

# TRILEMMA ADVENTURES

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Bestiary Entries



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## BESTIARY

### AETHER SERPENT

When the astral wind blows strangely, the sands of that realm form into writhing serpents which grind along the dunes in pursuit of material travelers. The sands of the astral realm are soaked in the dreams and fears of the ages, so the **bite** of an aether serpent inflicts potent, incapacitating visions of lives long past. Do not tarry in the astral realm!

### ACOLYTE OF RAAL

Occasionally, a vision or seer catches a glimpse of the dread ritual of Thiru that made the primordial orcs. Some try to mimic the ritual, consuming the spirits of the dead, in the hopes of obtaining the power of those legendary creatures.

Unfortunately, the ritual is subtle, and imperfect performance has many side effects. Each acolyte of Raal has different orcish gifts: glowing, night-seeing eyes; a tough leathery hide; claws and bestial strength; regeneration; to take sand and soil as sustenance; or even ageless vitality.

They may also have numbed limbs, weakness, leprosy, or rotting flesh—before overuse of the ritual causes them to succumb to unthinking ghouldom or death.

### ANT, BLIGHT

Blight ants bring total destruction when they come, like a slow-moving wildfire. Dog-sized **scout ants** find and mark suitable food. A few hours later, squads of **forager ants** arrive and carry away anything living. Horse-sized **blight soldier ants** watch over the operations and protect the smaller ants from reprisals.

Trees, bushes, injured or slow-moving animals—everything they can cut down and haul is pulled underground to rot in their subterranean fermentation pits.

Their ravages are cyclical: they enter an area, strip it down to the bare ground, and move on. After a few years

(if the soil hasn't dried up and blown away) the area begins to recover. Saplings grow and the animals return, but not long afterwards, so do the ants.

Blight ants prefer hot, dry climates, as their colonies are vulnerable to flooding in more temperate lands. In cold weather, they grow sluggish and vulnerable to hot-blooded scavengers. This small mercy is all that keeps them from sweeping over everything.

### APOCALYPSE LARVA

Fat white grubs (2 paces) cling to cavern walls, sloshing with precious oils. They are passive, but if disturbed they can burst explosively, splashing anyone nearby with flaming oil.

### AUTOMATON, SERVANT

These Seree-made automatons have bodies of wood, leather, and brass. They are built for hard labor, and are a full head taller than most humans.

Their heads are human skulls, each one containing a small, coral-like crystal of topaz, agate, or garnet, which holds the automaton's habits of endless servitude.

These **'wizard flowers'** were grown in the brains of acolytes not suited for powerful magic. Automatons occasionally do oddly life-like things (scratching an itch, leaning against a wall) before resuming their duties.

A **skull collar** (an enchanted brass sleeve with a central post) affixes the skull and animates the body with the impulses from the flower. This makes the skulls interchangeable, giving their minders the ability to replace the skulls with others, trained for different tasks.

In novel situations (e.g., if attacked, told what to do), servant automatons react appropriately on a 1-2 on a d6; otherwise, they ignore what's happening.

### AUTOMATON, VAULT JACKAL

The Seree also maintained a store of crystal-infused skulls for defensive purposes, made from starved jackals.

Automatons with jackal skulls hunt in packs of up to 8, sneak carefully, attack from ambush, and stop only when their victims are torn apart.

## AVATAR OF SUVUVENA

An avatar of Suvuvena is the penultimate chimeric creation, a person made of arthropods, fused together by hydra's blood and prayers to Suvuvena, shaper of life.

Its lungs are locusts; its skin is a carpet of beetles. Its eyes are holes filled with flies. A huge centipede makes up its guts; its hands are clusters of mantids. It can disassemble or reassemble at will.

As a master chimeromancer, the avatar's **gaze** instantly bonds flesh to flesh, as if one piece from birth. It can use this to deform its enemies, or affix two or more of them to one another. It can sew mouths, noses, and eyes shut with a glance, causing blindness and suffocation.

As intelligent, composite beings, avatars have rather alien ideas about identity and individuality.

While most chimeromancers strive to create new and better forms for the glory of Suvuvena, an avatar dreams of welding all life into a single, ecstatic organism.

## BANDIT WASP

These giant wasps live in colonies of 2-20 adults, each the size of a calf. They fly noisily, easily heard in the distance. Their glossy chitin protects like metal armor, though their legs and eyes are delicate.

They arrive in groups of d6, seize people, sheep, or goats with their hooked legs, inject venom, and fly home to feed their captured prey to their larvae.

Bandit wasp **venom** has a powerful effect: anyone injected becomes completely unaware of bandit wasps, as if they (and their larvae) did not exist. Many victims have been carried off without protest, calmly enjoying the view from the air.

Bandit wasp nests are cottage-sized, spherical globs of wax nestled high on cliff walls, the upper stories of ruins, or large, ancient trees. The nests crawl with forearm-sized **larvae**, which secrete the demon-repellent wax. They nose about blindly, but if bothered, they reply with a jet of hot wax (painful and blinding).

## BLUE LICHEN

A flaky, blue-gray lichen that rapidly turns exposed skin into more lichen. It grows quickly at body temperature, but is dormant in the numbing cold of its native climate, where it is found as blue-gray streaks on ice. Because it grows painlessly, blue lichen infections can go unnoticed for hours.

## BOG STRANGLER

Bog stranglers haunt the swamps, bogs, and moorland pools between villages. They live out an illusion of their lives from long ago, poor gatherers, charcoal burners, and fishers. The great working of the Martoi let them live as

they did thousands of years ago, but only as reflections in still water.

Do not accept their hospitality! Bog stranglers can be recognized by their ignorance of recent news, since they remember nothing since the working. Travelers have awakened to find themselves underwater and drowning: the humble cottage of their host revealed to be a slimy, leaf-filled water hole. Long fingers close about their necks and choke out their last breath.

## BONE DEVIL

Bone devils are the heralds of the great demons vying to rise to the surface from far below. They hunt the spirits of surface people who are foolish or unfortunate enough to be found outside the safety of ancestral hosts.

Bone devils are semi-corporeal. To lure the dead, they decorate themselves with bones (which are familiar to the departed). Where the devils settle, they create false shrines filled with stolen sacred objects, or parodies of them.

Bone devils carry **silver-tipped hooks** to catch spirits, though these are equally brutal when turned upon the living.

They know several sorcerous rituals:

**Devastating glory** causes sacred objects to sing, which they use to lure any nearby spirits who cherish them.

Bone devils light **flaming lamps** of blue fire, terrifying to the dead, to encircle and trap them. At the sound of their **maddening horns**, mounts throw their riders and flee.

They know a grating, **clacking rhythm** they perform when the living are near. It weakens bones, making breaks very likely with even glancing blows or tumbles.

## BRASS SOLDIER

Brass soldiers are magical statues of solid metal. They move at one-eighth normal speed, making them easily avoided in the open. In tight quarters (or when pushed, rushed past, or attacked with short weapons), the soldiers attempt to grab limbs or clothing.

They are immensely strong, and their grip cannot be dislodged. Seized victims have only moments to cut off whatever the soldier holds before being strangled by metal fingers.

Being solid metal, they are nearly impervious to harm (including electricity), and only "die" if their silver hearts are bored into or melted.

Brass soldiers are siege weapons from ancient Thiru, and are directed by a **ring of control**. If the ring is worn by a living person, they will march to reach them (underwater if necessary, even digging through earth and stone). Once in the wearer's presence, they will follow simple instructions as best they can. Otherwise, they simply stand where they are.

If a control ring is discovered as treasure, it controls d20 brass soldiers.

## CARREG

The Carreg are the “people of stone,” who live far underground, in and around the Ur-Menig. Their bodies are genderless, with skin like dimpled, supple clay. When healthy, they are cool and moist. They appear quite alien to surface peoples, having small mouths, slitted nostrils, and no eyes or hair.

They “see” by means of air currents and ground vibrations, and are unaware of light. They tolerate the air of Ur-Menig, which sends others into a deathless sleep.

Carreg fear iron, which to them is strong-smelling and toxic. Their warriors use weapons of bone or oil-hardened leather, while the best-equipped warriors wear head-caps and vests of lacquered tiles cut from isopod shell or bone.

They are calm, resolute, and speak in low, mumbly voices. The Carreg establish trust by speaking loudly about what everyone can plainly see for themselves. To them, the surface is mythical—to speak of it means you intend to break promises and flout their laws.

## CARREG RUST DESPERANT

With the song of their deity no longer protecting them, some Carreg have formed martial cults. By embracing iron poisoning, they toughen themselves against their enemies.

Their skin is broken and weeping, but covered in hard, metallic scabs. Their limbs grow abnormally long and muscular.

The desperants are not particularly skilled in war, but they commit to battle with berserker ferocity. Among them are many former saints, left despondent when the peace-bringing Song of Gamandes fell silent.

## CAVE SQUID

A cloud of black tentacles, hanging in the air like an ink drop in water. They “swim” through the air, fronds wafting on unseen currents.

Normally constricted to a mass 2-3 paces across, their tentacles stretch up to 6 paces if need be. Given time, they can squeeze through gaps only a few fingers wide. They are highly resistant to crushing or piercing attacks.

Their **venomous touch** causes paralysis, searing pain, or control of whichever of the victim’s limbs has been seized, depending on the squid’s vile purpose.

They hunt alone and act intelligently.

## CAVE STITCHER

The spider-like spawn of the demon Guguluin practice a gruesome form of sorcery, “stitching” victims’ bodies into new shapes by severing and reattaching limbs. The final form determines the spell they cast.

Some victims die while being prepared, while others survive to live on as **puppets** of the stitcher, ever available to produce the desired magical effect with a jerk of their silken tether.

Cave stitchers venturing into contested lands will be dragging d4 puppets, each with different **magical**

**effects**—spurting fire, a sound-deadening black fog, or a cantrip that makes their quarry’s blood sing like a boiling kettle (all the easier to find them).

They are strong climbers, able to drag their dangling puppets with them along walls or ceilings.

## CHALK HOUND

The ancients of Saaru made chalk golems in the form of hounds. They were lovingly etched with prayers, and as the hounds performed their intricate steps as they patrolled the temples, they graced the flagstones with prayer sigils.

## CHANGELING

Countless cultures have fallen into the depths of the underworld when their time on the surface came to an end. The changelings are the survivors: rather than be claimed by the depths and pass into myth, they adopt the forms of living peoples and blend in.

Changelings move among the crowds anonymously when they must, but a stable life requires a home, loved ones, and a station. These they obtain by murder, targeting a specific person, killing them, and slipping into their life.

Changelings are students of human nature, politely curious and excellent conversationalists. They are always observing, planning who they must become next. Some maintain several identities, leading two or even three lives at the same time.

Changelings feign openness to learn as much as they can in return for what they disclose, but this is a double-edged sword: many a changeling has given itself away with a careless idiom or a habitual phrase from a dead language.

## CHITIN DRAKE

Chitin drakes are bred as weapons of war by Dradkin chimeromancers. They look like flying centipedes, buzzing through the darkness in search of prey. They attack by biting, injecting a potent paralytic venom. If attacking a group, they will make rapid passes to sow confusion. When attacking lone targets, they bite continuously while coiling around their prey and latching on with a hundred stabbing legs.

They have carapaces like burnished lead, as tough as drake scale. Killing them requires holding them still long enough to batter through their scales.

The wings are not nearly as tough, and a solid blow will break many of them, although they can fly clumsily with as few as a third of a full complement.

They do not attack suicidally, and will retreat if they are hurt. When threatened, they hide on cavern ceilings or scurry into crevices.

Newly hatched chitin drakes are two paces in length and as thick as a wrist. When they can feed on fresh meat, they grow by half a pace every day. Once they reach five

paces in length, their drake nature emerges more fully, and they develop a prescient cunning.

The wings flake off, but they continue to fly by magical impulse. Twice daily, they can squirt a jet of sticky, **flaming liquid** sizable enough to engulf a human.

Chitin drakes will never approach a flame that burns with powdered drake-egg shell. This is the only means of control the Dradkin have ever been able to exert over these fell creatures.

## CRAESTEN

Hulking terrestrial lobsters, craesten are native to alien Tlarba. They are enormously strong and heavy, and despite the loud clacking of their legs, they move gracefully.

They are ignorant of human body language and tone of voice, which can make them seem stupid or naive at times, but they are intelligent and perceptive. Their **natural armor** lends them an unshakable confidence and humor: in the worst case, they can simply eat you.

When truly upset or angry, they produce a strong **citrus smell**, highly alarming to selks.

Spilled craesten blood produces a potent **magical entropy** that makes nearby spell casting difficult.

## CRYPT SERVANT

A crypt servant is a mummified husk, bound by magic to serve a monastic order in death. Their dry bodies are fragile and their minds addled by long years of inactivity, but their fearlessness and large numbers makes them dangerous in the claustrophobic crypts they protect.

## DEMON WOLF

The horse-sized demon wolves were loosed upon the earth in the war between the Powers and the Seree. They burble as they run, which sounds like a child blowing into a bottle half-full of spit. Flaming drops fall from their mouths and burn the grass or hiss in the cold snow.

They **leap** surprisingly far, easily forty paces. If cut, their blood catches fire and burns with green flames as it becomes exposed to the air. If grievously wounded, sticky, rope-like **tentacles** burst from the wound and attack anything that draws near.

They earnestly believe the Seree (and those who would imitate them) are a curse upon the earth. Some are bound to destroy specific places (or prevent them being rebuilt), while others have completed their tasks and now roam freely.

They are polite, but confidently superior that the mortals have no idea what's good for them or the consequences of their actions.

## DIRE FLEA

Dire fleas are parasitic vermin as big as a thumb. Their bite is numbing and injects d3 larvae, which burrow deep into the body.

The larvae emerge explosively as full-grown fleas 2d6 days later, leap to a new target, and begin the cycle again. Anyone caught bringing them into a settlement will most likely be carted off and burnt.

## DOGFOLK

The dogfolk are bipedal canines, the descendants of handwolves whose transformation completed after many generations.

Dogfolk reproduce slowly (more slowly than wolves), and their packs are few in number. They do their best to avoid people, living in highland forests where they have learned to hunt with clever snares. They are expert trap-setters, and many a deep-woods trapper has found themselves strung up.

They abandon all caution with sorcerers, whom they will hunt with murderous determination. They run at great speed, on all fours when they have to. They use harassing attacks and feigned retreats to encourage targets through narrow places with hidden snares, with the aim of separating and exhausting their enemies, over several days if necessary.

The dogfolk believe the moon has given them protection from sorcery—when they **howl** as a pack, magical effects are pulled harmlessly upwards into the sky. The effect even works on arrows and sling stones, rituals so old that people have forgotten they are magic.

## DRADKIN

The Dradkin are a people from deep within the earth. To surface dwellers, they look fine-boned and delicate, their movements jerky and unsettling. The majority are albino, some yellowish with ruddy features.

Their eyes are small, and bright light hurts them. They are at home in darkness, but use tiny lamps or naked wicks when they can afford oil. They have excellent hearing, bordering on echolocation, which they supplement by placing their long fingers against the cavern walls.

They have no cloth, but wear “kinleather” skins of their dead (a final gift), tailored with thread spun from hair, and they make tools and buttons of the bones. Each of their garments is named after the giver, and precious to them.

Eons ago, the Dradkin were surface dwellers, but they and their gods were ploughed into the earth by the workings of time. Now they are spread between distant habitable communities. Those which are not too deep sometimes make nighttime raids on the surface, but Dradkin are both agoraphobic and unable to tolerate the brightness of the sun.

Dradkin value directness. Evasiveness or partial answers appear to them as incompetence or badly concealed weakness. If they do not wish to discuss or disclose something, it is more polite to lie outrageously or introduce bizarre non-sequiturs.

## DRADKIN FLESHPRIEST

The most talented of the wealthy, pious-caste Dradkin are selected as fleshpriests. They begin learning the miracles of Suvuvena, shaper of flesh.

Acolytes know a cantrip to ruin echolocation, precipitate salt out of the body (causing weakness, spasms, and fainting), or to control d2 of a target victim's limbs.

Older fleshpriests become masters of chimeromancy, breeding Heilian gorgons or chitin drakes for use in wars with the Carreg.

## DRAKE

Primitive throwbacks to an earlier age of the earth, drakes are leather-winged, reptilian predators—aggressive and small-brained. They have sleek, glossy scales and long, sharp talons.

Drakes handle the cold winters of the Tristhmus poorly, but even in the warmer regions they are rare, being loners with large territories that they defend aggressively.

They are flightless for their first year, and bask in their mountain nests until they reach pony size, at which point they spread their ten-pace wings and find their own territory to patrol.

Drakes are endurance hunters, who use their soaring abilities to harass prey (commonly goats or plains deer, though they will eat anything) until it is too tired to fight back. At this point, they pounce with their talons, inflicting deep puncture wounds.

The Seree tried many times to use them as guardians, but their small brains and aggressive natures made them unsuitable. Most turned on their oaths within a decade or two, devouring their spell engines and becoming dragons.

## DRAKE, CAVE

These limbless beasts are not true drakes, but flying, winged worms with a taloned **grasper** at the end of their strong tails. They glide on rubbery wings in the upper reaches of Ur-Menig, seeking prey with heat-sensitive pits all along their oily bodies.

They use wounded prey as territory markers. Attacking cave drakes will swoop down and leave prey crippled with beak and talon attacks, then leave it to crawl around unless they are hungry (1-2 on a d6), or something (e.g., rescuers, another predator) interferes with it.

## DREAM EATER

The first sign of a dream eater's presence in a community is mass insomnia. People can't benefit from rest or sleep and, after a few days, begin experiencing acute exhaustion and hallucinations. Sleep-inducing magic lasts half as long as normal and provides no rest either.

The dream eater hides itself to avoid discovery (often in some fearful place), and acts at a distance to sow confusion and heighten fear, paranoia, and madness.

In addition to the insomnia, it has three Powers. It can **mimic the appearance** of anyone who has entered its hiding place. It can **amplify its victims' emotional**

**states** to such a degree that those nearby feel them also. Finally, it can make insomnia-induced **hallucinations into illusions** experienced by everyone.

Dream eaters are demons of the underworld, which exploit spiritual weakness to insert themselves within groups of people. (Communities without ancestral hosts, or who have forsaken traditional protections, are especially vulnerable.)

If confronted, dream eaters appear as dense clouds of black smoke, filled with teeth and sharp, metal points. Their smoky bodies resist harm, but they are not invulnerable.

When a dream eater dies, it leaves behind a **crown** of sharp, metal teeth. When worn, it grants a limited form of the dream eater's mimicry, emotional amplification, and illusionism. Without the dreams of the community as fuel, however, anyone using these powers will quickly become exhausted themselves.

## EMPEROR TORTOISE

The emperor tortoises have walked the earth since before there were people. Supposedly, they follow the paths of the gods—the ley lines and the other, subtler scars of creation.

Walking for so long has given them immense wisdom. Pilgrims, whether scholars, penitents, or mad hedge wizards, follow them for as long as they can.

The humblest hope to earn wisdom as the tortoise has, slowly, by walking. The impatient or ambitious hope to hear the tortoise actually speak.

Venerable Ganth-Nndu is rumored to have spoken at the foot of the Ivory Library of Pelark, which promptly collapsed in shame at its ignorance. Great Mmth-Endu is said to have uttered the word that destroyed all of Darpera.

Most who follow the tortoises, however, learn only their own inner lessons: while the tortoises can speak, they almost never do.

It is said that sleeping in the shadow of a tortoise would impart the secrets of the gods—but that would require them to stop walking, which they never do either.

Mere hot-blooded sorcery cannot sway them. The tortoises remember the cooling of the earth! Magic crashes on a tortoise's mighty hide like waves upon a mountain. The noise may be loud, but the mountain is unchanged.

## FEVER FLY

The **hallucinogenic venom** in the bites of these fat, blue-eyed flies impair judgment for d12 hours.

Possible effects: victims conclude they're traveling the wrong direction; the boat/sack/helmet would be a great way to carry water; a lost loved one is just below the topsoil ("Can't you hear them?"); I have way too much hair; someone should probably go and make sure the king is okay.

## FIRE BEETLE

Fire beetles are the brief adult stage of the apocalypse larvae. They are harmless, one pace in length, and fly noisily on crystalline wings. They occasionally spurt small flames, which can sometimes be spotted as tiny flickers in the darkness, clear across the Ur-Menig.

## FIRE SPRITE

These strange beings appear as normal fire, but attentive listeners can make out the dry whispers of their voices. They are small spirits, easily caught in the wild by beginning summoners.

If you have ever asked, “How do the torches in this tomb stay lit?” the answer: fire sprites. Once captured, their former, natural lives are closed off to them—all they can hope for is sufficient fuel to not extinguish.

## FIRE TITAN

The titans of orc legend were 8 paces tall, with brass skin and smoldering coal for eyes. Orc sooths tell how they were the first to walk the uncooled earth, even before the wailing horns of Thiru filled the air.

The titans were said to have built the City of Fire (now deep underground), whose cursed columns and temples are made from an architecture so stark and powerful, so absolute, that none whose eyes fall upon it can ever find solace in a lesser structure.

The writings of Seree sages dismiss orc mythology out of hand, and have many fanciful theories of their own: the titans were created by the gods to halt the expansion of Sorg (hence their ability to **disintegrate matter**); the titans were demonic creations meant to do battle with the war bodies of the demigods (hence their ability to **unravel magics**).

Others believed that they were neither, merely an early people adapted to the hellish landscape of old; or perhaps they never existed at all.

## GIRAGITA

The chameleons of the drylands grow to great size; the giragita largest of all. In the wild, they blend into cliff rocks using their natural camouflage, catching rats or desert arthropods with their long, sticky tongues.

Giragita can **climb** surfaces of any angle with ease, and can support several times their own weight with a single limb. They are very hard to see when they are still, but their ungainly walk can be spotted easily when they move.

Their minds are psychically porous—they use this to their advantage to anticipate the movements of prey, or to resolve inter-giragita territorial disputes without coming into contact.

If domesticated (they don't care where the bugs come from), they quickly pick up human languages, and they were sometimes used by the Seree as translators.

This ability, however, makes them susceptible to the whisperings of angry spirits, Powers of the earth, or mental domination by sorcerers or by ambitious Menaka.

They are not natural fighters, but deliver vicious, infection-prone bites if threatened or cornered.

## GUARDIAN

The Seree placed their spell engines in the care of magical, living guardians. Grown from mundane animals, they were fed a regimen of powdered gemstone and protective rituals. Reptiles were popular because of their uncanny stillness, but nearly every animal has been tried somewhere.

Long exposure to the intense magics caused them to grow in size and potency, while centuries of conversation and meditation granted them shrewdness and wisdom.

Mature guardians have innate command of the rituals in the spell engine they protect, as well as d6 additional magical abilities plucked from long years of dreaming.

After centuries of neglect, guardians are rarely genial, but they crave news and educated conversation. Some have solved their desperate loneliness by listening to the whispers of the Powers of the earth. Others devoured the spell engine they were sworn to protect, becoming “dragons,” able to fly and spit magical fire.

## GHOST BAT

These giant bats (6-pace wingspan) are swift and nearly silent, but delicate. They are common in larger underworld spaces. Their fur is greyish-white and of unrivaled softness.

They attack climbers and larger prey near steep drops with buffeting strikes, hoping to dislodge them so they can devour the crippled victim leisurely.

They are clever and easily trained; the Dradkin use them in the manner of surface falcons.

## GOD UNMOVING

Before it was claimed by the sea, the ancient spirits of Gaal invested themselves in titanic octopi and used them as their mighty instruments. Now that Gaal is lost, the spirits are silent, but the ‘gods unmoving’ swim on.

The gods unmoving have flawless **camouflage**. They cannot be seen to move, even when directly observed. (Perhaps they don't actually move at all.) It is merely *there*, now *here*, now *all around us*. Only the very alert will notice it. “Hey, where did all these tentacles come fro—”

Whole crews have been taken in broad daylight, without realizing anything was amiss.

The gods' only wish is to impress upon the living the true majesty of Gaal. They pull their victims below the waves, then inject their lungs with **hideous mucus**. This is lethal, but the body continues on in breathless undeath for d8 years before putrefying completely.

Victims are then taken down to the drowned realm to behold it. There, they are abandoned, and the god swims away, still unmoving.

## GRAY MONOLITH, ASCENDED

An ascended gray monolith is the result of apocalyptic necromancy, compressing thousands of spirits into a single being.

The monolith itself is made from thousands of bricks of compressed funerary ash, standing 10 paces tall. The outer surface is plastered with ash, then painstakingly embossed with rectangular **runes**: these spell out the repetitive but powerful ritual that bound the spirits together.

Ascended monoliths have one goal—teleport to an auspicious location and displace the local spiritual power. If they are attacking an ancestral host (of a settlement), the monolith will appear deep in the ground beneath the settlement. If they are attacking a Power of the earth (e.g., a potent nature spirit, a soil mother), it appears high in the air to prevent counter-attack.

The monolith's battle plays out in the unseen world, but the symptoms are acute for anyone connected to the local power—omens, nightmares, headaches, bleeding eyes. Each month the monolith is present, the local power loses d10% of its strength. When it reaches zero, it is either dislodged or destroyed.

Unfortunately, while monoliths are (by design) excellent at numinous contests of strength, they are unprepared for long years of dominion. Once they have displaced the local power, they are almost guaranteed to be usurped, in turn, by a demonic power of the underworld.

## HANDWOLF

Long ago, a sorcerer promised the comfortable lives of humans to a pack of wolves, in exchange for a generation of servitude.

Instead, the magic only caused the wolves' next generation to be born with **random human parts**: two hands instead of paws, an oddly human mouth, a foot. These wretched "handwolves" took vengeance on the sorcerer.

Handwolves envy the apparent comforts of village life—stores of food and captive animals to eat. In hard winters, packs of handwolves have been known to converge and invade outlying hamlets, doing their best to live as they have seen people do (while lording over the terrified survivors). Inevitably, they run out of food or people, or fall to intra-pack squabbling and are forced to return to the wilds once more.

Handwolves know nothing about sorcery. All sorcerers look the same to handwolves, who will go to great lengths to capture them to force them to complete the transformation.

## HEELAN

The Heelan are stooped, bipedal reptiles—as large as humans, but shorter because of their posture. Their scaly bodies are sandy beige, with bright blue stripes. When traveling, Heelan carry bronze knives and staves, and favor filigreed gold cuffs and piercings as jewelry.

Heelan prefer intense, dry heat, and can tolerate desert extremes lethal to humans without drinking for days. They live in the Far Blightlands in small, nomadic groups, though they supposedly lived in great numbers north of Firevault.

## HEELAN PHIB

According to the drylands Heelan, the phibs are degenerates who have succumbed to water-lust. Too water-dependent to leave, they live out short, dull lives confined to the few hollows and caverns in the drylands with enough briny water to support fish. Common wisdom is that they soon starve.

Lycaean sages, on the other hand, suspected that Heelan were aquatic as recently as the time of the Martoi, and that Heelan tolerance for the dry, desert heat is in fact a learnable skill.

## HEELAN PROUDSKULL

The Heelan hunters who earn acclaim in battle win the title "proudkull," and show their kills with silver bullets drilled into their bony crests, faces, or wrists.

Hunting is more of a sport than a necessity for Heelan (who survive just fine on succulents, cacti, and beetles), but water-shade-mounted proudkull hunting groups are occasionally pressed into service to defend their territory from sand monarchs and their thralls.

## HEELAN WARLOCK

The Heelan masters, high in Firevault, sent out warlocks to drive the undines from the soil and parch the lands.

Warlocks can throw bolts of fire from their fingertips, and know a ritual to construct an Iron Bell, whose toll spreads the dreadful environmental change.

## HEILIAN GORGON

These great cats are like lions with a mane of asps, whose yellow eyes transfix with a stare. They are said to be the offspring of a hydra and the great lion of Heilia. This is only true metaphorically—any encountered now were made by Dradkin chimeromancers, from hunting cats and a serum of splice hydra blood.

## HELL KNIGHT

The armored executioners, poets, and warlords of Mulciber's hell are known as hell knights. Though each is different, all wear ornate, **anachronistic armor** from any of a dozen forgotten eons.

By tradition, hell knights do not attack one another, the only perk of their high station.



Each carries a **sulfur stone**, a sphere of yellow, fuming nastiness caked around a flake of the hate star. The noxious gases make every breath painful, but the hell knights can breathe nothing else.

Their **notched swords** leave flesh undamaged, but shatter bone into needle splinters.

All one needs to do to become a hell knight is to kill one, wear its armor, and take up its notched sword. After all, what more is there to who we are than how people see us?

## HULK LARVA

Insect larvae exposed to drake ichor grow to unnatural size. They chew smooth, slippery tunnels through the bedrock with their garnet-encrusted mandibles.

Legless, they can nevertheless wriggle quite quickly. The drake ichor gives them a random magical ability, which they use thoughtlessly and frequently, regardless of its effect.

Example abilities that have been recorded: a glare that makes metal permanently flammable; a stench that makes books explode like popcorn; spray of boiling mud; babbling curse that causes all speakers in the vicinity to say the same word over and over; produce a glistening wall of dirty water, two paces thick; the frostmantle curse, which makes a target's largest item of clothing permanently icy cold (great in summer, a death sentence underground).

## HULK MOTHER

Hulk mothers are a rare natural occurrence, an amalgam of dozens of giant insect larva, mutated and burned by the drake ichor concentrations sometimes found in coprolith deposits.

The Dradkin consider them a miracle of Suvuvena and will pay dearly for information about their location.

Drake ichor infuses them with wild, unpredictable magic, making confrontation in their meandering, branching tunnel warrens extremely dangerous. Hulk mothers have been known to magically create **shields of copper**, cause **false memories** (e.g., of having defeated the hulk mother already), produce large quantities of **frictionless slime**, emit **orange beams** that turn attackers to ash, or cause the spontaneous formation of **biting mouths** on nearby stone surfaces.

## HUNGRY SPIRIT

The anxious, frantic spirits not part of an ancestral host are too faint to manifest as wraiths individually, but collectively they're very dangerous. They linger in cursed places, as the result of human sacrifices, battlefields, or the sites of villages lost en masse to the strange weapons of the Martoi.

Hungry spirits bring bad luck, misplacing vital items, loosening knots, or frightening animals. Sleepers and the badly injured risk possession when they are near. Dead bodies have been known to reanimate.

Once the hungry spirits control a body, they seek to (d6) 1-2: return to a nearby village to say goodbye properly, or 3-6: murder the nearest person in a futile act of revenge.

## ISOPOD

These armored, segmented arthropods are common underground, ranging from the size of a fingernail to as long as a leg. Like crabs, they are opportunistic scavengers—if you are small (or helpless), they will begin eating. Most scurry away from lights, and if attacked, roll up into hard, chitinous balls.

## ISOPOD, LEVIATHAN

The Ricalu clans from the deepest places learned the trick of harnessing the largest of the isopods: the leviathans.

Leviathan isopods migrate long distances through subterranean deposits of gravel and the deathly ravines of the Ur-Menig.

The Ricalu hitch a ride by boring **fistula-berths** into the outer carapace. For those brave enough to endure a deafening, claustrophobic ride, spending days praying the lacquered door won't fail, it is a quick way to cross vast distances: the secret of the Ricalu migrations.

## JORN

The Jorn are an underground people, descended from giants (or so they say). They are tall and immensely wide, with broad features and peg-like teeth and nails.

Their tiny, milky eyes are almost entirely blind, and they maneuver in the dark using the long, stiff bristles on their faces and backs. (They hate open flame, which singses their bristles.)

Near the surface, Jorn are nearly feral. Often called "trolls" by surface people, they dig tunnels with their immense hands, like moles.

Jorn of the deep are said to have mastered the art of travel using void worms, steering them with lune-moth "lamps." By this means, they can reach many secret spaces. The queen of the Jorn was said to ride an enormous "chariot of worms," and extract tribute from huge swaths of the surface realm with her iron-clad soldiers.

Jorn are violently allergic to garnet, which provokes an explosive, regenerative effect—eyes, fingers, limbs, and mouths sprouting from the contact site.

## LADY OF MEMORY

Rather than go down into the earth with the dead when their time had come, the Martoi people chose to haunt the world, to live on in illusion. This works as long as they are not outnumbered by living people, which forces back the veil and make them see themselves as the incorporeal wraiths they truly are.

To prevent this, Martoi sorceresses drop Tears of Memory into the waters of the land around them, a poison that causes the living to abandon their homes and families, crawling away to live as the animals do.

As a noble of Martoi society, a Lady of Memory will often be accompanied by an entourage of knights and attendants. Together, they ride forth to demand fealty from terrified villages.

Ladies of Memory wield the strongest of Martoi magics: they can **rob strength** from the body with a glare, urge their great horses (and those with them) to the **speed of the wind**, take **bird form**, or strike bargains with the Powers of the earth to call up other great curses or effects.

If revealed as wraiths (e.g., by being outnumbered, or by an attack that reveals their incorporeal nature), they grow enraged.

## LANTERN WORM

The worm is a strange and deadly horror of the underworld, fifteen paces long and as thick as a thigh. Its head is bare bone, the white jaws delivering venomous bites from a pike's reach with blinding speed. Most strikes are fatal.

At the tip of its tail bobs a lantern of bone, whose dread light casts a **prophetic snare**: if the worm is slain while the lantern still shines, time seemingly rewinds d20 minutes, undoing anything that happened. Everyone affected remembers the rewind events.

In fact, the snare is a prophetic, mass hallucination, and the "rewinding" merely an awakening. If the lantern is smashed (in reality or in a hallucination), the worm loses this power.

## MALAK

Malak are giant, spiral-shelled mollusks with a cluster of strong tentacles around their mouths.

They frequent rocky coastal areas, often lying in wait in shallow tidal pools. They eat fish when the tide comes in, but will happily snare larger prey that blunders into reach.

## MEEB

When undisturbed, these glassy slimes spread out large and thin, looking like wet stone or puddles. If awakened by light or sound, they draw up into keg-sized blobs over a few minutes. Once a minute they can **leap** surprisingly far, grappling their victims to dissolve them in **acidic juice**.

In places where they congregate, there can be a dozen or more in the vicinity. They are most vulnerable to cutting weapons.

## MENAKA

The Menaka are great, scaly beings three paces in height. A dozen chameleon eyes pivot and peer in every direction and a soft, tubular "mouth" dangles from the underside. A bladder of buoyant gas lets them float about freely.

Their hides are thick and their bites vicious, but they only fight as a last resort—Menaka are fiendish parasites, specialized in the exploitation of communities.

They insert themselves into groups by making themselves useful. They are highly intelligent, and well

versed on many civil and agricultural matters, having parasitized many cities over the course of their long, weird project.

Once situated, they set about performing subtly destructive social experiments, to see how the community writhes and changes. What is the worst plausible policy that could be enacted? A preferred tactic is layers of supporters, each so compromised that none could survive the Menaka's ouster from the community.

Menaka are magically adept and immediately learn any ritual performed in their presence. On a 1-3 on d6, they can interfere with it as it is performed, redirecting it.

The Menaka are explorers from a later age of the earth, when the current world has been ploughed over, buried far below the surface. To them, they are exploring a mythic underworld, a giant cavern full of memories that refuses to see itself as it is.

As a last resort, Menaka can escape to their own time, a sweltering jungle criss-crossed by sluggish streams. Anyone near them is dragged along with them, although anyone straying more than 50 paces from the Menaka returns to their present time.

## MOON BABY

If a moon-scryer ever uses their powers selfishly to look into their own future, they are instantly replaced by a moon baby. Whether it's an alien presence or a magical inversion of the seer, a dangerous force has entered the world.

A moon baby looks like the seer it has replaced, but hollow and inside out, like the inner side of a plaster cast. It makes heavy, ceramic clicks as it walks.

It pretends to be who it once was as long as possible. What it wants, however, is to give **clairvoyant visions**. Anyone who accepts a vision from a moon baby sees a plausible but false vision, a creation of the Moon Baby.

Moon babies can see out of the eyes of everyone ever given a vision, and their alien minds let them integrate this all simultaneously. In the case of magic users, they insist on a **kiss**. If this happens, the victim is immediately teleported to the moon, and replaced with a moon baby themselves.

Normal weapons cannot harm the moon baby; any object striking it turns to water and splashes to the floor.

It attacks with a **silvered knife**; it can inflict cuts at any range and always on the opposite side of the target.

Moon babies **transform or reflect all magical effects** which target them. Roll a d4. On a 1, the opposite effect occurs (healing instead of harm, etc.). On a 2 or 3, the effect is reflected back toward the caster. On a 4, both.

## MOTE

Motes are hybrid beings, animals reshaped to resemble human form and given one of the many sparks of intelligence formed when a spell engine is disassembled.

They retain the smallish stature and fur or scales of their original lemur, otter, or reptile heritage.

They are long-lived, but sterile. They are fascinated by babies of any sort, human or animal. They are less sympathetic toward parental bonds, with which they have no direct experience.

With no ancestral spirits, previous generations of cultural traditions to guide them, motes are extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Those who have survived are deeply wary of outsiders.

### MURK STAR (AKA MURKER)

These cave-swelling starfish have five spindly arms that glow a faint, luminous orange. They exude a **paralytic mucus** that they use to catch fish and other prey.

Though they hunt alone, murk stars are gregarious and occasionally come together in swarms of dozens or hundreds of stars.

Murk stars have a limited telekinesis that lets them fashion protective **outer casings** from mud in order to come ashore without drying out. Encased, they walk about like five-legged crabs.

**Siltbody** murkers are slow-moving ambush hunters that hide themselves in mud, leaving one glowing limb tip as a lure.

Mature murk stars can fashion casings of stone for use in war. These are immensely tough.

A rare few master both the wit and subtlety needed to shape flexible casings of clay (sometimes two-legged with arms, sometimes four-legged). Their fifth arm resides in a clay “head,” curled up like a long, glowing tongue. These **claybodied** murkers live alongside other peoples and participate fully in society. They are mute, but communicate using a set of hand-signs easily learned by anyone who bothers.

### NUSS ERUPTION

In a remote region of the luminous void is a patch of chaotic, vital energy. There is no matter there, and its inhabitants clamor for material forms.

They are jealous of the selfish mortals that express only one stable form during their long lives, resisting every change. Worst of all is the mortal habit of producing near-identical offspring—an act of supreme selfishness.

If they had the chance, they would use the material realms more wisely. They want bodies, to share if they must, so they can show the selfish the joy of eruption!

Each eruption uses the body given to it to express its unique form, but there are themes:

- Warty spheres
- Tough, rope-like umbilicals
- Tentacled mats
- Branching worms, with many legs or none
- Toothy, stud-like protrusions
- Dozens of tiny, bead-like eyes

They are erratic and short-lived, erupting into new configurations every few days. Eruptions are alarming, but not particularly dangerous. They need to eat, of course,

but are usually having too much fun feeling hunger to do anything about it.

### NUSS EXILE

The Nuss that dwell secretly among people have abandoned their true, chaotic forms (a heresy to most Nuss) to adopt human shape. This tires them; when exhausted or angered, the guise slips a little and their skin ripples with bumps.

As they cannot return home, they will do nearly anything to protect the secret of their presence. In desperate situations, they will abandon humanoid form to sprout whatever they need: new limbs, mouths, tentacles, claws, blade-like horns, spikes, protective fur, or scales.

They dissolve into iron-smelling goo if slain.

### NUSS HARBINGER

Harbingers resemble tall, walking bats with trilateral symmetry (three wings, three legs, three arms), topped with an eye-encrusted mass.

Ungainly on the ground, they **fly** as invisible lightning, tearing the sky with a deafening noise.

Their hollow-tipped **spears** inject the essence of a Nussan form; anyone stabbed begins turning into a Nuss eruption. Starting at the wound, the change spreads rapidly, completing in d6+5 days. Harbingers carry d3 doses of Nussan essence, but refilling their spears takes time.

Harbingers are not interested in martial glory, only bringing forth new eruptions. They will retreat from stiff resistance and wait for a chance for an ambush, but they are determined: unworthy Harbingers are recycled, their matter used to express new forms.

### OGRE

Ogres are the solitary giants that lead hidden lives on the edges of populated areas. They skulk below bridges or haunt roadways and forest paths to waylay and eat travelers.

They are usually remnants of forays from Firevault centuries ago, adventurers in their own right seeking fortune in the lands of the small and weak. Others are criminals, oathbreakers, or debtors forced out as exiles.

Their oafishness is feigned; no ogre could survive long among humans without cunning. They can throw heavy objects (rocks, stumps, unfortunate people) with great speed and accuracy. They use dense or rough terrain to hamper riders and archers; they cross deep water, haul themselves up trees, or scamper up small cliffs to avoid or separate pursuers. Their paths of retreat may have concealed, sharpened stakes, leaf-filled pits, or both. Ogre haunts will have many hiding spots—hollows surrounded by bushes, dense copses, and sturdy trees to climb.

Rarely, ogres have managed to hold on to a few advantages from their homeland: a companion or two, mighty war bows, or fine armor made from metal or lacquered plates.

Ogres have a love of gold and precious things, which they hoard in the hopes of buying their way back into their communities in the north.

## ONDDO

The quick-brained servants of a soil mother are grown to suit various purposes. All have a tough, woody exterior mottled like the leaf litter of the forest floor. When stationary, they are extremely difficult to spot, often mistaken for logs or stumps.

They are speechless, but constantly release and exchange spores with the forest, and so know the will of their soil mother instinctively.

**Hunting Onddo** are humanoid and wield wooden spears. **Tusked Onddo** are huge, headless quadrupeds, used to dig stream beds or to haul boulders.

**Seed Onddo** are roughly dog-like, with a sharp **beak** to inject spore-filled venom. This causes an irresistible wanderlust. When victims (eventually) die and return to the earth, a new soil mother is born there.

Though tough, onddo are not made to last long. In the first year of their lives, onddo can regenerate rapidly unless burned or completely hacked apart. Once a winter passes, onddo can no longer heal, and few last longer than a year or two.

Yet, a small number survive to become **venerable onddo**—they can **speak**, and (when it suits their soil mother) act as ambassadors to other surface-dwelling people.

## ORC, BLIGHT

The wasteland raider clans are called “orcs” for their practice of eating the ash of the dead. Despite the barren environment, their blasphemy makes them strong—they can run a day and a night without resting, and their ember-like eyes reveal the secrets of the night and of the unseen world around them.

They are nomadic, and erect tall “**orcneests**” for protection: bowl-like structures, balanced on a tripod of huge tree trunks. A reeking cesspool at the base keeps away scavenging blight ants.

With no ancestral host to protect them, orc lands are plagued with demons. By necessity, their sooths are skilled in bargaining with the unseen.

These dealings occasionally produce sorcerers or (more rarely) half-demon offspring.

Orc clans number 20-30 individuals. At any given time, half the nest will be out hunting, patrolling their borders for raids from other clans, or scouting for the next orcneest site.

The appearance of an orcneest heralds an invasion of blight ants within a month or two. The best hunting is found in the patchy new forests—the areas which have had a few years to recover from the last passing blight ant swarm. The ants, however, follow soon for the same reason. Panicked urgency is a fact of orc life.

From time to time, a strong leader unites several clans, but these alliances are short lived. The scarcity of food causes tensions wherever they congregate, and demonic whispering keeps them paranoid, mistrustful, and prone to sudden outbursts of violence.

Their raids into the borderlands are swift and brutal: killing as many as they can and driving away the survivors, just long enough to consume the ash before fleeing into the blight.

## ORC, PRIMORDIAL

In the time of ancient Thiru, some made themselves strong by hunting the spirits of the dead. Eaters of the black gruel dabble in mimicking them, but the primordial orcs devoured thousands.

By depleting the ancestral hosts, they left the land vulnerable to demons from the deep, rising up to fill the emptiness. The strongest of the orcs laughed and hunted them also.

## PELICAN, DIRE

These huge birds stand five paces high, with a nine-pace wingspan. They prefer fish, but will eat anything they can swallow, including people. Dire pelicans attack larger prey by snapping, battering, and when they can, **swallowing**.

Once a victim is held in the tough, rubbery throat sac, the pelican flees to subdue them in peace. This involves alternately beating the sac against the pelican’s body to crush the victim, violent shaking, and slurping water into the sac to cause drowning.

It can take half an hour for human-sized prey to weaken enough to be swallowed, but unless victims have a sharp knife and enough unbroken limbs to use it, the prospects of escape are slim.

## PIT LORD

The infernal lands are ruled by the pit lords—massive, squat beings, charred and distended like leering bullfrogs. Flames spurt from their coal-hot skin, which no blade can pierce.

Their **gaze** causes uncontrollable babbling—secrets, intentions, held incantations, and the true names of loved ones all tumble out. Once per day, they may pronounce the irrevocable **death** of anyone present—the target dies within 13 hours.

The **blessing** of a pit lord sets the skin aflame with a fire that scalds and blisters eternally but doesn’t consume.

Their sulfurous bowels swarm with infernal, toothed **slugs**, which emerge if the pit lord is mortally wounded.

If they were once human, they’ve forgotten, and fancy themselves alone in their clear-eyed grasp of hideous reality.

## RICALU

The Ricalu are the night people, sometimes called “goblins,” “elves,” or “kobolds.” There is a great variety to

their bodies; they can be long-limbed, furry, sticky, or tiny, but all see well in the dark. (Daylight is painful to their round, black eyes.) They have many excellent masons and know rituals to find or hide passages underground.

Ricalu stories say they were called up from their homeland in the deep by Deel to fight the Seree, but they were betrayed. After their service, they were abandoned, unable to find their way home again.

Isolated from their life-giving homeland, Ricalu have had to resort to magical tricks to replace their numbers.

In a few places they live well, but without the numbers to force the surface people to reckon with them fairly, most Ricalu live in marginal, itinerant groups. They scour the lands for a way “back home,” meeting up in caves, sewers, and back alleyways to exchange news and faint hope.

## RUST SOLDIER

These iron golems are said to be gifts to the Carreg from the deceased god, Gamandes. Though the Carreg fear iron, the rust soldiers’ service to the Carreg saints is symbolic of the freedom from fear that faith in Gamandes offers.

They help placidly, demonstrating the calm that is so valued in Carreg society. They have dog-like intelligence and can speak clearly (albeit simply).

They are mechanical contraptions, powered by a spring of white metal under unbelievable pressure. If they are allowed to rust too much (which they eventually do if not kept completely dry), they fail in explosive and alarming ways, sending rusty components in every direction at high speed.

## SAND MONARCH

The squid-like demons forced to the surface of the drylands live cruel, tormented lives. The sand flays their skin and their tentacles wither off. Those that survive use their dark gifts to **enthrall** desert dwellers—giant geckos, camel spiders, or unfortunate Heelan. These they press into service as transportation, food gatherers, or bandits to extort Heelan bands, bringing goods back to their subterranean burrows where they hide from the blistering sun.

## SAND SPRITE

The whorls of dust that play across desert dunes were once undines exiled to the surface by whatever force has dried the land.

They are playful, and **dancing** with them relieves thirst for an entire day. In exchange, they demand a small service or token of gratitude. If this is not done, they attack.

Angry sand sprites fight by multiplying water in the body. This causes splitting headaches, blindness as the eyes run with tears, and wracking coughs as moisture floods the lungs. Victims who are outnumbered will drown.

## SELK, GRUSH

Across the astral lands is the lost city of Tlarba. Its people are the selks: tall, skin-and-bones humanoids with large eyes, mottled skin, and copious, upward-pointing bristles (“grush”).

Their body language is alien and stiff-seeming, but they are full of feeling and passion.

## SELK, GHOST

Some adult selks begin to manifest their astral nature, becoming translucent and insubstantial.

In Tlarba, ghost selks live and train as a warrior caste. They use Saaru-traditional weapons from the wars with the craesten: short, chitin-breaking **seax** and double-ended **quilled javelins**, one end a cluster of sharp quills (to more easily find armored eyes), the other end cut from a **paralytic resin**.

Physical attacks affect them, but much less than normal. Their own attacks are unimpeded.

## SHADOW BOHKA

The Carreg say that Bohka is the wretched offspring of demon and sorcerer. He carries a **lamp** that casts darkness; surface dwellers produce brightly glowing “shadows” which dance as he moves.

He can snatch the bones from your arm with his **thieving touch**. These he takes and sews into his great coat.

Bohka is **invisible** in his shroud of darkness, but his bone-lined coat **rattles** as he moves. He can be seen once injured, for his **blood glows** like molten iron.

He carries one of the Books of Undibol and reads it regularly.

## SHRINE BABY

These alarming beings are made from clay-wrapped stillborn, turned by the spirits of Raal into tiny, clever homunculi. Some believe an ancestral spirit animates them, others believe the child’s spirit was returned to a body made sturdier by the ritual.

## SIREN

The sirens are women transformed by the blessing of the goddess of the ocean. They have skin as gray and slippery as eels, rows of sharp, shark-like teeth, and milky eyes that see in darkness above or beneath the waves.

Their low, **mesmerizing songs** confuse men, giving sirens time to indulge their hunger for man-flesh. Men are devoured immediately; women are given a chance to serve the goddess of the ocean and become sirens themselves.

The **crystal knife** of a siren is precious to her and the secret of her immortality—touching it for even a moment transfers a year of life from its victim to its siren owner.

When it serves them, sirens appear as their human selves, sitting naked by a tidal pool or bobbing in the shallows.

## SLEWT

The Slewts of Tlarba are glistening, orange amphibians. They are a small people, but lean and muscular. They are joyful beings, and spend their leisure hours frothing up their pools and warbling together in high-pitched harmonies.

Slewt slime **bonds metal to metal** instantly, which makes a mess of armor (especially mail). They grapple armored foes with this in mind, hoping to pin a weapon or arm in place before moving on to softer targets.

Slewts are not cowed by defeat or capture, and will readily surrender if battle goes against them, only to start fighting again moments later.

## SOIL MOTHER

The primordial forests of the Tristhmus are suffused with the fungal threads of vast, intelligent beings: soil mothers.

Their thoughts are slow and deep, spread among thousands of coconut-like ganglia buried in the soil. By touch and taste, they know everything that happens within their domain.

Though imperceptibly slow, they are immensely powerful, able to reshape the landscape. Streams flow and plants grow only where the soil mother chooses.

In a soil mother's territory, the flesh of large game animals becomes bitter and mildly toxic. By inducing mycotoxins into the plants and berries, the soil mother dissuades predators and scavengers from eating the brains she needs to grow onddo: quickened fungal servitors. When the need for many onddo arises, soil mothers produce rich, fruiting groves to attract animals in large numbers.

Soil mothers communicate with their onddo with **hallucinogenic spores**, but forest cults have occasionally learned to sense the "will of the forest." They are so expansive and alien in their thoughts that they are effectively an organic Power of the earth, with strange gifts to give.

Soil mother ganglia are sweet and nutritious, but eating them earns the eternal hatred of all soil mothers.

An enraged soil mother is fearsome and can poison ground water with **hallucinogenic toxins** (designed to target the offending species), or send hunting onddo as assassins.

## SPLICE HYDRA

A splice hydra is a chimeromantic abomination, made by fusing seven great serpents into a single creature. They are aquatic by preference, but the human lungs used in their construction make them amphibious.

When they wish, splice hydras **sing** like an overpowering, discordant choir. Joyous, ecstatic, and terrified voices all intertwine into one.

The sound is irresistibly primal. Only those of great will can resist joining its dreadful song, singing wordlessly at the top of their voices. The especially weak willed can do nothing else while they sing.

Splice hydra blood and eggs are alchemically auspicious, nearly as potent and useful as dragon ingredients.

## STORM SEAL

These magical creatures dwell within thunderclouds and the airy canyons between mountains. They swim through the air gracefully, winding sinuously before spiraling in to attack.

Their newborn **minnows** are aquatic, but the mouse-sized **pups** take to the air in wingless, flying swarms, keeping down the midges, flies, and fleas in coastal wetlands.

**Adolescents** are the size of large dogs, and are large enough to hunt. They are cruel, playful, and opportunistic. **Adults** are dolphin sized, large enough to lift a struggling horse up into the air, to be cast down to its death.

## SYLPH SPIDER

Sylph spiders are giant, bristly hunting spiders which hunt from the air. They spin silken membranes between their legs and soar on the thermal currents. They are ambush hunters, large enough to snare and envenom people, goats, or boars. They can't take off from level ground, but by jumping into the breeze off trees.

Sylphs avoid close-knit herds and groups, as they are vulnerable once on the ground. They will, however, follow groups for hours at a time, waiting for a straggler to separate or fall behind, and then silently pounce.

They prefer to hunt in broken, rocky terrain or sparse forests—places where they can get high enough to lift off once more.

They will drag lone victims up into trees to drain them quietly. If this is not possible, they will sometimes leave a dying victim to soften up and dissolve internally. The sweating caused by their venom is pungent and repels scavengers.

## TCHETH

The Tcheth are long-limbed, lightly furred people, with long, narrow skulls reminiscent of ferrets. They are excellent climbers, and their flexible bones let them squeeze through remarkably narrow gaps.

They are originally from deep underground, but they see poorly in the dark. Tcheth legends say they were forced to give up their night eyes in a bargain with the demon Guguluin, to win their freedom from the Jorn.

They are gregarious and form large fishing communities on the surface, preferring river gorges with good climbing. They built Yugra in the Cleft, and some see signs of their handiwork in the original structures of Novy Dom.

Tcheth love grass, thinking its texture and appearance hilarious. They are masterful weavers, and a traveling band of Tcheth takes no greater pleasure than in weaving a new, grass hut for themselves at every campsite.

Their ritual magic is based on weaving, and it's said that the witch-grain baskets (which insects compulsively fill with nuts, seeds and grubs) were a Tcheth creation.

## UNDINE

The undine are spirits which bring water to the surface. Where they dwell, natural springs are plentiful and rains come often.

Undines are said to have three forms. When seen in pools or streams, they appear as ghostly children. Their words cannot be heard by ears, but are remembered several days later. This makes dealing with them dangerous, since a back-and-forth conversation is impossible, and they have many rigid laws and customs that they expect visitors to uphold.

When angered, they take on the forms of watery serpents with **venomous bites**, almost invisible when submerged.

Many pastoral shrines are built to them, and village sooths say that mist and fog are a third form of the undines, moving about the land as the eyes and ears of the Powers. If their demands are not appeased (with suitable shrine donations), sooths say the undines punish the land by bringing droughts.

## VAMPIRE

Vampires are wraiths who have acquired a taste for the blood of the living. By drinking it, they regain a solid, mortal body. Freed from the ashen realm, they do anything they must to never return to it.

Since they are dead that prey on the living, they are the counterpart of orcs (living who prey on the dead).

To keep their mortal bodies, they must feed weekly. Because of this, many vampires cultivate positions of power and influence that give them opportunities to exploit living victims. Others haunt alleyways in the towns and cities, devouring those who won't be missed.

Only the most desperate vampires hunt in the wilderness, for like all dead without the protection of an ancestral host, they are vulnerable to demons.

Vampires fight as wraiths do, with silvered or enchanted weapons, or whatever magic they learned in life.

If a vampire's mortal body is slain, it reverts to its wraith form. Vampires are careful to keep a silvered weapon hidden, so they can use it to hunt if they are driven from their bodies.

## VAMPIRE BUSH

These large bushes appear to be covered in pink, circular flowers year-round. Their tough, raspy tendrils reflexively grasp anything that brushes them. The whole bush then curls around to encircle the prey, which is drained of its blood through the sucker-like "flowers."

They evolved to catch small birds and rodents, so they are not a serious threat to alert adventurers with a knife handy. Tired travelers who stumble directly in, however, quickly come to a bad end. So do armored or encumbered adventurers who can't as easily wriggle out of the bush's grip.

Vampire bushes are sensitive to spiritual energies, and when favored by spirits or Powers, they can grow

into substantial trees. These are extremely dangerous, especially to anyone who wanders beneath the canopy.

## VINTERALF

Beyond the high glaciers is a land so cold that humans simply cannot enter. There, the stars sing their songs to the seers of the Vinteralf.

Vinteralf are tall, thick-skinned, and blubbery. Their faces are seal-like, with stubby snouts and tiny eyes. When they must, they can hibernate for several decades. Only the hardest Vinteralf come to the glacier lands to defend their borders, hunt the white hydra, or to eject an exile.

They will be well armed, with carefully made, form-fitting metal or laminate armor. Most will be carrying a supply of cyldwort, a warmlands herb that cools the body enough for them to function.

Some Vinteralf parties will have a **confessor-acolyte**, a junior star seer able to see three heartbeats into the future, making them uncannily good in melee.

## VOID GULL

Deprived of their home plane long ago, these alien gulls have adapted to the void that howls between realms. When in mortal lands, they are found in small patrols or scouting groups.

More suited to the void, the pony-sized gulls are passable gliders but weak fliers. On flat ground, they move by "glide-hopping," bouncing up on their one leg and flapping for a few feet before hopping once more. They are swift, but tire easily.

Alone, they are nervous and inclined to keep their distance. When two or more are present, they revert to their military training, seizing victims with their hands and delivering axe-like blows with their bony, tripartite "beaks."

Gull "nests" are ruled over by a **void-bringer**, a gull with considerable magical ability.

They are keenly interested in sorcerers and summoners of all types and will abduct them opportunistically, hoping to extract magical secrets from them. As they are fascinated by planar destruction, the presence of a nest is a dire sign.

## VOID WORM

A mature void worm is twenty paces long, with a body made of nothingness. Where it lies, no rock exists. It inches forward slowly, occasionally intersecting a tunnel or cave. Once it has passed, there is undisturbed solid rock once more.

The appearance of a void worm often goes unnoticed. They're silent, and whatever they eat, they are uninterested in surface dwellers. They're heralded by nothing more than a circular opening appearing in a wall, enlarging to the full diameter of the worm, revealing an ever-shortening tunnel.

An hour or more later, when the worm crosses whatever room or corridor it blundered into, a similar breach opens on the far side.

At the tip of each tunnel is a seam of gold, which to the untrained eye appears to be a natural part of the rock. A thick, rich vein of pure gold! But alas, mining this kills the worm. The worm's nothing-body begins to rot immediately.

Crumbling, porous rock encroaches on all sides, replacing the smooth tunnel with crunching, delicate spurs of natural rock. In a few weeks, the void has closed completely.

The brave or foolhardy might run along its body, using it as a momentary glimpse into the surrounding rock, to other caverns or true seams of value, but the risk of being trapped is ever-present. Wise miners let the worms pass.

## WARBODY

When the demigods retaliated against the Seree, they made special bodies for themselves. An account of the attack on the pit of ensnarement described Deel as having a body of dark glass, carrying a lance of white metal. They flew as if blown by a hurricane, and their lances struck like lightning, smashing the masonry of the pit fortress apart. They hummed and crackled like spell engines, which may have given Pit-Master Zecoxy some clue he used to stun Deel before he was torn apart by Egesa.

## WATER SHADE

These pony-like creatures are magical scavengers, patrolling the drylands for prey. If one crosses a traveler's tracks, it pursues, stealing its victim's life from their footprints—fresh is best, but hour-old footprints will do.

Anyone so pursued must consume twice the normal amount of food and water or collapse from exhaustion. Each shade can affect d2 people once it begins following.

If spotted and chased, shades will keep their distance. They can outrun people, but tire quickly if forced to gallop for an extended period.

The Heelan sometimes use them as mounts, using the water shades' tracking abilities for their own sport.

## WEREWOLF, LEÁDSTÆF

The Leádstæf are deranged celestial beings, torn from the heavens by the pit of ensnarement. They roam the earth, looking to manifest their anguish and dread upon the people of the surface.

The Leádstæf are incorporeal spirits who attack by possession. They can control anyone "marked" by the Powers, such as by curses inflicted by the Powers, with any injury having a divine origin (including white metal weapons, divine warbodies, and the bite of Leádstæf themselves).

Anyone possessed by a Leádstæf immediately transforms into its animal form. Most of the time this is a huge, white-furred wolf, but other forms include a flayed arctic fox, a horse-sized arctic bat, or a three-headed polar bear. All are ferocious in battle.

Killing the animal form ejects the Leádstæf from the host (though it can possess someone again the next night), who awakens with serious injuries. If the mortal blow is inflicted with fire or a silver weapon, the Leádstæf dies permanently, but so does the host.

## WHIP SCORPION

Nightmares of black chitin three paces long, they patrol underground places incessantly, seeking sound or movement. They seize prey with their pincers, they then spray strong **acid** from their stiff, whip-like tails.

They are perfect **climbers**, moving easily along walls and ceilings. A faint **vinegar smell** is sometimes the only warning that one is near.

## WRAITH

When the fortunate die, they join with an ancestral host to solemnly watch over the living. Some are unwilling or unable to join, or are rejected by the ancestors—the very selfish or hateful, whose spirits are bent by self-interest. Others have minds filled with alien rituals or corrupted by wizard flowers, and cannot meld their whispering voices with the ancestors.

Most of these dissipate in grief or wander off to be caught by demons. The strongest willed, however, go on as wraiths.

Wraiths may use whatever rituals they knew in life and can wield silver or enchanted weapons or objects (including wizard flowers), as these exist on both sides of the veil.

## THE WYRM JOKUN

Jokun was once a Seree guardian, grown from an immature drake. She devoured her spell engine within decades of abandonment by the departure of the Seree, becoming a dragon.

The indigestible spell engine inside her pulls warmth from her environment to power itself—she radiates cold, but she is uncomfortably warm everywhere outside the glacial lands. Once per day she can vent the engine's power as a blast of heat so intense that everything but white metal or dark glass liquifies or turns to ash.

She is long and slender, and when her wings are folded, she can easily navigate spaces meant for people—a fact that has led her to feast in more than one fortress thought to offer security.

Her scales are as clear as glass, but as strong as steel, and she is invisible when she sleeps.

She cannot properly understand language, but barks half-remembered nursery rhymes from her infancy in a sarcastic tone.

## WYVERN

Wyverns are the offspring of guardian reptiles and a debased mystical order (which they later ate). They are giraffe-sized winged terrors with the playful and murderous demeanor of house cats. Wyverns patrol all



day, drifting high on the updrafts. They swoop down to snatch prey from the ground, carry them high, drop them, and then do it again.

They have oddly **human laughs**, and if need be, beg for their lives in **human voices**. They have **four eyes**, each of which is a precious gemstone.