

PROVIDENCE

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL



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CLIFF-SPIDER
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Legal Deposit: May, 1999

National Library of Canada

ISBN 0-9682942-8-6

First Printing

Stock Number: XID 016

Printed with Lightning Print Inc. (USA)

REMEMBRANCES AND DISCOVERIES

PART I

Jove Isan chose Cliff-Spider as his first destination. He thought the choice was obvious, since the rocky war citadel was the birthplace of his calling — that of the legendary Horizon Striders.

Jove had flown furiously for hours, and as he surveyed the land below him, he began to worry; the Strider had yet to see any hint of life at the base of the Crysarius Bridge. For a second from this distance, the Horizon Strider's vision, which was normally sharp, led him to believe that the massive stone spire no longer contained a city. He directed his eyes to the space surrounding the thick pillar, yet he could not sense movement. For miles extending from its base, Yas'Wailians normally cultivated the land on plantations called Free-Keeps. The workers of the Keeps provided foodstuffs for Cliff-Spider's inhabitants. Perhaps, the explorer thought for a moment, the Green People and the White Crow had attacked and destroyed the city during Jove's secret sojourn to the prison city of Bone-Wail. As the Eagle adjusted his keen vision, he finally began to see the large towers and structures centred in the cultivated fields that bordered Cliff-Spider.

"I must be getting tired," Jove shouted at his companion, a Blessed Raven woman he had taken as a pupil.

"What do you mean mentor?" The woman frowned as the wind pushed against her sore wings.

"For a moment, I could not see the Free-Keeps or the city," Jove replied hurriedly so as not to worry his student. The young woman fought the blowing wind by shouting back.

"I do not think you need to be concerned mentor, I still cannot see a thing." Jove remembered that not everyone had the sharp vision of an Eagle. The Pure Horizon Strider noticed the Raven's exhaustion. Jove also tended to forget that not all flyers possessed wings as strong as his own. Fuelled by the knowledge that he was near Cliff-Spider, Jove had pushed himself and flown frantically for the past several hours without rest. Jove Isan was amazed that his pupil, a Blessed with weaker wings than his own, had been able to follow him. Jene had yet to utter the slightest complaint.

"Time for a break!" Jove muttered. The Strider skilfully tilted his sinewy wings, curving his flight path to place himself atop the dark form of the Raven.

"What?" The young student had not heard her mentor's declaration, nor had she expected his sudden move. Already behind her, Jove poked at her leg and pointed below where a number of other flyers were taking a pause in the thick branches of ancient trees. The young Raven noticed a faint smile forming on the Eagle's full lips. As he dived at the trees, she followed with a smile of her own, secretly content for the pause.

The flight from Bone-Wail had exhausted Jove more than he had realized. The Horizon Strider turned to hand some food to his Raven student, only to find her napping in a root hammock. How convenient, Jove thought. Clearly, these trees were accustomed to weary travellers. Hammocks, tents and wooden shelters were in abundance in these woods. Frequent visitors had undoubtedly built some of these rest areas years ago while others were put up as recently as yesterday. How uncharacteristic of Yas'Wailians, Jove pondered, to maintain these shelters for other travellers. Jove stretched his wings and opted to rest for a while; he knew he would have a lot to explain to Jene when she awoke. His student was experiencing life outside of Bone-Wail for the first time in her life. As a member of the Slip Walkers, it was Jove's job to secretly liberate some of the ancient city's prisoners. Although Yas'Wailians came to Providence as chained rebels, most prison camp wardens had freed the prisoners over a thousand years ago. After generations of imprisonment, they felt they didn't have the right to punish the prisoners for the crimes of their ancestors. Bone-Wail's wardens however, never reached that conclusion. They still regularly subjected their prisoners to sadistic torture. The Slip Walkers pledged to cease the brutalities of the torturers. Although he was proud of his achievements, Jove was angry that the Walkers could not liberate all the city's prisoners in one massive exodus. "Patience," the stern Eagle muttered to himself, "patience."

PART II

Jove envied his student's nascent eyes. How he sometimes wished that he could see the world's beauty for the first time, untainted by cynicism and the blood of innocents. Unfortunately, Jove had witnessed the harsh cruelties Yas'Wailians inflicted upon each other far too many times to be affected by much.

The young woman's stirs broke Jove's reveries. The Horizon Strider was thankful for his perception and his light sleep; unfortunately, he rarely benefited from a sound night's slumber.

"Did you get any sleep?" the Raven asked while stretching her arms.

"Not much," Jove replied in his customary direct manner. The two explorers snacked on dried fruits and grains and silently absorbed the sight of flyers and caravans leaving the Keeps. After ensuring that his student had satisfied herself, he decided to begin his history lesson. "Can you see the city from here Jene?"

"Not very well," the Raven admitted. "All I can see are structures at the base of the Crysarius Bridge, and the Free-Keeps of course. The rocky spire truly is a splendour to behold, not at all what I expected," Jene continued.

"What did you expect?" Jove quizzed.

"I'm not sure. Maybe they're larger than I believed. I guess I shouldn't be surprised, considering that they reach from one end of our world to the other." The Raven stared beyond the sun to the point high above the world where the bridge anchored itself to the surface like a tree.

"You should also remember how Striders use them for navigation. We could not do so if they were not so large," Jove pointed out. The Raven student acknowledged his point by nodding. It seems that Jene knew even less than Jove expected. Her years living in Bone-Wail's secluded ghettos deprived the young woman of much knowledge. He was eager to introduce the city and the world to the child. "It is fortunate that you are Blessed!" he thought aloud. "It will make our travels through the city far easier." As he turned to face his student, Jove noticed the confusion on her face. Before he could inquire, Jene charged ahead.

"What do you mean when you call me Blessed? Are you referring to my skills?" By the tone in her voice and the speed of her response, it was clear to him that this was not the first time that she wondered what he meant.

"Are you not familiar with the caste system?" he asked.

"I have heard of it," Jene replied, unsure whether she should admit her ignorance of this topic. He noticed her hesitancy and sometimes forgot how different life must seem to someone raised in the prison camp of Bone-Wail.

"Well, like Bone-Wail, the liberated cities are populated with the winged, those who have glider membranes, and the people who have none. Only those who possess the strongest wings can attain the highest positions of power. They are known as the Pure. The Blessed, whose wings are almost as powerful, follow the Pure. In Cliff-Spider, people would label you as Blessed. Fortunately, the Blessed have access to virtually any part of the city."

"And if I were flightless?" Jene interjected.

"Well, the Pure and the Blessed do not always look kindly towards others," he explained. Despite his attempt to mask it, disapproval was clearly reflected in the Strider's tone. Nonetheless, Jove continued his discourse. "Anyone who innately wields great powers is relegated to the Guild caste — so long as they join the guilds. The Fortuned include everyone who possesses gliders, while the Redeemed may have wings or gliders, but these are too weak to use for gliding or flight. Finally, the most unfortunate victims of this caste system are the Fallen, who are devoid of any membranes." Jove finished and awaited his student's observations.

"How trivial," she said, allowing a hint of sadness to filter through her words. "And this applies to all the liberated cities, mentor?"

"Only the ones that join the Alliance of Kings," Jove replied, his student obviously surprised by his answer.

PART III

"Enough of this!" Jove exclaimed, his arms outstretched so as to wipe away his student's mood. The Horizon Strider noted his pupil's eagerness seemed blemished by the apparent injustices of the magnificent city they were about to explore. This was a common reaction by many of the prisoners the Slip Walkers freed from Bone-Wail. Their jubilation following their liberation led them to believe that they could live free from oppression outside the prison camp. Unfortunately, many of them, particularly those of lower castes, were subjected to the injustices of a different world. Jove had witnessed this reaction from many freed souls; few of them were Blessed in caste however. This only strengthened Jove's faith in his choice of a pupil. Clearly, Jene possessed all the demanding attributes to make a splendid Horizon Strider.

Despite her disappointment at uncovering what she perceived as a flaw in Cliff-Spider's society, Jene was still eager to learn of its past. "Mentor, one question continues to gnaw at my reason. Why would Yas'Wailians choose rocky and enclosed caverns to build a city?"

Jove replied with a question of his own. "Yes, why choose the Crysarius Bridge for a home? The answer lies long ago, when our people first came to this harsh world." By the tone in his voice, Jene knew Jove was about to detail an important historical chapter. "Cliff-Spider's wardens, like many others throughout Providence, sought the best means possible to ensure their protection and the proper functioning of their prison camps. Shortly after their arrival, the proud Hawk Chief Warden Jodus Tynul was one of the first rulers to discover that the gates that brought Yas'Wailians to Providence were closed. "Betrayed!" The chief warden exclaimed in the company of his closest advisors. The shrewd leader soon realized that all the wardens would undoubtedly have to fight for their survival in a tropical world that spawned many unnatural life forms. Jodus was probably the wisest of all the wardens, having survived in Yas'Wail because of his great political skills. The chief warden, being familiar with his warden brethren, knew that it would not take long before each prison camp realized that the gates were closed. Upon this discovery, he predicted that the camps would become isolated, and that each chief warden would try to dominate the others. Concerned with his survival and the maintenance of his power, chief warden Jodus demanded that his troops find the most defensible position in the world, even if it meant they had to travel to the other side of the orb."

"The warden's soldiers worked hard to find the most secure location to contain the prisoners, who were now living in a cleared field near the Crysarius Bridge. While his soldiers and fellow wardens struggled to keep the prisoner population from fleeing, Jodus, with the help of his powerful Wird casters, found the ideal site for their prison colony in the most unlikely of places. It seemed that the rocky bridge near them was partially hollow, possessing many large caves and tunnels. For months, potent Wird Weavers used their powerful magics to hollow out some tunnels, collapse walls, strengthen floors and ceilings, and secure the caves. Once their work was completed, the chief warden ordered his charges and his troops into the spire. The guards, along

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with the prisoners, only had access to the lowest caves while the ruling warden families lived in relative comforts above them." Jove paused and noticed a glimpse of understanding revealed in his student's features.

"I guess Cliff-Spider made the perfect prison," Jene voiced.

"And the perfect fortress!" Jove added.

PART IV

After briefly recounting Cliff-Spider's foundation, and the city's role in the world, Jove awaited Jene's questions with anticipation. "Why would people choose to continue living in the confined caves?" the student asked, still somewhat confused. "Does it not make it difficult for flyers to exercise their wings?"

"No, not especially," replied the Horizon Strider. "Cliff-Spider's caves are large and airy. Some of them even benefit from the natural light that filters through during the day. The ruling families that still lie above the common folk have concocted artificial globes of light that serve to illuminate even the darkest corners. Besides, it is no wonder that Yas'Wailians choose to maintain their homes inside the spire. Considering the enemies of the Alliance of Kings, it is wise for them to remain sheltered," Jove observed.

"Tell me more of this Alliance you keep speaking of, mentor." Jene regained the interest she displayed upon their departure from Bone-Wail. "You often speak of Cliff-Spider's role as the second city to free its prisoners," she added.

"Yes," Jove confirmed, "but you would be mistaken to believe that Cliff-Spider is always second to its sister, the capital city of Cry-Star."

The Raven student expressed puzzlement. "What do you mean, mentor?"

"Listen and learn," he replied. "Although Cry-Star may have initiated the move towards the emancipation of prisoners, Cliff-Spider made a number of important discoveries and innovations. Perhaps the most significant to the Alliance of Kings today, is the inclusion of Shards within the caste structure. Shards, people born with fantastic abilities — known as Keepers in your city — were sprouting everywhere and within all castes. Many nobles began to worry that they could upset the balance of power. To quell their concerns, Lord Juliard, an important noble in Cliff-Spider, and husband to one of the original Shards Lady Amariss, helped to create the caste of Gifted for those with powers. This ensured the survival of the free cities by maintaining the powerful Shards in their service. The practice soon spread to other cities, including Cry-Star. Gifted individuals are now generally referred to as members of the Guild caste."

"Incredible," observed Jene. "If not for the guilds today, the free cities that make up the Alliance of Kings would undoubtedly crumble, would they not?"

"That is quite possible Jene," Jove replied. "I would be remiss if I failed to tell you of the exploits of Cliff-Spider's Horizon Striders." Again, Jene's interest grew

substantially, no doubt because of the Raven's quest to become a Strider herself. "This tale occurs before the split with the Guild of Cartographers," Jove added. "At this time, roughly four hundred years ago, the Horizon Striders were part of the then noble guild. They were responsible for many of the geographic discoveries of our people. One of the most significant was the discovery of the ancient city of Aerie, home to the White Crow, the hostile members of the Lost Tribes. The group of brave Striders were brutally defeated. After escaping, the Horizon Strider expedition quickly made its way back to the city to alert the rulers of the discovery of another tribe intent on exterminating Yas'Wailians. This enabled Cliff-Spider and other cities to calibrate their forces to account for another race of powerful beings." Jove paused for a moment to catch his breath. "So you understand the need for the Alliance of Kings now?" The Horizon Strider asked his pupil.

"Yes," she replied. "With so many enemies to counter, including the Lost Tribes and Bone-Wail, it only makes sense for Cliff-Spider, Cry-Star and Water-Sister to form a pact of mutual defense. Despite some injustices, I think the Alliance of Kings serves to ensure the survival of free people." Jove smiled, proud of his student's ability to quickly assess a situation.

The Eagle and the Raven began packing their things to depart for the city. He could sense Jene's anxiety at entering Cliff-Spider. He felt he should prepare her as best as he could for this experience. "One more thing before we leave," Jove commented. "Be prepared to confront the harshness of the caste system. No other city enforces it as stringently as Cliff-Spider."

"Why is that?" Jene asked.

"Many reasons I am sure, not least of which is tradition. The nature of the caves also facilitates the segregation of whole peoples," the Horizon Strider added. Both adventurers finished packing the last of their things, ensuring that their temporary shelter remained as clean as before their arrival.

"Come," Jove voiced as he prepared to launch into the air, "Freetown lies ahead."

"Freetown?" The puzzled Raven asked.

"Just follow me, a whole city awaits us." The Raven student leapt into the morning's golden skies, dutifully following her mentor on a new adventure.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

INTRODUCTION

Cliff-Spider is a powerful icon, symbolizing the strength and resiliency of the Alliance of Kings. Months after the liberation of Cry-Star, the spire city's rulers followed suit and liberated their prisoners. Similarly, Cliff-Spider has always played the role of faithful second to Cry-Star in the political sphere. With the dark skies of war looming closer however, Cliff-Spider finds itself at the forefront of a conflict. The city's military power will be the key to the continued survival of the Alliance of Kings against the threat of the Lost Tribes. Cliff-Spider represents the strongest wall against the Alliance's aggressors. Its protective shadow now finds an entire Alliance huddling there for safety. This is a role that King Raldowin, and people beneath him, have prepared the city well to fulfill.

The spire city is an oddity in itself. That a race of beings born for flight would live under miles and miles of rock is incomprehensible to many people outside Cliff-Spider. Nonetheless, there are advantages for Yas'Wailians residing in the city. Cliff-Spider's location inside the Crysarius Bridge makes it almost impossible for enemies to invade. The fortress city also has the largest army in the Alliance of Kings, including the greatest number of Archers.

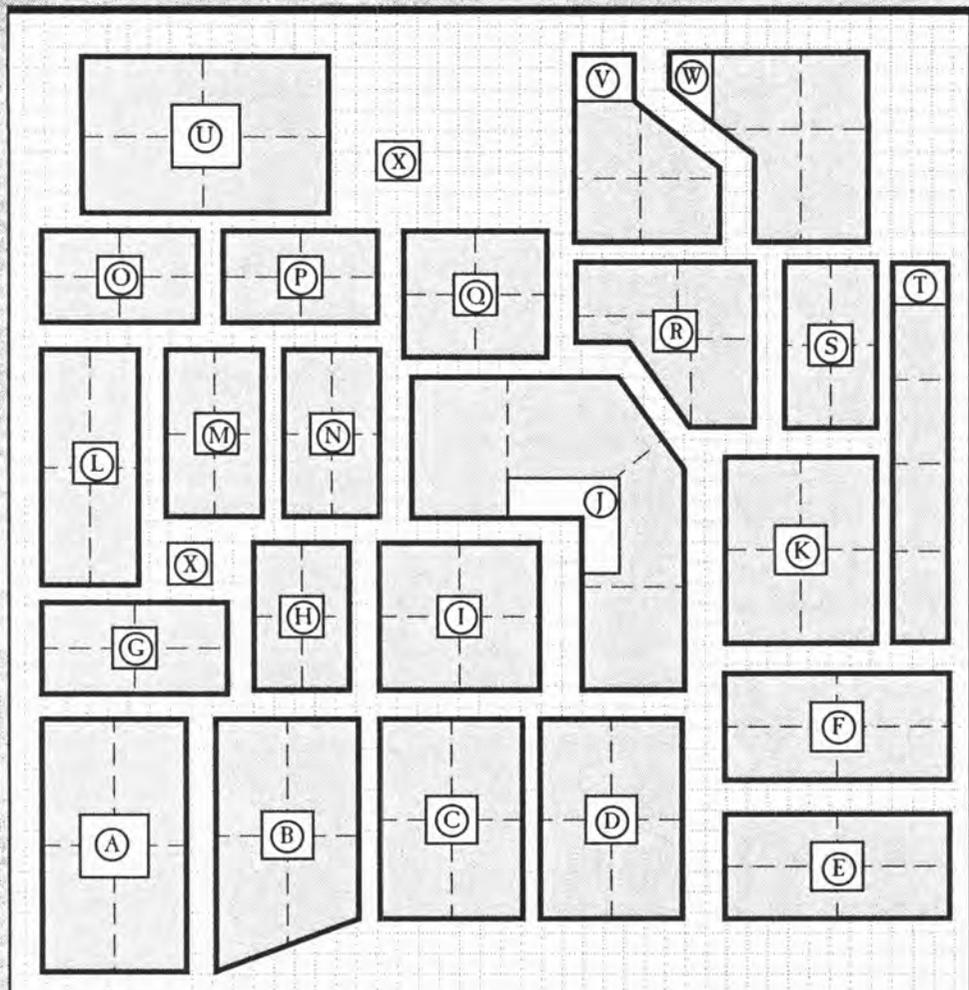
The city's role as the Alliance's seat of military power has undoubtedly affected Cliff-Spider's society. Within its stone walls, the city's rulers have stringently enforced the caste system. For generations, the long line of powerful rulers has claimed that order must be kept at all cost. In their eyes, the caste system enables them to maintain peace and lawfulness, despite the tremendous cost to certain members of society. Cliff-Spider's ruling population has maintained this tradition, making the caste system the most strictly enforced in the Alliance. King Raldowin IV's power in the city is secure, backed as he is by the second and third most powerful Houses in the city, namely Crackshore and Allister. This gives him and his city an incredible edge in times of war. With his hold on the throne secure, Raldowin can divert his entire attention to the war effort without having to constantly look over his shoulder, wondering when a blade might be directed at his back.

Everything in Cliff-Spider is a testament to the city's ability to wage war; that is the city's role, and one the leaders take most seriously. Although the city's main goal is to maintain a vast army, this does not prevent it from being a beautiful living environment. The thirty-four caves that house close to five million inhabitants are unique natural wonders. This is particularly true of the higher levels inhabited by the Blessed and Pure castes. There, Wird-crafted and maintained gardens and trees fill the caves with wild colours and sweet aromas. The walls shine with the streaks of various ores imbedded in the Crysarius Bridge. Floating globes of Wirdlight travel down streets, bathing the night in hues of blue and green. Openings cut in the rock allow the sunlight to filter in during the day.

Outside, the little fiefdoms known as Free-Keeps dot the landscape. The larger Free-Keeps are cities unto themselves. They offer shelter and protection to workers who harvest the fields throughout the year, and produce food so that the multitudes who inhabit the spire may eat. Located at the foot of the Crysarius Bridge, Freetown is a melting pot of cultures. It is a throwback to the early days of liberation enjoyed by the Yas'Wailians after the many generations of imprisonment.

The people of Cliff-Spider also realize the role in store for their city. They can feel tension in the air, and see it in the bustling bodies of jostling soldiers. A war that might well mark the end of many lives is approaching. Just as they have been doing for centuries now, Cliff-Spider's citizens take it all in stride. Every day is still "business as usual." The merchants hawk their wares, the acrobats and jugglers entertain the crowds, the wine goblets are filled, and the people are laughing. The undercurrent of fear resonating throughout the halls of power has yet to crush Cliff-Spider's spirited people. Preparing for a war forces people to adapt and overcome. For Yas'Wailians, this task is not too difficult since it is in their nature to anticipate the inevitable. Since Regent Caiylus, head of the Alliance of Kings, has pronounced that Yas'Wailians will soon begin their quest to return home, the people of Cliff-Spider are both anxious and excited. They realize that they are on the verge of something new. Cliff-Spider's population also knows that the price to pay for this adventure will likely be steep. In their minds however, they have survived much worse. At least now, they are free.





← TO CLIFF-SPIDER

FREE-KEEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| A Highwall | I Do'Raaky | Q Guard-Tower |
| B Clear-Field | J Free-Skye | R Four-Field |
| C Rodark | K Gold-Field | S Sunedavi |
| D Stohne | L Journey's-Rest | T Stone-Corale |
| E Sun-Side | M Turned-Earth | U Garethim |
| F Thorn-Bush | N Ground-Mother | V Outfield |
| G Star-Light | O Brilliant-ground | W Long-Range |
| H Green-Land | P Harvest-Moon | X Military Outpost |

FREE-KEEPS

"They call them farms, but I'll be damned if I've ever seen as many soldiers anywhere else."

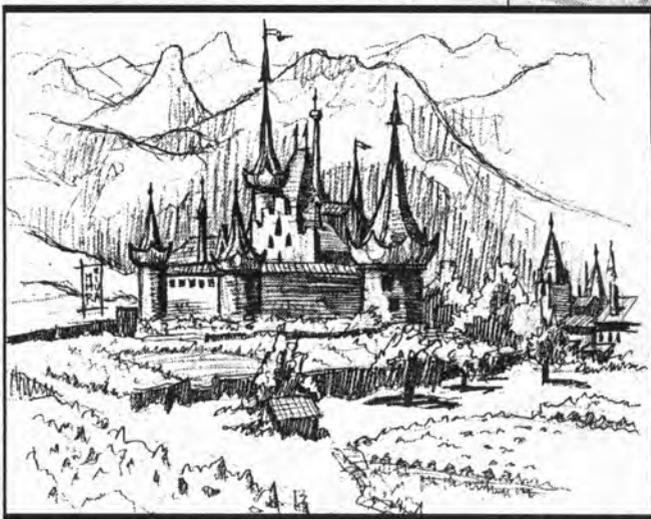
—Tolyn, Fallen worker

At the base of the Crysarius Bridge, the jungle slowly makes way for the various farming communities that surround Cliff-Spider. They extend for dozens of miles from the Bridge itself, to deep into the Exodus Plain. Workers have cleared the jungle near the shores of the Crysarius Sea; this allows communities known as Free-Keeps to occupy and cultivate the land. Cliff-Spider's population relies almost exclusively on produce from these fortified farms.

Generations ago, grateful rulers gave many of these lands to minor nobles as rewards for their services to the city. There are rumours however, that some nobles received their lands so that the city's rulers could keep them away from Cliff-Spider's internal politics.

Twenty-three Free-Keeps exist in all. They range in size from small village settlements, where only a small wooden keep and a few houses stand, to near city-like constructions, with a castle, towers and battlements. The largest one, Garethim Keep, belongs to House Gyark of Troupial Dove, and is home to over four thousand workers, soldiers, merchants and minor nobles.

Other important Free-Keeps include Clear-Field, which belongs to Anson D'Vark. He is a Hawk of House Yemek, and a knight in King Raldowin's court. Stohne Free-Keep is built on land bequeathed to Damaris Tovesh — a noble of Troupial Swan and House Gareffa. Finally, Free-Skye is located deep within the Exodus Plain. Romanica Ferish, a member of Troupial Bat, operates Free-Skye; she also oversees the adjoining Free-Keeps of Brilliant-Ground and Harvest-Moon. Hasken Yoresh, a Hawk and one of King Raldowin's most trusted advisors, owns all three Free-Keeps. As with a few other Keeps, Brilliant-Ground is not only a farming community, but it is also a plot of land where some of Hasken Yoresh's family lives. Brilliant-Ground is famous for the quality of its weavers and artisans.



In total, the Free-Keeps contain nearly 60,000 habitants of various castes. Generally, Free-Keeps employ Fallen and Redeemed workers, and it is usually members of the Blessed caste who oversee operations. The daily administration of the Keeps is the affair of members of the Fortuned caste. They ensure that workers meet their schedules. Ownership is generally reserved for the Pure. As for military personnel, all soldiers stationed at Free-Keeps are of the Fortuned caste.

Most of the Free-Keeps are defended very well with moats, towers, garrisons of soldiers, and high ramparts Wird-crafted from wood or stone. The largest and most fortified Keeps also serve as military outposts. Some of the Free-Keeps, such as Garethim, Free-Skye and Clear-Field, are large enough to be considered cities. It is a very real possibility that some of the most densely populated Free-Keeps will soon seek independence from Cliff-Spider. Whether King Raldowin or anyone in the Alliance of Kings will approve this request is another matter.

Yas'Wailians built most of the Free-Keeps along the same model: the village or town sits in the middle of the plot of land, which is surrounded by the fields. Four roads, one from each side of the Keep, lead from the village to the main routes that connect Cliff-Spider to all the Free-Keeps. The supervisors of the Keeps divide the land in four. This allows the fields to be in use year-round without requiring an enormous amount of workers. While workers ready one field, Wird Weavers "cultivate" a second. Meanwhile, a small number of serfs harvest an adjoining field. The fourth and last field is generally left fallow. It is used when demand increases or a natural disaster wipes out a productive field.

The construction of the villages depends entirely on their size and importance. Most of the largest Free-Keeps are built like small cities. Generally, they have a castle and a large marketplace, which are surrounded by living quarters and shops. Finally, the walls and ramparts enclose each village. Typically, a small Free-Keep is merely a handful of houses surrounding an open marketplace. The Keep's inhabitants make use of wells located in the middle of the market areas.

The Free-Keeps produce everything Cliff-Spider's population requires to subsist: meats, fruits, vegetables, grain and leather. To maintain an output of goods high enough to feed five million people, the Free-Keeps use Wird to bring freshly sowed crops to fruition within a matter of a month or two. Though the impact of such a use of Wird is minimal on a daily basis, the accumulation of side effects over the past hundreds of years is beginning to take a toll on the land. The crops of older Free-Keeps located near Cliff-Spider grow at a slower rate and smaller than before. This is why the Free-Keeps have recently begun expanding outward.

A STRANGER CAME

PART ONE

Marid Voss crouched low and surveyed the city looming before him. The tall spire of the Crysarius Bridge reached for the sky, like a great big arm supporting the heavens. Many dark niches marked the perches; various entrances to the city were scattered along the spire's length. He could see that the lower entrances were closed off to seal the city. Its upper ledges however, remained open to launch flights of soldiers if the need should arise. The overall effect was that of a gigantic bird house.

The sun's pulses grew weak, and the end of the day's cycle was approaching. Soon, darkness would fall over the landscape like a cold blanket.

Voss had never been to Cliff-Spider before, but he had heard enough to know he wanted to visit. Even now he could imagine the sights and sounds of the Freemarket, the smell of exotic spices and meats, and the loud voices of greedy merchants hawking their wares. Voss could also see the brightly coloured ka-pwis lining the streets, and almost taste the sweet Yesal wine. More importantly, he could feel the warmth of Solieri's embrace. That thought brought new energy to his tired wings. Straightening, then taking a few running steps, he unfurled his wings and took flight, rushing through a mad scattering of Brownrobber birds who dashed to and fro around him.

Already the fires were burning on the torch posts surrounding the Walkway. Much to the delight of the assembled crowd, gaily attired jugglers and acrobats performed atop its smooth, flat stone surface. Marid allowed himself a smile. The Red-Feathers, whom Solieri spoke of, would undoubtedly be at work. Their nimble fingers and glib tongues often loosened the purse strings of the unwary.

Marid finally reached the doors of Freetown. The ramshackle wall built around the city could barely keep Fallen toddlers out, let alone a determined enemy. Marid noted the grim faces of soldiers manning the wall. All of them wore the green and gold uniform of the Cliff-Spider militia, along with the silver epaulettes denoting them as soldiers of the Alliance of Kings. Their hands held wooden spears, and Marid could also see swords sheathed on their backs between their wings. In order to avoid trouble, Marid landed a hundred meters away from the city gate, and walked the rest of the way. His bare feet kicked up dust on the well-travelled road. Looking up, he could see the blue and green Wirlight globes marking the aerial entrances to the spire city. Beside the monolith, Marid could discern the faintly glowing lights of the Free-Keeps.

As he approached the main gate leading into Freetown, Marid wondered again what the cryptic letter he had received from Solieri meant. She had never been one to play games, or at least not this type of game. Though he hated to admit it, he was worried. Solieri had made it clear to him in Water-Sister that he

meant nothing more to her than a friend, but her last letter had changed all that. She had said she needed him, and that he had to quickly come to Cliff-Spider — more precisely, the Roundabout. Hurry, she had written. What was she up to now?

A Watcher hailed him. The officer, obviously a female of Troupial Dragon, stood nary five meters away from him. Two more soldiers flanked her, each holding their spears at the ready.

Marid Voss pushed aside his worries for now, and smiled. His smile got him into as often as it got him out of trouble; he knew the effect the eight white stripes placed below the eyes of his night-black skin had on people. A Kestrel of Troupial Raven, Marid had an air of mystery and confidence that was rarely matched by anyone; that's what his smile was all about.

"Evening," he said in his strong, clear voice. "My name is Marid Voss. I wish to enter Freetown, and seek refuge for the night."

"Be welcome, Marid Voss. I'm a captain of the Watchers. Know that I expect no trouble on my watch," the Dragon answered.

Marid swept past her. He was aware of her eyes following him as he allowed himself another smile. "But of course," he said. As the sounds and the colours of the Freemarket settled upon him like a brilliant shroud, Marid left the Dragon behind, shaking her head.

PART TWO

The kick to Marid's chest forced a loud "crack!" from his ribs. He bent over, falling to his knees. The pain wasn't as bad as the fact that his legs and hands were bound. His wings were also restrained at an odd angle, leaving him totally off balance. He hit the ground and as he gave the Jackal a murderous gaze, Marid wondered how he had managed to get into this situation.

Shortly after his arrival in Freetown, he had begun seeking Solieri. He had asked a few merchants and Inn keepers about her, as well as a few street performers and street urchins he had come across. Every time he had mentioned her name, they had greeted him with stone silences and furtive glares.

Soon, on his way to the Roundabout, Cliff-Spider's lowest level, he sensed that someone was following him. At first, he thought it was another Kestrel, gearing up for a challenge, perhaps trying to learn his identity. It soon became clear that the man following him was not a Kestrel. He was taking way too long to make a move, Marid thought.

Deciding to force a confrontation, Marid ambushed his follower. To his surprise, there was more than one person following him. In total there were five individuals, all apparently Jackals. Of course, this meant nothing. Marid was, after all, a Kestrel.

After Marid surprised the Jackals, the five men had charged without so much as a warning. It hadn't made a difference; Marid had thoroughly defeated them. While engrossed in the fight though, he had never noticed the man with the blowgun creeping up behind. All he could remember was knocking out his last assailant with a superb roundhouse kick to the jaw. Soon afterwards, Marid felt a slight tingling in his spine, then — nothing.

Since Marid had been rudely awakened, he had been at the mercy of three men, who were taking much pleasure in giving back what they had received. One Jackal, a rough looking individual with a huge scar running from his missing left eye, all the way down his neck, stood behind him. The man generously struck the back of Marid's head. Marid pitched forward, his face smashing into the hard, wet ground.

The situation was bad, but the worst were the visions. The drug must be quite potent, Marid thought, because he could swear the walls, floor and ceiling of this cavernous room were made of bones: Yas'Wailian bones, to be precise.

The man with the staff and the scar prepared to land another blow, intending to bury the end of his staff in Marid's kidneys. At that moment, a strong, beautiful female voice echoed from across the room.

"That's enough, Duss!"

"Come on. Look at what he did to us! He broke Fogin's leg, Messen's jaw..."

"Of course he did, idiot. He's a Kestrel. I told you not to attack him," the voice replied.

"He made us. We had to move, he would have -" Duss pleaded.

"Enough, Duss. Here." She threw something that briefly shone in the torchlight before Duss eagerly grabbed it. "Leave," the woman said.

"Sure. Good working with you," the Jackal answered. He and his two partners left the room.

For a short while Marid lay there, seeing nothing but the bones, jutting out at various angles from the walls, ceiling and floor. Then, he was jerked up to his knees, and the face of an attractive Raven female came close to his own. Her eyes were a deep green, and her hair was cropped close to her skull. She gave him an amiable smile. The woman smelled of something vaguely familiar, and sweet.

"Sorry about that. They were only supposed to bring you to me. Duss and his pack can get overzealous," she said in her strong voice, clearly used to giving commands.

"You're telling me," Marid replied. He watched incredulously as the woman took a small knife and cut his bonds. The second he was free, Marid

pushed her away, tucked in his wings, and executed an admirable back flip that took him away from her. He landed in a subtle, yet unmistakable fighting stance, not betraying the fatigue his body felt.

"That's impressive... but really not needed," the woman said, obviously not surprised. Marid stood up straight, then flexed his wings to relax his muscles.

"Right then. How about you tell me what in the Priest-King's name is going on?" He crossed his arms and tapped his foot impatiently.

"Relax. I'm Shaal'Shera, and I know you're looking for Solieri."

"Good start. But what does one thing have to do with the other?" Marid had heard of Shaal'Shera, but wasn't about to let her know he was impressed. Every little advantage counted.

"I know where to find Solieri. You wouldn't have had a problem had you not sought her out the way you did. People here are very protective of Solieri. When a Kestrel walks in, eight white slashes under his eyes, they only assume the obvious: you were here to kill her."

"I'm not. She asked me to come here."

"I know that. That's why I asked Duss to get you. He was only supposed to bring you here. I guess he took his job a bit too seriously. He was probably unnerved by you."

"Duss is of no concern to me until I meet him again. Then I'll have a short conversation with him. All I want to do now is find Solieri."

Shaal'Shera smiled, and motioned for him to follow her.



H. M. V. RA

In silence they walked along twisting, dark tunnels. Marid knew that without her, he'd be hopelessly lost. Soon, sounds started drifting toward them, then smells, rank and vile. Everywhere around him, Marid saw bones. He found he had to watch his step for fear of tripping over a jutting shin or collarbone. Marid had seen death many times, but he'd never been submerged in it before. He felt like he couldn't breathe. After they had walked for a while, Marid noticed an archway looming ahead. He could also hear sounds and smells that grew more intense with every step. When they reached the ledge, Marid could see where the commotion came from.

Ahead of them, at least twenty-five feet off the ground, stretched out miles of rope bridges. Below, a teeming mass of dirty people walked about. Marid could see patchwork tents here and there, small fires over which rodents and other various forms of vermin were cooking. Poor and irritable-looking men and women huddled around the fires or around mugs of dark, vile-looking brew. Loud yells and shrieks filled the air. Fights were breaking out every minute, and a brawl soon devolved into a knife fight. Here and there, couples were copulating in the makeshift tents and barracks. Smoke from narcotic plants emanated from pipes held between grimy lips. The bones, now a fitting decor to the debauchery contained herein, lay everywhere.



As they crossed the rope bridges, Marid had to dodge a few rocks and knives thrown by unseen hands. Clearly, anyone who ventured forth on the bridges took their chances with the same reception.

"What is this place?" he asked when they were again within the relative safety of a tunnel.

"The Boneyard," she said flatly, as if it explained everything.

Marid shook his head. You can discover something new in Providence every day, he thought.

PART THREE

"That was insane," Marid exclaimed as they walked out of the tunnel and emerged in what appeared to be the back room of an inn. Shaal'Shera pushed aside a few barrels of wine, as they clambered out of the cellar.

"Not much remains sane nowadays. Too much has gone on, and too much is yet to come," Shaal'Shera said as she headed for a door.

"You're starting to sound like Solieri."

She gave Marid a look that expressed exactly what she thought of his comment. Marid smiled, then followed her as she turned around and pushed through a door. On the other side lay a dirty alley. Garbage was scattered about, and a Fallen slept on the ground near the dead end of the alley. He was talking in his drunken sleep, counting his demons aloud, an empty skin of cheap wine cradled in his arms.

Marid looked away, and kept on following Shaal'Shera as she headed for the alley. The sky was dark, and the Wirdlight globes, floating free or perched atop wooden posts, only provided faint illumination. One of the globes slowly floated by him on its aimless jaunt through the city.

"The sky is remarkably dark tonight. It was clear when I entered the city," he said.

"That's because we're not outside," Shaal'Shera replied, a hint of a smile on her dark lips.

"Not out..." And then it dawned on him. They were inside a cave, one of the many that allowed millions of people to reside within the city. Marid took a deep breath. He was comfortable with the open sky. He was used to unfurling his wings and taking to the air, and used to the sight of night above him. The claustrophobia he had experienced in the Boneyard came back with fervour. The idea of miles and miles of rock sitting atop his head made him sick to his stomach. For a moment he knew the horror the first prisoners must have felt in the early days of Providence.

It all just felt so damn heavy, Marid thought.

"It's all right. You get used to it," Shaal'Shera said. However, Marid could see by the slight stoop now apparent in her shoulders that she didn't like it any more than he did.

They walked in silence down dirty, twisting streets, lined with beggars, prostitutes and cheap inns. Marid could sense many eyes staring, sizing them up, and gauging them from darkened alleyways and recessed doors. Marid soon realized what an odd sight they must make, two Blessed walking along the despairing streets of the Fallen community. He wondered whether it was the marks under his eyes, or the simple presence of Shaal'Shera that kept the hungry predators at bay. Marid kept a wary eye open, and all senses on alert. There was no way he was going to end up sliced and gutted in some filthy alley, picked apart by desperate people — no way.

"So, why did we come the way we did? Wouldn't it have been easier to just meet outside and walk in by the front door?"

"The Sentinels guarding the doors don't like me much," she answered.

"And why is that?"

"Silence. We're here."

A shrouded figure Marid had failed to notice moved closer.

"Hey, I don't know whom you think you are, but..."

"Still full of yourself, I see. Some things never change," the graceful woman said.

At the sound of the voice, Marid looked more closely. At first, he didn't recognize the speaker. The form was familiar, but he could not see the face, which was hidden behind a mask. But then, his eyes caught the speaker's eyes, and held them for a moment. They were ice blue, with flecks of silver. Marid had never forgotten those eyes. When the figure reached up, and removed the mask, his thoughts were confirmed, and his heart missed a beat or two. It was she: Solieri, as beautiful as the first day he met her. Her black-spotted white wings shone in the light of a Wirdlight globe floating near. Her smile was the same mixture of mirth and sadness it had always been. She still wore the dagger he had given her when last they had met, in Water-Sister. She was still the same: provocative, dangerous, and sad.

"Solieri..."

"How are you, Marid? It's been a while."

"Four years."

"Has it been that long?"

"I think so." Marid noticed that Shaal'Shera had vanished. He was happy they were alone. "What have you been up to? No good, I guess. That is, if the mask and your choice of acquaintance are any indication," he said as he threw a thumb in the direction that Shaal'Shera had disappeared.

She approached him, until she stood but a few feet away. He could smell her even above the stench that suffused the air of the Roundabout. He longed to run his hand in her hair, longed to take her in his arm; somehow he held himself in check. Clearly that was not what she expected or even wanted.

"I've been doing things. Some would call my actions good, others would not," she answered. "As for Shaal'Shera, well, I have no love for her actions, though again some would call them good. But she owed me a favour, and has just repaid it."

"Isn't that always the case?" He crossed his arms and smiled.

"Unfortunately. Come, I didn't ask you here to discuss semantics about good and evil."

"What is it you want?" Marid was getting exasperated; this just wasn't what he had planned. As if she were reading his mind, she said:

"I didn't ask you here to share a bed once again, Marid. That was long ago. Four years, you said it yourself. Besides, there's someone else now." Her eyes told Marid that she was lying, but he didn't feel like playing games. Fine. If this was the way things were going to be, he would go along with it, and carry on. That's all he had been doing his entire life: carrying on. A small flame sputtered and died in his heart, but he pushed all of this aside.

"I take it you need my services? Aren't there other Kestrels around here?"

"Yes, I need your services, Marid Voss. And yes, there are other Kestrels around, but none like you. I need your special talents," she said, her eyes again becoming sad and cold.

"Fine. Tell me what you need, and I'll tell you my price. But this better be worthwhile, Solieri. I hate being played with, and that's exactly what you did when you wrote that letter." His voice was now steady and clear. His eyes narrowed, and a ripple ran through the feathers on his wings — a sure sign that he was all business now.

"I apologize for that, but it was necessary. I needed you here quickly. It was..."

"Cut it," Marid interrupted. "Tell me why I'm here."

Solieri took a deep breath, seemingly to collect her thoughts. "War is coming. Soon. Everyone knows it, but not everyone seems to think it as dangerous as it really is. The Alliance is threatened from within. There are

traitors, Marid, traitors who would sell out the free people of the Alliance in order to promote their own agenda. These people must be stopped. Only you can do it, Marid."

"You're almost as good a fighter as I am, Solieri. What's so different between you and me?"

"You've not yet lost your taste for killing, Marid. That's the difference."

Marid wanted to say something to rebuke her, to deny these charges, but he found that he could not. She was speaking the truth.

"What do you have in mind?"

"I spoke of your taste for killing, but fortunately, that might not be necessary."

"Solieri, tell me what you want. Now, or I walk. I hate being in this place, and I sure don't plan to be here any longer than I have to." He spoke in a low voice. Solieri turned her eyes on him, and studied his face for a moment.

"I understand," she finally said. She came close, bringing her mouth to his ear. Her hair caressed his face, and the sweet smell of it intoxicated him. She put a hand on his chest, and Marid could remember the warmth of her touch on his skin. He closed his eyes.

"There's a man, his name is Koryanny De'inzil. He's one of the King's advisors, but his heart is foul. The King is in grave danger, but cannot see it."

"Why do you care about the King?" Marid asked, pushing her away gently.

"I don't. However, I care about Cliff-Spider and about its people. That's why I must do what I can to help them, and to save them."

"Why is this De'inzil such a problem? You said he was a cousin and advisor to the King."

"De'inzil himself is only moderately dangerous, but whoever is behind him is very dangerous. I don't know who that is yet, but I know that whoever it is plans to use De'inzil's greed and power to accomplish his goals."

"So, you want me to kill De'inzil?"

"No. I gave up that course of action years ago. It is not something I can sanction or condone anymore, not when there are other ways. De'inzil is no pushover, granted. He's a powerful warrior, one who has the task of forming and training a new breed of soldiers. These soldiers, it is rumoured, can each do the job of ten normal soldiers. They are dangerous, and so is De'inzil. That's why I need you. This man has hatched plans to assassinate the King's daughter. No doubt whoever is behind him wishes to sow confusion and rage within the King's heart, perhaps in an attempt to render him ineffectual as the leader of

the city. Such a move as the murder of his daughter would achieve this goal. She is his only heir, since his son has thrown in his lot with the Drummers. Normally I would not care what the Pure do with their time. Unfortunately however, this could have major repercussions for all Cliff-Spider's people."

"So I need you, Marid. I need you to protect the King's daughter. Not for her sake, or for the King's, but for the sake of everyone in this city who depends on this King."

Marid took a step back, then turned around to contemplate her request. Images from the Boneyard flashed in his mind. He closed his eyes, and from behind him, Solieri's voice emerged.

"So, will you do this for me, Marid? Will you do it for the people? You cannot be seen, for I do not want De'inzil to be alerted, but you must protect her."

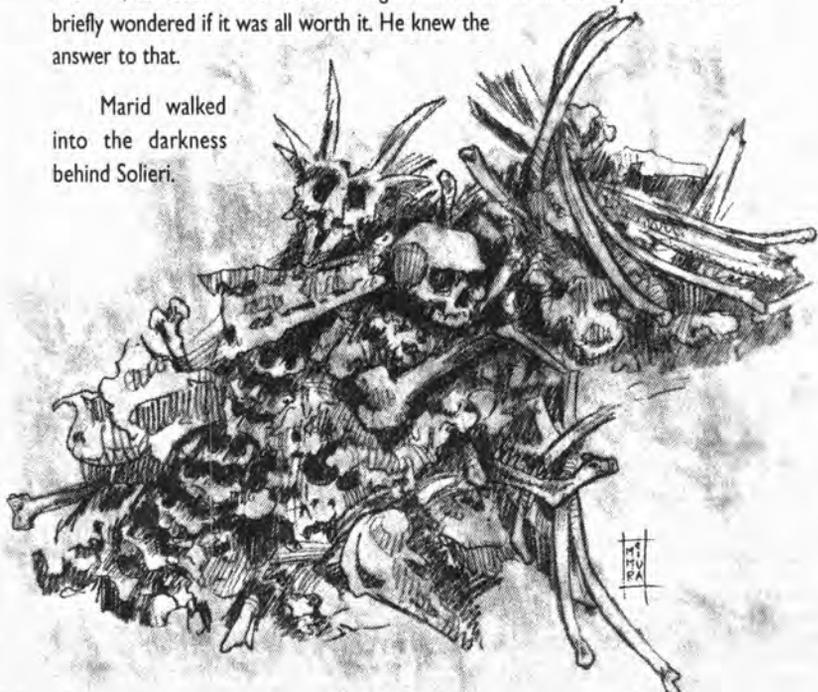
Marid opened his eyes, and the bones of the underground had disappeared.

"I won't do it for you, but I'll do it for the money."

"As long as you do it, Marid. Come inside." She turned to walk back into the building.

Marid took a deep breath. The air tasted dank and dead. He felt the weight on his shoulder grow heavier, and a ripple ran through his feathers again. Marid shook his head. He had half a mind to walk away. He knew he should, but Solieri had him, as usual. Marid felt the weight and darkness of the days ahead, and briefly wondered if it was all worth it. He knew the answer to that.

Marid walked into the darkness behind Solieri.



FREETOWN

"Woah, what's that smell? It reminds me of that Gethryn I saw near Bone-Wail... did I ever tell you that story?"

— Tensy Doshall, Horizon Strider

Freetown lies at the base of the Crysarius Bridge, and near the entrance to Cliff-Spider. Ironically, the people who lack the ability to fly live in the open-air grounds of Freetown, while the flyers inhabit the shaded confines of the caves. Undoubtedly, this is a reflection of life in Providence. The castes who hold the power know that the thick and impenetrable stone walls of the Crysarius Bridge make a far better fortress than the vulnerable flat-lands surrounding the spire.

The majority of Cliff-Spider's Fallen population resides in Freetown, often called Fallen City by members of the upper castes. A few Redeemed caste members, those too poor to afford living quarters inside Cliff-Spider, inhabit the buildings nearest to the spire itself.

At a time when the wardens first arrived in Providence, prisoners and slaves worked the natural caves at the base of the Crysarius Bridge into rough living quarters for the city's rulers, and the camp's prisoner population. A large portion of Cliff-Spider's militia lived in quarters they built at the base of the Crysarius Bridge. The liberation of the prisoners, and the influx of released or escaped rebels from other camps caused a boom in the population. Soon after the former prisoners left their claustrophobic and cavernous confines, they moved into the former militia quarters, built new homes, and named the camp Freetown. While Freetown was harder to defend than the spire, the Yas'Wailians were eager to live under the sky and the sun. These two simple things had been forbidden for uncounted years. Unfortunately, the Yas'Wailians' jubilation at re-discovering the skies was short lived. During the War of the Houses, the wardens in Bone-Wail, Water-Sister, and Green-Deep organized a strike against Cry-Star and Cliff-Spider. Fearing for their lives, most of Cliff-Spider's population retreated in the caves.

Following the conflict, the former prisoners continued to work Cliff-Spider's caves by Wird, hand, and tool, until a growing population could inhabit them. As time passed, Wird manipulations made it possible to climb higher into the Crysarius Bridge. For their own safety, the higher castes maintained their homes in Cliff-Spider proper, leaving behind Freetown.

The Guided Tour

Hi, I noticed that you arrived yesterday. Glad to meet you, my name's Shabann. Look, I moved here a couple of years ago myself. Why don't I show you around? There's a lot of information I could have used when I was new to the city and I don't mind giving you a hand. When? Well, now if you've got time. Why don't we start around here?

Freetown's ok, but you've got to watch where you walk sometimes. C'mon, let's go. There's a lot of ground to cover if you want to see it all today. Cliff-Spider doesn't take up the whole spire, but it's bigger than you'd think from here.



FREETOWN

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1 The Roundabout | A Blessed-Heart | F The Blue Bird | K Militia towers |
| 2 The Walkway | B Militia Towers | G Direction to Free-Keeps | L D'shau retreat |
| | C Gates | H Jendelle's tent | M Known entrances to the Boneyard's caves |
| | D Watcher Towers | I Bazaars | N Militia prisons |
| | E Gates into Cliff-Spider | J Caring-Hand | |

The Free Tribes, escaped prisoners who had made their way out of the warden camps years before, had also arrived in Freetown. They gathered to celebrate the newly acquired freedom of their families and peers. Many of these wandering tribes decided to settle down in Freetown, causing not only a boom in population, but also new ways of life. The newly freed Yas'Wailians adapted to their changing existence, learning the ways of freedom and of Providence from the wandering Free Tribes. Freetown quickly became a melting pot of styles, philosophies, customs and lifestyles. The Free Tribes brought news and stories from various corners of this strange new world they now inhabited. They recounted tales of other camps and how their populations reacted to their own liberation. They told Cliff-Spider's people of the conflicts raging across the landscape.

Gradually, the highest caste members of society found their way into the spire, leaving behind those born without wings. As time passed, Freetown expanded its borders, reaching out as far as a mile-and-a-half away from Cliff-Spider. Presently more than 425,000 Fallen reside in Freetown, along with close to 50,000 Redeemed. Many of these people are scavengers, but some are merchants, artisans and crafts people. Most of Cliff-Spider's transitory population, be they travelling merchants and adventurers, also resides in Freetown, whatever their castes. The Freemarket, the busiest area in Freetown, is renowned throughout Providence as a place where adventurers can find almost anything they desire.

At the ground level, three major entrances lead from Freetown into Cliff-Spider. A small tower housing a hundred Fortuned caste soldiers, guards each entrance. The area immediately surrounding the towers for approximately 100 meters in each direction is considered military ground. All of the dwellings located in this area belong to the military personnel and their families.

The Watchers have four Watch stations, which are situated at the four corners of Freetown, looking over the Freemarket. Totalling roughly 700 members, mostly from the Fortuned caste, Freetown's Watchers are rather lax

The Guided Tour

Look over there, that's one of the entrances to the city. We'll go by there in a little while. That's probably the entrance you'll want to use. The soldiers can really be annoying sometimes, but there are many good reasons for them to be there. Cliff-Spider's the best-protected city in the Alliance of Kings for a reason. There are an awful lot of Watchers around too. Not that I like them that much, but every once in a while, it's nice to know that they're around, if you're lucky enough to find one that's helpful. My advice is to just avoid them — some of them are really mean.

Horeck's Law

The leader of Freetown's military detachment is Horeck Sichal, a stern Blessed Eagle. Sichal is renowned throughout Freetown and Cliff-Spider for his harsh enforcement of caste rules and laws. Though he rarely interferes with daily life in Freetown, his jurisdiction extends over the city's jails. Sichal has no love for thieves, brigands or adventurers. On occasion, he has administered his own brand of "rehabilitation" on prisoners he considers to be particularly dangerous. Sichal also has a strong distaste for Wayfarers. Many captured Wayfarers have died before even reaching trial. This could very well be a result of Sichal's frustration after his demotion from the Overwatch. His rank as Arkon was stripped from him for reasons unknown except to him and the War Prefect Donica Lomass. Sichal is an extremely proud individual. No doubt this incident has left him more bitter than a man in his position should be.

when it comes to theft inside the Freemarket. The leader of the Watchers, Captain Yisaanii Kel'Dessi of Troupial Dragon, realized a long time ago that it would be impossible to enforce the law to the letter in a place as chaotic as the Freemarket. Thus, the Watchers only pay particular attention to violent crimes. They are quite content to let the Red-Feathers, an organization of thieves, work in the Freemarket. This has led to an understanding between Kel'Dessi and the leader of the Red-Feathers. The Watchers stay out of their hair inside the market, and the Red-Feathers in turn ensure that theft and other crimes stay out of Freetown's residential quarters. This arrangement has worked remarkably well for over fifteen years. Violent crimes are almost nonexistent in Freetown; they are usually the work of outsiders and strangers arriving in town. The Wayfarers, caste dissidents headed by the violent Shard Strike, remain a problem however. Strike's habit of avoiding the law by hiding out in Freetown has caused many innocent deaths. The unofficial agreement with the Red-Feathers gives the Watchers much needed respite. Between the Wayfarers and unwanted elements from the Boneyard, rising out of their macabre caves to further their own criminal goals, Kel'Dessi has her hands full.

The residential zones of Freetown are probably Cliff-Spider's safest areas — save perhaps for the Blessed and the Pure's caves. Nonetheless, Freetown is not a very hospitable or comfortable place. Multiple families have to share cramped living quarters in a squalor that would make most Hyenas cringe. Most of the homes in Freetown are rickety wooden shacks, tents, and more often than not, simple holes in the ground where the Fallen may find shelter for the night. Diseases are rampant, and the Anodynes have their hands full dealing with all the sickly Fallen.

Even in Freetown, the Fallen have a hard time finding work. Some of them work as Free-Keep field labourers on a rotational basis. Other Fallen work to sanitize the Roundabout, while a few work as servants for the minor nobility. The majority of Fallen however, have to find alternate means of survival.

THE BARRENS

The Guided Tour

You really want to be careful walking around here at night. Yeah, it looks fine now, but it's a lot more dangerous when the sun fades out. The area is called the Barrens, and the scoundrels who live here would rather cut your throat than greet you. Sometimes they'll say hello and then cut your throat! Not that everyone here is a wretch. Although there are a couple of interesting places to go, generally, I don't walk around here by myself. It's much too risky — even the Watchers stay away!

Unlike the residential areas, the Barrens is a haven for prostitutes, gamblers, beggars, swindlers and cutthroats of all types. The Barrens is a small quarter of several streets wedged between two of Freetown's gated entrances. The Watchers have been exceptionally vigilant to ensure that the contamination and corruption they perceive in the Barrens does not spread to the rest of Freetown. For this reason, most of the commercial and entertainment establishments are chaotically built atop one another. Many

establishments are therefore, built upon large wooden stages and platforms that are in turn, located above other structures. Cheap inns, brothels, and seedy bars occupy all of this zone. The Barrens' most frequented spot is the Blue Bird, a popular brothel among travellers and adventurers.

THE BLUE BIRD

The Blue Bird is a massive wooden and stone complex. The establishment was once a small inn. Like a hungry beast however, the Bird's owner began to commercially devour her competitors, swallowing and merging their structures into hers. The multi-level Blue Bird now serves as the most common resting place for low-caste visitors and tourists. The establishment offers some of the cheapest drink, food and bed, available anywhere. The Red-Feathers, a band of thieves who normally only operate in the Freemarket, recently targeted the inn and bar to offer their "services." Fearing that it would lessen her bar's appeal, Carista Dokante, the bar's owner and madam, refused the Red-Feathers' protection when they proposed their extortion racket. One really does enter the place at one's own risk. However, for adventurers in need of a good time, a cheap place to hide out, illegal substances, and a good sword for hire, the Blue Bird is the place to go. Carista, a Redeemed Dove, takes good care of her girls and guys, and her Dewberry wine is possibly the best in all of Cliff-Spider.

Among certain circles, Carista is very well connected, even more so than the King himself. She has contacts with the Anodynes, the Wayfarers, the Watchers, the militia, and certain really shady elements of the Boneyard. Rumours persist that Strike, one of the two Wayfarer leaders in the city, is a regular patron; gossipers claim that he is Carista's secret lover.

A good friend of the owner, a Gargoyle by the name of Roshak, handles contracts for mercenaries from the back room. Word on the street is that Roshak, a very well known figure in Providence's underworld, even has contacts with the Guild of Dusk. He denies this however, and is rumoured to have already killed three adventurers who made such a claim. No one can verify the rumour, but it continues to spread. Roshak is also in league with Traask, the crime lord of the Boneyard's underworld.

CRIME IN THE CITY

Despite the occasional Red-Feathers' thief and the infrequent other grim elements, there are few criminals in Freetown's crowded streets. The Pand-Jer, Traask's criminal organization from the Boneyard, does not have much influence in Freetown. Nonetheless, Traask himself does have a hand in the area's criminal rings. In the Barrens, Traask runs various criminal operations, from gambling dens to brothels; and all sorts of people work for him: panhandlers, brigands, and thugs. Traask also runs a small but profitable black market where adventurers can find hard to obtain equipment or restricted goods. However, Traask's people are paranoid and they do not advertise their trade. Characters trying to break into this subculture will find it difficult.

THE FREEMARKET

"Those damn kids stole my feather again! Hey, don't touch that!"

— Cyril Thom, irate merchant

The Guided Tour

You haven't told me what you do. Hey, it's your business. If you're legal though, your best bet is to try to find some room in the Freemarket. You can buy and sell a lot of good stuff there. What's it like? You'll see.

The Freemarket can be interesting, but you really have to watch yourself. The first time I came here, I left without my purse, despite all the Watchers walking around! If you want, there are a couple of people I can introduce you to. If you're sharp, you can probably get yourself a job in the market. The pay can be pretty good. Me? No, I work out in the forest. I can't spend that much time there; the smell gets to be a bit much after a while. Shall we go?

At the centre of Freetown lies the Freemarket, one of the most famous and unique shopping areas in the Alliance of Kings. The Freemarket thrives because it is free from the Trade Council's influence, tariffs and permits. Such a liberated environment as the Freemarket allows all manner of shops and goods to flourish. Even higher caste members seeking rare, exotic, or illegal goods circle the Freemarket's shadowy corners.

A large circular area of smooth stone called the Walkway, approximately 250 meters in diameter, marks the centre of the Freemarket. Various entrepreneurs built the permanent stalls that surround the Walkway.

Merchants and artisans rent out the stalls on a daily or monthly basis. Some of the best stalls, mostly the ones immediately surrounding the Walkway, come at an incredibly steep price. Each day, stall owners will not normally rent such prized locations for anything less than enough food to feed their entire families for a day.

People can barter for anything in the Freemarket. There are rumours that one merchant gave his handsome son away to marry a stall owner of a lower caste. This was in exchange for a year-long lease of a highly coveted stall.

Those merchants who do not have the means or the desire to secure a stall, can set up shop on the outer ring of the market. Most of these merchants and artisans lay their wares on thick, brightly-coloured rugs called ka-pwis. Weavers from the Brilliant-Ground Free-Keep make and sell these crafts. The ka-pwis become a mosaic of colours to anyone who views them from the air. In addition, the sunlight reflecting off the myriad of wares laid upon the rugs enhances the effect.

On the Walkway, the epicentre of the Freemarket, jugglers, acrobats, musicians and actors perform. Dirty street children run around panhandling, as do the small amount of Unaccountables (see page 51) who have yet to make their way into the Boneyard. Various street people lounge about, and at night, prostitutes from the Roundabout fill the area. No merchants can set up on the Walkway, except for those selling food. There are many diverse and interesting foods available. Shoppers can buy everything from spicy Lynax meat on a stick, fresh Uru fruits from nearby Free-Keeps, exotic Kella fruit from the shores of the Algerra Sea, to Rilbec eggs from Athrin's Desert.

WELCOME TO THE BAZAAR

"Perhaps this is what you're looking for? No? Oh, I see that your tastes require something else. Let me show you what we have here."

- Bazaar owner.

"Freetown plays host to some of the most unique people and goods in the world. Does it sound like I'm exaggerating? Maybe, but once you have a look around, I think you'll see things my way. Sure, I know you can probably find some of this stuff in the Roundabout, but let me tell you that you won't find a better deal elsewhere."

THE BELRASSI FLOWER

Availability: Common

The Belrassi flower is a fairly common item in the market. The plant grows in fields near the Free-Keeps. Some Keep owners have also decided to cultivate the flower to supplement their income from their regular crops. People want the Belrassi flower because of its beauty and its healing properties.

ABILITIES

The five petals of the Belrassi flower, when ingested with water, bestow healing upon its benefactors. The flower works exactly like the first level spell Heal Self/Others, providing 3 points of healing per flower.

I also have a couple of treasures that are unique to our Bazaar. Let's see, Ah! These precious plums are called Loriko leaves. Have you never heard of them?

LORIKO LEAVES

Availability: Rare

Legends claim that long ago on Yas'Wail, kings and queens used Loriko leaves as an aphrodisiac to entrap resistant love interests. Scholars used to believe that the Loriko plant could not survive in Providence's harsh environment. Horizon Strider explorers first discovered the rare plant growing in isolated clearings in the Deep. No one seems to know why they grow so far removed from any settlement.

ABILITIES

Anyone who ingests a Loriko leaf will gain the Trait: Behaviour, Extreme — Sexual. Resistant targets must roll their Willpower against a target number (TN) of 9 or engage in a sexual act as soon as they can. The Appearance of the partner the victim is considering affects the roll. Every point of Appearance above 0 increases the TN by 2; each point below 0 decreases it by 2.

This does not mean that victims will initiate or perform sex despite the circumstances — for example, if someone attacks them. The drug also won't give a person violent tendencies. Furthermore, if they dislike the person they are with, the TN decreases by 2. If it is someone they are attracted to, increase the TN by 2. If there is a reason that the partner might be totally unacceptable, the GM can decide that no roll is necessary. Game Masters and players should note that the Loriko leaves cannot change a person's sexual orientation.

Thanks for shopping in the bazaar!

THE RED-FEATHERS

Another less visible attraction in the Freemarket is the large, red feathers prominently displayed at certain stalls. The Red-Feathers, a very loose association of thieves, hand out these brightly coloured feathers to merchants who pay protection money. In order to be safe from theft, certain merchants and artisans "donate" a certain portion of their wares to the Red-Feathers, who in turn will forbid any thief from robbing these merchants. This racket is very effective, because the group will aggressively prevent thieves not associated with them to work in Freetown.

The Red-Feathers' rules are simple. The group allows thieves to work in Freetown, as long as they follow the three basic guidelines. First, anyone wanting to work in Freetown, and especially the market, must approach the leader of the Red-Feathers, a Redeemed Eagle who goes by the name of Lark. In exchange for a small portion of whatever a thief manages to acquire during the day, the Red-Feathers will allow any thieves to work in the market or Freetown at their leisure for that day. Anyone who joins gets a red feather. This feather allows them access to the market, and the right to ply their trade among the crowds. Street performers must also reach the same agreement with Lark. The second rule is that merchants who display the red feather are to be left alone. The third and final rule is that thieves cannot commit violent crimes. A group of Red-Feathers' enforcers will hunt down any thief who breaks one of these rules. Ironically, the thugs may also hand over any offender to the Watchers. Incidents between the Red-Feathers and other brigands happen daily, but they are usually small and inconsequential.

Fifty protection red feathers are available at any time, thereby ensuring that there is always work available for thieves inside the Freemarket. Merchants have occasionally fought each other for the feathers, but such incidents are rare. As a rule, merchants cannot gain protection for a period longer than one month at a time. After this, they must relinquish their feathers so that other merchants may benefit from them.

THE ARTIST AND THE RUFFIAN

"Bah! Any bird who works for the Feathers isn't a bird at all, merely a brute and a thief!"

— Two conversing Mockingbirds.

Many Mockingbirds are upset over the actions of the Red-Feathers. They feel that the group runs contrary to their beliefs and their carefree nature. Altercations between the Red-Feathers and the Mockingbirds are not unheard of, and can often have fatal results. As a rule, Mockingbirds are loners and subtle people. Since Lark demands that all his thieves pay part of their "earnings" to his organization, many Mockingbirds feel that he is undermining their work in Cliff-Spider. Mockingbirds consider themselves artists. They believe that what they take from their audience is merely a fee for the entertainment they provide. They don't understand why they should give any of their proceeds to a criminal like Lark. Furthermore, they consider the Red-Feathers to be an affront to their careers and reputations. Most of the people who work for Lark's group are not performers; their only goal is to make money. The desire to improve and test their skills is what drives Mockingbirds; money is not their ultimate goal. Many Mockingbirds would probably stop working altogether if they could not perform; that is precisely what has occurred in Freetown.

Since everyone who works the streets of the Fallen city must answer to Lark, most of the city's original Mockingbirds left for greener pastures. Nonetheless, a new generation of Mockingbirds is determined to fight the Red-Feathers' control. They are willing to risk working in Freetown without paying any fee. This angers Lark, who has decided to use force to dispose of the annoying Mockingbirds. As a result, the Mockingbirds want to involve the Watchers in the conflict. Although Watcher officers are content to let the Red-Feathers operate, many Watchers who patrol the streets take the situation more seriously. They do not tolerate anything or anyone that disturbs the peace in Freetown.

ENDANGERED STABILITY

Recently, rumours have started to spread that Alliker, King of the Mockingbirds, has taken an interest in the Red-Feathers' operation. The word on the street is that he might be visiting soon to investigate Lark and his practices. So far, Lark has discounted the rumours, perhaps because he fears this possible intervention. On the other hand, Lark and his people have recently started fighting against elements determined to take over the Red-Feathers' organization. Lark believes that these people work for the Reaver, Providence's greatest criminal mastermind. If the Reaver is attempting to take over the Red-Feathers, Lark's business relationship with Traask, the Gargoyle who rules the

Boneyard, would be at best, strained. It is common knowledge in Providence's underworld that the Reaver and Traask are business bedfellows.

The Exception to the Rule

One exception to the limited time feather rule is the small stall of Jendelle Soville. Jendelle, a Fallen Eagle, is an artisan of exquisite skill. Though blind, she fashions the most incredible jewellery in Providence. People come from all over to admire and barter for her work. She is very choosy about whom she creates pieces for. She has a permanent red feather, one that was taken and dyed from the few remaining feathers on Lark's stubby wings. The feathers are normally taken from the feathers of a Red-Minet bird. The Red-Feathers take special care of Jendelle. Two major rumours try to explain this: one says that Jendelle and Lark were once lovers, the other claims that they are related. No one but Lark and Jendelle knows for sure. As it is, neither has even been seen in the presence of the other.



Providence source book, People's Knights.

The criminals undermining the Feathers are robbing protected merchants, destroying their property, and committing violent crimes. Their hope is to destroy the merchants' and the Watchers' confidence in the ability of the Red-Feathers to maintain a quota of peace and respectability in the Freemarket. Someone also sent an agent to infiltrate the Red-Feathers, and strike at Lark when it was most appropriate. Lark narrowly avoided his own death by fighting and killing the assassin. Since this incident, Lark and his people have responded by increasing their presence on the streets. He hopes this will deter anyone who tries to assault him. Fortunately for Lark, the increased presence of the Red-Feathers on the streets seems to have discouraged the vandals — at least temporarily.

LARK'S PLANS

Lark has noted the Watchers' recent efforts against People's Knights, and particularly against the group known as Forge's Fist. The Watchers believe that the band of Fallen heroes may be working with Strike's Wayfarers. Lark knows that these People's Knights are not caste dissidents. He wants to offer Forge his help. Lark plans on using his influence with the Watchers to ask them to cease their actions against the heroes. Although he has yet to disclose his "fee" for this interference, Lark would ask for Forge's help against the Feathers' enemies, should he need it in the future. Although Lark knows that the Mockingbirds are above hiring an assassin, he suspects that they are nonetheless mounting an attack against his organization. If he could sway Forge's Fist to his side, he could use them to eliminate his foes and dissuade the Mockingbirds from interfering. For information on Forge's Fist, see the

THE MOCKING BIRDS

Frustrated by the work of the Red-Feathers, Cliff-Spider's few remaining Mockingbirds are planning to undermine Lark's organization. Unfortunately, the Mockingbirds lack the physical power to challenge the Red-Feathers. Instead, the entertainers are planning to use their abilities to sabotage the thieves. First, the Mockingbirds will start stealing some of the feathers that merchants display for protection. In addition, they will place these feathers on the stalls of merchants that did not pay for them. This should create confusion and cause the merchants who believe they are immune from thieves to lose respect for the Red-Feathers. The Mockingbirds also hope that the merchants will complain to the Watchers who will then be forced to break their agreement with Lark and start hunting the Feathers. To further antagonize the Red-Feathers, many Mockingbirds are also looking to involve several of the city's People's Knights like Solieri, or Forge, Razor, Maelstrom, and Arachnae, better known as Forge's Fist. Their inclusion in this conflict, could also force the Watchers' organization to re-examine its stance on the Red-Feathers. If these plans do not work, they are willing to take other more creative methods. Despite fears of retaliation from the Red-Feathers, the Mockingbirds are taking inspiration from the sightings of Alliker, "the King of Mockingbirds." Some people claim that Alliker walks among them, disguised as an entertainer. Others believe that he has infiltrated the Red-Feathers organization. Regardless, the Mockingbirds feel confident that should the Feathers take offensive action against them, Alliker will come out of the shadows to help them against Lark.

For information on Alliker, see the Recognizers source book.

SHAAL'SHERA

Shaal'Shera is the leader of one of two Wayfarer factions in Cliff-Spider. Shaal, whose real name is a mystery, is a female Raven born without wings to Blessed parents. Angered, her mother immediately asked her husband to get rid of the child. His wife's behaviour was peculiar enough for a Raven.

Shaal's father could not bring himself to murder his first-born daughter. Instead, he entrusted his daughter to one of his most loyal servants, who in turn handed Shaal over to his sister, who was herself a Fallen.

Shaal spent her first years growing up in Freetown, despised as a Fallen. She endured life in the lowest caste, without the benefit of schooling. This all changed on her twelfth birthday. On that day Shaal began, against all expectations, to grow wings. They were only stubs at first, but soon, Shaal grew a glorious set of full Seraph wings; instead of being a uniform black, like other Ravens, her's were a mottled black and white.

Word soon made it back to her Blessed father's ears. Overjoyed, he



informed his wife of what he had done, and what had become of their daughter. On behalf of their master, servants went to Freetown to recover Shaal. From then on, she lived the privileged life of a Blessed. She entered an exclusive school, and her teachers discovered and nurtured her fledgling Wird talents. Shaal, however, showed an affinity for Wird Dancing, which strongly upset both her tutors and her mother. Soon, Shaal began chaffing the strict etiquette of life among the high castes. She would increasingly run back to her stepmother in Freetown, disappearing for days at a time. Eventually, she could take no more. Four years after returning to her birthplace, Shaal packed up what belongings she cared for, and left the High City for good.

Returning to Freetown, she began using what knowledge she had of Wird to teach young Fallen and Redeemed who showed a propensity for using the gift. An old Wird Dancer named Ib nurtured Shaal's talents. A Fallen of Troupial Rat, Ib took a liking to the feisty young Shaal, and helped her master her power as a potent Wird Dancer. Not long ago, Ib travelled down into the Boneyard on business of his own — nobody has seen him since.

A few years after her return to the Fallen city, Shaal's stepmother died of an illness. Heartbroken, Shaal took to the streets. Eventually, she came to the attention of a small group of Wayfarers who had begun operating out of Freetown's underground. The charismatic captain of the group convinced Shaal to join the Wayfarers; she immediately took the name of Shaal'Shera, an old Dragon saying which means "Victory by Justice." She quickly rose through the ranks. Her natural propensity for Wird and combat, coupled with her intelligence and burning hatred of the higher castes, marked her clearly as a leader.

THE DOLSAI VARESH

Shaal'Shera is now the leader of the Dolsai Varesh Wayfarers. The Dolsai Varesh, one of the two Wayfarer organizations currently operating within Cliff-Spider, is a tightly knit group that calls Freetown home. Unlike their counterpart, Strike's cluster of Wayfarers, they prefer subversive methods of rebellion to violence. However, Shaal'Shera's people will not hesitate to use more direct methods when necessary. They specialize in humiliating and harassing any member of the high castes they encounter in Freetown.

One of their tactics is what they call "the lure." Members of the Wayfarers will often get in contact with prostitutes known for servicing ladies and gents from the higher levels of the city. When one of these prostitutes finds a target, the Wayfarers will follow them, and wait in ambush for the client to finish. Afterwards, the Wayfarers capture, disrobe, and hang the nobles naked by their feet or wings, and quickly tie them to columns known as "shame-posts." Left hanging, the victims must wait till daylight comes for Watchers to cut them

down. This has infuriated many people who demand that the Watchers crack down on the Dolsai Varesh.

Members of the Dolsai Varesh also act as vigilantes, catching and severely punishing perpetrators of crimes against members of the lowest castes. The group's main support is in Freetown, though they have allies within the Boneyard, the Roundabout and the lower castes living in Guildholm. Their main base of operation is unknown, and is suspected to change according to a random means of selection each time members meet. This secrecy has been necessary ever since a raid into Guildholm ended tragically for Shaal'Shera's people. Two members of the Dolsai Varesh, Jackals named Colvert and Duss, led a cell on a raid that was to learn the worthiness of prospective members. The raid was supposed to be quick; the primary objective was the desecration of the Mother and Father statues standing in the middle of a park in Guildholm. Though the raid itself went well, members of the militia subsequently tracked down and arrested the group of Jackals. Though Duss escaped, with a nasty scar on his face, the militia caught his partner Colvert. He died along with the other four Jackals at the hands of the Pathfinders, an elite group of warriors.

STRIKE'S WAYFARERS

There are two Wayfarer groups in Cliff-Spider. Strike, a particularly violent and determined Wayfarer, heads the second cluster. His group is larger than Shaal'Shera's, and may include the most Wayfarers of any group located in the Alliance of Kings. Strike encourages all his members to diffuse chaos among the upper castes at every opportunity. He believes that the ends justify the means, and anyone caught in the crossfire is simply a victim of caste warfare. All members of Strike's Wayfarer cluster will attack Watchers, members of the militia, and particularly nobles, destroying property and killing anyone who supports the caste system. Because Strike and Shaal'Shera's methods differ greatly, both groups avoid each other. Shaal'Shera believes that Strike's methods are counter productive while he believes her attempts are ineffective. For the moment, both leaders are content to maintain a comfortable distance. No one seems certain where Strike operates from, although many people believe he does not live within the spire.

SOLIERI: HERO TO THE PEOPLE

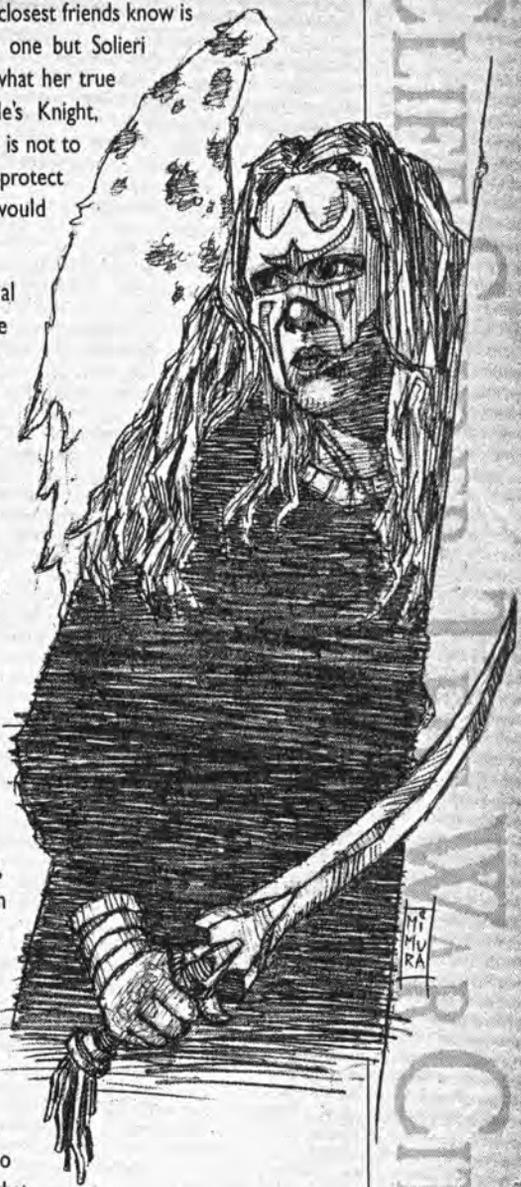
Freetown's hero is Solieri, a female Redeemed Dove. Solieri is a People's Knight. Many view her as a stalwart, honourable, and shining example of Yas'Wailian values. When inhabitants of Freetown have a dispute to settle, they often will bring it before her rather than to the attention of the Watchers. Many people also seek her counsel before making a decision on important matters. Few, however, know of her past as a thief and an assassin. A rarity among Doves,

Solieri was once as cold and cruel as the harshest Wayfarer or warden.

Solieri never speaks of her past. All her closest friends know is that one day she gave up her lifestyle. No one but Solieri knows exactly what made her change, nor what her true name really is. She has become a People's Knight, wearing a mask to create a new identity. This is not to protect her family, since she has none, but to protect herself from former employers who would disapprove of her new-found conscience.

Solieri does not possess any special abilities. All her skills are well honed, and she constantly practices hard to maintain her edge. She is adept at various sorts of weaponry, but prefers small, quick weapons as opposed to heavy blades. Her favourite item is a curved short sword made of crystal that obviously holds an enchantment of some sort. People who have seen her use the weapon tell tales of her astonishing speed with her sword.

Fighting her own private, inner battle, Solieri strives to make up for her past by helping people around her. Solieri has a strong dislike of Wayfarers and their violent ways, especially Strike and his underlings, and she opposes any conflict that affects innocent bystanders. The Watchers, on the other hand, have no need for Solieri or People's Knights in general. However, they tolerate her as long as she is a part of the solution, and not the problem. As far as the Red-Feathers go, Solieri has no respect for those people who would prey on the poor and downtrodden as much as they prey on members of the higher castes. A public confrontation between Solieri and Lark has not yet occurred, but no one can doubt the tension and animosity that exist between the two of them. As for the very secretive Forge's Fist, Solieri views them as an enigma. From what she has seen, they clearly fight to protect innocent people from getting hurt. Solieri has yet to make a decision regarding her feelings toward this group. At the moment, she prefers to simply watch, all the while making sure that society's victims do not find in Forge's Fist a new tormentor.



THE MEETING

The Wayfarer leader known as Shaal'Shera was not pleased. She accepted long ago that her Wayfarer group would never share Strike's vision, the leader of Cliff-Spider's other Cluster. Since both her Cluster and Strike's warriors rarely encountered one another, she assumed that like her, Strike was content to avoid a confrontation. Shaal'Shera wasn't particularly happy to learn of another agent trying to infiltrate her territory. This, she thought, might upset the delicate balance between Cliff-Spider's two Wayfarer groups.

Two days ago, Rogen Trish, her diminutive and talented spy, told her about a large disguised Jackal who worked in the King's palace. Initially, her anger emerged from her sense of failure. Perhaps Shaal'Shera was also a little jealous. As far as she knew, no Wayfarer had ever been so close to the city's ruler. What could he possibly hope to accomplish, she thought? Kill King Raldowin? Gather information? Her curiosity drove her to accept a meeting with the mysterious Wayfarer, who was apparently eager to meet her.

A knock at her door broke her concentration. Rogen slowly opened the portal, poking his head to survey Shaal's chamber. "I'm sorry to disturb you, but I've been knocking at your door for a while now."

"Oh, I'm sorry Rogen, I've been preparing." Shaal'Shera stood up and straightened herself. "Is he here yet?"

"Yes, he's waiting in the meeting room." Rogen paused, trying to determine his captain's mood. "Shall I tell him that you aren't ready for him yet?"

"No, no, I'm ready." Shaal'Shera affirmed. "Time to meet this tall, mysterious and dark stranger." Rogen was happy to note that his captain's biting sense of humour was still alive.

As Shaal'Shera opened the door, the man Rogen called Rekla, stood up and nodded, acknowledging her superior rank. Shaal'Shera glanced at the big man, not quite knowing what to expect from the Jackal. His manner and disposition expelled any doubts she may have had about the man's identity as a Wayfarer. Shaal'Shera marvelled at his sheer size, and wondered how the Jackal managed to find work in the King's palace.

Before Shaal'Shera could voice her concerns, the rigid Jackal began speaking. "I know my presence in Cliff-Spider, and my activities are somewhat irregular, but I am ready to answer any of your questions, and make you an offer." Shaal'Shera smiled at his stern disposition.

"Well, you have little choice but to answer my questions. After all, the reason you are here, that I accepted this meeting, is precisely for that reason." Rekla sat down, obviously respecting her frankness. "First of all, tell me where you are from?" Shaal'Shera asked.

"Cry-Star," Rekla replied.

"Cry-Star?" Shaal'Shera repeated, surprised at his answer. "Don't you have enough work to keep you busy in the capital city?"

"Oh yes we do, captain. I am here on orders from our... leader." It was plain to Shaal'Shera that Rekla paused and carefully chose the word "leader."

"Your leader? You mean your captain?"

Rekla was not pleased that he had exposed himself so obviously to her. Clearly she had noted his hesitation. "Yes, my captain, but also our leader."

"What do you mean your leader?" Shaal'Shera exclaimed, confused by Rekla's words. The large Wayfarer slowly lifted his vest to reveal a tattoo of a fire ball located on his shoulder. "What does it mean?" Shaal'Shera asked.

"It stands for Firedrake, our leader. You see, in Cry-Star we are all united. I come to spread Firedrake's message, to see if Cliff-Spider's Wayfarers will hear our leader's words and unite to strengthen each other's cause." Shaal'Shera's hearty laughter started Rekla. "You haven't heard of Strike have you?" Shaal'Shera asked the confused Jackal.

"Yes I have. Few people in our organizations have not heard of him. Then I take it the rumours of his fierceness and independence are true?"

"More than you know." Shaal'Shera stood over the seated Rekla, shaking her head at his ignorance. "He'll never agree to work under anybody, or with someone who doesn't agree with him."

"Then I presume that you are not so hasty to close yourself off as he is?" Rekla asked, hoping for a victory of his own.

"No, of course not. I like to think of myself as a reasonable person." As Shaal'Shera finished her sentence, she looked over at Rogen who nodded in approval. Shaal'Shera couldn't help but smile at her friend's loyalty. She felt comfortable and secure in his presence. "Still, I am nobody's fool. What does this Firedrake have to offer?" Shaal'Shera asked.

Rekla was pleased that she seemed interested. "While I am in this city, I am entirely at your disposal. Any information I may find while in the palace is yours."

Shaal'Shera was intrigued but she wondered what he wanted; no one was this selfless, she thought. "What do you expect in return Rekla?" Shaal'Shera replied.

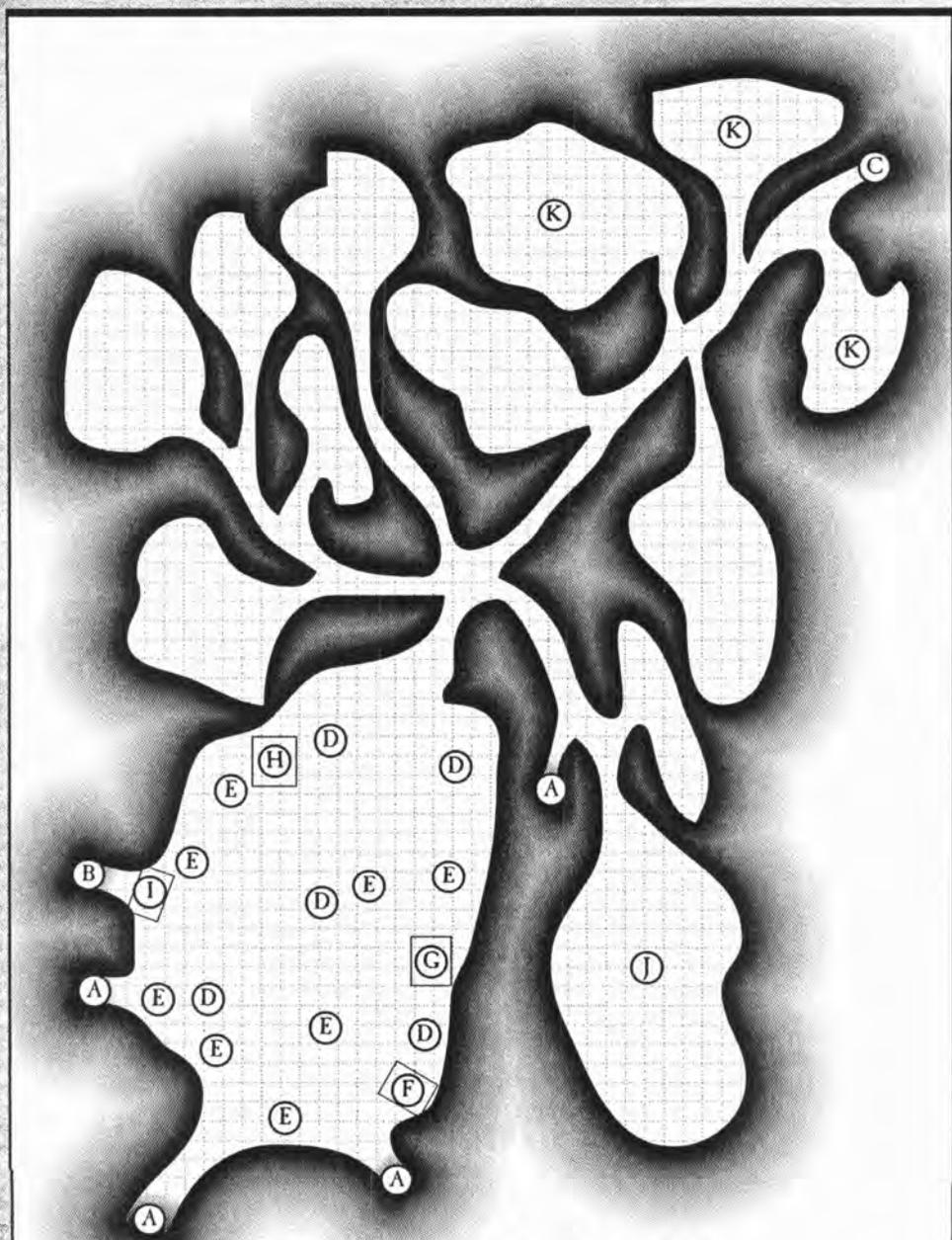
"Simply that you agree to meet with Firedrake with an open mind."

Shaal'Shera pondered and paced for several minutes before she spoke. "Very well, I will meet with this Firedrake. But be warned, your leader could start a conflict among Wayfarers. If Strike finds out, he could view Firedrake's move in Cliff-Spider as a threat."

She's right, Rekla thought. "I will make sure Firedrake is made aware of the consequences."

"Good," Shaal'Shera replied. "One last thing Rekla. While you're in this city, you do things my way. If you do not accept these terms, I am prepared to escort you personally out of Cliff-Spider," Shaal'Shera pronounced with renewed confidence.

"There will be no need for that Shaal'Shera," Rekla said confidently. "I agree to your terms." The Wayfarers shook hands for the first time. It had been a productive meeting for both of them.



THE BONEYARD

- | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|---|--------------------------|
| A | Known passage to the surface | E | Inns and merchants | H | Pand-Jer hangout |
| B | Secret passage to Freetown | F | Wayfarer hangout | I | The Rackna |
| C | Unexplored passage | G | Innis Rog's Emporium of the Sundry and Weird | J | The Unaccountables' cave |
| D | Pubs and bars | K | Known Kourakis caves | | |

THE BONEYARD

In the days following the devastating War of the Houses, dead and dying soldiers littered the battlefield outside Cliff-Spider's impenetrable walls; among them, many Bone-Wail abominations lay wounded. The city's ruler at the time decided to create a mass grave to place all the remains that were scattered across the battlefield. After making sure that no wounded Cliff-Spider soldiers remained on the field, Wird Weavers manipulated the ground and forced it to absorb all of the bodies. Freetown's hearty inhabitants have dubbed the site of the massacre the Boneyard — a fitting appellation for the past brutalities of war. Freetown's populace avoids travelling through the field. Although the Wird Weavers in charge of clearing the field did a competent job of removing the bodies, the hands of time have marked the ground. The dry and lumpy soil has cracked and curved like the scaly bark of an ancient tree. The bones of victims now turned to stone and long thought to be lost to time, protrude through the cracks like hands reaching for the sky. This sight alone is enough to dissuade even the bravest adventurer from passing through.

Years after the creation of the Boneyard, the inhabitants of Freetown unearthed a number of small holes and crevices leading to a veritable maze of tunnels and subterranean caves. The largest one of these caverns became a haven for criminals; it also came to be known as the Boneyard. The cave itself is a testament to the atrocity of death. The tunnels, the walls, the floor, and the ceiling of the cave are a mosaic of fossilized bones. This image, at once repulsive and fascinating, perfectly summarizes the cave's atmosphere — it is a fitting place for the inhabitants of the Boneyard.

The main area of the Boneyard is an

The Guided Tour

You wanna go where? I don't think we should go. It's repulsive, dirty and dangerous. No, that's just what it looks like; the people who spend time there are worse. Unless you're really tough, or you've got powerful friends, you shouldn't even think about going — even the Watchers don't go down there! It's no place for someone like me, that's for sure. Well, ok, if you insist. We'll just walk through quickly. Trust me, you won't want to stay for long.

The Boneyard's Nocturnal Visitors

Anyone brave enough to pass through the Boneyard at night can expect an uninviting welcome. A number of unpleasant creatures and residents are likely to surprise casual players. The most blatant threat to travellers does not live and breathe. Petrified corpses of deceased soldiers protrude from the cracked soil and are likely to injure novice explorers who walk through the Boneyard. Numerous sharp rocks and bones that have since turned to stone litter the floor. Anyone who walks through the yard must make a Coordination + Acrobatics roll against a Target Number (TN) of 7 to avoid falling or stepping on the jagged edges. Characters who fail take 4 points of Hard Damage.

The Boneyard's inhabitants are even more dangerous than the ground they thread. Game Masters (GM) who wish to include encounters can consult the following chart. On a roll of 1 to 4 on a ten-sided die, adventurers will come face-to-face with Tiger-Wolves. On a roll of 5 to 8, players will encounter the Boneyard's many thieves, who will attack the group, and attempt to rob them. From 9 to 10, the unfortunate characters will encounter the Boneyard's most dangerous dwellers, the vicious Kourakis. See page 50 and 141 for information on the Kourakis. The Tiger-Wolf is described on page 206 of the Providence World Book. GMs who wish to substitute Tiger-Wolves for other creatures can look to Providence's The Ecology for detailed descriptions of other creatures.

agglomeration of cheap inns and taverns, brothels and gambling dens, all built in the fashion of a veritable shanty town. Rope bridges crisscross the ceiling of the cave, allowing swift passage from one quarter to another. Lawless, the Boneyard is a haven for all the area's fugitives. Here, one can find anonymity and take reprieve from the Watchers. No one knows for certain how many people live in the Boneyard, but the Militia estimates that it contains 500 to 1,000 people, mostly Fallen.

Virtually isolated from the world above it, the Boneyard suffers from its own set of problems. Here, the words "survival of the fittest" take on a very brutal meaning. Violence is an everyday occurrence in the lives of its citizens. The only security one can find is by joining the largest criminal band in Cliff-Spider, the Pand-Jer. These villains view anyone who is not part of their gang suspiciously.

The Boneyard's isolated world smells of sweat, rotten matter, refuse, blood and hostility. Only truly resilient or demented souls can survive in this pit for extended periods of time. The Recognizers, Providence's infamous bounty hunters, are reluctant to venture forth in the Boneyard unless it is absolutely necessary. Murder, theft, prostitution and other unsavory activities take place here on a daily basis. Nonetheless, characters can find anything they desire in the

Boneyard. Illegal goods, narcotic plants such as the Bronze-Dust, weapons, mercenaries, and assassins are all available, as are many forms of pleasure. Of course, even the most careful adventurer is in constant danger of encountering the sharp edge of a blade or the venomous claws of a thief. Nonetheless, for the truly adventurous, the Boneyard is ripe with opportunity and adventure.

The Rackna

The Rackna is undoubtedly one of the Boneyard's seediest and most frequented bars. The wood and stone structure protrudes from one of the cavern's walls. The bar has two large open rooms for rowdy patrons. One of the rooms has a stage for the Boneyard's few and courageous performing artists.

TRAASK'S LAW

The biggest fish in a sea full of sharks is a Gargoyle called Vaska Traask. The self-styled "Mayor of the Boneyard," as he laughingly calls himself, heads the Pand-Jer, the biggest and fiercest gang in Cliff-Spider. Roughly translated, the name means "They-Who-Embrace-Death," which says volumes about the membership of the criminal ring. Most members of the Pand-Jer are Jackals, although the group includes a ragtag collection of Fallen and Redeemed of various Troupials. They operate throughout the Boneyard, Freetown, and the Roundabout, and are not above staging the occasional raid on some of the smaller Free-Keeps. Their main base of operation, however, is the Boneyard. Here, Traask controls everything with all the ruthless efficiency and criminal cunning only a man with his background can muster.

Traask was once a Watcher who was kicked off the force for abusive, violent behaviour. The organization also suspected that he was involved with a



number of criminals; they were right. Even when he was a part of the Watchers, Traask had a network of thieves, assassins, prostitutes and smugglers working for him. Now, Vaska Traask has his dirty finger in almost every criminal pie in Cliff-Spider. He runs brothels and illegal gambling dens throughout the city. Traask also operates a very profitable ring of smugglers who bring a diverse selection of narcotic plants into the city. Traask is the undisputed lord of the Boneyard. Nothing occurs in the musty cave without his knowledge or his approval. Furthermore, anybody who makes money in the Boneyard pays a percentage to him; refusal to pay is not an option. Cliff-Spider's Recognizers have placed a highly lucrative contract of 4 000 Natlaw Tasks on his head.

If Traask has a redeeming quality, it is that he operates with a certain code of honour. Once he has given his word, Traask will stand by it until death. On the other hand, those who do strike such a bargain with him better hold up their end of the agreement.

People often mention Traask and the Reaver in the same breath. Most people believe that the master of the underworld in Cliff-Spider has close ties with the crime lord. In fact, Traask is a very close ally of the Reaver's. As the person in charge of the Reaver's interests in Cliff-Spider, Traask enjoys considerable clout. With the Reaver's powerful backing, Traask has been able to expand his criminal empire. "The Mayor" also has an alliance with Strike and his group of violent Wayfarers. Many Jackals belong to both Traask and Strike's organizations. Traask is in charge of smuggling weapons into Cliff-Spider for Strike. In addition, whenever Strike leads a successful raid that nets him merchandise, Traask is the one who redistributes it, garnering both groups a tidy profit.

THE PAND-JER

Members of the Pand-Jer are a proud lot, and enjoy flaunting their allegiance. In places like the Boneyard, the Barrens and the Roundabout, if people encounter a member of the Pand-Jer, they will cooperate, albeit fearfully, with the scoundrels. Locals whisper tales of the unfortunate souls who tried to stand up to the crew in dark alleys and under the cover of the night. All members of the Pand-Jer sport elaborate tattoos made with extracts from two plants found only in the Boneyard. These tattoos are generally placed on the arms or shoulders, allowing members to cover them up if necessary. Though they can easily remove the tattoos, the competitive members of the band generally consider it cowardly to do so.



Unlike the other members, it is rumoured that Traask's tattoos are permanent. The Watchers have standing orders to arrest on sight anyone wearing such tattoos, and to do so with any necessary force.

INNIS ROG, MAN OF MYSTERY

The only independent soul in the Boneyard is a Rat who goes by the name of Innis Rog. Depending on whom you ask, Innis is a merchant, a thief, a poet, a member of the Wind Knives, a former Recognizer Solitaire, King Raldowin's personal advisor, or Lord Bis'Kell himself in disguise. No one has ever witnessed Innis do anything other than lounge around an inn, or recline on his favourite chair at the small stall he operates (Innis Rog's Emporium of the Sundry & Weird, Sell All, Buy All). In addition to selling and trading baubles and toys, Innis occasionally reveals secrets to deserving and attentive ears. There are more stories about Innis Rog in circulation than there are rumours concerning the upcoming war. If you listen well, Innis has travelled everywhere, done everything, and knows everybody. Aside from the fact that no one, neither Traask, nor the Watchers, will touch him, not much exists to prove that Innis is anything more than, well, a Rat. Nonetheless, his secrets are not cheap. As he likes to say, "Hey, an ex-Solitaire has expenses, ya know?!"



THE KOURAKIS (WING-EATERS)

"Munchmunchmunchmunchmunchmunch..."

— Typical Kourakis

The Guided Tour

Ok, that's it, we're getting out of here. What's down that way? I have no idea, and I don't want to find out. Nobody knows where all the passages in the Boneyard go. As far as I know, no one's ever returned from exploring further. Whatever's out there is nasty enough that the people who live here avoid it. That's all I need to know. Let's go somewhere I can breathe!

When Cliff-Spider's rulers created the mass grave that became the Boneyard, they did not know that Cliff-Spider's subterranean freshwater lake ran through a series of underground tunnels. Erosion from the passage of the water created several large caves. After the War of the Houses, many abominations and social outcasts fled to the caves and tunnels under Cliff-Spider. Fortunately for the outcasts,

the running water brought with it garbage from Cliff-Spider. When this refuse proved to be insufficient, the abominations turned on the bodies surrounding them, and started living off the flesh of dead Yas'Wailians in their graves. Through breeding and adaptation to life in their new environment, the outcasts mutated, a fate not uncommon for other Yas'Wailians.

After generations of adaptation, the bodies of the outcasts became shorter and infinitely more flexible. They grew strong, wide hands to easily dig tunnels. They lost their wings, replacing them with rough, bony skeletal protrusions that they use as weapons.



Another change visited upon the unfortunate creatures, known as the Kourakis, was their taste for fresh Yas'Wailian flesh; they began to crave it above anything else. Many lost travellers have found their way between the teeth of a Kourakis. The eyes of the creatures also grew accustomed to the everlasting darkness of the underground, and the presence of light leaves them blinded and in pain. Generally, the Kourakis fear the day and refuse to walk above ground except at night. The Kourakis rarely venture outside of their caves in any case. The only time they do so is when they find themselves in need of food. This is still a rare occurrence thanks to the amount of garbage and refuse coming from Cliff-Spider. Whenever the need strikes however, the Kourakis head out under the cover of night, and raid the outer reaches of the Boneyard.

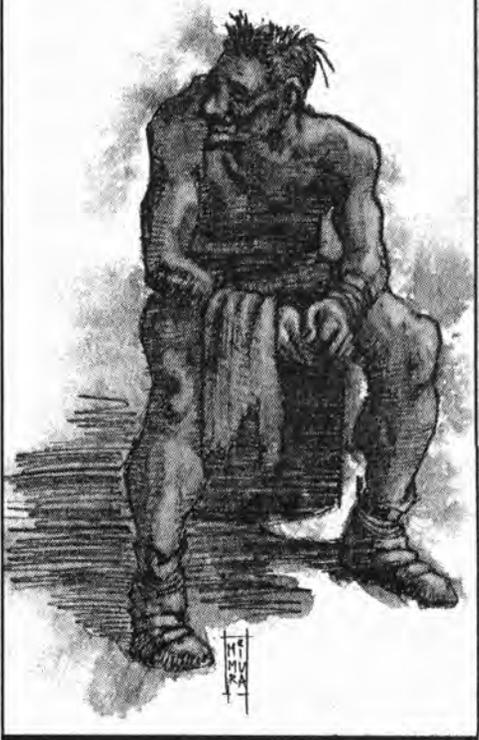
One of the most peculiar practices the Kourakis follow is the appropriation of wings from their victims. Deprived of their own, these creatures will usually cut or rip off the wings of Yas'Wailians and attach them to their own skeletal wings. This practice has earned them the name of Kourakis, or "Wing-Eaters." In a macabre imitation of the caste system, whichever Kourakis sports the most impressive set of stolen wings becomes the leader of the group.

The recent forays of brave adventurers into the Kourakis' mazes suggest that only a small number of the beasts exist, perhaps as few as fifty. However, there are many hidden tunnels and caves in the underground. It is possible that more Kourakis exist further away from the Boneyard. At King Raldowin's request, the Recognizers placed a bounty on the Kourakis in an effort to exterminate the dangerous creatures. The reward of 200 Natlaw Tasks per confirmed kill sparked an interest in the bounty hunting of Kourakis. Unfortunately, few people have claimed rewards.

The Unaccountable

Lately, the people labelled "Unaccountable," Cliff-Spider's insane, deformed, and rejected inhabitants, as well as people infected with incurable diseases, started congregating in one of the Boneyard's lowest caves. Hundreds of Unaccountable made their home in the cave. They even formed families, something they could not do in the city. The fact that they tolerate such a poor quality of life speaks volumes about their desire for a chance at a life without degradation.

Generally, visitors to the Boneyard avoid the Unaccountables' cave. Fugitives and caste Exiles however, find that they can successfully hide from the authorities among Cliff-Spider's rejected population.



THE ROUNDABOUT

1 Residential Caves

A Adrikall Temple (D'Shau)

C Sunarius Keep

F School

G Park

2 Militia Caves

B Militia Keep

M To Guildholm (Drilling Grounds)

3 Watchers' Caves

D Watcher outpost

E Watcher training area

4 The Retreat

D Watcher outpost

H Anodyne outpost

5 The Weaver's Cave

D Watcher outpost

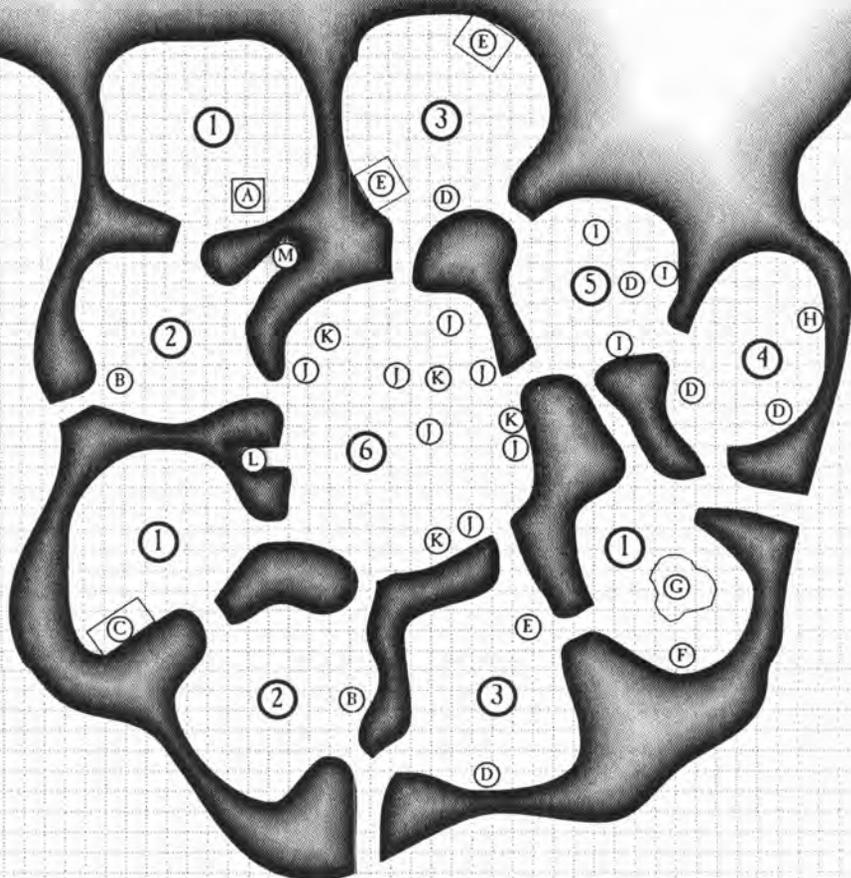
I Granary

6 Market Cave

J Shop / Bazaar

K Inn

L To Guildholm (Main Cave)



FREETOWN (OUTSIDE SPIRE WALLS)

THE ROUNDABOUT

"It isn't much, but at least it's better than outside!"

— Roark Thatch, Hyena

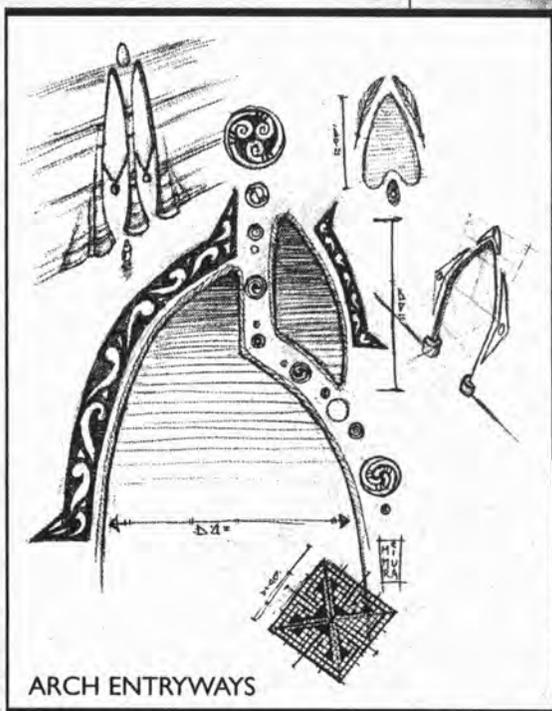
The Roundabout is Cliff-Spider's lowest and most frequented level. Stretching up for approximately one-quarter of a mile, the city's inhabitants dubbed this area the Roundabout because of the circular pattern of its main caves. This section houses Cliff-Spider's wealthiest Fallen (roughly 10,000), most of the city's Redeemed (approx. 890,000), and a few members of the Fortuned caste. The Roundabout, with its narrow corridors, overpopulation and giant stalagmites, makes it near impossible for an intruding army to gain access to the higher levels. Watcher and Militia outposts secure "choke points" — areas where the few tunnels lead to the upper levels. These fortified areas could resist any enemy's onslaught for days.

Ten major caves form the Roundabout; five of them open into Freetown, while passageways connect six of the caves to the central cavern. The Roundabout's ceilings are roughly 400-feet high, while its walls are dark and rough. The passages linking one cave to the next are close to 200-feet high. Although some quarters are scattered throughout the caves of the Roundabout, residents generally build their homes within the caves' sturdy walls. Holes and cave entrances dot the walls everywhere, while rope bridges run from one side to the other, and up and down the walls.

Within the caverns, stalagmites rise abruptly from the floor like the Moaning Bridge spire juts out of the Green Barrens's smooth canopy. Scattered irregularly throughout the five main caves, Wird Weavers use the stalagmites to hold the Wirdlight globes that illuminate the deeper parts of the Roundabout. People also attach Cliff-Spider standards and banners to most of

The Guided Tour

Yeah, impressive, isn't it? Seeing the spire from the outside doesn't prepare you for what's on the inside. The city doesn't even use half of the available space. You should get to know this area. If there's a war coming like people keep saying and you're outside, everyone will try to pull back within the spire. You should know your way around here; there'll be a lot of people fighting to get in. I'd make friends with someone if I were you. Mc? Yeah, I know some people here. Maybe we can talk about that later. Let me show you the city.



them, while others hold street signs and directions to the Roundabout's important locales. Certain Fallen families use the caves' larger stalagmites as residential quarters.

THE SPIRE'S FALLEN

Countless years ago, Wird casters hollowed out the insides of some of the small stalagmites, and crafted solitary prison cells. The particularly brutal captors placed recalcitrant prisoners in the damp and dark jails. If the carnivorous rodents who resided within the caves did not devour them slowly, many vicious jailors left their prisoners to rot. Although the thought of inhabiting these same cells disgusts most people, the chambers now serve to house most of the Roundabout's Fallen population.

Because of the space restrictions for the Fallen, many of them find themselves sharing their living quarters with other families. Due to the work cycles of both the Free-Keeps and Cliff-Spider, nearly half the population works during the day cycle, and the other half at night. As one family gets up and leaves for work, another comes in to take its place to rest. The Fallen who live in the Roundabout are currently content to have work. Nonetheless, many of them have suggested enlarging the lower caves in order to offer decent housing to everyone. So far, Cliff-Spider's rulers have yet to respond. Wird crafters are reluctant to make changes because they claim that enlarging the spire's lower caves would weaken the city's entire structure.

LIFE IN THE CITY

The Guided Tour

You can get used to living in stone, or so I'm told. Personally, I don't think I would like living with that many people inside a cave; it's pretty crowded in here. Watch yourself, we're heading towards the market. It's even more hectic than the Freemarket.

The Roundabout's central cavern holds the market and bazaar. Here, barter is the standard currency. The Redeemed who live in the Roundabout own and operate most of the shops, while the Fallen offer their services or their scavenged products.

On the outskirts of the market, and along various caves leading to it, beggars and panhandlers line the walls. Their presence is less noticeable than in Freetown, but one cannot easily dismiss them. Street urchins, thieves and prostitutes are also in good numbers here, but they usually tour the market area, rather than the residential zones.

Two strong Keeps mark the presence of the militia, which occupies two caves near the exit to Freetown. Cliff-Spider's Watchers on the other hand, have guard rooms in one cave near the entrance from Freetown, and one cave on the other side of the Market cavern. Resident artists carved elaborate sigils and designs on the archways of each cave's entrance. Large openings cut in the

walls allow the natural light to fall in and flood many of the Roundabout's caverns. In the event of a war, either Wird-trained militia guards or the Watchers can magically raise the stone gates that lead to Freetown.

There are four residential caves within the Roundabout. Various small houses dot the landscape where some of the Roundabout's merchants reside. A small, clean park rests at the centre of one cave, while other caves lack any superfluous space. Since daylight filters in the residential caves, few Wirdlights are needed during the day.

The Market cavern contains the Roundabout's better inns, as well as some of the better shops and artisans. The only school in the Roundabout serves the young Fortuned. Once a month, a contingent of Anodynes from Freetown visit this school to help the people most in need of their services.

THE WEAVERS' CAVE

Cliff-Spider's labourers and artisans live within the Weavers' cave. Here, Fallen and Redeemed caste members work all day and all night crafting what Cliff-Spider's population requires: pots, blankets, clothes, tools, furniture, and anything that the workers' worn hands can make. Wird crafters, who use their skills to shape homes, consider these common household items too menial to create. Merchants carry most of the items to the market of the Roundabout to be bartered away. The Weavers' cave also serves to stock the incoming produce from the Free-Keeps. This cavern has a large entrance permitting chariots to deliver the goods. Members of the Fortuned caste who work for the Trade Council oversee the distribution of products. Fallen and Redeemed workers aid them to separate the produce, setting the best aside for the higher castes. Lastly, merchants load up their carts to take the food to their various destinations.

Merchants from the Roundabout's Market cave, and some Fallen, come here twice a week to obtain excess products. This includes anything the inhabitants of the higher levels no longer consider fresh enough for their consumption. Afterwards, they take their finds back and barter on their own stalls and tables. The distribution is on a first-come, first-serve basis, and if not for the ever-vigilant Watchers, the quarrelling and competing mob would tear itself apart.

The Guided Tour

This is where we want to be. Artisans make most of the stuff you'll need in here. It's also a good place to find work, if you have the right skills.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The Guided Tour

Ok, if you're interested in living in the spire, this next section is probably where you'd live since it's well defended. Personally though, I wouldn't live here. It's much too crowded, and too dirty. I think you're better off living outside. Still, that's just my opinion. We'll take a look and you can make up your own mind. Follow me.

Watchers to redistribute. Travellers can find a few cheap inns and taverns in the Retreat. Although there is some gang criminal activity, the Watchers do a fair job to ensure that everything remains as peaceful as possible.

Finally, the Retreat holds all the water for this level. Redeemed workers who take care of distributing the water throughout the Roundabout tend to the system's capillaries. Watchers are present throughout the cave, closely guarding the system.

GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

ANODYNES

Like elsewhere throughout the Alliance of Kings, Cliff-Spider's Anodynes have devoted themselves to bettering the lives of the city's lower castes. Anodynes can be found in Freetown and within certain Free-Keeps. Most healers however, operate in the Roundabout. In Freetown and under Advocate Durin Mal'Dova's watchful eye, the Anodynes operate two shelters. One of these shelters, Caring-Hand, sits near the spire between two of the guard towers. The other, Blessed-Heart, is situated on the far side of the Walkway.

Within the shelters, anyone can find food, medical assistance, and a place to sleep. Blessed-Heart even doubles as a traveller's hostel, where visitors can find free lodging and cheap meals — though donations are always welcome. Since space is limited, Blessed-Heart is constantly full. For that reason, people who are not in need of serious medical attention cannot stay more than three consecutive nights. Blessed-Heart's kitchen, however, is fairly large and allows a great number of people to pass through. To stave off the cost of their efforts, the Anodynes receive donations from certain well-to-do individuals within Cliff-Spider.

The shelter of Caring-Hand offers mainly health-related assistance, and is the main housing for Anodynes within Freetown. The Advocate himself resides in Caring-Hand.

Roughly half of Cliff-Spider's Anodynes remain in the city, dedicating themselves to their work in the two shelters. The other half travels the city's environs, bringing help, care, and whatever else the beleaguered and needy population require. Approximately 1,000 Anodynes call Cliff-Spider home. New arrivals are directed to the Caring-Hand shelter house, where they may present themselves to Durin Mal'Dova, and offer their services.

Caring-Hand boasts the biggest and best stocked herbal/alchemy shop in the Alliance of Kings. The main store is part of Caring-Hand, but there are smaller subsidiary shops throughout the rest of Cliff-Spider, and in the largest Free-Keeps. Cordian Kolemi is the Herbalist in charge of the shops. Cordian, a friendly Rat, maintains close ties with both the Guild of Messengers and certain Horizon Striders who often pass by Cliff-Spider. Both groups provide the Anodynes with excellent herbs and other exotic materials. Kolemi has also hired adventurers and explorers to seek out rare and specific items, such as the Belrasi flower that grows in the Exodus Plain, and Loriko leaves, found only in the Deep.

Certain brave Anodynes will also travel into the Boneyard to acquire moss or fungi, or to help the outcasts who live in the darkness. However, several incidents have prompted many Anodynes to seek the protection of sturdy warriors whenever they venture down into the Boneyard's maze-like caves. Only one Anodyne maintains permanent residence within the Boneyard. She is Yvelle Da'Shik, a Fortuned Dove. Yvelle is also a Wird Dancer, and has been helping the poor and downtrodden of Cliff-Spider for well over twenty years. She resides with the Unaccountable population of the Boneyard. Her word is law, and everyone seeks her advice and counsel. She is devoted to helping her brothers and sisters who were cast out of society.

DURIN MAL'DOVA, ADVOCATE OF CLIFF-SPIDER

Durin Mal'Dova, a Swan Wird Weaver, is famous throughout Cliff-Spider for his singing voice. Whether speaking or singing, Durin is capable of arousing the same range of emotions. This particular ability has made him a powerful orator, one who can stir the heart of anyone who listens. Because of his increased sensibility towards the feelings and emotions of others, Durin has chosen to remain emotionally separated from the Anodynes' charges. **This saddens him greatly, but he feels it is necessary. Caring for the many terminally sick patients causes him severe depression.** Durin is particularly sensitive and emotional, and surrounding himself daily with feeble individuals drains him considerably.

Durin makes himself useful to the Anodynes by representing their cases in the royal courts of the Alliance. He also meets with members of higher castes, who invariably become much more charitable toward the Anodyne cause after a good long talk with Durin.

Durin's personal tale, however, is one of sorrow. Early in life, Durin met his life mate, an intelligent, beautiful young maiden of Troupial Dove. Noniska Vellar

had been receptive to Durin's advances, and had over time become quite in love with him. They soon sealed their union, and shortly after, Noniska became pregnant with their first child. Unfortunately, mere days before giving birth, Noniska was murdered in their bed. Durin was away meeting with a minor lord, a rich merchant from the High City. This man, Lochenko Hecarte, a Fortuned member of Troupial Gargoyle, had once courted Noniska unsuccessfully. Though the Watchers never offered proof, Durin remains convinced that Lochenko had Noniska, and by extension his first child, killed. To this day, Durin searches for proof that the master merchant was behind his wife's death.

D'SHAU MONKS

Adrikall Temple stands inside the Roundabout's fourth cave. Close to 700 D'Shau Monks call the Temple home, while another 200 or so spend their time travelling between Free-Keeps and other nearby cities. The Caretaker of Adrikall Temple is Cormen Panshiro, a Fortuned Eagle. Cormen has been the Caretaker for less than a year, following the sudden death of the former Caretaker, Olika Demen. The monks did not unanimously elect him, and a certain uneasiness accompanied his ascension to the role. Cormen is perhaps the most likely candidate for the position right now, but his personal abilities are nowhere near that of the former caretaker's. Many monks fear that in the trying days to come, Cormen will prove to be a liability more than an asset.

Five Journey-makers second Cormen Panshiro, each of which oversees one of Cliff-Spider's cavernous levels. Garnet Obei, a Fallen Hawk, oversees Freetown, while Shima Foskey, a Fortuned Dove, is in charge of the Roundabout. Osai Koumeh, a Blessed Raven, is responsible for Mid-City. Tonia Syl, the Journey-maker in charge of the High City, is a Blessed Dragon, and the Rat Finelius Desmon sees to the needs of the monks in and around the Free-Keeps.

In addition to Adrikall Temple, the D'Shau Monks also run a school in High City. Tonia Syl operates the Calm-Purity school, and forty of the wisest monks in Cliff-Spider staff the institution; the Alliance of Kings Trade Council funds the school. Each year, Calm-Purity accepts 200 young boys and girls, aged between 12 and 16. These students are always of either Pure or Blessed status. The school chooses them after 400 to 500 or more applicants go through stringent testing to figure out their aptitudes. The D'Shau Monks only select the best children.

Throughout Cliff-Spider, the D'Shau's small and demure monasteries decorate the city's landscape, reminding the populace that there are selfless individuals who work tirelessly to better the city. Travelling monks are always a warm and welcome sight, and all members can stay for free within the chambers of every D'Shau dwelling. Though most of the city's monks live within Adrikall Temple, as many as 200 are, at any given time, dispersed; they reside within all the small monasteries.

Adrikall Temple is the repository of the D'Shau's crystals in Cliff-Spider, which they import in moderate quantity from Cry-Star.

The city's D'Shau Monks have chosen a dark purple robe as their official garb. It is adorned with a deep green sash — the same shade as the official Cliff-Spider banner.

HORIZON STRIDERS

With the threat of impending war hanging over the Alliance's head, many people believe that the Yas'Wailians' only means of survival lies on their home world. The link that could lead them back to Yas'Wail is the gates that originally brought the rebels to Providence. Since the Cartographers, the world's original explorers, are keeping their cards close to their vests, the Alliance's hopes of finding the gates have fallen on the shoulders of the Guild of Messengers, and the valiant Horizon Striders.

Nowadays, few people see Horizon Striders in Cliff-Spider. Most members of the stalwart storytellers are on missions for various people, from the leaders of the Alliance of Kings to wealthy nobles. The few Striders that either pass through Cliff-Spider or reside in the city live mostly in the Roundabout or Mid-City. There are no formal gatherings of Horizon Striders, though curious citizens can usually find one or two in various taverns, telling stories of the wonders they experienced. Occasionally, a lucky Fallen might spot one running through Freetown.

Hundreds of years ago, the Striders and the Cartographers were united. Remnants of the schism that split the Horizon Striders from the Guild of Cartographers are especially prevalent in Cliff-Spider — birthplace of the Striders and home of Sirus Khohall, the head of the Cartographers. Guild Master Khohall keeps his plans a secret. For the most part, he stays clear of the Striders, and they avoid him and his guild members. It is no secret that SIRRUS resents the increasing importance of both the Striders and the Messengers; clearly Khohall views them as a threat to his guild's survival.

THE KESTRELS

Cliff-Spider's Kestrel population, numbering approximately a thousand members, remains arguably the most important one in Providence. The threat of impending war has forced King Raldowin to consider sending emissaries to the Kestrels in the city. He hopes that should the need arise, the order could support the city's troops in an eventual conflict with the Lost Tribes.

The Kestrels segregate themselves within Sunarias Keep, which stands inside one of the caves of the Roundabout. They teach new recruits the art of Shii'Klin and the ways of the Kestrel.

Thanks to the political climate of Cliff-Spider, the Kestrels find a lot of work as bodyguards. Due to the impending war and the caste conflict, many nobles are concerned about becoming the targets of either Wayfarers or outside threats. The Pure often consider hiring the services of a Kestrel as a necessity. It further sets the nobility apart from those members of society too poor or obviously not important enough to have such warriors at their service. The Kestrels are content to bask in this facet of Cliff-Spider's society. The increased demand for their skills brings Kestrels tidy profits, which they put to good use furthering their order's goals.

Although any Kestrel would discount the claim, a member of the triumvirate of elder leaders, along with his personal Gath Hadatchi, is rumoured to live in Cliff-Spider. This would lend credence to the rumour circulating among Kestrels that King Raldowin has personally hired a Gath Hadatchi warrior, along with several experienced Kestrels. Some people believe that Raldowin wishes to send them on a particularly dangerous mission: the infiltration of Bone-Wail. What they would do once within the prison city remains anyone's guess. It is however, safe to assume that they would gather information on what's happening inside the Warden-run city. The Alliance fears that Warden Elarian, ruler of Bone-Wail, might be planning treachery against Cliff-Spider and her allies. Any information the Kestrels could glean from within Bone-Wail's petrified fortifications could prove to be vital to the survival of the city.

THE RECOGNIZERS

Sierra Kudlow, a Pure Dove, is the Administrator for Cliff-Spider's Recognizers. A Fortuned Hawk named Hurin Seger, the treasurer, supports Sierra in her duties. Below them are four Taskers. Two Taskers, a Fortuned Eagle named Theren Deb and a Fallen Raven named Lissya Romel, assist Treasurer Seger in his duties. The other two Taskers, a Fortuned Gargoyle called Carver and a Blessed Hawk named Arya Tourmalin, are the academy's teachers and trainers.

The Recognizers own and operate a small fortified keep called the Sentinel Academy, which stands in one Mid-City's caves. Generally, all the city's bounty hunters train and receive their contracts within their headquarters.

Due to the organization's tidy profits in the city, the Sentinel Academy's expansive training grounds can make any visiting Watcher or soldier green with envy. Geared towards such skills as stealth, tracking, and survival, the academy has training facilities that present a hefty challenge to both new and experienced members. In effect, Cliff-Spider's Recognizers are some of the best trained and equipped of the Alliance. Few people can challenge the supremacy of the Recognizers in Cliff-Spider. They benefit from their location inside the mightiest city of the entire Alliance of Kings. Since Sierra Kudlow is confident that the academy is virtually immune from direct attacks, she can concentrate all her efforts on training her soldiers and accumulating the most lucrative Warrants.

King Raldowin and Sierra Kudlow enjoy a good relationship. Because of their friendship, carefully selected Recognizers have started training various members of the army in the art of jungle warfare and survival. For this purpose alone, the organization has appointed two Taskers and eight Assistants. Both Taskers are former Solitaires — experienced hunters who work alone. They abandoned their roles in order to train the army. Holver Rogass, a Fortuned male Hawk, and Rassica Del'Akarte, a Fortuned female Dragon, make monthly trips out into the jungle borders. Their Assistants accompany them to train a full Legion (1000 men and women), of soldiers. Progress is slow because the armed forces are not experts in jungle warfare. However, Sierra and King Raldowin know the difference such training might make when a war does erupt. It could allow members of Cliff-Spider's military to launch preemptive strikes against an approaching enemy.

One more Recognizer of note calls Cliff-Spider his home: Rowein Castard, a Fortuned Gargoyle. Rowein is one of the fiercest, and most successful Solitaires to roam Providence. He has collared over 100 Warrants (the Recognizers' wanted criminals), in his thirty-year career. He is the Recognizer the organization usually sends in the Boneyard when such a need arises. Castard is even more of a phenomenon when one considers that he has neither Shard abilities, nor Wird capabilities. Castard has only failed to bring his prey back alive once, very early in his career. The sight of his black bolas (three smooth, round stones linked together with thick leather cords), and huge stone war hammer, makes even the toughest Warrants regret ever giving-in to their criminal urges.

PEOPLE'S KNIGHTS

Given the strength of the caste system within Cliff-Spider, People's Knights cause extreme reactions among the cautious citizenry; people either revere or hate them. To members of the highest castes, the Knights are no better than the Jackals or Wayfarers who seek to undermine the established social order. To the multitudes of Fallen that inhabit the city, the Knights are true heroes.

People view the Wayfarers as too violent and erratic, almost as much a danger to the Fallen as they are to the higher castes. The Fallen, while respecting the Anodynes, regard the healers as pacifists and unable to do what it takes to make changes. Thus the Knights, heroes of the populace, represent a shining example of virtue and justice.

Many People's Knights make Freetown and the Roundabout their home; most operate alone, each working under his or her own code of ethics. Only the philosophy that everyone deserves protection unites them.

FORGE'S WAR

Forge's Fist is Cliff-Spider's preeminent group of People's Knights. Composed of their leader Forge, Arachnae, Razor and Maelstrom, Forge's Fist battles Strike's violent Wayfarers. Because they work outside of the law, and because they are all Fallen, the city's Watchers believe that Forge's Fist has an alliance with Strike; nothing could be further from the truth.

The Watchers have for years attempted to capture Strike and his Wayfarers. Unfortunately, the resourceful Wayfarers are also well organized. The most success the Watchers have achieved is to capture some of the organization's grunts. Recently, the activities of Forge's Fist have come to the attention of the Watchers. Since the People's Knights enjoy a certain amount of popularity among Freetown's Fallen population, some Watcher officers feel they must intervene and arrest Forge's Fist. Many officers believe that the self-styled heroes have the power to encourage a caste uprising, if they should choose to do so. Since Forge's Fist only has four members, they have become the Watchers' prime target. The group of heroes is avoiding the Watchers, but it is becoming more difficult to do so. Forge feels he must find a solution soon before the Watchers apprehend his group. Although they interfere with Forge's actions against the Wayfarers, he is unwilling to take any offensive action against the Watchers. For additional information on Forge's Fist, see the source book *Providence: People's Knights*.

THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS?

Recently, Lark, the leader of the Red-Feathers, approached Forge with an offer. Lark has an understanding with the Watcher captain Yisaanii Kel'Dessi. He proposed to inform the captain that Forge's Fist is only interested in apprehending Strike and his Wayfarers, and not in dismantling the caste structure. Lark also claimed that he could use his influence to ask that the Watchers leave the heroes alone. Although Lark has not asked for any favour in return, Forge suspects that if he accepts Lark's offer, it would only be a matter of time before Lark would ask. Nonetheless, Forge is contemplating the offer and what he must do to subdue the persistent Watcher efforts to dismantle Forge's Fist.

SLAYWINDS

Until very recently, there were no Slaywinds within the spire city, except for the odd pilgrim passing through on his or her way to the annual conclave. In recent months however, a small delegation of Slaywinds has arrived in the city. Since they were disguised and rapidly made their way to the higher levels upon their arrival, no one knew of their presence. It is rumoured that the leader of the delegation, an Eagle woman named Hishia Ossel, has met occasionally with King Raldowin to discuss matters of the upcoming war. The King's entourage is

keeping the results of these meetings a secret. The fact that some people have occasionally seen the delegation in High City, would suggest that both sides have reached a satisfactory agreement. Reports suggest that the group of six Slaywinds probably resides somewhere in the Roundabout or in Mid-City.

WATCHERS

Over 40,000 of Cliff-Spider's total Watchers are dispersed throughout Freetown, the Roundabout, Mid-City, the High City and some of the largest Free-Keeps. Roughly 2,000 of them also patrol the countryside and escort caravans coming in and going out of Cliff-Spider.

The military commander in charge of overseeing the Watchers is War Prefect Donica Lomass, a Blessed Raven. Her duties as commander of the Watchers have freed her from other responsibilities in the city. Donica is thankful since she enjoys and prefers her work as a Watcher. She has a reputation for being fair and just, and is a loyal advocate of King Raldowin's. Although Donica is a strong supporter of the caste system, she has overcome her initial outrage at the decision of letting Fallen join the ranks of the Watchers; generally, she allows them to operate in Freetown.

The Watcher Triumvirate has three members: Yosha Jidel, a Hawk who oversees the conduct of the Watchers; Ariadne Nella, a female Dove, who is in charge of the management; and the Dragon Tikel Or'Chera, who trains members of the organization. Sergeants are dispersed throughout the Roundabout, Mid-City, the High City and the Free-Keeps. The Dragon Captain Yisaanii Kel'Dessi supervises Freetown.

The Watchers live in the various towers and barracks spread throughout Cliff-Spider. The central nerve of the group is a reinforced keep that sits near the militia training academy in Mid-City. War Prefect Donica Lomass is also an advanced tactics teacher at the officer's academy; the fact that both buildings are near each other eases her work.

The Watchers of Cliff-Spider are a very devoted and militant bunch. The omnipresent militia and Archers make their job somewhat relaxed, but they take their duties seriously nonetheless. Since the army is constantly preparing for an eventual war, the Watchers still have more than their share of responsibilities. They take pride in their work, and enforce the rules harshly, but fairly.

The major prisons are situated in Freetown, and near the headquarters in Mid-City.

THE LOST TRIBES

Three tribes threaten the survival of the Alliance of Kings and its war citadel Cliff-Spider. Arguably the most aggressive members are the Green People, who believe it is their duty to obliterate the Alliance of Kings, the Merchant Bands, and Bone-Wail. The Green People feel that the presence of Yas'Wailians endangers Providence's fragile ecology. The White Crow have also shown a hatred of Yas'Wailians, and are maintaining an uncomfortable silence. Members of Cliff-Spider's militia occasionally see Serpenkine parties, but since the tribe's loyalties are divided, the soldiers are unsure whether to greet or attack them. Anyone who ventures near the city is far more likely to run into Green People than other tribes. Game Masters who wish to spice up their campaigns and adventures can add encounters with the Lost Tribes. On a roll of 1 to 6 on a ten-sided die, the adventurers are likely to encounter a party of Green People venturing near the city; naturally, they obviously will be hostile towards the players. On a roll of 7 or 8, the adventurers will encounter hostile Serpenkine, while a roll of 9 indicates a friendly group of Swarm Dancers or Serpenkine. Lastly, a roll of 10 means that the players encounter a group of White Crow. Although these tribe-members will attack the adventurers, their goal will be to flee the scene. It seems that the White Crow are more interested in gathering information than fighting. For information on the Lost Tribe warriors, see the Providence Main World Book pages 202 to 205.



GUILDHOLM AND MID-CITY

Guildholm and the Mid-City are located directly above the Roundabout. This level's inhabitants include more than a million Fortuned, nearly 250,000 members of one guild or another, and some members of the Blessed caste.

Fourteen major caves make up Guildholm and Mid-City. Four of them the city reserves for the exclusive use of the guilds. The military, three markets, four residential areas, and a water distribution cave make up the rest of these levels. Most of Cliff-Spider's inhabitants view these two levels as one, often referring to both sections as Mid-City. The reason for this apparent simplification is actually quite clear. The people who live in these sections possess what are known as the mid-jobs; they perform the work that is essential to the survival of both the lowest and highest castes. Clearly, the city's levels testify to the realities of the caste system; the most important castes dwell within the comforts of the High City, while the lowest castes dredge at the bottom of the column. If anyone possessed the ability to view the caves from the outside of the rocky spire, they would surely see how the caste system permeates and typifies every aspect of life in Cliff-Spider.

The Guided Tour

Here we are. The view in Guildholm is quite impressive. You should remember that we're probably not going to be able to stay a very long time. Why did the "nice" Watcher give us such a hard time you ask? You shouldn't be surprised. It's not unusual for them, for anyone here, to treat lower castes like myself that way. I mean, sometimes I have business up here, but I'm not really supposed to be here, you know? If they think I'm a beggar they'll surely kick me out. Still, I think it's worth the hassle, Mid-City is pretty nice. If I had the goods, there's a lot of stuff I'd get. Come, I'll show you around.

THE MAIN MARKET

Due to the flow of traffic from each market, the cave known as the Main Market connects with the Roundabout. The few Redeemed who do business in the Mid-City invariably find their way to the Main Market cave. What they offer tends to be only of a slightly superior quality than what players can find in the Roundabout. Very few beggars travel in the Main Market, though they are enough of a presence that no Blessed or Pure will visit or shop in this area unless they are hunting for something specific. This market's clientele tends mainly to be a mix of the Redeemed and Fortuned castes.

The cave itself is a maze of passageways and twisting streets that pass beside the shops and stalls, creating a confusing atmosphere. Cheap inns round out the businesses who operate in the Main Market.

The Watchers maintain an outpost that houses about a hundred men and women. They keep the peace and ensure that the riffraff does not mingle its way through the market. This cave connects directly to the Mid-Market. This second market cave conveniently leads to Guildholm's Upper Market. The businesses offer the Fortuned and Gifted clientele more expensive goods ranging from resin wares and finer cloths, weapons and tools.

DER: THE WAR CITADEL

GUILDHOLM AND MID-CITY

1 The Drilling Grounds

- A Militia administrative complex
- B Militia training zone
- C Melee-Trial
- D Passageway to Roundabout
- E Passageway to Castle Well

2 The Grotto

- C Park
- G Sentinel Academy

3 Guild Home

- C Park
- H Statues of Mother & Father

4 Main Market Cave

- D Passageway to Roundabout
- J Inn
- K Pub
- X Watcher outpost

5 Mid-Market

- J Inn
- K Pub
- L Bazaar

6 Upper-Market Cave

- J Inn
- K Pub
- L Bazaar
- X Watcher Outpost

7 War Break

- M Archer training zone
- N War Break

8 Rok-Den

- F Park
- X Watcher Outpost

9 Spider-Weave

- E Passageway to Castle Well
- O Militia academy
- P Stage of Kings
- Q Chirurgeon outpost
- R Fortified camp
- X Watcher outpost

10 Source Creek

- S Schools
- X Watcher outpost

11 Gorin's Cave

- T Messenger Guild Manor

12 Sillistine Guild Cave

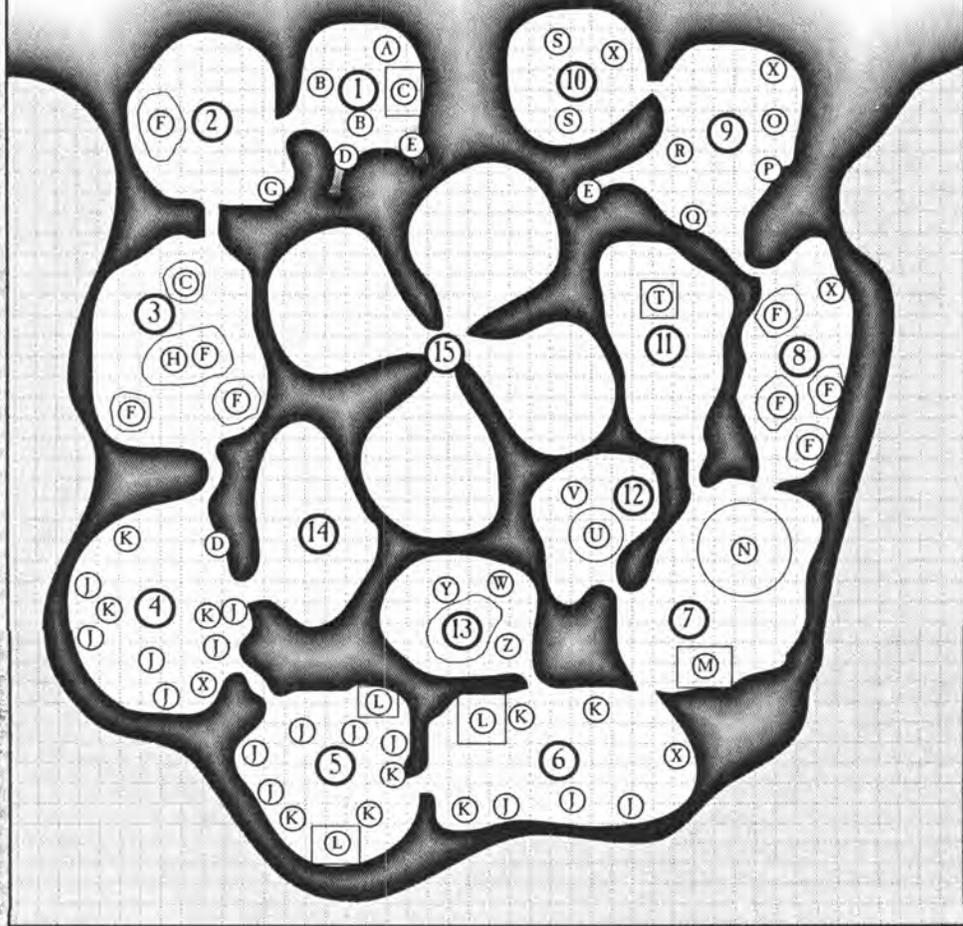
- U The Lost Tower
- V Guild Master's home

13 Shard Lake Cave

- W Umber-Keep
- Y Drummer Manor
- Z Chirurgeon Manor

14 The Alcove

15 Castle Well



THE ALCOVE, THE GROTTO, AND GUILD-HOME

There are three primary residential caves in this level. They follow the ascending order of the castes: the Alcove houses the Redeemed, the Grotto is home to the city's Fortuned, while members of the guilds claim the highest cave known as Guild-Home. Residents in the Alcove and the Grotto generally make their homes in the existing caves, small towers, and rock outcroppings. Furthermore, Wird Weavers have raised a few homes entirely from the cavern's sturdy stone walls and floors.

The Redeemed in the Alcove generally live in natural caves and small stone houses scattered about the cave. The cave's walls also house many families. The Alcove is deep within the spire, and no natural light shines in the cave. Globes of Wirdlight rest atop posts placed at regular intervals along the twisted, musty streets. Occasionally, the city will order Wird casters to grow flowers in the hollow corridors to challenge the unpleasant smells that sometimes take over. Travellers who are new to the city or unfamiliar with their paths can soon get lost amidst the maze-like array of streets. This layout is intentional, an effort to disorient any enemy that would make it this deep inside Cliff-Spider.

Living standards are a little better for the Fortuned. Though some families still reside in small alcoves built inside the walls of the Grotto, many live in stone habitations raised straight from the ground by Wird. A small park sits at the outermost edge of this cave, with the streets shooting away from it, much like the spokes of a wheel. D'Shau Monks maintain the park, tending to it every day. The outlying houses have the benefit of natural light streaming in from large openings cut through the rock, while homes nearest to the centre of the city receive light from Wirdlight globes. The Watchers of this area patrol the streets regularly, especially near the entrances and the park.

The very large and open cave known as Guild-Home is the home of guild members. The wide, safe streets are lined with a few exotic species of plants and trees. Wird weaving herbalists work day and night to maintain the greeneries inside such an inhospitable area as a cave. Guild-Home is undoubtedly the best lit cave in Mid-City. Large openings in the ceilings and outside walls create an atrium-like effect. In the various parks scattered throughout the cave, tall

The Guided Tour

The nicest homes I've ever seen are around this area. Come to think of it, I suppose they're nicer in High City, but I wouldn't really know. There's so much space here: plants, gardens... If you close your eyes, the sights and smells may lead you to believe that you're outside. We'll have to move pretty quickly through here though, or the Watchers'll kick us out. Follow my lead if someone stops us.

The Guild Roots

Guild Roots, the homes of junior members of the guilds, are located around the park. Housing either single Shards, or entire families, the Guild Roots vary in size and importance. Generally, Wird is used to carefully craft each Guild Root. The structures are relatively low to the ground, and their walls are thick and resilient, ensuring the protection of their inhabitants. Wird crafters have grown the stone and earth homes from the cavern's floors, firmly securing them to the stone. Each door is emblazoned with guild emblems, and various statues and carvings lend an air of majesty and importance to the structures.

quezal trees reach for the sky. In the main park also stands a statue of Mother and Father, Lady Amariss and Enoval Sahar — the great heroes of the war with the Elothorin avatar Sky-Spite.

For all its beauty, Guild-Home might as well be deserted. No area in Cliff-Spider (except perhaps the castle), is more austere and pristine than Guild-Home. Newcomers and recruits of the guilds are always struck by the clean and silent streets and spaces. Many of them even wonder if there is a curfew preventing traffic from passing through during certain hours of the day. They soon learn however, that this atmosphere is highly deceptive; the activities of guild members are a sharp contrast to Guild-Home's peaceful nature. With the increasing threat of war hanging over everyone's head, guild members are extremely busy. Therefore, they rarely use their Guild Roots, save to rest at night. This creates a paradox between the natural warmth and beauty of the cave, and the cold and severe aspect of its inhabitants.

Within Guild-Home, one can find Watchers at every street corner. With the men and women of the Watchers keeping an eye out for trouble, the guilds can concentrate on training.

The guilds alone used to keep security in the cave; that changed two years ago when a pack of Jackals sneaked in at night. They ran through the gardens, desecrated the statues of Mother and Father, and destroyed much of the plant life. Members of the Pathfinders caught the Jackals with the help of the Sentinels and the Watchers. Unbeknownst to anybody but Raldowin and a few trusted advisors, the Pathfinders also killed the Jackals.

THE DRILLING GROUNDS

The military cave in Mid-City, known as the Drilling Grounds, is spacious and ordered. Training zones dominate the cave; nonetheless, there are some residential areas and one large administrative complex. Years ago, tired soldiers awarded the cave its name because they felt that training and work dominated their lives. Other officers and warriors must surely have agreed with their caustic remark since the militia has adopted the name.

The Drilling Grounds clearly shows the militaristic nature of the city. For efficiency, passages to other military sections above and below the Drilling Grounds allow troops rapid access to a majority of the city. In addition, there are numerous ledges dotting the outer wall of the cave for flights of soldiers to easily leave the spire. As with other openings throughout Cliff-Spider, uniquely trained Shards and Wird casters can manipulate the stone to close the walls in case of an invasion.

THE UPPER MARKET

The Upper Market cavern is the hub of Guildholm. It leads upwards into the four guild caves, as well as the residential, the water distribution, and the military cave. The Upper Market area attracts a higher caste clientele; therefore, the quality and the price of goods are high. Since many guild members lack the ability to fly, the stores are close to the ground. Most of the structures consist of high quality stone, although using wood is acceptable. The cave's spacious floors host many exotic plant forms. The Upper Market is clean and safe, as one would expect of a cave the higher castes use.

SHARD-LAKE CAVE

The first guild cave leading away from the Upper Market is called the Shard-Lake Cave. It houses the manors of both the Drummers and the Chirurgeons. At the centre of the cave lies the Wird-shaped Shard-Lake. Powerful Wirdlight globes illuminate this spacious area.

The Drummers operate two major keeps within Cliff-Spider, both found in Guildholm. The first structure, a training facility called Umber-Keep, sits on the edge of the Shard Lake Cave. It houses the guild's trainers and Drummer recruits. The Keep itself, low but spread over a mile and a half, is a monument to spartan efficiency. The grey stone walls bear the emblems of the Alliance, of the guild itself, and of Cliff-Spider. Behind the walls, an immense training ground allows the recruits to test each other in combat, tactics and survival. The area is Wird-reinforced to allow the Drummers to practice their powerful Shard abilities safely.

The noise level around Umber-Keep reaches a peak during the training period. To counter this disturbance, a hundred years ago, the guild emptied two caverns that bordered the Shard Lake Cave, and collapsed the walls to extend the available space.

The taskmaster of Umber-Keep is Del'Kassa, a Dragon who has been part of the guild for nearly forty years. Del'Kassa is in charge of the training of recruits, as well as organizing the cross-training exercises held jointly with members of the Guild of Archers.

Drummer Manor, the central headquarters of the guild in Cliff-Spider, is a more elaborate structure than Umber-Keep. Located a mere half-mile from Umber-Keep, the manor is a four-story tall, half-mile wide structure carved

The Guided Tour

I think I can get us through the next series of caves, but we won't be able to look around very much. The guilds use this space, and most of them are very protective of their territory. The Drummers are generally nice and polite; unfortunately, I can't say the same about the Chirurgeons. You could be dying in front of their manor and nobody would lift a finger unless you paid for the treatment.

I don't know why the guards are so annoying; like anyone would attack a guild home! Anyway, let's go. If anybody asks, I'm bringing you to see a cousin of mine. Let me do the talking.

out of the cave wall itself. The first two floors contain the offices of the heads of the guild, the mess-hall and the meeting rooms. On the remaining floors are the living quarters. The walls of the corridors and halls of Drummer Manor are painted with scenes of legendary battles as well as glorious and legendary knights. Graphic scenes show the details of the Drummers' every major military engagement. Members take great pride in the artwork, whether they won the battles or lost. The guild uses the paintings as tools to teach each Drummer of his or her glorious heritage. It reminds them that whether in victory or defeat, a Drummer must uphold the tenets of courage, honour and nobility.



Chirurgion Manor is the richest and most extravagant of the guild headquarters. It is composed of many buildings layered on a sprawling estate near the lake. All the senior-most members of the guild own individual houses, while the newer members must share their homes with other guild members. This extravagant display of wealth has angered many other guilds, as well as members of minor noble Houses. The guilds feel that the Chirurgeons should be concerned with matters other than the amassing of wealth. The minor Houses who have complained on the other hand, fear that the guild may be wealthier than they are.

SILISTINE GUILD CAVE

The city's rulers named Silistine Guild Cave in honour of the Shard who created the statue of Mother and Father. The Lost Tower, a huge building where the Guild of Cartographers resides, dominates this cave. This spire, which reaches from the floor to the ceiling, was built at the base of an immense stalagmite. Unlike some of its residents, the natural dull-grey colour of the stone remains virtually unsoiled. Only the occasional glint of colour from one of the Cartographers' banners dotting the walls break its rough surface. The entire structure looks much like a miniature version of the Crysarius Bridge. The imposing Lost Tower holds the guild's offices, living quarters, and training



grounds. Guild Master Khohall maintains his own home — a small house near the entrance to the tower.

The Silistine Guild Cave itself is full of shadows and needle-like stalagmites and stalactites. Undoubtedly, the secretive Cartographers consciously chose this eerie cave as their home because of its properties. The mazelike tunnels and passageways that run through the cave are much like the dealings of the guild, confusing and shrouded in shadows.

The Cartographers maintain the largest libraries in Cliff-Spider. At the core of the tower, a huge vault holds books, maps, and various papers that chronicle the findings of the Cartographers through the years. Guild members

are constantly watching this vault, and none but the Cartographers of the highest levels may access it. The extent of the vault's knowledge is unknown following the rumours that the guild burnt many incriminating materials. Some people claim that they set fire to the place to ensure that the Alliance of Kings would require their services for a long time. One thing is certain however; most of the library's dark secrets are veiled to anyone outside of the guild.

GORIN'S CAVE

The activity in Gorin's Cave is frenzied, as Messengers on errands run or fly here and there, carrying missives of various importance up and down the spiral city. Gorin's Cave, named after a legendary Gargoyle warrior who made his mark during the Lost Wars, is the home of the Guild of Messengers. The four interlinked towers that form the Messengers' Guild Manor stand guard near the entrance to the cave. The Messenger Manor is the smallest of all the guild manors. Although it is unadorned and generally unimpressive, it is very functional. Suspended rope bridges allow the guild's non-flyers to travel quickly to the other towers. Charter Hall is the largest of the four towers. Clients wishing to hire Messengers send servants to bid and negotiate for the best Messengers in this structure. The other three towers are the guild's residential and training quarters. Each tower is named after famous Messengers from the past two-hundred years; the Charter Hall is also called Jolynne-Manor, in honour of their former Guild Mistress. The other three towers are named, in succession, Aria-Manor, Sildense-Manor and Hek'Shaa-Manor.

WAR BREAK

Dear Shyla,

It's dawn, and it's way too early to do anything except roll over. Unfortunately, I can't afford the time to be lazy; besides, I have a new assignment to start today. I apologize for not writing sooner, but I've been very busy!

As I think of the past, it seems strange how my life has changed since I left home. Two years ago, I was practically a beggar. Now, I live more comfortably than I had ever imagined possible. It's hard to believe, but some members of the highest castes look at me respectfully — can you believe it?!

Although I'm proud of my achievements, I'm especially happy at the effect my work has had on the people I love. My family now has a place to live in the spire, and they have food on the table every morning and night. I have a sweet girlfriend, and best of all, I work for the Alliance of Kings.

I'm what the Archers call a Hammer. It's quite straightforward really; all it means is that I can blow things up with uncommon ease. Unfortunately, I can't for the life of

Father, do anything that requires any fine control. That reminds me, I have such an embarrassing story to tell you. About a year and a half ago, I was in a training session with my mentor. She pointed out a target that was about fifty yards away. My task was to put a small hole in the centre of the wooden plate. Unfortunately, I blew the whole thing up — incinerated it! Looking back, I guess it seems quite funny, but at the time, I was extremely depressed. It didn't take long for the guild to label me a Hammer — no doubt about it! If I had been a Bolt, someone who has fine control of his or her abilities, I could easily have put a hole in the target. Basically, the difference between the two comes down to your ability to control your power.

I like being a Hammer; I've noticed that many people find me intimidating. I guess that's because Guild Master Arturias Sanquade is the head of our order and she's a Hammer. A person would have to be completely stupid not to be impressed by her abilities. Well, as much as I may enjoy reminiscing, I don't want to bore you.



Last time we spoke, you asked me what this place looks like, but it's not easy to describe. I've been in this place for almost a year and I'm never quite sure that I'm going the right way. You see, War Break was designed to confuse intruders. You'll never find a straight hallway, and you can never see more than thirty feet in front of you. At just about every intersection you could easily collapse the ceiling, if necessary. Unless you know where you're going, you can get lost very quickly. This place is basically like a wasp's nest, only our sting is substantially more powerful! I almost pity anyone who ever gets stuck in here. There'll be a legion of Archers who are ready to descend upon them like a mad army of ants.

War Break is our fortress in the city. Most of the time, half of the barracks are empty because of patrol duties and training. In addition, King Raldowin has hired us to occasionally supplement the militia's patrols outside of the city. Don't get me wrong, there are still enough Archers in War Break to make an enemy think twice about attacking. We're always perfecting our skills and learning new tricks.

For the last little while, the Archers in Cliff-Spider have been training with the Drummers. I must say that it's been really fun working with them. I guess Master Sanquade and Regent Caiylus want us to coordinate our efforts on the battlefield. If what I hear about the upcoming war with the Lost Tribes is true, we'll need to work together. Let's just hope that everybody remembers that and tries to put aside their differences. Well, I really have to leave now, I think I'm going to be late! Write back soon.

Your friend.



The Archers use the largest guild cave in Guildholm. It connects to the military's cave, the Upper Market and the outer wall of the Crysarius Bridge. War Break, the guild's central quarters, is an enormous keep that is virtually impenetrable. War Break has maze-like passageways and sections that collapse to provide barricades in case of an invasion. War-Break is a massive circular structure built in the form of a coliseum. Silver and white veins of precious stone riddle the structure's rough, black stone. While they remain secure, small openings in War-Break's walls allow the Archers to unleash their energy bolts

upon their unfortunate victims. At regular intervals, the Alliance's and Cliff-Spider's standards hang from polished, resin-covered poles.

Within War-Break, the daily administrative offices of the guild are reserved for the first story. The halls, corridors, and offices of this level are wide and welcoming. Because of the guild's importance in Cliff-Spider, the Archers employ the largest group of non-guild assistants to handle their daily business. The education of guild members and their families takes place in classrooms located on the second level. The following four levels are residential areas. Guild members with families have access to small apartments and single Archers use large rooms. War-Break's last two levels house the guild's meeting rooms, and equipment; furthermore, the highest ranking Archers reside in this area.

In addition to War Break, the Archers have an extended training area in this cave. The training centre is bustling with guild members who are always moving about, either training, leaving for a mission or returning from one. The preparations for an anticipated war with the Lost Tribes leaves the Archers little leisure time.

ROK-DEN

Rok-Den, the Blessed caste's primary residential cave, is located higher in the spire than any of the guild caves. Because it is home to the second highest caste, this cave is large and well aired. Fossilized sediments embedded in the spire's rock shine like diamonds throughout the day. Rok-Den's streets are wide and smooth, and Watchers patrol the area constantly. This cave is a testament to the lifestyle of the highest castes. No beggars, prostitutes, criminals, and crowds mar the beauty of this part of Cliff-Spider. The cave provides a stark contrast to the lower levels, and is a good example of the strength of the caste system in this city. Parks and low walls built from the natural rock of the cave divide the rows of houses. Opulence is evident throughout Rok-Den. Minor nobility stroll about, confident and secure with the strength of their rank in society.

A FINAL LOOK

Source Creek is the water distribution cave. The water supply that keeps the capillaries of this level functioning also rests under the direct supervision of the Watchers. Schools for this level's population are also in Source-Creek. These two schools are dedicated solely to the children of guild members. The guilds themselves own and operate these schools.

The Guided Tour

That's about it. If you want, we can take one last look around, and then we're out of here. I'm afraid what lies above is beyond the reach of my Fallen eyes. Unless someone summons us, there's no way we're getting up there. Besides, I want to see the sky again.

Spider-Weave is one of the military's caves. Within its fold rests a small academy and a fortified camp. The tunnels in this section create a veritable maze, which helps to block access to the higher levels. Two reinforced towers, housing nearly 200 Sentinel soldiers, guard the entrance to the tunnel leading up to the High City. Members of the Blessed and Pure castes can travel up and down this tunnel at their whim to get to the different levels. The Chirurgeons maintain a small facility in Spider-Weave from which they have easy access to their clientele in both Guildholm and the High City. The Spider-Weave cave is also home to the legendary Stage of Kings.

THE STAGE OF KINGS

Regent Caiylus stood upon the massive marble balcony.

"Children of a failed rebellion," Caiylus began. Her voice echoed sharply across the field of people, capturing everyone's attention. "Destiny is at hand, and I come to you not as your ruler, but as a messenger." The voices died down. Everyone was listening.

Elevated a hundred feet from the ground, and protruding from the bridge's massive wall, the Stage of Kings is the site of many illustrious historical speeches. The royal balcony is usually reserved for important public announcements. Lord Juliard's inauguration of the Gifted caste, Lady Barada's declaration of Cliff-Spider's membership in the Alliance of Kings, and King Raldowin IV's crowning, were all pronounced on the Stage of Kings. Recently, at King Raldowin's insistence, Regent Caiylus used the balcony as the site to announce the Alliance of Kings' plans. She declared to the people of Providence that they were going to locate and activate the gates that led to their home world.

Standards of Cliff-Spider, the Alliance of Kings, and House Tura are set upon the balcony's stone rail. Carved crests of past ruling Houses cover the edge of the platform. Set in the back of the stage is one of Raldowin's thrones. A small corridor leads to a private chamber for the King and visiting dignitaries. Security near the Stage of Kings is always tight. When it is not in use, a crystal gate lowers to prevent intruders from penetrating the private chamber.

THE GUILDS

Cliff-Spider's guilds are alive with a flurry of activity and political machinations. The threat of war with the Lost Tribes has bolstered the importance of the guilds, especially those oriented towards martial prowess. Everyone is busy with a frenzy of preparations. Some of the guilds, like the Archers or Drummers, have intensified their training cycles in order to confront any threat that might rise against the city. Other more politically active guilds, such as the Chirurgeons and the Cartographers, jockey around to bolster their position and power.

The leaders of the Alliance are aware of the important role the guilds will play in an upcoming war, and have taken steps to include them in any preparations they make. Each guild has its own agenda, but most seem willing to cooperate with the various leaders of the cities around them. Though certain guilds and guild masters have their own dark secrets, most guild members are still trustworthy. The Alliance hopes that all the loyal Shards will make a difference during any future war.

THE GUILD OF ARCHERS

The most influential guild in Cliff-Spider is that of the Archers. This guild operates out of two different Keeps: War-Break, which stands inside Cliff-Spider, and D'Oshea Keep, a fortress outside the city and near the Free-Keeps.

Cliff-Spider's populace views the Archers, arguably the most powerful guild in the Alliance — along with the Drummers — as virtuous and heroic figures. Although the Alliance employs the Archers, each guild member has the authority to hire themselves out as bodyguards, trainers and consultants to anyone who can afford their prices. The need to maintain well-filled, large coffers is beneficial to all the guilds. At Regent Caiylus's request, however, all the Archers are now finishing their private contracts in order to report to their various superiors. The shadow of war with the Lost Tribes hangs heavy against the spire city, and there is much each guild must do in a short period of time.

Thanks to Arturias Sanquade, the guild master, the Archers have always enjoyed a good relationship with the Drummers. This tradition is continuing with the recent talks between these guilds, as well as that of the Messengers, about forming an official alliance. This partnership would help the Archers and Drummers to cooperate and communicate during wartime. It would also help the fledgling Messengers take off from under the Cartographers' dark shadow. On a political level, Arturias Sanquade worries about Sirius Khohall's mounting influence and political power, which she believes he gains through blackmail. She intends on keeping a close eye on his manoeuvres.

For now, because of their versatility and power, the Archers remain Regent Caiylus' ace in the hole; the one card many believe could herald the Alliance's salvation in the face of the Lost Tribes. The Guild of Archers welcomes the challenge, and shoulders the responsibility with all the honour, sense of duty and self-confidence of knights sworn to protect the people. They prosper under the leadership of Arturias Sanquade. Her close relationship to King Raldowin can only help their cause, which in turn helps the people.

THE GUILD OF DRUMMERS



While the Archers could tip Providence's balance of power in the Alliance of Kings' favour, the Drummers are the cities' sturdy and reliable foundation. Without Drummers, there is little doubt that the allied Yas'Wailians would cease to be free. After the Archers, the Drummers are the most influential of the guilds in Cliff-Spider. Because of their reputation and their noble code of behaviour, the Drummers are one of the populace's and the highest Houses' favourite groups. For all their might and influence, the Drummers shy from becoming too involved in political debates. This, in their minds, leaves them free to concentrate on more important matters, like preparing for war. Indeed, when a war does erupt, the Drummers will be ready to confront it with stern determination. However, the guild master realizes that it is unwise for the Drummers' voice to remain completely unheard at critical times in the royal courts. They only offer their opinion when they feel it is absolutely necessary.

ITCHING FOR A FIGHT?

Although it currently merely simmers beneath a polite veneer, the Drummers' feud with the Guild of Chirurgeons in Cry-Star has spilt over to Cliff-Spider. To say that Drummers and Chirurgeons dislike each other is an understatement. The Drummers think that Chirurgeons, who serve and circle among the upper castes alone, are greedy and opportunistic. As far as the Drummers know, the Chirurgeons rarely criticize or question their actions. This, the Drummers believe, is only because the Chirurgeons are cowards and intelligent enough to understand the importance of the Drummers. The only compliment a Drummer will ever pay a Chirurgeon is to admit that the scheming guild members are shrewd. Why? Simply because the Drummers recognize that any attack the Chirurgeons make against them is veiled behind layers of misinformation. The Drummers have only ever felt minor rumblings. These are usually various failed attempts the deceptive healers have made to divert the financial support many Drummers receive from influential Houses into the Chirurgeons' own vaults. The Drummers are confident, and rightly so, for everyone realizes the vital services the Drummers provide. To cease supporting them would put the Alliance of Kings' society in serious jeopardy from its many enemies who fear the powerful pounding Drummers' hammers.



The current overseer of the Drummers in Cliff-Spider, a Blessed Eagle called Golayne Thark of House Ledate, cares little for the Chirurgeons or their obvious political agendas. He prefers to ignore them as long as they stay out of his way, and do not hinder his efforts to prepare the city for war. Should they

succeed in interfering in their affairs, or turn one of their patron Houses against them, the Drummers would not hesitate to retaliate.

THE KING'S PROGENY

One of the main features that sets apart the Guild of Drummers from other guilds is the presence of royalty. Markham, the first-born son of King Raldowin, is a Drummer.

Markham was struck unaware by Epiphany while sitting at the breakfast table on the eve of his fourteenth birthday. In a matter of hours he grew four inches and added enough muscle weight to put most of the guards in the palace to shame. Unable to control his newfound strength, Markham was becoming a problem in the palace. At a loss for what to do, King Raldowin summoned Golayne Thark to his aid, asking if perhaps the Drummers could help his son control his powers. The Drummers took Markham to Umber-Keep where instructors taught him to control his abilities and strength. Meanwhile, having heard of this incident, Jeba Sunfierce travelled to Cliff-Spider to ascertain the situation. It was soon clear that the boy was a prime candidate for the guild. Curious, the King agreed to let Markham undergo Drummer training, in an effort to inculcate some discipline and strength of character in the unruly boy.

Four and a half years later, having passed the tests successfully, Markham returned to the palace with reluctance. He had made good friends within the guild, and had found a niche for himself. A few months after his return to the family home, Markham grew restless, and petitioned his father for the right to return to the guild. Raldowin's son was surprised that his father refused him. But before long, memories of his own times with the Wind Knives came to Raldowin, and he was forced to acknowledge his son's courage and abilities. Aware that the next likely successor would be his daughter (who showed an affinity for politics), he decided to allow Markham to join the guild. Nonetheless, Raldowin made it clear that he would have to publicly appear to dislike the idea. King Raldowin is proud of his son, and only his love for him lets the King endure the troubles he has garnered on a political level. Some court members fear that the presence of Raldowin's son with the Drummers could increase the power of the guilds. They believe that Markham could one day become king of the city, or at the very least influence the ruler to award the guilds more power. Raldowin diffused much criticism by naming his daughter as heir. Nonetheless, this situation could potentially upset the caste system's delicate balance. Many members of the higher castes in Cliff-Spider feel that the guilds already have too much power.

THE GUILD OF CHIRURGEONS

"Wealth, power and prestige are no longer solely the domain of the Pure."

— Ajandi Melisrian at a gathering of Cliff-Spider's Chirurgeons shortly after her instatement as the Guild Master.

The third most influential guild is that of the Chirurgeons. This small, but extremely rich and powerful guild, tends to the needs of the members of the Pure and Blessed castes. Cliff-Spider's Chirurgeons practically never venture outside the city, nor do they ever descend to the lower levels. They operate their guild from a central office seated deep within the Shard Lake Cave of Guildholm. They also possess the largest, and most richly furnished guild manor of all the guilds on the shores of Shard Lake.

The Chirurgeons have angered some of the families and the rest of the guilds with their blatant bids for more influence, and their lack of dedication to helping the Alliance of Kings. Unfortunately, they have the resources to get away with it, and their influence with some of the most important members of King Raldowin's court has kept them out of reprisal's way. The guild has the backing of some of the most influential Houses in Cliff-Spider, namely House Crackshore of Troupial Eagle. The noble Dove House of Jistaan, and the Karistikant Dragons also provide support, both of which serve as advisors to the court.

Most Chirurgeons spend much of their time away from the manor, tending to the needs of the High City. Many of these Chirurgeons reside in appointed quarters on their clients' lands, to be nearby when the child of a Pure minor noble sneezes in the night. The Chirurgeons' guild manor itself is normally half-full, while the guild offices maintain a skeleton staff that includes the head of Cliff-Spider's chapter, two more senior members, and an average of twenty younger members. This group is in charge of emergencies, and assigns the remaining guild members to the numerous contracts that flood the offices daily. To handle the traffic of incoming and outgoing messages, the Chirurgeons employ a small number of overworked Messengers.

A Blessed Raven named Nariisse Coriante of House Skoraa is in charge of the Cliff-Spider faction of Chirurgeons. Nariisse is extremely devoted to both the guild and the Guild Master, Ajandi Melisrian. She seeks to emulate the Guild Master in every way. Nariisse holds the Drummers in contempt, and cares very little for the Archers. She also dislikes Sirius Khohall, but follows her Guild Master's orders when it comes to dealing with the Cartographers, which is to avoid their manipulative Gargoyle leader. Nariisse is the overseer of a group of four Chirurgeons whose sole purpose is to tend to the royal family. This has brought Nariisse in contact with Markham, the son of King Raldowin. Over the past two years, love has blossomed between the two of them. However, Markham's devotion and duty to the Drummers have kept them very much

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

apart, which is one of the reasons Narisse despises the Drummers. As unlikely as that is, many people have speculated that the sole intention of the ambitious Narisse is to marry into the royal family. Now that Markham's sister has replaced him as successor to the throne, Narisse feels cheated. She has however, kept her feelings a secret.

Narisse has developed a strong, reliable network of information gathering among the various Chirurgeons assigned to the houses of nobles. She keeps tabs on almost everyone, and although she possesses very little that is worthy blackmail material, she has access to a lot of knowledge and is aware of many political moves before they happen.

Lately, King Raldowin himself has attempted to convince Narisse that the Chirurgeons should help service the city's extensive militia when the war breaks out. The guild has yet to respond to this point. This is no doubt a shrewd move on Narisse's part. The longer she holds out, the bigger the rewards the court may offer the guild. However, this is a double-edged sword, since the Anodynes have also received the same offer. If they accept before the Chirurgeons do, Narisse could be left with less influence. Nonetheless, Narisse will not act without Ajandi's say so.

NARISSE'S OBSESSION

"I'm calling this meeting to discuss a... very serious situation." The senior Chirurgeon looked at his gathered colleagues with some discomfort. "I know this may appear as something other than what it is, but let me assure you all now that my intentions are pure." The gathered and concerned guild members looked at each other, some more aware of the matter they were all about to discuss than others. "You must all have noticed our esteemed leader's behaviour and appearance lately? I know I speak for all of us when I say that we initially disregarded any similarity Narisse's life had with our Guild Master's. Coincidence, I'm sure we all thought! I too, assumed that the many representations of Master Melisrian scattered throughout her chambers were merely signs of her devotion. When rumours began circulating that Narisse was courting Raldowin's heir, I merely frowned and discounted them. When they were confirmed, I began to worry. I visited Narisse in her chambers one day, only to find her staring blankly at a painting of Ajandi and her lover, Cry-Star's King Gunther. It wasn't until later that I discovered that she ordered it made for her. I also found out that day that she told the artist she would soon require him to render a piece of her and Markham, Raldowin's son. This worried me intensely, but I put my doubts aside, trusting her work instead. Unfortunately, I fear Narisse's fascination with our Guild Master may have turned to a dangerous obsession. She has even begun wearing her hair in the same fashion as Master Ajandi. Furthermore, ever since she discovered that Raldowin replaced Markham as heir to the throne with his daughter Narisse, she has been... unstable. Again, in any other circumstance, I would call for guild unity, but unfortunately, another matter has come to my attention. Yesterday, a representative of House Jistaan came to me with the same concerns. I ask you now what we are to do? We risk losing the financial support of our most prestigious benefactors if this persists.

There are only two choices as far as I can tell; we either approach Narisse with our concerns, or we must inform the Guild Master. This is why I called you all here today. We must decide which course of action we shall take."

The observations many Chirurgeons have recently made of their leader are correct. Narisse Coriante is obsessed with the Guild Master, and is emulating every aspect of her life. Whether this jeopardizes the Chirurgeons in the city is another matter. Despite her passions, Narisse is a capable leader. She is strong willed, dedicated, and her desire to please Ajandi Melisrian drives the Raven to excel in her duties. Should Narisse discover that some Chirurgeons are questioning her work, she will ease their concerns and focus her work, keeping her obsession in check. If some Chirurgeons try to express their concerns with the Guild Master, Narisse will not be so forgiving. She will do anything within her power to quell such voices. This situation could potentially explode in a bitter conflict that could consume Cliff-Spider's Chirurgeons and divert their attention away from other activities.

THE GUILD OF CARTOGRAPHERS

The Cartographers are the most mistrusted and disliked guild members among the city's inhabitants and nobles. Nonetheless, they are powerful and influential due to their Guild Master's presence in Cliff-Spider, the Gargoyle Sirius Khohall. The members of this guild all reside in, and operate from, a single building that stands in the middle of the Silistine Guild Cave. The Cartographers' guild manor, a huge tower built around an immense stalagmite, is a sight to behold. Though not as rich as the Chirurgeons, the Cartographers have recently managed to acquire generous donations from Manor Rift of Garethin Free-Keep, and of House D'Amari of Troupial Dove, a House of minor nobles operating with the Trade Council. The lord of House D'Amari, Basske, has himself struck a deal with Khohall. No one is aware of the details of the deal, but it seems likely that Basske may be paying Khohall to receive information on secret activities in the court. This would help House D'Amari gain influence in the court, and perhaps become a major player. It is also possible that Khohall may possess sensitive information on Basske and that House D'Amari's leader may be paying Sirius to remain silent. However, as is evident by the amount of money now filling the guild's coffers, Khohall has been busy, and successful. Khohall has proven that he will use any and all means necessary to make the Cartographers the most influential guild in Providence once again. Khohall will cajole, threaten, borrow or steal to get his hands on what he needs.

Khohall is unquestionably the most corrupt guild-affiliated player in Cliff-Spider's political scene. He is constantly on the move, forming alliances and hatching secretive plans. He has become a fixture in the politics of the spire city, and his presence is never less than provocative. Khohall has many enemies, but so far has managed to wield the clout (or the blackmail material) to keep

himself out of the fire. Many people, including Regent Caiylus of the Alliance, and King Raldowin, are aware of his manipulative ways. They are merely awaiting the proof to act on their suspicions. Nonetheless, Sirius's political acumen is unmatched at the guild level, and hard to surpass even in the halls of power above Guildholm.



UNDERGROUND ALLIES

Never one to leave a possible asset unused, Khohall has made alliances in the city's shadows, deep within its criminal element. Vaska Traask, the "Mayor of the Boneyard," and head of the Pand-Jer criminal ring, is a secret associate of Khohall's. Both Gargoyles have met and taken a liking to each other's methods. Traask handles the shadier aspects of Khohall's business, securing him with blackmail material, illicit goods and other sundries; all of which help Khohall further his quest for power.

Recently, Traask has provided information on the activities of one of Raldowin's closest advisors, Prime Koryanny De'inzil.

"It seems our dear noble Koryanny enjoys activities not well suited to one who holds such a... sensitive position in our famed city," the grinning Traask exclaimed. Khohall smiled faintly and savoured with anticipation the information "the Mayor" was about to divulge. Sirius was unaccustomed to waiting, and was hardly a patient man. He had come to appreciate their relationship however. Sirius used his considerable

influence to shield Traask's activities from the eyes of the Watchers and the militia in Cliff-Spider. In return, Sirus counted on Traask's Pand-Jer band as muscle when he couldn't afford to use his loyal Cartographers. In addition, Sirus had always hoped that Traask's minions would one day uncover a noble's filthy little secret. It seems that Khohall's uncharacteristic patience in this matter had finally payed off.

"Well Traask, I'm a busy man, what is it that you have to offer?"

"You were right about the proud and decorated lord in charge of interior matters," Traask said, rubbing his chin in obvious satisfaction at his own work. Even Traask knew not to keep Khohall waiting though; he could tell that the Cartographer was losing patience. "It seems that Koryanny is quite fond of Freetown, and has quite a taste for its inhabitants."

"Interesting," the Guild Master interjected, "but not enough to condemn him. So a few people may be shocked to find out his tastes run a different course. At most his family will be scandalized."

"You didn't let me finish," Traask said, interrupting for his turn. "There is one man in particular that Koryanny has taken a strong liking to. This young man, a handsome Fallen Hawk by the name of Jotan, has been in the Prime's presence regularly for over two months. It is likely that Lord Koryanny De'inzil's affection for the wastrel may have led him to become "loose-lipped." We cornered the man, and it is clear he knows something about the guarded War Council's secrets. Who knows what treasures he may hold?" Traask's smile dominated his visage. He was certain that he had impressed Khohall.

"I presume you have this boy?" Sirus asked.

"Well, we had him, but he is no longer... held." Traask's smile quickly faded as he noted the Cartographer's disappointment.

"You know what you need to do Traask. Bring me the wretch."

Jotan is aware that the Pand-Jer band are looking for him. He also suspects that they want him to betray Koryanny by revealing what he knows about the city's plans. However, Jotan knows only what Koryanny told him about the movement of Lost Tribes, since the Prime is concerned for Jotan's safety. The Fallen man is unwilling to comply with anyone since he cares for the noble Lord De'inzil. Jotan will try to evade the Pand-Jer and Traask for as long as he can. He may ask some of his friends, who may belong to a party of adventurers, to help him. He may also try to warn Koryanny, but he knows that it will be difficult for a Fallen to get his attention. Sirus Khohall on the other hand, will try to capture Jotan if Traask fails. Khohall will offer the man gold and anything else in exchange for the information. If Jotan refuses, Khohall will simply extract the information from the Fallen Hawk. After all, the resourceful Gargoyle has many ways to make even the bravest warriors reveal their darkest secrets.

SIRUS'S AIDE

Though Khohall keeps a close eye on the daily activity of his guild, he is not in charge of its day to day operations. Sussak Elios, of Troupial Rat, oversees the daily business of the guild. She is devoted to Khohall in an almost fanatical way, and often reports to him about transgressions guild members make, whether real or imagined. As one of Khohall's favourite workers, many Cartographers despise her, though none dare speak about it for fear of engendering Khohall's wrath.

THE GUILD MASTER'S BETRAYAL

Like other self-interested players in the Alliance of Kings and Cliff-Spider, Sirius Khohall is obsessed with obtaining power. Unlike others however, he does not care what the cost is; he will betray anyone and anything to achieve his goals. Sirius Khohall recently approached Warden Elarian of the prison state of Bone-Wail, in hopes that he could forge an alliance with the powerful Dragon ruler against the Alliance of Kings. Khohall intends to prove that his ambitions are genuine. To this end, Khohall is more than willing to weaken the Alliance of Kings from within. Sirius has taken note of the feud between the Chirurgeons and the Drummers. He knows that even the smallest spark will ignite a conflict between the two guilds. He also knows that the Chirurgeons have unsuccessfully attempted to amass the support of Houses that normally only reserve their financial boons for the Drummers. The Guild Master has a relatively minor noble within the Crackshore Eagles (Lord Allis Toran Crackshore) under his control, thanks to substantial blackmail materials. Although the noble cannot possibly influence the House to remove its support for the Drummers, the Eagle can divert his own personal funds, which are significant, away from the Drummers and into the hands of the Chirurgeons. Guild Master Khohall realizes that the Drummers will blame the Chirurgeons for this affront. This, Sirius hopes, will provide sufficient ammunition for the Drummers to react, possibly escalating into a full-blown conflict between the guilds.

THE GUILD OF MESSENGERS

The last guild of any significance is the Guild of Messengers. Troubles have plagued this group ever since its split from the Cartographers over two hundred years ago. These problems culminated with the destruction of their home city, Sun Guard. Since then, the Guild of Messengers has been in a state of chaos and disarray. Their leader Terracine Gulliver, seeks to re-establish a tight control over the guild. With Water-Sister's offer to house the guild, things are looking up. Even more interesting for the Messengers is the talk of an alliance with the two foremost war guilds of the Alliance, the Archers and the Drummers. Such a partnership could prove beneficial beyond all measures, allowing the guild to thrive in its constant conflict with the Cartographers.

After the destruction of Sun Guard, some Messengers headed for Cliff-Spider. Since Regent Caiylus suggested that Messengers serve as advanced scouts for the Alliance's armies, it made sense that they should have a strong presence in Cliff-Spider. The Messengers established a temporary headquarters in Cliff-Spider until their move to Water-Sister is completed. Terracine will maintain the base and a small force of Messengers in the city since they have already established a presence in Cliff-Spider.



For the most part, the Messengers shy away from politics, preferring to see to their duties and the solidification of their guild. Still, financial backing is essential to the wellbeing of any guild, so the Messengers make some allowances for politics. The head of the guild in Cliff-Spider is Gunder Dak'Strom, a Blessed Dragon who is an extremely apt politician. Guild Master Gulliver personally chose him to oversee the guild in Cliff-Spider. Dak'Strom came to the conclusion that it was of paramount importance to find serious backing for the guild if it was to recoup its losses.

Thanks to Dak'Strom, the guild has found two major backers in Cliff-Spider: Lord Illetrii of House Gyark and War-Prefect Juunda Sedos, of the Raven House Selestrii. With these nobles in their corner, the Guild of Messengers might soon be back on its feet. Their continuing struggle against the Cartographers, however, has played against them in many ways. It is a well-known fact that Gulliver has a bone to pick with the Cartographers' Guild

Master. The Guild of Messengers would be better off without an enemy such as Khohall. Even the Houses who would normally never back the Cartographers do not want to go against the vindictive and mercenary guild for fear of reprisals. This has hampered the Messengers' efforts in major ways, and they must fight a continuous uphill battle to prove themselves. Nobles and Houses accustomed to dealing with Cartographers for work are hesitant to deal with the Messengers for fear that they will become involved in a fight between the two groups. Everyone, including the city's court, wishes to stay far away from such a conflict; they feel that other more important matters deserve their attention.

Gulliver's people fight a constant war against the campaign of disinformation and slander the cunning and politically-shrewd Khohall launched. Too often, nobles who promised money and political support for the Messengers backed out of the deal at the last minute. This, Gulliver suspects, is no doubt the work of the Cartographers. Certain Messengers even reported that disguised members of the Cartographers attacked them while on duty. These ambushes have injured three Messengers and resulted in the loss of at least fifteen important contracts for the small guild. Gulliver has recently gone public promising that they would meet any further ambushes with swift and savage retribution. For now at least, things seem to be getting back on track. The Messengers' work with the Chirurgeons brings in some much needed funds, and the efforts to settle down in Water-Sister are progressing rapidly.

THE MESSENGERS AND THE ALLIANCE OF KINGS

Regent Caiylus, the Guild Masters of the Archers and Drummers, and perhaps even Ajandi Melisrian, are some of the few forces willing to provide support to the Messengers. The Alliance of Kings hopes that the Messengers can soon pick up the mantle of "far-reaching explorers" that the Cartographers left behind in their greedy quest for power. Perhaps, Regent Caiylus hopes, the Messengers will find answers to many riddles, including a way back to the home world of Yas'Wail. Presently, the Messengers must be content with building their strength and numbers, and serving the Alliance to the best of their abilities.

THE GUILD OF DUSK

Cliff-Spider's inhabitants make little mention of the Guild of Dusk. Some people claim it does not even exist. If the Guild of Dusk does operate, it does not advertise. There are rumours that members of the guild work within Cliff-Spider. Assassinations are few and far between, but Watchers have uncovered several bodies over the years with the ubiquitous dusk rose in their mouth. If they are indeed present in Cliff-Spider, the best bet is that the Guild of Dusk operates out of the Boneyard, or perhaps even Freetown. They remain, however, a name that people only whisper in dark corners.

THE MILITIA

Cliff-Spider's prime asset is its military might. No other city in the Alliance of Kings, not even Cry-Star, can match Cliff-Spider's capabilities for warfare. Not counting the specialist warriors of such groups as the Guilds of Archers and Drummers, or the elite Wind Knives, Cliff-Spider's militia counts over 400,000 soldiers and officers. Most of the soldiers are of the Fortuned caste, while officers are Blessed and Pure.

Cliff-Spider's army is broken down into four major factions. The Infantry consists mostly of whatever Redeemed are members of the militia, as well as most Fortuned soldiers. Pathfinders are scouts and spies, and also masters at survival, disguise, and sabotage. The Overwatch on the other hand, are soldiers who are skilled flyers. They are responsible for long-range strikes, and air support for ground troops. Support Operations consists of training, equipment, and general bureaucracy.



INFANTRY

"Like solid stone through brittle bone, we forge ahead!"

— Sentinel motto.

Accounting for roughly a third of Cliff-Spider's militia, the Infantry is the militia's roots, its strength, and its first line of defense. Many of the Infantry's

soldiers are posted in towers in Freetown and around the Free-Keeps. In addition, members of the Infantry are trained to act as an offensive force whenever the need arises. All Infantry soldiers know how to use melee weapons, specifically swords, axes and daggers. They also train in the use of spears and pikes.

Upon reaching the age of fifteen, men and women of any caste (though most are Redeemed and Fortuned) may join the militia. Training takes two years, though it can be condensed to a period of no longer than six months at times of war. In the face of the looming war, the city's military rulers are considering training more soldiers.

The Infantry contains two groups, Legions and Sentinels. The Legions are 1,000 warrior units who form the core combat groups of the Infantry. Sentinels, subdivided into many units of varying numbers, serve as guards for the city, the Free-Keeps, and the field outposts. This does not mean the Sentinels don't have the ability to be more offensive. These brave men and women are well aware that their sacrifice would not halt a powerful and persistent enemy; it would only allow Cliff-Spider to prepare. There are 150 Legions (for a total of 150,000 warriors) in and around Cliff-Spider. The Sentinels count approximately 100,000 soldiers, scattered throughout Cliff-Spider and the surrounding area.

UNIFORM

All members of the Infantry wear the green and gold tabard of the militia, as well as the silver-coloured epaulets denoting them as soldiers of the Alliance of Kings. The symbol painted on their chests, a ferocious-looking Tuscani wild cat, is the only marking an Infantry soldier wears. There are no ranks within the Infantry. A particular soldier's seniority separates him or her from another. The only exception to this rule is the Silver Gauntlet. Upon beginning his or her fifteenth year of service, an Infantry soldier gains a silver-plated gauntlet, worn on the left hand. This mark of respect goes a long way towards improving one's standing within the Infantry and militia as a whole. Presently, there are roughly two hundred or so Silver Gauntlets in the militia. Those who wear the silver gauntlet usually become leaders of Sentinels, or of particular guard towers. They

also serve as ground leaders for the Legion and Sentinel units.



NEW CANDIDATES

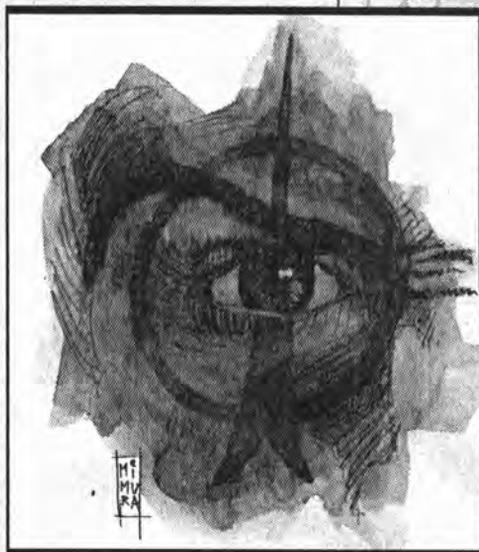
Infantry recruits go through physical training and take history and other lessons. This initial education lasts for the better part of a year. Each year the military academy accepts 1 500 new students; approximately 850 of them graduate. Upon completion of the academy courses, cadets select which branch of the militia they wish to serve. Anyone may join the Infantry, and 75% of the cadets do so. Those of the Blessed or Pure castes may opt to join the Overwatch. They account for over 20% of the remaining cadets. Between five and ten cadets can participate in the Pathfinder trials. Of these, officers choose one or two to continue their training as Pathfinders, while the remaining hopefuls wash out into the other branches. The first year of training involves combat and group tactics. The cadets learn the basics of discipline and warfare, and participate in arduous physical training. Roughly 20% of cadets fail before the end of the second year. The second year consists mainly of cross training between the Infantry and the Overwatch, as well as exercises aimed at honing the soldiers' sense of combat and tactics. Their weapons training continues and intensifies. By the end of the second year, cadets become soldiers, and join the ranks of their respective units.

THE PATHFINDERS

"Why is it that I've never heard or seen one of you before?" asked the curious noble. "That's because we do our work," the Pathfinder replied curtly. The puzzled lord looked at the reporting Pathfinder, unsure what the soldier meant.

Pathfinders are the scouts, spies, and all-around special forces of the militia. Every Pathfinder trains in a variety of weapons and hand to hand fighting styles. Members of the group do not wear uniforms since they have no ranks.

The Pathfinders have units of seven men and women. These units, known as Cells, are indicated by a colour scheme: Grey Cell, White Cell, Red Cell, Black Cell, Gold Cell, Green Cell and Blue Cell. The members of one cell live and train with the other members of their cell constantly, forming a very tight bond, to the point where all members know their companions as well as they do themselves. A senior member, always of the Pure caste, oversees each cell. These overseers, called Primes, report directly to King Raldowin. The most



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notable Prime is Koryanny De'inzil, a Hawk of House Tura. He is Raldowin's cousin, and a trusted advisor. He is also the senior-most Prime, and was one of the founders of the Pathfinders.



CLIFF-SPI

Each Pathfinder wears a distinct mark around the right eye: a circle cut by an arrow pointing upwards. The entire sigil has the same colour as one's unit. Soldiers cover the mark during missions to ensure anonymity. Members of Cliff-Spider's military respect the mark, but the civilian population remains ignorant as to its significance. No Pathfinder serves actively for more than seven years. Once a Pathfinder's tour of duty is over, they can return to their families. Those who so wish may remain active within their former cell as advisors and trainers. The militia chooses new Primes whenever current Primes can no longer fulfil their duties. All the current Primes have served in their position for over ten years.

PATHFINDER SPECIALTIES

All Pathfinders train in the use of various weapons, so that they may use whatever is available proficiently. They are masters of various hand to hand techniques; not many fighters can hope to best them in a fair fight. No Pathfinder uses Wird, to prevent Wird Hounds and Wird Casters from sniffing them out. All Pathfinders are also skilled at disguise and information gathering. They have trained in survival techniques that allow them to perform at peak efficiency no matter where they find themselves. They are excellent trackers and snare-makers. Pathfinders also spend years building up resistance against many known poisons used throughout Providence (See Trait Resistance to Diseases page 142). The militia allows only Blessed or Pure within the Pathfinders, and only the Pure may become Primes. It is considered an honour to be accepted within their ranks.

A SOLDIER'S DUTY

All members of the Pathfinders, including the Primes, are ultimately loyal to Raldowin — almost fanatically so. None of the rulers before Raldowin had such a unit under their command, and many of Raldowin's political opponents fear that he might use the Pathfinders as his personal enforcers. Raldowin, however, has never even entertained such thoughts. The Pathfinders were born from a discussion between Raldowin, De'inzil and Sierra Kudlow, administrator of Cliff-Spider's Recognizers. It seemed to these three leaders that having soldiers trained in the arts of tracking, survival and special warfare was necessary, given the particular abilities of the Lost Tribes. Thus was born the novel idea of the Pathfinders, who have never participated in a war. King Raldowin has yet to make the Pathfinders' role public knowledge, although many in the ruling class know the group exists. The Pathfinders continue to train, hoping to be ready when the time comes. They successfully completed their few missions, but many believe their true test is soon to come.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

THE OVERWATCH

The Overwatch is the pride of Cliff-Spider's militia. Blessed and Pure make up their ranks, though the Overwatch accepts strong gliders from the Fortuned caste. Members of the Overwatch, except for the young and numerous Lancers, serve as the militia's officers. The Overwatch awards the various ranks according to the time each member spends in the service:

- 1-3 years — Lancer
- 4-6 years — Marshal
- 7-10 years — Arkon
- 11-15 years — Marshal-Prime
- 16+ years — War Prefect

During these times of relative peace, the army has made changes concerning ranks. In order to prevent stagnation in their army, Cliff-Spider's rulers occasionally promote deserving soldiers (or those with the appropriate political clout), to make room below due to an increasing amount of aging soldiers within their ranks. This means that their officers are relatively young but well trained.

The leader of the Overwatch, known as the Celestial, is Miklas Vakis Crackshore, a Pure Eagle.

UNIFORM

The Overwatch's Lancers wear the green and gold uniform, but with a glorious golden Keshtria depicted on the front. All members of the Overwatch also wear the silver epaulets of soldiers of the Alliance. Furthermore, they wear helmets of the same deep-green colour as their tabard, with golden wings carved along the side of the helmet, and all the way around the back.



The costumes of Overwatch officers are easily distinguishable. Marshals wear a silver stripe around their right arm to distinguish them from warriors of other ranks. This silver stripe is marked with a green star for each year served as a Marshal. Arkons wear two stripes, with a similar star design to denote the number of years served as an Arkon. Marshal-Primes wear a gold circlet around their head, and a gold stripe around the right arm. Again, the green star design indicates seniority. War Prefects wear

a gold band around both arms for each year of service. They also wear a golden circlet with an encrusted diamond in the middle.

OVERWATCH DUTIES

The Overwatch is responsible for long-ranged attacks on isolated targets, supporting the Infantry, and launching surprise, hit-and-run raids on enemy supply lines. They serve a purpose much like that of cavalry, able to cover great distances in short periods of time. They are also the elite officers of Cliff-Spider's militia.

OVERWATCH DIVISIONS

Overwatch warriors are divided into groups of 100 soldiers called wings. The wings follow a simple number system, i.e. First Wing, Second Wing, etc. Each wing comprises eighty-six Lancers, ten Marshals and four Arkons. Also, each wing has control of a particular Infantry Legion. The Wing leader, the Arkon with the most seniority, acts as officer for the Infantry, while Silver Gauntlets act as advisors and ground leaders.

- Three Wings (and three Legions) form a Cohort. A Marshal-Prime heads each Cohort (also designated by numerals).

- Three Cohorts (a total of 3,300 warriors) form a Diamond, each of which is headed by a War Prefect.

- When stating their assignment, Overwatch Arkons, for example, would say: Arkon, 2nd Wing, 3rd Cohort, 6th Diamond. This would mean that they are part of the 2nd Wing of the 3rd Cohort in the 6th Diamond.

- Without counting the Infantry's Legions, 100,000 warriors are part of the Overwatch.

SUPPORT OPERATIONS

The remaining 50,000 members of Cliff-Spider's militia form Support Operations. They are clerks, trainers, cooks, tacticians, and officials of one type or another. They ensure that the militia always has supplies and is ready to confront whatever threat may arise. Support Operations may not be as glamorous as other branches, but their work allows Cliff-Spider's militia to concentrate on preparations and other important matters.

The Howling Furies

The Howling Furies are six Overwatch warriors that act as personal guards to Miklas Vakis. This group is composed of the six best female warriors in the Overwatch.

The Furies were originally formed as an honour guard. They took their name from the previous Celestial, a Blessed female Dragon named Kess Arkos, who was herself inspired by one of Cliff-Spider's legendary rulers. Kess was a phenomenal flyer and the hero of the Belarus Trial. At the cost of her own life, she saved King Raldowin from the poison arrow of an assassin known only as Belarus. For years Kess had worn the honourable nickname of Howling Fury. The group eventually grew into the elite force of the Overwatch, assigned to protect the Celestial. The current leader of the Howling Furies is Satera Arkos, Kess' daughter. Though an amazing warrior in her own right, Satera is finding the burden of living up to her mother's name harder and harder to bear.

MILITIA KEEPS

The militia is the sole user of three caves within Cliff-Spider. Of the three, two are in the Roundabout and one is in Mid-City. The main cave in Mid-City is where the academy and the training fortress known as Melee-Trial stand. This very large cave (roughly half a mile by a quarter of a mile), houses the thousand or so cadets in the midst of their two-year training period. It also holds another thousand or so Support Operations personnel. This cave is dedicated solely to the training area and residential quarters of the cadets.

The other caves house militia keeps, where soldiers train, sleep, eat, and essentially spend most of their time. The Overwatch has sole control of security in High City.

The Cliff-Spider Militia Chain of Command



The guilds and Pathfinders are outside this chain of command. Pathfinders answer directly to King Raldowin, while the Guilds answer to Regent Caiylus.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

The militia's chain of command is rather simple. Members of the Infantry are under the orders of the Silver Gauntlets. Lancers answer to Marshalls, who in turn answer to Arkons. The Arkons also act as superior officers to Silver Gauntlets. Arkons report to Marshal-Primes, who report to War Prefects. The Prefects are directly under the orders of King Raldowin.

THE COMING CONFLICT

Coordinating the militia with the Archers and Drummers is more complicated than ranking. The army answers only to King Raldowin. They wear the epaulets of the Alliance, but are ultimately loyal to the King, first and foremost. This is not true for the Archers and Drummers, who fall under the

providence of the Alliance. When war erupts with the Lost Tribes, as most people now believe, the Regent may ask a city's ruler to head the Alliance's armies. Other political advisors and diplomats believe she will ask either Raldowin, because of their deep friendship, or King Gunther, whose military expertise is unparalleled in Providence. Currently, the guilds answer to Regent Caiylus. Caiylus prefers that each guild master involved in the coming conflict coordinate their guild's efforts. She may however, decide that it is best that one person head all guild members and armed forces.

If forces should attack Cliff-Spider, the Infantry and the Overwatch would handle most of the defensive fighting, while the Archers and Drummers would be

assigned important targets. The militia's main concern would be the protection of Cliff-Spider, while the guilds would handle threats aimed more specifically at the Alliance as a whole.

THE WIND KNIVES

"Perfection is not an ideal — it is our essence."

— Jytal Feller, leader of the Wind Knives.

Another division of Cliff-Spider's militia is that of the elite royal guard unit known as the Wind Knives. Selection for this very prestigious and renowned corps occurs in two ways; first, the leaders select from the best members of the Overwatch, and the second method is through application. Each year the Wind Knives select ten promising recruits. After an intensive year-round relentless training program, the Wind Knives choose one recruit to become part of the Wind Knives. If none of the candidates meet the harsh requirements or survive the stringent background checks, no recruit graduates.

The result of the training process is a group of nearly sixty men and women, all of Blessed or Pure status, who are the best trained and most capable soldiers in all of Cliff-Spider. Members of the Wind Knives do not wear the silver epaulets normally associated with soldiers of the Alliance.

The Wind Knives' primary obligation is to the ruler. In this aspect, they act as royal guards, protecting both the King and his family. Their presence is, however, far from ceremonial. The Wind Knives also conduct commando-style missions such as raids on Wayfarer targets, or on particularly dangerous foes that threaten the royal family.

THE MILITIA'S ELITE WARRIORS

The current leader of the Wind Knives is Jytal Feller, a Pure Eagle. Jytal has been Centurion of the Wind Knives for nearly seven years. His devotion and loyalty to the royal family, and to Raldowin in particular, is unsurpassed. As with most members of the Wind Knives, Jytal is a Wird Weaver, and a very powerful one at that. In addition to Wird, all Wind Knives learn a variety of weapons and tactics. They



Raldowin's Secret Forays

In his youth, King Raldowin was a member of the proud and noble Wind Knives. Unbeknownst to most people, including members of his immediate family, Raldowin, who craves adventure and solace from the day-to-day doldrums of political life, often wears a disguise and accompanies the Knives on various missions. Some of the few members of the Wind Knives who are aware of Raldowin's presence secretly object to his dangerous forays with the group. They feel that he is needlessly endangering his life, and making their work more difficult. Nonetheless, no member would ever dare to question Raldowin's wishes in this matter.

tend to favour sturdy spears and axes. They wear two kinds of armour: one ceremonial, and an extremely light and sturdy resin armour. Both types are Wird-enhanced and offer protection well beyond that of normal armour. The Wind Knives wear the ceremonial armour, large and elaborate, at galas, in public, or when Raldowin hosts diplomatic missions. Roughly half of the Wind Knives wear this armour at all times. Half of the Wind Knives are inside the throne room, or accompany the King to social events. The armour is in the silver, black and deep green colours of the Wind Knives. The remaining half of the group surveys the king's work and travel areas from a distance. They soar high above, or meld into crowds, offering a more aggressive form of protection. They eliminate most threats to the King before his close guard, garbed in the ceremonial armour, even become aware of a threat. Jytal himself is always near Raldowin, almost never leaving his side.



THE POLITICAL REALM

Cliff-Spider's halls of power are mazes of politics, corruption, alliances and plots. Restricted mainly to Pure and Blessed members, these grounds are as dangerous as the Boneyard's. Here, however, the participants fight battles on a different level. Political "warriors" wage wars with words and paper instead of axes, spears, fists and claws.

Though Cliff-Spider is a monarchy, and thus the final word is always the ruler's, much of the day-to-day decision-making is left to lesser bureaucrats and politicians. In a city as large as Cliff-Spider, the ruler would indeed be hard-pressed to deal with everything on his or her own. Thus, King Raldowin delegates tasks and responsibilities to others. Six categories make up the power structure in Cliff-Spider: advisors, the law, taxes, the War Council, and finally, the King himself.

ADVISORS

The closest individuals to the King are his advisors; generally, the King selects these men and women. They advise Raldowin on everything from delicate Alliance of Kings' matters, to what he should wear on any given day. Chief among these advisors is Lord Bis'Kell, of Troupial Dragon, the Chancellor and a long-time friend of Raldowin's. Lord Bis'Kell is never far from the King. Raldowin trusts Bis'Kell enough to consult him on almost any situation. Among the most powerful of Cliff-Spider's nobles, most other courtiers view Bis'Kell with awe. The tall Dragon commands respect by his presence alone. If that is not enough, his impeccable record speaks for itself.

Several of the King's closest advisors handle specific tasks:

Watchers/Law: High-Magistrate Kirianis Starseek (Blessed Dove)

Militia Matters: Miklas Vakis, Overwatch (Pure Eagle)

Interior Matters/Security: Prime Koryanny De'inzil (Pure Hawk)

Social Matters: Herald-Master Dol Simsy (Blessed Raven)

Alliance Matters: Lord Raukin Crackshore (Pure Eagle)

Finances: Lady Vejandra Allister (Pure Dove)

King's Security: Centurion Jytal Feller, Wind Knives (Blessed Hawk)

The advisors hold monthly meetings, though the King, or the Chancellor, who replaces the King when he is absent, may decide to call emergency meetings when needed.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

LORD BIS'KELL, CHIEF ADVISOR TO THE KING, AND HEAD OF OCTAGON.

Bis'Kell has always been involved in politics in some fashion or other. Whether on Alliance matters, or on subjects specifically dealing with Cliff-Spider, the Dragon is an expert on almost any matter. A fierce proponent of the caste system, Bis'Kell nonetheless is a fair and open-minded individual. He keeps himself up-to-date on all matters concerning the Alliance, the city, and the King. Bis'Kell also acts as the Chancellor when the King is absent. A secret part of Bis'Kell's role is his work as the head of Raldowin's intelligence and advising apparatus. Eight people make up this group, called Octagon. Their job is to amass information and discover the movements and tactics of Bone-Wail, the Green People, the Boneyard's shady inhabitants, and groups and individuals within the city. They collect information, and keep the King apprised of dangerous situations and people.

The other members of Octagon are: the Hawk War Prefect Donica Lomass, and Prime Koryanny De'inzil of the Pathfinders. In addition, the Raven lord Jonas Feris, who is head of the militia's Support Operations division, joins the group. Sander Kel'Estrant, a Dragon, is the owner of a Free-Keep. Worina Largefang, a profitable Inn owner, is a Gargoyle. These two distinct individuals are also part of Octagon. Trade Master Davmin Sh'Jask, a member of Troupial Dragon, and Innis Rog, a foppish Rat rogue with a checkered past who works in the Boneyard, make up the final two members of Octagon.

CLIFF-SPIDER'S LEGAL SYSTEM

Cliff-Spider's laws are rather straightforward: the King is the absolute ruler, and his declaration on any matter is the final word. However, time restraints prevent the King from presiding over every single case. For crimes of murder, conspiracy, treason, or any other breach of a law, the magistracy steps in. The King (or the Chancellor in case the King is indisposed), judges only the most serious crimes like treason or the murder of a noble, if he so wishes. Normally however, Raldowin is too busy to judge a case.

The High-Magistrate, five magistrates, and a variety of justices make up the Magistracy. Lady Kirianis Starseek, the current High-Magistrate, *hears only* the most serious offenses. Otherwise, her job consists mostly of advising the King on judicial matters, running the Magistracy Halls (courts), and appointing new magistrates. The city's government, made up of numerous influential Houses, awards the position of High-Magistrate, though the King may decide to veto their choice. This position is a lifetime post, although the ruler may remove the High-Magistrate at any time. The High-Magistrate is also in charge of investigating cases of corruption found either inside the Magistracy or the Watchers. Currently, the High-Magistrate is conducting a secret investigation into reports of corruption concerning the Freetown magistrate, Trevian Solmyr.

One magistrate is responsible for each level of the city. In the High City, the magistrate is a Pure Dragon named Glaskow Kesh'Shant. Mayela Sedate, a Blessed Allister Dove, is the magistrate of Guildholm. She is also a former member of the Guild of Chirurgeons and has often demonstrated a particular distaste for guild members. A Blessed Hawk, Corus Dhet-Yoresh of House Tura, presides over the Roundabout. He is the busiest of the bunch. In Freetown, the magistrate is Trevian Solmyr, a Blessed Raven, and Denate Iria, a Blessed Dove, is the magistrate who oversees judicial matters concerning the Free-Keeps.

Each magistrate has a number of justices who handle the workload of cases. Magistrates oversee each case, finalizing the rulings. They are the head of each Magistracy Hall, one of which is located on each of the city's levels.

Activities in Cliff-Spider's legal courts are rather simple affairs. Both sides tell their side of the story and offer evidence to prove the veracity of their statements. The justice presiding over the case then makes a decision. In the case of murders and such, where only one side can be presented, Watcher court officials — special Watcher agents — must present their case against the defendant. If the case involves members of different castes, things become somewhat unbalanced. Almost invariably the lower caste party loses, unless they possess strong and irrefutable proof. This is an indication of the strength of Cliff-Spider's caste system. In fact, if called to testify or stand trial, members of Blessed or Pure status need not even present themselves to offer their side of the story. Conversely, anyone from a lower caste must be present, or else receive a verdict of guilty. The Pure and Blessed may elect to send a Principle, a person who legally represents them, to present their side of the case for them. Principles are often former magistrates themselves, or former Watcher court officials.

CAPITAL LAWS

There are many laws in Cliff-Spider. Ignorance of a law is not an admissible defense. Other than the usual laws defending private property, possessions and permits, some laws are called capital laws. They carry the stiffest penalties.

MURDER

Killing someone is murder, whether premeditated or not. The only acceptable defense is self-defense. Sentences depend on a few situational modifiers, such as the caste of the murderer, and the caste of the murdered individual. Usually, killing one of a lower caste will earn a murderer life in prison, or lifetime service in the militia, for which they will not get paid. If the murderer was of lower caste than the victim, the sentence is usually death. Members of the militia carry out these sentences, which involve the ingestion of poison, hanging, or decapitation. Killing a member of a higher caste, even in self-defense, can also carry a stiff sentence; it is usually unpaid service in the militia.

TREASON

If the magistrate proves treason against either Cliff-Spider, the King, or the Alliance of Kings, the sentence is death. In some cases, a magistrate has awarded the traitor the rank of Exile. If the court finds that the families or friends of guilty parties knew of the traitor's activities and did nothing, they can also suffer consequences. Family members and friends can be forced to serve the militia or to endure prison terms of one, five or ten-year increments. The guilty parties can also receive stiffer punishments, including death, if they helped the traitor. Anyone who is guilty and a member of either the Fortuned, Blessed or Pure caste will often receive the status of Exile.

CONSPIRACY WITH WAYFARERS

This court usually confers a lifetime of imprisonment in a dark and cold cell for perpetrators of this crime. If supporting a Wayfarer led to the death or injury of a Blessed or Pure, magistrates can sentence the culprit to death. If the court proves that the defender is actually a Wayfarer, sentencing is swift and remorseless.

RAPE

Obsessed with keeping their lineages intact, the Pure have made rape against members of the highest castes a severely punishable offense. In the case of Guild or Blessed caste members, the judgement is usually life imprisonment, and in the case of Pure caste victims, a magistrate will usually render the judgement of death. These judgements presume that the offender is of a lower caste than the victim. Should someone rape a member of the same or lower caste, the court will render a sentence of five to ten years in jail, or service to the militia. The magistrate usually dismisses the rape of a Fallen, despite the many complaints from Fallen prostitutes against members of the Fortuned or higher castes.

BLIGHT CROW

Anyone the court determines is a Blight Crow receives the stiffest punishment; they either become Exiles, or receive the death penalty.

Although he has rarely done so in the past, the King can reverse any judgement, whether guilty or not, at his discretion. As for the security, the Watchers protect the various Magistracy Halls.

TAXES

Since it is nestled in the city, the Alliance of Kings Trade Council collects taxes monthly in Cliff-Spider. Freetown, the High City, Guildholm, the Roundabout and the Free-Keeps are all taxed. The nobles of House Tura, the residents of Castle Well, and members of the militia are the only citizens exempt from taxation. The rationale behind this judgement is quite simple in the eyes of the Pure. In their minds, they support society, so why should they pay taxes? The Pure own many properties, and they willingly provide funds to individuals and organizations like the Alliance of Kings. It is clear to them therefore, that anyone who benefits from the protective shadow of the cities and the Alliance of Kings should contribute to their survival.

COLLECTOR

Lady Vejandra Allister is the person in charge of overseeing the proper functioning of the collection.

Cliff-Spider's government, headed by Raldowin, appoints a public servant to handle the actual duty of tallying up and recovering the taxes. This position, always held by a noble, has the title of Perceptor. The position is highly ceremonial, since the Trade Council does the actual work of collection. Nonetheless, there are always candidates who seek the position, which the government appoints every year. The title denotes the holder as one of the highest ranking members of society. Presently, the court has granted the post to his eminence, the Hawk Lord Raldomar of House Riessa. Raldomar is a very well respected, but not very intelligent, distant relative of the King. His faction, which is not always a reliable ally of the King's, is growing in strength at court. Bis'Kell recommended Raldomar, not for any skills that he might possess, but because of his wife Jaandi's popularity among many nobles. She is responsible for propelling House Riessa from obscurity into the limelight in only five short years. Bis'Kell offered her the position, but she turned it down because of other engagements. Nonetheless, the King's advisor believed her husband could bring in some of her House's support, which he has yet to do.

The Council determines taxes based on the income of a given person. Usually, Perceptors take roughly a quarter of an individual's earnings as taxes. The Trade Council handles the actual recovery, overseen by the Perceptor. The Trade Council holds the money. Unfortunately, the collection teams, individually known as the Vigil, are often the target of rampaging gangs, Wayfarers and criminals. In recent years, the Vigil has taken to recovering only small amounts at a time in order to avoid tempting fate. Still, the Trade Council has been thinking of asking King Raldowin for extra muscle at tax time, perhaps in the form of the militia or the Watchers.

WAR COUNCIL

As seems appropriate in a primarily military city, Cliff-Spider's War Council is the branch of government that experiences the fewest difficulties. The King knows that war is coming and feels that the development of a proper military strategy is critical. Royal favour and political jockeying play a very small part in deciding the members of the council. Raldowin has made it very clear that only the most experienced and capable members of Cliff-Spider's society will make up this council.

The War Council is a newly formed body created in anticipation of the coming war with the Lost Tribes. The council's role is to advise the King on matters of strategy, troop deployment, and assignments. Furthermore, the War Council is also in charge of military justice; they preside over court martials. The current War Council members are:

Centurion Jytal Feller of the Wind Knives

Prime Koryanny De'inzil of Special Operations (Pathfinders)

Lord Jonas Feris from Support Operations

Arturias Sanquade, or Crator D'Oshea for the guilds

Miklas Vakis for the militia

The Council meets in the War Hall, a secure location hidden deep within the King's castle; it is located in the Tura-Hall. The majestic room is Wird-crafted from white and dark-green marble. Immense frescos depict old heros. The high domed ceiling is white, shot through with glittering bronze. Wirdlight globes bathe the room in subtle lighting. In the centre of the room, a large table, raised from the floor with Wird, dominates the room. The table, the shape of a diamond, is encrusted with ivory and ebony. High-backed chairs surround the table. Maps adorn the walls, as do Cliff-Spider's standards, those of the Alliance of Kings, and House Tura.

The War Council has its hands full, and now meets twice monthly in preparation for an eventual war.

THE KING

"Justice and liberty are abstract concepts. Order on the other hand, is not — it is simply something we impose."

— King Raldowin Tura IV at a gathering of his security council.

When a king has the support that Raldowin IV presently enjoys, it is very hard to imagine anyone being able to oppose him. Cliff-Spider is not a place where dissent is appreciated, or accepted. King Raldowin IV has been on the

throne for many years, and when the time comes his daughter Sahanya is very capable of taking over from her father. Sahanya has the added benefit of capturing the respect of the people who matter. As such, the city is in good, strong hands and will be for many years to come. The threat of upcoming war has also given Raldowin an additional tool to use to eliminate his few enemies. As the King, Raldowin's word and decisions are usually final. The King can veto any decision an official makes. People unhappy with a magistrate's ruling, the conduct of a military officer, or who believe they have been unjustly taxed can petition the King for an audition. If Raldowin chooses to do so, he may reverse the original decision. Hopeful candidates should note however, that few people can reach the King in this matter. Supplicants must first approach a plethora of officials and advisors. They in turn, bring the case to the King, only if they decide that the plaintiff's cause is worthy. Naturally, few people make this request, and even fewer advisors bring the requests to Raldowin.

Given the control the King has over the city, backed by the second and third most powerful Houses, some might think that he would abuse his power. However, Raldowin is content with taking what is normally allowed him as King, and as a member of the Pure caste. King Raldowin is not a proponent of the caste system simply because it allows him to stand atop everyone else, but because he firmly believes in order. For order to emerge, there must be a strong, defined chain of command. According to the King, social order equates to people on top and people at the bottom. Nonetheless, Raldowin remains a just and fair ruler. He strengthens his royal office with years of service as a soldier and a knight. Always willing to listen to the advice of those around him, Raldowin makes judicious use of his advisors, most notably Lord Bis'Kell and his cousin Koryanny De'inzil. The one thing most people resent about the King is his support of, and relationship with, the Guild of Archers in general and its Guild Master, Arturia Sanquade in particular. They feel that his heavy reliance on the lower caste of Guild, instead of the Pure's militia, could damage the caste system.

The political situation, at least at the highest levels, is very stable. Problems start to emerge when one examines the lower levels of politics. Minor nobles seek to become more important. Powerful Houses jockey for the most prestigious appointments, while trying to keep their ambitious brethren below them. Thanks to Lord Bis'Kell's ingenuity and cunning, most of these petty wars remain in check, contained before they become a major problem. As a whole, the King's advisors take it upon themselves to shield Raldowin from unnecessary tribulations, especially in these days when the preparations for war are so important.

For all intents and purposes, the government operates smoothly. It is true however, that there are too many functionaries whose sole purpose is to direct you to their superiors. Similarly, there are several nobles, both Pure and Blessed, who serve no purpose. They constantly whisper meaningless secrets

and make futile attempts to plot against each other. Fortunately, true power does not rest in the hands of these sycophants; rather, it lies with the King, who in all things, has the final say. Usually, King Raldowin IV's capable administrators handle all but the most important matters.

A CONTEST OR A THREAT?

The King was accustomed to attending meetings with his advisor Koryanny De'inzil; he was however, unused to being summoned to one. The advisor stood in front of the King, attempting to convince Raldowin that his concerns should be addressed. "Complacency in this matter is not advisable my King. We must oppose House Danlinon in this matter at all costs." Koryanny, the King's cousin, voiced his concerns openly and without restraint. Sensing his advisor's genuine objections, Raldowin opted to listen attentively. Raldowin was aware that the Hawks in Cry-Star had successfully petitioned other Houses in the Dendyssy Hawk Chapter to hold a contest of skills. He also knew that the Chapter agreed to hold the festivities in the capital city of Cry-Star; Raldowin was not however, aware of House Danlinon's true purpose. "As far as you know my King, this competition is simply a contest to expose the greatest Hawk warriors in the land. I fear however, that the shrewd Hunter Danlinon may use this as an opportunity to challenge your leadership."

"That's absurd Koryanny," the King exclaimed passionately. "How could House Danlinon possibly rule Cliff-Spider? Their supporters in this city are few indeed," Raldowin stated confidently.

"Yes they are, but that is not the case within our Chapter," Koryanny replied.

"If you are suggesting that they are vying for the Chapter, I do not think that is a concern in these times."

By the impatient tone in Raldowin's voice, Koryanny noticed that the King wished to end this conversation; nonetheless, the advisor decided to press on, despite any fears that he would anger Raldowin. "With all due respect my King, in this matter you are mistaken," Koryanny voiced hesitantly. Raldowin, who was prepared to leave the room, turned to confront his advisor, anger blazing in his eyes. Before Raldowin could unleash his wrath, the advisor opted to soften his direct approach. "I do not mean to suggest that you have been negligent in your duties King Raldowin, simply that your great responsibility to the city prevents you from perceiving our foes elsewhere — specifically within our Chapter." Raldowin prepared to object, but instead allowed himself the time to absorb his advisor's words. "Perhaps you have a point cousin. I still do not understand how this makes any sense. How could replacing the leadership of our Chapter at this time in our history prove to be advantageous?"

Koryanny knew that Raldowin did not expect an answer, but the advisor's job was to gather information, and in this matter, Koryanny's skills provided results. "My agent informs me that is precisely the direction that the Chapter's Houses are heading. They are carefully observing these "games" to judge the leadership qualities of every participating House. One could argue that the winning House has the right to strip us of the Chapter's leadership. However, the Chapter knows that only House Danlinon and Tura have the necessary influence to rule our united Houses. If the Danlinons win, Hunter could argue that this is the perfect example of their right — nay their duty — to lead the Chapter."

The King remained silent for a few moments. He stared at the courtyard, then looked at his advisor. "How so?" Raldowin finally asked.

"They would argue that the greatest warriors must rule in times of war. Since we are faced with that possibility..."

"No need for further explanation," the King interrupted. "You have convinced me. Let us prepare, we have a lot of work to do." Koryanny bowed apologetically at the King, and prepared to leave the room. "Thank you for your brazen observation Koryanny," the King acknowledged. Koryanny turned his head, a faint smile forming on his lips, nodded and left the chamber.

THE GOVERNMENT

The Cliff-Spider Dominion, the city's government, has several factions. Each prominent House, including the Crackshore Eagles, the Allister Doves, and of course, House Tura, have the most say in the Dominion's halls. Most other Houses lack the strength and presence to have as much impact. The system for the functioning of the city is simple. The various factions try to reach a consensus on any matter that involves the government. The party that wins the most votes usually passes resolutions, unless of course the King strongly objects, at which point they must revise their decisions. Raldowin clearly has the most power in this structure. Nonetheless, he also has the greatest responsibilities. The King cannot possibly hear every matter, nor does he have the time to make every decision. The only matters Raldowin always hears concerns the militia, since the city is virtually in a state of war.

Generally, the King has the final say on any matter, but the city cannot function without the Dominion. If they feel that the ruler's judgement is unwise, they can effectively paralyze the city. For this reason, the King is as dependent on the Dominion as they are on him. Every influential party in the government, even the King, must coordinate and compromise if Cliff-Spider is to function properly.



A PRELUDE TO MURDER

Lord Bis'Kell is both feared and very respected for good reasons. His sense of order and his ability to manipulate situations has foiled most of the efforts to ruin the King's allies. Only one matter, regarding King Raldowin's second child, Sahanya, has seemingly escaped his notice. Princess Sahanya is presently involved with another Hawk from Chapter Dendyssy, the same Chapter that House Tura presently controls. The young man, Ordonios Kutan, is to all outward appearances, a perfectly acceptable companion for Sahanya; he may even be a potential husband. However, the truth is that he is a member of a small group of Hawks who strongly dislike Chapter Dendyssy for many reasons, not least of which is that they are but a vassal House.

There are many ancestral tales that recount the atrocities House Crelian committed against the now dead Chapter Dow'Shell in the early years of the exile to Providence. (See page 112 and 113 of the Providence Main World Book). The Crelians absorbed the Dow'Shell shortly after the wardens released the prisoners, and the two combined to form the Dendyssy. Although it is impossible for anyone to be purely of Dow'Shell ancestry, members of House Kutan seek the rebirth of the Chapter. Years ago, Raldowin's predecessor as head of the Dendyssy Chapter refused the House's demand to reorganize the Dow'Shell Chapter. The fathers and mothers of the present group were literally laughed out of the council hall. Today the Dow'Shell Warriors, as they call themselves, are thinking of using Sahanya to further their ambitions. They are currently trying to take control of the Alliance's Trade Council, and have a good hold on the current Cliff-Spider Chair, Lochenko Countswell, a Gargoyle whose greed is only surpassed by his financial acumen. Should they achieve their goal, they could become a real threat to the King and to Hawks in general. Unfortunately, no one suspects the extent of their dedication, nor exactly what they are willing to do for their cause. The Dow'Shell Warriors work slowly and very carefully, so as not to be exposed. Since Ordonios is involved with Sahanya, they believe they have another tool that they can use to pressure the Dendyssy to accept their demands. Exactly how they will use that tool remains to be seen.

CREATING A SCAPEGOAT

"Our ancestors were betrayed. We will become their vengeful voice for the future!"

— Burkel Kutan, head of House Kutan and leader of the Dow'Shell Warriors

Named after one of Cliff-Spider's former rulers, Burkel Kutan, father of Ordonios, desires to become one of Providence's most powerful voices. His goal is simple; Burkel wishes to weaken Chapter Dendyssy so greatly that the member Houses will capitulate to House Kutan's demands. His initial plan is to firmly sow deceit and betrayal among House Tura, the rulers of the Chapter. By

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

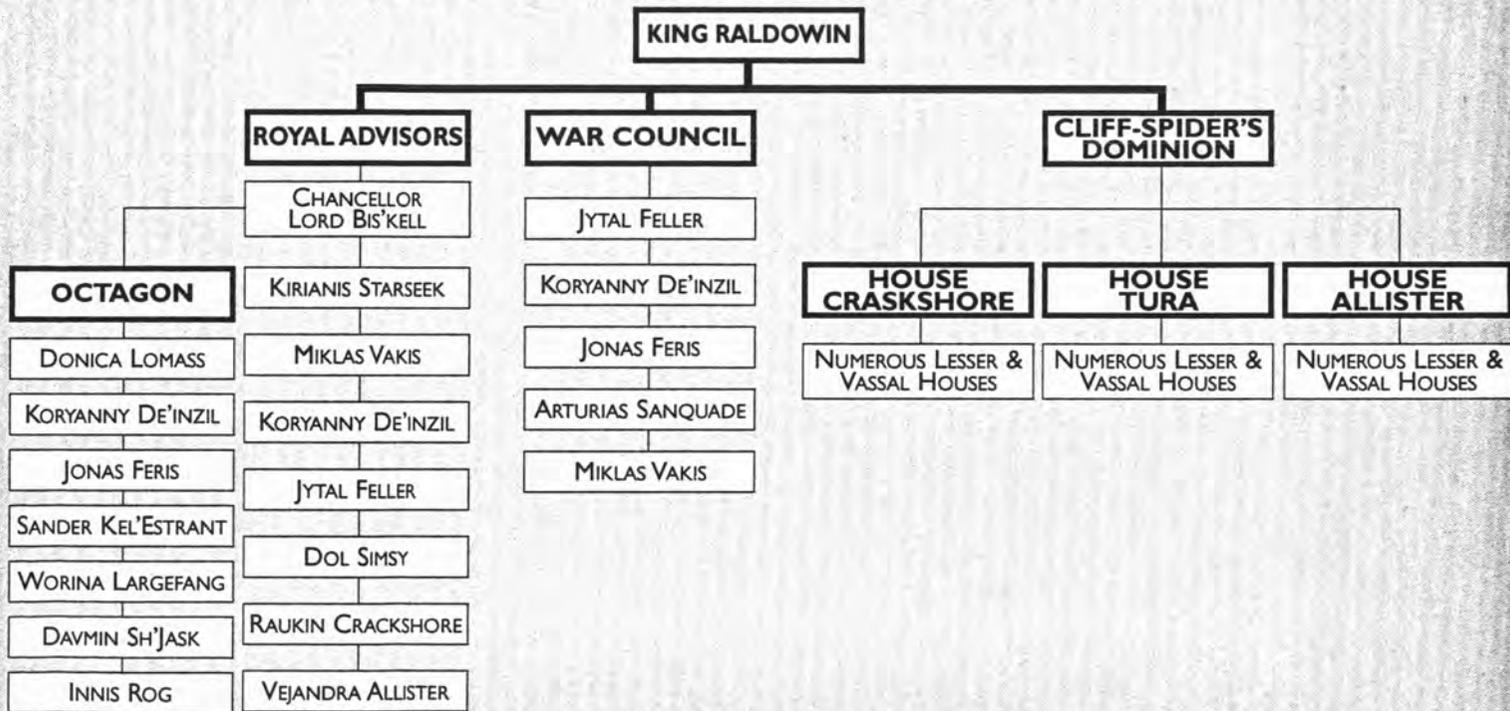
doing so, he is confident that the Chapter will be more likely to grant his desire for the reformation of the Dow'Shell.

Burkel Kutan's plans are to assassinate the heir to the King's throne, the princess Sahanya Tura. Burkel has already contacted assassins who claim to work for the Guild of Dusk. Before they perform this heinous act however, Burkel has instructed that they lay the blame at someone else's feet — Burkel's choice is Koryanny De'inzil. The assassins have already planted seeds of mistrust by spreading rumours in Cliff-Spider's underworld that the King's cousin, De'inzil, is planning the assassination. This is enough, they believe, to point an accusatory finger in the direction of the advisor. Conveniently, they also know that the advisor has been seen in Freetown, which lends credence to the rumour. When the time is right, they will murder the King's daughter and place any evidence in the Prime's chambers.

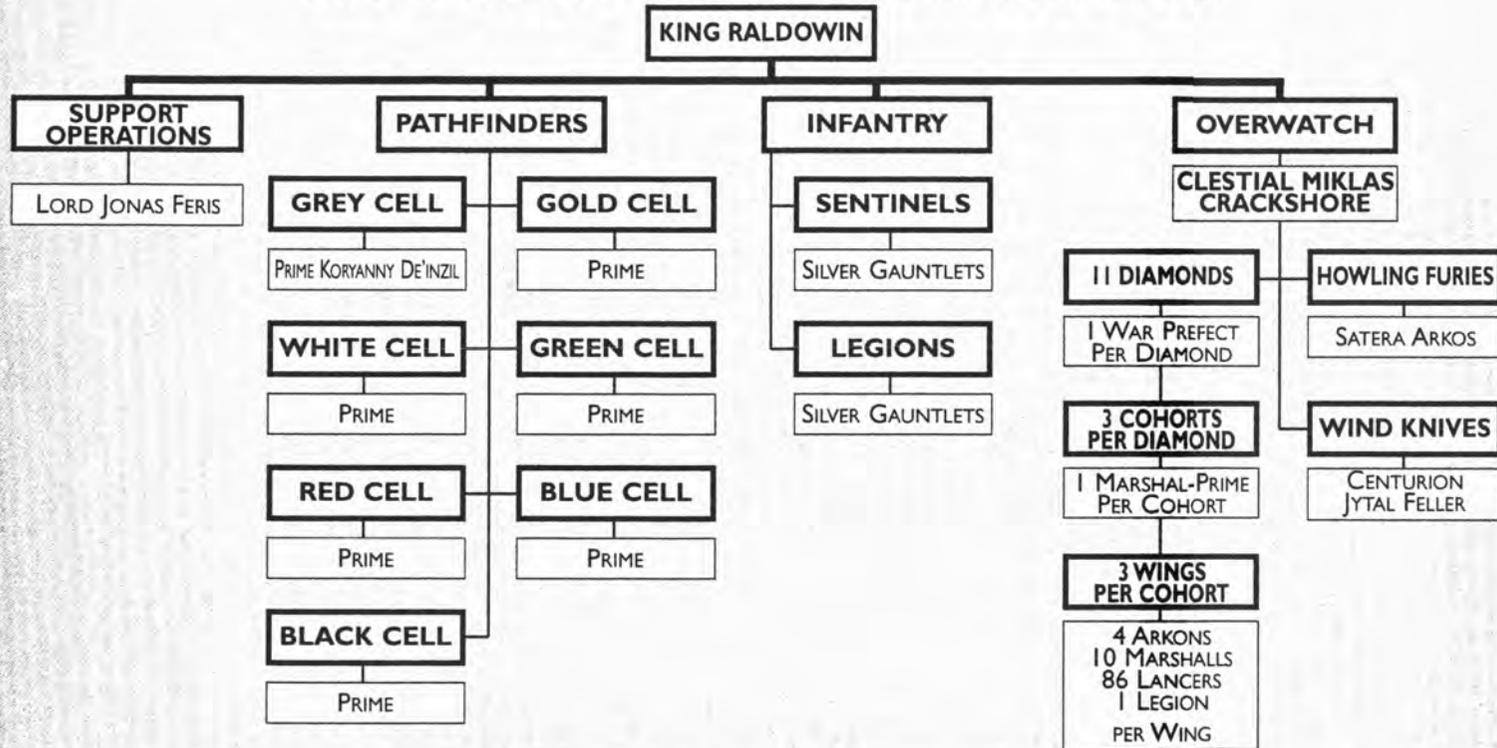
Burkel Kutan is pleased with this plan. If Raldowin believes that his cousin is responsible for the assassination, the King's vengeance will be wrathful and merciless. Burkel is gambling that other Houses will be so disgusted at the chaos in the leading House Tura that they may consider forming a new Chapter. Burkel Kutan would be waiting to present his option for the rebirth of the Dow'Shell. Since his House has the strongest blood ties to the Dow'Shell ancestors, Burkel is confident they would agree to make him their ruler.

Ordonios Kutas is unaware of his father's plans. He, like most other members of the Dow'Shell Warriors, simply wants to convince Chapter Dendyssy of the legitimacy of their claims. Due to his relationship with the King's daughter, he hopes that she will listen to his pleas, and bring them to Raldowin's attention. If he were to discover his father's plans, Ordonios would undoubtedly be repulsed and attempt to foil the maniacal plot.

CLIFF-SPIDER'S POWER STRUCTURE



CLIFF-SPIDER'S MILITIA STRUCTURE



CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

CASTLE WELL

"I had no idea why this place was called the High City until now." Jove's Raven student stared at the massive structures that hung from the ceilings, and rested on the sides of the cavern's thick walls.

"What do you mean?" The Horizon Strider asked.

"This place is magnificent. It truly is a high city in more ways than one. I wonder how the Fallen are able to reach the safety and comforts of Castle Well?"

Jove stared at his innocent pupil and remembered how little she knew of this dichotomous world. "They don't," Jove replied hesitantly. The young Raven woman lowered her head.

Castle Well, also known as the High City by most of Cliff-Spider's inhabitants, is undoubtedly the city's wealthiest area. Anyone who spends time within the well-guarded walls of the High City can easily forget the hardships other castes experience.

Castle Well's four caverns are laid in a four-leaf clover formation, with the uppermost level of Guildholm and the Mid-City forming a protective cocoon around them. The only way to reach Castle Well is through secured tunnels.

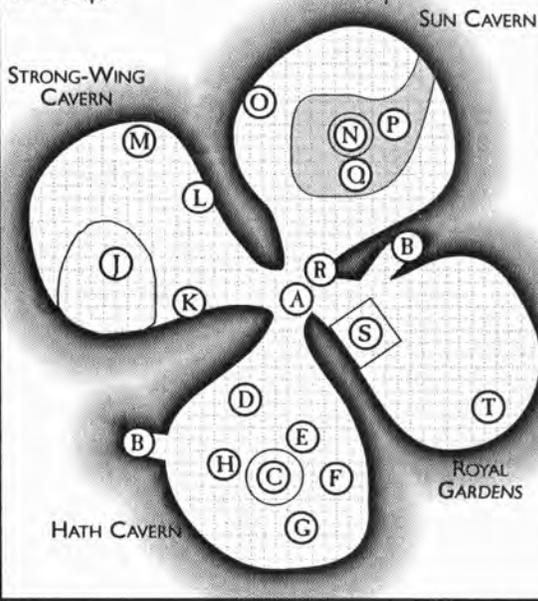
Castle Well's four caves are, in order: the Royal Gardens, Sun Cavern, Hath Cavern and finally, Strongwing Cavern. As a rule, members of the largest and most influential Houses live in their own caverns. The minor and vassal Houses that support the Allisters, Crackshores and Turas may or may not reside in the same cavern as their patron House. Considering that allegiances in Providence change regularly, it is impossible for one House or one political faction to geographically dominate a whole cavern. Similarly, since the office of ruler has rotated among different Houses in the past, the Royal Palace is located in the centre of the High City where the tunnels from each cavern meet.

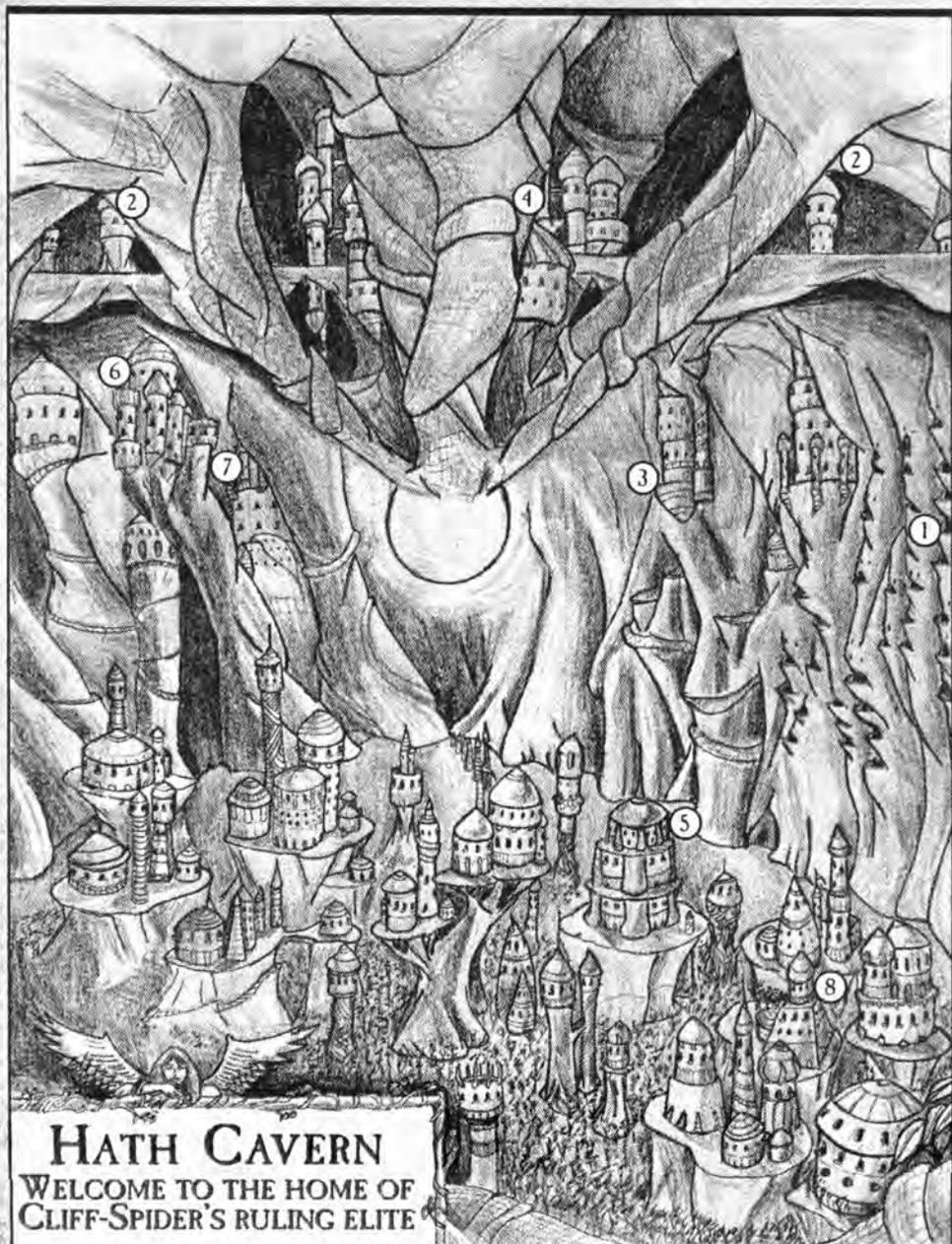
Castle Well

CLIFF-SPIDER

CASTLE WELL

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| A | Royal Palace | L | House Gareffa's estate |
| B | Passageway to Guildholm | M | House Arakid's estate |
| C | House Tura's estate | N | House Allister's estate |
| D | House Skoraa's estate | O | Calm-Purity school |
| E | House Sandista's estate | P | Peace-Water Lake |
| F | The Regent's Citadel | Q | Kipfer's Blood Lancers |
| G | House Starseek's estate | R | The Well |
| H | Wind Knives | S | Merchant's Square |
| J | House Crackshore's Manor | T | Alliance of Kings Museum of History |
| K | The Rapax | | |





HATH CAVERN
 WELCOME TO THE HOME OF
 CLIFF-SPIDER'S RULING ELITE

HATH CAVERN

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Alcoves for soldiers | 5 | House Skoraa's estate |
| 2 | Overwatch guard towers | 6 | House Starseek's estate |
| 3 | Wind Knives | 7 | House Sandista's estate |
| 4 | House Tura's estate | 8 | The Regent's Citadel |

When one accepts the fact that Cliff-Spider's most prominent inhabitants live in caves, it becomes far easier to notice the remarkable comforts and wealth of the High City. If persistent invaders ever succeeded in capturing Cliff-Spider, Castle Well's most important inhabitants could evacuate in the secret tunnel the militia has dubbed the Well. The Well has a secure position near the Royal Palace. Should an alien army invade the city, an elite force of guards would lead High City's civilians down the Well and out of the city.

HATH CAVERN

Out of all of Cliff-Spider's caves, the largest and most impressive is unquestionably Hath Cavern. Members of House Tura, the ruling family, occupy most of the cavern. Hath Cavern's ceiling is well over four hundred feet high. Its designers collapsed tunnels and sealed off all possible entrances to ensure that there are only two passages to this cavern — one leading into Guildholm, and another that leads to the High City's other caverns.

Many small alcoves extend all the way up the sides of Hath Cavern. Up to a thousand archers and soldiers can take position in these fortified locations to devastate an invading force. Most of Hath Cavern's mansions, and residential units are built into the cavern's walls or in the tips of giant stalactites and stalagmites. Wird gardeners maintain lush flowers, vines and trees that border the balconies, streets, and smooth walls of the cavern. In addition, artists carved beautiful frescoes into the pastel stone walls. These pieces depict the momentous events in Cliff-Spider's history. Golden Wirdlight globes keep the area well-lit and virtually devoid of shadows.

Hath Cavern's ambience is safe and welcoming to the flying castes. Nonetheless, archways link House Tura's main estate, enabling non-flying staff members to come and go. Elite Overwatch soldiers guard these archways.

The Wind Knives, King Raldowin's private guards, provide Hath Cavern's security. Members of the Overwatch also help the elite soldiers in their duties. The Wind Knives warriors stand poised on stone alcoves, waiting to swoop to the rescue of their charges. The Wind Knives also survey House Tura's holdings. Tura estate is held high above the ground, between five almost equidistant stalactites. The stone stalactites hang from the ceiling like giant fingers gently grasping the structure. Powerful Wird crafters bent the tips of these stalactites inward toward each other until they touched; House Tura's main estate rests within this protective cage. The mighty stone stalactites act like barriers, sheltering House Tura's estate from harm, or the overly inquisitive eyes of visitors and political adversaries. The mansion per say is a series of buildings interconnected by stone walkways. These white and gold-streaked marble buildings range in size from one to four-stories.

Residents of Hath Cavern have their very own sun. In the centre of the cavern's ceiling, between the Tura estate and the floor, hangs a giant Wirdlight

globe. To recreate the atmosphere outside of the Crysarius Bridge, the globe is the same colour as Providence's glowing and pulsating orb.

House Master Hasken Yoresh

Many people believe that blackmail cost Hasken Yoresh Tura's post as the Alliance of Kings' Trade Master. Information about Yoresh's extramarital activities may have reached the wrong ears, and Raldowin (who himself voted for Yoresh's successor, Davmin Sh'Jask), reportedly used his influence to pull him out of the limelight. The King believed that some less scrupulous elements in the city could use information on Hasken's affairs to force him to capitulate to their demands. Since Raldowin is fond of Hasken, he nonetheless awarded him the less publicly scrutinized job of House Master.

Hasken's hair is black, short and slightly receding. Despite his age, the House Master still looks impressive in his tunics and robes. His short goatee lends him a studious air. A well-learned man, Hasken's financial acumen made him one of the most effective Trade Masters ever to hold the position. He now also works as an advisor to Lady Vejandra Allister, who oversees Cliff-Spider's finances. His son Corus Dhét-Yoresh, is the Magistrate in charge of the Roundabout. A dilettante by nature, Corus only holds on to the job because of his House's influence.

The various estates of minor noble Houses and the Tura vassal Houses are scattered in walls and stalactites near Hath Cavern's floor. The most notable families within this sheltered cavern are the Raven House Skoraa, the Hawk House Sandista, and the Swan House Starseek. Members of these Houses also own sprawling estates. Their homes display glorious towers, domed halls, and sparkling stone rooftops. Hath Cavern is the epitome of comfort and elegance.

Although the head of House Tura is King Raldowin IV, one of his cousins, Hasken Yoresh, oversees the day-to-day affairs of the House. Hasken Yoresh Tura is the former Trade Master of the Trade Council and is a rich Free-Keep owner who resides in Hath Cavern. When Hasken lost the position of Trade Master to Davmin Sh'Jask, Raldowin picked him to run the House while the King attended to more important matters. Yoresh owns three Free-Keeps, which his companion, a female Bat named Romanica Ferish, oversees.

THE REGENT'S CITADEL

The Regent's Citadel, also named the Regent's Hall, is one of the largest structures in Hath Cavern. The hall is made of polished obsidian stone. Statues of past Regents decorate the Regent's Citadel on the outside; interestingly, Caiylus' predecessor, Jenobay Mit'ang's marble likeness, is conspicuously absent.

Although she is seldom in Cliff-Spider, servants carefully maintain Regent Caiylus' home in the city. The structure's builders made the citadel along the same principles as the King's palace; defense, not aesthetics, is the residence's primary design objective. Despite its utilitarian nature, Regent Caiylus' staff has turned the fortress into a beautiful home. The gardens surrounding the tower are practically unmatched in all of Cliff-Spider. Inside, thick carpets and rich tapestries cover the floors and walls, making the living area quite warm and inviting. The Regent's private quarters are Spartan; the lack of opulence often surprises visitors. The decorations are simple and tasteful, but of superior quality. In the Regent's absence, Overwatch Arkons guard the Citadel; when she is present, Wind Knives handle the security detail.

THE ROYAL PALACE

Located at the crossroads of the High City's four main tunnels, Cliff-Spider's Royal Palace is less aesthetically pleasing than it is utilitarian. It should actually be called the Royal Fortress, because its designers were primarily concerned with defense. Cliff-Spider is the war citadel for the Alliance of Kings. Its ruler is a warrior who must contend with the threat of invasion from Bone-Wail and the Lost Tribes. Every aspect of the palace's construction and surroundings, from its smooth walls to its decorative adornments, reflects the city's militaristic nature.

Most of Cliff-Spider's political activity takes place in the Royal Palace. The structure follows a basic wheel pattern. The palace's central hub is the Royal Hall. This is a seven-story tall structure, in a simple pentagon design. The walls, light grey and white with black and golden veins, are smooth and cut at various intervals with tall, narrow windows. The windows are made of coloured resin, with various designs emblazoned upon them. The third to seventh levels are taller in the front than the first two levels. Four tall columns of light grey marble support these levels. Reliefs depicting the history of Providence frame the building, from the Exile, the Warden Camps, the Emancipation, and through the present days. These carvings are a continuous work in progress. The palace sits in the Plaza, a large park that also surrounds an exquisite fountain where Pure and Blessed toddlers, supervised by their parents, can swim peacefully. Red stones form the pavement, a sinuous path that runs through the park, around the Royal Hall, and throughout Castle Well. Wirlight spheres that travel along a programmed path, like worker ants gathering food, illuminate the tunnels and the intersection that are home to the Royal Palace.

THE ROYAL HALL

Large, two story-tall double doors made of stone mark the threshold of the Royal Hall. Two Wind Knives guard the entrance around the clock, despite the fact that the doors are locked at night. Within the hall, plush deep burgundy and dark green carpeting line the smooth marble floors. Tapestries, statues, carvings and frescoes adorn the walls. Wirlight globes provide illumination at night, while light from the travelling spheres bleeds in during the day, creating prismatic designs as it passes through the coloured glass. Wind Knives in full armour, proud, solemn and armed with long halberds, guard the halls. Small plants of varying size and colour surround the sitting area, which consists of comfortable couches and chairs.

The Royal Hall's first room is the reception room; a beautiful fountain rests in the centre of this small foyer. Various surrounding plants feed greedily from its waters, while small gold and purple fish swim, unaware of the flurry of activity around them. Marble benches line the area, so that visitors may sit while waiting for their appointments. Messengers and scribes are on hand to

take messages and run errands for visitors and workers. The reception room's left wall has a large opening cut in it, sealed off with multicoloured glass. Huge double doors, made of stone and adorned with the standards of both Cliff-Spider and the Alliance of Kings, stand in the centre of the far wall. Two small doors on each side lead to various offices and wings.

Through the reception area's large double doors, advisors and visitors with appointments enter into the Royal Ante-Chamber. Within this lavish room, King Raldowin conducts business, speaks to petitioners, and deals with the daily problems that his heralds bring before him.

The Royal Ante-Chamber is large, open and well aired. Plush carpeting marks the way to the ruler. King Raldowin's throne is an elaborate piece of furniture that has been a staple ever since the Emancipation. The throne sits on a raised dais cut of dark-green stone, and polished to a smooth, shiny surface. Long tables line the hall so that visitors awaiting an audience or guests at a banquet may sit. Around the room, the standards of the Alliance of Kings, Cliff-Spider, Cry-Star, Sun Guard and Water-Sister hang on long spears planted in the floor. Ornate frescoes and tapestries from the Brilliant-Ground Free-Keep adorn the walls. Behind the throne, gilded double doors lead away from the chamber, deeper into the heart of the Hall.

The remaining rooms of the Royal Hall are offices, the quarters of servants, and an enormous kitchen, where as many as twenty cooks work at a time. A small private hall where the King meets with visitors sits near the entrance to Tura Hall. It is a simple room, with a large desk, and several plush chairs. Located above the private hall is the royal library with books dating from the Exile. Guards watch it around the clock.

THE TALE OF AIKEEN

"Jene!" The Horizon Strider Jove Isan shouted at his companion. "Have you ever heard of the breakout of Stone-Tree?"

The Raven student was busy studying the palace's decor when her mentor presented his question. "Do you mean the massive exodus of the camp's prisoners shortly before it was abandoned?" she replied. Jove, the Eagle Horizon Strider, was happy to note her knowledge of the event. "What does the desertion of Stone-Tree have to do with Cliff-Spider?" she asked.

"It has more to do with its most illustrious leader, the beautiful and courageous Queen Aikeen Dolma," the Strider specified. Leaning against a wall, Jove deemed it was time for one of his lessons. His Raven student, who was learning each day to read her mentor's body language more accurately, knew he was preparing to tell a tale. Jene approached Jove and stood beside him, eager to hear his story. "In 472 E.M.D., Stone-Tree's chained rebels revolted, murdered their guards, and headed towards this city. In retaliation for their crimes, the neighbouring wardens sent Ravagers, Ward-Dogs, and

other abominations to slaughter the fugitives. Reports soon made their way to the Swan ruler of Cliff-Spider that three thousand prisoners had escaped. Having been crowned in 472 E.M.D. at the tender age of 17, Queen Aikeen's militia advisors, who held considerable sway, decided that the city could do nothing to help the doomed prisoners. They feared that the wardens of other camps would descend upon Cliff-Spider if the city diverted any of its forces to support the fugitives. Not wanting to endanger her people, the Queen agreed; still, she could not sit idly by while masses of prisoners perished. Taking her most loyal and effective guards, most of which were women, Aikeen and her warriors flew to the rescue of Stone-Tree's rebels. They fought for weeks, with little food and water to sustain them. In the final battle, Aikeen used her last Wird energies to cast devastation upon the wardens' creatures. Weakened by this valiant effort, the Queen fell among the remaining abominations who savagely tore her limbs. Because of her sacrifice and the work of her noble warriors, close to a thousand weary and grateful prisoners survived and made their way to the war citadel. To this day, many storytellers talk about the fate of Cliff-Spider's youngest ruler, who also ruled for the shortest period of time of any King or Queen. This tale of bravery proved so inspirational to one woman that she founded a group of warriors known as the Howling Furies in her honour." The Eagle turned to look at his student, who prepared her customary query.

"Why does death and devastation fill the stories of our people so often?" she asked.

The Horizon Strider placed his gentle and understanding hand against her shoulder. "Because, my student. It is the way of Providence." The two explorers resumed their survey of the palace.

THE PALACE'S WINGS

A series of structures shoot out from the Royal Hall like the spokes of a wheel. Each wing serves a separate function. Five such "spokes," or wings, exist. The first wing is dubbed Aikeen Hall, after Aikeen Dolma, one of Cliff-Spider's greatest rulers. The hall houses the various administrative chambers of officials. Most of the palace's workers are of Fortuned or Blessed status.

The Royal Palace's second wing, known as Guardian-Hall, is home to the various off-duty members of the Wind Knives. The Wind Knives practice under the tutelage of Task-Masters in a training camp that is accessible from this hall. War-Prefects living at the castle have chambers in this Guardian-Hall. The rooms in these quarters are more comfortable than the rooms of the Wind Knives. A scribe assistant also works within each War-Prefect's chamber.

The third wing called Tura Hall carefully leads the area's few visitors to the King's chambers. Raldowin also maintains his private offices in the Tura Hall.

The King's house is a two-story, white stone hall, with a vast marble pool, and a plush perpetually bloomy garden in the back. Servants tend to the lawn, and perform their duties, which include cleaning, cooking, and running

messages. Raldowin's chambers are calm and serene, a perfect counterpart to the madness found in the Royal Hall. The Wind Knives ensure that the chaos and activity in the castle do not disturb the estate's serenity.

The fourth wing, named Alliance-Hall, houses various meeting halls. Raldowin's hand-picked advisors and the War Council meet in this area. All the advisors, as well as their personal scribes and messengers, maintain their offices in this wing. The High-Magistrate's offices and courts are located at the very end of the hall. Throughout the corridors, members of the Wind Knives vigilantly monitor the passage of visitors and dignitaries. Anyone who does not possess a pass cannot venture through this area.

Finally, Regent Hall, the fifth wing, contains the chambers of minor officials, respected visitors, and diplomats. Each chamber is ornate, with a private garden and a pool.

THE ROYAL FAMILY

Raldowin has thrived as King of Cliff-Spider, despite the fact that he enjoys the life of a soldier. King Raldowin's family lives in the royal chambers, except for his son, Markham, who resides with the Guild of Drummers. Raldowin's wife, Lady Ariadne Tura, a Pure Hawk of House Yemek, is a beautiful, regal woman. Tall, lithe, and very elegant, Ariadne keeps her long red hair loose, and her smile ready. She always presents herself with the utmost grace and pride. A fair woman by any standards, Ariadne is charming, intelligent, and possesses acute political skills. She and the King support each other completely. Lady Ariadne occupies her time mostly with diplomatic missions. Ariadne works closely with Raukin Crackshore on matters of the Alliance of Kings, and enjoys a close relationship with Regent Caiylus, and with Watcher Preventine. Ariadne is also an able Wird Weaver.

Ariadne and King Raldowin IV have two children. The eldest, Markham, is now a member of the Guild of Drummers. He is a handsome young man, with a square jaw, short brown hair and his father's eyes. His distaste for politics was obvious to Raldowin even when Markham was young. Markham was relieved when his father allowed him to join the Drummers. Markham's natural charm, his roguish smile and easy demeanour make him approachable. He is *open*, and always willing to help. Markham is clearly Drummer material — a strong soldier with a sense of duty and honour.

Raldowin's daughter, and now heir-apparent, is named Sahanya. She is a strong-willed young woman. Although she keeps her auburn hair fashionably short, she greatly resembles her mother. Every bit as regal and dignified as Ariadne, Sahanya has a tremendous social and political acumen. The young lady could charm Warden Elarian, were she ever to meet him. Sahanya's belief in the caste system is nowhere near as strong as her father's, though she is aware of

the need for an ordered society. A pacifist at heart, Sahanya wishes there were ways other than war to remedy Providence's current ailments. Sahanya firmly believes that there is always a diplomatic answer, and that force of arms should remain the last option. She has, however, trained in private with Prime Koryanny De'inzil, and is an adept warrior, capable of using various weapons and her own hands and feet to defend herself. The man responsible for the formation of the Pathfinders has improved her fighting skills. Still, she remains a peaceful soul, tormented by the events now threatening the Alliance of Kings. She is confident, however, that her father will see his people through the turmoil ahead.

STRONGWING CAVERN

The home of House Crackshore is the Strongwing Cavern. Despite its impressive stature, the cavern is not as opulent as Hath Cavern. Giant flying buttresses — walls or arches that are attached to the cavern and extend outward to support a structure — are moulded out of the spire's walls. They support the various estates of the Houses living within this cavern. Many of the estates actually hang underneath the buttresses. Tall stone archways link each estate to the others. A dark blue stone makes up most of Strongwing Cavern's structures and surrounding rock. At times, silver ore courses through the walls like the veins on a Drummer's thick arms. The architecture of House Crackshore's Manor is rough, angular, tall, and proud, much like its owners.

The Crackshore estate is vast, requiring the support of the cavern's two largest buttresses. This estate, which takes almost half the cavern's space, is built along the inner wall of the Strongwing Cavern. The Manor itself, composed of several small towers, slopes upward until it becomes part of the wall. Crackshore Manor reaches up until shortly before touching the ceiling. Two small towers with domed roofs stand guard at the entrance of the estate. From their perched balconies, Crackshore elite guards (called Rapax), vigilantly watch over their masters' estate. Aside from Raldowin, the Crackshores are the only nobles in Cliff-Spider to maintain a private, in-house security force. The Rapax are well trained and equipped. They are House Crackshore's knights, and are all are either Fortuned, Blessed or Pure. Lord Mandrakin Crackshore, the younger brother of Raukin, is the current leader of the Rapax. A fierce fighter and a Well-Born (non-guild member) Shard, Mandrakin was a respected member of the Wind Knives until his brother asked him — after their father's (Lurakin) death — to take over the mantle of leadership of the Rapax from the former, aging captain.

Minor nobles, most notably members of House Gareffa, of Troupial Swan, and House Arakid of Troupial Eagle, inherit the remainder of the Strongwing Cavern. Both Houses currently support House Crackshore.

RAUKIN CRACKSHORE

Eldest of three sons, Raukin Crackshore is a proud and haughty individual. Like his parents, who abandoned one of their youngest children, Raukin is a staunch supporter of the caste system, also abandoning his first-born daughter who was Redeemed. Raukin is a fierce competitor in any of his endeavours. A very moving and sincere speaker, Raukin has long been King Raldowin's favoured emissary. He is presently in charge of Alliance matters for the King. A childhood friend of Raldowin's, Raukin's main reason for supporting the Hawk is that, in his mind, there are no better alternatives — not even himself. He has pledged Raldowin his personal support, and that of his family, and will stick to his word. Raukin is tall and very muscular, a fact enhanced by the wurd-infused crystal plate-mail he wears all the time. The colours of House Crackshore (black and silver) adorn his armour, and he wears the Alliance's silver epaulets. Before his father died, leaving him in charge of the House, Raukin was a War Prefect in the Overwatch. His combat skills, therefore, are a match for his diplomatic skills. In addition, Raukin is a powerful Wurd Weaver. With his long, silver hair pulled back in an intricate braid, his piercing blue eyes, and his strong features, Raukin commands respect from everyone who meets him. His voice, hard and sharp, nonetheless carries warmth and authority. If ever anyone could oppose Raldowin successfully, or replace him as the leader of the city, it is probably Raukin; fortunately, he has no desire to do so.

Raukin has two sons and a daughter. The eldest son is named Lurakin, after Raukin's father, and the youngest is named Saurakin. Lurakin is following in his father's footsteps, and is currently a Marshal-Primus in the Overwatch. Saurakin is a member of the Wind Knives, as was his uncle Mandrakin. Raukin's daughter, Lysette, is under the tutelage of High Magistrate Kirianis Starseek. Raukin's wife, Dosette, is a member of Raldowin's court, and a good friend of Raldowin's wife. The family does not discuss the matter of Raukin's abandoned daughter or his sibling who now lives in Freetown.

BACK TO THE NEST

Raukin Crackshore caught the movement from the corner of his eye. He turned, his body giving no outward signs that it was readying itself for combat. He was expecting a visitor, but after so many years in the Overwatch, certain habits were hard to break.

Through the narrow window of his office, a dark silhouette appeared. Raukin caught the glint of Wurdlight on the golden earrings. He saw the piercing blue eyes, so much like his own, and the glinting, roguish smile. He also noticed the very sparse — and getting sparser all the time, it seemed — red feathers covering his guest's arms and shoulders. The man now standing before him, garbed in simple, dark clothing, was obviously Redeemed. Still, there was something proud, almost regal in the poise of his stance. A wickedly sharp dagger hung at his belt. Raukin also noticed the handle of the small crossbow protruding from a holster at the man's hip.

"Make yourself at home, brother." Raukin invited him in. The man moved deeper into the room, his face emerging from the shadows. He had the curved, beak-like nose of the Crackshore. His face, still young, nonetheless held a few lines, which Raukin thought of more as signs of experience and sorrow than hints of age. The man was tall, and had a tremendously lithe physique. Raukin knew him for what he was: a thief. The man Raukin had called brother plopped down in a chair, and reached out with a nimble hand to deftly pluck some fruits from a nearby bowl.



"Why, thank you so very much, oh mighty Raukin Crackshore." His sarcasm always irritated Raukin. But a brother was a brother, even if he was Redeemed.

"You sure know how to rattle my patience."

"I'm gifted. What can I say? So, what do you want? I tried to make myself believe that you invited me here simply to chat, but we both know that's a load of..." Raukin interrupted the thief before he could finish.

"You are right. As much as I enjoy your company, I need some information, which I do believe you are in a position to give me."

"What about this time? It better not be about Strike's whereabouts again, because last time I told you anything about him, two of my men died. And that's not something I wish to see happen again."

"Don't worry. Strike is not my concern right now. I received word through the Watcher captain in Freetown that a stranger came to town recently. He had only been in town a few minutes before he took down two men, and was subsequently taken to the Boneyard. Who was he?"

"Who knows? Some Kestrel. They come and go all the time."

"Perhaps, but agents of ours report that they saw him later in the Roundabout, talking with both Shaal'Shera and that Solaria woman."

"Solieri," the thief interjected.

"Whatever. If you haven't heard anything, I would appreciate if you kept your ears and eyes open."

The man jumped to his feet. "Is that it?"

Raukin nodded and watched as the man made his way back to the window. As his slender form stepped on the balcony, Raukin called out to his brother.

"How is Jendelle doing, Yarukin?"

"What do you care?" The man replied scornfully.

"I do."

"She's doing fine, no thanks to you." Raukin looked down, and clenched his fists in rage. "Do you still look after her?"

"Damn right I do. No one else does."

Even though he wanted to say more, Raukin could only mutter thanks.

"Sure," his brother replied. Before he turned back to the window and disappeared behind the wall, the thief looked at his brother. "And the name's Lark, not Yarukin. Get something right for once in your life."

Raukin felt so very alone.

A FAMILY'S SHAME

Lurakin Crackshore, father to Raukin, was a proud man. The Pure Eagle's prize possessions were his family, and their position in Cliff-Spider as one of the city's most influential families. Lurakin firmly believed in the caste system, and always expected others to abide by its rules. The proud man never believed that his doctrines would ever have to be applied to his own family; unfortunately, that is precisely what happened. Lurakin's beloved wife gave birth to a Fallen child. This devastated the proud Eagle, but he was nonetheless determined to maintain his family's honour. He arranged to have the young child handed to a Free-Keep owner.

Their loss saddened Lurakin's family for months, but almost everyone eventually learned to forget. The family soon discovered that one of their children, their most docile and silent, had taken the event to heart. The young Yaruken became increasingly despondent, and refused to practice his flight lessons. Initially, the family decided to let time heal his wounds, but the more they waited, the more Yaruken distanced himself from the family's fold. He constantly argued with his brother Rauken, who had always accepted his father's decision to give their young sibling away. Time never healed Yaruken's emotional scars. He refused to learn to fly, and never left the house. The family's Chirurgeon declared that the young boy's wings were weak, never having been used, and that he would never soar Providence's glorious skies. Eventually, Yaruken even ceased to speak to members of his family. Lurakin Crackshore gave up any hope that his child would ever lead a normal life. Lurakin and his wife kept him in their house, sheltered from the rest of the world. Despite her husband's objections, Yaruken's mother read to the boy every day and night, hoping that he could hear her words. On the eve of his thirteenth birthday, Yaruken disappeared. He left a hand-written note to his mother explaining that he wanted to find his sister and that he would never return home. Yaruken further informed his parents that they should no longer consider him a member of the Crackshore Eagles, like the daughter they heartlessly gave away. As far as Lurakin was concerned, his son was dead. Yaruken's mother never fully recovered from this trauma.

SUN CAVERN

The Sun Cavern, home of House Allister, is possibly the most visually pleasing of all of Cliff-Spider's caves. Flowers, vines and trees cover the walls and floors of the cavern, conveying an illusion that the cavern's inhabitants live in a deep jungle. The most notable structure located against one of the walls is the old Calm-Purity school. At the centre of the Sun Cavern lies a small, artificial lake and waterfall called Peace-Water. Like rippling waves, the estates of House Allister's supporters surround the lake. Looming high above Peace-Water Lake, much like House Tura's estate, the Dove House resides on a large stalactite in the unique form of an inverted mushroom. The Allister estate is sprawled across the expanse of the stalactite's circumference. The main buildings are inside the top of the mushroom-like stalactite. Wird Weavers chose a tasteful combination of deep green, ochre and white stone when building the estate. The structures are elaborately decorated with statues and intricate carvings. The servants live in simple quarters, carved in the base of the stalactite. A high wall surrounds the estate. A small contingent of soldiers who bear the colours of House Allister — white, dark purple and dark green — man the estate. The family's manor is a small, self-contained fortress that sits on one of the stalactite's slopes.

SUN CAVERN

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Peace-Water Lake | 4 | Kipfer's estate of Blood Lancers |
| 2 | House Allister's estate | 5 | Supporting and vassal Houses |
| 3 | Calm-Purity school | | |



KIPFER'S BLOOD LANCERS

A mercenary company has defended the home of House Allister for nearly fifty years. Kipfer's Blood Lancers is comprised almost entirely of former Recognizers. Radoux Sleth, a Redeemed Bat Free-Hold Shard (a non-noble Shard who is not a guild member), is the current leader of the Lancers. Sleth was a renowned Solitaire who caught over forty lucrative contracts in his seventeen-year career. The exception to the band of Recognizers is a Kestrel named Shar Rak'Sokel. He is Lady Vejandra's personal bodyguard. Shar is a Blessed Dragon, and recognized as one of the fiercest fighters in Cliff-Spider. Vejandra met Shar when she was a member of Octagon, Raldowin's Intelligence Council. When she left Octagon, she convinced him to become her bodyguard.

HOUSE MASTER VEJANDRA ALLISTER

Lady Vejandra is both the head of House Allister and one of King Raldowin IV's advisors. Vejandra Allister possesses stunning grace and a soft voice; perhaps her most striking feature, her long silver hair, reaches well below her waist. A political animal by nature, Vejandra has a charismatic and cunning nature nearly unmatched in Cliff-Spider, perhaps even in the Alliance of Kings. A powerful Wurd Weaver, Vejandra is far from defenceless. For a long time, she was a part of Raldowin's Octagon. She left seven years ago to give birth, quite unexpectedly, to her third child. Since then, she has served Raldowin as his advisor, most notably on financial affairs. She deals with the Trade Council on a regular basis, always attending the monthly meetings. She also handles the Free-Keeps, as well as Merchant Bands emissaries. Always finely dressed, Vejandra presents a striking vision, full of confidence, charisma and power.

Vejandra's husband, Voslo Quisan, is a Swan, a former Horizon Strider, a Well-Born Shard and a poet of unmatched quality. Quisan successfully courted Vejandra. Lady Vejandra's first love was a Pure Dove named Piersan Galliman — a Pathfinder Prime. When he attained the rank, after having served as the Wind Knives' Centurion for eight years, he found himself with less and less time to dedicate to his family. Because of the secrecy surrounding the then fledgling Pathfinders, Galliman was forbidden to discuss missions with anyone, including his family. Unbeknownst to him, Vejandra was also secretly serving her King as a member of Octagon. With both of them firmly holding onto their secrets, the tension between them grew and grew until it severed all their bonds. At that time, Vejandra met Quisan at a social occasion in Cry-Star. Quisan immediately knew he had found his life-mate. After two years of limited success, he finally won Vejandra over. She and Galliman parted from each other willingly, with the blessings of Raldowin, and she soon married Quisan. Some Swans still shun Quisan because they feel he interfered in an established relationship.

Vejandra's first two daughters, Mika and Salestrielle, are from her union with Galliman. Her son, Quani, born a Swan, is from her marriage to Voslo Quisan. Mika works for her mother, assisting her in her duties. Vejandra is

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teaching her to one day replace her mother as the head of House Allister. Salestrielle, the youngest daughter, maintains the Free-Keep the Allister family owns, called Sentinel Free-Keep. Quani attends Calm-Purity, the renowned school administered by the D'Shau Monks. He has displayed Wird aptitudes, and expects to become a Wird caster.

THE ROYAL GARDENS CAVERN

This lush cavern is an oddity within the cavern city of Cliff-Spider. When first-time visitors follow the well-worn stone path into the Royal Gardens, they never expect to see such a green and inviting retreat. With the addition of a huge Wirdlight globe high atop the cavern's ceiling, it is easy to fool even the most curious explorers into believing they are outside.

In addition to the many plants, trees, flowers, and vines, the Royal Gardens cavern is host to the High City's only market. Merchants have a limited space at the entrance of the cave to sell their goods to their demanding clientele. Enough space has been reserved for their use so that the flood of eager buyers does not harm the serenity of the gardens. Beyond the market lies the patchwork of carefully arranged gardens.

THE GARDEN

"The High City is a rather interesting place, if you can stand the natives." The experienced man spoke with a look of exasperation. "Look at them scurrying about like wild birds. They think that nobles and advisors will determine the fate of Providence in their courtrooms and offices. How little they really know." It was clear by the direction he was looking that the man spoke about the mass of frantic Pure and Blessed aristocrats in the winding corridors. "They always look like the weight of the world rests on their shoulders." The Dragon's eyes widened as he spoke; the man was tall, and the size and appearance of his wings clearly denoted him as Pure. The books and papers huddled beneath his arms suggested that he was a scholar. Although he was himself born into the aristocracy, the Dragon clearly did not consider himself to be one of them. His penetrating black eyes and his natural grace suggested that he was a man in tune with his surroundings. The simple robes he wore marked him as an aide to House Tura. It was obvious by the way others greeted him respectfully that he was well placed, perhaps even an advisor at court. As he walked, two women accompanied him down a busy pathway.

Here and there people were sitting and enjoying a moment's peace. There were also shops and stalls of different types, selling trinkets and cloth. Everything was clean and well maintained, and a few members of the lower castes were working hard to make sure things stayed that way. The Dragon was leading two young women to one of Providence's wonders: the Royal Gardens. This magnificent and tranquil park was an interior arboretum that housed specimens of Providence's and Yas'Wail's most beautiful and exotic plant life. Master gardeners arranged the

gardens; their mandate was to create a quiet alcove where one could escape the sometimes oppressive and dark nature of the caves.

"I'm curious sir," the quiet Raven named Sh'Jaell inquired. "And of course I mean no disrespect, but you have yet to introduce yourself. Might we have your name?"

"My name?" The Dragon looked amused at the Raven's request. "Well, I must apologize. My manners are atrocious, aren't they? I am Bis'kell of House Kiri'Nata, at your service."

Sensing that the shrewd old Dragon was easing his guard, Sh'Jaell pressed her advantage. "Tell me, what is it that you do? What permits you to take a pause from your work to give us a tour of the High City?"

"I have a number of duties that keep me occupied. The most pressing matter is to function as his majesty's aide and political advisor. Since the King is presently in Cry-Star, I have a great deal of advice to give, with no one I would care to share it with."

Both young women were stunned at the Dragon's candour. Although Bis'kell was Pure, he was the youngest son of a minor branch of the Kiri'Nata House. However, due to his obvious intelligence and his political savvy, he had quickly risen to high office as King Raldowin's chief advisor. This gave him some freedom to express himself liberally.

Bis'kell held no lands. He was not independently wealthy, nor did he possess any magical abilities; nonetheless, most people acknowledged him as a tremendous asset to the Alliance of Kings. More than one of the King's opponents had fallen victim to the Kiri'Nata Dragon's skills. Rumours had spread all over the city and the surrounding Free-keeps that Regent Caiylus had invited him to join her court in Cry-Star. If it was true, he had refused. The Dragon was also reputed to be extremely well-learned in the arts. Although his writings were rather caustic, school teachers and tutors often used his poetry in classes.

Sh'Jaell was not as easily intimidated and impressed as the Dove. She simply gave a respectful nod acknowledging his superior rank. "I should have known. Very few people would dare to make the comments you have today. I guess you really are as bitter as they say you are."

The young woman's remark stunned the Dragon who was unaccustomed to such candour. "Do they say that about me? Well, that's of no account," said the Dragon. "I am employed as an analyst and an advisor, not a flatterer. There are others out there who are much better at the latter than I. As for the former, the King will decide when I have ceased to be of any use, or when my comments have become too embarrassing. In the meantime, I'll endeavour to poke fun at the world and those who abide within it. A Dragon does need to have his little diversions, doesn't he?" It was a rhetorical question, and neither of the young women answered.

Conversation proceeded much as it had before, with Bis'kell commenting now and again on various topics. The two young women listened attentively as they walked, periodically asking questions. Finally, they approached a great arch made of blue quartz streaked with silver. It was beautifully carved in a subtle floral pattern of ivy leaves. A few tourists were standing nearby, admiring the incredible craftsmanship. Sh'jaell inadvertently released a gasp of wonder as she neared the arches. "By the Gods, they're beautiful!"

"Yes, they truly are, much better than the other gates actually. That's why I brought you this way. I thought you would appreciate them. I'm glad to see that they have impressed you. You see, I may be rather critical of others and greatly cynical, but I am capable of appreciating the accomplishments of the truly gifted. Now, if you would follow me, I'll show you around." Bis'kell led the two young women into a garden.

The gardeners had coaxed the cavern's stubborn rock floor to readily greet the fertile ground in which all manner of plants, flowers and trees could grow. This relaxing environment was a rarity in the cold cavern city of Cliff-Spider. The Royal Garden's walls were cleverly concealed amid trees and clinging vines. Their purpose was to give the illusion that the garden was even more vast.

Plants from all over Providence were on display in a semblance of their natural environment. Somehow, desert and tropical flora grew side by side, giving the garden an otherworldly feeling. Benches lay around the wildlife, by small ponds, and in quiet corners. Birds of all types flew around the enclosed area. The Royal Gardens were a quiet and comfortable grove where one could find tranquility and peace. To prevent disrupting the fragile environment, a limited number of people were allowed within a garden at any one time. No Fallen could enter; the lowest caste caretakers were at least Redeemed.

As they walked through a garden, pausing at times to smell a particular flower or simply to admire their surroundings, Lord Bis'kell described the garden's various plant and animal inhabitants. Despite his formal manners, the Dragon could not conceal his passionate understanding of the gardens. Finally, the visitors slowly made their way to the gardens' other marvel, the Alliance of Kings Museum of History.

"Ah, here we are, the Hall of Ancestors." Bis'kell spoke proudly as they approached the great marble building. "I know that you both truly enjoyed your walk through the gardens, but now you shall see the great intellectual achievement of Cliff-Spider's erudite artists. Within these walls is the complete history, or so they say, of the people of Yas'Wail on Providence." The advisor continued his discourse. "Of course, I would never be so optimistic as to say I believed it was completely accurate, but I'm quite content to say that it is vast. Shall we enter?" His question was less a question than an unnecessary invitation; the two Wird students were already halfway up the stairway that led to the front entrance.

"Which part do you want to look at first?" The Dragon looked at the first-time visitors.

"I'd like to look at their collection on the guilds, the Shards, and Father," Brina blurted anxiously. "I've heard that they have marvellous tapestries depicting the battle with Sky-Spite, and I'd love to see them. And what about going to see the display on the early days of the prison colonies? Even though it's creepy, I must admit I've always been interested in that part of our history. With the coming war and Bone-Wail, I think it's important that..."

"Brina, enough!" The Raven interrupted. It was obvious the two young women knew each other well since the comment did not seem to dampen the talkative Dove's high spirits. Sh'Jaell continued. "It's a wonder you find time to breathe between sentences. Let's just go in and see a few things on display. Then, we should start thinking about getting back to the school. It's already getting quite late."

The Dove's chatter ceased as they entered the museum. It seemed impossible that anything would impress them after their tour of the Royal Gardens, but once again they were awe-struck. The first work of art that adorned the marble walls was "Amariss' Victory." The rulers of Cliff-Spider had commissioned the tapestry after the defeat of Sky-Spite and the emergence of the Shards. It had been dedicated to Mother, Lady Amariss; the valiant lady was Providence's second Shard, and a native of Cliff-Spider. Lady Amariss had sacrificed her life, inflicting the blow that killed the great Elothorin Avatar. As a result, Amariss had saved countless lives. The tapestry, which was woven entirely by hand, took ten years to complete. It depicted the end of the battle at the time that Sky-Spite turned to swallow Mother, who was streaking towards his gaping mouth. The Avatar had died when Amariss' fractured form had shredded Sky-Spite's internal organs.

Finally, the students spent a whole hour examining the tapestry. By the time they were completed, Lord Bis'Kell informed them that it was getting late. They took this as an indication that they should return to their dormitories at the wild academy. Neither of them spoke as they made their way home, both feeling renewed and energized by the tapestry and the gardens.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

THE ALLIANCE OF KINGS TRADE COUNCIL

"Ok, who are we going to hear now?"

— Lochenko Countswell, beginning the selection process for Trade Seats.

The year was 1120 Etho Me'dan, and the event was the Crucible. This meeting consisted of a week of difficult and extremely important negotiations. The result forever changed the political structure of the free cities of Providence. Five delegations met on Sollas' Field, one each from Cry-Star, Bastion, Sun Guard, Water-Sister and Cliff-Spider. By the time it was over, the Alliance of Kings was born and Cliff-Spider became the home of the Trade Council. Today the Alliance of Kings Trade Council decides tariffs and prices for various goods. Furthermore, it grants trading agreements, exclusivity rights, and bestows permits. It is basically responsible for running the financial network of the Alliance of Kings.

The Trade Council is divided into three distinct parts: Trade Master, Chairs and Trade Seats. The Trade Master is usually of Pure status. The Rulers of Alliance cities and four Chairs elect Trade Masters every four years. The Trade Master's job is to be the tiebreaker of any locked vote, to oversee proceedings, and to mediate between conflicting factions. It is also the Trade Master's job to convene and preside over Trade Council meetings, and to see to the day-to-day job of running the Trade Council Hall. The current Trade Master is Davmin Sh'Jask, a Dragon of House Karistikant. He was unanimously elected to his position six years ago. Davmin won reelection two years ago without the support of Cry-Star, because of conflicts in that city between House Karistikant and the Hawk House Danlinon. Some Hawks within the Dendyssy Chapter felt that the conflict between the two houses in the city might colour Davmin's judgement on certain issues, therefore, the Cry-Star Chair voted against the current Trade Master. Despite this slight blemish, people generally view Sh'Jask as a fair and impartial element of the Trade Council, and he enjoys the respect of the mercantile community.

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

There are four Chairs in all, one for each of the Alliance cities. The various representatives operating in each city, known as Trade Undercouncils, elect these Chairs every six years. These Chairs represent the interests of their mother cities. All votes are public. The current Chairs, and their time served, are as follows:

In Cliff-Spider, Lochenko Countswell, a Blessed Gargoyle, has served 13 years. In Cry-Star, the Fortuned Hawk Loric Sekcha, has served one year. The

Water-Sister Chair, serving now for seven years, is a Bat named Ordai Mak. Davion Jendar holds the now largely ceremonial position of the Sun Guard Chair. This Redeemed Raven has served one year. The two newest Chairs were elected in 1516 E.M.D.

The Chairs create the Alliance of Kings' new trading laws, represent the various merchants from their respective cities, fix prices, and bestow permits. They are also in charge of overseeing the development of new trade routes, as well as the maintenance the old ones. The Chairs also debate issue that they feel affect trade in the Alliance of Kings. Finally, they head the various Undercouncils found in every city of the Alliance.

THE TRADE SEATS

Twelve Trade Seats are available for any merchants in the Alliance of Kings. These seats change from one meeting to the other. Anyone wishing to hold a seat for a particular meeting petitions the Council. The Chairs attend to the first order of the day at a meeting — the election of the seats. Naturally, merchants wanting to hold a seat for a meeting go to any lengths to ensure that they will succeed. Many persistent traders will give gifts and perform favours for the Chairs. Only successful merchants and individuals with enough money and power to influence some votes have a chance of earning a seat. Nevertheless, any merchant may petition the Council to accept their nomination to a seat. It is not uncommon for a certain Chair to vote in favour of a merchant in exchange for support on certain issues.

Each seat holds a single vote. Seats do not have the power to debate a subject, unless the Trade Master approves; their duty is to complete the voting process, which is supposed to represent the interests of all the merchants in the Alliance of Kings.

Seats can present the Council with one request each. They give these written requests to the Trade Master upon gaining a Trading Seat. A section of the meeting is reserved to deal exclusively with these requests. Of course, the Council has the power to grant or reject these requests at its discretion.

THE FACES OF THE COUNCIL

The members of the Council are chiefly honest — if often greedy — merchants and business owners. They do a fair job of

The Merchant Bands and the Trade Council

The Trade Council reserves one Seat, which comes without a vote, for a representative of the Merchant Bands. In this matter, the Bands can send in requests of deal proposals to the Trade Council. The Council then votes and examines each case. The most frequent holder of the Merchant Bands Seat is Gordo Kaul, a Redeemed Gargoyle who hails from Bastion. Kaul is firmly in the camp of those who would see Bastion rejoin the Alliance. As such, most of the matters he brings to the Council are voted on and accepted in record time.

looking out for the economic interests of most traders and merchants. The current Trade Master, Davmin Sh'jask, a Dragon of House Karistikant, is considered one of the best people ever to hold the position. However, the Trade Council has often favoured Cliff-Spider in many instances. The presence of the actual Council inside the spire city, and thus the presence of many Cliff-Spider merchants holding Seats, has contributed to Cliff-Spider's favour. Rumblings are slowly building, especially in Cry-Star, but so far, no officials have said or done anything.

The first phase of a Council meeting is the presentation of each Chair and the Trade Master. Following this initial ceremony, merchants vie for positions of Seats while the Council makes the final decisions.

Merchants and nobles who attend the proceedings can nominate other people, who can then accept or refuse the nomination. Each nominee prepares a brief presentation to offer their case for the position. Usually, anywhere from fifteen to a hundred nominees are present. If more than twenty or so merchants apply for a Seat, the Council skips the presentations until the Chairs elect twelve Trade Seats. The Trade Master breaks ties.

Following the selection of the Seats, each Chair has a turn bringing forth the concerns of his or her city for the month. A scribe keeps records of votes, and takes down any resolutions the Council makes. After every Chair voices their concerns, each Seat makes a request. The Trade Master and the Chairs either approve or reject the requests. Debates and votes follow, though in a very expedient manner.

At the end of this period, anyone who feels cheated by another party can bring forth their grievances. The Council as a whole punishes merchants who do not operate their businesses properly. Sanctions can be anywhere from seizure of goods, to cancellation of permits, to exclusion from the Trade Council. Then, the Scribe rereads all the decisions, bills, laws or licenses the Council promoted during the session. Everybody then retreats to an inn for wine and revelry. Average Council meetings last a good twenty to twenty-five hours, sometimes longer. The Council breaks up for roughly half an hour every five hours, or at the Trade Master's discretion, so that people can socialize. Down-time lasts a good deal longer, as end-of-the-month Trade Council meetings mark the end of the work cycle for two days.

MERCHANTS AND TRADE MONOPOLIES

The Trade Council has awarded trade monopolies to certain powerful merchants within the Alliance of Kings. The influence and power of these traders allow them to petition the council more effectively. If certain merchants control a large percentage of a vital resource, the Trade Council is far more likely to award them Trade Seats and exclusivity permits. These permits may

grant a particular merchant the exclusive right to distribute and trade a certain product for the whole Alliance of Kings. Other merchants who sell and trade the same goods must therefore pay duties to the merchant who owns the permit, in addition to the taxes to the Trade Council; if they choose, they can also sell their goods to the merchants at reduced prices. Such permits are rare however; the Trade Council only allows limited exclusivity permits for certain cities or regions.

The Alliance of Kings Trade Council obliges merchants to follow several basic laws. Although some cities allow for "permit-free zones" known as black markets and bazaars, any merchant wishing to trade or sell goods within the Alliance of Kings must apply for a trade permit. Merchants who only trade goods within their home cities should also apply for permits, but many neglect to do so. The Trade Council simply lacks the funds to enforce this rule, and the Alliance of Kings is far more concerned with politics than trade.

The Trade Council uses permits to gather some of its funds. Anyone who fails to pay for these permits will either be fined or jailed. Members of the Fallen castes are not generally expected to pay for permits. There are so few Fallen merchants, and they are so poor, that their presence is negligible to the Trade Council.

THE UNDERCOUNCILS

The Trade Council oversees all matter of transactions across the Alliance. They are also in charge of collecting the Alliance of Kings' taxes from the various cities and outposts. In each of the Alliance cities is an Undercouncil, a small, official board headed by that city's Chair, which oversees Council business in that particular city. Each city runs its Undercouncil differently. Cliff-Spider's Undercouncil is but an extension of the actual Trade Council, operating much in the same manner, but on a smaller scale. Cry-Star's Chair heads a small group of four bureaucrats, each of which is in charge of a particular aspect of Council business: one sees to permits and licenses, and one to tax collection. Most of these permits extend to businesses that operate within the Alliance's borders. Any merchant that works within city limits alone is generally exempt from the Undercouncil's influence and only answers to organizations in the city. Finally, Water-Sister's Chair is the sole person in charge of the Undercouncil, handling all duties and remaining the sole decision maker regarding all Alliance mercantile matters in that city. The Undercouncils hear the complaints and suggestions of the various merchants and members of the Trade Council in their respective cities. They then bring these to the monthly meetings held in Cliff-Spider.

The Trade Council also regulates the emission of currency, and is in charge of its creation. Each city houses a small money hall (whose location is a

secret) where the Tasks, Providence's currency, are made. Elite guards defend the money halls, and in the case of Cliff-Spider, members of the militia do as well. After their creation, the Council distributes the coins to various nobles and organizations. Although cities in the Alliance of Kings use currency, most of society depends on barter for trade. Only the highest castes use currency regularly. For more information on currency and bartering, see the Providence Main World Book on pages 23 and 24.

Most merchants and organizations use the Natlaw task when operating with money. Although many people and groups use different currency, it is the standard for trade. Free-Keeps pay their wages in Ener (bronze) Tasks, while the militia emits payment in Ener and Natlaw (steel), or in Ferida (silver) for members of the Overwatch. The Trade Council itself emits all payments to employees and Vigil guards with Natlaw. Only the truly rich deal in Ferida and Audra (gold).

THE TRADE COUNCIL AND THE ALLIANCE OF KINGS

The Trade Council is an important body for the Alliance of Kings because it regulates trade for the various members cities and outposts. Its importance is even greater for Cliff-Spider because it favours goods and merchants who operate in the city. Many of these merchants operate both in currency, and with barter. The Trade Council places a higher barter and currency value on goods like grains, livestock and other foodstuffs, which are available in large quantities in the Free-Keeps that surround Cliff-Spider. Although some merchants may not consider the trade fair, most accept this aspect of trade as a fact of life. Since the Trade Council has influence over merchants who operate throughout the Alliance, many traders shy away from trading too much of their goods outside their respective cities to avoid the Council's heavy taxation and permits. Consequently, large merchants whose trading scope reaches across the Alliance's vast territory, remain in Cliff-Spider to benefit from the Trade Council's location.

The Trade Council, although important to the well-being of the Alliance, is somewhat stunted by the Alliance's political problems. The threat of war prevents the Council from trading freely wherever it wishes. Furthermore, because the Alliance operates within a stringent caste system, economic opportunities take a back seat to the maintenance of power. Since the upper castes control almost all of the wealth and the political power in the Alliance's cities, their concern for mercantile activities is minimal. They believe that trade is largely the domain of lower castes, and are not very concerned with economics.

A MEETING OF MINDS

"Our struggle is fast approaching its end, I assure you. Soon, our tenacious forces will be united throughout this tumultuous land. The leaders of the Alliance will capitulate to our demands, or be crushed by our mighty fists."

— Firedrake at a meeting of Cry-Star's Wayfarer captains.

Shaal'Shera's Wayfarers are apprehensive about persistent rumours that circulate within their ranks. They claim that a movement among Providence's Wayfarers, originating in the capital city of Cry-Star, is slowly making its way to Cliff-Spider. Some of members of the Dolsai Varesh have also heard of an emissary from Cry-Star who is preparing to organize a meeting between their captain Shaal, and a representative of Cry-Star's Hel-Fire Wayfarers.

After weeks of whisperings, Shaal'Shera decided to quell the rumours. At a gathering of her people, she announced that she was indeed meeting with an emissary from Cry-Star. Although she purposefully left the details vague, she did claim that this meeting in no way indicated that her group, the Dolsai Varesh, would be joining Cry-Star's Hel-Fire movement. Only a handful of Wayfarers have any knowledge of the event. Even fewer people know that Firedrake himself, the architect of the unification movement in the capital, will be meeting with Shaal'Shera. The leaders are meeting in the Boneyard, in a seedy bar called the Rackna - dubbed after one of the cave's nastiest rodents. Shaal will be accompanied by a group of 5 Wayfarers, two of which possess Shard abilities. Firedrake will be accompanied by Rekla Toben and two Wayfarer guards, who are both excellent warriors, but lack any spell-casting or Shard abilities.

Game Masters should create these supporting NPCs to suit the level of their campaigns, and reflect the powers of their PCs (player characters). GMs interested in having the characteristics and abilities of Rekla should consult the GM Compendium while Firedrake can be found in Cry-Star:First of the Free.

THE PLAYERS GET INVOLVED

Yisaanii Kel'Dessi, captain of Freetown's Watcher detachment, is determined to rid herself of the Wayfarers. Although she usually targets Strike's violent group, she is more than willing to put a stop to Shaal'Shera's followers as well. Recently, Yisaanii's Watchers intercepted and captured two members of Strike's Wayfarers, who were trying to sneak into the Roundabout from Freetown. After interrogation, the Wayfarers revealed that Strike wants to disrupt talks between Shaal'Shera and an unknown agent from Cry-Star. According to the Wayfarers, Strike does not want anyone to intrude on his territory.

Yisaanii does not plan on ignoring this meeting of rebels. The captain will choose one of her best Watchers to infiltrate the Boneyard and observe the talks. Captain Yisaanii does not want to scare the Wayfarers away by sending a force of Watchers who could easily be identified by the Boneyard's inhabitants. She will authorize the chosen Watcher to hire the services of 3 to 5 mercenaries. These adventurers are to be paid no more than 50 Natlaw tasks for this assignment.

The primary mission of the group is to uncover the plans of the Wayfarers, and to observe their activities. Yisaanii is particularly interested in the rumoured agent from Cry-Star. If at all possible, the Watcher and the group are to stop the Wayfarers, but not at the risk of their own lives. The captain feels that it is more important that the group reports back to her with the desired information. Yisaanii will post a group of 5 to 10 Watchers near the entrance to the Boneyard, in case the Wayfarers try to escape by known passages. If the law-enforcers should intercept them, they will try to arrest the Wayfarers to interrogate them.

GM Notes: Ideally, one character among the players will be a Watcher. Presumably, the Watcher will then contact his or her friends to join him or her on this mission. At least some of the characters should possess skills and abilities that will facilitate their integration within the Boneyard. This adventure is one of the few times that lower caste characters will be at an advantage in this part of the world. Although some high caste members sometimes visit the Boneyard to obtain illegal goods, generally most inhabitants and visitors are low castes. The players should remember that they do not know the location of the meeting, only that it is within the Boneyard. The only information they possess is that a group of Strike's rebels may intervene, and that they have 3 days to get settled in the cavern before the meeting is to occur.

THE PLAN

The players should prepare themselves adequately for the meeting of the rebels. To avoid arousing suspicion, the characters may want to claim that they are in the Boneyard looking for something illegal, perhaps weapons, poisons, or simply to get away from the law. They should then try to uncover the meeting place of the Wayfarers. The only person in the Boneyard who has any information is Innis Rog (see page 144). If the characters ask the Boneyard's inhabitants where to get information, most people will point them in the direction of Rog. Innis doesn't know exactly where the meeting will take place but will suggest several possibilities. One will be a small cavern near the Boneyard. Unfortunately, this place is filled with rodents, and the Kourakis, who may attack the party. Another location Innis believes is possible is the cave of the Unaccountable. Finally, Rog will say that the Wayfarers may opt to meet in the open, in the Rackna, one of the Boneyard's most infamous bars. The players may have to separate to cover all the proposed areas.

AN ALLIANCE FORGED?

Despite the shrouds loosely hugging his imposing form, Firedrake could not easily conceal his scarred features. Some of the bar's filthy customers turned briefly to stare at the visitor, but soon resumed their drinking - no doubt more interested in their frosty mugs than the appearance of a stranger. After surveying the large room, the Wayfarer leader noticed his loyal soldier, the Jackal Rekla Toben. Firedrake naturally assumed that the striking Raven woman sitting near Rekla was the renowned Shaal'Shera.

The players will encounter the Wayfarers in the Rackna. Depending on their abilities, the adventurers may discover the following information.

It will be obvious to the players that Shaal and the emissary will form some kind of alliance. Both Wayfarer leaders will shake hands and seem to be quite friendly.

If the characters overhear the conversation amidst the screams and chaos of the crowded bar, they will discover that the pact between the two leaders is simply to exchange information and to keep each group up-to-date on occurrences in each city.

Finally, if the characters manage to overhear the leaders talk out of earshot of each other, they will discover that neither Shaal nor Firedrake trust each other. At the moment, they simply have agreed to form an alliance to keep tabs on their activities.

STRIKE INTERVENES

Since the primary mission of the players is to report back to their captain Yisaanii, and since they are greatly outnumbered, they will probably not interfere with Shaal and Firedrake. Unfortunately, Strike has other plans. The ruthless Wayfarer leader of Cliff-Spider's second cluster is determined to wreck the meeting. Five of Strike's Wayfarers, two of which possess Shard abilities, will enter the bar and attack. This will cause everyone in the bar to scramble for cover or join the fight on one side or the other. At this point it will become increasingly difficult for the characters to remain anonymous; they are likely to join in the fight. If however, the characters choose to intervene before the arrival of Strike's Wayfarers, the GM should use Strike's disruptors as a diversion if the characters become outmatched, which is likely to occur.

EXIT THE BONEYARD

It will become fairly obvious to the players that flight, and not fight, is their best option. The addition of Strike's Wayfarers in this conflict makes it virtually impossible for the players to stop and arrest all the Wayfarers. Since their primary goal is to report to Captain Yisaanii, they should ensure that the information they have obtained is delivered to the Watcher leader. It is possible that the players will encounter some of the rebels on their way out of the

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

Boneyard (GM's discretion). They may even be able to gain the assistance of Watchers above ground. Unfortunately, since there are many entrances and exits that the Watchers must cover in the Boneyard, the players are not likely to get much support. If however the players are lucky and persistent, they may be able to capture some Wayfarers. The rebel leaders Shaal'Shera and Firedrake will probably escape however, since they know many secret exits, and they are protected by several guards who will sacrifice themselves to ensure that their leaders will escape unharmed.

RETURN TO FREETOWN

Assuming that the players gathered information on the activities of the Wayfarers, captain Yisaanii will thank the characters and pay them their due. The Watcher leader may award bonuses if the group successfully captured any of the Wayfarers. After they receive their payment, the Watchers ask the players to leave since the captain must attend to her duties. Assuming that they were successful, the players should be content with the new contacts they may have made in the Boneyard.



KOURAKIS (WING-EATERS)

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 0 | Coordination | 5 | Strength | 3 | Constitution |
| -1 | Intelligence | 0 | Willpower | -1 | Psyche |
| -2 | Appearance | 0 | Charisma | 2 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 33 | Wird | | |
| 12 | Body | 12 | True Body | 28 | Endurance |

SKILLS

Innate

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|--------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | Awareness | 1 | Camouflage | 2 | CM - Charge |
| 2 | CM - Dodge | 3 | CM - Grapple | 3 | CM - Strike |
| 4 | Intimidation | 4 | Scavenging | 3 | Stealth |
| 4 | WS - Wings | | | | |

Learned

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| 3 | Survival - Caverns |
|---|--------------------|

Studied

| | | | |
|---|---------------|---|-------------------------|
| 2 | AK - Boneyard | 2 | AK - Cliff-Spider caves |
|---|---------------|---|-------------------------|

ABILITIES

Wing attack - 6 point attack, Hard Damage
Altered/Inhuman Sense, Infrared Vision, Permanent - Tier 4
Earthsium - Tier 2

TRAITS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Abnormal Appearance (-5) | Behaviour - Likes Yas'Wailian Flesh |
| Enemy - Cliff-Spider Authorities (-1) | Impaired Sense, Sight (in bright light) (-5) |
| Reputation - Deadly (-8) | |

BACKGROUND

Kourakis are the evolved survivors of abominations that were buried beneath Cliff-Spider after the War of the Houses. These creatures have a strong affinity for Yas'Wailian flesh and also treasure Yas'Wailian wings, using them as status symbols. They live deep in the caverns under Cliff-Spider and usually will only be found near the Boneyard. They rarely appear above ground and never in the daytime - bright light makes them extremely uncomfortable. For more information, see page 50.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

PATHFINDERS

MINIMUM CHARACTERISTIC

Coordination 1, Strength 1, Constitution 1, Intelligence 0, Willpower 1, Perception 1

BASE SKILLS

Innate

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 Athletics | 2 Awareness | 1 Body Language |
| 2 Climbing | 2 CM - Disarm | 3 CM - Dodge |
| 2 CM - Grapple | 3 CM - Parry | 3 CM - Strike |
| 2 CM - Throw | 2 Concealment | 2 Disguise |
| 1 Escape Artist | 2 Quick Draw | 1 Running |
| 3 Stealth | 3 Tracking | 3 WS - Knife |
| 4 WS- Sword | | |

Learned

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 2 Battle Tactics | 2 Breakfall | 2 Cartography |
| 2 First Aid | 2 Hand to Hand | 1 Lock Picking |
| 3 Melee | 2 Missile Weapon | 2 Riding |
| 2 Survival - Jungle | 2 Trapping | 3 WS - Bow |

Studied

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 2 AK - Cliff-Spider | 2 AK - Exodus Plains |
|---------------------|----------------------|

ABILITIES

Wings 2

TRAITS

Resistance to Disease (+2)

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

Since the Pathfinders are trained to use whatever equipment is available, they have no preferred weapon. See page 91.

PATHFINDER TRAIT

RESISTANCE TO DISEASE

COST: +2 or +5

Characters with this Trait are unusually resistant to diseases and poisons. They gain 1 (+2) or 2 dice (+5) for resisting any such attack. In addition, their Body increases by 1 or 2 when faced with poisons and diseases that cause physical harm. Note: Members of the Pathfinders have this Trait.

BURKEL KUTAN

Troupial: Hawk

Profession: Head of House Kutan

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Coordination | 0 | Strength | 0 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 0 | Appearance | 1 | Charisma | 1 | Perception |
| 3 | Aura | 33 | Wird | | |
| 7 | Body | 7 | True Body | 16 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|---|-------------------|
| 2 | Acting | 1 | Awareness | 2 | Body Language |
| 3 | Bribery | 3 | Charm | 2 | CM - Dodge |
| 2 | CM - Strike | 2 | Flight | 2 | Lang.- Serpenkine |
| 3 | Oration | 3 | Small Talk | 2 | WS - Dagger |
| 3 | Bureaucracy | 3 | Etiquette | 2 | Finance |
| 2 | Hand to Hand | 3 | Leadership | 2 | Melee |
| 2 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 3 | AS - Exodus Plain | 3 | Heraldry |
| 3 | History | 2 | LS - Old Yas'Wailian | 3 | Law |
| 3 | Philosophy | 1 | Wird Lore | | |

ABILITIES

Claws - 3 point attack, Hard Damage
Increased Sense, Sight - Tier 1
Wings - Tier 3

TRAITS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Behaviour - Curious | Behaviour - Deceitful |
| Behaviour - Vengeful | Behaviour, Ext. - Competitive with Hawks |
| Caste Status - Pure | Contact - Trade Master Countswell (+5) |
| Enemy - Chapter Dendysyi (-8) | Good Flyer |
| Literate | Wealthy (+5) |

BACKGROUND

Burkel Kutan is intoxicated with visions of glory and power. He is willing to do anything to renew his ancestors' Chapter, the Dow'Shell. He has assembled a group of like-minded individuals to achieve this goal. Unbeknownst to his son Ordonios, Burkel is planning on murdering the King's daughter, the princess Sehanya, and sending the Dendysyi into chaos. He hopes this will help to promote his agenda for the reformation of the Dow'Shell.

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

Ancestral Amulet

Burkel wears an ancient heirloom of the Dow'Shell. It identifies him as the purest ancestor of the defunct Chapter. Legends claim that the amulet is imbued with the essence of a Dow'Shell leader who was a great sailor. The powerful item allows the wearer to create water blasts (level 2 spell, Bolt of Water) three times a day. In addition, Burkel can grant himself Freedom of the Vrolagh (as the 2nd level spell) and Water Armour (as the 3rd level spell) three times a day for 10 minutes at a time.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

INNIS ROG

Troupial: Rat

Profession: ?

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Coordination | 0 | Strength | 1 | Constitution |
| 2 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 0 | Appearance | 2 | Charisma | 2 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 27 | Wird | | |
| 7 | Body | 7 | True Body | 20 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| 3 | Acting | 3 | Awareness | 2 | Bartering |
| 2 | Body Language | 2 | Bribery | 3 | Charm |
| 2 | CM - Disarm | 2 | CM - Dodge | 2 | CM - Parry |
| 3 | Concealment | 4 | Disguise | 3 | Imitation |
| 2 | Lang. - Serpenkine | 2 | Running | 2 | Scavenging |
| 3 | Small Talk | 3 | Stealth | 2 | Tracking |
| 3 | WS - Knife | | | | |
| 2 | Appraisal | 2 | Cartography | 2 | Etiquette |
| 2 | First Aid | 3 | Hand to Hand | 2 | Lip-reading |
| 3 | Lock Picking | 2 | Melee | 2 | Missile Weapon |
| 3 | Pick Pocket | 3 | Sleight of Hand | 4 | Streetwise |
| 2 | Survival | 2 | Thrown Weapon | | |
| 3 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 2 | AK - Boneyard | 3 | AS - Cliff-Spider |
| 2 | Cryptography | 2 | Heraldry | 3 | History |
| 1 | Law | 1 | Math | 1 | Philosophy |
| 1 | Politics | | | | |

ABILITIES

Altered/Inhuman Sense, Infrared Sight - Tier 2

Increased Senses - Tier 7

TRAITS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Behaviour - Caustic | Behaviour - Dislikes city smells |
| Behaviour - Loves information | Caste Status - Fallen |
| Contact - King Raldowin (+5) | Contact - War Council (+6) |
| Contact - Underground allies (+8) | Light Sleep |
| Literate | Photographic Memory |
| Reputation - Dangerous (+5) | Reputation - Mysterious (+8) |

BACKGROUND

The mysterious Rat named Innis is an enigma to everyone in Cliff-Spider. The chatty Fallen man skilfully weaves so many tales that if one believed everything he recounted, they would think him to be the wisest man in Providence. Despite a number of deceptive tales, Innis Rog does hold a multitude of secrets. Even though other members of the council have clearly voiced their objections, King Raldowin decided to award the Rat a seat on his War Council. The King thinks that he has to have eyes in every corner of the city, even if Innis's particular hole is the unpleasant and corrupt Boneyard. According to numerous rumours, Raldowin may know more about the Rat than he lets on. See page 49 for more information on Innis Rog.

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

Innis is rumoured to possess many powerful and dangerous magical items. Considering the bizarre objects he sometimes sell, it is hardly surprising that he has gained such a reputation.

KORYANNY DE'INZIL TURA

Troupial: Hawk

Profession: Pathfinder Prime

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 2 | Coordination | 2 | Strength | 2 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 0 | Appearance | 1 | Charisma | 2 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 30 | Wird | | |
| 9 | Body | 9 | True Body | 24 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|--------------------|---|---------------------|
| 2 | Acrobatics | 2 | Athletics | 3 | Awareness |
| 2 | Body Language | 3 | Camouflage | 2 | Climbing |
| 4 | CM - Disarm | 4 | CM - Dodge | 4 | CM - Grapple |
| 4 | CM - Parry | 4 | CM - Strike | 3 | CM - Throw |
| 3 | Concealment | 3 | Disguise | 2 | Escape Artist |
| 2 | Flight | 3 | Intimidation | 3 | Lang - Serpenkine |
| 3 | Quick Draw | 2 | Running | 3 | Stealth |
| 4 | Tracking | 3 | WS - Knife | 5 | WS - Sword |
| 2 | Animal Husbandry | 4 | Battle Tactics | 2 | Breakfall |
| 3 | Bureaucracy | 3 | Cartography | 3 | Etiquette |
| 2 | First Aid | 4 | Hand to Hand | 1 | Lang - White Crow |
| 3 | Leadership | 2 | Lip-reading | 2 | Lock Picking |
| 3 | Melee | 3 | Missile Weapon | 2 | Riding |
| 3 | Survival - Jungle | 3 | Strategy | 3 | Trapping |
| 4 | WS - Bow | | | | |
| 3 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 3 | AK - Exodus Plains | 2 | AK - Monarch's Peak |
| 3 | Cryptography | 3 | Heraldry | 3 | History |
| 1 | Lang - Swarm Dancer | 2 | Law | 2 | Math |
| 2 | Politics | 3 | Resist Pain | | |

ABILITIES

Claws - 3 point attack, Hard Damage
 Increased Sense, Sight - Tier 1
 Wings - Tier 4

TRAITS

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Absolute Sense of Direction | Behaviour - Courageous |
| Behaviour - Protective | Behaviour - Secretive |
| Caste Status - Pure | Combat Reflexes |
| Contact - King Raldowin (+8) | Contact - War Council (+8) |
| Deep Secret | Good Flyer |
| Literate | Military Rank (+8) |
| Reputation - Honest and Honourable (+8) | Resistance to Disease (+5) |
| Social Responsibility (-4) | Wealthy (+5) |

BACKGROUND

Prime Koryanny De'inzil is one of King Raldowin's most trusted advisors, and one of his distant cousins. The talented Hawk holds some of the city's most influential positions; he is both a member of the King's War Council, and the senior-most leader of the Pathfinders - a group of elite warriors he founded. As is the custom among many noble families, Koryanny's parents arranged for him to marry one of House Tura's beautiful young maidens. Several years after his marriage at the age of 16, Koryanny discovered his sexuality. Unbeknownst to his family and friends, Koryanny is involved with a Fallen man in Freetown. Recently, Koryanny informed the man that Green People scouting parties were near Freetown. Since the city may evacuate Freetown when a war comes, Koryanny intends on ensuring the safety of the Fallen man - even if it means he has to use his considerable influence.

Characteristics

Cliff-Spider: The War Citadel **145**

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

LARK

Troupial: Eagle

Profession: Leader of the Red Feathers

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 2 | Coordination | 1 | Strength | 1 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 0 | Appearance | 1 | Charisma | 1 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 27 | Wird | | |
| 8 | Body | 8 | True Body | 20 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|-------------------|---|---------------|
| 2 | Acrobatics | 2 | Athletics | 3 | Awareness |
| 3 | Bartering | 3 | Bribery | 3 | Charm |
| 2 | CM - Dodge | 2 | CM - Parry | 2 | CM - Strike |
| 3 | Concealment | 3 | Disguise | 2 | Escape Artist |
| 3 | Intimidation | 2 | Oration | 2 | Scavenging |
| 3 | Stealth | 2 | WS - Knife | 3 | WS - Sword |
| 3 | Appraisal | 2 | Etiquette | 3 | Hand to Hand |
| 3 | Leadership | 3 | Lock Picking | 2 | Melee |
| 2 | Missile Weapon | 2 | Multiple Strike | 3 | Pick Pocket |
| 3 | Sleight of Hand | 3 | Streetwise | 2 | Thrown Weapon |
| 3 | WS - Numbra's Bracers | | | | |
| 3 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 2 | AS - Cliff-Spider | | |

ABILITIES

Increased Sense, Sight - Tier I

TRAITS

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ambidexterity | Behaviour, Ext. - Honourable |
| Behaviour, Ext. - Protective | Caste Status - Redeemed |
| Contact - Vaska Traask (+3) | Contact - Watchers (+5) |
| Deep Secret | Enemy - The Reaver (-6) |
| Enemy - Mockingbirds (-5) | Wealthy (+4) |

BACKGROUND

Lark, whose real name is Yaruin, is the leader of the Red-Feathers. The magnetic thief holds many secrets close to his heart - not least of which is his heritage as a member of House Crackshore. When Lark was young, he rejected his noble family because they had given away his Fallen sister. Lark became obsessed with finding Jendelle. He became a thief to survive, and eventually formed the Red-Feathers organization in order to fund the search for his sister. After years, Lark finally located Jendelle; unfortunately, she had been viciously abused by her lord, who had blinded Jendelle to keep her as his concubine. Unbeknownst to the authorities, Lark murdered the greedy Free-Keep owner and took care of his sister. The blind artisan now works in the Freemarket, and is under Lark's protection. See pages 35 and 122 for more information.

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

Numbra's Bracers

When Lark first left his family, he encountered Numbra, an old and mysterious man who looked after homeless children. One day, Numbra gave Lark the magical bracers and then disappeared. The items only respond to Lark's commands. They allow him to cast illusions at will (See the level 4 spell Complex Illusion). Anyone trying to notice whether the illusion is real must roll their Perception against a TN of 13 + Lark's margin of success using his Intelligence and WS - Numbra's Bracers skill. When he is not casting an illusion, Lark can use the bracers to make himself invisible as the level 4 spell Invisibility.

The BPV of the bracers is 50.

MARKHAM TURA

Troupial: Hawk

Profession: Drummer

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 2 | Coordination | 18 | Strength | 4 | Constitution |
| 0 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 1 | Appearance | 1 | Charisma | 0 | Perception |
| 2 | Aura | 42 | Wird | | |
| 26 | Body | 10 | True Body | 32 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|---|---------------|
| 2 | Athletics | 2 | Awareness | 3 | Body Language |
| 1 | Camouflage | 2 | Charm | 1 | Climbing |
| 1 | CM - Charge | 2 | CM - Dodge | 2 | CM - Grapple |
| 2 | CM - Parry | 2 | CM - Strike | 3 | Flight |
| 2 | Intimidation | 3 | Oration | 1 | Stealth |
| 3 | WS - Sword | 2 | WS - Drummer's Hammer | | |
| 1 | Appraisal | 2 | Battle Tactics | 1 | Bureaucracy |
| 3 | Etiquette | 1 | Finance | 2 | First Aid |
| 2 | Hand to Hand | 2 | Leadership | 2 | Melee |
| 3 | Strategy | 2 | Survival | 3 | WS - Bow |
| 2 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 2 | AS - Cliff-Spider | 2 | Heraldry |
| 2 | Law | 2 | Math | 2 | Politics |
| 1 | Wird Lore | | | | |

ABILITIES

Armour, Permanent - Tier 3
Claws - 3 point attack, Hard Damage
Increase Density, Permanent - Tier 2
Increased Sense, Sight - Tier 2
Modify Characteristic Strength, Permanent - Tier 5
Wings - Tier 3

TRAITS

Behaviour - Curious
Behaviour - Drummers' Code
Behaviour, Ext. - Competitive with other Hawks
Contact - Golayne Thark (+6)
Good Flyer
Social responsibility (-4)

Behaviour - Dislikes politics
Behaviour - Calm
Caste Status - Gifted
Contact - King Raldowin (+10)
Literate
Wealthy (+9)

BACKGROUND

Prince Markham enjoys his duties as a Drummer more than he could possibly appreciate his father's world of politics. He feels that he can be of far greater help to the Alliance of Kings as a Drummer than the ruler of a city. Markham is pleased that his sister is their father's choice for the throne of the city.

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

God's Tooth Hammer

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

NARISSE CORIANTE SKORAA

Troupial: Raven

Profession: Head Chirurgeon in Cliff-Spider

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 0 | Coordination | 0 | Strength | 1 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 2 | Appearance | 1 | Charisma | 1 | Perception |
| 2 | Aura | 33 | Wird | | |
| 7 | Body | 7 | True Body | 20 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| 2 | Acting | 2 | Awareness | 4 | Bartering |
| 3 | Body Language | 3 | Charm | 1 | CM - Dodge |
| 1 | CM - Strike | 2 | Flight | 3 | Intimidation |
| 3 | Oration | 2 | Small Talk | 1 | WS - Knife |
| 2 | Appraisal | 2 | Bureaucracy | 4 | Etiquette |
| 3 | Finance | 4 | First Aid | 3 | Leadership |
| 2 | Lip-reading | | | | |
| 2 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 1 | AK - Exodus Plains | 3 | AK - High City |
| 2 | AS - Cliff-Spider | 4 | Biology - Anatomy | 3 | Biology - Fauna |
| 4 | Chemistry | 2 | History | 2 | Math |
| 2 | Politics | 3 | Psychology | 3 | Surgery |

ABILITIES

Heal, reduced Wird cost - Tier 6
Wings - Tier 2

TRAITS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Behaviour - Hates Drummer's Guild | Behaviour - Vain |
| Behaviour, Ext - Idolizes Ajandi | Caste Status - Gifted |
| Contact - Ajandi Melisrian (+7) | Contact - Great Library (+5) |
| Contact - Prince Markham (+7) | Literate |
| Phobia - Dislikes Snakes (-2) | Reputation - Greedy (-2) |
| Reputation - Mystic (+2) | Wealthy (+5) |

BACKGROUND

Narisse Coriante is the head of the Chirurgeons in Cliff-Spider. She thinks of herself as a close confidante of the Guild Master, Ajandi Melisrian, who does not harbour the same warm feelings in return. Coriante will do just about anything for the Guild Master. It is only recently that Narisse has started a relationship with Prince Markham. She is sure that she likes him, but isn't sure that the relationship will survive his devotion to the Drummers. She hopes that the Drummers will be weakened, and that Markham will quit. See page 82 for more information.

SEHANYA TURA

Troupial: Hawk

Profession: Heir to the throne

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Coordination | 0 | Strength | 1 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 2 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 1 | Appearance | 2 | Charisma | 1 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 27 | Wird | | |
| 7 | Body | 7 | True Body | 20 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|---|-------------------|
| 2 | Athletics | 3 | Awareness | 2 | Body Language |
| 3 | Charm | 1 | CM - Disarm | 2 | CM - Dodge |
| 2 | CM - Parry | 2 | CM - Strike | 2 | Flight |
| 2 | Intimidation | 3 | Oration | 3 | Small Talk |
| 2 | WS - Dagger | 1 | WS - Sword | | |
| 1 | Appraisal | 1 | AE - Singing | 2 | Battle Tactics |
| 3 | Bureaucracy | 1 | Dance | 3 | Etiquette |
| 2 | Finance | 1 | Hand to Hand | 3 | Leadership |
| 2 | Melee | 2 | Strategy | 1 | WS - Bow |
| 2 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 2 | AK - Exodus Plains | 2 | AS - Cliff-Spider |
| 3 | History | 3 | Law | 2 | Math |
| 2 | Philosophy | 3 | Politics | 1 | Wird lore |

ABILITIES

Claws - 3 point attack, Hard Damage
 Increased Sense, Sight - Tier 2
 Wings - Tier 3

TRAITS

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Behaviour - Compassionate | Behaviour - Curious |
| Behaviour - Pacifist | Behaviour, Ext. - Competitive with other Hawks |
| Caste Status - Pure | Contact - Koryanny De'inzil (+6) |
| Contact - Raldowin (+10) | Double-Jointed |
| Good Flyer | Light Sleep |
| Literate | Social Responsibility (-6) |
| Wealthy (+9) | |

BACKGROUND

Sehanya has always been preparing herself for the role she knows she will eventually play. Given her family's standing, she has always known that this would mean some position of responsibility. Since her brother has joined the Drummers, Sahanya is the current heir, a position she takes very seriously. She has no doubts as to her father's ability, but she is nonetheless getting ready for the day she will be the ruler of Cliff-Spider. Sehanya means to serve her people to the best of her ability.

Sehanya has mixed feelings about the upcoming war. She would prefer that the Alliance of Kings reach a peaceful compromise with the Lost Tribes, but she knows that it is not possible at the moment. If an opportunity for peace arises however, she will jump at it.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

SHAAL'SHERA

Troupial: Raven

Profession: Wayfarer captain

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Coordination | 0 | Strength | 0 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 1 | Appearance | 2 | Charisma | 1 | Perception |
| 2 | Aura | 30 | Wird | | |
| 7 | Body | 7 | True Body | 16 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|-------------------|---|---------------|
| 2 | Awareness | 2 | Body Language | 2 | Camouflage |
| 3 | Charm | 2 | CM - Disarm | 2 | CM - Dodge |
| 2 | CM - Parry | 2 | CM - Strike | 2 | Escape Artist |
| 2 | Intimidation | 3 | Oration | 3 | Stealth |
| 2 | Teaching | 3 | WS - Sword | | |
| 3 | Battle Tactics | 2 | Bureaucracy | 2 | Cartography |
| 1 | Etiquette | 2 | Hand to Hand | 3 | Leadership |
| 2 | Melee | 2 | Missile Weapon | 3 | Strategy |
| 3 | Streetwise | | | | |
| 3 | AK - Freetown | 2 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 3 | Cryptography |
| 1 | History | 2 | Law | 2 | Math |
| 2 | Politics | 2 | Resist Pain | 2 | Wird Lore |
| 3 | Wird Casting | 3 | Wird - Air | 3 | Wird - Earth |
| 3 | Wird - Fire | 3 | Wird - Water | | |

ABILITIES

Wings - Tier 2
Level 3 Wird Dancer

TRAITS

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Abnormal Appearance (-2) | Behaviour - Hates the Caste System |
| Caste Status - Blessed | Contact - Great Library (+5) |
| Enemy - Watchers (-4) | Literate |
| Reputation - Mystics (+2) | |

BACKGROUND

Having lived both as a Fallen and a Blessed, Shaal'Shera despises the injustices the caste system engenders. She is determined to hasten its destruction, but unlike her counterpart Strike, is unwilling to sacrifice innocent bystanders to achieve her goals. Shaal is intrigued by the unification movement in Cry-Star, but is unsure whether she can trust its leader, the mysterious stranger Firedrake. At the moment, she is willing to make an alliance with the Wayfarer - better to keep him close where she can examine his moves.

SPELLS

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Far Speaking | Heal Self |
| Hearing of the Bat | Night Vision |
| Slow Disease Self | Detect Life |
| Disguise Self | Flaming Weapon |
| Reflexes of the Rilbec | Dispel Magic |
| Light Armour | Size of the Mite |

SOLIERI DAMASCI

Troupial: Dove

Profession: People's Knight

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Coordination | 1 | Strength | 1 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 1 | Willpower | 1 | Psyche |
| 1 | Appearance | 2 | Charisma | 1 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 27 | Wird | | |
| 8 | Body | 8 | True Body | 20 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|---|-----------------|
| 2 | Acrobatics | 2 | Athletics | 2 | Awareness |
| 3 | Bartering | 3 | Body Language | 2 | Camouflage |
| 2 | Charm | 1 | Climbing | 2 | CM - Charge |
| 3 | CM - Dodge* | 2 | CM - Parry | 3 | CM - Strike* |
| 2 | CM - Throw* | 1 | Escape Artist | 1 | Oration |
| 2 | Small Talk | 4 | Stealth | 2 | WS - Knife |
| 3 | WS - Sword | | | | |
| 2 | Appraisal | 3 | Battle Tactics | 3 | Breakfall |
| 2 | Etiquette | 2 | First Aid | 3 | Hand to Hand |
| 2 | Meditation | 3 | Melee | 3 | Multiple Strike |
| 4 | Streetwise | 2 | WS - Throwing Axe | | |
| 3 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 2 | AK - Water-Sister | 3 | AK - Freetown |
| 2 | Biology - Anatomy | 2 | History | 3 | Martial Arts |
| 1 | Medicine | 1 | Philosophy | 1 | Politics |
| 1 | Resist Pain | | | | |

ABILITIES

None

TRAITS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Absolute Sense of Direction | Behaviour - Distracted by shiny objects |
| Behaviour - Won't Kill | Behaviour, Ext - Social |
| Caste Status - Redeemed | Combat Reflexes |
| Contact - Shaal'Shera (+2) | Contact - Street Vendor (+2) |
| Contact - Watcher (+2) | Literate |
| Reputation - People's Knight (+4) | Reputation - Reliable (+2) |
| Secret ID | Social Responsibility (-4) |
| Wealthy (+3) | |

BACKGROUND

Solieri Damasci, whose real name is known only to a handful of individuals, is a People's Knight in Cliff-Spider. She has come a long way from her origins as an assassin. Solieri grew tired of her life, and of taking the lives of others. One day, she decided to leave Water-Sister. Solieri is hiding from her former clients in the depths of Cliff-Spider and learned new skills to disguise her fighting style. Solieri genuinely wishes to help people in need; she simply no longer believes in her former life. See page 40 for additional details.

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

Crystal Short Sword

Solieri's short sword is made of crystal and contains the spell Blur, usable three times a day. In addition, she gains 2 dice to her Multiple Strike skill when she uses the sword. Solieri received this sword as thanks from a merchant travelling through Freetown whom she rescued from bandits.

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

VASKA TRAASK

Troupial: Gargoyle

Profession: Criminal

CHARACTERISTICS

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|
| 0 | Coordination | 3 | Strength | 2 | Constitution |
| 1 | Intelligence | 0 | Willpower | 0 | Psyche |
| -1 | Appearance | 0 | Charisma | 0 | Perception |
| 0 | Aura | 30 | Wird | | |
| 11 | Body | 11 | True Body | 24 | Endurance |

SKILLS

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|---|---------------|
| 3 | Awareness | 2 | Bartering | 3 | Bribery |
| 3 | CM - Charge | 3 | CM - Grapple | 3 | CM - Strike |
| 2 | Gambling | 3 | Intimidation | 2 | Jumping |
| 2 | WS - Dagger | 3 | WS - Morningstar | | |
| 3 | Armourer | 2 | Bureaucracy | 2 | Demolition |
| 3 | Finance | 3 | Hand to Hand | 3 | Leadership |
| 2 | Melee | 2 | Missile Weapon | 3 | Streetwise |
| 3 | AK - Cliff-Spider | 3 | AK - The Boneyard | 2 | AK - Freetown |
| 1 | History | 2 | Law | 1 | Politics |

ABILITIES

Armour - Tier 3
 Bite - 3 point attack, Hard Damage
 Horns - 3 point attack, Soft Damage
 Wings - Tier 2

TRAITS

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Bad Flyer | Behaviour, Ext. - Honourable |
| Caste Status - Blessed | Contact - Lark (+3) |
| Contact - The Reaver (+5) | Contact - Sirius Khohall (+5) |
| Heavy-Boned | Literate |
| Reputation - Barbaric and Violent (-4) | Wealthy (+3) |

BACKGROUND

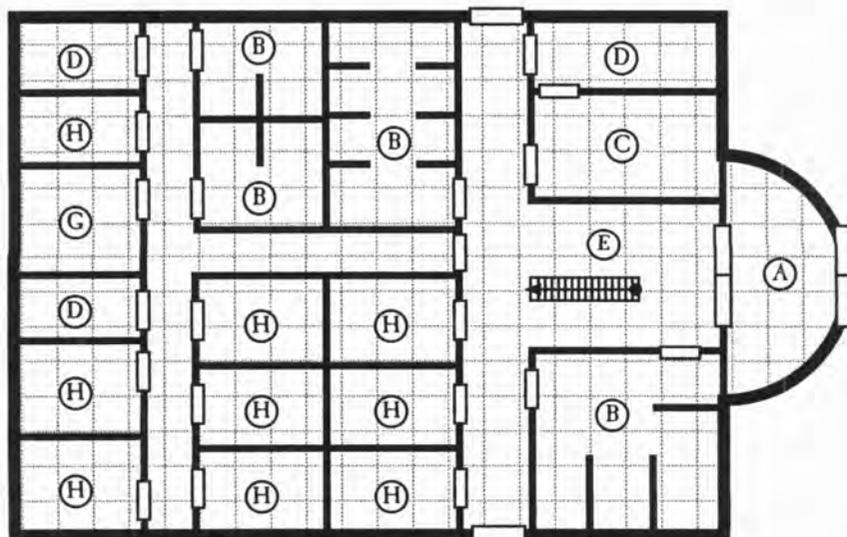
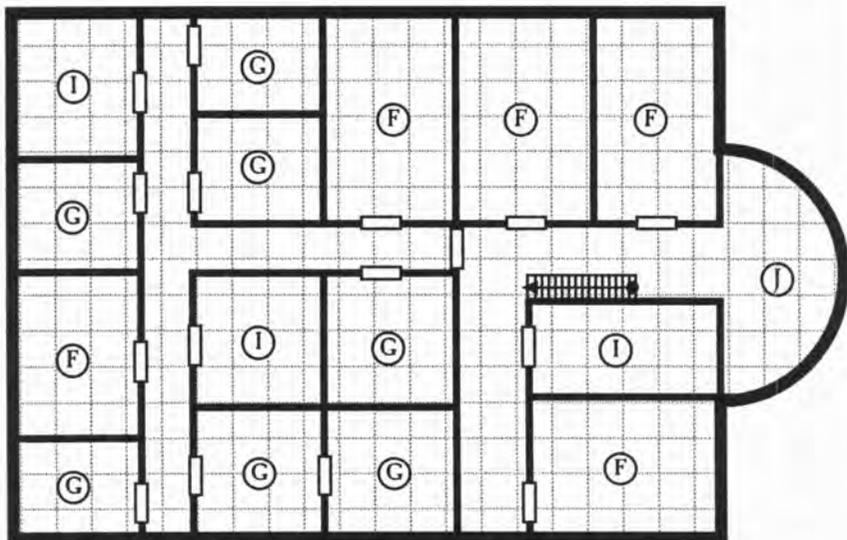
Traask is the undisputed "mayor" of the Boneyard. Since many people have a tendency to underestimate the intelligence of Gargoyles, Traask has been able to use his considerable skills to his advantage to rule in the Boneyard. Thankfully for the Gargoyle's ego, no one has yet to challenge his self-bestowed title. Vaska Traask enjoys the Boneyard's atmosphere and will do anything to protect its reputation as one of the seediest locales in the Alliance of Kings. Traask is in league with Providence's criminal mastermind, the enigmatic Reaver. Recently, she became interested in taking control of Freetown's Red Feathers. For the first time, Traask is uncomfortable with his association with the Reaver. He fears that his relationship with Lark, leader of the Red-Feathers, may be forever shattered if the Reaver persists in attempting to remove Lark. See page 46 for more information on Vaska.

EQUIPMENT OF NOTE

Traask's Morningstar can generate the 1st level spell Light, 3 times a day for 30 minutes at a time. In addition, it can also create the 2nd level spell Flash, 3 times a day. Finally, the weapon's energy glow can cause 8 points of additional damage in hand to hand combat 3 times a day. The weapon's BPV is 35.

THE BLESSED HEART

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| A Entry | E Foyer | I Operation room |
| B Patient waiting room | F Classroom | J Library / Reading room |
| C Kitchen | G Office | |
| D Storage | H Bedchamber | |



THE BLUE BIRD

A Entry

B Stage

C Kitchen

D Bar

E Main hall

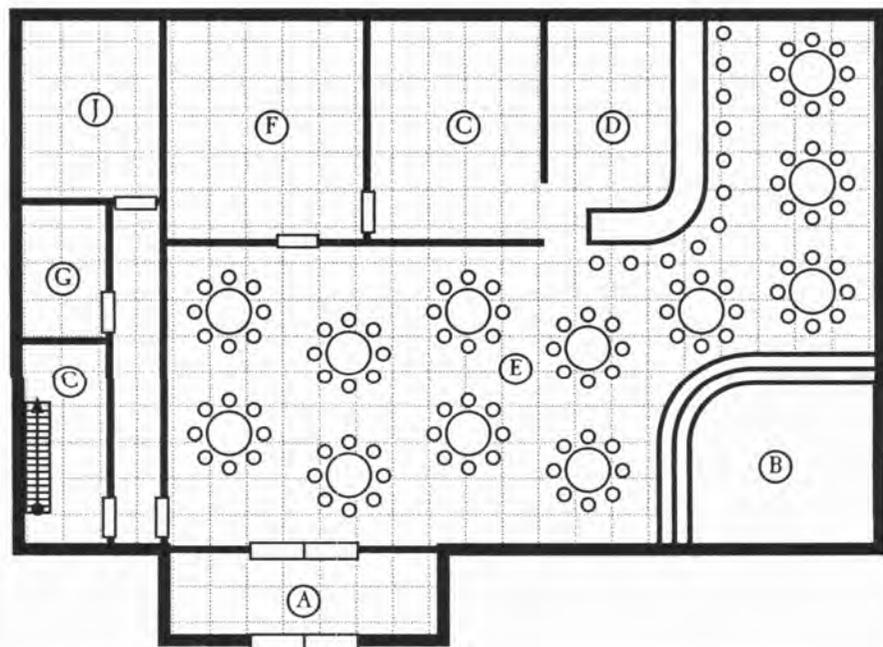
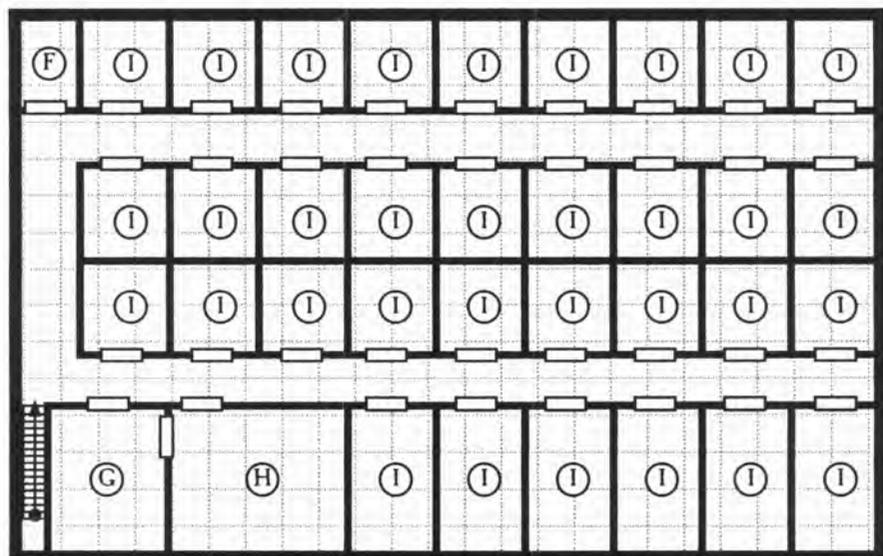
F Storage

G Office

H Living room

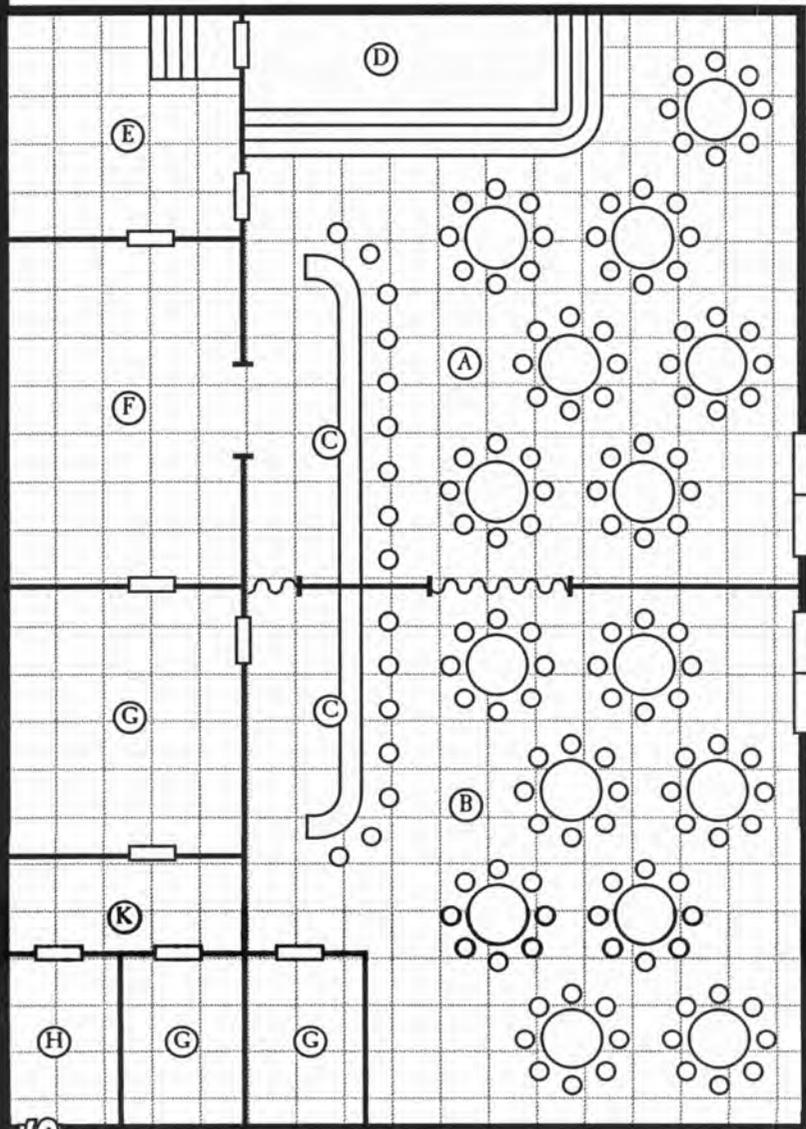
I Room for rent

J Roshak's office



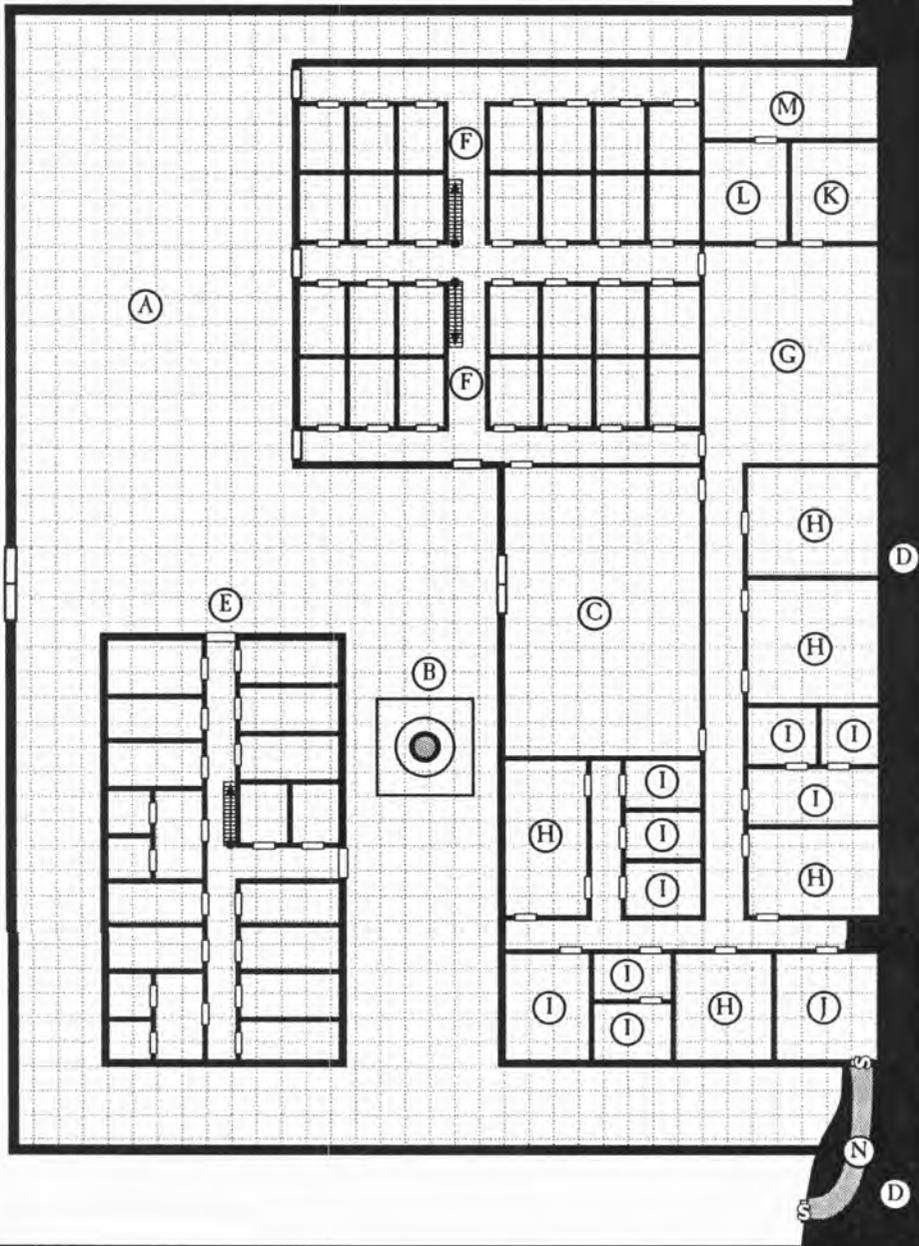
THE RACKNA

- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| A Performance hall | D Stage | G Storage | J Secret exit / entrance to Freetown |
| B Quiet hall | E Rehearsal room | H Office | |
| C Bar | F Kitchen | I Cavern wall | K Office |



SUNARIUS KEEP (GROUND FLOOR)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A Courtyard/Training Ground | E Living quarters for Immature Kestrels | H Classroom | L Quarter-Master's office |
| B Sacred Fire | F Living quarters for mature Kestrels | I Office | M Private practice room |
| C Main Hall | G Living area | J Storage | N Secret entrance |
| D Spire Wall | | K Coloured Quarter-Master's office | |



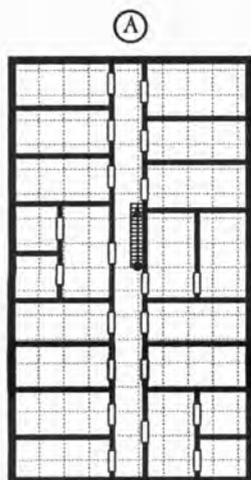
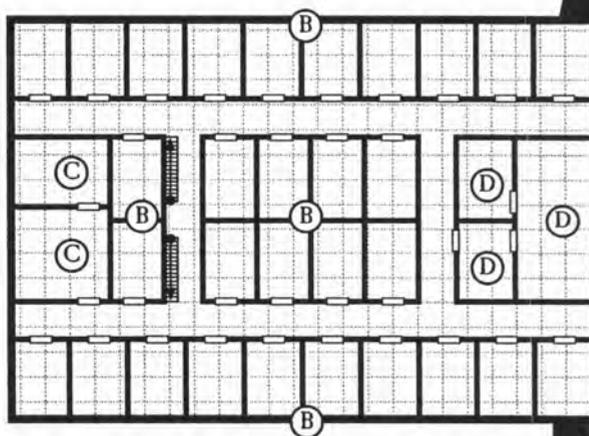
SUNARIUS KEEP (SECOND FLOOR)

A Living Quarters for immature Kestrels

B Living quarters for mature Kestrels

C Colored Quarter-Master's living quarters

D Quarter-Master's living quarters

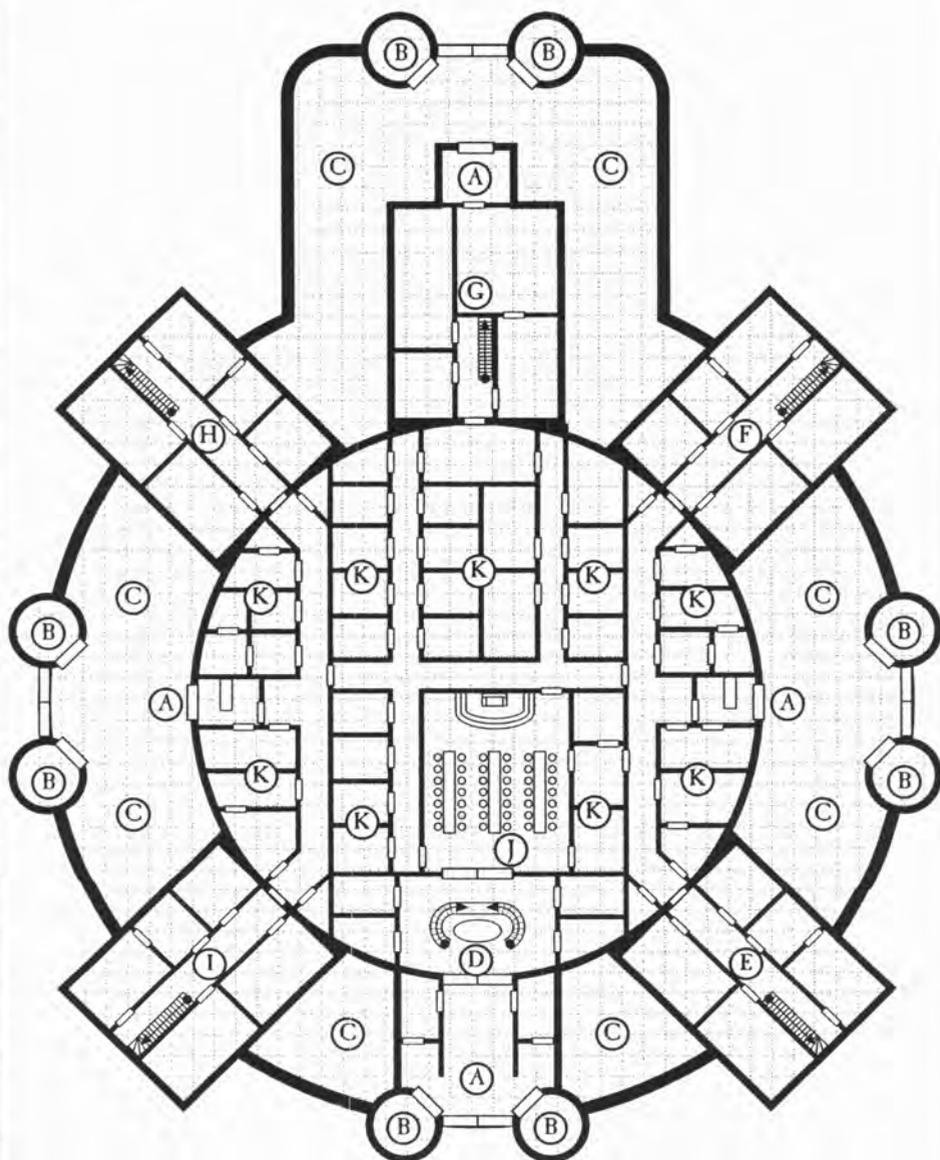


ROYAL PALACE (GROUND FLOOR)

A Entrance / Security
 B Guard towers
 C Park / Palace grounds
 D Royaln Hall

E Regent's Hall
 F Alliance-Hall
 G Tura Hall
 H Guardian-Hall

I Aikeen Hall
 J Royal Ante-Chamber
 K Offices



ROYAL PALACE (SECOND FLOOR)

A Entrance / Security

B Guard towers

C Executive Meeting Rooms

D Offices

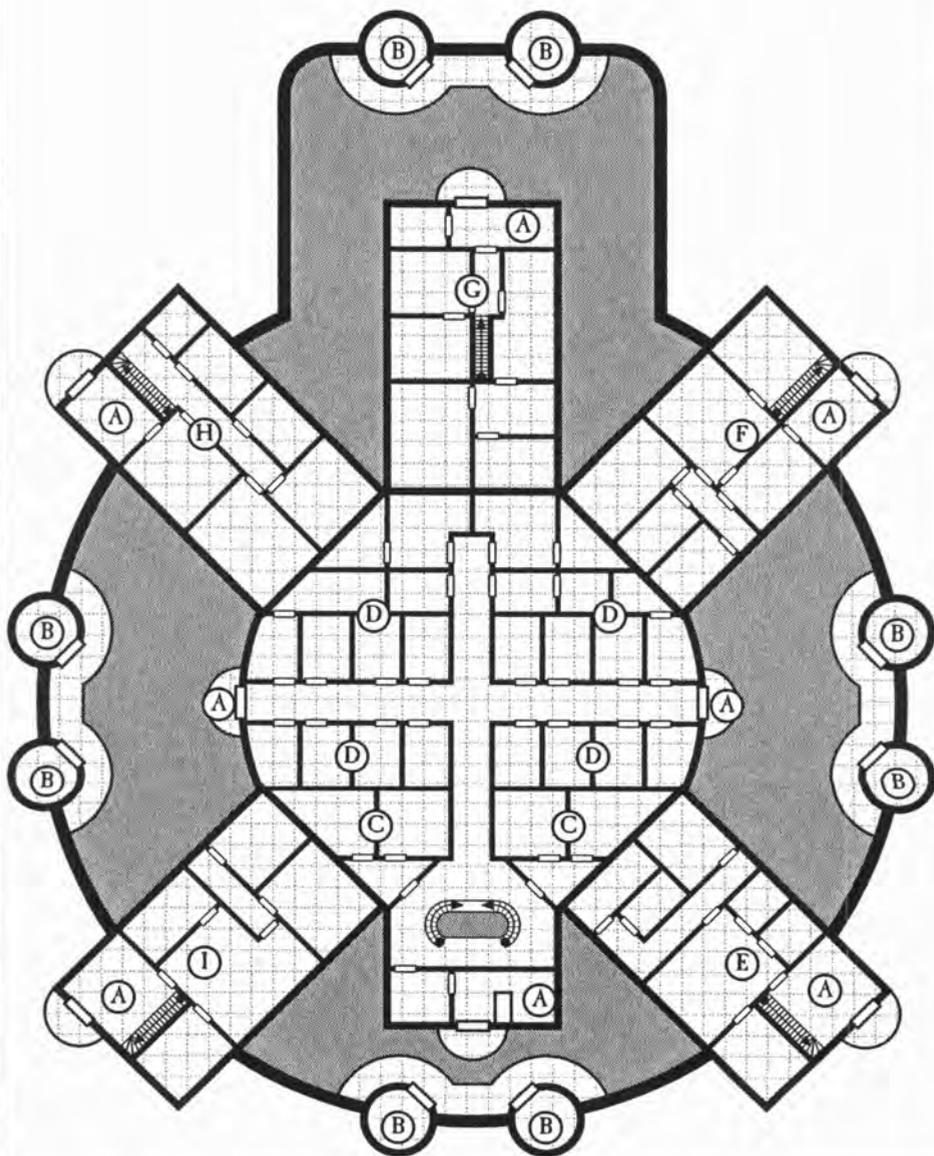
E Regent's Hall

F Alliance Hall

G Tura Hall

H Guardian Hall

I Aikeen Hall



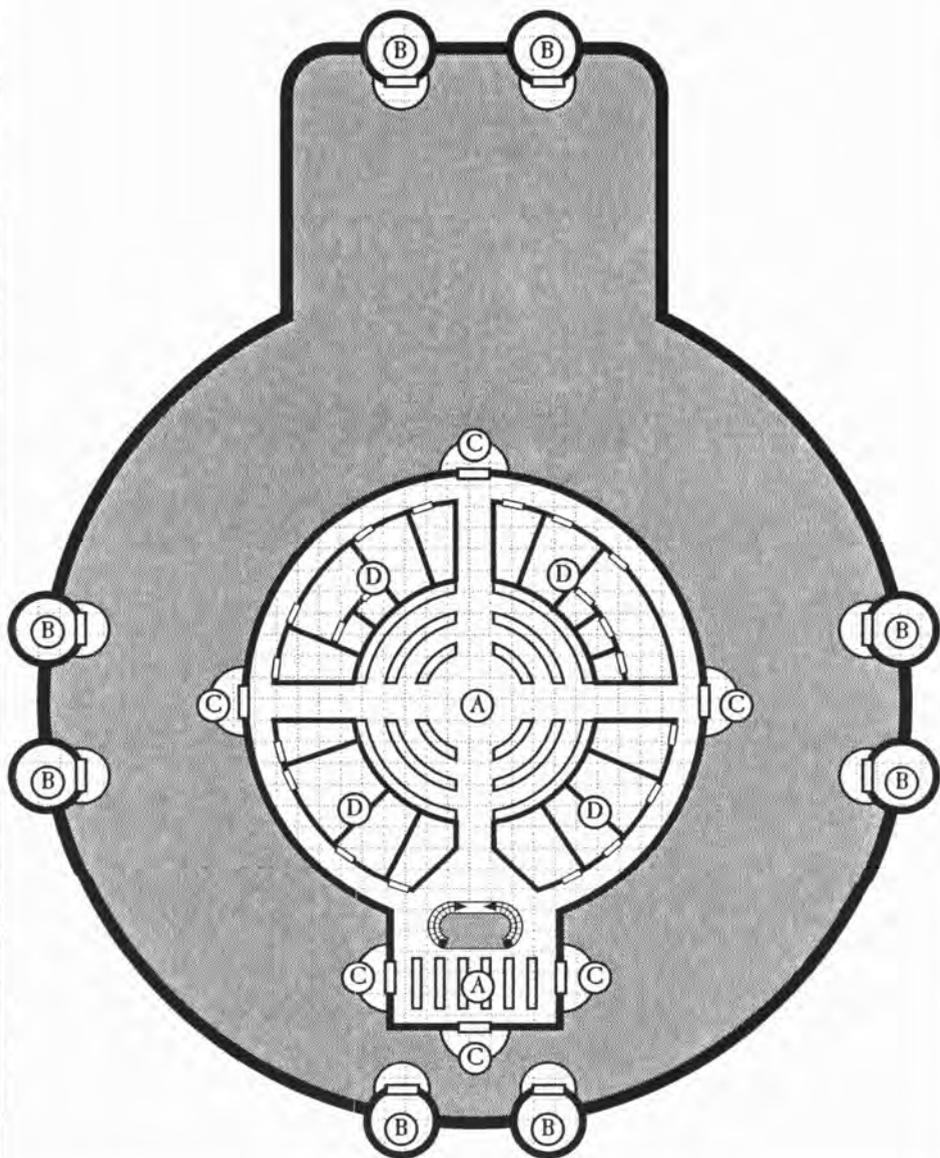
ROYAL PALACE (THIRD FLOOR)

A Royal library

B Guard tower

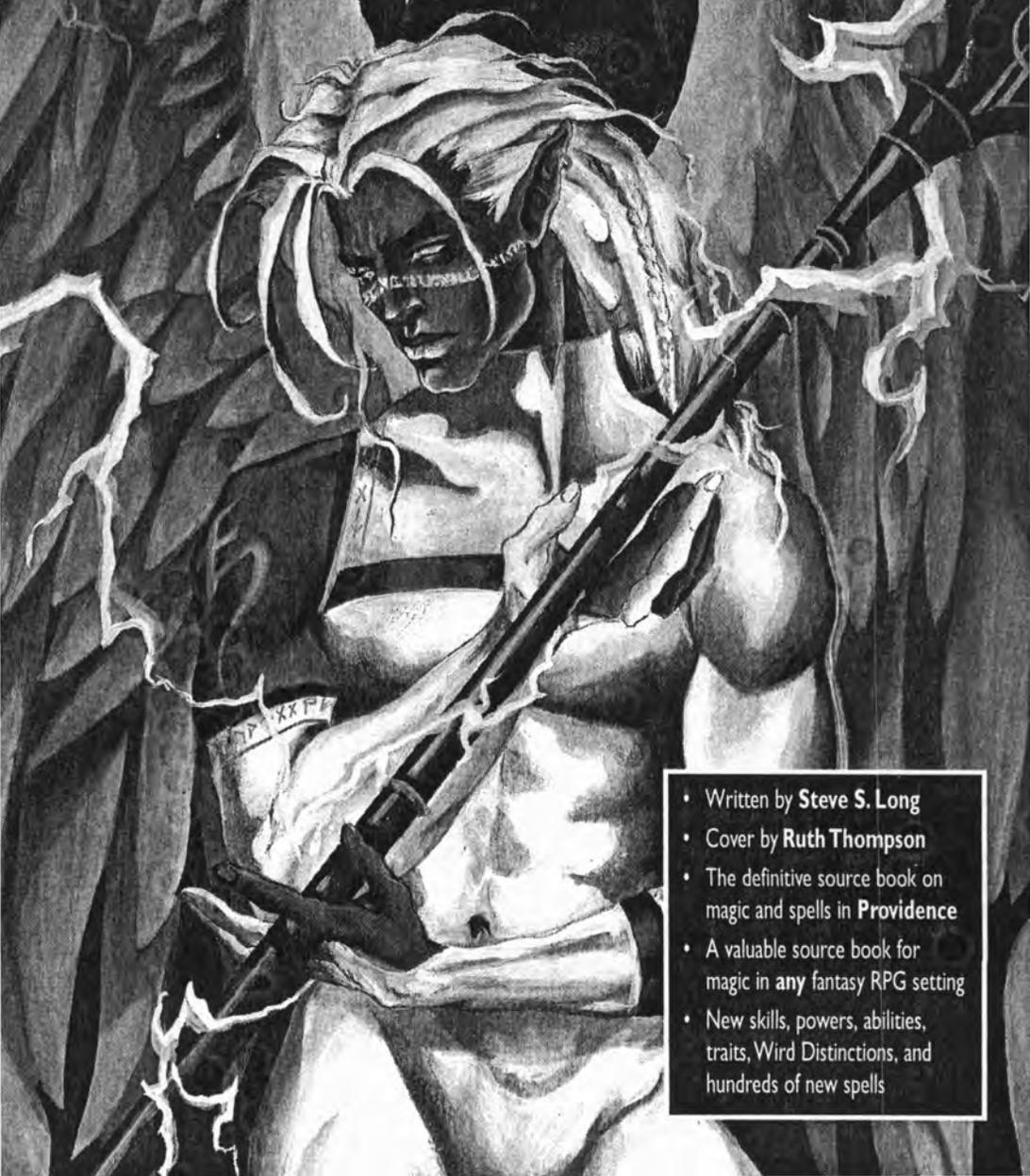
C Entrance / Security

D Office / Study Hall



PROVIDENCE

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PROVIDENCE

CLIFF-SPIDER: THE WAR CITADEL

Solieri, hero to the people, stood in a nameless corner of Freetown, poised to confront whoever threatened the safety of the Fallen city.

Sheltered within one of **Providence's** massive rocky spires, **Cliff-Spider** is a symbol of the strength and resiliency of the Alliance of Kings. **The War Citadel** is a unique city built entirely within natural and Wird-crafted caves, making **Cliff-Spider** the most formidable fortified city in the realm.

Follow the guided tour throughout the city, meet its colourful inhabitants, and uncover the agendas of various factions; encounter the mischievous Vaska Traask in the hidden depths of the Boneyard, and travel to Castle Well to learn the secrets of the militia's elite Pathfinders.

Cliff-Spider: The War Citadel includes maps of each of the city's levels, as well as floor plans of numerous buildings. Finally, **Cliff-Spider** includes a complete adventure, and countless story threads that cement this source book within the world of **Providence**.



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