

KATHAN

LANDS OF CONFLICT



Brian Patterson

Tracy Barnett

Karthun needs heroes. Will you heed the call?

Karthun was once a land of peace and prosperity. Then the release of the Worldfire and the breaking of the planes ushered in the Age of Conflict. Now, rulers wage war against the legions of the Three Demon Kings, ravenous undead horrors...and each other. Karthun needs heroes to stand against the darkness, but to be a hero in Karthun is to be a legend, for even the gods can perish here. All that awaits the fallen is the cold embrace of the Mother of the Dead.

Karthun: Lands of Conflict is an extensive epic fantasy setting for use with your favorite system such as Fate, D&D, or Savage Worlds. You must own a system book of your choice to play. Inside, you'll find plenty of character ideas, locations, and NPCs to send your characters off on adventures galore. This book includes:

- Plenty of international strife and potential controversy to fuel a political intrigue plot, an extensive spy network designed to support campaign espionage, and warring nations to build epic battle campaigns
- Smaller locations and story seeds to support one-shots or shorter campaigns
- A sample bestiary, including new creatures like the Worldfire Hound and the Spinesnatcher, for your adventurers to defeat
- A variety of potential player character races and classes, including a new race, the Illyn
- Karthun technologies to bring a new twist to the standard fantasy campaign
- An adventure template to help you build your campaigns, as well as a starter adventure: *The Black Cabinet*

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KARTHUN

LANDS OF CONFLICT



CREATION AND LEAD DESIGN
Brian Patterson

WRITING AND DEVELOPMENT
Tracy Barnett

EDITING
John Adamus and Amanda Valentine

ART
Brian Patterson

LAYOUT
Daniel Solis

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Fred Hicks

MARKETING MANAGER
Carrie Harris

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Chris Hanrahan

PROJECT MANAGER
Sean Nittner

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PUBLICATION**

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feedback@evilhathat.com
@EvilHatOfficial on Twitter
facebook.com/EvilHatProductions

in conjunction with

**EXPLODING ROGUE
STUDIOS**

www.explodingrogue.com
gamemaster@explodingrogue.com
@ExplodingRogue on Twitter
facebook.com/ExplodingRogue

**KARTHUN:
LANDS OF CONFLICT**

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Brian:

Thank you to all of the authors and illustrators who created the books, comics, and games that have inspired me since I was a kid (and a grown kid now).

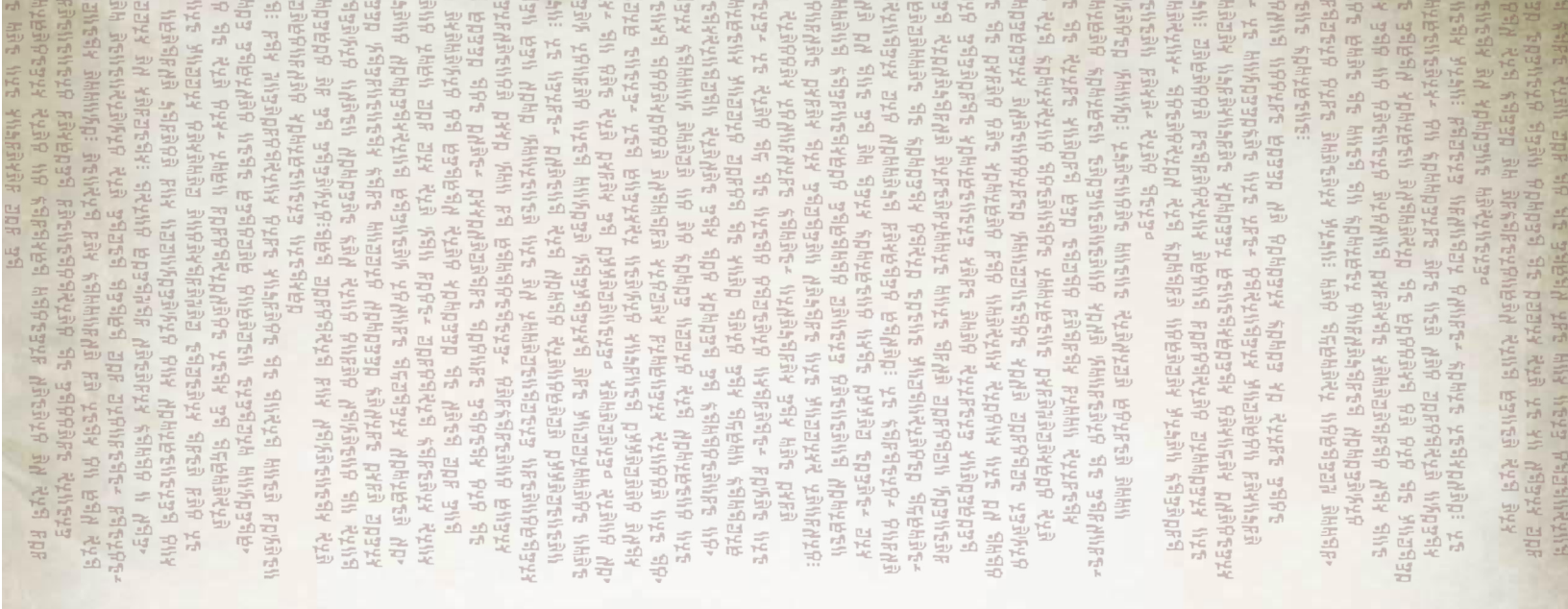
Thank you to Dave, Gary, and everyone who created D&D. Finally, thank you to the red-haired kid who invited me to play my first session of D&D when I was a lonely 10-year old. You changed my life.

Tracy:

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO KARTHUN

Karthun is a world of danger, political intrigue, and adventure where the gods walk among mortals. From monolithic cities where the gods refuse to tread, to the frozen ruins of the giants' empire, Karthun is filled with exotic locations, powerful magic, fantastic creatures, and technological marvels both benign and dangerous. Across Karthun, adventurers engage in the political turmoil of royal courts, launch expeditions into the ruins of sunken empires from floating citadels, and discover the truth of some of the world's oldest secrets. In Karthun, heroes hold court with the gods, shaping their own destiny.

Your heroes will venture into this world, traversing war-torn countries, breathtaking landscapes, and darkness beyond measure. The gods shaped Karthun and the people who worship them. Now the world is unraveling, beset by dangers from every direction. It's a dangerous time in the Lands of Conflict, and the world needs heroes.

A TIME FOR HEROES

Karthun is a world on the brink of destruction.

During the Age of Flames, powerful mages known as the World Walkers performed rituals they believed would lead to their ascension as gods. Instead, their rituals pierced the veil of Karthun's reality, allowing the Three Demon Kings to unleash the destructive force known as the Worldfire across Karthun.

The Worldfire consumed countless lives and destroyed two of Karthun's three continents. The legions of the Three Demon Kings laid siege to the final continent, killing thousands and pushing the power of the gods to their limit. In a final, desperate act, the gods harnessed the power of Karthun's sister plane of light, Kraya, to forge the Chain, saving the Last Continent from destruction and halting the movement of the Worldfire.

The ritual provided Karthun a reprieve from destruction, but in doing so, the gods sacrificed the harmonious balance between life and the afterlife of every mortal on the Last Continent. Kraya died, leaving behind a lifeless shadow of Karthun, and from between the cracks in reality, dark things



found their way from one plane to the next. The isolated sanctuary of the gods was broken.

The catastrophic loss of life and energy from Kraya's sacrifice deeply wounded Sehad the World Warden, the patron god of humanity and the shepherd of souls. With Sehad weakened, his bitter, jealous rival, Felicos the King of Rogues, seized the opportunity to murder the World Warden in a delusional attempt to prove his love to Valkyre, the goddess of valor and Sehad's lover. The betrayal of Felicos and the death of Sehad scarred an already wounded Karthun, divided the gods, and plunged humanity into an Age of Mourning. With Sehad gone and Kraya depleted, the countless souls of generations long dead lingered in Karthun, spawning innumerable undead horrors. Valkyre, once a beacon of justice and honor, withdrew deep into her own grief and sadness. Felicos, to many now the most reviled of the gods, abandoned his seat of power in Sylinn and disappeared among the people of Karthun. Now the Betrayer sows chaos wherever he goes, hiding from those who seek vengeance against him.

The Age of Mourning brought Karthun low, for the gods, reminded of their own mortality, pulled away from their patron races. Prathian turned to his studies and the dimensional interlopers attempting to breach his home in the Nexus. Elinar's failed efforts to save Sehad from his wounds sent the depleted goddess into a deep slumber, while Deknar's attention remained focused solely on maintaining the Chain. His lack of attention and leadership allowed the Three Demon Kings to corrupt the dwarves, desperate for aid in their losing war with the horrors of the Writhing Swarm; this sent the dwarves down a path to becoming the Underlords.

However, none of the gods suffered more so than Valkyre, who after many years in seclusion emerged as a dark reflection of her former self: the Mother of the Dead. Her first act as the Mother was to give birth to her son, Kyzul (fathered by Sehad before his death). Twisted and scarred in the womb by his mother's deific grief, sadness, and anger, Kyzul's birth tore the veil of reality, widening the gap between Karthun

and Kraya (now known as the Shadow) and closing all but a few of the exits from Karthun's plane of existence. The space between Karthun and the Shadow became a cold plane of dread and death. As the Mother, Valkyre assumed the role of goddess of the dead, abandoning her domains of valor and justice, claiming the Dead as her realm, and vowing to destroy any of her followers who choose to reject her new place in Karthun's pantheon.

With valor fleeting, each of the patron races struggling, and the threat of the Worldfire looming, war washed over the nations of the Last Continent, ushering in the current age—the Age of Conflict.

For three centuries, the Age of Conflict has raged across Karthun. War, distrust, and survival seed the thoughts of rulers, nobles, and commoners alike. Many great nations are beginning to crumble under the weight of war as the opportunistic wage shadow wars to grab fleeting wealth and power. Corruption spreads like a disease as demonic servants of the Three Demon Kings attack on the frontline, as well as subtly infecting the hearts and minds of those brave enough to oppose the Worldfire. In the dark corners of Karthun, ravenous undead horrors consume the flesh and souls of the living. From below the surface, ancient horrors such as the Writhing Swarm and the Blessed of the Crawl scratch and claw their way towards the surface, as the dwarven Underlords, long corrupted by the demons of the Worldfire fight a war on two fronts against the Writhing Swarm and against the nations of the surface they strive to enslave. For the dwarves there are no allies, there is only the domination of the weak.

It is a time for heroes, brave souls who will stand against forces working to enslave or destroy the nations of the Last Continent. To be a hero in Karthun is to be a legend, for even the gods perish in Karthun and all that awaits any who fall is the cold embrace of the Mother of the Dead.

The Endless

The Frozen Sea

Thulengard

Daynir

Whitemist Sea

Sea of Torment

Andorhem Forest

Tavia

Desin

Xyn

Andern

Istin

Landrin

Mirror Lake

Sylmn

Symul

Erast

Kraghorn

Traxyn

Great Wyrn Bay

Ilrenar

The Expanse

DORYAN

The Last Continent



DORYAN, THE LAST CONTINENT

Doryan, or “the Last Continent” as it’s commonly referred to, is all that remains of Karthun. It was once one of three continents—Doryan, Shoana, and Prevaul—until the arrival of the Worldfire and the armies of the Three Demon Kings resulted in the destruction of Shoana and Prevaul before the gods and heroes of Karthun halted the Worldfire’s progress with the sacrifice of Kraya. Now, the nations across Doryan and the descendants of the original refugees from Shoana and Prevaul (collectively known as the Lost) are all that remain on Karthun.

Geographically, Doryan represents a wide variety of climates and environments, ranging from rolling plains in Andern to the craggy, canyon wastes of Desin to the dense forests of Symul. However, two regions in particular stand out as examples of Karthun’s contrasting landscapes and as reminders of the once great empires lost to war and sacrifice.

To the far north, a frozen expanse of half-buried giant ruins serve as grim reminders of the former giant empire within a region known as the Endless. Countless expeditions travel to the Endless in search of what lies beyond the Dread Peaks, but few return and none have scaled the infamous mountain range. If the gods have secrets and Karthun holds mysteries, what lies beyond the Endless is one of the deepest.

To the far south, the rocky, war-scarred lands now known as Kraghorn were once held by the Dreadwing Council, Doryan’s most powerful draconic empire. The dragons of Karthun wielded great power from their fortress within Eternity Peak, but a deific war between corrupted dragons, the World Wardens, and the gods brought an end to the dragons and their followers. In the years that passed, the barren lands became the home to savage clans.

A majority of nations hold coastlines on one of Karthun’s oceanic bodies. Along the east coast, the ruins of Desin crumble as a grim reminder of the dwarves’ former nation alongside the warm ocean waters of the Whitemist Sea, so

named for its continual waves of steam created by the Worldfire. When the force of the Worldfire reached the Last Continent, Desin was the first to suffer. The Worldfire cracked and pulled massive pieces of the land into the ocean, carving massive rifts and canyons into the landscape.

To the south is the realm of Prathian’s patron race, the Elemental Lords, who serve as keepers of Istin and the few remaining dimensional leylines, and act as the rulers of the wild elementals and Djinn houses of Karthun. Istin is a land of elementals and magic with wondrous landscapes, both beautiful and dangerous.

Further south stands the nation of Landrin, one of the last bastions of valor in Karthun. Led by the embattled knights of the Last Watch, Landrin follows the teachings of the former goddess of valor, Valkyre, and wages war with followers of the Mother of the Dead and her theocracy—Erast.

Formerly the majority of the nation of Landrin and now the seat of the Mother of the Dead’s power on Karthun, Erast was founded by the Mother and her son, Kyzul, on the day of his birth. From his throne in Tenshan, the City of Tombs, Kyzul rules Erast and leads the church of the Mother in a campaign to destroy Landrin and put to rest the wild undead who haunt the Last Continent.

On the west coast, the chaotic lands of Sylmn exist in a constant state of open warfare and deep shadow wars, all to the delight of Felicos. While Sylmn or “the Kingdom of Five Thieves” is no longer his seat of power, Felicos revels in the power-hungry chaos and civil wars spreading across Sylmn. Five regions—from the warring lizardfolk clans of Diesess to the horseman cult known as the Kings of Dusk in the northern plains of Kolther—have all claimed independence and issued gestures of dominance, though no one single ruler has emerged. Along Sylmn’s coast of the Sea of Torment, several of Sylmn’s splinter nations battle the forces of the kingdom of Tavia, as well as the armies of the merfolk royal houses and other creatures from the unexplored depths of the sea.

Tavia is a training ground of master spies and assassins. It is waging wars with Sylmn and Andern while working towards grand plans to infiltrate Xyn, the lands of Prathian the Eternal Sage.

From her throne in the city of Highroost, the Queen of Whispers manages shadow games of deception, favors, and intrigue in every royal court, army, and major faction across Karthun.

From a series of small islands off the coast of Tavia, the monolithic towers of Xyn reach toward skies that roil with a vortex of godlike power. From the central tower of the Nexus, Prathian and his Archivists push the boundaries of magic and technology while safeguarding dimensional barriers from horrific beings from the beyond that attempt to breach Karthun's plane.

Along the southernmost border of the Endless, the nation of Daynir stands as the one of the oldest and most influential nations in Karthun's history. Xag, the City of Monoliths, stands as a beacon of education, technological innovation, and arcane discovery as well as housing the Grand Archive of Daynir—an archive said to contain written accounts dating back to the Age of Making, artifacts, dangerous technology, and otherworldly curiosities from across Karthun and beyond. Over time, Xag has become the home of great thinkers, mages, politicians, merchants, and those who disagree with the word of the gods. It is common knowledge that the gods refuse to enter the City of Monoliths, though no one, not even devoted followers, can say why for certain.

Off the western coast of Daynir, the island home of the Sunwalker clans of dwarves stands as the magocracy of Thulengard. From here, the dwarves of Thulengard launch campaigns against the Underlords and other threats to Karthun.

At the heart of the Last Continent are the kingdoms of Andern and Symul. Andern, often referred to as the Throne of Honor, is a land once great with chivalry and heroism, but now weary from centuries of wars with Tavia and

Sylmn, failed volunteer efforts to save Desin, and skirmishes with the ferocious elven clans of Symul. Despite this, the Iron King holds his kingdom together through strength of will and the bravery of heroes.

In Symul, three ancient elven clans, each bound to one of Karthun's three moons, embody the spirit and power of totem animals: wolf, bear, and jackal. In one of the oldest blood wars in Karthun's history, each clan battles for supremacy over the others, with each gaining and losing dominance with the waxing and waning of the moons. To Symul's neighboring nations, the forest kingdom of Symul is a beautiful and dangerous place, for the elves rarely show even the smallest hint of mercy.

Regardless of region, magic and technology play an important role in the day-to-day life of Karthun. Magic fuels communication and travel across great distances, heals the sick, and makes the creation of impossible architecture possible, such as the monoliths found in the city of Xag and scattered across Karthun and the flying city-citadels of Thulengard. Technological innovations and advancements in refinery, milling, agriculture, and science have led to the development and implementation of what some would consider fantastical machines. In every large town and city, all manner of technology can be found, including automated printing presses, firearms, advanced lightweight and durable armor, masterwork weaponry, explosives, artisan tools, and clothing that is more contemporary than classic middle ages fantasy.

Karthun is the marriage of sword and sorcery fantasy, high action science stories, and political drama, while leaving plenty of room for everything in between. Karthun's regions, people, magic, monsters, and secrets are waiting to be discovered, providing a setting for epic campaigns with high stakes and memorable moments.

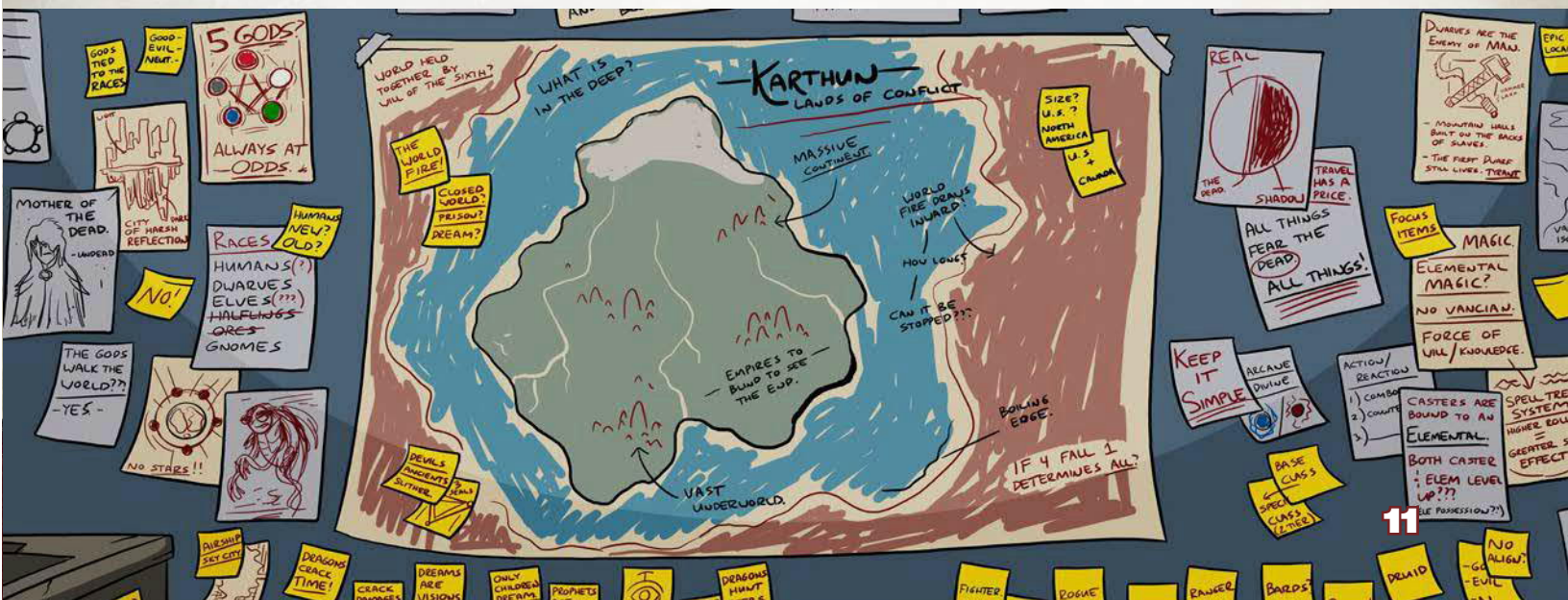
THE SECRET ORIGIN OF KARTHUN

The first ideas for Karthun (or ideas that would eventually become Karthun) formed in the summer of 1988. I was eleven years old, with about a year's worth of D&D under my belt, when I started thinking about elementals and how it would be cool if characters could merge with them. Fast-forward many years, campaigns, and systems later and we arrive at my webcomic, d20Monkey, and the first appearance of Karthun: the Lands of Conflict as Sam Tigh's homebrew setting.

Much like Sam, I was born and raised on iconic campaign settings like Greyhawk. For most of my gaming life, Greyhawk was the one setting I played in. Sure, I tried out new things, but I always drifted back to my first love, adding a few new bits and pieces mined from other settings and sources of inspiration. Eventually, I decided it was time to strike out on my own and dive into the waters of a pure homebrew campaign setting. I compiled all of the notes and ideas I could find from years' worth of campaigns and started to piece things together: the gods, the Worldfire, the magebound, the Blessed of the Crawl. Soon, the world took shape and I poured everything I had into it. When Tracy and I formed Exploding Rogue Studios, we discussed what our first big release would be and quickly agreed that it would be Karthun. I'll be honest, it's an awesome feeling to see your campaign setting coming to life and I could not have asked for a better partner in Tracy. From day one, he grabbed the design outline I made and ran with it. He poured a lot of love into Karthun and it shows. Now, thanks to our backers on Kickstarter, Karthun is a real thing, out there for everyone to play, and Exploding Rogue Studios is off the ground.

We both hope you enjoy the setting you are about to explore. Know that as of now, Karthun is *your world*. The locations, characters, factions, and history are yours to play with and make the most out of for you and your group, either by following our canon or mining ideas for your own campaign setting. Everyone will have their own version of Karthun and that's one of the best things about gaming. We plan to support Karthun with future projects, as this book only scratches the surface of the ideas we want to present. Tell us what you want to see. We're listening.

For now, thank you. Karthun awaits.



RELIGIONS

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter looks at the deific pantheon of Karthun—Deknar the Smith, Prathian the Sage, The Mother of the Dead, Elinar the Lady of Song and Beauty, Felicos the Betrayer, and Sehad (deceased). This chapter also details their domains of influence and the branches of worship within their followers. Throughout **KARTHUN: LANDS OF CONFLICT**, other beings of power are referenced, such as Maldros the Bear Lord and the Three Demon Kings. In some cases, these beings of power could rival the pantheon (and have, in the case of the Three Demon Kings) and attract their own followers or cults, but for the purposes of a hierarchy, these beings should be referenced as unofficial demigods and legends who appear godlike to the races of Karthun.

For the races of Karthun, there is one undeniable truth: the gods influence everything. From the highest clerics of each faith shaping the theological and political landscapes of nations, to the simple prayers of a farmer hopeful for a good season and the restful passing of a loved one, there is one simple, undeniable truth known across the Last Continent: the fingerprints of the gods are *everywhere*.

For those who dedicate their lives to serving as vessels for the words and power of their chosen god, spreading the doctrine and upholding their beliefs takes precedent over all responsibilities. The gods, be they kind or cruel, demand absolute faith and reverence from their followers. To be a cleric of one of the gods is to

know this: the world of Karthun is a moral sea of grey, but belief in a god must be absolute and wavering faith yields suffering.

The gods of Karthun don't exist in merely the hearts and minds of their followers or dwell on some distant plane. The gods walk among the races of Karthun and their proximity dramatically affects the faith of their followers. Knowing this, the gods don't directly intervene in every situation. Time and bitter experience has taught the gods to be more mindful of their actions as it pertains to the fate of followers and nations alike. It's clear the gods have greater foresight into the fate of Karthun, but history proves that even for the gods not everything is clearly written—the Worldfire, for example. This truth informs the faithful that, while the gods don't answer every desperate prayer for aid, they aren't above doing so, typically for specific reasons that don't present themselves for months, years, or generations.

Karthun's pantheon is small, but the five remaining gods each carry multiple areas of concern. For example, Deknar the Smith is the god of creation, cities, strength, and battle. While creation is his primary focus, it's common to find individual clerics and temples focused on one (or several) aspects of the deity's portfolio. In most cases, varying clerics and chapters share a mutual respect under their respective god's banner, although disagreements, rivalries, or outright hostility do occur (for example, the Daggers of Felicos and the Favored Coins).



FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE GODS OF KARTHUN

Despite walking among their followers on a daily basis and generations' worth of documented accounts of their actions, many mysteries and secrets still surround the gods of Karthun. Here are a few things to keep in mind about Karthun's pantheon:

- ◆ The gods can die. While they're nearly immortal, history and the death of Sehad prove that the gods can die.
- ◆ The gods are not omnipotent. They grant powers to their followers for their prayers/rituals but the gods are **not** all knowing or all seeing.
- ◆ The gods never speak of their existence before Karthun's creation. Prathian describes it as a metaphysical state of existence that the mortals of Karthun cannot perceive, while others simply do not speak of it.

Leading to ...

- ◆ All of the gods have secrets. Whether it's their true names, origins, past loves, their ultimate goals for Karthun, or why they refuse to enter the city of Xag, the gods have secrets they refuse to share.

THE GODS OF KARTHUN

The creation theory of Karthun is a stark contrast in relation to modern beliefs in that there's no doubt that the gods who chose partake were directly responsible for the creation of each of their patron races and allowed their own development and evolution to shape each race into what they are today.

In the early formative years, the gods were prevalent in the hearts and minds of the patron races, developing bonds and nurturing belief systems. The gods created races formed from primal aspects of their own personalities and psyches while skipping millennia of evolutionary development. There was no prehistoric age for Karthun. Instead, the gods created intelligent races capable of building nations with an engineered, if accidental, proclivity to worship their creators.

At the beginning of the Age of Making, six beings of power came together to combine their efforts to create a new world. Who the gods were or where they came from before the Age of Making is unknown to this day, even to the most trusted allies and followers of the pantheon. Attempts to use divination to reveal the world before the Age of Making fail and the gods refuse to speak of such times, nor will they speak of their collective refusal to enter the Xag, the City of Monoliths, or speak about the origin or nature of any of the monoliths scattered across Karthun. The origins of the gods are a question to which few know the answer.

When the gods completed their work on Karthun, they turned their attention to the creation of Kraya—the plane of light, a sister plane to Karthun, one of life and renewal. The effort required to create the plane of light would tax the gods greatly, but Sehad the World Warden lobbied for Kraya's creation, citing the need for an afterlife and a harmonious cycle for the patron races soon to inhabit Karthun. With the Harmonious Accord, life energy would pass to Kraya at the time of a mortal's death and cycle back to the creation of new life on Karthun, preventing the need for the gods to expend power for the creation of every new life.

The Age of Making ended with the six gods of the pantheon standing side by side as their patron races spread across Karthun, taking their first steps towards forming nations and centers of worship. It was a time of new beginnings in Karthun with each of the gods establishing seats of power.

Deknar watched over the dwarves as they banded together in the greatest kingdom in Karthun's history, building fantastic cities that pierced the skies.

The seeds of humanity spread by Sehad bore fruit in a human race diverse with color, build, and strengths. Sehad placed his faith in the world to shape humanity, and it did so in ways the World Warden did not imagine.

Elinar breathed life into the seasons to bring forth the Illyn, the Children of Seasons. In the Illyn, Elinar created the living embodiment of Karthun's seasons and formed a bond with her patron race deeper than any other.

Prathian, knowing the process of creating worlds and planes such as Karthun would result in the manifestation of wild, chaotic elemental energy, harnessed the power of the elements to create the Elemental Lords as watchers of these beings as well as stalwart defenders of Karthun's dimensional leylines.

Felicos, envious of the races and followers created by the other gods, created his own race in the lizardfolk, the embodiment of Felicos' cunning, pettiness, and will to survive.

Valkyre wandered Karthun, bringing the teachings of justice and valor to the patron races, while Sehad and Elinar pooled their power to create the elves, tying their power and fundamental beliefs to the three moons in Karthun's night sky.

The Age of Enlightenment formalized the worship of the gods, with temples and cathedrals appearing in every nation. The existing races grew, Prathian introduced new races to Karthun, and they all thrived under the watchful eyes of the gods. New strides in diplomacy, education, agriculture, magic, technology, and discovery

stoked the fires of every race's natural curiosity and desire to mold themselves in their god's image. Greed and a need for power pushed nations into conflict for the first time. The first threats from beyond Karthun appeared. And for the first time, mortals challenged the will and wisdom of the gods, yet Karthun continued to prosper and move forward.

Everything changed for the gods during the Age of Flames with the arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings. Passion to push the boundaries of discovery prompted the World Walkers to rebel against the gods and pierce the veil of Karthun's plane, accidentally allowing the wrath of the Worldfire to enter and nearly destroy everything. The threat of the Three Demon Kings, their armies, and the Worldfire brought the gods together again to defend Karthun alongside the nations of the Last Continent. The gods sacrificed Kraya's power to forge the Chain at the heart of Karthun, holding the Worldfire at bay and preventing Karthun's destruction. The widespread loss of life across Karthun crippled Sehad the World Warden. In that time of weakness, Felicos' jealousy for Sehad boiled over. Felicos struck Sehad down and that murder ushered in the Age of Mourning.

The gods all suffered during the Age of Mourning. Sehad was dead. Elinar nearly pushed herself to death in a failed effort to save Sehad. Deknar existed in a form of exile at the core of the world, keeping vigil over the Chain. Prathian withdrew from public view, fueling his obsessions. Felicos hid among the people of Karthun as his betrayal placed doubt in the minds of gods and mortals alike. The final blow came when Valkyre abandoned justice and valor to take up her new role as the Mother of the Dead. Sehad's followers were lost. Humanity's patron god was dead. Karthun had borne witness to war in the past, but with the loss of a god and the remaining pantheon shaken or in hiding, hostility between nations escalated to new heights.

In the Age of Conflict, the gods remain divided. Gone are the days when six deities joined together to create a world. Now five gods remain, each of them haunted and scarred by past choices, regrets, anger, and petty resentments. They answer the prayers of their followers, but their attention is diverted from the wars rampaging across the Last Continent, leaving the races of Karthun to fend for themselves for the first time since the Age of Making.



DEKNAR

The Smith, The Chain Forge, Lord of the Core

AREAS OF CONCERN: Battle, Cities, Creation, and Strength

PATRON RACE: Dwarves

HEAD OF FAITH: Dulsey Ro, The Hammer of the Smith

PRIESTS: Forgehands, Disciples of the Chain

COLORS: Rust Red and Gold

SYMBOL: Hammer wrapped in a chain

FOCUS: Hammer

“Mortals, gods, and monsters squabble over the land above while I care only for the Chain. Without the Chain, all is lost.”



According to legend, when the gods created Karthun, it was the strength, hammer, and forge of Deknar that shaped Karthun, carved the vast chasms of the Deep, pushed the mountains toward the sky, and raised entire cities for the patron races to inhabit. When his work was done, it's said the fire within his heart sparked the core of the world into life. In the

Age of Making, Deknar was first and foremost a god of creation, working side-by-side with gods and mortals alike to create architectural and technological wonders across Karthun. The Forgehands of Deknar were the first to encounter the Writhing Swarm within the Deep, beginning a war that still rages today. In the beginning, the

dwarves fought against the savage insectoids to protect the races on the surface of Karthun in the name of strength, honor, and battle.

Everything changed for Deknar and his followers when the World Walkers pierced the veil and accidentally allowed the armies of the Three Demon Kings and their plane of hellfire, the Worldfire, into Karthun's plane of existence. The Worldfire destroyed two of Karthun's continents, incinerating everything in its path. Demonic armies clashed with every nation on the Last Continent and at the heart of the battle, Deknar and his followers fought the worst General of the Three Demon Kings, working to save as many lives as possible.

When the tide of the battle against the demons turned for the worse, Deknar proposed the plan to sacrifice the life plane Kraya to forge the Chain to stop the Worldfire and save the Last Continent. Bolstered by the power siphoned from Kraya, Deknar descended into the core of Karthun with several of his most trusted Forgehands and forged the Chain, halting the movement of the Worldfire, pulling a crumbling continent back together, and driving a majority of the demons back into the fire. With the Chain forged, Deknar realized his new role in the survival of the races of Karthun. Now Deknar the Smith is the god of creation, cities, battle, physical strength, and strength of will as he exists in a self-imposed



exile within the core of Karthun, tending to the Chain that's constantly under the strain of the Worldfire. If Deknar falls, Karthun falls.

Members of Deknar's faith typically come from humble backgrounds as soldiers, blacksmiths, stonemasons, and laborers who strive to protect honor through strength of arm and character. His temples range from simple but sturdy buildings resembling smithies and workshops to large citadel monuments displaying the best in architectural design. Large temples house copies of Deknar's holy text, *The Accounting of Iron and Unbreakable Will* (typically referred to as just *The Iron*), a collection of rites, rituals, crafting techniques, and accountings of Deknar's feats of strength and will.

The two largest factions within the church of Deknar are the Forgehands and the Disciples of the Chain. The Forgehands make up the majority of Deknar's followers. Forgehands can be found across Karthun in places where creation and strength are needed to protect the weak and

powerless against oppression. Forgehands build cities and bridges, and keep the peace in lawless regions.

Disciples of the Chain are dedicated to strength and battle and can typically be found on the front lines where demons are present. The Disciples carry the burden and importance of the Chain, understanding that if evil takes hold again or if Deknar falls, the Chain will be lost.

In dress, Forgehands favor the clothing of smiths and soldiers, with personal preference in armor selection. All Forgehands wear the leather apron of blacksmiths (typically rust red in color with simple gold accents). Disciples of the Chain wear less armor than Forgehands, symbolizing their devotion to strength. Upon taking the Oath of the Chain, Disciples brand their skin with the symbols of both Deknar and the Chain. All Forgehands and Disciples of the Chain carry the favored weapon of Deknar as their holy symbol—a warhammer.

DULSEY RO, HAMMER OF THE SMITH

Over the course of ages, several Forgehands within the church of Deknar have held the title of Hammer of the Smith—the mortal leader and epitome of Deknar's beliefs and speaker of his will in times when the Smith himself is occupied. During the Age of Flames, the Hammer of the Smith perished during the fall of Honor's Hold; for generations after, Deknar refused to select a successor. A new Hammer was appointed in 705 when Deknar opened the floor of the throne room within the Iron Halls of Andern and appointed Dulsey Ro, a widow and blacksmith from the nearby town of River's Bend as his new Hammer of the Smith. Deknar returned to the Chain, and Dulsey Ro took her new role.

It's common knowledge this Hammer of the Smith is young, has never fought in a war or on any battlefield, and is the first human to be appointed to the position. In her first year as the Hammer, Dulsey Ro led several expeditions into the ruins of Honor's Hold on behalf of the Sunwalkers of Thulengard. The Hammer slew the Blackmist Juggernaut terrorizing the coast of Tavia. Dulsey Ro has proven herself to be a natural leader with an unbreakable spirit, yet many elder Forgehands still doubt and continue to politic around her. Some Forgehands and Disciples of the Chain are beginning to rally around the new Hammer of the Smith, as Deknar's choice seems far less of a mistake with every passing year.



ELINAR

The Lady of Song and Beauty, Mother of Spring, The Maiden of Light

AREAS OF CONCERN: Beauty, Art, Music, Seasons

PATRON RACE: Illyn

HEAD OF FAITH: Lady Autumn

PRIESTS: Speakers of Harmony, Servant of Season
(for example, Servant of Winter)

COLORS: White trimmed with their chosen season
(yellow for Summer, grey for Winter, deep orange
for Autumn, green for Spring)

SYMBOL: Four ornamental leaves marking the seasons

FOCUS: A petrified leaf taken from a tree in the
season the priest begins her career (this also
determines her season title)



“You judge my beauty by the scars upon my face? My child, true beauty is much deeper and resides in even the darkest of hearts.”

If Deknar honed stone and iron to create the world and Sehad planted the seed of every tree and carved every river, it was the Mother of Spring who placed the warmth of the sun in the sky, set waves to the oceans, and

breathed the first wind to trigger the changing of the seasons.

During the Age of Making, Elinar collected rain from the Spring, the warm winds of Summer, leaves from Autumn, and a perfect snowflake from Winter in the first seasons in Karthun to breathe life into her patron race: the Illyn. In her Children of Seasons, Illyn shared a bond unlike any other. In this age, Elinar’s followers gathered to her from across Karthun, constructing the



Cathedral of Harmony to celebrate the art, music, and beauty of her seat of power in Ilrenar. From her home, Elinar watched over the changing seasons, granted calm oceans, and served as a paragon of balance in all things.

In the Age of Enlightenment, the first sparks of war flared between nations and the blood of patron races spilled. Hoping to stave off any further escalation, Elinar and her followers founded the Speakers of Harmony—her most charismatic followers, trained to enter hostile situations and serve as emissaries of peace. The Speakers journeyed across Karthun, brokering peace treaties and ending disputes between nations and families alike. In this age, Elinar’s wrath was revealed after the torture and sacrifice of her Speakers at the Battle of Black Rain. Elinar’s storms and tidal waves shattered the armies of the Kranee in the Blight March. That act of vengeance sent Elinar into despair and a self-imposed exile that lasted until the Age of Flames, when destruction and losses to the Worldfire brought Elinar and her followers low. Elinar’s followers were slain by the thousands and the Mother of Spring suffered with the loss of every life.

The sadistic Generals of the Three Demon Kings

placed bounties on the heads of every Speaker of Harmony, sending the Speakers into hiding across Karthun, silencing their rallying influence on the armies battling for Karthun's survival. In their place, the Dawn Striders rose with Elinar's blessing, carrying word and supplies to vital locations across the war torn Last Continent.

The sacrifice of Kraya and the death of Sehad nearly ended Elinar, as she expended nearly all of her power in a failed attempt to save the World Warden from Felicos' betrayal. The effort left Elinar diminished; she fell into a deep slumber, spanning generations. During this time, the Speakers and Dawn Striders battled for their lives against Elinar's enemies. In time, she awoke to face the horror of her sister's transformation into the Mother of the Dead. An attempt to redeem the fallen goddess of Valor resulted in another brush with death and left Elinar with deep scars on her face. Today, she and her followers use the scars of war as a reminder of deeper beauty and perseverance in the face of tragedy.

The Speakers of Harmony and the Dawn Striders comprise the majority of Elinar's

followers. From their seat of power in the heart of Ilrenar, the Speakers of Harmony bring art, music, and harmony to every nation of the Last Continent with songs taken from their holy text, *The Fading Sonata*. For the Dawn Striders, the horizon is their passion and their holy text is *The Traveler's Tale*, a series of simple leather journals connected by Elinar's power to record and share every active Dawn Strider's entry. Traveling from dusk until dawn, blessed with Elinar's power and their enchanted steeds, the Dawn Striders maintain a strict code of neutrality in the years following the Age of Flames, delivering vital documents, items, and supplies across Karthun.

In appearance, the followers of Elinar have no restrictions, but all tend to favor a swatch of white fabric (cloaks, robes, scarves, etc.) trimmed in the color signifying their season of birth. The Dawn Striders proudly wear a uniform of rugged leather armor adorned with a white half-cloak and golden symbol of Elinar. All followers of Elinar carry her favored weapon: a short sword blessed in one of Elinar's temples.

LADY AUTUMN

Since the Age of Making, a Noble of Seasons has served as the mortal spiritual leader for the followers of Elinar. In earliest days of Karthun's history, the Noble served as a right hand to Elinar, traveling across Karthun to tend to vital negotiations and seasonal rituals. The Noble was an ambassador more than a leader of faith. This changed when Elinar fell into her slumber following the murder of Sehad, beginning a time for her followers referred to as the Long Winter. During these years, Elinar's power waned, leaving both the Speakers of Harmony and Dawn Striders vulnerable. Facing the threat of Elinar's enemies and fearful of internal strife, Peyna of Autumn chose to serve as the regent of Elinar as Lady Autumn. Taking action, she traveled alone to Landrin, home of the remaining Silver Guard paladins of Valkyre (Elinar's sister and the goddess of valor) and arranged for soldiers to come to the Cathedral of Harmony to train the followers of Elinar to defend themselves and Ilrenar from attack. The years of the Long Winter were difficult, but the church of Elinar survived thanks to the courage and determination of Lady Autumn. When the Mother of Spring awoke from her slumber, she granted Lady Autumn immortality and freedom from old age, ensuring that her most devout follower would stand by her side for many years to come.



FELICOS

The King of Rogues, Father Venom, The Betrayer

AREAS OF CONCERN: Assassination, Thievery, Cunning, Deception, Chaos

PATRON RACE: Lizardfolk

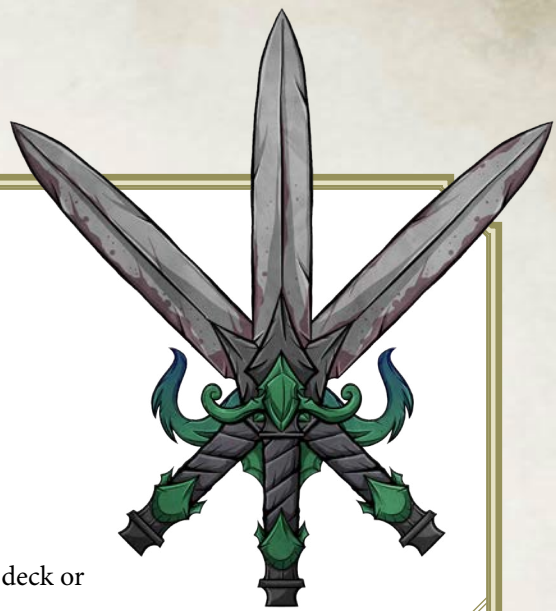
HEAD OF FAITH: Currently no fewer than 12 individuals across Karthun believe they are the First Dagger

PRIESTS: The Daggers, the Favored Coins

COLORS: None

SYMBOL: Three overlapping daggers

FOCUS: A dagger with a green leather handle (Daggers), a tarot deck or gold coin (Favored Coins)



“Never underestimate jealousy and greed. If someone wants something in the very pit of their soul, they would kill their own family to have it. They need only be shown that one thing.”

Felicos is the most confident and ambitious of all of the gods of Karthun, as well as the most troubled.

Felicos is a deity of extremes, unconditional love with contrasting hatred that perseveres for centuries. Legends say Felicos convinced Prathian to reach out to the dragons and giant races beyond Karthun for the sake of “necessary chaos” and that it was he who whispered the words that began Karthun’s first war.

In the Age of Making, Felicos watched the other gods forge a new world and populate it with their patron races.

Initially, Felicos took little interest in such pursuits, preferring that his legacy be his schemes and influence over the patron races and

the other gods of Karthun. In this age, Felicos’ attraction to Valkyre grew stronger, as did his jealousy of Sehad the World Warden. The King of Rogues believed his divine influence over shadows and chaos presaged him to join with and balance with Valkyre’s light, valor, and justice. Determined to best Sehad in Valkyre’s eyes, Felicos’ spark of jealousy prompted the creation of his own patron race: the lizardfolk. Seizing the opportunity to increase his power over the other nations of Karthun, Felicos took a direct hand in establishing a theocracy for the lizardfolk, pouring his skill, cunning, distrust, and greed into his patron race: the very first Daggers of Felicos.

The Age of Enlightenment brought wars to the nations of Karthun and a bloody shadow war to the theocracy of Sylmn, as Daggers and nobles battled for power and favor, all to the delight of the King of Rogues. Felicos reveled in the shadow war, encouraging (and often provoking) assassinations, blackmail, and espionage among his followers. During this age, word of Felicos’ Daggers reached the ears of every leader of nations, sowing distrust and paranoia. Outside of Sylmn, the first human clerics of Felicos founded the Favored Coins, focusing on Felicos’ roguish domains of luck, cunning, chance, and fate. Within a few years, the chapels of the Favored Coins spread across Karthun, welcomed into



every nation as the new public face of Felicos' faith. Meanwhile, the Daggers remained in the shadows, praising the faith of assassination and power under the gaze of Father Venom.

In Sylmn, civil wars and a second Shadow War ripped the theocracy apart as opportunistic nobles carved out their own lands. It took the arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings to bring the Shadow War to an uneasy armistice, while the gods and nations of Karthun battled for their lives against the demonic armies. Felicos watched Karthun's war with the Three Demon Kings from his seat of power in Sylmn until the opportunity to prove his love to Valkyre presented itself in a battle against one of the Three Demon Kings. The battle was won, but in the aftermath, Valkyre rejoined Sehad, now crippled by the loss of Kraya and thousands of lives. Despite Felicos' "heroism," Valkyre still chose Sehad. Felicos fell into a quiet rage for a time, turning his anger against the surviving World Walkers, but it was Valkyre's pregnancy that sent his jealousy boiling over, leading him to murder Sehad, abandon his theocracy, and go into hiding. Felicos now exists among the population of the Last Continent, leading his Daggers and followers from the shadows, hunted by the other gods, especially the Mother of the Dead (formerly Valkyre).

There are two contrasting factions within the followers of Felicos: the Daggers and the Favored Coins. Across the landscape of Karthun, small chapels known as Houses of the Lucky Coin serve as the bases of power for the Favored

Coins. Unlike the Daggers of Felicos, Favored Coins spread the virtues of luck, cunning, and fate. For the Favored Coins, quick wit and luck are all you need to overcome and outthink any difficult situation, and those situations always yield a good story or a bit of money. Felicos enjoys this congregation for their playfulness and bravado, as it reminds him of the days before jealousy and murder clouded his mind. At the other end of the spectrum are the Daggers. For the Daggers, espionage, betrayal, murder, and power are all that matter. So deep is the mystery and espionage within the Daggers that the Daggers have no proper temples, even in the former theocracy of Sylmn. Only rumor suggests the Daggers' largest base of operations is a cellar beneath the ruins of one of the haunted manors in Palefront. Within the hierarchy, Daggers fight their way up to reach the coveted spot as the Fourth, Third, Second, and First Dagger of Felicos. From the shadows, Felicos delights in the internal struggle. The Favored Coins and Daggers have clashed in recent years, each side proclaiming to uphold Felicos' true nature.

In appearance, neither the Daggers nor the Favored Coins wear distinguishing colors or apparel, as both factions favor blending in when need arises. However, the Daggers all carry ornamental daggers with green-wrapped handles as their focus of Felicos' power, while the Favored Coins carry one of the first gold coins they stole as a member of Favored Coins.

THE FIRST DAGGER OF FELICOS

Since the earliest days of the Daggers, Felicos has cultivated a doctrine of jealousy, greed, and a thirst for power among his followers. Legend says Felicos grants immortality to the First Dagger, and over the ages, the shadow wars among the Daggers have claimed hundreds of lives, leading to a revolving door of leadership and doubt. Now in the Age of Conflict, it's unclear exactly who among the Daggers is the true First Dagger. Rumors speak of an orc assassin in Kraghorn, a mute lizardfolk Dagger haunting the alleys of Palefront, a dead-eyed child in the city of Xag, and the mysterious Veiled King as the possible First Dagger. Only Felicos knows for sure, and with the King of Rogues in hiding, the war for their patron god's favor continues.



PRATHIAN

The Eternal Sage, Archmage of Karthun, Steward of Time

AREAS OF CONCERN: Magic, Time, Elementals, Law

PATRON RACE: The Elemental Lords

HEAD OF FAITH: Grand Archivist Sendrin Vrow, Steward of the Book

PRIESTS: Archivist, Sentinel of the Book

COLORS: Blue and silver

SYMBOL: A seven-pointed star



“History holds power and those who record it, wield it.”

When the six gods toiled to create Karthun, Elinar placed the sun in the sky, but Prathian placed the moons and dotted the night sky with the stars to watch over the patron races.

In the earliest age of Karthun's history, Prathian believed knowledge and innovation to be powers shared, cultivated, and pushed beyond the limits of perceived understanding. Nothing from the Eternal Sage embodied this more than his greatest gift to Karthun: magic, specifically the magebound rituals. Understanding that the act of creating a world would result in the runoff of wild, uncontrolled elemental energies, Prathian poured his power, his need for order, and his thirst for knowledge into his patron race, the Elemental Lords, to protect these elementals and watch over the dimensional leylines of Karthun.



The Age of Enlightenment brought a time of discovery for the followers of Prathian. Through the Archivists, Prathian watched over dedicated sages and magebound working to chronicle Karthun's living history while pushing the boundaries of magic and technology. A second, more militant branch of his followers formed as the Sentinels of the Book. Named for Prathian's *Infinite Codex*, the Sentinels actively pursued those using dangerous magic and forbidden rituals with the intent to bring harm to Karthun.

With his followers and patron race established, Prathian left Karthun several times to wander the planes beyond. In his travels, Prathian discovered new planes, new technology, and new races, bringing some back to Karthun (such as the gnomes) for reasons never explained. Prathian's travels created tension while he was away from Karthun during the War of Titans and believed dead or lost by many of his followers. His absence put a rift between himself and the Elemental Lords.

After brutal conflicts with the Final Council and corrupted dragons of Eternity Peak, Prathian began to withdraw from the nations of Karthun, obsessing over new rituals and schools of magic. Then the eruption of the Worldfire brought the Eternal Sage out of seclusion.

Exhausted and wounded from battle, Prathian spent fourteen days performing the ritual to siphon Kraya's power to Deknar and forge the Chain. The salvation of the Last Continent

came at a heavy cost. The ritual of the Chain left Prathian weak and scarred. Withdrawing again to the Nexus and his research, Prathian became a quiet observer while Felicos murdered Sehad, plunging humanity into chaos and Valkyre into the depths of despair.

From his citadel, Prathian studied new schools of magic and, if rumors are to be believed, succeeded in harnessing a form of Chronomancy (time magic). Alarmed by the rise of undeath across Karthun, Prathian enacted the Ash Protocol, ordering the burning of all recently dead. The Eternal Sage prepared to journey to the Dead with Elinar in an attempt to bring the former Valkyre, now the Mother of the Dead, back to the path of valor, but an assault on the dimensional portals within the Nexus pulled him away. The assault came from eldritch gods of chaos and destruction, known as the Gods of a Thousand Eyes. These gods travelled across vast planes and dimensions, making it as far as the portals within the Nexus. Now, Prathian and his followers wage a siege war and guerilla operations within the Nexus to stave off incursions or, worse, a full scale invasion. The Eternal Sage splits his time between being a battlefield general and safeguarding the practices

of magic and time in Karthun.

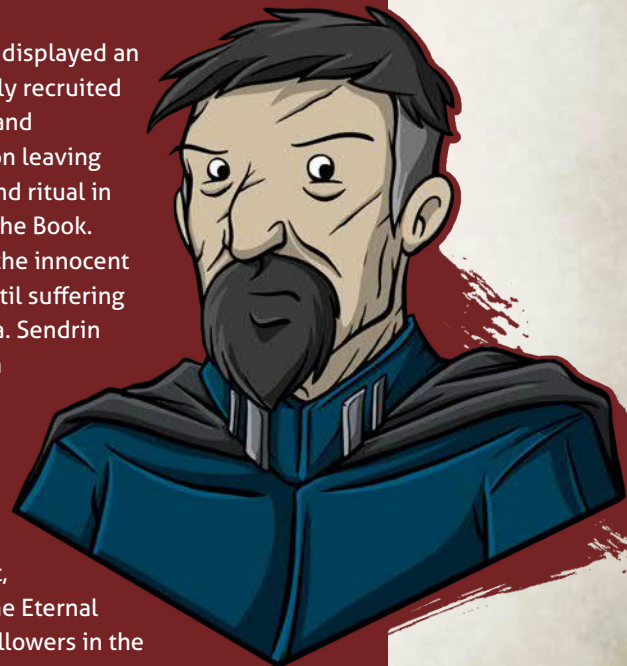
The Archivists of Prathian (typically referred to as Archivists) comprise the majority of Prathian's followers and can be found across Karthun working in Prathian's archive temples, in libraries, as local sages, and among groups of adventurers exploring known and unknown corners of the Last Continent. For Archivists, knowledge and innovation is everything, with new discoveries chronicled within the thoughtshards and tomes of knowledge of the Grand Archive in Xag. Within the Archivists, there are the Sentinels of the Book. Based out of the Nexus in Xyn, the Sentinels are the militant branch of Prathian's followers, traveling across Karthun to confront evil cabals, cults, and practitioners of evil and illicit magic, as well as protecting the dimensional veil of Karthun in the name of Prathian and his *Infinite Codex*.

Archivists tend to wear robes or clothing in tones of blue and silver emblazoned with the seven-pointed star of Prathian. Sentinels also wear tones of blue and silver, but favor a more militaristic look with light armor, cloaks, and spellbooks wrapped in heavy leather and iron banding, typically attached their belts via a chain.

GRAND ARCHIVIST SENDRIN VROW, STEWARD OF THE BOOK

The son of a merchant family from SylInn, Sendrin Vrow displayed an aptitude for arcane study at an early age and was quickly recruited into institutions of higher learning. Sendrin's teachers and family assumed that he would become magebound upon leaving university, but Sendrin turned away from the magebound ritual in favor of joining the church of Prathian as a Sentinel of the Book.

For decades, Sendrin traveled Karthun, protecting the innocent from wild, illegal magic and the enemies of Prathian until suffering nearly fatal wounds at the hands of a death cult in Tavia. Sendrin transferred to the Nexus and the war with the Gods of a Thousand Eyes as a strategist and field commander. His years facing the horrors at Karthun's door hardened Sendrin's heart and tempered his natural talents, catching the eye of fellow senior Sentinels and Prathian himself. In a surprising move, Prathian recently elevated Sendrin to the title of Grand Archivist, the first Sentinel to receive the honor. It appears that the Eternal Sage foresees the need for militant leadership of his followers in the Age of Conflict.



THE MOTHER OF THE DEAD

Widow of Valor

AREAS OF CONCERN: Death, Undead, Darkness, Prophecy

PATRON RACE: Undead

HEAD OF FAITH: Kyzul, Son of the Mother, Warden of the Dead

PRIESTS: Son/Daughter of the Dead

COLORS: Black, blue-grey

SYMBOL: A broken circle

FOCUS: A reliquary with the ashes or crushed bones of a loved one

“Who you were in life matters not, now you are here with me. You are all my children now.”



When the gods forged the world and poured themselves into the patron races, it's said that the goddess Valkyre, rather than create a patron race of her own, decided to bring honor, courage, and valor to Karthun.

During the Age of Making, she wandered the continents, delivering the teachings of valor and justice to fledgling nations. Valkyre's travels and message struck chords in the hearts of many and attracted followers from across Karthun, all of whom walked with her on a pilgrimage that bards and sages refer to as the Walk of Honor. During these years, Valkyre confronted

some of Karthun's earliest threats, such as the wild dragons and the unexplained horrors from the Deep. Her deeds attracted more followers for the Walk of Honor, and those who could not continue stepped off the trail to found temples in Valkyre's name.

The Age of Enlightenment brought a time of peace and temperance for Valkyre as she took an active role as an ambassador for peace alongside her sister, Elinar, while Valkyre's followers founded the Silver Guard in her name, standing as protectors of honor and valor across Karthun. During these years, with the discovery of Valkyre's pregnancy, love blossomed between the Knight of Karthun and Sehad the World Warden. Their happiness was short lived as the War of Wardens ignited with the Final Council at Eternity Peak, followed closely by the arrival of the Worldfire and the demon armies of the Three Demon Kings.

Years of destruction and war weighed heavily on Valkyre. Her child, a deity itself foretold to bring a new age to Karthun, was as yet unborn, leading sages and gods alike to worry for their safety. Felicos' jealousy could not be contained and the King of Rogues slew Sehad. The death of her lover and father to her child left Valkyre broken. For years she withdrew from her followers and the gods, lost in her own despair.

The Age of Mourning left humanity without both its god and the goddess of valor. With



neither Sehad nor Karthun's sister plane of life, Kraya, the recent dead remained in a form of tormented undeath, unable to pass on. In regions across Karthun, undead spread like a plague, killing thousands and taxing armies to their breaking point. Karthun and its nations had little time to recover from the undead plague when Valkyre reappeared in Landrin, a democratic nation founded in her name. Dressed in dark robes with sunken features, Valkyre murdered her eldest paladins and proclaimed the death of honor and valor in Karthun, taking her new role as the Mother of the Dead. Moments later, the Mother gave birth to her son, Kyzul.

The act of Kyzul's birth killed hundreds, brought storms over Landrin that blocked out the sun, caused the Worldfire to recede, and ripped the fabric of Karthun's reality. The Shadow, formerly Kraya, now a lifeless plane, was pushed further away from Karthun, leaving a cold, bleak space in between. The Mother claimed the dark space as the Dead, making it her new seat of power and the final resting place of the dead.

Noble and valorous Valkyre is truly gone. The Mother is a hypocritical goddess affected by a maelstrom of grief and despair so deep that many believe she is beyond hope. From her throne within the Dead, the Mother judges the souls of the dead, sending most to rest in the infinite

crypts below her chapel, while a select few are chosen to suffer, often for arbitrary reasons.

There are many aspects to the Mother's worship, from her purview over death to the sadness of loss to prophecy. Her clergy, the Children of the Dead, are treated with apprehensive caution at the best of times and outright fear in the worst. In most cases, her followers are not evil or practicing necromancers, as the Mother's hatred for necromancy and the undead created during the Age of Mourning is legendary. In the Mother's eyes, everything dies, and to cheat death for too long is to draw her ire. Within her church, the Shepherds of Rest—followers who have seen the Dead and returned—seek out and destroy the wild or unlawful undead of Karthun.

Both the Children of the Dead and the Shepherds of Rest favor dark clothing with accents of blue and grey—perhaps a small trace of the Mother's former heraldry. All followers carry a copy of the Mother's holy text *Final Account*, which is equal parts rites, rituals, and ledgers containing the names of those shown to the other side by the Mother's followers. The Mother of the Dead's holy symbol is a small reliquary containing the ashes or crushed bones of a loved one.

KYZUL, SON OF THE MOTHER, WARDEN OF THE DEAD

In the years prior to Kyzul's birth, it was prophesied that the child of Valkyre and Sehad would change Karthun forever, but prophecy has its own meaning, often not truly understood until it's too late. When the Mother of the Dead gave birth to Kyzul, the act killed thousands and ripped the plane of existence, ushering in dark times for Karthun. The god-child had died inside her womb, yet emerged, carried into a half-life by the spark of the Mother's divine anger. Although the god appears to be a pre-adolescent boy, the nations of Karthun quickly discovered that Kyzul is anything but childish or immature. Placed as the ruler of the theocracy in Erast, Kyzul rules over his mother's lands with a cold efficiency and takes a personal interest in the efforts of the Shepherds of Rest and their campaign to rid Karthun of the necromancers and wild undead created during the Age of Mourning. His interest in the campaign is fascinating to many, as he is secretly referred to as "the first undead" by his detractors, an insult aimed at his death in Valkyre's womb decades before the Age of Mourning and the death of his father, Sehad.



SEHAD (DECEASED)

The World Warden, Father of Humanity, The Arch Druid

AREAS OF CONCERN: Life, Earth, Nature, Law, Death

PATRON RACE: Humans

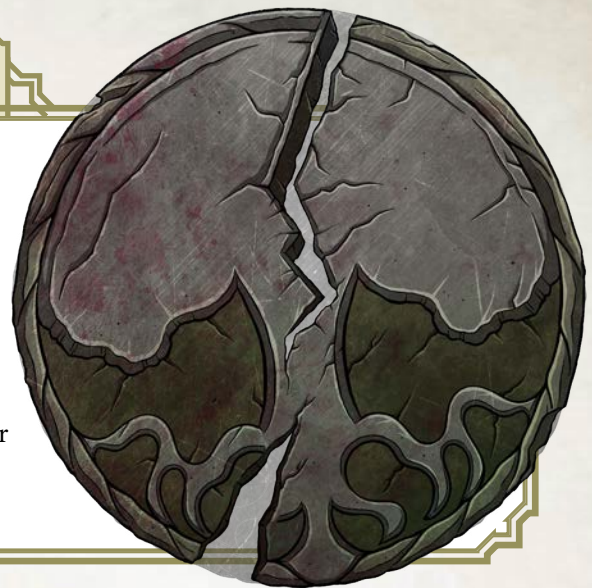
HEAD OF FAITH: Maldros the Bear Lord

PRIESTS: Wardens

COLORS: Dark brown, green, and gold

SYMBOL: A green circle with an ornamental tree in the center

FOCUS: A copper disc with green circle drawn on it



to the next, a tradition still practiced in Andorhem Forest.

Within Andorhem Forest, the wildlife, fey, and landscape all seemed to become a bit harder and colder without Sehad's presence, however arguably the biggest lasting effect of Sehad's death is humanity's loss of direction. The nations of mankind experienced war while Sehad still walked upon Karthun, but at their core, every human understood they were joined by a connection to Sehad. Evidence of this connection proved itself during the eruption of the Worldfire, when gods and mortals alike battled for Karthun's survival. Humanity stood together with the other patron races of Karthun to push back the demonic armies and, in their hearts, willingly gave their blessings for the gods to sacrifice Kraya and their afterlife. Sehad's death severed this connection, scarring humanity, and allowing petty feelings, jealousy, and war to escalate.

Without Sehad, humanity is lost and desperately trying to find its way in a world under siege from threats beyond the planes, from below the surface, and from themselves.

MALDROS THE BEAR LORD

Maldros is the current leader of the remaining Wardens and the inhabitants of Andorhem Forest. When Karthun was young, Sehad gathered the first Wardens to his side and chose several beasts to act as emissaries. Into Maldros, Sehad poured his power, his intellect, and his fierce devotion to the protection of nature and the creatures that reside within it. Maldros is a fierce champion of beasts and to those who revere nature. The betrayal and murder of Sehad at the hands of Felicos scarred Maldros deeply; as years passed, the once kind Bear Lord turned his rage inward, hardening his heart and nurturing a distrust of those who enter the wild without proper cause. Maldros stands as the last true World Warden of the old ways, having repelled countless attacks of undead horrors and assassination attempts ordered by Felicos, the King of Rogues. The war-weary Bear Lord grows increasingly untrusting of humanity, drawing his power and followers inward to the ruins of Sehad's former temple. Now, only the brave, purposeful, or foolish approach the ruins of the Shrine of the Wardens.



RACES OF KARTHUN

CHAPTER TWO

Karthun is a world of wonder, excitement, and danger. From the frozen expanse of the Endless to the punishing wastes of Kraghorn, all manner of fantastic environments exist. Upon these landscapes, the heart and soul of Karthun thrive: the races of Karthun.

Humans populate every environment like exotic flowers dotting the landscape. From the hearty tribes wandering the southern edges of the Endless to the noble families of Andern and the intellectual, almost monastic houses of Xyn, humans thrive even in an Age of Conflict. In the northern mountains of Thulengard, the Sunwalker dwarves, freed refugees from their tyrannical cousins, bask in the sunlight while studying the arcane arts. On the southern shores of Ilrenar, the Illyn serve as peacekeepers and caretakers to the beauty and music of Karthun. Cavorting through the forest realm of Symul, the elves draw power from Karthun's three moons while locked in a bloody civil war has raged for generations. Lizardfolk clans in the southern Kingdom of Five Thieves wage shadow

wars to gain power and favor from their patron god. Scattered across the Last Continent, the gnomes of the Lost wander, searching for a new home and purpose.

Within the realm of Istin, a handful of surviving Elemental Lords maintain a tedious balance among elementals, mages, and Djinn royal houses. Other humanoid races exist throughout Karthun, but in fewer numbers. Half-elves comprise the bulk of this population, loners who cannot find a home among the elven clans or human nations.

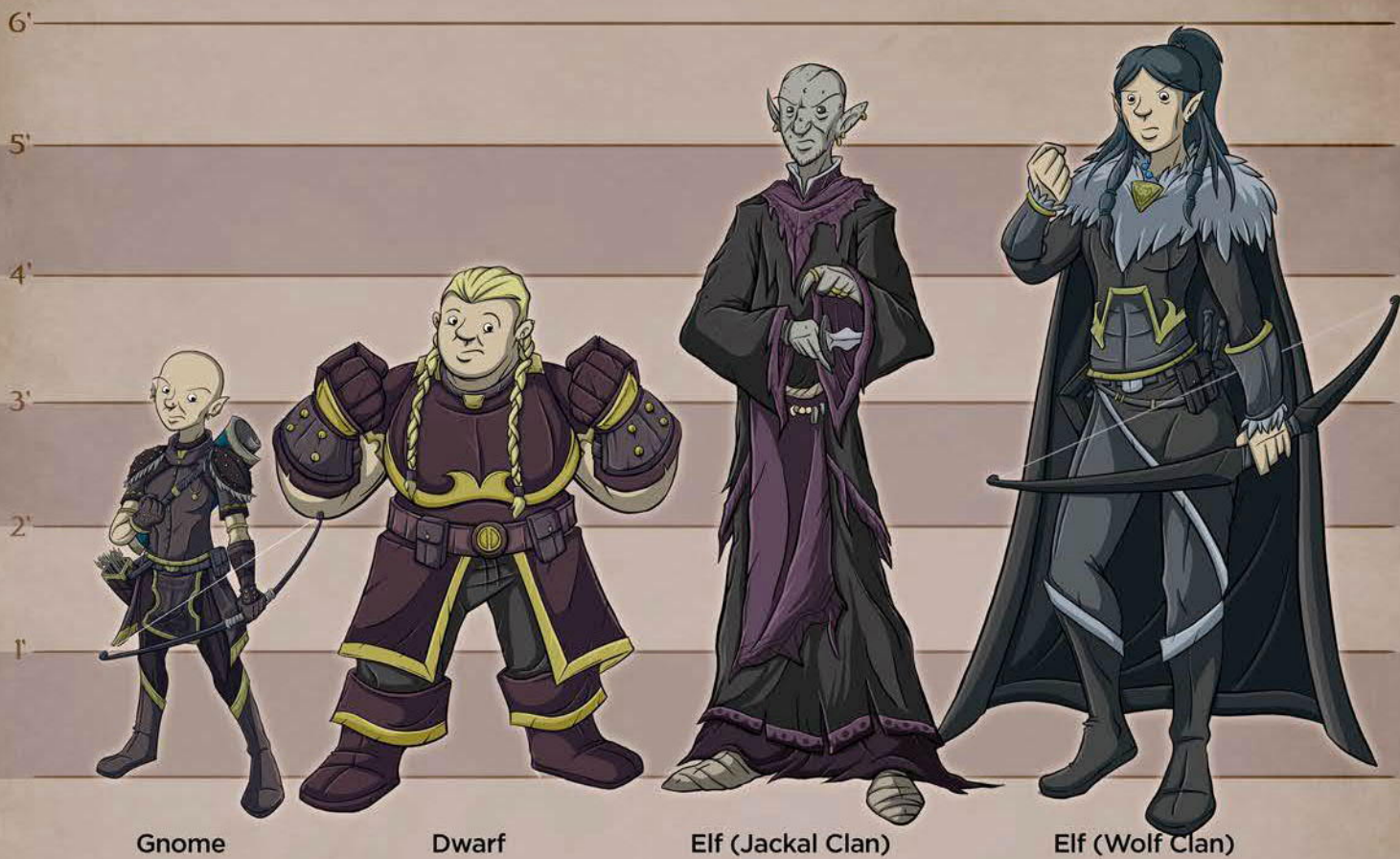
THE LOST

In ages prior to the arrival of the Worldfire, Doryan the Last Continent shared Karthun with two continents: Shoana and Prevaul. When the Worldfire erupted and consumed Shoana and Prevaul, countless lives were lost and thousands of fleeing refugees, such as the gnomes, were stranded on the Last Continent, their homes and former nations destroyed.

These refugee races wander the Last Continent and are collectively referred to as the Lost by the surviving nations.

OTHER RACES OF KARTHUN

While the core races make up the majority of the population across the Last Continent, there are many other humanoid races out there and you should feel free to include any of your favorites in your Karthun campaigns. Many races were lost to the Worldfire when it destroyed two of Karthun's three continents. In your campaigns, any new races could easily count themselves among the Lost, searching for new homes and footholds in new empires.



Gnome

Dwarf

Elf (Jackal Clan)

Elf (Wolf Clan)



Illyn

Lizardfolk

Elf (Bear Clan)

Human

DWARVES

PATRON DEITY: Deknar the Smith

LANGUAGES: Common, Dwarven, Demonic (Underlords)

CAPITAL: Two capitals are recognized—the Dread Throne, located at the heart of the Underlords' subterranean realm within the Deep, and Bastion, the capital city of the magocracy of Thulengard.

RULERS: King Brolden Vrak III, Master of the Iron Lash, Holder of the Dread Throne, ruler of the Underlords. Grand Evoker Gren Arcwell II, Queen of the Sunwalkers, the Voice of Liberation, ruler of the Thulengard

RELIGION: The Underlords have turned their back on Deknar the Smith in favor of demonic worship, while the Sunwalkers of Thulengard devote most of their faith towards Prathian the Eternal Sage. A group of Thulengard dwarves also observe the former teachings of Valkyre.

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Altha, Brella, Felysa, Gren, Jase, Luga, Sergayn, Windrid, Yagyn

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Althred, Byrne, Fransk, Gorlymn, Maydrid, Pask, Rigginn, Steld, Volrin, Zask

SAMPLE SURNAMES (SUNWALKER): Brighthome, Dreamhearth, Firehand, Nightmane, Riverlord, Swiftbeard, Truemaule

SAMPLE SURNAMES (UNDERLORDS): Bask, Graz, Helzik, Krayk, Mezsyn, Orvac, Queyd, Rygn, Tulvak, Vinsk, Xerks

NOTABLE FEATURES: Dwarves stand roughly one to two feet shorter than humans and vary in weight depending on their ancestry as either Sunwalkers or Underlords. Underlord dwarves carry dense, muscular builds while the majority of Sunwalker dwarves carry less weight and rely more heavily on dexterity. In appearance, dwarves of the Underlord realm are pale, heavily scarred by decades of battle or the lash, and bald (either by choice or by force at the hand of their slave masters). Underlord beards are long and unkempt, often stained with blood earned in combat and adorned with trophies from past victories.



The liberated dwarves of Thulengard are the direct opposite of their kin in the Deep. Sunwalkers revel in daylight, giving them healthy skin tones and lighter hair. Sunwalkers grow their hair long and adorn it with intricate braids or accents. To further separate themselves from the Underlords, all Sunwalker men shave their beards. Many Sunwalkers carry the scars from former lives under the Underlord's lash; many make efforts to tastefully cover the worst of their scars while allowing some to remain in view, as reminders of their former lives—a life that could return if the Underlords prevail in their war with the surface races of Karthun.

Dwarves are the patron race of Deknar the Smith and for generations, stretching as back to the Age of Making, the dwarves of the original empire revered and championed the name of Deknar in all things. The first, and possibly

greatest, challenge to the Emerald Throne emerged during dwarven expeditions into the Deep—specifically caverns beneath what are now the ruins and savage lands of Desin. They encountered a horror lurking in the deepest caverns—a brutish insectoid race the dwarves dubbed the Writhing Swarm. Once agitated, the Swarm seemed intent on breaching the surface of Karthun, but the noble dwarves of the Emerald Throne declared no such infestation would occur. A bloody conflict began, costing thousands of dwarven lives spanning generations.

The Age of Flames brought a crucial moment to the Emerald Throne as the outnumbered and vulnerable dwarves brought a desperate King Brolden Vrak II, a Forgesmith of Deknar, to call out to his patron god in the Emerald Throne's greatest hour of need. However, the Worldfire raged across Karthun and Deknar's attention focused on ending its destruction through maintaining the Chain. Disheartened by Deknar's silence, King Vrak fell into despair at the impending end of his people, when a new voice whispered in his ear from the darkness. One of the Three Demon Kings, Malkasesh, known as the Corruptor of the Worldfire, convinced King Vrak he needed more soldiers and should reach out to the surface races for aid. If they refused, then soldiers should be taken by force, for the "greater good." This set the desperate dwarves on a dark path. When the humans and halflings in nearby regions embroiled in the war with the demonic armies didn't respond quickly enough for aid, King Vrak and his council of Underlords ordered the collapse of settlements from below and forced survivors and refugees alike into servitude as bodies on the front line against the Writhing Swarm.

When Deknar brought his attention back to his people, sending the Hammer of the Smith before King Vrak and the Underlords to calm emotions and put his people back on the path of nobility and justice, the Underlords murdered

the Hammer of the Smith, placing his body on display as a warning to any dwarves who would openly worship Deknar. This final act pushed the dwarves away from Deknar the Smith and into a brutal, slavery-driven society prone to listening to the whispers of demons. Their war with the Writhing Swarm, the surface races, and the followers of Deknar continues to this day with neither side gaining a clear advantage and the Underlords replenishing their ranks from any race they can force into bondage. Even their own.

During the reign of King Vrak II, the Underlord society cemented itself as a place of harsh brutality and survival of the fittest. Many dwarves of scholarly clans refused to take up arms against the Writhing Swarm, calling for the dwarves to move to the surface, mend ties with the surface races, and stand united against the Writhing Swarm. Such noble families were forcibly taken into chains by the Underlords, stripped of their names and titles, and forced to fight on the front lines. One dwarf, Gren Arcwell, a secret forgermaid and matriarch of her clan held within the Dread Throne, maintained her devotion to liberty and Deknar despite endless torture. Her words and actions reached the ears of many, and when the Writhing Swarm launched a siege on the Dread Throne, an army of revolting captives freed Gren and fled to the surface. Once there, the refugees traveled to the lands of Xyn, seat of the god of magic, Prathian the Eternal Sage. Here, the nobles, scholars, and mages found sanctuary among the followers of Prathian. In time, Prathian himself used his power to assist this new society of Sunwalkers to form the magocracy of Thulengard. From Thulengard, the Sunwalkers flourished, mastering the arcane arts, pioneering new technology, and launching campaigns against the Underlords. Under the rule of Grand Evoker Gren Arcwell II, the Sunwalkers have found their place in the world and strive to make Karthun a better place for all.

ELVES

PATRON DEITIES: Elinar the Maiden of Light and Sehad the World Warden

LANGUAGES: Common, Elven

CAPITAL: The contested cities of Luun, Brokan, and Klask

RULERS: Lady Ensilva, the Mother Fang of the Wolf Clan / Lord Turik, the Granite Claw of the Bear Clan / Sysk, Pack Lord of the Jackal Clan

RELIGION: Sehad (formerly), Elinar, Felicos, the Mother of the Dead

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Ayana, Delsa, Elbayn, Festra, Jenyal, Meystra, Osllyn, Tessel, Weylm

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Anik, Calyll, Desyk, Feskrin, Illik, Jarmydr, Marsk, Pytren, Rigdin, Selryzen, Tydan, Vanzer

NOTABLE FEATURES: Elves of the three clans vary in appearance, based on their alignment with each of Karthun's three moons: Ogwan, Sheluun, and Timus. During the full phase of their respective moons (known as a moon reign), elves' strength, speed, and other characteristics heighten, augmenting their appearance. During moon reigns, the need for hunting and warlike emotions escalates with varying strength across the three clans. For the Wolf Clan, the hunts of the moon reign are ceremonial times used for cleansing of their lands and rites of passage. For the Bear Clan, their increase in strength during moon reigns is a time for contests and battle among their champions. Among the Jackal Clan, moon reigns are a time for savage debauchery filled with ritual sacrifice and brutal assaults on outlying Wolf and Bear Clan settlements.

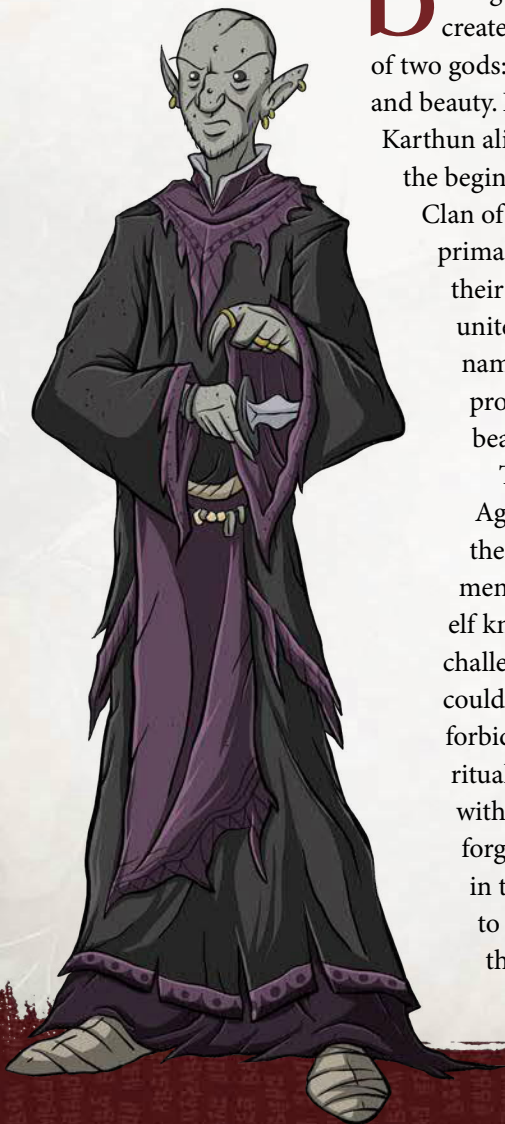


WOLF CLAN: The elves of the Wolf Clan are lean, strong, and swift. Male elves of the Wolf Clan don't grow facial hair, but all Wolves favor long hair, typically braided with threads of colors representing their houses. Wolf Clan hair color ranges from dark brown to grey/silver. During their moon reign, Wolf Clan elves increase slightly in size, their skin tone shifts color towards pale grey-blue tones, their teeth sharpen, their senses heighten, and their eyes take on a pale blue glow.

BEAR CLAN: The elves of the Bear Clan are naturally larger than elves of the Wolf and Jackal Clans. Bear Clan elves wear their hair, which ranges from deep red to dark brown, long and unkempt. The men of the Bear Clan typically wear long, unadorned facial hair.

During their moon reign, Bear Clan elves increase in strength, size, and weight, they become more resistant to physical damage, their coloring shifts towards red tones, and their eyes take on an orange glow.

JACKAL CLAN: The elves of the Jackal Clan are physically the smallest of the three elven clans with thin, almost sickly builds and sunken features. Most Jackal Clan elves appear underfed and nervous with an uneasy demeanor that's sometimes off-putting. Jackal Clan hair color ranges from dirty blonde to brown and varies in length and styles. During their moon reign, elves of the Jackal Clan develop a hunched posture, gnarled teeth, claws, and increased speed, and their eyes take on a sickening, yellow glow.



During the Age of Making, Sehad and Elinar worked together to create the only patron race derived from the combined power of two gods: the Elves. From Elinar, the elves inherited grace, strength, and beauty. From Sehad, the elves inherited a spiritual connection to Karthun aligned with her three moons: Ogwan, Sheluun, and Timus. In the beginning, Elinar and Sehad created two clans of elves: the Wolf Clan of Elinar and the Bear Clan of Sehad. The original clans were primal, fierce beings, infused with the blood, power, and grace of their animal patriarchs. For generations, the elven clans stood united, not solely in the service of their patron deities but in the name of Karthun itself. The Wolves and the Bears were fierce protectors of the land and the elven homelands of Symul were a beacon of harmonic balance, honor, and beauty.

The great divide between the elven clans began during the Age of Enlightenment, when a group of detractors challenged the leadership of the Wolf Clan. Existing under a pack mentality, many young, greedy Wolf Clan elves led by an exiled elf known as Syvel the Coward became increasingly bold in their challenge of the Wolf leadership. Syvel and his pack, realizing they couldn't defeat both the Wolf and Bear Clans alone, dabbled in forbidden magic, seeking ways to increase their power. Perverse rituals led to Syvel's pack infusing and mutating themselves with jackal blood, breaking their bond with the Wolf Clan to forge the new Jackal Clan. From his den in appropriated lands in the south of Symul, Syvel the Coward engineered events to create tension between his rivals, such as assassinating the sitting Father of Fangs, the leader of the Wolf Clan, and

framing the Bear Clan for the death. In time the truth emerged, but the seeds of war were planted between the Wolf and Bear Clans and the struggle among the three clans for control over Symul rages even now. In the Age of Conflict, the Wolf Clan has withdrawn, guarding their borders from all neighboring regions. The Bear Clan attempts to act as mediators and law keepers in the war for Symul, but remain overtaxed in their efforts. In the southern lands, the Jackal Clan continues to attack outlying settlements along their borders, reveling in the war between the elven clans. The passing phases of the moons bring each clan power; however no clan yet holds the upper hand.

THE RAVENOUS

Only the elves of Karthun channel the animalistic power linked to the three moons while maintaining their personality and free will. Such bonds are wild and uncontrollable for non-elves (half-elves struggle with the bond but maintain their sanity) and those who attempt to recreate such powers through magic are cursed with a condition referred to as the Ravenous. These wild shapechangers are dangerous and make up the population of various were-creatures (wererats, weretigers, etc.) across Karthun.





TIMUS

SHELUUN

OGWAN



GNOMES

PATRON DEITY: None

LANGUAGES: Common

CAPITAL: None

RULERS: Udo Proud, President of the Shattered Council, Holder of the Laws of Ten

RELIGIONS: Felicos, Prathian

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Avia, Ferd, Meska, Pell, Qyara

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Billo, Hark, Mel, Redd, Yurd

SAMPLE SURNAMES : Bright, Honor, Proud, Strong, Wise

NOTABLE FEATURES: The gnomes of Karthun average 4 feet in height with thin, athletic builds, slightly pointed ears, and dark, expressive eyes that radiate a faint arcane glow and give gnomes an almost alien quality. Hairstyles among male gnomes vary from any imaginable color of short, well-groomed locks to long braids, depending largely upon the popular styles of the region. Female gnomes are often completely bald or maintain very short styles. Neither male nor female gnomes grow facial hair.

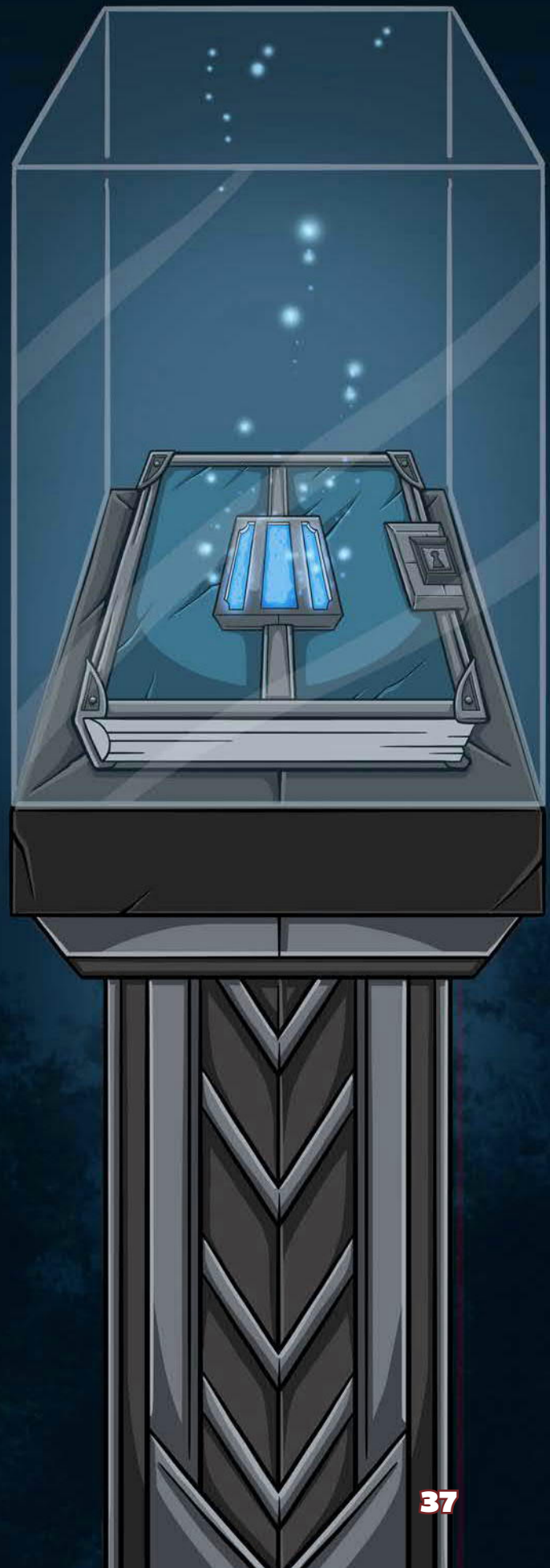


The most notable of the scattered races across Karthun referred to collectively as “the Lost” is the shattered remains of the gnome nation from Shoana. Gnomes were originally brought to Karthun during the Age of Enlightenment by Prathian during one of his multiverse pilgrimages. The gnomes’ intelligence, forward thinking, and arcane skill caught the eye of the god of magic. Legends suggest that Prathian’s pilgrimage saved the gnomes from a dying world where the gnomes’ ferocious curiosity and affinity for arcane innovation led to an unstable chain reaction within the planet’s core. Generations have passed and speculation on the fate of the gnomes’ home world continues, but the truth is known only to Prathian himself and he rarely speaks on the subject.

When the gnomes arrived on Karthun, Prathian aided in establishing a new nation for them as the keepers of crucial planar leylines centralized on the small continent of Shoana. The ruling party agreed and the gnomes quickly established the nation of New Orbellon (named for their former home world), a democracy governed by an elected President of Six Regions and a council of Senators. The nation of New Orbellon thrived on Shoana, as the gnomes proved themselves to be loyal, cunning, and ardent defenders of Karthun’s planar borders,

turning away countless threats, including the first whispers of the Three Demon Kings.

New Orbellon thrived until, despite the best efforts of the gnomes, the World Walkers—a group of powerful, ambitious mages—pierced Karthun’s planar veil and sparked the arrival of the Worldfire and the armies of the Three Demon Kings. Despite their structured society and arcane prowess, the Worldfire and the demonic forces within engulfed the continent of Shoana, destroying New Orbellon and the majority of the gnome population. The gnomes that escaped the destruction found themselves stranded as refugees on the Last Continent. Among these refugees was the sitting President of the Six Regions and two of her surviving Senators, along with the cherished *Laws of Ten*, a tome detailing the gnomes’ history since their arrival on Karthun and their intricate system of laws and social infrastructure. Many gnome mages turned to the realm of Xyn and Prathian, joining the ranks of the Sentinels of the Book, but the President and her Shattered Council would not rest until a new nation, a new home for the gnomes was established. In the years following the Age of Flames, the gnomes have struggled to regroup and move forward as a united people. The endless wars across Karthun sparked by the death of a god and centuries of rivalry have pulled the gnomes in various directions. The gnomes are lost, but some remain loyal to their former nation; the newly elected President of the Shattered Council, Udo Proud, is the best chance the gnomes have for forging a new nation and reclaiming their former status as guardians of Karthun.



HUMANS

PATRON DEITY: Sehad the World Warden

LANGUAGES: Common, dwarven, elven, regional dialects

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Elinar, Felicos, Prathian, the Mother of the Dead

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Varies by region

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Varies by region

SAMPLE SURNAMES: Varies by region

NOTABLE FEATURES: Humanity is the most diverse of Karthun's patron races. Human height ranges from as high as 7 feet to as low as 4 feet, spanning a wide range of builds, hair colors, and skin tones. Humans are resilient and adaptable, surviving in harsh environments and thriving through strength of will.



In the Age of Making, Sehad the World Warden chose humanity as his patron race. The origins of the gods prior to the creation of Karthun are the subject of mystery and wide speculation, as none of the gods speak of the time before the Age of Making. However, it's widely believed that the inspiration for humanity stemmed from Sehad's travels across the planes of reality and his interaction with beings similar to humans. Legend says Sehad, after looking upon the many environments—rolling plains, mountains, forests, cities, and coasts—created by the gods, decided that humanity should grow and develop much like exotic plant life. Legend continues that, in the Age of Making, Sehad walked the continents of Karthun, planting the seeds for humanity and allowing the world and environments to shape the people. In the years that passed, humanity emerged as products of their environments: hearty folk from the mountains, nimble people of the woodlands, and resilient people from swamps and deserts. Regional humans intermarried with ease and in the generations leading up to the Age of Enlightenment, humanity across Karthun became a diverse tapestry. In every human nation of Karthun, travelers can find humans of every skin color and ethnic descent. As Sehad intended, humanity spread across Karthun like a beautiful multi-colored vine.

Differences in humanity during the Age of Conflict begin with national traditions such as naming conventions, fashion, religious practices, and personal beliefs. Described here are examples of each of the human-centric regions across the Last Continent:

ANDERN

LANGUAGE: Andernese

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Anna, Carlyn, Elizabeth, Gretta, Lysa, Prim, Tiana, Wyndolyn

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Ander, Bartholomew, Henry, Jacob, Markayn, Robert, Terrance, Vance, William

SAMPLE FAMILY NAMES: Ashwall, Brighthome, Lakewild, Stansmore, Vash

DAYNIR

LANGUAGE: Daynese

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Byrell, Juniv, Kalas, Orsay, Seyan

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Abrast, Dekslam, Lyndros, Tyn, Volco

SAMPLE FAMILY NAMES: Andhern, Damorisk, Fectshan, Melv, Rynwell, Xanzer

ERAST

LANGUAGE: Erastian

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Allaswan, Estronde, Lymarrin, Shulwin

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Akros, Ignorian, Olvander, Rythis, Termis

SAMPLE FAMILY NAMES: Colthis, Dorian, Iconis, Volthan, Xandrius

LANDRIN

LANGUAGE: Landrinese

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Astra, Gundra, Jolma, Singrid, Tansia

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Bolgrim, Deyonad, Krig, Osten, Starn, Tallek

SAMPLE FAMILY NAMES: Dustspeaker, Lighthand, Proudhelm, Sunseeker, Veilbreaker

TAVIA

LANGUAGE: Tavian

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Androvia, Drusila, Porvontia, Quella, Vibreya

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Anthinus, Grathius, Helmis, Pavlo, Urdavian

SAMPLE FAMILY NAMES: Abrazio, Dolmenger, Fylonnus, Thrane, Waxtrovia

XYN

LANGUAGE: Xynese

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Do Shuryn, Nemock Kyn, Quel, Sarek Jun

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Damak Rin, Klein, Meillik, Turon Mar

SAMPLE FAMILY NAMES: None. Families from the nation of Xyn use individual family standards and introduce themselves as "...of Xyn"

THE TAPESTRY OF HUMANITY

Using the humans of Earth as an example, the humans of Karthun represent every ethnic background found on Earth: African, Asian, European, Native-American, Caucasian, etc. Travel to any nation and you will find every shape, color, and size of human. The humans of Karthun largely don't define themselves by race, as humanity is such a melting pot. Feel free to include any description that suits your needs when introducing human NPCs across Karthun. When human nations go to war, it's rarely over the color of skin but rather over issues such as land, political breakdowns, gold, or power.

ILLYN, CHILDREN OF SEASONS

PATRON DEITY: Elinar the Maiden of Light

LANGUAGES: Common, Illynese

CAPITAL: The city of Previan (in the theocracy of Ilrenar)

RULERS: Lady Autumn, First Speaker of Harmony of the church of Elinar

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Elinar, Felicos, Prathian, the Mother of the Dead

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Anilya, Jinsay, Penele, Tysuun, Zesha

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Brell, Darsom, Kydish, Rydel, Unsum

NOTABLE FEATURES: As the children of Elinar, the Illyn are a race tied to the seasons of Karthun. From the renewal of spring, the warmth of summer, the passing of life in autumn, and the cold end of winter, the seasons course through the Illyn's veins. For this reason, Illyn are referred to by the season in which they're born: Child of Winter, Child

of Spring, Child of Summer, and Child of Autumn. Illyn on average are the same height and build as humans with deep set eyes in colors matching their given season. All Illyn bodies are covered in ornate birthmarks like swirling patterns akin to ribbon in the wind along their arms, legs, torso, and neck. As varied as each season, each type of Illyn possesses their own sets of hair color and birthmark characteristics, as described below:

SPRING: Children of Spring typically have red hair and pale green birthmarks, to signify growth and life.

SUMMER: Children of Summer typically have blonde hair and gold birthmarks in reverence of the sun.

AUTUMN: Children of Autumn typically have brown hair and auburn birthmarks to signify the changing of seasons.

WINTER: Children of Winter typically have dark hair and blue-grey birthmarks to mark the arrival of winter.



In the Age of Making, Elinar tapped into the power of Karthun's sister plane of life, Kraya, to create her patron race in the Illyn. The use of such rituals and power gave Elinar's influence over the seasons of Karthun physical form in the Children of Seasons and created a bond between the Illyn, Elinar, and Karthun, deeper than any other patron race. The Illyn wax and wane with the mood and condition of their goddess; in return, Elinar can sense the life and deaths of every Illyn across Karthun. In Illyn dreams, Elinar provides peaceful sleep and words of wisdom in times of great need. The Illyn are truly Elinar's children and she protects her children fiercely.

Through the Illyn, Elinar possessed a way to spread the word of her faith and message of peace across Karthun through the Speakers of Harmony. The Illyn established the Speakers of Harmony in the name of their patron goddess, and the theocracy of Ilrenar emerged as a bastion of art, music, education, and enlightenment. Their mission is to travel to war-torn lands, bringing messages of peace and compromise, and, if possible, to serve as mediators in times of conflict. Ironically, since the earliest days of the Age of Making, rivalries and divisions of belief emerged between the Illyn (Winter opposing Spring, etc.); however, such differences rarely ended in open combat, until the arrival of the first of the Diminished.

The fall of Elinar's sister, Valkyre, and her rise as the Mother of the Dead greatly scarred

Karthun and even the goddess Elinar herself after a near-fatal confrontation with her sister. The sorrow of the loss of Valkyre weighed heavily on Elinar. The Mother's rise and claim to the role as the goddess of death did not improve matters in Elinar's eyes; she could not allow her children to suffer in death. To spare her children their fate within the Dead, Elinar transformed the source of Illyn power into tangible heartstones, which crystalized the hearts of each Illyn. Now, when an Illyn falls, their body passes away, leaving behind their heartstone with their essence intact and protected from passage into the realm of the dead. In the halls of Illyn settlements, grand chambers house the glowing heartstones of family ancestors.

This act enraged the Mother of the Dead and fractured a small portion of the Illyn from the whole. From her domain within the Dead, the Mother reached out to these disenchanting Illyn on the outlying edges of society who turned their backs on the Maiden of Light. They became known as the Diminished, following the path of the Mother of the Dead. Forsaking Elinar's light, Diminished heartstones dim, their color fades. Upon the death of a Diminished, their heartstone is ritualistically shattered, sending their souls to the Mother as they believe it is intended.

The arrival of the Diminished brought conflict across Ilrenar, as the Diminished slay or convert more Illyn with each passing year, bolstering their power and the will of the Mother of the Dead.



Heartstone of Spring



Heartstone of Summer



Heartstone of Autumn



Heartstone of Winter

LIZARDFOLK

PATRON DEITY: Felicos the King of Rogues

LANGUAGES: Sythax (a throaty language of hisses and clicks best pronounced by lizardfolk)

CAPITAL: Diesess in the Kingdom of Five Thieves

RULERS: None (though claimed and contested by many)

RELIGIONS: Felicos, Prathian, the Mother of the Dead

SAMPLE FEMALE NAMES: Dissa, Myzex, Reenas, Xexa

SAMPLE MALE NAMES: Classk, Hyssiks, Myss, Qidynn, Wessk

NOTABLE FEATURES: The lizardfolk of Karthun are tall and muscular, averaging 6 to 7 feet tall with heavy scaling on their shoulders, forearms, and backs. Lizardfolk scales vary in shades, typically ranging from deep green to pale blue, while explorers report sightings of white scaled tribes gathering in the frozen expanse of the Endless. Among lizardfolk tribes, scaling and the scars of battle denote social status within tribes. While a majority of lizardfolk are cunning and warlike, lizardfolk are present in all levels of society, education, politics, and trade.



It's common knowledge among the nations of Karthun that the lizardfolk are the last of the patron races created during the Age of Making. Rumors suggest an initial lack of interest from Felicos or possibly fear at the ramifications of such grand creation, but the truth behind the creation of the lizardfolk is summarized in one word: envy.

Envy pushed Felicos to pour his power into a patron race of his own. Envious of the worshippers and influence the gods garnered from the creation of their own races, Felicos looked on as Sehad the World Warden spread the seeds of humanity across Karthun. Felicos watched from the shadows as his secret love, Valkyre, turned her affections towards Sehad. Unable to profess his own feelings for Valkyre, Felicos attempted to catch her eye through the creation of his patron race. Like other gods, Felicos tapped into the power of Karthun's sister plane, Kraya, to forge an aspect of his being into physical form. When the ritual was complete, the tall, scaled, lizardfolk emerged. In the lizardfolk, Felicos poured his cunning, his distrust of others, his thirst for power, and his greed. Compared to the other patron races, the lizardfolk seemed like monsters not to be trusted. The first attempts



by lizardfolk tribes to establish relationships with other races met with cold response. The patron races were young and uneducated in such matters, a mistake many still regret. Regardless, Felicos used his influence as the god of cunning and thievery to establish a theocracy in his name and a home for his patron race, naming the region Sylmn. Soon after, the first of the Daggers of Felicos emerged and the church of the King of Rogues took shape. However, Felicos' delight in cunning shadow wars soon put the Daggers at odds, aligning only for matters of self-preservation, and it didn't take long for the Daggers and the corrupt politicians of Sylmn to fall into conflict.

Assassination, betrayal, and scheming spread across Sylmn like a virus, corrupting every life it touched. One by one, regions within Sylmn—each

led by ranking members of the Daggers or other powerful or charismatic leadership—splintered away to found their own baronies, kingdoms, etc. The history of violence continued through the ages and across countless conflicts, escalating to such a level that the fractured remains of Sylmn are now known as the Kingdom of Five Thieves.

The lizardfolk of Diesess are the largest population of lizardfolk in Karthun, shaped by years of brutal wars and assassinations as would-be leaders reach for power and favor from their patron deity. Across Karthun, lizardfolk mingle in towns, secret halls, royal courts, and among the centers of learning. The lizardfolk are cunning survivors who adapt to their environments and, through their connection to Felicos, find a way to succeed.

COSMOLOGY

CHAPTER THREE

The cosmology of Karthun is a compact, focused model of existence. In the Age of Making, the original six gods of Karthun pooled their vast power to forge the world and hang the tapestry of existence around it.

Mountains rose, forests bloomed, rivers flowed, and the sun, moon, and stars hung in the sky above. With the world forged, the gods created a sister plane of light and creation, Kraya. Through Kraya, the life of Karthun would flow, with the light of the dead passing into the plane of light, replenishing the world, and eventually returning to Karthun. The gods named this cycle the Harmonious Accord, and for centuries it served as the circle of life, death, and rebirth for the mortals of Karthun.

The gods speak little of what lies beyond, focusing their attention on Karthun and allowing the mortal nations to make their own discoveries and draw their own conclusions. Over the course of centuries, curious astronomers looked to the heavens to discover the wonders and secrets placed in the great beyond, as powerful mages took the first mortal steps into Kraya. The leaders of this movement of discovery were known as the World Walkers. Already powerful mages, the World Walkers grew curious about the planes of existence beyond Karthun and Kraya, and it eventually bloomed into an obsession. This obsession boiled over into recklessness, and a series of dangerous rituals changed the course of Karthun forever. The World Walkers reached out in an attempt to walk the planes as Prathian the Eternal Sage had so many times, but the rituals pierced Karthun's planar veil, allowing the

Worldfire of the Three Demon Kings to erupt across the world.

The arrival of the Worldfire halted the drive for discovery as the surviving nations of the Last Continent fought for survival. In the Age of Flames, Karthun shared its planar borders with the Worldfire and Kraya, with the Worldfire nearly occupying all of Karthun's space. In an act of desperation, the gods and heroes of Karthun sacrificed the power of Kraya to forge the Chain at the core of the world and halt the progress of the Worldfire. In the aftermath, Kraya, once the plane of light, withered into a shadow of its former self. Nearly all life abandoned the plane now known as the Shadow. The sacrificial ritual left the Shadow cracked and dangerous, as the eyes of horrors from beyond seeped between planar cracks.

The rise of the Mother of the Dead and the birth of her demigod son, Kyzul, fractured the already weakened planar tapestry once again. Under the strain of the dark powers created in the act, the Worldfire receded further from the Last Continent and Karthun and the Shadow were pushed farther apart, destroying the last remnants of the Harmonious Accord and creating a cold, lifeless schism—now known as the Dead—between the planes.

Now in the Age of Conflict, the weakness in the planar veil allows horrors from beyond a chance to enter Karthun. The Shadow sits away from Karthun, a hollow shell of its former self. The cold space of the Dead now serves as the domain of the Mother of the Dead.

KARTHUN

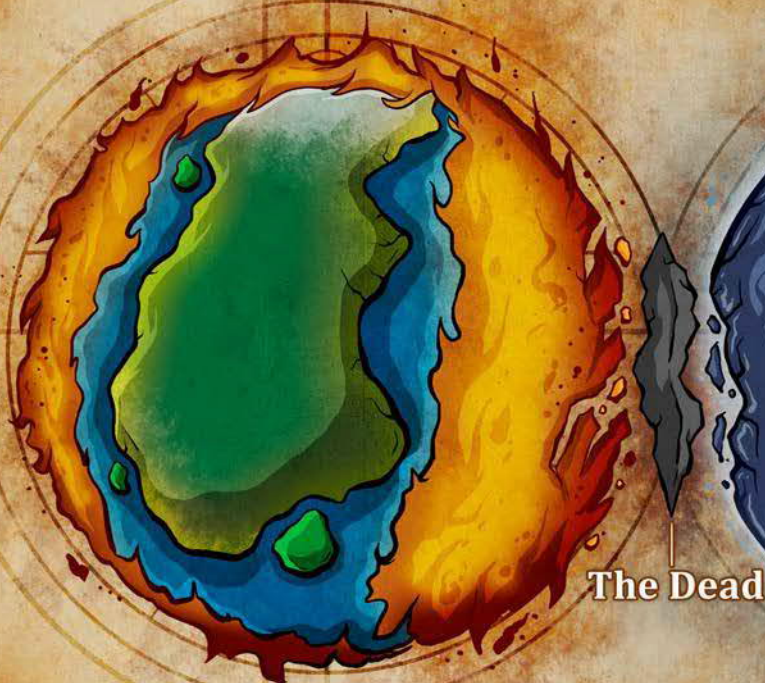
Karthun is the world of mortals and gods, the world where everything happens and anything is possible. When the gods created Karthun in the Age of Making, Deknar the Smith and Prathian the Eternal Sage took great care to design joined planes of existence and a world that is self-sufficient and carefully contained.

Looking into the sky, it's clear that Karthun is a world that orbits around a powerful yellow star and is itself orbited by three small moons: Ogwan, Sheluun, and Timus.

For many, Karthun is the center of existence and, based on the information gathered by astronomers, Karthun is the only known world. On clear evenings, stars and the moons hang in the sky, but as of the Age of Conflict no other worlds are visible through an astronomer's telescope. The void of space is a great mystery to the nations of Karthun and several pioneering sages approach the boundaries of technology and arcane capabilities for mortals to take their first steps towards exploring what awaits them in the stars above.

DEMIPLANES OF KARTHUN

As a whole, Karthun exists within four planes: Karthun, the Shadow, the Dead, and the Worldfire. The scarcity of gates leading away from Karthun's four plane existence pushed mages (and the gods) to make extensive use of planar rituals to create and maintain one of the most prized commodities in the Lands of Conflict: demiplanes. These small pocket dimensions exist within the cracks between realities and serve as secret lairs, treasure hordes, libraries, and laboratories for the wealthy and powerful. The Cinderhaunt, the fire-wreathed fortress of the mage Qesh'Nax, is an example of a demiplane. However, with the cracked planar veil of Karthun, demiplanes can be dangerous, unstable locales. Entire demiplanes collapse, with the fate of their contents unknown. Sages speculate the demiplanes appear elsewhere, join other demiplanes, or simply disappear from existence.



Karthun

The Dead



The Shadow

KRAYA THE SHADOW

Once known as Kraya, the plane of light, Karthun's sister plane served as the afterlife for mortals passing into death. In the Age of Making, each of the gods divided Kraya equally to create their ideal afterlife for their followers. There were the lush forests and rolling plains created by Sehad and Elinar, and the field of valorous battle of Valkyre. The halls of an endless library, filled with the sounds of lively scholarly debates, greeted followers of Prathian, alongside the great feast hall of Deknar. For the followers of Felicos, dim, smoky chambers filled with comfortable chairs, fine spirits, and games of chance awaited the faithful. Even for the more cynical gods such as Felicos, death and the afterlife was a place of peace and temporary rest. Death was not permanent, only a temporary way station. After an undisclosed number of years in Kraya, the life essence of the dead would cycle back to Karthun, bringing new life and rejuvenation. The gods established Harmonious Accord, replenishing Karthun while giving mortals the peace of mind knowing that their deaths, while ending their lives, would ultimately benefit all. In the ages of Harmonious Accord, the gods allowed their followers to raise the dead, though the rituals to do so were guarded and costly to perform. Despite their power and influence, the gods didn't dictate fate or life and death among mortals. If the lives of valiant heroes—and, for the sake of neutrality, horrific villains—could be returned before Harmonic Accord, so be it. Unfortunately, such balance did not last indefinitely. The ritual to forge the Chain sacrificed countless souls and depleted nearly all of Kraya's power.

Now in the Age of Conflict, the Shadow is a grim reminder of the sacrifices made to forge the Chain and halt the Worldfire. Once a plane of life and renewal with rolling plains and godlike structures where the dead passed to rejuvenate the Harmonious Accord, the Shadow is now a shell of its former self. Lush fields are barren plains filled with the fragile, ashen statues of the souls sacrificed to forge the Chain. The magnificent forests created by Sehad and Elinar withered, now haunted places where mortal travelers to the Shadow fear to tread. The never-ending libraries raised by Prathian are empty, mournful ruins haunted by beings that creep amid the shadows. The feast halls of Deknar, once rowdy, joyous places are dim and silent. In the lounges of Felicos, much of the comfort and excess faded away; however, many of the Betrayer's faithful make pilgrimages to these halls within the Shadow to prove their worth and search for forgotten treasure hordes—it's rumored Felicos hides his grand horde within the Shadow.

The Shadow is broken and the cracks in the planar veil allow horrors from unknown places to pierce the sorrowful ruins of this once beautiful plane. Explorers brave enough to cross over into the Shadow report strange, almost alien structures dotting the landscape and harrowing encounters with horrific beasts previously unrecorded in Karthun's history. The rewards found within the Shadow equal the risk, as strange new forms of technology, treasures, and untested arcane rituals find their way back to Karthun in the packs of those daring enough to make the journey.

THE DEAD

Created by the birth of the demigod Kyzul, the cold, harsh plane of the Dead is the domain of the Mother of the Dead. Smaller than Karthun and the Shadow, the Dead is a tear in reality wedged between the sibling planes. Across the desolate landscape of the Dead, light struggles to shine and warmth is all but impossible to sustain. Cold winds blow constantly as dark storm clouds swirl overhead, obscuring all view of any sky or plane that exists beyond. The horizon gives way to dark mists, existing in an absence of light as the ground below seems to fade away, consumed by the darkness.

Few structures stand within the Dead, but the largest by far is the home of the Mother of the Dead: the Final Chapel. A tall fortress adorned with spires and battlements, the souls of the dead march slowly into the main gates and directly into the judging chambers of the Mother of the Dead. Few judgments are handed down, as the procession of the dead march downward into the seemingly infinite crypts beneath the Final Chapel. Within the crypts, the Mother's "children" stand in chambers slightly larger than coffins for eternity, each new arrival bolstering the power of the Mother of the Dead and her servants.

On occasion, the Mother removes souls from the procession and hands down judgments. Despite succumbing to sorrow and darkness, the Mother still holds aspects of her former self in regard. For example, the souls of those who would do deliberate harm to expectant mothers or children face an eternity of pain and torment.

While the Mother holds dominion over the dead, conflict still rages within her domain as powerful emissaries of the gods often travel into the Dead to retrieve or save as many souls as possible from an eternity of unrest. Souls saved in such a way either make their way back to Karthun (via rituals that raise the dead) or to the Shadow and Harmonious Accord. The gods work to sustain a flow of life back to the Shadow in the hopes of returning Kraya to its former glory; however, such acts infuriate the Mother and open warfare along the infinite procession

is commonplace. The Mother believes she is the only god capable of caring for the dead and interfering with her task draws her wrath upon emissaries unfortunate enough to be captured—they are doomed to torture, death, and rebirth as one of the Mother's unholy abominations.

Death is no longer a peaceful reward for the mortals of Karthun. It is feared.



THE WORLDFIRE

Standing on the eastern coastline of the Last Continent, on a clear evening the Worldfire is visible along the horizon. A near endless wall of raging flames and boiling ocean water, the Worldfire covers three-quarters of Karthun's surface with flames, smoke, and ash stretching upward into the skies, darkening everything for miles. Explorers, sages, and sea captains brave enough to approach the boiling edge describe a wall of writhing flames held back by a translucent, metaphysical chain. Within the flames, dotted silhouettes of demonic shapes push against the flames and chain, straining and snapping links, only to see newly forged links emerge. It seems the Worldfire could burst at any moment. This is true.

Despite its appearance and destructive capabilities, the Worldfire itself is a plane of existence fighting to devour and absorb Karthun's plane, and then, presumably, the Shadow and the Dead, respectively. The home of the demonic legions of the Three Demon Kings, the Worldfire's arrival in Karthun was an accident spurred on by the whispers of the Demon Kings.

From outside of Karthun's planar veil, the Kings whispered in the ears of the ambitious World Walkers, hoping their power and influence would allow portals to be opened, giving the demonic legions their opportunity for conquest. However, the Three Demon Kings received more than they expected when the World Walker ritual ripped the planar veil. The plane of the demons tore as well, spilling into Karthun like water from a torn wineskin. Both planes are damaged and now exist in a forced overlapping state. Neither plane will heal in their current states and both sides deal with incursions and interlopers.

Stories from the gods and explorers who have seen the realm of the demons describe unusually beautiful, fiery landscapes dotted with impossibly tall mountain ranges and steaming rivers. The skies above are in a sort of perpetual dusk, in hues of red and purple. Alongside and within the mountains, incredible fortresses and settlements rise towards the skies, much like the monolithic structures across Karthun.

From their seat of power within the city fortress of Kalim'Dur, the Three Demon Kings—Drazok Mortalrazer, Malkasesh the Corruptor, and Givile Shun—rule over the demons of the Worldfire with iron fists. Each King oversees one of three regions, each governed on a day-to-day basis by small councils of arbiters known as Horned Masters.

Among the Three Demon Kings, Drazok Mortalrazer is the tip of the spear in the campaign to break the Chain and continue the destruction of Karthun. This effort is his obsession and has led the General of the demonic legions to clash with the gods several times. His most recent sortie saw him sustain grave wounds at the hands of Felicos and Valkyre (now the Mother of the Dead). His defeat created a temporary upheaval among his subordinates and only recently did the Three Demon Kings weed out the final dissenters.

For Malkasesh, his games and plans with the mortals of Karthun take years to come to fruition. A master tactician, Malkasesh currently oversees the forces engaged with the outsiders attempting to breach the Worldfire. Arriving shortly after the Ritual of the Chain, an army of strange humanoid constructs known as the Call laid siege to several fortresses, decimating thousands of demons and drawing the Demon King's attention away from Karthun for the moment.

The third of the Three Demon Kings, Givile Shun sits on the Deepflame Throne. For unknown years, the Demons Kings have rotated their time upon the Deepflame Throne, allowing the sitting King's vote to break ties in all matters. Currently, King Shun (a brilliant arcane practitioner) devotes a majority of his time to rituals and artifacts from beyond that could separate Karthun and the Worldfire. Shun is no fool and understands that both planes cannot exist in a shared space indefinitely. Even if Drazok's campaign to break the Chain succeeds, there's little chance that the Worldfire would be undamaged. For now, Shun tends to his studies and gives aid to the remaining Kings when needed.

LET ME TELL YOU A STORY...

MY GODDESS
ELINAR'S MUSIC
AND ETERNAL BEAUTY.

THERE ARE FIVE GODS
IN KARTHUN BUT WHEN
THE WORLD WAS NEW
THERE STOOD SIX.

IT IS UNCLEAR WHERE
THE SIX ARE FROM
THOUGH THERE ARE
MANY THEORIES.

TOGETHER THE SIX CREATED
KARTHUN, EACH OFFERING A
PIECE OF THEMSELVES IN IT'S
CREATION.

THE MAGIC AND
WONDER OF PRATHIAN,
THE ETERNAL SAGE.

THE CUNNING AND
CHAOS OF FELICOS,
THE KING OF ROGUES.

THE INSPIRATION OF
DEKNAR, THE SMITH.

THE SPARK OF
LIFE AND WILL TO
SURVIVE FROM SEHAD,
THE WORLD WARDEN.

AND THE COURAGE AND
HONOR OF VALKYRE,
KNIGHT OF KARTHUN.

SEHAD AND
VALKYRE...



BUT JEALOUSY IT
SEEMS, TOUCHES
THE GODS AS WELL.

FELICOS
MURDERED
SEHAD.

IN THIS AGE, LOVE
GREW BETWEEN SEHAD
AND VALKYRE AND A
CHILD WAS CONCEIVED.

THE LOSS OF HER
LOVE SENT VALKYRE
INTO THE LOWEST
PIT OF DESPAIR.



DESPAIR THAT
TWISTED HER VERY
BEING AND THAT OF
THE CHILD INSIDE.

VALKYRE BIRTHED
KYZUL, THE
FIRST UNDEAD

THE ACT TORE
REALITY, CREATING
THE SHADOW

IT SHATTERED VALKYRE.
SHE ABANDONED VALOR,
TAKING THE NEW MONIKER
"MOTHER OF THE DEAD"

AND THE DEAD, THE
COLD DARK BETWEEN.

SHE TOOK THE DEAD
AS HER NEW REALM
AND PLACED KYZUL
AS THE HEAD OF HER
NEW FAITH.

SHE HARVESTS SOULS
WHO PASS BEYOND,
CREATING MORE UNDEAD.

UNDERSTAND WHAT
IS BEING ASKED.

THEY FEAR
IT.

IN KARTHUN,
PEOPLE DO NOT
ACCEPT DEATH.



VERY FEW RETURN FROM
THE DEAD AND THOSE WHO
DO ARE CHANGED FOREVER.



KARTHUN'S HISTORY

CHAPTER FOUR

AGE OF MAKING, PRE-HISTORY, DATE UNKNOWN

From the Beyond, six gods align, agreeing to push the limits of their power to create the world of Karthun. Through deific rituals and inspiration, the gods bend their power towards forging the world.

The world is infused with the power and characteristics of each of the gods. Deknar uses his hammer, forge, and strength to form and shape the rock, fire, and stone of the world itself, stoking the heart of the world's core, and pushed grand mountain ranges towards the sky. Sehad carves mighty rivers and plants the seeds of every forest on Karthun beginning with the First Tree. Elinar hangs the sun in the sky, sets waves to the oceans, and brings seasons to Karthun. Prathian places the moons in the sky, hangs the stars, and infuses the world with magic. Felicos and Valkyre establish an accord to balance law and chaos across Karthun, bringing both light and darkness.

With the completion of Karthun, the gods pool their power to create a sister plane of existence, Kraya, a place of light and rebirth, to establish the Harmonious Accord: a balance between the passing of the living into the plane of light, replenishing the life, power, and people of Karthun. Sehad takes the role of shepherd, ushering the souls of the fallen to Kraya.

With the world and plane of light in place, Prathian reaches outward across the planes, bringing all manner of creatures to populate the world of Karthun. The giants and the dragons

are among the most intelligent and powerful to arrive on Karthun. Both races quickly establish empires across Karthun and reach accords with the gods.

Deknar is the first to create a patron race: dwarves.

Soon after, the other gods create their patron races that embody aspects of each of the gods. Humans, elves, Illyn, Elemental Lords, and lizardfolk migrate across Karthun and establish their fledgling nations. The patron races establish churches to their gods.

–3057 (Years before the Age of Flames) Prathian works with his Elemental Lords to create the **BINDER'S CODIX**, a series of tomes documenting the rituals and procedures needed to create the magebound. Prathian sends his Archivists to nations of each of the patron races, giving magic to the races of Karthun, and sends his Elemental Lords to establish bases of power at key dimensional ley lines across Karthun (the largest known today is Istin on the Last Continent).

–3055 The dwarves establish the first and possibly greatest kingdom in Karthun's history: the Emerald Throne, covering most of the western side of Doryan. Under the rule of Queen Brolem I and her heirs, the dwarves explore the wild, establish treaties to strengthen the civilizations of other patron races (humans and elves), and pioneer technological advancements.

BEYOND KARTHUN

Karthun was designed to be a plane upon itself. To use old school gaming terminology, for many ages, Karthun existed as a "closed world," locked away from other planes and the multiverse. Now, in the Age of Conflict, Karthun's planar veil is severely cracked and, while stable avenues (portals) away from Karthun are scarce and protected, it's absolutely possible to leave Karthun or allow visitors from beyond to discover the Lands of Conflict. As mentioned several times in this book, Karthun is now your world to play with, either as a stable campaign or as a stopping point on your campaign across the planes.

–**3050** Elder Shamans of the Longmane giant clan in the north use the ancestral rituals of their native plane to bind with Karthun, increasing their power tenfold. Using this newfound power, the Longmane clan establishes itself as the most dominant giant clan. The first of the Icestone Citadels are constructed. All but a few of the northern human tribes are driven south.

The dragons of the Dreadwing Council in Prevaul receive the prophetic vision of a dragon seer named Moonwing. Moonwing speaks of a mountain in the southern ranges of Doryan (the continent now known as the Last Continent) holding great power. The Dreadwing Council sends an envoy to claim the region for the dragons, naming the mountain Eternity Peak. Within the mountain, the dragons discover dimensional ley lines and perform dark rites to harness the power of realms beyond.

–**3030** After a generation of wandering the lands of Doryan, humanity begins to set its roots in their first nation: Mastern, the Divine Plains. Ruled from the monolith city of Xag by the fair and just hand of King Domarick Waryn, Mastern thrives under the watchful eye of Sehad. The people of Mastern raise great cities across the land, master agriculture and industrial pursuits, and study the ways of magic. Mastern welcomes all races, developing deep ties to the dwarven nation of Desin. From Mastern, humanity continues to explore Doryan.

–**3031** Prathian and his Archivists arrive in the city of Xag and seal one of the largest, seemingly unused buildings in the heart of the city, and leave. The building is never opened again and none of the gods return to Xag.

From her seat of power in Ilrenar, Elinar dispatches the first of the Ilyn Speakers of Harmony to travel across Karthun, spreading Elinar's message of peace. The Speakers are welcomed (or tolerated) in all of Karthun's nations and quickly become renowned for their roles as ambassadors and moderators of disputes. Elinar and her Children of Seasons keep a watchful eye towards the dragons of Eternity Peak with the aid of Elinar's sister, Valkyre, and the first paladins of her Silver Guard.

–**3020** Valkyre the Knight of Karthun begins her pilgrimage across Karthun. Her message of honor and acts of valor attracts followers. The Walk of Honor lasts for decades.

–**3010** Felicos the King of Rogues establishes the southern coastal theocracy of Sylnn. From his Veiled Throne, Felicos fortifies his borders with his patron race, the lizardfolk, and his followers from across Karthun. Sylnn establishes an accord with the Dreadwing Council of Eternity Peak and dispatches spies to every nation on Doryan. An air of distrust blows across Sylnn.

AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

- 3000** The Archivists of Prathian declare the Age of Making at an end, beginning the Age of Enlightenment: a time of discovery for the races of Karthun, as the rulers of nations stand united. With the patron races stabilized and thriving, Karthun prospers with advancements in philosophy, technology, and arcane discovery.
- 2996** Unable to bear children, a shaman clan mother of the giants (her name lost to history) swears an oath to Karthun and forms an infant from stone to share the strength of the giants and the resiliency of the world itself. Her child is the first kundrok; over the years, the Ritual of the Kundrok spreads among the giant tribes.
- 2995** The first elven house, House Clynis, establishes order among the elves and establishes the nation of Symul in the wooded plains of central Doryan. Under the banner of House Clynis and their first Patriarch, Hezran Clynis, the elves thrive, studying the teachings of Sehad and Elinar while pushing the boundaries of their power drawn from the land and moons circling Karthun.
- 2990** Sehad the World Warden and Valkyre the Knight of Karthun clash with Deathfang (the oldest male red dragon of Karthun at the time) after he attacks the monolith city of Xag. Deathfang is slain. The Dreadwing Council disavows Deathfang and his actions, labeling him a mad traitor. His actual motives for the attack are unknown.
- 2987** Goblin tribes from the southeastern coast (unseen until now), band together under the standard of a cunning chieftain named "Blackeyes" and attack the southernmost tip of the dwarven nation, costing the dwarves thousands of lives. The dwarves not slain or escaped are taken as slaves. Blackeyes declares the land his, naming it the Blight March.
- 2986** A prepared dwarven army led by Queen Brolem's eldest son, Varden Brolem, marches on the goblin occupation of the Blight March and is again decimated. Survivors describe the goblin's use of dark, otherworldly magic. Varden Brolem is sacrificed to dark powers on the battlefield.
- 2987** A final assault against the goblins, this time led by Queen Brolem directly (with the aid of elves of the Wolf Clan of Symul), breaks the goblins defenses in the Blight March. Blackeyes is slain and the surviving goblins scatter across Karthun. Idols to unknown beings are discovered in the goblin strongholds.
- 2984** After years in near-total seclusion, Queen Brolem dies. Her eldest daughter, Tergun Brolem, takes the throne. Rumors claim Queen Brolem died due to a wasting curse received at the Battle of Blight March.
- 2980** Accepted by very few giant clans due to their "small" stature, the kundrok serve their giant cousins as common laborers and slaves.
- 2979** Prathian departs Karthun again to travel the planes beyond. Prathian's archivists remain behind to oversee Xyn and his interests.
- 2978** The elves of the Bear Clan in Symul encounter the Dreadoak, a gargantuan rotting tree grown around an onyx monolith. Countless vampiric humanoids emerge from the roots of the tree, clashing with the elven druids. A few escape to return with more elves and Wardens of Sehad, only to discover the Dreadoak and the vampires disappeared.
- 2977** King Domarick of Mastern dies. With no heirs to take the throne, Mastern elects three representatives to the newly formed Governor's Accord. Each Governor takes responsibility for one of three regions making up the entirety of Mastern.

- 2671** Yaz'ar (the most powerful Elemental Lord of fire in Istin) and his followers take control of Istin by force.
- 2667** Halfling explorers for Shoana led by Captain Duro Windstride arrive on the eastern shores of the Emerald Throne in Desin.
- 2965** Deceit amongst the politicians and the Dagggers of Felicos leads to a series of assassinations and skirmishes splintering Sylmn into three independent regions: Diesess, Coldmount, and Palefront (the original seat of power of Felicos). Curiously, Felicos does little to prevent the splintering of Sylmn.
- 2960** Prathian returns to Karthun from his travels.
- 2930** The first of the Ravenous (cursed shapechangers) appear on Karthun. Legend says the first were created by rituals involving animal sacrifice and other unsavory acts.
- 2824** The ruling Governor of Northern Mastern, Governor Lurn, orders the construction of the Last Line, a colossal wall surrounding the city of Xag.
- 2823** Solum Dusk, the first true necromancer of Karthun, performs a unique ritual to bind himself to the restless spirit of the dragon Deathfang.
- 2818** The Last Line is completed around the city of Xag. Governor Lurn dies under mysterious circumstances.
- 2750** The first orcs of Karthun appear in the service of the Dreadwing Council dragons of Eternity Peak. Rumors suggest the Dreadwing Council brought the orcs to Karthun from another plane.
- 2535** Captain Duro Windstride departs Doryan to explore reports of uncharted islands to the far south of Karthun. Captain Windstride and his crew are never seen again.
- 2480** Sehad forms the Oaken Council in Andorhem Forest to preserve balance among the wild fey of Karthun.
- 2420** After years of servitude, the power hungry orcs of Eternity Peak, led by General Gram of the Warhowl Clan, turn on the Dreadwing Council, sparking the bloody Battle for Eternity. Both sides suffer losses but the orcs retreat from Dreadwing Council lands.
- 2418** Massive earthquakes ravage the north lands of the Endless, sinking portions of the continent into the Frozen Sea and creating several large islands.
- 2415** Orc survivors from the Battle for Eternity band together and migrate to the Blight March, taking the defiled lands for their own.
- 2380** Korack Drin, a magebound dwarf in the court of the Emerald Throne, successfully summons the first demon to Karthun. The enraged demon breaks his binding circle and rampages through Desin's capital citadel, killing hundreds, including two of the royal family, before he is destroyed by the Elder Forgehands of Deknar.
- 2379** Prathian, Deknar, and Valkyre declare the summoning and trucking with demonic outsiders forbidden to all of the nations of Karthun. Their worshippers begin to root out possible summoners and destroy any tomes or scrolls detailing rituals, incantations, procedures, or negotiations for doing so.
- 2220** Giantkin from the Skyreach mountains march into Palefront led by incestuous Cyclops rulers, Mursa and Erig of the Pillar. Several Dagggers of Felicos and the lizardfolk of Palefront engage the giantkin, while Felicos refuses to enter the conflict.
- 2216** Dwarves of the Emerald Throne fund the extensive exploration of the massive system of caverns below the surface of Karthun.
- 2214** As the battle for Palefront draws to a close with the death of Mursa and Erig in Sylmn, several large nests of lizardfolk use the opportunity to fortify themselves on the western coast, declaring the region Diesess and a new ruler in the Nest Queen.

- 2200 Prathian leaves Karthun to travel beyond.
- 2145 A series of betrayals and the actions of the Third Dagger of Felicos results in the death of the Nest Queen in Diesess. The Third Dagger assumes the throne.
- 2121 Explorers documenting the battle for Palefront track the giantkin's march back to the Skyreach Mountains and discover a monolithic structure similar to the buildings found in the city of Xag.
- 2101 The dragon seer Moonwing predicts a "great rending" of Prevaul. Her warnings are ignored by the Dreadwing Council.
- 1998 Explorers documenting the caverns below the surface of Karthun report evidence of abandoned civilizations. These civilizations include whole empty stone cities, subterranean ecosystems, and strange creatures never seen on the surface.
- 1945 Yaz'ar and his followers quell an uprising of the other Elemental Lords in Istin and murder the elder Lords of water, earth, and air as an example. Yaz'ar, now believed to be immortal, declares himself the God-King of Wrathful Flame and Elementals and closes the borders of Istin to all neighboring nations.
- 1940 A massive earthquake splits the continent of Prevaul in half, destroying most of the indigenous life and crippling the power of the Dreadwing Council of Prevaul. Offers of assistance from Sehad and Elinar are rejected as the dragons accuse Deknar and his Forgehands of the destruction.
- 1931 Valkyre and current head of the church of Elinar, the Lady of Winter, meet with Vaz'ar the God-King of Istin to calm tensions between Istin and neighboring nations. Violence is avoided but the meeting bears no fruit.
- 1930 The dragons of Eternity Peak locate the dragon seer Moonwing and imprison her in an unknown location to make use of her prophetic visions.
- 1910 Tension between the orc clans of the Blight March erupts into open war as clans battle for superiority.
- 1905 Prathian returns, bringing the first gnomes to Karthun. With the aid of Sehad, Elinar, Valkyre, and Deknar, Prathian and the gnomes establish the nation of New Orbellon as archivists and watchers of the dimensional leylines on the jungle continent of Shoana, as well as serving as ambassadors, emissaries, and mediators across Karthun.
- 1845 Poor conditions and weak leadership allow a cabal of murderous magebound known as the Hooded Crows and their followers to seize control of central Mastern, renaming it Tavia.
- 1842 Sensing weakness from Northern and Southern Mastern, the Hooded Crows of Tavia send assassins to murder the respective Governors. Both attempts fail. Tavia send their forces into Southern Mastern, while Northern Mastern withdraws behind the Last Line.
- 1841 A wasting disease known as the Withering Death spreads through Andorhem Forest like wildfire, drawing Sehad's attention away from the war between Tavia and Southern Mastern.
- 1840 The Withering Death claims the lives of half of the Oaken Council in Andorhem Forest. The cult of the necromancer Solum Dusk claims responsibility for the attack.
- 1801 Elves from Symul encounter the orcs of the Blight March, now twisted by the wretched land with milky eyes and grey skin covered in large pustules. The patriarch of the Wolf Clan, Dyniss Surn, calls the twisted orcs "Kranee" (the elvish word for wasting).
- 1805 Gnome magebound from Shoana summon the first Djinn to Karthun. A treaty between the Djinn royalty and the gnomes is established and the first Djinn-bound magebound are created. The act and treaty meets with Prathian's guidance and approval.

- 1680** The marriage of heirs from the elven Houses of western Symul ends in tragedy as Kranee from the Blight March attack Symul. Dyniss Surn and many Bear Clan nobles are slain with many more taken as prisoners. The elves taken are never seen again.
- 1678** The Governor of Northern Mastern refuses to aid Southern Mastern in their long, bloody war with Tavia. In response, Myson True, the Governor of Southern Mastern, secedes from Mastern, founds the kingdom of Andern, declares himself king, and swears to the gods to bring peace and justice to his lands.
- 1671** A party of over two hundred explorers and soldiers from the Emerald Thrones Guild of Discovery (the largest in history) are lost in the deep caverns beneath Karthun.
- 1650** The Governor of Mastern sends orders for the sealed monolith in Xag to be breached. All efforts to enter the structure fail. The Governor incites mass hysteria until Prathian's Grand Archivist, Lela Durn, arrives with a contingent of Sentinels of the Book to remove the Governor from power in the name of Prathian and Valkyre.
- 1649** Grand Archivist Lela Durn, speaking on behalf of Prathian, proclaims the city of Xag and the surrounding region to be known as Daynir.
- 1634** The elves of the Wolf Clan of Symul and the dwarves of the Emerald Throne continue to clash with the Kranee (blight orcs) of the Blight March. Valkyre and her Silver Guard paladins establish a large camp near the border of the southern Emerald Throne lands and the Blight March.
- 1615** Reports surface of the first sighting of the Arbiter of the Truth in the city of Xag.
- 1590** King Myson True of Andern abdicates his throne to his son, King Myson True II. King True II vows to uphold his father's pledge to honor and justice.
- 1575** A lone Illyn explorer from Ilrenar returns home to report the discovery of a monolith on the southern island now known as Traxyn. The explorer described tribes of intelligent ogre shaman defending the monolith.
- 1520** The Wolf Clan of Symul, weakened after prolonged conflict with Kranee of the Blight March suffer betrayal when several Wolf houses led by an exile named Syvel the Coward break away from the pack, claiming lands in southeastern Symul ravaged by war.
- 1517** The Father of Fangs, Wolf Clan patriarch in Symul, is murdered. The evidence points to an assassination by the Bear Clan.
- 1516** The Hooded Crows of Tavia turn on each other in attempts to gain sole control of the region. This conflict begins the War of Crows.
- 1510** An unnamed cabal of mages attempts to create a magebound with an aberrant horror discovered in the caverns along the coast of Mistfall. The ritual fails, creating the Mistfall Horror. The abomination devours the cabal and stalks the caverns under Mistfall.
- 1490** The War of the Crows ends with Queen Eva Nir taking the newly created Throne of Crows.
- 1430** The treasonous elves of the Wolf Clan in southeastern Symul use dark rituals to combine their blood with jackals. Many of the elves die in the process, but the survivors rise as the new members of the Jackal Clan.
- 1421** Chief Kral of the Icesplitter Tribe, his shaman advisor Elder Eye Nur, and a small group of clan leaders from the giant lands within the Endless travel to Daynir to meet with the Grand Archivist of Prathian and several emissaries. The visit is cut short when Elder Eye Nur takes ill and demands the envoy leave "the cursed city."



-1420 The Battle of Black Rain happens on the border of the Blight March as the armies of the Emerald Throne and the paladins of Valkyre's Silver Guard suffer heavy losses to the Kranee and their goblin warlocks. The warlocks summon a black rain that curses and decays thousands. The defiling act draws the attention of Elinar, Sehad, and Valkyre.

Elinar convinces the gods to allow her to send an envoy of her senior Speakers of Harmony to broker peace with the Kranee. The Kranee overpower the Speakers of Harmony and their Silver Guard escorts, sacrificing all in a dark ritual to increase the power of their King, Bilegut. Bolstered by dark magic, Bilegut clashes with Valkyre, critically wounding her. The act of desecration draws the wrath of Elinar. Hurricane force storms from the east batter the coastline of the Blight March, while lightning storms rain down on every Kranee settlement until their forces are dead, broken, and scattered. The Silver Guard and Emerald Throne armies discover an onyx monolith hidden among the mountain ranges. Valkyre recovers while Elinar and Sehad use their power to cleanse the lands as much as possible. Elinar exiles herself to Ilrenar for a time as penance for her rage.

Love blooms between Valkyre and Sehad.

-1415 Aberrant overlords beneath Shoana attack New Orbellon in an attempt to seize control of the portals under the gnomes' protection. The President and her Cabinet of Ten repel the attack, later increasing the fortifications around the capital.

-1408 The Wardens clash with the largest pack of Unchained Revenous in Karthun's history at the southern edge of Andorhem Forest.

-1401 The armies of Valkyre and the Emerald Throne stationed near the border of the former Blight March request and receive a charter from the Emerald Throne to found the nation of Landrin. A democratic election places an elder knight of Valkyre, Jarel Finn, as the first President of Landrin.

-1400 Prathian leaves Karthun again to wander the planes beyond.

-1399 The giant clans from the Endless in the north are led by Chief Kral Icesplitter, and they march south to attack Daynir with colossal stone constructs controlled by elder shamans. Under Icesplitter's command, the armies of giants and constructs carve a path of slaughter through Daynir, beginning the War of Titans.

Sehad pleads with the clan leaders to cease their war on humanity, but his plea falls on deaf ears. The giants attack Sehad, and he barely escapes with his life.

-1398 Daynir's military forces, Sentinels of the Book, along with the Wardens of Sehad clash with the giants for the first time on the eastern edge of the Summerfall Forest. The loss of human life under the rage and power of the giants is staggering. Sehad and Valkyre prepare to enter the battle when news arrives of a second giant force attacking Andorhem Forest, the heart of Sehad's worship. The giants' attack on two fronts weakens the Wardens, resulting in the loss of more life.

In Andorhem Forest, Sehad and Valkyre clash with several of the elder shamans and clan leaders while Chief Icesplitter's forces descend on the Last Line in Xag. The colossal wall buckles under the attack of the stone constructs, allowing the giants to enter the City of Monoliths. To the surprise of the giants, they are met by the Forgehands of Deknar the Smith and the Hammer of the Smith. The forces battle, and destroy the entire northern quarter of the city. Wardens of Sehad tap into his power to raise colossal treants to battle the constructs, while Wardens, Sentinels of the Book, soldiers of Daynir, and Forgehands battle the giants.

Outside the city, on the slopes of the war torn Bayden Plains, Chief Icesplitter and Sehad clash in a battle to the death as Valkyre destroys the last of the constructs on the battlefield along with their shaman masters.

Sehad defeats Icesplitter. To his and Valkyre's horror, they watch as the true source of the giants' power is revealed: an ancient ritual, unknown to Karthun, allowing the giants to pool the power of every giant life on the planet, all tethered to the life of the current Chief. Icesplitter falls and so too does every pureblood giant of Karthun.

-1397 The War of Titans ends. Daynir mourns their losses and begins to rebuild.

-1204 Sages begin to question if Prathian will ever return to Karthun.

-1108 A cabal of powerful magebound establishes the World Walkers, a group dedicated to the study and advancement of magic across Karthun and the worlds beyond, using rituals and powerful magic taken from the scrolls of Yaz'ar the God-King of Istin to extend their lives.

-900 Prathian returns to Karthun.

-840 On the eve of a full-scale assault of Landrin by Yaz'ar and his army of enslaved elementals, Felicos personally assassinates the self-proclaimed God-King of Wrathful Fire. The power vacuum is filled quickly as

the eldest Elemental Lords of air, water, and earth assume control of Istin.

-500 The dragon seer Moonwing prophesizes the birth of a child from the union of Sehad and Valkyre. From her prison, Moonwing's cries reach Sehad. The World Warden, Valkyre, and a host of noble dragons from Prevaal enter Eternity Peak to free her. The deific battle ends with the shattering of the Dreadwing Council. A freed Moonwing takes the throne as the first of the Dragon Queens, calling other elder queens of the dragons to serve by her side. A new age for dragons begins.

-230 The last of the Brolem royal line dies. Several clans vie for the Emerald Throne, but with no clear ruler, a temporary council is established.

-200 The World Walkers are the first mortals to step into Kraya, the plane of light. Bolstered by their success, the World Walkers vow to go further.

-170 The conflict between the Wolf, Bear, and Jackal Clans on Symul spills over into Andern, after Queen Vexra III offers aid to the Wolf Clan in an effort to end the bloodshed.

-50 The World Walkers clash with the Daggers of Felicos after a failed assassination attempt by the Second Dagger. The motive for the attempt is never revealed and the feud results in the death of many daggers of Felicos, World Walker apprentices, and Kaylen'Win, the wife of the leader of the World Walkers, Dyzak'Win the Sage of Spires.

-14 Explorers for the Guild of Discovery journey deeper into the caverns below Karthun and encounter a warlike insectoid race. The expedition suffers heavy losses, but survivors escape to report back to the Emerald Throne, naming the mass of insectoids the Writhing Swarm.

AGE OF FLAMES

- 0** The Archivists of Prathian declare the Age of Enlightenment at an end. Prathian dissolves his theocracy in Xyn and institutes a new democracy with the election of the first Grand Chancellor of Xyn, Vivian Yor.
- 5** The Writhing Swarm attacks the deepest mines under the capital of Desin, killing and capturing hundreds of dwarves. Despite squabbling leadership, the dwarves stop the assault of the Writhing Swarm, beginning a long, bloody siege.
- 10** Rumors circulate of survivors of the Dreadwing Council gathering in secret.
- 30** Several lords in the northern region of Palefront (of Sylmn) are poisoned. Days later, a hag claims the territory as Synothen, declaring it her kingdom.
- 40** To sow distrust, the elves of the Jackal Clan send a magnificent arrangement of roses to the newly-elected President of Landrin in the name of the Wolf Clan. The poisoned roses kill the President, sparking conflict between the Wolf Clan and Landrin.
- 41** Speakers of Harmony are unable to calm tensions between the Wolf Clan of Symul and Landrin. Landrin sends troops to the eastern border of Symul, sparking the War of the Thorn.
- 49** The mining town of Narhal is founded on the southern border of Andern.
- 60** The President of New Orbellon opens the defenses to the dimensional portals housed in the capital to aberrant forces from below Shoana. The Cabinet and members of the Amethyst Watch manage to fight off the invasion, losing several key politicians and soldiers in the battle. The President is revealed to be under the control of a sentient ooze nesting in his brain. Upon interrogation, the ooze reveals it is a part of a religion known as the Blessed of the Crawl.
- 70** The World Walker's power and curiosity lead to disagreements between the eight and Prathian. The disagreement explodes into open combat when the World Walkers clash with Valkyre and Deknar. Their battle reduces the city of Falcon's Rest in Xyn to ashes, sending the World Walkers into hiding.
- 77** Elinar ends her exile in Ilrenar and travels to a summit between the leadership of Landrin and the Wolf Clan of Symul, ending the decades-long War of the Thorn.
- 82** Zealous Wardens of Sehad express frustration at the lack of strength from humanity, and demand a culling of the weak. Sehad refuses, expelling the group from the Wardens.
- 87** Famed explorer Alise Mulgrave returns from an expedition to the far north of the Endless. She describes impossibly tall mountains that disappear into dark clouds.
- 96** Internal war erupts among the lizardfolk in Diesess. Felicos withdraws his Daggers and allows the struggle to play out on its own.
- 99** A new ruler takes the throne in Diesess, proclaiming herself the Nest Queen, the same name used by a former ruler. Under her rule, Diesess calms and stands united for the first time in its history.
- 100** Master thieves in the service of the Veiled King infiltrate the Nexus in Xyn and set off a series of explosions that weaken the dimensional barriers maintained within the citadel.
- 109** King Peran Fansk II, the Sword of Honor of Andern, sends relief aid to Desin. King Fansk is revered as the best mortal hope for reuniting humanity.
- 111** Elder Elemental Lords of fire devoted to the Cult of Yaz'ar attempt to take control of Istin from the Elemental Lords of water, igniting the War of Wave and Flame.

- 120** The dwarves of the Emerald Throne suffer heavy losses when the Writhing Swarm collapses the support foundations under half of the capital city of Honor's Hold in Desin. Thousands are killed.
- 130** Savage giantkin (ogres, Cyclops, kundrok) attack Andern from the north, pillaging and burning dozens of settlements.
- 135** The Fourth Dagger of Felicos infiltrates and mortally wounds King Peran Fansk II of Andern with a wasting disease not seen since an outbreak in Andorhem Forest centuries prior. No healing takes effect.
- 140** A massive earthquake hits Daynir, sinking portions into the Frozen Sea, creating tidal waves, and causing loss of life in the thousands. The coastal city of Widowhaven is lost. The devastation stops one mile from the city of Xag, creating the Memorial Coast. The land mass to the west is abandoned.
- 150** A merfolk army from the western coast of Sylmn attacks the surface of Coldmount but are repelled.
- The Dragon Queen Moonwing prophesizes that the child of Sehad and Valkyre will change Karthun forever.
- 155** With Andern under attack on multiple fronts, the Hammer of the Smith and the Wardens of Sehad forge an iron body for King Fansk of Andern II. King Fansk declares himself the Iron King and relocates the capital to fortified halls in the southern mountains.
- 160** The War of Wave and Flame escalates as the fire Lords use the dimensional portals of Istin to bring enemies of the Djinn royal family—an efreeti cabal known as the Scorched Sultans—into the war. Gnome mages from New Orbellon and Sentinels of the Book enter the fray as well. The battles spill into southern Andern and against the Bear Clan of northern Symul.
- 163** Speakers of Harmony and a group of heroes in Ilrenar thwart the Day of the Red Sun, a massive ritual conducted by the Voices of the Red Sun (a demon-worshipping cult led by Undrin, the Keeper of Summer).
- 165** Valkyre and Sehad reveal to their followers and allies that Valkyre is with child. Sages speculate on how the child of a deity will come into being. Sehad and Valkyre admit even they are not sure what will happen.
- Ancestors of the exiled Wardens align with the exiled dragons of Eternity Peak to form the Final Council. Led by Tyraxion the Devil Wyrm, the Final Council assaults Eternity Peak and the Dragon Queens. The attack catches everyone off-guard, resulting in the death of the Dragon Queens and their brood. The Final Council claims Eternity Peak and begins the War of Wardens.
- Bolstered by dark powers and a host of dragon allies, the Fallen Wardens descend on the heart of Andorhem Forest to begin an assault against the Circle of the First and the First Tree.
- 166** Armies from Andern, Ilrenar, and Symul led by Sehad, Deknar, and Prathian lay siege to the Final Council at Eternity Peak. The battle claims thousands of lives and scorches most of the lands surrounding Eternity Peak. Sehad pleads with Valkyre to stay away for the sake of their child, but when the battle takes a turn for the worse, Valkyre arrives and clashes with Tyraxion and his inner circle. The act of valor inspires one of the Djinn Princes of Air to cast a final Wish, sacrificing his life to guarantee Tyraxion could not recover from his wounds.
- With Tyraxion and his inner circle defeated, the Final Council is shattered. In the following days, Deknar and Prathian take steps to seal Eternity Peak.
- 167** Reports cite the appearance of the Arbiter of the Truth in southern Andern.

168 Prathian and Sehad keep a watchful eye on Valkyre and her unborn child. Expectant mothers begin to pray to Valkyre as a patron of fertility.

170 The World Walkers perform a dangerous ritual to pierce the veil of Karthun, accidentally unleashing the wrath of the Worldfire and allowing the demonic armies of the Three Demon Kings to enter Karthun. The initial eruption of the Worldfire engulfs the continent of Shoana. The President of New Orbellon and a few cabinet members, along with a few hundred gnome citizens, manage to escape through portals to Doryan.

The nation of New Orbellon and the continent of Shoana are destroyed. Several of the World Walkers are slain instantly, one is driven mad, one is taken by the demon armies, and the rest go into hiding.

The Worldfire reaches Prevaul and for a short time, the combined power of Deknar and the remaining dragons keeps the wrath of the Three Demon Kings at bay. The nations of Doryan have time to prepare for war. Nations fortify defenses and current wars agree to hastily built truces. In Desin, the dwarves finally appoint a new king with King Brolden Vrak I, a Forgehand of Deknar and dedicated voice for the Emerald Throne.

171 Demonic forces travel ahead to Doryan, specifically the eastern coasts of Desin and Landrin. The demons clash with the taxed armies of the Emerald Throne, who are supported by the Silver Guard of Landrin and the armies of the Iron King from Andern.

172 Tavia seizes the opportunity to attack a weakened Andern. Several bloody clashes occur over the course of the year with Andern's weakened army keeping Tavia's forces at bay.

173 Prevaul is engulfed by the Worldfire. Deknar barely escapes with his life. The remaining dragons of Prevaul and the shattered continent are lost.

The Arbiter of the Truth appears in public on the steps of the sealed monolith in Xag. The Arbiter proclaims this a time of judgment for the false gods of Karthun.

Reports from neighboring nations site the migration and congregation of giants, orcs, goblins, and other savage humanoid races in the scorched lands surrounding Eternity Peak.

174 The first of the Three Demon Kings, Drazok Mortalrazer, appears on the battlefield in Landrin with his personal battalion, slaying hundreds.

The Writhing Swarm launch a full-scale assault on the Emerald Throne, destroying the foundation of over half of the capital, dropping it into the mines and bottomless caverns below the city, killing thousands, including most of the elders of the church of Deknar and the Hammer of the Smith as well.

175 The Worldfire reaches Doryan, the Last Continent, along with the full power of the Three Demon Kings and their armies. The force of the Worldfire tears at the continent, breaking regions of the coast away into the seas, creating tidal waves and earthquakes claiming thousands of lives as no coastal nation is spared.

Prathian, Elinar, and Deknar exhaust their powers to push the Worldfire back, buying time for a frontal assault on the Three Demon Kings by Sehad, Valkyre, and Felicos. The gods clash with the Demon Kings but are overwhelmed by their legions of demons. Sehad is mortally wounded, forcing Valkyre and Felicos to retreat.

More earthquakes ravage the Last Continent, creating canyons near the coasts as tsunami tidal waves hit the western coast of Sylmn, killing thousands.

- 176** Followers of Elinar in Tavia found the Dawn Striders, a group of messengers imbued with the power of travel. The Dawn Striders keep the lines of communication open between the nations under siege from the Worldfire, regardless of political affiliation.
- 179** Witnesses of the Truth locate and capture Ignizian the Mad, a surviving World Walker driven mad by the horrors he saw beyond the veil of Karthun. Ignizian is imprisoned near the summit of the Stormheight Mountains.
- 180** In a desperate act, the gods syphon all of the energy from Kraya to create the Chain in the core of Karthun. The ritual holds the Last Continent together and halts the progress of the Worldfire, pushing most of the demons back into it. The loss of the life energy and shock of Kraya dying sends a wave of despair across Karthun, crippling Sehad the World Warden and Elinar. Deknar descends into the world's core to forge the Chain with his elder forgehands, while Prathian and the remaining keepers of Karthun's dimensional leylines perform a ritual to repair as much of the damage done to Karthun's veil as possible. Felicos and Valkyre, in one final clash with the Drazok Mortalrazer, mortally wound the Demon King.
- 190** A still weakened Sehad declares Maldros the Bear Lord as the new leader of the Wardens.
- 191** King Vrak I dies.
- 199** Elinar returns from Kraya and informs the Keepers of Seasons that Karthun's withered sister plane is dead. Word spreads across Karthun. Elinar's followers begin to refer to Kraya as the Shadow.
- 200** The Emerald Throne's war with the Writhing Swarm turns for the worse, prompting King Vrak II and his council of Underlords to pray to Deknar for aid. Deknar, consumed with keeping the Chain forged against the Worldfire, does not hear the plea for aid. The Emerald Throne loses more mines and settlements to the Writhing Swarm.
- 220** Rumors spread of otherworldly horrors assaulting the remaining portals within the Nexus. The Sentinels of the Book deny the rumors.
- 222** Felicos finds and assassinates Dyzak'Win the Sage of Spires, one of the surviving World Walkers. His Daggers of Felicos find and sack the Sage's home, the Twilight Spire, in the mountains of Tavia.
- 245** Malkasesh the Corruptor begins to whisper in the ear of King Vrak II of the Emerald Throne.
- 250** After centuries of war, the Elemental Lords of Istin put their differences aside, forgiving past conflicts, and establish the Council of Four Lords. Istin solidifies its borders and vows to protect the dimensional weaknesses of Karthun.
- 275** Sehad and Valkyre announce the imminent arrival of their child, proclaiming its arrival as a new age for Karthun.
- 280** Ignizian the Mad World Walker prophesizes a plague of undeath upon Karthun.
- 286** The jealousy of Felicos, King of Rogues, boils over, leading him to murder Sehad the World Warden.
- Elinar pushes herself to near-death in a futile effort to revive the fallen World Warden. With Kraya drained of its power, Prathian and Deknar are unable to help. Valkyre, overcome with grief, isolates herself to mourn the loss of Sehad. Humanity across Karthun feels the loss of their patron deity and the power of the Wardens begins to wane.
- Valkyre lays Sehad to rest in Andorhem Forest.
- Felicos abandons his seat of power in Palefront and goes into hiding.

AGE OF MOURNING

287 The Age of Mourning begins.

Near death after her failed effort to save Sehad, Elinar returns to Ilrenar and falls into a deep sleep, leaving the Keepers of Seasons and her followers to watch over Ilrenar, beginning the Long Winter.

Overcome with grief, Valkyre goes into seclusion, ignoring the prayers of her followers.

288 After a time of mourning, the Wardens of Sehad begin to hunt the Daggers of Felicos for retribution, sparking a doomed campaign that ends with most of the weakened Wardens slain.

300 The Writhing Swarm succeeds in destroying the capital city of Honor's Hold in Desin, collapsing the entire city into the dark caverns below Karthun's surface. Thousands of lives are lost, along with the majority of the Emerald Throne leadership. King Vrak II and a handful of his Underlords survive. The Emerald Throne is lost in the depths as the dwarves abandon Honor's Hold and enter the cathedral mines in the Cloudwatch Mountains. All statuary and markings of Deknar are destroyed.

302 General Simon Hurn of the Blackflight Army reveals himself as a follower of the Cult of Solum Dusk when he and his mounted battalions defect, seizing lands in southern Tavia. He renames the area "the Land of Kolther," once he establishes a cabal of leadership to be known as the Kings of Dusk.

305 With Deknar's attention focused on the Chain, a desperate King Vrak II succumbs to the corruption of the Three Demon Kings. The Underlords begin collapsing nearby settlements and forcing survivors into slavery on the front lines in the war against the Writhing Swarm. A handful of noble clans rebel against King Vrak II and the Underlords, only to be decimated and forced into slavery as well.

307 Ogre warlocks from the island of Traxyn assault the capital of Ilrenar and steal an item from Elinar's personal vaults. With the unknown item in hand the warlocks vanish, with the memory of their attack and theft fading from the memories of Ilrenar's citizens.

310 With Felicos in hiding, a power struggle erupts in Palefront resulting in the Fourth Dagger of Felicos taking the throne. Unknown to all, he is under the control of the Blessed of the Crawl.

314 Archivists of Prathian send word to the nations of Karthun to burn their dead, instituting the Ash Protocols. With Sehad dead and Kraya now the Shadow, the souls of the dead rise as undead by the thousands.

320 Tremors shake the city of Xag in Daynir. City engineers place the epicenter around the Sealed Monolith.

330 The orcs and giantkin (cyclops, kundrok, and others) of the scorched plains around Eternity Peak, band together under the banner of an orc chieftain named Grasock of the Iron Spike. Grasock organizes the chaotic tribes into one army and begins to build Kraghorn: the Iron Lands.

340 Explorers enter the cavernous ruins of Honor's Hold in Desin and discover thousands of eternally hungry undead.

350 The first report of the Rage is reported in Landrin.

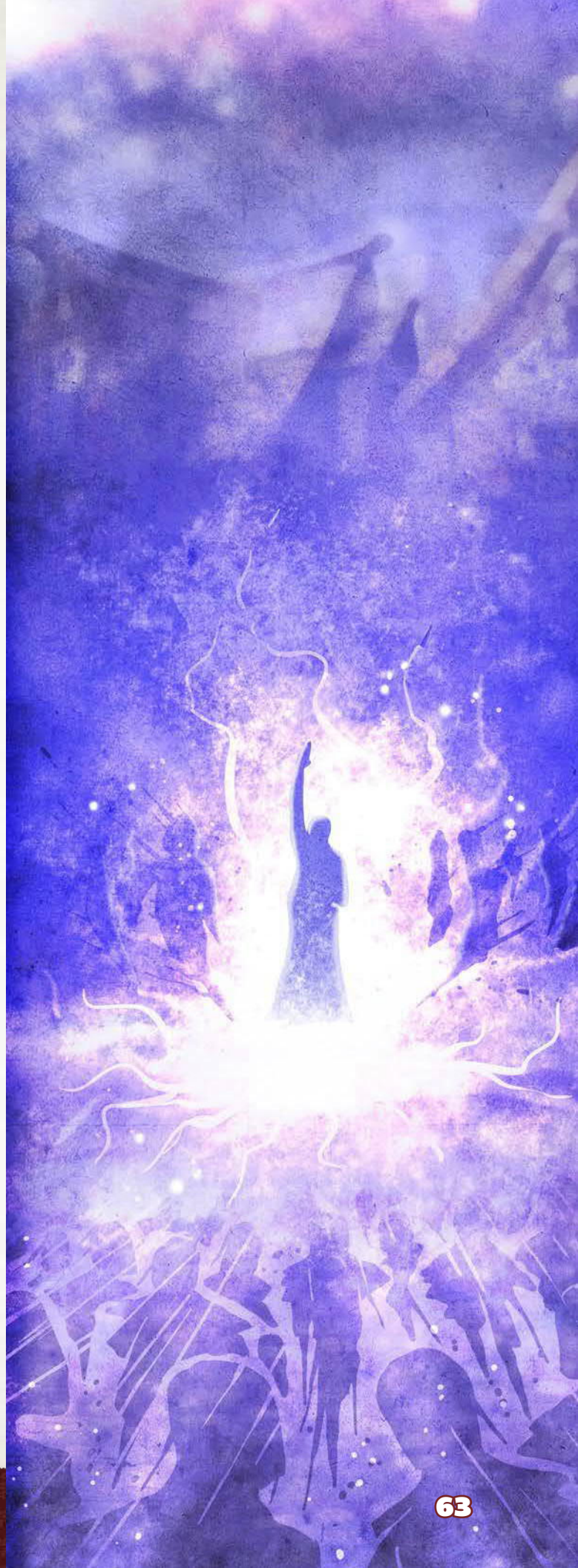
376 The new Queen of Palefront (and vessel for the Blessed of the Crawl) negotiates to bring the lands of Kolther and the Kings of Dusk into Sylmn as an ally.

380 An outbreak of the undead overruns the city of Owlhaunt in Tavia. Unable to destroy the undead, officials seal the gates, abandoning the city and surrounding area.

- 399** After decades under the harsh rule of the Underlords, the last of the Halfling race dies. The Underlords begin to take human settlements by force, enslaving survivors.
- 402** The paladins of Landrin cease to receive power from Valkyre, allowing their defenses to break under the weight of demons from the Worldfire. A bloody battle claims many lives on the eastern coast. Within hours, the dead begin to rise as undead. Nobles begin to flee Landrin for Andern and Daynir.
- 404** Elves of the Jackal Clan of Symul use alchemical explosives purchased from the Veiled King to destroy the Grey Tower, seat of the Wolf Clan's power in Symul, claiming half of the Wolf Clan lands. The fires threaten to destroy most of the forest, until an unnamed druid appears wielding Warden's Oath and summons rainstorms to extinguish the wildfire.
- 405** Valkyre appears in Landrin and murders the elder clerics of her faith, proclaiming the death of valor in Karthun and her new place as the new Warden of the Dead: the Mother of the Dead. Moments later, the Mother gives birth to her son Kyzul who appears as a pre-adolescent—the Mother's grief and sadness having twisted Kyzul into the embodiment of undeath in the womb.

The act slays every living thing within one hundred miles and rips the fabric of Karthun's reality, pushing the Shadow further away from Karthun and creating a cold, lifeless plane in between known as the Dead.

- 406** The First Tree returns to phase with Karthun.



AGE OF CONFLICT (CURRENT AGE)

- 407** Hundreds of followers (despondent from the toll of war or desperate for the love of their former goddess) make the pilgrimage to the spot of the Mother of the Dead/Kyzul's birth.
- 415** The first of the Iron King's construct armies appears around the Iron Halls in Andern.
- 421** Sages from Ilrenar are the first to observe that the lifespans of the elves and dwarves are shortening, falling closer to the life expectancy of humans.
- 422** The Mother of the Dead claims the Dead as her domain, placing Kyzul in charge of her theocracy: Erast (the lands formerly known as southern Landrin).
- 427** The unknown druid wielding Warden's Oath appears near the chasms of Honor's Hold, giving aid to Thulengard explorers trapped in a cave-in. The druid and Warden's Oath vanish shortly after.
- 430** Astrologists from Daynir discover anomalies in the stars.
- 444** Elinar awakens from her slumber and journeys into the Dead in an attempt to reason with the Mother. The confrontation erupts when the Mother attacks Elinar, blaming her inability to save Sehad for the Mother's grief and fall from valor. The battle leaves Elinar with terrible scars on her face that never heal.
- 460** The dimensional rift within the Nexus on Xyn widens. Prathian's Sentinels of the Book begin an ongoing war with the aberrant horrors attempting to enter Karthun.
- 451** The church of the Mother of the Dead sends the first Shepherds of Rest across Karthun to hunt and destroy the restless undead created during the Age of Mourning.
- 470** Maldros the Bear Lord clashes with the followers of the Succubus Queen Kissnax in Andorhem Forest.
- 500** A crew of seven astronomers from Daynir board *The Stargazer* (a modified airship) and take off to explore beyond Karthun. *The Stargazer* is never seen again.
- 505** Spies from Kraghorn are discovered in Ilrenar attempting to poison several of the Keepers of Seasons.
- 548** Demonic emissaries arrive at the Dread Throne to collect the debt owed to the Three Demon Kings. King Vrak IV betrays and hands over his father to settle the debt.
- 550** Gren Arcwell inspires an uprising of the slaves under the lash of the Underlords. During the uprising, hundreds of dwarves escape the Dread Throne and make their way to Daynir. Free from their captors, the broken clans refer to themselves as Sunwalkers and begin the March of Liberty towards Xyn.
- 551** Prathian raises a land mass lost off of the coast of Daynir as a new nation for the Sunwalkers. Gren Arcwell II takes the title of Grand Evoker with the support of the Sunwalkers and proclaims the new magocracy Thulengard.
- 570** Members of the Cult of Solum Dusk clash with Shepherds of the Mother of the Dead in the city of Narhal. It is revealed that Narhal sits on a location where the veil between Karthun and the Dead is thin.
- 574** Diehard followers of the teaching of Valkyre found the Last Watch in Landrin to rally against the seemingly endless demonic and undead sieges.

- 580** Efreeti marauders attack Convergence in Istin and are slain by adventurers from Andern. Several of the efreeti carry holy symbols of Felicos.
- 600** The Pillars of Virtue are erected in the capital of Landrin, driving the demons and undead from the battered lands.
- 607** Rangers from the Bear Clan of elves in Symul encounter the vampires of the Dreadoak, not seen in Symul since the Age of Enlightenment. The vampires swarm over several unprepared Bear and Wolf Clan settlements. The location of the Dreadoak remains unknown.
- 610** Kyzul appears in the city of Xag with Erast's new ambassador to the Seat of Nobles: Stiva Duke.
- 630** Airships from Daynir set off to explore the Dread Peaks in the Endless and never return.
- 650** A new species of merfolk, the most powerful and cunning encountered, rise out of the western ocean to attack Sylmn on multiple fronts.
- 670** The Mother of the Dead finds Felicos in the city of Narhal. Their clash destroys half of the noble quarter. Felicos barely escapes and goes back into hiding.
- 700** Boldrak the Unbreakable, a kundrok slave freed through the gladiatorial pits, takes the throne in Kraghorn and sets his sages to work on attempting to open the sealed fortress at Eternity Peak.
- 705** Deknar rises from the core of the world and enters the throne room of the Iron King to proclaim the selection of his new Hammer of the Smith (the first in centuries): Dulsey Ro, a widowed blacksmith from Andern.
- 709** The current Year.



NATIONS OF KARTHUN

CHAPTER FIVE



In the Age of Conflict, the continent of Doryan (now commonly referred to as the Last Continent) is all that remains of the landmasses and continents of Karthun. From the vast cold of the Endless in the north to the barren plains of Kraghorn, many nations struggle to hold on to their territories. The Worldfire looms over every nation, but still many armies battle for patches of land and resources. From the corrupt to the noble, the nations of the Last Continent struggle for survival in the face of destruction.

This chapter offers a closer look at each of the major nations of Karthun, with an emphasis on their history, government, and several points of interest within the borders of each nation. Karthun offers every kind of adventure experience, from the political intrigue of Tavia, to the glory of heroism in Andern, to the desolate wastelands and ruins of Desin. Karthun's nations offer endless opportunities for adventure.

ANDERN

CAPITAL: The Iron Halls

RULER: The Iron King

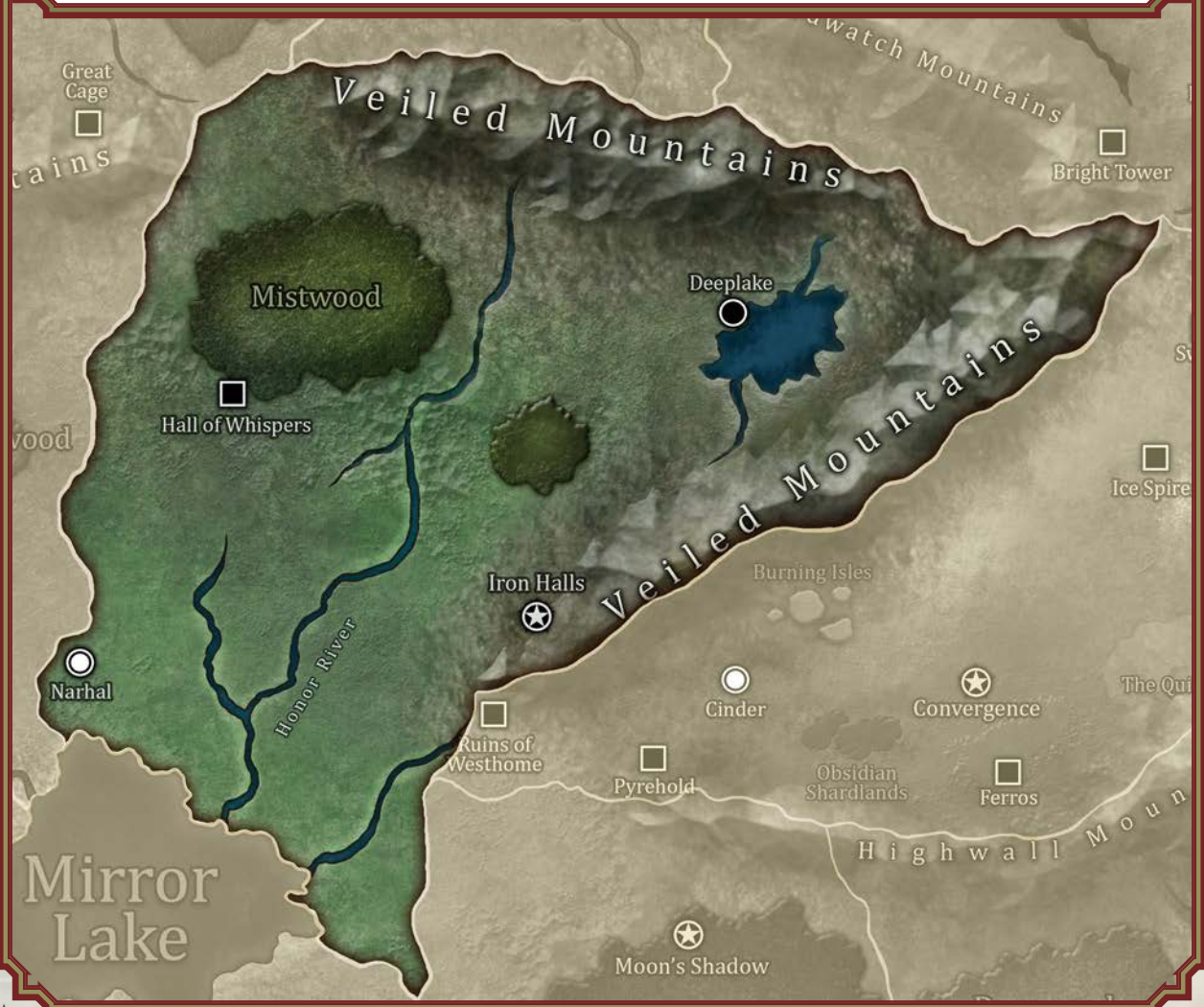
COINAGE: Throne (platinum), Crown (gold),
Scepters (silver), Goblets (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Elinar, Felicos, Prathian, the
Mother of the Dead

Andern is a land of heroes and opportunity. Once part of the greatest human nation in Karthun's history, Andern asserted its own identity in the crucible of war and rose to become a beacon of valor. Over the years, Andern offered aid to many nations at the expense of its

own safety by being pulled into a bloody civil war between the Djinn and Elemental Lords of Istin. Further betrayals and assassinations among the nobility left Andern's greatest King withering and near death until direct action from the gods spared his life and forged the Iron King who still leads Andern in the Age of Conflict. Now, after centuries of war and internal strife, even the resolve of the Iron King strains as the kingdom falls back into a shadow war among nobles and the influence of outside forces. From hidden places and forgotten depths of Andern, new threats to the crown rise in these chaotic times with little regard for the innocent. Andern needs heroes brave enough to stand against evil and return this once great nation to its former glory.



HISTORY

Andern traces its fractured roots as far back as the Age of Making to the largest human nation in Karthun's history: Mastern. For unknown years, humans wandered the plains of the Doryan under the watch of their patron deity, Sehad the World Warden. The gods constructed Xag the City of Monoliths prior to the arrival of the patron races and the legendary city quickly became humanity's touchstone. Tribes of humans, possessing a natural hardiness and greater curiosity than the other patron races of Karthun, drove further south to encounter the other patron races for the first time. Humankind proved to be an open and adaptable race, over the years developing solid relations with the dwarves of the Emerald Throne and the elf clans of Symul, and trade with the lizardfolk of Sylmn.

Eventually, humanity settled in regions stretching along the west coast and through the heartland of Doryan near the northern borders of the elven nation of Symul, building cities and towns with the aid of their allied nations. The First King, King Domarick Waryn, united all of the settlements under one banner as the united nation of Mastern, ushering in the golden age of humanity on Karthun. Under the rule of King Waryn, Mastern raised legendary cities, pioneered agriculture, and took its first steps into the practice of magic. Humanity thrived under the banner of Waryn, but all things pass into death and the loss of King Waryn marked the end of Mastern's golden age and—though unknown at the time—marked the beginning of humanity's slow decline.

Mastern divided into three regions: Northern, Central, and Southern Mastern, each with its own elected Governor. For a time, each nation thrived harmoniously in the name of Sehad the World Warden and King Waryn's legacy, until a shift in Central Mastern placed a cabal of murderous mages known as the Hooded Crows into power. The Hooded Crows proclaimed Central Mastern as the new nation of Tavia and began a war with Northern and Southern Mastern (now Daynir and Andern, respectively) that continues in the Age of Conflict.

The Hooded Crows craved power and their assault on Southern Mastern continued for years at the cost of countless lives. In the north, paranoia and fear gripped the leadership of Northern Mastern, leaving the South to fend for itself against assassins, mages, and armies of the Hooded Crows. Finally, in 1678, the sitting Governor of Southern Mastern, Myson True, reached his breaking point and, with the full support of his people, declared himself King of the new kingdom of Andern. In his first speech to his subjects, King True (a devout paladin of Valkyre and ally to the druids of Sehad) vowed to end the bloody war with Tavia and bring peace and justice to Andern. For decades, King True and his knights battled the corruptive forces within Andern, driving back the forces of the Hooded Crows of Tavia, routing the Blessed of the Crawl from the Deep of Karthun, and sending aid to ally nations in their times of need. However, as with the legacy of King Waryn of Mastern, time and death caught up with him. Rather than allow his death to bring chaos to Andern, King True abdicated his throne to his adopted son, King Myson True II. For generations that followed, the kingdom of Andern thrived with an ancestral line of rulers and appointed rulers maintaining the values and tenants of King True's reign.

At the pinnacle of Andern's good work, young King Peran Fansk II, the Sword of Honor of Andern, led his kingdom to become a beacon of valor and nobility in a war-torn world. Despite battling its own wars with Tavia, clashing with the now xenophobic and unpredictable elves of Symul, and numerous threats to the people and crown of the kingdom, Andern answered the calls for aid from its allies in their darkest hours. Relief efforts in the form of troops, supplies, and gold flowed into efforts to save Desin, the noble Djinn families of Istin, and the Wardens of Andorhem Forest. Andern earned the moniker the Arm of Valor and stood as the heart of humanity's nobility.

However, while based in noble intentions, Andern's actions overextended their armies,

leaving the kingdom vulnerable when the War of Wave and Flame in Istin (the brutal war between Elemental Lords, Djinn royal house allies, and efreeti cabals) spilled into the southern regions of the kingdom. Unable to mount a defense quickly, Andern fell prey to the Scorched Sultans who destroyed settlements, enslaved Andern citizens, and slaughtered entire battalions of Andern troops. The Scorched Sultans pressed their advantage north, towards the capital. Efreeti assassins made tireless attempts on King Fansk's life and, in the face of every failed attempt, chose to slay members of the King's elder council and the eldest members of Andern nobility instead. Soon, King Fansk had few allies remaining in his royal court. King Fansk's advancing years and the dark whispers of efreeti deceivers pushed corrupt, younger nobles to make bold claims for the throne. At the zenith of these chaotic days, a society of noble worshippers of Felicos enlisted the aid of the Fourth Dagger to inflict grave wounds and a wasting disease upon the King.

Heroes of Andern drove the Fourth Dagger away and pushed the secret society into hiding, but the wasting disease ravaged the aging King. With no heirs to his throne and all of his trusted allies slain by the machinations of corrupt nobles and the Scorched Sultans, the future of Andern stood in grave peril.

Forces of the Scorched Sultans laid siege to the capital city of Westhome, burning the walls and slowly overwhelming the exhausted and dwindling armies of Andern. Inside the city, betrayers and cowards worked to aid the Scorched Sultans, searching for King Fansk, who was taken into hiding by his few trusted allies.

At the last minute, as the efreeti forces breached the gates of Westhome, the Hammer of the Smith (the leader of the church of Deknar the Smith) and Wardens of Sehad the World Warden appeared in the capital square and at the bedside of the withering King. A devout worshipper of Deknar, the prayers of King Fansk reached the ears of the Hammer of the Smith. Sehad—who long chose to allow humanity to develop and stand on their own—decided that Andern's noble

leader and the best hope for uniting humanity would not fall to treachery. As the citizens of Westhome, the Wardens, and the followers of Deknar fought for the future of Andern, the Hammer of the Smith and the Wardens forged an iron body for the King. Through a series of guarded rituals, the Wardens transferred the mind of the withering King into his new form and as he marched onto the burning streets of Westhome he proclaimed himself to Andern as the Iron King.

Renewed, the Iron King rallied his people with the support of the Wardens to defeat the encroaching army of the Scorched Sultans; however, Westhome was destroyed. In the time that followed, the Iron King and citizens laid the dead to rest and marched to the fortress of the Iron Halls in the Veiled Mountains, proclaiming the Iron Halls the new capital of Andern.

In the Age of Conflict, Andern still stands, but the toll of war, the devastation of the Worldfire, and the rise of the Mother of the Dead weigh heavily upon the head of the Iron King. Old enemies continue to torment Andern and the once noble people succumb to cynicism and doubt in the face of the Worldfire and constant danger. Across the plains, abandoned ruins of fallen noble lines tempt travelers with rumors of riches and secrets, while enemies to the crown creep forward from the shadows. In the south, the forces of the Scorched Sultans continue to loom over Andern, as the Iron King grows more distant from his people—and possibly his own humanity.

It is a truly time for heroes in Andern, or one of the oldest nations in Karthun may fall.

GOVERNMENT

The Iron King rules Andern and oversees a majority of the laws and major decisions made on a day-to-day basis. The rigors of such a schedule would be impossible for a mortal to maintain, but thanks to his unique body, the Iron King does not eat or sleep. It's common to see the Iron King walking the passages of the Royal Quarters in the Iron Halls at all hours.

The assassination attempt on his life by the Fourth Dagger and the betrayal of his closest aid and allies in the former royal court made the Iron King cautious about who he solicits for council or aid. The royal court of Andern once boasted 13 members voting on matters of the day through majority vote, but in the current age, the Iron King maintains the Inner Council. Comprised of five members of the noble families who were loyal to Andern and the Iron King before the fall of Westhome, this small council advises the Iron King on important matters and distributes duties the King is unable to handle personally. Unknown to the council, the Iron King maintains a close watch on their dealings through covert methods and the use of his construct soldiers in the Stoneguard.

Across the cities and settlements of Andern, local mayors and minor nobility handle the day-to-day operations of their communities and act as extensions of the Iron King's will in regard to the enforcement of laws and the collection of taxes. A majority of the lesser nobles and elected or appointed officials are loyal to the crown but recently, concerns over the behavior of the Iron King and the whispers of dark forces (such as the Scorched Sultans and demons of the Worldfire) sow discontent. Secret societies flourish across Andern and the worship of dark powers increases despite the best efforts of the military and heroes of Andern.

Andern's military is comprised of two distinct branches: the Iron Falcons and the Stoneguard. The Iron Falcons are Andern's living army, assembled from the population through open enlistment. Led by Falcon Master Tela Hammerfall, the Iron Falcons specialize in a wide variety of fields—infantry, siegecraft, magic, etc.—but the real strength of the army is the exceptional training of its ground troops. Enlistees undergo rigorous training in combat, tactics, and survival skills, with the deep recon ranger units (known as the Silent Striders) among the most feared and respected across the Last Continent.

Within the Iron Halls and surrounding region, the stone construct army of the Iron King known as the Stoneguard maintains a constant, silent vigil over the capital. In the Stoneguard, the King has a security force that never sleeps and is immune to the greed and dissent that poisoned his closest allies many years ago. The origin of the constructs is a mystery to all, even the Inner Council, but many believe the Iron King called in favors and services from mages and masons from beyond Andern's borders to ensure security and discretion. Regardless, the Stoneguard is an intimidating force of unknown number that shows little mercy. None of the constructs bear any distinguishing marks or outward signs of personality. It's clear that the Iron King controls the legion, but it's uncertain how he does so.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Deeplake

The name of both the lake and the small fishing town near the water's edge, Deeplake is the last glimpse of civilization along the northeastern border Andern shares with the wastelands of Desin. Deeplake is a welcoming town and safe haven for merchant caravans making their way through Andern towards Daynir or brave souls planning expeditions in Desin. The Sleepy Drunk Inn boasts fine ales, warm beds, and fine entertainment and the town is well stocked with supplies. The center of town hosts a small shrine to Deknar the Smith and Prathian the Eternal Sage. The mayor, Abigail Rudd, is a descendent from refugees who fled Desin during the rise of the Underlords and she takes the protection of the town very seriously. Mayor Rudd often employs adventurers to investigate disturbances and rumors of trouble in the surrounding area, paying well for their services.



Hall of Whispers

Near the edge of the Mistwood stands a large stone archway overgrown with moss and ivy. It serves as a portal, transporting those who pass through the archway to a series of stone passages in an unknown location. Constructed from a strange bluish stone unknown to Karthun, there are no windows or sources of light within these foreign halls. Explorers braving the passages return with conflicting reports. For some, the halls are one passage with a series of right turns that leads back to the entry/exit arch. For others, the halls are an elaborate, unending maze. Some return from the halls in moments with nothing for their effort, others return with found treasures, and even more never return. Despite their experiences, every visitor describes one common occurrence: the whispers. From the moment of entry, voices never louder than a whisper echo through the halls, often barely audible but somehow familiar.

Iron Halls

The capital of Andern is nothing short of a fortress. The destruction of Westhome at the hands of the Scorched Sultans forced a move to the Iron Halls. Now, in the Age of Conflict, the Iron Halls stand as a massive subterranean city within the Veiled Mountains. Mining operations and trade across Karthun through caravans and massive farstep circles keep Andern's coffers overflowing to fund their efforts against their enemies. The people of the Iron Halls respect their King, but dark thoughts circulate among numerous secret societies loyal to the Iron King's original betrayers as well as agents of Felicos and the Mother of the Dead. Visitors to the Iron Halls describe the city as "the safest dangerous city" in Karthun.

Mistwood

The largest forest in Andern, legend says the Mistwood was the second forest planted on Karthun by Sehad the World Warden. The trees in the Mistwood are old with dense canopies, and a perpetual fog gives the Mistwood an uneasy atmosphere. Years ago, the Mistwood became the home to a pack of unchained werewolf demon worshippers—the Ravenous—who hunt with

little regard for the outside world, often straying out of the Mistwood on blood hunts for food and fresh sacrifices to their demon masters. In the dark recesses of the Mistwood, the Ravenous perform acts of debauchery and sacrifice to gain unholy strength and attempt in vain to satisfy a bloodthirst they cannot quench. In a desperate effort to quell the slaughter of travelers and nearby communities, a group of rangers from the logging town of Twinforks formed the Longbowmen to patrol the dangerous roads and hunting trails of Mistwood. Offering escorts to travelers and logging caravans alike, the rangers do all they can in fighting a losing battle against the growing madness of Mistwood.

Pyrehold

Once known as the mining town of Stonegate, Pyrehold now stands as the fortress citadel of the Scorched Sultans in Andern. The first victims of the War of Wave and Flame, Stonegate was overrun by servants of the efreeti noble houses and served as a launching point for campaigns against Istin and Andern. Since the occupation, the quaint thatched roofs and stonemasonry of Stonegate have been replaced with sharp iron points and the angled architecture symbolic of the efreeti. At the center of Pyrehold, the former clock tower stands remodeled as an iron tower, its peak constantly ablaze. In recent months, the stewards of Pyrehold have allowed independent travelers and merchants to trade in their marketplace and for those bold enough to do so, the oddities and wonders of the efreeti market offer treasures rarely seen in Karthun.

Ruins of Westhome

Once the capital city of Andern, Westhome is a smoldering ruin. Destroyed in 155 under the crushing forces of the Scorched Sultans, the unholy fire of the efreeti still smolders and crackles in 709 of the Age of Conflict., Dangerous creatures seeking nests, wandering undead imbued with the same unholy fire, and the depraved seek shelter amid the crumbling ruins. The ruins of Westhome is a popular site for would be heroes to make names for themselves

in Andern, but the Iron Falcons maintain a tight perimeter around the remnants of the city. Many treasures and personal artifacts of the monarchy were left behind; recently, the Iron King is growing remorseful and on occasion employs explorers to brave the ruins for specific heirlooms.

Narhal, the City of Harsh Reflections

Known as a free city of endless opportunities for the cunning and bold, a haven of political intrigue, and a monument of beauty washed in the macabre, Narhal stands as the most prominent free city on the Last Continent. Founded as a small mining village in 49 of the Age of Flames, Narhal prospered for decades, expanding from village, to town, to thriving city thanks largely to the mining and trade of Shadowrock.

Known across Karthun for its durability and rarity, Shadowrock is prized by master artisans and mages for its resilience and supernatural properties. The destruction of Shoana and Prevaul wiped out the majority of Shadowrock on Karthun, leaving only the veins on the Last Continent as viable mining options. On the Last Continent, the largest veins of Shadowrock rest within the mines beneath Narhal. With market prices soaring in the wake of the Worldfire's destruction, the mining operations of Narhal have thrived.

In the Age of Conflict, Narhal is a city of metaphors divided into two districts: the City of Day and the City of Night. Generations of mining, powerful rituals, and natural shifts in the land contribute to Narhal standing as a pillar within the recesses of a quarry. Monolithic bridges span across the quarry to allow entrance into Dusk: the entryway and middle ground between the City of Day and the City of Night. From Dusk, nobles, merchants, workers, and travelers move into and across the city districts. The streets of Dusk are Narhal in microcosm, with the rich and the poor both occupying the streets and alleyways. Traveling into the City of Day, the clean streets, elegant architecture, and sunlit gardens are the home of nobles, wealthy merchants, dignitaries, and the families of the

Council of Four (the four families who control the majority of Narhal's mining operations). While the streets of the City of Day are heavily patrolled and well lit, many other dangers dwell in both the shadows and the light of day.

Below the bright lights and warmth of the City of Day, the dim roads and alleyways of the City of Night serve as the homes of miners, warehouse workers, and the poor. Mining and nefarious deeds are the most common sources of income in the City of Night, with generations of renovations and haphazard construction resulting in a twisting maze of streets, alleyways, and derelict structures. Unlike the city above, the central neighborhoods of the City of Night exist in a constant state of dim light, with the exception being the streets along the outer rim of the pillar (homes and buildings here are prized). From the lower levels of the City of Night, the Council of Four's mining operations continue to work the veins of Shadowrock along with other precious gems and minerals while engaging in a centuries-old shadow war for superiority and sole ownership of the riches beneath the city.

Despite the differences of the City of Day and the City of Night, both districts share a pervasive sense of gloom and dread. The white stone towers of the City of Day always seem to be slightly dingy, with the stonework and accents favoring a macabre appearance. The flowers of the gardens never seem to fully bloom and rainfall around Narhal is notably substantial. In the shadows of the City of Night, the darkness almost feels tangible at times as unsettling silences sweep across entire neighborhoods. The dead do not rest easily in Narhal, and reported hauntings in both districts are commonplace. In 570 of the Age of Conflict, Shepherds of the Mother of the Dead discovered the veil between Karthun and the Dead is dangerously thin in Narhal. Clerics and sages have many theories as to why the phenomenon occurs, but few facts exist. For now, the citizens of Narhal, rich and poor alike, understand that grim things exist in the cracks of their city and everyone observes one tradition: cover your mirrors at night, for you do not know who or what is on the other side.

ANDORHEM FOREST

CAPITAL: None

RULER: None

COINAGE: None. Coinage from every nation circulates within Andorhem Forest

GOVERNMENT: A loose confederacy between towns, villages, and druidic circles

RELIGIONS: Elinar, teaching of the deceased Sehad the World Warden

Andorhem Forest is a shadow of its former self. Woodland groves planted and tended by Sehad, once lush with flora and natural streams, now stand faded and decaying. The once beautiful woodland realm of Andorhem Forest now stands as a mournful reminder of the World Warden's death. The temples and outposts of the Wardens crumble and decay. Once mighty oak trees as old as Karthun wither and burn under the weight of the war with the undead plague

spread by the worshippers of the Mother of the Dead. War-weary rangers, druids, and an alliance of beasts clinging to the philosophies of Sehad all wage war with the untiring undead, refusing to let the World Warden's legacy succumb to corruption and decay.

At the center of the conflict with the undead, Maldros the Bear Lord, darkened by the loss of his god and the endless war, struggles to protect Sehad's greatest forest. Under heavy canopies in the dark corners of the forest, fey natives of Andorhem are no longer mischievous or helpful, for they have turned to tormenting outsiders crossing through their realm. Around the hearths of taverns in villages dotting Andorhem, travelers tell stories of ghosts and demons haunting ruins that appear and disappear with the phases of the moon. Packs of Ravenous hunt with reckless abandon. The days of sun-soaked trees and beauty for Andorhem are over; all that remains is a cold, withered shell.



HISTORY

Legend says when the gods set about creating Karthun in the Age of Making, Sehad the World Warden wandered the world for years before choosing the spot where he planted Shodun the First Tree. The First Tree reached impossibly tall towards the sky, reaching outward in a thick umbrella that seemed to embrace the forest. The roots of the First Tree extended for miles; around it, a lush forest of dense trees, flowers, and undergrowth rose from the soil. Legends add that Sehad, wielding his staff, Warden's Oath, carved the first rivers and lakes on Karthun to nourish the First Tree and surrounding forest. Soon after, wildlife arrived—or appeared—within the boundaries of the massive forest. As the patron races emerged on Karthun and began to explore the world the gods created, the first humans to discover the forest and the First Tree called it Andorhem: a druidic term meaning “Gift of the Warden.”

Sehad journeyed on to raise the other forests of Karthun, but when his work was complete, he proclaimed Andorhem his home. From the stone and trees of Andorhem, he raised the first Shrine of Wardens as a place of rest and worship for the first of his Wardens. Followers arrived in droves to pledge their undying faith and allegiance to Sehad, the patron god of humanity. Soon, more shrines and outposts appeared throughout the forest. The ranks of the Wardens expanded and across Karthun the teachings of Sehad reached new rangers and druids of various woodlands dedicated to safeguarding nature. In Andorhem, Sehad granted his blessing upon Maldros, a bear known for his courage, kind heart, and strength. As the Bear Lord, Maldros reigned over the bears of Karthun and served as Sehad's right hand in the Wardens.

For years, Andorhem thrived in the face of the political upheaval in surrounding nations and dark forces attempting to corrupt the woodland folk. Evil spirits and cults of ill intention gravitated toward Andorhem and the First Tree. Rumors circulated with promises of the tree's ability to raise mortals to godhood and

nihilistic tales of ultimate destruction linked to its death. Doomsday cults routinely attacked the First Tree, convinced its death would trigger a chain reaction leading to Karthun's destruction. Undaunted, Wardens and the Circle of the First fought off such attacks, risking their own lives in the process.

When rumors reached the ears of neighboring nations, several attempted to absorb Andorhem for varying reasons and concerns. Emissaries from Daynir and Andern approached the Wardens and Circle of the First as concerned allies, hopeful to position military garrisons within Andorhem to protect the First Tree. The Wardens and druids politely declined and did so several times throughout the ages. In the case of Tavia, the sitting monarchy—long under the secret domination of the Blessed of the Crawl—demanded Andorhem fall under its “protection.” When the citizens of Andorhem refused, Tavia sent troops to take the First Tree by force. Underestimating the power of the Wardens, Circle druids, and allies of the First Tree, the conflict was a disaster for Tavia and its secret masters. Tavia withdrew its forces and opted for subtle methods, as the Blessed of the Crawl are nothing if not patient.

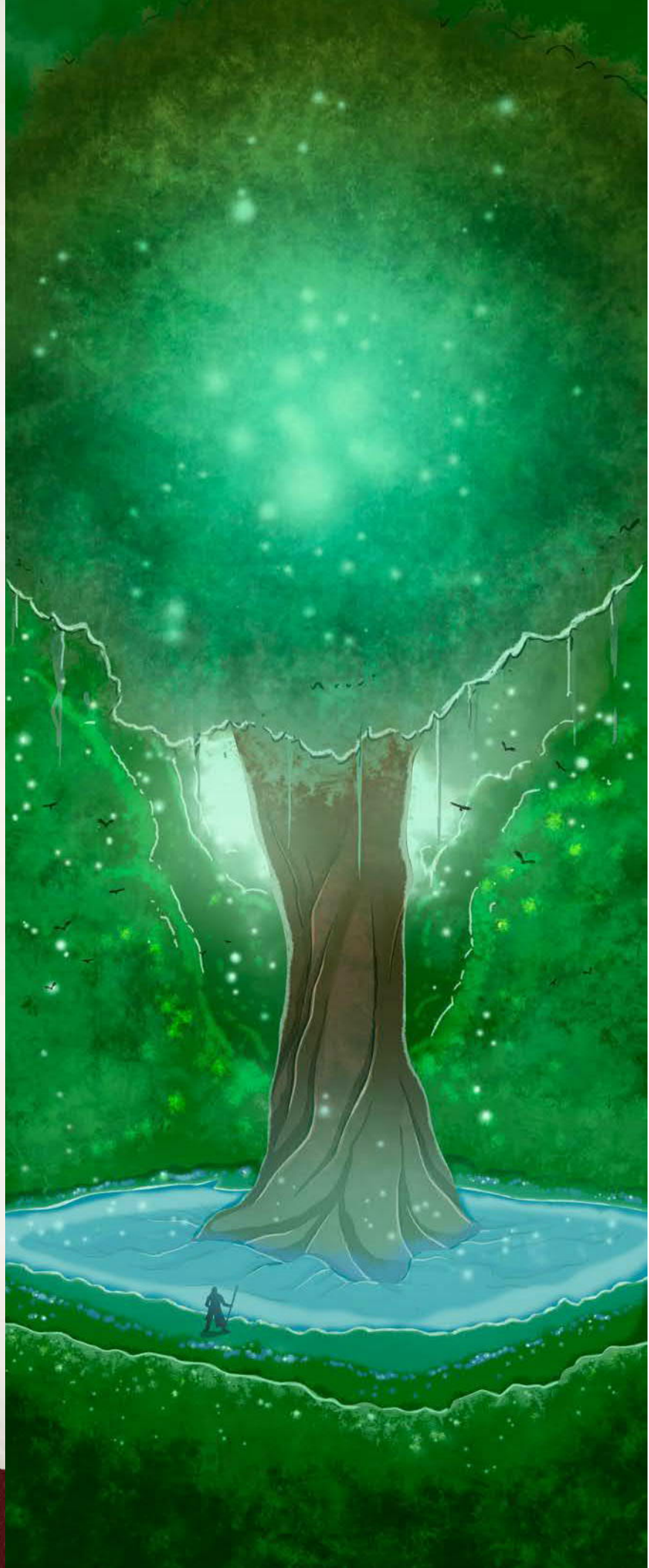
War is commonplace in Karthun and the flames of conflict touched Andorhem as well. During the War of the Titans, Wardens clashed with giants attempting to burn down the forest and destroy the First Tree. Many lives were lost and portions of the northern edge of Andorhem were destroyed. Suffering such losses, power of the First Tree waned, and it withdrew to focus its power on restoring the forest. Many historians believe this time of waning contributed to the corruption of the hardened Wardens who, frustrated with the state of Andorhem's hierarchy, called for a culling of the weak. For this, they were exiled from Andorhem.

Vowing revenge, ancestors of these exiles returned to Andorhem and slowly corrupted many of the Wardens. They forsook Sehad and joined the ranks of the exiled dragons from Eternity Peak to form the Final Council. The War

of Wardens claimed thousands of lives, as the dragons and Fallen Wardens tapped into dark, undisturbed powers to slay the Dragon Queens and their brood. As heroes rallied to the slopes of Eternity Peak, the Final Council launched a second assault against the First Tree. Supported by a draconic host, the Fallen Wardens claimed the lives of many Circle druids and residents of Andorhem before heroes arrived to halt the siege. The region around the Tree was decimated by the battle and, again, the First Tree waned under the loss of life.

The arrival of the Worldfire created Andorhem's greatest threat: the demons. Sensing the power and the importance of the First Tree to Karthun, the Three Demon Kings sent countless legions and demonic agents to destroy or corrupt it. Bloody, fire-scorched battles raged across the western regions of Andorhem, as again, Wardens, Circle druids, residents, and heroes joined forces to hold back the demons. These battles claimed the lives of most of the Circle of the First, with only a handful of elders and initiates remaining as a last line of defense at the base of the First Tree. In a desperate act, the First Tree removed itself from harm through a planar shift. It didn't leave Karthun completely, but set itself out of phase with the plane. A ghostly half-image remained visible but the act greatly weakened the Circle druids on the front lines. Soon after, the gods and heroes of Karthun sacrificed Kraya to forge the Chain and drive back the Worldfire. The sudden loss of the plane of light visibly shook the First Tree and the inhabitants of Andorhem, Sehad most of all.

When Sehad drew his final breath, the forest seemed to wilt. The sun-soaked trees and flowers of the forest bowed. The clear waters of the lakes and streams became murkier. The residents of Andorhem all staggered under the weight of sadness and loss. Sehad's Wardens awoke the next morning powerless, overcome with rage and grief. Their campaign against the Daggers of Felicos ended in tragedy, leaving the Circle of the First, Maldros, and the natives of Andorhem to watch over Sehad's legacy.



The First Tree's return in 406 puzzled many Circle druids. Its power seemed diminished, as though the Tree itself grieves Sehad. With the war waged by the Mother of the Dead and her undead army, the logging operations by Tavia, and the rise of strange cabals and creatures to corrupt Andorhem's communities, the Tree stands, embattled, but symbolic.

Andorhem is no longer a woodland paradise. The forest is besieged from many directions, clinging to life, and in desperate need of heroes.

GOVERNMENT

Andorhem functions under a loose confederacy between the towns, settlements, and the Circle of the First. Maldros the Bear Lord acts as the senior surviving voice for the philosophies of the Wardens and Sehad, but makes little effort to govern the forest. Each town operates under an elected leader or small council of elders, who communicate on a regular basis with the Circle of the First through written communication delivered by the Sparrows (a league of ranger-messengers). The arrival of the Rotting Legion in the south pulled the communities of Andorhem closer together and many town elders call for the appointment of a single authority figure in the time of war.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Shrine of the Wardens

Once the first shrine to Sehad the World Warden, these crumbling ruins remain as a grim reminder of the dead god's legacy. Raised and shaped by Sehad, the once pristine wood and sturdy stonemasonry of the shrine is now rotting and weakened. Despite its grim appearance, the shrine still serves as a meeting place for residents of Andorhem who are faithful to the teachings of Sehad. A handful of rangers and independent druids (including the hermitic Father of Leaves) still practice the rites and ceremonies of the Wardens, though none would ever label themselves as such. Within the shrine, simple markings offer praise and remembrance to Sehad and house the last of his personal belongings not

taken by the followers of Felicos. The shrine is never empty, as an informal schedule among the rangers and druids ensures that no ill-meaning forces or nesting beasts make their way inside. When a ranger isn't on hand, Maldros the Bear Lord resides in the shrine.

Oakbridge

Oakbridge is a popular waypoint for travelers passing through Andorhem. Nestled alongside the Fallleaf River, Oakbridge is the largest settlement in Andorhem and is named for the large oak bridge extending across one of the widest sections of the river. Merchants and townsfolk enjoy bountiful fishing and controlled farming and lumber operations under the guidance of the Circle of the First, as residents understand and respect their impact on the forest and choose to live in balance. Thought it began as a large campsite for traveling caravans making their way south from Daynir to the kingdom of Andern, Oakbridge developed into a small village and later into a town. Over the years, many travelers have arrived at Oakbridge and fallen in love with the peace of the forest and the local charm, but the war with the Rotting Legion in the south has scared off new settlers and driven away families. For now, the town still maintains a large population and hosts a small inn, tavern, merchant's plaza, and a meeting hall for the Andorhem rangers who patrol the paths and hunting trails.

Grove of the First Tree

Near the heart of forest, the land rises into a set of circular hills covered in a dense canopy of trees that obscures all daylight and a carpet of undergrowth filled with sharp thorns and vines. Eventually the thorns and brush clear, giving way to a grove filled with green grass, flowers, and enormous tree roots bathed in beams of sunlight. The roots lead to the center of the grove, twisting and turning towards the base of the First Tree. The First Tree is massive, measuring roughly 100 yards at its base and extending impossibly high towards the sky. At the top, dense branches extend outward over the tops of the highest trees

of Andorhem like a secondary canopy. Within the grove, druids of the Circle of the First live simply in shelters at the base of the First Tree. A small pond and stream run through the grove and fruits and vegetables are bountiful. Druids perform simple ceremonies in honor of the First Tree and the sound of chanting is common. From this central point, the druids commune with the First Tree and venture out into Andorhem to watch over its roots and the denizens of the forest. In times of peril, the entire grove can thicken in density and grow upwards of 20 feet. However, if a threat such as the Rotting Legion were to reach the grove, many druids believe the First Tree would move out of phase with Karthun once again—but they fear that may be the death knell of Andorhem.

Kellenbrooke

Once a thriving community in the southern region of Andorhem, the village of Kellenbrooke was the first to fall to the Rotting Legion. No one is sure how the Rotting Legion overran the village, but rumors suggest the followers of the Mother of the Dead and her undead legion rose from the old caverns beneath Andorhem Forest. Other rumors suggest infiltration and betrayal among the rangers sworn to protect Kellenbrooke. The legion continues to clash with rangers, druids, and denizens of the forest on their slow march towards the First Tree. Kellenbrooke is little more than a staging area for the Rotting Legion, and the quaint homes and small inn now serve as barracks and a shrine to the Mother of the Dead. Commanding the legion is a foul cleric named Diazmen Fyul, Daughter of the Mother. Diazmen is cold, cunning, and driven.

Glimmerhaunt Mines

Decades ago, an independent mining operation from the kingdom of Andern respectfully requested (and was granted) access to areas within Andorhem rumored to contain rich veins of gold. A caravan discovered the caves and miners quickly established their operation and a small base camp. For weeks, miners carefully explored and mined with few results. Frustration

rose until a breakthrough in the lowest mineshaft revealed a large chamber filled with glittering veins of gold. However, before the miners could harvest the first vein, strange growths in the cavern coughed a fog of spores that clung to skin, burning the victim and multiplying like a rash. Within moments, dozens of miners were encased in the glimmering spores and perished. Fearful, the miners abandoned the operation. The rangers of Andorhem stay far away from the Glimmerhaunt.

Sparrowfort

This small, wooden fort serves as the headquarters for the Sparrows, a group of rangers working as messengers across Andorhem. Many of the settlements rely on written communication and the Sparrows deliver correspondence with the guarantee of discretion. Unlike many travelers across the forest, the Sparrows keep an updated status on all of the temporary base camps, caravans, and travelers passing through Andorhem and possess an uncanny ability to locate anyone within the woodlands. This talent is of particular interest to the spies from the nation of Tavia who use the Sparrows to stay up to date on happenings among the rangers and druids, as Tavia continues to harvest lumber from the western edge of the forest.



*Emblem of
The Sparrows*

DAYNIR

CAPITAL: Xag the City of Monoliths

RULER: High Magistrate Sendrin Kynn

COINAGE: Tower (platinum), Gate (gold), Book (silver), Copper (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Democracy led by an elected High Magistrate and Congress of Nineteen

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Elinar, Felicos, the Mother of the Dead, Prathian

Human history began with founding of the nation of Mastern; in time, as tragedy and the will of humanity pulled the great nation apart, the nation of Daynir rose from its ashes. Heralded

as the greatest nation for academia, magic, and political theatre, Daynir survived the War of Titans, massive earthquakes, and the arrival of the Worldfire with grace and dignity. Now, in the Age of Conflict, in a world without the patron god of humanity, Daynir begins to suffer under the weight of corruption and the ill intentions of dark forces. Ambassadors from every nation bicker over land, power, and prestige as the nation of Tavia prepares for another brutal war, hungry to take what Daynir holds. From the city of Xag, the monoliths, silent and ancient, loom over the nation, sowing renewed paranoia and fear for the secrets held by the gods.



HISTORY

What is now Daynir was once called Mastern. Sages and archivists versed in the historical accounts of Mastern's early days proclaim the rise of the first human nation to be divine providence for a number of reasons. When the first pilgrims traveled to the northwest region of Doryan, they discovered a monolithic city of impossibly tall towers, monoliths, seemingly endless libraries, centers of academia, and pristine residences. The city itself was empty, devoid of life, and appeared to be ready made for the first of the patron races to discover and claim it. Mastern quickly became one of the largest nations in Karthun's history, with an empire extending along the entire west coast of Doryan and into the heartland of the continent, sharing borders with the dwarves of the Emerald Throne and the elven clans of Symul. In the far south, they managed a tentative but peaceful relationship with the lizardfolk of Sylmn.

For years, Mastern thrived and within the capital city of Xag, mages, scholars, scientists, philosophers, and engineers pioneered new ways of thinking, magic, and technology that shaped the future of Karthun. Human explorers set out across the uncharted regions of Doryan as well as the city of Xag itself. The City of Monoliths presented mysteries the natural curiosity of humanities mages and scholars could not ignore. Soon, scholars and nobles began to ask questions about Xag's origins, the monoliths, and the sealed archives around the city. Under the proclamation of King Waryn, archivists began to map and catalog the passages and structures within every city quarter. Below the city, explorers plumbed the depths of catacombs stretching the length of the city and descending to unknown depths. With every building archived and every new system of catacombs discovered, more questions developed among the people of Xag. Over the course of the following months, reports of similar catacombs, individual monoliths, and sealed archives found across Doryan reached the ear of King Waryn. With curiosity and caution on the rise, the kingdom's leadership petitioned the gods for answers.

In -3031, Prathian the Eternal Sage and his Archivists from the nation of Xyn appeared before King Waryn for a private conversation. Shortly after the conference, Prathian and his Archivists performed rituals to seal seven structures within the city of Xag, including the hall housing the Diamond Monolith. With the sealing rituals completed, Prathian left the city of Xag, issuing a statement that neither he nor any of the gods would ever return to the City of Monoliths.

The eventual death of King Waryn splintered Mastern into three regions governed individually; in time, each assumed their own identities and agendas. A cabal of mages, the Hooded Crows, formed the nation of Tavia in Central Mastern, and years of war with Tavia and isolation drove the Governor of Southern Mastern and his subjects to declare their independence and establish the kingdom of Andern. Northern Mastern responded to feelings of paranoia by withdrawing into itself. This paranoia led to the construction of the Last Line, a colossal wall around the capital city of Xag, and an obsession with the sealed structures across the city and region. The public ramblings and accusations of the Governor incited a moment of mass hysteria, as panicked citizens clawed at the sealed structures, attacked the centers of academia, and assaulted clerics and paladins of the gods. For several days, hysteria washed over the city of Xag. In a rare moment of clarity, the Governor resigned his post and the Grand Archivist of Prathian appeared before the people to institute a new leadership with a High Magistrate and the Congress of Nineteen, proclaiming the city of Xag and surrounding region of Northern Mastern be known as Daynir.

The High Magistrate and Congress of Nineteen devoted time and great expense towards elevating the prestigious centers of learning across Daynir. Colleges received donations from the government and private nobles to construct new facilities for magic and science. Students from across Karthun flocked to the finest academies Daynir offered, and for decades Daynir stood above all other nations in matters

of academia. The greatest achievement of the first High Magistrate and Archivists of Prathian was the construction of the Grand Archive. The library-fortress in the center of Xag now stands as the largest and most comprehensive archive in Karthun. Within the seemingly endless halls, copies of books from around the world and beyond await those eager for knowledge. In secure wings guarded by Sentinels of the Book, dozens of tomes penned by Prathian himself stand on display and are made available to the public. The Grand Archive is Karthun's living history, meticulously looked after by the most experienced archivists in Daynir.

The Grand Archive and its contents are believed by many to be the cause of Daynir's first life-threatening challenge: the arrival of giant clans from the Endless marching south in a full-frontal assault of the region, carving a path of destruction towards the City of Monoliths and sparking the War of the Titans. On the steps of Congress Hall, a masked figure known as the Arbiter of the Truth called for the return of the gods to protect the first city of Karthun and the Grand Archive. When the gods did not answer, giant shamans tapped into primal forces within Karthun to raise gargantuan stone constructs known as Titans. Marching to Xag, the Titans destroyed entire sections of the Last Line as Daynir's military, heroes, and the gods battled for their lives against the giant marauders. In the desperate final clash, heroes of Karthun and Sehad the World Warden defeated the giant Chieftain Icesplitter and his titans on the blood-soaked plains outside of the city of Xag, ending the Chieftain's life and the lives of every giant on Karthun (all bound to him through profane rituals to increase his strength). The City of Monoliths survived, and Daynir mourned their dead.

The Age of Flames brought the fury of the Worldfire to Karthun and to the western coast of Daynir. The force of the Worldfire pulled pieces of the continent into the seas, claiming countless lives. In the heart of the City of Monoliths, once again the Arbiter of the Truth and his Witnesses of the Truth appeared in public squares, proclaiming

the folly of worshipping the gods, blaming the Six for the wrath of the Worldfire, and calling for a reckoning. In the years since his first appearance, the Arbiter and his followers stood accused of acts of terrorism against the city of Xag and the temples of the gods, while being directly responsible for revealing acts of corruption among the nobles and politicians of Daynir.

The eastern nations of Desin and Landrin suffered the full brunt of the demonic legions with the arrival of the Worldfire, but Daynir did not escape the corrupting influence of the Three Demon Kings. Daynir boasted a cosmopolitan populace with open-minded views on religion and personal freedom, but the arrival of the demons and their nihilistic views challenged these beliefs. In secret chambers, masked cultists ranging from powerful politicians to common laborers met in secret to perform disturbing rituals to the Three Demon Kings and other dark forces beyond the veil of Karthun. Necromancers acting in defiance of the Mother of the Dead imbibed elixirs to extend their lives and increase their power. A dark corruption penetrated Daynir at every level of society and the once strong academic and political pillars of Daynir society weakened with every passing year. While enemies continue to grow outside, still the greatest threat to Daynir is Daynir itself. The nation of Tavia presses its advantage against Daynir with political maneuvers and a shadow war executed by the deadliest spies and assassins on Karthun. Several of the Daggers of Felicos roam among the population and politicians, hiding in plain sight, creating chain reactions of chaos and murder to the delight of the King of Rogues.

GOVERNMENT

The current political theatre of Daynir in the Age of Conflict is a cold, cutthroat arena filled with personal agendas, blood feuds, and partisan bickering. The current High Magistrate, Sendrin Kynn, is under constant political assault and false allegations of corruption and debauchery. In the Congress Hall, the Congress of Nineteen bicker over every major (and some minor) law

and proposal placed for vote. Once steadfast leadership, several members of the Congress are now rumored to be in league with demons or working to advance the schemes of Tavia. Among the Congress, the Fifth Dagger of Felicos operates unnoticed, moving pieces on a political chessboard.

From the High Magistrate and Congress of Nineteen, laws and policies are distributed to and enforced by Lord Mayors in every city and town across Daynir. Lord Mayors have the right to create and enforce their own policies based on the region and political climate, but any major shift in the law or established policy must go before the Congress of Nineteen. With the current state of Congress, many Lord Mayors opt to forego new policy—or establish their own without Congress approval.

Daynir's military acts as a police force in the cities and towns, taking orders in conjunction with military commanders known as Town Generals. Along the borders of Daynir, large military forces enforce strict travel policies in the wake of acts of terrorism and war from Tavia and isolated organizations. The troops along the southern border with Tavia are currently under orders to avoid open warfare, but it's common—though unproven—knowledge that a shadow war between covert agencies is ongoing.

Since the days of the first High Magistrate of Daynir, the Greymasks have served as the first line of protection for the High Magistrate and the office. Due to the danger and sensitivity of their roles in the government, all Greymasks wear their namesake: featureless grey masks. All masks are the same, regardless of sex, and none of the Greymasks use proper names in the field. Instead, each member answers to a specific number with Number One acting as the commander and liaison to the High Magistrate. As the personal bodyguards and police branch of the High Magistrate office, the Greymasks attend to security and confidential matters. The chain of command is simple and straightforward, with Number One answering to the High Magistrate and orders and seniority descending downward



by number. Currently, twenty-three Greymasks are active with another fifteen in reserve. Secrecy and loyalty are paramount to the Greymasks, and the use of advanced interrogation techniques, investigation, and magic is employed to ensure corruption never enters the organization. In the rare cases of such corruption and betrayals, the offenders seem to disappear from the face of Karthun with no questions asked by the Congress or High Magistrate.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Arkmont Forest

The largest forest in Daynir, Arkmont Forest is the primary source for lumber for the city of Xag and settlements across the region. Several government-funded logging operations work along the western edge of the forest, often competing for annual contracts. Within the forest, several druidic circles work to maintain a

balance with the loggers and the wild creatures of Arkmont. One druidic circle, the Midnight Order, grows weary of the logging presence and recently launched a campaign against the lumberjacks and their camps. Arkmont also contains a handful of ancient entryways into the massive catacombs stretching beneath Daynir. Currently, the druidic circles avoid the entryways, reporting the presence of dark entities surfacing from the darkness within.

Candlewood

Nestled at the base of the Wyrmfall Mountains, the dense foliage and canopies of pine trees cast the Candlewood in a perpetual state of shadow. Travelers and residents of the Candlewood tell stories of small, floating lights within the darkest portions of the forest, each flickering like candlelight. Children in the small villages chase the lights that drift close, but to date no one has actually touched one of the lights, as they seem to blink out of existence when approached. Regardless of the origin or true nature of the lights, travelers lost in the wood tell tales of the lights leading them back to civilization. The lights know what residents do not know: the center of the Candlewood is dangerous and haunted by the presence of vampiric beasts—half bear-half owls covered in grey, rotting fur and feathers that hunt at any hour, thanks to the thick canopy at the heart of the forest.

Fourbells

Formerly a small watchpost on the plains (hence the tower bells used as signal alarms) and the largest town in southern Daynir, Fourbells serves as one of the few safe havens for travelers entering into Tavia on the open plains. The isolation of Fourbells gives the town a frontier feel, with hardy folk who believe someone's word is their bond. Fourbells also attracts individuals looking to escape from large society or the law for past crimes. Residents rarely ask about the past and choose to live in the present under the watchful, stern eye of Lord Mayor Stansk Riger and his personal police force, the Hounds. While not corrupt, Riger and the Hounds are not kind

individuals and those who cross them typically end up severely injured or disappear from Fourbells completely.

Greymask Hall

As the central headquarters for the Greymasks of Daynir, this tower is reinforced against direct assaults and contains an extensive bunker stocked with weeks' worth of supplies, gold, and weapons, and magical access to secret safehouses across Karthun (including a secret farstep circle within the High Magistrate's personal residence in Xag). From here, the Greymasks coordinate protection details and launch investigations and missions at the order of the High Magistrate.

Memorial Coast

In 140 of the Age of Flames, a massive earthquake struck Daynir, sinking portions of the western coast into the Frozen Sea, creating massive tidal waves, and claiming thousands of lives. The devastation ceased one mile away from the city of Xag. To memorialize the dead, a stone monument was erected on the coastal cliffs, marking the day and the names of as many of the fallen as possible. Over the years since the earthquake, reports of ghosts of drowned victims haunting the region became common. Some ghosts seem to observe the water quietly for a time, while others seem overcome with rage, haunting nearby communities and attacking the living.

Tower of Stars

Appearing only at night and standing high among the rocky slopes of the Wyrmfall Mountains, this black stone tower stretches into the sky, appearing to fade into a brilliant field of stars. This is the Tower of Stars, the former home of the mage Moren Task, one of the infamous Worldwalkers. Little is known about Moren's life prior to becoming a mage bound to an elemental that's described as being composed of pure starlight. Rumors suggest Moren survived on the streets of Daynir until coming of age. Others suggest he was to be the sole heir to a merchant empire. In his prime, Moren Task was a powerful mage and earned a reputation as a planar

scholar, giving detailed lectures focused on his fascination with the stars in the night sky. The Tower of Stars stands as a siren call to adventures in Daynir. Since the fall of the Worldwalkers, Moren Task's whereabouts are unknown and the Tower of Stars remains impervious to thieves and curious explorers. The path to the Tower of Stars is dangerous, as the sheer cliffs and jagged terrain make the journey difficult, in addition to a clan of Cyclops raiders who lair in the region around the tower.

Traylin

Known as the Gate of the East, the merchant city of Traylin is a crossroads and destination for numerous merchant operations and travelers making their way through Dawngate Pass in the Wyrmfall Mountains. Unlike other towns and cities within Daynir, the unofficial/official truth of the matter is that the position of Lord Mayor of Traylin is largely an honorific title currently held by Lord Mayor Augin Vern, a middle-aged man of little ambition. The true rulers of Traylin are the members of the Kaldenum, an alliance of powerful merchant lords from Daynir, Tavia, Andern, and Istin. While their exact membership and numbers are hazy to the public, the Kaldenum are organized and methodical in their practices. From Traylin, the merchant lords oversee the ebb and flow of goods and services across vast regions and their agents maintain secure transport services. Ten years ago, the Kaldenum hired adventurers to explore and clear out vast sections of the Daynir catacombs for their own purposes, using the passages as an exclusive trade road around Traylin.

Xag the City of Monoliths

Legend says that when human pilgrims first arrived in the region known today as Daynir, the city of Xag was waiting for them. The origins of the city remain a topic of discussion for historians, but the impossibly high towers, advanced architecture, aqueduct systems, and the massive wall of the Last Line alone make Xag a breathtaking sight for first-time visitors. What sets Xag apart from other cities is the presence of the Monoliths. Standing high over the tallest towers in the city, these deep blue crystalline pillars stand silently, emitting a faint blue glow on nights when any one of Karthun's three moons is full. Since the Age of Making, several monoliths of various sizes and influences have been discovered across Karthun and mages and scholars have studied the pillars since humans arrived in Xag with little to show for it. As with many things, the gods do not discuss the monoliths.

Xag is a cosmopolitan city with representatives of every race and every nation walking the same city streets. As a center for the Last Continent's political theatre, ambassadors from every nation and major organization reside in the city to pursue their homeland's best interests. Intrigue and covert dealings are commonplace across the city, as politicians, powerful mages, heroes, merchants, thieves, demons, and other dark forces maneuver for power and position.

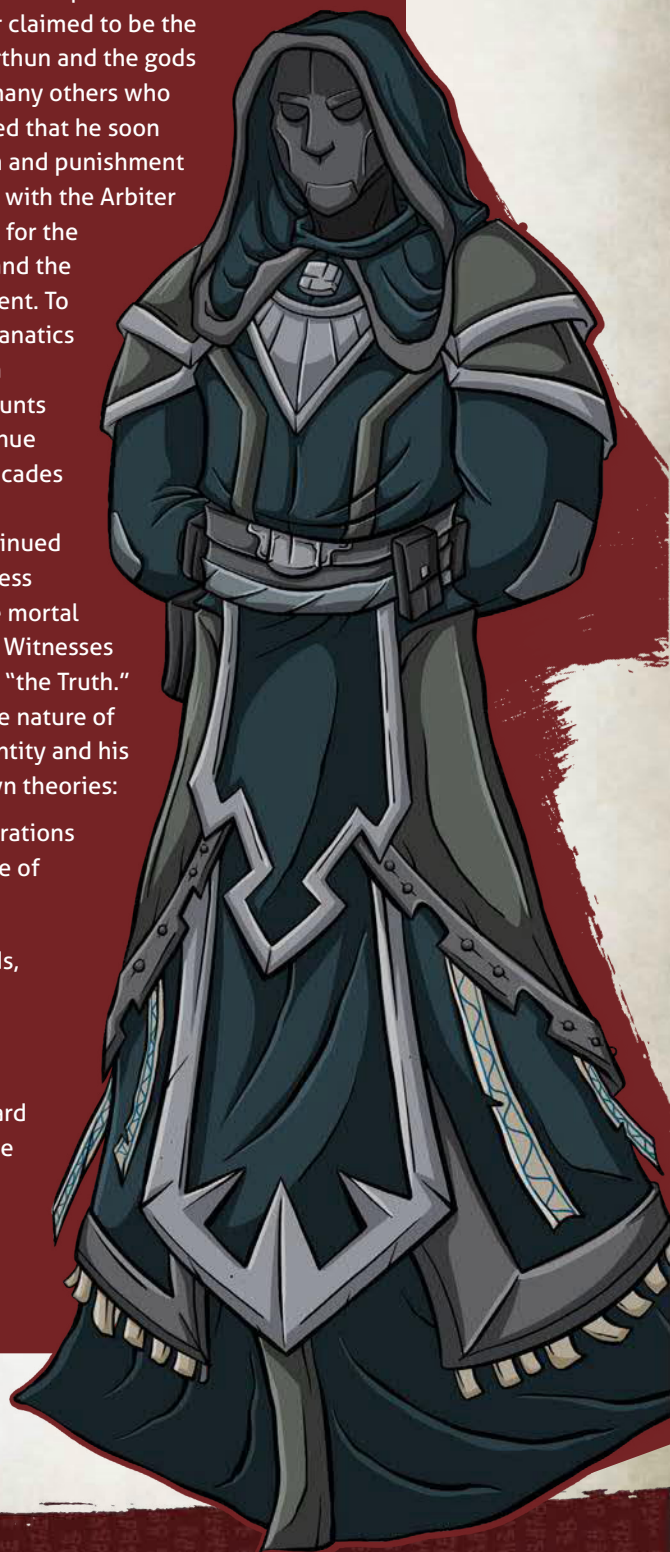
Dozens of documented entrances to the catacombs of Daynir are scattered across the city. Interestingly, some are sealed and placed under watch by the Daynir military while others are open to explorers and historians brave enough to enter. The historical department of Delhurst Academy currently offers payment for any maps made of new sections of the catacombs beneath Xag, but such exploration is dangerous as all manners of cultists and creatures wander the passages.

THE ARBITER OF THE TRUTH

Hero. Activist. Terrorist. Enigma. The being known as the Arbiter of the Truth is one of the most infamous figures in Daynir and cause for a great deal of speculation. Appearing at random moments in the city of Xag, with reports of sightings across the Last Continent, chaos seems to follow the footsteps of the Arbiter. The first reported sighting of the Arbiter occurred in 1615 in the Age of Enlightenment. Appearing and sounding as a male humanoid wearing long, intricate robes, a hood, and mask covering his entire face, the Arbiter spoke his first words to the citizens of Xag on the steps of the cathedral of Prathian the Eternal Sage. In his speech, the Arbiter claimed to be the holder of "the Truth" and secrets that would bring Karthun and the gods to its knees. Initially, the Arbiter was dismissed, like many others who prophesized doom and destruction, and it was believed that he soon faded away. In time, the Arbiter returned, vowing pain and punishment for every year the truth remained hidden by the gods, with the Arbiter and his Witnesses of the Truth claiming responsibility for the death of corrupt politicians, cultists, random nobles, and the destruction of strategic targets across the Last Continent. To some, the Arbiter is a terrorist and his Witnesses are fanatics warped by his words. To others, he is a saint walking a difficult path. Despite popular opinion, massive manhunts fail to apprehend the Arbiter and the Witnesses continue to preach the word of "the Truth," disappearing for decades only to appear for a seemingly random purpose.

Over the course of centuries, the Arbiter has continued to appear in the city of Xag, demanding the gods confess their sins as slavers to mortal souls and calling for the mortal races to rise up against their divine jailers. He and his Witnesses are still active, carrying out their personal crusade for "the Truth." The supernaturally long lifespan of the Arbiter and the nature of his public sermons lead to several theories on his identity and his true purpose. Here are some of the more widely known theories:

- ◆ The role of the Arbiter has passed down the generations from one bearer to the next, creating a false sense of immortality.
- ◆ The Arbiter is one of the first followers of the gods, granted immortality and driven mad by it.
- ◆ The Arbiter is Prathian the Eternal Sage.
- ◆ The Arbiter is a construct, much like the Stoneguard in Andern, created by powerful mages to serve the gods, but he's been somehow damaged.
- ◆ The Arbiter of the Truth is the seventh god of Karthun, betrayed by his brethren before the creation of the patron races.



THE DEEP

CAPITAL: None

RULER: None

COINAGE: None. Coinage from the surface nations, unminted coinage, and gemstones are common currency

GOVERNMENT: Dictatorships, mageocracies, tribal leaders, and scattered “kingdoms”

RELIGIONS: Deknar, demonic worship, Felicos, Prathian, the Mother of the Dead

Below the mountains, forests, deserts, and rolling plains of the Last Continent exists a dark underworld of twisting passages, enormous caverns, rivers, and lakes known as the Deep. To a majority of the inhabitants of Karthun, the Deep is a mysterious place best left unexplored and unprovoked. Settlements near caverns warn their children and foolhardy adventurers about the dangers of going into the dark, claustrophobic recesses of Karthun—typically to no avail—and every village bard tells tales of the horrors that await below.



HISTORY

Karthun is a world filled with secrets and conspiracies and, while recorded history accounts for many things, the origins and history of the Deep both baffles and troubles historians. It's known that the gods forged the world, the heavens above, and Kraya during the Age of Making, but details about the creation of the Deep remain scarce. The gods rarely speak of the Deep or the goings on beneath the surface, with

the exception of Deknar's work with the Chain at the world's core. Many scholars speculate that the expansive, ever-shifting nature of the Deep and its denizens render it too chaotic or frivolous for the attention of the gods.

Since the Age of Enlightenment, explorers and adventurers have taken up torch and sword to descend into the seemingly infinite passages and caverns of the world below the surface. Many

never returned, but those who did spoke of wonders, horrors, and a world unlike any on the surface. The earliest reliable accounts of the Deep came from the dwarves of the Emerald Throne as they mined and explored the depths beneath Honor's Hold in their former nation of Desin. Many dwarves set out into the dark to discover rich mining veins and new life with the hope of unlocking some of Karthun's greatest secrets. Over the years, the dwarves encountered strange, almost alien lifeforms, cities carved from stone, rivers, vast lakes resembling dark oceans, and mountain ranges to rival those on the surface. Dwarven explorers filled countless tomes with notes, maps, and sigils found in the Deep.

The time of exploration for the dwarves came to an abrupt end when explorers first encountered the warlike race of insectoids the dwarves dubbed the Writhing Swarm. Their battles resulted in catastrophic losses on both sides, sparking a war that still rages in the Age of Conflict. When the Writhing Swarm destroyed the city of Honor's Hold and sent the Emerald Throne into ruin, the dwarves retreated into the Deep to escape the wrath of the demons of the Worldfire, believing they could defeat the Swarm. In the years that followed, the dwarves descended into demon worship, slavery, and tyrannical dreams of conquest within the Deep. Their shift in morality broke ties with the surface nations and silenced any reliable scouting of the deepest regions within the Deep.

In the centuries since the rise of the Underlords, countless scouting parties have mapped the uppermost layers of the Deep referred to as the Surface Caverns. Attempts to delve deeper were met with parties becoming lost, starving, or encountering hostile denizens, leaving much of the Deep unexplored and dangerous. A select few entered the darker regions of the Deep and returned with a smattering of maps and notes of their encounters. Despite forward progress, many heads of state turn a fearful eye to what lies below, cautious that it may all rise to the surface someday.

GOVERNMENT

The Deep covers the entire expanse of the Last Continent (and possibly more). With so many unexplored regions and warring denizens vying for control, no one government exists within the Deep.

TERRITORIES WITHIN THE DEEP

In the Age of Conflict, explorers and historians have pieces of information regarding the depth and territories within the Deep. This section details the current extent of common knowledge regarding the Deep and the occupied areas for Karthun campaigns. A majority of the Deep remains unexplored and unlabeled for Gamemasters to customize to their own adventure ideas and campaigns.

Deep Terminology

As explorers ventured into new areas within the Deep, they recorded significant changes in the environment, giving deeper "levels" of the caverns individual names for recording purposes. Across the expanse of the Deep, levels collide and intersect with each other, often very subtly. Explorers lost in the caverns can travel miles before realizing they have moved onto a different level of the Deep. Naturally shifting environments also confuse travelers, rendering maps often out of date. Maps of the Deep from reputable sources sell for small fortunes in major cities among heroes, branches of law enforcement, mining operations, and individuals with ill intentions searching for isolated places to conduct their clandestine business.

In populated areas dedicated to exploration—such as universities and explorer's guilds—great effort is expended to provide markers and safe havens within the Deep, through the use of everburning torches and reinforced safehouses keyed to specific farstep circles. Mining operations employ skilled escorts and magic to prevent tunnel collapses or to drive away hungry predators from operations.

Surface Caverns

These are the twisting passages and small caverns found closest to the surface. Many rivers and lakes flow into these caverns, leading into the deeper levels. Explorers recorded tales of companions falling into moving water within the Surface Caverns only to be discovered far below in the Eternal Night or deeper still. The Surface Caverns are a maze of interconnecting and labyrinthine passages honeycombed with dead ends, small caverns, and nooks. With proximity to the surface, many of the caverns and passages allow for pockets of natural light that keep the appearances of dangerous molds, spores, and fungi to few and far between. Traditionally, wild animals such as wolves, bears, and similar creatures nest in the Surface Caverns, while kobolds, goblins, and feral orcs use the caverns for lairs and makeshift strongholds.

Light's End

In the darker levels below the Surface Caverns, all light from the surface fades as the thicker cavern passages widen into large caverns filled with stalactites dotted with pockets of mold and fungi. Within Light's End, the first deep rivers, waterfalls, and lakes appear in the Deep. While the rivers rush quickly downward from the Surface Caverns, the lakes in Light's End remain still, aside from the occasional ripple from creatures lurking beneath the surface. While the twisting passages of the Surface Caverns often confuse travelers, it's the open, dark expanses of Light's End that bring feelings of loss and hopelessness. Travelers lost in Light's End often perish from hunger or madness. Feral, mindless creatures are said to roam the passages of Light's

End and many explorers believe the dark stone caverns to be haunted or closely aligned with the plane of the Dead.

The Falls

So named for the gargantuan pits, cliffs, and waterfalls that descend from the levels above, the Falls claims the lives of explorers, miners, and denizens alike. The eruption of the Worldfire and the forging of the Chain collapsed miles of caverns as the ground cracked and yawned, creating the chasms that form the Falls. Walking along the passages and ledges of the Falls is dangerous in the best situations and the migratory patterns of giant bats and other flying creatures makes unguided travel in this area a deadly proposition.

Eternal Night

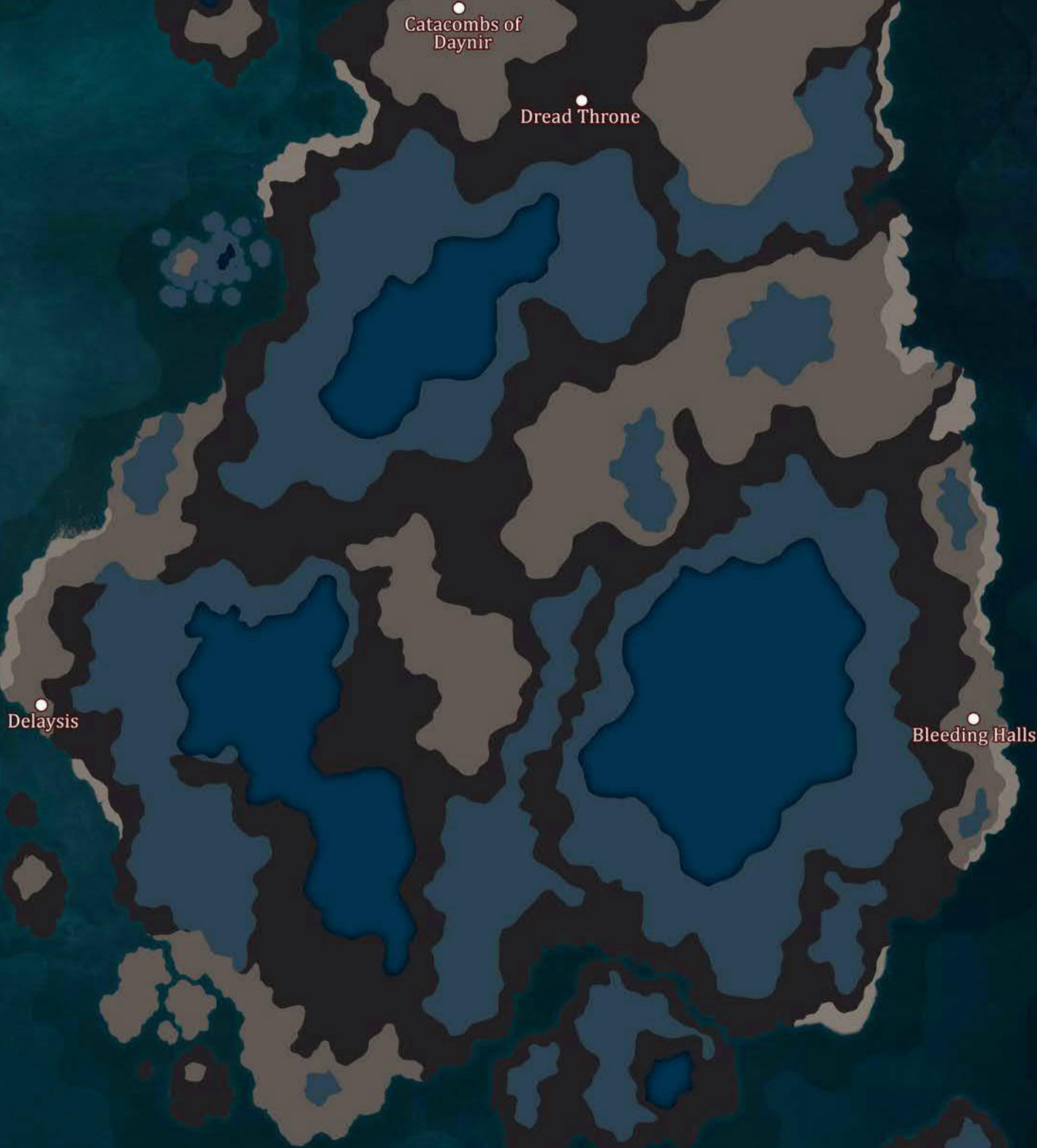
Recognized as the lowest recorded levels of the Deep, Eternal Night is a realm of horrors. Known for its colossal caverns miles wide and subterranean mountain ranges surrounded by lakes as still as dark glass, tales from explorers describe the region as "otherworldly." Few explorers have traveled to Eternal Night and returned unscathed. The utter absence of light seems to dim both mundane and alchemical light sources with few rational explanations. The stillness and silence of Eternal Night impose a feeling of dread upon travelers, and the creatures lurking in the darkness possess frightening patience and intellect. At the deepest levels, explorers describe shrines dedicated to gods unknown on Karthun and vast cities carved from the cavern walls with an inhuman attention to detail.

WHAT LIES BELOW?

Eternal Night is the deepest recorded level of the Deep, but more caverns and dangers could lie deeper still. GMs are encouraged to add as much or as little as they prefer to the expanse of the Deep. Caverns below the Last Continent could reach down to the ocean floor or deeper. In the fantasy setting, tunnels could lead to the realm of Deknar the Smith and the Chain, though such a journey would be perilous from both environmental dangers and beings lurking near the world core, searching for one crack in Deknar's defenses.

THE DEEP

- Surface Caverns
- The Falls
- Light's End
- Eternal Night
- Body of Water



POINTS OF INTEREST

The Bleeding Halls

Located across the Surface Caverns and Light's End levels of the Deep beneath the theocracy of Erast, the Bleeding Halls is the stronghold for a massive gathering of trolls known as the Undying. Led by the ancient troll necromancer named Shatterbones, the Undying are currently embroiled in a war with clans of kobolds and grimlocks occupying the caverns surrounding Undying territory. The trolls have amassed a legendary treasure horde since beginning their occupation, serving as a tempting challenge for thieves and adventurers. In the deepest recesses of the Undying caverns, Shatterbones and his harem of necromancer brides perform dark rituals to extend the already prolonged lifespans of Shatterbones, his harem, and his trusted aides. Such magic performed under the Theocracy of Erast is an affront to the will of the Mother of the Dead and several of her Shepherds have entered the caverns to root out Shatterbones, but none have ever returned. Despite his Mother's wishes, Kyzul—the demigod ruler of Erast—opts on the side of caution and wishes to avoid a bloody uprooting and full-scale assault upon the Undying. Currently he's searching for a group of powerful heroes to eliminate Shatterbones.

The Dread Throne

Deep within the recesses of Eternal Night, the center of power for the Underlords is an imposing structure of iron, stone, and fire. In a tribute to the demonic architecture of their patrons the Three Demon Kings and a blatant act of defiance towards their former patron god, Deknar the Smith, the Underlords constructed the Dread Throne from iron taken from and shaped by fires of the Worldfire.

Fortified to withstand massive assaults by hand, siege, or magic, the Dread Throne has repelled countless attacks from the Writhing Swarm. Inside, the fortress houses thousands of dwarves, workshops, living quarters, and chapels to the Three Demon Kings, as well as secret chapels to Felicos and the Mother of the Dead.

At the heart of the fortress, the namesake Dread Throne sits in an open cathedral of twisted iron and fire. Here, King Brolden Vrak III holds court with his advisors and any subjects deserving of an audience. King Brolden Vrak III is never without two members of his personal guard nearby and often travels exclusively through secret tunnels connecting the throne cathedral to his private estate.

Beneath the fortress city, slave pits and cells hold thousands of slaves for distribution to slave markets across Karthun. In addition to the pits, two small gladiatorial pits are in use to test potential high-value fighters for auctioneers and pit masters.

Catacombs of Daynir

Within the Surface Caverns, an intricate network of metal tunnels expands across the estimated width of the nation of Daynir. The smooth metal passages connect at perfect angles and with seamless craftsmanship. Since their discovery beneath the city of Xag, many of the entrances into the catacombs were sealed or placed under guard by Daynir's government, though other passages remain open to scholars and explorers. While criminals, cults, and creatures use the tunnels for passage and reaching dens all across Daynir, the actual purpose of the metal catacombs remains a mystery.

Delaysis

Carved within the coastal cliffside of Kolther in Sylmn, the passages of these Surface Caverns serve as the domain of three medusa sisters in service to the Lords of Dusk. With the aid of several dozen grimlocks, the medusa sisters oversee the port towns and business affairs of the Lords of Dusk along the coast. Inside the realm of Delaysis, the medusas utilize twisting passages and pits to trap and slay intruders. At the heart of their realm, the sisters collect statues of their prey and arrange them along a circular chamber referred to as the Heart of Stone.

DESIN

CAPITAL: None

RULER: None

COINAGE: None. Coinage from the ruins of the Emerald Throne and surrounding nations circulate in Desin

GOVERNMENT: None

RELIGIONS: Deknar, demonic worship, Felicos, Prathian, the Mother of the Dead

Once the seat of power for the greatest empire in Karthun's history, the ruined wasteland of Desin is a far cry from the days when the noble dwarves of the Emerald Throne watched over the east coast of Doryan (now the

Last Continent). After years of war and tragedy, the Emerald Throne fell, the dwarves abandoned their lands and ideals, and the arrival of the Worldfire and the demonic legions of the Three Demon Kings scarred the land. Now, brutal scavenger clans of gnolls fight for land, riches, and superiority while the survivalist engineers of the Surveyors use the abandoned and disused railways of Desin to search for forgotten technology from the gilded age of the Emerald Throne. Demonic horrors under the watch of the Three Demon Kings scheme from the shadows and the dwarves of Thulengard (freed slaves now forging their own destiny) continue their campaign to explore the ruins of their ancestral home, searching for their legacy.





HISTORY

Before the fall of the dwarves and the corruption of the Underlords, the monarchy of the Emerald Throne ruled over the largest nation in Karthun's history. Originally comprised of the entire eastern region of Doryan in lands known today as Desin, Landrin, and Erast, the ancestral Kings and Queens of the Emerald Throne pursued aggressive expansion of their holdings while spearheading countless arcane and technological breakthroughs in the name of their patron god, Deknar the Smith. Emerald Throne engineers pioneered innovations in industry, architecture, and science. The Emerald Throne constructed massive cities across—and below—Desin, linked through farstep circles and the dwarves' greatest industrial innovation: the railway. Forged from dwarven iron and powered by steam and locomotion, a massive network of railway tracks reached every region of Desin, with isolated tracks stretching as far south as the southern regions of modern Erast. Through the railway, the Emerald Throne promoted expansion by delivering massive loads of supplies and troops to outlying regions. In their golden age, the Emerald Throne thrived through a firm hand, careful decisions, and a unified people, but their exploration into the Deep (the massive caverns beneath the surface of Karthun) led to a bloody, generation-spanning war with the insectoid race known as the Writhing Swarm. For centuries, the Emerald Throne battled the swarm, vowing the nightmare from below would never reach the surface or breach their defenses.

The fall of Desin began with the destruction

of Honor's Hold. After centuries of war, clashing on the subterranean battlefields of the Deep beneath Desin, the Swarm launched a gambit to destroy the mines and support pillars beneath the capital city. The assault succeeded as over half of the city of Honor's Hold collapsed into the vast mines and caverns beneath the surface, killing thousands. The Emerald Throne was lost, nobles and dignitaries perished, and the greatest empire in Karthun's history was broken. The surviving leadership and noble families rallied and moved further into their subterranean holdings, fueled by rage and determined to destroy the Writhing Swarm. On the surface of Desin, the broken empire lost control over holdings, rivalries divided clans, the industrial technology and resources of the empire fell into disrepair, and from the Cloud Watch Mountains a new threat appeared in the savage gnoll tribes.

The arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings brought devastation to Desin. The force of the Worldfire hit Desin and Landrin first, with Desin bearing the brunt of the attack. The sea boiled and the land shook, breaking away from Doryan, pulling miles of land east of the Cloudwatch Mountains into the sea, killing countless dwarves, humans, and halflings, as well as destroying all of the halfling lands. Huge craters and canyons formed and the unrelenting heat scorched a majority of the land. The ruined eastern coast of Desin became the staging ground for the demonic assault on Doryan, with dwarves from the broken Emerald Throne and humans from Landrin and nearby Andern rallying to meet the armies of the Three Demon Kings. The battles



fought across Desin brought further destruction to the land and the surviving communities. Demon sorcerers unleashed deific rituals against their foes, scorching the land and driving the armies of the broken Emerald Throne back to their subterranean keeps and the rule of the rising Underlords. The dwarves abandoned Desin while the armies of Landrin and Andern continued to fight for survival, but the landscape was forever warped by the infernal magic leveled against it.

Desin's fate was sealed with the forging of the Chain. The ritual used to forge the Chain drove the demonic legions back into the Worldfire, but years of brutal conflict marked Desin a broken land. Great chasms stretched across the edges of the land, isolating Desin from neighboring nations. The land was scorched, resources were precious, and from the dark corners tribes of savage gnolls and the few demonic influences remaining in Desin moved quickly to seize land and riches. Many survivors attempted to return to their homelands with varying degrees of success. Some made the near-impossible trek through the great canyon barriers while others fell to the gnoll tribes, the lack of resources, or the other dark things creeping among the shadows of Desin. The survivors that remained behind banded together to form the first Surveyors. Despite the harsh landscape and dwindling hope, tribes of survivors and scavengers now make their way across the once great lands of Desin, a scorched shadow of its former glory, dotted with the ruins of cities and hidden vaults filled with technology and magic from the golden age of the Emerald Throne.

GOVERNMENT

In the Age of Conflict, no recognized government exists within Desin. The ruins of the once great dwarven nation hold no political influence and are considered to be a wasteland in the political theatres across Karthun. In central Desin, the tribes of the Surveyors use the remains of the dwarven rail system to scour ruins across the landscape for technology, equipment, and weapons long forgotten and overlooked to survive against the constant onslaught of gnoll scavengers. While any number of small clans and tribes exists across Desin, described here are a few of the prominent tribes and their current leaders.

The Surveyors

Descended from the survivors of the armies who fought in the war with the Three Demon Kings, the Surveyors are the largest tribes of humans and dwarves in Desin. The Surveyors use technology and magic scavenged, repurposed, and rebuilt from the time of the Emerald Throne to survive the harsh conditions of Desin and fight against the gnoll tribes. The greatest tool of the Surveyors is the railway system stretching across Desin. For generations, the Surveyors, led by the Four Gear Clan (an almost monastic order dedicated to the preservation of the rail system), repaired and modified the tracks for their own purposes. Through the rail system, the Surveyors send squads of Railrunners out across Desin to explore and catalog ruins from the days of the Emerald Throne, collecting any technology or magic possible.

In regards to faith, the Surveyors revere technology and survival, with a majority of their worship divided between Deknar the Smith and Felicos the King of Rogues, through a large congregation of Favored Coins. The current leader of the Surveyors is Wynn. Known for his modified heavy crossbow and cloak fashioned from the metallic scales of a gorgon, Wynn served as a Railrunner for the Surveyors in his youth, leading countless expeditions into Emerald Throne ruins before joining the Knights of the Spark on the front lines against the gnoll tribes. As a Knight of the Spark, Wynn earned his reputation as a leader and levelheaded tactician, repelling gnoll raiding parties and reclaiming fallen Surveyor outposts. Now in his early forties, Wynn was elected Railmaster by a majority vote. Wynn is fiercely dedicated to the survival of his tribe but avoids massive battles whenever possible, opting for cunning over brute force.

Renewal

Floating high above the sunken ruins of Honor's Hold, the flying citadel Renewal serves as a staging point for Thulengard's campaign into the ruins of the former Emerald Throne capital city. Freed from generations of slavery under the tyrannical Underlords, the Sunwalker clans of the Thulengard magocracy explore the ruins in search of their ancestry and abandoned lore. Two primary units launch expeditions into the ruins of Honor's Hold: the Emerald Eagles and the Order of Stone.

Led by Sky Commander Dolvek Proudmane, the Emerald Eagles represent a strong military force dedicated to the protection of Renewal and the Order of Stone. Trained in military tactics and combat, Emerald Eagles drop into active zones first to secure the area prior to the arrival of the Stonespeakers from the Order. Honor's Hold is extremely dangerous, crawling with gnoll scavengers, demons, undead, remnant dwarven defenses, and other horrors spawned from the infernal magic that seeped into the land.

Led by a council of three elder Stonespeakers, the majority of the Stonespeakers are scholars

and archeologist mages bound to earth elementals. Within the ruins, the Order of Stone maps ancient passageways and collects significant items unearthed during their surveys. It is common knowledge that Thulengard's presence above Honor's Hold serves two primary goals: a chronicle of lost dwarven history and the recovery of the Emerald Throne itself, said to be an artifact of immense power abandoned during the collapse of the city.

The dwarves of Renewal maintain a friendly relationship with the Surveyors but remain hesitant to allow the tribes of scavenger engineers full access to the ruins of Honor's Hold. Of course, this doesn't stop teams of Surveyor explorers (or adventurers seeking fame and fortune) from slipping into the ruins.

Three Fang Tribe

The largest gnoll tribe in Desin, the Three Fang Tribe is also the most organized, with farming operations, primitive reading and writing skills, and the use of precise, tactical strikes against their enemies. Led by the Three Fangs (Graj, Kyza, and Rek), three gnoll sisters, this tribe dominates most of the northern base of the Cloudwatch Mountains. Rumors suggest the Three Fangs are daughters of prophecy, said to be the tribe leaders who will unite all of the gnoll tribes into the first gnoll empire.



*Emblem of
Four Gear Temple*

The Warhowl Tribe

Holding land in the southern region of the Cloudwatch Mountains, the Warhowl Tribe represents the savage devastation of Desin. Originally a small gnoll hunting tribe, legend suggests the original Warhowl elders discovered something in the Cloudwatch Mountains that increased their power tenfold but twisted their minds. In truth, the elders succumbed to the lustful charms of a coven of succubi that survived the Ritual of the Chain. Over time, gnoll and succubi interbreeding produced powerful offspring warped by demonic power and fanatically loyal to their coven mothers.

The Clatterbones

Scattered across Desin, sects of dour, grey-furred gnolls loyal to the teachings of the Mother of the Dead stalk the outer edges of tribe lands and settlements. Known for their clattering, unsettling laughter and love of bone jewelry, the Clatterbones either serve as proper shepherds of the dead or revere the perversion of necromancy, depending on the sect. It's believed this deviance in beliefs is all that prevents the Clatterbones from being a serious force within the ruins of Desin.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Bright Tower

Looking up from the southern base of the Cloudwatch Mountains, natives of Desin and travelers alike tell tales of a light from within the clouds that obscure the peaks of southern mountains. The light and the tower it emanates from are described as sun-like, piercing the densest clouds. No record of the tower or its architect exists among the tomes collected from Honor's Hold and other dwarven ruins. Through the use of telescopes, sages describe the structure as "definitely not of dwarven or any other patron race's construction." Adding to the mystery, at seemingly random intervals over the course of days, weeks, and months, the Bright Tower shines brighter, much like a lighthouse on a coast. In addition to the mysterious light, several failed expeditions to Bright Tower reported accounts of

traveling up the mountain for weeks towards the visible tower, only to succumb to feelings of doubt, as the tower never seemed to get any closer.

Four Gear Temple

Formerly one of the larger railway hubs for the Emerald Throne, this stone and iron building now stands as equal parts industrial complex and holy temple. Home to the Four Gear Clan, the engineer monks of this order dedicate their lives to maintaining the railway system across Desin with reverence for machines and steam. Led by First Gear, Brother Koldum, the Four Gear Clan aids the Surveyors in their travels and exploration across Desin, hopeful to discover new lines of track and technology to improve their blessed rails.

Highpoint

The largest settlement of the Surveyors, Highpoint can be seen for several miles thanks to its elevated plateau and large watch towers that spark with light in the night sky. From the towers, watchmen train firearms and crossbows on unknown travelers approaching the massive rolling gate leading into town. Home to dozens of Surveyor tribes and hundreds of survivors, Highpoint began as a large military camp during the Age of Flames. Highpoint is self-sufficient with sustainable crops, clean water, and protection from the dangers of Desin. The town is a safe haven for merchants and travelers willing to trade technology, magic, or knowledge. However, trust is earned and not given in Highpoint and the residents are unwelcoming to warmongering tribes or outlaws, with the town watch taking a firm hand to criminals or rule breakers, often exiling them outside of Highpoint's walls without food or water.

The Moaning Hills

Carved into the side of large hills, this series of cairns serves as the largest settlement for the Clatterbones tribe of gnolls. Often used as the focus of tales designed to frighten disobedient children, the truth of the Moaning Hills frightens even the hardest of adventurers. Within the

deepest levels of the cairns, mad clerics known as Harvesters, claiming to be servants of the Mother of the Dead, perform arcane rituals upon the dead and the unfortunate living captured on the surface. Recently, Shepherds from the Mother of the Dead passed through Highpoint, gathering information in search of the Moaning Hills and were never seen again.

Plains of Ash

The site of the largest and most destructive battles during the Age of Flames, the Plains of Ash used to be lush, rolling hills bristling with life. When the demons marched across Desin, the armies of the Emerald Throne, Landrin, and Andern met them in a series of brutal conflicts that ended with demon sorcerers calling down unholy fire upon the land, killing thousands and scarring the land forever. Now in the Age of Conflict, the tribes of Desin and experienced travelers avoid the Plains of Ash, as the lingering curses of demonic hellfire still plague the land. Explorers tell stories of unholy abominations wandering the plains and mad cults of demon worshippers hunting fresh sacrifices, but the most horrific story of all is also true: dying within the Plains of Ash does not mean death, as those who fall immediately rise as an ashen, hellfire creature of undeath.

Ruins of Honor's Hold

Once the capital city of the largest empire in Karthun's history, Honor's Hold is now one of the most dangerous places on the Last Continent. The breathtaking city is now a ruin, collapsed into a great chasm created by the Writhing Swarm. Within the destroyed city, passages twist and turn in the darkness, now inhabited by restless undead, demons, scavengers, and the timeless defenses of the dwarves. Despite the dangers, adventurers travel from across Karthun

to delve into the ruins in search of ancient treasures, magic, and technology lost in the deep corners of the city.

Rust Lake

One of the few bodies of water in Desin to survive the onslaught of the Worldfire, the waters of Rust Lake are named for their deep red color. Since the Age of Flames, many clans and forces have laid claim to Rust Lake, citing the unusual water granting incredible power over prolonged exposure. Such claims lead to countless bloody battles near the lake. Recently, the current "owners" of Rust Lake, a tribe known as the Southern Sons, disappeared from their huts near the water's edge. Railrunners from Highpoint discovered the camp empty and, during an overnight stay, noticed strange lights and oddly mechanical sounds emanating from the bottom of the lake.

The Scorched Coast

Desin was the first region of Doryan to suffer the effects of the Worldfire and the Scorched Coast remains as testimony to the land's scars. When the power of the Worldfire arrived, miles of land burned and fell into the ocean, cracking the continent wide open. In the Age of Conflict, most of these chasms descend to unknown depths and are home to horrors never seen elsewhere. Many sages cite the infernal magic used by the demon sorcerers in the service of the Three Demon Kings, summoning unknown beasts from beyond Karthun and scarring the land to warp native creatures into new terrors. Rumors persist of the presence of demonic strongholds deep within the chasms, filled with untold treasures. Since the Age of Flames, many explorers from across Karthun travelled to learn the truth, but none have returned.

THE ENDLESS

CAPITAL: None

RULER: None

COINAGE: Various coinage from across Karthun

GOVERNMENT: A very loose alliance of scattered tribes with no definitive leader

RELIGIONS: None

The Endless is accurately named, for it stretches for miles across the northern region of the Last Continent in a vast, icy plane. Venturing into the frigid wasteland that once was the seat of power for the nation of giants is now the province of the brave, foolish, or powerful—or some combination of the three. The Endless is best known for the ruins giant cities of buried under ice that is miles deep in some cases. The giants possessed great power that matched their physical stature, and allowed them to challenge the gods themselves. Rumors of magical and mechanical artifacts within the ruins draw explorers and adventurers to investigate the Endless, though only a handful of these cities have been discovered. The rest are rumor, perhaps nothing more than myth. Still, tales of cities and their treasure troves keep the brave venturing north. Some groups of travelers come to the Endless, not seeking lost

giant glories, but for refuge from the war-torn lands across the Last Continent. Few groups make it far into the icy wastes, and fewer still survive. Still, there are settlements that survive and even thrive in the cold embrace of the north.

The landscape of the Endless is one of icy chasms and vast, featureless plains—or so most assume. For the unprepared, this is all the Endless is, or ever will be, as the cold and their lack of ability to survive it means they never learn more about the area. For those who have studied and prepared, however, the Endless holds secrets and, surprisingly, livable areas of great beauty. Among those are the ice-seas, liquid water amid frozen wastes. Some are the result of volcanic activity deep under the ice, while others exist due to undiscovered means. At the furthest known regions of the Endless, a dark mountain range calls the name of the region into question. The Dread Peaks rise, black knives against the blue-green glow of aurora and sunlight, untouched by the destructive force of the Worldfire, a northern boundary that none living have crossed. Despite the mystery and danger surrounding the Dread Peaks, stories and rumors swirl in southern Karthun, wondering what might exist beyond the mountains to the north.



HISTORY

Very few records documenting the true extent of the Endless and the giant nation during the height of its power prior to the War of the Titans exist in the Age of Conflict. Lost over time to theft, malice, and destruction, a majority of tales told of the earliest days of the Endless come through stories told around campfires and songs sung by bards in taverns across the northern nations of the Last Continent. The true origins of the giants remains one of the most intriguing mysteries, as the gods never speak of the giants or their nation prior to the War of the Titans. Many believe the gods created the giants as Karthun's first true patron race, only to see the giants reject the gods and make their own designs toward eventual godhood. In the halls of academia, sages of planar travel speculate the gods did not create the giants but brought the first giant clans from beyond Karthun's plane.



The earliest accounting of the giants documents a diplomatic tour of the city of Xag in Daynir in -1421 by a group of elders from the Icesplitter tribe. For reasons unknown, one of the elders took ill and the summit ended abruptly. For years, tribes of the Endless remained isolated and silent until -1399 when Chief Kral Icesplitter and his legion of giant warriors marched south into Daynir, carving a path of destruction towards the city of Xag. Harnessing power from deep within Karthun, giant shamans raised gargantuan stone constructs from the rocks and soil. The giants defied reason, attacking on two fronts: Xag and Andorhem Forest. Sehad and Valkyre clashed with giants in the heart of Andorhem Forest while, in the city of Xag, the Hammer of the Smith rallied troops against the colossal titans, laying waste to an entire quarter of the city. When the tide of battle turned against the giants, elder shamans and Chief Icesplitter enacted a powerful, reckless ritual to channel the strength of every giant on Karthun into Icesplitter. Despite his godlike strength, Icesplitter fell and to the horror of all, so too did every giant soul on Karthun (now linked to their chieftain through the binding ritual). Icesplitter's defeat ended the life of every pureblood giant on Karthun.

In the years following the death of the giants, the cold, harsh landscape of the Endless reclaimed their villages and cities. Ice and snow entombed generations of secret magic, technology, and lore, sparking the imaginations of explorers and thrill seekers across Karthun.

In the Age of Conflict, tribes of humans and exiles from nations find their way to the cold isolation of the Endless. For many, it's a new beginning. For some, life in the Endless is a new challenge for those with a pioneering spirit. For others it's an escape from war and lives best forgotten. Many sages across the Last Continent believe the Endless holds secrets crucial to the survival of Karthun for those brave enough to discover them. Far to the north, the mysteries of the Dread Peaks remain.



GOVERNMENT

No formal government exists within the Endless, as small settlements and villages govern themselves with varying forms of governmental structures. Settlements in the Endless come in two varieties: rare and abandoned. It's far from uncommon for prepared travelers to break through what they assume is a thin crust of ice, only to find what's left of a settlement, or at least a failed caravan or expedition. However, there are a few settlements that found ways to eke out a survivable way of life, and in one case, to thrive.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Branwither's Bane

Branwither's Bane is one of the settlements built within the ruins once occupied by the giants. In fact, the majority of the settlement exists in the remains of what the settlers think was once a smithy. The heat source for the smithy is still active, allowing the residents to not only reside comfortably, but also to grow vegetables and keep a small herd of tundra sheep for a source of food. The name of the settlement comes from one of the many massive weapons that hang, half-frozen or buried, on the high walls of the space in which the people reside. The runes on one of the massive swords names Branwither as the target of vengeance, and says that this sword will be that giant's downfall. Few are able to translate giant-speak, so most outsiders take the word of the locals at face value. However, the uncertainty has given rise to the other name of the settlement: Half-Frozen Forge.

The permanent residents of Branwither's Bane practice a religion they call the Frozen Heart. They claim that after the death of Sehad the World Warden, all real warmth left the world, and what remains is an illusion. Their bodies, therefore, must be rid of the illusion of warmth to achieve the afterlife they desire. To accomplish this, all residents spend time, unclothed and without food or shelter, in the wastes of the Endless. This time inures them to the cold, creating hardiness and endurance matched only by that of the frost giants of lore.

Visitors to Branwither's Bane are usually welcomed, but only for a short time. Residents of the settlement, though kind, ultimately trust no one who won't devote themselves to the Frozen Heart, and encourage travelers to move on, though such travelers leave amply supplied. In addition, only a small number of people who do wish to follow the Frozen Heart are accepted, as there is a limit to the number of beings that the Bane can support.

The Knife

Of all the many failed settlements of the Endless, the Knife is perhaps the most infamous in recent history. A renowned bard from Daynir named MacConnell Givens began telling stories of a great treasure hidden within the cold expanse of the Endless. Givens spoke of a great cavern below the ice, lit by an artificial sun, giving light and warmth to everything within the abundant space. Givens gathered a large number of followers with his stories, though in hindsight, none know where he first heard the story himself. Legend suggests Givens ventured to the cavern himself, based on the number of strange artifacts he claimed originated from the cavern. He said the entrance to the cavern was marked by a large spike of ice, like the tip of a massive spear driven into the ground. Though his claims of seeing this landmark or the cavern below were uncorroborated, his words stirred the souls of those who listened.

With an entire company of followers, some 5,000 strong, Givens ventured into the Endless. Over weeks and months, Givens and crew traveled north, looking for the entrance to the fabled land. The company passed through Branwither's Bane, with few losses along the way, and departed shortly thereafter. The company was never seen again. Rumors and tales say that they made it to the cavern, but found nothing there, or at least nothing good. Since that time, others have charted the same course, and although they have found the icy landmark, none have dared to enter. The Knife remains a grim, enigmatic landmark on the frozen plains. Legends speak of ghosts haunting the region. Around the campfires of Branwither's Bane, travelers suggest the company found an entrance to the Dead, and that the entirety of the company are now frost wights bound in service to the Mother. No matter the outcome, the Knife is a place of darkness and death. Perhaps treasure lies buried beneath the ice. If such tales are true, it would take bravery and fire to discover it.

The People of the Seal

More of a nomadic tribe than a settlement as one would find in the south, the Huts of the Seal appear in various locations around the Endless. The people, mostly elves or elven-kin who bear no resemblance to the elves found in the south, move from one inner ice-sea to another, living off of the populations of pond seals, deep fish, and winged boara that live in the area.

Scholars in the south speculate about how these elves are able to survive so far north into the Endless. Most people who spend any time among the People of the Seal don't get to see much of their faces or the rest of their physical forms, as they spend any time outside of their huts wrapped from head to toe in warm fur clothes, including face coverings made of seal skin. Though little is known about them as a people, they are largely peaceful, and do their best to help anyone they find wandering the Endless. As they travel from ice-sea to ice-sea on a schedule known only to them, they're not easy to find, so their help isn't something that can be counted on if venturing into the Endless.

Of major note in the lives of the People are what they call the Ceremonies of the Darkened Moon, something they let no travelers see or participate in. Little is known about these ceremonies, save that they occur in the deepest part of the night, and only on nights when no aurorae are in the sky. In fact, one traveling scholar who managed to get as close as anyone has ever been to the ceremony claimed that the sky was completely dark, devoid of any light, including stars. That same scholar managed to find and take with her a scrap of sealskin inked with a celestial chart like no other, with a fourth moon on it. Most believe it to be a forgery so she could advance her career.

The Cairns

Dotted across the landscape of the Endless are large mounds of ice, shaped like stacked piles of boulders, unshifting and unaffected by the winds that rage across the northern expanse. The best any can tell of these apparent piles of

icy boulders is that they mark the final resting places of the giants, long departed from the face of Karthun. Some adventurous explorers have attempted to find entrance into the cairns, but the windy and forever shifting landscape of the Endless around them makes it a difficult task. More than one expedition has returned with varying stories about the boulders: sightings of giant spirits haunting the piles, that some of the boulders seem hollow and ring like gongs when struck, or even tales of lights seen inside the boulders, twisting and winding along paths buried deep under the ice. One of the cairns is home to a group of lizardfolk, though which cairn that is seems to change, as the settlement is never found in the same place twice. Both the People of the Seal and the residents of Branwith's Bane go silent whenever the Lizard Cairn is mentioned. It's unknown what kinds of beings or practices could give residents of the Endless such fear, but what is known is that all tales of coming upon the settlement occur when the aurora is in the sky, lighting the way to the entrance of the cairn.

The Razorcrags

Natives and travelers quickly become aware of one of the deadliest predators within the Endless: the boara. Their largest nest is among the jagged crags in the deep ice known as the Razorcrags. Feared by hunters and explorers, the leather-winged and elusive boara fly the high winds far above the Endless. Most boara have wingspans that cross the threshold of six feet in length, with some as large as eight. Boara bodies are tight and compact while flying, but if they descend for a kill, they extend arms and legs many times the length of their wings. A diving boara resembles a skyborne, leather jellyfish, with limbs reaching for prey. The claws of a boara are particularly strong, and appear to be made of some type of transparent chitin. When harvested from their bodies, the claws can easily be adapted into fine weapons, a trick the People of the Seal know well.

Glint Lake

On days when the sun shines over the ice of this massive frozen lake, the Endless can be beautiful, a cascade of shimmering light stretching as far as the eye can see. Within those lights, however, glints hide, waiting to dazzle the unwary and lead them astray. They resemble flashes of sunlight off of the snow, but with splashes of inviting color. The glints aren't harmful, in and of themselves, but much like wisps in the south, glints seem to exist for not much more purpose than mischief. This makes them especially dangerous in the Endless. When the sun shines and glints are out, it pays to be more mindful of your surroundings than usual, as the colors a glint shows can make you think your feet are going quite a different direction than they actually are. Some tell tales of beneficent glints, leading travelers to fresh meltwater, or to caches of food. Others say that glints have led them to great treasure, showing the paths to deeply hidden rooms once occupied by giants. Most, however, agree that glints are not to be trusted, and that one's eyes should stay on the path, such as it is, when the sun is out.

BEYOND THE DREAD PEAKS

The Dread Peaks serve as a natural barrier that confounds explorers of Karthun, both past and present. In gameplay terms, the Dread Peaks represent a classic theme in role-playing games and video games: Here is a barrier you cannot pass yet, but when you do, it reveals all new possibilities for adventures and threats to Karthun. We may dig into Brian's notes and explore what awaits Karthun beyond the Dread Peaks in future publications, but for now that topic is solely up to GMs to explore (if at all). When asked, Brian revealed "Yes. There is something beyond the Dread Peaks. The region around the base of the Dread Peaks and the mountains themselves are incredibly dangerous and serve as an excellent source of adventure for high-level campaigns."

ERAST

CAPITAL: Tenshan, City of Tombs

RULER: Kyzul, Son of the Mother

COINAGE: Tomb (platinum),
Memory (gold), Ash (silver),
Candle (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Theocracy,
Dictatorship of the Mother of
the Dead

RELIGIONS: The Mother of
the Dead

Erast is the seat of power for the Mother of the Dead and her theocracy. While there is darkness in Erast, there is also daily life. The Mother is cold and sometimes vindictive, but from Erast her Wardens seek out the wild, restless dead across Karthun. Erast is currently at war with Landrin and embroiled in an internal conflict with a large group backed by Landrin that's dedicated to the teachings of Valkyre. This group is determined to purge all undead—including the followers of the Mother—from Karthun.



HISTORY

The Age of Enlightenment brought conflict and strife to the fledgling nations of Karthun, as differences between the patron races, geographical upheaval, and sinister threats crept forward from the shadows. During this age, the dwarves of the Emerald Throne thrived as the largest empire in Karthun's history, claiming ownership of the entire eastern coast of the continent Doryan. The first challenge to the Emerald Throne arrived when a goblin army in the southernmost regions of Doryan appeared. Once a massive marshland, the goblins under the

banner of a warlock named Blackeyes wielded dark, otherworldly magic, laying siege to the Emerald Throne and blighting the land through profane rituals. In time, the combined armies of the Emerald Throne and the neighboring Wolf Clan elves of Symul defeated the goblin legion, scattering them across Karthun, but the damage to the Blight March seemed permanent and the Emerald Throne abandoned the cursed marshland. For years, the Blight March festered like a sore on the face of Karthun, largely abandoned aside from the foul beasts native

to the marsh, aberrant creatures, or miscreants seeking solitude or escape from neighboring nations.

The Blight March remained unclaimed for centuries, until orc survivors fleeing from the Dreadwing Council after their failed attempt to take Eternity Peak and unseat the dragons arrived on the edge of the marshland. With few options and little opposition compared to the size of their clans, the orcs of Eternity Peak claimed the Blight March as their own. To the west, the elves of Symul observed with reservation and the dwarves of the Emerald Throne voiced concern, but neither nation took direct action. For a time, the orcs remained silent and unseen within the marshlands and no historical record exists to document the true story of the orcs' time in the Blight March before their bloody reemergence on the eastern borders of Symul as the Kranee. Somehow twisted and corrupted by dark forces within the Blight March, the Kranee waged war, drawing in armies from the Emerald Throne, elves from Symul, and the paladins of Valkyre's Silver Guard.

Desperate to end the bloodshed, the goddess Elinar dispatched her Speakers of Harmony in the hopes of calming the situation. When the Kranee and goblin warlocks sacrificed the Speakers and several paladins of the Silver Guard to dark powers, Elinar unleashed her fury upon the Blight March, killing and scattering the Kranee. The war with the Kranee ended and the combined power of Sehad and Elinar cleansed most of the blight from the southern lands. To ensure the safety of the newly cleansed lands, volunteers from the Emerald Throne and Symul led by the Silver Guard paladins of Valkyre received permission from the Emerald Throne to found the new nation of Landrin. With the first President of Landrin elected and the capital city under construction, a time of growth swept across the former Blight March lasting for generations. The teachings of honor and valor from the Silver Guard of Valkyre infused the government and people, creating a nation of proud, honorable folk.



Everything changed for the region in the Age of Flames with the arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings. The eastern nations of Desin and Landrin suffered the full brunt of the demonic legions, engaging in a fight for their lives. It was only through sacrifice of Kraya, the Ritual of the Chain, and the halting of the Worldfire that the war came to a close.

However, it was in this moment that Felicos killed Sehad, sending humanity and Valkyre into despair. She withdrew into her grief and sadness, later to re-emerge as the Mother of the Dead, and later still birthing Kyzul, the now twisted offspring of her union with Sehad. The Mother claimed the southern region of Landrin as her own, establishing Erast as her theocracy, before taking the Dead as her domain. This began a new age of oppression in Erast and meant war for Landrin.

Despite Landrin being a smaller nation, the Pillars of Virtue—powerful crystalline monoliths in the heart of their capital city of Whitetower—keep the demons and controlled undead of Erast outside the nation's borders. Along the western border, the elves of the Jackal Clan of Symul clash with Erast's army, while agents of the Mother of the Dead press to the southern theocracy of Ilrenar, in the lands of Elinar and the Illyn, working to fulfill a blood-sworn vendetta the Mother still holds against Elinar and her patron race.



GOVERNMENT

Kyzul the First Son of the Mother is the absolute ruler of the theocracy of Erast. As a demigod among mortals, very few challenge Kyzul's authority and power over Erast, despite his appearance as an adolescent human (roughly 12 years old with a thin frame, dark hair, and pale skin). From his seat of power in the capital city of Tenshan the City of Tombs, Kyzul proclaims laws and delivers the will of his mother to the citizens of Erast. A council of advisors keeps Kyzul informed. To ensure his will is done, chosen clerics of the Mother act as intermediaries and the leaders of communities across the theocracy.

In addition to the clerics of the Mother of the Dead, Kyzul commands the central order of Shepherds, those followers of the Mother touched by death and trained to hunt the wild undead of Karthun. Despite raising and using undead in her armies and as guardians for key locations, the Mother of the Dead and Kyzul both despise the wild or "unlawful" undead spawned through necromancy and the dark times of the Age of Mourning. Under order from Kyzul, the Shepherds act as an elite order within the hierarchy of Erast, hunting wild undead and serving as a form of secret police for Kyzul and his closest aids.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Spike

A monolith of unknown origin stands in Erast. Known as the Spike, it looks like a giant spike thrust into the heart of the mountains, and it comprises the central section of the Jagged Mountains that extends through Erast. Rather than stone, as most mountains are composed of, the Spike seems to be made of a metallic substance, one that doesn't rust, corrode, or suffer erosion of any kind at all. Visually, the range plays a strange trick on the eyes. No matter where one is within the borders of Erast, the entirety of the Spike is visible, even though it should not be, given distance and variances in the Jagged Mountains. When the moons become visible, the Spike glows in patterns that sting the eyes. Residents of Erast know to look away from the Jagged Mountains at sunrise, to the point that most localities have enacted laws to that effect. There are too many stories of people becoming enthralled, or even physically changed, upon gazing too long at the lights of the Spike.

Waste Gap

In the center of the Wholing Forest, there's a clearing in the trees, where nothing grows and few things venture. After the rise of the Mother of the Dead, adherents of Valkyre clung to her valorous ways. In secret, the Adherents worked diligently to raise a powerful army deep within the heart of the Wholing Forest to combat the Mother of the Dead and Kyzul's undead army. The battle between the Adherents and the servants of the Mother was brutal. The Mother unleashed dark magics that blasted the skeletal wastes even further, destroying every living things for miles in any direction. Now that gap in the Wholing forest is a barren, white plain of bone and dust, perfectly attuned to the aspects of death. To the displeasure of the Mother and her Shepherds, necromancers gather in the Waste Gap and, on occasion, undead horrors seem to spawn spontaneously.



Pelthon

Pelthon is a community thriving in the northeast region of Erast along the Ventar River. Aside from brisk trade and clear water, Pelthon is one of the largest areas for sustainable crops in Erast. The residents understand this and have taken great efforts to maximize the yields granted by the harvests in Pelthon.

Pelthon's crops are grown from the high edges of the valley walls, all the way down to the deeps of the valley itself, near the river's edge. The valley walls are terraced, allowing for flat growing spaces. The housing in the area is built into the growing plan as well, with terraced residences covered in lush vines and ivy. The crop cycles are strictly maintained and protected by Kyzul's advisor of agriculture. Thankfully, the weather in the area is cooperative and the rare occasions when the Mother's darkness flows through the valley, it rarely damages the crops or citizens of Pelthon.

Skyspear Peak

On an island off the coast of Erast is a single peak, one whose top cannot be seen for the dense clouds that surround it. Known as Skyspear Peak as a reference to the formations spearing into thick clouds, Skyspear would be a destination for explorers and adventure scholars if not for the countless undead haunting the mountain. The few braving the dangers of the undead and the mountain itself report more of the strange material used to create the Spike, leading scholars to believe the two sites are somehow connected.

Tenshan, the City of Tombs

Tenshan is the capital city of Erast. Often referred to as the City of Tombs for the extravagant number of catacombs, graveyards, and tombs located within the walls of the city, Tenshan is a grim reminder of the Mother of the Dead and her son, Kyzul. The city was originally constructed during the years of Landrin's expansion, in the days prior to the rise of the Mother of the Dead and the founding of Erast. As the largest city in the region, Kyzul and the Shepherds appropriated the city as the new capital and in the centuries that have passed, Tenshan has changed. The once pristine whitewashed stone and bright colors of the city have faded and darkened over time. Newer buildings resemble mausoleums and temples of worship. While the city isn't inherently grim or overly gothic in appearance, a morose air hangs over the city.

Unlike other regions, the dead aren't burned in Erast, as it's understood that every fallen citizen is potentially a foot soldier in Erast's army in times of need. The dead are treated with reverence in Erast and the City of Tombs is the primary example, as burial crypts are maintained and protected by the clerics of the Mother.

For their part, the residents of Tenshan are a stoic people, living with a different relationship with death and dying than most on Karthun. The people of Erast and the City of Tombs accept their fate within the Dead and their eventual passage into the arms of the Mother. Those under Kyzul's rule recognize this passage as inevitable, and live their lives in spite of it. Much like the Shepherds of the Mother, citizens of Tenshan revile wild undead and serve Kyzul in the hunting and elimination of such undead and necromancers.

With Kyzul's presence and the Mother's influence over Erast, the veil between the Dead and Karthun is thin in the city of Tenshan and it's not uncommon for citizens to stray into the fleeting passages between the two realms. Often, the traveler doesn't fully step into the Dead, but merely touches it. The experience changes

mortals. The Shepherds seek out anyone who has had contact of any kind with the Dead, understanding the gravity of the lasting effects.

Those who travel the streets of the city for the first time are often surprised by the light and laughter that permeates the streets of Tenshan at night. There's an odd contrast between the look and feel of the city, and the actions of its residents. The residents of the city, because of their acceptance of their eventual deaths and the cold embrace of the Mother, celebrate their lives while they have them. It's the difference between somber funerary rites and a wake. In Tenshan, life is for the living. All else is for the Dead.

Mother's Watch

Located directly on the border between Erast and Landrin, Mother's Watch is a fortress built by Landrin to serve as a forward outpost. However, Kyzul quickly invaded and overcame the defenses. Now the fortress is staffed by a combination of his mortal army and the undead under his command. Landrin and Erast are constantly warring with one another, and Kyzul has secured the majority of the border by using this fortress as a staging area. The fortress itself is a massive construction of gleaming white stone and can be seen for miles in all directions, shining at all hours of the day. The light of the fortress was meant to be a beacon to the people of Landrin, a symbol of their fight against Erast. Now, all the light does is mock, as the fortress held by a force partially comprised of undead.

However, the Landrinese might have the last laugh, as the light of the fortress seems to wear on the undead, making them decay more rapidly. This means that Kyzul must continually replenish his forces, and the level at which the fortress is staffed fluctuates regularly.

ILRENAR

CAPITAL: The city of Previa

RULER: Lady Autumn

COINAGE: Star (platinum), Sun (gold), Moon (silver), Leaf (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Theocracy of Elinar

RELIGIONS: Elinar, Deknar, Prathian

Ilrenar is the oldest theocracy in Karthun. Founded by the goddess of Elinar and her patron race, the Illyn, Ilrenar is an island paradise. Ever since the first Speakers of Harmony journeyed across Karthun, Elinar's faithful make pilgrimages to see the rolling hills and beautiful forests across the countryside. From the capital city of Previa, Lady Autumn and the Keepers of Seasons watch over the citizens as threats gather abroad and internally. The nations of Kraghorn, Erast, and the mysterious island of Traxyn move against Elinar and her people, while cults infiltrate the ranks of nobility and government.



HISTORY

When the gods combined their power to forge Karthun in the Age of Making, the goddess Elinar claimed a beautiful southern island off the coast of Doryan to establish her theocracy. The lush forests, clear waters, and rolling hills of the island perfectly embodied everything Elinar represented. Soon afterward, Elinar tapped into the power of Kraya to create her patron race, the Illyn, a race of beauty and grace with mystical ties to Karthun and its four seasons. Under the watchful eye of Elinar, the Illyn established

the theocracy of Ilrenar and began to journey outward across Karthun.

Conflict swept across the lands of Karthun quickly as the patron races of the gods, new nations, and strong-willed beings such as the dragons of the Dreadwing Council all vied for land and power. From her seat of power in the city of Previa, Elinar and her inner circle observed the growing tension and took action. Hoping to prevent widespread war, Elinar dispatched the first of the Speakers of

Harmony to travel across Karthun with Elinar's message of peace. The Speakers negotiated peace between warring factions and fledgling nations, stemming the loss of life across Karthun. The words of Elinar and the Speakers of Harmony reached many ears, resulting in an influx of new worshippers arriving on the shores of the theocracy of Ilrenar. For many years, the people of Ilrenar thrived.

The first threat to Ilrenar's safety and harmonious existence arrived in the form of a series of mysterious disappearances from settlements along the Bright Coast. Dozens of settlements, once filled with citizens, appeared deserted overnight. Despite the best efforts of the Speakers and investigations conducted by local adventurers, no sign of the missing citizens emerged. In time, a few of the larger fishing towns along the Bright Coast were reestablished, but the majority of empty settlements remained abandoned as rumors and ghost stories kept many away.

1,575 years before the Age of Flames, a lone explorer named Brell of Winter boarded a small ship and set sail southeast of Ilrenar and the continent of Doryan, determined to discover new lands and chronicle his adventures. Many believed Brell to be a fool, but near the end of that same year, Brell returned to the shores of the Bright Coast, haggard and near mad. Brell told rambling, near incoherent tales of an uncharted island, impossibly close to Ilrenar and Doryan, inhabited by a society of ogres practiced in dark arts. Brell spoke of a monolith stretching towards the clouds and the almost alien city that surrounded it. He claimed to be captured and tortured by the ogre warlocks until he managed to escape and make his way back to Ilrenar. Many believed Brell's time alone on the seas drove him to madness and delusion—until he produced bits of cloth and a medallion torn from one of his captors during his escape. The medallion was engraved with strange symbols and was made from a pearlescent substance never seen on Karthun. Brell and his artifacts were taken to Previa and the Speakers of Harmony. Sadly,

Brell died before arriving at the capital city and his medallion disappeared. As months passed following Brell's death, the memory of his name and his accountings slowly faded from the memories of everyone he encountered.

Ilrenar's attention turned from Brell and his mystery to a new tragedy as Speakers of Harmony journeyed to the heart of the war raging between the Kranee, the Wolf Clans of Symul, and armies of the Emerald Throne. This journey ended with the Speakers overrun and later sacrificed by the goblin warlocks of the Kranee army. The act of murder and desecration earned the rage of Elinar, and the goddess rained lightning upon the Kranee armies and summoned hurricanes to destroy and cleanse the Blight March. The act of retribution from Elinar sent shockwaves across Ilrenar, as her faithful split in support and condemnation of her actions. Elinar returned to Previa and began a self-imposed exile, withdrawing from the nations of Karthun and, to a lesser degree, her followers.

The arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings brought destruction to Karthun unlike any natural disaster or war in history. For Ilrenar, the touch of the Worldfire was minimal but the influence of the Three Demon Kings wrought chaos among the noble houses. Numerous societies of demon worshippers gathered in secret across Ilrenar to make offerings to the Three Demon Kings in attempts to seize power in the chaos. Among these cults, the Voices of the Red Sun was the largest and most well organized, with membership extending from commoners all the way up to their leader, the Keeper of Summer, Undrin of Summer. Undrin, a gifted druid and charismatic leader, believed in the lies of his new demon masters and vowed to bring about what he called the Day of the Red Sun (a ritual rumored to bring new power to the demons on Karthun and burn the unfaithful). Publicly, Undrin was beloved by the people, hiding in plain sight until the eve of his grand ritual when he murdered the sitting Keepers of Winter and Spring, Leva of Winter and Rylen of Spring. The combined efforts of

THE TOWER OF FOUR SEASONS

Serving as the seat of power in Ilrenar and for the goddess Elinar, the Tower of Four Seasons is the crown jewel in the capitol city of Previa. Constructed by Deknar the Smith for Elinar, the tower is an architectural marvel of ornately shaped gold, copper, glass, and crystalline shards that stand as the tallest structure in the city. The ground level of the tower houses the chambers of law, where the Keepers of Seasons and lower-tier politicians and nobles attend to the laws and issues of the day. Several floors above house residents and offices for officials and staff, while the uppermost floors serve as Elinar's residence. The vaults below the tower house documents, Elinar's personal treasure, and the treasury for Ilrenar. The appearance of the Tower of Seasons shifts, as its colors and "mood" shift with the changing of the seasons. The flowers bloom with unnaturally bright pigments in spring, while the halls feel colder and dour in winter months, leading many to believe the tower to be semi-sentient.

Speakers of Harmony and a band of heroes ultimately defeated the Voices of the Red Sun, but Undrin escaped and many believe the cult still exists, now skillfully hidden among the people.

The events of the Age of Flames tested the people of Ilrenar, but their greatest challenge came with the arrival of Elinar's slumber and the time known among the Illyn as the Long Winter. In the aftermath of Elinar's efforts to save Sehad, the goddess pushed herself to near death, falling into a deep slumber. In the years that followed, the Keepers of Seasons struggled to keep Ilrenar safe. Many Illyn turned away from Elinar and her light to follow the Mother of the Dead, becoming the first of the Diminished on Karthun. Many believed the Long Winter would bring an end to Elinar, her followers, and Ilrenar. The tide turned when Peyna of Autumn—the sitting Lady of Autumn and ruler of Ilrenar—recruited the surviving members of Valkyre's Silver Guard to teach the Speakers and citizens to defend themselves. Despite Elinar's waning power, countless internal struggles, and more disappearances along the Bright Coast, Lady Autumn led her people through the Long Winter.

A test of Lady Autumn's leadership came by way of a direct assault against the capital of Previa by the ogre warlocks of Traxyn. The warlocks seemed to materialize across the city and within the inner chambers near Elinar, still in her slumber. Within moments, the warlocks

slaughtered numerous citizens, city watch, and nobles within the heart of the city as Lady Autumn and the Keepers of Seasons rallied forces to engage the interlopers. A bloody battle raged in the heart of the city as every soldier and Speaker of Harmony regrouped to protect the sleeping goddess. However, while the ogre warlocks engaged the goddesses' protective forces, others stole *something* from Elinar's private vaults beneath the city. With their task complete, the ogre warlocks (living and slain) vanished from Previa. In the aftermath, Lady Autumn and the Keepers worked to determine the identity of the ogres but as the days passed, the memory of the ogres and their assault on the city slowly slipped from memory.

When Elinar awoke from her slumber, ending the Long Winter, it brought renewed hope to the citizens of Ilrenar. Elinar's first act was to journey into the Dead in an attempt to bring her sister, the Mother of the Dead, back from grief and darkness. Their meeting ended in combat, with the Mother horrifically scarring Elinar's face. Upon her return to Ilrenar, the goddess embraced Lady Autumn and thanked her for her strength during the Long Winter. As a token of appreciation (and in defiance of her sister), Elinar granted Lady Autumn immortality against aging and began her campaign to bring the Diminished back to her light.

GOVERNMENT

A council of four elder Illyn known as the Keepers of Seasons handles the governance of Ilrenar. Among the four Keepers, one Keeper holds the High Seat, a position of two votes that rotates on a cyclical calendar. During these times of authority, Ilrenar is referred to as being in a time of that season. For example, Ilrenar is currently in a time of winter, as the Keeper of Winter (Lady Domin of Winter) holds the High Seat. During these times of power, the seasonal houses in the High Seat broker deals and forge alliances to sustain their holdings through until the next cycle. Political maneuvering among the houses is high, with many deals struck publicly (and secretly).

Each seasonal house (Spring/Summer/Fall/Winter), chooses a Keeper to sit on the council until their death or replacement due to extenuating circumstances. The selection of Keepers is handled within each house through independent nomination and election. Age and experience play significant roles in the selection process, but it's not always a determining factor. Together, the Keepers of Seasons work closely with Lady Autumn and local leaders to hand down and enforce the laws and decrees of Elinar.

Lady Autumn sat on the council of Keepers for many years during the Long Winter, but now she holds an honorary position within Ilrenar's government. Often referred to as the "Fifth Keeper," Lady Autumn advises the Keepers of Seasons on day-to-day matters and acts as confidant to Elinar. Lady Autumn's immortality and strength during the Long Winter grants her a unique perspective among the Illyn and has earned the respect of many. Some politicians in Ilrenar believe Lady Autumn should be the sole ruler of the theocracy, while others secretly believe Lady Autumn should simply be the sole ruler. Despite any whispers of discontent, Lady Autumn is fiercely loyal to Elinar and Ilrenar.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Previa

The capital city of Ilrenar is a marvel to behold. Constructed during the Age of Making by Sehad and Elinar, legend says the gods raised the stone and wood from Karthun, shaping it like clay to form the towers and massive canals that run throughout the city. Vines and flowers grow along ancient walls, bathed in sunlight that pours through large windows and skylights. The city is divided into three districts: Rose District, River District, and Gate District. The outermost ring of the city is the Gate District, serving as the common residential area, filled with markets and small shrines to each of the gods. The southern portion of the Gate District has fallen into disrepair, attracting the criminal element of the city. There, cults and thieves' guilds gather in secret. Rumors also suggest that one of the Daggers of Felicos—an elf of the Wolf Clan known only as the Final Fang—leads coterie of assassins across Ilrenar from a lair in the slums of Previa. Ascending the elevating roads and staircases in the Gate District leads to the River District, dominated by large canals and beautiful waterfalls that filter down into the Gate District. This district is home to a majority of the nobles and merchant families in Previa. At the heart of the city is the Rose District, named for the expansive gardens and flora that cover the buildings and lawns of manor houses and the towers of the wealthy. The Tower of Four Seasons serves as the home for Elinar and the center of all political business in Ilrenar.

Durnwood Asylum

Nestled in the foothills around the Brightsky Mountains, this imposing fortress serves as a prison and asylum for individuals across Karthun driven irreversibly mad. Founded in the Age of Flames as Durnwood Hospital, the asylum slowly evolved into a prison for the criminally insane, housing criminals and powerful mages in vaults deep within the dungeons. Currently, a wing of Durnwood was secretly established by the Keeper of Fall to study individuals claiming to remember the attack and sightings of the ogre warlocks of Traxyn island.

Sundown

Sundown is the largest fishing town in the Bright Coast. Populated by laborers, fishermen, and tradesfolk, Sundown has a reputation for being a rough but down-to-earth town where anyone can find work. The Fisherman's Guild is one of the most well organized guilds in Karthun, quietly earning massive profits for their goods and services. Guild members are paid fairly at the

insistence of the current guild leader and Mayor of Sundown, Carly Ro (cousin to the current Hammer of the Smith, Dulsey Ro). Mayor Ro is tough as nails and tolerates very few disturbances in her town.

Winterwood

The largest forest in Ilrenar carries the curse of undeath. Once the home of druids, fey, and rangers of the House of Spring, the rise of the dead in the Age of Mourning brought a gloom and countless undead to the forest. For years, the undead remained in the shadows and forgotten regions of the forest, haunting hunting trails and remote villages, largely unnoticed by outsiders. The scope of the undead threat in Winterwood was revealed when an envoy of the Shepherds of Rest brazenly arrived in Previa at the orders of the Mother of the Dead. Now the Shepherds maintain a small camp on the outskirts of the Winterwood, systematically working to send the wild undead souls to the Mother.

THE FORGOTTEN ISLAND OF TRAXYN

The island of Traxyn is a mystery. Originally discovered by Brell of Winter during his expedition to the southeastern oceans of Karthun, the island of Traxyn is remarkably close to the mainland and Ilrenar. However, despite its proximity, Traxyn remains "unknown" to the people of Karthun. In his ramblings, Brell described an island inhabited by ogre warlocks and a monolith that reached into the clouds above the island. Many dismissed him as mad but the truth is this: Brell was right.

Disturbingly, after his death, the memory of his stories and the references to the island seemed to slip from the memories of everyone he spoke with about his imprisonment there. The same phenomenon occurred following the direct assault on Elinar's vaults beneath Previa. Over the course of a few days, all memory of the warlocks and the battle faded. To the survivors who lost loved ones, they simply know they lost someone but when asked, they cannot seem to remember how. The ogre warlocks stole something from the vaults but neither they nor Elinar have revealed what it is.

ISTIN

CAPITAL: Convergence

RULERS: The Council of Four Lords

COINAGE: Winds (platinum), Flames (gold),
Tides (silver), Veins (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Oligarchy

RELIGIONS: Prathian and various faiths of the
Djinn and efreeti royal houses

Istin is a nation that rests on the last of
the dimensional ley lines on Karthun. A


relative wilderness populated with the largest
concentration of elemental beings and gnomes
on Karthun, Istin is ruled by the patron race of
Prathian the Eternal Sage: the Elemental Lords,
powerful and intelligent elementals who rejected
their patron deity generations ago. In the Age
of Conflict, the Council of Four Lords rule
over the wild elementals, Djinn houses, efreeti
cabals, and natives of the land, while aggressively
safeguarding the secrets entrusted to their care
during the Age of Making. Istin is a land of
wonder, powerful magic, and danger.



HISTORY

As one of the oldest nations of Karthun, the
nation of Istin was forged in the fires of creation
dating back to the Age of Making. When the
molten slag of the world cooled and the original
six gods set about their work, the god of magic,
Prathian the Eternal Sage, understood that the
expenditure of such raw, divine power would
bleed forth from their work in the form of
primal elemental beings. Soon, the residual

power of Karthun itself seeped to the surface,
birthing the first of the elementals. Prathian
diverted the majority of these new beings, who
possessed primitive intelligence and immense
power, toward the lands known today as Istin.
Prathian steered the prime elementals towards
the region for a specific purpose: to act as
dimensional watchdogs. Far more than the



other deities, Prathian understood the workings of dimensional ley lines. As a planar traveler and architect of the cosmos, the Eternal Sage observed an abundance of such ley lines in the region of Istin, which served as a center for elemental power and natural wonder. While access to dimensional travel was important (and often necessary) for the god of magic, he also understood the dangers presented by what awaited the uninformed beyond Karthun's planar veil. To ensure the safety of the ley lines and maintain order among the elementals, Prathian created his patron race, the Elemental Lords: intelligent humanoid beings comprised of the primal forces of earth, air, fire, and water. With his work complete, Prathian placed the first Elemental Lords in positions of power over the new nation of Istin. Working with the lords, Prathian penned the first copy of the *Binders Codex*, a tome detailing the rituals of the magebound, thereby giving magic to the nations of Karthun. The Elemental Lords would serve as caretakers of the *Binders Codex* and the magebound, shepherding willing elementals across Karthun, spreading the word of magic and Prathian's gift.

For centuries, the Elemental Lords watched over Istin and the elementals rising from the primal energies of its fantastical landscape. The Elemental Lords shared power and responsibility evenly among four lords, ruling cautiously but justly. To neighboring nations, much of Istin and its rulers remained a mystery as the Elemental Lords did not favor the arrival of fellow patron races eager to settle in their lands. While the Elemental Lords never closed their borders or refused trade with adjacent nations, the safety of the wild elementals and Karthun's planar ley lines always remained the prime concern for the lords. However, the landscape of Istin changed drastically in 2671 of the Age of Enlightenment when a powerful and ambitious Elemental Lord of Fire named Yaz'ar (the most powerful of his age) and his followers assumed sole control over Istin by force. Under the rule of this tyrant, Istin closed its borders to the outside world and enslaved the lords of his

opposing elements (earth, air, water). Prathian the Eternal Sage, patron deity to the Elemental Lords, was away from Karthun, traveling the planes beyond; despite their desperate pleas for aid, neither Prathian nor his Archivists in Xyn arrived to free the imprisoned lords and unseat Yaz'ar. Unopposed, Yaz'ar believed himself immortal and declared himself the God-King of Wrathful Flame.

For centuries, God-King Yaz'ar ruled over Istin with an iron hand, quelling countless uprisings from the lords of water, air, and earth, often publicly executing the elders of each lord type. Prathian returned to Karthun and, for reasons unknown, chose not to interfere in the happenings in Istin. The lack of concern from the Eternal Sage bolstered the power and influence of the God-King and pushed the Elemental Lords away from their patron deity forever.

The power and ego of the God-King rose unchecked for generations. Istin was a remote nation with closed borders and, with war touching all the nations of Karthun, the God-King remained unchallenged until his decision to expand his lands to the east into Landrin. For weeks, fire elementals and troops loyal to the God-King attacked settlements along Landrin's western borders until, on the eve of Istin's full-scale invasion, Felicos the King of Rogues assassinated the self-proclaimed God-King of Wrathful Flame, breaking the chains of his tyranny. Quickly, the elder Elemental Lords of air, water, and earth took control of Istin and ushered in a brief period of peace. Despite the death of the God-King, his elder advisors and legion of fanatical supporters refused to relinquish their hold over Istin, attacking the new leaders and igniting the War of Wave and Flame.

For decades, the War of Wave and Flame raged across Istin, with the Elemental Lords of air, water, and earth gaining the upper hand by calling in the aid of their allies from the nation of gnomes on the continent of Shoana and their alliances with the Djinn royal houses from beyond Karthun. In response, the Elemental Lords of Fire made use of the sealed planar ley lines of Istin to summon an efreeti cabal



*Mark of the
Scorched Sultans*

of sorcerers and necromancers known as the Scorched Sultans. The power of the efreeti quickly outstripped that of the fire Lords. The battles between the Elemental Lords, gnome mages, Djinn, and efreeti reached divine levels of destruction, spilling over into neighboring Andern. Despite suffering losses to the allied Elemental Lords, Djinn, and gnomes, the efreeti cabal maintained a foothold on the western border of Istin, sending their troops into Andern to decimate their enemies' overextended armies.

The Scorched Sultans waged wars on two fronts while the fury of the Worldfire ravaged Karthun. In Istin, the destruction of the continent of Shoana and the gnome nation left thousands of gnomes homeless and wandering the Last Continent. Many of the gnome elders and mages found refuge in Istin, as they owed their presence on Karthun to Prathian the Eternal Sage and now shared a mutual distrust and hatred for the god of magic. The Worldfire claimed a majority of Karthun's dimensional ley lines, making Istin a focus for outside forces desperate to control planar travel.

In the aftermath of the Age of Flames, the Elemental Lords of Istin put aside their differences, forgiving past conflicts, breaking ties with the Scorched Sultans, driving them out of power and across the northern border of Istin. They then established the new Council of Four Lords. Under the watch of the Council, Istin solidifies its population as elementals and their allies vow to protect the dimensional ley lines of Karthun.

GOVERNMENT

Istin flourishes under the rule of the Council of Four Lords. Geographically, Istin is divided into four quadrants, each favoring an elemental landscape (earth, air, fire, water). From the capital city of Convergence, the Council of Four Lords oversees matters of national interest and implements new laws. Since its founding in the year 250 of the Age of Flames, several lords have ascended to sit on the Council of Four Lords. While the line of succession doesn't rely on hereditary lineage, a majority of recent council members hail from dynasties within Istin. Regardless of lineage, the selection of new council members falls upon the remainder of the sitting council through a vetting process and majority vote. In the event of a deadlocked vote, the members of the Pillars of Istin cast their votes to determine the outcome, with a majority necessary for ascension.

Beneath the Council of Four Lords in the line of authority are the Pillars of Istin, a group of 17 various nobles and dignitaries with interests and holdings across Istin. While no outsiders may sit on the Council of Four Lords, nobles from across Karthun making residence in Istin may serve as one of the Pillars. For example, heirs to two of the oldest gnome families in Istin serve as Pillars in the lands of earth and air. The Pillars are truly the backbone of Istin's government, acting as the day-to-day dignitaries, ambassadors, and decision makers for communities and small courts. Each region functions with four Pillars each with the final Pillar serving the needs of the capital city of Convergence. To maintain order across the four regions of Istin, each region commands a militia force comprised of residents of their specified region. To promote coexistence among the four regions, the militias often trade officers and specialists.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF ISTIN

More than any other region on the Last Continent, Istin is one of the most wondrous and magically infused areas of Karthun. The landscape of Istin is largely vast rolling plains, dotted with immense elemental formations created by the primal forces used to forge Karthun in the Age of Making.

The nation is divided roughly into quadrants, each with an individual elemental alignment. With the elemental alignments of fire, earth, air, and water dominating each quadrant, there are areas of overlap creating a bleed-through effect where the lines between one distinct element and another are blurred. This is especially true at the heart of Istin around the capital city of Convergence, where storms of fire, water, and earth swirl in massive whirlwinds in the skies high above the city, darkening the light of the sun while bathing the region in elemental light and power.

Each of Istin's quadrants looks internally homogenous. Water looks like a shifting pool of liquid, earth appears as subtle shifts in land, fire as steady campfires, and air as breezes. The elements in their purest forms lose distinction in the eyes of those who aren't born or trained to see such differences. To non-elementals, the most interesting areas of Istin are where the alignments of quadrants change from one elemental type to another. There, the elements blur and combine in ways rarely seen outside of Istin. These areas have distinct names, owing to the uniqueness of their geography and topography.

To the south, the earth-aligned region of Istin borders the elven nation of Symul, with the Highwall Mountains serving as a natural barrier and source of power for those in the region. Here, the structures of settlements and fortifications comprising Istin's largest militia are dense and imposing, shaped with jagged edges from stone hewn by the gods during the Age of Making.

In the east, the water-aligned quadrant borders the nation of Landrin, providing much of the water used across the region, as well as feeding numerous lakes and rivers in Landrin and Symul.

Here, water mages, merchants, and Elemental Lords reside on large floating settlements that move with the currents. In this peaceful region, scholars and philosophers travel from across Karthun to experience the tranquility. Boat and ferry travel dominate the methods of travel, with native or well-trained guides knowledgeable of the travel patterns of settlements, as their locations change over the course of a calendar year.

The northern, air-aligned region of Istin shares a border with the wastelands of the former nation of Desin. Partially separated by massive gorges and chasms created by the destructive force of the Worldfire, this region is known for impossibly tall spires that tower over the landscape. From elevated heights, air mages and Elemental Lords converse with Djinn nobility and watch over the militia safeguarding Istin from the roaming tribes and magic-scarred horrors of Desin.

In the west, the fire lords, still distrusted by many within Istin, maintain a vigil on their borders with Andern. The Elemental Lords of fire severed their ties with the Scorched Sultans centuries ago, sparking a blood feud that smolders in the Age of Conflict.

The Scorched Sultans hold lands along the border of Andern and Istin, with all manner of criminals, cultists, and ill-minded creatures flocking to the fire-aligned lands.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Burning Isles

The overlap of the regions of fire and air produces a series of semi-solid islands of air surrounded by rivers of liquid fire known as the Burning Isles. The effect is startling, mesmerizing, and deadly. The air islands are only visible from the correct angles, as transparent as normal air. Travelers in the Burning Isles quickly learn to discern where the flow of fire splits and rejoins to know where the isles exist. The isles move and flow much as air does, meaning that the area a person is standing on at one moment may dissipate, disappear, or move further down the fire river.

Cinder

The smoldering city of Cinder in the fire-aligned lands was once the home of the Scorched Sultans. Driven out during the fire lord uprising, the Sultans moved their operations into occupied lands within Andern. Cinder stands as a reminder of the former efreeti tyrants, with tall spires wrought from sharp iron stained with ash and alight with smoldering flames. Cinder hosts one of the largest marketplaces in Istin, welcoming travelers and merchants from across Karthun via extensive teleportation magics. The Pillars of the fire region all reside in Cinder and live lives of decadence, drawing the ire of Elemental Lords and merchants within the city.

Convergence

As the capital city of Istin, Convergence is a marvel to behold. Circular in design with ascending levels of golden spires rising towards the center of the city and the Heart of the Convergence, the skies above the city swirl with the power of all four elements. Across the city, all four elements are represented in their purest forms.

At the center of the city, the golden, twisting spire of the Heart of the Convergence feeds each of the four elements outward through canals that sluice toward their respective regions. Several outer chambers ring the central spire, each containing the few known stable gates leading beyond Karthun. The chambers remain under constant guard, watched over by elder Elemental Lords and powerful elementals and constructs. It's not uncommon to see one of the Four Lords patrolling the halls between the gate chambers. Despite their hatred of their patron deity, the Elemental Lords maintain their duty to protect Karthun's planar veil from danger.

Beyond the Hall of Gates, a set of massive doors seal away the Chamber of the Heart. What lies beyond the massive doors leading into the Heart is a secret known only to a few. The Council of Four Lords enters the Chamber of the Heart often but they never speak of what occurs inside. Legend and rumor speculate

that the Heart is the true power of Istin and the Elemental Lords. Others believe it's a direct conduit to the power of the gods or a gate to the heart of Karthun and the Chain.

Alarmists believe it is was once a gate to Prathian's inner sanctum but, following his separation from Istin, the gate now leads to a dark place, possibly the Dead or the citadel of the Three Demon Kings. The last theory was found in a journal of one of Prathian's Sentinels of the Book, where he stated his belief that the Heart itself is a pool of infinite possibilities, a hole in the fabric of reality by which one could see the multitude of pasts and futures that have been, or could have been. The possibility of this final theory fuels concerned debate in the halls of academia as historians and scholars of planar theory, familiar with Prathian's proclivity for Chronomancy, voice concerns over what could be changed in Karthun's history with such power or, more worryingly, what has already been changed and no one has realized.

Ferros

The largest fortress of the earth-aligned region in the south of Istin, this imposing structure serves as the primary entry point into Istin from the nation of Symul. Shaped from the stone of the Highwall Mountains, the mages and Elemental Lords of Ferros have little patience for the elves of the Jackal Clan and their hunting parties, often clashing with the frenzied Jackals on nights when one of the moons is full. Pillar Debb Wulvo—a gnome mage bound to an earth elemental and a respected militia leader—recently raised concerns with the Council of Four Lords, as he suspects the Jackal attacks aren't random, but rather are testing Ferros' defenses.

The Ice Spires

The air-aligned and water-aligned regions of Istin meet at the Ice Spires, which are bitterly cold, with raging winds that blast upwards from the ground towards the sky. These winds pulled water upward, freezing the water in beautiful vertical columns. To traverse this area, one must navigate from frozen column to frozen column using ropes, grapples, or climbing spikes. Among the frozen spires, caverns twist into darkness and serve as lairs for beasts and other threats—but the legend of the King of Spires draws curious adventurers to the treacherous region.

Said to be a mage bound to one the primal elementals of water, the King of Spires maintains his extensive lair among the caverns of the Ice Spires, feeding on the fallen and amassing a treasure horde greater than the vaults of the former Emerald Throne.

The Obsidian Shardlands

The border between the quadrants aligned to earth and fire is an ever-shifting mass of black, volcanic glass referred to as Obsidiack. Outside of Istin, Obsidiack glass is prized for its reflective qualities and unique alchemical uses. Travelers through the Obsidian Shardlands claim that, in addition to the elementals that call the area home, strange elementals possessed by ghosts and dark spirits haunt the area. Some mages urge caution with Obsidiack, claiming that people gazing into their own reflections in pieces of the black glass lose part of their souls in the process, becoming trapped in a state of half-life. The presence of these elementals and the theories of their connection to Obsidiack results in the black glass of the Obsidian Shardlands being a disturbingly valuable commodity outside of Istin.

The Quick

Where the air-aligned and earth-aligned regions meet, the Quick appears as a moderately tame part of Istin's landscape. However, the Quick is only tame in appearance. Travelers quickly discover that what appears to be solid ground is often nothing more than a thin crust of solid earth covering a yawning pool of quicksand

or mud. Scholars theorize that if one were to survive a trip down through the primeval ooze, one might find centuries' worth of bones and fossils of unfortunate beings who were less lucky. The Quick, much like the Obsidiack of the Obsidian Shardlands, also carries some modest commercial value, as there are wealthy individuals who swear by the properties of the mud as a purifying agent for their skin.

Swept

This watch post is the largest spire along the northern border of Istin. The air-aligned militia and the Order of the Eastern Wind—a small band of monks and philosophers—call this place home. From the highest point, the militia watches over the chasm into the wastelands of Desin, mindful of the roaming tribes, fierce storms, and horrors that stalk the plains. Recently, the head of the Order of the Eastern Wind, Kasik, ascended to the position of Pillar for the region. He and his Eastern Wind brothers are recruiting new members to the Order and attracting followers to their philosophy from as far away as Ilrenar.

Torrent

The largest floating settlement on the waters of the eastern region, Torrent is the only anchored city. Once a small fishing village, Torrent earned its name for the fierce rainfall of the region and turbulent nature of its past leadership. Over the years, new merchants and residents migrated to Torrent for trade and the peace of isolation on the water. Once the settlement reached its current size, the Pillars of the region thought it best to anchor the city as a focal point in one location at the center of the region. Recently, the militia and water elementals of the region have clashed with telepathic creatures nesting in the depths of the waters below Torrent and more than one citizen of the city has fallen victim to the creatures' beguiling influence, launching themselves into suicide missions in the name of their telepathic masters.

KRAGHORN

CAPITAL: Wyrbane, Grand Fortress of the Conquest

RULER: High Spear Boldrak the Unbreakable, kundrok slave who fought his way to the throne

COINAGE: Various coinage from across Karthun and the original unnamed coinage of the Draconic empire

GOVERNMENT: Dictatorship

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Felicos, the Mother of the Dead, fanatical worship of the dragons

The former realm of the draconic empire and the Dreadwing Council before their fall during the War of Wardens, Kraghorn

suffered under the destructive rituals invoked during the war and existed for centuries as wild, unclaimed lands. In time, tribes of orcs and giant-kin returned to the barren plains, resulting in a long chain of brutal conflicts between tribes as chieftains battled for supremacy.

In the Age of Conflict, the kundrok gladiator Boldrak the Unbreakable rose to power through brutality and the secret machinations of his lover (and the true Queen of Kraghold) Mikasha, the half-demon dryad. Under the control of Mikasha, Boldrak pushes his forces toward the sealed fortress of Eternity Peak and the dark secrets it possesses, while across Kraghorn tribes of orcs struggle over water supplies, explore the ruins of the draconic empire, and search for treasures long forgotten under the barren lands.



HISTORY

Compared to the other nations on the Last Continent, Kraghorn stands as one of the most drastically affected by history. When the fledgling nations of the patron races were first settling into their respective lands, the dragons of the Dreadwing Council already controlled the continent of Prevaul and thrived as a nation pushing the boundaries of magic and planar travel. The exact origins of the dragons and their empire on Karthun remain a mystery, but recorded history confirms the arrival of the first draconic envoy to the southern mountains of Doryan late in the Age of Making.

Representing the Dreadwing Council of Prevaul, the dragons claimed the Black Star Mountains, the surrounding region, and the tallest peak along the range (an impossibly tall mountain that seemed to bleed into the cosmos), naming it Eternity Peak. This act and this claim were purposeful. The Dreadwing Council discovered dimensional ley lines housed within an immense fortress hidden within the mountain. Harnessing energies from beyond Karthun from the ancient gates and the mountain itself, the power and influence of the Dreadwing Council increased tenfold.

The first ripples of fate to touch the lands of Kraghorn arrived with the first orcs of Karthun. Eager to expand their empire, armies, and worshippers, the dragons of Eternity Peak reached out across the planes to find the orcs and bring them to Karthun. With their immense strength, need for battle, and fanatical loyalty to the Dreadwing Council, the orcs quickly swelled the armies of the dragons and expanded their empire. The sitting Chieftains of the orcish clans paid fealty to their draconic masters for many years while the Dreadwing Council continued to learn and draw power from Eternity Peak. In these years, the gods, distracted by other happenings across Karthun, lived unaware of the powers rising in the southern lands of modern Kraghorn.

Despite years of loyalty, the servitude and worship from the orcs waned as the rebellious words of General Gram of the Bloodhorn

Clan led to the orcs turning on the Dreadwing Council. Their rebellion sparked the Battle for Eternity with both sides suffering losses. In the end of the battle, the surviving orcs retreated from the Dreadwing Council lands, eventually finding the Blight March.

With the orcs in retreat, the Dreadwing Council's hold on their lands around Eternity Peak began to wane; separately, greedy clans of giantkin marching from the Skyreach Mountains and the noble dragons of Prevaul arrived, pressing the resources of the Dreadwing Council to the brink. In an effort to strike back and gain an advantage, the Dreadwing Council located and imprisoned the dragon seer Moonwing, using her prophetic visions to outmaneuver their enemies. Despite minor setbacks, the Golden Flight of Prevaul and heroes from Andern aided by Sehad the World Warden freed Moonwing from her prison and shattered the Dreadwing Council. Moonwing took the throne of Eternity Peak as the new Dragon Queen, ushering in a new age for dragons on Doryan.

Once again, peace proved fleeting, as the Final Council—a union of exiled dragons and disgraced Wardens led by Tyraxion the Devil Wurm—attacked Eternity Peak, slaying the Dragon Queen and her court. The scars of the ensuing battle mar the lands around the Black Star Mountains and Eternity Peak to this day. The gods ultimately sealed the fortress within Eternity Peak and the surviving dragons returned to their home continent of Prevaul.

The Worldfire did little to affect the land, but it was the arrival of demons that truly ravaged Kraghorn. When all was said and done, the scattered, surviving demons remained lurking in the shadows, ensuring that the land would never truly flourish again. Karthun was in chaos and with the natural barrier of the Skyreach Mountains, the region descended into a savage wasteland.

For many years, the southern region remained scarred and unclaimed. Across the barren plains, water became scarce as roaming bands of humanoids and various giantkin from the Skyreach Mountains migrated across the lands,

competing for small territories and resources in the shadow of the Black Star Mountains. Eventually, in 330 of the Age of Mourning, orcs migrating back to their original homeland with tribes of goblins and gnolls united under the banner of Grasock of the Iron Spike, a descendant of Gram of the Bloodhorn clan. Grasock's strength and his loyal clan provided most of the necessary components to unite the lands, but in truth, another force was at work: the half-demon dryad, Mikasha of the Lash. The exiled daughter of a demon lord from the Worldfire and the Queen of Willows of Nightshade Forest, Mikasha wandered the Last Continent for years seducing merchants, nobles, and heroes to acquire wealth and power; but her demonic blood craved bloodshed and primal combat. This desire led her to take Grasock as her lover. Soon, her powers of seduction and domination claimed the will of Grasock, as Mikasha used the Chieftain as a pawn, moving him and other pieces on the chessboard of Kraghorn.

Fate returned the orcs to the land, and under Grasock's rule (with Mikasha ruling from the shadows), the region became known as Kraghorn: the Iron Lands, a harsh region existing under the rule of tyrannical Chieftains, each rising to claim the throne through brutal combat

with Mikasha pulling their strings, always with her eye on her grand design.

In the Age of Conflict, Kraghorn is a brutal land of survival of the fittest (or the most clever), existing in the shadow of its former draconic masters, the treasures they left behind, and the schemes of Kraghorn's secret queen.

GOVERNMENT

Kraghorn's government is based on brutality, secrets, the subtle use of power, and dark magic. At the forefront of Kraghorn's leadership is the current High Spear of Kraghorn, Boldrak the Unbreakable. Boldrak is a kundrok orphan raised in the slave pits and gladiatorial circuits across Kraghorn. Since adolescence, Boldrak possessed an uncanny intelligence, strength, and unbreakable will. For years he toiled in the pits, claiming hundreds of lives. Despite his attempts to escape his slaver masters, Boldrak remained in chains until his strength caught the eye of Mikasha. She orchestrated the masterful chain of events that brought Boldrak not only the Spear of Malice (a spear forged from the bones of a Dreadwing Council dragon) but also allowed him to claim the title of High Spear from the aging previous High Spear, Rigback the Scourge of Kraghorn.

ETERNITY PEAK

Standing in the southern region of modern Kraghorn, the blue stone and otherworldly nature of Eternity draws in curious explorers, mages, and gods alike. For many across Karthun (both past and present), Eternity Peak and the rumors of the power sealed within its halls is the ultimate prize. Following the War of the Wardens, the gods sealed the halls at the heart of the mountain, fearful of what could happen if left unchecked, allowing tales of its power to fade into rumor and legend but the truth is this: Eternity Peak houses a crossroads of gates away from Karthun's plane of existence. The gods used the gates to bring the giants and dragons to Karthun when the world was young. Under the stewardship of the dragons, Eternity elevated the dragons power to godlike levels and their eventual corruption scared the gods. Powerful rituals and protectors seal the inner halls, but many agents work to unravel the rituals and tap into Eternity's power for their own gain. Eternity and the secrets within is an excellent source for high-level campaigns.

While Boldrak retains much of his own free will, moving Kraghorn in directions that align with Mikasha's visions, the seductress uses her abilities to cloud Boldrak's mind and subtly push him towards the secrets of Eternity Peak.

To maintain control over the majority of the tribes and inhabitants of Kraghorn, the High Spear utilizes a personal army of warriors chosen from various tribes and now, under Boldrak's rule, the slave pits. Boldrak has yet to abolish slavery and the gladiatorial pits, but many tribal elders believe the day is coming and when it happens, they fear the strong possibility of civil war across Kraghorn.

The High Spear also maintains control over the Water Barons and their distribution of water from Ashbone Lake, the primary water source of the region. The Water Barons exploit the weakness and desperation of tribes across the land, gathering treasure hordes rivaling those of the former draconic masters. Through the use of canals and heavily regulated aqueducts, the Water Barons distribute water to settlements and the capital of Wyrmbane. Often, young tribes and greedy organizations stage raids to syphon water from the aqueducts and shipments but the Water Barons employ powerful warriors and mages bound to fire and earth elementals, all of whom are ruthless in their retaliations for such attempts.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Ashbone Lake

Before the War of Wardens, Kraghorn was a fertile paradise with a name worthy of the dragons that made it their home. Now there's one primary body of water within Kraghorn and it's one of the few hospitable areas of the region, a source of fresh water that seems to never run dry and never needs replenishment from rain. In fact, as part of organizing the orcs of Kraghorn into something close to a nation as opposed to random tribes, the High Spear Boldrak organized massive distribution chains of water, transported via caravan, canals, and a new aqueduct system stretching to the most remote regions of Kraghorn. One might think that such couriers

would be in great danger, but it's a testament to the power and influence held by Boldrak and his Water Barons that being a Water Courier in Kraghorn is one of the safest professions a person could hope to hold. In fact, the Water Barons and Water Couriers have become the active arm of Boldrak's power throughout Kraghorn, as they quite literally dole out life to those who take their water. Water comes with a price, of course and the Water Barons are unforgiving of debt, with villages delinquent on payments suffering as their aqueducts or shipments run dry.

The Black Star Mountains and the Skyreach Mountains

The bulk of the draconic treasure troves discovered in Kraghorn rest within these two mountain ranges. Evidence suggests not that the dragons lived in these mountains in such numbers, but rather that the dragons used magical means to store their wealth within the ancient rock. The wyrms of the Dreadwing Council, though proud and self-reliant, knew that combining their power would serve them well against interlopers and outsiders. Thus, they used a series of farstep circles to link spots in their lairs with distant portions buried deep within the mountains. However, in recent years, the magic of the farstep circles has begun to break down, leading to various types of mishaps, such as entire treasure hoards reappearing within draconic lairs claimed by denizens of Kraghorn (changing the fates of poorer tribes overnight). On the opposite side, some circles lose their power, sealing distant treasure hoards in their secret places within the mountains, forever.

The Green Isle

A large island off the southwestern coast of Kraghorn, the Green Isle is one of the only places in or near Kraghorn that can support crops. Some combination of winds off the Expanse and the fertile soil of the island produced land especially suited to all things green and growing. Boldrak has established his power here using a series of grand bridges built over the course of years at the cost of countless lives and the

use of discovered—and appropriated—farstep circles. The island itself is run by an oddity in Kraghorn: a gnome Water Baron. This gnome goes simply by the name of Splice, and through means unknown, has earned both Boldrak's (and Mikasha's) respect and permission to oversee the Green Isle largely as she wishes, as long as the Water Couriers are granted safe passage and she continues to send crops back to the mainland.

The Hoard Circles

Transient fighting arenas, the Hoard Circles sprout up wherever a lost draconic treasure hoard is found in Kraghorn. Because of the variable nature of the protections on the hidden hoards, the types of contests that happen in the Hoard Circles are different at each circle. In some cases, the hoard is available and exposed to all, so the contest is a brutal fight to the death, the rules of which established by whichever of Boldrak's Water Barons is first to arrive. Often, discovered hoards are protected by vicious traps and deadly magic, typically contributing to the victory conditions for each Hoard Circle. Many brave or foolish combatants from across the Last Continent travel to Kraghorn to seek out Hoard Circles, eager to make their name and possibly a fortune.

Plains of Greed

Barren plains covering central Kraghorn, the Plains of Greed stand as a grim reminder of the destruction unleashed during the War of Wardens. The plains are considered to be among the most dangerous regions of Kraghorn, filled with environmental hazards, roaming bands of savage tribes of orcs, trolls, and ravenous giantkin (such as half-ogres and ettin). The Plains of Greed are also home to a phenomenon unique to Kraghorn known as Walking Treasure—enormous piles of gold and various treasures from ancient draconic hoards, infused with wild magic and given partial sentience. Walking Treasure appears on the plains, attracting the greedy and desperate hoping to defeat one of the enormous hoards.

Spinebreaker

This settlement is aptly named not for the manual labor that it implies, but for the number of people who have shattered their spines falling into it. Spinebreaker is located approximately 100 miles south of the Skyreach Mountains, and 500 miles west of Ashbone Lake. If one views it from above, it resembles nothing more than a near-perfect black circle, a hole delving into the ground. From a land approach, all that can be seen of this yawning pit is the city of that surrounds it. Founded by a retired Water Courier named Feldra, Spinebreaker is both a mining operation and a safe haven for travelers in Kraghorn. Rumors suggest that years ago, during one of her journeys through the wastes, Feldra passed by the pit and beheld the gleaming of gemstones. Staking her claim, she used her earnings as a Water Courier, as well as the influence she garnered from surrounding tribes, to hire builders and miners to journey with her into the pit to claim a fortune. In the pit, Feldra claimed a fortune in gems and discovered an unusual amulet. The charm allows Feldra to summon trees anywhere she commands. Her first act upon bringing more hired help to the pit was to grow a small forest, cut it down, season the wood, and use it to build her town. Now, Feldra uses the amulet in creative ways, growing trees from the side of the pit, which are used as supports for delving deeper down into the depths.

Splinter

One of the former Hoard Circles, Splinter is home to a diverse group of people with one thing in common: they all carry dragons' blood in their veins. Scholars speculate that some artifact or lingering spell in this hoard caused the effect, as there are no records of there being dragon-blooded descendants of the Dreadwing Council in the area until after the hoard was discovered. Splinter is named for the manifest written by its leader, Helk. Helk, being more dragon than humanoid, claimed sovereignty of a blasted area of land around the hoard after he won the Hoard Circle battle for the region. Most stories

claim that Helk was an orc prior to the Hoard Circle, but was changed during the process of winning the hoard. His manifest claims, among other things, that the residents of Splinter are all descendants of the dragon necromancer Urkrav of the Tolls (named for the haunting tolling of bells used during his rituals), who, once enough of his blood has been spread into enough bodies, will rise from the depths and claim the land. Even more odd is that Boldrak allows this settlement to continue, and even thrive, as the number of dragon-blooded in it grows by unknown means.

Wyrmbane, Grand Fortress of the Conquest

Located near the northwestern edge of Ashbone Lake, Wyrmbane is the home of the High Spear Boldrak the Unbreakable, and is the seat of the real power in Kraghorn. Legends say that when Boldrak escaped the chains of his masters, he swam for three straight days through Ashbone Lake, taking refuge on tiny rock outcroppings, surviving as a scavenger. During this journey, Boldrak found a draconic artifact of great power, one that spoke to him, and only through instinct he realized it would not benefit him in battle, but would instead help him to rule. After winning the contest and taking the head of the former High Spear, Boldrak walked to a plateau within sight of Ashbone Lake and activated his artifact. There rose a massive fortress, great black walls stark against the sky. Boldrak took the citadel as his seat of power and began to gather the disparate tribes of orcs under his control. He named the fortress Wyrmbane as a declaration that none, not even a returning flight of dragons, would be able to unseat him. Wyrmbane itself is a near-impregnable fortress, created and maintained by Boldrak's artifact. More than just a seat of Boldrak's power, Wyrmbane is also the center of trade and commerce for Kraghorn. As the primary source of water for Kraghorn, all of the magic, exotic trade, and unimaginable wealth located in Kraghorn is subject to a levy executed by Boldrak and his Water Barons. Wyrmbane has seen more than a few casual challengers that have blunted

their weapons against its mighty walls. However, Boldrak continues to keep an active guard there. Some claim that Boldrak fears a return of the dragons that once ruled the land, and that is the real reason for the name of his fortress.



Wyrmbane Standard

LANDRIN

CAPITAL: Whitetower, the City of Hope

RULER: Maryn Tanner, the Shining Lady, the Seventh Star

COINAGE: Shields (platinum), Swords (gold), Staves (silver), Daggers (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Militocracy led by the Seven Stars and Knights of the Silver Legion

RELIGIONS: Deknar, former philosophies of Valkyre, and demonic worship

Landrin is a nation of soldiers. Founded by the armies of the Emerald Throne, Symul, and the Silver Guard of Valkyre, Landrin stands as one of the few lines of defense between Karthun and the remaining demonic gates of the Worldfire. Along the eastern shores of the Last Continent, Landrin's Silver Legion wages war with the demons of the Worldfire, hordes of ravenous undead, and scavenger elves of the Jackal Clan of Symul, in addition to contending with a centuries old blood war with the theocracy of Erast. Under the protection of the Pillars of Virtue and the command of the otherworldly knights known as the Seven Stars, the people of Landrin know the importance of their role in the protection of the Last Continent and are willing to die, down to the last soldier, to uphold their beliefs.



HISTORY

During the Age of Enlightenment, dark, unholy forces festering within a region known as the Blight March brought forth one of the first serious threats to the eastern regions of the continent of Doryan: the Kranee. The emergence of these fetid, plague-ridden orcs set the wheels of fate in motion towards the founding of one of Karthun's greatest—and most tragic—nations.

Once held and later abandoned by the Emerald Throne, the Blight March existed for centuries as a cursed marshland, corrupted by the dark rituals of a long-dead goblin empire. The marsh thrived as a haven for twisted, horrific creatures and for cultists and criminals desperate to avoid the gaze of neighboring nations. In the Age of Enlightenment, orc clans fleeing the dragons of the Dreadwing Council arrived at the southernmost region of the Blight March and seemingly vanished. For years, merchants and travelers wandering close to the edges of the marsh reported the odd sighting of orcish clan banners and signs of life, but very rarely did travelers see any sign of orcs themselves. Generations passed, with little sign of the orcs' existence within the marsh, until Wolf Clan settlements along the eastern border of Symul reported the first sightings and violent encounters with fetid, plague-ridden orcs from the Blight March, dubbed the Kranee, the elvish word for wasting.

The bloody war between the elves of Symul and the Kranee raged for years, eventually spilling over into the southern regions of the Emerald Throne. The Kranee fought with the bloodrage of their orcish ancestors, combined with the use of dark, arcane magic, plagues, and curses, costing countless lives. Kranee warlocks polluted the land while their soldiers raided villages, stealing men, women, and children by the hundreds. The Kranee and their magic grew to be such a blight, it caught the attention of Valkyre the Knight of Karthun, goddess of Valor.

Amassing a legion of soldiers, mages, paladins of Valkyre's Silver Guard, and volunteers, the bolstered forces assaulted the Kranee. To the

horror of all, Kranee warlocks used dark magic to invoke a black rainstorm, cursing and killing thousands with a wasting disease that also reduced miles of land to fetid waste. The defiling act drew the rage of Sehad and Valkyre, but the goddess Elinar, convinced the Kranee could be saved, begged the others to allow her Speakers of Harmony and a squad of Silver Guard escorts to enter the Blight March and negotiate peace. What followed horrified the goddess as the Kranee overpowered the Speakers and Silver Guards, torturing and sacrificing all of them to bolster the strength of their leader, Bilegut. Enraged, Valkyre clashed with Bilegut and his elite guard, only to suffer dire wounds at the hands of the empowered chieftain. Sehad took Valkyre to safety, battling the wasting disease infecting the goddess as Bilegut's brazen act brought the full rage of Elinar to bear. Hurricane force storms battered the coastline of the Blight March, as lightning storms rained down on every Kranee settlement leaving their armies dead, broken, and scattered.

With the threat of the Kranee quelled, the gods used their power to heal as much of the land as possible while the soldiers and Silver Guard paladins looked toward their future. The land was far from safe and, with civil war erupting in Symul, the Silver Guard felt an obligation to stand watch over the southern region. Soon, a plan was developed as the elder paladins of the Silver Guard approached the monarchy of the Emerald Throne, requesting permission to found the city-state of Landrin, the Hope of the East. Over the course of years, Landrin expanded and continued to watch over the unclaimed southern regions as an extension of the Emerald Throne. With the Emerald Throne uncertain and support to Landrin slipping, a temporary council of dwarves elected to sign over significant land in the south to Landrin, forming a new nation of the same name. The people elected the first Shining Lord via democratic vote and the nation of Landrin took shape, expanding its efforts to safeguard the southern regions of Doryan.

The Age of Flames brought a string of challenges and tragedies to the young nation of

Landrin. Fearing their alliance, the Jackal Clan of Symul sowed distrust and war between Landrin and the Wolf Clan, leading to the War of the Thorn (named for the poisoned roses sent to the Shining Lord of Landrin by the Jackal Clan in the name of the Wolf Clan). The War of the Thorn changed Landrin and its people. To maintain order, the leadership moved back towards the nation's roots as a military force and adopted a new system of government. Instead of election, leaders rose by promotion due to service and rank within the Silver Legion. The change met with little resistance and Landrin continued to thrive, despite their war with the Wolf Clans. After decades of bloodshed, Elinar broke her self-imposed exile following her destruction of the Kranees and negotiated peace between the Wolf Clans and Landrin.

Landrin's greatest challenge came when the Worldfire reached Doryan. The demonic legion of the Three Demon Kings struck the eastern nations of Desin and Landrin first, as the destructive force of the Worldfire split and destroyed miles of land along the eastern coast, killing thousands. The greatest loss came when the collapsing land took the city-state of Landrin itself. The capital of the nation burned and plunged into the depths of the Whitemist Sea. In the devastation, the sitting Shining Lord and most of the senior chain of command perished, leaving Landrin without leadership and in a chaotic battle for their lives against the demonic legion. The Ritual of the Chain performed by the gods and heroes of Karthun halted the progress of the Worldfire and drove many of the demons back away from other nations, but on the battlefields of Landrin, war continued. For reasons unknown, several of the original gates opened in Landrin did not close during the ritual, allowing demons to funnel into Karthun. In the days that followed, the people of Landrin vowed to stand fast as a line of defense for the Last Continent.

For years, the Silver Legion clashed with demons from the Worldfire, preventing their spread across the Last Continent. The war was

never-ending but the people of Landrin settled in and, for a time, kept the demons in check. Then, across battlefields in Landrin, thousands of soldiers and demons falling in combat rose again as ravenous undead thanks to the death of Sehad. The spread of undeath created widespread chaos among the citizens of Landrin and the demonic legions. No one, mortal or demon, was safe from the curse of undeath. Residents of Landrin fled their homes in exodus to neighboring nations. Demons of the Worldfire fortified their gates, battling the spread of undeath among their own numbers. Mortal and demon alike worked in earnest to burn the walking dead to ash, all in the hopes of stemming the rising tide of the dead. When Valkyre finally appeared before her followers in the southern region of Landrin after years of isolation, the goddess slayed the elder clerics of her faith and gave birth to her son, Kyzul. Twisted by Valkyre's grief, Kyzul's birth further ripped an already fragile plane of existence, pushing the Shadow further from Karthun and creating the lifeless plane between: the Dead.

Landrin stood on the brink of destruction. Valkyre, now the Mother of the Dead, abandoned her Silver Paladins and the soldiers of the Silver Legion. Faith in Landrin was broken. From the south, Kyzul watched over Erast, the new theocracy of the Mother, with a divine proclamation to destroy all of Valkyre's faithful and seize Landrin. To the east, demons continued to pour into Karthun from the Worldfire gates; across Landrin, the restless undead from the Age of Mourning continued to plague the living. Drove of nobles and commoners alike hoped to flee Landrin to find safety, but Desin was already a scorched wasteland after the arrival of the Worldfire. To make matters worse, the theocracy of Erast issued orders to kill any Landrinites faithful to Valkyre on sight. For Landrin, hope was in short supply—until the rise of the Seven Stars.

On a mid-winter's eve, demons breached the walls of Whitetower, beginning what many sages believe to be Landrin's most desperate hour. Silver Legion soldiers and citizens fought for



their lives in a losing battle against the demons, as entire quarters of the capital city burned. On the toll of the seventh hour, seven otherworldly knights appeared amid the chaos in various areas of the city, ablaze with holy power and shining like bright stars in a clear evening sky. Each of the knights wielded a greatsword that radiated with power, laying scores of demons low. The appearance of the knights rallied troops and citizens against the demonic forces, turning the tide of battle and forcing the invaders into retreat. Whitetower was saved; on the steps of the Silver Legion fortress, the heroes announced themselves to Whitetower and all of Landrin as the Seven Stars: heroes of prophecy blessed with holy power from beings beyond Karthun's plane of existence and destined to banish the demons of the Worldfire from Karthun forever.

The Seven Stars met with a hero's welcome. In the months of recovery and rebuilding for Whitetower that followed, each of the Stars coordinated with the leadership and military of Landrin and led successful campaigns against encroaching demonic forces from the Worldfire and the undead still plaguing Landrin. Maryn Tanner—the Seventh and most senior Star and the leader of the Seven Stars—quickly became a trusted fighter and tactician for the Silver Legion. The public respected and adored her firm hand and strong sense of justice in the face of the undead, demons from the Worldfire, and the threat of hostile nations. New soldiers enlisted

daily to serve under Tanner and the Seven Stars in their campaign against the demons.

In the Age of Conflict, the Seven Stars performed powerful rituals with the aid of trusted Silver Legion mages to create the Pillars of Virtue, three large crystalline pillars at the heart of Whitetower. Once activated, the holy power of the pillars sent shockwaves across Landrin, driving many of the lesser demons beyond its borders and outright destroying thousands of lesser undead. For the first time in centuries, Landrin could breathe a sigh of relief as hope washed over the nation. Soon after the raising of the Pillars of Virtue, the sitting Shining Lord retired from service and nominated Maryn Tanner to take his place as the new Shining Lady. The motion broke military protocol, but the senior staff of leadership agreed and Tanner took the role.

Now, the Seven Stars, Silver Legion, and people of Landrin stand as a unified people and the first line of defense for the western nations of Karthun against a full-scale assault of the demons from the gates of the Worldfire. For now, the demons seem content to avoid Landrin and sow discontent in the hearts of the other nations across Karthun, as demonic worship is at an all time high. Tension between Erast and Landrin runs high, with skirmishes between the nations escalating. Across the nation, undead from Erast and the remnants of the Age of Mourning continue to plague the southern borders and dark places.

GOVERNMENT

Landrin is a militocracy led by a chain of command beginning with the Seven Stars and descending down through the Silver Legion. Individual branches of Landrin's military force and economic structure (treasury, agriculture, etc.) are overseen by assigned commanders signified as High Commander (e.g., High Commander of the Treasury).

The appointment of Maryn Tanner to the position of Shining Lady met with little resistance, despite the divergence from protocol. To ease the minds of any detractors inside and outside of the governing military, Tanner and the rest of the Stars officially enlisted in the Silver Legion and received ranks in accordance to their experience and previous military accomplishments against threats to the nation.

Politically, Landrin maintains loose affiliations with the Elemental Lords of Istin and the Wolf Clan of Symul (despite their bloody war generations prior), often giving aid to both nations in times of need. Along Landrin's northern border, the chasms and distant threats of the wastelands of Desin are kept in mind but are rarely acted upon, as the threats of the demons from the Worldfire and the theocracy of Erast draw most of the Silver Legion's attention. In regards to Erast, political tension and centuries old hatred continue to keep the two nations at war, with bloody conflicts spilling into the Jackal Clan regions of Symul and as far north as the Weeping Fields (the site of the Mother of the Dead's ascension and Kyzul's birth).

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Durnwood

The largest forest in Landrin, the Durnwood straddles the border of Landrin and Symul, and is home to foul Jackal Clan elves. The vile, scavenger nature of the Jackal Clan drove many of the native fey out of the Durnwood, leaving behind dense woodland permeated with a sense of lifelessness. Rumors suggest the lack of native fey allowed something more sinister to take hold of the Durnwood. Regardless, expeditions

into the Durnwood revealed several rich mining opportunities in gold and precious stones, but the occupying Jackal Clan makes mining in the Durnwood a dangerous proposition. Several mining operations in Landrin pay handsomely for caravan guards.

Fort Day

The easternmost fort of the Silver Legion on the Fallen Plains, Fort Day stands as the first line of defense against demons emerging from the Burning Gates. For generations, the soldiers of Fort Day have slowed the tide of the demonic legions of the Three Demon Kings, especially with the arrival of Faron Hark, the Fourth Star of the Seven Stars. Under the leadership and otherworldly power of Hark, the Silver Legion engineers have solidified Fort Day into the strongest it's been since the arrival of the Worldfire. In addition to the soldiers of the fort, the Dawn Striders maintain a station here, in the event of another massive demonic incursion.

The Fallen Plains

The site of countless battles between the Silver Legion and the demons emerging from the Burning Gates, the Fallen Plains were once rich plains dotted with dozens of farmsteads. In the Age of Mourning, fallen soldiers and demons alike rose on the plains as ravenous undead, polluting and cursing the land. Now, the plains stand as a mass grave, forsaken by Landrin but an irresistible lure for adventurers and scavengers eager to find abandoned treasure, magic, and weapons left behind by mortals and demons alike.

The Weeping Fields

One of the most cursed locations on Karthun, the Weeping Fields stand as a reminder of Valkyre's abandonment of valor, honor, and the people of Landrin. In the heart of the fields, the ruins of the city of Lightsdawn stand crumbling, infested with the restless undead slain by the Mother of the Dead and the birth of her son, Kyzul. For years, Landrin abandoned the Weeping Fields to Erast, but recently, the Seven Stars and Silver

Legion have moved to reclaim the territory in the name of honor and valor, as Lightsdawn is the ancestral home of many noble families in Landrin. These acts lead to open combat between the armies of Erast and Landrin, as sides battle both each other and the horrors of the undead haunting the fields.

Whitetower

Known to many as the City of Hope, the capital city of Landrin is an impressive sight. Sitting on a strategic rise in the plains, the high walls and dense towers within give the city the appearance of a fortress, ready to repel any encroaching army. Within the walls, the senior commanders of the Silver Legion and the Seven Stars organize troop movements across the nation from their

headquarters, the Brass Citadel, so named for its reinforced walls and coloration from the last demonic siege. At the heart of Brass Citadel, the Pillars of Virtue stand in a high-ceiling chamber under constant guard. Whitetower also hosts Greyhelm College (a military academy), a thriving marketplace, and several small mages guilds. Several temples to Deknar the Smith operate within the city and a few small shrines to the former teachings of Valkyre exist in the low-quarters. The citizens of Whitetower are hard working and fiercely loyal to their homeland; however, the influence of the demons of the Worldfire permeates the city and demonic worship in the form of depraved cults is on the rise.

THE SECRET OF THE SEVEN STARS

Landrin's return to greatness began with the arrival of the Seven Stars during the Battle of Whitetower. Emerging on the battlefield like angels of valor, the Seven Stars turned the tide of battle and won over the hearts and minds of the people of Landrin. In time, the Stars launched successful campaigns against demons and undead, entrenching themselves in military operations; then the Seven Stars "sacrificed" portions of their own power to raise the Pillars of Virtue and push back the demons and undead plague.

For the Three Demon Kings, everything is proceeding according to plan.

Created by Malkasesh the Corruptor, the Seven Stars are advanced constructs powered by intricate rituals to mask their demonic power and true origins. Through emissaries and covert dealings, the Seven Stars are propagating the rise in demonic worship while slowly eroding the stability of the Silver Legion and Deknar's followers in Landrin. The forging of the Chain greatly weakened the demonic legions of the Worldfire, but the Three Demon Kings are nothing if not patient. By infiltrating the only opposing force to the Burning Gates, the demons bide their time until they're ready to launch another full-scale invasion of Karthun.



SYLNN

CAPITAL: Five contested capitals

RULER: Five contested rulerships

COINAGE: Throne (platinum),
Crown (gold), Scepters (silver),
Goblets (copper)

GOVERNMENT: A hostile
confederacy of five regions
loosely supporting a theocracy

RELIGIONS: Felicos, Prathian, the
Mother of the Dead

Sylnn is one of the most politically divided regions of Karthun. And Felicos would have it no other way. The King of Rogues operates out of his claimed capital in Palefront, sowing dissension and chaos wherever he can, but carefully. It's difficult to enjoy machinations if there's no one left alive.



HISTORY

Sylnn was the last nation founded by the patron races. Legend says Felicos the King of Rogues had little interest in creating his own race to populate Karthun, until he observed the theocracies and influence the patron races exhibited over Karthun. Truthfully, Felicos ultimately created the lizardfolk in an effort to secure his own power base among the pantheon and to draw the attention of Valkyre. While he didn't succeed in swaying Valkyre away from Sehad the World Warden, he did accomplish his goal to establish a theocracy in his name in the southwest region of Doryan. The new theocracy became Sylnn and, from his Veiled Throne, Felicos established tenuous accords with the elves of Symul and the Dreadwing Council of Eternity Peak, while dispatching spies to every capital and notable house across the nations of Karthun.

Felicos quickly became bored with the stability and unity of the residents of Sylnn. Felicos himself brought the cyclops clans from the Skyreach Mountains to Sylnn's gates, instigating many battles. As the lizardfolk and Dagers of Felicos engaged the cyclops threat, treachery took hold of several large nests of lizardfolk and human nobles within Palefront. The splinter groups abandoned their brethren to the cyclopic threat and established the kingdoms of Diesess and Coldmount under the banners of their new rulers—the Nest Queen and King Quentin Varr, respectively—all to the delight of Felicos.

The founding of Diesess and Coldmount and lack of direct reprisal from Felicos delivered a powerful message to those schemers in Sylnn that favored cunning and ambition. This game of ambition would not only be encouraged

by the King of Rogues, it would be celebrated. For years, the Nest Queen ruled over Diesess, establishing relations with shadow organizations in neighboring nations and bolstering her armies with the integration of the snakefolk in northern Sylmn. In Coldmount, King Varr surrounded himself with close family relations and the magic of skilled mages specializing in divinations and prophecy. The rule of the Nest Queen ended with a series of betrayals by her inner circle and her assassination at the hands of the Third Dagger of Felicos. Quietly, the Third Dagger assumed the throne under the guise of a hooded sorcerer from the snakefolk.

In Palefront, a failed assassination against Dyzak'Win the Sage of Spires resulted in a bloody clash between the Daggers of Felicos and mages of the World Walkers, which sparked the fury of Palefront's leadership. The true motives behind the attempt were never revealed, but the feud between the World Walkers and the Daggers resulted in the loss of many lives. In the chaos, several lords and leaders in northern Palefront were poisoned, creating a temporary power vacuum. Days later, a hag posing as Countess Feldtha Jynn—a beautiful “heir” to the House of Jynn—claimed control of the region with the aid of several supporters within Palefront, proclaiming it the new region of Synothen. Rumors suggest that the impersonator is the Hag Queen, one of Felicos' many lovers and most dedicated followers. Some rumors suggest that the Hag Queen is the true First Dagger of Felicos, but such claims remain unsubstantiated.

With Sylmn divided into three realms and distrust sweeping across the nation like an ill wind, the clans of lizardfolk in Diesess plunged into civil war. Assassinations and small battles swept across the land as Felicos withdrew his Daggers and allowed the civil war to wage until a clear leader emerged with the crowning of a new Nest Queen. Under her rule, Diesess calmed as the nests united with snakefolk to solidify Diesess' political power. In Coldmount, the line of kings remained intact, thanks to the fanatical use of divination magic of a coven of mages

known as the Waking Dream. Their visions prepared Coldmount for an attack by merfolk from the deep waters of the Expanse. After several clashes, the merfolk army retreated back into the sea.

The arrival of the Worldfire and the demons of the Three Demon Kings struck the coastal region of Coldmount the hardest. Despite vague visions of disaster, the Waking Dream could not foresee the magnitude of death and destruction as the Worldfire cracked the coast, sending tidal waves of godlike proportions into Coldmount, killing thousands. The death toll in Coldmount was tragic and Sylmn is unforgiving; in their moment of weakness, agents from Synothen descended on the royal family in an attempt to claim the kingdom for the Hag Queen (who over the years continued to reinvent herself as distant “heirs”). The attempt failed when heroes of Coldmount intervened. The Hag Queen called to Felicos for aid but the King of Rogues, now hunted for his betrayal of Sehad the World Warden, abandoned the Veiled Throne in Palefront and retreated into hiding.

The departure of Felicos sent Palefront into chaos, with nobles and lizardfolk assassins battling for control. After years of bloody shadow wars, the Fourth Dagger of Felicos took the Veiled Throne. Unknown to all (perhaps even Felicos) the Fourth Dagger came under the control of the Blessed of the Crawl, a society/religion of intelligent oozes from the Deep capable of nesting within the minds of hosts to control their actions. Under the control of the Blessed, the Fourth Dagger schemed to place Blessed oozes in every major noble and power player in Palefront. The Blessed of the Crawl used the Fourth Dagger and dominated nobles until his death, moving on to place Queen Abid Kayel I upon the Veiled Throne.

In a curious move, Queen Kayel negotiated treaties with the Kings of Dusk, necromancer horsemen followers of Solum Dusk and the rulers of Kolther. By bringing Kolther into Sylmn as an ally of Palefront, the Blessed of the Crawl holds power and influence over two of Sylmn's largest regions.

In the Age of Conflict, the five regions of Sylmn earned the moniker the Kingdom of Five Thieves and exist now in a constant state of espionage and shadow wars with each other and nations along their borders. Currently, Sylmn's greatest threats are returning merfolk armies from the Expanse. Unlike previous encounters, these merfolk appear to be different—vastly more intelligent, well versed in terrible magic, and ruthless. Identified as the Bloat, the pale, bloated merfolk appear half-dead and touched by forces beyond the veil of Karthun's reality. The united clans of Diesess and the armies of Coldmount fight a war with the Bloat on multiple fronts, but in the current year the Bloat gain ground and the remaining regions of the Kingdom of Five Thieves must choose whether to stand together or descend into treachery once again.

GOVERNMENTS AND REGIONS

Currently there are five independent regions within Sylmn, as described below:

Palefront

CURRENT RULER: Queen Abid Kayel I (the Blessed of the Crawl)

While the lands of Sylmn are varied, the one characteristic they have in common is warm temperatures. The northernmost coastal region of Palefront is largely plains and farmland, with a notable gathering of trees known as Waypoint

Forest. The lands rise, forming more hills as one nears the coast. Small towns and settlements dot the landscape, and the capital of Dagger's Reach sits on a promontory overlooking the ocean. Palefront is the largest region of Sylmn and the extensive farmlands of the region provide a majority of the crops sold and distributed across Sylmn.

The worship of the King of Rogues remains prominent despite his flight from the region, but the true power in Palefront is the religious organization known as the Blessed of the Crawl. This group of sentient, powerful oozes secretly exists within the skulls of the Queen and countless nobles within the region. Slowly, the Zealots of the Crawl emerge to walk among the citizens of Dagger's Reach and serve as the personal guard of Queen Kayel. Housed in hollow suits of armor, the Zealots of the Crawl serve as silent, imposing figures around the city, tolerating few disruptions to their grand designs. Every day, new Blessed take hold of citizens of Dagger's Reach, expanding their influence and working toward the slow domination of every city in Karthun.

Diesess

CURRENT RULER: The Shadowmurk Council

South of Palefront is Diesess, the low, swampy region largely inhabited by Felicos' patron race, the lizardfolk. It's unknown exactly how many



settlements there are in Diesess, as the clans move around the region in a semi-nomadic lifestyle. To outsiders and the uneducated, the lizardfolk of Diesess seem slightly savage and disorganized, but nothing is further from the truth. With clans of lizardfolk moving in migratory patterns as a distraction tactic, a central clan of elders and tacticians lead Diesess from a handful of hidden settlements only accessible to the lizardfolk, found in submerged caverns below the swamplands. From these secret lairs, the elders of the clans organize clan movements, refine arcane practices, and coordinate with spies across Karthun.

Coldmount

CURRENT RULER: The Boy King, King Calvus Dulmay I and the Onyx Chamber

The coastal kingdom of Coldmount takes its name for the mountainous island off the western coastline. Founded in turbulent times for Sylmn, the monarchy of Coldmount wagered their kingdom's isolation as a deterrent for interlopers from the mainland. Coldmount operates massive mining operations in and around the mountains of the island, supplying a majority of the ore and precious stones used in the Kingdom of Five Thieves. A heavily guarded strait between the island kingdom and the mainland ensures stable passages of transport, watched over by agents of the crown from the capital city of Pikehold. Coldmount's isolation afforded generations of relative peace, until the arrival of the merfolk armies from the waters of the Expanse.

In the Age of Conflict, the residents of Coldmount work to hold back the literal rising tide of the Bloat and the machinations of agents from the nations of Sylmn, keen to overthrow the young king of Coldmount and acquire the mines and treasure of Coldmount for themselves. King Dulmay is overwhelmed and struggles to maintain control; if not for the aid of his senior advisory council of spies and cunning politicians, the Onyx Chamber, Coldmount would fall.

Kolther

CURRENT RULER: The Kings of Dusk

The northern inland region of Kolther is a land of flat, open plains, ruled by a militia of roving horsemen/necromancers known as the Kings of Dusk. At the head of the militia, the five senior Kings lead the militia as the Reins of Ash, with each Rein taking responsibility for an aspect of the militia force and day-to-day operations of Kolther. The Kings of Dusk and the people of Kolther are nomads, constantly wandering the plains of the region. Very few static settlements exist on the plains of Kolther, but the largest is the city of Shadenigh, a destination for travelers crossing the plains and merchants peddling wares.

Shadenigh is also one of the largest mining operations in Sylmn. Much like the lizardfolk of Diesess, the migration patterns of the people keep their enemies disoriented with complex travel patterns understood only to the Reins. Formerly a splinter nation of Tavia, the Kings of Dusk joined Sylmn at the behest of Queen Abid Kayel I of Palefront. The details of their treaty remain a guarded secret, but many believe it involves the rumored goal of the Kings of Dusk. As defiant necromancers, the Kings of Dusk are devoted followers of the teachings of Solum Dusk, one of Karthun's most infamous necromancers. None have seen Solum Dusk for centuries and many scholars believe the necromancer met his demise or sits imprisoned somewhere on the plains of Kolther. Now, the Kings of Dusk roam the plains searching for the remains or phylactery of their spiritual leader.

Synothern

CURRENT RULER: Countess Feldtha Jynn III, the Hag Queen

Synothern, named after the lake in the western plains of the region, is the dominion of the Hag Queen Feldtha. Synothern is naturally divided by the river Syn which flows from Kolther, through Synothern, and into the coastal holdings of Coldmount. The land west of the river verges into swampland, much like Diesess, and is the original

home of Feldtha. On the eastern side of the river, rolling plains dotted with villages, towns, and cities comprise most of the region. From the capital of Willowhelm, Feldtha rules Synothen with an iron fist and the blessings of Felicos the King of Rogues and several Daggers of Felicos.

Recently, a group of heroes known as the Champions of Dawn declared war on the witches and hags taking refuge in the Murkwater Swamp, drawing the ire of Countess Feldtha. Many of the hags are centuries old allies of the Hag Queen and it's rumored that more than a few of the witches are her direct descendants. Among the other clandestine wars sweeping across Sylmn, the Hag Queen secretly works to destroy the Champions of Dawn.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Coldmount Peak

The mountain range that gives the island its name is a former dwarven stronghold, filled with tunnels and caverns carved throughout the mountain and surrounding area. These tunnels and chambers serve as the staging areas for the war against the Bloat. Why the dwarves abandoned the mountain remains a mystery, though the battalions encamped in Coldmount Peak don't venture far into the mountain tunnels. The massive discrepancy in temperature between this area and the rest of Sylmn regularly tests the army's capabilities and readiness. Coldmount comes by its name honestly—the entire mountain, from peak to base, sits in snow year-round.

The Crest

The Kings of Dusk control the whole of Kolther. Though they seem like little more than marauders with the strength to run the area, they have more acumen than it might appear at first glance. Their true power is gathered in the Hidden Ring, but the Crest serves as the public front for their authority. The Crest is a trading post, series of hostels, and a home to many in Kolther. It's where anyone who farms or raises livestock in Kolther comes to trade and sell. Every transaction, every bit of gold or silver that

changes hands in the Crest sees a percentage of it go into the coffers of the Kings of Dusk. This makes the Crest a valuable location in Kolther. No one knows that more than the merchants and moneylenders who choose to make the rough location their home.

Dagger's Reach

Atop the Wailing Cliffs, Dagger's Reach is where Felicos makes his home, at least in name. It's one of the most dangerous cities in all of Karthun. Felicos revels in secrecy, double-dealing, and duplicity, and there are constant rumors that the god of thievery and deceit still wanders the city. The same is true for every city in Karthun, however, as Felicos is continually working to evade the Shepherds of the Mother of the Dead, and often hides in plain sight. Due to the enormous amount of illegal goods flowing through the city, Dagger's Reach is one of the most prosperous cities in all of Karthun. If there's a single place where one could hope to find anything in Karthun—nearly anything at all—it's Dagger's Reach.

Deep Pockets

Though the lizardfolk roam across much of Sylmn, and especially Diesess, one or two gathering places exist and reliably house the wandering clans. One is a swampy cave colloquially called Deep Pockets. The rumors about the cave suggest that it's home to the only thieves' guild in all of Karthun that defies Felicos, his will, and his Daggers of Felicos: the Six Knives. An assassin known only as Knife makes her home in Deep Pockets, and people gossip that she's waiting, gathering her strength, and biding her time until she can assassinate Felicos himself, claiming his position as the new god of thievery and assassins within the pantheon. A dark rumor, spoken only in a whisper, is that Knife does indeed want to kill Felicos, but she has no aspirations for his power. She is, at her core, a devout servant of the Mother of the Dead, and represents a bastion of the goddess of death's power in Sylmn. Claiming the soul of Felicos for her goddess would ensure Knife's glory at the side of the Mother of the Dead for all eternity.

Hag's Crossing

The point where the river Syn meets the nameless lake where Feldtha ruled as the Hag Queen before becoming the Countess of Synothen is now known as Hag's Crossing. There, the servants of Feldtha collect tolls and enforce her will upon travelers and explorers. This has given Feldtha a great source of wealth independent from the coffers of the nation, as there are no other safe crossings along the River Syn. The lack of safe crossing is something that Feldtha works to ensure, and no one else in the region has the power to change things, for now.

The Hidden Ring

The Kings of Dusk don't often take prisoners, but when they do, they hold the prisoners in an area they call the Hidden Ring. It's not so much that the area can't be found, but that anyone who enters will likely never be seen again. The structure itself resembles a low hill, with a depression in the middle. In that space, the Kings hold ceremonies and conduct necromantic rituals, presumably using those they've captured. An eerie, violet light sometimes rises from the Hidden Ring on the evening following the secret rituals held by the Kings. Rumors suggest the Hidden Ring is where the Reins of Ash store all of their most sacred tomes and treasures.

Razor Shoals

This merfolk city is located not far off the coast of Coldmount, and from there the Bloat launch their assaults on Coldmount and the western coast of Sylmn. The entire city is constructed of coral, grown and shaped by the merfolk. Above the surface, the city looks washed out, more bone than coral. Under the surface, the colors of the coral span the entire visible spectrum with tunnels and caves that extend for miles in all directions.

Slethss' Pond

This clear body of water is feared by every living being in Diesess. Those who have seen into its depths describe it as deep, with water clear enough to see the muddy rocks at the bottom surrounding a pristine set of stone stairs that

descend into darkness. However, there are few who have lived to report such things, as the only story more often told about the lake is that of the monster that lives in its confines. The locals have named it Slethss, the lizardfolk word for invisibility. Few have ever seen the giant monster before it surfaces and devours the hapless beings near the shore it protects.

The Wailing Cliffs

The promontory upon which Dagger's Reach rests is known as the Wailing Cliffs. Through unknown means, the cliffs below the city are riddled with holes and caverns. The winds that whip south from the Sea of Torment pass along these cliffs, and the sound that rises from those winds gives the cliffs their name. Some say that Felicos himself carved the cliffs, and it's a story that should not be discounted. No one is allowed down onto the cliffs without the express order of the King of Rogues. In his absence, the sitting leadership of Palefront continues to enforce the rule. Countless legends and rumors circulate about the nature of the Wailing Cliffs, but it's common knowledge that any explorer or would-be hero discovered and captured on the cliffs is put to death without trial.



SYMUL

CAPITAL: Three capitals are recognized, one for each of the clans

RULERS: Lady Ensilva, the Mother Fang of the Wolf Clan / Turik, the Granite Claw of the Bear Clan / Sysk, Pack Lord of the Jackal Clan

COINAGE: The clans of Symul use simple pressed coinage or coinage from neighboring nations

GOVERNMENT: Gerontocracy

RELIGIONS: Elinar, the Mother of the Dead, circles of druids following Sehad's teachings

The largely wooded land of the elves is divided into three regions as the war between the clans (primarily the Wolf and Jackal Clans) still rages on. As one of the oldest regions, there's a wealth of secrets and more for anyone brave enough to enter Symul, but the neighboring regions have tried and failed to invade on numerous occasions. The lunar reigns of each clan grant each one advantages for a time, but none of the clans seem to gain the upper hand. Some of the elvish war is spilling into Andern, and the forces of the Iron King are spread too far to keep it at bay.

When the three moons are all full at the same time, it's referred to as the Night of Three Eyes.



HISTORY

In the mythical years of the Age of Making, Sehad the World Warden and Elinar the Maiden of Light joined their powers to create the elves, the sole patron race derived from the combined power of two gods from Karthun's pantheon. Into the elves, Elinar and Sehad poured their strength, grace, and fierce devotions to the balance of nature and the world itself. The original clans of the Bear Clan and Wolf Clan each represented the best of their patron deities. For a time undocumented, the elves (much like humanity) wandered the central plains of Doryan until they settled within the large forests of their new nation: Symul.

Under the banner of the first great elven house, House Clynis of the Wolf Clan, the elves of Symul quickly established settlements and relationships with neighboring nations. The first elves discovered that the forests of Symul, while plentiful and beautiful, also presented dangers both known and unseen. Native fey residents reached out to the Bear Clan, natural protectors of Symul, for aid against darkness taking root in the heart of the woodlands. The Bear Clan druids trekked deep into the darkness and, to their horror, discovered the Dreadoak: a massive, withering, decayed tree grown and warped around an onyx monolith.

The Dreadoak was a dark reflection of the First Tree in the heart of Andorhem Forest. Rather than spread life and rejuvenation across Doryan (and presumably the world) the Dreadoak brought rot and corruption to everything touched by its roots. The druids recoiled in horror at the sight of the horrific tree and the pale, gaunt, vampiric humanoids that emerged from its black roots. Spawning by the dozen, the vampires overwhelmed the druids, with only a few escaping to tell the tale. Frighteningly, when elves from several houses and Wardens of Sehad arrived to confront the vampires of the Dreadoak, the cursed tree, the monolith, and the vampires were gone. All that remained was a blackened grove of diseased, dying foliage and polluted soil.

For years, the houses of the Wolf and Bear Clans searched for the Dreadoak, occasionally encountering more of the vampires with no definitive encounters with the tree. The druids of House Clynis and the Wardens suspected the Dreadoak remained hidden within Symul. However, the elven houses soon encountered another threat to Symul as the Kranee from the bordering Blight March launched a full-scale assault on the eastern Wolf house lands. The savagery of the Kranee and the spread of their plagues claimed countless lives, but the Wolf houses would not retreat, pushing the orcs back into their lands until the arrival of the armies of the Emerald Throne and the Silver Guard paladins of Valkyre. As the Wolves battled with the Kranee, a group of malicious detractors challenged the sitting elders of Wolf Clan houses. Led by Syvel the Coward, an exiled elf of the Wolf Clan house Ryven, these young Wolves became increasingly bold. Syvel and his pack, realizing they could not defeat both the Wolf and Bear Clans alone, began to practice dark, profane magic, seeking ways to increase their power. With the aid of a human mage known as the Grey Hood, the detractors infused themselves with jackal blood, breaking their bonds with the Wolf Clan to forge the new Jackal Clan of Symul. Afterward, the Grey Hood disappeared from Symul, his identity and motives never revealed.

With the Jackal Clan established, the savage Jackals appropriated lands and abandoned settlements lost in the south of Symul after battles with the Kranee. Syvel the Coward engineered events to create tension between his rivals in the Wolf and Bear houses, such as assassinating the sitting Father of Fangs—the leader of the Wolf Clan—and framing the Ironmaw Rangers of the Bear Clan in the process. In time, the truth of the Jackal Clan's deception emerged, but the seeds of war were planted between the Wolf and Bear Clans and the struggle among the three clans for control over Symul erupted into full-scale war. Elven houses struck against each other both in open warfare and through clandestine methods. For a time, the

Wolf Clan was pulled into a war with the nation of Landrin due to the deception of the Jackal Clan, creating a rift that never truly healed and pushed the Wolves further into isolation.

In the Age of Conflict, the Wolf and Bear Clans have withdrawn, guarding their borders against all neighboring regions. The Bear Clan attempts to act as mediators and law keepers, but the primal animosity makes a difficult task nearly impossible. The Bear houses remain overwhelmed between the war of the Wolves and Jackals and the recent return of the vampire plague of the Dreadoak. Along Wolf and Bear settlements, the vampires attack, killing and dragging corpses into the darkness. During the first encounter with the Dreadoak, the elves stood united with the aid of Sehad and his Wardens, but now, the elves are splintered, Sehad is dead, and the Wardens are no more. Darkness is spreading across Symul, and if the elves remain divided, none of the clans will survive.

THE CLANS

Described here are the three clans of Symul.

Bear Clan

For the eight largest houses of the Bear Clan, the sitting matriarch or patriarch of each house (referred to as an elder) serves on a council under the leadership of an elected high elder, referred to as the Granite Claw. The title of Granite Claw applies to the high elder regardless of sexual orientation. The elders gather at least once every month to discuss pressing matters and set new laws into motion under the direction of Lord Turik the Granite Claw. Overall, the elders and lesser nobles of the Bear Clan houses agree on matters, with occasional bickering and political infighting. The return of the Dreadoak

has quelled even most of these minor disputes—at least publicly—as the Bear houses suffered greatly during their first encounter with the vampires of the Dreadoak. Above all others, the Bear Clan understands the need for a united front against this threat to Symul.

Supporting the Granite Claw and elders are the soldiers of the Bear Clan army, a large organized militia force that maintains a presence in every settlement and at key locations along their borders. Among the militia, a number of druidic circles and rangers function as field commanders and specialists. Known for their strength and unbreakable spirit, the Ironmaw Rangers stand out among the most skilled and respected rangers on Karthun. The Redleaves of Symul function as the primary druidic circle within the army, teaching soldiers how to identify supernatural threats and the presence of the vampires of the Dreadoak.

Currently, the Bear Clan repels small incursions of the vampires of the Dreadoak while organizing significant resources in an effort to locate the cursed tree itself. Granite Claw Turik works to establish a coalition with the Wolf Clan, citing the imminent danger of the Dreadoak, but thus far no such alliance exists.

THE BEAR LANDS: The land controlled by the Bear Clan is a majestic forest filled with hills and ravines covered in tall, ancient trees. Across the region, mighty rivers flow through the rock, creating areas riddled with caves and crevices. The largest rivers in the region are the Vas River and the Crescent River.

Both rivers are twisting, confusing paths through Symul for the uneducated, and Bear Clan guides make a steady living by providing escorts across the region. Many large



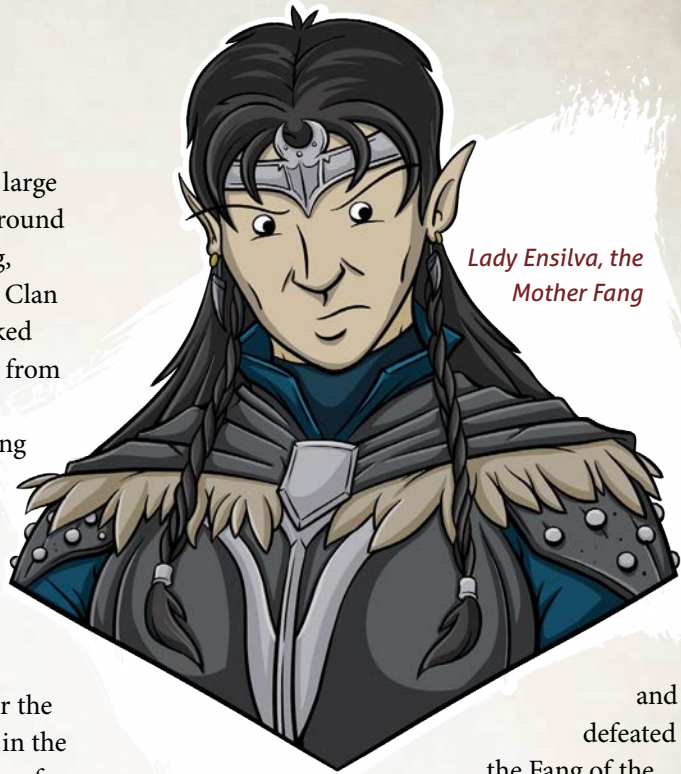
*Turik the
Granite Claw*

settlements of the Bear Clan thrive in large cave networks, functioning as underground cities connected by a series of twisting, guarded tunnels. On the surface, Bear Clan cities and towns are a mixture of worked stone and expert carpentry, fashioned from the lumber operations controlled by a number of noble houses. The harvesting of lumber is heavily regulated and interlopers are not tolerated.

Wolf Clan

The leadership of the Wolf Clan functions with a pack mentality where the strongest elders rise to take leadership over the direction of the clan. One night each year, in the capital city of Moon's Shadow, sitting elders of houses accept the challenges of younger nobles through formal, almost ceremonial contests of battle known as the Rising. The night of the Rising prevents most widespread slaughter and deceit among houses over the course of the year, as such attempts to grab power in the Wolf lands are forbidden and punishable by death according to a law passed by the current Fang of the Wolf Clan. Contests are held in the traditional fighting arena in the heart of the city, celebrated with wine, food, and revelry for the combatants. During the Rising, the life and death of combatants is left to the participants. Some practitioners of the old ways encourage death as the deciding factor, while others value the wisdom of life after defeat. Regardless, such changes of the guard for houses only occur on the night of the Rising and participants battle only once, unless a newly ascended elder chooses to challenge the sitting Fang of the Wolf Clan; this is the only way a Fang may be challenged. Such was the case for the current ruler of the Wolf Clan, Lady Ensilva the Mother Fang of the Wolf Clan.

A decade prior, Lady Ensilva and her house grew tired of the lack of direction and rampant murder of sitting elders. After defeating her father, the sitting elder of her house, in glorious combat, Lady Ensilva immediately challenged



Lady Ensilva, the Mother Fang

and defeated the Fang of the Wolf Clan. For a decade, she has worked to bring order to the Wolf houses, repelling a handful of challenges over the years. Lady Ensilva wants peace and is hopeful she can achieve it before age or the strength of the youth overtake her, but she feels the ill wind blowing across Symul.

Despite the challenges of power among the elders of the Wolf Clan, the army of the Wolves is a united fighting force. Comprised of expert rangers and archers, the Wolves defend their territory fiercely against outside nations and the threat of the Jackal Clan to the south. Travelers passing through the Wolf lands do so carefully, as the Wolves have very little tolerance for outsiders.

THE WOLF LANDS: More mountainous than the lands of the Bear Clan and Jackal Clan, the Wolf lands allow for packs of hunters to strike from the rocky outcroppings and woodlands, attacking and retreating as needed. The trees and brush found in the Wolf lands range between black, grey, and white, with different types of trees appear largely within three different stands of woods in the Wolf Lands. This suggests divisions among the Wolf Clan that are more fine-grained than even the differences among the different clans themselves.

In settlements, the Wolf Clan favors sturdy construction with shingled roofs and cobblestone streets. Despite their recent apprehension towards outside nations, the nobles of the Wolf Clan entertain visitors and political envoys to discuss trade. However, many visitors to the Wolf lands do so through the use of farstep circles, as outside of settlement walls, the dangers of the forest and threat of the vampires and the Jackal Clan makes travel across the Wolf lands treacherous.

Jackal Clan

The elves of the Jackal Clan are a chaotic, murderous pack of scavengers and thieves where cunning and assassination are all that's needed to rule. The current Pack Lord of the Jackal Clan is Sysk, a gaunt white-haired elf who rose to power by seducing and murdering scions of larger clans. Within days, Sysk seduced the daughter of the sitting Pack Lord, Kolska, a gifted assassin, and began a five year campaign to gather followers and slowly erode the trust between Kolska and her father. At Sysk's urging, Kolska murdered her father to assume the Carcass Throne, only to end up betrayed and murdered by Sysk. Sysk maintains control over the Jackal lands through brute force and an intricate web of assassins and spies among most affiliations and rising powers in the region. Sysk is a master manipulator and devout follower of Felicos the King of Rogues. Many believe Sysk is one of the Daggers of Felicos or possibly even the First Dagger.

No military hierarchy exists among the Jackal Clan aside from a very loose militia that's more marauders than a militia. Countless gangs and loose affiliations plague the border nations of the Jackal lands with raids, burnings, and kidnappings for ritual sacrifices to the dark powers—demons, gods, and beings from beyond—that the Jackals barter with for promises of wealth and power.



*Sysk the
Pack Lord*

THE JACKAL LANDS:

The southernmost region of Symul is the home of the Jackal Clan. The forests here are filled with clusters of spindly trees, as well as dense patches of scrub and brush. Where the forests end, the land itself is predominately rolling hills with small patches of grassland dotting a rocky, difficult terrain.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Basin

Near the geographic center of Symul is a large valley known as the Basin. At first glance it appears to be of natural creation, but prolonged study reveals a series of pale lines traced along the ground under the grass and scrub that dots the land. Few non-elven scholars have been granted access to the Basin to study it, but there's a series of drawings made by an intrepid aerial mapper from Andern, who used trained griffon to make several passes over the valley. The drawings show that the pale lines likely correspond to the orbits and phases of the three moons of Karthun, leading many to speculate that the Basin is essentially an enormous moon dial, used to track which clan is under the effect of their moon reign at any given time.

Moon's Shadow

Moon's Shadow, the capital city of the Wolf Clan, is one of the most accessible elven cities.

Outsiders come in via the prescribed roads to the city and trade freely with the residents. Because of that access, Moon's Shadow is a prosperous city, although lacking in the crime and vice that accompanies merchant cities across Karthun. The Wolves are very keen on keeping things that way. Lady Ensilva, the ruler of the Wolf Clan, delivers harsh punishments for anyone caught stealing or double-dealing on contracts. The Wolf's Bite is a fitted collar of sharpened wolf teeth that's placed around the neck of the sentenced party. Any but the most careful movements result in the criminal being pierced by one or more of the teeth. The length of time the collar is worn is commensurate to the gravity of the crime. The wounds never heal cleanly, so the criminal carries the scars with them for the rest of their days.

The city itself is a combination of wood and stone housing, most with two, if not three, levels. Wooden bridges occasionally span from one level of a building to the same level of another across great distances, but they aren't common. Most outsiders are allowed a Writ of Rest for a span of days. Some have been in Moon's Shadow for so long that most would consider them residents, but not the elves. Unless you're an elf, and especially unless you are Wolf Clan, you are never a resident of Moon's Shadow, but always a guest.

The Den

The Bear Clan's largest city, the Den is an enormous group of trees that have been cultivated to grow over the years to form a cave of sorts, made of wood rather than stone. Massive branches, vines, and twisting trunks seem to merge and separate with gaps near the top to allow in sun and moonlight at specific times of day and at specific intensities. This means that only some parts of the city receive light at any given time, while the rest is shrouded in shadow. Bears are commonplace within specified areas of the city's confines and often wander the cavern networks below the city as natural guardians.

The Circle

The smallest of the elven capitals, the Circle is also the most loosely defined. Consisting of a wide-spread collection of dwellings among the rocky outcroppings on the plains, the elves of the Jackal Clan are the most secretive of the three clans, and they hide their dwellings well. Utilizing a small grouping of caves just below the surface of the hills, the Circle maintains the look of a small, disused tent settlement; but beneath the surface, the caves and larger caverns expand into countless domiciles modified by residents to resemble homes. In the largest area, Sysk maintains a small fortress to hold court with prospective followers and business associates.



TAVIA

CAPITAL: Highroost, the City of Eyes

RULERS: Queen Qirolli Nir, the Queen of Whispers

COINAGE: Tower (platinum), Gate (gold), Book (silver), Copper (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy (secretly controlled by the Blessed of the Crawl)

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Felicos, the Mother of the Dead, Prathian

Tavia—a kingdom with its eyes on everything—was born through the scheming of the Hooded Crows. Time and conflict brought the time of the Hooded Crows to an end, but their legacy of cunning and survival lives on. As the nation with the largest and most skilled intelligence agency in the Black Talons, Tavia hears the whispers of every nation on Karthun and uses these whispers to wage war on former allies. Tavia is a land of opportunity and intrigue, as factions work from the shadows to unseat an establishment that's grown more paranoid with every passing year. The Black Talons utilize science and magic to unearth hidden secrets and invade the personal freedom of the people, all at the command of the true ruler of Tavia: the Blessed of the Crawl.



HISTORY

Tavia is built upon lies and secrets. In the mythical days of the Age of Making, humanity stopped wandering the plains of Doryan and founded its first (and arguably greatest) empire, Mastern. An empire that dominated most of the west coast and heartland of Doryan, humanity thrived under the rule of the First King, King Domarick Waryn. Mastern was a nation of thinkers, mages, and scholars. The world of Karthun was new and humanity's curiosity drove the nation to push the boundaries of magic, art, politics, and science. It was the golden age of humanity and the nation of Mastern. Under the leadership of the First King, nothing seemed impossible.

The first tragedy to strike Mastern arrived with the death of King Waryn. The king died suddenly, unmarried, and without an heir to his throne. In the capital city of Xag, senior advisors to the king took the role of leadership by dividing the regions and leadership of Northern, Central, and Southern Mastern between three Governors. The change in government angered some elder politicians, but the move to elections and individual freedoms pleased the citizens of Mastern. The division of Mastern allowed for the new territories to follow three separate paths with Andern, Daynir, and Tavia respectively.

The division of land and resources required an adjustment period for Central and Southern Mastern. As the former capital of the nation, Northern Mastern and Xag the City of Monoliths thrived. In Southern Mastern, the people united to overcome adversity and established accords with neighboring nations, such as the Wolf and Bear Clans of elves in Symul. However, for the leadership and citizens of Central Tavia, the divided resources and new government did not benefit the region and quickly pushed Central Tavia into a chaotic state. A string of brutal winters and poor harvests in Central Mastern prompted a food shortage and general unrest, as merchants raised prices and the wealthy secured personal stores of goods from neighboring nations. Food riots sparked violence in the cities

and towns across the region as an ineffective Governor and his inner circle did little to affect change.

Finally, with citizens starving, violence at an all-time high, and a majority of Central Mastern's law enforcement either dead or disbanded, the masterstroke of the Hooded Crows came to fruition. For years, the Hooded Crows operated as a secret cabal of like-minded mages operating among the nobility and military of Central Mastern. Using magic and alchemy, the Hooded Crows ruined crops and farmland across the region in a far-sighted gambit to send the region into chaos. At the brink of Central Mastern's demise, the Hooded Crows acted.

First, their military arm, the Talons, descended on the capital city of Highroost, establishing order and distributing food to the citizens. Next, the Hooded Crows appeared on the steps of the Governor's manor and, to the enraged delight of the people, executed him and every member of his inner circle. After years of secret plans and flawless execution, the Hooded Crows claimed the region and renamed it Tavia.

With the Hooded Crows in power, the military replenished itself quickly and the Crows placed high priority on developing covert operatives to rival the Daggers of Felicos in Sylmn. Recruiters scoured Karthun to find the best rangers, thieves, grifters, and assassins to fill out the ranks of the Black Talons. Utilizing grueling training techniques and extensive resources, the Black Talons infiltrated every noteworthy noble family, religious organization, political faction, guild, and merchant alliance across Karthun. Posing as wealthy nobles just as easily as beggars in alleyways, the Black Talons became the eyes of the Hooded Crows, especially in the city of Xag in Daynir. The Hooded Crows craved power and knowledge; as mages, several of whom traced their ancestry to Xag, they understood that the leaders of Daynir and the gods held power and secrets in the City of Monoliths. The Crows ordered attempts on the lives of the rulers of Daynir and Andern; though both attempts were foiled by heroes of each realm, their lust

for power boiled over with a full-scale assault of Andern, beginning a bloody war that waxes and wanes even in the current Age of Conflict.

Years passed and the original Hooded Crows handed down their masks and robes to their children and chosen successors. Tavia thrived under the successors, but generations of jealousy and inflated desire for the secrets of the Grand Archive drove the Hooded Crows to eventual madness and infighting. When the War of the Crows erupted, it raged for years.

The War of the Crows ended with the inauguration of Queen Eva Nir I, the last of the surviving Hooded Crows. Casting off her mask and Hooded Crow robes, Queen Nir proclaimed herself Queen and established the Throne of Crows with the approval of the people and the support of the Black Talons (of whom she was an active and murderous member). For the Queen, it was the culmination of a lifelong journey. She was the ruler of her homeland, with the power of the Black Talons at her disposal. However, before she could enjoy the fruits of her labor, the ooze of the Blessed of the Crawl revealed themselves after decades of patient observation, implanting a Chosen of the Crawl into her skull, dominating her mind and body. Queen Nir ceased to exist, trapped in her own mind as the Chosen of the Crawl controlled her every action.

Tavia continued to thrive, with occasional skirmishes with Andern. Over the years, “Queen Nir” married and gave birth to a child. When her daughter came of age, the Chosen ended Nir’s life



*Queen
Qirulli Nir*

and moved to her daughter, changing her, and presenting her as the same Queen Nir as before, beginning the cycle once again and continuing the Blessed of the Crawl’s rule over Tavia.

In the Age of Mourning, the rise of the undead was accompanied by betrayal from the General of the Blackflight Army, General Simon Hurn.

Unknown to the nation of spies, General Hurn and his soldiers were all devout worshippers of the necromancer Solum Dusk. With the support of countless undead sweeping across the southern plains of Tavia, General Dusk and his supporters—in a moment of history repeating itself—seized the overrun lands and proclaimed themselves the Kings of Dusk. The bold move did not draw the wrath of the sitting

Queen (or the true rulers in the Blessed of the Crawl), as Tavia focused on eradicating the undead plague, losing the city of Owlhaunt completely, and taking advantage of the undead threat. Using the Black Talons, Queen Nir ordered the assassination of dozens of key targets across the Last Continent to move the grand plans of the Blessed of the Crawl forward.

In the Age of Conflict, Tavia remains a nation of lies and secrets. Andern and Tavia still clash over contested borders, with the armies of the Iron King growing weary and vulnerable to the cunning tactics of the Black Talons. Across the Last Continent, the spies of Tavia report secrets, plans, and fears for the Queen of Whispers; in her mind, she hears the grand designs of the Blessed of the Crawl and their centuries-old march towards the Grand Archive of Daynir and the secrets of the gods.

GOVERNMENT

The Queen of Whispers rules Tavia from the Throne of Crows in the capital city of Highroost. As the latest in a long line of puppet rulers, the current incarnation of Queen Nir and her advisors are generally well liked by the people of Tavia, despite the kingdom's ongoing war with Andern and clashes with neighboring nations. To the average citizen, the Queen of Whispers does what is best for Tavia. This idea is reinforced largely through subtle manipulation, fear-mongering, and propaganda campaigns.

The Queen has a small council of advisors known as the Watchers and the support of Tavia's military, including the Black Talons. The Watchers are a council comprised of thirteen men and women from Tavia's nobility, heads of faith (Deknar, Felicos, the Mother, Prathian), and several military advisors, including the Veiled King. The Watchers function as a direct extension of the Queen's rule by watching over key areas of commerce, faith, and military pursuits.

The Chosen of the Crawl controlling the Queen is incredibly intelligent and astute in regards to social hierarchy. The Chosen understands the need for genuine, spirited debate and differences of opinion to maintain the illusion of freedom, hence the presence of the Elder Forgehand of Deknar and Archivist of Prathian on the council. The Chosen is content to "lose" battles to maintain its grand illusion. The Watchers handle day-to-day business of the nation, while Queen Nir works directly with the Veiled King and the Black Talons on matters of highest priority.

In conjunction with the Watchers, the military secure the nation. Every city and town in Tavia maintains a garrison and troops, varying depending on the size of the settlement. Local officials often employ locals as city or town watch and reservists for small militias. The Black Talons encourage this practice through proper channels, but maintain records and surveillance on every government official and noteworthy citizen, such as local heroes, guild members, etc.

Surveillance is a core concept for Tavia. For the

past several decades under the rule of Queen Nir (and the Chosen of the Crawl), the Black Talons have combined magic and technology to establish an unknown number of Listening Posts, Gemsight Stations, hidden outposts, and safehouses across Tavia. Black Talon agents use Listening Posts to monitor and record key political meetings in the capital, as well as at strategic locations in every major city. In the travel centers and highly populated areas, mages of the Black Talon use scrying magic keyed to specially honed gemstones hidden around the cities to track and monitor, but Gemsight technology is still in its infancy and the use of the scrying spheres taxes the mind greatly. Finally, as the greatest covert network on Karthun, the agents of the Black Talon are everywhere. While a select few perform wet-work or assassinations for Tavia, every agent is trained in disguise, social interaction, and espionage. Occasionally, Black Talon agents are uncovered and need a safe haven. To provide this, the Black Talon purchase residences, small businesses, docked ships or the like to establish safehouses for compromised agents in the field. Every safehouse is maintained by a Lord or Lady of the House and implements the latest in Tavia's security and surveillance methods.

At the head of the Black Talons is the Veiled King, an anonymous figurehead and leader of the organization whose power and influence in Tavia rivals the Queen (some would argue the Veiled King is even more powerful), hence his honorific title. The Veiled King is the top of the ladder for all matters of espionage in Tavia. If there's an individual who holds all of the answers to questions everyone is afraid to ask, it's the king. Only the Queen (and the Chosen) know the identity of the Veiled King and he rarely appears in the flesh, opting to use speaking stones and a unique brand of mirror-based magic to communicate and travel. In appearance, the Veiled King wears dark, regal robes, and an intricate mask. The secrecy around his identity concerns the Watchers, but the deadly nature of the Black Talons' work makes his appearance more palatable for the council.

The Veiled King wields great power as the leader of the Black Talons and he displays an inhuman amount of patience and restraint. The greatest example of his restraint is his gambit against Queen Nir and the Blessed of the Crawl. The Veiled King knows about the Chosen and its lineage of domination in Tavia and has set slow moving wheels in motion to expose the Blessed of the Crawl and retake Tavia. For now, the Veiled King hides in plain sight and his identity is a game of widely speculated rumors for nobles and politicians who know of his existence.

A number of “resistance” factions operate across Tavia, opposing the wars and propaganda of the Throne of Crows. Most are simple rally groups attempting to impact change through political channels and demonstrations, but a handful are militant and becoming increasingly organized. The largest organization on the Black Talon watch list is the Broken Cage—an organization comprised of numerous cells across Tavia utilizing guerilla tactics and icons of caged birds to expose Tavia’s surveillance and oppression protocols. The Broken Cage exposes corrupt politicians and Black Talon operations whenever possible. The organization has no clear leader, as cells operate independently with loose coordination. If the Broken Cage ever united under one leader, it could be a serious threat to the Black Talons and the Blessed of the Crawl.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Vanished Monolith

Rumored to have once existed near the capital of Highroost since the Age of Making, this monolith disappeared from sight and, more slowly, from the minds and memory of the populace of Tavia. The monolith is the true stronghold for the Blessed of the Crawl in Tavia. There are many secrets hidden deep inside the monolith, and the Blessed work tirelessly to unlock them. One such discovery allowed the Blessed to cloak the monolith from view, and later to slowly obscure the memory of it over the course of years. This has allowed the Blessed of the Crawl much greater autonomy in Tavia. The monolith itself rests near the highest point of the Central Mountains, the range that runs through the heart of Tavia. The capital city of Highroost sits on the mountain slope some few thousand feet below the base of the monolith. However, most residents of Tavia have forgotten the monolith’s existence.

The Great Cage

Located within a cavern deep beneath the tallest point of the Central Mountains, directly under the Vanished Monolith, a repurposed dwarven fortress serves as the largest safehouse for the Broken Cage. From here, the Broken Cage launch counterintelligence operations, gather for

BLESSED OF THE CRAWL

The Blessed of the Crawl is a disease slowly spreading across Karthun. The origins of the crawl are unknown but here are the facts: A large group of Oozes gained incredible intellect and sentience during the Age of Enlightenment and coalesced into a fanatical cult determined to control every nation/sentient being of Karthun. From their seat of power within the lowest recessed of The Deep, the oozes of the crawl rallied around their leader, the Voice of the Crawl, and over centuries worked their way to the surface and into the inner circles of every nation. The crawl are divided into two groups: The Blessed and the Chosen. The Blessed are foot soldiers, housed in sealed suits of plate armor, moving among large armies and mercenary squads. The Chosen are oozes who enter living vessels and dominate their minds, assuming their places in society. For example, the current queen of Tavia is a Chosen of the Crawl and rumors suggest more than one Chosen has infiltrated the ranks of the Three Demon Kings as well. The goal of the Blessed of the Crawl remains the same: Dominate Karthun.

summits between cells, and take shelter in times of peril. The fortress itself seems to be dwarven made; however, closer examination reveals that the walls of the fortress are not stone, but a strange metallic stone/iron hybrid unseen in other parts of Karthun. In one of the bottommost chambers of the Great Cage, there's a set of containers made from the same material as the walls; stores of food and potable water appear in these containers on a regular basis. Mages from the Broken Cage study the materials in an attempt to learn how these containers work, but no conclusive answers have been reached and fear of outside sources prevents deeper analysis.

The Hidden Houses

The Hidden Houses are Listening and Gemsight outposts scattered across the whole of Tavia, with a few covertly appearing in other countries and principalities. They vary in size, shape, and composition, and are crafted to blend in seamlessly to the landscape around them. The same combination of magic and technology that allows the Vanished Monolith to be placed out of sight and mind of the people of Tavia allows the Hidden Houses to stay true to their name. Outsiders report hearing a low hum in some parts of the country, a rumor attributed to the Hidden Houses. However, these rumors are unsubstantiated, and those that spread them vanish quickly.

Highroost

As the capital city, Highroost is the largest city in Tavia. It's perched on a peak of the Central Mountains, sprawling down the sides of the mountain face, and expanding deep into the mountain depths. It's a city of layers, both physically and socially, and in both cases, there's great maneuverability. One could conceivably get from the Throne of Crows at the peak of the mountain to the depths of the mines below the city in a matter of hours. Movement through Tavia is accomplished by either foot or by lift, with massive carts of people being pulled up and down the angles of the mountain by a massive system of ropes and pulleys. Some of these

conveyances are pulled by hand, with crews of workers hauling passengers on maintained schedules. Newer lifts operate through large machines driven by combinations of steam and magic. These lift-trains make passage from one part of the city to another very easy. However, as Highroost has grown, travelers unfamiliar with the layout of the city could easily wander into an unexpected and potentially dangerous quarter of the city. Planners have color-coded each of the major train lines; however, even this system can confuse those unfamiliar with it.

In addition to the lifts, there are bridges and cables that cross the face of the mountain. These allow for lateral movement across the city. And if the secrets that flow throughout the city make it necessary to eliminate a rival, the bridges and cables provide convenient excuses for people to disappear. This is aided by the fact that gases and steam from the interior of the mountain vent into the air throughout the whole of Highroost. This provides near-constant cover for clandestine activities, as well as keeping the face of the mountain warmer than it otherwise would be at the city's elevation.

West Landing

The westernmost coastal city of West Landing serves as the largest shipping annex and port of call for the nation. Massive fisheries and cargo operations control the city, with the heads of business sitting on a city council led by a figurehead, the Lord Mayor. The current Lord Mayor, Bartlin Ansol, is a spineless weasel of a man and deeply corrupted. Through bribes and personal favors, the Lord Mayor has amassed a small fortune, funding his deviant lifestyle. While legitimate goods pass through the city, West Landing's underworld of drug trafficking and slave trade is enormous. The Underlords, through surface emissaries, use West Landing as their largest slave market on the surface of the Last Continent.

THULENGARD

CAPITAL: Bastion

RULER: Grand Evoker Gren Arcwell II

COINAGE: Pillar (platinum), Flame (gold), Spark (silver), Link (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Magocracy led by the Grand Evoker and supported by the Voices of Seven

RELIGIONS: Deknar, Prathian, former ideals of Valkyre

When the once noble dwarves of the Emerald Throne fell into darkness and emerged as the Underlords, many noble clans, scholars, and allies protested—only to find their homes destroyed and their families in chains. Generations later, the voice of one maiden rallied the shattered clans to fight for liberation. Founded by scholars, former slaves, and merchants under the lash of the Underlords, the dwarves of Thulengard escaped from the tyrants to forge a new destiny. From the sun-soaked halls of Bastion to the mysterious cairns hidden along the shores of Hollowcliff, Thulengard stands as a beacon of knowledge, mysteries, and adventure. In the Age of Conflict, the free magocracy of Thulengard is a haven for arcane and technological pursuits, a launching point for the exploration and reclamation of the former seat of power in Desin, and the backbone for countless campaigns against the tyrannical Underlords.



HISTORY

Desperation and tragedy in the Age of Mourning ignited a dark time in history for the dwarves of Karthun. For centuries, the dwarves of the Emerald Throne waged war with the Writhing Swarm: a horrific, seemingly unstoppable insectoid race from the Deep. Bolstered by their strength of will and dedication to Deknar the Smith, the dwarves vowed to prevent the Writhing Swarm's march toward the surface and the nations of Karthun. In the Age of Mourning, the Emerald Throne struggled. Dwarves died by the thousands. The demons of the Worldfire ravaged the surface, prompting the gods and heroes of Karthun to forge the Chain. In the killing fields of the Deep, the Writhing Swarm pressed their advantage as a desperate monarchy cried out for Deknar's aid. However, the Smith did not arrive, as his attention was focused solely on maintaining the Chain, holding back the advance of the Worldfire and the armies of the Three Demon Kings.

The Emerald Throne suffered its greatest defeat when the Writhing Swarm attacked and collapsed the capital city of Honor's Hold, sending countless lives and most of the dwarven city down into the depths of the Deep. The once iron will of the monarchy was broken. Desperate to regain power and launch a counter attack against the swarm, King Vrak II and his surviving Underlords gave in to the dark whispers of Malkasesh the Corruptor; for the "greater good" they launched a campaign to bring troops to the frontlines by force. The monarchy of the Emerald Throne renounced Deknar the Smith, outlawing his worship in their lands. The Underlords collapsed the surviving halfling settlements in the lands of Desin, enslaving their former allies and placing them on the frontlines—an act that led to the extinction of the halflings. This drew the ire of noble clans, who called for the removal of King Vrak II and his Underlord council. In response, the Underlords enslaved countless dwarves opposing their cause. Merchants, scholars, and clerics opposed to the Underlords suffered under the lash and filled the ranks of the

Underlord armies. Entire clans of noble dwarves fell in the war against the Writhing Swarm. Dwarves unable or unwilling to fight were tortured, used as breeding stock, or sold to slaver networks to bolster the Underlord coffers.

For years dwarven slaves toiled under the lash of the Underlords, dying in the name of a campaign that began as desperation but evolved into a harsh society of greed and dominance. The bloody war between the Underlords and the Writhing Swarm cooled as the swarm retreated further into the Deep of Karthun.

With the war less intense, the Underlords continued their tyrannical ways, expanding their slaver empire by attacking settlements on the surface and going so far as to attack and murder a Hammer of the Smith sent by Deknar in an effort to save his patron race from a path of darkness. The Emerald Throne was shattered and the Underlords stood as one of the greatest threats to the nations of Karthun.

Among the broken, enslaved clans, talks of revolt stirred but typically fell silent after vocal leaders fell under the implements of the Underlord torturers. In 550, a new voice echoed through the slave pits under Dread Throne, that of Gren Arcwell. Arcwell was born into slavery. Her father taught her the philosophies of Deknar the Smith and Prathian the Eternal Sage in secret. In the pain and darkness of the pits, Gren swore herself to Deknar as a Forgehand and began speaking of liberation. Arcwell's words inspired many, but her actions did more.

Taken by the torture masters and subjected to unthinkable horrors, Gren Arcwell's will did not break. Despite daily pain, Arcwell continued to cry out for liberation. The broken clans rallied to her voice and the winds of rebellion blew through the pits beneath Dread Throne. Fate provided the final spark, as the Writhing Swarm, unseen for years, launched a massive attack on Dread Throne; in the chaos of the battle, Arcwell and the broken clans made their escape. Many lives were lost as the Underlords repelled the Writhing Swarm's attack, but Arcwell and most of the slaves—dwarves, humans, and other races—

escaped from Dread Throne to the surface.

For the slaves born in captivity, the warm feeling of the sun's rays for the first time was intoxicating. The broken clans (now known as the Sunwalkers) had their freedom. Understanding Deknar's labors with the Chain, they instead looked to the west for guidance, for the majority of the surviving dwarves were the heirs of scholars, teachers, and mages familiar with Prathian the Eternal Sage. Under the leadership of Gren Arcwell, the Sunwalkers began their dangerous pilgrimage to the center of Prathian's worship, Xyn, in a journey known as the March of Liberty. The long journey led the dwarves through dangerous territories and across the heart of Tavia. Disease and fatigue claimed the lives of many dwarves, extinguishing several clans dating back to the Age of Making. Despite the hardship, the March of Liberty arrived on the shores of Xyn, overshadowed by the home of Prathian himself, the Nexus.

The Sunwalkers found food, shelter, and kindred spirits among the citizens of Xyn and soon afterwards, Gren Arcwell received an audience with Prathian. Understanding he could not save or redeem all of the dwarves, Prathian vowed to establish a new home for the broken clans of the Sunwalkers. Generations prior, a massive earthquake splintered a portion of the nation of Daynir, sending it into the depths of the ocean. Harnessing his power, Prathian raised a portion of the sunken land from the ocean for the Sunwalkers. Gren Arcwell II (mage and daughter of the aging Voice of Liberation) took the title of Grand Evoker and with the support of the Sunwalkers proclaimed the land as the new magocracy, Thulengard.

In the years that followed, the Sunwalker clans worked to clean and rebuild many of the ruined structures lost to the earthquake and time spent below in the Frozen Sea. The former city of Caydul was renamed Bastion, as a haven for all who escape persecution and slavery across Karthun. New cathedrals to Prathian and Deknar rose from the ruins as the study of magic and technological pursuits took priority for

Thulengard's population. Grand Evoker Arcwell negotiated treaties with Daynir and Tavia for trade, and the newly recognized Ambassador of Thulengard, Kasyn Proudhand, took her place among the ambassadors of Daynir. With stability and confidence, Thulengard mages and scientists began to push the boundaries of magic and technology by launching the first Thulengard airships into Desin.

Determined to usher in a new age of glory for the dwarves and overshadow the horrors of the Underlords, Grand Evoker Arcwell authorized efforts to explore and reclaim the lands around Honor's Hold and prepare for war against the Underlords.

Thulengard thrives in the Age of Conflict, but not without trouble. Along the western coast, the unexplored catacombs and ruins of the Hollow Cliffs house horrors of the undead and creatures from the depths of the ocean unwilling to relinquish their lairs. Among the Sunwalker clans, spies for the Underlords and the nation of Tavia work to seed distrust and to steal the pioneering secrets of magic and technology discovered in Thulengard's institutions of learning. In the Soddenwood, a coven of hags known as the Deep Brides haunt the land, stealing travelers and children for unholy rituals. Despite current treaties, a growing group of political adversaries challenge the Sunwalkers' claims to the land, citing old land titles held when the island was connected to Daynir prior to the earthquake. Among the steep peaks and deep caverns of the Bluemist Mountains, rumors of sickly, dark-skinned orcs circulate with tales of ruins of former giant strongholds.

Since its founding, the Sunwalker clans have proven that Thulengard is a nation of learning, magic, and freedom standing proudly against tyrants and threats across Karthun.

GOVERNMENT

Thulengard is a magocracy led by the intelligence and will of the Grand Evoker Gren Arcwell II and an elder council of advisors known as the Voices of Seven. On a daily basis, the Grand Evoker and Voices determine policy for the nation of Thulengard, such as laws, foreign relations, and budgetary concerns. The Grand Evoker and four members of the Voices of Seven are ranking members of Thulengard's largest mages' guild: the Dekrelium.

Founded by the Grand Evoker's mother, Gren Arcwell I, and several survivors of the March of Liberty, the Dekrelium conduct their public business in the open-air halls of government in Bastion as well as maintaining a private tower overlooking the city. The Dekrelium are secretive about guild dealings out of necessity, as spies from Tavia, the Underlords, and other factions are everywhere in Thulengard.

Under the Voices, mayors handle the governing of towns and communities throughout Thulengard. Every ruling official is elected by popular vote once every two years. In the event of a death before the end of an official's term, the official's second assumes the position until the next election year. Thulengard is a young nation compared to others on the Last Continent, with political machinations and personal egos taking lower priority to the continued growth of the nation.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Arcflame

Located on the eastern coast of Thulengard, this small town serves as a welcoming waypoint for travelers sailing across Northwind Bay. Arcflame is a small town with friendly citizens, good food, and comfortable beds. The largest landmark in Arcflame is the namesake of the town: the Arcflame, a massive lighthouse constructed to safely guide ships into port. Infused with magic and a series of large mirrors, the Arcflame produces twice the light of conventional lighthouses and is operated by the new Mayor of Arcflame, Mayor Todin Eastwind.

Bastion

The heart and soul of Thulengard is the cosmopolitan city of Bastion. Famed for its sprawling centers of learning, diverse population, and innovative design, Bastion is the home of the Grand Evoker and the Voices of Seven. Rebuilt from the ruins of the city of Caydul, Bastion architecture favors high, open-air ceilings allowing more natural light and gentle breezes—comforts not taken for granted by the Sunwalker dwarves. Bastion hosts the largest mages' guild in Thulengard, the Dekrelium. From a tower overlooking Bastion, the Dekrelium work to expose spies and threats to Thulengard through a network of contacts and powerful magic. Originally a group of a dozen mages, the actual number of members is unknown in the Age of Conflict and rumors run rampant regarding membership.

The streets of Bastion are crowded with dwarves and races from across Karthun. Trade with communities across Northwind Bay in Daynir thrives and new students arrive to study at Bellthorne University every year. The surrounding area of Bastion is lush farmland, filled with quaint farmsteads and mills, providing much of Thulengard's crops and livestock.

Standard of Thulengard





Bluemist Mountains

Looming high over Thulengard, the peaks of the Bluemist Mountains disappear into low hanging clouds. Named for a pale blue mist that drifts downward from the peaks, few have attempted to scale the Bluemist Mountains, and those who have did not reach the summit. Before an earthquake sank the land, engineers from Daynir carved a massive tunnel through the base of the Bluemist Mountains as a trade road. The tunnel survives, but damage from the earthquake and rising water from the Frozen Sea left the tunnel with cracks and pockets where dark things nest, making trips through the tunnel dangerous; this has created a thriving market for caravan protection.

Recently, professors from Bellthorne University studying weather anomalies commissioned the exploration of the Bluemist Mountains. Explorers traversing up the mountains encountered sickly, diseased orcs. The few explorers who escaped reported the orcs inhabiting what appeared to be the ruins of a giant stronghold. The explorers

died soon afterwards from a wasting disease contracted during the encounter. Scholars and members of the Voices of Seven are desperate to learn more about the orcs and the unknown giant fortress.

Cinderhyn

The closely-knit community of Cinderhyn serves as safe haven in the largely uncharted western region of Thulengard. Located near the base tunnel through the Bluemist Mountains, Cinderhyn residents make an honest living through farming and mining operations. The local militia, the Cinderwatch, patrols the roads and hunting trails between Cinderhyn and Millpoint. Recently, a watch patrol disappeared along the western most hunting trails locals refer to as the Doewood.

Hollow Cliffs

Nestled along the southwestern shores of Thulengard, the Hollow Cliffs stand as a grim reminder of the lives lost when an earthquake claimed the land generations prior. Networks of

caves honeycomb the cliff faces, leading into long forgotten lairs and caverns extending miles inland. Inside the partially flooded network of tunnels, undead horrors and creatures from the Frozen Sea refuse to surrender their lairs. Prior to the collapse, one of Daynir's minting facilities operated near the region; adventurers travel from across Karthun to explore the depths of the Hollow Cliffs, hoping to discover immense treasure.

Millpoint

Founded from the ruins of a town nestled along the Soddenwood, Millpoint serves as a home for Thulengard's largest lumber operation. Privately owned and operated by Mayor Gulvin Wynn, Millpoint Lumber employs town locals at criminal wages and demands long hours. Despite the disappearances of crews deep in the Soddenwood, Wynn continues to send workers in. Millpoint's distance from civilization and the eyes of Bastion encourages an unsavory atmosphere that attracts the kind of individuals who want to disappear. In addition to the lumber operation, Wynn secretly funds a gang of cutthroats and mercenaries in the town operating under the guise of law enforcement.

Lake Valor

Replenished by streams running off the Bluemist Mountains, the waters of Lake Valor are clean, clear, and deep. Named for the brave souls who sacrificed their lives to save citizens during the great earthquake, Lake Valor serves as the largest inland source of fish. Since the founding of Bastion, travelers report strange lights on and in the water of Lake Valor on nights of the full moon, accompanied by the sound of singing on the wind.

Soddenwood

Equal parts forest and swamp, the Soddenwood is the largest woodland area in Thulengard and serves as the primary source of lumber for the region. The Soddenwood is deep, dense, and permeated by an unnatural sense of dread. Wildlife thrives on the outer edges of the woodland, but deeper in towards the swampy

marshes, nearly all life seems to disappear. At the deepest regions of the Soddenwood, the wind ceases to blow and a silence falls. Hunters and rangers from the nearby town of Millpoint often refuse to lead explorers into the marshes for fear of tales of the Deep Brides, a coven of hags who kidnap travelers and steal children from beds for unholy ritual sacrifices. Adventurers travel into the Soddenwood to chase rumors of a tower trimmed in platinum, filled with ancient magic and treasures. The tower does exist, but guards forged of platinum and obsidian keep a merciless and constant vigil.



*Grand Evoker Gren
Arcwell II*

XYN

CAPITAL: The Nexus

RULER: Grand Chancellor Fela Vyrull

COINAGE: Star (platinum), Sun (gold), Moon (silver), Dusk (copper)

GOVERNMENT: Former theocracy, now a republic with an elected Grand Chancellor and Senators

RELIGIONS: Prathian

Xyn is one of the oldest and most successful nations on the Last Continent. Once Prathian began wandering the planes regularly, what started as the theocracy of Prathian


the Eternal Sage gave way to the birth of the republic of Xyn. For generations, the republic of Xyn's islands thrived under the rule of the Grand Chancellor and the Senate, supported by the Archivists of Prathian. The arrival of the Worldfire tested Xyn greatly and a choice made by Prathian at the eleventh hour made an enemy in the nation of Tavia. Xyn entered a new time of conflict when agents of the Black Talons detonated bombs in the Nexus, weakening Prathian's dimensional barriers against the horrors of the Gods of a Thousand Eyes. Now, the followers of Prathian fight a secret war within the Nexus against aberrant horrors from the planes of death and madness.



HISTORY

Since the earliest days of the Age of Making, the beautiful and imposing sight of the Nexus has loomed over the nation of Xyn off the western coast of the Last Continent. The Nexus is the home of Prathian the Eternal Sage, Karthun's god of magic and steward of the dimensional ley lines that intersect with Karthun's reality. The nation of Xyn began as a dedicated theocracy to the will of Prathian. When the patron races were young and beginning to wander across the world, Prathian summoned his power to raise the islands and cities across Xyn in preparation for his followers'

arrival. Xyn was a ready-made nation, much like the City of Monoliths, Xag, in the nation of Daynir. When his followers began to arrive from across Karthun, Xyn was ready. As the citizens of the new theocracy settled in, Prathian turned his attention towards the Nexus: a tower fortress rising from the top of the highest mountain in Xyn. The Nexus radiates power, constantly producing an azure glow that illuminates the night sky and the clouds that seem to perpetually swirl at the apex. Prathian understood in the Age of Making that the largest, potentially most



dangerous ley lines intersecting on Karthun all converged at the Nexus. In the wrong hands, such power could topple nations and possibly destroy the gods. To protect the site, Prathian and Deknar the Smith constructed the Nexus to serve as Prathian's home and as the last line of defense against forces determined to use the fulcrum of power for ill intent.

Prathian created his own patron race in the Elemental Lords. The deific power used to summon and forge the world of Karthun created an excess of primal elemental energy. While most of these elements settled into a cycle of use and replenishment for the world, the excess energy bubbled to the surface in the form of elementals. These wild elementals possessed great power and little intelligence. Left unchecked, elementals created chaos wherever they went. Seeing their potential as power sources for the mortals and guardians of the ley lines in Xyn and Istin, Prathian poured his intelligence and ambition into the Elemental Lords.

Formed from the same primal energies as their charges, the Elemental Lords possessed great intellect and an ingrained sense of responsibility to protect the planar veil of Karthun. However, rather than gather his new race to his side in Xyn, Prathian placed the lords in the region known as Istin. Much like Xyn, Istin existed on crucial dimensional ley lines that could bring destruction to Karthun in the wrong hands. With the Elemental Lords in place, Prathian turned his attention to Xyn, the Nexus, and his clerics: the Archivists.

Followers of Prathian's teachings arrived from across Karthun. Members of every patron race and practitioner of magic found their way to the islands of Xyn. The first Archivists studied by Prathian's side, learning the mechanics of the universe, magic, and time. Time is important to the Archivists as they, above all others, carry the responsibility of chronicling Karthun's history. The Archivists established the measurement of time and Karthun's calendar. Prathian looked out over his theocracy, his Archivists, and Karthun and declared the Age of Making at an end. The Age of

Enlightenment began and the Archivists set out across Karthun to document history and learn.

The Age of Enlightenment brought the first winds of change, but few compared to the shifting tides in Xyn. For years, Prathian toiled within the Nexus, teaching apprentices, learning alongside his Archivists, and studying the infinite possibilities of the realms beyond Karthun. In these years, Prathian made frequent trips to Kraya, the plane of light, to discuss life and death with Sehad and the souls of his followers who passed over. A yearning for knowledge gnawed at Prathian and in -2979 the god of magic gathered his elder Archivists and the leaders of Xyn's communities. After a discussion, Prathian placed the Archivists in charge of Xyn and departed Karthun to explore the planes.

Prathian returned years later to learn that Xyn and the Archivists, though older, endured perfectly well without his presence. The belief of his followers never wavered and his blessings flowed to the Archivists despite the great distances he traveled. Prathian learned much on his travels, sharing new ideas and magic with his most trusted allies.

Prathian left Karthun a number of times over the course of history, but his return in 0 marked great change for Xyn. Gathering his followers and the citizens of Xyn to the base of the Nexus, Prathian addressed the people, dissolving his own theocracy and instituting a new age of democracy in Xyn. Within the following month, candidates were nominated for the first Grand Chancellor of Xyn and the first seats on Xyn's Senate. After elections, the Senate had its representatives from all the islands of Xyn and a delegation from Tavia, Xyn's closest bordering nation. On the steps of the new Senate Building, Prathian and the Archivists inaugurated the first Grand Chancellor of Xyn, Vivian Yor.

Tragedy soon found its way to the thriving nation. First, the distance between Prathian and the Elemental Lords of Istin widened to such a point that the lords abandoned Prathian as their patron. Istin suffered for centuries under the rule of tyrant fire lord Yaz'ar, and Prathian's

inaction to remove the God-king created a potentially permanent rift. In the Age of Conflict, very few elementals exist in Xyn and none of the Elemental Lords make the journey to the Nexus.

Upon his next return from another journey across the planes, Prathian discovered the existence of a new order of mages known as the Worldwalkers. As eight of the most powerful and intelligent mages of the age, the Worldwalkers were heavily active in Xyn as allies to the Senate, and across Karthun as heroes working to turn back the rising tide of evil. The Worldwalkers, much like Prathian, craved knowledge and possessed a desire to travel beyond Karthun, but Prathian objected, saying that the minds of mortals—even gifted mortals—could not understand the complexities of the planes. This statement offended the Worldwalkers; in secret, the eight worked to pierce the veil of Karthun without Prathian's aid. Their efforts and a heated disagreement between the eight and Valkyre and Deknar erupted into a battle that drove the Worldwalkers into hiding and decimated the community of Falcon's Rest in Xyn.

Now hunted by the gods and yet undaunted, the Worldwalkers pushed against the planar barrier; in their hubris they finally pierced the veil into the realm of the Three Demon Kings and the Worldfire. The arrival of the demonic legions affected every nation on Karthun as the Worldfire decimated coastal regions. In Xyn, Prathian, the Archivists, and other great mages harnessed the power of the Nexus to divert the path of the Worldfire away from Xyn. In a moment of impossible choice, Prathian pushed the Worldfire towards Tavia, tripling the destruction of the west coast of the Last Continent. Xyn was spared, but the cost of the lives lost and the wrath of Tavia still haunts Prathian in the Age of Conflict.

Tavia's vengeance arrived years after the Ritual of the Chain halted the movement of the Worldfire. Master thieves and saboteurs under orders from the Veiled King, the leader of the Black Talons of Tavia, infiltrated the heart of the Nexus and detonated a series of explosions.

The explosions killed hundreds of Archivists and greatly compromised the integrity of the Nexus itself. However, the worst came with the revelation of secrets Prathian was hiding from Xyn and his followers. The heart of the Nexus contained hundreds of gates to realms beyond Karthun, all mapped and discovered by Prathian on his wanderings. It was also discovered that during his previous time away from Karthun, he inadvertently attracted the attention of elder beings of madness and destruction. Although he escaped their grasp, the Gods of a Thousand Eyes followed Prathian back to Karthun and pushed against the planar barrier he constructed. The damage created by the Worldfire and the damage caused by the Black Talon assault allowed the minions of the Gods of a Thousand Eyes to assault the Nexus. What was once the last line of defense for mortals attempting to seize the power of the multiverse was now the first line of defense for Karthun against horrors from the planar darkness.

Gathering his Archivists and the Sentinels of the Book, Prathian channeled power from the Nexus to create a stopgap, a wavering demiplane between the broken gate and Karthun. The demiplane became known as the Bleed and served as the battleground for the ongoing War of the Breach. Now, in the Age of Conflict, followers of Prathian and heroes from across Karthun enter the Bleed to push back the nightmares spawned forth by the Gods of a Thousand Eyes, but they are fighting a losing battle as mortals tire, break, and die while the horrors from the cosmic darkness are unrelenting. Publicly, the Sentinels of the Book and Xyn actively work to keep the direness of the war a closely guarded secret, but it's only a matter of time before Karthun learns of the darkness knocking at its door.

GOVERNMENT

Xyn exists as a republic, possibly the strongest on Karthun. Since the days of the first election of Senate house members and the first Grand Chancellor, Xyn has redefined what a united republic stands for in the face of the destruction threatening the Nexus.

Xyn is comprised of several small islands in close proximity with the Nexus acting as a central hub. Each island is named by a number, One to Nine, which is shorthand for natives or residents of said island. Typically, residents greet each other in a fashion akin to “Hailing from Nine.” For permanent residents of the Nexus, the greeting is “Hails from Nexus.” Many attribute the use of numbers to Prathian’s focus on time and chronology.

Each of the nine islands carries their own individual culture and practices. For example, Four is the center of mining for Xyn and the residents are hardy folk who don’t tolerate laziness. The structures of Four are dense, imposing, and industrial as mining and refinery are the primary industries of the island.

The Nine are connected via large stone bridges secured by enormous iron gates and drawbridges that may be raised in times of emergency. Each of the Nine provides extensive carriage and transport services for goods and services across islands. Each of the Nine uses farstep circles as well for personal travel and the delivery of goods. With the attack on the Nexus still prevalent in the minds of Xyn’s citizens, security is an important issue between islands and impossibly heightened on the Nexus. Travel to the Nexus is restricted to citizens or guests carrying stamped, encoded documents that change often and must pass a series of security checks. The Black Talons who attacked the Nexus posed as new initiates in the Sentinels of the Book and broke away from the tour to plant their explosives. Now, each member of the Archivists and Sentinels of the Book has their face and voice encoded onto special speaking stones at security checkpoints. Records of new initiates are meticulously maintained and new recruits undergo extensive questioning and background checks.

At the top of Xyn’s political hierarchy, the Grand Chancellor answers only to Prathian himself, but in the years since the introduction of Xyn’s republic, the Eternal Sage rarely issues orders to the Grand Chancellor and understands too well that the Chancellor might refuse such

requests. The current Grand Chancellor is Fela Vyrull. In her youth, Grand Chancellor Fela Vyrull was known as Darmus Vyrull, an intelligent young man from Five, Xyn’s fishery community, who caught the attention of the Archivists at a young age. Darmus enrolled into the Archivist academy and upon graduation day, presented herself as Archivist Fela Vyrull. The Grand Chancellor quickly rose to her position through the ranks of the Archivists and through her activity in the political theatre. She served as an ambassador to both Daynir and the hostile courts of Tavia, thwarting one assassination attempt on the ambassador from Erast and another against herself. Upon her return to Xyn, she was asked to run for the office of Grand Chancellor by her predecessor and Prathian himself. She won by a landslide and assumed the office to the delight of the Nine.

Grand Chancellor Vyrull is an intelligent, direct, no nonsense leader who isn’t afraid to wade into the fray politically or physically. In moments when the Senate grinds to a halt, she is typically the official who gets issues back on track.

The Senate of Xyn is comprised of two Senators from each of the Nine and one Senator from the nation of Tavia. Despite the hostility between the nations, Grand Chancellor Vyrull insists on maintaining the Senate position for Tavia, affectionately referring to it as the “Seat of Crows.” Senators are elected every two years from their island. Individuals not born in Xyn may be elected to the Senate if they are a permanent resident of one of the Nine for no less than two years. As the primary lawmakers and enforcers of the law, the Senate maintains a steady flow of laws and a unified front. Occasional differences in opinion stall issues, but rarely do the Senators bicker over preferential treatment of one of the Nine over another.

The laws of Xyn are enforced by the Sentinels of the Book and small bands of local law enforcement maintained individually by the Nine. Each island elects a local leader, typically referred to as mayor, to oversee the day-to-day operations of the community.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Nexus

As the home of Prathian and the center of worship for the Archivists and Sentinels of the Book, the Nexus is an impressive sight. The Nexus is a thirty story tall tower-fortress that radiates a constant glow, illuminating the clouds that perpetually swirl at the apex of the tower. Engraved within the stone of the tower are enormous, intersecting glyphs that glow with the same power. The path to the entrance of the Nexus is a massive stone pathway, smoothed for wagons and horses, lit with hundreds of lanterns. Followers of Prathian who make the pilgrimage to the Nexus are greeted along the path by Archivists who give blessings and advice for those seeking direction.

Inside the Nexus, the high ceilings and grand architecture of the entry hall and passageways are breathtaking. Every floor ascending towards the top serves as barracks, libraries, temples, hospitals, and guest residences. Space is never an issue. In the lower levels, the Archivists maintain a public archive and a secret archive that's an exact duplicate of the Grand Archive in Daynir. The archives contain originals and copies of nearly every publication written since the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, as well as spellbooks, scrolls, and magic items deemed too dangerous for public use.

At the heart of the Nexus, a central chamber four stories tall stands surrounded by layers of security protocols and Sentinels of the Book. Within the chamber, hundreds of stone archways line the walls on four levels. Each archway leads to another plane beyond Karthun. The Black Talon attack ruined thirty of these gates and ruined protection spells Prathian himself cast on the chamber. On the north side of the chamber, the wall is cracked open. An ethereal mist spills from the crack into the chamber. Beyond the mist is the Bleed, the demiplane battleground of the Sentinels of the Book and the eldritch horrors of the Gods of the Thousand Eyes. The Bleed appears as an open battlefield with rolling hills under a darkened

sky. One thousand yards from the entrance, an identical wall of mist stands, leading to the madness-filled home plane of the elder terrors.

Mistfall

As the smallest of the Nine, Island Two is also the furthest away from the Nexus and the rest of the Nine. Island Two is one of the textile leaders for Xyn, with several large factories and world-renowned tailors calling the island home. However, the western coast of Two and the town of Mistfall are in slow decline based on the legends (and legitimate threat) of the Mistfall Horror. Many stories circulate regarding the Mistfall Horror but the most popular version of the tale focuses on a group of students from Peldurn University attempting to bind a summoned demonic creature to a student via magebinding. The ritual failed, creating a unique and powerful monster that stalks the coastal tunnels near Mistfall, devouring fishermen and aspiring heroes eager to make their name in the tunnels. The presence of the Mistfall Horror has contaminated Mistfall with a permeating sense of dread. The people of Mistfall are dour and find little joy in life.

Lonetower

Located on the open plains of Island Seven, this small tower stands in the middle of the wilderness. Constructed from an unusual substance that resembles cobalt steel, the tower's single entryway stands open. Inside, there are no rooms or windows. The tower is a hollow shaft. For years, scholars and adventurers journeyed to Lonetower seeking answers. None have presented themselves, but recently a lone survivor from a party of nine thrill seekers stumbled into a nearby town, nude, bloody, and with no memory of who he is or what happened. It's uncertain if he and his party made it to Lonetower.

Highmont

While the Nexus is the center of worship for Prathian in Xyn, Highmont is the official capital city. Located on Island Three, the center for academia, religion (of other faiths), and politics,

Highmont is also one of the largest cities in Xyn. The buildings of Highmont are tall and dense, with accents that resemble dwarven architecture found in the ruins of Honor's Hold in Desin. Many of the buildings are white or light shades of grey with shingled roofs. The streets of Highmont are paved smooth in the central district and cobblestone in the districts of the outer rims. In addition to the largest temples to Deknar, Elinar, and the Mother of the Dead, Highmont is also the home of Peldurn University.

Ivorydell Mines

Owned and operated by the Ivorydell Mining Consortium, the Ivorydell Mines comprise the largest mining operations in Xyn. Located beneath the Tower Peaks on Island Four, the mines delve impossibly deep beneath the surface, thanks to the use of magic and cutting edge technology from the minds of Peldurn University. New shafts open on regular schedules and the management of Ivorydell always needs workers brave enough to journey to the lowest mines, despite rumors of terrible things lurking in the darkness.



FACTIONS OF KARTHUN

CHAPTER SIX

Since the Age of Enlightenment, groups of likeminded individuals have gathered across Karthun to work towards similar goals. From the control of commerce to the dispensation of a brand of justice to the complete domination of the world, factions play an integral part in the landscape of the Lands of Conflict. This chapter examines a selection of Karthun's larger organizations and factions currently active in the Age of Conflict, including their prominent members and active agendas. The presented factions cover a wide array of moralities and goals to serve as a perfect addition to any Karthun campaign.

CIRCLE OF THE FIRST

Hidden deep within the trees of Andorhem Forest, the Grove of the First Tree serves as the home and base of operations for the druids of the Circle of the First. Centuries ago, the power of the First Tree and the Circle protected the denizens of the forest from threats across Karthun under the watchful eye of Sehad the World Warden. The arrival of the demons of the Worldfire and later the death of Sehad greatly weakened the First Tree, sending it out of phase with Karthun, leaving the Circle of the First powerless. Undaunted, the

Circle druids continued to defend Andorhem Forest until the First Tree returned to full phase with Karthun. The Circle of the First strives for peace and harmonic balance within the forest and across Karthun, but new threats jeopardize everything the Circle of the First stands for.

In the Age of Conflict, the Rotting Legion of the Mother of the Dead dominates the southern region of Andorhem Forest as the grief-driven goddess of death pushes her armies and undead towards the First Tree, the final legacy of Sehad. Legends speculate the death of the First Tree will trigger a chain of events leading to the death of humanity and possibly Karthun. As the patron race of Sehad, the Mother of the Dead demands the First Tree be destroyed and humanity sent to her realm within the Dead. On the frontlines, rangers, mercenaries, heroes, and denizens of Andorhem stand with the Circle of the First in a bloody guerilla war against the encroaching undead and servants of the Mother.

Currently, the Circle of the First recognizes three-dozen members, with the majority standing as a final line of defense in the Grove of the First. The leader of the Circle of the First, Kaleya of Andorhem, organizes Circle druids and the rangers in tactical strikes on the frontline against the Rotting Legion. The Circle of the First



*Kaleya of
Andorhem*

yearns for a return to peace and tranquility, but the brutality of war is upon them and no druid is foolish enough to hope for peace with the Rotting Legion. The power of the First Tree prevents the Mother of the Dead from taking a hand personally in the war, but her servants and undead are unrelenting.

The Circle of the First is always searching for new druids and rangers to join the battle, happily accepting the aid of passing heroes in exchange for food, shelter, safe passages through the forest, or knowledge from previous ages. Despite their low numbers, the Circle maintains an impressive library of tomes and historical scrolls, as well as oral accounts of history. The druids of the Circle also have access to rituals and druidic spells long forgotten by many, but saved during the Age of Flames. The Circle of the First are formidable allies buried under the fires of war.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Kaleya of Andorhem

The current leader of the Circle of the First, Kaleya of Andorhem is a fierce druid and brilliant tactician. To the untrained eye, Kaleya is an athletic human woman with long brown hair and the vestments of a druid of the Circle of the First. Kaleya is a native of Andorhem, as she joined the Circle over a decade ago and has supported her druidic family and the First Tree with her life ever since. Kaleya has a secret known only to her, the First Tree, and Maldros the Bear Lord: Kaleya is a succubus. While her origins remain a mystery, Kaleya abandoned her demonic heritage and exiled herself to Andorhem. When Maldros the Bear Lord found her critically wounded in the woods, he took her to the Circle of the First where she discovered a new home and family. Kaleya has no evil intentions for the First Tree. She is simply

defending her home and her family, though she's pledged to Maldros that she will reveal her true nature on the day the Rotting Legion is driven from Andorhem Forest.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The Circle of the First continues to protect the First Tree at all costs. Kaleya sends scouts into neighboring regions searching for anyone willing to aid her in the battle against the Rotting Legion, often bringing to the war effort heroes eager to make their name.



*The
Veiled
King*

THE DAGGERS OF FELICOS

Across Karthun, the church of Felicos is publicly represented by the Favored Coins. In the shadows, the Daggers reverence the darker sides of Felicos. Whether they run assassins' guilds, work alone, or have loose organizational ties, they are everywhere. With the correct

signs of religious belief, or simply enough money, one can request an assassination in almost any part of Karthun.

What makes the Daggers unique among the other factions is their diversity. Unlike most of the religious organization in Karthun, the Daggers have a varying set of beliefs. Felicos encourages this. Being a master of secrets and shadows, even the dictates of his own religion are kept obfuscated. What is clear, however, is that the Daggers favor killing and death above all things, much as the Favored Coins reverence luck in all of its forms.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

The First Daggers

One of the most confusing aspects of the Daggers, and indeed, worship of Felicos in general, is that no one actually knows who the head of the sect is. A dozen or so people claim to be the First Dagger, each working in their own

way to further the goals of their god. Even more strange is that there seem to rarely be disputes between the various organizations or groups headed by these First Daggers. Perhaps it's honor among thieves, or perhaps that's the true secret to the power of this branch of Felicos' church: a hidden unity amongst a seemingly fractured and contentious group of leaders. Only Felicos truly knows. What follows is a listing of the known First Daggers, their locations, and a brief description.

SKULLEATER, KRAGHORN: Skulleater

believes not only that his killings are justified by Felicos, but that he can gain the power of his enemies by consuming their brains after death. This vicious orc is often hired by the Water Barons for jobs where a message needs to be sent.

THE SCALED SHADOW, PALEFRONT:

A lizardfolk prowls the streets, saying nothing, and is given wide berth. She was dubbed the Scaled Shadow, and most avoid her if possible. It's said that death follows in her wake, and that she stalks Palefront, listening for the prayers of the faithful and delivering the deaths they wish.

ISHIKA, XAG: In Xag, there's a child who never ages. Her eyes are grey and soulless. Some think she's Gravetouched, others that she's a soul-killer. Both are possible. Soul-killers launch psychic attacks, killing what's inside a person, while leaving their body intact.

FELDTHA, SYNOTHEN: Feldtha rules Synothen after the mysterious deaths of many of the nobles in Palefront. Her true nature as a hag is concealed from most, and any deaths that are carried out by her hand are always

magical or poisonous in nature.

THE VEILED KING, TAVIA: One of the thirteen men and women who advise the Queen, there has been a Veiled King in Tavia for centuries. The Veiled King operates a guild of thieves, carrying out missions across Karthun for the highest bidder.

SYSK, SYMUL: Lord of the Jackal Clan, Sysk's power was cemented by his betrayal of the daughter of his main rival. He now has a network of spies and assassins that rivals anything seen in Tavia. His methods are brutal, and public.

THE WIND THAT SLIPS, ISTIN:

An air elemental, the Wind That Slips is perhaps the most secretive of the possible First Daggers. Able to carry out assassinations

anywhere air can reach, the

Wind is one of the most storied assassins in all of Karthun. However, the Wind is also easily concealed, leading many to disbelieve its existence.

There are rumors that at least five additional individuals lay claim to the title of First Dagger. However, who they are and where they operate is unclear.



Ishika

ACTIVE AGENDA

The Daggers have one unifying agenda: the Will of Felicos. They all refer to it by the same name, but it's obvious that each of them believes it to be something different. Felicos has plans within plans, and it's possible that each Dagger knows they're playing a part in something larger. It's equally possible that Felicos wishes only to sow chaos, even among his faithful.

THE DAWN STRIDERS

During the Age of Flames, the Worldfire and the armies of the Three Demon Kings ravaged Karthun. The champions of the gods opposed the demons on the battlefields, oceans, and battlements, but few suffered as the followers of Elinar. The Speakers of Harmony rallied armies with story and song against the demonic legions with such power and efficiency, the Three Demon Kings placed bounties on the heads of every Speaker. The Speakers of Harmony fell by the hundreds, sending the surviving Speakers into hiding, depriving the armies of Karthun of their bolstering power. The tide of the war shifted in favor of the demons.

Within Elinar's faithful, a new sect of clerics channeling the power of the sun and fueled by the horizon rose to contribute to the war effort and ensure the safety of the Speakers of Harmony in hiding. Founded by Lucy Fenroe, the daughter of two Speakers of Harmony slain by the assassins of the Three Demon Kings, Lucy mobilized the first riders of a small band dubbed the Dawn Striders setting out across the Last Continent. Through divine magic and rituals to bolster the speed and stamina of their mounts, the Dawn Striders delivered vital documents to frontline encampments that seemed cut off, they escorted refugees from war zones, and they shepherded Speakers to safe houses.

As years passed, the Dawn Striders increased in number and, while the organization remained an extension of Elinar's faith, the brutality of war and wholesale loss of life across the Last Continent pushed the Dawn Striders to take a vow of neutrality. Their vow opened closed borders and allowed the organization to do more good for those cut off or otherwise affected by war.



*Petryn
of the Wolf Clan*

In the Age of Conflict, the Dawn Striders are trusted by every nation as couriers, emissaries, and agents of neutrality.

Atop enchanted steeds, Dawn Striders deliver vital messages to heads of faith, rulers of nations, town mayors, and farmers. All who need a guarantee of security, speed, and neutrality in an age where magical communications can be intercepted and caravans robbed make

use of the Dawn Striders.

New recruits ride in pairs with experienced mentors until they're properly trained to brave the dangers of the roads and plains of the Last Continent alone. The time of apprenticeship varies depending upon the mentor, but the time spent on the road forges a supernatural bond between Dawn Striders and their mounts, much like the relationship between a wizard and a familiar. Upon appointment, new Dawn Striders are sworn in with a simple ceremony (either at a roadside inn or on the trail with their mentor) and given a copy of the Dawn Strider holy text: *The Travellers Tale*, a series of simple leather journals, connected by Elinar's power to record and share every active Dawn Strider's entries, notes, maps, and warnings.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Petryn of the Wolf Clan

Raised amid the elven civil war of Symul, Petryn answered the call of the Dawn Striders after an encounter with his mentor and a pack of dire wolves. Known for great speed and unwavering dedication to the Dawn Striders' oaths of neutrality and confidentiality, Petryn is one of the most sought after Dawn Striders active on the Last Continent.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The Dawn Striders continue to serve as neutral couriers and emissaries across nations in the Age

of Conflict; however, recently the organization has come under attack from unidentified assassins, for reasons unknown. Solitary Dawn Striders and their steeds crossing Andern, Symul, and Erast have fallen to the same form of blades and poisons. Surprisingly, valuables in the care of the fallen Dawn Striders remain undisturbed, with only their copies of *The Travellers Tale* and—more gruesomely—their eyes removed. The Dawn Striders are threatened and actively seeking answers.

THE DEKRELIUM

Atop the high, white stone tower of Endesium, overlooking the city of Bastion, the mages of the Dekrelum watch over the government and citizens of the magocracy of Thulengard. Founded by Gren Arcwell I and surviving mages and alchemists of the March of Liberty, the original Dekrelum consisted of over two dozen members of varying schools of expertise and skill level. As the years passed and Thulengard took shape, the original founders passed away, traveled to distant lands never to return, or entered retirement, bringing the total number of members down to eleven, the member limit still observed in the Age of Conflict.

To the citizens of Thulengard, the Dekrelum conduct the majority of their business in public, often holding their bi-weekly meetings in the open-air gardens within Bastion. Citizens are welcome to observe the meetings (politely) and every session ends with questions from the gallery. The topics of discussion range from affairs of the nation, to personal pursuits, to foreign affairs. Many of the meetings spark passionate debates among the membership, but such debates always follow a structured,

respectful model. As the current leader of the Dekrelum, Grand Evoker Gren Arcwell II always attends and makes herself available to as many questions from the gallery as possible. Many of Thulengard's nobility question the security threat of allowing the leaders of the nation to meet in public (as do a few Dekrelum members) but the

Grand Evoker's stance on transparency does not waver and, to date, no assassin foolish enough to attack a gathering of eleven of Karthun's most skilled mages has stepped forward.

Following their public meetings, the members of the Dekrelum move to the top floor of Endesium for discussion of national security matters, personal dealings, and audience with

Prathian the Eternal Sage. Here, the topics of discussion turn toward enemies and threats to Thulengard, the Dekrelum, and Karthun itself. Prathian typically observes the meetings quietly,

speaking only when necessary, allowing the Grand Evoker to steer the meetings. At the end of each meeting, Prathian speaks with Grand Evoker Arcwell alone for a few moments before departing.

Endesium is well guarded. Through the presence of personal guards, rituals, and artisan construction, the lower levels of the tower contain a multistory library filled with tomes and scrolls dating back to the Age of Enlightenment, personal quarters for each member, servant quarters, and farstep circles linked to dozens of locations across Karthun. In the vaults below the tower, the Dekrelum store personal wealth, magic items, and dangerous artifacts under lock, key, and spell (as well as several powerful guardians).



Altha
Firehearth

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Altha Firehearth

The oldest member of the Dekrelium, Altha was born into slavery in the pits of the Underlords and forcefully bound to a lava elemental for research purposes. The process left Altha scarred and angry. When she escaped the slave pits, she wandered Karthun looking for purpose and harmony with her elemental (as their bonding was seeded in rage) when she came to the attention of the Grand Evoker Arcwell II. Over the years, Altha found balance with her elemental and is one of the most powerful mages on the Last Continent. She carries a lifelong hatred for the Underlords and spearheads many of the missions against her former captors.

Tybus Oakhand

Tybus stands apart from the members of the Dekrelium as the newest appointed member and the first non-mage to join the guild. Tybus is a druid raised in the forests the Soddenwood. Publicly, Tybus stands as an example of the leadership's willingness to open their doors to any voices of the nation. Such is true, but Tybus' true purpose is to serve as an emissary between the Dekrelium and the hag queens of the Soddenwood: the Deep Brides. Taken as a child by the hags and raised as their "son," Tybus learned druidic and unholy spellcraft from his hag mothers, and as tensions between the Dekrelium and Deep Brides escalated, Tybus traveled to Bastion to negotiate a fragile peace. The act carried weight with the Grand Evoker as she sponsored the druid's membership into the organization.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The overall focus of the Dekrelium remains fixed on the continued success of Thulengard, the appointment of new apprentices to the sitting members, and their efforts to reclaim lost treasures and knowledge from their ancestral ruins of Honor's Hold in Desin. The exploration and excavation process is slow, as the ruins are incredibly dangerous and filled with many

horrors in the form of undead, creatures from the Deep (such as the Writhing Swarm), and the savage tribes of humanoids occupying the wastelands of Desin.

FACTIONS OF TAVIA

The level of intrigue and scheming found in Tavia rivals that of the Kingdom of Five Thieves, and it's no wonder those are the two locations where the Blessed of the Crawl have power. Due to the level of tension and enculturated spying, the greatest threat in Tavia is, quite literally, anyone who is not yourself. That threat is exemplified most strongly by the factions that vie for power. Every city, especially those that are part of the Hand of Highroost, has its own cadre of factions. Alliances bloom, grow, and die on the vine with such rapidity that it's difficult to ensure that one knows what side one is on.

By the same token, factions are created and destroyed with such regularity that knowing what intrigues are happening in a given city can be extremely difficult. If one aligns oneself with the wrong faction, it's very easy to end up being the target of intrigues without one's consent. There are, however, well-established factions to be aware of. The two most notable factions are the Black Talons and the Broken Cage, given more detail here than in the entry for Tavia. The factions below them are much more fluid, and are presented as a reflection of the amount that's known about them.

THE BLACK TALONS

The Black Talons are perhaps the deadliest and most feared faction in Tavia. They're the shadowed right hand of the Blessed of the Crawl, though they claim to work for the Queen. In reality, it's all one and the same. The Black Talons employ not only magic, but the nascent study of science in their quest for knowledge, power, and influence on behalf of the Crawl. It's these studies, in fact, that give the Black Talons their name.

The motives of the Blessed of the Crawl seem simple: to be the ruling force in Karthun. However, their mindset is unique to them as a

race. The lines between individual and collective are heavily blurred. This allows the Crawl to manipulate their/its own nature in interesting and often disturbing ways. The Black Talons are one of those manipulations. The name is a literal one, for every member of the Black Talons has hands with twisted ebony claws at the ends of their fingers. Rumors about the Black Talons claim that a member's hands are altered magically when they join the order. The rumors are partially correct.

Each member of the Black Talons is bonded with a Blessed of the Crawl, resulting in a set of talons that grant a Black Talon great power. The bonding takes place via magical and alchemical means, literally altering the physical structure of both the soon-to-be Black Talon and the Blessed of the Crawl. The Black Talon member's hands are plunged into the physical mass of an ooze of the Crawl, and the ooze is slowly absorbed into the candidate's hands. The alchemical process of this absorption changes the ooze's form such that it solidifies, losing the majority of its original mass, and leaving behind the namesake claws. The process is excruciating, and the talons are left thirsty, wanting for moisture. Woe betide the person whose skin is pierced by those claws. Not only is a massive amount of moisture pulled from their body, but also a mass of memories gets pulled from their mind. This gives any individual Black Talon the ability to extract nearly whatever information they wish, from any informant.



*Black
Talon Agent*

THE BROKEN CAGE

The members of the Broken Cage are among the only groups in Tavia to fight for the freedom of its people rather than adhering to a selfish or self-serving ideology. The members of the Broken Cage are as widely varied as the people of Tavia; this serves as the faction's greatest strength, and its greatest weakness.

The Broken Cage has no formal leader, no command structure, and no set agenda, save the one noted above. This means that anyone who takes subversive action against the ruling powers of Tavia, or against the Blessed of the Crawl, can claim membership in the group. Such actions

are often marked by the symbol of the group: a shattered glyph with a bird in flight. However, not all actions marked with the glyph are actually the actions of a member of the faction. The Broken Cage could be

active in any part of Tavia, or any other faction could claim they were acting as the Broken

Cage. Being a movement with no head has both benefits and drawbacks.

The attempts to unify the Broken Cage have not yet been successful.

The more jaded members, who despair of ever seeing Tavia as a free country or who have seen supposed leaders rise quickly and fall, speculate that Felicos is

actively working to keep the group from banding together under a common leader.

Whatever the case, there's a growing restlessness in Tavia, one that could be leveraged for freedom by the right person. That is, if a god isn't actively working to prevent it.

INGERSOLL'S CHILDREN

Some years ago, a physician named Ingersoll rose to power in the city of Hope Falls. He was charismatic and dynamic, with a penchant for drawing people to him. He believed that by controlling the health of a population, you controlled the population. A series of schools opened, where he educated the generation of physicians and doctors to follow him. However, his techniques were designed not necessarily to help people, but to control them. Addictive substances were distributed to patients, making them dependent upon their doctors. These techniques provide control under the illusion of health maintenance as they spread throughout Tavia. Devotees of Ingersoll's practices are easily identified by their bird-like masks and wide-brimmed hats.

THE WALKERS

The Walkers are a faction that resists every other faction in Tavia, not through violence, but through non-violent resistance. They travel the whole of Tavia, thus earning their name, and when they encounter agents of any other faction, they do what they can to stand in the way of those agents proceeding with their work, stopping short of an all-out conflict. They arrange minor accidents, road blockages, or other non-harmful delays in an effort to disrupt, delay, or frustrate the information networks of the other factions. The Walkers are one of the few factions whose members know of the tunnels that thread their way under Tavia, and they make use of this knowledge by making sure that the transports in those tunnels break down as often as possible. Many Walkers come from modest backgrounds as laborers or repair workers.

THE SIGN ASCENDANT

One of the more chaotic factions in Tavia, the Sign Ascendant is the polar opposite of the Walkers. Those who adhere to the tenants of the Sign also fight against every other faction of Tavia, but do so through anarchy and destruction. This should make them a faction that could be dealt with through traditional means, but the Sign Ascendant has ties to deeper powers. The most powerful members of the Sign are true servants of the Three Demon Kings, and they seek to tear holes, however small, through the fabric of reality to the Worldfire. When they're able to find gaps in Deknar's Chain, such gaps are small and short-lived. However, the demons, fire, and chaos that seep through in those moments cause great destruction. In fact, some of the most memorable disasters in the history of Tavia can be traced back to the Sign Ascendant.

PAGE TURNERS

An offshoot of the church of Prathian, the Page Turners seek out knowledge wherever they can, through whatever means possible. They don't necessarily work with the church of Prathian, but the two find themselves aligned more often than not. This puts the Page Turners directly at odds with the Blessed of the Crawl, and the two factions are bitter enemies. The Page Turners have the most advanced techniques for discovering the Blessed where the oozes have infiltrated society, and a portion of the Page Turners work directly within the Queen's palace in Highroost, trying to mitigate the influence that the Blessed of the Crawl have over the royal family. The Page Turners keep secret archives and hidden caches of knowledge around Tavia. Stumbling across such a cache would make the finder both powerful and a target.

THE GREYMASKS OF DAYNIR

In the nation of Daynir, home to Xag, the City of Monoliths, political machinations and shadow wars plague a once honorable government. Members of the Congress of Nineteen bicker and squabble over laws, foreign affairs, and personal goals. Corruption takes root in the dark corners of the capital city of Xag, as personal grudges and vendettas spanning generations play out on the Congress Hall floor and in midnight summits across the city. At the forefront of Daynir's government is the current High Magistrate, Sendrin Kynn, a noble but embattled leader under constant threat of political sabotage and outright assassination. High Magistrate Kynn is clever and vigilant, but the weight of Kynn's day-to-day protection and survival falls on the shoulders of the High Magistrate's personal security force: the Greymasks.

Founded shortly after the appointment of Daynir's first High Magistrate, the cloaked, masked members of this organization work towards one primary objective: the safeguarding and longevity of the sitting High Magistrate. The Greymasks currently report twenty-three active members with fifteen serving as unmasked sleeper agents in the field. The identities of each active Greymask is known only to the sitting High Magistrate and Number One, with every member assigned a number based on seniority within the organization. Upon receiving their grey mask, a new member is struck from Daynir's halls of records and, in many cases, their deaths or disappearances are fabricated for the benefit of family and former friends. Membership in the Greymask means a total dedication to the service of the High Magistrate, forsaking all elements of former lives.

Through secrecy, advanced espionage

techniques, and magic, the Greymasks actively root out assassination plots aimed at the High Magistrate with as little public acknowledgment as possible. Secrecy and loyalty drive the Greymasks under the command of Number One. Greymasks appear in public with the High Magistrate during public functions, but speak rarely and show emotion even less. Every member of the organization wears a featureless grey mask, light armor, and weaponry with a finely tailored grey cloak and hood. The Greymasks strike an imposing sight in public,

yet every member employs techniques to blend into the background of large crowds when necessary. The people of Daynir know a simple fact: If you see the High Magistrate, the Greymasks are close by.

The central headquarters for the Greymasks is a lonely, imposing tower located outside the city of Xag known as Greymask

Hall. Inside the tower, powerful rituals prevent curious

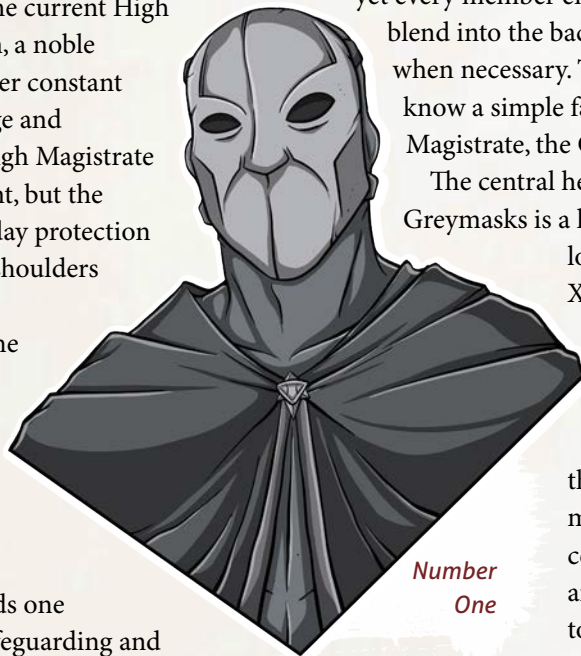
outsiders from prying through conventional or magical techniques. The cellars below the tower are stocked with supplies to last for several weeks, while on the upper levels,

dozens of farstep circles remain active and are keyed to important safe houses and locales across Daynir and Karthun.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Number One

Very little is known about the current leader of the Greymasks aside from a stern dedication to order and technique, and strong devotion to the office of High Magistrate. Recruited at a young age from Daynir's military, Number One slowly rose through the ranks as retirement or death claimed the lives of his seniors. Number One carries many scars from battle and numerous decorations for service and valor from Daynir



Number One

and the High Magistrate's office. Notably, Number One prevented the attempted assassination of the previous High Magistrate by efreeti assassins. He lost most of the previous protection detail, but cultivated both his and the Greymasks' legend in the process.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The daily protection of the High Magistrate is the sole purpose of the organization. Recently, sleeper agents reported the presence of the Fifth Dagger of Felicos among the Congress of Nineteen. The presence of such an agent of chaos could mean an impending assassination attempt upon High Magistrate Kynn. The Greymasks are currently working to expose the Fifth Dagger using secondary sources and unsuspecting heroes until it's time to make their presence known.

THE KALDENUM MERCHANTS ALLIANCE

Across the Last Continent, armored merchant caravans and trade ships under the standard of the Kaldenum Merchants Alliance (or Kaldenum for short) deliver goods both exotic and mundane to every major port, city, town, and settlement market place. For the Kaldenum, wealth and the control of goods is everything and the Kaldenum don't hesitate to use lethal force to protect their holdings. The origins of the Kaldenum Merchants Alliance are murky, even to its current members. Among the rumors and tall tales surrounding its inception, the truth focuses on a small group of rival merchants in the city of Xag during the Age of Enlightenment. Four merchants from Tavia, Daynir, Andern, and Istin fiercely competed for coin and dominance in Xag's city market, each offering superior goods and services. The four rivals bickered and jockeyed for position

for years until one merchant (it's unclear who) suggested the four would be more powerful as one. Soon, a new standard for the Kaldenum Merchants Alliance appeared in the market, and within one year, the Kaldenum controlled the entire city market of Xag (either publicly or secretly).

Over the following centuries, the Kaldenum expanded their empire across Karthun, taking control of valuable markets, crops, and supplies as well as exotic goods and magic. The yellow and black standard of the Kaldenum represents value and choice for consumers, while quietly imposing a sense of dread in rivals and enemies. The

methods of the Kaldenum and their agents are cold blooded and methodical. Rumors speak of entire merchant clans and their loved ones taken in the night, never to be seen again; powerful mages bewitching nobles and politicians; and many high ranking members of the Kaldenum trafficking with demons (or worse).

There are countless tales about the merciless actions and acquaintances of the Kaldenum—and the majority of the tales are true.

The alliance took great steps to remove the names of the original founders from history, through murder and the destruction of documents.

As the organization expanded,

the founders and their heirs changed their names multiple times, changed locations, and spoke through emissaries. In the Age of Conflict, the Kaldenum operates as a network of powerful merchants across Karthun, each with their own resources and tactics, all answering directly to one individual known as Lord. Lord is the emissary, the mouthpiece of the Four Merchants of the Kaldenum. There have been many known as Lord over the years, each answering to the Four Merchants through a series of complex communications (often encoded missives delivered by the Dawn Striders). The current Lord



*Deena
Solk*

is a former spymaster of the Black Talons of Tavia who faked his own death to join the Kaldenum.

The Four Merchants of the Kaldenum are the heirs of the original founders, as the leadership of the alliance has passed from parent to child for centuries. The Four and their families' wealth is legendary and many master thieves consider discovering and stealing from their estates to be a benchmark of excellence, despite the risks involved.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Casus Rendall

The oldest member of the Four, Casus resides in a palatial estate just outside of the city of Xag. Believed to be a prosperous wine maker and vineyard owner (true), Casus' devotion to his family is unwavering; but as his twilight years approach, he must choose which of his four sons will take the Kaldenum and his legacy.

Deena Solk

Residing in Tavia, Deena Solk is a fencing instructor working out of a small, humble studio in the port city of West Landing. As a half-elf, Deena doesn't speak of her parents or her fabricated family history. She's a master of appearing as a humble, unassuming instructor plying her trade. Recently, she's come under threat from a local gang attempting to extort her for protection. She finds it amusing and plans to hire a group of passing heroes to save her from the gang. She'll find potential pawns for the Kaldenum among the heroes or among the gang members, depending on survivors.

Markus Dek

Residing at a private estate on the border of Istin, Markus Dek is the least interested in the Kaldenum and its great merchant game. Choosing a life of solitude to devote to his studies as a demonologist and warlock in the service of the Three Demon Kings, Markus believes the end of Karthun is coming and when his masters wash over the Last Continent, he will be among those chosen to survive. Markus' actions and distance have caught the attention of his fellow Merchants,

who plan to send scouts and agents to assess his mental state and take appropriate action.

Tisa Quinn

The dark skinned, raven-haired beauty Lady Tisa Quinn of the Four Merchants hides in plain sight as the wife of the local lord who heads a fabric and clothing consortium in Andern. Tisa wears the finest in modern fashion and mingles with the elite of Andern and beyond, making regular trips to Daynir, Erast, and the Wolf Clan halls of Symul. Tisa is the life of any party and her presence at a ball or banquet is a mark of excellence in social circles. Tisa is also the master assassin of the Four Merchants and controls a vast network of spies. She has slain countless heroes, nobles, and other assassins (including the former Seventh Dagger of Felicos).

ACTIVE AGENDA

Despite influencing politicians for generations, none of the Four Merchants has ever taken public office. Recently, Casus Rendall suggested Tisa Quinn escalate her public image by moving to Daynir and running for public office as a means to oversee more operations and usher one of his chosen sons into the Four Merchants and the Kaldenum. The plan is scandalous by Kaldenum standards, but Quinn is considering the move as she now finds Andern boring.

THE KNIGHTS IN MOURNING

When Valkyre, the goddess of valor and justice, returned to Karthun in the Age of Mourning as the Mother of the Dead to proclaim the death of valor and honor, many of Valkyre's faithful refused to believe their goddess fell. Within moments of her return, the Mother of the Dead slayed the elder paladins and knights within the Silver Guard, enslaving their souls, and pressing their undead remains into service as her personal guard within her realm of the Dead. The Mother then dispatched her faithful to hunt down the members of the Silver Guard and Valkyre's faith unwilling to abandon valor and join her congregation.

In the years that followed, members of the Silver Guard scattered across the Last Continent, avoiding the tireless hunting parties of the Mother, while continuing to spread the laws of valor and honor to all willing to listen. In time, their number dwindled as more succumbed to the fear and pressures of lives spent on the run. Small villages and towns closed their doors to the wandering knights for fear of harsh repercussions from the Mother and her followers. As more years passed, the last of the original Silver Guard perished, but the teachings of Valkyre lived on in the heirs and new allies found along the roads and small corners of Karthun where valor and honor still ring true.

In the Age of Conflict, the students and heirs of the Silver Guard live on under the name of the Knights in Mourning. Across the Last Continent, lone warriors or small groups skilled with swords and versed in the teachings of Valkyre wander roads and settlements performing acts of selfless heroism in an age of apathy and self-preservation. These “knights” accept very little reward for their deeds, only enough for room and board on their travels. The true reward for the Knights in Mourning is spreading the word of Valkyre to any willing to listen. However, the Knights are no fools. Only after traveling long distances with potential students and/or fighting by their side against evil will a Knight reveal their faith and offer to teach the words of Valkyre.

For the Knights in Mourning, whether it be absolute faith, false hopes, or conspiracy theories handed down from their forefathers, they believe that Valkyre’s fall from valor and turn towards death and maliciousness may not be of her own choosing. Many of the Knights believe that

Valkyre could be redeemed and separated from the malicious entity responsible for her fall from grace. The issue is debated among the Knights on the rare occasions when they gather to exchange stories, share drinks, and praise valor.

The Knights in Mourning recruit cautiously, fully explaining the dangers involved with spreading the word of the former goddess of valor. Agents of the Mother of the Dead continue to hunt those spreading the “falsehoods” of Valkyre, and the Knights value cautious secrecy.

Many travel alone, visiting a handful of safehouses across Karthun in times of need.

Despite the risks involved, the Knights’ membership boasts some of the greatest swordsmen and women on Karthun, utilizing techniques believed lost to time. Recruits have access to mentors and tomes dating back to the original founders of the Silver Guard.



Dela White

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Dela White

One of the eldest Knights, Dela wanders the rolling hills of southern Andern and watches over a small safehouse in the Dusk district of the city of Narhal. Dela has served within the Knights for most of her adulthood, as evidenced by her extensive scars and weary but strong demeanor. As one of the greatest swordswomen on Karthun, she’s begun the search for her final apprentice; but her years and injuries are catching up and time may be running out.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The Knights in Mourning continue to spread the teachings of Valkyre and pursue any avenues towards her redemption and the eradication of evil across the Last Continent.

SCIONS OF THE DREADOAK

The location of the Dreadoak remains a mystery, and there are signs that the power behind the cursed tree is growing. Throughout Symul and the regions surrounding it, a new symbol has begun appearing: twin Vs. The VV has appeared at places where disaster has struck: fires, storehouses raided, notable people killed in their own homes, and even incursions into the clan houses. Increasingly, and more disturbingly, people killed during these attacks have been found with bite marks in their necks.

The Scions of the Dreadoak are responsible for these attacks, and the people being affected by them are just now beginning to see an emerging pattern. The Scions, vampires, and vampire spawn of the Dreadoak seek to not only destabilize Symul, but to supplant the extant elven clans there.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Root and Branch: First Child of the Dreadoak

Root and Branch looks elven at a glance. This is because most who see him are elven. His appearance changes based on who is viewing him, and all see him differently. Root and Branch began life as an elf in Symul hundreds of years ago. Whether he stumbled across the Dreadoak and heard its insidious whispers, or whether the Dreadoak hunted him down somehow, Root and Branch is the patriarch of the foul tree's children. To supplant the clans of Symul, he's crafted a replacement: three new clans, each a variety of vampire, each with its own agenda.

Gripping Hand: Clan of Body

The Clan of Body are vampires as they're traditionally known. They fear the light of the

sun and consume the blood of the living to continue their existence. Gripping Hand runs her clan in an ordered manner, unleashing her hungry mobs only when they can assure the total destruction of the target in their attacks.

Still Mind: Clan of Bone

The Clan of Bone appear to act like traditional vampires, biting their victims and draining them. However, the victim's bones turn to a liquid and are drained. In the process, the arteries and veins of the victim calcify, leaving enough structure that the body appears largely unchanged. Still Mind is hot-tempered and impulsive, belying her name. She revels in destruction and is reckless with her attacks, meaning her clan stays small in size due to attrition.

Unreason: Clan of Spirit

Vampires of the Clan of Spirit prey on the minds and emotions of their victims, using their bites to pull the very essence of their victims out of them. Unreason is the most subtle of all three clan lords of the Dreadoak. Clan of Spirit vampires are stealthy, and Unreason directs them to insinuate themselves into the society of Symul, sowing madness and lack of rationality as they are able, without being discovered.

ACTIVE AGENDA

Unlike the three clans of Symul, the Scions of the Dreadoak have a leader that unifies them. Root and Branch is planning a series of coordinated attacks to strike at the hearts of each of the three elven clans. Because of the long lifespans of all the parties involved, these attacks seem on the surface to be random, but they have long-reaching effects. Even beyond supplanting the elves, Root and Branch has a deeper game and a darker plan. He strives to draw enough power into the Dreadoak to give it the same status as the gods themselves. This is the true aim of the Dreadoak: to become a deity



Root
and Branch

of Karthun, with the vampires as its chosen race. Everything done by the three dark clans serves these ends, whether they know it or not.

THE SCORCHED SULTANS

Driven from Cinder, and occupying a chunk of land on the southern end of Istin, the Scorched Sultans are rapidly becoming Karthun's most feared mercenary company. As they've held their small borders against incursions from both Istin and Andern, not only repelling attacks, but also expanding their territory, the eyes of the Sultans have begun to roam farther across Karthun. Armies are expensive to maintain, but hiring out bands of elementals and magebound to the highest bidders keeps the money rolling in.

The Sultans have established a trade town of sorts in the middle of their claimed territory. Outsiders must tread carefully, quite literally in some cases. The efreeti are far more comfortable in environments that would burn non-elementals to a crisp. In addition, the beings who come to work under the banner of the Sultans are vile enough to make Felicos reconsider hiring them. So say the stories, anyway.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

The Firebrands

Most people that fight on the field for the Sultans now are mercenaries of little note. The Firebrands are different. They were one of the first companies to join up with the Sultans, and they quickly became one of the most feared and utilized groups in the Sultans' command. The Firebrands earned their name by literally burning their way across whatever landscape they occupy. In the early days, wildfires raged as they passed and swaths of southern Andern burned. Now, they

still mark their passage with fire, but it's almost more ominous: they burn a small line, only a few inches wide, in the wake of their company. They've learned that moving quietly and subtly, with their reputation behind them, not only accomplishes the tasks the Sultans set them, but also means less loss of life for the company.

Sheen

Sheen is one of the few individuals serving the Sultans, rather than being part of even a ragtag group of mercenaries. She earned her name because of the way light shines off her metallic right hand. Stories abound as to how she lost the hand, or how she had it replaced, but no one knows, save for her. Sheen works with whatever company the Sultans assign her to, and she always has some other agenda beyond what's assigned. Some think she serves Felicos as much as the Sultans, even whispering that she may be yet another First Dagger.



*Firebrand
Mercenary*

ACTIVE AGENDA

Territory and control, wealth and power.

Exiled from Istin, and with a foothold in Andern, the Sultans strive to make a place for themselves in Karthun. Few remain to stop them. Andern cannot push them back, and Istin seems to not care as long as the Sultans don't move south. This has allowed the Sultans to expand their base of power and hire more mercenaries. Some wonder at the seeming complacency of the Sultans, for no new territory has been claimed recently. However, those wondering would do well to spend their time worrying about the Sultans' true goal.

Working in secret, the Sultans have been forging an alliance with the Three Demon Kings, with assurances that when the Worldfire consumes Karthun, the Sultans will have a place within the demonic fire. To that end, the Sultans have begun digging, seeking to provide another point of stress to Deknar and the Chain he ceaselessly toils to maintain. Should the Sultans be able to drive their power all the way down to the Chain, it could spell further disaster for Karthun.

THE SHEPHERDS OF ERAST

In a land known for the dark influence of the Mother and her undead son Kyzul, the Shepherds are a group that people speak of only in whispers. Living beings, yet touched by the cold hand of death, the Shepherds are Kyzul's secret police, ersatz military force, and growing source of power. Kyzul uses the Shepherds to control the population of so-called wild undead across Karthun. And should the need arise, he could call them together into a force capable of fighting even the most powerful of undead.

Kyzul is fanatically loyal to his Mother, serving her unquestioningly. However, even he is aware of the potential for her mental stability to falter further, and has honed the Shepherds for that potential day. The bulk of the Shepherds don't even have a thought that this might be a possibility, though some of the higher-ranking members have suspicions.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Ringworm, Head Scout

Ringworm, a Lizardfolk whose given name is well and truly lost, serves as the second-in-command to Kyzul. Ringworm distinguished herself in service during an event known as the Surge. Somehow, a wave of necrotic energy was released across a portion of northern Erast, giving rise to a massive number of undead threats. Ringworm worked tirelessly, often dispatching undead enemies herself. During this campaign—one kept secret from the people of Erast—she gained Kyzul's trust. Ringworm is one of the few Shepherds who believe that the only real way to stop the undead is to cut them off at their true source: the Mother and the Dead. Wisely, she keeps this to herself.



Ringworm

Arloss, the Purifier

Arloss holds no titles or rank in the Shepherds. The gnome will not accept any. He views himself as unworthy of titles or accolades. He simply wishes to serve. He does so in a unique way. Arloss can touch undead and pull their energy out of them. In some cases, it's even said he can restore a person back to full life, given the right circumstances. Families across Erast seek him out to try to be reunited with loved ones because of this power. Arloss accepts no payment for these services, and always places the needs of the Shepherds above a request from an individual. Some whisper that Arloss is another son of the Mother, one with a deep enough connection to her that he's able to pull spirits back across the veil from the Dead.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The Shepherds have a single focus: destroy any undead not sanctioned by the Mother. Their primary focus is in Erast. As their ranks have grown along with Kyzul's power, they've begun sending scouting parties to other parts of Karthun. They're often mistrusted, as some

believe that rather than halting undead threats, the Shepherds are the cause of them. It's difficult to say which is the accurate view. On one hand, the Shepherds dispatch rogue undead with ruthless efficiency. On the other, there have been instances where a scouting party of Shepherds has arrived claiming to be hunting undead where none have ever been seen.

In addition, the Shepherds serve as an ad hoc clergy for the Mother. Often, the scouting parties have one or more priests of her faith present. The more zealous of these clerics work to convert people to what they feel is the proper worship of the Mother of the Dead.

Scouting parties are rarely spotted traveling across Karthun. They appear in an area, take care of whatever business they feel they have, and then leave. Some in Erast believe this means that the scouting parties don't travel across the surface of Karthun, but instead move through the Dead as they travel. They have safe passage through the Mother's realm to carry out her son's bidding, which is a chilling thought.

THE THREE BELLS SOCIETY

In the royal houses, ambassadorial suites, and ballrooms across the Last Continent, the power brokers of Karthun enjoy the finer things in life. With enough gold and influence, anything is possible, any dream fulfilled, any desire granted. On the outer edges of these elite circles, a legion of servants, butlers, maids, courtesans, and aids serve their employers quietly and efficiently. For most of these servants, their allegiances lie with their employers and the gold they provide, happy to serve and protect even the darkest secrets overheard in moments of rabbleroising or vulnerability. However, for the members of the Three Bells Society, their loyalties lie only with a cabal of like-minded spies and their true masters: the Three Demon Kings.

Founded in 2380 of the Age of Enlightenment by the first demons to enter Karthun's royal courts, members of the cabal slowly infiltrated noble houses, palaces, and temples dedicated to each of the gods across Karthun to serve their mortal masters and collect any information of value to the Three Demon Kings. For several decades, the society made use of demons exclusively until several members were discovered, nearly exposing the entire society and their operations. In a bold gambit, the sitting

Bellmaster, Drugo Vestrain, orchestrated a plan to expose and purge every demonic member of the society by leaking their identities to the Silver Guard of Valkyre and the Archivists of Prathian and replacing them with non-demon worshippers and allies of the society. The plan worked perfectly. Although the purge greatly hindered the society for many years to follow, the Bellmaster's gambit succeeded, as the slain or banished demons were replaced with seemingly plain, mortal worshippers—who all passed high society's new strict demon scrying rituals and protocols.

In the Age of Conflict, the Three Bells Society is everywhere. From trusted family butlers to the lowliest stable boy, the society quietly recruits those of like mind or those desperate enough to be turned to the society's way of thinking. Generations of servants (and demon worshippers) pass the legacy of the Three Bells Society down from parent to child.

Some never make use of the secrets they collect, while others change the world. Rumors persist that, at the behest of her demonic masters, the maid (and secret lover) of the Worldwalker Moren Task planted the seeds in Task's ear that led to the Worldwalkers piercing the veil and igniting the Worldfire.



*Bellmaster
Drugo
Vestrain*

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Bellmaster Drugo Vestrain

To the oldest members of the Three Bells Society, Drugo Vestrain seems immortal and they are correct. The rumored half-demon son of one of the Three Demon Kings has led the society for centuries with an iron fist wrapped in the finest white silk. The Bellmaster appears as a distinguished and strikingly handsome human with dark skin, greying hair, and piercing eyes.

As the leader of the society, Drugo possesses supernatural intelligence and charisma, and he's a master of politics, intrigue, and spycraft, playing at a level higher than the majority of the mortals on the Last Continent.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The agenda of the Three Bells Society is a demonic hydra with many heads, moving many pieces across the Last Continent. For some society members, the objectives are simply to observe and report, while others are (sometimes unknowingly) engaged in long-form plans that won't see fruition for decades or lifetimes. Currently, the society's greatest concern is an ongoing conflict with members of the Black Talons of Tavia.

In a complex game of cloak and dagger, the Three Bells Society and the Black Talons attempt to infiltrate valuable locations and gain proximity to high value targets. The competition for information is cutthroat between the organizations, but played at the highest levels of secrecy and misdirection.

THE WATER BARONS

The Water Barons of Kraghorn control the entire water supply for the area that Boldrak the Unbreakable rules. However, their ambitions reach far beyond Kraghorn. The Water Barons have learned one undisputable, insurmountable fact that affects living beings everywhere: water is life. In Kraghorn, that maxim is obvious, for the land is arid and inhospitable. But even as far away as the Endless, the Barons have found this to be true.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Jhonise Klell, Commander

Jhonise came up through the gladiatorial arenas by using her brains as often as her strong sword-arm. It became obvious to her owners, the Fallen Arm Coalition, that she was worth as much to them in a leadership capacity as she was in the arena. She proved her worth over and over by negotiating trade arrangements, backed up by her masters' power and her reputation. Soon enough, she began secret negotiations with a rival of her masters, Drell Gaggor. Ostensibly, the contract was designed to broker peace between Drell and the Coalition. Such was the trust she'd gained that neither side read the contract closely. Upon the execution of the contract, Jhonise was declared free, as well as majority owner of the new organization she had formed.

Jhonise sees possibilities and ventures that reach far beyond Kraghorn. She has created a subset of the guards that protect the canals in Kraghorn, and has dubbed them the Water Runners. Through the Runners and her second-in-command, Klekk, she plans to one day control the water not only in Kraghorn, but in all of the major nations of Karthun.



Jhonise
Klell

Klekk, Magebound Watercaster

Klekk is the lynchpin in all of the far-reaching plans Jhonise has enacted. Klekk is a human of unknown origin. He arrived in Kraghorn some five years ago, and managed to gain an audience with Jhonise where he took the greatest risk of his life and revealed his true nature. Though magebound, Klekk's elemental is unique in that it can physically leave Klekk's presence, leaving a measure of its power behind. With this level of autonomy, the elemental—known only to

Klekk as Wash—can travel throughout the whole of Karthun, using any form of water as its transportation.

Klekk and Wash have gathered a number of elementals that tire of the rule of the Lords of Istin, and feel that water should be the dominant force in Karthun. Among those elementals is a small subgroup that believes that only vast quantities of pure elemental water can truly combat the Worldfire. Wash believes so as well, though it's managed to keep that information away from Klekk, perhaps due to the unique nature of their magebond.

ACTIVE AGENDA

The ultimate goal of the Water Barons is to control the use of water throughout Karthun, using the work done in Kraghorn as a template. Jhonise is no fool, and she knows that in areas where water is more available, if not abundant, she will need additional leverage. This is where Klekk and his coterie of elementals come into play. She's had Klekk slowly secreting elementals into major waterways and supplies in the regions just to the north of Kraghorn. The first test of whether her plan will work is a localized drought. Once the people in the area find themselves in need of water, Jhonise will provide it. If this plan proves efficacious on a small scale, she plans to expand rapidly, blaming the Worldfire for the massive shortage of water to come.

Wash has its own plans, and as the elementals infiltrate the water supplies, Wash is making sure that each of them begins tunneling channels to Istin, to pull pure water directly from the water quadrant. This infusion will give Wash's elementals more power than Jhonise could imagine or account for. Once the drought spreads, Wash plans to have its elementals exert control and drive all of the elemental water directly to the Worldfire, drowning all in a massive flood.

WITNESSES OF THE TRUTH

Since the Age of Enlightenment, the Witnesses of the Truth have appeared throughout history to perform acts of violence, protest, and justice across the lands known today as Daynir. Led by the enigmatic Arbiter of the Truth, the armor-clad Witnesses have spoken out against the worship of the gods on the steps of Prathian's cathedral in the city of Xag, burned temples and manor homes to the ground, exposed and executed corrupt politicians and followers of the gods. However, the biggest achievement of the Witnesses of the Truth could be the capture and imprisonment of the Worldwalker, Ignizian the Mad, shortly after the Worldwalkers pierced the veil and ignited the Worldfire.

The Witnesses of the Truth baffle heads of state and law enforcement agencies with their motives and actions. From acts of terrorism to the capture of dangerous mages, the Witnesses and the Arbiter seem to act randomly; but many believe otherwise. The Witnesses have a motive, perhaps even a grand design, but they are masters of vanishing for days, weeks, and years at a time only to emerge suddenly without warning to kill a politician or destroy a structure within Daynir. Many speculate the Witnesses are a cult dedicated to an archaic belief of law and order, one passed down generationally while being led by a figurehead in the Arbiter of the Truth.

In the Age of Conflict, the Witnesses of the Truth and the Arbiter reappeared to speak out against the power and oppression of the gods, often within the city of Xag—a city famously lacking in appearances by any of the pantheon for unknown reasons. However, unlike previous appearances throughout history, the Witnesses of the Truth took residence in the city, occupying several abandoned city watch houses and the derelict city prison, decommissioned after the construction of Eaglemont Prison. City officials are incensed by the act, but with no tangible proof of wrongdoing aside from stories and legends, city law enforcement is powerless to act at the moment.

The Witnesses of the Truth are financed and well-equipped, with access to gold, weapons, and magic at a moment's notice depending on the operation. In public, the Witnesses wear white and gold cloaks and hooks over their armor, as well as masks similar to the mask worn by the Arbiter. The chain of command follows a military protocol, with senior Witnesses referred to as Captain and Sergeant (no proper names given), while junior members are Initiates. Orders and missions come directly from the Arbiter, but the leader of the Witnesses of the Truth rarely appears in public.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Captain

Since the arrival of the Witnesses in Xag, one voice aside from the Arbiter stands out above all others in the woman known only as Captain. Standing head and shoulders over other Witnesses, Captain speaks with authority and distinction. It's obvious Captain is well educated and fiercely loyal to the Arbiter and his cause. Many believe her accent to be Andernese and that she comes from a military background based on her movements and cadence of orders when the Witnesses move through the streets. For now, she's a mystery.



Captain

ACTIVE AGENDA

The brazen appearance and occupation by the Witnesses in Xag has everyone on edge. High Magistrate Sendrin Kynn ordered continual surveillance on the organization's safe houses with strict orders to arrest the Witnesses only if caught in the act of a crime. The criminal elements within Xag employ the services of thieves and assassins in attempts to infiltrate their safe houses, with six master burglars contracted to enter and report. One of the thieves returned claiming to have knowledge on the identity of the Arbiter, but disappeared by sunrise the next morning.

For the Witnesses of the Truth, they await new orders from the Arbiter and prepare for a coming battle as surveillance teams report the stockpiling of supplies and workers (both masked Witnesses and hired hands) working to reinforce their crumbling residences. Patrols of the Witnesses move through the city streets at night, often without incident; but recently a patrol under the command of Captain fell under an ambush of a local gang known as the Night Wolves. Eye witnesses claimed Captain warned off the thugs to no avail, resulting in the decimation of the gang. The following evening, the tavern inn used as the Night Wolves headquarters burned to the ground.



TIME AND TECHNOLOGY

CHAPTER SEVEN

Karthun, hovering on the brink of destruction, exists in a constant state of chaos where everything shifts: the influence of the gods, the power of nations, and the land itself. However, one thing is constant: time. Regardless of recent efforts made by Prathian, for gods and mortals alike, time is a constant force to be observed and chronicled. From the earliest days of Karthun's history, the Archivists of Prathian strived to keep detailed accounts of the passage of time, as well as any significant events or holidays that emerge.

Many ages have passed since the Age of Making, and the passage of time, divine inspiration, and the innovation of the mages and science devotees of Karthun has led to great strides in the application of science and magic. Across Karthun, ideas considered impossible are made possible. This chapter explores the constant flow of time in Karthun and the effects the innovations in science and magic have on the gods, nations, and people of the Last Continent.

TIME

At the end of the Age of Making, Archivists of Prathian delivered the official calendar of the Eternal Sage to each fledgling nation of Karthun. The calendar, known as the Sage's Chronicle, quickly became the standard measure for the passage of time across Karthun. Others exist among humanoid tribes and within cults devoted to beings beyond Karthun, but unless otherwise stated, all dates and measures of time follow the guidelines of the Sage's Chronicle.

Recorded history begins with the Age of Enlightenment and the coronations of the first rulers of Karthun. While these years don't carry an abbreviation, the time before the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Making is commonly referred to as B.E., Before Enlightenment.

For the purposes of familiarity in a world filled with wondrous creatures, magic, and gods who walk among mortals, time passes in a fashion similar to that of Earth. Karthun spins on its axis once every 24 hours, one week consists of seven days, and there are twelve months in a year. Six of the twelve months of the year are named for the gods and many of Karthun's religious holidays occur during these months. The remaining six months are named for the patron races of Karthun.

DAYS OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY: A day of work and celebration of the seasons for the followers of Elinar

FORGEDAY: A day of work and dedicating time to stone/metalwork projects for the followers of Deknar

FIREDAY: A day of work and remembrance of those lost to the Worldfire

KNIGHTSDAY: A day of work and, formerly, celebration of chivalry for the followers of Valkyre

DUSKDAY: A day of work and observation of rituals for the followers of Felicos and the Mother of the Dead

HEARTHDAY: A day of rest and, formerly, observation of gatherings for the followers of Sehad

STARDAY: A day of work, intense study, and rituals for the followers of Prathian



MONTHS OF THE YEAR

MONTH	EARTH EQUIVALENT	NUMBER OF DAYS	SEASON
Prathis	(January)	31	Winter
Dwaran	(February)	28	Winter
Humus	(March)	31	Spring
Sehans	(April)	30	Spring
Illinus	(May)	31	Spring
Elinan	(June)	30	Summer
Eyvan	(July)	31	Summer
Deknus	(August)	31	Summer
Lordrin	(September)	30	Fall
Fellus	(October)	31	Fall
Lyzan	(November)	30	Fall
Valus	(December)	31	Winter

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

The following is a list of notable holidays and annual festivals observed across Karthun:

PRATHIS

6TH, DAY OF THE BREACH: A solemn day of remembrance for the lives lost during the Day of the Breach within the Nexus.

29TH, BINDING DAY: A day where the arcane powers of Karthun for magebinding are strongest. In nations cross Karthun, new mages are bound to elementals, and the day is marked with rituals and celebrations.

DWARAN

13TH, HONOR'S END: A day marking the destruction of Honor's Hold, the former seat of the dwarven empire's power in Desin.

20TH, LIBERATION DAY: A holiday celebrating the liberation of dwarven slaves from the Underlords and the founding of Thulengard.

HUMUS

18TH, DAY OF THE WALL: A festival in the city of Xag celebrating the completion of the Last Line, the monolithic wall surrounding the city.

21ST, DAY OF DEMONS: A day marking the arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings to Karthun. The greater demons of the Worldfire are emboldened on this day, allowing greater numbers to push through into Karthun.

SEHANS

1ST, SEASONS RENEWAL: A week-long festival held by followers of Elinar and Sehad, celebrating the arrival of spring and the rejuvenation of Karthun.

ILLINUS

2ND, DAY OF SEASONS: Each head of the seasonal houses of Illyn gather to speak on the state of their clans and to plan for the coming year. It's a small event, hosted on a rotating schedule among the houses.

10TH, NIGHT OF DIMINISHMENT: An evening of mournful remembrance for the night the first of the Illyn forsook Elinar during her slumber to become the Diminished.

23RD, SLUMBER'S END: The Illyn of Ilrenar celebrate the awakening of Elinar from her slumber with drink, songs, and tales of heroism during her slumber.

ELINAN

9TH, FESTIVAL OF HARMONY: A week-long celebration of music, art, and revelry commemorating the founding of the Speakers of Harmony.

20TH, DAY OF STORMS: Once per year, the goddess Elinar unleashes her fury across the seas of Karthun to purge her misery and anger. Only the foolhardy or desperate travel the seas on this day.

EYVAN

5TH, CLANSMEET: Representatives from each elven clan in Symul gather to discuss peace. Open combat is forbidden. Despite generations of Clansmeet summits, no peace exists in Symul.

15TH, NIGHT OF JACKALS: A wild celebration filled with debauchery and ritual sacrifice marking the rise of the Jackal Clan in Symul and the murder of Wolf and Bear Clan nobles.

DEKNUS

15TH, DAY OF THE CHAIN: A commemoration of the day the gods and heroes of Karthun sacrificed Kraya to forge the Chain, banishing a majority of the demons from Karthun and halting the progress of the Worldfire.

20TH, LOST SOULS DAY: A day for memorials and remembrance of the souls lost during the sacrifice of Kraya to forge the Chain.

27TH, DAY OF THE HAND: A celebration filled with drink and songs honoring the Hands of the Smith.

LORDRIN

1ST, DAY OF FIRE: A celebration of the Houses of Fire in Istin, marked with amazing pyrotechnic displays and duels.

10TH, DAY OF WATER: A celebration of the Houses of Water in Istin. The day is filled with drink and merriment, with a closing ceremonial ritual that blesses and renews the waters of Istin for the coming year.

15TH, DAY OF CONVERGENCE: A festival celebrating the end of the War of Wave and Flame.

20TH, DAY OF EARTH: A celebration of the Houses of Earth in Istin. The celebration marks the opening of new buildings and monuments in Istin, as well as remembrance for the fallen.

30TH, DAY OF AIR: A celebration of the Houses of Air in Istin. A day marking the arrival of the first Djinn clans in Karthun, filled with drink, dancing, and the fulfillment of wishes.

FELLUS

14TH, WARDENSFALL: A solemn day marking the assassination of Sehad the World Warden. The day is celebrated by the Daggers of Felicos, for the King of Rogues' betrayal.

27TH, NIGHT OF VEILS: A day of trickery (and often death) celebrating Felicos across Karthun, marked with the wearing of masks.

LYZAN

4TH, THRONE DAY: A day celebrating the coronation of the Iron King in Andern.

14TH, BETRAYER'S DAY (ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS): A bloody day of open combat when the leadership of lizardfolk clans is contested from sunrise to sunset. The last combatants standing at sunset assume leadership.

VALUS

2ND, FANG'S END: A festival in Daynir celebrating the defeat of the dragon Deathfang at the hands of Valkyre and Sehad.

17TH, VALOR MOURNED: A celebration held in Landrin filled with drink, song, and storytelling remembering the deeds of Valkyre the Knight of Karthun.

TECHNOLOGY

Karthun is a world full of wonders. From the monoliths of the city of Xag, to the secrets of time and reality locked away in the vaults of Eternity Peak, no marvel arcane or technological is beyond Karthun's reach. The gods walk among mortals, influencing the development of nations indirectly—and sometimes directly—by motivating practitioners of science and magic to push the boundaries of what is known. Such strides in innovation have shaped Karthun through breakthroughs (such as the printing press) and, in some cases, disaster (the arrival of the Worldfire). Regardless, pioneering practitioners push the boundaries and their efforts often bear fruit that affects nations, cities, towns, and villages across the Last Continent.

Generally speaking, magic and science play equal roles in the development of Karthun's technology. From the early mythical days of the Age of Making, under the watch of the gods, nations constructed massive cities and developed the earliest innovations in transportation, communication, and industry. Advancing through the Age of Enlightenment, technology continued to evolve with the introduction of thoughtshards, gravity-defying airships, larger and faster printing presses, and the earliest firearms. The pioneering mages and engineers of Karthun reached for the stars (literally in a few cases) and it seemed nothing would slow their progress.

The arrival of the Worldfire in the Age of Flames seemed to halt all significant technological advancements. Many brilliant, cutting-edge theories and the pioneers who created them died during the brutal arrival of the Worldfire. The war with the Three Demon Kings pulled the remaining geniuses into military service or relief efforts as continents and countless lives were lost, and the basic need for survival replaced the pioneering spirit of innovation.

In Karthun's desperate hours, mages made council with the gods and rulers of nations to craft the deific ritual that created the Chain and drove the forces of the Three Demon Kings back. The idea for the ritual itself came not from the gods, but from the mind of a young, brilliant mage from the city of Xag. Mortal innovation saved Karthun and the brilliant engineers across the nations began the process of rebuilding what was lost. No one is sure what world-changing ideas disappeared in the chaos of the Age of Flames, but now forward-thinking creators are looking to the future once again, preparing to take Karthun to new places.

EXAMPLES OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology affects the everyday lives of every nation across Karthun. In cities and large towns, citizens use farstep circles to travel across the Last Continent in moments. While ink and quill messages written on parchment are still common, in at least every town hall a speaking stone sends instantaneous illusory messages (much like holograms) to neighboring cities and towns, making communication in times of need nearly effortless. Over the savage wastelands of Desin, gargantuan city fortresses from Thulengard float silently above the ruined chasm of the former seat of the dwarven empire's power. In the alleyways of Highroost, criminals brandish the newest firearms, now carrying quieter, more effective power. In the streets of Xag, devotees to the Knights and the Arbiter of the Truth spread their message with leaflets printed on large, automated printing presses. In farmsteads across

Andern, homes are equipped with running water and sources of light, through either arcane power or conventional electricity, allowing craftspeople to work into the late hours of the night. Across Karthun, technology is everywhere, improving the lives of gods, nobles, merchants, and commoners alike. If you can imagine it, there's a place for it in Karthun.

Firearms

Ironically, the first firearms appeared in the Age of Enlightenment. Initially, crude flintlock style pistols were prone to mishaps, and engineers tinkered with designs for years before the arrival of the Age of Flames and the loss of several innovative gunsmiths that slowed progress for a time. However, the war with the demons created a necessity for firepower and the progress of firearms across Karthun resumed. Now, in the Age of Conflict, firearms of all shapes and sizes are available, ranging from small and practically quiet handheld models to large chain-fed siege weapons.

Textiles

Textile harvesting and development in Karthun deviates greatly from classic, middle European fashion. Fashion in Karthun is more contemporary with components such as zippers, buckles, and intricate weaving. In the rural areas of Karthun, peasants wear durable cloth pants, shirts, and tunics with leather accents, while aristocrats from large cities wear cutting-edge fashion more art deco than classical fantasy.

Industry

Technological and arcane advancements have vastly improved industry. Constructs and contemporary equipment work the deepest, most dangerous mines, while large facilities work the mined bounty to create iron, steel, and other sturdy metals for construction. Assembly lines work in harmony to mass produce products such as clothing, paper goods, firearms, and tools. In the rural farmlands of central Karthun, large-scale farming operations harvest grains and produce, while farmers raise and herd livestock

in record numbers.

Printing Press

The printing press opened many doors of possibility for industry, education, and adventure across Karthun. Initially a small-scale, laborious task, recent innovations led to the production of larger, automated presses capable of producing books by the hundreds in a fraction of the time. With printing press technology, scholarly work spread across nations, educating and informing the public. Libraries are thriving again and, while the practice of arcane script still requires a steady hand, the sky's the limit as to where printing press technology will take mages in the years to come.

Airships

A marvel of arcana and science, the earliest airships were small, delicate vehicles of transportation based on simple spells and experimental construction. Now, years later, the mageocracy of Thulengard pioneers new techniques in airship technology with powerful rituals, arcane-infused materials, and master engineers, expanding the capabilities of travel and exploration across the Last Continent.

Farstep Circles

Located in the halls of the wealthy and influential across Karthun, the circles use teleportation rituals to send small groups of individuals and goods from one circle to another within moments. Basic circles link two fixed points,

while larger (and more expensive) circles may link to any known farstep circle. In the Age of Conflict, the maximum number of travelers for any circle is five, but mages continually work to increase farstep capabilities for personal, diplomatic, and military use.

Speaking Stones

Much like farstep circles, every town hall and home of the wealthy and influential makes use of speaking stones. These small ornate platters of fine wood, banding, and gems allow individuals to speak instantaneously across Karthun through illusory images (appearing as holograms). Such a device allows for conversation and serves as an early warning device in times of peril.

Thoughtshards

Created in the Age of Making, these small crystalline shards are attuned to record auditory messages. For many years, thoughtshards allowed individuals and clandestine groups to speak across great distances through couriers in a time before speaking stones. In addition to communication, thoughtshards served as an alternative means of archiving moments in history with great effect. The Age of Flames resulted in the destruction of countless thoughtshards across Karthun, many containing examples of the oldest archives in the world's history. Recently, thoughtshards returned to prominence in libraries and archives, as well as returning to use among covert groups and cults across the Last Continent.

THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

For some, the introduction of advanced technology into a fantasy campaign setting is a frightening concept. There's fear that the inclusion of powerful weapons such as firearms and fantastic methods of travel such as airships and farstep circles cheapen the overall travel and/or combat experience of classic fantasy adventures. Firearms, printing presses, and airships are intended to bring the wonder and advancement of the nations of Karthun closer to a modern age, without dulling the experiences of sword and sorcery play. Karthun is a more contemporary setting, both in the appearance of races/nations and its technology level, but feel free to add or remove any elements that seem out of balance for you and your campaigns in the Lands of Conflict.

ADVENTURING IN KARTHUN

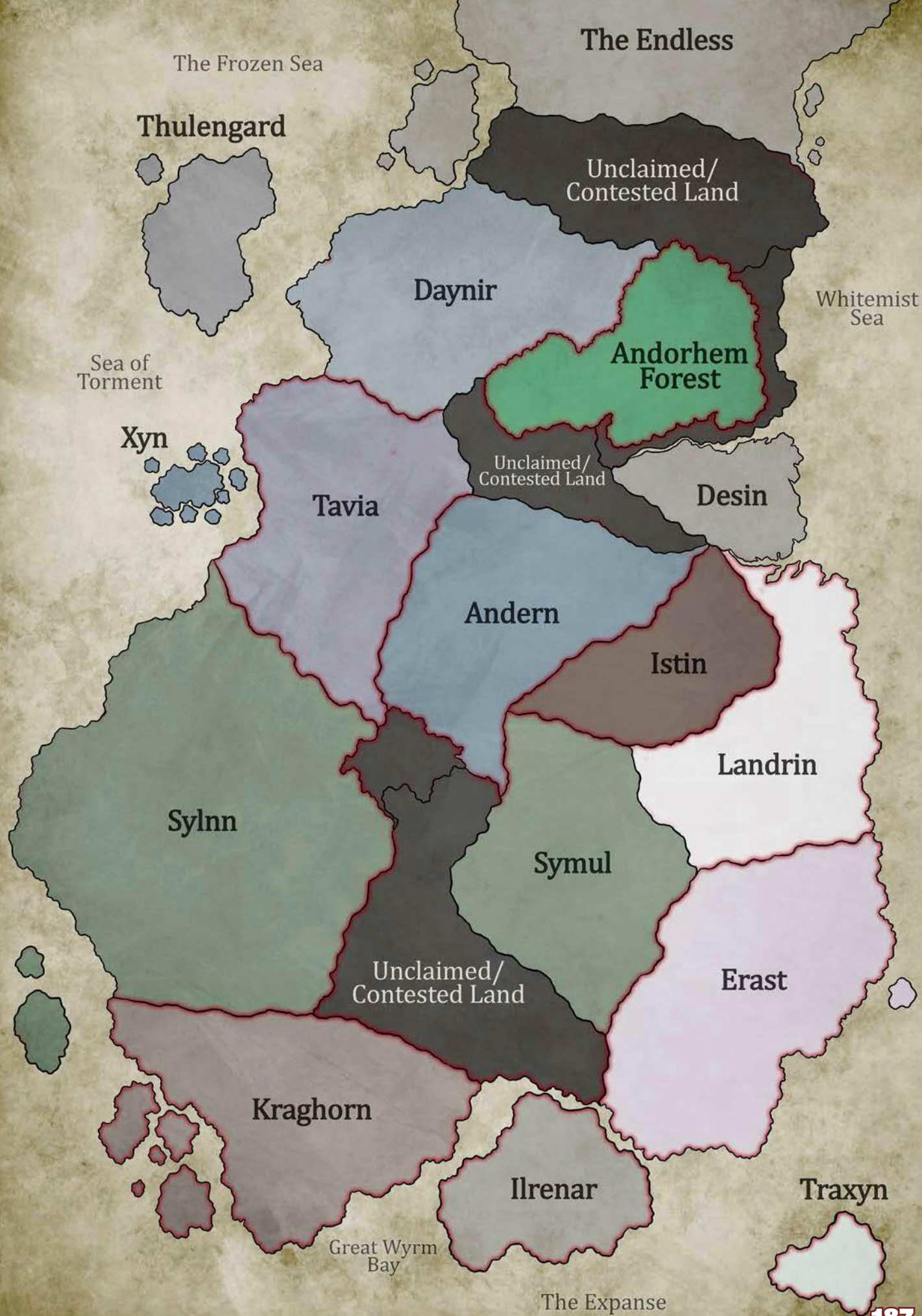
CHAPTER EIGHT

WAR IN THE AGE OF CONFLICT

War has left many scars upon Karthun. Since the Age of Enlightenment, the squabbles of nations have escalated into a bloody mix of cloak and dagger wars between courts and open, savage warfare. Wars have raged, then quieted for an age, only to be reignited again. The Speakers of Harmony, heroes of Karthun, and proponents of peace do all they can to quell the bloodshed, but with humanity grieving their loss and the threat of the Worldfire looming, calmer voices do not always prevail.

In the Age of Conflict, many borders remain contested and all manner of warfare can be found across the Last Continent. While countless disputes, rivalries, vendettas, and political machinations thrive, below is a list of major conflicts currently unresolved on Karthun:

- ◆ Landrin and the Theocracy of Erast battle for control of the eastern coast
- ◆ Traxyn currently wages a shadow war against Illrenar
- ◆ Thulengard currently pitches a war of two fronts with campaigns into the ruins of Desin and active engagements with the Underlords and their network of slavers across Karthun
- ◆ Xyn (specifically the Sentinels of the Book in the Nexus) battle forces from beyond Karthun's realm
- ◆ The Lords of Dusk in Kolther are in the midst of a bloody open war and a guerrilla shadow war with Tavia
- ◆ Andern and Tavia continue a generations-old dispute along Andern's western border while Tavia's agents continue to infiltrate the courts of nations across the Last Continent
- ◆ The elves of Symul continue a civil war among their tribes, with the Jackal Clan launching raids along Erast's western borders
- ◆ Demons from the Worldfire continue their strikes against the Last Continent's eastern coast, specifically against Landrin and the tribes of Desin
- ◆ The tribes, cannibals, and scavengers of Desin's tribes continue to battle for resources and land in the wasteland
- ◆ The Water Barons and factions of Kraghorn struggle for dominance while launching attacks against Illrenar and along the southern borders of Symul
- ◆ The Blessed of the Crawl continue to infiltrate regions of Karthun and grow more brazen in their attacks against humanity
- ◆ In Andorhem Forest, the Circle of the First continue to repel attacks from the worshipers of the Mother of the Dead, Tavia's logging operations, and other aberrant horrors spawning deep in the wood



CLASSES

KARTHUN: LANDS OF CONFLICT is a system-neutral campaign setting for use with a wide variety of role-playing game systems. Rules for particular classes and systems will be presented in the **GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE TO KARTHUN**; however, for the purposes of this chapter, the focus is on a selection of iconic character classes and professions.

BARBARIAN

Tribal barbarians thrive at the edges of the known world, away from the precise architecture and infrastructure of organized society. For these tribes, the relationship with the land is precious, honor is the most valuable form of commerce, and strength defines everything. The tribes in the north, living among the ruins of the giants' empires in the Endless, survive on a landscape that many believe is too punishing to endure. In the Age of Conflict, tribes bicker over territory and compete in regular contests of strength in an effort to establish dominant chieftains and tribes in the harsh society of the Endless.

In the southern lands of Kraghorn, nomadic tribes of barbarians wander the plains for survival and regularly engage the humanoid clans of orcs, giant-kin, and savages occupying the former draconic empire.

For many, the idea "barbarian" is synonymous with deep, supernatural rage that epitomizes strength and a primal loss of self-control. Traditionally this rage is a representation of a barbarian's inner connection to the land or animal totems, granting power at the cost of self-control. Such ritual practices exist among the southern tribes, as warriors coming of age perform ritual hunts to take on the strength of the wild; those who fail often become the Ravenous, wild shapeshifters. It's a time-honored practice, but for most, the animalistic state is not called rage.

In Karthun, the Rage is a demonic curse that can affect anyone. Brought to the Last Continent by the Three Demon Kings during the Age of Flames, the Rage appears much

like barbarian combat lust, with a substantial increase in strength and stamina, and a reckless disregard for pain. Such a curse could be seen as a blessing among martial combatants; however, the demonic nature of the curse slowly devours the afflicted, pushing them even further with an increase in size and near-total loss of self-control marked by black blood oozing from the eyes and mouth. Despite being a curse, the Rage spreads like a virus. Anyone clawed or bitten by someone afflicted by the Rage must make successful saving throws to fight off the effects and even so often feel the lingering presence of the Rage for a short time, despite avoiding its grip. More information on the Rage and suggestions for integrating it into campaigns are available in the **GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE TO KARTHUN**.



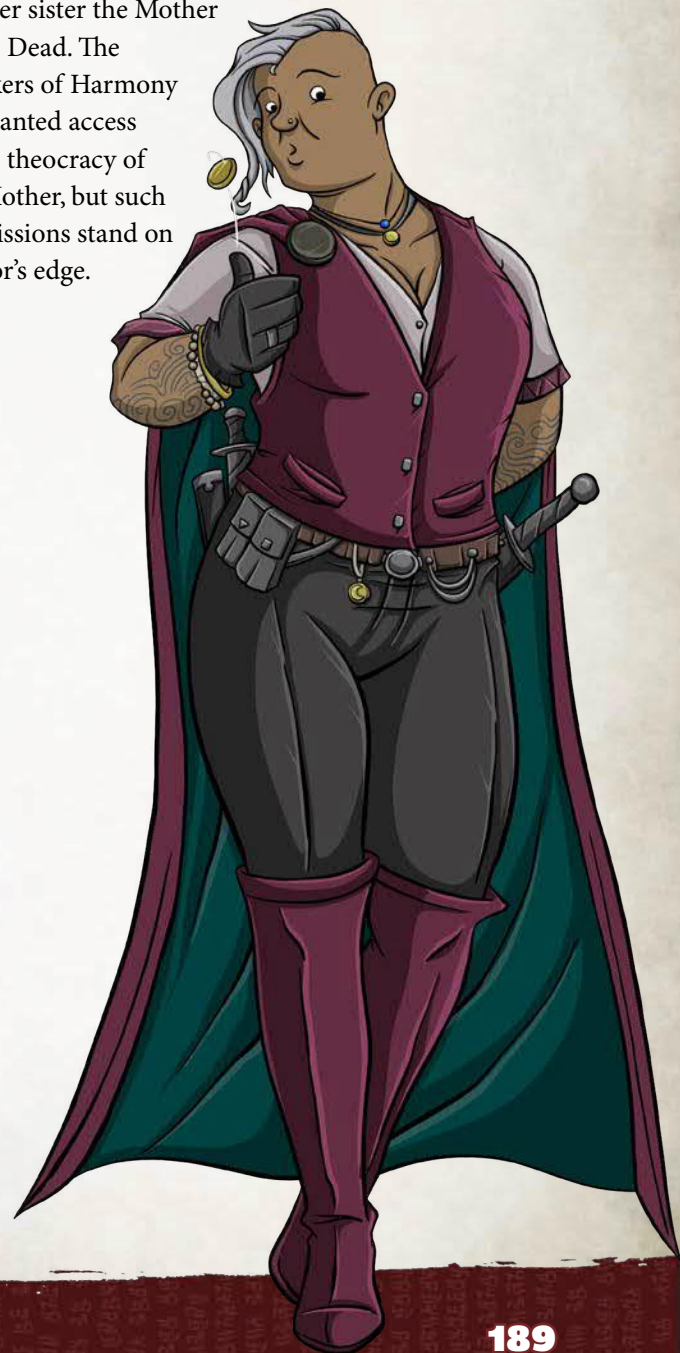
BARD

Travel to any region on the Last Continent and you'll find bards. From seedy taverns in the low quarter of Highroost in Tavia to the decadent courts of nobility in Erast, bards mingle within every level of society. Music, song, and storytelling opens many doors for the bards of Karthun, and while charismatic rogues find no shortage of adventure, fame, and fortune, it's the higher calling of Elinar that placed bards in high esteem across Karthun. When Elinar and her faithful founded the Speakers of Harmony, bards from across Karthun joined clerics, paladins, and other talented worshippers of Elinar gathered under one banner as ambassadors of peace and mediators of disputes, defusing countless feuds and conflicts. In the Age of Conflict, the bards of the Speakers of Harmony carry high esteem and respect from every nation.



CLERIC

In a world where the gods walk among their followers, there's no shortage of clerics. Clerics spread the word of their gods, whether from in the safety of their own temple or amid a small group of allies in times of great need. From small roadside temples to grand cathedrals, clerics are everywhere. For the gods with theocracies and established seats of power, the population of clerics is high. In contrast, clerics of opposing deities rarely travel to contested regions without good reason. For example, clerics of Elinar rarely visit Erast due to the animosity between Elinar and her sister the Mother of the Dead. The Speakers of Harmony are granted access to the theocracy of the Mother, but such permissions stand on a razor's edge.



DRUID

Druids of Karthun are found in any of larger forests on the Last Continent. In Andorhem Forest, druids practicing the teachings of Sehad the World Warden ally with Maldros the Bear Lord in his campaign to protect the former realm of Sehad from interlopers. In the elven nation of Symul, druids of the Bear Clan act as protectors of nature and peacekeepers in the bloody civil war among the three elven clans. In cities like Xag, urban druids secretly wander the alleyways and sewers as champions of civilization. In the ruined wastelands of Desin, druids work with the explorers from Thulengard to restore the land damaged by the Worldfire. In addition

to forested realms, druids of Karthun are found in the various mountain ranges, coasts, and unforgiving landscapes such as the Endless.

Anywhere in Karthun where nature is in danger or a there is a need to preserve life, druids are there.



FIGHTER

Karthun lives in an Age of Conflict and war needs soldiers to thrive. Fighters are found among any army, among private security personnel, royal bodyguards, gangs of thugs in the dark alleyways of cities like Highroost, and as daring individuals looking for fortune, honor, or glory. In the gladiatorial pits of Kraghorn, fighters hone their martial skills where failure means certain death. In Desin, squads of trained fighters launch strikes into the collapsed ruins of Honor's Hold, striking back at the gnoll clans and horrors from the Deep of Karthun. For a fighter in Karthun, there's no shortage of opportunities to ply their trade and take steps towards becoming legends.



MAGE

In a world filled with magic and wonder, mages are everywhere. Much like clerics, mages are in every corner of Karthun. The only exception to this is a few towns in Tavia where magebound are distrusted and hunted, where townsfolk believe strength of arm and skill as assassins and thieves is all that matters. Mages (or magebound, different terms for the same thing) wander the great libraries of Xyn and Daynir, debating arcane theorem. In Istin, mages and the Elemental Lords safeguard the few dimensional ley lines remaining after the Worldfire, renewing powerful rituals and studying the beyond. In Prathian's home, the Nexus, mages enlisted as Sentinels of the Book wage spell wars with dangerous outsiders seeping through the cracks of Karthun's damaged planar veil. In Andern, mages maintain the Stoneguard, an army of stone constructs under the control of the Iron King. In Thulengard, dwarven mages pioneer new technological advancements in airships, farstep circles, and speaking stones, all in the name of defeating the Underlords. Mages travel across Karthun every day, discovering and creating new wonders—and equally new horrors—for Karthun.

Karthun is a world of magic, and mages are at its heart and soul.



MONK

Monastic orders are rare in Karthun but they do exist. Individual teachers take on small groups of students, passing along philosophies and martial training. In a remote temple on one of the smaller islands of Xyn, the Clan of Five Feathers trains monks in the ways of arcane-infused martial arts. In the city of Xag, the Order of Zayl practices the teachings of Karthun's oldest and most powerful monk, Desona Zayl. Legend says Desona Zayl defeated a nightmare from beyond Karthun, plunging her hands into its heart, gaining power and the ability to see glimpses of the future. Disciples of Zayl patrol the streets of Xag giving aid to those in need and journey across Karthun to complete labors set forth by Desona. Usually, the objective of such labors is clear, while other times, the journey itself is the lesson for the disciple in question.



PALADIN

Taking up the oath of a paladin is dangerous under normal circumstances, but in Karthun it is two-fold. Oaths of valor were once the domain of Valkyre the Knight of Karthun, now risen as the Mother of the Dead. The Mother is cold and especially spiteful towards any who choose to carry on her teachings of honor and valor. Death is a frightening concept in itself, but the Mother reserves special torments for any paladins who cross over into the Dead. However, this does not dissuade some, as a handful of paladin orders exist within the clergy of Deknar, Prathian, and Elinar across Karthun. The greatest number of paladins resides in Landrin. Locked in a struggle with the theocracy of Erast, the paladins of the Last Watch clash with clerics of the Mother of the Dead and savage gnoll tribes from Desin. Valor lives under the Last Watch, despite the dark secrets held in Landrin and the knowledge that a paladin's death brings only torment.



RANGER

Rangers can be found anywhere there's remote and inhospitable terrain. There are rangers from the frozen lands of the Endless to the rolling hills of Tavia and the forest domains of Symul and Andorhem Forest. In southern Erast, ranger mercenaries lead cult members devoted to the Kranee (the blight orcs) to the former seat of their power in the mountains. In the forests of Daynir, rangers in the service of the Oaken Queen (an ancient, female treant) patrol the forests, hunting packs of Ravenous lycanthropes endangering trade caravans. In the city of Narhal, urban rangers track the whereabouts of a missing noble, using knowledge and keen senses to traverse the crowded city. Karthun is a dangerous place, and for those who travel off beaten paths, rangers are invaluable.



ROGUE/THIEF

Everyone has something of value. Whether it's treasure, magic, or information, there are secrets and locked doors to protect them. For rogues in Karthun, there's an abundance of opportunity. Cutpurses in busy city streets make small fortunes on the stolen gold of wealthy nobles. In Tavia, clandestine academies and brotherhoods train the finest rogues and assassins in the world. In Sylmn, the Kingdom of Five Thieves is rife with shadow wars between rival nobles and organizations vying for control over anything and everything. In Landrin, rogues paid in demonic gold execute a long con to get close to the Pillars of Virtue in the hopes of damaging the legendary crystals, allowing the demons to once again lay siege to the eastern coast. In the Deep, rogues disguise themselves as servants of the Underlords to infiltrate the dwarven slavers' fortresses and vaults of godlike treasure. Karthun is a world in turmoil; for rogues, turmoil is opportunity.



SORCERER

Amid the wonders and power of the magebound and devout clerics of the gods, there are sorcerers and warlocks—arcane spellcasters who don't follow the norm. For the sorcerers of Karthun, the legacy of the dragons lives on in the bloodlines of Karthun's sentient races. The dragons were prolific in their time, siring offspring with humans, elves, and dwarves as well as performing complex (and often taboo) rituals and experiments with draconic blood. Karthun itself is a realm damaged by immense power and war. The planes of existence remain in a state of flux, allowing horrors from beyond into the world, as well as alien power. For some sorcerers, abnormalities in their blood allow them to see and manipulate these powers, warping reality to their whim. While considered to be aberrations among many of the schools of learning (and often hunted for their power), sorcerers walk among the nations of Karthun in the royal courts of Tavia and on the bloody battlefields of warring nations. In Xyn, sorcerers gather under the protection of the Sentinels of the Book to provide unique power and perspectives to the ongoing war within the Nexus. For the rest of the Karthun's sorcerers, their lives, much like their power, is a changing, unpredictable thing as they wander from town to town, nation to nation, looking for a place to belong.

WARLOCK

Standing apart from all arcane spellcasters, the warlocks of Karthun truck in deals and pacts with powers unique to the world. The broken years for the nations of Karthun following the arrival of the Worldfire and the Three Demon Kings presented a near endless supply of willing servants for the demons. Whether desperate or simply power hungry, members of every race upon Karthun made pacts, swearing allegiance to the demonic tyrants. Warlocks devoted to the Three Demon Kings often hide in plain sight among the nobles and members of government across the Last Continent. In the halls of the Underlords, warlocks openly worship the demons and offer sacrifices in efforts to please their patrons. However, demonic worship is not the only form of pact sworn by the warlocks of Karthun. Many choose to ally with powerful fey creatures, such as the Countess of Blooms in Andorhem Forest, or beings such as the Arbiter. Unlike those who heard the call of Deknar, Donovic Rigden, a humble blacksmith from Xyn, forged a unique pact with the Chain itself, wandering Karthun to prevent attacks upon it from the dangers beyond.




MAGIC

Magic is vital to Karthun. From its creation during the Age of Making to the forging of the Chain during the Age of Flames, magic—either divine or arcane—is crucial to the world's survival. Magic is rarely in a constant state, as it changes and adapts with the ebb and flow of the world. New spells, magic items, and techniques appear regularly in the halls of learning and the libraries of mages from every nation. Daring mages pioneer new schools of magic, discover new forms of magebinding, and experiment with the primal forces of creation. Such trailblazing is viewed with caution or outright fear, as the desire to see and do more is what led the World Walkers to pierce the veil of Karthun, triggering the arrival of the Worldfire. Regardless, most nations enjoy the benefits of magic on a day-to-day basis, and curiosity is difficult to ignore.

Magic typically stems from two primary sources, the divine and the arcane. However, there are creatures and individuals across Karthun who represent other sources, such as the Arbiter of the Truth and Maldros the Bear Lord. These individuals grant power to their followers and wield magic in a fashion similar to the gods, without being gods themselves. They are anomalous rarities, shrouded in mystery and left to GMs and characters to define as they see fit. As stated, magic is powerful and it remains in flux, so there is magic that cannot be explained. Magic is mysterious and even the god of magic, Prathian, works to discover new and innovative rituals and spells to push the known boundaries.

DIVINE MAGIC

For many, there's a simple truth to the creation theory of reality: the gods created Karthun and the heavens and they walk among their followers. Since the earliest days of the Age of Making, each of Karthun's deities granted power to their devout followers. Either to protect and improve the lives of their followers or to promote their own agendas, divine magic has existed on Karthun longer than any other form of magic. Through the prayers and actions of the devout,



the gods bestow small portions of their power in the form of divine clerical spells. Ranging from spells and rituals that heal the sick and injured to spells that call thunder and lightning from the heavens, the pantheon's presence is seen and felt every day across Karthun.

In regards to power and scope, divine magic is every bit as powerful as arcane magic. Divine magic is powerful, but in many ways it's the most capricious, because access and availability to divine magic is based directly on a divine caster's relationship with their patron deity. Whether it be through spreading the word of their deity, performing specific rituals and acts, or through living in a way aligned with a deity's beliefs, the bond between a caster and her deity is crucial.

Deities grant power but they also take it away. If a cleric of Elinar turns to cold blooded murder and sacrifice, abandoning Elinar's philosophies, the Maiden of Light would likely refuse to grant power to that cleric until they atone for their actions. Such developments create memorable campaign experiences and gamemasters should feel free to interpret the boundaries of each deity.

In addition to changes of beliefs, the death or change of deities affect divine casters. Following Felicos' betrayal and murder of Sehad the World Warden, clerics of Sehad received one final day (sunrise to sunset) of power from their fallen god before his light extinguished. While all of Sehad's creations remained—such as his contributions to Karthun, humanity, and everlasting effects such as the enchanted waterfalls within Andorhem Forest—his clerics no longer possessed divine magic. Many of Sehad's followers turned to Elinar out of kinship with the Speakers of Harmony and the Maiden of Light's clerics, while others carried on Sehad's philosophies without divine magic.

Not all changes in power result from a caster's change of beliefs or the death of a god. In the case of Valkyre/the Mother of the Dead, Valkyre's descent into sadness and despair over the death of Sehad twisted the former Knight of Karthun into the goddess of death. For Valkyre's followers, the goddess abandoned her ways of bravery, honor, and valor and in doing so, abandoned

her clerics and paladins. Thousands of Valkyre's followers died when, in their greatest moments of need across Karthun, their prayers to Valkyre went unanswered. Valkyre's abandonment left countless followers without divine magic. Generations-old protections and rituals performed by Valkyre to protect the nations of Karthun were abandoned as well, allowing horrors to spill into populated areas, costing even more lives. In Valkyre's place stood the Mother of the Dead, the goddess of death, and she offered her followers one chance to abandon valor and follow her unto death. Those who accepted continued to channel power from the Mother, while those who refused no longer received power and were actively hunted by her followers.

Each of the deities represents various domains of influence from death to cities. The **GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE TO KARTHUN** provides more information on the use of exclusive domains and suggestions of creating new domains for Karthun campaigns.

ARCANE MAGIC AND THE MAGEBOUND

In the formative years of Karthun, immense power channeled by the gods shaped the world and the cosmology around it. The use of such primal power splintered and bubbled to the surface of Karthun in the form of the elementals: beings of immense primal power and minimal self-control. In the early days, the first elementals roamed Karthun like wild animals, overwhelmed by their own power. Soon, Prathian discovered that the elementals would continue to appear in the wild, as is the nature of Karthun and its power. To bring guidance to the elementals, Prathian created his patron race, the Elemental Lords (powerful, intelligent elemental beings) to act as noble guardians and leaders for the growing elemental population. It was time for arcane magic to spread among the races of Karthun, and the arrival of the elementals provided a perfect opportunity. Soon afterwards, Prathian the Eternal Sage granted the gift of arcane magic to Karthun and its nations through the process of the magebound.

By performing a series of complex rituals, a vessel (the caster) joins with an elemental (the source) to become one being (mage). The binding ritual is a long, intricate process typically overseen by mages and scholars familiar with the necessary techniques. Described below are key points to the process and effects of the magebound ritual:

- ◆ Both the vessel and source are willing participants of the ritual. Unlawful rituals performed against the vessel or sources typically do not end with ideal results, often with the death of one or both parties involved.
- ◆ Both the vessel and source retain their personalities. Mages speak with a hollow, echoing tone, and often refer to themselves in the plural (we, us, etc.). Mages typically retain the vessel's name.
- ◆ Vessels retain their original skin tone but take on a slight hue of the source—red for fire, blue for air and water, etc. Mages' eyes glow, their body takes on intricate markings representing the source's composition, and some display cosmetic characteristics of the source. For example, an earthbound mage's skin may take on a stone color and texture, with cracks and carved markings.
- ◆ Mages possess an affinity for magic that utilizes their source's power type. If the source isn't a conventional elemental, gamemasters and players are free to establish their own sources and affinities for unique mages.
- ◆ When a mage dies, the vessel and the source remain bonded for a number of days before the source power dissipates. If a vessel is raised from the dead after her source dissipates, the mage is powerless, often visualized by a lack of echoing voice, markings, and visible power. Such vessels may perform the ritual to take on a new source, but few do so, as the broken bond between a vessel and her source scars deeply.

Once the binding ritual is complete, mages gain access to arcane magic associated with your game system of choice with the following added abilities:

- ◆ Mages may conjure a weapon made of their source's element as a free action. For example, a fire bound mage may summon a scimitar of fire, rather than weigh herself down with an actual weapon. For mechanical purposes, the summoned fire scimitar functions as a standard scimitar, provides light, and minimal heat. At advanced levels, GMs may allow summoned weapons to increase in power and effect.
- ◆ Mages are highly resistant to their source elemental type.
- ◆ Mages are highly resistant to enchantments and mind control due to their joined dual personalities.
- ◆ Mages possess a unique ability based on their source elemental type known as a magebound gift. For example, air bound mages may levitate at will at lower levels and eventually fly at will at higher levels. Magebound gifts are often unique to mages, but some overlap occurs.

Typically, mages are bonded through elementals of primal forces (earth, air, fire, and water); however, unique bonding is possible. Mages in Karthun's history have bonded with rare elemental types (acid, lightning, mold, etc.) and with the essences or souls of other source types. For example, Solum Dusk, one of the most powerful necromancers in the history of Karthun, developed and performed an unholy ritual to bind himself to the restless spirit of the dragon, Deathfang. Anything is possible through binding, and GMs are encouraged to experiment with their own ideas to create memorable NPC mages.

OTHER TYPES OF CASTERS

While magebound are the primary source of arcane magic casters in Karthun, others exist. The gnomes aren't native to Karthun, having returned with Prathian on one of his travels across the beyond. Among the gnomes, many arcane casters are referred to as wizards and don't rely on binding to elementals for power (though many still do so). Such wizards function in a fashion similar to mages, without any of the benefits and personality traits associated with the magebound. These wizards may have access to spells and rituals foreign or incomprehensible to mages, utilizing different schools of magic. With magic in flux on Karthun, GMs should feel free to experiment with the behavior of magic and introduce any outside sources as new layers of depth to campaigns.



MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items are commonplace across Karthun. From simple torches that never extinguish to flying carpets and floating cities, magic is everywhere and in nearly every level of society. Even in remote villages where a magebound wizard might never be seen in a resident's lifetime, there are charms and small incantations passed down from generation to generation. In many areas, these spells are used to empower everyday items with small enchantments.

Blade of Blades

Bladed weapons enchanted as the blade of blades ensure that the wielder is never without a weapon. Whether the wielder is disarmed, has their weapon confiscated in a search, or willingly surrenders it, a blade of blades duplicates itself in spectral form. This spectral duplicate is available to the wielder whenever they want the blade in hand, but only lasts for a handful of seconds. This gives the wielder long enough to make a strike against an unwary target, the primary use of such an enchantment.

Such blades are highly favored by the Daggers of Felicos, as the enchantment allows the wielder to give the appearance of honesty while maintaining a stopgap weapon for either defense or, in the case of the Daggers, assassination. In some cases, a blade of blades carries an additional enchantment to render the duplicate blade undetectable by magic, making the weapons highly coveted.



Brands of Convergence

The want of magical power has led many in Karthun to take what some may call extreme measures. Around Istin, those who survived attacks from elemental energy, especially attacks from transients, have found the scars they bear can sometimes surge with magical elemental energy. For most, this energy is incidental, barely enough to light a candle. Some, though, have scars that contain great power, enough to occasionally rival that of a magebound. In fact, Convergence is the only place in Karthun where such brands can be obtained, as the Elemental Lords far prefer branding to magebonding.

In some cases, people have worked to harness that elemental energy purposefully, branding themselves with glyphs or runes using elementally charged implements. The process isn't a certain one and the efficacy of the brands varies based on a number of factors. Some magebound specialize in these types of brands, however, and have a much higher rate of success than an untrained, unbound individual would have.

The powers contained in the brands vary as well. Some brands allow offensive abilities, as in throwing shards of ice or goutts of fire at enemies. Others are defensive, such as shields of wind or earth. The bulk of the brands have non-combat utility, however. They allow the branded being to create structures of their given element, or give them the means to survive in a harsh elemental environment.

Brand power is not consistent. Each brand can typically only be used a certain number of times before it must recharge. In most cases, the recharging process is an extreme one; one must expose their brand to as pure a source of elemental power as possible. This has led to a geographical focusing of certain types of brands, as it's much more convenient to have such a brand if the bearer is near the appropriate element.

Cleansing Stone

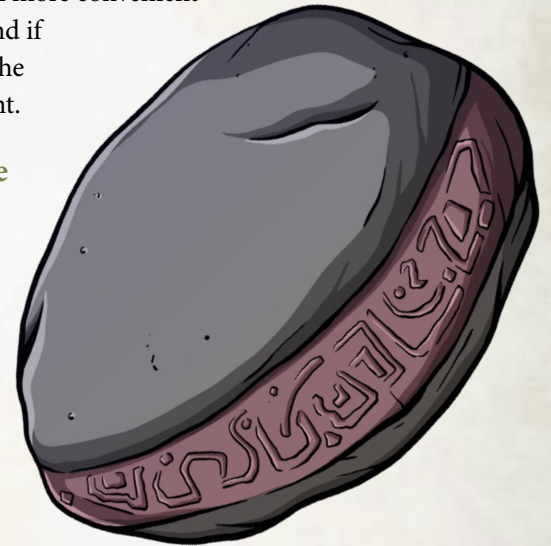
For those who are ill, or suffering from a magical malady, a cleansing stone can be an extremely beneficial item, but only in the hands of a beneficent healer.

Cleansing stones, when activated and passed over the sick person, remove the illness, malady, or curse from the suffering person. Most healers then destroy the stone, destroying the malady along with it. However, if not destroyed, the sickness remains within the stone and can be passed on to someone else.

In the hands of an unscrupulous healer, someone working for a criminal organization or a member of Ingersoll's Children for example, the removed disease or curse is often held over the head of the victim, proving to be a handy means of extortion or leverage.

For healers who research diseases and illnesses, cleansing stones are a valuable form of research.

Some collect various diseases and maladies, hoping to make an archive for later study. A cache of diseases would be deadly if the wrong people had access.



Deepstones

No one knows who created the deepstones, but all agree that they offer adventure, at a cost. Deepstones are one of the few reliable methods for navigating the chambers, tunnels, and caverns of the Deep. The stones can be commanded to provide directional navigation, including depth, limited maps, and presence of threats. The stones do this by referencing a fixed point in the Deep. However, each individual stone is attuned to a different location, meaning that much study or knowledge (or multiple stones) may be required for ideal orientation and travel.

There are groupings of stones that can be found on the surface. How or why similar stones find their way to the same geographic areas on the surface remains a mystery. One thing is for sure, regardless of the location a deepstone references, they are considered among the best ways to navigate the changing landscape of the Deep.



Desert Dice

As much a game as they are a magical item, desert dice are popular in Kraghorn, where they originated. When used by a single person, desert dice are tuned to the will of the person who tosses them, magically coming to rest on a range of favorable rolls. When used by a group of people who all know the properties of the dice, they turn a game of dice into a contest of wills, with each party to the game working to exert



their will over the dice. This way, the strongest-willed, and not the luckiest, is most often the winner. In Kraghorn, this game is often accompanied by wagers that include drinks, pain, or other means of lowering the will of a person, adding additional risk to the game.

Some play the game outside of Kraghorn, but a set of desert dice found in a mundane dicing game is enough to have the owner run out of a game on pain of stabbing, if not to have them outright assaulted by those they were dicing with.

Elemental Bracers

Elemental bracers are crafted in or near Istin and imbue elemental power to the ranged attacks of the wearer. One must be careful when choosing a set of elemental bracers. The first bracers were made by magebound whose willing elementals gave pieces of their own power into the items. Such power is recovered over time, but it's still a sacrifice. In recent years, spells have been discovered that carve off power from an unwilling elemental, a heinous crime in Istin. Bracers crafted from willing parties bear a creator's mark and seal of Convergence. Those without are unlawfully—and some would say immorally—made.

Also, the power contained within the bracers is volatile. There's a chance it will surge, either damaging the intended target or the bearer.





Fists of Wicking

In the fighting rings of Kraghorn,

there's a type of fist wrappings banned in many bouts, but required in the most brutal fights.

Fists of wicking, upon impact with living flesh, pull all moisture from the impact site, leaving desiccated flesh behind. The item only has so many useable charges per day, so experienced combatants avoid excessively punching their adversaries, instead using kicks and elbows to ensure that when they do hit with the magical wraps, they deal the most damage possible. The impact sites left by these wrappings are very distinctive and almost never fully heal, and those hit by them repeatedly can easily be identified by the parts of their body where their skin, muscle, and tissue cleave to their bones.

Similar enchantments can also be placed on other types of weapons, but fist wrappings are very easy to conceal and remain the most popular version of this enchantment. There are also variations of the wraps that heal the wearer an amount equal to the damage done. Regardless of the lust for bloodsport that exists in some parts of Kraghorn, or perhaps because of it, any wrappings that heal the wielder are strictly outlawed in the fighting pits.

Flames of Deknar

The Flames of Deknar were originally created to make the life of an adventurer easier. They are small boxes, magically insulated, which contain enchanted charcoal that never goes out or loses heat. They're especially popular for groups going to the Endless, where



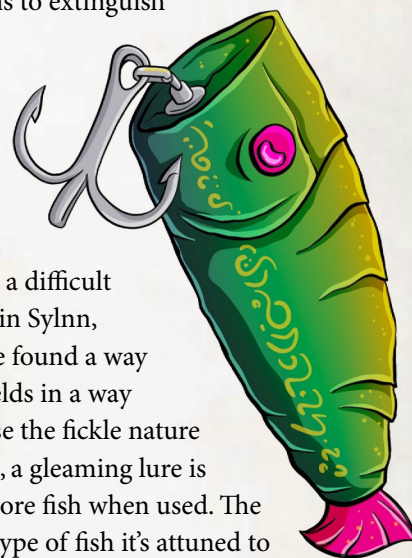
sources of fuel for a warming fire are few and far between.

Flames have seen a huge rise in popularity in warfare, as well. Variations have been created where the magical insulation is purposefully weakened. A sharp impact, such as dropping from a height, shatters the insulation, spilling everburning charcoal around the impact site. Mercenary warbands, or even despotic leaders bent on making an example of a town or village, load those coals into catapults and launch them. The resultant fires rarely, if ever, burn out, and require magical means to extinguish the charcoal.

Gleaming Lures

All along the coasts of Karthun, fishing is the primary trade of a not-insignificant number of beings. It's a difficult life. Not surprisingly, in Sylnn, some enchanters have found a way to increase fishing yields in a way that would even please the fickle nature of Felicos. Simply put, a gleaming lure is enchanted to catch more fish when used. The downside is that the type of fish it's attuned to changes without warning. The lures send out a magical pulse, compelling fish to the user. If the user has a run of good luck, then their nets or rods will bring in fish that the market requests.

More than a few users of these the lures have caught more than they bargained for, however. It's rumored that the current war with the merfolk in the area had



something to do with a lure that got tuned towards aquatic people. Some have also taken seeming bad luck and turned it into good. An entire school of razorsharks is an excellent way to eliminate enemies, while also fetching a tidy sum at market.

Golden Hope

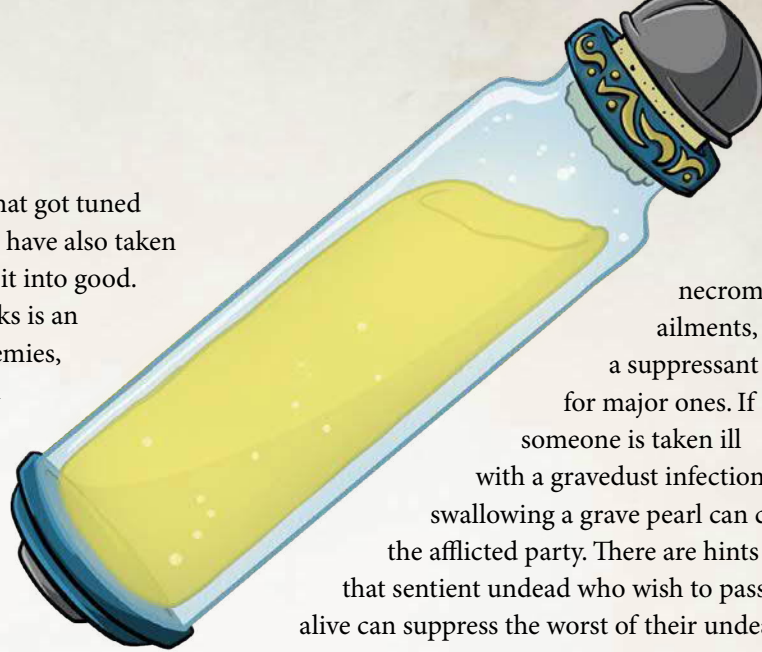
A softly glowing vial of golden liquid, Golden Hope is one of the few commercially marketed magical substances in Karthun.

The liquid was originally developed by a sage of Prathian to help those in mourning. When swallowed, the potion uplifts the emotions and gives the imbiber a warm sense of hope. Additionally, the imbiber has better luck and makes more of the opportunities presented to them for a few hours after ingestion.

The formula was acquired—some say stolen—from the archives of Prathian by an enterprising lizardfolk named Szathh Szethh, who found a way to produce the potion in larger batches. Now Golden Hope Brand Uplifting Tonic can be found in most of the major cities in Karthun. It's favored by the elite and sly alike. Prices vary, though are almost always high. Knockoffs and diluted versions thrive on the black market. The initial feeling one gets from imbibing the potion is not unlike the effects of alcohol, so an unwary buyer may be easily duped.

Grave Pearl

Grave pearls appear where the undead spawn, some type of leftover from whatever process creates a given type of undead. This makes grave pearls far more common in Erast than anywhere else in Karthun. Grave pearls, when ingested, serve as a cure for minor

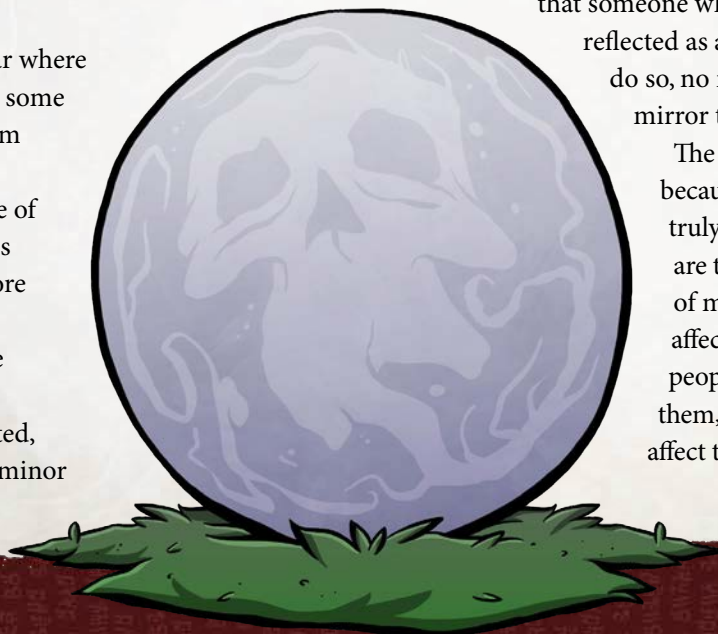


necromantic ailments, and a suppressant for major ones. If someone is taken ill with a gravedust infection, swallowing a grave pearl can cure the afflicted party. There are hints that sentient undead who wish to pass as alive can suppress the worst of their undead characteristics by regularly ingesting grave pearls. The curative properties make them highly sought after. It's lucky for those who seek grave pearls that the undead who leave them behind seem to be unaware of their creation. Those who hunt them only have to beware the possible return of an undead being to the site of their rising. Not a common occurrence, but one that's happened enough that grave pearl hunters need to be aware of it.

Harsh Mirror

Crafted from the Shadowstone found in the city of Narhal, harsh mirrors are necromantic devices that are banned or are unlawful in most areas of Karthun, especially Erast. In their most benign form, as in the hands of an untrained user, harsh mirrors appear to do no more than reflect the user's image as if the user were undead. Everyone looking into the mirror will find that the nature of their reflection doesn't change, meaning that someone who sees themselves reflected as a ghoul will always do so, no matter which harsh mirror they look into.

The mirrors are banned because of what they're truly capable of. There are two different types of mirrors: those that affect the minds of people who look into them, and those that can affect the physical world.





The first type of harsh mirror, when activated, makes those looking into it thereafter see only their undead reflection, regardless of reflective surface used. This has caused more than one person to go mad, as continually seeing an undead being staring back at them in anything reflective unhinges their minds.

The other type somehow retains the images that the mirror reflects, and can be used to bring those undead reflections into Karthun under the control of the mirror's owner. This control is absolute, with one exception: the undead summoned in this manner have a deep desire to destroy the being whose stored reflection gave the undead being its form. This desire is muted at first, but as time goes on, if the owner of the mirror doesn't allow the summoned undead

reflection to hunt down and kill their original, the undead has an increasing chance of rebelling completely and going on a rampage.

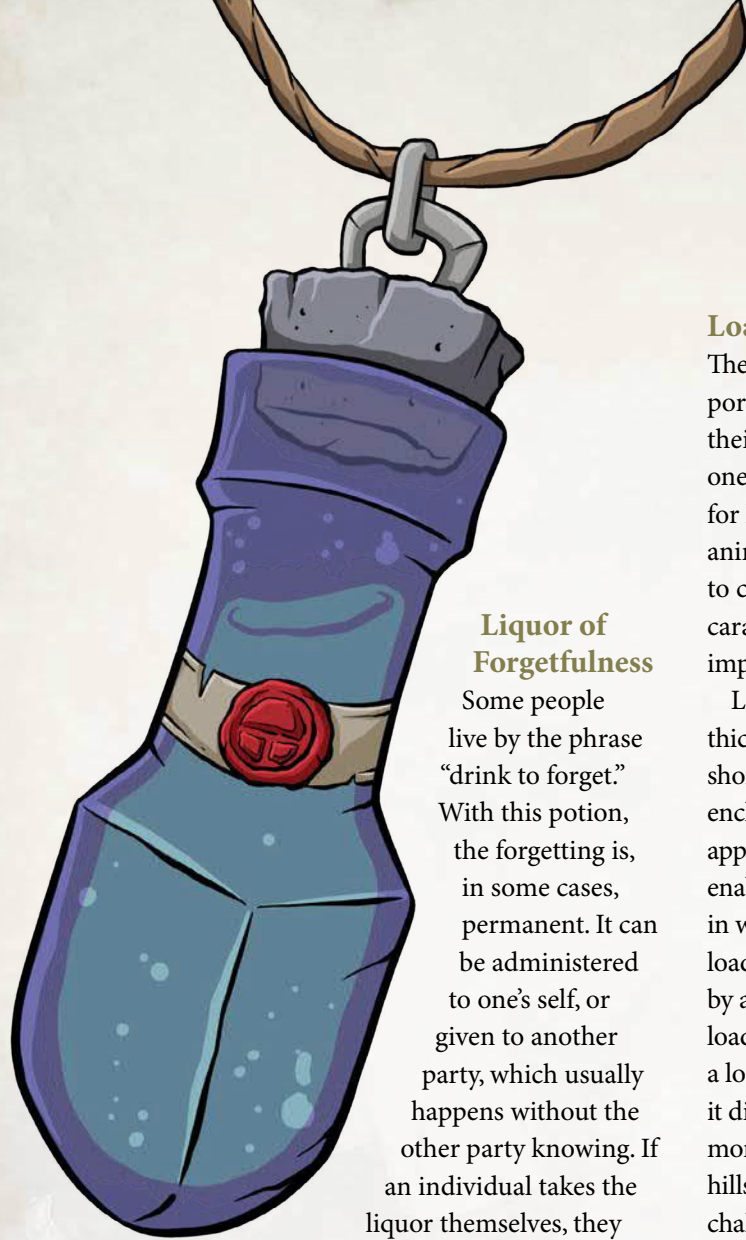
Knife of Doors

A knife of doors is an unassuming looking weapon that, when used in combat, deals damage as a normal knife would. However, when activated, the magic of the knife allows the wielder to cut into and through most solid substances for the express purpose of making an entrance. In the hands of an enterprising burglar or spy, this weapon allows easy passage into almost any sealed room.

The entrances so created are temporary, usually lasting no more than a handful of minutes. The other drawback of this short span of time is that the blade cannot be used more than once in a span of 24 hours. This means that anyone wishing to use a doorway made by this knife must either work quickly or have a separate exit strategy planned, or they'll be trapped in the space they entered.

It's rumored that a few more powerful versions of this weapon exist. They allow the wielder to not only open doorways in physical spaces, but also to create doorways between two physically separate locations.





Liquor of Forgetfulness

Some people live by the phrase “drink to forget.” With this potion, the forgetting is, in some cases, permanent. It can be administered to one’s self, or given to another party, which usually happens without the other party knowing. If an individual takes the liquor themselves, they can focus on the particular memories they want to lose. The erasure is long-term in most cases. The liquor’s effects will last for years, though it will also erase any peripheral memories as well.

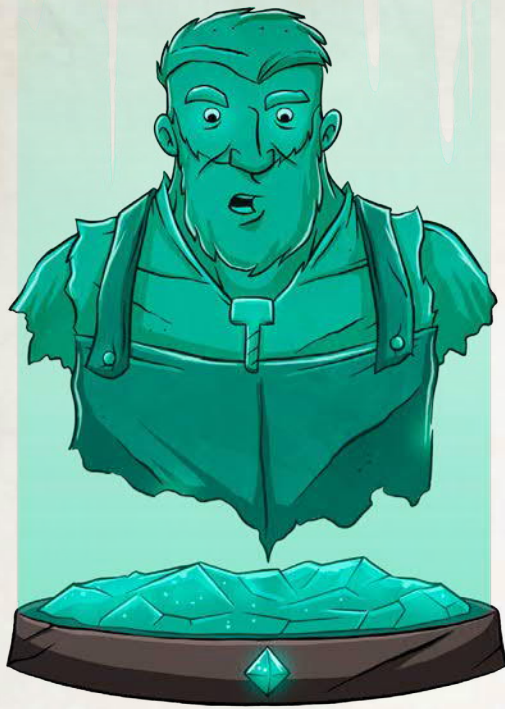
If the liquor is administered to an unaware party, it provides a general erasure of memories, going back as much as a day depending on the dose. Under extreme stress, or because of an incredibly large or potent dose, an individual’s complete set of memories will be erased. This erasure is likely not permanent, but it often lasts long enough to make life very difficult for the dosed subject.

Loadstone

The system of roads that connect the settled portions of Karthun are of variable quality, and their navigability can change drastically from one area to another. This makes it very difficult for large amounts of goods to be transported by animal-drawn wagons. Loadstones were invented to combat that, for it’s easier for a traveling caravan to obtain or enchant one than it is to improve the roads.

Loadstones are blocks of granite at least one foot thick. They vary in size from about as long as a shortbow to as sizable as a medium-sized tent. The enchantment on the stone causes the stone to float approximately a foot and a half off the ground and enables the stone to carry loads up to several tons in weight, depending on the size of the stone. The loadstone can be pulled easily over solid surfaces by any individual of average strength. However, loadstones don’t fare as well over water, and once a loadstone begins moving, momentum can make it difficult to stop. This make loadstones much more popular in flat areas, as going up and down hills can prove very challenging.





Speaking Stone

Speaking Stones are the predominant form of long distance communication across Karthun. Speaking Stones look like a wide, narrow piece of chiseled crystal mounted onto finely varnished wooded platters. When a Speaking Stone contains a new message, they emit soft pulse of light.

Speaking Stones may contain a single message or may be used to open a two-way line of communication. A single message is placed in the stone by use of one command word and open communication is opened with a command word keyed to the intended receiving stone. Once activated, the stone sends out a beam of light that envelops the user, capturing a magical replica of the person and their words. Some have tried to store or cast magical spells inside/through Speaking Stones, but in the current year, no one has succeeded.

Moonborn Item

From weapons to magical trinkets, moonborn items are crafted in Symul, and their power waxes and wanes with the fullness of the moon to which the item is bound. Much as the various elven clans gain and lose power with these cycles, moonborn items register as barely magical with their linked moon is dark. However, when a given item's linked moon is full in the sky, their power can rival that of some artifacts. This makes moonborn items difficult to use on a regular basis. Most moonborn items are treated with a sense of ritual or reverence, as they are at their most powerful for only a few days each month.

In Symul, moonborn items of opposing clans are coveted and sought after. During many of the raids that occur, warriors of a given clan seek out moonborn items that will become powerful while the raiding individual will be weak. Thus, moonborn items in Symul are vigorously protected by each clan, only given out to those who can protect them the most effectively.

Outside of Symul, especially in the black markets in the larger cities across Karthun, it's possible the owner of a given item doesn't know the item is moonborn, just that the item varies in power. This has led to a number of instances where a being accomplished amazing deeds and cemented a legacy, only to find that their sword wasn't able to pierce stone as before, or that their armor couldn't withstand any arrow. By the same token, some never find out that the mundane looking bow kept on their



mantle never misses, or that the bracers in the trunk at the foot of their bed can protect against any magic, but only for a few days each month.

Muted Lantern

A favorite of the followers of Felicos, and especially of those who plumb the depths of the Copper Catacombs in Xag, muted lanterns look unremarkable, until lit with a paired taper. The individual that lights the muted lantern gets use of it, as a standard lantern, but no one else can see the light. This allows those who wish to both see and remain hidden to navigate with ease. The light fades out when the person who lit the lantern sets it down. There are also versions of this item with altered enchantments to allow multiple designated people to see, or which shed light as a normal lantern when commanded to do so.

The drawbacks to this item are twofold: it takes one hand to hold the lantern, so wielding a weapon such as a crossbow is out of the question. The second issue is that something about the magic of the muted lantern amplifies the sounds made by the bearer. This means that only the stealthiest of rogues can attempt to use the device. It is one thing to be able to navigate darkness with ease; it is entirely another to have to double down on how quietly one breathes.

Ooze Mimic Tonic

No one knows whether this tonic was made by the Blessed of the Crawl, or by those fighting the Crawl in Tavia, but one thing is for sure:



both sides make use of it now. The tonic itself is red and typically comes in small, wax-sealed vials. When consumed, the tonic changes the form of one's body to that of an ooze. This makes it possible for devoted spies to infiltrate the Crawl for short periods of time. However, the converse is also true: when poured onto an ooze, the tonic works in reverse fashion, turning the ooze into a humanoid form.

The effects of the tonic only last for an hour or so at a time, meaning that any being using it for long-term infiltration must keep a ready supply of the tonic at hand. This is dangerous, not only because of the risk of discovery, but also because the tonic itself is unstable—a vial can explode easily, generating a noxious cloud of vapor harmful to humanoid and ooze alike.





Paintbrush of Minions

There are some people who wish to capture the world as they see it, painting natural environments. However, in some cases those who possess the talent to create such art don't have the ability or ready financial means to protect themselves. In cases like this, a paintbrush of minions comes in extremely handy. With this brush, an artist can paint an image of a creature on their canvas and then use a command word to summon the creature to life. Created beings stay in existence for a full day, unless destroyed during combat or by other means. The summoned minion is under total control of the painter, and will fight in the painter's defense to the exclusion of all else.

The summoned minions aren't actual living examples of creatures of their type, and don't possess many of the abilities that their real-world counterparts do. For example, if someone summons a swamp goblin, the creature may get enraged and explode, but the resultant mist won't infect adjacent creatures to turn them into swamp goblins. The minions summoned by the painting are extremely resilient however, and offer excellent protection to the artist that creates them.

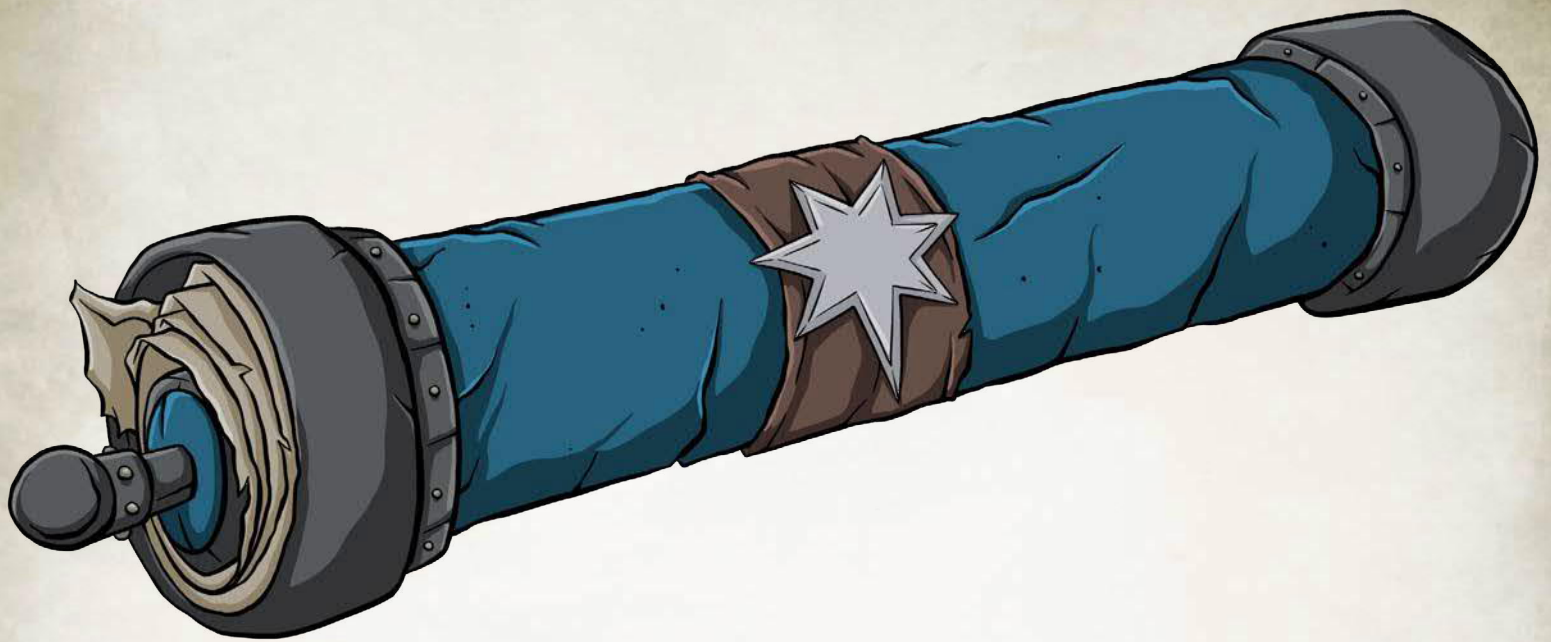
Ploughshare of Swords

In agrarian areas where strife is common, so too is this enchantment. Every farmer has one, perhaps two ploughs that are harnessed to

oxen or horses to prepare a field for planting. However, not every farmer cares to attempt to carry a weapon while tending to their fields. A ploughshare of swords, when given the proper command word, transforms from a humble plough into a mighty blade, though variations exist where the plough forms into a weapon of the enchanter's choice. More than one unperceptive would-be threat has been put down by a farmer or family with one of these objects in their possession.

Some of these ploughshares also carry an additional enchantment that makes them more often used as weapons than they otherwise might be. These are sometimes referred to as "hungry" ploughshares because as they take lives in weapon form, they make the fields they plough more bountiful. In the hands of the more superstitious, this means that each planting season is preceded by a hunting season where the ploughshare owner makes sure the weapon form gets the life-force it needs to "bless" their fields. Most owners keep this hunting confined to wild animals; however, some—especially those with perpetual bandit problems—take pains to hunt those who plague them to make sure their crops are full come harvest season.





Prathian's Tears

Some sages in Xyn find their minds full to bursting with thoughts and information, and still they desire more. Some have taken what might seem to be extreme measures to clear their minds for new learning. Modeling themselves after master sage Prathian, they store their excess thoughts and memories on scrolls. These scrolls of memories are colloquially known as Prathian's Tears after a story where the sage saw a number of these scrolls lost and destroyed in an attack. The sage is said to have wept for weeks over the loss of his memories and knowledge.

Prathian's Tears are created by an individual placing their head near a magically imbued scroll. After incanting the proper spells, the user focuses the thoughts they wish to store towards the front of their heads. Some describe the feeling of the thoughts and memories leaving their heads as tears flowing, giving an alternate meaning to the name of the resultant liquid. The liquid flows onto the scroll, inscribing the user's thoughts in a form only they, or someone they charge, can understand.

Anyone with the magical command word can read the scroll and understand the memories there. If they concentrate long enough on the scroll, they even relive the memories. There are tales of enterprising thieves stealing caches of memories from forgetful sages or nobles and selling them on the black market. These thefts are only as good as the command words, so

there's a brisk trade in lists of commonly used command words as well. Some have collected piles of scrolls and command words, spending their time reliving the memories of others, losing themselves to the glut of others' experiences.

Ring of Ropes

Favored by farmers, sailors, and adventurers alike, a ring of ropes allows the wearer to command any and all rope or rope-like objects. This command is absolute and allows a very fine degree of control if the will of the wearer is strong enough. This means that knots can be tied, nets mended, or even bridges slung. It's an item of great utility.

Altered versions of this item are better suited to manipulating string or thread. There are artisans of great renown who no doubt have skill, but whose reputations would be ruined if got out that they made their most intricate garments with the aid of a magical device.





Ring of Slivers

A deadly and powerful offensive weapon, rings of slivers originated in Kolther; though still rare, they're now found across Karthun. When the ring wearer hits an opponent with their fist, the ring shoots out thin threads of a metallic substance, resembling metalweave or sliver leeches. These filaments instantaneously embed themselves in the flesh of the wearer's opponent, and when the wearer pulls back their fist much of the area around the point of impact gets pulled along with the filaments.

The majority of these rings are used by the Kings of Dusk as torture and interrogation devices, though the few that make it out of Kolther are viewed as potent—and disgusting—weapons. There are also rumors that swords, axes, maces, and more have been enchanted similarly. One tale even tells of a suit of armor with this enchantment, but it affects both the wearer and their target. The armor is embedded onto the skin of the wearer, and any contact with living flesh by the wearer causes horrible damage.



Rooted Boots

In Andorhem Forest, sometimes hiding is the best chance for survival. These boots, often stylized with leatherworked images of trees, allow the user to activate two different abilities. The first, activated by simply wearing the boots, allows the user to walk through a forested region without leaving much of a trail, making it very difficult for the wearer to be tracked. This same enchantment also mutes the sounds and smells that the wearer makes.

The second effect, often useable only once a day at the most, transforms the wearer into a tree. This transformation provides more than just the ability to hide. It's a complete transformation, allowing the changed person to gain sustenance from the ground and the air. This sustenance is magically enhanced, so it also provides rest and healing.

Rooted boots are rare and are controlled closely by the remaining followers of Sehad in Andorhem Forest. The passing of a pair of these boots from one of the faithful to another is a sacred moment. Some very few pairs of these boots have made their way out of Andorhem Forest. Outside the forest they function as normal, but the tree into which the wearer transforms matches the trees and vegetation relative to their location. These pairs of boots are sought by followers of Sehad, as many of them believe that the boots should be possessed only by the faithful who live in Andorhem.

Runestone

The magic of the lost giant empire of the Endless can be found in a variety of items, weapons, and armor, but no items reflect the power of this lost people more than runestones. Runestones look simple at first glance, just carved pieces of flat stone, bearing a single etched rune. However, for those with the proper knowledge, runestones are hugely powerful items with a variety of properties.

Each runestone resizes to palm-sized for any who attempt to hold the stone and exert a small amount of will over the item. These



stones were crafted by the giants not only for their own use, but also for their chosen smaller servitors. Past that, each runestone is unique, giving the knowledgeable user power based on the rune etched in the stone.

Sages studying the runestones have discovered the meanings of a number of runes, though some remain arcane and unknown. Some of the known runes are as follows:

- f* *Fehu*: Luck, Great Fortune. Bearers of Fehu runestones can manipulate their luck or the luck of those around them. Attacks and defenses that come from such runestones look like random chance or lucky breaks.
- x* *Thurisaz*: Destruction, Change. The decay of things or the transmutation of things is the hallmark of the Thurisaz runestones.
- r* *Raidho*: Speed, Travel. Those with runestones of Raidho move faster than an eyeblink. Some say they move instantaneously from one place to another.
- h* *Hagalaz*: Hail, Nature's Wrath. Those with runestones marked with Hagalaz are storms contained in mortal form. They can control the weather and unleash its brutality whenever the bearer wishes.
- p* *Perthro*: Secrets, Occlusion, Stealth. Masters and Mistresses of the hidden, those with a Perthro runestone breath secrets and walk in shadows.
- O* *Othala*: Age, Ancestry, Old Power. Othala runestones make anyone into a fearsome

warrior who can call on the names of their ancestors to bring their spirits to fight at their sides.

- d* *Dagaz*: Day, Dawn, Fire. Renewal and rebirth through purifying fire. The flames of the sun burn in those runestones marked by Dagaz and woe betide any who challenge their bearers.

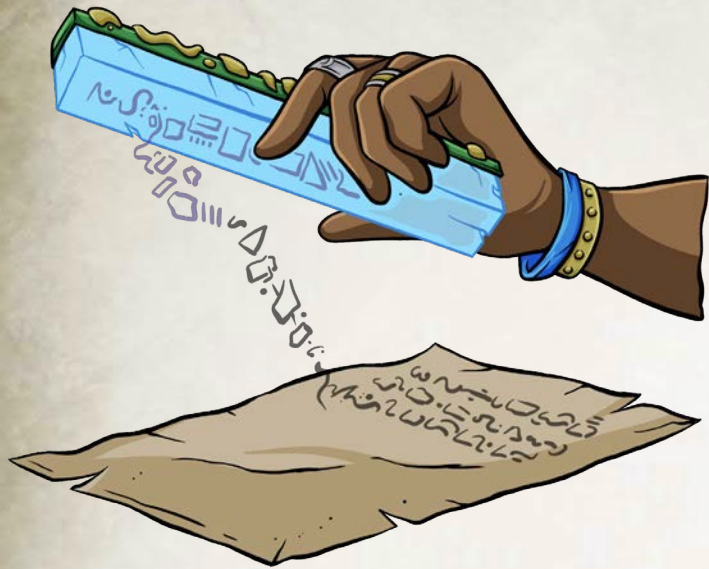
Silvertongue Staff

This staff, though solid to the touch, looks like it's composed of quicksilver. It functions as a regular staff if used as a weapon, but upon impact with an enemy, the enchantment of the staff activates and the quicksilver-like material explodes off the staff to cover whatever was struck. If the target is unable to resist the climbing stands of silvery metal, it descends down the throat of the target. At that point, if the will of the target isn't enough to resist, the target comes under full control of the wielder of the staff for 24 hours. A being so controlled is marked by the color of their tongue, which gives the staff its name.

This control isn't absolute, as the wielder can't tell the target to harm themselves or those dear to them. However, the will of the target is often lowered by the domination, making it easier—though not guaranteed—for the wielder to maintain their control for consecutive days.

These staves are very distinctive looking, and are outlawed in most localities.





Storage Crystal

Copying documents by hand with parchment and ink is a tedious process. Even printing presses take a lot of time to set up. A storage crystal is as wide as a piece of parchment, with one flat, smooth side. On command, the crystal can be passed down the length of a document, copying the contents and storing them inside the crystal. That crystal can then be taken to a blank sheet of parchment and a different command word spoken to transfer what's inside the crystal to create a new document. Each document can be transferred multiple times, making it relatively easy for a being to create many copies of a given document very quickly.

There are also variations of storage crystals that erase the original document as it's being copied, or that create impermanent copies of a document. These variations are heavily favored in Tavia where subterfuge is the order of the day. The only drawback is that the command words to activate the crystals are much the same, regardless of the variation of enchantments, so if a crystal falls into enemy hands, the contained documents are readily accessible. This has given rise to the purposeful seeding of crystals that contain false documents.

Sundering Armor

Crafted by the Underlords and their servants, armor with a sundering enchantment is designed not to protect the wearer more, but to destroy any weapons that hit the wearer. During their wars alongside the Three Demon Kings, the Underlords created this enchantment to demoralize their enemies, depriving them of the means to fight.

The enchantment comes in a variety of forms, the most common form increasing the chances



of shattering a weapon that hits the wearer. The most pernicious form of this enchantment is a plague of the battlefield, rusting and pitting all other metal the wearer touches. This version of the enchantment is especially dangerous, as the wearer has no control over the rusting, save to not come into contact with any other metal. There are a few instances of a warrior damaging as much of their army's own supplies as the enemy's due to carelessness.

Technomagical Constructs

All areas of Karthun have inventors and artificers who create technomagical constructs, which most refer to simply as constructs. These devices range across many types of both mechanical construction and magical power source, depending on the whims or expertise of the creator. The most prevalent types of construction focus on the small interlocked gears of clockwork, and the most prevalent types of magical power function much like a magebinding.

Constructs also fall broadly into two categories: devices and automatons. Automatons are designed to mimic or are inspired by natural creatures. They often feature a central body of some type, actuated limbs that allow for independent locomotion, and a head or heads. Automatons range in function from small toy-like constructions all the way up to near-giant-sized war machines.

Devices, by default, are any constructs that aren't automatons. They're largely stationary or, if they move, use wheels or similar means of locomotion. Devices cover a wide array of functions as well, and artificers have made nearly any type of device one could think of. This includes everything from farstep circles to clocks with an elemental energy source.

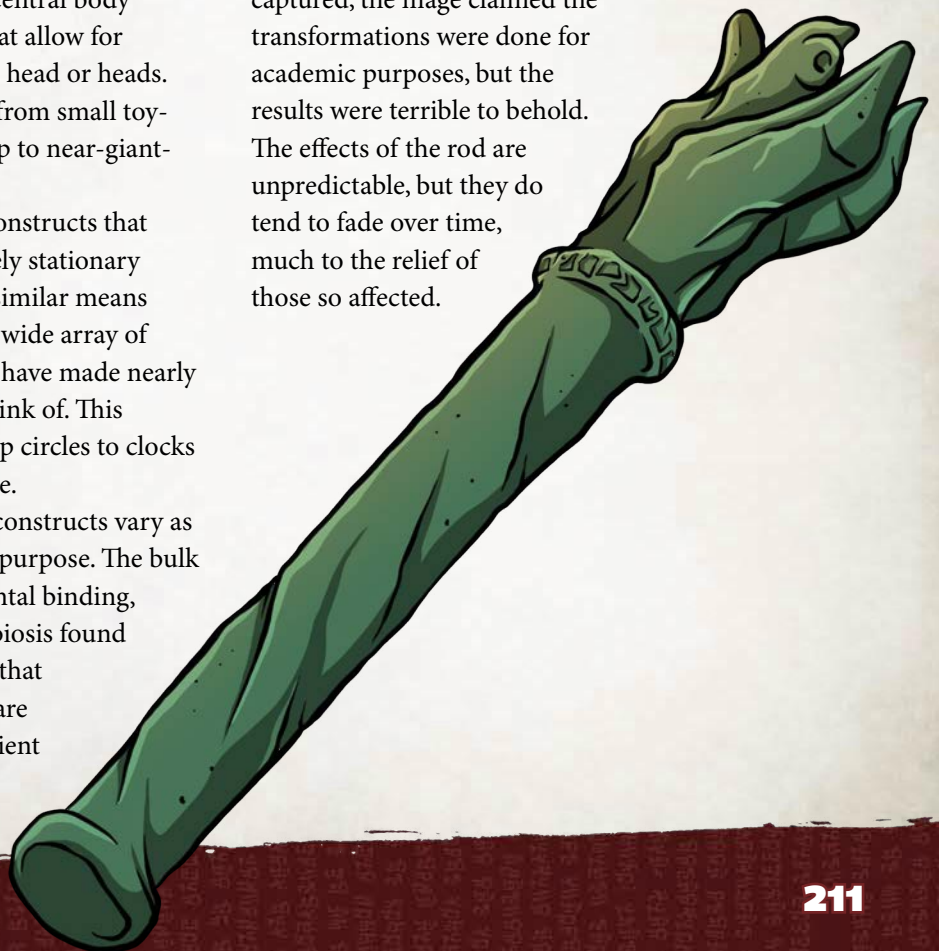
The power sources for these constructs vary as widely as their construction or purpose. The bulk of them are powered via elemental binding, though not with the same symbiosis found in the magebound. This means that most elemental power sources are Transients, seemingly non-sentient

sources of elemental power. Constructs with elemental power sources are either frowned upon or outright banned in Istin. Other options for power include gems or other crystalline materials that have been imbued with magical energy, either arcane or divine.

Tentacled Rod

This short piece of deep green wood is carved with short tentacles at the end. The original maker of this item was particularly twisted. This rod, when activated, transforms a living being into a bizarre combination of whatever it originally was, plus tentacles. There are some who prize this item for the ability it grants to navigate aquatic environments well. Others find that the suckers on the tentacles are effective when grappling in fights or climbing walls.

In most cases, however, this item is used on unwilling targets, and the created tentacles offer form over function. In at least one instance, a water magebound, a renegade apprentice of Prathian, took a tentacle rod on a tour of Karthun, leaving a trail of misshapen semi-aquatic beings in their wake. When captured, the mage claimed the transformations were done for academic purposes, but the results were terrible to behold. The effects of the rod are unpredictable, but they do tend to fade over time, much to the relief of those so affected.



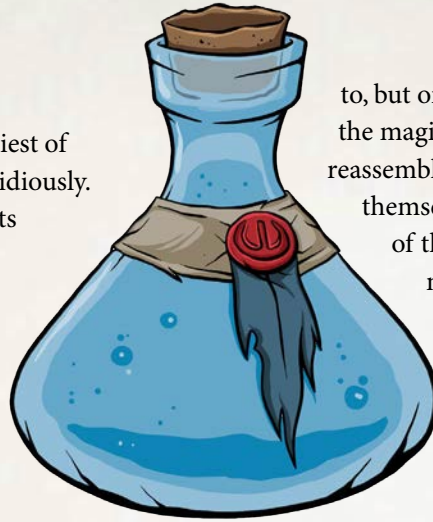
Water of Wending

Water can slip through the tiniest of spaces, moving into places insidiously. The water of wending allows its imbiber to do the same by turning the swallower's body into water. If the imbiber does nothing, the shape of their now-liquid body remains the same. In this form, the potion grants resistance to damage. As well, the being who drank the potion can have nothing taken from their person; physical objects simply pass through their liquid body.

The primary use of the potion is found in the drinker's ability to shape their body. With a thought, their solid form splashes to the ground, looking like a puddle. In this form, the drinker is still aware of their surroundings, can hear and see everything within five feet of where they pool, but cannot communicate unless they possess the ability to speak from mind to mind. This allows an enterprising spy to secret—or secrete—themselves in a hidden location, disguised as ambient water. The pool can be spread thin across whatever surface the drinker is on; however, the drinker's awareness of their surroundings diminishes greatly when the water isn't pooled together.

The drinker can move their puddled form, flowing as water does and into places only water can go. Stories tell of enterprising rogues who drank this potion and then spent weeks flowing into the keeps of unaware lords or the vaults of unknowing bankers, loading themselves with riches, then consuming another potion to begin their weeks-long escape.

The potion lasts for as long as the drinker wishes it



to, but once the drinker decides to shed the magical effects, their physical form reassembles in whatever space they find themselves in. While under the effects of the potion, the imbiber has no need of food or drink. However, upon returning to their solid form, the time spent not eating or drinking unloads its cumulative effect on the drinker. The rogues in the stories would have experienced weeks of hunger and thirst

happening all at once upon entering the target of their infiltration, leading to questions about the veracity of the tales.

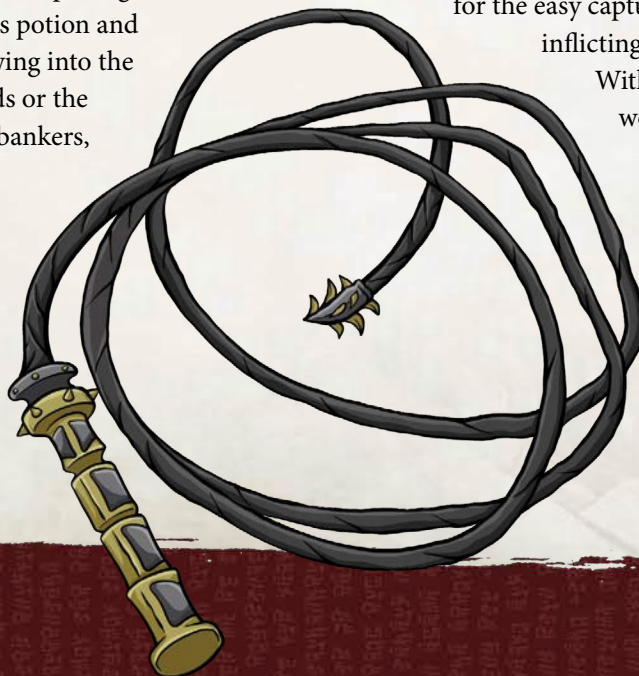
Whip of Binding

Favored by the slavers of Kraghorn and bounty hunters across the rest of Karthun, whips with a binding enchantment give the wielder two abilities not found in mundane versions. The first is that the whip may be used as a weapon, dealing damage equivalent to a dagger, or in some cases, even a small sword. This allows the wielder to carry only the whip as a weapon, not encumbering themselves as they travel across the land with their bounty or to capture other beings to sell.

The second ability is what gives the enchantment its name. On a command word, the whip can lash out, the end turning into a manacle or other similar type of binding. This allows for the easy capture of the target, without inflicting damage on the target.

With another command word, the binding can be detached from the whip, leaving the whip useable again, and the target bound by an enchanted leather manacle.

A third command word releases the binding.



The binding charm of this type of weapon can only be used a few times a day, and so is only used when the wielder wishes to keep their target bound at all costs. The manacle is extremely difficult to break, and there are stories of even giantkin being captured by them. In some cases, the binding carries an additional effect of pacifying the target, making it much easier to transport them to their intended destination. Weapons with this additional enchantment are outlawed in countries where slavery is illegal, as the subjugation of a being's will is viewed with distaste.

ARTIFACTS

There are some magic items so powerful or unique that they transcend convention, garnering their own mystique and legend. Many artifacts exist across Karthun. Described below is a small selection of artifacts currently circulating around the Last Continent.

Blade of Nails

No one is sure who forged the Blade of Nails, but the story that circulates about this mighty weapon is the same, no matter who tells it.

There was a slave in Kraghorn, forced to work for a truly brutal master. The slave had no possessions, and was searched every night before she went back to her quarters to ensure that she wasn't hiding anything that would allow her to escape. One day, the slave spied a lone nail on the ground as she was walking on an errand for her master. She picked it up and determined that she would try to sneak the nail back to her quarters, regardless of the possible repercussions. She had no place to hide the nail, so she prayed to Felicos to keep the nail concealed. That night, when she was searched, the nail was not discovered.

The next day, the slave found a second nail. Again, she prayed to Felicos, and neither nail was discovered. That night, she looked

at the two nails by the thin moonlight that came into her quarters. She pressed the nails together, tapping at them with the tips of her fingers. She prayed again, this time to Deknar, and as she tapped, the two nails merged together.

Each day for the next 300 days, the slave found a nail. Each day, she prayed to Felicos to hide the nail, and to Deknar to forge the nails together.

On the night of the 300th day, she looked at the blade her prayers had wrought. It was lumpy and uneven, the heads and points of the nails pointing every direction. She wept, for though she had a blade, she knew not how to use it.

That night, the gods conferred about her. Felicos said that he had placed and hidden the nails because he thought it good fun.

Deknar stated that her desire to forge was as pure as he had ever seen, so he had helped her forge the nails together. Both of them looked at the other gods expectantly. Prathian bowed his head and gave the blade his blessing, imbuing it with magical resilience and strength.

Valkyre took her strength of arms and put knowledge into the blade so the slave would be able to fight. Sehad took the wild will for freedom and ensured that the blade would always fight for one who sought to be free.

The next morning, the slave reached out to touch the blade, and it awoke in her hands. She knelt and thanked all of the gods for the gifts she had received. The blade served her well, and that day she gained her freedom.

The Blade of Nails looks as the legends describe, and as such cannot be sheathed. If carried by one who values binding and enslavement, the nails stab and cut the wielder as much as any the blade is directed against. If wielded by one who values freedom above all else, the blade almost wields itself, breaking bonds and wounding those who would oppose freedom. The Blade is feared across



Kraghorn, and that's typically where it can be found. Many warlords have attempted to contain the blade, but thanks to the other blessings on it, it always manages to find its way into the hands of someone who will use it in the same manner as the slave who first begged the gods for aid.

Charm of the Dreamer

The Charm of the Dreamer is one of the most dangerous items found in Karthun. Before they pierced the veil between Karthun and the Worldfire, each of the Worldwalkers undertook a number of magical experiments. Notably, Ignizian the Mad experimented with the minds of others, including trying to divine the line between waking consciousness and that of the dreamers. Ignizian reasoned that the most effective way to do this was to enter the minds of those he experimented on. He found that he could enter conscious minds, and even the minds of the unconscious, but the dreams of the unconscious eluded him. He worked for years to discover the secret, and was able create an amulet, the Charm of the Dreamer, from it. Using the Charm, Ignizian was not only able to enter the dreams of those he wished, but also to influence their dreams and even travel from the dreams of one person to another.

The Charm unlocked an entirely new world to Ignizian. He began to spend more and more time in the Realm of the Other, as he came to call it. Ignizian claimed that exploring and influencing the dreams of others gave him deep insights into the waking minds of people, unlocking vast new realms of power to him. It's rumored that when the Worldwalkers pierced the veil between worlds and unleashed the Worldfire, that Ignizian didn't venture with the other



Worldwalkers in his physical form, but instead walked through the dreams of people subsequently driven mad by his passage.

After the Worldfire was released and Ignizian was captured by the Witnesses of the Truth, his amulet disappeared. There are rumors that it's surfaced from time to time, leaving madness in its wake. Sages who search for the amulet believe that the amulet itself passes through the Realms of the Other, using various dreams of the people of

Karthun to travel from owner to owner.

If worn, the amulet allows the wearer to go into a trancelike state at will, their body becoming ephemeral and permeable to the physical world. In this way, Ignizian protected himself while his mind roamed the Realm of the Other. Once in the Realm, the wearer of the amulet can find the dreams of any being sleeping in the whole of Karthun and perhaps beyond. The dreams can be viewed, participated in, or manipulated as the wearer sees fit.

Sages also believe that anyone possessing the Charm could continue the work of the Worldwalkers, traveling to realms of existence only rumored to exist. The Realm of the Other is posited to touch all other realms, real and imagined. It's possible that the wearer of the Charm might even be able to use the power of the collective dreamers of Karthun to make entirely new worlds, or that Karthun itself is simply a dream of a more powerful being than even the gods.

What is sure is that if the Charm of the Dreamer were wielded by anyone with ill intent, including the still-imprisoned Ignizian the Mad, a shadow of danger would be cast across the whole of Karthun. After all, even demons dream.

The First Coin

During the earliest days of Karthun's nations, the minting of individual gold coinage took high priority for many of the first rulers. Based equally in individuality, ego, and greed, several rulers immediately banned the exchange of coinage from rival nations, seizing such coins for melting and reminting. Never one to pass on the opportunity to humble the patron races of Karthun, Felicos the King of Rogues created the First Coin: a plain disc of gold roughly the size of average Karthun coinage. Alone, the First Coin appears plain and unremarkable. However, when placed among other coinage, the First Coin takes on the appearance of the most common gold coin present and infects every coin touching it with a terrible curse. The curse manifests slowly over time as an insatiable greed that drives the owner to collect and hoard as much gold as possible with little to no regard for the safety of anyone or anything else. If left unchecked, the curse of the First Coin drives the owner to madness and eventual death. Upon the death of an owner, the coin returns to its natural state until claimed by another, thus beginning the cycle over again.

Currently the First Coin waits for its next owner among a treasure horde in crypts below an abandoned manor house in the Kingdom of Andern (or anywhere else GMs need it to be), as its previous owner died from the madness with no living heirs to seek out his treasure.

The Forge of Deknar

Before he moved deep into the depths of Karthun to forge the Chain, Deknar was a master smith responsible for creating some of the most powerful and intricately crafted metalwork in all of Karthun. The forge he called his own was imbued with his power over the years, and much like Prathian's Quill it's sacred to his followers. However, unlike the Quill, the



Forge of Deknar is in an unknown location, some say not even in the world of Karthun itself.

Followers of Deknar claim that one of the faithful—a cleric of the faith or a smith who has attained the highest level of their craft—might visit the Forge while deep in the throes of their work. This visitation is metaphysical in nature, which makes some sages question whether the Forge is a physical location. Some suggest that the Forge might be a projection of the will of Deknar himself, the only portion of his being he can truly spare while all of his energies are focused on maintaining the Chain that holds back the Worldfire.

Regardless of its true nature, items of peerless quality have been forged by the faithful of Deknar and the masters of metal in Karthun. These works—weapons, armor, gear, and metal goods—rival those created by Deknar himself, and the only explanation each individual blacksmith has is that they went to the Forge of Deknar while they were working. Most describe it as hearing an echo of their own hammer strikes, though larger and magnified, thrumming through their bodies as if they were simply a conduit for a greater power. Others deny the existence of the Forge, claiming they lost themselves in their work, perhaps they even felt the metal aligning for them as they hammered away.

In either case, the power of Deknar is evident in the resulting items, and their superior craftsmanship allows rumors of the Forge to continue unabated.



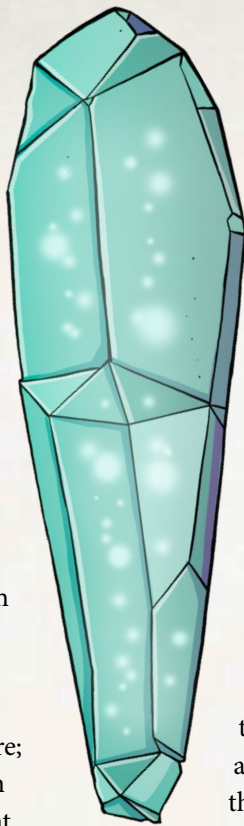
Last Shard of Kraya

When Kraya was sacrificed to banish the demons and push back the Worldfire, most thought the entire plane was used, leaving only the Shadow behind. While difficult to substantiate, there are stories and legends that a small piece of Kraya the Light was spared, and that it's appeared across Karthun since the sacrifice was made.

The stories all begin the same way, with a loss, or great strife, and always on an individual scale: a struggling farm beset by bandits; a poor family eking out their existence with little coin to spend or spare; an orphan huddled in a bundle of rags in the freezing rain. The kinds of stories that bards use to easily pluck at the heartstrings of easy marks. However, in each of *these* stories, something miraculous happens. The struggling farmers find the will to fight, bolstered by a vision of their ancestors or loved ones lost. The poor family finds a cache of coin or jobs for those who need them, and are led there by inexplicable visions. The orphan finds a family, or purpose, or shelter, or all three, and their life begins anew.

Much as Skycaller is thought to perhaps be the last spark of Valkyre that the Mother cannot extinguish, so too is the Last Shard thought to be the last remnant of light from the space the Mother now holds as her domain. A few of the remaining faithful of Valkyre pray not to the goddess they remember, but to the Last Shard, that the light of that lost realm fall upon them.

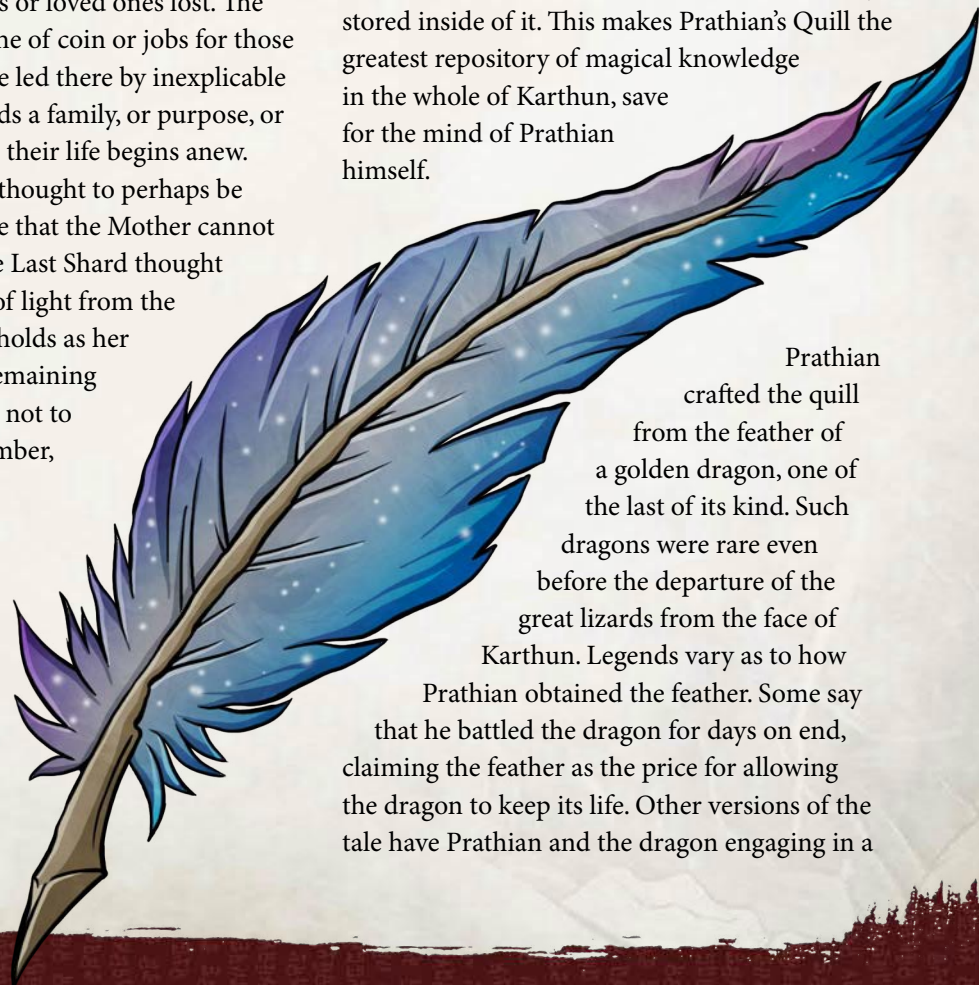
Some quest for the Shard, hoping to secure it for a variety of reasons. The faithful, especially those paladins who still cling to the



remnants of their faith in Valkyre, hope to find the Shard and reignite the valor and justice they believe to still linger in the heart of the Mother. Others, notably those who serve Kyzul, would find the Shard to extinguish its light and fully darken the heart of the Mother. However, the Shard, if it even exists, has eluded all discovery. It lives in stories and songs, some of which may have a seed of truth to them.

Prathian's Quill

This quill, a lustrous golden feather that glints with shifting tones of blue and purple in direct light, is said to be the quill Prathian used to record his mightiest spells over years of seeking out hidden magical knowledge. Prathian's will, being as strong as it was and is, imbued the quill with a unique ability: every spell that's ever been written on a scroll with this quill is permanently stored inside of it. This makes Prathian's Quill the greatest repository of magical knowledge in the whole of Karthun, save for the mind of Prathian himself.



Prathian crafted the quill from the feather of a golden dragon, one of the last of its kind. Such dragons were rare even before the departure of the great lizards from the face of Karthun. Legends vary as to how Prathian obtained the feather. Some say that he battled the dragon for days on end, claiming the feather as the price for allowing the dragon to keep its life. Other versions of the tale have Prathian and the dragon engaging in a

battle wits and will, with Prathian's magical staff serving as the counterbalance to the dragon's offering of a feather.

The quill is kept in a vault in Xyn which is accessible only to the highest ranking members of Prathian's church. It's only accessed once a year, when the newest spells developed by the church are re-written with the quill to ensure that the knowledge of them will never be lost. The quill can also be accessed during times of emergency to call upon rare and dire spells that would be too dangerous to keep on scrolls, lest they fall into the wrong hands. In addition, any spells that are stored in the quill, when written out on a scroll, are at their most powerful. There are rumors that the High Priest keeps a small cache of such scrolls hidden away.

There are lesser copies of this quill that circulate throughout the church of Prathian, and even they are carefully protected. Other factions in Karthun have attempted to re-create the powers of even the lesser versions of Prathian's Quill, but none have yet succeeded.

Skycaller

Wielded by Valkyre the Knight of Karthun, Skycaller is a magnificent longsword, forged by Deknar the Smith; it embodies everything Valkyre's faith represents. Forged from a blue/silver metal alien to Karthun and etched with the words "Honor calls to the skies" along the blade, Skycaller in the hands of Valkyre defeated countless threats to Karthun. Legend says Valkyre delivered the killing blow to the dragon Deathfang by invoking Skycaller's ability to call down holy lightning, reducing Deathfang to ashes. Valkyre carried Skycaller into battle against the Three Demon Kings as the Worldfire ravaged Karthun. Every battle Valkyre waded into, Skycaller was by her side.



When Valkyre abandoned valor and became the Mother of the Dead, she locked Skycaller deep within the vaults of the Final Chapel. No one knows why she didn't destroy Skycaller, but many theorize that the Mother, now a dark shadow of her former self, is unable to affect the legendary blade. Others theorize that Skycaller represents the last spark of

Valkyre's valor and the Mother, in her deepest thoughts, cannot extinguish it completely. Regardless of her reasons, Skycaller remained in the vaults for many years until a group of adventurers, journeying into the Dead and the Final Chapel to save a fallen ally, freed the blade from captivity and used Skycaller to aid their escape. The act infuriated the Mother of the Dead, but Skycaller is free on Karthun and beyond the Mother's sight.

In the years following its return to Karthun, Skycaller has passed through the hands of several heroes, often appearing on the eve of significant battles. Skycaller possesses no direct personality of its own, but wielders describe an overwhelming need for valor and justice from the sword.

In the hands of a paladin, Skycaller is a godlike weapon capable of slaying magical foes and calling lightning from the heavens. Skycaller also discerns lies by emanating a zone of truth around the wielder, as well as providing immunity to all poisons and diseases. In the hands of someone with evil intentions, all of the described abilities work as normal; however, Skycaller randomly calls lightning from the heavens to defend itself. If a wielder dies, Skycaller disappears for a time and reappears elsewhere in a moment of need.

Task's Vestments

Moren Task is one of the greatest of the Worldwalkers, and some say, the person who made the final decision was to pierce the veil between worlds. Task has disappeared since that fateful day, but some of the items he used and wore during that ritual have been found around Karthun.

Other than the gods, few beings in Karthun have imbued items with power simply by wearing or using them. This is one of the many ways in which Task is a being apart from the rest of those who live in Karthun. Some of these items were enchanted by Task or others prior to his using them; however, it's almost without question that Task's very presence gave the items greater power than they possessed before.

Task was fascinated with all things celestial and often styled himself in the manner of a priest. He gave lip services to his worship of Prathian; however, at the height of his power, Task had a few small cults scattered around Karthun who professed to worship the Worldwalker himself.

In many instances, the items bear a name that's metaphorical. These items are scattered around Karthun and, thus far, have not been reunited. Should all of these items come together, the possessor would have a great deal of power at their disposal.

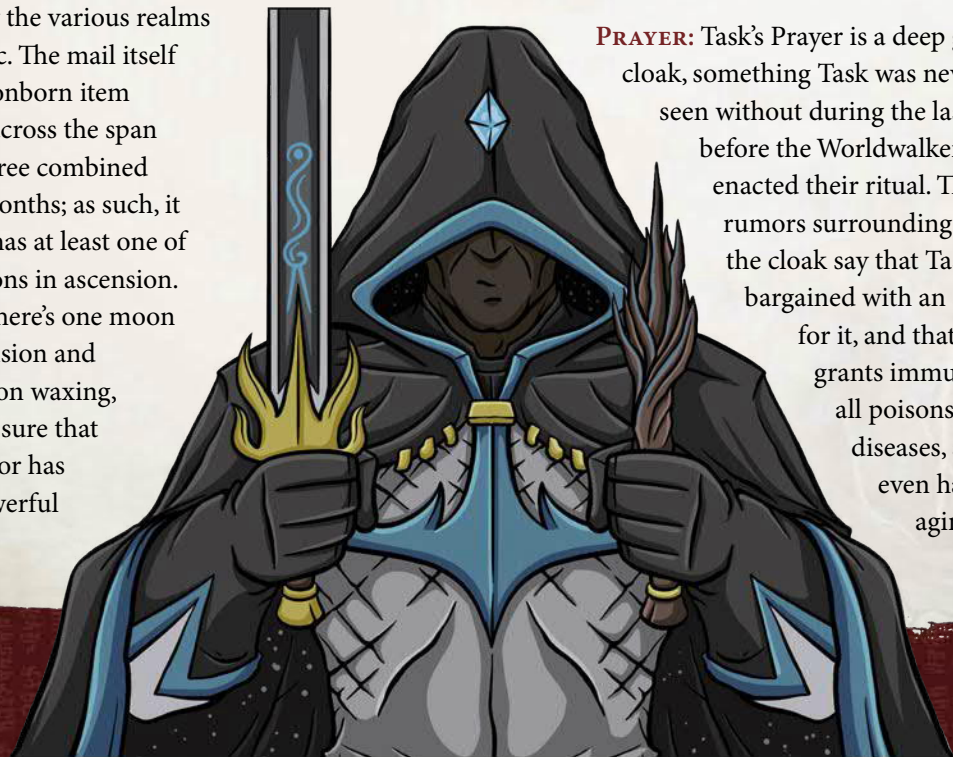
CHAIN: The Chain is a set of glowing mail that Task wore as he continued to study the various realms of magic. The mail itself is a moonborn item forged across the span of all three combined lunar months; as such, it always has at least one of the moons in ascension. Often, there's one moon in ascension and one moon waxing, making sure that the armor has two powerful

enchancements in effect on a near-permanent basis.

HALO: Task's Halo is a small stone that, when tossed in the air, floats around the head of the being who tossed it. This stone looks innocuous and, at first glance, appears to have a simple light charm on it, giving the user the appearance of a halo of cold starlight. However, the stone provides the user with enhancements to their physical and mental abilities, as well as protection against all mental attacks and intrusions. Finally, the Halo can, once a day, release a mighty spell that leaves all in the area of the user charmed, wishing to aid, or at least to not harm, the being using the stone.

JUDGMENT: Judgment was the name that Task gave his sword, a blade said to have been forged by Deknar himself. Judgment has a bluish cast to its metal and never needs to be sharpened. When swung at an opponent, the will of the wielder manifests itself. If the wielder is merciful towards its target, Judgment heals the being it touches, and also makes the target favorably inclined to the wielder. If the wielder wishes the target dead, however, the blade removes the target's head. All stories about Task and this weapon detail those two options alone. For someone as cunning as Task, it's likely that different motivations would result in a wider variety of effects when wielded.

PRAYER: Task's Prayer is a deep grey cloak, something Task was never seen without during the last days before the Worldwalkers enacted their ritual. The rumors surrounding the cloak say that Task bargained with an angel for it, and that it grants immunity to all poisons and diseases, and even halts aging.

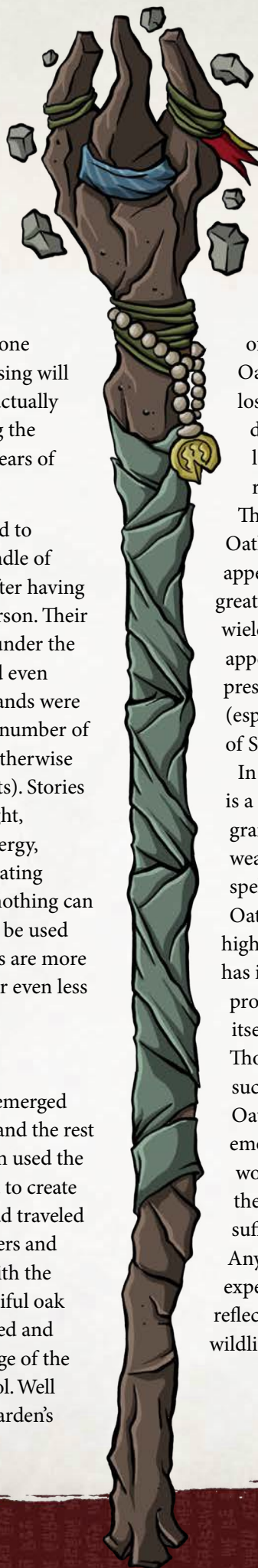


These effects last for 30 days following the removal of the cloak, so to maintain them, the cloak must be worn at least once a month. In addition to those benefits conferred upon the wearer of the cloak, once a month the wearer can give someone else the same blessings. This blessing will cure any disease or poison, and actually reverses the aging process, giving the recipient anywhere from 2 to 6 years of their natural lifespan back.

SCEPTER: What came to be referred to as Task's Scepter is actually a bundle of magical wands, fused together after having spent so much time on Task's person. Their wood and metal fused together under the ambient effects of Task's will, and even combined their power. All the wands were offensive in nature, containing a number of spells designed to kill, maim, or otherwise injure an opponent (or opponents). Stories have Task lobbing bolts of starlight, launching missiles of magical energy, heaving explosions, and even creating miniature vortexes from which nothing can escape. Some of these effects can be used multiple times a day, while others are more limited, working only monthly, or even less frequently than that.

Warden's Oath

Legend claims that when the gods emerged from the beyond to forge Karthun and the rest of cosmos, Sehad the World Warden used the second tree from Andorhem Forest to create Warden's Oath. With this staff, Sehad traveled across Karthun, carving mighty rivers and planting the first forests. Imbued with the essence of Karthun itself, this beautiful oak staff appears to be impossibly twisted and shaped by hand, topped with a visage of the second tree and Sehad's holy symbol. Well worn and stained by ages of use, Warden's



Oath entered battle with Sehad at every pivotal moment in Karthun's history.

When Sehad fell to the treacherous dagger of Felicos, Karthun embraced the staff, hiding it from the Betrayer and his Daggers of Felicos. For generations, Warden's Oath remained hidden and believed lost until an unknown druid took it up during the great fires in the Wolf Clan lands of Symul to summon godlike rainstorms, extinguishing the flames. The unknown druid and Warden's Oath vanished soon after. Warden's Oath appears across Karthun at moments when great peril jeopardizes the land, with a new wielder every time. Warden's Oath could appear at any crucial moment, as Karthun presents it to a worthy druid in need (especially druids following the ways of Sehad).

In the hands of a druid, Warden's Oath is a living extension of Karthun's will, granting the wielder power over animals, weather, and the earth itself. Any druidic spells or abilities cast with Warden's Oath should be considered to be at the highest possible level. However, the staff has its own personality and intellect and proves a long-held theory that Karthun itself possesses an intelligence and will. Though the planet may not communicate such feelings directly, through Warden's Oath, the wielder experiences these emotions and motivations. Karthun is wounded and angry, suffering under the strain of the Worldfire and abuse suffered during the Age of Flames. Anyone wielding Warden's Oath will experience mild personality shifts reflecting a need to protect Karthun and its wildlife with wrathful fury.

MONSTERS OF KARTHUN

CHAPTER NINE

Karthun is a world in peril. From the threat of the Worldfire and the demonic legions of the Three Demon Kings to the sinister oozes of the Blessed of the Crawl, monsters stalk every corner of the Last Continent.

This chapter describes the common roles of many iconic fantasy monster types, as well as describing monsters and threats unique to Karthun. Monsters take many shapes and play many roles in the conflicts across the Last Continent, from ravenous beasts terrorizing small villages to intelligent, devious horrors hiding in plain sight among the mortals of cities and towns. Monsters are everywhere.

MONSTERS. EVERYWHERE.

This chapter presents a handful of monsters native to Karthun, with many more mentioned throughout the book, and many more left unmentioned. We want to explore and detail more monsters in future publications. For now, there are many, many resources for monsters on the market today and as a rule of thumb when it comes to monsters in Karthun: If you have a stat block for it, you can find it somewhere in Karthun. Using campaign specific monsters may require a small amount of lore adjustment on the part of GMs, but Karthun is a big place with plenty of space for new monsters to hide (or not hide, respectively).

ICONIC MONSTERS IN KARTHUN

Described below are the common roles of a selection of iconic monster types present in many fantasy role-playing games. While this section doesn't include every possibility, it's a good selection of monsters for new and experienced GMs to choose from when planning their campaigns across Karthun.

ANGELS

The appearance of angels on Karthun is rare. In the Age of Making, when the world and the planes were new, the gods each created three angels. Unlike the patron races to come, each angel was a physical manifestation of their god's power. Sentient, powerful, and wise, the angels worked alongside their gods to forge Karthun and their domains within Kraya. As the caretakers of each realm within Kraya, the angels rarely appeared on Karthun. When the gods sacrificed Kraya to halt the Worldfire, many of the angels were slain as well. The few angels who escaped either left to explore the planes beyond or remained on Karthun as unseen agents of their god's will. Rumors and legends speculate wildly regarding the current location of the angels. Angels are indeed among the citizens of nations of the Last Continent, but their agendas (if any) are unknown.

ANKHEGS

Dwelling beneath the surface of Karthun in the vast caverns of the Deep, this insectoid race comprises the majority of the horrific mass known as the Writhing Swarm. While many variations exist among the swarm—from lowly soldiers to the spellcasting Clattermages, up to the highly intelligent and powerful Swarm Queens—the ankheg of the Writhing Swarm has terrorized the Deep and surface of Karthun for centuries. The origins of the Writhing Swarm remain unknown; however, the dwarven tyrants, the Underlords, have battled the insects for generations and possess the more insight into the Writhing Swarm than any race of Karthun.

BUGBEARS

With their physical prowess and cunning strategies, bugbears thrive across the Last Continent. Small tribes of warmongering bugbear tribes reside in the southern regions of Erast, Kraghold, and scattered across the wasteland of Desin. The largest tribe, known as the Red Mace Battalion, occupies a large range of land within the Bluemist Mountains of Thulengard. In contrast to their war-like kin, two bugbear brothers (Koldrik and Gruv) serve as member of the Sentinels of the Book within the Nexus of Xyn.

BULLYWUGS

Bullywugs inhabit many of the swamps and marshlands of the Last Continent. Despite their aspirations of a great bullywug empire, many of the tribes are too untrusting and greedy to share any form of wealth or land. Most notably, the largest bullywug tribe in the Diesess swamps of the Sylmn is currently embroiled in a three-way war between the lizardfolk of the Shadowmurk Council and the harpies of the Ironfeather Nest.

DEMONS AND DEVILS

Demons and devils lurk in every corner of Karthun. Whether on the battlefields on the eastern coast of Landrin or hiding among nobles in the city of Narhal, the subjects of the Three Demon Kings are ever-present. Uncommon

to other planes of existence, the term *devil* isn't commonplace. In a time before the Age of Making, the Three Demon Kings waged war with devil lords lost to time and established one kingdom: theirs. Devils present in role-playing games have a place in Karthun, but most commoners refer to all demons and devils as simply demons. The tyrannical rule of the Three Demon Kings doesn't exist without its share of detractors and conspirators, and many devils long for a day when their empire will rise anew.

DINOSAURS

Before the arrival of the Worldfire and the destruction of Shoana and Prevaul, dinosaurs roamed the jungles of Shoana. In the Age of Conflict, most of the dinosaurs are extinct, but a handful of specimens survived the Worldfire, existing in private menageries or loose in the deepest woods or caverns of the Deep.

DOPPELGANGERS

Doppelgangers move across the Last Continent in a wide variety of roles, from common thieves and con artists to infiltrators and spymasters in the employ of rival nations. Though several doppelgangers operate independently, the true hierarchy of the race resides with the Cabal of the Faceless. This group of elder doppelgangers controls the movements of nearly every doppelganger on the Last Continent through a fanatical, cult-like rhetoric and tales of the secret god hiding among the pantheon of Karthun.

DRYADS

Dryads inhabit many of the woodland regions of Karthun. Many delight in seduction and acts of cruelty upon unwitting travelers in their domains. Many trick heroes into performing acts that benefit the dryad, whether it's obvious to the heroes or not. However, in Andorhem Forest, the dryad of the wood recently abandoned their capricious ways to join in the war against the undead of the Rotting Legion.

GIANTKIN

The giants of Karthun died centuries ago, or so the stories say (see Giant, page XX, for more). Their bloodlines and distorted heritage lives on through the ogres, kundrok, cyclops, and handful of ettin on the Last Continent. Ogres (vastly more intelligent than expected) prowl the mountain ranges and Surface Caverns of the Deep, attacking caravans and villages for supplies and treasures. The ogre warlocks of the forgotten island of Traxyn utilize powerful magic and ingenious tactics to wage a secret war against the Illyn of Ilrenar.

Kundrok work as personal bodyguards and gladiatorial competitors in pits across the Last Continent, while Cyclops clans prefer the isolation of high mountain ranges of peaks. From their strongholds in the clouds, Cyclops chieftains recount the ancestral tales of their forefathers, instilling a fear of mankind and the world at the bottom of their mountains. Within their strongholds, Cyclops artisans carve works of art from stone and use druidic magic to commune with Karthun itself.

Wandering the plains and wild regions of the Last Continent, three ettin survive as the last of their kind. All male, the ettin know their time is coming to an end. For the ettin druid Two-Trees, it's the passage of time and life. Once an ally of the Wardens of Sehad, Two-Trees wanders the plains and forests of Andern and Symul, conversing on philosophy and the seasons, giving aid to travelers willing to accept his aid, all the while avoiding hostile forces. Two-Trees fought in many wars and tires of the world, longing for his natural passage into the soil.

GHOSTS/GHOULS

Any place in Karthun where the veil between the world and the Dead is thin, ghosts and ghouls are near. Thriving on the carrion from battlefields, ghouls are scavengers who often avoid direct attacks, preferring to prey on the wounded or recently deceased. In the deepest mines beneath Narhal, the self-proclaimed "King of the Feast" rallies ghouls and ghosts to his side, planning for

a full-scale assault on the living in the city above.

GNOLLS

Surviving in roaming packs in the expanse of Kraghorn and along the rock terrain near the bases of mountain ranges, the largest concentration of gnolls thrives in the wasteland of Desin. A large, unknown number of gnoll clans make war with rival clans and the survivalists of Desin's wasteland, raiding villages, stealing supplies, kidnapping, murdering, and looting. Many of the gnolls of Desin have an obsession with the artifacts and abandoned dwarven technology scattered across the wasteland. On the eastern shores of Desin, the Vilemane tribe breeds with demons of the Worldfire and offers sacrifices to the Three Demon Kings.

GOBLINS

Despite their former empire's destruction, goblins survive as a plague across the Last Continent. Goblins are everywhere. In the sewers and slums of every major city, to the Surface Caverns of the Deep, to abandoned mountain strongholds, goblins are a thorn in the side of every nation and every patron race. The goblins of Karthun are survivors, cunning and devious. Unlike many traditions, the goblins haven't forgotten their ancestry, performing profane rituals to the dark powers beyond Karthun to empower their warlocks. In the nation of Xyn, goblins hide in the shadows of the Nexus, plotting ways to infiltrate the structure and aid the horrors within the Bleed fighting to enter Karthun.

GRIMLOCKS

Lurking in the buried ruins of strongholds, castles, and keeps across the Last Continent, grimlocks hold dominion over a majority of the Surface Caverns and lower depths of the caverns within the Deep. Isolated packs of grimlocks attack the surface for food and supplies, often clashing with heroes and small communities. Within the Deep, grimlock armies wage war with the troll clans of the Undying and the clever battalions of the kobold nests for control of

territory and resources. In the deepest regions, grimlock slaves battle on the frontlines of the war against the Writhing Swarm for their Underlord masters. Surface scouts believe a full-scale war will erupt within the Deep soon.

HAGS

In the forests and swamps across the Last Continent, hags (coven and solitary) conspire to grab power in any form. From wealth, to political power, to secrets and arcane knowledge, the hags of Karthun are cold-blooded monsters. Hags appear at any level of society, often in seats of leadership or in positions adjacent to rulers. While many favor taking on the appearance of beautiful women, older hags prefer to appear as stately, regal women of distinction to impose fear and confidence upon their subjects. Regardless of social standing, hags are capable spellcasters and alchemists with a fondness for poisons and curses.

HARPIES

Nesting in the high cliffs and canyons across Karthun, harpies in small numbers pose a threat to caravans and small communities. In large numbers, under strong leadership, harpies are formidable enemies to any city or nation. Their greatest obstacle is a fierce distrust among rival nests, with the bloodiest wars in harpy history stemming from internal civil wars as their Queens struggle for territory and power.

KOBOLDS

Found in small caves and ruins, kobolds in Karthun favor traps and tactics to compensate for their small stature. In the Surface Caverns of the Deep, the kobolds of the Three-Poisons tribe battle with the grimlock tribes and the trolls of the Undying for supremacy. Unlike the trolls and grimlocks, the Three-Poisons kobolds trade with the surface where they are accepted and they often hire (or trick) heroes into service against their foes. Rumors suggest the kobolds know of a powerful secret hidden within the Undying domain and work to claim the area. The trolls are unaware of the power hidden within

their caverns and the kobolds intend to keep it that way.

MEDUSAS

Found within the ruins of fallen empires and powerful figures from history, medusas are among the most feared monsters on Karthun. Medusas favor any climate or nation, but the largest population appears along the western coast of the Last Continent in the regions of Tavia and Kolther. Medusas are fiercely territorial and guard their secrets to the death. In Kolther, the Lords of Dusk have an alliance with three medusa sister to safeguard their coastal port towns and serve as final measures against the Lords of Dusk's enemies. Rather than slay all of their enemies, the Lords employ the sisters to cast their gaze and imprison the statues deep within their cavern stronghold for all eternity.

SERPENTFOLK

In the flooded regions of the Deep along the east coast of the Last Continent, large nests of serpentfolk control vast expanses of caverns, driving out all trespassers. Originally from Shoana, serpentfolk wizards cast powerful rituals to evacuate as many nests as possible when the Worldfire arrived to destroy the continent. Arriving on Doryan, the elders ushered their nests to the small marshes along the east coast. Struggling to survive, the serpentfolk were nearly destroyed when the Worldfire ravaged Desin, Landrin, and Erast. The destruction of Desin's coast caused massive earthquakes and flooding into the Surface Caverns of the Deep. Once the Worldfire ceased, the serpentfolk found their way to the flooded caverns and established their new home. While the elders stress separation from the surface, many young, angry leaders wish to take their armies to the surface of Desin and Landrin to claim what the surface dwellers own.

NEW MONSTERS

Described below is a small selection of monsters and threats unique to Karthun based on region and frequency of appearance.

BEHEMOTH

RARITY: Extremely Rare

Across Karthun there are unexplained phenomena. One of the deadliest is the Behemoth. Some say there's only one of them, and only ever has been one of them, that it cannot be killed, and if bested it will only reappear in another area some time later. Others claim that there has to be more than one, and in a world where even the gods can die, they must be able to be killed.

In the stories told around campfires and in alehouses, some of the details are always the same. The first thing that signals the arrival of

a Behemoth is the shaking of the ground. The tremors last for days, perhaps

as long as a week. In the more geologically active parts of Karthun, this type of warning is fruitless, at best. The second sign is a thick and reeking fog. It's from this fog that a Behemoth arrives.

The descriptions of a Behemoth are all similar enough that most who ponder such things believe they're describing the same being or type of being. A Behemoth is a massive slab of flesh and limb, towering well over 100 feet tall when erect. Its arms, legs, and neck are all similar in length, and it seems to be able to switch the locations of those appendages at will. This means a Behemoth can stand on two legs, or use its arms, legs, and neck interchangeably as a means of locomotion. When this happens, its head recedes into its body and can reappear at the end of any of its limbs, making that limb into a neck. This gives a Behemoth the effect almost of a ball, with its limbs moving along the outside of the surface, rather than operating in a fixed location.

A Behemoth's flesh is a mottled brown color, though the descriptions of color of the mottling vary, giving more credence to the idea that there might be more than one of these monstrosities.

No one knows why a Behemoth chooses to arrive—or be sent, as some stories suggest—to a given location. This much is known: wherever one appears, destruction follows. Behemoths are incredibly strong, amazingly durable, and possess a seemingly endless supply of energy. They eat voraciously, and attack until they're driven away, killed (if that's even possible), or leave of their own unknowable accord.



BOARA

RARITY: Uncommon

Leather-winged and elusive, the boara sail the high winds far above the Endless. Most boara have wingspans over six feet in length, with some as large as eight. Their bodies are tight and compact while flying, but when they descend for a kill, they extend arms and legs that are many times the length of their wings. A diving boara resembles a skyborne leather jellyfish, its limbs reaching for prey.

The claws of a boara are particularly strong, and appear to be made of some type of transparent chitin. When harvested from their bodies, the claws can easily be adapted into fine weapons, a trick the People of the Seal know well. These same properties also extend to the bones of the boara. In areas frequented by the flying predators, the People of the Seal have entire mobile villages whose structures are made from boara bones. They are lightweight and easy to move.

Boara usually hunt small prey, but have been known to take adult seals when desperate. They seem to have an aversion to pain of any type, more than most living beings, and will avoid a fight if at all possible. This means that boara are rarely seen where there are large concentrations of people, as they have come to associate two-legged beings with the pain of death.

Boara live in familial packs and mate for life. They spend most of their time aloft, using the high winds of the Endless to drift and float, even in sleep. When they do land, they rest on one long, extended foot, much like a stork. Multiple packs of boara have been seen roosting on the ground together, looking like a short forest of leathery bodies; those who've seen the boara in such groupings report a massive sense of unease at the sight. These instances are rare, however, and boara in such cases are often left alone.





CRAWLPIT

RARITY: Uncommon

Scattered across the whole of Tavia are swamp-like areas colloquially referred to as crawl pits. Though the Blessed of the Crawl originated at the Vanished Monolith, they spawn more of their kind in these recesses. The areas covered in crawl pits give a faint greenish glow, especially at night, and smell like rotting eggs. However, during the day, with a freshening breeze, they can be very difficult to detect. More than one crawl pit has been, shall we say, *enhanced* by the addition of an unwary traveler or animal. As well, strange hybrid beings are often seen in the vicinity of the crawl pits. Whether deliberate machinations of the Blessed or a simply byproduct of the pits themselves, the ooze hybrids are strange and disturbing to most.

In Tavia, some attempt to destroy any crawl pits they come across, talking of the horrors that lurk inside each pit. An individual ooze is just that: a sentient mass of thick, gelatinous material. However, crawl pits are filled with a series of intertwining, extremely strong fibrous strands, almost like cables. These strands have a fleshy color to them that's only exposed if the surrounding slime and ooze is burned away. This is the only way to set about destroying a

crawl pit, but it is also when a crawl pit is at its most dangerous. The cables burst forth from the pit, lashing out and latching onto any organic material they can find. The cables can be cut apart, which is what must be done to destroy the crawl pit. It's thought that if the cables aren't destroyed, organic matter they seize forms the basis for the regeneration of the ooze around them.

Crawl pits possess a limited sentience, the precursor to the spawning of a full ooze intended to eventually become a member of the Blessed of the Crawl. This base intelligence gives the crawl pit a few unique characteristics. If undetected, a crawl pit sometimes extends a section of itself, like a slimy tentacle, to pull in an unwary being. These tentacles are extremely strong, with the core formed by the cords inside. Some crawl pits are said to project different smells, enticing unwary beasts and beings to come too close, unaware of the danger that awaits.

DRAGON SPUR

RARITY: Uncommon

The departure of the dragons left large holes in the general structure of Kraghorn. Few areas of the land are free of draconic marks in Kraghorn, and in some areas, the signs are far more obvious.

Dragon spurs are one of those signs. They're pieces of rock, stone, or other similarly durable material that seem to have taken on some of the malicious intelligence many dragons once possessed. This doesn't mean that the spurs are self-aware, simply that they are guided somehow by remnants of draconic intelligence. But it does mean that care must be taken as one travels across Kraghorn, as there's a possibility of any rock or outcropping suddenly flying at a perceived enemy.

Some of the deadlier dragon spurs also bear a breath weapon spraying fire, acid, gas, or other foul, harmful substances at those they attack. There are rumors of people seeing dragon spurs move towards one another, almost as if they're gathering together. More than one traveler claims to have seen many dragon spurs together, light glowing around them, and moving with purpose. Such rumors might be

discounted, but one can never be sure what form magic will actually take, so great caution is advised.

Dragon spurs have another property that's historically associated with dragons themselves: treasure. Something about the draconic nature of the spurs attracts valuables, and more than one cluster of dragon spurs has been destroyed only to reveal a cache of coins, gems, and even magical items within. This has led some to speculate that dragon spurs weren't created in the wake of dragons, but rather were left behind, as either safeguards or gatherers of treasure. Most in Kraghorn, and the few other areas around Karthun that bear the marks of draconic history, don't care where the spurs came from. They're either avoided at all costs, or hunted for the treasure they might contain.



Most dragon spurs bear some alignment with the traditional colors and types of dragons, and are elementally aligned to match. Even if a dragon spur doesn't possess the ability to spit fire or lightning, it's not difficult to tell which chromatic or metallic dragon the dragon spur is molded or modeled after. The different types of spurs tend to be found together, and rarely will one find metallic and chromatic spurs in the same area. However, there are rumors of an entire mountain composed of nothing but clusters of adjoined dragon spurs, of all types. The likelihood of these rumors being true is low, but caution is advised.

FLESHLING

RARITY: Rare

When a person's gravedust infection goes on for too long, they collapse, and two things happen to their bodies. Their bones disintegrate, turning into more gravedust, which then moves away to continue propagating. Then their flesh contracts, shrinking down, turning into a dessicated, compact mass in a vaguely humanoid shape. This is a fleshling, a deadly byproduct of gravedust. Fleshlings move from wherever they were spawned to the closest population center, killing as they go. Every time a fleshling kills another living being, more muscle and tissue is added to its form, and it grows larger. Few are ever able to attain great size or power, as the Reavers sent into Erast by Kyzul hunt them down as quickly possible. However, if a fleshling is allowed to kill, unchecked, it's difficult to say whether it would ever stop growing in size and power.

Fleshlings are, by far, most common in Erast; however, they can be found anywhere that gravedust has taken hold. Outside of Erast, though they're rare, they present a much larger threat

as Reavers are rarely sent outside of the bounds of their country to hunt the beings. Fleshlings are cunning, capable of hiding and stalking their prey for weeks at a time before attacking. More than one string of murders in cities across Karthun can be laid at the feet of fleshlings.

An unfortunate variant of the fleshling only steals the skin of its victims. These skinsnatcher fleshlings are more intelligent and far subtler than their fleshy counterparts. The skinsnatchers choose their victims carefully, sometimes taking months or longer to pick the right target. Rumors say there are skinsnatchers that have killed enough, have added layer upon slow layer of skin to their bodies, that they've attained a size that lets them pass undetected in even populous cities.



FOREST EEL

RARITY: Common

Found across the whole of Karthun, forest eels resemble snakes at first glance, but with shorter, thicker bodies. They slither through the cover of trees, occasionally taking to the canopies of trees for cover or ambush. However, their mouths give them away, as they have a circular opening filled with serrated teeth which they use to attach themselves onto their prey, rather than a jaw like most snakes. They use this mouth not to eat flesh, but to drain their prey of its blood and other vital fluids.

When small, forest eels may be easily mistaken for leeches, as they're often found in wet environments. However, as they grow, they're able to venture to other locales. Most often, forest eels prey on birds and small mammals. However, as they continue to grow—there's no upper bound to their age or size that anyone on Karthun is aware of—they become more territorial and begin attacking anything that comes close. The largest forest eel on record was found just south of Andorhem Forest, and was a good six feet in length and over a foot in diameter.

Forest eels have no visible eyes, and seem to sense the world around them via echolocation. In areas where forest eels are common, people have taken to carrying or wearing devices that produce extremely high pitches, throwing off the ability of the eels to sense where they are. There



are also a few species of animal that have adopted similar tactics. Foxes in eel-infested areas, for example, spread out and yip constantly as they move through an eel's territory.

In some parts of Karthun, forest eels are a delicacy, their sweet flesh enjoyed as an alternative to dessert.

FROST WIGHT

RARITY: Uncommon

If someone dies in the cold embrace of the Endless, sometimes they rise again, their physical forms given over to the Mother to do her bidding in the frozen north. Or so some say. Others claim that frost wights have nothing to do with the Dead, but instead are embodiments of walking ice, looking to tear apart anything warm that they come across.

Frost wights look like humanoid beings carved from pure ice. They move with a fluidity that belies the stiff look of their bodies. Moreover, they don't consume the flesh of their victims, but instead their internal fluids, leaving icy husks behind. The oldest frost wights aren't icy in color, but instead are the brown-red of old blood, as their bodies have taken on the color of that which they consume.

Frost wights often travel in packs, making them deadly for a lone traveler, and a serious danger for even a seasoned



group of adventurers. Frost wights take great pleasure in hunting their prey across the Endless, wearing them down, and eventually consuming them. They don't hunt quietly, but announce their presences with a sound that's a combination of ice cracking and a cacophony of voices. Some swear that they've heard the voices of dead friends among the snapping sounds of ice.

The tireless hunting of the frost wight is enough to wear down even the hardest of adventurers. In a few cases, the wights have even followed their prey out of the Endless, seemingly unaffected by warmer climes. Some followers of the Mother, driven by mad determination and what they say is her calling, have attempted to harness the power of the wights for themselves, using them as a tireless, hounding army.



GIANT

RARITY: Extremely Rare (Rumored)

Regardless of the fall of their northern empire many mortal lifetimes ago, rumors still persist that giants roam the Endless, traversing their former home like massive ghosts. Little is known about the giants, if they even exist, save that they hold a deep and unbridled rage for any being that isn't of their blood.

Some stories claim that the giants aren't gone from the Endless, but instead live underground, biding their time before they rise to reclaim the lands they once ruled. Regardless of whether this is true, it is true that the giants left abandoned settlements all across the Endless.

Searching for giant ruins, if not for the giants



themselves, is one of the primary reasons that non-residents venture into the Endless. In the south, tales abound of great halls, filled with gold and eldritch magics, and every now and again, a group of foolhardy people gathers the courage to venture to the Endless to explore. Most find nothing but frozen misery. This is the true legacy of the giants: the deaths of so many of the giants hold, or held, in such contempt.

Those who've returned from the Endless claiming to have seen giants or found their ruins report beings fifty feet tall or more, but who move as quickly as the winds that tear across the frozen plains. Some have returned with weapons, pieces of armor, or even works of art that could only have belonged to beings of immense stature.

One such piece depicts a massive army of giants, some nothing more than skeletons with a burning fire in the middle of their chests.

Still others have treasure that they claim came from the ruins of giant-created palaces: coin, jewelry, and magical items. Most of these stories are dismissed as rumors, as the size of the so-called giant treasure is equal to that of the smaller humanoids who fill the whole of southern Karthun. Still, there are runic markings on some that cannot be deciphered, and some sleeping in proximity to such treasure report dreams of ground-shaking footsteps, stone halls filled with booming voices, and haunting songs of massive proportions.

THE CHAIN LORD

RARITY: Unique

In the dark days after the former goddess of valor, Valkyre, turned to sorrow and death to become The Mother of the Dead, not all of her faithful abandoned the hope that their goddess was lost forever. The Pillars of Valkyre, three knight-paladins, the truest champions of Valkyre, refused to believe their goddess lost and willingly entered the darkness of The Dead to plead with their matron to bring her back to her senses. Their journey was difficult and after thirteen days and nights within The Dead, battling former friends, allies, and lovers now twisted into undead abominations by the Mother of the Dead, the Pillars approached the Final Chapel, citadel of the Mother. On bended knees, the Pillars begged their goddess to come back to the path of light and valor, citing the inevitable doom of Karthun should it continue without a beacon of justice to guide its' people. The Mother of the Dead refused, calling her former champions "slaves to hope and misguided valor". The Mother of the Dead offered each Pillar of Valkyre one chance to stand by her side as her Reapers, ushering in a new age of death. When the Pillars refused, the Mother unleashed her fury upon them, ripping her former champions to pieces and caging their souls within the deepest vaults beneath the Final Chapel.

As punishment for their refusal to join her willingly, the Mother of the Dead cobbled their remains together into a hulking abomination she dubbed "The Chain Lord", her enslaved jailer within the bowels of citadel. Returning to Karthun from the death is no easy task and on occasion the Mother of the Dead demands an escaped soul be found and returned to her embrace. In these situations, she sends forth the Chain Lord, sending him back to Karthun to tirelessly hunt souls his goddess demands.



GRAVE HAMMER

RARITY: Extremely Rare

The pain of the Mother is deep, and her hatred of Felicos is great. There are times when the rage she feels escapes her control, and her will is made manifest in Karthun. Most of these occasions result in storms or perhaps a small plague. Sometimes, however, the energies collect into a solid form: the grave hammer, one of the most terrifying servants of the Mother, save for the Chain Lord itself. The appearance of a grave hammer varies, as the Mother's will gathers whatever materials are available to construct this monstrosity. Most often, grave hammers occur in confined locations where the barrier between Karthun and the Dead is thin. This means graveyards in and near Erast and Narhal, among other locations, see them most often. This also means that the materials gathered to create the grave hammer are likely to be the stones, bones, and dirt of such burial grounds.

A grave hammer is the Mother's rage personified. Most often, they take humanoid shapes, six to seven feet in height, with a semblance of long hair and burial shrouds trailing behind them as they move. Regardless of the physical materials from which they're constructed, grave hammers move with the liquid grace of the Mother, and strike with her ferocity as well. Most often, grave hammers exist

only to destroy, to allow the Mother to vent her rage upon the world that allowed her beloved Sehad to be murdered. However, on occasion, a grave hammer has a distinct purpose: to serve as herald to the Chain Lord.

On these occasions, a grave hammer doesn't strike out randomly or without purpose. No, on these occasions, a grave hammer moves from its location of origin to a place where the veil

between Karthun and the Dead is too strong for the Mother to penetrate, and

it works to thin that space, expending its own energy and the Mother's rage, to allow her to send the Chain Lord through to hunt for the souls the Mother claims as her own.

Grave hammers fight with cunning and ferocity. They have no resistance to magic, although they have the ability to pierce illusions and see the unseen. Only finding a follower of Felicos changes the course of a grave hammer from one of total destructive rage or a thinning of the veil. On those

occasions, the grave hammer hunts that follower to the exclusion of all else, as the Mother's desire for an end to all that Father Venom represents outweighs

all of her other desires combined.



GRAVEDUST

RARITY: Common

With all of the undead and all of the funerals and all of the tombs in Erast, a great amount of the dirt and dust in the country bears the particles of dead bodies in it. Some of these particles retain a measure of the energy of the bodies that make them up. These pockets of dirt are gravedust, and while mostly a nuisance, they can prove to be deadly to the unwary. Gravedust moves around as one might imagine dirt would: being blown along by a breeze, by boots kicking it back and forth, clinging to the clothes of a traveler, or carried by a stream. Gravedust, however, clings in greater quantities, or moves without the presence of a breeze or flowing water.

If an unwitting person breathes in or ingests too much of the dust, their organs begin to turn necrotic, and eventually decay inside of them. This process is difficult to detect, however, as

the gravedust projects the illusion that all is well. However, outside observers can detect the presence of too much gravedust in a person because the victim's veins slowly turn a sickly grey color. The treatment is easy, as the person only needs to swallow a measure holy water to expel the dust. However, if left untreated, the person eventually dies, their body decaying and rising again as a fleshling.

Gravedust can be found in and around almost any collection of buried dead bodies, though it's far more common in Erast. There's also a variant of gravedust from large funeral pyres. This graveash is far less common, but can be found in areas torn by war or wracked by plague where bodies are often burned in large quantities. Graveash acts much quicker, burning a person's body from the inside out, and leaves nothing but more graveash in its wake. There's no graveash equivalent of fleshlings, which is a blessing, as the ash itself is deadly enough.



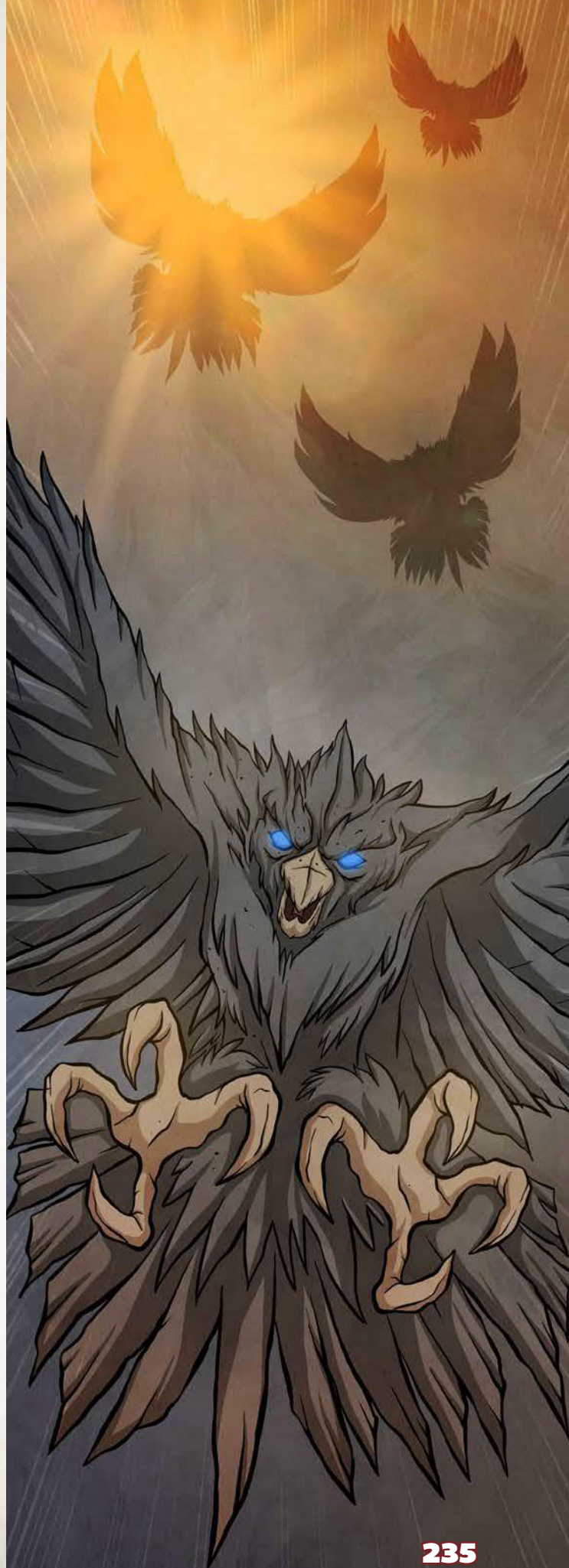
GREYHAWK

RARITY: Uncommon

More of a threat to roving undead such as fleshlings, greyhawks are birds of prey that have gravesight, allowing them to track undead from miles away. They dive, spreading their wings to their full six-foot span at the end of their dives, rising back up to the skies with gobbets of undead flesh in their mouths. It's difficult to say whether the birds are undead themselves, but those with gravesight report that they're unable to track the birds, so it's assumed they're living. Greyhawks are primarily a threat to undead, as that's their primary source of food. However, if driven to extremes of hunger, or if changed somehow—by an infestation of gravedust, for example—the birds have been known to attack the living from time to time. Their three-inch long talons do just as much damage to living flesh as they do to undead.

Greyhawks are found anywhere there are large concentrations of undead, and so are primarily found in Erast. However, they've been spotted as far north as the Endless, giving credence to the idea that frost wights are, in fact, servants of the Mother. Greyhawks don't exhibit any mating habits that anyone has been able to detect thus far. They're never found in or near nests of any kind, no one has seen eggs, witnessed a live birth, or in fact seen greyhawk young. For those who study such things, this is both an endless source of fascination and a continual frustration.

Another peculiar feature of the greyhawk is their tendency to form “wheels” in the sky. A large grouping of greyhawks gathers together and flies in a near-perfect circular formation, looking much like the wheel of a cart or wagon. These wheels typically only last for a few seconds, though there are places in Karthun where greyhawk wheels have persisted for a few hours, or even days. Much like how they reproduce, no one knows why greyhawks form wheels, though most view them as signs of good luck.





ICE MIST

RARITY: Uncommon

Ice mists are the airy, misty cousins of frost wights. Some say these apparitions are the spirits of those who died from the cold in the Endless, sent back by the Mother to bring more souls to her realm, as cold as the depths of the Endless. Others claim that ice mists are a form of elemental, summoned by the latent magics of the giants under the ice.

Whatever their true nature, ice mists hunt quickly and silently, stealing into the lungs of the unwary, freezing them from the inside out. Protecting against them is trivial; a breathable piece of cloth over the mouth, a wise protection in the Endless regardless, is enough to keep them out. However, all they need is the smallest gap, the barest entrance into mouth or nose, and they will enter, beginning their frigid work.

Some who venture into the Endless return changed, their skin pale, their lips blued. If these changes don't fade after their exit from the frigid depths of the north, it pays to keep an eye on them. It's rumored that there are more powerful, subtler forms of ice mist, ones that don't kill their hosts, but possess them. People so possessed, if such a thing truly can happen, don't exhibit any behaviors that would mark them as dangerous. However, especially in the lands that border the Endless, those who exhibit such signs are shunned and turned away, local lore insisting that they are dangerous.

There are also dangerous mist-like creatures to be found in the rest of Karthun. They aren't as common as they are in the Endless, but they're no less deadly. They can be found anywhere there are extremes of environment or temperature, stealing into the lungs of the unwary traveler and killing much as the ice mists do.

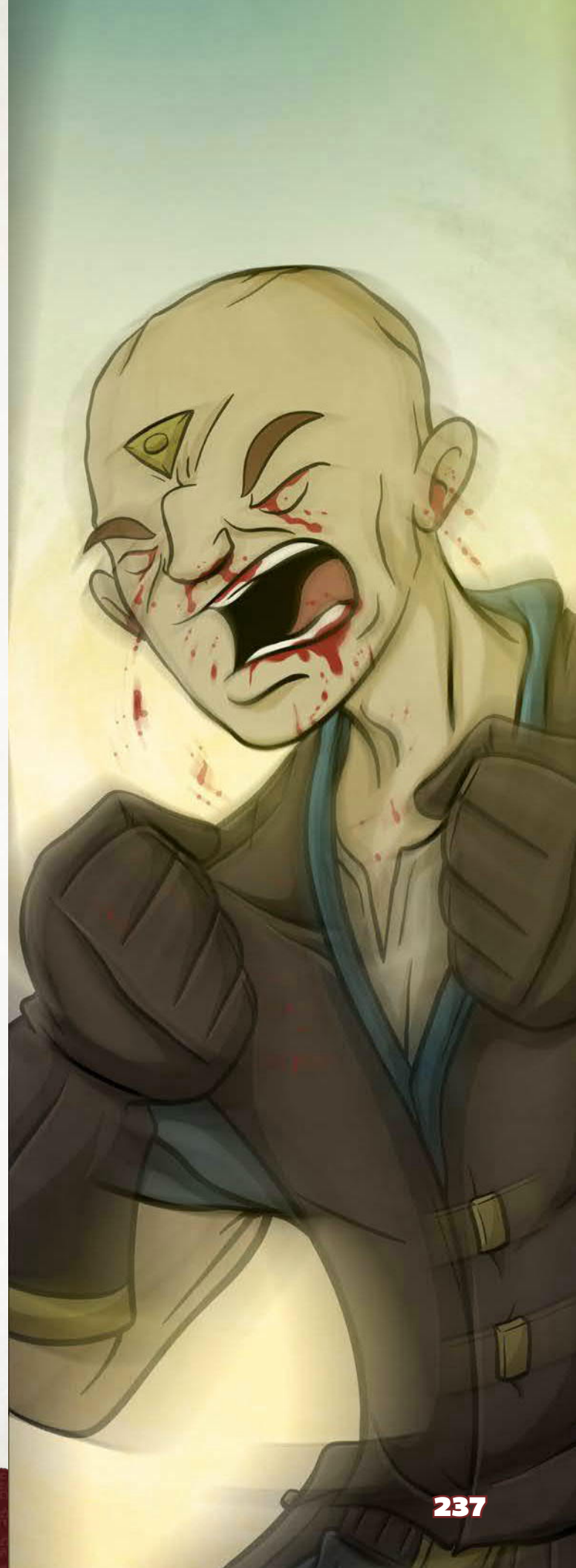
LIQUID SOUND

RARITY: Uncommon

Water is a scarce resource in Kraghorn, which is why Boldrak's Water Carriers are able to help him control so much of the land. There's a desperation bred by lack of a stable source of such a life-giving thing, which has led to the rise of pools of liquid sound—not a source of life, but a deadly hazard.

Perhaps another offshoot of draconic magic, pools of liquid sound convince the hearer, usually one who's desperate for water, that a cool, clean source of running water is nearby. In reality, there's no discernible source for the sound of the water, save for a hazy near-afterimage in the heat of the Kraghorn wastelands. The people who survive do so, not through guile or physical strength, but through the loss of their hearing. One and all, they've been deafened by the liquid sound they discovered, and more than a few rave, either verbally or through writing, of the sounds they still sometimes "hear" echoing in their minds.

Liquid sounds aren't classifiable as a monster, as such: no one has defeated one and only a few have ever survived an encounter with one with their hearing intact. However, stories claim that by stopping up one's ears, one can venture into the domain of a liquid sound. Those same stories speak of shimmering images, flashes of other places, perhaps even other worlds, glimpsed in the shifting form of a liquid sound. It's unknown whether these stories are true, and it would take a foolhardy individual indeed to attempt an investigation.



MONOLITH

RARITY: Uncommon

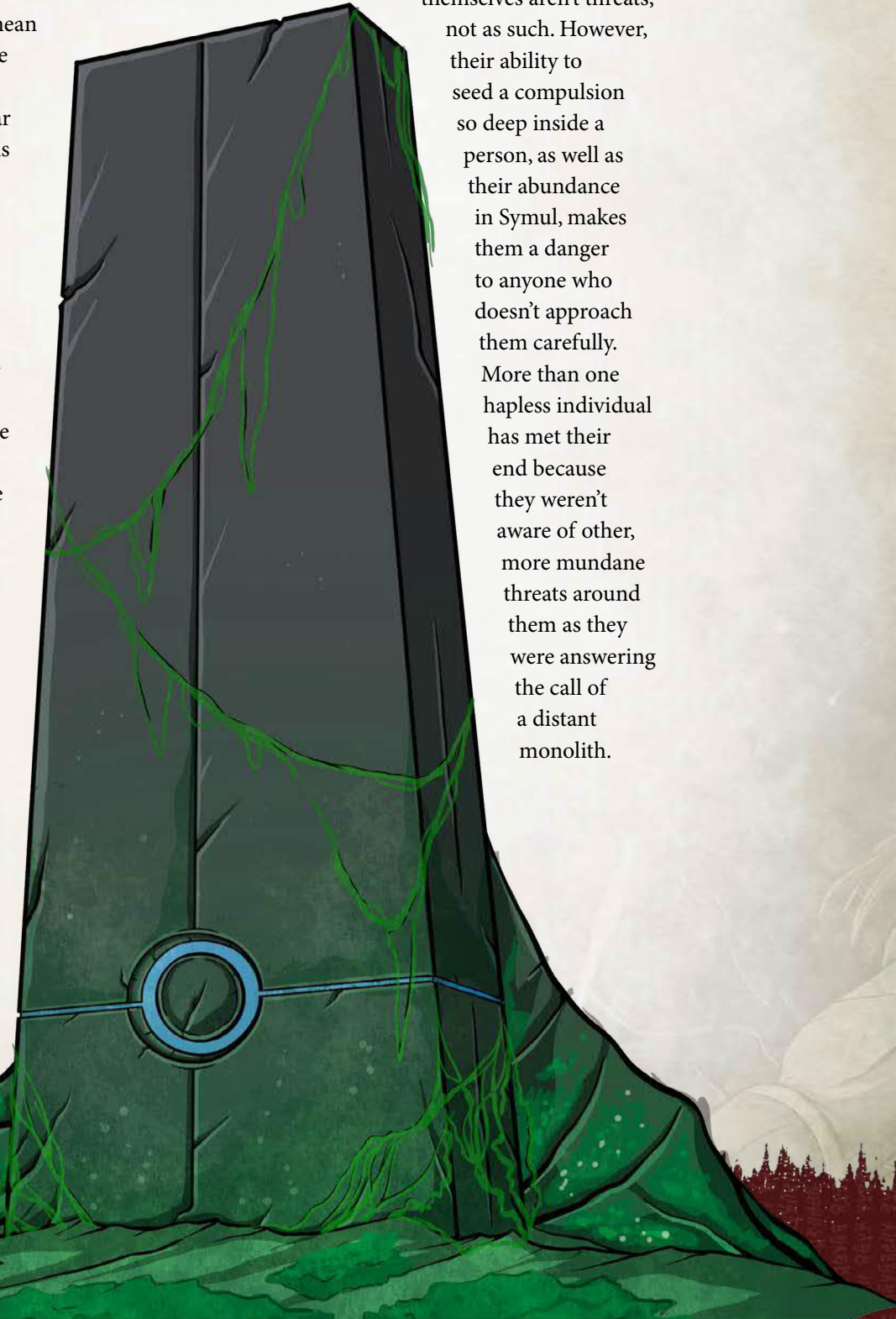
Monoliths are found throughout Karthun, a remnant from the creation of the world, their purpose long forgotten. In Symul, more than in other parts of Karthun, the monoliths are... active. It's been noted that travel through Symul is dangerous, and that the elves guard their lands with unmatched ferocity. For anyone with the sense given a goose, that would mean traveling through Symul would be a foolhardy undertaking at best. However, there are some who hear the inaudible call of the monoliths and risk the journey all the same.

The monoliths of Symul look much as the rest of the land does. That is to say that they blend in, even better than the dwellings of the Jackal Clan do, and unless you're called by them, it would be possible to walk directly past—or over—a monolith and be none the wiser. There are two times of day, however, where the monoliths are more visible. At the exact point when the sun crests the horizon in the morning, or when the last sliver of daylight dips below the horizon, the monoliths glow with a hazy, white light for a brief moment.

The nature of the monoliths has long since been lost to the mists of time. Some who've found them claim that there are doors or other entrances, and that magical wonders wait inside of them. Others are drawn to a given monolith and, upon arriving, simply wish to stare at it, as if the monolith itself wishes to be worshiped. Others react only

to specific stimulus, such as fire, water, a certain type of food, a drink, or other even more arcane items. Invariably, the one who's been called by a monolith—a mental calling, one that roots itself deep inside an individual—knows what the triggering item is (if there is one) and goes to great lengths to make sure the monolith receives it.

Overall, the monoliths themselves aren't threats, not as such. However, their ability to seed a compulsion so deep inside a person, as well as their abundance in Symul, makes them a danger to anyone who doesn't approach them carefully. More than one hapless individual has met their end because they weren't aware of other, more mundane threats around them as they were answering the call of a distant monolith.



MIST WIDOW

RARITY: Uncommon

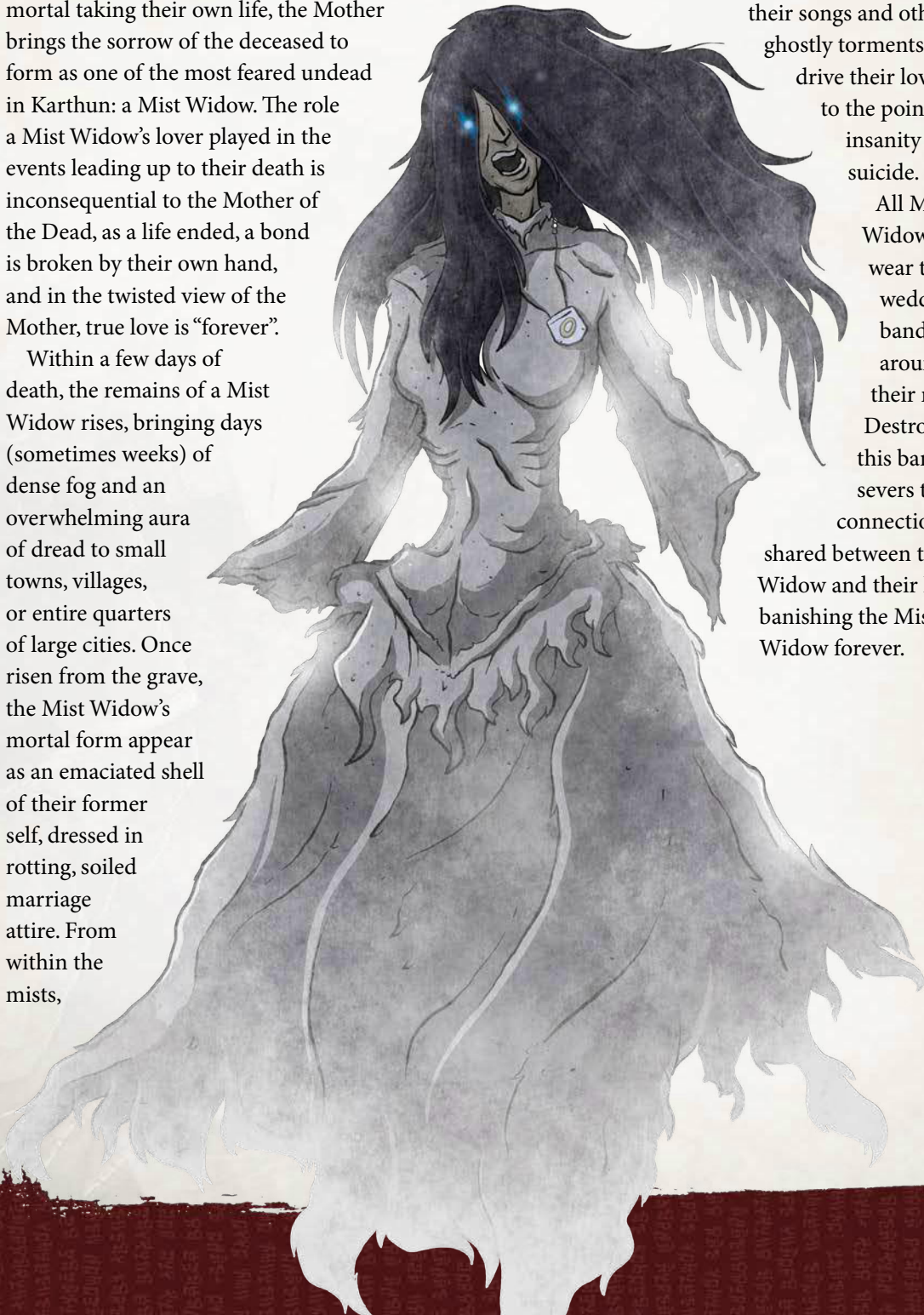
With her own love taken by betrayal, the Mother of the Dead turns a spiteful eye towards true love among mortals. From her throne within The Dead, the Mother watches passing souls carefully for a special torment she reserves for lovers with an especially strong connection. When true love is severed by the act of a mortal taking their own life, the Mother brings the sorrow of the deceased to form as one of the most feared undead in Karthun: a Mist Widow. The role a Mist Widow's lover played in the events leading up to their death is inconsequential to the Mother of the Dead, as a life ended, a bond is broken by their own hand, and in the twisted view of the Mother, true love is "forever".

Within a few days of death, the remains of a Mist Widow rises, bringing days (sometimes weeks) of dense fog and an overwhelming aura of dread to small towns, villages, or entire quarters of large cities. Once risen from the grave, the Mist Widow's mortal form appear as an emaciated shell of their former self, dressed in rotting, soiled marriage attire. From within the mists,

witnesses see only obscured views of the Mist Widow and hear the low sounds of sobbing and the mostly incoherent, grief stricken mutterings from the Mist Widow lamenting their loss of love. Once a Mist Widow finds their prey, it begins humming dour melodies that, while barely audible to nearby listeners, ring loud and clear in the ears (and mind) of their target. Mist Widows remain near the home of their lover,

typically trapping them inside using their songs and other ghostly torments to drive their lover to the point of insanity and suicide.

All Mist Widows wear their wedding band around their neck. Destroying this band severs the connection shared between the Widow and their lover, banishing the Mist Widow forever.



ORC MARAUDER

RARITY: Common

Not all orcish tribes in Kraghorn have gone easily under Boldrak's sway. Some have remained independent, and they roam across the whole of Kraghorn, pillaging and generally clinging to the old ways. They travel in groups, with the largest warbands being around 50 members in size. Those numbers help keep them out of Boldrak's sphere of interest.

When an orc raiding party comes through even a semi-settled area, there's often much bloodshed. And not all of it is at the hands of the warband itself. Any given settlement or gathering of mortals in Kraghorn has good odds of being home to very capable warriors, who give as good as they get.

Some speculate that the time of the warbands is done, but there are still chieftains who refuse to bow to Boldrak even if it would mean an easier life. They dream of glory, of uniting many orcs under their banners, even of crossing the Skyreach Mountains and raiding into the more settled lands to the north.

Some orcish chieftains have grown desperate for power and have begun digging into the secrets of Kraghorn itself. The departure of the dragons left behind all manner of hidden power, from physical objects to things far subtler and more deadly. At least one orcish chieftain, known only as Leader Spur, has bonded herself to a dragon spur to harness its power. No one knows how she did this, but she's feared and avoided at all costs. This is only one example of the lengths to which some orcish leaders will go in their bid for power and dominance.



RAVENOUS

RARITY: Uncommon

The elves of Symul aren't unique in Karthun for their abilities connected to both a moon and to a species of animal. However, they are some of the only sentient beings in Karthun who have undertaken such a binding successfully. Across Karthun are those who have attempted to mimic the success of the magics of Symul, with disastrous effects. They're known as the Ravenous and they lurk in the dark spaces on the edges of society. They remain largely at the fringes of society, in sewers, caverns, close to the people who are like what they used to be, but far enough away to remain largely undetected.

The bulk of the Ravenous are rat hybrids, though their musculature is that of a much larger being. They stand between 6 and 7 feet in height, and they radiate a sickly purple glow from their eyes and mouths. If they're cut, their blood is also luminous with the power that created them. Other Ravenous are combinations of different animals, including lizards, snakes, cats, and bats. No one is sure why rats are the most common

hybrid, and few of the Ravenous are willing to talk about it.

The Ravenous are intelligent, hunt in packs, and seem to refrain from attacking one another. Those who have survived an encounter with the Ravenous claim that the beings do speak, though not in complete sentences. Single words express their intent, which is often to kill and consume any who disturb their subterranean lairs.

There's speculation as to why the binding rituals don't work for anyone who isn't an elf of Symul; however, there's not enough evidence or information to come to a solid conclusion. It's difficult to gather information on the spells and rituals used to create the Ravenous because the elves of Symul carefully guard their own secrets, and the Ravenous are unwilling or unable to discuss the process after the transformation is complete.

One item of note is that the Ravenous don't change with the phases of the moon. Whatever power they obtain, and whatever forms they're bound into are finalized at the completion of the ritual. That alone makes them very different beings from the elves of Symul.





SLIVER LEECH

RARITY: Uncommon

In Kolther, the Kings of Dusk harvest and control all sources of metalweave. This flexible metallic substance is pulled from the ground almost as one would pull grass in a field, or trim hair from a head. It's strong and flexible, and can be woven into any number of forms, then tempered for extreme durability. However, harvesting metalweave can be a deadly process, especially if a nest of sliver leeches is found in a metalweave patch. Sliver leeches look just like metalweave at first glance: shiny, slender bundles of metallic fiber. That appearance remains until the nest is disturbed, at which point the sliver leeches roil forth, attaching themselves to the hapless target.

Once a sliver leech affixes itself, it begins to burrow under the target's skin. They're so slender that it's almost impossible to grab one of them at a time, so the affected person often begins ripping at their own flesh to try to prevent the leeches from digging inside. If even a single leech makes it into the victim's bloodstream, a total transformation of the victim's body takes place, with a metallic circuitry appearing where their veins and arteries run through their body. At that point, the victim is dead in all but appearance, as the rest of the living functions cease, but their bodies continue to move. Some hazard that the sliver leeches are in some way related to the oozes that make up the Blessed of the Crawl, but this theory hasn't been substantiated.

Few know what happens to a person after a sliver leech has taken hold. Anyone taken while harvesting metalweave for the Kings of Dusk is immediately put down, on the order of the Kings. If the sliver leeches are somehow connected to the Blessed of the Crawl, in nature if not in actual allegiance, one might suppose that a new faction could be born in Karthun. However, any being that propagates by taking over or repurposing of another living being is viewed as anathema by most sentient beings across the whole of Karthun.

SPINESNATCHER

RARITY: Uncommon

These boneless undead burrow under the ground, flowing through the small spaces between pieces of dirt and rock, leaving few signs of their passing. Their name comes from their preferred form of attack, which is to gather the masses of muscle that make up their bodies, and spring out of the ground, grabbing their victim by the base of the spine. They then tear back into the ground with awful strength, taking chunks of bone and flesh with them. In addition, if a spinesnatcher comes upon someone sleeping, they gather under that person, slowly positioning themselves along the entirety of the victim's back. More than one hapless traveler has woken to find their companions dead on the ground, all the bones of their backs removed, leaving nothing but a gaping chasm in their backs. Spinesnatchers avoid any fabric woven in the light of the full sun, or all three moons. As one might imagine, there's a brisk trade for such goods in the towns and cities of Erast.

Spinesnatchers are similar to, though not at all related to, fleshlings. They're both undead bundles of muscle, with no bones to speak of. However,

where fleshlings take muscle from their victims to increase their power and size, no one knows what spinesnatchers do with the vertebra they steal from their victims. The few spinesnatchers that have been killed or captured all appear to be of a similar size, so these beings aren't increasing their power with their deadly thefts. If they're gathering the spines instead of using them, one shudders to think what such a macabre collection would look like.

SPLINTER

RARITY: Common

Just as so many things in Symul move and change with the movements of the three moons, so too does one of the more common threats of the area. Splinters are fragments of trees that fall or are cut in an area of Symul when a given moon's power over that area is the strongest. Because the moons are always waxing and waning in power, and because the cycle of nature sees trees fall regularly, splinters can be found in every part of Symul. They resemble walking piles of wooden remnants, humanoid in appearance, but not in temperament or demeanor. In fact, it's unknown if they're intelligent or not. They respond to potential threats to their existence with violence, moving quickly and stabbing their targets repeatedly with the



sharpened ends of their arms, legs, or even the tops of their heads.

As they were formed when the power of their moon was at its height, so too do they wane in power when their moon does. This makes them a natural accompaniment to the elves of their area. In fact, some elves have even created magics to bind groups of splinters together to use as weapons or, for the masochistic, into armor. Wielding or wearing a splinter in this manner often brings harm to the bearer as well as their target, for the splinter's sharp points are a constant threat, no matter on which end one may be.

Some elves hold reverence for splinters simply because those beings wax and wane with power in response to the moons, much as the elves do. These sects of elves most commonly wield a splinter-born weapon or wear splinter-born armor. Some even go so far as to pierce themselves with living splinters in a bloody ritual that fuses the animate wood with the elf's body. Such bindings are rare, but they are honored, even among elves who don't revere the splinters.



SWAMP GOBLIN

RARITY: Common

Much like the merfolk in the waters adjacent to Sylmn, the swamp goblins are a mismatched lot, bearing features from all manner of vile creatures. They have little in common with the goblins found roaming in the rest of Karthun, partially because no one's sure if they're really goblins or not, and partially because it seems the swamp goblins are largely incapable of organized behavior. They bicker with each other as much as anyone else. One of their only unifying factors is greed. They covet things, things that seem random to an outside observer. In fact, a swamp goblin might accost a lone traveler and demand a pink feather for passage just as soon as it might demand coin or more traditional forms of payment.

Most would disregard swamp goblins as little more than a nuisance, or a price of doing business is Sylmn. However, the swamp goblins have another shared characteristic, one that means they must have attention paid to them. If a swamp goblin is

sufficiently angered, its physical form disintegrates, and a thick, noxious vapor takes its place. That vapor, if inhaled, is fatal almost immediately. Any who survive the inhalation begin to change, eventually becoming swamp goblins themselves, or near enough as to not be able to tell the difference. One story speaks of a portion of the deep swamp that's full of nothing but raging swamp goblins, their gassy forms filling the area to the exclusion of all else.

Some foolhardy, or perhaps highly entrepreneurial, individuals work to deliberately anger swamp goblins, and then capture the resultant mist. Some mages use the mist in spellcasting rituals or keep it as a curiosity. Other devious individuals use the mist as a potent and darkly mischievous form of assassination, one with the potential for massive collateral damage. Fortunately, swamp goblins seem to have little longevity when outside of their native

environment. If this weren't true, it's plausible that an infestation of swamp goblins could overrun a small town or part of a city with ease.



TRANSIENT

RARITY: Common

Transients form and dissipate with regularity within Istin, pulled from whatever unknown existence they had before taking shape, and returning to the same without warning. They embody any elemental type found in Istin, including sub-types found at the borders of the quadrants. Most transients aren't intelligent, though they do appear to form with internal intent, as if they have a task to complete before dissipating. If one gets in the way of or disturbs a transient, it invariably leads to an often deadly conflict.

Most transients form, move with whatever inborn purpose they have, and dissipate within the bounds of Istin. The chaotic elemental nature of Istin is a natural breeding ground for transients, though they can be found anywhere pure elemental energy is expended, even as the result of a spell.

Their very name indicates impermanence; however, many sentient elemental beings got their start as transients. The process by which this happens is unknown, though those of a theological bent posit that it must be a divine occurrence, much as any sentient being comes into the world with what they call a soul. It's difficult to study transients, as predicting when a transient will form is nearly impossible. Even if one were present when a transient formed, one would have to stay at a distance as to not provoke it, and then possess luck enough for that given transient to

develop sentience. The odds of being in the right place at the right time to witness and chart such a development are high indeed.

WALKING TREASURE

RARITY: Rare

Another side effect of Kraghorn having once been home to dragons, the so-called walking treasures are both tempting and deadly. In a land driven by the discovery of hidden wealth, many cling to the idea that they'll one day become rich because they'll stumble across treasure, and won't need to share it or give it away. More than a few have been lured away from family, friends, and safety by walking treasures.

They take the form of exactly what their name suggests. This means that any cache of treasure or goods in Kraghorn has the potential to be a deadly trap, rather than a means of attaining riches. Additionally, walking treasures fog the minds or senses of their targets, making their victims think they're always just about to reach the treasure. The walking treasures lure their victims to areas where the victim will die



due to natural hazards, allowing the walking treasure to consume them at leisure.

Walking treasures are most common in Kraghorn, though most areas of Karthun have some analogue to them. Elsewhere they're called freezing riches, gravecoins, Felicos' lures, or simply tempters. Some claim that killing a walking treasure will reveal the way to an even greater fortune, but all those who claim to have hunted them have nothing to show for their efforts save for stories and empty pockets.

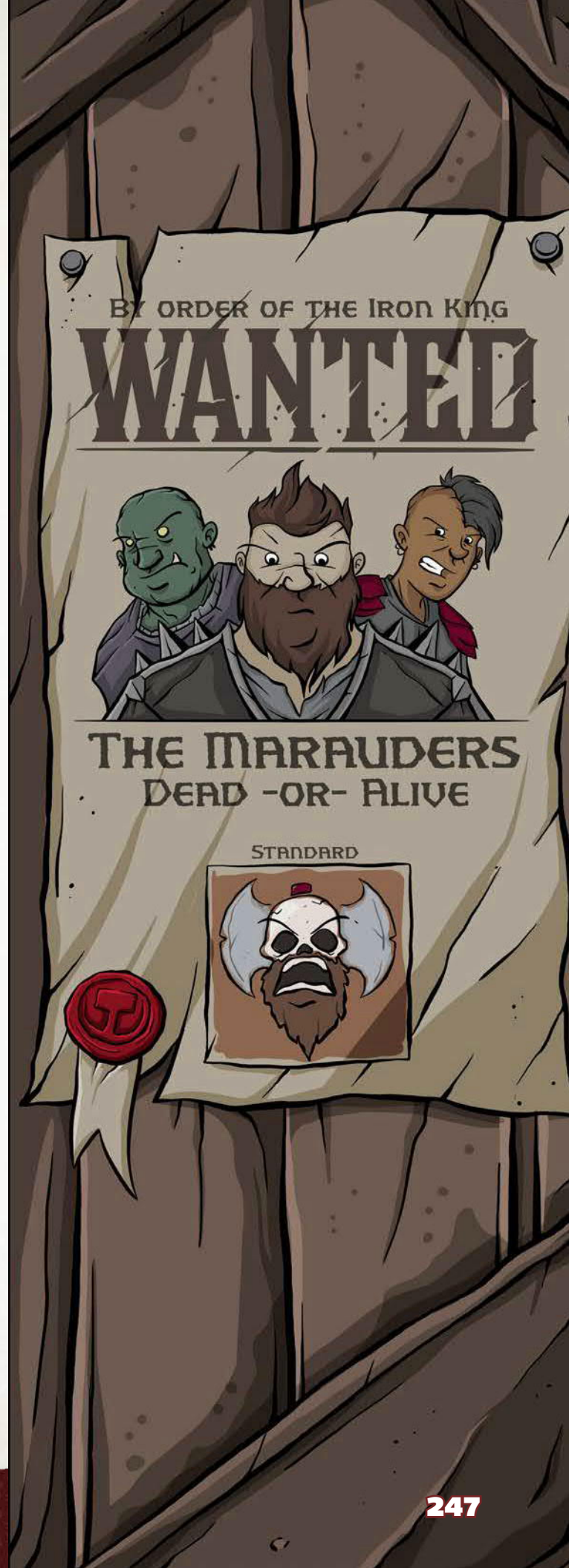
WARBAND

RARITY: Common

Due to all the undead that roam the lands of Erast, neighboring countries or enterprising groups of individuals gather warriors and venture out to hunt undead. There's a great prejudice often held by those who make up such warbands, and more than one group of innocent Erastian farmers or landowners have been killed without mercy by such forces itching for a fight. And beyond groups of such warriors, there are also individuals that have made names for themselves as leaders of the warbands. They target mercilessly, fight to claim bounties, and little more. Some suggest that they're the true threat of Erast, as Kyzul's Reavers handle the majority of the errant undead in the country.

Warbands of similar bent exist all across Karthun, especially in areas where there's active strife or conflict. Enterprising humanoids invariably find ways to profit from conflicts. In areas like Landrin and southern Istin they're especially common.

Warbands can be composed of whatever types of beings have chosen to band together for common cause. More often than not, they're not of noble bent, though there are exceptions. Most warbands exist either to make a profit, to cause mayhem for their enjoyment, or some mix of the two. Warbands who hold no value in lives save for their own can be a scourge that plagues any locality. In militaristic areas of Karthun, ones where discipline and the rule of law have sway, warbands are far less common.



WHISPERER

RARITY: Rare

Those who spend a long time in the Endless claim that it changes the way one's ears work. For many, the only sound heard for days on end is the moaning of wind across the ice. The longtime residents of the Endless hear other things, however. They speak of whispers in the ice, seeming to come from deep below the surface. Southerners scoff at this notion, claiming that those few who live amid the ice have just lost their senses.

No one has ever seen one of the whisperers, but the stories all share a common theme: after a long period of time out in the Endless, usually a month or more, some people begin to hear whispers coming from below the surface of the ice. The words are always indistinct, but everyone who's heard them agrees: there's something down there, calling. Some who hear the whisperers try to dig through the ice with their bare hands, needing companions to drag them away. Others hear nothing now, having pierced their own eardrums rather than hear the whispers any longer.

Whisperers are unique to the Endless, which is fortunate for those who live in the other desolate locales of Karthun. However, a similar phenomenon or threat is reported to exist in the mountain tunnels found in Tavia and the Deeps. People who spend enough time underground claim to hear echoes in the tunnels, or even sounds coming from deep within the rock. Most dismiss these stories as mental instability; however, the common threads that link these incidents with the stories of whisperers in the Endless are too visible to ignore.



WORLDFIRE HOUND

RARITY: Extremely Rare

When the Worldwalkers pierced the veil between the Worldfire and Karthun and the Three Demon Kings sent their armies forth, demons and devils poured into Karthun in nigh-uncountable numbers. However, the Worldfire Hound was one of the greatest threats to come through the tear before Deknar was able to block the gash with the Chain.

A Worldfire Hound is exactly what its name implies: a four-legged being composed of moving, sentient Worldfire. They're over ten feet tall at the shoulder, and are extremely muscular. A Worldfire Hound isn't an elemental, as such, and suggesting that they might be in the presence of elementals doesn't go well for the speaker of such words.

Worldfire Hounds are exceedingly rare, which is all the better for the residents of Karthun. The Chain keeps them locked out of Karthun, save for the few times when the Demon Kings have mustered enough power to sunder a link and send a Hound through. The damage to the Chain is always swiftly repaired, but the damage a Worldfire Hound can do is worth the effort to the Demon Kings. Worldfire burns all it touches, but the bite or claw of a Worldfire Hound also burns the reality around it, not only killing, but erasing the target from existence.

A Worldfire Hound can only be destroyed by magical power or weaponry, and it's vital for such destruction to happen swiftly. When the reality-altering attacks of a Worldfire Hound occur, Karthun changes forever. Memories of those killed are erased from those who survive, and the holes in reality caused by a Hound are never truly repaired.



NOTABLE NPCs

CHAPTER TEN



Karthun is full of people whose deeds and lives are worth noting. GMs should feel free to use these beings in their campaigns, altering details as needed to make sure that NPCs fit well in their campaigns.

Karthun is full history, magic, monsters, and of characters whose deeds and lives are worth noting, but none of this would be possible without the legion of amazing individuals who contributed to make Karthun: Lands of Conflict a reality through the power of Kickstarter. Many placed funds toward this book and we are eternally grateful to all of you.

A handful of backers pledged to have their characters stand alongside the legends of Karthun as playable NPCs and this chapter details those NPCs. GMs should feel free to use these characters, altering details as needed to make sure that each NPCs fits well in their campaigns as heroes, villains, or the morally grey who make their way across the Last Continent amid the war and chaos plaguing every nation.

AZRYN TAM

If you're looking for something a bit odd, there's a good chance Azryn Tam has it or knows where you can find it. Darkened leathery skin and short-cropped white hair would place this average looking man in his forties or fifties. His eyes, however, hold a twinkle of mischievousness normally reserved for the young or foolish.

Azryn Tam owns and runs a modest store, Tam's Trinkets, out of Iron Halls. He travelled in his younger days, returning with oddities and curios from all over Doryan, but now Tam spends most of his time manning the shop, relying on more adventuresome allies and backroom dealings for the more interesting items that adorn his shelves.

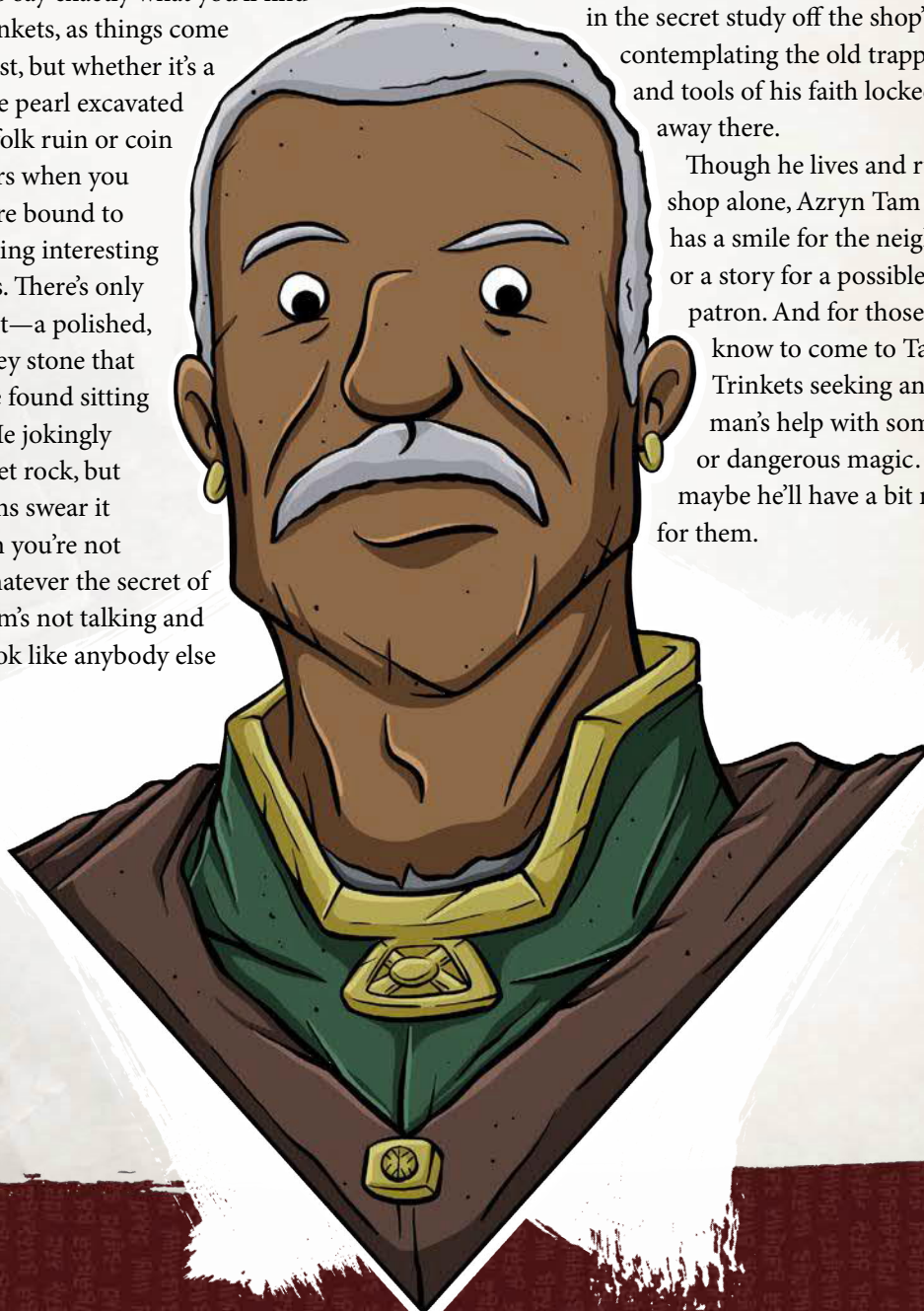
It's hard to say exactly what you'll find in Tam's Trinkets, as things come and go so fast, but whether it's a glowing blue pearl excavated from a merfolk ruin or coin that whispers when you hold it, you're bound to find something interesting in his stocks. There's only one constant—a polished, fist-sized grey stone that can often be found sitting near Tam. He jokingly calls it his pet rock, but many patrons swear it moves when you're not looking. Whatever the secret of the rock, Tam's not talking and it doesn't look like anybody else is either.

Azryn Tam's secrets don't stop there. While there are few left who remember, and fewer still who would share, Azryn Tam was once a respected priest of Prathian and a Sentinel of the Book. The impetus for many of his travels was actually seeking out those dabbling with magics they shouldn't have been, or tracking down rumors of artifacts. While he never meant it as a retirement plan, Tam's Trinkets was built on the odd items Azryn Tam found that were too inconsequential to bother the Archive with.

If anyone mentions Prathian or his followers, Tam deftly steers the conversation elsewhere, though the perceptive may notice a touch of sadness. And when things are quiet and he can't fight off the memories, Tam can often be found

in the secret study off the shop's cellar, contemplating the old trappings and tools of his faith locked away there.

Though he lives and runs the shop alone, Azryn Tam always has a smile for the neighbors or a story for a possible patron. And for those who know to come to Tam's Trinkets seeking an old man's help with some dark or dangerous magic...well, maybe he'll have a bit more for them.



GORIDA JEMSEN

Gorida was born on the outskirts of Andorhem Forest with defects to her arms and legs. The druids of the Forest offered healing to “correct” the issues, but her family wanted it to be the child’s choice. She learned to walk later than most and had difficulty helping her family on their homestead. Her family worked with her, helping to accommodate her differences. Gorida was always aware of her differences, and every year, from the time she was old enough to understand, her parents asked her if she wanted the druids to help. Gorida’s answer was always the same: “I want to help the druids.”

Gorida worked and trained to not only help her family, but also with weapons, using adapted versions of a crossbow and sword. She developed her own enhancements to these weapons, making sure to always advocate for her own abilities. When she turned fourteen, she undertook the Ranger Trials to serve the Oaken Queen. She passed the Trials and became an initiate of the Order of the Oaken Queen. There were those who scoffed at her ability when she joined the ranks of the Order, for the rest of the world didn’t take the same view her family did.

She continued to do as she’d done on her family’s farm, and out-worked everyone. She soon became bonded to a forest lynx named Lorichian. After three years as a trainee for the Order, she was given her Ranger’s Writ, free license to protect Andorhem Forest as she saw fit. She began to seek out those who were born like her, those others had given up on, be they humanoid or animal. She serves as a Ranger still, helping those in need and fighting for the rights of those who don’t operate in the world in the same way as the majority.

HEVEL THE DAMNED

When Sehad still walked the world of Karthun, Hevel and his family were followers of his faith. They were simple farmers and people of the earth who honored the will to survive by mastering the world around them. One season, a terrible famine struck their land. The two brothers Hevel and Qayin prayed to Sehad to show them favor. The World Warden spoke and told them that he would



return in one week and reward the brother who presented him with the best offering. Unknown to the brothers, this was a simple motivator Sehad often used, as he intended to help regardless of their offerings. As the days went by, Qayin harvested the sparse crops that he had managed to grow and scavenged for others. Hevel, on the other hand, toiled in the fields nurturing a small tree on the property.

On the seventh day Sehad returned and the brothers presented their offerings. Hevel presented the tree which had grown strong from his nurturing and would eventually feed the family for many generations if they cared for it. Qayin presented the god all that he had harvested and scavenged and without warning, Qayin lit it ablaze that the smoke might carry it back to Sehad who had graciously let it grow.

Sehad was shocked and furious with Qayin, who willfully burned food that could have fed his family. The World Warden struck the foolish brother down with a curse that made him unable to grow anything for the rest of his days. He found favor with Hevel blessed him so his lands would always prosper, if Hevel worked the land.

The World Warden departed the brothers and events began that would shatter Karthun as it once was. Qayin, jealous at his brother for receiving Sehad's favor, struck his brother down in anger at the same moment Sehad was struck down in a jealous rage by Felicos the King of Rogues. This synchronicity was unknown by either brother at the time, but the repercussions have rippled through their respective lives.

Struck down by his brother after Sehad's death, Hevel floated in the abyss between life and death.



Time passed. Hevel lost himself in the darkness, succumbing to his anger, screaming into the darkness, until a unknown voice whispered in his ear. The voice in the darkness was Kyzul, the son of Valkyre (now the Mother of the Dead) and Sehad, the slain god of humanity.

Kyzul whispered a single question "do you want revenge?". Hevel replied "yes" but like many men tempered by rage and hatred, he did not consider what his answer would cost him and accepted Kyzul's gift.

Pain wracked his entire body as the blood of the boy god remolded and reshaped him. Hevel arose from where he was struck down as Karthun's first Hevelite. Kyzul smiled at his creation and from

her throne within The Dead, Mother of the Dead smiled at the knowledge of her son's first creation.

Released upon Karthun, Hevel founded a new order, named for himself, in the service of Kyzul. The Hevelites, intelligent, vampiric undead, prey upon betrayers, liars, and necromancers, under the guise of evil intentions. They possess powers akin to those of a vampire and drink blood for nourishment. Hevel himself doesn't work directly with his soliders. Instead, he continually roams across the Last Continent, an imposing figure in black armor and tattered robes, seeking out new members for the order and targets for Kyzul's wrath, fully aware that one day, he and his undead brethren will also fall under the blade of the Mother and return to her embrace.

KVETHS SSTEND

Kveths was born in the Kingdom of Five Thieves,

and from a young age, she dreamed of being a musician. She was drawn to instruments of all kinds and was apprenticed to a local bard. However, during her training, she quickly discovered that when trying to perform, she became nervous, unable to play in front of an audience. Her mastery of instruments and her voice were unparalleled, but she couldn't share them with anyone.

For years she sought to overcome these feelings, but to no avail. She left her home and traveled to a small hut at the edge of a swamp, determined to live out her days in solitude. In this hut, unbeknownst to her, was one half of a pair of speaking stones, one set to passively send out whatever sounds occurred around it. The match to that stone was discovered when a merchant heard the most beautiful music coming from it. After much searching, the merchant found Kveths, and proposed an offer to her: he would hire people to take the stone to the performance halls and taverns that she herself couldn't travel to, and would collect the money gathered there. Kveths agreed, and a happy partnership was struck.

Now, the Stone of Kveths is taken on a regular circuit across Karthun, and Kveths performs for all manner of people from the comfort of her remote home. She's amassed a small fortune, as well as a strong following. She and her partner are now researching ways to link multiple stones together, hoping to one day hold the largest simultaneous concert across the whole of Karthun.



OMRI THE WHITE

An amnesiac swordsman wrapped in bandages and white cloth, his face has never been seen. Omri travels the world, unaware of his horrible past. His first memory is waking underneath a tree, two scimitars covered in blood in his hands, and a desire to run and stay hidden from something, though he knows not what.

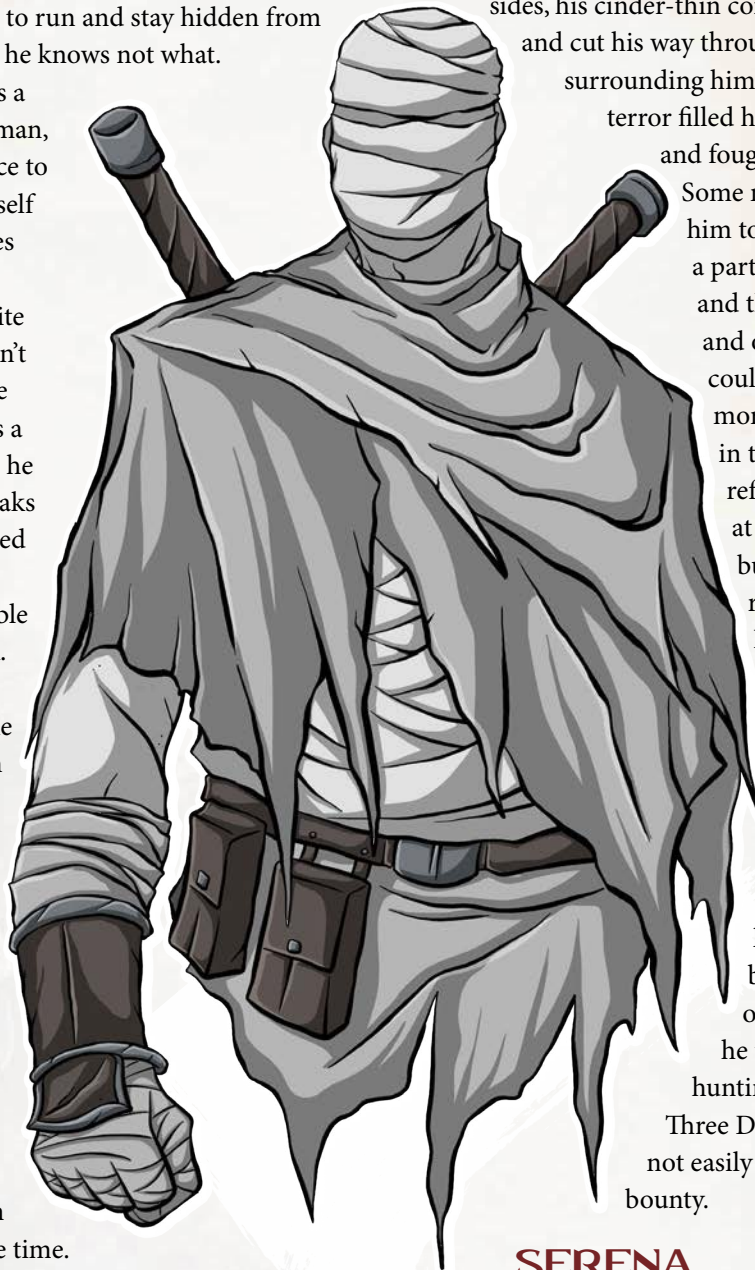
Omri hires out as a mercenary swordsman, travelling from place to place, keeping himself covered in bandages and white cloth. It must always be white cloth, though he can't remember why. The only thing visible is a slit near his eyes so he can see out. He speaks with a rough, gnarled voice and always seems to have trouble beginning to speak. When Omri fights, it's like dancing. The bandages and cloth he wears flip about like a whirling dervish, the swords flying out for quick strikes and slashes. When he's in the fervor of battle, his swords sometimes glow with eerie white fire.

Omri hasn't been alive for quite some time. When he thinks on his past, a mental block of terror and anxiety overwhelms him and he seeks out some other distraction. Omri, in fact, fought his way out of the hell of the Three Demon Kings. Burned and buried according to the traditions of his people, Omri went not the Dead, as he should

have, but beyond the veil, to where the Worldfire burns. As his spirit awoke somewhere within the afterlife, confused and disoriented, he panicked and ran from the demons preparing him and unwrapping the grave bandages that transferred with his spirit. Grabbing the two swords at their

sides, his cinder-thin corpse sliced and cut his way through the spirits surrounding him. Panic and terror filled him as he ran, and fought, and ran.

Some miracle caused him to find an exit, a parting of the veil, and the earth split and opened so he could return once more. Now present in the world, he refuses to look at his skeletal, burnt visage as he rejects his reality. His knowledge of mystical things is great, perhaps vestigial skills from his life long forgotten, and he only knows the battle and fear of the demons he thinks are hunting him—for the Three Demon Kings do not easily give up their bounty.



SERENA STORMFYRE

Serena Stormfyre is something that few in Karthun even realize exists: a human heir to the Dragon Queens. While the Brood itself was sundered completely and the Queens killed,

some of their offspring scattered to the winds. Only three true dragons survived, all of them male. With no females to continue their lines, Stormfyre, Skyglimmer, and Acidmaw made a choice. They devised a ritual that would allow them to intermix with the prosperous humans. This would preserve their bloodlines, until one day maybe one of their heirs could devise a way to restore the Dragon lines. Serena is heir to the red dragon line of Stormfyre.

Serena's parents were simple merchants who knew of their ancestry, but it had been three generations since any child had displayed any power. At the age of six, Serena began to grow armored scales and other abilities. Her blood flowed naturally with the innate power of a red dragon, and the young girl learned to harness this power, becoming a sorceress and needing no bonded elemental to wield arcane power. When Serena became curious about the world, she left home to begin to study the differences between her own abilities and that of the magebound. After several years of study at the Nexus, she determined that her own blood was the source of her powers, and she had a strength that other sorcerers couldn't come close to dreaming of. To repay the kindness of the scholars at the Nexus, she became a Sentinel of the Book for a time and lent her strength to holding the Nexus. She gained great mastery of her powers in that time and fostered a burning curiosity about how to end the never-



ending war.

Serena came to believe that answers lay outside the Nexus, so she began traveling to old ruins and places of power in hopes of discovering a clue. Over time, Serena has become convinced that many disparate events in Karthun's history must be related. The Arbiter of Truth. Deathfang's apparent insanity. The impassable Dread Peaks. There must be a thread that ties all these things together. She's continued to explore and discover, hoping to find the truth she so desperately seeks.

Serena Stormfyre is a powerful sorceress with an unmatched command over fire. New adventurers may find themselves in her employ seeking lost bits of lore or artifacts. Seasoned explorers may join her in expeditions to dangerous locations such as forgotten cities deep beneath the surface.

ZAT QUILLEN

Zat Quillen is an aged gnome of slender build, with large almond eyes and waist-length braided white hair. For years, he's been a stalwart defender of the trails and travelers of Andorhem. Tanned and wrinkled by time, Zat patrols the less-traveled trails along the border between Andorhem and Erast. He's roughly waist high to most humans and many decades older than he looks. He's always helpful to those in need. You may find him warming himself by the fires

of inns in Oakbridge or helping the poor, sick, and weary of the city. Though charismatic, there's a certain emptiness to his voice and he often confuses himself by referring to himself as "we" or "us." He's most often slightly dirty with sand in his hair and wearing sun-faded robes.

A scoundrel as a child, Zat was raised amongst merchants and caravaners traveling to and from Andern. Orphaned by a group of bandits as an infant, he was found by a dye trader on his way from the Iron Halls. Until he could find a way on his own, he lived in service to various traders as a server and eventually an informant due to his small stature and ability to blend into his surroundings.

After years of servitude he found himself freed by chance. While on a caravan to the recently founded Oakbridge, his group was attacked by the undead. During the chaos he managed to escape into the wilderness and eventually stumbled his way to safety. Still in his early adulthood, he spent many years angrily searching for a way to make himself a weapon against the undead.

The next couple of decades were a blur for Zat as he searched for the power he needed to fulfill his ambitions. After years of searching, he eventually managed to bind himself with a sand elemental while in the wastes of Desin.

After their bonding, the two wandered the wasteland, learning arcane magic from whatever would teach them, be it from the experience of surviving in such a harsh land or from dark

artifacts left over from before the forging of the Chain.

Believing he was powerful enough to turn the tide of undead on his own, he returned to Andorhem. Like an unfathomable terror, Zat tore through the undead, first clearing the most traveled routes and gathering the aid of many settlers in the smaller towns of the forest. With a small force behind him, he decided to march on Kellenbrooke to strike at the heart of the Legion.

Though a bold and courageous attempt, it did not succeed.

His past leapt up in his mind, and he

feared to leave someone as he once found himself. Zat sacrificed himself to

allow his brothers in arms the opportunity to escape. Zat used every ounce of his magical ability, but to no avail, as he eventually succumbed to the forces of undead.

Zat awoke alone. He'd been separated from the elemental he'd come to rely on for so long. As to how he found himself alive again, he would never know for sure. Without a purpose, Zat eventually took to wandering the many trails of Andorhem Forest, warning travelers of the many dangers of the woods. He meditated in the sandier wastes of the forest as it made him feel he wasn't alone anymore. As time passed, he began to learn the druidic ways and is always willing to help others on a similar path.

Zat Quillen can be used to help players out of a difficult situation while in Andorhem Forest or as a source of knowledge for navigating the terrain.



ADVENTURES

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The adventure presented in this book is designed as a guide for the Game Master. GMs are encouraged to restructure, add to, adapt, and revise the adventure to fit the needs of their players. The general structure of the adventure, the sections and description of those sections, follows. This template can be used to make your

own adventures in Karthun using the RPG system of your choice.

This template was originally designed for Exploding Rogue Studios by Quinn Murphy. It's also used in **IRON EDDA: WAR OF METAL AND BONE**.

A BRIEF NOTE ON ADVENTURES

Instead of telling a story then shoehorning characters into it, we want to provide a framework for players and GMs to create stories. The template provided here is a structure for that framework. It's meant for a GM to spend five minutes looking over the material, and start playing shortly thereafter. Rather than a "story in a can," it's more a "quick start" into a situation. Our ideal adventure is a platform that could be run multiple times with wildly different results based on what characters do and what elements the GM uses.

When filling out the template, avoid branching, since it presumes certain starting points and constrains choices. Likewise, avoid providing solutions. Solutions are for players. We can provide a goal ("Get X at this location"), but how the characters do that is up to the players. This is their game; let it be rich with their decisions!

KARTHUN ADVENTURE TEMPLATE

SITUATION

What's happening here? What's the basic background and what events are being set into motion? We don't want proscribed endings. It should be brief, and include the main antagonist, locale, and a quick summary of the current problem.

IMPACT

What will happen if no one intervenes? What will change if nothing else happens? This is an explanation in both the fiction and mechanical results of what will happen if the situation is unresolved. Consider including partial results as well ("If the characters accomplish x and y, but not z, this happens").

This is an important section to any adventure because events do not happen in a vacuum. If player characters do nothing, then bad things will occur, and it is valuable to know that the fallout could be. This also provides the GM with a guideline for figuring out what happens next.

HOOKS

Rather than the GM trying to convince players to come in, provide a few questions that presuppose character's involvement. Why are the characters here, and what's their special relationship to some element of the story? These hooks get the characters involved in the adventure and also provide hooks for other aspects of the story. Good hook questions presuppose something that puts the character into the adventure, while asking something that lets them establish their character's motivations or history.

ANTAGONISTS

Who are the most important NPCs in the adventure? What do they want and what are they like? A short description of each of the primary antagonists in the story is good. Also provide a few moves, which are actions these characters might take during the course of the adventure. The villain might send in his minions whenever the characters get a good clue, or the merchant

who hires the characters might check in on them every day that passes without the job being completed. These moves help the GM know how to play these characters.

THREATS

What threats might adventurers see during the adventure? Threats can be NPCs, monsters, weather conditions, traps...anything that can complicate the characters' lives and come after them. The difference between an antagonist and a threat is that an antagonist can take its own independent action. A threat is just something that gets in the way. This section is actually good for describing threats an antagonist might introduce into the game. If a villain sends thugs, you can describe the thugs in this section.

Each adventure can have 1 to 3 chapters. For each chapter, include:

OPENING: A potential opening scene or event that brings the characters into this chapter.

EVENTS: 3-4 sample scenes that the GM can initiate. These can include aspects or distinctive bits that might come into play.

CLOSING: When does the chapter end? If the adventure ends with this chapter, create a closing event. This can be a fictional event ("when the characters reach the city") or it can be a more mechanical event ("when a character levels up, or when a fate pool refreshes").

A simple adventure might only have one chapter. The adventure starts with the hooks, which sets the characters up for the opening scene. After the characters get through that, they start making decisions and interacting with the adventure. The GM will have a list of the major characters and "moves" they can make. The structure is simple, but flexible enough to get crazy and creative very quickly. Using this template, GMs have the tools they need to let players go wherever they want.



ADVENTURE: THE BLACK CABINET

SITUATION

In Narhal, a gang of smugglers and thieves known as the Night Kings have come into the possession of a relic called the Black Cabinet. The Night Kings operate out of the City of Night, the lower district of Narhal. Since they took possession of the relic, unexplained phenomena have been happening across the lower city, escalating in severity.

IMPACT

The Black Cabinet holds a being known as the Horror. It shifts not just through space, but also through time, and feeds off the negative energy it creates by causing chaos and death. If left unchecked, the Horror will ultimately end up tearing a hole back through to the Bleed and setting up a permanent portal to the planes beyond, throwing all of Narhal into chaos. Narhal lies very close to the Dead, and the barrier between those two realms is thin. If the Bleed breaks through in Narhal, the Mother herself will respond, adding to the trouble that Narhal faces.

To stop this, the Horror must be destroyed or recaptured inside the Black Cabinet. Otherwise, different planes of existence will begin to collide within Narhal.

HOOKS

For this adventure, it's assumed that the PCs are members of the Underwatch working the night shift. They're the overworked and underpaid law enforcement of the City of Night. The PCs are assigned the case during their squad briefing and told to find and question an informant, a smuggler known as Domar Ren, at the Dead Witch Inn.

Depending on how the encounters at the Dead Witch Inn play out, the PCs receive a lead to a nearby Night Kings warehouse along the outer ring of the City of Night, leading to an encounter with a Night Kings patrol, and eventually to the warehouse full of dead Night Kings and the ominous Black Cabinet.

For PCs who are members of the Underwatch, the GM is encouraged to ask one of these questions to hook the PCs into the adventure.

- ◆ "Why did you join the Underwatch? Is it a family tradition?"
- ◆ "Are you from Narhal? Were you raised in the City of Day (the upper-city of the wealthy and nobles of Narhal) or the City of Night (the lower-city known for slums, crime, and the mines below the city)?"
- ◆ "Do you have issues with a fellow member of the Underwatch? If so, what is it? Can you resolve it?"
- ◆ "Cults routinely take citizens of the City of Night for rituals and sacrifice. Do you know anyone taken? Were they a friend or family member? Were they saved or lost?"
- ◆ "What did you do to see yourself suspended from the Underwatch? How did you manage to get back on active duty?"

For PCs who aren't members of the Underwatch, the GM is encouraged to ask one of these questions to hook the PCs into the adventure.

- ◆ "What debt do you owe to the Night Kings, and why has their recent silence drawn you to Narhal?"
- ◆ "A mage of Xyn has asked you to journey to Narhal as a favor. What will you get in return? What's fishy about the whole deal?"
- ◆ "A distant cousin of yours works for the Underwatch in Narhal and has recently gone missing. Where were they last seen? Why does the Underwatch suspect the Night Kings are involved in their disappearance?"

ANTAGONISTS

The Night Kings

One of the prominent gangs in the City of Night, the Night Kings all wear hoods that magically obscure their faces in darkness. The Night Kings use numbers to overpower their foes and word on the street is that several Underwatch members are also Night Kings. The Night Kings have their fingers in a lot of pies, and when news leaked about a valuable antique passing through the warehouses on its way up to the City of Day, the Night Kings intercepted the cabinet and hid it in one of their warehouses with no idea how dangerous the cabinet truly is. With the Horror manifesting, the Night Kings have become panicked, maddened, and unstable. They don't know the Black Cabinet is to blame, they only want this to end.

MOVES: Overwhelm with Numbers, Stab You in the Back, Fall into Madness

The Horror

A being from beyond, interested in gaining power by killing, causing chaos, and driving people out of their minds. If the Horror isn't stopped, it will eventually gather enough power to open a permanent portal to the Bleed, allowing the unknowable terrors there to flood into Narhal.

MOVES: Cloak Itself in Time, Summon Waves of Terror, Dig into Your Mind

The Restless Squadron

The Mother has snuck a band of undead soldiers into Narhal with the intent of stopping the Horror. They'll fight anyone who gets in their way. Should the Horror open a rift to the Bleed, they in turn will rip open a rift to the Dead. They may do the latter anyway.

MOVES: Fight Tirelessly, Advance the Mother's Agenda, Claim Souls for the Dead

THREATS

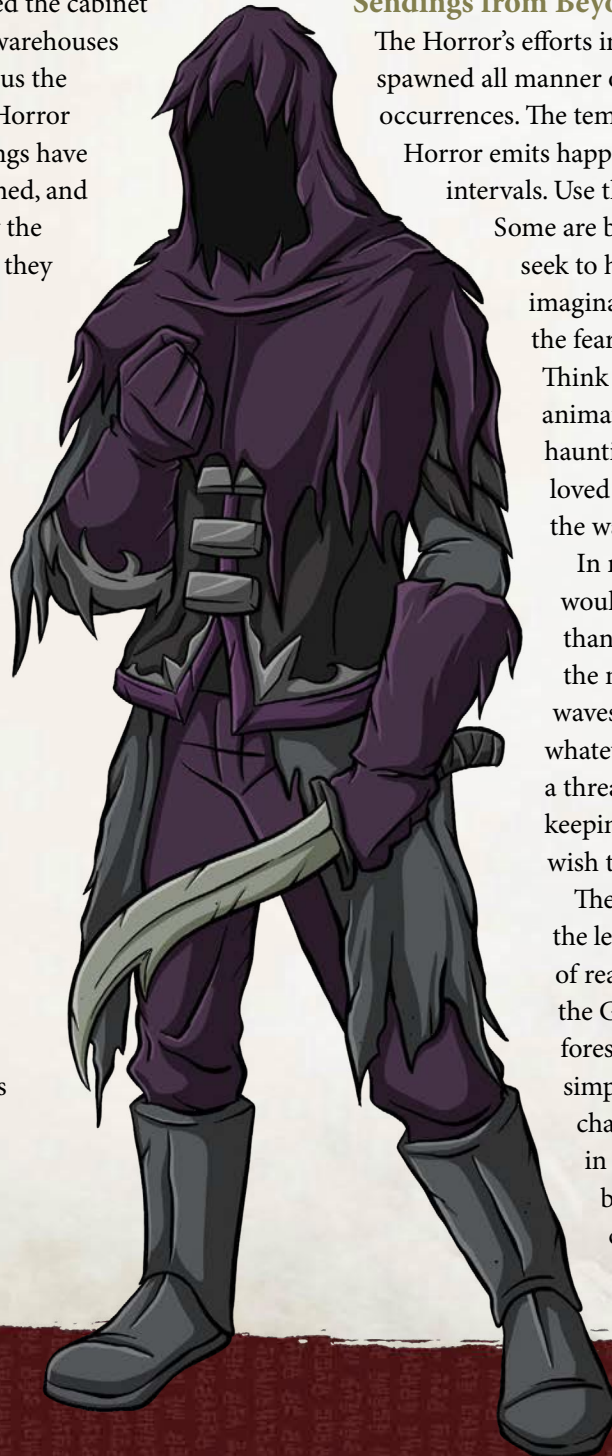
Sendings from Beyond

The Horror's efforts in Narhal have spawned all manner of strange occurrences. The temporal waves the Horror emits happen as random intervals. Use them as you see fit.

Some are benign, while others seek to hurt or harm. Use your imagination here. Exploit the fears in your PCs' minds. Think of anything from animated furniture to the haunting voice of a dead loved one emanating from the walls.

In most adventures, there would be more threats than just one; however, the nature of the temporal waves allows a GM to use whatever they wish for a threat as long as it's in keeping with the tone they wish to set for their players.

The temporal waves, at the least, distort perceptions of reality. When they occur, the GM can use them to foreshadow events, or simply mess with the characters. The waves in reality are noticeable by all, but a successful check reveals that the



season briefly changed, or that the time shifted from day to night and back. Disturbing visions also fit the tone of this adventure, such as the characters seeing themselves dead on the floor just prior to the final encounter. Get creative.

CHAPTER ONE: SQUAD BRIEFING

Opening

For the purposes of this adventure, this squad of Underwatch is comprised of a group of shadier watch members (most Underwatch come from the City of Night and know the streets), or watch members accused of corruption. Use the questions asked previously to determine why everyone is here, *especially* if the PCs aren't members of the Underwatch proper.

The briefing is delivered by Captain Dursk, a middle-aged Underwatch captain with just enough motivation to keep his job. He is portly and seedy looking. He delivers the night's assignments, saving the case of the Black Cabinet for the PCs. The orders to find the cabinet have come from "up above," meaning the leadership of the City of Day. When those orders come down, it usually means the brass is doing someone a favor and typically the "case" is groan worthy.

In this case, the cabinet (an antique) was supposed to come through Dusk (the quarter between the Cities of Day and Night, respectively) and on to the home of an anonymous noble in the City of Day when it was stolen during transport. The noble believes it to be the work of the Night Kings and upper management wants the Underwatch to handle it.

Captain Dursk (or one of the PCs) points the group to Domar Ren, the informant and man-in-the-know for things regarding the Night Kings. A few checks or just common knowledge leads the PCs to Domar's favorite evening haunt, the Dead Witch Inn.

Dursk also notably assigns another patrol to investigate a report of muggings and the like in an area of the city known to be closely connected to the Dead. It's here that the Restless Squadron entered Narhal on their own search for the Black Cabinet.

Events

This chapter is largely set-up, and allows the players and their characters to become familiar with the Underwatch and the mission. It's an excellent time for roleplay between characters and NPCs, as well as to establish the tone that the GM wants to set for the Underwatch and the adventure itself.

Other possible additions to this scene are:

UNRULY UNDERWATCH MEMBERS: There's a grudge being nursed between some members of the Underwatch. Perhaps it involves the PCs, perhaps not, but a fight breaks out during Captain Dursk's briefing, and at least one PC gets caught up in it.

A TEMPORAL WAVE IN THE UNDERWATCH

HQ: A temporal wave emanated from the Black Cabinet, loosing a horror inside the Underwatch Headquarters. In this instance, it's a mass of impish creatures who scatter throughout the HQ, causing damage and chaos. If one of them gets an NPC cornered, it attempts to possess the character by jumping down its throat, turning the NPC into a secret minion serving the Bleed.

GEARING UP FOR THE CASE: This would likely occur after Captain Dursk dismisses the patrols, and would involve organizational roleplay to acquire gear, gain additional information, etc. Useful if the party is very into the minutia of planning and preparation.

Closing

Whatever the prior events, this scene closes when Captain Dursk dismisses the patrols for their rounds. Whatever conflicts may have happened, the Captain is still in charge of the briefing, and everyone departs, happily or not, after he's finished speaking. The PCs now have a lead to follow.

CHAPTER 2: THE DEAD WITCH INN

Opening

The Dead Witch Inn is a middle of the road tavern/inn located in the City of Night. The establishment has passed through many owners over the years, but the current is Lyna Ward, a friendly woman raised in the low quarter of Xag. She runs the Dead Witch Inn honestly and has a good relationship with smugglers and Underwatch alike.

It's known that the veil is thin in Narhal and this phenomenon is responsible for much of the Dead Witch Inn's appeal and namesake. The ghost of a fortuneteller appears on seemingly random evenings in a private room on the ground floor of the inn. Travelers, merchants, and nobles alike visit the inn in hopes of seeing or speaking with the ghost. When she appears, Lyna rings a bell to announce her arrival and allows five visitors to line up and speak with the ghost. The crowd waiting to speak with the unnamed witch isn't as dense as one would expect, because it's known that the witch's predictions are *never* wrong. Whatever her cryptic readings foretell, they always come to pass.

Events

SPEAKING WITH DOMAR REN: Domar is a small, cowardly man with his ear to the ground in the City of Night. He hears about dealings and schemes and he works as an informant for the Underwatch. Domar is in the bar when the witch arrives tonight. He's planning to speak to her for the first time in his life. If allowed, he leaves with a pale look on his face and needs a drink. "She told me I would be rich" is all he'll say about his reading if asked.

IF THE PCs USE DOMAR TO FIND THE NIGHT KINGS WAREHOUSE, he requires little pressing as he's already making plans to spend his future fortune far away from Narhal.

A FORTUNE FROM THE WITCH: If one (or more) of the PCs wishes to have their fortune told by the witch while they're at the Inn, use whatever means you deem equitable (or not) to determine which PC gets a reading. The witch is cryptic, but always accurate. This is an excellent opportunity foreshadow either events to come in the adventure, or for your campaign at large. The PC only gets one question, so impress on them that they need to make it count.

A TEMPORAL WAVE IN THE DEAD WITCH INN:

The temporal waves are increasing in frequency, and if one passes through the Dead Witch Inn, it juxtaposes the Restless Squadron with the witch, and no one seems to take it amiss. The members of the Squadron will answer questions, just as the witch will, but while their answers seem very true, they're actually false. This wave persists until all five questions have been answered for the night.

Closing

If the PCs get their lead from Domar Ren or the witch, they're directed to the Night Kings warehouse in the Outer Ring. If they get their information from the Restless Squadron, they're directed to the location across the city where the other Underwatch patrol was told to go. If this happens, we suggest that at least one PC get the correct information, to spur tension. If the group heads to the location of the other patrol, follow the events of the adventure that follow, but have the encounter with the Night Kings patrol happen as the Night Kings are chasing down the Squadron to recover the Black Cabinet.

CHAPTER THREE: THE OUTER RING

The PCs journey through the City, looking for the Night King (or Restless Squadron) warehouse. If in the previous chapter they got a fortune from the Squadron, they're directed to the wrong warehouse, which gives the Squadron time to invade the Night Kings warehouse and take the Black Cabinet.

Many portions of the City of Night resemble inverted towers. Along the outer streets closest to the open air, cranes and spells transfer supplies and shipments from Dusk down to the City of Night and from the bottom of Narha's crater up to the City of Night. This is the Outer Ring.

Falls from the Outer Ring are fatal, but 99% of the alleys and spaces leading to certain death are blocked with walls and fences. The warehouse of the Night Kings is located on the eastern side of the Outer Ring, and the original location of the Restless Squadron is on the western side.

Events

NIGHT KINGS PATROL: An encounter with a Night Kings patrol group near the warehouse (either one). Add any flavor you like, but we recommend the fight be tense, to reflect the desperation of the Night Kings. Alleyways, unblocked exits to the Outer Ring, that sort of thing.

A TEMPORAL WAVE IN THE OUTER RINGS:

The PCs are coming close to the Black Cabinet now (whether it's in the Night Kings warehouse, or the Restless Squadron has taken it for themselves). Make the visions bizarre and terrifying. If any creatures manifest, they're not pulling pranks, they're killing people.

Closing

Whether it's still in the possession of the Night Kings, or the Restless Squadron has taken it, the PCs enter a warehouse to discover the Black Cabinet and the Horror lurking within.



The Black Cabinet Horror

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BLACK CABINET

Opening: Night Kings

When the PCs make it to the warehouse, they discover that the Night Kings inside are already dead and the back of the warehouse has been wrecked, leading to an open air drop off of the Outer Ring. It's eerily quiet aside from the breeze blowing in from the opening and the dull, rhythmic thumps from within the cabinet.

Alternate Opening: Restless Squadron

When the PCs arrive at the Squadron's place of entrance into Narhal, they find their fellow Underwatch patrol-mates dead. Otherwise, the scene is the same, save that the Restless Squadron is present, about to attempt to open the Black Cabinet.

Events

SET OFF A TEMPORAL WAVE WHEN THE PCs SEE

THE CABINET: In the wave, the PCs see gore on the walls and see their own dead bodies lying on the floor. They also get a glimpse of the Horror running towards them.

BATTLE WITH THE HORROR: The Horror spends its first two rounds temporally cloaked, appearing to move supernaturally quickly around the room. It's difficult, but not impossible, to hit. Magical items can pierce the temporal field to strike it. If this fight begins in the Squadron location, it's already engaged in combat with the Squadron and doesn't cloak.



THE RISE OF THE RESTLESS SQUADRON: If the PCs came to the Night Kings warehouse, the Squadron shows up at the start of the third round of the conflict, fighting all involved. If this fight is happening in the Squadron location, the Squadron is involved from the first round.

Closing

When the PCs defeat the Horror and drive off the Restless Squadron, more Underwatch patrols and investigators come to the crime scene along with Sentinels of the Book (who encase the Black Cabinet and take it away back to Xyn).

It's a job well done for the PCs, but questions remain:

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- ◆ Who is the mysterious noble who ordered the Black Cabinet shipped to them?
 - ◆ Do they know what the cabinet really holds?
 - ◆ Who created the Black Cabinet, and why?
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