)+39; hp 121; Init +6; Spd 30'; AC 20, touch 12, flatfooted 18; BAB +11/+3, Grapple +15/+7; Atk +18/+10 +3 *frost greatsword* (2d6+7/19-20x2), +13/+5 light crossbow, +2 *bolts* (10) (1d8+2/19-20x2); SA: Aura of Courage, Convert the Unbeliever 9/day (DC19), Detect Evil, Divine Grace, Divine Health, Divine Protection, Empower Congregation 4/day, Lay on Hands 32 hp/day, Remove Disease 2/week, Smite Evil 1/day, Smite the Heathen, Special Mount, Turn Undead 7/day; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Craft (Shipmaking) +8, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +5, Heal +7, Intimidate +5, Intuit Direction +4, Jump +6, Knowledge (Geology) +4, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (nature) +7, Knowledge (religion) +14, Sense Motive +7, Spot +5, Swim +0, Survival +8; Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Knowledge (religion)).

Languages: Common, elvish, dwarvish.

Possessions: *Amulet of natural armor* +4, antitoxin (1 vial), +2 *crossbow bolts* (10), light crossbow, dagger (2), blue diamond



raising of horseflesh—the latter originating with the warhorse cavalry pulled into Arena by the Mask of Fury and cultivated to a herd of thousands over the years.

Many of the vessels sailing the waves of the Southern Ocean were constructed by the shipwrights of Meheloas Harbor. These ships are never sold to races other than human, but are often taken in conquests then sold to non-human warlords and buccaneers. It is common knowledge, to the ire of many warlords along the concave coastline, that Meheloas Harbor supplies ships to pirates who stand opposed to the chaotic rule of Arena's military masters. These customers often return for repairs or in search of safe haven, and if they have been true (at least in part) to the ideals of Mistress Creiddyladl they are welcome in the human port.

Forces: Of the twelve thousand residents of Meheloas Harbor nearly all possess either holy warrior or clerical abilities used to defend their home. All of the holy warriors are trained in horsemanship and cavalry tactics, and their symmetry on the battlefield has proved more than a match for an average warlord's jumbled armies. Lady

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(1,000 gp), +3 frost greatsword, gem of brightness, gem of seeing, glove of storing, gold holy symbol of Creiddyladl, heavy war horse, mithral shirt, templar robes, potion of heroism, potion of see invisibility, pouch (belt), ring of freedom of movement.

Paladin Spells (2/2/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 1st " cure light wounds, protection from evil; 2nd " oathbrand, shield
Other: 3rd " cure moderate wounds, discern lies.

Port Makhesh

Population: 19,560.

Influencing Bloodlord: Lord Mabon.

Warlord: Gaone Makhesh (Chromithian male, Ftr6/Rog4/Stalker4).

Overseer: Lord Mabon.

Major Industries: Foodstuffs, slaves, arms.

Overview: Located just north of the river's split, Port Makhesh is the oldest port (nearly 5,000 years) currently established along the Xanthus River. While the port is governed by the proclaimed chromithian warlord Makhesh, true rulership of the settlement is done from the palace of Blackwall by the faust Lord Mabon. It is believed Mabon had the former ruler of the port assassinated and replaced with the puppet Makhesh several decades ago. Since then the port has flourished considerably. River traffic from Penance typically comes directly to Port Makhesh from Temper, and most ships are under the control of Lord Mabon's river captains. There are other small way stations along the Xanthus River between Temper and Port Makhesh, most of which are under the control of Mabon as well. Those not traveling on official business in the name of the bloodlord pay a heavy toll to reach Arena in this method, and seldom are they taken beyond Port Makhesh.

In addition to receiving goods from Blackwall, Port Makhesh serves as a launching point for anyone traveling to Arena's eastern lands and all points to the south. Those wanting to join the armies of the Grand Asherake make their first stop here, and agents of the asherake leave the port daily traveling eastward towards Krymzin. Occasionally travelers wish to head south, but the reputation of the River of the Dead and the purists of Meheloas Harbor often discourage those without specific business. In fact, finding river transportation south from Port Makhesh can be both difficult and expensive.

Assets: The two largest commodities traded from this port are slaves and food, both exports of Lord Mabon. Enslavement of some of the weaker races, which include mostly humans and dovers, comes to a head in Port Makhesh with daily slave auctions as well as private showings for influential customers. Makhesh handles many of the slave issues himself, since the immoral trade brings in considerable gold from outlying warlords along with weapons and other tools of war.

Foodstuffs harvested from the plains of Penance are the largest trade that passes through Port Makhesh. Fresh fruits and vegetables, a staple in the diets of many humanoids and a needed food to stave off certain diseases, is nearly impossible to find in any sort of quantity in certain parts of Arena. Agents of Lord Mabon bring entire cargo holds of this fare to Port Makhesh, much of which is magically preserved for the long trip from the plains of Penance.

Forces: A militia of 4,000 soldiers is stationed in Port Makhesh, with access to an additional 2,000 local mercenaries who are frequently hired by Makhesh if the port comes under attack. In recent times aggression against Port Makhesh has been at a minimum, as most warlords recognize the importance of the location and its trade connections to Penance.

Port Ulmuk

Population: 9,100.

Influencing Bloodlord: Lord Belus.

Warlord: Nissliss Ulmuk (Ftr5/Vigilante5).

Overseer: Lord Belus.

Major Industries: Wood, crafts, foodstuffs.

Overview: Port Ulmuk has had several warlords in recent decades, as the port is poorly positioned strategically when compared to Port Makhesh, and it is often quickly conquered before a new ruler has even been able to get firmly entrenched in his new home. A few years ago the nightling Ulmuk, with support from Lord Belus of Illumina, successfully overthrew the previous warlord to take control of the port without incident. How this was accomplished without significant bloodshed and a great number of troops is a mystery to neighboring warlords.

It is only in the last 300 years that Port Ulmuk has become a settlement desired by the warlords of northern Arena. With the rise to power of the sorcerer Raghuveer to the west, travelers that would normally continue on past this port instead disembark. The dark reputation of the shadowy Raghuveer and the rumors of the assassins that serve under him are enough to dissuade most mercenaries and traders from traveling west. This has been a boon for Port Ulmuk, which has tripled in size since coming under the control of the shifty nightling.

Assets: Port Ulmuk's primary trade is different from that of most other cities or settlements. In addition to the common exports of food, wood, and mercenaries and slaves, the influence of Lord Belus has brought something tremendously rare and out of the ordinary to Arena—luxury. Hand woven rugs, jewelry, art objects, and the like are shipped to Port Ulmuk by traders on the payroll of Lord Belus. The more powerful a warlord the more luxurious a lifestyle they can lead, while subordinates handle day-to-day affairs. Many of these luxuries are less extravagant than those found in Penance, but are over-elaborate nonetheless when compared to the rest of the domain.

The hidden asset of Port Ulmuk is a sizeable silver mine five miles from the outskirts of the settlement. The vein was discovered by a seeker shortly after Ulmuk took control of the port, and the nightling has somehow managed to keep it secret from the prying eyes of competing warlords. The drawback of this discovery is a large feral tribe of ramzadi centered only a few miles south of the mine. The savage lizardmen attack the mines on a regular basis, and casualties at the site have been high as of late. Ulmuk has taken to assigning port troops to the location to protect the ore supply, and it is becoming more difficult to hide the mine from the inquisitive eyes of rivals.

The Shadow Mage

Raghuveer (whose illustration appears on page 3) was born human long ago, and still is to some degree. It is thought that the Shadow Mage was born five centuries ago, but the truth is he came to the Forge on his own 10,000 years ago from a dying world. Raghuveer was intrigued by this world-prison of gods. Over his unnatural lifespan the wizard has established a center of power in each of the domains, and has even spoken to all of the Feathered Fowl, Barbello being the last of the seven. Raghuveer spoke to each of them of the secrets of the Forge, the Oath of Binding, and other subjects known only to them, and left each of them in peace.

The true goals of Raghuveer are known only to him. He has gone by a hundred names across the world, and has been a bloodlord in Penance, a pirate from Kiln, and even a member of the Warlocks from the Vault. Raghuveer's pursuits as an assassin for hire, while it is enjoyable, are only a means to maintain his existence on the world. Those who have gotten close to him over the centuries may have suspected he had always had a surreptitious objective, but it is known only to him and possibly members of the Black Flock.

Raghuveer's extended age is due to the *amulet of eternal life* he put on long before he came to the Forge. The magic item wholly stops the aging of the wearer, and as long as the possessor does not die from physical damage he will live forever. Should Raghuveer be killed in combat his body instantly turns to dust, and all attempts to restore his life through magic fail. Several times has the Shadow Mage come close to death, but unlike other long-lived races he does not long to end his life. Many who encounter the wizard are chilled by his demeanor, and with the exception of his inner circle those that meet him are usually dead the next day.

Raghuveer, the Shadow Mage, Male Human, Wizard14/Assassin10/Demagogue8: CR 32, Medium Humanoid (human); HD 14d4+10d6+8d6+72; hp 191; Init +8; Spd 30'; AC 25, touch 14, flatfooted 21; BAB +12/+7/+2 (+6 epic), Grapple +15 (+6 epic); Atk +25/+20/+15 +4 *quarterstaff* (1d6+7/20x2), +23/+18/+13 +3 *dagger of venom* (1d4+6/19-20x2); SA Death Attack (DC 26), Sneak Attack +5d6, Spells; SQ Spell Resistance 15, Become Incorporeal, Poison Use, Save vs. Poison +5, Summon Familiar, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked), Hide in Plain Sight; Sway, Taunt, Threaten, Pacify, Outrage, Convey, Tempt, Convince, Negotiate, Humiliate, Filibuster; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +20, Will +20; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 23, Wis 18, Cha 15.

Skills & Feats: Appraise +8, Balance +6, Bluff +5, Climb +5, Concentration +23, Craft (alchemy) +18, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +6, Forgery +9, Gather Information +12, Hide +15, Battlespeak +7, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +12, Knowledge (geography, Arena) +12, Knowledge (geology) +12, Knowledge (history, Arena) +12, Knowledge (minerals) +12, Knowledge (undead) +12, Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +24, Spot +15, Use Rope +8; Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Deceitful, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Concentration), Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Transmutation, Evocation).

Languages: Asherake, ceptu, common, elven, faust, lunar, nightling, valco.

Possessions: +6 bracers of armor, +2 ring of protection (armor), wand of magic missiles (9, 25 charges), bag of holding (bag 2), scroll: incendiary cloud (15), power word, kill (13), solid fog (7), +4 quarterstaff, +3 dagger of venom, amulet of eternal life, five vials of poison (varied).

Wizard Spells (4/6/6/5/5/4/4/2; base save DC = 16 + spell level; 17 + spell level for transmutation and evocation spells): 0th-detect magic x2, message, read magic; 1st-change self, magic missile x4; 2nd-blur, ghoul touch, levitate, mirror image, summon monster II; 3rd-dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt x3; 4th-improved invisibility, polymorph x2, stone shape; 5th-cone of cold, sending, transmute rock to mud; 6th-chain lightning x2, disintegrate; 7th-forcecage, control weather.

Assassin Spells Known (2/2/2/1; base save DC = 16 + spell level): 1st-detect poison, ghost sound; 2nd-darkness, undetectable alignment; 3rd-misdirection, nondetection; 4th-poison.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Mind (*Centered:* immune to charm effects, gains a +4 insight bonus to all saving throws vs. fear and compulsion effects, gains a +4 insight bonus on Concentration checks; *Enterprising:* gains a +2 racial bonus to Intelligence, gains a +4 competence bonus to all Knowledge checks.), Focus of the Shadow (*Shadow:* +3 natural armor bonus, +6 circumstance bonus to Hide checks; *Shaded:* spell resistance 15; *Veiled:* ability to airwalk, ability to become incorporeal.)

Forces: Ulmuk as a defense force of 4,000 soldiers, mostly nightlings and pickers who are extremely loyal to him and Lord Belus. The nightling's troops are lead by an experienced haze called Kele, whose telepathic abilities give him a distinct edge in all military endeavors. There are also an additional 1,500 mercenaries and servants of the bloodlord in the port that can be called upon as well.

Port Raghuveer

Population: Unknown (suspected 4,000-5,000).

Warlord: Lord Raghuveer (Wiz14/Assassin10/Demagogue8).

Overseer: None.

Major Industries: Assassination.

Overview: Until 500 years ago this settlement did not exist. No one is sure who Raghuveer is (or was) or where he came from, but he was not brought to the Forge by

Overview of Arena

Barbello or any other member of the Feathered Fowl. Earning the moniker of the *shadow mage* since he appeared out of nowhere (and either achieving quickly or arriving with *focus of the shadow*), Raghuveer and a modest army of a thousand marched into Arena hundreds of years ago from nearby Anvil and established a settlement unopposed along the Xanthus River. The location of Port Raghuveer was previously insignificant to all who had scouted the area before, as there are no gold or other precious metals or gems that would have made this region desirable to warlords in the past. Regardless of the reason, the enigmatic Raghuveer, who is suspected to be human, has defied both mortality and the wrath of Barbello for the past five centuries.

Port Raghuveer is a closed city. Walls of stone, conjured by the magic of the mystic warlord, surround the entire settlement at a height of fifty feet. Only those that serve or are invited by the Shadow Mage are welcome within its walls. Those that sneak in or use magic to enter the city are promptly rounded up and often summarily executed after being tortured for information. Trespassers are eventually fed to the carnivorous xial fish, and the river bottom of the port's harbor is littered with the bones of the foolish.

Since building the city Raghuveer has attracted some of the most ruthless and cunning followers from across the Forge, generally immoral rogues, assassins for hire, and spellcasters of questionable character. With this following Raghuveer has become a dark force on the Forge, one whose ultimate goal is known only to him. As for the Mask of Fury, she paid the Shadow Mage a visit shortly after he began building his empire. Despite her usual instincts Barbello did not blindly attack the powerful wizard, but instead spoke with Raghuveer for nearly two days. What the two talked about is unknown, but the Feathered Fowl has never returned and has yet to interfere with any dealings of Port Raghuveer.

Assets: Port Raghuveer has no tangible exports, other than the established truth that for a price anyone can take out an assassin's contract on a warlord or anyone else on the Forge within its walls. While few goods leave the city, ships laden with various commodities arrive from Temper on a regular basis. Ships belonging to Raghuveer, sleek black vessels burned with the mage's brand, three vertical lightning bolts, are given free passage along the Xanthus River. Those who have looted Raghuveer's assets in the past eventually end up dead, especially those wanting to learn the wizard's secrets. What Raghuveer hides behind his walls, whether gold or magic, is highly coveted by the warlords and bloodlords alike.

Forces: Port Raghuveer is thought to have a limited military, which in centuries past gave it the impression of an easy target. The port does have a contingent of nearly 2,000 soldiers that have left the safety of its walls to confront aggressors, though Raghuveer's primary means of defending his city is through the assassination of opposing army's leaders and even warlords should attacks continue. A neighboring warlord, Og Brickhand, and his 5,000 troops have an uneasy alliance with the Shadow Mage. Since the armies of the two had never met on the battlefield, it is unknown why the lawful dwarf Brickhand would align himself with the cagey Raghuveer—though blackmail or some other means of extortion is suspected.

Sovann'Cru

Population: Unknown (suspected 5,000+ undead).

Warlord: Mariadok the Undying (Half-Elven male lich, Necr15/Ftr7/Clr5).

Overseer: None.

Major Industries: None.

Overview: Long ago the oasis of Sovann'Cru, named for the elven female companion of the warlord Mariadok, was a lush and thriving sanctuary that was home to the thousands that served their liege. Why the territory of Mariadok fell into ruin 400 years ago is unknown, but it was not from the attack of an opposing warlord or by the wrath of the Mask of Fury. Whatever the reason the oasis is now a haven of the dead that have risen from the battlefields of north western Arena, raised and commanded by the lich and warlord of the oasis Mariadok the Undying.

Lost to him long ago, Mariadok spends his undead days brooding over the memory of his former lover Sovann, and his nights gathering undead from across Arena under the cover of darkness. Mariadok only raises the largest and best-preserved bodies he finds, which coupled with the necromancer's potent magic make for sturdy undead warriors. Seldom does Mariadok lead his forces away from Sovann'Cru, but when the army does march it always returns with much greater numbers—the result of adding opposing warlord's troops to lich's undead ranks.

Despite the presence of rotten flesh and decay, the oasis itself is still teeming with life. Mariadok orders the beauty of the oasis maintained at all times, in loving memory of his late love. To this end there are a handful of "living" servants of the lich enslaved to properly maintain the land's splendor. Occasionally other necromancers will also travel across the Forge to Sovann'Cru in an effort to learn from the ancient mage. Those Mariadok does not accept as worthy become members of his undead infantry.

Assets: Unlike in life, Mariadok now cares nothing for gold and other treasures excavated from the soil of Arena. The sands beneath and surrounding Sovann'Cru are laden with thick veins of gold, a wealth coveted by many warlords in the area. Several times a year major offenses are launched against Mariadok by various northern warlords, all in an effort to obtain this buried treasure. All assaults to date have been unsuccessful, and have done nothing but add to the lich's undying ranks.

Forces: The true number of undead currently under Mariadok's command is known only to him. The total number fluctuates based on the number of campaigns launched or number of times the oasis is defended in a given year; but ranges between four and seven thousand strong. Of this number about 400 are free-willed undead, such as vampires, who serve Mariadok enthusiastically for their own reasons. These intelligent undead operate as the commanders, scouts, and infiltrators of Mariadok's forces. For those that follow the lich's dealings there is recent talk of dubious dealings with the thief-lords of Eclipse, which can bode nothing but ill for those that covet Mariadok's gold.

Ecology of Arena

There is no safe haven in Arena. You can die of thirst in the desert, drown in the vast ocean, and become prey for oasis predators. In reality, life is the same there as the rest of the Forge. In the end, we all have to die sometime.

- Raghuv eer, The Shadow Mage

Arena is a vast domain. The majority of it consists of the cratered desert made up of red sands, as well as enormous lakes and long rivers bordered by jungle teeming with life. The environment of the desert is harsh, and food and water are typically in short supply, yet people flock here for the wealth that potentially awaits them.

The Desert

Red sands stretch from horizon to horizon in the desert, though the landscape is far from flat. In some areas rocky outcroppings rise to heights of up to three hundred feet. In other places the land is cratered where mines have collapsed.

Many believe that the sand is red because of the sheer number of soldiers that have died here. While it is true that these sands have drunk more than their fill of blood, that is simply not the truth. When Barbello pulled the lands that made up Arena, she made a conscious effort to bring in lands that were rich in minerals such as gold, silver, and gems. Nearly all of the soil was rich in iron and pulled from uninhabited, unlivable areas of the material plane. Upon arrival in the Forge, it promptly rusted, causing the earth and the sky of Arena to turn red. In Arena, both of the Forge's suns are red, hidden behind the veil of fine red sand carried on the winds.

Climate

The temperature in Arena ranges from extremely hot to extremely cold. The skies are nearly cloudless, allowing the heat to quickly dissipate during the periods when neither sun is up. The temperatures in southern Arena, in the areas bordering the Vault are often cool, ranging between 35° F and 70° F during the daylight hours depending on the season and the weather patterns. Middle Arena, particularly the areas that border the Southern Ocean and the Central Ocean are more temperate, with temperature ranges between 60° F in the Sleeping season to 90° F in Seething. The bulk of the land in Arena, that bordering Penance, Wildwood, and Anvil, are usually extremely hot, with temperatures that range from 70° F to 105° F. Evening temperatures tend to be 20° F to 30° F below these in all areas. Extreme temperatures occasionally exist in all of these regions, raising or lowering the average temperatures by an additional +/- 15° F.

Regions in southern Arena sometimes experience below-freezing temperatures. During these times anyone caught outdoors without proper clothing are subject to cold dangers, as described in the DMG. Luckily, snow in this region is as rare as the rain is, but there are often severe windstorms that accompany the cold weather, making shelter an immediate necessity. Occasionally, travelers in such a storm can find an abandoned mine to hide

in. Just as often, however, characters caught in a storm are forced to dig into the cold earth and erect some form of cover to wait out the storm.

Mid-Arena enjoys the benefits of an arid climate, with temperatures that are neither severely hot or cold. Occasionally temperatures here rise as high as 100° F during the day and plummet as low as 30° F during the evening, but such extremes are rare. Most of the time temperatures are tolerable, though rainfall is almost nonexistent. Storms here are also extremely rare. Many people that live in this region don't plan for extreme weather since it is comfortable outside most of the time.

Northern Arena makes up the majority of the landmass of the domain and is hot by most people's standards most of the time. Worse still is the scarcity of water here. While many die in the numerous clashes over the mines that unearth the fortune hidden underground, many more die from the desert heat. Characters must drink one gallon of water per day, which means that during long forays into the desert, they must find a way to bring this water with them. Because of this, extra-dimensional spaces, such as *bags of holding*, filled with water are an invaluable resource.

Rainfall in the desert is less than ten inches per year. Since weather conditions do not carry over from one domain of the Forge to another, all the moisture here originates from the rivers that run through the domain, the oceans that border it, and the oases that are formed from natural springs. Cloud cover and rainfall rarely carry inland more than a few miles, though the banks of the rivers are usually warm, wet, jungle areas, seeing more rainfall in a single week than the rest of Arena sees in a year.

In the desert, sandstorms are all too common and pose great threats to anyone who must travel through them. Because the red sand is so fine in certain areas, those traveling the desert must use rags to cover their mouths and noses or risk inhaling the sand. If a character that is unequipped to filter out the sand cannot find cover and must brave the outdoors during a sandstorm, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) every ten minutes or suffer 1 Constitution damage. The sandstorms of western Arena are even more deadly due to more gritty sand (DC 18, lose 2 Constitution damage).

During a typical sandstorm, visibility is cut down to one-half of normal. A more powerful sandstorm can cause the sky to darken slightly and visibility to be cut to one-quarter. The most powerful sandstorms kick up so much sand into the air that it cuts visibility down to nothing and literally blocks out the sun. Sandstorms are also often accompanied by rain, which has the effect of slowing travel because of the decreased visibility and the muddy ground.

Flora & Fauna

Very few life-forms call the desert of Arena home. Those that do are hardy species that are able to avoid the harsh climate or have creative ways of withstanding the heat. During hot spells in northern Arena, nothing save a few species of plants survive long outside of a shelter.

Bamrag Lizards: This species is a tiny lizard that traverses the desert at high speeds in search of insects and water. It walks on four legs and has a hood of skin

Ecology of Arena

that casts a shadow over its face in the hot suns. It air-cools its body as it runs across the desert surface. If stops for any period of time, it keeps its feet from burning in the hot sand by raising one of the front legs and the back legs, and then alternating legs a few seconds later. It continues this, switching supporting legs periodically, until it begins to move again.

Cactus Species: Numerous cacti grow throughout Arena. These plants absorb the scarce water found in the desert, growing slowly upwards. The lifespan of the cacti is many times longer than typical plant species, though there are many fewer of these plants than there are most other types of foliage in a given area. The Manari cactus produces the unnpas fruit, which is edible, about the size of a typical melon, and is made up mostly of water. A manari cactus is considered a valuable find and most warlords punish the destruction of a manari cactus with death.

Carerla Lizards: These small-sized lizards rarely appear during the hours when the yellow sun is in the sky, though they can be seen at night and when the red sun is out. During the day they hide in subterranean dens, which protect them from the heat. At night they go out in search of insects, water, and carrion. Creatures that must survive in the desert for any length of time without food hunt the carerla lizard. Its body provides a source of meat that can last 1d4 days for a single person, and its blood is thin and drinkable. A carerla lizard yields one and a half gallons of blood.

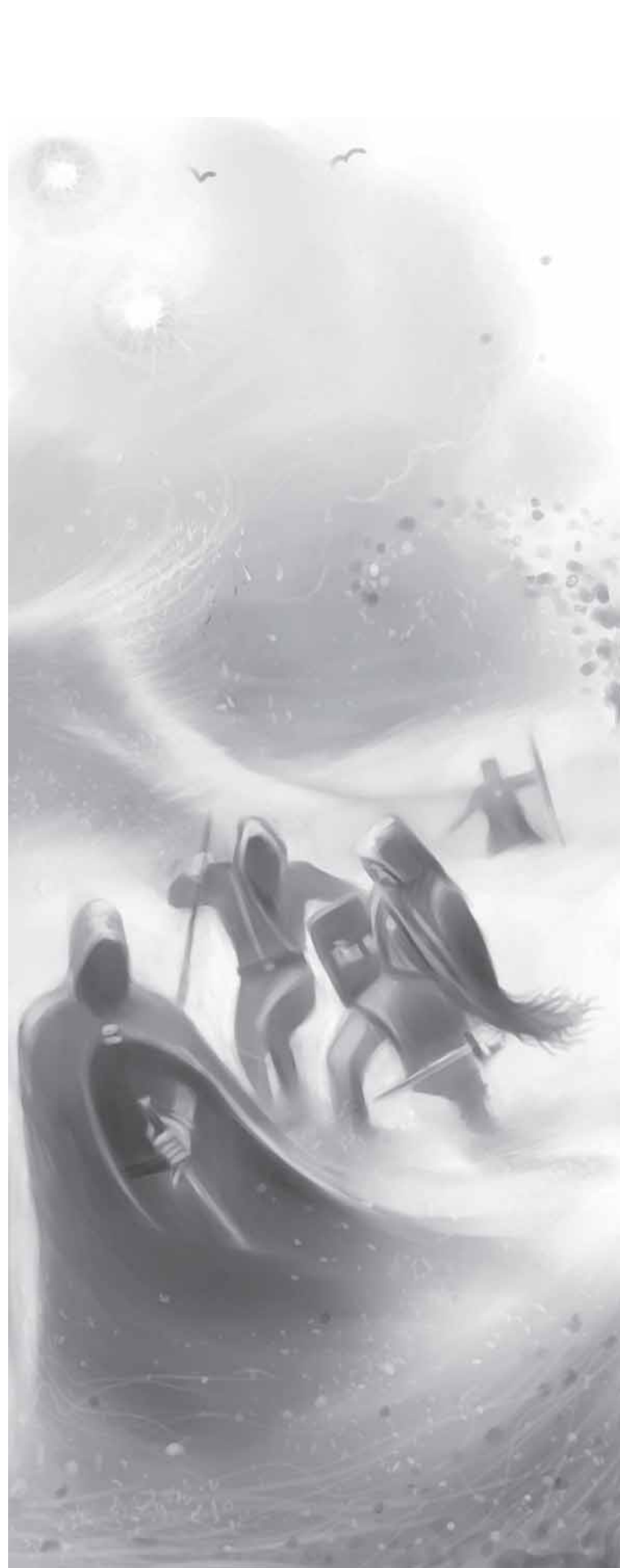
Carkel Flowers: These are beautiful white and pink flowers that are only seen immediately following a rain-fall, growing quickly to a height if four to six inches. They can be seen covering the normally sandy desert landscape for miles. As the water is soaked up by the desert sands and the heat rises, the carkel flowers dry up and disintegrate, but not before leaving billions of new seeds that will grow into flowers when next it rains.

Kobold Grass: This is the only form of grass that has any chance of surviving without the need for water. It is hardy and durable, surviving, and oftentimes is the only plant that can be seen for miles. Unfortunately it does little to change the appearance of the desert regions where it grows as its color ranges from yellow to rust. Those who live near oases consider this to be a weed and try to destroy it when it invades their lush green yards.

Madow Frogs: These frogs are diminutive-sized and live in shallow holes. They require little sustenance, and are able to literally collect water vapor on their tongues and swallow it to sustain their lives. Many times they climb into holes through tiny openings and are then unable to leave their shelters as their bodies grow larger than the openings they entered through. During the rare rains that fall, the entrances widen and they can break free long enough to find the other frogs in the area, mate, and then find shelter before the heat becomes unbearable for them.

Adventuring

Desert regions are hostile environments. Water is scarce, heavy armor hinders more than it helps, sinkholes are all too common, and powerful creatures that are accustomed to the harsh environment lie in wait for prey to come to them. Creatures that don't properly prepare for a journey don't stand a chance.



Water: Forays into the desert often last weeks or even months. Creatures traveling the desert normally have detailed maps showing exactly how far it is from one oasis to the next. Occasionally however, if the region is going through a particularly dry season, entire oases dry up, or become mud. Creatures that are able to cast *create food and water* are in high demand, although if identified by an enemy, are often the first characters targeted in combat.

A character in the desert must drink one gallon of water per day. A character that can only drink a half-gallon of water during a single day takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage from dehydration. A character that drinks less than a half-gallon per day sustains 1d6 points of Constitution damage per day. These rules supersede the rules in the DMG when the creatures are in an extremely hot desert environment like Arena.

The trade of food and water is a major industry in Arena. Merchants able to move hundreds or thousands of gallons of water into the desert are guaranteed to earn the wealth they seek if they don't fall prey to bandits first. Merchants with water that ply the trade-ways in Arena are able to sell water for up to 5 gp per gallon.

Accessing water is also not a guarantee just because one knows where an oasis might lie. Bandits sometimes claim oases as their own, charging an exorbitant fee for anyone wishing to drink. Many warlords wall in medium-sized oases, making it possible only for their own people and their allies to get water. Unlike the bandits, they often do not share if someone approaches them with an offer of wealth in exchange for water. In addition to this, sometimes when creatures plan a journey according to a map, they arrive at what should be an oasis only find nothing but desert sand due to incorrect cartography or a recent major geological change.

Armor: Armor is another major problem in the desert. The various metal armor that is popular in Penance can be a death sentence in Arena. Rules describing the negative effects of heavy armor are listed in the DMG. Creatures in the desert have much better luck with leather armor, despite the decrease to armor class. Because of this, spells such as *mage armor*, *barkskin*, and the various protection spells are in high demand. In addition to those spells, items such as *rings of protection*, *bracers of armor*, and the like fetch twice the market price or more in Arena.

Sinkholes: Sinkholes are fairly common throughout Arena. They are areas filled with loose sand, with the solid foundation either far beneath the surface. Underground rivers have been found in places where they rise up near the surface, creating a sinkhole. Sinkholes also sometimes form as the result of a buildup of sand atop a collapsing mine.

Creatures standing within 10 ft. of a sinkhole may make a Spot check (DC 20). Once spotted, the creature can find the edges and avoid the dangerous terrain. A creature walking into a sinkhole must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 17) or fall in. Once in, the creature is allowed one Reflex save per round for 1d6 rounds. Each round the Reflex DC is increased from the previous round by 2. Creatures that are able to fly or are aided by others outside the area of the sinkhole (with rope, magic or other such assistance) can escape the sinkhole without any fur-

ther rolls. Characters unable to escape the sinkhole within the allotted amount of time slip beneath the surface and begin to suffocate, per the rules in the DMG.

The Jungle

The rainfall that the majority of Arena doesn't receive is made up for in the jungle areas. Though they are only a small percentage of the total land mass of Arena, the intense heat of Arena plus the fertile soil in this area makes for one of the most dense concentrations of life within the Forge. Here can be found some of the most horrific creatures that hunt the lands of the Forge. This is also an area where creatures often go to hide. In fact, some armies have encamped for long periods of time in the jungle just before making sneak attacks against nearby enemies.

The jungle is found primarily along the rivers that flow from Penance, although many of the large oases also have a large verdant band surrounding them as well. The rivers and jungle banks form long meandering trails through Arena. Because of the lengths of these rivers, the climate gradually changes the further south they reach. Some of the southernmost green areas are fairly cold, though rain falls much of the time, the vegetation grows just as wild and uncontrolled as in the warm jungle areas, and life is every bit abundant here as it is elsewhere.

Climate

Most of the jungle areas fall within the northern third of Arena and are effectively warm rainforests. Temperatures here match those in the deserts of Arena, though it feels hotter with the humidity, making travel uncomfortably warm for most species. Waterways originate through the rivers that flow through these areas, and rainfall is commonplace. Clouds are typically present, as are morning and evening mists. Like the rest of Arena, the ground here is also a muddy red color, although it has a much darker, healthier appearance due to the nutrients present in the soil. Much of the area surrounding the rivers is marshland.

Just as important as the rainfall are the ever-present deciduous trees. The trunks of many of the trees are six or more feet in diameter. The trees reach hundreds of feet into the sky, and their dense branches create a canopy with few breaks. In most places the sun is nearly blotted out by the branches.

Within these interlocking branches are entire layers of life, mini-ecosystems that form only at a particular altitude, and only over a given area. Most of this life evolved naturally over the eons since Barbello had been more concerned with her attempts to populate the desert. In fact, this is one of the few areas in the Forge that has had the opportunity to develop with little interference.

The southern regions are best described as temperate rainforests. The trees consist of mostly deciduous species, and they tend to be much shorter than the trees to the north. Cloud cover is an ever-present fact of life in these areas and there are few breaks in the wet weather. Rainfall can be erratic, going from a downpour to sunny and comfortable in a few minutes. Snowfall is almost unheard of here, though frost often forms during the evening and freezing rain falls quite often.

Ecology of Arena

The middle third of Arena has few stretches of jungle. Jungles can be found where the rivers meet the Southern and Central oceans. The weather here is generally warm, though rainfall and cloudy conditions are common.

In general, the climate is made up of the milder elements from both the northern and southern third of Arena. At times it is excessively warm while at other times it can be cool. One of the strange effects this climate has had is that coniferous trees have grown much larger than the ones to the south. In some cases the bases of these trees are 10 feet or more in diameter, and rival the height of the trees to the north. The layered canopies and mini-ecosystems that are found in the rainforests of the north are not found here due to the absence of extreme heat.

Flora & Fauna

The river channels of Arena are bordered by massive densely packed trees that support all manner of life. There is a wondrous variation of species, and numerous sub-species share the same ecosystem. In addition to this, the god's magic of the Forge has caused unusual mutations to standard plants and animals, often blurring the line between the two.

The specific forms of life that are found in the jungles are impossible to describe in full due to the incredible amount of diversity found there, though it includes most standard animals and many beasts and even stranger creatures. Mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, and amphibians thrive here. In addition to the animal life, plant life of all kinds also flourishes.

Balkryn: This is an unusual creature that is highly prized by people who must sail through the river channels. This creature is shaped like a fish, usually 12 to 16 inches long, with wings, and the head of a shark. It has both gills and a set of lungs. It is equally at home in the river, where it eats smaller fish, and flying through the air, where it eats insects and small birds. Because it is able to leave the water, people traveling the waterways are able to net them in the air or catch them with fishing lines. Its primary diet consists of the carnivorous xial fish, which likely keeps the smaller predators from overrunning Arena's fresh waterways.

Death Berries: These berries are red and they look and smell inviting. Their pollen actually combines with the seeds of other plants, which causes them to actually grow on numerous different types of plants. If the berry or the juice from the berry is ingested, the creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 1d6 Constitution damage 1d4 hours later, followed by an additional 1d3 Constitution points damage per day until the character

either dies or the toxin is somehow neutralized. Because it is so easy to find, it is often harvested and made into poison.

Needletrees: These trees are (fortunately) rare. Tiny holes in the bark of the trees conceal tiny wooden needles that are encased in dried sap. This has an effect of increasing the weight of the needles as well as the damage they do. If a medium-sized or larger creature comes within 10 feet of the tree, the needles fire. The needles fire in all directions. All creatures caught within 25 feet of the tree when it fires its needles must make a Reflex save (DC 20) or take 1d4 points of damage. The tree can fire its needles twice before having to grow more and it takes 1d3 days for more to grow.

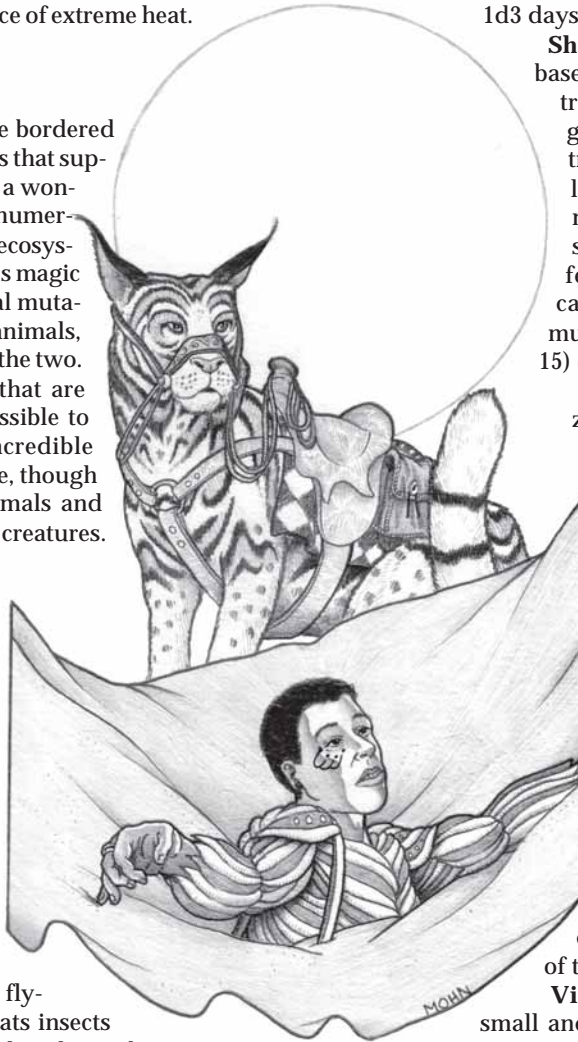
Shezzashi: This animal is a land-based form of squid. It lives in the trees, using its long tentacles to grip branches as it swings from tree to tree. Its diet consists of leaves and plants. When cornered, it emits a cone of black smoke that is effective up to 10 feet away. Creatures that are caught within the smoke cone must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

Shrub Constrictors: These bizarre animals have the basic physiology of a snake, but the outward appearance of a shrub. The basic body appears much like a green-colored boa constrictor. Attached to the body of the snake are thorny branches. When the snake is fully extended the body can be seen, but when coiled, the branches become more densely packed and the creature at the core is hidden from sight. The snake uses its deceptive appearance to attract prey. Small creatures often scurry away from other dangers, and right into the maw of the shrub constrictor.

Viny Creepers: These plants are small and bushy with long tendrils instead of roots. They take sustenance from sunlight, which is often in short supply in the jungles. Their tendrils however, act much like tentacles, allowing the plant to move towards sunlight, which it can somehow sense from a distance. They are found in sunlit patches of ground just as often as they are found in tree-tops.

Adventuring

For many characters, traveling through the jungles may be the first contact they have with Arena. Travel from Penance to Arena by boat is one of the preferred methods to traverse such great distances quickly without the aid



of magic. Much of Arena can also be accessed by the waterways, despite the general lack of water throughout the domain. The main dangers adventurers face when traveling through these regions are predatory beasts, heat, and disease.

Predatory beasts come in many forms in the jungle. Snakes, tigers, monkeys, apes, and lizards are found in abundance. Monsters such as assassin vines, lizard folk, locathah, manticores, and nagas inhabit the jungles and often set up ambush points and await intrepid souls to pass by. Rakshasas are also known to inhabit these areas in concentrations higher than those seen in other areas of the Forge. Hydras are a constant danger, and various dangerous forms of worms and carrion eaters are present throughout the jungles as well.

The heat carries with it many of the same dangers as it does in the desert regions of Arena (see above). To compound this, the humidity in the air causes greater discomfort to most creatures than the arid climate. Any time a creature suffers subdual damage because of the heat, he also suffers an additional 2-point penalty to any Fortitude saves until the subdual damage is healed.

The threat of disease is a very real danger in the jungle. Any wound stands a chance of becoming infected, causing disease. Because of the proliferation of life throughout these regions, there are diseases here that are found nowhere else in the multiverse. Creatures immune to these diseases are rare, so disease poses a serious risk to anyone traveling here.

Every time a creature suffers injury in a single combat while in the jungle, that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 15). Failure means that the creature has contracted a disease (see the table below). Characters can combat this in several ways. If disease is not a special attack of the creature, magically healing a wounded victim back to full hit points within one hour of combat prevents an external disease from setting in. Also, casting *remove disease* promptly following combat is another quick way of preventing it. Characters that are simply traveling through jungle regions in Arena sometimes take no precautions to prevent disease until they have left the jungle, and then cast curative spells to remove anything they may have acquired. *Remove disease* is also the primary method of treating the diseases listed below, as well as herbal remedies that may have been developed by warlords lacking clerical aid.

Scarlet flu: This disease causes flu-like symptoms. The victim vomits frequently (1d4 times per hour). The skin takes on a scarlet hue and a fever results. If left untreated, 3d4 days after the onset of the disease, the victim develops a bleeding ulcer, which causes 1 Con drain per day.

Death from this disease is extremely painful, and people who are not accustomed to treating badly suffering people rarely wish to remain near the victim due to the unpleasant and messy symptoms of the disease.

Penance fatigue: A relatively mild condition, this is caused by eating plants or roots that have been infested with a particular bacterium. The victim suffers 1d2 Constitution damage, which takes the form of a general feeling of malaise. If left untreated, it usually goes away on its own in 1d4 days.

Arena waste: This is an ugly disease caused by bacteria that begins eating the flesh of the victim. It is normal for patches of skin all over the body to turn a deep red color as the flesh is slowly dissolved by the bacteria. If left untreated for 2d3 days, this causes an additional 1d4 points of Con damage per week.

Stinkfoot: Often a source of humiliation due to the horrific smell, this disease is not a laughing matter. Harmful bacteria infest patches of skin all over the foot, all the way up to the shin. The skin first turns red, then brown, at which time it begins to smell like decay. In fact, the skin itself is dying, and quickly begins peeling off. If left untreated for 2d3 days, the affected foot must be removed (in game terms, this is equivalent to 2 points of permanent Constitution damage per foot).

Black hives: This condition is caused by a poisoning of the blood. Toxins rise through the skin causing black boils that pop and ooze puss and other bodily liquids. These bodily fluids are highly contagious, and anyone coming into direct contact with it must make a Fortitude save (DC 17) or become infected. The victim loses 1d6 Constitution points immediately after the incubation period has ended. The following day, and every day after that the victim suffers 1d2 Constitution damage per day until dead.

Faust fever: Faust fever is caused by a bacterial infection that raises the overall body temperature and causes profuse sweating. After the onset of this disease, the infected creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or begin to hallucinate. If the save is failed by 5 points or more, the victim mistakes any anyone nearby, including allies or friends, as hostile opponents and tries to kill them. Following the onset of this condition, the victim loses 1 Constitution point per day until dead.

OCEANS

Arena is bordered by every ocean of the Forge. The northern section of Arena is bordered by the Northern Ocean and the southern portion of Arena is bordered by the Southern Ocean and the Central Ocean. Each ocean is quite

Table 3.1: Arena Diseases

Roll	Disease	Infection	DC	Incubation	Damage
1	Scarlet flu	Injury	15	2 days	1d4 Con
2	Penance fatigue	Ingestion	13	6 hours	2 Con
3	Arena waste	Contact	14	2 days	1d4 Str
4	Stinkfoot	Contact	15	1 day	1d4HP/day, 2 Con
5	Black hives	Injury	17	1d3 days	1d6 Con
6	Faust fever	Injury	17	1 day	1d4 Int

Ecology of Arena

different from the others, though each is used for travel and trade between the various domains.

Currents: Every ocean has one or more currents that run throughout, circulating the water on a grand scale. Currents are generally warm-water or cold-water currents. These affect the ocean in two important ways. First, the currents give a general idea of which way a vessel might float should it lose the power to propel or guide itself. Ocean-bound ships usually consider the currents when planning their voyages so that the sea can help guide them to their destinations. Secondly, the currents play a large role in determining the climate of the land near the oceans. Cold currents tend to create mild climates while warm currents create tropical climates.

Northern Ocean: The portion of the Northern Ocean near Penance is detailed in *Plains of Penance*, although much of the information in that book describes the portion falling within that domain. The rest of the ocean is split between Arena, Anvil, and the Wildwood. The Northern Ocean is the largest of the three oceans of the Forge, and of the three, it is the most calm.

A chain of islands (itself split between Arena and Wildwood) bisects this ocean into two main regions. Warm currents run east to west along the coast of Arena and into the island chain that forms the northernmost portion of the domain. Colder currents run along the coast of the Wildwood, although the warm currents that run through the islands of Arena continue on through Wildwood's island chain as well, growing colder as it approaches Wildwood's shore.

Central Ocean: The Central Ocean borders Arena, the Wildwood, and Anvil. It is deep with a harsh climate and few islands. Cold currents run throughout, typically causing the sky to be gray and cloudy. Torrential rains fall much of the time, and mammoth waves large enough to capsized large ocean-going vessels are fairly common. The storms are at their worst 20 miles away from shore, so most vessels plying these waters stay relatively close to shore. This serves the dual purpose of avoiding much of the dangerous weather and keeping the journey to shore short for the survivors of maritime disasters.

The harsh waters of this ocean are cold and deadly. Creatures that are not specifically adapted for cold weather often freeze to death in these frigid waters faster than they would normally drown. Those creatures that can deal with the cold, either naturally or through magical means, must brave the deadly predators and other intelligent species that call this ocean home.

Southern Ocean: The Southern Ocean lies between Arena and the Vault. There are just as many warm currents here as there are cold ones. The coast of the Vault is dominated by a very cold west-to-east current, allowing the numerous icebergs of this region to form and float freely for many miles beyond its frozen shores. The heart of the ocean has some warm currents running nearby colder currents, which often move in opposite directions. Because of this, the majority of the islands in this ocean have a mild, rainy climate. Storms are common in this ocean due to the crossings of the warm and cold currents, though they tend to not be nearly as violent as the ones found in the Central Ocean.

This ocean is not as deep as the Central Ocean. Small ice floes drift across the surface of the water in numerous locations, and often serve as temporary strongholds and staging grounds for pirates and warlords' naval forces. Chains of small islands can be found in the central portion of this ocean as well. This comes at a price, however. Reefs are common throughout, and the shallower portions of the ocean must be carefully navigated to avoid damaging the undersides of ocean-going ships.

Flora & Fauna

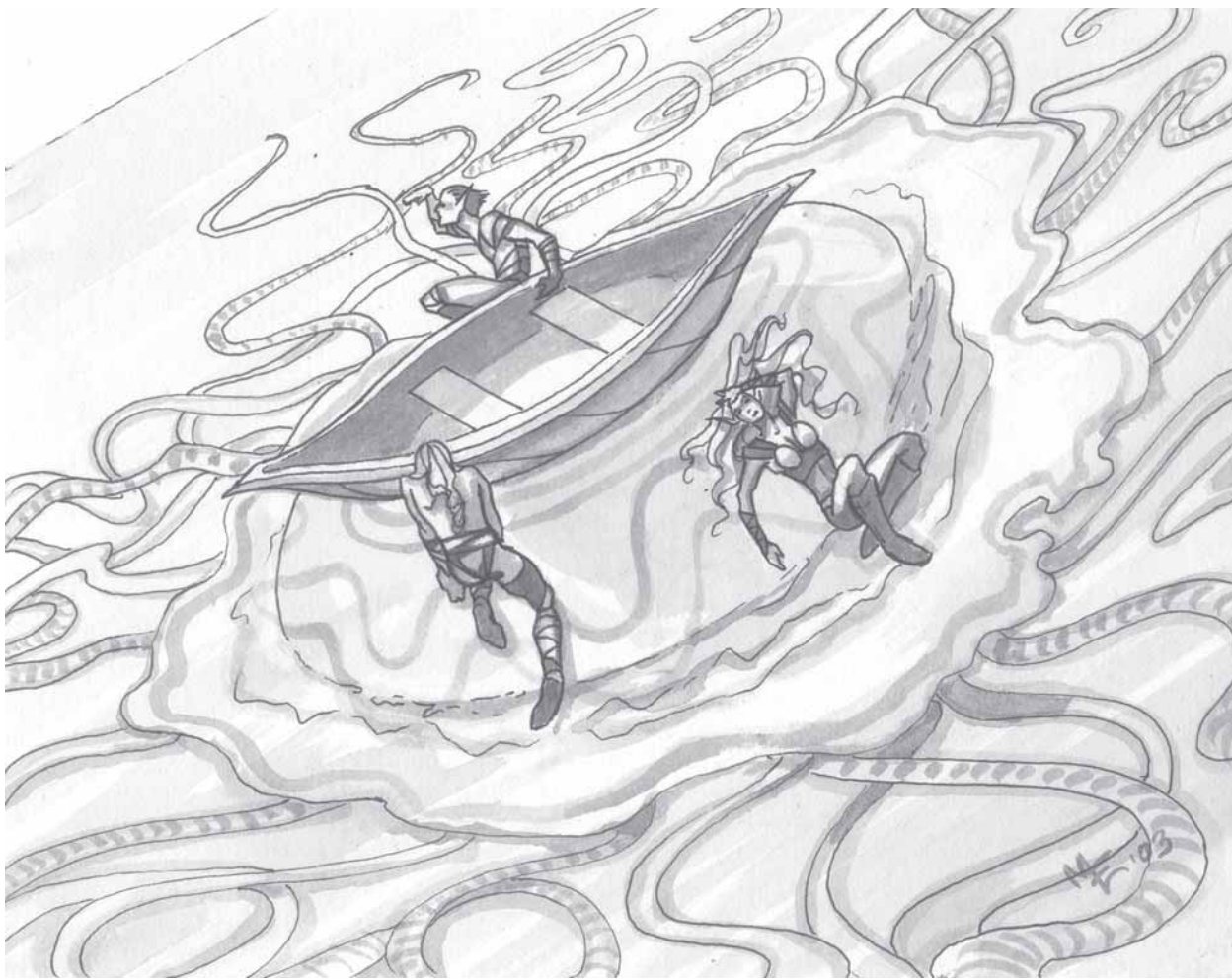
The majority of the life-forms that inhabit the ocean regions are, of course, aquatic. In these usually gray waters, the fish tend to be of a darker coloration. Absent here are the colorful tropical fish that are present in the Northern Ocean.

The Central Ocean is the home of many different dolphin and whale species, though noticeably absent is the moab, which is found only in the Northern Ocean. Fish, sharks, undersea plants, and microbes are also found in abundance. Also present is the ceptu's distant relatives, the jellyfish. Many species of crabs and other crustaceans live along the ocean floor, some of which are large to huge in size.

Besimi: From a distance these creatures look much like tiny islands, though when sailors draw near they soon realize their mistake. These enormous creatures are one of the wonders of the Central Ocean. They are colossal in size, and shaped similar to jelly fish, although their anatomy is not at all similar. They possess a plant-like intelligence, and they grow to between 300 and 900 feet in diameter. The bulk of their massive bodies are solid and fleshy, much like a whale's hide, and they float at the ocean's surface. Their diet consists of krill and other microbes. Massive tendrils reach deep into the ocean to draw water into its body, where it filters it for food and minerals, then returns the rest to the ocean. Survivors of sunken ships are occasionally relieved when they see besimi in the distance since they can leave their life boats and take refuge on the massive creatures for extended periods of time.

Eettle: These bizarre creatures are small and have the body of a turtle and the head of an eel. Their shell surrounds their entire body, though these creatures have no arms or legs, there are openings where fins sprout forth to propel and steer these creatures. They are harmless, but they are often hunted since they are considered a delicacy among intelligent creatures living on the coast of the Southern Ocean. They are usually boiled and then served whole.

Ialisil: The ialisil is a large underwater creature that is native to the Southern Ocean and is often used as a mount by air-breathing creatures. It is whalelike in appearance, though its head more closely resembles that of an otter. It has gills, though it also has an organ at the top of its head that exhales oxygen, which is breathable by air-breathing creatures. The organ looks much like a fin, with a large hole at the end of it. These creatures can take themselves and their riders up to five hundred feet down into the sea.



Loaramai: This leafy underwater plant is common throughout both the Southern and Central Oceans. It is brownish-green in color and is covered in a coat of slime. When harvested, mashed, and then cooked, it creates a meaty protein-rich food with a flavor that is not unlike the alorak plant, with a flavor and consistency similar to beef. It can be grilled, stewed, or eaten raw. Many intelligent creatures that live by the sea eat this instead of fish or other types of meat, and it is exported in large quantities to the deserts of Arena.

Adventuring

The oceans are important locations within Arena and the surrounding domains. While much of the fighting in Arena takes place within the sands of the desert, great battles are frequently fought between massive navies intent on pulverizing one another. Most of these battles are outgrowths of the conflicts between the warlords on land; although other seafaring organizations exist that promote their own agendas on the sea.

The most obvious way that characters may adventure on the ocean is by serving aboard a ship belonging to one of the warlords. If they are low-level characters, they likely serve as part of the hired crew. Mid-level characters may hold positions of importance within the command struc-

ture of the ship, while high-level characters may be in charge of the ship and be responsible for the success or failure of its missions.

Warlords seldom set foot on ships since it leaves them in a position of vulnerability. If the ship engages in combat and loses, or if the ship encounters some of the many dangers of the sea, the ship may be lost and all aboard killed. Few warlords wish to take this risk. The few times warlords must travel by ship, they rarely announce their journey, and they often leave at least one decoy at their seat of power to fool those who would try to catch them on the sea.

There are the exceptions to this rule however. Pirates are the warlords of the sea, and rather than mine the gold from the earth, they choose to mine it from the holds of their victims. Numerous pirate groups exist. Some of them consist of no more than a single ship that preys on smaller ships, while others consist of several ships or even alliances that form small navies. Known pirates seldom find a safe port on the mainland, but instead find their homes among the islands dotting the Southern Ocean and the Northern Ocean. These islands are rarely harassed by the powers from the mainland unless needed as a staging ground for a war. In some cases these pirate dens are destroyed when they are discovered, but just as often the army pays the pirates who have claimed ownership of the island a small fee for the right to amass and prepare

Ecology of Arena

for war there. The pirates usually agree to such terms because under these circumstances they are not forced into a position where they must defend their islands, and they gain some measure of wealth from the arrangement.

Many pirates avoid the need to hold an island by becoming privateers. These ships are commissioned by some of the warlords to prey and plunder enemy ships. While they must leave ships bearing the flag of the warlord they serve alone, they are encouraged to raid any ships bearing the flags of their enemies. In fact, in addition to the wealth they gain from plunder, the warlord that hired them often pays them a bonus if an enemy ship is sunk. Many pirates choose to go this route to acquire more wealth and to have a safe port on the mainland where they will be welcomed. In some instances, the people of the mainland regard the privateers as heroes for defending their interests.

Of course any time there is pirate activity, there is also anti-pirate activity. Warlords that find themselves prey to privateers, or communities that have had too high a toll taken on their ships send out ships charged with finding pirates and destroying them. While small fleets of ships are somewhat successful in this endeavor, lone ships full of well-intentioned heroes often find themselves outnumbered and these expeditions fail more often than they succeed.

Just as enemy fleets and pirates make adventuring on the ocean dangerous, so too do the many storms that rage in the oceans. The massive waves and the fierce winds pose just as real a threat as do enemies. Even seasoned crews are frequently lost when hit with a powerful storm.

Characters who decide to brave the oceans will find that certain magic items go a long way in prolonging their lives. *Water breathing* is a good spell to have in case the ship sinks or the character falls overboard. The downside to this spell is that its effects have a duration, so unless the character it is cast upon has some way out of the water, it merely postpones the inevitable. *Water walk* or a *ring of water walking* is just as valuable to a character that has gone overboard because by staying above the water, she is not subject to the cold dangers of the ocean. The most useful magic item for ocean survival is the *helm of underwater action*, which allows the wearer to see underwater, creates an air bubble around her, and allows freedom of movement. Because of its exorbitant price, however, few warlords outfit their crews with this item, choosing instead to spend the money on newer ships to add to their fleets.

While the rules in this book are designed to give you a feel for the oceans and what can be found there, it does not contain rules for ocean-faring ships. Such rules for the d20 system can be found in a number of sources, including the *Seafarer's Handbook* by Fantasy Flight Games, *Broadsides!* by Living Imagination, or *Seas of Blood* by Mon-goose Publishing. Each product has an alternate system for handling movement and combat.

OASES

The blasted and cratered surface of the desert is broken periodically by standing bodies of water, which many believe are fed by a network of underground rivers. These

oases—some large, some small—are essential to the survival of civilization in the desert. Oases are not entirely different from the jungle areas found in the river channels, but the density of the foliage is not as great and the chance of contracting disease is also much lower.

These areas supply the inhabitants of the desert with most of the water needed for survival. For this reason, controlling them is a major part of any warlord's claim over Arena. Most warlords have established their strongholds at the oases, usually controlling them in their entirety. At the center of the oases are lakes, the water for which is supplied by springs.

The climate of the oases is quite comfortable for most species. They enjoy the overall heat that is present throughout much of the desert while not suffering from the dryness found everywhere else.

Flora and Fauna

One major difference between the foliage found in the oases and that found in the jungle areas is the types of trees. In the jungle, immense deciduous trees that reach hundreds of feet into the air are common. At the oases, palm trees are the most commonly occurring type of tree, although some smaller trees are also found here. Also present are shrubs, vines, and all manner of weeds and grasses.

Animal life consists of predators and prey of all types, each of which stakes out a territory near the water and tries to hold it against natural enemies. Herd animals, such as gazelle and bison, need to frequently stop by oases for water, which ensures the presence of predators in these areas. Lions, tigers, and hyenas are the most commonly found predators on land while crocodiles and hippopotami are the lords of the water.

Hagalped: A large insect that looks similar to a scorpion, the hagalped is a major food source within many oases. Though these creatures are nonpoisonous and lack the scorpion's pronounced tail, they have long legs that they use to capture their prey and large razor sharp claws that they use to tear it apart. They usually eat smaller insects, leaves, and tiny mammals. These creatures are small enough to grab in one hand by medium-sized creatures, and are unable to strike at their capturers when held by the top of their body. Hagalpedes are normally boiled in water and have a taste and consistency very similar to lobster.

Bucradas: Though this leafy plant looks similar to lettuce, looks are where the similarities end. These plants are actually weeds that emit a noxious odor when they are disturbed and during warm weather. Though most people generally eradicate these plants whenever they infest a new area, some will purposely plant them in places when they want to hide evidence of their settlements. Creatures moving through areas infested with these foul plants suffer a -2 penalty to all Fortitude saves.

Athapad: This small colorful bird appears similar to a parrot. Their colors cover the spectrum of bright colors such as red, green, yellow, purple, and blue. They usually have patterns of colors throughout their bodies and their wing tips are usually black. Also like parrots, they have the ability to speak. What makes them unique is that they are easily trained to act as messengers. They can be

shown a rudimentary map of a place, and if it is a place they have been to before, or they are given a general location and a specific person to find in that area, they are able to seek out that place. Once they have arrived at their destination, they are able to convey complex messages of up to three hundred words. These birds are used as reliable means of communication both between people who live in areas that are geographically adjacent as well as by armies in the field who use them as messengers.

Odis: Mercifully rare, the odis is technically a rodent, though many people raise them for later consumption despite the known health risks. The odis is slightly larger than a rabbit, but their ears are shorter and their coloration never deviates from light brown. Contained within the muscles and organs of the creature is a toxin powerful enough to kill most creatures (save DC 20 or die in 1d4 hours). When fully cooked, the toxins are rendered harmless, but they do serve to give the meat a spicy flavor. The most poisonous parts of this creature are the liver and the kidneys. Some say it's best to leave a little bit of the poison when serving odis because it causes a prickly sensation in the tongue.

Some of the more hard-core mercenary groups in Arena prove their toughness by eating these parts raw, though many deaths result. Each time this is done successfully, the save DC to avoid death is decreased by 1. There are some who have made themselves immune to the poison by a long string of lucky successes against it. Assassins often harvest the poison from the liver and kidneys of these creatures and then distill it to create a poison so deadly that it kills in almost every instance it is used (save DC 30 or die).

Adventuring

Characters entering the oases face danger in three forms: hostile forces, land predators, and water predators. Since the oases are tightly controlled by warlords, entering oases held by competing groups for any reason, even to simply resupply themselves with water, invites conflict. De-

spite this, many warlords have recognized that access to the oases is a necessary part of life in the desert, so rather than restrict access; they open up portions of them to the public and charge a fee for access. In times of open warfare, these are often blocked off completely, with detrimental effects on the local inhabitants.

On most worlds, predators can easily distinguish between prey and the intelligent, dominant forms of life. In the Forge however, this distinction is much harder to make. Valco are often mistaken for prey because of the physical similarities they share with the herd animals of the desert. Because of this confusion, predators consider nearly anything wandering into their territory as a potential food source, though most break off their attacks when they catch sight of the flash of steel, or any display of magic. If hungry enough, however, these creatures will pursue an attack against a more powerful creature despite the dangers. Some water creatures are even more aggressive, especially crocodiles, piranhas, and hippopotami. Unlike the predators on land, these creatures know no distinction between proper prey animals and the dominant species of the surrounding areas.

Rashers braving these areas must also contend with monsters that live here as well. Lizard folk often make their lairs nearby, and they are on friendly terms with other local species just as often as they are not. Rocanny (originally released in *e-minions* by Bastion Press and reprinted in this book) are commonly found hunting the oases and lord over the other predators, out-competing the other creatures for food. Another monster commonly found in or near oases are digesters, who roam in packs, searching for prey.



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- The last words of Galdrian the Seeker.

How exactly does a skilled swordsman or powerful wizard achieve the title of warlord upon the sands of Arena? Contrary to the opinions of the high and mighty—and ignorant—of Penance, there is more to being a warlord than the ability to kill an opponent in battle. Every year warriors by the hundreds leave the lush fields of Penance and travel into the unsympathetic world of Arena with aspirations of one day returning with sacks filled with gold and gems. Few succeed, and fewer still ever attain the label of warlord. Most perish, some return with nothing, and the rest are enslaved by those who hold the real authority in the Forge’s harshest domain.

Most that venture out into Arena do so for one thing—gold. One of the most popular myths believed by the foolish is that you cannot walk upon the sands of Arena without there being gold beneath your feet. While millennia ago this may have been true, seldom is something so precious out in plain sight. The dark truth is that there is gold in Arena to be had, more than even the greediest rogue can imagine, but obtaining it is another matter. Those stupid enough to believe they are invincible or skilled in war when they are not quickly become slave labor instead of mercenaries with gold-filled pockets.

Obtaining Gold

The most common way to come upon gold in Arena is to earn it as a mercenary (or by plying a skilled craft) in the army of an established warlord. Most military campaigns in Arena occur between the months of Passion and Savage, reaching a bloody peak in the latter where the mortality rate of a typical mercenary is exceptionally high. There are still conflicts that continue into the months of Scourge and Ravage; though these are the months that usually cover Arena in violent sandstorms that make the movement of troops difficult if not impossible. Conflict in Arena is year-round, to be sure, but a sensible warlord does not pay for the service of troops that are not being used. During months of less conflict most mercenaries are released to conserve a warlord’s payroll, as very few can afford to pay and feed an army of thousands if there is nothing to conquer.

Beginning with the month of Atonement surviving mercenaries return to the city of Penance or other population centers across the Forge to spend the precious gold acquired by their efforts. Some spend their booty wisely, their bloody tenure in Arena causing them to invest in a future far away from the red sands. Others with less foresight spend their rewards on revelry and debauchery in the brothels and taverns of Penance. When such senseless warriors awake from their stupor three or four months later they return to Arena once again to earn enough gold to begin the cycle anew. Those who do return from the

hard campaigns bring back considerable wealth, which quickly lures other aspiring mercenaries seeking fame and fortune on the Forge.

What a mercenary can earn in Arena depends on who they are working for, how successful the warlord is in battle, and how skilled said mercenary is in combat. Most warlords typically pledge a flat rate of 4–10 gold pieces a week depending upon experience, plus bonuses for successful campaigns or extreme bravery during a specific confrontation. Since more than half of all mercenaries never return from Arena, false promises of higher rates of pay are often given to inexperienced seeds, which are seldom redeemed. The few mercenaries who return to Arena for consecutive campaigns under the banner of certain warlords (most commonly the Grand Asherake, Ossian, and Varan Trinovant) are given bonuses, promotions, or additional benefits for their continued service.

Those wishing to serve in the armies of Arena can join the conflict in many ways. The more powerful warlords, those that require thousands of warriors to fill their armies, have recruiters throughout Penance and in the ports along the Xanthus River. Aside from the Queen’s city, recruiters are most commonly found in Temper, Port Ulmuk, and Port Makhesh. For the purposes of recruiting troops these cities are considered neutral ground, but some warlords commonly pay agents of Lord Mabon kickbacks to gain certain amenities that make their job easier—such as exclusive access to incoming ships and even the assassination of rival recruiters.

Becoming a Warlord

The cycle of life in Arena is not one for the squeamish, and the life of a warlord is just as difficult in the beginning. There are really only two ways to become a warlord in Arena: depose or otherwise slay an existing warlord and appropriate their mines, fortress, and other holdings; or start with nothing and stake your own claim upon the red sands. The key to both paths is the availability of gold or other precious commodities within a warlord’s chosen territory. Such treasures are used to pay mercenaries to guard against other encroaching warlords, supplies to mine the minerals and feed the troops, and materials to build a fortification to protect it all. Without these material necessities and hired safeguards another greedy warlord can swoop in and steal in the blink of an eye all that you have built.

Of the two paths, deposing an existing warlord is the easiest course to take. Even said, this is not a task to be taken lightly. Most warlords of consequence in Arena are formidable creatures in their own right, wielding great power and gaining the loyalty of their subordinates through strength and wisdom on the battlefield. The warlords of Arena are a far cry from the fat, overstuffed bloodlords that sit in the plush palaces of Penance, and the greater the assets of a warlord the more difficult it is to step in and assume their throne.

It is not uncommon, however, for a warlord to die in battle or be assassinated by a confidant. On occasion a warlord may also simply disappear, never to be seen again, which hearsay attributes to the Feathered Fowl Barbello as she makes way for someone more favored to continue her war across the domain. Many warlords were

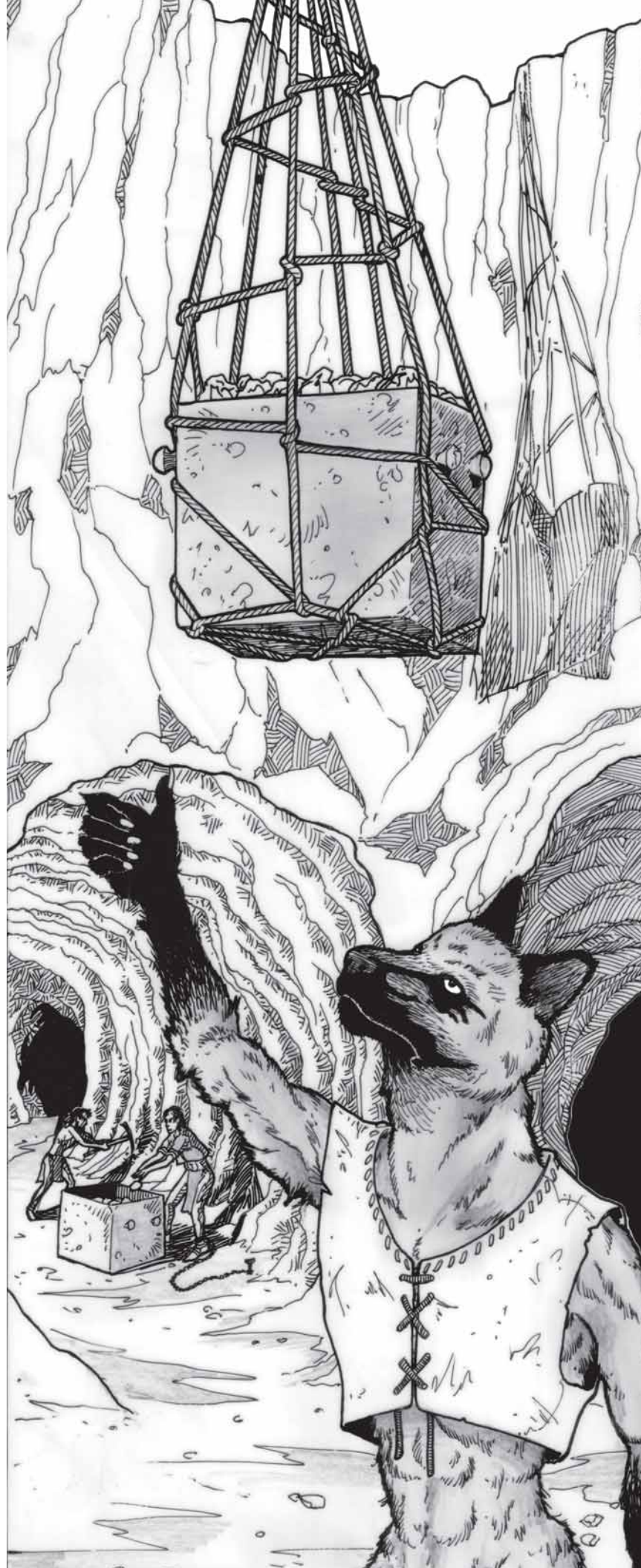
once generals in the army of their former masters, making it easy for them to assume the vacant seat when backed with military might under their command. In some instances there might be multiple successors or challengers to a fallen warlord's assets, which results in conflicts to the death.

When no clear or dominant heir is apparent, it is not uncommon for there to be gladiatorial-like challenges open to all under the banner of a deceased warlord. These combats are always to the death, but in some instances can leave a territory open to attack from neighboring warlords while a former competitor's army is in disarray. There is also an unwritten law followed by many hardened veterans that allows for neighboring warlords (and warlords only) to enter the tournament and compete for the assets of a fallen commander. This is risky, since in doing so it puts the entire realm of that warlord into the pool to be had by the victor. In the early days of his rule Minos Spar used this tactic to acquire a defeated or dead warlord's resources. This approach resulted in fewer deaths in the opposing army, which in turn added greater numbers to the half-titan's forces.

The true test of a potential warlord, however, is to build a fortress from scratch and hold it against opposing forces. In the past 20,000 years the number of oases in Arena has dwindled, and with it the number of secure locations for a warlord to build a fortress. Death is quick for those without fresh food and water, and new warlords must be resourceful in order to survive when building a kingdom from scratch. For those originating from Penance, potential warlords with the right connections can employ the services of the brotherhood of druids to help create or expand an oasis. Cultivation projects of this nature are not impossible, but often take time, during which a warlord must protect both the druids and mine the gold needed to pay everyone involved.

In addition to experienced mercenaries and commanders, a warlord requires supporters with skills in mining and smelting to extract the gold from the earth, those trained in stonemasonry to construct a fortress, and other loyal followers to recruit forces and handle day-to-day operations. There is also the moral dilemma faced by some warlords regarding the use of slave labor in their mines. The life of a slave in Arena is a harsh one, and rarely does an average slave live more than a year when spending each waking moment digging for gold. Given this high mortality rate most warlords responsible for slave deaths are not of good alignments, reinforcing the fact that one of the unwritten requirements for being a warlord is a lack of morality and conscience.

Every so often a warlord of neutral or good alignment attempts to employ manual labor as opposed to purchasing slaves from Penance or subjugating others. In the end this method of labor becomes ineffectual, as the amount of gold refined by the warlord is not enough to pay mercenaries, purchase supplies, maintain other miscellaneous expenses, and pay laborers to mine gold. In the end a warlord is left little choice but cut expenses and turn laborers into slaves. As a result most warlords prefer the cost effective use of slaves over hiring laborers.



Prospecting

The first thing a warlord must do prior to establishing a base of power is to find gold hidden beneath the red sands. The most popular method of finding gold in Arena is to hire a seeker, someone accomplished in the ways of the land as well as the mystic arts, to help locate a suitable vein to begin mining. Seekers are trained in Penance by bloodlords with an interest in Arena gold, or as apprentices under established warlords, which in turn are leased out for a price to scour for hidden wealth. After eons of mining, finding gold in the pock-marked landscape is no easy task, which underscores the importance of a seeker. Self-employed seekers can also be found roaming the sands of the domain, and are commonly located in ports along the eastern Xanthus River or in the neutral city of Krymzin.

Without a seeker, finding gold is difficult but not impossible. Thousands of abandoned mines litter the landscape of the domain, especially southeast and west of the Xanthus River and around the Sea of Tears. Abandoned for various reasons, some of these mines may still have viable veins of gold or less precious metals such as silver or copper ready for the taking. However, these mines may not yield enough wealth to establish a fortress or raise an army, or may have been given up for other reasons entirely.

Another method of finding gold is to venture out into the desert during the intense sandstorms that pummel the domain in the months of Scourge and Ravage. During this time the sands blow wildly across the domain, temporarily exposing bedrock that may contain visible gold veins. These savage storms eventually blanket the gold again with red sand, but those hearty and skilled enough to weather the gritty tempests can then sell knowledge of the location to a warlord or mine the location themselves.

Mining

There are three basic types of mining practiced across the domain of Arena: placer mining, shaft mining, and vein mining. Which type of mining method is used depends on a warlord's resources and the geological layout of the area to be excavated. Of the three, placer mining is the least used since it requires the presents of large amounts of flowing water. In Arena the only sources of this kind of water are the Xanthus and Aegis Rivers. Rumors speak of a great underground river that originates in Penance and flows all the way to the Sea of Tears, and indeed, many warlords have claimed to find it after striking underground water that flooded their mines, but the existence of a massive underground river has never been proven to the satisfaction of Penance scholars. The common belief is instead that there exists beneath Arena a network of smaller rivers linked by large water caches deep beneath the surface.

Placer mining involves the discovery of gold already removed from the bedrock beneath the sands by natural means. Placers, or alluvial deposits, are separated by the mechanical process of erosion concentrated at or beneath the surface. Erosion from flowing water is the most common mechanical process causing placer deposits, which are generally found in the rivers and underground flows

of the domain. In Arena this means either the Xanthus or Aegis rivers, which is complicated by the presence of the carnivorous xial fish or jungle predators that roam the river banks. For those able to safely break into underground caverns filled with flowing water, placer deposits can be found in large quantities at the bottom of such pools or rivers.

Discovery of placer deposits is generally accomplished through crude methods such as the panning, or sifting of soil in shallow water. For the warlord who has discovered huge quantities of placer nuggets large amounts of soil are removed from the bottom of a river or pool, and is then strained through multiple layers of netting in order to separate the gold from dirt. Accomplishing this task requires the use of conjured elementals, clockwork machines, or giant-size creatures capable of lifting and carrying great amounts of soil to where it can be processed to separate the gold.

An important aspect of placer deposits is that the ore exists in its natural state. That is to say, it is free of the impurities of other minerals. The friction of flowing water on the gold over time removes the imperfection of other minerals, though this takes place over the course of hundreds of thousands of years. Because the gold ore of a placer deposit is so pure there is no need for it to be subjected to any metallurgical processes after extraction. For individuals searching for gold but not wanting to devote themselves to being a warlord, placer mining is one of the few options open to them.

Shaft mining, or shafting, is the construction of vertical shafts that lead down into large galleries or caverns where gold and other precious minerals can be found combined with soil or rock. Deep vein mining is similar in concept, except shafts begin as horizontal excavations that slope downward into the earth or mounds of upraised rock. Shaft and deep vein mining are often combined to create great galleries of tunnels, a virtual maze of mined shafts that follow veins of gold beneath the sands like the path of snakes through wet grass. It is said that whenever a vein of gold is discovered the greed of Arena's residents will chase it to the heart of the Forge.

Once a vein of ore is found, the next step is to extract the gold from the surrounding solid rock. To accomplish this a warlord must have the right tools: hammers, chisels, and picks are used by slaves to pound the gold from the neighboring rock. For warlords with enough resources, iron or steel tools are the most effective and hold up the best from prolonged use. Tools made from stone or animal teeth and antlers work as well, though they become worn or shatter over time. Even with tools made of iron, removing gold or other precious metals from solid rock is not an easy task. In an effort to extract a maximum amount of gold, a mine boss or overseer orders the slaves to chisel the rock surrounding the gold instead of the gold itself. This way no gold is lost, though it must be separated later through smelting. Slaves that ignore this mandate or mistakenly chisel away at the gold are often beaten the first time, and either slain or fed to the warlord's troops if it happens again. Especially cruel warlords regularly make an example of a random slave for those who may have just arrived, just to reinforce the point.



Fire, both normal and magical, is also used to help soften large sections of the rock to help remove the imprisoned gold. This heat is not enough to melt the gold from the rock, but does lessen the amount of force needed to break apart the rock and remove the section containing the gold. Magical fire is preferred, since lighting normal fires causes the air in the mines to become polluted—though magical fire does produce some harmful fumes as well. Shafts that become contaminated with noxious fumes quickly cause unconsciousness and death for anyone belowground.

The mines of Arena are not the most desirable places to work. It is not uncommon for slaves to spend months underground, never seeing the light of day and measuring their shifts by how much oil is burned from a lamp or how long it takes a bucket to fill with dripping water. Abandoned chambers and shafts are used for sleeping quarters and kitchens for the slaves, attesting to the amount of time they spend below the surface. Taskmasters would also allow slaves to bring small animals into the mines, such as lizards or small rodents. These animals collapse if the air in the mines becomes contaminated, alerting slaves and taskmasters that the breathable air is nearly depleted.

Smelting

Once the ore has been mined it is hoisted or carried in sacks or baskets back to the surface by slaves to be smelted. The chiseled rock and gold is laid out on large slabs to be further crushed to remove more of the surrounding stone. Depending on the amount of rock and soil excavated, the rubble may then be subjected to running water to further break away the gold. Being extremely precious, the water is run through netting to collect the eroded chunks then recycled into a nearby cistern to be used again later.

The remaining chunks that contain gold are then collected and placed in crucibles for firing in a furnace. When the crucible's contents begin to reach a molten state, a mixture of sulphur is sprinkled along the edges to draw out iron and other impurities. As the crucible cools the iron sulphide slag is carefully shaved from the top leaving behind the purer gold to be tapped out from the crucible.

With the exception of the Grand Asherake, no warlords in Arena mint their own gold coins. Unless a warlord wants to pay his troops in ore, refined gold bars are transported to Penance or the neutral settlement of Krymzin to be minted into coins. More powerful warlords employ magic users to teleport the smelted gold from their strongholds to Penance to have it converted to coins, avoiding the risk of transporting the gold overland. The

Fighting the Odds

exchange rate for Arena gold to be converted to coins is 30–35 gold pieces per pound of refined ore, or an average of around 35% below market value. More influential warlords generally get a better exchange rate from supporting bloodlords in return for regular business. The coin makers of Krymzin are less concerned with afflictions, but offer only 25 gold pieces per pound of refined gold.

Fortifications

Now that a potential warlord has found gold beneath the crimson sand and has begun mining, the next step is to protect the claim from other warlords with a fortress. In addition to building an armed force a prospective warlord must build a fortification to house troops, slaves, supplies, and other assets. Arena is a vast, desolate domain, but extensive mining and massing of troops is sometimes difficult to hide. Rumors of supply caravans and other transports from the northern ports moving towards a previously unoccupied area is evidence that a new warlord is on the rise. Before word has a chance to spread too far across the sands a fledgling warlord had best have a fortification in place to better defend against encroaching opposition.

The more wealth a warlord has the more magnificent and defensive the fortification. For warlords of power a fortification can quickly evolve into a city, especially if supported by a flourishing oasis and steady supply of gold. A warlord with the proper resources can support thousands despite the unforgiving nature of the surrounding wasteland. This all begins with a fortification, most of which are made of stone rather than wood. Stone is by far the sturdier material and does not harm the local oases with the harvesting of lumber.

The key to any fortification is erecting it rapidly before competitors for Arena's gold become aware of what is transpiring. The quickest way to raise a fortification is using magic. For a considerable fee (around 10,000 gold pieces) several bloodlords in Penance—most notably Lord Belus and Lord Floflo—will send wizards skilled in *transmutation* and *evocation* magic to raise walls of stone around the fortification's perimeter and help erect the fortress. The fee pays for the time and materials of the wizards, as well as to insure the silence of all involved until the fortification is completed.

After the walls are erected a specialized spell, developed by some long dead warlord called *transmute sand to stone*, is used to create the thousands of stone blocks needed to build the central section of the fortification. After all the materials are assembled a warlord's forces must have craftsmen skilled in stonemasonry to assemble the fortress, which can also be supplied by the bloodlords for an additional price (typically double what was paid for the transmuting wizards). Since Arena consists of mostly sand and dirt, materials such as mortar and other resources may be needed. Prepared warlords find the use of *stone shape* and other such spells helpful for these tasks, which again can be purchased from the bloodlords.

After the stone and quarry has been assembled, a fortification must be put together. Dwarves and gnomes are obviously the best choice for constructing any fortification of merit, though it is not uncommon for a warlord to

enlist his army's help and do it himself if someone with the proper skills is present. With the right assistance a fortification can be raised in the deep Arena desert in less than a month. There are other, slower methods of piecing together a fortification, but without the support of a bloodlord such constructions can be difficult and leave a warlord open to attack from competitors.

Building an Army

Once a warlord has a fortification and a steady supply of gold, the next undertaking is to raise an army capable of protecting these assets from opposition. This task can be extremely difficult, especially if a beginning warlord has limited resources and potent adversaries a mere stone's throw away. Most experienced mercenaries are also reluctant to sign on with novice warlords, as the pay and survival rate of joining on with an established army is greater in both cases. This leaves only untried and reckless seeds available for hire to the greenhorn warlord. Using such troops is suicide when confronting more experienced opposing armies. This is where the sponsorship of a bloodlord of Penance is again paramount.

Bloodlords do not assist just anyone who strolls into (or out of) Arena with aspirations of becoming a warlord. Extensive interviews are conducted by either the bloodlord or his confidants in Arena, which is traditionally followed by a good faith pledge by the warlord of anywhere between 100 and 1,000 pounds of gold—depending on how much the warlord wants a shrewd bloodlord involved in his business.

Many bloodlords of Penance have a vested interest in keeping their puppet warlords supplied with veteran mercenary troops. For yet another nominal fee, or a cut of a warlord's gold production, a sponsoring bloodlord will act as a recruiter until a fledgling warlord can accumulate a more formidable powerbase. With the help of a bloodlord a warlord with enough gold can raise an army of thousands in a very short time. Such recruitment is generally done prior to or during the construction of a fortification. By bringing these two endeavors together at the same time a warlord can solidify his muscle in a chosen region more quickly, avoiding the notice of neighboring warlords before it's too late for them to act.

Getting an army from Penance or ports along the Xanthus River to a warlord's fortification is also not an easy task, particularly if you don't want to alert the notice of enemy warlords. Depending on how far an army has to travel and what path they take, it is possible to move a large force from one end of Arena to another. Magic is always an option for those with access to mass illusion spells, but this option becomes tremendously difficult and expensive for groups of more than a thousand humanoid warriors. Traveling overland is also an alternative when moving smaller forces and such troop deployment is frequently done in the nighttime hours. In all instances of overland travel an exceptional knowledge of Arena's geography and geopolitical breakdowns are crucial. Crossing another warlord's territory with a large force is an act of war, and most protect their terrain by attacking first and asking questions later.

Moving troops by water on large cargo barges either down the Xanthus River or on the ocean is by far the most popular method of moving an army from Penance to Arena. When moving troops down the Xanthus River, however, a warlord must be careful to pay fidelity to the Lord Mabon. The faust bloodlord controls nearly all ship traffic in and out of Temper and Port Makhesh, and acts of defiance against Mabon often results in retribution of some type in the future. The presence of ceptu warlords in the Northern Ocean also makes moving armies down the river a more sensible choice.

Supplying an Army

The army of a warlord consists of hundreds, if not thousands of humanoids, and feeding these troops can be a warlord's greatest challenge. The control of Arena's gold may be the foremost reason to strike out at an opposing warlord, but the second by far is the need and desperation of armies dying of thirst or on the brink of starvation. If a warlord is powerful enough to possess an oasis, this eases the burden some in regards to fresh water and the ability to grow a handful of local crops. Since many oases are fed by underground rivers, the water at Arena's largest oases nearly limitless. Fresh water is also a popular import and export for many warlords, as well as from northern ports along the Xanthus River. Those without access to a ready supply are forced to buy untainted water, or risk extracting it from the uncultivated regions that surround the Xanthus River.

Due to the oases that cover the desert domain water is plentiful for some, but food is another matter. Farming is a viable option for oases that have cultivated fields, but seldom is the amount of harvest food enough to feed a warlord's troops year-round. Alliances with the bloodlords of Penance are crucial for obtaining food. Farmers from the plains of Penance harvest hundreds of thousands of tons of food each year, which in turn is shipped to Temper. From there the food is distributed by boat to Port Makhesh and overland to Krymzin for sale to warlord food caravans that travel across the desert.

For warlords in good standing with the trusk nation of the Central Ocean, large quantities of fish are regularly traded for iron weapons and other amenities. Warlords with fortifications close to Wildwood also send hunting parties into the dense brush daily to bring back game. These hunters are not your typical mercenaries, and are commonly hired from the plains of Penance at a greater rate of pay than average mercenaries.

Given the sheer number of troops under a warlord's command, even combinations of the above food supplies is sometimes not enough to feed their enormous armies. When food supply is in short demand, warlords with vast armies, such as the Grand Asherake and Siviss Nexx, allow their humanoid forces to resort to the cannibalism of their enemies to feed themselves. Some of the more savage asherake units, thousands of bloodthirsty winged warriors, relish in feeding upon dead humans, doves, and especially any valco they encoun-

ter. As for the reptilian Nexx, the goblinoid masses under his command delight in the consumption of enemy flesh following a successful campaign. The Dragori warlord purposely underfeeds his inhuman troops in the days prior to a large conflict, sending them into a wild feeding frenzy once the battle is finally engaged.

Lastly, warlords with clerics and druids under their command use magic to *create food and water* on a daily basis. Magically created provisions are frequently conjured for lieutenants and other high-ranking associates in a warlord's army. Powerful wizards and sorcerers with the ability to travel back and forth to Penance can also be used to gather food and other valuable supplies, but never enough to feed an entire army. Rumors abound of a warlord somewhere in Arena with a dimensional gate that allows unlimited travel back and forth to a parent gate somewhere in Penance. In theory, this warlord could move limitless supplies or troops in and out of the domain with this relic. The identity of this warlord and the location of the twin gate in Penance has become an obsession for Minos Spar, who apparently has evidence of the gate's existence.



CARAVANS

Even before a warlord can start to think about building a fortification he must consider how to get gold and other supplies to and from Penance and other locations in Arena. Whether it's getting raw gold ore to Krymzin or Penance for minting into coins, or acquiring foodstuffs and slaves from ports along the Xanthus River, sooner or later a warlord must institute a series of caravans and routes across Arena. Without the ability to trade or obtain supplies not readily accessible, a warlord and his armies can die a quick death in the depths of the desert. Unless a warlord has access to powerful conjuration magic, the only other option is overland caravans.

A warlord's dependence on caravans is based largely on the locations of his fortification in Arena. The more distant a warlord is from Penance the more reliance is needed on a caravan's ability to travel long distances. This reinforces the importance of the ports along the Xanthus River, as they cut the distance traveled to civilization for most warlords in western Arena. One of the largest challenges in sending a caravan overland is the decision to send either a large or small contingent of soldiers along to protect it. A bigger sized caravan may attract the attention of a nearby army, while a smaller one may not be properly protected from smaller raiding parties and hungry monsters.

In the eastern half of the domain most caravan travel is regulated in one way or another by the Grand Asherake and the city of Krymzin. If warlords in the southeast wish to avoid paying caravan tribute to the Grand Asherake, the only alternative is traveling to Penance via Wildwood or dealing with the warlocks of the Vault. Of the two most would rather deal with the perils of the forest rather than the necromancers to the west.

On the other side of the Southern Ocean, the caravans of Minos Spar and Varan Trinovant dominate the routes to Port Ulmuk in the north. Between the great distances needed to travel and savage armies of the warlord Siviss Nexx, only the well armed caravans of these two warlords have any chance of making the journey safely. Warlords not in good trade standing with either of these powerful warlords run the risk of falling victim to lack of supplies and revolting armies.

EXPANSION

The mines dug deep into the sand and rock of Arena are not limitless, and sooner or later a warlord must expand his territory to discover or conquer new veins of the precious metal. Unless you're a warlord with standing akin to that of the Grand Asherake, it is sometimes unwise to attack another warlord's realm without provocation. Warlords form alliances with other warlords and settlements, as well as Penance bloodlords and possibly even factions from other domains. Each and every clash of armies has ramifications in Arena and beyond, and should a warlord go against the wishes of a sponsor they run the risk of being cut off from food supplies as well as mercenary recruitment. However, Arena is named the domain of war for a reason.

As prudent as it is to expand with caution, it is more common for a warlord's sponsors to promote conflicts as a means to keep gold flowing into a bloodlord's coffers. In fact many bloodlords unwittingly pit the warlords they support against one another in an effort to solidify more territory under their sponsorship. It is easier for a bloodlord to exert control over a single warlord than a dozen others spread across the domain.

Expansion of a warlord's region is also a costly affair. Additional troops and supplies must be procured through supporters, intelligence on an enemy must be gathered or paid for, and unless the plan is to completely raze an opponent's territory a warlord must be able to sustain whatever is acquired from the victory—such as mines, slaves, and possibly surrendering troops.

Any clash between warlord armies is always a bloody affair. Some battles last less than an hour, while others drag on for days depending on the extent of the forces involved. In the end one side is usually victorious, with the triumphant army taking control of the defeated warlord's mines and fortifications. Any territory between the two warlord's fortresses is also joined together beneath the banner of the victorious warlord, and with it more land in which to prospect for gold.

SPENDING THE WEALTH

The life of a warlord, both long- and short-term, is a hard one. Many who attain the level of warlord do so not only for the gold but for the thrill of crushing the life from others. These "career" warlords remain in Arena until their death, which can be at the hands of an enemy or even Barbello herself. Should a warlord choose to build a life of luxury in Arena and not pursue the endless quest for death and destruction, the Mask of Fury herself slays the indolent warlord for such actions. It is for these reasons many warlords choose retire to the safety of Penance rather than perish on the bloody sands.

Those seduced by the bounty of gold and power in the beginning often tire of the harshness of Arena over time, wanting nothing more than to retire to Penance after amassing a small fortune. If a warlord has made the proper alliances with a bloodlord or two, escaping the title of warlord and withdrawing to Penance is a fairly easy task. It is not uncommon for a competent warlord with significant resources to end up as judge or razor in service of his supporting bloodlord. Such positions are influential and lead to a life of posh extravagance for as long as the commanding bloodlord is obeyed.

For warlords of substance wanting more, say the title of bloodlord for themselves, it is not unusual for an army to march from the Arena desert to the precipice of Penance itself. More than one determined warlord has arrived at the base of the plateau as either a potential conqueror, or a future bloodlord looking to raise his or her own cantons from the rubble of Penance's ruins. Warlords bitter with the manipulation placed upon them by bloodlords over the years may attempt to exact vengeance upon their erstwhile puppet masters. Such conflicts occur ever few centuries, and unless the favored of the Queen are threatened, or at the behest of Barbello, Israfel does not interfere with these conflicts.

Lords of the Land

“The screams, the pain, the ending. Nothing stirs my flesh as the lingering moment of death. I have died upon a score of weapons, each a welcome diversion to my torment. So few. Ah, but the pleasure of pleasures.”

-A rare quote by Barbello.

Barbello—Mask of Fury

A legacy without an heir, Barbello strides the sands of Arena disenfranchised and alone. The progeny of the celestial union of Israfel and the nameless god, Barbello is both blessed and cursed. Gifted with immense power, her ferocious hunger for battle is limitless and insatiable, consuming everything about her in a whirl of blood, bone, and steel. Capable of destroying armies in heartbeats, she is equally adept at manipulating mortals to her own ends—to twist their personal lives much like one articulates a doll. It is this power that has damned her to an eternity of isolation. She was imprisoned with the fall of her parents, sequestered because of the might she displayed and the potential she promised. The victim of divine war, Barbello suddenly found herself without guidance from parent or peer. The comfort afforded children by the presence of parents was absent. Alone in a soup of residual destruction, she had eons to compound thoughts of doubt, spite, and misplaced anger. By the time Israfel eventually contacted her, reestablishing the link between mother and daughter, the damage was done.

Scarred by ages of angst-filled solitude, Barbello has allowed her inner emotions to rule all aspects of her being. Reactive and instinctual, she wages a personal war against feelings no god should experience. Betrayal, abandonment, and insecurity are as closely wound about her soul as the Great Oath. She has forgotten the glory of her past where she had commanded entire worlds in war. The Great Oath left Barbello in the murky shadow of her former self, snuffing that bright time from memory. Her natural tendencies of aggression and spite were amplified, becoming world-shaking passions that she had little control over. Never possessing the emotional fortitude for restraint, she acts as she feels, much to the detriment of others.

Whether it is the slaying of legions or the elevation of a particularly skilled warlord, Barbello is a creature of extremes. Though mirth has never been ascribed to her

to any large degree, she is known to possess a cruel child-like humor, playing deadly pranks on unsuspecting warlords and their armies just to see the chaos it invokes. A particularly vile incident involved Barbello pulling two warring armies into a shallow acidic lake where the water slowly ate their flesh. The sight of them climbing upon each other to relieve their suffering brought a chuckle to her throat and an open laugh when the few survivors made rafts of the dead and paddled themselves to the distant shore.

Having the curiosity of youth, Barbello is ever experimenting with those she pulls into Arena. She is especially interested in her ability to sift new seeds. Mostly used to detach undesirable items from unworthy arrivals, Barbello has attempted to twist the intent of the ability. Her greatest experiment—and greatest failure—involved the pull of the being that would become the Grand Asherake. As she drew him into her domain, she attempted to expel herself into his and escape the Forge. The Great Oath forbade success but did have the unforeseen consequences of transmitting some of her essence to the new arrival.

The Great Oath of Binding forbids Barbello from harming herself in a telling manner. Originally intended to prevent the Mask of Fury from implementing her own destruction in order to escape confinement, it also has the effect of not allowing her to directly confront the Grand Asherake. By far the mightiest of the current warlords, his capacity for power has not diminished. Bestowed with immortality and might beyond mortal ken, the Grand Asherake is slowly consuming her domain. The insignificance of time to him makes his conquest a near certainty, harkening her eventual doom. Suddenly, the security and assurance of power she had always possessed has evaporated, leaving a residue of fear and uncertainty against the most significant threat to her existence.

Barbello's Secrets

Though Barbello is inwardly intrigued by the development of the Grand Asherake, the Great Oath compels her to ward against his rise. She has taken to manipulating the careers of talented individuals to enhance their potential. While she has always done so, her activities in this sphere have increased significantly. This has given quick rise to a slew of especially vicious warlords, each cultured for the ability to defeat the Grand Asherake. Seen by the outside world as a god's meddling, it is really a premeditated attempt to forestall the advancement of her own destruction.

Several current warlords show extreme potential. Three—Minos Spar, Regan Severn, and Varan Trinovant—receive special attention. Seen as the cream of her efforts, Barbello has placed them within reach of her



Illustrated by Ginger Kubic

Lords of the Land

own holding and prompted each to swear a nonaggression pact. Surrounded by this ring of defenders, Barbello is free to plot action against the Grand Asherake. Cognizant of her inability to attack him, she is not convinced that he suffers the same prohibition and has become cautious in her endeavors. Most actions are swift raids against Fastness caravans by petty warlords under her control. Meant to harass the warlord, they also provide valuable information about the current status of his holding. She has yet to strike deep into his territory, but the moment fast approaches. Even the Great Oath of Binding cannot restrain the Mask of Fury overlong.

Not content with the defenses she has erected, Barbello is pursuing other avenues. One involves an encounter she had recently on a distant northern island. Whilst battling, Barbello came upon a man possessing a golden sword and shield. The remarkable similarity of his sword to her own caused her to pause. Curious, she demanded his name, to which he replied that he was “the last.”

Perplexed by his response, Barbello attacked him with her pull ability with the intent of questioning him at her leisure, only to have it falter against the bulwark of his shield. Stunned, she quickly succumbed to his attacks, his topaz sword quavering like a whip of searing light and striking her at every angle. When her reconstituted avatar returned to the island he was gone. Barbello has become obsessed with the man’s golden armaments and the secrets he harbors. She reasons that their power can augment her ability to withstand the Grand Asherake and perhaps the Great Oath, though his whereabouts have eluded her.

Barbello is also cultivating a special warlord—Sivvis Nexx, a bestial reptilian of surpassing violence—envisioning him as the potential tool to break the deadlock with the Grand Asherake. Unknowing or uncaring of his place in Barbello’s universe, Nexx relishes destruction and pounces on every opportunity she provides him. Gifted with a maul of awesome might, he strides the desert silently evoking her name with every felled opponent. With time and guidance, Nexx should provide the edge her steel needs to pierce the air of invulnerability that encapsulates the Grand Asherake.

The Citadel of Barbello

This mountain-like edifice of moss-draped iron rises from the salty water that encompasses her citadel. Miles wide, the rust covered structure is a complex collection of towers, terraces, and parapets, all leading to solid walls of seamless metal that provide no ingress. The perfunctory architecture’s sole entrance is a gate 500 feet tall that has never opened since its construction. Rust a foot thick covers its surface in a fuzz of crimson. Talus mounds of the red powder pile before the gate and elsewhere, seeming as drifts of frozen blood before an iron tooth.

The upper levels of the citadel are inhabited by all varieties of oozes, slimes and jellies, gruesomely modified by magic. Its lower levels are filled with brackish water and teem with horrible denizens that feed on all who enter. In the tallest tower is a chamber that contains some of the most powerful weapons on the Forge—rows of them, each more potent than the last. It is a collection Barbello is justly proud of, but one she finds lacking. On

an iron stand displaying all the weapons that have ever slain her avatars is an empty place that awaits the golden sword of “the last.” Beside it is a platform for the owner’s severed head.

Barbello's Avatar

Female Feathered Fowl

Medium-size Avatar (Equivalent to an Outsider)

Hit Dice: 30d8+600 (840 hp)

Initiative: +19

Speed: 60 ft.; fly 150 ft. (perfect)

AC: 63 (+15 Dex, +25 natural, +13 plate armor), touch 15, flat-footed 48

Base Attack/Grapple: +30/+55

Attack: *Amber Blade of Nusrum* +62 melee

Full Attack: *Amber Blade of Nusrum* +62/+57/+52/+47/+42/+37/+32/+27 melee

Damage: *Amber Blade of Nusrum* 2d6+34/17-20 plus wounding

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. *Amber Blade of Nusrum*)

Special Attacks: *Amber Sword of Nusrum*, critical smite, pull

Special Qualities: Avatar, barbarian abilities, DR 15/+5 lawful, fast healing 10, fighter abilities, regeneration 10, resistance, SR 36, truesight, truespeech

Saves: Fort +42, Ref +37, Will +29

Abilities: Str 60, Dex 40, Con 50, Int 30, Wis 25, Cha 35

Skills: Appraise +20, Balance +46, Bluff +22, City Lore +17, Climb +49, Concentration +30, Craft (armorsmithing) +40, Craft (weaponsmithing) +30, Decipher Script +20, Diplomacy +26, Disable Device +20, Disguise +24, Escape Artist +24, Forgery +20, Gather Information +24, Handle Animal +32, Heal +17, Hide +24, Intimidate +44, Jump +51, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +20, Knowledge (geography) +20, Knowledge (local) +20, Knowledge (warfare) +20, Listen +37, Move Silently +24, Open Lock +25, Ride +27, Search +20, Sense Motive +17, Sleight of Hand +26, Spellcraft +22, Spot +17, Survival +39, Swim +45, Tumble +26, Use Magic Device +22, Use Rope +25.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Greater Weapon Focus (two-handed sword), Greater Weapon Specialization (two-handed sword), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Mobility, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (two-handed sword), Weapon Specialization (two-handed sword), Whirlwind Attack.

Organization: Unique.

Challenge Rating: 30+.

Treasure: +5 weightless full plate, *helm of brilliance*, *Amber Blade of Nusrum*, 10d10 gems of miscellaneous value.

Typically Equipped Items: Book of the Great Oath, +5 weightless full plate, *helm of brilliance*, *Amber Blade of Nusrum*.

Encased in steel armor and helm, no portion of Barbello is visible. Her four horns protrude through the helm, curving about in such a manner as to make its removal impossible. This has given rise to the erroneous belief that her avatars are nothing more than incredibly deadly suits

of animated armor. Scholars dispute this as nonsense, citing that numerous avatars have been slain in the past, their corpses lasting several moments before disintegrating into red sand. What is known with certainty is that Barbello always wears rusted armor draped with silt-encrusted seaweed, a curious affectation stemming from her wanderings in the deepest levels of her citadel. A taciturn and meager conversationalist, her voice is nonetheless clear and commanding. With a simple whisper she can cut through the cacophony of the battlefield to deliver orders or challenges.

Description

In combat Barbello eschews missile weapons of all sorts, viewing them as the implements of cowards, disdaining anyone who relies on them. Her preferred mode of attack is simply to appear in the center of the enemy and kill everything within reach. If pressed, Barbello will utilize her pull and avatar abilities to their fullest potential.

Avatar (Ex): The Mask of Fury interacts with the Forge and its inhabitants through an avatar, receiving all the powers and abilities listed in the Powers of the Avatars section of *OATHBOUND: Domains of the Forge*.

Barbarian Abilities (Ex): Barbello possesses all the abilities of a 20th level barbarian.

Critical Smite (Su): Five times per day the Mask of Fury can strike an opponent and inflict an automatic critical. This ability does not work against creatures or entities that are immune to critical hits, such as constructs or elementals. This ability can be used more than once per round and can be declared after the attack roll.

Fighter Abilities (Ex): Barbello possesses all the abilities of a 20th level fighter.

Pull (Su): Though Barbello can use her ability to draw entities to the Forge, she occasionally uses it for combat purposes. Seldom implemented, she views it as a tool for the weak and would much rather pound her enemies into the red sand—earning victory instead of stealing it. When she does employ the power, it is typically to use her sifter to separate a foe from some dangerous item he possesses.

Resistance (Su): Due to her divine pedigree, Barbello receives a +5 bonus to all saving throws.

Truesight (Su): Barbello receives the permanent effect of the spell *true seeing* at all times.

Truespeech (Su): Barbello can understand all languages, and her speech can be understood by all beings capable of hearing, regardless of what languages they may know.

Amber Blade of Nusrum (Major Artifact): This +5 *keen wounding two-handed sword* is a relic from a world destroyed by its passion for war. Taken from one of the last surviving inhabitants of that world, which was called Nusrum, the sword is exceptionally broad at its tip, appearing more like a cleaver. It is fashioned entirely from a topaz colored resin that is resistant to all forms of damage. At will this woeful weapon can elongate, granting a reach of 15 feet. This power can be used in conjunction with any combat maneuver, including the whirlwind ability. It also grants the wielder the ability to cast *haste*, *harm*, and *true strike* each 5/day as if cast by a 20th-level spellcaster.

Siviss Nexx

The savage monstrosity that is Siviss Nexx is quite possibly of the most vicious creature ever to attain the title of warlord since Barbello covered the domain in crimson sand. Siviss is a dragori-nen, a humanoid reptilian from the lands of the Dragon Sands, and is anything but a typical member of his species. Once the greatest warrior in the service of his lord the Dragon Emperor, Siviss is twice the size of other members of his race and possesses ten times their cruelty. Though he was undefeated in every conflict and saved the Dragori Empire from invasion a number of times, he was banished from his homeland because of his ferocious nature and unbalanced mind. Soon after his banishment Siviss was found by Barbello and pulled into Arena. The Mask of Fury knew the dragori had the potential to be a powerful warlord, and since his first days upon the sands Siviss has been a favorite of Arena's Feathered Fowl.

Shortly after his arrival a warlord named Palsmedes, a silver sorcerer who controlled the large oasis of Qamil in western Arena, recruited Siviss. For a time Siviss was content as a ranking commander in the armies of Palsmedes, and in the course of a year was promoted (through death and defeat) to general of the silver's forces. The dragori quickly gained the respect of the forces under his wing, and since taking command many of the more sadistic mercenaries in Arena have flocked to the western oasis to follow him into battle. It was with this promotion that Siviss earned the notice of Nairye, a picker cercess and apprentice of Palsmedes.

An opportunist by nature, and attracted to a fellow reptilian humanoid, Nairye saw Siviss as a means to gain the power she has coveted since coming of age in Arena. Through time and seduction the picker was able to convince Siviss that he was the true power behind Palsmedes. With the army's support it took little effort for the two to depose the silver and take control of his assets. Now Siviss dominates the massive armies of Qamil while Nairye handles the mining, trade, and strategic planning. The two reptilians are a formidable force; though without the strong inhuman arm of Siviss it is doubtful Nairye could hold together the current force of humanoid loyalists who have become devotees of the giant dragori.

Behind the scenes, Nairye has taken control of her dead master's library of magics, but she is years away from gathering the power once held by Palsmedes. Siviss has also been keeping a sharp eye on the picker and is much more intelligent than his reptilian lover realizes. While he has become fond of Nairye in his own way, Siviss is not above killing her without a second thought should she betray him. For now he needs the picker to run his affairs away from the battlefield, so he is content to let her live until circumstances change.

Siviss Nexx is a massive creature, covered in endless rippling muscles bulging from beneath broad, dark jade scales so sharp they can cut the unprotected skin of lesser beings. Upon the Dragon Sands Siviss was considered an aberration by many of his fellow dragori because of his unnatural size. Being oppressed and demoralized at a young age molded Siviss into a brutish monster, and by the time he had come of age at 14 summers he was already the greatest warrior the Dragon Empire had ever

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known. Even Siviss' winglike ears, the trademark of the dragori race, are exceptionally large and pronounced. Someone not familiar with the race would almost think they granted him the power of flight.

Siviss' intimidating size alone—a towering 10 feet—is enough to instill terror in most that view him for the first time and at first glance many mistake him for an ogre, giant, or some type of dragonkin. Siviss has undergone several fantastic transformations since arriving on the Forge: the growing of additional unyielding scales, large leathery wings, and the ability to breathe fire among them. Since the dragori worship the power and soul of the dragon, Siviss believes this is a gift from his distant gods.

Upon Siviss' arrival in Arena Barbello sensed great potential within him, a destiny greater than that of a mere warlord—or at least that is her hope. To encourage this Barbello gave him a magical war maul that since has never left his side. With it Siviss has crushed thousands in the five years he has been on the Forge, earning him not only the title of warlord but also the watchful eye of Barbello. On more than one occasion she has tipped the scales of a battle in the favor of Siviss by killing key members of the opposition—all in an effort to cultivate the dragori into one of the greatest warriors in the domain.

Siviss Nexx, Male Dragori Bar10/Feral Ravager10: CR 22; Large Humanoid (reptilian); HD 10d12+10d10+120; hp 305; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 28, touch 17, flat-footed 20; BAB +20, Grpl +32; Atk +33/+28/+23/+18 melee (2d8+12/19-20x3, +4 *thundering war maul*), or +30/+25/+20/+15 melee (2d6+10/17-20, +2 *keen greatsword*), or +28/+28 melee (1d4+8, 2 claws), +26 melee (1d6+4 plus poison [Injury, Fort DC 22, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str], bite) and +24 melee (1d6+8 subdual, tail); Space/Reach 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Breath weapon (20d6 fire damage, 4/day), impassible domain, improved trip (tail), lord of the domain, massive cleave, mighty stride, prehensile tail, rage 5/day, smashing blow; SQ Acid resistance 5, cold resistance 5, DR 2/-, improved uncanny dodge, +2 saves vs fire, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +21, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 26, Dex 16, Con 24, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Balance +10, Battlespeak +10, Bluff +2, Climb +16, Craft (weaponsmithing) +8, Hide +10, Intimidate +18, Intuit Direction +15, Jump +15, Listen +10, Move Silently +4, Ride +11, Search +5, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10, Survival +6, Swim +15, Tumble +5, Use Rope +4; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (war maul), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (war maul), Improved Trip (tail), Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (war maul)

Languages: Common, draconic, dwarf, elf, gnome, goblin, orc.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Serpent (*Scaled*: gains +2 natural armor bonus and acid resistance 5; *Fanged*: gains envenomed fangs (bite damage 1d4+Str/x2 plus poison [Injury, Fort DC 15 + fanged creature's Con Bonus, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str]), Focus of the Wurm (*Flying*: has thick leathery wings, fly 70 feet (average); *Kindled*: can breathe fire 4/day for 1d6 damage per level, gains cold resistance 5.

Gifts: Intimidating.

Possessions: +4 *heavy steel shield*, chain shirt, +4 *war maul of thundering*, +2 *keen greatsword*, *ring of protection* +3, gold necklace (2,000gp).

Lord of the Domain: By taking advantage of their natural reach a feral ravager can prevent opponents from closing inside their reach, thus keeping smaller opponents out of range. With a successful attack against an opponent moving inside his threatened area, he and the opponent must make an opposed Strength check. If the check succeeds, the opponent is forced back five feet into the square he just left, and his movement is ended.

Massive Cleave: The feral ravager has the extraordinary ability to take a 5-foot step before making a Cleave or Great Cleave attack. This can only be done once per round, and only if the Feral Ravager has not taken a 5-foot step that round.

Rage: The feral ravager learns to let loose his feral nature, flying into screaming blood frenzy. This is treated identically to the barbarian rage ability and is usable 2/day. If the feral ravager already has the ability to rage as a barbarian, then he gains the ability to rage one additional time per day.

Impassable Domain: The feral ravager learns the extraordinary ability of intercepting tumbling foes. If the feral ravager can beat the tumbler's skill check with a d20 + feral ravager level + Tumble skill, then he may make an attack of opportunity as normal against the tumbling foe (and may use the Lord of the Domain ability also).

Mighty Stride: The feral ravager takes full advantage of his longer legs and huge stride to move confidently through the battlefield. Whenever entitled to take a single five foot step which does not provoke an attack of opportunity, he is instead entitled to take a 10 foot step which itself does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Smashing Blow: The feral ravager may declare any two-handed attack to be a smashing blow. This special attack incurs a -5 penalty to hit, but adds twice the strength bonus damage instead of the normal one-and-a-half times for wielding a two-handed weapon.

Prehensile Tail: The dragori have a prehensile tail that can be used in combat to make an additional subdual attack or to trip an opponent. The tail can even be fitted with exotic weapons (requires Exotic Weapons feat) to do normal damage. If the tail is ever sliced off the Dragori takes three temporary points of damage to both Constitution and Dexterity. The tail has the ability to grow back over time, and can also be restored through magical healing (which restores lost ability points).

Nairy, Female Picker Rog5/Sor6: CR 11; Medium-size Humanoid (picker); HD 5d6+6d4+22; hp 62; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13; BAB +6, Grpl +8; Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+4/19-20, +2 *dagger of venom*) or +9/+4 melee (1d6+5/20, +3 *vicious quarterstaff*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak attack +3d6, spells; SQ Detect magic, enhanced memory, evasion, scent, summon familiar, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills & Feats: Balance +7, Climb +6, Concentration +12, Craft (alchemy) +10, Craft (metalworking) +8, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (geology) +9, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +11, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +7, Search +14, Sense Motive +9, Sleight of Hand +8, Spellcraft +11, Spot +13, Sur-

vival +9, Swim +11, Tumble +10, Use Rope +10; Brew Potion, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Languages: Chromithian, common, dover, nightling, picker, silver.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Senses (*Sharpened*: gains +4 competence bonus to all Listen, Spot, and Search checks, gains low-light vision; *Enhanced*: gains the Scent ability).

Possessions: +2 dagger of venom, +3 quarterstaff of viciousness, +3 bracers of armor, minor circlet of blasting, ring of x-ray vision.

Sorcerer Spells Known: (Spells per day: 6/7/6/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, disrupt undead, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*mage armor, shield, shocking grasp, summon monster I*; 2nd—*blur, invisibility*; 3rd—*fly*.

Gix, Vermin Familiar (spider): CR 1/4; Tiny Vermin; HD 1/2d8; hp 31; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., Climb 10 ft.; AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18; BAB +6, Grpl +9; Atk: +9/+4 melee (1d3-4 plus poison [Injury, Fort DC 11, 1d2/1d2 Str], bite); Space/Reach 2 1/2 ft./2 1/2 ft.; SA Poison, web; SQ Vermin; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 3, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills & Feats: Balance +6, Climb +7, Intuit Direction +4, Hide +18, Jump +5, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Search +10, Sense Motive +7, Spot +11, Survival +4, Swim +3, Tumble +9; Weapon Finesse (bite).

Nairye is a larger than normal picker, likely the result of being born and reared in the harsh environment of Arena. Nairye grew up in the oasis of Qamil as the daughter of a gold smelter, and earned the notice of the sorcerer Palsmedes when she stole the purse of one of the silver's generals. The warlord immediately noticed her inherent sorceress ability and took her on as an apprentice. Nairye learned quickly, though Palsmedes was especially hard on her—for which she learned to hate her master more and more over the years. When Nairye discovered the powerful Siviss among the warlord's troops she decided to take advantage of the dragori's mighty arm and help him overthrow Palsmedes, claiming his magical library and treasures for herself.

In the five years since the ascension of Siviss to warlord status Nairye has proven to be an extremely competent overseer of Qamil. She is as ambitious as any in Arena, though still lacking the raw power to become a warlord on her own. For now Siviss is the answer to her problems, as Nairye has never before seen such a savage and powerful warrior. She is also wary of the dragori as he can be somewhat unpredictable when it comes to intellect and aptitude. For now she is confident that Siviss needs her to run the everyday issues of Qamil while his armies wreak havoc over western Arena.

Qamil

Population: 17,390

Warlord: Siviss Nexx

Overseer: Nairye Iumet (Female Picker, CN, Rog5/Sor6)

Major Industry: Fish

Overview: Qamil is a major oasis nestled on the sands of western Arena, third in size and population to the Sea of Tears and The Fastness. The oasis is teeming with life, such as large flocks of edible fowl and vast schools of fish—the latter of which is the oasis' only export and greatest asset. Prior to the coming of Siviss each warlord who had claimed Qamil employed druids from the plains of Penance to keep the oasis cultivated and prosperous. When Siviss slew Palsmedes and took control of the oasis the druids, who owed allegiance only to the silver, returned to Penance. After five years the oasis has begun to show signs of neglect, so much so that Nairye is looking to restore Qamil's relations with the druids.

Over 8,000 of the residents of Qamil are slaves, set to work in the mines and smelting factories that now belong to Siviss. Most of the slaves are humans and dovers, purchased on a regular basis from slavers that are in the service of Lord Mabon. In addition to the labor, many human and dover slaves are bought as food for the ferocious goblinoids now flocking to the dragori's banner. Most, however, are sent to work in the gold mines that dot the area a few miles west of Qamil. Various warlords have worked the mines of Qamil for hundreds of years with no signs of playing them out. These mines are extensive and deep, worming through barren hills for literally hundreds of miles in every direction.

Forces

In recent years word of Siviss and his brutality has spread across Arena and beyond, attracting some of the most vicious humanoids to his banner. Ogres, gnolls, bugbears, orcs, goblins, trolls, and several divisions of giants and ettins are among the humanoids that currently serve as Siviss' frontline infantry. His second line, which he leads into battle personally, consists of aerial troops of chromithians, asherakes, gargoyles, vogels, and a handful of harpies. The remainder of Siviss' army, which is nearly 8,000 strong in total, is filled with savage faust and nightling assassins, evil clerics of various species, and a faction of drow sorcerers who serve the dragori for unknown reasons.

Assets

Under the rule of Siviss the settlement of Qamil has but one tangible asset, the large quantities of fish harvested from the oasis. The previous warlords of Qamil had exported iron, weapons, and other crafts, but not so since Siviss slew the sorcerer. The rapid shift in power caused many loyal to Palsmedes to flee or be killed, creating a gap in industrial production at the oasis. To date Nairye has been unable to fill most of these gaps, with the exception of the fishing trade. With an overabundance of fish Siviss is able to feed his troops and maintain trade with key resources along the Xanthus River.

Alliances

In five years Nairye has reestablished trade alliances with both Og Brickhand to the north and Port Ulmuk to the east. Through these arrangements Qamil has been able to obtain needed supplies such as slaves, weapons and other



sundries needed to maintain the armies. Whatever else Qamil and the forces of Siviss need they simply take from the dead of the battlefield.

There have been opportunities for other alliances in western Arena, which Nairye had encouraged Siviss to pursue in the first year of his rule. However, a failed treaty with the powerful Minos Spar to the south quelled the dragori's taste for alliances with neighboring warlords. This confrontation, which had cost Siviss over a thousand warriors, has led to several large battles against the forces of Minos in recent times. It is also well known that the two have grown to despise each other. Any direct conflict between these powerful warlords would be a titanic battle.

The Grand Asherake

A willing victim to the will of Barbello, the Grand Asherake strides the hot sands of Arena taking pleasure in defeating the armies of his enemies and capturing their holdings. The archetypal warlord, he is what the Mask of Fury envisioned when she began populating her domain ages ago. He is strong and dominant, devoid of the weaknesses of compassion, kindness, and remorse. The Grand Asherake is a warrior lord from a race of warriors. Also known as the Warlord of the Two Moons, because there is no region of the domain untouched by their light or his power, the Grand Asherake slowly extends his control. Never impulsive, he takes measured steps designed to enhance his power without threatening his security. Though he has yet to voice it, it is assumed that he strives for a final confrontation against Barbello where either he achieves glory in defeat or unspeakable power in victory.

The Grand Asherake rules by virtue of his intuitive sense of command, his intimate understanding of the soldier's mind, and the vicious nature of his race. He wields dozens of distinct armies with unparalleled ease and administers a complex socioeconomic structure based on obedience, fear, and greed. He is master of his empire, taking actions as he wills and answering to no one for their consequences. Lacking the capricious nature of Barbello, the Grand Asherake is calculating and patient, spending decades on tactical plans that when set in motion are performed with flawless devastation.

Tales surrounding the Grand Asherake are clouded with misconceptions. Some claim he is an immortal that has reigned for hundreds of years while building his empire. Others maintain that it is actually a series of individuals who have taken on the personae in order to facilitate their own power. The truth is actually a blend of the two, a secret kept with bloody vigilance by the being that is the Grand Asherake and the Mask of Fury herself, Barbello.

Over five hundred ago, Barbello pulled the asherake who would become the Grand Asherake into the Forge. It was a process that Barbello had performed millions of times, but in this instant something went awry. Desirous to free herself from the bonds of the Oath, Barbello attempted to push herself from the Forge while pulling the asherake into it, hoping to impose an exchange of positions. The process failed and was never to be repeated, but it did have the unforeseen affect of transferring some

of her energy to the seed. Charged with divine vigor, the asherake found that he healed at a surprising rate and was immune to the maladies common to the Forge. The asherake's aging process slowed and then stopped altogether, leaving him eternally in the prime of life. Whether the asherake is truly immortal is unknown, as few are willing to test the possibility.

Gifted almost beyond measure, the asherake traveled the sands of Arena, adapting to his new world and gaining control over his newfound abilities. Already a resolute opponent, the asherake began to revel in his new situation, applying his powers as he would. Armed with natural prowess and bolstered by the essence of Barbello, the asherake soon drew power to him, making himself warlord of a small portion of the vast desert. Trained in cavalry tactics and aerial assaults, his legions sweep across the desert wielding sword and spell, subjugating others to his banner. So successful was the asherake that he took the appellation Grand and has remained so ever since.

The Grand Asherake is shockingly ordinary in appearance for a member of his race. Slightly more than seven feet tall, his fur is tawny brown with thin stripes of dark brown that shade to black near his head. His wings are dusty gray in color and are tipped with dark brown. Beyond the walls of his citadel the Grand Asherake is always encountered in full military regalia. Over this he wears a long coat fashioned from the tanned faces of his most challenging enemies. Within the walls of his fastness he dons shifts of sheerest silk, taking pleasure in the luxuries brought by war.

Grand Asherake, Male Asherake Ftr4/Mnk11/Sovereign5: CR 22; Large Monstrous Humanoid; HD 4d10+11d8+5d10+120; hp 253; Init +13; Spd 120 ft., fly 200 ft. (average); AC 35, touch 35, flat-footed 26; BAB +17, Grpl +34; Atk +29/+29/+24/+19/+14 melee (3d6+14/17-20, +5 *defending frost huge greatsword*) or +34/+34/+34/+34/+34 melee (2d10+18/19-20x3, claws with flurry of blows) and +34 melee (1d10+18/19-20x3, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA *Ki* strike (lawful, magic), snatch, trip, unarmed strike; SQ Chain of command +4, diamond soul (SR 21), energy resistance 10*, flight, fortification enhancement, greater aura of command, immortal*, improved evasion, immune to disease*, immune to poison*, low-light vision, purity of body, regeneration 10*, scent, siege warfare, slow fall 50 ft., still mind, wholeness of body; AL LE; SV Fort +23, Ref +21, Will +22; Str 25, Dex 29, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 22.

* These abilities derive from the influx of Barbello's power when he was pulled into Arena.

Skills & Feats: Balance +4, Bluff +12, Climb +13, Concentration +16, Diplomacy +24, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +15, Handle Animal +13, Hide +12, Intimidate +18, Jump +11, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +13, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (history) +13, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Perform +10, Profession (siege engineer) +15, Ride +8, Sense Motive +12, Spot +8, Survival +7, Swim +8, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +16; Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Disarm (Focus of the Claw), Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Multiattack (Focus of the Claw), Improved Trip (Focus of the

Claw), Improved Weapon Finesse (Focus of the Claw), Leadership, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Asherake, common, ith'n ya'roo, orc.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Body (*Immunized:* Con score increased by 2, immune to disease, and a +6 bonus to saves against poison; *Sinewed:* Str score increased by 2 and +1 hp per level; *Metabolized:* Dex score increased by 2, movement rate is doubled, additional attack or action each round, does not gain benefit from *haste* or magic that increases movement), Focus of the Claw (*Edged:* +1 attack and damage on all natural weapon attacks, can bypass DR 1, gain the Weapon Finesse and Multiattack feats; *Armed:* additional +1 attack and damage on all natural weapon attacks, can bypass DR 2, damage die upgraded by one, +1 critical threat range, gain the ability to trip; *Razor:* additional +1 attack and damage on all natural weapon attacks, can bypass DR 3, gain Improved Weapon Finesse, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, and Improved Grapple only with natural weaponry; *Deadly:* additional +1 attack and damage on all natural weapon attacks, can bypass DR 4, +1 critical threat range, +2 competence bonus to trip, disarm, and grapple checks; *Lethal:* additional +1 attack and damage on all natural weapon attacks, can bypass DR 5, gain Improved Multiattack, additional +2 competence bonus to trip, disarm, and grapple checks), Focus of the Fair and Foul (*Fair:* Cha score increased by 2, +4 competence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform skill checks, gain Use Magic Item as a class-skill; *Empowered:* Cha increased by 2, +4 inherent bonus to Handle Animal skill checks, gain Use Magic Item as a class-skill; *Foul:* leadership score increased by 2, +4 competence bonus to Gather Information and Intimidate skill checks, opponents suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attacks against the Grand Asherake and to all saving throw versus effects generated by him).

Gifts: Danger Sense (earned), Famous (earned), Willful.

Possessions: +5 *defending icy burst huge greatsword*, *amulet of mighty fists +5*, *belt of giant strength +6*, *bracers of armor +8*, *cloak of resistance +3*, *gloves of Dexterity +6*, *ring of blinking*, *ring of protection +4*, *rod of rulership*, *scroll: heal (x3)*, *wand of lightning bolt* (10th level, 40 charges).

The Fastness

Population: 55,725

Warlord: Grand Asherake

Overseer: Khenmon Direnight (Male Human, LE, Ftr7/Sor7)

Major Industries: Aerial ships, armory, crafts, slaves, smithing, weaponry

Overview: By dint of his leadership and martial prowess, the Grand Asherake has carved from the shifting red sands an empire nearing the size of the plains of Penance. His holdings are massive and diverse, encompassing the entirety of the southeastern arm of Arena with borders on the Vault, the eastern shore of the Southern Ocean, and the Wildwood. Some members of the Grand Asherake's military command even consider it a separate domain, though only in muted tones, lest they draw the premature attention of Barbello.

Lords of the Land

His capital, known as The Fastness, resides in a great and ancient pit mine located in the one of the largest oases in Arena. Named the Oasis of Departure, it is the site of his victory over a significant nightling warlord decades past. After storming the defenses, the Grand Asherake slew the nightling warlord in single combat, claiming the oasis and its surrounding regions as his own. The capital is culturally distant from the provincial settlements common to the domain. It possesses running water, sewers, a walled perimeter, and a permanent class of craftsmen who endeavor to maintain the equipment and provide the services the Grand Asherake's armies demand.

Walled and magically protected from aerial assault, the city's buildings cling to the slopes of the mine, descending in a shallow spiral from the top to the bottom. The curtain wall is pierced in three locations and is manned by five full detachments of the Grand Asherake's best troops. Fanatically loyal to their lord, they are armed with magic items capable of attacking distant foes. The last attack upon the city resulted in the invading army being laid waste hundreds of feet from the gates. The defenders were so capable that when the Grand Asherake was notified of the attack he jokingly questioned why their weapon practice had been moved up.

The citadel of the Grand Asherake is located at the bottom of the mine and is frighteningly impressive. A deep moat of clear water encircles the structure that rests on the northern end of the flooded mine. Spikes, barbs, and cages are affixed to its exterior, each laden with the corpses of soldiers who had once arrayed themselves against the Grand Asherake. Some of the corpses are animated; their flailing limbs and unending cries are a continual reminder of the fate of those who impede the resolve of the Grand Asherake.

FORCES

Reviled and respected, the legions of the Grand Asherake are worthy of their reputation. They are fearless warriors who never quail at the critical moment, being resolute in victory and defeat. There are five major segments of the Grand Asherake's military: aerial, mounted, ground, siege, and armada. Each detachment has between 1,000 and 10,000 individuals. The Grand Asherake can field 20 detachments for extended periods of conflict, and 10 more if his home guard is activated.

The aerial detachments are composed of asherake and other winged creatures that function in coordinated flight formations. Acting as shock troops, they are adept at making dive attacks against opponents, hurling jugs of poison, slimes, or other virulent substances. In a contested engagement they tend to make one dive attack, then retreat to use their missile weaponry from a distance. These units prefer hit and run tactics, relying on speed and maneuverability to protect them.

The mounted detachments ride kine, mawgriffs, and polars if close to the Vault. Through a dedicated breeding and training program, the mounts become bonded to their riders in an ancient rite known as *kirran pa'tak*, or *brothers bond* in the native asherake tongue. Meant to merge their souls, the ceremony causes the mount and rider become aware of the other's thoughts. Each reacts with unparalleled harmony to its bond brother, making

it nearly impossible to surprise or flank the pair. Capable of a ferocious defense when its bond brother is threatened, there are instances of rider less mounts slaying incredible numbers of enemies.

The ground detachments are generally diverse, with a wide range of races represented and organized to accentuate their strengths. Half-orcs, orcs, and hobgoblins are used for nighttime operations. Capable of seeing in utter darkness, they are trained at infiltration and assassinations. Feral halflings and valcos are frequently located along the border of the Wildwood as they are adept at traversing the twisted undergrowth. Hovara sorcerers supplement all types of troops, using their magic to enhance defense and wield death.

The siege detachments tend to be smaller in size and are tasked with the construction, maintenance, and application of siege engines to break down an enemy's defenses. They employ a variety of specialized bombardments, including oozes, slimes, acids, and a particularly potent poison that activates only when mixed with open water. Known as *thirstbringer*, the poison has been used to destroy oases, tainting the water supply and killing its drinkers. Anything partaking of the fouled water dies of agonizing thirst, as the victim can no longer tolerate consuming liquids of any kind.

The armada of the Grand Asherake is his most potent weapon. Numbering over 100 vessels, the fleet is an active component of the warlord's ruling power. Several dozen asherake sunshadows are used for scouting patrols and secret missions. Small and affordable, they act as the feelers for the empire, sensing trouble before it reaches the border of the holding. Spindire dragonships form the backbone of the armada. Necrotic engines power the fifty or so vessels, making them exceptionally useful on the battlefield. They are all war-fitted, with ballistae and catapults that can issue a variety of missiles depending on the opponent. New siege engines, capable of expelling weighted nets large enough to bind a dragon, have recently been placed on some of the dragonships. Laced with the metal slade, the nets nullify most magical ability, neutralizing even the most dangerous magical opponent.

Discipline is a byword in the camps of the Grand Asherake. Individuals who do not adhere to the dictates of their superiors are quickly weeded out and sent to the arena pits for the amusement of the crowds. Every military action contemplated is analyzed for any consequence or eventuality. The Grand Asherake takes a dim view of the ill-prepared, personally seeing to their punishment in the bowels of his citadel.

ASSETS

The assets of the Grand Asherake are staggering. He possesses many oases of arable land, numerous gold and gem mines, and the elite armies to protect it all. Through the careful husbandry of his resources, the Grand Asherake has the capability to feed, clothe, and shelter his entire populace if needed while still maintaining his military. Despite this self-sufficiency he freely spends gold on material requirements and luxuries. Aware that a sated people are more easily controlled, the Grand Asherake slakes their gluttony with exotic foods, goods, and daily bloodsports at the local arena. The last day of each sea-

son is especially popular, with battles between scantily armed prisoners and lethal creatures a perpetual favorite.

Beside the capital at the Oasis of Departure, the Grand Asherake has almost two-dozen significant settlements that act as bulwarks against the encroachments of his competitors. Each is the home of a petty warlord either overcome or coerced into servitude. Regardless of the details, they are sworn to the Grand Asherake, an oath seldom broken as the consequences are utterly beyond mortal endurance. Lacking most of the finer luxuries, these settlements still afford visitors a decent haven in which to gather their strength and restock precious supplies. Each settlement is protected by detachments of the regular army. Similar detachments protect trade routes, mines, or ward the border against incursion.

Allegiances

To ally oneself with the Grand Asherake is to submit to his will, ceding control of armies, holdings, and resources. Anything less is unacceptable, and anything unacceptable is not long suffered within his reach. His terrifying influence over the area denies opposing warlords the opportunity to come to a peaceful resolution when conflict has been declared. Once deemed a threat, a warlord is hunted until he is destroyed, his armies shattered, and his holdings plundered.

Some do claim the Grand Asherake as ally, namely the hovara and the bloodlord of Beacon. Manta ray like creatures that roam the border of Arena and Penance, the hovara are supreme slavers, capturing entire caravans for their flesh handlers. Nimble sorcerers as well, they also make effective spies, gathering intelligence about the movements of caravans, enemy forces, and political leaders. Not above the occasional act of betrayal they have sold information about the Grand Asherake to his enemies. Unbeknownst to the hovara, the warlord is aware of their duplicity. He maintains the illusion of their subservience as it offers him an avenue of dispensing false information.

A special bond also exists between the bloodlord of Beacon, Mecham Pandarus and the Grand Asherake. Both of the same race, they are also of the same blood, a fact unknown to most. Born in Beacon, Pandarus is the descendant of Asgrim Pandarus who was the product of the Grand Asherake's brief liaison with an asherake slave. Being loyal to his own, the Grand Asherake supports his offspring, waiting to see if they show promise. Those who do are promoted through the ranks of leadership to become valuable tools for the administration. Asgrim was gifted with the natural talents of leadership and cunning. Sent to Beacon to secure the moab trade, he conquered the city and began extending its borders. Together with the aerial fleet of the Grand Asherake, he and his lineage have held Beacon ever since.

The familial ties between the Grand Asherake and Pandarus are strong, though Mecham is ignorant of their true depth. Knowing only that he has a powerful ally that does not waver, Mecham has been emboldened of late to continue the expansionistic designs of his family. The Grand Asherake, aware of the raw power of his descendant, has begun to take measures to ensure his loyalty.

Sensing rogue thoughts of independence from his scion, he has placed several spies within the Pandarus court to remove the bloodlord at the signal of the Grand Asherake.

Persistent rumors hint that the Grand Asherake and Barbello are pledged not to attack each other until the red sun eclipses the yellow sun. Given the size variance between the celestial bodies, such a rumor is quickly discounted as inane babble. However, some scholars maintain that the erratic orbit of the red sun could draw it close enough to the Forge to visually occlude the yellow sun. They claim that though it is an incredibly rare event it has been recorded in the past.

Minos Spar

Minos Spar is the highly unusual offspring of a centaur and titan. Although half-titan, he was smaller than most centaurs during his youth and considered a runt. He was often the focus of cruel jokes and taunting by others because of his stature. His only weapon was his advanced intelligence and wit, which he wielded like a razor sharp sword. Upon entering puberty, the titan half of his genes kicked into overdrive and he quickly grew to become the largest member of the centaur clan. Those who tormented him now felt he was a threat to them all since he stood a full head and a half taller than the clan leader.

It was during this tumultuous time that the centaur clan was ambushed by a large force of gnolls. The clan was unprepared for such a clearly organized attack and was on the verge of annihilation. If it were not for the natural intuitive abilities of Minos, the clan would have been completely massacred. He was able to outthink the gnolls and turn the tide of battle by anticipating their next move. He single-handedly saved the clan and changed the way the others thought of him.

After a few uneventful years, Minos was given a sealed scroll by his mother. She told him that it was time to seek out his father. The scroll contained a map with special instructions on where to travel and what he should take. After a long and arduous journey, he found a simple cave that was home to a titan wizard, his father. Under his father's tutelage, Minos learned that his titan heritage allowed him to shape and cast arcane magic, and that he would continue to grow even stronger and smarter than any other centaur he would likely know. Minos' father schooled him in a multitude of subjects and he studied hard to perfect the art of wizardry.

One morning, Minos was studying in a small woodland grove when he noticed a growing number of black birds perched in the overhead trees. He continued his studies until the number of birds became so great it was disconcerting. Rising to leave the grove, he quickly found himself surrounded by the flock, unable to see and completely disoriented. When the flock cleared, the landscape had changed and it became apparent he was in a new land. Moments after his arrival the guardian known as Israfel appeared before him, granted him an arrival gift and challenged him to fulfill his potential and become as truly great as destiny dictated.

Lords of the Land

Minos' adventures and journeys ultimately led him to the domain of Arena where his instincts and natural talent for strategy became invaluable. On the battlefields he quickly worked his way up the ranks of the military, commanding whole legions and winning battle after battle with brilliant tactical moves that crushed the opposition. Within record time, he became one of the three most powerful warlords in all of Arena and certainly the most feared, yet respected, tactician.

Minos does not just rule, he commands. His imposing frame and charismatic demeanor gives him a presence that all but guarantees everyone will focus their attention upon him when he speaks. His tactical brilliance is apparent in the very manner in which he speaks and whom he chooses to address. Minos speaks in carefully measured tones and words designed to elicit specific emotional responses within his audience. It's no wonder that every single member of his great army would follow him into oblivion without question.

Minos has a deep respect for Barbello, but also sees that she is playing with him in her own way. He recognizes the cycle all warlords are thrust into. The tactician within him sees the constant struggle and war between the different warlords and their factions as a huge and intricate chess game—a game he is determined to win at all costs.

Minos Spar, Male Half-titan/Centaur Ftr8: CR 22; Large Outsider; HD 12d8+8d10+100; hp 232; Init +6; Spd 70 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 21; BAB +20, Grpl +34; Atk +34/+29/+24/+19 melee (2d8+15/19-20x3, +3 ghost touch rust protection huge greataxe), or +24/+19/+14/+9 ranged

(1d12+2/x3, +2 penetrating, forceful large composite longbow), or +29/+29/+27/+25 melee (2d6+10, hoof), or +29/+29/+27/+25 melee (1d4+10, unarmed); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Spell-like abilities, spells, scent; SQ DR 15/+1, SR 25, low-light vision; AL LN; SV Fort +18, Ref +14, Will +15; Str 30, Dex 14, Con 21, Int 19, Wis 17, Cha 16.

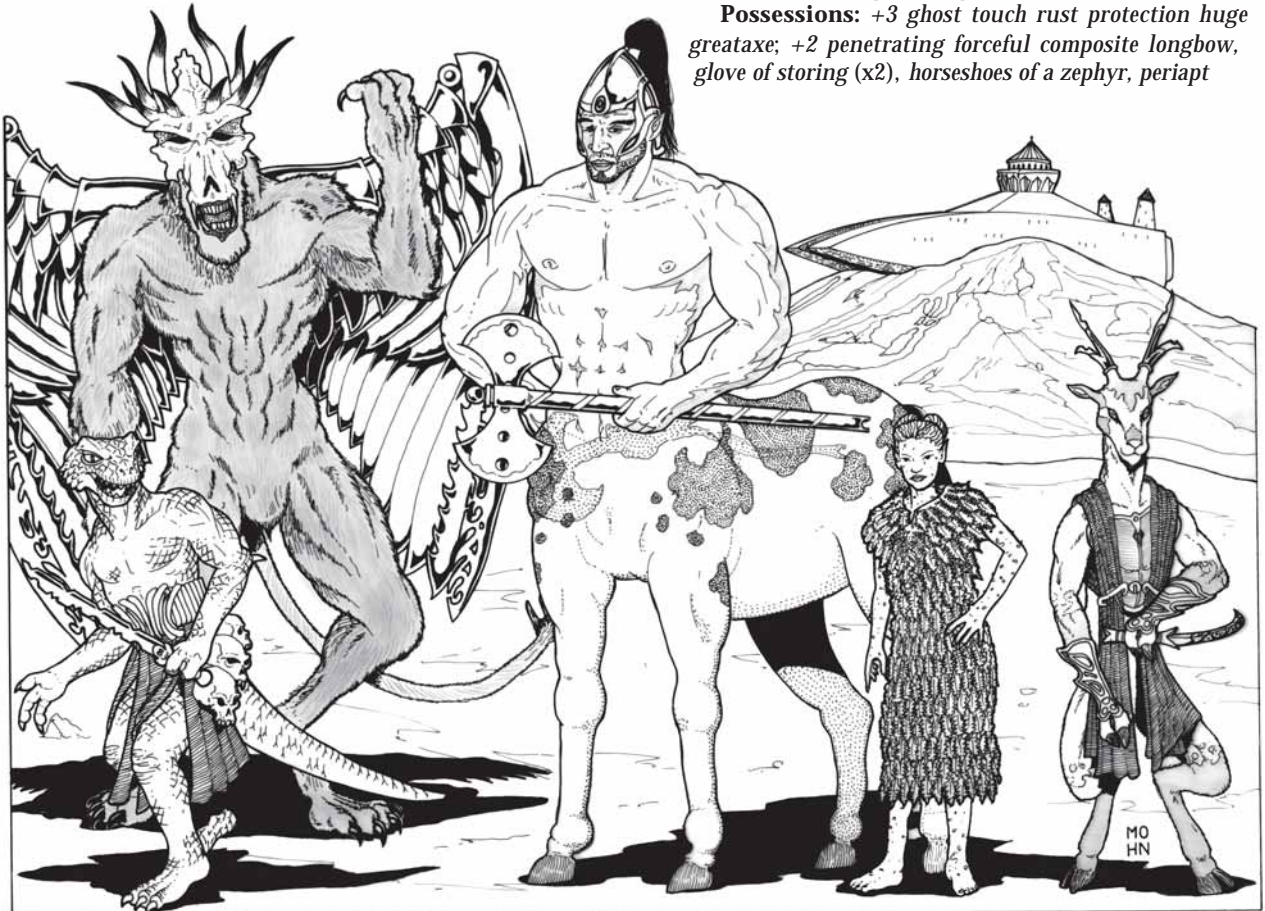
Skills & Feats: Bluff +8, Climb +15, Concentration +13, Craft (armorsmithing) +14, Craft (weaponsmithing) +14, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +8, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +15, Jump +20, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (geography) +13, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (history) +19, Listen +15, Search +14, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Survival +12; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Greater Weapon Focus (greataxe), Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Leadership, Multiattack, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Focus (hoof), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Languages: Asherake, Draconic, Elf, Faust, Giant, Sylvan, Valco.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Mind (*Centered:* immune to charm effects, gain a +4 insight bonus to all saving throws against fear and compulsion effects, and gain a +4 insight bonus on Concentration checks; *Enterprising:* Int score increased by 2 and gain a +4 competence bonus to all Knowledge checks; *Enlightened:* Wis increased by 3, and gain a +4 competence bonus to all Sense Motive checks), Focus of the Senses (*Sharpened:* gain a +4 competence bonus to all Listen, Spot, and Search checks and gain low-light vision; *Enhanced:* gain the Scent special ability; *Watchful:* gain 360 degree field of vision and cannot be flanked).

Gifts: Inspiring, Precognitive (earned).

Possessions: +3 ghost touch rust protection huge greataxe; +2 penetrating forceful composite longbow, glove of storing (x2), horseshoes of a zephyr, periapt



Illustrated by Jesse Mohn

of proof against poisons, ring of protection +4, ring of regeneration, rod of enemy detection, spellbook, unbreakable helm.

Spell-like Abilities: (usable once per day unless noted): *Bless* 3/day, *charm person or animal*, *commune with nature*, *cure light wounds* 3/day, *eyebite*, *etherealness*, *fire storm*, *hold monster*, *holy smite*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *remove curse*, *remove fear*, *summon nature's ally II*. (These abilities are as the spells cast by a 20th level sorcerer.)

Wizard Spells Prepared: (4/6/6/6/5/5/5/5/3/3; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*; 1st—*burning hands*, *charm person*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *summon monster I*; 2nd—*blur* x2, *cat's grace*, *flaming sphere* x2, *invisibility*; 3rd—*fireball* x2, *flame arrow*, *fly* x2, *haste*; 4th—*minor globe of invulnerability*, *polymorph self*, *stoneskin* x2, *summon monster IV*; 5th—*cloudkill*, *dominate person*, *summon monster V*, *teleport*, *wall of force*; 6th—*analyze dweomer*, *circle of death* x2, *globe of invulnerability*, *legend lore*; 7th—*banishment*, *forcecage*, *limited wish* x2, *mass invisibility*; 8th—*horrid wilting*, *mass charm*, *prismatic wall*; 9th—*temporal stasis*, *wail of the banshee*, *wish*.

Anatolis

Population: 33,863

Warlord: Minos Spar

Overseer: Dhrem Benhaw (Male Picker, N, Ftr8/Rog3)

Major Industries: Glass, iron, smithing, and weaponry

Overview: Minos' capital fortress, Anatolis, is in the northernmost area of the triangular points that make up the Sea of Tears where the Citadel of Barbello lies. The southwestern edge of his territory borders with lands belonging to Regan Severn, while the warlord Varan Trinovant shares the southeastern border with Minos. His territory extends northward from the Sea of Tears to the coastlines and northeast to the lands where the warlord Nianyth has recently laid a claim. This is a hotly disputed geographic area and is the current focus of attention for Minos. The land is rich in mineral and valuable metal deposits that Minos uses to trade with others for certain goods. Minos is also vying for control of the lands near the mouth of the River of the Dead in order to control the shipping lanes that go farther north where the key port cities are located.

Although his capital fortress is along the shores of the northern bay of the Sea of Tears, Minos spends a great deal of his time aboard a massive mobile fortress that brings him closer to the battlefields in order to assess tactical situations during engagements. This fortress, which he has christened *Stormheart*, contains enough forces to conquer nearly any city or legion it may come against. Working in conjunction with massive magic and teams of oliphants harnessed to the castle, *Stormheart* traverses the desert like an armored tank, averaging 240 to 300 miles in a single day depending on the terrain. At 1,100 feet in length and just over 200 feet in height, this 50,000-ton juggernaut houses a formidable armada of armament and military muscle.

FORCES

The legions of Minos Spar have the best of form and discipline when it comes to military precision and following orders. Each major element is commanded by one of Minos' trusted lieutenants. The forces they command are varied in composition and number more than 10,000. These commanders have earned the nickname of The Four by their adversaries because they represent the embodiments of the legendary Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: War, Famine, Plague and Death. Those who are fearful of his retribution and brand of justice as he hands out judgment upon them sometimes refer to Minos as The Fifth.

Kosh S'sylainnas, Male Ramzadi Ftr8/Slayer6: CR 16; Large Monstrous Humanoid; HD 8d10+6d12+68; hp 182; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., Climb 20 ft.; AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 23; BAB +14, Grpl +23; Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (1d10+7/x2, +2 *soul burner bladed maul*), or +22/+17/+12 melee (2d8+13/18-20, +3 *serrated vorpal greatsword*), or +19/+14 (1d4+5, tail); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft.; SA Blood of the slayer, enhanced damage, skull crush, supreme cleave, supreme focus; SQ Darkvision, DR 5/magic, fast healing 1, scent; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +15, Climb +20, Handle Animal +12, Hide +9, Intimidate +17, Jump +15, Listen +5, Ride +12, Survival +2; Cleave, Great Fortitude, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Finesse (tail, Weapon Focus (bladed maul), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Asherake, Common, Draconic, Valco.

Gifts: Nature's Blessing (earned), Valiant.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Body (*Immunized:* Con increased by 2, immune to mundane and magical disease and gains a +6 racial bonus to saves against poison), Focus of the Cockroach (*Dual-Brained:* not susceptible to Intelligence damage, decapitations are not immediately fatal; if the head is not reattached within 1 day, the creature dies 2d20 days later).

Possessions: +3 *invulnerability chainmail*, +2 *soul burner bladed maul*, +3 *serrated vorpal greatsword*, +4 *ring of protection*, *boots of teleportation*.

Kosh is one of The Four and represents the embodiment of War. He is one of Minos' most trusted lieutenants and commands Minos' ground forces. At nearly ten feet tall, he is almost as imposing as Minos. But where Minos has a commanding presence, Kosh merely commands through intimidation. Those beneath his command fear him but respect him all the same. Kosh leads his troops into battle from the frontlines as opposed to most legion commanders who run a war from the rear. He derives great satisfaction and enjoyment from dismembering opposing forces with his jagged greatsword. When his sword is not handy, Kosh does not hesitate to use his hands and crush his foes' skulls as if they were made of clay.

Despite his evil alignment, Kosh has sworn fealty to Minos and obeys his orders without question. Minos recognized the spark of leadership within Kosh and has nur-

Lords of the Land

tured it, giving guidance and the opportunity he needed to fulfill his potential and become a prominent member of The Four.

Cronarra Vilathas, Female Elf Drd10/Plague5: CR 16; Medium-size Humanoid (Elf); HD 10d8+5d10+60; hp 167; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, 12 touch, 14 flat-footed; BAB +10, Grpl +11; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d4+3/19-20, +2 *keen pestilence sickle*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Venomous touch; SQ Aura of decay, carrier of disease, elf traits, horde of vermin, low-light vision, nature sense, poison knowledge, resist nature's lure, trackless step, wild empathy, woodland stride, wild shape (dire 5/day), venom immunity; AL NE; SV Fort +15 Ref +7 Will +14; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +14, Craft (alchemy) +12, Diplomacy +10, Handle Animal +5, Heal +11, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (nature) +17, Listen +15, Search +9, Spellcraft +12, Spot +14, Survival +18; Child of the Wilderness, Natural Spell, Track, Weapon Focus (sickle).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elf, Sylvan, Valco.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Mole (*Nocturnal*: at night, or in dimly light or dark areas, +2 racial bonus to initiative at night or dim areas, +4 racial bonus to Reflex saves, and a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks).

Gifts: Mr. Creepy.

Possessions: +2 *keen pestilence sickle* (filth fever), *furious vestment*, *ring of protection* +2, *rod of withering*.

Druid Spell Prepared: (6/6/6/5/4/3/2/1; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*create water*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *know direction*, *light*, *purify food and drink*; 1st—*calm animals*, *entangle*, *faerie fire*, *invisibility to animals*, *obscuring mist*, *summon nature's ally I*; 2nd—*charm person or animal*, *chill metal*, *speak with animals*, *summon swarm*, *tree shape*, *warp wood*; 3rd—*call lightning*, *meld into stone*, *plant growth*, *remove disease*, *snare*; 4th—*control plants*, *freedom of movement*, *rusting grasp*, *spike stones*; 5th—*commune with nature*, *control winds*, *insect plague*; 6th—*liveoak*, *transport via plants*; 7th—*fire storm*.

Cronarra is the living representation of the entity known as Plague. She despises the living lush growth of life and seeks to wither and decay it, bringing disease to all. Cronarra heads up Minos' espionage division. She commands those who would go behind enemy lines and weaken opposing forces by poisoning them or cutting off their supply lines. Hitting key areas and targets of opportunity is an important part to Minos' overall strategy and Cronarra is a key component to his plans.

Rugan, Male War Valco Clr15: CR 15; Medium-size Humanoid (valco); HD 15d8+45; hp 135; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 26; BAB +11, Grpl +15; Atk +15 melee (2d6+4, ramming), or +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+6, +2 *crushing morningstar*), or +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8/19-20, +3 *undetectable light crossbow*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Ramming, spells, turn/rebuke undead; SQ Hardy, spontaneous casting; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +15; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 19, Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +21, Listen +6, Spellcraft +19, Spot +6; Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Heighten Spell, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Elf, Valco.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Shadow (*Shadow*: gain +3 natural armor bonus and a +6 circumstance bonus to Hide checks; *Shaded*: gain Spell Resistance of 15 or gains +10 to existing SR if above 5).

Gifts: Nature's Blessing (earned).

Possessions: +1 *full plate*, +1 *heavy steel shield*, +2 *crushing morningstar*, +3 *undetectable light crossbow*, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +2, *gloves of dexterity* +2, *periapt of wisdom* +4, *potion of fly*, *ring of protection* +1, *scroll: implosion* (17th), *scroll: resurrection* (13th); *scroll: true resurrection* (17th), *wand of searing light* (10th level, 25 charges)

Cleric Spells Prepared: (6/6+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1/1+1; base save DC = 14 + spell level; domains: Death and Luck): 0—*detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *resistance*, *virtue*; 1st—*bane*, *bless*, *command*, *doom*, *entropic shield*, *magic stone*, *magic weapon*; 2nd—*aid*, *augury*, *bull's strength*, *enthrall*, *hold person*, *lesser restoration*, *remove paralysis*; 3rd—*animate dead*, *blindness/deafness*, *contagion*, *create food and water*, *daylight*, *water walk*, *wind wall*; 4th—*freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon*, *lesser planar ally*, *restoration*, *spell immunity*, *tongues*; 5th—*circle of doom*, *flame strike*, *greater command*, *insect plague*, *slay living*, *true seeing*; 6th—*blade barrier*, *create undead*, *geas/quest*, *planar ally*; 7th—*control weather*, *moment of prescience*, *regenerate*; 8th—*fire storm*, *wail of the banshee*.

Rugan is the support commander for the rear guard. He leads teams of spellcasters who use their ranged magical attack abilities to supplement and support the ground infantry units engaged with the enemy. Rugan views Arena and those in it as pawns to be used and discarded in his quest for power. Because of his willingness to drain the energy from anything and leave a dried husk in his wake, he is referred to as Famine, another member of The Four. Rugan has a fondness for Cronarra and her un-elf like view of waste and desolation. There is a mutual respect and friendship between them.

Erek, Male Asherake Sor16: CR 18; Large Monstrous Humanoid; HD 16d4+57; hp 105; Init +8; Spd 30 ft., fly 70 ft. (average); AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 19; BAB +8, Grpl +17; Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+7, +3 *disruption heavy mace*), or +12/+10 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws), +8 melee (1d8+2, bite), and +6 (1d8+6, wings); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Snatch, spells; SQ Scent; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +15, Will +15; Str 19, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 18.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +22, Hide +10, Spellcraft +21; Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Maximize Spell, Multiattack, Toughness.

Languages: Asherake, Common, Draconic, Elf.

Gifts: Mesmerizing (earned).

Prestige Races: Focus of the Senses (*Sharpened*: gain +4 competence bonus to all Listen, Spot, and Search skill checks and gain low-light vision); Focus of the Quill (*Spined*: natural weaponry does an additional 1d6 points

of damage and opponents receive 1d6 points of slashing damage per round of grappling, unarmed attacks do not provoke an attack of opportunity).

Possessions: +3 *disruption heavy mace*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *bracers of armor +3*, *cloak of Charisma +4*, *gloves of Dexterity +2*, *potion of cure moderate wounds (x3)*, *ring of minor elemental resistance*, *ring of protection +2*, *wand of stonesskin (16th level, 25 charges)*, *wings of death*.

Sorcerer Spells Known: (Spell per day: 6/7/7/7/7/6/6/5/3; base spell DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *light*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st—*burning hands*, *enlarge*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *reduce*, *shocking grasp*; 2nd—*Barbello's fury*, *cat's grace*, *flaming sphere*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*; 3rd—*fireball*, *fly*, *haste*, *sleet storm*, *stonesskin*; 4th—*black tentacles*, *confusion*, *darksight*, *fear*, *ice storm*; 5th—*hold monster*, *shadow evocation*, *summon monster V*, *telepathic bond*; 6th—*chain lightning*, *contingency*, *freezing sphere*; 7th—*finger of death*, *simulacrum*; 8th—*clone*.

Nibble, Animal Familiar (cat): CR 1/4; Tiny Animal; HD 1/2d8; hp 52; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20; Atk +10/+10 melee (1d2-4, 2 claws) and +5 melee (1d3-4, bite); Space/Reach 2 1/2 ft./2 1/2 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills & Feats: Balance +10, Climb +5, Hide +17, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse (bite), Weapon Finesse (claws).

Erek is the admiral of Minos' mighty air navy. Representing Death in The Four, Erek uses the vast floating naval armada aboard *Stormheart* to strike out against enemy targets and provide a means to weaken the opposition before the main engagement begins by Kosh's forces. Bereft of his wings as a result of a battle that had gone badly, Erek wears *wings of death*. These wings allow Erek to fly, but at a price. He may never remove them, nor does he always have complete control over them. They have been known to strike out of their own volition, sometimes killing their target.

Assets

Minos controls territories rich in minerals and uses them to negotiate favorable trade agreements. This in turn finances the immense costs needed to maintain such large and ever-demanding armies as those he presides over and fulfill the needs of the population that he protects. Because of his own experiences, Minos knows that the smallest child can make a critical difference. Therefore, he spends a great percentage of his trade resources to make sure everyone under his domain has their basic needs and requirements met. No one goes hungry, nor do they go without adequate shelter. In return for these provisions, all who live under Minos' protection must serve a minimum of two years service as a part of the military force that protects the lands and its peoples. Furthermore, they must swear an oath of allegiance to Minos with the promise to defend the settlement where they live if need be.

The vast majority of settlements lie within three days journey of the Sea of Tears and Minos' capital city. Small mining encampments and settlements are strung out

where rich mineral deposits exist. Additionally, periodic outposts and garrisons guard the main trade roads that go in and out of Minos' territory.

Allegiances

Minos is very careful about those he forms alliances with. All such alliances are founded upon trade agreements only and not promises of military aid and support. He currently has agreements with both Regan Severn and Varan Trinovant that allow free trade passage among all three of the warlords' territories and the promise that no acts of aggression shall be committed against him or his people by either warlord.

Ossian

Ossian originally lived in a small peaceful community in Wildwood near the border with both Penance and Arena. His home village had numbered roughly 350, and was composed of dovers and some elves. Ossian had been one of the leaders of this group, using his natural talent for diplomacy and his knowledge of the woods to help secure peace, and supply them with food. Then one day the forces of the warlord Hateni attacked, and life changed for this peaceful village.

Many resisted the attack, but the warlord had moved in several units of troops and was rapidly overtaking the nearby villages. They moved swiftly so that escapees did not have the time to reach the neighboring villages and raise the alarm. Ossian fought the invaders, but was ultimately beaten unconscious and nearly killed. When he awoke, he was locked away in a prison wagon, along with the two hundred surviving members of his village.

Hateni brought Ossian to nearby Arena where the captured villagers were taught the humility of slavery as well as the skills required to work the mines. The warlord had been keeping a new mine secret and put the new slaves to work there. For three years Ossian watched his fellow villagers die under the cruel yoke of their oppressor. He also would have died had he not struggled to keep his people together, hopeful, and motivated to escape. Whenever possible the remaining villagers, and those who had joined them, smuggled pick axes and other tools into the cells where they were kept. They dug a hole, buried the equipment, and then placed rugs over the pit to disguise them.

Eventually the day came when the guards began to work the slaves to death in order to squeeze the remaining gold out of the mine as quickly as possible. Many believed that the gold was running out, and there were rumors that the guards planned to kill surviving slaves that could not be worked to death rather than free them after the mine closed. Shortly after this new wave of brutality began, Ossian gave the order for the slaves to arm themselves and attack while the guards were gathering the slaves for their daily work. The guards were not expecting the sudden uprising and had barely enough time to organize a defense. After a full day of battles, Ossian's forces drove warlord Hateni's taskmasters from the mine. In doing so, they became the new owners of two tons of unprocessed gold ore.

Lords of the Land

Upon their escape from the mines, only one hundred of Ossian's fellow villagers remained alive. The surviving slaves who broke their bonds were a diverse group: people from neighboring villages, ordinary travelers who had been caught unprepared on the roads, and prisoners from warlord Hateni's many conquests. For a brief time Ossian entertained the notion of returning with his people to the village they had been forced to leave, but eventually took responsibility for the nearly 700 others he had led to freedom.

Processing their ore became the next struggle for the band. Processing facilities were few, far between, and always under control of the local warlord. Ossian had a force large enough to defend itself from small hostile forces, but lacked the numbers necessary to defend themselves against the full armies of the warlords, which usually numbered in the thousands. Ossian met with several warlords, each demanding more than half of the final amount of gold to process it for them. Two of them tracked him into the desert and tried to take the gold by force, but those efforts failed due to preparation and the tenacity of the people defending their property.

Ultimately it was decided that the group would deal with the gold themselves. They continued south, through the Wildwood, to a small oasis, just north of the vault. Along the way they hired experts with the knowledge to process the ore they had mined, promising to pay with a portion of the final load of the precious metal. A processing facility was built, and they soon were in possession of a sizable treasure.

Ossian tried to keep the news of his group's arrival to the area quiet for as long as possible, but the word of his defiance spread, drawing numerous wanderers, out-of-work prospectors, and soldiers who were unhappy with their current employment. Their numbers swelled over the next five years, as did the amount of treasure they were able to accumulate through mining the nearby region. News of this new warlord soon reached Hateni, who remembered Ossian's rebellions and decided to make it a personal crusade to ruin him.

Hatani contacted several other warlords, eventually establishing alliances with two others. He then ordered the armies to make the long trek southward, through the Wildwood, to Ossian. This time Ossian was warned well in advance and was ready for the invaders. Except for a

group of roughly 300, the inhabitants of the oasis were evacuated to a nearby area and the oasis was transformed into a death trap. The small group that remained behind served to make the oasis appear inhabited and unleash the traps on the invaders.

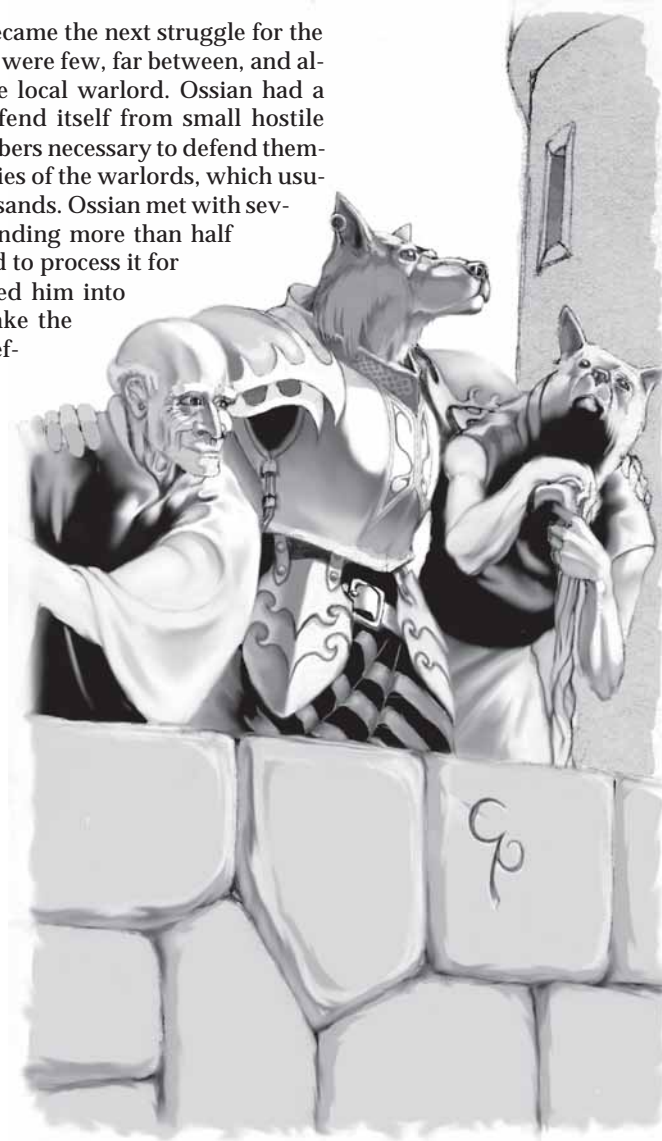
Hatani's forces had suffered numerous deaths due to the heat and lack of water while traveling south. Many more soldiers deserted during the long march, seeing little reason to travel all this way for what they perceived to be

little more than a vendetta. The trek through the Wildwood was equally dangerous, resulting in numerous casualties. Upon their arrival on the far side of the Wildwood, the troops were allowed to rest, and were further reinforced by Hateni's ally Lillidiel at the Bashat oasis. Though attrition had taken half their numbers, the force that finally arrived at Ossian's oasis was twice as large as Ossian's force. When they invaded the oasis however, their numbers plummeted quickly, forcing the few soldiers that remained to concentrate their attacks against Ossian's leadership.

During that battle, Ossian had those he had evacuated surround the oasis and attack the invaders from the outside. Hundreds of enemy soldiers fled, but the majority of them, demoralized and without leadership, simply agreed to surrender and switch their allegiance to Ossian. It was then that the good-natured dove made the decision that he was indeed a warlord, and it was his calling to not only lead those who would follow, but to create a just society

for them to live in.

Ossian marched south to the oasis of warlord Lillidiel, the nearest warlord who had aligned himself with Hateni, and took the warlord's forces by surprise. The defenders did not have nearly the time needed to prepare a proper defense. With the intelligence provided by the soldiers who had switched allegiances, Ossian's forces knew where and how to strike. Ossian's casualties were low and the defeat of Lillidiel was rapid and complete. By the end of the battle the warlord was dead, and all of the soldiers who wished to live another day were forced to join Ossian's ranks. Ossian then took control of Lillidiel's holding, and has held that territory ever since.



Padra

Aside from his standard forces, Ossian's technicians have developed new siege weapons crafted from strange plants that are found in the Wildwood called padra. Padra lob massive balls of molten lava against his opponents' forces. These plants have rock-like exteriors and a central core that is made from a biological form of steel. It derives its sustenance from the sun and the rock of the desert. As the rock is digested, it is heated to the point where it becomes magma. The waste is then ejected through a chute at the top of the plant.

When not being used for war, the engines produce small amounts of waste, which is ejected slowly and it safely cools a short distance away. During times of war, the plants' rock intake is increased to five times its usual diet, causing the massive discharges of magma. Enormous steel plugs that block the chutes regulate these explosions. Pressure builds and when the plugs are removed, magma erupts in the direction the plant is facing.

Padra have a range of 300 feet and function as any standard siege engine in terms of aiming and firing. The one drawback of the padra is that they tend to rupture either when damaged or if the plug is not removed in time. In such events, the area immediately surrounding padra is afflicted as if shot by their own siege engine.

Mass Combat: Ten padra make up one unit. They function and are aimed as catapults for all other purposes and have a movement rate of 50 feet.

Item	Cost	Damage	Critical Range	Increment	Crew
Padra	1,500 gp	10d6	X3	300 ft.	5

Since that time, there has been a steady trickle of people filtering into Ossian's camp. The dover has welcomed all who wish to join his cause, ordering housing built to accommodate everyone. All the while his prospectors have scouted the neighboring regions for mines, and so far three have been excavated, each of which have been operating in secrecy. Mine workers are hired for a fair wage, and none of them are forced into slavery.

Ossian's armies have been battling their way to the east, and he has conquered miles of the region that lies between the Vault and the Wildwood. The warlord Droghin Firefriend, who raids his caravans, and the Oasis of Lost Souls, which is inhabited by dinosaurs and other immense predators, has slowed Ossian's push east towards the Sea of Tears.

In addition to the conquest of Arena, Ossian sends large expeditions into the Wildwood. He knows that the Wildwood is made up of entire cultures that have been pulled into the Forge, and he seeks any undiscovered war technologies that might be lost in the ruins of the dead civilizations there. Recently, Firefriend has offered his people as guides into the vast lushness, though his reasons for doing so are unclear.

Eventually Ossian plans to march against Hateni, though that day is still far off. He knows that Hateni is plotting against him. He understands that if he does not act soon to counteract the threat of an attack, his followers will find themselves on the defensive, a position Ossian does not wish to be in.

Ossian, Male Dover Rng17: CR 17; Medium-size Humanoid (dover); HD 17d8+81; hp 183; Init +5; Spd 30 ft; AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 20; BAB +17, Grpl +20; Atk +21/+16/+11/+6 (1d8+6/19-20, +3 *longsword*) and +20/+15/+10 (1d6+5 plus 1d6 cold/19-20, +2 *frost short sword*), or +18/+13/+8/+3 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow), or +20 melee (1d6+1, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Favored en-

emy (monstrous humanoid, humanoid [reptilian], aberration, magical beast), spells; SQ Camouflage, evasion, hide in plain sight, scent, swift tracker, wild empathy, woodland stride; AL CG; SV Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 15.

Languages: Common, dover.

Skills & Feats: Climb +8, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +14, Heal +15, Hide +16, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +19, Move Silently +21, Profession (miner) +15, Spot +25, Survival +20; Blind-Fight, Cleave, Dodge, Endurance, Great Cleave, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Leadership, Power Attack, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Gifts: Inspiring, Persuasive (earned).

Possessions: +3 *chain shirt*, +3 *longsword*, +2 *frost short sword*, longbow, quiver with 60 arrows, *gloves of arrow snaring*, *ring of sustenance*, *ring of protection* +3.

Ranger Spells Prepared: (4/3/3/2; base save DC = 15 + spell level): 1st—*alarm*, *animal messenger*, *longstrider*, *read magic*; 2nd—*cat's grace*, *cure light wounds*, *remove disease*; 3rd—*command plants*, *greater magic fang*, *neutralize poison*; 4th—*commune with nature*, *nondetection*.

Bashat Oasis

Ossian inhabits the Bashat Oasis, which is located in southern Arena, just north of the Vault. Despite its proximity to the Vault, the Bashat Oasis is actually slightly lower than sea level, and is quite warm. Ossian makes his home in a keep on the south side of the oasis. Spaced out around the large body of water are the three cities. Each is loyal to Ossian, though their own overseer rules them. Each of the cities maintains a large lighthouse, which are used to flash messages across the oasis.

Lords of the Land

Many warlords in Arena take very little interest in the well-being of their people, offering just enough necessities for them to survive, leaving them to scramble for food rather than arranging reliable supply lines. Ossian is not one of those warlords. He oversees three nearby towns: Ialtus, Manari, and Destari, the populace of which are fairly taxed, and in turn are provided with protection, access to government buildings, and traveling merchants.

Ialtus

Population: 8,560.

Warlord: Ossian.

Overseer: Cimidil (Male Dover, LG, Rng13).

Major Industries: Crafts, desert caravans, smithing.

Overview: Built on the north side of the oasis, this small city is directly overseen by Cimidil, a dover who had once been a native of the Wildwood. This city has existed for several hundred years, its size waxing and waning over time with the changes in the quality of its leadership. Before Ossian's rule, the city had been on a slow decline due to the careless leadership of Lillidiel, who forcibly recruited as many able-bodied people as were readily available into his army, and then marched them off into poorly planned campaigns. Losses typically were high, though many soldiers were reluctant to leave because of the otherwise comfortable living at the oasis. Ossian conscripts far fewer of the inhabitants, and has been largely successful in planning his battles to ensure the return of greater numbers of soldiers.

The city is walled and at the center is an enormous bazaar with an ornately crafted clock tower called the Adunti. The clock chimes hourly, loud enough that the sound carries to the neighboring cities. The clock tower's origins are shrouded in mystery and no one is known to have entered this structure for the past two hundred years. Several wards protect the interior, though it is believed that a gateway to the other domains of the Forge lies at the center..

Manari

Population: 20,850.

Warlord: Ossian.

Overseer: Daliara (Female Human, NG, Wiz12).

Major Industries: Mining, agriculture.

Overview: Manari and Destari are said to be twin cities; both had a population near 4,000 before the arrival of Ossian. The size of this city swelled as new mines were discovered and opened. Other new arrivals found work producing food from crops and domesticated animals. Daliara is a female human who has been one of Ossian's long-time supporters. Daliara is a female human who has been a long-time supporter of Ossian.

The people of Manari are hard working folk who have a reputation for keeping the local breweries in business. Because of its distinction as the largest city for many miles, a healthy underworld has recently evolved here. Two competing thieves guilds have cropped up, as have several smaller street gangs. The eastern side of the city is what's left of the original settlement, and its inhabitants are sectioned off.

Destari

Population: 7,280

Warlord: Ossian

Overseer: Vensar (Male Human, LG, Pal14)

Major Industries: Art, water trade

Overview: The smaller of the twin cities, Destari is built on a hill that overlooks the oasis and the surrounding territory. It plays a key role as lookout for the oasis. Vensar is the overseer of this town, and demands its citizens to be orderly and courteous. This city has always been a home for artists, philosophers, and poets. They welcome settlers, though many people who have spent their entire lives at work have a difficult time relating to the carefree attitude of this city. Even before the reign of Ossian, the people here cared less about the politics of the area, and did the bare minimum necessary to appease the warlord of the time, thereby keeping themselves from the gallows. This is not a city known for its soldiers, but a large amount of war propaganda has been created by the minds at work here.

Though its hillsides are steep, it is by far the most scenic of the three cities. A plaza at the top of the hill is the city's most renowned scenic area, with well-pruned trees and a marble fountain that is at the head of a stream which trickles down into the oasis below. The city is protected behind a 20 ft. high wall that encircles its base. The buildings of the city are made of adobe and incorporate pillars and enormous arches into the structure.

Forces

Ossian's standing army numbers 6,000 with another 3,000 in reserve. Its components are equally divided, though the bulk is in infantry. This army also maintains ten catapults, 50 ballistae, and 10 padra, each easily broken down for swift transport. Since he is relatively landlocked, Ossian maintains only two warships that patrol his sizable oasis. Should his ships be called on by one of his allies, they are capable of navigating the narrow channel of water to the nearby river though this possibility has not yet been called upon.

Assets

Ossian's assets include the keep he inhabits at the southern end of his oasis. Highly protected by his most senior guards are 1.5 million gp in gold bars and gems. He also possesses rich iron, copper, and gold deposits and one of the few slade mines in the region. However, his greatest asset is the loyalty of his people, who view him as a cooling shade from the relentless suns. Revered and respected, Ossian is confronted with less treachery than most warlords of Arena..

Alliances

Ossian is allied with Trinovant and Minos Spar. Although he has not yet called upon them in a time of crisis, he maintains these alliances in case a force he is not equipped to deal with threatens his oasis. Because these alliances

are untested, Ossian's enemies debate whether or not they would actually come to his aid should he be attacked by their combined forces.

In times of peace, the alliances with Trinovant and Minos Spar translate to a peaceful sharing of resources and magic lore. Ossian frequently entertains envoys sent from both warlords, and occasionally the warlords themselves. Likewise, Ossian frequently sends his own envoys to their oases to ensure that their diplomatic bonds remain strong. The one unfortunate truth Ossian has come to recognize is that his allies have much larger armies than his own, and they have a much larger local population to support. This has made him acutely aware of the fact that he is an ally of lesser stature, and his problems may be disregarded if it is not convenient for them to send reinforcements.

Hateni

Before being pulled into the Forge along with the bulk of his army, Hateni had been a human pharaoh of a wealthy desert empire. Hateni's army was about to enter battle against a group trying to win freedom against his fearful rule when his army was pulled into the Forge. Barbello did not give Hateni or his army any choice about entering the Forge, but instead brought them to a battle that was already raging between two enemy forces. Hateni's arrival unbalanced the original combat, and the pharaoh's forces not only emerged victorious, but the two warlords who had been warring were both killed in the battle.

Hateni absorbed the remains of both armies as well as all the people that lived under the rule of the defeated warlords. He chose the larger of the two holdings to live, and declared himself the pharaoh over these lands. He immediately demanded that his people worship him as the god-emperor.

Initially Hateni was focused on returning to his own world with his army. While this was not an impossible goal, the enhanced senses caused by the god's magic in the Forge led to a manic sense of power that he had never been able to feel on his own world. His troops also quickly became enchanted with this place and it was decided that the spoils of the Forge outstripped what they could hope for at home.

Convinced of his own godhood, Hateni decided that Arena would be his. In a few short years he conducted successful campaigns against Minos Spar and Varan Trinovant, taking territory and wealth, and earning him powerful enemies in the process. Hateni's forces then began raiding nearby Penance and Wildwood to capture slaves to work his mines. Shortly thereafter, the warlords he had made war on briefly banded together and dealt his army a terrible defeat. Not only was their original territory reclaimed, but also Hateni's original holdings were noticeably reduced. Several of the mines he had been working were taken over by the enemy warlords, leaving him with just enough resources to keep his remaining territory from collapsing under its own weight.

The next setback to Hateni came when a slave revolt in one of his mines gave rise to the warlord Ossian. The dove escaped the mine with hundreds of slaves and a very large shipment of unprocessed gold ore. During this

time, Hateni was continually frustrated by his inability to locate the escapees or move his forces to their location fast enough to engage them when he could determine their whereabouts.

Hateni formed an alliance with the warlords Lillidiel and Gahazerra, then finally managed to track down Ossian's group at their oasis. By that time the new warlord's forces had grown considerably, and the gold ore had been processed. Hateni had planned a massive sneak attack on Ossian's oasis far to the south, but attraction took its toll on his army as it marched. Ossian's forces learned of the impending attack ahead of time and laid a trap for invaders. The losses were heavy, and still Ossian had successfully defied the god-emperor. This loss was soon made worse when Ossian's forces marched on Hateni's ally Lillidiel, assaulted his base of power, killed the warlord, and assumed control of his oasis.

Shortly thereafter, the warlord Gahazerra realized that Hateni was vulnerable and broke their alliance in an effort to take Hateni's territory and gold. Gahazerra's forces, while still encamped with Hateni's forces, were ordered to turn on their allies and not only neutralize them as a fighting force, but track down Hateni and kill him. Hateni intercepted the orders before they could reach Gahazerra's troops. In response he sent an assassin to kill Gahazerra. The assassin completed her grim task with deadly efficiency and Hateni simply assumed control of his former ally's forces. When this occurred, Hateni regained some of the power that had been stripped from him after the failure of the alliance.

The god-emperor of the Tutahut Oasis has slowly been building his forces once again. Though he remains intoxicated by the Forge, Hateni understands that his initial successes here were largely due to luck, and his recent failures have served to teach him valuable lessons about overconfidence in this chaotic land.

One of Hateni's goals, thus far unfulfilled, is to topple Ossian's power. Despite the distance that now lies between them, Hateni will not forget the audacity of the slave who rose up against him and marched out with more than a month's mining worth of gold ore. While his military campaign against Ossian ended in failure, he continues to send agents whose job is to look for weaknesses that can be exploited in the upstart warlord's forces.

Hateni is a cruel despotic leader that rules through fear. In the world of his youth, he was raised by the ruling faction and was taught that pharaohs are gods, and when they die, they lord over all of the other souls that have died under their reign. While Hateni has always believed this to be true, he also believes that the reality of the situation is that if any leader grants too much freedom to their subjects or does not force them to fear him, they will rise up and usurp his leadership.

Hateni's conviction of his superiority over his subjects, as well as his innate fear of them have been the two most important factors that have guided him during his cruel leadership. He allows very few individuals close to him, and of those, he rewards some who serve him well and kills all who disappoint him. He never walks out among his people, but polices them with his troops and issues statements through his war advisors. The only time he is with his subjects is on the rare occasions that he accompanies his army into battle.

Lords of the Land

Hateni tolerates no degree of lawlessness among his people. The law is simple and brutal. Anyone caught stealing loses a hand. Anyone foolish enough to be caught speaking heresy or treason is publicly mutilated and then killed. Sex crimes are punishable by death at the hands of the victim. While many believe that murder should bring an immediate death sentence, Hateni instead conscripts murderers into his armies and places them on the front lines, and then he keeps track of their progress. If they survive their first few battles and show an aptitude for fighting or military planning, he often promotes them, thereby ensuring their loyalty. He then gives them the opportunity to serve him by keeping others in his army from rising up against him.

Among the few people allowed close to Hateni are his five generals, his three wives, and the household servants that he has kept for years. In addition to those in his inner circle, Hateni is protected by a group of elite fighters whose loyalty is paid for with large sums of gold.

Over time, some of the generals have displeased Hateni, incurring his wrath. After the campaign in which he lost territory back to Minos Spar and Varan Trinovant, Hateni punished the generals by dipping them feet first into vats of acid, painfully claiming their lives. The generals in Hateni's service would honestly not choose to serve him, had they a choice, but they know that if they were to leave, they would be tracked down and killed.

Hateni, Male Human Ftr5/Ravenger13: CR 18; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 5d10+13d8+54; HP 169; Init +5; Spd 30 ft; AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; BAB +15, Grpl +19; Atk +23/+17/+13 melee (1d8+8/19-20x3, +4 *longsword*) or +18/+13/+8 (1d8+2/x3, +2 *longbow*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Fire ray, firelace, gyre of stone, improved firelace, improved elemental attack, improved gyre of stone, magma bolt, storm, stone rain, transmute rock to magma; SQ Channeling, improved stone armor, one with the earth, sand wall, stone armor; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Languages: Common, Asherake, Lunar, Orc.

Skills & Feats: Climb +14, Concentration +13, Intimidate +21, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +7, Ride +9, Spot +13, Use Magic Device +17; Cleave, Endurance, Evolve, Improved Initiative, Great Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ride-by Attack, Spirited Charge.

Gifts: Determined, Kinship with Stone (earned). **Possessions:** +4 *breastplate*, +4 *longsword*, +2 *longbow*, quiver with 40 arrows, *horn of blasting*, *amulet of proof against detection and location*.

Penakhimen

Population: 200,450.

Warlord: Hateni.

Overseer: Enheb (Male Human, NE, Clr14).

Major Industries: Mining, construction, museums.

Overview: Hateni's base of power is the city of Penakhimen. This ancient city may be as old as Penance, though it is just a fraction the size. Like Penance, the city is layered. Existing portions of the city are built overtop older buildings that have either fallen to disrepair or sim-

ply outlived their usefulness and have then been built over. Many times those older buildings are incorporated into the bases of new buildings, creating a mish-mash of styles. Unlike Penance however, Penakhimen does not have the same problem with buildings sinking.

The height of Penakhimen is roughly 500 feet higher than the territory surrounding the city. The outer edges have been reinforced and built into great walls to ward off invaders. Over the millennia, these walls have repelled countless armies, protecting its citizens from attack and subjugation.

At the center of the city is the Penakhimen Oasis. As the city has increased in altitude through the ages, the water level has also risen to match it. Where lush trees, grasses, and wildlife surround most oases of Arena, brick and mortar surround the Penakhimen Oasis.

There are patches of greenery throughout the city where entire areas devoid of people have been cleared away to make room for gardens. Flora from throughout Penance and the Wildwood have been brought to Penakhimen and transplanted in the gardens here, making it one of the wonders of the Forge. Because it is far more efficient to feed a city with plants as opposed to animals, the majority of the people of Penakhimen are vegetarians. The most notable exception to this is the standing army, which have a diet of the meat of the gorak and carerla lizards, which are raised outside of the city. They also eat other desert animals, which must be hunted. Meats are three times the normal price when bought within the city, and the consumption of animal meat is viewed as taboo, much to the consternation of many visitors that come to this city.

Throughout the ages, Penakhimen has been a city of high art, culture, and relative peace. Leaders were elected to their positions by the population, and most people strove to acquire wealth and pursue their dreams and desires. This would vary depending on the leadership and outside threats, but it was rare for politics to be a major concern. This changed when Hateni assumed power.

Preceding the takeover of the city, arch-prelate Nubeni had taken an interest in the hostile occupation of a vast network of formerly independent mines. After several diplomatic attempts to remove the invaders, Nubeni committed the city's lightly trained army to the task of removing the invaders. As the battle ensued, Hateni's forces, which were superior to both of the combating forces, were pulled to the Forge. After the victory, Hateni learned of Penakhimen and quickly assumed control.

Under Hateni's control, the arts have suffered greatly, and a portion of the Egyptian pantheon was adopted. Hateni has forced the religion in his own name upon his people, placing himself as the vital link between them and Set. Monuments to a diverse set of preexisting gods have either been destroyed or reshaped in his name. All but the oldest and most valuable religious artifacts from before his arrival have been destroyed, and those that do still exist have been taken from public view and hoarded in a secret chamber beneath Hateni's palace.

Under Hateni's rule, the people of Penakhimen have suffered. Shortly after seizing control of the city there were uprisings as people protested being conquered and subjected to his rule. Publicly torturing and killing several of their number quickly put down these uprisings. During

the first year of his rule, Hateni was responsible for the deaths of 5,000 citizens of Penakhimen. Since then, anyone who has been suspected of conspiring against him have either been jailed indefinitely or taken during the night and killed.

The people of Penakhimen now fear to rise up against Hateni. Any plotting against him is done with the utmost care and secrecy to avoid discovery. Over the years there have been several attempts on Hateni's life, though all have met with disaster, earning Hateni another title among the people: Unkillable.

FORCES

Due to the constant warfare, Hateni's forces are battle hardened and ready. The attrition of normal warfare has left only the most capable soldiers in his army. Currently, Hateni commands more than 9,000 troops, nearly half of them infantry. The remaining units are equally divided amongst arcane, divine, cavalry, and archery. His cavalry units are especially potent, having survived their initial pull into Arena and the subsequent battles.

ASSETS

While Hateni possesses a vast wealth in gold and gems, his true asset is the city of Penakhimen. The taxes levied on the populace and merchants easily outstrip the production of all his mines combined. This is significant, considering the sheer amount of wealth generated by the mines. Hateni controls rich deposits of gold, diamonds, emeralds, and a rare type of ruby that glows as if aflame.

ALLIANCES

Shortly after his rise to power, Hateni had been aligned with a number of warlords. During his campaigns of conquest, Hateni betrayed the majority of his alliances, which led to his near defeat. Currently Hateni has an alliance with Nish'ric Bloodtooth, though the faust is notorious for betraying confidences as well. Hateni is now seeking to build alliances with the younger, less powerful warlords in an effort to re-launch his bid for conquest.

Varan Trinovant

The warlord known as Varan Trinovant began life as the simple and seemingly doomed Var'yan Clodgrubber. Var'yan, whose name literally means "weakling whelp" was nothing more than the youngest and smallest offspring among a large and riotous brood of goblins that wandered the plains to the far west of Penance. The Clodgrubbers were a rustic lot, who seemed content to merely wander the vast plains, prey on the hapless and those few souls weaker than they and make do as they were able. All of this ended, however, when one day they were set upon by a large contingent of hovara from Cage; the Clodgrubbers that were not easily slain in the attack were quickly captured and taken back to fill the endless hive-like cells beneath the iron-walled city—Var'yan among them.

Var'yan, like all slaves in Cage, was instantly subjected to intense and rigorous psychological testing (some folk call it torture, but the hovara view it differently) and was deemed only fit to be a house slave because of his tiny stature and his below average physical aptitude. The thing that the hovara failed to discover, simply because they had no thought to look, was that the small goblin known as Var'yan Clodgrubber held the potential to be, quite possibly, one of the most intelligent beings on the face of the Forge. Despite this, Var'yan (who at this point had no inkling of his potential either) was merely happy to be alive and went about his assigned duties as best he could, in the service of one of the most influential hovara nobles of Cage, Nulyyk Trinovant.

Many things happened during his tenure with clan Trinovant, most notably his meeting with the mysterious thorn prophet-slave, Phocis, who was gifted with the ability to see others' futures. Through this chance meeting, Var'yan learned that the days ahead held much more for him than the mere life of a slave and in truth, the young's goblin potential became to be realized. In the span of two short years, not only had Var'yan begun to evolve, following the path along the Focus of the Mind, but had also performed a feat unheard of before or since. Var'yan—who took on the name Varan, which in his native tongue means "set apart-one"—through an ingenious scheme, overthrew the hovara Nulyyk and became the ruler of clan Trinovant.

Once firmly ensconced within Cage, Varan subsequently vanished into the plains surrounding Penance. While none know for certain, it is thought that Varan spent this time wandering the whole of Forge, learning ancient and obscure knowledge, gathering powerful items and experiences as well as amassing an impressive store of wealth. When he emerged from the wilds a near decade later, he was primed to become the warlord that would one day rule from a crystalline citadel soaring above the Sea of Tears.

Despite his power and might, Varan is a sad and lonely creature. It was this loneliness, a deep and profound sense of loss for his clanmates now long since dust, which originally drove him into the role of enchanter. To this day he surrounds himself with an entire empire of adoring allies and servants. None of them, however, can be called friends—so his feelings of loneliness grow more intense. It is this same loneliness that first drew Varan to make contact with a group of ancient, alien, and powerful beings, who now seem more like family to him than any creature upon the face of the Forge.

Varan appears, at first glance to be a relatively ordinary, if small, goblin. It is only under close observation that he appears as something far removed from ordinary goblin-kind. The changes he has undergone in pursuit of his chosen evolutionary paths have transformed him into a creature that is as far removed from his goblin birth as his ettercap follower, Skein.

Varan's ashen-colored skin has a thin and slimy pall to it, which shines like oil in torchlight. His sparse, spiderweb-like hair is scattered all about his bulbous head in clumps, always appearing wet and oily. The enchanter warlord's eyes are massive, bulging, and seem to be thrust too far forward in his skull. Indeed, Varan's large, pale-white and nearly luminous eyes are each mounted upon



three-foot long, purplish stalks that he can control with as much ease and skill as he would his arms or hands. Varan's ears are a good deal larger than those of most goblins, both in length and width, and sprout out from the sides of his head almost like two large horns. These ears are supple and sport tiny, sapphire-colored tufts of hair at the tip of each. His nose and mouth are normal in size (for a small goblin, of course) and his entire visage displays far too many wrinkles for a creature of his age, an unfortunate and unavoidable side effect of the dark arts in which he dabbles. On the right side of Varan's neck is an oddly organic-looking tattoo. Varan often tentatively caresses this tattoo when he is lost in thought.

Varan always wears his beloved *robe of many mouths*. The robe is rumored to be a living gibbering mouther that has a symbiotic relationship with the goblin enchanter. The robe, which is always tightly closed at the neck with a large brooch depicting a water naga devouring its tail and bound with a belt crafted from grick tentacles, is disturbing to behold, as its dark russet folds continually reveal emerging eyes, fanged maws and glimpses of screaming faces. Only Varan's slender and strangely webbed feet and hands are visible when he wears the cloak. The coloration of both his feet and hands darken from ashen to a rich purple-blue color at the tips of the fingers and toes. Varan's feet, which are said to never touch the ground, are typically seen folded under him as he floats about. His toenails are long, yellowed and serrated, spiraling down nearly to the floor. Lavish bracelets, rings, anklets, necklaces, earrings, nose rings, and piercing of all kinds, bizarre and mundane, adorn nearly every inch of Varan that is not covered by his unusual robe.

Varan's homunculus, S'gerd, is never far from its master, flitting about on its leathery, purple-vein streaked wings or resting on its master's shoulder. S'gerd bears a striking resemblance to a miniature umber hulk, with large wings budding from its horned carapace and a pair of feathery antennae reminiscent of a rust monster.

Physically weak, Varan never enters into actual melee, relying instead on his formidable repertoire of magic and his many layers of defense. This nearly impenetrable defensive shield derives from a series of well-laid magical protections, the forewarning eyes and ears of his charmed and enchanted followers, and the excellent forethought and tactical planning on the part of Varan himself.

Varan Trinovant, Male Goblin Enc20: CR 20; Small Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 20d4+20; hp 80; Init +4; Spd 30 ft, swim 100 ft.; AC 31, touch 14, flat-footed 27; BAB +10, Grpl +7; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d2-3, unarmed); SA Spell-like abilities, spells; SQ Darkvision 60 ft, DR 5/+5, immunities (charm, sleep, death from massive damage, paralysis, stunning effects, critical hits, subdual damage), low-light vision, waterbreathing, summon familiar; Space/Reach 5 ft./10 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +20; Str 5, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 34, Wis 25, Cha 10.

Languages: Abyssal, Aquan, Asherake, Celestial, Common, Dover, Draconic, Dwarf, Goblin, Giant, Infernal, Lunar, Orc, Undercommon.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Bluff +23, Concentration +23, Craft (alchemy) +22, Disable Device +4, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +8, Forgery +17, Hide +23, Knowledge

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(arcana) +23, Knowledge (geography) +23, Knowledge (religion) +23, Knowledge (nature) +23, Knowledge (warfare) +23, Listen +23, Move Silently +23*, Search +23, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +23, Spot +23, Swim +23, Tumble +10; Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Evolve, Forge Ring, Leadership, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (*charm person, suggestion, summon monster III, fly, levitate, charm monster, dimension door, improved invisibility, dominate person, disintegrate, supplanted suggestion, mass charm*).

Prestige Races: Focus of the Mind (*Centered*): immune to charm effects, gain a +4 insight bonus to all saving throws against fear and compulsion effects, and gain a +4 insight bonus on Concentration checks; *Enterprising*: Int score increased by 2 and gain a +4 competence bonus to all Knowledge checks; *Enlightened*: Wis increased by 2, and gain a +4 competence bonus to all Sense Motive checks); Focus of Odd (*Quaint*: gain +2 racial bonus to Appraise, Decipher Script, Intuit Direction, Listen, Read Lips, Search, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, and Spot, also can cast *see invisibility* 3/day as if by a 4th-level spellcaster; *Bizarre*: gain the ability to have any one die roll re-rolled once a day for every three levels but must take the second die, gain the capability to cast *misdirection* 3/day as if by a 5th-level spellcaster; *Preternatural*: gain the capacity to select either die that is rerolled, gain the ability to cast the following spell-like powers 1/day as if by a 9th-level spellcaster: *confusion, feblemind* and *mind fog*); Focus of the Wave: (*Sodden*: gain low-light vision and a +4 competence bonus to all Escape Artist and Swim checks, any grappling opponent suffers a -4 to all related rolls, swim speed of 50; *Saturated*: no longer subject to critical hits or subdual damage, no longer requires solid food but must consume twice the daily amount of fluid, gain ability of *waterbreathing*; *Watery*: gain a racial bonus of +4 to Balance, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Hide, and Tumble checks, +5 reach, and able to enter places normally not possible, immunity to paralysis and stunning; *Torrential*: gain swim speed of 100, immunity to sleep and death from massive damage, ability to control its shape in any way, ability to increase its volume at will a number of times equal to one half its level).

Gifts: Ethereal Sight (earned), Mesmerizing (earned), Mind Reading (earned), Greater Wild Talent: *levitation* (earned).

Spell-like Abilities: *See invisibility* 3/day as a 4th-level spellcaster, *misdirection* 3/day as a 5th-level spellcaster, and *confusion, feblemind*, and *mind fog* 1/day as a 9th-level spellcaster.

Possessions: *evolved major armor sycophant, anklets of spell turning, bracelet of friends, brood broach (water naga), grick belt, ring of wizardry IV, ring of shooting stars, shirt of safety and sustenance, writhing tattoo (plane shift, heal, iron body)*.

Wizard Spells Prepared: (4/8/8/8/16/7/7/7/7/6; base save DC = 22 + spell level; spells marked * are enchantment spells): 0—*daze**, *resistance, detect magic, mending*; 1st—*charm person**, *endure elements, hold portal, hypnotism**, *magic missile, shield, sleep**, *spider climb*; 2nd—*acid arrow, blur, flaming sphere, hideous laughter**, *mirror image, resist elements, summon monster II, web*; 3rd—*flame arrow, fly, haste hold person**, *lightning bolt, magic circle against evil, suggestion**, *summon monster III*; 4th—*black tentacles, charm*

monster, confusion*, dimensional anchor, dimension door, emotion*, ice storm, improved invisibility, lesser geas*, looking glass, polymorph other, resilient sphere, shadow conjuration, summon monster IV, touch of the ceptu, wall of ice*; 5th—*cone of cold, dominate person*, feblemind*, hold monster*, mind fog*, sending, supplanted suggestion*; 6th—*acid fog, chain lightning, disintegrate, geas/quest*, greater dispelling, mass suggestion*, repulsion*; 7th—*insanity*, plane shift, prismatic spray, sequester, shadow walk, summon monster VII, teleport without error*; 8th—*antipathy*, binding*, demand*, etherealness, irresistible dance*, mass charm*, sympathy**; 9th—*dominate monster*, meteor swarm, prismatic sphere, summon monster IX, weird, wish*.

Sanctum

Population: 37,153.

Warlord: Varan Trinovant.

Overseer: Tibit (Female Kobold, LN, Wiz10).

Major Industry: Books, crafts, knowledge magic.

Overview: Varan's command citadel, a breathtaking and awe-inspiring floating crystalline tower known as the Seer's Spire, can usually be found hovering over the middle of the southeastern body of water that comprises one of the three points of the triangular-shaped Sea of Tears. The Seer's Spire is a highly mobile and magical citadel and from time to time, it vanishes from its usual spot on the horizon of Arena, only to reappear at an unsuspected place and time. No one, other than those within the citadel, truly knows what happens to the Seer's Spire during these disappearances and those from within the mystic tower certainly are not talking, in fear of being overheard by the thousand ears of the Enchanter.

Varan also rules from his massive palace on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Tears known as the Sanctum, located in the oasis of the same name. This sprawling stronghold was once an ancient temple dedicated to an ancient god of war whose name has been lost to time. Varan uncovered this tremendous fortress-temple and transformed it into a bustling hive of activity, but left it mostly covered by the tangled growth of the jungle. It is from here that the administration of the holding is efficiently conducted.

The Enchanter Warlord's rich and plentiful holdings within the domain of Arena are as scattered and sundered as are his followers. This aids the goblin warlord greatly in that he has no single vital area that can be struck and overrun. The brilliant warlord rarely forgets his holdings and personally reviews their management, even to the point of conducting random inspections from time to time. All petty nobles that serve under his banner live in constant fear the Seer's Spire appearing above their land. Varan has little mercy for those that do not follow his designs.

Varan's symbol is typically and officially shown as a great, lidless eye, the pupil of which is formed by a curling tentacle. Occasionally, the symbol is seen with an additional aspect, stylized waves lapping around the periphery of the spherical eye. Precisely what this symbol means remains a mystery to all but the warlord. Equally mysterious is that while he requires that all his charges bear the symbol in at least one form or another, he himself has never been spotted bearing his own mark.

FORCES

Compared to the other major warlords of Arena, Varan simply does not command a large enough standing army to claim the position of prominence that he holds. However, it is not in the number of combat-ready soldiers that Varan's strength lies; it is instead in the number of potential forces that he can bring to bear in a moment's notice. The Enchanter Warlord has an untold number of warriors awaiting his call, even if the warriors themselves do not know it—this amazing feat is achieved through Varan's powerful enchantments and a veritable army of skilled lesser enchanters, all of whom are carefully trained under his supervision.

So widespread and potent is his influence that simply triggering a single spell on the Warlord's part has changed the outcomes of entire battles. At the sound of a war horn or at the unfurling of a banner, entire divisions of an opposing warlord's force have turned traitor, screaming their previously unrealized allegiance to the Enchanter Warlord. Varan achieves this through a saturation campaign by his enchanter-spies, the *D'wemas*, who travel the length and breadth of Arena, charming their chosen targets with spells that can be triggered many days—or years—later. This way, beings who might never lay eyes upon the Seer's Spire or Varan himself, might one day remember a deeper, stronger commitment to a Warlord they do not even recall meeting. Other warlords greatly fear and despise these invisible forces, for they have proven undetectable by any means and are far more effective than conventional spies or turncoats once in place.

To supplement these forces, Varan has also inspired a fanatical following amongst misfits and outcasts of all kinds. Varan offers home and hearth to these castoffs of society, and his generosity is well known and thought of as a gleaming hope to folk from all over the Forge, particularly the dejected and homeless of Penance. Varan takes a special and focused interest in these individuals, often making public appearances among their gathered throngs, rousing even greater sentiments of fervor and undying devotion. To them, Varan promises and delivers a basically free and ordered existence, as long as they are willing to answer the call of his military at a moment's notice. After their former lives of harsh and uncaring treatment, many of them are more than willing to do so; those that are not so willing are usually the recipients of a visit from the *D'wemas*.

The bulk of Varan's rank-and-file is drawn from this last segment of exiles. However, summoned and charmed outsiders, aberrations and less exotic creatures supplement these numbers. While these horrific battalions, known colloquially as renders (or render squads), are devastating and fear-inspiring on a battlefield, high-level battle mages equipped with powerful dispel magic abilities can wreak havoc amongst them. Even prior to the effects of a massive dispel, however, native members of a render squad often continue to rain destruction and death, but do so upon foe and friend alike.

ASSETS

While Varan's assets are vast and rich, the lion's share of the wealth goes to maintaining the well-oiled adminis-

trative machine that the mastermind Varan has crafted over the years. Maintaining supplies and magical items for an entire army of powerful enchanters is also highly expensive, as is sustaining all of the various secret pacts and contracts that the Enchanter has forged over the years. A great deal of the riches Varan's forces pulls from the bedrock goes to fund his personal research into new, more powerful spells and into his ever-inquisitive and growing interest in the forces from *beyond*.

ALLEGIANCES

On the surface, Varan seems opposed and vastly indifferent to offers of alliances of any kind. In fact, he held out the longest in the negotiations prior to the trade and non-aggression treaty between himself, Minos Spar and Regan Severn that governs their lands around and beyond the Sea of Tears. Secretly, Varan is using his skill and craft as an enchanter to slowly form a pact with the necromancers of the Vault in order to gain access to their massive stores of necromantic lore and their stockpiles of magical devices. As an enchanter, Varan is barred from the school of necromancy, and surreptitiously feels vulnerable as a result. Through a bond with the Vault, Varan hopes to fill this gaping void.

Because of his deep-seated fascination with the sea, its creatures and peoples, and the alien, primeval forces from beyond which he venerates, Varan has long held treaties and fostered close relations with the major undersea races. In fact, though it is known to only a few, the Seer's Spire is actually a sentient marine creature that was a gift to Varan from a group of powerful rogue ceptu pions. The creation was the price for Varan's support in the ceptus' sinister and secret plots to overthrow the Ceptu Nation of the Northern Ocean.

In truth, there are few major bodies of water in which Varan does not have allies. It is Varan's hope is that when he is finally able to pounce upon the prize that is Arena; his surprise attacks will come from the one source that few warlords think to tap—the oceans. Varan recently has begun encountering some unusual resistance from the depths of the Sea of Tears. He hasn't identified the source of this resistance, despite his earnest attempts to root it out. This vexes the Enchanter, and he has sent his most trusted advisors beneath the surface of the Sea of Tears to investigate. Varan knows that while he is truly mighty, he is not yet ready to face Barbello, at least not quite yet.

Still the ruler of the hovara clan Trinovant, Varan has long-time ties to the city of Cage, but his influence there is despised. He still travels there at least once a month, in order to make sure all affairs are in order and that things are proceeding as he intends them. The hovara, who strain beneath Varan's rule continually, plots against him and has crafted elaborate schemes with opposing warlords. Somehow the crafty and gifted goblin manages to foil their plans time and again.

Aryis, Lord of the Wind

Few warlords own the sky like the vogel lord Aryis. An avian species, the vogel are territorial, and Aryis exemplifies this to an extreme. He feels that all of the lands and the skies above them that he claims belong only to

him and the vogel and no one else, including the underwater ceptu. Anyone crossing into Aryis' territory had better have the necessary tribute or hold a letter of passage lest they be run out of his territory—by force, if necessary.

Aryis has an unpredictable nature that makes him a dangerous adversary and, at times, an even more dangerous ally. His chaotic tendencies are often reflected in his moods. When he is calm, he is calculating and carefully weighs matters before acting upon them. However, once angered, he focuses upon the source of that anger with his entire wrath.

Born on the Forge, Aryis grew quickly and learned that only the strongest survive for long in this war-torn region. Seeing his people abused and maligned by the other warlords, Aryis sought to establish a refuge for his kind. He uses his fighting skills and clerical devotion towards these ends and has successfully secured an area that draws vogels from all other regions to make their homes here.

Aryis, Male Vogel Clr6/Ftr12: CR 18; Small humanoid (avian); HD 6d8+12d10+54; hp 180; Init +8; Spd 40 ft., fly 120 ft. (average); AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17; BAB +16, Grpl +15; Atk +20/+20/+15/+11/+6 melee (1d8+8, +3 *ghost touch mire skewering trident*), or +20/+20/+15/+11/+6 ranged (1d8+5, +3 *ghost touch mire skewering trident*), or +19/+19/+14/+10/+5 ranged (entangle, +3 *seeking distance returning net*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, turn/rebuke undead; SQ Spontaneous casting; AL CN; SV Fort +16, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Languages: Ceptu, Common, Vogel.

Skills & Feats: Balance +6, Bluff +8, Climb +8, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Heal +6, Hide +7, Jump +6, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +4, Spellcraft +6, Survival +5, Swim +6, Tumble +6; Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (net), Far Shot, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (net), Improved Critical (trident), Improved Initiative, Leadership, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Shield Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Track, Weapon Focus (trident), Weapon Specialization (trident).

Prestige Races: Focus of the Body (*Immunized:* +2 to Con, immune to disease (including magical diseases), +6 racial bonus to saving throws vs. all poisons; *Sinewed:* +2 to Str, +1 hp per level; *Metabolized:* all movement rates doubled, +2 to Dex, gain one additional attack or standard action each round), Focus of the Deep (*Gilled:* can breathe underwater).

Gift: Fury (earned).

Possessions: *Trident of fish command, trident of warning, +3 ghost touch mire skewering trident, +3 seeking distance returning net, Bag of holding (type I), circlet of persuasion, ring of elemental command (air), ring of protection +4.*

Cleric Spells Prepared: (5/4+1/3+1/2+1; base spell DC = 11 + spell level; domains: Air and War): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, guidance, light, read magic*; 1st—*entropic shield, lesser darkness, magic weapon, obscuring mist, sanctuary*; 2nd—*Orif'ele's resilience, sound burst, spiritual weapon, wind wall*; 3rd—*darksight, magic vestment, oathbind.*

Aerial

Population: 15,629.

Warlord: Aryis.

Overseer: Dohver (Male Vogel, N, Ftr14).

Major Industry: Fish, weapons.

Overview: Aryis rules the islands of the Northern Ocean along with a significant portion of the northwestern corner of the mainland continent. His fortress is built into the rocks and cliffs of the largest island directly off the coast on the western side where it is protected from the elements and the ocean itself. A part of the mountainous terrain of the island and accessible only by air, the fortress is built to withstand heavy bombardment by even powerful magics. Those who would attempt to assault the fortress by scaling the walls of the cliffs will be hard-pressed to find adequate shelter from aerial attacks, allowing the vogel to pick them off at their leisure.

Forces

The legions of Aryis are small in number when compared to those of other warlords. However, other warlords do not command the air like those of Aryis. Only the Great Asherake and Minos Spar have a navy capable of taking on Aryis. However, he resides at too great of a distance from them for them to bother, at least for the moment. Aryis' forces are only a few thousand strong, but with their aerial speed and agility, they are difficult targets to hit and are quite accurate with their ranged weapons and spells.

Currently, Aryis is at war with the ceptu that reside in the Northern Ocean. The ceptu are trying to establish overland bases of operation and have targeted the islands as staging grounds. At first, they attempted to secure a peaceful nonaggression alliance with the vogel, but a terrible social gaffe on the part of the ceptu ambassador enraged Aryis and ended the negotiations when he served the ambassador as the main course for the evening meal just before declaring war and sending the remaining members of the diplomatic party back to the sea in small pieces to serve as food for the other ocean-dwelling species.

His forces are also engaged with those of the ceptu warlord Sandblossom in an attempt not only to secure more mainland territory, but also to eliminate any the threat of any ceptu retaliation.

Assets

The islands are thin on natural resources, but the portion of the main continent controlled by Aryis does hold several key mines that supply wealth to the vogel. In addition, several merchant trade agreements are in place that allow for the safe passage of airships through the territories of Aryis at a high price. These agreements make up for the bulk of the warlord's war chest. Recent raids upon ceptu surface settlements along with some daring underwater raids have produced fruitful gains to the treasury as Aryis' forces continue to make measured advances in conquering more territory for the expanding vogel nation.

Allegiances

Apart from simple trade agreements and rights of passage, Aryis has no formal allegiances with any warlord. He has had limited encounters with the undead of Sovann'Cru, but their forces have only skirmished on rare occasions. At the moment, Sovann'Cru has a greater concern with the warlord Sandstrider.

Regan Severn

Regan Severn inherited her grandmother's seductive and scheming nature and is heir to a legacy established by her mother's strength of leadership. She was born of the trysts between her valkyrie mother and asherake and human fathers.

Regan's grandmother, Katla, a concubine in the court of Warlord Kethil, was unusually adept at obtaining items, favors, and concessions from those in positions of power around her. Katla's abilities as an assassin punctuated her maneuverings within the court, garnering the attention of the warlord. Even he eventually succumbed to her deadly game, having underestimated her ambitious goals, but not before fathering a child by her. Carrying the unborn child of the former warlord solidified her claim to rule as regent from the fallen Kethil's throne.

Regan's mother, Sev, was born into the chaotic wake of Warlord Kethil's passing. When Sev was old enough to walk and fly, Katla trained her in the traditions of a valkyrie. Sev became a powerful leader who expanded the influence of Sterkblad Fortress through numerous campaigns. Unfortunately, Sev also became carelessly bloodthirsty, losing battle after battle to the Grand Asherake's forces. When she mothered a child by captured asherake and human fathers, her troops began to question her sanity and loyalties.

After Sev gave birth, Warlord Katla banished her to the western reaches of Arena in a successful effort to bolster the waning morale of her forces. Hundreds of valkyrie still loyal to Sev joined her in exile to the region near the Oasis of Lost Souls, and helped establish the stronghold Voldsom.

Many tense years passed as the fortresses of Voldsom and Sterkblad fought skirmishes over the lands between them. Fifteen years of empty treaties and fierce fighting passed before Warlord Katla had enough. In a daring attack that left Sterkblad unprotected, she led her armies to reduce Voldsom to shattered rock, smoldering ash, and fetid carrion. In the final battle of honor, Katla and Sev dueled to the death, with Katla emerging victorious. The young Regan, Sev's only daughter, drew her first blood in the attack to slay the mother she never knew.

With the internal strife of the valkyrie gone, they once again focused their efforts against the petty warlords that had encroached on Sterkblad's lands. Warlord Katla and Regan fought side by side against the warlords during the next several years with numerous victories for their side. All that changed when Regan began to lead the armies by herself. The Grand Asherake, longtime nemesis of Sterkblad, launched his own campaign against the valkyrie warlord. With the majority of her forces under her granddaughter Regan's command warring in the north, Katla found herself fighting off the Grand

Asherake's forces at her own gates. Success came at a great cost for Sterkblad; Warlord Katla was dealt a mortal wound. Her healers worked hard, but the magical poison that she was subjected to was steadily weakening her already battle-damaged and aged body.

Regan returned to Sterkblad too late. Warlord Katla had died two days prior and a usurper from the court had claimed the throne. Regan claimed her blood-right to the throne and duels with any who disputed her leadership. With the armies backing Regan's claim, and the members of the court still loyal to Katla defending her blood-right, the usurper's reign was short. Regan ascended to the position of Warlord of Sterkblad at the age of twenty-two, and has ruled with a strong sword ever since.

Ultimately, Regan strives to be the most powerful warlord of the Sea of Tears, but knows that this goal is unlikely at best. She still slyly maneuvers her "eyes and ears" within her rivals' courts, constantly seeking the foothold that will give her the leverage she desires to accomplish her ends.

She takes pride in her physical fitness and the enchantments of the flesh she has undertaken. Among her troops, she governs by strong example and intimidation. She does not ask of her troops that which she cannot herself perform. Within the court she holds in Sterkblad, Regan uses her charismatic presence to achieve her ends, often with the subtly veiled threats of dishonorable assignments or unspeakable tortures should her wishes go unfulfilled.

A valkyrie, Regan Severn appears as a human woman with a pair of large feathered wings growing from her shoulders. She has a strikingly beautiful face that stirs the lust of most men and jealousy of just as many women. At any given moment, her mouth is held in either a subtle smile—as if to suggest that she knows something about the onlooker—or a fierce grimace as she screams commands and rally cries while cutting her way through a battlefield. Her long, variegated blonde hair is tied back into a single ponytail, held in place by a splendid sapphire-bejeweled golden cuff.

Regan's skin is deeply tanned by a life under the harsh suns of the Forge, and is covered with numerous scars earned earlier in her career. She has chosen to decorate her skin with symbols of the warlords she has defeated, wearing them in tattooed bands that encircle her upper arms.

The High Swordmaiden seldom wears armor, preferring instead to rely on magical items to aid her should her skills not be enough to defend her. She wears loosely fitted, fine clothes made of silk embroidered with gold or platinum. Regan prefers to wear blue-hued garments.

Regan Severn, Female Valkyrie Bbn9/Sor4: CR 22; Medium-size Outsider; HD: 9d12+4d4+65; hp 158; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., fly 70 ft. (average); AC 22, touch 20, flat-footed 17; BAB +15, Grpl +22; Atk +26/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+11/19-20, +4 mighty cleaving wounding longsword [+2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage with slashing weapons; roll two dice taking the better result]), or +13/+8/+3/+3 ranged (1d8+11/x3, +4 steel-phase long spear); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Rage 3/day, spells; SQ DR 5/non-subdual, fire resistance 10, fast heal 5, improved un-

Other Warlords

canny dodge, low-light vision, trap sense, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 24, Dex 17, Con 23, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 21.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (geography) +14, Listen +9, Ride +9, Spellcraft +5, Spot +11, Survival +10; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Leadership, Power Attack.

Languages: Asherake, Battlespeak, Common, Valkyrie.

Prestige Races: Focus of the Brawler (*Toughened:* damage reduction 5 versus subdual damage, gain an increase of +2 to Con score and a +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves; *Burly:* damage reduction 2, a +2 racial bonus to Str, and a +2 natural armor bonus; *Skirmish:* gain fire resistance 10 and an additional 2 points of damage reduction, benefit from a +2 increase to Dex, also gains the extraordinary ability to trade no more than 5 points of AC gained from Dexterity to increase damage by an equal amount; *Brawler:* fast heal 5, gain ability to deliver maximum damage in an attack as a full action), Focus of the Fury (*Swift:* gain an additional attack at their lowest Base Attack Bonus and gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC; *Keen:* cause slashing damage when employing piercing weapons and gain a +2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls when employing slashing weapons; *Whirling:* forgo normal number of attacks and, as a full action, attack each target within melee weapon's reach at highest Base Attack Bonus), Focus of the Body (*Immunized:* increase Con score by +2, immune to disease, including magical diseases, gain a +6 bonus to saving throws vs. all poisons; *Sinewed:* increase Str score by +2, gain one additional hit point per level).

Gifts: Battle Sense (earned), Danger Sense (earned), Greater Thick Skin (earned), Painless (earned).

Possessions: +4 mighty cleaving wounding longsword, +4 steel-phase longspear, ring of battle prowess, ring of protection +5, scarf of Charisma +4.

Sorcerer Spells Known: (Spell per day: 6/7/4; base spell DC = 16 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, chill touch, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*mirror image, web*.

Location

Battles in Arena are fought as fiercely as the hot suns burn its sands, and Regan Severn, High Swordmaiden of the Valkyrie, stokes the furnace of conflict to intense degrees. She rules over her domain with a strong will, steady sword arm, and skilled insight. The High Swordmaiden calls the southwestern portion of the Sea of Tears her home, though her influence reaches far west beyond her oasis fortress of Sterkblad toward the Oasis of Lost Souls.

Forces

The flying squadrons of Regan Severn are often seen swarming above the skies of southwestern Arena. Their ferocity is focused by her strong leadership abilities and those of her few trusted sub-commanders. Regan's forces often call her the High Swordmaiden out of respect for her power and influence over the valkyrie, though they

sometimes call her the Flying Fury or Winged Steel out of fear and reverence for her battle prowess.

Symbol: A winged arm holding a sword.

Assets

Regan's assets are immeasurably vast, though mostly in the form of her forces and claimed lands. Much of the large amounts of money she wrenches from beneath Arena go to feed and supply her growing armies.

Allegiances

Regan, as one of the three most powerful warlords of Arena, can count on few people to be her true allies. Aside from the growing feud she has with the Grand Asherake, Ossian is constantly pushing into Regan's claimed territories, while the savage dinosaur threat from the Oasis of Lost Souls is a constant struggle. As a result, she often makes temporary strategic alliances with others who share in her struggles.

Other Warlords

Here's a sampling of some of the other Warlords of Arena.

Droghin Firefriend

Droghin Firefriend is a rarity, a troll gifted with superior intellect and vision and the drive to use them. Originally from Wildwood, Firefriend has gathered like-minded creatures to him and migrated into the western expanse of Arena. Frightfully capable, Firefriend is looking to make a new home for himself.

Droghin (Male Half-troll/Half-dragon (red), CE, Bar8) is an oddity. The scion of a red dragon and a troll captive, he possesses his father's intellect and immunities and his mother's natural drive for battle. He is taller and broader than normal, with fine red scales covering his flesh and short tail.

Location: Understanding that Wildwood is the best source of recruits, Firefriend has taken residence in a grassy plain near his old home. Though well watered from artisan springs, the site lacks open water, being swamplier in nature. Small hillocks have been carved out to serve as dens and lairs for his followers. Firefriend's den is deeper than most, capable of housing the entire population in times of crisis.

Forces: Always thirsty for combat, Firefriend employs ranged fire attacks against his opponents before employing swarm tactics. This militia is composed of trolls, ogres, ettins, nightlings, and chromithians, with a smattering of other creatures. Numbering slightly more than 1000, the force is nonetheless powerful, able to deliver crushing blows against unsuspecting opponents.

Assets: Deep within several hillocks are active gold and sapphire mines. Though he does not value such things, Firefriend gathers the resources so they can be used when dealing with other warlords. His holding also has a

Warlord Symbols

Droghin
FirefriendElvin
SandstriderGrand
Asherake

Hateni

Minos
SparNish'ric
BloodtoothOg
Brickhand

Ossian



Quee'eetee



Raghuveer

Regan
SevernSimeon De
VehouriaSviss
NexxThe
Warlock

Varan

Zanh
Viayth

rather successful gorak-breeding program. Their wooly hair is softer than normal and comes in a variety of hues, depending on the feed given them.

Allegiances: Droghin Firefriend has made defensive arrangements with the warlord Ossian, lending the enigmatic warlord guides familiar with Wildwood in exchange for basic supplies and information about traveling caravans not attached to Ossian. To date, it is an arrangement that has profited both warlords, though Ossian's relentless push toward the Sea of Tears may sever this relationship.

Elvin Sandstrider

This warlord (Female Elf, N, Sor12) seeks to secure caravan routes across the northern portion of Arena—for a price. She offers her services, demanding coin or a portion of the caravan's goods as payment. Those who refuse meet with frequent nighttime raids. Sandstrider commands 500 archers and 300 cavalry, most of which are elf or half-elf.

Nish'ric Bloodtooth

A novice in the ways of power, Nish'ric Bloodtooth is exceptionally lucky to have survived as a warlord, a fact completely lost on her. Blinded to the reality of her true influence, Bloodtooth envisions herself as a mighty commander on the cusp of greatness. The truth is far more wretched, as her traits make her easy prey for the other warlords.

An opportunistic scavenger, Nish'ric Bloodtooth (Female Nightling, CE, Ftr8/Vigilante1) was born and bred on the sands of Arena. Rather thin for a nightling, she is wiry and exceptionally nimble. In battle and diplomacy she tends to attack apparent weaknesses, hoping to best her opponent with a quick strike. This propensity is well known to other warlords who bide their time before exploiting it. A small mouse in a pride of cats, Bloodtooth is the unknowing prey, not the predator.

Location: Bordered by the Wildwood in the east and the vastness of Arena everywhere else, the holding of Nish'ric Bloodtooth is prototypical of a fledgling warlord. It encompasses a single oasis, a rundown fortress and village, and a mine long past its prime. The wilderness of the Wildwood lays one day's march away, making it a common way station for military units in need of immediate food and water.

Forces: Barely capable of feeding her troops, Bloodtooth has fallen to raiding caravans, travelers and anyone less powerful than she. A fair leader, she nonetheless runs an undisciplined military that frequently crumbles to chaos in combat. She commands 1000 irregular soldiers armed with swords and short bows. Nightlings, pickers, humans, and bloodthirsty degenerates make up the bulk of her army.

Assets: The holding of Nish'ric Bloodtooth is extremely poor. The mine about which the village is constructed is nearly played out, producing only a few hundred coins worth of gold and silver per month. The villagers are ambivalent to her presence since they do not

benefit or suffer for it. Unknown to Bloodtooth, the fortress is resting upon an exceptionally valuable vein of diamonds.

Allegiances: Bloodtooth's bluster in dealing with the other warlords has negatively affected her relations with them. She is convinced that their dissociation is because they feel threatened. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Having already attacked a caravan belonging to the Grand Asherake, she lives only as his toy, ignorant of the fate that has been determined for her.

Og Brickhand

The slave of a cruel master, Og Brickhand worked in a slade mine until fate placed him at the head of the holding he had learned to hate. Having killed his master with his bare fists, Brickhand freed his brethren and was proclaimed their warlord. Tentatively exercising his authority, Og has begun to improve and enlarge his holding.

Og Brickhand (Male Dwarf, LG, Ftr8/Dwarven Defender6) is an especially stout dwarf whose beard is braided with twists of copper wire. Uncomfortable in his new position, Brickhand still wears the clothing of a slave, taking comfort in its simplicity. Though untrained and often ignorant of the proper role of a warlord, his honesty is endearing to the populace.

Location: Situated in a sizable oasis south of the wide bend of the River Xanthus, Brickhand's holding is a broad expanse of rolling hills and scattered light woods. Herds of gorak and kine roam freely, penned by the encroaching sands, while residents of the oasis tend fields of crops and fruit trees. The walled town of Nimble lies on the east side of the oasis, its approaches guarded by towers along the perimeter of the refuge.

Forces: The militia at Brickhand's disposal is haphazardly outfitted and trained, though fairly numerous. Able to muster upwards of 5000 soldiers, they are mostly freed mine slaves who augment their lack of combative skill with pure malice against any who would take away their newfound freedom. Vicious when threatened, the military have held their own against superior forces and are quickly gaining experience in warcraft.

Assets: The slade mine Og Brickhand was forced to delve is now his greatest possession. Rich in the meteoric metal, it also has significant amounts of iron ore. Rock crushers and smelters run continually, turning the raw ore into high quality ingots. Smiths in Nimble craft all manner of metal objects, weaponry and cookware foremost among them.

Allegiances: Lord Mabon of Blackwall, who had huge investments in the holding prior to its liberation by Brickhand, is taking an aggressive posture and is seeking mercenaries who will bring the rogue holding to heel. To offset this, Brickhand has made arrangements with Lord Belus of Illumina to supply military support in exchange for a portion of the mine's output. This amount has steadily increased as Belus insists on more revenue to fund his military. Brickhand also has a burgeoning trade with Siviss Nexx, motivated more by placation than profit.

QUEE'EETEE Sandblossom

A tragic individual among the ceptu, Quee'eetee Sandblossom is a rogue carrier that has forsaken the traditional role of its kin for raw power. Guidance and personal enlightenment do not hold its attention, only the subjugation of others and the expansion of its holding. That many perceive its race as weak rankles Sandblossom, who takes strides to dispel such falsehoods.

Quee'eetee Sandblossom (Androgynous Ceptu, LN, Psion18) is an atypical ceptu. It has completed the Focus of the Sphere and has large, diaphanous membranes for flight that are exceptionally colorful and shimmer like oil on water. This beautiful effect is reported to be mesmerizing, possibly in relation to Sandblossom's ability to control numerous intelligent beings. Its tentacles are much longer than normal, affording the warlord an additional 5 feet of reach.

Location: The eastern spur that extends into the Northern Ocean contains Lake Phoe, a volcanic lake that serves as the capital of Sandblossom. The lake is extremely deep, with a conical island in the center that contains dwellings, barracks, and other government structures. On the south side of the island is the citadel of the warlord. It is strange building with curved towers, and towering crosswalks. The floors of the stronghold descend deep into the water, flooded by the volcanically heated water. Known to the ceptu that follow it, and suspected by Sandblossom's enemies, are the numerous flooded tunnels on these levels that eventually open to the Northern Ocean.

Forces: As a sign of strength, Sandblossom takes every opportunity to walk the land, displaying its power to its land-based army. A few thousand dovers, half-orcs, and valcos make up the majority of this army. Skilled in skirmish actions, they serve to protect the land approaches to Sandblossom's volcanic lake. This display of might extends to the water as well. Thousands of ceptus, many of them psions, are spirited with the pace of their race's advancement in the world and have pledged themselves to the warlord. It is a pledge readily accepted, cementing Sandblossom's conviction that an epiphany is about to overtake its people. Dolphins, tritons, and a small tribe of aquatic giants all serve beneath the waves.

Assets: Understanding that wealth fuels war, Quee'eetee Sandblossom makes concerted efforts to secure volcanic islands that are rich in diamonds. The warlord claims most of the northern islands of the eastern peninsula. Protected mining camps carve into the cones for the raw gemstones, uncovering a king's ransom every month. Similar operations exist underwater, where pearls, kelp and edible sea life are all collected.

Allegiances: Clandestine operations with the Sea Hags of Mourn on the Plains of Penance have led Sandblossom to consider expansion to the east. While the westerly islands are more diamond-laden, the lure of a direct connection to the wealthiest domain is tempting. Fearful and confused about their misguided kin, the ceptu settlements in the Northern Ocean give Sandblossom's holding a wide berth. Uncertain how to repatriate the wayward carrier, they have opted to remain distant and observe.

Simeon DeVelhouria

A relatively new seed, Simeon DeVelhouria hails from a world dominated by naval powers and the pirates who dare to challenge them. The son of an infamous freebooter, DeVelhouria sees potential in this new world, and has taken steps to secure a kingdom of his own design.

Simeon DeVelhouria (Male Human, N, Ftr4/Rog9/Wiz3) is a painfully good-looking man whose smile has been known to win over enemies and liberate them from their valuables. Somewhat short, his complexion and hair are ruddy from the weather. He wields a scimitar when in combat and a rose when on the prowl. A liberal consumer of womanly wares, DeVelhouria has been known to attack enemy fleets simply to acquire a single woman.

Location: One of the most successful naval warlords, DeVelhouria's holding is on the Isle of Amsung, a small island located in the Central Ocean, several miles off the northern Arena coast. A nondescript isle, the interior is a haven of vibrant foliage, clear streams, and ample game. A deep harbor lies on the northwest side. Broad enough for twelve vessels, it is obscured by a tall spur of bedrock from which sentries keep constant watch.

Forces: A master sailor, DeVelhouria commands a fleet of forty vessels, each crewed by 40 seamen and 200 soldiers. The vessels bristle with heavy armaments: catapults, cannons, ballistae, and a device that hurls various bolts of mystic energy capable of hulling enemy craft. These devices are DeVelhouria's most closely guarded secret. Where or from whom he acquired them is unknown.

Assets: The Isle of Amsung is a trove of natural resources, affording DeVelhouria and his followers a peaceful respite from the hardships of the sea. A single town occupies the island. It is well established and functions at a high social level, producing superlative fabrics, scrimshaws, and cheeses. The highest peaks of the island are thick with veins of gold and diamonds. Though aware of their existence, DeVelhouria has not mined them as he does not need the wealth and does not wish to disrupt the idyllic life of his holding.

Allegiances: DeVelhouria has cultivated relations with the fisher folk of Kiln. Realizing that the volcanic domain offers a secure bolthole against the fickleness of his career should the Isle of Amsung be overtaken, he has established a base of operations from which to carry on. DeVelhouria also trades with the nomads of the Sea of Sand, receiving artifacts of ancient civilizations in exchange for his plunder.

The Warlock

Chained by the hate and desperation of Nemamiah of the Vault, the Warlock was originally tasked with creating an artifact capable of freeing the Feathered Fowl from the Great Oath. After becoming aware that warlocks who

actually completed any item of significant power were destroyed, the Warlock fled his master's domain, taking refuge in Arena. His research continues, but for his own ends.

The Warlock (Male Human Lich, NE, Wiz15) appears as a desiccated corpse left too long in the sun. His skin is dark and exhibits traces of faded geometric tattoos. The flesh clings tightly to his bones, as if the liquid beneath had been removed. Cunning and patient, the Warlock continues to increase his undead army while researching powerful magic that will allow him to assail the domain of the Vault.

Location: The Warlock's holding is secreted in a series of caverns at the bottom of an escarpment on the verge of the Vault. Being undead the Warlock and his retinue need no food and water, making the traditional trappings of a warlord unnecessary. The caverns contain numerous labs, libraries, and undead creation pits that continually swell the ranks of his lifeless militia.

Forces: The ranks of the Warlock are legion with more than 5,000 ghouls, ghosts, wights, and mohrgs. In battle, undead warlords, spectres, and bone sovereigns command them according to the dictates of their master. Used sparingly for now, when eventually released they will spread terror across the domain, but at present conduct raids for living bodies that are used for the Warlock's experiments.

Assets: The Warlock's holding is replete with arcane devices and components, as well as extensive libraries full of obscure but valuable information. A gifted creator of wands and staffs, the Warlock often supplies such items to his minions who use them with startling proficiency. The deepest portion of his cavern complex is an active gold mine peppered with pockets of platinum.

Allegiances: Though many warlords are aware of the Warlock's existence, and have had some diplomatic contact with him, they have not determined the location of the Warlock's holding. Maintaining this secrecy is vital to the Warlock's future plans of revenge against Nemamiah. Understanding that exposure leads to conflict, he takes every precaution to protect the secret of his holding's location.

Zanh Nianyth

This warlord (Male Lunar, N, Drd5/Rgr6) roams the wilderness east of the Central Ocean with a pack of several hundred lycanthropic humanoids. Never settling long in any one position, they prey upon small settlements, taking slaves and goods for trade elsewhere.



OCEANS OF ARENA

“The struggle for Arena does not end at its shoreline.”

- Warlord Varan Trinovant

Water is life. On countless worlds, it was from the oceans that nearly all forms of life first crept and it is the oceans that continually support and prolong that life. The oceans upon the Forge do not contradict this rule, but as with all things upon its surface, the oceans of the Forge have their own unique ways of taking this rule and warping it slightly to suit their own needs. On the Forge, water is life and stability, but it is also very often a source of death and conflict. Nowhere upon the world’s surface is this more clearly shown than in the oceans that surround the domain of Arena.

In each of the main bodies of water that encircle the domain of Arena—the Northern, Southern, and the Central Oceans—there are invariable examples of both life-sustaining and conflict-producing elements. While all of the oceans, regardless of their locations, overall temperatures and temperaments, and depths, produce large bounties of food they also provide trade routes that are used by all of the domains of the Forge.

Where there is life and wealth, however, there is also death and conflict, and the Oceans of the Arena are no exception to this rule. War has always been fought both on land and the sea and the battles that scour the souls from the individuals of Arena are no different. To the warlords of this battled-hardened domain, the oceans are merely tools to be effectively used or obstacles to be overcome; war continues, regardless.

War is not solely an occupation of those that breathe the air of the Forge by any means, and there are constant and long-lived struggles that endure beneath the murky surfaces of Arena’s oceans. Civilizations rise and fall, leaders and despots crawl their way to power and are dragged down again and entire races are pressed into the iron fetters of slavery and are freed from bondage without the first grain of sand being disturbed upon the rolling red dunes of Arena. Nevertheless, war persists beneath the lapping waves, and Barbello smiles behind her iron mask.

The Northern Ocean

Considered the home and domain of the Ceptu Nation, and its capital, Attatal, the Northern Ocean forms the calm, warm, northernmost shore of the entire domain of Arena. This massive ocean, which is the largest on the Forge, contains many islands and island chains that are used by many nefarious pirate and Warlord-backed marine guilds and organizations. Further, the unique moab whaling industry is singular to the Northern Ocean and provides the raw materials used for many devious and life-taking machines used upon the war-ripped sands of Arena.

While the majority of the Northern Ocean is peacefully ruled under the powerful and far-reaching Ceptu Nation, it is not without its own small pockets of strife and warfare. Not all of the ceptu are content to remain peaceful and wait for the other races to be slowly assimilated into the ceptu way of life. Some have taken matters into their own tentacles and are forcing the issue; many have heard the clarion call of the Warlord Sandblossom from his center of operations beneath Lake Phoe. Warlords, too, strain constantly to catch the golden ring that

Oceans of Arena

is the wealth-filled shipping lines that crisscross the Northern Ocean, by means both fair and foul. Pirates scour the seas, raiding all and paying homage to none. Sea creatures and aquatic monsters known and unknown alike roam the warm waters, seeking nothing more than their next meal. While it might seem deceptively calm and serene at first glance, the Northern Ocean is not nearly so civilized and orderly as the ceptu might have one to think....

The Northern Ocean is fully detailed in Chapter 6 of OATHBOUND: *Plains of Penance*.

The Central Ocean

Area: 75,000 square miles

Population: 8,250,000

Racial Makeup: Trusk: 64%, Locathah: 21%, Dolphin: 4%, Sahuagin: 4%, Ceptu: 1%, Elf, aquatic: 1%, Humanoid, aquatic: 1%, Makkru: 1%, Merfolk: 1%, Other: 2%

Roughly half the size of its northern brother, the Central Ocean is dominated in every way by the trusk. Despite their proliferation, however, they are not the only creatures that reside beneath the waves of the Central Ocean. Members of all of the aquatic races can be found in the Central Ocean and for the most part are no different than their kin encountered elsewhere.

While the reasons for the drastically decreased percentages of other races within the Central Ocean are varied, the most widely accepted is attributed to the bombastic and coarse natures of the trusk. Simply put, most civilized races do not want to have the trusk as neighbors and deal with them as infrequently as possible. Oddly, only the locathah are somehow able to coexist with the trusk and as such, the Central Ocean has become a bit of a haven for these gentle fish-folk. Also, recent rumors that the numbers of sahuagin are on the rise have been shown to be true, but the sahuagin that are being spotted are not of the normal ilk. These new sahuagin have somehow adapted to survive in the exceedingly cold waters of the Central Ocean and they likely pose an increased threat to all those around them.

Dominance of the Trusk

Thoroughly misunderstood and disliked, the trusk are the primary species of the Central Ocean. Very little happens there without their knowledge and approval.

Trusk are a race that desires, above all, peace and tranquility in their lives. The easiest and most efficient way to achieve that goal is by making themselves the dominant species—not necessarily through military means, but by insuring that their views are heard. Trusk truly prove the adage that the “squeakiest wheel gets the grease” and they care little for the opinions of others. As long as they are respected and things go their way (for the most part) then the trusk feel that all is well and right with the world.

Trusk are by no means above going to war if it means that the end result will be their notion of peace; in fact, many speculate that this very stubbornness was what led to the great schism that cause the trusk and the ceptu to part ways. Ceptu and truskan ideals of peace and order are too divergent to coexist, so the two races had to part ways.

However it is gained and maintained, the truskan version of peace seems to go over well with the Central Ocean and its inhabitants, at least for those few non-trusk that inhabit these waters. Further, this obstinate nature has done well by the coffers of the trusk, as they impose heavy tariffs for any vessel using their harbors. While this has led to many a disagreement, the trusk have always managed to come out on the top of the heap; in fact they are one of the few races in all of Arena to which the warlords pay some sort of homage (albeit a pittance for certain) instead of the other way around. Their vastly superior numbers, aquatic warfare tactics (which they will not teach to any, no matter the price), and steadfast resolution make them exceedingly tough opponents and they far outstrip all but the most powerful warlords, who have long since learned that it is much better to simply appease the trusk than it is to wage war with them. Of late, the trusk have become fast allies with Sinault, the largest city in Anvil. It seems that the anti-ceptu sentiment of Sinault sits well with the trusk and they have sent their most skillful ambassadors (which does not account for much, of course) to the city to maintain alliances and communications.

Luckily for the whole of the Forge, the trusk seem content to rule their tiny portion of the world for now, with no apparent needs to expand outward to the lands beyond. They merely sit in their frigid *deepflow* citadels, count their coin, tinker with their bizarre inventions, and blubber and yell at one another quite often, which apparently is the favored trusk pastime.

Truskan Technology

Despite what the trusk believe, it is not their overbearing attitudes that keep the warlords from wiping them out altogether (although their superior numbers do help) but rather their usefulness in providing the warlords with new and sophisticated gadgetry that can be utilized on the battlefields. These unusual and fantastic items are generally crafted from *deepflow* and come in the forms of engine-like powerhouses that can be used to power airships, golems, golem engines, doom striders, siege engines and much more. These items have two primary drawbacks, however, despite their usefulness and modularity: because they are comprised of *deepflow*, they are both highly toxic to any non-trusk that handle them; and once removed from their cold storage containers; they soon melt into an acidic slush. While this is good for the manufacturing trusk, it is an undesirable, but unavoidable side effect that must be endured by the warlords.

Little known to the warlords of Arena, the trusk have for some time been supplying the inhabitants of the Kiln, particularly the folk of Fathom, with a specially treated form of *deepflow*. This *deepflow* floats much better than any other known material upon the Forge and so long as it remains in contact with water of any temperature, it does not degrade into its more toxic components. The folk of Fathom use this refined *deepflow* to build their floating cites upon and are creating the rudiments of the first *deepflow* navy; none know of their true intent for these vessels. The trusk feel confident that their waters will remain undisturbed, however, for that was the primary price for this miraculous *deepflow*—that the trusk be named sovereign lords of the Central Ocean!

Sites

While there are precious few benefits to the reign of the trusk over the Central Ocean, one is that the vast bulk of the place remains unexplored territory. There are thousands and thousands of square miles of ocean upon which those not native to the sea have never laid eyes. Countless new locations, geographical features, creatures, plants, animals, treasures, and the Seven know what else await those who are brave and hardy enough to seek them out. Mariner's tales and rumors are rampant and spread like blood over the sands of Arena; the following is but a sampling:

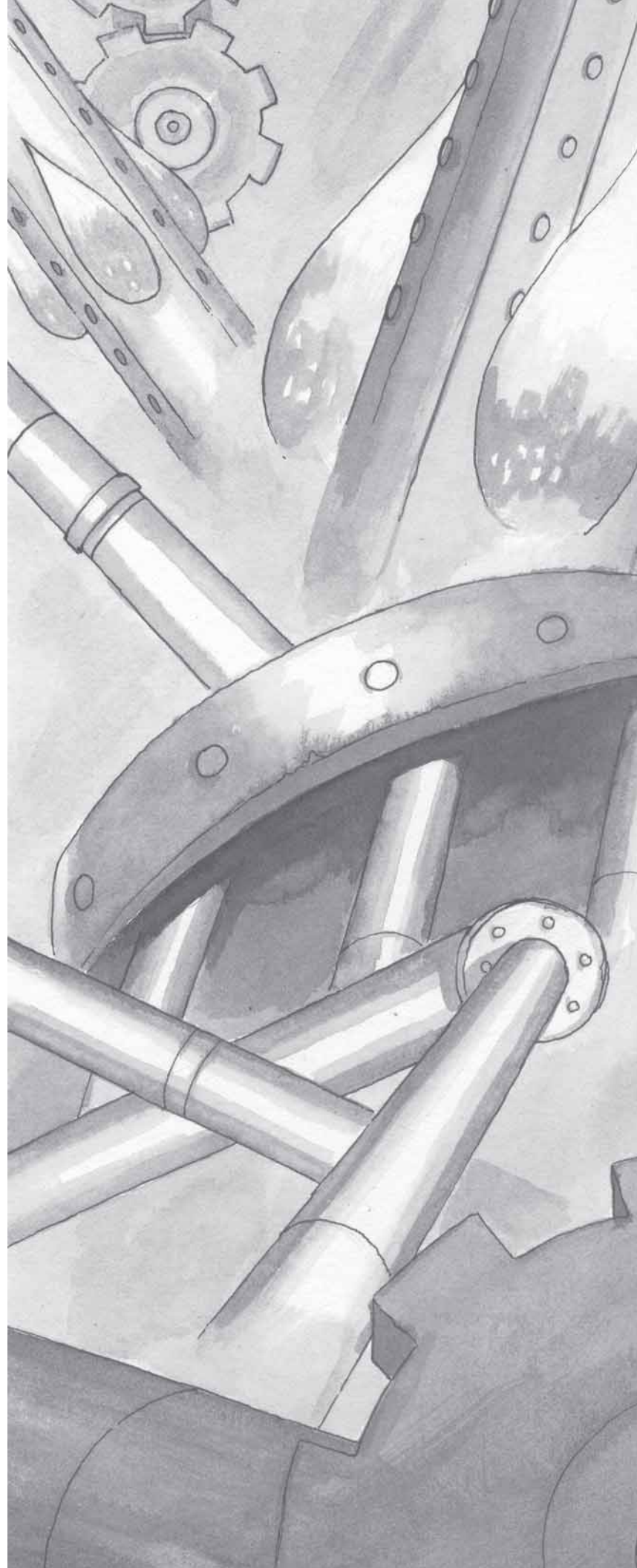
Eekoomock'Eemick: Deep beneath its surface, the truskan capital sprawls across the bottom of the Central Ocean like a great dark glacier. Ever expanding, the city matches the growing population of the trusk as it slowly grows year after year as new layers of *deepflow* continue to form. Eekoomock'Eemick is one of the most stunning sites on the whole of Forge, for it looks like a massive city lovingly carved from a single, mammoth stone. Lights from within shine with an opaque, smoky light, casting an otherworldly beauty over the city and give it its name in the truskan tongue, literally "fire in water."

The Isle of Orynioko: Somewhere in the open vastness of the Central Ocean lies a small, verdant isle that continually emits the most magical, ethereal singing ever heard by a mortal. It is said that so sweet is this singing that it could melt the heart of even the Leper and that it drives sane men mad with longing. A few tales even mention a race of impossibly beautiful beings reside upon this island and that their sole desire in all the world is merely to have someone come and rescue them from their loneliness.

Orphic Obelisk: Until recently, tales from those who said they saw the Orphic Obelisk were discounted as the ravings of drunks and madmen. However, a few artifacts were recently discovered in a part of a routine loaramai shipment, carefully wrapped in sharkskin to protect them from the plant's slime: a fragment of a metal-like substance that to date has withstood all attempts to shatter or affect it in any manner; what appears to be a tiny, but meticulously scaled model of the Obelisk itself; and a square piece of writing slate—upon this slate, written in the language of magic, were the words, "Prepare. We return." These artifacts have created a bit of a stir in Penance and are undergoing study.

The legend of the Orphic Obelisk declares that the Obelisk itself is a massive, inverted, and hollow tower that extends to the core of the Forge itself. It is said that a mysterious and ancient race crafted the tower at the zenith of their power—long before the foundations to Penance were laid. The strange and aberrant folk lived and worked inside this massive, hollow structure which is, if it indeed exists, the largest structure on the Forge! Sightings of the Obelisk have occurred from time to time over the years and all seem to come from somewhere deep in the Central Ocean, where the Obelisk is said to forever extend into its cold, dark depths.

The Deepening Rift: Far beneath the surface of the Central Ocean, there lies a fissure of near-impossible proportions. Possibly as deep again as the Ocean itself and nearly as long, the Deepening Rift is a yawning, abyssal



chasm thousands of miles long and hundreds of miles deep, and it is still growing. Occasionally, great gouts of steam, superheated rock, fire, and poisonous vapors boil up out of the Rift, killing anything living within miles of the eruption. While most think the Deepening Rift is merely the result of some violent, but natural phenomenon, some believe that it is actually a gigantic, ancient evil that is soon to awaken and wreak havoc upon the Forge.

However, the Deepening Rift is of special interest to the warlords of Arena, due to the near-limitless stores of mithral and diamonds that have been found therein. As such, there is a massive push on the part of several warlords to lay the first claim on the Deepening Rift, no matter what the collateral damage might total.

The Besimi Bevy: Once every three years or so, the besimi of the Central Ocean converge in what can only be termed as a massive meeting of these strange creatures. No one knows what calls the besimi together in a single spot at a specific time, but scores of these island-sized creatures congregate together and remain so, bound together by their long tendrils, for several days. Witnesses have reported strange, rumbling sounds in the air and unusual gouts of water spouting from the besimi during this time but none have yet made any sense of it all. The bevy ends as suddenly and mysteriously as it began, with the besimi drifting off slowly away from each other, as if nothing whatsoever happened.

The Maelstrom: Sailors who ply the waters of the Central Ocean tell a tale of a sentient storm that rides the winds, looking for unsuspecting ships. None can say why

this storm seeks out ships and viciously attacks them, but the few survivors that can be found will not deny that the storm acts with cunning and intelligence, using its slashing winds, stinging rains, lightning and hail to rip bone and board to tatters, spilling both men and cargo into the cold, unfeeling waters.

One particularly chilling story comes from a dover sailor by the name of Gou'de'Jurt, who says that after the maelstrom destroyed his vessel and most of the crew that the clouds themselves dipped down into the water, like a massive maw, and consumed them—right before his eyes. Gou'de'Jurt will not board another ship and swears to this day that he heard a growl, like low, rolling thunder, issue forth from the maelstrom as it consumed its prey.

Au's Heart: Perhaps one of the most sought-after shipwrecks on the whole of Forge, the ship known as Au's Heart was crafted by the bloodlord Valercan Tahhat who ruled Mechanized Igniis over 12,000 years ago. The craft was unlike anything that had ever been seen before or since on the Forge—similar to an airship in basic mobility (i.e. it could fly) but far outdistancing the airships in terms of speed, maneuverability, and appearance. Sadly, the craft was sabotaged on its maiden voyage and it was thought to have plummeted into the frigid waters of the Central Ocean. Countless warlords, treasure seekers, and history enthusiasts have tried to locate and salvage the craft, for reasons as varied as their accompanying organi-

New Material: *Deepflow*

Deepflow is a rare and unique form of salt-infused ice found near the bottoms of Forge's oceans. While *deepflow* contains a myriad of other elements, salt is by far its primary component and is responsible for many of its unusual properties. Due to the combination of water and these other elements prior to freezing, the physical makeup of *deepflow* is dramatically different and thus it does not melt in the same manner as ice under natural conditions. For instance, *deepflow* does not float and exists in a strange, quasi-liquid and frozen state, slowly creeping along the bottom of the ocean depths, its core liquid but the edges continually half frozen and half flowing. Further, due to its exceedingly high salt content, in conjunction with the bizarre combinations of other usually inert elements, *deepflow* is highly toxic to nearly anyone who comes in contact with it; only a thick layer of insulating fat protects against this toxin.

Despite its caustic nature, those that possess the proper physical and mental prerequisites can actually work *deepflow* in much the same manner as one might work with and form regular ice or stone. Once *deepflow* is sectioned into smaller portions, its physical stability increases as long as it is kept cold; once worked into a given shape, *deepflow* generates a small but stable form of energy which can be put to any number of uses, as long as it remains cold. Items crafted from *deepflow* are almost always mechanical in nature. The innate power of the substance does little when shaped into armor, shields or mundane weapons. However, although a few inventive instances of *deepflow* weapons, such as crossbows that winch themselves after being fired, are not unheard of; the physical limitations of the substance simply does not lend itself well to practical, land-based applications. Items crafted from *deepflow* typically have a marketplace modifier of +5,000 gp/lb. Items crafted from mundane materials, but with the intent to be powered by a *deepflow* engine, must be crafted to house the *deepflow*—a process which typically costs an additional 20-30,000 gp but insures and extends the life of the *deepflow*.

If the *deepflow* is ever subjected to temperatures above freezing, it quickly melts into a foul-smelling and highly corrosive sludge. Another unusual aspect of *deepflow*, known to precious few outside the truskan *deepflow* artisans, is that *deepflow* that is suddenly subjected to intense heat, such as the fire from a *fireball* spell, erupts into a massive acidic explosion (as a *meteor swarm*, with the exception that the damage is acid-based), followed by a lingering and hazardous haze (equivalent to a *cloudkill* spell).

zations, but none have yet succeeded. It is said that the craft was powerful enough to grant wishes to the pilot and that it could even possessed the ability to leave.

The Southern Ocean

Area: 810,000 square miles

Population: 1,100,000

Racial Makeup: Makkru: 46%, Ceptu: 16%, Trusk: 9%, Elf, aquatic: 7%, Dolphin: 6%, Merfolk: 6%, Humanoid, aquatic: 4%, Sahuagin: 4%, Locathah: 1%, Other: 1%

The smallest of the Forge's three oceans, the frigid expanses of the Southern Ocean still support a surprising bounty of life. The waters here teem with massive schools of cold-water fish and the waters are positively choked with dense kelp forests. In turn, these submarine jungles form the basis of a complex web of life which includes many marine mammals, such as seals, walrus and whales of all descriptions. These kelp beds also comprise the foundations for the finest and largest sources for mussels and crustaceans upon the whole of the Forge. It is said that the crab, lobster, clams and oysters that come from the frigid waters of the Southern Ocean are the finest anywhere.

Despite having nearly as many warm currents as cold ones, the Southern Ocean's proximity to the Vault adds a considerable influx of arctic chill to its waters. This proximity to the Vault is also the source for the large number of ice floes scattered throughout the Southern Ocean. Despite popular conception, many of these gigantic, floating islands of ice have become inhabited by various creatures; some have even developed into temporary mobile bases for pirates or other nefarious groups.

While the seeming omnipresence of the makkru within the Southern Waters keeps the numbers of all other sentient aquatic races closely in check, others do call these waters home. Some ceptu, mostly rogues, outcasts, or explorers from the Northern Ocean, are fairly common, as are all forms of merfolk and a scattering of trusk.

The Makkru Presence

The vicious and cruel sharklike race known as the makkru are feared throughout the length and breadth of the Southern Ocean and its shores; they rule its waters through sheer numbers, raw terror, and underhanded political machinations. Few truly know what lies at the heart of the makkru and none can comprehend their alien desires and motivations. One thing is clear, however: Whatever they desire, total domination of all those around them is a pivotal aspect of their nature.

The makkru expend vast amounts of energy and wealth to prove that they are not only the top of the heap socially and politically, but also the top of the food chain. Those who possess the might and ability to stop these loathsome creatures have turned a blind eye to their advances and actions, hoping that the harsh domains of the Vault and Arena will contain the vicious creatures. Woe unto them that underestimate these cruel and intelligent predators.

Unknown to any, save perhaps the Seven, is the fact that the popular projected numbers of the makkru fall far short of the truth. With their quick reproductive rates and

the literal bounty of prey that stocks the cold waters of the Southern Ocean, the number of these brutal and inhuman predators is reaching alarming levels. The devious leaders of the makkru are careful to keep this closely guarded secret, hiding their forces in massive ice-ground caves near the shorelines of the Vault and ancient flooded mines along Arena's borders. From here, these literal hordes of makkru await word from their masters, slaving at the opportunity to swarm forth onto the land and consume and domineer all before them.

Sites

The Undead Isle: Near the Vault, but still within the confines of Arena and the Southern Ocean sits a cold, heartless, and deadly place known only as the Undead Isle. This warped locale seems like a spot ripped fresh from someone's nightmares, an impossibility that could not—should not—be. The entire island, which is little more than a tremendous, sessile iceberg is populated by undead; ruled over by a Ghoul King and his vampire bride, these undying creatures play out a twisted mockery of life as they go about their daily lives, despite having passed from the realm of the living. Imported slaves and body parts from the slave pens and battlefields of Arena sustain them, and they pay claw-crafted necromantic items and valuables dug from the ice (and from any passing victims) as well as with their fealty and undying loyalty to whatever Warlord will deal with them.

The Flooded Observatory: One of the more intriguing sites in the Southern Ocean, the Flooded Observatory hails back to the time when the Vault was known as Glimmer—by far, its most prosperous era. The Observatory was used at that time for viewing the fascinating multitude of sea creatures that made the then-warm and teeming Southern Ocean their home. Now, only a faded shadow of that former glory remains and while the magic of the Observatory still operates, sections of it have become flooded and dark, providing home to shadowy, slimy, and hungry things that slink through the eerily lit pathways; seeking their next meal...

Calderis: Known by many names—the Smoking Isle, the Pit, and the Gates of Hell—Calderis is a huge, black mass of submerged rock that can be found in the southernmost reaches of the Southern Ocean. Much of the mountain of craggy stone lies beneath the cold water's surface, but the cone continually spews a thick, dark smoke. While it is unknown to the populace at large, Calderis is one of the few places upon the Forge where one can evolve through either the Focus of the Wave or the Focus of the Flame. Furthermore, the dark smoke that issues forth from the submerged mount of Calderis has powerful restorative properties, healing mortal wounds and even regenerating lost limbs!

Kyy'Yaggys: Kyy'Yaggys, the mobile and mechanized fortress of the makkru, roves across both the whole of the region surrounding the Southern Ocean, terrorizing and destroying anything in its path. This bizarre and deadly craft, which looks like a giant metal makkru and moves with equal ease upon both solid and liquid surfaces, is propelled by some obscure arcane or divine force. Often the nightmarish craft will erupt from an icy shoreline, its

Oceans of Arena

great metallic maw vomiting forth hordes of bloodthirsty makkru. Few who witness such a gruesome display survive to tell the tale.

The Patchwork Isle: Near the center of the Southern Ocean, where the tangled morass of the giant kelp beds become impassable by any but the largest of vessels, what appears to be an island is forming. Fashioned from drifting flotsam and jetsam, caught up in the strands of sticky kelp, and seeded by wind and the droppings of passing seabirds, the island is a hodgepodge of all that the Forge has to offer. Visitors to the Patchwork Isle are as likely to find alorak plants and field beetles as they are the native sea birds and mundane otters. Rumors surround the Patchwork Isle and many say that a race of sleek, quick and shy furred creatures calls this floating tangle of refuse home and that they are actively building and adding to it day and night. If one believes the tales, these creatures can spend long periods of time deep beneath the waves and are harvesting the long sunken treasures that the sea has to offer, squirreling them away in the confusing mesh that forms their home.

Skirr: Due south of the harbor of Meheloas lies the sprawling and submerged city of Skirr, the City of the Strands. Made entirely of the thick, entangling kelp that is plentiful in the Southern Ocean, Skirr is a constantly moving (literally) and bustling metropolis that is an enigma to surface-folk. Skirr extends over several score square miles, in all three dimensions, its swaying, bobbing buildings artfully crafted from the kelp itself. At first glance, these structures appear to be nothing more than massive clumps of entangled kelp and cast off debris, but once a visitor develops an eye for the formations, their true ingenuity and beauty cannot be denied. Skirr comprises the last safehold for the bulk of the non-makkru that inhabit the Southern Ocean and it stands as a final

bastion against their incessant encroachment. Were it not for its valuable use as a port to the warlords of Arena, who often use Skirr as a stopping-off point and a location for rest and relaxation for beleaguered troops, Skirr would have likely fallen to the makkru long ago. However, for now, the makkru leave the hedonistic Skirrians to their delights of the flesh, knowing that soon the makkru will no longer fear retribution from the warlords or any upon the Forge.

Skirr has a small standing army, comprised mostly of trusk and merfolk, but even these forces are often found engaged in pursuits that are far more pleasure-seeking than military. Skirr's current lord is, oddly enough an aurad named Aar from the plains outside Penance. Odd even for his unusual folk, Aar has taken both the Focus of the Wave and the Focus of the Deep and feels perfectly at home beneath the waves. As the lord of Skirr, Aar (with the support of his ceptu "Advisory Board") has recently undertaken a campaign to convince his citizens to focus more on producing exportable works of art (of which he feels certain they are all capable) and less on their riotous and self-indulgent acts.

Connections

“Gold? Bathkol’s blood, seed! Were you planted yesterday? Gold maybe the shiniest treasure in Arena, but it is not the most valuable. No, that privilege lies in the deeds of blood and bone that all can see. That is true wealth, seedling.”

- A dwarf overheard berating a new arrival.

The domains of the Forge nestle together like puzzle pieces from several sources. Titanic mountains rest beside abyssal seas; impenetrable forests encroach on dune-covered plains. It is a world of divergent extremes that is expressed in the cultures and trades that bind them together. Bloodlords of Penance sent caravans of their wares across the sands to the embattled warlords of Arena who pillage the natural resources of the Wildwood. Each domain interacts with the others. This interaction is seen in Arena, where trade is brisk and full of potential.

Economics drives the major political issues of the domain of Barbello. The largest of the seven domains, Arena touches all three of the world’s oceans, acting like a bridge to the other domains. The geographical placement of the domain makes it an ideal trade nexus—a place where land- and sea-based trade routes meet. Fleets from Penance hug the northern coast, selling wares and luxuries for gold and gems. The nomads of the Sea of Sand pass through the northern regions of Arena, offering uncovered artifacts to the highest bidder.

Possessing the longest coastline of any domain, Arena’s shorelines are a hive of activity. Settlements dot the landscape, offering succor to naval travelers and a chance to lighten their hold. The island chain to the northwest is a dominant string of volcanic islands rich in natural resources. It is a favorite stopping-place of foreign merchants, eager to make the sale of a lifetime. In legion they test the waters, slipping past pirates and aggressive warlords, to make their fortunes. Though not a perfect economic environment, the incredible potential of Arena will always encourage merchants to work there.

Politically, the other domains and the powers that hold sway there view Arena as a mining community where individual warlords possess far too much wealth.

Emboldened by the proximity of such resources, the lords of other domains make repeated forays into Arena, in the hope of establishing a stable trade network. Most fail, becoming the victims of raiders, bandits, or opportunistic warlords. However, some few succeed and create trade route strung with reliable consumers. The domain of Penance is the most effective of the domains in this practice, though Anvil merchants are not far behind. Traders from the Vault, Kiln, and Eclipse are rarer, but still make occasional appearances. The Wildwood is a unique case. The communities there view the warlords of Arena as parasites nibbling on the bounty of their land. Though some trade exists, it is meager and very localized.

The adage, “If there is something that someone wants, there is someone willing to sell it,” holds true on the Forge. Propelled by the dogged merchants who brave restless seas and dangerous lands, trade flows like blood through the domains, invigorating the societies partaking of its enrichment. Numerous commodities are traded between the domains, each a signature of the domain that produced

it. From Penance come sculptures, clockworks, golems, and foodstuffs. The bloodlords of Penance ensure the quality of their wares, selecting only the finest for export lest inferiority reduce their sales. Driven by pride and skill they ply their goods amidst the domains that possess the raw materials needed to keep their economy functioning. Lumber from Wildwood, glazier’s sand from Arena, and marble from Anvil are but a few samples of their requirements.

The domain of Anvil trades more from need than desire. Lacking the basic capacity to grow their own food or manufacture textiles, inhabitants of Anvil barter with what they do possess. Fine marble, granite, iron, gems, and slaves are all gathered for export, as are relics excavated from the Sea of Sand by the nomads. Anvil residents seek simple pleasures—grain, alorak fruit, cloth, cookware, and alcohol—anything that will make their lives more tolerable.

Penance is the largest trader of the Forge, plying the water, land, and air in pursuit of profit. Their central location and immense political power cause merchants to gravitate to them. Even if the bloodlords of Penance never set an economic foot beyond the towering walls of their city, they could still enjoy access to everything the other domains produce. Blessed with an abundance of food and luxury goods, the lords of



Connections

Penance sell their excess to less fortunate domains, namely Arena and Anvil. Lumber, used to fuel construction and the creation of goods, is brought in from Wildwood. Other raw materials (such as slade, iron, and gems) are sought from Anvil, Arena, and the aquatic communities of the Northern Ocean.

Not all trade is mundane—or even pleasant. The Vault seeks a continual flow of living tissue to refresh its armies and fuel its experiments. Grisly and despicable, it nevertheless finds willing merchants who hire press gangs of the most evil sort. The city of Temper is a haven for such activity, supporting an organized and widespread slave trade that caters to the undead to the south, the assassins to the north, and the bloodthirsty warlords to the west.

Organizations exist in all the domains that facilitate the exchange of intelligent flesh. Brokers collect, grade, price and auction slaves to the highest bidder, with bulk rates being offered for the less choice selections. Though slavery is not officially endorsed in Kiln or Penance, it is practiced. Most slaves are used for manual or dangerous tasks, such as mining, pearl diving, and the clearing of Wildwood. Death comes early to slaves. Beaten down by backbreaking labor and poor treatment they succumb to the ravages of their lot.

Another commodity is equally bleak. Illicit drugs are common in every domain of the Forge. Whether the concoction is a local blend or an exotic foreign mixture, it is available to the needy for a price. The perfect commodity, drugs maintain their consumer base, ensuring repeated purchases for the life of the user. A carefully placed sample can enmesh clients for life, opening their cash boxes, their secrets, and their souls to the supplier. Though more of a political tool in the domains of Eclipse and Penance, it serves a recreational purpose elsewhere.

A focus of international trade, Arena is a prize sought by many groups. The bloodlords of Israfel's domain have carved a dominant niche in local trade, a result of their proximity and financial strength. To ensure the sanctity of their trade routes, the bloodlords sponsor regional warlords to protect and enlarge their network of contacts and resources. It is an insidious invasion where the battles of the warlords are seen as a titanic game, with the winner gaining wealth and prestige at the expense of the bleeding soldiers. This mindset breeds arrogance, as the bloodlords consider Arena to be an extension of their personal holdings.

The footprints of the other domains are light and temporary. Lacking the influence of Penance, they trade what they can for what they can get. It is a casual relationship, with merchants making regular stops with predictable wares. The tensions present from the influence of the bloodlords are normally absent with these domains' interactions with Arena. Unable to promote warlords to further their interests, they rely instead on traditional methods of commerce. Basic items and slaves crisscross Arena daily, feeding the war machines that hum continually under the twin suns.

Some of the minor warlords, in order to prolong their existence on the sands of Arena, have forged economic pacts among themselves that allow an equal division of the wealth from trade. Similar to The Alliance of Penance, they defray the cost of their supplies and defense amongst themselves, acting in commune. Overall, it does increase

the odds of their survival, but the tactic is completely alien to the political and social climate of the domain. The major warlords have noticed this, but as yet have done nothing. Curious about its applicability, they are waiting to see the reaction of Barbello once she takes serious notice.

As is typical, the largest economies of Arena are the largest consumers, taking in far more products than they export. The Grand Asherake leads this group of ultra-consumers, exercising his enormous buying power to influence regional politics. Without realizing the consequences, many smaller warlords have begun to tie themselves to the economies of the mass consumers. Pleased with the profit they were making, and lulled into believing that economic ties protect them against aggression, the lesser warlords continue to strengthen the connection. Once the process begins it is hard to slow, and over a period the larger warlord controls the entirety of the smaller warlord's produce. At this point the larger warlord can influence the lesser, directing policy against the threat of economic sanctions. If the smaller warlord resists, he is destroyed, his economy ruined prior to that of his armies. If he capitulates, then his authority is eroded and ultimately negated. At best the lesser warlord can survive as a subordinate of the greater; at worst he is removed and replaced with a willing loyalist.

The reverse process is nearly as effective. The mass consumers make items beyond the manufacturing reach of the smaller warlords, such as basic necessities of life: clothing, food, and drugs. They provide these items at a substantial reduction in cost, promoting the dependence of the lesser warlord on the greater. The ties of trade strengthen until the lesser warlord relies on the crucial wares that are imported. At this juncture, the greater warlord can influence the political policy of the lesser, holding back the imports until its new policy direction is accepted. Though not as influential as the tactic described above, it can make a satellite of the lesser warlord's holding.

Anvil

Anvil views trade in Arena through two distinct lenses: the restless nomadic tribesmen of the Sea of Sand and the content mountain dwellers. The nomads sift the sands of their home for the remains of civilizations that once dotted the region. They gather what artifacts they can and travel to the edge of the land to offer them to available merchants. Sculptures, personal objects, unique building materials, and magic items are highly prized. The warlords take pride in the carvings and personal relics of the past, seeing them as a cultural enhancement. Once art objects are no longer admired, they are sold off to the lords in Penance and Eclipse for an exorbitant profit. Building materials salvaged from the ancient ruins are incorporated into the citadels of the warlords. Windows whose panes melt away with a command and water closets that magically dispose of waste and stench are perennial favorites. Even more valuable are the remnants of forgotten enchantments. Rings and wondrous items are most common, though staves, scrolls, and rods are also found.

The nomads seek food, medicine, and fabric in return. The nature of their tentative existence forces them to procure necessities, not luxuries. While they will accept gold in payment for the items they offer, the cost is greatly increased, as the metal has little importance to them. Canny merchants who bring grains, brilliant cloth, trinkets, and easily carted items find that the nomads are willing to spend great amounts of gold for relatively inexpensive supplies. They are even known to trade magic found beneath the sand for a few sacks of meal.

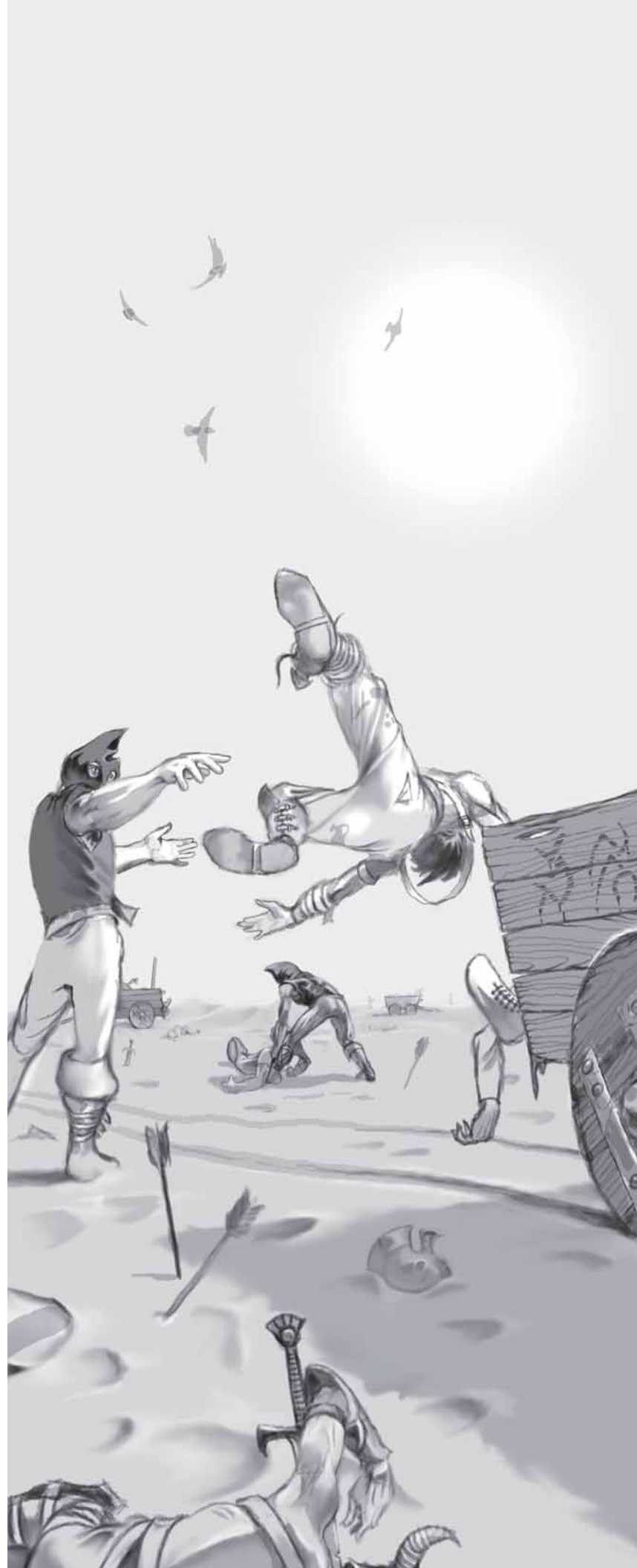
The inhabitants of the mountain vales and catacombs possess extensive natural resources. Various stones destined for construction and artistic creations are cut from the mountains. Colorful marbles, granite, dolomite, and basalt are quarried and sent to trading depots along the edge of the Sea of Sand. Ores and gems are also extracted, with the capable settlements smelting the ore for easier transport. Such shipments make the journey to the depots under heavy guard. There the merchandise is separated, cataloged, and graded. Attached buildings permit merchants and their retinues to reside in comfort while inspecting the offered materials.

Individual communities of Anvil, who tend to seek specific items in exchange, run these depots. A community of orcs dwelling beneath the mountains may need food and alcohol while a clan of vale-dwelling lunars desire cloth and cookware. These are communal enterprises that profit the entire population. Though individuals or families hold some depots, this organizational method is in the minority. However, as the bloodlords continue to make inroads into the domain the trend towards individual ownership will continue.

The placement of the depots and the merchandise they wish to procure are well known to established merchants. Newcomers to the red sands may find that they travel leagues only to be turned away because the inhabitants of the depots have no need for their wares no matter their worth. Preparation and research are the hallmarks of the successful trader. Ill-prepared merchants have been known to anger Anvil merchants by pressing their inventory. Most occurrences lead to the expulsion of the merchant, but some result in a bloody confrontation. If the merchant was insulting or demeaning, he is likely to be attacked, his goods confiscated, and his life cut brutally and painfully short.

Rarely, these conflicts explode into trade wars. Mercenaries are hired to take every opportunity to hinder the economic success of the offender. Depots and caravans are raided and destroyed, with any survivors sold to the slave merchants who seem to hover in such areas of turmoil. Trade wars generally fade away as each side succumbs to the fiscal damage they are causing to their own businesses. If they do not sputter into indifference, they escalate into full war. Armies are massed and sent to battle. Horrendously vicious, these events usually precipitate the utter destruction of all concerned.

The dwellers of Anvil are capable warriors and offer their services to the warlords of Arena and the proxies of the bloodlords. Their motivation is seldom monetary; it is rather the manifestation of either the primal need to prove ones worth in battle or—more practically—acquire a guarantee of future service from the employing warlord.



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The former are typically youthful adventures seeking to bloody themselves on the dunes of Arena. Brazened by tales of honor, wealth, and heroics, they swarm to the border of the domain, selling their services for a set term. Many mountain communities regularly send their youth off on such missions as it is seen as a rite of adulthood. The particularly bloodthirsty settlements promise to slay a specified number of enemies before the contract is cancelled. The more dangerous the Anvil warrior, the higher the promised body count. Trophies are taken in such cases as proof of their fulfillment of the contractual obligation.

The latter pursue employment with the warlords so that they can claim some future service in return. Both parties always know the service to be provided though the time of its delivery is not. Most agreements of this nature concern very specific trade goods, a discount on future purchases for a stated period of time, or the financial backing to establish a new depot. If a new depot is constructed it is common for the backing warlord to claim a small percentage of its profit for one year.

Eclipse

The land of eternal night, Eclipse is mostly self-sufficient and seldom heard from. Sporadic contact does occur with Arena, with trade being the motivating factor. Quality stones with interesting patterns of light and dark are highly prized and are ordered in bulk prior to their quarrying. Soft stone is preferred as it is intended for statuary, carved moldings, and finials. Glass is also a premium item. The amount and varieties of sand to be found in the Arena lends itself to the glazier's craft. Many warlords have shops of glassblowers who create all manner of items for public and military consumption. Glassware and serving dishes are most popular, with multicolored beads nearly so.

The drug trade thrives between the two domains. The alchemists of Eclipse are proficient as well in the manufacture and application methods of the lethal concoctions, and are eager to export them to all interested. The warlords, always looking for an edge against their opponents, are willing to employ them as it can spare them the cost of soldiers and equipment. A few well-placed drops of poison can induce an enemy to quit the battle even before it has begun. Likewise, recreational drugs can have the same effect. Dark-minded warlords have been known to addict their own troops only to withhold it. Eager to sate their hunger, the troops are willing to perform any action requested. Reserved for particularly violent campaigns, these suicidal drug fiends can savage a battlefield in minutes, throwing themselves against any foe.

If the opportunity presents itself, the warlord's agents can poison the water supply of an enemy. This involves sneaking into the opposed holding and contaminating the wells, oasis, or reservoirs with a toxin. Multistage poisons are preferred since effects are not realized until the warlord administers the final component. On the battlefield, this takes the form of glass globes hurled into combat. When broken, they release a gas that activates the poison but has no effect on the other army. The Grand Asherake used this tactic once on a warlord who preferred

to poison his opponents. When the citadel was finally breached all of the defenders were found dead, poisoned by the gas globes arched into the compound by catapults.

Arena also imports assassins from Eclipse. Arena's warlords have killers in abundance, but few of them possess the subtlety necessary infiltrate an enemy's stronghold, kill him or her, and leave convincing evidence of another's involvement. Most warlords eschew such talents; wiliier commanders realize the benefits of a single blade at the correct time and place. This is particularly true when the target is a trade agent, say, of one of Penance's Bloodlords, or respected chieftain from Anvil. Some skilled freelance and guild-affiliated blackguards and assassins from Eclipse work only for certain contractors. The Grand Asherake has such contacts—although he rarely uses them against opposing warlords—as do a few other warlords. Others offer their services to the highest bidder. Taking on a contract, the hired killers often go to the targeted warlord and inform him of the agreement—usually without identifying the contractor, if it is meant to be secret—offering the target a chance to place a counter contract in which the first contract is nullified in favor of the second. This process continues until the warlords can no longer afford to increase the attached fees or they tire of the procedure. At this point the last contract taken is fulfilled. Sponsoring guilds mark any warlord who slays the hired assassin or blackguard after the completion of the contract. That warlord becomes the primary mission for all guild members, with the guild leadership paying a substantial fee for its completion.

Barbello loathes those who use assassins to avoid battle, at least in wars in her domain. She couldn't care less if a warlord kills off a merchant prince from Penance, but she takes a dim view indeed of any warlord who defeats a rival by such underhanded means. Over the eons, more than one warlord has suffered her wrath for substituting the poisoned blade for bloodied sword.

Kiln

Contact and trade with the smallest domain is likewise diminutive. Given its encirclement by Anvil, the inhabitants of Kiln do not engage in social interactions with many outsiders. The volcanic regions in which they dwell are barren of outward signs of wealth. However, regardless of appearances, the domain possesses immense gem and metal mines. Diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and topaz are all pulled from the mountains. They are polished and set in silver or gold findings, then decorated with undulating patterns that mimic the ocean waves. Fisher folk cling to the coast, trawling the depths of the Central Ocean for the food that will keep their communities thriving.

The only dealings Kiln residents have with Arena are through aquatic warlords or those who ply the ocean's waves, such as Simeon DeVelhouria. In either case the trade that exists is simplistic, the merchants selling fruits, nuts, and other agricultural products, especially wood. The coastal residents of Kiln always have fish for trade, as well as scrimshawed fishbone necklaces and amulets. The work on these items is exquisite and fragile, bespeaking of the great labor placed into them. They are also adept at weaving plant fibers, crafting everything from light ar-

mor to furniture. The fish are smoked, sun-dried, or pickled in accordance with the particular skills of the villagers. The interior residents of Kiln refrain from trade with outsiders, preferring to rely on trains of knük to disseminate their wares and to gather supplies. These missions take place every ten years and are an indication of the rigid nature of Kiln society.

The most sought after item of the domain, the stone fishing ships of the coastal inhabitants, is also the one least likely to be sold. Constructed of pale gray and green volcanic stone, the vessels are incredibly durable and buoyant, superior in many ways to the their wooden counterparts. The material contains vast amounts of trapped air pockets, giving the material its light weight and buoyancy. A ships maneuver as well as traditional vessels and seem incapable of sinking, as the trapped air keeps even the smallest part afloat. The raw material is mined in secret quarries found in the interior and is not available for bulk trade.

Warlords with access to the Central Ocean often make arrangements with coastal villages to establish a safe harbor for vessels in need of repair or as a haven against the brutality of his enemies. Most such ports are secretly kept, the villagers receiving shipments of goods in compensation for service. Overbearing warlords who try to secure these villages militarily are always defeated. The fishing vessels can be quickly converted to warcraft, and in the hands of a few skilled sailors, can dash an opposing navy to splinters.

PENANCE

The largest trading partner of Arena is the domain of Israfel. Its proximity and internal politics have led many bloodlords to take an active hand in the land of their neighbor. Their touch is far from soft. In the pursuit of personal agendas, the bloodlords deal death like others expel breath. Entire communities are destroyed on a whim, their possessions gathered like prize ribbons. Just as fast as they act, the bloodlords lose interest, abandoning their armies and proxy warlords to fates unknown.

The rationale for such interference is multifold, depending on the bloodlord involved. Lord Belus of Illumina is one of the most active participants, having no fewer than five standing armies in the domain charged with protecting his mines and trading depots. The vast amount of gold dug from the mines maintains Belus' interest. Aware that a major portion of his power is now tied to Arena, he takes special care not to let his forces there degrade. To ward against this Belus commands his air navy to make regular supply runs to the fastnesses he holds. They carry food, equipment, mining supplies, and replacement personnel lost in the course of duty. When they return the cargo holds are laden with precious metals, gems, and any oddities that might capture the interest of their lord.

An intelligent bloodlord, Belus has begun to incorporate established warlords into his network of resources. Og Brickhand is the most important acquisition thus far. Home to a large and exceptionally pure deposit of the meteoric metal slade (see *Plains of Penance*), Og's holdings provide an invaluable resource to Lord Belus. Aware

that regional opponents were moving against Brickhand, Belus extended a proposal, hoping to counter their aggression and ensure a source of slade. For the right to dock his aerial fleet for rest, gather supplies, and make repairs, Belus would aid Brickhand in securing his holding from all outside forces. Realizing the nature of the proposal, Brickhand was leery but could see little choice—for the moment. By the unspoken threat of invasion, Brickhand entered into a mutual aid pact with Belus to ensure the survival of his holding.

Friction does exist between the forces of the proxies and Belus' forces, though it is usually relegated to tavern brawls in the early hours of shroud. Only once did it mushroom into something more critical. Moved by anger, the bloodlord brought three armies against the transgressor and laid waste to his holding. The rebellious lord was taken to Penance for the bloodlord's personal entertainment while the remaining citizens were sold to merchants from the Vault.

Another Penance bloodlord who takes a special interest in Arena is Galak Mabon of Blackwall. With cantons on either side of River Xanthus, Mabon controls the flow of traffic to and from the two domains. The main thoroughfare by which merchants ply their trade, the Xanthus is a bustling conduit of wealth and merchandise. Every manner of trade good passes on this route, making it the second best supplied region next to Penance itself.

The wealthiest of the bloodlords, Mabon oversees a number of way stations in Arena along the river's length, allowing travelers a safe place to rest before proceeding on their journey. The stay is surprisingly cheap, amounting to only 10 gp per vessel and 1 sp per passenger. The true profit comes from the goods the way stations buy and sell. The continual influx of wares makes the way stations a vital source of steady revenue. This profitability has marked the way stations as targets for greed driven warlords. They are well fortified with experienced troops and combat spellcasters. Despite their limited numbers, the defenders have repulsed attackers on a number of occasions, lending an air of invulnerability to the way stations that Mabon is beginning to market. Citing that they are the safest locations in Arena, the traffic passing through their portals has increased threefold.

The most important access point to Arena from Penance is the city of Temper. A nest of ceaseless activity, it sports fantastic entertainment facilities meant to tempt merchant and visitor alike. Designed to pry wealth from the fingers of the covetous, Temper's social setting is one of wild fantasies and wilder realities. Special inns cater to the needs of demented clients. No matter how exotic or dark the desire there is someone willing to provide it—for a price. Drugs, rape, and murder are available to all, magically induced or real. In a city where passions and sinister tastes are currencies to be bartered, the virtuous are those who partake sparingly.

Many of the soldiers that traipse the barren landscape of Arena had one last day of pleasure in Temper. Whether willingly enlisting in the forces of a recruiting warlord or drugged and pressed into service, the warriors find themselves pawns in a game which has no rules, and winning only forestalls defeat. A significant center of recruitment and slavery, Temper has representatives of bloodlords, warlords, and merchants who vie for control of the avail-

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able living resources. To this end they establish businesses promoting their product, whether it is a bloodlord seeking to defend his gold mine or a warlord looking for revenge.

Most of these companies operate openly, declaring the objective and the benefits afforded those who participate. Benefits are ephemeral affairs designed to drown the senses for a few days. These places blur the lines of morality until they vanish, taking all inhibition with them. Every whim is made real and every reality is treated like a whim. All proclivities are provided for and even encouraged. The last days of freedom and life are made to be as enjoyable as possible before the enlistee is shipped off to whatever fate holds.

Other interested parties sign on for more corporeal reasons. Perhaps their village has accumulated substantial debt to the business owner and by enlisting they can get the lien forgiven. Similarly, entire populations have enlisted in order to avoid displacement to an invading power or a repressive overseer. Though rare, they are usually accepted en masse and sent to establish a new village in Arena at the business owner's direction. They are provided all the materials required for such an endeavor with success resting solely on their shoulders. Those that fail are a fleeting memory, but those who succeed become added to the economic network of the warlord or bloodlord.

The most insidious recruiters are the slavers. Dwelling in a haze of semi-secrecy, they present themselves as regular Temper merchants to the unwary. Employing drugs, physical force, and deception they collect living properties that are sold to needy warlords, bloodlords, and the chilling inhabitants of the Vault. Many of the enslaved are destined to fight and die on the sands of the Arena at the behest of some faceless lord concerned only for his own wealth. Others will toil for a brief period in the dank mines until disease and despondency claim them. The unlucky are sold to the undead emissaries of the Vault, never to be seen again.

The Vault

As hungry as Penance is for art and gold, the inhabitants of the Vault are ravenous for life. The domain of Nemamiah the Leper is a nearly lifeless region, devoid of the basic economic needs that assist in the normal establishment of trade. Populated by undead and the soon-to-be, the necessities of food, clothing, cookware, and other consumables are not required, leaving the visiting merchants in a quandary over what wares to provide.

The answer rests in the social structure of the domain. Obsessed with departing the mortal sphere, Nemamiah seeds his domain with powerful spellcasters, known as Warlocks, who are swiftly condemned to undeath and instilled with a loathing for their lord that overcomes all other emotions. Secretly hoping for success, Nemamiah encourages this behavior by obstructing research that has no potential of overcoming him. Prohibited from normal avenues of inquiry, the Warlocks' hatred is fueled even more. Thus provided an eternity in which to contemplate their doom, the seeds strive to fashion magic powerful enough to destroy their tormentor and free them from

confinement. Though many have come close to designing a device capable of destroying the Leper, none have succeeded.

To facilitate the manufacture of ensorcelled artifacts, Nemamiah allows selected Warlocks, who are compelled to serve him, to venture into Arena as merchants. Traveling in convoys more akin to funeral processions, the undead move up the River of the Dead in vessels fashioned from lashed bones. Prevented from abandoning their lord, these Warlocks are constrained to return to his domain. How this is accomplished is unknown, but it is generally thought that the Leper acts through them in some way, controlling their actions.

Being a warlord within 300 leagues of the River of the Dead bears a burden most find revolting, but ultimately rewarding. By methods not understood, the merchants from the Vault travel to all holdings within this area, laying claim to the dead in exchange for potent magic items and unique spells. The range from the river is absolute, changing with the river's course. A sudden shift can place a warlord in their path or remove him instantly. Knowledgeable warlords have subordinates assigned to the collection the dead, gatherers who are garbed in blood-red vests. The gathers pick through the battlefields and hospices, taking all corpses not reduced to bone or dust. Solemn and taciturn, they take the bodies to special pallets that are supplied by the Warlocks, with more pallets to the larger holdings. The pallets are of dark wood graven with mysterious sigils and patterns, each capable of accommodating 100 medium-sized bodies. All dead flesh placed thereon is protected from decomposition until it is removed.

The Warlocks appear when the pallets are full, either by land or river. They appear as if summoned and possess an unerring understanding of the exact number of corpses to be delivered into their chill fingers. If a warlord purposefully conceals a corpse, say of a favored companion, the Warlocks demand it, threatening dire events should they be denied. Corpses of the dead who have been restored to life are also demanded, though the Warlocks will take a living slave in exchange.

Though the Vault hungers for dead flesh, there is a decided need for the living as well. Many of the Warlocks' hideous experiments cannot be performed on the dead, necessitating the need for a warm body. Prisoners of battle and captured citizens of a defunct holding often make this final journey. The screams of the condemned can be heard for miles as the realization of their fate becomes plain. A most horrible of fates, there have been instances where the caravans have been attacked by allies of the prisoners. These missions are rarely successful, but those that do succeed provide some slim hope for those so destined.

Membership in this cult of the dead is mandatory. Wayward warlords meet quick defeat at the machinations of the Warlocks. After their defeat, as the battlefield stills and survivors weep, the Warlocks appear and begin collecting the dead. They ignore the pleas of the dying, leaving them for the following delivery. When the body of the defiant warlord is located, they all cease their activities and encircle the corpse. A few witnesses have reported that the lord's body is placed in a box of grayish-yellow marble half the size of a typical coffin. They also tell that

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screams echo from the box as soon as the lid is secured, ear-piercing wails of torment and dreadful comprehension. Needless to say, the number of disobedient warlords is extremely low, resulting in a steady inflow of corpses to the Vault.

The items given in trade for the dead are of all designs and powers. Some are unique, others are rare, but all are potent examples of the skill of the Warlocks. Arms, armor, and destructive magic capable of laying waste to vast portions of ground are the most common items available, as they facilitate the death trade. Wondrous items, rings, wands, and scrolls are less common, and often are resold in Penance and Eclipse. If requested, the Warlocks can provide animated objects, such as golems and clockworks, in place of magical items. These animations can be programmed by the warlord and his servants, and used as he sees fit. Whether the Warlocks still hold sway over the creations is unknown, but a wise ruler will always presume as much.

The value of items is always relevant to the number of dead handed over. This has led many unscrupulous warlords to sacrifice entire armies in pointless battles to obtain a higher death count. More corpses means more potent items offered in exchange. A delicate balance of subterfuge and charm must be employed with this tactic, for if the intent is ever made known to the soldiers, the warlord is surely "pallet-bound." More than one warlord has fallen to his own forces when rumors of this nature run rampant through the ranks.

There is one more unusual element of trade between the two domains. The ith'n ya'roo, the bestial folk who dwell at the fringe of the Vault, make infrequent forays into Arena looking for meat and occasional trade. Unless persuaded to the contrary, the ith'n ya'roo see all other beings as animals to be hunted or domesticated. The presentation of wine or gold or valor in battle is the only known method of convincing the ith'n ya'roo of another's intelligence. Once this conceptual barrier has been breached, trade can occur.

A nomadic people, the ith'n ya'roo do not require traditional trade goods, except wine and anything fashioned of gold. In reciprocation they offer some of the finest carvings ever made. All of bone, they tend to be large and elegant, a gentle mix of geometric patterns and idealistic animal forms. To the trained eye each piece tells a story, often about some aspect of the carver's life. A dedicated collector will possess a series of carvings by the same artist, in essence a biography. The elders of the tribe enchant a precious few of the carvings. Most are naturalistic in tone, directing their magic towards animals and the environment. A very few, seldom parted with, are crafted to ward against the undead of the Vault. Seeing the scions of Nemamiah as an abomination of the natural process, the ith'n ya'roo generate items specifically useful against the unliving. Understanding the value of such items to those who would contest the authority of the southern domain, the ith'n ya'roo sell them at steep prices, normally a full caravan of wine.

Where trade is normally an exchange of items to the agreement of both parties, the relationship of Wildwood and Arena is a story of theft, ambivalence, revenge, and greed. The forested domain of Haiel is bereft of an economy as most interpret it. Its populace is scattered throughout the wilderness, with only a few settlements large enough to be considered cities. Most never have significant contact with the outside world and when they do it is with rashers in search of adventure. This dearth of trans-domain trade provides the impetus for Arena warlords to take what they need since there is nothing they can offer the residents of Wildwood in replacement.

The coveted resources are selected for their proximity and abundance. A military camp is quickly established with defense the priority. After scouting the region, the most valuable sections of the forest are located and marked for processing. Wood, medicinal ingredients and animal by-products are all harvested with equal verve, with distinct groups of workers assigned to each task.

Trees are felled around the clock, except for periods of true night. The trees are dragged by teams of kine back to camp and there are hewn into lumber before being separated according to quality and type. Meanwhile, teams of skilled herbalists investigate all manner of plants, searching for those that may have beneficial effects. Promising plants are identified and gathered, after which they are processed before being packaged for transport. Another team hunts the thick tangles of forest and its undergrowth for the creatures that dwell there. Pelts, flesh and trophies are collected and preserved, most finding their way to the warlord's personal chambers or to the well-heeled bloodlords of Penance. Occasionally, live specimens of dangerous creatures are captured and sent to the combat pits of the warlord's holding for the enjoyment of the cheering crowds.

At set intervals caravans sponsored by the warlord arrive at the camp. These bring troop reinforcements, craftsmen, and supplies, such as food, clothing, and entertainment. The appearance of a caravan is cause for a day of giddy excitement by the camp workers. Unable to indulge in frivolity, they take these moments to enjoy themselves and forget the severity of their jobs. An intelligent warlord always includes musicians, actors, and individuals skilled at carnal pleasure. Collectively, they lighten the mood of the camp and maintain an elevated sense of morale. When departing the rim of the Wildwood, these caravans take the processed goods the camp has been able to acquire.

The devastated land worked over by the camp inhabitants is eventually burned to ash and converted to farmland. Alorak fruits are popular, as are the various grains. If the soil permits, cotton is grown and carded, the fibers spun into colorful thread from which fabrics are woven for exporting. If nothing interferes with the process, these settlements pave the way for the enlargement of the warlord's holding. The warlord can supply his war needs and develop a new resource with only the expenditure of a few soldiers.

Interference is, however, as sure as sunlight. Conclaves of Wildwood dwellers who take umbrage at the intrusion of the warlords work along the edges of the settle-

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ments, preying on the lost and weak. Their tactics include capturing a single member of the camp and interrogating him, often with torture, about the defense of the settlement. If an attack on the camp is conceivable, the conclave members begin targeting the foresters and herbalist, as they are less well armed than the hunters. With stealth and caution, they can remove a significant number of camp inhabitants before their presence is realized. And even after it is, the attacks continue, but in a more open and straightforward manner.

If the residents of Wildwood have success in their campaign, they plan an assault on the camp. The attackers often use fire, as well as nature itself: poisons, forest predators, and so on. If a shaman or druid is present, they may summon the very plants to fight for them. It is a titanic spectacle, as the very wilderness comes alive to attack the invaders.

Settlements that succumb to the activities of the defenders of the forest are quickly replaced by the warlord, but usually with a larger body of soldiers. Forays into the leafy canopy of the Wildwood encounter hastily vacated campsites at best or ambushes at worst. The hunt continues until either the forest dwellers are confronted and slain or the warlord's forces are expelled. Historically, the inhabitants of Wildwood fail in the defense of their homes. Though lacking the organizational skills and resources of their opponents, they fight on; making every tree and plant lost to the warlords a costly one.

The Central Ocean

The chill waters of the Central Ocean are home to the trusk, a race of intelligent aquatic mammals whose society is spread throughout the murky depths and shallow coasts. A bombastic race, they have little interaction with outsiders, seeing them as interlopers sent to foment trouble. What contact they do have tends to be violent. Many merchants and warlords have met a sinister fate at their hands, their vessels hulled from beneath by the repeated blows from narwhales allied with the trusk. The narwhales and trusk then slaughter the crew in the water and destroy the cargo after gleaning anything of value. Warlords who have experienced this loss have little recourse, as the vastness of the ocean deters any effective retribution. Those that have tried never return to their ports of call, apparent victims of trusk territorial protectiveness.

With little need for the products of other cultures, the trusk ignore most overtures of trade. There are exceptions, usually by the clans who dwell near the coasts of Kiln and Arena. Some warlords and merchants have cultivated an understanding with these trusk, allowing them to proceed through their territories unmolested. The privilege is not free, but requires a stipend paid on every trip. Those who do not pay are treated as trespassers and summarily sunk. Ships with this advantage use it to engage in commerce. The trusk of these regions have become enamored with the bone carvings fashioned by the two domains, and trade pearls, rare minerals, and exotic sculptures of *deepflow* for the trinkets. They also enjoy gems and gold jewelry, as they do not deteriorate in the water.

Other aquatic tribes exist, though nowhere near the extent of the trusk. Tritons and locathah cling to the depths, populating areas not desirable to the trusk. The limited settlements in their possession place them on the extreme edge of communications with the residents of Arena, as both feel threatened by the aggressive mammals. The tritons are the most outgoing, offering to serve as guides for the right prices. Knowledgeable of the undercurrents and hidden dangers makes them superlative scouts of the underwater realm. The locathah are more detached, making contact more by accident than design. When approached and given proof that they are not in danger, they are quite helpful. They greatly fear the trusk and this fear can be turned to the advantage of the guest.

The depths also hide secrets best left unsaid. Triton legends speak of a people, now extinct, that once held sway over the entire ocean. A race of cephalopods with hardened shells, powerful intellects, and the ability to breathe air, they mastered an empire that extended miles inland. The legends go on the say that they encroached on the citadels of Bathkol and Barbello in ages past and that a titanic war erupted involving both Feathered Fowl and their personal forces. The details of the conflict are forgotten, but not the outcome. Destroyed and scattered, the remnants of the once mighty empire are said to lurk in the deepest chasms of the ocean, regaining strength before continuing their contest.

Regardless of the race's ultimate fate, there remains evidence of their passing. In the deep trenches that parallel the northern coast are a series of fastnesses that are fashioned from the living rock. Vacant and massive, the structures are feats of architectural magnificence, exhibiting entire walls that fold away with a touch and chambers that can be filled with air or water by touching a series of colored stones. Expeditions to these underwater wonders have garnered items of fantastic potency that augment the thoughts and whims of the wielders. Most are of an oddly mundane sort, acting as visual displays of an individual's surface thoughts, while others instill awesome psionic talent to even the most closed mind.

The Northern Ocean

This ocean is the domain of the ceptu. Its warm waters are bursting with life, and the resources available there make living beneath its surface relatively easy. A burgeoning race, the ceptu have quietly conquered the ocean, with only a few pockets currently beyond their reach. Most are organized around councils of carriers who oversee the political and social agendas of the settlements. The healthy economy of the ceptu reflects the stability they enjoy. They trade with all species that fall within their auspices, both aquatic and land-bound.

They make frequent trips to the northern coast of Arena, selling pearls, colorful carvings of coral, and seafood. They have also recently begun to sell slabs of green, flaky material made from processed kelp. Known as *wassubbee*, the substance makes a nutritious broth when added to warm water. Capable of sustaining carnivore and herbivore alike, the material is extremely popular with

warlords running on a tight budget. A single cracker-sized piece can provide a meal for a normal human and has a shelf life of several years if kept dry.

The ceptu have a keen taste for fruits and vegetables, buying them at steep prices if fresh. The rarity of terrestrial plants makes them a novelty to the sea-dwelling creatures, which treat them as delicacies served to guests at important social functions. The ceptu also enjoy fine glassware, trading examples of their art for it. Since neither the ceptu nor the Arena merchants pay much for the goods they trade, the commerce is gaining strength, becoming a sizable source of income for warlords in that region.

A ceptu of particular note is Quee'eetee Sandblossom, a psion of immense power who has transformed itself into a capable warlord. Commanding a significant portion of the northern coast, Sandblossom controls several islands and the surrounding ocean terrain. As with most warlords, it is protective, attacking any who would intrude. Half-orcs, valcos, and dovers make up the bulk of its land forces, settling in small communities assigned to guard Lake Phoe, its home. The aquatic forces are almost solely ceptus swayed by the word of Sandblossom. Communication with outsiders is steady and regular. Merchants and emissaries make overtures, asking for permission to enter the territory. If granted, they proceed with commerce or diplomacy; if not, they are often attacked, eliminating any chance of them spying on the holding or otherwise acting against it.

When trade does occur, it is with gems and precious metals mined from the islands held by Sandblossom's forces. The quality of these gems is excellent, making them a favorite for jewelers across the Forge. The gold and silver they mine is less plentiful, but notable for the shades of color it possesses. Caused by impurities, the gold is found in shades of red and violet, while the silver is blue or green. Though the metallic properties remain the same, the unique hues make the metal a sought-after property for the wealthy.

Another strange product of Sandblossom's holding is a species of semi-intelligent coral known as questal. Found only in the southern waters of the ocean, it is capable of being trained to construct aquatic structures with unusual speed. Employed mainly by the most influential ceptus, questal buildings are able to quickly heal structural damage and alter their physical shape over time. A beneficial side effect of the questal's food consumption is the excrement of a thick, oily sap known as t'secen that can be molded into small objects while still soft. Once dried, t'secen objects take on an orange sheen that darkens or lightens according to the phases of the suns. As to the nature of this connection none can say, but it is speculated that the orbital forces of the suns affects the internal structure of the t'secen.

The Southern Ocean

Surrounded by Arena and the Vault, the Southern Ocean is a frigid region of ice floes and migrating sea life. The harshest of the oceans, it is likely the most dangerous. Pirates and the dreaded makkru stalk the sea, taking whatever they can, whenever they can. The pirates seldom act independently; more often they are hired free-

booters in the employ of one warlord or another. The Grand Asherake is the largest employer of such mercenaries, using them to guard his coast while weakening the navies of his opponents. The contract between the parties is mutually beneficial. The Grand Asherake gains security and income from the booty collected, while the pirates are provided a safe harbor in which to rest and sell their acquisitions. Merchants sponsored by the warlords or the bloodlords of Penance always have an escort of freebooters hired to protect them.

The makkru are a sharklike race capable of short excursions on land. Violent by nature, they make exceptional guards and are sometimes used by merchants for that purpose. Having little desire to acquire gold or other forms of material wealth, the makkru trade only when items unavailable in their settlements are offered. Wares of stone and bone are welcome, as are slaves who are devoured on the spot. In fact, sentient flesh carries the highest premium for the makkru, who will swear service for a limited period to the provider. A favorite method of disposing of unwanted prisoners, it is also the method used when ships encounter makkru unexpectedly. Crewmembers are swiftly tossed overboard to placate the fierce creatures that in turn leave the remaining crew to their own devices. Makkru adolescents commonly exploit this by terrorizing vessels just to see what is tossed off.

Occasionally, ice sheets break away from the Vault and progress along the coast. When these floes encounter a coastal settlement, they mysteriously stop and float towards shore. Once beached, the ice melts and reveals a lone Warlock. Once ashore the Warlock pronounces that the village must select and sacrifice three children to it to avoid destruction. Most villages agree, fearful of the reputation of the Warlocks and Nemamah. If they acquiesce, the Warlock commands that the sacrifices be stripped naked and tossed into the water behind it. The victims instantly freeze and bob to the surface. When all three have been presented, the Warlock freezes the surface water, creating a new floe, which slowly returns whence it came.

Villages that refuse to accommodate the Warlock are subjected to terrible reprisals from a band of dark-furred ith'n ya'roo that can spout freezing gouts of air. What is known is that the ith'n ya'roo that attack are different from those who roam free across the glaciers. The method of inducing these ith'n ya'roo to attack is puzzling considering that the species bears no love for the other inhabitants of the Vault. Also puzzling is the purpose of collecting the children, though some speculate that it is for breeding programs. Several bands of rashers have followed the abducted children and the marauding ith'n ya'roo, but as yet none have returned.



WAR

"The chaff of the enemy shall fall before me, as overripe grain to a keen scythe."

- A traditional soldier's oath uttered before battle.

Mass Combat System

This system is a quick and dirty method for handling mass combat in the d20 system. This is a relatively straightforward system that can be adapted to any setting. In order to make this system useful, certain battle conditions are discussed that are not likely in Arena or the Forge, such as the arrival of a deity, muddy terrain, etc. The entire Mass Combat System, minus the few names and places specific to OATHBOUND, is open game content and any game publisher that wishes to use it in their product is encouraged to do so.

What this system is not is a comprehensive tactical combat system. In an actual medieval war there are numerous additional types of troop units and advanced combat tactics. When using a system that takes that degree of complexity into account, the game ceases to be role playing and becomes a wargame. The mass combat system is not a wargame, it is a method for handling combat on a massive scale, while retaining the focus on the heroic characters involved. If it is a wargame that you and your group desires, there are numerous war games on the market, some of which are compatible with the d20 system. If, on the other hand, you desire a method to quickly resolve massive battles without having to resort to GM's fiat, then this system is for you.

Overview

The combat system functions in much the same way combat does with a standard d20 game, with the exception that when an attack is made, some degree of success is automatically assumed, hit points are measured by combatants, and weapon damage has more to do with your attack roll than a damage roll.

An army is led by its warlord and is divided into units. Each unit starts out consisting of 1,000 troops. Most units are made up of a single type, though it is possible to have mixed units. Units are treated much like characters. They have a Defense Rating, which is determined by armor and training. They have a Base Attack Bonus, which is determined by training and their level. They have troops, which function much like hit points. They have saving throws, which function in exactly the same way as they would in a standard d20 game. Each unit type also has special unit abilities that they may use to affect their performance in the battle.

The Battlefield

When using the Mass Combat System, players have the option of either visualizing the battlefield or mapping it out. Visualizing the battlefield, while possible, is difficult because it is important to keep track of the position of troops on the field. A unit of clerics, for instance, must be touching any unit they wish to heal. When visualizing

Illustrated by Alexander Leonard

the battlefield, it is important that the GM take notes to keep track of where unit is placed, and for the player to clearly define what actions the units under his control will take.

Another option is to map out the battlefield. This can be done on a game mat using erasable markers, or boundaries can be defined with tape or other objects. The best scale to use is 1 inch equals 50 feet.

The army can be represented with miniatures made of plastic, pewter, or cardboard counters. Since each starting unit consists of 1,000 soldiers, the best way to represent this on the battlefield by having each miniature or counter represent 100 soldiers. Whenever 100 points of damage are sustained by a unit, one counter is removed.

How Combat Works

The sequence of events in a combat round is limited to four basic operations, and equates to a standard melee round for PCs. The explanation of each operation is detailed below, along with some examples.

Step 1: Initiative

Step 2: Actions are declared

Step 3: Saving throws (if any) are made

Step 4: Damage is calculated and assigned

Initiative: Each round of mass combat equals 1 minute.

Initiative is determined at the beginning of combat and determines what order the units act in. Unlike the standard d20 system where initiative is determined by the Dexterity modifier, in this system the level of each unit wholly determines the initiative bonus. A d20 is rolled, the initiative bonus is added to the roll, and that determines the order in which the units act.

Actions: Actions in combat are relatively simple: a unit may charge, attack, defend, move, cast spells, or retreat.

Charge: The unit rushes towards its opponents, attacking them as they meet. This is rapid advance that has the effect of causing an extra damage die of casualties to the enemy troops. The drawback to a charge is that the charging group takes additional damage from their opponent, who gains a +1 step bonus on the Damage Mitigation Table. The charging unit receives a +2 step bonus on the Damage Mitigation Table. Units, both foot and mounted, move at twice their standard movement rate when making a charge. A unit may charge forward for as many rounds as necessary to reach their opponents, but must cease their charge once an opposing unit is met.

Attack: The unit level, the unit type, and situational modifiers determine the Attack Rating. Attack modifiers may change from round to round. The attacking unit rolls the d20 and adds its Base Attack, then compares this roll to the defending unit's Defense Rating. Since all attacks are assumed to cause some damage, what is determined is how effective the attack was, so the roll is compared to the Damage Mitigation Table. A roll of a 1 means that the attack was completely ineffective while a natural 20 means that the attack inflicts one and a half times regular damage.

Any units that engage multiple enemy units make an attack roll against each enemy unit and then apply an equal number of damage dice to all opposing units. The attack roll suffers a -2 penalty on the Damage Mitigation Table. For example, a unit of footmen with a total attack

rating of +4 (+3 for being 3rd level and for holding higher ground) confronts two opposing units of footmen (DR 16). Attack rolls are made against each opponent, with the total damage dice split evenly between them.

Cast Spells: Spells in the Mass Combat System are handled abstractly in order to expedite their handling. Spells are effectively split between damage-causing, protection, healing, and summoning spells. See the entries for arcane and divine spellcaster units for details.

Defend: A unit that is defending suffers only half the casualties for that round and gains a +4 to its Defense Rating. An attack roll is still made against any opponents that may be engaging them, but they inflict only half of the damage dice against their opponents that round.

Move: The base movement rate for a unit is 100 ft. Most units move this speed, although some move twice or even three times as fast. This represents the base distance that a unit marching in formation can cover in one round. Charging units move at twice this speed.

Retreat: This is a withdrawal from enemy units. When this is done, the opponent opposing the retreating unit is entitled to a single extra attack before the retreating unit moves. This attack inflicts only half of its standard damage dice. Retreating units may move at their standard speed or twice their standard speed. Any unit sounding a retreat gains the effect of a Defense action for the round their retreat begins, though it may not initiate an attack except in defense.

Support: A unit can ready an action and wait for a specific set of events to occur, or serve as reinforcements and backup for other units.

Saving Throws

Saving throws are determined by type of unit, the unit's level, and any additional modifiers that may be in place due to spells or combat conditions. Whenever a save is required, a single save roll is made for the entire unit. Saves are the same as in the standard d20 game: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.

Damage

In the Mass Combat System, each unit is assigned a range of damage it is capable of inflicting. This amount of damage increases as the unit advances in rank. When an attack roll is calculated, consult the **Table 8.1: Damage Mitigation**. Aside from rolling a natural 1, no attack does less than 1 damage dice. Each entry in the Attack Roll Difference column represents a step up or down. Thus, missing the target's Defense Rating by -4 represents a -2 step penalty on the Damage Mitigation Table. Some entries state a bonus step or penalty step modifier (e.g. +2 step bonus or -1 step penalty). These adjustments modify the attack roll difference by raising or lowering it accordingly, generating a better or worse damage dice outcome.

The amount of damage equals the number of casualties a unit sustains in combat at a 1:1 ratio; each point of damage representing one member of the enemy unit killed or incapacitated. Many of these individuals are killed and many others are too wounded to fight without healing.

Table 8.1 - Damage Mitigation

Attack Roll Difference	Damage Dice
Natural 1	No damage
11 or less	-7
-10 to -6	-5
-5 to -3	-3
-2 to -1	-1
0 to 5	Normal
6 to 10	+1
11 or more	+3
Natural 20	1.5 X Normal Damage

Example: A footman unit attacks another footman unit; the attacking footmen have an Attack Rating of +3 and their enemy has a Defense Rating of 14. The attacking player rolls the d20 and gets a 17. The Attack Rating of 3 is added to this roll, so the attack succeeded by +6. Damage dice are rolled, resulting in 65 casualties. Since the roll was 6 more than the enemy's Defense Rating, an additional damage Dice is added, resulting in a total of 74 casualties that round.

Victory Conditions

The conditions for victory depend upon the battle being fought. For example, the objective of a unit may be to conquer a bridge, hold it long enough for supplies to move over it, and then fall back to a secured location. In such a scenario, even though the opponent's forces were only temporarily driven back, the mission was a success. This limited sort of engagement is counted as a victory for advancement purposes.

More often than not, however, a battle will be a pitched engagement between two hostile forces who will literally be fighting for their survival as well as the survival of those whom they protect. Victory can only be defined by whether or not the army can stand against the opposing force. In such cases, the following guidelines apply.

Every round after a unit has been reduced to 50% of their original number, the unit must make a morale check, which consists of a Will save (DC 15); failure indicates it retreats or it ends hostilities. Should they fail their saving throw, a Fort save (DC 15) must be made. If the unit fails the second save, it surrenders to the enemy. Should it succeed at its second save, the unit retreats as above.

Any time 75% or more of the original units in the army have ceased hostilities, the remainder of the entire army must make the same Will save as detailed above. Should they fail this save, the army retreats.

Player Characters and War

While the Mass Combat System is designed for play between two opposing forces, there is room for player characters to get involved. Player characters taking a leadership role in a unit issue the commands for that unit and reap a measure of the rewards if they lead their unit to victory. If that PC's unit is destroyed, the PC is the last to fall, unless specifically targeted by a Concentrated Strike (see below) by archers or an Ambush attack by skirmish-

ers. For the purposes of calculating rewards, PCs that lead a unit to victory earn experience as though they had defeated an opponent with a challenge rating equal to their level. PCs can become involved in a war in the ways listed below:

Special Goal

While the fighting rages on the battlefield, the PCs may be called to perform a special duty in order to advance the goals of the entire army. This may involve entering a secret tunnel that leads to the other side of castle walls where the PCs must locate the crank that controls the portcullis and open the main doors. It may be to find a specific individual and bring them back to the rest of the army. It may be to locate a powerful item in a nearby area while the war continues.

The important thing to remember when integrating PCs into a battle in this way is that one round of action for a PC is 6 seconds compared to the 60 seconds it takes for one round of mass combat. This means that the PCs get 10 rounds for each of the army's rounds.

Commanding a Unit

PCs may take command of a fighting unit. When this is done, the round to round combat is not tracked as carefully as it is when adventuring. It is assumed that the PC is a true hero, who is a more capable combatant than the unit that serves beneath him. It is up to the PC to make the decisions for the unit, rather than having that responsibility fall entirely on the warlord. For many PCs this leads to fame and fortune as the tales of their bravery spread, while for others who are less skilled at battlefield tactics, it can lead to embarrassment, misfortune, and infamy.

Participating in the Battle

Difficult for the GM to run, but an option just the same, some PCs may wish to participate in the battle as the battle wages. What this entails is running two combats at once. On one hand, the PC is on the battlefield with a large group of actual soldiers while they face a seemingly unending sea of enemy troops. The other combat is the standard mass combat between enemy armies. When this occurs, the PCs get 10 rounds between the army's rounds, and the PCs kills during that time are added to the casualties for that round. The NPCs that the PCs fight against should be average characters from the DMG of the appropriate type based on their unit. PCs so engaged may still issue commands to their units as normal.

Units

An army consists of soldiers, units, and subdivisions. In the Mass Combat System, we are concerned with acquiring, training and maintaining the soldiers that comprise units. While smaller subdivisions perform important functions within a unit, this system is not concerned with that degree of minutia. When armies clash, each unit is played against opposing units until a victor emerges.

Costs

An army costs a great deal of gold to form, outfit, and maintain. The initial costs of forming an army are 10,000 gp per unit. This amount is assumed a 10-gp payment to the soldier for joining the unit.

A warlord with lands under his control may choose to forego this expense by forcing able-bodied individuals into their army, but doing so has dramatic negative effects on the soldier's morale. The troops of a warlord recruiting in this way lose 1 level, deal 1 fewer damage die by level than they should, and take a -2 penalty to their Defense Rating.

Other warlords are able to recruit soldiers without this expense if they promote a cause that is popular enough with the people that they would be willing to lay down their lives for it. Warlords who actively hold lands are not eligible to raise an army in this way; however, deposed warlords may. Once the warlord has achieved her objectives, she must either begin paying her army, or the army will disband of its own accord. It is up to the GM to determine whether or not conditions exist warranting the raising of an army in this way. Some situations that might justify it include fighting against an oppressive leader, an enemy that has killed many innocents, or an occupying force.

Armies must be properly equipped. Equipping them at a minimum level includes purchasing weapons, armor, and survival gear. The standard amount that must be spent on equipping a unit is 15,000 gp, assuming that some portion of the army or the forces under the warlord's control is manufacturing these items for the army. If these must be purchased on the open market, that amount doubles.

Armies march on their stomachs. An army that isn't properly fed isn't able to fight or cover the distances necessary to fight their battles. A warlord must pay 100 gp per day to feed a unit and have a method for acquiring the necessary food. This may include carrying wagonloads of food with the army, or maintaining and protecting a supply line to constantly move food to the army.

If a unit forages for supplies, its daily movement rate is halved. Gathering supplies in populated or naturally abundant regions provides the foraging units all their immediate needs. If foraging in areas of sparse resources, the foraging unit must make a Fort save (DC 15) in order to gather enough supplies for one day. Failure causes the unit to suffer 10d6 points of damage from dehydration, sickness, and hunger. If a suitable area to replenish supplies is found, half of these lost points can be returned in one day.

Advancement

Units begin at their warlord's character level divided by 5. They do not advance as their warlord advances, though new units are created after a warlord has gained a number of levels start at the higher level divided by 5.

Units advance in level by either winning battles or training. The table below shows the conditions by which an army may advance. The table indicates the total number of battles, or the total amount of gold necessary to raise a unit of a particular level. For example, a warlord

wanting to train a 3rd level unit up to a 5th level unit pays 100,000 gp (125,000 for a 5th level unit—25,000, which accounts for the level that they have already attained). Units may not advance beyond 10th level by any means.

Unit Level	Battles Won	GP
1	0	10,000
2	3	15,000
3	7	25,000
4	12	45,000
5	18	125,000
6	25	285,000
7	33	605,000
8	42	1,245,000
9	52	2,525,000
10	63	5,085,000

Certain features of a unit can be advanced by 1 without advancing the unit an entire level. A unit's statistic may be advanced no more than their current level's value +3. Once an increase has been purchased, it is permanent, and remains at a higher value as the unit advances in level normally. The cost for advancing a single statistic of a unit is equal to a set percentage of the cost to advance the unit to the next increase in that stat, as is illustrated in the table below.

Stat	Percentage
Base Attack Bonus	50%
Defense Rating	20%
Saving Throw	10%

For example, a 4th-level divine spellcasting unit wants to train to increase its base attack bonus by 1. Since it would normally take 2 levels to increase the base attack bonus by 1 from its current value, and increasing the base attack bonus constitutes 50% of the cost of buying a level, the warlord must spend 50% of the difference between a 4th-level unit and a 6th-level unit. This ends up costing the warlord 120,000 gp.

Walls and Doors

The d20 system already contains a complex system for destroying walls or breaking down doors. This system works when 1 round equals 6 seconds and the player characters are involved with the destruction or the defense of those walls. In a battle, gaining access to a stronghold becomes more complicated. Not only do you need to break through the barrier separating you from your enemies, but most strongholds are equipped with murder holes, parapets that allows enemies to spill hot pitch on you, and lethal traps.

In the Mass Combat System, defended access points and barriers are treated as their own units. The statistics for these units match that of footmen units, with the following exceptions: They are motionless, attacking units cannot move past them until they are destroyed, and they automatically impose a -2 step penalty on the Damage Mitigation Table for attacks made against them. Castle gates and portcullises can sustain 700 points of damage before failing. Wall sections not exceeding 50 feet in length can sustain 1,000 points of damage before failing. For the

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purposes of this system, walls cost the same amount as level 4 footmen. No more than a single unit can be used to defend a 200-foot section of wall (see Stronghold Walls under the Combat Modifiers section).

Combatants can enhance walls and gateways. A warlord can commit up to 300 points of a unit to reinforce a gateway or wall section. When this happens, those soldiers are counted as temporary hit points for the purpose of calculating the amount of damage suffered by the area they are defending. Damage inflicted to this area is split evenly between the added defenders and the area defended. The added defenders cannot attack an enemy themselves, but increase the regular defenders roll on the Damage Mitigation Table of +2. When the gateway or wall section does fail, the remaining additional troops can be returned to their original unit.

Effects of Casualties

Each unit is made up of 1,000 soldiers. As battle progresses, the number of soldiers decreases as damage is taken. As this happens, the unit's ability to fight effectively is diminished. This is reflected by the amount of damage they are capable of inflicting upon their opponents. For each 100 casualties a unit suffers, the unit does 1 fewer dice of damage to their opponents.

If an army possesses divine units, they may heal up to 75% of their losses. Divine units have a number of dice based in their unit's level that they are able to restore to another unit. While healing, a divine unit is unable to actively attack an enemy unit, although they are capable of defending against a unit attacking them.

Unit Types

These are the base types of units that can be commissioned.

Mixed Units

Mixing unit types in the Mass Combat System is possible, and works in much the same way as multiclassing a standard character in the d20 system. When the unit gains a level, the commanding player chooses to take a level of a different unit type. This allows that unit to gain the special unit abilities for the new unit type.

Mixing unit types does come at a price however. For every die of divine or arcane damage the unit adds, the unit must decrease its standard damage by that amount as well. The unit may trade out up to half of its original damage dice. From that point forward, the unit must decide which class to advance in each time they level up.

Monstrous Units

Monstrous units in the d20 system follow the same guidelines as creating monstrous characters. The key feature of the monster needed to generate a monstrous unit is the effective character level (ECL). The unit level adjustment of a monstrous unit is equal to the ECL of the creature.

For example, if a 20th-level warlord has a unit of asherake, the starting unit's level would be 6: 20 (warlord's level) divided by 5 = 4, plus the asherake's +2 level adjustment. Because more powerful creatures require more materiel to equip them, more food, and often require special housing arrangements, the recruiting cost of a level-adjusted unit equals the price in gold pieces of a unit equal to the level adjustment plus one. Therefore the recruiting price for an asherake unit is 25,000 gp. For purposes of this cost, creatures with a level adjustment higher than +10 function as a level 10 unit.

Arcane Spellcaster Units

Arcane spellcasting units are made up of wizards, sorcerers, and members of prestige classes that cast arcane spells. Like their non-military counterparts, arcane spellcasters wear little if any armor, so their primary purpose is to stay behind friendly lines and cast spells against the enemy. Arcane spellcasters deal a great deal more damage against their enemies than divine spellcasters do, but this comes at the cost of versatility.

Arcane spellcaster units have a reputation for being powerful but haughty. The standard footmen usually have little love for them and many warlords are afraid of what would happen should a spellcasting unit turn against them. For this reason they are usually watched closely, and the warlord usually makes sure that he can trust the arcane spellcasters' commander before agreeing to integrate them into his army.

Table 8.2 - Arcane Spellcaster Units

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Rating	Damage Dice
1	0	+0	+0	+2	Arcane Spells	12	6d4
2	+1	+0	+0	+3		12	6d4
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Summoning	12	8d4
4	+2	+1	+1	+4		13	8d4
5	+2	+1	+1	+4		13	10d4
6	+3	+2	+2	+5		13	10d4
7	+3	+2	+2	+5		14	12d4
8	+4	+2	+2	+6		14	12d4
9	+4	+3	+3	+6		14	14d4
10	+5	+3	+3	+7		15	14d4

Unit Types

make a Will save (DC 20). If failed the unit's magic is negated for that round. If the save is successful, the magic functions normally but the unit still deals -5 damage.

Uses Per

Level	Day	Damage	Protection
1	2	10d10	+1
2	4	10d10	+1
3	6	12d10	+2
4	8	12d10	+2
5	10	14d10	+3
6	12	14d10	+3
7	14	16d10	+4
8	16	16d10	+4
9	18	18d10	+5
10	20	18d10	+5

Archer Units

Archery units are a vital part of many armies and are usually comprised of rogues, rangers, and any prestige classes that specialize in the bow. Often, due to the limitations of the battlefield, it takes more than one round for a unit of footmen to charge into combat against enemy units. During this time, archers can soften up the opposing force by firing volleys of arrows at them. This has the effect of weakening the opposing force and sometimes even has the effect of halting their advance.

Archery units make every effort to stay as far away from the melee combat as possible. They fire from hill-sides, stronghold walls, and through murder holes built into the stronghold architecture especially for their use. Archery units are opposed by other units on the battlefield also capable of ranged attacks, including divine and arcane spellcaster units and other archery units.

Should they be forced into melee combat, an archery unit is able to switch weapons and deal the same amount of damage that they would normally be able to do with their bows, though they cannot use any of the unit's special abilities.

Move: 50 ft.

Darken the Sky: Twice per battle the archery unit can fire a hail of arrows so thick that it deals extra damage. The opposing unit is allowed a Reflex save (DC 15). If the save is successful, the arrows cause the normal amount of damage. If the enemy unit fails the saving throw, the damage is adjusted by +2 bonus steps on the Damage Mitigation Table.

Interrupt Advance: If an opposing unit is attempting to push the lines of battle either through Forced Advance or a charge attack, the archers can attempt to interrupt the enemy movement by firing a volley of arrows towards the advancing unit. If the attack scores a +1 modifier or better on the Damage Mitigation Table, the enemy's movement is halted.

Concentrated Strike: At 10th level, once per battle, the entire archery unit can focus their attack on the leader of an opposing unit. An attack is made against the enemy commander's AC. If the attack is a success, the enemy leader sustains 12d8 points of damage, while the enemy unit suffers 6d8 points of damage. Should this be enough to kill the unit's commander, the unit must make a morale check (see morale check under Victory Conditions).



Because arcane spellcasters don't deal a great amount of melee damage, low-level arcane spellcaster units typically have an exit plan to escape the battlefield once they have used their magic for the day. Only higher-level arcane spellcaster units choose to enter into melee combat, and they only do so if the footmen units protecting them fail, allowing enemy units to attack the spellcaster unit. When this happens, arcane spellcasters are able to reduce the number of melee damage dice they use against their enemies by up to half and replace those damage dice with the same number of arcane damage dice. Essentially the front of the arcane spellcasting unit is engaging in melee combat while the back portion of the unit is casting spells at their enemies.

Move: 50 ft.

Arcane spellcasters are able to cast spells at enemy units that are up to 300 feet away from their position. In addition to this, they can cast protection spells on their own unit as well as other units that are within their 300-ft. range. They may not use more than one effect per round. Enemy units are allowed a Reflex save (DC 15 + unit level) to sustain half of the casualties rolled. Protection spells add the number listed below to the target unit's Defense Rating. This effect lasts for 1d4 rounds +1 per 2 levels rounded down.

Arcane spellcaster units can also summon additional troops. Each summoning casts 2 points per level of the summoned unit. These points are deducted from the uses per day as noted below. A summoned unit functions as a footmen unit of the summoned level. Summoned units remain for 1 round per the summoning unit's level. The summoned unit can be immediately placed on the battlefield up to 50 feet from the summoning unit. For example, an 8th level arcane spellcaster unit decides to summon a 3rd level unit. At two points per summoned level, the unit costs the spellcaster unit six points from their available point allotment; thus the summoning unit spends six of its 16 points in summoning the 3rd level unit.

The table below shows the number of times per day arcane magic can be used and the amount of arcane damage it can bestow. When a arcane spellcaster unit employs arcane magic while engaged in melee combat, it must

Table 8.3 - Archer Units

Level	Bonus	Base Attack Save	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Special	Defense Rating	Damage Dice
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Darken the Sky	15	10d8
2	+2	+3	+0	+0		15	10d8
3	+3	+3	+1	+1		15	12d8
4	+4	+4	+1	+1		16	12d8
5	+5	+4	+1	+1		16	14d8
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Interrupt Advance	16	14d8
7	+7	+5	+2	+2		17	16d8
8	+8	+6	+2	+2		17	16d8
9	+9	+6	+3	+3		17	18d8
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Concentrate Strike	18	18d8

Cavalry Units

Cavalry are the mounted warriors that ride into battle, wreaking havoc upon their enemies. They are the elite fighting force of any army. These units are usually made up of fighters and paladins. When not in combat, because they are mounted and highly trained, it is normal for cavalry units to act as guards for warlords and generals.

Cavalry are not capable of forming or maintaining a line. In fact, their main purpose in battle is to penetrate an enemy unit, dealing massive amounts of damage to them. Because of this, they deal more damage than standard footmen, but their Defense Ratings suffer by comparison since enemy forces constantly surround them. Cavalry both inflict and sustain massive numbers of casualties.

Move: 50 ft.

Penetrating Strike: Rather than forming battle lines, cavalry ride directly into the midst of their enemies. Cavalry literally invade the area occupied by their enemies and occupy only that space. This allows their footmen units to attack the enemy from established lines of battle while cavalry eliminate the enemy from within. In order to occupy the same space as the enemy, the cavalry unit must have 100 feet of unprotected and unoccupied space in front of them to mount a charge. If there is not 100 feet of open space between the cavalry unit and an opposing

force, the cavalry unit can attack it from the outside in the same way standard units do. However, when attacking in this way, they suffer a -2 step penalty on the Damage Mitigation Table as this tactic detracts from their strength. Enemy units striking against a cavalry unit amidst them benefit from a +1 step bonus when calculating the casualties inflicted upon them.

Override: At 4th level, a cavalry unit follows up a Penetrating Strike with their override ability. This ability effectively stuns the enemy unit, causing them to suffer a -2 step penalty on the Damage Mitigation Table for 1d4 rounds.

Demoralize: At 7th level, once per battle, a cavalry unit is able to strike fear into the hearts of an enemy unit. The enemy unit must make a Will save (DC 15 + the cavalry's level). If this roll is failed, the enemy unit retreats for 2d4 rounds.

Decimate: At 10th level, once per battle, a cavalry unit rides into their opponents in a flurry during a Penetrating Strike, causing twice the standard casualties the cavalry unit is normally capable of in a single round. This amounts to 20d20 points of damage. If a natural 20 is rolled on this attack, the number of casualties becomes 30d20.

Table 8.4 - Cavalry Units

Level	Bonus	Base Attack Save	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Special	Defense Rating	Damage Dice
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Penetrating Strike	15	10d10
2	+2	+3	+0	+0		16	12d10
3	+3	+3	+1	+0		16	12d10
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Override	17	14d10
5	+5	+4	+1	+1		17	14d10
6	+6	+5	+2	+2		18	16d10
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Demoralize	18	16d10
8	+8	+6	+2	+2		19	18d10
9	+9	+6	+3	+3		19	18d10
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Decimate	20	20d10

Divine Spellcaster Units

Divine spellcaster units are comprised primarily of clerics, although they sometimes recruit members belonging to prestige classes that also use divine magic. These units have a number of beneficial talents. They are able to damage their opponents from a distance, though the amount of damage dealt is a lower amount than that of arcane spellcasters.

In addition to this, divine spellcasters are well armed and well armored, making them useful in direct combat with enemy units. They can cast protective spells on themselves, improving their ability to fight against other unit types, and they can use their magic to heal as much damage as they can cause to an opponent. Divine spellcasters are also able to hold a line as effectively as first level footmen.

Divine spellcasters also serve as a religious presence within an army. In a profession where death is commonplace and they see grisly scenes on a regular basis, the presence of religion is especially important for many of the troops. In this way, divine spellcasters are valued not merely for their combat versatility, but rather their ability to tend to the hearts and souls of the troops.

Move: 50 ft.

Divine Magic: Divine spellcasters are able to channel their magic in one of three ways. They are able to cause casualties, restore casualties, or protect their own unit. When using divine magic to cause damage, the Damage Mitigation Table is not consulted. Divine spellcasters use one of the effects from the table below each time they use their divine magic. They may not use more than one effect per round.

Enemy units are allowed a Reflex save (DC 15 + unit level) to suffer half of the casualties rolled. Divine damage may affect any unit within 150 feet. When a divine spellcaster unit employs divine magic while engaged in melee combat, it must make a Will save (DC 20). If failed the unit's magic is negated for that round. If the save is successful, the magic functions normally but the unit still deals -5 damage.

To use divine magic to heal, the unit must be touching the unit they wish to aid. No roll is made to mitigate the amount of casualties restored to action; however, divine spellcasters are unable to restore any more than 75% of a unit's existing casualties. Protection spells affect their

own units, adding the number listed below to the target unit's Defense Rating. This effect lasts for 1d4 rounds +1 per 2 levels rounded down.

The table below shows the number of times per day divine magic can be used, the number of casualties the unit can restore, and the amount of divine damage it can bestow.

Level	Uses	Casualties/	Protection
	Per Day	Damage Restored	
1	2	8d8	+1
2	4	8d8	+1
3	6	10d8	+1
4	8	10d8	+2
5	10	12d8	+2
6	12	12d8	+2
7	14	14d8	+3
8	16	14d8	+3
9	18	16d8	+3
10	20	16d8	+4

Hold the Line: At 1st level, a unit gains Hold the Line. When an enemy unit is trying to push back the unit, they make a contested roll against their opponent's Forced Advance roll. Hold the Line gives the unit a +1 bonus per level when opposing their enemy's Forced Advance roll. At 5th level the unit gains the Hold the Line +1 unit ability. This gives the unit a bonus of their unit level +1. At 8th level, a divine spellcaster unit gains Hold the Line +2, which give the unit an additional +1 bonus to contest a Forced Advance. Therefore, an 8th level unit of divine spellcasters has a +10 bonus to resist an enemy's Forced Advance.

Footmen Units

Made up of warriors and fighters, the footmen are the main fighting unit used in the majority of all armies. They are capable of engaging various different types of enemy units while forming battle lines that are difficult for the enemy to break. In addition to forming the battle lines, they are also able to push back enemy lines.

Only a portion of the actual footman unit is engaged with the enemy. This is normally 30% to 40% of the actual fighting unit. The rest of the soldiers on the battlefield

Table 8.5 - Divine Spellcasters

Level	Base				Special	Defense Rating	Damage Dice
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save			
1	+0	+1	+0	+2	Divine Magic, Hold the Line	15	8d8
2	+1	+2	+0	+3		16	8d8
3	+2	+3	+1	+3		17	10d8
4	+3	+3	+1	+4		18	10d8
5	+3	+4	+1	+4		19	12d8
6	+4	+4	+1	+5		20	12d8
7	+5	+5	+2	+5		21	14d8
8	+6	+6	+3	+6		22	14d8
9	+6	+6	+3	+6		23	16d8
10	+7	+7	+3	+7		24	16d8

War

are held in reserve to take the place of those on the front line who fall, and to fight cavalry forces that might breach their lines and attack the unit from within.

In many cases the lines of battle define the difference between success and failure of a battle. If defenders are pushed all the way to the back of the battlefield, they may leave spellcasting units exposed, or strongholds virtually undefended. Likewise, if attackers' lines are pushed back far enough, their attacks often fail to strike at their true targets or capture their objectives.

Footmen make up the common soldier in an army. There are typically two to three times as many footmen units in any given army than any other type of unit. Other than cavalry, they are the most often used on the front lines, and upon a victorious return, they are the ones most often recognized as heroes by their people. Footmen must be touching an enemy unit in order to engage them.

Move: 50 ft.

Hold the Line: At 1st level, a footman gains Hold the Line. When an enemy unit is trying to push back the unit, they make a contested roll against their opponent's Forced Advance roll. Hold the Line gives the unit a +1 bonus per level when opposing their enemy's Forced Advance roll. At 5th level the unit gains the Hold the Line +1 unit ability. This gives the unit a bonus of their unit level +1. At 8th level, a footmen unit gains Hold the Line +2, which

give the unit an additional +1 bonus to contest a Forced Advance. Therefore, an 8th level unit of footmen has a +10 bonus to resist an enemy's Forced Advance.

Forced Advance: At 3rd level, footman units are able to attempt to push any opposing units back 50 feet. To do this, the player makes a roll contested by their opponent's Hold the Line roll. The d20 is rolled and their unit level is added to the roll. If this roll is higher than the opposing unit's Hold the Line roll, their enemy is pushed back 50 ft. Enemy units that do not have the Hold the Line as a unit ability roll an unmodified d20 to oppose a Forced Advance. This ability takes 2 rounds, but the contested roll is only made once.

Invincibility: With the Invincibility unit ability, once per battle, the unit suffers no casualties for 1d4 rounds. The unit must be engaging only one enemy unit when using this unit ability.

Skirmisher Units

Skirmishers are not used as standard combatants. Some refer to them as irregular units, guerilla fighters, or even terrorists. Their job is to strike at a relatively unprotected target, then fade away quickly. These groups are primarily made up of rogues, though bards, rangers, and barbarians sometimes enter these units as well.



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Table 8.6 - Footman Units

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Rating	Damage Dice
1	+0	+2	+0	+0	Hold the Line	15	10d10
2	+1	+3	+0	+0		16	12d10
3	+2	+4	+1	+0	Forced Advance	17	12d10
4	+3	+4	+1	+1		18	14d10
5	+3	+4	+1	+1	Hold the Line +1	19	14d10
6	+4	+5	+2	+1		20	16d10
7	+5	+5	+2	+2		21	16d10
8	+6	+6	+2	+2	Hold the Line +2	22	18d10
9	+6	+6	+2	+2		23	18d10
10	+7	+7	+3	+3	Invincibility	24	20d10

Skirmish units are often sent covertly behind enemy lines to strike at arcane spellcasters. They are also used to disrupt enemy supply lines, take down targets of opportunity, such as leaders that may be traveling behind the army with light protection, or attack units that are not currently prepared for battle.

The most common tactic of a skirmish unit is to sneak in, attack their target for a limited number of rounds (usually 2 to 4), and then make use of their rapid speed to flee the area before their targets can become organized enough to effectively combat them.

Because of the questionable nature of many of the members of skirmish units, the other members of any army often view them with distrust. Some armies, worried about their valuables, sometimes even force them to camp at least 50 feet away from the rest of the army. At higher levels (usually 7+), their skill is recognized and most armies consider them to be an integral and necessary part of their fighting force.

Skirmish units may attack using ranged weapons from up to 50 feet away, or they may enter melee combat. They are equally equipped to deal with both forms of combat, and suffer no penalties for either melee or ranged combat.

Move: 50 ft.

Take Cover: A skirmish unit must hide themselves before attempting an ambush. This is done by wearing clothing that matches the local terrain and the natural fea-

tures of the land to sneak up on their opponents. These natural features may consist of large rocks, sand dunes, trees, branches, or other features that offer concealment. When making a Take Cover check, the player rolls the d20 plus the skirmish unit's level. This is compared to an unmodified d20 roll for all other standard units. Units containing a character may instead contest the Take Cover roll with the character's Spot check. Skirmish units attempting to take cover and ambush other skirmish units make this check against the opposing skirmish unit's Take Cover roll.

Ambush: If the skirmish unit successfully takes cover, the next round they can ambush an enemy unit. An Ambush attack causes the standard amount of damage the skirmish unit may make plus the Ambush damage indicated by level. In addition to this, enemy units that are ambushed are unable to mount an effective defense against a skirmish unit for 1d4 rounds, resulting in a -1 step penalty on the Damage Mitigation Table.

If a skirmish unit catches an enemy unit while encamped or otherwise unprepared for battle, it takes 2d4 rounds for the enemy unit to prepare an adequate defense against them. During this time, the enemy army suffers a -2 step penalty against them on the Damage Mitigation Table.

Table 8.7 - Skirmishers

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Rating	Damage Dice
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Take Cover Ambush +2d6	12	10d6
2	+1	+0	+3	+0		13	10d6
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Ambush +4d6	13	10d6
4	+3	+1	+4	+1		14	12d6
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Ambush +6d6	14	12d6
6	+4	+2	+5	+2		15	12d6
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Ambush +8d6	15	14d6
8	+6	+2	+6	+2		16	14d6
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Ambush +10d6	16	14d6
10	+7	+3	+7	+3		17	16d6

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“They say that a single grain of sand can be changed into a pearl by the sea. The red dunes of Arena also yield gems but of a different luster – gems of bone and blood. Aye, there are as many mortal jewels in Arena as there are fish in the sea.”

-Warlord Simeon DeVelhouria

In the astoundingly remarkable and varied world of Forge, where endless possibilities await, prestige classes play a highly emphasized role; taking on the duty of representing specific and unique aspects of life. In the blasted and smoking war-torn backdrop of Arena, the surest way to survive is to stand out amongst the hundreds of thousands of poor souls destined to become little more than field fodder. Constant change and self-improvement is the only path to becoming a warlord and to ruling in this desolate place. Only by continually honing ones' skills and by developing entirely new ones that are unavailable to the masses, can an individual slip past the bloody fields of Arena and into the lap of luxury that awaits its elite. Simply becoming stronger, faster, smarter, or more cunning is just not enough in Arena—there is always someone who is burlier, quicker, sharper, or craftier waiting just around the bend. The prestige classes contained herein are merely a small sampling of those pursued by the inhabitants of Arena.

Ravagers

Ravagers are ferocious warriors that have learned how to tap into the innate magic of the Forge and to channel its power into a pure and potent force of destruction. Ravagers have become attuned to the natural elements of the desert, allowing them to harness the powers of earth and fire. They use their powers mostly to destroy and conquer. People usually fear ravagers because of the powers that they wield, which is why many ravagers conceal who they are from others. Those who do reveal that they are ravagers normally do so brazenly as they defy those who discriminate against them. A very small number of these

publicly known ravagers are powerful individuals, and they use their status as ravagers to intimidate lesser folk.

Like all channelers, ravagers must gain basic knowledge of magic before they can embark upon the path of the ravager. Once they have done this they must leave the trappings of civilization to spend 30 days wandering in the desert, surviving on nothing except what the wilderness offers them. This includes braving the harsh heat, the horrific sandstorms, and they must somehow find enough water and food to survive. The early effects of the class take effect immediately, partially protecting the character from the heat. Each day in the scorching heat, the potential ravager must make a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) in lieu of the standard hourly Fortitude save; failing one save causes 1d4 points of subdual damage. If the character fails this roll five days in a row, they may not attempt to enter the class until the next level.

Upon surviving 30 days in the desert, the ravager has acquired a keen understanding of how magic and the harsh environment are interrelated in the Forge. In a sense, they have become a force of nature themselves, and it is their prerogative to use that power to reshape the landscape in accordance with their wishes. Higher-level ravagers are able to control storms, and even change their bodies into earth or flames.

The condition of a ravager's body is essential to his ability to channel destructive energies. The stronger the ravager's Constitution, the more magic she can wield safely. Once a ravager becomes fatigued, the destructive power that he pushes through her body begins to wear away at it, possibly even destroying her.

Ravagers are a class unique to Arena. They may travel to other domains, and their powers function there just as well. The extreme desert environment is essential to the creation of the ravager, and these conditions aren't found anywhere else on the Forge. Ravagers that do travel away from Arena must return to the desert at least once per year or their channeling powers are temporarily lost until they return. Powers thus lost require one week of meditation in the desert for each ravager level to regain them.

Hit Die: d8

Table 9.1: The Ravager

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Channeling, firelace (1,s)
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	Fire ray (1,s)
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	One with earth, stone armor (2, s)
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Stone rain (2, s)
5 th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Magma bolt (3,s)
6 th	+4	+5	+2	+2	Gyre of stone (4,s)
7 th	+5	+5	+2	+2	Improved firelace (5)
8 th	+6	+6	+2	+2	Improved elemental attack (6)
9 th	+6	+6	+3	+3	Sand wall (7)
10 th	+7	+7	+3	+3	Sand Storm (8)

Requirements

To qualify to become a ravager, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any chaotic.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Fortitude Save: +5.

Feats: Endurance, Evolve.

Knowledge (arcana): 4 ranks.

Knowledge (nature): 4 ranks.

Survival: 4 ranks.

Special: Must spend 1 month surviving alone in the desert (see above).

Class Skills

The Ravager's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the ravager prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Ravagers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. Ravagers are also proficient with all types of armor and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble.

Channeling (Sp): The ravager is a type of channeler. A character's caster level for his channeling powers is equal to her ravager level.

Power Limit: The number of power points available to a ravager each day is equal to his ravager level times her Con bonus. When a ravager runs out of power points, she can still channel effects, but she takes physical damage each time she does so. This damage is equal to 1d12 for every power point he expends.

Stacking Limit: Some of a ravager's powers are stackable, indicated by an "s" after the power point cost. Unlike an artificer (see *OATHBOUND: Plains of Penance*), a ravager may never spend more power points in one action than she has levels in the class.

Firelace (1,s)(Su): All ravagers are able to focus the destructive forces of the Forge into a weapon. The weapon must be in contact with the ravager in order to be laced. This energy remains within the weapon until it strikes a creature or object. The stored energy deals an extra 1d10 points of fire damage per power point used (to a maximum of the caster's Con bonus). This power may damage an objects as well as a creature. A ravager may *firelace* his own natural weaponry, but she may not *firelace* another creature's weapon. The target of this ability may make a Reflex save (DC 10 + caster's Con bonus) for half damage.

Fire Ray (1,s)(Su): At 2nd level, a ravager learns to be able to project a ray of fire from her eyes, making for an effective ranged attack. The ravager must make a ranged touch attack to hit his intended target, whether a creature or an object. A fire ray deals 1d8 points of fire damage per power point used and has a range increment of 50. The target of this ability may make a Reflex save (DC 10 + caster's Con bonus) for half damage.

One With the Earth (Su): At 3rd level, ravagers can use the Hide skill even while being observed. As long as they are in an outdoor area, ravagers can hide themselves from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. They blend with the terrain, taking on the coloration and texture of their surrounding.

Stone Armor (2, s)(Su): At 3rd level the ravager can harden the clothing or armor on her or touched allies, granting them +1 to their AC for 1 round per ravager level. The ravager may put as many points into this as she wishes, but may discharge no more than 5 points per person touched. Stone armor has a maximum Dex bonus +2, an armor check penalty -4, and an arcane spell failure 25%. Characters that would normally suffer penalties for wearing armor still suffer all associated penalties when protected by *stone armor*. This



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bonus stacks with armor and enhancement bonuses; though the creature's nonmagical armor bonus may not be improved beyond +5.

Stone Rain (2, s)(Su): At 4th level the ravager brings into existence one 5 ft. by 5 ft. rain of rocks per class level. These 5-ft. squares may either fill contiguous spaces, or they may be spread out over a 100 ft. by 100 ft. + 10 ft. per class level area. Creatures within these areas take 1d8 points of damage per power point used, Ref save (DC 10 + caster's Con bonus) for half damage. This power point cost is applied to each 5 ft. by 5 ft. square, squares may not be stacked to inflict more than 5d8 damage. Creatures must also make a Fort save (DC 10 + caster's Con bonus) or be stunned for 1 round.

Magma Bolt (3,s)(Su): At 5th level, a ravager learns to make bolts of superheated rock that explode upon contact with any object. These bolts do 1d8 points of damage to their target per power point spent, and also deal 1d4 hit points per power point to all objects and creatures within adjacent 5 ft. squares of the explosion (a 15-ft diameter sphere). The target of this ability may make a Reflex save (DC 12 + caster's Con bonus) for half damage. Objects held within other objects only take damage if their container is destroyed, and only take the left over damage at that.

Gyre of Stone (4,s): At 6th level, ravagers can create a gyre of stones that surrounds them or any touched creatures. Initially a total of 5 stones begin rapidly swirling around the character. This can be increased by 1 stone for every power point spent (to a maximum of ten). For every 2 stones spinning, the character's AC improves by 1, up to a maximum bonus of +5. This bonus stacks with armor and enhancement bonuses; though the creature's nonmagical armor bonus may not be improved beyond +5. The affected creature can move and attack normally while this power is in effect. The creature may fire as many as all of their stones at any opponent within 60 ft. Each stone strikes its target with a successful ranged touch attack and deals 1d6+1 damage (no save). Stones used in this manner cannot be replaced while the power is in ef-

fect and the AC bonus is recalculated according to the current number of stones employed. *Gyre of stone* lasts 1 round for every ravager level.

Improved Firelace (Su): At 7th level, a ravager's firelace ability improves, each now using a d12 as the damage die. The save increases to DC 12 + caster's Con bonus.

Improved Elemental Attack (Su): At 8th level, a ravager's *magma bolts*, *stone rain* and *fire rays* improve, each now using a d10 as the damage die for direct hits. The saves increase to DC 15 + caster's Con bonus.

Sand Wall (7)(Su): At 9th level the ravager may create a sand wall. *Sand wall* is similar to *wall of stone* except that the wall is made from compressed sand rather than rock. The sand immediately fills in any holes that are made in the wall, as if possessing fast healing 5. If an entire 10 ft. section of the wall is breached in one round or as the result of successive damage from multiple rounds that is not filled in, the entire wall collapses. Creatures caught within 5 ft. of the collapse must make a Reflex save (DC 15 + caster's Con bonus) or be buried in the sand and unable to take any actions for 1 round. To create a *sand wall*, the ravager must be within 100 ft. of a source of sand.

Storm (7,s)(Su): At 10th level the ravager may call a ferocious sand storm to an area 100 square ft. per character level for 1d4 rounds +1 per character level. The storm's center may be up to 50 feet away from the ravager for every ravager level. It may be in any shape the ravager wishes, but it must fall within contiguous squares. All creatures caught within the storm suffer as though under the effects of the *silence* and *darkness* spells. In addition to this, the ravager and up to one ally per every 2 character levels may move into the storm and be completely unaffected by it. Vision, hearing, and attacks do not suffer the penalties normally caused by the storm.

Seeker

Seekers are specially trained warrior mages that excel at locating vast stores of ore, water, and riches buried beneath the sands of Arena's battlefields. Seekers are experts at setting up the initial structures of mines for war-

Table 9.2: The Seeker

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Subterranean Insight	+1 level of existing class
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+0		+1 level of existing class
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Mineral & Ore Detection, Stone Soul +1, Skin of Stone +1	+1 level of existing class
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+1		+1 level of existing class
5 th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Scry of Stones, Stone Soul +1, Skin of Stone +1	+1 level of existing class
6 th	+4	+5	+1	+1		+1 level of existing class
7 th	+5	+5	+2	+2	Ethereal Jaunt, Stone Soul +1, Skin of Stone +1	+1 level of existing class
8 th	+6	+6	+2	+2		+1 level of existing class
9 th	+6	+6	+2	+2	Passwall, Stone Shape, Stone Soul +1, Skin of Stone +1	+1 level of existing class
10 th	+7	+7	+3	+3	Tremorsense	+1 level of existing class

lords, and surviving on their own in the harsh desert climes of Arena.

Hit Dice: d6

Requirements

To qualify to become a seeker, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Feats: Alertness, Spell Focus (Divination), Martial Weapon Proficiency (Pick, heavy or see below*).

Climb: 4 ranks.

Disable Device: 4 ranks.

Knowledge (architecture and engineering): 7 ranks.

Profession (miner or geology): 7 ranks.

Survival: 4 ranks.

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 3rd-level spells, four of which must be divinations.

Class Skills

The class skills (and the key ability scores of each) are Balance (Dex); Climb (Str); Concentration (Con); Decipher Script (Int); Disable Device (Int); Gather Information (Cha); Hide (Dex); Intuit Direction (Wis); Jump (Str); Knowledge (Int); Listen (Wis); Move Silently (Dex); Open Lock (Dex); Profession (Wis); Search (Int); Spellcraft (Int); Spot (Wis); Survival (Wis); Tumble (Dex); Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features enjoyed by the seeker prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Seekers are proficient in any light armor and all simple melee weapons of medium size or smaller. *They also gain free proficiency with the heavy pick or any similar mining tool that can also be used as a weapon. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble.

Ethereal Jaunt: Seekers gain the ability to perform an *ethereal jaunt* three times per day, as the spell cast by a spellcaster equal to their level.

Mineral and Ore Detection: Seekers can detect specific types of ores or minerals, in the same manner as a paladin detects evil, once per day per level.

Passwall: Seekers gain the ability to cast *passwall* at will, as a spellcaster equal to their level.

Scry of Stones: In order to establish the positions of vast stores of ores, minerals, water, natural caverns, or mine exits while deep beneath the surface, seekers gain the ability to *locate object* at will as a spellcaster equal to their level.

Stone Shape: Seekers gain the ability to cast *stone shape* at will, as a spellcaster equal to their level.

Stone Soul: Seekers gain the staunchness and stoic nature of the bones of the world, gaining a +1 racial bonus to their Constitution scores at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th levels.



Skin of Stone: Seekers' skin slowly hardens to a gritty, stone-like texture, which provides added protection and helps to fend off blows. As such, they gain a +1 natural Armor Bonus at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th levels.

Subterranean Insight: Seekers gain the Skill focus feat in Knowledge (architecture and engineering) and Profession (miner) for free.

Tremorsense: Seekers gain the extraordinary ability to sense the location of anything within 60 feet of them that is in contact with the ground.

Sovereign

Aggressive in action and resolute in purpose, sovereigns are masters of mass combat. Their skill is displayed in the tactical functioning of the military units they command. Rare and potent, the sovereign is a fearsome leader on the battlefield. Seldom taken by uncivilized warlords, it is prestige class that squeezes every ounce of ability from a military unit, translating it into victories and personal honor.

Introduced by the Grand Asherake as he first came to power, these individuals have formed the backbone of his commanding corps. Devoted and loyal, they are su-

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preme battlefield leaders, capable of turning defeat into victory with a sharp command. This ability has them highly placed in Arena society – and highly sought. Warlords have been known to war just for the privilege to hire a certain sovereign freelancer.

Hit Dice: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become a sovereign, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-chaotic.

Base Attack Bonus: +7.

Feats: Leadership.

Diplomacy: 10 ranks.

Sense Motive: 5 ranks.

Intimidate: 5 ranks.

Class Skills

The sovereign class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (nobility and royalty) (Int), Knowledge (warfare) (Int), Profession (siege engineer) (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the sovereign prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A sovereign is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, as well as all armor and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble.

Aura of Command: A sovereign can influence troops under his command to a range of 100 ft. times his Charisma bonus plus three, provided there are no interposing barriers. Mountains, heavy forests, and rivers represent communication barriers that cut the range of the aura in half unless methods are available that can circumnavigate them. A unit must contain at least 100 individuals in order to benefit from this heightened communication. Thus a sovereign with 16 Charisma has an aura of command of 600 ft., or 300 ft. in interposing terrains.

Siege Warfare: At 1st level a sovereign gains a +5 competence bonus to Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Knowledge (history), and Profession (siege engineer). He is capable of designing, constructing, and utilizing siege weapons. Siege engines employed by a sovereign, both personally or via commanded units, gain a successive shot bonus of +4 and have their range extended by 50%. Thus a light catapult commanded by a sovereign gain a +4 successive shot bonus to hit and has a base range of 225 feet.

Fortification Enhancement: Fortifications and siege engines built or strengthened by the sovereign gain +2 Hardness and add +10 hit points per unit of thickness of the materials used. For instance, a 12-inch thick wooden palisade comes under attack from a light catapult. A normal wooden palisade of that size has Hardness 5 and 120 hp (60 hp per 6 inches of thickness). While under the care of a sovereign, that same palisade has Hardness 7 and 140 hp (60 hp plus 10 hp per 6 inches of thickness). A sovereign must actively work for eight weeks minus one week per Wisdom bonus at strengthening a site. The bonuses remain in place for eight weeks after the departure or death of the sovereign.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level a sovereign gets a bonus feat in addition to any normally received feats. The bonus feats must be taken from the bonus feats listed in the fighter section of the *Player's Handbook*. An additional feat is gained at 4th level.

Greater Aura of Command: At 4th level, the commanding presence of the sovereign extends to a range of 1000 ft. times three plus his Charisma bonus, regardless of interposing barriers, provided those barriers are not impassable. Thus a sovereign with 19 Charisma has a commanding presence to a range of 7000 ft. This ability replaces the ability aura of command.

Chain of Command: Troops within the aura of command of the sovereign gain a circumstance bonus on initiative and attacks rolls reflecting their ability to adhere to their commander's battle plan. The competence bonus is +1 at 1st level, +2 at 3rd level and +3 at 5th level. Troops who leave the area of command immediately lose this bonus, but regain it if they remain within range for ten consecutive rounds. Affected individuals must recognize the leadership of the sovereign in order to benefit from this ability. Impassable barriers block the functioning of this ability. The sovereign must spend a standard action conducting the battle for the units under his command to receive the above bonuses.

Table 9.3: The Sovereign

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Aura of command, chain of command +1, siege warfare
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Bonus feat, fortification enhancement
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Chain of command +2
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Bonus feat, greater aura of command
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Chain of command +3

Ferrin

Ferrin are metallic medium-sized humanoids with gray iron-like skin. Many compare them to silvers; in fact some even consider them a subspecies of silver, but sharing a metallic flesh is where their similarities end. Ferrin are powerfully built, blunt, and hard working, but many consider them to be a warm and welcoming people. Although they are able to use magic, their cultural disposition usually has them avoiding or even shunning the use of arcane practices.

Personality: Ferrin personality types vary, but they usually have a few characteristics in common. They are generally introverted individuals, but they are very polite to those they don't know. Among their own people they are more boisterous and outgoing, though it is considered taboo for one ferrin to come within two feet of another unless they are either working on something that requires close proximity, or they are more intimately familiar.

Ferrin are extremely concerned with the welfare of the community. It isn't usually easy for non-ferrin to earn their trust, but once an individual has managed to do so, ferrin usually become fiercely loyal to those they consider worthy. Ferrin are less motivated by the needs of the individual, and more concerned with building communities and making sure that the needs of those within their communities are met. If their communities are suffering through hard times, it is not uncommon for individual ferrin to keep only the amount of gold they need to survive and donate the rest to the community. If resources become scarce, ferrin often pool all said resources and divide them up equally among the community. Ferrin communities always make sure that lodging is provided for their people, and it is commonly believed that only the mentally ill are homeless, and this is only because they choose to be.

Ferrin are the most successful when living among their own kind. In cities consisting of many different species, ferrin often fall to the bottom of the social hierarchy due to their preference to keep their matters private, and their inherent lack of trust for non-ferrin. They are usually wage earners who stay in the same line of work their entire lives. Those who are not miners are usually reluctant to try numerous different trades, preferring instead to find something they are good at and then develop those skills their entire lives. For this reason, elder ferrin are often the best at their trade.

Physical Description: Some mistakenly believe that the ferrin are race that has arisen by breeding silvers with humans. The fact is that they have always been their own race, with their roots on a world where they shared do-

minion with the elves. The skin of the ferrin is a dull gray metallic color, their build is tall, even for a humanoid, and they are usually powerfully built. Their body shape is almost identical in shape and proportion to humans, and bears no physical resemblance to silvers. A ferrin's eyes are lighter, polished steel, and the iris ranges in color from metallic blue to a rusty brown.


The ferrin have hair, which more closely resembles wire. It can be combed and otherwise styled, though the metallic nature usually holds the shape for up to a week. If unkempt for long periods of time, the hair turns red with rust. Often the younger ferrin, seeing the many diverse types of creatures that live on the Forge, choose to add paint to their hair to color it. Older ferrin often remove all the hair from their heads, which is seen as a sign of maturity. Ferrin do not have any facial hair.

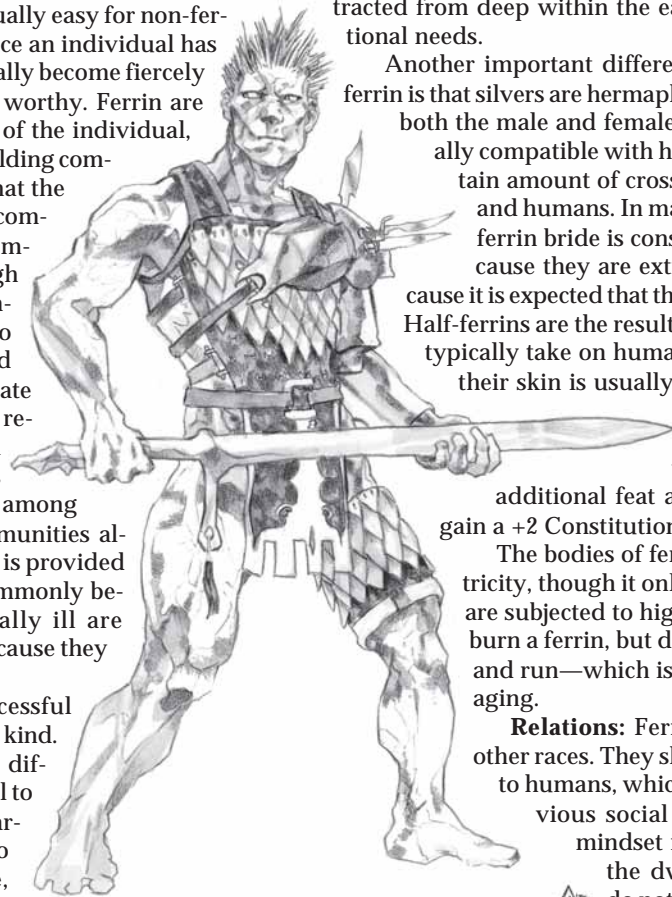
Like silvers, ferrin do not need to eat ordinary food. Though they are capable of eating and even enjoying the taste of food that is standard for most species, they instead derive their sustenance from iron, and must drink lubricating fluids (such as fish oils and petroleum extracted from deep within the earth) to meet their nutritional needs.

Another important difference between silvers and ferrin is that silvers are hermaphrodites while ferrin have both the male and female genders. They are sexually compatible with humans, and there is a certain amount of crossbreeding between ferrin and humans. In many human settlements, a ferrin bride is considered a trophy both because they are extremely beautiful and because it is expected that their children will be hardy. Half-ferrins are the result of such unions, and they typically take on human characteristics, though their skin is usually a slightly metallic color.

Half-ferrins are treated as humans except that they do not receive the additional feat at first level, but they do gain a +2 Constitution bonus.

The bodies of ferrin readily conduct electricity, though it only harms them when they are subjected to high amounts. Fire does not burn a ferrin, but does cause its flesh to melt and run—which is just as painful and damaging.

Relations: Ferrin get along with most other races. They share a similar appearance to humans, which helps overcome the obvious social barriers, although their mindset is more similar to that of the dwarves. Ferrin generally  do not like races that are sneaky or underhanded, so they have an aversion to fausts, nightlings, and silvers. Aside from humans, they prefer the company of pickers and valcos. Since the ferrin share their home world with elves, they usually relate especially well to elves, and new arrivals to the Forge often know elvish and keep the company of elves until they can adjust to the common language of the Forge.



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Alignment: Typical ferrin are lawful in alignment, and lean towards good or neutral in moral aspect. Rare divergent individuals exist, though they are mostly adventures or outcasts

Ferrin Lands: Ferrin live primarily in Arena in a few small villages. However, most ferrin live to work the mines. As long as they are given an honest wage and are not subjected to unusually dangerous working conditions, most ferrin are content to live underground mining for various precious metals. While ferrin miners are employed by members of other species, there are a few mines in Arena owned and run by ferrin. Production in mines that are worked by ferrin is usually one third higher than those worked by non-ferrin.

It is a commonly held belief that a ferrin is able to smell the metals in the ground, which is largely untrue. The fact is that as a people, the ferrin have been mining for so many generations that their culture has collectively established more effective methods of mining.

Religion: Most ferrin worship the god Zuthrix, who is usually depicted as an enormous spherical globe of mercury that glows. It is said that Zuthrix is able to take the form of any ferrin he chooses, and sometimes even appears as a metallic version of an individual from another race. The religion teaches the importance of civic responsibility, hard work, and individual empowerment. The religious symbol of Zuthrix is the round ball on a white background with rays of light emanating from it.

Once per generation, a ferrin is born with irises of gems, usually sapphire or emerald, rather than metal. This ferrin is believed to be a chosen one, and the child and its parents immediately become the focus of the church. Their needs are placed above those of the rest of the community while both the child and the parents are taught the history of their religion as well as the intricacies of the various religious doctrines. When the child comes of age at twenty years, that child officially becomes the head of the church. At that time the ferrin who had preceded this one from the previous generation steps down and becomes an advisor to their new leader.

The title of the chosen one is the Mithras-Laduat. The child is believed to be the living incarnation of an aspect of Zuthrix. It is also believed that if seven of the chosen were to exist at one time and place, the various aspects of Zuthrix would combine and the god would manifest on the material plane for a thousand years. The ferrin lifespan is 80 years, with some living an exceptionally long 115 years. Hence, since a chosen one is generally born only once every 20 years, the prophecy of the seven has never occurred, at least not in living memory. It is known, however, that during times when 4-6 of the chosen exist at one time all ferrin know relative peace and prosperity. Any time a generation passes without the birth of a chosen, that period is considered cursed, a time of great hardship.

Language: When the ferrin were originally pulled into the Forge they spoke their own language. Throughout the thousands of years that their species has lived here, their native language has been all but forgotten, and has been replaced with a dialect of Common. They are able to speak with most other races using their own dialect, and both parties will be understood, but many words have different meanings and most expressions of the ferrin are com-

pletely unknown to outsiders. Because of this, ferrin who do not take Common as a separate language suffer -4 to all Diplomacy checks with non-ferrin or non-ferrin speakers.

Occasionally a ferrin seed is brought to the Forge. When this happens they are rarely able to communicate with their own kind because they speak the language of their home world, although many seeds do know elvish and are able to speak through an elven interpreter. They eventually decide to either become part of normal society and learn Common, or become part of the ferrin society and learn the ferrin dialect of Common.

Names: Ferrin names are usually short and blunt. Their first name is that of their clan and their last name is their individual name. Ferrin that leave their own communities often go by their clan name and do not reveal their individual names to outsiders. It is considered a sign of deep trust and respect for a ferrin to reveal their full name to a non-ferrin.

Ferrin Male Names: Balik, Gathin, Korbuk, Koren, Mardek, Nardush.

Ferrin Female Names: Jallis, Kalidda, Malan, Seris, Sortal.

Clan Names: Adnad, Arglar, Debrug, Sharmul.

Adventurers: There are very few ferrin that chose the life of adventure. A ferrin might chose to become one if something tragic befalls their community. Some are sent on lengthy missions if something threatens their communities. Ferrin whose families or friends are killed by hostile forces sometimes take up a quest against their killers, and they follow the trail back to the transgressors with an almost religious zeal. They do this because they believe that the victim of a murder will not rest until the murderer is dead, either murdered themselves, or they die of natural causes. As with all races, some ferrin simply do not fit in with their own kind. Maybe they are overly ambitious, or they have wanderlust. Whatever the case, ferrin are sometimes part of adventuring companies despite not fitting any of the reasons above.

Ferrin Racial Traits

- Ferrin receive a +2 to Con, and a -2 to Cha.
- **Medium:** As Medium-sized creatures, ferrins receive no bonuses or penalties due to size. Ferrin height ranges from 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 feet, and weight from 150 to 235 lbs.
- Ferrins reach adulthood at age 16 and are considered middle aged at 40 years. They are thought to be old at 90 and venerable at 110.
- A ferrin's base speed is 30 ft.
- Ferrin have a +2 natural armor bonus.
- Ferrin have electrical resistance 10.
- Ferrin ingest and derive sustenance from any metal object they can swallow. Ferrin can eat any kind of metal, but they normally feed on iron or iron ore. A ferrin can survive comfortably on a half-pound of metal per day. Precious metals, such as silver, gold, or platinum are considered delicacies, although they offer no additional effects.
- A ferrin can regenerate wounds and heat damage if it ingests mithral. A ferrin is healed 1d10 points of

damage by ingesting a handful of mithral. Four coin-sized nuggets of mithral cost 40 gp.

- **Hydrophobia:** Ferrin have an extreme fear of water, and suffer a -10 to all swim and nautical skill checks. The ferrin cannot digest water or fermented beverages.
- **Automatic Languages:** Ferrin-Common. *Bonus languages:* Ceptu, Chromithian, Common, Dover, Elvish, Nkoll, Picker, Silver, Trusk, Undercommon, Valco, Valkyrie, and Vogel.
- **Favored Class:** Monk. A multiclass ferrin's monk class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. The rigid structure of a monk's existence suits the ferrin's racial aptitude for hard work and loyalty.

Trusk

The trusk are a race of stubborn, stalwart and somewhat uncouth walrus-like humanoids that inhabit a substantial portion of the Forge's frigid Central Ocean. Trusk are some of the most misunderstood creatures ever to gain a foothold on the Forge. Many consider their mulish and simple ways overly aggressive and simply barbaric, but the reality is that the trusk are a peaceable folk who rely on a great deal of bullying and bluster to solve conflicts between members of their own race as well as in dealings with others.

Personality: The personalities of trusk, overall, are as varied and diverse as are those of humans. As a race, however, they are by and large peaceable, if somewhat loud, hardheaded and brash. Trusk see the world in much in the same manner as other folk, but there are a few crucial aspects of their world view that are different. It is these slightly different interpretations that cause strikingly alternate beliefs in comparison to most people.

Like many others, trusk feel that in all things, only the strongest should lead. However, the pivotal divergence from the norm lies in the truskan conception of strength—to a trusk, the strongest individual is the one who is most skilled at intimidation and bluff. In essence, trusk rely on their "bark" as opposed to their "bite" to determine who leads and who follows. As a result, trusk often come across to those not of their race as belligerent, overbearing and often, downright rude. To a trusk, however, these same qualities are considered merely the minimum requirement for existing in "polite" truskan society.

Physical Description: Trusk are massive, bipedal walruses. Ranging from four to eight feet in height, (males tend to be twice the size of females), trusk have bulky bodies covered with layers of thick, blubbery flesh that ranges from dark black to rusty red in coloration. Their outer layer of skin, which is oily, coarse, rubbery, and often covered with scars, displays deep furrows and wrinkles and bristly whiskers over every square inch of its surface. Their limbs end in stunted, flipper like hands and feet that, while they enable them to grasp and manipulate tools to a slightly lessened degree than most humans, seem far more suited for paddling and swimming through the icy waters they call home.

Their faces are oval shaped and feature small, watery eyes that are always a black or brown hue, which seem to sit too far apart from one another on nearly opposite sides of their skulls. A small, nondescript nose sits in the center of their faces and is nearly lost in their massive, flap-like, whisker-coated upper lip, which, in comparison, seems to be scant covering for their massive, gleaming ivory tusks. These tusks protrude out and downward in large arcs from their mouth and aid in such everyday tasks as locating and digging for buried mollusks and crustaceans (their favored food), fighting, and even pushing lesser beings around.

Trusk love to decorate their bodies with elaborate, vibrant, and massive tattoos. It seems that their many layers of thick, blubbery skin protect them from the pain typically associated with this practice and trusk see it as a method of personal and spiritual expression; it is exceedingly rare (outside of newborn whelps) to see a trusk without a cluster of colorful and complex tattoos.

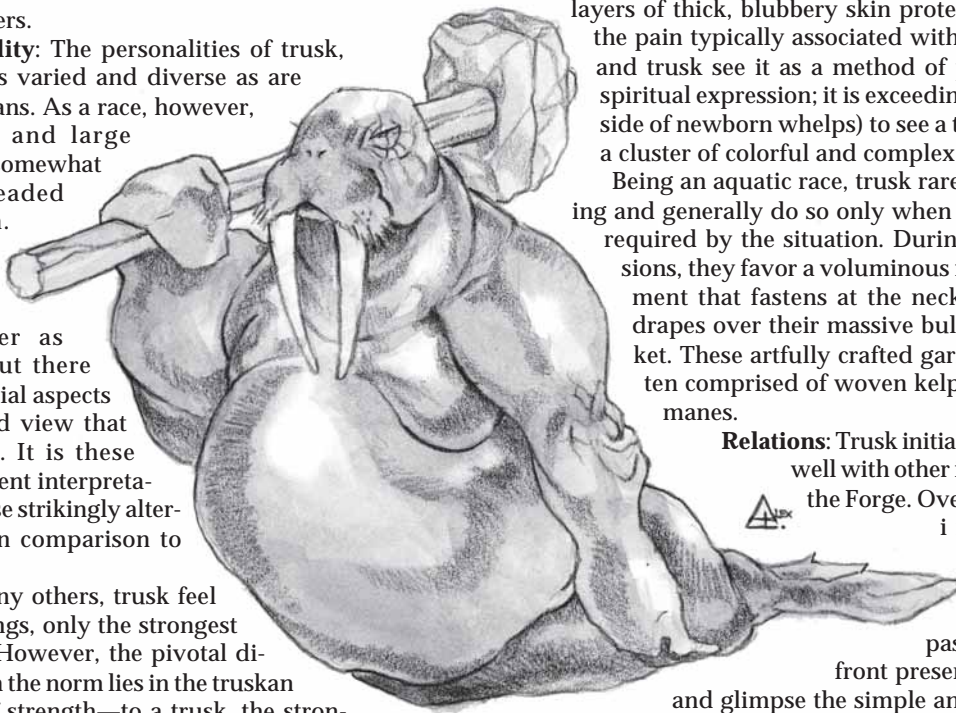
Being an aquatic race, trusk rarely don clothing and generally do so only when they feel it is required by the situation. During these occasions, they favor a voluminous robe-like garment that fastens at the neck and simply drapes over their massive bulk like a blanket. These artfully crafted garments are often comprised of woven kelp and sea lion manes.

Relations: Trusk initially do not mix well with other inhabitants of the Forge. Overly patient or intuitive



people can often make their way past the brusque

front presented by trusk and glimpse the simple and gentle race that float beneath its surface like the dark, placid waters that rest beneath the gnashing ice floes that the trusk call home. As their numbers have grown and their explorations into areas not dominated by their own kind expanded, trusk have begun to learn that their ways often lead to splintered relations with other folk. At best, their gruff and uncivil ways can lead to distrust and isolation and at worst, to severed relations and even to all-out war. Given their dependence on trade and their slow birth rate,



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the latter are things that the trusk cannot risk and as such, the trusk have taken to sending ambassadors abroad to try to change the popular view of their people.

Despite this attempt to try and show outsiders a different picture of their race, the aspect of their natures that most defines the outside world's view of them is their constant and ever-vigilant defense of their homelands and their trade routes. While the trusk see this as an unalienable right and responsibility of their people, most see it as a further extension of their harsh and domineering ways.

Relations between the trusk and the ceptu have always been strained, as each race (albeit in their own unique way) ultimately desires dominance of the sea; that each race is effectively locked into their own ocean is doubtlessly the only thing which has kept them from waging a racial war on each other. Still, the great oceans of Penance are an interconnected and ever-complex web of life. Despite their geographical separation, competition for natural resources such as food and dominance in (sea) trade with the surface world has long kept tensions between these two races strained. Over the past eons, the threat of war between the trusk and the ceptu has been constant, but has never blossomed into full-scale conflict. When they encounter each other, members of these races do their best to assert their supremacy.

Finally, trusk have what seems to be a native affinity with and racial tie to narwhales; they raise them as pets, mounts, and beasts of burden. In fact, so long have the two races cohabitated that the trusk benefit from a limited empathic connection with the single-horned, white whales. Trusk encountered in the water (unless they are encountered in exceedingly deep waters and are not near a *deepflow* settlement) always have at least a narwhale or three nearby, and they possess the singular ability to call them by means of an ultrasonic whistle they emit from deep within their blubbery throats. A feared component of the truskan fleet is the dreaded Alabaster Cavalry, an elite group of specially trained albino trusk that ride battle-hardened narwhale mounts.

Alignment: Trusk are typically neutral, tending towards neutral good.

Trusk Lands: The trusk can be found throughout the length and breadth of the Central Ocean. Without a doubt, they dominate the terrain of that region physically, politically and socially and bow to none within the confines of what they consider to be their "home range." Truskan cities are composed of an unusual and completely unique substance known as *deepflow*—a type of heavy, salt-laden ice that literally flows at a snail's pace along the murky bottom of the Central Ocean. Only the trusk hold the secrets of mining, crafting and building with this strange material, which is apparently highly toxic to any creatures whose bodies do not contain a sufficient amount of insulating fat. Using this *deepflow*, the trusk are able to construct massive, sprawling water- and air-filled cities of unbelievable complexity and beauty and are rumored to hold the secrets of creating vessels and other complex forms of gadgetry from it as well.

Religion: Truskan religion is an elaborate shamanistic affair that touches all aspects of their lives. Visions gained from the trusk shamans help to guide decisions made by not only the rulers of the clans, but also those on

a more intimate, private and individual level. All trusk clans contain their own hierarchy of shamans and the upper echelon of shamans from across the clans composes a body of spiritual leaders that help to direct the policy of the race as a whole.

Language: Trusk employ their own alphabet of angular letters that are usually transcribed into scrimshaws or other semi-permanent carvings. When dealing with other races trusk generally prefer the common tongue.

Names: Truskan names generally bear a first name, which identifies the individual, followed by a clan name, which marks the trusk as member of one of the thirteen clans of trusk found on the Forge. While clan-less trusk are not unheard of, they are exceedingly rare and are often rogues that have been cast out for one offense or another, such as the murder of a fellow trusk, which is a supreme racial taboo.

Trusk Male Names: Names of individual male trusk are generally of one or two varieties: either the names consist of a very glottal, guttural sound in the tongue of the trusk or they illustrate a physical characteristic or property that can be attributed to the individual. Names such as Grahl, Gronk, Reet, Icetooth, Clamcrusher and Bellow are often seen.

Trusk Female Names: Names of individual female trusk always consist of combinations of the most musical and lyrical sounds of the truskan language. Names such as Pog, Gompiee, Kreelut, Nilalaaq, Redeke, and Angutta are common.

Trusk Clan Names: The family names for the thirteen truskan clans, in their order of prominence and power, are as follows: Keretkun, Onetusk, Ohrr, Strongback, Rostungr, Longtooth, Inku, Pudlo, Pudlat, Deepwrinkle, Whitewhisker, Uvik, and Gunkgrubber.

Adventurers: Trusk adventurers are unusual, but those that exist typically fall into the role of ambassador as mentioned above. These individuals still possess all of the coarse and gruff tendencies of their people, but continually strive to keep them in check. In their eyes, suppressing these deep-seated penchants is the only way they can aid their people as a whole. From a player's perspective, this aspect of adventuring trusk creates an unusual, occasionally awkward, and always challenging roleplaying opportunity. If a representative of their race, the favored class for adventurer trusk is, oddly enough, bard (trusk bards favor a base drum as their instrument of choice), as they use their intimate knowledge of their people to sway people's minds and opinions of their kind.

Trusk adventurers that do not serve in the roles as racial emissaries favor the class of fighter.

Trusk Racial Traits

- Trusk receive a +4 to Cha and -4 to Dex.
- Medium: As Medium-sized creatures, trusks gain no bonuses or penalties due to size. Trusk height ranges from 4 to 8 feet, and weight from 400 to 700 lbs.
- Trusk land speed is 10 ft. while their swim speed is 60 ft.
- Trusk enjoy a +8 racial bonus to all swim checks.
- Trusk can breathe water and air with equal ease.

- +4 racial bonus to Bluff, Intimidate and Sense Motive checks and a -2 racial penalty to Jump, Tumble and Balance checks due to their size and bulk.
- Darkvision: Trusk live in the dark and frigid depths of the ocean and gain darkvision 60 ft.
- Trusks reach adulthood at age 28 and are considered middle aged after 60 years. They are thought to be old at 130 and venerable at 300.
- Immunity to cold.
- Spell-like Abilities: Trusk have innate spell-like abilities, which they can employ as bards of equal level to their hit dice. 3/day: *cure light wounds*, *mage armor*, and *resistance*. 1/day: *bull's strength* and *cure moderate wounds*. These innate abilities can only be used on themselves or other trusks.
- Summon Narwhale: Trusk have the ability to ultrasonically call 1 narwhale per hit die per day to their aid. Once they arrive, the narwhales serve the trusk to the best of their ability, even giving their life if so commanded.
- Automatic Languages: Truskan, empathic language with narwhales. Bonus Languages: Ceptu, Common, Undercommon or Aquan.
- Favored Class: Bard. A multiclass trusk bard class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. Trusk inherently exist in their society through their ability to bluff and bolster their way through life, which provides excellent preparation for a profession in the bardic way of life.
- Trusk have a level adjustment of +1.

Valkyrie

The valkyrie are a race of courageous, feather-winged humanoid females. Flying (and walking) over the crimson sands of Arena, the valkyries are quick to join a conflict and revel in those battles they create. Encountering a skirmish already underway, they are known to choose a side and fight as if the cause was their own. Their fierce fighting technique is formidable and feared by many, and the majority of the beings inhabiting the Forge prefer to fight beside the valkyries rather than against them. Countless scores of the most savage battles in Arena's history have involved valkyrie fighting on one side or the other—and often both.

Interestingly, their original racial name has been lost over the centuries, and has been replaced by one that is inextricably intertwined with a group of Norse women

warriors. Some believe that there is more truth to this relationship, though it eludes scholars and remains shrouded in mystery.

Personality: The valkyrie are the ferocious swordmaidens of Arena, and use this reputation to their full advantage. They value physical strength, strong leaders, skill in battle, bravery, and personal and clan honor. Valkyries hold their beliefs in high esteem and will passionately defend their way of life with a blade.

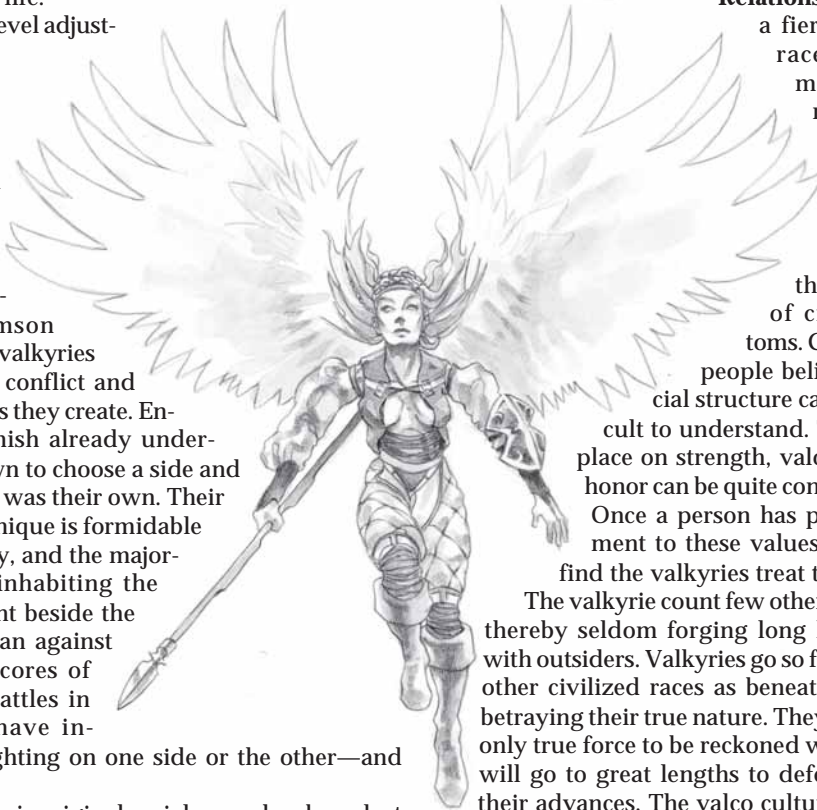
Physical Description: Valkyries appear much like human women with a pair of large feathered wings growing from their shoulders. They average around 5 ½ feet tall with a build slightly more muscular than a humans. A valkyrie's wingspan is usually around 10 feet, and the strong wings can bear them aloft with a few strong beats. Their hair and skin colors run the entire gamut of human complexions, though most are deeply tanned from a life under the twin suns of the Forge.

Due to some ancient magic now long forgotten, the valkyrie race was cursed to be forever a race of females without a male counterpart. As would be expected, over the ensuing years the valkyries came to embrace their unique situation, and instead see their need to choose the strongest mates from among other species as a blessing. Valkyries can mate with males of nearly any humanoid race, causing them to choose only the strongest and most healthful males they can find. In some clans it is considered taboo to mate with a male that cannot defeat a valkyrie in combat.

Relations: Valkyrie are seen as a fiercely savage warrior race who are not normally trusted among more refined company. They are commonly seen as savage barbarians who do not understand or appreciate the complex subtleties of civilized social customs. Contrary to what most people believe, the valkyrie social structure can be somewhat difficult to understand. The importance they place on strength, valor, honesty, and clan honor can be quite confusing to an outsider. Once a person has proven their commitment to these values, however, they will find the valkyries treat them as an equal.

The valkyrie count few other races as their equals, thereby seldom forging long lasting relationships with outsiders. Valkyries go so far as to consider most other civilized races as beneath them, for they are betraying their true nature. They see asherakes as the only true force to be reckoned with in the Forge, and will go to great lengths to defend their lands from their advances. The valco culture is the exception to their disdain for other societies, though the valkyries feel they still have a few things to learn about life.

Alignment: By their very actions, the valkyries can largely be described as chaotic. Though some civilized and moral cultures might describe their actions as evil,



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they are more accurately neutral in alignment, and are even known to exhibit good tendencies when it suits their goals.

Valkyrie Lands: Valkyrie clans claim much of the land between the Sea of Tears and the Oasis of Lost Souls as theirs, though few actually honor these claims. With the exception of the fortress held by Regan Severn, most valkyries are nomadic, roaming the skies of Arena in search of food, fights, and foes. A largely nomadic people, they subsist primarily on the goods they can find, steal, or obtain through bartering. When necessary, the valkyrie settle in cliff faces or other areas that are hard to reach by foot. Valkyrie settlements, whether on the ground or a cliff face, consists of a few stone and mud communal buildings with thatched roofs.

Religion: Valkyries worship various deities of war, though most prefer to worship the war goddess Freya.

Language: Not having a written language of their own, the spoken language of the valkyries is how they relate their history to the next generation. It is a language rich with multiple words to describe every facet of their life and, while many outsiders have learned the language, few have come to master its intricacies. Those valkyrie who have learned how to write do so using the alphabet of the Common tongue.

Battlespeak is something valkyries have embraced wholly, and it is common to find battlespeak words and gestures punctuating their daily conversations.

Names: Valkyrie names are usually short and easily to pronounce. They do not use family names in the traditional sense, but instead honor their mother through the use of a matronymic last name. The use of “ern” or “rn” added to the end of the mother’s first name means “daughter of”. If the name ends in a consonant, “ern” is used, but if it ends in a vowel, an “rn” is used instead. Valkyries with an honorable lineage may use numerous matronymic names to record their bloodline. For example, Regan Severn is the daughter of Sev Katlarn, who in turn is the daughter of Katla Aldisern, so Regan might choose to be known as Regan Severn Katlarn Aldisern if her great-grandmother was important to her or her followers.

Valkyrie Given Names: Aldis, Erdil, Falif, Jorna, Katla

Valkyrie Clan Names: Elinern, Freyarn, Helgarn, Mekarn, Reganern

Adventurers: Valkyrie adventurers are often barbarians, though some are warriors of some other sort. Bards, druids, and sorcerers are not uncommon, but are more frequent than wizards and clerics.

Valkyrie Racial Traits

- Valkyries receive a +2 Dex, and –2 Int.
- **Medium:** As Medium-sized creatures, valkyries gain no bonuses or penalties due to size. Valkyrie height ranges from 5 to 6 feet, and weight from 90 to 130 lbs.
- Valkyries base land speed is 30 feet while their base air speed is 70 feet (average).
- The powerful wings of the valkyrie allow them to carry up to 20 pounds per point of Strength and still maintain average maneuverability.

- **Low-light Vision:** Valkyries have low-light vision and gain a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks.
- Valkyries reach adulthood at age 15 and are considered middle aged after 40 years. They are thought to be old at 90 and venerable at 130.
- **Warrior’s Upbringing:** All valkyries are proficient in javelin, halbspear, longsword, and shortspear. They are also proficient with shields.
- **Automatic Languages:** Battlespeak, Common, Valkyrie. **Bonus Languages:** Asherake, Chromithian.
- **Favored Class:** Barbarian. A multiclass valkyrie’s barbarian class does not count when determining whether she suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. The chaotic nature of their culture lends itself to barbaric trappings.
- Valkyries have a level adjustment of +1.

Vogel

Vogels are a generally placid and peaceful race of avian humanoids that tend to colonize any lush, tropical area they can gain a foothold on. Vogels are a buoyant and jovial race that seems to take great pleasure from life itself and disapprove of conflict and negativity in any form.

Vogels are found in several of Arena’s larger oases, as well as the mountainous areas in the northern reaches. Many serve the vogel warlord Aryis, working as his spies that span across the red sands of the domain.

Personality: Vogels are exceedingly cheerful creatures and seem perfectly content to while away their days surrounded by the sunshine, the wind and the bounty of nature in which they make their homes. Rarely does one encounter a depressed or dejected vogel, for the sweetness of the air or the sound of water running over the rocks in a stream is more than enough to delight their hearts. Due to their unusual societal structure, vogels operate with striking efficiency among other races and if truth be told, other races often tire of the lighthearted and bubbly vogels long before the bird-folk become weary of them.

Vogels are overwhelming optimists and are able to find the bright side of any dark storm cloud. They are quick to point this out to those around them; this trait usually tires all but the calmest of other folk. The vogel, however, cannot fathom this concept but instead continue to heap more encouragement and sanguinity upon the situation, thinking that the problem will be solved in this manner eventually.

Vogels love, and are enchanted by, beautifully crafted, shiny or sparkly items. While they rarely adorn themselves with these items, they hoard them in their homes and frequently give them as gifts to those with whom they are close.

Physical Description: Vogels resemble nothing so much as large, brightly covered songbirds that sport an additional pair of slender limbs beneath their wings. Vogels are almost uniformly four feet in height and have bright, inquisitive and intelligent eyes and a slight, delicate frame. This frail-seeming body structure is due to the vogels’ lightweight and slender skeleton, which is the sole reason why these bird-folk can still take to the air, despite their size and relatively narrow and stunted wing-

span. Beneath these wings, vogels have a pair of arms, which are identical in structure and appearance to their legs and are equally as dexterous.

The vogel spend vast amounts of time preening themselves and always look immaculate—they are very fond of baths and take every opportunity to spend some time frolicking about in any clean, clear water that they can find. Oddly, the vogel rarely decorate themselves and other than the occasional ring or small trinket do not adorn their bodies in any manner, including clothing, for which they see little purpose.

Relations: Generally, vogels tend to get along well with any and all that treat them with mutual respect. They make for cheerful, unflappable companions and interact well in large groups, which are reminiscent of their societal structure. For the most part, vogels have positive relations with all races, save for those who display naturally aggressive tendencies such as asherakes, nightlings and hoveras. Further, once a single individual of a race makes an unfavorable impression upon an individual vogel, others of that race will find they have a more difficult time winning that vogel's trust and friendship.

Generally, vogels are non-aggressive and tend to avoid conflicts (even of the verbal variety). This disdain for discord perhaps has roots within the structure of vogel society, wherein there are rarely disputes and all seem to be of a single (or at least very similar) accord. As such, vogels rarely debate or take part in arguments of any sort. Generally, when an issue becomes heated, vogels flutter away out of earshot, if possible, and make themselves scarce long before the quarrel further degrades into an exchange of blows. For this reason, many folk consider vogels to be non-confrontational and cowardly; if pressed, however, they can make for fierce, determined, and canny opponents.

Alignment: Vogels are almost always neutral or good.

Vogel Lands: Vogels tend to colonize lush, tropical island chains, both for their vibrant, verdant characteristics and the overall seclusion offered by these locales. However, any flourishing, fertile landscape will do for them, provided there is ample room, food, and water to support their colonies, which tend to grow quickly.

These colonies are ruled over by the vogels themselves, as each individual holds an equal vote in the actions and directives of the society as a whole. While there is no centralized leadership, as such, that holds sway over the

whole of a vogel colony; the church and the military do play into its function. However, neither one of these bodies holds any more influence than the other and it would seem that their influence extends into the actions of the colony only as need and logic would dictate.

Religion: Vogel religion, like its society, is the picture of balance and fairness. Based on gods who emulate the four elements and seasons, each vogel deity holds symbolic sway over the church only during its assigned season, peacefully giving way once its part in the never-ending cycle has completed. These complementary and selfless gods, none of whom are deemed of any higher status

than the other, are: the sun, which gains its figurative dominance in the summer; the land, who commands the church during fall; the wind, who commands the biting winters; and the ocean, whose lapping waters hasten the return of spring and bounty.

Language: Vogels employ an alphabet of sweeping curves and loops that can be altered according to the intended meaning of the writer, much like inflection can alter the meaning of spoken words.

Names: Vogel names are generally taken from their singsong, musical language, which involves many chirps, trills, and piping sounds. As such, these long names generally mean very little to non-vogels (in fact, they sound very much like ordinary bird song), but they contain a great amount of historical and hereditary information. It is said that the name of a vogel literally contains its entire lineage, which extends all the way back to the beginning of time. Whether or not this is true is unknown, as the vogel language has yet to be learned by

any non-vogels. However, for ease in dealing with other races, vogels typically shorten their names to the first two or three "syllables," which must be pronounced with a dramatic and purposeful exclamatory burst of emotion at the end. The vogel think that the way other races pronounce their names is strikingly funny and often entertain themselves in the simple act of exchanging names.

Vogel Male and Female Names: Vogels place little distinction on the separation between the sexes and their names reflect this fact. To a vogel, each name is as individual as is their history, and there is no need to add a further distinction that indicates what sort of reproductive organs one has; in fact, they consider this practice in other races quite silly and altogether a waste of effort. As such, shortened names such as Twirt-lit-a-lita!, Whoopa-



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whit-whill!, Tweet-trilit!, Chitt-chitt-chitt!, Swoo-witta-witta-trilit!, and Ke-ke-ke-kill-lit! are seen for both males and females among vogel.

Adventurers: Due to the omnipresent, but by no means overbearing, societal influence of both the military and the church upon all vogels, those who venture out into the wild world beyond their colonies typically fall into the roles of clerics. Happy-go-lucky and ever upbeat, vogels make for fine adventuring companions, provided that one can bear this sort of invasive cheerfulness around the clock.

Vogel Racial Traits

- Vogels receive a +2 Wis, +4 Dex, -2 Str, and -4 Con.
- Medium: As Medium-sized creatures, vogels gain no bonuses or penalties due to size. Vogel height ranges from 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 feet, and weight from 25 to 40 lbs.
- Vogels have a base land speed of 30 ft. while their base flying speed is 60 ft. (average). Vogels cannot wear armor (see below) or carry more than 25 pounds of equipment if they wish to fly.
- Vogel reach adulthood at age 10 and are considered middle aged after 25 years. They are thought to be old at 40 and venerable at 60.
- Due to their slight frames and lightweight bone structure, vogels cannot wear any form of armor or employ a shield (unless they are enchanted with the *weightless* quality); they can however, employ any form of magical protection.
- Automatic Languages: Vogel. Bonus Languages: Auran, Aquan, Common, Ignan, or Terran.
- Favored Class: Cleric. A multiclass vogel cleric class does not count when determining whether it suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. Vogels, due to their unique societal and religious structures seem almost predestined to traverse the paths of the cleric once they depart the closeness of their fellow vogels.

War Valco

Personality: As per their cousins, except that the war valcos are far more confrontational over small affairs. Nearly every conflict in a tribe is settled by some contest of physical or martial prowess. Outsiders who come into conflict are almost always pitted in a martial contest of varying degrees, from first blood to the death.

Physical Description: Similar in overall body shape and style to their valco cousins, war valcos are generally broader shouldered, more heavily muscled, but only slightly taller. The most distinct difference between the two races is the war valco's more ram-like appearance, having large curled horns and a thicker, shaggier coat.

Relations: War valcos are known and respected throughout Arena for their fighting prowess and courage. More aggressive in nature than their valco cousins, they are quite willing to have dealings with most any race. War valcos generally show a mutual respect for dovers and haze, although they find the haze a bit too alien to casually socialize with, and for the most part, they distrust and disrespect pickers and nightlings.

Alignment: Their wandering lifestyle and ability to socialize with most any race generates a tendency towards neutrality.

War Valco Lands: A race of roaming clans and tribes, war valcos call no single place home. Despite this they are not all that uncommon throughout Arena, acting mostly as freelance mercenaries for the local warlords. While larger clans travel the land in a nomadic lifestyle, smaller tribes of warriors (numbering 10-50) will often function as fighting units for hire.

Religion: The war valcos' carefree mode of existence is reflected in their animistic religion where significant land forms or atmospheric conditions are venerated and held as powerful influences over the course of their lives.

Language: War valcos employ a simplified version of the valco's racial alphabet but seldom use it unless dealing with other races where written documents or contracts are necessary.

Names: Like their cousins, war valcos names tend to be short and simple. Female names are usually male names with "enth" or "eth" added to the end. War valcos take great pride in their clan names and will not suffer any insults to it.

War Valco Male Names: Boro, Kret, Morde, Rumek, Treger



Illustrated by Alexander Leonard

War Valco Female Names: Kretenth, Laneth, Mordeth, Nementh, Saboeth

War Valco Clan Names: Bahsro, Dwosh, Grulen, Polnuk, Trodar

Adventurers: War valcos are rarely ever adventurers, tending to feel more at home in a structured military-like lifestyle. Some rogue warriors (mostly fighters and rangers) have been known to strike out on their own and find acceptance in adventuring parties, where their battle prowess is greatly appreciated. The war valco tend toward the hone, vigilante and occasionally rafter prestige classes.

War Valco Racial Traits

- War Valcos receive +2 to Str, +2 Dex, -2 Int, and -2 Wis.
- Medium: As Medium-sized creatures, war valco gain no bonuses or penalties due to size. War valco height ranges from 5 to 5 1/2 feet, and weight from 110 to 150 lbs.
- War valcos have a base land speed of 30 ft.
- War valcos have a natural armor bonus of +2.
- War valco adulthood at age 12 and are considered middle aged after 30. They are thought to be old at 45 and venerable at 60.
- Hardy: War valcos are able to consume and derive sustenance from nearly any organic substance. War valcos get a +2 bonus to all saving throws against poisons and diseases.
- Ramming: War valcos can perform a charge attack, striking his opponent with his horns for 2d6 + Str bonus damage. The target must make a successful Dex check (DC = ramming damage) or fall prone.
- Automatic Languages: Valco, plus they have their own dialect that involves limited use of signing and body language. Bonus Languages: Asherake, Chromithian, Common, Dover, Dwarfish, Elvish, Faust and Nightling.
- *Favored Class:* Barbarian. A multiclassed war valco's barbarian class does not count when determining whether he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. War valcos are fearless, robust and

powerful on the field of battle and their martial skills are bred into them and honed at an early age.

New Gifts

Gifts are special powers or abilities granted to new arrivals as they enter the Forge. The full list of standard gifts can be found in the OATHBOUND: *Domains of the Forge* sourcebook. However, for those individuals who are delivered directly into the harsh lands of Arena, a special list of gifts are provided below that better reflect the nature of that realm.

Sample Arrival Gifts

The following are sample gifts suitable for use as rewards for those who have recently arrived in Arena. To better match the scope of the PCs, additional arrival gifts may be created by the GM. Unless otherwise noted, the bonuses granted by these gifts stack just as any other bonuses of the same type; refer to the DMG for more details.

Decipher the sky: You can accurately predict the weather. When you concentrate for 1 minute on the local environment you have a 50% + (10% times your Wis modifier) to correctly predict the weather over the next 6 hours.

Eyes of the night: You gain darkvision (60 ft. range). If you already possess darkvision your range increases by 60 ft.

Fleet of foot: Your base movement rate (land) increases by 10 ft. This does not affect any other method of movement (i.e. flying, burrowing, climbing, etc.).

Keen ears: Your hearing becomes quite acute, granting you a +4 bonus to Listen checks and a +2 circumstance bonus to any surprise checks. This is not stackable with the Listen bonus if a Listen check is used to determine surprise.

Keen eyes: Your eyesight becomes quite acute, granting you a +4 bonus to Search and Spot checks.

Painless: You gain a +4 bonus to saves against pain-based effects and DR 5 against subdual damage (only).

Recall: Once per day you may recast any 0-,1st-, or 2nd-level spell or spell-like ability that you have used earlier that day. The spell cast cannot have come from an item, but one normally cast by you.

Resilient: You are particularly impervious to blows. You gain DR 1/-. This gift stacks with the barbarian's damage reduction ability.

Scentless: You do not give off a natural scent and cannot be tracked or detected by the scent ability.

Thick skin: Your skin toughens, giving you a natural armor bonus of +2. If you already possess natural armor, its bonus increases by +1.

Tongue of beasts: You gain the ability to communicate with a species of creature (canine, feline, reptile, serpent, fish etc.), just as if through the use of a *Speak with animals* spell.

Twist of fate: You can re-roll any single die roll (attack, saving throw, skill check, etc.), but you must abide by that roll, no matter what. This ability can be used only once per day.

Weapon of choice: You choose one specific weapon that you possess. You gain an inherent +1 bonus to attack

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rolls when using that weapon.

Wild skill: You gain 4 ranks in a skill. The skill is determined randomly, but it should lend itself to the character; it may include skills that are not on the character's class skill list.

Withstand energy: You ignore the first 5 points of damage from an attack from one specific type of energy effect (fire, cold, electricity, sonic or acid). This protection is not stackable with *resist energy* and *protection from energy* spells.

Sample Earned Gifts

Heroic feats performed in Arena can gain divine attention and can earn PCs additional powers and abilities. The gifts presented below may be granted to individuals that have shown real character and guts by overcoming great peril. Such actions should make a significant impact on the adventure. Only then should a GM consider granting the character an earned gift.

Danger sense: You feel a tug in the back of your mind when sudden danger lurks just around the corner, such as an ambush, a dangerous waterfall ahead, or a sneak attack. Roll a Will save (DC 10+ level of intended attacker, or DC15 if an environmental danger) to receive this warning. A successful save prevents you from being surprised by the danger and allows you to call out a warning to others (which might allow them to avoid being surprised if they make a successful Spot check to notice the danger). This ability does not apply to traps. Danger sense is not a conscious ability, so all rolls for it should be made secretly by the GM.

Fury: You can *rage*, just as a barbarian, once per day. If you can already rage a number of times each day through your class abilities, you gain an additional rage per day.

Nature's blessing: You are immune to poisons, secretions and inhalations from nonmagical animals, plants and beasts, including dire and giant versions of these creatures.

Regenerate: You gain regenerate 2, though you cannot regenerate severed limbs or return from beyond -10 hit points.

Second skin: Wearing armor feels natural to you. When wearing armor that you are proficient with, your standard penalties for wearing armor decrease. Maximum Dex bonus increases by +1, armor check penalty decreases by -1, arcane spell failure reduces by 5% and you do not suffer any movement penalty.

Terrain mastery: You are well suited to life in a particular type of terrain (desert, forest, plains, etc.). While within your terrain type you gain +10 ft. to your movement rate and a +6 inherent bonus to Climb, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (nature), Move Silently, Ride, Search, Spot and Survival checks. These bonuses apply to these skills only while in a natural setting.

Tongue of the eternal: You gain the ability to read and speak one of the following languages. Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic or Infernal (random or GM's choice). Choice of language is not restricted by alignment.

Voyeur sense: You can sense when someone is watching you from afar, including scrying. You know from which general direction (east, south-east, south, etc.) you are being observed, but not the distance or the method used.

Weapon use: You gain proficiency with a specific type of exotic or martial weapon that you would normally be restricted from using by class or race.

Prestige Races

The concept of prestige races was introduced in the OATHBOUND *Domains of the Forge* rulebook. It basically is the voluntary modification of one's genetic code, allowing the body and mind to reform into something completely new.

Altering one's genes is a difficult and dangerous prospect, and hence, it can only be done in short, slow steps. Also, a focus for these evolutions is required; you cannot simply randomly change your genes and see what happens. A focus is a genetic aim or goal, which provides

Foci of Arena

Focus of the Arid Wastes	Exp. Cost
Resilient Creature	2,500
Prickly Creature	4,500
Cactus Creature	8,500

Focus of the Brawler	Exp. Cost
Toughened Creature	3,250
Burly Creature	4,500
Skirmish Creature	6,500
Brawler Creature	10,000

Focus of the Fury	Exp. Cost
Swift Creature	3,000
Keen Creature	5,000
Whirling Creature	10,000

Focus of the Odd	Exp. Cost
Quaint Creature	3,000
Bizarre Creature	4,500
Preternatural Creature	5,500
Aberrant Creature	6,500

Focus of Warfare	Exp. Cost
Havoc Creature	3,500
Onslaught Creature	4,500
Bulwark Creature	5,500
Artifice Creature	6,500

Focus of the Wave	Exp. Cost
Sodden Creature	5,000
Saturated Creature	7,500
Watery Creature	9,500
Torrential Creature	11,500

inspiration for the change, but which typically is not attainable in one simple step. Six completely new foci are unique for Arena, and only those that have spent time on the red sands or its bordering oceans can obtain these gifts. These are the Foci of the Arid Wastes, Brawler, Fury, Odd, Warfare, and Wave.

To take a prestige race, a creature must either possess the Evolve feat (see OATHBOUND: *Domains of the Forge*, page 321) or physically travel to one of the sacred places of the Forge (or Arena). Evolve is a standard feat, and can be purchased by anyone. Once a character meets the prerequisites, he or she must simply pay the required XP cost, and the genetic change happens instantaneously. The body will then rapidly adapt to the change, usually finishing the process within a single minute.

Focus of the Arid Wastes

Those who live in desert areas are often drawn to this path. For some it is simply a matter of survival. For others this path provides a way to actively become an intricate part of a merciless and unforgiving ecosystem.

Resilient Creature

Example: Resilient Dover

Cost: 2,500 XP

Minimum Level: 3rd

Prerequisites: None

Unavailable to: GM-specified races

Details: A resilient creature develops tanned and weathered skin, but shows no other outward signs of change. If the creature has a coat (instead of skin), their fur shortens significantly and either darkens or lightens slightly toward a shade of light brown.

Game Effects: A resilient creature is able to consume and gain sustenance from nearly anything organic. They also gain a +3 to all saves against poisons and diseases and require only half the normal daily water requirements for a member of their race.

Prickly Creature

Example: Prickly Dover

Cost: 4,500 XP

Minimum Level: 6th

Prerequisites: Resilient

Unavailable to: Non-resilient creatures

Details: A prickly creature develops inch long needles over most every area of their body. This allows the creature to cause additional damage with unarmed strikes and when grappling.

Game Effects: A prickly creature does an additional 2 hp damage with any unarmed attack and inflicts 1d3 hp of slashing damage per round of grappling. As a standard action, a prickly creature can launch a barrage of needles in a 360-degree radius, up to a distance of 10 ft. for 2d4 hp of piercing damage. This can be done once every 1d4 rounds. Anyone within range of this attack must roll a Reflex save (DC 17). Those who succeed take half damage.

Cactus Creature

Example: Cactus Dover

Cost: 8,500 XP

Minimum Level: 14th

Prerequisites: Prickly

Unavailable to: Non-prickly creatures

Details: A cactus creature is one that has fully evolved into a plant. They lose all body hair and develop a tough, greenish skin.

Game Effects: The creature's type becomes plant. They are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis and stunning. They gain a +3 resistance bonus to all saves against mind-influencing effects and polymorphing. Also, any critical hit scored against a cactus creature has a 50% chance to fail and be considered a normal hit instead. A cactus creature requires only one-fourth the daily water requirements as a normal member of their species.

Focus of the Brawler

Those who walk the path of the brawler celebrate the physical experience of combat and live for the thrill of uncertainty life-and-death struggles bring. Performing an enchantment of the flesh while in the waters in the south-western bay of the Sea of Tears allows this focus to be undertaken.

Toughened Creature

Example: Toughened Dover

Cost: 3,250 XP

Minimum Level: 4th

Prerequisite: None

Unavailable to: Creatures with Focus of the Green, Serpent, or Wyrm

Details: The toughened creature is thrilled by melee combat, and has grown accustomed to the physical strain it brings. She revels in the surge of adrenaline-steeped energy of battle, and gains greater benefits from her changed physiology.

Game Effects: A toughened creature gains damage reduction 5 versus subdual damage. She also gains an increase of +2 to her Con score and a +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves.

Burly Creature

Example: Burly Dover

Cost: 4,500 XP

Minimum Level: 5th

Prerequisite: Toughened

Unavailable to: Non-toughened creatures

Details: The throes of battle have bolstered a burly creature's muscles enabling her to deliver more damaging strikes. Her militant lifestyle has further toughened her skin, providing her with an increased ability to shrug off attacks or render them less effective.

Game Effects: A burly creature gains damage reduction 2, a +2 racial bonus to Str, and a +2 natural armor bonus.

Skirmish Creature

Example: Skirmish Dover

Cost: 6,500 XP

Minimum Level: 7th

Prerequisite: Burly

Unavailable to: Non-burly creatures

Details: A skirmish creature has gained refined control over her movements, allowing her to use various techniques to deliver greater damage. Her continued exposure to the harsh conditions of war has toughened her, granting the ability to ignore more damage and even ignore limited exposure to fire and heat.

Game Effects: A skirmish creature gains fire resistance 10 and an additional 2 points of damage reduction. She gains a +2 Dex bonus. She also gains the extraordinary ability to trade no more than 5 points of her AC gained from Dexterity to increase her damage by an equal amount.

Brawler Creature

Example: Brawler Dover

Cost: 10,000 XP

Minimum Level: 10th

Prerequisite: Skirmish

Unavailable to: Non-skirmish creatures

Details: A brawler creature's "battle physiology" has been honed to a fine edge, enabling her to recover quickly from wounds and to deliver deadly attack after fighting her opponent and anticipating their actions.

Game Effects: A brawler creature gains the ability fast heal 5. She also gains the ability to deliver maximum critical damage in an attack as a full action.

Focus of the Fury

Followers of this path give themselves over fully to the flow of raw energies that course through their bodies when engaged in melee combat. Creatures of this path will not willingly wear anything heavier than light armor as they feel confined by it and indeed they lose all benefits of this path should they wear heavier armor.

Swift Creature

Example: Swift Gnome

Cost: 3,000 XP

Minimum Level: 3rd

Prerequisites: None

Unavailable to: Any class that has Flurry of Blows as a class ability.

Details: A swift creature becomes slightly leaner, but shows no other outward signs of change. However, their appetite does increase and tends to eat more and more often.

Game Effects: A swift creature gains an additional attack at their lowest Base Attack Bonus and gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC, due to their mobility and rapid body movements. Any situation, in which they would lose their Dex bonus to AC, negates this bonus as well.

Keen Creature

Example: Keen Gnome

Cost: 5,000 XP

Minimum Level: 7th

Prerequisites: Swift

Unavailable to: Non-swift creatures

Details: Keen creatures become quite lean and their limbs tend to elongate slightly. This may require clothing or armor to be altered in order to fit properly.

Game Effects: Keen creatures gain a +2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls when employing melee slashing weapons. This bonus stacks with all similar bonuses.

Whirling Creature

Example: Whirling Gnome

Cost: 10,000 XP

Minimum Level: 12th

Prerequisites: Keen

Unavailable to: Non-keen creatures

Details: A whirling creature is quite lean and its limbs are now noticeably longer and out of proportion to the rest of its body. The creature's face tends to lengthen slightly and it develops more chiseled facial features.

Game Effects: A whirling creature can forgo its normal number of attacks and, as a full action at his lowest Base Attack Bonus, attack each target within his weapon's melee reach. Only one attack can be made against each target in that round.

Focus of the Odd

Oddities exist everywhere in reality—small strange happenings that not only make little logistical sense, but more so that adversely and actively resist the strictures of actuality. Individuals that exalt and relish these idiosyncrasies typically follow the Focus of Odd; literally reforming themselves in the process. As they traverse this winding road of the inexplicable and unusual, they slowly become more and more like that which they revere—the oddness of the universe—in mind, body, heart and soul.

Quaint Creature

Example: Quaint Halfling

Cost: 3,000 XP

Minimum Level: 4th

Prerequisite: None

Unavailable to: GM -specified races

Details: Quaint creatures are those that have become aware of the frequency of odd things around them. Often, these creatures are known in civilized areas as seers, mystics, prophets or (often) madmen due to the fact that they can perceive things that others feel are simply not there. Further, quaint creatures have discovered that this heightened perception further brings them a measure of control over their environment; they can make sights and sounds appear as if out of thin air. These creatures often undergo physical changes that are closely related to perception: eyes that are slightly larger and more watery than normal; ears that have become larger, slightly flared, or

Focus of Warfare

possibly even more flexible; hands and feet that are longer, suppler and far more receptive to tactile sensations.

Game Effects: The creature gains a +2 racial bonus to Appraise, Decipher Script, Intuit Direction, Listen, Read Lips, Search, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, and Spot. Additionally, the character gains the ability, three times a day, to see *invisibility* as cast by a 4th-level wizard.

Bizarre Creature

Example: Bizarre Halfling

Cost: 4,500 XP

Minimum Level: 5th

Prerequisite: Quaint

Unavailable to: Non-quaint creatures

Details: Bizarre creatures not only perceive the unusual happenings around them, but they have also learned how to harness them. Further, they are beginning to understand the very nature of the oddities of the universe and can manifest them in such a way as to alter reality itself. Each of these creatures begins to deviate at this point in their evolution; sometimes, bizarre creatures sprout new limbs or organs, often in unusual locations (such as a third eye on their chin). Other times, an aspect of their physical makeup changes at random (or sometimes at the will of the character) such as hair that is shoulder length and black one day, short cropped and green the next (the GM should work with the character's player and devise a physical attribute that fits the character, the player's style of play, and the game setting appropriately).

Game Effects: The creature gains the unique ability to actually alter the reality around them, albeit in a severely limited fashion. Essentially, a bizarre creature can elect to have any one die roll (which does not necessarily have to be their own) re-rolled; they may use this ability once per day for every three levels they have attained. They must take the second roll, even if the result is worse than the first. Furthermore, three times per day, the creature gains the capability to manifest the spell-like power of *misdirection* as if cast by a 5th level wizard.

Preternatural Creature

Example: Preternatural Halfling

Cost: 5,500 XP

Minimum Level: 6th

Prerequisite: Bizarre

Unavailable to: Non-bizarre creatures

Details: Preternatural creatures have stumbled upon rents in the fabric of reality and have been brave (or foolish) enough to peer through. That which they have seen in the realms beyond our own has altered them irrevocably. Their minds, expanded (some say shattered) far beyond its original physical and mental borders have latched onto powers and abilities typically reserved for only the most powerful spellcasters. Their physical appearance, acting as a mirror for their altered state of mind, deviates even farther from its fundamental form, slowly turning them into something much more than—and less than—human. Often, these creatures will undergo physical changes such as sprouting new, unidentifiable and seemingly useless appendages, seeing their skin revert into a translucent, viscous jelly, or budding an entirely new skeletal structure—

on the outside of their skin! (As above, GMs should work closely with the player of a preternatural character in order to devise a suitably balanced and unusual change for their campaign.)

Game Effects: The creature gains the capacity to further control their reality-altering powers; now the creature can elect which result (either the originally rolled result, or the result of the subsequent re-roll) they would like to keep. The creature also gains the ability to cast the following spell-like powers: *confusion*, *feeblemind* and *mind fog*, once per day each, as cast by a 9th-level wizard.

Aberrant Creature

Example: Aberrant Halfling

Cost: 6,500 XP

Minimum Level: 7th

Prerequisite: Preternatural

Unavailable to: Non-preternatural creatures

Details: Aberrant creatures have crossed over a line and truly become something alien. These creatures no longer perceive reality in the same light as others, and their actions and forms illustrate that fact. While all aberrant creatures retain some portion of their former selves mentally, very few of them preserve portions of their previous physical forms—most become something that seems barely humanoid. Giant, sentient, amorphous blobs or headless torsos that amble about on eye-tipped tentacles are within the realm of possibility for an aberrant creature and considered completely desirable and normal to them. (As stated above, the GMs should continue to maintain constant interaction with the player of the aberrant character, in order to craft a form that is both fitting for the campaign and playable as a character race.)

Game Effects: The creature gains the aberration subtype. Furthermore, the creature gains the ability to manifest *insanity* once per week, as cast by a 13th-level wizard.

Focus of Warfare

Those that select this focus feel that warfare, at its quintessence, is the center of life. These characters see all things as a struggle for life, in one form or another. From the very moment one is born, they espouse, life is naught by a constant battle for survival, from drawing one's first breath to facing a charging horde of enemies—they are all warfare cloaked in one of its myriad guises. As they move along this path, characters' physical, mental and emotional attributes become constantly more honed and refined for making war.

Havoc Creature

Example: Havoc Ferrin

Cost: 3,500 XP

Minimum Level: 5th

Prerequisite: None

Unavailable to: GM-specified races

Details: Havoc creatures have become one with warfare's initial and most common face: the sheer, unadulterated fury of battle. These creatures yearn for the call of battle and their bloodlust for it is nearly insatiable. Slight changes in their physical makeup, such as a feral, wild

People and Powers

look in their eyes, or a generally haggard and unkempt appearance are experienced by havoc creatures, but it is their outlook that truly undergoes a total transformation. **Game Effects:** The creature gains the ability to enter into a rage as a barbarian of equal level a number of times per day equal to their Constitution bonus. This rage also occurs (involuntarily) any time the character moves within 100 feet of a pitched battle. During this rage, all Will checks are made with a circumstance penalty of -2 due to the fact that the character is engrossed in the thick of the battle.

Onslaught Creature

Example: Onslaught Ferrin

Cost: 4,500 XP

Minimum Level: 6th

Prerequisite: Havoc

Unavailable to: Non-havoc creatures

Details: Onslaught creatures have discerned how to temper the raw fury of open battle into a focused, potent weapon. While they still yearn for the heart of war and the call of the clash, onslaught creatures have further learned that warfare is a complex entity, composed of attacks, defense, feints and strikes. Their eyes are now beginning to open to the true heart of war and as a result, they learn to wedge their chaotic energies into the attack form. Onslaught creatures gain an impenetrable, steely gaze and their forms become honed and tense, as if always ready to spring into an attack.

Game Effects: The creature gains a +2 racial bonus to Dexterity and Strength. Further, the creature retains the ability to rage as a havoc creature, but because of their new viewpoint, do not suffer any of the penalties or negative affects of the rage.

Bulwark Creature

Example: Bulwark Ferrin

Cost: 5,500 XP

Minimum Level: 7th

Prerequisite: Onslaught

Unavailable to: Non-onslaught creatures

Details: Bulwark creatures have discovered that warfare encompasses equal parts defense and offense. While the clash on the field of honor is foremost in the minds of those who think of war, often those same battles are truly won in the show of an unflinching resistance. While they still hear the frenzied cries for battle within their hearts, bulwark creatures know that there is a time and place for everything, to them, defense is paramount. The countenance of a bulwark creature takes on an impassive, unflinching manner and those near them feel inexplicable feelings of security and safety.

Game Effects: The creature gains a natural armor bonus of +2 and a +2 racial bonus to Constitution and Wisdom. The creature further gains the ability to manifest *magic circle against chaos/good/evil/law* and *emotion* once per day as cast by a 6th-level bard.

Artifice Creature

Example: Artifice Ferrin

Cost: 6,500 XP

Minimum Level: 8th

Prerequisite: Bulwark

Unavailable to: Non-bulwark creatures

Details: Artifice creatures are truly the masters of all aspects of warfare. War, in its varied forms and semblances literally pulses through the veins of the artifice creature, few can withstand his fury on the battlefield, pierce his stone-solid defenses, or unravel his cunning tactics and plans. The ultimate general, an artifice creature lives for war and if it can find none, it will foster its creation. Artifice creatures are terrible to behold, for their faces are those of countless wars reborn, their speech is the clamor of countless battles and their eyes are twin pools of merciless fury. Strangely, however, warmongers and others like him are drawn to the artifice creature, which they view as a god.

Game Effects: The creature gains a racial bonus of +2 to Intelligence and Charisma, in addition to a natural armor bonus of +2. The creature further acquires the supernatural ability to inspire fear or bolster courage while on the battlefield. As long as the creature is in sight, all Will checks of those allied with the creature enjoy a +5 circumstance modifier. Similarly, those against the creature suffer a -5 circumstance penalty to all Will checks.

Focus of the Wave

Those who elect to traverse the way of the wave tend to be placid and slow to anger. Deep within the cores of their beings, they feel the love and pull of the oceans, and from them they draw their unfathomable strengths and patience. As they steadfastly make headway along their chosen focus, these characters slowly experience changes and alterations to their minds, bodies, and spirits that only intensify their longing and love for the sea.

Sodden Creature

Example: Sodden Elf

Cost: 5,000 XP

Minimum Level: 6th

Prerequisite: None

Unavailable to: GM -specified races

Details: Sodden creatures have realized how truly vast and limitless the powers of the sea can be, and have managed to bind a portion of that realization to their form. These creatures' skin becomes coated with a slick, almost transparent film of water, which can never be removed or sloughed off. Sodden creatures' hair (fur, plumage, etc.) turns wet and slimy and remains so, despite all attempts to make it clean or dry. The creature's toes and fingers become webbed and elongated. Further, its eyes become paler and more luminous, like twin full moons reflected upon the surface of a calm bay.

Game Effects: The creature gains low-light vision and a +4 competence bonus to all Escape Artist and Swim checks. Further, any opponent attempting to grapple the sodden creature suffers a -4 to all related rolls. The creature also gains a swim speed of 50 ft.

Saturated Creature

Example: Saturated Elf

Cost: 7,500 XP

Minimum Level: 9th

Prerequisite: Sodden

Unavailable to: Non-sodden creatures

Details: Saturated creatures have discovered how to tap into the immense power that lies beneath the waves in such a way as to actually alter their physical makeup. As a result, the bodies of these creatures undergo a transformation whereby the internal organs revert into nothing more than water. While the organs continue to perform their assigned tasks, the potential damage that can be delivered to them by most weapons is essentially nullified. The only outwardly noticeable sign of this change is that the creatures bleed clear, pure water.

Game Effects: The creature is no longer subject to critical hits or subdual damage. The creature no longer requires solid food to sustain itself (it must, however, consume twice the daily amount of fluid required for a creature of its size and type). The creature also gains the capacity to breathe water naturally.

Watery Creature

Example: Watery Elf

Cost: 9,500 XP

Minimum Level: 11th

Prerequisite: Saturated

Unavailable to: Non-saturated races.

Details: Watery creatures have become one with the waves, and their hearts pound with the rhythmic sound of the sea. Their entire forms alter into one of barely contained water, like a rushing river held back by only a thin skin of vellum. Watery creatures gain control of their bod-

ies in such a way that they can flatten and stretch their forms, provided the mass remains the same. It is said that the color of watery creatures' eyes always reflect their true mood, much like the color of the waves hint to a coming storm.

Game Effects: The creature gains the ability to stretch its form at will, providing a racial bonus of +4 to Balance, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Hide, and Tumble checks, and enabling it to enter places a creature of its size might not normally be able to enter. The creature further gains immunity from paralysis and stunning due to its fluid, highly malleable, and absorbent form.

Torrential Creature

Example: Torrential Elf

Cost: 11,500 XP

Minimum Level: 13th

Prerequisite: Watery

Unavailable to: Non-watery creatures

Details: Torrential creatures have forsaken their old forms entirely, fully embracing the fluctuating realm of fluidity. Their forms become entirely liquid and thus their shapes and temperaments, like the sea, are ever changing and unpredictable.

Game Effects: The creature gains a swim speed of 100 ft., plus immunity to sleep and to death from massive damage. The creature further acquires the ability to completely control its shape and the ability to increase its volume at will a number of times equal to one half its level (as if affected by an *enlarge* spell cast by a 4th level sorcerer). A character may take the shape of a horse, for example, or form its hands into massive "water" war hammers; however, no additional exceptional abilities or skills are conferred by this alteration. As such, in the example mentioned above, the creature's hands would inflict no more damage than a normal unarmed strike by the creature.

War Machines

"They leave their flank unguarded. By the gods! Fate is with us this night!"

- A skirmisher's last words before stepping on an acid mine.

In Arena, the ability to reduce your opponents' forces to smoking piles of offal shot through with twisted shards of metal is of great concern to a warlord. While normal war machines such as the ballista or mangonel are quite capable of tearing down a fortification wall or punching through the hide of a dragon or other creature impressed into battle, there is sometimes a need for something more powerful, more impressive.

In this chapter, you will find information about the war machines of Arena, from the conventional weapons found in use on battlefields and siege encampments throughout the region to the dreaded doom striders, which pack artillery, mobility, and freakish endurance into one powerful package.

Given the constant state of conflict endemic to the domain of Arena, there is no doubt that more powerful and more versatile weapons of warfare would be developed here. The engineers and eldritch scholars have truly outdone themselves in the fields of destruction, providing the warlords with the weapons they need to more efficiently destroy their enemies' armies.

Conventional War Machines

In addition to the most common war machines, such as the catapult, ballista, and ram, the armies of Arena also use more exotic or powerful mechanized weapons. Each of the frequently used machines is described in more detail below.

Caltrop Spreader

Caltrops are most useful when spread over a very large area, but doing so is time consuming and can require significant manpower. The advent of the caltrop spreader, however, has alleviated both problems and turned this once odious chore into a relatively quick and mostly painless procedure.

The machine consists of a large wheel topped by a gear assembly, a hopper, and a rotating chute. The pilot of the machine can move it at 20' per round simply by pushing the pedals attached to the gear assembly. This not only turns the wheel, but also takes spins the chute beneath the gear assembly. Caltrops held in the hopper then slide down the chute and are thrown wide by the quick rotation.

A single machine creates a 20-ft.-wide path (10 feet on either side as it travels) that can be up to 300 feet long before the hopper must be refilled. Filling the hopper requires 240 pounds of caltrops.

Mass Combat: If using the mass combat system found in this book, all units that move through an area covered with caltrops have their movement immediately reduced by one-half. In addition, they must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or have their movement reduced to one-quarter for the duration of the battle.

Caltrop spreaders are not deployed during a battle, they have no defenses and are considered destroyed if a unit scores any hit against them.

Hell Scorpion

Designed to mow down advancing troops as quickly as possible, the hell scorpion hurtles dozens of darts in a high arc. Though not terribly damaging, it covers such a large area and has such a long range that it is often able to injure dozens of troops before they are able to retaliate. The hell scorpion looks much like a catapult but instead of a basket, a cylinder tops its throwing arm with dozens of holes drilled into its top. The holes are filled with darts, which are hurled in a high arc at enemy positions.

When a hell scorpion is fired, one of the crew makes a Profession (siege engineer) check (DC 20). If successful, where the object actually lands is determined by rolling 1d12 and consulting the Deviation (10 ft. to 16 ft.) Diagram found in Chapter 3 of the DMG. The center is the desired target. If the check is failed, the GM secretly rolls and consults the same deviation diagram. The result is now where the hell scorpion is actually aimed. This new result is used as the center to determine the actual deviation of the attack.

For example, a hell scorpion is used to attack an advancing squad of bugbears. The Profession (siege engineer) check fails, so the GM rolls 1d12 and gets an 11. By consulting the diagram, she determines that the actual target is 10 feet from the desired target, behind and to the left. Now, a crewmember rolls 1d12 and gets an 8. After consulting the Deviation Diagram in the DMG to see where the missiles land, the GM ascertains that the center of the affected area falls 10 feet short and to the left of the actual target, which is 20 feet to the left of the desired target.

The spread of the hell scorpion's missiles covers a 50' diameter circle, centered on the target point. Any targets within the affected area must make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or suffer 1d4+5 points of damage. Targets who fail their save by more than 10 are actually struck 1d4 times, suffering the above damage each time they are hit.

Given the aerodynamic nature of the projectiles and the ease of loading the weapon, the hell scorpion requires a crew of only five and can be fired every three rounds. Against slowly advancing troops, this weapon is devastating in its power, able to shred tight formations with great efficiency.

Table 10.1: Conventional War Machines

Item	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Crew
Caltrop Spreader	300 gp	—	—	—	1
Hell Scorpion	800 gp	1d4+5	X3	200 ft.	5
Trebuchet	1,200 gp	10d6	—	300 ft.	25



Mass Combat: Ten hell scorpions and their crews comprise a unit of war machines. To determine the damage caused by a unit of hell scorpions, multiply their standard damage by 5. Hell scorpion units may only fire once every other round, but each time they are fired they are treated as if they had executed the Darken the Sky special ability as defined in the archer troop type in Chapter 8: War.

Units of hell scorpions have a movement rate of 50 feet and are otherwise treated as a unit of archers.

Trebuchet

These massive weapons are indirect fire weapons, which propel boulders or other massive objects through the use of counterweights. The weapon has a simple frame, which contains a balanced arm with baskets at either end. The larger basket is situated closer to the pivot point of the weapon and is typically filled with rocks, lead, or sand. Manpower is used to raise the weighted end of the trebuchet, while the projectile is placed in the smaller basket. When the counterweight is released, it hurtles downward, which naturally swings the longer arm up and over. This sends the projectile flying a great distance, much further than even the most powerful catapults.

When a trebuchet is fired, one of the crew makes a Profession (siege engineer) check (DC 20). If successful, where the object actually lands is determined by rolling 1d12 and consulting the Deviation (10 ft. to 16 ft.) Diagram in the DMG. The center is the desired target. If the check is failed, the GM secretly rolls and consults the same deviation diagram. The result is now where the trebuchet is actually aimed. This new result is used as the center to determine the actual deviation of the attack.

A trebuchet requires a crew of at least 25 men and may only be fired once every fifteen minutes. The trebuchet bounces and tosses around a great deal from the torque exerted upon its frame by the falling counterweight and must be re-aimed (as described above) each time it is fired.

Mass Combat: Ten trebuchets make up one unit. They are treated as a unit of archers for all other purposes and have a movement rate of 50 feet.

Magical War Equipment

In addition to the conventional, mechanical war machines detailed above, the forces of Arena have developed powerful magical weapons and ammunition designed to wreak havoc amongst the armies of their enemies.

War Machines

Most of these war machines are amplifications of existing spells, combining traditional magical effects with various focusing or diffusion magical devices to make the spells more useful on the battlefield. Each of the magical war machines is detailed below. Unless otherwise noted, these are magical weapons and are created as such.

Leaper Bombard

Troops can be easily rattled when their environment changes suddenly and few changes are more startling or confusing than a change in the way gravity works. Leaper bombards fire 'balls' of antigravity which, when they strike the ground, cause those in their area of effect to experience a very sudden change in the way the world works.

Leaper bombards are indirect fire weapons that require the Profession (siege engineer) skill (DC 25) to accurately target. If the skill check succeeds, the engineer lands the antigravity sphere where he intended; otherwise, it goes astray. To determine where the antigravity sphere ends up, roll 2d10 and multiply the result by 5 to calculate the number of feet the sphere drifted before landing. Then roll 1d8 and consult the Grenadelike Weapons chart found in Chapter 8 of PHB to determine the direction of deviation.

The leaper bombard may be fired once every three rounds, but requires a successful Profession (siege engineer) skill check each time it is fired. The leaper bombard has a range increment of 300 feet.

The sphere has a radius of 30 feet and any creature caught in it must make a Reflex save (DC 20) to catch onto the ground or another stable feature or be pulled into the air. Those who make their save are able to seize onto something to halt their fall, but are unable to take any other actions for the remainder of the round.

Those who fail their save immediately fall 30 feet into the air, where they remain for 1d3 rounds. At the end of this time, they fall back to earth, suffering 3d6 points of damage.

In addition, any target in the area of effect is required to make a Will save (DC 15) or be stunned for 1d3 rounds by the sudden change in their environment.

Mass Combat: A single leaper bombard is considered its own unit and causes the damage listed above when fired into an enemy unit if that enemy unit fails its Reflex save. Regardless of whether the unit fails its save or not, any unit struck by a leaper bombard must forfeit its next movement action as it attempts to reorganize itself and get moving again.

Leaper bombards are considered archer units for purposes of their saving throws and attack rolls, but have no movement rate and any hit from an enemy unit destroys a leaper bombard unit. *Caster Level:* 14th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *reverse gravity*; *Market Price:* 100,000 gp; *Weight:* 700 lbs.

Vacuum Bolt

This powerful weapon causes a localized implosive reaction, which creates a powerful vacuum that is deadly to any troops nearby and distracting and dangerous to those further away.

The *vacuum bolt* looks very much like a standard ballista bolt and is normally fired from a ballista. Because the bolt does not need to strike a particular individual in order to activate, it may either be fired as normal (using the attack bonus of the operating weapons engineer) or it may be fired at a section of the battlefield.

Aiming at a specific section of the battlefield requires a successful Profession (siege engineer) skill check (DC 15). There is a -2 circumstance penalty applied to this check for every range increment after the first between the ballista and the target region.

If the attack misses, or the skill check fails, the bolt continues to travel in a straight line for 4d10 x 10 feet before impacting the ground and detonating.

When the vacuum bolt detonates, it immediately releases the powerful magic it contains, causing 1d6 points of damage to all targets within 10 feet of the impact point. In addition, the vacuum bolt begins generating a powerful vortex at the point of impact.

At the beginning of the round following the bolt's detonation, all creatures within 20 feet of the impact point must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) to be able to move in any direction except directly toward the vacuum bolt. At the beginning of each subsequent round, this range increases by 10 feet, until the affected area reaches its maximum radius of 50 feet.

In addition to this effect, all targets who fail their Fortitude save must immediately make a Strength check (DC 15) to avoid being pulled toward the impact point. If this check fails, the target immediately moves 10 feet directly toward the impact point. Targets do not have to attempt to move around obstructions—if they bump into an object of at least the same size category as themselves, they may halt their movement at that object.

Spellcasters in the area of effect must make a successful Concentration skill check to avoid losing their spell, due to the distractions of flying debris and detritus hurtling in toward the vacuum bolt's vortex.

At the end of the first round following the bolt's detonation, all targets within 10 feet of the vacuum bolt's point of impact must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 2d6 points of damage.

The vacuum bolt's vortex persists for six rounds after its detonation and then dissipates harmlessly in a flash of light accompanied by a loud popping noise.

Mass Combat: This weapon causes its normal damage to enemy units during a mass combat round. In addition, units struck by this weapon may not move to avoid the damage it causes. *Caster Level:* 17th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *implosion*; *Market Price:* 4,000 gp; *Weight:* 10 lbs.

Zombie Missile

Heavily modified from the inferno shrieker (see below), the zombie missile contains a magical payload that explodes and then transforms those killed into ravening zombies with a thirst for the flesh of their former allies. Devious and deadly in the extreme, this weapon is used only by the most depraved warlords who do not fear the retribution of their peers. Anyone using this weapon on the battlefield is likely feel the wrath of those who regard this weapon as horrific and abominable.

Alchemical War Equipment

The weapon is fired in the same manner as the inferno shrieker and requires the same Profession (siege engineer) skill check as detailed for that weapon. Zombie shriekers also have a range increment of 200 feet.

When the zombie missile hits, however, it explodes in a blast of necromantic energy, rather than a ball of fire. Targets are allowed a Fortitude save (DC 20) to avoid the effects of this negative energy, but those who fail suffer 1d4 negative levels. Creatures reduced to 0 levels or less immediately die as a result of this effect.

Any creature that dies rises as a zombie on the next turn. This zombie is not controlled in any way and will attack the nearest living creature it spots.

Mass Combat: To simulate the confusion and damage caused by a group of zombies suddenly bursting up in the middle of an enemy unit, use the following system. For every point by which the unit fails its Fortitude save, it suffers one round of damage from the zombies. Each round, the unit will suffer 2d10 points of damage. At the end of this time, it is assumed the zombies have been destroyed or otherwise dealt with.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *animate dead, enervation*; *Market Price:* 3,000 gp; *Weight:* 10 lbs.

Alchemical War Equipment

While magical tools are very powerful and feared weapons on Arena's battlefields, they are also costly and they require magical capabilities to produce. Alchemical devices, on the other hand, can be more easily manufactured and require no innate magical abilities to produce.

The following are the more commonly used alchemical items found in Arena, along with the costs and DCs for enterprising alchemists who wish to create their own items.

Acid Mines

Essentially large bladders containing two other bladders filled with reactive compounds, these mines are used to hamper the advance of troops on the land. When stepped on, the internal bladders rupture and combine to create an explosive reaction. This attack showers nearby troops with acid and stinging bits of shrapnel. Though the actual damage is not severe, the damage caused by these mines can slow an advance and sap the will of enemy troops before they can reach their destination.

Acid mines are constructed using the Alchemy skill (DC 15), but must be planted using the Craft (trap making) skill. The result of the Craft (trap making) skill becomes the DC for locating the trap before stepping on it. The mine can be located by a successful Spot, Search, or Survival skill check, though only the Spot skill check does not require actively searching for the mine.

Whenever a character or other creature passes through the square the mine is planted in, or any adjacent square, there is a 50% chance the mine is detonated. The detonated mine sends a geyser of acid hurtling into the air to rain down over a 20-foot radius area.

All targets in the affected area are permitted a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid exposure to the burning fluids. Those who make their saving throw suffer 1d4 points of

damage, while those who fail suffer 1d4 points of damage and irritating burns. These burns slow the movement of affected targets to one-half their normal speed until they are treated by a Heal skill check (DC 20) or until all the damage caused by the acid is healed.

Mass Combat: A unit is permitted a Spot, Search, or Survival skill check to locate the mined area (assume a unit has skill equal to its level). If they succeed, they may move around the mined area as normal. If they wander into the mined area, however, they will automatically detonate the mines. This mine causes five times its normal damage to mass combat units and automatically reduces the movement speed of affected units by one-half. Note that once a mined area is tripped during a mass combat it is no longer mined.

DC: 15, **Cost:** 200 gp

Flash Stones

These clay balls actually contain four smaller balls, two of which are filled with flint and steel shards and two of which are filled with an alchemical solution that burns very quickly and extremely brightly.

These stones are thrown from catapults or trebuchets and are primarily used to confuse and disorient enemy units. Because the fluid burns so quickly, it causes no damage, but the fire is so bright it is quite capable of blinding any who see it.

Any creature within 30 feet of the impact point of a flash stone must make a Fortitude save (DC 20). Those who fail their saves are immediately blinded by the intense flash of light, and remain sightless for 1d4 rounds, after which time they may act normally.

Mass Combat: If entire units of trebuchets fire flash stones during the same round, the unit they hit must make its save or remain immobile for 1d4 rounds. During this time the unit may take no actions and any attacking unit gains a +2 circumstance bonus on all attack rolls against the unit.

DC: 25, **Cost:** 500 gp

Inferno Shrieker

These tubes of clay and paper are filled with all manner of alchemical explosives. When ignited, they streak across the battlefield toward enemy troops. With any luck, they explode where intended and shower the battlefield with sticky gobbets of burning fat.

Firing an inferno shrieker is difficult and requires a successful Profession (siege engineer) skill check (DC 20). If the skill check succeeds, the shrieker lands where intended. Shriekers have a range increment of 200 feet.

If the check fails, however, roll 1d6, +1 for every range increment of distance between the inferno shrieker and the target location. Multiply this number by 5 to determine how many feet away from the target location the blast lands. Then roll 1d8 and consult the Grenadelike Weapons chart found in Chapter 8 of PHB to determine the direction of deviation.

Should the unfortunate siege engineer actually roll a 1 on his skill check, the shrieker explodes instantly at the point of launch.

War Machines

Wherever the shrieker lands, it immediately explodes, causing 1d6 points of damage to all targets within 20 feet of its point of impact. Targets are allowed a Reflex save (DC 20) to avoid all damage from the shrieker. Those who save suffer no injury, while others are coated in flaming tallow and are considered to be on fire.

The tallow continues to burn until extinguished, inflicting an additional 1d6 points of damage each round. Flaming targets are allowed a Reflex save (DC 15) at the beginning of each round they are on fire to put the flames out. If this check saves, the fire is extinguished. If they fail, they suffer an additional 1d6 points of fire damage. This continues until the target dies, or the flames are extinguished. The flames can be extinguished automatically by submerging the target in water.

Mass Combat: Ten of these missiles must be fired at the same time in order to damage a mass combat unit in any noticeable way. All ten missiles are resolved with the same attack—if they hit, they cause five times the damage listed above, both initially and during the subsequent rounds.

DC: 25, **Cost:** 500 gp, **Range Increment:** 200 feet

Venomous Vapor Ammunition

Designed to be hurled from catapults, these clay spheres are filled with poisonous gases that spread quickly and efficiently through the air when the clay is broken. By combining standard poisons with other agents, the alchemist is able to turn them into a gas, making them much more useful on the battlefield.

To create venomous vapor ammunition, the alchemist must first procure a dose of the poison he wishes to use in the ammunition. A single dose of poison is enough to create a 10-foot radius burst of poisonous gas. A 20-foot radius burst can be made using 5 doses of the poison, while a 30-foot radius burst can be made using 25 doses of the poison. All doses must be of the same type of poison—mixed poison types simply do not react well with the other reagents involved.

When fired from a catapult, the venomous vapor ammunition is targeted just like a boulder or any other type of ammunition. When it strikes the ground, however, it bursts and releases its poison gas. The gas has the same save DC as the original poison, but its type becomes ingested and both the initial and secondary damage is reduced by one-half. All targets within the area encompassed by the cloud must make their saves, but the poison gas cloud dissipates quickly thereafter.

Mass Combat: An entire unit of catapults or trebuchets must fire this ammunition in order to damage a mass combat unit. Regardless of the type of poison used, the result is the same—units who fail their save suffer a reduction in their effective level of 1d2 for both primary and secondary damage from the poison. Units who succeed at their saves suffer no reduction in effective level, whatsoever.

DC: The save DC of the poison used, **Cost:** 200 gp plus the cost of the doses of poison used

Doom Striders

During the many battles in Arena, warlords have found communication to be one of their greatest difficulties. Having a thousand catapults in position is an achievement; getting them all to fire on the same target at something approaching the same time is virtually impossible. This led to the creation of more condensed units, packing more and more weapons and men into the smallest possible area to reduce communications lag. Of course, the advent of the hell scorpion and the heavy use of area-affecting spells quickly made this costly. For centuries, warlords struggled with the right mix of compact units and risked heavy enemy fire, until the advent of the doom strider.

These great war machines are magical in nature and allow a single man, or very small group of men, to field a frightening amount of firepower. By condensing an entire unit's worth of assault power into the hands of one man, communication worries were eased, and a much smaller number of troops could accomplish formerly impossible goals. The doom strider has since become a fixture on the battlefield, providing heavy artillery support and point-defenses for the ground troops who swarm around it in search of enemy soldiers.

But doom striders have their downsides, as well. They are expensive, foremost, and require a great deal of arcane or divine talent to construct. They are also targets for enemy fire and suffer great damage during each battle; such damage can be expensive to repair and strider captains are often rewarded for returning their machines with minimal battle damage.

Perhaps the most severe problem facing the doom strider is that it is only as good as the pilot inside. Doom striders augment the power and skill of their captains, meaning only the best, toughest, strongest, or most capable are ever placed into the captain's seat. Warlords are somewhat reluctant to use their best soldiers in such walking targets, but the returns still outweigh the investment, despite the high casualty rates.

How the Doom Strider Works

Doom striders are massive war machines that are magically connected to their captains. The creature inside the strider provides the core upon which the rest of the machine must rest—putting a 90-pound weakling into the captain's seat will simply give you a 100-foot-tall weakling, endangering both the captain and the war strider.

This magical symbiosis works both ways, however, and many captains suffer grievous injuries during their time at the controls of a doom strider. Though the attacks of enemies may not penetrate the thickly armored skin of the doom strider, the connection between captain and machine can and often does transfer the damage from one to the other.

Many soldiers think of the doom striders as nothing more than especially elaborate suits of magical armor. This analogy works well enough; though there are striders that can seat numerous crewmembers, most are powerful tools that turn great soldiers into engines of death and destruction.

Building a Doom Strider

The doom strider is not a simple machine; one cannot simply hop down to the local blacksmith and order one up. They require not only the hands of a skilled craftsman to shape the doom strider's body, armor, and weapons, but also powerful magicians and clerics to give the doom strider life. The following sections describe the process necessary to create a doom strider, as well as the materials and magical power needed to create one of these powerful war machines.

All doom striders are composed of the same basic parts: a head, torso, and limbs. The creation and installation of each of these components is discussed in the sections below—follow the procedure outlined in the following section and you will have a battle-ready death machine ready when you get to the end.

Construction Materials

All doom striders are composed of the same basic materials—wood, leather, iron, quicksilver, and other, more arcane, substances are used to create the majority of the body, armor, and internal components. However, it is possible to use more durable or lighter components when creating a doom strider, at an increased cost.

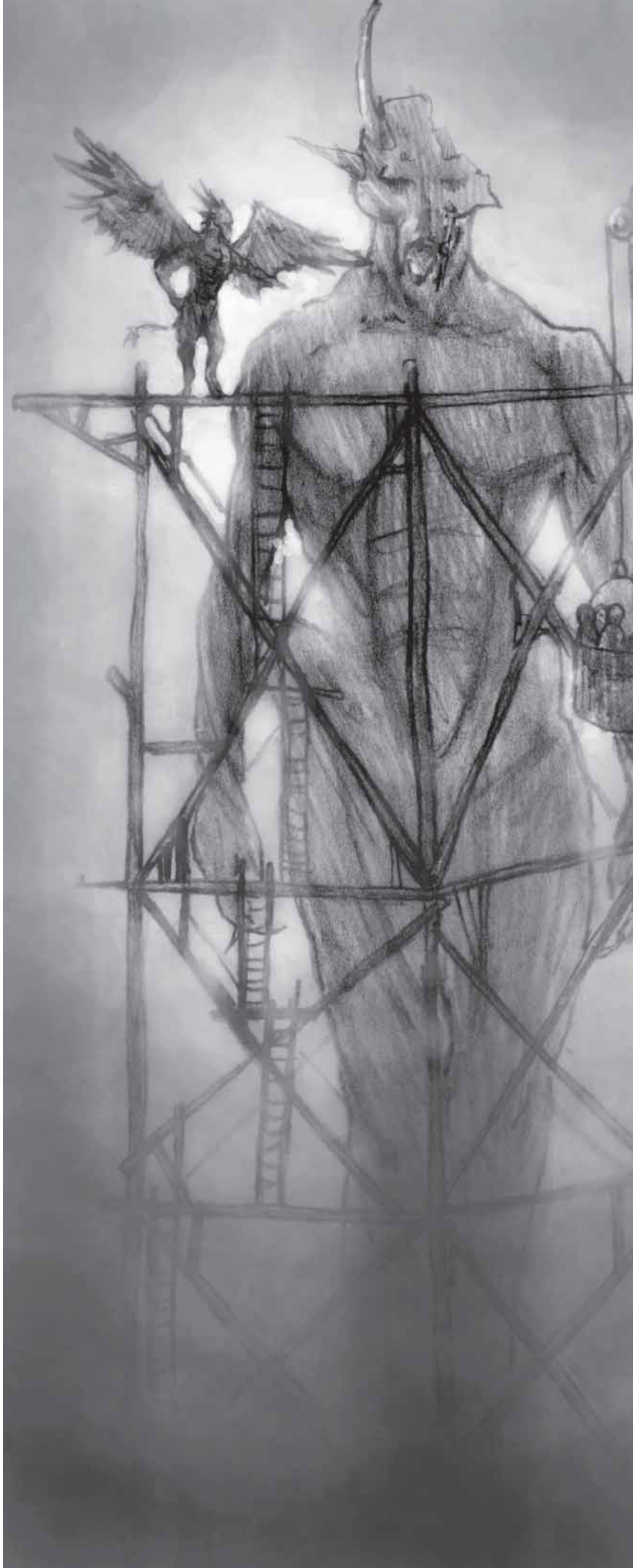
Adamantine, darkwood, and mithral are three of the most common exotic materials used in the creation of doom striders and each provides its own benefits. Adamantine, for example, is much stronger and durable than mere iron, while mithral is far lighter. Darkwood is favored for its flexibility and low weight, as well, especially for smaller doom striders in great need of agility and speed. The table below illustrates the benefits, and increased costs, for using these alternative materials in the construction of a doom strider.

Material	Bonus/Cost
Adamantine	+3 AC bonus, +2 bonus to all melee weapon damage, +2 bonus to all Fortitude saves. <i>Cost:</i> 3 times normal
Mithral	Treat doom strider as one size category smaller for purpose of determining Armor Class and Attack modifier. <i>Cost:</i> 2 times normal
Darkwood	Doom strider receives a 10-foot movement bonus. <i>Cost:</i> 1.5 times normal

Size

All doom striders are measured in size categories the same as those used for monsters. Doom striders must be of at least Huge size to accommodate the power supply and other mechanical components along with a pilot. Gargantuan and Colossal sizes are far more common with doom striders, as the extra size makes them both more durable and affords the creator with more space in which to cram weapons or other systems.

A doom strider's size category is determined by the size of its torso, only. A colossal torso with gargantuan limbs is still a colossal doom strider, while a gargantuan torso with colossal limbs is still a gargantuan doom strider.



The Torso

The most important piece of the strider is its torso. The torso contains the captain and the control mechanism, as well as the power mechanism. The torso also determines the overall size of the doom strider and the size of the other components that can be attached to it.

Table 10.2: Torso details the different sizes of torsos available for constructing a doom strider and provides the necessary information for each type of torso. The sections of the table are:

Size: The size of the torso (Huge, Gargantuan, and Colossal).

Cost: The cost of the torso in gold pieces.

Slots: The number of component slots available in the torso. Each type of component will use up a number of slots, as detailed in the individual descriptions below.

Limbs: The number of appendages (arms, tails, legs, etc.) that can be attached to the torso. This does not include the head, which is a separate component

HP X: To determine the doom strider's hit points, multiply the captain's hit points by this number.

AC/Att: The Armor Class and Attack modifier for a doom strider of this size. This applies to all attacks made by the doom strider.

Maximum Dexterity Bonus: Each doom strider has a maximum dexterity bonus based on its size: Huge: +1; Gargantuan: +0; Colossal: -1.

The Head

The head of the doom strider is used primarily for doom striders through which spells can be cast. In doom striders with a focus on conventional weapons, the head is normally used as a small weapon mount, rather than wasting the money and space on link crystals or channel receptors.

The head of a doom strider must be of the same size category as the torso, or one size lower. Thus, a doom strider of Gargantuan size could have a Huge or Gargantuan head, but could not have a Colossal head.

The table below details the different sizes of torsos available for constructing a doom strider and provides the necessary information for each type of torso. The sections of the table are:

Size: The size of the head (Huge, Gargantuan, and Colossal).

Cost: The cost of the head in gold pieces.

Slots: The number of component slots available in the head. Each type of component will use up a number of slots, as detailed in the individual descriptions below.

Size	Cost	Slots
Huge	10,000	1
Gargantuan	15,000	2
Colossal	20,000	3

Table 10.2: Torso

Size	Cost	Slots	Limbs	Min Size	Max Size	HP X	AC/Att
Huge	50,000	8	4	Huge	Gargantuan	2	-2
Gargantuan	75,000	12	6	Huge	Colossal	4	-4
Colossal	100,000	20	8	Gargantuan	Colossal	8	-8

Limbs

Once the head and torso are selected, it is time to select the limbs. There are three basic types of limb: tails, arms, and legs, each of which has its own benefits and disadvantages.

Tails are the strongest of the appendages, capable of supporting large weapons, and can also be used as powerful weapons in their own right.

Arms are the least powerful and smallest of the appendages, but they also contain a large number of slots and are critical for the use of nonintegrated weaponry. A doom strider with arms can carry extra weapons and switch between them as needed, while striders without these appendages are limited to their installed weaponry.

Without legs, a doom strider is immobile and unable to move about the battlefield. Immobile doom striders tend to be blown apart in short order, so this type of creation is quite rare. In order to move, a doom strider must have at least two legs.

The table below details each of the different limbs and different sizes of limbs available for constructing a doom strider and provides the necessary information for each type of limb. The sections of the table are:

Size: The size of the limb.

Cost: The cost of the limb in gold pieces.

Slots: The number of component slots available in the limb. Each type of component will use up a number of slots, as detailed in the individual descriptions below.

Damage: The damage caused by a melee attack with an unarmed limb.

Arms' Size	Cost	Slots	Damage
Huge	15,000	2	1d6
Gargantuan	30,000	4	2d4
Colossal	45,000	6	2d6
Legs' Size	Cost	Slots	
Huge	30,000	4	1d6
Gargantuan	45,000	6	2d4
Colossal	60,000	8	2d6
Tail's Size	Cost	Slots	
Huge	45,000	6	1d8
Gargantuan	60,000	10	2d6
Colossal	100,000	12	2d8

Putting it Together

After determining the size of the torso, the head, and each of the appendages, it is time to put it all together. This process involves the Craft (doom strider) skill and a host of assistants to work with the individual who puts it all together. (The creation of a doom strider is so complicated that it requires its own separate Craft skill.) The cost of hiring and housing assistants is taken into account

in the cost listed in the table below, with roughly 5 assistants working with the chief crafter for every 5,000 gp value of the war machine.

To create the body of the doom strider, total up the cost (as noted in the tables above—do not forget to include the cost multiplier for working with exotic materials) for the head, torso, and each of the limbs. This provides the ‘price’ of the doom strider for use in the crafting skill. Using this price, the chief crafter must then follow the standard use of the Craft skill outlined in PHB, making checks each week using the Craft (doom strider) skill (DC 20).

When the body is complete, the doom strider is still not quite ready to roll out on the field of battle. Though weeks and months have been spent on its construction, there are weeks to go.

Doom Strider Abilities

A doom strider is treated as a creature with the same basic abilities as its captain (not the additional crewmembers). To determine the basic abilities of a doom strider, consult the table below.

Ability	Determine By
Hit Points	Multiply the captain’s hit points by the modifier determined by the doom strider’s torso size.
Initiative	Equal to the captain’s initiative modifier.
Speed	Determined by the doom strider’s size and number of legs as shown in Movement and Movement Rates, below.
Armor Class	10 + modifier for torso size + any armor modifiers (see Outfitting the Doom Strider, below)
Attack/Damage	Captain (or crewmember) BAB + modifier for torso size. Unarmed attacks cause damage based on the size of the appendage making the attack, as shown in the Limbs section, above.
Saves	Equal to the Captain’s saves. The AC/Att modifier is a penalty to the doom strider’s Reflex saves, but a bonus to its Fortitude saves. Note that the maximum Dexterity bonus based on the size of the doom strider will affect its Reflex save, as well.
Abilities	The doom strider has ability scores equal to the captain’s abilities, modified by any components installed in the doom strider.

Outfitting the Doom Strider

Though the main body of the doom strider is an impressive sight, it is of precious little use if it is not outfitted with weapons, a power supply, and other items that transform it from a simple tool to a powerful weapon of destruction. Each of the additional components needed to get a doom strider up and running is detailed in its own section, below, from the captain’s chair to strength en-

hancers to the eldritch linkages. Simply select the items you need from the sections below, and pay the cost to have them installed in your strider.

Note that several of the sections below are labeled with *Required*. You must select one of the options from this section for your doom strider.

Ablative Shielding: A combination of metal and wooden shields, these simple constructs provide the doom strider with additional hit points that protect the machine without the expense of armor. While armor is more effective in the long run, these break-away shields are very useful when funds are tight or when a doom strider simply needs to be able to stand up to more damage to fulfill its objective.

Each slot taken up by ablative shielding increases the hit points of the doom strider by 5%, rounded down. These hit points are reduced first, before the doom strider begins to suffer actual damage. More importantly, any ablative shielding slots are destroyed before slots containing other components, even if the shielding’s hit points have been totally reduced.

Cost: 200 gp per slot.

Arcanofurnaces (required): Doom striders are powered by arcanofurnaces, which convert magical power into energy the strider can use. This is accomplished by ‘burning’ magical items or directly converting spells—in either case, the resulting power is measured in energy points.

All arcanofurnaces have a capacity, which indicates the maximum amount of energy they can contain, measured in energy points. Each point of energy can be used to provide basic motive force, to power weapons, or to activate one of the components of the doom strider. When an arcanofurnace depletes all the energy it can hold (as determined by its capacity) it must begin converting more energy until its capacity is once again filled. An arcanofurnace can convert magical power into energy points while it still has some energy in storage, but it will stop the conversion process when its capacity is filled.

An arcanofurnace immediately transforms every level of spell energy transferred to it into one point of energy. An arcane or divine spellcaster may transfer energy to an engine by voluntarily sacrificing one of their available spell slots, a process which requires one round per level of the sacrificed spell slot. Transferring a 5th-level spell slot requires five rounds, for example, and provides 5 points of energy immediately.

Magical items placed in the arcanofurnace generate one point of energy per hour per 1,000 gp value of the item (as listed in the DMG). Any item placed in the arcanofurnace becomes immediately useless, however, and loses 1,000 gp of its value at the end of each day (including the first day) until it is completely destroyed when its value is completely depleted. Despite the great cost of powering a doom strider in this fashion, it is very convenient for groups of doom striders that expect to travel far from their spellcasting support, or for instances when the doom strider is expected to operate for long periods of time without support.

The table below details each of the different sizes of arcanofurnace available for constructing a doom strider and provides the necessary information for each of them. The sections of the table are:

Size: The size of the arcanofurnace.

War Machines

Cost: The cost of the arcanofurnace in gold pieces.

Craft DC: The DC of the Craft (doom strider) skill check needed to craft the arcanofurnace.

Slots: The number of slots (in the torso) this arcanofurnace takes up.

Capacity: The capacity (in energy points) of the arcanofurnace.

Size	Cost	Slots	Capacity
Small	5,000	1	5
Medium	10,000	2	10
Large	15,000	3	15
Huge	20,000	4	20
Gargantuan	25,000	5	25
Colossal	30,000	6	30

Armor: Armor may be installed in any slot, and each time it is installed it adds +1 to the Armor Class of the doom strider. Heavily armored doom striders are not uncommon, as they represent a very expensive investment that is protected as cautiously as possible. Note that slots used for armor may not be used for any other components.

Mass Combat: Armor actually reduces the damage caused from any attack by 1 die for every slot of armor.

Cost: 2,000 gp per armored slot.

Channel Receptor: This powerful array of crystals and copper wires receives magical power from friendly spellcasters and transfers it to the arcanofurnace for conversion into energy points. The channel receptor can receive energy from up to 500 feet distance without any reduction in the power produced, but for every additional 500 feet the sacrificed spell slot produces one point less energy, as some of the power bleeds away on its way to the receptor. This is treated the same as transferring a spell slot to the arcanofurnace in all other ways, however, and requires the same number of rounds as detailed above. The amount of energy transferred is determined at the time the process is complete, not at the time it is begun.

Example: Slautheris is piloting a doom strider toward the enemy when he realizes he is low on energy. The spellcasters are currently 1,000 feet away, so he starts moving in their direction. It takes five rounds for his wizard ally to complete the transfer of energy, during which time the doom strider closes to 500 feet. No energy is lost in this case, because the doom strider ended its movement within 500 feet of the transferring spellcaster. On the other hand, if the doom strider had started at 500 feet, then moved out to 1,000 feet before the transfer was complete, it would lose one level spell energy due to the distance at the time the transfer completed.

When a channel receptor is used, it expends one energy point at the end of the round during which it was used.

Slots: 2

Power Source: None, but the channel receptor expends one energy point at the end of each round in which it is used, regardless of the number of spells it receives during that round.

Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, imbue with spell ability; **Market Price:** 40,000 gp; **Weight:** 70 lbs.

Control Mechanism: The control mechanism provides the interface between the captain and his doom strider. The quality of this mechanism can greatly affect the ability of the captain to control his doom strider in difficult circumstances.

Some doom striders have more than one control mechanism, allowing additional crew members inside the strider. A Huge doom strider can have only a single control mechanism, a gargantuan doom strider can have two control mechanisms, while a colossal doom strider can house three control mechanisms. The control mechanisms assume a medium-sized creature at each station—increase the number of control mechanisms by one if all the crew members are small and decrease the number of control mechanisms by two if all the crew members are large.

If there is more than one control mechanism, the builder must tie each of the limbs (and all associated weapons and components) to one of the control mechanism. While a control mechanism may control any or all of the appendages and attached components of a doom strider, each appendage may only be controlled by a single control mechanism.

Example: Slautheris' doom strider has four arms and two legs. There are three control mechanisms—the captain's controls and two additional control mechanisms for crewmembers. Two arms (and any items installed in those arms) are controlled by the first crewmember, while the other two arms are controlled by the second crewmember. The captain's control mechanism has control over all other aspects of the doom strider. If one of the crewmember control mechanisms is destroyed, then the two arms controlled by that mechanism cannot be controlled by any of the other mechanisms.

Note that regardless of how many crew members are inside the torso, one of them must be nominated as the captain, who makes all Profession (doom strider captain) skill checks and is used as the basis for the doom strider's hit points, saves, and other core abilities.

The table below details each of the different types of controls available for constructing a doom strider and provides the necessary information for each of them. The sections of the table are:

Quality: The size of the controls.

Cost: The cost of the controls in gold pieces.

DC: The DC of the Craft (doom strider) check used when creating the mechanism.

Slots: The number of slots (in the torso) this control takes up.

Man.: The bonus (or penalty in some cases) provided by this control mechanism to all maneuver checks the captain must make.

Quality	Cost	DC	Slots	Man.
Poor	1,000 gp	12	1	-4
Low	2,000 gp	14	1	-2
Average	4,000 gp	18	1	0
Good	8,000 gp	20	1	+2
Excellent	20,000 gp	25	2	+4

Conventional Weapons, Mounted: A mounted melee weapon uses one-half of the slots for the arm or tail to which it is mounted (legs cannot support mounted weap-

ons) and may be up to one size larger than the appendage to which it is mounted. Thus, a huge tail could support a gargantuan weapon, while a gargantuan arm could support a colossal weapon. In addition, the doom strider may apply 150% of its Strength bonus to both damage and attack bonuses, just as if the weapon was wielded in two hands.

Another advantage to mounted weapons is the ability of the doom strider to use a mounted missile weapon on each appendage. This increases the cost of the weapon by an additional 2,000 gp. This additional cost pays for the automated loading and cocking mechanism, which allows the weapon to be fired once per round.

This increased power makes mounted melee weapons very powerful and popular, though it does reduce the ability of the doom strider to change its tactics in response to changing situations.

Slots: One-half of the slots on the appendage to which the weapon is mounted; may not be mounted on legs.

Power Source: None, but each use of a conventional weapon expends one energy point.

Conventional Weapons, Unmounted: Doom striders with arms can use those arms to wield weapons that are not mounted to the war machine. This allows a doom strider to switch between a crossbow and a greatsword, for example, depending on his needs. An arm may wield any weapon equal to or less than its own size, but two arms are required to wield a weapon larger than either of the arms.

Example: Slaughteris' doom strider has two arms, one size huge and one size gargantuan. He can wield a huge weapon in the smaller arm and a gargantuan weapon in the larger arm. If he wishes to wield a colossal weapon, however, he must use both arms. As with creatures wielding weapons with two hands, the doom strider may add 150% of its strength bonus when calculating attack and damage bonuses.

Melee weapons are the most reliable weapons available for doom striders and remain popular and efficient choices on these war machines. To determine the damage caused by a weapon, scale it up in size using the rules found in Chapter 6 of the DMG. To determine the cost of a weapon, double its cost for every increase in size category. A falchion (which starts as a large weapon) has a base cost of 75 gp. If it is increased to huge, however, its price is doubled to 150 gp. If it is again increased in size to gargantuan, its price doubles once more to 300 gp, and doubles again to 600 gp when the weapon's size is increased to colossal. Each size increase also cubes the weight of the weapon.

In general, melee weapons are used primarily against other doom striders or structures, where the massive strength of the doom strider can be targeted against a single target. With their enormous strength, doom striders are able to wreak great havoc against these targets, quickly demolishing fortified positions and revealing the covering troops within.

Slots: None.

Power Source: None, but each attack expends one energy point.

Crossbow Cluster: Because it is impossible for a doom strider to target creatures that are smaller than Huge in size with its main weaponry, it needs some system of point defense to protect it from swarms of smaller creatures hacking at its legs. The crossbow cluster is just such a defense, positioning ten heavy crossbows around a central mount. Though each cluster can only be used a single time before it must be reloaded (a manual operation), the deterrent it provides is often enough to keep unseasoned troops from swarming the legs of the doom strider.

When the cluster is fired, the captain or crewmember makes an attack roll, which suffers a -4 circumstance penalty. This fires the crossbows, which pepper the area with bolts. Up to 10 creatures within 20-feet of the doom strider are targeted by these bolts and all attacks are resolved using the initial attack roll. If there are fewer than six targets in range, they are each attacked twice.

The more expensive and larger crossbow cluster listed in the prices below includes a mechanism that automatically reloads the crossbows, a process which requires four rounds.

Slots: 1 (3)

Cost: 500 gp (1,000 gp)

DC: 15 (25)

Power Source: None, but expends one energy point per use.

Detection Lamps: Invisible creatures, especially those with the ability to cast spells or otherwise unleash destructive powers, are a great threat to an army. With their inability to deal with small targets, this can be especially true for doom striders, making the early detection of an invisible creature a very high priority.

To this end, the detection lamp was created. Normally housed in the head of a doom strider (to allow the strider captain to easily switch the direction the lamps are facing), these lamps produce a dim, blue light in a cone 200 feet long. Any invisible creature entering the cone is not only rendered visible, but is also illuminated with the equivalent of a *faerie fire* spell.

Though quite powerful, the energy consumed by these lamps is outrageous. The lamps require one energy point per five minutes of operation, making them very useful only in circumstances in which it is reasonable to suspect an invisible creature may be sneaking up on a doom strider's position.

If mounted in the head, the detection lamp can be swiveled up to 180-degrees at the beginning or end of a given turn, at no action cost to the captain or a crewmember. If mounted elsewhere, they can be rotated 90-degrees at the beginning or end of a given turn, but require a partial action from the captain or a crewmember. Note that the lamps cannot 'sweep' an area; they are only effective when focused on a specific section of the battlefield.

Slots: 1

Power Source: None, but expends 1 energy point per five minutes of operation—the power point is spent at the beginning of this time period.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *faerie fire*; **invisibility purge**; **Market Price:** 17,000 gp; **Weight:** 70 lbs.

War Machines

Item Harness: This relatively simple device allows a single magical item to be installed in a doom strider. This may be any type of magical item, from wands to wondrous items. However, items that normally provide a persistent effect (such as an *amulet of natural armor*) only provide their effects for five minutes at a time and require regular infusions of energy from the doom strider to keep them operating.

The items in an item harness work as they normally do, with the following exceptions:

Items that provide a persistent effect must be activated (requiring a standard action) before they will take effect. Activation costs one energy point; at the beginning of the round immediately following the activation, the item provides its bonus to the doom strider (and only the doom strider, not the creatures inside the doom strider) and will continue to do so for five minutes, at which point the item stops functioning and must be reactivated before it provides its benefits again.

Items that normally require activation, such as wands or staves, can be activated by the captain of the doom strider, regardless of whether or not she is of the proper class. Items that can only be used by creatures of a specific race or alignment, however, cannot be activated if the captain does not meet these requirements. Potions may not be used in an item harness, nor may scrolls.

Slots: 1

Power Source: None, but each use of an item in the harness requires the expenditure of one energy point, including the activation of persistent items.

Cost: 5,000 gp

Link Crystal: This enchanted crystal provides a source of communication between the captain and other doom striders with synchronized crystals. The captain speaks and the link crystal simply transmits his words to the ears of all other captains within 2,000 feet, provided their doom strider is equipped with a properly synchronized crystal.

This device must be mounted in the doom strider's head—the interference from the torso disrupts the link and prevents communication while the sudden movements of the limbs are just as disruptive.

A link crystal expends one energy point from the arcanofurnace at the end of each round during which it was in use.

Slots: 1

Power Source: None, but it expends 1 energy point per round of use.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *whispering wind*; *Market Price:* 10,000 gp; *Weight:* 30 lbs.

Shard Cannon: This weapon uses a *wand of fireballs* to hurl shards of twisted metal at enemy troops. Though capable of inflicting some damage against doom striders, the shard cannon is most effective when used against massed numbers of flesh-and-blood targets.

Firing this weapon requires a successful Profession (siege engineer) skill check (DC 15). If this check succeeds, the targeted area is affected by the blast from the shard cannon (see below for effects). If the check fails, however, roll 1d6 + 1 for every range increment of distance between the doom strider and the target location. Multiply this number by 20 to determine how many feet away from the

Magical and Exceptional Weapons of Great Size

A doom strider can use magical weapons as easily as can a character, provided the captain is able to use the weapon himself. When creating a magical weapon, the cost is increased for purposes of creating the base weapon (and its masterwork component) but not the cost of the enchantment itself.

The masterwork component for the weapon costs 300 gp, plus an additional 250 gp for every size category above Large.

target location the blast lands. Then roll 1d8 and consult the Grenadelike Weapons chart found in Chapter 8 of PHB to determine the direction of deviation.

The shard cannon has a blast radius of 20 ft. + 5 ft. per die of damage normally caused by the *wand of fireballs* used to power the cannon. All targets in this area of effect are entitled to a Reflex save (DC 20). Those who fail their Reflex save suffer 3d4 points of damage, while those who succeed suffer one-half this damage.

Doom striders caught in the blast of this weapon suffer a mere 1d4 points of damage, as the small projectiles tend to bounce from its surface with no ill effects.

Mass Combat: This weapon is particularly effective against massed troops, causing 10d4 points of base damage against enemy units.

Cost: 5,000 gp

Ammunition Capacity: 10 shots

Ammunition Cost: 200 gp per 10 shots

Range Increment: 100 feet

Power Source: One *wand of fireballs* (cost not included in the cost of this weapon). Activating this weapon also expends 2 energy points, in addition to the charge from the wand.

Stinging Cloud: Another device used to protect doom striders from troops on the ground, the stinging cloud releases a cloud of fine, powdered pepper suspended in a clinging medium of sawdust. Those caught in the area of effect risk debilitating irritation to their eyes and lungs, not to mention the painful welts and blisters that result from exposure to the peppery cloud.

The stinging cloud can be activated as a partial action by any member of the crew. When activated, it creates a cloud of pepper with a 20-foot radius centered on the doom strider. Any creature caught in this cloud must immediately make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be considered dazed and blinded for 1d4 rounds and blinded for an additional 1d4 rounds. After this time has passed, the creature may act as normal, unless he is still within the peppery cloud, in which case another Fortitude save is required.

The cloud remains in the area in which it was activated for 1d4 minutes, hovering in the air like a reddish stain. Anyone who enters the cloud must immediately make a Fortitude save, as noted above.

Mass Combat: This cloud is large enough to discom- fort entire units. When a unit fails its Fortitude save, it is considered dazed for 1d4 rounds, after which it may re- sume acting normally.

Cost: 3,000 gp

Ammunition Capacity: 3 clouds

Ammunition Cost: 100 gp per shot

Power Source: None, but activating this device ex- pends 2 energy points.

Strength Booster: Used to increase the strength of the doom strider, these devices are powered by *gauntlets of ogre power*. For every strength booster installed, the doom strider's Strength is increased by +2 and there is no limit (other than the slots consumed) to the number of boost- ers that can be installed. Note that the price listed below does not include the *gauntlets of ogre power*.

Cost: 2,000 gp

Power Source: One pair *gauntlets of ogre power* (cost not included in the cost of this item).

Targeting Beam: This device greatly assists siege en- gineers with their attacks, allowing them to more accu- rately target their weapons. When activated, this projects an illusion that only the siege engineer can see, allowing him to 'see' the path of his projectile before it is fired.

Activating this device requires the expenditure of 2 energy points, after which the crewmember or captain who activated receives a +4 bonus to all Profession (siege engineer) checks made to target indirect fire weapons. This bonus lasts only during the round in which the item is activated and the round immediately following.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *bleeding*; **Market Price:** 4,000 gp; **Weight:** 50 lbs.

Temple Banner: This massive banner juts from the back of the doom strider and emanates a powerful aura that benefits creatures of a specific religion. Any creatures who worship the deity associated with the banner (which is decided at the time of the item's creation) who are within 50 feet of the doom strider receive a +1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls as long as the banner remains active.

Activating the temple banner requires a standard ac- tion and the expenditure of 2 energy points. Once acti- vated, the temple banner provides its benefits for five minutes before deactivating.

Mass Combat: During a mass combat situation, this banner is far more effective, providing its bonus to all units within 500 feet, provided they can see the banner. Note that a unit may not gain the benefits of more than one temple banner, regardless of how many such ban- ners it can see.

Power Source: None, but the activating this item ex- pends 2 energy points.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *bleeding*; **Market Price:** 4,000 gp; **Weight:** 50 lbs.

The Doom Strider's Captain

The captain is the central component of the doom strider; it is her strength and endurance that provides the core around which the doom strider is wrapped. Without a captain, a doom strider is worse than inert, it is very vul-

nerable to attack and can be destroyed with ridiculous ease. The magical processes that go into the creation of the doom strider allow them to be very powerful, but gives them this great weakness—without a captain, they are nothing.

Each doom strider is attuned to a single captain, a process that requires at least eight hours, during which time the captain must remain in the control section of the doom strider. It is an osmotic process—while the captain is in the control section, part of her leaks into the doom strider and vice versa. When she emerges, the doom strider is ready to accept her commands and she gains a greater understanding of the doom strider and how it feels when in action.

If a captain dies or is rendered unconscious, his doom strider is considered to have zero hit points, as well. Though a new captain can be assigned to the doom strider, the attuning period must still pass—replacing a captain in the heat of battle is simply impossible.

Doom Striders in Combat

Doom striders follow the same rules in combat as a crea- ture or character, with a few key differences, which are described in the sections below.

Movement and Movement Rate

Each doom strider has a movement score, which repre- sents the speed at which it can move on the battlefield. Unlike creatures, doom striders can only walk—they are not able to hustle or run. A doom strider also may not swim, climb, jump, or move in any other way save for walking. Doom striders may charge, but only move up to their normal movement rate when doing so.

In addition, doom striders are allowed to make a single turn of up to 90-degrees during a move. If they wish to turn more than once, or more than 180-degrees, this re- quires a Profession (doom strider captain) skill check, with a DC determined from the table below.

Maneuver	DC
Additional turn during the round	15*
Turn up to 135-degrees in a single turn.	20
Turn up to 180-degrees in a single turn	25

* Increase the DC by 2 for each additional turn after the second turn in the round

Other than the differences listed above, the doom strider may move as a creature. Doom striders are affected by terrain if moving overland, just as any walking crea- ture would be.

During each round in which the doom strider moves, it expends energy points. A Huge doom strider burns 1 energy point per movement, a Gargantuan doom strider burns 3 energy points, and a Colossal doom strider burns 4 energy points.

Each doom strider has a movement rate based on its base size and the number of legs it has, as shown on the table below.

Size	Movement Rate
Huge	35 feet
Gargantuan	30 feet
Colossal	25 feet
Each leg*	+5 feet

* For the third or additional legs

Conventional Weapons & Reach

A doom strider's captain makes all attacks using conventional weapons using his Base Attack Bonus, modified by the Strength or Dexterity of the doom strider he is captaining. The doom strider is able to make all attack actions a character could make, provided it has a conventional weapon either mounted or ready for use.

Conventional weapon attacks may only be made against creatures of at least Huge size. The doom strider lacks the fine control necessary to target smaller targets using a conventional weapon. For attacks against smaller creatures, the doom strider must rely on unconventional weapons (such as the shard cannon).

If more than one control mechanism is installed in the doom strider, each crew member may make its normal attacks for the round, but each appendage may only be used by a single crew member per round. Thus, a doom strider with three control mechanisms and two arms would only afford two of its crew members with attacks—the third mechanism can be used for movement or other actions, but it cannot be used to make an attack, because all of the appendages have already been used in combat.

Each conventional weapon attack made expends one energy point from the doom strider's arcanofurnace.

Conventional melee weapons, whether mounted or not, have reach, based on the size of the smallest limb wielding the weapon, as shown on the table below.

Limb Size	Reach
Huge	10 feet
Gargantuan	15 feet
Colossal	20 feet
Mounted on Tail	+5 feet
Gargantuan Weapon	+5 feet
Colossal Weapon	+10 feet

Magical Weapons

Any weapon powered by a magical device (such as a wand) requires a captain or other crew member capable of using the item providing the power. Thus, a shard cannon requires someone capable of using a *wand of fireballs* and a *lightning shield* requires a crew member who can use a *wand of lightning bolts*.

Each attack made with a magical weapon expends two energy points from the doom strider's arcanofurnace.

Spellcasting

The captain or crewmembers of a doom strider may cast spells from their control mechanism position. The crew area provides a clear enough view of the field of battle to

allow spells to be cast from within the doom strider, and all spells are assumed to originate from a point at the center of the doom strider.

Special Maneuvers

Given their enormous size and immense strength, doom striders are able to make several special attacks, each of which is detailed below.

Grapple: Doom striders can grapple and use the same system as other creatures, with the following modifications.

First, doom striders cannot grapple creatures smaller than Huge in size; it simply lacks the ability to effectively grapple smaller creatures.

Second, doom striders with extra arms gain a +2 circumstance bonus to all grapple checks.

Stomp: Doom striders may attempt to stomp on creatures that are at least four sizes smaller than they are. This is resolved as a standard attack, though the attacking crewmember suffers a -2 circumstance penalty. If the attack succeeds, it causes 1d4 points of damage (plus the Strength bonus of the doom strider) and the target must make a Fortitude save (DC equal to the captain's base attack bonus) or be knocked prone. Those who are knocked prone are also stunned for 1d4 rounds.

Tail Sweep: Doom striders that are at least Gargantuan in size and equipped with a tail may make a tail sweep attack. Each tail may only make a single such attack per round. A colossal doom strider makes a tail sweep that covers a half-circle with a 20-foot radius, centered on the rear of the doom strider. A colossal doom strider covers a 25-foot half-circle with its tail attack. Any creatures within the affected area that are four size categories or smaller than the doom strider are potentially affected by this attack.

The crewman or captain who makes the attack makes a standard attack roll, which receives a +4 circumstance modifier. The result is used to resolve the sweep attack against all creatures in the area affected by the tail sweep. Those who are hit suffer damage equal to the doom strider's current Strength bonus (rounded down). Affected creatures must make a successful Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone, as well, with a DC equal to the captain's Base Attack Bonus.

Damage & Critical Hits

Doom striders suffer damage just as creatures do. Any time a doom strider suffers damage, some of this is passed on to the captain. For every die of damage the doom strider suffers from an attack, no matter what type of die it is, the captain suffers 1 hit point of subdual damage. The link between captain and doom strider is a close one, and what hurts one hurts the other. It is important, too, to remember that the doom strider's hit points are directly tied to those of its captain.

When the captain suffers hit point damage (but not subdual damage), the doom strider's hit points may be reduced. If the doom strider's current hit points are lower than the captain's hit points times the doom strider's multiplier, the doom strider's hit points remain as they are. If, on the other hand, the doom strider has hit points

Building a Doom Strider

greater than the captain's current hit points times the multiplier for the doom strider's size, the are reduced until they are equal to the captain's current hit points times the multiplier for the doom strider's size.

If the captain's hit points are reduced to zero, the doom strider is considered to have hit points equal to zero, as well. Until it can be reactivated with a new captain, it is in great danger of destruction. Despite their great power and immense size, doom striders are highly dependent on their captains for their survival.

When a doom strider's hit points are reduced to zero, it is considered inactive—it can perform no actions and its arcanofurnace begins leaking energy at the rate of one point per round. A doom strider that is reduced to -10 hit points is downed, falling to the ground (and causing 1d6 points of damage to all crew in the process). A doom strider reduced to -50 hit points is considered destroyed, its torso ruptured and its limbs shattered. All crew members inside the doom strider when this occurs suffer 4d6 points of damage immediately, no saving throw allowed.

A doom strider that suffers a critical hit, however, does not suffer additional damage. Instead, randomly determine which part of the doom strider was hit, using the table below.

Roll	Affected Part
1	Head
2–6	Torso
7–8	Limbs

If a limb is hit, randomly determine which limb is struck, with each limb having the same chance of suffering the critical hit.

Next, roll the appropriate die (as shown on the doom strider record sheet) to determine which slot was damaged. If the item in that slot takes up only one slot, it may be destroyed. If the item in the slot takes up more than one slot, then it is only damaged until its last slot is damaged by a critical hit.

When an item is going to be destroyed as a result of a critical hit, the captain of the doom strider is entitled to a Fortitude save (DC 20). If this save succeeds, the slot is not destroyed and the item continues to function.

If the Fortitude save fails, however, the slot is destroyed and the item with it. When a slot and the item it contains is destroyed, it becomes useless. The destroyed item no longer provides any benefit (including any benefits from armor installed in the now-destroyed slots). Even worse, if an appendage suffers the loss of all its slots, it is considered destroyed.

Any weapons held by an arm that is destroyed are immediately dropped to the ground. If one-half of the doom strider's legs are destroyed, the captain must immediately make a Profession (doom strider captain) skill check (DC 25) or the doom strider falls prone. In this case, the crew immediately suffers 2d6 points of damage.

If a doom strider remains standing on half of its original number of legs, the captain must make the same check each round, which requires a move-equivalent action. If this check fails, or the captain does not take the move-equivalent action, the doom strider immediately falls over, with the consequences detailed above.

When the last of a doom strider's legs are destroyed, it hurtles to the ground and the crew within suffers 2d6 points of damage.

Special Case: The Arcanofurnace

If the power source of a doom strider is destroyed, things get ugly fast. Any remaining energy points are released in a blast of chaotic power. This blast covers a radius of 10 ft. + 5 ft./10 energy points still contained and causes 1d4 points of damage for every 10 energy points, or fraction thereof, contained in the arcanofurnace when it explodes. Creatures outside the doom strider when this occurs are allowed a Reflex save (DC 15) for half damage. Any creatures *inside* the doom strider, however, suffer the full, maximum damage, with no saving throw allowed.

Special Case: Damage to the Crew

If a slot containing a control mechanism is damaged, the crewman or captain using that mechanism also suffers damage. One-half the normal hit point damage caused to the doom strider by the attack is also inflicted on the crewman or captain currently using the control mechanism.



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Note that this damage to the captain may also reduce the doom strider's hit points, as detailed above. In addition, if the captain is killed, the doom strider shuts down immediately; see above for more information about the relationship between the doom strider and its captain.

If a crewmember is killed, his position may be assumed by another crewmember, if needed.

Doom Striders in Mass Combat

Because they were designed to operate in large battles, doom striders are quite powerful when facing massed troops. While the above information details the use of doom striders day-to-day battles with smaller units, huge creatures, or fortifications, this section details the use of doom striders in battles with thousands of units on each side. It is here that the doom strider can truly shine and its ability to scythe through massed troops becomes its greatest asset.

The following sections parallel those found in the Mass Combat chapter and describe the manner in which doom striders adhere (and sometimes break) those rules.

Units: Each doom strider is considered a unit of its own.

Initiative: Doom striders use the level of their captain as their level. They are significantly more powerful than standard units, as their massed firepower and great size allows them to inflict significant casualties against massed forces.

Actions: While doom striders are more powerful than most units, they have a great deal of difficulty keeping up with units capable of performing more or faster actions. This is one of the primary reasons additional crewmembers are used in situations where the doom strider must deal with large-scale combats. For each crew member at a control mechanism, the doom strider is able to take one action per mass combat round. Note that the rules above still apply—no appendage or component may be used in more than one action per round. The following are the actions a doom strider may take during a mass combat round. Where these deviate from the rules presented in the Mass Combat chapter, the differences are detailed here.

Charge (Wade In): Doom striders are not terribly adept at charging, because they are not able to effectively increase their speed beyond their standard movement rate. On the other hand, when engaged in close combat, they are able to inflict serious damage to units. Thus, rather than a charge action, the doom strider may 'wade into' an enemy unit, stomping and thrashing its limbs as it goes.

When a doom strider wades in, make an attack roll as normal. A Huge doom strider receives a +2 damage step on the Damage Mitigation Table, while a Gargantuan doom strider receives a +3 damage step, and a Colossal doom strider receives a +4 damage step bonus.

However, the doom strider suffers a circumstance penalty to its Armor Class equal to the damage step bonus during the round in which this action is performed. Note that the doom strider must expend two energy points, in addition to any energy points required by the movement, in order to use the Wade In action.

Attacks: Each crewmember in the doom strider (including the captain) may make a single attack during each mass combat round. However, each appendage or item may only be used during a single attack during the round. Because each control mechanism only controls a specific set of appendages, this means that those appendages may only be used to make a single attack during the round.

Each doom strider may only target one unit at a time, but otherwise uses the rules for mass combat attack actions as presented in the Mass Combat chapter. See above for information about the energy costs for different types of attack.

Cast Spells: The crew of a doom strider simply does not have the number of spellcasters necessary to effectively cast spells during a mass combat turn. This option may not be taken by members of the doom strider's crew during any mass combat turn.

Defend: When doom striders defend, they are able to actively deflect incoming attacks at the cost of all attacks for the following round. When this maneuver is performed, the captain makes an Attack Roll, as normal—the result of this roll is added to the doom strider's Armor Class for this round, but the doom strider may not make any further attacks during this time. Note that defending costs the doom strider 3 energy points.

Move: When doom striders move during mass combat rounds, it burns 10 energy points per round. In addition, doom strider captains do not need to make checks to maneuver their doom striders and may make up to three turns (of any type) during this movement. To determine the distance a doom strider moves during a mass combat turn, quadruple its normal movement rate.

Retreat: If the doom strider performs the defend action in the round preceding its retreat, the opposing units do not gain a free attack when the doom strider retreats. Otherwise, the doom strider retreats as normal (see the Mass Combat chapter).

Support: Doom striders can provide support just as other units do.

Saving Throws: Doom striders use their captains' saving throws, as per normal, during mass combat.

Damage: Doom striders are powerful machines, capable of knocking men senseless with a single swipe of their massive tails or a hammering blow of their metal fists. To determine the damage a doom strider causes with an attack, simply double its normal damage, including damage bonuses from Strength. Its weapons cause double their normal damage when fired into the mass of troops, unless otherwise noted, as they are specifically designed to shred through large groups of combatants.

In addition, during any round in which the doom strider rolls maximum damage, it may strike fear and dread into the heart of the damaged unit. This is treated as the Demoralize special ability in the Mass Combat chapter, with the required Will save DC equal to 15 + the captain's level.

Modifiers: When doom striders enter the scene, it is horrifying to troops on the ground. When the first doom strider that enters the fray, all units within 500 feet of the doom strider must immediately make a morale check. In addition, any unit attacked by three or more doom striders in the same combat turn must make a morale check.

Sands of Change

*“Never has it been so precious to me as now.”
- A soldier’s dying utterance as he clutches Arena sand.*

Sands of Change is an OATHBOUND scenario designed for four to six player characters of 9th to 12th levels, wherein they search for mysterious artifacts that bring warlords to conflict. The adventure can be scaled up or down as desired and provides ample opportunities for further development. Characters can be from any portion of the Forge, though those with connections to the city of Penance are best suited, requiring the least amount of modification.

Adventure Background

The Feathered Fowl are enigmatic beings, prone to contrary logic which only they can see. Throughout the millennia they have all vanished for a time, escaping inward from the terrestrial prison to which they are bound. Severing such ties is but a temporary event, lasting no more than a century. It seems to refresh the Flock, as if they draw strength from the respite. So when Bathkol, lord of Kiln, detached himself from the physical workings of his domain, none took notice. Now his absence nears ten centuries without hint of his return.

Even more unsettling is that pages from his personal book of the Great Oath have been found in scattered corners of his domain, further fueling speculation about his fate. Whether he has succumbed to the final mystery or escaped the bonds of his confinement is in debate. What is certain is that the sheets, known as *Bathkol Pages*, are profoundly powerful, bestowing a variety of gifts to the possessor. Many of the powers are extremely limited in scope, but others are vast in breadth and influence.

Aware of the potential of such items, numerous lords from Penance, Arena, and elsewhere have begun to collect the pages, employing them as tools to further their personal ambitions. Eager with the prospect, these lords are sending agents to acquire them by whatever means necessary. Most pages have been found in Kiln and Anvil, with a few turning up in Arena. Ever questing for the precious few pages that bestow awesome might, the lords pay great sums for mere rumors of their whereabouts. It is one such report that stirs Lord Belus in his bloodhold.

Adventure Synopsis

Still recovering from the events of the past few months (see the adventure *Black on Black*, from OATHBOUND: *Wrack and Ruin*, for specific details), Lord Belus receives a message from a loyal warlord, Nissliss Ulmuk. Besides the customary details concerning their financial and political connections, the nightling warlord mentioned that he had discovered two of *Bathkol Pages*, having acquired them from a local merchant who did realize what the pages were. The letter goes on to state that as a loyal servant of the bloodlord, he is willing to part with the sheets, but wants additional forces to protect his borders from the raids of the barbaric ramzadi.

Stunned by his good fortune, and thankful for Ulmuk’s faithfulness, Belus appoints an agent, the hobgoblin Mychus Nesbitt, to retrieve the pages and secure their power for Belus. Known to be knowledgeable of the items in question, Nesbitt is forced to take on the assignment and remains under constant military escort.

Realizing the arduous nature of the journey ahead, the Lord of Illumina has asked the player characters (PCs) to protect Nesbitt, as they have well served him in the past. When they are located, the envoy explains the mission is vague terms, leaving out all information that does not specifically benefit their function as bodyguards. They are forcefully asked to guard the hobgoblin at all costs until he has fulfilled his mission, as which point they are to return to Penance for their rewards.

Unbeknownst to the PCs and Lord Belus, Nesbitt is in league with Brehg Uhmaxus, an Arena warlord who already possesses two *Bathkol Pages* and hungers for more. Paid great sums of gold and promised a commission in the warlord’s army, the agent has agreed to procure the pages and turn them over to Uhmaxus. Presenting himself as an expert on the mysterious artifacts, the hobgoblin drew the attention of Belus, easily gaining inclusion on the mission. The only difficulty has proven to be the PCs, as their presence can prematurely expose his plans. To this end Nesbitt activates his agents and commands them to secure his discreet liberation from the party. Nesbitt positions a group of these agents at the mooring point of the *Black Ivory*—the paddleboat prepared to ferry the PCs into Arena from the city of Temper.

With these elements moving into place, the warlord Uhmaxus begins to make preparations for the war he knows will surely follow once his part in the deception is known. Though lacking the resources of Lord Belus, he does possess a strong citadel and ample troops with which to defend it. This, coupled with the powers of the *Bathkol Pages*, should defray much of the might brought against him.

The PCs and the agent travel downriver aboard the *Black Ivory*. Supporters of Lord Mabon of Blackwall complicate their course. Also coveting the artifacts, Mabon orders toll-keepers in his employ to waylay the party and secure the agent. Cunning but direct, the toll-keepers make an attempt to sabotage the mission and capture Nesbitt.

Continuing on, the party arrives in Temper, the great trade city for those venturing into or out of Arena. Here the PCs can restock their provisions, take in dark amusements, or simply rest. By this time, other agents employed by Nesbitt make their bold attempt at freeing him. Successful, they feign his kidnapping, allowing him to scurry off to procure the pages unmolested. Bereft of their responsibility, the PCs must decide whether to return to Lord Belus empty-handed, attempt to track down the kidnappers, or push onward to meet Nissliss Ulmuk.

Regardless of the path chosen, the PCs discover vital clues about the nature of the items they are seeking and the treachery of their companion. Belus, or his emissary Ulmuk, invokes the PCs’ oath of service and orders them to complete the mission. To facilitate this endeavour, Belus places several units of his army at their disposal. As burgeoning warlords, they are to retrieve the agent, the items

Sands of Change

for which the agent was searching, and the head of Brehg Uhmaxus, who is named as the driving force behind the theft of the *Bathkol Pages*.

Augmented by the forces of Lord Belus, the PCs move against Uhmaxus. However, they encounter difficulties when it is made known that Mabon has also dispatched an army against the warlord for a similar purpose. With decisive action the PCs can position their forces to ambush Mabon's army, destroying his ambition to claim the artifacts. The PCs are then free to besiege Uhmaxus' stronghold. The party must reduce the city and fortress of the warlord and take the battle to him and his betraying agent. The climatic encounter pits the PCs against the Uhmaxus, Nesbitt, and their bodyguards. If the PCs are successful, they can retrieve the *Bathkol Pages* and plunder the holding, or even claim them as their own. If they fail, the victorious forces of Brehg Uhmaxus will tell their sad story as they sit atop their cooling bodies.

Preparation

Full statistics for non-player characters (NPCs), monsters, and items are provided alphabetically by section at the end of the adventure. While it is assumed that the PCs played in the previous OATHBOUND adventures, it is not a requirement. The campaign book, OATHBOUND: *Domains of the Forge*, is required to effectively run *Sands of Change*. The Bastion Press products *Arms & Armor*, *Minions: Fear-some Foes*, *Plains of Penance*, and *Wrack & Ruin* were also used in the development of this adventure, and though helpful, are not required. Player text can be read aloud, paraphrased, or handed out as appropriate.

The gamemaster (GM) should carefully read this entire adventure before attempting to run it. The flow of events and the interactions with NPCs will become more visualized if the GM is intimately familiar with the contents of the adventure. While the storyline is mostly linear, it does present additional opportunities for enterprising characters. Note that encounters are broken up into location-based and event-based encounters. Location-based encounters are keyed to specific locations on an adventure map. They detail an encounter with some entity or event that cannot be encountered elsewhere. Event-based encounters are for story advancement and serve to propel it in a particular direction. These encounters typically offer clues and insights that allow the PCs a chance to reveal the true nature of their mission.

The GM should heed one caveat: It is critical that the double-dealing agent Mychus Nesbitt does not reveal himself prior to his "kidnapping" in *Temper*. If he is detected and ultimately removed from the story by the actions of sharp-eyed PCs, arrange for another agent of Uhmaxus to capture the pages prior to the PCs' arrival. The new agent can pose as the Illumina agent and claim the pages, turning the adventure back to the main course. Though not a critical event should it occur, it does create extra work for the GM to draw the story back together.

Scaling the Adventure

Sands of Change is driven by a series of event- and location-based encounters. Scaling is varied, depending on

the section the PCs are engaged in. The average level for this scenario is 10th-11th though characters ranging from 8th to 14th level are acceptable. Additional random encounters can be placed to enhance the difficulty of the adventure, or can be lessened to accommodate weaker parties. If an encounter is not listed, no alterations are required to scale it for PCs of higher or lower levels.

Episode 1: The Summons

The River Xanthus: The number of volt polars can be reduced for weaker parties or increased for stronger parties. The treasure found in the lair and in the stomach of the beasts should be changed to reflect the change in difficulty.

Episode 2: The Passage West

The Black Ivory: For weaker parties, the number of howlers can be reduced. For stronger parties, the single green hag can be replaced by a covey of the hellish beings.

The Toll of Villenius: The number of soldiers at this location can be decreased or increased according to the relative strength of the PCs.

A Temper Found and Lost: No real change need occur for weaker parties, as this section does not have a protracted battle. For tougher parties, the numbers of the kidnappers could be increased, or a spellcaster could be added.

Episode 4: A Taste of Red Sand

The Confluence of Blood and Stone: A general way of increasing or decreasing the difficulty of this section is to either remove or add enemy units, or lower or raise their levels. Such changes can have a profound effect on the pace of the adventure, so weigh all changes carefully.

The Reduction of a Warlord: The number of bodyguards present can be raised or lowered to accommodate varying levels of power in the PCs. Also, the powers of the *Bathkol Pages* Uhmaxus is wearing can be modified.

Adventure Hooks

While the assumption of this adventure is that the PCs are in Penance and loyal to Lord Belus, other possibilities certainly exist. The adventure hooks below are options that can be employed if this is not the case, or if the GM wishes to engender a different direction to the adventure. Character text, place names, and some descriptions should be altered to reflect any changes. Regardless of alterations, the basic context and conceptual flow of *Sands of Change* remain the same.

A Lord by Any Name

Perhaps the most straightforward method of incorporating change to the adventure, this hook simply replaces Lord Belus with another figure of power, such as another bloodlord or an Arena warlord. Given the power of the

Episode 1: The Summons

Bathkol Pages there are few lords of the Forge who would not sacrifice rashers to acquire them. Minor changes to text and detail are all that is needed to accommodate a different lord.

For Kith and Kiln

The PCs are agents in the employ of Kiln's leadership. Mystified by the absence of their lord, the knük elders are concerned about the appearance of pages from Bathkol's book of the Great Oath. Comprehending the immense power the sheets hold, and given that they are part of their lord's sacred flesh, the elders desire their return until such time as the Lord of the Mountain returns to claim them. PCs so engaged must identify the foreign agents involved, shadow them to the *Bathkol Pages* and attempt to take them. The battle with Uhmamax would be an example of one the rare times Kiln has made a spearhead attack into Arena, with the PCs the advance guard.

Godskin

As rogue rashers, the PCs come upon clues in previous adventures indicating the origin and power of *Bathkol Pages*, sometimes referred to as *godskin*. Perhaps they have already acquired one and worn it. The PCs see the pages as the vehicle by which they can ascend to lordship. In a competitive race, they battle the agents of the bloodlords across Arena to the resting place of the pages. There they must overcome Uhmamax with spell and steel for the right to wear the godskin.

Episode 1: The Summons

Herein the party is drawn into the political maneuvering of warlords and bloodlords. Regardless of where the PCs actually begin the adventure, they receive a summons from agents of Lord Belus. It is an offer for future employment worded in such a manner that refusing it would be ill advised.

The Call of Illumina

Whether reclining at an inn known for its sensual pleasures or arguing with a bazaar merchant in a distant city, the PCs are approached by several cloaked figures wearing the insignia of Lord Belus. Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs. Make alterations to this text and others found throughout the adventure in accordance to the dictates of your campaign.

You instantly notice the six humanoid figures as they move towards you. Silent and straight, they stride confidently through the crowd, which scampers from their path as if perceiving some threat you have not.

Among their numbers is a hobgoblin that they sternly propel forward with cruel hands. Obviously uncomfortable in his surroundings, the hobgoblin glances for any avenue of escape. As he moves to flee, two of his guards throw him to the ground and pin him with their iron-shod boots.

Unsure of their purpose your hands inch towards your weapons until you notice the stag emblem of Lord Belus embroidered on their breasts. The leader, a tall elf of greenish complexion, reaches beneath his cloak and pulls forth a folded parchment.

"Sheath your blades, rashers, and bow to the will of the bloodlord of Illumina. My orders are to seek you in his name and for his purpose."

The party can react as they wish regarding the agents of Belus. Feeling resentment over what they perceive as an insult to their capabilities by the hiring of these non-loyalists, the agents are surly and abrasive towards the PCs. They avoid combat, however, having orders only to deliver the letter and the hobgoblin. Their assignment discharged, the agents of Illumina wordlessly depart, casting disparaging glances back at the party.

Upon inspection, the PCs see that the parchment is sealed with emerald wax bearing the sigil of the bloodlord. If the PCs have dealt with Belus before they instantly recognize the sigil as genuine; if not, a successful Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 15) confirms its authenticity. When opened, the PCs find a taciturn letter politely demanding that they accompany one of Lord Belus' agents—a hobgoblin named Mychus Nesbitt—to retrieve certain objects held by Nissliss Ulmuk, a warlord of Arena. The duration of the mission or the nature of the items to be retrieved is not stated. The letter goes on to state that Nesbitt is familiar with the items in question, and must reach his destination alive to verify their authenticity.

Mychus Nesbitt doesn't seem too interested in traipsing across sandy wastes full of psychotic killers. In fact, he would rather be anywhere else than standing before his "escorts," but his choice was this or Belus' prison. PCs who make a successful Sense Motive check (GMs may want to make this roll secretly) against Nesbitt's Bluff skill (+24), however, determine that he is more interested in the mission than he claims and is downright excited about the items to be recovered. If the check succeeds by more than five, the observer also determines that the hobgoblin is feigning fright. If questioned about these observations, Nesbitt admits that he is truly eager about the mission, as he has studied such items in the past. He also claims that acting meek and fearful seemed the best course considering the company he has been forced to endure. A Sense Motive check against his Bluff skill determines that these statements are truthful.

Mychus Nesbitt is much more than he seems. Passing himself off as a rogue of meager skills, he is actually a powerful sorcerer sent by Brehg Uhmamax, a warlord of Arena who has recently acquired an interest in the *Bathkol Pages*, to win Belus' confidence. Guileful and cunning, Nesbitt is eminently capable of skirting the truth and deceives the party by feeding them vague half-truths. See the **Important NPCs** section for Nesbitt's history and motivation.

Preparations and Departure

The letter of Lord Belus woefully lacks concrete details about the mission, forcing the PCs to rely on Nesbitt for

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crucial information (Belus himself knows little more than Nesbitt has told him). Relishing his position of power, Nesbitt begins to incorporate himself into their trust by offering valuable insight into the course they should travel. Unless the party has access to *fly* or similar magic, they must traverse the plains of Penance on foot to reach Temper, the first stopover on their trek into Arena. Descriptive text and encounters are written assuming that a land route is taken. If the case is otherwise, the GM must alter the text to accommodate the needs of the campaign.

If asked about the items, Nesbitt becomes reserved, saying that such things are best left unspoken while in some areas of the Forge. He does offer the following bits of information. The level of truth of each statement is provided. In all cases, PCs trying to determine the validity of Nesbitt's comments must make an opposed Sense Motive check against his Bluff skill.

- ◆ Lord Belus has sent them for the torn pages from a book of incredible age. The contents of the pages are unknown, but it is believed that they possess information on the creation of a unique magical device. (Though his explanation shies away from reality, it is truthful enough to avoid detection.)
- ◆ Only someone of ruling blood can use the item discussed in the sheets. (This is a lie; if exposed, Nesbitt says he was to speak such to deter the PCs from acquiring the item.)
- ◆ The item has some form of detrimental affect on the user. (This is true in a sense; Nesbitt knows that the only way to remove the item is by skinning it off.)
- ◆ The item is in the possession of Og Brickhand, a warlord who owes some allegiance to Lord Belus. How or from where he gained them is not known, but he is expecting them to retrieve the pages. (False; the item is actually in the hands of Nissliss Ulmuk.)
- ◆ Brickhand's holding lies to the extreme west, past the confluence of the rivers, and is incredibly difficult to locate. (This is not true; all residents of Arena know the holding of Brickhand and can guide the PCs accordingly, though the journey there is fruitless.)
- ◆ There are others who would seek the pages, for the power they potentially offer is great—in the right hands. (This is very true.)
- ◆ The city of Temper is the best location to strike off into Arena, affording the party a chance to rest and equip themselves for the journey to Brickhand's holding. Nesbitt informs them that a vessel has been put at their disposal for passage along the River Xanthus. (This is true; the vessel awaits their arrival at a spot upriver from the city.)

This is all the information Nesbitt is willing to impart to the party at this point. If pressured for more, he says there is little else to tell beyond his own professional understanding of the items. He adds that this knowledge has made him valuable to Lord Belus and he is not willing to surrender it to a bunch of rashers to satisfy their curiosity. He does confide, however, that only he understands

the value of what they are looking for, and that without him they would be incapable of finding it.

How the PCs progress at this point is a factor of the campaign they are in and their personal resources. GMs who desire to document a lengthier expedition may develop encounters accordingly. The following section (**The River Xanthus**) presents an encounter for just such an event. Those who have access to magic capable of speedy transport—such as the spells *teleport* and *fly*—can alleviate the sundry details of land travel, permitting the party to traverse the distances swiftly.

The River Xanthus

This section is presented as a means for the GM to offer the party some challenge in the journey to the Xanthus River. Accordingly, it can be included or neglected without affecting the adventure. Read or paraphrase the following to the party as they are passing through an area of low hills or rolling plains.

The air is chilly for the season, promising a rare break in Penance's normally predictable weather. With these thoughts fresh on your minds, you feel the first cold pinpricks of sleet. Their occasional stings intensify, developing in to a driving icefall that steals your breath and vision.

Ahead you glimpse a copse of beech trees beside a low hill scarred by erosion. Though meager in stature, they will afford you considerable protection against the threatening weather. Expelling steam and energy, you slog through the slick mud towards the inviting boughs.

The trees indeed provide a comforting haven against the inclement weather, sheltering the party from the worst of the icy rain, which continues through the night. Unfortunately, the copse and hill is the lair for a breeding pair of volt polars who have recently moved into the region. The erosion of the hillside is from the creatures traveling to and from their den, which can be determined if the area is investigated. A successful Survival skill check (DC 15) will identify the beasts that made the path.

The polars immediately become aware of the party's presence in the copse. Being experienced hunters, they bide their time, waiting until the PCs have bedded down before attacking. The pair will fight until both are below 30 hp, at which point they will retreat to their den. If either of the pair is slain, the mate becomes enraged, incurring the same effects as a barbarian's rage special ability.

Volt Polar (2): 104 hp.

If the den is inspected, the PCs find the scattered remains of recent kills. Among the bones of several kytuses and a scavan that had once laid claim to the den, is the body of a human male. He is more than half consumed, but if the party can endure the displeasure of inspecting the remains, they locate 262 gp, 36 sp, a 35 gp opal, a 470 gp garnet, a *ring of protection +2*, *scroll of stoneskin*, and an *amulet of health +4*.

Canny adventurers realize that valuables may have been swallowed by the volt polars along with the victim's flesh. If the polars are cut open, their stomachs are found to contain a *ring of wizardry II* and a *wand of acid arrow* (7th level, 18 charges).

Episode 2: The Passage West

Herein the party encounters the first of Nesbitt's treacheries, as he tries to lead them afool. After a battle, they procure the *Black Ivory*, the paddleboat set aside by Lord Belus for their use. They travel to Temper, and after a brief interruption, gain entry to the portal of Arena, where their guide is lost and a mystery is found.

The Black Ivory

As the party continues on their journey, they catch the tantalizing scent of water, then the low groan of a flowing river. Cresting a low hill, they find themselves above the banks of the Xanthus River. It flows briskly to the west, vanishing on the horizon. Slightly to the west is a paddleboat moored to the riverbank. The hull is dark in the fading light, but the words *Black Ivory* can clearly be discerned. Read or paraphrase the following to the party.

Nesbitt turns to you and smiles through pointed teeth.

"Ah, the vessel. Our journey nears an end and a beginning. We must follow the course to Temper and there strike off into the sands of Arena."

Before you can respond, the hobgoblin hurries onward, vanishing into a thin mist that is beginning to stretch out from the river. You call out his name, but he vanishes into the vapor, wordlessly motioning you to follow.

An individual with unique acquaintances, Nesbitt has made arrangements for a local green hag named Ghrash to interfere with the party. In addition to a considerable amount of coin given to her—which is hidden far from here—the hag has been promised everything the party carries. So motivated, she used her abilities and a pack of trained howlers to overcome the ship's crew, killing many and securing the rest below decks for later ingestion. Ensnared, she has calmly awaited the party's arrival. Alerted to their presence by Nesbitt, the hag prepares her ambush aboard the ship. Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs near the ship.

The mist hampers your visibility, but you can clearly see the name of the ship written in gold letters: Black Ivory. It is a paddleboat with a lacquered black keel. The gangplank rests on the riverbank, between two temporary mooring spikes to which are lashed thick cables.

The deck appears deserted and still, lacking all signs of crew. The hairs on the back of your neck are starting to stand on end. Just as your hands close about the hilts of your weapons, a human sticks his head over the side and looks down at you.

Episode 2: The Passage West

"Greetings, agents of Illumina. Welcome to the Black Ivory. Be advised that Lord Belus has ordered me to deliver you to Temper, but that I must adhere to the dictates he has set forth concerning the journey. He has instructed me to inspect the contents of your packs to make sure there is no contraband that would put the mission at risk. You may board one at a time."

The human is Ghrash using her *change self* and mimicry abilities to pass as the human captain. The real captain was devoured the previous night, along with several of the crew. Regardless of which PC boards the ship, Ghrash takes pains to actually inspect their pack. In the process, she makes a touch attack with her weakness ability against the PC until successful in draining Strength. She will placate the PC by saying that he must be experiencing a touch of seasickness. She will continue draining the party until they refuse to allow her near, at which point she will summon the howlers to attack.

Besides their normal abilities, the howlers have been fed a steady diet of meat tainted with blue whinnis poison. Never enough to kill them, the poison has concentrated in their quills, affecting anyone struck by them. If possible during the skirmish Ghrash attempts to touch the PCs, implementing her weakness ability still further. When attacked, she will revert to her natural form and attack in earnest. The howlers fight until destroyed, though Ghrash will flee into the river when below 20 hit points.

Ghrash: 63 hp.

Howler (Advanced) (8): 72 hp each.

Though eager to pursue the *Bathkol Pages* without interference, Nesbitt remains on the vessel and watches the fight. If the PCs are defeated, he goes blissfully on his way; if the PCs are victorious, he pounds on the cabin door he was concealed behind, pretending to have been locked in by the creature. A Sense Motive check (DC equal to his Bluff check) or a casual inspection of the unlocked cabin door determines that the hobgoblin is lying. If questioned further, Nesbitt admits to being cowardly and that he did not want to aid the party, which is true, but not in the sense the party takes it to mean.

Below decks, the PCs find slightly more than half the crew still alive. They are fearful and compliant, offering no resistance to the commands of the party. As they currently have no officers, the crewmembers latch onto the most charismatic PC after a few hours, refusing to take orders from anyone else. Their stats are presented at the end of the adventure if required. With the *Black Ivory* secure, the party must make headway to the city of Temper.

The Toll of Villenius

The crew of the *Black Ivory* is extremely able and capable of urging the paddleboat to surprising speed. Over the course of three days, the vessel passes through numerous petty bloodholds, each exacting a toll from all passing ships. The crew tends to all such matters, taking gold from the captain's coffers (which contain a total of 3,000 gp).

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They explain to the PCs that such tolls are common and cannot be avoided, but that the contents of the coffers should meet their needs for the entire voyage. Unless the PCs interfere with the process, the trip is nearly uneventful. Read or paraphrase the following to the party.

A crewman on the bow let out a whoop and gestures vigorously downriver.

"The hold of Villenius! Temper by tomorrow!"

His pronouncement is met with a ragged cheer from tired men. Wordlessly, the crew begins to steer the Black Ivory towards the northern embankment. Ahead, just below the water's surface, you can discern a massive chain stretched across the river. The end of each chain passes into a fortified tower on opposing banks. Armed humans and doves stand guard on the parapets, their stares blatantly aimed at your vessel.

The toll of Villenius is the last barrier before the paddleboat reaches Temper. Any PC that states they are examining the area, or otherwise expressing concern about the stop, can make a Spot check (DC 12). If successful, the PC notices that the northern bank seems oddly devoid of the normal activity common to such settlements.

As the *Black Ivory* touches the shore, a pair of guards rushes forth to secure the paddleboat to mooring posts. Cautious PCs who scan the area notice that two-dozen more guardsmen are clustered about 100 feet away, tending to some structural maintenance. A Sense Motive or Knowledge (architecture) check (DC 15) determines that those guards are pretending to work, their attention riveted on the party and the crew of the paddleboat.

Unbeknownst to Nesbitt, the ruler of the toll is allied with the bloodlord of Blackwall, Lord Mabon. The bloodlord has become aware of the mission the PCs are engaged in and has ordered the toll-keepers to deter them by any means. Aware of the nature of the *Bathkol Pages*, Mabon strongly desires them and is willing to slay the entire party to retrieve them. By this directive Villenius is about to attack the party and capture Nesbitt before they can enter Arena.

Toll-keepers (25): 46 hp.

The guards retreat inside the tower after sustaining 20 casualties. There they and the other tower inhabitants (20 more toll-keepers and Villenius) will use missile fire and chortle bombs to defeat the party. The guards continue to fight until Villenius is slain or captured. The chortle bombs they carry are fragile glass vessels that contain the dander of the chortle beast. When struck by a bomb the victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or be incapable of performing any actions for 1d4+1 rounds due to painful fits of laughing and choking. Each guard carries one chortle bomb.

Toll-keepers (20 plus survivors from outside): 46 hp.
Villenius: 88 hp.

The only way to manually lower the river chain is to enter the tower and release the pulley suspending it, requiring a Strength check (DC 18) to succeed. The door is

relatively stout (Thickness 4 in., Hardness 5, 40 hp, Break DC 23, Locked DC 25), and when opened reveals a single room with a spiraling staircase along the exterior. The tower has three stories, each a single chamber with numerous arrow slits. The guards are evenly placed throughout the tower levels.

The top level is Villenius' personal quarters and contains a locked chest (Villenius possesses the only key). Within are eight small sacks containing 500 gp each, a pouch with 60 gems (each worth 50 gp), and a packet of papers carefully tied together with a red ribbon. An examination of the papers quickly determines that Mabon is aware that Belus is seeking some arcane items rumored to impart fantastic power to the wielder. The exact nature of the items is not discussed, though they are thought to be scraps of leather or vellum. The hobgoblin guide of the party is described in detail, with attached instructions to capture him alive at all costs. The letters go on to state that another power seeks the items and is acting through an assassin who has yet to be identified (the assassin is Nesbitt, a misconception derived by his possession of the *mark of the killer*). A Decipher Script (DC 15) also notes that the text makes vague references to the items being worn, but in a way dissimilar to clothing.

Once the river chain has been lowered, the party and crew of the *Black Ivory* can depart for Temper.

The party is frustrated if they attempt to circumnavigate the toll and locate another boat. All of the larger vessels have been removed in preparation for the ambush, though a Search check (DC 15) locates a holed rowboat capable of holding five. It can be repaired with a successful Craft (carpentry) or Craft (shipmaking) skill check (DC 18). Repairing the boat takes one day and cannot be done unless the toll keepers and Villenius are dealt with beforehand.

A Temper Found and Lost

Early on the fifth day the walls of Temper can be seen on the horizon. As the party prepares to enter the city, read or paraphrase the following.

Temper rises on the horizon like an obscene sun. Though not nearly the breadth of Penance, it is still an impressive sight, with its city walls colorfully tiled with scenes of wanton pleasure and base gratification. As you near you can make out garish signs offering all manner of sensual pleasures or exotic wares.

The river access to the city is choked with boats of all types, each seeking entrance. A small river vessel, bearing the sigil of Temper—an open hand and mouth—directs your craft towards the northern bank. As your paddleboat is moored one of your crew turns to you to speak.

"We shall take care of the fees for passage through the city, my lords. Lord Belus has commanded us to haste, but we are in need of food and water for the journey into Arena. Seek the shop of Artmeies of Anvil. He is a merchant in the employ of Lord Belus and is expecting you. You can find him in the lower west section of the Loop."

The process of obtaining permission for passage through the city is a lengthy one, taking most of the day.

Whether the party heads straight for the shop of Artmeies of Anvil or wander the delights of Temper is a matter of preference. Trips beyond the path of this adventure are left to the GM to develop. Possibilities include a trip to the flesh markets to acquire personal slaves, visiting the bazaar to purchase items from all over the Forge, or immersing oneself in the carnal delights of the sex district. If explored, such actions should not detract from the adventure, but be used to heighten the experience of Temper.

The shop of Artmeies of Anvil is easily located. Asking any resident earns the party a quick point of the thumb in the general direction. After passing through a maze of shops and pleasure palaces, each more decadent than the last, the PCs come upon a large shop with an elaborate sign showing an exploding volcano that actually spews smoke and embers. Stepping inside the PCs find that the shop is extremely busy, with customers barking orders to bustling staff who scramble about collecting all manner of items. A general store, the shop of Artmeies of Anvil has nearly everything persons venturing into Arena might need. As the PCs stand in the entrance, a female picker scurries up to them.

“Welcome to the shop of Artmeies of Anvil, procurer of the finest wares in Temper, if not the Forge. I am Dallia, your personal clerk. Speak your needs, gentle beings, and I will make them appear.”

If the PCs mention that they are in the employ of Lord Belus, Dallia’s smile dips slightly, then recovers. She escorts the party to a richly appointed private chamber and summons servants to see to their immediate needs, after which she departs. In moments, an impossibly tall human enters the chamber. Blooded by giants somewhere in his ancestry, Artmeies is exceptionally tall—nearly nine feet. His voice is deep but clear, accenting his cheerful expression.

“Hail to you! I am Artmeies, loyal procurer to Lord Belus. How may my humble establishment assist the agents of Illumina?”

Artmeies has been informed of the party’s pending arrival, though he does not know of them specifically. With deferential politeness, the shop owner questions the party to ascertain their identity. When satisfied that they are who they claim to be he places Dallia at their service. He informs the party that they may place all orders through her. If asked about the payment, he chuckles and says that Lord Belus has already seen to it.

The PCs may order any item they wish provided the total worth does not exceed 5,000 gp and no single item exceeds 500 gp. Magical items cannot be purchased, though alchemical ones can, the type and amount determined by the GM. This is an excellent opportunity to integrate new items or equipment into an existing campaign, since the store is a funnel for products from all over the Forge. When the order is complete, Dallia assures the PCs that everything will be delivered promptly to their ves-

sel. She suggests that they take in the sight of Temper, and even recommends a nice pub several streets down the Loop called *The Sand’s Edge*.

Whether the party takes Dallia’s advice and travels to *The Sand’s Edge*, strike off in the bowels of Temper, or returns to the paddleboat, they are beset by a group of rashers hired by Nesbitt. Anticipating the failure of Ghrash and the howlers, Nesbitt made alternate plans to have the PCs attacked in Temper and himself kidnapped. The intent is to make the party believe that he has been abducted, spirited away to some erstwhile location while he makes haste to the location of the *Bathkol Pages*. If all goes according to plan he will vanish and some or most of the PCs will perish.

The point of attack is at the discretion of the GM, but a crowded, public location is best. When the kidnapppers attack, they attempt to capture Nesbitt, who does his best imitation of resistance before succumbing. The intention of this encounter is to separate Nesbitt from the party. Once distanced from the PCs, Nesbitt “recovers” from his ordeal, pays the kidnapppers and bids them adieu.

Kidnapper (8): 46 hp.

Kidnapper sorcerer: 54 hp.

The outcome of the contest is not in doubt and is not intended to be a battle to the death. After three rounds of combat they depart with Nesbitt in tow. Their escape route is cleverly chosen. They have set up some comrades at two ambush points along their escape route that are designed to slow any pursuers. The ambushers fight only to delay; if any of them are killed, they withdraw. The ambushes make it difficult for the PCs to follow. If the PCs make it through the ambushes without too much delay, they must still make opposed Spot checks (the player with the highest skill total making the check) against the kidnapppers’ Hide skill (+6 total; +2 Dex, +5 circumstance bonus for planning the escape route, +5 competence bonus for being intimate with the terrain, and a –6 equipment penalty). Assume the kidnapppers have a 20-point lead, with each point representing a pip on the opposed roll. If the PCs succeed on a skill check the amount of success is subtracted from the 20-point lead. The kidnapppers (1d2), though not the ones actually carrying Nesbitt, are overtaken if the lead is reduced to 15, 10, and 5. If the point lead is eroded to zero or less, the remaining kidnapppers with Nesbitt have been overtaken. If the kidnapppers can extend their point lead to 30 or more, they have escaped. In the event that Nesbitt and the kidnapper are overcome, he will play dumb about the course of events. Though it exposes his hand, Nesbitt utilizes his magic as soon as possible to escape the confines of the party.

Given that they have been charged by a bloodlord to protect Nesbitt and the knowledge he carries, the PCs should be motivated to recover him. The logical place to start is to search the bodies of slain or captured kidnapppers. The dead possess nothing of significance except that each has a parchment with the hobgoblin’s portrait on it. Nesbitt provided them to ensure his safety from the chaos of battle. Luckily for the PCs, one of the kidnapppers scrawled a brief note on the back, the contents of which read:

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*"Hobgoblin wants self. Not hurt bad. Pay good.
Get the boys."*

The hobgoblin in the note refers to Nesbitt placing the commission for his own kidnapping. A living kidnapper can confirm the intent of the note, but not that Nesbitt ordered it. Though he says that he was not at the initial meeting, his boss did mention that the hobgoblin had a very curious tattoo low on his neck—some sort of profane rune or glyph. Even if the party resorts to more direct methods to extract information they learn nothing new.

Episode 3: Quandaries and Questions

The adventure at this point is nonlinear, affording the PCs a chance to determine the course of actions. They can either gather information concerning the kidnapping and the role Nesbitt may have had in it; they can also progress to the holding of Og Brickhand to fulfill the original intent of their mission; finally, they can retreat to Lord Belus and admit to their failure. Regardless of which action is pursued, or combination thereof, they can garner the necessary information to solve the mystery and take the fateful steps to complete their instructions.

A Kidnapper's Hideaway

PCs who wish to investigate the parchment can start by determining where the kidnappers were known to loiter. A Gather Information check (DC 15) earns the name *Dusky Maiden*, a disreputable tavern in the warrens north of the Loop, that the kidnappers were known to hang about. A Gather Information check (DC 20) and 100 gp further uncovers that the kidnappers belong to a thieves' commune, a loose gathering of like-minded blackhearts for the purpose of graft and mutual protection.

The *Dusky Maiden* is the spine-chilling dive of the foulest sort. Located in the poverty-stricken section of Temper, the surrounding populace is surly and angry, ready to lash out any anyone professing means or weakness. If the PCs are discreet in their travels, by means of a Disguise skill check (DC 10), they can avoid senseless entanglements on the streets. If not, petty criminals and beggars accost them. The simple display of steel scatters them to the darkness.

Within the tavern, two burly humans covered with scars and greasy sweat stop the PCs, demanding to know what they want. If the PCs present the poster or otherwise mention the kidnapping, they are told to wait. Read or paraphrase the following to the party.

With a curious grunt, one of the guards takes the poster and examines it a moment. Smiling at the fresh bloodstains on the parchment, he ventures into the dim recesses of the bar, eventually stopping at a table occupied by drow dressed in silver and gray. The guard gives the drow the poster and after a moment's conversation motions you over.

The PCs can each make a Spot check (DC 10). If successful, they notice at least ten dangerous looking men and women who are taking an inordinate interest in their presence. A Sense Motive check (DC 10) determines that those individuals are experienced bodyguards for the drow and only await his order to strike. Wisdom should restrain confrontational party behavior.

The drow introduces himself as Whist (male drow, Rog12/Ass5), the proprietor of the *Dusky Maiden*. Suave and serene, Whist is out of place in the barely restrained anarchy. Waving them to chairs, he orders drinks that arrive almost instantly. Though the PCs may be reserved about consuming anything in the tavern, the drinks are safe and surprisingly good. At the moment they have piqued the drow's interest.

Whist asks the PCs where they acquired the poster. Truthfulness here earns the party respect. If they relay the events that led up to their acquisition of the parchment, the drow nods and sips his drink. He then asks the party what they intend to do with the information that he might possess. Whist accepts nearly any answer, except one that implies that he is held to blame. If accused of improprieties, Whist smiles and states that business dictates the nature of his involvement.

After the verbal sparring, Whist flatly states that enlightenment has costs. He assures them that the information he has is of value, but that the price for his assistance is 10,000 gp in advance. If Whist found one of the PCs particularly entertaining, he drops the price to 6,000 gp. The price is nonnegotiable; either the party pays the sum or goes without the information. If the sum can somehow be paid, Whist supplies the following information, all of which is true

- The hobgoblin who hired his men is a sorcerer named Mychus Nesbitt who is known to work for hire. His reputation is stellar and much admired in the business.
- Nesbitt is currently working for an Arena warlord named Brehg Uhmaxus whose holding is somewhere down the east side of the River of the Dead.
- Nesbitt is tasked with the recovery of the *Bathkol Pages*, artifacts of the Feathered Fowl of Kiln said to impart fantastic power to the wielder.
- Brehg Uhmaxus is a petty warlord with serious ambitions. Reports indicate that he has increased his armed forces at the expense of his entire treasury. It is a move that bodes war for his neighbors and enemies, even more so if he obtains the pages.
- Whist surmises that the *Bathkol Pages* are at Port Ulmuk, as Nissliss Ulmuk is reported to have found them.
- Ulmuk is expecting Nesbitt and is planning to turn over the pages to him at first opportunity. Despite their potential power, Ulmuk is a loyal follower of Lord Belus and is not likely to betray him.
- Lastly, the bloodlord Mabon of Blackwall is also known to have an unhealthy interest in the *Bathkol Pages* and has mustered an army to acquire them. The disposition and location of those forces have not been determined, though Whist assumes that Mabon has access to the same information now possessed by the party.

Episode 3: Quandaries and Questions

After the exchange of coin and word, Whist wishes the party luck in their endeavors and has them escorted out. At this point the PCs are free to go to Port Ulmuk, the true location of the pages, or retreat to Lord Belus.

Retreat to Penance

The least likely—and most dangerous—of pursuits is to travel to Penance to offer themselves to the mercy of Lord Belus for their failure. Upon their arrival at the city's edge, they are approached by a large group of Illumina guards who instruct the party that their presence is required at the palace of the bloodlord. Once on palace grounds, the PCs are surrounded by scores of seasoned troops and compelled to surrender. If they resist, they are slain out of hand. If they comply, they are stripped of equipment and magic and placed in cells beneath the palace.

After languishing for several days, they are summoned forth by Lord Belus and made to stand trial for the crimes of treason and breach of trust. They are found guilty, though the GM can play it out as he likes. He can even exonerate the party if they can offer an entertaining and compelling case in their defense. After conviction, the party is condemned to exile in the undercity unless someone can vouch for their future behavior. As if by command, a sycophant in the rear of the audience chamber shouts that only one of highest virtue can oversee such miscreants. The bloodlord smiles, and then justly assumes the role as their overseers for life. In essence, the PCs have just been subjected to slavery. Such is life in Penance.

In all likelihood the career of the PCs has taken a decidedly divergent path as they are sent to the slave pits to work off their debt and failure. If the GM desires, the party can progress with **A Trip Completed and Begun** and assume command of his army. Such a commission is not an honor, but a grinding burden where failure means death. To ensure their servitude, Lord Belus has them ensorcelled with an altered version of *word of recall* (at 20th level) in which he or one of his officers – who will accompany the party – can utter the command word, sending the PCs instantly to the dim prison cells beneath his palace. Even with victory, the PCs are recalled to suffer the whimsical dictates of their bloodlord master. The GM will have to alter player text and other components of the later sections to reflect their current nature of their servitude.

A Trip Completed and Begun

The most likely course for the party is to attempt to complete the mission despite the loss of their guide. The logic that the guide was taken in order to procure the *Bathkol Pages* for someone else is not in error, even if its true complexity is still a mystery. Regardless of whether the party is aware of Nesbitt's duplicity, the events of this section remain unaltered.

When the PCs arrive at the *Black Ivory* they find that all the supplies they had purchased were delivered and stowed. The crew is nervous and ready—even eager—to depart. The mission has been a grievous event for them, and they desperately want to discharge their obligation for honor and pride.

With all the fees paid, the *Black Ivory* can proceed down the Xanthus River at the players' discretion. As the PCs pass through Temper and into the domain of Arena, read or paraphrase the following.

You smell Arena before you see it. The odor of hot sand is vaguely unpleasant and stings your nostrils. With it comes a swelling heat that drains the air from your lungs, leaving a leaden lump in your chest. The walls of Temper near then pass, leaving you alone on a murky river—a thread of green and brown lain atop a great vastness.

Red sand dominates the landscape, though purplish features can be seen in the distance. Dunes cling to every escarpment and protrusion beyond the river, like drifts of crimson snow that never melt. Scattered about are tenacious plants that pale in contrast to their Wildwood cousins, but which appear uniquely suited to the terrain.

Along the river runs ribbons of life made bountiful by the water. Huge cottonwoods, birch, and willows are plentiful, as are myriads of birds and insects. The current of the Xanthus ripples with aquatic life that flashes at the surface and vanishes again into the depths.

A crewman turns to you, his face a deepening frown. "The domain of Barbello, my lords: The Sands of Change."

The passage to Ulmuk's holding is a matter of traveling down the Xanthus River, to its confluence with the River of the Dead. Its location is known to the crew, as are the stops along the way. Even if Og Brickhand's holding is still believed to contain the pages, Port Ulmuk is a logical stop, allowing the GM to redirect an uninformed party. There are a number of smaller settlements, each availing itself to the needs of passing vessels. Though fascinating, they have no relevance to the adventure and are thus left to the GM to develop. The one exception is Port Makhesh, the seat of Lord Mabon of Blackwall's power in Arena. If the party decides to stop, their layover is uneventful—or so they might think.

The port is tense and on edge. A Gather Information check (DC 20) determines that a large portion of the city's military was quickly sent south for unknown reasons. A Diplomacy check (DC 20) discovers that the force included about ten thousand men, and has a balance of units with emphasis on footmen and cavalry. The informant also indicates that the army took several units of siege engines with it.

The next port of interest is Port Ulmuk, the destination the PCs have likely striven for. The port is a holding of Lord Belus, as is evident by the Illumina-influenced architecture and culture. As soon as their paddleboat secures its mooring lines, read or paraphrase the following.

War is in the air. The wharf is unusually active, with every available ship, regardless of size, being hastily loaded with equipment and supplies. Screaming merchants are ignored as their displaced cargos are dumped on the docks or tossed in the water. Soldiers bearing the sigil of Illumina mill about by the thousands. Some embark on ships, oth-

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ers assemble in designated areas to await orders, and many bid farewell to friends and family.

Mesmerized by the energy of the scene, you fail to notice a band of soldiers approach your vessel. All are garbed in the livery of Lord Belus.

“Hail, agents of Illumina. Nissliss Ulmuk requests your presence on a matter of importance. I am instructed to tell you that what you lost has been found, but that there are issues yet to be determined.”

If quizzed about his message the guard states that he only repeats what he was ordered to do so, and that the matter at hand is grave and needs their immediate attention. The guards will tolerate no excuse to decline. Their orders are explicit and weighted with dread should they fail. Going with the guards peacefully is the best course. Regardless of how the PCs depart, they swiftly find themselves in the grand hall of the ruler of Port Ulmuk. The building is more fortress than palace, but does possess a few elegant embellishments. Statues of Belus and Nissliss line a colonnade leading to the front entrance, which is covered with bright geometric patterns of mosaic tiles.

Inside the fortress is decidedly more dreary, a practical extension of a warrior’s mind. Under escort, the PCs are taken to an upstairs room with an exceptionally stout door of verdigris-covered bronze. Therein, Nissliss Ulmuk waits. As a loyal follower of Belus, Ulmuk is angered by the party’s inability to complete the mission as intended. This anger is amplified by the fact that he personally turned the *Bathkol Pages* over to Nesbitt, even though his actions were in accordance with his master’s wishes. The warlord sees only weakness in the party, placing all blame for his dishonor on their shoulders. Read or paraphrase the following when the party enters the chamber beyond the door.

A male nightling sits behind a silk-draped table littered with rolled parchments. Garbed in black leather, the nightling looks sternly at you, as if you were a child who has caused him grief. Tapping the table with a taloned finger, the nightling speaks.

“You cause distress, seeds. Your inability to control what was given to you has cost the Lord of Illumina greatly. Understand that this is no small endeavor you pursue, but a prize worth war. Shroud nothing in deceit, but speak plain the events that brought you hither.”

Having already ascertained many of the facts surrounding the loss of Nesbitt and the *Bathkol Pages*, Ulmuk is expecting and hoping for dishonest responses from the party. As such, he questions and probes for every contradiction, looking to uncover the final proof of the PCs’ deceit. If they speak false, the warlord feels compelled to abrogate Lord Belus’ instructions. He has anyone he deems dishonest beaten (suffering 20% of maximum hp in damage) and thrown in the river. Those that speak true are studied carefully for several moments in stony silence, after which the warlord again speaks.

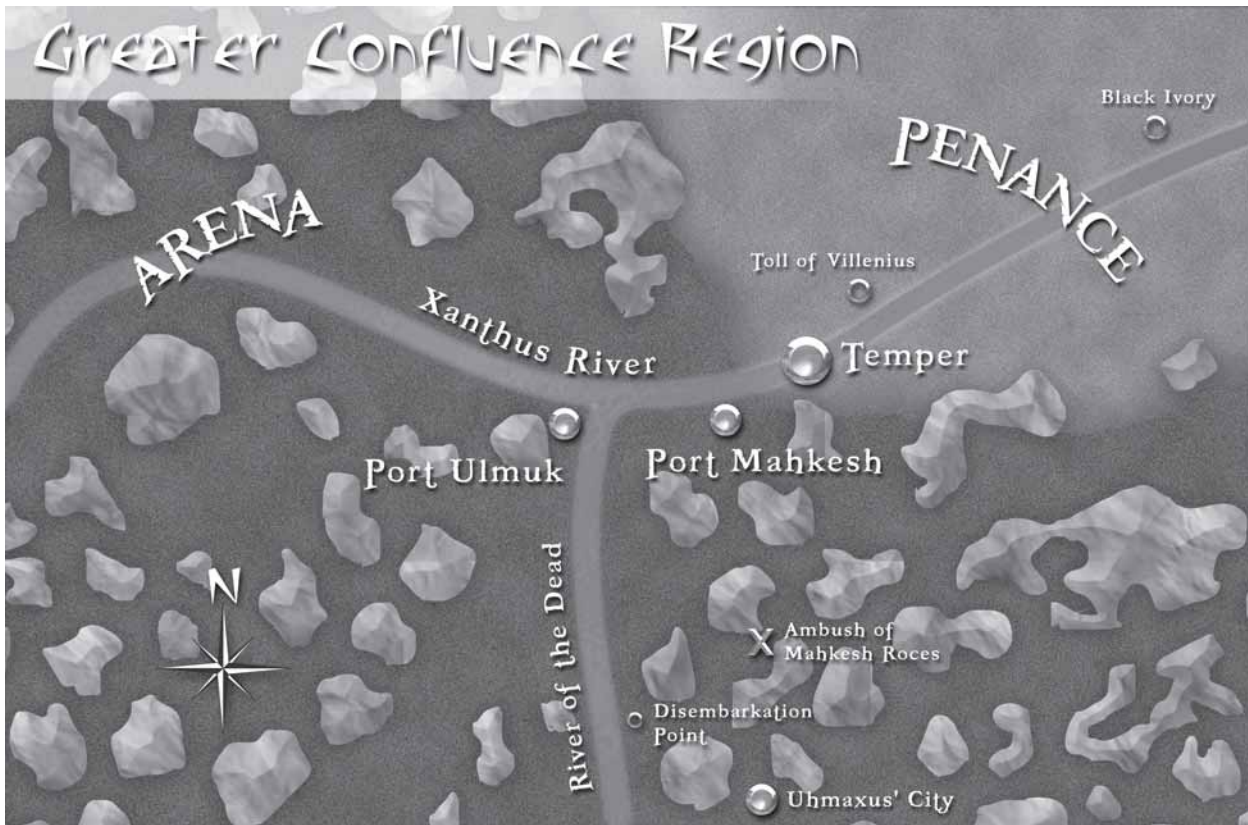
“You words ring true—for the most part. But be not complacent in the belief that all is forgiven. It is

not. Lord Belus has determined that what you could not keep by stealth you must now regain by might. As is his right, you are henceforth commissioned to lead his forces against those who would deter his will. It is an honor and a burden. Succeed and prosper, fail and experience the bliss of eternity.”

Despite his resentment for the preferential treatment he perceives the party is receiving, Ulmuk is willing to answer any questions they might have, though not always with the truth. His tone is gruff and crisp, frequently breaking down into a growl.

- Nesbitt was sent to retrieve the *Bathkol Pages*, sheets torn from the Bathkol’s book of the Great Oath. They bear references to ancient secrets and arcane rituals unfathomed by mortals. (False; Ulmuk know exactly what the pages are and what they have the potential to do.)
- The pages were found in an ancient ruin to the extreme west of the domain. Not realizing what they were, a scavenging nomad sold them to a Port Ulmuk merchant. (True.)
- As per the instructions of Belus, the pages were turned over to his designated agent, Mychus Nesbitt, who fled into the desert. (False by omission; while it is true that Nesbitt disappeared with the *Bathkol Pages*, Ulmuk declines to mention that Nesbitt charmed him into providing the pages after he had become suspicious.)
- The pages are known to be in the possession of Brehg Uhmaxus, an ambitious warlord located down the River of the Dead, who had hired Nesbitt to procure them. (True; Nesbitt used his *teleport* scroll to arrive at Port Ulmuk to confiscate the pages and then made haste overland to the holding of Uhmaxus.)
- Uhmaxus has commissioned a large force of mercenaries and mobilized his own forces, numbering five thousand total. The purpose to the sudden expansion of his military can only be for war, either he plans to attack someone, or stage a defense of his holding. (True; the warlord had planned to attack Port Makhesh, but his plans were diverted by the swift dispersion of Mabon’s own forces. Also, due to a failure of intelligence gathering, the true size of Uhmaxus’ forces is deflated.)
- The forces of Lord Mabon of Blackwall are making for Uhmaxus’ holding. It is obvious that the bloodlord covets the pages and plans to take them. (True; Mabon originally planned to attack Port Ulmuk to obtain the pages, but their relocation to Uhmaxus’ holding caused him to alter his attack plans accordingly.)
- Nissliss Ulmuk can answer any other questions the party possesses, according to the desire of the GM. The one restriction is that the warlord will not compromise his position or that of his master.

After the questioning is completed, the lord of Port Ulmuk unfurls a parchment, revealing a map of the immediate region (see the **Greater Confluence Region Map**). Ulmuk tells the party that Mabon’s forces are moving slowly, plagued by some unforeseen encounters with local denizens. The plan Ulmuk has devised is to ferry the



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PCs and their forces down the River of the Dead, disembarking south of Mabon's forces. With a quick march and luck the PCs should be able to cut off Mabon from his prize and have enough time to stage an ambush on a suitable portion of ground.

Ulmuk goes on to state that after Mabon's forces have been destroyed or forced into retreat, the party is to proceed south to the capital of Brehg Uhmaxus. They are to breach his initial defenses, besiege his fortress, lay waste to his city and army, and claim the *Bathkol Pages* from Uhmaxus for the glory of Lord Belus.

After the pages have been secured, the PCs are to turn them over to Ulmuk for delivery to Lord Belus. The warlord makes it very clear that neither the bloodlord, nor his servants, will tolerate any conspiracy. At the first hint of duplicity from the party, they will be branded traitors and destroyed. The threat is mostly hollow—at least for the moment—as it would take time for Belus and Ulmuk to summon forces large enough to destroy the party. Such an event is left to the imaginings and designs of the GM.

The PCs are given the following units to command. They are listed by type, race, and level of the unit. The existing officers have been appraised about the change of leadership and have been instructed to assist the party to the best of their ability. The party may distribute the units as they see fit amongst themselves. However, the units cannot be altered or modified during the entirety of the adventure. Refer to Chapter 8 for information concerning unit composition, abilities, and combat.

PCs' Military Units

Unit Type	Race	Level
Arcane spellcasters #1	Human	5
Arcane spellcasters #2	Human	3
Archers #1	Dover	5
Archers #1	Human	4
Divine spellcasters	Dover	4
Footmen #1	Orc	4
Footmen #2	Human	3
Footmen #3	Human	3
Skirmishers #1	Orc	3
Skirmishers #2	Goblin	2

The army also has several siege engine units traveling with it. The type and number for each is noted below, as is the relevant bonus for the particular siege engine. Those that rely on a skill check to function are given the relevant skill total possessed by a typical weapon crew (though none appear on this table the latter tables have a number of such entries). Weapons that perform as a traditional combat unit are noted, along with the combat level at which they function. Those that use a standard attack roll are given the bonus of a typical weapon crew. Refer to Chapter 10 of this work and Chapter 3 of the DMG for information concerning the abilities of siege engines.

PCs' Siege Engine Units

Type	Units	As Unit Type or Skill Check	BAB
Ballista *	1	-	+11
Caltrop spreader	2	-	-
Hell scorpion	1	Archers, 3 rd level	-
Ram	1	-	+11
Siege tower	2	-	-
Trebuchet	1	Archers, 4 th level	-

* Ten ballistae comprise a single unit. Their normal weapon damage is multiplied by five if used in mass combat.

Lastly, the PCs are supplied for a few selective types of ammunition, which could be scrounged at the last moment: 4 zombie missiles, 3 inferno shriekers, 3 acid mines—all of which constitute a single use in mass combat, and 6 fills for the caltrop spreaders. See Chapter 10 for details.

Episode 4: A Taste of Red Sand

With legions at their command, the party must rush to intercept the forces of Mabon from Port Makhesh before turning their attention towards Uhmaxus and the traitorous Nesbitt. The events here are more robust in terms of action, being comprised of two large-scale battles and the final encounter with the ambitious warlord. It is in this section that the PCs encounter the full peril of Arena. They must overcome it or perish, as have countless millions before them.

The Confluence of Blood and Stone

The PCs must marshal their forces, get them embarked, and depart as soon as possible. While the process is well under way, the PCs can speed the troops to action by making a Diplomacy check (DC 15) for each unit under their specific control. If successful, that unit obeys their commands without delay. If failed, the unit suffers a -1 morale penalty to Initiative and attacks for one week, as they do not believe in the current leadership. If the skill check succeeds by ten or more points, that unit gains a +1 morale bonus to Initiative and attacks for the next week.

The trip to the disembarkation point is less than one day away, and is itself uneventful. The lush vegetation bordering the river lessens somewhat, as if the River of the Dead actually carries the essence of its name. The sheer number of vessels and troops deters any local fauna from interfering with their passage. At the disembarkation point the PCs need to make Diplomacy check to effectively command the units to vacate the ships. Failure by any amount indicates that each unit takes 10d10 points of damage due to drowned soldiers or lost equipment.

When on land the legions must make haste to the east, hopefully cutting the intended route of Mabon's forces in half. Unless the party takes an alternate route, or otherwise does not adhere to the battle plan of Ulmuk, they will arrive as a suitable ambush point several hours before the forces from Port Makhesh. The GM must adjudicate all PC actions in such cases. If the PCs do not block

the progress of the Port Makhesh forces, they lay siege to Uhmaxus' fortress, creating the potential for a three-way battle at the city.

The site for the battle is a sandy patch of land with sparse vegetation. Two low hills, supporting meager clusters of tiny-leaved shrubs, flank a broad plain that is broken by a shallow ravine. See the **Blood and Stone Battle Map** for details. The PCs can allocate their forces as they see fit. In all likelihood, they will attempt to prepare an ambush. The skirmishing units can be concealed in most any place, while the siege weaponry is hidden atop the hills. After the party has made their preparations, read of paraphrase the following.

The sand at your feet quivers and shakes, as if it were resting on a lightly beaten drum. In the distance you note a general darkening below the horizon. Distorted by heat, the dark patch of marching soldiers separates and reforms as it undulates across the terrain. The officers at your sides stiffen and rub their hands—a sign of nervousness.

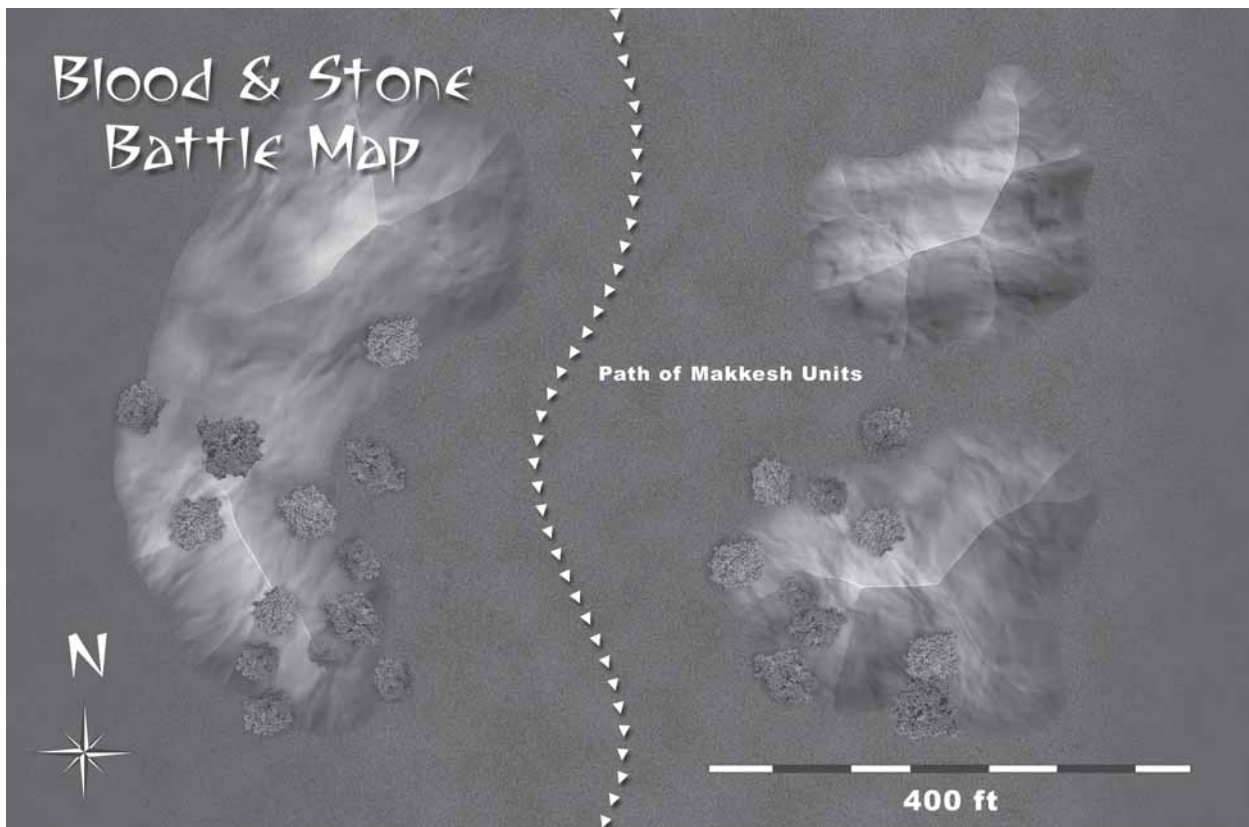
Turning, you issue final commands to the officers. As they depart, you are struck by the realization that you are rubbing your hands. It will pass, you tell yourselves, as soon as the enemy comes.

Given the incredible number of actions and reactions that can take place in the course of this battle, it is impossible to detail all eventualities. The GM is provided only the most basic outline for the intentions of the Port Makhesh forces and their likely response when engaged. The intention for Mabon's army is to march south to Uhmaxus' holding and lay siege to his city. They possess several units of siege engines and many rounds of specialized ammunition. Unfortunately for them, if the PCs succeed in laying an ambush, the superiority they have in that sphere is effectively negated. The map shows the initial disposition of Mabon's troops as they travel through the area. The units comprising the Port Makhesh army are as follows.

Port Makhesh Military Units

Unit Type	Race	Level
Arcane spellcasters	Human	5
Archers	Dover	5
Cavalry #1	Nightling	5
Cavalry #2	Human	3
Divine spellcasters	Human	4
Footmen #1	Asherake	5
Footmen #2	Human	4
Footmen #3	Human	3
Footmen #4	Dwarf	2

Due to the haste in assembling the army, the leadership was unable to increase the number of spellcasting units or archers. Normally the strength of Mabon's military, the need for speed precluded the ability to raise such units. In compensation, they mustered two units of cavalry and an extra unit of footmen. They were also able to place siege engines in the battle train with an impressive array of specialized ammunition: 3 vacuum bolts, 5 zombie missiles, 6 flash stones, and 3 inferno shriekers.



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Port Makhesh Siege Engine Units

Type	Units	As Unit Type or Skill Check	BAB
Ballista *	1	-	+11
Catapult, heavy *	2	Profession* +15	-
Hell scorpion	1	Archers, 3 rd level	-
Leaper bombard	2	Profession* +15	-
Siege tower	2	-	-
Trebuchet	1	Archers, 4 th level	-

* Ten ballistae or ten heavy catapults comprise a single unit. Their normal weapon damage is multiplied by five if used in mass combat.

** Siege Engineer

The forces of Port Makhesh will proceed through the map region in an order determined by the GM until they become aware of the PCs' forces. When alerted, they immediately attempt to form a line: footmen in the middle, with the cavalry on the flanks. The spellcasters will support the infantry by first increasing their defensive rating, then attacking all targets within range. Meanwhile, the siege engine unit will begin to deploy their arsenal. It will take five mass combat rounds before the ballistae or hell scorpions units can be brought to bear. The heavy catapults and leaper bombard units take ten rounds, while the trebuchet unit takes 15 rounds before being capable of firing.

If facing a superior force after suffering 50% casualties, the forces of Port Makhesh will begin to retreat. The process takes five rounds, after which it becomes a rout. Because of the exodus, they are forced to abandon their

siege weapon units and ammunition, which can be claimed and used by the PCs. A search of the carnage also garners enough food and water to refresh the supplies of the party's legions. Any treasure found is absorbed by their victors, and has no game effect other than pleasing the troops.

The Contest of Lords

The PCs must now move south to Uhmamaxus' holding. Little more than a day's travel away, the PCs' presence has not gone unnoticed. Skirmishers sent to harass the forces of Mabon witnessed the battle and have warned their master. When the PCs arrive, the city is girded for war. The city walls are manned and the land about is mined. Refer to **Uhmamaxus' Hold Battle Map** for the location of acid mines. The defensive units can be placed according to the designs of the GM, with a concentration of forces at the front and south gates. Units can be moved as desired during the battle, and gain double movement due to their familiarity with the environment and the compliance of the population.

Read or paraphrase the following to the party when they reach the stronghold of Uhmamaxus.

The city of Brehg Uhmamaxus seems like any other desert city. Walled and manned, it is the essence of life in Arena. But something is different, and only after several moments do you realize what it is. There is tenseness in the air, exuding from the very sand and stone, rising from the unseen populace behind the walls with every shallow breath. The fate of all within and without the walls is to be deter-



mined in the course of hours. Unsettled, but excited, you summon your battle lords for final council.

The task at hand requires the reduction of the city wall. With the siege weaponry already possessed and captured the day before, the PCs should have no trouble breaching the wall in a number of locations. As the PCs' units advance they must cross acid mine fields. Units near such locations come under fire from the city walls in an attempt to redirect their travel path over the mined region. They do this by lobbing sacks of pitch into a region, saturating the sand. Balls of flaming pitch follow these missiles. If ignited the affected area blazes for five mass combat rounds. Units in or passing through such areas suffer 5d6 damage each round they are exposed, Reflex save (DC 15) for half damage. Upon leaving the area they must make another save; if failed they continue to take damage from immolation until extinguished.

The units defending the walls are afforded limited protection from incoming fire directed by the forces of the party. All enemy units behind the city walls gain a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex saves if actively resisting the attack. If the enemy units are hunkered down in a purely defensive position, they gain a +8 bonus to AC and Reflex saves and effectively gains the improved evasion ability for any Reflex saves.

Enemy siege and military units engaging the forces of the party fire upon any opposing unit within range, selecting spellcasters, archers, and siege weapon units above all others. Any unit approaching the main gate is subjected to a barrage of venom vapor ammunition. The immediate area in front of the gate is then set ablaze as noted

above. The city gates are sheathed in steel and will not succumb to the flames. The city features have the following statistics:

Features of Uhmaxus' City

Feature	Thickness/ Height	Defense Rating	HP
City wall	10 ft./30 ft.	8	1,000
City gate	8 in./40 ft.	10	700
City tower	10 ft./40 ft.	8	1,500

When the wall or gate is breached, the defenders attempt to fill the gaps with units of impressed citizens. These frightened individuals are ill armed and trained, and function as a 1st level footmen unit suffering a -2 morale penalty and a -2 competence penalty (-4 total) to all actions, including the Damage Mitigation Table. A crude stopgap measure, it still affords the surviving military time to pull back to the fortress to make their last stand. The defensive forces of Uhmaxus' city are as follows.

Uhmaxus' Military Units

Unit Type	Race	Level
Arcane spellcasters #1	Dover	4
Arcane spellcasters #2	Human	2
Archers #1	Valco	4
Archers #2	Human	2
Divine spellcasters	Human	4
Footmen #1	Chromithian	5
Footmen #2	Haze	4

Footmen #3	Human	3
Footmen #4 (impressed)	Orcs	1
Footmen #5 (impressed)	Human	1

The siege weapon units available to the defenders of the city are listed on the table below. The units possess the following special ammunitions for use in their defense: 3 zombie missiles, 5 flash stones, 2 inferno shriekers, and 4 venomous vapors.

Uhmaxus' Siege Engine Units

Type	Units	As Unit Type or Skill Check	BAB
Ballista *	3	-	+11
Catapult, heavy *	2	Profession** +15	-
Catapult, light *	3	Profession** +15	-
Hell scorpion	1	Archers, 4 th level	-

*Ten ballistae comprise a single unit. Their normal weapon damage is multiplied by five if used in mass combat.

** Siege Engineer

When the forces defending the wall are forced back into the citadel, the true battle begins. The city itself is bare to the depredations of the party's forces. Wonton slaughter, rape, and destruction begin in earnest unless the PCs can exercise control over their troops. A Diplomacy check (DC 15) for each unit curtails much of the mayhem (such units suffer 5d10 damage), while success by ten or more points avoids it completely. Failure causes each disrupted unit to suffer 10d10 points of damage from troops scattering to pillage the city environs.

The Reduction of a Warlord

The last contest awaits the stalwart party. With the city fallen, the only remaining portion is to storm the fortress and confront Uhmaxus and Nesbitt. The breaching of the castle is much like the overcoming of the city walls. The statistics for the fortress features are identical to those of the city noted above. If siege weapon units still remain, the PCs should have little trouble reducing the castle defenses. The defending units are comprised of a single unit of 3rd-level footmen and the survivors from the battle at the city walls. The fortress is also armed with a ballista unit and a hell scorpion unit that have access to 4 inferno shriekers and 2 venom vapors.

The PCs have two methods of entering the fortress. They can either reduce its defenses with their units or force their way in by means of stealth and personal magic. If the exterior defenses can be broken, the units of the PCs can flood the confines of the fortress to battle the remaining defenders. Conduct all warfare as normal, except that the tight confines reduce all rolls on the Damage Mitigation Table by 5. Also, siege weaponry is rendered useless in this situation, being capable of firing only on exposed units not located in the interior spaces of the fortress.

If the party chooses to sneak or force their way into the fortress by dint of their personal skill and magic, their remaining units immediately suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attacks for as long as their supreme commanders (the PCs) are absent. Once inside the stronghold, the PCs must fight their way to the hall of war where Uhmaxus



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and Nesbitt are plotting the defense. Such encounters occur every ten rounds until the warlord and his bodyguards are defeated. 20% of all encounters include an arcane spellcaster. If the fortress defenses are breached, however, the guards become occupied elsewhere. In this event, restrict the number of encounters to one to three for the searching PCs.

Fortress guards (1d4+2): 46 hp.

Fortress sorcerer: 54 hp.

Once the fortress has been penetrated or overcome, the remaining task is to locate the warlord and his agent. An Intimidate check (DC 10) on any captive informs the PCs that Uhmaxus and his staff are in the hall of war, which is located on the second floor of the fortress. Arriving at the chamber takes 1d3+1x10 melee rounds, with the above encounters still an occurrence. With a captive guide, the trip takes 10 melee rounds.

The double door to the chamber is locked (Thickness 4 in., Hardness 5, 40 hp, Break DC 23, Locked DC 25). Unless the attempt to open the portal is successful on the first attempt, the inhabitants of the chamber become aware of the PCs and prepare accordingly. When the doors are opened, read or paraphrase the following to the party.

The chamber beyond is small and circular, with shelves and cabinets dotting its circumference. A 6-foot wide table dominates the center of the chamber, its top covered with unfurled maps and charts. A band of humans, a faust and the rogue agent stare at you, their visages confident despite the desperation of their position. Mychus Nesbitt turns to a faust—whose torso is covered with slowly shifting tattoos—and smiles.

The faust speaks, "You have destroyed my city and my army. These I can replace. You, however, are indispensable to me. Allow me to show you the power you have brought to me. The power only a god can wield."

The 20-foot diameter chamber explodes into combat. At this juncture, the ultimate outcome of the battle hinges on who wins the final conflict. If Uhmaxus should win, the units of the PCs dissolve into chaos and retreat, most never reaching home alive. If the PCs should defeat Uhmaxus, the remaining defenders surrender in five mass combat rounds.

Bodyguards (10): 92 hp.

Brehg Uhmaxus: 100 hp.

Mychus Nesbitt: 123 hp.

The bodyguards protect Uhmaxus to the best of their ability, fighting to the death in all cases, even over his corpse. Uhmaxus, convinced of his own superiority, also stands his ground. He uses his newfound abilities to his best advantage, sacrificing his guards is needed. Nesbitt uses his spells first, but activates his *ring of blinking* if pressed. If he can detach himself from the melee, Nesbitt skulks in the area and attempt to assassinate a PC. If threat-

ened with imminent death, he flees by any means available. If Nesbitt is given a chance to secure the *Bathkol Pages* he does so and flees.

Conclusion

Depending upon the action of the party, the final outcome may or may not be covered below. The GM may have to modify various conditions to reflect what actually happened.

Failure

Failure in this adventure comes in two varieties: losing the battle against Uhmaxus or losing their lives. If the PCs die in the pursuit of the *Bathkol Pages* or during the final battle, their failure is infinite and needs no further discussion. If the party simply loses the battle against Uhmaxus and retreats, Nesbitt slays the warlord during the victory celebration, takes the pages and proclaims himself warlord. His involvement in the political and military spheres of the domain is assured, as his power now equals his ambition. Also, Lord Belus does not suffer incompetence and places the PCs on a list of entities he would prefer removed from the Forge. Returning to his graces is no mean feat, but not impossible, especially if the PCs can procure the pages.

Victorious Outcomes

With skill and some measure of luck the PCs should be able to overcome Uhmaxus and possibly Nesbitt. If the party acted of their own free will to defeat Uhmaxus, Lord Belus rewards them by permitting them to retain the fallen warlord's holding. He also allows them to keep the remnants of the military that survived the battles. In return, they are expected to see to the supply needs of the bloodlord's aerial fleet and provide a venue for trade between the two regions. If the PCs were coerced into command of the troops—such as by their conviction for treason and breach of faith—they still retain control of Uhmaxus' holding, but suffer under the vigilant eye of Belus loyalists.

The retrieval of the *Bathkol Pages* is problematic, as they are just as likely to be absconded by the hobgoblin. Since they are not the actually the focus of the adventure, their loss is not considered a failure, but their acquisition by Nesbitt is likely to haunt the PCs later in their careers. If the party has the pages they can either hand them over to Belus or use them. Relinquishing them earns each PC 25,000 gp and a useful major magic item, as well as the respect of the Lord of Illumina. Wearing the artifacts, however, will incite Belus and likely fissure relationships with the bloodlord. The PCs are warned.

Continuing Adventures

The following are suggestions for additional adventures or campaigns. The ideas may need to be modified depending on the outcome and details of the adventure.

Rise of Mychus Nesbitt

Having survived the events of the adventure, Nesbitt has begun to carve out a holding for himself. He likely will assassinate a residing petty warlord and assume his position. The memory of the PCs' victory is still fresh and has birthed a sense of revenge in the hobgoblin. This scenario works best if the hobgoblin does not have the *Bathkol Pages*.

The Accumulation of Godhood

Unrealized by the wearers of the *Bathkol Pages*, the more that are worn, the more one comes under the control of Bathkol. Despite his apparent absence, Bathkol still exerts considerable control over the pages since they are pieces of his flesh. Those wearing the artifacts are driven to gather more, eventually covering his entire body. Whether this would bring forth the missing Feathered Fowl or recreate him anew is unknown.

Betrayal Most Common

A surprising fifth column of Uhmaxus supporters manifests in the ranks of the characters' military units. Unrest quickly turns violent as the rebellious units capture the settlement's fortress while the characters are away, forcing the second reduction of the defensive works. To complicate matters, a local asherake warlord named Kikkin backs the betrayers and sends several military units to prop their claims of independence. Undiscovered for the moment is the fact that Kikkin has bribed many of the rebelling commanders, offering them a portion of the settlement's wealth if they allow him access to the fortress.

Caches Best Forgotten

As the characters are settling into their new home they stumble across a collection of creatures in stasis secreted in dimensional spaces about the fortress. Intended as trade items to be sent to the Vault, these caches release their contents if they are not renewed every lunar cycle. The exact creatures held vary, but the interested warlocks are known to have a taste for exotic beasts, such as jaggons, quillons, and starks.

The Imbalance of Power

Emboldened by the recent subjugation of Uhmaxus' holding, a petty asherake warlord named Kikkin attacks the settlement with six units of mixed strength. If defeated, Kikkin retreats and wages a sustained guerilla war against the outlying components of the characters' holding. If not stopped, sympathizers develop throughout the holding that aid the invader, seeing him as an avenue to power. If the characters are not prudent and decisive in their actions general civil war erupts.

Appendix A: NPCs

Warlord Brehg Uhmaxus, Male Half-fiend/Faust Rog8:

CR 13; Medium-size Outsider; HD 8d6+64; hp 100; Init +11; Spd 50 ft; AC 33, touch 20, flat-footed 26; BAB +6, Grpl +10; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+6/19-20, +2 *human bane short sword*), or +10/+10 melee (1d8+4, 2 claws) and +5 melee (2d4+2, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak attack +4d6, spell-like abilities; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immunity to poison, improved uncanny dodge, medium fortification, regeneration 10, resistance 20 (acid, cold, electricity and fire), scent, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +13, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 24, Con 26, Int 19, Wis 16, Cha 17.

Skills & Feats: Appraise +9, Bluff +8, Climb +9, Decoder Script +9, Disguise +8, Disable Device +9, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +8, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +9, Jump +10, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +13, Search +9, Spot +8, Tumble +12; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility.

Languages: Asherake, Common, Faust, Lunar, Undercommon.

Gifts: Fleet of Foot (earned), Greater Touch Skin.

Possessions: +2 *human bane short sword*; *Bathkol Pages* (1: +6 Con bonus; 2: regeneration 10; 3: medium fortification; 4: a) *haste, hold person, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, scorching ray, spider climb*—each 6/day at 8th level; b) *mass heal*—1/day; c) +4 Wis bonus); *cloak of minor displacement*; *elixir of fire breath*; *ring of protection* +3; pouch: 20 50-gp garnets, 10 500-gp rubies, 47 gp.

A late arrival to Arena, Uhmaxus has made great inroads in the region, in part due to the *Bathkol Pages* he has been able to obtain over the last several months. Discovering their potential by accident, Uhmaxus has become obsessed with their acquisition. Dreaming of his impending greatness, the faust has deluded himself to the reality of his position. He has spared little expense in gathering information about the pages and raising his military. Neither mighty, nor frightening, his days on the Forge are numbered. Whether he falls to the party or another bloodthirsty warlord is the only factor to be determined.

NPC Continuation: There is little chance for Uhmaxus to escape the trap of his own conceit. Though the pages have given him incredible powers, they have not elevated him beyond the pale. Unless he manages to escape, or is spared, he will not reappear in any significant way.

Mychus Nesbitt, Male Hobgoblin Sor12: CR 13; Medium-size Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 12d4+72-6; hp 123; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 17; BAB +6, Grpl +9; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+6, +3 *major alterable folding morningstar*) or +9/+7 melee (1d6+3 plus poison [deathblade, injury DC 20, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con, 4 doses in each glove], *kith claws*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Death strike, sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., poison use, summon familiar, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +10 (+12 against poison), Ref +8, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 22, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 19.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +24, Climb +23, Concentration +11, Diplomacy +19, Gather Information +9, Hide +14, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Disguise +9, Knowledge (ar-

Appendix A: NPCs

cana) +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Search +8, Spellcraft +8, Spot +7; Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Improved Unarmed Strike (*kith claws* only), Maximize Spell, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Two-Weapon Fighting (*kith claws* only).

Languages: Common, Giant, Hobgoblin, Orc.

Gifts: Ability Boost: Constitution (earned), Chameleon.

Possessions: +3 major alterable folding morningstar, *kith claws* (poisonous; new item), +3 leather armor, cloak of displacement, necklace of the beguiler (new item), periapt of wound closure, mark of the killer (new item), *potion of cure serious wounds* (3), ring of blinking, ring of protection +2, scroll: teleport (10th level), pouch: 12 cp, 5 sp, 35 gp, 1,000 gp in mixed gems.

Sorcerer Spells Known (Spells per day: 6/7/7/7/7/5/3; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, ghost sound, mage hand, open/close, ray of frost, read magic, touch of fatigue*; 1st—*chill touch, mage armor, magic missile, shield, true strike*; 2nd—*acid arrow, ghoul touch, mirror image, see invisibility, web*; 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, fly, hold person, lightning bolt*; 4th—*minor globe of invulnerability, scrying, stoneskin*; 5th—*baleful polymorph, dominate person*; 6th—*chain lightning*.

Assassin Spells Known (Spells per day: 3/1; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 1st—*detect poison, obscuring mist, spider climb, true strike*; 2nd—*alter self, invisibility, undetectable alignment*.

Even before Barbelo drew him to the Forge, Nesbitt was destined for greatness. On his home world, hobgoblins were strikingly different, holding prominent places in society and boasting of a culture more advanced than most human-centric worlds. Nesbitt was blessed with above average intelligence and an innate ability to cast spells, and would have soon been a leader of his people. That is, until the Mistress of the Red Sands took him away.

He plies his trade well in this new world, selling his skills to the highest bidder. Nesbitt has little loyalty, but pays lip service to whoever happens to currently wield the scepter of might. Above all, Nesbitt is at his core a heartless creature that makes use of any tools to achieve his intended goals. Lying, cheating, and even the spilling of his own blood are acceptable costs if it nets him the prize he seeks. Surprisingly well off, Nesbitt only takes jobs that he considers to be interesting and challenging, and he literally delights in the precise execution of intricate plans.

In combat, Nesbitt is very deliberate and brutal. If possible, he uses all of his sorcerous abilities to thoroughly scout out the coming confrontation and then places as many bulwarks between himself and his enemies as possible. When he tires of the cat and mouse game and is ready to finish his opponents, Nesbitt often employs touch spells and *true strike* just to make certain that the job is performed properly and efficiently. In Nesbitt's book there is no such thing as overkill.

NPC Continuation: In the event that Nesbitt is not eliminated in the course of the adventure, it is very likely that he will continue to interfere with the party's lives. Whether it is out of sense of genuine interest, professional respect, or wounded pride is up to the GM. The canny and well-enconced Nesbitt, with his plethora of contacts and his

vast store of wealth, could easily become the raw material for a memorable future villain, or even the most unlikely and surprising of allies.

NPCs & MONSTERS

Episode 1: The Summons

Volt Polar: CR 10; Large Magical Beast; HD 11d10+22; hp 104; Init +3; Spd 50 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15; BAB +11, Grpl +20; Atk +16 melee (1d8+5, 2 claws) and +14 melee (1d8+5, bite) and +16 melee (2d6+2, 2 rakes); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Improved grab, polarizing blast, rake; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, SR 20 (mind affecting magic only); AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +14, Will +4; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Hide +9, Jump +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Spot +6; Alertness, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Possessions: See the text for details.

Episode 2: The Passage West

Crewmember of the Black Ivory, Male Human Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (human); CR 3; HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; BAB +3, Grpl +4; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/19-20, short sword); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb +6, Craft (shipmaking) +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +4; Athletic, Dodge, Endurance, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, pouch: 2d6 sp, 3d6 gp, 1d4 10 gp gems.

Ghrash, Female Green Hag: CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 9d8+9; hp 63; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 22; BAB +9, Grpl +13; Atk +13 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Mimicry, spell-like abilities, weakness; SQ Darkvision 90 ft., SR 18; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Concentration +13, Knowledge (local) +5, Hide +11, Listen +11, Spot +11; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude.

Possessions: bracers of armor +1, elixir of love, *potion of cure serious wounds*, pouch: 6 50 gp opals, 3 100 gp emeralds.

Howler (Advanced): CR 4; Large Outsider; HD 9d8+18; hp 72; Init +7; Spd 60 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14; BAB +9, Grpl +18; Atk +13 melee (2d8+5/19-20, bite) and +8 melee (1d4+2 plus poison [blue whinnis, injury, DC 14, 1 Con/Unconsciousness], 1d4 quills); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Howl, quills; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +14, Hide +12, Listen +15, Move Silently +12, Search +5, Spot +15; Alertness, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative.

Kidnapper, Ftr6: Use the statistics for the toll-keeper.

Kidnapper Sorcerer, Female Dover Sor9: CR 9; Medium-size Humanoid (dover); HD 9d4+27; hp 54; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14; BAB +4, Grpl +4; Atk +6 melee (1d4+2/19-20, +2 dagger) or +4 melee (1d6, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA spells; SQ scent, summon familiar; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 17.

Skills & Feats: Bluff +7, Concentration +9, Listen +4, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Spellcraft +6, Spot +2; Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility, Spell Penetration.

Possessions: +2 dagger, bracers of armor +2, *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *ring of protection* +2, *wand of lightning bolts* (5th level, 16 charges).

Sorcerer Spells Known (Spells per day: 6/7/7/7/3; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, flare, mage hand, message, open/close, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, grease, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*daze monster, false life, touch of idiocy, web*; 3rd—*hold person, lightning bolt, stinking cloud*; 4th—*enervation, shout*.

Toll-keeper, Male Human or Dover Ftr6: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (human or dover); HD 6d10+18; hp 46; Init +2 (+6 if human); Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; BAB +6, Grpl +9; Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+5/19-20, +2 longsword) or +8/+8/+3 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb -4, Jump -4, Spot +3 (+5 if human), Swim -10; Combat Expertise, Far Shot, Improved Initiative (if human), Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot.

Possessions: +1 scale mail, light steel shield, +2 longsword, shortbow, quiver with 20 arrows, 10 +1 arrows, chortle bomb, belt pouch: 2d6 gp, 3d6 gp, 1d3 50 gp rubies.

Villenius, Male Dover Ftr7/Rog2: CR 9; Medium-size Humanoid (dover); HD 7d10+2d6+27; hp 88; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20; BAB +8, Grpl +11; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+7/17-20, +2 shocking burst longsword), or +14 melee (1d8+7/17-20, +2 shocking burst longsword) and +8 melee (1d6+1, bite), or +11/+6 ranged (1d6+2/x3, +2 shortbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Evasion, scent, trap finding; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills & Feats: Appraise +6, Climb +2, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +13, Jump +2, Listen +4, Spot +0, Swim -5; Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Critical (longsword), Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: +2 chainmail, +2 heavy wood shield, +2 shocking burst longsword, +2 shortbow, quiver with 20 +1 arrows, pouch: 6 sp, 54 gp, 5 pp, 15 50 gp mixed gems.

Episode 4:

Bodyguards, Male Human Ftr8: CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 8d10+32; hp 92; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21; BAB +8, Grpl +12; Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+8/17-20, +2 keen longsword); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 19, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb +0, Jump +0, Spot +2, Swim -6; Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Greater Weapon Focus (longsword), Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Possessions: +2 breastplate, +1 heavy steel shield, +2 keen longsword, *cloak of resistance* +1, *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), pouch: 2d6 gp, 3d6 gp, 1d3 50 gp emeralds.

Brehg Uhmamax: See the section **Important NPCs**.

Fortress guards, Ftr6: Use the statistics for the toll-keeper.

Fortress sorcerer: Use the statistics for the kidnapper sorcerer.

Mychus Nesbitt: See the section **Important NPCs**.

Appendix B: Feats, Skills, & Spells

Feats

Battle Fury (mass combat)

The warlord can increase the base attack bonus of the units under his control.

Benefit: The PC can add one quarter of his base attack bonus (rounded down) to that of his troops. This effect is reduced by half each round (rounded down) until it reaches zero. The hero may renew this ability as a full round action, but its effects do not stack with similar bonuses.

Critical Strike (mass combat)

The PC trains any unit other than arcane or divine spell-casting units to strike more accurately.

Prerequisite: The PC must have a Base Attack Bonus of at least +10.

Benefit: The damage dealt by the units under the warlord's control gain a +1 step when calculating damage on the Damage Mitigation Table.

Heroic Vigor (mass combat)

The warlord can increase a saving throw of the units under his command.

Benefit: The PC can add half of his base save bonus (Will, Reflex, or Fort; rounded down) to troops under his command. This is a free action that can be taken at any time during the battle (even after a spell has been cast). This effect is reduced by half each round (rounded down) until it reaches zero. The hero may renew this ability as a full round action, but its effects do not stack with similar bonuses.

Appendix B: Feats, Skills, & Spells

Rapid Smite (mass combat)

Units under the PC's control can make a second attack.

Prerequisite: The PC must have multiple attacks every standard combat round.

Benefit: The PC can train the any units engaging in melee combat to strike more quickly. This adds a 2nd attack to those units with a base attack bonus of +6 or more. This attack is at -5 from the unit's base attack bonus, and deals half of the regular damage dice. This effect is reduced by half each round (rounded down) until it reaches zero. The hero may renew this ability as a full round action, but its effects do not stack with similar bonuses.

Unwavering Resolve (mass combat)

Units under the PC's control are more likely to stay and fight despite changing battlefield conditions.

Prerequisite: Leadership

Benefit: Whenever a unit must make a morale check (see Victory Conditions), that unit has a +5 bonus on their Will save.

Skills

Battlespeak (Int, Trained Only)

The sign language of battlespeak is different from the more common Speak Languages ability in that it accumulates ranks like most other skills. Battlespeak is most commonly found in Arena, though slight variations of the skill can be found across the Forge. While it is possible to understand battlespeak without obtaining the skill, a PC must be trained by another with at least 5 ranks in order to properly learn those expressions unique to Arena's sphere of influence. The same stipulations apply to other domains and forms of the skill.

To successfully convey a message in battlespeak a character must equal or exceed a DC of 10 + modifiers based on their skill rank, the spectators for which the message is intended, and other random factors (outlined in Table B.1) based on the intended audience. A successful roll versus the target number indicates that the speaker has effectively communicated her message, as crude as it may be.

Table B.1: Battlespeak Modifiers

Condition	DC
Viewer has 16+ Intelligence	+3
Viewer has more than 7 levels in Battlespeak	+3
Viewer is of the same race	+2
Viewer and speaker are biped	+2
Viewer and speaker are non-biped	+2
Viewer and speaker know a common language	+2
Viewer is literate	+1
Viewer's Intelligence is less than 10	-3
Viewer is greater than 20' distant	-3/20'
Viewer does not know Battlespeak	-3
Viewer is of a different race	-2
Viewer is new to Arena (within six months)	-2

Viewer is biped, speaker is non-biped	-2
Viewer is non-biped, speaker is biped	-2
Viewer is illiterate	-1

Action: It takes a full round of noncombat actions to convey one message; such as halt, stop, go, attack, etc. More complicated signs can take up to an additional 1-3 round based on the meaning (roll or GM's choice).

Synergy: If the character has 5 or more ranks in any Knowledge (Arena)-based skill there is an additional +2 bonus for conveying the message.

Try Again: The speaker is allowed one additional chance to make the viewer understand the message following failure. Such retries suffer from a -2 penalty and take twice as long to convey the message.

Teaching: A character can teach another battlespeak only after attaining 7 or more ranks, and has been in Arena more than six months on the Forge calendar. The latter is to better learn all of the specific geographical and other references exclusive to Arena.

Advanced Battlespeak: When a character achieves 10 ranks in battlespeak the meaning of this makeshift sign language changes dramatically. At this level the character can convey more detailed communications between someone of a similar level (+/- 3 skill ranks). Such exchanges are considered to be the same as if the two spoke the same language.

Craft (Deepflowsmithing)

You are trained in the precise and delicate art of crafting items and complex objects with *deepflow*. Because of the highly unusual nature of the substance, this skill must be used in conjunction with the Knowledge (deepflow) skill. Note: Not all trusk are instantly subject to this skill as a bonus, though many do elect to take it for obvious reasons.

For more information on the Craft skill, please refer to the *PHB*.

KNOWLEDGE (DEEPFLOW)

You have dedicated copious amounts of time to studying and learning the extraordinary and dangerous properties of *deepflow* and are proficient with all known and current information applicable to its usage. In order to craft an item with *deepflow*, you must use this skill in conjunction with the Craft (deepflowsmithing) skill but you need not craft items with *deepflow* if the intent is merely to study it; the possession of this skill does not mandate the other. Note: Not all trusk are instantly subject to this skill as a bonus, though many do elect to take it for obvious reasons.

For more information on the Knowledge skill, please refer to the *PHB*.

Knowledge (warfare) (Int)

Conducting a successful military campaign requires extensive comprehension of not only strategy and tactics, but knowledge of supplies, logistics, terrain, espionage, engineering, sieges and all other factors pertaining to the maintenance of a highly efficient and fully functional fighting force. Knowledge of the proper moment to mount an

Appendix C: New Equipment & Items

offensive, fall back, or even surrender is vital to the survival ratio of an army.

Check: When employing decision-making that involves battlefield strategies, the highest-ranking character with this skill currently in command makes the rolls. Characters may cooperate forming a command group, but they may not take ten.

DC	Action
15	Accurate estimation of the size of the opposing force
15	Examining the surrounding landscape for the best tactical advantage
20	Recognizing a particular military maneuver
20	Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of siege machines
25	Locating spies within your own encampment
30	Determine war strategy
45	Determine strategy of opposing forces

Retry: No. While the commander or command group may attempt the same strategies or tactics multiple times during the course of a battle (even if they have failed previously), they must live with the consequences. Furthermore, each time a strategy is repeated during the same battle, any opposing checks gain a cumulative competence bonus equal to their Intelligence modifier to detect this.

Special: Commanders with the Leadership feat gain a +2 synergy bonus to their Knowledge (warfare) rolls. An untrained synergy check is a simple Intelligence check without a circumstance bonus and with a -4 competence penalty applied.

Spells

Transmute Sand to Stone

Level: Drd 5, Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 2 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Area: Up to two 10 ft. cubes/level

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: No

This spell transforms sand (Arena or otherwise) to stone that has the consistence of granite (hardness 8). Any creature covered in sand is allowed a Reflex save to escape before being trapped by the hardening stone. Currently there is no counter to this spell, such as *transmute stone to sand*. If such a counter exists its secret is well guarded by the bloodlords of Penance.

Arcane Material Component: Powdered granite and glass mixed together, a pinch of grass or straw, and water.

Magical Items

Bathkol Pages (Major Artifact): The pages torn from Bathkol's book of the Great Oath appear as golden vellum carefully scraped to transparency. Incredibly strong and durable, the sheets are actually the preserved skin of the lord of Kiln, removed by the conquering deities after the imprisonment of the nameless god. Written in the Fowl's own blood, each page is covered with thin, cramped writing that seems to shift over time, hampering any attempts at deciphering. The sheets' true ability become evident when pressed to the naked flesh of the bearer. The vellum instantly softens and merges with the bearer, the script appearing as a faint tattoo. As with the script, the tattoo shifts over time, though its power never changes. Every page grants a cumulative +1 natural armor bonus. In addition, each sheet possesses a power determined on the below table.

The bearer may wear one sheet per point of Constitution bonus. If this limit is exceeded, the bearer suffers 20d6 points of force damage, Fortitude save (DC 25) for half damage. The bearer also permanently loses 1d3 points of Constitution (no save) as the additional sheet is expelled. The sheets may only be removed by skinning them from the living or dead body of the bearer, causing 10% of the maximum hit points in damage. Removed pages revert to their original form.

It is unknown exactly how many *Bathkol Pages* exist, though given the size of the Feathered Fowl's tomes it could be anywhere from 50–100 pages. Lord Belus is thought to have documented the location of over a dozen of these mystic pages, but the exact total is known only to him.

Strong abjuration, evocation, necromancy, and transmutation; CL 20th.

Kith Claws: Crafted in imitation of the Penance steeds, these paired items resemble ordinary, fingerless gloves that can be crafted from nearly any material. Their powers can be invoked at will by the wearer. When activated they convert into large kith paws, complete with retractable claws. They add a +15 competence bonus to all Climb checks, and grant the wearer the Improved Unarmed Strike and Two-Weapon Fighting feats when the gloves are activated—even if the feat prerequisites for such have not been met.

Roughly 20% of these items can be mentally commanded to inject a dose of poison. These doses must be preloaded into the gloves beforehand. Each glove can hold up to 1d4+1 doses of poison. The number of doses is set at the item's creation and can never be increased.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self*, *cat's grace*, *poison* (poisonous version only); Price: 15,550 gp (24,900 gp poisonous version).

Mark of the Killer: This item is an elaborate tattoo that is scribed with magical ink into the flesh of a willing recipient. The ink required to scribe the *mark of the killer* is

Bathkol Pages

d%	Bathkol Page Power
01-12	+2 bonus to one ability score (determine randomly) *
13-20	+4 bonus to one ability score (determine randomly) *
21-25	+6 bonus to one ability score (determine randomly) *
26-37	Ability to cast 1d4+2 arcane spells of levels 1 st -3 rd 6/day each**
38-45	Ability to cast 1d4 arcane spells of levels 4 th -6 th 3/day each **
46-50	Ability to cast 1d2 arcane spells of levels 7 th -8 th 1/day each **
51-52	Ability to cast 1 arcane spell of level 9 th 1/day **
53-64	Ability to cast 1d4+2 divine spells of levels 1 st -3 rd 6/day each**
65-72	Ability to cast 1d4 divine spells of levels 4 th -6 th 3/day each **
73-76	Ability to cast 1d2 divine spells of levels 7 th -8 th 1/day each **
77-78	Ability to cast 1 divine spell of level 9 th 1/day **
79-82	Energy resistance 10 (determine randomly) *
83-84	Energy resistance 20 (determine randomly) *
85-90	Light fortification ***
91-94	Medium fortification ***
95-96	Heavy fortification ***
97-98	Regeneration 10 *
99	Roll twice on this table, ignoring rolls of 99-00
00	Roll thrice on this table, ignoring rolls of 99-00

* These powers stack; thus +4 and +6 Strength bonuses become a +10 Strength bonus.

** If a same spell is rolled more than once, its uses per day stack.

*** These powers do not stack; the more powerful ability negates the lesser.

composed of the essence of a skilled assassin, who must be murdered in a heinous fashion by the hand of the individual desiring the mark. The body of the assassin must undergo a secret ritual that culminates with the slow boiling of the body until little more than a slick, syrupy slag remains, to which are added rare ingredients and the blood of the recipient (dealing 1d10+4 points of permanent damage).

The bearer of the *mark of the killer* gains the ability to access assassin skills as class skills, despite any other class he might hold. The wearer receives a +2 inherent bonus to Dexterity until the tattoo is removed. Further, the *mark* bestows upon its owner the following abilities (per the assassin prestige class): +2d6 sneak attack ability (which is stackable with similar abilities), +2 save against poison, death attack ability, poison use, uncanny dodge, and the following spells from the assassin spell list: 1st-*detect poison, obscuring mist, spider climb, true strike*; 2nd-*alter self, invisibility, undetectable alignment*; these spells are cast as if by a 4th-level assassin. Lastly, the possessor of the *mark of the killer* must endure an alignment shift towards evil, with all associated ramifications thereof.

The *mark of the killer* is instantly recognizable to any that behold it as a foul blight and the sign of a professional killer. The mark can only be removed by performing some deed of good and righteousness that is equal in stature and breadth as the evil that was required to make it in the first place.

Strong transmutation and necromancy; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *simulacrum, trap the soul*; Price: 35,000 gp + any costs incurred in the acquisition of the assassin source material.

Necklace of the Beguiler: This plain silver chain conveys a +10 competence bonus to all Bluff and Diplomacy skill checks. It also allows the wearer to cast *charm monster* and *suggestion* 3/day. All effects are as if cast by a 7th-level spellcaster.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *mass suggestion, suggestion*; Price: 47,300 gp.

Spellseeker Eggs: The eggs of the spellseeker can be enchanted to create grenade-like devices. The spellcaster must use her spells and alchemical skills to preserve and enchant them. Once enchanted, the eggs are considered AC 12 with a Hardness 5. If an egg should take even 1 hit point of damage it breaks and explodes. All within in a 30-ft. radius are affected as if by a *dispel magic* spell cast by a 15th-level sorcerer. Strong abjuration: CL 15th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Maximize Spell, *dispel magic*; Price: 1,700 gp; Weight: 5

lb.

Wings of Death (Major Artifact)

These 10-ft. cursed wings are made of a rare combination of adamantine and mithral. They may only be worn by a creature of Large size and who once possessed wings. These magical wings will graft themselves to the location where the former wings once were and may never be removed. They may not be used by any creature that does not normally possess wings. The *wings of death* are intelligent with an ego of 12 and a neutral evil alignment. It also grants the wearer the following:

- +2 damage bonus to all attacks
- +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class
- Capable of hurling 2d4 wing blades per round at a target, inflicting 1d8 points damage per blade (5 per day). Blades are magically regenerated upon release.
- 1d10 damage when used in melee combat
- Possesses the *vorpal* weapon quality upon a critical hit.

The wearer may use the wings in either melee or ranged combat. If the wearer becomes incapacitated, the wings will act on their own to defend themselves and their owner by attacking the nearest target. The wearer must also be evil in alignment. If he is not, a Will save (DC 20) must be made each day to avoid a shift in alignment. Furthermore, the wearer must make a daily Will save (DC 12) to retain control of the wings.

Strong transmutation; CL 20; Weight 40 lbs.

Appendix D: Monsters

Athrigyle

Huge Aberration

Hit Dice: 14d8+70 (154 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), burrow 20 ft.

AC: 19 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 18

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+26

Attack: Claw +18 melee

Full Attack: 2 claws +18 and bite +16 or tentacle slam +18

Damage: Claws 1d8+8, Bite 2d8+4, tentacle slam 1d6+8

Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab, spell-like abilities, wave of cold

Special Qualities: Eyes

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +11

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 8

Skills: Balance +8, Climb +15, Gather Information +7, Spot +9

Feats: Blind Fight, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack

Environment: Any desert and underground

Organization: Solitary, pair, or group (3-6)

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: Standard

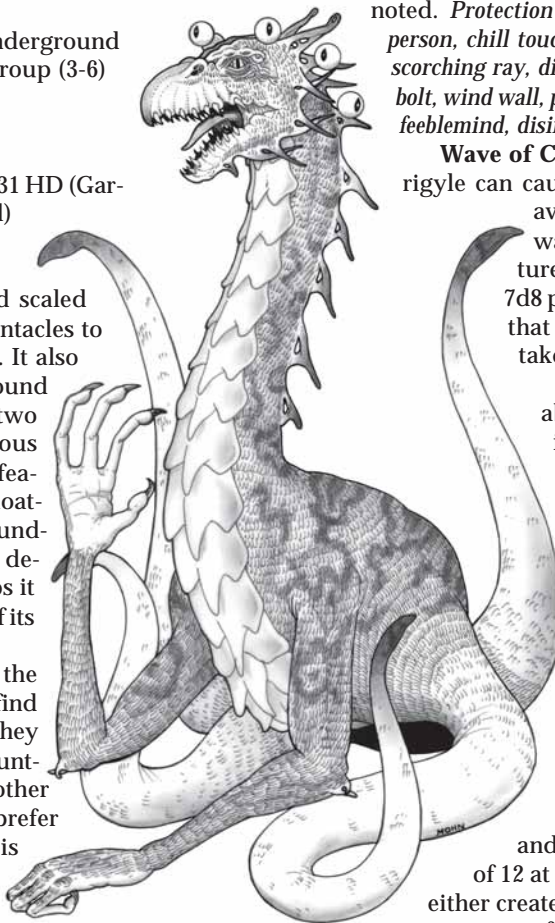
Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: 15 HD (Huge), 16-31 HD (Gargantuan), 32-42 HD (Colossal)

Level Adjustment: -

The athrigyle is an earth colored scaled creature that uses its immense tentacles to “swim” beneath the sandy earth. It also uses these tentacles to move around aboveground as well, and has two muscular arms that end in vicious claws. One of the more bizarre features of this creature are the free floating eyes that hover in the surrounding area and give it the ability to deliver ranged spells, and also keeps it apprized of the relative position of its enemies.

The athrigyle can be found in the desert, but more often they either find or excavate a subterranean lair. They normally stay in their lair unless hunting for food, or interacting with other intelligent beings. Though they prefer to maintain their true form, it is normal for them to use *polymorph self* and then enter civilization to make arrangements to further their own greedy desires.



The athrigyle are motivated by power over others. They are unlikely to serve a warlord as part of their army unless that warlord has promised them something valuable in return. While they value gold and other precious metals, they are much more interested in ancient historical artifacts or magic. Occasionally an athrigyle will become so highly regarded by the civilizations they interact with that they will become respected leaders of that community. In almost all cases where this has happened, they remain in their *polymorphed* state and do not reveal their true nature while lording over as many other beings as they can manage.

Combat

When enemies first appear, the athrigyle softens its enemies first with their wave of cold ability, and then follow this up with their spell-like abilities, dealing as much damage as possible before they close to melee range. It determines which enemies appear to be the strongest spellcasters, and then delivers a *disintegrate* spell to the strongest spellcaster or fighter opposing it. When enemies enter melee range, it primarily uses its claw and bite attacks to quickly deal with its opponents, but if it feels relatively safe it takes sadistic delight in grabbing enemies in a tentacle and then constricting them to death.

Spell-like Abilities: All spell-like abilities of the athrigyle can be used once per day unless otherwise noted. *Protection from good, grease, identify, hold person, chill touch, fog cloud, web, see invisibility, scorching ray, dispel magic, hold person, lightning bolt, wind wall, polymorph, ice storm (X2), teleport, feblemind, disintegrate.*

Wave of Cold: Every five rounds the athrigyle can cause a wave of cold to emanate away from it in one direction. The wave is 100 ft. across, and all creatures caught within the wave take 7d8 points of cold damage. Creatures that succeed at a Fort check (DC 20) take only half damage.

Improved Grab: To use this ability the athrigyle must hit with its slam attack. If it gets a hold, it can constrict for further damage.

Constrict: An athrigyle deals 1d8+8 damage with a successful grapple check.

Eyes: In its natural form the athrigyle is able to spontaneously create eyes, which burst forth from a tiny opening in the back of its skull and hover around it constantly. At any given time the athrigyle has 3d4 eyes floating in its vicinity, and it can control up to a maximum of 12 at one time. During combat, it can either create new eyes or replace destroyed ones at a rate of one every 4 rounds.

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The eyes move at up to 40 ft. per round, but must stay within 200 ft. of the athrigyle. Each eye has an armor class of 12 and 2d4 hit points. They allow the athrigyle to see anything that they see, and have the following effects:

Ranged touch attacks: the eyes are able to deliver ranged touch attacks or any other spell that requires the caster to see their target.

Loss of Concealment: Concealment has no effect against all spell-like abilities wherever an eye can view the concealed creatures.

Cannot be flanked: the athrigyle cannot be flanked as long as it has one or more eyes hovering near it.

Gaunt

Small Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 3d8-6 (12 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 30 ft. (average)

AC: 16 (+1 size, +5 Dex), touch 16, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/-1

Attack: Bite +9 melee

Full Attack: Bite +9 melee

Damage: Bite 2d3 plus poison

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison

Special Qualities: -

Saves: Fort -1, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 20, Con 6, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Escape Artist +6, Hide +10, Move Silently +6, Spot +3

Feats: Flyby Attack, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Environment: Any land

Organization: Flock (murder) (10-30+)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Double standard

Alignment: Always neutral evil

Advancement: 4-6 HD (Small); 7-9 HD (Medium-size)

Level Adjustment: +1

Looking like pure embodiments of malice and evil, the gaunt are thin, merciless hunters and scavengers native to the blasted and pitted sands of Arena where there is ever a rich and renewing source of food and plunder. Small, but perfectly suited for their environment, the gaunt physically live up to their namesake—a nearly skeletal creatures with elongated limbs, serrated wings, and bat-like ears. Their eyes gleam with malice and a cunning intelligence set into a face that seems ripped, still bloody, from some poor soul's nightmares. Long, slender fingers and toes that seem perfect for strangling and grappling complete this picture of an utterly horrific and despicable creature.

Gaunt are thought by many to be in league with some of the more nefarious of the warlords, and many a superstitious soldier will not even speak with a gaunt within earshot. Also, it is said that to hear the gaunt cracking

bones as they consume their victims (they are very fond of bones) is to invite death to sup with you, so most give these creatures a wide berth.

The gaunt speak a strange, squawking tongue amongst themselves that no one has yet been able to decipher, even through avenues of magic. It is believed that they can understand far more than they let on, but this has yet to be confirmed.

Gaunts tend to organized into large social groups known as flocks, or more commonly among natives of the domain, murders. This in and of itself should speak volumes about the evil creatures, but the simple minded never seem to learn. These flocks range in numbers from one to several dozen, and dominate a given terrain until their food sources become depleted. There is always another battlefield fresh with carrion just over the horizon.

There seems to be a definite "pecking order" amongst the various murders of gaunt, but the hierarchy is nebulous, with the current dominate individual changing from moment to moment. Little is known for sure of this strange hierarchy, however, as trying to study a large group of evil creatures that would much rather make a snack of your skeleton adds a measure of difficulty to the investigative process.

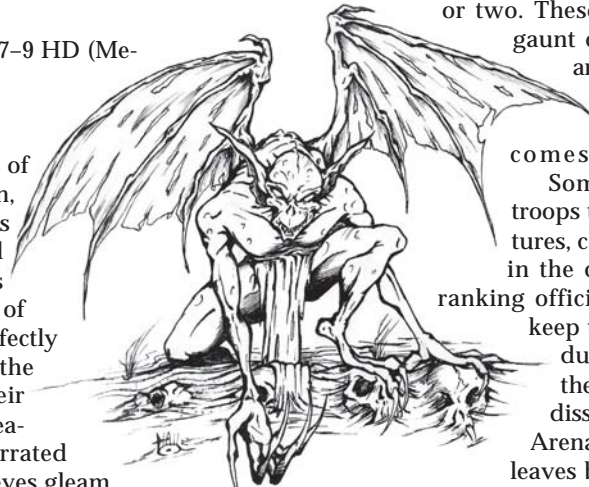
It is known that the gaunt practice cannibalism without hesitation or remorse. It seems that a carcass is merely a carcass to them, no matter its origins. Nothing is known for sure about the reproductive process of the gaunt, but rumors say they lay hard calcium eggs in the large piles of rotting corpses that they frequent. The heat from the decaying process then hatches the eggs and new gaunt emerge from the gore, fully grown and hungry.

Gaunts are hated by the natives of Arena. Occasionally, hunting parties are formed by the natives (usually headed by an adventuring party with less sense than the average individual) to go out to eradicate a flock or two. These are usually short lived as gaunt can easily outdistance most, and they usually return with reinforcements, at which point the hunting party becomes hunted.

Some of the more evil-aligned troops tend to be fond of these creatures, considering them good omens in the coming battles. Many high-ranking officials and warlords will even keep them as pets. The gaunt produce nothing of value and upon their death the creature's flesh dissolves into the bloody sands of Arena within 24 hours. Their death leaves behind only their jagged and serrated bones. Some have been known to make weapons from these bones, but it is generally accepted to be taboo to carry a weapon made of the bone of a gaunt.

Combat

While normally preferring to stick to their scavenger way of life (preying on the near dead and dying), gaunt can be fearless in direct confrontations and attack almost anything that moves if it enters their territory. Their initial



strike is a flyby attack, in which they attempt to bite with their massive, bone-crunching teeth. This bite is horribly powerful as well as painful, and it seems that the sound of crunching bone only heightens the fury with which the gaunt attack.

Poison (Ex): Gaunt poison, known colloquially as “dead man’s rigor” is a particularly potent substance. It seems to have its origins in their food source, carrion. Those bitten by a gaunt must make a Fortitude Saving throw (DC 20) or suffer paralysis in addition to losing 1d4 temporary points of Constitution. The effect lasts for 2d6 hours.

KINE

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+15 (33 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares)

AC: 19 (-1 size, +10 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+11

Attack: Bite +6 melee

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee

Damage: Bite 1d8+7

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft. (tongue 40 ft.)

Special Attacks: Improved grab, spit, swallow whole, tailgrab, tongue whip

Special Qualities: Camouflage, Regeneration 5, Tremorsense

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will -2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 3, Wis 3, Cha 2

Skills: Listen -1, Spot +4*

Feats: Alertness, Run

Environment: Any land

Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (6-15)

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4 HD (Large); 5-9 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: -

Natives to the Forge, kine are almost exclusively seen in the domain of Arena. Their unusual physical characteristics and abilities make them perfectly adapted to its harsh conditions of the domain, and are considered priceless in the eyes of many warlords. In fact, they are so highly prized that the export of a kine from that domain is a punishable offense—and sometimes even death from some of the more cruel warlords.

Kine are a bizarre combination of a massive chameleon and a camel, with all of the worst features of each accentuated. These beasts are truculent, indignant, smelly and loathsome, and are often known to attack their riders for no reason at all. Their value is in their unique abilities

as hearty mounts and beasts of burden, making them nearly perfect for the harsh, war-torn fields of Arena. It is for these reasons that they are so sought-after and prized.

The bulk of a kine’s body is roughly oval-shaped, topped with twin fringes comprised of tough plates of cartilage that run laterally from the beast’s neck to tail. A rider sits cross-legged upon the kine’s back in a specially crafted web harnesses, with straps spun between two shield-like fringes. This rigging is known as a *kine casket*, as the harness configuration is so secure that warriors, once slain in battle, remain upon the kine’s back until removed.

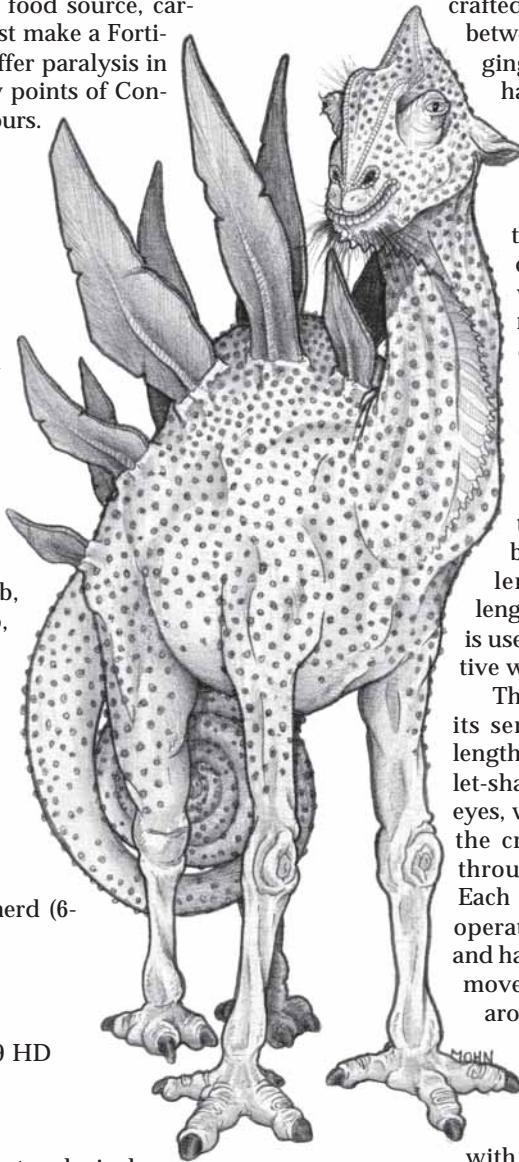
A kine’s skin is covered with a thick, pebbly-like coating of tightly coiled fur, which at first glance provides the appearance of finely rounded scales. Due to the creature’s extraordinary ability to change the color and tightness of these coils they constantly change both the color and texture as the beast moves. The long prehensile tail of the kine can be coiled and tucked neatly beneath the creature’s belly. When extended to its full length the tail is easily twice the length of the kine’s massive body, and is used for both balance and as an effective weapon in combat.

The kine’s neck, while not as long as its serpentine tail, is easily twice the length of its body and sports a small, bullet-shaped head. Two massive, bulging eyes, which are situated on either side of the creature’s head serve to guide it through the stinging sands of Arena. Each eye is conical in shape, is able to operate independently of one another, and has an incredible 360 degree range of movement, thus giving the creature all around vision. A set of small, sealable nostril slits adorn the very end of the creature’s pointed head and a large, slit of a mouth that continues nearly to its neck is filled with small, peg like teeth. Within the

kine’s gaping maw is an incredibly elastic purplish tongue that it uses to snare its prey. This remarkable organ can move with lightning speed and fantastic precision and can distend up to twice the length of the creature’s entire body!

Combat

In combat trained kine bring all of their formidable abilities and qualities to bear in a frightening display of combative prowess. While camouflaged they initiate an attack with their spit, followed by using tongue whip, improved grab, and swallow whole abilities as one coordinated and fluid attack. If pressed the kine will rely upon its severe bite and tailgrab ability to snag opponents and



Appendix D: Monsters

drag them to its massive maw. Wild, untrained kine use only its bite for offense and if pressed retreats using camouflage to insure its safety.

Camouflage (Ex or Sp): The kine possess the natural ability to exactly mimic its surroundings. This gives the creature a racial bonus of +20 to Hide.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the kine must hit an opponent that is one size category smaller than itself with either its bite attack or tailgrab ability. If successful the kine then attempts a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. The kine can grapple with both its mouth (via its bite attack) and tail (via its tailgrab ability) simultaneously without penalty.

Regeneration (Ex): Kine have regeneration 5, except fire and cold-based attacks which do normal damage.

Spit (Ex): A kine can be trained to spit a large wad of mucous as a partial action each round at an opponent's lower torso. Anyone hit with this mucous must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 18) or become firmly rooted to the spot (as per a *hold* spell of the appropriate type, but limited to a duration of three rounds). The attack is treated as a ranged touch attack, with a range increment of 40 feet.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The kine can automatically swallow held (see Improved Grab) opponents up to one size category smaller than itself. The swallowed creature suffers 2d6+2 points of crushing damage per round plus 6 points of acid damage from the kine's digestive system. A swallowed creature can attempt to cut its way out of the kine's stomach by using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon by dealing 50+ points of damage to the surrounding tissue (AC 20).

The stomach of a kine can hold two Medium-size, four Small, eight Tiny, sixteen Diminutive, or thirty-two Fine or smaller opponents.

Tailgrab (Ex): As a full action a kine can attempt to grab an opponent with its long, dexterous tail without provoking an attack of opportunity. If this attack succeeds, the opponent is firmly detained in the tail's coil. Kine can elect to drop a grabbed creature as a free action.

Tongue whip (Ex): A kine can lash out with its long, sticky tongue in an attempt to grab its opponents or prey. This formidable natural weapon can strike up to 40 feet away. If the kine hits with its tongue, its sticky surface immediately adheres to its opponent's body. This strike deals no damage, but draws the stuck opponent 10 feet closer each subsequent round (no attack of opportunity) unless the opponent performs a successful Escape Artist check (DC 24) or Strength check (DC 20). The kine then draws the opponent into its mouth, at which point it either attempts to use its bite attack or Swallow Whole ability.

Tremorsense (Ex): A kine can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground, so long as the kine itself remains in contact with the same surface.

Skills: Due to the unusual structure of their eyes, the kine have a +8 racial bonus to all Spot checks. With a 360-degree range of vision (coupled with their tremorsense abilities), the kine are seldom surprised.

Oliphant

Gargantuan Animal

Hit Dice: 20d8+140 (260 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

AC: 17 (-4 size, +11 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +15/+41

Attack: Slam +29 melee

Full Attack: Slam +29 melee or 2 stamps +29 melee and gore +27 melee

Damage: Slam 1d8+14, stamp 2d6+14, gore 2d8+7

Space/Reach: 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Trample 3d8 +20

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +19, Ref +12, Will +9

Abilities: Str 38, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 3, Wis 13, Cha 7

Skills: Balance +5, Listen +6, Spot +6, Survival +6

Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Run

Environment: Temperate plains

Organization: Solitary, pair, family (3-5)

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: 21-24 HD (Gargantuan); 25-60 (Colossal)

Level Adjustment: -

Oliphants are gargantuan-sized dire mammoths with light tan to dark brown shaggy hide and 8 ft. long, curved yellow tusks. These massive creatures have been domesticated by the sentient races for generations, and can be found living wild only in the most inaccessible and inhospitable places.

Most often, oliphants are used by armies as beasts of burden or as walking siege weapons. Not only can they pull large weapons, wagons and materials, but oliphants are large enough that they can be fitted with small platforms. These platforms provide an elevated position for commanders, spellcasters and range weapons fire.



Illustrated by Brannon Hall

In most every fashion oliphants live and behave much like their elephant cousins. They are strict herbivores, attacking other creatures only in defense. In the wild, oliphants travel in herds of up to 30

adults with 5 to 10 young. They are lead by an alpha male; however, most of the daily organization is handled by the alpha female. Oliphants have also been known to be magically controlled for use in offensive combat, which is not difficult given their animal intelligence. The druids of Penance, who are strong defenders of the oliphant, adamantly oppose any domestication or magical manipulation of these peaceful creatures.

Oliphants have been noted, wild or domesticated, in all domains except Eclipse and Anvil. Of all the domains of the Forge oliphants are found in the greatest of number in Wildwood, and have hence been tamed by warlords living in eastern Arena. Domesticated oliphants in Arena are used to haul dirt and rocks from the mines, and to pull great siege weapons across the sands. The ivory of the oliphant is also greatly prized in Penance; however, between druidic protection and the coveting of the beasts by warlords, most oliphant poachers are sentenced to death for hunting these enormous tusks.

Combat

These gentle giants are normally non-aggressive, and attack only in defense of its young or when commanded magically by handlers.

Trample (Ex): An oliphant can trample Large-sized or smaller creatures for automatic gore damage. Opponents that don't attempt to make attacks of opportunity against the oliphant may attempt a Reflex save (DC 22) to take only half damage.

Spellseeker

Small Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 2d10+4 (19 hp)

Initiative: +2

Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 10 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/-2

Attack: Claw +2 melee

Full Attack: 2 claws +2 melee and bite -3 melee

Damage: Claws 1d3, bite 1d4

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Inhale Magic, *magic fang*

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., death throes, *detect magic*, enhancement, SR 17

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +2, Listen +4, Search +2, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness

Spellseeker Enhancements

Attribute	+4 Spell Levels	+8 Spell Levels	+12 Spell Levels
Size	Medium	Medium	Large
Speed	30 ft., climb 15 ft.	30 ft., climb 15 ft.	40 ft., climb 20 ft.
Damage	Bite 1d6+1, Claws 1d4	Bite 1d6+1, Claws 1d4	Bite 1d8+1, Claws 1d6
Magic Fang	+1 (bite)	+3 (bite)	+5 (bite)
Spell Resistance	SR 19	SR 21	SR 23

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral

Advancement: Special

Level Adjustment: +2 (cohort)

These ravenous creatures are constantly sniffing about in search of enchantments and other items of magical power. Driven to consume magic in order to procreate, spellseekers are the bane to the warlords of Arena, as well as those coveting magic in other domains.

Spellseekers are mustard-yellow to dark brown, reptilian creatures with 10 legs that end in three-toed claws. The fore claws are fully twice the length of the other legs and end in four-digit claws that the beast uses to attack or manipulate items. They have a short, stubby tail and a long, snakelike neck that allows the creature to attack in nearly any direction.

While they can be found sniffing around ancient ruins and abandoned mines, spellseekers are most often encountered on the vast battlefields of Arena rummaging through the lost weapons and armor of fallen warriors. Sometimes these creatures are harnessed and used as magic-sniffing "bloodhounds". This is quite difficult, as the beasts may turn on any magic the handler may possess. Said handlers either have to go without magic or protect themselves with an *anti-magic* aura or other such effect. Conversely, spellseekers can instinctively sense the presence of slade and avoid the rare metal at all costs. The beasts can't normally be trained to sniff it out, but skilled handlers may notice a behavioral change in the creature and deduce that a deposit of the metal may be nearby with a Knowledge (animal/spellseeker) skill check (DC 12).

Spellseekers are carnivores, eating whatever small mammals, birds and fish it can find. As noted above, these asexual creatures search for and consume magical energies as their method of reproduction. In order to do this a spellseeker must consume 13 or more spell levels, at which time it is saturated and will not feed on any more magic. When a spellseeker reaches saturation it hides away deep underground to lay 1d6 cantaloupe-sized eggs. These eggs hatch in 30 to 40 days, producing 1 HD offspring who mature in three months. Once its eggs are laid a spellseeker reverts back to its normal size and HD, remaining with the eggs until just moments before they hatch.



Combat

Spellseekers are always searching for either food or magic, and generally leave most other creatures alone—unless of course they carry enchanted items. These creatures have been known to attack others of their kind in an attempt to dominate what little magical resources may be in the area. Unless a spellseeker is starving it only attacks in order to obtain an enchanted item or to defend itself or its nest. As soon as the beast has an opportunity to snatch a magic item, it attempts to escape back to its lair to consume the item's enchantments in peace.

Alternatively, it is not unheard of for an adventuring wizard to awaken in the middle of the night to find a spellseeker quietly inhaling the active enchantments she has placed on her person or item.

Detect Magic (Su): The spellseeker can *detect magic* within a 120 ft. radius at all times.

Enhancement (Su): As the spellseeker consumes magical energies (see *Inhale Magic* below), it instantly grows in size and power. For every four spell levels (beyond its base of 4) consumed, the spellseeker's Hit Dice, AC (natural), Saves and BAB increase by 1, plus certain other attributes increase, as detailed in the **Spellseeker Enhancements** table.

One spell level is equal to one charge (such as in a wand), one plus of a weapon or armor or one special ability. If a spellseeker cannot consume enough spell levels indicated by an above category every 24 hours it drops one such category until it is Small again. It also suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to all abilities and Constitution until it consumes at least four spell levels per day. If a spellseeker's Constitution reaches 0 it dies.

Death Throes (Su): A spellseeker magical nature allows it to store magical energy in its body for future use. If the creature is killed it releases all its spell levels in an explosion. All creatures within 20 ft. must roll a Reflex save (DC 5+ 1/spell level released) or suffer 1d6 hit points of damage/spell level stored. Those that succeed their save take half damage. This explosion is considered to be

pure magic energy, and is not subject to defenses against elemental energies. Starving spellseekers that have lost more than ½ their Constitution do not explode upon death.

Inhale Magic (Su): The spellseeker can breathe in magic from any magic item (or active spell effect) within a 5 ft. range. This is a standard action. This ability affects the item just as if a *disjunction* spell (cast at 20th level). If the process is interrupted (creature can make a Concentration check just as if the creature were casting a spell) the item still ceases to function for 1d4+1 rounds, after which it will return to normal.

Magic Fang (Sp): As a standard action, the spellseeker may choose to "burn" three stored spell levels to gain the benefits of a *greater magic fang* spell. (See Enhancement above for details) This can only be done after the spellseeker has grown to medium size or greater.

Skills: Spellseeker receive a +4 racial bonus to all Climb, Listen, Search, and Spot checks.

Rocanny

Large Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 6d10+24 (69 hp)

Initiative: +7

Speed: 40 ft. (4 squares), fly 80 ft. (average)

AC: 15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+15

Attack: Claw +10 melee

Full Attack: 2 claws +10 melee, 2 wings +8 melee, and bite +8 melee

Damage: Claw 1d8+5, bite 2d4+2

Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft. (wing buffet 20 ft.)

Special Attacks: Aura of darkness, pounce, rake 1d8+2, wing buffet

Special Qualities: -

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +1*, Jump +6, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +2

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack

Environment: Warm mountains, hills, or plains

Organization: Solitary or mated pair

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: 7–12 HD (Large); 13–18 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: +2 (cohort)

A rocanny is flying, nocturnal feline that resembles a jet-black panther with flexible bat-like wings. It is a creature of pure darkness and can envelop itself and its prey in a deep, inky blackness. If trained, rocanny are capable of carrying a lightly armored Medium-size humanoid, and is a rather agile flyer. The rocanny's preferred diet is larger herd animals, such as mountain goats, yaks, kine, and bison. The rocanny is versatile in its hunting tactics and is as likely to stalk its prey on the ground as it is to swoop down on it from the air.

Rocanny also have a love for eggs and often devour those of giant eagles, hippogriffs, and even griffons. This tends to make them unpopular among the other large flying races, which often attack rocanny on sight.

Combat

The rocanny rarely leaves its den during daylight hours, as it prefers the cool darkness. At nightfall it takes to the air and scouts the area for prey. Depending on the surface conditions, the rocanny either pounces on its prey from the air or lands at a distance to stalk it. A rocanny engages its aura of darkness ability when pouncing, depriving its prey of sight. The rocanny focuses its claws and bite on a single opponent and uses its wing buffet to defend itself from flank attacks. If attacking an airborne opponent, the rocanny uses its pounce attack during each pass.

Aura of Darkness (Su): At will, a rocanny can generate a field of magical darkness around itself (as the spell *darkness*, cast at 6th level). The rocanny can see in its own aura of darkness. This ability cannot be used in natural sunlight.

Pounce (Ex): If a rocanny leaps on a foe during the first round of combat (such as when attacking from a dive), it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action. This also applies to attacks made against airborne opponents.

Rake (Ex): Anyone struck by both claws in a single round is subject to two rake attacks from the rear claws. This ability has a +8 bonus to hit and can be used in combination with the pounce ability above.

Wing Buffet (Ex): Each round, a rocanny can attempt to strike a foe on either side up to 20 feet away with its wings. This is a +8 melee touch attack and does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If a wing attack is successful, the target must make an opposed Strength check vs. the rocanny's or be knocked down. The rocanny gets +4 to its Strength check due to its size. The rocanny can use this attack once per round with each wing. This ability cannot be used while the rocanny is flying.

Skills: Due to their flat black coat, rocanny receive a +8 racial bonus to Hide checks at night or in similar dark areas.



Training a Rocanny

Training a rocanny as an aerial mount requires a successful

Handle Animal

check (DC 23 for a young creature, or DC 30 for an adult) and the willingness of the creature. Wild rocanny are almost never willing to take on a

rider unless some sort of magical calming effect has been placed on them. For this reason, trainers prefer to breed these cats in captivity.

Very young rocanny can also be brought in from the wild to be trained as mounts. A rocanny less than six months old may fetch up to 8,000 gp on the right market. Riding a rocanny requires an exotic saddle. A rocanny can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds at a Ride check (DC 15). It is advisable that riders have a means of seeing through the creature's darkness aura, as it is instinctive for them to engage it when pouncing—a habit nearly impossible to control or train away.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a rocanny is up to 350 pounds; a medium load, 351-700 pounds; and a heavy load, 701-1,050 pounds.

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