

OSR RPG ZINE SPRING 2021 ISSUE NUMBER 02

AQUITIUS





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AQUILUS

IDEAS FOR USE WITH TRADITIONAL ROLE-PLAYING GAMES & THEIR MODERN EDITIONS

↳ THE HEXCRAWL & CITY ISSUE ↻

CONCEPT, WRITING & LAYOUT

Vasili Kaliman

INSPIRATION FOR THIS ISSUE

The paintings of Thomas Cole (1801–1848); Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* (1981–1987);
Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (1971); the lectures of Terence McKenna;
the Cryo Chamber music label.

ART

Cover: Odilon Redon (1840–1916), *Christ and the Samaritan Woman (The White Flower Bouquet)* ca. 1895.
All images in this publication are in the public domain. .

CONTACT

Send fan mail to: vasili@vasilikaliman.com | Instagram: @vasilikaliman and @osrrpg
Blog: www.beyondthesingingflame.blogspot.com

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Aquilus*. In this issue, I have attempted to create the foundations of a sandbox or hex campaign in an arcadian region of *Aquilus* called *Ostaria*.

The arrangement of the hexcrawl in this issue takes an informal approach. The map of *Ostaria* includes details of seven numbered locations. These offer extended descriptions, places worth knowing. Landmarks, features, weather, and exploration encounters in other hexes can be generated by random tables.

I decided on a limited amount of keyed locations — firstly — because of spatial concerns with the page count of the zine, and — secondly — I thought populating each hex with fixed material would feel like the party exploring an amusement park after a while. Instead, referees and players can collaborate to fill in those blanks.

The hexcrawl in *Ostaria* is specifically written without a narrative or underlying plot framework. Think of it as a skeleton over which to drape ideas, an open-ended way for the party to experience the world. Blending results from random tables offer a vague basis to create a narrative structure, brief outlines of story-hooks, and the initial set-up for wider campaigns. It's less preparation for the referee before a session and avoids the frustration of detailing locations the players won't encounter.

This issue also includes a toolkit to generate an urban campaign in the city of *Halgarth*. Again, the various random tables can be used to create plot hooks, features, agendas,

NPCs, encounters, and factions. The results facilitate the flexibility of players wandering through a city according to their whims, instead of plans devised by the referee beforehand. The story or plot can develop in play.

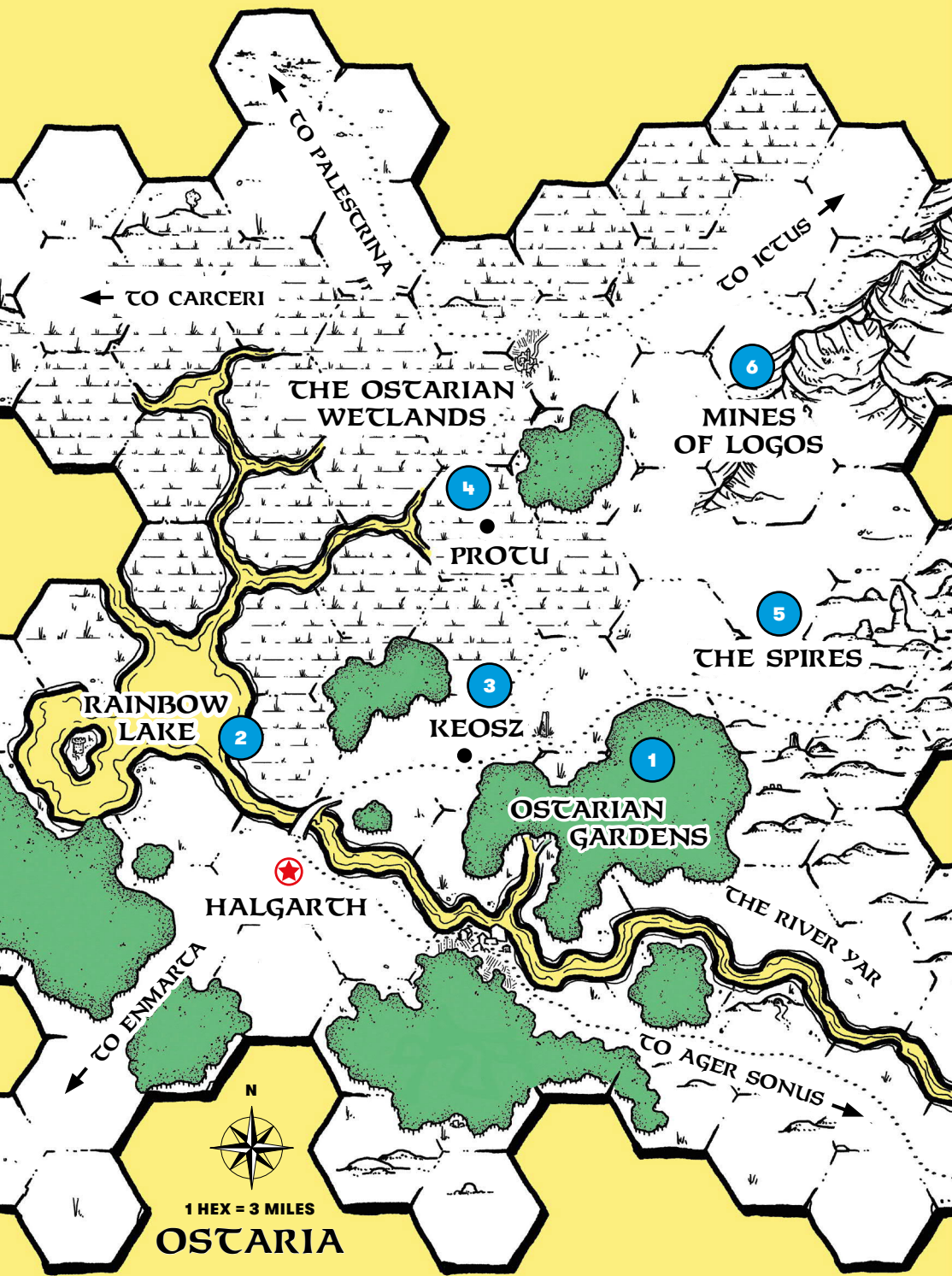
I haven't included stats for monsters or packaged treasure in this issue. I assume there are plentiful resources out there, both online and in print (such as wandering monster tables, bestiaries, treasure generation, etc.) for referees to utilize.

The referee is encouraged to modify, expand upon, plug in other published adventures, or add original material of their own. Of course, referees or players can use this issue as a sourcebook, mining it for inspiration or pure reading pleasure.

In conclusion, I'm hoping to release 2-3 issues per year of *Aquilus*, as I now have an understanding of the amount of work involved in writing and designing a forty-page publication. I've also started work on supplements to this zine in a similar format, including a bestiary of new monsters, deities, magic items, and new spells. These will be stand-alone zines expanding the world of *Aquilus*, and will be released over the next twelve months. For now, turn the pages and lose yourselves in wonder and adventure. Enjoy this issue!

— Vasili Kaliman, February 2021





THE OSTARIAN
WETLANDS

MINES
OF LOGOS

PROTU

THE SPIRES

RAINBOW
LAKE

KEOSZ

OSTARIAN
GARDENS

HALGARTH

THE RIVER YAR

CO ENMARCA

CO AGER SONUS

CO PALESCRINA

CO ICCUS

TO CARCERI

N

1 HEX = 3 MILES

OSTARIA

The marvelous region of

Ostaria



DESCRIBING THIS REGION

Say these words to players

- *“Ostaria is known as one of the loveliest parts of Aquilus.”*
- *“Bright with flowers and splendid groves of trees.”*
- *“Haunting songs and music drift through the air.”*
- *“Scented flowers in hushed gardens, bathed in the light of a delicately flushed sunset.”*
- *“Colors here seem richer and heavier, and even shadows even have colors of their own.”*
- *“Clear and pastoral.”*
- *“Full of wondrous forms, each vista more beautiful than the next.”*

Show these images to players

- The inside front cover of this issue.
- The series of paintings *The Voyage of Life*, created by Thomas Cole in 1842.

THE HEX MAP

- The map on the left details the region of Ostaria.
- Key locations are numbered. The numbered locations are described on pages 11–16.
- The featured location for this issue is the city of **Halgarth** (marked in red on the map), covered on pages 19–33.

How to explore the hexes

1. Roll on the tables on page 6–7 when the party enters a new hex and see what's inside...
2. ... then roll on page 8 to generate the weather ...
3. ... then roll on page 9 to for random encounters.
4. Use your imagination to combine these results into hooks and develop the fiction.
5. As referee, feel free to change anything, add your own locations, side adventures, and encounters.

EXPLORING HEXES

D50 ROLL TO POPULATE HEXES WITH FEATURES & LANDMARKS...

- 1 A settlement circled by gargantuan winged beasts.
- 2 Monolithic columns surrounded by fog at the base.
- 3 A 1000 ft diameter shaft of flame rising into the heavens from an enormous pit.
- 4 Structures of constantly shifting colors.
- 5 Dozens of perfectly preserved statues carved from a precious stone, depicting mythic beings.
- 6 A ziggurat with holy people standing at the top.
- 7 The bones on an enormous beast, 3d100+300 ft in length.
- 8 Hundreds of ornate mausoleums of past rulers.
- 9 A large well, overgrown with brush and filled with waste oils.
- 10 A carved megalithic block with inscriptions of various laws throughout Aquilus.
- 11 A settlement filled with houses made from tanned human skins.
- 12 Several tunnels at the perimeter of a pit, they run deep into the earth.
- 13 Fields with corroded metal cylinders on the ground arranged in mathematical patterns.
- 14 A settlement of houses built on the backs of large creatures. The town is nomadic.
- 15 Dozens of pits. It is impossible to estimate how deep they are.
- 16 Dull-gray rocks with swirling patches of electricity surging through them.
- 17 A military training base.
- 18 The ruins of a recently burned settlement lying in ashes.
- 19 A rotting aqua-duct defaced with holy symbols.
- 20 A lush area filled with savage plants and hidden predators.
- 21 A canyon of breathtaking majesty.
- 22 Plains of grass with dim dancing lights above.
- 23 A settled marsh area with stilt houses.

- 24 Amphitheater of statue shrines, dedicated to gods and heroes.
- 25 A large grassy field where the grass is perfectly rigid. The grass acts as tiny daggers.
- 26 A pond of acidic water. The reflections are not what they should be.
- 27 Secluded homes, dense with an unseen population.
- 28 A titanic living shadow.
- 29 Geysers randomly erupt. They cause strange mutations to those caught in them.
- 30 Mounds of revolting garbage and faeces.
- 31 The remains of prison, with courthouses, execution facilities and holding cells.
- 32 A submerged mystical fountain.
- 33 Large, sensuous flowers of all hues grace a meadows.
- 34 The roots of a massive gargantuan dead tree.
- 35 Several dozen poles mounted with signs, pointing towards various distant lands.
- 36 Carved trio of protruding faces all looking and pointing the same direction.
- 37 A small settlement which is a utopia.
- 38 A garden infested by deadly plague.
- 39 Billions spheres of water like a sky ocean flying by and forming patterns.
- 40 Cracks appear when walking on the ground, but disappear once people have passed.
- 41 Town where buildings are created from monster bones, scales, and giant insect carapaces.
- 42 A glorious estate. Everything is strangely pristine.
- 43 Huge cavern system, which is a dead creature's digestive tract.
- 44 A drifting garden of floating reflective liquid orbs in various sizes.
- 45 A tower with a large network of tunnels created by the former residents.
- 46 A tower with a beam of light shooting into the sky, visible both night and day.
- 47 A huge necropolis with hundreds of tombs and headstones.
- 48 An area filled with giant footprints, foul smelling contaminated water remains in each one.
- 49 A pleasure palace.
- 50 The collapsed and eroded blocks of an ancient structure concealing the entrance to a vault.

WEATHER

2D12 ROLL EACH TIME THE PARTY ENTERS A NEW HEX...

- 2 Tangerine fog. Any dead animals or plants temporarily come back to life.
- 3 Rising wind. It carries with it faint but unmistakable melodies, coming from close by.
- 4 Violet lightning storm. Wherever lightning strikes, objects begin hovering and slowly rising up towards the sky. This effect lasts for 1d10 minutes, after which all the objects slowly descend.
- 5 Clouds which appears to be moving in the opposite direction to the prevailing winds.
- 6 Emerald hail. Huge balls falls from the sky for 2d4 rounds. Seek cover or make DEX check each round, taking 1 damage on fail.
- 7 Chrome yellow rain. Turns whatever strikes it invisible for 1d4 hours
- 8 Light blue storm. Freezes isolated pockets of space, and transports them backward in time. Also has a minor teleportation effect, which is unsettling.
- 9 Disorientation due to brief electrical storm. Magic casters must make a WIS or INT check or forget all spells for the day.
- 10 Day inexplicably turns to night with 30 ft visibility. Or the night turn to blinding daylight. Lasts 3d10+10 minutes. -2 on ranged attacks.
- 11 Light green ghost rain. It's raining, but the rain seems to pass right through everything.
- 12 Pink noxious rain. Causes vomiting, fungus grows out of everything not metal.
- 13 A rainbow appears in the sky with the distinct tang of magic.
- 14 Blizzard blue ionized storm. Metallic objects randomly release sparks, small lightning bolts.
- 15 Amaranth red pollen cloud. PCs cough up blood. CON check once per day, or lose 1 CON. 2 sequential saves over 2 days to recover.
- 16 Orange gas. Mood altering, can cause victims to be loving or violent.
- 17 Dread silence, lasting 2d6 hours. Spells requiring a verbal component cannot be cast. Roll save vs spells per hour or suffer -2 on all rolls due to terror.
- 18 Cyan acidic rain. Any exposed metal has 30% each round of being corroded. Metal is destroyed if rolls under 30% are made on two consecutive rounds. Lasts 2d8 rounds
- 19 Scarlet red mist. Temporarily erases memories and language and makes creatures incapable of speaking, reading or communicating. Lasts 1d4 hours. Affects spells with verbal components
- 20 Fragrant wind. Seems to pick up thoughts of those it passes. PCs have a 50% chance to pick out carried thoughts, and identify who a thought came from, even from hundreds of miles away.
- 21 Silver rain storm. Creates fog when it strikes the ground, reducing visibility. All ranged attacks at -3, no visibility beyond 1d100+100 feet. Lasts 1d6 hours.
- 22 Lawful or chaotic sun rays. 50/50 chance of either. Glows blue or red, lawful or chaotic creatures in direct sunlight gain +1 bonus to all rolls, the opposite alignment gets -1 penalty.
- 23 Blazing comet. Crosses across the sky, either during the day or at night. Each PC should roll 1d20, highest roller is under a protection from evil spell for 1d12 hours.
- 24 Gold dust. A storm of gold dust, but bottling or capturing it makes it dissolve.

HEX ENCOUNTERS

D30 1-IN-6 CHANCE EVERY FEW HOURS, OR ROLL WHEN APPROPRIATE...

- 1 Telepathic sorcerers. Seeking sacrifices for obscene rituals.
- 2 Handsome man with 18 CHA. Admiring his reflection in a pool of water.
- 3 Grave robbers. Trying to open a tomb.
- 4 Lost adventurers. Exhausted by their last quest.
- 5 Talking beast. Will let the party pass for treasure.
- 6 Traveling merchant. Selling foul smelling potions.
- 7 Escaped prisoner. Manacled and carrying a religious icon, infested with disease.
- 8 Giant birds. Flying overhead, 50% chance of spotting the party and swooping.
- 9 Bone farmers. Excavating the recently deceased.
- 10 Mirror image of the party. They walk towards them, disappearing when they get near.
- 11 Man carving sculptures from ice. They come to life when completed.
- 12 Large black reptiles. They are tame and can be used as riding mounts.
- 13 Traveling group. Invites the party to a healing spring.
- 14 Humanoid insects. Love to trade goods, have little want for treasure.
- 15 Scrap dealer in a wagon. Loaded with all kinds of parts, can repair common items
- 16 Mercenary patrol. They are in the distance and have spotted the party.
- 17 Headless corpses. Suspended on poles with symbols carved into their chests as a warning sign
- 18 Four-legged beasts. Dueling for the corpse of a dead human.
- 19 Armed delegation. Informs the party they intrude upon lands owned a local lord, and to leave, or be arrested.
- 20 Starving beggar. Willing to trade information for food
- 21 Walking insects. They spit an amber like substance at their victim's feet to keep them still.
- 22 Farmer and his daughter. The man is teaching her a song and offers to teach it to the party.
- 23 Sirens. Competing in a singing contest. The party will be pressed into judging the winner, losers will be furious.
- 24 Refugees. Lost and thirsty. They tell the law forbids you from giving them water.
- 25 Criminals on the run from the law.
- 26 Nomadic gambler. Offers the party a wager with high stakes
- 27 Corpse. Falls from sky in front of the party
- 28 Roadside circus. Not run by humans.
- 29 Mutated family. Hideously deformed.
- 30 Band of men. Lowering prisoners into a pit, will flee if spotted.



LOCATIONS

1. OSTARIAN GARDENS

These delightful gardens are home to a fellowship of tree elementals, who act as representatives of *Ostaria's* ecosystem.

They are guardians and inheritors to a consciousness stretching back to the origins of life. Some are so ancient, they don't recollect a time they did not exist.

The roots of these trees extend deep, mingling with the roots of all plants throughout the region.

The gardens are self-maintaining, the grass grows perfectly even, and everything functions as intended.

Gardens such as this can be found throughout *Aquillus*, each with varieties of plant life reflective of the region in which they're situated.

What's makes the gardens enigmatic?

- Close observation will reveal the gardens appear to rearrange themselves. They cannot be mapped or remembered. Visitors who return on another occasion will find their recollections of the gardens are useless.
- Fragments of the trees can be used to create +2 wooden weapons such as clubs, spears, and arrows. Visitors will face wrath if attempts to remove any wood. They will be attacked by leeches who attach themselves, draining hit points and possibly levels from everyone, and additionally, magic itself permanently from casters.
- Visitors spending time here discover their deeds — both good and bad — are widely known by the elementals.

What else will visitors find here?

- It smells like after it rains.
- Cave-entrances hidden by illusions which PCs of a lawful alignment can detect. They lead to other places.
- Tree elementals attempting to make babies.
- Numerous garden mazes, which are highly complex.
- A small pool of black water. Visitors looking in will see their reflections showing the deepest darkest evil within each of them. Clerics of lawful alignment feel wrath from their god and must make a WIS check, or lose abilities until they atone.
- Hundred or thousands of statues, possibly petrified by nature or otherworldly powers.
- Enchanting birds weaving new sections of the gardens.
- Fruit never falls from trees, but is ripe for picking and eating. Some fruit possesses magical properties, a few varieties are deadly.
- Anything which dies immediately turns to dust.

Where to next?

Should the PCs choose to explore the gardens in-depth, suggestions of published OSR adventures to continue with are:

- **The Gardens of Ynn** by Emmy Allen (2018).
- **Winter's Daughter** by Gavin Norman (2018).

2. RAINBOW LAKE

The *River Yar*, which courses through *Ostaria*, flows into *Rainbow Lake*.

In the heart of the lake is an island, where the end of a perpetual rainbow rests upon it. It radiates strong magic.

The rainbow serves as a beacon for travelers, enabling them to return to familiar territory if they guide themselves by its warm light and breathtaking color.

What's around the shore of the lake?

- It is a pilgrimage site, drawings visitors to collect and drink its waters, believed to contain magical properties.
- If drinking from the lake, visitors will attain a random memory from someone who has drunk there before. They will also deposit a memory for someone else to attain.
- If visitors plunge their head into the lake, they can look through the eyes of another creature which has plunged before, for as long as they hold their breath.

What if visitors go to the island?

- It smells like cold mountain air.
- They begin to talk in rhyme once they set foot upon its shores. This wears off after a visitor departs the island.
- Close inspection of the rainbow will reveal it is formed of billions of colored butterflies, flying in the same position. Attempting to interrupt the butterflies will result in being aggressively attacked.
- One of the after effects of leaving the island is the deep feeling of being homesick and an overwhelming desire to return.

D10 WHAT ELSE IS ON THE ISLAND?

- 1 An oasis with a waterfall. The water is falling up.
- 2 Magnificent carvings in rock-faces detailing panoramic battles between humans and otherworldly beings.
- 3 A cemetery with crumbling headstones inscribed with poems.
- 4 An eternal fire has burnt for a billion years. It contains secrets nobody must ever know.
- 5 Portions of the island where time does not operate normally. Days may seem to be hours, or hours may seem to be days.
- 6 Memory erasing gas. Casters will arouse from comas with spell loss for the day.
- 7 An ancient temple cut into a rock face. There is a statue of one of the PCs in the entrance.
- 8 A giant, gray stone pillar. If touched, it throws lightning bolts into the sky.
- 9 A lonely castaway has been stranded here for years. He offers one gold coin for passage to the mainland.
- 10 Sadistic human/hybrid creatures. They glorify an idol.

Where to next?

Should the PCs choose to examine the island in-depth and expand it into a longer campaign, then a couple of suggestions of published OSR settings to continue with are:

- **Fever Swamp** by Luke Gearing (2018).
- **The Dark of Hot Springs Island** by Jacob Hurst, Evan Peterson and Donnie Garcia (2017).

3. KEOSZ

Here is a humble trading post, populated by pilgrims who left populous cities to establish a communitarian utopian movement, without hierarchy, traditions, religion, or laws.

Visitors are welcomed, and those passing through will be able to purchase basic supplies. Many of the pilgrims are artisans and also offer unique items.

What about the pilgrims?

- They throw their dead into a nearby well.
- They are fanatics. The colony has collapsed into severe dysfunction.
- Many of them are twins.
- They worship a majestic stone egg and pray it will hatch and transform the world.
- They can smell heartbreak on someone's breath at 6 ft distance.

What do the pilgrims sell? (d12)

1. Forked stick. Points towards areas with water. Also points to hungry beasts.
2. Tobacco. Blows monstrous shapes, taking a life of their own.
3. Fine azure powder. After snorting, user can identify potions by smell.
4. White ball. Turns a myriad of colors when touched, before settling on a deep green glow.
5. Pair of glasses. They show grief.
6. Miniature planet inside a glass jar.
7. Bottle of ink. Never goes dry or runs out.
8. A crystal. Creates a flame when rubbed, doesn't burn.
9. Vial of droplets. When added to a pile of excrement, it turn back into what it was before.
10. Silk gloves. Can find secret doors at +2.
11. Ear plug. Can read one thought within 10 ft for one minute, once per day.
12. Cup. Makes an liquid poured into it evaporate instantly.

D8 RESIDENT COMPLICATIONS... (ROLL ON EACH COLUMN)

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Ex hero | Love at first sight with one of the PCs | ... trusts only... | Ex zealot |
| 2 | Ex alchemist | Awakened from the dead | ... schemes with ... | Ex academic |
| 3 | Ex witch doctor | Has a magical bloodline | ... is a clone of ... | Ex hedonist |
| 4 | Ex glassblower | Witnessed unspeakable atrocities | ... owes a favor to ... | Ex gravedigger |
| 5 | Ex pickpocket | Certain they are an advanced being | ... worried about ... | Ex torturer |
| 6 | Ex prisoner | Can recite spell-books, backwards | ... secretly loves ... | Ex brewer |
| 7 | Ex playwright | Was raised by magical beasts | ... secretly serves ... | Ex musician |
| 8 | Ex psychic | Spends lavishly on donations to cults | ... parent of ... | Ex cartographer |



4. PROTU

Standing within a clearing of saturated swamplands is a settlement which has invented a thanatonic compound, allowing users to get a glimpse at life after death.

The highly valuable, sought-after substance is supplied as an extremely addictive opiate to the wealthy. It is extracted from highly poisonous fungal growth which is scraped from tree trunks in the surrounding areas.

This area is pervaded by vicious predators, and teeming with disease. It smells putrid, like decayed animals and boiled urine.

What about the residents?

- They have photosynthetic skin, allowing them to produce their own food in sunlight.
- They won't permit laughter or singing. Punishments for violations are severe.
- A family of three lives here, with flesh resembling translucent gelatin. The residents are secretive about them.
- They can instantaneously eject ink from the pores of the skin, enveloping them in a mist, which protects them from spells. They make saving throws vs all magic at +2.
- The children spend their days stroking dead animals with thigh bones of the dead. The stroking produces miniature lightning storms of static. They store the electrical discharges in jars, then used to illuminate the home interiors at night.
- They communicate with deadly insects which guard their settlement.

5. THE SPIRES

This lush, fertile area of *Ostaria* is filled with tall, colossal spires. They rise from the ground, lined with perfect hexagonal cells, around 10-20 ft in diameter, near the base.

As the spires ascend, the cells become less regular and more erratic, before ultimately degrading into abnormal shapes, and twisting helices.

The spires are covered in hundreds of varieties of flowers, each conceivable color, and even colors unique to this area alone. It smells comforting, like vanilla.

What's inside the spires?

- They are made from a thin, soft, organic membrane and can be easily ruptured with a sharp implement. A glance inside will reveal they are empty, and lead into explorable caves, and tunnels underneath. They lead to the *Mines of Logos* (Location 7, see page 18)
- Once a day, they secrete a pus-like substance which bubbles up from under the ground and oozes out through the sides. It is sweet-smelling and highly nutritious. Applied to the base of plants, it accelerates their growth by 100 times.

What else is around here?

- If the wind is right, the smell can be sensed from miles away, attracting roaming beasts to this area to feed on the secretions.

6. MINES OF LOGOS

“The world is made of words.”

Language is extracted at the *Mines of Logos*. This is the prime, raw element from which Aquilus is formed.

Language is a variety of telepathy. It allows one user to imprint an image or idea on the mind of another. Language weaves thought, infests matter, and shapes reality. It is a virus.

An entire mythology is stored within language. Language is magic, perhaps the most powerful one of all.

Language does not describe reality, it creates the reality it describes. Language is a map to navigate the world.

How is raw language refined?

- *The Miners* feed the extracted substance into a free-standing machine complete with knobs, dials, levels, and chimneys of various widths and heights. The apparatus resembles a steam engine from the 19th century Industrial Age of the Victorian-era.
- The machine emits sounds of *beeps, hums, buzzing, and whirs* as it transforms the raw matter. Characters of the alphabet begin to sprout from chimneys which initially appear solid, then gradually dissolve into a smoky, translucent substance melting into air.
- Language is then carried by the wind, permeating throughout the land. Once inhaled by residents, new ideas become seeded into their minds.

What else about this place?

- It smells warm, like cinnamon.
- Everything within the mine is edible.
- There are buried, well-guarded vaults located nearby, concealing forbidden words. The ideas they contain must not enter the mind of civilization and be comprehended. It would create its downfall.
- Due to the sheer quantity of raw grammatical data saturating the area (which behaves similar to radiation), cast spells with verbal components are unpredictable. Have players prepare their chosen spells as normal. Once cast, there is a 50% chance a randomly determined spell will replace it from the same level, even if it is not contained in their spell-book, or granted by their deity.

Where to next?

Should the PCs decide to explore inside the mines and commence a campaign within a pitch-black world, suggestions of published OSR underdark settings to continue with are:

- **Journey to the Center of Aereth** by Harley Stroh (2017). Made for DCC, but easily convertible to OSR systems.
- **Veins of the Earth** by Patrick Stuart and Scrap Princess (2017).
- **Operation Unfathomable** by Jason Sholtis (2018).





The glorious city of

Halgarth



POPULATION (D4)

- 1d4 + 1 million
- 1d100 + 100 thousand
- 1d20 + 20 thousand
- 1d6 + 10 thousand

RULERS (D6)

1. The most attractive
2. The most intelligent
3. Randomly selected
4. The most wealthy
5. Those specially bred
6. Secret societies

GOVERNMENT (D12)

1. Unprincipled
2. Decadent
3. Repressive
4. Innovative
5. Supremacist
6. Perfectionist
7. Democratic
8. Incompetent
9. Anachronistic
10. Utopian
11. Revolutionary
12. Humanitarian

MAIN TRADE GOODS (D6)

1. Magic spheres (*pages 32–33*)
2. Academies
3. Predictions
4. Art
5. Trade nexus
6. Illicit goods

MAJOR INFLUENCE (D8)

1. Magic
2. Mothers
3. Ancient texts
4. Scandals
5. Guilds
6. Child prodigies
7. Popular opinion
8. Criminal element

DESCRIBING THE CITY

Say these words to players

- *“The major megalithic city in Ostaria.”*
- *“It’s carved columns reach into the sky.”*
- *“Legendary for it’s beauty.”*

Show these image to players

- The painting on the left by *Thomas Cole*.
- Landscape paintings of classical ruins by *Claude Lorrain* (1600-1682), French artist of the Baroque era.

USING THE RANDOM TABLES

- Roll on this page to set up the basics.
- Roll on your preferred tables on the following pages.
- Use your imagination to create hooks and develop the fiction.

EXPANDING HALGARTH

Should the referee wish to develop *Halgarth* through detailed maps, shops, NPCs, etc, suggestions of published RPG toolkits and campaign settings to consider are:

- **Yoon-Suin** by David McGrogan (2015).
- **Fever Dreaming Marlinko** by Chris Kutalik (2015).
- **Dungeon Crawl Classics Lankhmar** by Michael Curtis (2017). Made for DCC, but easily convertible to OSR systems.
- **Magical Industrial Revolution** by Skerples (2019).
- **Electric Bastionland** by Chris McDowall (2020).

CITY RESIDENTS

D20 PEOPLE LIVING HERE... (ROLL FOR EACH COLUMN)

| | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Local voyeur | Obnoxious, suspicious | Has exquisite mastery of the law. |
| 2 | Chimney sweep | Knows everybody | Can reverse-engineer magical items. |
| 3 | Temple beggar | Can't be relied on | Has mind connections with others. |
| 4 | Family historian | Narcotic addict | Secretly serves enemy guilds and mercenary groups from a rival city. |
| 5 | Zealous fanatic | Pessimistic, eerily lucky in all endeavors | Claims they were raised by planar beings from another dimension. |
| 6 | Orphanage caretaker | Never without a drink | Enjoys watching others die by magic. |
| 7 | City emissary | Cold hearted, obsessive | Fears to leave the city. |
| 8 | Brash entrepreneur | Spies for local bandits | Has no memory of the past. |
| 9 | Sword sharpener | Develops close friendships | Carries a secret tablet of unique wisdom. |
| 10 | Gossiping servant | Is known as a genius | Collector of fantastic tales. |
| 11 | Mute spiritualist | Is in deep debt | Wandering through Aquilus in search of their one true love. |
| 12 | Incense burner | Greasy, fearless | Leads a secret cabal of nihilists. |
| 13 | Desperate debtor | Wildly impractical | Provides tomes of dark lore and arcane power. |
| 14 | Black market contact | Kleptomaniac | Looking to take over a powerful crime syndicate. |
| 15 | Deranged lunatic | Undaunted by danger | Asks if the party has any messages they can carry. |
| 16 | Expert cartographer | Follows rules | Believes their family's ancient curse has returned. |
| 17 | Summoner's mishap | Bold, incoherent | Inherited an ancient tomb. |
| 18 | Prophet priest | Fails at everything | Identifies one of the party as the incarnation of a deity. |
| 19 | Contract killer | Idle hedonist | Can locate someone lost by concentrating. |
| 20 | Prominent patron | Has chronic illness | Claims to be a time traveler. |





Hij-S-

CITY FACTIONS & CULTS

| D20 | THEIR LEADER... | THEIR REPUTATION... (ROLL FOR EACH COLUMN) |
|------------|--|--|
| 1 | Anarchic, there is no leadership. | They explore trade routes and share maps to re-establish old civilizations. |
| 2 | Related to most cult members. | They are document forgers. |
| 3 | Obsessed with ruling the land. | They preserve their dead for future resurrection. |
| 4 | Here because of being exiled for past crimes. | They make exquisite and valuable art. |
| 5 | Creates wax sculptures of dead loved ones. | They produce a rare item. |
| 6 | Brokers useful information. | They burrowed and found a meteorite-based metal, capable of creating powerful magic weapons. |
| 7 | Afraid of their uncontrollable powers. | They have the means and knowledge to create magical implants, they are operated by thought. |
| 8 | Secretly a dark magic caster. | They are expert assassins for hire, but expensive. |
| 9 | Continually talks of their own dreams. | They seek to abandon their humanity for the sake of becoming a better species. |
| 10 | Derives pleasure from others' fear. | They hate material want and idealize the maximizing of available resources for all. |
| 11 | Can provide unholy healing of dire sickness. | They are romantics who dedicate themselves to collecting ephemera from the past. |
| 12 | They are cursed with eternal life. | They preserve dead corpses indefinitely. |
| 13 | Carries a book with a lock. | They long for the release of death and await a messiah-like figure who will deliver it. |
| 14 | Can read fortunes in tea leaves and tobacco smoke. | They are experts in protective and shielding magic. |
| 15 | Over-explains everything, twice. | They know the secrets of inter-dimensionality. |
| 16 | Is a muttering, mad person. | They are compassionate healers. |
| 17 | Has a great past glory. | They acquire victims for the cult's enjoyment. |
| 18 | Grim and warlike. | They crave extinction but want to take as many others with them as possible. |
| 19 | Claims right is wrong, freedom is slavery, and war is peace. | They revere and develop powers of the mind. |
| 20 | Convinced they will die soon. | They are free of guilt. |

CITY ENCOUNTERS

D20 UNEXPECTED EVENTS & HAPPENINGS...

- 1 A big mob comes up to the party and offers a mysterious object. They seem dangerous.
- 2 Three well-dressed women are taking off their shoes and showing them to each other.
- 3 The party gets an invitation to an event hosted by an orgiastic cult in a secret pleasure dome.
- 4 A tax collector, traveling with six watchmen and an enormous personal bodyguard.
- 5 The party learns one of them is to be assassinated. They don't know who.
- 6 A crowd gathers to observe a miracle.
- 7 A person tells the party at midday tomorrow, they will all be shrunk to six inches tall by demonic magic, and then slaughtered.
- 8 A street preacher makes a loud public sermon on the back of a wagon.
- 9 Card dealer offering bets from folding card table.
- 10 An acting troupe puts on a performance. They encourage the audience to participate.
- 11 Small children running by, all dressed like the party.
- 12 A person selling tickets to a significant public event.
- 13 Children offer the party apples they picked.
- 14 A holy person greets the party and offers free first aid or to prey for their wellbeing.
- 15 Suddenly the winds dies down and the air becomes still. People begin to retreat indoors.
- 16 A messenger stops a party member and gives them flowers from a secret admirer.
- 17 Missionaries walking the streets offering peaceful euthanasia to the needy.
- 18 One item the party carries is considered taboo by the citizens. They either bow or kneel, avert their eyes, or leave the party's presence when said item is brandished.
- 19 A bubbling pit of thick tar on the streets. There are several bodies of humans stuck in the pit. The people around seem to pay no attention to it.
- 20 People torturing captives with heated iron rods for information.





CITY RUMORS

D20 THE WORD ON THE STREET...

- 1 Students of the arcane arts come from far away to explore mysteries within nearby forests.
- 2 Ruins in Ostaria are crawling with monsters. Don't trust stories of easy riches and relics.
- 3 Several bodies have been found drowned in the river with ecstatic smiles on their faces.
- 4 The creatures of the woods can smell blood for tens of miles.
- 5 Bones litter the forests all throughout Ostaria. Don't go inside them.
- 6 A nearby crystalline arch is a gateway to another realm.
- 7 Every movement made by the residents is tracked, recorded, and archived.
- 8 Nearby villagers burn people who claim they can communicate with trees.
- 9 There is a roving city in Ostaria, it won't be found in the same place twice.
- 10 You can't trust anyone. Changelings are omnipresent, replacing us all.
- 11 Some people permanently rove throughout Ostaria, digging up the dead and burning them.
- 12 All kinds of fantastic creatures have been spotted in the north, unseen in generations.
- 13 Complex board games can be played with ghosts somewhere in the city.
- 14 There's is a temple on a mountain where no explorer has ever returned. It is the source of all pure water.
- 15 Any scratch or cut from a beast roaming Ostaria will make you one of them.
- 16 Don't leave any corpse behind. They must be staked in the heart and their mouth sewn up.
- 17 Priests warn men to fear the woods and forget it's treasures and secrets.
- 18 The are psychics in Ostaria with huge overweighted craniums, who can teach secrets in return for service.
- 19 Flying beasts periodically clean the land with fire for sins and wicked living.
- 20 Parts of Ostaria have been crippled by love, peace, and plenty for all.

CITY LIFE

D20 BELIEF SYSTEMS, CUSTOMS & CONVENTIONS...

- 1 The concept of 'war' has been removed from the regional language. It is now inconceivable.
- 2 Impoverished families sell amputated limbs of their children to medical societies.
- 3 Anyone requiring a divine answer to a question must offer a gift of magic at a certain shrine under a full moon.
- 4 Married couples display their devotion by getting surgery to look like their spouse.
- 5 Even the most minor infractions must be resolved by duels to first blood.
- 6 It is forbidden to injure fruit trees in the orchards by picking the fruit. Windfalls however may be gathered from the ground. The crime is punishable by death.
- 7 Crying in public is punishable by ruinous fines or exile.
- 8 Fantastic games are held once a generation, such that no living person will have ever seen their like.
- 9 Saliva from holy people is considered to be blessed. It can be discovered for sale in vials at markets.
- 10 There are people who've chosen to stop aging. Children have remained children for decades.
- 11 Women can become pregnant by eating a seed bud from a magical tree which grows within a certain temple. The babies are able to speak as soon as they are born.
- 12 There are quarters within the city where citizens all wear identical masks, recognizing each other by elaborate body tattoos.
- 13 Twins are thought to represent all the good and all the evil a soul will do in its life. Holy people are consulted when they are born and one will be left to die.
- 14 At the moment of death, some people can open their mouths to send forth their souls in the form of birds, which live on.
- 15 Seven random young people are sent as tribute to a mysterious island each year. None have ever returned.
- 16 The art throughout the streets and museums in Halgarth depicts towering beings teaching ancient people of Aquilus the secrets of civilization.
- 17 People all suffer from a disease where they are literal empaths, who feel whatever pain they see inflicted on another.
- 18 People who attain power in the city are determined by the random roll of dice. The dice are rolled once more to determine how long their position of influence will last.
- 19 When the young join the city's holy orders, their family acts as if their life has already ended.
- 20 The most valuable commodity here a jars containing tears of grief.





CITY INSTITUTES

D12 HALGARTH'S MAGIC & SPELLCASTING ACADEMIES... (ROLL FOR EACH COLUMN)

| | | | |
|----|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 | The Seat of | Future | Chronomancy |
| 2 | The Affiliation of | Ecological | Philosophy |
| 3 | The Academy of | Alchemical | Hemerticism |
| 4 | The Faculty of | Spiritual | Alchemy |
| 5 | The League of | Practical | Inscriptions |
| 6 | The Seminary of | Ancient | Alteration |
| 7 | The Society of | Temporal | Divination |
| 8 | The Alliance of | Geomantic | Experimentation |
| 9 | The Foundation of | Hermetic | Necromancy |
| 10 | The Union of | Evolutionary | Invocation |
| 11 | The Center of | Sorcerous | Abjuration |
| 12 | The Guild of | Mathematical | Summoning |

D12 STYLE OF MAGIC TAUGHT... IT'S REQUIREMENTS... (ROLL FOR EACH COLUMN)

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Focuses on infernal power. | Knowing the mother's name of the target. |
| 2 | Focuses on singing. | Avoiding any contact with the target. |
| 3 | Focuses on the fabric of space. | Certain bloodlines can use this magic. |
| 4 | Focus on sound and metal. | Dancing whilst making highly specific hand-signs. |
| 5 | Focuses on mind-control. | Poems written in a language the caster invents. |
| 6 | Focuses on shape-shifting. | Various internal organs of the recently dead. |
| 7 | Focuses on gold and gems. | Solving mathematical calculations. |
| 8 | Focuses on microbial life. | Adjusting the gears of small, complex mechanisms. |
| 9 | Focuses on gravity. | Heightened emotions. |
| 10 | Focuses on astral matter. | Wearing a special mystical outfit. |
| 11 | Focuses on ancient texts. | Making bargains with non-human entities. |
| 12 | Focuses on death energy. | Being aligned with the collective consciousness of plants. |

Spheres

ROLL D18 FOR ASTONISHING ORBS AVAILABLE AT HALGARTH'S SHOPS, BAZAARS, STREET VENDORS & DISCREET TRADERS

1. SPHERE OF TRANSCRIBED RECOLLECTION

Can store user's memories outside the body. Users can project fifteen minutes' worth of mental images and words, which can be replayed by anyone activating it. Crafted in spring green crystalite.

2. SPHERE OF AUDITORY ESPIONAGE

When activated, user can pinpoint any point they can see up to 1000 ft away, and hear whatever could ordinarily be heard at the spot for 10 minutes. Crafted in indigo zarbrina.

3. SPHERE OF DIAGRAMMATIC EMULATION

Throw this sphere into a modest dungeon where it sojourns for 1 hour. When it returns, the user can cast a holographic image on the ground, drawing an accurate map which has been traced. The map does not show living creatures, secret doors, traps, or items in rooms. Crafted in deep ultramarine garnet.

4. SPHERE OF COGNITIVE ASSIMILATION

This device assimilates the knowledge of one creature and grants it to the user. The target must make a save vs spells. If failed, they lose 1d2 x 1000 XP which are added to the user's total. Each time the sphere is used, there is a 25% chance it fails, draining the user of 1d2 x 1000 XP. Crafted in tangerine orange agate.

5. SPHERE OF UPWARD ELEVATION

This device counteracts gravity, permitting the user to rise up to 300 ft vertically into the air. Ascension can be up to 30 ft per round. The user can also pull up to 150 lb of weight behind them. Crafted in sky blue nephrite.

6. SPHERE OF VANISHING VERITY

Activate this sphere, and all deceit and hate will fade. Only truth and love will remain. Very expensive. Crafted in rich, royal blue lapis lazuli.

7. SPHERE OF RUDIMENTARY RENEWAL

If a creature has been lifeless for less than 24 hours, this reconstructs a rudimentary semblance of life by reactivating its nervous system. The creature does not know its former self. It is a mindless shell, executing basic duties. Complies with verbal commands of the user. The creature works for one hour before fainting and swiftly decaying into a stench. Crafted in blue tanzanite.

8. SPHERE OF REPLICATED TERRAIN

Throw this sphere above your head, it will blast 1000 ft into the air and hovers for 1 minute. When it descends, it can cast a hologram on the ground, drawing a highly detailed topographical map of 50 miles in each direction. Map does not show living creatures. Crafted in extra-planar polished mercury.

9. SPHERE OF DISSIPATED WARMTH

Hold this sphere close to your mind. For one hour, you will be permitted to observe objects and creatures based on the heat they emanate. This may allow the user to see otherwise invisible creatures, or even certain objects if their temperatures are largely different. Carved in lime green moldavite.

10. SPHERE OF THE INSTANT COMMUTING

User and all associates within a short range are immediately transported 1d10 + 10 minutes into the future. For them, no time elapses. For all others, it's as if they ceased to exist during the intermediary period. Crafted in rare white obsidian.

11. SPHERE OF ACCELERATED DESTINY

Activating this sphere will induce time to slow down, and the user gains 3 extra rounds while the rest of reality stands still. User can make attacks, move, or take any other action permitted. This process is exhausting, and user suffers 1 point of damage. Crafted in deep vermilion fluorite.

12. SPHERE OF THINGS TO COME

This sphere allows the user to observe a future which ensues on the point they are standing. The event witnessed is from a period which happens in (roll d8): 1). 1d3 hours; 2). 1d4 days; 3). 1d6 weeks; 4). 1d8 months; 5). 1d10 years; 6). 1d12 decades; 7). 1d20 centuries; 8). 1d100 millennia from the current time. Results of 7 or 8 require the user to save vs stone or age 1d10 years. Crafted in forest green malachite.

13. SPHERE OF THRESHOLD EXPOSITION

This sphere automatically detects and opens secret doors within 20 ft. It also emits a clicking noise when in range of traps. Crafted in red kornerupine.

14. SPHERE OF NAIVE DUPLICATION

If one end of this sphere is rubbed against a creature, a mass of foam froths out. Within 6 rounds, it generates what resembles to be an authentic, living copy of the touched creature, including clothing and equipment. The facsimile is a level 1 creature with shallow intelligence which endures for up to 24 hours, after which it softens, melts, and dissolves away. The copy comprehends simple commands, complicated concepts are beyond its abilities. copy. Crafted in translucent green jade.

15. SPHERE OF CONTAGIOUS MAGNETISM

When activated, this sphere speeds toward a target at up to 1000 ft range, discharging clouds of dust along the way. This acts as an aphrodisiac, attracting all nearby creatures to attack whoever is overwhelmed by the dust. No saving throws for the affected creature. Lasts for 1d4 rounds, or until the target is lifeless. Crafted in maroon tourmaline.

16. SPHERE OF LIQUID PROGNOSIS

This sphere will change color if one drop of fluid is put onto it which bears magical or poisonous properties. Crafted in golden yellow topaz.



17. SPHERE OF FLAMING EXHALATION

This sphere contains a slot of gourmet confectionery, enabling the consumer to use their breath as fire weapon inflicting 2d6 damage at a 10 ft range, with no save allowed for victim. The user must make a save vs breath when eating these or suffer 1d6 damage themselves. Crafted in lavender adamantine.

18. SPHERE OF DRAINING INHALATION

When activated, an area of 30 ft radius is depleted of all air creating a vacuum. The area of vacuum is permanent. Carved in polished black spherulite.

APPENDIX 'A'

| |  HALGARTH | 1. OSTARIAN GARDENS | 2. RAINBOW LAKE |
|---|--|--|--|
|  HALGARTH | | Tree elementals are the judicial system of Halgarth. They create laws, punishments, influence power and forecast outcomes. Officials in Halgarth provide the tree elementals with tributes and sacrifices. | Secret cults in Halgarth covet magical items found around the lake, for the promise of power and extended life. Several cult secretly resist, and are engaged in destroying magical items to thwart the other's plans. |
| 1. OSTARIAN GARDENS | | | Underground tunnels lead from the gardens to the lake, roots of the tree elementals extending throughout. The elementals steal memories from the lake as their main nutrient and life source. This is their secret. |
| 2. RAINBOW LAKE | | | |
| 3. KEOSZ | | | |
| 4. PROTU | | | |
| 5. THE SPIRES | | | |
| 6. MINES OF LOGOS | | | |

CONNECTIONS & LINKS

| 3. KEOSZ | 4. PROTU | 5. THE SPIRES | 6. MINES OF LOGOS |
|---|---|--|---|
| Residents in Keosz won't make eye contact with anyone from Halgarth. They hate elites and are against centralized power. | High-ranking officials in Halgarth are addicted to the compound produced at Protu. Village leaders spend all the proceeds in the city's private pleasure and torture palaces. | Alchemists from Halgarth travel to the spires to collect a rare and valuable secretion which can make women pregnant without a father. | A high-level official in Halgarth has been siphoning vast amounts of money to the mines towards a secret project. |
| Keosz was built near the site where an evil tree elemental was slain, an exile from the gardens. Anyone buried at the site will arise as a sentient but evil plant in three days. | Magic casters in Protu require a raw material growing in the gardens for magical schemes. They use blackmail, as they know secrets of how and why the tree elementals came to be there. | The tree elementals protect an unknowable truth lying inside several of the spires. Those who gained such knowledge would be able to establish an eternal empire. | Elementals have an uneasy alliance with the mines, and seek to ban certain words. They are prepared to hire assassins to kill miners if they fail to comply. |
| Residents of Keosz have all traveled to the island on the lake. They weren't the same after they returned. They have it well mapped. | Residents in Keosz are planning a heist from a prominent shrine on the island in the lake, but they are desperately short of a resource they desire. | A great plague once came to the spires from the lake, culling most of the plant and animal population. The plague is still dormant in this area somewhere. | The extraction method at the mines is powered by an extremely valuable energy source, found at the island in the center of the lake. |
| | Keosz and Protu are reluctantly in trade with each other. One settlement has crushing blackmail on the other, which they exploit. | Residents of Keosz worship an animal feeding at the spires. They travel here to receive the animal's blessings, otherwise their colony would crumble from internal struggle. | A resident of Keosz is secretly head of a price-fixing cabal controlling values of extracted language. Curiously, they are a young child. |
| | | Residents of Protu are mystically joined to the spires. Village leaders come here to oversee ritualistic ceremonies which heal the sick and summon spirits. | Villagers in Protu are part of a vast conspiracy to overthrow the mines and take control of language. Several villagers were formerly miners and know it's workings. |
| | | | Miners once extracted an unearthly metal against which all sorcery was impotent. They buried their discovery under the spires to prevent it falling into the hands of wrong people. |
| | | | |

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The names "Aquilus", "Ostaria", "Ostarian Gardens", "Keosz", "Protu", "Mines of Logos", and "Halgarth" are product identity. "Trade dress" (fonts, layout, identifying marks, cover logo) are reserved as Product Identity.

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